Disability & Society

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cdso20

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To cite this article: Irene Tor-Carroggio (2021) The customer is always right: Study on Chinese persons with sight loss' opinion on audio description, Disability & Society, 36:2, 306-325, DOI: 10.1080/09687599.2020.1713727

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1713727

Published online: 06 Feb 2020.

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DISABILITY & SOCIETY
2021, VOL. 36, NO. 2, 306–325
https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1713727

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The customer is always right: Study on Chinese persons with sight loss' opinion on audio description

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ABSTRACT

Audio description is in its infancy in China, both in terms of the provision of the service and as an academic object of study. This article provides a useful insight into what Chinese audio description users think of this access service and how they consume it. This information was gathered through two different questionnaires, mostly distributed in the city of Shanghai, although not exclusively. The results show what the profile of the audio description user is, how satisfied they are with the service that is currently available and their expectations for the future. Only after identifying the areas that matter to users the most can both science and industry contribute to guaranteeing their rights in the best possible way.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 9 April 2019
Accepted 7 January 2020

KEYWORDS
Media accessibility; audio description; China; user satisfaction

Points of interest

- Media accessibility, specifically audio description, is in its infancy in Mainland China as an academic object of study. This study contributes to start bridging this research gap.
- Regarding their access to information and culture, the voices of Chinese persons with sight loss are hardly heard. This is the first study that takes into consideration their opinion and experience with audio description.
- The results of this study have had a direct impact on how audio description is delivered in Shanghai.
- The comparison between China and Europe indicates where audio description in China is in relation to countries in which this access service has already come of age.
- The results of this study are key to developing audio description in Mainland China following the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' slogan: 'nothing about us without us'.

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1. Introduction

Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism have played a key role in shaping the concept of disability in China. In early China physical abnormality was not inexorably identified with negativity, as popular deities often had uncanny body shapes (Zhou 2002, 105). Also, the *Zhuangzi* contains some passages that suggest that physical disability was not perceived as negative (Zhou 2002; Lewis 2014; Lambert 2016). Yet, this changed and throughout history Chinese persons with disabilities have been seen as not worthy of attention, as the result of karma (Campbell and Uren 2011) or their parents' defects (Palmer 2014), as a deficient fusion between man and nature (Avery 2016), as criminals, as outsiders and even as racial degeneration and one of the key causes for the nation's backwardness (Zhou 2002), just to name a few. It is, therefore, not surprising that persons with disabilities try to run away from traditional stigmatization. After interviewing persons with disabilities in China, Lin and Yang (2018) concluded that their interviewees shared a common feature: they denied being victims of any discrimination and, thus, did not pursue social inclusion. According to these researchers, this phenomenon is caused by a host of institutional, environmental, social, family-related and psychological factors, most of which have been inherited from previous generations' prejudices.

Like in any other language, the choice of words in Chinese reflects social attitudes towards certain issues, among which disability can be found. In China, the terms referring to it have negative connotations, although Aguado Díaz (1995, 277) observed that some social practices carried out in the past, like foot binding, evidence the cultural relativity of physical disability and its context-sensitiveness. Currently, the most widespread word to refer to persons with disabilities is *canjiren* (残疾人), which literally means 'a person who is deficient and ill'. Other words that clearly exemplify how medicalized the conception of disability is in China are, for example, *canfei* (残废, 'crippled') and *shazi* (傻子, 'simpleton'). Yet, new voices have emerged that advocate for new terms to refer to those functionally diverse, such as *canzhang renshi* (残障人士), 'a deficient and handicapped person' (Hallett 2005; Palmer 2014). Unfortunately, although it sounds more formal, it still frames disability within the medical model of disability, which believes that disability stems from biological problems that must be addressed and that only concern individuals. This model has already been condemned by, for instance, the International Telecommunication Union (2017), which endorses an approach that vindicates the idea that the problem emanates from social behavior, instead of the person with an impairment (Orero and Tor-Carroggio 2018).

The establishment of the China Disabled Persons' Federation by the Chinese central government in 1988 was the first step towards the

development of policies and legislation on disability (Zhang 2017). Also, since China's ratification of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, the country has made visible efforts to improve the life of persons with disabilities, such as the amendment of the Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, originally passed in 1980. This is no surprise taking into account that "the occurrence of important domestic and international events often becomes a critical policy window for the improvement of the welfare of disabled people" (Tang and Cao 2018, 1173). Thus, the almost 83 million persons with disabilities in China are also benefiting from the country becoming more aware of their needs. One of the rights the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes—hence the need of China to give an answer to it—is the access to culture and information. In the case of persons with sight loss, who make up the group this paper revolves around, this right can be granted through sensory accessibility services such as audio description. Audio description, an exponentially growing Audio-visual Translation mode, is a means of translating visual elements into aural description primarily for helping persons with sight loss to enable them to access live and pre-recorded programs and performances. In other words, it is the visual made verbal (Snyder 2014).

In fact, persons with no sensory loss receive information from two sensory modalities: sight and hearing. Audio description interacting with the original sound track 'should stimulate a number of other senses in the user' (Fryer 2016, 47) and therefore grant users a similar experience to that of sighted viewers. Some users have even argued that their experience is enhanced because the lack of visual reminders, such as a TV screen, eradicates the need for suspension of disbelief (Fryer 2016, 47). This accessibility service is, along with others such as subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing and sign language interpreting, already legally required in countries such as Spain, the UK, and even Japan—although to a different extent (Martínez-Sirés 2016, 34).

In contrast, audio description is still at its infancy in China, both as a professional service and as a research topic (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost, forthcoming). Martínez-Sirés (2016, 27) had also highlighted the lack of scholarship in media accessibility—an umbrella label for a number of sensory access services—for non-Western languages. Known as *koushu yingxiang* (口述影像, 'image description') and *wuzhang'ai dianying* (无障碍电影, 'barrier-free movies'), depending on the province and on the level of accuracy aimed at, some researchers have tried to contextualize audio description from a historical point of view (Li 2013) and even by reporting its state of the art and profiling the persons in charge of delivering it in China (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost, forthcoming). Nonetheless, one of the main angles from which audio description needs to be studied remains unveiled: user needs and satisfaction. In fact, Matamala and Orero (2018)

consider this to be of the utmost importance and underline the need of making the end user's voice heard, and that research supports the statements they make.

This paper aims at bridging this existing research gap by presenting the results of two different surveys conducted in Mainland China in 2018. Both questionnaires departed from the following three research questions:

1. What are the habits of audio description users when it comes to this accessibility service?
2. What are the needs of audio description users when it comes to this accessibility service?
3. How satisfied are users towards the audio description currently delivered?

This article is divided into four sections. The first one revises previous studies that have focused on Chinese persons with sight loss and Chinese media accessibility. The second one explains the methodology followed in the two studies presented in this paper. The third section analyzes the results of the two surveys conducted with audio description users. Finally, the discussion and conclusions are put forward.

2. Research background

Although the events related to it are reported in the press from time to time, media accessibility is still an under-researched field in China (Gambier and Jin 2018). This is also proved by doing a quick search combining 'Chinese' and 'media accessibility' in the Translation Studies database BITRA, which is the field, more specifically Audiovisual Translation, in which media accessibility is encompassed. Currently, such a search only yields four results. Something similar happens when consulting the Chinese academic database CNKI. Consequently, it is not surprising that only a few scholars have investigated audio description users to find out what their needs are and how audio description should be delivered to suit them best. Chao (2002) and Liu (2015) carried out some research in Taiwan in this regard. The former was the first academic researcher to consider audio description as a research topic in Greater China, while the latter studied the need of using audio description to assist the learning of elementary school students with visual impairment. This is also the case of Leung (2018), who examined the media use, behaviour and motivations, as well as the reception and preferences, of visually impaired audiences when consuming audio description in Hong Kong. Similarly, Li (2013), in a rather comprehensive study on media accessibility in Mainland China, included a section presenting the results of a survey administered to persons with sight loss ($N = 729$) in Zhejiang province from which their media use, behavior, and satisfaction were elicited. Her research

confirmed that the most popular means of communication amongst them were television (86.6%), radio (75.3%), mobile phones (68.1%), the Internet (45.3%), DVD/VCD (24.8%), movies (21.2%), and newspapers (20.5%). The respondents claimed to use the media primarily to get informed (64.0%) and to entertain themselves (41.3%), and they were 'quite satisfied' (51.6%) with how it met their needs. As for their habits regarding the TV, 50.0% of the informants watched it more than one hour every day and the most popular type of program was the news. Li (2013) connected the latter finding with the fact that news programs allow persons with sight loss to be less dependent on the images being broadcast. The fact that audio description is not incorporated in TV programs did not prevent Li's (2013) respondents from affirming they were satisfied with TV content (Li 2013, 59–60). As for the lack of audio description on TV, Li and Looms (2016) investigated the current incompatibility between Chinese TV sets and audio description:

> One of the reasons for not including the capability to offer closed captions or audio description in China's digital television standard, China Multimedia Mobile Broadcasting (CMMB) 10 years ago was a concern about the affordability of set-top boxes (STBs) [sic]. Industry sources suggest that the retail price of STBs had to be kept below RMB 200 (currently USD 30). As the inclusion of closed captioning and audio description would have required patent licenses, this would have driven costs above the target retail price (Li and Looms 2016, 267–268).

As for movies, which are the only field in which audio description is applied in China, Li's (2013, 41–47) results show that they are a less popular choice amongst blind and partially-sighted persons. More than half of the respondents (54.0%) never watched movies mainly because of the inconvenience of getting to the venue.

The scarcity of academic bibliography might derive from society's general lack of interest in this group of persons, as the results from Wu and Xie (2015) study revealed. These researchers conducted an online survey in China and found out that, out of the 160 valid responses gathered, 79.4% of the respondents admitted not caring about persons with sight loss. This is probably why 88.8% of them did not know about the existence of audio description (Wu and Xie 2015). The lack of literature can also be attributed to persons with sight loss not having attached enough importance to or not having vindicated enough their right to culture and information because of them having to deal with other difficulties. In fact, Li's (2013) survey proved that the main challenges respondents had to face were poverty (24.7%) and loneliness (24.7%). She even recounted in her book how users questioned her research for not focusing on what they considered more critical problems, such as employment. Also, the scant research in this field has not been compensated from abroad, as, as far as we know, only Fei (2011) wrote a masters dissertation on audio description and the Chinese community in

Canada, which aimed at examining the differences and similarities of expectations and evaluations of integrated audio description between the Chinese and Canadian communities. Yet, his results need to be contextualized, since the stimuli he used was audio description in English with both groups.

It is in this context of lack of studies on audio description in China that this researched is framed in, with the aim of making a step forward from the users' perspective.

3. Methodology

This research presents the results of two different questionnaires that catered for the same target respondents—Chinese persons with sight loss that had experience with audio description.

The first questionnaire was inspired on an existing one created by the European project ADLAB PRO (http://www.adlabproject.eu/), which gauged user satisfaction and opinions on audio description. It was 'inspired' and not 'based' on that survey because numerous changes had to be made to fit the Chinese case. For example, 'opera' was replaced for 'Chinese opera' in those questions in which some fields were listed so that users chose where they wanted to enjoy audio description. The questionnaire had also to be shortened because the circumstances in which the questionnaire was expected to be delivered would not allow us to enter into much detail. The questionnaire was then orally piloted in a blind massage parlor on 18 April 2018 in Shanghai. Five blind masseurs were recruited and only one had previous experience with audio description. Yet, all their comments provided useful insight into the design of questionnaires for this respondent profile. The pilot resulted in many changes, such as adding a clearer explanation of what audio description was in the information sheet and making all the information and questions more easy-to-read. This was attributed to the users' low educational level and lack of knowledge about this accessibility service. It was also found that these users did not know the Chinese term for audio description and an explanatory remark was made to show that the access service delivered by the so-called 'barrier-free movies' was also known as *koushu yingxiang*. Also, it was confirmed that users had difficulty in understanding 1–10 scales and were consequently substituted by categorical ones. All these changes arising from the pilot were considered to be a normal practice, as, for instance, Chmiel and Mazur (2012) indicated they had to change their testing materials up to sixteen times before formally administering them. Before conducting our survey, and since applying for ethical approval is becoming commonplace in the execution of Audio-visual Translation research (Orero et al. 2018), our questionnaire was approved by our university's Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations in human research have been a major concern since the critical articles written by Pappworth

(1967) on medical research. The final questionnaire was administered at the Cathay Cinema in Shanghai on 26 April 2018. This cinema is one of the 16 cinemas that offer a live audio description session for free thanks to the financial help of the local government (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost, forthcoming). With the help of some volunteers, who had been briefed on what audio description is and also on the aim of the research, cinema-goers with sight loss were approached while they were lining up to get into the cinema for their monthly live audio description session. This was thought to be the best way to find as many users as possible, since one of the requirements to answer the questionnaire was to be or to have been an audio description user. An online version of the questionnaire was also made available in the website Web Survey Creator. It was sent to the China Braille Library in Beijing so that they helped us recruit informants from a different city. Therefore, the survey was administered orally and through the Internet.

The second questionnaire was both designed and administered by the association Sound of Light in Shanghai. Sound of Light is an association led by Han Ying which was set up in Shanghai in 2016. It receives direct material and financial assistance from the Shanghai Association of Persons with Disabilities. They produce about 50 audio described movies every year, which are recorded in their headquarters and distributed through digital means. The movies are audio described thanks to a network of volunteers that both write the audio description script and voice it. These movies can be accessed at specific projecting sites which are all located in Shanghai (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost, forthcoming). The aim of the questionnaire was to gather data about the experience, if any, of persons with sight loss regarding the so-called 'barrier-free movies', as well as their opinion on them. In this case, the survey was only conducted in Shanghai. It was administered in person and orally by volunteers and by the association's staff before or after the audio description sessions. The surveys were collected by Sound of Light employees and stored in the association's headquarters. Data collection started in April 2018 and was extended until January 2019.

The reasons for presenting the results of both surveys in the same paper are the following. First, the first questionnaire's sample was smaller than the second one, so it was thought that the first findings could be contrasted and complemented with the data obtained from the second survey. Yet, the first questionnaire could not be replaced by the second one because the questions asked were not the same and both provided significant information about user experience and satisfaction towards audio description. Second, despite the fact that the second questionnaire was not designed by myself, I was offered the data to analyze it in order to ultimately present the results to the Shanghai Association of Persons with Disabilities. Finally, as it has already been underlined, this is the first time this kind of data from

Mainland China is being presented to academia and the aim of the paper was to compile what is currently available and offer as complete of a picture as possible of what has been done so far in this regard.

For the statistical analysis IBM SPSS (version 22) was used.

4. Results of survey 1

The first questionnaire that was administered was framed within PhD research aimed at verifying if Chinese persons with sight loss would accept the use of artificial voices in the audio description of films. Before doing so, audio description users had to be studied and profiled to better design the next stages of the PhD research.

4.1. Informants' demographic profile

Fifty-two informants answered this first questionnaire. They were from both Shanghai (42) and Beijing (10). The average age was 63.8 years old and the median was 65 years old. The youngest informant was 28, while the eldest was 88. It is worth highlighting that 17 persons decided not to answer this question. In the light of the average age observed, it was not surprising that 88.5% of our respondents were retired. Almost 6% of our respondents were unemployed, 1.9% were freelancers and 3.8% of the persons who answered our questionnaire stated that they had a different employment situation than those listed.

Figure 1 clearly shows that only a minority (3.8%) had attended university, with secondary education being the educational level which the majority of informants had completed.

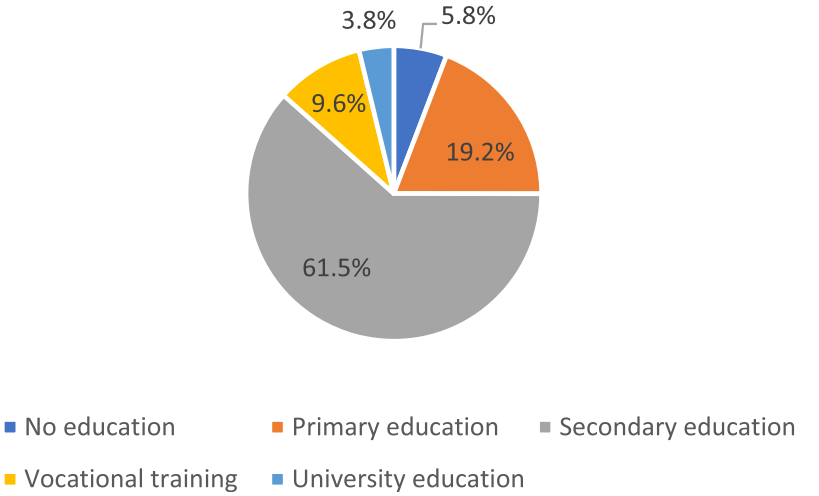

Figure 1. Informants' educational background.

As regards their mother tongue, more than half of the respondents (57.7%) claimed to speak a Chinese dialect, although Standard Chinese (42.3%) is the language in which movies are mainly audio described in China. The average level of Standard Chinese was found to be 0.83 out of 2. A reason that could explain our finding could be the well-known Chinese modesty and cautiousness. Yet, Rovira-Esteva (2010, 257) also noted that, according to official data from 2004, the older Chinese persons are, the less they can use Standard Chinese to communicate. The same happens with their academic background: the more educated they are, the better they can communicate in the country's *lingua franca*.

With respect to their visual condition, 67.3% of the informants claimed that their sight loss was congenial, whilst 23.1% said it was acquired.

4.2. Informants' experience and opinion on audio description

All the informants were consumers of audio described films, and more than 80% did so in cinemas, but none of them selected any of the other areas in which audio description can be provided, i.e., TV, museums, among others. Yet, they would be interested in having the service available in different fields, as Figure 2 points out.

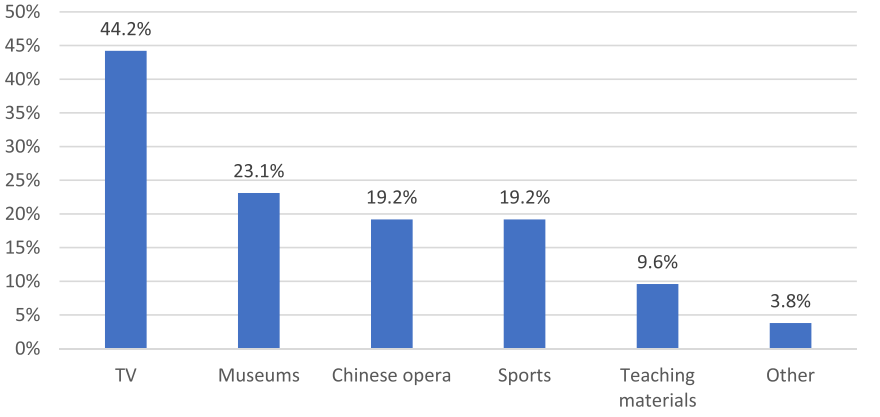

Figure 2. Fields in which respondents would like to have AD.

TV revealed itself as the most sought-after mode for audio description, although the distribution obtained was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.692$, $p = 0.405$). This meant that a distribution in which 'yes' and 'no' had the same weight could not be discarded.

As for the frequency of use of the service, three quarters of the informants claimed to consume audio description in films frequently or very frequently. 15.4% did so sometimes and only 9.6% of the informants declared that they rarely watch audio described films.

One of the main points of the questionnaire was to determine the degree of user satisfaction with audio description. It was observed that our informants were more satisfied with the quality of audio description (mean = 3.33, in a 0–4 scale) rather than with its quantity (mean = 3.15, in a 0–4 scale). In order to determine if satisfaction in terms of quantity was statistically different to that in terms of quality, a Wilcoxon signed ranks test was carried out. In spite of the means showing some slight differences, it is not possible to state that users are more satisfied with audio description quality than with the quantity offered ($Z = -1.415$, $p = 0.157$, with 33 ties).

It was also deemed interesting to see if there was any correlation between the frequency of audio description consumption and user satisfaction, both in terms of quality and quantity. A statistically significant lineal relation was found—although weak—between audio description consumption frequency and user satisfaction with quantity ($r_S = 0.437$, $p < 0.05$).

The last question sought the opinion of users about which types of movies they considered more suitable to carry out some experiments with artificial voices. Although this experiment is not the focus of this paper, the results of this question are also added because they can be understood as the genres users liked the most. Respondents could select more than one option. The top three choices were historical (36.5%), war (25.0%), and inspirational (25.0%) movies (Figure 3).

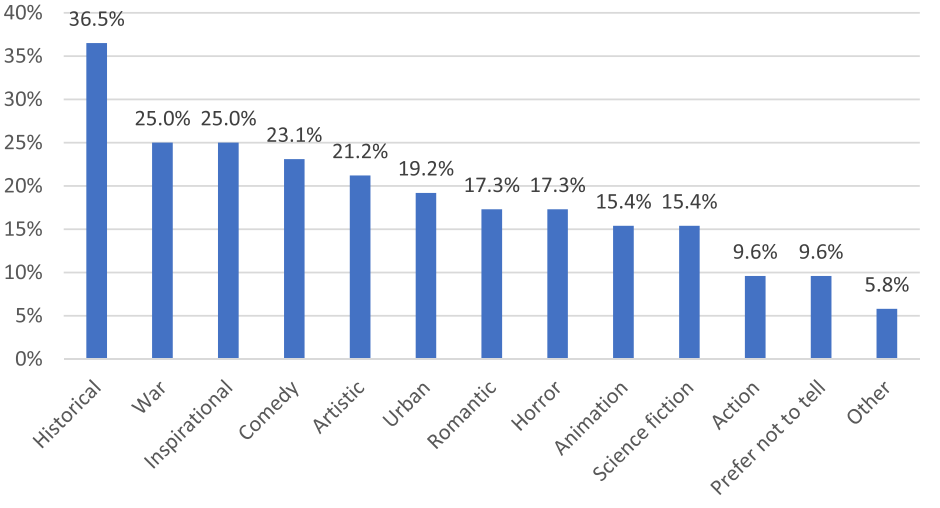

Figure 3. Informants' preferred movie genres.

5. Results of survey 2

The first section presents their demographic profile, whereas the second one focuses on their experience and opinion on audio described movies.

5.1. Informants' demographic profile

One hundred and fifty-six persons answered this questionnaire. The proportion of women (56.4%) was slightly higher than that of men (41.7%). Just about half of the informants (50.6%) were 60 years old or above. Less than 1% were 18–25 years old, those aged 18–35 only represented 4.5% of the respondents, the persons aged 36–45 represented 12.8% of the respondents and almost a third were 46–59 years old (30.1%). Three persons did not answer this question.

As for the informants' academic background, the vast majority did not attend university (92.9%), as Figure 4 shows. This is in line with the age of most informants, who probably did not have a chance to access even basic education in their youth because of their physical impairment or the socio-political situation in the country at that time.

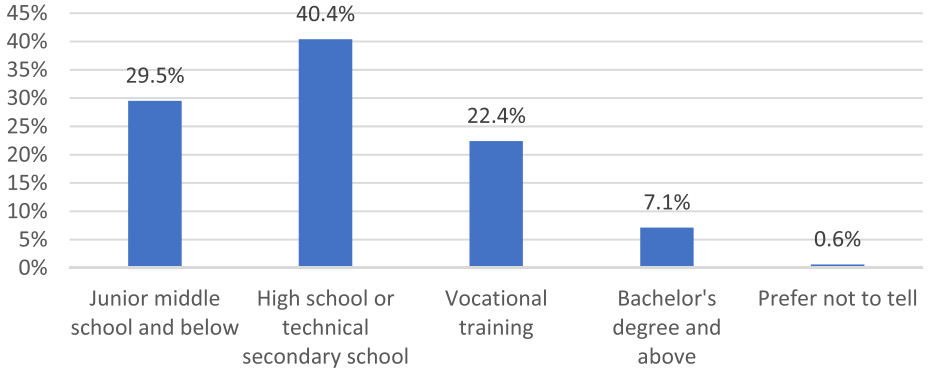

Figure 4. Informants' education background.

Regarding their employment situation, it can be stated that there were no students among the informants. More than half of the respondents were retired (66.7%). The rest were either employed or depended on their families (28.2%) or had other situations (4.5%).

5.2. Informants' experience and opinion on audio description

Regarding whether informants were aware of the existence of audio described movies, 90.4% of the respondents claimed to know about it, whereas 12 persons (7.7%) admitted they did not know and three persons refused to answer this question. This result makes sense given the fact that those surveyed were recruited during activities related to the so-called 'barrier-free movies'.

When asked about how they came to know about this service, more than 80% revealed that they had learned about it through user associations. The rest of the informants mentioned 'assistive staff' (23%), 'family and friends' (16%), and 'the media and the Internet' (15%). Twenty persons did not answer this question.

Regarding whether respondents had the need of audio described movies, an overwhelming majority thought so (94.2%) and only three persons preferred not to answer. Those who answered 'no' in this question were asked to stop filling in the survey.

The remaining 148 informants were then asked what their purpose was when watching audio described movies. They were allowed to select more than one option. The choices given were 'for entertainment' (67.3%), 'to socialize' (37.8%), and 'for study purposes' (49.4%).

Informants were also asked if they had ever watched movies with audio description. Almost 84% of the respondents had watched them (83.3%). These persons were mostly satisfied or very satisfied (76.3%) and only one person admitted not being satisfied with them.

The questionnaire was also interested in knowing how respondents got to the place where barrier-free movies are screened. More than half of the 128 respondents that answered claimed to use public transport, such as the bus or the metro (64.1%). Less than a quarter of respondents (17.3%) stated they went on foot and one informant chose the option of 'others'.

When asked whether there were parts of the audio described movies that were not understood while watching them, more than half of the respondents said that there were almost no such parts (55.1%). Some respondents admitted that they sometimes had to face this situation (26.9%) and only one person admitted that this situation happened quite frequently. Twenty-seven informants preferred not to answer.

To the question about how users wanted the information regarding barrier-free movies to be delivered to them. The option of reaching out to them through Wechat or QQ, both instant chat tools, was the most popular one (30.8%) among the 125 informants that answered the question, closely followed by a Wechat public account (26.9%). Door-to-door notification was only chosen by 16.7% of the informants and nine persons selected the option of 'others'.

Informants were asked what kind of movies they liked the most. They were able to choose three of the 12 types presented. The top five were comedies (47.4%), historic films (37.8%), inspirational films (33.3%), romantic films (27.6%), and war films (25.6%), as Figure 5 shows.

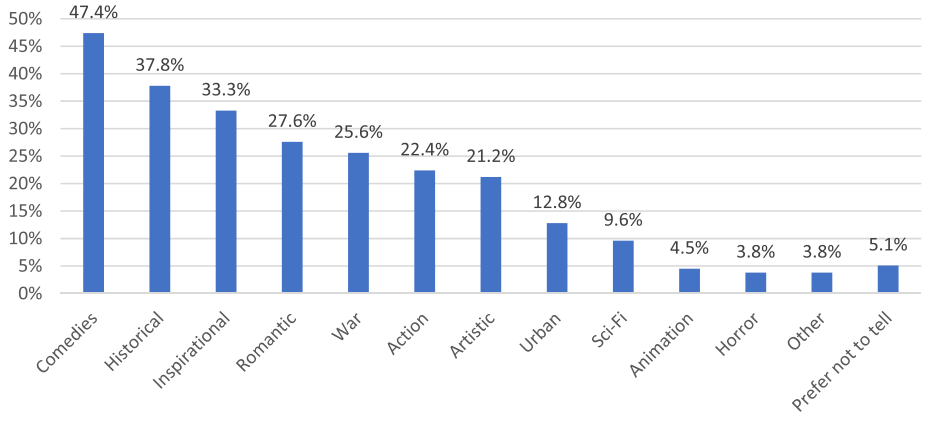

Figure 5. Informants' preferred movies.

Participants were also asked what type of movies they preferred: classic or new. The option of 'both' was also available. Almost 40% of the respondents (39.7%) said that they liked classic movies the most, whereas only 14.1% stated they enjoyed newer movies more. Still, 37.2% of respondents affirmed they liked both types. Fourteen persons refused to answer.

Regarding this last question, an association between the age and the type of movie chosen was found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 20.39$, $p = 0.009$). This means it can be affirmed that, in general, the older a person is the more they prefer to watch old films. In our case, it was observed that persons who were 60 or older preferred old movies.

Finally, a qualitative question was added to allow informants to make any remarks they thought were appropriate. First, some respondents thought that audio described movies needed to be screened more often and better publicized so that more users could benefit from them. Second, it was considered necessary to turn down the volume of the original soundtrack because it sometimes did not allow users to hear the audio description clearly. Third, a few informants wanted the types of movies screened to be more varied and to include more foreign films. Fourth, some persons also asked for more staff to help users when entering and leaving the facilities. Finally, many users hoped that in the future persons with and without sight loss could watch movies together at the cinema. They thought this could be achieved by persons with sight loss using headphones to listen to the audio description.

6. Discussion

These two surveys have helped us draw a picture of the users' profile of audio description in China. Although in both cases the sample was quite aged, being a limitation of this study, the users' similar profile allowed us to draw justifiable comparisons among the two questionnaires. Also, despite

the sample undoubtedly not being representative of the whole China, it must be stated that vision problems are mostly age-related (Fryer 2016, 43), so the samples, even though they can be criticized, can also shed some light on the majoritarian group of audio description consumers. It could be deduced from the average age in both questionnaires that audio description is mostly consumed by elderly persons, but the truth is that audio description sessions for children are also carried out and recorded material is produced for them as well. Fryer (2016, 43) also claims that women are more likely than men to become blind simply because they live longer. This is supported by the slightly higher proportion of women in the sample recruited by Sound of Light. The first questionnaire did not ask about informants' sex because it was not deemed necessary to assess user experience. The demographic similarities between the two samples go beyond age, since in both cases more than 90% of the informants did not attend university and the clear majority were retired.

All the informants were consumers of audio described movies and none mentioned any kind of experience with other types of audio description. Leung's (2018) results also point out that audio description is mostly consumed in films in Hong Kong, although it has a wider scope in the region and, therefore, can also be found in theatres and art exhibitions, for example. All our informants watched audio described movies frequently, which can be explained by the fact that their age allows them to have quite a lot of free time. In contrast, Leung's (2018) informants did so mostly sometimes (38.6%) or rarely (27.3%). Thanks to the Sound of Light questionnaire we found out that users perceived audio description mainly as an entertainment tool. This is in line with Leung's (2018) informants, who also claimed to watch films to entertain themselves. Yet, the respondents of the Sound of Light questionnaire also revealed having other objectives when watching audio described movies, such as socializing and learning, which is line with studies carried out in other countries, such as that of Fryer (2016, 49), who had already pointed out that users valued audio description as a means of social inclusion. In fact, Li (2013) had already found out that one of the problems persons with sight loss had to face the most was loneliness, along with others such as poverty. Macdonald et al. (2018) framed persons with disabilities' loneliness in the social model of disability and argued that so many of them feeling that way was due to the presence of certain disabling barriers, not because of their impairment.

As for user satisfaction with the audio description available so far, it seems that they think quite highly of it, which might seem strange taking into account that mainly volunteers with no professional training deliver it (Tor-Carroggio and Casas-Tost, forthcoming). This can be understood in different ways. Since persons with disabilities have traditionally been ignored and not

taken care of in China, it is possible that any initiative that aims at helping or including them is highly praised, no matter the level of professionalism with which it is carried out. Yet, Branje and Fels (2012) found out that amateur description could maintain an acceptable level of quality so the possibility that the audio description prepared in China being of good quality—despite its conditions—is also more than feasible.

Last but not least, users preferring historical films in general was probably related to their age, since the top ten highest-grossing 2018 films in the Chinese market were consulted and none belonged to that genre. Similarly, Leung (2018) found out that historical movies were the second preferred genre in her study, in which 44 persons with sight loss, mostly aged above 40, participated. Therefore, in case this information is used for the preparation of future experiments or even for the real delivery of the service, it must be taken into account that the movie genre probably cannot be divorced from the age of participants.

6.1. The European case

Since the first questionnaire presented was originally used in the ADLAB PRO project, it is possible to compare our results with some of those obtained in the European case. In spite of the respondents coming mostly from 23 European countries, some non-European respondents coming from, for example, Brazil and Mexico were recruited as well (ADLAB PRO 2017). Although the European results do not represent the whole continent, the picture is still quite valuable because the most represented countries in the survey (mainly the UK, Spain and Italy) are those in which audio description has already come of age.

According to ADLAB PRO (2017), the original questionnaire was drawn up in all the project languages, i.e., English, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Slovene and Dutch. One hundred audio description users responded the questionnaire but, unlike the respondents from our sample, not all of them were persons with sight loss (5%). This detail also illustrates the fact that in Europe it is already common to believe that, although mainly targeted at persons with sight loss, audio description can also benefit sighted viewers. This is even endorsed by the International Organization for Standardization's Technical Specification 20071-21 'Information Technology — User interface component accessibility — Part 21: Guidance on audio description' (ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 2014).

The sample recruited was more representative than the ones presented in this paper in terms of age, since they managed to find a more balanced number of respondents for each age bracket. Also, it is worth mentioning that 51% of the respondents had attended university. This stands in stark

contrast with the educational background of our Chinese informants, almost none of whom had attended university. Had the Chinese samples included younger respondents, this could have been different, since Tang and Cao (2018, 1172) state that after cases that hit the headlines such as that of Dong Lina, education institutions are committed to provide special arrangements for disabled people when they participate in any national examinations according to the newest revision of the People with Disabilities Education Ordinance.

Unlike our informants, the ADLAB PRO respondents admitted having access to more kinds of audio description, although most use it to watch films or TV, or when visiting a museum. Audio description is not used that often in the case of theatre, opera and other live events. Some Slovenian respondents complained about the inconvenience of the time programmes with audio description are broadcast or even the lack of it in theatres or opera. However, it can be observed that China is lagging behind because audio description is still not even offered on TV, which is what users demand the most and is probably the most popular medium for audio description in many countries such as Poland (Jankowska and Walczak 2019).

Regarding end-user satisfaction, the European results showed that most users were dissatisfied (46%) or very dissatisfied (22%) with the quantity of audio description provided in their country, although they were quite satisfied with the quality of the products that were offered (14% were very satisfied and 58% were satisfied). We also observed users being more satisfied in terms of quality, but they also claimed to be quite satisfied with the quantity provided, probably because they are still not aware of all the applications audio description can have.

The original ADLAB PRO questionnaire inquired about the aspects related to audio description that users appreciated and disliked the most in regards textual and technical aspects, as well as audio description language and style. Yet, due to the conditions under which the first questionnaire circulated, this kind of questions were left out. Focus groups or one-to-one interviews could be arranged in the future to go into these areas more in depth.

7. Conclusions

Chinese persons with disabilities rarely raise their voices to express themselves or to get engaged in rights advocacy (Zhang 2017). Yet, there are already some accessibility services mostly targeted at persons with hearing and sight loss with which access to information and culture, a right recognized in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, can be granted. Audio description is one of these services and in order to enhance its provision and academic research, which are rather

scarce in China so far, users need to be involved. Not much is known about Chinese persons with sight loss, but these are key to developing audio description and making sure the service meets their needs.

This article is the first of its kind, since it provides a deep insight into what Chinese audio description users think of the service and how they consume it. Only after identifying the areas that matter to users the most can science and industry contribute to guaranteeing their rights in the best possible way. Some conclusions can be drawn from the results of the two questionnaires carried out. First, old persons with little or no education and who are already retired seem to be the users that most attend audio description sessions in the cities where the sample was taken, Shanghai and Beijing. Second, they only have access to audio description in films, which they consume quite frequently mainly for entertainment purposes and thanks to the information provided by user associations. Third, they are all satisfied with the service provided so far, despite it not being delivered by persons who have been professionally trained in this field. Fourth, their favorite movie genres seem to be historical films and comedies.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that the results of the Sound of Light questionnaire had immediate consequences that had an impact on the audio description policy of the association. For example, in light of the fact that most of their users are elderly persons with little education, they came up to the conclusion that the terminology in the scripts needed to be simplified. This could actually be a future line of research to explore, since, to the best of our knowledge, easy reading and audio description have never been combined before, although there are some EU-funded projects that have already started looking into that direction, such as the EASIT project (http://pagines.uab.ca.t/easit/en). Also, they decided to take into account the movie genres preferred when selecting the movie to be audio described.

Our study is not exempt of limitations. First, the first questionnaire was delivered in rather difficult circumstances, in which other cinema-goers would be expressing their opinion while one was being surveyed. This may have prevented the informant from expressing their true views by exposing them to peer pressure. Second, since Chinese volunteers helped with the administration of the first questionnaire, and although they were briefed on our research, one cannot be sure that all the questions raised by the informants were answered appropriately. Third, in both cases, especially the first one, the sample was rather small and was not obtained randomly but by recruiting persons attending the screenings of audio described films. Also, the respondents in both cases were mostly elderly persons coming mainly from one Chinese city. Therefore, we cannot draw conclusions for the whole of China and future studies should include bigger and aleatory samples, integrated by persons coming from a wider range of places in China.

Although Chinese persons with sight loss have little experience with audio description, it is worth carrying out research to elicit their opinions on it, as Chmiel and Mazur (2012) underlined when mentioning countries in which audio description still had a lengthy path ahead of it. Also, working within the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities paradigm means to consult end users, following the 'nothing about us without us' approach. That is the reason why, in case audio description wants to be enhanced in Mainland China, the academic research concerning it must frame itself to a user-centric framework.

It is hoped that this paper will raise awareness on how important it is to involve persons with sight loss in the provision or research of anything that concerns them directly. Li and Looms (2016) assured removing the barriers persons with sight and hearing loss face clearly has a high priority in China, so it is expected that studies like this will set the course for future research because the need for it is overriding.

Acknowledgements

The author is member of the TransMedia Catalonia research group (2017SGR113) and is currently enrolled in the PhD Programme in Translation and Intercultural Studies at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The author would like to thank all the Chinese persons with sight loss taking part in her study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This article has been funded by the EasyTV project (GA761999), the RAD project (PGC2018-096566-B-I00) and the Confucius Institute.

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