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Sarah EARDLEY-WEAVER

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# **Lifting the Curtain on Opera Translation and Accessibility**

Translating Opera for Audiences with Varying Sensory Ability

Sarah Eardley-Weaver

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
PhD

University of Durham

School of Modern Languages and Cultures

November 2013

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## Abstract and keywords

**Abstract:** In the multicultural world of today, as boundaries continue to merge and evolve, issues of accessibility and translation are brought to the forefront of political and social debate. Whilst considerable progress has already been achieved in this domain, the international social and legal recognition of the human right of accessibility to the media and arts demands further advancement in the development of facilities to provide universal access to various art forms including theatre, cinema, and opera. With rapidly developing technology, digitisation and an increasingly socially-aware society, the notion of media accessibility is evolving in response to shifting audience expectations. Performing arts and media, such as opera, are called upon to advance further to embrace all audiences and related audiovisual translation methods are progressing. These include audio description and touch tours for the blind and partially-sighted, as well as sign language interpreting and surtitles for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing. These relatively new translation modalities which are consumer-oriented by nature require an original research design for investigation of the translation processes involved.

This research design follows two fundamental principles: (1) audience reception studies should be an integral part of the investigation into the translation process; and (2) the translation process is regarded as a network. This present work explores the unique translation processes of audio description, touch tours, surtitles and sign language interpreting within the context of live opera, focusing on the UK and from the perspective of actor-network theory. A twofold methodology is employed which brings together a study of the translator's role and an audience reception survey. The translator's task is examined through observational methods and dialogue with professional practitioners of the various aforementioned translation modalities. The audience's perspective is investigated through analysis of data collected in a pioneering audience reception project conducted in May 2011, in collaboration with Opera North at performances of Bizet's *Carmen*. The focus is on findings assessing the mutual impact of

the translator's choices and audience reception on the distinctive process of translating opera for the blind and partially-sighted as well as the deaf and the hard-of-hearing.

**Keywords:** opera accessibility and translation, translation process, audience reception, audio description, touch tour, sign language interpreting, surtitles, actor-network theory

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## Abbreviations and Glossary

AD:	Audio Description
AI:	Audio Introduction
BPS:	Blind and Partially-Sighted
BPSP:	Blind and Partially-Sighted Patron
BSL:	British Sign Language
DH:	Deaf and Hard-of-hearing
ENO:	English National Opera
ROH:	Royal Opera House, Covent Garden
SDH:	Subtitles for the Deaf and the Hard-of-hearing
SL:	Sign Language
SLI:	Sign Language Interpreting
ToTo:	Touch Tour
UAB:	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
WHO:	World Health Organisation



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# 1

## General introduction

Opera translation is evolving to embrace all audiences including the blind and the partially-sighted as well as the deaf and the hard-of-hearing, and the process of translating this multisemiotic art form is advancing towards widened accessibility. As numbers of people with sight and hearing loss are rising in aging populations such as those in Europe and North America (Díaz-Cintas and Anderman, 2009: 5-6; Neves, 2005: 79), innovative translation techniques to provide for this growing minority group are becoming more widespread in various audiovisual media, including television and opera (ibid.).

These developments reflect an increasing general acknowledgement of accessibility issues in today's society, as also demonstrated by legislation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), which first set out an all-encompassing expression of fundamental, globally protected human rights, states that 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits' (Article 27 (1)). Subsequent international, European and national legislation continues to further promote universal accessibility to media and arts, demanding facilities to provide access for all. For instance, in 1966, the UN adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights). In the UK, the Broadcasting Act 1996 (Great Britain Parliament, 1996) and Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (Great Britain Parliament, 2005) were passed, amending the original 1990 and 1995 Acts respectively. Furthermore, the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive (European Parliament, 2010), renaming and amending the 1989 Television Without Frontiers directive, specifically encourages media access for 'people with a visual or hearing disability' (Article 7).

Similarly, in the field of translation studies, both the notion of translation and particularly the scope of audiovisual translation research are expanding in line with social and politico-economic advancements (Remael, 2010) to include media accessibility. As Orero states, 'Audiovisual Translation will encompass all translations – or multisemiotic transfer – for production or postproduction in any media or format, and also the new areas of media accessibility: subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing and audio description for the blind and the visually impaired' (2004: VIII). However, the process of raising awareness about accessibility facilities, such as opera translation for blind and partially-sighted (henceforth BPSPs) and for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (henceforth DH), is still in progress (Greening and Rolph, 2007: 127; Díaz-Cintas and Anderman, 2009: 6).

The research problem that this current work seeks to address is to provide an analysis of the nature of the translation processes involved in making live opera accessible for BPSPs and the DH. This analysis is conducted from a socio-cultural perspective and entails examination of the roles of the translator and the audience. Furthermore, the impact of this investigation on the definition of translation and accessibility is explored. An original research design is employed which is based on the notion of the translation process as a network (see the section 1.2) and takes into account that analysing audience reception is an integral part of translation process research (see Künzli and Ehrensberger-Dow, 2011: 188; Tiselius and Jensen, 2011: 273; Mateo, 1997: 99-102). As part of this research design, a two-fold methodology is employed which brings together applied research on the opera translator's task and audience reception studies in the UK. Given the relatively little scholarship in this particular area of opera translation and accessibility research (see section 1.1), this investigation presents the preliminary results of a new exploration of the process of translating opera for BPSPs and the DH, combining research into the viewpoints of translator and audience in order to consider, discuss and understand the entire translation process from production of the translation to reception of the translation product. Through dialogue with both of these agents in the translation network, the researcher bridges the gap between translator and audience. Furthermore, building on the idea of translation as a constantly evolving notion and an 'open concept' (Tymoczko, 2005: 1091), this work proposes that the translation process, viewed as a network, is cyclical. The researcher feeds back the audience responses to the translators, thus completing a full cycle and closing the loop between translator and audience. Hence, audience reception is seen as part of the action

of the process, rather than a reaction to the process. In this paradigm, audience feedback is not used merely to evaluate the quality of the product or the results of the translator's task, but is part of the translation process when reported back to the translator and provides the impetus to restart the cycle between audience and translator.

Hence, the central focus of the present work is the examination of the mutual impact of the translator's task and audience reception on the process, regarded as a cyclical network, of translating opera for BPSPs as well as the DH.<sup>1</sup> The translator's choices are scrutinized from a textual and contextual perspective and the significant relations between translation production and reception are analysed. Additionally, the present work seeks to indicate avenues for future research and to identify the path towards a dynamic, interdisciplinary theoretical framework for studying the process of translating for BPSPs and the DH.

Part 1 explores the translator's role in the audience reception of opera accessibility facilities for the BPS and the DH. This study involves defining and introducing the translation modalities under investigation, followed by discussion of fieldwork conducted with translators of these modalities. In Chapter 2, the focus is on opera translation for BPSPs including examination of audio description (see section 2.1) and touch tours (see section 2.2). In Chapter 3, opera translation methods for DH, such as sign language interpreting (see section 3.1) and surtitles (see section 3.2) are analysed. In both Chapters 2 and 3, the translator's choices are explored regarding certain linguistic-semiotic issues and the social nature of the translation process. Results of these investigations rely on a combination of observational analysis and interviews conducted with practitioners from British audio description companies, such as Talking Notes and VocalEyes, as well as with opera surtitlers and sign language interpreters at the UK opera companies Opera North, English National Opera (henceforth ENO) and the Royal Opera House (henceforth ROH).

Part 2 focuses on the audience's perspective in relation to the opera accessibility facilities which are explored in Part 1. The ways in which opera patrons with varying visual and hearing ability perceive these translation modalities of audio description, touch tours, sign language interpreting and surtitles are analysed with reference to the pioneering audience reception project carried out in collaboration with Opera North at performances of Bizet's *Carmen* in May 2011. In Chapter 4, the research design and

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this notion of the translation network and the comparison with other paradigms which are not used in this study, see section 1.2.

methodology employed in the project are presented. In Chapter 5, collected data are analysed, firstly considering the audience's response to audio description and touch tours, and secondly examining the feedback on surtitles and sign language interpreting.

Finally, this study is considered in relation to the wider research context, considering in particular the impact of the findings and methodological approach on developments within other media and on future scholarship.

Having established the overall structure of this work, it is now vital to present the research context, as well as the theoretical framework and methodology for the study which follows.

## 1.1 Research Context

There is relatively little written scholarship in this field of audiovisual translation and media accessibility for audiences with varying visual and hearing ability, especially within the area of audience reception of accessibility facilities for the BPSPs as well as the DH in the context of live performances. In particular, literature about opera accessibility is very sparse and audience reception research in this specific field is limited.

The main studies relating to opera accessibility research in general are: Matamala and Orero (2007; 2008b), Orero and Matamala (2007), Orero (2007b), Mateo (1998), Desblache (2004; 2008; 2012), and Eardley-Weaver (2010). Research into opera surtitling includes papers by Burton (2001; 2009), Burton and Holden (2005), Griesel (2007), Mateo (2008), as well as three chapters by Palmer, Page and Chalmers in the volume *Music Text and Translation* edited by Minors (2012). However, these works do not focus on the provision of surtitles for the DH or sign interpreted opera performances, subjects for which there is hardly any research (Eardley-Weaver 2010; 2014). As regards opera audio description written scholarship is also restricted to a small number of papers as follows: York (2007a), Puigdomènech, Matamala, and Orero (2008), Cabeza (2010), Eardley-Weaver (2010; 2013; forthcoming), Corral and Lladó (2011). Touch tours have received very little academic attention with only a few significant articles by Udo and Fels (2009a; 2010) which investigate audio description and touch tours in theatre performances, document pioneering studies in this area and explore in particular the concept of Universal Design (ibid.; Udo and Fels, 2012). In the field of opera, touch tours have only been mentioned in passing in the few aforementioned existing papers, although Eardley-Weaver (2013) focuses more on opera touch tours than previous literature. This current

work provides a detailed examination of opera touch tours from the perspectives of the translator and the audience.

In view of the relatively small amount of scholarship on audio description, touch tours, surtitles and sign language interpreting within the context of opera or indeed live performance in general, other related literature provides a fundamental background to the research in this present work. Works by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) and Gambier and Gottlieb (2001) as well as edited volumes by Díaz-Cintas and Anderman (2009), Díaz-Cintas, Orero and Remael (2007), Díaz-Cintas, Matamala and Neves (2010) constitute essential points of departure as they lay the foundation for studies into media accessibility and translation for the BPS as well as the DH. There is a relative wealth of literature on audio description and although scholarship mostly focuses on this translation modality within television and film, work which examines for instance the challenges of translating images into words and recurring issues in the audio description process (see for example Braun 2008; Benecke 2007; Orero 2005) also provides a crucial theoretical foundation to the part of this present work examining opera audio description (see sections 2.1 and 2.3). Similarly, Neves' research into subtitles for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH) (2005; 2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2010) and Orero and Matamala's edited volume *Listening to Subtitles* (2010) are fundamental sources for the part of this present work investigating surtitles for the DH (see section 3.2). As regards audience reception research, works by Chiaro (2007; 2008) and Di Giovanni (2011) researching into reception in the field of audiovisual translation and accessibility are vital references. In addition, amongst ample general scholarship on social research methods and statistical analysis, works by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Oppenheim (1992), Dörnyei (2010), and Agresti and Finlay (2009) are key sources. As elaborated below, the research of several leading translation theorists including Nida, Jakobson, and Holz-Mänttari, amongst others, naturally constitutes the bedrock of the theoretical framework and methodology of this present work. For instance, Jakobson's definition of intersemiotic translation (1959/2000) is the starting point from which the concept of translation is problematized in this study (see section 1.2). Holz-Mänttari's theory of translatorial action, including the notion of the collaborative translation process involving a series of players (1984), provides a basis from which to develop the application of actor-network theory (Latour, 2005) to the examination of the translation process (see section 1.2). Nida's theory of equivalent effect (1964) is readdressed when considering the notion of the shared experience which is key to the exploration of opera

translation and accessibility and its reception (see section 1.3). Furthermore, studies that investigate the translation process from a sociological perspective, such as those by Chesterman (2006) and Buzelin (2005) form an important point of reference, as discussed in the next section 1.2.

The focus on the audience in this work reflects the shift in research trends in translation studies towards greater consideration of the audience perspective, and increased demand, in the audiovisual translation sphere in particular, for audience reception studies. For example, Gambier discusses 'the urgent need to carry out reception studies in order to provide audiovisual programmes accessible to all' (2006: 1), reiterating more recently 'this social dimension of audiovisual translation services demands a better knowledge of viewers' needs, reading habits, and reception capacity. Much work remains to be done in this area in order to ensure that technological progress can best satisfy users' demands and expectations. Different methodologies could be applied' (2009b: 22). Di Giovanni highlights the lack of reception studies despite recognition of their importance, stating 'even though issues of reception are said to be a priority for most scholars in this field, audiovisual translation studies focusing primarily on them are still scanty' (2011: 10).

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology**

The research methodology employed in this present work was driven by the conception of the processes of translating opera for BPSPs and the DH as complex networks. Therefore, their analysis undoubtedly required an interdisciplinary theoretical framework stemming from a dynamic notion of translation.

The live performance of opera is an intrinsically multisemiotic experience that appeals to multiple senses. Hence, for the purposes of this study, translation is regarded as a form of communication between sign systems: a transfer process (or product thereof) between one sensory communication channel and another. As such it can be labelled 'intersensorial' (De Koster and Mühleis, 2007: 189), 'multidimensional' (Gerzymisch-Arbogast, 2005: 5), or 'intersemiotic' translation (a nuanced redefinition of Jakobson's original 1959/2000 term by Gottlieb, 2005: 3). Here, in relation to opera translation for BPSPs and the DH, the term multisemiotic translation is used. At an early stage in the enquiry, the schema in Figure 1 was designed in order to show some of the multiple semiotic signs to be considered in the translation of live opera for BPSPs and DH. This schema is based on categorisations by Delabastita (1989:199; also see Díaz-

Cintas and Remael, 2007: 46) and as reported by Cabeza, opera scholars such as Pahlen, Arregui and Vela (Pahlen, 1963; Arregui and Vela, 2007 in Cabeza, 2010: 227) with the addition of tactile, olfactory and gustatory aspects (Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 2).

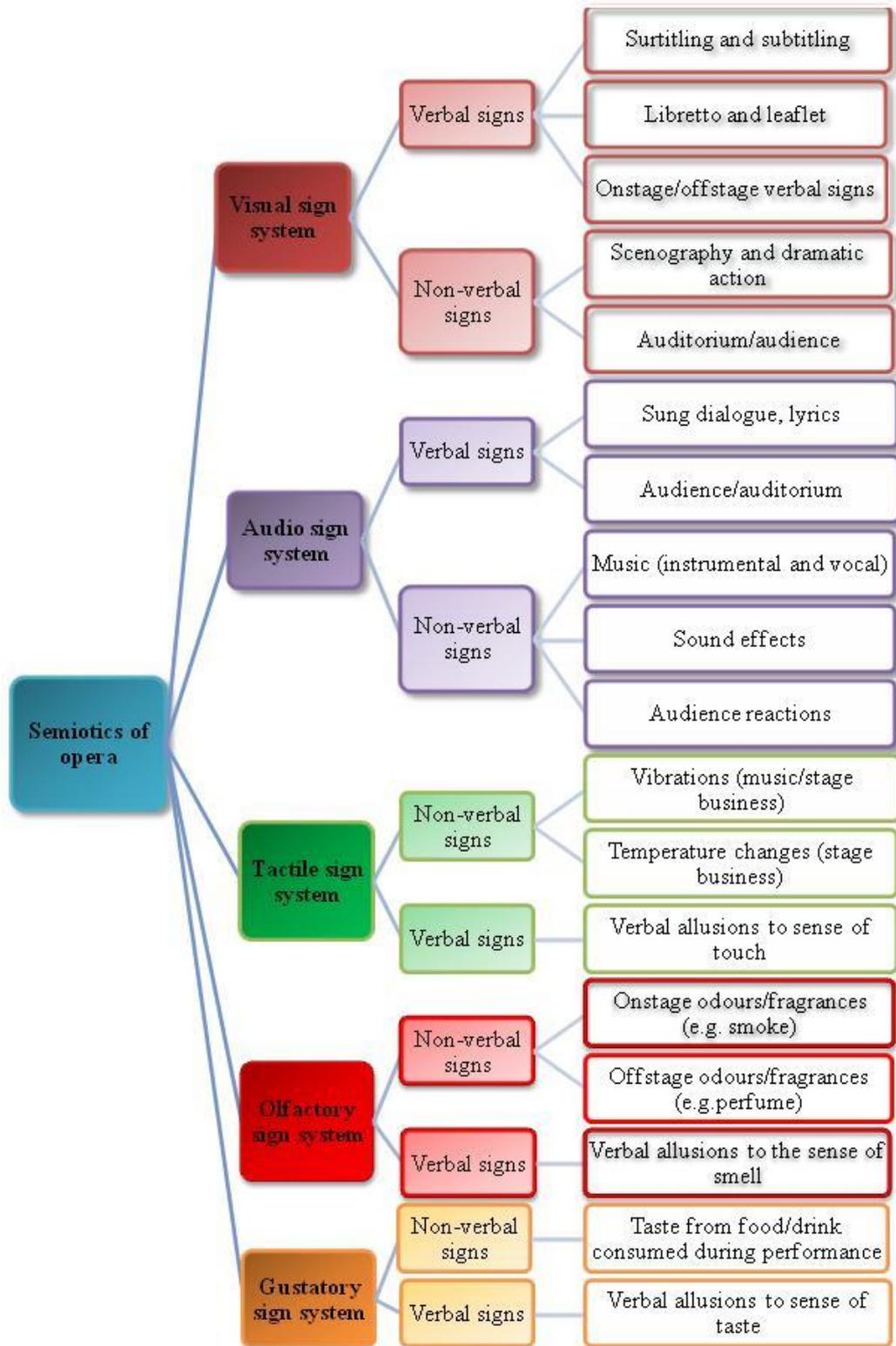


Figure 1: Schema displaying some of the multiple semiotic aspects of opera

The schema in Figure 1 is merely representative of the numerous factors to be considered in the translation of live opera for BPSPs and the DH. It includes not only features of the opera itself but also aspects of the opera experience. For example, within the non-verbal signs of the visual sign system the schema includes the audience or the auditorium, and within the non-verbal signs of the gustatory sign system the schema includes taste from food and drink consumed during the performance. It is difficult to define the boundaries between features of the opera experience and the elements of the opera itself as they are

very subjective and flexible. For example, whereas gustatory sensations produced by consuming food or drink during the performance could be labelled more readily as features of the opera experience as opposed to the opera itself, the classification of surtitles as elements of the opera or opera experience is debatable. (Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 3)

Therefore, in this present work the semiotics of opera encompasses all aspects including those which might be considered to be semiotics of the opera experience, as the translation process is explored in terms of making the opera experience as a whole accessible to all audiences. The inclusion of these elements in the multisemiotic live opera experience reflects Calvino's perspective of cinema performances:

*cinema vuol dire sedersi in mezzo a una platea di gente che sbuffa, ansima, sghignazza, succhia caramelle, ti disturba, entra, esce, magari legge le didascalie forte come al tempo del muto; il cinema è questa gente, più una storia che succede sullo schermo. (1953/1995: 1889)*

[cinema means sitting in an audience of people who are puffing and panting, sneering, sucking sweets, annoying you, going in and out, maybe even reading the subtitles out loud as was done in the era of silent films; cinema is about these people, plus a story that unfolds on screen]

This notion of the experience of a performance shared with the rest of the audience, which is particularly significant in the case of live opera, leads to another fundamental feature of the framework for this research; the socio-cultural aspect of the translation process.

The concept of translation employed in this present work reflects an expanding notion of translation which encompasses media accessibility. Translation is viewed as 'a form of accessibility' and vice versa (Díaz-Cintas et al., 2007: 13-14). Therefore, the role of the translator is to facilitate communication and access by overcoming 'not only linguistic but also sensorial barriers' (Orero and Matamala, 2007: 262). In audio description and touch tours, the translator's role is to convey the visual and other semiotic features primarily via the audio and tactile sensory channels. In surtitles and

sign language interpreting, the translator's task is to portray the audio and other semiotic aspects, predominantly using the visual communication channel. The translator can be described as a narrator, interpreter, and performer, but above all as a facilitator of social inclusion. Therefore, the definition of translator is a multifaceted and dynamic notion. This multifunctional role of the translator, which is explored further in chapters 2 and 3 highlights the complexity of the translation processes in opera translation for BPSPs and the DH. This in turn emphasises the need for a flexible theoretical framework and a combined, interdisciplinary methodology.

In this present work, which explores the translation process in opera audio description, touch tours, surtitles and sign language interpreting through examination of both the translator's role and the audience's perspective, the methodology employed is a combination of a top-down design and a bottom-up, data-driven approach. The top-down design is based on a multisemiotic model of translation explained above (see also Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 2), which facilitates the identification of the intersemiotic opera translation processes for BPSPs and the DH. The bottom-up approach refers to the methods for analysing these processes. This analysis, which is conducted from a sociological perspective using ethnography,<sup>2</sup> draws on actor-network theory (Latour, 2005) and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

In actor-network theory, a process is viewed as a network consisting of agents and the interactions between them. Agents can be human or non-human and are characterized as 'anything that can induce [...] an action' (Buzelin, 2005: 197). This theory can be applied in translation process research, for example, in establishing which networks exist and in exploring the links between the agents (Chesterman, 2006: 22). Furthermore, as Buzelin (2005: 212) argues, the actor-network concept 'enables us to grasp both the complexity - and nonlinear character - of the translation process, and the hybridity of the translating agent'. In this study, the opera translation processes for BPSPs and the DH are regarded as a network and the agents include, amongst others, the audience, set, translators, companions of BPSPs and DH patrons, and service providers. This network could be coined the *multisemiotic translation network* of opera. Thus, actor-network theory provides a theoretical framework for the investigation in this present work, which focuses on establishing a link in the network between the audience

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<sup>2</sup> Ethnographic research is characterised by the collection of data in natural settings using a variety of techniques to explore and understand human social worlds from the perspective of the research participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 2; Hubscher-Davidson, 2011: 4).

and translator for audio description, touch tours, surtitles and sign language interpreting through audience feedback. The translation processes of each of these translation modalities are regarded as individual networks or *sub-networks* of the overall multisemiotic translation network of opera. In addition to the aforementioned attributes of actor-network theory, one of the main advantages of using the notion of the network within the context of translation and accessibility for BPSPs and the DH is the clarity it permits the analysis and the structure of the translation process (i.e. the ways in which the multiple translation processes interact and relate to each other as well as to other processes such as marketing and box office activities). This structure is complicated due to the multisemiotic nature of opera translation which in addition includes both human and non-human agents. In this present work, actor-network theory has been favoured over other eminent models such as Bourdieu's field theory (1993) and Luhmann's social systems theory (1995)<sup>3</sup> because as elucidated by Chesterman (2006: 14):

Like Bourdieu's model, Luhmann's too seems more applicable to the study of factors influencing translation and translators, and to the distribution of different kinds of translations in society, than to the translating process itself.

The focus in this present work is the translation process including its multifarious components rather than the tension between the process and its ambient environment. An additional merit of the notion of the network as opposed to the system or field is that it is conceptually simple to grasp, providing a user-friendly explanation of the translation process. This is important due to the ethos of this current work which advocates promoting an appreciation of the translation network as a whole on the part of the agents involved in the process. Such an appreciation may be particularly advantageous to the official translator(s)<sup>4</sup> in understanding the interrelations of other components in the translation network with their own task.

Grounded theory can be defined as 'the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 2). This ethnographic style of research is particularly suited to the investigation of the opera translation process for BPSPs and the DH because it can accommodate the complex and

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed account of Luhmann's social systemic theory within the context of Translation Studies, see Tyulenev, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> The official translator(s) may refer to the audio describer(s), the sign language interpreter, or the surtitler. For further discussion of this notion of the 'official' translator, see the concluding remarks to Part 1.

contradictory evidence that qualitative data may present. As Koskinen (2008: 36-39) argues, this research approach not only enables flexibility and complexity in data collection and analysis within a real-life environment, it also supports 'theory-building by providing methods for eliciting new kinds of qualitative data on the social aspects of translation'. Furthermore, this ethnographic style of research promotes reflection (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 4), the benefits of which for translation process research have been highlighted by Hubscher-Davidson (2011). Reflection within the context of opera translation for BPSPs and the DH has the added advantage of raising awareness of the processes involved in the access facilities.

This discussion relates to the socio-cultural aspect of the translator's role which itself determines the social impact of the research. This argument stems from the engagement of the research with audience responses to translation modalities which themselves contribute to social inclusion by granting further opera accessibility to all and by allowing a shared experience. Consequently, the aspiration of this research, following the analysis of the data, is that collective awareness is raised about these modalities and dialogue is promoted amongst the various agents involved in the translation process. The importance of considering the translation process within its socio-cultural environment was already emphasized by Holz-Mänttari in 1984. Actor-network theory, which improves upon Holz-Mänttari's translatorial action theory (Abdallah, 2012: 44), facilitates a more intricate analysis of the translation process in all its complexity, 'looking not only at the translators, but also at the other parties involved in the translation process (clients, subject-matter experts, colleagues) and the many tools that are part of modern translation work' (Risku and Windhager, 2013: 36).

### **1.3 Terminology issues: Shifting Boundaries and Overcoming Borders**

The increased recognition of the social dimension of translation coupled with technological innovations and constantly changing expectations from society are causing the boundaries in the definition of translation and accessibility to shift. The concept of translation employed in this present work has already been established in section 1.2. Another essential term to define for the purposes of this research is accessibility which relates to the notion of disability. The concepts of accessibility and disability are both highly complex and it is not possible to discuss these in full within the confines of this

current work.<sup>5</sup> However, it is important to clarify the shifting notion of accessibility in relation to developments in opera translation for audiences with sight or hearing loss. As Díaz-Cintas & Anderman state, 'accessibility is a new key concept; an umbrella term that encompasses all associated new modes of translation' (2009: 5). Furthermore, accessibility refers to the notion of making something available for all. Hence, the translation modalities of opera audio description, touch tours, sign language interpreting, and surtitles, which make opera more available for all are forms of accessibility.

Within this current work, the concept of accessibility is considered in relation to desire and effort, according to Hewitt's proposition as follows:

If the purpose of accessibility, i.e., introducing external changes into the schema of a disabled person's desire, is to provide them with "equal opportunities" as many forms of literature and current governmental thinking put it, then not merely the basic biological access to the fulfilment of desire must be provided, but also an attempt to equalize the amount of effort required by a disabled person to fulfil the same desire. (2013: 73)

Therefore, the idea is that opera accessibility facilities which are targeted primarily at BPSPs or the DH must aim to equalise the amount of effort required by these audiences to fulfil their desire of receiving the opera experience in comparison to sighted and hearing audience members. As Hewitt reiterates:

Accessibility can be said to be the employment of external agency or factors (i.e., factors not involved with changing the person's physical or psychological being), which contribute to either removing or reducing biological limitations to fulfilling a desire, or reducing the effort required for fulfilling that desire to the same amount experienced by a hypothetical individual with no similar prohibitions, divorced from society, fulfilling the same desire. (2013: 75)

Although the focus in this current work is on BPSPs and the DH, these groups are not considered as separate from other audience members but within the context of a diverse audience with varying hearing and visual ability. The importance of considering opera accessibility in relation to social environment, relations, and perceptions, as well as in terms of an individual's desires, is highlighted by Hewitt's new definition of disability which is employed in this current work.

Disability is [...] more than just a social phenomenon, being a relation between a person, the world, and their desires which rests in a person's biological and psychological self, rather than in how they

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<sup>5</sup> See Hewitt 2013 for further discussion of the definition of disability and accessibility.

are perceived by those around them. Nevertheless, [...] the interactions between a person's own disabled state and the people around them play a huge part in a disabled person's ability to fulfil his/her desires, from a desire for a certain career or path in life, to desires attached to the mundane but vital details of everyday living such as travel, dressing, eating, and of course relationships with friends, strangers and family. Though [...] disability is not just made up of these social relations and perceptions, no discussion of a definition of disability would be complete without addressing them. (2013: 95)

The perspective adopted in this current work is also particularly significant if disability is categorised as 'a general, biologically inhibitive state which will be experienced by most people at some point in their lives, rather than as only applying to some specialized groups within society who have specific cultural or political interests which need exceptional treatment or recognition from others' (Hewitt, 2013: 96). If applied within the context of opera translation, rather than considering the needs of BPSPs and the DH as special requirements which demand separate provisions, the impetus would be on facilitating access for all including sighted, BPS, hearing, and DH patrons. By investigating the translation processes involved in ensuring a shared, inclusive opera experience for those with varying visual and hearing ability, this current work addresses this issue of a shifting concept of accessibility and the move towards a notion of inclusion. Furthermore, questions are raised regarding the potential inevitability of separate provisions for audiences with differing visual and hearing ability, thus creating borders, and as regards the feasibility of providing a fully inclusive opera experience. Prior to proceeding with this investigation, the use of the terms 'blind and partially-sighted' and 'deaf and hard-of-hearing' in this current work also require brief explanation. As discussed further in section 4.3.1.1, these terms were employed not only so as to encompass those with diverse types and degrees of sight or hearing loss but also to avoid any negative associations of alternative terminology.



## **Part 1**

### **The translator's role in audience reception**



## Introduction to Part 1

The role of the translator in audience reception is investigated within the research framework established in Chapter 1, exploring the multisemiotic opera translation process, regarded as a network, within a socio-cultural context. In view of the centrality of audience reception studies in this translation process research framework, the issues under examination concentrate on aspects relating to audience impact and response. The focus within this paradigm on the notion of the shared reception of an inclusive multisemiotic opera experience also determines the topics for discussion. Therefore, while many issues are related to the translation processes involved in the various methods for making opera accessible to all including BPSPs and the DH, Part 1 of this present work concentrates on the translator's working methods, decision-making processes and strategies regarding certain challenges relating to the aforementioned aspects. Furthermore, given that the analysis of the translation process is from an actor-network theory perspective, there is an emphasis in this discussion on the collaborative and multifunctional aspects of the translator's role.

The parameters explored in this study of the translator's role in audience reception of a universally inclusive multisemiotic opera experience include the following:

1. language and register used by the translator
2. maintaining or breaking theatrical illusion
3. using subjectivity or objectivity in description, both in general terms and within the context of specific Opera North and ENO productions
4. audience response, especially with respect to humorous and surprise or shocking elements, taking into consideration the ways in which the translator's decisions are affected by the intended emotional impact of the visual, audio and other semiotic elements on the audience, as well as by actual live audience reaction at individual opera performances

5. the tripartite relationship between the audience, translator and director, considering the portrayal of the director's vision in terms of the potential and the reality of the translator's collaboration with the director and other members of the production team at varying design stages
6. the status of the translator, for example in relation to how he/she perceives his/her role in the performance, as well as the perception of other members of the production and performance team
7. the significance of the 'whole opera experience' as opposed to just the opera performance, for both the actors and the audience - a notion which is particularly relevant when considering opera accessibility for all.

The methodology used to explore these parameters follows a primarily bottom-up, ethnographic research approach based on observation of the translation process and dialogue with the translators involved (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 2; Hubscher-Davidson, 2011: 4). The qualitative data analysed here draws predominantly on the results of interviews conducted with expert practitioners in the field of opera translation and accessibility working chiefly for the ROH, ENO, and Opera North. However, this analysis is also supported by discussion of observations of the translators at work and photographic evidence. Thus, a combination of different data-collection methods is used for gaining insights into the translation process from the translator's viewpoint, as advocated by theorists including Gyde Hansen (2003; 2008), Maureen Ehrensberger-Dow and Alexander Künzli (2010), and the PACTE group (Beeby et al., 2003). The methods employed were chosen as they were considered the most ecologically valid and reliable way to investigate the actual translation techniques in their natural environment given the live nature of opera and the majority of accessibility facilities under discussion, and in view of the exploratory approach of this study. The specific research devices used, for example regarding interviewing techniques, observation methods, and the nature of dialogue with the translators, follow procedures from relevant literature in the Social Sciences by scholars such as Oppenheim (1992), Bernard (2000) and Bryman (2012). Details of the interviewing and observation techniques as well as the profile of the interviewees are given in the subsequent sections.

## 2

### **Opera translation for blind and partially-sighted patrons**

The awareness of the importance of social inclusion is growing within society and as technological developments progress within an increasingly multimedia world, the advancement of accessibility facilities for all is becoming an ever more prominent issue. Access to the arts, including opera, is no exception. In opera, the diverse needs of audiences with varying visual ability are beginning to be recognised, as evidenced by the relatively recent introduction of audiovisual translation modalities which facilitate access for BPSPs. As discussed in this chapter, the innovative translation modality of audio description, which was introduced to live opera in the UK around nineteen years ago primarily for the benefit of BPSPs (York, 2007: 215), is continually being developed along with other provisions predominantly targeted at this audience including touch tours and audio subtitling, as well as large-print and Braille resources.

In the UK, according to a report prepared for the 'Royal National Institute for the Blind' (RNIB) by 'Access Economics' in July 2009, results show 'more than a doubling (115% increase over 2010) in the numbers of people with partial sight and blindness in the UK, to nearly 4 million people by 2050' (Access Economics, 2009: 44). These rising figures, coupled with increasing international social and legal recognition of the human right of accessibility to the media and arts, highlight the need for further advancements in access facilities to overcome the current linguistic, sensory, and socio-cultural barriers which remain. In opera, valuable access services are already being provided internationally and various innovative translation modalities are evolving. These modalities include facilities for BPSPs which will be defined and elaborated upon subsequently. However, as discussed in more detail later, in many cases opera access services are restricted in number (see section 2.3.2)

and there are certain limitations for BPSPs of current conventional methods of translation and accessibility provisions (see section 5.1).

In this chapter, the focus will be on the two main opera translation modalities currently targeted primarily at BPSPs in the UK: audio description (henceforth AD) and touch tour (henceforth ToTo). As alluded to in section 1.2, each of these translation modalities may be considered either as part of the overall multisemiotic translation network or as individual networks in their own right. Firstly, these principal facilities of AD and touch tours (henceforth ToTos) will be defined respectively in sections 2.1 and 2.2. In these sections, AD and ToTos are each considered as separate networks. Secondly, the methodology and results of a qualitative study, combining observational techniques and interviews with translators involved in the process of opera AD and ToTos, will be discussed in section 2.3. In this section, AD and ToTos are discussed both as part of the overall multisemiotic translation network and as components of the overall network. Finally, the additional facilities of large-print or Braille programme notes and libretti, as well as audio subtitling will be briefly examined in section 2.4.

## **2.1 Audio description**

In this section, the translation network of AD is investigated. As part of this investigation, the translation processes of the different types of AD currently used in UK opera houses are examined with a view to clarifying the nature of these facilities prior to the analysis in section 2.3. Firstly, AD is briefly defined, and then the various subcategories of opera AD are enumerated.

### **2.1.1 Definition of Audio Description**

AD is defined by Hyks as an ‘aural translation of the visual aspects of a live or filmed performance, exhibition or sporting event for the benefit of visually impaired and blind people’ (2005: 6). Matamala and Orero (2013: 150) define AD as:

the descriptive technique of inserting audio narrations, explanations and descriptions of the settings, characters, and actions taking place in a variety of audiovisual media, when such information about these visual elements is not offered in the regular audio presentation. [...]. Its function is to make audiovisual content available to all.

The implicit distinction made by these two definitions regarding the target audience raises the important issue of the perception of AD as a special access service for a specific audience, rather than a translation modality for all. At present, AD is generally considered as primarily targeted at BPSPs, although the benefits of this facility for sighted people have also been pointed out with reference to its value in general, as a language learning tool and as an aid for those with cognitive disabilities (Snyder, 2005; Udo and Fels, 2010; Krejtz et al., 2012). Driven by the notions of open access and universal inclusiveness, this current work promotes the development of opera translation modalities for all. Therefore, it is important to examine the potential advantages of opera AD for sighted patrons as well as the assets of other access facilities for all audiences. These issues are explored further when discussing the translator's role in contributing to social inclusion (see sections 1.3, 2.2, 3.2.4, 3.2.5, 3.2.7 and 3.2.8) and in relation to the audience reception study (see sections 4.1. and 5.1). In view of this focus in the present work, Matamala and Orero's definition, which does not restrict the target audience and is less specific than that of Hyks, is more appropriate for describing opera AD. However, Hyks' definition is also useful in clarifying the intersemiotic nature of the AD translation process, as is López Vera's explanation which states that AD 'transforms visual information to words, translates the visual into spoken language' (López Vera, 2006: 1).

In the opera AD process, the translator verbalizes the visual aspects of the opera, with a change in mode firstly from the visual to the written form (as the audio describer writes a printed script having seen the performance) and then a further mode-shift to the audio format (as the script is spoken aloud) (Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 3; Braun, 2008: 2-3). The many and varied visual aspects of opera are communicated in AD primarily via the audio channel, although other sensory channels may be engaged, for instance through the use of 'allusions which have reference to the senses other than sight - especially touch and smell' (York, 2007a: 13). In view of the potential wealth of visual features in any given opera production, as represented in Figure 2 which is a non-exhaustive scheme based upon Matamala's tripartite categorisation (Matamala, 2005: 10), one of the principal challenges of the translator is prioritising which elements to describe (Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 3). Moreover, given the prominence and significance of music in opera, this challenge is heightened, although in different ways in the various types of AD enumerated in the subsequent section 2.1.2 and as discussed further in section 2.3. Each of the different

types of AD is defined in section 2.1.2. However, taking into consideration the aforementioned definitions of AD and the features of opera, the following general definition of opera AD is proposed:

Opera AD is the aural translation of the multiple visual aspects of the opera experience (including, amongst others, scenography and dramatic action, and verbal and non-verbal onstage and offstage visual signs) where this information is not communicated or accessible via the audio channel.

This translation process may involve reference to audio aspects for purposes of contextualisation or orientation for the listener. For instance, if a sound which is accompanied by visual action is deemed unidentifiable via the audio channel, the translator may decide to explain the sound in the AD.

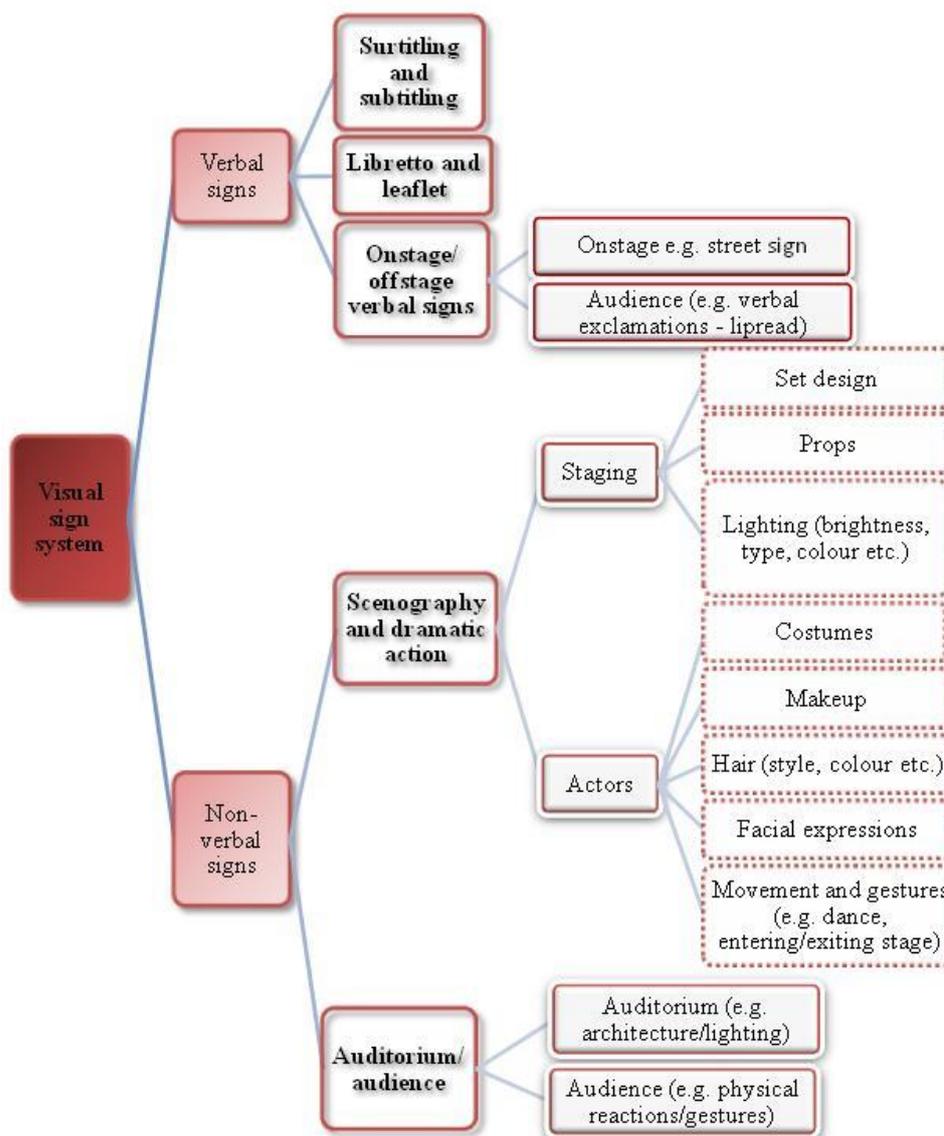


Figure 2: Schema displaying some of the various visual features of opera.

From an actor-network perspective, the agents involved in the AD translation network include amongst others: the audio describer(s), the audience, the set, and technological assistive devices such as headphones. There are different technologies available to communicate opera AD to the audience. For instance, experiments involving the use of smartphones are being conducted in Spain (Oncins et al., 2013: 151-159). However, at present in the UK, AD is most commonly broadcast into the auditorium via wireless headphones provided for BPSPs by the theatres (see Figure 3), although some types of AD which are pre-recorded may be available for all online or by request via post, as indicated in Figure 4.

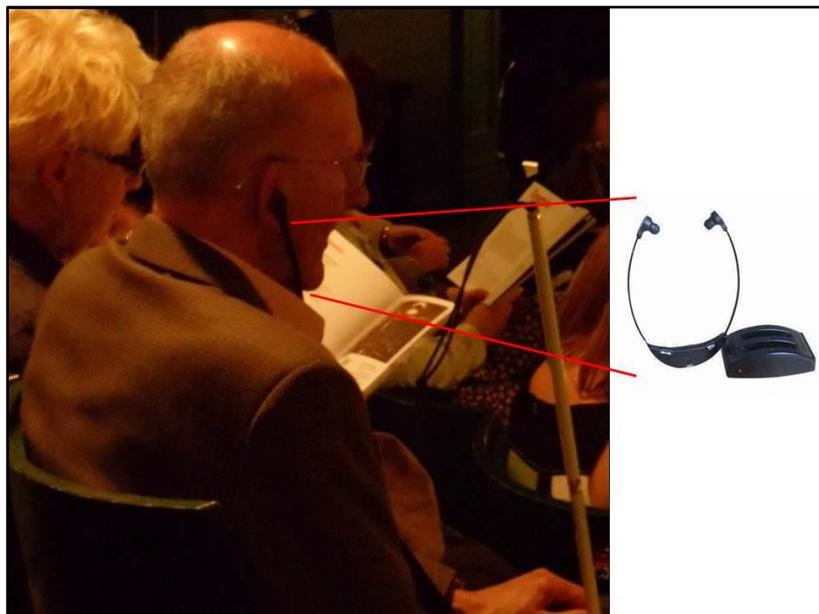


Figure 3: A BPSP listening to the AD via wireless headphones at Opera North's performance of *Carmen*, at Nottingham Theatre Royal, May 2011.

### 2.1.2 Types of Audio Description

In this present work, AD is used as an umbrella term which encompasses the different types of this translation modality, including audio introduction (henceforth AI) and audio through-description, as well as various other subcategories which are discussed here. AD for live opera takes many forms and Figure 4 illustrates the classifications used in this present work, although this is not an exhaustive list of the various types of AD employed in the UK. These classifications are used to distinguish between the varying forms of AD for comparison purposes.

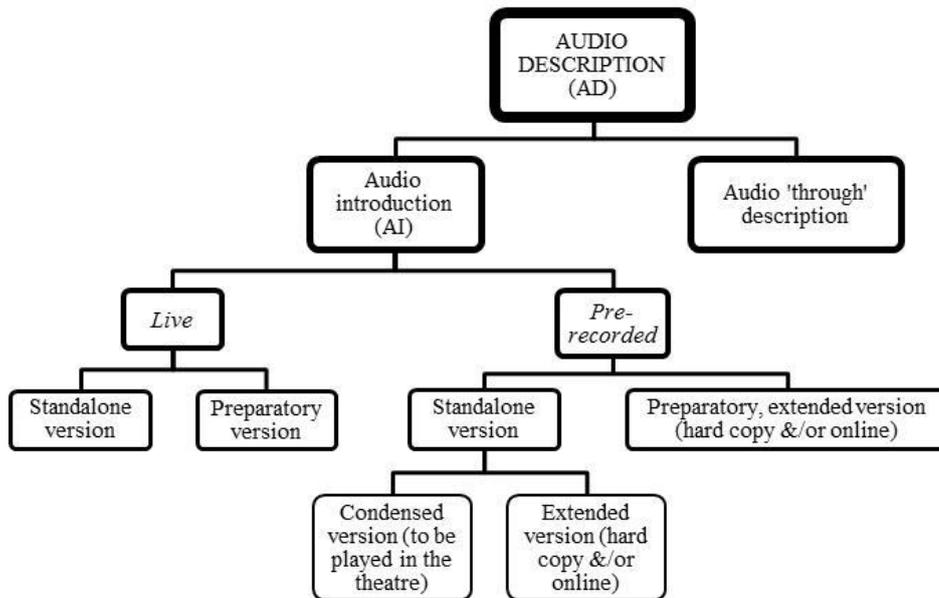


Figure 4: Diagram showing some of the subdivisions of opera AD used in the UK

A distinction will be made between AI referring to audio notes provided *prior* to the performance and through-description signifying live intermittent commentary *throughout* the performance. It is also important to differentiate between *pre-recorded* and *live* AI, both of which have subcategories: a standalone version which is designed to be listened to on its own, and a preparatory version which is designed to be listened to before a through-described performance. These different types of AD are not mutually exclusive. For example, VocalEyes provides both a preparatory version of live AI to be played in the auditorium immediately prior to the performance and a pre-recorded extended version which can be accessed by all online or requested via post in advance of the performance. The online version can be downloaded free of charge from the VocalEyes website in mp3 format by anyone who wishes to use it, and all AD facilities are provided without charge for BPSPs. In all of the subcategories of AD the overall transfer process is between sensory communication channels; translating visual aspects into audio format. Each subcategory has features which impact upon the translation process by affecting the translator's decisions and audience response, as investigated subsequently.

It is important to note that Figure 4 only shows the types of AD which are provided by the 'official'<sup>6</sup> audio describers. The role of these translators is collaborative because audience members may contribute to the AD translation process, whether intentionally or not, through oral comments and reactions to the opera. Therefore, arguably, in addition to audio introduction and audio through-description, another category of *audio description by audience members* could be added. This category could be subdivided into AD by companions of BPSPs and AD by other audience members. One of the main differences between these subcategories and the types of AD denoted in Figure 4 relates to the element of choice of the listener. For all the subdivisions shown in Figure 4, the patron using the facility can always choose whether or not to listen into the AD by switching the audio device on or off. However, the patron does not have this option with audio description by audience members, although in some cases there may be an element of choice if, for example, the patron has requested an oral explanation from a companion. In view of these differences, it was decided not to include the additional category of *audio description by audience members* in the Figure.

## 2.2 Touch tours

Live AD in some UK performances is often accompanied by a ToTo which takes place shortly before the performance and adds an interactive element to the opera experience before curtain-up. As Figure 5 shows, this involves a guided tour of the stage by the audio describer(s) with opportunities to touch items of the set, props, and sometimes a member of the cast in costume (Orero and Matamala, 2007: 273). In this present work, ToTos are studied in conjunction with AD, because at present opera ToTos are only offered at audio-described performances and, although patrons can use AD or ToTo alone, these two facilities are envisaged in tandem. Moreover, ToTos involve oral explanation by the audio describer(s).

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<sup>6</sup> Here the term 'official' is used to denote the audio describers who have been employed to provide the AD. The notion of 'official' and 'unofficial' translators will be elaborated upon in the concluding remarks to Part 1.



Figure 5: Touch tours by VocalEyes for Opera North's productions of *The Merry Widow*, at The Lowry, Salford Quays, UK, March 2011 (top left), and of *Carmen*, at The Grand Theatre, Leeds, May 2011 (top right) and Nottingham Theatre Royal, May 2011 (bottom left and right). Photos courtesy of Opera North.

In ToTos, a combination of intersemiotic translation processes occurs between multiple sensory communication channels, predominantly tactile and audio. The translation process engaging the tactile channel is conducted by the BPSPs themselves, adopting the role of translator 'as they translate the information gathered by means of touch, such as texture and weight, in order to create their own mental image without any external agent' (Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 3-4). Thus, the roles of translator and target receiver blur to the point of merging. The audio channel is engaged primarily by the audio describer(s) who orally describe(s) various visual features such as the set, props, hairstyles, and costumes. There may be

additional agents in this translation process; sometimes assistant directors, stage designers, backstage staff, and cast members are willing to offer extra comments or explanations during the ToTo (Udo and Fels, 2010: 232). Also, companions of BPSPs may provide physical guidance, directing which items to focus on, and orally describing visual aspects. For instance, Figure 6 shows a BPSP's companion providing guidance around the stage in order assist the BPSP in envisaging the dimensions of the stage.



**Figure 6: A BPSP with his companion who is providing guidance around the stage at a touch tour at Nottingham Theatre Royal, May 2011.**

Therefore, there is a highly collaborative aspect to the ToTo process which can be regarded as a complex network and the decisions of the various translating parties will be mutually influential. The amount of involvement of the various agents in the network depends on the audio describers' translation strategy in the ToTo, which varies according to the nature of the production as well as other factors such as the numbers and ages of participants. Sometimes audio describers guide all participants around the stage throughout the ToTo, or they might begin the ToTo with a brief introduction and then allow BPSPs to freely explore the stage with their companions. ToTo participants are also usually given the opportunity to ask questions, thus highlighting the interactive and collaborative nature of the joint translation process of a ToTo performed by the multifarious network of aforementioned agents.

Where used, ToTos have certainly become part of the multisemiotic opera translation process for BPSPs. Like any translation process, social and contextual factors have a significant impact on the format and route of the ToTo. For instance, the choice of elements to touch may be determined by safety concerns, for example relating to set fragility or dangerous objects. The ToTo process may also be influenced by time constraints which might, for example, be affected by the availability of cast members involved in the ToTo or by set preparation timings. Similarly to any other translation strategy – such as the impossibility of using computer-aided translation (CAT) tools for certain language combinations – practical issues determine the feasibility of consistently providing ToTos because some opera houses do not have an accessible stage. In these situations, guiding BPSPs may prove to be dangerous.

At present ToTos are only offered to BPSPs and their companions and this is partly due to issues of health and safety. However, similarly to AD, ToTos could arguably be valuable and appealing to other sighted patrons. By opening ToTos to a larger and more diverse audience, the notion of a universally inclusive opera experience could be promoted. The results of the audience reception project presented in this present work (see sections 5.1.8 and 5.1.9) support this point. The number of people attending any given ToTo would naturally have to be restricted in some way due to safety concerns, however if this facility were to be offered at a cost, the financial gain from such a venture might also be an attractive prospect to theatre companies. Furthermore, the novel opportunity to attend a backstage tour may draw in a new audience and increase figures of opera patrons. The question of benefits of ToTos to sighted audience members has been addressed to some extent in the audience reception project discussed in Part 2, although further research is needed to test the feasibility and value of this proposition.

### **2.3 Analysing the translator's role in audio description and touch tours, and comparing approaches of opera audio description**

In this section, the methodology and results of a study carried out with the purpose of exploring the translator's role in opera AD and ToTos are presented. This study followed a primarily bottom-up ethnographic approach (see Hammersley and

Atkinson, 2007: 2; Hubscher-Davidson, 2011: 4), using a combination of qualitative research methods to gather and analyse the data. The data collection procedures employed included: (1) direct observation, which ‘involves watching people and recording their behavior on the spot’ (Bernard, 2000: 408); (2) in-depth interviews with expert practitioners affiliated to leading British AD companies; and (3) photographs. This research was conducted between 2010 and 2012 in a variety of locations in the UK including opera houses and recording studios, as detailed below. Firstly, an overview will be given of the profile of the participants in this study. Secondly, the methods and results of the direct observational approach will be explored. Thirdly, the interviewing techniques and findings from the dialogue with the audio describers will be presented. In addition to consideration of the various working methods of the interviewed audio describers, a comparative analysis of the different types of AD will be a common thread running through these discussions.

### **2.3.1 Profile of the study participants**

The focus in this study is on the task of the ‘official’ audio describer in the translation processes of opera AD and ToTos. As discussed previously, in sections 2.1.2 and 2.2, the role of the translator is not only performed by the ‘official’ audio describer but in some cases also by other agents in the translation network. However, the role of translator is predominantly performed by the ‘official’ audio describer in the AD process. In ToTos, the translation network is more complex, for example with BPSPs simultaneously adopting the role of translator and receiver, although the ‘official’ audio describer maintains a leading position in the translation process. Therefore, in order to gain insights into the translation processes of opera AD and ToTos from the translator’s perspective, eight audio describers from the UK AD companies Talking Notes, VocalEyes, Sightlines and Mind’s Eye were observed, interviewed and photographed. With reference to the Audio Description Association directory, which identifies six audio describers skilled in opera AD (Audio Description Association, 2013), and the websites of various UK AD companies (see ‘Mind’s Eye: Who We Are’, n.d.; ‘Sightlines Audio Description Services’, n.d.; VocalEyes, 2012a), this number equals a large proportion of currently practicing professional UK audio describers with experience in opera AD. The eight study participants, including six female and two male audio describers, all accredited, have worked for the following opera companies: ENO, English Touring Opera, ROH, Opera North, The Welsh

National Opera and Glyndebourne Touring Opera. It is not possible to give a fixed profile of their working methods as these vary according to the type of AD being prepared, the venue at which the AD is to be provided, and the production itself, amongst other factors. The similarities and differences in the translators' working methods will be discussed in the presentation of the qualitative data collected from the observational research and interviews in the following sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3.

### **2.3.2 Observational research**

The qualitative observational research into the overall translation process of opera AD and ToTos involved taking 'field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site', recording observations (Creswell, 2014: 246), and taking photos. These techniques were used whilst attending: (1) dress rehearsals of opera performances with audio describers; (2) rehearsals of live ADs; (3) sound checks; (4) performances to sample the final AD product; (5) ToTos, as well as whilst (6) visiting recording studios and theatres during the production and revision of the AD; and (7) listening into dry runs of live ADs.<sup>7</sup> Prior to these events, oral permission was gained from the study participants and venues to conduct this research. The investigation involved intermittent informal discussion with the audio describers throughout the observation process, although care was taken to avoid interfering with the phenomena of translating as it naturally occurs.

The results of the observation of the eight participants in this study revealed a clear distinction between the working methods of translators conducting different types of AD in diverse venues. At ENO productions at The Coliseum, London and at the ROH, Covent Garden, the audio describer prepared pre-recorded standalone AI by attending a series of rehearsals, taking notes, writing and editing a script on a laptop (see Figure 7), and discussing any visual details which needed clarifying with members of the production team who were present at the rehearsals.

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<sup>7</sup> The dry runs of live ADs attended by the researcher took place during one of the first performances of an opera production and involved rehearsing the entire AD script.



Figure 7: An audio describer preparing an AI at an ENO rehearsal, The Coliseum, London.

The audio describer collaborated with a colleague who visited the costume departments and attended model showings in order to establish the particulars of the costumes and set. Additionally, when writing the AI script, the audio describer referred to an authenticated version of the synopsis of the opera provided by the opera house's publications department (York, 2007a: 218) and to other relevant material, such as an online interview with the director. If the opera production included any audiovisual material, such as a film clip, as in the ENO's 2011 production of Donizetti's opera *Lucrezia Borgia*, a copy was made available to the audio describer for reference purposes in the preparation of the AI script. The AI production process varied in length according to the opera production. For instance, a revival of a former opera production would merely entail annotating a previous script, whilst a new opera production would involve a longer process of writing a script from scratch. However, in all cases the aim was to keep the schedule 'as tight as possible - and not to embark on a new production too early, to allow for inevitable changes when the work reaches the stage' (York, 2007a: 218). Having completed the script, the audio describer recorded the standalone AI in a private studio (see Figure 8).



**Figure 8: An audio describer preparing an AI in his private recording studio.**

Depending on the rehearsal schedule, amongst other factors, the audio describer might attend another rehearsal having recorded the AI script and subsequently make any revisions to the audio recording if necessary. The AI was then finalised and sent to the sound crew at the opera house prior to the first performance of the production and allowing sufficient time for copies to be made on CD and posted to any patrons requesting this facility. The AI was played in the theatre via wireless headphones about 15 minutes prior to the start of each performance (providing a general introduction and referring to Act One) and 5 minutes before the end of any intervals (with details of subsequent acts). The wireless headphones could be requested and signed for by those wishing to use the service prior to the performances. One of the main advantages of this pre-recorded standalone AI is that the facility can be made available at all performances which the audio describer is not required to attend.

Live AI on the other hand which is now generally offered in conjunction with through-description requires a presenter to attend the performance and deliver the introduction from a soundproof booth in the theatre. Thus, the working methods of audio describers conducting live AD vary with those preparing pre-recorded AI.

Another significant factor which can cause a divergence in the translator's working methods is connected with the recording facilities at different venues. In some theatres, the audio describers are required to deliver the live AD from recording rooms in the auditorium with a view of the stage (as shown in Figure 9 and Figure 13), whereas in other venues, the live AD is broadcast from a room which is not in the auditorium but has live video transmission of the performance (as shown in Figure 10).

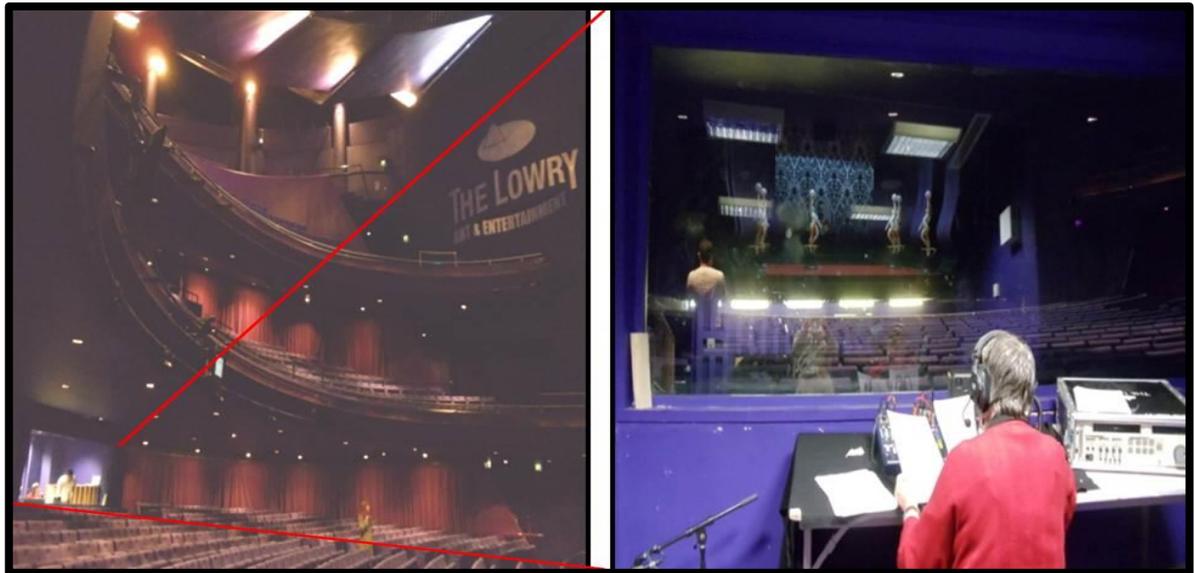


Figure 9: An audio describer at an Opera North pre-performance sound check, The Lowry, Salford Quays.



Figure 10: An audio describer in the recording room at The Grand Theatre, Leeds.

The main impact of these different recording facilities relates to the portrayal of spontaneous acts, whether onstage or in the auditorium. If working in a recording room which only has access to the live video transmission of the performance on a small screen, the audio describer's view of the stage is limited and therefore it might be difficult to notice any unplanned details of the live opera. Furthermore, with no view of the auditorium, the audio describer will probably not be able to report any spur-of-the-moment visual particulars in this area. Nevertheless, in contrast to pre-recorded standalone AI in which it is not possible to communicate spontaneous details of any kind (York, 2007a: 217), one of the main advantages of live AD is that the audio describer does have the opportunity to incorporate such information. Therefore, the working methods of audio describers conducting live AD entail a greater aspect of flexibility and spontaneity than in pre-recorded AI.

Conversely, one of the main disadvantages of live AD at present is that it is only provided at a limited number of performances. For example, at Opera North and Welsh National Opera, there is usually one audio described performance at each of the tour venues, and therefore between three and five audio described performances per production. Figure 11 shows the number of Opera North opera performances with AD and ToTo from 2010 to 2012. In this Figure, NoTR refers to Nottingham Theatre Royal, NeTR refers to Newcastle Theatre Royal, Lowry refers to The Lowry, Salford Quays, Leeds refers to The Grand, Leeds and Edinburgh refers to The Festival Theatre, Edinburgh.

YEAR	MONTH	OPERA	VENUE	AD AND ToTo PROVIDER
2012	November	The Makropulos Case	NoTR	VocalEyes
	"	"	NeTR	"
	"	"	Lowry	"
	"	"	Leeds	"
	August	"	Edinburgh	"
	March	Norma	NeTR	"
	"	"	Lowry	"
	February	"	NoTR	"
	"	"	Leeds	"
2011	November	Madama Butterfly	Lowry	"
	"	"	NeTR	"
	October	"	Leeds	"
	May	Carmen	NoTR	"
	"	"	Lowry	"
	"	"	Leeds	"
	March	The Merry Widow	Lowry	"
	February	"	NoTR	"
	"	"	NeTR	"
2010	December	"	Leeds	"
	November	The Turn of the Screw	NoTR	"
	"	"	NeTR	"
	"	"	Lowry	"
	October	"	Leeds	"

Figure 11: Opera performances with AD and ToTo at Opera North tour venues from 2010-2012.

The proportion of performances at which AD and ToTo are offered as compared to the total number of performances of a given production varies as shown in Figure 12. For instance, in the case of Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw*, half of the total number of performances were audio described with a ToTo, whereas for Bizet's *Carmen* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* AD and ToTo facilities were offered at only an eighth and ninth of the total number of performances respectively. However, it is important to note that UK companies which provide live audio introductions, such as VocalEyes, also produce pre-recorded extended versions for all productions, which can be accessed online or requested in hard-copy via post prior to the performance. These AIs remain available online for years after the performance in written format and as an mp3 audio file and can currently still be accessed (for example, see VocalEyes 2012b).

<b>OPERA</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES</b>	<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES WITH AD &amp; ToTo</b>
The Makropulos Case	9	5
Norma	11	4
Madama Butterfly	27	3
Carmen	24	3
The Merry Widow	20	4
The Turn of the Screw	8	4

**Figure 12: Total number of Opera North’s opera performances with AD and ToTo from 2010-2012 compared to the total number of performances.**

The work schedule for an individual production of an audio describer preparing pre-recorded standalone AI differs from that of an audio describer conducting live AD. In general, the latter writes the AD script working from a video of a dress rehearsal of the opera production, and then attends one of the first performances for a rehearsal of the AD. For live opera AD in the UK, the audio describers work in pairs. One writes and delivers the live AI and through-AD for the first act, and then they alternate for subsequent acts. The audio describer delivering the through-AD in the final act also describes the curtain calls. Both audio describers have a copy of the AD script for the whole performance, so that if one audio describer is ill or delayed, then the other can fill in for him/her. Both audio describers attend the rehearsal of the AD. In general, this rehearsal involves: (1) comparing notes with each other on the draft AD script to ensure consistency etc.; (2) meeting with the sound crew to discuss the equipment to be used; (3) a brief visit to the stage to look at the set in preparation for the ToTo (which as mentioned previously often accompanies live AD) and a tour of the venue if it is unfamiliar; (4) a dry run of the AD during the performance in which the audio describers take in turns to sit in the auditorium with the rest of the audience and listen into their partner’s delivery of the AD via wireless headphones and make notes of any necessary revisions; and (5) further comparing of notes and editing of the AD script. It emerged from the interviews (see section 2.3.3) that one of the advantages of such

a rehearsal is that the audio describers have the opportunity to gauge audience response to some extent, which may aid in practising the timings of delivery of jokes, for example. To a certain degree, the rehearsal also facilitates preparation for the curtain calls and may provide some clues regarding spontaneous action, for example if the actors improvise or if the audience requests an encore.

In opera companies that tour different venues with the same production, such as Opera North, the rehearsal for the live AD only takes place at the first venue. On the day of the performance with live AD (and ToTo), the audio describers arrive several hours before the start of the opera for a sound check (see Figure 9 and Figure 13), and a visit to the stage, before meeting the BPSPs and their companions for the pre-performance ToTo which usually takes place about one hour and fifteen minutes before curtain-up.

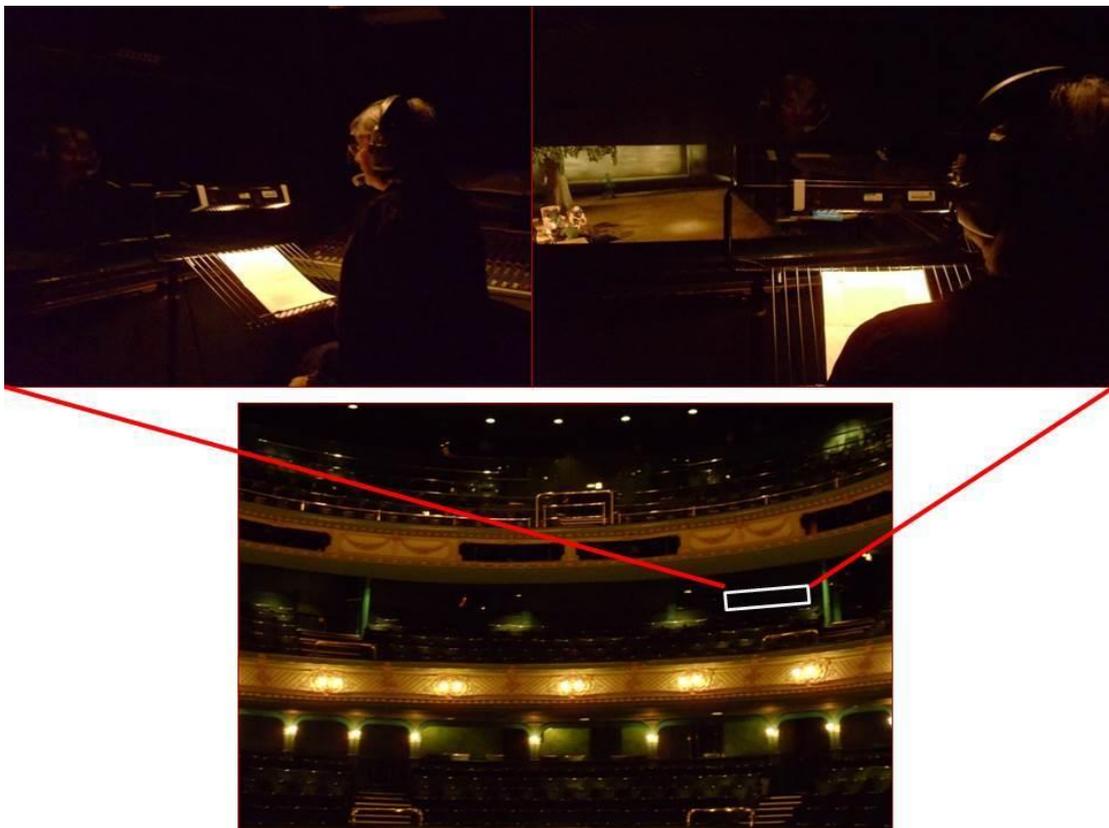


Figure 13: An audio describer at a pre-performance sound check for an Opera North performance, Nottingham Theatre Royal.

The working methods of each individual audio describer naturally differ in some ways. For instance, in live through-AD, in which one of the main challenges is fitting the AD around the music of the opera, some audio describers with knowledge of reading music, insert their script onto the musical score. However, others work from

a typed script of the AD which includes written prompts about audio elements including music. This issue raises the main debate between through-description and AI relating to the longstanding tension in opera between music and text which provokes differing opinions amongst translators regarding the relative importance of these aspects (see for example Low, 2002: 103; Matamala and Orero, 2007: 205; Dewolf, 2001: 182; York, 2007a; Puigdomènech et al., 2008). Through-description allows more time to elaborate on visual details but risks treading on the music. In fact, one of the main arguments in favour of standalone AI is that every note of the music can be enjoyed without interruption and without having to wear a headphones during the performance (York, 2007a: 217). However, with through-described performances the listener has the option of switching the headphones on or off as desired and does not have to rely purely on memory. Hence, the longstanding debate in opera between music and text manifests itself in two different ways: (1) the traditional tension between the music and the libretto; and (2) a further tension between the additional audio text of the AD and the music. This aspect will be discussed in section 2.3.3.5, with reference to the responses given by the audio describers in the interviews for this study.

The flexibility of the working methods of audio describers is particularly evident in ToTos. Similarly to opera AD, there are no written guidelines or established protocol for conducting ToTos. However, with ToTos, it is even more likely that the audio describer will be required to vary his or her translation techniques in each ToTo, due to the interactive element of this facility. The overall framework of a ToTo is fixed to a certain degree because there are limits imposed by safety concerns and time constraints. However, the participation of patrons and other agents in the translation process, as discussed in section 1.2, can have a significant impact on the audio describers' approach to the ToTo and on the specific methods employed.

For instance, the varying attitudes of patrons to the touching of items, as explored further in section 5.1.6, can affect the amount of oral description required from the audio describer. If a patron prefers to use the ToTo as an opportunity to hear about some extra details about props or a certain character, for example, or to get a sense of the geography of the stage, the audio describer might try to accommodate these wishes by guiding the patron around the stage and not focusing on giving the patron items of the set to touch. If on the other hand, a patron is keen

to gain a tactile experience from the ToTo, the audio describer might assist him or her in feeling certain props, interesting textures on the set or even in trying on a costume accessory where available (see Figure 14).



**Figure 14:** Photos of audio describers (in each photo on the right-hand side) assisting BPSPs on opera ToTos.

The set itself, which can be seen as an agent in the translation network according to the actor-network framework discussed in section 1.2, might affect the audio describer's working methods. For instance, if there is an abundance of visual details, the ToTo is a prime opportunity to elaborate on minutiae not covered in the AD, whether due to time restrictions or other issues such as maintaining theatrical illusion, a topic which will be discussed in section 2.3.3.3. If there are certain visual aspects of the set which are difficult to understand, the audio describer might focus on explaining these in the ToTo in order to aid comprehension of the AD. Also, if there are physical features of the set which might make it difficult for BPSPs to make their own way around, for example if there are steps, the audio describer might provide individual guidance (see Figure 15).



**Figure 15:** Photo of an audio describer assisting a BPS up some steps on the set in the ToTo for ON's production of *The Merry Widow*

Although the audio describer will have some idea as to the layout of the set, having visited the stage prior to the ToTo, he or she will not necessarily know in advance which props will be available to touch, due to artistic preparations for the show. Furthermore, the number of BPSs and companions attending the ToTo, as well as the amount of involvement of members of the production team and cast members, is often not confirmed until just before the ToTo. Therefore, a pre-prepared script is not an option for an opera ToTo in its current format and the audio describer will have to make spontaneous translation decisions. If there is a relatively large group of participants on the ToTo, it is more likely that members of the stage crew will contribute, as shown in Figure 17, although this depends on their availability and willingness to volunteer assistance.



Figure 16: A member of the stage crew (dressed in black) assisting a BPSP at the ToTo for Opera North's production of *Carmen* at The Grand, Leeds.

Just as the audio describers work in pairs for live AD (which is offered in conjunction with ToTos), they continue this partnership on the ToTo, although their collaboration varies according to each production. On some occasions, one audio describer takes the lead in giving oral explanations, whilst the other helps with the guiding of BPSPs around the stage and is available for questioning. On other occasions, both audio describers provide descriptions, alternating between the role of translator and receiver. These are only two examples of the many scenarios in which audio describers work together on ToTos. The presence of guide dogs at a ToTo and the numbers of BPSPs without companions can also affect the audio describers' working methods because these issues can determine the autonomy of a BPSP. Also, if there are any younger patrons attending the ToTo, one of the audio describers might decide to devote his or her attention to these individuals (see Figure 17) whilst the other audio describer attends to the rest of the BPSPs.



Figure 17: Photos of audio describers (dressed in black) providing oral description and a hands-on experience for BPSPs on opera ToTos

### 2.3.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the eight aforementioned audio describers with the purpose of testing the hypothesis that there is a reciprocal influence between audience reception and translators' choices in the translation process. The participants were numbered 1 to 8 for anonymity purposes when referring to their comments subsequently. The interviews were conducted by adopting an in-depth, semi-structured interview approach that

typically refers to a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview schedule but is able to vary the sequence of questions. The questions are frequently somewhat more general in their frame of reference from that typically found in a structured interview schedule. Also, the interview usually has some latitude to ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies. (Bryman, 2012: 212)

The interviews were all conducted face-to-face with individual audio describers in an informal, natural work environment. Prior to the interviews, participants were asked for permission to record the conversation for research purposes only. A

dictaphone was used to record the discussion and short-hand notes were taken throughout in case the recording equipment failed (Creswell, 2014: 194).

The interview questions for this study can be found in Appendix I in section 7.1, although this list was only used as a prompt for the interviewer, given the semi-structured, flexible and informal nature of the interviews. The open-ended nature of many of the questions resulted in discussions of varying lengths. The topics of discussion were chosen because they are recurring issues in the relatively little amount of literature that is available on these subjects in previous AD studies, as detailed subsequently (see, for example, Holland, 2009; York, 2007; Puigdomènech et al., 2008). Moreover, in view of the theoretical framework for this study, based on a multisemiotic model of translation and actor-network theory, the interview questions explored in particular the collaborative aspects and methods of AD and ToTos. This particular focus was chosen because the assumption to be tested was that these translation modalities contribute to a multisemiotic opera experience for BPSPs that can be shared with other audience members. Little to no research has been conducted with reference to opera ToTos, and therefore this investigation, which explores the translation process of both opera AD and ToTos from the translator's perspective, provides new insights into this unique translation modality.

In the following sections 2.3.3.1 to 2.3.3.5, the results from these interviews are analysed. This analysis concentrates on topics which provoked the most debate and which are particularly challenging for the translator in both opera AD and ToTos. In view of the aforementioned hypothesis, the issues selected for analysis here were also chosen because they generated comments from the target audience (see Part 2). Furthermore, attention is primarily dedicated to findings assessing the effects of the tripartite relationship between the translator, audience and director on the distinctive process of translating the multisemiotic opera experience for BPSPs and indeed for all. From this perspective, the following issues are examined: (1) use of subjectivity or objectivity in the translation process; (2) portrayal of the director's vision; (3) maintaining or breaking theatrical illusion; (4) translation of certain features provoking an emotional response in the audience, including humorous and shocking aspects; and (5) the tension between music and text in the translation of opera.

### 2.3.3.1 *The use of subjectivity in the translation process*

The interviewees' answers suggest that one of the main challenges for the translator in all types of opera AD and ToTos is dealing with time restrictions. In through-description there is the advantage of more time overall than in AI, although the constraint in that case is fitting in with the music. Whilst ToTos allow an extra opportunity in addition to the AD to describe the visual aspects of the production, there is also a limited time frame for this translation modality. Given the time constraints for ToTos and AD and the numerous visual features in opera (see Figure 2), the translation process naturally involves prioritizing which visual aspects of the opera to translate. As a result of this inevitability of having to choose which elements to describe, a certain degree of subjectivity is unavoidable, as highlighted by Holland (2009: 184) who states that 'there is no direct equivalent between a moment on stage and the words chosen to describe it. The exhortation to be "impartial" doesn't recognise this fact'.

Although this inevitable subjectivity in the translation process was unanimously acknowledged by the interviewees, their attitudes to this topic varied. All eight participants remarked that they had been taught that their general approach in the translation process should be to *aim* for objectivity. However, their opinions on this issue differed and revealed an ambiguity regarding the degree of subjectivity to be used in AD. Audio describer 3 stated definitively: 'you're not there to give your opinion'. Interviewee 5 commented: 'in general I try to encapsulate objective physical characteristics that imply emotion rather than using a subjective adjective'. This opinion was shared by audio describer 4 who gave the following example, 'instead of talking about Carmen's yearning gesture, you say Carmen stretches her hand out towards José with emphasis on the delivery of the word *stretches* to convey the yearning.' Interestingly, the same interviewee suggested that if the opera is being sung in a foreign language and the lyrics express a certain emotion, then this can be included in the AD:

If the lyrics of the opera are saying 'I'm crestfallen in French', then you can incorporate this into the AD, for example 'She looks around disconsolately' - it is subjective but it is more concise.

Many of the comments made by audio describers referred to the idea of reflecting the mood in the opera performance. Such comments include: 'you try to

marry your voice to the mood but don't reveal your own emotion', 'it is important to sometimes express some emotion in your delivery of the AD in order to make it more interesting to listen to and congruent with the mood of the opera production', and 'you may like to use adverbs to make the AD more atmospheric and vivid'. Similarly, for characterization purposes, audio describer Greg York states you might talk about 'an ostentatiously-trimmed hat' to imply 'the vanity of its wearer' (2007: 222). The responses of the interviewed audio describers indicate that although in general a neutral register is chosen, they sometimes try to match the register of language used in the AD with the mood of the opera performance or with the tone of a certain character. Also, if it is a children's opera such as Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* or Dove's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, they might choose simpler language in view of the target audience.

The interviewees' responses and the observations of the audio describers leading ToTos, suggest that these translators are more inclined towards providing interpretative descriptions during this pre-performance experience. For example, on the ToTo for Opera North's 2010 production of *The Turn of the Screw*, the set with its sloping walls and angular characteristic, was described as follows with an objective statement accompanied by a personal interpretation of this setting 'there are lots of angles in the room giving it a slightly disturbing feel'.

These results suggest that, in the UK, the translation processes of AD and ToTos generally involve a compromise between a totally objective depiction of emotion as employed in some AD traditions such as in the USA (Puigdomènech, Matamala and Orero, 2008: 387) and a predominantly subjective AD approach as adopted in some Catalan opera performances (Corral and Lladó, 2011: 174). Investigation into the audience's perspective on this issue in section 5.1 will provide further insights into this issue within the UK context.

### **2.3.3.2 *Portrayal of the director's vision***

Regarding the influence of the director's vision on the translation process, the audio describers interviewed expressed differing opinions. 25% of the interviewees felt that it was not their job to give insights into the director's vision as it was privileged information. However, 50% considered that the director's intentions have an important influence on the AD process, as explored in research by Udo and Fels (2009: 2-4). For instance, audio describer 2 stated 'the audience comes to see what a

director has done with an opera' and audio describer 7 declared 'you have to present the nature of the production not just the opera'. Interviewee 6 commented that the decision whether or not to refer to the director's intentions at any particular point in the AD might be determined by the production, as some design concepts are more visually complex or obscure than others and might require further explanation of the director's vision for comprehension purposes. The remaining 25% of the interviewees acknowledged an inevitable influence of the director's vision on translation choices, but emphasized the importance of prioritizing 'description of what is actually happening' (audio describer 8) over the director's intentions. All interviewees expressed caution in portraying the director's vision, especially where disparities arise between the director's intended effect and the actual impact, highlighting the greater importance of describing the visual features from the audience's viewpoint than from the director's perspective.

The practical current reality of the AD process as revealed by the audio describers interviewed is that opportunities to speak directly with the director or to gain insights into the director's vision in general are rare (with exceptional cases as discussed below), thus rendering portrayal of the director's intentions particularly problematic. The interviewees revealed that collaboration with other members of the production team is more common, for instance, at model showings, dress rehearsals and ToTos. The overall visual product of each opera performance is inevitably influenced by the director's vision, but also by other members of the production team including designers for the stage, costumes, lighting etc. It is the culmination of the artistic realizations of the design team that makes each production unique, and arguably this individuality is a vital component of the entertainment value of live performance. Therefore, communication to the BPSPs of the visual results of the director's and entire production team's vision seems an essential part of the AD process.

One strategy employed by audio describers is to include this information prior to the performance. In AIs produced by Talking Notes, interviews with directors and stage designers are occasionally included (York, 2007: 220). Also, in ToTos, the possible involvement of other members of the production team in the translation process, as explained in section 2.2, make this an ideal forum for access to the vision behind the production which could even be considered a characteristic feature of this behind-the-scenes experience. Indeed, the interviewed audio

describers who acknowledged the influence of the director's vision suggested that the ToTo is an opportunity to give more background and perhaps be a little more subjective in making suggestions regarding the director's vision, as proposed by Udo and Fels (2010: 236). These comments raise issues concerning the interpretative element in the translation processes of AD and ToTos which relate to the notion of giving 'a text an Author' (Barthes, 1967: 147). The idea of the limits imposed on the audience's interpretation by explanation of the director's intentions is mentioned in the results of the audience reception project in section 5.1.

### **2.3.3.3 *Theatrical illusion***

As regards maintaining theatrical illusion, in general, any relevant explanation of the mechanics of stagecraft was unanimously considered by the interviewees as most appropriate during the AI and ToTo. In the through-description all describers expressed the importance of maintaining theatrical illusion, for example by avoiding technical terminology such as 'in the wings' or 'stage left'. For instance, audio describer 1 stated that whilst it might be explained in the ToTo or AI that scaffolding poles are used as trees, in the through-description they are merely referred to as trees. On a ToTo, the mechanics of certain props or of the set as a whole might be inevitably revealed, because the stage is explored at close proximity from all angles. For instance, the tree in Figure 18 arguably looks real and solid from the perspective of the audience sitting in the auditorium, as shown by the front of the tree trunk in the left-hand picture. However, the ToTo allows patrons to touch or to see the back of the tree, thus revealing that it is hollow and merely a prop, as shown by the right-hand picture in Figure 18. Hence, the ToTo can lead to the breaking of theatrical illusion and for this reason some patrons have reservations about attending ToTos, as discussed further in sections 5.1.6 and 5.1.7. On the other hand, insights into the workings of the set, props etc. on the ToTo can be part of the attraction of this behind-the-scenes experience.

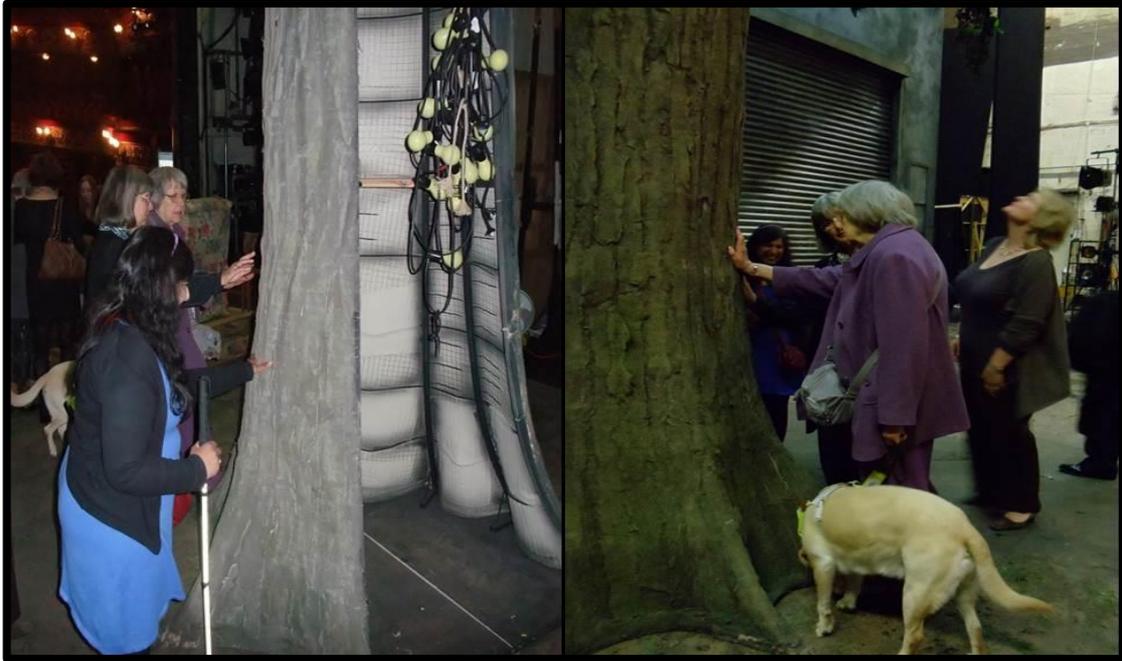


Figure 18: BPSPs touching the tree on set on the ToTo of Opera North's *Carmen* at The Grand, Leeds.

On occasions, the choice between maintaining and breaking theatrical illusion might be obfuscated, for example if puppets are involved. For instance, in ENO's production of Raskatov's *A Dog's Heart*, performed at the London Coliseum 20 November - 4 December 2010, the puppeteers who manipulated the dog puppet were in costume and visibly part of the performance from the audience's viewpoint, and yet it might be argued that the intended effect was to achieve the impression of a real dog. Interestingly, the AI read as follows:

Before the dog becomes human he is represented by a full-size puppet and brought unnervingly to life by three members of Blind Summit Theatre' with subsequent references to simply 'the dog'. (York, 2010)

The key to the translation process here, as in many other aspects of AD and ToTos, seems to be achieving a balance. In this case, the balance is between providing information about the mechanics of the stagecraft and maintaining theatrical illusion, which involves considering both the intended impact and the actual effect on the audience. Thus, the translator is concerned with both aesthetic and pragmatic considerations, mediating between the fundamental artistic dimension of the opera experience and practical accessibility issues which are crucial in achieving universal inclusion. This notion of the balancing act performed by the translator within the

context of opera translation and accessibility is discussed further in the concluding remarks.

#### **2.3.3.4 *Translating features provoking an emotional response***

The process of translating features of opera which might have an emotional impact on the receivers exemplifies the many inherent difficulties in the translation processes involved in AD and ToTos, due to the difference between the ways in which messages are conveyed and received visually, verbally and via other sensory channels, as alluded to by a BPSF in the results of the audience reception project in section 5.1.4 . The strategies adopted to overcome this challenge and in achieving semiotic cohesion (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 49-52; Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 2-3) are examined here in relation to the translation of humorous and shocking features.

All of the interviewed audio describers commented on using language for effect in recreating the humour or shock of any visual aspects. For example, when conveying visually-shocking elements, the audio describer might use emotionally-charged language. In Opera North's 2011 production of *Carmen*, for instance, there was a visually-shocking moment when Carmen kicked another character Zuniga in the groin and the audio describers said 'she kicks him in the balls' (VocalEyes, 2011b). According to the results of the post-performance audience reception study, which are discussed in section 5.1, this description seemed to have the desired shocking effect on the majority of the participating BPSFs.

Whilst acknowledging the challenge of translating humour in all types of AD, the interviewees also remarked that they try to replicate any visual humour in the opera with linguistic humour in the AD. For instance, comments included the following: 'to portray visual humour you try to use words that are equally comic' and 'to convey visual humour you use words that are amusing'. The concept of amusing or comic words is highly subjective and therefore the feedback of audiences regarding the effect of such linguistic choices is vital in informing translation decisions.<sup>8</sup> When passed on to the audio describer, it may be that feedback about the translation of a certain humorous aspect might affect a translation decision regarding a different comic feature or regarding his or her approach to translation of humour in general. Alternatively, given that opera performances are repeated and

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<sup>8</sup> See for example Díaz-Cintas, 2001; Chiaro, 2006; and Veiga, 2009 regarding the translation of humour in AVT and its many challenges.

that there are revivals of certain opera productions, if an audience reception study were to be conducted at one of the first performances and negative feedback about a specific aspect given to the translator before a performance of the same production at a later date, this could prompt the audio describer to change their description. Interviewee 3 gave an example of an attempt to recreate the visual humour in the cancan scene in Opera North's production of Léhar's operetta *The Merry Widow*, performed 16 October 2010 - 4 March 2011 in the description 'she bounces her pom poms' (VocalEyes 2011a).

When translating visual humour, it is not only the choice of words but also their delivery, in terms of intonation and timing which affects their reception. All interviewees commented on the importance of timing of delivery in conveying comic aspects. For example, audio describer 6 remarked:

Timing is crucial with humour. You try to describe just before it happens so that BPSPs laugh at the same time as the rest of the audience, although this is more difficult if there's a noise just before the joke.

Similarly, audio describer 2 stated, for instance 'Don't pre-describe or post-describe humour when possible. Feel the sense of anticipation in the audience to judge when to deliver the line.' These comments evidently apply only to through-description which usually allows BPSPs to receive the impact of the humour or shock concurrently with the rest of the audience if the audio presenter can describe the visual humour simultaneously with the onstage action. For example, in Opera North's production of *The Merry Widow*, the following AD was delivered simultaneously with the visually comic moment during a dance scene in Act II, shown in Figure 19, in an attempt to mirror the onstage visual humour: 'Back to back she bumps his bottom' (VocalEyes, 2011a).



Figure 19: Opera North's production of *The Merry Widow* at The Lowry, Salford Quays, March 2011 (photo by Alistair Muir, courtesy of Opera North).

Sometimes in through-description the comical moment may have to be anticipated slightly and pre-described. For instance, as highlighted by the first comment above, this is the case if immediately before the joke there is either a noise which obliterates the AD or singing over which description must be avoided. For example, the interviewed audio describers all mentioned that they generally try to avoid speaking over singing, especially in arias. In pre-recorded standalone AI, speaking over singing and interrupting the music and any emotions this might provoke is not an issue. However, although musical cues may be used to indicate when the visual humour or shock will occur, the audience has to be alerted to shocking aspects in advance which will inevitably detract from its impact and humour has to be anticipated causing the joke to lose its spontaneity. Nevertheless, in pre-recorded standalone AI, the audio describer aims to provoke a similar reaction prior to the performance through choice of words. For example, York describes the operation scene in *A Dog's Heart*, as seen in Figure 20, as follows:

The Professor hacks off a part of Sharikov with a cleaver and tosses it aside, and he and Bormenthal in white theatre masks and gowns operate on his writhing body, dropping organs into a white enamel bucket. Blood flows everywhere. (2010b)



Figure 20: Operation scene in Act II of Alexander Raskatov's opera *A Dog's Heart* (photo by Stephen Cummiskey courtesy of ENO).

It might be argued that through-description which will inevitably at times speak over the music may detract from the emotional impact whereas standalone AI allows the expressive power of the music alone to work to full effect. For example, in the visually shocking operation scene at the end of Act II of the recent ENO production of Raskatov's opera *A Dog's Heart* (shown in Figure 20), it might be suggested that the frenetic intensity of the music is more effective in unnerving the audience without parallel through-description. However, the music does not always reflect the visual action and without description BPSPs may miss significant provocative visual details and thus be denied the opportunity to receive the emotion of the opera experience with the rest of the audience. For instance, using the example of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, one audio describer highlighted the importance of through-description in allowing the BPSPs to share in the emotional journey of an opera, especially if it is focalised by one of the characters in the opera:

*The Turn of the Screw* is seen through the eyes of the governess, and so the reception of information and emotion is compromised if details are not told as you go along or if they are revealed later or before.

### 2.3.3.5 *The tension between music and text in the translation of opera*

The interviews reveal that in opera AD the tension between music and text poses a particular challenge for the translator. The two manifestations of this tension,

discussed in section 2.3.2, are explored here from the perspective of the translators. Regarding the relative importance of the music and the text of the opera, the eight audio describers gave differing responses. 50% of the interviewees asserted that music is more important, with comments such as 'prima la musica' and 'emotion is conveyed in the music so you put the music first but sometimes you need to draw attention to the emotion of a particular visual detail'. 25% of the audio describers suggested that music is less important than the text with comments such as 'music underscores the text' and the other 25% thought that both are of equal importance. However, as regards the tension between the music and the additional audio text of the AD all expressed a distinct respect for the communicative aspect of the music, reiterating the aim to avoid speaking over singing as much as possible, most especially arias. For instance, audio describer 8 proposed that the motto 'less is more' is appropriate for opera AD and interviewee 7 remarked 'you can often let the music speak for itself'.

Nevertheless, the audio describers pointed out that it is vital to be aware of incongruence between the music and visual aspects, because the music does not always accurately convey the mood. For instance, interviewee 2 commented 'it is particularly important to describe aspects which are different from what is expected or when the visual belies the music'. In ToTos, the translator does not face the challenge of trying to avoid treading on the music and does not have to directly consider the emotional impact of the music. However, the translator's choices regarding which aspects to focus on or explain in the ToTo may be influenced by the level of congruency of the visual aspects of the opera production with the music of the opera itself. For instance, if there was a ballroom scene in a given libretto in which waltz music was played, and in a given production this music was accompanied by a scene which was transposed to a disco, the translator may choose to emphasise this aspect during the ToTo.

All of the interviewees confirmed that a summary of the plot of the opera is a vital ingredient of all types of AD. This is usually chiefly provided in the AI with occasional further references to details of the storyline in the through-description. In an opera which is sung in a foreign language, three of the audio describers mentioned that they sometimes refer to the surtitles in the through-description for comprehension purposes. Hence, the challenge posed by the tension between music and text is heightened if the opera is sung in a language unfamiliar to the native

audience. If there are copious visual aspects to describe, it is likely that the additional information from the surtitles will cause further interruption of the music.

In conclusion, the translator is not only constrained by time restrictions but also by considerations as regards avoiding interference with the audience's interpretation of the various other semiotic information to which they have access, such as the music. Within these constraints the translator must choose which of the multiple visual aspects of the opera to prioritise. This discussion of the complexity of the translator's task highlights the inevitable impact of the translators' choices on the audience's reception, thus corroborating the research hypothesis.

#### **2.3.3.6 *Discussion of findings***

The diversity of opinions and approaches amongst the translators who were interviewed regarding individual translation issues in AD and ToTos highlights the complexity and flexibility of the translation process. From these findings, some general observations can be made about individual translation issues. For instance, whilst in general audio describers aim for objectivity, the translation process as a whole is inevitably subjective to a certain extent. Also, the translator aims to achieve a balance in many aspects of the translation process, for example between maintaining and breaking theatrical illusion, and between the director's intended effect and the actual impact on the audience. However, individual translation decisions are dependent on many factors such as the nature of the production and visual aspects, time constraints, the music, the type of AD and its style of delivery and so on. Therefore, the overall translation process is versatile and receptive. Furthermore, the translation process can also be described as collaborative as all types of AD and ToTos involve teamwork. The working methods of audio describers often depend on other agents in the translation network, for example if a director is willing to give an interview to be included in the AI or if a cast member is able to participate in the ToTo. Another common factor in all translation decisions is the importance of audience response which points again towards the overall dynamic nature of the translation process which is production-specific and may even be performance-specific. This focus on the audience is also reflected in a shifting approach to research into the translation process, especially in audiovisual translation, with increased importance assigned to audience reception studies, as discussed further in Part 2 (see for example Mateo, 1997: 99-102; Gambier, 2006: 5;

Chiaro, 2006; Denton, 2007: 26; Di Giovanni, 2011: 10; Künzli and Ehrensberger-Dow, 2011: 188; Tiselius and Jensen 2011, 273).

## **2.4 Audio subtitling, Braille programme notes and libretti**

The present work focuses on the primary opera accessibility facilities used in the UK and therefore analysis concentrates on AD and ToTos. However, the following two sections provide an overview of two additional facilities which are primarily targeted at BPSPs: audio subtitling and Braille resources. Firstly, the translation modality of audio subtitling will be defined and discussed, considering its use in films and live opera performances. Secondly, the adoption of Braille resources in live opera performances will be explored, focusing in particular on Braille libretti. The discussion involves identification of possible applications to UK opera performances and avenues for related future research.

### **2.4.1 Audio subtitling**

Audio subtitling is defined by Orero as 'the media accessible mode of reading aloud, or voicing, subtitles' (2007: 141). This emerging modality of audiovisual translation, which can also be described as 'spoken subtitles' (Braun and Orero, 2010: 173), is 'positioned at the interface between subtitling, audio description and voice-over' (ibid.). Rемаel discusses its use in films and denotes it as a hybrid form which like subtitles 'holds the middle between two linguistic modes' (2012: 387). Within the context of film, Rемаel describes audio subtitles as the 'dialogue, written to be spoken, then summarized and rewritten to be read as subtitles by the audience, now have to be read aloud again as audio subtitles' (ibid.). This description of the types of transfer involved in this translation process equally applies to opera where the dialogue is the opera's libretto written to be sung (and on some occasions also spoken). From an actor-network point of view, the translation network for audio subtitling in opera has several similarities with that of opera AD in that the agents include amongst others the audio describer/audio subtitler, the audience, and the headphones. However, there are some differences between these two modalities. For instance, in comparison with opera AD, the translation network for opera audio subtitling might involve additional agents, such as extra voice-talents. The relationships between the agents may also be different. For example, in audio subtitling, closer collaboration between surtitlers and audio describers or voice

talents might be necessary, as discussed further subsequently. In the opera context, the term 'audio surtitles' has been used in order to make a distinction between different genres (see Braun and Orero, 2010: 174). However, in this present work the terms audio subtitles and audio subtitling will be used respectively to encompass audio surtitles and audio surtitling for opera.

Audio subtitling is being used in films and on television both on its own and in combination with AD in various countries including the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Italy (Braun and Orero, 2010: 173; Benecke, 2012: 100). In opera, this facility is not widely available. However, at the *Gran Teatre del Liceu* (henceforth *Liceu*), the opera house in Barcelona, audio subtitles have been used in combination with AD whenever possible following an experiment in 2005 which tested the reception of an audio subtitled concert version of Donizetti's opera *Roberto Devereux* sung in Italian (Braun and Orero, 2010: 175; Orero, 2007). The results of this experiment reported that this facility was 'rated highly' despite initial reticence from BPSPs (ibid.). In the UK, audio subtitles are not available in opera, although findings from the interviews and observation discussed in section 2.3 (particularly in section 2.3.3.5) suggest that surtitles are intuitively incorporated into the AD for operas sung in a foreign language. This issue of incorporating surtitles into the AD or offering audio subtitles as a separate provision was raised during the informal discussion part of the audience reception project which will be examined further in section 5.1.3.

In the aforementioned experiment at the *Liceu*, the target audience for the audio subtitles was BPSPs. However, this facility can benefit a wider audience, as Orero mentioned with reference to the Spoken Subtitles project (1999-2001) which aimed to make foreign television programmes on Dutch television more accessible 'for those who are visually impaired, and also for the elderly and for people with language impairments such as aphasia or dyslexia, or cognitive impairment such as mental retardation or decreased concentration' (2007: 140-142). In addition, audio subtitles may be of use to hard-of-hearing patrons who find it tiring or difficult to read the surtitles (see section 3.2.2). However, this suggestion requires further research regarding the listening equipment to be used and the pitch of the voice reading the audio subtitles amongst other factors.

As reported by Braun and Orero (2010), Remael (2012) and Benecke (2012), there are many challenges and factors to be considered in producing and delivering

audio subtitling, both as a standalone facility and when offered in combination with AD. Many of these considerations stem from the differences between written and spoken language, and the interaction between visual or audio features and the subtitles. One of the main challenges in opera audio subtitling, as in opera through-description, especially when targeted at BPSPs, is avoiding interference with access to the music. Benecke's following statement, which refers to the audio subtitling of foreign language songs in films, also applies to opera audio subtitling: 'as the song itself is important, the blind and visually impaired audience wants to hear as much as possible of it and the audio subtitling has to be edited very precisely into the gaps between the song lyrics or over repeated lines' (2012: 102). For this reason, it might be argued that a verbatim rendition of the written surtitles in audio format could be too lengthy and obtrusive, and therefore adaptation is required. The argument for adaptation of written surtitles is also supported by the point that surtitles can sound unnatural when read aloud due to the difficulties presented by the change in mode from written to spoken format. Subtitles and surtitles are written to be read but 'audio subtitling offers the chance to restore some features of spoken language' (Braun and Orero, 2010: 176) into this modality which is to be listened to. Rewriting of the written surtitles might also be necessary for the spoken version due to the different impacts of the written and spoken modes, as explored in section 3.2.5, for example with reference to emotionally-charged language.

Further related dilemmas that must be considered concerning the mode and methods of delivery of audio subtitles include timing, voice, and intonation. In opera, access to the sung original is particularly important, given the significance of the music. Therefore, it might be suggested that rather than being in synchrony with the sung dialogue, the audio subtitles should be delivered in voiceover style with a slight delay after the sung words. As reported by Remael, this was the method used in the Dutch film *Oorlogswinter* 'where the original voices are heard for about half a second after which they are *subdued* by the Dutch voice of the [audio subtitles]' (2012: 389). In addition to allowing as much access as possible to the music, this method aids character identification. However, research is required to investigate explicit audience preferences regarding different delivery methods of audio subtitles in live opera, as well as implicit cognitive obstacles that this modality might potentially present.

In the aforementioned Dutch television Spoken Subtitles project, a synthetic voice was used, but in the *Liceu* opera audio surtitles experiment, 'the voice reading the surtitles was the same descriptor, or voice-talent, who had done the AD in the previous three operas' (Orero, 2007: 142). In view of the UK Guidelines on the provision on television access services (Ofcom, 2006) which emphasise the unsuitability of a synthesised voice for an entire drama or film, and given the results of previous research (see Orero, 2007: 141-2), this option would not be recommended for live opera performances. Therefore, the question is raised as to who would voice the audio subtitles for a UK opera performance. If offered as a standalone facility, the audio subtitles could be voiced by the audio describer(s). If the opera audio subtitles were to be provided in combination with the AD and only one voice-talent could be used for the AD and audio subtitles, it might be argued that changes in voice intonation could be used to distinguish between these two modalities. However, it might be advisable to use a different voice talent from the audio describer(s) providing the AD, in order to make a distinction between the spoken subtitle and the AD (Benecke, 2012: 99), thus avoiding confusion on the part of the listener. In film audio subtitling, this distinction has been clarified by employing a male voice-talent for the AD and a female voice-talent for the audio subtitles, or vice versa (Benecke, 2012: 102; Braun and Orero, 2010: 180). Braun and Orero suggest that

a more complex but perhaps more appropriate solution is to use not only a gender distinction between AD and [audio subtitles] voice, but to assign different voices to the [audio subtitles], matching the sex and possibly age of the film characters. (2010: 180)

This method has been employed to different degrees in audio subtitled films (see Benecke 2012: 102; Remael, 2012; Braun and Orero 2010: 180), although it is yet to be tested in opera audio subtitles. The cost factor may prevent the feasibility of this option.

An alternative method for clarifying distinctions between the dialogues of different characters in the audio subtitles is the 'manipulation of intonation' (Remael 2012: 389). This may prove more cost efficient as fewer voice-talents are required. However, if audio subtitles are offered in combination with AD and this method of changing voice intonation is used to distinguish between these two translation modalities, the employment of this same method within the audio subtitles to make a distinction between different characters could prove problematic. Interestingly,

with reference to the different techniques in film audio subtitling of 'acting out' or simply reading the audio subtitles, Braun and Orero state that from the results of their case study examining fourteen audio-described and audio-subtitled films, 'in general, most [audio subtitles] in the corpus are acted out to a certain extent, using appropriate intonation patterns' (2010: 182). Voice intonation in opera audio subtitles is a particularly important issue because of the highly expressive quality of the sung dialogue. The question is whether or not the intonation in the opera audio subtitles should match the emotion in the sung words. Does a neutral delivery of the opera audio subtitles detract from its impact or help prevent the distraction of attention from the portrayal of emotion in the music? These issues relate to the discussions about opera AD in sections 2.3.3.1 and 2.3.3.4, but require further research with respect to the reception of opera audio subtitles.

Braun and Orero argue that audio subtitles should be provided in combination with AD for BPSPs, stating that:

one particular challenge for [audio subtitling] is that subtitles often greatly reduce the source-text message, relying on the recipients' ability to use visual input to compensate for condensations and omissions in the subtitles. This creates problems for an audience who have no access to the visual mode. (2010: 176)

In concert version opera, this is less problematic because little AD is required due to the 'lack of dramatic action, minimal stage production and costumes, leading singers and choir all dressed in black and in a still position throughout the representation' (Braun and Orero 2010: 174). On the contrary, in staged opera, the visual context is crucial. Therefore, for BPSPs, in performances without AD audio subtitles are likely to aid comprehension to a certain extent but also cause confusion in other respects. In staged opera, it might be argued that for BPSPs access to the visual features of the production is more essential than access to the subtitles, even when the opera is sung in a foreign language. This justification is acceptable because often the same operas are repeatedly performed and it is the visual design, costumes and so on of each production that make it unique. It is possible to familiarise oneself with the plot and dialogue prior to the performance, although this places a strain on memory and therefore, although perhaps of secondary importance, access to the subtitles is also necessary for comprehension purposes. Hence, arguably whilst in concert version audio subtitles should take priority over AD, in staged opera AD should take

precedence over audio surtitles. Audience reception studies are required to investigate the preferred order of priorities in relation to more discrete and measurable evidence. If financially feasible, it would be ideal to offer both facilities, so that patrons could choose according to their own personal preference, which may vary according to each opera or individual production amongst other factors.

In both concert and staged opera, the challenge of avoiding interference with the music remains when providing audio subtitling and/or through-description and this is heightened in staged opera due to the plethora of visual aspects to translate. When providing a combined facility of through-description and audio subtitles for staged opera, reduction techniques have to be applied to both. Alternatively, AI could be provided in combination with audio subtitles and this would not impose additional condensation techniques in the audio subtitles. The issue of the relative volumes of the music, the through-description and the audio subtitles must also be taken into account (Braun and Orero, 2010: 177) to ensure the audibility of the music underneath and in between the through-description and the audio subtitles.

Within the context of live performance, another important consideration is whether the audio subtitles should be delivered live or pre-prepared. The advantage of pre-prepared audio subtitles, similarly to pre-recorded AI, is that they could be made available at all performances. In this case, the audio subtitles could be synchronised with the written surtitles, so that the surtitled could cue both simultaneously. Thus, pre-prepared audio subtitles could also provide a cost-efficient method for improving access for BPSPs to the opera. The feasibility of these suggestions and of the provision of varying combinations of modalities requires further research. However, given the minimum technical requirements, as well as the cost and time efficiency of audio subtitling (Orero 2007: 147), this translation modality seems a valid option for increasing the currently limited number of opera performances which are accessible to BPSPs (for example, see Figure 11).

#### **2.4.2 Braille facilities**

Braille can be defined as ‘a tactile system that individuals who are blind use to read and write. The basis of braille is a rectangular “cell” consisting of six raised dots, two vertical rows of three dots each’ (Silberman, 2007: 317). There are 63 combinations of these six dots, variations of which represent all the letters of the alphabet,

punctuation and groups of letters. According to a project conducted by RNIB in 2011 which aimed to provide a profile of current braille users and usage in the UK,

Braille is a fundamental tool to enable independence for many blind people, and provides a gateway to the rights of education, work and social and cultural inclusion. (Phillips and Beasley, 2011: 6)

Results from this project revealed that an estimated eighteen thousand registered BPS people in the UK read braille (ibid.: 8) and although audio facilities are increasingly used, especially for reading fiction books, 87% of the survey participants agreed 'they would be lost without Braille' (ibid.: 4).

For live opera performances in the UK, Braille and large-print programme notes are available upon request and free of charge. The large-print version is usually printed on standard white paper, and the Braille translation is provided on white card. It is also possible to obtain Braille libretti for some operas, for example from the RNIB, although these are naturally not production-specific and individual opera patrons have to acquire these independently.

A new project to make Braille libretti more readily available in the UK and the US for opera sung in a language other than English is currently in its pilot phase and will be launched in America in 2014. This project is led by Lydia Machell, Director of Prima Vista Braille Music Services<sup>9</sup> who has stated:

Surtitled translations have become an integral part of the opera-goer's experience, and are now offered in most opera houses around the world. But visually impaired audience members have been excluded from the enhanced understanding and enjoyment that surtitles bring. Opera houses offer audio descriptions and touch tours for visually impaired patrons, bringing the visual aspects of the opera closer to the mind's eye. However, these accessibility measures don't convey the intelligibility of the sung text in the way that, say, signed performances for deaf and hard of hearing patrons do.

The question of the effectiveness of current accessibility facilities in assisting comprehension of the text of the opera and the issue of BPSs' access to the surtitles raised by this comment are discussed further in sections 5.1.3, 5.2.2, and 5.2.3 with reference to audience responses to this topic. Machell continued:

As an opera-lover whose company produces braille music, I decided to address this problem. Following an initial consultation with Glyndebourne Opera, I explored a number of solutions.

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<sup>9</sup> See <http://primavistamusic.com/>.

The challenges in making surtitles accessible demanded a number of considerations: opera companies' technical requirements; the willingness, or not, of the target audience to embrace technical solutions; and, not least, the cost of the service. In discussions with Opera North, it emerged that a full translation in embossed braille format could be the most pragmatic way to bring the sung text to braille-reading audience members.

Due to the financial and technical considerations raised in the initial discussions referred to in this remark, Machell's plans for this project involve building up a library of hard copy Braille translations of opera libretti translated into English by the opera critic and translator Andrew Porter. The full libretto is to be provided in Braille as opposed to a Braille translation of the surtitles which constitute an abridged version of the libretto. Opera companies will then be able to hire the Braille libretti books from Prima Vista and they will be available in the theatre for any Braille-reading audience member to use at any performance. As mentioned in the following comment, a trial was conducted on 16 February 2013 at The Grand, Leeds at a performance of Opera North's production of Verdi's *Otello* sung in Italian with English surtitles to test the reception of the Braille libretto translation. This Braille translation was provided in hard copy format and via an electronic device called a refreshable braille display.

A pilot project with Opera North resulted in attendance at a performance of Verdi's *Otello* by two blind volunteers who were provided with braille libretti and a refreshable braille display unit. Their feedback suggested several ways forward for increasing accessibility to opera for braille-reading audience members, and a commercial model has been developed to promote this approach globally. (personal communication)

During an interview on the RNIB's radio station, Insight, one of the participants in this trial commented as follows:

The Braille text for me personally is exactly what you need [...]. Other people like to have everything described as it is happening, but I would rather let Verdi, or whichever composer it might be, tell me through the music exactly what is happening, as long as I know what people are saying. So, this was absolutely the best of all worlds for me. ("Braille at the Opera", 2013)

Interestingly, the same user commented on the benefits of having been able to attend a ToTo along with the use of the Braille libretto, thus highlighting the advantage of combining methods of opera translation. It might also be argued that AI could also be successfully used in combination with Braille libretti in order to provide a

description of the visual features of the stage design which would not be communicated in the libretti. However, further research is required in this area.

The idea of providing more than one opera accessibility facility is particularly important in the case of Braille libretti because, whilst they may be an extremely valuable provision for Braille users, BPSPs who are not Braille users will need another translation modality to allow access to the opera. Audio subtitles are the nearest equivalent to Braille libretti for non-Braille users, because both provide access to the sung text of the opera, although to varying degrees and engaging different semiotic channels. Whilst audio subtitles are received via the audio communication channel, Braille libretti engage the tactile sense. In this way, Braille libretti are similar to ToTos, although ToTos engage the sense of hearing as well as the sense of touch. The process of translating Braille libretti for opera performed in a foreign language involves translating an English translation of the opera libretto, written to be sung (and on some occasions also spoken), into a Braille translation to be read using the tactile sense. Once again, it is clear that further research is required to investigate the translation network of Braille libretti. From initial analysis, it seems likely that this translation network involves considerably fewer agents than the network for AD, ToTos and audio subtitling, namely the translator of the written English libretto, the Braille translator, and the Braille libretti users.

For Braille users, the advantage of Braille libretti over audio subtitles is that Braille libretti provide a way of accessing the sung text of a foreign opera without interfering with their reception of the music. Another principal advantage of Braille libretti, like pre-recorded AI and pre-prepared audio subtitles, is that they can be made available at all performances. However, the level of Braille reading fluency required to follow the Braille libretti may limit the number of patrons who can benefit from this facility. Again, further research is necessary to investigate this issue, but it is interesting to note the following comment addressing Braille reading fluency which was made by the aforementioned participant in the Opera North Braille libretto trial:

We [...] are pretty fluent Braille readers and [...] in *Otello* there are very busy parts where even we were challenged to keep up, but [...] you can find yourself again very quickly [...]. What we found really was that the chorus, in particular, in their sections, they repeat their words quite a lot [...]. We'd feared that we were going to be a bit behind but we found that we were actually slightly ahead at times because we'd found the next solo and of course when that comes in you can think oh that's where we are. And I would have thought [...], if you're not perhaps

quite so fluent in Braille, you could still get quite a lot out of it by finding your next landmark, if you like. For example lots of speeches would use the character's name, so if you have no Italian at all you can find that. [...]

You might be tempted to think that it's too much to be trying to follow something and to listen but in fact it makes you listen more closely because even the best music can wash over you a bit [...]. Having to concentrate, if you like, I think you do get more out of both things.

This comment raises many interesting questions for further research relating, for example, to the topic of repetition, which will be explored with reference to surtitles and sign language interpreting in section 3.2.6, and to the subject of character labelling in surtitles which is addressed in section 5.2.3. The final sentence also highlights the issue of the cognitive aspects of receiving a translation which again requires further study, especially in relation to the approach of combining different access facilities.

The use of various Braille facilities in making opera accessible to BPSPs was discussed in the audience reception project presented in Part 2 and the results relating to this subject will be analysed in section 5.1.1. A Braille libretto was not available at the project performances, however Braille programme notes were provided on request. Although the reception of the Braille facilities was not a primary focus of the audience reception project, interestingly several BPSPs raised this issue in the feedback sessions. In view of this response and the aforementioned comments regarding the Opera North Braille libretti trial, Braille opera accessibility facilities arguably constitute an important component in the path towards achieving a universally inclusive opera experience and deserve further scholarship.

### 3

## **Opera translation for deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons**

Media accessibility for the DH is a mounting concern in a society which rates social inclusion increasingly highly, as reflected in UK and European legislation. The numbers of deaf and hard-of-hearing people worldwide are rising as more people are living into old age, and the requirements of this growing minority group are gradually becoming more recognised internationally within various audiovisual media such as television, film and opera which share numerous transferable concepts of access. In the UK, the British national institute for the DH, 'Action on Hearing Loss' (formerly known as the 'Royal National Institute for the Deaf', a.k.a. RNID) reports a dramatic future increase in numbers of people with hearing loss, stating: 'hearing loss is a major public health issue affecting over 10 million people in the UK - one in six of the population. As our society ages this number is set to grow and by 2031 there will be more than 14.5 million people with hearing loss in the UK' (Action on Hearing Loss, p.11). These projections highlight the vital importance of providing and improving facilities for the DH.

In opera, the two principal current translation modalities which aid access for the DH are surtitles and sign language interpreting (henceforth SLI). Surtitles play an important role in the path towards inclusiveness, but for the DH they only provide restricted access to the various audio aspects of the opera experience (see Figure 21). Similarly, whilst SLI is an invaluable access facility, it does not cater for the requirements of the entire DH community. Therefore, it is crucial to study these translation modalities in order to explore possible solutions to ensure universal opera inclusion. In this chapter, firstly, the practice of opera SLI will be defined in section 3.1.1. This will be followed by a discussion of the methodology and results of the combination of observational techniques and dialogue with two expert opera

sign language (henceforth SL) interpreters in order to shed light on the translator's role in this unique process. Secondly, the translation modality of surtitles which overcomes the linguistic barrier and also to a certain extent the sensorial barrier will be examined. The context in which surtitles were first introduced to opera and their evolution will be briefly described, with a view to considering their development into a modality which is more suitable for DH audiences. Some of the limits for a deaf and hard-of-hearing audience of current conventional surtitling practices in the UK will be examined within the context of specific Opera North, ENO and ROH productions. Furthermore, possibilities for adapting surtitles in order to render them more accessible to the DH will be explored, with some comparison with both current and potential practices in SDH in film and television.

Prior to investigating the facilities which aid access to the opera, it is important to quell the misconception that the DH cannot enjoy music or the opera. This narrow-minded view stems from not only an inability to recognise the multilayered and multisemiotic creative complexity of opera, in which a 'mix of artistic disciplines' (Williamson, 2008: 31) play an important role, but also from a lack of understanding of hearing impediments. A large range of varying hearing abilities must be considered including 'hard of hearing, profoundly deaf, deafened, cochlear implant user, deaf British Sign Language user and deaf sign supported English user' (Shaw, 2003: 38), because 'only a small percentage of hearing-impaired individuals do not hear at all' (Darrow, 1985: 33). Furthermore, research has proven not only that 'hearing-impairment does not vitiate music responsiveness' (Darrow, 1985: 33), but also that listening to music is one of the musical activities most enjoyed by deaf individuals (Darrow, 1993: 105). Therefore, 'a theatre that is aiming to be fully accessible to all deaf people will offer all three assistive devices: sound enhancement, sign language interpretation and captioning for their performances' (Stagetext: Current Access Provision, n.d.). Music is a multisemiotic experience and therefore can be appreciated on many levels by the hearing and the DH. Evelyn Glennie, an internationally renowned percussionist, highlights the tactile element of hearing, stating:

Hearing is basically a specialized form of touch. Sound is simply vibrating air which the ear picks up and converts to electrical signals which are then interpreted by the brain. The sense of hearing is not the only sense that can do this, touch can do this too. (Glennie, 1993)

She also emphasises the significance of sight in this process, confirming

We can also see items move and vibrate. If I see a drum head or cymbal vibrate or even see the leaves of a tree moving in the wind, then subconsciously my brain creates a corresponding sound. (Glennie, 1993)

Furthermore, the entertainment value of opera for the hearing-impaired is reiterated by Orero and Matamala (2007: 274) who state that ‘the deaf and hard-of-hearing community includes people who are partially able to hear, people who hear only certain frequencies and people who cannot hear anything at all but who can feel the vibrations of the orchestra, making opera an enjoyable experience for all of them’. In addition to the appreciation of the music, the DH, like any other audience members, may also enjoy the opera as a social event and may like to accompany a friend or relative to the opera. Without translation modalities to provide access to the acoustic elements of the opera, their enjoyment of such an event is limited. Indeed, for the DH to be able to have the opportunity to access and enjoy the opera experience in all its multisemiotic and creative complexity, SLI and surtitles are necessary. Furthermore, these facilities enhance the enjoyment of the social aspect of the opera experience by allowing the DH to share and discuss their reception of the performance with other audience members during the interval and afterwards.

### **3.1 Sign language interpreting**

In this section, the process of opera SLI and the role of the SL interpreter will be discussed. The involvement of other agents in the network will also be explored. Having problematised SLI and the role of the opera SL interpreter in this complex network, the practice of this little-known modality will be analysed through findings from dialogue and observation of two opera SL interpreters.

#### **3.1.1 Problematising opera sign language interpreting**

In this present work, which employs the multisemiotic model of translation, discussed in section 1.2, interpreting is viewed as a form of translation. As Pöchhacker (2010: 155) states ‘the concept of interpreting refers to a particular form of translational activity and is therefore at once subsumed under the broader notion of translation and set apart by its unique features’. Within the multisemiotic model of translation, translation is broadly defined as a form of communication between

multiple sign systems; as a transfer process (or product thereof) between sensory communication channels. Hence, SLI is also considered a form of translation, as highlighted by Leeson and Vermeerbergen (2010: 324):

Sign language interpreting (SLI) prototypically means interpreting to and from either a spoken language or another signed language. However, the typical situation is interpreting between a spoken and a signed language. We note here that signed languages are naturally occurring languages that are independent from spoken languages.

Opera SLI not only involves interpreting from a spoken language or rather sung language, namely translating the lyrics, but also entails interpreting other acoustic aspects of the opera, such as music, displayed in the non-exhaustive scheme in Figure 21.

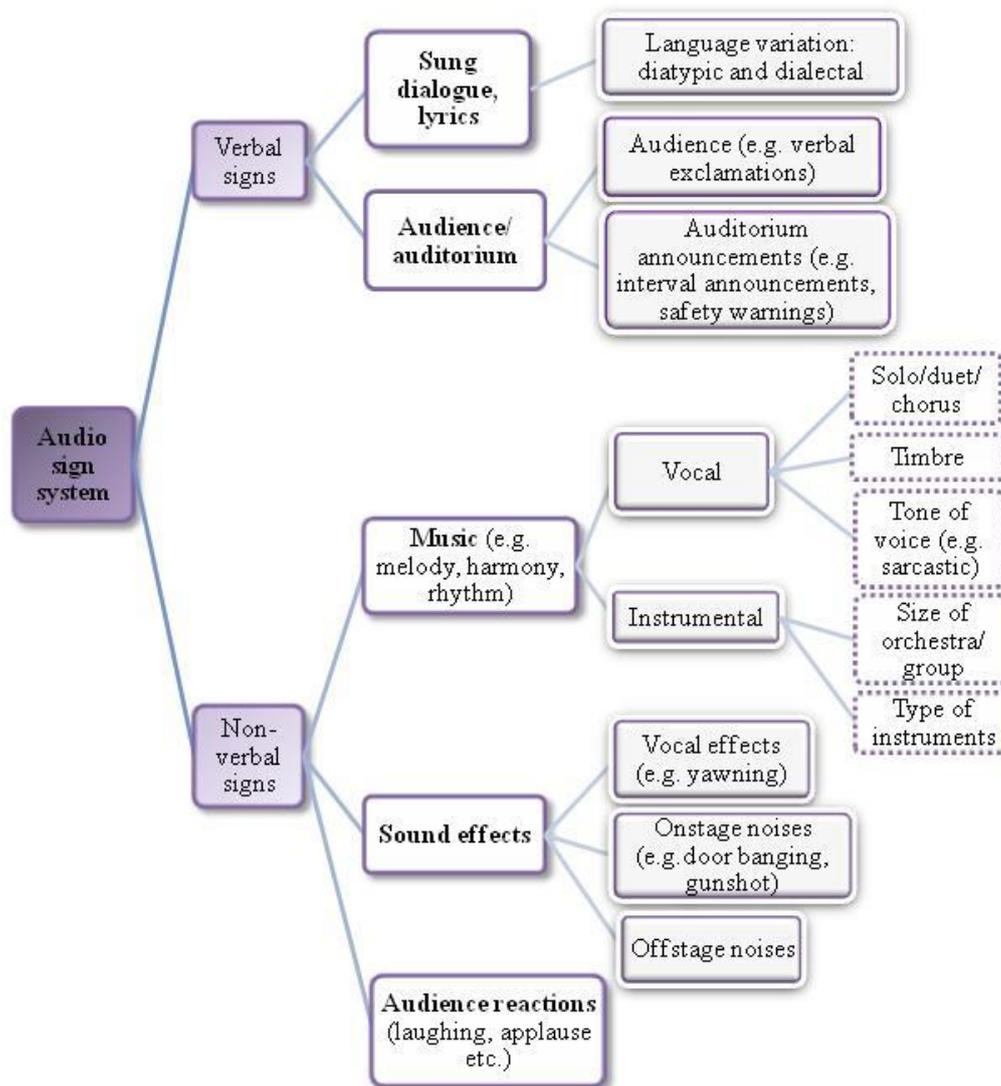


Figure 21: Schema of some of the various audio aspects of opera

These features are conveyed in sign language using a variety of communication methods. As Rocks states:

Sign language is not only made with the hands; for example, functions such as tone, mood, questions, counterfactuals and hypotheticals are all conveyed by facial expression, simultaneously expressed with, and modifying, the manual utterance'. (2011: 72)

Timmermans also confirms as follows:

Sign languages are languages that are conveyed by means of hand shapes, the movements of the hands and body, and the use of facial expressions and lip patterns. Whereas spoken languages use units of sounds to form words, sign languages use visual-gestural units of form, composed of four basic hand forms: hand shape (e.g. open or closed), hand location (e.g. on the middle of the forehead or in front of the chest), hand movement (e.g. upward or downward), and hand orientation (e.g. palm facing up or out). (2005: 9)

SLI thus primarily entails transfer between the audio channel and the visual channel. However, other sensory communication channels may be engaged. Although opera SLI predominantly engages the sense of sight to communicate audio features such as the sung words and the sound effects, the interpreter may also appeal to the tactile sense to convey other audio aspects such as the music. For instance, the rhythm of the music might be portrayed physically through bodily movements such as swaying to the beat or tapping of the hand. The communication of the music of an opera in SLI is discussed further in section 3.1.2.3.

Opera SL interpreted performances are chiefly aimed at sign language users, and in the case of UK opera performances British Sign Language (henceforth BSL) users. It is important to note at this point that each country has its own national sign language<sup>10</sup>, and that sign languages are very different from the spoken languages of the same geographical area in terms of vocabulary and syntax (Timmermans, 2005: 10). Nevertheless, in view of the indication of paralinguistic features by opera SL interpreters, for example conveying music through bodily movement, or portraying the emotion of the music via facial expression, opera sign language interpretations can also arguably be considered of use to DH patrons who are not familiar with BSL. The advantages of SL interpreted opera for non-sign language users are explored further in section 3.1.2.2 and in the discussion of the audience reception project

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<sup>10</sup> 'Some countries have more than one sign language, e.g. in Spain, Catalanian Sign Language is used in Catalonia, and Galician Sign Language in Galicia' (Timmermans, 2005: 9).

results in section 5.2.2. It is also necessary to consider that amongst sign language users there are hearing people as well as DH patrons. Furthermore, people whose first or preferred language is sign language not only include the pre-lingually deaf but also ‘some hearing people who grow up with deaf family members’ (Timmermans, 2005: 10).

The role of the opera SL interpreter is principally to facilitate social inclusion by providing access to the copious acoustic aspects of the opera experience for those who would otherwise be excluded from receiving these features. The benefits of this facility for the DH who do not understand BSL are restricted, although for those whose first or preferred language is BSL, this provision is essential in order to be able to share the multisemiotic opera experience with the rest of the audience. The opera SL interpreter contributes to social inclusion by his or her visual presence which promotes awareness of accessibility issues. However, as discussed in the next section 3.1.2, further clarification is required for some audience members with a lack of knowledge and appreciation of the purpose of the opera SL interpreter. In addition to this social role and the functional role as a translator, the SL interpreter’s task also involves a performance aspect which leads to role conflict.<sup>11</sup> These and other aspects of the role of the opera SL interpreter will be discussed further in the next section 3.1.2.

### **3.1.2 Analysing the role of the opera SL interpreter**

The role of the opera SL interpreter was investigated using the same approach as the ethnographic study of the translator’s task in the AD and ToTo processes (see section 2.3). A combination of qualitative research methods was employed including: (1) direct observation along with informal dialogue; (2) in-depth, informal, semi-structured interviews; and (3) photographs. This research was conducted between 2010 and 2012 in various UK theatres and opera houses, including Nottingham Theatre Royal, The Grand, Leeds, The Lowry, Salford Quays, the ROH, Covent Garden and The Coliseum, London. The interviewees, both female, were the two principal opera SL interpreters at the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, and Opera North. Although, as Rocks states, since the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 ‘there has been a rapid and substantial increase in the

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<sup>11</sup> In this current work, the terms interpreter and translator are used interchangeably in the context of sign language interpreting.

number of mainstream theatres providing interpreted performances of their productions' (2011: 73), in opera the number of SL interpreted performances generally remains limited to approximately 3 performances per venue per year (personal communication from Opera North). Rocks also highlights that 'there is no specialized training in interpreting for theatre' (2011: 74). Hence, there are only a very small number of SL interpreters in the UK with experience in opera SLI who take on this complex translation task.

The observation of the opera SLI process entailed taking notes on the translator's conduct and working methods: (1) throughout the SL interpreted performance from the auditorium; (2) during their preparation routine prior to this on the day, in their dressing room, and on their brief visit to the stage to check their positioning and lighting; (3) immediately after the performance. It was not possible to observe the earlier stages of preparation but these were discussed during the interviews. The interviewing techniques and recording methods were the same as those employed in the study of the translator's role in AD and ToTos (see section 2.3.3). The interview questions for the SL interpreters can be found in Appendix II in section 7.2. The amount of photographic evidence which could be collected was limited to some extent due to copyright restrictions regarding taking photos of the stage.

The topics for discussion were chosen because they relate to those selected for analysis of the translator's role in AD and ToTos and in order that comparisons can be drawn between these varying opera access facilities. There is little or no previous scholarship regarding opera SLI (Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 4) or indeed SLI for the stage in general, as Marinetti, Perteghella and Baines state 'it is notable how little has been written on this topic' (2011: 4). Therefore, this present investigation of the opera SL interpreter's role is an exploratory study which serves to identify areas for further research. The discussion here builds on from Rocks' article (2011) about the theatre SL interpreter and draws on literature about community SLI (see for example Roy, 2002; Dickinson and Turner, 2008; Swabey and Gajewski-Mickelson, 2008), with which interesting parallels can be made regarding the role of the opera SL interpreter. Furthermore, given the theoretical framework of this present work, the focus is on the collaborative and multifaceted nature of the opera SLI process.

In line with this focus, the SL interpreter's role is examined following Lee and Llewellyn-Jones' model of a multidimensional analysis of interpreter behaviour

which concentrates on the ‘interactions amongst decisions’ (2011: 2). The relevant subject matters addressed in the ITC Guidelines on Standards for Sign Language on Digital Terrestrial Television (Ofcom, 2002) and Ofcom’s Code on Television Access Services which came into effect 1 January 2013 (Ofcom, 2012b) are also used as reference points for the investigation. Therefore, the results of the interviews and observations are discussed with regard to the interpreter’s decisions relating to: (1) the performance aspect, including preparation, positioning, synchronising, and portrayal of spontaneous stage business; (2) the intended audience, their reactions and interactions with the SL interpreter; (3) the communication of paralinguistic aspects including music and emotion.

### 3.1.2.1 *Preparing for and performing a sign language interpretation of a live opera*

The performance aspect of opera SLI is highlighted due to the live nature of the delivery and the generally onstage positioning of the SL interpreter. To be more precise, the SL interpreter usually stands at the periphery of the stage (Orero and Matamala, 2007) in a position which is visible to as many of the audience members as possible, as shown in Figure 22.



Figure 22: Photo showing the SL interpreter’s positioning in relation to the entire stage and the audience (photo courtesy of Opera North).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The view of the stage is blocked out for copyright reasons.

If the SL interpreter is visible to all, this can be described as open access, because an open access facility can be defined as available to everyone in the audience (with the exception of those audience members who do not have use of the sensory channel by which the access facility is delivered).<sup>13</sup> Conversely, a closed access facility can be defined as not available for everyone in the audience (accepting the qualification mentioned in the definition of open access). A further distinction is needed to clarify the audience member's element of choice in activating the access facility. Therefore, the terms 'opaque' and 'transparent' are proposed, the first meaning that the audience member does not have this choice, and the second referring to a scenario in which the patron does have this choice. For instance, a SL interpreter who is performing at the side of the stage and is visible to all audience members can be described as an opaque open access facility. If the SL interpreter is positioned in such a way that the SL interpreting is only available to certain audience members, this can be described as an opaque closed access facility. An example of this type of closed access in which the SL interpreting is only available to a section of the audience where seats have been allocated to DH audience members is shown in Figure 23 where the SL interpreter is standing amongst the audience.



Figure 23: The SL interpreter amongst the audience at the open-air performance of the play *The Passion of Jesus* in Trafalgar Square, London.

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<sup>13</sup> This qualification in brackets is included to avoid perfunctory scenarios, for example a scenario in which SLI would be deemed a 'closed' access facility if a member of the audience was totally blind and therefore did not have access to the SLI.

If a video recording of the SL interpreter is available on demand to be displayed on individual screens, such as smartphones, this can be described as a transparent closed access facility if it is only available for DH patrons for example and a transparent open access facility if it is available for all patrons.

The results of the observation and interviews revealed the significance of the currently most common onstage positioning of the SL interpreter in live opera performances. One SL interpreter commented as follows:

If I'm on stage, I think I can become much more integrated into the performance, yet strangely inconspicuous because of that. If I have to be positioned slightly away from the stage, so that the eye line for the deaf people is quite wide, it's not ideal for the audience, and it puts a kind of wall between me and the production. I find that very hard, particularly with music, to then completely feel part of what's happening, and I think the deaf audience lose out to a certain extent.

This remark also indicates the SL interpreter's lack of choice regarding his or her positioning, as this decision is most likely to be made by the director or a member of the stage design team. In view of this influence of the members of the production team on this particular decision in the translation process, it might be suggested that they are agents in the translation network. Interestingly, communication between the SL interpreter and members of the production team is often minimal and, as discussed later in the concluding remarks to Part 1, the lack of dialogue between these agents in the translation process has proved problematic.

The amount of space for the SL interpreter will also usually be pre-determined and often dictated by the set design, thus highlighting the notion, which follows actor-network theory, that the set is also an agent in the translation process. As demonstrated in Figure 24, the SL interpreter generally makes a quick visit to the stage prior to the performance to check their positioning and the room for movement.



Figure 24: The SL interpreter checking positioning on stage prior to the performance (photo courtesy of Opera North).

The SL interpreter can choose the angle at which they stand, and this is an important part of the translation process, for example in terms of character identification. As demonstrated in Figure 25, the SL interpreter might use the technique of turning slightly to face one direction and then another in order to indicate the dialogue of different characters.



Figure 25: Photos illustrating the changing angle at which the SL interpreter stands (photos courtesy of Opera North).

The SL interpreter's decision regarding the direction they face can also affect the translation process in terms of synchronisation, as suggested by the following comment:

I definitely prefer to be on the stage, and it's crucial that I can see what is happening. I'm diagonal usually; I'm facing to the centre of the stalls and that's so that I can keep a peripheral eye on the stage.

The SL interpreter needs to be able to keep an eye on the stage because although he or she is translating the audio aspects of the opera, visual cues aid synchronisation, particularly with dialogue. For hearing SL interpreters, as are those participating in this study, following the music helps ensure synchrony to a certain extent, although visual prompts are also key. By combining sight and sound, the SL interpreter aims to match the timing of the signed sentences with the sung words as much as possible, although the syntax often differs due to the dissimilar grammatical structures of the two independent languages: BSL and English (Ofcom, 2002: 5). Some SL interpreters for theatre are deaf or hard-of-hearing and access to the visual aspects for synchronisation purposes is particularly crucial for them. If the opera is sung in a foreign language, the SL interpreter's positioning and view of the stage is important in terms of the communication of emotion, irrespective of his or her hearing ability. For instance, the following remark suggests that it is helpful for the SL interpreter to be able to see the actors' faces for the purpose of conveying the emotional nuances which he or she may not receive via the audio channel if the opera is not sung in the vernacular: 'If it's in a foreign language, I always need to see the singers' facial expressions'. The translation of emotion will be discussed further in section 3.1.2.3.

One of the SL interpreters mentioned that they use an 'ear-prompt' if the opera is performed in a foreign language or even if it is sung in English but is less familiar to the signer and a particularly difficult opera to interpret. The following comment explains the role of the ear-prompt:

It's always someone who can read music and knows the piece very well. They read a line in English, just read it, they don't tell me who it is, they don't need to have any intonation - they just have to read a line to me. And that gives me a cue as to what everyone else is singing and that allows me to stay up with the music. I don't want them to add anything about sound effects or who is singing what; they just throw me lines.

The SL interpreter is fed occasional lines from the English translation of the opera libretto by the ear-prompt into an earpiece which is always worn 'in the opposite ear to the stage, so I have English in one ear and the foreign language of the sung words and the music in general in the other ear'. The involvement of an ear-prompt adds extra complexity to the translation process, as there is a second stream of information to the SL interpreter via the audio channel and the ear-prompt can be seen as an additional agent in the network. The function of the ear-prompt relates to the positioning of the SL interpreter because the SL interpreter pointed out that the audio cues can also be helpful 'if the set doesn't throw the sound to me or if the singer is facing upstage'.

The combination of access to the audio and visual aspects of the opera, whenever possible, is necessary for the SL interpreter to achieve semiotic cohesion, a notion which refers to the 'interaction between words and images' and between 'speech and gesture' (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 49-52). Indeed, Díaz-Cintas and Remael's statement that if subtitles 'are to function effectively they must interact with and rely on all the film's different channels' (2007: 45) can be applied to SLI for opera, merely replacing the word film with opera. The ability to achieve semiotic cohesion in SLI for live opera requires a combination of careful preparation in terms of familiarising oneself with the opera and spontaneity in performance. Interestingly, the results from the interviews revealed that the SL interpreter does not always have access to the particular opera production which is to be signed until the SL interpreted performance itself. Sometimes it might be possible to attend rehearsals but recordings of dress rehearsals are not always available due to copyright issues. Therefore, the SL interpreter generally prepares by working from a recording of the opera, but not of the particular production to be signed. The SL interpreter does not have a dress rehearsal, and results from this study suggested that spontaneity is an important part of the performance, as demonstrated by the following remark:

I'd like to think my performance is spontaneous. Although I put a lot of preparation into it, I don't pre-decide my signs. In my head, I might work something out if I think something is difficult, and on odd occasions I may need to check something out speed-wise. For example, there is an aria in *The Barber of Seville* which is hugely fast and when I first signed this opera, I used to have to have little shots at it to see whether I could sign at that speed. But I don't stand in front of the mirror and practise.

Spontaneity is particularly significant within the context of live performance as there is always the possibility of spontaneous stage business. For instance, in the SL interpreted performance of Opera North's 2010 production of Jonathan Dove's opera *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, two of the actors in the opera spontaneously interacted with the SL interpreter onstage, staying in character as a cat and a fox, touching her hair and smelling her. This did not require interpreting as the interaction was purely visual, but it demanded spontaneity on the part of the SL interpreter, thus highlighting the performance aspect of this translation modality. When asked about this, the SL interpreter replied 'I don't mind any interaction [with the actors] and being included [in the onstage action] as long as it doesn't stop me signing.' The same SL interpreter continued to explain that if the actors interact with her in such a way that requires dialogue, for example if they ask a question, it is not possible to sign this because not only does the question have to be signed but also the answer, and this extra translation could interfere with the SLI of the opera. In opera, spontaneous alterations in the acoustic elements are less likely than in theatre, for example, where improvisation is more common. However, one of the SL interpreters commented on the need for spontaneity if, for instance there is an incident onstage which requires audio explanation. She gave the example of a situation in which a piece of scenery fell on an international opera star and the performance had to be temporarily halted and an audio announcement made which required translation into BSL for the DH patrons. This highlights the role of the SL interpreter in providing access to the entire opera experience.

### **3.1.2.2 *The intended audience and their reactions***

The primary target audience for SL interpreted opera performances in the UK is BSL users. However, as previously mentioned, sign language interpretation of opera can also be of benefit to DH patrons who are not BSL users to a certain degree due to the portrayal of paralinguistic features, as discussed further in section 3.1.2.3. The use of SL interpreted performances is limited for non-BSL users in terms of providing access to the text of the opera, and therefore surtitles are required for this purpose. However, for BSL users, the sign language interpretation is essential in providing access to the linguistic subtleties of the opera text in addition to the paralinguistic aspects. In view of the diverse needs of the DH, both facilities are necessary in order

to provide opera access for all. With regard to surtitles, one of the SL interpreters participating in the study made the following comment:

Surtitles are a back-up, they're a gist of what is going on. There's no repetition, there's no emotion, there's no indication of who's singing what. [...] The surtitles are only a précis, whereas I'm giving the whole performance. [...] If you asked Deaf people [referring to those whose first or preferred language is BSL] to rely on surtitles, it would be like asking someone who only spoke English to go to an Italian opera with German surtitles. They're different languages. And even amongst deaf people who can read English, most would be confused over who is singing what, how the emotion was, where the opera was going, why there was no repetition, sound effects and so on.

The lack of indication of repeats and other paralinguistic information in standard surtitles, as mentioned in the above remark, is discussed further in section 3.2. For some DH patrons, SLI and surtitles are complementary facilities. For instance, a deaf or hard-of-hearing patron who is not a BSL user may refer to the surtitles for a gist of the dialogue, but look at the SL interpreter for portrayal of the emotion and music. This complementary nature of SLI and surtitles is shown in Figure 26

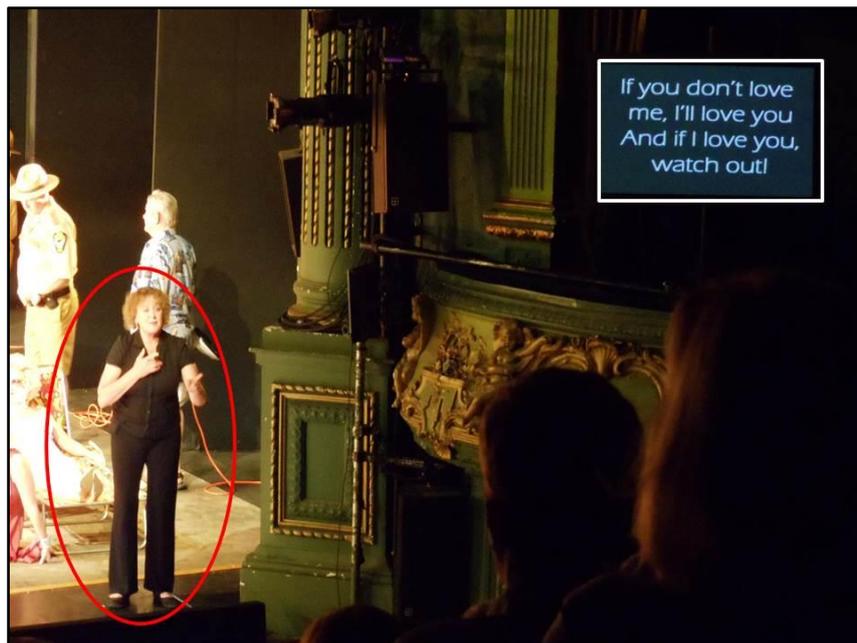


Figure 26: Photo demonstrating the complementary nature of the surtitles and the SL interpreter for DH patrons (photo courtesy of Opera North).

Furthermore, sometimes the SL interpreter uses exaggerated lip movements to mouth words, as shown in Figure 27, and therefore it may be possible to lip-read depending on the distance between the patron and the SL interpreter.

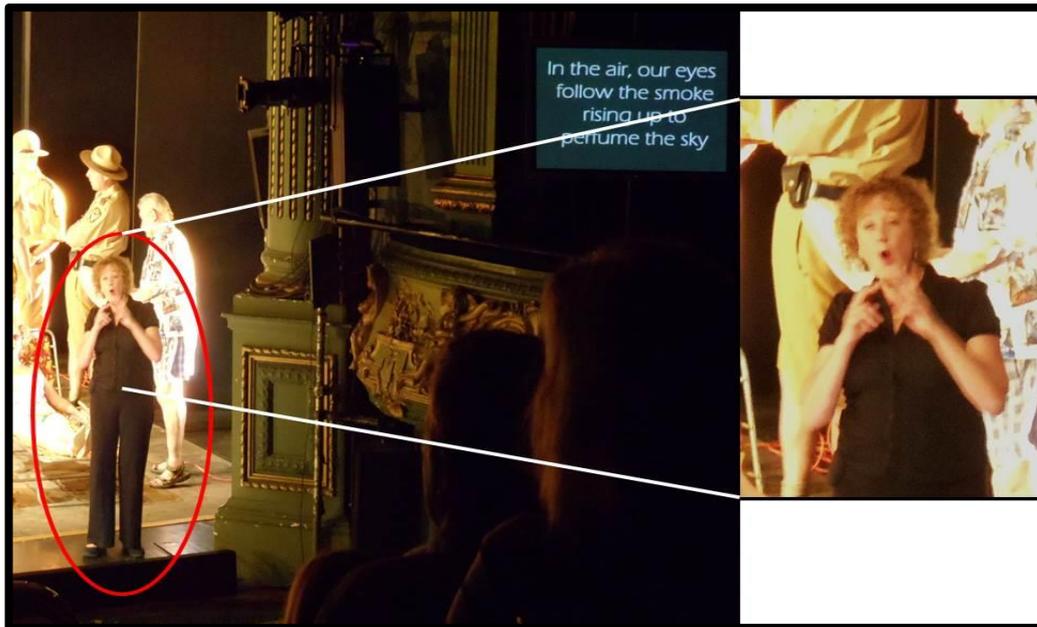


Figure 27: Images showing the SL interpreter's lip movements (photos courtesy of Opera North).

This notion of lip-reading is explored further in the discussion of the results of the audience reception project in section 5.2.2. The SL interpreter is often positioned closer to the onstage action than the surtitles. Hence, for non-BSL users, especially those who can lip-read, a quick glance at the SL interpreter might be easier and less distracting from the onstage action of the opera than referring to the surtitles.

With regard to the visibility of the SL interpreter and the issue of distraction, results from the interviews and observations revealed that this is a complex issue. Both SL interpreters wore black for their performances and subtle lighting was used to illuminate their face and upper body (see Figure 28), as well as often the lower body.



Figure 28: Photo showing the SL interpreter's black dress code and the lighting used.

The following comment by one of the SL interpreters emphasises the importance of not proving a distraction and the paradoxical notion that being positioned onstage is less distracting, as also alluded to in the first remark quoted in the previous section 3.1.2.1:

I wear black. That's for the simple reason that I need to be everyone on stage and I don't want to split focus or draw attention to myself any more than I have to. My whole point about being on stage is to be conspicuously inconspicuous.

This paradox highlights the ambiguity or rather dynamic nature of the SL interpreter's role who is evidently a performer and arguably part of the opera performance (at least for the DH) but at the same time separate from it. Here, a parallel can be drawn with the conductor who is detached from the opera performance in some ways, in terms of his or her positioning in the orchestra pit but musically part of the performance. Similarly to the conductor, the SL interpreter is usually invited to take a curtain call with the rest of the artistic team at the end of the performance.

There is a similarly fine line between the SL interpreter and the audience. Although one SL interpreter stated 'I never feel part of the audience', she also mentioned that audience members have on occasions interacted with her, for example passing her a tissue or a cough sweet just before leaving the stage for the interval. The audience reactions can influence the translation process because the SL

interpreter may also sometimes translate these reactions in addition to communication of the onstage opera performance. For instance, one SL interpreter gave the example of an occasion in a performance of Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte* when the singer got the words the wrong way around causing the hearing audience to laugh, and therefore the SL interpreter had to explain this reaction to the DH patrons. In addition, results of the interviews and observations indicated that the SL interpreter's approach differs if there are a large number of children in the audience. In this case, one of the SL interpreters suggested that the focus is on making it 'an enjoyable, positive experience of opera', whereas with predominantly adult audiences it is more about 'providing access to the opera in terms of the music and emotion, and the plot, so that they have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether opera is a medium which they will enjoy or not'.

### 3.1.2.3 *The translation of paralinguistic features of the opera*

The results of the interviews and observations highlighted the importance in opera SLI of communicating the music and emotion of the opera. As shown in Figure 29, emotion can be conveyed in sign language in many ways including facial expression, hand signs and stance.



Figure 29: Photos showing the SL interpreter using a combination of facial expression, hand signs and bodily movement to convey characterisation and emotion in SLI opera (photos courtesy of Opera North).

Although some such signs may not be comprehensible to DH patrons who are not BSL users, the expression of emotion is generally more likely to be understandable to these audience members than the interpretation of other features such as dialogue. For instance, in Figure 30, even when viewed in isolation, the expression of emotion by the SL interpreter can be understood or at least deduced by non-BSL users. Moreover, when received within the context of the opera, this emotional expression would be more readily comprehensible. It is also interesting to note that in Figure 30 there are no words on the surtitles screen and therefore the DH are relying merely on the sign language interpretation at that particular point.



Figure 30: The SL interpreter conveying emotion alongside a blank surtitles screen (photo courtesy of Opera North).

One of the SL interpreters, who mentioned that spontaneity is an important part of the performance (see final comment in section 3.1.2.1), also remarked on aiming for a spontaneous interpretation of emotion in general, as follows:

One of the things I decided to do a long time ago was not to pre-plan how I was going to do anything, unless I had to and that's for speed or for a particularly difficult emotion to interpret. In *La Bohème* there's a famous quartet and the emotions of the two couples are very different and I had to get my head around that at first when I did that. So those kinds of things I work harder on when preparing, but I don't like to have a planned way of signing something because I want it to be spontaneous and how I feel at the time.

Furthermore, the subsequent comment highlights that techniques which are not conventional in SLI in general are often used in the portrayal of the music, which includes emotional expression and other details enumerated below.

In my experience, strangely you have to forget interpreting in a sense, because you have to use whatever your skills are to make the opera accessible musically in order to make it different from a play or from standing up and signing at a conference. So, you mix BSL, English, whatever is needed to make it accessible for Deaf people.

Techniques for conveying music include swaying to the beat and hand movements to indicate the rhythm, tempo or the length of a note. The texture and dynamic of the music is also often shown through bodily movement and by varying the size of the hand movements. For instance, in a loud, heavier passage of music, the SL interpreter might indicate the beat with larger hand movements than in a quiet, lighter musical moment at which point he or she might only use finger movements. The variation in the size of hand movements is restricted to some extent due to an awareness of the importance of discretion, as demonstrated by the following remark:

As an interpreter in theatre, I think you need to be there but not be there. I think that's really important. So, what you do during moments when there is only music and no dialogue is crucial. One of the things I decided to do when I started doing this is to try and develop an understanding of the music that was happening whilst there was just orchestra playing, which I try to express with my hands. But you have to be discreet about it and you don't want people distracted by big hand movements at the side of the stage: that would be ridiculous and it wouldn't be fair on the rest of the audience really, so it has to be subtle.

Therefore, although in orchestral passages the SL interpreter generally uses more discreet hand or finger movements, in sung dialogue there is more freedom to convey musical details such as crescendos and so on through more expressive hand and body movements. Instrumentation is not generally indicated, although if, for example, a solo flute was playing, the SL interpreter's hand and body movements would indicate that the texture and dynamic was lighter than in a loud percussion section.

In addition to the portrayal of music and emotion, the SL interpreter also always indicates repetition in the dialogue, as specified by the following remark made by one of the SL interpreters: 'if there is someone singing, I'm signing'. Any relevant sound effects which are not accompanied by clearly visible visual action are

also communicated by the SL interpreter. The significance of the portrayal of these aspects is discussed further in sections 3.2.6 and 3.2.4 respectively.

#### **3.1.2.4 Discussion of findings**

The findings from the interviews and observation emphasise the interrelation between the individual translation decisions of the SL interpreter and other agents in the translation network. For instance, the decision regarding the positioning of the SL interpreter impacts upon choices regarding the portrayal of emotion, if for instance he or she cannot see the actors' facial expressions, as well as affecting issues of synchronisation and semiotic cohesion. Also, the SL interpreter's choices regarding the spontaneity of the performance relate closely to decisions about the speed and complexity of interpretation.

In addition, the findings regarding the interactions between the SL interpreter and members of the opera production team, the set, and on occasions an ear-prompt highlight the collaborative aspect of the translation process. The paradoxical nature of the SL interpreter's role as an inconspicuous performer is also repeatedly emphasised with respect to positioning, expression of musical detail and differing audience requirements amongst other issues. For instance, the SL interpreter tries to avoid distraction from the action of the opera for DH and hearing audiences, whilst providing access to the emotion of the music through an expressive and artistic visual performance. Thus, the SL interpreter is faced with the challenge of role conflict, as is also experienced by SL interpreters in employment settings who 'switch between confidant, co-worker, interpreter, assistant and advocate' (Dickinson and Turner, 2008: 231; see also Swabey and Gajewski-Mickelson, 2008; Roy, 2000). Similarly, the opera SL interpreter can be described as an access facilitator, a performer, a translator, a narrator, and a mediator. Hence, the role of the SL interpreter is complex, collaborative and multidimensional.

The complexity and tension surrounding the issue of the visibility of the SL interpreter is highlighted by the findings from the interviews as well as the results from the audience reception project (see sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.4). Thus, the need to raise public awareness regarding the function of SL interpreter in contributing to social inclusion is suggested. The sensitivity with respect to this topic of the visibility of the SL interpreter has been heightened due to resistance from 'people who consider signed language and surtitling obtrusive and annoying practices that

hinder the full reception of the visual component' (Orero and Matamala, 2007: 274). Therefore, arguably a general announcement should be made before each performance or a written notice handed out to all patrons to explain the presence of the SL interpreter for the benefit of all audience members, who are sometimes unaware of the purpose of this facility. In addition, it may be important for partially-sighted patrons to be informed of the presence of a SL interpreter onstage in the live AD to avoid confusion, as they might be able to see movement at the side of the stage but not enough to understand what it is.

### **3.2 Surtitles**

Surtitles have largely paved the way in the path towards opera accessibility for all, progressing alongside legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (Great Britain Parliament, 2005), amending the 1995 Act, and the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive (European Parliament, 2010), renaming and amending the 1989 Television Without Frontiers directive. Surtitles emerged thanks to technological advances in order to respond to a 'reception need' (Mateo, 2008: 136) as viewers developed an increasing desire to understand the text of the opera, and they continue to allow wider audiences to enjoy access to this multisemiotic art form. Whilst causing substantial controversy when introduced to opera houses in the 1980s (Burton, 2009: 58-62; Low, 2002: 97-98, 109)<sup>14</sup>, surtitles have had a significant impact on the expectations of the audience towards opera accessibility and led to the development of further opera translation services for audiences with differing visual and hearing ability (Orero and Matamala, 2007: 264-265; Burton, 2009: 62). As audience attitudes towards surtitles and approaches to viewing opera have changed (Mateo, 2007: 178; Burton, 2009: 61), the types of translation provided by surtitles have evolved to include both interlingual and intralingual transfer. This section focuses on the next possible phase in this diversification to incorporate intersemiotic translation will be explored, focusing on the translator's role in the reception of opera by a DH audience.

Firstly, some of the restrictions of conventional surtitling practices in the UK for the DH will be discussed, considering the notion of access to the opera

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<sup>14</sup> There are differing accounts regarding the first introduction of surtitles in an opera house with reports that they were used in Hong Kong and Copenhagen in the early 1980s, in Canada around 1983, and in Britain at the ROH in 1986 (see Burton, 2009 and Griesel, 2009 for further details).

experience as a whole. Issues such as the portrayal of repeated words or phrases, additional audio aspects including sound effects and musical elements, language variation and character identification will be explored. The positioning of the surtitles and modes of delivery will also be investigated, taking into account the challenge of accommodating the varying requirements of both the hearing and the DH audience. Secondly, bearing in mind the aforementioned issues, possible methods to render surtitles more accessible to the DH will be examined, focusing in particular on the representation of audio elements which provoke an audience response, such as humorous aspects. Comparisons will be made throughout with subtitles for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (henceforth SDH) in film and television, and with the methods adopted by Stagertext, the UK registered charity number 1084300. Stagertext 'provides captioning and live speech-to-text services to theatres and other arts venues to make their activities accessible to people who are deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing' (Stagertext, n.d.). Stagertext's services differ from current standard surtitling facilities offered in UK opera houses which are not targeted specifically at the DH and are mostly provided by in-house surtitlers (Palmer, 2012; Mateo, 2007: 172-173). This section will concentrate on live performance of opera whilst also providing some comment on the transferability of the access concepts to other contexts and media. Finally, the overall feasibility of providing surtitles which are specifically targeted at the DH will be considered, and the question of resistance to such a development will be raised.

### **3.2.1 Definition and terminology**

Before starting this investigation proper, it is necessary to briefly define surtitles and to clarify a related terminological issue. Surtitles are defined by Palmer as 'an abridged simultaneous translation of the libretto' (2012: 21). At present, within the context of live opera, it is most common to use the term 'surtitles' referring to translated text 'displayed above the stage' (Burton, 2009: 58). In addition, the terms 'surtitling' and 'surtitler' are employed in relation to this profession. Therefore, this terminology is adopted throughout the current work. However, it is important to note that at present, surtitles shown in opera houses take a number of forms and can be displayed in different positions around the stage as well as on separate individual screens (Freddi and Luraghi, 2011: 55). At Nottingham Theatre Royal, for example,

the surtitles for Opera North's productions are sometimes shown on screens at the sides of the stage (see Figure 31).



Figure 31: Side surtitles screens at Nottingham Theatre Royal during a performance of Opera North's production of *Carmen*, 24 May 2011 (photo courtesy of Opera North).<sup>15</sup>

At the ROH in Covent Garden and other international venues, such as the *Liceu* in Barcelona and the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where the seatback system was first introduced in 1994 (Palmer, 2012: 21), in addition to the main surtitles screen, seatback screens display the surtitles (see Figure 32). The issues surrounding the positioning of surtitles screens in relation to the stage and other visual elements (such as a SL interpreter) are discussed in sections 3.1.2.2 and 3.2.7, considering the varying requirements of different audience members.

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<sup>15</sup> The stage is blacked out for copyright reasons.



Figure 32: Seatback screen at the *Liceu*, Barcelona.

From an actor-network perspective, the surtitles screen may be considered as an agent in the translation network in addition to the surtitlers who are ‘responsible for sourcing, programming and cueing the titles during performances’ and the surtitle authors or translators who provide the translated text of the surtitles (Palmer, 2012: 25). As Palmer highlights, the surtitler and the surtitle author or translator may occasionally be one and the same (*ibid.*).

### 3.2.2 Limits of current standard surtitles

Surtitles in their current standard form in the UK can fulfil a similar function for some DH patrons to that for hearing audiences by assisting access to the text of the opera. At present, surtitles are primarily addressed to a hearing audience or as Orero and Matamala state ‘an audience that is not sensorially impaired’ (2007: 274). Nevertheless, surtitles, both as interlingual and intralingual translation, can to some extent be a useful resource for some DH audience members in terms of comprehension of the language, the plot and other linguistic elements. However, there are some characteristics of conventional surtitles which are not suited to the DH and which can hinder ‘the full reception of the opera’ by these patrons (Orero and Matamala, 2007: 274).

For some DH patrons whose first or preferred language is sign language, reading surtitles can be a difficult and tiring experience, and therefore their use is limited. Indeed, whilst surtitles are a valuable provision, they do not address all the needs of the entire DH community in order to allow as comprehensive access as

possible to the complete opera experience. The number of people in the UK who use BSL as their first or preferred language is estimated at 50,000 people (Action on Hearing Loss, n.d.). This constitutes around 0.5 percent of the total number of more than ten million people in the UK affected by hearing loss (ibid.). The provision of an alternative translation service, in the form of SL interpreted performances, is vital to ensure opera accessibility for all. For the group of the deaf community who use BSL as their first or preferred language, having to read surtitles in order to be able to access the opera text may detract from their enjoyment of the experience or even prevent access if they have reading difficulties. In addition, as discussed in section 3.1.2.3, SL interpreters often convey paralinguistic elements, such as providing a feel for the rhythm and mood of the music in their bodily movements, which is not communicated in conventional surtitles.

This lack of communication of paralinguistic elements in surtitles in their current standard format is one of their main limitations in terms of access. DH patrons who are not sign language users rely on the surtitles for access to the audio aspects of the opera, but as standard surtitles are not specifically targeted at the DH, they arguably do not provide sufficient access to the audio aspects of the opera experience as a whole for this group. SDH for film and television, as Díaz-Cintas and Anderman (2009: 5) summarise, ‘incorporate all paralinguistic information that contributes to the development of the plot or to the creation of atmosphere, which a deaf person cannot access from the soundtrack e.g. a telephone ringing, laughter, applause, a knock on the door, and the like’. However, in opera at present, surtitles do not include such details, and are reserved for communicating the text of the opera whether as an interlingual or intralingual translation. Similarly to films, the paralinguistic elements in opera include, amongst others, sound effects and musical features. Additionally in a live opera performance, audio elements of the opera experience as a whole, such as auditorium announcements, might also require consideration

### **3.2.3 Auditorium announcements**

At present in the UK, standard surtitles rarely indicate auditorium announcements such as safety instructions, or pre-show and interval notices. Although some of this information may be included in the programme, DH patrons may not have independent access to audio communications conveying these details and last-

minute messages. For example, at the performance of ENO's production of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* on 17 November 2010, a spoken announcement was made from the stage before the start of the performance informing that the actress designated in the programme as playing the part of Donna Elvira was not able to perform at the last minute and naming her replacement. This information would not have been received by most DH spectators, especially those seated too far from the stage to be able to lip-read, as it was not included in the surtitles or any other visual format. Although not crucial to the understanding or enjoyment of the opera, the lack of communication of these details in standard surtitles can be frustrating and demeaning for the DH, who may be dissuaded from attending opera because they feel excluded from the opera experience as a whole. This sense of exclusion, which is compounded by the limited number of SL interpreted opera performances, is discussed further in section 5.2 with reference to the results of the audience reception project.

#### **3.2.4 Sound effects**

For DH opera patrons, the lack of indication in surtitles of sound effects, especially those which are not accompanied by visual action implying a sound, may not only detract from their enjoyment of sharing the entire opera experience concurrently with other hearing audience members, but it may also impair their comprehension of the opera, as some sounds, for example an offstage gunshot, may be crucial to the plot. It is important to consider sound effects produced by paralinguistic elements, linguistic features or a combination of both, such as sung words, because if not replicated in the surtitles, their impact may be lost on DH patrons. For instance, in Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*, in the duet between Papagena and Papageno, these two characters repeatedly exchange the syllable 'Pa', stuttering and resembling bird calls. In current standard surtitles, the 'Pa...Pa...Pa' and so on is generally not indicated because for a hearing audience this could be distracting. However, for DH patrons, the effect produced by the sound could be lost if not translated visually in the surtitles.

It has also been argued that for hearing audiences in some cases surtitles go against the composer's or librettist's intentions because certain words or musical compositions have been chosen for their phonic effect rather than their meaning and therefore the words are not supposed to be heard. For example, David Syrus, Head

of Music Staff at the ROH has stated, with reference to the storm scenes in Britten's *Billy Budd*, written and sung in English, that 'the words are not intended to be heard and that it is the alliterative sounds they make that create the required atmosphere rather than the meaning of the words' (Palmer, 2012: 29). However, although this might apply for most hearing audience members, for DH patrons who cannot hear the effect produced by the audio aspects, the visual representation of the words in the surtitles may be vital to their reception of the composer's intended impact.

Interestingly, this may also be the case for some hearing audience members who are essentially 'deaf' to certain audio aspects because they are seated in an area of the theatre where acoustics are poor, or in other circumstances because the sung language of the opera is not their mother-tongue, as highlighted by Palmer (2012: 29) in an argument in favour of intralingual surtitles. Other factors which may reduce audio access to the words for both hearing and hard-of-hearing patrons, whether or not in synchrony with the composer's or librettist's intentions, may also need to be compensated for in the surtitles in order to communicate important details of the plot or to create the desired acoustic impact. These factors include inaudibility of words sung in particularly high or low registers or in certain parts of a singer's range where articulation is reduced or during passages with loud orchestral accompaniment. This issue highlights the complexity of the translator's task in making translation decisions affected by compositional intentions that are open to many interpretations and in responding to altered audience expectations. It might be suggested that current audiences tend to expect more comprehensive access to the various aspects of the opera than previously and wish 'to understand the verbal text at the same time as they receive the music' (Mateo, 2008: 137) as well as the other semiotic stimuli which engage the various channels of communication. Indeed, this inclination and greater desire in the audience to comprehend the text, one of the reasons for which surtitles were originally invented (Desblache, 2008: 163), has arguably been encouraged by the introduction of this mode of translation, as audiences have become accustomed to understanding more whilst also simultaneously receiving the various audio and onstage visual aspects of the opera. Therefore, the lack of communication in conventional surtitles of audio aspects which are inaccessible to certain audience members, whether deaf, hard-of-hearing or hearing, may become an increasingly limiting aspect. Furthermore, as 'our traditional media are giving way to a completely different generation of multimedial

gadgets' (Neves, 2008: 139) and, in general, there is increased exposure to a more multisemiotic environment, raised expectations from all members of the public for multisemiotic, inclusive and interactive modes of entertainment may demand a different approach to opera accessibility which includes all, rather than providing special access to certain patrons with specific requirements.

### 3.2.5 Language variation

Another audio linguistic element which is rarely indicated in standard surtitles, and whose portrayal in the surtitles could also arguably be of benefit to hearing as well as DH audiences, is language variation. This issue is more significant in modern opera or modern adaptations of classic opera where both dialectal, defined as variety 'according to the user', and diatypic, defined as variety 'according to the use' (Halliday 1978: 35, 110), varieties may be used for effect. For instance, certain characters in an opera, such as Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, might sing or speak with a different social dialect for purposes of characterisation, or differing geographical dialects might be adopted in sung translations to indicate the origins of the characters as well as for comic effect. For example, in Opera North's production of L  har's operetta *The Merry Widow*, performed 16 October 2010 – 4 March 2011 and sung in English translation, the French characters assumed a comical French accent, dropping the letter 'h' off the beginnings of words and pronouncing 'th' as 'z' in an exaggerated manner. Currently in surtitles, rather than reflecting language varieties such as these, standardised versions in written form are generally used.

The tendency in surtitles to employ methods of standardisation or neutralisation is also present in subtitles for film or television as most subtitling guidelines state that standard language must be used (Taylor, 2006: 39) due in part to their 'regimented written form' (D  az-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 185). However, in film and television subtitling, as Mason (2001: 21) notes, this trend seems to be changing and techniques, especially in SDH, are becoming more flexible, marking language variation with the use of brackets, colour-coding or italics, as advocated by Bartoll (2006: 5). For example, in the film *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (2008) directed by Dany Boon, the French SDH indicate the Southern French accent of a Proven  al uncle character by the use of brackets, '(Accent du Sud)'. In the English subtitles, another technique of adapting 'the spelling of the target language' (D  az-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 194) is used to convey the distinctive accent of the Ch'tis regiolect in

order to replicate its comic function replacing 's' with 'sh'. These techniques compensate for the loss of meaning incurred as a result of the fact that the non-French speaking audience is essentially 'deaf' to the difference in pronunciation. Although language variation is less common in opera than in film, for a DH audience, and perhaps also for hearing patrons in some cases, it is important to consider conveying these nuances in the surtitles, particularly as the use of a certain language variety in opera is most likely to be deliberate and therefore to have a specific diegetic function.

Another example of language variation in opera which may be used to create an impact on the audience is 'emotionally charged language' (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2007: 195). Given that the emotional impact of linguistic elements, such as obscene language, differs according to the mode of delivery, this is a delicate issue in the transfer from spoken or sung lyrics to written surtitles, especially within the context of a live performance. In standard surtitles, Burton (2009: 65) gives the advice 'slang, expletives and colourful language should be treated with care', suggesting neutral alternatives are sometimes preferable. However, for the DH, it might be considered necessary to include the sung or spoken expletives in full in the surtitles, however shocking they might be, especially if the opera is sung in the vernacular, so that these patrons receive as similar as possible an impact as the hearing audience. Interestingly, in the ROH performances (17 February - 4 March 2011) of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Anna Nicole*, sung in English, due to the large quantity of obscene language in the libretto, the production staff discussed whether surtitles should only be displayed on the seatback screens and not on the main screen in order to avoid undue offence (personal communication from Judi Palmer). In the end, surtitles, including all the obscenities as sung, were shown on the main screen as well as the individual smaller screens, although in their television broadcast the BBC used asterisks for certain words.

### **3.2.6 Repetition, space and time constraints**

The topic of repetition in surtitles also deserves some attention as it can be a point of contention for DH audiences. In UK opera houses, repeats are usually omitted following an overall aim of unobtrusiveness (Burton, 2009: 62-63, Palmer, 2012: 32) which, as Palmer (2012: 32) highlights, is 'in contrast to the current style used extensively on the continent, whereby everything is titled'. For hearing audiences

this extra text might be considered distracting, but omissions can be frustrating and confusing for the DH who may feel as if they are missing out on something, as they can see an actor singing but no surtitles to explain this. Although repeats are indicated by SL interpreters, as mentioned in section 3.1.2.3, DH patrons who are not BSL users rely primarily on the surtitles for information on audio features of the opera, including repeats. Moreover, given that there is often only SL interpreted performance per season, the need to make surtitles accessible to the DH in this and other ways is particularly significant. Furthermore, repeated phrases may also be used for phonic effect, which the DH may not be able to receive unless indicated in the surtitles.

The space constraints on currently available opera house surtitles screens often determine reductions in words in the form of condensation or omissions. It would seem that the typical number of characters per caption is increasing as Low (2002: 103) states a 'maximum of 2 lines per title and 32 characters per line', whereas Palmer (2012: 21) writes more recently that surtitles 'consist of one or two lines (no more), with a maximum of 33-39 characters per line'. This is the case at the ROH, as shown in Figure 34. Some opera companies, such as Opera North, use side screens which display the surtitles over a greater number of lines but with fewer words per line, as shown in Figure 33. Nevertheless, whether spread over 2 lines or 5 lines, the number of characters per caption still leaves little room for repeats or the inclusion of additional verbal paralinguistic information.

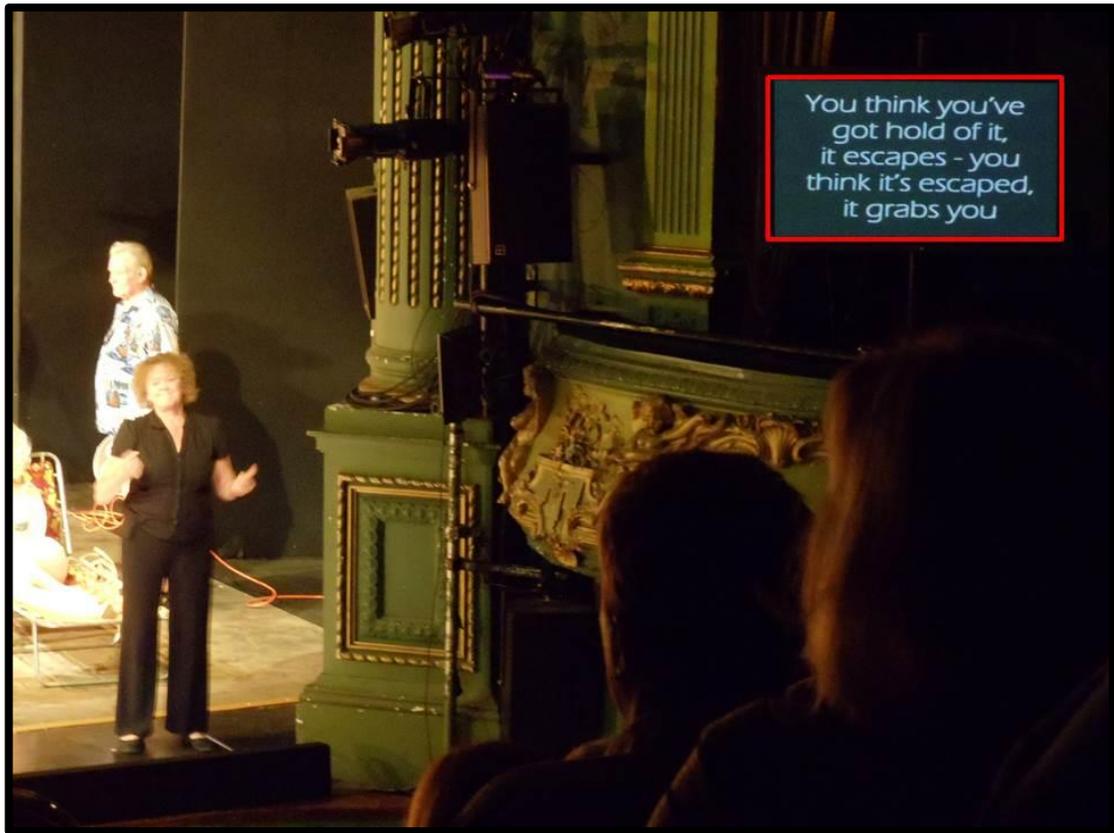


Figure 33: Surtitles screen at Opera North's production of Carmen at Nottingham Theatre Royal (photo courtesy of Opera North).

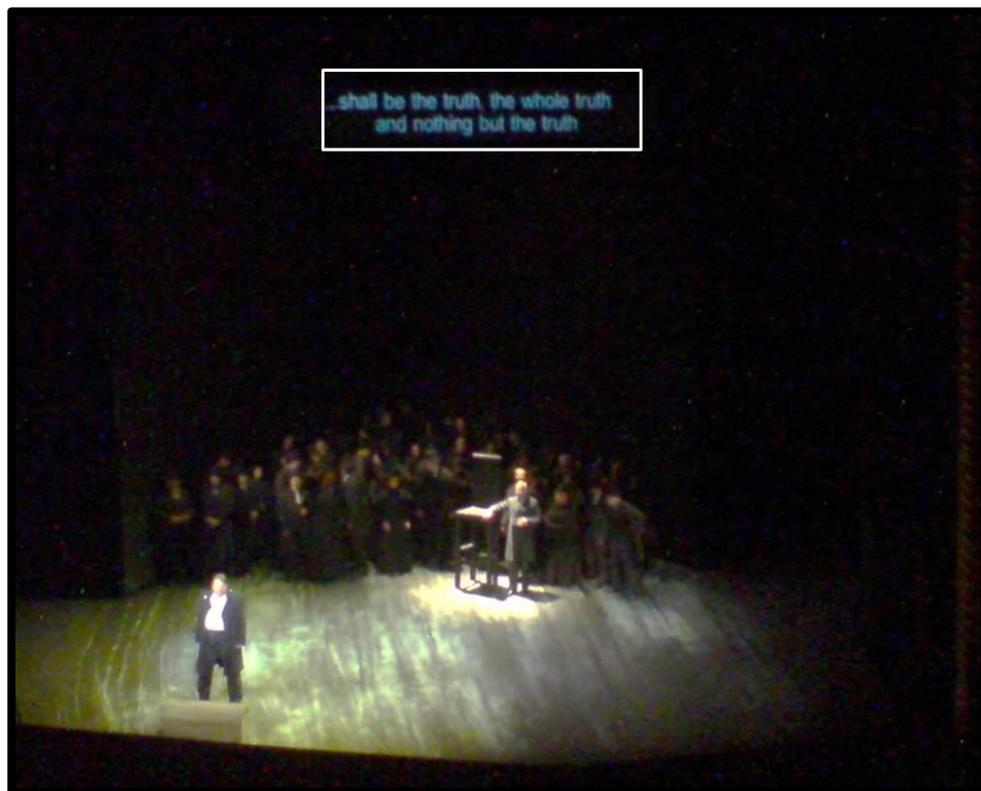


Figure 34: Surtitles screen at the ROH, Covent Garden during a rehearsal of the prologue scene of Peter Grimes (photo courtesy of the ROH).

The limited time frame in which each surtitle can be displayed, dictated by each individual performance and music, can also prove a constraint; an issue which along with the varying reading speeds of different audience members, including the hearing and DH, requires further research. The amount of time that a surtitle can be displayed and its reception by different patrons may also be affected by the positioning of the surtitles. For instance, if the surtitles are placed in a position which requires less head and/or eye movement from the stage to the surtitles screen and vice versa, it might be argued that the surtitle could be displayed for fractionally longer in order to allow more time to communicate the additional details for the DH. For example, the surtitles on the seatback screens in the orchestra stalls area at the *Liceu* are placed at the bottom of seats of the row in front (see Figure 32) and are therefore relatively low in comparison to the stage. This positioning may allow a shorter time frame to display the surtitles than on the new individual surtitles screens in the stalls circle at the ROH, which hang down from the upper level so that they are just above the line of view to the stage. However, this topic requires further research to establish the feasibility of longer surtitles, and the responses of differing audiences, for example in relation to preferences regarding vertical or horizontal head or eye movements from the stage to the surtitles screens. For DH audiences, it is also important to consider the positioning of the surtitles in relation to the SL interpreter, as some patrons may like to refer to both. This issue again highlights the challenge of providing for audiences with differing requirements and raises the question of possible solutions which accommodate varying audiences.

### **3.2.7 Possible methods to increase the accessibility of surtitles**

Given the space restrictions of current surtitles screens and possible disparities between the reception of surtitles by hearing and DH patrons, the idea of separate provision for the DH of surtitles on seatback screens or other localised screens with space for extra details such as repeats and paralinguistic information might be most appropriate. However, it might also be argued that this kind of segregation goes against a notion of inclusiveness. For example, open captioning available for all audience members to see and aimed specifically for use in live performances is promoted by Stagertext, who provide captioning with information about sound effects, character names, and auditorium announcements amongst other details as well as at times references to the music. This is because open captioning 'raises

people's awareness of hearing loss, makes the production more accessible to everyone, and fosters inclusiveness' and means that 'hearing and non-hearing people can sit together and enjoy the performance together' (Shaw, 2003: 16). Open captions may be positioned on, below, above or beside the stage or indeed in the most appropriate place for each production. Alternatively, closed captions may also be presented to certain individual patrons via seat-back screens, hand-held screens and even special glasses (Shaw, 2003: 14).<sup>16</sup> Both of these methods of delivery are used by Stagertext, and in the recent past captioning of this kind has been employed in the world of opera by ENO, English Touring Opera, The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and Wales Millennium Centre amongst others (Eardley-Weaver, 2010: 4). However, at present Stagertext captioning or any surtitles targeted specifically at the DH are rarely used in opera. This may be due to the more established tradition of surtitling in opera or because of the method in Stagertext captioning of providing access to the full text. This verbatim technique may have to be adapted especially for opera sung in a language unfamiliar to the audience, although in this case there may be an argument for offering verbatim captions in the original language of the opera alongside a translated version. This would provide the audience with access to the original language and the opportunity to engage directly with the singing on stage. However, it might be argued that this would be too obtrusive and distracting and cause information overload in addition to technical complications. Yet again further research is required in this area to find out audience preferences. A solution, currently under investigation, is the Universal Access System, on Android or iPhone (Oncins et al., 2013), which might achieve inclusiveness in some respects in that it would allow users of surtitles specifically targeted at the DH to sit anywhere in the theatre and to enjoy a shared experience.

In order to promote the fundamental inclusiveness notion of sharing the experience with other audience members, it is particularly important to consider including in the surtitles indications of audio aspects which provoke an audience response; for example, indicating any aural linguistic humour so that the DH have access to this humour, albeit through a different semiotic channel. For instance, in a performance of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the ROH on 21 November 2011, in Act II the character Dr Bartolo sang to his ward Rosina adding extra syllables to her

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<sup>16</sup> The idea of using new technology such as Google Glass is explored further in the conclusions in Chapter 6.

name for comic effect, as is the tradition, singing 'Rosininowina'. This provoked a laugh in the audience but as the surtitles simply read 'Rosina', for DH patrons this aural linguistic humour might have been missed. It might therefore be suggested to consider representing this aural humour in a visual format in surtitles for the DH so that the surtitles might actually read 'Rosininowina'. Linguistic peculiarities such as this might seem awkward in written form and they tend to be standardised or 'normalised' (Freddi and Luraghi, 2011: 72). However, in order to recreate the effect of the audio aspect for DH patrons, the opera translator may like to consider counteracting the 'levelling effect of the mode-shift and in particular the way in which features of speech which are in anyway non-standard tend to be eliminated' (Hatim and Mason, 1997: 79). This method of adapting the spelling is already used in some subtitles in film and television, as discussed previously with reference to the film *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*. Other practices used in SDH in film and television such as the use of brackets, italics and colour-coding may also provide a concise and accessible option for surtitles for the DH. They may also help the translator to avoid omissions caused by constraints of space and pace, and serve as a compensatory technique for loss of either linguistic or semiotic meaning incurred due to the mode-shift from oral to written. However, it is also important to consider the effect of these techniques on the audience, because the use of bracketed text to provide a kind of translator's note may aid comprehension but it could also detract from the impact on the spectator due to a distancing effect or text overload (Civera and Orero, 2010: 155-157). Issues such as colour blindness and the religious or cultural associations of certain colours may also need to be considered in relation to the technique of colour-coding. For instance, caution may need to be exercised when using the colour green due to the associations of sacredness for Shiite Muslims. Although valuable reception studies into several of these subtitling techniques have been conducted (Matamala and Orero, 2010), and in opera a pioneering audience reception project addressing some of the aforementioned surtitling issues was carried out in May 2011 in collaboration with Opera North at performances of Bizet's *Carmen* with surtitles and SLI (see Part 2, especially section 5.2), further research into audience response is required.

In surtitles targeted at the DH, it might also be considered appropriate to include information in the surtitles about musical elements, at least those which provoke an emotional reaction in the audience, so that the DH can share this

experience with the hearing patrons. For example, in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in Act II when Don Basilio has been tricked into thinking he is ill, he sings *sono giallo come un morto?* [I am pale as a corpse?], with a comical, dramatic drop in pitch during this passage to sing an unusually low note that often provokes a laugh in the audience. Without indication in the surtitles or any other visual representation, this humour may be lost on DH patrons and arguably some kind of symbol should be used in the surtitles. Interestingly, this drop in pitch was communicated by the SL interpreter at the ROH performance of this opera on 21 November 2011.

Use of icons, such as a generic picture of a gun placed in brackets to indicate a single gunshot offstage, might be an option in surtitles for this target audience and indeed all patrons, perhaps requiring a brief glossary of devices used for the audience. This may also help to overcome the problem of too much text and not enough space on display screens, as well as issues of time constraints and reading speeds. This method could also be advantageously applied for different media (Civera and Orero, 2010: 156-157) and may be of benefit to hearing spectators in certain contexts by optimising reading speed and thus reducing distraction from onstage action. Other visual features which can convey audio details and create emotional effect via text display – for example speed and mode of text delivery, moving text and word layout – may also provide a succinct and effective method of communication. In addition to linguistic choices, it may also be possible to use these techniques, for example through rhythmic delivery of text, to appeal to the tactile sense which can be an important aspect in the DH's reception of music. In technical terms, icons and some typographical effects are a feasible option as many screens, such as those installed at the ROH, can display both verbal and non-verbal content in high definition, although the potential distractive element of such features may provoke resistance. Given that it is chiefly the visual channel which is engaged in opera translation techniques for the DH, it is inevitable that the audience's focus will at times be diverted away from the visual aspects of the opera. It might be argued that the use of symbols in surtitles, conveying concepts more concisely than words, in conjunction with methods such as positioning of the screen and other aforementioned techniques, could in fact limit this diversion for all audiences. However, although some studies have been conducted into the notion of conveying linguistic or musical audio effects via surtitles for the DH, through use of poetic

devices, symbols and other semiotic means (Neves, 2010; Matamala and Orero, 2010), further research is required, especially in opera.

### **3.2.8 Feasibility and necessity of adapting surtitles**

Although surtitles originally faced considerable resistance, with some critics publicly denouncing them (Burton, 2009: 61), they are now an established access tool for hearing audiences. They are provided in most opera houses for all performances including those sung in the vernacular, because audiences expect to be able to access and understand the text of the opera whilst enjoying its visual and other semiotic aspects. For the DH, surtitles are a particularly important facility to provide access to the audio elements of the opera, although current standard surtitles only fulfil this function to a certain extent due to a lack of communication of sound effects, musical features, repeats, language variation and other linguistic or paralinguistic details. Although the DH remain a minority group, numbers of people with a hearing loss are increasing as 'the number of people with presbycusis [age-related hearing loss] is growing at the rate of aging societies and will account for significant numbers in aging continents such as Europe or America' (Neves, 2005: 79). Adaptation of surtitles is therefore a necessary consideration to ensure complete opera access to this target audience. It could also benefit hearing patrons by providing access to acoustic subtleties such as verbal humour otherwise lost through lack of comprehension of the words, whether due to the language barrier or the inaudibility of words, thus revealing a whole new level of multisensory experience of opera for all audiences.

The challenge in adapting surtitles to accommodate the varying needs of the hearing and DH, which incorporates a diverse group with differing degrees and types of hearing loss, is to reconcile the notions of providing for specific requirements and including all. The first step in the progression from accessibility to inclusion may be to produce surtitles which are specifically aimed at DH patrons on individual screens such as on hand-held devices, in a designated area of the auditorium, or on specially adapted glasses. Furthermore, initially the focus in the surtitles might be particularly on conveying acoustic effect. These developments seem a feasible option considering current advancements in technology. A viable solution in the near future may be the development of surtitles which incorporate details of audio aspects in such a way to be offered to all audiences, as transparent

open surtitles including an interactive element which allows individual choices.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in view of changing audience attitudes towards surtitles and the potential advantage to hearing patrons of adapted surtitles, this open access approach may gradually achieve universal appeal.

Whilst any change will initially face resistance from traditionalists, just as interlingual and then intralingual surtitles have, and financial considerations might prove a barrier, the altered expectations of audiences who are now accustomed to responding to multiple semiotic stimuli and the promotion of awareness of access issues will surely contribute to breaking down these barriers. Just as some insights into these modifications may come from techniques used in film and television SDH, new access techniques developed in surtitles may also conversely inspire innovative access concepts which can be transferable to other audiovisual media.

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<sup>17</sup> See section 3.1.2.1 for the definition of a transparent open access facility.

## Concluding Remarks for Part 1

Within the context of opera translation for BPSPs and the DH, the role of the translator is complex, collaborative, and constantly evolving. The innate multisemiotic nature of opera which appeals to various senses compels the translator to adopt a flexible approach in conveying this unique art form in all its multiplicity to a diverse audience with varying visual and hearing ability. In view of the numerous challenges posed by the mission of overcoming not only linguistic but also sensorial barriers, the translator must juggle numerous roles including mediator, performer and access facilitator in order to achieve a universally inclusive, multisemiotic opera experience. Therefore, the translator's task is multifunctional and dynamic. Moreover, the various conflicting aspects present within the process of translating opera, such as the tension between music and text as well as between the visibility and the invisibility of the translator, reiterate the delicate balancing act of the translation task.

The findings in Part 1 show that the translator is part of an intricate network of agents whose roles often overlap with that of the translator. For instance, in ToTos the role of the translator is not only fulfilled by the audio describer(s) but also at times by other agents in the network including members of the cast, companions of the BPSPs, as well as the BPSPs themselves. Within this translation modality, a merging of the role of translator and receiver often occurs, thus highlighting the changeable definition of the notion of the translator. In audio description, the translation task is primarily performed by the audio describer, and consequently the audio describer might be denoted as the 'official' or 'primary' translator. Nevertheless, it is likely that other agents will be involved in the translation process, including the BPSPs' companions who could be referred to as the 'unofficial' or 'secondary' translators. The main distinction that can be made between the notions of the 'official' and 'unofficial' translator(s) relates to their function. The term 'official' translator(s) can be used to describe the person(s) who is (are) employed by

an authority (such as the theatre company) to provide the translation and for whom this is their primary function. It is the formal responsibility of the 'official' translator to provide a translation for the target audience. The term 'unofficial' translator(s) can be used to refer to other agents in the translation network whose primary function is not to provide translation; they are not employed to fulfil this purpose and their involvement in the translation process is informal and voluntary. The distinction between 'official' and 'unofficial' translator(s) cannot be defined in terms of financial remuneration, because some 'official' translators who are employed to provide AD and ToTos work on a voluntary basis, for example at Scottish Opera (personal communication from Scottish Opera). In some cases the translation provided by the 'official' translator may be a receiver's only means of accessing the opera experience in all its multisemiotic complexity. However, as discussed previously, it is common for 'unofficial' translators to be involved in the translation processes of AD and ToTos. Similarly, in SLI and surtitles, the translator's task is characterised by a highly collaborative nature. Thus, translation can be seen as a multi-agent event and interaction between the audience and the 'official' translator(s) is facilitated by means of feedback which is relayed by the researcher.

In addition, the translator's role is influenced by technological progress and the development of translation tools which can be considered as agents in the network. For instance, current experiments involving the use of smartphones (Oncins et al., 2013) and future possibilities employing Google Glass in the opera translation process will impact upon the role of the translator. However, the main influence on the translator's role is the audience, as reiterated by the responses of the interviewed translators who acknowledged the importance of considering audience reception in their translation strategies and decisions. Indeed, the success of the translation product is determined by the audience. Consequently, research into the opera translator's role naturally leads onto a study of the audience's perspective. The translator's task is only part of the translation process as a whole, and in Part 2 the next stage of the translation process is examined: the reception of the translation product.

## **Part 2**

### **The audience's perspective**



## Introduction to Part 2

A fundamental principle of the research framework of this present work is that examining audience reception should be an integral part of research into the translation process, which is regarded as a network (see section 1.2). Therefore, having considered the effect of the audience on the translator's decisions and so far mostly focused on the translation process from the translator's viewpoint in Part 1, it is important to examine the impact of the translation choices on the audience's reception.

Research into the audience's perspective is crucial to gain further more comprehensive insights into the multisemiotic opera translation process in its entirety. As Elena Di Giovanni highlights, 'media audiences are indeed the driving force behind the success or decline of the media themselves; they are a dynamic, increasingly diverse and demanding force, whose specific identity and requirements are also extremely relevant for the translation process' (2011: 10). As discussed in Chapter 1, the present work proposes considering the translation process as a cyclical network of which audience feedback is a fundamental part when reported back to the translator. Within the network of opera translation for BPSPs and the DH, audience feedback provides a link between audience and translator. This may be viewed as a dialogue, referring to Hansen's definition of this term: 'a process of negotiation with the purpose of reaching subjective and inter-subjective identification and clarification of a phenomenon of interest' (2008: 394). Thus, audience feedback can promote collective understanding of translation quality amongst the agents in the network (Chesterman, 2006: 23).

In view of the socio-cultural dimension of the research framework for this current work, investigation into the audience's perspective is particularly important in terms of promoting understanding and awareness of the process of translating opera to render it accessible to all. Audience reception studies are also of paramount significance in responding to the sociological shift in audience expectations as people become increasingly accustomed to multimedia environments (Gambier and Gottlieb, 2001). Within the context of opera translation and accessibility, audience reception research is

very sparse (Orero and Matamala, 2007; Orero 2007b). In fact, in general translation studies focusing on audiences remain limited (Di Giovanni, 2011: 10), although, as John Denton claims: 'audience reception is fast becoming a leading feature of audiovisual translation research' (2007: 26). The urgency of the demand 'to know the viewers' needs and reception capacity, whatever the modality of AVT being offered' is emphasized by Yves Gambier (2006: 5; see also Chiaro, 2006).

With this in mind, in 2011 a pioneering audience reception project was carried out at two performances of Opera North's production of Bizet's *Carmen*. This dramatic, sensuous opera tells the tragic story of the love triangle between a soldier, a bullfighter, and the passionate seductress Carmen, concluding with her murder. SLI, surtitles, AD and ToTo were provided at each of the performances on 8 May at The Grand, Leeds, and 24 May at Nottingham Theatre Royal (UK). The audience reception project aimed to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of these opera access facilities from the audience's perspective, and to promote understanding and awareness. By acknowledging the centrality of audience reception studies in this translation process research, not only is understanding of the opera translation process as a whole improved but social awareness is also raised, which in turn contributes to the path towards inclusive opera for all.

The audience reception project's research design and findings will be the subject of the next two chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 presents the overall research design for the audience reception project and evaluates the methodology employed, including an examination of the limitations of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the descriptive statistical analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected relating to audience responses to opera AD and ToTos, surtitles and SLI.

## 4

### **Audience Reception Project: Research Design**

The overall research design for the audience reception project is ethnographically-oriented. Thus, the approach adopted can be explained as follows:

Ethnography attempts to understand social and cultural phenomena from the perspective of participants in the social setting under study. To do so, the approach builds conceptual models using qualitative techniques and then validates or tests them both qualitatively and quantitatively (Schensul et al., 1999: 165)

The details of the methodology employed in this project are discussed in this chapter in relation to the individual components of the design which are set out according to Oppenheim's model for data collection and survey (1992: 6-8). It is important to note, however, that in accordance with the ethnographically-oriented approach adopted, the research design is not a fixed arrangement but rather 'a reflexive process that operates throughout every stage of a project' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 21; Maxwell, 2009: 214-215).

Firstly, in section 4.1, the general aims of the study are enumerated along with the areas of interest to be investigated. Secondly, in section 4.2, the variables to be measured are discussed with reference to the rationale behind the choice of comparisons to be made. Thirdly, in section 4.3, the research techniques used to gather the data will be presented. The process of designing the questionnaires will be explained, including details about the layout, rating scales, the choice of topics for discussion and as regards the ordering and wording of the questions. In addition, issues relating to research ethics and the data collection process will be elaborated upon here. In section 4.4, the population under investigation is discussed in terms of the groups of participants and their salient characteristics. In section 4.5, the alterations which had to be made to the original study design due to external factors will be considered. Finally, in section 4.6 the

research design of the audience reception project will be reflected upon and suggestions for improvements will be given.

#### **4.1 Objectives of the project**

The overall purpose of the audience reception project was to investigate opera accessibility facilities for BPSPs and deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons from the perspective of current audiences. Therefore, one of the main objectives was to establish a profile of the participants. The other primary aim was to explore the audience reception of an inclusive, multisemiotic opera experience facilitated by translation modalities targeted primarily at BPSPs and the DH respectively. This involved analysing the translation processes of opera AD, ToTo, SLI from the audience's perspective in terms of (1) breaking down linguistic and sensory barriers to provide access for BPSPs and the DH to the multisemiotic opera experience; and (2) overcoming borders between audience members with differing requirements to facilitate a shared reception with other sighted and hearing audience members. The methodology used to explore the audience's perspective regarding the aforementioned translation modalities followed a primarily data-driven, ethnographic research approach. A two-fold design was employed which involved questionnaires and feedback via discussion with the opera patrons participating in the project.

In view of the role of the aforementioned translation methods in contributing to social inclusion, another broad aim was to help increase awareness of opera access facilities. This aim was pursued by involving relevant local associations such as Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People as well as student societies at Durham University and the University of Leeds in the project in order to develop a wider audience base which includes more young people in the long-term. It is also intended that this project act as a catalyst for further collaborative larger-scale audience reception initiatives and long-term audience evaluation. Thus, another general target of the project was to inform the establishment of a sustainable audience development plan and the formulation of research questions for future projects, as discussed in section 5.3.

An approach based on grounded theory methodology was used to inform the project objectives and the choice of the salient areas of interest to be investigated. This methodology allows theories and areas of interest to emerge without preconceptions, and for the researcher to identify the research problem from the participants' perspective (Glaser, 2012). Several open conversations with various BPSPs and DH audience

members as well as their hearing and sighted companions were conducted at the beginning of the research process, prior to designing the audience reception project. These discussions were mostly held during intervals of opera performances with AD, ToTo, surtitles, and/or SLI. Thus, these audience members all had experience of AD and/or ToTos for opera or surtitled and/or SL interpreted opera. They were keen to express their opinions about opera accessibility, so once this topic had been introduced with an open question or statement such as 'What do you think about opera accessibility?' or 'I'm looking into opera accessibility and I'd be very interested to hear your opinions about this topic', the researcher's role was to listen and immediately afterwards take field notes. The main areas of interest that emerged from these open conversations are enumerated below. Each is subdivided into issues that were later in the data collection process to be investigated through the audience reception project. These areas of interest mostly relate to the effectiveness of the various translation modalities targeted primarily at BPSPs and the DH. The criteria chosen for measuring effectiveness in this context were enjoyment of the opera experience, comprehension of the plot, and emotional engagement with the opera. This choice was informed by the salient concerns which emerged from the aforementioned open conversations and which relate to the entertainment medium of opera and live nature of the performances under investigation. Furthermore, the open conversations reiterated the interconnectedness of these criteria within the context of live opera performance in which emotional engagement forms a fundamental part in the reception and enjoyment of the opera experience, which is also most likely to be dependent on comprehension of the plot. Hence, it was decided to explore these three criteria in combination. In accordance with the approach adopted for selecting the measurement criteria based on grounded theory, a preconceived theoretical framework was not used to guide the choice (Glaser, 2012). However, with hindsight it is interesting to note a parallel with Gutt's theories which follow on from the approach of 'dynamic equivalence' translation developed by Nida and Taber. Gutt (1989: 79) states 'the quality of a translation is now judged in terms of its comprehensibility and impact on the receptors'.

The main areas of interest, or in other words the topics of investigation which the project aimed to investigate, were as follows:

- 1) **The overall perceived effectiveness of AD individually from the perspective of BPSPs**
  - a) The helpfulness of AD

- b) The enjoyment of AD
  - c) Whether BPSPs want to come to another opera with AD
  - d) The effectiveness of AD in providing access to a multisemiotic, inclusive opera experience
  - e) The helpfulness of AD in conveying humour
  - f) The helpfulness of AD in conveying shock
  - g) The helpfulness of pre-recorded preparatory AI
  - h) The helpfulness of live AI
  - i) The helpfulness of through-description
  - j) Reception of the plot
  - k) Reception of the emotion of the opera
  - l) Reception of the music
  - m) Possible improvements to the AD (e.g. audio subtitles)
- 2) The overall effectiveness of ToTo individually from the perspective of BPSPs**
- a) The helpfulness of the ToTo
  - b) The enjoyment of the ToTo
  - c) Whether BPSPs want to come to another opera with a ToTo
  - d) The effectiveness of ToTo in providing access to a multisemiotic, inclusive opera experience
  - e) Possible improvements to the ToTo
- 3) The overall effectiveness of AD+ToTo in combination compared to AD alone from the perspective of BPSPs**
- a) The effectiveness of AD+ToTo in providing access to a multisemiotic, inclusive opera experience compared to AD alone
  - b) The effectiveness of AD+ToTo in facilitating plot comprehension compared to AD alone
  - c) Does AD+ToTo improve enjoyment of the opera performance compared to AD alone
  - d) Does AD+ToTo improve the social event of coming to the opera as compared to AD alone
  - e) Does AD+ToTo improve reception of emotion as compared to AD alone
- 4) The overall effectiveness of the surtitles individually from the perspective of the DH including (i) DH non-BSL users and (ii) DH BSL users**
- a) The helpfulness of the surtitles

- b) The enjoyment of the surtitles
  - c) Whether the DH would come to another opera with surtitles
  - d) The effectiveness of the surtitles in providing access to a multisemiotic, inclusive opera experience/The restrictions of surtitles in their current format in terms of providing access to DH audience members with differing degrees and types of hearing loss to a shared multisemiotic opera experience
  - e) The helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying humour
  - f) The helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying shock
  - g) Reception of the plot
  - h) Reception of the emotion of the opera
  - i) Reception of the music
  - j) The issue of potential adaptations to current surtitles (such as including character labelling and references to sound effects and music in the surtitles) to render them more accessible to the DH
- 5) The overall effectiveness of the opera SLI individually from the perspective of the DH including (i) DH BSL users and (ii) DH non-BSL users**
- a) The helpfulness of the SLI
  - b) The enjoyment of the SLI
  - c) Whether the DH would come to another opera with SLI
  - d) The effectiveness of the SLI in providing access to a multisemiotic, inclusive opera experience
  - e) The helpfulness of the SLI in conveying humour
  - f) The helpfulness of the SLI in conveying shock
  - g) Reception of the plot
  - h) Reception of the emotion of the opera
  - i) Reception of the music
  - j) Possible improvements
- 6) The significance of being able to enjoy receiving and sharing the emotion of the opera with the rest of the audience**
- a) the effectiveness of the access facilities for BPSPs in enabling this
  - b) the effectiveness of the access facilities for the DH in enabling this
- 7) Possible ways to improve translation techniques by surpassing limits of current conventions**

**8) The potential benefit and entertainment value of AD and ToTo for sighted audience members**

**9) The reception of SLI and surtitles by hearing patrons**

From these nine areas of interest, the general hypothesis emerges that whilst current translation methods as a whole meet audience needs to a certain degree, there are individual elements, especially relating to a shared and inclusive experience, which could be improved. These issues were addressed in the questionnaires and feedback sessions for the audience reception project. It was necessary to investigate these specific areas of interest for the audience reception project, not only for comparison purposes but also to encourage critical respondents. In fact, the aforementioned open conversations prior to the audience reception project revealed that in general patrons tend to be appreciative of any access facilities and initially reluctant to make critical comments. This may be due to the relatively small number of performances at which these facilities are provided and in view of the relatively recent introduction of these translation modalities before which opera access for BPS and DH patrons was minimal. By asking the audience reception project participants questions about specific elements of a given access service, the aim was to encourage them to feel free to scrutinize the translation methods discerningly from the start. The anonymity of these questionnaires and room for additional comment also intended to further this aim. The room for additional comments on all questionnaires and the opportunity for open discussion during each feedback session also allowed participants to raise any other concerns which had not been addressed in the questions.

Thus, in the questionnaires and feedback sessions for the audience reception project, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. Consequently, a combined methodology using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was employed to investigate all of the above areas of interest. The types of analysis used for the quantitative data include univariate and bivariate analysis, as well as multi-item scales. The data analysis methodology will be discussed in full in Chapter 5, but brief definitions are provided here. As Bernard states:

Univariate analysis involves getting to know data intimately by examining variables precisely and in detail. Bivariate analysis involves looking at associations between pairs of variables and trying to understand how those associations work. (2000: 539)

A multi-item scale refers to a set of questions regarding the same topic or as Dörnyei describes it 'a cluster of several differently worded items that focus on the same target' (2003: 33). This methodology was selected because as Oppenheim (1992: 147) states 'by using SETS of questions, provided they all relate to the same attitude, we maximise the more stable components while reducing the instability due to particular items, emphasis, mood changes and so on'. It was necessary to include at least four items in the questionnaires relating to different aspects of this area of interest because as Dörnyei states 'it is rather risky to go below 4 items per subarea' (2003: 34). Figure 35 shows which questions were used to study each area of interest enumerated above and the type of analysis employed.

OBJECTIVE	TRANSLATION MODALITY	TYPE OF ANALYSIS	POST-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS USED	PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS USED
1a	AD	Multi-item scale Univariate [+ qualitative]	3, 11a, 11b, 11c 3 [+ comments]	
1b	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative]	2f [+ comments]	
1c	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative]	16 [+ comments]	
1d	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative] Univariate [+ qualitative]	11a [+ comments] 13 [+ comments]	
1e	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative]	11b [+ comments]	
1f	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative]	11c [+ comments]	
1g	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative]	7b [+ comments] 7b compared to 7a [+ comments]	
1h	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative]	5b [+ comments] 5b compared to 5a [+ comments]	
1i	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative]	6b [+ comments] 6b compared to 6a [+ comments]	
1j	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative]	10 [+ comments]	
1k	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate	12, 11b, 11c [+ comments] 6a compared to 12, 11b, 11c	
1l	AD	Univariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative]	2b, 13 [+ comments] 2b, 13 [+ comments] compared to	→11
1m	AD	Qualitative	Comments	
2a	ToTo	Univariate [+ qualitative]	4 [+ comments]	
2b	ToTo	Univariate [+ qualitative]	2g [+ comments]	
2c	ToTo	Univariate [+ qualitative]	17 [+ comments]	
2d	ToTo	Qualitative	Comments	
2e	ToTo	Qualitative	Comments	

OBJECTIVE	TRANSLATION MODALITY	TYPE OF ANALYSIS	POST-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS USED	PRE-PERFORMANCE QUESTIONS USED
3a	AD+ToTo vs. AD	Bivariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative]	11a compared to 1 [+ comments] 14 compared to 1 [+ comments]	
3b	AD+ToTo vs. AD	Bivariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative]	10 compared to 1 [+ comments] 8 compared to 10 [+ comments]	
3c	AD+ToTo vs. AD	Bivariate [+ qualitative]	2a compared to 1 [+ comments]	
3d	AD+ToTo vs. AD	Bivariate [+ qualitative]	2e compared to 1 [+ comments]	
3e	AD+ToTo vs. AD	Bivariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative] Bivariate [+ qualitative]	12 compared to 1 [+ comments] 11b compared to 1 [+ comments] 11c compared to 1 [+ comments]	
4a	Titles	Multi-item scale Univariate [+ qualitative] Univariate [+ qualitative]	3, 6a, 6b, 6c 3 [+ comments] 10ii [+ comments]	7, 15d " "
4b	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative] Univariate [+ qualitative]	1g [+ comments] 10ii [+ comments]	" "
4c	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative]	19 [+ comments]	"
4d	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative] Univariate [+ qualitative]	6a [+ comments] 9 [+ comments]	" "
4e	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative]	6b [+ comments]	"
4f	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative]	6c [+ comments]	"
4g	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative]	4 [+ comments]	"
4h	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative]	7 [+ comments]	"
4i	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative]	6a, 1b [+ comments]	"
4j	Titles	Univariate [+ qualitative]	13, 14, 15, 16 [+ comments]	"
5a	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative] Univariate [+ qualitative]	2, [+ comments] 10i [+ comments]	7, 15d "
5b	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative] Univariate [+ qualitative]	1f [+ comments] 10i [+ comments]	" "
5c	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative]	18 [+ comments]	"
5d	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative] Univariate [+ qualitative]	5a [+ comments] 8 [+ comments]	" "
5e	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative]	5b [+ comments]	"
5f	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative]	5c [+ comments]	"
5g	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative]	4 [+ comments]	"
5h	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative]	7 [+ comments]	"
5i	SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative]	5a, 1b [+ comments]	"
5j	SLI	Qualitative	Comments	"
6a	AD, ToTo	Qualitative	Comments	15
6b	Titles, SLI	Qualitative	Comments	15
7	AD, ToTo, titles, SLI	Qualitative	Comments	
8	AD, ToTo	Univariate [+ qualitative]	1, 1f, 1g, 3, 4, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b, 16, 17 [+ comments]	15b
9	Titles, SLI	Univariate [+ qualitative]	1f, 1g, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19 [+ comments]	15d

Figure 35: Areas of interest with the types of analysis and the questions used to investigate them.

## 4.2 Variables

The variables to be measured in this project, which have already been touched upon in section 4.1 whilst clarifying the project aims and areas of interest to be investigated, can be divided into two categories: (1) variables relating to demographic details and other personal information; and (2) variables which establish an individual respondent's reaction to the translation modality or modalities at a given performance. The set of variables in the first category include:

- I. Age group
- II. Gender
- III. Visual ability at birth
- IV. Visual ability at present
- V. Hearing ability at birth
- VI. Hearing ability at present
- VII. Educational qualifications
- VIII. First language
- IX. Knowledge of French
- X. Learning difficulties or disabilities
- XI. Prior experience of opera, including the number of:
  - i. operas attended
  - ii. performances of Bizet's opera *Carmen* attended
- XII. Prior experience of access services, including the number of:
  - i. live performances at which the respondent used AD;
  - ii. operas at which the respondent used AD;
  - iii. operas at which the respondent used through-description
  - iv. operas at which the respondent used standalone, pre-recorded AI
  - v. live performances at which the respondent used ToTo
  - vi. operas at which the respondent used ToTo
  - vii. operas at which the respondent used both AD and ToTo
- XIII. Familiarity with the plot of the opera *Carmen*
- XIV. Familiarity with the music of the opera *Carmen*
- XV. Use of Braille
- XVI. Use of BSL

Focusing on these variables facilitates a clear definition of the profile of the response groups and enables comparisons within the data set. For instance, prior experience of access facilities was established in order to find out the range of the experience of the participants with the translation modalities under investigation. These data would enable assessment of the effect that experience might have on a participant's response to variables in the second category which are enumerated below. There are numerous combinations of comparisons that can be made between the variables in the first category and those in the second category, as well as within each data set. These are discussed further in section 5.3 in relation to clarifying research areas for future audience reception projects. In this study, the variables in the first category were primarily analysed using descriptive statistical techniques in order to establish the profile of the participants. However, as shown in Figure 35 some comparisons were made between variables in the first and second categories, thus analysing causality, which renders this a survey with an 'analytic design' (Oppenheim, 1992: 13). The choice regarding which comparisons to analyse was influenced by the areas of interest and objectives which emerged from the open conversations mentioned in the previous section 4.1.

The variables in the second category concern the audience reception of the access facilities for the project performances of *Carmen*. All of these variables relate to the project objectives and the criteria of plot comprehension, enjoyment and emotional engagement chosen to allow evaluation of the effectiveness of the translation modalities under investigation, as discussed in section 4.1. These variables are listed below:

- A. Touch tour attendance
- B. Amount of listening to:
  - a) the live audio introduction
  - b) the through-description
  - c) the preparatory audio introduction
- C. Amount of attention paid to:
  - a) the SL interpreter
  - b) the surtitles
- D. Enjoyment of:
  - a) the performance
  - b) the music
  - c) the particular interpretation of *Carmen*

- d) the visual design of the production
  - e) the social event of coming to the opera
  - f) the audio description in general
  - g) the touch tour
  - h) the sign language interpreting
  - i) the surtitles
- E. Helpfulness of:
- a) the audio description in general
  - b) the live audio introduction
  - c) the through-description
  - d) the preparatory audio introduction
- F. Helpfulness of the touch tour in general
- G. Helpfulness of:
- a) the sign language interpreting in general
  - b) the surtitles in general
- H. Comprehension of the plot
- I. Helpfulness of the audio description in conveying:
- a) the visual aspects of the opera including costumes, props, set, characters and onstage action
  - b) the humorous aspects of the opera
  - c) the shocking aspects of the opera
- J. Helpfulness of the sign language interpreting in conveying:
- a) the musical aspects of the opera
  - b) the humorous aspects of the opera
  - c) the shocking aspects of the opera
- K. Helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying:
- a) the musical aspects of the opera
  - b) the humorous aspects of the opera
  - c) the shocking aspects of the opera
- L. Overall reception of the emotion of the opera
- M. The clarity of mental imagery of the geography of the stage
- N. The degree to which the audio description detracts from enjoyment of the music
- O. The degree to which the sign language interpreting detracts from enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera

- P. The degree to which the surtitles detract from enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera
- Q. The desire for indication in the surtitles of:
- a) sound effects
  - b) music
  - c) repeated phrases
  - d) names of characters labelling who is singing what
- R. The desire to come to:
- a) another opera
  - b) another opera with audio description
  - c) another opera with touch tour
  - d) another SL interpreted opera
  - e) another opera with surtitles

A further variable which was taken into consideration in the data analysis was the positioning of the respondent in the auditorium. As discussed in the analysis of the reception of the SL interpreted opera in section 5.2.2, this was an important factor for the project participants.

### **4.3 Research techniques**

In this section, the methodology used for gathering feedback will be discussed with reference to the questionnaire design and the data collection process. In this study, a combined methodology using a two-fold design which involved questionnaires and feedback via discussion was employed and thus an amalgamation of both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. This design was employed because as Creswell (2014: 4) states ‘the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone’. The questionnaires included questions, often requiring graded responses, as well as space to write comments to explain answers. Further qualitative data was collected via post-performance verbal and signed (in the case of the BSL users) discussion. Before elaborating upon the process of gathering of feedback, the method of constructing the questionnaires must be examined. Firstly, in section 4.3.1, the general design of the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires will be considered. Here, issues relating to layout, formatting and measurement scales are discussed. Then, in sections

4.3.2 and 4.3.3, the ordering and wording of the questionnaire will be analysed. In section 4.3.4, ethical issues of anonymity and consent will be commented upon. Finally, in section 4.3.5 the data collection methods employed will be explored.

#### **4.3.1 Questionnaire design**

The performances of *Carmen* at which the study was conducted all provided four different translation modalities: AD and ToTo for BPSPs; surtitles and SLI for the DH. The surtitles were the same at both performances, and the AD and ToTo were given by the same two audio describers. In addition, the same SL interpreter provided the SLI for both performances. Two different 'group-administered' (Oppenheim, 1992: 103) questionnaires were required for the two groups of respondents which included: (1) users of the AD and/or ToTo; and (2) users of the SLI and/or surtitles. Each of these two groups was asked to complete two questionnaires: (1) a preliminary questionnaire to gather demographic details and other personal information which was to be administered prior to the performance, and (2) a post-performance questionnaire to gain feedback on audience reception of the translation modalities provided immediately after the event. All of the variables in the first category, enumerated in section 4.2, were measured in the preliminary questionnaire, with the exception of familiarity with the plot and the music of the opera *Carmen* which were included in the post-performance questionnaire. All of the variables in the second category, as listed in section 4.2 were measured in the post-performance questionnaire. An example of the hard-copy versions of these questionnaires can be found in Appendices III-VI. The electronic copies followed the same format but with slight differences in order to make them accessible electronically.

As shown in the examples in the Appendices, the layout of all the questionnaires is very similar, with slight variances to details such as the title (amended appropriately according to the venue and date for the second performance) and introductory statement in accordance with the target readership. There are also some differences in presentation including font and size of print because the questionnaires for the BPSPs follow the RNIB's 'Clear Print' guidelines (RNIB, 2011). For instance, these print design guidelines recommend that all body text should be left-aligned, preferably 14 point with bold used sparingly and no blocks of capitalised letters or italics. Also for accessibility purposes, rather than producing the questionnaires in the perhaps more attractive and compact booklet format with landscape layout, the questionnaires were printed in portrait format

with print on only one side so that the pages which were stapled together could be flipped through easily on the portrait-style clipboards provided to the respondents.

#### 4.3.1.1 *Preliminary questionnaires*

The preliminary questionnaires for each of the two groups of respondents followed the same format with many identical questions, so that comparative analysis could be conducted. In fact, the only questions which differed between the questionnaires for the two groups were those asking about prior experience of AD and/or ToTo or SLI and/or surtitles. For instance, in the preliminary questionnaire for users of AD and/or TT question 10 read as follows: 'How many performances of any kind (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) have you attended at which you used audio description services?'. In the preliminary questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles, the equivalent question read as follows: 'How many live sign-interpreted performances of any kind (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) have you attended?'. For other differences between the preliminary questionnaires for the two groups see Appendices III and V, questions 10-14. The preliminary questionnaires both contained twenty-two questions and were designed to take approximately ten to fifteen minutes to complete.

The measurement scales used in the preliminary questionnaires varied according to the question. An ordinal scale was used for the questions regarding the categorical variables of: (1) age group; (2) visual ability at birth; (3) visual ability at present; (4) hearing ability at birth; (5) hearing ability at present; and (6) educational qualifications. An ordinal scale was also used for the questions regarding the quantitative variables of: (1) prior experience of opera, including the number of: (i) operas attended and (ii) performances of Bizet's opera *Carmen* attended; and (2) prior experience of access facilities, including the number of: (i) live performances at which the respondent used AD; (ii) operas at which the respondent used AD, and so on (see section 4.2 for full list). A nominal scale was used for the questions regarding the categorical variables of: (1) gender; (2) first language; (3) use of BSL; (4) use of Braille; and (5) learning difficulties or disabilities. For the first part of the question regarding the categorical variable of knowledge of French 'Do you have any knowledge of French?' a nominal scale was used, and an ordinal scale was used for the qualifying second part of the question 'If yes, what level?' (see Appendices III and V, question 20).

The categories used for each of the variables were defined according to various factors. In most cases, the categories were based on standard classifications, where they

existed, such as for age group (Gillham, 2000: 29). The choice of categories was also dependent on the nature of the variable, for example whether or not it addressed a sensitive topic, and on the level of precision required for the analysis of the results. Defining the categories for the questions regarding visual and hearing ability was complex because a standard classification that is suitable for this questionnaire does not exist. The categorisations for these questions also required extra care in view of the potentially sensitive nature of this topic and the various connotations of related terminology, as discussed in section 1.3. The World Health Organisation (henceforth WHO) categorises blindness according to the ICD 10 (International Classification of Diseases Tenth Revision). Categories are defined in terms of degrees of visual impairment (mild, moderate or severe) which also relate to binocular or monocular blindness, and light perception, as shown in Figure 36.

Presenting distance visual acuity		
Category	Worse than:	Equal to or better than:
Mild or no visual impairment 0		6/18 3/10 (0.3) 20/70
Moderate visual impairment 1	6/18 3/10 (0.3) 20/70	6/60 1/10 (0.1) 20/200
Severe visual impairment 2	6/60 1/10 (0.1) 20/200	3/60 1/20 (0.05) 20/400
Blindness 3	3/60 1/20 (0.05) 20/400	1/60* 1/50 (0.02) 5/300 (20/1200)
Blindness 4	1/60* 1/50 (0.02) 5/300 (20/1200)	Light perception
Blindness 5	No light perception	
9	Undetermined or unspecified	

\* Or counts fingers (CF) at 1 metre.

Figure 36: The WHO categories of blindness (World Health Organisation, n.d.: 4)

However, these numerical classifications and technical definitions are too specific for this study with a level of precision which is unnecessary for the analysis and may be off-putting to respondents. Furthermore it was decided that the terminology 'visually-

impaired' should be avoided due to the potentially negative reception of the word 'impairment' by respondents. This term 'impairment' is disliked by many deaf people and almost all Deaf people as 'it has negative connotations and focuses on a perceived deficit' (Wareham et al. 2001: 7).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, for purposes of consistency and to avoid any potential offence, this term was not used in reference to sight loss either. Hence, for the questions regarding both visual and hearing ability, simplified categories with neutral, yet accessible terminology were employed for ease of response and because no greater specificity was required for the objectives of the study.

The categories used for questions in the post-performance questionnaires regarding visual ability were as follows: totally blind, legally blind, partially sighted, and have full vision. These categories were based on definitions for visual acuity given by the RNIB as defined in the 2009 report 'Future Sight Loss UK 1: Economic Impact of Partial Sight and Blindness in the UK adult population' as follows:

Common definitions for visual acuity used in the UK and in this report are as follows:

- Blindness (severe sight loss) is defined as best-corrected visual acuity of <6/60 in the better-seeing eye.
- Partial sight is defined as best-corrected visual acuity of <6/12 to 6/60 in the better-seeing eye, and is categorised as:
- Mild sight loss - best-corrected visual acuity of <6/12 but better than or equal to 6/18; and
- Moderate sight loss - best-corrected visual acuity of <6/18 but better than or equal to 6/60.

Sight loss is defined as partial sight or blindness in the better-seeing eye. (Access Economics 2009:2-3)

The classifications employed for questions regarding hearing ability were as follows: profoundly deaf, partially deaf, hard-of-hearing, have severe hearing loss, have mild/moderate hearing loss, have no hearing loss. These categories were based on levels of hearing loss given by Action on Hearing Loss in the 2011 report 'Hearing Matters':

There are four different levels of hearing loss, defined by the quietest sound that you are able to hear, measured in decibels (dB).

- Mild hearing loss:
  - Quietest sound: 25-39dB
  - Can sometimes make following speech difficult, particularly in noisy situations.

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<sup>18</sup> The term 'Deaf' with an upper case D was first proposed by Woodward (1972) 'to recognise those signed language users who form Deaf communities. The term 'Deaf' aims to distinguish between people who see themselves as part of a linguistic and cultural minority (Deaf community) while 'deaf' refers to deafness as an audiological deficit, a hearing loss' (Leeson and Vermeerbergen, 2010: 324).

- Moderate hearing loss:
  - Quietest sound: 40-69dB
  - May have difficulty following speech without hearing aids.
- Severe hearing loss:
  - Quietest sound: 70-94dB
  - Usually need to lipread or use sign language, even with hearing aids.
- Profound deafness:
  - Quietest sound: 95dB+
  - Usually need to lipread or use sign language. (Action on Hearing Loss, 2011: 23)

Some of the categories used in the preliminary questionnaires for the questions regarding hearing ability are overlapping. For instance, hard-of-hearing is a term which can be used to describe someone who has a degree of hearing loss from mild to severe. However, it was decided that it was important to give categories representing the various levels of hearing loss or deafness in order to cover all the terms a DH individual might best choose to describe his or her hearing ability. It was particularly important to give all these options because the DH's 'perception of their own hearing loss is often predicated on their experiences of family life, education, employment and leisure; someone who describes themselves as hard-of-hearing may actually have a greater hearing loss than someone who describes themselves as deaf' (personal communication from Roz Chalmers, Stagertext). In order to avoid confusion with the overlapping categories and to allow participants to give greater detail about their visual or hearing ability, or any terminology issues, should they wish, the question was introduced as follows:

Also for the purposes of statistical analysis, this question asks about your hearing and visual ability. Please mark with a cross any of the boxes below which apply to you. Please fill in each section. Some descriptions overlap so you may have to mark with a cross more than 1 box per section. If you feel that these descriptions do not adequately describe your visual and hearing ability or if you would like to add further comment please feel free to give details in the section below. (see Appendices III and V, question 15)

In the question regarding learning difficulties or disabilities, which read as follows 'Do you have any learning difficulties or disabilities?', the subsequent categories were chosen: none, autism, dyslexia and other (see Appendices III and V, question 21). Only autism and dyslexia were specified because of the particular impact these disabilities might have on the reception of the access facilities. An option was given to provide greater detail, should the participant wish, in order to allow space to elaborate if the 'other' option was selected or to give any other information.

For the questions about prior experience of opera and access facilities, the numerical groupings of 0, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10+ were used (see Appendices III and V, questions 8-14). These categories were chosen due to the relatively recent introduction of AD, ToTo, surtitles and SLI at live performances and in view of the limited number of shows at which these services are provided. Although these questions about experience of opera and access facilities differed slightly between the two groups of respondents, the same categories were used in both preliminary questionnaires for uniformity and in order to facilitate comparative analysis. Whilst substantial research was carried out to seek suitable categorisation for each variable, the choice of categories was on trial as this is the first study of its kind. The results suggested that some changes to these classifications may be useful for follow-up studies, as discussed in section 4.6.

#### **4.3.1.2 Post-performance questionnaires**

The post-performance questionnaires for the two groups of respondents also followed the same format as each other and both questionnaires were designed to take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. The same parameters of comprehension, enjoyment, and emotional engagement formed the basis of the questions in the post-performance questionnaires for both groups. In addition, there were some identical questions in the post-performance questionnaires of both groups such as those regarding familiarity with the plot and music of the particular opera *Carmen* (see Appendix IV questions and, and Appendix VI questions). Moreover, many of the questions were formulated in the same way for comparison purposes and there were also similarities between the two post-performance questionnaires in terms of the ordering of the questions. These issues are discussed further in sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3

The majority of questions in each questionnaire required graded responses using a variation on the Likert scale technique which replaced the standard set of responses (strongly agree to strongly disagree) with the numerical scale 1 = not at all, 2 = not very much, 3 = so-so, 4 = quite a lot, and 5 = very much. This numerical rating scale was selected as the most appropriate method of measurement for practical purposes as well as for theoretical reasons. These closed-ended questionnaire items allowed quick and easy feedback in a restricted time frame. Furthermore, they were chosen due to the equipment to be used for the data collection for the BPSPs. Hard-copy questionnaires were distributed to these patrons and their companions, should some BPSPs have sufficient sight to be able to write on them if they wished or should they wish their

sighted companions to write a comment for them. However, the main response method was via electronic Keypads, with press buttons numbered 1-9, shown in Figure 37.

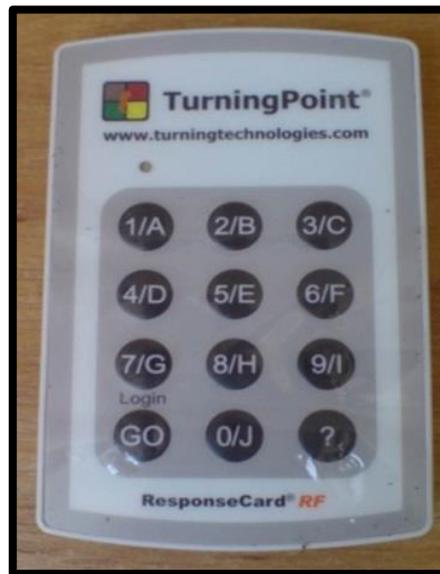


Figure 37. Keypad used in conjunction with TurningPoint software.

These Keypads were used in order to gather feedback from BPSPs who were not able to fill in a hard-copy questionnaire, thus rendering the feedback process as accessible as possible to all, whilst also encouraging individual responses. Any companions of the BPSPs were also given Keypads so that they might provide their feedback whilst allowing the BPSPs greater independence and individuality in their responses. Another advantage of this data collection method was that the Keypad system, which runs in conjunction with TurningPoint software, allowed the data to be immediately entered into a database.

The layout of the Keypad equipment influenced the number of response options to be given for the scaled items. It was not possible to employ a 0-9 scale because the bottom row of the keypad, where the 0 button is found, contained buttons which, if pressed, could reset the whole system and risk losing collected data. Having consulted with some BPS people and sight loss experts at Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind, it was also decided that a scale of 1-5, reserving 6 for the abstain option, would render this equipment more accessible to the BPS respondents as there were fewer options of buttons to press. Therefore, the equipment was adapted slightly, by blocking off the bottom 2 rows. Also, a 'bumpon' (a raised adhesive dot) was added to button number 2, in order to aid keypad orientation (shown in Figure 38).



Figure 38. Keypad adapted with orange bumpon and cover for data collection from BPSPs

These practical considerations were a significant factor given the specific requirements of the participants and the importance of making the feedback process as accessible as possible to these patrons. However, the choice regarding the number of response options to be given for the feedback also followed theoretical reasoning based on the original Likert scale containing five responses without too 'many neutral items or many extreme items at either end of the continuum' (Oppenheim, 1992: 195). This was a particularly salient consideration in terms of the attitudinal questions which form the majority of the post-performance questionnaire, in order to collect useful and valid data suitable for analysis. Also for analysis purposes, an ordinal scale where the variables can be interpreted as quantitative (i.e. measured in terms of numeric values and where the values reflect differences in magnitude), allows a more fine-grained evaluation of the resulting statistics.

In the post-performance questionnaires, in order to gather qualitative data to complement the quantitative data collected from the rating scale responses, each question included an open-ended item in the form of room for comments. On the hard-copy questionnaires, for the purpose of facilitating the answering process, the method of responding to the graded questions was consistent throughout, with the instruction 'please circle the number of your choice'. Similarly, blank lines were provided after each question for writing comments. Instructions at the beginning of the questionnaires encouraged the participants to provide this qualitative data, as follows: 'If you can, please give more details to explain your choices'. There were also other items inviting further comment such as 'If you have any further comments in response to this

questionnaire, please write them below'. Moreover, in the feedback sessions, this request for further comment was reiterated orally and participants were given the opportunity to provide this information in written or oral format or using SLI. As discussed further in section 4.3.5, this data was collected using a combination of methods including hard-copy questionnaires, audio recording, video recording and note-taking.

### **4.3.2 Ordering of questionnaire items**

The issue of question ordering is a focus of controversy due to 'the difficulty of producing conclusive evidence about question order effects' (Bryman, 2012: 223). Nevertheless, as Dörnyei states, 'item sequence is a significant factor because the context of a question can have an impact on its interpretation. Indeed, the meaning of almost any question can be altered by the adjacent questions' (2003: 59-60). Therefore, it was important to be aware of the possible implications of question ordering when designing a questionnaire. Despite the lack of specific theoretical rules for ordering of questionnaire items, there are some general principles which can be followed (ibid.). As discussed subsequently, these issues and principles were taken into account when writing both the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires for the audience reception project.

#### **4.3.2.1 Preliminary questionnaires**

The preliminary questionnaires contained all the 'factual questions' or 'classification questions' to be asked of the respondents (Dörnyei, 2003: 8). However, there were also some 'behavioral questions' (ibid), for example about experience of opera and access facilities. One of the question-ordering principles regarding opening questions is that they need to be 'interesting questions dealing with the topic of the study' (Oppenheim, 1992: 109). This removes the possibility of confusion or frustration on the part of the respondent due to seemingly irrelevant questions and immediately engages their attention. For this reason 'personal questions about age, social background, and so on should not be asked at the beginning' (Bryman, 2012: 221). Furthermore, because such questions may be of a sensitive nature, they should be saved for the end of the questionnaire (Oppenheim, 1992: 109; Dörnyei, 2003: 61). Therefore, in the audience reception project preliminary questionnaires, the factual questions were placed at the end, and the more interesting behavioural questions were asked earlier on. It was decided that name and consent should be initially confirmed in order to ensure that this

crucial information was not neglected. However, the first proper question (see Appendices III and V, question 3) dealt with the focus of the study, namely the opera accessibility facilities. It read as follows, with a brief introductory statement:

Firstly, we would like to clarify that the performance which will be sung in French with surtitles will be sign interpreted and audio described with a pre-performance touch tour.

3) Which of these facilities would you like to use? Please mark with a cross the box(es) below to indicate any of the services you would like to use.

Surtitles

British SL interpreter

Audio description

Touch tour

This question and the other opening questionnaire items were also placed at the beginning because they reiterate the idea that the audience's requirements are prioritised. Thus, Bryman's suggestion that 'as far as possible, questions that are more likely to be salient to respondents should be asked early' (2012: 221) was heeded. As discussed in section 4.3.3, the wording of these opening questions was chosen for the same purpose.

Another general principle about question ordering concerns the clarity of the structure (Dörnyei, 2003: 60). The questionnaires can be organised according to the format or content of the questions (ibid.). In the preliminary questionnaires, both of these principles of organisation were adhered to. After the initial formalities in the first two questions asking for name and consent, the first three questions were arranged according to content as they all established the participant's individual access requirements for the opera performances at which the project was conducted (see Appendices III and V, questions 3-5). Questions 4 and 5 read as follows:

4) Will you require the programme notes and questionnaire translated into Braille? Please mark with a cross to indicate your requirement.

yes

no

5) Do you have any physical access requirements? Will you require any particular physical assistance? Please give details below.

The subsequent two questions followed on logically from these opening questions, because of the similarity in content. However, it was important to separate them with a linking sentence to indicate a subsection and clarify that they did not refer to the

participant's requirements for the opera performances. These two questions read as follows, with a short instructive sentence:

- 6) Do you use Braille at all?  
yes  no
- 7) Are you a British Sign Language (BSL) user?  
yes  no
- If yes, would you say that BSL is your first (or preferred) language?  
yes  no

The next seven questions were grouped together according to content and format. These questions (see Appendices III and V, questions 8-14) all addressed the same issue of experience of opera and accessibility facilities. Furthermore, in terms of format, they all requested the respondent to select an answer from amongst five categories, each with the same numerical groupings, as shown in the subsequent quotation. This group of questionnaire items was also organised with more general questions preceding specific ones (Bryman, 2012: 221). This latter ordering principle is exemplified in question 11, as quoted below, which might be considered as a grouping in itself in view of its subsections.

- 11)** How many **operas** have you attended at which you used audio description services?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+
- i)** How many of these operas were through-described? i.e. with intermittent commentary throughout the performance?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+
- ii)** How many just had an audio introduction i.e. description before the performance and in intervals only?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+

The remaining questionnaire items all addressed personal issues and were ordered according to content. For instance, question 15 contained several subsections which all requested information about hearing and visual ability and were thus grouped together (see Appendices III and V, question 15). The subsequent questions 16 and 17 regarding gender and age were placed together next as they were simple and easy to answer as opposed to the preceding question 15 which might have required some thought and notes in the comment sections. These questions were followed by a group of questionnaire items about education, language knowledge and learning difficulties of

disabilities (see Appendices III and V, questions 18-20). As mentioned previously, all of these potentially sensitive questions were positioned in the latter part of the questionnaire. The intention of this ordering was that the participant would feel more at ease having already worked through some more interesting questions which focused on his or her needs and interests.

At the very end of the preliminary questionnaire, there was a question requesting consent to take photos and recordings of the feedback and access events. Given that the preliminary questionnaires were administered prior to the feedback sessions, this question was placed at the end because it looks forward to the forthcoming events and acts as a reminder to the participants. It was necessary to include this question in the preliminary questionnaires in order to gain consent and make the necessary arrangements in advance of the feedback sessions. The administering of the questionnaires and temporal progression of the feedback is discussed further in section 4.3.5. Finally, in accordance with another principle of question ordering which suggests positioning open-ended questionnaire items at the end (Dörnyei, 2003: 62), there were a couple of unnumbered questions which requested further comments (see Appendices III and V). They were placed here because time and thought is required in writing answers and this may have been off-putting or distracting for some respondents if they had been included earlier in the questionnaire, thus posing the risk of preventing completion. Furthermore, as Dörnyei states, 'some people find it psychologically more acceptable to put in the necessary work if they have already invested in the questionnaire and if they know that this is the final task' (2003: 62). These final questionnaire items read as follows:

If you have any further comments in response to this questionnaire in general, please write them below.....  
.....  
.....  
This is a pilot project and we would be very grateful for any comments or suggestions regarding the questionnaires, feedback sessions or in general about the project.....  
.....  
.....

#### **4.3.2.2 *Post-performance questionnaires***

The post-performance questionnaires included mostly 'attitudinal questions' with some 'behavioral questions' (Dörnyei, 2003: 8). Similarly to the preliminary questionnaires, the

ordering of the questions in the post-performance questionnaires was carefully considered in order to ensure: (1) interesting opening items; (2) a clear and organised structure; and (3) a logical, comfortable progression with any potentially problematic or open-ended items reserved for the end.

The ordering of the starter questions and final questions is very similar in the post-performance questionnaires of both groups of respondents. One of the main opening questions in both post-performance questionnaires (see Appendix IV, question 2 and Appendix VI, question 1) asked about general enjoyment of several aspects of the opera experience. Given that the feedback sessions in which the post-performance questionnaires were administered took place immediately after the performances, this question was chosen as it seemed an effective way to attract the interest of the audience and open the discussion. It was also important to place this question at the beginning in order to establish the participants' general impressions of the individual aspects of the performance. If this more general question had been placed after the specific questions which followed, the participants' responses to the more general question might have been affected by these subsequent items (see Bryman, 2012: 221-223).

In the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo the very first question can be seen as an extra preliminary question. It was decided that this question should be placed at the beginning due to the difference in the format of the response requested here in comparison to the rest of the questionnaire. As shown below, this question required a yes/no answer, whereas all other questions requested a graded response from 1-5, with 6 reserved for abstaining. The first question in the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo read as follows with the brief instruction preceding it.

The first question requires a yes or no answer where 1 = yes, 2 = no and 3 = abstain.

Please circle the number of your choice.

If you do not wish to answer this question please circle 3 =abstain.

1) Did you attend the touch tour earlier this evening?

1 (= yes)

2 (= no)

3 = abstain

In view of this uniquely different response format, the only other logical placement of this question would have been at the end. However, as it was vital to gather this data for the comparative analysis of the combined approach of AD plus ToTo compared to AD alone, it was decided that it was best placed at the beginning in case some respondents were not able to reach the end of the questionnaire.

The next opening questions in both questionnaires were grouped together because they addressed the overall helpfulness of the opera translation modalities (see Appendix IV, questions 3 and 4 and Appendix VI, questions 2 and 3). They were placed at the beginning in accordance with the rule that ‘general questions should precede specific ones’ and because they are ‘directly related to the topic of the research’ (Bryman, 2012: 221). Furthermore, these questions are likely to be salient to the participants and therefore may encourage enthusiasm to continue the questionnaire and to give comments to explain their answers, thus providing useful qualitative data to complement to quantitative data from the graded responses.

After these opening general attitudinal questions, the sequence of the questions differs in the post-performance questionnaires for the two response groups, at least in the middle segment. As mentioned before, the final section of the post-performance questionnaires for both response groups are very similar. They both contain questions which ask about future interest, followed by an open-ended item requesting any additional comments (see Appendix IV, questions 15-17 and Appendix VI, questions 17-19). The open-ended item was placed at the very end of each post-performance questionnaire for the same reasons explained in section 4.3.2.1 in relation to the open-ended question concluding the preliminary questionnaires. This final grouping of questionnaire items in the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo read as follows:

15) How much would you like to come to another opera?  
 1            2            3            4            5                                  6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

16) How much would you like to come to another opera with audio description?  
 1            2            3            4            5                                  6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

17) How much would you like to come to another opera with a touch tour?  
 1            2            3            4            5                                  6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

**Thank you very much for your participation.**

If you have any further comments in response to this questionnaire, and/or if you are happy to give your e-mail address, phone number or other contact details, please write them below.

This is a pilot project and we would be very grateful for any comments or suggestions regarding the questionnaires, feedback sessions or in general about the project.

**Please hand in your questionnaire as you leave. Thank you.**

.....  
.....

If you have not had time to add additional comments or if there are any other remarks you would like to make after tonight, the researcher, Sarah Weaver, would be very pleased to hear from you. Her e-mail address is [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk).

In view of the difference in the ordering of items for the post-performance questionnaires of the two groups of respondents, the structure of the middle segments of these two questionnaires will now be considered separately.

The first few items in the middle segment of the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or TT, questions 5-7, were grouped together because they have the same format and address a similar content area (see Appendix IV). In terms of format, each question was made up of two sections a) and b). These sections combine behavioural questions about how much of the various types of AD were listened to with attitudinal questions regarding the helpfulness of these individual types. For instance, question 5 read as follows:

5) a) How much did you listen to the **live audio introduction** (i.e. the part of the audio description immediately before the performance starts) this evening?  
1          2          3          4          5                                  6 = abstain  
Comments.....  
How helpful did you find this **live audio introduction** in general?  
1          2          3          4          5                                  6 = abstain  
Comments.....

It was also important to group questions 5-7 together in order to avoid any potential confusion over the terminology used to describe the various types of AD. These questions were positioned fairly near the beginning of the questionnaire for reasons of memory because they referred to elements of the AD which took place before the performance began and therefore the sooner they were asked the better. Furthermore, these questions relate directly to the topic of research and are likely to be important to the participants (Bryman, 2012: 221; Dörnyei 2003: 61). The subsequent two questions 8 and 9 enquiring about familiarity with the music and the plot of the opera before the performance were positioned here for reasons of memory. Furthermore, these more general enquiries were placed successive to the slightly more pedantic questions 5-7 as a contrast. Questions 8 and 9 were grouped together with question 10 due to similarities in

format and content. Moreover, they all address issues relating to the parameter of comprehension. Questions 11, 12 and 13 are grouped together because they concern topics which correspond mainly to the parameter of emotional engagement. They are placed later in the questionnaire due to their specificity and so as not to influence the responses to previous questions. The final question in the middle segment of the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo reads as follows:

14) In general how clear was your mental image of the geography of the stage?  
 1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain  
 Comments.....

This item did not fall naturally into any other position amongst the question groupings in the questionnaire, and therefore it stands on its own. It is placed towards the end of the questionnaire because it refers to a specific feature. However it was a vital question to include for the purpose of evaluating the helpfulness of the ToTo through comparative analysis of the combined approach of AD plus ToTo with that of AD alone.

In the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles, the middle segment begins with question 4 which stands alone (see Appendix VI). This question about comprehension of the plot does not refer to the sign language interpretation or the surtitles and therefore it is clear to the participants that it can be answered by all of them. This question was placed here in order to set a precedent for subsequent items in terms of reiterating the intention that all questions are to be considered by all participants. Also for this reason of encouraging participants to consider answering questions about both SLI and surtitles, the items were not grouped together in such a way that those enquiring about SLI were separate from those asking about surtitles. Arguably, for audience members who only used one of these access facilities, it might have been less time-consuming to complete the questionnaire if all the questions about surtitles were grouped together in one section and all the questions about SLI in another section. However, this approach may have prevented patrons who mainly focused on one translation method, for example the surtitles, from realising that they also referred to the other translation modality, for example the SLI for the reception of certain aspects. Similarly for hearing audience members who were not consciously using the access facilities, it was important that they read all the questions in order that they might recognise any subconscious use of the surtitles or SLI by considering their responses to the enquiries. Furthermore, it was decided that for patrons who used both

access facilities, the chosen grouping of questions according to content was more logical. Hence, questions 5 to 7 are grouped together because they all relate to emotional engagement. The next group of questions 8-12 are all interlinked in a different way and the consecutive sequence in which they were placed was significant for tracking the development of the participant's thought processes with the aid of additional comments. The responses to questions 8 and 9 are likely to be influenced by the answers to question 10. This is because the amount of attention paid to the SL interpreter and surtitles is likely to affect the participant's opinion regarding the extent to which these facilities detracted from the enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera. The responses to question 10 are in turn affected by the results from questions 11 and 12, regarding familiarity with the plot and music of the opera. Given the possible retrospective impact of these questions on each other, it was important to place them in reverse order in the questionnaire so as to avoid influencing the participants' responses. The following four questions 13-16 were grouped together because they all aim to gauge audience demand for surtitles specifically targeted at the DH. Additionally, they were all intended to measure the effectiveness of standard surtitles (or their limits) from the perspective of the DH, at least in terms of certain specific aspects. These aspects included indication of sound effects, music, repeated phrases and character labelling. This group of questions was also placed fairly near the end of the questionnaire in view of their hypothetical nature. This placement was chosen for the purpose of avoiding confusion on the part of the participants by making a distinction between these questions which alluded to possible developments of future surtitles and earlier questions which referred to the surtitles at the just previously attended performance. As explained in section 4.3.5, this distinction and the hypothetical nature of this group of questions was to be reiterated orally by the person leading the feedback session. However, this was not possible because in accordance with the participants' wishes, the session took the format of an open discussion. Consequently, the addition of an instructive statement before this group of question is suggested and discussed further in section 4.6.

### **4.3.3 Questionnaire wording**

A questionnaire contains several principal components including the title, the introductory statement, the instructions, the final thank you and the questions. The questions are naturally the main focus, and therefore this section concentrates on the wording of these items. However, it is also important to first briefly mention the

phrasing of the other components. According to Dörnyei, 'a questionnaire should have a title to identify the domain of the investigation, to provide the respondent with initial orientation, and to activate various content schemata (2003: 25). The title for the audience reception project read as follows: 'Pilot Study into Opera Accessibility: Carmen Audience Reception Project' with a subheading indicating the date and place of the survey. This title fulfils Dörnyei's criteria because the field of study is identified as opera accessibility and audience reception, and the respondents are informed of the principal details of the survey, including its date and location and that it is a study related to a performance of *Carmen*. The informative purpose of the title in introducing the content of the study was also supported by the introductory statement. For instance, in the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo, the introductory statement read as follows (see Appendix IV):

Thank you very much for your involvement in this audience feedback project. Your responses are extremely valuable and we are very grateful for your participation.

This is a hard-copy of the post-performance questionnaire to find out about your experience of the audio description and/or touch tour. It should take about 15 minutes to complete. We would be most grateful if you could hand in your completed questionnaire to the researcher, Sarah Weaver, this evening or return it via e-mail to [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk) or by post to Becky Lane, Marketing Coordinator, Opera North, Grand Theatre, 46 New Briggate, Leeds, LS1 6NU.

If you would like an electronic copy to be sent to you, please let Sarah Weaver know as you leave or e-mail her as above and she will be very happy to send you one. Alternatively, you can contact Becky Lane at Opera North on 0113 22 33 590 or 07964 561 427.

We can also arrange a time to speak to you on the phone if you prefer to give your feedback in this way. Your response would be much appreciated.

This feedback opportunity is part of an audience reception project which Opera North is carrying out with Sarah Weaver, a PhD student at Durham University who is researching into opera accessibility for audiences with differing visual and hearing ability.

The aim of the project is, with your help, to evaluate to what extent opera access facilities meet audience requirements and to raise awareness of these services so that wider audiences can enjoy access to the arts.

Your answers to any or all of the questions will be treated with the strictest confidence. We ask for your name here in order to be able to match up the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires, but before any responses are analysed, your name will be removed from all correspondence to ensure confidentiality; the researcher will only study the questionnaires once these are completely anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact the researcher Sarah Weaver or let her know during this session.

We have provided a consent form for you to sign. This is merely a formality but we would be very grateful if you could sign this before starting the questions. Again if you have any queries let Sarah Weaver know.

There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your valued opinion and preferences. If there are any questions you would rather not answer, you can choose the abstain option. We would be very grateful for your personal responses, as only this will guarantee the success of the

investigation and the more details you can provide the better. Some questions may seem irrelevant but we would ask you to answer as many as you can as your responses would be most appreciated. Please feel free to add any additional remarks at any point in the questionnaire. We would also be very pleased to receive any further comments at a later date should you wish and you can send these to the researcher by e-mail to [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk). Thank you again for your help.

The introductory statements varied slightly in each of the four types of questionnaires including the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires for users of AD and/or ToTo and for users of SLI and/or surtitles (see Appendices III-VI). However, in each questionnaire the introductory statement provided general information about the project and its aims, followed by a summary of the types of questions and the length of the questionnaires. Furthermore, confidentiality of responses was assured in each case, and other formalities including contact details were provided as concisely as possible. The introductory paragraphs were all worded in such a way as to try and encourage personal and detailed responses, for example reiterating that there are no right or wrong answers.<sup>19</sup> The intention of the phrasing used was also to create a general feeling of 'respect and consideration' towards the respondents, showing gratitude for their participation and using polite language (Oppenheim, 1992: 122). This technique was used throughout the questionnaire. For example, some questions had introductory sentences by way of explanation and appreciation, and the participant was thanked at both the beginning and the end of each of the questionnaires. In order to show the participants that their responses were valuable, the introductory paragraphs in the preliminary questionnaires included an invite to an informal social gathering in the intervals of the performance as a small gesture of gratitude.

In the preliminary questionnaires, the instructions for answering the questions were fairly minimal, asking the respondents to 'please mark with a cross' the relevant boxes of the categories in a given question, and occasionally asking for details where appropriate. However, for some of the questions asking more personal details, given their potentially sensitive nature, a carefully-worded special introduction was given with 'some sort of a justification and a renewed promise of confidentiality' (Dörnyei, 2003: 57). For instance, such introductory phrases included the following: 'now, to help us classify your answers and to make statistical comparisons we would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions' and 'rest assured that all information you

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<sup>19</sup> Some patrons responded to the invitation at the end of the introductory statement to provide further comments at a later date, as discussed in section 4.3.4.

provide will be treated confidentiality. It is just to help us make statistical comparisons in our research’.

In the post-performance questionnaires, the instructions regarding answering procedures were more detailed and specific, although they were worded as concisely as possible. Before the start of the questions, an initial explanation of the rating scale was provided along with the criteria to be used throughout the questionnaire. Furthermore, a copy of the rating scale was included on each new page as a reminder and in order to avoid any errors in answers due to confusion regarding the response criteria. The initial instruction read as follows:

In this questionnaire we would like you to answer some questions by simply giving marks from 1 to 5.

1 = not at all    2 = not very much    3 = so-so    4 = quite a lot    5 = very much

For each question please circle the number of your choice.

If you do not wish to answer a question please circle 6 = abstain

Although relating more to formatting rather than to wording, it must be noted that in the post-performance questionnaire for the users of SLI and/or surtitles, these instructions were put in bold print to distinguish them from the questions. The same formatting applied to the rating scale which was repeated on each new page. In the questionnaire for the users of AD and/or ToTo, bold print was not used due to the recommendation of the RNIB Clear Print guidelines to avoid blocks of bold print in order to improve readability for partially-sighted people. Alternatively, each time the rating scale was provided in these questionnaires, it was placed in a box in order to separate it from the questions. In both post-performance questionnaires, in every question, the number 6 on the rating scale was slightly separated from the other 5 numbers on the scale and also labelled as follows ‘6=abstain’ in order to try and avoid participants forgetting that this number was not part of the rating scale. The simple wording of the response categories for the rating scale indicating various degrees of intensity was chosen in order to avoid bias and so that it could be used throughout both questionnaires for all graded response questions. Although for some of the questions, these responses were not grammatically correct, it was decided that it was more important to maintain the same wording for the scale throughout for the purpose of consistency. The instructions regarding the method of answering were equally consistent, that is giving graded responses by circling the appropriate number, and participants were invited to give extra comment where possible. The wording for the invite to respondents to give further explanation for their

graded answers was polite and not too emphatic, with the aim of encouraging comment rather than demanding it which might be off-putting.

#### 4.3.3.1 *The wording of the questions*

Similarly to the issue of the ordering of questionnaire items, as Peterson (2000: 46) states, there is 'no formal, comprehensive theory of question wording'. Peterson highlights that there is moreover a lack of 'well-defined principles for properly wording questions' or 'universal rules' due to the necessity of considering each unique research context individually (ibid.). However, there are some general considerations to be borne in mind in the formulation of questions regarding the avoidance of certain issues such as ambiguity, complexity, irrelevance and imprecision. These considerations were taken into account in the construction of the questionnaires for the audience reception project in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. Indeed, in view of the possible impact of even the most subtle differences in the wording of questions, each questionnaire item was scrutinised within its individual research context before including it the questionnaires. In this section, firstly the phrasing of the questions in the preliminary questionnaires will be examined. Secondly, the wording of the items in the post-performance questionnaires will be explained.

##### 4.3.3.1.1 Preliminary questionnaires

The preliminary questionnaires for both groups of respondents (see Appendices III and V) contained mostly classification questions which are 'of special importance in stratifying the sample' and therefore required extra care (Oppenheim, 1992: 132). In general, the items were kept as short as possible and natural, simple language was employed. Polite turns of phrase were also used in the posing of the questions, such as 'if you would not mind' or 'we would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions' in order to show respect and appreciation to the respondents for 'taking time and trouble to answer' (Oppenheim, 1992: 122). The first couple of questions, although merely formalities, were written using a conversational style in order to set the tone for the questionnaires. For instance, the second question was stated in full, rather than using a terse category as follows 'Name:' in order to avoid giving the impression of an official document and thus to help put the respondents at ease. These questions read as follows:

- 1) Are you happy to give your consent to take part in this survey?  
yes  no

2) What is your name?.....

If you are happy to give your e-mail address, phone number or other contact details, please write them below.....

.....

The second question was followed by the polite request for further contact details in case any follow-up research was required. However, this was not essential information and therefore it was worded in such a way as to again ensure the respondents felt comfortable and to avoid putting them off by demanding personal data from them. Having dealt with the formalities, the rest of the questions in the preliminary questionnaires were included for the purpose of establishing the profile of the participants, as discussed in section 4.2. In addition, some questions related to the specific project objectives enumerated in section 4.1, as discussed subsequently with regard to the relevant questions.

The third question read as follows:

3) Which of these facilities would you like to use? Please mark with a cross the box(es) below to indicate any of the services you would like to use.

Surtitles

British SL interpreter

Audio description

Touch tour

This item was phrased using the expression ‘would you like to use’ rather than for example ‘will you need to use’ in order that hearing and sighted audience members would be more likely to realise the significance of this question for them. Furthermore, this wording was selected so that none of the respondents would feel restricted in their choices. For instance, it was intended that deaf or hard-of-hearing patrons who were not BSL users would not be put off from selecting British SL interpreter if they felt they would like to use this facility. The specification of ‘British SL interpreter’ was also made, as opposed to purely writing ‘SL interpreter’ in order to avoid ambiguity and imprecision. Definitions of the four different accessibility facilities were not provided here for the purposes of concision. It must be pointed out that this decision was reviewed, as discussed in section 4.6. The following two questions read as follows:

4) Will you require the programme notes and questionnaire translated into Braille? Please mark with a cross to indicate your requirement.

yes

no

- 5) Do you have any physical access requirements? Will you require any particular physical assistance? Please give details below.....  
.....

These items were worded in such a way as to emphasise to the respondents that the project was concerned with their individual accessibility requirements. Furthermore, the questions were phrased in a fairly informal manner in order to bring the sense of a personal touch which might encourage openness and further comment throughout the questionnaires on the part of the respondent. Question 5 was written as an open-ended question because the range of physical access requirements could not be covered concisely within categories of responses and in order to give the participant the freedom to respond in as much detail as desired.

As has already been mentioned, introductory phrases were used occasionally to explain the need for personal data. The following quote includes just such a phrase before questions 6 which read as follows:

Now, to help us to classify your answers and to make statistical comparisons we would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions:

- 6) Do you use Braille at all?  
yes  no

The wording of linking sentences such as this also helped maintain the conversational style of the questionnaire in order to establish a rapport with the respondent. The phrasing of question 6 was chosen for brevity and the words 'at all' were included in order to clarify that the question was enquiring about the use of Braille in any context however minimal. Question 7 read as follows:

- 7) Are you a British Sign Language (BSL) user?  
yes  no   
  
If yes, would you say that BSL is your first (or preferred) language?  
yes  no

Again, the wording chosen here was aiming for concision and clarity. The use of the phrase 'first (or preferred) language' may make this seem like a double-barrelled question which Dörnyei recommends avoiding (2003: 55). However, it is not a double-barrelled question because to the respondents for whom this question was relevant, this phrase would have been recognised as the standard way to distinguish between

different types of BSL users. This question was relevant to the project objectives of investigating the following areas of interest: 4. a-m and 5. a-j which relate to the overall effectiveness of the surtitles and SLI, respectively, from the perspective of the DH. In addition, this question relates to areas of interest 4.i. and 5.i. which concern the reception of the music for DH non-BSL users and DH BSL users (see Figure 35).

Questions 8 to 14 were formulated in a similar way using variations of the basic structure 'how many... have you attended?'. For instance, questions 8 and 9 read as follows:

- 8) How many operas have you attended? Please mark the appropriate box with a cross.  
0                   1-3                   4-6                   7-9                   10+
- 9) How many times have you attended a performance of Bizet's opera Carmen?  
0                   1-3                   4-6                   7-9                   10+

Both questions use simple and natural language and were written as closed-ended questions to speed up the answering process. Question 8 provides precise information in the form of 'Bizet's opera Carmen' to clarify that the question is enquiring about this specific opera and not the film *Carmen* or any other opera for example. The same numerical groupings were used for the response categories in questions 8 to 14, and this choice is discussed further in section 4.3.1.1. Throughout the questionnaires, technical terminology was avoided on the whole, although in questions 10 to 14 certain specific terms were employed requiring some elaboration. The wording of question 10 differed slightly between the questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo (see Appendix III) and the questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles (see Appendix V), as shown below:

- 10) How many **live performances of any kind** (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) have you attended at which you used audio description services?  
0                   1-3                   4-6                   7-9                   10+
- 10) How many **live sign interpreted performances of any kind** (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) have you attended?  
0                   1-3                   4-6                   7-9                   10+

In both questionnaires, for precision purposes and in order to avoid any ambiguity, the meaning of 'live performances of any kind' was defined by giving the examples of 'musicals, plays, opera, other'. The same definition was given in question 12 of the questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo and question 13 of the questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles. Similarly, in question 11 of the questionnaire for users of

AD and/or ToTo, which read as follows, some explanation was required to clarify the terms 'through-described' and 'audio introduction' in order to avoid ambiguity.

- 11) How many operas have you attended at which you used audio description services?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+
- i. How many of these operas were through-described? i.e. with intermittent commentary throughout the performance?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+
- ii. How many just had an audio introduction i.e. description before the performance and in intervals only?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+

As discussed in section 2.1.2, AI may be provided as a standalone facility for opera, whereas through-description is typically offered in conjunction with different types of AI, hence the choice of wording for parts i and ii of question 11. In questions 12 and 13 of the preliminary questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles it was also important to explain the distinction between standard titles/surtitles and titles/captions specifically targeted at the DH, as shown below:

- 12) How many **operas with standard titles/surtitles** (i.e. not targeted specifically at the deaf and hard-of-hearing) have you attended?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+
- 13) How many live performances of any kind (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) with titles/captions specifically targeted at deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences with details of sound effects etc. as provided for example by the company Stagertext have you attended?  
0  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+

The wording of question 15, including the phrasing of the response categories, in the questionnaires for both groups of respondents is discussed in section 4.3.1.1. Also, in this question, it was decided to use the term 'ability' rather than 'disability' because hearing and/or sighted audience members were included in the group of participants. The subsections of question 15 were closed-ended items for the purpose of aiding comparative data analysis. At the very end of this question, there was also an open-ended item with the instruction: 'Please give any details you can for further description', so that the respondents had room to clarify their responses as desired. This room for clarification was provided for the purpose of establishing an accurate profile of the participants with regard to visual and hearing ability.

As with the opening questionnaire items, questions 16 to 18 were written as full sentences, rather than terse categories, in order to maintain the conversational style of the questionnaires. In view of the potentially sensitive nature of question 17, it was decided that the response categories should refer to age group, rather than asking for an exact age which could be deemed as an 'unnecessary detail' (Oppenheim, 1992: 132). The choice of response categories used in questions 18 and 20 is reviewed in section 4.6. Question 19 was worded as an open-ended item as follows: 'What is your first language?' so as not to limit the various possible answers, although as reported in section 4.6, this resulted in some comical responses. The choice of phrasing and response categories for questions 21 and 22 are discussed in sections 4.3.1.1 and 4.3.2.1.

#### 4.3.3.1.2 Post-Performance Questionnaires

Similarly to the preliminary questionnaires, in the post-performance questionnaires for both groups of respondents (see Appendices IV and VI), the style of writing in the questions was natural, simple, and concise. For consistency and accessibility purposes, all of the questionnaire items were presented in the format of questions. The topics of enquiry were chosen according to the project objectives (see section 4.1) whilst also taking into account the subjects which would most likely be of interest to the respondents having just experienced an opera performance and which might provoke discussion. Furthermore, on the whole, the questions did not ask about specific details which might be taxing or distancing for the respondents.

The natural, conversational tone intended to maintain a rapport with the respondents is evident from the start in the first question of the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo. This question read as follows: 'Did you attend the touch tour earlier this evening?'. The verb 'attend' was chosen here, instead of 'participate in' for example, because the intention was to find out which respondents were present at the ToTo, including sighted audience members who may have been passive observers or active participants. This question was necessary for the purpose of investigating the project objectives relating to the areas of interest 3. a.-e. which concern the effectiveness of AD plus ToTo in combination in comparison with AD alone from the perspective of BPSPs (see Figure 35).

The second question in this questionnaire read as follows:

- 2) On a scale of 1-5 in general how much did you enjoy:
  - a) the performance?

- 1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain
- b) the music?  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain
- c) this particular interpretation of Carmen?  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain
- d) the visual design of this production?  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain
- e) the social event of coming to the opera?  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain
- f) the audio description?  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain
- g) the touch tour? (if you did not attend the touch tour please press 6 = abstain)  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

If you can, please give more detail to explain your choices

.....  
 .....  
 .....

The wording of the first question in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles was worded in an identical way, with the exception of the final two parts of this item which were read as follows:

- f) the sign interpreting?  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain
- g) the surtitles/the titles? [from now on the term 'titles' will be used]  
1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Given that this was one of the opening items in both questionnaires, the question included a reminder of the scale 1-5, in order to prevent respondents from accidentally selecting number 6 as the top rating. The fact that number 6 was the abstain option was reiterated by specifying as such for each item as follows: '6=abstain' and by separating it slightly from the other options. The phrase 'in general' was included in the question as the aim was to obtain an overall impression of the participant's response to the various aspects of the performance. In part a) of the question, the term 'performance' was chosen instead of 'opera' for example, so as to avoid responses about Bizet's opera *Carmen* rather than regarding the particular performance of Bizet's opera *Carmen*. Part b)

regarding music was included in both questionnaires because even though such a question might be judged irrelevant for deaf patrons, as mentioned by some of the participants (see section 5.2), the questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles was targeted at hearing and hard-of-hearing patrons who may have had differing degrees of access to the music. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the DH can enjoy music albeit through a different semiotic channel from hearing patrons (see the end of the introduction to Chapter 3) and the SLI may have contributed to this enjoyment. It was particularly relevant to include this potentially provocative question about music within the context of a feedback session for the purpose of stimulating discussion relating to the research aims of the project (see section 4.1). A similar argument applies to part d) of this question regarding the visual design of the production. Although this question might appear irrelevant for BPSPs, it aimed to provoke discussion regarding the reception and enjoyment of the visual aspects via semiotic channels other than sight including touch and hearing as facilitated by the AD and ToTo. The wording of part c) of this question is reviewed in section 4.6. Part e) refers to 'the social event of coming to the opera' so as to encompass all social aspects of the opera experience. Part g) of this question in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles uses the term 'surtitles' and introduces the use of the term 'titles' from then on. It was thought that 'surtitles' would be a more familiar term to respondents and therefore this was used initially, but then the term 'titles' was employed because at the project performances the surtitles were displayed on screens at the sides of the stage and so the term 'surtitles' may have caused confusion. As discussed in section 4.6, the term surtitles proved problematic to some extent and therefore this wording was reviewed. The open-ended item at the end of this question was worded in a polite fashion and as a request in order to encourage further explanation of responses. In the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo, the various parts of this question were relevant to the project objectives of investigating the following areas of interest: 1.b., 2.b., 3.c., 3.d., 7., and 8. (see Figure 35). In the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles, the varying parts of this question were included in order to be able to investigate the areas of interest 4.b., 5.b., 7., and 9. (see Figure 35).

The subsequent two questions in both post-performance questionnaires were very similar and read as followed:

- 3) How helpful did you find the **audio description** in general?



or favourable or a negative/unfavourable attitude toward the object of interest' (2003: 37). In this study, a variation on the Likert scale was used, as discussed in section 4.3.1.2, and the questionnaire items were worded as questions rather than as statements for consistency purposes. The five graded answers, including 1 = not at all, 2 = not very much, 3 = so-so, 4 = quite a lot, 5 = very much, show to the respondent that a negative answer is acceptable, thus reducing 'the leading effects of the question' (Oppenheim, 1992: 138). Furthermore, the importance of considering negative responses was emphasised by: (1) placing the rating scales at the beginning of every page of the questionnaires; (2) reading the rating scales aloud (see section 4.3.5 for more details regarding data collection methods); and (3) reiterating orally and in writing in the introductory statements of the questionnaires that there were no right or wrong answers. The same argument applies to the other questions using potentially loaded words such as 'enjoy'. Within the context of this study with the overall aim of evaluating the effectiveness of opera accessibility facilities, it is arguably highly relevant to enquire about the degree of helpfulness of these modalities. Moreover, in view of the reiterated negative statements in the rating scale, the use of the word 'helpful' rather than a possibly more neutral term such as 'effective', could help avoid ambiguity. Similarly, given that the parameters for measuring the effectiveness of the translation modalities included enjoyment, as explained in section 4.1, the use of the word 'enjoy' was more fitting to the purpose of the study than a more impartial and possibly ambiguous term such as 'receive'. In addition, the use of multi-item scales and the collection of complementary qualitative data in the form of comments helped to identify any possible biasing effects and verify the reliability of the graded responses. In the post-performance questionnaires for both groups of respondents, multi-item scales were used, as discussed further in section 4.1 and Chapter 5.

The wording of certain items in the post-performance questionnaires might have appeared repetitious, for example where the helpfulness and enjoyment of a given access facility was the subject of enquiry. It was essential to include questions relating to both enjoyment and helpfulness in order to clarify subtleties of the effectiveness of the translation modalities. Indeed, although the variables of enjoyment and helpfulness are closely related in that helpfulness or usefulness is likely to increase entertainment value and enjoyment, they are not interdependent. For instance, whilst the AD might have been considered helpful in making the visual aspects of the opera more accessible, it might not necessarily have been enjoyed very much if, for example, the audio describer's

voice was deemed annoying. Hence, this choice of subtle difference in wording was deliberate.

In the post-performance questionnaire for the users of AD and/or ToTo, the subsequent three questions read as follows:

5 a) How much did you listen to the **live audio introduction** (i.e. the part of the audio description immediately before the performance starts) this evening?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

b) How helpful did you find this **live audio introduction** in general?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

6 a) How much did you listen to the **through-description** (i.e. the intermittent commentary throughout the performance once it had started)?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

b) How helpful did you find this **through-description** in general?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

7 a) How much did you listen to the preparatory audio introduction (i.e. the extended audio introduction which is available on the VocalEyes website and/or in hard-copy from VocalEyes in advance of the day of the performance)?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

b) How helpful did you find this preparatory audio introduction in general?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

Although these items are not very concise, the wording used for these questions was chosen for precision purposes as there was a 'need for definitions' (Oppenheim, 1992: 125). It was crucial to clearly define the different types of AD within the context of this performance, including live audio introduction, through-description and preparatory audio introduction, because there are no commonly accepted standard terms for the different types of AD. For instance, some patrons referred to the preparatory audio introduction as pre-show notes. Hence, without clearly-worded definitions, these questions could have been ambiguous. Questions 5b, 6b, and 7b were included for the purpose of investigating the project objectives relating to the areas of interest 1.a.

regarding the overall perceived effectiveness of AD from the perspective of BPSPs and 8. concerning the potential benefits and interest of AD for sighted patrons. More specifically these questions facilitate the examination of the perceived helpfulness of the three different types of AD available for the project performances which relate to objectives 1. g., h., and i.. Questions 5a, 6a and 7a were included for the purpose of corroborating the results from the aforementioned questions and objectives through bivariate analysis (see Figure 35).

Although most questions in the post-performance questionnaires for both groups referred directly to the access facilities, it was also important to include some items which were more general which members of the audience who did not use the access facilities very much could also answer. For instance, question 4 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles and question 10 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo, which were worded identically, read as follows: 'How much were you able to follow the plot of the opera this evening?' (see Appendix VI, question 4 and Appendix IV, Question 10). These questions were worded in a concise and informal manner so as to maintain the interest of the respondents. The verb 'follow' was used for the purpose of informality but also because it is more neutral than a word such as 'understand' which relates to knowledge and may have provoked higher scores if the respondents felt as if their knowledge was being tested. Thus, this choice of wording also reflects the focus of this question on establishing the effect of the translation modalities in terms of plot comprehension, rather than testing the respondent's knowledge of the plot. Questions 4 and 10 relate to objectives 4.g., 5.g., and 1.j. which all concern the reception of the plot. Similarly, these questions also relate to objectives 9 and 8 respectively which involve exploration of the hearing or sighted participants' responses regarding plot comprehension. In addition, question 10 relates to area of interest 3.b. which pertains to the effectiveness of AD plus ToTo in combination in facilitating plot comprehension as compared to AD alone (see Figure 35).

Other items which were worded in a more general fashion were questions 8 and 9 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo and questions 11 and 12 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles. These questions were each phrased identically in the questionnaires for the two groups of respondents and read as follows: 'How familiar were you with the plot of the opera before this evening?' and 'How familiar were you with the music of the opera before this evening?' (see Appendix IV, Questions 8 and 10, and Appendix VI, Questions 11 and 12).



ambiguity and to stimulate comments. The inclusion of comprehension questions about specific jokes or shocking moments which occurred in the opera was considered for the purposes of exploring emotional response and the effectiveness of the access services in communicating emotional aspects. It was felt that this approach might seem patronising and off-putting for respondents and therefore the more broad questions quoted above were included with room for comments where details could be provided. Similarly, the comments sections had to be relied upon for nuanced answers where it was not possible to introduce subtleties into the questions for fear of overloading respondents with details. For instance, again relating to the questions about humour and shock, it was not relevant to ask specifics about the type of humour, such as aural or visual humour, because this would have introduced too much detail into the question which was not directly related to the project objectives. Nevertheless, details concerning the type of humour might impact on the helpfulness of a given translation facility and therefore this is an interesting topic for further discussion, as detailed in section 5.3. In the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo, the various parts of question 11 were relevant to the project objectives of investigating the following areas of interest: 1. a., d., e., f., 3.a., 3.e., and 8. (see Figure 35). In the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles, the various parts of questions 5 and 6 relate to the following objectives respectively: 5. a., d., e., f., and 9.; 4. a., d., e., f., and 9. (see Figure 35).

Question 12 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo was worded identically to question 7 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles. These questions read as follows: 'to what extent did you feel you were able to experience the emotion of the opera?' (see Appendix IV, Question 12, and Appendix VI, Question 7). This was worded as another general question with no reference to a specific access facility, and therefore members of the audience who did not use the access facilities very much could also answer this. The phrase 'did you feel' was used to highlight to the participants that the question was asking for their perceptions, and the verb 'experience' was employed in order to encourage a personal response. This wording was effectively aligning the project to its chosen ethnographic approach. Questions 7 and 12 relate to objectives 3.e. and 6.a. and b., which all concern different aspects of the reception of the emotion of the opera (see Figure 35).

The post-performance questionnaires for both groups of responses each included a negatively worded item to 'reduce the harmful effects of the "acquiescence bias"'



providing access to a multisemiotic, inclusive opera experience (see Figure 35), areas of interest 1.d., 4.d., and 5.d.).

Question 10 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles read as follows:

10) During the performance this evening how much did you look at:

a) the **sign interpreter**?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

b) the **titles**?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....

.....

This question was worded as concisely as possible whilst maintaining a conversational style. The phrase ‘look at’ was chosen rather than ‘refer to’ or ‘use’, for example, for the purpose of informality but also in order to encourage responses reflecting both conscious and subconscious use of these facilities. In view of the visibility of both the SL interpreter and surtitles to all patrons, it is possible that patrons used these facilities without realising it. For a more accurate reflection of the extent to which patrons looked at these facilities, eye-tracking equipment would be required, and this avenue for future research is discussed further in section 5.3. In this audience reception study, this question was included to obtain a general impression of the participants’ use of SLI and surtitles for the purpose of qualifying the results from aforementioned questions. These questions relate to areas of interest 4.a. and 5.a., as well as 9. which concern the helpfulness of surtitles and SLI for the DH and their potential benefits for the hearing (see Figure 35).

Similarly, the hypothetical questions 13 to 16 in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles were included and worded using the conditional tense to establish a general impression regarding responses to potential adaptations to surtitles in their current format. These questions, which relate to objectives 4.j., 7 and 9 read as follows:

13) How much would you like information about the **sound effects** in the **titles**?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....

.....

14) How much would you like information about the **music** in the **titles**?

1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain

Comments.....

.....





issues was developed appropriate to the diverse participants and data collection scenarios. Regarding confidentiality, from the beginning of the data collection process, all data was treated with the strictest confidence. All participants were assured of this both orally and in writing.

As regards anonymity, it was explained to the respondents that although they were asked to give their name on the questionnaires, this would only be used to associate answers from the preliminary questionnaires with those of the post-performance questionnaires. Before being analysed, all questionnaires were numbered, the same number was put on the section containing a respondent's name and then the name was removed to ensure confidentiality. Thus, the questionnaires were all completely anonymised before being analysed. This process was explained to all participants in the following statement which was included in the preliminary questionnaires for both groups of respondents (see Appendices III and V):

Your answers to any or all of the questions will be treated with the strictest confidence. We ask for your name here in order to be able to match up the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires, but before any responses are analysed, your name will be removed from all correspondence to ensure confidentiality; the researcher will only study the questionnaires once these are completely anonymous.

It was important to clarify this process of anonymising the responses to the questionnaires not only for ethical reasons, but also because of the possible advantages regarding the reliability and validity of the results. For instance, Oppenheim suggests that anonymous self-completion questionnaires possibly help reduce the 'social desirability bias' (1992: 138-139). In a similar vein, Dörnyei states: 'anonymous respondents are likely to give answers that are less self-protective and presumably more accurate than respondents who believe they can be identified' (2003: 24). During the data collection process, it was not possible for the respondents to remain completely unidentifiable because the feedback sessions were conducted in person in a group situation. Therefore, the participants could be identified visually, although not by name. Similarly, in some cases where the participant was unable to complete a hard-copy or electronic preliminary questionnaire in writing, the preliminary questionnaires were conducted over the phone at the respondent's request. However, the participants' responses were anonymised in all cases before analysis and this process was emphasised to the respondents in order to encourage honest answers. Furthermore, the data collection process was designed to allow self-completion as much as possible. For

instance, the data collection method of electronic Keepads was used for the post-performance questionnaires for users of AD and/or ToTo so that the BPS participants who could not respond in writing on the hard-copy version could complete these themselves. In fact in all data collection scenarios, the respondents were given the option of various methods of giving feedback so that they could choose whichever (one or more) they were most comfortable with. For example, whilst some participants were evidently happy to communicate openly about both their positive and negative responses to the translation modalities during oral or signed discussion, it seemed that others preferred to provide more critical comments in writing. Some respondents were keen to give additional feedback via phone. Interestingly, one participant commented specifically on the freedom felt in being able to speak openly on the phone to a third party researcher without a vested interest in the opera company or AD company because although the access service provided was gratefully received, there were criticisms and suggestions for improvements which the respondent was keen to make. This comment suggests that the respondents' perception of the project was the crucial factor in encouraging their participation, thus emphasising the significance of ethnographic approach adopted in influencing this perception.

Prior to requesting consent from the respondents regarding their participation in the project, it was necessary to inform them of the aims and context of the study (Dörnyei, 2003: 92). This information was provided orally at the beginning of the data collection process and in writing in the introductory statements of the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires for both groups of respondents (see Appendices III-VI). Subsequently, the respondents were provided with the option of various methods for giving their consent. The post-performance questionnaires for both groups included a consent form which read as follows:

Questionnaire Participant's Consent Form

I agree to take part in a questionnaire conducted by  
Sarah Weaver  
as part of her PhD research.

I acknowledge that the following has been explained:

- what is involved in the questionnaire
- the purpose of the work in this area
- her commitment to preserving the confidentiality of feedback given by participants

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this work.

I also give my consent to Sarah Weaver to use photos taken during project events, such as the feedback session and touch tour, and to video record or audio record feedback for research purposes.

Signed ..... Date .....

The consent form was accompanied by the following statement in the introductory statements:

We have provided a consent form for you to sign. This is merely a formality but we would be very grateful if you could sign this before starting the questions. Again if you have any queries let Sarah Weaver know.

All of this information was provided orally as well as in writing. In addition, in the preliminary questionnaires, the first question asked read as follows: 'are you happy to give your consent to take part in this survey?'. This question was included in the preliminary questionnaires in order to confirm consent before starting the data collection and in case some people were able to only fill out one part of the questionnaire or unable to provide a signature on the consent form in the post-performance questionnaire. The respondents completing the preliminary questionnaire in hard-copy format could tick the appropriate box, and those responding by phone could give oral consent. At the very end of the preliminary questionnaire, a further question established consent prior to the events to take photos and video and audio recordings of the feedback sessions for research purposes only. This question was asked again orally and obtained by a show of hands on the performance night before any photos or recordings were taken. Consent was obtained from all participants both regarding participation in the survey and concerning the use of visual and audio recording equipment.

#### **4.3.5 Data Collection Methods**

The data collection process for the audience reception project primarily involved collating the answers obtained from the questionnaires and group discussion described in the previous sections. In order to ensure the accessibility of this process for the diverse group of respondents with varying visual and hearing ability, a variety of methods were used to administer the questionnaires and gather the data, as discussed shortly. However, some aspects of the data collection were the same for all respondents. For all participants the questionnaire data was gathered in two stages: the preliminary questionnaire which was to be filled in prior to the performance and the post-

performance questionnaire to be completed after the performance. This two-stage process was necessary in order to avoid an overly lengthy questionnaire after the performance which may have been 'counterproductive' (Dörnyei, 2003: 18). Moreover, it was important to keep the post-performance questionnaire under the recommended '30-minute completion limit' (ibid.), whilst allowing time for discussion, for the eminently practical reason that the theatres at which the performances were held had to shut shortly after the performance. The aforementioned group discussions, which provided another opportunity to collect qualitative data, not only took place in the post-performance feedback sessions but also during the performance intervals. In addition, some participants provided further feedback via phone within a couple of weeks after the performance.

The pre-performance stage of the data collection process was the same at both venues at which the project was conducted: The Grand, Leeds and Nottingham Theatre Royal. The main data collection method was in the form of the preliminary questionnaires. Patrons who had made bookings for access facilities were contacted in advance of the day of the performance where possible and asked if they would be willing to be involved in the survey. If they agreed to participate, they were asked in which format they would prefer to receive the preliminary questionnaire: hard-copy in the post, electronic copy via e-mail or read aloud via the phone. In the case of e-mail or post, the respondents were asked to send back their completed questionnaires before the performance if possible, or if not to bring it on the day of the performance. Any data collected via phone was noted directly onto a hard-copy questionnaire. Most questions merely required the marking of boxes with a cross and any comments made by the participant in response to the questions were written verbatim. Thus, the researcher taking the phone call acted as a scribe for these respondents. Participants of the survey who had not booked for the access services in advance or could not be contacted before the day of the performance were approached on the performance night and asked if they would be willing to give feedback. All participants were invited to informal social gatherings prior to the performance and during the two intervals in an area of the theatre bar reserved for this group. The gathering prior to the performance took place immediately after the ToTo which started one hour and a quarter before curtain-up and lasted for approximately thirty minutes. During this pre-performance gathering any respondents who had not completed a preliminary questionnaire fulfilled this task. In most cases, the questionnaires were self-completed, but this was not possible for some

BPS participants. The researcher was on hand throughout the pre-performance gathering along with two assistants to read aloud the questionnaire and act as a scribe to individuals as required.

A further opportunity for pre-performance data collection was during the ToTo in the form of direct observation and photographic evidence. The researcher attended the ToTo prior to both of the project performances and took notes and photos throughout. These data collection methods were used during the informal interval gatherings and post-performance feedback sessions at both venues in order to get a general impression of audience response from the discussions. In addition, a video recording was made of the post-performance feedback session for the users of SLI and/or surtitles in order to document any signed discussion. This approach of visual sociology which refers to the observation of 'the social world through photographs and films and [...] interpreting the resulting images as a "text"' (Schutt, 2012: 345) was an important component of the data collection process, especially in view of the multisemiotic methods of communication employed amongst the diverse group of participants. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the results using this approach, it was crucial to take into account, as Schutt states, that 'as in the analysis of written text, however, the visual sociologist must be sensitive to the way in which a photograph or film "constructs" the reality that it depicts' (2012: 346). The results from these techniques are analysed in combination with the data collected from the questionnaires in Chapter 5.

The post-performance stage of the data collection process differed slightly between the two venues at which the project was conducted. As discussed further subsequently, this difference was due to practical issues imposed by the venues and because the group of survey participants at Nottingham Theatre Royal was smaller than at The Grand, Leeds. At Leeds, two feedback sessions were conducted immediately after the performance. The feedback session for the users of AD and/or ToTo was held in the theatre auditorium, as shown in Figure 39.



Figure 39: Feedback session for those patrons giving responses about AD and/or TT in the auditorium at The Grand, Leeds

The feedback session for the users of SLI and/or surtitles was held in the theatre bar area where the interval gatherings took place earlier, as shown in Figure 40.



Figure 40: Feedback session for those patrons giving responses about SLI and/or surtitles in the bar area at The Grand, Leeds. The left-hand photo shows participants completing their questionnaires, and the right-hand photo shows participants having a signed discussion.

In the feedback session for users of AD and/or ToTo, the Keepad equipment described in section 4.3.1.2 was used in conjunction with a TurningPoint slideshow presentation. This slideshow presentation contained the post-performance questionnaire items and the TurningPoint software allowed the responses to these questions from all participants using the Keepads to be immediately stored in a database. Hard-copy

questionnaires were distributed. The respondents were directed through the questionnaire with some time for written or verbal comments in between questions. However, most oral discussion was reserved until after the questions had been completed. In addition to the data collection via Keepads and the hard-copy questionnaires, the session was audio recorded for the purpose of collecting any oral comments. Notes were taken in case of failure of recording equipment.

Originally the plan was to display the slideshow presentation to the respondents whilst reading the questions aloud in order to make the questionnaire as accessible as possible to both sighted and BPS respondents. It was not feasible to use projector equipment in the auditorium and it was decided that this would be the most appropriate place for this feedback session. This location was chosen so that the BPSPs would not have to find their way to a different room but simply remain in their seats. Consequently, the respondents were only aurally directed through the questionnaire. Firstly, the participants were welcomed to the feedback session and the introductory statement to the questionnaire was read aloud. Having thanked the respondents for their participation, assured confidentiality and clarified the aim of the project, the Keepad system was briefly explained. Before starting the questionnaire proper, there were two practice questions to allow the respondents to get used to the Keepads and to check that all the equipment was working. The participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions and encouraged to feel free to make comments at any point. It was explained that if a respondent pressed the wrong button on the Keepad or changed his or her mind regarding their choice of graded response, another button could be pressed and the system would record the data according to the final button pressed. The researcher leading the feedback session worked from a laptop displaying the TurningPoint presentation, reading the questionnaire items aloud and tracking the response rate for each question. The number of Keepad responses for each question or poll was shown on the individual slides of the TurningPoint presentation. This response rate tracking feature was used to ensure that the respondents were given sufficient time to answer each question before closing the poll and to confirm that the Keepads were working, thus helping to achieve a 100% response rate. Furthermore, the researcher checked with respondents after each item to see if they were ready to move on to the next question. Just before closing the poll, the researcher announced this orally so that if any respondents wished to change their answer they could do so. It is important to note that the response rate tracking feature did not allow the researcher to identify individual

Keypad numbers or participants who had not responded, or to associate certain answers with certain Keypads, therefore ensuring absolute anonymity.

The feedback session for users of SLI and/or surtitles took place simultaneously with the session for users of AD and/or ToTo but in a different location, as specified previously (see Figure 40). It was not possible for both groups to use the Keypad system due to the potential problems caused by using two separate TurningPoint sessions within close proximity. The viability of using Keypad system for both groups was tested prior to the event, taking into account the minimum distance between the two locations of the feedback sessions in the theatres. This test confirmed that there was a risk of mixing up of data between two separate TurningPoint sessions in the two designated locations because of the relatively long distance at which data can be received from the Keypads. Consequently, it was decided that the Keypad response system should only be employed for the group of users including BPSPs in view of the significance of its tactile nature in rendering the feedback process more accessible to these patrons. In the feedback session for users of SLI and/or surtitles, hard copies of the post-performance questionnaires were distributed and a SL interpreter was present in order to facilitate communication between BSL users and non-BSL users. A PowerPoint presentation was prepared for this session for the purpose of leading the participants through the questionnaire items by reading the questions aloud whilst they were also SL interpreted. However, the respondents were keen to hold a discussion, and therefore the feedback session took the form of an open dialogue. Consequently, in terms of the questionnaire, this feedback session was less directed than the feedback session for the users of AD and/or ToTo, and the questionnaires were completed by the respondents at their own pace. The session leader was on hand to answer any queries about the questionnaire or project in general and all fundamental information, including details about anonymity and the response scale, was written in the hard copies. Similarly to the feedback session for users of AD and/or ToTo, a combination of methods was used to collect the data including hard-copy questionnaires, video recording and note-taking.

At Nottingham Theatre Royal, the post-performance feedback sessions took place immediately after the performance, just as at The Grand, Leeds and the data collection process was very similar. However, due to the smaller numbers of participants at the Nottingham venue in comparison to Leeds, these sessions were more informal, with greater opportunity for one-to-one feedback, as shown in Figure 41.



**Figure 41: Getting individual feedback at Nottingham Theatre Royal.**

For practical reasons relating to theatre management, the post-performance feedback sessions for both groups of respondents had to be held in the theatre bar area where the informal gatherings had taken place earlier prior to the performance and during the intervals. This was a large space and therefore after the performance it was possible to set up separate areas for the two different groups of respondents. There were no bookings for the SLI and although there may have been BSL users at the performance, none remained after the performance for the feedback session. Therefore there was no SL interpreter present at this feedback event. These feedback sessions were audio recorded and notes were taken. However, no video recording was made, partly because the researcher only had one assistant on this occasion but also for the reason that no sign language was used during the session which needed to be visually documented.

In view of the restricted amount of time for qualitative feedback immediately after the performance, all respondents at both venues were given the opportunity to e-mail or post any additional comments or to give extra feedback via phone. This feedback was all collected within the maximum of a month after the performance.

#### **4.4 Participants**

In this audience reception project, the participants consisted of two separate groups of respondents: (1) users of the AD and/or ToTo including BPSPs and their sighted

companions; and (2) users of the SLI and/or surtitles including DH patrons and their hearing companions. The primary focus was on the responses of the BPSPs and the DH patrons, as reflected in the project objectives (see section 4.1) and in the data analysis (see Chapter 5). Therefore, in relation to the exploration of the reception of opera AD and/or ToTo, the principal population under investigation can be defined as BPS Opera North patrons. Similarly, with reference to the examination of the reception of opera SLI and/or surtitles, the main population under investigation can be defined as DH Opera North patrons.

The population of BPS Opera North patrons is an average of 27 registrations by BPSPs to use AD and/or ToTo at Opera North opera productions annually (personal communication with Opera North, 2011).<sup>20</sup> The population of DH Opera North patrons is more difficult to quantify because, as discussed in section 4.5, it is likely that there are undeclared DH users of the SLI and surtitles. There were 21 BPS and 7 DH participants involved in the project. Therefore, the data collected from this project is arguably comparable to that of a longitudinal study. This discussion explains the significance of the results of this audience reception project for the populations of BPS and DH Opera North opera patrons as a whole and is continued in sections 5.1.1 and 5.2.1.

The BPS and DH populations are both specified as Opera North patrons, because the project was only conducted with regard to performances given by Opera North. It was necessary to carry out the survey with reference to particular performances due to the the overall project objective of investigating the AD, ToTo, SLI and surtitles from the audience's perspective and the fundamentality of collecting both quantitative feedback from the BPSPs and the DH. Indeed, the project was conducted with regard to particular opera performances in order to make the feedback process as accessible as possible to the BPSPs and the DH, as discussed in section 4.3.5 in relation to the data collection methods used. Furthermore, by gathering feedback about particular opera performances, the items in the questionnaire could be focused on specific aspects, thus encouraging respondents to be critical, as discussed in section 4.1. It was thought that the participants would be more likely to be responsive and keen to talk about their reception of the performance having just experienced it, thus stimulating more detailed and enthusiastic discussion, which was especially beneficial for the accumulation of qualitative feedback. Another reason for carrying out the survey at particular opera performances was the advantages of the personal approach. Requesting feedback in person allowed the

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<sup>20</sup> The significance of this annual figure is discussed further in section 5.1.1.

researcher to establish a rapport with the respondents, which is conducive to cooperation and discussion (Schensul et al., 1999: 74), as was the collection of feedback in a group context. It is also important to note that the project was conducted at performances of the opera *Carmen* due to Opera North's preferences. Nevertheless, whilst the findings from this project are context-bound due to its ethnographic nature, the theories generated from this project for further investigation in future research are not only limited to Opera North patrons and the reception of AD and/or ToTo, or SLI and/or surtitles at performances of *Carmen*, as explained further in sections 5.1.9 and 5.2.5.

There was no sampling or selection process regarding the project participants because as Schensul et al. state 'where populations are very small, sampling is not needed' (Schensul et al., 1999: 232). The opportunity to give audience feedback was advertised both nationally and locally along with the details of the performances through all the channels normally used by Opera North for promoting access performances. For instance, the information was broadcast on the RNIB Insight Radio and sent to the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People in advance of the performance. In addition, anyone who had already registered with Opera North for the access facilities was contacted to ask if they would be willing to participate in the survey. Moreover, posters advertising the opportunity for feedback were displayed in the theatre at the performances and front-of-house staff were informed about the feedback session in order to be able to invite any BPSPs who came along on the night without having registered.

The sighted companions of the BPSPs and the hearing companions of the DH patrons were included in the data collection and some of the analysis. Therefore, there are two secondary populations which must be defined: (1) BPSP Opera North patrons and their companions; and (2) DH Opera North patrons and their companions. The sighted and hearing companions of BPSPs and DH patrons were included in the project for several reasons. The main purpose for their participation was to allow comparisons between the results of BPSPs with sighted audience members and between the data from DH with hearing patrons. It was also particularly relevant to include sighted and hearing companions in view of their role as agents in the translation network, as discussed in sections 1.2, 2.1.2, 2.2, 5.1.1, and 5.1.9. It was also important to include them in the project in view of the objectives of investigating the effectiveness of the translation modalities in facilitating a shared opera experience and the potential benefits of the

access facilities for hearing and sighted audience members. Furthermore, by asking the companions to complete questionnaires, the BPSPs and DH were more likely to have the opportunity to give independent and individual responses.

## 4.5 Changes imposed on the research design

A flexible and reflexive approach was adopted with regard to the research design for the audience reception project in accordance with the ethnographically-oriented methodology employed. Thus, minor modifications to the design decisions were made whenever necessary throughout the process with regard to individual components (see Maxwell, 2009: 215). For instance, the required alterations to the data collection methods are explained in section 4.3.5, and the revisions regarding the specific objectives of the project are discussed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, given that this project was the first of its kind and was designed with a view to conducting further audience reception studies, the process of modification is ongoing and suggested improvements to the research design are discussed in the subsequent section 4.6. This current section, however, discusses the major changes imposed on certain aspects of the research design of the project.

One of the main changes imposed on the research design related to the participants to be involved in the project. The original plan was to involve school groups in the survey, thus focusing on a population of BPS and DH people within a certain age range, most likely between 11 and 18. However, Opera North's 2011 production of *Carmen* was given a 12+ rating and received some press coverage criticising the shocking nature of certain scenes, especially for younger viewers (for example, see Ward, 2011 and BBC, 2011). Furthermore, in view of the time of year of the performances in May, which is around the exam period for pupils taking GCSEs or AS-levels and A-levels, it was not an ideal opportunity to involve schools. Therefore, following discussions with Opera North, it was decided that it would not be appropriate to actively involve schools in a survey in relation to this production of *Carmen*.

The other principal change to the project related to the number of venues at which the survey was to be conducted. There were only three performances of Opera North's 2011 production of *Carmen* at which the access facilities of AD, ToTo and SLI were provided.<sup>21</sup> These performances took place at three of Opera North's tour venues: The Grand Theatre in Leeds, Nottingham Theatre Royal and The Lowry, Salford Quays.

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<sup>21</sup> Titles were provided at all performances of this production.

The plan was to carry out the survey at all three of these performances with AD, ToTo, SLI and surtitles at these three tour venues. However, in the end the study was not conducted at The Lowry, because there were no bookings for the access facilities for the performance of *Carmen* at this venue. This outcome emphasises the significance of the number of participants in the audience reception project (see sections 4.4, 5.1.1, and 5.2.1) and is an interesting result in itself as it raises several questions for further research. For instance: 1) How can the absence of bookings for the accessibility facilities at this performance be explained? 2) Does this result reflect a lack of awareness of accessibility facilities in this area and is this due to marketing deficiencies? 3) Is the location of this venue a factor which affected this result? Interestingly, during some of the aforementioned open conversations prior to the audience reception project which took place during intervals of performances with AD and ToTo at The Lowry, the issue of location was raised by certain BPSPs. They remarked on problems regarding getting to the venue as a BPS person due to public transport concerns. In particular, they expressed feelings of insecurity in walking in the relatively isolated area of the theatre towards the bus and train stops, especially in the dark as a result of poor street lighting. The issue of venue accessibility was also raised by BPSPs in the post-performance discussions at The Grand, Leeds and Nottingham Theatre Royal, as mentioned in section 4.6. Thus, the need for further research in this area is highlighted, as discussed further in section 5.3.

Another important question raised by this issue of the absence of bookings for the access facilities at the May 2011 performance of *Carmen* at The Lowry is whether BPSPs and DH patrons would prefer not to have make special bookings but rather remain anonymous members of the audience. This question relates to the matter of transparent, opaque, open and closed access discussed in section 3.1.2.1. In fact, at present, surtitles and SLI are provided as open access facilities which can be seen by the entire audience. Therefore, DH patrons who require these facilities do not have to make a special booking, unless they wish to apply for a discount.<sup>22</sup> Hence, it is possible that there were DH patrons referring to the SL interpreter and/or surtitles at the performance of *Carmen* at The Lowry despite the lack of bookings. This idea of undeclared or anonymous users of these access provisions is discussed further in section 5.2.1. It is currently not possible for users of the AD and/or ToTo to remain anonymous because

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<sup>22</sup> Reduced ticket prices are available at most theatres for patrons with proof of disability or a complimentary ticket is offered to disabled patrons requiring assistance. However, it is usually necessary to be added to an access members list in order to be eligible, as for instance at the ROH.

these are closed access facilities which are only available to those who request them. It is recommended to book in advance for these facilities because there are a limited number of audio sets for listening to the AD and restrictions regarding the amount of people who can attend the ToTo. However, it is possible to request these facilities on the day of the performance without having booked in advance, as was the case with the one BPSP who came to use the AD and ToTo at the performance of *Carmen* at The Lowry. In relation to this discussion, the possible advantages of making AD and ToTo open access facilities which are available to sighted audience members are explored in sections 5.1.1, 5.1.8, and 5.3.

#### **4.6 Suggestions for improvements in future audience reception projects**

During the implementation of the audience reception project and the analysis of the data, certain issues arose relating to the project research design which provided insights for future studies. This section involves self-reflection on these issues including suggestions for improvements and recommendation for further development in methodological approaches aimed at completing future reception studies in AVT. Firstly, the research techniques relating to data collection and participants are discussed. Secondly, the questionnaire design is considered in terms of wording, ordering and choice of questions.

In the audience reception project, the number of participants involved was small in absolute terms, especially the DH patrons. However, in relative terms, as discussed in sections 5.1.1 and 5.2.1, these figures are significant taking into account the current average number of declared users of the access facilities per performance. Nevertheless, in future studies, in order to try and encourage a wider variety of participants including younger patrons, as implied by respondents' comments (see section 5.2.1), it would be advisable to precede the project performances with workshops in schools and public institutions. The additional advantage of this approach would be the promotion of awareness of opera accessibility facilities through these events. The timing of the project performances would also need to be considered further in order to maximise participation and the amount of feedback provided. For instance, some participants remarked on the difficulties with public transport in the evenings suggesting that they would have liked to have remained at the feedback sessions for longer for further discussion. For the purpose of conducting further comparative studies, for example

evaluating the relative effectiveness of the different types of opera AD, a larger number of participants would be required. Ideally a group of participants would listen to only AI, some only through-description, some both AI and through-description etc. Similarly, in order to compare the effectiveness of AD and ToTo, SLI and surtitles, there would be BPSP groups amongst the participants who used AD only, AD and ToTo, ToTo only, no access services, DH groups who used SLI only, surtitles only, SLI and surtitles, no access services. Hence, for such a study some kind of financial incentive such as reduced price or free tickets would be necessary, as it would not be fair to ask BPS or DH patrons to forgo using certain access facilities if paying their usual ticket price. Consequently, external sponsorship may be needed to recompense any financial loss on the part of the opera house involved. Another possible scenario for this research might initially be smaller-scale amateur opera performances which may allow greater flexibility in terms of controlling certain aspects of the access facilities for the purpose of testing their reception.

As regards the administration of the questionnaires, the method of a directed questionnaire employed in the feedback sessions for users of AD and/or ToTo arguably proved more successful than the non-directed completion of questionnaires by the users of SLI and/or surtitles (see abstain rates in sections 5.1 and 5.2). As mentioned in section 4.3.5, the plan in the audience reception project was to show a PowerPoint presentation to the users of SLI and/or surtitles and guide them through the questions similarly to the technique used in the session for the users of AD and/or ToTo. However, the person leading this session did not follow this plan because the participants' seemed to favour open discussion. Nevertheless, the results suggest that in future studies the approach of directed questionnaire followed by open discussion might be more effective. The advantages of a directed questionnaire, whether orally or otherwise, are that: (1) the session leader can clarify any queries about individual questions as the questionnaire progresses; (2) ensure the questions are completed in the intended order; (3) help avoid misreading of negatively-worded questions; (4) help prevent accidental missing out of questions; (5) and highlight the context of certain questions where necessary. For instance, in the feedback session for users of SLI and/or surtitles, it was planned that as part of the PowerPoint presentation, the session leader would introduce questions 13-16 (see section 7.6, Appendix VI) as follows 'the next few questions are about possible developments in surtitles for opera' in order to distinguish them as hypothetical questions. However, as the feedback session took a different format, the context of these

questions was not highlighted and therefore they may have been misunderstood, thus affecting the responses. The non-directed completion of the questionnaires also renders the ordering of the questions less significant, because whilst a respondent is probably more likely to complete the questions in the order they are written, this is not necessarily the case, especially if they are completing it at their own pace.

Several insights into possible improvements to questionnaire ordering and wording for future studies were gained from the pioneering audience reception project. For the preliminary questionnaires, further clarification is needed regarding the terminology used with reference to the different types of AD. It would be advisable to establish the use of AD as an umbrella term which includes AI and through-description. Furthermore, the term 'pre-show notes' was used by several participants to refer to the live AI, and therefore it may be useful to use this term when defining live AI. For future research, it would also perhaps be beneficial to include brief definitions and photos (as appropriate) representing the four different accessibility facilities of AD, ToTo, SLI and surtitles for the purposes of clarity and raising collective awareness. In the audience reception project, the term 'surtitles', in particular, was not understood by all participants. The abstain rates to the question regarding visual and hearing ability (see sections 5.1 and 5.2) suggest that the categorisations used may need reconsideration in follow-up studies and that further clarification is required in the instructions relating to these items. In future studies it would be important to emphasise that all sections of this question should be answered by all participants, and a separate question regarding the use of hearing aid(s) may be advisable, rather than including it as part of question 15d (see sections 7.3 and 7.5, Appendices III and V). For instance, the following instruction might be used: 'Please consider answering all of the subsections of this question, even if some seem irrelevant. We are interested in both your visual and hearing ability'. In view of the large number of participants aged 66 or above, with several patrons in their late 70s and 80s, the age groups categories may need to be refined for future studies to include additional categories of 66-75, 76-85, and 86+. Similarly, in future research, as opera access facilities become more established, the categories relating to experience of opera and access facilities may need to be increased. Indeed, in the audience reception project there were a few participants who specified in the comments section to this question that they had attended many more than 10 operas with AD. The results of the other participants suggest that at present these particular respondents were exceptional because on the whole the participants did not have a lot of experience of opera AD or

ToTos. Nevertheless additional categories may be necessary in future. Conversely, for the question regarding educational background, in future the categories used could be refined and condensed. The open-ended wording of the question about first language may also like to be reconsidered for consistency purposes (most other items in the preliminary questionnaire were closed-ended). Amusingly, in the audience reception project, one participant gave the following answer to this question 'Yorkshire!'.

For the post-performance questionnaires, the wording of the question 'how much did you enjoy this particular interpretation of Carmen?' would need to be altered as it caused confusion amongst several participants as to whether this referred to the SLI, the performance of the person who played the character Carmen, or the interpretation of the opera as a whole. In the session for the users of AD and/or ToTo, any ambiguity was clarified by the leader as the questions were raised by participants as the directed questionnaire progressed. However, in the session for the DH, any confusion amongst participants with regard to this question may not have been recognised and clarified by the leader as the users of SLI and/or surtitles as this questionnaire was undirected. In the post-performance questionnaire for users of AD and/or ToTo, the graded response categories to the questions regarding the amount of the different types of AD listened to may also require modification in future studies in order to avoid ambiguity. Although the comments section allowed respondents to elaborate upon their responses to these questions, it may be advisable to provide clearer definitions for the categories. For instance, in the case of the question 'how much did you listen to the preparatory AI?', the graded responses categories could read as follows: 1 = not at all, 2 = not very much (listened to a small part of it), 3 = so-so (listened to about half of it), 4 = quite a lot (listened to it all the way through once), 5 = very much (listened to it all the way through at least once). Regarding live AI and through-description the categories might be clarified as follows: 1 = not at all, 2 = not very much (listened to about a quarter of it), 3 = so-so (listened to about half of it), 4 = quite a lot (listened to about three quarters of it), 5 = very much (listened to all of it). Similarly, in the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles, responses to the questions 'during the performance this evening how much did you look at the SL interpreter/titles?' might read as follows: 1 = not at all, 2 = not very much (looked at her/them for about a quarter of the time), 3 = so-so (looked at her/them for about half of the time), 4 = quite a lot (looked at her/them for about three quarters of the time), 5 = very much (looked at her/them throughout the performance). In future studies, it would also be important to change the instructions for

the questions regarding helpfulness of the different types of AD, SLI or surtitles. For instance, with regard to the question regarding helpfulness of live AI, in order to avoid any ambiguous responses, the instruction might read as follows 'if you did not listen to the live AI choose the abstain option'.

In view of the inconsistency in responses by some participants regarding the final three questions of the post-performance questionnaires, the ordering and wording of these items may need to be reconsidered in future studies. These questions relating to desire to come to another opera, desire to come to another opera: (1) with AD; (2) with ToTo; (3) with SLI; or (4) with surtitles, may be supplemented or replaced with questions which are worded exactly the same way, except that they state 'without' instead of 'with'. For instance, for the purpose of confirming the indispensable nature of AD from the viewpoint of BPSPs as suggested by the audience reception project results, the penultimate question in the post-performance questionnaire might be worded as follows: 'would you like to come to another opera *without* AD?'. Towards the end of the post-performance questionnaire for users of SLI and/or surtitles, the hypothetical questions about possible adaptations to surtitles require comment with a view to conducting future studies. Hypothetical questions are generally not recommended, as they 'have often been found to be poor predictors of people's future reactions or behaviour, especially to something they have not previously experienced' (Oppenheim, 1992: 126). However, given that Opera North wished to find out the potential benefits of surtitles adapted for the DH, and that in this context it was not possible to allow patrons to experience these adapted surtitles, these questions were included merely to get a general impression of responses to this idea. In order to evaluate the DH patrons' responses to adaptations to surtitles, such as character labelling and details about the music, a trial would have to be set up in which surtitles were adapted in this way and then responses to it recorded, making only one change to each set of surtitles in order to evaluate the adaptations individually. From a methodological point of view, a further improvement to the research design would be the employment of techniques which facilitate the study of the translation process from cognitive and psychological perspectives. For instance, in combination with the two-fold methodology used in the audience reception project, innovative audience reception research devices such as eye-tracking, thermography, and neuroimaging (Tymoczko, 2012) could be employed. Nevertheless, this first study of its kind yielded significant findings as evidenced in

Chapter 5, in which the data analysis of the audience reception project is presented and discussed.



## 5

### Data analysis

In this chapter, the results of the audience reception project are examined. The combination of the collected quantitative and qualitative data is analysed using both descriptive statistics, which ‘summarise the information in a collection of data’ (Agresti and Finlay, 2009: 4) and observational analysis (including photographic evidence). The access facilities are considered separately in terms of the two groups of respondents: (1) AD and/or ToTos for BPSPs and their sighted companions, in section 5.1; and (2) surtitles and/or SLI for the DH and their hearing companions, in section 5.2. In each case, the profile of the group of participants is discussed first, then the reception of the different facilities is analysed, exploring a combination of the quantitative and qualitative data collected. Both sections close with a discussion of the findings. This is followed by the macro-analysis, in section 5.3, which involves a summary of overall study findings relating to the audience reception of the opera AD, ToTos, SLI and surtitles, as well as the presentation of questions raised by this pioneering project for future research.

The areas of interest discussed in section 4.1 with regard to the objectives of the project serve as a basis for the majority of the data analysis. Having collected the data there were some modifications to the focus of the topics for analysis. These modifications were made in view of the flexible, ethnographically-oriented methodology employed and are discussed individually in the relevant subsequent sections. In addition, as grounded theory informed the approach regarding the choice of the areas of interest, the data analysis remains focused on the participants’ accounts. Due to the nature of the ethnographic research approach adopted, results are necessarily situated and caution is needed in making inferences (Hubscher-Davidson, 2011: 13). However, as Jan Blommaert points out referring to Pierre Bourdieu’s views, ‘there is a clear suggestion that single cases, even if they don’t speak to the totality of the population or the system,

can speak to theory' (2005: 228). Furthermore, as discussed in sections 5.1.1 and 5.2.1, in view of the usual figures of declared users of the access facilities, a significant number of patrons took part in the audience reception project. The features of the opera under investigation also further the possibility that the results are indicative of the audience reception of other operas. Indeed, due to the wide popular appeal of the regularly performed Bizet's *Carmen* which possesses the key elements of opera of music, drama, poetry, and the visual arts (see Arnold et al., 2013 and Macdonald, 2013), many of the theories generated from the findings are arguably not only limited to this particular opera.

## **5.1 Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected relating to audience responses to audio description and touch tours**

In this section, the responses given by BPS respondents and their sighted companions regarding the AD and/or ToTo are presented. Firstly, in section 5.1.1, the profile of the whole group is presented. This profile is formed from the results of the preliminary questionnaires. Secondly, in sections 5.1.2 to 5.1.7, the BPSPs' reception of the AD and/or ToTo is analysed using the data collected from the post-performance questionnaires. The focus of this data analysis is four-fold, concerning the audience reception of: (1) the AD, in section 5.1.2; (2) the music, in section 5.1.4; (3) the translation of features provoking an emotional reaction, in section 5.1.5; and (4) the ToTo, in section 5.1.6. Although previous literature mentions the different types of AD, the reception of music in AD (Fryer, 2010) and the translation of emotion in opera AD (see Matamala and Orero, 2007; Puigdomènech et al., 2008; Holland, 2009; York, 2007), there are very few audience reception studies into opera AD (Matamala, 2005; Cabeza, 2010), and no audience reception research into opera ToTos. Furthermore, UK opera access providers have expressed interest in the survey results in relation to the development of their accessibility provisions regarding the types of facilities offered and translation strategies employed. The topics for analysis relate to the project objectives enumerated in section 4.1, specifically objectives 1, 2, and 7. These specific objectives concern the overall perceived effectiveness of AD and ToTo respectively from the perspective of the BPSP participants and possible ways to improve translation techniques by surpassing limits of current conventions. Thirdly, in section 5.1.7, a comparative study of the combined approach of AD plus ToTo with AD alone is conducted. The variables to be analysed in this comparative analysis relate to project objective 3 (see section 4.1) and are specified in

section 5.1.7. Fourthly, in section 5.1.8, the data collected from the BPS respondents' sighted companions are analysed with a view to considering the potential benefits and interest of AD and ToTos to sighted patrons (objective 8). The variables to be examined are elaborated upon at the opening of this section. Finally, in section 5.1.9, all of the abovementioned findings from the audience reception project are discussed as a whole.

Before starting the analysis of individual variables, it is important to establish the response rate and abstain rate for the questionnaire items in terms of the quantitative data collected. The response rate amongst the BPSPs and their sighted companions for both the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires was 100% because all AD and/or ToTo users in attendance at the project performances completed these documents. As discussed in sections 4.3.4, 4.3.5 and 5.1.1, this response rate might be explained by the data collection methods used and the enthusiasm of the participants to provide feedback. The abstain rates for the BPSPs for the preliminary questionnaires was 0% throughout, with the exception of questions 5, 15c and 15d (see Appendix III in section 7.3). These questions referred to requirements regarding physical assistance, as well as hearing ability at birth and at present, and the abstain rates were 19%, 5% and 10% respectively. The abstain rates for the BPSPs for the post-performance questionnaire are displayed in Figure 42.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Question number</b>	<b>Abstain rate (%)</b>
ToTo attendance	1	0
Enjoyment of the performance	2a	5
Enjoyment of the music	2b	5
Enjoyment of interpretation of Carmen	2c	0
Enjoyment of the visual design of the production	2d	24
Enjoyment of the social event of the opera	2e	0
Enjoyment of the AD	2f	0
Enjoyment of the ToTo	2g	0
Helpfulness of the AD	3	10
Helpfulness of the ToTo	4	5

Variable	Question number	Abstain rate (%)
Amount of live AI listened to	5a	5
Helpfulness of live AI	5b	11
Amount of through-description listened	6a	5
Helpfulness of through-description	6b	10
Amount of preparatory AI listened to	7a	14
Helpfulness of preparatory AI	7b	17
Familiarity with the plot	8	10
Familiarity with the music of the opera	9	10
Plot comprehension	10	5
Helpfulness of AD in conveying visual aspects	11a	5
Helpfulness of AD in conveying humour	11b	10
Helpfulness of AD in conveying shock	11c	10
Extent of feeling the emotion of the opera	12	10
Extent to which AD detracted from the music	13	10
Clarity of mental imagery of stage layout	14	10
Desire to come to another opera	15	29
Desire to come to another opera with AD	16	10
Desire to come to another opera with ToTo	17	14

**Figure 42: Abstain rates for the post-performance questionnaire for BPSPs**

As only 11 BPSPs attended the ToTo, the abstain rate for any questions regarding the ToTo is calculated out of a total of 11, except in the case of the variable of the desire to come to another opera with ToTo, because this was relevant to all 21 BPSPs. For the calculations of the abstain rates regarding the variables of helpfulness of the preparatory AI, live AI and through-description, the number of BPSPs who specified that they did not listen to each of these types of AD is taken into account. As regards the sighted

participants, the numbers of people who abstained from certain questionnaire items are discussed as relevant in section 5.1.8 in relation to the individual variables.

### 5.1.1 Profile of the participants

The profile of the whole group is discussed here because the opera experience is a social activity shared amongst BPSPs and their companions, who may, moreover, be agents in the translation process (see sections 1.2, 2.1.2, and 2.2). In total, 32 people participated in the questionnaire on AD and ToTo: 11 sighted patrons and 21 BPSPs, of whom 4 were totally blind, 16 were legally blind and 1 was partially-sighted.<sup>23</sup> The majority of the BPSPs were not congenitally blind as shown in Figure 43. All of the sighted participants stated that they had full vision at birth.

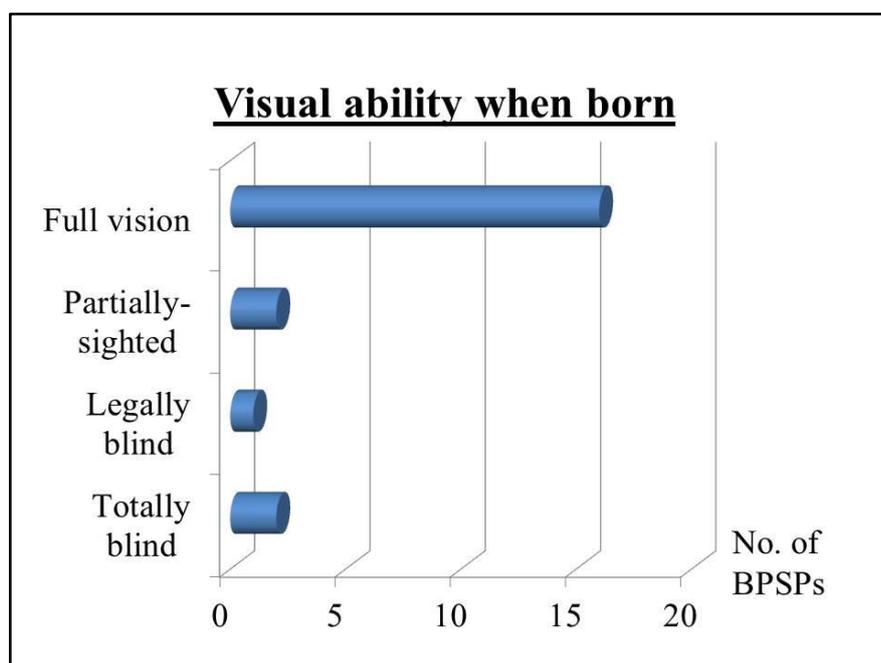


Figure 43: Distribution of the visual ability of the BPS participants using AD and/or ToTo.

Regarding hearing ability at birth, 20 BPSPs declared that they had no hearing loss and one BPS respondent abstained, and all 11 sighted participants specified that they had no hearing loss at birth. Figure 44 shows the hearing ability at present of all 32 participants, and a distinction is made between the BPSPs and sighted results in each bar. Amongst the BPSPs, 2 participants abstained from answering the question relating to current hearing ability. Interestingly, 7 out of the 19 BPS, which is equal to more than one third of the respondents, declared some hearing loss. In addition, 5 out of the 11 sighted

<sup>23</sup> Categories are based on definitions of visual acuity by the RNIB (Access Economics 2009, 11-12).

participants declared some hearing loss. Furthermore, the figures for the participants who stated that they use a hearing aid were as follows: 7 out of 20 BPSPs (one abstained) and 3 out of 10 sighted respondents (again one abstained). This result suggests that it may be important to consider hearing ability during the translation process of AD and ToTos.

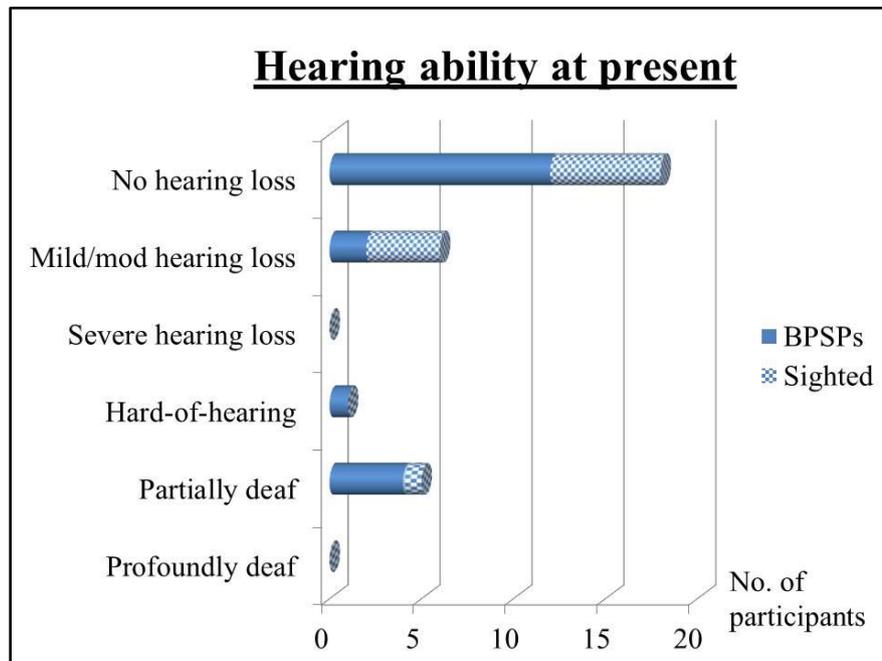


Figure 44: Distribution of the present hearing ability of the participants using AD and/or ToTo.

Amongst the BPSPs, 8 were male and 13 were female. Amongst the sighted patrons, there were 5 males and 6 females. Of the 32 participants, 7 stated that they required physical assistance, and the respondents' comments revealed that this was predominantly due to difficulties with steps or stairs. This latter result highlights the importance of considering physical access provisions for BPSPs including avoiding steps whenever possible in terms of seat allocations and the route of the ToTo. All of the 32 participants declared that their first language was English and that they had no learning difficulties or disabilities. A wide range of educational qualifications were reported across the group, as shown in Figure 45.

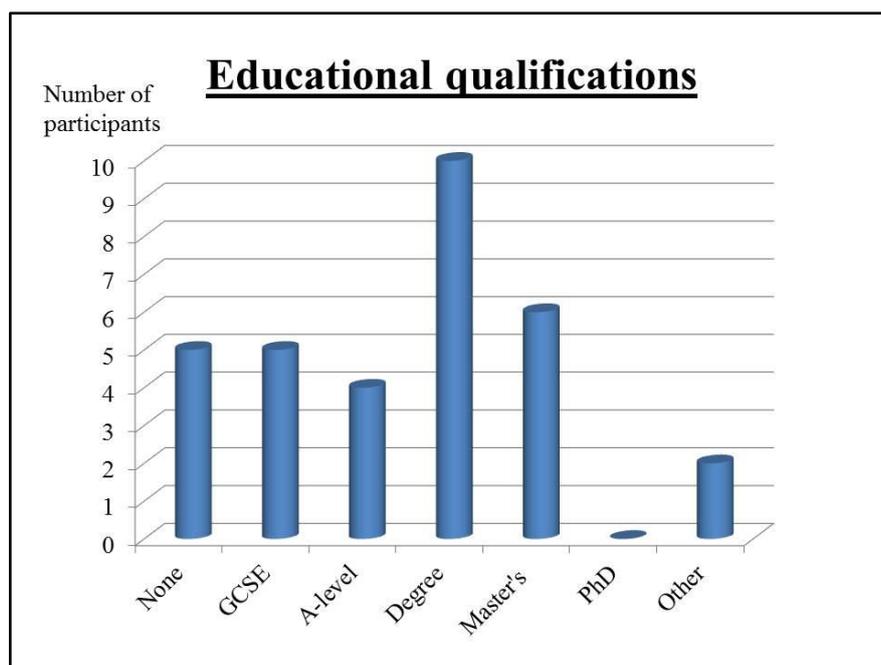


Figure 45: Distribution of the educational qualifications of the participants using AD and/or ToTo.

The graph shows the highest level of qualification for each participant. For instance, somebody who has a Master's degree is not included in the categories of Degree, A-level, or GCSE. The categories of GCSE and A-level on the graph refer to these qualifications or their equivalents respectively, as specified in the questionnaires (see Appendices III and V, Question 18).

Figure 46 shows the distribution of age across the whole group: half of the participants were aged 66 and above. These results could arguably suggest a lack of awareness amongst younger people of the availability of these access facilities, although many other factors could explain the numbers of younger AD and ToTo users, such as the opera genre itself, or this particular production of *Carmen*, which was given a 12+ rating by Opera North (see BBC, 2011). Moreover, it is possible that these figures merely reflect the age distribution of the current population of BPS opera patrons and their companions. Nevertheless, in view of the objective of this project of informing the development of a wider audience and the establishment of a sustainable audience development plan, these results suggest the need to target marketing strategies at younger audiences as well as older patrons. Interestingly, comments made by respondents highlighted a general lack of awareness and publicity regarding access facilities. One participant commented that 'access is not always advertised, you have to ask' and another remarked 'I'd forgotten about that' with reference to the pre-recorded preparatory AI. These responses reflected the recurring issue of the lack of knowledge of

the availability of opera AD and ToTos which was raised during the open conversations prior to the performance, and highlight the need to reconsider marketing strategies for this cultural industry (and possibly cognate sectors such as ballet and drama).

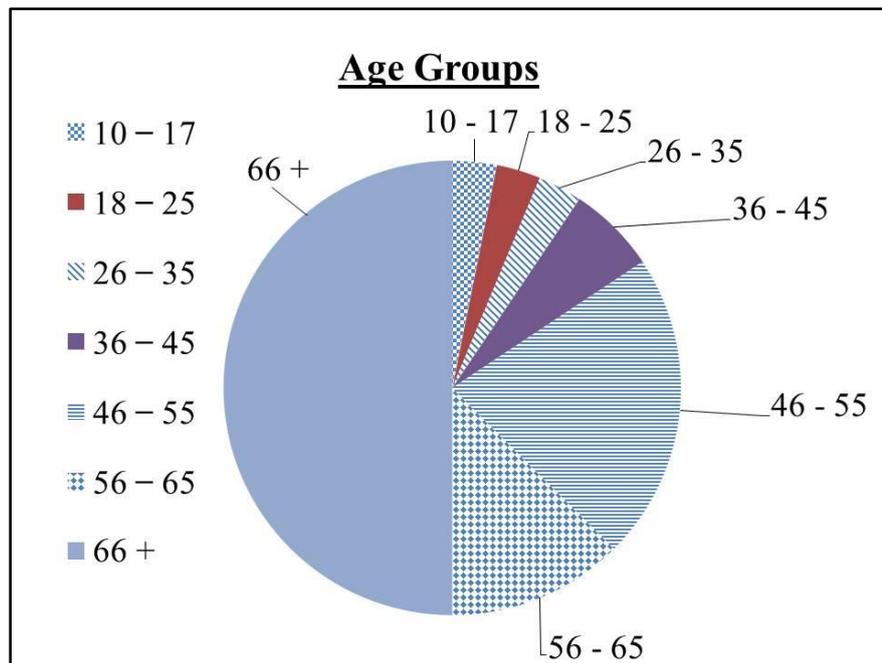


Figure 46: Distribution of age amongst the participants using AD and/or ToTo including BPSPs and their sighted companions.

The results given by the 21 BPSPs regarding age groups are shown in Figure 47. There was one respondent in the category 10-14 and no respondents in the categories of 15-17 or 18-25, therefore these have been collapsed into one category of 10-25.

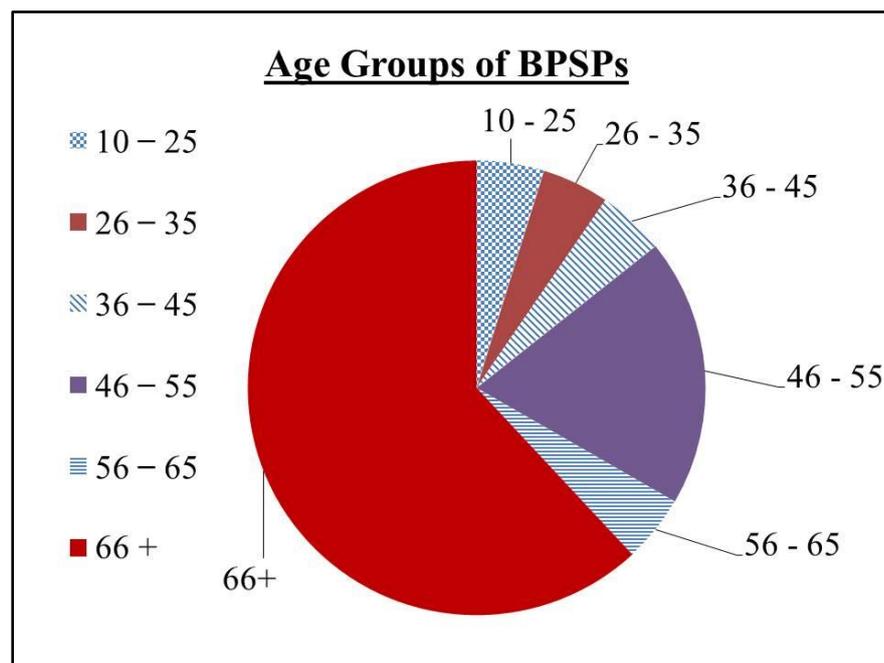


Figure 47: Distribution of age amongst the BPS participants.

The following results concern the participants' experience of opera and access facilities. Figure 48 shows the numbers of operas attended by the participants. The responses given by the 21 BPSPs are separated from the answers given by the 11 sighted respondents. There were 3 BPSPs and 0 sighted participants with no experience of opera. At the other end of the spectrum, 6 out of the 21 BPSPs and 3 out of the 11 sighted participants had attended 10 or more operas.

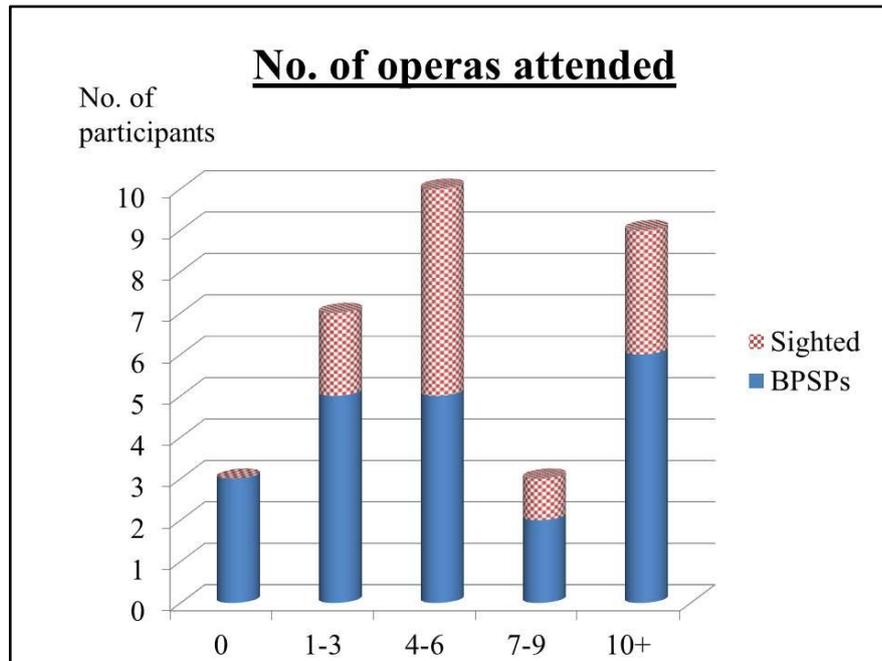


Figure 48: Number of operas attended by the participants using AD and/or ToTo.

The data collected in response to the question about the number of times a performance of Bizet's opera *Carmen* had been attended was as follows: 11 BPSPs and 7 sighted participants had never attended a performance of Bizet's opera *Carmen*; also 10 BPSPs and 4 sighted respondents had attended between one and three performances of this opera. Figure 49 shows the numbers of operas attended by the participants at which AD was used.

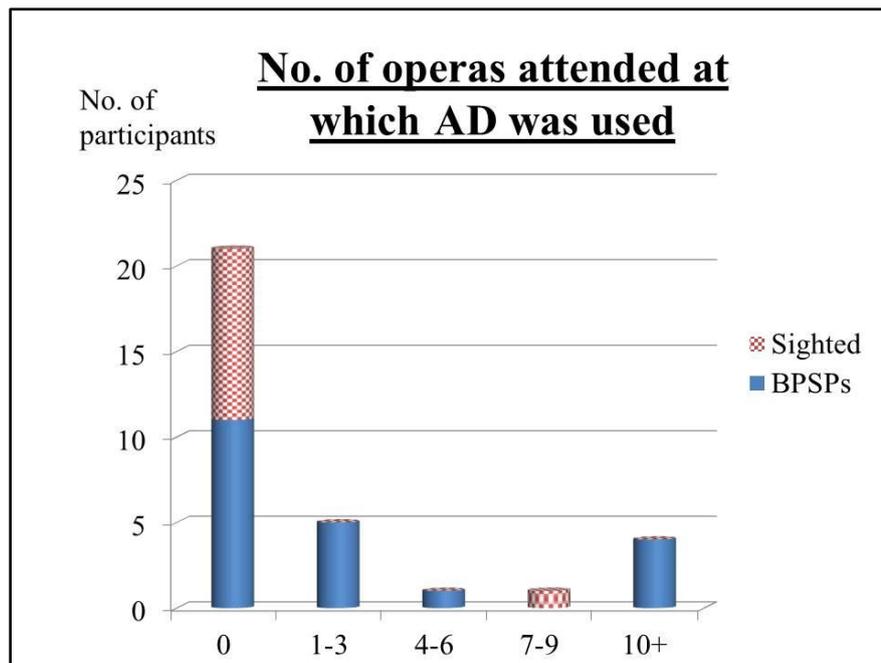


Figure 49: Number of operas attended by participants at which they used AD.

These results advocate the need to raise awareness about opera AD and ToTos, and suggest there may be potential for growth of the users of opera AD and ToTos. For instance, whilst there are only 3 BPSPs with no experience of opera, there are 11 BPSPs with no experience of opera AD. This finding might be explained by the limited availability of opera AD, as discussed further below, and points towards the issue of increasing availability of this facility. The same applies for opera ToTos, as shown by the data displayed in Figure 50 which specifies that there were 12 BPS participants, which is over half of this subgroup, with no experience of opera ToTos. Identical results were collected from the BPSPs regarding the number of operas attended at which both AD and ToTo services were used. Hence, there were 12 BPS participants with no experience of the opera AD plus ToTo in combination, and 4 who had attended more than ten operas at which they used both the AD and ToTo. The results gathered from the sighted participants regarding this variable differed slightly from number of opera ToTos attended. 8 sighted respondents declared no experience of opera ToTos, whereas 10 out of the 11 sighted participants stated that they had no experience of AD plus ToTo in combination. The remaining sighted participant specified that he or she had attended 4-6 operas at which he or she had used both the AD and ToTo services.

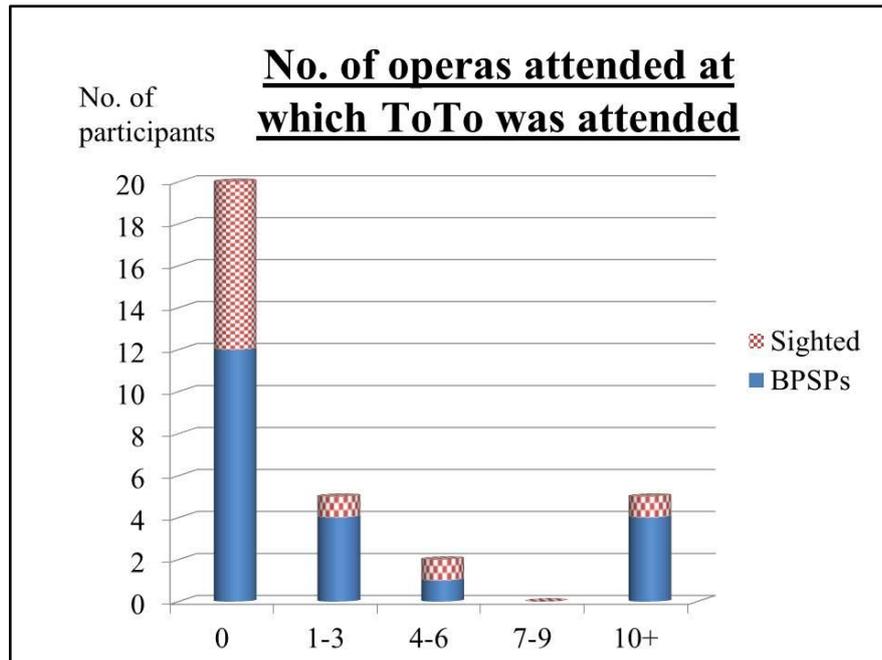


Figure 50: Number of operas attended by participants at which they went on a ToTo.

The results regarding experience of AD and/or ToTo at live performances of any kind (including musicals, plays, opera and other), displayed in Figure 51 and Figure 52, indicate that the participants reported that they had used these facilities more within these contexts than in opera alone. As shown in the first column in Figure 51, only 3 BPSPs and 6 sighted participants declared no experience of using AD at performances of any kind, whereas 11 BPSPs and 10 sighted participants declared no experience of using opera AD, as shown in Figure 49. At the other end of the spectrum, as displayed in the final column of Figure 51, 14 BPSPs and 3 sighted participants stated that they had used AD at 10 or more performances of any kind, whereas 4 BPSPs and 0 sighted patrons specified that they had attended 10 or more operas at which they had used AD, as shown in Figure 49.

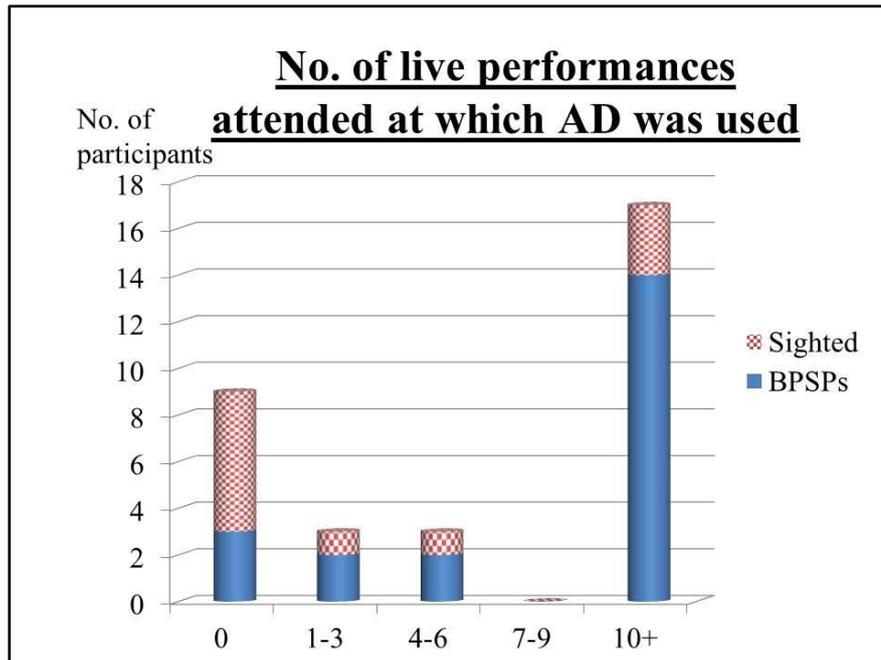


Figure 51: Number of live performances of any kind (including musicals, plays, operas and other) attended by participants at which they used AD.

Similarly, as shown in Figure 52, only 3 BPSPs and 3 sighted participants indicated that they had attended no performances of any kind at which they went on a ToTo, whereas 12 BPSPs and 8 sighted respondents declared no experience of opera ToTos, as shown in Figure 50.

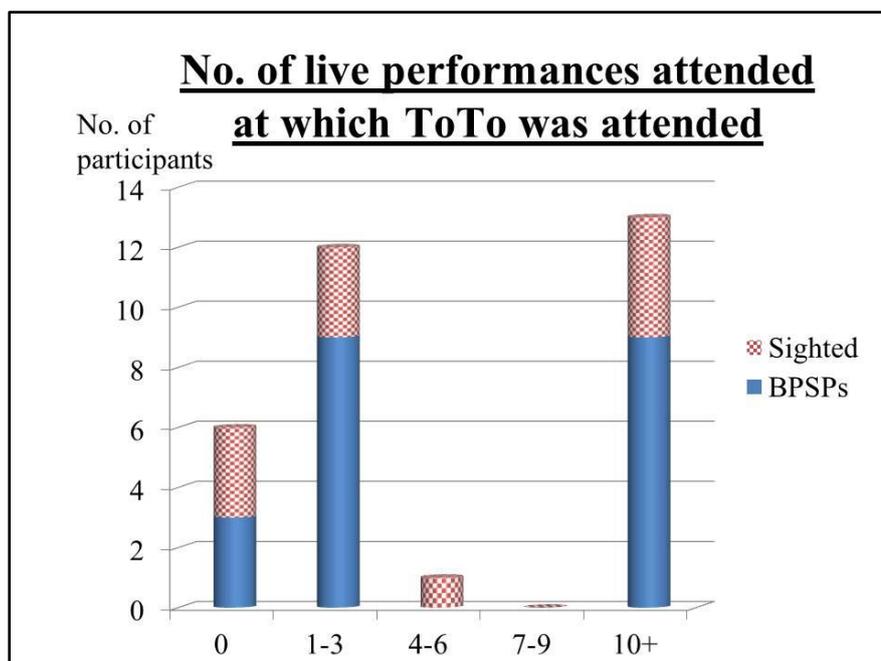


Figure 52: Number of live performances of any kind (including musicals, plays, operas and other) attended by participants at which they attended a ToTo.

The data collected with respect to experience of operas with different types of AD revealed that the number of BPS participants who had attended no operas with standalone AI (see section 2.1.2) was much greater than those with no experience of through-described opera. As shown in Figure 53, there were 19 BPSPs with no experience of standalone AI for opera and 11 with no experience of through-described opera.

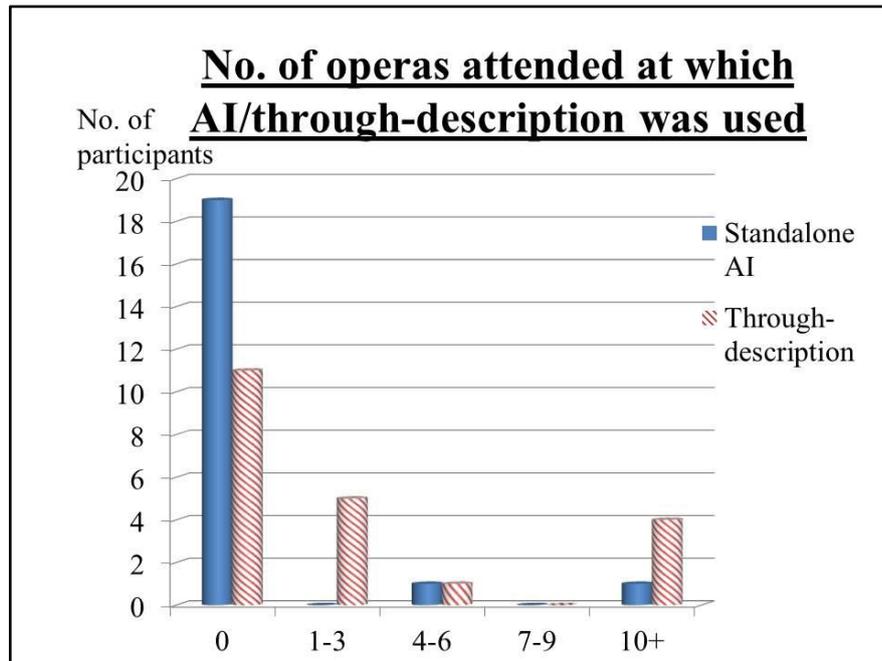


Figure 53: Number of operas attended by participants at which they used standalone AI compared to the numbers of operas at which through-description was used.

These data may be explained by the geographical location of the performances and the facilities offered at these venues. The audience reception project was conducted with Opera North patrons and Opera North does not offer standalone AI. For instance, if this study had been conducted at the ROH or ENO where opera AI has been offered for several years, the data may have revealed different findings. The reception of the different types of AD is discussed in section 5.3. The results by sighted respondents revealed that 10 out of the 11 had never used opera through-description or AI. One sighted participant had used through-description at 4-6 opera performances and one had used AI at 1-3 opera performances.

The results analysed in subsequent sections mostly refer to responses from the 21 BPSPs participating in the survey, although where relevant comparisons are made with answers given by the sighted respondents. The analysis involves examination of quantitative and qualitative data collected from the post-performance questionnaire in

the form of graded responses and comments. This accumulated quantitative and qualitative data of 21 BPSPs is significant, because on average 27 BPSPs register to use AD and/or ToTo annually at Opera North productions.<sup>24</sup> As discussed in section 2.3.2 and shown in Figure 11, there are usually around 9 opera performances by Opera North per year at which AD and ToTo are offered. On average 3 BPSPs attend each event. It is difficult to gauge the significance of the size of this average because there are many factors which may have an effect on it. These include:

- The marketing strategies adopted may not maximise the audience base (as suggested by the aforementioned results).
- The restricted number of performances at which AD and ToTo are offered (see section 2.3.2) reduces the BPSPs' freedom of choice in selecting a convenient date to attend.
- The relatively recent introduction of opera AD and ToTos.
- The current format of AD and ToTo as closed accessibility facilities (see sections 4.5 and 5.3) may deter some BPSPs who would prefer to remain anonymous members of the audience and may impede the process of raising awareness about AD and/or ToTos.

It is vital to research these and other factors in order to prevent theatre companies from misreading the figures of BPSPs using AD and/or ToTo as a lack of demand for these access facilities. This misconception can result in a reduction of the number of performances at which access facilities are available which in turn restricts BPSPs' choice regarding convenient dates to attend, thus most likely further limiting numbers. Indeed, audience reception research plays a crucial role in establishing dialogue between the various agents in the translation network and in breaking this vicious circle. The large numbers of BPSPs at the project performances may be explained by the BPSPs' attraction to the prospect of being able to give feedback, because as mentioned in section 4.4, the feedback events were advertised along with the details of the performances. This suggestion is supported by participants' comments such as the following: 'we enjoyed the opera and the feedback session, which was something we'd never done before'. Furthermore, as suggested in section 4.3.4, the collection of data by a third party researcher was an additional attraction for some participants who were keen to have the

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<sup>24</sup> Personal communication with ON, May 2011.

chance to speak openly about their responses to the access facilities. Thus, the importance of creating further opportunities for giving feedback on AD and/or ToTos and the need for future audience reception research prominently stands out as a necessity in the field.

Another interesting statistic regarding the profile of the BPSPs amongst the group of participants is the number of Braille users. The graph in Figure 54 shows the proportion of the BPS survey participants who use Braille and those who do not. 43% of the 21 BPSPs were Braille users and 57% were not. However, only four of the nine Braille users requested Braille programme notes.

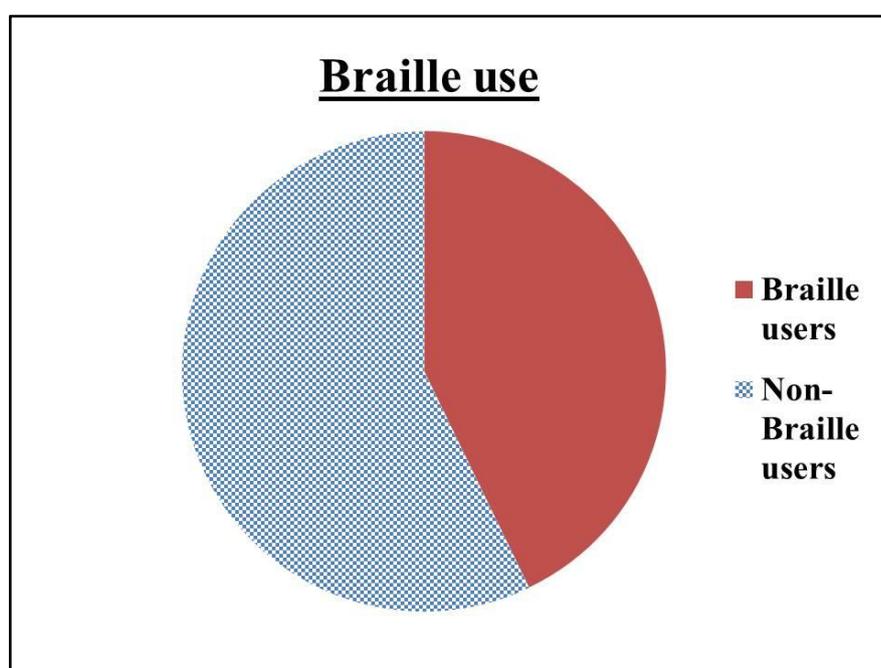


Figure 54: Proportion of Braille and non-Braille users amongst the BPSPs.

These results highlight the need for further research into the value of Braille facilities for BPS opera patrons, and the following discussion about participants' comments identifies some specific areas of interest. Comments by participants suggested that the number of requests for Braille programme notes may have been due to lack of Braille fluency. For instance, one participant remarked 'I can read Braille but slowly' and another stated 'I can write Braille but can't read it very well. I would be ok with a letter in Braille but I'd never attempt a book.' Interestingly, in relation to this, the issue of Braille literacy in reference to the use of Braille libretti was raised by one of the participants in the following comment: 'You have to be a very good Braille reader to follow a libretto, as the libretto is a full published version and performances often include cuts, swaps etc. so you need to be able to jump around to find your place.'

Another factor affecting the number of requests for Braille programme notes may have been the provision of AD at the performances under investigation. In view of the fact that AD was provided, participants may have felt less of a need for Braille programme notes. The results regarding requests for Braille programme notes could also reflect participants' preferences given the option of AD, as implied by the following participants' comments:

- 1) I can read Braille but given a choice of information methods I prefer it in audio or computer version.
- 2) It depends on what is done in the AD. I've not requested Braille programme notes this time. Braille takes a long time to read. Braille reading speed is not equal to reading in print. It is quicker to use screen readers and so on. You can't skim read in Braille.

However, these comments also suggest that if AD had not been offered at the performance, the numbers of requests for Braille programme notes may have been higher. Given that AD is only offered at a limited number of performances, as discussed in section 2.3.2, the provision of Braille programme notes and libretti at all performances, could arguably increase access for some BPSPs, especially at performances at which AD is not offered. Furthermore, as Lydia Machell has commented, AD and Braille libretti could be used as complementary facilities by some BPSPs (personal communication). The following participants' comments point towards the value of current Braille provisions and the emerging modality of Braille libretti from the audience's perspective, although more research is required to evaluate these access facilities.

- 1) I got a very good picture of the opera from the Braille programme notes. Braille is not used as much as it ought to be. Children in school are not using it which is very sad. Besides being able to use computers, being able to read a book in Braille is important. I thoroughly enjoy reading Braille.
- 2) I sometimes use a Braille libretto when going to the opera instead of AD. A libretto gives you more information than the actual opera.
- 3) I would find it very helpful to have Braille surtitles during a performance. It's not tiring or painful for your fingers. Your finger tips are sensitised but it doesn't detract from the enjoyment. Surtitles and descriptions in Braille would be very helpful. In the Braille programme notes the character's name, actor's name and singing voice (e.g. tenor) is very helpful.

In addition, in relation to the question regarding physical access requirements, one participant commented on the use of Braille to indicate seat numbers. The remark read as follows: 'If I was going on my own to the opera, I'd need to be directed to my seat

because the seat numbers are not given in Braille. This time I'll just be following my Dad.' Hence, issues for future study include the following: (1) the levels of Braille literacy required to read Braille programme notes and to follow a Braille libretto respectively; (2) audience's preferences regarding AD or Braille facilities; (3) the complementary nature of Braille facilities and AD; and (4) other uses for Braille in increasing BPSPs' autonomous access to the opera experience, such as for the purpose of indicating seat numbers.

### 5.1.2 Reception of the audio description

In this section, the reception of the AD by the 21 BPS participants is discussed with reference to their graded responses to the questionnaire items and the comments they made during the feedback sessions.

As regards the helpfulness of the AD in general, on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is very much, the mean average score given by the respondents was 4.5. The positive reception of the AD suggested by this result is corroborated by the findings regarding other variables, including: (1) enjoyment of the AD, (2) helpfulness of the AD in conveying visual aspects of the opera; and (3) desire to come to another opera with AD. Figure 55 shows the mean average scores given by the participants in relation to these variables which are denoted in the graph as (1) ENJAD, (2) ADVIS and (3) OPAWAD.

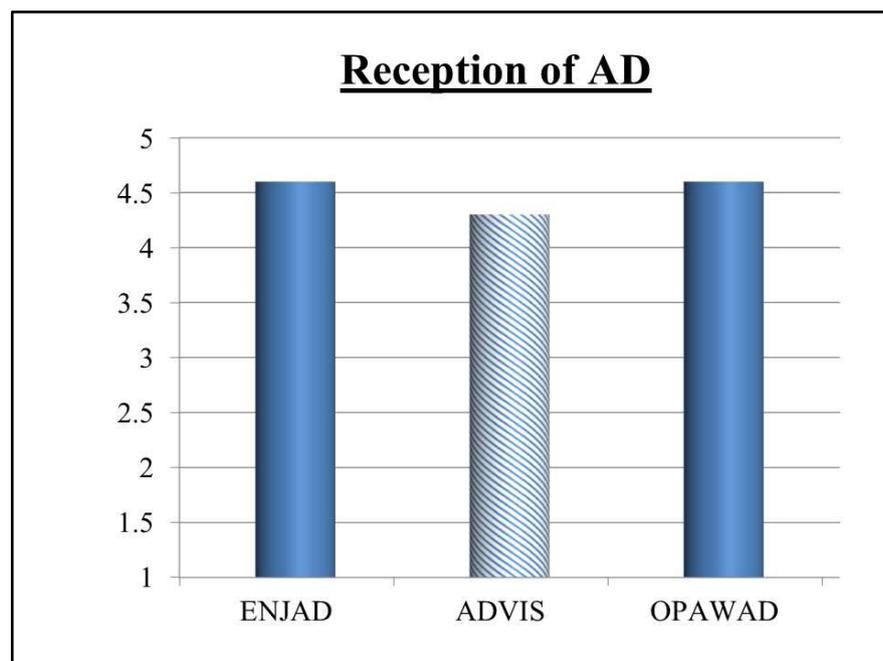


Figure 55: Average perceived enjoyment of AD, helpfulness of AD in conveying visual aspects of the opera, and desire to come to another opera with AD.

Regarding enjoyment of the AD, as shown in the first column of the graph in Figure 55, the mean average score given by the 21 BPSPs was 4.6. Similarly, in response to the question 'How much would you like to come to another opera with AD?', as shown in the third column of the bar chart in Figure 55 a mean average score of 4.6 was given by the respondents. The second column in the graph in Figure 55 displays the mean average score of 4.3 given by the BPSPs regarding their perceived helpfulness of the AD in conveying visual aspects of the opera. Thus, in general these results suggest that on average the BPSPs considered the AD very enjoyable, perceived that the AD was very helpful in conveying the visual aspects of the opera, and expressed a desire to come to another opera with AD.

As mentioned in sections 4.1 and 4.3.3, this study makes use of multi-item scales. The following 4 variables form a multi-item scale which measures the overall perceived effectiveness of the AD: (1) helpfulness of the AD; (2) helpfulness of the AD in conveying the visual aspects of the opera; (3) helpfulness of the AD in conveying the humorous aspects of the opera; and (4) helpfulness of the AD in conveying the shocking aspects of the opera. In order to verify the reliability of the graded scores to these variables the internal consistency of this multi-item scale is examined, thereby strengthening the conclusions drawn about these variables. For this purpose the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated which according to Bernard (2000: 298) 'is a statistical test of how well items in a scale are correlated with one another'. This test assigns a numerical value between 0 and 1 to the multi-item scale and from this value the internal consistency is measured. The Cronbach Alpha of the above variables yielded a value of 0.88, thus confirming that there is internal consistency amongst these variables. For more information about the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, see Bernard (2000: 298-299) and Dörnyei (2003: 112-113).

The BPS participants' comments reflect the positive reception of the AD from their perspective whilst providing some more nuanced responses regarding the variables shown in Figure 55. General compliments included the following: 'great thought was obviously given to the AD', 'the AD throughout the evening was excellent', 'the AD is very helpful because you know what is going on' and 'without AD one would have no idea at all'. One participant noted the advantage of the involvement of two audio describers in the translation process:

I think it is helpful to have two people doing the AD if the budget allows two voices. This is reflected in the quality of the AD - the fact that they have discussed it, checked each other - they monitor each other linguistically as well as in technical terms i.e. if something goes wrong from a technical point of view.

More specifically, some respondents remarked upon the helpfulness of the AD in conveying the visual aspects of this production. For instance, one stated 'the AD was very helpful especially as the last scene was in a forest. All I could see was blackness. If I hadn't had the AD I wouldn't have known what was going on in that scene'. Another remarked 'although a slightly unorthodox performance, I thought it was quite interesting. This was thanks to the AD that this unusual aspect came across.' These comments point towards the function of the AD in contributing to a shared experience of live opera in which the BPSPs can receive and consequently discuss the visual-related specificities of the production and the director's vision with other audience members. Another participant alluded to this idea with regard to the helpfulness of the AD in conveying visual detail, stating:

I couldn't see detail at all, the AD helped with that. The AD was clear. I wouldn't have known it was a dog fight. It was a bit odd that there was a dog fight instead of a bull fight. Also, I wouldn't have known it was set in the USA instead of Spain if there was no AD, and I understand from the AD they were in modern dress.

This remark highlights the notion that the AD allows the BPSPs to better form their own personal opinion about the production and director's vision so that they can discuss it with other patrons.

As regards the helpfulness of the AD in conveying visual aspects of the opera, the BPS participants' remarks were generally positive with some suggestions for improvements. It is also interesting to note the differences in responses regarding this variable from a diverse group of BPSPs with varying degrees and types of blindness. For instance, whilst one participant stated 'I can't think of a fault. The description of the colour of clothing was excellent', another commented as follows: 'although some of the specifics in AD about the colours and details of the costumes etc. are not particularly helpful for me on their own because I am blind from birth, overall AD is invaluable for the opera experience'. Similarly to these remarks, the following participants' comments highlight the significance of the translator's choices regarding the portrayal of individual visual aspects in the translation process of AD. One participant provided separate scores for various different visual aspects of the opera, stating as follows:

The actions were described very well; 5 for that. The description of the costumes was ok. I didn't hear much description about the costumes, perhaps it was in the pre-show notes [preparatory AI], but I got that they were in modern dress - so 3 for that. I think 2 for description of the props though as I didn't find that very helpful.

Other comments included: 'I liked the way the AD handled dance and stage business', 'I would have missed finer gestures and detail without the AD', and 'I thought it was all very good. The costumes, the set and people coming and going were all well described'. These remarks emphasise the need for further dialogue within the translation network between the translator and audience regarding the balance of the specific visual details required by the diverse group of patrons in the opera AD. In addition, the following comment suggests a specific area for improvement: 'I think it would have been a good idea for the audio describer to mention that there was going to be a person on stage signing. It took me a while to realise who she was.' This comment suggests that the AD was not completely inclusive in terms of providing the BPSPs with access to every aspect of the opera experience, and this notion is discussed further in section 5.1.5.

As regards the desire to come to another opera with AD, both the mean average score of 4.6 mentioned above and the BPS participants' comments in relation to this variable suggest a positive outlook with respect to the future numbers of opera AD users. For instance, remarks included the following:

- (1) I would very much like to come to another opera with AD. AD has enabled me to continue enjoying the theatre which is a major love of my life. I am sure that you will understand that my blindness has deprived me of many pleasures that were previously taken for granted.
- (2) Before AD, my wife and I didn't go out to the theatre much. I wasn't an opera buff. Now that there is AD I would very much like to come to another opera.
- (3) We've been to several operas at the Grand and we would very much like to come to more. The standard of the audio description has always been very high. The commitment of the staff and performers to involving us in the opera experience is obvious and very much appreciated.

These remarks suggest that AD is perceived as fundamental in providing an inclusive and enjoyable experience for BPSPs. The final comment also raises the issues of the significance of the sense of feeling included in the opera experience as a whole and the impact of the quality of the AD on audience reception. In fact, comments made by other participants highlight that AD is indispensable in terms of their desire to attend other opera performances. For instance, one respondent stated 'I would never attend an opera or any theatrical performance that is not audio described', and another affirmed 'I don't want to come to one [an opera] without AD. I think it's great that these things are laid on

for people like me. A lot of work is put into it'. The following statement by another BPSP who gave a score of 2 regarding desire to come to another opera with AD, highlights the negative effect of a lack of AD, whether through unavailability or faulty listening equipment in this case. He or she denoted 'I rely on AD when I go to the theatre so I was very disappointed in the Carmen performance because the equipment didn't work'. This remark raises the question of the indispensability of AD in providing access to opera for BPSPs (see section 4.6). In the following comment, the participant raises the issue of alternative access facilities in Braille and preferences regarding the different types of AD.

I would like to come to another opera, but only if I have a Braille libretto or AD. I'm not keen on going to opera without through-description but I would consider the Royal Opera House option of a synopsis before the performance - increasingly though you don't have to rely on that. I find it more helpful to have a Braille synopsis during the performance. To be told a plot synopsis before the performance is not really very helpful. It is quite easy to get a synopsis off the internet and convert it into Braille. At the Royal Opera House you're usually rushing back to your seat after dinner or a drink in the interval so there is no time to listen to the audio notes in the interval.

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected regarding the reception of the different types of AD, although standalone AI was not provided at the audience reception project performances, so this translation modality cannot be investigated. Figure 56 displays the mean average scores given by the BPSPs to questions regarding the amount and helpfulness of the different types of AD listened to.

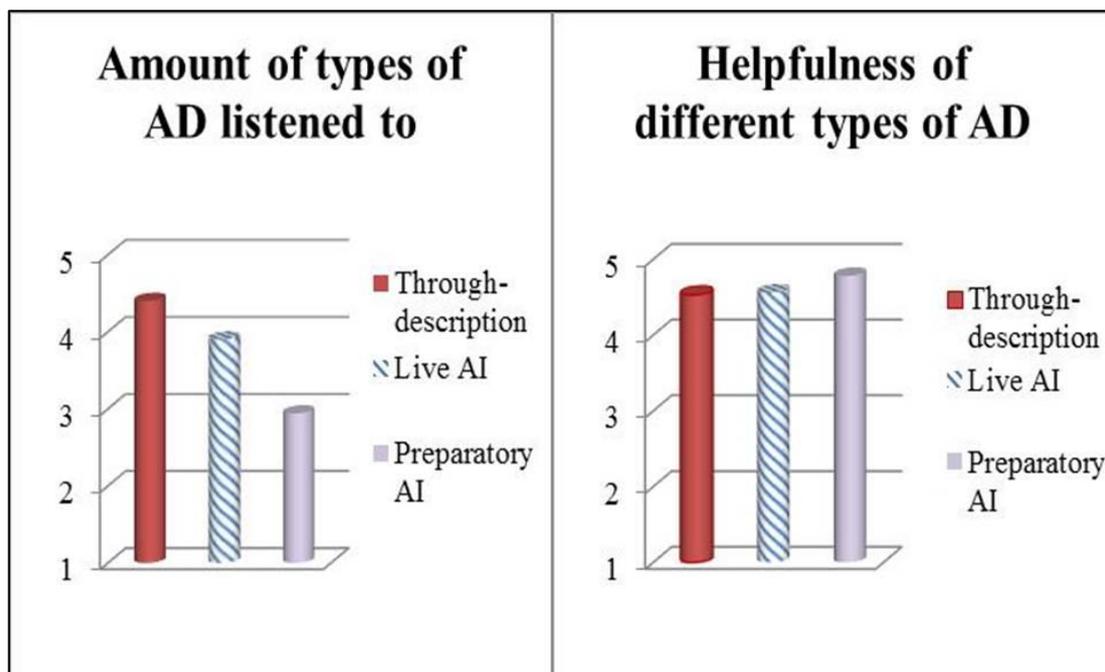


Figure 56: Average perceived amount and helpfulness of different types of AD listened to by BPSPs.

The left graph in Figure 56 shows that on average the BPSPs perceived that they listened to more through-description than both live and preparatory AI. This result is not surprising in light of the effort required to gain access to each type of AD - listening to preparatory AI requires time and effort prior to going to the performance. Also, a couple of respondents stated that the preparatory AI did not arrive in the post on time. For example, one stated 'normally I have the pre-performance CD but it didn't arrive in time. It does usually come on time'. In addition, some problems were reported regarding the listening equipment before the start of the performance and therefore some participants were not able to listen to the whole of the live AI. For instance, one participant commented 'I had a problem with the headset to begin with but I usually listen to the whole thing' and another stated 'due to temperamental hardware I wasn't able to listen to it all'.

The high scores in the right graph of Figure 56 show that all types of AD were considered very helpful. These results are not intended to assess which type of AD is the most helpful, as the participants were not asked to rank them. Certain comments from the survey respondents help explain the high scores regarding the helpfulness of the different types of AD. For example, remarks with reference to the preparatory, pre-recorded AI included:

- (1) Because of the unorthodox interpretation and imaginative production with so much happening, the basic storyline was a bit complicated to understand. Having had the pre-show notes, it was easier to follow the plot - less confusing - just like for sighted people it's helpful to read the program to know what is happening, who is who, which character is which and so on.
- (2) I'd had the pre-show notes so I had an idea of the characters, description of the various acts, synopsis of the story - the synopsis was perhaps made more complicated by the production because of so much incidental happening on stage - there was a lot to take in.

These observations highlight the benefit of increased familiarity with the opera and production gained by listening to the preparatory AI. Similar comments emphasizing this element were made regarding the live AI, such as 'it's a good reminder even if you've heard it before'. Several participants noted the value of both of these types of AD in 'setting the scene'. For instance, one respondent commented 'the live AI was very useful because I could imagine it then - the square in Seville, the cigarette factory etc.' and another stated 'it's a good scene setter'. In addition, some participants remarked on the helpfulness of the details in the preparatory AI regarding access to the venue, for example 'I think the access section at the end of the pre-show notes about Nottingham

Theatre Royal for those who've not been before is very useful.' There was also some critical appraisal regarding the certain types of AD, such as 'background noise in the auditorium made it difficult to hear the AI.' Regarding through-description, participants commented on the helpfulness of the immediacy of the description and communication of details as they happen. Thus, the results regarding the helpfulness of the different types of AD support the suggestion of a positive reception of the AD in general.

Furthermore, examination of the relationship between the amount of the different types of AD listened to and their perceived helpfulness suggests that in each case the more they were listened to, the more helpful they were perceived to be by the BPS participants. These conclusions were reached by calculating the Pearson's correlation coefficient. This statistical quantity may be used to test whether or not there is a linear relationship between a proposed independent variable and a proposed dependent variable. More specifically, a numerical quantity between -1 and +1 is assigned to the pair of variables. This value encodes two pieces of information: (1) it quantifies the strength i.e. significance of the relationship between the variables; and (2) it describes the nature i.e. direction of their relationship. For more information about Pearson's correlation coefficient, see Bernard (2000: 581-589).

With the quantity of preparatory AI as the independent variable and the helpfulness of this type of AD as the dependent variable, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to be 0.661. This result suggests that these variables exhibit a strong positive relationship, where 'positive' signifies that the relationship between the variables implies that the more preparatory AI listened to, the more helpful it was perceived to be and 'strong' quantifies the closeness of the relationship. With the quantity of live AI as the independent variable and the helpfulness of this type of AD as the dependent variable, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to be 0.789. This result suggests that these variables exhibit a very strong positive relationship. Similarly, with the quantity of through-description as the independent variable and the helpfulness of this type of AD as the dependent variable, the Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to be 0.739. This result suggests that these variables exhibit a very strong positive relationship.

### **5.1.3 Reception of the plot**

This section investigates the BPSs' responses to the question: 'how much were you able to follow the plot of the opera this evening?'. The aim of this question was to establish

the perception of the participants regarding their ability to follow the plot and the mean average score given by the BPS survey participants was 4.0. With regard to familiarity with the plot before the performance, a mean average score of 3.0 was given by these participants. Given that the opera was sung in French and out of the 21 respondents only 2 had A-level or equivalent knowledge of French and only 2 had degree level French, it seems unlikely that the majority of the BPSPs would have been able to follow the plot by listening to the sung French. Therefore, these results may suggest that the AD contributed to the participants' ability to follow the plot.

In the rest of this section, issues raised by the qualitative data are examined. These suggest possible implications of the effect of AD on plot comprehension, however, it must be noted that this is a complex relationship and to reach any firm conclusions would require sophisticated research techniques beyond the scope of this audience reception project. To begin with, the following comments made by participants suggest that these participants perceived the AD to be crucial in terms of plot comprehension. For instance, one participant commented 'I've lost a lot of my distance vision so I rely on AD in following the plot' and another asserted 'I was able to follow the plot quite a lot almost entirely because of the AD'. Similarly, other respondents made the following remarks:

- (1) This is my first experience of AD in the theatre and without it I would have had little understanding of the plot and development of the themes.
- (2) The fact that the opera was sung in French, meant that the AD was even more valuable and helpful. Without the AD I would have been greatly disadvantaged especially as it was sung in French - the AD made it much more accessible. The AD was particularly helpful in terms of the plot as I didn't know it intimately.

Equally, the subsequent comment suggests that without the AD, the respondent was not able to follow the plot: 'I was quite confused in Act III because the listening equipment wasn't working so I couldn't hear the AD.' Other participants who affirmed the importance of AD in facilitating the following of the plot also mentioned the idea of a translation of the French lyrics and audio access to the surtitles into the AD. For example, comments included the following:

- (1) While a full translation would have been nice, I do understand this is not possible. Without the description I would not have been able to follow the plot as I do not have any French.
- (2) With the AD for this performance of *Carmen*, I could follow the plot intimately. I really felt I could follow the performance which was very nice. We didn't get the surtitles word-for-word

in the AD but it got enough information across. I think audio word-for-word surtitles could detract from the music but it is hard to say without actually experiencing it.

The issues mentioned in the latter comment regarding the reception of the music and the possible introduction of audio subtitles are discussed in section 5.1.4 and later in this section respectively. Firstly, however, it is important to note that there were a couple of participants who made critical comments regarding plot comprehension. For instance, one respondent who gave a score of 3 stated that 'general themes in the plot were clear but some extended themes were not'. Another participant remarked as follows:

The description of the plot might have been in the pre-show notes [preparatory AI] or live AI. I only heard 5 minutes of the live AI. The through-description didn't really help with the description of the plot. It was more about what was happening on stage not how the story was unfolding. It [the opera] was all sung in French and I can't read the surtitles. I would appreciate audio surtitles - I'm very much a words woman!

As discussed in section 2.4.1, audio subtitling is a facility currently not available in the UK, which could provide access for BPSPs to the text of an opera sung in a foreign language in the form of an audio version of the surtitles. References may be made to the surtitles in the AD, especially if the opera is sung in a foreign language. In fact, in the AD for the project performances the audio describers mentioned that they did incorporate some of the surtitles into the AD because the opera was sung in French. However, in view of the following comments, it seems that some of the participants did not realise this. For instance, one respondent remarked 'I loved the AD, but perhaps it would be helpful to have a translation of the lyrics from the subtitles in the AD at times so that there is a mixture of excerpts from the subtitles and description of the visual action'. Similarly, another BPS participant commented on the potential benefits of audio subtitles as well as Braille surtitles.

I'm interested in the idea of audio surtitles - it would have made it much easier. Because I've got some hearing loss now, it would be helpful to have the surtitles incorporated into the AD. If there were Braille surtitles, I might find that helpful. You would have to be quite fluent with Braille to read Braille surtitles but I would cope with that.

These participants' lack of awareness of references to the surtitles in the AD might be considered an attribute of the AD in that the references to the surtitles were seamlessly interwoven with the description of the visual aspects and so on. Alternatively, these comments might suggest that the participants would have liked more details of the lyrics

and more references to the surtitles. Interestingly, one of the respondents made a comment which demonstrated that he or she did recognise that the surtitles had been referred to in the AD, stating as follows:

The AD was a 'tour de force' really - pretty comprehensive. I'd imagine it was a challenge. I thought it was particularly good because there was a lot to do - lots of action to follow and because it was in French quite a lot of relaying or paraphrasing of the lyrics. You have to try and get the AD between the sung lyrics and try not to clash with the arias. I think I might find the idea of audio surtitles a bit much as I think it might encroach on the music too much.

This remark reveals a further intricacy of the translation process soliciting comparative studies of the reception of AD for opera sung in the vernacular with that of AD for opera sung in a foreign language, as discussed further in section 5.3. It also raises the issue of the reception of music which is the topic of the subsequent section.

#### **5.1.4 Reception of music**

In view of the project objective of investigating the effectiveness of AD in providing access to a multisemiotic opera experience, it is crucial to consider the BPSPs' reception of the music. As Fryer states: 'Blind and partially sighted people receive AD aurally, rather than as a written text. AD is one sound source among many, and must interact with the existing dialogue, music and sound effects to create a multisensory experience through audio alone' (2010: 212). The variables to be considered in relation to this topic are: (1) the enjoyment of the music (denoted as ENJMUS in Figure 57); and (2) the amount the AD was perceived to detract from the enjoyment of the music (denoted as ADDMUS in Figure 57). The mean average scores given by the BPSPs regarding these variables are shown in Figure 57.

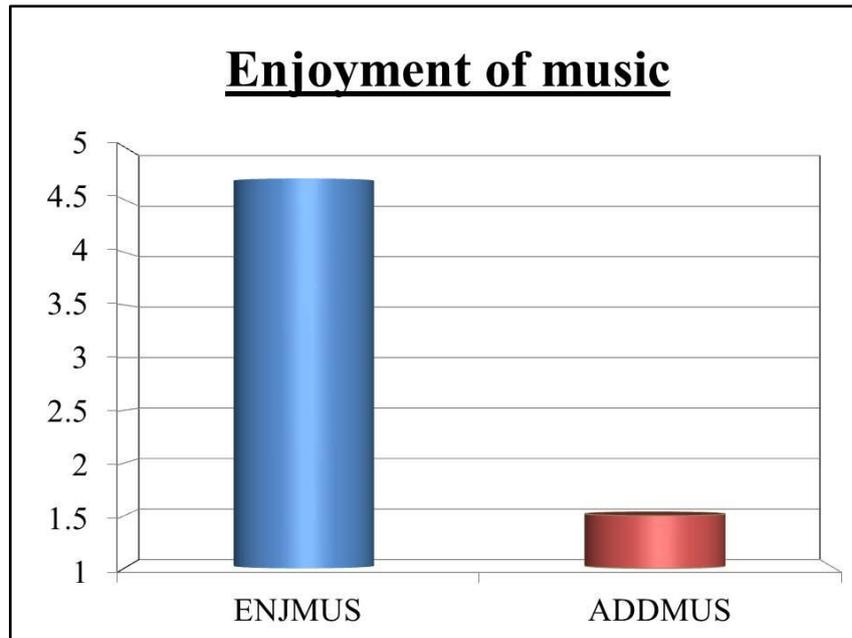


Figure 57: Average perceived enjoyment of the music and the amount AD detracted from the enjoyment of the music.

Before discussing these results, it is important to note that for the project performances as usual the patrons had the freedom to control the volume of the AD on their individual headphones and to turn it on and off as desired. In response to the question 'how much did you enjoy the music in general?' on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'very much', the mean average score amongst the BPS participants was 4.7, as shown by the first bar in the graph in Figure 57. This high score suggests that the participants felt that the AD did not interfere with their enjoyment of the music. This finding is corroborated by the result from the question 'how much did you find that the audio description detracted from your enjoyment of the music? where 1 is 'did not detract at all', and 5 is 'detracted very much'. As shown by the second bar in the graph in Figure 57, the mean average score given here was 1.5, thus confirming that the AD was not perceived by the BPSPs as having a negative effect on their enjoyment of the music.

The qualitative data in the form of participants' comments also reaffirmed these results and raised some important issues. For instance, remarks included the following:

- (1) The music was particularly important for me and I enjoyed it very much.
- (2) The music is the key thing for me. I really enjoyed it. It's relaxing to hear well-known tunes.

Another participant commented as follows, 'the AD did not detract from my enjoyment of the music but the buzz on the listening equipment did'. Technical problems with the

listening equipment relating to poor sound quality and volume control were indicated by a few participants, as mentioned in sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3. For example, comments included the following :

- (1) My headphones didn't work very well. It would have been nice if this had been checked before the performance and during the intervals. My headphones got worse as the evening went on and so this colours my responses. It was very poor sound quality and intermittent so I only got odd bits.
- (2) There was a little bit of interference in the left earphone so I put this away from my ear.

These results emphasise the impact of the listening equipment on the BPSPs' reception of the AD and the music. Indeed, within the theoretical framework of actor network theory (see section 1.2), the listening equipment can be seen as a tool and an agent in the translation process. Thus, the need to address this issue in further studies is highlighted.

The following remarks relating to the reception of the music raise another interesting issue regarding the effect of experience with opera AD on the extent to which AD is perceived to detract from enjoyment of the music. For instance, one participant, who gave a score of 2 indicating that the AD did not detract very much from his or her enjoyment of the music, stated 'you get used to AD'. Another respondent, who gave a score of 1 denoting that the AD did not detract from his or her enjoyment of the music at all remarked 'I'm used to AD. I've been to about 6 audio described performances before'. Similarly, another participant made the following comment which highlights the challenge of the audio describer in achieving a balance between communicating visual information and allowing access to the music.

The AD did not detract from my enjoyment of the music at all. I'm used to it. If I wasn't used to AD, it could have detracted from my enjoyment of the music because there was more description than I'm used to. When the overture started and there was AD all the way through I thought it was rather full-on but there was a lot of visual detail to convey.

This comment raises the issue of the impact of the participants' experience of opera AD and ToTo on their responses. The comparative analysis relating to the effect of experience on reception of the music is presented here.

This comparison is conducted by considering the difference in the mean average scores given by the 11 BPS respondents without experience of opera AD compared to the 10 BPS respondents with experience of opera AD. Figure 58 shows the comparison

between these two groups regarding the enjoyment of the music and the amount AD was perceived to detract from the enjoyment of the music.

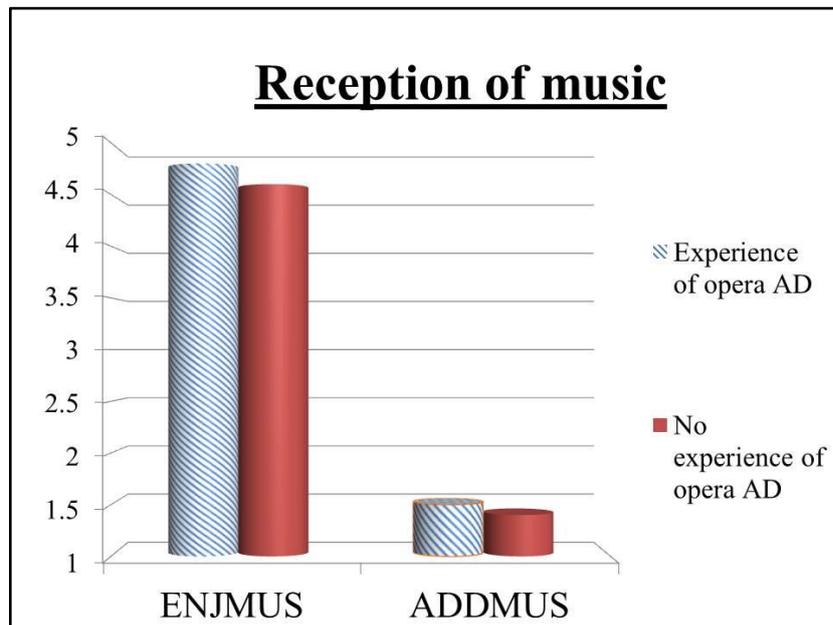


Figure 58: Mean average scores given by BPSs with and without experience of AD regarding perceived enjoyment of the music and amount AD detracted from the enjoyment of the music.

As demonstrated by the two clustered columns in the graph in Figure 58, the mean average scores regarding perceived enjoyment of the music are 4.8 and 4.6 for those with and without experience of opera AD respectively. The mean average scores regarding amount AD detracted from the enjoyment of the music are 1.5 and 1.4 for those with and without experience of opera AD respectively. As the average scores for each of the two groups for these two variables are close in value, this suggests that experience of opera AD did not appear to impact upon enjoyment of the music, or the extent to which AD was perceived to detract from the enjoyment of the music for the project performances of Bizet’s *Carmen*. Both those who were new to opera AD and those who had experience of opera AD alike responded positively to this particular AD in terms of the reception of the music. These observations relate to the performances of this particular opera and its AD.

Another significant variable to consider in relation to the reception of music is the extent to which participants felt they were able to experience the emotion of the opera. The relationship between these two variables was reiterated by participants’ comments. For instance, one respondent, having given a score of 5 confirming that he or she had felt very much able to experience the emotion of the opera affirmed that ‘this was quite a bit because of the music’. Another couple of participants who each gave a score of 4 stated

respectively ‘musically I was able to experience the emotion of the opera very well, not necessarily through the libretto’ and ‘a lot comes from the music. The emotion did come across’. The reception of the emotion of the opera is explored further in the subsequent section.

### 5.1.5 Reception of features provoking an emotional response

The mean average scores given by the BPSPs to questions concerning emotional response to the opera are displayed in Figure 59. The variables investigated include: (1) the reception of the emotion of the opera, denoted in Figure 59 as EMO; (2) the helpfulness of the AD in conveying humorous aspects of the opera, denoted in Figure 59 as ADHUM; and (3) the helpfulness of the AD in conveying shocking aspects of the opera, denoted in Figure 59 as ADSHK. The analysis of the BPSPs’ reception of the translation of features provoking an emotional reaction concentrates on humour and shock because this production of *Carmen* included dark comedy and explicit references to sexuality and violence. The results of this project will inform and refine the questionnaire design for use in follow-up studies.

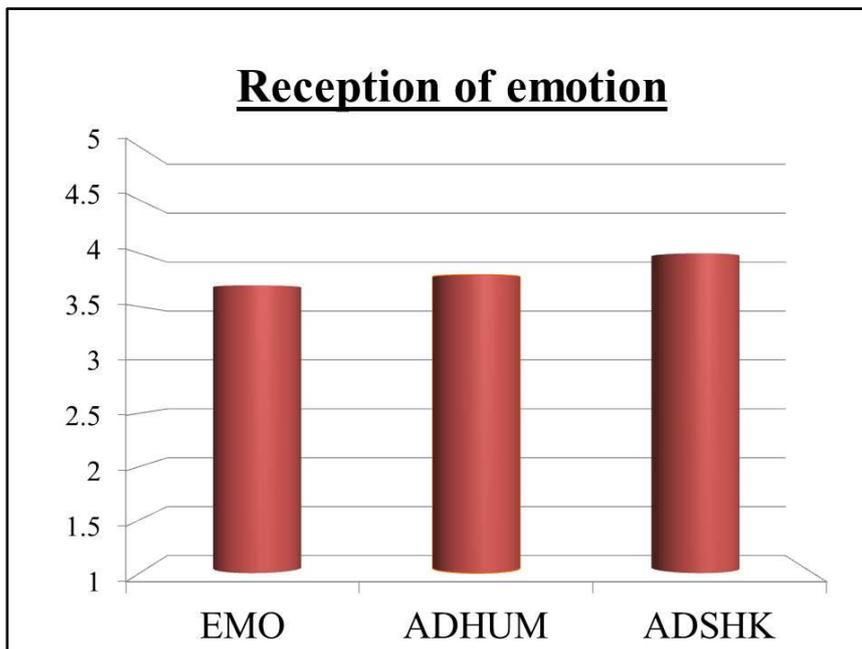


Figure 59: Mean average scores given by BPSPs regarding the reception of emotional aspects of the opera.

The first column in Figure 59 shows the mean average response to the question asking participants to what extent they felt emotionally engaged with the opera on this occasion. The score of 3.7 reveals a fairly positive response, although it suggests that some participants did not feel that they were able to fully experience the emotion of the

opera. This result might be explained by the production itself, as one participant remarked:

I think a more conventional production would have been stronger. For me the emotion was lost in the type of production it was. In this production, there wasn't the poignancy. There was not a very good ovation from what I sensed. It seemed like people were a bit non-plussed. I couldn't see people's reactions but I didn't get a sense of people standing in the aisles or a great ovation etc.

Another respondent qualified his or her score of 2 for this question by stating 'not because of the AD but because of the production'. The following remark by a survey participant also provides a possible explanation for this mean average score. He or she referred to the second-hand experience in AD for BPSPs, whilst emphasizing the social role of translation in contributing to inclusion.

With AD you are experiencing something second-hand. As a listener you don't really have an opinion, you don't have your own reaction to it, you have the audio describer's reaction to it. But it really helps to be able to share visual aspects with other audience members, which is the most important dimension. AD provides an independent source, so you can discuss it after with other audience members.

This comment highlights the paradoxical nature of the reception of AD, the inevitable subjectivity of the audio describer's role and the interpretative element in the AD process as a whole. The AD allows the BPSP to interpret the opera independently from other audience members, but the BPSP's interpretation is not independent because it is influenced by the audio describer's rendering; it is second-hand. Another BPSP alluded to this distancing effect, but this time in relation to the translation of humour in the AD. The participant stated:

It's quite hard to convey humour in the third person because it's reported speech. It's hard to portray something that's funny because of the timing of the punchline - there's a delay in the delivery of the humour. It is like somebody saying something in a foreign language which is simultaneously translated - it loses impact in translation because it is delayed. The reaction of the audience is not simultaneous and so it loses impact.

The mean average scores of 3.8 and 4.0 given to questions about the AD's helpfulness in conveying humorous and shocking aspects, respectively (see columns 2 and 3, Figure 59), indicate a positive response overall, although participants' comments reveal mixed reviews. Acclamations included the following:

- (1) I've experienced many performances where I don't understand why other people are laughing. AD has brought theatre to life for me. I received the humour of *Carmen* Well because of the AD.
- (2) The AD was very good. It enabled me to really enjoy the performance. Without it I wouldn't have known why people were making comments or laughing around us. AD is so inclusive.
- (3) I liked the comic moment in the AD where it said something like "Zuniga sits there in all his massiveness". I don't mind subjectivity - it's inevitable so why not have fun!

The respondents' positive views on AD suggest that this translation modality is a contributing factor in offering an inclusive and enjoyable opera experience for the BPSPs. Also, interestingly, in the final remark, the use of subjective description in the AD is advocated. Another participant recommended the use of more subjective description in the AD to convey characters' emotion and facial expressions, stating:

Because I can't see their [the characters] facial expressions, I gather from the descriptions of their movements in the AD what they're trying to convey. I think it would be helpful to describe facial expressions and emotions of characters in the AD, for example "He's very angry" or "She's very sad and sorrowful".

There were also mildly critical comments regarding the portrayal of humour in the AD such as 'I don't think that was as good. I imagine humour is difficult to convey in AD'. Also, one participant noted that there was no description of some of the spontaneous humorous aspects of the performance 'my husband told me that the dog was wagging his tail happily but there was no description of this funny impromptu action in the AD'.

Similarly, regarding shocking elements, several BPSPs' comments revealed a lack of awareness of any shocking details, such as nudity and allusions to sexual violence, suggesting that the translation in the AD was not entirely successful for some. For example, one respondent remarked 'The references to sexual violence which I was told about after the performance didn't come across in the AD'. In particular, the lack of a shared reception of this feature was noted; one participant highlighted the difference in verbal and visual communication:

If I compare my feelings with my [sighted] wife's feelings, my wife found it a violently disturbing production. I didn't receive this idea of physical violence. If one is told 'Zuniga kicks Carmen after she has fallen over' it has less impact than if you see it. I didn't wince but it did make me think. I did notice the use of shocking language in the AD to convey the shock of the production, for example 'she punched him in the balls' - that was a clue that the gloves were off. However, although it gave a hint, still the language used didn't help me receive the same impact of visual violence.

This remark raises questions concerning the notion of an inclusive experience which is poignant in the context of live performance received in a group context, as demonstrated by other aforementioned participants' comments. The participant continued as follows: 'it is a crime of passion but it is difficult to convey the brutality in the music alone. Having discussed the production during the interval, I listened to attempts to convey violence in the music.' Thus, the idea of the importance of maintaining a balance in the AD between allowing the music to speak for itself whilst describing sufficient visual detail to convey the emotional aspects of the opera is highlighted.

At the other end of the spectrum there were very positive remarks regarding the helpfulness of AD in conveying shocking aspects, such as:

- (1) The AD was very helpful for this, not just for the stabbing of Carmen but also the sinister characters Escamillo and the leader of the guards Zuniga. I got a sense of the sinister characters, and also the fact that Carmen is a bit of an outcast - the idea of racism. That shocking aspect came across loud and clear. The use of language and not using euphemistic language was also effective - they [the audio describers] said it as it was 'she kicked him in the balls'.
- (2) The way it was presented, the language used, was very good. It takes a long time to prepare AD.
- (3) The description of "going to the man's crotch" and "balls" was a bit shocking. The description gave us all a shock - you could feel a ripple of shock going along the row.

These comments reveal an awareness of certain aspects of the translation process including linguistic choices and the preparation time amongst these participants. Moreover, they highlight the need for research investigating audience preferences regarding linguistic choices in opera AD, such as the use of non-euphemistic language in the portrayal of shock.

The contrasting aforementioned remarks relating to the portrayal of the shocking aspects of the opera highlight the challenges faced by the translator. The audio describer(s) not only have to consider the difference in impact of visual and verbal communication but also diverse audience expectations and preferences. Moreover, such observations underline the importance of dialogue between translator and audience through audience reception research in discerning possible refinements needed in the AD process according to consumer requirements. Further research is needed to explore the diversity in audience response which may have been affected by various factors. For instance, results from the Pearson's correlation coefficient calculations, shown in Figure 60, suggest that the more through-description listened to, the more the emotion of the

opera is perceived to be felt, and the more helpful the AD is perceived to be in conveying the humorous and shocking aspects of the opera.

<b>Independent variable</b>	<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Pearson's correlation coefficient</b>	<b>Relationship</b>
Amount of through-description listened to	Extent to which the emotion of the opera was perceived to be felt	0.689	Strong positive relationship
Amount of through-description listened to	Helpfulness of the AD in conveying the humorous aspects of the opera	0.749	Very strong positive relationship
Amount of through-description listened to	Helpfulness of the AD in conveying the shocking aspects of the opera	0.714	Very strong positive relationship

**Figure 60: Pearson's correlation coefficient calculations regarding the relationship between the amount of through-description listened to and the reception of emotional aspects.**

The effect of ToTo attendance on the reception of emotional aspects is examined in section 5.1.7.

### **5.1.6 Reception of touch tours**

In this section, the reception of ToTos is considered primarily with reference to the graded responses and comments given the 11 BPS participants who attended a ToTo at the project performances. There is some indication of responses given by the 10 BPSs who did not attend a ToTo where relevant, although results from this group are explored further in the comparative analysis in section 5.1.7. The reception of the ToTo by sighted patrons is examined in section 5.1.8.

Firstly, the perceived helpfulness of the ToTo in general and enjoyment of the ToTo are examined. The mean average scores given by the 11 BPS participants who attended a ToTo are shown in Figure 61.

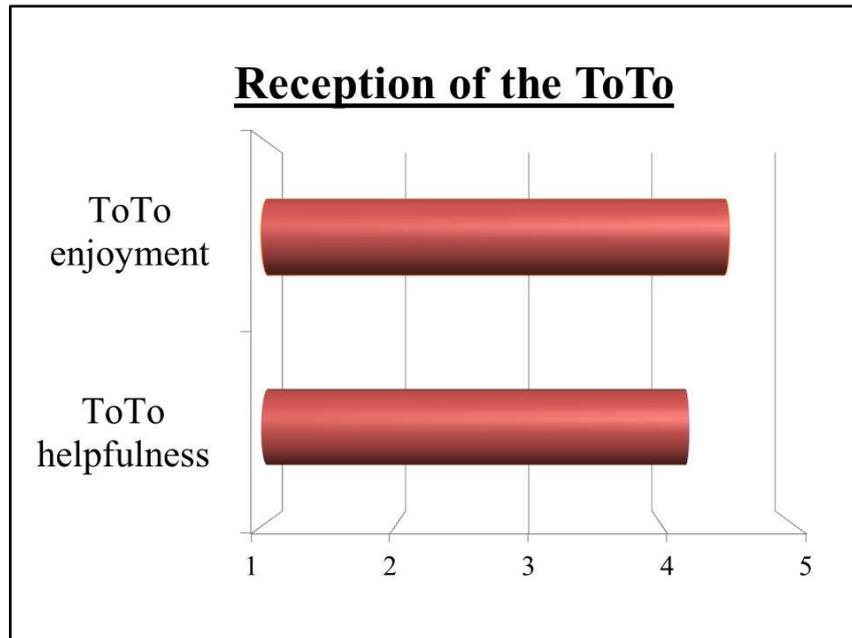


Figure 61: Mean average scores given by BPS ToTo attendees for enjoyment and helpfulness of the ToTo.

The following participants' comments provide further details regarding the positive reception of the ToTo suggested by these results. For instance, some respondents who attended the ToTo explicitly remarked on the helpfulness of this access facility in terms of visualizing the stage, gaining a first-hand tactile experience of the costumes and being able to ask questions. Such comments included the following:

- (1) The opportunity to ask questions on the touch tour was helpful.
- (2) I very much like seeing costumes, being able to touch them and see them up close is important for me.
- (3) The touch tour helps me to visualise the stage set.

The generally positive reception of the ToTo and in particular its entertainment value are corroborated by the photographic evidence in Figure 62.



Figure 62: Photos taken at the project performance ToTos.

There were also suggestions regarding room for improvement on the ToTo in terms of its overall completeness ('the touch tour was useful but they only did the first act') and in

terms of details ('it was great to see specific props and get an idea of the stage. It would have been nice to see more of the set in other acts').

As shown in Figure 61, the mean average score given for enjoyment is marginally higher than that for helpfulness. This result might be explained by the respondents' emphasis on the 'fun' aspect of the ToTo, as mentioned by several participants referring, for example, to the enjoyment of speaking to the actress who attended the ToTo. This aspect of the ToTo is shown in Figure 63.



**Figure 63: Enjoyment of participants speaking to the actress on the ToTo.**

Related comments included the following:

- (1) It was great fun talking to the singer playing the part of Frasquita in particular. I talked to friends a lot about my conversation with Frasquita on the touch tour.
- (2) I enjoyed speaking to the actress but there was not much to see on the touch tour. I've been to sets before where there is much more to see but on this occasion there was not very much. I have some sight, but cannot see at a distance.'

These remarks highlight the contribution of the ToTo in facilitating access for the BPSPs to a multisemiotic opera experience as a social event. The effect of ToTo attendance on the enjoyment of the social event of going to the opera is explored in section 5.1.7. In

addition, the latter comment points towards the notion of the set as an agent in the translation process (see section 1.2) as reiterated by the following remark 'it depends on the set as to whether the ToTo is helpful'.

Further audience reception research is needed regarding factors affecting the helpfulness and translation processes of ToTos, such as the set, other agents involved, and numbers and ages of patrons. Studies focusing on BPSPs' preferences regarding interpretative description and explanation of elements of the director's and design team's vision are required too. From this perspective, the following comment is noteworthy:

I would definitely like to come to another opera with a ToTo. I have some reservations about ToTos but I can't resist them. It's so nice to be part of the business. It adds to the experience of the performance. But it's a bit like seeing a film of a book you like. In some ways I prefer to create my own mental image of the stage from the AD without interference of the tactile experience and details on the ToTo.

The same BPSP continued as follows, emphasizing the social aspect of the translation process in providing an inclusive experience:

As a totally blind person who has never seen, all the details given about colour, costumes, props, and so on are not particularly helpful for me. I realize though that audio describers have to cater for all audiences with differing degrees and types of visual ability. For me, the important part of the opera experience is what you talk about with other members of the audience. That is what is so valuable about ToTos and AD - that you can share the experience with the rest of the audience.

Another variable which must be considered for the investigation of the reception of the ToTo is the desire to come to another opera with ToTo. The mean average score given by the BPSPs who attended the ToTo regarding this variable was 4.3, and the majority stated that they would very much like to come to another opera with a ToTo. However, the mean average score given by BPSPs who did not attend the ToTo was 3.3. The following comments made by these participants provide some explanation for this result.

- (1) I would have to consider my companion's availability in terms of attending a ToTo.
- (2) It depends on what it is. I usually go to the touch tour to see what is what. It makes it a bit of a long evening sometimes, so some friends who are BPSPs don't like to go. There are sometimes difficulties with public transport in evenings, especially on a Sunday.
- (3) It just wasn't convenient this time. I don't know if I'd like it but I'd like to try it.
- (3) It would depend on the opera. It takes up time. It makes it a long time for the whole opera experience.

These remarks suggest that practical issues such as a companion's availability, convenience and transport concerns are influential factors, as well the opera itself. Alternatively, ToTo attendance might simply be a case of personal preference. For instance, one participant who gave a score of 1 regarding the desire to attend another opera with a ToTo stated 'I didn't come to the touch tour because I get my partner to describe things when we get to the performance'. Another factor affecting ToTo attendance might be the difficulty in booking for this facility as suggested by the following comment:

The lady who arranges access at Nottingham Theatre Royal wasn't in the office on the day I phoned to book so I didn't come to the touch tour because I didn't know the timings etc. The lady in the box office didn't know anything about the AD or touch tour - I would have thought the people in the box office should familiarise themselves with timings of the touch tour etc.

Although the mean average score given by the BPSs who did not attend the ToTo was quite low, four of these respondents indicated that they would like to attend another opera with a ToTo.

#### **5.1.7 Comparative analysis of the combined approach of audio description plus touch tour with audio description alone**

In this section, the focus is on the comparison of the audience reception of a combined approach of AD plus ToTo with the individual method of AD alone. This comparison is conducted by considering the difference in the results for the mean average scores given by the 11 BPS respondents using AD plus ToTo compared to the 10 BPS respondents using AD only. The aforementioned numerical rating scale is used here from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'very much'. Qualitative data in the form of participants' comments are also referred to in this analysis.

Firstly, the responses to the following questions are considered: (1) 'in general how much did you enjoy the performance?'; (2) 'how much were you able to follow the plot of the opera this evening?'; and (3) 'in general how much did you enjoy the social event of coming to the opera?'. The mean average scores given by the BPSs regarding these questions are shown in Figure 64 and the questions or variables are denoted as: (1) ENJPER; (2) FOLPLT; and (3) ENJSOC.

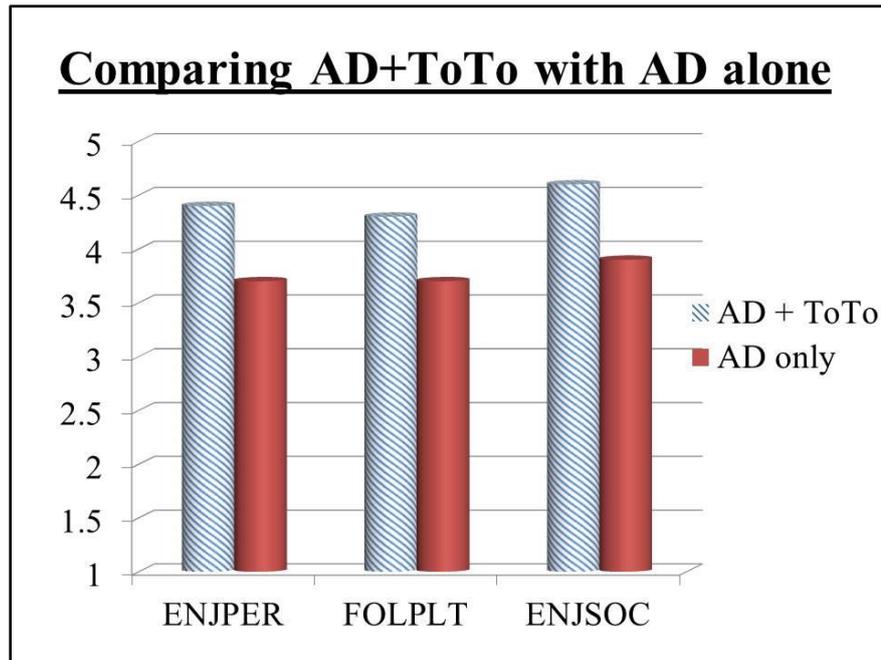


Figure 64: Comparison of mean average scores given by BPS users of AD plus ToTo with users of AD only regarding enjoyment of the performance and of the social event of the opera, and plot comprehension.

For all of these variables, the BPS users of AD plus ToTo, represented by the left-hand bars of each clustered column in Figure 64, consistently gave marginally higher scores on average than those who only used AD. Thus, these results suggest that on average the ToTo attendees enjoyed the performance and the social event of the opera and were able to follow the plot slightly more than those who did not attend the ToTo. A possible explanation for these scores might be the benefits of the ToTo discussed in section 5.1.6. For instance, the helpfulness of the ToTo regarding visualising the set and the opportunity to ask questions may increase familiarity with the plot as well as heightening general enjoyment. Moreover, the entertainment value and social aspect of the ToTo commented upon by participants, as documented in section 5.1.6, might influence the BPSPs' perception of an improved social experience in general. Participants highlighted the impact of the helpfulness of the theatre staff and familiarity with the venue on their enjoyment of the social event of the opera. Hence, the venue and theatre staff should also arguably be considered as agents in the translation process.

The comparative analysis of results relating to the reception of emotional aspects of the opera by the BPS participants who did and did not attend the ToTo reveals a considerable difference in mean average scores between these two groups. As shown in Figure 65, the variables under investigation include: (1) the reception of the emotion of

the opera, denoted as EMO; (2) the helpfulness of the AD in conveying humorous aspects of the opera, denoted as ADHUM; and (3) the helpfulness of the AD in conveying shocking aspects of the opera, denoted as ADSHK.

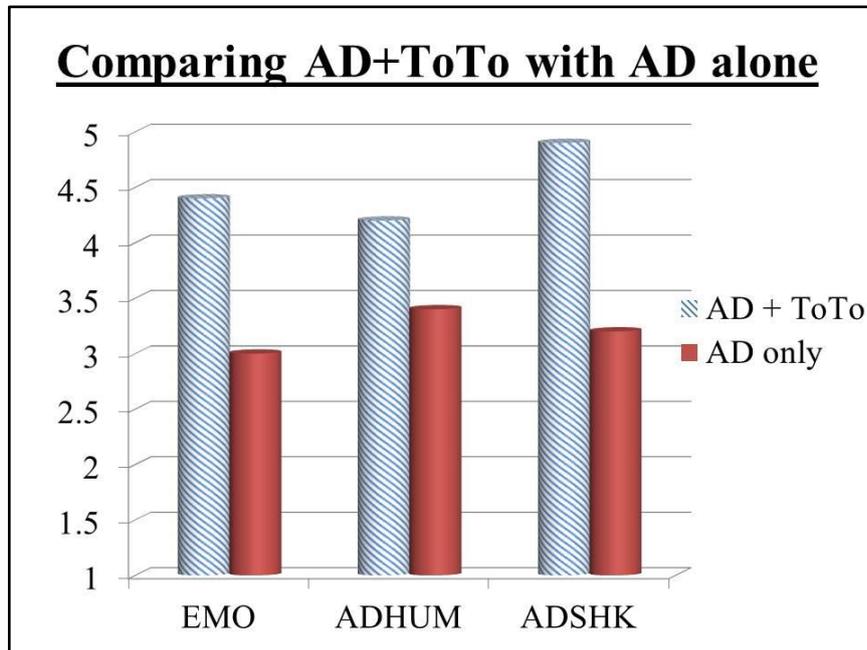


Figure 65: Comparison of mean average scores given by BPS users of AD plus ToTo with users of AD only regarding the reception of emotional aspects of the opera.

Regarding the reception of the emotion of the opera, the difference in mean average scores between the BPS users of AD plus ToTo and the BPS users of AD only, shown in the first clustered column in Figure 65, can be thought of as about 35%. This result suggests that for the questionnaire respondents the ToTo quite considerably enhanced emotional engagement with the opera. The qualitative data collected, in the form of participants' comments relating to this variable, as discussed in sections 5.1.5 and 5.1.6, support this suggestion. For instance, whilst a second-hand experience and distancing effect was noted with respect to the AD, in the remarks regarding the ToTo, references were made to the first-hand personal engagement with the costumes, set and characters. Therefore, interestingly, despite possible insights into the technicalities of stagecraft gained during the ToTo which might break the sense of theatrical illusion, the suggestion is that in comparison to the BPSPs who only used the AD, the BPSPs who used both the AD and the ToTo felt that they were able to experience the emotion of the opera to a greater extent.

The differences in mean average scores between the BPS users of AD plus ToTo and users of AD only regarding the reception of humour and shock corroborate this

interpretation of the data. As shown in the second and third clustered columns in Figure 65, the users of AD plus ToTo gave considerably higher scores for both of these variables. The differences in mean average scores here can be thought respectively of as about 20% and 43%. Comments made by BPS patrons emphasised the benefit of the ToTo in conjunction with the AD in terms of clarifying shocking or unexpected visual details. For instance, regarding the appearance of a dog onstage, several BPS respondents stated that they would not have realised what was going on without having been alerted to this detail by the audio describers on the ToTo. During the performance a real dog came onstage as the usual Toreador's bullfight was replaced with a dog fight. This information was communicated in the AD, although with numerous additional visual and other semiotic aspects to absorb, the details about the dog could arguably have been easily missed by the listeners. The audio describers' choice to focus on explaining the dog carry box in the ToTo and to encourage BPS patrons to touch it, as shown in Figure 66, seemed to aid clarification of this unconventional aspect of the production. Indeed, through observation of conversations during the intervals amongst the BPSPs who did not attend the ToTo, it was evident that there was considerable confusion as to why there was a dog. For sighted viewers, it was clear from the visual appearance of the dog carry box and the dog itself that it was a fighter dog. Similarly, for the BPSPs who attended the ToTo, the clarification of these details on the ToTo seemed to aid comprehension. Hence, the advantage of the extra level of familiarity with details of the production gained by attending the ToTo is highlighted.



Figure 66: One of the BPSPs on the touch tour at The Grand, Leeds touching the dog carry box.

The final variables to be considered in the comparative analysis of the combined approach of AD plus ToTo and AD alone are: (1) the helpfulness of the AD in conveying visual aspects (denoted as ADVIS in Figure 67); and (2) clarity of mental imagery of the geography of the stage (denoted as MENGEIO in Figure 67). The mean average scores regarding these variables, separated into those given by the BPSPs who did and did not attend the ToTo, are shown in Figure 67.

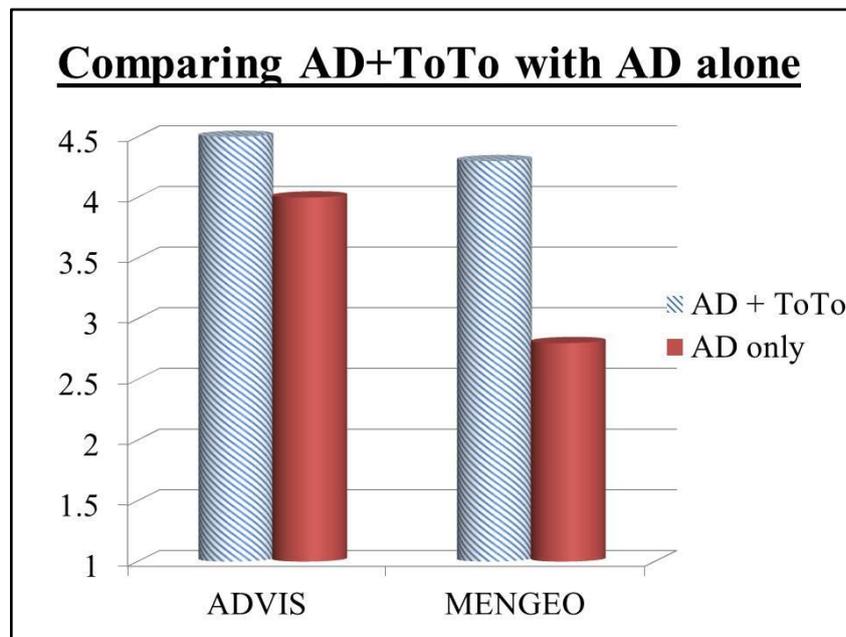


Figure 67: Comparison of mean average scores given by BPS users of AD plus ToTo with users of AD only regarding the reception of visual aspects and the clarity of mental geography of the stage.

As shown by the first clustered column, the difference in mean average scores between the BPS users of AD plus ToTo and the BPS users of AD only regarding the reception of visual aspects is small. In contrast, the difference in mean average scores between the two groups of BPS users with regard to the clarity of the mental geography of the stage, which can be thought of as approximately 38%. Again, the ToTo attendees gave a higher score for both of these variables. This result suggests that the combined approach of AD plus ToTo was very advantageous in facilitating a clear mental image of the stage layout as opposed to AD alone. Comments made by respondents who attended the ToTo support this statement. For instance, one participant remarked ‘the touch tour was very helpful for that - creating a mental image of the geography of the stage’. Furthermore, remarks made by participants who did not attend the ToTo reiterate that they perceived that they were disadvantaged regarding this aspect. For example, a few respondents who both gave a score of 1 stated as follows:

- (1) I wish I'd been able to get to the touch tour. We didn't have time on this occasion.
- (2) Not very clear at all. Maybe that is where the touch tour would help.
- (3) I didn't go to the touch tour - that would have helped.

In summary, the comparative analysis of the combined approach of AD plus ToTo as opposed to AD alone shows that BPSPs who attended the ToTo consistently gave higher scores regarding the variables investigated. This result suggests that the BPSP participants' opera experience was improved by ToTo attendance whether due to increased familiarity with the plot, production concept and stage design or other factors. Further research is required to investigate these various relationships. The findings discussed in this section suggest the advantage of the combined experience of ToTo and AD in terms of these particular variables for the participants of this study.

### **5.1.8 Reception of the AD and ToTo by the blind and partially-sighted participants' sighted companions**

The reception of the AD and ToTo by the BPSPs' sighted companions, of whom there were 11, is considered here by examining the quantitative and qualitative data provided by those who used the AD and/or ToTo facilities. Firstly, the reception of the AD is investigated in terms of its helpfulness and entertainment value from the perspective of the sighted participants, the amount listened to and the desire to come to another opera with AD. Secondly, the helpfulness and enjoyment of the ToTo is analysed as well as the desire to come to another opera with ToTo.

Amongst the sighted participants, there were 7 who reported that they had used the AD and 4 who abstained from answering questions about the AD. In terms of the question 'in general how much did you enjoy the AD?', 4 of these participants provided a graded answer, giving a mean average score of 3.8. Similarly, regarding helpfulness of the AD 3 sighted participants gave a graded response, with a mean average score of 3.7. These results suggest that these participants did not respond in a negative way to the AD and qualitative data in the form of comments provide more nuanced responses. Indeed, participants' remarks reveal a variety of reasons for which the AD was considered helpful and enjoyable. For instance, one respondent stated 'there were some visual details highlighted in the AD that I wouldn't have noticed otherwise. This was particularly because I was sitting at the back of the auditorium'. Another remarked as follows: 'it [the AD] refreshed my memory of the plot and explained the production'. These comments suggest the potential benefits of AD for sighted audience members with

a restricted view of the stage and in terms of ability to follow the plot and understand the production. This idea that AD has the potential to enhance sighted patrons' reception of the opera was also suggested by another participant who affirmed 'the AD added to my enjoyment of the performance'.

Regarding the amount of AD listened to, amongst the 7 AD users, 3 listened to the preparatory AI only, 3 listened to the live AI and the through-description, and 1 listened to the through-description only. Figure shows the mean average scores given by these participants regarding the amount of the different types listened to and their perceived helpfulness.

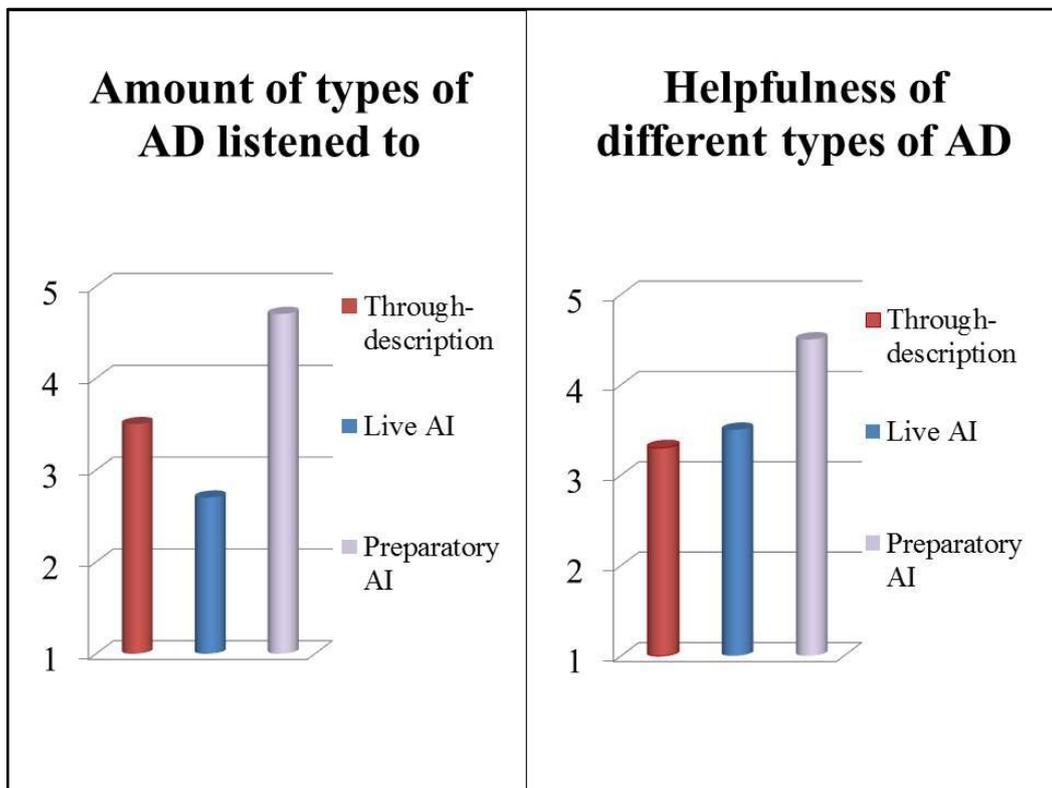


Figure 68: Average perceived amount and helpfulness of different types of AD listened to by sighted participants.

These results suggest that the preparatory AI was considered very helpful, and the live AI and through-description were considered fairly helpful, although not a lot of live AI was listened to.

The mean average score of 4.7 relating to the desire to come to another opera with AD suggests a very positive response to the AD. This suggestion is supported by sighted participants' comments such as the following: 'I thoroughly enjoyed tonight and will look forward to the next one [opera with AD]'. It is important to note that the majority of the qualitative data collected suggested that the strong desire to attend

another opera with AD was not primarily due to the benefits of AD for the sighted patrons own personal use. Instead, the participants' comments suggest that their desire to come to another opera with AD was predominantly fuelled by the knock-on effect of the advantages of this facility for their BPS companions which allowed them to share the opera experience. For instance, one sighted participant stated 'it would have to be an opera with audio description so that I can come with my friends [who have sight loss]. We only go to the opera when there is AD for my partner - we always go together'. Similarly, another remarked 'going to the opera is especially enjoyable when with friends, some of whom are blind'. The following comments reiterate the positive impact of the provision of the AD upon the sighted patrons' enjoyment of the performance not only due to the opportunity to share it with BPS companions, but also because it means they do not have to assume the role of translator themselves which may interfere with their own enjoyment of the performance and risk disturbing other patrons.

(1) I would not attend any stage show without my partner [who is blind]. It would be grossly unfair to leave her at home. Frankly I would not enjoy doing so. It is not possible to describe the action on the stage adequately when sitting in the audience, and it is very to disturbing to other patrons. So I would only come to audio described performances.

(2) My enjoyment of the evening was much enhanced by my knowing that my husband could follow what was happening and I didn't have to whisper details!

Further research is required with sighted patrons who are not companions of BPSPs in order to investigate the potential benefits of AD for sighted audience members.

As regards the reception of the ToTo by the BPSPs' sighted companions, the responses of the 8 participants who attended the ToTo are analysed. The mean average scores of 4.3 and 4 regarding enjoyment and helpfulness of the ToTo suggest a positive reception of this facility by the sighted participants. This suggestion is also corroborated by participants' comments such as the following which highlight the entertainment value of the ToTo:

(1) I went to accompany my husband but it was interesting for me too, for example a conversation we had with the stage staff about monitors to help the singers see the conductor and the talk about the [piñata] horse.

(2) Although I am sighted the touch tour added to my enjoyment of the performance.

(3) The touch tour was good fun.

Furthermore, the results regarding the sighted participants' desire to come to another opera with a ToTo support the positive reception of the ToTo. The mean average score

given for this variable was 4.7 and comments in response to the question ‘how much would you like to come to another opera with ToTo?’ included ‘definitely, the touch tour was fun’ and ‘it would depend on what the opera was all about. The touch tour would be very helpful in the case of an opera which I was less familiar with’. The latter remark raises the question of the reception of the ToTo for different operas; exploring which features of an opera make an associated ToTo appealing from the perspective of both sighted and BPS patrons. The ToTos for the project performances were primarily targeted at BPSs. However, within the context of considering the possible interest of ToTos for sighted patrons, it is interesting to note the suggestions for improvements of the ToTo from a sighted viewpoint. For instance, one participant expressed a desire for more significant characters in costume on the ToTo, remarking as follows:

The ToTo was quite good but it could have been better. If a few more of the cast in different costumes came, it would be better. A fairly incidental character came for the ToTo in a costume with rabbit ears which was quite fun but not particularly relevant to the opera plot or anything else. Perhaps it would be better to have characters in costume representing different groups in the opera, like cigarette girl, policeman [for this production of *Carmen*], or main characters if possible.

Similarly, another respondent commented on the appeal of the attention to detail in the ToTo whilst stating a personal preference for more explanation of specific features of the production.

There were some extra visual details which I had access to on the ToTo that I wouldn't have noticed otherwise, such as the traffic lights at the top of the set. Some of the explanation about the production, such as the fact that the opera was set in Seville, USA was quite helpful but the ToTo could have been very helpful with more explanation about the significance of props, the production and the vision of the production, especially as this production was a bit unusual.

### **5.1.9 Discussion of findings**

The findings presented in sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.7 support the general research hypothesis that, while current translation processes in AD and ToTos meet BPSs’ needs to a certain degree, improvements could be made. The results discussed in sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.7 reveal diversity in terms of the profile and responses of the BPSs to the access facilities. However, in general both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest an overall positive perception of the effectiveness of the AD and ToTo from the BPSs perspective in terms of the variables investigated, whilst also highlighting some of their perceived limitations.

The relatively high mean average scores (which are mostly above three) given by BPS respondents to the questions focussing on the reception of visual, audio and tactile aspects of the opera, suggest quite a positive audience reception in terms of the effectiveness of the AD and ToTo in providing access to a multisemiotic opera experience. However, comments suggest room for improvement especially in terms of the translation of emotional aspects of the opera and as regards the BPSPs' perception of a shared opera experience. In addition, the results of the comparative study in section 5.1.7 suggest that a combined approach of AD plus ToTo which provides overlapping stimuli between various sensory channels is more advantageous than AD alone which appeals primarily to the sense of hearing, at least within the context of this project and in terms of the variables under investigation. While it must be acknowledged that these findings are context-bound due to the ethnographic research approach adopted (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 159; Glaser and Strauss, 1967), they are clearly valuable, especially given the pioneering nature of the audience reception project. As regards the data collected from the BPS participants' sighted companions, findings suggest that there might be potential benefits of AD and ToTo for sighted patrons in terms of their entertainment value. More specifically whilst the results suggest that there is room for improvement from the viewpoint of these patrons, the possible advantages of the AD and ToTo in facilitating access to details about the plot and production are highlighted, especially for those who are not familiar with the particular opera being performed.

In relation to the actor-network theoretical framework discussed in section 1.2, the findings corroborate the idea that AD and ToTos form part of a complex, multi-agent translation network. For example, this notion is tacitly understood by BPSPs, as demonstrated by comments referring to the involvement of various agents in the translation processes of AD and ToTos, including companions, cast members, the set, and the BPSPs themselves. For instance, the comment about the delay in the delivery of the humour in AD in section 5.1.5 implies that the BPSP realizes that the audience's reaction has translated an aspect of the performance.

The findings also provide critical appraisal of the translation of specific features such as emotion. BPSPs' comments reveal the importance of sharing the opera experience with other audience members, including sighted companions, and acknowledge the helpfulness of AD and ToTos in facilitating this. The results suggest that the AD and ToTos did not allow BPSPs to fully share the emotion of the opera,

which relates to the BPSPs' sense of a second-hand experience. It is implied by BPSPs' comments that factors affecting their reception of emotion include: (1) delay in delivery and level of subjectivity in the AD; and (2) the influential role of companions in the translation process, who may affect the BPSPs' perception of the quality of the AD by providing another translation with which to compare the AD. This highlights the complexity of the audio describer's role within the collaborative network of agents and emphasizes the delicate balance required between using subjectivity to provide a vivid AD and allowing the BPSPs to interpret the performance themselves.

Many of the inherent difficulties in the translation processes of AD and ToTos stem from the differences in visual and verbal communication which result in inevitable subjectivity. Consequently, the incorporation of audience feedback into the translation process is crucial in establishing BPSPs' preferences. When fed back to the translators and other agents in the network, which is considered as cyclical (see section 1.2), these results may inform the production of future opera AD and ToTos. Although the findings from this project relate to the AD and ToTo at specific performances of the opera *Carmen*, the quantitative and especially qualitative data collected from the BPSPs provide general observations about the translation processes involved. Therefore, when communicated to the audio describers, for instance, who provide AD for various operas and opera companies, this information may impact upon their methods. In addition, the data collected during this project has generated theories for future investigation, as discussed in section 5.3, thus emphasising the ongoing, cyclical nature of the translation process.

## **5.2 Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected relating to audience responses to surtitles and sign language interpreting**

In this section, the feedback given by DH respondents and their hearing companions regarding the SLI and/or surtitles are presented. Firstly, in section 5.2.1, results from the preliminary questionnaires which establish the profile of the whole group of respondents will be presented. Secondly, in sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, results from the post-performance questionnaires regarding the DH participants' reception of the SLI and/or surtitles will be analysed. This data analysis concentrates on the following topics relating to the project objectives 4, 5, 6b, 7, and 9 (see section 4.1), and where relevant a distinction is made between the responses given by the DH BSL users and non-BSL

users. In section 5.2.2, the reception of the SLI is discussed with regard to the variables of helpfulness and enjoyment of this access facility in terms of portrayal of humorous, shocking and musical aspects. In addition, the reception of the plot and of a multisemiotic, inclusive opera experience is considered. Furthermore, possible ways to improve translation techniques by surpassing limits of current conventions are investigated from the DH participants' perspective. The same variables are explored in section 5.2.3 with regard to the reception of surtitles. Thirdly, in section 5.2.4, the reception of the surtitles and SLI by the DH participants' hearing companions will be analysed. Section 5.2.5 provides a summary of all of the aforementioned findings.

Prior to commencing the examination of the individual variables, the response rates and abstain rates are explained. As in the analysis of the quantitative data about reception of the AD and ToTo by the BPSPs and their sighted companions (see section 5.1), the response rate amongst the DH and their hearing companions for the preliminary questionnaires was 100%. The response rate amongst the DH and their hearing companions (considered here as two individual groups) for the post-performance questionnaires was 86%. The abstain rates for the DH for the preliminary questionnaires was 0% throughout, with the exception of a small number of questions. The abstain rates for these questions are indicated in Figure 69.

Variable	Question number	Abstain rate (%)
Braille requirement	4	14
Braille use	6	14
Visual ability at birth	15a	43
Visual ability at present	15b	43
Hearing ability at birth	15c	14
Knowledge of French	20	14
Learning difficulties	21	14

Figure 69: Abstain rates for the preliminary questionnaire for the DH.

The abstain rates for the DH for the individual post-performance questionnaire items are displayed in Figure 70.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Question number</b>	<b>Abstain rate (%) BSL users</b>	<b>Abstain rate (%) Non-BSL users</b>	<b>Abstain rate (%) All DH users</b>
Enjoyment of the performance	1a	25	0	17
Enjoyment of the music	1b	75	0	50
Enjoyment of interpretation of Carmen	1c	25	0	17
Enjoyment of the visual design of the production	1d	25	0	17
Enjoyment of the social event of the opera	1e	25	0	17
Enjoyment of the SLI	1f	25	100	50
Enjoyment of the titles	1g	25	0	17
Helpfulness of the SLI	2	0	100	33
Helpfulness of the titles	3	0	0	0

Plot comprehension	4	0	0	0
Helpfulness of SLI in conveying music	5a	25	50	33
Helpfulness of SLI in conveying humour	5b	0	100	33
Helpfulness of SLI in conveying shock	5c	25	50	33
Helpfulness of titles in conveying music	6a	50	0	33
Helpfulness of titles in conveying humour	6b	25	50	33
Helpfulness of titles in conveying shock	6c	25	50	33

Extent of feeling the emotion of the opera	7	25	0	17
Extent to which SLI detracted from visuals	8	25	50	33
Extent to which titles detracted from visuals	9	25	0	17
Amount of SLI looked at	10i	25	50	33
Amount of titles looked at	10ii	25	0	17
Familiarity with the plot	11	25	0	17
Familiarity with the music	12	25	0	17

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Question number</b>	<b>Abstain rate (%) BSL users</b>	<b>Abstain rate (%) Non-BSL users</b>	<b>Abstain rate (%) All DH users</b>
Desire for info about sound effects in the titles	13	50	100	67
Desire for info about music in the titles	14	50	50	50
Desire for info about repeats in the titles	15	25	0	17
Desire for character labelling in the titles	16	0	0	0
Desire to come to another opera	17	0	0	0
Desire to come to another SL interpreted opera	18	25	50	33
Desire to come to another opera with titles	19	25	0	17

**Figure 70: Abstain rates for the post-performance questionnaire for the DH.**

The abstain rates amongst the DH for some questions in the post-performance questionnaire are quite high; the BSL users preferred in some cases to provide general feedback through signed discussion (which was video-recorded) rather than in writing. Furthermore, some BSL users did not give responses to certain questionnaire items regarding surtitles because they did not consider these questions to be relevant to their opera experience. Similarly, some non-BSL users did not answer questions relating to SLI as they considered them irrelevant. Questions regarding SLI and surtitles were deliberately included on the same questionnaire and distributed to all DH participants, whether BSL users or not because of the possibility of the combined use of these facilities. Analysing the abstain rates reveals the preferences of diverse groups of patrons. By examining which questions concerning SLI were answered by non-BSL users and which questionnaire items regarding surtitles were answered by BSL users, the features of each of these facilities which could be of benefit to each group can be identified. For instance, the potential advantages of certain features of SL interpreted opera for non-BSL users from the audience’s perspective can be explored. The abstain rates for the DH for individual items are discussed further in the relevant subsequent sections. The abstain rates for the hearing participants for certain questions are discussed as relevant in section 5.2.4. In view of the abstain rates for the post-performance questionnaires, the analysis presented in sections 5.2.2 to 5.2.4 focuses primarily on the

qualitative feedback collected, and quantitative data in the form of graded responses are examined in combination with the qualitative results where relevant.

### 5.2.1 Profile of the participants

Similarly, to the presentation of the results by users of AD and ToTo, the profile of the whole group is discussed here because the opera experience is a social activity shared amongst the DH and their companions. Furthermore, through signed or oral dialogue about the performance the DH's companions act as agents in the translation process (see section 1.2). In total, 14 people participated in the feedback sessions on SLI and surtitles: 7 hearing patrons and 7 DH patrons, of whom 5 were profoundly deaf, 1 had severe hearing loss, and 1 had mild/moderate hearing loss. Regarding the use of a hearing aid, amongst the DH participants, 3 reported that they used one, 1 stated that he or she did not, and 3 respondents abstained. As discussed in section 4.6, in order to avoid abstains in future studies with respect to this variable, the wording of the question is to be reconsidered. All of the hearing respondents specified that they did not use a hearing aid. The results of the DH participants regarding hearing ability at birth are shown in Figure 71. The majority (4 out of 6) declared no hearing loss when born. There were 2 DH participants who stated that they were profoundly deaf at birth and 1 respondent abstained. 6 out of the 7 hearing participants reported no hearing loss at birth and 1 denoted mild/moderate hearing loss.

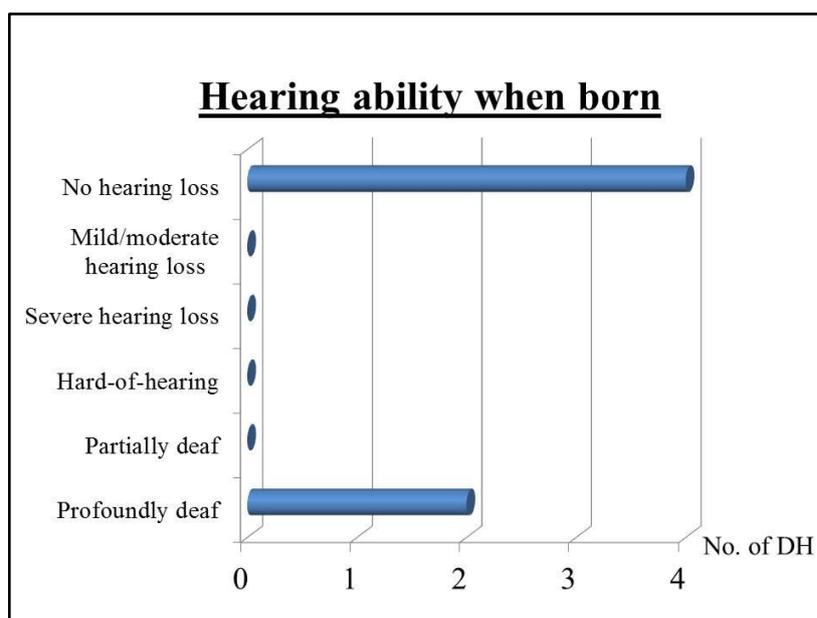


Figure 71: Distribution of the hearing ability of the DH participants using SLI and/or surtitles.

Regarding visual ability at present and at birth, 4 of the DH participants declared full vision, and 3 abstained. This relatively high numbers of abstains might be due to the sensitive nature of this information. Alternatively, as suggested by the following participant comment, this abstain rate may be explained by the fact that DH participants considered these questions irrelevant for themselves: ‘although I have completed the entire questionnaire, only questions relating to hearing loss are applicable to me. Possibly it would be better to separate the sensory impairments’. The wording of these questions is reconsidered in section 4.6. All 7 of the hearing respondents specified that they had full vision when born and regarding visual ability at present one stated that he or she was partially-sighted whilst the remaining 6 declared full vision. Amongst the DH, 3 were male and 4 were female. Amongst the hearing patrons, 1 was male and 6 were female. Figure 72 shows the distribution of age across the whole group: over half of the participants were aged 56 and above.

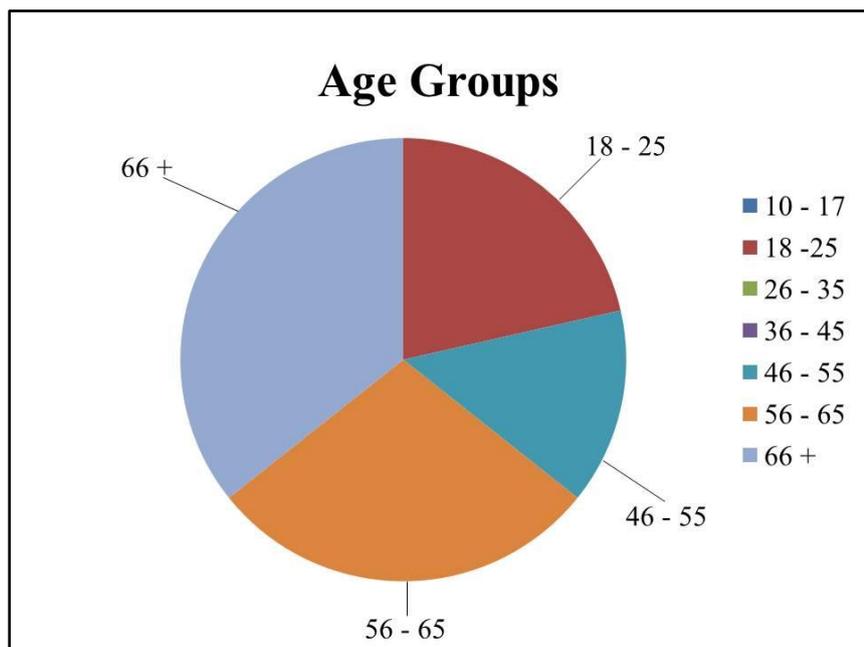


Figure 72: Distribution of age amongst the participants using SLI and/or surtitles

All 14 of the respondents stated that they did not require any physical assistance and 13 declared that they had no learning difficulties or disabilities, although one respondent abstained. 4 DH respondents out of all of the 14 participants specified BSL as their first language and the remaining 10 respondents denoted English as their first language. Amongst the whole group of 14 participants, there were 7 BSL users and 7 non-BSL users, both categories including hearing and DH patrons. Amongst the hearing

participants, there were 2 BSL users and 5 non-BSL users. Amongst the DH respondents, there were 5 BSL users and 2 non-BSL users. The educational qualifications of the whole group of 14 participants are shown in Figure 73.

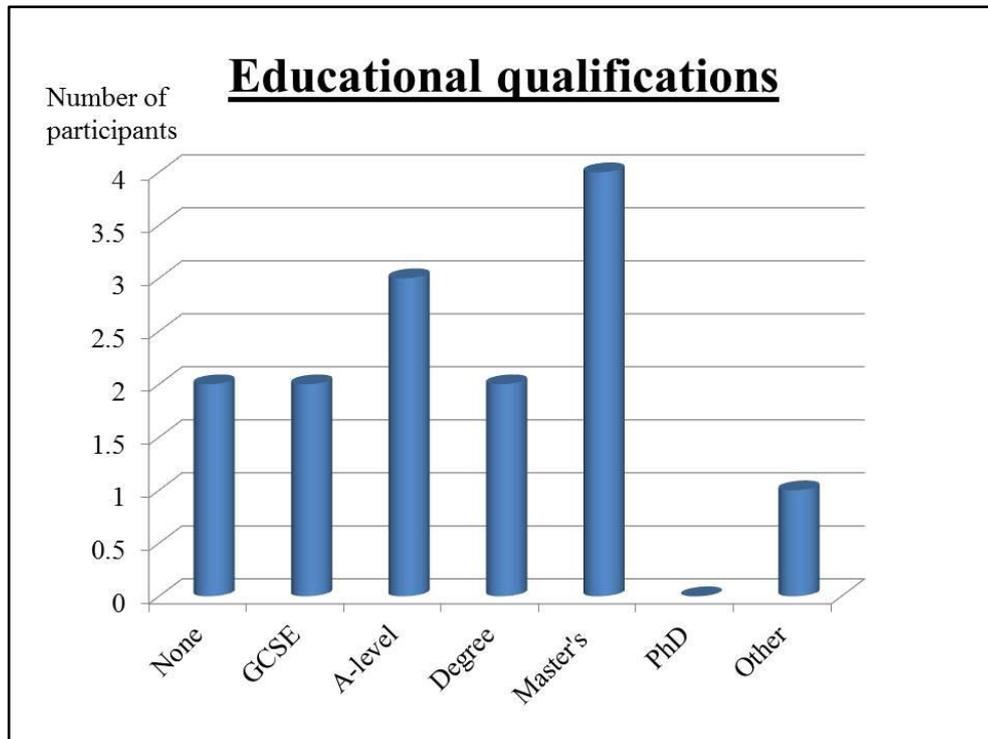


Figure 73: Distribution of the educational qualifications of the participants using SLI and/or surtitles.

As displayed in Figure 73, similarly to the users of AD and/or ToTo, the participants using SLI and/or surtitles held a wide range of educational qualifications. The graph shows the highest level of qualification for each participant and the most common qualification held amongst the users of SLI and/or surtitles was a Master's.

The following results concern the participants' experience of opera and access facilities. Figure 74 shows the numbers of operas attended by the participants with the data of the 7 DH respondents separated from those of the 7 hearing respondents. Amongst the DH, the number of operas attended is fairly evenly spread, with 2 DH patrons who declared no experience of opera, 2 who had attended 1-3 operas, 1 who had attended 4-6 operas, 0 who had attended 7-9 and 2 who had been to 10 or more operas. Amongst the hearing, there were 0 participants with no experience of opera and the majority stated that they had attended 10 or more operas.

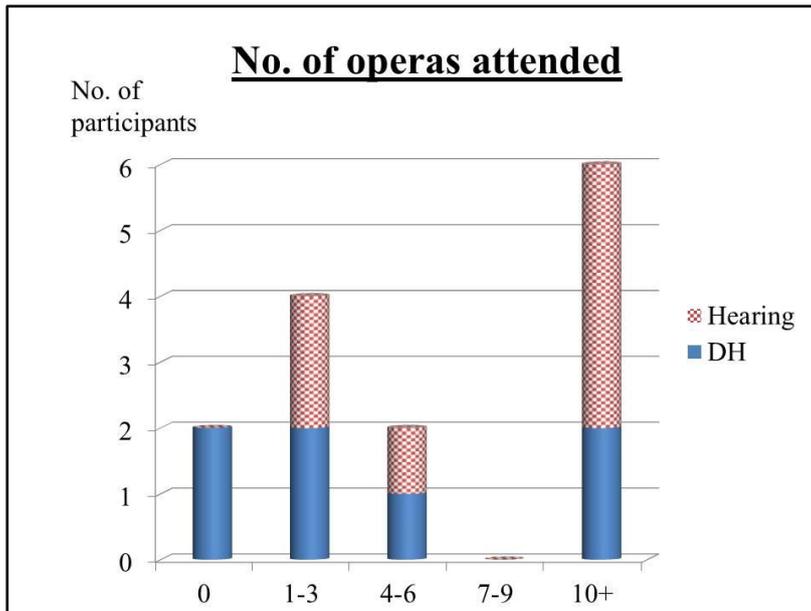


Figure 74: Numbers of operas attended by the participants using SLI and/or surtitles.

As regards the number of performances of Bizet’s opera *Carmen* attended, there were 4 DH participants and 2 hearing respondents who had never experienced a performance of this opera, 3 DH and 3 hearing participants who had attended 1-4 performances and 2 hearing respondents who had attended 4-6 performances.

Figure 75 shows the results in response to the question asking participants about the number of live SL interpreted performances of any kind (including musicals, plays, opera and other) attended.

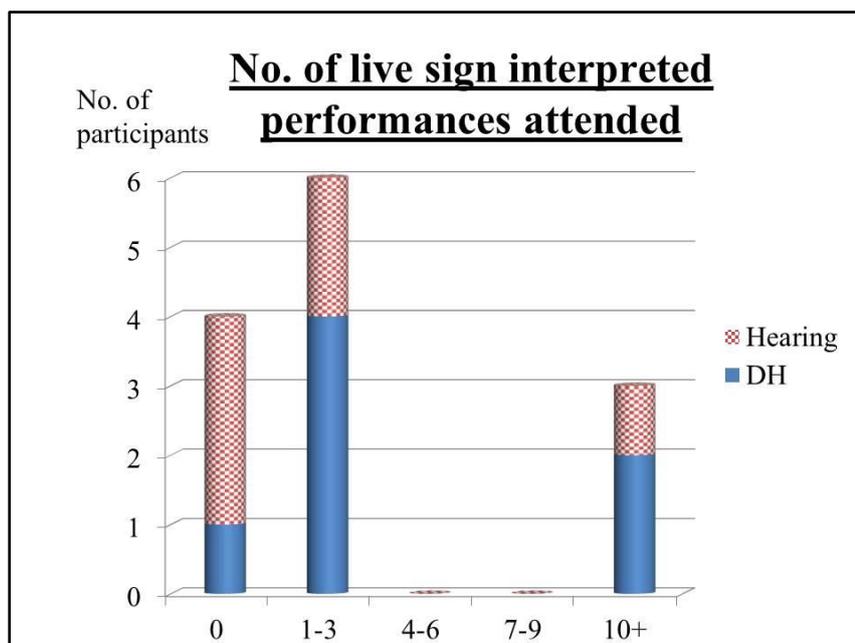


Figure 75: Number of live SL interpreted performances of any kind (including musicals, plays, operas and other) attended by participants.

The majority of DH respondents had experience of live SL interpreted performances with only 1 participant with no experience. Amongst the hearing, there were 3 respondents who had never attended a live SL interpreted performance of any kind, 2 participants who had experienced 1-3 such performances, 1 who had attended 10 or more, and 1 respondent abstained. As shown in Figure 76, the data collected from the hearing participants regarding the number of SL interpreted operas attended were identical to these results, except that nobody abstained and there were 4 respondents who had never attended a SL interpreted opera. The answers given by the DH participants about the number of SL interpreted operas differed quite considerably to those regarding experience of live SL interpreted performances of any kind. As displayed in Figure 76, there were 3 DH respondents with no experience of SL interpreted opera at and other end of the extreme, no participants who had attended 10 or more SL interpreted operas.

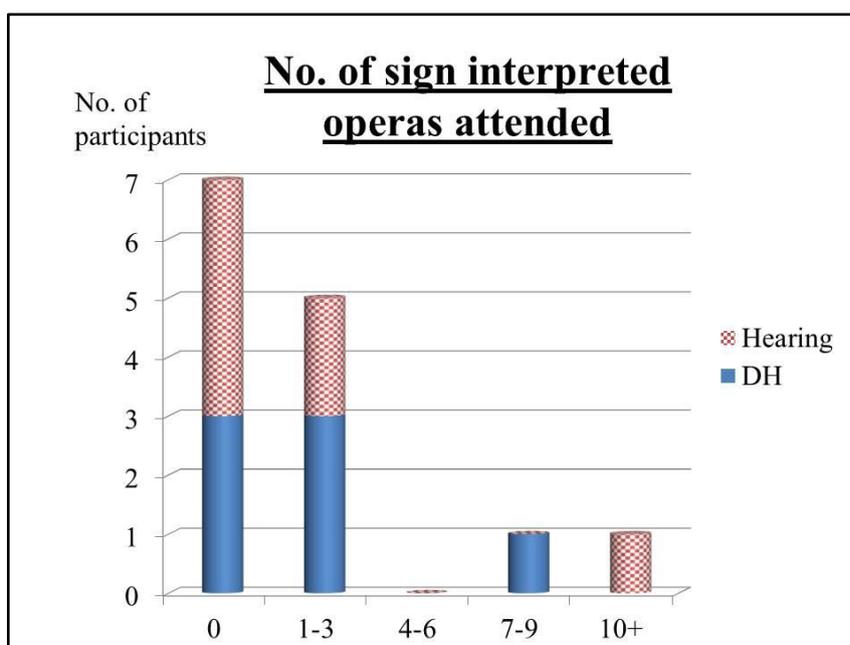


Figure 76: Number of SL interpreted operas attended by participants.

Such scores may be explained by the limited number of SL interpreted opera performances (see section 3.1.2) resulting in a restricted amount of choice for patrons wishing to use this access facility, or by the number of BSL users amongst the participants. Interestingly, however, among the participants with no experience of SL interpreted opera, there were 2 BSL users and 1 non-BSL user. The other non-BSL user amongst the respondents stated that he or she had attended 1-3 SL interpreted operas. In some ways, it is surprising that there was one hearing participant who stated that he or

she had attended 10 or more SL interpreted operas, especially given that this participant was not a BSL user - it is probable that this participant was accompanying a DH friend or relative. Furthermore, a comment on the questionnaire revealed that this respondent was a lipspeaker, and may therefore have also chosen to attend SL interpreted opera performances for his or her own benefit because SL interpreters often use lip movements in their translation, as discussed further in sections 3.1.2.2 and 5.2.2.

Interestingly, there was a larger number of DH participants with no experience of surtitles than those who had never attended a SL interpreted opera. As shown in Figure 77, there were 4 DH respondents who had never attended an opera with surtitles, all of whom were BSL users. The rest of the results regarding the number of operas with surtitles attended by both the DH and hearing participants are displayed in Figure 77.

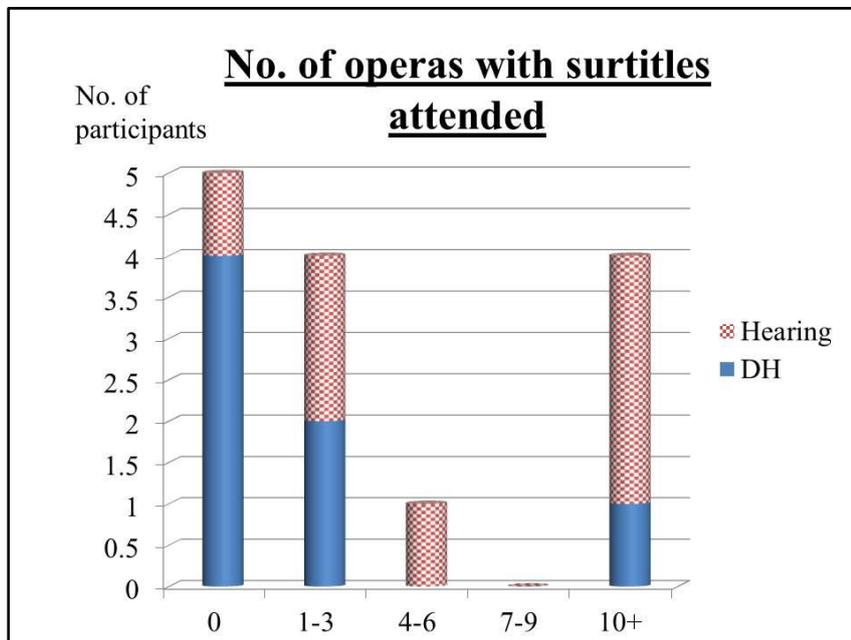
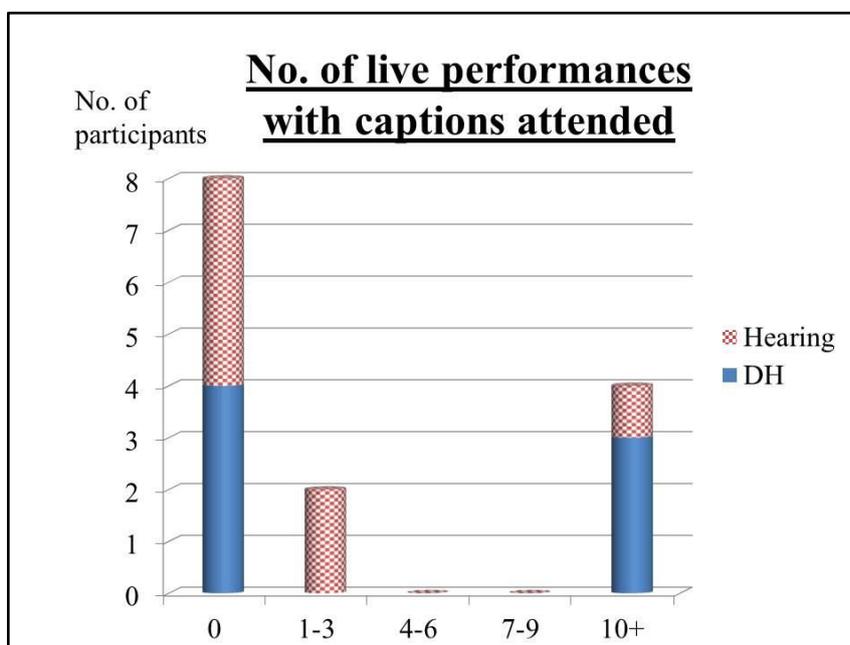


Figure 77: Number of operas with surtitles attended by participants.

In response to the question asking about the number of operas attended with both SLI and surtitles, 5 DH participants and 4 hearing respondents gave the answer 0. The remaining 2 DH participants and 3 hearing respondents specified that they had attended 1-3 operas with both SLI and surtitles. These results show that for the majority of participants the project performances were their first experience of an opera with a combination of SLI and surtitles. The data collected with regard to the number of live performances of any kind (e.g. musical, plays, other) attended with captions targeted primarily at the DH (including details of sound effects etc., as discussed in section 3.2.7) showed results given by the DH at the two extremes, as displayed in Figure 78. There

were 4 DH participants who had no experience of live performances of any kind with captions, of whom all were BSL users, and 3 DH respondents who had attended 10 or more live performances with captions, of whom 2 were non-BSL users and 1 was a BSL user. As shown in Figure 78, on the whole the hearing participants had little or no experience of live performances with captions targeted primarily at the DH.



**Figure 78: Number of live performances of any kind (including musicals, plays, operas and other) with captions primarily targeted at the DH with details of sound effects etc. attended by participants.**

The results analysed in subsequent sections predominantly refer to responses from the 6 DH patrons who participated in the post-performance questionnaire. The analysis involves examination of quantitative and qualitative data collected from the post-performance questionnaire in the form of graded responses and comments. One of the DH participants in the preliminary questionnaire did not complete the post-performance questionnaire. There are several factors which might explain the number of DH participants in the audience reception project. As mentioned in sections 4.4 and 4.5, the population of DH Opera North patrons is difficult to quantify because DH patrons do not have to register for the use of SLI/and or surtitles as they are open access facilities. Therefore, there may be undeclared users of these facilities who wish to remain anonymous members of the audience. There were no bookings for the SLI or surtitles at the relevant performances of *Carmen* at Nottingham Theatre Royal or at The Lowry (which as mentioned in 4.5 was to have been a project performance). At the performance at The Grand in Leeds, there were only 3 DH registered users but 6 DH patrons took part in the audience reception project. The idea that surtitles and SLI at live performances

may be providing an access service to more people than can be officially recorded, whether DH or hearing, as mentioned in section 4.5 is discussed further in section 5.3. The recorded population of DH Opera North patrons might be explained by the reflection made by Rocks (2011: 73) that deaf people 'have no particular culture of attending non-Deaf theatre because SL interpreted theatre is a relatively recent development'. Interestingly, comments made by DH project participants communicated a similar idea that opera is not part of Deaf culture and therefore Deaf people do not commonly consider going to the opera. As suggested by the following remark, this phenomenon may be due to an historical lack of access for the DH to the opera and the arts in general:

I'm sorry to say that in general there a lot of deaf people who are not keen on opera, particularly male. We wanted to encourage them to come along and to make them realise that you have tried to make it more accessible for deaf people. But it's difficult and it's a lot to do with the education of deaf people - historical reasons. You have to have an interest in the arts or the theatre to want to come. A lot of deaf people have not had access to the arts, maybe a few, but they tend to watch very action-packed events at the cinema. There are some deaf people who have got some useful hearing and they are more likely to come to the opera. And some deaf people have been to ballet classes when they were younger so they've developed an interest in arts but most deaf people haven't.

This comment implies that education could play an important role in increasing the accessibility of opera for the DH. Educational or outreach events may stimulate the latent interest in opera amongst the DH. For instance, another DH participant commented on the benefit of workshops for this purpose, affirming:

Workshops would be very good because they could help deaf people to become educated about opera. There are so many operas around - it would be really good if there could be workshops for everyone. We could feel the singers' throats and chests when they are singing, meet members of the cast and so on. We've been to one here but they are usually one-off events. It would be fantastic if there were more.

Hence, similarly to AD and ToTo, as discussed in section 5.1.1, the average number of recorded users of opera SLI and/or surtitles may be explained by their relatively recent introduction and lack of awareness of these facilities. As time progresses, with effective marketing strategies and educational initiatives which introduce the potential enjoyment of opera for DH within the deaf community, these audience figures may increase. Moreover, as also discussed in section 5.1.1, audience reception research plays an important role in promoting dialogue and awareness about these access facilities

amongst the various agents involved in the translation process. Thus, such research may contribute to breaking the vicious circle of a misconceived lack of demand leading to a reduction in the number of accessible performances and limiting the element of choice of the patrons requiring access facilities which in turn may restrict audience figures.

### **5.2.2 Reception of sign language interpreting**

In this section, the reception of the SLI by the 6 DH participants, of whom 4 were BSL users and 2 were not, is examined. The 4 BSL users all indicated that they were profoundly deaf, and amongst the non-BSL users one declared severe hearing loss and the other mild/moderate hearing loss. This examination involves analysis of these 6 participants' graded responses to the post-performance questionnaire items and the comments they made during the feedback sessions. Photographic evidence is also used to corroborate results. As already mentioned in section 5.2, the qualitative feedback gathered is the primary point of reference due to the relatively high abstain rates for the graded answers of certain questionnaire items. These abstain rates might be explained by the BSL users preference for signed discussion in some cases and the fact that the non-BSL users considered certain questions relating to BSL interpreting irrelevant, as elaborated upon below.

Interestingly, whilst both of the non-BSL users abstained from answering the questions about the general helpfulness and enjoyment of the SLI, one of these participants, who had declared a mild/moderate hearing loss, gave a graded response regarding other variables relating to reception of the SLI. These variables included: (1) the helpfulness of the SLI in conveying the musical and shocking aspects of the opera; (2) the amount the SLI detracted from enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera; (3) the amount looked at the SL interpreter; and (4) the desire to come to another SL interpreted opera. The graded responses given by the non-BSL user to questions about the variables listed above suggest the importance of raising awareness about the potential benefit for individual patrons of using a combination of SLI and surtitles. Regarding the helpfulness of the SLI in conveying the musical aspects of the opera, the non-BSL user gave a score of 3, indicating that he or she found the SLI helpful in this respect to a certain extent. This score also suggests that there may be potential for some improvement of this aspect, as discussed further below with regard to the reception of music by DH patrons. The non-BSL user gave a graded response of 5 for the helpfulness of the SLI in conveying the shocking aspects of the opera suggesting a very positive reception of this feature. This is

a curious result, especially given that the participant gave a score of 2 (which means 'not very much') in response to the question 'how much did you look at the sign interpreter this evening?'. The positive reception of the SLI by the non-BSL user is corroborated by his or her graded responses of 1 (which means 'did not detract at all') and 4 (which means 'quite a lot') regarding the amount the SLI detracted from enjoyment of the visual aspects and the desire to come to another SL interpreted opera. These results suggest that there may be advantages of SL interpreted opera for non-BSL users. Given that only 1 non-BSL user gave responses to certain questions regarding the SLI, when analysing the mean average scores subsequently, only the graded answers given by the BSL users are presented.

The first variables to be considered in terms of the graded responses and comments provided by the BSL users are the helpfulness and enjoyment of the sign language interpreting in general. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'very much', the mean average scores given for these two variables were 4.5 and 5 respectively. Thus, these results suggest a positive response to the SLI, as also corroborated by participants' comments. For instance, a couple of respondents whose first language was BSL remarked 'we really enjoyed the sign interpreting' and 'for Deaf people, when there is a sign interpreter present that's fine' (see footnote 12). Another participant whose first language was not BSL remarked as follows:

I'm not usually comfortable with BSL and prefer subtitles but I found the interpreter very very good so followed it perfectly. I've got a lot of praise for the interpreter. I prefer interpreters to use SSE (Sign Supported English) rather than BSL. The interpreter also mouthed words and seemed to use more SSE. I found this very helpful. Some interpreters use more BSL and do not mouth words. SSE is sign language translated into grammatical English. BSL is sign language with its own internal BSL grammar. My enjoyment of the performance was due to the excellence and particular way the interpreter used sign language.

This comment suggests that SLI is not necessarily only useful for people whose first language is BSL. Moreover, it raises the question for future studies of the type(s) of SL used in opera SLI and audience preferences regarding this matter.

The overall positive reception of the SLI suggested by these findings is supported by the quantitative and qualitative data collected regarding other variables. As shown in Figure 79, the mean average scores of the BSL users regarding the helpfulness of the SLI in portraying the musical, humorous and shocking aspects of the opera (denoted as SLIMUS, SLIHUM and SLISHK), the reception of the emotion of the opera (denoted as

EMO), as well as the desire to come to another opera with SLI (denoted as OPAWSLI) were all 4 or above.

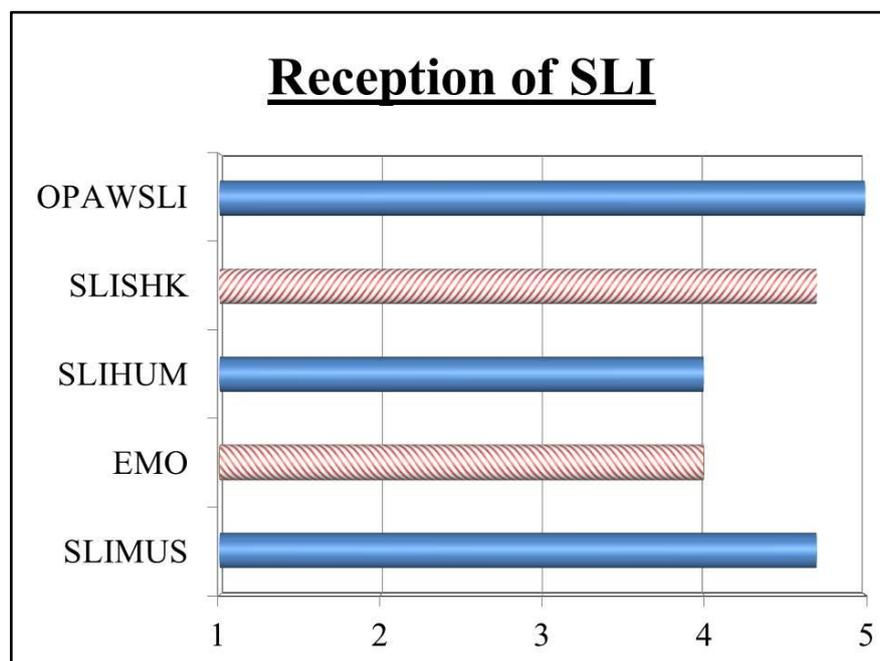


Figure 79: Mean average scores given by DH BSL users regarding variables relating to the reception of emotional and musical aspects as well as the desire to come to another SL interpreted opera.

The participants' comments relating to these variables again reflect the positive reception of the SLI from their perspective whilst also providing some critical appraisal and suggested improvements. For instance, with regard to the desire to come to another SL interpreted opera, one DH respondent stated 'the interpreter was good at it, comfortable to watch' and another commented 'I would very much like to come to another sign interpreted opera, although it depends on the expertise of the sign interpreter'. These remarks suggest that the quality of the SLI is a deciding factor for these DH patrons with regard to future opera attendance, which raises an intricate question to answer 'what constitutes good quality opera SLI from the audience's perspective?'. Another participant's comments regarding the helpfulness of the SLI in conveying the humorous and shocking aspects of the opera touch upon this issue and reveal an awareness of the translation process. He or she stated 'the interpreter will have to understand the meaning of the translation [to be able to convey the humorous aspects of the opera]' and 'the interpreter will need to have cultural awareness to convey this [the shocking aspects of the opera]'. Regarding the BSL users' perception of the extent to which they were able to experience the emotion of the opera in general, comments suggested the importance of the SLI for this aspect. For instance, one participant whose first language was not BSL

remarked 'the interpreter put this [the emotion of the opera] over well'. Similarly, other first language BSL users stated 'the sign interpreter's body language successfully conveyed the power and emotions within the story, and at the same time she maintained very clear, easy to read, finger spellings and signing' and 'the signer used expressive language'. These remarks highlight that the opera SLI may be of benefit to both DH patrons whose first language is BSL and those whose first language is not BSL.

Regarding the question 'in general how much did you enjoy the music?' only 1 DH BSL user gave a graded answer. He or she gave a score of 5 indicating that he or she enjoyed the music very much. The other 3 BSL users abstained and made comments as follows 'I don't know? I can't hear!' and 'how can you appreciate the music if you can't hear it'. Interestingly, 2 out of these 3 BSL users noted that they were not at all familiar with the music prior to the performance (1 abstained), whereas the participant who gave a score of 5 regarding enjoyment of the music specified that he or she was very familiar with the music before the performance. This participant also gave a score of 4 with regard to the helpfulness of the SLI and the surtitles in conveying the musical aspects of the opera. Thus, it might be suggested that it was a combination of prior familiarity with the music, the SLI and surtitles that enabled this participant to enjoy the musical aspects of the opera. The overall results regarding helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying the musical aspects of the opera are discussed in section 5.2.3. As mentioned before, all 4 of the BSL users were profoundly deaf, and therefore the difference in responses with 3 abstains and 1 score of 5 also raises questions about the varied meaning of enjoyment of music for DH people (discussed further below). Interestingly, 2 of the BSL users who had abstained from the question about enjoyment of the music responded to the question about the helpfulness of the SLI in conveying the musical aspects of the opera. Indeed, both gave a graded answer of 5 indicating that they perceived the SLI as very helpful in portraying musical aspects and one commented 'the interpreter was good and showed movement'. These results may be explained by the different wording of the questions in which one the term 'music' was used and in the other 'musical aspects'. The meanings of 'music' and 'musical aspects' and their significance within the multisemiotic medium of opera are open to multiple interpretations. For example, either of these terms may have been interpreted to include the opera lyrics. Moreover, these results suggest that there may be a distinction made by the DH between reception of the music and enjoyment of the music.

The findings above raise fascinating and complex questions about DH people's reception and appreciation of music which it may be possible to pursue using neuroscientific approaches, for instance measuring other sensory responses with quantitative data (MRI, eye-tracking). Within the context of opera, an investigation of DH patrons' opinions regarding which elements of music (including melody, pitch, rhythm etc.) are most important could influence translation decisions.<sup>25</sup> The participants' comments highlighted the importance of a tactile experience in order to be able to enjoy the music, referring in particular to the significance of pitch. For example, as mentioned towards the end of 5.2.1, one DH respondent remarked upon the helpfulness of the opportunity to touch singers' throats and chests whilst they were singing. Similarly, another DH participant who was a BSL user stated as follows:

Deaf people vary in the amount of hearing they have. Some people would follow vibrations for information. So maybe there is special equipment they could have to be able to feel the different vibrations for voices of different pitches. There are different voices: high sopranos, very low voices etc. That's very important to be able to appreciate the music.

The importance of being able to distinguish between singing and speaking was also highlighted during the feedback session, as demonstrated by the following remark: 'I think the majority of deaf people can't tell whether someone is speaking or singing. I have some hearing so I can sometimes identify it'. Thus, the question of the relevance of indicating this information in the SLI and/or surtitles is raised. In musical theatre, in which switching between spoken and sung dialogue is common, such indications are arguably especially significant. In opera, further distinctions may be made in the SLI and/or surtitles to denote particular singing styles such as recitative passages or *Sprechgesang*.<sup>26</sup> Another specific music-related issue which was raised by participants' comments concerned the conductor. One respondent stated 'the sign interpreter could give the name of the conductor before the clapping', and another remarked as follows:

When they started everyone was clapping. I could hear a bit so I knew what it was about - it was the music - it was the conductor coming out and people clapping but we couldn't see the conductor, so we were wondering: what is everyone clapping about? We thought maybe it was something to do with the orchestra. Maybe you need the name of the person who is approaching on

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<sup>25</sup> It would also be important to consider the possible differences in this hierarchy according to each opera, production as well as individual passages in a given opera.

<sup>26</sup> Recitative is 'a type of vocal writing, normally for a single voice, with the intent of mimicking dramatic speech in song' (Monson et al., 2013). *Sprechgesang* is 'a type of vocal enunciation intermediate between speech and song' (Griffiths, 2013).

the titles, that would be good and then we would all know what was going on. I felt like I was missing out on something.

These findings suggest the importance of clear visual access to the whole stage area for the DH as well as highlighting the value of considering access to the opera experience as a whole as part of the process of translating opera and making it inclusive for all.

The mean average score given by the BSL users regarding plot comprehension was 3.8, thus suggesting that this aspect of the combination of SLI and surtitles was not entirely successful for some. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of the BSL users the fundamentality of the SLI in providing any access to the plot was conveyed by comments including the following.

If there was no sign interpreting, you might understand what was going on a bit but you wouldn't be able to follow the plot at all. You would have to know the plot beforehand, otherwise you wouldn't understand. Deaf people would be completely excluded from that information.

In addition, another respondent who was not a first language BSL user affirmed 'I followed it [the plot] by sign language'. These results regarding plot comprehension may have been affected by a further variable, namely the positioning of the respondent in the auditorium. One respondent stated 'my responses are affected by the problem with our seating'. Several participants expressed frustration regarding seating arrangements and the misinformation at the box office regarding the positioning of the SL interpreter. Furthermore, discussions during the feedback session highlighted that this is a recurring issue. These findings bring into focus the importance for any patrons wishing to use the SLI of being able (with the assistance of the theatre staff) to book a ticket in a position in the auditorium which is close enough to the stage for clear visual access to the SL interpreter and also in a seat which maximises vision of the stage when looking at the SL interpreter.

The problems regarding seating arrangements may have also affected the responses of the BSL users regarding the amount the SLI detracted from the enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera. The mean average score for this variable amongst the BSL users was 2 and the mean average score regarding the amount of SLI watched was 4.7. These results suggest that the SLI did not detract very much from the enjoyment of the visuals, although one BSL user gave a score of 4. Two other participants who both gave a score of 1 commented as follows: 'I'm used to it [SLI]', and

I was very impressed with the sign interpreter. She was very low key in her choice of positioning so that she could be seen, without disrupting the performance in any way, and, as she was dressed very plainly, her signing was very clear.

These remarks highlight the paradoxical issue of the visibility of the SLI, as discussed in sections 3.1.2.1 and 3.1.2.2, and raise the issue of the effect of experience with SL interpreted opera on the reception of this facility.

Finally, regarding enjoyment of the social event of the opera, the BSL users gave a mean average score of 4.3, thus suggesting a positive response to this aspect of the opera experience. The advantage of the SL interpreted opera in allowing BSL users to discuss the opera production with fellow audience members was evident during the performance intervals. As shown in Figure 80 dynamic conversations about the production were observed amongst the project participants during the intervals and post-performance feedback session.



Figure 80: Survey participants signing to each other during the interval and feedback session at The Grand, Leeds.

### 5.2.3 Reception of surtitles

This section includes an exploration of the responses given by the 6 DH participants regarding the surtitles. Both graded answers from the post-performance questionnaire and participants' comments are referred to in the analysis, and a distinction is made between BSL users and non-BSL users. In their comments, participants used the terms subtitles, surtitles and titles to refer to the translated text provided on screens at the sides of the stage in the project performances (as shown in Figure 31), which in this current work are referred to as surtitles for the purpose of terminological consistency, as explained in section 3.2.1. However, all three terms are used interchangeably when quoting participants' comments. Where relevant the abstain rates for the graded responses are discussed in relation to individual variables.

For the purpose of verifying the reliability of the graded responses regarding overall perceived effectiveness of the surtitles, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated for certain variables which constitute a multi-item scale. These variables included: (1) helpfulness of the surtitles; (2) helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying the musical aspects of the opera; (3) helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying the humorous aspects of the opera; and (4) helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying the shocking aspects of the opera. This calculation yielded a value of 0.87 for the Cronbach Alpha, thus confirming that there is internal consistency amongst these variables.

The results regarding the overall helpfulness and enjoyment of the surtitles reveal that whilst non-BSL users and BSL users alike found these useful to some extent, there is room for improvement from the perspective of the DH patrons who participated in the project. The mean average scores given by the BSL users and non-BSL users regarding these variables are shown in Figure 81. The helpfulness and enjoyment of the surtitles are denoted in the Figure as HELPTI and ENJTI. It is important to note that the surtitles provided at the project performances were not targeted specifically at the DH.

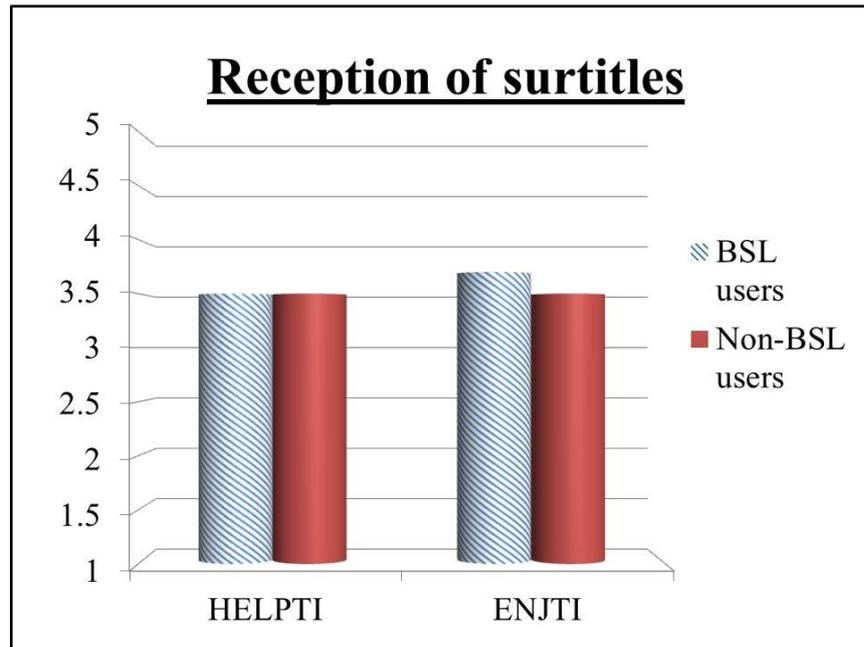


Figure 81: Average perceived helpfulness and enjoyment of the surtitles by the DH participants.

These data show a very similar reception of the surtitles by the BSL users and non-BSL users. Interestingly, all 4 BSL users provided graded answers for the question regarding helpfulness of the surtitles of whom 3 gave a score of 4 (which is 'quite a lot') and 1 gave a score of 2 (which is 'not very much'). This 0% abstain rate suggests that the BSL users consider surtitles an important part of their access to the opera, as also supported by the following comment: 'subtitles don't give full texts - mostly cut messages but they are important to include - access for us to read'. This remark, similarly to other participants' comments reflects the suggestion from the quantitative data shown in Figure 81 of a fairly positive reception of the surtitles but with some reservations. For instance, one non-BSL user stated 'the titles were clear and well placed but a little inadequate'. Another remarked 'the surtitles were a bit sparse but in general surtitles are of great help. Having surtitles is excellent. A synopsis of the opera would be a great help - via e-mail would do. I am extremely happy that we are offered seats at reduced prices'. These comments suggest that for these DH participants the surtitles provided were of benefit but not as comprehensive as they would wish. The further remarks made by the BSL users suggest a similar response. For instance, one BSL user stated 'I found the titles were not as informative as Stagertext subtitles' (see sections 3.2 and 3.2.7 for explanation of the techniques of the charity Stagertext). Another BSL user raised the issue of providing access to the opera experience as a whole, remarking as follows:

There was a lack of information - we didn't know how long the interval would be. It didn't say on the surtitles screen and nobody mentioned it to us. Next time it would be helpful to use the surtitles to give us some information about this and about the conductor. We followed hearing peers clapping hands but we didn't know what it was for but then we realised it was for the conductor.

The suggestion that the surtitles are not complete enough and the idea that there is room for the improvement of surtitles from the perspective of the DH participants are also supported by the results regarding other variables. For instance, the mean average scores amongst non-BSL users regarding reception of the emotion of the opera and ability to follow the plot were both 3.5. As mentioned in section 5.2.2, the mean average scores of 3.8 and 4 regarding these variables given by the BSL users are slightly higher than those given by the non-BSL users. This result suggests that the participants who were able to follow the SLI perceived that they were able to follow the plot and receive the emotion of the opera marginally more than the non-BSL users. The following comment might reveal an explanation for the graded responses regarding the surtitles in relation to plot comprehension: 'the surtitles were too brief but gave the gist of the story. In general the surtitles were not very helpful for this [following the plot] - no detail.'

In addition, the comprehension of the plot may have been affected by the positioning of the surtitles screens as well as of the DH patrons themselves in relation to the stage. Indeed, the following comments suggest that positioning caused problems with regard to the reception of the surtitles similarly to the reception of the SLI (see section 5.2.2). For instance, one non-BSL user remarked 'there were two people sitting in the box where the surtitles screen was. They obscured our view of the surtitles at times'. As shown in Figure 31, the surtitles screens were positioned in two boxes either side of the stage for the project performances. Another non-BSL user commented 'I think it's best when the surtitles are placed on the two pillars at either side of the stage. Otherwise it is particularly difficult if you want to look at the sign interpreter and the surtitles'. Similarly, one BSL user stated: 'the subtitles units could have been placed nearer the stage to make it easier to read and watch the performance at the same time'. Thus, these comments suggest a preference for surtitles screens closer to the stage for the purpose of being able to comfortably simultaneously view the surtitles and onstage action, as well as the SL interpreter if desired. The following comment made by a BSL user reiterates the importance of finding a seat which is at a sufficient distance from the stage to be able to see the SL interpreter, surtitles and stage all in one view, whilst being close enough to see the SLI clearly, if requiring use of the surtitles and SLI. He or she remarked 'I wanted

to look at the surtitles and the sign language interpreter but it was difficult because I was too close. It was like watching a tennis match having to move my gaze back and forth.’ Again, as mentioned in section 5.2.2, these comments emphasise the importance of ensuring that the DH are given clear information regarding the positioning of the SLI and surtitles so that they can be allocated a seat in a suitable area depending on which facilities they wish to use. As demonstrated by the copious amount of discussion on this topic observed during the feedback session, the issue of seating arrangements was evidently an important factor for the project participants with regard to both the SLI and the surtitles.

In spite of the problems relating to positioning, the mean average scores regarding the amount the surtitles were watched and the amount they detracted from the enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera suggest that the surtitles were positively received in terms of these variables. The mean average scores given by the BSL users and non-BSL users concerning these variables which are denoted as AMTI and TIDVIS are displayed in Figure 82. Also, one BSL user noted ‘my enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera was not affected by the titles – no visual noise!’ and another stated ‘if you don't know the language the surtitles are particularly important. It does sometimes distract you but you can either have one or the other. You don't have to look at them, you can overtake your gaze’.

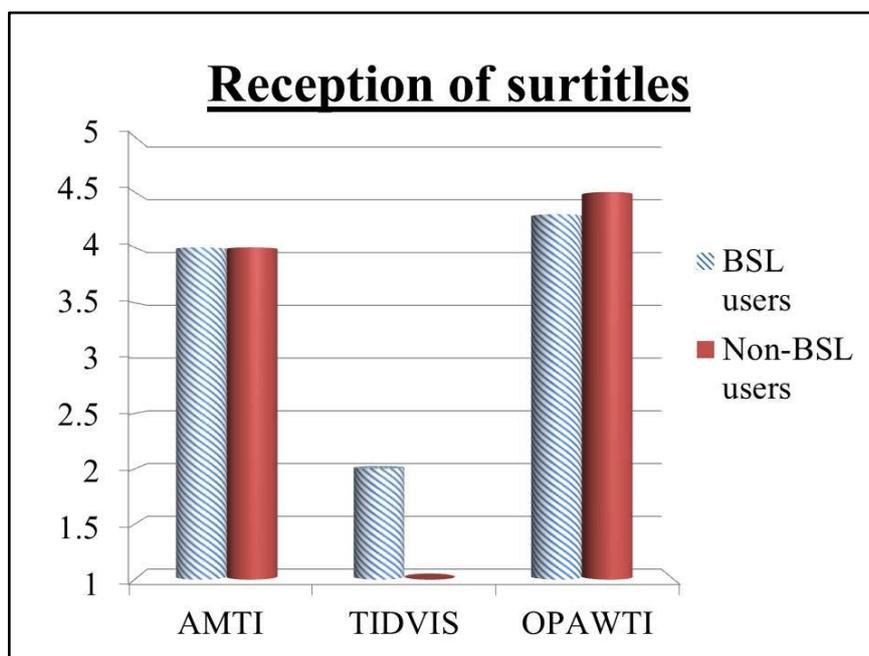


Figure 82: Mean average scores given by the DH participants regarding variables relating to the reception of the surtitles.

Similarly, the results regarding the desire to come to another opera with surtitles, which are also shown in Figure 82 in the clustered column denoted as OPAWTI, suggest a positive outlook. The following participants' comments also suggest that several of the participants would like to experience the combined approach of surtitles and SLI again:

- (1) I would like to go again. I enjoyed the evening and the access provided by both the BSL/English interpreter and the subtitles.
- (2) It is useful to have both access services. I enjoyed reading the subtitles and watching the BSL/English interpreter to get me thinking of translation.
- (3) I looked at both the titles and the signer and I would very much like to come to another opera with titles and sign interpreting.

The first two comments were made by BSL users and the third by a non-BSL user, thus suggesting the attraction of the combined approach for both of these subgroups of the DH.

Finally, the responses to the hypothetical questions regarding possible adaptations of surtitles are analysed. The high mean average scores of 4.8 and 4.5 (where 1 is not at all and 5 is very much) given by the BSL users and non-BSL users respectively in relation to the question 'how much would you like to have names of characters in the titles indicating who is singing what?' suggest that this would be a desirable adaptation. Furthermore, the participants' comments corroborate this suggestion with remarks from both BSL and non-BSL users on the usefulness of character labelling in particular for following the dialogue. One respondent stated a preference for colour-coding in order to identify the speech of the different characters. The mean average score of 4.5 given by the non-BSL users with respect to the adaptation of current standard surtitles to include indications of repeated phrases suggests that this possible development may also be desired by these participants. However, the mean average score of 3.3 amongst the BSL users regarding this variable suggests that signalling of repeats is less important for this group of users, perhaps because this is already indicated by the SL interpreter.

The abstain rates for the other two hypothetical questions about the possible adaptation of surtitles to include information about the sound effects and music were high amongst both the BSL users and non-BSL users. There was no response from the non-BSL users regarding the indication of sound effects in the surtitles. Only 2 BSL users gave graded responses of 4 and 1 and another commented 'I'm not bothered'. These results might suggest that these developments are not very important for the majority of the respondents or that the question was misunderstood. Alternatively, the participants

may have felt unable to answer the question without having experienced surtitles in which the sound effects were indicated. Hence, the need for future studies which allow participants to compare surtitles with and without the various adaptations mentioned in the study. Similarly, regarding the question about surtitles with information about music, only 1 non-BSL user gave a graded answer of 3 and only 2 BSL users gave scores of 2 and 4. However, a comment made by one of the BSL users raised the issue of the significance for DH patrons of visual access to orchestra and the possible benefits of description in the surtitles about the music. He or she remarked as follows:

I like watching the orchestra on television, for instance the New Year's Day Vienna concert and there is lots of information about the music in the television subtitles: who's playing - lots of background information, so it's very accessible. But if I came to watch a live performance of a concert, opera or theatre, for instance, I wouldn't be able to get any of that information about the music. It would be completely different. I mean the music itself, the opera, the melodies, the power of the music.

As discussed in section 5.2.2, the results regarding the reception of music by the DH is a complex issue. As mentioned in this previous section, one of the non-BSL users noted the helpfulness of the SLI in conveying the musical aspects of the opera. As regards the helpfulness of the surtitles in conveying the musical aspects of the opera, the mean average score given by the non-BSL users was 4.5. This result suggests a positive response, as also supported by the mean average score of 4 amongst the non-BSL users regarding enjoyment of the music. This result may also have been affected by the non-BSL users' familiarity with the music prior to the performance, for which a mean average score of 4 was given. There were only two graded answers of 2 and 4 provided by the BSL users regarding the question 'how helpful did you find the titles in conveying the musical aspects of the opera?' thus giving a mean average score of 3, as opposed to the mean average score of 4.7 amongst the BSL users regarding the helpfulness of the SLI in conveying the musical aspects of the opera. Therefore, this result suggests that for the BSL users, the SLI may have been more helpful in facilitating access to the music of the opera.

#### **5.2.4 Reception of the surtitles and sign language interpreting by the DH participants' hearing companions**

This section includes an exploration of the reception of the SLI and surtitles by the DH participants' hearing companions. There were 6 hearing respondents to the post-

performances questionnaires, 2 of whom were BSL users and 4 of whom were non-BSL users. The investigation of these participants' reception of the SLI and surtitles is driven by the qualitative data in the form of comments, although graded responses are considered where relevant. The mean average scores given by BSL users and non-BSL users are presented separately. Firstly, the reception of the SLI is examined with regard to the following variables: helpfulness and enjoyment of the SLI; desire to come to another SL interpreted opera; the amount the participants looked at the SL interpreter; and the amount the SLI detracted from enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera. Secondly, the reception of the surtitles is investigated in terms of perceived enjoyment and helpfulness of the surtitles and desire to come to another opera with surtitles. The perceived amount the participants looked at the surtitles and the amount the surtitles detracted from enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera are also considered. Furthermore, the responses regarding possible adaptations of surtitles to include information about sound effects and music, character labels, and repeats are examined.

Regarding the reception of the SLI interpreting, it is interesting to note that all six of the hearing participants reported that they looked at the SL interpreter to some degree during the performance. The mean average score given by the BSL users regarding this variable, where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'very much', was 4.5. The mean average score amongst the non-BSL users was 2.5. In addition, both non-BSL users and BSL users alike affirmed that the SLI hardly detracted from their enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera at all, giving mean average scores of 1.3 and 1.5 respectively (where 1 is 'did not detract at all'). In relation to this, one BSL user commented 'it [the SLI] is something else to watch as well as the busy stage' and a non-BSL user remarked 'it is possible to ignore her [the SL interpreter]'. The latter remark suggests the idea that it might be possible for opera patrons to filter out unwanted visual detail.

As regards the enjoyment of the SLI, one of the BSL users remarked as follows: 'I enjoyed watching the signer to watch the detail, accuracy and very positive interpretation - the kind of signing I aspire to'. Thus, this comment highlights the educational aspect of the SLI for hearing BSL users, as noted by another BSL user who stated 'I found it [the SLI] very interesting to watch as I was studying it'. The mean average scores given by the BSL users regarding the helpfulness and enjoyment of the SLI, as well as the desire to come to another SL interpreted opera were 4, 4.5 and 4.5 respectively suggesting a positive response in general. The mean average scores given by the non-BSL users concerning the same variables were 2.5, 5 and 3, although it must be

noted that the abstain rates for these items were high amongst the non-BSL users, perhaps indicating that they considered these questions about SLI irrelevant. These results suggest that the hearing non-BSL users who gave a graded response did not find the SLI particularly helpful, and that they were ambivalent regarding coming to another SL interpreted opera. Nevertheless, one of the non-BSL users responded positively regarding enjoyment of the SLI and stated 'I enjoyed having the opportunity to see a signed performance "live" for myself, and I hope she had the same positive effect on the deaf people in the audience'.

In general, the surtitles were positively received by the hearing participants. The mean average scores given by the non-BSL users regarding helpfulness and enjoyment of the surtitles, as well as the desire to come to another opera with surtitles were 4.5, 3.8 and 4.7. The following comments reflect this positive response. For instance, one participant remarked 'I found the titles very helpful. Although I speak and understand French, when it is sung it becomes more difficult', and another stated 'I'm a relative newcomer to opera. If I came to an opera which wasn't in English or in fact also if it was in English, I would definitely want titles. Even when sung in English, things are not always clear'. The latter comment raises the issue of the impact of experience with opera on the reception of the surtitles. Other participants' comments suggest room for improvement regarding the comprehensiveness and positioning of the surtitles. For example, one respondent remarked 'the titles could have been fuller' and another noted as follows:

The titles were too high to watch the show and read without a lot of head movement. The left-hand titles screen should not have been placed with two people sat in the same box as they covered the screen at times. I found my seat in the stalls too low to read the titles comfortably without a lot of head movement so I was unable to watch the performance and glance at the titles.

This qualitative data suggests that the hearing and DH raised similar issues regarding the surtitles, although this may be due to companions influencing each other's responses.

Similarly to the non-BSL users, with respect to helpfulness and enjoyment of the surtitles, the BSL users gave mean average scores of 4 and 3.5, and one commented 'they [the surtitles] are very helpful in interpreting the show'. However, the desire to come to another opera with surtitles was not very strong, with a score of 2 given by one of the BSL users and the following comment by another 'there is no need for me to use them

[the surtitles]'. Interestingly, the BSL users gave a mean average score of 3 regarding the amount they looked at the surtitles, suggesting that they did use this facility to some extent. Unsurprisingly, the non-BSL users looked at the surtitles more giving a mean average score of 4.3. Both groups of users suggested that the surtitles hardly detracted from their enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera at all, giving an overall mean average score of 1.2. One participant stated as follows: 'the titles didn't detract at all from my enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera. They added to my enjoyment of the opera'.

The responses of the hearing participants regarding possible adaptations of the surtitles were quite varied. Only one of the BSL users responded to these hypothetical questions stating 'not relevant to me'. Hence, the focus is on the responses of the non-BSL users. Similarly to the results from the DH (see section 5.2.3), the most positive response from the hearing non-BSL users concerned the inclusion of character labels in the surtitles. Participants commented on the helpfulness of indicating the characters' names in the surtitles, especially in certain contexts such as during a duet or an ensemble. The graded responses regarding this variable ranged from 2 to 4, with a mean average score of 3.5. The reaction to the inclusion of information about music in the surtitles was more varied with graded answers ranging from 1 to 5 and comments including the following:

- (1) Extra information giving some interpretation of the music would be quite helpful.
- (2) As a hearing person I don't really want this, but that doesn't mean to say that I would be bothered if details about the music (melody, rhythm, harmony) were in the surtitles.

Comments by the hearing non-BSL users to the indication of sound effects in the surtitles suggested that they did not desire this adaptation for their own benefit but that they would not object to it. As regards the indication of repetition in the surtitles, participants' remarked that they might find it helpful although in moderation and depending on the context.

As companions of the DH, this group of respondents probably has a greater tolerance and awareness of the possible additional information in the surtitles required by the DH. Therefore, further research is required to investigate the response of other hearing audience members (who are not companions of DH patrons) to such developments. Given that at present surtitles are visible to all sighted audience

members, DH and hearing alike, it is important to consider the preferences of both of these groups of patrons.

### **5.2.5 Discussion of findings**

Similarly to the findings regarding AD and ToTo, the results presented in sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 support the general research hypothesis that, while current translation processes in SLI and surtitles meet DH patrons' needs to a certain degree, improvements could be made. The overall reception by the DH of SLI was more positive than that of surtitles in their current format. Also, the results suggest that the combined approach of surtitles and SLI was well received.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data suggests an overall positive perception of the effectiveness of SLI from the perspective of the DH. The results suggest the helpfulness of the SLI for DH BSL users as well as the potential benefits of this facility for DH non-BSL users or for those for whom BSL is not their first language, especially in terms of the portrayal of emotion and music. The findings suggest that detraction from the enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera by the SLI was minimal from the perspective of both BSL users and non-BSL users. Furthermore, it seems from the data that both BSL and non-BSL users have a strong desire to come to another SL interpreted opera. However, there was also some critical appraisal, particularly regarding the portrayal of the plot and the translation of music in the SLI. Participants' comments suggest that there is room for improvement in terms of providing access to the opera experience as a whole and that the SLI is not entirely successful in facilitating inclusion, especially as regards music-related aspects. Furthermore, respondents' requests for more hands-on experiences such as workshops affording an opportunity to engage the tactile element of music appreciation and hearing in general suggest that the SLI is not completely effective in terms of providing access to a multisemiotic opera experience. From these results, the theory emerges that a combination of surtitles, SLI and tactile events might facilitate inclusive access to the multisemiotic opera experience as a whole.

Regarding the reception of the surtitles, the results suggest a fairly positive response, although with several reservations from the perspective of the DH BSL users and non-BSL users. Findings suggest a strong desire to come to another opera with surtitles in general amongst the DH and only a slight distraction from the visual aspects of the opera caused by the surtitles for the BSL users. However, both BSL users and non-

BSL users commented on the lack of detail in the surtitles in general and results suggested that there was not a very positive response in terms of reception of the plot and emotion of the opera. Furthermore, it seems from the qualitative data collected that the surtitles were not considered as providing a completely inclusive experience of the opera as a whole from the perspective of the DH participants in general. The responses regarding the possible adaptations of surtitles were mixed, although they suggested a clear interest in the inclusion of character labelling on the part of the DH BSL users and non-BSL users.

The results from the hearing companions of the DH patrons suggest that in general both the SLI and surtitles were positively received by the BSL users, whereas the non-BSL users responded well to the surtitles but were ambivalent regarding the SLI. Interestingly, similarly to the DH, the data from the hearing participants also suggested that more comprehensive surtitles were desired. Furthermore, the hearing participants' responses with regard to the hypothetical questions about potential developments in the surtitles, although varied, suggested that they were open to the possible benefits of adaptation, especially character labelling.

The findings also raise the issue of the positioning and visibility of both the SL interpreter and surtitles in conjunction with the booking and arrangement of seating as a primary concern for the DH patrons and their hearing companions. From these results, the theory emerges that SLI and surtitles form part of a complex translation network in which the agents include not only the translators and the audience, but also the theatre staff, the auditorium, and the set. Furthermore, the benefits of considering this intricate network as cyclical in which the responses of the audience members are fed back to the various agents involved in future research is highlighted.

### **5.3 Overall study findings and future research**

One of the theoretical premises of this present work is that within the context of this study translation is a form of accessibility, and therefore without translation there is limited access (see section 1.2). The project results support this idea that without provision of AD and/or ToTos, BPSs are excluded from the multisemiotic opera experience. Similarly, without facilities for the DH which respond to all types and degrees of deafness in the form of surtitles and SLI, many of these patrons are also ostracised. Furthermore, the data suggests that in general these access facilities are received in a positive way by the BPS and DH patrons as contributing to enjoyment and

understanding of the opera. The complementary nature of SLI and surtitles, as well as of AD and ToTo, in allowing access to opera for DH and BPSPs respectively is also suggested. In addition, the possible benefits of these access facilities for sighted and hearing patrons are not negated by the results. However, the findings suggest that a truly inclusive opera experience is not achieved for all patrons by the translation modalities in their current format. Indeed, the results suggest that although the translation processes of AD, ToTo, SLI and surtitles are effective to some degree in breaking down linguistic and sensory barriers, they are not entirely successful as regards the social aspect of translation in overcoming borders between audience members with differing requirements. Therefore, in order to adhere to current expectations and requirements of social inclusion in which patrons of varying visual and hearing ability can receive and share the opera experience, improvements are required. This raises the question for future research: What constitutes a shared experience from the audience's perspective?

Numerous other areas of interest for future research regarding the translation processes of opera AD, ToTos, SLI and surtitles have emerged from the findings of the pioneering audience reception project. The majority of these possible future research topics have been highlighted throughout the data analysis. However, in view of the project objective of generating results which are to be used to inform the establishment of a sustainable audience development plan and the formulation of research questions for future projects (see section 4.1), it is important to clarify these and any other areas of interest.

Firstly, the general areas of interest for future research which emerged with regard to the various translation modalities under investigation are discussed. The results of the audience reception project corroborate the hypothesis that many of the variables under investigation are interconnected and highlight some of the multivariate relationships for analysis in future studies. For example, there are several cases where multiple causes, represented by  $x$  and  $z$  in the diagram in Figure 83, influence the response variable, represented by  $y$  in Figure 83.

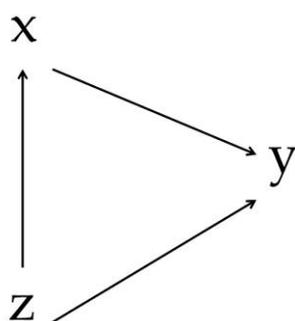


Figure 83: Diagram displaying some combinations of multivariate relationships

Some of the possible multivariate relationships for future analysis are enumerated in Figure 84 in which the abbreviation TM for translation modality which in the audience reception project included AD, ToTo, SLI and surtitles. This is not an exhaustive list. Furthermore, in future studies, other translation modalities to be investigated might include Braille libretti and audio subtitling.

x	y	z
Enjoyment of the performance	Enjoyment of the TM	Age
"	Helpfulness of the TM	Age
Amount of use of the TM	Plot comprehension	Visual ability at birth
"	Reception of the emotion of the opera	"
"	Helpfulness of the TM	"
"	Enjoyment of the TM	"
"	Clarity of mental imagery of the stage	"
"	Amount TM detracts from enjoyment of the music	"
"	Comprehension of the plot	Visual ability at present
"	Reception of the emotion of the opera	"
"	Helpfulness of the TM	"
"	Enjoyment of the TM	"
"	Clarity of mental imagery of the stage	"
"	Amount TM detracts from enjoyment of the music/opera visuals	"
"	Comprehension of the plot	Hearing ability at birth
"	Reception of the emotion of the opera	"
"	Helpfulness of the TM	"

"	Enjoyment of the TM	"
"	Clarity of mental imagery of the stage	"
"	Amount TM detracts from enjoyment of the music	"
"	Comprehension of the plot	Hearing ability at present
"	Reception of the emotion of the opera	"
"	Helpfulness of the TM	"
"	Enjoyment of the TM	"
"	Clarity of mental imagery of the stage	"
"	Amount TM detracts from enjoyment of the music/opera visuals	"
Amount TM detracts from enjoyment of music/opera visuals	Enjoyment of TM	Experience of the TM
"	"	Enjoyment of the music/opera visuals
Enjoyment of the social event	Enjoyment of the TM	Enjoyment of visual design
Enjoyment of the visual design	Enjoyment of the social event	Enjoyment of the TM
Familiarity with the plot	Plot comprehension	Helpfulness of the TM
Amount TM detracts from enjoyment of music	Enjoyment of the music	Familiarity with the music
Reception of the emotion of the opera	Helpfulness of the TM	Helpfulness of the TM in conveying humour
"	"	Helpfulness of the TM in conveying shock
Enjoyment of visual design	Enjoyment of the TM	Helpfulness of the TM in conveying visuals
Helpfulness of the TM	Reception of the emotion of the opera	Amount of use of the TM
Helpfulness of the TM in conveying visuals	Helpfulness of the TM	"
Clarity of mental imagery of the stage	Enjoyment of visual design	Helpfulness of the TM in conveying visuals
Enjoyment of the music	Reception of the emotion of the opera	Helpfulness of the TM in conveying shock

**Figure 84: Some of the multivariate relationships to be analysed in future research.**

As shown in Figure 84, areas of interest include the effect of age, visual and/or hearing ability on the reception of the translation modality, as well as the impact of experience or familiarity with the translation modality. In addition, the effect of the use of any given translation modality on variables such as plot comprehension and emotional engagement with the opera are proposed as topics for future study. For example, a

controlled empirical test could be conducted comparing the results of a group of participants who have had access to a given translation modality with another group who have not. By including patrons with and without sight or hearing loss in each of the two groups of participants, the audience's perception of how a multisemiotic opera experience is shared may be explored. Another possible avenue for future research alluded to in participants' comments is the investigation of any correlations between venue accessibility, the translation of this information to the BPSPs and the DH, and the reception of the translation facilities and of the opera experience as a whole.

Regarding AD, areas of interest for future research might include the following:

1. The reception of the different types of AD and their relative effectiveness from the audience's perspective.
2. The effect of the sung language of the opera on the reception of the AD.  
If the sung language of the opera does not coincide with the language of the AD, does this affect the audience's reception of the AD, for instance in terms of emotional engagement? If the opera is not sung in the vernacular, how does this affect audience expectations' regarding the main features of the AD?
3. The relative usefulness of AD in terms of communicating certain details such as colour and shape for patrons who are congenitally or non-congenitally blind.
4. The effect of the type of humour (visual or aural) in a given opera on the reception of the AD. What are audience preferences' regarding the translation of visual and aural humour?

Regarding ToTos, avenues of research may address the following questions:

1. Do ToTos reduce the distancing effect of AD and enhance emotional engagement?
2. Are there core features that patrons consider fundamental to any ToTo or other details that should not be revealed?
3. Does the involvement of actors in the ToTo break the sense of theatrical allusion from the audience's perspective? How would the reception of this feature of the ToTo be affected if the actors appeared on the ToTo 'in character'?

4. Which details about costumes, props, set, colours, shapes etc. that may be provided on the ToTo are useful for congenitally blind and non-congenitally blind patrons? Is there a difference? What are the preferences of these patrons?

Furthermore, it would be interesting to conduct further research into the potential benefits of AD and ToTos for sighted audience members. As mentioned previously, opera AD and ToTos are currently only available as closed access facilities. However, research investigating into audience preferences as well as the possible financial implications of making these available as open access facilities for BPSPs and sighted patrons alike, could prove important in the sustainability of these access facilities in the long-term. Whilst safety concerns would need to be considered, for instance in the case of ToTos in their current form as the numbers of people allowed on stage are restricted, by opening the access facilities to all, they may gain popularity as a bonus feature which allows a more multisemiotic, interactive opera experience. As such, it may be possible to charge patrons a small sum for these facilities, thus providing a source of financial revenue in order to sustain them and perhaps promote an increase in the numbers of performances at which they are available. As open access facilities, AD and ToTos may not only appeal to sighted audience members, but they may become attractive to a larger number of BPSPs due to the increased sense of anonymity and flexibility. The idea that there may be people who prefer to attend performances without declaring their need for access services, whether DH or hearing, BPS or sighted, requires further research as it has powerful implications. The appeal of anonymity was suggested by the results of the audience reception project regarding SLI and surtitles which implied that there were possibly already existing unrecognised beneficiaries of these open access facilities. However, it is vital to establish the figures of current users so that theatre companies making evaluations of their access facilities can recognise the unofficial or 'undeclared' benefits of these provisions. Consequently, the possible advantages of also offering AD and ToTo as open access facilities may be assessed.

Regarding SLI, topics for further research might include the following:

1. The effect of the positioning of the SLI and the patron on the reception of this translation modality
2. The illusory invisibility of the SL interpreter. How does the visibility of the SLI or congruency of the SL interpreter's dress and delivery with the opera

production affect the DH and hearing patrons' reception of the opera and the perception of this translation modality? By aiming for invisibility of the SL interpreter in terms of dress, positioning and delivery, does the hearing audience perceive the SLI as something separate and foreign, thus contributing to the segregation of the DH patrons?

3. A comparison of the reception of the combined approach of SLI plus surtitles in contrast to SLI alone
4. The reception of different methods used for translating music in the SLI

As regards surtitles, future research might focus on the following subjects:

1. A comparison of the reception of the combined approach of surtitles plus SLI in contrast to surtitles alone
2. The reception of adapted surtitles by DH and hearing patrons, considering each adaptation such as the indication of sound effects or character labelling individually. For example, comparing the reception of surtitles with and without indication of repeats.
3. The effect of the positioning of the surtitles on their reception. How would surtitles which were incorporated into the design of the production be received?
4. The effect of the comprehensiveness of the surtitles on their reception. How would verbatim surtitles be received by DH and hearing patrons in the case of opera sung in the vernacular? How would the inclusion of details about the opera experience, such as the length of the interval, be received by DH and hearing patrons?

A comparative analysis of users of surtitles and SLI with users of surtitles only and users of SLI only was not possible in the audience reception project discussed in this present work as both facilities were available to all members of the audience. In order to facilitate this comparative analysis, in future audience reception research the respondents would have to be divided into three groups: those with access to SLI only, those with access to surtitles only and those with access to both SLI and surtitles.

## Concluding Remarks for Part 2

The vital significance of reception research within the context of opera accessibility has been reaffirmed by the audience reception project presented in Part 2 of this present work. The data collected have provided numerous new insights into opera accessibility from the audience's perspective and into the multisemiotic opera translation process as a whole, also raising copious questions regarding these issues. Thus, this project constitutes a starting point from which to conduct future research and to instigate further dialogue between the various agents in the multisemiotic translation network.

The importance of the notion of feeding back the audience responses regarding the access facilities to the translators and other agents in the network has been emphasised through the audience reception project. This relates to the idea of embracing consumers as 'active agents' in the translation process through reception studies 'in favour of a collaborative method based on a circular flow of different skills and profiles and the interaction amongst them' (European Commission, 2012: 31). Similarly, this current work proposes that the translation network is cyclical with audience feedback as both the final stage (Matamala and Orero, 2007: 209) and the first stage of the process. Given that performances are often repeated within a short timeframe, it is particularly relevant to regard the translation of live opera for BPSPs in this way. In view of the analogies between the collaborative networks of AD, ToTos, SLI, surtitles and other forms of translation especially within consumer-oriented entertainment media, this notion may be transferable to other translation contexts.

The highly collaborative nature of the translation networks of opera AD, ToTos, SLI and surtitles has been highlighted by the audience reception project findings. Numerous agents have been identified as being involved in the process, and this present work proposes for instance that the listening equipment should be considered as an agent in the translation process of AD, and that the venue and theatre staff should also arguably be considered as agents in the translation processes of AD, ToTos, SLI and surtitles. In addition, the process of raising awareness has been advanced by the

audience reception project through the stimulation of discussion amongst the agents in the networks under investigation. Further research bringing together investigation into the translator's role and audience reception is needed in order to unite and promote increased dialogue between these agents in the translation network and to further explore the sociocultural, collaborative aspects of the translation process. As Gambier states: 'in this changing mediascape, the translators have and will have a major role, if they fully realize their socio-cultural function' (2006: 7).

Thus, the theoretical framework of this present work drawing on actor-network theory and grounded theory provides a foundation from which to initiate larger-scale audience reception studies. The audience reception project presented in this current work has focused on AD, ToTos, SLI and surtitles. Future studies might examine opera AD and ToTos in conjunction with other facilities, such as audio subtitling and Braille libretti. Moreover, the methodology employed including pioneering data collection methods designed to suit the diverse needs of an audience with varying visual and hearing ability provides a basis for further studies into this complex translation process. In the rapidly expanding and increasingly interdisciplinary field of audiovisual translation, opera accessibility and audience reception, research is called upon to explore beyond the borders of conventional perceptions of sights and sounds, collaborating with disciplines such as music psychology and neuroscience. Audience expectations of media accessibility are constantly altering and the methods used to translate opera for the BPS as well as the DH are at the forefront of change, pushing the boundaries of notions of translation with modalities which appeal to multiple senses. In view of this and the live performance nature of the multisemiotic medium of opera, research into these translation modalities, especially relating to reception, requires a dynamic approach. Therefore, in future interdisciplinary audience reception studies, the flexible ethnographic approach and proactive methods used in the audience reception project may be complemented by procedures which investigate opera translation reception at a neurological and cognitive level.

## 6

### Conclusions

Opera is a unique entertainment medium which in its innate multiplicity characterises the constantly evolving, multifaceted role of the translator and which by its very nature demands focus on audience reception. As audience expectations are continuously growing in the increasingly multimedia world of today, translation process research must become ever more versatile and receptive to these changes. This need is particularly evident in the relatively unexplored field of opera accessibility, especially given the current progression of experimentation with new technological translation techniques.

By examining innovative translation modalities which are at the forefront of this current climate of change, the present work has yielded significant research outcomes relating not only to the nature of the translation process but also to the topical issue of the shifting boundaries of translation and accessibility. The two-fold methodology combining research into the process of translating opera for the BPS and the DH from the perspective of both the translator and the audience has revealed the collaborative, complex, and dynamic nature of this multisemiotic translation network. Indeed, translation emerges as a multi-agent event in which the mutually-influential roles of the translator and audience are intrinsically linked. The increasing significance of the socio-cultural role of the translator in providing access and the importance of the translator's awareness of the needs of a diverse audience is underlined. Furthermore, the centrality of the audience's role in the multisemiotic translation network is emphasised. The major research outcome of the present work is the proposition of the importance of dialogue between the translator and the audience and the consideration of this network as cyclical in exploring the translation process as a whole from production to reception. These research outcomes are corroborated by findings both from the interviews with translators analysed in Part 1 and from the audience reception project discussed in Part 2

which accentuate the propelling force of the audience in the cyclical network and highlight the role of the researcher in facilitating a full cycle by feeding audience responses back to the translator and other agents in the translation network.

Due to the ethnographically-oriented approach adopted in this current work, the focus for addressing the original research problem developed during the course of the investigation to become more audience driven. Within the dynamic arena of audiovisual translation and media accessibility described above, audience reception studies are of key importance in stimulating dialogue, and actor-network theory provides a flexible theoretical framework for studying the translation process in all its complexity (Chesterman, 2006; Buzelin, 2005; Risku and Windhager, 2013). This includes investigation of the fundamental link between audience and translator, as discussed in this present work, which reveals a merging of roles of these two agents in the highly collaborative network of opera ToTos. The advantages of considering the translation processes of opera AD, ToTos, SLI and surtitles as collaborative networks which involve various agents and links are highlighted by the audience reception project. Through dialogue, reception research promotes identification and clarification of the various agents and links, which may help participants to feel part of the network and contribute to BPSPs' and the DH's sense of a shared experience. It can also foster recognition amongst BPSPs and the DH and their respective companions of the intricacies of the translation process, which may in turn encourage reflection concerning their expectations and perceptions of these facilities. Furthermore, it promotes mutual understanding amongst the agents in the network, which may contribute to changes in translation practice. In addition, reception research heightens awareness of the access facilities in general and of any innovations in the field, thus contributing to a universally inclusive, multisemiotic opera experience. Although this present work has focused on the link between the translator and the audience in the multisemiotic translation network, the significance of the tripartite relationship, which also involves the artistic team including the director, has been mentioned. Further research and dialogue involving all three of these parties, as well as other agents involved in the translation network, is needed to promote collective awareness and tolerance. Moreover, the issues of web accessibility and the marketing of opera performances with AD, ToTo, SLI and surtitles require further attention.

Despite the continuing expansion and development of opera translation modalities overcoming linguistic and sensorial barriers, the dividing line between

audience members with differing hearing and visual ability remains. Minority groups such as the BPS and the DH remain marginalised through limited numbers of performances with access facilities, and sometimes segregated in terms of seat allocations and provisions. This division is perhaps due to the attitude of theatre companies and society towards accessibility or in view of the delimitations of the notion of accessibility itself. Or maybe, it is an inevitable border brought about by the paradox of specificity and generality inherent in trying to achieve a universally inclusive performance for audiences with varying specific requirements? The question is: can these notions be reconciled? Is it possible to provide a fully inclusive experience through access facilities which cater for differing audience members with specific requirements?

It might be argued that potential answers to this dilemma may be found by examining the fine line between accessibility which is connected to reception and inclusion which is related to perception. Indeed perhaps the issue to be considered is not whether there is a border, but rather how the border is perceived. Accessibility can be considered the vehicle towards inclusion and whilst the development of access facilities is the first step in this path towards an inclusive experience for all, the shift in attitudes of all audience members towards greater tolerance for these access services providing for differing requirements is the second necessary step.

Although resistance to change is inevitable, given the increased exposure of today's societies to multimedia in general, people are becoming more accustomed to multisemiotic environments and to filtering out what they require and do not require access to. Therefore it would seem that audiences will become more accepting of approaches to opera accessibility which offer an inclusive experience for all, for example by incorporating access concepts from the design stage or by using access methods which allow all patrons to choose options to suit them, rather than providing separate access to certain audience members with specific requirements. For instance, Google Glass might provide a method for communicating SLI or surtitles to the audience where patrons have an element of choice in the amount of detail included in the surtitles. This and other similar innovations could improve access for the DH as well as other audience members. Moreover, such developments may also enhance the opera experience for all including the DH, BPSPs, sighted and hearing patrons by contributing to the interactive nature of opera which may in turn increase its popularity as a genre. In view of current technological developments in opera such as the aforementioned experiments with smartphones and given changing audience expectations in an increasingly multimedia

world, it seems likely that opera will continue to evolve with digital media in order to maintain its appeal to present and future audiences.

Therefore, a reconciliation between provision of translation modalities targeted at specific audiences and offering a fully inclusive opera experience for all seems a feasible prospect. The mostly positive responses from results of the audience reception project discussed in Part 2 of this current work suggest that although some improvements are required to make the opera experience fully inclusive, from this particular audience's perspective, current translation modalities are quite effective in breaking down linguistic and sensory barriers, as well as the borders between audience members with differing visual and hearing ability, therefore also implying an optimistic outlook.

The multisemiotic nature of opera, which has the potential to engage all the senses, arguably contributes to its popularity and accessibility as a genre for all audiences with varying visual and hearing ability. Opera is not just about the words and the visuals but also the music, and the multisensory opera experience as a whole which might include eating an ice cream in the interval or feeling the vibrations of the music and the sense of anticipation amongst the audience. It is for this reason that the various forms of opera translation including AD, ToTos, SLI, surtitles, and Braille facilities are so important in ensuring that all patrons have the opportunity to access opera in most if not all its multisemiotic, creative complexity. Furthermore, this issue raises the significance of considering the notion of access to the entire opera experience from before the curtain goes up until after it has come down.

The further development and expansion of translation modalities which facilitate access to the entire opera experience in all its multisemiotic complexity, is fundamental in providing the freedom of choice to all patrons alike. For instance, at any given point in an opera if there is a visually-complex set, a sighted person may not be able to digest all the details of a scene at once, but can choose which aspects he or she wishes to focus on. In order to replicate this freedom of choice for a BPSP, the findings presented in this current work have demonstrated that it may be advantageous to translate as many of these details as possible in as many ways as possible, which may involve a combination of access facilities. Similarly, the research findings suggest that an increase in the number of performances at which access facilities are available may be beneficial for BPSPs and the DH so as to allow patrons who wish to use them to be able to choose which performance to attend. Moreover, the importance of such developments is increasingly recognised by social and legal requirements of the human right to accessibility.

Additionally, the potential benefit and interest to all of these improvements which enable a more diverse audience to enjoy access to the arts and thus may attract a wider audience base have been reiterated.

Financial considerations may present a challenge, although with prospective decreasing costs of technological assistive devices, the possibility of increasing expertise of translators, and the potential interest of hearing and sighted patrons in access facilities, the long-term economic prospects of access developments may prove secure. However, the real barrier at present is in the prevailing mentality that translation modalities such as AD, ToTo, SLI, and Braille exist as an additional bonus for minority groups rather than as a legal and social necessity in order to ensure equality in providing the freedom of choice for all. This barrier is not only in evidence within the context of opera but also in terms of the mentality of society towards disability and accessibility in general. Accessibility facilities tend to be seen as supplementary services provided as an afterthought for those with special requirements which incur additional costs, rather than as an essential part in the conception of a product which is considered in the economic planning from the outset. However, with technological developments and increased dialogue within various media, including opera, the course of changing such attitudes has begun.

The advancement of this course is dependent on further discussion and collaboration between the various parties involved in the translation processes which contribute to universal media accessibility. In view of the transferability of the concepts discussed here, although opera translation and accessibility is only a small subdiscipline of translation studies, the impact of findings about opera AD, ToTos, SLI and surtitles may bring about changes in this medium which could influence other translation contexts by providing a forum for testing experimental translation techniques and research methods before employing them within more mainstream media. By acknowledging the translation process as a cyclical network in which the audience is the driving force, the collaborative, receptive and interactive nature of this activity can be embraced with the prospect of achieving greater media accessibility for all. Moreover, as access facilities develop, technology advances and audience perceptions of accessibility change, the curtain is lifting on the possibility of multisemiotic, interactive and universally inclusive modes of entertainment.



## Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix I: Interview questions for audio describers

1. In your opinion what is the main function of audio description in opera?
2. How do you see your function in terms of your relationship with the audience? (e.g. a guide/interactive role)
  - i) Do you see yourself as part of the audience or part of the performance or both?
  - ii) Which pronoun(s) do you use to address the audience (e.g. you/we)?
  - iii) Do you use an informal/formal register in AD or does it vary? Do you use an informal/formal/colloquial etc. register in your audio descriptions or does it vary? Do you ever use slang?
3. Do you think about a particular audience (age group/gender/degree of visual impairment etc.) when producing your audio description?
  - i) If so, what audience do you have in mind when preparing an AD? (totally blind? young?) Do any of these factors affect the register or language (more simple/sophisticated) you use?
  - ii) Is your AD affected by the type of audience (age group/degree of visual impairment if you have access to this info) you are performing to when you deliver the AD live?
4. Would you say your choices when preparing AD are influenced/ even determined by the emotional impact *intended* on the audience? (e.g. narrative functions, intended emotional impact of the music) and then by the *actual* impact on the audience i.e. audience reactions when you are performing the AD live?
5. How do you see your role as an audio describer?
  - i) Do you see yourself as a translator/narrator/author/communicator/mediator/

performer/interpreter/technician/artist/all of the above/none of the above/other?

- ii) Do you see your role as creative/inventive/subjective/objective/both/other?
6. There are so many and varied aspects in opera (plot, themes, setting, colour, language etc.) how do you choose what to describe? Does it differ according to the opera or performance or when preparing the AD do you follow a standard formula/outline format which you adapt to each opera/performance?
  7. Would you describe your method as formulaic/prescriptive/spontaneous or all of the above or in some other way?
  8. Do you follow/refer to any guidelines? If so, have you developed them yourself or do they come from other sources?
  9. Do you think it would be helpful to develop guidelines to establish some kind of standard method or do you think this would be restricting or even irrelevant given the particularities and individuality of each opera, production and performance?
  10. How long do you usually have to prepare an audio description for an opera production?
  11. Do you have an opinion as to whether text or music is more important in opera or of equal significance?
  12. Is this opinion about text/music tension affected by the language in which the opera is being sung (foreign to audience) or any other aspects (if particularly visual production)?
  13. How do you deal with the time constraints in AD whilst also avoiding interference with the music or other aspects of opera to which the BPSPs do have access?
  14. How do you describe implicit meaning e.g. visual symbolism? If it is implied or reiterated in the music do you leave it to the music to communicate this meaning or does it vary? (E.g. religious overtones)
  15. If relevant do you allow the music to speak for itself in hinting at the nature of a character (e.g. comical – glissandi in the brass) or do you make the characterisation explicit in your AD?
  16. Returning to the issue of subjectivity, how do you describe emotion or do you leave it to the music to communicate the emotion? Do you describe facial expressions at the risk of sometimes treading on the music? In general, do you think that music alone can convey emotion sufficiently or does it vary?

17. How do you deal with inconsistencies between the emotion portrayed by the music and mood portrayed by visual aspects of stage design or text sung? Do your choices depend on the intentions of the director or other aspects? Maybe incongruence is intentional? Humour or distancing the audience? Do you explain?
18. Do you sometimes choose words for their phonic effect? Do you use the sound and rhythm of words to convey certain impressions/emotions/themes? (E.g. onomatopoeias/ words with tactile associations such as coarse brown, silky voice)
19. What particular difficulties do you face as an audio describer (linguistic/ technical/synchronisation/constraints)?
  - i) How do you portray visual humour? Examples?
  - ii) How do you deal with surprise elements (including audience reactions)?
  - iii) How do you deal with spontaneous stage business/last minute changes? Examples?
  - iv) How do you deal with shocking elements? Examples?
20. Do you use previously existing audio descriptions (e.g. revivals) or do you start from scratch?
  - i) Have you ever used anybody else's audio description script in a different language and translated/adapted it?
  - ii) How do you feel about your audio description scripts being translated?
21. Do you apply a particular method for describing/identifying characters?
22. Have you had the opportunity to audio describe opera both sung in a language familiar to the audience and unfamiliar to the audience? i.e. in English and in a foreign language?
23. Does this (language in which the opera is sung) affect your describing method i.e. what you describe, how much you describe? E.g. if sung in foreign language do you describe more in general and more about the plot whereas if sung in English allow singing to speak for itself more?
24. Do you have an opinion on the debate between audio description and audio introduction in opera? Is your opinion affected by the language in which the opera is sung or any other aspects? Do you think it is appropriate to synergise AD and AI and touch tours in a combined approach?
25. Have you had the opportunity to collaborate with other members of the design team when preparing opera AD?

26. In general how much do you interact with other members of the production team?
- i) Do you work/quote from the surtitles at all?
  - ii) Does the directors vision/opinion as to what aspects are the most important to be communicated to the audience affect your choices in your AD?
  - iii) Do you ever include interviews with directors or stage designers in you introductory notes for the AD?
  - iv) Is the AD available online?
  - v) When preparing an AD do you have the opportunity to attend events such as the pre-performance workshops?
  - vi) When preparing and AD do you refer to the online cast and production interviews/podcasts/videos?
  - vii) Do you feel like an acknowledged member of the production team? Do you consider AD as an integral part of the opera performance or as a supplementary service or as a separate performance?
27. Do you think that involvement with the production team at earlier stages of design would be beneficial to the audience's reception of your AD? (in term of VIPs enjoyment and ability to share as similar as possible an experience to the sighted audience and in terms of sighted audiences recognition of your role in the performance)
28. Do you see your role as invisible/visible? Do you aim to be an invisible or visible translator? Do you try to maintain theatrical illusion or not or does it vary? Do you use technical theatrical terminology? How do you feel about maintaining or breaking the theatrical illusion? Do you describe the mechanics of the stage to explain how something works visually? Touch tour – do you think this breaks the theatrical illusion?
29. How do you feel about providing description about offstage aspects of the opera experience rather than simply the opera performance itself? E.g. before curtain up, auditorium details, audience reactions?
30. Do you ever describe audience reactions? How about action in the wings if it is visible? Breaks theatrical illusion or perhaps director intended to distance audience?
31. How would you evaluate the awareness of the availability of opera AD? How well do you think it is known that this facility is available?

32. Do you consider yourself to hold a commercial role and/a social role (i.e. to increase audience figures and box office takings or to improve social integration)?
33. How important to do you think the cultural/historical/political aspect of opera is or does it vary according to the opera/director's vision etc.?
  - i) Do you use cultural references/allusions in AD or not due to the fact that they might not be recognised by the audience or deemed as stereotypes?
  - ii) Do you ever leave aspects of the AD in a foreign language in order to produce a foreignising effect / to emphasise the cultural or linguistic context of the opera? Examples?
34. Do you have experience with audience feedback sessions? What kind of questions do you think need to be asked of the audience? (e.g. did you enjoy the performance/ how much did you enjoy the AD?)
35. Do you think the BPSPs/ audience using AD has changed over the years you have been providing AD? (because of reductions in ticket prices, student schemes etc.)
36. Do you think audience expectations regarding opera access are changing? (E.g. generally more people expect to have surtitles in order to have access to the text)
37. Do you think that the image of opera is changing? Accessible – more inclusive.
38. Do you have any other comments about your role as an audio describer?



## 7.2 Appendix II: Interview questions for sign interpreters

1. In your opinion what is the main function of sign language interpreting in opera?
2. How do you see your function in terms of your relationship with the audience? (e.g. a guide/interactive role/part of the audience or the performance)
  - i) Which pronoun(s) do you use to address the audience (e.g. you/we) if it can be expressed as such in SLI?
  - ii) Do you use an informal/formal register if applicable to SLI or does it vary? Do you use an informal/formal/colloquial etc. register in your interpretation or does it vary? Do you ever use slang?
3. Do you think about a particular audience (age group/gender/degree of hearing impairment etc.) when preparing a sign language interpretation of an opera?
  - i) If so, what audience do you have in mind? (totally deaf? young?) Do any of these factors affect the register or language (more simple/sophisticated) you use?
  - ii) Is your interpreting affected by the type of audience (age group/degree of hearing impairment if you have access to this info) you are performing to when you sign interpret live?
4. Would you say your choices when preparing sign language interpretation are influenced/ even determined by the emotional impact intended on the audience? (e.g. narrative functions, intended emotional impact of the music) and then by the actual impact on the audience i.e. audience reactions when you are performing the sign interpretation live?
5. Are you able to accommodate spontaneous stage business even though you are facing the audience rather than the stage?
6. How do you see your role as a sign interpreter?
  - i) Do you see yourself as a translator/narrator/author/communicator/mediator/performer/interpreter/technician/artist/all of the above/none of the above/other?
  - ii) Do you see your role as creative/inventive/subjective/objective/both/other?
7. There are so many and varied aspects in opera (plot, themes, setting, colour, language etc.) how do you choose what to describe? Does it differ according to the opera or performance or when preparing the sign language interpretation do you follow a standard formula/outline format which you adapt to each opera/performance?

8. How do you prepare for a sign interpreted opera performance? Do you refer to the libretto/ a video/audio recording of the production or attend rehearsals?
9. Would you describe your method as formulaic/prescriptive/spontaneous or all of the above or in some other way?
10. Do you follow/refer to any guidelines? If so, have you developed them yourself or do they come from other sources?
11. Do you think it would be helpful to develop guidelines to establish some kind of standard method or do you think this would be restricting or even irrelevant given the particularities and individuality of each opera, production and performance?
12. How long do you usually have to prepare a sign language interpretation for an opera production?
13. Do you have an opinion as to whether text or music is more important in opera or of equal significance?
14. How do you express the music for DH audiences?
15. How do you describe implicit meaning i.e. that which is implied or reiterated in the music? E.g. religious overtones, emotion conveyed by the music (romantic, comical, sarcastic...)
16. If the music is hinting at the nature of a character (e.g. comical – glissandi in the brass) do you make the characterisation explicit in your sign language interpretation?
17. Returning to the issue of subjectivity, how do you describe emotion as the emotion conveyed by the music cannot be fully received by the DH? Do you describe facial expressions and little details which the audience might not be able to see to compensate for this?
18. What particular difficulties do you face as a SL interpreter (linguistic/technical/synchronisation/constraints)?
  - i) How do you portray humour? How do you deal with surprise elements (including audience reactions) and spontaneous stage business?
19. Do you use previously existing sign language interpretations (e.g. preparation you have done before for operas which are revivals) or do you start from scratch each time?
  - i) Do you work from a script when preparing? Have you ever used anybody else's sign interpretation script/performance in a different sign language and translated/adapted it?

- ii) How do you feel about your SL interpreted performances being translated? What do you think about relay sign interpreting for foreign opera DH audiences?
20. Do you apply a particular method for describing/identifying characters?
  21. Have you had the opportunity to sign interpret opera both sung in a language familiar to the audience and unfamiliar to the audience? i.e. in English and in a foreign language?
  22. Does this (language in which the opera is sung) affect your interpreting method i.e. what you describe, how much you describe?
  23. Have you had the opportunity to collaborate with other members of the design team when preparing opera sign language interpretation?
  24. In general how much do you interact with other members of the production team?
    - i) Do you work/quote from the surtitles at all?
    - ii) Does the directors vision/opinion as to what aspects are the most important to be communicated to the audience affect your choices in your sign language interpretation?
    - iii) When preparing a sign language interpretation do you have the opportunity to attend pre-performance events relating to the opera such as workshops?
    - iv) When preparing a sign language interpretation do you refer to the online cast and production interviews/podcasts/videos?
    - v) Do you feel like an acknowledged member of the production team? Do you consider sign language interpreting as an integral part of the opera performance or as a supplementary service or as a separate performance?
    - vi) Do you think that involvement with the production team at earlier stages of design would be beneficial to the audience's reception of your sign language interpretation? (in term of the DH's enjoyment and ability to share as similar as possible an experience to the hearing audience and in terms of hearing audiences recognition of your role in the performance)
  25. Do you see your role as invisible/ visible? Do you aim to be an invisible or visible translator? Do you try to maintain theatrical illusion or not or does it vary? Do you use technical theatrical terminology?
  26. How do you feel about providing sign language interpretation of offstage aspects of the opera experience rather than simply the opera performance itself? (E.g. before curtain up, auditorium details, audience reactions)

27. How would you evaluate the awareness of the availability of opera sign language interpreting? How well do you think it is known that this facility is available?
28. Do you consider yourself to hold a commercial role and/a social role (i.e. to increase audience figures and box office takings or to improve social integration)?
29. How important to do you think the cultural/historical/political aspect of opera is or does it vary according to the opera/director's vision etc.?
  - iii) Do you use cultural references/allusions in opera sign language interpreting or not due to the fact that they might not be recognised by the audience or deemed as stereotypes?
30. Do you have any other comments about your role as a sign interpreter?

### 7.3 Appendix III: AD and TT preliminary questionnaire sample

Pilot Study into Opera Accessibility  
Carmen Audience Reception Project

Opera North, Nottingham Theatre Royal, 24 May 2011

We are currently carrying out a project with a PhD student, Sarah Weaver, from Durham University, researching into opera accessibility for audiences with differing visual and hearing ability. The aim of the project is to get feedback from the audience about the access services so that we can find out to what extent they meet your requirements. The results from this survey will allow us to evaluate current accessibility facilities and will bring benefits by helping to raise awareness so that wider audiences can enjoy access to the arts.

Your feedback would be extremely valuable and we hope that you would like to be involved in this special feedback opportunity. If so, we have a few questions which will help us provide facilities for the performance and feedback opportunity which suit you. There are also some general questions about you which will enable us to analyse your responses in context. These preliminary questions should take about 10 minutes and we would be most grateful if you could send your answers by e-mail to the researcher Sarah Weaver at [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk) or by post to Becky Lane, Marketing Coordinator, Opera North, Grand Theatre, 46 New Briggate, Leeds, LS1 before 23 May 2011. Alternatively you can bring your completed questionnaire with you on the performance night.

We would like to invite you to join us for an informal gathering during both intervals of the performance of Carmen (24 May 2011) and we will ask you to fill in a short questionnaire after the performance to give feedback on the audio description and touch tour services. If you are not able to stay around after the performance, we can send you an electronic copy of the questionnaire via e-mail, give you a hard-copy on the performance night or arrange a convenient time to conduct the 15 minute post-performance questionnaire over the phone at a convenient time for you.

All feedback will be absolutely confidential. There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your valued opinion and preferences.

Your answers to all of the questions will be treated with the strictest confidence. We will ask for your name but this is only because we must be

able to associate your answers to this questionnaire with those of the other questionnaire which you will be asked to answer after the performance. Before your responses are analysed, your questionnaires will be numbered, the same number will be put on the section containing your name and then your name and any contact details will be removed to ensure confidentiality.

We would be very grateful for your personal responses as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. Some questions may seem irrelevant to you as this questionnaire is targeted at all audience members but the more details you can provide the better. If there are any questions you would rather not answer, move onto the next question. If you have any questions or concerns please e-mail the researcher at [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk). Thank you very much for your help.

1) Are you happy to give your consent to take part in this survey?

yes

no

2) What is your name?

.....

If you are happy to give your e-mail address, phone number or other contact details, please write them below.....

.....  
.....

Firstly, we would like to clarify that the performance which will be sung in French with surtitles will be sign interpreted and audio described with a pre-performance touch tour.

3) Which of these facilities would you like to use? Please mark with a cross the box(es) below to indicate any of the services you would like to use.

- Surtitles
- British SL interpreter
- Audio description
- Touch tour

4) Will you require the programme notes and questionnaire translated into Braille? Please mark with a cross to indicate your requirement.

yes

no

5) Do you have any physical access requirements? Will you require any particular physical assistance? Please give details below

.....  
.....  
.....

Now, to help us to classify your answers and to make statistical comparisons we would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions:

6) Do you use Braille at all?

yes

no

7) Are you a British Sign Language (BSL) user?

yes

no

If yes, would you say that BSL is your first (or preferred) language?

yes

no

8) How many operas have you attended? Please mark the appropriate box with a cross.

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

9) How many times have you attended a performance of Bizet's opera Carmen?

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

10) How many **live performances of any kind** (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) have you attended at which you used audio description services?

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

11) How many **operas** have you attended at which you used audio description services?

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

i) How many of these operas were through-described? i.e. with intermittent commentary throughout the performance?

0       1-3       4-6       7-9       10+

ii) How many just had an audio introduction i.e. description before the performance and in intervals only?

0       1-3       4-6       7-9       10+

12) How many **live performances of any kind** (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) have you attended at which you went on a touch tour?

0       1-3       4-6       7-9       10+

13) How many **operas** have you attended at which you went on a touch tour?

0       1-3       4-6       7-9       10+

14) How many operas have you attended at which you used **both** the audio description and touch tour services?

0       1-3       4-6       7-9       10+

15) Also for the purposes of statistical analysis, this question asks about your hearing and visual ability. Please mark with a cross any of the boxes below which apply to you. Please fill in each section. Some descriptions overlap so you may have to mark with a cross more than 1 box per section. If you feel that these descriptions do not adequately describe your visual and hearing ability or if you would like to add further comment please feel free to give details in the section below.

a) Firstly, what was your visual ability when you were born?

Totally blind   
Partially sighted

Legally blind   
Had full vision

b) If it has changed since you were born, what is your visual ability at present?

Totally blind   
Partially sighted   
Have full vision (corrected if necessary)

Legally blind

c) What was your hearing ability when you were born?

Profoundly deaf  Partially deaf   
Hard-of-hearing  Had severe hearing loss   
Had mild/moderate hearing loss  Had no hearing loss

d) If it has changed, what is your hearing ability at present?

Profoundly deaf  Partially deaf   
Hard-of-hearing  Have severe hearing loss   
Have mild/moderate hearing loss  Have no hearing loss   
Use a hearing aid  Do not use a hearing aid

Please give any details you can for further description

.....  
.....  
.....

16) Please mark the appropriate box with a cross:

male  female

17) If you would not mind telling us what your age group is, please mark the appropriate box with a cross.

12-14  15-17  18-25  26-35   
36-45  46-55  56-65  66+

Rest assured that all information you provide will be treated confidentially. It is just to help us make statistical comparisons in our research.

18) Regarding your educational qualifications, please mark with a cross any of the boxes which apply to you.

No educational qualifications  GCSE or equivalent   
A level or equivalent  First degree

Master's degree

Doctorate

Other

Please give any details if you wish

.....

19) What is your first language?

.....

20) Do you have any knowledge of French?

yes

no

If yes, what level?

Beginner

GCSE or equivalent

A-level or equivalent

Degree

Other

Please give any details if you wish

.....

21) Do you have any learning difficulties or disabilities?

None

Autism

Dyslexia

Other

Please give details if you wish

.....

.....

22) Finally, we would like to take photos and audio and/or video recordings of the feedback and access events (such as the touch tour) on the 24 May **for research purposes only**. Would you be happy to give your consent for this?

yes

no

If you have any further comments in response to this questionnaire in general, please write them below .....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

This is a pilot project and we would be very grateful for any comments or suggestions regarding the questionnaires, feedback sessions or in general about the project .....

.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you again for your participation. We look forward to meeting you on 24 May.**



## 7.4 Appendix IV: AD and TT post-performance questionnaire sample

### Pilot Study into Opera Accessibility

### Carmen Audience Reception Project

### Opera North, Nottingham Theatre Royal, 24 May 2011

Thank you very much for your involvement in this audience feedback project. Your responses are extremely valuable and we are very grateful for your participation.

This is a hard-copy of the post-performance questionnaire to find out about your experience of the audio description and/or touch tour. It should take about 15 minutes to complete. We would be most grateful if you could hand in your completed questionnaire to the researcher, Sarah Weaver, this evening or return it via e-mail to [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk) or by post to Becky Lane, Marketing Coordinator, Opera North, Grand Theatre, 46 New Briggate, Leeds, LS1 6NU.

If you would like an electronic copy to be sent to you, please let Sarah Weaver know as you leave or e-mail her as above and she will be very happy to send you one. Alternatively, you can contact Becky Lane at Opera North on 0113 22 33 590 or 07964 561 427.

We can also arrange a time to speak to you on the phone if you prefer to give your feedback in this way. Your response would be much appreciated.

This feedback opportunity is part of an audience reception project which Opera North is carrying out with Sarah Weaver, a PhD student at Durham University who is researching into opera accessibility for audiences with differing visual and hearing ability.

The aim of the project is, with your help, to evaluate to what extent opera access facilities meet audience requirements and to raise awareness of these services so that wider audiences can enjoy access to the arts.

Your answers to any or all of the questions will be treated with the strictest confidence. We ask for your name here in order to be able to match up the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires, but before any responses are analysed, your name will be removed from all correspondence to ensure confidentiality; the researcher will only study the questionnaires once these are completely anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact the researcher Sarah Weaver or let her know during this session.

We have provided a consent form for you to sign. This is merely a formality but we would be very grateful if you could sign this before starting the questions. Again if you have any queries let Sarah Weaver know.

There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your valued opinion and preferences. If there are any questions you would rather not answer, you can choose the abstain option. We would be very grateful for your personal responses, as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation and the more details you can provide the better. Some questions may seem irrelevant but we would ask you to answer as many as you can as your responses would be most appreciated.

Please feel free to add any additional remarks at any point in the questionnaire. We would also be very pleased to receive any further comments at a later date should you wish and you can send these to the researcher by e-mail to [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk).

Thank you again for your help.

### Questionnaire Participant's Consent Form

I agree to take part in a questionnaire conducted by Sarah Weaver as part of her PhD research.

I acknowledge that the following has been explained:

- what is involved in the questionnaire
- the purpose of the work in this area
- her commitment to preserving the confidentiality of feedback given by participants

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this work. I also give my consent to Sarah Weaver to use photos taken during project events, such as the feedback session and touch tour, and to video record or audio record feedback for research purposes.

Signed ..... Date .....

**Name:**..... **Seat area and number**.....

The first question requires a yes or no answer where 1 = yes, 2 = no and 3 = abstain.

Please circle the number of your choice.

If you do not wish to answer this question please circle 3 =abstain.

**1) Did you attend the touch tour earlier this evening?**

1 (= yes)

2 (= no)

3 = abstain

In the rest of this questionnaire we would like you to answer the questions by simply giving marks from 1 to 5.

<b>1 = not at all</b>	<b>2 = not very much</b>	<b>3 = so-so</b>
<b>4 = quite a lot</b>	<b>5 = very much</b>	

For each question please circle the number of your choice.

If you do not wish to answer a question please circle **6** = abstain

**2) On a scale of 1-5 in general how much did you enjoy:**

a) the performance?

1

2

3

4

5

6 = abstain

b) the music?

1

2

3

4

5

6 = abstain

c) this particular interpretation of Carmen?

1

2

3

4

5

6 = abstain

d) the visual design of this production?

1

2

3

4

5

6 = abstain

e) the social event of coming to the opera?

1

2

3

4

5

6 = abstain

f) the audio description?

1

2

3

4

5

6 = abstain

<b>1</b> = not at all	<b>2</b> = not very much	<b>3</b> = so-so
<b>4</b> = quite a lot	<b>5</b> = very much	

g) the touch tour? (if you did not attend the touch tour please press 6 = abstain)

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

If you can, please give more detail to explain your choices

.....  
.....  
.....

**3)** How helpful did you find the **audio description** in general?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

If you can, please give more detail to explain why

.....  
.....

**4)** How helpful did you find the touch tour in general? If you did not attend please circle 6 = abstain.

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....

.....

**5) a)** How much did you listen to the **live audio introduction** (i.e. the part of the audio description immediately before the performance starts) this evening?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....

.....

<b>1</b> = not at all	<b>2</b> = not very much	<b>3</b> = so-so
<b>4</b> = quite a lot	<b>5</b> = very much	

b) How helpful did you find this **live audio introduction** in general?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
 .....  
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**6) a)** How much did you listen to the **through-description** (i.e. the intermittent commentary throughout the performance once it had started)?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
 .....

b) How helpful did you find this **through-description** in general?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
 .....

**7) a)** How much did you listen to the **preparatory audio introduction** (i.e. the extended audio introduction which is available on the VocalEyes website and/or in hard-copy from VocalEyes in advance of the day of the performance)?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
 .....

<b>1</b> = not at all	<b>2</b> = not very much	<b>3</b> = so-so
<b>4</b> = quite a lot	<b>5</b> = very much	

b) How helpful did you find this **preparatory audio introduction** in general?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
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.....

**8)** How familiar were you with the **plot** of this opera before this evening?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
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.....

**9)** How familiar were you with the **music** of this opera before this evening?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....  
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**10)** How much were you able to follow the **plot** of the opera this evening?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....  
.....

<b>1</b> = not at all	<b>2</b> = not very much	<b>3</b> = so-so
<b>4</b> = quite a lot	<b>5</b> = very much	

**11)** In general how helpful did you find the **audio description** in conveying:

a) the **visual aspects** of the opera, for example the costumes, props, set, characters and onstage action?  
 1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

b) the **humorous aspects** of the opera?  
 1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

c) the **shocking aspects** of the opera?  
 1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

**12)** To what extent did you feel you were able to experience the **emotion** of the opera?  
 1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

**13)** How much did you find that the audio description detracted from your enjoyment of the music? (1 = did not detract at all, 5 = detracted very much)  
 1            2            3            4            5                            6 = abstain  
 Comments.....  
 .....

<b>1</b> = not at all	<b>2</b> = not very much	<b>3</b> = so-so
<b>4</b> = quite a lot	<b>5</b> = very much	

**14)** In general how clear was your mental image of the geography of the stage?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
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**15)** How much would you like to come to another opera?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

**16)** How much would you like to come to another opera with audio description?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

**17)** How much would you like to come to another opera with a touch tour?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

**Thank you very much for your participation.**

If you have any further comments in response to this questionnaire, and/or if you are happy to give your e-mail address, phone number or other contact details, please write them below.

This is a pilot project and we would be very grateful for any comments or suggestions regarding the questionnaires, feedback sessions or in general about the project.

**Please hand in your questionnaire as you leave. Thank you.**

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If you have not had time to add additional comments or if there are any other remarks you would like to make after tonight, the researcher, Sarah Weaver, would be very pleased to hear from you. Her e-mail address is [s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.l.weaver@durham.ac.uk).



## 7.5 Appendix V: SLI and surtitles preliminary questionnaire sample

### PILOT STUDY INTO OPERA ACCESSIBILITY

### CARMEN AUDIENCE RECEPTION PROJECT

Opera North, Nottingham Theatre Royal, 24 May 2011

We are currently carrying out a project with a PhD student, Sarah Weaver, from Durham University, researching into opera accessibility for audiences with differing visual and hearing ability. The aim of the project is to get feedback from the audience about the access services so that we can find out to what extent they meet your requirements.

With your help the results of this survey will allow us to evaluate current accessibility facilities and will bring benefits by helping to raise awareness so that wider audiences can enjoy access to the arts.

Your feedback would be extremely valuable and we hope that you would like to be involved in this special feedback opportunity. If so, we have a few questions which will help us provide facilities for the performance and feedback opportunity which suit you. There are also some general questions about you which will enable us to analyse your responses in context. These preliminary questions should take about 10 minutes and we would be most grateful if you could send your answers by e-mail to [sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk) or by post to Becky Lane, Marketing Coordinator, Opera North, Grand Theatre, 46 New Briggate, Leeds, LS1 6NU. Alternatively, you can hand in your completed questionnaire to Sarah Weaver on the performance night.

We would like to invite you to join us for an informal gathering during both intervals of the performance of Carmen (24 May 2011) and we will ask you to fill in a short questionnaire after the performance to give feedback on the sign interpreting and/or surtitles services. If you are not able to stay around after the performance, we can send you an electronic copy of the questionnaire via e-mail, give you a hard-copy on the performance night or arrange a convenient time to conduct the 15 minute post-performance questionnaire over the phone at a convenient time for you. Please e-mail Sarah Weaver as above for more details or ask her about this at the performance this evening.

All feedback will be absolutely confidential. There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your valued opinion and preferences.

Your answers to all of the questions will be treated with the strictest confidence. We will ask for your name but this is only because we must be

able to associate your answers to this questionnaire with those of the other questionnaire which you will be asked to answer after the performance. Before your responses are analysed, your questionnaires will be numbered, the same number will be put on the section containing your name and then your name and any contact details will be removed to ensure confidentiality.

We would be very grateful for your personal responses as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation. Some questions may seem irrelevant to you as this questionnaire is targeted at all audience members but the more details you can provide the better. If there are any questions you would rather not answer, move onto the next question. If you have any questions or concerns please e-mail the researcher at [sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk). Thank you very much for your help.

**1) Are you happy to give your consent to take part in this survey?**

yes

no

**2) What is your name?**

If you are happy to give your e-mail address, phone number or other contact details, please write them below.

Firstly, we would like to clarify that the performance which will be sung in French with surtitles will be sign interpreted and audio described with a pre-performance touch tour.

**3) Which of these facilities would you like to use? Please mark with a cross the box(es) below to indicate any of the services you would like to use.**

- Surtitles

- British SL interpreter

- Audio description

- Touch tour

**4) Will you require the programme notes and questionnaire translated into Braille?**

yes

no

5) Do you have any physical access requirements? Will you require any particular physical assistance? Please give details below.

Now, to help us to classify your answers and to make statistical comparisons we would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions:

6) Do you use Braille at all?

yes

no

7) Are you a British Sign Language (BSL) user?

yes

no

If yes, would you say that BSL is your first (or preferred) language?

yes

no

8) How many operas have you attended? Please mark the appropriate box with a cross.

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

9) How many times have you attended a performance of Bizet's opera Carmen?

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

10) How many **live sign interpreted performances of any kind** (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) have you attended?

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

11) How many sign interpreted **operas** have you attended?

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

12) How many **operas with standard titles/surtitles** (i.e. not targeted specifically at the deaf and hard-of-hearing) have you attended?

0

1-3

4-6

7-9

10+

**13)** How many live performances of any kind (e.g. musicals, plays, operas, other) with titles/captions specifically targeted at deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences with details of sound effects etc. as provided for example by the company Stagertext have you attended?

0       1-3       4-6       7-9       10+

**14)** How many operas with **both** sign interpreting **and** surtitles/titles have you attended?

0       1-3       4-6       7-9       10+

**15)** Also for the purposes of statistical analysis, this question asks about your hearing and visual ability. Please mark with a cross any of the boxes below which apply to you. Please fill in each section. Some descriptions overlap so you may have to mark with a cross more than 1 box per section. If you feel that these descriptions do not adequately describe your visual and hearing ability or if you would like to add further comment please feel free to give details in the section below.

**a)** Firstly, what was your visual ability when you were born?

Totally blind                       Legally blind   
Partially sighted                       Had full vision

**b)** If it has changed since you were born, what is your visual ability at present?

Totally blind                       Legally blind   
Partially sighted   
Have full vision (corrected if necessary)

**c)** What was your hearing ability when you were born?

Profoundly deaf                       Partially deaf   
Hard-of-hearing                       Had severe hearing loss   
Had mild/moderate hearing loss       Had no hearing loss

**d)** If it has changed, what is your hearing ability at present?

- Profoundly deaf  Partially deaf   
Hard-of-hearing  Have severe hearing loss   
Have mild/moderate hearing loss  Have no hearing loss   
Use a hearing aid  Do not use a hearing aid

Please give any details you can for further description

**16)** Please mark the appropriate box with a cross:

male  female

**17)** If you would not mind telling us what your age group is, please mark the appropriate box with a cross.

12-14  15-17  18-25  26-35   
36-45  46-55  56-65  66+

Rest assured that all information you provide will be treated confidentially. It is just to help us make statistical comparisons in our research.

**18)** Regarding your educational qualifications, please mark any of the boxes which apply to you with a cross.

No educational qualifications  GCSE or equivalent   
A level or equivalent  First degree   
Master's degree  Doctorate   
Other

Please give any details if you wish

**19)** What is your first language?

**20)** Do you have any knowledge of French?

yes

no

If yes, what level?

Beginner

GCSE or equivalent

A-level or equivalent

Degree

Other

Please give any details if you wish

**21)** Do you have any learning difficulties or disabilities?

None

Autism

Dyslexia

Other

Please give details if you wish

**22)** Finally, we would like to take photos and audio and/or video recordings of the feedback and access events on the 24 May **for research purposes only**. Would you be happy to give your consent for this?

yes

no

If you have any further comments in response to this questionnaire in general, please write them below.

This is a pilot project and we would be very grateful for any comments or suggestions regarding the questionnaires, feedback sessions or in general about the project.

**Thank you again for your participation. We look forward to meeting you on 24 May.**

## 7.6 Appendix VI: SLI and surtitles post-performance questionnaire sample

PILOT STUDY INTO OPERA ACCESSIBILITY

CARMEN AUDIENCE RECEPTION PROJECT

Opera North, Nottingham Theatre Royal, 24 May 2011

Thank you very much for your involvement in this audience feedback project. Your responses are extremely valuable and we are very grateful for your participation.

This is a hard-copy of the post-performance questionnaire to find out about your experience of the sign interpreting and/or surtitles. It should take about 15 minutes to fill in. We would be most grateful if you could hand in your completed questionnaire to the researcher, Sarah Weaver, this evening or return it via e-mail to [sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk) or by post to Becky Lane, Marketing Coordinator, Opera North, Grand Theatre, 46 New Briggate, Leeds, LS1 6NU.

If you would like an electronic copy to be sent to you, please let Sarah Weaver know as you leave or e-mail her as above and she will be very happy to send you one. Alternatively you can contact Becky Lane at Opera North at [becky.lane@operanorth.co.uk](mailto:becky.lane@operanorth.co.uk), by texting 07964 561 427 or on 0113 22 33 590.

This feedback opportunity is part of an audience reception project which Opera North is carrying out with Sarah Weaver, a PhD student at Durham University who is researching into opera accessibility for audiences with differing visual and hearing ability. The aim of the project is, with your help, to evaluate to what extent opera access facilities meet audience requirements and to raise awareness of these services so that wider audiences can enjoy access to the arts.

Your answers to any or all of the questions will be treated with the strictest confidence. We ask for your name here in order to be able to match up the preliminary and post-performance questionnaires, but before any responses are analysed, your name will be removed from all correspondence to ensure confidentiality. We have provided a consent form for you to sign. This is merely a formality but we would be very grateful if you could sign this before starting the questions. If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact the researcher Sarah Weaver.

There are no right or wrong answers; we are just interested in your valued opinion and preferences. If there are any questions you would rather not answer, you can choose the abstain option. We would be very grateful for your personal responses, as only this will guarantee the success of the investigation and the more details you can provide the better. Some questions may seem irrelevant but we would ask you to answer as many as you can, for example even if you are not a British Sign Language user your responses to questions about sign interpreting would be most appreciated.

Please feel free to add any additional comments at any point in the questionnaire. We would also be very pleased to receive any further comments at a later date should you wish and you can send these to the researcher by e-mail at [sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk).

**Thank you again for your help.**

#### QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM

I agree to take part in a questionnaire conducted by

Sarah Weaver

as part of her PhD research.

I acknowledge that she has explained:

- what is involved in the questionnaire
- the purpose of the work in this area
- her commitment to preserving the confidentiality of feedback given by participants

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this work.

I also give my consent to Sarah Weaver to use photos taken during project events, such as the feedback session and touch tour, and to video record or audio record feedback for research purposes.

Signed .....Date .....

NAME..... Seat area and number.....

**In this questionnaire we would like you to answer some questions by simply giving marks from 1 to 5.**

**1 = not at all    2 = not very much    3 = so-so    4 = quite a lot    5 = very much**

**For each question please circle the number of your choice.**

**If you do not wish to answer a question please circle 6 = abstain**

**1) On a scale of 1-5 in general how much did you enjoy:**

a) the performance?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

b) the music?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

c) this particular interpretation of Carmen?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

d) the visual design of this production?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

e) the social event of coming to the opera?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

f) the sign interpreting?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

g) the surtitles/the titles? [from now on the term 'titles' will be used]

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

If you can, please give more detail to explain your choices

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

1 = not at all    2 = not very much    3 = so-so    4 = quite a lot    5 = very much

2) How helpful did you find the **sign interpreting** in general?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

If you can please give more detail to explain why

.....  
.....

3) How helpful did you find the **titles** in general?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

If you can please give more detail to explain why

.....  
.....

4) How much were you able to follow the **plot** of the opera this evening?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

5) In general how helpful did you find the **sign interpreting** in conveying:

a) the **musical aspects** of the opera?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

b) the **humorous aspects** of the opera?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

c) the **shocking aspects** of the opera?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

1 = not at all    2 = not very much    3 = so-so    4 = quite a lot    5 = very much

6) In general how helpful did you find the **titles** in conveying:

a) the **musical aspects** of the opera?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

b) the **humorous aspects** of the opera?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

c) the **shocking aspects** of the opera?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

7) To what extent did you feel you were able to experience the **emotion** of the opera?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

8) How much did you find that the **sign interpreting** detracted from your enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera? (1= did not detract at all, 5= detracted very much)

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

9) How much did you find that the **titles** detracted from your enjoyment of the visual aspects of the opera? (1= did not detract at all, 5= detracted very much)

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

1 = not at all    2 = not very much    3 = so-so    4 = quite a lot    5 = very much

10) During the performance this evening how much did you look at:

i) the **sign interpreter**?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

ii) the **titles**?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

11) How familiar were you with the **plot** of this opera before this evening?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

12) How familiar were you with the **music** of this opera before this evening?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

13) How much would you like information about the **sound effects** in the **titles**?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

14) How much would you like information about the **music** in the **titles**?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

15) How much would you like **repeated phrases** to be indicated in the **titles**?

1            2            3            4            5            6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

1 = not at all    2 = not very much    3 = so-so    4 = quite a lot    5 = very much

16) How much would you like to have **names of characters** in the **titles** labelling who is singing what?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

17) How much would you like to come to another opera?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

18) How much would you like to come to another **sign interpreted** opera?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

19) How much would you like to come to another opera **with titles**?

1                    2                    3                    4                    5                    6 = abstain

Comments.....  
.....

**Thank you very much for your participation**

If you have any further comments in response to this questionnaire, and/or if you are happy to give your e-mail address, phone number or other contact details, please write them below.

This is a pilot project and we would be very grateful for any comments or suggestions regarding the questionnaires, feedback sessions or in general about the project.

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**Please hand in your questionnaire as you leave. Thank you.**

If you have not had time to add additional comments or if there are any other remarks you would like to make after tonight, the researcher Sarah Weaver would be very pleased to hear from you. Her e-mail address is [sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sarahweaver2011@hotmail.co.uk).

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