Article

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Student perceptions of transferable skills development through didactic audio description

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Abstract: Didactic audio description (DAD) refers to the use of active audio description (AD) tasks where students generate the AD text themselves. In foreign language teaching, DAD has been used to improve linguistic and oral competences, integrated and intercultural skills, media literacy, mediation, or accessibility awareness, with positive results. This article explores students' perceptions about active AD to promote transferable skills development through data gathered from a series of two experiments implemented at the University of Manchester between 2018 and 2020. Specifically, it explores (i) whether participants perceived an improvement in their transferable skills, and (ii) in which specific skills sub-sets they did so. Quantitative data show high perceptions of transferable skills development (especially decision making, summarizing, and communicative skills) even when perceptions of the usefulness of AD to foster linguistic skills were low. Qualitative data show that the skills range where participants perceived improvement was broader than predicted, as responses to open-ended questions mentioned skills not foregrounded in closed questions, such as integrated skills, metalinguistic skills, mediation, and accessibility awareness. This suggests that active DAD tasks could be useful in diverse settings to promote a holistic learning experience where students simultaneously develop linguistic and non-linguistic abilities, and where accessibility and inclusion are at the forefront.
Keywords: didactic audio description; transferable skills; student perceptions; didactic audiovisual translation; accessibility awareness.

1. Introduction

The increased popularity of the use of active audiovisual translation (AVT) tasks within foreign language teaching (FLT) is reflected in the numerous examples of experimental studies and research projects exploring its multiple applications and benefits carried out over the last two decades, such as LeVis (Sokoli, 2006), which developed a tool for the active creation of subtitles

within task-based activities; ClipFlair (Baños & Sokoli, 2015), which focused on revoicing and provided pre-designed lesson plans; ARDELE (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017b), which explored the potential of audio description (AD) for multiple language learning purposes; or TRADILEX[1] (Navarrete & Bolaños, 2022), which investigated the pedagogical impact of various AVT modes upon foreign language learning. These projects, alongside many other initiatives, have led to the establishment of a field of specialization in its own right known as "didactic audiovisual translation" (DAT; Talaván, 2020). DAT is defined by an active engagement on the part of the learner (Talaván *et al*., 2022), who is not a passive user but a creator of the AVT in question—be it subtitling, dubbing, AD, or free commentary.

This article contributes to this body of work by focusing on the potential of didactic AD (DAD) to foster the development of transferable skills in learners of Spanish as a foreign language (FL) in a higher education context. The data shared here was collected in two experiments implemented at the University of Manchester between 2018 and 2020 exploring learners' production of Spanish pronominal verbs and integrated skills development through DAD. Interestingly, the first exploratory analysis of questionnaire data revealed that participants frequently hinted at development of transferable skills despite them not being openly targeted throughout the Project. Exploring which specific transferable skills participants considered to have improved thanks to DAD could help to maximize its potential in this respect, as well as to identify further educational contexts where it could be applied with these pedagogical aims. Therefore, this article analyses participants' perceptions of transferable skills development through a DAD task within an FL learning context with the following aims:

1) To explore the *extent* to which participants considered that DAD tasks helped them develop transferable skills.
2) To explore which *specific* transferable skills participants considered to have developed thanks to DAD tasks.
3) To suggest further applications of DAD tasks for transferable skills development.

To do so, participant responses to questionnaire data are analyzed following a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data from end-of-project questionnaires (EPQs)—i.e., the feedback questionnaires completed by participants at the end of the experiment. While questionnaire data in FLT research has traditionally been used as support for linguistic data, some studies have emphasized its value for obtaining a more holistic picture of metacognitive processes related to language use, or details about how to make tasks more effective (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2015a, 2015b). Moreover, recent publications have re-centered student perception data as a source of key—instead of complementary—information about learning processes (Bausells-Espín, 2022; Fernández Costales, 2021; Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2021; Navarrete, 2018). Closely analyzing perception data allows researchers and practitioners to better

[1] TRADILEX is associated to UNED (Spanish National University of Distance Education), where several Educational Innovation Projects on didactic AVT have also been developed (see https://tradit.uned.es/en/antecedentes/; last accessed: 24 Feb. 2024).

understand what students gain—or miss—when undertaking different pedagogical interventions, and to use this information to inform subsequent ones (Ferreira Alves & Santiago Araújo, 2016).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Didactic audio description

Audio description (AD) is a mode of accessible AVT that turns visually coded elements[2] into a verbal commentary to facilitate audiovisual access, aimed primarily at blind or partially sighted people (Walczack & Fryer, 2017). Increased awareness of the social mediation role of AD has contributed to its incorporation into media accessibility regulations across countries (Orero, 2016), further leading to its popularization as a classroom tool. Translation in AD is intersemiotic or "cross-modal" (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017a, p. 53), as the transfer occurs from an image-based mode to a language-based one—and therefore from the visual channel to the acoustic one—activating different mental processes in the translator or audio describer. These mental processes—such as image decoding and linguistic re-coding, or attention tracking—are essential to bridge the gap between the sensory experience of sighted audio describers and non-or-partially sighted audiences (Holsanova, 2016). Furthermore, unlike other translation modes, AD requires making both language-related and content-related choices: the audio describer must not just decide how to word the description, but also select plot-wise or atmosphere-wise relevant source-text elements considering the dialogue gaps available for inserting the AD track. These particularities have inspired innovative practices and research on didactic applications of AD within FLT.

Experimental studies on didactic AD (DAD) have proliferated over the past decade, ranging from pedagogical proposals (Cenni & Izzo, 2016) to explorations of its potential for developing linguistic competences (Calduch & Talaván, 2018; Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2013, 2023), speaking competences (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2015a, 2015b; Navarrete, 2018; Talaván & Lertola, 2016), integrated skills (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2014), intercultural skills (Plaza-Lara & Gonzalo Llera, 2022; Vermeulen & Ibáñez Moreno, 2017), media literacy (Herrero & Escobar, 2018), mediation skills (Navarrete, 2022) or accessibility awareness (Ogea Pozo, 2022a, 2022b). Results suggest that DAD tasks enhance learning in multiple ways (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017a; Lertola, 2019; Talaván *et al.*, 2022).

In short, AD is a professional activity with an authentic communicative purpose and specific skills requirements: awareness of target-audience needs and communication challenges; intermodal, content, and communicative mediation abilities; and knowledge of cinematic language and film narrative conventions, among others. It further requires critical thinking to make language-related and content-related decisions which are intertwined, and synthesizing-paraphrasing skills to summarize language while minimizing the impact upon content and upon semantic or pragmatic connotations. Asking language students to audio describe means asking them to apply not only grammatical or lexical knowledge, but also all those sets of non-linguistic skills, as well as empathy towards and awareness of visual accessibility issues. In other words, it means asking them to use

[2] An AD may also indicate the source of unclear or unrecognizable sounds whenever relevant and possible.

non-subject-specific, professional skills which could be useful in different settings—or, as they will be called henceforth, *transferable skills*.

2.2 Transferable skills in foreign language teaching

Transferable skills are "those developed in one learning situation which can be transferred into another" (Grundy *et al*., 2011). Not being subject-specific, they have also been called "generic skills", "interdisciplinary skills", "transversal skills" or "cross-curricular skills" (Baran-Łucarz & Klimas, 2020, p. 25). Back in 1995, the UK Department for Education and Skills (DFES) provided a comprehensive definition of transferable skills: "those cognitive and interpersonal skills (application of number, communication, information technology, problem solving, personal skills, working with others and improving own learning and performance) which are central to occupational competence in all sectors and at all levels" (Chadha & Nichols, 2006, p. 117).

While that definition centered around employability, more recent ones have broadened the focus to include abilities that, being also applicable to the workplace, favor a social and civic approach. Nowadays, the label "21st century skills" (Rosevsky & Opfer, 2012) has become the preferred term. However, it is still difficult to find a "universally accepted definition or framework of 21st century skills", which are generally understood as "a set of knowledge, skills or traits necessary to function effectively in today's world" (Baran-Łucarz & Klimas, 2020, p. 24) and frequently linked to the development within the classroom of competences, knowledge, and abilities that will help students navigate today's globalized society. Depending on the adopted perspective, 21st century skills have been called "soft or interpersonal skills", and applied to workforce or life skills (Silva, 2008, p. 3), as well as to "thinking processes such as creativity, problem solving, decision making, self-knowledge, critical thinking, accessing and analyzing information […], adaptability, […] communication, motivation, or time management" (Baran-Łucarz & Klimas, 2020, p. 24).

In FLT, transferable skills are often called *extra-linguistic* skills and opposed to the key, subject-specific *linguistic* skills. However, this dichotomy has been questioned over the past couple of decades. As with transferable skills generally, the focus was first placed on the need to incorporate to language-focused pedagogy "tasks and projects that imitate professional assignments […] so that students engage in 'real-life' activities that are representative of professional standards" (González-Davies, 2004, p. 19), in line with methodological approaches such as task-based teaching (Nunan, 2004). Later, the emphasis shifted from the workplace to society as whole. In Eaton's words: "the focus in language education in the twenty-first century is no longer on grammar, memorization and learning from rote, but rather using language and cultural knowledge as a means to *communicate and connect to others* around the globe" (Eaton, 2010, p. 5, *my emphasis*).

The Companion Volume to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) systematizes this reconceptualization of language learning, considering FL learners as "language users and social agents", and language as "a vehicle for communication rather than a subject to study" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 29). Thus, the classroom is reconceptualized as a space where learners develop "wide-ranging" skills that go well beyond linguistic ones, and that will "help them succeed in different spheres of life" (Baran-Łucarz & Klimas, 2020, p. 24). However, the question remains as to "which skills are transferable and how they can be taught or trained" (Nägele & Stalder, 2017, p.

739). These authors highlight the difficulty of achieving effective transfer, the interdependency of both individual and contextual factors, and the important role played in the transfer by the training that students receive, or by the specific intervention design followed (Nägele & Stalder, 2017). Similarly, the question arises of what constitutes effective transfer, and how—if at all—it could be measured.

Given the existing challenges, it is worth exploring the potential of pedagogical interventions such as DAD which require the application of multiple real-world abilities to promote transferable skills development. In this article, this is done by departing from student perception data as an easily accessible source of valuable information, as it offers an insight into which additional tasks students felt they engaged in while performing the central one—namely, while creating an AD.

3. The study

3.1 Research background and aims

The experiment described in this paper drew on a previous study by Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen conducted with Dutch-speaking students of Spanish as FL as part of the ARDELE Project (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2017b)[3]. Departing from Cohen and Brooks-Carson's (2001) hypothesis that the absence of students' first language (L1) in direct writing tasks would reduce the impact of negative linguistic transfer[4] from the L1 into the FL more than interlingual[5] translation tasks, Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen hypothesized that AD tasks could have a similar effect, given that the source text is image-coded, therefore lacking explicit L1 linguistic content (Ibáñez Moreno & Vermeulen, 2023). They further hypothesized that this potentially reduced linguistic interference would lead to more idiomatic L1 productions. To test this, the researchers focused on a highly idiomatic structure, Spanish pronominal verbs, and compared participants' productions in AD and interlingual translation tasks.

In the experiment described here, Ibáñez Moreno and Vermeulen's hypotheses were adopted, and basic procedures replicated with English-L1 participants, incorporating the relevant adaptations to account for the requirements of the new academic context. The aims of the experiment were two-fold:

1) As a classroom AD project: to promote the development of integrated skills, both linguistic and extra-linguistic (as *transferable skills* were referred to).
2) As a research experiment: to explore whether AD was more beneficial than interlingual translation to promote pronominal verb production and improve its idiomaticity among English-speaking students of Spanish.

[3] The ARDELE Project started in 2010 and explored the impact of AD across multiple FL learning areas. Data related to PNV production was kindly shared with the researcher at an earlier stage and the authors consented to its replication. For some preliminary *linguistic* results of the replication, see Bausells-Espín (2023).
[4] *Negative transfer*, though a problematic label, is used to describe L1 interference in FL acquisition-production (Zhao, 2019). A detailed analysis of language transfer lies beyond the scope of this article.
[5] Following Jakobson's terminology (1959).

This article focuses on a sub-section of aim (1), as it analyzes the potential of DAD to promote *extra-linguistic* or *transferable* skills as expressed by participants through the feedback questionnaires completed at the end of the experiment—i.e., the end-of-project questionnaires (EPQs). It explores (i) the *extent* to which they considered to have improved their transferable skills, and (ii) which *specific skills* these were (see section 4).

3.2 Context and participants

The DAD project was implemented with second-year students of Spanish at the University of Manchester between 2018 and 2020 and conceived both as a classroom project and as a research experiment. From a research perspective, its first iteration (2018-2019) was considered the pilot experiment (PE), and the second (2019-2020), the main experiment (ME). As they took place in two consecutive years, participants differed from one to the other, and certain modifications stemming from observations gathered during the PE were introduced in the ME. These are described whenever relevant.

The project was integrated into a compulsory language module, *Spanish Language 5*, taught at the B2 CEFR level (Council of Europe, 2001). This module was divided into three components: (i) *grammar*, (ii) *translation and writing skills*, and (iii) *integrated skills*. Components (i) and (ii) were grouped into a two-hour weekly session. Component (iii) had its own one-hour weekly slot and focused on the development of oral skills through an integrated-skills approach, combining reading and listening comprehension with production-interaction-oriented tasks within functional-communicative frameworks.

All students enrolled in *Spanish Language 5* were eligible to participate in the DAD project. Students (n = 95 in the PE; n = 70 in the ME) combined Spanish with either a Language, a Humanities, or a Science degree. All had studied Spanish for 5 to 10 years, and their ages ranged between 18 and 20. They were all proficient speakers of English, the L1 for the vast majority: 93 (98%) in the PE, 66 (94%) in the ME. In both iterations, most students were familiar with—or at least aware of—the existence of AD, but only a few in each had experience watching audio described programs, and none had attempted audio describing before. Because attendance at project sessions and task completion (including questionnaires) were not compulsory, not all students participated. Henceforth, *students* is used when speaking generally, while *participants* or *respondents* are used when referring to those individuals whose responses to EPQs are analyzed (see section 4.2.).

3.3 Instruments

For project tasks (see section 3.4.), two clips of consecutive scenes from Woody Allen's 2005 movie *Match Point* were used[6]. They were selected because of their linguistic value for the research aims (*i.e.*, the high incidence of pronominal verbs in the professional Spanish AD script), as well as for their suitability for use with first-time audio describers: they were self-contained scenes set in the same environments with few characters and little dialogue (Calduch & Talaván, 2018;

[6] Clip 1 time codes: 1:25:44-1:29:49. Clip 2 time codes: 1:29:51-1:33:45. These are based on the *Match Point* Spanish DVD edition (Voilà DVD Art Studio, 2006)–also the source for the professional Spanish AD script.

Talaván & Lertola, 2016). Both the clips and the text of the professional Spanish AD script corresponding to those scenes were used, as well as an English translation of the script[7].

Besides the instruments used for project tasks and for linguistic data gathering, two additional ones were used: two questionnaires created with Google Forms. The first was a pre-project questionnaire, which aimed to collect information about participants' academic background and prior AD experience. The second was the end-of-project questionnaire (EPQ), which aimed to collect participants' perceptions about the project itself and about the potential of DAD for linguistic and extra-linguistic learning. Data shared in this article originates from EPQs.

EPQs were shared with participants at the end of both the PE and ME (henceforth, EPQ1 and EPQ2, respectively). At the end of the PE, a revision process took place to assess the whole project, including questionnaires. An internal questionnaire validation process was conducted which determined that, while EPQ1 was valid for its aims—i.e., obtaining information about participants' perceptions towards the project and DAD—it could benefit from certain modifications, namely: (i) removing irrelevant or redundant questions, (ii) simplifying question texts, and (iii) modifying certain question types, scales, or items. An external validation process[8] was then undertaken for EPQ2 where experts validated the relevance and clarity of each question and item, the adequacy of the estimated completion time, and the overall quality of the instrument. The results confirmed that all items in EPQ2 were relevant and clearly formulated, and that the few minor concerns raised by the experts (mainly related to wording) did not compromise the adequacy or validity of the instrument. Given the high overall quality rating (4/4), EPQ2 was considered adequate.

The introduction of such revisions means that some differences exist between EPQ1 and EPQ2. Those regarding transferable skills-related items mostly relate to format changes or to more detailed response item breakdowns in EPQ2, but the backbone remained the same, making response comparison possible to a reasonable extent. Modifications relevant for the aims of this article are accounted for in the analysis, and their impact described as appropriate in section 4.

3.4 Structure and procedures

The AD project covered four sessions (see Table 1): (i) an introductory workshop, (ii) a first task-writing session (elaboration of the AD script—ADS—for clip 1), (iii) a feedback and reflection session, and (iv) a second task-writing session (elaboration of the ADS for clip 2). Out-of-class work complemented session 2 (stage 3 on Table 1), as participants had to record their AD and integrate it into the video file to obtain an audio described version of the clip with their own AD.

Students were divided into two experimental groups (EG): in the PE (n = 95), there were 57 students in EG1 and 38 in EG2; in the ME (n = 70), 32 in EG1 and 38 in EG2. In the PE, students completed the tasks collaboratively; in the ME, they did so individually[9]. For the first task, one group

[7] The English translation was done by the researcher and proof-read by L1 English-speaking colleagues. The researcher had no access to a professional English AD script. To her knowledge, no such version is available on commercial DVDs/BDs or streaming platforms.

[8] A detailed description of this validation process and its results lies beyond the scope of this article.

[9] This procedural change resulted from the post-PE revision process, which revealed a generalized low participant satisfaction regarding group work. However, questionnaires were always completed individually, and the data analysis did not suggest an impact of the work arrangements upon perceptions of transferable skills development. Discussing impacts of work arrangements elsewhere lies beyond the scope of this article.

created an AD translating from images into words (intersemiotic translation); the other, translating from the English version of the script into Spanish (interlingual translation). For the second task, each group did the other translation type. This enabled comparison between intersemiotic and interlingual translation in relation to the main research aim (production of Spanish pronominal verbs; see section 3.1.). Once the two types of tasks were completed, EPQs were distributed. They were emailed to participants and shared on the course's virtual learning environment. Questionnaires remained open for two weeks and several reminders were sent.

Table 1. AD Project temporalization (PE and ME)

AD Project Temporalization		
Stage	**Module slot / Week**	**Procedures & tasks**
1	*Translation & Writing Skills* / Week 3	Session 1 – Introductory Session (introduction to AD, project information)
2	Homework	Completion of pre-project questionnaire PPQ (by week 4)
3	*Integrated Skills* / Week 4	Session 2 – ADS Writing Session: Task 1 (*Match Point* clip 1)
4	Homework (editing phase)	ADS Completion & editing/proofreading ADS recording & integration into video file Upload of audio described clip
5	*Integrated Skills* / Week 5	Session 3 – Feedback & Reflection Session
6	*Translation & Writing Skills* / Week 7	Session 4 – ADS Writing Session: Task 2 (*Match Point* clip 2)
7	Homework	Completion of end-of-project questionnaire (EPQ) (by Week 9)
8	Autonomous work / Weeks 9 & 10	Grammaticality Judgement Test (Main Experiment only)

Source: Author

[Description] Table 1 presents the temporalization of the DAD project, with rows showing each project stage (first column), corresponding module slot and semester week (second column), and a brief description of project procedures and tasks (third column). Relevant contents mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

4. Data analysis

4.1 Background: main observations from the exploratory analysis

Upon completion of both PE and ME, an exploratory analysis of EPQ data was conducted. This analysis looked at the whole set of participant perception data, and it exposed a direct relationship between three variables: (i) perceptions of AD difficulty, (ii) perceptions of DAD usefulness for skills development, and (iii) perceptions of own learning thanks to the DAD task. This was called the *triple-connection hypothesis* (Bausells-Espín, 2022), and it suggests that the higher the perception is for one variable, the higher it is for the others—the case for ME participants—and that the lower it is for one, the lower it is for the others—the case for PE participants. In other words, if a certain AD aspect was perceived as difficult, the set of skills needed to overcome that difficulty was perceived as potentially improvable through DAD and, in fact, such improvement was reported. Correspondingly, if an AD aspect was perceived as easy, its linked skills were perceived as less likely to be improved through DAD and no or little perception of improvement was reported.

Among the skills most widely perceived to be useful for overcoming AD challenges and for which improvement was reported by participants were transferable skills. Although there was explicit reference to some transferable skills (such as *summarizing* or *decision making*) in EPQs, this set of skills had not been foregrounded during the process of experiment design, nor during sessions, nor in communication with participants. In other words, development of transferable skills was not an established project goal. However, EPQ responses revealed that participants were highly satisfied with both DAD's usefulness for transferable skills development and with their progress in this area. Such manifestations prompted an interest in the specifics of those perceptions, and thus a more narrowed-down analysis of EPQ data was conducted focusing exclusively on transferable skills-related items.

4.2 Corpus and focus of analysis

The quantitative analysis considers response frequencies in EPQ1 and EPQ2 closed-question items referring to perceptions of (i) DAD usefulness for transferable skills development and (ii) own learning progress in this area (see Table 2). Items related to *communicative skills* and *accessibility awareness* are also considered for the analysis, as they encompass mediation, adaptability, interpersonal, and other skills falling within the *transferable* label. All transferable skills considered are needed to overcome specific AD challenges, especially: (i) *content selection*, i.e., deciding which visual information to include in or to exclude from the AD script; (ii) *summarizing*, i.e., fitting the AD into the available dialogue gaps; and (iii) *sounding natural*, i.e., communicating information in the most suitable way considering both source content and audience needs.

Table 2. EPQ1 and EPQ2 quantitative analysis items

Items for quantitative analysis				
	Pilot Experiment (EPQ1)		**Main Experiment (EPQ2)**	
Perception	**Question (Q)**	**Items**	**Question (Q)**	**Items**
DAD usefulness	Q11: 'Overall, *how useful* do you think audio description is as a language learning activity?' (Multiple choice)	'Less useful than regular translation' 'As useful as regular translation' 'More useful than regular translation'	Q10: 'Based on your experience during this project, how much do you agree with the *usefulness* of AUDIO DESCRIPTION as a language learning activity? 1 being "I do not agree at all", and 4 being "I completely agree"' (Rating scale)	'Transferable skills' 'Communicative skills'
Own learning progress	Q4: 'Which *aspects of your learning* would you say have improved throughout the AD project?' (Checkbox grid)	'Transferable skills'	Q5: '*In terms of your own learning* throughout the AD project, how much do you agree with the following statements? 1 being "I do not agree at all" and 4 being "I completely agree". (Rating scale)	'Transferable skills' 'Communicative skills' 'Accessibility awareness'

Source: Author

[Description] Table 2 presents questionnaire items selected for analysis of transferable skills development perceptions. The fourth row shows items related to perceptions of DAD usefulness; the fifth, items related to perception of learning progress (first column: 'perceptions'). The second and third columns show the EPQ1 questions and response items

selected, respectively. The fourth and fifth columns show the EPQ2 questions and response items selected, respectively. Relevant contents mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

Table 2 compiles all the transferable skills-related questions and items selected for quantitative analysis from EPQ1 and EPQ2. As it shows, these were the equivalent questions (Q) from each questionnaire: (i) the one asking about perception of DAD *usefulness* (Q11 in EPQ1: 'Overall, *how useful* do you think audio description is as a language learning activity?'; Q10 in EPQ2: 'Based on your experience during this project, how much do you agree with the *usefulness* of AUDIO DESCRIPTION as a language learning activity? 1 being "I do not agree at all", and 4 being "I completely agree"'); and (ii) the one asking about perception of *learning progress* thanks to DAD (Q4 in EPQ1: 'Which *aspects of your learning* would you say have improved throughout the AD project?'; Q5 in EPQ2: '*In terms of your own learning* throughout the AD project, how much do you agree with the following statements? 1 being "I do not agree at all" and 4 being "I completely agree".).

As discussed in section 3.3., certain formal differences exist between the selected questions in EPQ1 and EPQ2 resulting from the internal validation process which informed EPQ2 (see Table 2). For this reason, the analysis of each variable (usefulness and learning progress) starts with a description of the question from which data is drawn in EPQ1 and EPQ2 where said formal differences are addressed, followed by a description of the data including any impact of said differences if identified.

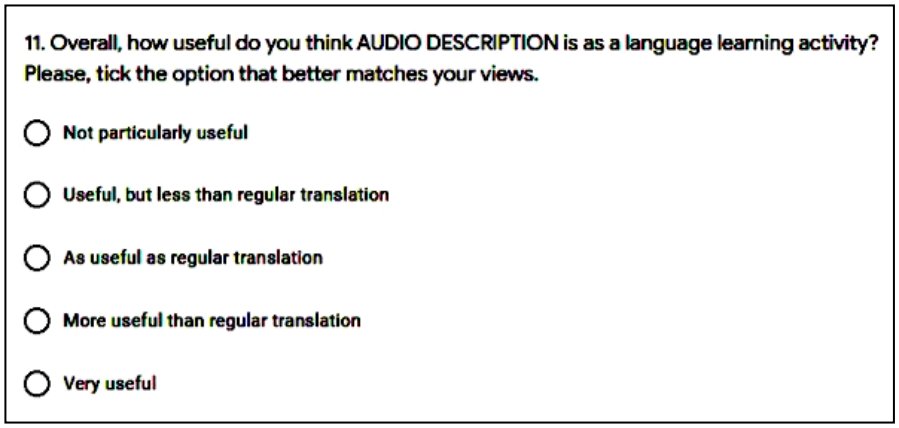
EPQ1 response rate in the PE was 22% (21 respondents out of 96 students), while it was 18.6% in the ME (13 out of 70). Despite these low response rates, perceptions expressed are considered representative, as in both cases over 90% of respondents had completed at least the DAD task and attended all sessions. The analysis shows both absolute numbers and percentage data but, due to response rate difference, it focuses on percentage data. Finally, the qualitative analysis examines the content of responses to open-ended questions and considers all references made to transferable skills, including those skills or skills sets not explicitly mentioned in closed questions.

4.3 Quantitative analysis

4.3.1 Perceptions of DAD usefulness for transferable skills development

In the PE (EPQ1), perceptions of usefulness of the DAD task were collected through a multiple-choice question, Q11: "Overall, how useful do you think AUDIO DESCRIPTION is as a language learning activity?". Respondents were asked to select one of five statements comparing the usefulness of DAD and interlingual translation: "Not particularly useful", "Useful, but less than regular translation", "As useful as regular translation", "More useful than regular translation" or "Very useful" (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. EPQ1: perception of usefulness (multiple choice)

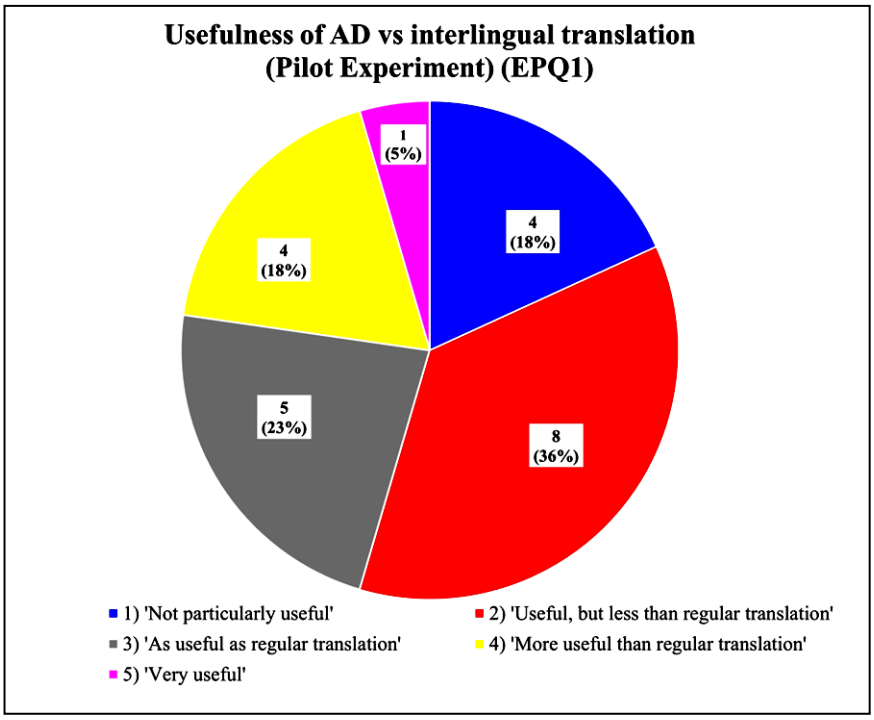


Source: Author

[Description] Image shows a screenshot of the EPQ1 Google Forms questionnaire showing Q11 and the five multiple choice response items. Contents mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

As established in section 3.1., among the aims of the experiment was to compare the potential of DAD and interlingual translation for language learning purposes, which explains the opposition between these two types of tasks in Q11 (Figure 1). As Figure 2 shows, PE participants shared a perception of *limited* usefulness of the DAD task, as only 5% considered it *very useful*, and a low 18% considered it *more useful than regular translation*. The same percentage (18%) considered it *not particularly useful*, and the highest selection rate was for *less useful than regular translation* with 36%. Aggregated responses show a small majority of opinions on the low-usefulness side: 54%, vs 23% on the high-usefulness side. The remaining 23% considered both types equally useful.

Figure 2. Usefulness of AD vs interlingual translation (Pilot Experiment)



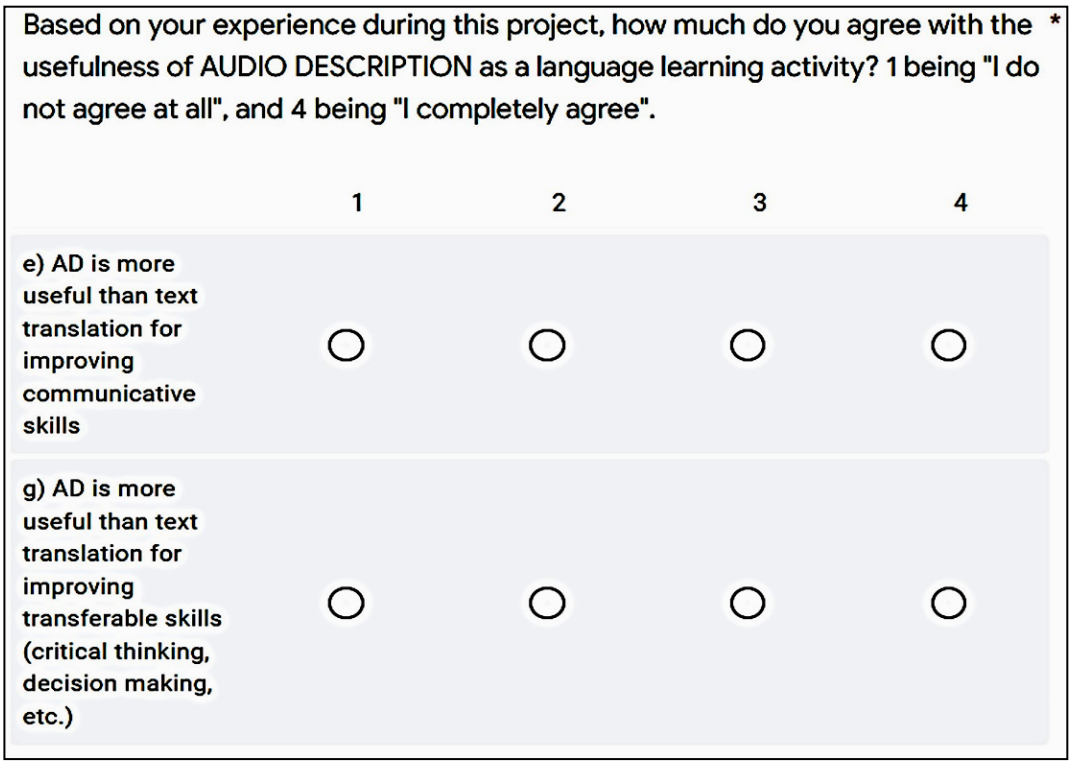
Source: Author

[Description] Image shows a pie chart representing the selection rates for each of the Q11 response items. Contents mentioned and analyzed in the body text. [End of description].

Since Q11 in EPQ1 (Table 2; Figure 1) only allowed for comparing overall usefulness, the question format was modified in EPQ2 to obtain more detailed information. In EPQ2, perception of usefulness was collected through a rating scale, Q10: "Based on your experience during this project, how much do you agree with the usefulness of AUDIO DESCRIPTION as a language learning activity? 1 being 'I do not agree at all', and 4 being 'I completely agree'" (see Table 2 and Figure 3). Each response item linked DAD's usefulness to the development of specific skills compared to that of interlingual translation. The two response items for this analysis were: (e) "AD is more useful than text translation for improving communicative skills", and item (*g*) "AD is more useful than text translation for improving transferable skills (critical thinking, decision making, etc.)" (see Figure 3).

As Figure 4 shows, the aggregated response rate for values on the *agree* side of the spectrum—ratings 3 (agree) and 4 (completely agree)—for the selected items outperform the aggregated response rate for values on the *disagree* side—ratings 1 (don't agree at all) and 2 (disagree)—, indicating a generalized positive perception of DAD usefulness for transferable skills development among EPQ2 respondents. Specifically, 92% agreed (46%) or completely agreed (46%) with the idea that DAD was useful for developing transferable skills, while 85% did so for communicative skills (23% agreed; 62% completely agreed). Contrary to what happened in EPQ1, no EPQ2 respondents considered DAD not useful at all, and only a small percentage slightly disagreed with its usefulness (8% for transferable skills, 16% for communicative).

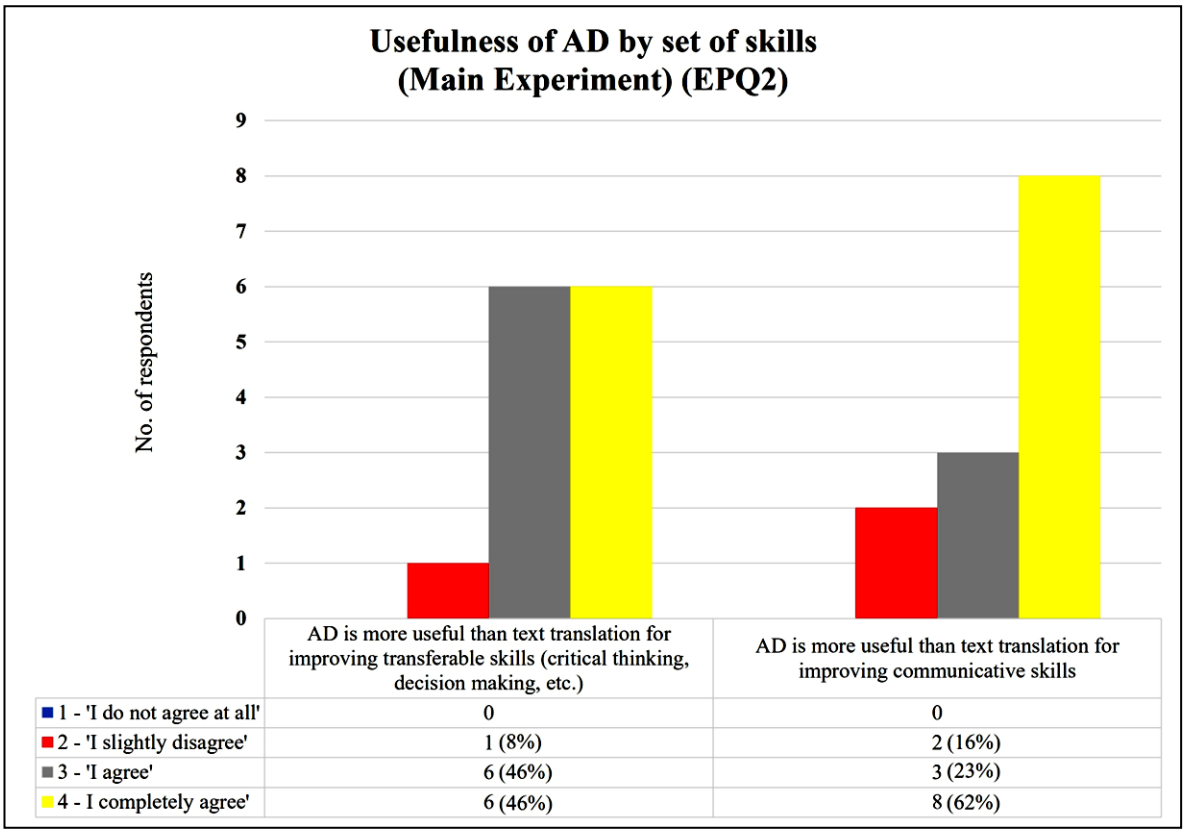
Figure 3. EPQ2: perception of usefulness by set of skills (rating scale)



Source: Author

[Description] Image shows a screenshot of the EPQ11 Google Forms questionnaire showing Q10 (DAD usefulness) and the two response items object of analysis. Contents mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

Figure 4. Usefulness of AD vs interlingual translation (Main Experiment)



	AD is more useful than text translation for improving transferable skills (critical thinking, decision making, etc.)	AD is more useful than text translation for improving communicative skills
1 - 'I do not agree at all'	0	0
2 - 'I slightly disagree'	1 (8%)	2 (16%)
3 - 'I agree'	6 (46%)	3 (23%)
4 - I completely agree'	6 (46%)	8 (62%)

Source: Author

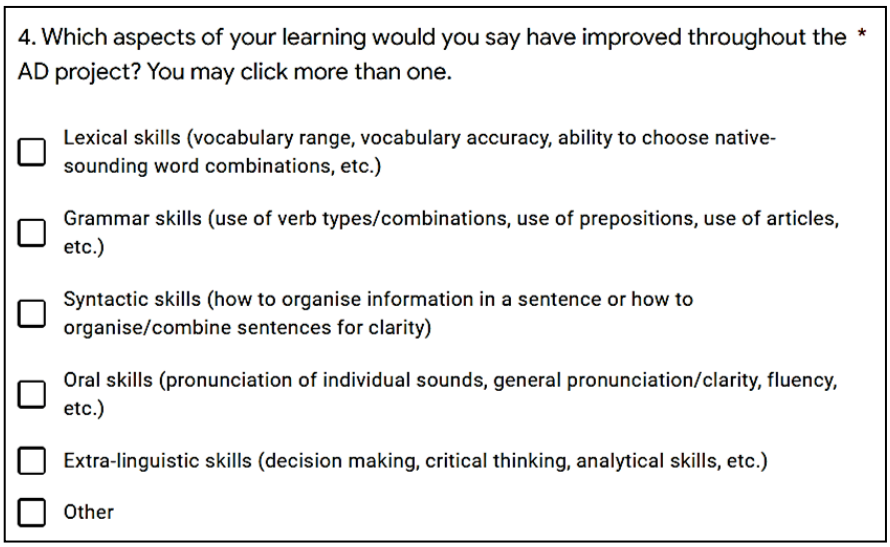
[Description] Image shows a clustered column chart with response numbers and selection rates for each scale value in Q10 (DAD usefulness) for the two response items selected. Contents mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

4.3.2 Perceptions of learning progress in transferable skills

In EPQ1, data regarding perception of learning progress was gathered through a checkbox grid question, Q4: "Which aspects of your learning would you say have improved throughout the AD project?" (see Figure 5). Response items included "lexical skills", "grammar skills", "syntactic skills", "oral skills", and "extra-linguistic skills", all accompanied by examples of those skills in brackets, as well as an "other" option. Respondents could select as many items as they deemed applicable. Therefore, only the "extra-linguistic skills" item—which included "decision making", "critical thinking" and "analytical skills" as examples—referred to transferable skills explicitly, with the "other" item leaving space for potential additional contributions in this area[10].

[10] A follow-up, open-ended question was provided for respondents selecting the *other* item. No responses to the follow-up question included references to transferable skills.

Figure 5. EPQ1: perception of learning (checkbox grid)

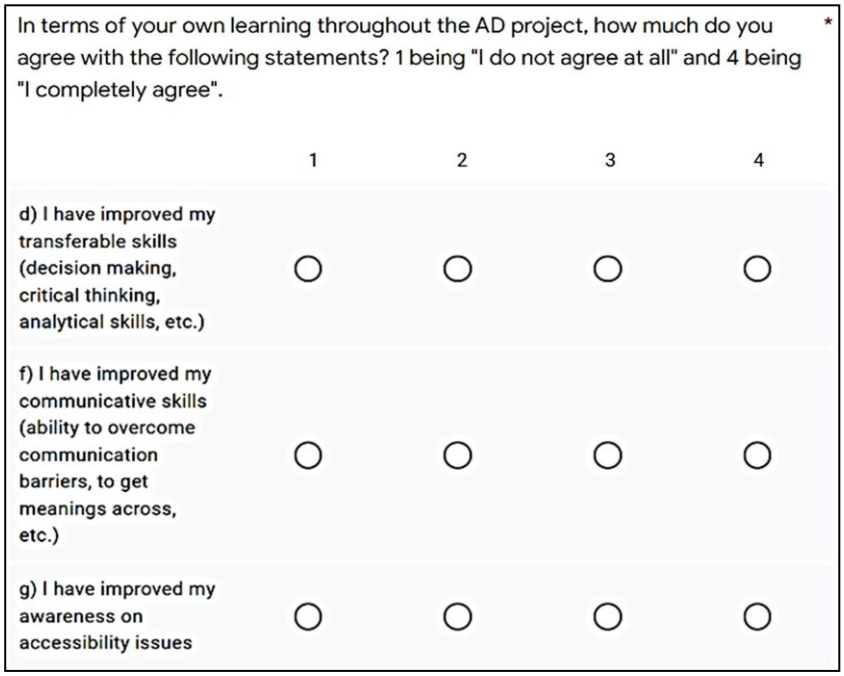


Source: Author

[Description] Image shows a screenshot of the EPQ1 Google Forms questionnaire showing Q4 (learning progress) and the response items provided. Contents mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

In EPQ2, this data was collected through a scale question, Q5: "In terms of your own learning throughout the AD project, how much do you agree with the following statements? 1 being 'I do not agree at all' and 4 being 'I completely agree'" (see Figure 6). Respondents rated their agreement with statements affirming having improved a given skill. The response items selected for the analysis were: (d) general "transferable skills (decision making, critical thinking, analytical skills, etc.)"—the equivalent to EPQ1's "extra-linguistic skills"—(f) "communicative skills (ability to overcome communication barriers, to get meanings across, etc.)", and (g) "awareness on accessibility issues (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. EPQ2: perception of learning (scale)



Source: Author

[Description] Image shows a screenshot of the EPQ11 Google Forms questionnaire showing Q5 (learning progress) and the selected response items. Contents mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

Table 3. Perceptions of learning progress in transferable skills (EPQ1 vs EPQ2)

Perception of Learning Progress					
Item	**PE (EPQ1)[i] (21 responses)**	**ME (EPQ2) (13 responses)**			
Scale value	n/a[ii]	1	2	3	4
Scale value meaning	n/a	'Don't agree at all'	'Slightly disagree'	'Agree'	'Completely agree'
"**Extra-linguistic skills** (decision making, critical thinking, analytical skills, etc.)'	**64%** (14)	n/a[iii]	n/a	n/a	n/a
'I have improved my **transferable skills** (decision making, critical thinking, analytical skills, etc.)'	n/a	0%	15% (2)	54% (7)	31% (4)
Aggregated by scale side	n/a	15% (2)		**85%** (11)	
'I have improved my **communicative skills** (ability to overcome communication barriers, to get meanings across, etc.)'	n/a	8% (1)	15% (2)	31% (4)	46% (6)
Aggregated by scale side	n/a	23% (3)		**77%** (10)	
'I have improved my **awareness on accessibility** issues'	n/a	8% (1)	0%	31% (4)	61% (8)
Aggregated by scale side	n/a	8% (1)		**92%** (12)	

NOTES:

[i] Values in the PE column based on response frequency for the selected item.

[ii] 'n/a' in the PE column for 'Scale value' and 'Scale value meaning' indicates that these measurement criteria do not apply because the relevant question in the PE was in a checkbox grid format.

[iii] 'n/a' in the 'Extra linguistic skills' row for the ME columns indicates that this response item was not present in EPQ2, as it was replaced by the other three items for which values exist.

Source: Author

[Description] Table 3 presents response numbers and rates for the EPQ1 and EPQ2 question regarding perception of learning progress. Rows 5, 6, 8 and 10 show the response items with their corresponding selection rates. Rows 7, 9 and 11 show aggregated response rates for 'agree' and 'disagree' scale sides for EPQ2 items. Column 1 shows the response items; column 2 shows EPQ1 response data; columns 3 to 6 show EPQ2 response data. Relevant data mentioned in the body text. [End of description].

Due to the question format changes from EPQ1 to EPQ2, only one item can be compared directly, "transferable skills" ("extra-linguistic skills" in EPQ1). Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents reporting having improved the various sets of transferable skills in EPQ1 and in EPQ2 compared. For EPQ1, it shows the selection rate for the only relevant response item ("extra-linguistic skills"); for EPQ2, it shows the aggregated selection rates for scale values on the *agreement* side (values 3 and 4) for the relevant response items: "transferable skills"—equivalent to the EPQ1 item—, "communicative skills", and "accessibility awareness".

As Table 3 shows, 64% of EPQ1 respondents reported improvement in *extra-linguistic skills*—as transferable skills were called—which included decision making, critical thinking, and analytical skills. This was the item with the highest selection rate in that question. In EPQ2, a cumulative percentage of 85% of respondents agreed (scale value 3, 54%) or completely agreed (scale value 4, 31%) with having improved their transferable skills, which included the same sub-skills as in EPQ1. For the two other items, selection rates were higher for the maximum level of agreement (scale value 4), with a 46% selection rate for communicative skills—which covered mediation—and a 61% rate for accessibility awareness. In total, a cumulative percentage (scale values 3 and 4 together) of

77% agreed or completely agreed with having improved their communicative skills, and a cumulative percentage of 92% did so for accessibility awareness.

4.4 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis compiles all references to transferable skills across responses to open-ended questions (OEQs), which were the same in EPQ1 and EPQ2:

1) Non-required OEQs:
   a) Expansion question: "Please, give details about your *learning progress* by skills".
   b) Final question: "Please, add any other comments".
2) Required OEQ: "What was the most positive aspect of the AD Project?"

Analytical induction was applied to response analysis to uncover common themes, which were then categorized following a label-based system[11]. In EPQ1, positive perceptions regarding DAD usefulness and learning were scarce in OEQ responses, in line with the perceptions of relatively limited usefulness and limited learning expressed in closed questions. However, among the positive comments, transferable skills featured prominently, including references to the opportunities provided for developing new or professional abilities, and summarizing skills. As for communicative skills, one respondent mentioned acquiring a new ability "to describe things", while another appreciated the chance to practice vocabulary with a real-life application: "I was able to refresh my memory of different vocabulary that I would not usually be able to use. I think that this will help me during my year abroad". As for professional skills, respondents appreciated learning about AD or "seeing a new type of job in the language world and having a go at it", thus "discovering a practical application of language learning". Finally, observations of an improved ability to understand "how to paraphrase actions" and how to summarize language were also shared, frequently in connection to how challenging this aspect of AD had been: "For me, the skill which I most improved on was extra-linguistic skills as timings and making the speech fit within those timings was the biggest challenge".

In EPQ2, expressions of positive perceptions of the value of DAD to promote transferable skills abounded in OEQ responses, in line with the high level of perceptions of usefulness and learning progress expressed in closed questions. Transferable skills were the most frequently mentioned set alongside lexical skills, with references to multiple sub-sets. Decision making and summarizing were often mentioned together and linked to the need to choose "specific words and phrases" to create concise descriptions to fit into dialogue gaps: "it allowed me to be selective about what I was saying and more concise". Conversational skills development was often connected to an increased awareness towards interlocutor-specific needs, pointing at visual accessibility awareness and at development of mediation skills. One respondent expressed that adding their AD to the video had

[11] The "analytical induction" (see Cohen et al., 2007, p. 472-473) process involved: response scanning and analysis, label creation, item coding, label refining, and item recoding. A detailed discussion lies beyond the scope of this article.

been "really rewarding" as they felt they were "really building tension for the viewer"[12], while another found that it especially promoted learning and usage of "vocabulary [and] grammar structures which collocutors actually need and will actually use in everyday conversation". Another valued the fact that the DAD task was "different from usual tasks and used realistic language in a potentially useful setting". The authenticity element was also highlighted in other responses, such as: "It made me think more about communicating ideas in the most authentic way possible". Another respondent specifically mentioned having improved their awareness on accessibility issues, and "fully [appreciating] the necessity for these types of provisions".

As for development of learning awareness, respondents stressed that recording themselves allowed them to listen to their own "accent and intonation and improve on them", or to identify which areas they needed to improve. Finally, critical thinking was mentioned both in general terms and in relation to integrated skills development. One respondent shared that the task had "broadened" their horizons, while another added that it had exposed them "to a new way of thinking other than translation in a traditional sense […] and to a wide range of new skills", pointing at a positive impact of the cognitive particularities of intersemiotic translation discussed in section 2.1. In this line, another respondent pointed at the challenging but beneficial need to have "to combine a lot of skills together", thus having gained awareness of how skills can converge and be developed simultaneously. Finally, critical thinking was also mentioned in connection with metalinguistic awareness, with one respondent expressing that the task had helped them to "explore the different ways in which [they] could think about language", and another one highlighting the benefits of having to think about how Spanish and English construct meaning, referring to how the DAD task had given them "a new insight into the way the [two] languages function and helped [them] understand the nuances between the two". Metalinguistic thinking was also pointed at in relation to lexical learning, as one respondent underscored the fact that AD had not exactly "improved" their vocabulary "but rather how you use it concisely to convey meaning".

5. Discussion

EPQ data from both the PE (EPQ1) and the ME (EPQ2) show that DAD was deemed useful to develop transferable skills, and that improvement across various sub-sets was perceived. As seen in PE participants' responses (EPQ1), the perception of limited potential of DAD tasks to promote linguistic learning does not extend to their potential to enhance several extra-linguistic or transferable skills—such as summarizing, paraphrasing, or other professional skills—, in particular because the DAD task had provided a real-world-like experience where participants were able to think about language use beyond the classroom. Responses from ME participants—who reported a much higher perception of usefulness of the DAD task for linguistic learning[13]—suggest that the potential of DAD for promoting transferable skills development reaches a much wider range of sub-

[12] This response presents an additional layer of interest, as it suggests development of an awareness not only of AD's assistance role but also of its role in providing or increasing leisure opportunities, pointing at the "emancipatory paradigm" proposed by Silva and Barros (2021).

[13] Potential reasons for this difference in satisfaction levels between PE and ME participants include the change from group work to individual work, the increased possibility to receive feedback during the ME due to extra-contextual factors, and other motivational factors. Discussing them in detail lies beyond the scope of this article.

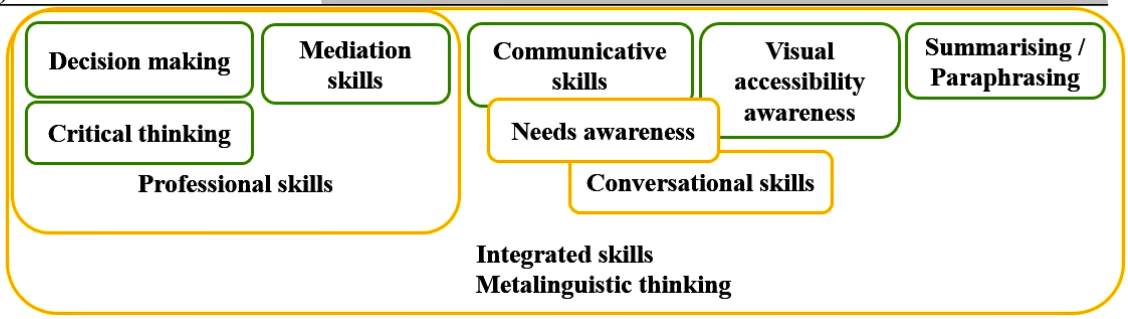
skills beyond decision making or critical thinking, reaching others such as learning awareness or metalinguistic thinking, as well as communicative abilities linked to mediation, needs awareness, and visual accessibility awareness. All of these include abilities that can prove necessary and be applied across very diverse contexts and fields of specialization—in other words, abilities that can be transferred to a myriad of spheres of personal and professional life where communicative adaptability is required.

As established by the *triple-connection hypothesis* (see section 4.1.), the skills identified as most widely improved through the DAD task are those needed to overcome those aspects of it which represented a bigger challenge for participants (see Figure 7). In the PE, these were "content selection" and "sounding natural". Selecting the most relevant content for an AD script requires decision making, as well as analytical and critical thinking. Similarly, sounding natural (or *idiomatic*) requires an ability to understand the needs of the interlocutor, thus demanding accessibility awareness and communicative skills, as well as paraphrasing or summarizing skills to use language concisely and meaningfully—something which, incidentally, also requires creativity. In the ME, besides "summarizing", "sounding natural" and "word choice" were the most commonly perceived difficulties. Although "word choice" is directly related to linguistic skills, it also requires decision making, and consideration of semantic or pragmatic connotations (often of a cultural or sociolinguistic nature), or of idiomaticity issues. Moreover, it is linked to awareness of both communicative setting and interlocutors' needs, to communicative and textual mediation skills, and to metalinguistic awareness, with the latter further requiring an ability for abstract thinking and reasoning beyond knowledge of grammar rules or lexical recognition and usage.

Another noteworthy observation emerged from the qualitative analysis: that the range of transferable skills which participants reported having developed thanks to the DAD task was broader than expected, as skills not included in closed questions were mentioned across open-ended responses. Participants also regarded DAD as beneficial for developing professional abilities such as IT skills (video editing was part of the task) and recognized the cognitive benefits of applying several skills simultaneously to overcome challenging tasks. DAD was also seen as useful to develop a range of mediation skills, as it brought the role of the interlocutor and the idea of communicative diversity to the forefront, increasing not only participants' awareness of recipient's communicative and leisure needs, but also of the necessity to adapt language to meet them, and the revelation that mediating could also refer to the process of navigating through two different codes (visual and linguistic) and of making specific adjustments to get meanings across.

Figure 7. Perception of AD difficulty by aspect and linked set of skills

Perception of difficulty of AD by set of skills				
	Content selection	Word choice	Idiomaticity (sounding natural)	Fitting AD into dialogue gaps
Pilot Experiment (EPQ1) (22 responses)	64% (14)	50% (11)	64% (14)	41% (9)
Main Experiment (EPQ2) (13 responses)	54% (7)	85% (11)	92% (12)	85% (11)



Source: Author

[Description] Image represents the connection between AD difficulties perceived by participants and sets of skills reported to have been developed through the DAD task. The upper half shows a table where rows 3 and 4 provide the selection rates for the most-chosen AD difficulties in EPQ1 and EPQ2, respectively, with one AD difficulty per column ("content selection", "word choice", "idiomaticity", and "fitting into dialogue gaps" in columns 2 to 5). The bottom half shows skills sub-sets in boxes, placed under the relevant columns depending on the difficulty to which they are associated, and grouped by larger skills sets: "decision making", "mediation skills" and "critical thinking" are grouped within "professional skills"; "communicative skills" and "visual accessibility awareness", within "needs awareness" and "conversational skills"; all of them plus "summarizing/paraphrasing" within "integrated skills" and "metalinguistic thinking". Data and contents explained in body text. [End of description].

Finally, AD was also perceived as helpful for gaining metalinguistic awareness thanks to the need to think carefully about language structure and its mechanisms to construct meaning, both to condense it and to understand specific semantic or pragmatic subtleties in a more context-specific and meaningful manner than other tasks allow for, as the DAD task compelled participants to keep audience needs in mind throughout all the steps of the communication process.

6. Conclusions

In the current paradigm of FL learning, it is paramount to make classes an inclusive space where learning happens in a motivating and meaningful manner that will help students function effectively in today's globalized society, and where linguistic and extra-linguistic learning are intertwined—as linguistic and extra-linguistic communication are—giving way to a truly holistic learning experience. This article has explored the potential of didactic audio description (DAD) tasks as an innovative tool to enhance students' development of a wide range of skills beyond linguistic knowledge and abilities in a simultaneous and integrated manner. While further analysis may help determine statistical significance, results show that DAD tasks represent comprehensive activities where the borders between the classroom and the real world fade, and where students act not only as learners but also as users and social agents, as they face the challenges of navigating between

image-coded and language-coded information; of overcoming communication barriers and providing accessibility; of approaching and using language from new angles; and of putting the needs of the interlocutor at the center.

This article has also shown that DAD tasks allow for applying—and thus developing—a wide range of specific transferable skills: by providing opportunities to explore different ways of experiencing the world and processing information and meaning, it encourages students to engage in varied, complex thinking processes that involve accessing information through different channels, critically analyzing it and how meanings are constructed across the channels, and selecting the most relevant contents based on the communicative purpose. Furthermore, DAD tasks foster reflection around language structure and use to recodify such information in a way that requires creativity, adaptability, understanding of specific interaction and access needs, mediation skills, and problem solving—all within a clearly established and meaningful communicative framework. In DAD tasks, processes that seem linguistic in essence—such as choosing words—cannot be separated from the communicative context in which they are embedded, nor from audience needs, nor unlinked from all the associated pragmatic, semantic, or cultural connotations that permeate a given message.

In view of this, it would be worth incorporating DAD tasks into further learning contexts. For example, it could be used with lower levels or even with young learners, since an AD task is as easy or challenging as the video chosen and tasks can be customized to specific levels of competence or literacy. AD requires using narrative strategies, and thus has similarities with storytelling, which has proven beneficial in young learner and early childhood education both in FL (Férez Mora & Coyle, 2023, among others) and L1 contexts (Satriani, 2019; Kim & Hachi, 2021; among others). Storytelling not only fosters linguistic learning but also literacy, imagination, creativity, and higher-order thinking skills (Bloom, 1956) such as analyzing, synthesizing, critical thinking, or evaluating, which leads to an overall cognitive development—benefits that mirror what has been discussed in this article regarding DAD tasks.

Furthermore, while AD has been used in some L1 contexts[14] mostly to promote linguistic skills, there is enough evidence to suggest it could also be beneficial in other L1 contexts such as secondary education or non-language disciplines to promote those other skills sets which it has been proven to foster in FL contexts: narrative skills, intercultural awareness, and the whole array of transferable skills—i.e., summarizing, paraphrasing, decision making, analytical skills, mediation abilities, or accessibility awareness. Focusing on the last two, DAD could be applied within the field of language for specific purposes (LSP)[15], since communicative adaptability is often required to navigate exchanges involving specialized language. For example, in an LSP class for healthcare students or professionals, a DAD task could provide opportunities to engage in varied types of mediation, such as linguistic mediation between specialized and plain terms, or between professional-oriented and patient-oriented texts, raising awareness and recreating in the classroom conditions resembling those of outside-world interactions, and broadening what a language learning experience can represent. In sum, DAD tasks provide a unique tool to make classroom learning more holistic,

[14] For example, it has been used within translator training programs for over a decade, both to train general translator competences and AD-specific competences (Basich Peralta *et al*., 2009).
[15] Other AVT modes, especially subtitling, have been successfully applied to LSP (for example, see González Vera, 2021; Lertola & Talaván, 2022), though still with an eminently linguistic focus.

meaningful, and inclusive, opening learners' eyes to existing communicative and leisure needs that still are—sadly—often overlooked.

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