

“Audio description is a magic trick that allows the blind to see”

“Audio description is a magic trick that allows the blind to see” – this was the comment made by Roberto, a visually impaired man from Campo Grande, immediately after *Rigoletto*, opera that was played at Teatro São Pedro, in São Paulo, had finished. This comment may seem to many an overstatement or even an utopian view, but it clearly translates what this accessibility resource means for the visually impaired. Verdi’s famous opera - that tells a story of love, vengeance and death of the hunchback Rigoletto, a jester in the Duke of Mantua’s court, and that of the hunchback’s naïve daughter, Gilda – became known and could be understood in all its scenic complexities by Roberto and by many other visually impaired people who attended one of the five performances of this splendid spectacle directed by Lívia Sabag.

With the help of audio description, and with the reading of subtitles, the Duke of Mantua’s love affairs and misfortunes, as well as Rigoletto’s mocking, ironic, scornful, merciless actions as jester, while, at the same time, showing zeal and concern as a loving father, and his grief concerning his own condition as disabled; Gilda’s deception with the betrayal of her lover, the setups by Sparafucile – professional assassin – and his sister Maddalena; the ballrooms of the palace; Rigoletto’s house, Sparafucile’s homely inn, the nobility in attire and the ladies’ dresses – everything could be experienced, with equal opportunities, without any communicational barrier that so often prevent full access to information in the realm of performances.

Starting in 2009, when operas such as *Cavalleria Rusticana (Rustic Chivalry)*, *Pagliacci (Players, or Clowns)* and *O Barbeiro de Sevilha (The Barber of Seville)*, Teatro São Pedro, in partnership with Vivo, has become a place with accessibility for people with visual impairment. Equipment such as booths, sound, ear phones and receptors were assembled there so that the audio describers, Vivo’s employees and voluntary workers from Instituto Vivo, can narrate with details, the scenery, the costume and the actions of soloists on stage, besides describing the beautiful and historical theatre where the operas were presented - Teatro São Pedro.

Audio description is therefore a resource that, by using sound information, broadens the understanding of people who are visually impaired when these attend cultural events (plays, TV programs, exhibitions, shows, musical shows, operas, pageants, fashion shows, dance spectacles); touristic events (city tours and visitation tours); sports events (games, fights, competitions); academic events (talks, seminars, conferences, lectures, science fairs, scientific experiments, historical records of events) among others. It changes the visual into verbal communication, allowing for greater possibilities of access to the culture and to the information, thus contributing to cultural, social and school inclusion. Besides broadening the understanding of those who are visually impaired, this accessibility technique also enhances the grasp of the elderly, of dyslexic people and of those who have intellectual disabilities.

Aware of the inclusive potential of this resource, teachers can use it in the classrooms, describing the imagistic universe that is present in the school – such as illustrations

found in course books and history books, graphs, maps, videos, photographs, scientific experiments, drawings, science fairs, cultural visitations, etc., without requiring any special equipment for this, yet making sure that they are verbalizing everything that is visual. This will certainly contribute to the learning of all students and not only those that are visually impaired. The latter will gain in autonomy and independence, besides having more learning opportunities and a better knowledge of the world. Those who describe will develop their observational skills, as well as their linguistic repertoire and their verbal fluency.

It is no longer possible for us, teachers, to ignore this great inclusive movement that is reaching all the contexts around us. It is also our duty to remove communicational barriers and, even more so, attitudinal barriers that prevent the transformation of the school into a place where it is possible to make a difference. And when we muster our strengths towards this movement, we can certainly provoke

A flight of many wings
that provoke a strong breeze,
a hair-raising
breeze of new airs
that jumbles the tresses,
and tosses old papers
and old roles into the air,
so that they never more
return to become
the same...

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