

Adverbs as markers of women's objectification events in audio descriptions of English feature films

Eva Schaeffer-Lacroix

Sorbonne Université – eva.lacroix@sorbonne-universite.fr

Abstract

Audio descriptions are soundtracks added to (audio)visual products, e.g. movies, to make them accessible to blind or visually impaired persons. This paper focuses on adverbs as markers of women's objectification events in the audio descriptions of English feature films. It presents a textometric analysis of the English AD scripts of 488 movies which are part of MAD-v2 (Movies Audio Description), a dataset we enriched with additional metadata. Objectification applies to visual events in which people are cognitively reduced to their parts akin to objects and in which their agency (i.e. their capacity to act) is reduced. The identification of such events can be subject to interpretation. We expect that adverbs, in particular affective adverbs like “lasciviously”, are used by the audio describers to depict such scenes. Our results reveal quantitative differences between film genres, gender of the film directors, and years of film release with respect to the use of items tagged as adverbs in the MAD-v2 dataset. Our qualitative analysis of the movie with the highest adverb proportion informs in a nuanced way on the role played by adverbs to refer to objectification events.

Keywords: audio description, objectification, agency, adverb, feature film, English