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Audio Description for Individuals with Visual Disability: Enabling Participation in Cultural Events

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The Central Library
for Blind
and Reading
Impaired People

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Occupational Therapy Department

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Participation in Cultural Events

Audio Description (AD)

- **Audio Description** is a systematic method whereby visual information is made accessible to individuals with visual impairment during cultural events such as: conferences, events, parades, movies, TV shows and theater.

- The primary component: **Descriptive Narration** is added to the soundtrack/dialogue of an event describing supplementary visual information that cannot be understood from the main soundtrack/dialogue alone.

The Professional Audio Describer

Accompanies the listener throughout the event via a headset system and verbally presents content related to the display, scenery, clothing, body language, and any other important visual elements of the production

- Timing
- Relevance
- Concise

Live Theater AD Protocol

Arrival

⬇

Headphone distribution

⬇

"Touch Tour"

⬇

"Pre show Notes"/ "Play Trailer"

⬇

Performance accompanied by Simultaneous Auditory Description

Low Vision In Israel

- 24,000 people are registered as legally blind.

- Estimations indicate that over 200,000 people have low vision.

- 60% live in the outlying communities, less services

The Audio Description Project

In 2014 The Israel National Insurance Institute took up the challenge to develop the AD service for live theater productions

- First Course In Israel to train professional Audio Descriptors

- Providing equipment to 11 theaters

- Research

The Central Library For the Blind
was the preferred NGO
to operate the project

Main Aims of the Research

- To assess the <u>satisfaction</u> from Audio Description during the live theater productions

- To evaluate the effect of the Audio Description on the <u>quality of the experience</u>:

  o Spatial presence

  o Narrative perception

  o Engagement

- To understand <u>patterns of participation</u> in theater productions: barriers, challenges, etc.

Interdisciplinary Research Team

Occupational Therapist: Vision Rehabilitation
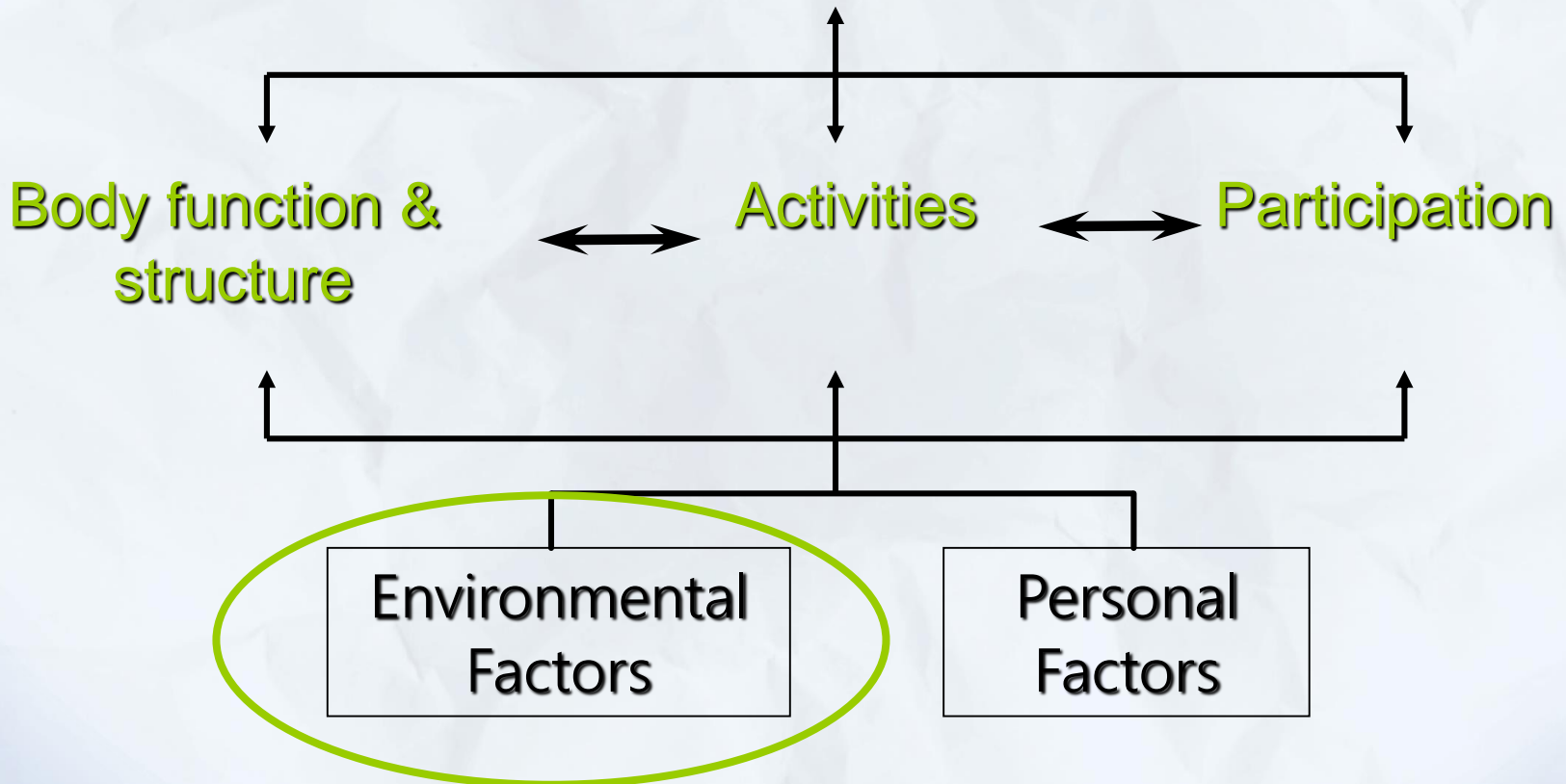
Representative from Israel's Library Center for the Blind

Occupational Therapist: accessibility

Social worker: accessibility

Research Specialist from the field of Psychology

Participants

- *N* = 83
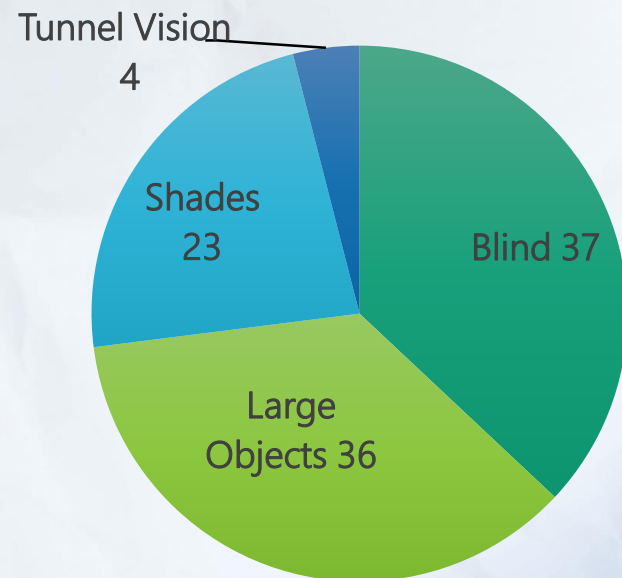
- Gender: 58% Women

- Age: 54 (±14); 40% Over 60

- Status: 44% Married / sig. relationship

- Education: 90% high-school education+

- Working: 57% (public settings)

Vision ability

Tunnel Vision 4

Shades 23

Blind 37

Large Objects 36

Research Method

- 5 plays, each play was performed once with AD and once without.

- Each participant watched <u>two different plays</u>

  o one with AD

  o one without

Research Tools

- Quantitative questionnaire: <u>satisfaction</u> from AD, end of each play with AD , scale 1-5

- Quantitative questionnaire: <u>quality of experience</u>, end of each play
  - Spatial presence (3 Items, scale 1-5, α=.81)
  - Narrative perception (3 Items, scale 1-5, α=.79)
  - Engagement (3 Items, scale 1-5, α=.80)

- Quantitative questionnaire: <u>patterns of participation</u> in theater productions, at outset and one year later

- Qualitative interviews for in-depth understandings of the AD process as whole

Results

Results: Satisfaction from AD

- Satisfaction from the AD device   67% very satisfied

- Satisfaction from the "Pre Show Notes"   85% very satisfied

- Satisfaction from the "Touch Tour"   77% very satisfied

Satisfaction from the AD characteristics

- Expression   93% very satisfied

- Intonation and pitch   86% very satisfied

- Pace and speed   84% very satisfied

- The amount of text   80% very satisfied

- Integrated into the content of the play   72% very satisfied

- Contributed to understanding   90% very satisfied

- Contributed to the experience   94% very satisfied

- Overall satisfaction from the AD   87% very satisfied

Results: Quality of the Experience

Comparison between plays with vs. without AD

Domain	AD	No AD	Effect Size	P-value
Spatial presence	4.3	3.6	0.84	<.001
Narrative Perception	4.3	3.6	0.96	<.001
Engagement	4.3	3.8	0.55	<.001
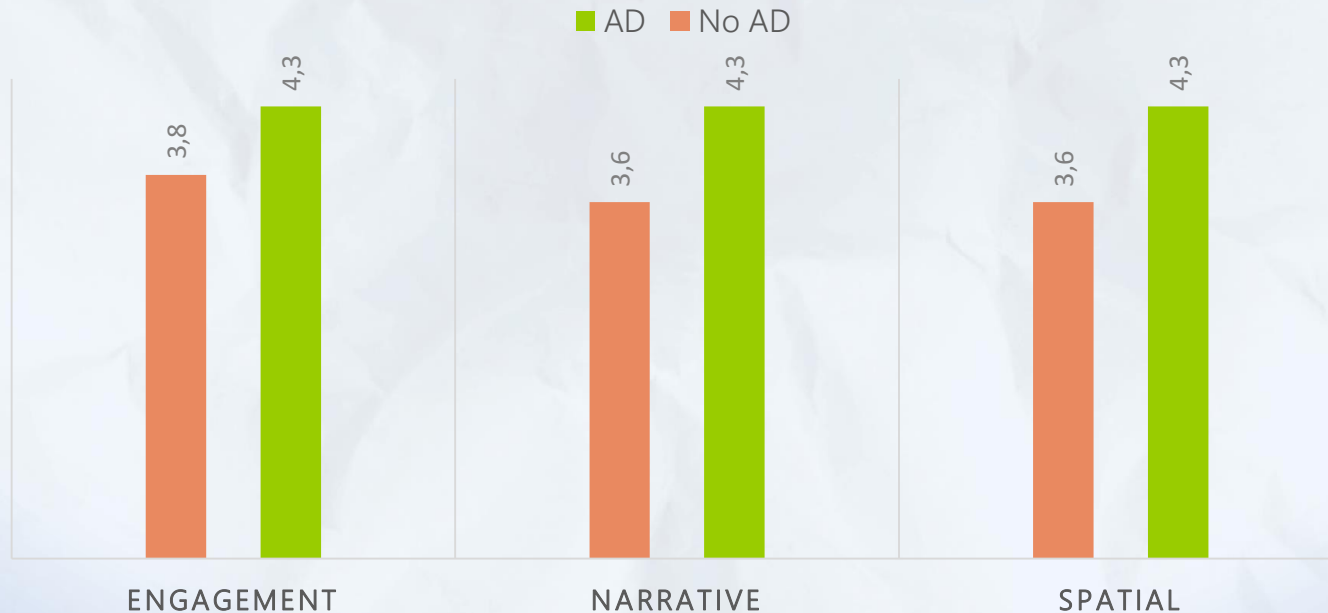
One reaction as an example

"Once again I am amazed at how easily the appropriate access makes me forget all about my disability, on this occasion at the play `The Handicapped`.

Wearing the headphones, with the narrator from the Library for the Blind whispering to me what is taking place on stage, I laugh, I cry, I identify, and above all enjoy this wonderful service.

It is just a shame that I can't keep the headphones on permanently, and listen to the audio description of life."

Iris Ratzabi 's reaction to the play The Handicapped, Performed at the theater in Rishon Lezion, Israel February 9, 2016

Results: Patterns of Participation

Considerations, Challenges & Obstacles	Much / very much (%)
Quality of the play	82
Availability of an escort	71
Quality of the actor's performance	65
Available transportation	61
Difficulty comprehending content	56
Distance of theater from residence	46
Accessibility of the theater	46
Accessibility of box office	40
Overall expense of theater outing	39
Price of theater ticket	37
Scheduling of the performance	22

"What really affects the possibility to attend plays is the ability to find and pay for an escort. We cannot walk without an escort. It's very hard to manage by ourselves."

Conclusions: AD in Live Theater

- Overall high satisfaction from AD
  - Enhanced the quality of the theater experience
  - Particularly enhanced understanding

- The **Pre Show Notes** and **Touch Tour** are valuable components to AD in the theater

- Other Important factors to enable participation:
  - physical accessibility
  - companion required
  - maintenance of the assistive devices

Occupational Therapist's Pivotal Role within the Team

- To provide a broad perspective on accessibility and assistive technology

- To identify and measure the variables of the person, their environment, and the interaction between them

Thank you
Toda Raba