

**(In)Accessibility of cultural spaces
and live events in Slovakia**

Eva Verebová

Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra

eva.verebova@ukf.sk

Abstract

The proposed paper aims to explore the current state of accessibility of cultural spaces and live events in Slovakia in relation to audiences with special needs, focusing mainly on the D/deaf and hard of hearing (DHOH) and theatres. It examines what should the target recipients here be able to have access to thanks to their legal rights and what they can really access in practice. The paper delimits the objects of interest taken into consideration for the purposes of this research; introduces some of the most relevant legislative documents in effect in the domestic and broader context; analyses the situation in Slovakia – mainly by collecting publicly available information on the Internet – and compares it with strategies exercised beyond its borders; and presents our findings of a questionnaire aimed at gaining insights from theatres themselves into the accessibility of theatrical performances. Even though there are initiatives (most notably film or theatre festivals) striving to provide accessible events, Slovakia is still lagging behind some other countries in terms of the studied topic and is far from the ideal situation of all audiovisual media content being completely accessible to everyone – with or without a special need. The paper also draws on examples of good practice from countries where accessibility of cultural spaces and live events is better developed than in Slovakia to on the one hand provide evidence of what works elsewhere and what might possibly serve as a useful source of inspiration for our country, and on the other hand to further support its own claims.

Verebová, Eva. 2023. (In)Accessibility of cultural spaces and live events in Slovakia. In: *Bridge: Trends and Traditions in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. Vol. 4, No. 2: pp. 38-59.

1. Introduction

Theatrical performances or other live events are subjects that have so far not received sufficient attention within Translation Studies research done in the Slovak cultural space. Most domestic AVT-related publications have focused mainly on films and dubbing, and later the orientation broadened to TV broadcasting, the cinema and subtitles (cf. Janecová and Tyšš 2014, 177-180; Perez, Brezovská and Jánošíková 2021; Gromová et al. 2016), but theatre as an object of interest is still almost completely absent. Although both “older” (cf. Svrčková 2017; Gromová et al. 2013) as well as more recent works published in Slovak (Hefty and Hefty 2022) or even English (cf. Secarř and Perez 2022) are an asset, in comparison with works from abroad (cf. e.g. Fryer and Cavallo 2022; Zárate 2021; Griesel 2005, 2009; Mateo 2007; Di Giovanni 2022; Richardson 2017; Hansen 2014; Secarř 2019) domestic research still lags far behind, especially when it comes to media accessibility within theatre.

In this paper we chose to concentrate primarily on theatres and live events. In recent years, the popularity of streaming platforms has increased significantly, resulting in a growing demand for audiovisual translation (AVT) in the translation market, as well as growing public awareness of the final products of AVT, especially subtitles and dubbing. However, a huge amount of audiovisual media content is far from being accessible to viewers with special needs, although its quantity in accessible form for people with sensory impairments is gradually increasing. For example, according to an analysis of the state of audiovisual translation in TV broadcasting in Slovakia between 2016 – 2019 by Perez, Brezovská and Jánošíková (2021), the percentage of programmes in sign language or with sign language interpreting increased, based on a sample of 2 major public broadcasters, from 4.8% to approximately 5.6%. The situation in case of 2 analysed prominent private broadcasters was much lower, due to different quotas set for public and private broadcasters in the legislation effective at that time (cf. *ibid.*, 73-101). Nevertheless, Beňacka (2023) claims that “[The private TV broadcaster] *Televízia Markíza* annually produces approximately 850 hours of programmes with closed captions for the D/deaf and hard of hearing viewers and 150 hours of programmes with audio description for the blind and visually impaired viewers.” Thus, accessibility of TV broadcasting content is slowly improving – mainly thanks to legislation (for more information see chapter 2. Legislation), and evidence can be seen also in the relatively large number of relevant Slovak AVT research papers related to TV broadcasting (cf. Tyšš 2018). The case of cinemas is much different, as, according to Bernát (2016, 28): “In reality Slovak films with audio description and subtitles for the D/deaf and hard of hearing are screened in cinemas only exceptionally.” Theatres and live events are of the main focus of this paper, but they are much different, as will be shown in greater detail in the following chapters.

2. Legislation

Media accessibility (MA) requirements and the rights of people with special needs are more or less enshrined in several documents on the international and national level.

One of the key internationally effective documents is the *Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the condition of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities* (2018), which focuses on improving the situation of protection of the rights of people with special needs and claims that “The means to achieve the accessibility of audiovisual media services under Directive 2010/13/EU [(2010)] should include, but need not be limited to, sign language, subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, spoken subtitles, and audio description”. Another very important document dealing with the rights of people with special needs is the *Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services* (2019), which should become national law on 28 June 2025, and there is also the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN General Assembly 2006), which in Article 9 on Accessibility and Article 30 on Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport obliges Member States to endeavour to e.g. “[...] enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life [...]” (ibid., 9), that is, to also “[...] take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life [...]” (ibid., 22). When speaking about Translation Studies it includes e.g. “[...] access to television programmes, films, theatre, and other cultural activities, in accessible formats [...]” (ibid.).

At the national level, of particular importance for the DHOH and MA in Slovakia is the *Decree No. 318/2023 Coll. of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic on Subtitles for the Hearing Impaired* (Hroncová 2023), as it lays down rules concerning technical parameters of subtitles for the D/deaf and hard of hearing (SDH). It is an updated version of the decree which was in force until quite recently (cf. Maďarič 2016) and which was in many parts much less specific than the new one. There is also the *Act No. 40/2015 Coll. on Audiovision and on Amendment and Supplementation of Certain Acts (Zákon č. 40/2015 Z. z. o audiovizíii a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov 2015)* in force, which obliges the distributor of an audiovisual work to provide it with SDH and audio description (AD). Another important document is the *Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on Media Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts (Zákon č. 264/2022 Z. z. o mediálnych službách a o zmene a doplnení*

niektorých zákonov 2022) which sets quotas on accessible content in TV broadcasting.

However, there is a difference between theory and practice. Although according to the documents, people with various special needs have the right to experience and attend cultural events, as well as to use many services, just like people without special needs, after researching the situation in Slovakia, it turns out that the Slovak viewer practically does not have many options.

There are no rules nor supervision in relation to cultural events. Despite the right of the viewers to attend cultural events, neither providers nor organisers have any obligation regarding the access provision means (i.e. SDH, AD or sign language interpreting). Therefore, they lack motivation to make changes and start providing events accessible also to people with special needs. The DHOH or the blind and visually impaired have too few opportunities to enjoy cultural experience in Slovakia, despite the rights they have based on the existing legislation.

3. Good practice in Slovakia and other countries

As Greco (2018) claims, “[t]he first cry of accessibility in contemporary thought and society can be traced back to the same intense debate as that on human dignity, equality, autonomy, and participation that took place in the first decades of the last century, between the end of WWI and that of WWII.” Nonetheless, the state of accessibility varies substantially throughout the world, as the pace of its development differs from country to country. Despite initiatives (mostly film and theatre festivals) which are striving to provide accessible events, Slovakia is still lagging behind several countries with regards to the whole concept of accessibility. This statement is supported in this chapter by examples of good practice from abroad, where the situation of accessibility of cultural spaces and live events is more developed.

The rise in popularity of accessibility is noticeable not only in the academia, but also beyond it (cf. e.g. Romero-Fresco and Fryer 2018; Križková 2021; *Audiovízia bez bariér* 2021, 2022). Although progress is quite slow, it might be only a matter of time before a breakthrough occurs and many more people start to take an interest in it. Perhaps the most significant example of domestic good practice would be the international documentary film festival One World (Jeden svet c2023), which is, according to Perez (Raffi and Perez 2023), the “first film festival in the country incorporating inclusive and integrated access provision strategies”, and which improved the previously existing situation when “no film festival had systematically made its content accessible to blind people.”, as Križková (2021, 8) claims. One World not only provides linguistic access thanks to subtitles and interpreting, but also sensory access via SDH and AD, and also Slovak sign language interpreting during

live discussions. The festival cooperates and organises discussions with access professionals and representatives of communities of the DHOH or the blind and visually impaired.

International theatre festivals like *Divadelná Nitra* or *Nová Dráma* (*New Drama*) provide (predominantly or exclusively), “unfortunately, only” linguistic access via subtitling and interpreting. *Divadelná Nitra* concerns at least a bit with the blind and visually impaired thanks to the *A Tulip for You* (*Darujem ti tulipán c2023*) project which brings to the festival the so called Black Box – an “interactive object for seeing about unseeing” that enables visitors without impairments to authentically experience blindness in complete darkness.

Other accessible cultural events are held mostly thanks to initiatives, which take place usually in cooperation with associations of target communities, for example the civic association Centre of Deaf Culture – Myslím (*Myslím – Centrum kultúry Nepočujúcich c2005 – 2022*) or The Association of the Deaf of Slovakia (*ANEPS c2023*).

Important events in the context of accessibility of theatrical performances include the International Day of the Deaf, which takes place on the last Sunday of every September, as theatrical and other performances are usually held on this day. Moreover, Hefty and Hefty (2022, 10) claim that “Deaf viewers were able to encounter interpreting of music for the first time during the celebration of the International Day of the Deaf in 2010, when both hearing and deaf performers performed at the Aupark shopping centre in Bratislava. The songs of well-known performers were accompanied by interpreting for the deaf.” Another example worth mentioning is the *Divadlo Lab* theatre and a performance called *Deti ticha* (*Children of a Lesser God*) played by it in 2021, because, as Nitschová (2022, 85) says, it was “the first Slovak production incorporating Slovak sign language, which was accessible to both hearing and deaf audience equally.”

An individual group of producers of accessible performances is represented by theatres that directly employ actors with special needs. In Slovakia we have both professional (*Divadlo Tiché iskry* theatre, in which professional as well as amateur D/deaf actors perform) and amateur troupes (*DIKO* Theatre troupe). There are similar ones abroad, for example the *Divadlo Neslyším* theatre in Brno, Czech Republic. However, according to open source information on the websites and social sites of theatres and news channels, it can once again be seen that in general, Slovakia lags far behind several countries in terms of quantity and quality of the provision of accessible theatrical performances or other live events (cf. e.g. Uličianska 2009; Ramps on the Moon c2023; Jacques 2023; Leach 2023; Bywood 2023; Disability Arts Online c2023). Even in the neighbouring Czech Republic the target recipients have more opportunities (cf. Uličianska 2009). Pribylová’s (2015, 26) claim could serve as proof of that, as “the deaf can attend

an interpreted cultural programme at least once a month" there. Very functional and inspirational solutions are already common practice of some theatres in the United Kingdom – some of them employ artists with special needs, provide integrated subtitles (cf. Fryer and Cavallo 2022) and creative solutions such as using AD or theatre sign language interpreting by the actors themselves. The Leeds Playhouse uses British Sign Language interpreting integrated directly into the performance or many other creative solutions, such as the D/deaf characters carrying objects that make specific sounds, so that blind viewers know which characters are on the stage (Leach 2023). The Graeae Theatre Company (Disability Arts Online c2023) puts the D/deaf and actors with some special needs in leading roles and breaks down prejudices. We could also mention technologies that are not used in Slovak theatres but are used abroad, for example smart glasses, downloadable applications for mobile phones or tablets, small screens on the backs of seats, etc. The reason why they are not used is usually due to finances. The historic Chelsea Physic Garden makes use of AD to provide the blind and visually impaired people with a better picture of the garden (Bywood 2023). The UK is praised by Romero-Fresco (2018, 193) too, he claims that it is "arguably one of the leading countries in the world when it comes to MA" and adds that "MA rides the wave of political correctness and equal rights and is a key issue in society." As a final example we will mention the *Italian Inclusive Guides Project* (cf. Di Giovanni and Raffi 2022; Raffi and Perez 2023) which provided training for inclusive guides for theatres and cultural spaces.

It is questionable what would have to be done to make it as easy for the target recipients to be able to attend theatrical performances as it is for the part of Slovak population without special needs. Perhaps Dudášová's (2022, 56) question: "How should we promote theatre (for or by) people with impairments?" and an answer given as a good practice advice from the USA by Koppers (2022, 56) could be helpful a little: "By arousing people's curiosity. Not by emphasizing the social good of a production, but by focusing on the exciting, energizing, innovative or reassuring about a particular work. Also, by employing people with impairments to write reviews. And by hiring more people to create productions. Overall, by employing people with impairments in the arts." Although we know from our existing research that these recommendations would not be sufficient to solve the problem, they point to one of the many barriers accessibility still faces, and which are unlikely to be easily overcome.

4. Accessibility of theatrical performances in Slovakia from the point of view of theatres

It would be impossible to acquire more open source data essential for our work, so in order to gain valuable information regarding the situation of accessibility, we decided to apply one of the quantitative methods of reception studies – a questionnaire – in the next phase of our research. Our aim was to explore the state and causes of (in)accessibility of theatrical performances in Slovakia in relation to audiences with special needs based on the answers received by contacted theatres since the distribution of the questionnaire on 21st August until the deadline for filling it in on 9th September 2023.

Concerning the methodology, the questionnaire focuses on quantitative (e.g. which theatres strive to provide accessible performances, how often, since when...) as well as qualitative data (specific opinions and experience). All theatres had been contacted exclusively via e-mail with a request to fill-in the questionnaire. Their selection had been conducted based on several online lists of theatres in Slovakia and on the availability of contact information. Albeit the lists had never been perfectly complete and updated (so far no such list exists in Slovakia), we chose the most comprehensive ones (cf. e.g. Ministerstvo kultúry Slovenskej republiky [Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic] 2022; Slovenské centrum AICT [Slovak Section of the International Association of Theatre Critics] c2006-2023; Slovak Theater c2018; Nezávislé divadlo [Independent Theatre] c2023). Of the overall 87 addressed theatres, we managed to obtain 22 relevant responses – either in the form of a) a filled in questionnaire (19), b) a filled in questionnaire and additional information sent via e-mail (1), or c) an e-mail response without a filled in questionnaire (2). We consider the ratio of sent and obtained responses satisfactory, especially because despite the number of respondents, many theatres often concurred in their answers and thus indicated the credibility of the overall findings. Out of the 4 national theatres only 1 did not react to the questionnaire (in this research we do not differentiate between the individual sections of drama, opera, and ballet, and perceive them collectively as one theatre, because we received one response per each institution superordinate to those sections). The following theatres in Slovakia are termed “national”: *Divadlo Nová scéna* in Bratislava, *Slovenské národné divadlo* in Bratislava, *Štátna opera* in Banská Bystrica and *Národné divadlo Košice* in the city of Košice – they are professional and the only theatres in the country established (i. e. funded) by the state (cf. The Theatre Institute c2018). Our selected sample includes all national and many other “bigger” – established (by higher territorial units or municipalities) and non-established (they receive financial support from various funds and grants) – theatres. We did not contact amateur,

alternative (they typically play experimental, anti-mainstream performances) at this time, nor solely dance-oriented theatres. The main partial findings of the questionnaire are presented in the following subchapters.

The questionnaire consisted of open, closed as well as semi-closed questions. Based on the first question the respondents were divided into two groups: theatres which provide or have already provided performances accessible to viewers with special needs (40% – 8 theatres) and theatres without this kind of experience (60% – 12 theatres). After that, both groups received different questions which were tailored according to the first question.

Question 1: Do you provide or have you ever provided any performances accessible to viewers with special needs (e.g. viewers with visual or hearing impairment)?

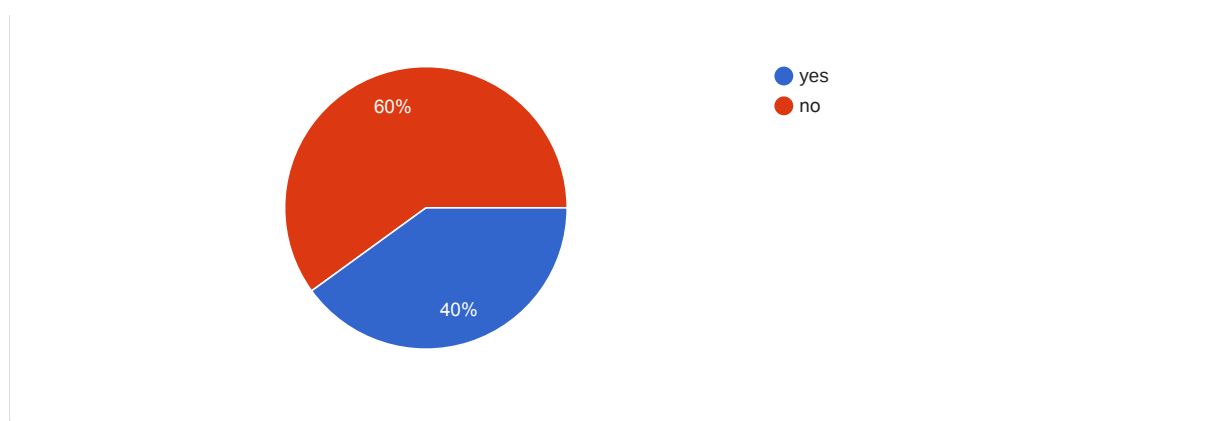


Figure 1. Experience with provision of accessible performances

4.1. Responses of theatres which provide or have already provided performances accessible to viewers with special needs

Question 2: For which group of viewers with special needs have you provided accessible performances?
(multiple answers are possible)

(In)Accessibility of cultural spaces and live events in Slovakia

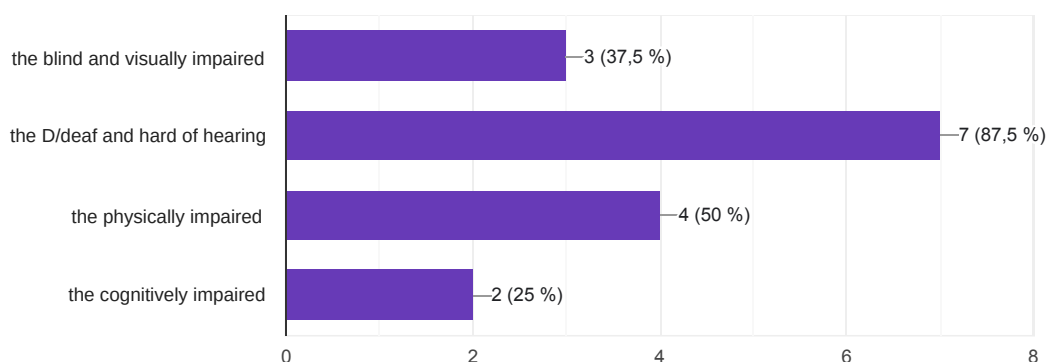


Figure 2. Target group of viewers with special needs

In the graph we can see that the DHOH have the most opportunities to attend performances accessible to them. Out of 8 theatres which provide or have already provided performances accessible to viewers with special needs, 5 chose more than 1 option, which we consider as a positive trend. Out of the remaining 3 theatres, 2 provide or have provided their performances only for the hearing and the DHOH, and 1 for the hearing and the physically impaired audience.

Question 3: How many suchlike performances do you have (currently or not) in your repertoire? If you chose multiple answers in the previous question, differentiate their total amount here and match with corresponding group of viewers.

Two theatres have 1 performance in their repertoire which is (or was) accessible to the DHOH and the blind and visually impaired audience; 2 other theatres – 2 performances for the DHOH; 1 theatre – 3 performances for the DHOH, physically and cognitively impaired; 1 theatre – 5 performances for the physically impaired; 1 theatre – 4 performances out of which 2 are accessible to the DHOH and 2 for the blind and visually impaired (moreover, the same theatre chose also the option with “physically impaired”); 1 theatre probably misinterpreted the question, because it answered that people with physical impairment, a psychiatric diagnosis or some other impairment perform within the theatre, and that it also performs for similar audiences, alongside the mainstream society.

In Question 4 (“Since which year do you provide such performances?”) we received some interesting answers: “In the 90’s we made performances for children and now since 2021 continuously.”; 2019; 2021; 2017; 1987; 2006; “it was a pilot year with a theatre application in development”; 2020.

(In)Accessibility of cultural spaces and live events in Slovakia

Question 5: Do you cooperate or have you ever cooperated with an access professional during the creation of performances accessible to viewers with special needs? If yes, how often do you make use of this option and do/did you have your own (internal) professional or and external one? (multiple answers are possible)

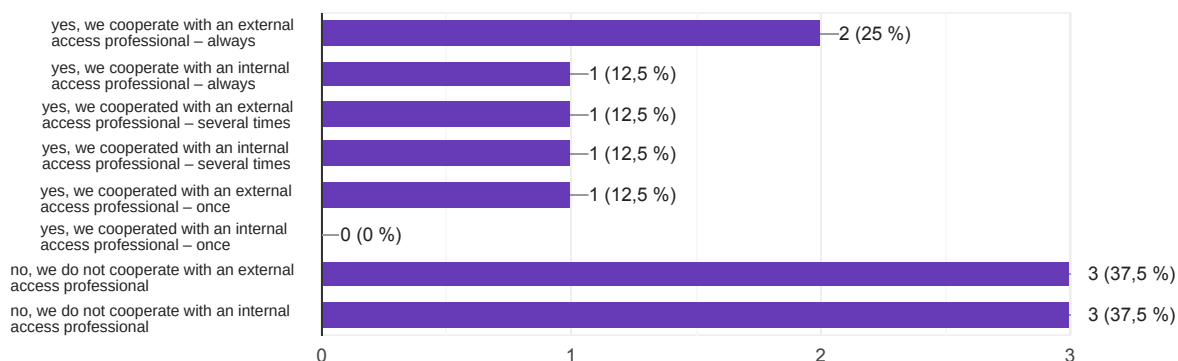


Figure 3. Experience with cooperation with an access professional

We can see a few positive answers in the case of the fifth question too. One theatre cooperated with an external access professional once; 1 other as well, but several times; 1 theatre cooperated with an internal access professional several times; 3 theatres do not cooperate neither with an external, nor internal access professional; 1 theatre always cooperates with an external access professional; 1 theatre always cooperates with both an external and internal access professional.

Question 6: Do you also cooperate or have you ever cooperated with a representative of the respective community (e.g. the Deaf community)? If yes, how often and in what way?

Four theatres answered "no"; 1 theatre cooperates, because a D/deaf actor plays in its performances accessible to the DHOH; 1 theatre cooperated, because the representatives of the community "provided the performers with a series of sign language and sign language interpreting workshops, and they also attended the reruns of the performances"; 1 theatre cooperated for example during the ERROR festival [International festival of homeless theatres]; 1 theatre stated that it always cooperated with the Centre of Deaf Culture – Myslím (Myslím – Centrum kultúry Nepočujúcich c2005 – 2022) and sign language interpreters.

Question 7: What led you to start providing performances accessible to viewers with special needs?

Every theatre was motivated by something else: 1. "Theatre is for everyone and should cross the borders of communication, create space of greater opportunities for all."; 2. "Unfortunately, it is not a regularly played performance."; 3. "An initiative of a student responsible for theatre production."; 4. "interest in the performances of also the physically impaired"; 5. "The opportunity to play for this kind of audience as well, as it is the most appreciative audience."; 6. "life"; 7. "Even the viewers with any kind of impairment can enjoy the performance almost to the fullest, if we provide them with a "guide" thanks to modern technologies."; 8. "We wanted to join the activities of the International Day of the Deaf."

Question 8: What do you see as the biggest challenge of providing such performances?

Due to the diversity and volume of text in the responses we will try to summarise them in a generalised form: 1. Communication with the given communities; 2. Taking into consideration all aspects which can help create a similar type of the production.; 3. Time intensity and coordination of rehearsals.; 4. Awareness about the performance; 5. Giving away the joy from performances for them too.; 6. Understanding the real needs of everyone involved; 7. Development of user-friendly application compatible with the stage manager's console; 8. Adaptability and communication with interpreters.

Question 9: Do you think viewers with special needs in Slovakia have a sufficient selection of theatrical performances which are accessible to them?

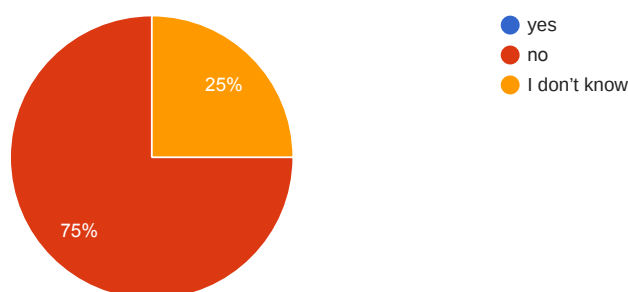


Figure 4. Opinion on the selection of accessible performances 1

It is interesting that 2 theatres could not answer the last question clearly. However, the remaining 6 answers confirm that the state of accessibility is evidently not perceived only by academics, but at least also by practitioners. The reason why the majority of respondents concurred about the insufficiency of the quantity of accessible performances might be, for example, because of their knowledge regarding the situation thanks to cooperation with access professionals or representatives of the community, or perhaps due to the fact that Slovakia is a small country where many people working in the cultural sector (i. e. in theatres as well) know each other and therefore are well informed about current practices elsewhere in the country.

4.2. Responses of theatres which do not provide nor have ever provided performances accessible to viewers with special needs

Question 2: Would you like to provide your performances to viewers with special needs?

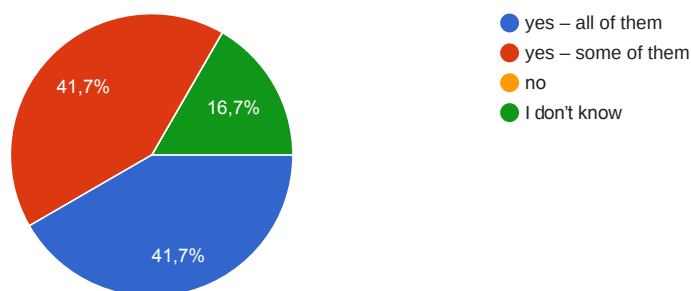


Figure 5. Interest in provision of accessible performances

We presume that the dissension within the answers of theatres to the Question 2 in a ratio of 5 : 5 : 2 probably emerges from the reasons they state in Question 3: "What are the reasons why your theatre does not provide its performances for viewers with special needs? (multiple answers are possible)" and also Question 4: "Briefly elaborate on your previous answer (based on what you mentioned there)".

Out of the 3 suggested answers to the Question 3, 9/12 theatres identify "financial reasons" as the biggest problem, and 7/12 identify also or only "organisational reasons". In addition to "financial" and "organisational reasons", 2 theatres identify also "spatial reasons". The reason for 1 theatre is different – there is no demand by the viewers, and when the DHOH come "once a year", they are given the seats in the first row, and their audience usually includes "autistic children".

Due to some more extensive answers in Question 4 we will try to generalise at least some of them again: 1. absence of barrier-free access, technical, staff and financial demands; 2. and 3. lack of financial resources and technical support; 4. "a private theatre without any support by the state"; 5. "We are a non-established theatre and we operate thanks to subsidy schemes, which are not exactly set up in the best way in Slovakia. Financially we can barely cover our basic functioning and any extra activity without additional subsidy would be staff-wise and technically beyond our capabilities."; 6. "independent theatre without its own space for performances", technical and organisational reasons; 7. the answer from the only theatre which mentioned a different reason in Question 3: states that "If a production is unsuitable e.g. for epileptics or otherwise disabled people, we always indicate it in the performances, so that they can mentally prepare for it. Most of the time, the viewers come with an escort, and they have a discounted admission at our theatre."; 8. spatial reasons (capacity of 50 seats) and, "we are financially subject to a very restricted grant scheme"; 9. technical, staff and financial reasons; 10. staff reasons, although "This is currently unmanageable for us in relation to all performances, but we can imagine a pre-organised performance for people with special needs."; 11. insufficient means to cover current staff costs; 12. the specificity and quantity of texts of the theatre, "it would be a minimal experience for the deaf", financial reasons.

Question 5: Do you think viewers with special needs would be interested in your performances, if they were accessible to them?

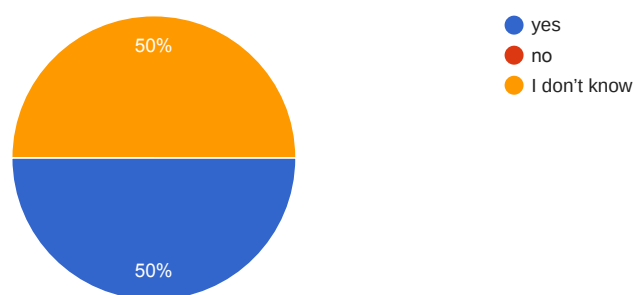


Figure 6. Opinion on the interest in performances if they were accessible

Within Question 5, we find another valuable finding. One of several possible reasons for the indecisive answer could be, for example, prejudice against viewers with special needs and the assumption that these viewers

(In)Accessibility of cultural spaces and live events in Slovakia

would not be able to perceive or adequately interpret a performance of the given theatre.

Question 6: Did you know that for the purpose of creation of theatrical performances accessible to viewers with special needs you can cooperate with specialised access professionals or with representatives of the respective communities (e.g. the Deaf community)? (multiple answers are possible)

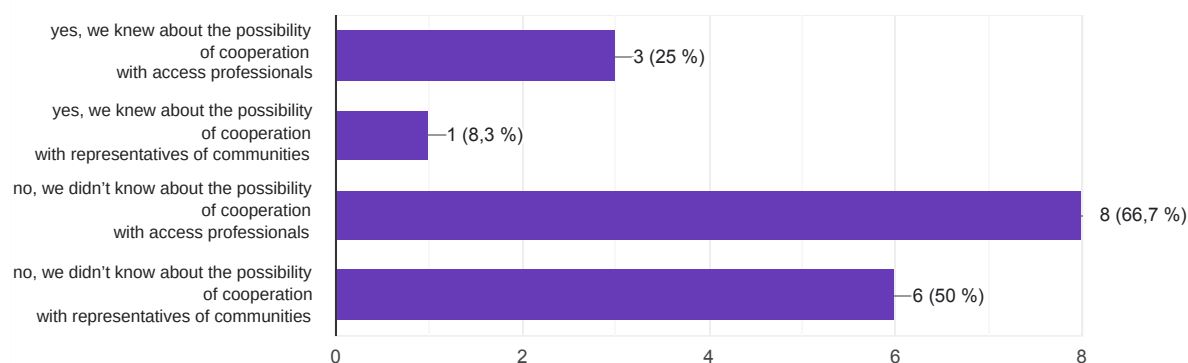


Figure 7. Possibilities of cooperation with access professionals and representatives of communities

Except for 3 theatres which claimed in Question 6 that they either 1. knew about the possibility of cooperation with access professionals (2 theatres), or 2. knew about the possibility of cooperation with access professionals as well as with representatives of communities (1 theatre), all remaining theatres checked 1 or 2 answers of nescience about the possibility of cooperation with access professionals or representatives of communities.

Question 7: If you were providing performances accessible to viewers with special needs, would you make use of the opportunity of cooperation with a specialised access professional?

(In)Accessibility of cultural spaces and live events in Slovakia

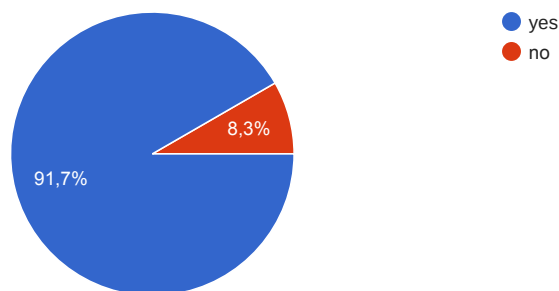


Figure 8. Willingness to cooperate with an access professional

Question 8: If you were providing performances accessible to viewers with special needs, would you make use of the opportunity of cooperation with a representative of some community?

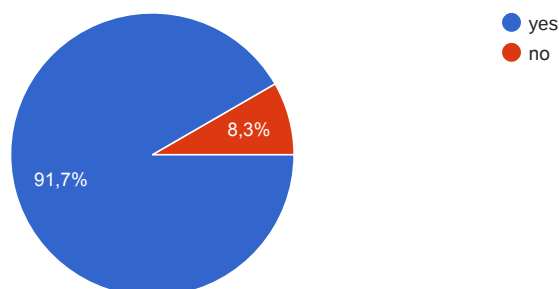


Figure 9. Willingness to cooperate with a representative of a community

Question 9: What would you consider to be the positives and negatives of cooperation with representatives of respective groups of audience?

Positives mentioned by the theatres included: repertoire expansion; improvement of the positive character of the theatre; personal and professional growth; inclusion into the community; culture for all; increase of the number of viewers; theoretical and practical expertise; expansion of the audience by an interesting community, which can be a great asset for further work; outreach to the respective groups; inclusion; art truly for all.

The negatives referred to by the theatres included: the need of own space, the overall orientation of the theatre, current unimaginable cooperation with regard to the genres performed by the theatre (dramatic

comedies); the focus of the theatre on visual perceptions; expertise and designation of realistic possibilities, especially the equipment which would suit the respective groups of viewers the most; the time-consuming nature of preparing events for respective groups of viewers; the disruption of the artistic experience of the work caused by subtitling, the dramaturgy subject to the needs of artistic education; extra organisational cost.

Question 10: Do you think viewers with special needs in Slovakia have a sufficient selection of theatrical performances which are accessible to them?

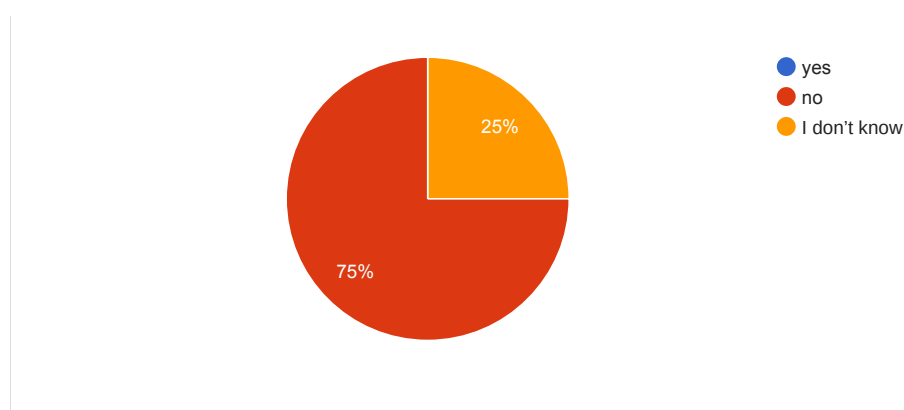


Figure 10. Opinion on the selection of accessible performances 2

As the most remarkable phenomenon discovered in the questionnaire we consider the percentage match in the ratio of answers by theatres from both groups in case of the last identical question. In this case the ratio is 9 : 3, in the previous case 6 : 2. Despite the nescience of the respondents about the possibility of cooperation with access professionals or representatives of communities, they still do not lack the knowledge regarding the real state of the issue. The reason could be the same as we previously mentioned in our interpretation of Figure 4. about the interconnectedness and awareness of peers working in the cultural sector and theatres in general. The potential reason for the indecisive responses might be insufficient knowledge about the target users or maybe even passivity of the target users or their representatives in this context.

4.3. Questionnaire results

The findings from the questionnaire helped us to better understand the opinions of theatres on the provision of accessible performances, and also the causes and reasons why we do not have more initiatives in Slovakia which would provide such performances. If we

were to summarise the key findings, they would be as follows: 1. Theatres in Slovakia do not have a negative attitude to the notion of accessibility. For example, even though our questionnaire was not filled in by a certain theatre, it expressed its long-term interest in addressing the issue via e-mail. 2. Lack of awareness among the theatres about the possibilities of cooperation with access professionals and representatives of communities of people with special needs; 3. Lack of funding for theatres; organisational and technical problems; 4. The opinions of many theatres on the provision of their performances to viewers with special needs are mostly positive. As one theatre stated: "I don't see any negatives, if we had that opportunity of providing them with an accessible performance, then from the very moment when the play starts they are exactly the same audience members to us as anyone else. Their reactions, whatever they are, are as important to us as anyone else's."; 5. Theatres would be willing to deal with accessibility under certain assumptions (financial, staff, technical, organisational issues).

5. Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to map the current situation of (in)accessibility of cultural spaces and live events in Slovakia to audiences with special needs with the focus on viewers with sensory impairment, mostly the D/deaf and hard of hearing.

The paper consists of an overview of relevant academic and legislative literature, a summary of the current situation of accessibility of our objects of interest, examples of domestic and foreign good practice and a practical survey comprising a questionnaire carried out with selected theatres aiming to explore the state of accessibility of theatrical performances in Slovakia from their point of view. Based on an analysis of the questionnaire we drew conclusions important for further research.

Despite all our findings presented in this paper, much more information needs to be revealed in relation to our research topic. For example, opinions of the other groups of viewers with hearing impairment, i.e. the hard of hearing, the deafened or non-signers, are still not yet known to us. Therefore, more research needs to be done to fill the domestic Translation Studies- and AVT-related research gap.

Acknowledgements

This article was supported by the project UGA III/11/2023 *Dostupnosť divadelných predstavení pre divákov s poruchou sluchu*.

References:

ANEPS. c2023. *O nás*. <https://aneps.sk/o-nas/#>. Accessed on: 23 October 2023.

Audiovizia bez bariér. 2021. <https://www.jedensvet.sk/podujatie/audio-vizia-bez-barier/>. Accessed on: 26 October 2023.

Audiovizia bez bariér II: Aj nevidiaci majú právo na kino. 2022. <https://www.jedensvet.sk/podujatie/audiovizia-bez-barier-ii-aj-nevidiaci-maju-pravo-na-kino/>. Accessed on: 26 October 2023.

Beňačka, Lukáš. 2023. *Reflex*. <https://www.markiza.sk/relacie/reflex/epizoda/158522-21-11-2023>. Accessed on: 23 November 2023.

Bernát, Daniel. 2016. Slovenské filmy a sluchovo a zrakovo postihnutí diváci. In: *Film.sk*. 2016(10): pp. 28-29.

Bywood, Lindsay. 2023. *Devisualising the Museum: From Access to Inclusion*. <https://youtu.be/znYrlduut4I>. Accessed on: 23 October 2023.

Darujem ti tulipán. c2023. *Black Box výbeh, tulipán online a tulipán túr Divadelná Nitra 2020*. <https://www.darujemtitulipan.sk>. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Di Giovanni, Elena. 2022. Inclusive theatre-making: Participation, empowerment and well-being. In: *inTRAlinea*. 24(Special Issue: Inclusive Theatre: Translation, Accessibility and Beyond).

Di Giovanni, Elena and Raffi, Francesca. 2022. Inclusive Theatres as Boosters of Wellbeing: Concepts and Practices. In: *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*. 5(1): pp. 166-185.

Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive). 2010. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32010L0013>. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the condition of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities.

2018. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services. 2019. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L0882>. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Disability Arts Online. c2023. *Graeae Theatre Company*. <https://disabilityarts.online/directory/graeae-theatre-company/>. Accessed on: 26 October 2023.

Dudášová, Dominika. 2022. Zmena príde od nás!. In: *kød*. 16(6): pp. 51-57.

Fryer, Louise and Cavallo, Amelia. 2022. *Integrated Access in Live Performance*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Greco, Gian Maria. 2018. The nature of accessibility studies. In: *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*. 1(1): pp. 205-232.

Griesel, Yvonne. 2005. Surtitles and Translation: Towards an Integrative View of Theater Translation. In: Gerzymisch-Arbogast, Heidrun and Nauert, Sandra (eds.). 2005. *MuTra: Challenges of Multidimensional Translation*. Saarbrücken: MuTra.

Griesel, Yvonne. 2009. Surtitling: Surtitles an other hybrid on a hybrid stage. In: *TRANS: Revista de Traductología*. 2009(13): pp. 119-127.

Gromová, Edita; Hodáková, Soňa; Janecová, Emília; Müglová, Daniela and Filípková, Antónia. 2013. *Translácia v divadelnej komunikácii*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre.

Gromová, Edita; Hodáková, Soňa; Perez, Emília and Zahorák, Andrej. 2016. *Audiovizuálny preklad a nepočujúci divák: Problematika titulkovania pre nepočujúcich*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre.

Hansen, Chloe. 2014. *Theatrical Interpreting: An Explanation of the Process*. [https://wou.omeka.net/s/repository/item?fulltext_search=%22honors theses/15%22](https://wou.omeka.net/s/repository/item?fulltext_search=%22honors%20theses/15%22). Accessed on: 23 October 2023.

Hefty, Michal and Hefty, Angela. 2022. *Divadelné tlmočenie do slovenského posunkového jazyka*. Trnava: Pedagogická fakulta Trnavskej univerzity v Trnave, Bratislava: Myslím – centrum kultúry Nepočujúcich.

Hroncová, Silvia. 2023. *Vyhláška Ministerstva kultúry Slovenskej republiky 318/2023 Z. z. o titulkoch pre osoby so sluchovým postihnutím*. https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2023/318/20240101?fbclid=IwAR1-Wu85qyfsQrNeoST2_65x-ZSCi1HxTg LZ5NUWKTp6RgX-Ib7HFLrXtco. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Jacques, Codi. 2023. *Theatre For All: Accessibility And Inclusivity On The Big Stage*. <https://uncoverliverpool.com/features/theatre-for-all-accessibility-and-inclusivity-on-the-big-stage/>. Accessed on: 25 October 2023.

Janecová, Emília and Tyšš, Igor. 2014. Bibliografia slovenských prác o audiovizuálnom preklade do roku 2013. In: Gromová, Edita and Janecová, Emília (eds.). 2014. *Audiovizuálny preklad: výzvy a perspektívy*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre. pp. 176-180.

Jeden svet. c2023. *Everything you need to know about the One World Slovakia festival*. <https://www.jedensvet.sk/en/about-us/>. Accessed on: 26 October 2023.

Križková, Eva. 2021. *Manuál prístupnosti pre filmové podujatia na Slovensku*. Bratislava: Človek v ohrození, n. o.

Kuppers, Petra. 2022. Zmena príde od nás!. In: *kød*. 16(6): pp. 51-57.

Leach, Amy. 2023. *Why Access Shouldn't Be An Afterthought: A Director's Journey in Creatively Integrated Access*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kIVUI_bO6UI. Accessed on: 25 October 2023.

Maďarič, Marek. 2016. *Vyhláška Ministerstva kultúry Slovenskej republiky 12/2016 Z. z. o titulkoch pre osoby so sluchovým postihnutím*. https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2016/12/vyhlasene_znenie.html. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Mateo, Marta. 2007. Surtitling today: new uses, attitudes and developments. In: *Linguistica Antverpiensia, New Series – Themes in Translation Studies*. 6: pp. 135-154. <https://doi.org/10.52034/lanstts.v6i.184>

Ministerstvo kultúry Slovenskej republiky. 2022. *Evidencia profesionálnych divadiel v Slovenskej republike*. https://www.culture.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2022-03-23_evidencia_profesionalnych_divadiel_v_SR.pdf. Accessed on: 28 October 2023.

Myslím – Centrum kultúry Nepočujúcich. c2005 – 2022. *O nás*. <https://www.myslim.sk/sk/node/145>. Accessed on: 25 October 2023.

Nezávislé divadlo. c2023. *Objavte nezávislé slovenské divadlá*. <https://nezavisledivadlo.sk/divadla>. Accessed on: 28 October 2023.

Nitschová, Barbora. 2022. Medoff trojjazyčne. In: *kød*. 16(6): pp. 85-86.

Perez, Emília; Brezovská, Miroslava and Jánošíková, Zuzana. 2021. *Slovenský dabing a titulkovanie v premenách času*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre.

Pribylová, Veronika. 2015. *Tlmočnické služby v Českej republike a Slovenskej republike*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.

Raffi, Francesca and Perez, Emília. 2023. *Accessibility to Cultural Spaces: Training and Good Practices*. <https://youtu.be/FvmoeISN5Nk>. Accessed on: 25 October 2023.

Ramps on the Moon. c2023. *Who we are*. <https://rampsonthemoon.co.uk/who-we-are/>. Accessed on: 26 October 2023.

Richardson, Michael. 2017. The Sign Language Interpreting in Theatre: Using the Human Body to Create Pictures of the Human Soul. In: *Transcultural: A Journal of Translation and Cultural Studies*. 9(1): pp. 45-62.

Romero-Fresco, Pablo. 2018. In support of a wide notion of media accessibility: Access to content and access to creation. In: *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*. 1(1): pp. 187-204.

Romero-Fresco, Pablo and Fryer, Louise. 2018. *Accessible filmmaking guide*. London: British Film Institute.

Secarň, Alina. 2019. Surtitling and Captioning for Theatre and Opera. In: Pérez-González, Luis (ed.). 2019. *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation*. London; New York: Routledge. pp. 130-144.

Secarň, Alina and Perez, Emília. 2022. Addressing content, technical and collaboration concerns in providing access to the D/deaf and hard of hearing audience: Integrated theatre captioning and theatre sign language interpreting. In: *inTRAlinea*. 24(Special Issue: Inclusive Theatre: Translation, Accessibility and Beyond).

Slovak Theater. c2018. *Zoznam divadiel na Slovensku*. <https://www.odivadle.sk/divadla/>. Accessed on: 28 October 2023.

Slovenské centrum AICT. c2006-2023. *Divadlá*. <https://monitoringdivadiel.sk/divadla/>. Accessed on: 28 October 2023.

Svrčková, Kristína. 2017. *Tvorba titulkov k divadelným predstaveniam ako špecifický typ translačného procesu*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre.

The Theatre Institute. c2018. *Established*. <https://www.theatre.sk/en/sluzby/divadla-a-festivaly/zriadovane>. Accessed on: 27 October 2023.

Tyšš, Igor. 2018. Audiovisual translation meets Slovak translation studies: a historian's take on a discipline in the making. In: *TRANSLATOLOGIA*. Nitra: Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. 2018(1): pp. 2-22.

Uličianska, Zuzana. 2009. *Tiché divadlo*. <https://kultura.sme.sk/c/4345068/tiche-divadlo.html>. Accessed on: 25 October 2023.

UN General Assembly. 2006. *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>. Accessed on: 21 October 2023.

Verebová, Eva. 2023. *Prístupnosť divadelných predstavení: transferové, recepčné a technické aspekty titulkovania pre divákov s poruchou sluchu*. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre.

Zákon č. 264/2022 Z. z. o mediálnych službách a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov (zákon o mediálnych službách). 2022. <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/264/20230101.html>. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Zákon č. 40/2015 Z. z. o audiovizii a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov. 2015. <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2015/40/20230101.html#>. Accessed on: 24 October 2023.

Zárate, Soledad. 2021. *Captioning and Subtitling for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Audiences*. London: UCL Press.