

EASIT: Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training

Anna Matamala and Pilar Orero

TransMedia Catalonia

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Campus UAB, 08193 Barcelona

Anna.matamala|Pilar.orero@uab.cat

Abstract

This paper presents EASIT, an Erasmus + funded project that aims to define the skills of a new professional profile in Easy Reading (ER) and to develop innovative training materials. The focus in the EASIT project is on audiovisual content and on the hybridization of ER with other existing access services such as subtitling.

1 Introduction

Easy Reading (ER) is an access service that creates or adapts texts so that they are easier to read and understand (Tronback 1996, García Muñoz 2014, Maass 2015). Originally focused on printed texts and addressed to persons with reading difficulties or cognitive disabilities, ER can actually benefit all types of users. It can also be expanded to other formats, such as audiovisual content, by importing or adapting ER guidelines into other access services and formats (Bernabé and Orero forthcoming).

Open source training materials in ER are scarce and the professional profile of the experts involved in ER is not yet fully established across Europe, hence the EASIT project was born. EASIT aims to define the skills of the new professional or expert in ER, to design a curriculum in ER and to develop innovative educational materials, while approaching certification. To define both the professional skills and the content of the open educational resources, it will be necessary to define current practices and analyse how they can be transferred into the audiovisual realm.

The project, led by Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, involves partners from different backgrounds and countries: Spanish, German and Italian universities (Universidade de Vigo, Sprachen und Dolmetscher Institut Munchen, Stiftung Universität Hildesheim, Università degli Studi di Trieste), Swedish and Slovenian

associations (Dyslexiförbundet, Zavod RISA), and a broadcaster (RTV Slovenija).

This paper aims to provide a wide overview of the project, which started in September 2018 and will last three years, highlighting the work done in its initial stages.

2 Understanding current practices

There are existing guidelines and recommendations at European and national level on ER (Inclusion Europe 2009, IFLA 2010, Accessible Working Group 2011), with specific work in areas such as health and social care services (Mencap 2013), to put just one example. An experimental standard has also been developed in Spain (UNE 2018), and a proposal for a standard at ISO is currently being discussed. However, a better understanding of ER practice and training needs to be achieved, in order to identify shared practices across Europe. This will be achieved in the EASIT project by means of an extensive survey. Additionally, since our interest lies on audiovisual content, it is crucial to discuss with professionals involved both in ER and audiovisual media accessibility how ER could be merged with other existing access services such as audio description, subtitling or audio subtitling. This aim will be achieved by means of focus groups or interviews with audiovisual access service experts, who will discuss how ER guidelines could be transferred to audiovisual content. The design for the survey, for the focus group protocol and for the semi-structured interview is currently being developed in a collaborative way by all project partners, and will then be translated into the project languages.

3 Profile and curriculum definition

Based on the input received from the previous steps in the project, a skills card for the new professional profile will be developed. This new professional will be able to create ER content

from scratch or adapt existing content, two of the current possible scenarios. The project will also consider the possibility of defining the profile of the users validating the ER content. Finally, the project will also evaluate how additional skills could be added to already existing profiles developed as part of the projects ADLAB PRO (on audio description) and ILSA (on subtitling). This aspect is highly innovative as it proposes to merge already established skills with new ones, improving the professionals' employability.

The next step in the project will be to design a curriculum to train the experts in ER, by defining learning outcomes, curriculum and course structure, and number of credits. In this regard, it would be interesting to consider also both situations indicated above, namely professionals who are trained on ER but also professionals who have already been trained in other audiovisual access modes and want to expand their skills. All this process will be carried out taking into account certification procedures available at European level in order to guarantee the project sustainability and impact.

4 Creating educational resources

The central part of the EASIT project will be the creation of multilingual training materials both for standard ER and for hybrid services in which ER may be integrated (easy-to-read subtitles, easy-to-read audio description, etc.).

Following Europe's open access agenda, materials will be openly available and will allow both for self-learning and for their inclusion in existing courses. In other words, the aim is not to create a finished and closed course, but to generate open access materials that can be used in different educational settings.

Although ER includes many language-dependent features, the focus on the current project will be on multilingual generic content that can be shared across Europe. The content will be created first in English and then translated into different languages (Catalan, Galician, German, Italian, Slovene, Spanish, and Swedish), representing Europe's multilingual nature.

When creating training materials on an access services such as ER, accessibility features will be taken into account. This is why EASIT has a

dedicated Accessibility Manager who will take care of accessibility issues by suggesting the best strategy when developing materials. In this regard, accessibility will not be considered an afterthought but will be part of the content development itself.

5 Conclusions

Generating content which is easier to read and easier to understand is much needed in many areas of our society. All users, regardless of their capabilities, should have access to information in a clear and understandable format. However, in order to provide high quality content that diverse users can understand, more training opportunities are needed. Providing the tools and resources for such training to be a reality across Europe is the ultimate aim of the project, which will not stay only in the academic sphere but will also involve end users and relevant stakeholders. In this regard, EASIT follows the slogan "nothing for us without us" and puts users at the center of its methodological design, by involving user representatives together with broadcasters, trainers and researchers.

Credits

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