

Quality Training in real time subtitling across EU and EU languages

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Abstract

The need for real time subtitles has risen since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the European Accessibility Act and the Audiovisual Media Service Directive. Both urge providers to ensure access to people with a visual or hearing disability. Yet, the provision across Europe is uneven and its quality uncontrolled (European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, 2015) or insufficient (Romero, 2015). Nowadays, most subtitlers are untrained, and have no clear or recognized professional status (European Project ACT, 2015)

LiveTextAccess (LTA) is a project that approaches the mismatch between trained and needed skills in the labour market by a collaboration between educational and non-educational partners. Subtitlers trained by LTA will have suitable skills to provide high-quality subtitles by respeaking or Velotype in four different contexts: cultural events, parliamentary assemblies, broadcasts and education, and for three working settings: face-to-face, online and by relay.

LTA opens job opportunities for people with and without disabilities. The harmonized profiles, skills frames and

competence requirements, and the ready-to-use materials will allow for easy implementation at Universities and companies. Further, LTA opens a training pathway outside the universities for current professionals willing to develop new skills through vocational training.

1 Introduction

Real time subtitles can be produced in three ways: by stenotype, respeaking or Velotype. Stenotyping is reliable and accurate but it is language specific, and only exists in very few European languages. The training takes long and the service is expensive.

The second one, respeaking, implies using a speech recognition software to transfer voice to text. Respeaking is the less expensive option and the most used one nowadays. However, end-users criticize the uneven quality delivered (Romero et al 2015). The number of available languages is limited, and the training focuses on the experience of the trainers.

The third one is Velotype, an EU developed system between the previous two in terms of quality, delay and cost. The Velotype keyboard produces whole syllables or words with every keystroke. Trained subtitlers can type at the speed of speech for longer periods. It covers over 30 languages, and has shown to deliver superior results in noisy environments and when it comes to high quality orthographic typing.

LTA focuses on respeaking and Velotype, since they cover the greater number of languages and working scenarios, respond to the market demands and thus shows a higher employability potential.

2 Objectives

Many EU research projects have been funded on media accessibility (e.g. DTV4ALL, ACCESSIBLE, ADLAB, HBB4ALL, SUMAT, SAVAS). However, to our knowledge, the professional nor the recognition aspect involved in media accessibility has not yet been covered in any EU funded projects¹. LTA fills this gap. Media accessibility is gaining momentum, and it is high time to think and organise a new curriculum and define a new quality professional profiles who can be deployed in different media, social and cultural contexts.

LTA aims are:

- Increase employability by creating certified qualifications that will train professionals on the existing needed skills. The prospective trainees are: translation and interpreting graduates and postgraduates, professionals already working as translators or interpreters, real time subtitlers or other professionals who want to expand their skills, and become Intralingual Respeakers and/or Velotypists. The certified trainings will be available for both academic and vocational levels: ECTS/ECVETS. The flexible and modular design will allow to implement the courses in different institutions, be it at Universities, as professional courses, or as in-house trainings.
- Promote an Information for all approach (Greco, 2016). LTA aims to benefit a wider target group of real time subtitles viewers. This includes vulnerable audiences (deaf and hard of hearing viewers, physically challenged groups, people with special needs and learning disabilities) but also foreign audiences. In this regard, migrants, refugees and marginalized groups will acutely benefit from subtitles that allow them to improve their language skills, thus facilitating their integration in the new culture.
- Create flexible Open Educational Resources (OER) that can be integrated in different learning environments and catered to the needs of various trainees'

profiles, also blind and low sighted trainees. This open access digital approach supports the modernization of training systems and produces flexible materials that can be re-purposed in different learning situations. LTA adopts a strategic and integrated use of ICTs and OER in training putting the trainee at the centre of the learning process by generating content that can be used for self-learning, in flipped learning environments and in class.

- Conduct user centered evaluation with prospective trainers and trainees to secure the quality of the resources and the trained skills, and the certification.

The wide scope of LTA can only be reached through transnational cooperation and networking of diverse EU realities. The LTA consortium will assure that EU linguistic and cultural diversity is taken into account in the curriculum and material.

The complementary mix of educational and non-educational partners will assure exchange of expertise coming from different sectors (academia/industry/end-users) and operating in countries with different local or national subtitling traditions. A bottom-up cross-sectorial collaboration will be used to define the curriculum and the necessary digital technology, to outline existing and emerging solutions, possible innovation, not only for training but also for the deployment of real time subtitling.

References

¹ At the EU eACCESS+ web, www.eaccessplus.eu/education_survey, not a single education or training programme could be found.