



# **UNIT 3C. EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND (E2U) AND AUDIOVISUAL JOURNALISM (AVJ)**

## **ELEMENT 1. PROCESSES**

### **GENERAL AND E2U AUDIOVISUAL JOURNALISM**

#### **Video Lecture Transcript**

#### **Slide 1**

Welcome to Unit 3c, Easy-to-understand and audiovisual journalism.

Element 1. Processes. What is general and E2U audiovisual journalism?

I am Ester Hedberg, from the Swedish National Association for Dyslexia.

#### **Slide 2 - Overview**

In this short presentation I will focus on a few important journalistic components and what to think about when creating audiovisual journalism in easy language.

These components are:

- selecting relevant news



- time
- truth
- making the content interesting

### **Slide 3 - Accessible journalism**

Making audiovisual news easier to understand can be done by means of accessibility services such as audio description and audio subtitles in both standard and simplified formats. But these are not always enough. Sometimes the content itself needs to be made easier to understand. That goes for both verbal and visual content.

If you listen to the interviews with users, which you can find in this unit as "Users voice", you will learn that pace is crucial. Users that have difficulties following standard news shows on TV or the radio often need more time to reflect and digest information.

In this unit you will also find videos dealing with verbal, visual and technical issues, for instance "The Process of Creation, Adaptation and Validation of E2U Audiovisual Journalistic Content" and "Simplifying language and style of audiovisual journalistic texts".

### **Slide 4 - Democracy**

Before continuing with this lecture, I would like to say a few words about the importance of journalism. In the book "The elements of journalism", Kovach and Rosenstiel write that: "The quality of our democratic life depends, in short, on the public having the facts and being able to make sense of them" (2014, p21).



## Slide 5 - Purpose

They also write that: “The primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing” (2014, p28).

The citizens that Kovach and Rosenstiel are referring to are you and me. All of us. As individuals we need to know what is happening around us to participate in society on an equal basis, to speak up for ourselves, and to fulfill our social duties, such as voting in an election. It does not matter who we are or what abilities or disabilities we have. Journalism, in its true meaning, is really important for all of us. And for democracy.

## Slide 6 - Selection

With that in mind, what is journalism?

Smith and Higgins write in their book “The Language of Journalism” (2020, p. 1) that, “The items that make up the news agenda are not randomly assembled, nor are they the outcome of a natural and unchanging order. Rather, journalism is a matter of selection.”

Selecting the right news is always a challenge for journalists. It is the great responsibility of the journalist to choose the right news – meaning the right news for the news consumer.

And this is really worth a discussion. Should you as a journalist provide the same news topics for consumers of easy language news as for consumers of standard language news?



## **Slide 7 - Relevance**

Of course you should. But maybe not exclusively. Because as a journalist you also need to think about what is relevant for your particular target audience. What are their interests? You must know your audience and it has to be reflected in the news you select.

## **Slide 8 - Needs of the audience**

If you are producing news in easy language for second language learners, there will be certain particular issues that are of more interest to them than to others. If you produce easy language news for people with cognitive difficulties, there might be some other issues that are important to them.

You must know what your audience needs. Not only for selecting the right news, but also when deciding how to describe the news and which words to use. For a second language learner you may need to explain some cultural features that are most likely very familiar to the rest of the audience.

## **Slide 9 - Time**

Time is always an important factor in broadcast news shows. But it is even more important when presenting news in easy language. And in particular if your audience is struggling with cognitive difficulties. They might need a slower pace in both verbal and visual presentations and clear gaps between the different news items. They might also need complex news items to be more thoroughly explained – and that often means more words.



## Slide 10 - Do not avoid

Most probably you will find that some news items are hard to present in an easy-to-understand manner in the short time format you are given. This is a challenge, and you may be tempted to just avoid this particular news item or to leave out parts of it.

But by leaving parts out there is a risk that the news item will be harder to understand. And by avoiding some news items, you might exclude your audience from information that is important to them. That is not good journalism. Ask yourself if there is another way to present the news item. Talk to your colleagues. Or maybe there is a less important piece of news that you can skip so you can devote more time to what is important.

## Slide 11 - The truth

You remember that Kovach and Rosenstiel wrote that: “The primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing”. In their book they list 10 principles that you need to fulfil to do this. I will only talk about the first and the seventh principles.

So, the first one is:

“Journalism’s first obligation is to the truth.” (2014, p. 56).

As a citizen, it can be hard to rely on the information you get. Especially today, when there are so many platforms giving space to different voices – not all of whom tell the truth or have an honest purpose. But how do we know? We are taught to double check facts and to review sources, but still, it is difficult.



## **Slide 12 - Trustworthy**

People who need news in easy language might have an even harder time than others to pick out a reliable voice from the crowd. They will most likely be more vulnerable to fake news since it is often more difficult for them to double check the facts or to review sources.

As a journalist you can help your audience by being honest and trustworthy. Always present the truth and be transparent about the way you work. Don't let them down.

## **Slide 13 - Interesting**

As you already know, there are different ways to make journalistic content accessible. One of them is to make sure the news items are engaging. Kovach and Rosenstiel's seventh principle is:

"Journalism must make the significant interesting and relevant." (2014. p.198)

## **Slide 14 - Boring is hard**

Most of us would find dull and boring content hard to digest. If your target group includes people with cognitive difficulties, some will get tired very easily and/or have problems concentrating. For them it is harder than for the rest of us to take in material that is uninteresting or is difficult to understand. Try to make the news item captivating for your audience.

There is no contradiction between being relevant and being engaging. Kovach and Rosenstiel write that:



“The task of those engaged in journalism...is to make the significant parts of each story interesting for the reader.” (p199–200)

## **Slide 15 - How to do that**

And how do you do that? They say:

“...through superior reporting, thinking, narrative, design and presentation of data in a way that helps the reader make sense of what's going on in the world.” (2014, p.199)

And to make your piece of news interesting you have to start planning before going out to report.

## **Slide 16 - Ask yourself**

Kovach and Rosenstiel continue: “When taking on a story, or thinking about engaging a topic, one should ask (and the audience should be able to detect the answers to) the following questions.

What is this story really about?

Who does this story, or these facts affect, and how? What information do these people need to know to make up their own minds about the subject?

Who has the information, and who can put it in context?

What's the best way to tell this story? Is it even a narrative, or is it better told another way?

These simple questions can make a big difference.” (2014, p.110)

## **Slide 17 - Making it understandable**

As a journalist you will help your audience understand by using easy verbal and visual language, providing time, being trustworthy and reporting what is relevant in an engaging way.

There are different methods, but you need to make sure that your audience can take it in and understand it.

Kovach and Rosenstiel say:

“Whatever it is, your first concern should be whether your method for conveying the story will lead the reader to greater understanding of the issues at hand.” (2014, p. 213)

## **Slide 18 - Meet the audience**

“Nothing about us without us” is a slogan used by disability rights organizations worldwide. It means involving users in the design and production processes. You can learn more about that in Unit 1.

To make sure that your audience understands the news, you need to know them. And you must ask them about their needs and preferences.

In stressful journalistic processes you cannot ask your audience on a daily basis whether they find the content relevant, interesting and understandable. But you should stay in touch with them and ask for their opinions in a way that works for them. Remember that sending out a written survey is generally not a good idea because some of them have difficulties reading and understanding. Get an understanding of them and decide together with them how you can work together to make news that works for them.





## **Slide 19 - Diversity**

We have been focusing on how to make news content easy to understand but there is one last thing, and that is to work together with journalists that have personal experience of disabilities. They know better than others how to describe different disabilities. And they also have a better idea of how to make the daily news accessible to more people. But most importantly, by working together with people of different backgrounds and experiences, you will widen your newsdesk's perspective on issues and better mirror our society. Diversity enriches, so encourage it.

## **Slide 20 - Summary**

It is important to use simplified verbal and visual content when creating news that is easy to understand. But in this video lecture we have been focusing on some general journalistic elements and on what to consider when producing news for people who need news in easy language. That is:

select the right news

devote time

be trustworthy

report what is relevant in an engaging way

meet your audience

encourage diversity at your newsdesk



## **Slide 21**

Thank you for listening!

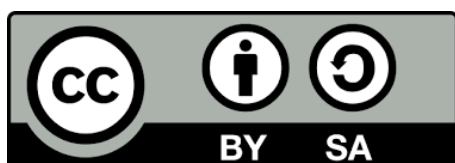
## **Slide 22**

This video lecture was prepared by Ester Hedberg, the Swedish National Association for Dyslexia.

You can reach me at [ester.hedberg@dyslexi.org](mailto:ester.hedberg@dyslexi.org)

**Copyright and disclaimer:** The project EASIT has received funding from the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education programme, grant agreement 2018-1-ES01-KA203-05275.

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



### Partners:

