



UNIT 3B. EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND (E2U) AND AUDIO DESCRIPTION (AD)

ELEMENT 3. TECHNICAL ASPECTS

SOUND-EDITING FEATURES

Video Lecture Transcript

VOICE 1 Unit 3b. Easy-to-understand (E2U) and audio description (AD). Element 3. Technical aspects. Sound-editing features. This video is reproduced with permission of ADLAB PRO.

Overview. This video includes two training materials from the ADLAB PRO project. Mereijn van der Heijden, from Soundfocus in The Netherlands, explains the audio description production process. He first focuses on sound recording and editing, and then on sound mixing and delivering.

VOICE 2 This is an ADLAB PRO video. ADLAB PRO is a project funded by the European Union. This video is made available to you on a Creative Commons licence.

MEREIJN VAN DER HEIJDEN Hello, my name is Mereijn van der Heijden from Soundfocus, The Netherlands. We produce a lot of screen AD for all types of media, and in this video I will explain our production process on sound-recording and sound-editing.



When you record audio description, several aspects are important and do influence the quality of the end result.

First of all, you need some important conditions for a successful recording. This includes well-prepared scripts, the possibility to work with experienced voice actors, and also proper recording equipment and some knowledge about how to use it. Also important are the room acoustics of the recording space because they do have a great influence on the quality of the recording, especially when the audio description eventually will be offered as a stand-alone stream.

As a sound technician, you have several tasks. In our work flow here at Soundfocus, it is important that the sound technician also provides directional instructions, so the person is both engineer and director.

In my case I read along with the script to notice mistakes during the recording, and at the same time I follow the image to see if the script is correct. I also monitor the tone of voice constantly.

Besides that, I do all the technical operations here with the equipment for the recording, and also do the communication with the voice talent who is located in a room separate from this one.

We use audio editing software to clean-up the Wav files and delete unusable parts of the recording and after that we will start adding fades at the beginning and the end of sentences. We also normally remove all the bold breaths.



At the end, we will adjust the timing of every description based on the original soundtrack.

The end result is a continuous AD track that still needs to be mixed.

Hello, my name is Mereijn van der Heijden from Soundfocus, The Netherlands. We produce a lot of screen AD for all types of media, and in this video I will explain our production process on sound mixing and delivery.

When recording and sound editing are finished the audio description track is processed with equalising, compression and limiting to make the audio description better audible.

The difference between unprocessed audio and processed audio is very clear.

[unprocessed audio example]

A U-boot cruises on the surface of the ocean. The U-boot captain walks along a corridor within the boat then looks through the periscope.

[processed audio example]

A U-boot cruises on the surface of the ocean. The U-boot captain walks along a corridor within the boat then looks through the periscope.

The placement of AD in almost all situations is in the middle of the mix or in the center channel in case of surround sounds. The reason for this is the fact that



people interact differently with spoken words than with music or sound effects in film.

Then dialogue or audio description often takes the viewer out of the story or experience, and this is something you want to prevent.

In general, audio description needs to follow the dynamics of the original soundtrack.

In terms of loudness, the AD equals to dialogue level.

In case of an interbred mix or open AD, the original soundtrack will be adjusted. If there is AD in the timeline but it is not audible at a particular moment, the volume of the film sound will be lowered.

Some examples of open AD are the audio description mixed on a DVD or the audio description mixed over by Netflix.

[example]

An operations room during World War II. Someone in handcuffs pushes a document across a desk.

Actor 1: Gentlemen, this is the plan.

A submarine.

Actor 1: The government chose you to lead this operation.

Actor 2: Where are you going to find a crew that's up to this?

A woman sights in a rifle.



A German military convoy drives past.

A group of misfits set out to sea on a small boat.

Actor 3: It's a suicide.

A U-boot cruises on the surface of the ocean.

In case of a discreet AD channel, like it is offered in cinema, the sound of the film plays at a fixed level.

The level of the audio description can be adjusted by the end user because it is offered on a separate system with volume control. That is why it is so important that the audio description track follows the dynamics of the original sound mix.

In a silent scene the AD level can be a bit lower and in an action scene the level needs to go up.

If the audio description would be on a fixed level the user would be forced to replay back volume constantly during the film, and this is not a nice film experience.

The next step is delivery. The delivery of pre-recorded audio description can be split up in two categories. Delivery as open AD which means mixed together with the original soundtrack, and delivery as closed AD which means a discreet audio description track that is delivered as a separate audio file.

The different export formats are related to the playback system. This means that the same production, for instance a web video, needs to be prepared in different



formats. Here is an example of a web video we produced for the Dutch government.

On their own website they use an accessible video player that includes an AD button to switch the audio description on and off. Users with an IOs device however can't use this function, that is why a download alternative with open AD is also provided.

The same video with open AD is published on social channels like Facebook and Youtube because they don't support closed AD either.

In case of film, we also start with closed AD for DCP, which is a digital copy of the film for cinemas. But later on, for DVD or video on demand, we will deliver an integrated mix also in different formats because there are differences in frame rate as well.

Because of all these different formats we decided to develop an audio description app called Earcatch.

It is a hybrid solution that works with a discreet audio description channel on a mobile device with headphones in combination with all types of screening. It works in cinemas but also in combination with DVD, Blu-ray, video on demand or broadcast.

The app is able to synchronise based on sound recognition and also knows the difference between the different playback speeds for cinema, which is 24 fps, and for TV, which is 25 fps in Europe. In case of the Earcatch app we only need to make one audio description track that can be reused in all situations.



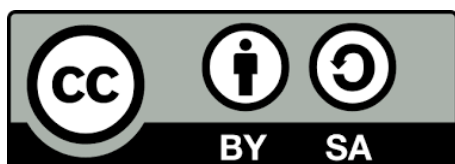
This makes the production process fast and very cost effective.

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