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

ELEMENT 1. PROCESSES

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSIONALS: LOUISE FRYER

Transcript

Unit 3B, Easy to understand (E2U) and audio description (AD); Element 1. Processes; "Interview with professionals: Louise Fryer".

Overview. In this video interview, the British AD professional Louise Fryer will talk about the accessibility of audio description. She will share her ideas on what can contribute to making this form of audiovisual translation difficult to understand, and she will unveil her stance on the possibility of describing in an easy way.

Louise Fryer: Hello I'm Louise Fryer. I'm an audio describer and an academic. I'm in my 50s with short brown hair graying at the temples. I'm wearing a purple jumper and a black padded down vest and I'm sitting at my desk upstairs in an old cottage in the UK. I'm going to answer some of the questions put to me by the EASIT Project.

Do you think that AD as you know (and produce) it is really accessible for all?

No. AD certainly makes some content accessible for some people by providing access to the image to those who can't perceive it themselves,

but the problem is that even though the blind and partially blind audience is extremely diverse, there is currently only 1 AD track. In an ideal world people would be able to choose between descriptions targeted in different ways, for example depending on sight experience – have the persons in the audience always been blind, did they lose their sight later in life? May be some people would choose the director's AD drawing attention to the camerawork. Some people might prefer a man's voice, others a woman's. At the moment AD of live events is usually only accessible to people who wear a headset – this means it is closed. And what about people with different levels of education of lack of cognitive skills? AD aims to use language suited to the content, so for the AD of a play with complex language, the AD will also be complex which might not be accessible to everyone.

What elements of AD do I consider to cause a higher cognitive load and why?

Cognitive load hasn't been properly researched in AD. It relates to Working Memory Capacity, that is holding a large amount of information in short term memory and manipulating it – for example remembering the description of a character from the Audio Introduction until the time that character appears on stage and then updating your mental image if the character puts on a disguise. Working Memory Capacity is thought to be limited. It would be affected by the amount of information which might mean the complexity of the content you're describing but also the word count, speed of delivery and the complexity of linguistic structure of the AD itself. However, it is possible that AD reduces load by adding context to enable users to interpret the dialogue more easily. Load can also be eased by users not having to filter out unnecessary information - the describer's not describing every single thing - and by spreading information across

different modalities – inflection and tone and the soundtrack might convey emotional detail without the need for complex words.

Do I think that I describe in an easy way?

I don't think I describe in an easy way, but I try to describe in a logical order prioritizing which information I give first.

Do I think that I could describe "in an easy way"? I would not like to be limited as to the vocabulary I use beyond adapting it to suit the content, so while I would use easier words and constructions for a children's show, I would not like to use easy words to describe content meant for educated adults.

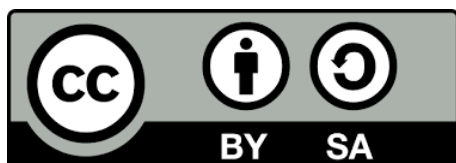**Have I ever been given users' feedback on how easy it is to follow my AD?**

I was once told (about 30 years ago) that I used too many words, since then I have tried to use words more effectively. Less but better as the designer Dieter Raams put it. As an AD professional, I have never been asked to write an "easy" AD, but I have been asked to describe a relaxed performance for a neuro-diverse audience, so I kept the descriptions as short as possible, but I hope still helpful. I felt it became more of a guide to the performance rather than an audio description – so I said things like "the girl is happy. She's clapping. She's encouraging us to clap too". I've also been describing recently for film AD to be delivered by synthetic speech. The writing needs to be more explanatory because you can't use inflection and pace to build excitement or tension. The idea of replacing some descriptions by explanations, is a common strategy in AD – to use a technical word followed by an explanation. I like to do both whenever I have time and whoever I'm describing for.

This video was prepared by Elisa Perego and produced by Angelika De Markis, Laura Mariani and Annalisa Navetta from University of Trieste. The narrator was Annalisa Navetta.

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