

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

### **ELEMENT 1. PROCESSES**

#### **INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSIONALS: LISTENABILITY**

##### **Transcript**

This is Unit 3B, Easy to understand (E2U) and audio description (AD); Element 1. Processes; other video "Interview with professionals: Listenability".

Hello, this is Annalisa Navetta. I am a student of Applied Interlinguistic Communication at the University of Trieste.

Overview. Listenability is a measure of the *ease* or *pleasure* in listening to something, such as music, or even an oral text. Audio descriptions, particularly easy to understand audio descriptions, should display this quality in order to be received, enjoyed and understood as well as possible.

It is difficult to list all the features a listenable audio description should show. However, suffice it to mention, for instance, the need to deliver it at a slow pace and volume, with a clear and engaging tone of voice, as well as the need to get rid of interfering sounds that might get in the way of a clear final soundtrack.



Do professionals and academics know what listenability is? And what are their suggestions on the ways that could make audio descriptions more listenable?

We'll ask four professional audio describers, i.e., Bernd Beneke (head of Audio-Description at Bayerischer Rundfunk – the only broadcaster in Germany with an Audio-Description Editor) Louise Fryer (one of the UK's most experienced describers and now director of her company Utopian Voices Ltd., based in the UK and doing research and strategy consultancy for media accessibility) and Joel Snyder (President of Audio Description Associates, LLC, and Director of Audio Description Project and the American Council of the Blind), as well as a renowned academic and AD expert, Christopher Taylor, who spent most of his career at the University of Trieste, Italy, researching and teaching AD. Let's hear what they think of listenability!

**Annalisa Navetta:** Have you ever heard the term “listenability”, especially in relation to AD?

**Bernd Benecke:** No, but I can guess what it means: make things easier to listen.

**Louise Fryer:** I have never heard the term “listenability”, in relation to AD.

**Joel Snyder:** I have, and I have addressed that to a certain extent. I believe the tone of voice, the pace, certainly, the quality that suggests that you are speaking to an individual human being as opposed to a group, as opposed to being read. People want to hear a voice that sounds like they are reading to them in a rote sort of way. It's easier to talk to people and you can do that with a script or without a script. If you have a script, it's a matter of making the script sound as though it's spontaneous



and I think that's an important part of listenability and something that TTS has yet to be able to provide.

**Chris Taylor:** Yes, together with readability, comprehensibility, etc. listenability has become a buzz-word in audio-visual circles.

**Annalisa Navetta:** According to you, how should be an AD that is easier to listen?

**Berns Benecke:** First, of course, it has to do with the text. If you're writing a text that is easy to understand, you have a text that is easy to listen to. But the next thing of course is how you mix it, what you do with the description in terms of sound level. Is your description on the same sound level as the original soundtrack? Or do you higher the volume so that the description is a little bit over the dialogue, which makes it a little bit more understandable? And you can do the same with the dialogue if you can, so that you lift up the dialogues compared to the music and the sound effects. These are things that make things easier to listen to. Especially the app I talked about in another project is called Dialogue Plus, so that's what they do, they try to transmit just the dialogue of the film so that people can lift up the volume and can listen easily to the dialogue and understand the dialogues.

**Louise Fryer:** I think an AD can be made easier to listen to by having a natural rather than a synthesized voice so that the listener has the advantage of appropriate prosody that aids intelligibility and understanding, when speaking over music or a battle scene, the volume of the underlying soundtrack should be well balanced to enable the AD to be heard while still getting the emotion from the soundtrack.

**Joel Snyder:** I think I have covered that to some extent, this idea of tone, of coincidence, of pace, of vocabulary level too. Because, you know,



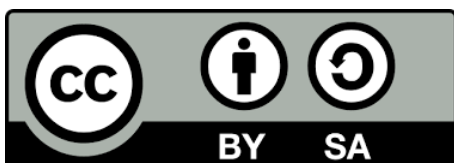
all those aspects, absolutely they apply to people with learning disabilities, but I think they apply across the board to whatever audience. Knowing your audience is an important part of all of this. Oftentimes your audience is gonna be heterogeneous all over the map, but at other times you know that this particular description being recorded is intended for an audience of people with learning disabilities. But, really, I think that ease of listening - listenability - is something that needs to be understood and employed more frequently.

**Chris Taylor:** A good, clear voice enunciating slowly with simple sentence structure and vivid but understandable lexis. The technological advances made in terms of personalisation mentioned earlier come to one's assistance here. The possibility to slow down delivery speed and adjust volume, type of voice, etc. all make for better listenability.

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

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