



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

ELEMENT 1. PROCESSES

WHAT IS E2U AUDIO INTRODUCTION?

Video Lecture Transcript

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This is unit 3B, easy-to-understand and audio description; element 1, processes; video lecture, What is E2U audio introduction?

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I am Pablo Romero Fresco, from Universidade de Vigo, Spain, and in this short video lecture I will give you a quick overview of audio introductions (definition, content, function, style) and how they could be produced in easy-to-understand language.

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Audio introductions were originally conceived as introductory notes aimed to provide blind and partially sighted audiences with relevant information about the opera or theatre performance they were about to attend (York, 2007; Holland, 2009).

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In the European project ADLAB PRO, they are defined as

a continuous piece of prose, providing factual and visual information about an audiovisual product, such as a film or theatre performance, that serves as a framework for blind and visually impaired patrons to (better) understand and appreciate a given ST [source text].

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AIs can be used in combination with an AD or as stand-alone pieces. They can be recorded and made available beforehand (for instance via a website) or they can be delivered live, as is often the case in the theatre. The recorded AI can feature a single voice or it can include a combination of voices and sound bites.

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AIs often include information that is relevant for the users and that, due to time and space constraints, cannot be included in the AD (if there is an audio description). AIs for live events often include musical extracts or interviews with members of the cast and they provide relevant information from the printed programme, including running time, cast and production credits, as well as detailed descriptions of the set, costumes, and the characters. They may also describe the director's input in terms of the nature of the production—for example, whether it is naturalistic or maybe stylized and whether scene changes are marked by a lowered curtain or they flow seamlessly from one to the next (Fryer and Romero, 2014).

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Much of this applies to AIs for film, which as per what was written by Fryer and Romero, “they must engage the listener’s attention, whet their appetite, and, most importantly, they must enable them to appreciate the film’s inherent cinematic qualities” (Fryer and Romero, 2014).

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AIs can have at least five different functions, according to Remael and Revier:

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The first one is the informative function, whereby AIs provide the audience with information about the production obtained from the website or the programme booklet. Here’s an example from the AI produced by Louise Fryer for the documentary *Man on Wire*:

Welcome to this audio introduction to the Oscar-winning documentary *Man on Wire*, directed by James Marsh in 2008. It’s based on the novel *To Reach the Clouds*, by French high-wire artist Philippe Petit, intercutting reminiscences by Petit and his accomplices with reconstructions of the events leading up to their dramatic feat:

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On 7 August 1974, they strung a cable between the two towers of the World Trade Center, in New York. Poised on the cable, some 1,350 feet above the ground, Philippe walked from one tower to the other, without safety net or harness, before turning himself in to the Police. The stunt was dubbed “the artistic crime of the century.”

(AI for *Man on Wire* created by Louise Fryer [Romero-Fresco and Fryer, 2013])

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AIs also have a foreshadowing function, with the description of visual information that could not be included in the AD and that anticipates aspects of the production such as the look of the film/set, the lighting, the physical characteristics and costumes of the characters. This is another example from the AI to *Man on Wire*:

Present-day interviews with Philippe and his friends are filmed in colour, the presentation slick and stylish – talking heads brightly lit, framed against plain backgrounds in interior locations. By contrast, the earliest footage of their younger selves, played by actors who bear a strong resemblance to them, is shot in black and white.

(AI for *Man on Wire* created by Louise Fryer [Romero-Fresco and Fryer, 2013])

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AIs can also fulfill an explanatory function, highlighting aspects that may be too difficult to grasp without full access to the visuals. Here's an example from the AI produced by Louise Fryer for the film *Slumdog Millionaire*:

For the flashbacks to Jamal's early childhood, the dialogue has English subtitles. For the more recent past, present and future, the dialogue is in English.

(AI for *Slumdog Millionaire* created by Louise Fryer [Romero-Fresco and Fryer, 2013])

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These explanations often end up fulfilling an expressive function that highlights the effect of a particular device. Another example from the AI produced by Louise Fryer for *Slumdog Millionaire*:

The cinematic style reflects modern films like *City of God* and contemporary Indian cinema. (...) The style emphasises India as a disorientating, vibrant, place, awash with colour and contradiction.

(AI for *Slumdog Millionaire* created by Louise Fryer [Romero-Fresco and Fryer, 2013])

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Finally, as shown in a recent study by Vocal Eyes (Fryer, 2020), AIs can also have an instructive function, with information regarding how to get to the venue, how to use the headphones for transmitting the AD, etc.

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Regarding style and language, the following words by Fryer sum up what may be expected of AIs:

the language of AIs must be clear and accurate to provide the necessary factual and visual information about the film; they should be vivid and memorable to engage the listeners' attention and whet their appetite; and insightful to help blind and partially sighted people appreciate the film's inherent cinematic qualities (Fryer and Romero-Fresco, 2014, p. 25).

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The normally vivid language of AIs can be adapted to E2U language so that the content can be more comprehensible especially for some users.

If we have a look at the AI excerpt from *Man on Wire* created by Louise Fryer (Romero-Fresco and Fryer, 2013), we can observe that the long paragraph is in fact made of 112 words and only four sentences

Welcome to this audio introduction to the Oscar-winning documentary *Man on Wire*, directed by James Marsh in 2008. It's based on the novel *To Reach the Clouds*, by French high-wire artist Philippe Petit, intercutting reminiscences by Petit and his accomplices with reconstructions of the events leading up to their dramatic feat...

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Breaking this long text into short, digestible sentences should therefore be a first step to take.

We can see how to proceed focusing on the first sentence, which can easily be broken down into eight shorter sentences.

Welcome.

This is an audio introduction.

This audio introduction will give you important information on the documentary you are about to watch.

A documentary is a video that talks about reality and teaches you new things.

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This documentary is entitled *Man on Wire*.

This documentary is excellent. For this reason, it received an important award: the Oscar award.

This documentary was directed by James Marsh in 2008.

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The simplification process results in a larger number of words caused by the frequent repetition of the same word (for example, “documentary”) and by the explanation of notions that are taken for granted in the original AI (e.g. the very notion of audio introduction, the meaning of documentary and also of Oscar awards).

Some work on terminology might also be needed. Words such as dramatized, footage, intersplined, fringed, gauche, jowly, etc., taken randomly from the AI to *Man on Wire*, need a simpler, core vocabulary counterpart in the E2U translation. Some of these words might be discarded to lighten the information load.

Compound adjectives, such as well-defined, light-hearted, or charcoal-grey should be unpacked too.

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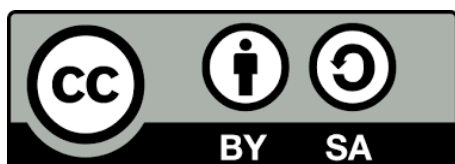
More information about how AIs can be adapted to E2U formats is provided in the video sample produced by Elisa Perego in this unit.

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This video lecture has been prepared by Pablo Romero-Fresco, from Universidade de Vigo. You can reach me at promero@uvigo.es.

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