



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

ELEMENT 1. PROCESSES

WHAT IS E2U SCREEN AD?

Video Lecture Transcript

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This is unit 3B, E2U and AD; element 1. Processes. Video lecture “What is Easy-to-understand screen audio description”. I am Elisa Perego, from Università degli Studi di Trieste.

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And in this short video lecture I will briefly define audio description, focus on screen AD, and I will also offer some hints and examples on the way you could make it simpler.

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Nowadays, the multimodal world we live in has become more and more inclusive for people with different abilities. Screen products, but also exhibitions and static art forms are no longer inaccessible to people with sight loss.

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Audio description, which is a form of accessible, assistive and intersemiotic audiovisual translation, enables us to transfer the most relevant visual elements of a text into a verbal aural narrative.

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Depending on what we audio describe, the audio description can be more or less complex. In films, it is normally made of short simple sentences that exploit the semantic richness of the chosen words to convey as much information as possible in a handful of seconds – those intercurring between film dialogues.

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Think of the sentence “The brunette rushed after him”.

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The single-word noun “brunette” refers to a woman or girl with dark brown hair. So it really conveys a lot of information in just 8 characters!

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The verb “to rush” specifies the manner of carrying out the movement – with urgent haste.

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The sentence is syntactically simple. It is made of a subject, a verb and an adjunct, or an adverbial element.

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Screen ADs are not always so simple in terms of number of words, at least. And the one we just analysed has its downsides.

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The noun “brunette” and the verb “to rush” might be too semantically rich for some users. So, even if the syntactic structure of the sentence is simple, and the length of its constituents is limited, the words used might not be easy to understand for someone.

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Choosing common words is a basic way out when we need to produce an E2U AD or to adapt an already existing one. The inevitable compromise will be losing some semantic nuances, which might not even be so subtle.

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“Brunette” could easily turn into “girl” or “woman”, and just as easily fail to convey the fact that she has brown and not blond hair. A detail that has a connotative meaning but that can however be delivered at a different point in time in the film, if relevant, thus resorting to a sort of “compensation technique”.

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Let's look at another example.

"Mary grabs the packet angrily".

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Again, the verb "to grab" lexicalizes the manner of the action carried out, and it refers to the act of grasping something *suddenly and roughly*.

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An adverb (angrily) is added to qualify the manner of the action.

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The AD could be simplified turning "to grasp" into the semantically simpler and high-frequency "to get", and deciding whether to maintain the manner adverb *angrily* depending on the level of simplification we wish to reach.

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Apparently, lexical simplification in screen AD often comes with information loss. In fact, unfortunately, there is not enough space for explicitation strategies or reformulations, which on the other hand easily find their way in other AD types, such as art AD, where time constraints are looser.

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Some screen ADs are more elaborated. This happens when there is time to deliver more pieces of relevant information.

In these case, you might always want to apply the main simplification principles, such as using short, positive sentences; using active language; avoiding subordination; ordering information in a way that is easy to follow.

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Finally, once your E2U screen AD is ready, do not forget to take care of its “listenability”. This is the ease with which a given material is listened to, enjoyed and understood. Make sure it is delivered at a slow pace and with a clear and engaging tone of voice.

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I hope these selected recommendations were useful and thought-provoking. It’s up to you now to find more ways to write or adapt ADs integrating E2U and listenability principles.

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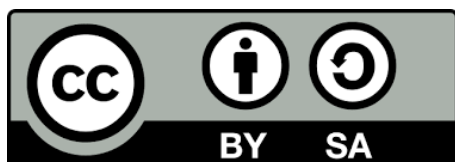
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