



UNIT 3A. EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND (E2U) AND SUBTITLING

ELEMENT 1. PROCESSES

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSIONALS

Other Video Transcript

- NARRATOR Unit 3a, Easy-to-Understand and Subtitling;
element 1, Processes. Interview with
professionals.
- NARRATOR This video includes an interview with Kate
Dangerfield, filmmaker and PhD student at the
University of Roehampton (London). Kate has a
background in accessible filmmaking,
- NARRATOR an area in which she has collaborated, amongst
others, with the UK charity Sense, the British Film
Institute, the Centre for Voluntary Sector
Leadership (Open University) and PAL.TV. Her
accessible filmmaking work was screened at the
Victoria and Albert Museum in London as part of
the Open Senses festival in 2017.
- NARRATOR In this interview, Kate talks about the potential
use of easy-to-understand subtitles for one of her
films, the benefits of taking an integrated



approach to media accessibility and the need to question whether accessibility is really benefitting all viewers.

PABLO Hello, my name is Pablo Romero-Fresco, I work at Universidade de Vigo in Spain and it's a pleasure to be here today, be able to interview Kate Dangerfield. Hello, Kate. How are you?

KATE Hi, I'm fine, thanks.

PABLO So, just a brief introduction. Kate is doing a PhD at the University of Roehampton in the UK. This is a practical and theoretical thesis, so a combination of practice and research involving the making of a film, entitled "Within Sound and Image," and also we have a written thesis that Kate is writing about it, with the same title plus I think a subtitle: "a theory and practice of accessible filmmaking." Kate, can you tell us a little bit about this project and also about the participants you are working with?

KATE Thanks. So, yes, it's a practice and research PhD and I did workshops with three different groups of people. I was working with the charity Sense, which is the national disability charity in the UK and the project was funded by the British Film Institute, but we did workshops, three different workshops, filmmaking workshops. We had the same starting point, but the participants were free to explore their own ideas. There were three key



questions at that stage where we were looking at: Which equipment was accessible? How they used film as a means of communication and expression? Then, how to make the content that they made accessible to them? So, I think that is really the focus of today, but what we then did or I did is that I did interviews with people who were either involved in the project or I met through the research. They were people that would also be considered as disabled people, but not people with learning disabilities. So they commented on, they watched the films, they told me what they thought about the project and also about their experience with film whether that is in the arts or in the industry. And so... then... documentary is... the footage from the workshops and then those interviews and that discussion.

PABLO

Brilliant. So those two layers, right? The participants with whom you made the workshops and then the kind of experts with maybe different disabilities who were looking at those workshops, watching the footage, and... those two layers. Brilliant. Kate, could you describe a little bit about... because I remember as I said before that when we started this project you were referring to some of your participants or... you were writing about the participants as deaf-blind participants, but now you are actually talking about participants with complex communication needs. So, what's the difference there...? Why the change?



KATE

Yeah, I think the initial aim was to look at how content could be accessible to deaf-blind people, that was so the initial aim of the research. Also I was working with Sense, the charity, they considered themselves at that point as the deaf-blind charity. But then...

PABLO

Sorry, Kate, but even when you were referring to deaf-blind at that stage, you and the charity, just for people who may not have experience with this, we are not talking about fully deaf and fully blind, are we? Or not only talking about that? We are talking about different degrees of visual loss and hearing loss?

KATE

Exactly, different degrees, so some people were, but not everybody, and it was very, very, very different, really fast difference between the people that I was working with which you can see through the film actually. Nobody that I worked with specifically was totally deaf and totally blind, but very, very different experiences for each person. And I think so... Sense's known now as the national disability charity rather than the deaf-blind charity, so I think there is a shift in that sense, but also looking through the research and looking into disability studies I talk about... When I say disabled people, I'd say disabled first rather than people with disabilities, and that is something that is tied up with the UK social model of thinking. And then also as my position as a non-



disabled person I say complex communication needs, because that's about access and that's really my perspective rather than focussing on their impairments. But if I were respeaking with them, then I would go by whatever they decided to... how they wanted to term themselves.

PABLO

That's very interesting. I don't think I've ever heard that perspective of talking about this... or about them as people with complex access needs just because that's the way you're looking at the whole situation from your kind of able perspective of course. That's very interesting. So I would imagine that now one of the challenges is to make the film accessible of course. Because of the nature of this project, that deals with subtitles for easy-to-understand language, which in this project encompasses plain language and easy-to-read, how do you see the role of these subtitles in a film like yours for example or what do you think the role could be, and have you considered any... what have you played with, what tools are you thinking about using in order to make your film accessible in general?

KATE

Yes, so really... from each course of workshops we were looking at different forms of access, so the first guy that I was working with needed subtitles, and actually standard subtitles would be totally fine for him.

PABLO

Okay.



KATE

But then the group in Cambridge that I worked with that actually audio description was more suitable for them, but also their communication... their means of communication was through something called widget symbols.

PABLO

Can you explain to us what that is, Kate?

KATE

Yes. That is like a... It's pictures to support speech or some people use it like as speech. So... I will send you an example of it, but basically they are small cards or small pictures which would have like an activity on or, you know, anything that they wanted to say and they would use these symbols as a means to communicate or to make choices and things like that.

PABLO

In many ways, that could be seen as easy-to-understand type of subtitled content, right?

KATE

Yes, I think... I mean it's something that I considered at that point of whether or not it could be something... because each workshop was about making that content accessible to the people that make the film, so really focussed on individual needs. But... and actually for the film that we made with them we used the widget symbols for the titles and then... but then really tried to focus on images and there was very, very little dialogue in their film that we put together. So actually that was something that we thought about like while we were making it so taking an accessible



filmmaking approach in that sense. So it wasn't... The thing is I think with those widgets symbols which is why we went for that approach was that they used them and it's static, it's not a moving image, so they have time to consider which symbol they want to use and then it takes time and actually whether that's suitable for a film is a totally different situation I think, you have to do a lot of research to work out whether it is suitable or not.

PABLO

One of the things that strikes me when I watched, you know, the versions that you've shown me about your film so far is that you can't have the luxury of focussing only on subtitles and see if subtitles may be or not simplified in a different way because obviously you have to combine different forms of access almost at the same time, right? So, just to give an idea, and I'm sure we can show some examples in the final edited version of this video, you have used audio introductions, you've used audio description, sometimes the descriptions themselves are introductions within the film to certain parts of the film, you've also used, Kate, a kind of... you've also frozen some frames, right? So that you can just pause the film and then describe what is going on and I guess that description that you're using when you pause a particular frame then that would need to be subtitled as well, right?



- KATE Yes.
- PABLO So, I would imagine that...
- KATE There is time to do it, because then you are pausing the film. Yes.
- PABLO Exactly, exactly. So then, even if you were to use subtitles that maybe are not simplified so to speak there the fact that you're giving time to read them also helps in many different ways. Okay, and since you are combining all these different options then, does that mean that you are thinking about having all those options combined as an attempt to make one version of the film that is accessible to everyone, to all?
- KATE For my submission there will be one version and I'm trying to make it as accessible as possible to everybody that was involved, but... that's not to say that I consider it to be accessible to everybody. So, yeah, I think then, later on, I would consider other options of how to make it accessible in different ways. And actually there is gonna be two versions: there is gonna be another version with... there is one version that's integrated audio description and then there is one version with what would be considered more standard audio description.
- PABLO Okay, for those who have not heard about this, integrated audio description would be audio description that is maybe not traditional, that is

done in collaboration with the filmmaker and that moves away from guidelines and normally tries to include the audio description as part of a overall description, right? So that it doesn't feel like it's an add-on, whereas audio description, Kate, if you agree, would be... a standard audio description would be more of a... this kind of added-on track that doesn't merge with the narration, it's just a kind of intentionally built for what it is, to provide access, right?

KATE

That's it, because there's the beginning of the film which is integrated audio description, which would be suitable, but then I'm exploring other ideas later in the film and that, for instance, there are parts where the sound isn't really good quality and so actually for somebody who is blind, that's really problematic, whereas some blind people wouldn't mind if... because it's kind of part of the film and it's a different experience because it's more about the sound and making it not so specific on what's being said, they would be happy with that. But then other people would want to know exactly what's being said. So, I think, I can't cater for everybody, but I'm gonna try, as much as I know how to, I'm gonna try and cater for the people that are involved.

PABLO

That's very interesting. As I hear the answer to your questions, I can't help but think that for people who may be watching this video thinking I



was expecting content on subtitles in easy-to-understand language, I guess there's two take-aways, one being that it is increasingly the case that when dealing with participants like yours you can't just kind of just separate access services as kind of completely different sections because it's all part of complex communication needs. So they live with those... the possibility of using those simplified subtitles actually lives with the rest of the access services, right? Everything needs to be considered holistically as a whole and then you may be able to choose what you need. So that's one of the things that I was thinking. And related to that is the fact that you seem to be given up on the possibility of creating a version that caters for all and I wonder whether we are actually guilty of... because of the catchy nature of the slogan "for all", guilty of using it in a way that maybe is not completely accurate because it seems very, very difficult to actually provide one version that is accessible to all. In some of the videos that we've had as part of this project we've heard the usual discussion of whether this simplified subtitles could be the version that everyone uses or it could be an alternative version to more standard subtitles. So, two questions to you would be: the first one, do you think that when... well first of all actually, are you giving up then on the idea of one version for all? Do you think that's just not possible and that we have to actually come to terms with the fact



that if we want to get to everyone, then we will need more than one or two versions, we would actually have to start thinking about that? What do you think?

KATE

Yes, from the research and from the people that I've worked with, even so say around ten people in the workshops and then the... so four people that were involved in the interviews and even on that such a small scale it's still not possible to find a way that is accessible for all those people, so there's this thing...

PABLO

That's fascinating...

KATE

There has to be compromises throughout, so... yeah... I think... It's not giving up on access, but it's giving up on the idea that it's possible to...

PABLO

Yeah, absolutely. No, I don't say that in despair and I don't see any kind of loss of hope there, so I don't come out with a negative feeling. I just think that the first question is the idea that the for-all or actually bringing here the idea that the for-all may be catchy, but not very accurate, and that if we do want to actually cater for all then we're gonna have to start thinking about catering for almost everyone, which means making distinction and your case is very illustrative, because you're dealing with only ten participants and you're already telling us that the differences within them who have been kind of addressed as deaf-blind



first and people with complex needs, so they have been pigeon-holed as something and you can't even reach them all with just the one version. So...

KATE

And also has changes like for instance we've got... one of the participants that I was working with in the first workshops, he was using subtitles at the beginning, but actually then his hearing aids were tweaked and he wasn't using subtitles by the end of it, so also this changed over time as well, you know, they're not really things that you can pinpoint.

PABLO

Yeah, it sounds very complex, but also fascinating because it really means that we're gonna have to start thinking more individually about the different needs as opposed to just maybe thinking of big groups that... whether we like it or not are not heterogeneous at all. So, when you do start thinking about that, when you do start thinking about, you know, having, you know, those people in mind who you want to get the film to and make it accessible to, then is the use of easy-to-understand subtitles a possibility in some of the versions of the film?

KATE

I would definitely if somebody contacted me... Because I think what I'm planning to do is... I'll put the film out with the access that I can and then say that if people need other access... people have other access requirements then to contact me and I can try and arrange that, but... So I think it's a



possibility if somebody came to me and asked for it, I would consider it.

PABLO

And Kate, I'm trying to, you know, put myself in the shoes of somebody who may be watching this without prior knowledge about your project and may be thinking "wow, that's amazing", I mean, from the point of view of looking at and speaking to what I would call an accessible filmmaker, accessible in many different ways but in this case about media access and accessible filmmaker, who is considering the... I mean... Obviously we can't expect many people to have your views because, you know, you've been trained in media access but also in filmmaking, you have an understanding of the complex needs that many different individuals may have, but can we... So, in your case, from our point of view, it's fantastic to hear this, but how scalable is this? How can we have... How can we ensure that we have more filmmakers who are aware of all this, and do you know that they'll be thinking "God, it's too much"? How can I be expected to provide a specific version with a specific form of access for a specific person? How is that... I don't know... How can we keep this up?

KATE

Yeah, well... I think the main thing is also... is the shift in thinking, and that doesn't happen overnight. You know... it's a sort of one step at a time with everything. So if you are interested in making things accessible, then... you know...



possibly look at one thing first and... and keep trying and, you know, I think quite often... it's difficult to always get it right and I think, you know, just keep trying different options and getting feedback from people, so... But I think...

PABLO

I agree, Kate.

KATE

It's a shift in thinking that also just doesn't need to just happen in terms of filmmaking and media accessibility, it's about just generally everything being more inclusive. So, it's a shift in thinking that needs to happen generally...

PABLO

I agree, Kate, and I also... I tend to think when I talk to you about these things... I tend to think that obviously when we talk to filmmakers first they need to know about access, very general access, and about disability in general, so you start with the basics. Then you take them on a journey to where we are in media access, which is to the idea of "okay, we have audio description, we have subtitles, we have subtitles that could be easy-to-understand subtitles, we can do this in collaboration with filmmakers", that's where you take them, but then we can take them a little bit further, which is where you are, from my view, which is fine, but the "for all" slogan may not be working because when you look at individuals, then you're leaving a lot of them behind and then there's a need for more kind of individualised type of access and looking into more of the trees rather



than just the forest, you know, not so much as a group.

KATE

Exactly, and it might be more encouraging without the “for all” over it, because actually that’s pretty daunting, you know, your sense as a filmmaker, this is going to be for everybody, maybe that’s when people shut off, so, you know...

PABLO

And it could be disappointing, the “for all” could be disappointing for those who are meant to be within this “all” and are not there or cannot have access, right?

KATE

You’re striving for something that’s not possible.

PABLO

Absolutely. So, Kate, well, thank you very much for being here today, it’s been fascinating to hear about your project, to hear how it relates to this project and to hear about the possibility of you using this type of subtitles in one way or another once there’s a need for it. So we’ll be keeping an eye on what you do and how you do it, and from a personal point of view it’s fantastic to see somebody who has such awareness of the complexity involved in access and who is also working from the filmmaking side of things because, you know, we need more people like you, Kate, but, yeah, it’s been great to have you here.

KATE

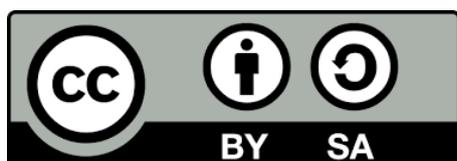
Thank you very much, yeah, it’s been really interesting.



- PABLO No worries. Good luck with your project and we look forward to reading it and to watching the film, so thank you very much, Kate.
- KATE Thank you.
- PABLO This video was prepared by Pablo Romero-Fresco, from Universidade de Vigo, and Kate Dangerfield, from the University of Roehampton, and produced by Jesús Meiriño-Gómez, from Universidade de Vigo.

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