



UNIT 1. MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY

ELEMENT 4. WHAT IS MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY?

MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Video Lecture Transcript

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This is unit 1, Media accessibility; element 4, What is media accessibility; video lecture, Media accessibility services. I am Anna Matamala, from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

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In this short video lecture I will give you a broad overview of what media accessibility services are. I will focus on audiovisual content, which can be two-dimensional, but also new formats such as virtual reality. As I said, it will be a broad overview because then there are specific videos for each of the access services.

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Audiovisual media have audio and visual components, which can be verbal and non-verbal. When you don't have access to one of these components, for whatever reason, an access service is needed.

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If you cannot properly hear the audio, subtitles are a solution. Subtitles can be live or can be recorded. Subtitles addressed to persons with hearing loss are often referred to as SDH (subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing). However, I wonder if this is the best terminology. Very often hearing persons are watching content, for instance on a bus, with subtitles and without sound.

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Another possible access service when you don't have access to the audio is Sign Language interpreting. In this case, an oral language is interpreted into a sign language.

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If you cannot properly see the images, audio description is the access service that you need. In this case, the visuals but also any sound which maybe cannot be understood without access to the visuals is transferred into spoken words. The interplay of the audio description together with the original soundtrack allows audiences to understand, to enjoy the audiovisual content.

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In the context of the performing arts, very often this audio description goes together with a touch tour and an audio introduction. A touch tour allows audiences to often go on stage or at least touch the props and get a better understanding of the performance. An audio introduction is a short text that provides some additional information and that is offered orally before the performance begins. It is especially useful when the time available for the audio description is limited.

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If you can hear the audio but cannot understand it, then you need access to it as well. You need a translation in this case. One possibility is dubbing. In this case the original soundtrack is replaced by a target language version which keeps lip synchronization. Another possibility is voice-over. In this case, the original soundtrack can be heard. There is an overlapping of the original and the translation. A third possibility is subtitles. In this case, the original soundtrack is kept and then a very specific type of text on screen, subtitles, are projected, are on screen.

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The choice of audiovisual transfer mode has traditionally been linked to the country's tradition. So we say, for instance, that Germany, Spain, France are dubbing countries, and we say for instance that Portugal and Greece are subtitling countries. And we say that Poland is a voice-over country. However, things are changing and with new digital media audiences are more often given the possibility to choose.

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However, when you don't understand the original and the translation solution that is offered to you are subtitles, there may be a problem if you cannot read them. And this can happen for various reasons. You may have sight loss, you may have reading difficulties or you may be on a bed in a hotel room and the television is very far away. In these cases, what you need are audio subtitles (also called spoken subtitles), that is the subtitles read aloud. This access service is also used very often used together with audio description (so audio description and audio subtitling), but it can also be offered independently.

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Very often dubbing, subtitling, interpreting, voice-over have been studied under the umbrella of Audiovisual Translation Studies. SDH, audio description, sign language interpreting, audio subtitling have been studied from the perspective of Accessibility Studies.

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In my view it is just a matter of how we approach these services. They can be approached as audiovisual transfer modes, but they can also be approached and viewed as access services. From the perspective of the user, what is really important is personalisation and customisation: that they are offered services suited to their needs and that they are given the opportunity to choose.

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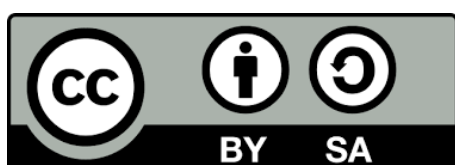
To conclude, I would like to say that I have not mentioned “easy-to-understand language”, but we could have easy-to-understand subtitles or easy-to-understand audio descriptions. In any case, this will be the topic of other videos in other units.

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This video lecture has been prepared by Anna Matamala, from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. You can reach me at anna.matamala@uab.cat.

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