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UNIT 1. MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY

ELEMENT 4. WHAT IS MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY?

UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIOVISUAL TEXT

Video Lecture Transcript

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This is unit 1, Media accessibility; element 4, What is media accessibility?; video lecture Understanding the audiovisual text.

I am Anna Matamala, from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

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And in this short lecture I will explain the concept of audiovisual text and link it to that of multimodality.

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When we talk about a text, we often think about a written text: a newspaper article, a written essay. However, the concept of text is not limited to the written word. One can talk about an "audio text", about an "audiovisual text", even about a "multimodal text".

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Let's focus on the concept of "audiovisual text", which is at the centre of audiovisual translation studies.

An audiovisual text is made of audio (or acoustic) elements and visual elements. These elements can include both linguistic (or verbal) and non-linguistic (or non-verbal) elements.

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Non-linguistic sound elements would include music, sound effects, special effects and paralinguistic sounds such as sneezes, clicks, cries, coughs, etc., but also silence, which can be really meaningful. These sounds can be part of the story being told —known as diegetic sounds— or may have been added afterwards, during the postproduction process —extradiegetic sounds, in this case. Imagine someone is playing the piano in a movie. The music is part of the story. The characters in the story hear this music. This sound is diegetic. Now imagine that in a scene piano music is added. The characters are not hearing the music because it has been added during the film editing. This sound is extradiegetic.

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In respect of the sound elements of a linguistic nature there are: monologues, narrations, dialogues, polylogues and lyrics. These linguistic elements can be in the main language of the audiovisual text or in another language, especially in multilingual productions.

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Among the visual elements which are non-linguistic we can find images and all related aspects (photography, light, costumes, etc.), and visual features associated with text on screen (for instance, the colour, font type or size of a caption on screen).

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Finally, visual elements of a linguistic nature include different types of text on screen: logos, film credits, superimposed captions, graphs, maps, subtitles, etc. Also, written information which is part of the plot: a sign at the entrance of a city, an email written on a laptop screen. And again, these visual elements can be diegetic or extradiegetic, they can be part of the story or may have been added during the postproduction phase.

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The distribution of audio and visual elements, of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, may change in each audiovisual text. Prototypical examples such as contemporary Hollywood films will include elements of all types, whereas non-prototypical examples may be lacking one element. For instance, a silent film with intertitles.

Audio and visual elements can have different types of relationship: the information being presented orally may be reinforced visually or, on the contrary, the information may be contradictory. If you are interested in this topic, I recommend you to read the papers by Patrick Zabalbeascoa.

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In any case, if you are a professional and work on an audiovisual text or if you are a researcher and want to analyse an audiovisual text, there are some questions that you may want to ask yourself:

- Who created the audiovisual text?
- When was the audiovisual text created?
- Why?
- For whom was it created?
- What type of audiovisual text is it?
- Where and how will the audience enjoy this text?
- At what stage is it? Is it finished or not? Is it content on the making?

Replying to these questions will allow you to better understand the source audiovisual text that you may want to translate or render accessible. Similarly, you can ask most of the previous questions about the target audiovisual text that you want to create.

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Although I have put the focus on the audiovisual text, a key concept you should also be familiar with is that of "multimodal text". A multimodal text can be understood as a text that combines more than one mode in a specific context. In this sense, an audiovisual text could be seen as a type of multimodal text.

But let me posit another example. A written text could be combined with images and that would make it a multimodal text. In fact, we could take this example a step further and make sure that the images contain

alternative written text and that the written text is also available in an audio version.

Multimodal texts construct meaning through the interaction of different modes. Multimodal texts can also be an excellent way to convey meaning through different modes, guaranteeing access to a wider range of users.

In any case, always bear in mind that a text is not only a printed paper or a digital file with words in it. A text here goes beyond the concept of written text.

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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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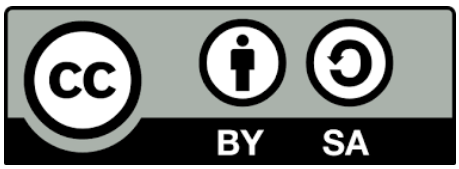
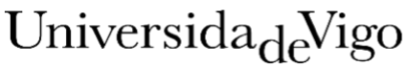
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