



Module 1

Unit 5: The audio description process

Core video transcript

Module 1

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Transcript

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Hello. I'm Nina Reviere, from the University of Antwerp, and in this ADLAB PRO video I will describe the audio description work process. This is Unit 5 in Module 1, General Introduction.

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Creating an audio described product or event is a complex undertaking. It requires skilful project management and good teamwork. In this unit, I identify the parameters that determine the AD workflow, the different stages involved and I discuss the role of the specialists in each stage.

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How the AD workflow is organised and the experts that need to be involved depends on a few parameters.

First, the type of product you are describing. Is it a recorded form of AD for film or a description of a live performance, for instance?

Second, the additional services required. Do you need to plan for an audio-introduction or include the creation of audio-subtitles, as well?

Third, the creation approach adopted by the provider. Will the AD be created in what is called post-production, after the film or performance is finalised, or will the AD be created in parallel to the original source material? An approach usually called “accessible filmmaking”, but which of course can also be applied to live-AD. Then it is often called “integrated AD”.

Fourth, project managers have to take into account the technical requirements as well. For instance, the type of technology used to distribute the AD.

Finally, the number of people involved and the scale of the AD workflow also depends on the scope of the project in terms of time and budget.

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Depending on the above parameters, a tailor-made workflow can be developed. Such a workflow, for any type of AD context, usually includes the following stages: preparation, scripting, voicing, mixing/performing, quality control and feedback.

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The preparation stage includes determining the type of AD, whether additional services are required, what the technical needs are, what the creation approach will be and what the scope of the project is.

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The scripting stage involves creating what is usually called the AD-script: a written and timed preparation of the descriptions that will be included in the

AD. Scripting involves thorough source text analysis, timing and writing the descriptions and includes reviewing and final editing as well.

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The voicing stage includes selecting appropriate voice(s) to read the AD-script, rehearsing the script with the voices and making final changes where necessary. For recorded AD, this also includes recording the descriptive units.

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The next stage includes mixing the recorded voices with the original soundtrack in the case of recorded AD or performing the AD live in the case of live events.

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Finally, it is important to integrate quality control in the AD process. Quality control needs to be organised after each stage in the AD process, so that changes can be made accordingly and in a timely manner. Mistakes in the AD-script are difficult to put right, once the voices are recorded and mixed.

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Gathering feedback from both the production team and from users is an essential step towards quality improvement and it is strongly advised to plan for this in advance.

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Now, you may be wondering who is involved in these different stages I just

described? This depends, again, on the context and varies from involving a single describer to requiring the input of a whole team.

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We can broadly distinguish three groups: First, the organiser. Second, the artistic team and third the AD-team.

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The organiser or initiator of an AD project can be a film production company, a broadcaster, a theatre company, a cultural venue, a sports organisation or a museum curator. They are usually involved in the preparation stage and organising feedback.

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The artistic team, includes all people involved in creating the original audiovisual product that is described. Think of directors and their assistants, actors, directors of photography and sound designers, costume and stage designers, scriptwriters, artists. The artistic team is not always directly involved in the AD-creation process, but their input in the scripting stage can be particularly useful.

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Finally, the AD team minimally consists of an Audio describer, but can additionally include a final editor, a visually impaired AD advisor, an AD director, AD voice talents and an AD sound technician. They are the core team in the AD work process and are ideally involved in all stages, from preparation to quality control and feedback.

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It has become clear that creating an Audio Description is a combined effort and requires great teamwork!



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