



Module 2

Unit 5: Time and space in audio description

Core video transcript

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Transcript

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Hello. I'm Agnieszka Chmiel from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. In this ADLAB PRO video I will present the basic information related to audio describing time and space in screen AD. This is Unit 5 (Time and space) in Module 2 (Screen AD).

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Knowing when and where something is happening is crucial for understanding the film plot. Temporal and spatial settings may change within seconds and these changes must be included in audio description.

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You should organise the description starting from the general and add more details if they are needed and if time allows.

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Let's have a look at these examples. Titles of the films these examples come from are in the brackets.

- A forest.
- In a bar.
- A monolithic town.

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- In the publishing house.
- At night in the manor house.
- The terracotta and sandy-coloured spires and domes of Oxford.

Notice how the descriptions become more detailed depending on how much time the audio describer has to fit the description.

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Sometimes you can indicate certain temporal settings by describing the spatial settings, as in the following example:

- A morning in the forest. Silvery frost covers the ground and tree branches.

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Instead of explicitly stating that it is winter, the AD describes those attributes of winter that make the sighted viewers infer about the time of the year. The blind viewers may thus make the same inference and know more about what's on the screen.

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Settings may have various functions. They may simply be a background to the action. A police station, for instance, may simply be the backdrop for part of the action in a crime film.

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Settings may also serve a narrative or symbolic function. A castle, by contrast, may symbolize the power of its inhabitant...

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...whereas a dilapidated castle may indicate the downfall of that person.
Make sure you reflect that function properly in the AD.

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It is important to correctly reflect temporal relations in the AD. Sometimes the plot is not linear and directors tell the story in a non-chronological order. This results in flashbacks and flashforwards.

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You should use the principle of continuity, i.e. it is assumed that the scenes follow one another in time. If the continuity is broken, a different temporal and/or spatial setting has to be indicated in the AD.

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Let's have a look at this example which shows how you can indicate two different temporal settings:

Modern times. Sabina leans on her stick as she walks around the arrivals hall.
It's the fifties again.

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Flashbacks may also be indicated less explicitly, as in these examples:

- She remembers seeing the tree frozen.
- The same tree comes back in her winter time memories.

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Sometimes different spatio-temporal settings are associated with a particular character (as in the film “The hours”, where Virginia Woolf is in London in the 1920s...

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...Laura is in Los Angeles in 1951...

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...and Clarissa in New York in 2001). In this case, the character mentioned in the AD will help identify the setting.

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Sometimes settings can be well-known or unfamiliar. How they are described in AD depends on the background knowledge of the describer and the viewer. We have an additional video on that. Watch it!

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If you want to find out more, I recommend reading the ADLAB guidelines “Pictures painted in words”. I have actually used some the examples from this publication in this presentation.

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I hope you have learned some interesting things about audio describing spatio-temporal settings from this video. Bye!

Creation of these training materials was supported by ADLAB PRO (Audio Description: A Laboratory for the Development of a New Professional Profile), financed by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Programme, Key Action 2 – Strategic Partnerships, Project number: 2016-1-IT02-KA203-024311.

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