Module 5

Unit 1: Audio subtitling

Core video transcripts

Module 5

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Transcript

Slide 1

Hello. I'm Anna Matamala, from UAB, and in this ADLAB PRO video I will explain what audio subtitling is. This is Unit 1 (Audio subtitling) in Module 5 (Additional services).

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Imagine you are a Norwegian speaker and go to the movies. The film is in Japanese with subtitles in Norwegian.

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You cannot understand Japanese and you cannot read the subtitles: you are blind, you have dyslexia o the subtitling speed is too fast.

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Audio subtitling is the solution.

Slide 5

Subtitles are one type of text on screen. Other types of text on screen are logos, film credits, superimposed titles, popping-up text messages, etc., but we will not be dealing with those here.

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In some countries subtitling is the standard way of translating audiovisual

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content. In other countries (what we call dubbing countries or voice-over countries) subtitles are also used, but a bit less.

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Audio subtitling is the rendering of written subtitles into audio. It's the subtitles read aloud. Terms such as "audio subtitles/captions", "spoken subtitles/captions", or even "audio text" are also used. Here I will use "audio subtitling" and "audio subtitles" and the abbreviation "AST" together with "AD" for audio description.

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I will discuss the relationship of AST with AD, its main features in terms of creation and delivery, and the role of users.

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Audio subtitling can be an independent service or can be integrated with the AD.

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One example: when you are watching live broadcasts or lived streamed TV on online TV channels on the Swedish public service broadcaster you can get automatic text-to-speech audio subtitles through your digital terrestrial network.

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Another example: the multilingual film *Inglourious Basterds*, by Quentin Tarantino, is mainly in English but has dialogues in French and Italian

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subtitled into English. The AD describes the visuals but it also incorporates an oral version of the written subtitles. It is an AD with AST.

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In terms of delivery, audio subtitles can be read aloud by a human voice or can be automatically read by a text-to-speech system. In any case, the voice should be clear and should be easily understood by users.

Audio subtitles can be live or recorded. Sometimes, when some preparation is possible for a live delivery, we talk about semi-live audio subtitles.

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Audio subtitles address many users: for example, persons who cannot access the visuals, who cannot or do not want to read subtitles, persons with reading difficulties, persons with sight loss, but also children, the elderly and language learners. It is important that users are informed about the availability of AST by including an accessible notification.

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Users should also be involved in the creation and evaluation of audio subtitles.

The ISO standard on AST recommends that users should be able to select different types of access services independently or in combination with AD.

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When delivering audio subtitles, synchronisation and timing are critical. This can be difficult when the text is very dense or when there are numbers and

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abbreviations. In this case, you may need to increase the narration speed or change the text of the subtitles, make it shorter, rephrase it.

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There are two main types of delivery effects: when the audio subtitles in the target language are heard on top of the original dialogue, a "voice-over effect" is achieved: you can still hear the original dialogues.
When the original is not heard at all, we have a "dubbing effect". This often involves some acting by the voice talents.

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When audio subtitles are delivered together with an AD, it is important to differentiate them. Various strategies can be used:
- different voices: for example, a female voice for the AD and a male voice for the AST;
- prosodic features, that is, changing the intonation, or
- descriptive words, such as, for example, "Subtitles read:".

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Similar strategies can be used when you want to identify the character speaking: different voices, prosodic features... or you can also indicate the name of the character or even use reported speech.

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If you want to know more about this, I would recommend four resources to start with:

The ADLAB guidelines "Pictures painted in Words". Good advice on how to create audio subtitles with a step-by-step decision process.

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The HBB4ALL guidelines, with a specific document on AST.

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The article "Audio description with audio subtitling", by Braun and Orero.

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The ISO technical specification 20071-25:2017. A must-read!

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