Module 6

Unit 7: Accessible productions

Core video transcript

Module 6

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Transcript

Slide 1

Hi, I'm Anna Jankowska from UAB. In this ADLABPRO video I will talk about accessible productions. This is Unit 7 in Module 6.

Slide 2

Current distribution workflows usually relegate audio description to the postproduction process. Very often – because of how the film is edited – it is not possible to insert AD. There is simply not enough space between dialogues. AD is scripted by describers who are not part of the creative team. They don't work alongside with the film director, director of photography, editor, screenwriter or producer. The creative team does not supervise the AD script. And because of that it is possible that the director's artistic vision might be altered in the AD script.

Slide 3

What if a different approach was possible? Some researchers have already noticed the shortcomings of the current workflow of making films accessible.

Slide 4

Udo and Fels noticed that the way audio description is prepared now is far from the principles of Universal Design.

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Slide 5

Benvenuto points out that the constraints of film production restrain the choices available to describers and shows that a film, from the very beginning, can be developed with AD in mind.

Slide 6

Finally Pablo Romero-Fresco underlines that describers should be part of the creative team.

Slide 7

This new approach put forward by the researchers I mentioned before is known as *accessible filmmaking*.

Slide 8

Accessible filmmaking is a term coined by Romero-Fresco, who defines it as "Integration of AVT and accessibility as part of the filmmaking process".

Slide 9

Accessible filmmaking does not only cover AD but also subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, subtitling, dubbing or voice-over. But in this presentation we will talk only about AD.

Slide 10

You can read more about accessible filmmaking in Romero-Fresco's article: Accessible filmmaking: Joining the dots between audiovisual translation, accessibility and filmmaking.

Slide 11

Accessible filmmaking means that AD should be planned at the pre-production stage, so that from the very begining there is enough space in the film to include AD. Some changes can be made also in post-production. For example during film editing. Additional images can be added to include more dialogue-free content. Also some dialogues can be moved on the timeline to make space for AD. Last but not least, the describer should receive as much information about the film as possible from the creative team and if possible interact with them.

Slide 12

Accessible filmmaking is not only an academic concept. The industry seems to be slowly opening to this idea.

Slide 13

The first accessible film in English that integrated AD from the very beginning is "Drive" from 1997. It was directed by a blind filmmaker Raina Haig. More recently, a UK based company, Screen, is advocating to include describers in the filmmaking process. Also the Flemish public broadcaster VRT is trying to include AD both in the pre and post-production stages for some of the programmes.

Slide 14

In 2002 the Spanish public broadcaster showed "Nicolás". In this cartoon series for children AD was planned from the very beginning.

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Slide 15

The need to bridge the gap between filmmakers and describers is also noticed by institutions that provide training. Some universities already include accessibility in their filmmaking courses: for example Kingston University and Central School of Drama in the UK and University of Valladolid in Spain. On the other hand, AVT and accessibility courses have started to include filmmaking. The University of Roehampton in the UK can be one of the examples.

Slide 16

Let me finish with a quote from Raina Haig: "You have a group of artists: writer, director, actors, and designers, who collaborate on a creative project, the film. Well, the audio describer to my mind is just one more participant in that project, and how can they work as part of an otherwise highly qualified team, without a sound basis in how film works? (...) I'd like to see screen writers and filmmakers training and working as audio describers."

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