[=]LTA
LiveTextAccess

UNIT 1

Element 3 – Learning Outcome 3

TRANSCRIPT: REAL-TIME SUBTITLES IN PARLIAMENT.

A TESTIMONIAL BY D'ARCY MCPHERSON

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LiveTextAccess. Training for real-time intralingual subtitlers.

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This is Unit 1. Understanding accessibility. Element 3. Embedding accessibility in working environments.

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In this video lecture, we show a testimonial by D'Arcy McPherson, a real-time intralingual subtitler from Canada, about real-time subtitles in parliament.

My name is Piero Cavallo from the Internationale Hochschule SDI München, in Germany. I have prepared this video lecture in collaboration with Rocío Bernabé Caro, also from SDI München, and the European Federation of Hard of Hearing, in short, EFHOH.

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On completion of the training sequence, you will be able to advise customers about how to best set up an accessible real-time working environment for persons with hearing loss in the trained working contexts and settings. To achieve that, we will show testimonials and interviews of professionals.

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The agenda is very short. First, I am going to introduce our invited speaker, D'Arcy McPherson. Then, I will illustrate the topics of the interview. Finally, we will end this video lecture with a summary.

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First of all, let me introduce you D'Arcy McPherson.

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D'Arcy McPherson is a broadcast captioner and court reporter from Canada. During his career, he also worked in other countries.

He is now the director of Hansard Services, at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, in Canada.

He uses a stenotype machine to provide real-time subtitles.

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Let me give you some information before watching the video.

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In this testimonial, D'Arcy starts talking about the key role of real-time subtitlers in the parliamentary and legislative contexts, also as an access service for all.

Then, he briefly reviews how the making-process of subtitles in these contexts work and the differences between working on-site and online.

Finally, he gives some suggestions to future professionals.

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Ok, let's watch the video now!

[TESTIMONIAL VIDEO STARTS]

Hello, my name is D'Arcy McPherson and I am the director of Hansard Services at the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, in Canada. I've been asked to speak to you a little bit today about accessibility in the legislative setting. My role as the director: I oversee three different sections at the assembly. One is the editing and reporting side, which produces the text debates of both the plenary session and committees, to the publishing systems, which publishes the parliamentary documents and post them online in a variety of formats. And the third is the broadcasting section, which disseminates the live feed of both plenary and the committee broadcasts. It is an interesting dynamic in the legislative assembly, because the role of captioning takes on a different meaning, I think, than it does in most generally understood ways in terms of, say, broadcast for live news or for a sporting event. Here we have the added dimension of politicians. And, as a democratic institutions, politicians are strongly motivated to want to share their message with as many people as possible, in as many ways as possible. They are very happy to have the closed captioning embedded in their video clips that they send out through Twitter, or Facebook, or other methods of communicating with their constituents. They communicate with us on a daily basis to get those clips, so that they can share them and they want the closed captioning in them because they want everyone to be able to see and understand the words that they've said in their speeches, or their questions, or the bills that have been passed, that are important to them and the people they represent. Today I'm going to talk to you a little bit about how we're accessible in British Columbia and what I expect from external captioning providers. The changes that we've seen in recent months since the beginning of the pandemic and how we've adapted during COVID-19. And then to talk a little bit about training, and then hopefully provide a little bit of advice. Or some suggestions, or things to consider. Just to begin in terms of how we're accessible in British Columbia, as I said, we provide the text in a variety of electronic formats XML, PDF, HTML, both through direct live feed over satellite to every provider. There is an agreement with the oversight body in Canada, which is called the CRTC, which is a commission, which ensures that Canadian content reaches broadcasters, and in turn Canadians. So, as part of that agreement, legislatures and parliaments are able to provide their video feeds for free, without commercial content, so that everyone who has either cable or satellite has access to what their elected representatives are doing in the various legislatures and locations that they're sent to. That's an interesting approach, and I think it's probably mimicked in a lot of areas. But it creates a slightly different dynamic for the captioners that provide the information. Because whatever we broadcast has to be captioned by regulation. We do that and we engage an external provider in order to provide those captions. When the sitting is happening, there's someone who's sitting actually one province over, most of the time in Alberta, which is where the main hub of the people who provide our captions are. And they assign it to different people, and when the live proceedings are happening, the person is sitting most of the time in their home and setting out the data

through an encoder, back to our broadcaster who disseminates the information to the screen. From the time the words are spoken, until the person writes them on their shorthand machine sends it back to us through the encoder, it does take about two seconds before the words are on the screen. So, as you're as you're viewing the screen, you see the words. For us, that's how that functions. And we're a fully independent broadcasting unit. That gives us a lot of... a lot of authority in terms of communication with the external provider. And also to make sure that our clients are, at least our main stakeholders, that their needs are met. That's very important to us. When it comes to reporting, what we do is, we take the closed captioning, the data that's been sent with that, and we filter it through a macro that takes out all of the capitalization and the chirons, those two little chevron type marks that indicate new speakers, and it converts it into a Word file, so that we can begin our editing process. That also happens simultaneously and is broken down in one-minute components that are then compiled into five-minute chunks of time that are matched with sound. And then our editors begin their work. The closed captioning is perused very carefully, word for word, and... compared against the sound. For the closed captioners there's a little bit more stress because they know that whatever they write is going to be reviewed at a granular level in order for us to then produce the debate. They try very hard to do their very best, to give us a quality product. that we won't have to massage as much when we're producing our debates. It speeds up our process and it works very well for us. After the editors review the work, at the first level, within one hour of words being spoken, they're posted in the first edit form that hasn't gone through its various other filters. But it's definitely a high quality product. It will just be refined further for things such as, references to documents that are quoted, or place names that may be obscure or language references. We have a lot of first languages-- first nations languages that are spoken in British Columbia. we have a department that focuses on ensuring that those spellings are accurate and respectful of first languages protocol and cultural elements. That is a slightly different way to approach captioning. But it really does work for us. it's been really helpful to bring my experience as a broadcast captioner to this role. To really be able to communicate when things are going wrong. If things go wrong, usually they go right. It's exciting to use captions, to begin the editing process for debates. There are a few jurisdictions in Canada that do that. And we're one of them and we're really pleased that we are. So, changes during COVID. Like many legislatures, we were... directed not to have the same number of people in the chamber because it was not safe. And so we needed to ensure physical distancing was maintained. We established a system of having about 60 to 70 percent of the people who would normally be in the chamber wiring in remotely. so that we would have a Zoom account and they would be... giving their speeches and communicating to the other people involved via Zoom. That created a greater distance and there were some challenges with that. Some people were much more familiar with technologies, so that was easier, some people weren't and... that was a little bit of a learning curve for some of our

members, but in the end it did work. Our department was closely involved with ensuring that members had the right technology and the right training in order to be able to participate fully in their roles as elected representatives. Now today we continue that process it has the added benefit of allowing people not to have to commute every week from distant regions of British Columbia, where it can take some time, 7 or 8 hours in transit. It saves the members a lot of time that way. Many others are still able to participate in their roles. One of the interesting things that's happened in this hybrid process and using Zoom, is that there's a lot less heckling. As the reporter is doing the captions, before COVID there would be a lot of crosstalk as is often evidenced in many legislatures if someone says something that one political party doesn't agree with, that party will... express their opinions loudly and that can make it challenging for the person who's trying to take down the person who's speaking. Now, with the hybrid system, there is a lot less heckling because people are muted. That makes for a cleaner transcript and less stress for the captioner. It's interesting: there are times when the presiding officer, our speaker, has to remind members not to do that... type of grandstanding or loud intervention into a microphone. And not only is it not useful for... the actual process that we're using with Zoom, it also makes it really hard for the audio. If someone is yelling something over Zoom, And-- their voice becomes very loud, it throws off the audio and can be very damaging to the people who are listening to that sound, to have the volume fluctuate at those levels. COVID has had one benefit in terms of being able to... enhance the decorum of the chamber. That's been really nice to see and it's been welcome. And hopefully that will be carried forward. In terms of training, one of the interesting things has been that it's actually improved our training systems. When we are training people, we're doing it from a distance and using multiple screens. The person who's mentoring or training is communicating to the person who's being reviewed and they're looking at their screens through screen shares, and able to communicate with them that way. It's actually a much less stressful environment. It's actually better to learn. That was one of the unexpected things that we've experienced here, is for new people coming in we've been able to have that additional level of access in a less stressful way, but also encourages learning. We've seen a definite trend in terms of transmitting that learning into action, in this more physically distanced way. I don't know if that's because editors or reporters tend to prefer people at a distance, but it's certainly something that we've noticed. And welcomed. That's basically our system at the legislature, and what I wanted to share with you. The access element of... captioning that we provide through an external service is something that we've had a lot of really good feedback from, not only from people who are Hard of Hearing who are often in contact with us and really appreciate the level and quality of the captions that we produce, but it's also used... in a variety of other ways. The closed captioning that comes up on the screens means that people who are in gyms, right now gyms are open here, they're able to follow the proceedings if they're on the screen and in the gym and following along. People who are

political assistants can... can follow along the debate without having to have the sound on. They find that very useful. And then members transmit that information through social media and in an accessible format that is also appreciated by their constituents. We tend not to use ASL except in specific circumstances. But it's something that for... bigger events such as the opening of parliament or a speech on the throne, we also include ASL. I'd like to see more of it but, at this point, it's not something that's provided on a regular basis. But it's hopefully something that will be going in that direction. In terms of the advice that I can offer to people who may be interested in either reporting in legislatures, or for broadcast captioning, or who may have to caption legislatures, I would recommend and highly stress the need to maintain constant practice, be vigilant, do your research, be prepared, and bring the best you that you can to the job. That is the most important part. And being... agile and flexible is what any employer would be looking for. I think that anyone coming into the profession will have a long and successful career, if they adhere to those basic tenets. So, with that I will say good luck and thank you for listening. And stay safe.

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The summary.

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To sum up, we can say that real-time subtitlers have an important role in politics, because politicians are strongly motivated to want to share their message, with as many people as possible, and in many ways as possible. Because of that, the communication between politicians and real-time subtitlers happens on a daily-basis. Also, everyone can benefit from real-time subtitles, as they represent an access service for all and help to be actively involved in society.

We have also seen that the subtitles produced pass through different stages, from its production, to the editing and their publication, and are published in a variety of digital formats.

Then, we have seen that working online from home has its pros and cons. But in general, this has helped professionals to work more efficiently.

Finally, D'Arcy shared with us some suggestions for future professionals entering in this field. He highlighted the need to maintain a constant practice, be prepared, and bring the best you can to the job. Also, being agile and flexible are useful skills that professionals should have.

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Exercises.

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The exercises for this video lecture are in the Trainer's Guide and the PowerPoint file.

15   Voiceover

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