



UNIT 1

Element 1 – Learning outcome 2

TRANSCRIPT: MULTIMODALITY



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1 Slide 1

LiveTextAccess. Training for real-time intralingual subtitlers.

2 Slide 2

This is Unit 1. Understanding accessibility. Element 1. Basic concepts.

3 Slide 3

This video lecture focuses on multimodal communication, which is a specificity of audiovisual translation and live situations.

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

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On completion of this training sequence, you will be able to explain the concept of multimodal communication, and to describe the challenges that real-time subtitlers and end-users face.

5 Slide 5

Let's take a look at the agenda. We start talking about what modes are in audiovisual translation and why communication is considered to be multimodal. Then we discuss multimodality in the context of real-time intralingual subtitling, and we also talk about the intricacies of conveying information through a mode that is not the original one.

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The concept of multimodality seems easy to understand at first glance.

7 Slide 7

In audiovisual translation, scholars such as Jorge Díaz Cintas classify modes into 2 categories: audio and video. Modes help us to classify in which way a specific resource is realised. In multimodal communication, resources are realised either visually or aurally.

8 Slide 8

Sociolinguists and semiotic scholars, such as Halliday, Kress or Van Leeuwen, explain that there are many different types of resources within a culture. These resources can be verbal, such as language, or non-verbal, such as gestures, images, sounds, or objects, for example clothes or food.

Depending on the type of resource, a speaker can choose the video or the audio mode for its realization. For instance, words are a resource that can be realised aurally, through the audio mode, and visually, by using subtitles, for example.

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When a message is rendered multimodally, the audience needs to access both channels to receive the complete message. However, this is not always the case. The reasons why one channel may not be available are manifold, and can range from a noisy environment to a hearing loss.

In such cases, alternatives need to be available. This is the essence of the work of audiovisual translators and the purpose of access services. That is, to provide an alternative way to access the information that is not reaching the audience through the original channel.

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Our job is to enable a diamesic change from one mode to another, which has been described by Carlo Eugeni as "diamesic translation".

For instance, dialogues or narrations that are rendered aurally in an original can be conveyed visually using subtitles. In real-time subtitling, subtitler generates this visual information that is then added to the original resources that were already rendered visually.

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This change from one mode to another includes words and other resources that are necessary to understand a message. For example, sounds, contextual information, and identifying a speaker.

For instance, at a conference, subtitlers may render sounds, like an "APPLAUSE" after a speech or a sound to which a speaker may react, such as siren from outside, or someone sneezing, or a loud bang in another room.

This brings us to the challenges that a real-time subtitler face.

12 Slide 12

The challenge of multimodality.

13 Slide 13

The challenges that real-time subtitlers face in the process of rendering resources visually emerge from 3 main constraints.

These are a limited amount of time and space for our subtitles, and latency. Latency refers to the maximum delay or time by which subtitles should appear on a screen. Subtitles should coincide as much as possible with speech onset. A minimum delay supports understanding and lip-reading, which is an additional input cue that persons with hearing loss often use in communication.

Some examples of maximum delay in different contexts are: 6 seconds for TV, 6 to 8 seconds in parliaments, and 3 seconds at conferences.

These constraints of real-time situations have clear implications for subtitlers, who will continuously have to choose what resources to render. These choices are influenced by how well-organised a speaker is, and how fast he or she speaks, and by the working context.

Let's see some examples.

14 Slide 14

In parliaments, the most important features to be subtitled are, in this order: speech, which should be as verbatim as possible, and without features of orality, such as tone or stress. Then, speaker identification. This is especially important because words need to belong to the actual speaker. Otherwise, diplomatic incidents could occur. Then, contextual information, which becomes key when voting takes place. In voting cases, the other resources (speech, speaker identification, slides, etc.) are of less importance. Lastly, other materials. In parliaments, rarely happens that somebody brings things with him or her such as pictures, or slides. In most cases, this information is not relevant and will not be prioritised.

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Lastly, an example from conferences.

At conferences, speech is also prioritised as it is in parliaments. Identifying a speaker is often less important in conferences because it is usually quite clear who is speaking, especially when only one speaker is on stage. However, identifying a speaker may be relevant when there is a debate and speakers start to switch. In these cases, identifying the speaker becomes more critical, as subtitlers will have to pay more attention to mentioning the names.

Another case of speaker identification at conferences would be when an interpreter says something for him or herself. For example, a simultaneous interpreter may say: "I cannot hear the speaker". Or "the microphone is shut off". In such cases, it is a small challenge to show in your text, as subtitler, very clearly, that this is something that the interpreter says, and not the original speaker.

Sounds, like applause, are often included in subtitles, at conferences, whereas contextual information such as "irony" is less common because the interaction is live.

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Ok, let's recap now.

17 Slide 17

Multimodal communication makes communication exciting and complex at the same time. Moreover, multimodality often requires a higher effort from both viewers and subtitlers. On the one hand, viewers or end-users will perceive more information through the visual mode, and at a pace that is set by the speaker. On the other, subtitlers continuously have to make choices about what resources should be rendered and when. Depending on the context, this will mean to add information or, conversely, to reduce or condense the message to provide subtitles in synchrony with the speech onset with a minimum delay. You will learn how to do this in Unit 5 and Unit 6 with our colleagues Wim Gerbecks, Carlo Eugeni and Silvia Velardi.

As for now, I say goodbye.

18 Slide 18

Exercises.

19 Slide 19

The exercises for this video lecture are in the Trainer's Guide for Unit 1 and in the PowerPoint presentation.

20 Voiceover

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