



## **UNIT 1. UNDERSTANDING ACCESSIBILITY**

### **Element 2. Learning Outcome 1**

### **TRANSCRIPT: PETER VANHOUTTE – PART 1**



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## **1 Slide 1**

LiveTextAccess. Training for real-time intralingual subtitles.

## **2 Slide 2**

This is Unit 1. Understanding accessibility. Element 2. Target users and their needs.

## **3 Slide 3**

This video lecture shows the first part of an interview with Peter Vanhoutte, a member of the Deaf-Blind community from Belgium. He gives us insights about deafblindness and its impact to the person.

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.

## **4 Slide 4**

On completion of the training sequence, you will be able to explain the needs and preferences of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, Late-Deafened, and Deaf-Blind community.

## **5 Slide 5**

The agenda is very short. First, I am going to introduce Peter Vanhoutte. Then, I will illustrate the topics of the interview. Please note, that the interview has two parts. This is the first part of the interview.

Finally, we will end this video lecture with a summary.

## **6 Slide 6**

First of all, let me introduce you Peter Vanhoutte.

## **7 Slide 7**

Peter Vanhoutte is from Belgium. He refers to himself as deafblind. He has medium long, grey hair. He wears a shirt and a sweater. He is on the board of the Flemish association of deafblind people, called “Anna Timmerman association”. He is also on the board of the European DeafBlind Union, in short EDBU.

## **8 Slide 8**

Let me give you some information before watching the first part of the video.

## **9 Slide 9**

In this video, Peter recorded himself with a webcam, while he answers some questions that we sent to him before.

Peter speaks in Flemish, which is one of the languages spoken in Belgium.

The video has English subtitles.

## **10 Slide 10**

In this first part of the interview, Peter talks about what is deafblindness and the differences between the groups of persons that make up the community.

Then, he talks about the impact that deafblindness has in different contexts, such as in communication, in mobility, and in gathering and processing information. Then, Peter addresses to the issues that a deafblind person could have, for example in organising things. Finally, Peter talks about the different possibilities for interpreters to provide accessibility to a deaf-blind person.

## **11 Slide 11**

Ok, let's watch the first part of the video now!

[TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW – PART 1]

Hello. I am going to talk about deaf blindness and text interpreters. But first I'm going to introduce myself. I am Peter Vanhoutte. I am from Belgium. As a child, I was heavily visually impaired. I have learned to speak like all other children. By imitating my mother. I have learned Braille in the school for the blind in Brugge. As a teenager, I gradually became deaf. Now I am deafblind. I am on the board of the Flemish association of deafblind people. Which is called the Anna Timmerman association. And I am also on the board of EDBU. That is the European DeafBlind Union.

What is deafblindness? Deafblindness is a specific disability. It is more than the sum of being deaf plus being blind. Solutions for deaf people or for blind people are not always sufficient. For example, when watching television. For deaf and hard of hearing there is subtitling. For the blind and visually impaired there is audio description. When you can't read the subtitling anymore and you can't hear the audio description anymore, then you can only watch television together with a deafblind interpreter. Another example is an alarm clock. The blind use speech to set the alarm clock. And sound to wake up. Deaf can use their eyes to do the setup. And use light flashes to wake up. Deafblind need an alarm clock that you can setup by touch. And a vibrating pillow to wake up. Traffic and moving around for deaf people, that is no problem. Because they can use a bicycle or a car. Blind and visually impaired can easily ask for help from people in the street. Deafblind people almost always need an assistant. Then, for communication. For blind people speaking is not a problem. Deaf people can see people are speaking. And can ask what people are talking about. Deafblind people sometimes don't even know there is a conversation.

Deafblindness is a combination. Deafblindness is a combination of audiological and visual impairments. And there is no possibility of compensation. It is about people with a visual impairment who don't have the possibility to compensate in an auditive way. Because they also have auditive limitations. And people with auditive limitations who don't have the possibility to compensate visually because they also have visual limitations. At the moment you don't see well, you will start to use your hearing in a better way. But if there are also problems with that, then you speak of deafblindness. People who don't hear well compensate that by watching. But if watching doesn't work well, then you speak of deafblindness.

There is a description of deafblindness, approved by the European Parliament in 2004. The description is functional and not medical. Deafblindness is a special impairment. That is, a combination of visual and auditive impairments. Which leads to problems with access to information, communication, and mobility. So not all deafblind persons are completely deaf and completely blind. An estimation is that only 5% of the deafblind are completely deaf and completely blind. 15% are blind and hard of hearing. 20% are deaf and visually impaired. And more than 50% are hard of hearing and visually impaired.

The group of deafblind is very diverse. Also historically and in communication. When I look at the moment of origin of deafblindness. You can divide the group as follows. There is a small group of people born deafblind. Besides that, there is a group of people who are born with a visual impairment and later on become deaf or hard of hearing. A larger group are the people who are born with a hearing impairment and later on become blind or visually impaired. Within this group, there are mainly people with Usher. Those are deaf or hearing impaired people with tunnel vision. Tunnel vision is tube vision. There are also people who can see and hear who, because of an operation or an illness, become deafblind. An accident can also be the cause of deafblindness. And there is also a big group who start to see and hear less because of ageing.

And then the impact that deafblindness has on people. The impact of deafblindness. That differs strongly from one person to another. Still, there are things that reoccur. Deafblindness is an impactful impairment. And has a great impact on participating in daily life. I will describe the image in a number of issues.

Firstly, the communication. Deafblindness has big impact on communicating. Communicating becomes a problem. Sometimes a deafblind person needs to learn a new way of communication. Because of progressive loss of hearing or loss of sight, one can't communicate like before. Few people in the environment adapt to the new needs of communicating. Communication remains very limited with deafblind people. Only the most essential things are being told. Difficult communication leads to limited social contacts. For example in a park or in an association. If you are going somewhere, for example to a party, you almost always need a deafblind interpreter. You are dependent on someone who describes a bit what is happening. You are dependent on someone who describes what happened and to follow the conversation you need an interpreter.

Secondly. The mobility becomes a problem for deafblind people. In their own home, they can move around independently. They know where everything is. Everything has its own place. Familiarity is important. But it is more difficult and more dangerous to move around traffic by yourself. You can't hear or see the cars. And you can't see traffic lights. So you can't see the cars and the traffic lights. You are often dependent on public transportation or on others to get somewhere. Also in a strange building, you need an assistant to find your way. In a strange building you need an assistant to move around safely. During a reception or a meeting you will also need assistance. You'll need assistance to go to the people you want to talk to. Often, it happens that deafblind people want to go somewhere or make an outing. Participate in an activity. So they want to go somewhere, but they don't find anyone who wants to take them or support with transportation. They don't find anyone to interpret. That's why they are forced to stay at home. Because they can't find help. Mobility is a very big problem. It is important the deafblind person has adapted appliances at home for remote communication. Through email, text messaging, Facebook.

And thirdly, the third problem is information. Gathering and processing information. Ears and eyes constantly provide information. Deafblind people are missing those. As a deafblind person, you live in an unsafe world. A lot happens unannounced and unexpected. You have little control over what happens. It is very frustrating. You need someone providing information about the situation, describing what is happening around us. So we will feel ourselves safe in the environment we live in. The deafblind person also wants to know who is there. So that you don't start gossiping about the people who are nearby. The deafblind person wants to know what is being said. And how the others react to that, verbally and non verbally. When they know what is being said and how others react to that, only then he can participate in the conversation. What does the room look like? Describe it! Maybe the deafblind person can move around independently. Getting coffee independently, going to the toilet independently. So if you describe what the room looks like, then the deafblind person feels more confident. The deafblind person can move around the room without bumping into something or tripping. Information also provides comfort. The deafblind person feels himself at ease. And also the curiosity is stimulated. The deafblind person finds out about things he wants to know more about. We expect from people they involve us in what is happening and that they provide us with information.

Fourthly. That is organising things. Planning for deafblind people is very important. Most of the time it is necessary to plan ahead if you want to go out. You can't just go out, if it is not organised. You have to look for an interpreter and arrange for transportation.

Another issue is time. Time and energy. Everything is going slower. Communicating for example. Everything is going slower. During a meeting when a joke is told, hearing people laugh directly. But the deafblind person laughs later. Because you are depending on public transportation, also the travelling takes much more time. Alright. Also interpretation demands more time than for deaf people. You don't only interpret, but also need to describe. Sometimes you have to repeat or reformulate something. Give extra explanation. Looking for something on the Internet is also very time consuming. Prepare yourself. Cooking something for dinner is also time consuming. It also demands a lot of energy. It takes energy to listen or to decypher Braille or Lorm. To follow or feel the signs. You are tired more quickly. You need more breaks and rest.

Deafblindness often is also progressive. Hearing is going backwards and hearing loss is increasing. So you'll lose more possibilities. It is a continuous processing process. You get more and more dependent. You constantly have to hand over things. Questions arise about the future. Will I be able to talk to people? How will I move around? How will I keep myself busy? Will I be able to live independently? How can I be of use to the society? Will I find a partner? So a lot of questions arise.

The deafblind needs one-on-one support. Having a group conversation is impossible for us without individual interpreters. During meetings of deafblind people you sometimes see 5 deafblind persons together with 5 interpreters. One has a text interpreter, with the text on a screen. Another one has a text interpreter, with a Braille device connected. A third person prefers an oral interpreter. An oral interpreter is someone, an interpreter who repeats the spoken word in a clear format. A fourth deafblind person uses sign language in a small space. A fifth uses tactile sign language.

Yes, and another issue is stress. Deafblind people often experience stress. There is stress when the communication happens laboriously. When the deafblind person is not involved in the situation. When he is there just for the ride. When people don't give information, then it is frustrating.

And a final issue. As for the impact. It is the sense of touch, this really becomes important. Touching is for no other group so important as for deafblind people. Touching is necessary for communication and for the assistance. By touching, people get a concrete form. Otherwise it remains abstract. People are abstract when you don't see or hear them, and when you can't touch them. But if you can touch them, then they get a face. You can also feel objects and products. Then the description becomes much more concrete and clearer. We can stop.

## 12 Slide 12

The summary.

## 13 Slide 13

To sum up, we can use the words of Peter and say that, indeed, it is true that deafblindness is more than just the sum of being deaf plus being blind. Professionals in the field, often say that the two disabilities multiply each other. This applies not only to deafblindness, but also to any person with more than one impairment. Deafblindness affects communication, mobility and participation. It makes a person dependent and takes away the spontaneity because planning becomes key.

Access services made available for persons with hearing loss or sight loss are not always sufficient for deafblind people, who instead require specific solutions, such as tactile sign language.

Then, we have learned how diverse deafblind people are. In fact, very few deafblind people are completely deaf and completely blind.

We have also learned that deafblindness is an impactful impairment, that requires a strong adaptability from the deafblind person and often requires assistance in order to participate in daily activities.

Because of that, familiarity and information are key factors and provide comfort. Providing additional information, for example what is happening during a conversation, what a room looks like, where is a drink positioned on a desk, can really help. Also planning is really important: since deafblindness is an impactful impairment in terms of time and energy. Lastly, Peter mentions the emotional stress that the person experiences and the questions that arise such as, can I live independently? Can I talk to people? Will I find a partner? How can I be useful to society?

## 14 Slide 14

Exercises.

## 15 Slide 15

The exercises for this video lecture are in the Trainer's Guide and the PowerPoint file of part 2.

## 16 Voiceover

LTA - LiveTextAccess. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. SDI - Internationale Hochschule. Scuola Superiore per Mediatori Linguistici. 2DFDigital. The European Federation of Hard of Hearing People - EFHOH. VELOTYPE. SUB-TI ACCESS. European Certification and Qualification Association - ECQA. Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

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**Authors:** Peter-Vanhoutte, Piero Cavallo, Rocío Bernabé Caro, Wim Gerbecks

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