



## UNIT 1

Element 2 – Learning outcome 2

### **TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW HEARING AIDS AND REAL-TIME SUBTITLES - PART 1**



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

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## 1 Interview

Piero: Hi, good evening, Aida and Marcel. It's a real pleasure to have you here in this little talk, little interview. This interview will be about a very a very interesting topic, not always discussed, which is: why Hearing Aids are not enough. Why a person with a hearing loss should use a Hearing Aid and also use a real-time subtitler to attend an online meeting, like this one, or a face-to-face meeting, in order to attend the meeting on an equal basis. First of all, I'm asking you to present yourself a little bit, so to introduce you. Aida?

Aida: Ok, I will start, then. I am Aida Regel Poulsen. I'm Danish. I have had my hearing loss since I was 26 years old. So, I'm living with it growing up, I think. I am also a teacher of the deaf, and a speech and hearing therapist for school children. I'm also working in this field professionally. Do you want to introduce yourself, Marcel?

Marcel: Yes. Hello, Piero. Nice to meet you. I'm Marcel Bobeldijk, and I am from the Netherlands. I am hard of hearing since my birth. I use hearing aids on both ears. On a volunteer-basis, I am the President of the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People. I'm very happy to work together with you and Aida in the LiveTextAccess project.

Piero: Yeah, also for me it's a really nice pleasure to have you here as EFHOH representatives. Should we start with the first question? Ok, so the first question is: why a person, like you, who uses a Hearing Aid still should require from their company to hire a real-time subtitler for attending an online meeting or a whatsoever meeting, a face-to-face meeting, or in a normal situation, in order to attend that meeting on an equal basis. So why essentially is the Hearing Aid not enough?

Marcel: Ok, I'd like to start by giving the answer. Let me start by saying that every Hard of Hearing person is different. I, and Aida, will give an answer from our personal perspective. Let me start by giving an example at my work. When we have face-to-face meeting, and it is a one-to-one, or there are 2 or 3 people, I only use my Hearing Aids. When the group is a little bit bigger, for example, 6, 8, 9, or 10 people, I also use a communication set with 4 mikes on the table. When the group is bigger than 12 people, for example at a national meeting that we have at our organization, we have a meeting with many colleagues from all over the countries on a central place, then I have the speech-to-text support. The speech-to-text interpreter is by me in the room. Most of the times, the speech-to-text reporter is sitting near me. I have always, or most of the times, the same speech-to-text interpreter, because my organization agrees with working with a text-to-speech interpreter. It is important that in most of the times is the same person, because it was fine for my colleagues to know the speech-to-text reporter, and also the speech-to-text reporter to know my work situation, and the language that we are talking in the meeting, a lot of difficult words is coming at different times. This makes the work of the speech-to-text interpreter easier to do. Before the meeting, I send to the speech-to-text interpreter the agenda and the minutes of the last meeting. And also all the documents that we discuss in the meeting. So that the speech-to-text interpreter before the meeting has the time, and need to prepare him or herself do the job at the meeting. At the meeting, we have at my work the rule that the speech-to-text interpreter says when we have a coffee-break or the lunch break. Most of the times after an hour, one and a half hour, the speech-to-text interpreter asks me: "Is it ok to have now the lunch break, or the coffee break?" Sometimes, I say: "Oh, wait 5 or 10 minutes so that the topic is finished and then we can have the break." That has happened in face-to-face work settings. Now in the Corona-time, we have a lot of online meetings and I have Hearing Aids that can stream via Bluetooth in my iPad and phone and that is different than before, because my former Hearing Aids did not have the streaming connection and then it was needed to have the speech-to-text interpreter. It depends on the possibilities that you have on your Hearing Aids. And also of the quality of the Hearing Aids. But also it is related to how heavy the hearing loss is. I am a very heavy Hard of Hearing person, so that I need my Hearing Aids in big meetings and the support of speech-to-text. Now this is communicated by the sound that I receive on my Hearing Aids, I see the face of the speakers, so that I can read the lips and I read the text. This is kind of multitasking and ladies, as Aida, do that much better than I.

Piero: Thank you, Marcel, for your very exhaustive answer. It was very interesting. So, Aida, I can tell it is very tiring for you, as Marcel was saying, to catch up the lip-reading, and the speech-to-text interpreter, what he or she says. The use of Hearing Aids. It's very tiring, isn't it?

Aida: Well, yes it is. And even though you have a hearing loss and you get some audiological treatment in Hearing Aids or Cochlear Implants, our hearing is just not so flexible. In meetings like this, we are 3 participants here, but the quality of the sound is very different from me to the two of you. In meetings with more than 2 people, I actually appreciate real-time subtitling. Also because the microphone settings from other participants, I cannot rely on a good quality from that. I'm very aware of myself to use a boom microphone, so that I have the same distance from the microphone all the time. But not everybody is aware of that. Voices vary a lot. My hearing loss is moderate. Maybe in the high frequencies is going to much severe. But I also have a discrimination loss, which is something in the brain. I have twisting words around. If I mishear something, and I act on that, I think I have understood. But then I might in fact have misunderstood it. So I really appreciate the real-time subtitling to do my tasks correctly. I'd like to add also that in work situations, for planned meetings, it is no problem to book a speech-to-text interpreter. But for sudden meetings, emergency meetings, we cannot have that. So that could mean that we cannot be in front at the work, because at the work that is where many emergency meetings are. So we need to have a better system for this. Also for my situation, it would be me booking the speech-to-text interpreter, it would never be my employer. That is an extra task, to know when is the meeting, and then to book somebody, and make sure that I have the same interpreter because, as Marcel said, the interpreter would learn the topics of my job and the technical expressions. And that is in fact a quality.

Marcel: Piero, it is good to know that I organize with the speech-to-text interpreter that I use for my work settings, and work meetings. In our system here in the Netherlands, it's our responsibility to pay the speech-to-text interpreter. Not my work organization is paying the speech-to-text interpreter, but I pay the speech-to-text interpreter. But it's not about money. It is the coercion system that employees with hearing loss have in the Netherlands. Then I have 3 options: I can use the sign language interpreter, you can use Dutch with sign interpreter, or I can use the speech-to-text interpreter. There is no difference between the 3 groups.

Piero: But it's really up to you? I mean, in terms of costs and organization.

Marcel: Yeah. And when I go to a meeting where I prefer to use an interpreter with Dutch and sign, that is also possible. But in 99% of the times, I prefer to use the speech-to-text.

Piero: What do you think is the added value for a speech-to-text interpreter, instead of this plenty-of-errors subtitles we are having right now, this automatic subtitles?

Aida: The automatic speech recognition that we are using just now it just doesn't learn throughout an event. I was just saying to Marcel earlier today that I attended a Cochlear Implant seminar a couple of weeks ago, that lasted for 2 hours. There was some automatic speech recognition in it, and for 2 hours it never learned to write "Cochlear Implant", which was the main topic. You kind of get frustrated and it is an extra thing for my brain to overcome and make the repairs.

Marcel: But it is very important that in work settings the quality is high. Spelling mistakes are not a problem for me personally, but for me it is important that the words are correct. I prefer that the interpreter types exactly the same words that are said, not making a summary, not writing simple words. In our work, we talk sometimes with typical words, and when the interpreter makes an "own" interpretation and translation in simple words, that confuses me. Because I hear something, and I see or I read a different word. And then my brain says: "Oh, what is happening to you!" That costs too much energy. You go out of concentration and then you miss parts of the meeting.

Piero: Yeah, of course. So, it's really important to have a verbatim interpretation, instead of a more sensatim one.

Marcel: Yes, and then it is also important. That the interpreter says: "That is a difficult topic for me." or "I have too limited knowledge about this, the words are too difficult". Then, it is better that the interpreter says: "It is better that you hire another person." Because sometimes meetings are in a very academical language.

Aida: I think it is also important to know that in Marcel's system, which is Dutch, the speech-to-text interpreter will always be prepared for the meeting, will ask for the agenda, would ask for documents. I'm Danish, and I've not yet succeeded to book an interpreter. That person would have to be prepared. Some have asked, but it is not part of their salary to prepare themselves for the work. Whereas sign language interpreters in Denmark, it is part of their salary that they prepare themselves for the work. But it isn't the same when it is a speech-to-text interpreter. They just come here and they write what they hear. There is a difference how this things are carried out throughout the entire world, actually.

Marcel: Yeah, and here you see the difference between countries in the northwest of the European Union. We are not neighbor countries, but we are very close to each other. so that you can maybe understand that the situation in the map of the European Union, or in Europe is different. In Spain, it is different than in Sweden. Or in Norway, it is also different than in Hungary, or in Romania, or in Italy.

Piero: So it really depends on the country?

Aida: Oh yes. And also the automatic speech recognition, because that does not work for us in Danish.

Piero: You're lucky because in Denmark and also in the Netherlands you speak very good English.

Aida: Thank you.

Marcel: But a lot of hard of hearing people don't speak [English] very well, or don't like to speak English. So they prefer to do it in Danish or in Dutch language. Then you see the automatic speech systems are not very good at it in most other languages than in English.

Piero: Of course. So, let's change a little bit of topic. Talking about the setting of your work station, for example. What if a real-time subtitler, or a speech-to-text interpreter is not provided? What should be the setting of your working station in such cases?

Aida: It depends on the type of meeting, but I have managed, about a year ago, to have a meeting with 3 ladies and they work in the same company. I asked them to be each in their room and not to use the same computer because then the distance to the microphone would [not be] very much from one to another. That was the start of the meeting. I asked them to move apart and this of course took a lot of time. In that way, sometimes we may appear to be complicated to work with, because we are changing routines and we seem to change the agenda. But I would not have been able to follow what they were saying, if they hadn't listen to me then.

Piero: Because you were in the same room?

Aida: Because they were in the same room. They were in a different country. Even I was in Denmark. They were down in Brussels. That was not about my computer, my settings. I was telling them how to do their settings. So, it really takes to chair the meeting in a way, when in fact they had invited me and they chaired the meeting.

Piero: Right.

Marcel: It is good to say that I prefer the speech-to-text interpreter with me in the meeting, in the same room. I don't like so much working in remote, because different times that I have do it via remote, there were some technical problem. The Internet connection was not good, or the interpreter was not able to hear as we were both in the room. Back to your question, what I do when there is no speech-to-text interpreter and there is a big meeting, I go sitting in a strategic place. The place where I can hear well the speakers. Or I give him the table mike and then I have an extra kind of loop. We call it "loop system", so that I can hear the presentation very well. But then I have the problem that I don't hear well the questions from the floor. Because, for example, if it is a kind of theatre, so that people are sitting in lines, you need always to look back over your shoulders to whom is speaking. And of course I am sitting in the first line, so that I can see very well the speaker. Sometimes people are speaking in a dialect. The Netherlands is a small country, but some people from the south or the north is speaking in a dialect. Then, I cannot hear it. Then sometimes I ask my colleagues: "What is he saying?" and then sometimes the answer is: "Oh, I could also not hear it." So as a hard of hearing person, you need to understand when you are in a big room, for example with 1500 people, that people come out with questions. Even if you are in the first line, you are not always very aware of the things that are being said.

Piero: So, accent plays a big role in this situation? And I think maybe that's why speech-to-text interpreter are important. So to have the correct words that the person is saying, without the accent that he or she might have.

Aida: Where I have worked, a center for hearing loss in Denmark, for stuff meetings we have had a very good loop system, with the head of the meeting who was wearing a boom microphone. And then there would be smaller microphones around the tables, so that all participants would pick up a microphone and speak in that. When that works, it is really fine. And that also showed me that I still have a good auditory memory, because that is also important, to be able to use what you have of your hearing left. That can be done, but it takes maintaining all these technical stuff. And you also rely on good acoustic in the room, and that nothing else is disturbing the sound. It is vulnerable, but all technology is, I think.

Piero: Every part is important, no? So, everything plays a role?

Aida: Yeah, sure. Everything plays a role and even though people have been using these microphones, I may ask: "Sorry, what did you say?" "Could you switch on your microphone?" That's a special role, once again, that that one person in the meeting all the time will state: "Oh, you forgot so and so." You have like special permission to interrupt all the time and change the topic in fact, in the meeting, to "everything about microphones", when we are talking about the budget or something.

## 2 Disclaimer, acknowledgement and copyright information

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## 3 Additional metadata<sup>1</sup>

<b>Title or file name of resource</b>	U1_E2_LO2_Interview_HearingAids_and_Real-Time-Subtitles_Part-1_TRANSCRIPT.docx
<b>Version</b>	FINAL
<b>Description of resource</b>	Audio transcripts for the interview about Hearing Aids and real-time subtitles – part 1
<b>Keywords</b>	Hearing aids, real-time subtitlers, respeakers, velotypists, verbatim, sensatim
<b>Author/Contributor</b>	Piero Cavallo (SDI München), Aida Regel Poulsen and Marcel Bobeldijk (EFHOH)
<b>File type</b>	Text
<b>Length (pages, actual length of audio or video)</b>	9 pages
<b>Copyright holder</b>	LTA Project
<b>Other related pedagogical assets</b>	Part 1 of interview and other related YouTube videos in the playlist
<b>Related subject or skill area</b>	Unit 1 Understanding accessibility – Element 2 Target users and their needs.
<b>Publisher</b>	LiveTextAccess
<b>Format</b>	PDF file
<b>Issued</b>	March 22, 2021
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Licence</b>	CC BY-SA 4.0
<b>Accessibility</b>	PDF checked with Adobe Pro
<b>Certified by</b>	ECQA: <a href="http://ecqa.org/">http://ecqa.org/</a>

<sup>1</sup> The scheme used is an adaptation of the format provided by the EU project 2014-1-DE01-KA203-000679