



UNIT 1

Element 2 – Learning outcome 2

TRANSCRIPT: INTERVIEW HEARING AIDS AND REAL-TIME SUBTITLES - PART 2



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1 Interview

Piero: We are talking about speech-to-text interpreter. We talked about hearing aids. We talked about the importance to have good internet connection. The importance to have maybe the speech-to-text interpreter in front of you. The importance of good acoustic. Anything [else] that you think might be important?

Aida: Yeah, light. Just for this my picture is a lot darker than the 2 of yours. But I still think that my facial expressions are there. The light means a lot. I have also been FaceTiming with people with hearing loss and they said: "Could you [move] a little, because you have some light coming in behind you?" And that would disturb the lip-reading.

Piero: Marcel, would you like to add something?

Marcel: Yes, for me is the same. Light is very important to see the face for the non-verbal communication but also for reading the lips. There is something that I don't like, but yours is working fine, and that is the "electronic background" behind. Because sometimes the faces are a little bit moving or you cannot see very good the faces. This makes the lip-reading more difficult.

Aida: We call it "visual noise".

Piero: Maybe to have not this background maybe, but like a "video" background.

Aida: No, not a video, thank you! It moves too much. It's very disturbing. So that is "visual noise".

Piero: Before you said that subtitles must be word-by-word subtitles: that is very important. You know, in LTA project, we also care about accessibility, for persons who need more simplified subtitles. What do you recommend about it? Do you prefer more simplified subtitles, or less simplified subtitles? And why do you think, and in what situation do you think easy-subtitles should be a plus for some persons?

Aida: Well, I like to have what happens in the room interpreted to me. But I don't want so much: to have interpreted what it's meant. That is for my brain to do that. Again, some people might need that. For a conference, for instance, it would be nice that you tick the box of what kind of accessibility you need. Do you need verbatim? Or do you need easy-to-read? Because it may not be the same interpreter that we should use.

Marcel: Yeah. Can I give you an example? When you look to the Teletubbies, on the television, that is a program for small kids. There, the spoken language is in very simple words. Then, it's also important that each word is typed. But when you are working in an academic meeting or in other meeting, and there are a lot of difficult word, then it is also important that each word is typed. Personally, I don't like so much to have them simpler. Maybe when the speech goes so fast that you don't know what the client is saying, you say: "Ok, what are we doing? Do we make it more summarized?" or "Do we make more short breaks for the interpreter?" That is also an option. And of course this is related to the time of meeting. Is it a very short meeting with the interpreter? Then for me it's not a big problem, when it is not so accurate, or there are more spelling mistakes. But at work settings, I thing also for students at education settings, it is very important that you have a good quality of the speech-to-text. People with learning difficulties or with language difficulties, if you work for them, of course: then is fine to have the subtitles or the speech-to-text in more easier language. But when the presentation is not in easy language, then it is a very difficult question. It is up to the speech-to-text interpreter to make the language easier in the text. Personally, I don't like it. I also don't like when sign language interpreters make it easier for that person. I think it's not the job or the role of the interpreter. That is a bit of a personal opinion.

Aida: I think the message from a speaker, we should not have interpreted what that person thinks about this topic. We should be informed of what is a person saying and then we should manage to understand what is the meaning in this topic. Some years ago back at a conference, I had some speech-to-text and I was all the time on the screen informed: "They are talking about..." And I was thinking: "Yeah, but what are they saying about that topic?" In during the breaks afterwards, if I want to go to the speaker and ask a question, I'm not able to ask qualified questions, because I don't really know what the person was saying about the topic. All I could address would be to say: "So, you were talking about that topic?" Yeah, how interesting is that. And this is a problem I think. Sometimes this is our situation and all the people may think that we don't really understand anything. That is important, that we still get our brains to work at that high intellectual level, that we are able to.

Piero: We talked about the working settings. In what other environments do you think that real-time subtitles should be provided so that people who use hearing aids can have full accessibility?

Marcel: I think that is very important also to talk about education settings. Aida can say something more about the primary school and secondary school. But we see also more and more lifetime education at work, in your free time. And that is also fine that you have the possibility to hire a speech-to-text interpreter. Here is the same question and discussion as we had before. Is the training course about motors of cars or very technical aspects? Or a training course about the history of Denmark? Then, it is also needed different types of speech-to-text interpreters. The one speech-to-text interpreter that have more feeling for technical stuff related in cars, and the other maybe have more feelings for history. But some speech-to-text interpreter can do both very well. Maybe most of the times. That is also related to the personal interests of speech-to-text interpreters. But for example when you go to a training course at the university or in high-school, also there it is a little bit the same than in work settings. How is the room? Are the people sitting in a circle? How big is the group? Are there 10 people talking? This is different than 100 people sitting in a theatre setting. And also there, for me is important the light, the acoustics, no background noises, if I can see the speakers very well. Is it needed that I use the neckloop system, so that I give the speaker, or the teacher, a special mike? Then we have the speech-to-text interpreter. Then it is important to say that the transcript that the speech-to-text interpreter makes is only for the student, and is not for all the students in the classroom. The speech-to-text interpreter makes it only for the student. That is possible in the Netherlands, but for example in the Scandinavian countries it is not possible to share the transcript. Or that the interpreter gives the transcript of the meeting to the client. That also happens in work settings and in other meetings. I think that Aida maybe can say something about speech-to-text interpreters at the secondary and the primary schools.

Aida: I have worked as a consultants for school children with hearing loss included in local settings. It is still not used that we introduce speech-to-text to these kids. And if you look to Great Britain, they have puppet theatre with subtitles. For instance, Little Red Riding Hood. They would put up a picture of Little Red Riding Hood and then it would be written what is she saying. You can actually practice reading. To read and understand. It can be done, but it is still not introduced here. The typical thing is not until a young person goes into university, then they are introduced to speech-to-text, which is very strange. Really, really strange. And they have never heard of it until then. I'm quite convinced that it should be introduced because it is a good mean for these kids to have it. It is sometimes used if a film is being shown, to have the subtitles put on, if they're available. And then you mentioned Marcel to have the transcript. That is not possible in the Scandinavian countries. You can, in the Netherlands, have the transcript from a meeting. I think in the UK they can pay to have the transcript, where you can have it for free. But that is also a little thing in the Scandinavian countries, so that the interpreter cannot risk to be taken to court for something being said in a meeting. It depends on what kind of meeting it is, of course. I do appreciate when I work in international settings. There I can have a transcript after a meeting, so that I can run through all the different topics again. Because I still do concentrate in more ways than somebody who has a typical hearing.

Piero: Sure. So to fill the gaps that maybe you could have during the meeting.

Aida: Yeah, quite.

Piero: And what other settings do you think should provide a speech-to-text interpreter? We talked about school now.

Marcel: It is good to say something about cultural life. The film for example in the Netherlands. When you go to the cinema, all the movies from abroad have subtitles. But all the movies in the Dutch language have no subtitling. Sometimes, there are special film meetings with subtitles, but they are very limited. The same happens in the theatre. In the theatre, the place are without subtitles. Also musicals are without subtitles. Only the operas have subtitles, but they are in the top of the theatre, in the top of the stage. There, you can read the speech-to-text. Some years ago, Aida and I were in Oslo, in the beautiful theatre. The Opera House in Oslo, maybe you know that? There you can read the subtitles in the back of the chair before you. Then you can have 2 options: to have the subtitles in English, or in Norwegian. But maybe in Denmark there are other possibilities?

Aida: No, we don't have that. But we do have in the opera the subtitles. They are just above the stage. I think in opera, when they sing the same text for a very long time, it is not so hard with operas. We are better now with films in Danish, because film producers here receive support from the Danish state. If they do not provide subtitles, then they would not have the support. That's a financial thing, and is apparently a good way to do it.

Piero: Yeah.

Marcel: But also here you see a lot of differences. In Sweden, all the films in the Swedish language are with subtitles. In the United Kingdom you see that musicals and a lot of places are with subtitles. Not all, but a lot of. For example, in big theatres in London, but also all over the country, there are a lot of situations where speech-to-text is included.

Piero: To summarize a little bit. This is our final question. Since the necessity to provide real-time subtitles for persons who use hearing aids is a topic that, as we have seen, is not discussed very often. What is your final recommendation?

Marcel: Maybe to say something about settings, also for personal situations. At parties, but also not nice settings, when you need to go to a funeral, or you need to go to the hospital. In that kind of "personal" moment, you can also use a speech-to-text interpreter. Personally, I don't do that so much and I am a little bit doubting. Some people like to do that. Sometimes it can be a little bit complicated. When you go to a marriage, or a party from a friend of yours, and you take a speech-to-text interpreter with you. Then, it is very important that you contacted before your friend [and ask] if it is OK that you bring the speech-to-text interpreter with you. For example, when I have a birthday party in my family, I never do that. And when I do that, they look a little bit: "Oh, what is happening to you? What is this person doing?" Then it is very important a good introduction of the speech-to-text interpreter. Also in work settings is very important that I, as a hard of hearing person, but also the speech-to-text interpreter, explain what he or she is doing. So that there's no misunderstanding about the role of the speech-to-text interpreter. But maybe Aida uses for personal settings sometimes the speech-to-text interpreter?

Aida: No. No, I don't. I use what I can get on my TV, and I also use it now when I watch YouTube films. I really appreciate that it is there now. I'm looking forward every time and really enjoyed when it is there. About going to a party, an old friend of mine went to her son's 15th birthday. And she was very worried. She said: "I will try to have a speech-to-text interpreter with me." And of course the son said: "Yes, this is a very good idea." And it was such a great idea. Everyone around the table where she sat really enjoyed it, and they were also having some fun with this. She wrote me the next day and said when she came home, that she could not fall asleep because she was so happy. It was a long time ago that she had "heard" so much and really have been part of the party. She was so happy that she had tried it. This is a good thing, and I think this is also important that elderly people actually find out that this is possible and they can do it. But I have another thing, because with the European Federation of Hard of Hearing I have travelled a lot. At the gate when they call people out and say which [one] in the plane should come up first. Then I always walk up and then it's not me. They have so many big screens and it takes nothing. I mean, they can pre-type these sentences and show it on a screen and then just add the numbers. There is a huge thing in transport, I think. Airports, trains, buses, whatever, where we can also have good use of speech-to-text.

Marcel: Piero, I'd like to say something more about work settings. It's good to know that I have only one speech-to-text interpreter with me. Is the meeting for 2 hours? It's also one. But if the meeting [lasts] 6 hours, I have also one. For a very limited time, [I have] 2 with me. So that means that at the coffee break, or at the lunch break, also the interpreter has coffee break and lunch break. That is fine, but on the other hand not fine. Because in the coffee break there is a lot of background sounds. Then sometimes it is very difficult for me to participate [in this] part of the meeting. Because then the lunch time without the support of the speech-to-text interpreter costs me more energy than the whole meeting, because I need to concentrate so much to listen, to look. Because the hearing aids are not able to reduce all the background noises. Some hearing aids programs are able to focus on the other speakers, and haven't the possibility to reduce the background noises. There is a limitation in that. Sometimes in the [advertisement] of a new hearing aid, they present them as wonderful, so that you can hear effectively also in noisy room. Maybe sometimes. But in most of the times is an hard work for the hearing aids, but also for the hard of hearing person.

Aida: But the problem is also that the background noise at coffee breaks will be other people talking. And other people's voices. And speech sounds is the same frequencies that we are using. Then some will maybe recommend you to use your smartphone and some app that could translate or write what people are saying. But that microphone is just as vulnerable as the microphones in your hearing aids. Sometimes we escape to the back kitchen or something to have quiet around us and be able to talk.

Piero: So, in conclusion: more speech-to-text interpreters for every situation.

Aida: Yes.

Piero: That's the key.

Marcel: Yeah, that is the key. That there is a good access to speech-to-text interpreters so that we are then enough. But it's also important that the speech-to-text interpreters are educated very well in the technical stuff. Some speech-to-text interpreters use the Velotype, or the steno machine, or type in a keyboard. Then is good that the speech-to-text interpreters have also the knowledge about the technique. But sometimes the machine or the keyboard is broken, or there is no good Internet connection. Sometimes there are some technical difficulties.

Piero: Hopefully in the future Automatic Speech Recognition will be better.

Marcel: Yeah, maybe. But it is also important to train the Automatic Speech Recognition.

Piero: Thank you, Aida and Marcel for joining. Thank you very much for all your interesting points of views.

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