



UNIT 1

Element 3 – Learning Outcome 2

TRANSCRIPT: HEARING ACCESSIBILITY IN WORKING-CONTEXTS: PART 2



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13 Slide 13 – Part 2

Hi! In the first part of this video lecture we have talked about aspects such as light, and acoustics, seating position and equipment, and how they influence the hearing accessibility of a venue. The focus in this part is on the difference between online and on-site working contexts, and on how organisers, participants and speakers can become more active in the provision of hearing accessibility.

I give the floor to Aida now.

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[Aida] As for what is different between on-site meetings and online meetings or online venues, first of all the sense of other participants differ. If you are in a room with people, you sense who they are. You sense when they are ready to say something, you might not feel that, if you are doing the meeting online. And even using assistive listening systems in both situations, in a physical meeting when you are in the room together with other people, you may not hear right away who is saying something because you use directional hearing for that, and the assistive listening system is trying to provide you with the sound directly into your hearing aids. So, you may not sense it right away, but you would soon recognize the voice and you will look to the direction to where that person sits and you would provide that person awareness, attention. When you are on an online meeting, when somebody speaks, the picture will change, of course, so you see the persons, that's right. But it means for a person with a hearing loss that you don't really practice your directional hearing and you must just practice it every day to maintain it. So, this is a very important feature, you could say, within hearing.

In physical meetings, there might be background noises from people going through their papers or moving around their coffee mug, things like that. But you can also have background noise in an online meeting when people don't turn off their microphone and do things around the computer and so. So, you just need to know what you address and that you need to address it and you can do it nicely. And this is needed to have a nice meeting. Then, maybe, online venues tend to be more strict to the point on the topic because you don't have a lot of chitchat. That is not really possible because then it will flicker around with different pictures, and we soon get organized to make sure that we don't have all this changing around. We could have used automatic speech recognition for speech-to-text and, since that is not very good always, it does make you laugh, and you could have fun that way, but otherwise I'd say that in a physical meeting you meet before the meeting and you can say, "How are you?" and "Did it go well with so and so since we last meet?" And you sense the person. How is this person doing now? And

then, during the meeting, you have this feeling with you that you know this person is quite happy today or this person has just had a message that he or she needs to go to some doctor for whatever. So, you know what kind of mood the different people are in. And this is important, I think.

It is not that one is bad and the other is good, but I think these two things in the future will support each other well. So that will know, "OK, we need to meet now and then". And for quicker meetings, we can do it online. For one topic that we just need to have it solved right now, then it would be good to say, "OK, we can do that online because that is quicker." And then we can do the physical meetings for other purposes where we get to know each other and sense who are we, what kind of team are we.

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And then as to how to get organized. Speech-to-text works differently for one country to another. And some speech-to-text interpreters who work by themselves will ask, "Can I have the agenda for the meeting? Do you have more papers?", because then they prepare the meeting and have all the keywords for the meeting ready in their dictionary.

In other countries, speech-to-text interpreters come, hear, and write. That is how they do it. So, they don't actually prepare. And this is also a matter of the salary. Having worked with EFHOH now for six years, there is a huge difference in the quality when a speech-to-text interpreter is prepared and knows the vocabulary of the meeting. It is not that the speech-to-text interpreters will know afterwards and go and chitchat and talk a lot about the topics in the meeting. That is not what this is about. This is about typing fast and correctly. And you saw what this is about and then being able to write as close to the orally spoken language as possible.

Then, to prepare an online meeting. You will need to test a connection. The organizer of the meeting will open the platform for the meeting like 15 maybe 30 minutes before the meeting starts. Then, the speech-to-text interpreter, the captioner, will log in and will check out, like, in Zoom. The person will need an API-token. And then that API-token will allow the speech-to-text interpreter to write in the Zoom subtitles. It says "Text on Top" here. That is a radio transmission which means that it is good for in-situ meetings, I mean, physical meetings, when you are in the room, and Text on Tap works online. And the Text on Tap can also provide you with the other languages, if that is needed. Then you check the connection, you check that things work well. Typically, also the speech-to-text interpreter would like to be a co-host of the meeting because that allows the interpreter to have more to choose during the meeting and to navigate.

Then, we should also remember to introduce the subtitler and their role. When we are a group of hard-of-hearing people meeting, it is obvious. We can kind of say, “Oh, hello!” to the speech-to-text interpreter and we all know the person is there. But if I’m the only one in the meeting needing speech-to-text, I need to introduce the speech-to-text interpreter, and I also need to say, “Well, this means that we need to have breaks so and so.”, because the interpreter will need to pause every now and then. So, that it is also important.

And then, if somebody speaks too quickly, even the speech-to-text- interpreter or the user would have to break in and say, “Could you slow down?” or “Could you repeat, please? Because this is too fast for the interpreter to follow you.” And if others are interested, because there might even be people in the meeting thinking they have typical hearing, but maybe it is not so well with the hearing after all. And then it could also be good to introduce the others to how to get the subtitles open, so that they can follow the text and see what is all this happening. And this has happened many times to me that somebody opens the subtitles and they go, “Wow that was brilliant. It was far easier for me to follow the meeting with this.” So, that it also a good way to introduce it and people find out that it is kind of nice and more relaxed.

And then we need to plan breaks for the real time subtitler. I actually prefer to have this sorted out between me and the organisers, so that the organisers will plan, “OK, we do so and so many topics and then we plan for the break.” instead of me saying, “Oh, we have been working for more than one hour, could we have a break? Because, you know, the subtitler...”

It is better that we have it organized and that the organisers know this and then we train them, we train organisers for the future that they know this could be part of the meeting and that they would then learn how to do it.

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The organisers of the event can also help online participants to contribute to accessibility. For instance, when the invitation link is sent out, it would be good to remind people to facilitate good audio, to use a microphone that is not just open to the computer. But for instance, that you wear it here, right under your mouth, so that you are at the same distance of the microphone all the time. This is also when you reach out to get more papers. You still wear your microphone at the same distance and don’t enlarge the distance to the microphone in your computer, because then it would weaken the sound for us. It will weaken the sound for everybody. But with a hearing loss, we just don’t have the efforts that it takes to listen that harder.

It would also be good to remind people about switching off microphones when they are not in use. And also to do so with the camera, if it is not needed. And then, for online meetings and

events, it is good to use the chat, but also don't overuse it. Don't come up with all sorts of topics. This is the topic we all talking about now, we are talking about hearing accessibility, so in the chat we should not have an awful lot about vaccination and COVID-19, or some tragic accident, or whatever. Stick to the topic. That is also good to remind people before the meeting, but also during the meeting if the organisers see that this may happen, then to remind people kindly on how to participate in an online event.

It is also a good thing to introduce yourself, so that the interpreters have the names of everybody. In online meetings, most people have the name at the bottom of their picture and that is of course also a help for the speech-to-text interpreter, but it is very good to have all the names of the participants for the speech-to-text interpreter to be able to indicate who is talking now. Many people have the names at the bottom of the picture when they participate in an online meeting but some have only the name of the organisation they represent so it is very good to be aware what are people's names and in this respect it might not enough to just have 15 minutes preparation before the start of the meeting. It must be remembered also that when speech-to-text interpreter meets 15, maybe 30 minutes before the meeting, this is their work, so they should be paid for this work, even if it is preparation.

And then we also experience delay. Different technologies work differently. For instance, some speech-to-text interpreters prefer to use shared screen for speech-to-text. To me, there is a bigger delay in these technologies than when you use the Zoom subtitles, or you use, for instance, some Text on Tap overlay: this works faster. So it does take extra time and this will mean that people think, "Oh, maybe she is thinking of something completely different." But in fact, she, which is me, she is waiting for the text to pop up because it assures what you hear. Just recently, I was in a meeting and somebody asked me a question and ended up with my name. I thought I heard my name, but I wasn't sure, and I was reading, reading, reading, and then came up my name, but everybody was waiting, thinking, "Oh, what is happening?" So, it is very good to know that this delay also shows in our behaviour and, therefore, it is also good to know the best technologies for what is available for that particular setting.

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It is also good to know about hearing loss, to have knowledge about what is a typical hearing loss, because it just makes you able to react here and now; everywhere. And we are not just relying on the technology in the online meetings. We are also relying on the technology in on hearing aid, in the assistive listening systems. You know, there is also a delay in these equipment. So delay, on delay, on delay, it gives us a different way to behave, so it is good to know that it is not intended to behave in a bad way, or appear slow because none of us like to do that. But it is good to know what are the consequences and also that once we have the information, we are able to think. We are able to conclude. And we are also able to have opinions that relate to that very topic. So, it's good to also focus on communication, and that the communication is the overall topic that you talk to me as, primarily, a person. And we are discussing this topic, and not primarily, "Oh, she is the person with a hearing loss, so I'd better do it short, I'd better simplify my messages.", because we are capable of advance languages. Actually, many of us are.

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Speakers are also participants and co-designers of accessible communication. Their oratory skills, style, and non-verbal communication directly influence the extent to which their message is more or less accessible. By this I mean their ability to organise a speech or modulate their voices, but also their gestures and even the clothes they are wearing.

So, what verbal and non-verbal aspects can improve communication?

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Using a microphone is recommended, but it is not everything.

Speakers must be aware of their style, pace and prosody. They can use them for making information more accessible for the audience. For instance, speaking quickly enables us to say more, but not necessarily to be better understood. According to Barker et al., 1980 and Nichols & Lewis, 1954: we spend about 60% of our communication time listening though we are only able to make meaning out of about 25% of it.

It is not about saying less, but about organising your speech differently. For instance, you can use less words, or, if that's not your style, then to moderate your speed and use pauses. As a reference, newsreaders speak at pace of 150 to 170 words per minute according to current research. So, you can use this value as reference when you practice.

When speaking, you can also remember that your words and questions will reach the audience with a certain delay. Then your words must go through the interpreter or real-time subtitler first.

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As for non-verbal features, speakers should avoid walking around the room and turning back their faces from the audience. As we have mentioned before, lip-reading is key, and it becomes very challenging when the person with a hearing loss must chase the speaker's lips through the room while using the subtitles simultaneously. One thing that often happens is that speakers don't keep the mic close to their mouths. They start moving their hands to point at something and forget to move the mic along. Other times is just because they are nervous and tend to gesture more with their hands.

At any rate, it is always good for speakers to always remember that the subtitler is there trying to keep up with them. So, if possible, they can always double-check with them, especially in difficult situations, such as in conferences when spontaneous questions come up or panellists are talking at the same time.

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OK. Let's summarize the main ideas.

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To sum up, we can say that embedding hearing accessibility into working contexts aims at preventing barriers.

This can be done by taking a holistic approach that integrates different types of features into from the very beginning, i.e. linguistic, physical, technological, and societal ones.

Lastly, we have seen that hearing accessibility requires the awareness and contribution of all stakeholders, from organisers to participants, to speakers, to end-users.

Thank you very much.

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Exercises

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

25 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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