



UNIT 1

Element 3 – Learning Outcome 3

TRANSCRIPT: REAL-TIME SUBTITLES IN CONFERENCES AND WORKING MEETINGS. INTERVIEW WITH EVAN DORRESTEIN



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1 Slide 1

LiveTextAccess. Training for real-time intralingual subtitlers.

2 Slide 2

This is Unit 1. Understanding accessibility. Element 3. Embedding accessibility in working environments.

3 Slide 3

In this video lecture, we show an interview with Evan Dorrestein, a real-time intralingual subtitler from the Netherlands. He will talk about the role of real-time subtitles in conferences and working meetings.

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 advise customers about how to best set up an accessible real-time working environment for persons with hearing loss in the trained working contexts and settings. To achieve that, we will show testimonials and interviews of professionals.

5 Slide 5

The agenda is very short. First, I am going to introduce our invited speaker, Evan Dorrestein. Then, I will illustrate the topics of the interview. Finally, we will end this video lecture with a summary.

6 Slide 6

First of all, let me introduce you Evan Dorrestein.

7 Slide 7

Evan Dorrestein is from the Netherlands. He has medium long, brown hair and a beard. He started his career as a real-time subtitler for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at the Dutch national broadcaster NPO in 2001.

Since 2006, he has been a freelance subtitler and respeaker and he has worked at conferences and other live events, both on-site and remotely.

8 Slide 8

Let me give you some information before watching the video.

9 Slide 9

In the interview, Evan answered some questions about how a real-time subtitler provides accessibility in conferences and in working meetings. In particular, he discussed about the equipment that a real-time subtitler should have when working in these contexts, the differences between working on-site and online, and the differences between the two contexts. Finally, Evan shared his suggestions for future professionals.

10 Slide 10

Ok, let's watch the video now!

[INTERVIEW VIDEO STARTS]

-[Piero] Hi, Evan. Nice to meet you.

-[Evan] Hi, there.

[Piero] Thanks for joining in this interview. The topic of today's interview is providing accessibility, as a real-time subtitler, as a live captioner in different contexts. And the contexts you are about to talk about are: conferences and working meetings. I suppose they share a lot in common. So we are going to talk about the two settings together. And then maybe highlight some of the differences that captioners might have and might encounter in these two settings. As a professional who facilitates communication in conferences and working meetings, what do you need, as a real-time subtitler, as a live captioner, what do you need in these contexts to provide good accessibility?

[Evan] Yes. Let's start with being a captioner on-site. Because there are a couple of differences between doing things remotely or doing things on-site. But if you are visiting a company to do captioning on-site at a company somewhere, a couple of things are needed, of course. First thing that you need, very important is to have good audio of the speakers that you are going to subtitle. Sometimes, when you arrive at a place, they have a separate speaker for you there with the sound. But you cannot plug your headset into it. So you need to clearly communicate that you want the sound, and you have to be able to plug in your mini jack wherever the sound comes from. What I did myself, as a captioner, is, I bought one of those little things that can connect, if you do have the sound from a little speaker that you can just adapt and have the right cable to connect things, so that you always have your own gear to be able to use the audio jack from your headset. If you don't have it, that's a tip that I would give is buy one of those little things, and you can always do it yourself, if they don't have it. I will show you in a minute what it looks like.

[Piero] OK, perfect.

[Evan] So, next what you need is, you want to sit in a room where you do not disturb the people who are talking. If you are a respeaker, like I am, you make some noise. If you are a velotypist, maybe it's not that disturbing to be in the room itself. But if you are a respeaker, you really need to have your separate room, or at least be far away enough so that you don't disturb the people. Another thing that you need is, you want to have your screen there, with the visuals of the meeting or whatever it is. And preferably, where you can also see the subtitles that you create yourself. It's not a must. I mean, you can do it without. The main thing is that you can have both audio and video. And one of that things that you might run into is, if you work with Text on Top, and you have these little USB sticks, these little dongles, they work with a radio-graphic signal. And it can be difficult to connect, to get a clear connection, if you are too far away from the laptop that is supposed to pick up the signal. What you want to do is, you want to ask the people from the technical audiovisual department you want to ask them to put the laptop near where you are, so that the distance between the two dongles isn't that great. And you will have a good connection there. Because if the distance is too great, you will see that words will start to, well, sort of disappear. You will get words just not appearing on screen. Same thing goes with if you have a really thick wall between the room where you are and the place where the laptop is. The radio-graphic signal doesn't really carry well through thick walls. But there is always a workaround. And that is, you can always use Wi-Fi, instead of the dongles. And then you can work with Text on Tap, instead of Text on Top. It's basically the same program, but just a different way of doing things. But it can happen, that you both have a bad signal or connection, because of the place where you work and where the laptop is. And you're in a place where the Wi-Fi isn't very good. I had that the other day.

[Piero] And what did you do in that case?

[Evan] In the end, we used the hotspot from my own mobile signal on my telephone. So we had reasonable Wi-Fi through my mobile phone, because the Wi-Fi in the building was not good enough.

[Piero] These things can happen sometimes, I guess.

[Evan] Yes.

[Piero] What about the differences about the equipment that a live captioner must have in conferences and in working meetings. Are there any differences?

[Evan] Let me show you some things that I have in my kit. What I prefer to work with is this headset. This is a gaming headset, basically. It has really large earpieces, so your ears are well inside the earpads. So it's comfortable and the quality of the audio is good. And it has two connections. You have the pink one for the backphones, and the green one for the audio. You can always unplug the green one to get the audio from wherever it comes from. Now, what I was talking about earlier, is this thing. This can connect with an XLR cable, which is a really-- those professional audio cables that they tend to use on-site. And you can plug in your green little mini audio jack in here. All you need is two little batteries for this. This is a good thing to have in your kit.

[Piero] So it's basically a converter?

-[Evan] Yes, it's an adapter.

-[Piero] OK.

[Evan] These are the little dongles that I told you about. The Text on Top dongles. They have a little radio signal. So always be aware of the distance that they have to travel. Another thing that I sometimes really enjoy having next to me is a little-- I have a mini i-Pad. For my notes, if I don't have to print everything out I can also have a little mini i-Pad next to me. Or my phone. But it's a little-- It's a really small screen on my phone. It's good for keeping your notes. And the documents and the PowerPoint presentation on a little mini i-Pad, in my case. That's basically the most important things that I use for conferences on-site. Oh, wait. I didn't tell you about this one.

-[Piero] Oh, yeah.

-[Evan] This is the stenomask.

[Evan] And it goes over your mouth. If you talk into this, you won't make much of a sound. You will still hear something. [talking into the stenomask]

-[Evan] But it's not disturbing.

-[Piero] Yeah.

[Evan] Sometimes, there are situations where you are-- where you can't be in a separate room, and they think that you are going to sit there in the room with all the other people. So always have the stenomask in your little suitcase. And then you'll be fine, whatever happens.

[Piero] Yeah. And these are the basic features that—

[Evan] No, these are the advanced features, I would say. I mean, the basic thing is just your laptop. A separate keyboard is always a good thing to have. Because I'm much happier typing on a regular keyboard than on my laptop keyboard for corrections. So always have a separate keyboard with you. If you have all these things, you won't-- Oh, yes, another one is an extension cable, for your... audio signal. I have like a 3-meters-long extension cable for bridging the gap between my-- they had put on my headset, to where the audio goes in to. Extensions cords are always nice to have. I also have an HDMI cable with me. Should they want to copy my text signal from my laptop screen directly into another laptop. I haven't really used that much, though. I have all sorts of cable with me. It's always good to have a lot of cables, and adapters, and things.

[Piero] And also, maybe, two cables of the same-- of the same thing, I guess.

[Evan] I also have an audio splitter. Let me see what I have. Oh, yeah. This thing is really important. This is your regular-- from a small cable input into a thick, big input cable. This is a must. This is an essential thing. And this can also be very helpful, if you have to share audio with a colleague.

-[Piero] OK.

-[Evan] So, these things—

[Evan] Yeah. I think I've covered—

[Piero] And you use this equipment both for conferences and working meetings?

[Evan] Whenever I go on-site to work, yes. I just have a suitcase full of equipment. Sometimes, what also can help is an extra plug for your electricity. If you want to maybe have an extension for your electricity and the power socket maybe is too far away. I must say, 9 times out of 10 where you work, they will have that for you. But it can also be helpful to always have something for yourself. For having power. If you need to charge your laptop but you also need to charge your phone if the battery is nearly dead. You might have to have two power sockets, instead of just one.

[Piero] Yeah. I guess that there is a lot of difference between face-to-face and online settings. Of course, in this period of COVID-19 pandemic, most of the conferences and working meetings are held online. Things have changed a little bit. And live-captioners have to adapt to this new situation. Maybe there are some pros, but I guess there are also cons.

-[Evan] I can tell you a good example.

-[Piero] Yeah.

[Evan] The other day, I was working for Ajax, the football club from Amsterdam. They had become champions of the Eredivisie. They had this sort of-- a sort of online celebration for season ticket holders who weren't able to go to the stadium all year long. This was a sort of online event for the fans, really. And they just wanted to do the live subtitling. The translation, from Dutch into English. Because there might be a global audience there. And they wanted to do this at the event, where it was held, which was at the actual football stadium of Ajax. The Johan Cruyff Arena. We got to sit there, in the football stadium. Like the hooligans, you know. If you have any affinity with football, it's really nice to be in a stadium. Afterwards we got a thank you from Edwin van der Sar, who used to be a famous goalkeeper of Ajax. Now he is the CEO of Ajax. We were really excited to be there, and to be on the pitch. We were actually in the massage room, near the dressing rooms of the visiting teams. That's basically where the players are. That was our working environment at that moment. It was brilliant. We got a really good feeling about that. Now, 2 or 3 weeks later, they asked us back. But now they said: "The technical team says there isn't any room for you there." "Could you do it remotely, please?" Of course we can, you know. It was basically the same thing, but now I was at home in my office doing the same thing. You miss the buzz, you miss the excitement. You miss being part of something, you know. If you are there, you will do things together with the technical team. And with the presenters. All of you are working on the same... assignment, really. It's the same thing. You're part of the team, basically. Although you are beyond the scenes. If you work remotely, if you work from home you're not part of the team at all. You're just the person who does the captioning. If it's a Zoom meeting, it's the person who is hidden under the CC captioning button. It's a completely different thing of doing things. Of course, it's easy and you don't have to travel, and it's efficient. But it's not as much fun as being somewhere on-site.

[Piero] Yeah, I can tell this. Apart from this, does it change anything on the equipment from face-to-face and online settings?

[Evan] Essentially, no. Because you have the same software you work with. Only the settings are different. You don't use a dongle to send the text. You do it through Internet. And you still have usually a Zoom call. Or WebEx, or Skype, or Microsoft Teams. That's where you get the feed, where you get the sound and the image. It doesn't really matter that much, essentially, in doing the work. It's just a lot less fun [laughs].

[Piero] Would you say that there are some pros in online settings?

[Evan] Well, absolutely. You don't have to flight all over Europe. I remember before COVID broke out, I got into plains, I went to Milan, I went to Vienna, to Berlin, to Stockholm. All these places, Paris, Brussels, Antwerp. I did a lot of things. And it was really quite exiting. But it leaves quite a lot ecological footprint. It's a lot of time that you-- It takes a lot of time. Ideally, I would like to see a hybrid form, where you sometimes can do things on-site, and sometimes you can just stay at home, and do it from behind your laptop. At home, in the office.

[Piero] Yeah, many people are now switching to this hybrid mindset of working remotely some days and face-to-face other days.

[Evan] Yes. I think it really helps for companies as well, to see your colleagues on-site every so often at conferences. For us it's fun to be there as well. It sort of brings you-- It strengthens the connection that you have with the client. If you can see them face-to-face, if you can have some chit-chat before and afterwards. I wouldn't want to loose the on-site experience.

[Piero] Yeah, of course. Online maybe you have more time to spend with your family.

[Evan] Or you can do 2, 3 jobs in one day instead of just one. Financially, it can also be convenient to plan in more work on one day, because you don't have to travel.

[Piero] Yeah. But it's more tiring. I guess it's more tiring online.

[Evan] Yes, but it also gives you energy if you come back from a job, and people were happy with the work you did. That really charges your batteries.

[Piero] One last question: what are your advices or recommendations for new professionals entering these fields? And in particular in conferences, working in conferences, and working meetings?

[Evan] Yes, one-- Very important bit of advice is to know your software, know your stuff, know the technical things that you need to know. And don't just know how to work with it, but also learn how to explain it to a technical person who needs to also implement it in his working station. So it's important that you can-- can tell the client what he or she needs to do in order to get things right, to get it to work. And if you don't know it, go out with the colleague who does know and pay attention, ask some questions, and make sure that you understand it yourself. Another bit of advice is always ask for some feedback from the person that you've been working for. Were they happy? Usually they will say nothing. You just assume it was fine. But maybe, they have some preferences. They might say: "I didn't like the way the subtitles looked.", for instance. Maybe the letters were too small, or the letters weren't visible enough because they were too white, and whenever the subtitles were over somebody who wore a white shirt you can hardly read. These things are important to get feedback of. So that you can solve it for next time. And also it helps you to become better, because if you never get any feedback, you won't do anything different next time. And maybe that should be the case. Another one is, ask for materials beforehand. Sometimes you have a client who should do this for you, because there might be a subtitling company, or whatever. Not everybody does as good a job of asking for the right documentation, for the PowerPoint presentations. Because otherwise sometimes people will-- will read out an entire presentation and they will not do it in a very good way, they will just read it out at a very high pace. It's impossible to adequately caption this if you do not have the text. But if you do have the text, you can have it on your second screen so you can read along, and you can just read from your own screen and still get the information across. But if you don't have that information, it can be hell.

[Piero] OK, any other advices, or tips you—

[Evan] I'm just looking around at my desk and I see that I have 4 screens on my desk.

-[Piero] Oh, wow!

-[Evan] I have an iMac.

[Evan] I have a second screen for my laptop, I have my laptop screen, and I have a TV screen. Sometimes I use all of them at the same time. I would definitely invest in having a second screen for your laptop. So you can have your presentation, the documentation, you can have it open on one screen. You can have the Text on Top, or whatever it is you use to put your input on another screen. And you can have a word list to look at that you might need. Yes, second screens. I'm a big fan of second and third screens.

-[Piero] And also fourth screen.

-[Evan] And fourth screen sometimes, yes.

[Piero] And you only have two eyes, what a pity!

[Evan] Yes, I only have two eyes, but sometimes, you know-- If you have different speakers and you have different tabs open to get to the next PowerPoint, or the next Word document, so, yeah, you need these screens.

[Piero] OK. Any last remarks about the differences on conferences and working meetings?

[Evan] For work meetings you often subtitle for just one person who is Hard of Hearing. And that changes the situation in that sense, that he or she is the only person who reads your text. You can usually be a bit more informal with these people. Especially if you have communicated with them before. Maybe you are on a first-name basis with them. And you can ask them directly for feedback. How would you like it? Is it very important to have speaker indications? For instance. Or is it not important because in the Zoom call you can already see who is talking. You can ask them: "Would you like a transcript afterwards or not?" And you can also, if you are working for one person, maybe typos and spelling errors are not that-- a big deal, as they would be maybe for subtitles that everyone would see. If you are working for one person, don't bother too much if you make an error, rather than if you work for everybody to see. Because they would say: "These subtitles look unprofessional." "I saw all these mistakes." But if it's for one person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing, they won't bother that much.

[Piero] I think that's it. Many thanks for your knowledge. For sharing with us your knowledge.

-[Piero] All this information.

-[Evan] It's been a pleasure.

-[Evan] Thank you very much.

-[Piero] Yeah, thank you.

-[Piero] See you, bye.

-[Evan] Bye.

11 Slide 11

The summary.

12 Slide 12

To briefly sum up, we can say that working as a real-time subtitler both in conferences and in working meetings, basically requires the same equipment, both on-site and online, with few differences in the settings.

Then, we have seen that it is extremely important to know and invest in good-quality equipment.

Lastly, we learned that feedback is essential to improve yourself. So always ask for feedback to your end-users when possible.

13 Slide 13

Exercises.

14 Slide 14

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

15 Voiceover

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