



UNIT 1

Element 3 – Learning Outcome 3

TRANSCRIPT: REAL-TIME SUBTITLES IN LIVE TV. 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.

You can also watch the two videos on the same topic by D'Arcy McPherson.

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 live television. In particular, he discussed about the equipment that a real-time subtitler should have when working in this context. As you will see in a while, he highlights the fact, that usually is the company that provides you with the equipment and a software to work with. Then, Evan talks about the differences between working on-site and online.

Then, Evan talks about the importance of getting feedback in this context.

Lastly, Evan talks about what are the advantages of working for a television company as a real-time subtitler.

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Ok, let's watch the video now!

[INTERVIEW VIDEO STARTS]

-[Piero] Hi, Evan.

-[Evan] Hi, there.

[Piero] Nice to have you here again. Now we are talking about live TV subtitling. We already talked about conferences and working meetings. We have seen what a live captioner needs to have in order to provide good accessibility. And what are the differences between online and face-to-face settings. And also some tips and tricks for new professionals entering these fields. We are now switching to live TV, as I said. As a professional who facilitates communication in live TV, what do you need in live television, when providing captioning in live television to provide good accessibility?

[Evan] Usually, if you work for television, it would be in the office, where all the subtitlers are. The only thing you will probably need, is provided by the company. You would have a company headset, or you would have a company microphone. And you would have the company software to work with. Depending on the country, you would do your TV shows by yourself, and correct yourself, or you would have a colleague who would do the correcting as you work. Or you might even take turns. That is different for each country. I will tell you something about the situation in the Netherlands. We have some commercial broadcasters. They usually work in pairs. Where one person would do the subtitling before the commercial break, and the other one would do the second bit after the commercial break, for instance. And they would help each other with the preparation of the TV shows. So they would... build a lexicon of words that they would need for a particular TV show. And they would load it wherever it's needed, so that the other person could use it. I began my career as a TV subtitler for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I would do Dutch to Dutch respeaking. We used to do the shows by ourselves. Not in pairs. I'm used to editing my own mistakes when I am respeaking. It's very important that you have some basic typing skills to quickly correct your own mistakes. Because you would not use speech recognition to correct your mistakes. You would use the keyboard. Or, if you make a lot of mistakes, you would discard the whole phrase and you would respeak it again. And then hope that second time round, it would come out right. If you work for television, there are several-- different-- different types of software that you could use. One company that I worked for, they had... software where you could hardly use the keyboard to edit your mistakes. You would have to do everything by voice. Which was really annoying. Because the errors would already be on-air and visible for everybody to see, and you have to correct afterwards. Now, for other broadcasters that I worked for we can work from home. So we have the software on our own laptop. And we can use the keyboard to correct the mistakes. We can send the actual caption online by pressing a button. So we have a lot more control over the quality that we bring. Which I prefer much more than being sort of-- at the will of the computer who decides for you whether or not a mistake is visible or not for the entire audience to see.

[Piero] So we have seen basically that, most of the times live captioners work in an office. Or at home. And they are provided with a software from the company, a computer, and so on. Apart from all these, do you think there are some equipment specific for the live TV setting that a live captioner must have, or should have?

[Evan] The thing that struck me when I started to work was that they did not have the headset that I use. I would have a standard loan microphone to talk in. Basically, it's what the company provides you with. You don't really have any control over that. It's different. If you work from home, you can get your own equipment. If you are self-employed, like I am, you make sure that you have your own equipment. You make sure that you have the state-of-the-art equipment. The best equipment that you can get. That's a bit of an investment, maybe. But it will pay back for itself with a couple of jobs that you do. If you work for a company, you have to deal with whatever they give you.

[Piero] You have to stick with the equipment they provide you. And what about-- You mentioned, in the other interview we had about conferences and working meetings, that a good space, environmental space and also good lighting, good acoustics, those are important factors, in those settings. What about in live TV? Is it important to have good lighting, good acoustics, and so on?

[Evan] Again, you are at the will of what the company offers you where you have to sit. One difference that there is between live TV and conferences, is that sometimes, because of the digital signal of TV, the subtitles that you create, there is a delay there. You would get the audio signal maybe 8 seconds earlier here in the Netherlands. And it would appear on TV maybe 9 seconds later. The subtitles are not completely synchronized. There's always a delay of 1 or 2 seconds. Even when you are really quick. But that-- That causes some issues, that you cannot rely too much on the television, on what you see on TV. You are relying on the audio. So if you are subtitling football, and the commentator says the name of the player who has the ball, I wouldn't bother saying that, in my subtitles-- Because, whenever I say the name of a football player, the ball is already 2-3 players on, so the wrong name comes on screen at that particular time. It requires a bit of-- You have to anticipate a bit more. And maybe adapt your way of captioning. But that goes-- That's really, mostly for sports. But also, there might be subtitles that are in another language, so that there is already a subtitle there that you need to be aware of if you are working with closed captions. So you would need to, maybe, put you captions a bit higher, maybe at the top of your screen. Or halfway. So that you don't block the other subtitle that will be on screen in your TV.

[Piero] So you have to consider that too.

[Evan] You have to consider that. Although, I must say, for some companies, they always have the subtitles for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. They always have them raised a couple of lines, so that they never cover the bottom part where the regular subtitle would be. So, that-- In that case, your subtitles are always raised. But then again, sometimes the regular subtitles are raised because there's a name-- a speaker indication there. And whenever that happens the regular subtitle loosens up. And, even then, you are conflicting the position of the subtitles. Sometimes it goes wrong, even when you raise the subtitles. Always.

-[Piero] It can get messy sometimes.

-[Evan] It can get messy, yeah.

[Piero] What about the differences that... you have in online and face-to-face? I mean, when you are physically in the office. in the broadcaster office. And when you're working at home. Are there any differences?

[Evan] Not really, because... if you're working for TV you don't have any feedback or any feeling with the person that you are doing your work for. You feel very, very distant from the intended audience, if you're working for TV. It feels a lot more scary to work for one person who is sitting in front of you, who you're doing the work for, than if you're subtitling for 100,000 viewers, maybe. But they are all behind the television set, somewhere in the country. And you don't have any contact with them.

[Piero] What about the feedback? Do you get any feedback at all working in live TV?

[Evan] Hardly. Hardly. And that's a shame. Because if more people would give feedback, then some people in a position of power, might be-- might feel compelled to change something. And something about the quality of TV live subtitling. Because it really is pretty bad, at times. And if people don't complain, the managers who are at the top, they won't change anything. I would encourage people to complain about the bad subtitles. Or give us some compliments when things are good. There is really a lack of feedback from the viewers in the Netherlands.

[Piero] So you basically stick to the requirements of the broadcaster. Their guidelines.

[Evan] Yeah, you just do your thing, and you just-- It's just another shift that you do. And your heart is not really in it, usually. It's completely different when you're working for people face-to-face. Or for companies. Then you really think, "I have to do my best here." And if it's just another TV show, it's just another TV show.

[Piero] Yeah. So maybe working in conferences and working meetings is more exciting

-[Piero] than working in live TV.

-[Evan] It is.

[Evan] It's a lot more fun, yeah.

[Piero] What would you say is a pro in working in live television instead of working for conferences and meetings?

[Evan] Well, the pro is that you have a steady income. You have some stability. Because you have a certain amount of shifts every week that you do. You have this basis to fall back on. This foundation. And it's great to have that. And to have both of these things. So you can have your freelance career. And you have your television... career, that's the basis of what you need. If you have both, it's a great combination. I have one more thing to add about what makes television... different from the live settings. If you work for a television show, you have a lot of... prepared text that you need to edit, and make ready for-- to bring on-air. Sometimes, you have to switch between doing live captioning and using the text that you already have. The autocue text, for instance. Or if you have-- If you have a news presenter, you would have all the text of the news presenter. That makes it... a bit easier have longer shifts, so you can sometimes have a little breather, because you can just press the pre-prepared text on-air. But if you make the switch from doing a live bit, and then you go back to the prepared text that you have, you always have a bit of a delay, because... everything that you do live it causes you to run a few seconds behind, when you've finished. And then you can't immediately use the next bit of text that you have prepared because the last subtitle that you had brought on-air, is still on-air. So you have to be very aware of the timing. And... make sure that you don't press the next prepared bit of text on-air. Because it causes the other bit of text to disappear too quickly from your screen. And people won't be able to read it. Because it's been on your screen for maybe half a second. And then the other text pops on on screen. So you really need to be aware of the timing there.

[Piero] Talking about these advices you are giving, what are other tips you would like to give to new professionals entering in this field and live captioners who want to work in live television?

[Evan] Again, here I would say it's very important to get feedback. Sometimes you might have a colleague who assesses your work. And they would give you feedback. They would say, "Your NER score is not good enough." That's just a paper reality. An administrative way of looking at the quality of work. Whereas, sometimes, It would be nice to have the feedback of somebody who actually saw your work.

-[Piero] Yeah, from the audience.

-[Evan] Yeah, from the audience.

[Evan] Because you can be very literal and have a lot of text but have a lot of mistakes. But because you have so much text, that your score might still be quite good. But there might have been quite a lot of errors there, as well. I would always advice people to be critical of the text that they provide. That you can see on screen. Because you cannot see, in an NER score, if the text disappeared from your screen too quickly. And it wasn't readable at all. It's hard to get these things-- to capture these things in quality assessments. So these are the things that you need to be aware of yourself.

[Piero] Any last remarks you want to raise for live television?

[Evan] Yeah. Go to the toilet before you go into a broadcast. Because once it starts, there's no way to go. [laughs]

[Piero] You cannot ask the switch

-[Piero] after 5 minutes.

-[Evan] No. Don't drink too much.

[Evan] I mean, drink enough coffee, but don't drink too much coffee. Especially if it's a late-night TV show.

-[Piero] So, always go to the toilet before.

-[Evan] Always go to the toilet.

[Piero] Many, many thanks, Evan again for all your knowledge, and all your information.

-[Evan] I see you.

-[Piero] See you.

-[Piero] Bye.

-[Evan] Bye-bye.

11 Slide 11

The summary.

12 Slide 12

To briefly sum up, we can say that working as a real-time subtitler in live television, basically requires the same equipment, both on-site and online. Usually, is the broadcaster you work for that provides you with the equipment, a software, and an office. If you work for live television, but from home, you might have more control over the equipment you use, allowing you to use the equipment that best fits your needs.

Then, we have seen that getting feedback from users of real-time subtitles of television is hard. This is because the interaction between the subtitler and the users is really scarce. Still, it is very important for a subtitler working in television to get feedback from users, in order to improve the service offered. An alternative way to get feedback is to ask your colleagues.

Lastly, we have seen that one of the advantages of working in a broadcaster company is that you have a steady income. This allows you to have your freelance career in parallel to that.

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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