



# MULTIPLIER EVENT 2 | REPORT

27th September, 2017

Venue: [Faculty of English, Collegium Novum, al. Niepodległości 4, Poznan, Poland](#)

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## AUDIO DESCRIPTION TEACHING AND TRAINING

### PROJECT DETAILS

**TITLE** | Audio Description: A Laboratory for the Development of a new Professional Profile

**ACRONYM** | ADLAB PRO

**EC PROJECT NUMBER** | 2016-1-IT02-KA203-024311

**NATIONAL PROJECT ID** | GU10213041978

**FUNDING SCHEME** | Erasmus+

**SUB-PROGRAMME** | Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices

**ACTION** | Strategic Partnerships for higher education

**DURATION** | 36 months

**COORDINATOR** | Università degli Studi di Trieste

### BENEFICIARIES

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (ES)

Universiteit Antwerpen (BE)

Uniwersytet Im. Adama Mickiewicza W Poznaniu (PL)

Utopian Voices Ltd. (UK)

Soundfocus B.V. (NL)

Radiotelevizija Slovenija Javni Zavod Ljubljana (SI)

Royal National Institute of the Blind (UK)

1



## OBJECTIVES

This summary captures a half-day of presentations and discussions convened by ADLAB PRO Project board and UAM, the Polish partner to the project with the aim of spreading awareness of the European Project on audio description. Close to 50 participants, including audiovisual translation scholars, other representatives of academia, professional audio describers, consultants and practitioners gathered to hear about the objectives of the EU-funded project and current and planned achievements. Further developments were also discussed along with updates on recent developments in the wider audio description (AD) field. A hands-on session on AD training was a good opportunity to showcase interesting teaching techniques and exercises.

## ORGANIZATION

**Chair and moderator:** Agnieszka Chmiel (UAM)

**Presenters:** Perego (UNITS), Chmiel & Mazur (UAM), Kuentler (Napisy-Audiodeskrypcja), Mankowska (Fundacja Katarynka), Drozdowski (Department of Art History, University of Łódź), Remael (University of Antwerp), Jankowska (Jagiellonian University, UAB), Yousaf (SDI Media), Fryer (Utopian Voices).

**Minute takers:** the event was recorded.

**Photographer:** Simonin (UNITS)



2

## SESSION 1: ADLAB PRO PROJECT

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND TO THE PROJECT

**Elisa Perego (University of Trieste)**

Elisa Perego, Project Coordinator from the University of Trieste, thanked those present for joining the multiplier event and summarised the project structure and the objectives (see annex ME2\_2017\_UNITS\_ADLabPRO). ADLAB PRO is a follow-up from a previous project titled ADLAB (2011-2014), which focused on designing reliable and consistent guidelines for the practice of AD. Building on those best practice guidelines, the three-year ADLAB PRO Project (2016- 2019) aims to create a portfolio of free-to-use training materials for audio describers. Perego confirmed that the materials shall be created as separate independent units wherein each unit will cater to the requirements for training in specific areas including but not limited to theatres, television programmes, films, museums and live events.



The final presentation for the training material is yet to be finalised, however attendees were assured that the plan is to offer it in a few different formats, for example: videos, webinars, web pages, lectures etc. The project board is keen to ensure that the materials produced are received positively by all, including industry professionals and those working in academia therefore it is important to strike a neutral tone that can be easily implemented in the European credit transfer system. The project, which is financed by the European Union and Erasmus+

Programme, is led by University of Trieste and has eight partners from seven European countries. In addition to the four academic partners - University of Trieste, Autonomous University of Barcelona, University of Antwerp, and University of Poznan, there are four non-academic organisations on board - Utopian Voices Ltd., Sound Focus, RTV Slovenia and the Royal National Institute of Blind People. The deliverables of the project are divided into six intellectual outputs; these are allocated to different partners and each output lasts 5-6 months.

## PRESENTATION OF IO1 RESULTS. A SNAPSHOT OF AD TEACHING AND TRAINING PRACTICES Agnieszka Chmiel and Iwona Mazur (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan) (Lead of IO1)

The project summary was followed by a presentation on the findings from the assessment of the existing AD training practices completed in the first intellectual output (see annex ME2\_2017\_UAM\_IO1). This assessment included examining existing courses in AD offered by universities and other independent bodies. Various aspects such as their duration, area of specialisation along with their focus on approach and evaluation were taken into consideration. Close to 200 courses were appraised with an almost even split between academic and non-academic courses. The conclusions from quantitative and qualitative analysis offer a comprehensive view of the key practices that are common to most courses and also identify gaps in training modules. One of the most interesting findings that emerged from this assessment was the lack of any significant difference between the teaching practises adopted for academic and the non-academic courses (except for more emphasis placed on AD voicing in non-academic courses).



However, what did not necessarily come as a surprise to most was that the teachers of AD often happened to be practitioners as well. Film AD was the most taught type of AD and audio-visual materials were very much used as part of such courses especially movie clips and television programmes with AD, which the students were asked to analyse. Theory and guidelines were introduced in PowerPoint presentations. AD was taught in a very practice-oriented way. Students in the analysed courses were usually given plenty of opportunities and assignments to practice AD drafting. When possible, students participated in real-life projects and prepared AD for real audiences or worked around a real theatre production to develop their AD drafting skills.

## PRESENTATION OF IO2 RESULTS

**Elisa Perego (University of Trieste) (Lead of IO2)**

Next, Elisa Perego presented the results of Intellectual Output 2 (see annex ME2\_2017\_UNITS\_IO2). Intellectual Output 2 aimed to draw up a list of essential skills and competencies required in an audio describer. Methodology involved drawing up a questionnaire based on the results from Intellectual Output 1, literature review of existing academic materials, and collating observations from other projects on AD. Service providers, practising audio describers and also those who use description on a regular basis were requested to respond to this survey and feed into the final outcomes. The multilingual questionnaire was prepared in English, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Polish and Slovene. It included a consent based on the requirements of the UNITS ethical committee. The responses were provided by 65 audio describers, 100 AD users and 18 service providers from 26 countries. The results led to the creation of a matrix of skills and competences ordered by degrees of relevance. Decisions on the importance of particular sets of AD skills to be included in the course design will be taken as part of the IO3 activity based on their relevance determined by the index of importance as well as based on the theoretical framework that will be developed. The speaker presented sample contents of the matrix, with such textual and linguistic skills as the selection of significant visual information and an excellent command of mother tongue assessed as the most desirable competences for audio describers. At the end, Perego invited the audience to read the full IO2 report that would be available online in the coming weeks.

## SESSION 2: TEACHING AND TRAINING

### AUDIO DESCRIPTION AS NARRATION. USING FILM ANALYSIS AND FILM PERCEPTION ANALYSIS IN DRAFTING AND TEACHING AD

**Izabela Kuentler (Napisy-Audiodeskrypcja)**

Izabela Kuentler is an experienced Polish audio describer. She started by presenting her credentials and her experience as an AD author in numerous Polish projects (see annex ME2\_2017\_AD\_Izabela Künstler-Zawisza). She claimed that audio description is narration. She presented her definition of AD and claimed that AD per se has to be subjective, that a film script is important and should be used to draft AD because it is a good source of information about the intentions of the film director/producer.





As a result, we arrive at an informed and well-constructed sound-based narration, which leads to user satisfaction. AD should satisfy its users, it should stir emotions, it should be entertaining. She also claimed that AD can be likened to an audio drama. She then gave an overview of Polish standards of audio description and Polish legislation. She mentioned that at the beginning of its development in Poland AD was supposed to be objective and emotionless but films are about emotions and should evoke emotions, thus emotions should be named and expressed in AD.

## HOW TO TURN A JOURNALIST INTO AN AUDIO DESCRIBER

Justyna Mankowska (Fundacja Katarynka)

Justyna Mankowska, an experienced Polish audio describer and accessibility lobbyist and activist, described a project which started when Poland was preparing for Euro 2012, the European Football Cup. Polish sports commentators were trained to become audio describers of football games. The project enjoys sustainability because all sports events organized at the Polish National Stadium in Warsaw since 2012 have been audio described. Justyna Mankowska presented some challenges, differences between live commentary and AD and showed some examples. She mentioned that AD of sport events has to be creative and entertaining.



## TEACHING AUDIO DESCRIPTION OF WORKS OF ART IN THE ACADEMIA – THE MAIN PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Adam Drozdowski (Department of Art History, University of Łódź)

Adam Drozdowski talked about teaching audio description of works of art from the perspective of an art historian (see annex ME2\_2017\_Adam Drozdowski). What is important in the methodology of the description of the piece, since it might affect the way it is interpreted and perceived by the blind AD user. Although many sources claim that the description should be as objective as possible, consultations with the blind show that such objective descriptions might not be sufficient. Audio description of a work of art requires some background in the history of art since the description itself might be enriched and include

information about potential interpretations of the piece or some anecdotal information regarding the piece or the artist. Obviously, the clarity and good structure of the description are of key importance. Students of art history have participated in AD-related projects since 2013. The groups include 8-12 students who attempt the creation of AD for pieces of art under the supervision of Prof. Pawłowska. The first project involved AD for the Neoplastic Room. The students described the room itself and four selected paintings. The second project was about describing pieces by Francis, Klasen and Haneman. Other projects followed. The students voiced their descriptions, some of them were also translated into English and Spanish. The project-based learning process helped students to develop not only their audio description competences but also their interpersonal skills.



### SESSION 3: HANDS-ON SESSION WITH LEARNING ACTIVITIES CONCLUDING REMARKS

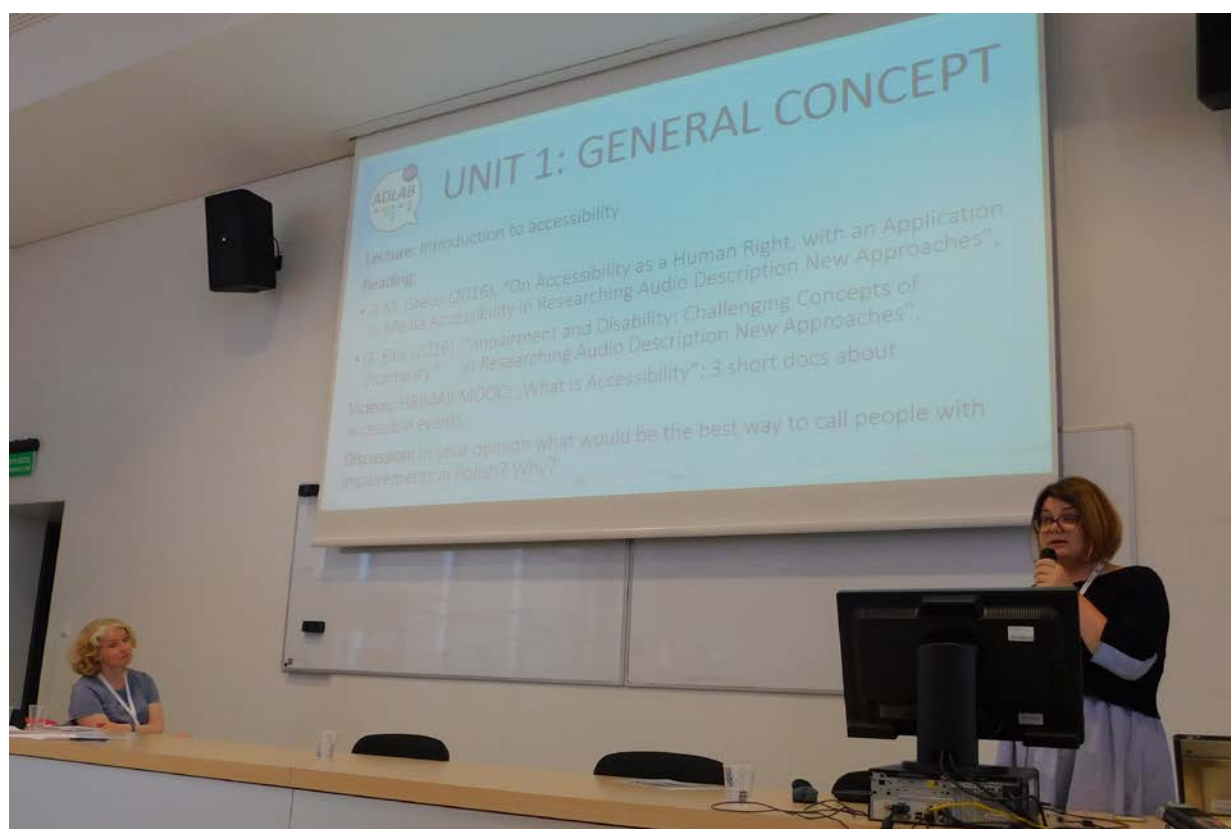
#### ROOM DESCRIPTION AND DRAWING Aline Remael - University of Antwerp

Aline Remael presented two preparatory exercises that she uses at the beginning of her accessibility course (see annex ME2\_2017\_UA\_Workshop). In one of them students are asked to prepare a description of a room they know well (e.g. their dorm room or bedroom). The descriptions are read out in class and another student is asked to draw a plan of that room. Usually, one failed attempt is enough for the students to realise that they (as describers) have to position themselves in the space in order to provide audio descriptions that would be appropriate for visualising by end users. The other exercise involved a description of a painting (Edward Hopper's Cape Cod Evening). The exercise is contextualised, i.e. students are instructed to describe it as if it were the opening scene of a film. They should not attend to artistic features (such as types of brush strokes) and they should treat the people depicted there as protagonists of a movie. The students are also given a limit of 140 words for the description. Students discuss their descriptions and identify description elements mentioned by all/some/few students.



This is followed by a discussion of what must be included, what is superfluous and how to describe things that are not certain. This discussion includes elements of peer review and students have usually no problems providing feedback to their peers. Following such an interactive session, the students are asked to rewrite their descriptions and then are given individual feedback by the teacher. The learning outcomes are as follows: (1) the students can identify and name the challenges involved in selecting information for the description of a static scene involving a relatively simple well-structured (symbolic/suggestive) setting with immobile characters; (2) the students can identify the missing contextual information they would require in order to write an effective description (for a film); (3) the students are aware of the impact of subjectivity in their respective descriptions. At the end of her presentation, Aline Remael read out a final version of the description prepared by the most recent group of her students.

**Anna Jankowska - Jagiellonian University, Autonomous University of Barcelona**



Anna Jankowska briefly presented her blended learning course on media accessibility (see annex ME2\_2017\_Jankowska\_Workshop). The course starts with a lecture that introduces the concept of accessibility. The students are asked to discuss how to call people with impairments in Polish and to justify their choices. The next unit is about awareness and regulations. The students are asked to imagine that they are a blind person and try to find information about accessible TV programmes, cinemas, museums and theatres. They learn by doing and later discuss how easy or difficult it was for them to find the relevant information. What follows in the course is a lecture of AD definition and history. The speaker then presented a task that aims at giving students a first insight into the challenges of AD drafting, allowing students to reflect upon the effect of different AD strategies and making them experience accepting feedback and defending their standpoint. Then students listen to two descriptions and try to draw a picture based on this

description (see annex ME2\_2017\_Jankowska\_Materials Workshop). The descriptions are deliberately wrongly structured and too detailed. As a result, the drawings created by the students differ considerably. The students then discuss what would make the task easier and arrive at certain solutions, thus learning by solving a problem. The speaker played the descriptions and showed the resulting drawings. She also presented the original drawing and an improved description. This task can be directly copied by the participants of the event in their teaching practice.

## CAN YOU CREATE AN ILLUSION? (A CLIP FROM THE KILLING)

Shak Yousaf - SDI Media

Shak Yousaf is an experienced audiodescriber, head of audio description in SDI and responsible for in-house training professional audio describers in SDI Medi (see annex ME2\_2017\_Yousaf\_SDI Media). He presented a minute-long opening scene from *The Killing* that was very interesting due to its illusory effect (see video ME2\_2017\_Shak Yousaf\_Forbyrdelsen.mp4). At first, the viewer is misguided to interpret the character's actions as intercourse. Later, the illusion disappears as the viewer sees that the character is tied to a chair and is trying to free himself. The challenge for the audience was to create audio description to create a similar illusion. The participants were given a few minutes to draft their audio descriptions. What ensued was a presentation of the participants' suggested descriptions and a feedback session during which various solutions were discussed.



## GUIDING

Louise Fryer - Utopian Voices

Louise Fryer involved the participants in a practical guiding task which she usually uses in teaching theatre audio description. First, she asked two participants to demonstrate the most basic principles of guiding a blind person in a theatre. The guide introduces herself and asks a blind person if she/he would like any help. Then the guide has to ask how the blind person would like to be guided. Some blind people choose to take the guide's arm, others prefer to put a hand on the guide's shoulder. The guides were instructed to stay relaxed and in control of the situation. The guide should be slightly in front of the partner. This also means that if the guide spots an obstacle, he/she will be the first to react to it and the guided person will detect the movement (e.g. the guide's arm moving behind the guide's back). Louise Fryer also instructed the participants how to guide a blind person through doorways, how to direct them to a seat (and explain the type of seat) and how to guide them up or down stairs. These techniques were demonstrated by the two



volunteers. Then, the participants were asked to pair up and guide each other around the building (the guided person was asked to close their eyes). The participants returned to the room after a few minutes and reported on their reactions, whether they trusted the guides, how they felt and what the main challenges were. The exercise was a great practical experience for the participants – they could both feel what it is like to be deprived of a major mode of information (vision) and they became aware (through practice) what is especially important in guiding.



### Q AND A SESSION

The event finished with a Q and A session with participants asking more detailed questions about the contents of the previous presentations. The participants were also asked to complete and submit two evaluation sheets – about the practical exercises and about the Multiplier Event in general. The evaluation results will be presented as reports within IO5. At the end, the moderator thanked everyone for contributing to the success of the Multiplier Event and encouraged the participants to network more during lunch.



### NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

The Multiplier Event offered plenty of networking opportunities both before the event, during the coffee break and during lunch following immediately after the event.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This event was organised by the Faculty of English, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. We thank our colleagues from ADLAB PRO Project who provided support and expertise that greatly assisted the organisation and delivery of the sessions. We would like to thank all the speakers for sharing their insights and best teaching practices with us.

## DISCLAIMER

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