

7<sup>th</sup> International Conference & Exhibition  
on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media

# Languages & The Media

October 29 – 31, 2008

Hotel InterContinental, Berlin

**Global Business –  
Local Access  
Good-bye Quality?**

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## CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

The conference agenda was created through a selection process involving both a public call for proposals and in-depth research of the international media sector. The agenda provided 49 presentations covering seven diverse topics. Fifty-seven speakers from 20 countries gave lectures on their fields of expertise for an international audience of 230 participants from 30 countries.



## CONFERENCE AGENDA

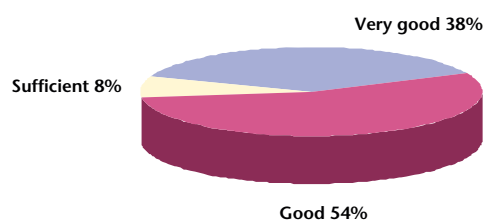
### FIRST CONFERENCE DAY

The opening of the conference was introduced and chaired by **Yves Gambier** from the University of Turku, Finland. In his introduction, Gambier addressed the issue of accessibility of media, not only for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, but also for visually impaired media users. He pointed out that social marginalisation due to lack of accessibility is an urgent matter that needs to be dealt with in a proper manner. While media knowledge is expanding and new prospects of accessibility can be given, a healthy balance of a wide range of services and usability needs to be maintained.

## THE EVENT

**Languages & The Media 2008**, the 7th International Conference and Exhibition on Language Transfer in Audiovisual Media, took place at Berlin's Hotel InterContinental from October 29th – 31st, 2008. The Steering Committee included Mary Carroll (TITELBILD Subtitling and Translation GmbH), Germany; Jorge Díaz Cintas (Imperial College London), UK; Yves Gambier (University of Turku), Finland; and Corinne Imhauser (ISTI-HEB), Belgium.

### Conference Programme

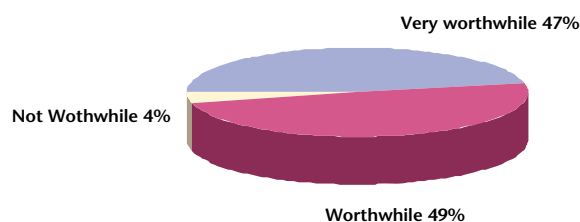


## PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Prior to the event, five workshops were held. The topics of these hands-on sessions included:

- Creating Audio Description: From the Image to the Word
- Producing Effective Subtitles for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Viewers. Practical Tips
- Training Respeakers: A Glimpse of the Present
- Live Subtitling: Respeaking the TV News. Essential Theory and Practice
- Videogames Localisation: Brief Introduction for Hardcore Translators

### Overall Evaluation



**Brij Kothari** from the Indian Institute of Management presented his unconventional approach of using Bollywood karaoke subtitling for educational efforts. Dr Kothari and his team have innovated, researched and nationally implemented the Same Language Subtitling (SLS) project in India to promote mass literacy among the illiterate and weak readers. According to national studies, 600 million Indians are considered literate when, in reality, half of them have the weak reading capabilities of early-literates. The SLS initiative aims to transition these 300 million people from a state of weak and fragile reading to functional and fluent reading ability. By making same language subtitles part of daily TV viewing habits,



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reading becomes a regular and automatic process for the viewers. The success of this project, Kothari said, is remarkable: After five years of exposure to SLS, the percentage of illiterates has decreased 50 percent while the number of good readers has doubled. As a positive side effect, newspaper-reading has gained popularity, leading to a boom in India's print industry. However, the challenges of this initiative are still prevalent: In order to further implement, extend and fund the project, the on-going cooperation and support of television and education policymakers have to be ensured.

**Alex Varley** from Media Access Australia tackled the issue of using global media empires to expand disabled access. Disability access to media is a global issue, yet it has been treated mainly as a local issue. Using the example of the local Australian market, Varley identified the advantages and challenges of the captioning process on a global scale. Especially the easy access to contents in the production and import of DVD material can be used to implement captioning and audio description (AD). A common effort of interest groups and production companies may thus cater to the need of the disabled viewers and change the industry subsequently. Closing the panel, Varley placed emphasis on the opportunity of creating an international benchmark with accessible media. Notably, he underlined the fact that the service of subtitling and captioning had to be treated as a new product development and would, as such, be a profitable business.

A majority of the first conference day sessions focussed on the subject of **live subtitling** and language challenges. Following up on the introduction of this topic at the previous conference in 2006, this year's presentations and discussions dug deeper into the matter. In two panel sessions chaired by **Beatrice Caruso** from SWISS TXT, Switzerland, and **James Gardner** of the Independent Media Support Group, UK, technical challenges and quality issues of live subtitling were examined.

The first conference day closed with a hands-on panel discussion on the topic of **The UK's Experience of High Levels of Access Regulation** led by David Padmore from Red Bee Media. Based on the UK experience of high levels of access regulation, participants outlined the ways in which the key protagonists in the industry have balanced quantity, cost and quality. On the panel were **Wilf White**, Head of External Policy for the BBC; **Chris Higgs**, Managing Director, ITFC; and **Dick Bates** from the RNID Media Access Group.

White explained how the UK's regulation – including 100 percent subtitling by the BBC and over 90 percent from ITV and Channel 4 – has necessitated an on-going discussion between all groups on how to achieve these volumes without reducing the quality of what goes on screen while remaining within affordable limits for cash-constrained broadcasters. The explosion of accessibility – over 80 UK channels now have access obligations – has stimulated innovation in technology and in production methods, and an interesting double-edged relationship between the service providers and the audience.

The discussion evolved around the reasons why access may not be as high in other countries. Participants from broadcasters remarked that a budget often has to be allocated for translating and subtitling of foreign language programmes, so little room is left for means of access. Translators and audio describers were mainly concerned about the cost pressures put on them by broadcasters. High-quality education and training is often not rewarded financially.

Panellists agreed that the great passion and enthusiasm on behalf of the BBC to give as much access as possible, coupled with an effective lobbying for the blind and deaf and hard-of-hearing, were paramount for the exemplary development in the UK. Broadcasters aside from the BBC also generally comply with the regulations as peer pressure accelerates compliance on the market.

The numerous sessions during the day raised questions from participants and the evening reception offered the opportunity to extend the discussions, as well as to socialise with colleagues from 30 countries after the day's final session had closed.



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## SECOND CONFERENCE DAY

The second conference day started off with a **panel discussion on Achieving Accessibility and Challenges for Broadcasters**, chaired by Mary Carroll from TITELBILD Subtitling and Translation GmbH, Germany. In their presentations, international television representatives shed light on the accessibility policies and conditions of their stations.

**Gion Linder** from SWISS TXT gave insight on the accessibility reality of Swiss television. In 2007 a newly introduced radio and TV law regulated one-third of the broadcasting time to be subtitled in French, German and Italian. The law shifted the emphasis to easily accessible content such as news and documentaries, and raised the importance of efficiency, quality assurance and intercultural management. With regard to these challenges, the process of transformation denoted a concentration on Swiss content and the outsourcing of drama programmes. Additionally, the focus now lies on raising awareness of accessibility among the general public. This will be accomplished by making subtitles visible to all viewers and using prime-time programming hours, as well as providing communication opportunities for the hard-of-hearing via websites.



**Izabela Künstler**, from the Polish TV station Telewizja Polska, shared her experiences as the editor-in-chief of the Captioning Department. The station faces new challenges with new EU regulations requiring that all public broadcast television time be captioned. The vague EU guidelines require a re-organisation of work within the station, extra training of staff and special measures to guarantee quality, which are often connected with financial issues. Having started captioning on public TV only 14 years ago, Telewizja Polska now provides about five to six hours of captioning per day. Despite the ambitious intentions to expand the service for the hard-of-hearing, Künstler struggles with technical and competency needs. Since no speech recognition systems are available in Polish, the editing of live programmes is still a tightly scheduled, manual process. The implementation of new technologies, however, necessitates the specialised training of people while educational studies in that field are still rare to find.



**Pere Vila** from the Catalan Broadcasting Corporation faces similar difficulties in his daily work as a broadcasting representative for Televisió de Catalunya in Spain. Starting with the introduction of analogue subtitling in the early 1990s, Vila gave an overview of the station's accomplishments in the field of accessibility. Through a constantly innovating technical process, Televisió de Catalunya has introduced subtitling, audio description and sign language in recorded and live programming. With the launch of Digital Television, the technical feasibility of captioning and AD has improved greatly, though the lack of speech recognition software in the Catalan language still requires simultaneous editing. Vila closed his presentation with reference to the impressive statistic of 11,500 hours of subtitles in 2008, which gained him and his station recognition from the industry and interest groups.



**Mark Harrison** from MTV UK & Ireland presented his station's policies and challenges with Access Services. As MTV's Access Services Supervisor, Mark Harrison coordinates all subtitling, sign language content and audio description, working with a small team of both in-house and freelance staff. He reported that in the UK, television access services are a legal obligation, regulated by the authority of Ofcom, the Office of Communications. Thus, most channels are required by law to provide accessible content in varying quantities, based on factors such as channel revenue, ratings and content.

The diverse content of MTV's broadcasting schedule and high frequency of content repeats poses issues when it comes to access services; notably copyright issues concerning lyrics, turnaround, accuracy, viewing figures and schedules.

With only one percent of all revenue designated to accessibility, MTV struggles with budget issues, though managed to raise the total amount of accessible content in 2007. The main channel, MTV One, increased the percentage of accessible content from 45 percent to 82 percent of all programming within only one year. Closing his presentation, Harrison stated that Access Services has become an invaluable part of MTV, with a potential future role in producing DVDs.



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Isabel Charlton, Head of Access Services at Radio Telefís Éireann (RTE) in Ireland, gave a retrospective of her work of building a subtitling division. From the introduction of teletext subtitling for the hard-of-hearing in 1980 to the first live subtitling on late night shows in 1995 to the launch of the Forum on Access Services in 2004, Charlton has cleared the station's path to becoming the market leader in Ireland. What always remained in the focus of Charlton's work was the constant cooperation with the deaf community in an effort to balance both their needs and the station's development. Moreover, Charlton tackled the urgent issues RTE faced during the early stages. Besides common hitches like technical difficulties, budget issues and dealing with interest groups, the problems of reliability and professionalism delivered by external providers were brought to the table. Between the years of 2003 and 2008, RTE managed to not only raise awareness for the need of subtitling among the public, but also to increase the amount of subtitling of channel RTE One by 70 percent and of RTE Two by an impressive 203 percent.

The discussions that followed the presentations picked up on specific issues such as the technical realisation of producing accessible content, the balance of cost and quality in the production process, and customer needs.

Subsequent to the opening panel, the second conference day offered further sessions on topics such as the latest tools and innovative formats of language transfer, new aspects in the fields of dubbing, subtitling and audio description, as well as issues of quality management.

## CONCLUSION

Following up on topics addressed at previous conferences, Languages & The Media 2008 remained up-to-date with this year's agenda. A wealth of questions and experiences on the issues of providing accessibility, guaranteeing quality and dealing with time and cost pressures were brought to the table by speakers and participants alike. Numerous sessions during this year's conference tackled the urgent concerns revolving around the focus of content localisation in a globalised business. The quality assurance of local and global content, a lack of standardised tools in a multilingual environment and the growing variety of special interest groups and their individual needs were identified as the main challenges of the industry. Giving an outlook on the coming years, however, the development and implementation of new media technology will cater to the future improvement of access content within a restricted time and cost frame.

## EXHIBITORS

The conference was accompanied by a parallel exhibition that featured the following companies:

- Titelbild
- Dr-Maria.com
- MWA sonda engineering AG
- Screen Subtitling Systems
- Sysmedia
- Elrom Studios
- TRADUCCIONES IMPOSIBLES / VOSE Subtitulos y Localización



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

October 6 – 8, 2010  
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