

AUDIO SUBTITLES IN HBB TV

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1. DEFINITION

Definition 1 _____

Audio subtitling (AST) is the spoken rendering of the written subtitles with a film or live performance. It makes accessible productions in a foreign language that are not dubbed or voiced-over to users who would otherwise miss the information. AST is usually combined with another access service: audio description.

EXAMPLE AUDIO SUBTITLE

2. COHESION

Cohesion 2 _____

Cohesion between AST and audio description needs to be preserved in a given film or live performance. They have to interact with each other. Therefore, when preparing AST, one has to make sure what exactly is covered by the existing mode and what information from the dialogues or visuals (e.g. speaker identification) must be included in the AST.

The original subtitles are sometimes read as they are, sometimes they are expanded and/or adapted to resemble spoken language more closely and to include information from the dialogues that had been left out in the subtitling process.

The additional information to be integrated in the AST includes, but is not limited to:

- a. speaker identification

EXAMPLE SPEAKER IDENTIFICATION

- b. logos

EXAMPLE LOGOS

c. credits

EXAMPLE CREDITS

d. on-screen name tags

EXAMPLE ON-SCREEN NAME TAGS

3. WAYS OF DELIVERY

AST may be recorded or read live.

EXAMPLE SYNTHETIC VOICE RECORDED

Ways of delivery 3 _____

4. WAYS OF RECORDING

The two most common ways for recording AST are voice-over and a form of dubbing.

In the voice-over mode, the AST starts a few seconds after the original dialogue, which remains audible in the background. Thanks to that the users are able to identify speakers. In the dubbing mode, the AST replaces the original dialogues (almost) completely. This mode may involve some acting on the part of the voice talent.

EXAMPLE VOICE-OVER

EXAMPLE DUBBING

Ways of recording 4 _____

AST should be synchronized with text and with visual action such as body language, where possible, and take into account audio elements such as music and other sounds.

EXAMPLE SYNCHRONISED AST

EXAMPLE BAD SYNCHRONISED AST

5. TYPES OF VOICES

Types of voices 5

The original subtitles can be read by a voice talent or a synthetic voice.

If there is more than one person in the production speaking a foreign language, two or more voices – ideally matching the gender and the age of the original voices – may be needed for the AST. This would help the users differentiate between speakers. In the case of TV series or low-budget films, only one voice may be used for reading the subtitles. Then, a different intonation can be used for each speaker.

Availability and quality of synthetic voices varies depending on the language. User testing indicates that human voices are generally preferred in certain programme categories, e.g. drama, but synthetic voices are also accepted and might be prioritized, especially when users are familiarized with them.

EXAMPLE HUMAN VOICE

EXAMPLE SYNTHETIC VOICE

6. SOUND MIX

Sound mix 6

In the case of recorded AD for film or television, the AST is mixed into the soundtrack. This process is of high importance in order to guarantee comprehension and enjoyment by users.

In HBBTV the soundtrack for AST should be prepared as sound objects so that users could adjust the volume of the original audio and the volume of the AST separately.

EXAMPLE GOOD SOUND MIX

EXAMPLE BAD SOUND MIX

7. AVAILABILITY ACROSS TECHNOLOGIES

Availability across technologies 7

The AST should be available regardless of the technology being used to transmit and/or present the original content. It may be especially useful when subtitles are consumed through secondary platforms. In such cases, the AST helps to avoid split attention.

Technologies used for transmission include, but are not limited to: cable, satellite, internet, DVD, stream, catch up.

Technologies used for presentation include, but are not limited to: television, computer, smartphone, tablet, and cinema.

8. USER CONSIDERATIONS

User considerations 8

Users should be able to access to information (both in real time and in advance) that identifies when the AST service is available and for which content. For example, at the beginning of a given programme, a verbal and a visual notification may be presented to make users aware that the AST is available. Such an availability can be identified by a standardized logo, both on the screen and in any media where it is advertised. Logos might vary from country to country, therefore it is important for them to be consistent across as many jurisdictions as possible.

The full range of users should be included in the process of creating AST in videos where possible. This can take the form of focus groups, employment of users as marketers or community consultants. Users might also be included in situations where stakeholder groups are actively involved in the creation and marketing activities. Users feedback should be systematically registered and taken into account to improve the AST creation process.