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## Learning Audio Description: Training Resources for Future Academics and Professionals

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### *Abstract*

*Audio description (AD), one of many access services, narrates key visual and some sound elements of various types of visual content: a film, a TV advert, an opera, or a book cover. These descriptions can be inserted into natural pauses when the content has a dialogue or narration, or it can be a free delivery, as in the audio description of a sculpture. Audio description is a complex access service which can be used in recorded or live situations, giving rise to different approaches for its creation and delivery. Training the expert audio describer requires skills and competences from numerous and diverse areas, from writing skills to vocal performance. This article presents the training materials generated within the ADLAB PRO Erasmus + funded project, which focuses on the development of the professional profile of an audio describer. The first part of the article describes the overall aims of the project, as well as the methodology used towards outlining the skills and competences required. The second part focuses on the course design, followed by a presentation of the learning materials typology. Finally, examples of the training materials created are provided, together with suggestions for their exploitation.*

*Keywords:* audio description, training, accessibility, ADLAB PRO project, audio describer profile, materials.

### **1. Introduction**

Audio description (AD) is a burgeoning access service and area of research in Translation Studies. It is an access service that narrates key visual and non-discernible sound elements of visual content: a film, a TV advert, an opera, or a book cover, for instance. These descriptions can be inserted into natural pauses when the content has a dialogue or narration, or it can be a free delivery, as in the audio

description of a sculpture. As our society becomes more inclusive, the need for professionally trained audio describers is increasing. Training the expert audio describer requires the development of skills and competences from many and diverse areas, from writing skills to vocal performance.

Regarding research, two different areas have been identified: AD as an object of study, and training in AD. There are two dedicated EU projects on AD training (ADLAB and ADLAB PRO), there is a conference which takes place every two years (ARSAD<sup>1</sup>), and several monographs and edited volumes have been devoted to AD to date (e.g., Chmiel and Mazur, 2014; Maszerowska *et al.*, 2014; Snyder, 2014; Jankowska, 2015; Fryer, 2016; Matamala and Orero, 2016). These particular circumstances mean that research in AD is working towards creating a critical mass in terms of terminology, standardisation, practice and training. Other complementary Erasmus+ projects have also been granted where AD is one of the targeted access services, i.e. the project ACT,<sup>2</sup> Accessibility Culture and Training (2015-2017) and EASIT,<sup>3</sup> Easy Access for Social Inclusion (2018-2021).

The ADLAB<sup>4</sup> (Audio Description: Lifelong Access for the Blind) project set out to define the practice of audio description in keeping with industry guidelines. These first collaborative guidelines took European aspects into consideration, which are multi-culture and multi-language. ADLAB also had diverse audiovisual products in mind (e.g. films, television programmes, documentaries, museums and their content). Two main publications were produced, focussing on the many approaches towards producing audio description scripts (Maszerowska *et al.* 2014; Remael *et al.* 2015). The results from ADLAB merited a follow-up, to further develop the training of the expert audio describer taking into consideration the workflow and the many technologies available, which led to ADLAB PRO (2016-2019),<sup>5</sup> focusing, this time, on the professional profile of the audio

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see <http://jornades.uab.cat/arsad/> [retrieved 14/03/2019].

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see <http://pagines.uab.cat/act/> [retrieved 14/03/2019].

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see <http://pagines.uab.cat/easit/> [retrieved 14/03/2019].

<sup>4</sup> This successful European training project, submitted to the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) (2011-2014), was led by Chris Taylor from Trieste University. For more information, see <http://www.adlabproject.eu/> [retrieved 14/03/19].

<sup>5</sup> In 2016, Elisa Perego, also from Trieste University, received Erasmus+ funding for the project. For more information, see <https://www.adlabpro.eu> [retrieved 14/03/19].

describer.

This article presents some of the main outcomes of the ADLAB PRO project. It describes its aims, the course structure that has been proposed, and the typology of learning materials that have been developed: introductory videos, core videos, tasks, additional videos, reading lists and trainer's guides. A detailed sample of training materials from Unit 1 in Module 5 ("Audio subtitling") is also provided, together with suggestions about how to employ them. It should be highlighted that the open-access, didactic materials designed as part of ADLAB PRO are varied and flexible and can be used both in a vocational context and in an academic environment.

## **2. ADLAB PRO: Aims and objectives**

ADLAB PRO's main aim was to define the profile of the audio description expert, namely the skills and competences they should have, and to produce open-access training materials that could be easily integrated in different learning situations. In other words, the aim was not to create a full set of materials that could be used in a single, pre-established course but to provide a wide range of educational components that prospective trainers could use in various courses, at university level but also in vocational environments, depending on the training requirements. In order to achieve this aim, the project consisted of several stages.

First of all, it mapped the current situation in Europe in terms of audio description training and practice through a questionnaire (Mendoza and Matamala, 2019; ADLAB PRO, 2017). The questionnaire gathered basic information on training programmes, their content and evaluation. A total of 86 AD trainers provided information on 192 courses, including 93 academic and 99 non-academic courses. This questionnaire was followed by qualitative interviews with selected lecturers from five courses with different duration times: three academic courses and two non-academic courses. Understanding existing practices helped to outline the professional profile of the audio describer, in line with the required skills and competences.

A second questionnaire (ADLAB PRO, 2018a), addressed to audio describers, AD users and AD providers, complemented the information gathered and allowed the educational background of the describers to be mapped, which skills and competences professionals

should acquire, as well as user expectations in terms of AD quality.

Based on the input from the questionnaires and the qualitative interviews, a curriculum was created and remodelled into a course design (see Section 3), which aims to ensure professional, Europe-wide AD implementation in all cultural and media sectors. The training proposal considers different types of AD (i.e., TV, cinema, museums, live performance) and is flexible in its nature: it is built upon different modules that can be offered together or independently, depending on the prospective learners' profiles (see section 3). This training proposal has been the basis for the generation of a comprehensive body of learning materials, which have been continuously assessed internally and externally to guarantee the highest possible quality.

While designing the course, the project also looked at the learning outcomes and workload associated with each module, at both academic and vocational levels, assigning ECTS and ECVETS.<sup>6</sup> Learning outcomes are defined by what the learner is expected to know, understand and be capable at the end of the process, and were central factors in the project.

## **2. Course design**

Existing literature on AD training and course design has two very different sources: the professional (Navarrete Moreno, 1997; Hyks, 2005; Snyder, 2014), and the academic (Orero, 2005; Matamala, 2006; Díaz-Cintas, 2007; Matamala and Orero, 2007; Jankowska, 2017). The commonality between the two approaches is twofold: the lack of a theoretical framework, and the central focus on skills and competences required from audio describers. However, when designing training programs, the complex nature of the audio description service requires a more comprehensive framework, beyond skills and competences. Issues such as the learning environment, the educational materials, learning format/modality,

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<sup>6</sup> ECTS (European Credit and Accumulation Transfer System) is a student-centred credit system which is based on learning outcomes and workload. 1 ECTS is usually considered to equal 25-30 hours of students' work, and a full year of study may equal 60 credits. On the other hand, ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) is the equivalent applied to vocational training. Both systems allow for compatibility across European countries, and facilitate students' employability

support, assessment, and the specific didactic activities are to be considered.

Taking all these considerations into account, a flexible course was designed, divided into six independent modules (ADLAB PRO, 2018b). First of all, based on the questionnaires and interviews, the skills and competences a describer should acquire were translated into learning outcomes, in other words, what the learner should be capable of at the end of the learning process. At the same time, three big areas of AD practice were identified: screen AD, AD for live events, and AD for static arts. After discussions with interested stakeholders and partners, a module-based proposal was created, as follows:

- Module 1: General introduction.
- Module 2: Screen AD.
- Module 3: AD of live events.
- Module 4: (Semi) live AD and recorded AD for static arts and environments
- Module 5: Additional services.
- Module 6: Additional technical issues, developments and change.

For each module, a series of units were identified. Each unit was grouped in relation to learning outcomes. The first module was a general introduction to AD. It was designed in a way that would enable it to provide a basis of AD for those with no previous knowledge and who were willing to specialise in any of the AD types included in other modules. It could also work independently for those wishing to have a general overview of what audio description is. Module 1 included the following ten units:

1. Audiovisual texts: this unit discusses the challenges that audiovisual texts pose, going beyond the realm of the written word. The aim is that learners can define the fundamental, multimodal character of audiovisual texts and differentiate between the different modalities interacting in a multimodal text. They can also assess the challenges of such texts for the main target audience of the audio description.
2. Defining audio description: this unit provides definitions of

AD in different contexts.

3. Audio description research: it identifies the main research topics and questions in the field.
4. Additional services: it deals with services which are often associated with AD, such as audio introductions and audio subtitles.
5. The audio description process: this unit explains the main steps in the AD workflow, including final editing and quality control, and the main parties involved in the process, including users and the artistic team.
6. The target audience of audio description: this unit provides specific knowledge on the needs of the primary audience of audio description, i.e. persons with sight loss, but also refers to secondary audiences who can benefit from audio descriptions.
7. AD guidelines: this unit makes learners aware of the existence of different audio description guidelines and their heterogeneous approaches.
8. Central audio description issues: this unit approaches general, content-related knowledge of the basic rules for all types of audio description, namely what, when and how to describe.
9. Audio description voicing: it trains learners in basic delivery skills and for the voicing of different types of AD.
10. Audio description legislation: it allows students to learn about relevant international and European AD legislation and to explore national implementations.

All in all, the first module offers a wide panoramic on the different AD features, including legislation, the intended audience, guidelines and the process of creating and delivering an audio description. From this general approach a second module focuses on the process of generating recorded AD for screen AD and its main components, as detailed below:

1. Screen audio description: films and genres: this unit allows learners to understand the different types of content a professional may audio describe for the screen.
2. Process: it focuses on the process of recording an audio description.
3. Software: this unit describes how software can be used for

the production, reception and distribution of screen AD.

4. Characters: they are a central component of audiovisual content, and this unit describes how they can be audio described.
5. Time and space: these elements are another central building block in any film, and this unit approaches its audio description.
6. Culture: this unit discusses how to transfer cultural references into audio description.
7. Language: it discusses the specific linguistic features of audio descriptions.
8. Film language: it analyses whether, and how, film techniques should be transferred into audio descriptions.
9. Audio introductions: this unit provides specific training on this additional service, which normally complements audio description.
10. Recording: it illustrates how to record screen AD.

Module 3 is dedicated to live performances and covers the following topics:

1. Audio description of live events: this is the first unit and provides an introduction to the topic, which includes a taxonomy and description of the main challenges.
2. Technical skills: it trains students on the main technical equipment needed for a live AD performance, such as a mixing desk.
3. What to describe for live events: it discusses the function and importance of the different types of information that can be included in a live AD script.
4. Scripting: this unit explains how an AD script should be written, accommodating the unexpected.
5. Touch tours: it provides a thorough vision of what this additional service is and how it is integrated in a live event.
6. Workflow: this unit trains students on creating a timeline in which all the stakeholders involved are identified.
7. Evaluation: it gives learners the tools to identify evaluation criteria and implement them.
8. Dance and opera: this unit focuses on the specificities of this genre.
9. Audio introduction: it defines this additional service and

explains how to develop one for a live event.

10. Innovation: this unit encompasses all new developments related to the AD of live events.

Module four pays attention to the static arts, focusing on content, and where art objects are housed, such as museums.

1. Static arts: this unit includes a general introduction to the module, with a definition and a classification of static arts.
2. Museums: this is a unit in which students learn about the different types of museums and their accessibility features.
3. Audio description for static arts: it allows learners to recognise and critically assess linguistic and textual features of existing ADs in this area.
4. Strategies: this unit proposes strategies to formulate AD for visual art, allowing learners to create their own.
5. Live and recorded: this unit focuses on the differences between two process modes, both in terms of writing and delivery.
6. Audio description directions: this is a unit in which strategies for formulating and prioritising the AD of directions regarding museum layout, spaces, auditoria, lobbies, etc., are presented.
7. Tactile explorations: it is concerned with the creation of tactile descriptions of museum artefacts.
8. Descriptive tours: this unit gives learners the tools to know how to create a coherent tour of a museum or other environment such as a heritage site.
9. Stakeholders: it allows learners to become aware of the different agents involved in an audio description.
10. Research: this unit provides insights into existing research and gives hints to learners on how to conduct research in the field of museum AD.

A very short module five follows, looking at the three audiovisual translation modalities which influence audio description, since media may be in the original language or presented as a translation in the form of subtitles, voice-over or dubbing. In the first case, audio subtitling will need to be produced, and in the second and third cases the AD will need to interact with the re-voiced versions. The structure for Module 5 is as follows:

1. Audio subtitling: this unit deals with the auditory presentation of written subtitles, also called *spoken subtitles*, which allow for subtitled content to be accessible not only to persons with sight loss but also to persons with reading difficulties.
2. Voice-over: it presents the main features of this transfer mode and discusses how audio description interacts with voice-over.
3. Dubbing: this unit explains the specificities of dubbed content and how audio description interacts with it.

The last module, module six, is also short and focuses on technology. Technology has become a central tool in translator training and it is key in the training of future audio describers. The units in this module describe the technology available for both AD production and consumption, while taking into account new scenarios and new audiences. It is a module in which innovation finds it place, containing the following seven units.

1. Technology consumption: this is a unit concerned with technological developments that allow users to consume audio descriptions, such as applications.
2. Technology delivery: this unit takes a different approach and focuses on the technology that allows audio description delivery in different scenarios.
3. Translating audio description: it considers an AD production process based on the translation of already existing audio descriptions, be it through professionals or through a post-edited machine output.
4. Text-to-speech: it presents technological developments that allow audio descriptions to be automatically voiced by a synthetic voice.
5. Crowdsourcing and online collaboration: this is a unit that discusses online collaborative models of AD creation.
6. New services and new audiences: this unit makes learners aware of how AD can be used to other ends, such as learning a language.
7. Accessible productions: it is concerned with the concept of accessible filmmaking and how audio description should be considered from the beginning when developing audiovisual

content.

Table 1 provides an overview of the complete structure of the training materials provided by the ADLAB PRO project, including all modules and units:

Unit	Module 1: General introduction (6 ECTS/ECVETS)	Module 2: Screen AD (6 ECTS/ECVETS)	Module 3: AD of live events (6 ECTS/ECVETS)	Module 4: (Semi) live AD and recorded AD for static arts and environments (6 ECTS/ECVETS)	Module 5: Additional services. (3 ECTS/ECVETS)	Module 6: Additional Technical issues, developments and change (3 ECTS/ECVETS)
1	Audiovisual texts	Screen AD: films and genres	AD of live events	Static arts	Audio subtitling	Technology: consumption
2	Defining AD	Process	Technical skills	Museums	Voice-over	Technology: delivery
3	AD Research	Software	What to describe for live events	AD for static arts	Dubbing	Translating AD
4	Additional services	Characters	Scripting	Strategies	–	Text-to-speech
5	AD process	Time and space	Touch tours	Live & recorded	–	Crowdsourcing and online collaboration
6	The target audience of AD	Culture	Workflow	AD directions	–	New services and new audiences
7	AD guidelines	Language	Evaluation	Tactile explorations	–	Accessible productions
8	Central AD issues	Film language	Dance and opera	Descriptive tours	–	–
9	AD voicing	Audio introductions	Audio introductions	Stakeholders	–	–
10	AD legislation	Recording	Innovation	Research	–	–

**Table 1. Module and unit structure**

For each unit, specific learning outcomes were formulated, suggesting learning methods as well as teaching materials. The credits assigned already provide a calculation of the global students' workload, but a more specific timing of the different face-to-face and home activities was also proposed.

Some of the topics are recurrent in several modules. The reason for this is that the course is created in a flexible way that will allow trainers to adapt it to their needs. In other words, the course is a proposal addressed to trainers who can implement all modules as a whole course (for instance, a postgraduate course) or can implement modules independently (for instance, as vocational courses focusing on one AD typology). This training proposal was the basis for the development of a wide array of materials, which in turn can be implemented in more than one way and in learning environments both academic and vocational.

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### 3. Learning material typology

A necessary first step before developing training materials was to define how each learning outcome could be better achieved by learners. In this regard, while developing the course design, proposals for training activities were made in association with different learning methods: learning through acquisition, inquiry, discussion, practice and collaboration (Laurillard, 2012). Thanks to brainstorming by all project participants,<sup>7</sup> three main types of activities were identified: (a) lectures, (b) reading lists, and (c) tasks. The typology of tasks was also varied: discussion activities, writing and recording exercises, analysis, class presentations, written essays, web and literature searches, among others, which could be performed individually, in pairs or in groups, either at home or in class.

An interesting discussion arose around the concept of "assessment", in other words, how to propose evaluation activities that trainers could use to assess learners' performance. An additional category for assessment activities was initially planned, which would include multiple-choice tasks and some evaluation activities. However, after much discussion regarding continuous assessment in the new European Higher Education Area (EHEA), we realised that the best approach would be to generate a list of tasks including multiple choice, that prospective trainers could use for assessed or as non-assessed tasks, depending on their needs. In other words, the ADLAB PRO project would not identify a task as an evaluation activity but would simply provide a list of suggested tasks that trainers could then use as evaluation if needed.

The final typology of training materials included introductory videos, trainer's guides, core videos, additional videos, reading lists, and tasks, which correspond to the main activity types identified during the course design. In order to guarantee a smooth development and harmonisation of all training materials, templates, instructions and samples were created and evaluated by both internal

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<sup>7</sup> The partners of the ADLAB PRO European project were Università degli Studi di Trieste, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Universiteit Antwerpen, Adam Mickiewicz University, RTV Slovenija, Utopian Voices, Soundfocus and the Royal National Institute of the Blind.

and external experts. Additionally, a blind user advised on the accessibility of the contents and a technical partner controlled the technical development. The different types of learning materials are described below:

a) Introductory videos

Introductory videos are 3-minute videos that explain in a lively manner, through an animated character, what each module is about and what learners and trainers can expect to find in each module. These introductory videos act as module teasers. There is also a general one that provides a global introduction to all the modules.

b) Trainer's guide

A guide addressed to trainers was created for each module. The aim of the guide is to list all materials that are found in each module, and provide recommendations on how to use them. The trainer's guide also provides the key to some of the tasks and thoroughly describes the features of each training material.

c) Core videos

Lectures were one recurrent activity suggested by trainers during the brainstorming phase. However, creating full lectures for each of the topics was beyond the scope of the project. This is why the approach taken was to create short videos on central elements for each unit. The aim of these so-called "core videos", with a length of between approximately 5 to 10 minutes, was to summarise all the main elements students should learn in each unit. These core videos are offered together with extra material: a PDF transcript of the core video narration, and a stand-alone PPT presentation, to be used in multiple ways. For instance, a trainer may want students to watch the video before or after they attend a face-to-face lecture or face-to-face discussion, in a flipped classroom situation. In another learning environment, a lecturer may want to include the core video as part of an online course without any further modifications. A third situation could arise in which the trainer uses the already created presentation as a starting point to develop their own presentation. The possibilities are multiple and, in order to cater for the needs of an even wider audience, English subtitles are provided for all core videos in all modules – a total of 50 –, and subtitles in the project languages, Catalan, Dutch, Italian, Polish, Slovene and Spanish, are made available for the core videos in module 1. Due to budget restrictions it was not possible to create subtitles in these languages for the other modules.

To provide a visual identity, it was agreed that all core videos would follow a basic unified style: they would be based on a PPT presentation and an off-screen narration by the lecturer. Accessibility issues were thoroughly considered: the PPT template followed accessibility guidelines and the videos were created in such a way that the audio description was either integrated or not necessary.

d) Additional videos

Beyond core videos, it was considered that a choice of additional videos could be developed. Additional videos are videos with a free format and a more lively approach, touching upon non-central, but still relevant topics in each unit. Once the core videos were finished, project participants analysed what was missing to guarantee that trainees achieve the learning outcomes and suggested possible additional videos. One of the key aims was to allow trainees to familiarise themselves with real professional practice and user needs. In this regard, the choice of additional videos is ample: there are interviews with professionals and end-users, audiovisual content samples with and without audio description, samples from live events, animated videos, and tutorials, among others. Again, they allow for multiple integrations in different educational environments: they can be used in or outside the classroom, to generate group discussion or to propose group or individual tasks, to name just a few. Special care was taken with the use of copyright-free material or in the acquisition of all the copyright permissions, so that all content in the ADLAB PRO project could be uploaded to an open access repository and shared for free with all interested trainers.

e) Reading lists

Another training material type was reading lists. It was decided that a reading list per unit would be created and would include 5 to 10 key references for the topic under discussion. The selection of such references was not easy, as various elements were put forward: first of all, the language of reading lists and, secondly, whether references in languages other than English should be included. Despite the interest in multilingual approaches to AD, a practical approach was favoured and it was decided that reading lists would include international works in English, as it was understood that local references could in fact be added by the trainer depending on each learning situation and need. The second discussion on reading lists involved the concern that they would become soon outdated: the solution was not an easy one, as the project cannot guarantee the continuous update of online reading lists. Therefore, the decision

was taken to prioritize seminal and classical works in the field, which all AD trainees should be aware of.

#### f) Tasks

Another educational material type was tasks. A document was created for each unit in which two to seven suggested tasks were proposed. For each task the following elements were described: the aim or aims of the task, the grouping (individual/pairs/groups), approximate timing, material and preparation needed, and development. Additional comments with further suggestions could be added in a final section for each task, and, if needed, a specific hand-out to be given to learners was provided. This same structure was reproduced for a wide variety of tasks. A specific format for tasks was included in all units, namely a multiple-choice exercise that includes five questions based on the core video for that unit. The idea behind the tasks document was to offer learners a series of possible exercises whereby trainers could make choices, depending on their needs.

The result is a complete set of training materials that are open access through Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's online and free repository DDD,<sup>8</sup> but also accessible in a user-friendly way through the ADLAB PRO website. In this way, any trainer is able to download and re-use the educational materials that suit their needs in order to train professional describers for free.

## **4. Training material exploitation: an example**

Materials can be used in both vocational and academic learning environments. For instance, a university may want to develop the full course as described above and implement all materials. An MA on Translation may want to include a specialisation on live AD or AD for static arts in a traditional university course and implement only module 3 or module 4. An audiovisual translators association may want to provide a short, online introductory course to their members and re-use module 1 materials as online training content. A translator may want to simply watch all core videos to further develop their skills through a self-learning process. Or a company may decide to provide further training for their members by incorporating Module

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<sup>8</sup> For more information, see <http://ddd.uab.cat> [retrieved 14/03/2019].

6 into an industry course. The five scenarios presented above are just a few of the many possibilities that ADLAB PRO offer to trainers via the open-access and free materials available online.

A presentation of one unit may help to better understand the characteristics of the training materials, and how they are suitable for different learning environments. We will focus on Unit 1 from Module 5, namely “Audio subtitling”.

Learning outcomes associated with this unit, and any other unit in the course, have been carefully designed following the findings of two studies (see Section 2 in this article for more details) carried out within the project (ADLAB PRO, 2017; ADLAB PRO, 2018a). Learning outcomes planned for Unit 1 (see Table 2 below) were divided into two levels: basic and advanced. This allows trainers to select activities according to the level of learner and according to the learning environment. Activities proposed in the unit presented below, and in other modules of the course, are heavily practice oriented, as the course aims at training professional describers. However, following the approach of theory feeding practice and given the fact that audio description research has been and is close to professional practice, some activities introduce theoretical concepts.

Level	Learning outcome
Basic	Learners can define what audio subtitling is and describe its main features.
Basic	Learners can identify different types of audio subtitles and relate them to text on screen.
Basic	Learners can identify the technology needed to produce audio subtitles.
Basic	Learners can identify different types of recommendations related to AST.
Basic	Learners can create audio subtitles to be integrated in an audio description
Basic	Learners can defend and justify the audio subtitles they have created.
Advanced	Learners can deliver audio subtitles to be integrated in an audio description with appropriate voicing.
Advanced	Learners can summarise research on audio description.
Advanced	Learners can evaluate the impact of research on AST on their practice.

**Table 2. Learning outcomes (Module 5, Unit 1)**

In Module 5, Unit 1 (Table 3), learners gain knowledge about

audio subtitling – a media accessibility modality that is merged with AD to provide access to text on screen, be it foreign language dialogues rendered as subtitles or in logos, film credits, superimposed titles, popping-up messages, etc. Basic theoretical notions are introduced in the core activities, that is, through the core video lecture followed by a multiple-choice quiz and reading assignments. Additional videos provide examples of audio subtitling and discuss selected audio subtitling guidelines. The core video is followed by a multiple choice test (Task 1) and by five practical tasks (Tasks 2-6), which are presented and discussed in tables 4 to 8.

<b>Module 5, Unit 1</b>	Audio subtitling
<b>Core video</b>	Core video on Audio subtitling with subtitles in English, downloadable PowerPoint slides and transcript.
<b>Tasks</b>	Multiple choice + 5 practical tasks
<b>Reading list: essential readings</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Braun, S., and Orero, P. (2010). Audio description with audio subtitling. <i>Perspectives. Studies in Translatology</i>, 18(3), 173-188.</li> <li>2. International Organization for Standardization (2017). <i>Information technology -- User interface component accessibility -- Part 25: Guidance on the audio presentation of text in videos, including captions, subtitles and other on-screen text (ISO/IEC TS 20071-25:2017)</i>.</li> <li>3. Matamala, A. (2014). Audio describing text on screen. In A. Maszerowska, A.; Matamala, A.; Orero. P. (Eds.), <i>Audio description. New perspectives illustrated</i> (pp. 203-120). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.</li> <li>4. Remael, A., Reviere, N., and Vercauteren, G. (2015). <i>Pictures painted in words. ADLAB audio description guidelines</i>. Trieste: EUT.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional videos</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An additional video with audio subtitling examples in English.</li> <li>2. An additional video with audio subtitling examples in Spanish.</li> <li>3. An additional video with audio subtitling examples in Catalan.</li> <li>4. An additional video on guidelines and recommendations in audio subtitling (ISO).</li> <li>5. An additional video on guidelines and recommendations in audio subtitling (ADLAB guidelines).</li> </ol>

**Table 3. Module 5, Unit 1: overview**

The aim of Task 2 (Table 4) is to familiarize learners with

different guidelines and recommendations on the provision of audio subtitling. This is achieved through analysis and discussion of existing guidelines and recommendations that include both documents prepared as a result of academic research and those used in professional practice. What is important in Task 2 is the fact that learners are actively involved in the learning process through induction rather than deduction.

<b>Task 2</b>	
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To learn what guidelines and recommendations say in relation to audio subtitling and on-screen text.</li> </ul>
<b>Grouping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual, pairs or groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Material and preparation needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended watching before the class: additional video on audio subtitling guidelines and recommendations.</li> <li>• List of guidelines and recommendations (hand-out).</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give learners a list of guidelines and recommendations on audio description. Ask them to search for more local guidelines.</li> <li>2. Ask learners to identify whether the guidelines or recommendations give advice on how to render written text on screen, especially subtitles, via the audio description.</li> <li>3. Learners discuss the results and a summary of the findings is presented on the board.</li> </ol>

**Table 4. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 2**

In Task 3 (Table 5) learners become acquainted with the wide variety of text on screen. Once again, students are encouraged to learn through inductive methods, such as inquiry, production, collaboration and discussion, as they analyse and discuss real-life material. Learners are asked to watch a multilingual film that contains text on screen - *Inglourious Basterds* (Q. Tarantino, 2009) is suggested as a possible example. Later they prepare a list of the on-screen, presented text instances in the film and try to identify and classify their function. Finally, they explain the results of their work in a group discussion.

Task 3	
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To learn about the wide variety of text on screen.</li> </ul>
<b>Grouping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual, pairs or groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Material and preparation needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A multilingual film in which text on screen is present. A good example would be <i>Inglourious Basterds</i> (Q. Tarantino, 2009).</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners watch the selected film at home or in class.</li> <li>Learners make a list of text on screen (individually).</li> <li>Learners categorise the on screen, presented texts in the film and identify their function (in pairs or in groups). A sample categorisation is not provided. Learners try to create their own.</li> <li>Learners discuss results in class.</li> </ol>

Table 5. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 3

Task 4 (Table 6) aims at familiarizing learners with different strategies for rendering audio subtitles. Learners are presented with real-life examples of audio subtitles used in a short film *What happens while* (N. Nia, 2016) and are asked to identify the strategies for rendering audio subtitles in terms of content, voicing, and synchronisation. Their findings are then examined in a group discussion.

Task 4	
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare and evaluate strategies for the rendering of audio subtitles.</li> </ul>
<b>Grouping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual, pairs or groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 hour.</li> </ul>
<b>Material and preparation needed:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional video on audio subtitles in the film <i>What happens while...</i> (N. Nia, 2016). They are available in English, Spanish and Catalan.</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners watch the additional video mentioned above.</li> <li>Learners identify the diverging strategies used to render audio subtitles in terms of content, voicing, synchronisation and any other relevant features students may observe.</li> <li>Learners discuss pros and cons of each approach.</li> </ol>

Table 6. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 4

In Task 5 (Table 7) learners create audio subtitles integrated with audio description. However, an equally important aim of this task is for students to learn to offer and accept feedback and defend their standpoint. To this end they are asked to work in pairs and comment on each other's performance. This exercise prepares them to carry out tasks performed both by describers and proof-readers.

<b>Task 5</b>	
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learners can create audio subtitles integrated into an audio description.</li> <li>• Learners are aware of the importance of voicing and synchronisation.</li> <li>• Learners can defend and justify their choices.</li> </ul>
<b>Grouping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual, pairs or groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Material and preparation needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A short film excerpt in which subtitles are present (3-5 minutes).</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learners create an audio description with audio subtitles for the film excerpt at home (individually).</li> <li>2. In class, learners work in pairs. Learner 1 voices his/her audio subtitles live in front of Learner 2, who evaluates them.</li> <li>3. Then, Learner 2 voices his/her audio subtitles live in front of Learner 1, who assesses them.</li> <li>4. Learners discuss and defend their choices, accept criticism and improve their audio subtitles where necessary, based on the feedback received from peers.</li> <li>5. Class discussion on the main challenges of audio subtitling and the importance of voicing and synchronisation.</li> </ol>

**Table 7. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 5**

In Task 6 (Table 8) learners write and voice audio subtitles and audio descriptions and later write an essay in which they discuss the encountered challenges and adopted solutions. Task 6 has two aims that are extremely necessary in the professional practice of any describer. First, learners practice the creation of both audio description and audio subtitles. Second, they are asked to justify their choices to show that they are the result of a consciously adopted strategy. This is a skill needed when dealing with clients and project managers, who might question the describer's choices.

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<b>Task 6</b>	
<b>Aims</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners can create audio description with audio subtitles.</li><li>• Learners can defend and justify the audio subtitles they have created.</li></ul>
<b>Grouping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual.</li></ul>
<b>Approximate timing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20 hours.</li></ul>
<b>Material and preparation needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short clip with subtitles.</li></ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask learners to create audio descriptions with audio subtitles for a short film at home, and to write an essay discussing the main challenges and their choices.</li></ul>

**Table 8. Module 5, Unit 1: Task 6**

## **6. Conclusion**

Early literature on audio description teaching - from an accessibility service perspective - dealt with very generic training in the industrial sector. Defining skills and learning outcomes were required as soon as audio description training began to be a part of the academic curriculum in specialised university courses. The professional audio describer was then considered to be a specialised audiovisual translator, along other profiles such as the subtitler. Many academic courses on audiovisual translation and media accessibility have flourished, and audio description training is now to be found in many universities.

The task of profiling a pan-European, professional audio description training has required much effort within the ADLAB PRO partnership. Audio description is bound to the media content which it describes, hence the fact that a subtitled video requires a different audio description to a dubbed movie or a voice-over documentary. These three audiovisual translation modalities, as well as the different European languages and cultures, and the existing audio description traditions, have been taken into consideration when describing the skills of the professional audio describer.

ADLAB PRO has achieved a comprehensive and unified, modular training methodology drawing upon the skills and competences of professional describers and has proposed a course

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design. The course consists of six modules that complement each other and can be used independently, in combination with other modules or as a whole, depending on the training environment and needs. The modules include topics such as a general introduction to AD, the process of generating recorded AD and its main components, live performances, AD for the static arts, additional services and technology for consumption and production.

As with any publicly funded project, the outcomes are published as open-access teaching materials. They have been designed to cater for different cultural contexts and levels, and also for both vocational and academic training. Undoubtedly, the wide array of materials provided by the ADLAB PRO project will contribute to the training of highly skilled audio describers, whose work will be beneficial, not only for people with sight loss, but also for any other potential users, such as elderly people, users with specific needs, and society as a whole.

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