

Is Media accessible 4 all?



London hosted Media 4All International Conference on 28th June till 1st July 2011 organised by Imperial College. The conference was a gathering of the latest news and research in the audiovisual translation, latest practices and a chance to network for all involved in the field. Jan Lamby and I took part in the Conference as the EFHOH delegates Guus Coehen was there to represent FEPEDA. EFHOH presented user point of view in subtitling and accessibility of media.

We asked:

*Is TV and internet inclusive for those with hearing loss?
Is there instant and simple access to subtitles?*

The following days of presentations and discussions showed that the media are not accessible for all, especially those with hearing loss.

During EFHOH presentation I spoke about the need access to information and learning, spelling and phonics.

For the deaf and hard of hearing children, it supports their reading and even supports hearing children, especially if they don't read books.

Speakers of other languages also benefit especially in case of phonetic languages like English.

Many learners make mistakes speaking as they read in English and they need this constant reminder of variations of phonics in language to improve their spoken English.

We presented the need for strong national legislation in media following Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) the latest EC Directive and explained what happening at the European level as follows:

- ▶ Disability Strategy 2010- 2020
- ▶ Single European Accessibility Act 2012
- ▶ Standardisation in the provision of subtitling using DTV4All
- ▶ Strong campaign for full inclusion of hard of hearing people in Europe

We spoke to many representatives of broadcasting industry and the subtitlers themselves. We have learned so much from understanding the arguments on all sides but at the same time it is important that everyone understand who is using subtitles and provides as much verbatim delivery as possible without dumbing it down with smileys and making short cuts in speech translation. For many of us it feels like patronising.

We have observed many interesting presentations but also some, which started a heated debate. Many times researchers confuse people who use sign language with hard of hearing and deafened people and therefore deny those who do not use sign language correct access to media.

To many times we are not receiving full translation of the speech and that is in turn denying equal access for those who need subtitles. Researchers confuse reading abilities of HoH and deafened people while at the same time the subtitlers will make full and correct translations for films in cinemas, they will simplify the speech and make short cuts while subtitling the same movie for TV broadcasters.

The conference has made us realise that we need linguistic standards set out for all broadcasters and subtitlers to follow and those have to be agreed with the organisations representing all with hearing loss.

I would like to thank our speech to text reporters who came from Sweden.

The Media4 All organisers liked the support we had and they are planning for this support to be available to all participants, not just people with hearing loss during the next conference in 2 years time.

This shows that the benefits of captioning in international conferences like this one with many different accents and nationalities involved.

This has been an “eye opening” conference for us at EFHOH and we have realised the need of including the actual users in this sort of gathering, because it feels like talking about us, without us!

Lidia Best
London July 2011