How do you use captioning?

Introduction

Students with a hearing impairment sometimes struggle to access spoken information. In the lecture hall, they are often dependent on the use of an individual audio induction loop. A condition for this is that the speaker uses a microphone. Videos that are used for teaching on location are however not accessible for these students.

With online teaching, the student has the option of amplifying the sound and reducing ambient noise, but sound reproduction is nevertheless not always optimal. Deaf students are still dependent for online teaching on a sign language interpreter.

To guarantee access to education, it is advisable to supply audio recordings with a transcript. This is not only helpful to students with a hearing impairment, but also to students who are following a study programme in a language that is not their native tongue, and students who have trouble concentrating.

Overall, people remember information better when they both hear it and see it written down at the same time. Other advantages of captioning are that it increases the reach of the recorded material (search engines search for text) and makes it possible to easily translate what is being said into another language.

Captions and subtitles

There is a difference between captions and subtitles. With captioning, the text is fully and literally transcribed. Subtitles, on the other hand, provide a translation (and often a summary) of what is being said.

Different captioning formats

There are various captioning formats available: live captioning, closed captioning, open captioning, and audio descriptions.

- **Live captioning.** In this form of captioning, the person's speech is translated simultaneously. The accuracy of this form of captioning is usually 90-95%. Live captioning offers the advantage that the information is made immediately available so that students can also respond directly to the information offered. This increases the participation of students with a hearing impairment in online teaching, and puts them on an equal footing with students without impairment. There are two available variants: automatic captioning (software-generated) and automatic captioning that is simultaneously corrected manually. These options are available in Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Live

Transcribe, Verbit, Otter.ai, Early, YouTube, AVA, Webcaptioner, and Amberscript, among others. When archiving recordings, you sometimes need to edit the captions afterwards.

- **Closed captioning.** With closed captioning, users can turn on the captions themselves. The products mentioned above that offer options for real-time captioning also often provide a closed captioning option. See also Kaltura and Brightspace.
- **Open Captioning** Open captions are directly coded into the video stream of a video so that it is not possible to turn them off for viewers who do not need or want them. The products mentioned above that offer options for real-time captioning also often provide an open captioning option. See also Kaltura and Brightspace.
- **Audio descriptions** Audio descriptions describe effects that are not visually observable, such as squeaky doors, explosions that occur out of sight, creaking floors, and breaking glass. Audio descriptions are also used to transcribe the text of audio recordings published on websites. See 'All you need to know about audio descriptions and Amberscript'.

More information:

ECIO fact sheet 'Captioning of lesson materials' (Dutch)

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