

What makes a good audio description for a video?

Despina Constantinidou, Alexandra Vanichkina,
Ines Bieler, *e-lang citizen team*

Teacher Sheet

Task

Your students will be given the following task.

You are going to reflect on what makes a good audio description for an online video to be used by people with a visual disability.

To do so, you will watch some video samples with audio descriptions, read some further information on audio description and then write a list of do's and don'ts for prospective audio description creators.

Website

Site hosting videos with audio descriptions: <https://youdescribe.org/>

YouDescribe is a platform hosting audio description (AD) videos for people with visual disabilities who cannot see what is going on in a video. The AD videos are recorded by sighted volunteers and are sourced from YouTube.

The interface of the site is in English. AD videos are available in several languages, including English, Spanish and German, but they can be adapted to any language.

CEFR level - For B1 level and above

Objectives

Digital citizenship and literacy

	Dimensions covered in task	(Potential) specific objectives
Digital Citizenship	Ethical and responsible	Developing social responsibility and inclusiveness towards visually impaired people.
Meaning-making literacy	Media literacy	Understanding how audio description works and being able to identify the key elements of a good audio description.
Interaction literacy	Multimodal literacy	Understanding how to translate visual/video elements into words.

Main language activity

- Oral reception: listening to samples of audio descriptions.
- Written production: writing the guidelines.

Possible steps

It may be interesting to carry out this task in several steps:

- Engage learners in a brainstorming session on audio description.
- Invite learners to listen to a short video with audio description (ideally with the visual component switched off). This can be carried out in any of the language(s) of the learners, even their L1 if necessary.
- Ask them to describe what was imagined while listening to the audio description. Then, repeat the exercise, but this time with the visual on.
- In groups, ask learners to build a mind map of the components of a good audio description.
- They can read articles or watch videos on what audio description is to further the reflection:

In English:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_GrYOruY7w
- [Audio Description in a Couple Minutes - YouTube](#)

- [Audio Descriptions - At a Glance - YouTube](#)

In French:

- <https://www.csa.fr/Mes-services/Foire-aux-questions/Proteger/L-accessibilite-des-programmes-aux-personnes-souffrant-de-deficience-auditive-ou-visuelle/Qu-est-ce-que-l-audiodescription>
- Review and complete the group's mind map, if needed.
- They can watch more samples of videos with audio descriptions (selected from YouDescribe) and write down a list of do's and don'ts, or guidelines for a prospective audio description creator.
- They can compare this list to the guidelines suggested on YouDescribe (<https://youdescribe.org/support/describers>) and other available guidelines (found online in various languages), and finalise the list.
- They can discuss and compare the components included in the guidelines created by each group.
- They can select videos with audio descriptions from YouDescribe and assess whether the created guidelines are respected in these videos. If necessary, the guidelines can be revised.
- They can compare their lists again and produce a set of guidelines for the class.

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Student Sheet

Task

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Website

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CEFR level - For B1 level and above

Objectives

Digital citizenship and literacy

While completing this task, you can:

- become aware of the importance of providing good audio-descriptions for visually impaired people;
- learn what components should be included in an effective audio description;

- learn how to translate visual elements into words.

Hints

Keep in mind who you are addressing

When drawing up your guidelines, you need to keep in mind two main audiences:

- the future developers of audio descriptions (your guidelines need to be precise);
- the future users of the audio descriptions: people with a visual disability (you need to think about their specific needs).

Work on the language-related aspects

You can look at other guidelines and analyse how these are formulated to help you in the writing process.

If you have trouble understanding some of the recommended material, you may want to use a machine translation tool, such as DeepL (<https://www.deepl.com/translator>), or look for similar material in a language easier for you to understand.

For you to think about

Once you have completed the task, you can reflect on the following:

- Have you ever considered how technology can help visually impaired people to access information and content? Is it important to contribute to the catalogue of audio descriptions?
- What makes a good audio description? What qualities does your recording need to have to be a good audio description? What are the elements you should include, and which ones can you leave out?
- What constitutes a good set of guidelines? What information do you need to include?
- How can you provide guidelines for audio descriptions, taking into account the way visually impaired people perceive the world around them?