

## Improving access to audiovisual narratives for cognitively diverse audiences

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National legal requirements and technological advances in Media Accessibility (MA) have highlighted the need and possibility of achieving cultural participation across (dis)abilities (European Commission, 2015; Ofcom, 2017). As a case in point, Audio Description (AD) has also proven beneficial for other audiences in learning environments (Cozendey & da Piedade Costa, 2016; Krejtz, et al., 2012; Walczak, 2016) and has been recently adapted to support emotion recognition for high-functioning autistic children (Starr & Braun, 2021), suggesting that its repurposing can overcome more than just sensory barriers and support Cognitive Accessibility (Johansson, 2016). The European EASIT project has further explored the adaptation of AD for audiences with diverse cognitive abilities, with a focus on training. However, the question of how to reduce cognitive barriers and achieve social inclusion and cultural participation for people with diverse cognitive abilities requires further research.

This research project addresses this requirement by focusing on the access of cognitively diverse audiences to audiovisual narratives. This is achieved by repurposing selection strategies used in traditional AD and integrating them with narrative cues tailored to the specific communicative needs of potential audiences while drawing on Easy-to-Understand (E2U) language varieties to create a novel access mode within MA: Accessible Audio Cues.

These verbal descriptions, i.e., the Accessible Audio Cues, will be piloted in a reception study to gauge the extent to which they can improve cognitive access, comprehension, and enjoyment of audiovisual fiction.

The presentation will outline the project's background, methodological approach and initial key findings from a guidelines and corpus analysis conducted to identify recurring and divergent patterns between theoretical approaches to, and practical applications of, E2U strategies.

**Keywords:** Accessibility, Easy language, Easy to understand, Audio description, Media accessibility, Audio introduction, Audiovisual translation, Narrative, Access, Cognitive access

**Bio:** Andreea Deleanu is a PhD Candidate at the University of Surrey, UK, specialising in Media Accessibility (MA). Her project focuses on repurposing audio access modes for cognitively diverse audiences to fully access audiovisual narratives. The ensuing mode will also reduce the effort stemming from the decoding of additional verbal material through the use of Easy-to-Understand (E2U) audio cues. Andreea holds an MA in Conference Interpreting from the University of Trieste (Italy) and has specialised as a healthcare interpreter. She was part of the EASIT project, working on E2U and Audio Description (Unit 3B).