

Francesca	<p>FRED Film Radio, this is Francesca Raffi. Today we are going to get more familiar with the Live Text Access project, co-founded by the European Union for the period 2018-2021. The LTA project tackles the mismatch between trained and needed skills in the labor market by a collaboration — and this is one of the main strengths of the project — between educational and non-educational partners.</p> <p>Among the non-educational partners there is ZDF Digital, an affiliate of the public broadcaster ZDF, based in Germany, which, among other things, creates live subtitles and other accessible services for many different contexts.</p> <p>Today, we have virtually with us Miriam Hagmann, international project coordinator at ZDF Digital. Hi Miriam, welcome to FRED.</p>
Miriam	Thank you, good morning.
Francesca	Miriam, first of all, tell us more about yourself. What is your background?
Miriam	My background is quite diverse. I initially studied French and English in Freiburg and Paris, then I became a project manager in another international project that wanted to bring together different actors of the energy field — the climate network in Strasbourg, Germany, southern Germany and northern Switzerland. Next, I worked on the website of the University of Strasbourg — I edited texts and put together information that might interest German students who wanted to study at the university. And since I moved to Mainz, Germany, I work at ZDF Digital as a project coordinator for international projects — mostly EU-funded projects where different partners from different countries work together, like LTA, which is a project we are currently working on.
Francesca	So, the Live Text Access project. And as I said, ZDF Digital is one of the partners of the project. Among other things, the company provides live subtitles. Is that correct, Miriam?
Miriam	That is correct. We provide live subtitles for parts of the ZDF programme. They have a live-subtitling department, but they cannot do it all, because live subtitling is very time-consuming.
Francesca	Can you tell us more about this accessible service?
Miriam	This is how live subtitling works. Most people are not aware that live subtitling really implies a live situation — the programme that is broadcasted with live subtitles is broadcasted on the internet but also on TV, so as the audience you can add live subtitles via teletext. Mostly, you need a team of three live subtitlers to work on it. They need to work together because it's a very demanding task where you have to be concentrated all the time. And it works in the following way. The live subtitler works with re-speaking — so you might want to know what re-speaking is.
Francesca	Yes, possibly, thank you.
Miriam	So, the live subtitler hears what is being said on TV over the headphones and basically repeats every word that is said on TV; sometimes they skip words that are not so important. They repeat and

	<p>speak it into a speech recognition. Why is that? If you are simply trying to repeat everything that is being said on TV while using speech recognition, it's not going to be recognized, because you have to speak in a certain ductus, in a certain way, so speech recognition then recognizes what is said and puts it into writing. So, while the re-speaker is re-speaking he is listening to what the person on TV continues to say, and while doing these two tasks, he is also looking at what has been transcribed by speech recognition and, if necessary, needs to correct what has been written, because sometimes speech recognition might just not correctly understand and transcribe what is said. For example, if a person says: "We want to explore the city," speech recognition might recognize: "We want to explode the city." This is something that needs to be corrected. It makes people laugh, because it's obviously a mistake — but it's better to correct things.</p>
Francesca	<p>As for live subtitling — just trying to sum it up — only the main outlines, the subjects and the participants of a given programme are known. The rest happens live — in real time and unpredictably.</p>
Miriam	<p>Yes, unpredictably. Sometimes they know who are going to be the guests that are invited on a TV show. For example, if you were invited, they would train the speech recognition beforehand by saying your name, "Francesca Raffi," several times, in order to make it recognize and transcribe your name correctly. Because otherwise it is probably going to be wrong.</p>
Francesca	<p>And once the subtitles are corrected and, possibly, shortened — what happens?</p>
Miriam	<p>What happens after re-speaking, transcribing, correcting — it is of course the most important part — is the sending of the subtitles, because if you don't send them, they are not going to appear on TV. So, during all those processes they have to send the subtitles, while also ensuring that they don't send them too quickly so that people are able to read them; then they also have to respect a certain time, so our goal is to have a delay of three seconds, so there is not a huge gap between what is said on TV and the subtitles. This is very important, so we try to have a delay of three seconds between the live situation and the subtitle. The delay is between three and six seconds, and there are certain techniques to catch up with what is said by shortening, but mostly, they are able to respect those three seconds.</p>
Francesca	<p>So, during the live programme, live subtitlers provide a written version of the content of the programme.</p>
Miriam	<p>Yes, that's correct.</p>
Francesca	<p>So, they need to be specially trained for this task. And this is the reason the LTA project has been launched, isn't it? Why did ZDF Digital decide to take part in this project? And what is its role within the project?</p>
Miriam	<p>Since we have a big live-subtitling department consisting of ten to twenty persons — some working full-time, some working part-time and some working as students — we realized that for them it is mostly an experience of either being gifted and able to do this job, or at some point realizing they cannot do it, because it is a very demanding job. On</p>

	the one hand you have to be very concentrated, to be able to do the multi-tasking. And on the other hand, you have to be good at...
Francesca	Typing.
Miriam	It's an interpreting job, but if you are an interpreter you focus on the oral language, whereas in re-speaking you also have the written part of it. So you have to be good at grammar and spelling, etc.
Francesca	Which plays a huge role.
Miriam	This is the part where we realized: All our live subtitlers are very skilled, but they have no certificates as live subtitlers. They are trained, they are good, but let's suppose they want to change the company and to go elsewhere — they have no real proof of their skills. The way they learned how to subtitle is not an institutionalized way. They just tried it out and one day realized they are good at it, and at re-speaking, because it takes a certain practice; and maybe some of them realized they couldn't do it and they had to quit the job. So it is important to have this professional profile institutionalized and also certified, so that people can try it out earlier, before they are on the job; and also, in order to tell them what is really necessary — the skills they need — and to make this more official.
Francesca	And what is the role of ZDF Digital within the LTA project?
Miriam	Some of the partners in the LTA project are the academic partners at the university that are mostly responsible for the curriculum and have experience in mounting a curriculum. ZDF Digital is not an academic partner, it's a professional, practical partner. Having this live-subtitling department, we know a lot about the reality of live subtitling.
Francesca	And I think that this balanced participation — having various partners coming from different but also complimentary backgrounds — I think this is one of the main strengths of the Live Text Access project. What do you think?
Miriam	You are exactly right. The strength of the project is that we have different partners coming from different backgrounds. So, we have on the one hand the academic partners, on the other hand the non-educational partners who really work in live subtitling — it's either the velotyping or the re-speaking part. And I think it's a very good symbiosis of the different partners, because you cannot mount a curriculum without the partners from the practical but non-academic side, but you cannot mount the curriculum without the partners from the academic side.
Francesca	So, everyone can bring in their own experience — professional and academic experience.
Miriam	And maybe I can add something about the role of ZDF Digital. It is also planned that we might contribute training material, because we work with a lot of TV programmes every day. And we also have one partner on the advisory board of the public chain ZDF, and we hope that they will provide us with training materials. Real, live training programme material that can be used for training purposes.
Francesca	Very interesting and very clear. Thank you very much, Miriam, for being with us today.

Miriam	Thank you for having me.
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