

Francesca: Fred Film Radio, this is Francesca Raffi. Today we are going to learn more about the LiveTextAccess project. A strategic partnership addressing inclusion and innovation in higher education. The LTA project aims to design an effective and certified curriculum for both realtime intralingual respeakers and velotypists. And Velotype, the Dutch company which invented the Velotype keyboard is one of the partners of the project. So, to know more about this we have virtually with us today Wim Gerbecks. Co-founder of Velotype, the only company in the world that produces and sells the Velotype keyboard. Hi Wim, thank you for being with us today.

Wim: Hi, thank you for having me.

Francesca: First of all, Wim, tell us more about yourself and how does it feel to be the inventor of, we can say the modern version of a product which has revolutionalized the way of typing. Especially within the context of live subtitling of course.

Wim: Yes, thank you. Well, my name is Wim Gerbecks. And I have been working as a speech to text interpreter for deaf and hard of hearing people for quite some years now. I have also been doing live subtitling for television, mainly for the Dutch television. It is very nice. We have a small company that makes the Velotype keyboard which I use as a text interpreter and as a subtitler. And throughout the years we have tried to innovate this keyboard, modernize it. And try to use this for as many languages as possible.

Francesca: And I imagine this is the result of years of research. How does this keyboard work, Wim? Because of course it has nothing to do with a computer keyboard, right? How does it work?

Wim: Well, it is quite a different way of typing. When you type on a normal keyboard you press one key and you get one character each time. With the Velotype keyboard the idea is that you type a chord of keys. So you press several keys simultaneously. With every chord of keys you get a whole syllable or a whole word. It is a very different way of typing. But in the end much more efficient.

Francesca: Okay. So by pressing several keys simultaneously we can make let's say complete syllables and words. So instead of typing character by character. Is it correct?

Wim: Yes, exactly.

Francesca: Okay, alright. So, being a quick way of typing, I imagine it is especially useful when we need to type at a higher speed. What are the main application contexts in which this keyboard is used, Wim?

Wim: Well, the invention of the keyboard was basically just for anybody who wants to type at a quicker speed and more efficiently. But eventually the main applications for the keyboard are for the support of hard of hearing in all different situations. You can imagine you can use it at a big event where many people are watching your text. But even at the doctor, or even at a job interview when you sit next to somebody who is deaf or hard of hearing you type directly what the conversation is about and they can read along immediately. It is a very good support for deaf and hard of hearing people. And besides that it is also being used for live subtitling for television through Teletext for many years. So, the people watch television at home, they see the live subtitling, also by the use of Velotype.

Francesca: So the velotypists listen to the speaker and simultaneously type what they say, using the Velotype keyboard, right?

Wim: Yes, exactly. You have to be trained for it. Of course, you have to know how to use the keyboard. Besides that you have to be trained to listen to speakers, to also understand all the

different accents and then try to type it as quickly as possible. You can imagine the spelling, the knowledge of the spelling is very important when you do this work.

Francesca: And the LiveTextAccess project aims precisely to create online open source training material for both respeakers and velotypists. And this is the third stage of the LTA project. Is it correct? The intellectual output number 3. Wim, can you please give us an overview of this phase of the LTA project?

Wim: Yes, well, the idea of the whole project itself is what we see for example in the Netherlands and in the UK and in the United States, is a good practice of people who are text interpreters or doing live subtitling. What you see in many different especially European countries sometimes there is nothing at all, or not really trained people. The aim of the project itself is to get minimum standard and training of people who for example use the Velotype or use respeaking or maybe even another system to get to a good quality of speech to text services. In the part of the IO3 where we produce the online material, the aim there is that we produce material by which people can see how this service works, what they need to do to train to get that far, basically any aspect of the live subtitling and the speech to text services.

Francesca: Okay. And what is the startingpoint? I mean, I know that there are intellectual output number 1 and intellectual output 2. So, is this third step somehow based on the results achieved in step 1 and 2, Wim?

Wim: Yes, certainly. The first step was basically to see what's out there. To ask the people, both the hard of hearing users and the professionals their knowledge and to see what's out there already. In the second phase, IO2 is to make a design of all the courses and the third step would be to start producing them. We are of course relying on the outputs of IO 1 and 2 to make this next step. We try to have different applications, so also besides the hard of hearing on location and the events, and the live subtitling for example there is also the application of for example parliamentary reporting. So this is also a place where high speed of text is required. It is quite a broad range of applications, this profession can be used for.

Francesca: And this is only the third of a series of steps. So we are very much looking forward to hearing more about the LTA project. Thank you very much for being with us today, Wim.

Wim: You are very welcome, thank you.

Francesca: And thank you very much to all of you and stay with us to know more about the LiveTextAccess project. This is Francesca Raffi and this is Fred Film Radio, the festival insider.