

# Towards accessibility standards in the language industry?

A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY THE TEXTE-IMAGE-LANGAGE (TIL)  
RESEARCH CENTRE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BURGUNDY, WITH THE SUPPORT OF  
THE MA MULTIMEDIA TRANSLATION (T2M) PROGRAM.

**FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2023**

**AMPHITHEATRE, MAISON DES SCIENCES DE L'HOMME, ESPLANADE ERASME, DIJON**

*Organising committee:*

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In recent years, accessibility studies has gained increasing recognition both as an academic field and in the public consciousness. This shift reflects a very welcome increase in the recognition of specific individual needs, and implies a shift in within the field from a focus on specific types of disability towards a broader, universalist framework often termed “accessibility for all” (Greco, 2018; Greco and Romero-Fresco, 2023). While the need to cater for diverse user requirements has long been recognised – and is increasingly being incorporated into training guidelines such as the 2022 European Masters in Translation competence framework – the need to consider the specific requirements of all possible users of a product brings into relief the question of how accessibility provision could or should be standardised. The 2019 European Accessibility Act aims to remove barriers to communication across EU member states both by reinforcing accessibility provision and by increasing standardisation, though the question of how best these aims might be achieved and of the possible unintended consequences of increased standardisation remains open for debate.

Researchers and practitioners within the language industry have come to link accessibility to the concept of barrier-free communication (Jekat and Massey, 2018; Jekat et al., 2020), with a parallel focus on the types of barriers to be overcome (e.g. physical and physiological, organisational and systemic, cultural and attitudinal, psychological, technological) and on appropriate methods for doing so, with respect to specific user needs, modes of and requirements for communication and degrees of specialisation. Yet the need to make content accessible to specific users in specific circumstances implies a paradox for the movement towards standardisation and even, arguably, for the concept of accessibility standards, in the sense that strategies but also norms for accessible communication may be perceived differently by different users.



Categories such as “easy and plain languages” cover a relatively broad range of techniques, target users and product types that are often, in practice, influenced or organised by specific national or linguistic traditions (Maaß, 2020, ch. 2.2). For audiovisual products, a similar phenomenon can be observed in the field of subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers, where locale-specific techniques and traditions, developed over time by national broadcasters and regulators and their associated production ecosystems with at least some degree of user consultation and codified by national regulators (CSA, 2011; Cerezo Merchán and Caschelin, 2017). These have seen increasing competition from the internationalised SDH standards used by SVOD platforms such as Netflix (Pedersen, 2018), showing the economic – as well as linguistic and/or user-oriented – factors at work. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines published by the Web Accessibility Initiative (W3C-WAI, 2023) offer a model for website accessibility that shares key principles with website internationalisation, although the published comments of the WCAG3 working group make it clear that offering standardised guidelines and conformance models for accessibility of products that are by nature complex, multimodal and rapidly evolving remains an ongoing challenge. Such complexities can also be observed in fields including audiodescription and game and app localisation and are at least in part a consequence of a shift towards increasingly multimodal communication (Duarte and Fonseca, 2019; Kaindl, 2020).

The planned workshop aims to explore the opportunities offered and the challenges faced by the implementation of accessibility standards within the language industry, broadly defined, as well as the points of convergence and divergence between different techniques, product types, user groups and national and other spaces.

Proposals of around 300 words in French or English should be sent by 28 July 2023 at the latest to the organising team:

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In order to give a speedy reply, proposals will be examined as they are received. The organising team is available to answer any questions and hopes to see you in person on 27 October!

