Tip sheet – Using captions and transcripts

Erler (2012, p 4) observes that 'higher education institutions are faced with the extraordinary challenge of delivering content and information across an ever-expanding number of channels to an increasingly diverse student body'. Rich media content (eg video, audio) is an integral part of the learning and teaching resource mix. The many ways to use video/audio content in your FLO topic site/s include:

- Mini (digestible) lecture videos
- Videos created for revision/other learning
- Presentation files that you talk to
- Virtual classroom sessions (recorded)

As a guiding principle, ensure that you provide text-based alternatives (captions, transcripts) for video and audio content in your FLO topic/s as much as possible, and alert your students to these features to maximise their use.

Disability Services provides students on an Access Plan (AP) with captioning/transcription services if required. This tip sheet considers the many benefits for **all students** of using captions and transcripts for your video/audio learning materials. The main focus is on Kaltura, the University's streaming video platform, as a tool to provide captioning and transcripts. Collaborate, the University's web conferencing tool for learning and teaching, is briefly covered.

Benefits and good practice

Why use captions and transcripts for video/audio content? The main reason is to make learning activities that include rich media content accessible to, and inclusive of, diverse student cohorts. This approach also caters to different learning preferences, enabling students to learn comfortably and/or challenge themselves via alternative options if they prefer. Providing alternative options helps students avoid cognitive overload and enables flexible learning. Research shows that all students, not just non-English speaking background (NESB) students and students with a disability, will benefit from their use as learning aids (Oregon State University 2015; Kent and Ellis 2017).

Some added benefits of using captioning and transcripts are that multiple representations 'allow students to make connections within, as well as between, concepts' (CAST). They can also 'use these tools to improve their note taking, revision and general study habits' (Kent and Ellis 2017, p 57), with support and guidance.

CAST principles that particularly relate to providing captions and transcripts are Multiple means of engagement and Multiple means of representation. These principles are based on the premise that '[l]earners cannot meet a demand without appropriate, and flexible, resources.'

Multiple means of engagement guidelines and checkpoints include:
- optimise individual choice and autonomy
- minimise threats and distractions
- vary demands and resources to optimise challenge.

Multiple means of representation guidelines and checkpoints include:
- offer alternatives for audio information
- offer alternatives for visual information.

These alternatives are not just about providing captions and transcripts (text alternatives) but also visual/other alternatives, so are worth exploring.

Kaltura

Kaltura is the video and media platform in FLO. It is used for storing and sharing videos for learning, and also includes a desktop recorder for recording videos from your computer.

Kaltura also has machine captioning functionality and can generate **closed captions** (meaning that the viewer can turn them on or off, thus enabling flexibility). After uploading your videos to FLO (My Media/Media Vault), you can request auto(machine)-captioning. Once generated, you can edit the captions. Kaltura's 'Search and Replace' feature lets you correct multiple captioning errors quickly (eg replacing 'flow' with 'FLO'). After editing the captions, view the video to check the captioning. At this point, you will be able to download a **text transcript** as a text file. Format it to make it more user friendly (headings, bold text, links etc), and upload it to FLO as a PDF/Word doc to accompany the video (applying the principle Multiple means of representation).

The viewer (student) can select the following playback options:
- closed captions
- full-screen playback
- quality and playback speed.

Kaltura analytics will show you how much students interact with the video and/or transcript. You could also use the feedback tool to ask students for feedback.

Generating closed captions creates timely access for diverse cohorts of students (no delay) and an inclusive experience for all students. View instructions on how to add captions (request, edit) and generate a transcript using Kaltura (FLO Staff Support site). You might also want to visit the Kaltura self-paced workshop FLO site.

Collaborate

Collaborate virtual classroom doesn't have machine captioning, but you can ensure student inclusivity in the following ways.
- Record presentation components of sessions as short videos (include captions) and provide them prior to the live session. Use the live session for discussion and collaboration.
- Provide presentation files with additional text-based information in the notes.
- Make slides/handouts available. Use vocal cues when changing slides.

Live closed captioning is possible in Collaborate. The easiest way to do this is for moderators to make attendees captioners. If you have students with Access Plans in your topic who require captions, Disability Services will arrange a captioner and you will need to make them 'captioners' in your Collaborate sessions (this can take time to organise). Alternatively, a captioner could be a support teaching staff member (if available) or a student/s. If students have this role, it could be rotated so that all students who volunteer/have this capability get experience. The captioner types what is said during a session. Participants can view what is being typed in real time. Captions entered during the live session are included when the session is recorded.

Refer to the Collaborate – planning guide and Collaborate – administration guide (FLO Staff Support site).

References

CAST, The UDL guidelines, Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Ecampus Research Unit 2015, National research study: Student uses and perceptions of closed captions & transcripts, Oregon State University

Erler, Kevin 2012, The essential higher ed closed captioning guide, White Paper, McGraw-Hill Tegrity/CaptionSync Solution

Kent, Mike and Ellis, Katie 2017, Mainstreaming captions for online lectures in higher education in Australia: alternative approaches to engaging with video content, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE)