



Smart glasses

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SMART CAPTION GLASSES SYNC WITH THEATRE SHOWS

 PUBLISHING & MEDIA

New software allows smart caption glasses for the hearing impaired to sync up exactly with theatre performances.

There have been a number of innovations aimed at people with hearing loss. These include a system that **translates** between sign language and spoken English and **ear implants**. However, it can still be difficult for those with hearing loss to attend the theatre. Captioning and sign language interpretation is not available at all shows, and can be difficult to see from all seats. Now, the **National Theatre** (NT) in London is pioneering a way to make theatre more accessible with captioning smart glasses.

The **Epson glasses** use custom voice-following software to keep track of exactly where the show is in the script. The software also uses lighting, sound and video cues to stay on track. The software allows glasses to display a synced transcript of the dialog onto the lenses. Unlike projected captions, this syncing allows viewers to follow the lines in real time, concurrent with the actors on stage. The size, colour and position of the typeface seen by the user can also be set before the show starts.

The project was developed in an ongoing collaboration between the NT's technical team and speech and language experts at the **University of Roehampton**. The glasses will be available via free reservation at all NT venues in London from November. The next phase will be to make the glasses available at productions outside London. This will include productions by Leeds Playhouse and during a tour of *Macbeth* at venues around the UK and Ireland.

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Takeaway:

The smart caption glasses will help to give people more choice and freedom about when and how they come to the theatre. It may also be possible to adapt the software used in the smart glasses to other types of entertainment. The improved accessibility could also boost revenue for different types of shows. What other venues and show goers could benefit from smart glasses?