# Subtitling as an Activity for Language Learning

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## Aims

- To cover the need for active and participative language learning

- To use audiovisual material in a productive, efficient and motivating way

- To counter passivity when working with audiovisual material in the FL classroom

## Premises

- **Subtitling as an activity:**

    - **has a hands-on result which will motivate and facilitate learning**

    - **provides the environment for the development of necessary linguistic skills: listening, reading, comprehension, writing (reducing, paraphrasing)**

    - **is enjoyed by a lot of people (attending subtitling courses, fun-subbing)**

# Subtitling combines three widely used methods in the language classroom

1. **Translation: "out-moded" (but reviving)**

2. **Video: "modern"**

3. **ICT: "fashionable"**

# 1. Translation and FL learning

- **Translation was overused in teaching and overvalued in FL testing and thus came under rightful criticism as a tool for FL learning. (Prevalence of the Communicative Approach)**

- **Main criticism: as a method it may discourage thinking directly in the language being learned. Negative interference of mother tongue**

- **However, its use has been reconsidered because of the emphasis given to its value as a communicative activity of mediation**

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## What kind of text to be translated?

- **The audiovisual text has characteristics that differentiate it from the "prototypical" written text traditionally used for translation exercises**

- **The existence of these differences may overcome the drawbacks of the utilization of translation in the FL classroom**

## What makes the audiovisual text different?

- **Synchrony is required between its basic components imposing time and space constraints**

- **These constraints sometimes render a literal, word for word translation impossible: the learner is liberated from the "requirement for faithfulness"**

- **The existence of the nonverbal components obliges the learner to take the context into consideration**

## 2. The use of video in the FL classroom

- **Introduces variety**

- **Provides exposure to nonverbal elements**

- **Promotes FL comprehension**

- **Linguistic aspects are presented in their context**

## The use of subtitled video:

- **Provides simultaneous exposure to spoken language, printed text and visual information, all conveying the same message**

- **Promotes content and vocabulary learning even with relatively inexperienced learners (Baltova:1999)**

- **Subtitles are useful in bridging the gap between reading and listening skills (Borrás & Lafayette:1994)**

**Main shortcoming: passivity**

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## Subtitling as an activity benefits language learning

- **Students attending subtitling courses have improved their linguistic skills [Klerkx (1998), Williams & Thorne (2000), Rundle (2000) and Neves (2004)]**

- **However, up to now no subtitling software has been designed specifically for language learning - with all the shortcomings this entails**

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## 3. ICT

- **Advances in Information and Communication Technologies provide new opportunities for the exploitation of subtitling in language teaching and learning**

- **Development of a subtitling software for active learning task-based activities. This tool is intended to give learners the chance to use a special version of a professional environment, not for the purposes of training but for its side benefits.**

## What is LvS?

- **Learning via Subtitling (LvS) is a subtitling simulator designed for educational activities' purposes in language learning**

- **Teachers can use it to create activities based on subtitling for film-scenes, news, documentaries, personal recordings etc.**

- **Learners can employ it to carry out tasks ranging from filling in the gaps to placing mixed subtitles in the correct order, and from transcribing the original utterances to translating them and creating new subtitles**

**A lesson plan which includes subtitling activities needs to specify:**

- **Objectives: e.g. to practice listening, enrich vocabulary or identify colloquial speech**

- **Mode: face to face, distance, independent learning**

- **Learner profile:**

    - **Age group: from school-children to adults**

    - **Level: from A1 (Breakthrough) to C2 (Mastery)**

- **Structure: Pre-, LvS-, Post-activities**

## A subtitling activity needs to specify:

- **Objectives, duration, mode of delivery (individual / pairs / small groups), place (classroom / other)**

- **Type of activity: Transcription, translation, paraphrase, commentary, rescripting, editing**

- **Language combination: video clip, subtitles**

- **Materials: Instructions, video-clip and subtitles:**

  - **Only with timing and no subtitle text**

  - **With timing of subtitles and some subtitle text**

  - **No subtitle file given (learners create it)**

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LvS (2.0) [Authoring] - SampleActivity

File   Options   Help

New activity...        F4
Open activity          ▸
Save all...            F2
Close
Import                 ▸
Export                 ▸
Exit                   F12

I need a deep Florida tan,
if it takes all afternoon

00:00:19.89                              00:01:46.76

1-The Awful Truth activity    2-Subtitles

## Step 1: Let's watch the film-scene

- This is the first scene of a film called *The Awful Truth*. To watch it, click ▶ (under the video screen).
- After you've finished watching it, click *here* again to see how you can add subtitles.
- You can watch a specific part again by selecting the corresponding subtitle line and clicking ▣

Set subtitle start   Set subtitle end   Add subtitle   Remove subtitle

| # | Start time | End time | Duration | Subtitle | Te... | Stu... |
|---|------------|----------|----------|----------|-------|--------|
| 1 | 00:00:06.97 | 00:00:09.10 | 00:00:02.13 | Come on, get that sun lamp ready. | ✓ | |
| 2 | 00:00:09.20 | 00:00:11.77 | 00:00:02.57 | About 15 minutes is the m I'd advise, Mr. Warriner. | | |
| 3 | 00:00:11.87 | 00:00:16.06 | 00:00:04.19 | All aboard for Miami, Palm Beach and Point... | 🔔 | |
| 4 | 00:00:16.16 | 00:00:17.53 | 00:00:01.37 | Give her the gun. | | |
| 5 | 00:00:17.62 | 00:00:20.77 | 00:00:03.15 | I need a deep Florida tan if it takes all afternoon | | |
|   | 00:00:20.02 | 00:00:22.02 | 00:00:02.02 | | | |

Teacher notes    Student notes

B  I  U  S

*(This is the general notes area.)*

Well done! All your subtitles are correct. But there is always some room for improvement: take a look at the comments per subtitle below.

| # | Comment |
|---|---------|
| 1 | Correct! (This is a per-subtitle comment.) |
| 3 | Attention: The protagonist speaks fast here, you have to shorten these utterances. |

## Copyright issues

- **There is no specific legislation to address the movie clips copyright issues in the digital education environment.**

- **In most EU countries, the use of short movie clips for educational purposes is permissible and does not constitute copyright infringement. It is common practice but not formally regulated, that the duration of these clips be up to three minutes. (IPR report - LeViS project)**

## Project LeViS: Learning Via Subtitling

- **Socrates - Lingua II funding**

- **LvS Software and material development for existing FL learning environments (no change in the methodology required)**

- **5 languages (EL, ES, HU, PO, RO)**

- **October 2006 – September 2008**

- **http://levis.cti.gr**

## LeViS project Partner members

- **Hellenic Open University**

- **Computer Technology Institute**

- **Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona**

- **University of Algarve**

- **RoehamptonUniversity**

- **University of Pecs**

- **University of Brasov**

- **Evaluation: P. Zabalbeascoa**

# Thank you!

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[http://levis.cti.gr](http://levis.cti.gr)

**Source code + Latest Web installer:**

[http://LvS.codeplex.com](http://LvS.codeplex.com)