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An innovation project in the Secondary classroom:  
Interlinguistic subtitling to enhance oral comprehension

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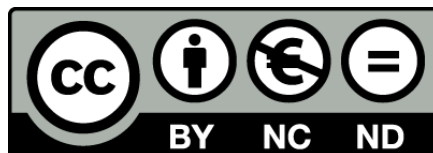
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Trabajo de Fin de Máster

**An innovation project in the  
Secondary classroom:  
Interlinguistic subtitling to  
enhance oral comprehension**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Translation and audiovisual resources are becoming increasingly relevant tools in second language acquisition particularly in the case of Secondary students (Danan, 1992; Talaván, 2013). However, few scientifically-supported research other than the studies by Williams and Thorne (2000), Incalcaterra (2009) and Talaván (2010) has been conducted on the use of subtitles and subtitling in the ESL classroom. Specifically, no projects addressing Secondary learners have been reported. This Master's Thesis intends to fill in this gap by proposing a practical innovation project involving the creation of subtitles by 1<sup>st</sup> of Bacalaureate students.

In order to fulfill this objective, this Master's Thesis delves into this field from different viewpoints, such as the role of new technologies and video in L2 learning, the relevance of subtitling as a didactic tool or the relation between Audiovisual Translation modalities and language competence level. An interlinguistic subtitling project to improve the learners' oral comprehension will be proposed for the Secondary classroom.

**KEYWORDS:** Subtitles, subtitling, audiovisual translation, oral comprehension, language didactics, language acquisition, Secondary students.

## **RESUMEN**

La traducción y los recursos audiovisuales son herramientas de creciente importancia en la adquisición de segundas lenguas, especialmente entre estudiantes de Secundaria (Danan, 1992; Talaván, 2013). Sin embargo, exceptuando los trabajos de Williams y Thorne (2000), Incalcaterra (2009) y Talaván (2010) apenas se ha llevado a cabo investigación científica sobre el uso de subtítulos y subtitulado en la clase de lenguas extranjeras. Concretamente, no consta la existencia de proyectos con estudiantes de Secundaria. Este Trabajo de Fin de Máster pretende cubrir este vacío proponiendo un proyecto práctico de innovación en torno a la creación de subtítulos por alumnos/as de 1º de Bachillerato.

Para llevar a cabo este objetivo, este Trabajo Fin de Máster profundiza en este ámbito desde diferentes perspectivas, entre otras, el papel de las nuevas tecnologías y el vídeo en la enseñanza de segundas lenguas, el subtitulado como herramienta didáctica o la relación entre las modalidades de traducción audiovisual y el nivel de competencia lingüística. Se propondrá un proyecto de innovación en torno a la creación de subtítulos interlingüísticos por parte de los alumnos de 1º de Bachillerato para mejorar la comprensión oral.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Subtítulos, subtitulado, traducción audiovisual, comprensión oral, didáctica de lenguas, adquisición de lenguas, estudiantes de Secundaria.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution we have witnessed in the past decades has given rise to new learning approaches. In the field of languages, audiovisual materials have proven to be an efficient tool to learn a second or foreign language. The combination of different sources of input, namely, sound, image and subtitles, lead to the creation of more realistic and motivating learning environments.

Simultaneously, Audiovisual Translation (AVT) has now started to carve out a niche in language didactics. Previously, it had been despised since translation was the core of the Grammar-Translation Method used at the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the words of Cook (2010: 15):

“Translation in language teaching has been treated as a pariah in almost all the fashionable high-profile language teaching theories of the 20th century. Translation was often simply assumed to be bad, and if mentioned it at all, was held up to ridicule”.

It has not been until the beginning of the 21st century when AVT has received the place it deserves in language didactics (Danan, 1992; Talaván, 2013). Thus, taking the existent theories of AVT from a didactic perspective as a starting point, subtitling as a pedagogical tool is implemented in the class.

Subtitling and subtitles have proven to be influential in achieving a higher L2 competence. In the past decades several studies have shown how subtitles dramatically improve many of the necessary capacities and skills to master a foreign language, among other positive aspects. The implementation of subtitles and subtitling in the L2 classroom:

- Improves vocabulary memorisation and comprehension (Snyder & Colon, 1988; Pavakanum & d'Ydewalle, 1992; Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999).
- Develops language skills, allowing a faster



development, thanks to the multisensorial effect (Borras and Laffayette, 1994; King, 2002).

- Facilitates pronunciation, as well as oral expression and communication (Bird & Williams, 2000; Danan, 2004).

- Improves reading speed, both in source and target language (Kikuchi, 1998).

- Allows learners to create a more precise mental image of words (Bird & Williams, 2002).

- Leads to a better recognition of the words which are heard (Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999 Bird & Williams, 2002).

- Creates a useful audiovisual integration, since words appear both written and orally (Danan, 2004; Talaván, 2006).

- Motivation is greatly enhanced. Moreover, the use of new technologies in the classroom favours learners' active participation and engagement (Vanderplank, 1998; Kikuchi, 1998).

It must be noted that the competence in linguistic communication is:

“The ability to express and interpret thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions both orally and in writing and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of social and cultural contexts, in education, training, work, home and leisure” (European Commission, 2014: 11).

The benefits of the use of subtitles and subtitling in the foreign language classroom extend to the four skills (oral expression, written expression, oral comprehension and written comprehension), proving to be a highly valuable tool to promote communicative competence in a foreign language.

Furthermore, according to the *Decreto 19/2015 por el que se fija el currículum de Educación Secundaria*, the Foreign Language Curriculum in La Rioja aims at

developing the following competences:

1. *“Identificar la información esencial, los puntos principales y los detalles más relevantes en textos orales breves y bien estructurados, transmitidos de viva voz o por medios técnicos, y articulados a velocidad lenta o media, en un registro formal, informal o neutro, y que versen sobre asuntos cotidianos en situaciones habituales o sobre temas generales o del propio campo de interés en los ámbitos personal, público, educativo y ocupacional” (BOR, 2015: 12535).*

The use of subtitles in the L2 classroom allows students to engage in oral situations as diverse as wished and, as noted in the aforementioned extract, perform diverse tasks related to each situation or interaction they listen to. Moreover, subtitled audiovisual material is a very powerful source of information, since it provides the viewer with information via three input channels, namely, image, soundtrack and subtitles. In this regard, it is noteworthy that kinaesthetic behaviour and non verbal communication play a pivotal role in oral comprehension (d'Ydewalle, 2002: 60-77).

2. *“Producir textos breves y comprensibles, tanto en conversación cara a cara como por teléfono u otros medios técnicos, en un registro neutro o informal, con un lenguaje sencillo en los que se da, solicita o intercambia información sobre temas de importancia en la vida cotidiana y asuntos conocidos o de interés personal, educativo u ocupacional (...). Incorporar a la producción del texto oral los conocimientos socioculturales y sociolingüísticos adquiridos relativos a estructuras sociales, relaciones interpersonales, patrones de comportamiento y convenciones sociales” (BOR, 2015: 12537).*

As presented throughout the theoretical framework, the introduction of subtitles in L2 learning allows learners

to enrich their vocabulary in terms of words and expressions, familiarise with them, and be able to perceive non verbal elements in a communicative situation.

3. *“Conocer y aplicar estrategias adecuadas para elaborar textos escritos breves y de estructura simple, p.e. copiando formatos, fórmulas y modelos convencionales propios de cada tipo de texto” (BOR, 2015: 12541).*

An interesting manner to present new contents and help learners to create models that they will later use in their texts is by means of video and subtitles. The use of video permits the viewing of a certain model repeatedly. The visual support provided by subtitles helps learners to accurately produce it in their texts at a latter stage.

4. *“Identificar la información esencial, los puntos más relevantes y detalles importantes en textos, tanto en formato impreso como en soporte digital, breves y bien estructurados, escritos en un registro formal, informal o neutro, que traten de asuntos cotidianos, de temas de interés o relevantes para los propios estudios y ocupaciones”. (BOR, 2015: 12539).*

Reading subtitles alone may not sufficient to foster reading comprehension skills, but it can contribute to its development to a great extent. Subtitles may be excellent supportive tools to work on texts based on the learners' interests and enhance reading comprehension related to their experiences and background knowledge.

5. *“Apoyarse en y sacar el máximo partido de los conocimientos previos” (BOR, 2015: 12540).*

Linguistic input, supported by contextual non verbal elements, activates previous cultural experiences. It permits learners to build and integrate a model of communicative situations which is familiar to them on many occasions. Working with prior experiences and communicative situations which are usual for them in their mother tongue is one of the many possibilities subtitles

can offer. Since new contents are incorporated to the already existing knowledge, a faster and more efficient acquisition is fostered.

6. *“Discriminar patrones sonoros, acentuales, rítmicos y de entonación de uso común, y reconocer los significados e intenciones comunicativas generales relacionados con los mismos” (BOR, 2015: 12535).*

One of the fundamental advantages of the use of video and subtitles in L2 learning is the improvement of speaking skills, namely, phonetics, rhythm, accentuation and intonation. Learners have the chance to listen to real native speakers, speaking in different accents and varieties of the foreign language.

In view of all the aforementioned benefits and since no pedagogical interventions have been found about the implementation of subtitling at a Secondary level, in this Master's Thesis we aim at exploring the positive effects of interlinguistic subtitling in oral comprehension by means of a practical innovation project. Before moving on to explain the present innovation project, an overview of the theoretical dimension of subtitles and subtitling will be necessary in order to get a broader picture of the relevance of this resource.



## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In the first section of this Master's Thesis we will give an overview of the theoretical dimension of subtitles and subtitling.

Firstly, we will provide a description of the most appropriate theoretical framework for the implementation of subtitling and subtitles as a pedagogical tool in the L2 classroom will be provided. A series of methodological approaches, as well as the use of new technologies and video, will be included.

Secondly, we will present the meaning and origins of Audiovisual Translation (AVT), in order to get a broader picture of the subtitling versus dubbing debate. Specific data comparing the foreign language competence level in several European countries will be included, proving the impact that the choice of a certain AVT modality has on their citizens' language mastery.

Thirdly, we will show an overview of subtitling as a pedagogical tool. General considerations on the characteristics of this discipline, as well as the indications for its correct implementation in the L2 classroom will be provided.

Finally, we will present a review of previous research on subtitles and subtitling and its impact on language skills. We will focus on the fact that not much investigation has yet been conducted on the implementation of subtitling software and techniques into the L2 class, thus identifying a gap for research.

### **2.1. L2 learning approaches**

Among the diverse L2 acquisition theories which have been embraced in recent years, three of them are particularly relevant to the implementation of subtitles and subtitling in the language classroom. The theoretical perspective for which this resource is suggested is

*Communicative Language Teaching* (hereafter referred to as CLT) (Wilkins, 1976) combined with *Task-Based Language Teaching* (hereafter referred to as TBL) (Nunan, 1999). This line approaches the *Postmethod* concept. Since human communication is inherently linked to language and both are natural to human beings, students must be taught naturally, in real communicative environments where they play an active role. Littlewood (1992:106) points out the need of students being the decision-makers in their own learning process.

“Adopting active roles implies that the learners make choices and decisions which affect their own learning activity [...] Since using language involves making choices in any case, it is largely a question of extending these choices further up a scale so that, as their course progresses, learners become more and more capable of operating independently both in their communication and in their learning”.

According to the definition of communicative task made by Nunan (1989), subtitled fulfils these characteristics, since it is an authentic, functional and active process, with a clear objective and visible results. Students develop a direct relationship with materials, as well as having a goal with immediate results. Materials are authentic and depict real communicative situations, helping students greatly in real life situations where the foreign language must be used. The nature of materials establishes a link with the world outside the school environment, motivating students to perform the activity or watch subtitled films outside the classroom.

Throughout the years, diverse theories regarding L2 acquisition have been devised. Drawing on an extensive range of sources, a number of authors advocate more eclectic positions, such as Postmethod (Nunan, 1999). The Postmethod pedagogy acknowledges the limitations of traditional methods, opting for implementing the method which best suits the specific needs of each particular

group of students. Teaching is explained by means of practice, moving closer to the observation of the teaching context, and further from abstract terminology. This view is supported by Candlin and Mercer (2001:5), who write that:

“We should be less concerned with stipulating what methods to follow and much more concerned with discovering what effective teachers actually do. Resisting the *deprofessionalizing* effect of some slavish adherence to methods frees us and teachers more generally to examine what the practices of effective language teaching might be”.

In line with these principles, in the present innovation proposal learners have a completely active role, since they create the subtitles for the clips the teacher has selected previously.

### *2.1.1. Communicative Language Teaching*

The origin of this approach dates back to the 1970s decade, when functionalist Halliday (1975), sociolinguist Hymes (1972) and philosophers of language Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) laid the foundation for an approach in which the functional dimension and the communicative competence were key to the teaching-learning process.

One of the main theories which contributed to give rise to CLT was the *Notional-Functional Syllabus*. This conception, presented by Wilkins in *Notional Syllabuses* (1976) marks a milestone in the didactic of languages by claiming that the underlying principles in L2 content organisation are semantic and not grammatical, as it had been considered heretofore. Thus, the teaching-learning process is planned on the basis of notions and functions, considering the use of linguistic forms in real life situations and enabling efficient communication in specific contexts.

Rather than a methodology itself, the Notional-Functional Syllabus is a theory about possible methodologies that could be implemented upon its principles. The Council of Europe collected these new



communicative principles and established *threshold levels* which would define the content of syllabuses on the basis of notions and functions.

Communicative Language Teaching is born in the 1980's decade. Based on the works by Littlewood (1981) and Brumfit (1984), it claims that language is a tool for social interaction and has effective communication in real situations as its ultimate goal. The main innovation introduced by it is that the learning process becomes more creative, internal and individual, with marked constructivist features.

According to this approach, the process becomes student-centred. The teacher role is to strike a balance in the integration of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), make communication in the classroom significant, and facilitate the process, preventing students from feeling stressed or frustrated.

Another novel feature of CLT is that authentic materials are used in carrying out communicative activities. While in the conception of this approach, these were hard to obtain, nowadays the use of ICT has contributed to solve this problem. Authentic materials suppress the artificiality of prepared materials, contain more social and cultural information, and increase students' motivation, since they bring them closer to everyday life situations.

It is precisely here where the relevance of subtitling, as included in the present innovation project, is brought into play. The inherent characteristics of audiovisual language make it an ideal tool for language didactics. Pavesi (2012) found that the language used in series such as Friends presents numerous similarities with authentic conversation, as it contains a high frequency of lexical and grammatical features which are present in spontaneous conversations. Not only is it realistic, but it also conforms

to the purposes of language teaching, suppressing the least desirable elements of spontaneous talking, and adding more useful ones.

### 2.1.2. *Task-Based Learning*

The Task-Based learning approach is bringing about excellent outcomes in achieving an efficient communicative competence (Nunan, 1999; Widdowson, 2003). The essential basis of this theory is the presentation of familiar situations to students by means of diverse tasks. Considering Nunan's definition (1989:10), a task is "a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language, while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form". Tasks allow students to familiarise with the suitable language for daily life situations, and internalise it by means of functional practice.

Its precedent was set by Prabhu (1987), an English teacher from India, who intended for his students to master the language while they were performing other tasks. His ideas were soon supplemented by the work of Nunan (1989) and Willis (1996).

The aim of this theory is to get students "learn to learn". Therefore, individual needs are considered. Nunan (1999:88) notes that "task-based language teaching is more than just a means of learning a language. It's a way of becoming a better communicator in the workplace and in the social world beyond the classroom".

On this account, this approach develops *transferable skills* (Holmes, 1995), or skills which are necessary to function adequately outside the educational environment, and with an increasing relevance in all teaching fields. This point is particularly relevant in the proposal of subtitling as a learning tool, since this activity

includes further skills, namely, the use of ICT, specific subtitling software and translation.

Regarding the teacher and learner roles, under this approach, the teacher is the guide, who selects materials, solves doubts and contributes to the creation of a suitable atmosphere for learning. The student role is so active and relevant that they can even participate by selecting content and activities.

One of the most remarkable features of TBL is that students “learn by doing”, as opposed to traditional methods, centred in the mere presentation and repeated practice of linguistic features. As Widdowson (2003:128) observes: “the great advantage of tasks is that they allow for learner engagement in realizing the communicative potential of language [...] Get performance right and competence will, with some prompting, take care of itself”. With this statement, he draws our attention to the fact that by performing tasks or actions in which language is involved, certain competences can be acquired without being even explained, but rather inferred from the development of the task itself.

These precepts are applicable to the present innovation project, since students carry out an active task as they learn doing something different. Furthermore, as with CLT, the learning application of subtitling fits perfectly in TBL. Not only is it a practical and appealing task, but it also involves the use of video, ICT and authentic materials which resemble real communicative environments.

### *2.1.3. Postmethod*

We observe that at the end of the 20th century language teaching takes place in a great variety of situations, with numerous types of students, contexts and motivations. In order to adapt language teaching to this reality, there is a pressing need to go beyond the idea of

method and create wider and more flexible approaches. Many experts (Sharwood, 1994; Steinberg, 2001; Brown, 2007) advocate more integrating and eclectic trends.

After centuries of systematic research on language teaching and learning, a golden solution capable of guaranteeing success for all students has not yet been discovered. Nevertheless, all methods present characteristics which can be useful. Commenting on this issue, Steinberg (2001:216) observes:

“No method is a total failure because in all methods, students are exposed to the data of a second language and are given the opportunity to learn the language. However, to the disappointment of all, there is no magic method [...] Still, teachers can do much to make the experience for the learner rewarding and enjoyable whatever method is employed [...] Most methods will have some features which can be of benefit to the language learner”.

Thus, research in the 21st century acknowledges the absence of an only valid method for all contexts, taking up an integrative stance regarding L2 learning. In this context emerges the concept of Postmethod, a theory based upon the idea that methodology is a creative, exploratory and dynamic process that starts again every time the teacher interacts with a new group of students (Richards, 2001). Its main promoter was Kumaradivelu (2005: 224), who defines it as a series of strategies to “advance a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, socio-cultural, and political particularities”. Therefore, the context emerges as the fundamental element and the factor which determines the strategies to be used in each circumstance.

Within this framework, Kumaradivelu (2005:173) proposes three dimensions of pedagogic division: particularity, practicality and possibility:

“The first deals with teaching context sensitivity such as

people, local knowledge, physical settings, course and institution nature, time, and teaching resources. The second encourages language teachers to 'theorize what they practice and practice what they theorize'. The last criterion pertains to macro-social factors such as institutional, social, economic, cultural, and political environments which shape identity formation and social transformation".

One of the main critical questions of this method lies in the difficulty to apply these concepts practically, since they are merely theoretical. In this respect, teachers will have to strive to put these principles into practice.

Nowadays, this integrating way of instruction is a widespread concept in language teaching. With the current analysis, we aim at providing a general overview on the theoretical framework of L2 teaching and learning, in order to explain how the pedagogical use of subtitling conforms to the standards by following all the principles underlying the Postmethod perspective.

#### *2.1.4. Further theories which justify its implementation*

According to the Input Hypothesis formulated by Krashen (1985), when learning an L2, it is particularly relevant that the input is comprehensible, understanding by it "that input which is slightly beyond the current level of competence of the language learner". (1985:80). Students must learn to interpret, making use of the contextual elements that surround the message. In the particular case of subtitling and audiovisual materials, they do not only provide information in the shape of images and sounds, but also many paralinguistic elements (facial gestures, body movements, tone of voice), that can help learners to comprehend the message.

There is consensus among numerous authors that lexis in the mother tongue is acquired by means of a massive exposure to comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985; Horst, Cobb and Meara, 1998: 207-223, Gardner:

2004: 2). By being exposed to it, and in an incidental or involuntary manner, new words and linguistic structures are acquired.

It is worth mentioning that, even if this input is comprehensible, exposing learners to it alone is not sufficient. Presenting an attractive input, which attracts their attention and interest is of utmost importance. Krashen (1982: 30-32) states that if didactic materials fail in attracting the learners' interest, what he refers to as "affective filter" comes into play. The activation of this filter may have a negative impact on the learning process. Some of the relevant factors a task can trigger in the learner are a high level of anxiety, a low self-esteem or lack of motivation. In these cases, the learner gets blocked, and the connection between perceptive organs and those in charge of language learning and acquisition is hindered. This explains the need to find materials that, apart from having pedagogical benefits, can foster students' interest and engagement, and decrease their anxiety levels, creating a relaxed environment.

It may seem that the reception of comprehensible input is a necessary and sufficient requirement to learn an L2. In view of this situation, Swain (1985: 371-391) formulates the *Comprehensible Output Hypothesis*. It claims that, even though necessary, input alone cannot be enough for an L2 comprehensive learning. Production is a process that contributes to language acquisition, so it becomes necessary for learners to produce comprehensible output. Additionally, in the input production stage, the *silent period* phase must be taken into account. In the same way as children who arrive in a foreign country need time to build on their competence by means of the input before they are able to produce, we must provide our students with a sufficient time period. By artificially hastening this process, the affective filter would

not be activated, leading to an unsatisfactory and unnatural learning process.

## **2.2. The role of new technologies and video in L2 learning**

Nowadays, the greater availability of audiovisual media is contributing to the creation of an active, multi-sensorial and participative learning environment, in which these resources can be used in a productive, efficient and motivating manner. The recent digitalisation has led to a new form of knowledge. Therefore, we believe it is crucial to analyse the roles Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and video play in L2 teaching and learning.

Among the numerous teaching applications of ICT, it is worth mentioning an area of study named CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). In the past 20 years, it has become an extremely relevant field in the L2 context.

With regard to video, its existence is prior to the origins of ICT. Nonetheless, thanks to its ease of access and use, ICT has granted greater teaching relevance to it. Video materials introduce variety in the educational environment, as they allow students to observe non-verbal elements, and analyse the linguistic context, achieving a better degree of language comprehension.

When the authenticity factor is added to the semiotic component, realistic learning contexts can be obtained. As previously mentioned, this factor is of utmost importance. Not only does it bring learners closer to real linguistic situations, but it also facilitates the acquisition of L2 cultural elements. In the words of Peterson and Coltrane (2003), mastery of a foreign language requires in-depth knowledge of the cultural elements associated to that language.

A second idea which justifies the implementation of ICT and video in the L2 classroom is the increasingly widespread theory of multiple intelligences. Suggested by Gardner (1999), this concept is based upon the idea that intelligence is not dominated by a single mental ability, but it consists of several levels. Gardner suggests nine types of intellectual skills, namely, musical, visual-spatial, linguistic, mathematical, kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalistic. One of the greatest advantages of ICT is that it enables the simultaneous development of several skills. Technological resources influence spatial, linguistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, which, as pointed out by Puchta et al. (2005) have a correspondence with the most commonly used types of intelligence in language learning.

Thus, the main advantage of the introduction of ICT and video in the classroom is the simultaneous activation of several types of intelligence, thus benefitting a larger number of students.

### **2.3. Didactic implications of ICT in the L2 classroom**

Nowadays, ICT is blended with audiovisual media. Informatic programmes gather in a single machine all the tools which were isolated and in different formats thus far. Since all the resources are integrated, multimedia and online applications are unified, leading to a compact and individualised learning, in which a single medium contains full L2 tasks, together with the space and means to perform them, as well as immediate feedback provision to learners.

Among the multiple advantages of multimedia resources in learning environments, we believe the promotion of the learner's autonomy is worthy of mention. Multimedia materials allow students to work individually and at their own pace. The widespread presence of the



internet is making texts increasingly visual, multimodal and interactive. Likewise, ICT permits the exploitation of video as an educational resource, as it allows functions such as rewind, replay, or insert subtitles, among others.

As a general norm, multimedia materials put a great variety of tools at the disposal of teachers and learners. Additionally, thanks to the integration of elements of diverse nature, multimedia materials are authentic, to a great extent. Thus, thanks to the blend of ICT with audiovisual media, multimedia resources present numerous advantages, such as the connection of information from different sources, quick access, and the development of new learning strategies.

As far as the internet phenomenon is concerned, it has shifted the computer from a mere information processing tool to an essential instrument of information, communication and expression. The internet has utterly changed the concept of traditional lessons in terms of space and time, offering both synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication, transforming learning into an open and continuous process.

Multimedia environments have undoubtedly provided a vast amount of improvements to the study of L2. The presence of video is one of the most prominent among them.

#### **2.4. Video as a didactic resource**

Since its origins in the 1970s, numerous authors have defended the use of video in the field of teaching. Specifically, in L2, its pedagogical value has also been recognised in recent years by authors such as Sherman (2003), or Talaván (2007).

The omnipresent series and films in Western societies constitute an infinite pool of resources. Video combines image, text, and social and cultural elements,

which jointly provide a context for the learning process. Since video is the resource which best resembles real communicative situations in the teaching-learning environment, its use should be as frequent as possible. According to King (2002), the introduction of audiovisual materials in the learning process, submerges the student into credible and realistic scenarios, by means of a ludic, everyday activity.

Video provides learners with a large amount of comprehensible (image, sound), as well as paralinguistic hints (movements, intonation, gestures). Krashen (1987: 8) explains: "we acquire spoken fluency not by practising talking, but by understanding input, by listening and reading". This statement connects to the abovementioned *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, by the same author. Thereupon, if the choice of audiovisual materials is appropriate, and its viewing is presented as an attractive activity, the affective filter can be lowered, facilitating the learning process.

In the following part, the features of the two main types of video which can be incorporated into the L2 classroom will be explained.

## **2.5. Educational video versus authentic video**

In its origins in the 1970s, video was used as a relatively passive resource (Tomalin, 1986; Lonergan, 1989). At a later date, it became a highly valued tool for intensive language development (Sherman, 2003; Wagener, 2006; Talaván, 2007). In this respect, two different types of video must be defined:

Educational video. It does not present real speech, since it has been previously evaluated in terms of content and duration. Correction of grammatical and lexical structures in them is guaranteed. The additional exercises which accompany them are included for further practice.

Almost every educational publisher includes this type of videos, which, despite not being authentic, attempt to imitate reality as much as possible. Its main disadvantage, as pointed out by Breen (1985), is that language in them is distorted, and prevents learners from applying background knowledge from previously known real communicative situations.

Authentic video: originally conceived for native speakers, language in them is neither simplified nor graduated. They are characterised by the presence of features which guarantee the real use of language, regardless of grammar or norms. According to Buck (2001), this language will resemble to a great extent that encountered by learners when they have to communicate in L2.

In language didactics, the latter is particularly relevant. As Wilkins (1976:79) observes:

“Learners who have followed conventional language courses and who may have developed a considerable classroom competence find that, when they come into contact with native speakers of the language, they meet serious problems of comprehension. [...] They are not accustomed to hearing the language as it is produced *by* native speakers *for* native speakers”.

The present innovation project involves the use of authentic video clips. Thanks to the possibilities offered by ICT, these are easy to obtain and edit. The presence of real language in them provides the learners with tools to overcome common problems that may arise in communicative situations with native speakers. In the present project, authentic video allows students to perform a real subtitling task, in which the teacher plays a guiding role, facilitating learners the creation of knowledge by themselves.

## **2.6. Strategies for a successful implementation of video**

Three decades ago, Tomalin (1986:27) set the basis for the implementation of the video resource in the L2 classroom claiming that:

“In teaching with video, the video extract is the most effectively used as the basis of the lesson, not as an ancillary to it. [...]. In planning the lesson, the teacher should select a short extract of video, decide what language is going to be exploited in it, plan for communicative activities around it and plan material for comprehension, intensive study and exploitation of the new language”.

From this observation, a series of useful recommendations can be extracted. Firstly, the videoclip must be short, and used at the core of the lesson. It must be accompanied by tasks and activities which exploit the language part contained in it.

With respect to the clip selection, it requires a rigorous effort on behalf of the teacher, since it must comply both with the pedagogic objectives and with keeping the students' motivation and interest. Therefore, the communicative function or linguistic aspect which will serve as the central part must have been previously selected by the teacher.

When authentic video is employed, duration needs to be particularly taken into account. Since it presents an exaggerated amount of information at a very advanced level, diverse authors such as (Tomalin, 1986; Garza, 1994) advocate the use of short two or three-minute clips, reaching a maximum of six minutes. Download sites and video edition programmes allow the selection of certain scenes, or its adaptation to the lesson's purpose.

As far as the video task structure is concerned, experts agree on the establishment of three main phases: previewing, while-viewing, and postviewing. During the previewing stage, learners familiarise with the task they

are going to perform, activating their mental schemes and background knowledge. Brainstorming exercises are typical of this part. During the while-viewing phase, learners are guided to focus on the information which will be necessary to perform the required tasks. Characteristic activities from this part could be fill-in the blanks, or true-or-false exercises. In the last stage, postviewing, the assimilation of the recently learnt elements is promoted. Examples of activities at this stage could be debates, role-plays, or writing exercises.

All things considered, video tasks offer a number of possibilities depending on their approach, provided that the methodological aspects that make its use efficient are respected.

With regard to teacher and student roles in authentic video tasks, their success will depend to a great extent on the teacher's creativity, training and experience when developing the aforementioned steps. Teachers will try to take to activity to the most active dimension possible, and make the students understand that the key is not in understanding every single word which is heard, but in comprehending the essence of the message. According to Talaván (2006), in a video task, learners will be doubly motivated. Firstly, they will be using an entertaining resource which is familiar to them. Secondly, in spite of working with an advanced material, they will be achieving successful communicative exchanges with a degree of comprehension.

All the aforementioned principles regarding clip selection, duration, task structure and teacher and student roles are taken into account when developing the present innovation project.

## **2.7. Subtitling as a didactic tool**

After an overview of the theoretical framework to

which the application of subtitling in the L2 classroom belongs, in this part we aim at analysing this didactic tool in depth. With such a purpose in mind, this part reviews the basic concepts of Audiovisual Translation, together with its main modalities. In a later stage, the possible relationship between the levels of competence in foreign language at a European level and the Audiovisual Translation modalities used is analysed, paying particular attention to subtitling and dubbing.

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) is a translation modality conceived in the 1930s. It could be defined as the technical method which makes possible the linguistic transfer of an audiovisual text.

According to Talaván (2013), AVT can be defined as the translation of products streamed via cinema, video, DVD, internet and television, as well as multimedia products transmitted by computers or videogame consoles. Its main peculiarity compared to other types of translation is that, in this case, the message is encoded in two different channels, namely, auditory and visual, with characteristic features: fixed or in-movement image, dialogue, noise, music, text... In other words, two codes, verbal and visual, are combined. For this purpose, two tools which provide a renewed insight into L2 learning are available: translation and audiovisual materials. Both foster the students' motivation by means of an entertaining and realistic learning. This combination requires certain translating strategies which take into account the different channels and codes, which may also vary depending on the diverse types of Audiovisual Translation.

The main Audiovisual Translation modalities are dubbing (replacement of oral dialogues by its translation in another language), subtitling (inclusion of the written translation in the image) and voice-over (a modality with resemblance to dubbing, although with no requirement to

synchronise image and sound, leaving the original soundtrack in the background).

Thanks to the increasing media accessibility for hearing and visually handicapped people, we think it is worth mentioning other more specific varieties: subtitling for the deaf, audiodescription and audiosubtitling. According to Díaz Cintas (2006: 203), subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing involves:

“(...) Not only turning the actors’ dialogues into written speech, but also keeping all the paratextual information vital for plot development and scene-setting, which is inaccessible to deaf people if merely from the soundtrack, like telephones ringing, knocks on the door, etc.”.

Audiodescription is defined as the inclusion of a track which describes the visual elements of the audiovisual product with the aim that the visually handicapped can follow the message in the most similar way to that of a non-handicapped person.

Audiosubtitling includes the reading of subtitles by a second voice which is heard together with the voice which reads the audiodescription of the visual message. This modality is the most widespread resource when the audiovisual message is displayed in a foreign language, and with traditional or interlinguistic subtitles.

Another element to be taken into account in this discipline is the concept of synchrony among the diverse channels and codes. In the case of subtitling, the addition of the subtitle must coincide with the beginnings and endings of the dialogue. The subtitle must appear on the screen when the characters start speaking, and disappear when they cease to do so. This characteristic implies that, as a general norm, subtitles are a shortened version of the oral information. This may be one of the most useful aspects of the introduction of subtitles in the L2 classroom. The divergence between the text in the subtitles and the

oral information is positive in this context. Not only does it help students to be aware of the differences between audio and text, but it also increases their interest and motivation, since they realise that they are able to understand the foreign language they are hearing beyond what is read in the subtitles (Talaván, 2013).

## **2.8. Subtitling and dubbing**

All audiovisual products, and more concretely films and series, have a very high potential in terms of transmission of values. Thus, the choice of the translation modality for those products will have an enormous impact on the reception the source culture may have in the target one. Szwarkowska (2005) argues that is convenient to focus on the best known Audiovisual Translation modalities (dubbing and subtitling) before analysing the implications derived from the choice of a certain one.

Some countries opt for dubbing their audiovisual materials, whereas others subtitle them. Some of the traditionally subtitling countries are Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Slovenia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Norway, The Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Sweden. Countries with lower economic levels, such as Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary or Czech Republic also prefer dubbing, despite its high cost. Poland and Russia are traditionally voice-over countries (Talaván, 2013).

The choice of a certain modality normally obeys to economic reasons. Nevertheless, other factors, namely, political, cultural and ideological, can play a role in this decision (Caimi, 2008).

One of the most relevant economic factors is the fact that distributors must take into account the audience preferences with a view to obtain maximum economic benefits. For instance, those viewers used to dubbing will not normally have the necessary visual skills to read



subtitles without considering them a nuisance. Likewise, countries with a long subtitling tradition have a solid industry which employs a vast number of people.

Regarding political factors, dubbing has historically been used as a form of censorship, since this was the AVT mode chosen by the dictatorial regimes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically in Spain, these historical and political reasons were the ones which forbade other options different from dubbing. During the 1930s and 1940s, institutions were created and laws were passed to regulate the entry of foreign audiovisual materials in order to censor political references contrary to the regime. After the defeat of fascisms, actions to derogate the mandatory character of dubbing were taken. Nevertheless, the dubbing tradition has been followed until our days due to economic reasons, currently remaining as the most widespread modality in Spain.

With regard to cultural and ideological factors, dubbing and subtitling are the two extremes of what has been named cultural domestication and foreignisation (Venuti, 1995). The former represents an approach to translation which aims at making the translated texts sound as natural as possible in the target language, whereas the latter embodies exactly the opposite, namely, the introduction of elements of the target culture in the translation. According to these definitions, dubbing would be a domesticating strategy since it tends to the neutralisation of foreign elements from the source text, favouring the target culture. In recent years, the domesticating tendency in Spain has led to an increasing number of cases of introduction of target culture phenomena in translated products. Rodríguez Espinosa (2001:17) observes how in numerous American or British series and cartoons a large number of references to Spanish singers, programmes or sportspeople can be

noted. On the contrary, subtitling would be closely related to foreignisation, since it emphasises the foreign nature of the audiovisual product, and its translation linked to the source culture (Szarkowska, 2005).

Fortunately, AVT trends are not as fixed as it could seem. In Spain, an increasing interest for subtitling is being observed recently. A greater education level among the population, a desire to learn foreign languages, the rise of video in the internet, multiculturalism, etc., are factors which lead to an increasing consumption of subtitled products. Nowadays, a growing number of Spanish youngsters prefer watching their favourite films or series, English-speaking in most cases, online, without waiting for their release in Spain. They download the subtitled version as soon as it is available. These subtitles are made by fans (*fansubs*), and normally contain errors and inconsistencies which are detrimental to the quality of the translated product.

The following table adapted from Díaz Cintas (2003:67) compares the main characteristics of the two most frequent AVT modalities.

<b>Dubbing</b>	<b>Subtitling</b>
Costly.	Economic.
Original dialogues are lost.	Integrity of original dialogues is respected.
Laborious and slow.	Less laborious and faster.
It attempts to be a domestic product.	It fosters language learning.
Actors' voices may be repetitive.	Original voices are maintained.
Better for illiterate and children.	Better for deaf and immigrants.
Respects original image.	Contaminates original image.
Less reduction of original text.	More reduction of original text.

Allows dialogue overlapping (several actors speaking at the same time).	Does not allow dialogue overlapping.
The viewer's attention is focused on the image.	The viewer's attention is divided among image, text, and original soundtrack.
Dialogues can be easily manipulated.	Dialogues are more difficult to manipulate.
Can contribute to the creation of more loan translations.	Does not contribute to the creation of loan translations.
Viewers can follow the story, even when they get distracted from the image.	Viewers cannot follow the story if they do not read.
Subordinated to lip synchronisation.	Subordinated to time and space constraints.
Presents a single linguistic code.	Presents two different linguistic codes simultaneously, which can be disorientating.
Exclusively used for films and series.	Can be used for any programme or audiovisual product.
Remains oral.	Turns from an oral to a written text.
Allow a greater cinematic illusion.	Can diminish cinematic illusion.

In view of the analysed features, it can be concluded that, as O'Connell already pointed out more than two decades ago (1994:364), subtitling is to acquire a greater presence and relevance in the Audiovisual Translation sphere. As he continues:

“It is clear that in the short term, at least, the future belongs to subtitling. There are many reasons why this should be so. A subtitled version is, by and large much cheaper and quicker to produce than a dubbed one. [...]. Consequently, it is likely that the larger, wealthier countries traditionally considered ‘dubbing countries’, e.g. France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Austria, etc., will gradually wean their viewers over to more and more subtitled programmes”.

This prediction seems to be being fulfilled. If this trend continues, language didactics can be benefitted greatly, since, as it will be developed in the next points, the choice of a certain AVT option has an enormous impact on the foreign language competence level among the population.

## **2.9. AVT and language competence level**

As we have explained in the previous chapter, whereas some countries are advocates for dubbing, others prefer to subtitle their audiovisual products. This division seems to be closely related to the foreign language level of their citizens. Additionally, it reflects the degree of acceptance the use of subtitles may have in the language classroom.

In 2005 the European Commission conducted a study called *Europeans and Languages* in order to analyse the degree of foreign language mastery among the European population. In one of its parts, this survey focused on discovering whether the respondents preferred watching dubbed or subtitled films. One of the main findings was that the traditionally dubbing countries, where subtitling is not a common option, tend to reject this AVT modality. By contrast, this was the favourite trend in the countries which are used to subtitles. These results may be explained by the fact that dubbing countries normally perceive subtitles as a burden.

The most relevant information coming from this survey is the realisation of the existing differences in linguistic competence among European countries, according to their preferred AVT modality. In 2012 a report by the European Commission made clear the differences between the two groups of countries. This table (Talaván, 2013) shows the percentage of polled citizens able to speak at least one language different from their mother

tongue.

<b>DUBBING</b>	DE	ES	FR	IT
<b>COUNTRIES</b>	66%	48%	51%	38%
<b>SUBTITLING</b>	BE	DK	NL	SE
<b>COUNTRIES</b>	72%	89%	94%	91%

From the aforementioned figures it can be inferred that in the countries where the use of subtitles is favoured, citizens have a higher level of linguistic command. This difference is not casual (Talaván, 2013). Diverse studies from other experts such as Koolstra et al. (2002), Díaz Cintas (2003) or Gottlieb (2004) ratify this view. Thus, it is a very relevant fact that must be taken into account when introducing subtitling as a pedagogic tool, especially in those countries with a dubbing tradition.

In the specific case of Spain, apparently “65% of Spaniards admit that they are not able to speak, read, or write in English” (Pantaleoni, 2008:28). It seems obvious that one of the historical obstacles to achieving a higher English level in our country is the fact that programmes and films are rarely broadcasted in original version. This observation is an undisputed fact when the Spanish results are compared to those of other countries, such as Sweden or Denmark.

Finally, it must be noted that in a report named *Do you consider subtitling can improve your knowledge of foreign language?* (Media Consulting Group, 2011: 18), as a general rule, European citizens agreed that subtitling could help them to improve their foreign language mastery to a great extent.

In the light of all the above, an educational strategy based on the use of subtitling can be very significant within the L2 learning field, particularly with learners from traditionally dubbing countries. In the forthcoming section an overview of the traditional approach to subtitles will be

made. This revision will give rise to a thorough description of subtitling as an active task performed by the learners themselves.

### **2.10. The pedagogical use of subtitles**

This chapter starts by summarising the potential of the traditional use of subtitles as a supporting tool for the improvement of diverse linguistic skills. Then, we provide a description of the pedagogical contributions of subtitling as an active tool (creation of subtitles by the learners). Thanks to this practical task, it is possible to work in all the dimensions of the language, by means of a dynamic and motivating approach, and a goal with tangible results.

### **2.11. Traditional approach to the didactic use of subtitles**

Before going in depth into the detailed description of the creation of subtitles by the learners, an analysis of the traditional approach to subtitles becomes necessary, since this second step also counts with the advantages of traditional subtitling.

On many occasions have subtitles been considered distracting elements in language learning. It has been argued that students rely excessively on the written aid, ignoring the audio, so subtitles become annoying rather than helpful (Danan, 2004; Díaz Cintas, 2012; Wang, 2007).

Nonetheless, diverse studies favouring the use of subtitles have debunked these myths. One of the first authors in defending the potential of subtitles was Vanderplank (1988). According to this author, instead of being a bothering element, subtitles can be beneficial particularly for those who find it harder to understand L2. Text support helps to monitor oral speech, enabling its understanding. The incorporation of subtitles contributes

to ease the anxiety the audiovisual material causes in the learners, creating a sense of security and a greater comprehension.

Additional research confirms that those who consume subtitled audiovisual products present a better degree of command in foreign or second languages. The reasons for this progress might be following:

- Watching television in a language other than one's own boosts both listening comprehension and oral expression (Baltova, 1999; 33).

- In the case of written comprehension, when subtitles are in the same language as that in which the film or documentary is projected, they also favour the improvement of this skill, apart from the aforementioned ones (Talaván, 2013).

- The fact that subtitles are in the learner's target language also facilitates lexical acquisition (Talaván, 2013).

- It is proven that audiovisual material is a motivating element when learning a language, and motivation is an essential factor for language acquisition (Diaz-Cintas , 2012; Talaván, 2013).

In the same vein, there are three didactic theories with a sociolinguistic basis which demonstrate the efficient use of subtitles: Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, Dual Coding Theory and Information Processing Theory.

Firstly, the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (Mayer, 2003) explains that individuals have a limited capacity to pay attention to the input information which is introduced by a single channel (i.e. auditory). When the information is received by more than one channel, attention capacity is boosted, since the different channels provide related information which reduces the cognitive load thanks to the connections among the different types of information.

Likewise, the Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1991) states that information is processed and stored by two different but interrelated memory systems: visual and verbal. In the case of the video, verbal information accompanied by images will be more easily remembered. In addition to that, if the support provided by text in subtitles is added, this third channel reinforces this relation in an even more positive manner.

The third and last theory is the Information Processing Theory (Wang and Shen, 2007). It explains the functioning of the memory structures, and how the first filters of retained information are sensory, specifically, visual and auditory. This fact justifies the potential of subtitles in the L2 class. Its link with these two channels increases the chances of retaining information both in the short and in the long term.

As noted by Danan (20014), “subtitling facilitates language learning by helping students visualize what they hear, especially if the input is not too far beyond their linguistic ability. Subtitling can also increase language comprehension and leads to additional cognitive benefits (...)”. Borrás and Lafayette (1994) add that it can bridge the gap between reading and listening comprehension. Therefore, subtitling helps to encourage motivation and enthusiasm among learners by means of a pleasant and pragmatic learning process.

To achieve their ultimate goal, subtitles must be used for a clear purpose, other than to read what is heard (Talaván, 2013). Teachers must know how to incorporate them in the task with a clear aim. One of its characteristic features is the reduction of information in order to achieve a correct synchronisation. This feature affects learners positively, since they realise they are able to understand the foreign language beyond the text in the subtitles.

## **2.12. Classification of subtitles**



Different language combinations in audio and text lead to the existence of diverse types of subtitles. The most widespread varieties are the following:

- Subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH): traditionally intralinguistic (in the same language which is heard in the audio). They present an enormous pedagogic potential, as they describe a series of intratextual elements (noise, music).

- Bimodal or intralinguistic subtitles: both the audio track and the subtitles are in L2. This modality is very useful when working on oral and written comprehension, and lexical acquisition.

- Traditional or standard subtitles: the audio track is in L1, where the subtitles are in L2. This is the most frequent combination when an audiovisual product is broadcasted in a foreign country. In the language field, this mode plays a supportive role for video input comprehension, being particularly useful for elementary levels.

- Reversed subtitles: this variety, characterised by the union of audio in L1 with subtitles in L2 is not as common, but can be equally valid for vocabulary building.

Most research on the field has focused on a single type of subtitles, particularly, bimodal subtitles. So is proven by studies by Vanderplank (1988), Garza (1991), Mariotti (2002), Araújo (2008), o Bravo (2010). As a general rule, the conclusions derived from them have been positive. It has been noted that subtitles are a useful tool to boost learners' confidence, develop oral and reading comprehension and lexical acquisition strategies jointly, thanks to the creation and development of connections. Nowadays, the vast bank of resources provided by the internet makes it a pedagogical treasure with an enormous potential, which must be exploited to the fullest, particularly taking into account its possible use

beyond the classroom environment.

### **2.13. Subtitling as an active didactic tool**

The mere fact of introducing subtitling in the learning environment already constitutes a novelty, as it incorporates a new and highly motivating element. Learners perform an active task that could be found in the real professional world. Moreover, in the words by Neves (2004:138): “Experience has shown that, while learning how to subtitle, students gain a greater command of language usage, in the broadest of senses and above all, find pleasure in manipulating text to achieve the best possible results”.

When these advantages are added to the aforementioned benefits regarding the pedagogical value of ICT and video, the result is a complete task with a high educational potential.

As well as counteracting the traditionally passive nature of audiovisual material, subtitling can be used to enrich vocabulary, improve oral comprehension skills, develop techniques to improve oral comprehension, familiarise with gestures and body language, gain knowledge about social behaviour, etc. (Talaván, 2013).

Likewise, this practice introduces transversal skills, such as the use of computers and the manipulation of digital files. An additional skills is the subtitling practice itself, taking into account that the pretension is not to train subtitling experts, but rather to help learners to benefit from the numerous advantages this tool can offer.

### **2.14. Characteristics of subtitling**

This chapter sets forth the characteristics inherent to the subtitling practice in order to achieve a better understanding of this technique. Secondly, some programmes which can be used for the implementation of

subtitling and subtitles in the L2 classroom will be briefly described, before continuing with a review of previous research on this subject.

The history of the use of subtitles is even prior to the origin of sound films, when they were known as intertitles (Díaz Cintas, 2001; Chaume, 2004). Since then until our days, this technique has acquired a strengthened status. In the past decades, several norms have been developed seeking criteria unification. Nowadays, there are different conventions on the correct subtitling of audiovisual material. According to Díaz Cintas (2003), these can be divided into four main categories, namely, spatial, temporal, punctuation and orthotypographic considerations.

Concerning spatial considerations, it is worth mentioning the existence of one or two lines at the lower part of the screen, unless it is occupied by essential visual information, in which case subtitles should be moved to the upper part. The characters per line oscillates from 28 to 40, being 35 the most common number.

With regard to temporal conventions, one-line subtitles should remain on the screen from approximately four seconds, whereas two-line subtitles should do it for six. There must be temporal coincidence between the insertion of subtitles and the initiation of the utterance. Camera takes and cuts should be respected to the extent possible.

As far as punctuation conventions are concerned, ellipses are used at the end of a subtitle and at the beginning of the following in order to indicate that the subtitle is incomplete and continues in the next one. Dashes are used to indicate the exchange of characters' utterances. Parentheses, brackets and semi colons are rarely used.

As for orthotypographic conventions, Díaz Cintas

(2003) and Chaume (2004) mention the omission of less relevant parts of the speech and the widespread use of acronyms, as long as they are easily recognisable.

Nevertheless, when focussing on the application of subtitling to the educational field, it must be noted that these conventions take second place, not interfering with the key learning objectives of this practice.

### **2.15. Subtitling software**

Whereas the characteristic norms of this discipline are more relevant to its professional practice, we believe it is indispensable to find a subtitling software which is appropriate for its application to the L2 learning and teaching context. There is a great variety of subtitling programmes subject to payment, however, the budget constraints educational centres usually have to face make free softwares the most feasible alternatives. Among them, we find two of them particularly relevant thanks to its user-friendly interface and easy installation: Subtitle Workshop and LvS (Learning via Subtitling).

Subtitle Workshop can be directly downloaded from its webpage. It is particularly useful for users with a basic ICT competence. Its most prominent feature is its function to identify and automatically correct orthographic errors.

LvS was specifically conceived to be applied in the language teaching and learning context. It is part of the Learning via Subtitling project, funded by the European Commission. In the words of Sokoli (2006), this programme seeks to promote L2 learning in levels from A1 to C2, according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). Its main advantage is that it allows the inclusion of full activities by the teachers. Learners can save their answers, thus working autonomously in remote virtual environments.

The aforementioned programmes are equally valid

for its implementation in the classroom. The main asset of Subtitle Worskhop is its simple and practical nature, whereas LvS has the advantage of being eminently didactic.

## **2.16. Review of previous research**

Several studies have confirmed the favourable effects of subtitles on language learning. Intralingual subtitles have been explored in the areas of listening comprehension (Garza, 1991; Huang and Eskey, 1999) motivation (Vanderplank, 1988), and vocabulary (Borrás and Lafayette, 1994; Bird & Williams, 2002; Caimi, 2006). Interlingual subtitles have been investigated in the fields of motivation (Ryan, 1998), lexical acquisition (Pavakanun & d'Ydewalle, 1992; Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999), and listening skills (Araújo, 2008). Reversed subtitles have proved to have a positive impact on comprehension (Holobow et al., 1984), and lexical acquisition (d'Ydewalle & Pavakanun, 1997).

Other proposals which combine the use of diverse subtitling modalities the works by Kikuchi (1998) with reversed and intralingual subtitles, and Davis (1998) with interlingual and intralingual, both orientated to vocabulary learning, are also worth mentioning.

Unfortunately, as far as the implementation of subtitling software and techniques is concerned, not much investigation has been conducted yet. Very few researchers or teachers have worked on the use of subtitling as a tool to improve L2 learning.

The first empirical study as such was undertaken by Williams and Thorne (2000). Longitudinal research was conducted on a group of university students with Welsh as L2 in order to test the effects of subtitling on the improvement of oral comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

In 2009 Incalcaterra undertook a study with L2 Italian students. The control group was provided with the script and context, while the experimental group had to create their own subtitles. It was demonstrated that the latter paid more attention to the input, leading to a better memorisation and comprehension.

The only study involving Spanish learners with English as L2 was conducted by Talaván in 2010. Adult B1 learners carried out the same task. Whereas one group used subtitles passively, the other was in charge of creating their own. It was proven how both subtitles and subtitling facilitated the development of oral comprehension.

The monography by Incalcaterra et al. (2011) includes a number of chapters devoted to the educational use of subtitle making. Prime among them is the study by Borghetti (2011), which suggests the implementation of interlingual subtitles to foster intercultural knowledge.

### **2.17. Theoretical conclusions**

In consideration of the current research on the topic and the cultural situation of diverse European countries, we can conclude that the L2 command in traditionally subtitling countries is neither a coincidence, nor solely the consequence of a more efficient educational system.

Subtitling and subtitles have proven to be beneficial in achieving a higher L2 competence. The aforementioned studies show how subtitles dramatically improve many of the necessary capacities and skills to master a foreign language, among other positive aspects.

Once that the theoretical principles of subtitling and subtitles have been presented and the appropriate way to make a fully efficient use of this tool has been suggested, we will go on to explain our innovative project as a practical sample to be implemented in the classroom.



### **3. AN INNOVATION PROJECT: INTERLINGUISTIC SUBTITLING TO ENHANCE ORAL COMPREHENSION**

#### **3.1. Objectives**

With the present innovation project we seek to achieve the following objectives:

- Improve the learners' oral comprehension
- Work on the ability to summarise
- Implement ICT in the L2 classroom
- Introduce communicative situations with real dialogues in the L2 classroom
- Bring cinema within the reach of learners
- Enhance autonomous learning

#### **3.2. Description**

The present innovation project is composed of two stages. In the first stage we seek to improve oral comprehension by means of real audiovisual materials (a sitcom) with the aid of the original script, since audiovisual clips including humorous elements increase motivation in L2 learning dramatically. As stated by Ur (1984: 30):

“Visuals have an important function as aids to learning, simply because they attract the students' attention and encourage them to focus on the subject in hand. [...]. If this something is conspicuous, colourful, humorous, dramatic or in motion -so much the better: striking and stimulating visual aids are likely to heighten students' motivation and concentration”.

The way to measure the success of this first stage is a summary of the main ideas written in Spanish.

In the second stage, learners work on subtitling actively, introducing the subtitles in the clip they have viewed previously, with the support of both the original script and their summaries.



The addition of traditional subtitles is the most common form of subtitling. These subtitles are based on interlinguistic translation, which has been reappraised in recent years thanks to its mediation role between languages and cultures (Vanderplank, 1998; Garza, 1991).

### 3.3. Organisation

The sessions are structured as follows:

First session	Previewing First viewing with audio, content hypothesis Second viewing with audio, hypothesis confirmation
Second session	Third viewing with the script, comprehension Summarising
Third session	Postviewing Translation/subtitling
Fourth session	Subtitling

This design has been adapted from Lertola (2012: 66). This structure has considered to be suitable for this project since it includes the previewing, viewing and postviewing parts indicated in the chapter *Strategies for a successful implementation of video resources* (see page 21).

### 3.4. Target learners

The present project is to be implemented in the 1<sup>st</sup> of Baccaureate classroom, with a linguistic competence in the region of B1, according to the CEFR.

1<sup>st</sup> of Baccaureate has been selected for being the most appropriate year, both in terms of language level and maturity. Nevertheless, the flexible nature of this tool would allow its adaptation to diverse situations and educational levels, presenting all the advantages mentioned in previous chapters.

It is conceived to be implemented during four sessions in each term, preferably at the end of them, due to the ludic nature of the task.

### **3.5. Theoretical basis**

Regarding the basic structure of a video clip-centred task, it is necessary to prepare activities which guide and accompany its viewing. According to diverse authors (Stempleski, 1990; Rost, 2002; Sherman, 2003), three phases can be mentioned in the structure of these tasks, namely, previewing, viewing and postviewing.

As was pointed out in the first part of this Master's Thesis, the pedagogical approach used is based on Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Learning and Postmethod due to its active, communicative and flexible nature.

The innovation in the present project lies in the fact that no prior practical experiences involving the creation of subtitles by Secondary learners have been conducted.

### **3.6. Development**

After viewing the clip on three occasions and reading the script, learners can take notes of the main ideas for a better summary. Students are provided with a sheet with the instructions of the activity, where they will have enough space to include their answer. A summary of the main ideas from the video clip in Spanish is chosen as a tool which allows to focus on the general plot, and not on finding specific information, as required in closed questions (Talaván, 2013). In the instructions learners are encouraged to include as much information as possible. The reason for choosing their L1 as the language in which the summary must be written is to prevent any kind of interference from other skills (Buck, 2001).

By using this tool to assess oral comprehension, it is the learners who have control over the task, deciding which elements to include in the summary of the main ideas. By not including true/false or multiple choice questions, students can assume a more autonomous role. Summarising is a basic skill, which can be beneficial either in their target language and their mother tongue. Nevertheless, before performing this task, it could be pertinent to familiarise the learners with synthesis, note-taking, or key words strategies.

In the second part of this innovation project, subtitling is performed by the learners as a linguistic and communicative task, in which transversal strategies, such as the use of ICT tools, come into play. Regarding the technical conventions inherent to this discipline, the learners do not receive any instructions on them, but they are indicated to imitate the subtitles they see in films and series, with a maximum of two lines. Were this tool to be used repeatedly in the classroom, a guideline to the technical features of subtitling could be introduced.

As far as task design is concerned, Anderson and Lynch (1988) mention three possibly problematic factors to be taken into account: amount of information, timing and difficulty.

The amount of information is reduced due to the existence of simultaneous channels of input, which act supplementarily.

Regarding timing, a starting planning is made. Nonetheless, it can be modified according to the sessions development.

With regard to difficulty, learners can encounter either linguistic or technical difficulties. The speed of the characters' utterances, compared to the already-prepared audiovisual materials, can constitute the main obstacle

learners must face. Notwithstanding, it can be compensated with the visual aid which images provide.

With respect to subtitling software, Secondary students are digital natives, so the use of ICT should not pose problems for them. Nonetheless, were technical difficulties encountered in the first session, the teacher could resort to the creation of time-edited subtitles, so that students only had to introduce the words to complete them.

### **3.7. Resources**

The resources used are the subtitling software Subtitle Workshop and the video clips downloaded from YouTube. The choice of the subtitling programme was made owing to its friendly-user interface and its flexibility of use in face-to-face lessons, in which the teacher can guide the task development freely. Learners will only have to open the programme, upload the video and open a new subtitling file. The script is retrieved from the online script repository Springfield Springfield. The video is selected from YouTube and converted with A Tube Catcher. If necessary, it can be edited with Windows Movie Maker.

In words by Gruba (2004), video clips are very appropriate resources in L2 learning, since they incorporate aspects of non-verbal communication, which audio texts lack. According to Buck (2001): "If the strategy is to focus on what is unique to listening, then it becomes more important to use texts with a range of realistic oral features" (2001:252). For the aforementioned reasons, and due to the communicative nature of this innovation proposal, authentic video clips are selected, since they present a vast number of typically oral features.

The video clips have been selected from the American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. Authors such as Rost (2002) or Talaván (2013) mention it as one of the

favourite series to learn English among L2 learners. They belong to Chapter 22 Season 1 (see Annex I), Chapter 1 Season 5 (see Annex II) and Chapter 17 Season 7 (see Annex III). They were selected according to the following criteria: appropriateness in terms of language and contents, and the fact that the scenes did not require previous knowledge of the plot.

As far as video clips are concerned, as already noted in the chapter *Strategies for a successful implementation of video resources* in the theoretical framework, it is highly advisable to select short clips with a maximum duration of six minutes. The clips we have selected are around 4 minutes 30 seconds. According to Buck (2001), each clip must be viewed at least twice, in order to counteract the difficulty authentic input presents, since the fact that students are not in a comfortable environment can affect their performance.

### **3.8. Expected results**

Among the main implications of Task-Based Learning (fundamental theoretical approach to which this pedagogical innovation belongs), it helps learners to progress in L2 competence by means of activities based on the use of video (viewing and summary of the main ideas), and in freer activities (subtitling). Thus, students are provided with the tools to undertake self-learning projects, both inside and outside the classroom environment.

The contact with authentic audiovisual materials enhances their oral comprehension skills. The fact of performing the task in a playful environment, similar to the one in which they watch series and films in their free time, increases their motivation, as well as frees them from the stress listening comprehension exercises usually exert on them. The written script we provide students with serves

as an aid, while further improving the identification between written words and their pronunciation, and allowing the acquisition of vocabulary in context.

A further implication derived from AVT and the creation of subtitles is the enhancement of mediation skills in the classroom. When translating a script, a source language text to which a third person has no access is being reformulated (Talaván, 2013). Furthermore, learners are able to understand language from the message construction in terms of communicative competence. It is a task with an immediate and tangible result, which helps students to familiarise with social and cultural elements, while simultaneously building on their linguistic competence from an active and practical approach.



#### 4. DISCUSSION

Spanish learners do not achieve the expected L2 competence level at the end of their Secondary education stage (Corpas y Madrid, 2009). Their results are inferior to those in other European countries such as Sweden or Denmark. This fact can be explained by a great variety of reasons. Nevertheless, one of the most significant ones could be a lower degree of exposure to L2 outside the classroom, since these countries with a greater language level are traditionally subtitles (Talaván, 2011).

Additionally, most Spaniards declare not to be able to express themselves in English either when speaking or when writing (Pantaleoni, 2008). This Master's Thesis has given evidence of how L2 teaching-learning theories such as the Communicative Approach can contribute to tackle some of the problems which generate this lack of L2 mastery.

The Communicative Approach advocates for the use of authentic materials in the classroom, as opposed to traditional trends, which preferred using eminently didactic materials. The main problem posed by real materials is that fact that beginner L2 learners may find difficulties when following a conversation or speech which has not been linguistically adapted. In order to overcome this obstacle, and to include real materials from the start of the learning process, authors such as (Talaván, (2012) or Díaz Cintas (2012) recommend the use of authentic materials for two reasons. First, students come into contact with real language from the start. Second, if they manage to understand it, at least partly, they will feel more motivated and less anxious when taking part in communicative situations in real life.

Regarding the use of subtitles, the present innovation proposal they have been included actively, being elaborated by the learners from the Task-Based



Approach. According to it, students are the main protagonists of the learning process because they act as real subtitlers.

Encouraging learners to watch films and television in original version could contribute to compensate for that lack of L2 in real context that Spanish learners need.

With this objective in mind, the present innovation proposal for the English classroom is suggested. Instead of thinking of films and series as a pastime or a prize when students behave well, they must be understood as an opportunity to enhance skills such as oral comprehension or vocabulary acquisition.

As we have mentioned in the theoretical framework, several learning theories justify the implementation of subtitles and subtitling as a pedagogical resource. Nonetheless, it is eventually the teacher who decides how and when to introduce them, since they know the students' level and personal preferences. Teachers must reflect on the most adequate subtitling modality for their students and on the active or passive approach to them, according to the skills that are to be improved.

Lastly, we have noted that there is a lack of authentic materials which are appropriate to the learners' needs. The present project proves that, despite involving additional work for the teacher, finding them is not impossible. The creation of subtitles by the learners is an innovative and efficient method for L2 learning. The existence of free subtitling software and the great availability of video clips on the internet make this task feasible.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

We live in a society in which the number of ICT users and audiovisual product consumers has dramatically increased, and will continue to do so in the years to come.

Specifically, in the L2 teaching and learning field it has been proven that there are as many valid methods as there are learners, and that traditionally despised resources, such as translation, present an enormous potential.

In today's world, language mastery, and more precisely, English as a lingua franca, becomes essential. In a country like ours, with dubbing tradition, L2 competence is much lower than that in others where subtitling is the most widespread AVT modality. Thus, it can be assumed that the creation of subtitles by the learners will contribute to the development of linguistic skills such as oral comprehension or vocabulary acquisition in an efficient and motivating manner.

The present Master's Thesis has sought to achieve several objectives. Firstly, we have presented the theoretical framework which provides the basis for an intervention proposal in the Secondary classroom. We have commented on the methodological approaches recommended for an adequate implementation of subtitling in the classroom, together with the main features of video and ICT, two elements which go hand in hand with this tool. In order to provide a broader picture of this discipline, we have explained the meaning and origins of AVT. We have expounded the subtitling versus dubbing debate, together with the implications the choice of each AVT modality has on the citizens' linguistic command. We have provided an overview of subtitling as a pedagogical tool. Finally, we have included a review on previous research on subtitles and subtitling and their impact on language skills.

This theoretical framework has served as the basis to make an innovation proposal to be implemented in the 1<sup>st</sup> of Baccalaureate classroom. This video-centred task involves the use of real audiovisual materials. In its first phase, oral comprehension is enhanced by viewing a video and summarising the main ideas. This pre-task gives rise to the main phase, in which the learners have to create the subtitles for the clip, with the aid of the original script and their summaries. The implementation of ICT, together with the introduction of real communicative situations, make our proposal a fully pedagogical task.

This practical sample could serve as an example of the many contributions subtitling and subtitles can make to L2 learning. We know that there is neither a magic formula for L2 learning, nor a single way of implementing subtitles in the classroom. Numerous factors, such as the students' level or specific skills or contents to be fostered, must be taken into account.

As far as the introduction of subtitling as a pedagogical tool in the L2 classroom is concerned, teachers may face some difficulties, namely, the lack of availability of already prepared materials, need for technical expertise, or copyright-derived problems. Nonetheless, these disadvantages can be solved for the most part, and their benefits far outweigh them, both in number and in relevance.

### **5.1. Further research**

As can be observed, subtitles and subtitling are a tool with a great potential yet to be exploited. Since the nature of subtitling itself is innovative, further research in the future should be carried out on the possible impact of the use of subtitling on other skills, such as oral interaction and production, reading comprehension, or sociocultural competence. Possible pedagogical application of other

AVT modalities, such as subtitles for the deaf, audio description or dubbing could also be explored.

In view of the fact that there is no definite or global answer to L2 teaching and learning, as teachers, we must continue researching and suggesting solutions for the immense diversity of learners' profiles, needs and circumstances. Overcoming difficulties will be necessary to gain knowledge. Intervention proposals such as the present one represent a step forward in this discipline. This project deserves to be continued in order to address the broad spectrum of pedagogical possibilities subtitled and other AVT modalities can provide to the L2 learning field.



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