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Didactic Subtitling in the Foreign Language (FL) Classroom. Improving Language Skills through Task-Based Practice and Form-Focused Instruction (FFI): Background Considerations.

1. Introduction: An Overview of Didactic Subtitling in FLL

Subtitle creation in Foreign Language Learning (FLL) is a relatively new area of investigation, which has gained considerable popularity over the last few years. A distinction has been made (Talaván 2010) between subtitle use (subtitles as a support) and subtitle creation (subtitling as a task). This paper is concerned with the latter, namely the addition of subtitles onto a video clip carried out by the learners themselves. Since this audiovisual (AV) practice is specifically referred to in the context of language pedagogy, the term didactic subtitling will be used throughout this paper. From the 1980s to the present day, a plethora of experimental and pedagogical studies have addressed subtitle use in the fields of FLL, Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), Second Language Acquisition (SLA), psycholinguistics (e.g. using eye-tracking) and Audio-Visual Translation (AVT). In contrast, very few studies have dealt with subtitle creation specifically and, so far, the vast majority come from the AVT literature. Traditionally, subtitle creation has been of two main types: standard and reverse. In standard subtitling, learners watch and listen to the FL AV text and translate the message into native language subtitles. In reverse subtitling, learners watch and listen in their

native language and produce FL subtitles. To date, a number of publications have addressed didactic subtitling (Kantz 2015; Neves 2004; Sokoli 2015; Talaván 2013; Williams and Thorne 2000). Some specifically investigated the creation of standard (Incalaterra-McLoughlin and Lertola 2011, 2014 and 2015; Lertola 2012; Lopriore and Ceruti 2015; Talaván 2011) or reverse subtitles (Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2014; Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera 2015).

In these studies, the act of creating subtitles has been found to facilitate retention and promote vocabulary acquisition (Lertola 2012), while providing the opportunity to practise reading ability and listening comprehension alongside the development of transferrable skills such as digital literacy (Incalaterra-McLoughlin and Lertola 2015, 56). Didactic subtitling can also enhance productive abilities such as spelling and summarising, thus counteracting the passivity of other language learning activities (Sokoli 2006) and reinforce both student FL writing and translation skills (Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera 2015). Didactic subtitling constitutes a functional and interactive exercise allowing peers to create together or share their work (Talaván 2010), thus promoting collaboration while also fostering learner autonomy in a distance-learning context (Talaván 2013). It involves a series of micro-activities such as note-taking and information prioritisation (Sokoli 2006) and it challenges students to find synonyms and condense the message (Lertola 2015), thus bolstering pragmatic competence (Lopriore and Ceruti 2015). Moreover, it produces a tangible result that resembles that of a

professional subtitler in the real world (Sokoli et al. 2011), it allows to use authentic material in a cultural context (Williams and Thorne 2000), thus offering opportunities for intercultural language education (Borghetti and Lertola, 2014), it increases language awareness and fosters metalinguistic reflection (Lopriore and Ceruti 2015), and finally it creates emotionally charged activities that provide a motivational stimulus (Incalcaterra-McLoughlin and Lertola 2014). The EU has recognised such potential and supported a number of projects aimed at spurring the use of video applications for class-based language activities. Examples are Divis [i] (Digital Video Streaming and Multilingualism), LeViS [ii] (Learning Via Subtitling) and ClipFlair [iii]. The introduction and noticeable increase in the use of these resources demonstrates that the integration of AV activities in FLT is already underway, and highlights the need for a clearer positioning of such activities with respect to theoretical concepts addressed in the FLL and SLA literature.

2. Scope, Aims and Structure

There are numerous ways of integrating audiovisuals in the FL classroom. Some practices do not include translation. For example, students could be asked to add subtitles directly in the FL to a video with music and background noises but no Source Language (SL) dialogues in order to describe what they see in a scene. Some AVT types [iv] do not include the presence of subtitles, e.g. dubbing, narration and voiceover. For a summary of possible learning

activities involving audiovisuals, see Zabalbeascoa et al. (2012, 21-22). In the studies and platforms mentioned above, a number of AV texts were employed, such as TV series, ads, documentaries, animations, etc. Different learner characteristics were addressed, such as age groups (young or adult) and proficiency levels (from CEFR A1 to C2). Different types of institutions (private or public, school or university, undergraduate or postgraduate) and types of classes (e.g. small or large groups, mixed-origin or same language background) were involved. Finally, different types of instructional delivery, such as face-to-face or distance learning were exploited. This paper aims at broadening this picture by appraising some issues of theoretical interest related to using subtitling as a FLL tool. In doing so, some ideas for activities and class structure will be mentioned in passing. However, the main goal of this paper is not to present a methodological proposal, but to provide a foundation upon which such proposals can be grounded. Within its length constraints, this article constitutes a first attempt to situate didactic subtitling in the SLA and FLL literature by considering a number of theories and recent developments in these fields that can inform the subsequent design of subtitling activities. Since this is an integration of findings coming from the AVT studies reviewed above and from the SLA literature, the scope will not be restricted a priori only to a specific AVT text, type of learner or proficiency level, yet these will be called upon when relevant. Inter-lingual subtitling, both standard and reverse, will be at the centre of the discussion, while other AV types and sub-types (e.g. dubbing, intra-lingual subtitling[v])

will be touched upon where relevant. Moreover, and importantly, the focus will be on foreign rather than second language contexts. In the former, language learning happens in the native language environment of the student; in the latter, it happens in the Target Language (TL) environment. For this reason, the more general abbreviation FL, rather than L2, will be used.

As mentioned above, Talaván (2010) highlighted the difference between subtitles as a support and subtitling as a task, and so indirectly posed the question of why and how adding subtitles to authentic video material can be considered a task applicable to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches. The first part of this paper takes a closer look at Task-Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT), provides a definition of tasks and, in doing so, examines how the subtitling task can be exploited within such an approach. In the second part, some constructs from SLA and cognitive psychology will be introduced in order to describe the learning process and assess what the subtitling task can and cannot provide in an FL classroom setting. Lastly, the documented shift from purely meaning-based to form-based approaches to FLL and FLT will be addressed, and an argument for the integration of didactic subtitling and Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) will be put forward.

3. Defining Tasks

Several definitions of task have been given in SLA literature. A useful starting point is Skehan's definition of a task as "an activity in which meaning is primary, there is some sort of relationship to the real world, task completion has some priority, and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome" (1996, 1). A task is an activity that necessarily requires pragmatic processing of language, where learner attention is primarily focused on meaning. Tasks are concerned with the use of language in context, which resembles, directly or indirectly, the communicative processes involved in real life. Examples include making an airline reservation or filling in an official form. In a task, the student chooses what linguistic resources to use to achieve the communicative goal at hand, making any learning that might take place incidental rather than intentional (Ellis 2003, 2-3). Therefore, a task usually requires participants to see themselves as language users rather than learners. However, the extent to which they will pay attention to meaning when performing a task will vary, as they may momentarily pay attention to form and therefore adopt the role of language learners rather than users (2003, 5); for example, when they look a word up in the dictionary. A task can be designed without the practice of a specific structure in mind (unfocused) or with the aim of eliciting a particular linguistic feature (focused). Even in focused tasks, however, this feature should not be mentioned explicitly in the rubric of the task (2003, 16) and consequently may or may not result in being used. A task can therefore constrain the linguistic forms to be used but cannot specify them, leaving the final choice to the learner.

4. Didactic Subtitling as a Task

Drawing on previous work, Ellis (2003, 9-10) lists six key criteria a task must satisfy. Each will be analysed in turn, to assess how and why the act of subtitling in itself can be considered a communicative task.

(1) A task is a workplan for learner activity that involves teaching materials. It specifies what learners have to do, yet it is relatively unstructured so that they can choose what linguistic resources to use.

The subtitling activities used in FLT usually involve a lesson plan set by the teacher, who selects the relevant teaching materials (including the video clips to be subtitled) and gives at least a minimal set of instructions to the students, e.g. to translate the clip into their native or foreign language. Often activities are relatively unstructured, as the students choose the linguistics forms to render the source text (ST) message. Not only that, but learners can also have control of how to watch (when to pause, re-listen, slow down the video) and how to work on the task. For instance, some students tend to print a transcript whenever one is available, while others work directly in the subtitling platform.

(2) A task must have a primary focus on meaning and *incorporate a 'gap'* for the students to fill, be it an information, opinion or reasoning gap.

Much has been said about the polysemiotic dimension of AV media and how it affects communication of meaning in AVT. More than 25 years ago now, Delabastita pointed out that film translation is "not just a matter of language conversion" (1990, 99). From his well-known analysis of the "semiotic nature of the total film sign" (1990, 101) to Lambert and Delabastita's (1996) classification of how semiotic shifts between verbal and non-verbal channels affect meaning in AVT, passing through Gottlieb's (1994) idea of diagonal translation, one thing stands uncontested: message conveyance has always been pivotal to the act of translating. Subtitling, as a form of AVT, is an inherently meaning-centred activity. Moreover, in didactic subtitling there is a clear information gap between the AV source and the target, which is left to the students to close by transferring multimodal content into subtitles through their own language resources. This criterion is of particular relevance to the act of subtitling and will be revisited later (section 5.3).

(3) A task involves real-world processes of language use.

During the subtitling activity, learners will take on the role of a subtitler, to some extent reproducing the real operating conditions of professional work. When faced with comprehensible input, students work at what has been called the i + 1 level (Krashen 1982): they will understand the gist of the message and most of the language, but they will also encounter words and expressions they are not familiar with. They may look up words in a dictionary, do terminology research on a topic and use support materials such as glossaries.

If translation cannot be fitted around the space and time constraints typical of the AV medium, they may have to look for alternative ways of conveying a piece of information, for example through synonyms or sentence restructuring. These are all operations professional subtitlers also carry out on a daily basis.

Different tasks will have varying degrees of impact on what learners are going to do when communicating in the FL outside the classroom. The act of subtitling per se may not have the same immediate real-world relevance as the act of asking for or giving directions to a certain location; when in the foreign country, students are more likely to need to request and understand directions to a supermarket than to find themselves subtitling a clip. Nevertheless, the language produced through subtitling can very much reflect that of a real situation. In fact, a video excerpt could be selected precisely because it contains an exchange where directions are asked for by a character and provided by another. Furthermore, the presence of the moving images adds authenticity and memorability to the communicative situation. In fact, the AV input provides a much closer experience to an immersion situation than many other classroom-based activities. I would argue that, from this point of view, subtitling is less artificial than, for example, a spot-the-difference task (where one has to determine whether two pictures are the same or different) and certainly than a fill-in-the-gaps exercise, an operation that learners are highly unlikely to perform outside the classroom[vi]. Not only can didactic subtitling deploy the same meaning-making processes of a profession

that exists in the real world, but it can also very much resemble naturally occurring situations leaners are likely to experience outside the classroom.

 (4) A task does not exclusively involve oral production skills.

Although much of the literature on tasks has concentrated on oral skills (Bygate et al. 2001), Willis and Willis (2007) note that a task can involve any of the four language skills. A task may entail receptive or productive skills, produce an oral or written text and involve monologic or dialogic language use. Didactic subtitling requires students to create a written text. As we have seen above, it was found to help towards the improvement of productive abilities such as overall writing skills, be the output in the FL or SL. Where the foreign input is in the audio (standard subtitling) the subtitling task also entails practice of FL listening comprehension skills (Danan 2004). Where the native language input is in the audio (reverse subtitling) it is FL production skills such as composition, reformulation and spelling that will be practiced (Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2014).

(5) A task requires a number of cognitive processes.

Alongside language manipulation, a task involves cognitive operations such as reasoning and perceptual skills. Auditory and visual perception are crucial perceptual skills in audiovisual processing. However, their conceptualisation as separate components is artificial. In fact, speech perception is a natural multisensory process where both the auditory properties of the speech stream and the visual articulatory attributes of the talker – where available – are

automatically attended to (Erber 1979; McGurk and MacDonald 1976). This is also the case during subtitling tasks. When the FL is perceived aurally (standard mode), learners have to combine their listening skills (including the ability to understand intonation, dialects, accents and singing) with their ability to read and interpret signs from the visual input (including character information, movements, proxemics, as well as camera techniques such as close-ups or panoramic views). This integration of auditory and visual perception skills is also crucial when the AV ST is in the native language of the learners (reverse mode) as it will affect and inform the FL output they produce. Ellis maintains that tasks also involve the structuring and restructuring of the FL (2003, 7), which is precisely what, through concept elaboration and problem solving skills, is achieved during the creation of FL reverse subtitles.

Prabhu (1987, 46) discusses reasoning as a thought process involving inferences and perception of patterns and relationships, where deductions, connections and evaluations are made between new and old pieces of information. AV comprehension skills and reasoning abilities are linked during the subtitling task. Within the rich semiotic architecture of the AV text, deductive skills, connections between ST and TT, content selection and situation evaluation are needed both to process and produce the FL, for example when learners must go beyond the denotative meaning of words in order to understand or render the affective meaning of an utterance.

(6) A task has a clear communicative outcome.

Finally, a task should have a defined outcome other than the simple use of the FL. The outcome determines whether the task has been completed. For example, a spot-the-difference task would result in the students having a list of differences between the items compared, which constitutes a clear outcome (Ellis 2003, 8). In didactic subtitling, a defined outcome signals whether the task has been completed, namely the production of the subtitled clip. This is a piece of learner language that seeks to communicate a source message to a target audience, so that the latter can have an experience of the AV text equivalent to that of the originally intended audience. Thus, not only will the students produce a tangible, semi-professional result, they will also achieve a well-defined goal by enabling viewers who do not understand the original language to access the AV clip.

As we have seen, subtitle creation has specific characteristics that make it a task suitable for use in the communicative language classroom. The position of didactic subtitling in TBLT and the consideration of why this activity can be considered a task, however, indirectly call for consideration of what features of this task are most relevant to the learning process. We will therefore now explore to what extent and in which ways didactic subtitling can be used to foster language learning in classroom contexts.

5. The Role of the Subtitling Task in the Learning Process: Reappraisal of Form

5.1. Noticing, 'Form' and FLL

Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990 and 2001) proposes that noticing, a concept closely related to attention, may often be a necessity for input to become intake, i.e. be internalised by the learner and increase its chances of being acquired. So, although some learning may occur without attention, most often focused attention on both forms and meaning is necessary. Since language features are often "infrequent, non-salient and communicatively redundant" (Laufer and Girsai 2008, 697) they may easily be disregarded by the learner unless some attention is focused on their form. In fact, in a still predominantly communicative era, language researchers have been questioning for years the effectiveness of entirely communicative approaches to FLT. Many support the idea that, if successful language learning is to be achieved, some FFI is needed (Doughty and Williams, 1998; Laufer 2006; Loewen 2005; Long 1991). Ellis defines FFI as "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form" (2001, 1-2), where 'form' is used in a broad acceptation, intended as any phonological, lexical, grammatical and pragmatic language aspect focused on during instruction. Therefore, the term includes the function that a particular form fulfils (Laufer 2006, 150). An example would be knowing that the English verbal form –ing, when non-

nominalised, usually indicates a continuous action. FFI has been further categorised into Focus on Form (FonF) and Focus on FormS (FonFs). In the former, learners' attention is drawn to linguistic elements during a communicative task, be it comprehension- or production-based (Ellis 2001). In the latter, learners' attention is drawn to linguistic elements through "teaching discrete linguistic structures in separate lessons in a sequence determined by syllabus writers" (Laufer and Girsai 2008, 695). FonF can be incidental, if it arises from student need, or planned, if it arises from task design (Laufer 2005, 224). Several scholars maintain that through meaning and communication alone, students might not be able to achieve native-like levels of accuracy (Loewen 2005), native-like speech (Tschirner 2001) or grammatical competence (Laufer 2006). Evidence for this comes from the realisation that some grammatical structures are not acquired even after years of exposure to comprehensible input in purely communicative situations (Ellis 2001, 5). Tschirner argues that native-like oral production "may occur only when the learner is directed towards the linguistic form in addition to the meaning it encodes" (2001, 308). From a psychological perspective, Sharwood Smith (1993) also argues that both form and meaning must be perceived and processed simultaneously if learner interlanguages are to develop. To do so, he suggests that explicit attention should be drawn to formal properties of the input (which he calls 'input enhancement').

5.2. Didactic Subtitling and Attention to Form

Intrinsic to the subtitling task, there are specific time-, space- and picture-related constraints such as minimum and maximum permanence time on screen, maximum number of lines of text and visual ties to the image. The ST often cannot be translated verbatim, naturally requiring reformulating, summarising, sometimes reducing or even omitting information that is not essential to the core message. These technical constraints force learners to prioritise the message and make subtitling an inherently meaning-centred activity, leading the students to use language pragmatically rather than displaying their language knowledge, to engage in an act of communication rather than just practising one pre-selected item, as it happens in some traditional exercises and drills. However, while students primarily focus on meaning, they have to concentrate on form too, at least to a certain extent, in order to render said meaning in the translation. In standard subtitling, students have to understand and break down both the FL speech stream and the rest of the multisemiotic content in order to establish what to prioritise and how to transfer the core message into appropriate forms of their native language. In reverse subtitling, understanding the speech stream is not an issue since the auditory input is in the students' native language. Therefore, students will be able to concentrate their efforts on integrating meaning from linguistic and non-linguistic sources, evaluating and prioritising this information, in order to choose appropriate FL forms to create a coherent piece of FL writing that respects the core message of the original. Students do all the above during the communicative task, while they are mainly concerned with understanding and

manipulating messages. From this standpoint, therefore, the act of subtitling can be considered a form of FonF. And indeed, in their comparative study, Laufer and Girsai (2008) treat translation as a form of contrastive FFI. One of the advantages of having students create standard or reverse subtitles is that the contrastive differences between SL and TL are naturally highlighted in the process of filling that information gap between AV text and subtitles. Through this form of highly contextualised translation, students can be quite inventive and have to figure out things for themselves. This need to take initiative and use their own judgement to link the semiotic codes is likely to increase their awareness of the language. In fact, translation, fiercely criticised for decades in FLT theories (Cook, 2010), has started to be reconsidered precisely because it has been shown to increase language awareness and provide an opportunity for consciousness raising (see, amongst others, Butzkamm 2003; Scheffler, 2013). If, from a pedagogical perspective, we consider translation as a continuum along which different classroom activities can be placed, then translating disconnected, artificial, stand-alone sentences that bear no relevance to learners' life (like those used in the much-criticised Grammar Translation method) sits at the diametrically opposite end from translating complex multisemiotic meanings through the creation and addition of subtitles to a piece of rich, authentic video. AVT tasks offer plenty of opportunities for consciousness raising, which should make them a favourable candidate in applied studies aimed at shedding light on the role of the mother tongue in the FL classroom.

5.3. Didactic Subtitling and Production

Another concept that is linked to noticing and relevant to subtitling as a task is that of 'pushed output'. In his Output Hypothesis, Swain (1985) proposed that noticing the gap between their linguistic resources and a linguistic problem they need to manage pushes learners to look for the adequate knowledge needed to fill that gap. The resulting production is pushed output, which, for Swain, constitutes part of the language learning process. Indeed, translation can be considered a form of pushed output (Laufer and Girsai 2008). When adding subtitles to a rich AV text, students naturally focus on the gap between what the AV text is communicating and their own language resources, which they need to stretch and manipulate in order to get the meaning across. Moreover, closing the gap means generating language, so pushed output is closely related to the process of production. Typically, the enhancement of 'active' production skills, such as speaking and writing, is more problematic for learners to master than 'passive' ones (Laufer and Girsai 2008). This is the case both because more in-depth knowledge is required to use a word or a structure correctly (pronunciation, spelling, register, different types of meanings, syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships) and because learners tend to encounter language items receptively more often than they get to practice them actively (Laufer 2005, 231). AVT tasks requiring learners to produce the FL, such as reverse subtitling, monolingual FL subtitling and revoicing practices, can therefore present a particularly fruitful addition to language courses aimed at enabling

learners to make active use of language in communicative situations. In addition, words that are acquired productively, i.e. by means of active language use (be it speaking or writing) are less prone to be forgotten than those acquired passively (Schmitt 1998), providing a further argument for the use of didactic subtitling in FLT as means of improving productive acquisition of language features.

5.4. Active and Passive Skills in Didactic Subtitling

It should be pointed out that dichotomous concepts such as 'passive' and 'active' skills, although commonly used in SLA, do not provide the best fit to the audiovisual environment, where listening and reading – traditionally considered passive activities – can indeed be active (Zabalbeascoa et al. 2012). Nor can didactic subtitling be satisfactorily categorised within the finite categories of listening, reading, writing and speaking. There clearly seems to be more to it than development of linguistic competence. In fact, more than ten years ago, Gambier already acknowledged that subtitling can be considered translating only "if translation is not viewed as purely a word-for-word transfer" (2003, 179) and takes into account the multimodality of AV communication. Although this terminology is used herein for ease of reference to the SLA literature and in order to make clear what is being referred to in widely understood FLL terms, I support Incalcaterra-McLoughlin and Lertola's (2014, 72) argument that the traditional four-skill model may be too restrictive when multimodal meaning is conveyed through

the AV medium. Zabalbeascoa et al. (2012, 21-22) attempted a solution by introducing the concept of AV literacy and proposed six AV-specific skills: AV-watching, AV-listening, AV-reading, AV-speaking, AV-writing and AV-production. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to address these skills directly, they appropriately highlight the need to update linguistic models and classifications in light of the complex set of semiotic relationships that inform multimodal AV communication (see Zabalbeascoa 2008).

5.5. Didactic Subtitling and Interaction

Within his Output Hypothesis, Swain (1993) also highlighted how, in order to be most useful, student production needs to happen in a meaning-focused environment and through interactional exchanges. For Gass (1997) FL conversational interaction is considered the basis for FL grammar development. And indeed, interaction has been found to improve second language development (Ohta 2000). One of the most evident drawbacks of the subtitling task seems to be that it is not interactional per se, since it typically involves only the learner and the AV text. This need not be so, however. The great potential of the AV medium also lies in its versatility. The subtitling task could be modified so that students engage in group work, which is considered central to task-based teaching (Ellis 2003, 253). For example, students could create subtitles in pairs as to produce a single, final, agreed-upon translation. If one looks beyond didactic subtitling, other opportunities for both oral and written interaction arise, e.g. through revoicing

activities (e.g. two students dub a dialogue) or through chatroom-based exchanges revolving around an AV text (Arslanyilmaz and Pedersen 2010). While productive skills practised through didactic subtitling are valuable, and should find a more stable place in the language classroom, the value of other tasks, in particular oral conversation, remains a given. Since oral tasks are crucial to language development, students should still be allowed ample time to communicate interactionally, especially in FL rather than SL contexts, where classroom hours may be the only opportunity they have to practise the FL.

5.6 Didactic Subtitling and Multiple Exposures

Despite the encouraging findings in the AVT literature reviewed above, one must bear in mind that, as cognitive psychology literature teaches us, elaborate processing alone is unlikely to result in acquisition. New information – even rich, authentic input such as the one provided by audiovisuals – is unlikely to leave a lasting trace in memory if not frequently reactivated (Hulstijn 2001, 256). In fact, some research in AVT and language teaching has already highlighted the need to create classroom activities that ensure multiple exposures (Bueno 2009, 320). If didactic subtitling activities are designed to extend over more than one class, they allow for reactivation of previously learnt words and structures. For example, a video clip could be introduced and the subtitling task could be started in a first class (first exposure). The students could then be asked to complete the task at home

(second exposure). Finally, in the following class, the clip could be watched again, the task could be revisited and reinforcement activities and exercises could be carried out (third exposure). This structure would seem to work best if the classes were some time apart. If classes were close together, however, the structure could still be adapted, for example by removing the homework phase. Alternatively, reactivation can be promoted by presenting new clips that contain 'old' language students are already familiar with, for example by taking two excerpts from the same source video, or TV series episodes that build up on each other. This type of input processing has been termed $i - 1$ (Day and Bamford 1998), since the level of the clip will be just below ($- 1$) the current level of competence of the learners (i). In introducing this concept, Day and Bamford mirrored Krashen's idea of comprehensible input, whereby, in order for new language to be acquired, the input has to contain elements just above the learner's knowledge, that is, at the $i + 1$ level (Krashen 1982). Practicing at the $i + 1$ level fosters language development, doing so at the $i - 1$ level fosters fluency (Bruton and Alonso Marks 2004, 772), and is used in automaticity training (Day and Bamford 1998, 16), especially to reinforce sight vocabulary, i.e. all the "[w]ords that readers are able to recognise automatically" (1998, 13). Since the level of the clip will be just below the level of competence of the students, they will encounter familiar language and comprehend most of the content, which may also boost motivation and provide a sense of satisfaction. In these cases, one might speak of comprehended input (Gass 1997) rather than comprehensible input. So,

while the concept of the i + 1 level (Krashen 1982) is certainly relevant and has been referred to in the AVT literature (Incalcaterra-McLoughlin and Lertola 2014, 75), practicing at the i – 1 level also has an educational value as reinforcement and rehearsal of previously learnt content.

5.7. TBLT and Unpredictability

Finally, a drawback intrinsic to TBLT is that tasks, by their very nature, make both the production and acquisition of specific forms unpredictable. Since no explicit indication of what forms to use can be given in the rubric and the choice of linguistic resources is left to the learner, one cannot be sure they will produce a word or a structure, even when the task is focused. When reverse subtitling is employed in the classroom, the teacher cannot predict whether students will produce particular FL items, even when the subtitling activity was designed to elicit their use. If production is not certain, accurate production is even less so. In some cases, if a student has made a mistake that does not cause communication to break down, they might not notice their mistake and therefore make no effort to correct it. In addition, the teacher might not find an opportunity to elicit its correct use in a purely task-based learning environment, so students could achieve fluency at the expense of accuracy. To prevent this from happening and to capitalise on their language development, Willis maintains that another stage is needed after the task cycle, where instruction will examine language forms and entail a level of analysis, in order to "get students to identify and think about particular

features of language form and language use" (1996, 102). In fact, such focusing of learner attention on formal features of the language, as Tschirner (2001, 313) notes, could be one of the key advantages that classroom-based instruction has over natural learning.

6. One Step Further: Focus on FormS

Didactic subtitling creates a situation where form is attended as student need arises during communicative tasks. However, as we have seen, the subtitling task alone, despite the rich and meaningful multimodal environment, may not always result in the internalisation of the FL. In some cases, therefore, having a more explicit FonFs phase might be necessary. In such a phase, formal instruction is given, language is treated as the object of study rather than communication tool, and students relate themselves to the language as learners rather than users. A number of classroom studies (Lightbown and Spada 1990; Spada and Lightbown 1993; White et al. 1991) have indirectly questioned uninstructed positions in FLL by showing that explicit rule teaching and error correction is superior to implicit learning (DeKeyser 1998, 56). Moreover, FFI approaches have been found to accelerate rate of learning (see Long and Robinson 1998, 21) and raise ultimate attainment levels (Pavesi 1986; Eckman et al. 1988, in Long 1991, 47) compared to naturalistic settings where exposure to positive input may be large but formal instruction is almost absent. Some grammar features are certainly more difficult to master

without explicit focus on form than others. For example, White (1989) demonstrated that the adjacency principle in English adverb placement was not successfully learnt by French native speakers though positive input alone. This would suggest that some form of additional salience or negative evidence might be required, at least in some cases. Salience can be achieved through input enhancement, for example by highlighting target words or structures through typeface (underlining, italic, bold) or colouring. Negative evidence can be explicit or implicit and includes grammar rules, overt error correction, recasts and repairs when communication breaks down (Long and Robinson 1998, 18-19). The body of evidence presented herein suggests that a more explicit FonFs phase after the subtitling task would be beneficial to learners and in some cases might be the only way to effectively enable them to achieve linguistic production accuracy. Willis and Willis (2007, 115) note that introducing and practicing individual forms right before a task is likely to affect the learners so that they will be less likely to focus on getting the meaning across and more likely to display their knowledge of those forms. Therefore, however the FonFs phase is implemented, it is usually presented after the task phase to avoid conditioning the learners. Drawing attention to specific formS related to the topic addressed in the video after the students have completed a subtitling task can be achieved in many ways, including through salience or negative evidence. However, as noted by Spada et al. (2005, 200-201) how explicitly learner attention is drawn to linguistic forms can change dramatically, both in the presentation of rules and feedback on

error. In some cases, input can be enhanced post-task without overt instruction or error correction. In AVT, for example, other types of AV input such as keyword subtitles could be integrated in a post-subtitling FFI phase as a form of input enhancement. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the specifics of how FonFs can be achieved, the reader is referred to Willis and Willis (2007) for a comprehensive treatment of task-based teaching that includes detailed examples of how to incorporate FonF and FonFs activities in a task-based curriculum. Some of the activities they present would require a degree of adaptation, in light of the characteristics of the AV medium and its specific meaning-making process, but they could be a starting point for a principled integration of didactic subtitling (as well as other AV learning tasks) and a task-related FonFs phase. How such integration may be best achieved is yet to be established, and underlines the need to warrant further investigation into the topic, both through experimental and pedagogical applications.

7. Conclusions

This paper reviewed the literature on didactic subtitling and its findings to date, explained why this AVT type can be considered a task and discussed how it can fit within a task-based view of language learning and teaching. It also described the learning process by revising some cognitive constructs such as attention, noticing, reactivation and pushed output, and demonstrated

their relevance to the subtitling task. Starting from recent research that refutes purely communicative approaches, it also addressed FFI, considering both FonF and FonFs in relation to didactic subtitling. The reasons why this AVT mode is a FonF activity were explained by examining the relationship between processing form and meaning during subtitling. Finally, this paper argued in favour of the integration of a more overtly instructional FonFs phase after the subtitling task. While research in FLL has undergone major changes in the last few decades, Tschirner (2001, 306) asked: "have these changes also affected classroom realities?". Fifteen years later, I propose they have started to do so, as demonstrated by the AVT studies mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Of course, shifting from theoretical considerations to practical implementation is rarely a mundane exercise, and several open questions remain. However, by making explicit some of the cognitive underpinnings of subtitling as a task and demonstrating that it is compatible with widely accepted modern SLA theories, it was shown that this multimodal translation practice has specific acquisitional potential and why it should be investigated further in the context of SLA. As Borrás and Lafayette remind us, it is not the provision of technology in itself but its application in education that will affect learner performance (1994, 71-72). Therefore, it is only through empirical applications of didactic subtitling such as the ones herein reviewed that evidence can be gathered in order to further knowledge on the topic. Finally, addressing the integration of didactic subtitling and FFI in TBLT provides a starting point for discussing methodological proposals regarding

the inclusion of audiovisuals in FL class and syllabus design. By addressing

such topics, it is hoped that teachers and practitioners will feel inspired to

incorporate subtitling tasks or other AV(T) activities in their classroom

practice.

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Notes

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[i] http://www.divisproject.eu/ [accessed 23/02/2016].

[ii] http://levis.cti.gr/ [accessed 23/02/2016].

[iii] http://clipflair.net/overview/ [accessed 23/02/2016].

[iv] For the purpose of this paper, a distinction is made between AVT type (or mode) and sub-type (or submode). Mode and type have been used as synonyms (Gambier 2003), and as such they will be used in this paper too. Broader practices such as subtitling, dubbing, audio-description, narration, key-word captioning and free commentary are herein considered AVT types/modes. These are practices that can be sub-divided further according to a number of different criteria. Any of their sub-divisions will be considered sub-types, whatever the criteria used in the classification. There are taxonomical challenges in classifying AVT types and sub-types, especially since new modes are created as the discipline expands and redefines itself. A particularly controversial issue is where the line between types and sub-types should be drawn (Hernández Bartolomé 2005). Since taxonomic classification is peripheral to the purposes of this paper, the choice is motivated chiefly by its convenience and clarity in the present discussion.

[v] This AV sub-type has also been referred to as monolingual, teletext or same-language subtitling in the AVT literature and bimodal input in the psycholinguistics literature.

[vi] Subtitling and spot-the-difference tasks certainly have different purposes but are both activities that can be used in the FL classroom, and as such, they can be compared in a discussion on exercise type. Since both tasks have been deemed artificial in the published literature (Ghia 2011, 99; Ellis 2003, 10), drawing a parallel between them serves the purpose of highlighting what I consider to be a flaw in the artificiality argument: basing our judgement of learning activities solely on whether they are likely to be performed by the learners outside the class (potentially discarding some activities on such basis) can be dangerous, since other

reasons are also relevant and should be considered in their assessment (for example, their

different purposes, or the cognitive benefits involved with such activities).