Chapter 2

Captioning

Captioning is the most widely studied AVT mode in foreign language learning. A great number of contributions on pedagogical captioning have been published in the last two decades. The following sections aim to provide an introduction to subtitling and a comprehensive outline of relevant publications and a systematic analysis of experimental studies in the different forms of captioning: standard interlingual subtitling, reverse interlingual subtitling, and intralingual subtitling, respectively.

2.1. Introduction to subtitling

A number of scholars advocate the use of subtitling in language learning. Díaz Cintas (1995, 1997, 2001) foresaw the potential of subtitling in foreign language learning by recognising subtitling as a new and motivating exercise for language learners. He encouraged teachers to incorporate subtitling into their teaching routine since it can enhance vocabulary acquisition and cultural awareness. Subtitling also involves learners in a critical reflection on the linguistic aspects of TV or film products and helps them become acquainted with tools pertaining to much of the professional world in general, such as videos and the PC, which they will most probably use in their future careers.

Although the focus here is on language learning, this type of activity can help raise genuine interest in the professional AVT field among language learners as well. Vermeulen (2003) and Wagener (2006) also suggest the potential of subtitling as a pedagogical tool. Vermeulen proposes subtitling as a motivating exercise for learners thanks to the involvement of video and translation. Focussing on the use of digital laboratories to develop independent learning skills, Wagener presents subtitling as an exploitable resource.
In a greatly-detailed article, Talaván (2006a), proposes the production of standard and reverse interlingual ‘ad hoc subtitles’ as a beneficial way of learning an L2 for adolescents and adults of all levels, as “it provides learners with the opportunity to negotiate meaning, to notice language, to become motivated, and to enhance most language learning areas, especially those related to the spoken language, that are typically among the most challenging to teach and acquire” (p. 45). She highlights the active role played by learners in subtitling since it takes place in a motivating context fostered by the multimodal input. The methodological approach respected in Talaván’s (2006a) subtitling production proposal is communicative language teaching in combination with task-based learning and teaching. To this regard, Talaván (2010) defines the language learning activities of reading subtitled material and producing subtitles as subtitles as a support and subtitling as a task, respectively. This precise terminology clearly helps distinguish the two pedagogical applications in language research. Underlining the development of oral comprehension skills, Talaván identifies a number of advantages in applying subtitling, such as the possibility for learners to benefit from authentic multimodal input and to produce a tangible output that can also be shared with peers. Finally, she proposes combining subtitling and subtitles in a single task to create the best impact on foreign language learning.

Talaván (2006b) also anticipates the potential of standard and reverse interlingual subtitling in language for specific purposes education. She presents subtitling as a novel strategy for enhancing the writing and speaking skills of Business English learners, especially in a distant learning context. Learners are required to subtitle short business-related video extracts (from TV series, films, etc.) aimed at definite communicative language functions through ad hoc activities. She argues that the subtitling task “has a sense of purpose in itself […] and the accompanying tasks also look for a sense of communicative achievement that can allow learners to transfer these performance-oriented learning experiences to real life business situations in which they take part” (Talaván, 2006b, p. 327). Furthermore, considering that sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence are

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1. A great number of studies document the benefits of subtitled videos in language learning and teaching (Gernsbacher, 2015; Vanderplank, 2016). Interestingly, novel forms of subtitled material in foreign language learning are also being studied, such as AV comprehension questions in the form of subtitles (Casañ Núñez, 2017).
fundamental components of Business English learning, the subtitling practice can be particularly effective in fostering speaking skills in this context as it is a valid way to teach spoken English as a foreign language.

Kantz (2015) confirms the effectiveness of interlingual subtitling in language for specific purposes, and in particular regarding English for specific purposes. This scholar describes a study carried out with advanced dentistry students at the Università degli studi di Pavia, Italy. After successfully carrying out previous courses proving that multimodal analysis of health-related films are suitable for dentistry students, Kantz (2015) decided to go a step further by asking learners to create the subtitles as well. Divided into four groups, participants collaborated in a virtual learning environment in order to create an annotated corpus of public information films and announcements comprised of sub-corporuses made by each group. The sub-corpus creation involved analysis and classification of the films, selection of the text to be subtitled and, finally, the subtitling of a sample of the sub-corpus. In this context, the term ‘subtitle’ is used to “include all the metatextual processes that the students wanted to represent” (Kantz, 2015, p. 280). One of the most remarkable outcomes of the study is how learners interpreted the concept of subtitling itself and thus rendered it in different ways, namely interlingual, intralingual, and intertitles (i.e. text placed between film scenes).

Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola (2011) suggest a methodology-based subtitling model while providing a practical example. The authors argue that, far from being a reappraisal of the grammar-translation method, subtitling allows language learners to greatly benefit from translation, which has been reassessed in foreign language learning (Council of Europe, 2001). The translation involved in subtitling implies linguistic and metalinguistic awareness and an ability in contrastive analysis, skills necessary in order to complete a monosemiotic, written translation task as well. Many AV texts lend themselves well to this purpose. In contrast, written translations incorporated in foreign language teaching have often been closed, self-referential systems which exclude the wider linguistic universe that students must perceive and understand when using a foreign language. This shifts focus from a closed, self-referential system to one
where there is scope for a wider communicational context, in which non-verbal elements add meaning to each utterance, reinforcing and complementing the verbal element of the communicative act in a foreign language. In audiovisual translation, a communicative reason for the translation (which goes beyond a simple grammatical exercise) is immediately evident, giving a meaningful functional dimension to the new target language text. The authors propose a five-stage methodology-based subtitling model, after testing subtitling activities with Italian B1-level university students of the Bachelor of Arts programme at the National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway. A preparatory stage (which teachers select and prepare the AV material, transcribe the AV dialogue and familiarise themselves with the software), paves the way for five sequential phases, based on a teaching unit model: presentation of the activity (motivation), viewing of the video (global perception), analytical comprehension (analysis), translation-subtitling (synthesis), and considerations on the subtitling process and subtitled clips (reflection). The first phase aims at preparing learners for the activity by increasing their motivation and involvement. This can be done by presenting learners with the AV material to be subtitled by discussing the title and some images taken from the excerpt. In the second phase, learners perceive the communicative situation as a whole. The AV input can be watched a number of times (sound off and sound on respectively) to give the learners the opportunity to familiarise themselves with it and confirm the hypothesis formulated during the discussion in the first phase. Learners can watch the video accompanied by the dialogue transcript in the third phase, and analyse the dialogue by concentrating on the understanding of the message in L2, both in groups and individually. The fourth phase involves metalinguistic considerations since learners are required to translate and subtitle the original spoken dialogue into their L1. The last phase entails a reflection both on language and on the whole learning experience. The model can be used with lower or higher proficiency levels. Similarly, Borghetti (2011) devises the subtitling process in five steps and recommends the subtitling practice expressly for enhancing intercultural education. Foreign language learning gives learners the opportunity to better understand a foreign culture and foster intercultural knowledge. Subtitling proves to be particularly suitable to this purpose since it requires learners to understand an AV foreign language text, which is rich both on a linguistic and a cultural level. The subtitling process
for intercultural education is articulated into the following steps: presentation and motivation; viewing; research; synchronisation of subtitles to the video and translating; and editing. Depending on the learning focus – linguistic or intercultural – teachers thus have the opportunity to choose a suitable model to apply in the language learning classroom.

Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola (2014) advocate for the integration of subtitling in the foreign language curriculum. In order to communicate, learners are involved in a number of receptive (aural and visual), productive (oral and written production), interactive (spoken and written interaction), and mediating (oral and written mediation) (Council of Europe, 2001) activities, which can be effectively integrated into a foreign language curriculum. To this end, the authors report an example of such an integration in Italian Studies within the second year of the undergraduate Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Commerce degree at NUI, Galway. A subtitling module aimed at teaching the Italian language through the AVT task has been running since September 2008. As an integral part of the core language course, the subtitling module runs for the whole academic year for a total of 24 weeks (one contact hour per week) and contributes to the fulfilment of the general learning objectives of the course, that is allowing undergraduate students to achieve B2 level and preparing them to spend the following year as foreign exchange students in an Italian university. Students are given basic subtitling training and are required to subtitle four short video clips from L2 (Italian) into L1 (English) during the module. Evaluation is obtained through continuous assessment, attendance, and submission of finished subtitles (no final exam is envisaged).

Following the integration of subtitling activities in the foreign language Bachelor degree curriculum, Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola (2015) describe the integration of revoicing and captioning activities through ClipFlair in an online environment. ClipFlair activities are used to date in the Language Lab section in the second year of the Diploma in Italian Online at NUI, Galway, Ireland. The two-year diploma is a part-time course for people interested in learning Italian for professional or personal reasons with no previous knowledge of the language. The aim of the diploma is to achieve A2 level by the end of the first
year and B2 by the end of the second. After being trained in intonation reception and production in the first year, learners carry out captioning and revoicing activities in the second year. Video clips used within this framework are carefully selected to fulfil the linguistic content of the syllabus while reinforcing prosodic skills practised during the first year of the course. Learners are asked to provide intralingual subtitles and dub the selected clips; meanwhile, they can discuss their experience in the discussion boards within the course virtual learning environment. As the learners acquire more experience in the required AVT tasks and overcome technical issues, discussions move from learner-teacher to learner-learner. The authors provide five examples of ClipFlair activities in a gradual progression in terms of difficulty. Each activity comprises both captioning and revoicing: reordering intralingual subtitles and then dubbing one character (slow-paced dialogues); inserting verbs in intralingual subtitles and dubbing one/two character(s); inserting vocabulary-keywords and dubbing two characters (individually or in pairs); transcribing intralingual subtitles and recording the script (i.e. subtitles); and writing the script then inserting the subtitles and recording the script. In order to allow learners to focus on language and avoid technical issues while synchronising, the authors suggest to include the timing of the captions in each activity. Although tested in an online learning setting, these activities can also be used in face-to-face contexts.

In the first book devoted to the use of subtitling as a task in language learning, Talaván (2013) significantly contributes to the debate on the integration of AVT in foreign language learning for what concerns both researchers and teachers. After presenting the theoretical framework of subtitling in language learning based on the integration of communicative language teaching and task-based learning and teaching within the guidelines set by the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2001), the author emphasises the crucial role of video in language teaching and learning: AV material provides learners with the unique opportunity to encounter language use in real communicative situations. In the second part of the book, dedicated to the pedagogical potential of subtitling and to its practical applications, the author describes subtitling norms and subtitling software suitable for language teaching and learning. She compares different freeware software and includes
very helpful step-by-step guides on how to use subtitling and video editing software. She also presents the limitations of subtitling in foreign language learning, clearly deriving from the author’s own extensive first-hand experience. For example, she points to the lack of ready to use materials. Apart from exceptions like the ClipFlair project, which helps solve this issue for several target languages, teachers often have to prepare ad hoc activities according to their specific circumstances, which can be greatly time consuming.

Lertola (2015) considers the use of subtitling as a pedagogical tool in the L2 classroom from a teacher’s perspective. The author discusses the potential of interlingual and intralingual subtitling in language learning, examining its potential advantages and disadvantages in line with Talaván (2013). The article focusses on how teachers can integrate interlingual subtitling as a language learning task in their teaching routine. To this end, an adaptation of professional subtitling norms for pedagogical purposes is proposed. Learners should be made aware of these basic norms: the subtitling task generally requires a certain amount of translation quality; the translation should respect linguistic and cultural elements of the original dialogue; subtitles should be syntactically and semantically self-contained (distributed on a maximum of two lines). In order to produce effective segmentation of the original dialogue into subtitles, learners should be able to identify sense units in L2. This can prove quite challenging to learners and previous training is encouraged. In addition, it could be useful to provide learners with examples of correct segmentation (e.g. do not split articles or adjectives from nouns, etc.). Bearing in mind that this task is aimed at language learning and not at professional training, Lertola (2015) provides general guidelines for subtitle synchronisation. While synchronising, it could be quite useful to invite learners to employ the professional habit of condensing the message – through partial or total reduction – in order to respect space and time constraints. This practice can also enhance the above-mentioned identification of sense units in L2. Professional linguistic and technical assessment criteria for evaluating learners’ subtitled videos are also adapted for language learning purposes. These criteria are divided into five main categories – translation, linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence, and technical skills – which are further divided into subcategories. Finally, a description of appropriate
AV material selection is provided, together with a brief record of subtitling tasks suitable for learners with different levels of foreign language proficiency.

Ragni (2018) acknowledges the value of the experimental studies on the pedagogical applications of subtitling, which she defines as ‘didactic subtitling’, and draws attention to the need for a clearer theoretical framework to support subtitling activities in the foreign language classroom. To this end, she considers a number of theories, from second language acquisition literature and cognitive psychology, that support interlingual subtitling in foreign language learning. After examining how subtitling can be applied within task-based language teaching, she argues for the integration of subtitling and form-focussed instruction. Subtitling is recognised to have specific characteristics that make it an appropriate task to be used in communicative language teaching; however, Ragni (2018) claims that:

“the subtitling task alone, despite the rich and meaningful multimodal environment, may not always result in the internalisation of the [foreign language]. In some cases, therefore, having a more explicit FonFs [Focus on Forms] 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” (pp. 22-23; emphasis in original).

Although the author provides a few examples, Ragni (2018) does not provide the specifics on how learners’ attention can be drawn to linguistic forms after the subtitling task. The author acknowledges that it can be challenging moving from theoretical considerations to real-world applications and encourages further investigation on the topic.

2.2. Standard interlingual subtitling

Research on standard interlingual subtitling is the most developed line of related studies to date, and these experimental studies on standard interlingual
subtitling will be discussed in detail in this section. Table 2.1 presents the studies in chronological order by identifying their key features: research focus, target languages, participants, learning settings, AV materials and captioning/revoicing software, and type of analysis (i.e. qualitative and/or quantitative).

Table 2.1. Experimental studies on standard interlingual subtitling in chronological order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) and date of publication</th>
<th>Research focus</th>
<th>Target languages (from L2 into L1)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Learning setting</th>
<th>Audiovisual materials</th>
<th>Captioning software</th>
<th>Type of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bravo, 2008</td>
<td>Idiomatic expression</td>
<td>From English into Portuguese</td>
<td>20 A2/B1-level undergraduate students in Portugal</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Sitcom</td>
<td>Learning via Subtitling</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incalcaterra McLoughlin, 2009a</td>
<td>Pragmatic awareness</td>
<td>From Italian into English</td>
<td>10 A1- and 3 B1-level undergraduate students in Ireland</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Learning via Subtitling</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talaván, 2010, 2011</td>
<td>Listening comprehension</td>
<td>From English into Spanish</td>
<td>50 A2-level university students in Spain</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Sitcom</td>
<td>Subtitle Workshop</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lertola, 2012</td>
<td>Incidental vocabulary acquisition</td>
<td>From Italian into English</td>
<td>16 A2-level university students in Ireland</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borghetti &amp; Lertola, 2014</td>
<td>Intercultural language education</td>
<td>From Italian into English</td>
<td>14 A2/B1-level university students in Ireland</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Learning via Subtitling</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incalcaterra McLoughlin &amp; Lertola, 2014</td>
<td>Learners’ feedback on subtitling</td>
<td>From Italian into English</td>
<td>49 B1/B2-level undergraduate students in Ireland</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The language level of the participants is reported only when specifically expressed by the author(s) (i.e. language levels self-assessed by the learners themselves are not considered).
Bravo (2008) investigates the idiomatic expression retention and recall of 20 Portuguese undergraduate A2/B1 learners of English as a foreign language through subtitling. Students participating in this study were first tested on their familiarity with a number of idiomatic expressions, and results showed that most of them were unfamiliar with these expressions. Students were then exposed to these same idiomatic expressions within AV material (an American sitcom) with intralingual subtitles (L2-L2). They were subsequently asked to recognise these expressions in a multiple-choice post-viewing questionnaire. One week later, students were asked to use the Learning via Subtitling simulator to create their own subtitles (from English into Portuguese) for the selected expressions. The students had already carried out one practical session with Learning via Subtitling prior to the subtitling task in order to familiarise themselves with the software. Technicalities of subtitling were reduced to a minimum and students only had to subtitle the items under study. In the days following this subtitling activity, students were given the original multiple choice questionnaires on the idiomatic expressions once again. Results showed their knowledge of these expressions had improved (on average nine out of ten expressions were used correctly). Three weeks later, students were provided with a list of paraphrases in Portuguese for each idiomatic expression they had been exposed to in English and were asked to choose seven expressions from the list to include in a coherent
written text in English. Students thus had the opportunity to use the newly-acquired English idioms themselves, and the exercise showed very positive results. The majority of the students (15 out of 20) managed to construct coherent and cohesive texts using the seven idioms correctly, while three students used one idiomatic expression wrongly and just two students used two expressions wrongly. This subtitling activity thus proved to highly promote the acquisition of idiomatic expressions. In addition, through repetition of the AV text, students were exposed to the meaning of idiomatic expressions in context, helping to fix these in their memory. An open response questionnaire on the activity showed that students had become more aware of their language competence and subtitling had enhanced their motivation, as they reported that they felt a sense of accomplishment which exceeded their expectations. They had also increased their awareness of cultural differences and lexical structures.

Incalcaterra McLoughlin (2009a) investigates the development of pragmatic awareness in Irish university students of Italian as a foreign language. The level of proficiency of the students involved was diverse: 10 A1, 3 B1 (undergraduate), and 9 C1-C2 (postgraduate). The undergraduate students were attending a regular Italian language course within their degree, while the postgraduates were being trained as translators and interpreters; therefore, the latter will not be considered. Divided into two groups of five (‘Group 1’ and ‘Group 2’), the A1 students were all given the same dialogue transcript to translate from L2 (Italian) into L1 (English). Group 1 was then asked to translate the transcription without watching the video clip after being informed about the context of the dialogue. Group 2 was introduced to Learning via Subtitling software, asked to watch the video, and create subtitles using the transcription provided. The translations produced by Group 2 demonstrated an attempt to move away from literal translation and a higher degree of pragmatic awareness than those of Group 1. Although considerably more time consuming, subtitling also proved more motivating for students due to “the ‘fun’ element and the goal of arriving at a meaningful, controllable output” (Incalcaterra McLoughlin, 2009a, p. 232). Group 2 students seemed to better recall lexical elements from the AV dialogue and use more correct syntax three weeks later, when recording some questions for an interview. The three B1 students worked as a single group. These students
were shown a scene of an Italian movie, provided with the dialogue transcript and asked to translate it into English. Once translation was complete, they were introduced to *Learning via Subtitling* software and asked to convert the translation into subtitles. As emphasised by Incalcaterra McLoughlin (2009a), the passage from translation into subtitles can raise awareness of underlying linguistic patterns and the semantic value of paralinguistic features. It is therefore preferable to first translate relevant passages rather than to move directly from listening to subtitling. At the end of the subtitling process, students were asked to comment on the differences between their translation and subtitles. When subtitling, besides avoiding literal translation, students indeed seemed to become more aware of some pragmatic features of the text they were translating.

Talaván (2010, 2011) examines the use of subtitling as a task and subtitles as a support in enhancement of listening comprehension skills in a communicative task-based learning context. The quasi-experimental study\(^3\), grounded on two preliminary studies, applied both qualitative and quantitative techniques and involved 50 Spanish adult A2-level learners of English as a foreign language at the Official School of Languages in Spain. Learners were allocated to two groups: experimental and control. Both groups had the same number of participants and were exposed to AV material with intralingual subtitles (L2-L2), but only the experimental group carried out the subtitling activity. Two approximately two-minute video clips of a popular sitcom were selected for the experiment, taking into consideration learners’ levels and interests, self-containment of the communicative situation, visual-oral correlation, and the presence of humorous elements. After a preliminary warm-up, all groups watched the first video clip twice with bimodal subtitles. Learners were asked to take notes to test listening comprehension and, after the second viewing, they were asked to summarise the main ideas of the sequence in their L1. Each summary was assessed in terms of ‘idea units’ which the learners had understood. The experimental group learners were then required to subtitle the first video clip individually in their L1. One of the subtitled clips was chosen at random to be viewed by the whole group as

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\(^3\) A quasi-experimental design generally combines analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and is often employed in education research in which “the random selection or random assignment of schools and classroom is quite impracticable” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 282).
a finished product. In the meantime, the control group discussed the first video clip and their comprehension of it, giving priority to difficult lexical items. Control group learners watched the clip without subtitles three more times while continuing their discussion. All group work was designed to ensure that the only difference between the groups’ experience was the subtitling task performed by the experimental group. Related to the first clip in terms of characters and contexts, the second video clip was shown twice to both groups with intralingual subtitles. The groups again took notes and wrote summaries in L1. A discussion similar to the one previously carried out by the control group was held in both groups as a post-viewing activity. Finally, all learners filled out a self-completion questionnaire containing closed and open questions. Talaván’s (2011) concluding statistical analysis of the listening comprehension test confirms the subtitling task as an effective strategy for listening comprehension. Her analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data allows for triangulation⁴, providing a higher degree of reliability to the findings of the study.

Lertola (2012) studies the effects of interlingual subtitling tasks on incidental vocabulary acquisition in 16 A2-level undergraduate students of Italian at NUI, Galway. Following a quasi-experimental design, students were divided into two groups: six in the experimental group and ten in the control group. The experimental group carried out a subtitling task from L2 (Italian) into L1 (English) while the control group performed oral comprehension and L2 writing task-based activities on the same video clip. The two groups worked for a total of four hours (one hour per week). During the first hour, both groups completed the same pre-viewing activity that consisted in watching the video twice (the first time with no audio in order to formulate hypotheses, the second with audio in order to confirm or disprove these hypotheses). In the second hour, the experimental group watched the video a third time with a dialogue transcript and worked on comprehension, while the control group watched the video again and carried out oral comprehension task-based activities. The experimental group then performed the subtitling task while the control group carried out oral comprehension and writing tasks in the third and fourth hours.

⁴. Triangulation is usually considered “a valuable and widely used strategy [which] involves the use of multiple sources to enhance the rigour of the research” (Robson, 2002, p. 174).
In order to verify the research hypothesis – whether subtitling results in a more statistically significant retention of new L2 vocabulary – pre, post-immediate and post-delayed vocabulary tests were administered. The pre-test, administered two weeks before the first experimental session, aimed at ensuring that all target words were unknown to the participants. It contained 15 target words and 15 distracters. The immediate and delayed post-tests, administered during the last experimental session and after another two weeks respectively, only included the 15 target words. Findings showed an improvement in learners’ incidental acquisition in both groups (though higher in the experimental group). However, statistically significant results emerged at the post-delayed point, proving that subtitling leads to more significant incidental vocabulary acquisition in L2. This small sample does not allow for a generalisation of the results; however, outcomes encourage further investigation.

Borghetti and Lertola (2014) attempt to empirically investigate the application of interlingual subtitling (from Italian into English) for enhancing intercultural language education, based on Borghetti’s (2011) work. They report on an exploratory case study carried out at NUI, Galway, with 14 A2/B1-level students of Italian within their regular subtitling module, which is part of their Italian language course (Incalcaterra McLoughlin & Lertola, 2014). Since the study was carried out over a limited amount of time (two weeks), comprehensive development of intercultural competence was not possible. The study thus examines whether the subtitling practice can offer language learners opportunities for cultural and intercultural awareness development. Data was collected through class audio-recordings, initial and final questionnaires, group and pair responses to two teaching forms, semi-structured video-recorded interviews with participants, the teacher’s field notes, and students’ interlingual subtitles. Results from thematic data analysis reveal that subtitling offers learners “opportunities (possible starting points) for autonomous cultural and intercultural awareness development” (Incalcaterra McLoughlin & Lertola, 2014, p. 436). Although it is mainly the teacher who fosters learners’ cultural and intercultural awareness

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5. According to Byram (2000, in Borghetti, 2011, p. 115) a person possessing a good level of intercultural competence can be defined as “someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (part of) their own and other cultures – someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural” (pp. 117-118).
development through class interaction and discussions, data analysis suggests that even when teacher mediation is limited, subtitling tasks present conditions in which students can better develop their intercultural skills.

Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola (2014) investigate undergraduate students’ feedback of the subtitling module integrated in the Bachelor foreign language curriculum through a questionnaire. A total of 49 students attended the subtitling module in four different academic years (2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012), but only 40 completed an online evaluation questionnaire. The six-item questionnaire contains five closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. The first two questions require students to express their agreement or disagreement with four identical statements on subtitling and on translation, if they have also undertaken the latter. Analysis of the responses shows a large majority of learners were happy to see their subtitled product (88%) and were satisfied with it (83%); almost all students (91%) enjoyed the subtitling task. As for the students (32 out of 40) who answered the identical questions about translation, a similar large majority (88%) were happy to see their translation, and were satisfied with it (75%). However, the translation task was enjoyed by 68% of the respondents, therefore to a lesser extent than the subtitling task. In the third question, students rated the improvement they felt they had made (or not) due to subtitling practice in the four traditional language skills – listening, reading, speaking, and writing – as well as in translating, which might be considered as a ‘fifth skill’ (Colina & Lafford, 2018; Ferreira Gaspar, 2009). Predictably, learners felt they had improved mostly the major skills involved in interlingual standard subtitling, namely translating (93%) and listening (85%). Since the L2 dialogue transcription was used in the subtitling task, more than half of the students (65%) felt they had improved their reading skills. Students had to write the English translation and felt their writing skills (65%) were also enhanced. This confirms Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón’s (2014a) findings in terms of listening comprehension and writing skills. It is also worth noticing that seven out of 49 students were not English native speakers. Therefore, they had translated from L3 (Italian) into L2 (English). Although the subtitling module was mainly presented in Italian and students communicated in L2, the subtitling task did not specifically involve speaking practice. Only a quarter
of the students (23%) perceived an improvement in their oral production. For what concerns their AV habits after subtitling, 75% of the students reported that they watch more AV material in a foreign language and most of them (90%) better appreciate subtitled material. Overall, as much as 95% of the students acknowledged that they had enjoyed having subtitling as part of their regular foreign-language course.

Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón (2014a) investigate the implication of standard interlingual subtitling (from English into Spanish) in the enhancement of listening comprehension skills in advanced English as a foreign language students within a blended learning context at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain. Ten C1-level students were asked to subtitle three short video excerpts of a movie using ClipFlair. Students carried out the activities both in the computer labs with the teacher’s guidance and assistance, and by themselves at home. Due to the small number of participants, no control group was envisaged. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through background and final questionnaires, listening comprehension pre- and post-tests, and the teacher’s observations in order to apply triangulation and thus provide further reliability. Statistical analysis of the marks obtained in the listening comprehension pre- and post-test show an improvement in learners’ performances over one month. These positive results are supported by the learners’ opinions in the final questionnaire. The degree of satisfaction regarding the learners’ perception of improvement in their listening comprehension is remarkable. Most learners also felt that they had improved their writing skills in the L1. The teacher’s observations were direct (face-to-face and by email) and indirect (assessment of the submitted activities). In face-to-face contact, an increase in motivation was observed. For what concerned blended learning, activities were successfully performed autonomously at home. This was also possible thanks to the good information and communication technologies skills of the students involved in the study. As a part of indirect observation, the submitted subtitling activities were assessed using a rubric\textsuperscript{6} that included several criteria: accuracy and appropriateness, effectiveness of communication, organisation of the text, and technical aspects.

\textsuperscript{6} A similar rubric, useful for research and teaching purposes, can be found here: http://www.sub2learn.ie/downloads/evaluation_guidelines.pdf
The very positive assessment of the subtitling activities provides further evidence of language learning improvement.

Lopriore and Ceruti (2015) endorse subtitling as a powerful pedagogical tool for pragmatic awareness. Nineteen postgraduate students of a one-year Master course for professional Web, TV, and cinema writers at the Università di Roma Tre, Italy, were required to create standard interlingual subtitling samples from English into Italian for six travel documentary excerpts (two to four minutes). This text-type was selected since it is easier to compare to other genres due to the alternation of voice-overs and interviews; it is close to authenticity and it supports understanding through constant oral reference to the images. The subtitling task was accompanied by noticing activities in order to foster pragmatic awareness, such as identifying pragmatic L1 equivalents. Learners were encouraged to motivate their choices and then choose the most suitable equivalent. The authors highlight the importance of individually engaging learners in text comprehension and creation. Data was collected through pre- and post-questionnaires, language tests, and a final interview, allowing for qualitative and quantitative analysis. Comparison of the initial mock-subtitling activities to the final subtitling product clearly shows a greater degree of confidence in providing appropriate L1 equivalents in the final product. One of the unexpected findings of the study was the lack of awareness of pragmatic language features in the L1; apparently, working on the L2 text helped learners to become more aware of the makings of their own native language.

Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola (2016) discuss foreign language learners’ attitudes to the translation of impolite language from Italian (L2) to English (L1) within a subtitling task. The study draws from previous research on (im)politeness and the perception of emotional language among non-native speakers; however, it focusses on second language acquisition and the role of AVT in the development of pragmatic awareness and competence in L2. The authors argue that reflection on the perceived emotional impact of swearwords and other taboo or vulgar expressions in translation can help to enhance students’ ability to communicate appropriately in a given context. In particular, AVT can be extremely beneficial to this aim, since the texts learners are asked to work with
provide examples of communication in realistic situations presented in an AV product. Clearly, filmic language differs from spontaneous conversation, and a number of stylistic choices inform the construction of film dialogue. However, AV dialogue proves particularly useful in language education (Pavesi, 2012), especially in the context of foreign (as opposed to second) language learning where spontaneous input is more limited and often constrained by the formality of classroom interaction. In line with previous research illustrating the higher impact of swearwords in one’s native language, the study suggests that learners provide a weaker translation of impoliteness in their L1 compared to the original L2 text. The empirical study compares the collaborative translation of five native English speakers with the individual translations of 11 native English speakers, and those of four non-native English speakers in a study at NUI, Galway, Ireland. The study shows that the percentage of impolite language translated by learners is generally high (69%, 72%, and 81% for the three groups, respectively). However, the strength of the impolite language used varies. Learners from the non-native speakers group, working from L3 to L2, were more willing to employ stronger expressions, suggesting that swearwords had a lower impact on them. Since the offensiveness of a word is determined by pragmatic variables such as the identity of the speaker/listener, their relationship and social norm, future research should involve a larger number of participants from different age groups, sexes, and levels of proficiency, working both individually and together in different language learning contexts.

Lertola (forthcoming) investigates the role of subtitling tasks on incidental vocabulary acquisition in 25 A1-A2 native-English speaking undergraduate students of Italian at NUI, Galway, after extensive piloting (Lertola, 2012). The author concludes that subtitling engages learners in complex information processing involving both acoustic and video channels. Considering that noticing is an essential aspect of language acquisition, she also reasons that subtitling tasks facilitate learners in noticing L2 words due to contrastive association with their L1 equivalent. In particular, Laufer and Hulstijn’s (2001) involvement load hypothesis for vocabulary acquisition postulates that tasks are more effective if they imply

7. One French, two German, one Portuguese, and one Spanish student.
a greater involvement load, which combines three factors – need, search, and evaluation – with regard to the words. Lertola (forthcoming) argues that:

“the subtitling task can be considered as task-induced involvement since it simultaneously implies need, search and evaluation. Need, the motivational dimension of the involvement, is present in the task when a word is necessary for comprehension. To subtitle, learners are required to achieve a good understanding of the foreign-language text and thus they experience the need to understand unknown words. Search and evaluation represent the cognitive dimension of involvement. Search takes place when learners are looking for the meaning of a new L2 word or for the L2 form. Learners then experience evaluation when choosing the appropriate meaning of a word in its context. For instance, if a word has more than one meaning, learners must select the one which best applies to the context”.

The study followed a mixed research design (combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis). Due to the restricted number of participants, four types of triangulation were employed, namely data, observer, methodological, and theory. Quantitative data was collected through vocabulary pre- and immediate post-tests. Qualitative data offering valuable understanding thus allowing for better interpretation of the findings was also collected through an initial questionnaire that informed on participants’ background information as well as their AV habits and preferences, a final questionnaire which provided participants’ feedback, classroom audio, and video recordings, and classroom observations. The results of the study, obtained through statistical analysis, show that interlingual subtitling promotes the incidental acquisition of new word meanings in terms of productive recall.

2.3. Reverse interlingual subtitling

Reverse interlingual subtitling is gradually gaining scholars’ attention, particularly with regard to writing skills. Relevant studies will be presented in
Chapter 2

this section and can be seen in Table 2.2. Similarly to Table 2.1, Table 2.2 shows a chronologically-ordered overview of studies on reverse interlingual subtitling organised by their key characteristics – research focus, target languages, participants, learning settings, AV materials, captioning/revoicing software, and type of analysis.

Table 2.2. Experimental studies on reverse interlingual subtitling in chronological order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) and date of publication</th>
<th>Research focus</th>
<th>Target languages (from L1 into L2)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Learning setting</th>
<th>Audiovisual material</th>
<th>Captioning software</th>
<th>Type of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talaván &amp; Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014b</td>
<td>Writing and translation skills</td>
<td>From Spanish into English</td>
<td>40 B1-level undergraduate students in Spain</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Aegisub</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burczyńska, 2015</td>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>From Polish into English</td>
<td>24 students of a foreign language school in Poland</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Subtitle Workshop</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talaván, Ibáñez, &amp; Bárcena, 2016a</td>
<td>Writing skills</td>
<td>From Spanish into English</td>
<td>68 undergraduate students in Spain</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Aegisub</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón (2014b) explore whether reverse subtitling as a collaborative language learning tool can develop writing and translation skills in a distance learning context. A total of 40 undergraduate students of English (level B1) at UNED were involved in the experimental study and were equally divided into experimental and control groups. Participants in the experimental group were further divided into four groups and were required to provide English subtitles for two video clips of a Spanish movie working collaboratively online over two and a half months. Collaborative work was fostered by the use of the university virtual learning environment through forums, chat rooms, and video conferencing. In the meantime, control group participants performed non-
collaborative student-centred online activities that did not comprise subtitling. The study provides data through pre- and post-questionnaires, writing and translation assessment tests, and teachers’ observations. Two observers also assessed the language tests following specific rubrics with specific evaluation criteria. The criteria for assessment of the writing assignment included clarity, focus, coherence development, knowledge, critical thinking, intellectual ambition, expression, grammar and usage, and academic conventions. The criteria for assessing the translation tests were accuracy and appropriateness of the translated text, grammatical/syntactic constructions, good use of vocabulary, organisation of text, cohesion and coherence, and effectiveness of communication. The average mark of writing and translation tests from pre- and post-test shows an improvement both in writing and translation skills for the two groups. However, improvement in the experimental group is higher than in the control group (0.7 and 1.2 in the writing and translation tests respectively). These results are also backed up by post-questionnaire answers. Learners’ perceptions of writing and translation skills development was particularly high, especially in the experimental group. General satisfaction with regard to written production and translation competence was also confirmed by teachers’ observations. The collaborative work was also perceived as beneficial by most learners; particularly in terms of written expression, vocabulary acquisition, use-of-English confidence, and grammar knowledge. Overall findings seem to confirm that reverse subtitling can be used as a beneficial activity for L2 writing and translation.

Burczyńska (2015) presents a pilot study with 24 Polish learners of English at a foreign language school in Poland. Here too, the students were evenly divided into an experimental and a control group. For the specific context of creating reverse subtitles in the foreign language class, the author proposes an adaptation of Neves’s (2004) framework of subtitling process, followed in translator training. Data collected through pre- and post-questionnaires, interviews (with a limited number of participants), and written assignments are analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Two months after the pilot, participants in the experimental group made fewer grammar mistakes and fewer spelling mistakes compared to the control group in the post-written assignment. As suggested by post-questionnaire
answers, learners also perceived an improvement in their vocabulary, including fixed expressions and idioms. In addition, when interviewed, experimental group participants acknowledged finding the subtitling activity “a thought provoking, simulated task” (Buczyńska, 2015, p. 239). All participants were eager to have these types of activities in their regular foreign language class. The author calls for an integration of subtitling in the regular foreign language course both for writing and vocabulary enhancement.

Talaván et al. (2016a) investigate collaborative reverse subtitling for the enhancement of written production activities in an online setting within a research project on Collaborative AVT to Improve Language Skills in English as a second language at UNED, Spain. The month and a half mixed-research experimental study involved 68 undergraduate students of English who were divided into two equal groups (experimental and control). The experimental group participants, divided into sub-groups, had to subtitle two excerpts of a Spanish comedy into English. Each sub-group had to agree on a draft translation of the subtitles, and each member had to add subtitles to each video and share these with other members. Finally, the sub-group was asked to choose the most linguistically and technically accurate subtitled version of the two movie excerpts among the members’ videos. The data collection tools were initial and final questionnaires, pre- and post- writing production tests, and teacher’s observations. The language assessment tests required participants to write two essays and were evaluated following an ad hoc rubric compiled by two of the teachers involved in the project. In order to reach a higher degree of reliability, the quantitative analysis made use of correlation studies and distribution of average marks of the tests. Improvement was detected in both groups. However, a greater degree of improvement was found in the experimental group. According to the authors (Talaván et al., 2016a), “the learning experience has influenced writing skills development in the [experimental group], while the [control group] members have improved at a slower pace, […] there is a direct cause-effect relationship between the reverse subtitling process and the improvement of written production” (p. 12). For what concerns participants’ perception, subtitling was identified as useful for a number of factors rated in the following order: material authenticity, activity creativity, and technology-based settings including both subtitling software and
virtual learning environment tools (like chats and forums). The collaborative nature of the project was positively evaluated by participants. In particular, they appreciated the opportunity to evaluate and discuss with peers, their assessment obtained from peers, and the teachers’ supervision. Teachers’ observations confirm the participants’ commitments to the project and their effort in working together. Considering their experience in previous distance-learning projects, the authors appraise collaborative reverse subtitling as especially motivating for English as a second language learners.

2.4. Intralingual subtitling

Investigation on the application of intralingual subtitling in foreign language classrooms is quite limited. However, two such studies have been identified. One was carried out by López Cirugeda and Sánchez Ruiz (2013) combined with revoicing and will thus be considered in Chapter 4, Combined captioning and revoicing. The other study by Talaván, Lertola, and Costal (2016b) will be presented here; its main features are shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3. Experimental studies on intralingual subtitling in chronological order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) and date of publication</th>
<th>Research focus</th>
<th>Target languages (from L2 into L2)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Learning setting</th>
<th>Audiovisual material</th>
<th>Captioning software</th>
<th>Type of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talaván et al., 2016b</td>
<td>Writing skills and incidental vocabulary acquisition</td>
<td>From English into English</td>
<td>41 B1-level undergraduate students in Spain</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>Sitcom</td>
<td>ClipFlair</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Talaván et al. (2016b) present the findings of a study on intralingual captioning (iCap) for the enhancement of writing skills and vocabulary acquisition. The study was carried out with 41 B1-level undergraduate students of English at
UNED, Spain over a month and a half in a distance-learning setting. Participants were asked to provide intralingual subtitles – not a simple transcription of the original dialogue but a condensed version of the spoken text – to ten excerpts of an American sitcom using ClipFlair. According to the authors, when creating intralingual subtitles, learners can foster their written production since they have to pay attention to register and style, cohesion and coherence, as well as spelling. As regards vocabulary learning, while subtitling, students are asked to listen carefully to the original dialogue and identify new L2 words in order to understand the message; then, they should rephrase the text to condense the message so as to respect time and space constraints. Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered through initial and final questionnaires, writing, and vocabulary pre-tests and post-tests, and observation, thus allowing for triangulation. Two observers assessed the writing pre- and post-tests in which students were required to produce two approximately 150 word essays in 60 minutes. The ad hoc evaluation rubric included five assessment criteria (readability, coherence, cohesion, length, and general impression) that were evaluated considering B1-level written production. The vocabulary pre-test, aimed at measuring the productive recall of meaning, was comprised of 50 target words selected in ten video excerpts belonging to the Corpus of Contemporary American English-Academic, plus 25 distracters. Students taking the pre-test did not know that they were going to be tested again. The vocabulary post-test only contained the 50 target words. As for vocabulary tests, it should be noted that target words were selected on the basis of 70 participants, the initial total number which was ultimately reduced to 41, since dropout rate can be quite high in online learning contexts. Quantitative analysis was carried out with a subgroup of participants and target words; it thus does not provide generalisable conclusions. However, qualitative analysis supports learners’ perceptions of an improvement in their vocabulary knowledge. Data analysis of the writing tests provides evidence of the benefits produced by intralingual subtitling on written production, backed up by answers, a final questionnaire, and researchers’ observations.