

The role of translation in foreign language learning has long been a subject of debate. With the advent of more communicative approaches, a tendency to avoid any type of translation in the language classroom became dominant. After contextualising translation in foreign language learning within some relevant teaching methods and approaches, this paper proposes subtitling as an Audiovisual Translation task that can be effectively used in foreign language learning within a communicative perspective.

**KEY WORDS:** translation, audiovisual translation, subtitling, language learning.

# From Translation to Audiovisual Translation in Foreign Language Learning\*

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# De la traducción a la traducción audiovisual en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras.

El papel de la traducción en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras ha sido objeto de debate desde hace mucho tiempo. Especialmente con la llegada de enfoques más comunicativos, ha habido una tendencia a evitar cualquier tipo de traducción en la clase de idioma. Después de contextualizar la traducción en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras dentro de los métodos y enfoques de enseñanza que se han desarrollado a lo largo de los años, este artículo propone la subtitulación como una tarea de traducción audiovisual que puede ser usada de manera efectiva en el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en el marco de una perspectiva comunicativa.

PALABRAS CLAVE: traducción, traducción audiovisual, subtitulación, aprendizaje de idiomas.



#### INTRODUCTION

The role of translation in foreign language (FL) learning has long been a subject of debate (Malmkjaer, 1998; G. Cook, 2010), and, for a good part of the last century, a tendency arose to avoid any type of translation in the language classroom, especially with the advent of more communicative approaches. However, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) (Council of Europe, 2001: 14), learners activate their communicative language competence when performing "various language activities, involving reception, production, interaction or mediation (in particular interpreting or translating). Each of these types of activity is possible in relation to texts in oral or written form, or both". To this regard, an innovation of the CEFRL is in its acknowledgment that mediating language activities "occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies" (ibid: 14). The activity of language mediation, i.e. reformulation of an existing text in order to communicate, can be either oral (interpreting) or written (translation).

Audiovisual Translation (AVT) refers to the transfer of verbal language in audiovisual media and in general it is used as an umbrella term to indicate 'screen-translation,' 'multimedia translation', 'multimodal translation' or 'film translation' (Perego, 2005; Chiaro, 2009; Bollettieri, Di Giovanni and Rossato, 2014). Thanks to the growing interest of scholars in AVT over the last two decades, this discipline is now recognised as "one of the fastest growing areas in the field of Translation Studies" (Díaz Cintas, 2008: 1). AVT can be considered a mediation activity which can be effectively used within a communicative perspective. AVT modes can be divided into two main types: captioning (writ-

ten language transfer procedures) and revoicing (oral language transfer procedures). Captioning includes subtitling which can be interlingual (written translation of the spoken text) or intralingual (condensed transcription of the spoken text, also called bimodal or same language). In addition, two combinations of interlingual subtitling can be considered in language learning: standard and reverse. Standard subtitling refers to spoken second language (L2) text translated into written first language (L1), while reverse subtitling refers to Li spoken text translated into written L2. Revoicing includes dubbing, voice-over, narration, audio description, free commentary and interpreting (Pérez González, 2009).

The European Union has actively recognised the potential of AVT in language learning by funding both the LeViS (Learning via Subtitles)1 project which specifically designed software for carrying out subtitling activities (Sokoli, 2006; Sokoli et al., 2011) and, more recently, the ClipFlair<sup>2</sup> project under the Lifelong Learning Programme (2011–2014). Clip-Flair, based on the LeViS experience, aimed at promoting language learning through interactive clip captioning (subtitling and video annotations) and revoicing (audio description, dubbing and reciting). The language learning web platform resulting from the project offers AVT activities complemented by lesson plans and relevant metadata, suitable for different learning contexts i.e. the classroom, distance and self-learning (Baños and Sokoli, 2015; Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola, 2015; Sokoli, 2015). This paper contextualises translation in foreign language learning within the relevant teaching methods and approaches which have

- <sup>1</sup> http://levis.cti.gr/ Last accessed on 10/7/2017.
- http://clipflair.net/ Last accessed on 10/7/2017.

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been developed over the years. It then presents the advantages and disadvantages of translation which can be extended to the subtitling practice and focuses on the peculiarities of subtitling as a language task. Finally, it proposes AVT —subtitling in particular— as a valid foreign language learning tool to be further explored and utilised.

# METHODS AND APPROACHES IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The twentieth century was characterised by numerous changes and frequent innovations in language teaching, not to mention many competing methods and approaches. Methods can be defined as a set of core teaching practices based on specific theories of language and language learning and teaching. Methods offer a detailed description of content, the role of the learners and the teacher, as well as teaching procedures and techniques. The role of the teacher within this context is to follow the method and no individual interpretations are allowed. Approaches, on the other hand, are a set of principles to be used in the classroom and rely on theories of the nature of language and language learning. Approaches leave space for individual interpretations in the application of principles which can be updated as new practices emerge (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Methods have generally been preferred over approaches because they do not depend on interpretation, skills or the expertise of teachers.

Throughout the twentieth century, there was an intense search for more effective methods with the belief that teachers and researchers would find the 'best method' in language teaching. A shift in this position emerged near the end of the century, as Bialystok and Hakuta (1994: 209) reflected in their book on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, stating

"[t]he inescapable conclusion we draw from the information presented in this book is that there is no single correct method for teaching or learning a second language and that the search for one is probably misguided". As a reaction to established methods, teachers started to adopt an 'eclectic' position. This position leaves teachers to adopt what they consider the most suitable teaching practices —pertaining to different methods—according to their experience. This eclecticism has been criticised because it is too vague to be considered a theory in its own right, and because it relies excessively on individual judgement (Stern, 1992). In this context, Kumaravadivelu (1994: 29) introduced the concept of 'postmethod condition' which describes the growing awareness about the modern state of language teaching methods and "signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method".

Furthermore, it is important to consider some prominent previous methods which greatly influence language teaching and learning to date and which are relevant to the use of AVT in language learning, namely the Grammar-Translation Method, the Reform Movement, the Communicative Language Teaching approach, Task-based Language Teaching and the reintroduction of Translation in Language Teaching within the Postmethod era.

### The Grammar-Translation Method

Looking back to the sixteenth century, modern languages such as English, French and Italian started to gain importance due to political changes in Europe and, in the eighteenth century, they finally entered into the curriculum of study in European schools. Latin, which had been the most studied language until then, was gradually replaced. Nevertheless, modern languages were taught in the same way as

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Latin: the main focus was on grammar through the study of rules and on writing practice through sample sentences and translation. This approach, based on classical language teaching, was also adopted in the nineteenth century and it was known as the Grammar-Translation method (GTM) or traditional method.

In the GTM, the goal of language learning is to be able to read literary texts in the target language or benefit from the mental exercise of language learning. Grammar is learned deductively by presentation and memorisation of grammar rules, which are taught —according to a syllabus— in a systematic order. These rules are usually assimilated through the translations of short passages or sentences from mainly literary texts. Hence, the focus is on reading and writing, and almost no attention is paid to listening or speaking. The basic unit of teaching and language practice is the sentence, and thus focus on the sentence is a characteristic feature of the GTM. Accuracy is promoted and successful learners must achieve highly 'correct' translations. The language of instruction is the students' mother tongue (MT) which is also used for contrastive analysis. Vocabulary is functional to the reading comprehension of texts and words are presented and memorised in bilingual lists. Dictionary study is also encouraged. The teacher is the authority in the classroom, source of information, language model and judge of what is correct and what is not. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000: 18), "[m]ost of the interaction in the classroom is from the teacher to the students. There is little student initiation and little student-student interaction".

The GTM is recognised to have been the dominant method in Europe for 100 years, from the 1840s to the 1940s (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). However, the GTM demotivated people from wanting to learn an L<sub>2</sub> by perpetuating

the idea that language learning merely involved memorisation of grammar rules and vocabulary, 'boring' translation, an excessive and incorrect reliance on the MT and by not facilitating interaction with other language speakers in real life. But well beyond their questionable function in the GTM, translation and the use of the MT, when employed correctly, have proved to have a positive effect in language teaching and learning, as will be discussed in more detail later.

# The Reform Movement

At the end of the nineteenth century, the need to place more attention on the spoken dimension of language competence was expressed through the emergence of the reform movement led by scholars and linguists who promoted alternative approaches to language teaching. The reform movement included the Natural Method and the Direct Method.<sup>3</sup> The underlying common interest of these new methods was to improve the teaching of modern foreign languages through the study of the spoken language, more focus on phonetics, an inductive approach to grammar learning and a greater use of the foreign language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

A German teacher of English, Wilheim Viëtor (1850-1918), proclaimed the inadequacy of the GTM in language teaching and initiated the reform movement in Germany. In order to indicate the path for the progress of research and practical work and try to make the best of the 'existing conditions', the English linguist Henry Sweet presented innovative methodological principles of language teach-

<sup>3</sup> The Direct Method was introduced in the United States by the German linguist Maximilian Berlitz (1852-1921) in his successful Berlitz Language Schools. Thus it was then known as the "Berlitz Method".

ing. Sweet (1899), one of the promoters of the International Phonetic Alphabet, suggested basing the study of all languages on phonetics and encouraged reference to spoken language rather than literary texts. However, Sweet (ibid: viii) refused to "join [the reformers] in their condemnation of translation" and distinguished two types of translation: from L2 into L1 and from L1 into L2. According to this linguist, the great difference is that translating from the L1 into the L2 implies a certain degree of proficiency in that language, whereas translating from the L2 into the L1 does not necessarily presuppose the knowledge of the words or sentences to be translated and often is an easy way to explain the meaning of new vocabulary. The picture-method and giving definitions in the foreign language can also be used in vocabulary teaching but these methods can be inexact and ambiguous at times, while "translation makes knowledge more exact" (ibid: 200). This is because learners can get a better idea of the shade of meaning of a word and learn idiomatic expression by means of translation.

According to Sweet, there are three stages in the use of translation in language learning. In the first stage, translation might be used to convey information or meanings to the learners. Translation is minimised in the second stage since the meaning is extrapolated from the context or explained in the foreign language. In the last stage, contrastive analysis between L1 and L2 can be performed through free idiomatic translation. Sweet identified the fallacy of the GTM in the translation exercise from the MT into the foreign language. If sentences in L2 could be constructed by simply combining words following predetermined rules it follows that translation would only require a good knowledge of grammar and an equally good dictionary. Of course, this is not the case. Instructors who applied the GTM used to give certain rules and lists of words together with (sometimes improbable) sentences to be translated from and into the foreign language to learners from beginner level onwards.

A Danish scholar, Otto Jespersen, and colleague of Sweet (with whom he collaborated in the development of the International Phonetic Alphabet) promoted the Direct Method. Besides acknowledging that translation or skill in translation is not the aim of foreign language teaching, Jespersen (1904: 56) stated that "translation might still be a useful and indispensable means4 in the service of language instruction". To this purpose, Jespersen distinguished four different ways in which translation could be used. (a) Translation into L1 in order to make learners understand the meaning of a word or a sentence by providing the translation in Li, (b) translation into L1 when ensuring that the meaning of a word or a sentence is understood by asking learners to give the translation in Li, (c) translation from L1, which gives learners the opportunity to practice the L2, and (d) translation from Li, which gives teachers the chance to test learners in L2 oral/written production or the understanding of grammar rules. The first two categories (a and b) and the last two (c and d) are closely related to each other, however, one does not necessarily imply the other. To vary methods, Jespersen also suggested alternative ways to present learners with the meaning of words: the direct observation of objects, the mediation of perception through pictures, inferring the meaning from the context and definitions in the target language.

An English scholar and author of many books and articles on English as a Second

Original author's emphasis.



Language (ESL), Harold E. Palmer, proposed a teaching methodology based on linguistics, psychology and pedagogy. His approach could not be described as a direct method and was defined as a multiple approach since it considered various theories. Palmer (1917) was one of the British applied linguists who attempted to develop a more scientific-based selection and presentation of oral language content for ESL courses. This approach is widely known as The Oral Approach or Situational Language Teaching. Beyond showing new interest in vocabulary selection, the innovation of this approach is the notion of 'situation'. All oral language activities are presented in situations in order to provide learners with many opportunities for speaking practice. Similarly to Sweet and Jespersen, Palmer did not discard translation in language teaching. Once again translation was seen as an effective means of conveying the meaning of a given word (semanticising) together with material association, definition and context (inferring). According to Palmer, demonstration by translation consisted in associating the L2 word or sentence with its equivalent in L1. Palmer (1917: 80-81) also declared that "in the face of the obvious benefits to be derived from a rational use of translation as a means of explaining the meanings of new units, a generation of reformers has been and is fighting against any form of translation".

As we have seen, the strong rejection of the GTM which started at the end of the nineteenth century was mainly a reaction against the study of grammar and vocabulary as a memorization exercise, the great focus on reading and writing which did not envisage the oral comprehension and spoken practice of the target language, and the use of literary texts rather than spoken language. However, a closer look shows us that the use of translation was not condemned by all

reformers but rather seen as one of the elements of the GTM to be preserved. In fact, translation was employed as an effective way of conveying the meaning of new words and sentences as well as a way of testing learners' comprehension.

# Communicative Language Teaching

The period between 1950 and 1980 was one of the most lively in the history of approaches and methods in language teaching. The Audiolingual Method emerged as a logical development of the American Army Specialized Training Program and the Structural Approach (Fries, 1945; Lado, 1957). Based on structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology, the Audiolingual Method focused on oral language as consisting of a set of habits to be learned. According to Skinner (1957) language is verbal behaviour and does not differ from nonverbal behaviour. Thus, any learning process -including language learning— occurs when a stimulus triggers a response behaviour which is followed by reinforcement. Both teacher and audiovisual equipment have a central role in Audiolingual courses since they represent the language model. Oral input and instructions are in the target language and, in general, there must be no translation of any kind.

The Audiolingual Method was criticised on the theoretical level by Noam Chomsky (1959), who argued that language was not just a set of habits and preferred to acknowledge the role of abstract mental processing in learning. Thanks to this new psychological perspective in language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s, innovative but less widespread methods like the Silent Way, the Natural Approach and the Total Physical Response came about. These new movements, also known as humanistic approaches, regarded language learning as a process of learners' self-realisation.

In the same period in Great Britain, the traditional teaching method developed in the 1930s —Situational Language Teaching5— was challenged by contemporary applied linguists in view of Chomsky's critique to the structural linguistics theory. Similarly to American structuralism, in Situational Language Teaching, speech is considered the core part of language and knowledge of structure is essential for developing speaking ability. In addition, structures should be presented in meaningful situations to provide learners with opportunities to practice the target language. An inductive approach is adopted in grammar and vocabulary teaching. Learners are expected to induce structures and the meaning of words from the situations in which these are presented. Explanations in either the native or target language are discouraged. Changes in the education system in Europe at that time, however, contributed to the decline of the Situational Approach. One of the major contemporary interests of the Council of Europe was education and, within this field, promoting language teaching among European citizens. The Council of Europe thus implemented the Major Project in Modern Languages between 1964-1974. The project, pursued with energy by its developers, reached "considerable progress towards its major goal, to break down the traditional barriers which fragmented the language teaching profession in Europe and to promote its coherence and effectiveness as a major force for European integration, whilst preserving linguistic and cultural diversity" (Trim, 2007: 10). A group

<sup>5</sup> Situational Language Teaching was also known as the Oral Approach, Situational Approach or Structural-Situational Approach. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 38), "[the Oral Approach] was not to be confused with the Direct Method, which, although it used oral procedures, lacked a systematic basis in applied linguistic theory and practice".

of experts was formed in the early 1970s for the creation of a unit/credit system for adult education. Three central issues involved in the process were examined: new organisation of linguistic content, evaluation within the unit/ credit system and ways of implementing the new system in the teaching and learning of modern languages. One of the members of this group, the British linguist Wilkins (1972, 1976), theorized that language is made of communicative universal meanings which learners need to understand and express. He identified two types of meaning: 'notional' categories (time, quantity, location, etc.) and 'communicative function' categories (requests, denial, complaints, etc.). The notional-functional syllabus organises teaching and learning not on basis of grammatical structures but on communicative functions: the purposes learners need to fulfil.

The Council of Europe applied Wilkins's notional view in a new language syllabus, Threshold Level (Ek and Trim, 1990), which states language learning objectives to develop communicative proficiency. The work of the Council of Europe, and Wilkins's contribution in particular, considerably influenced the development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).6 Although the initial influence on the development of CLT came from British applied linguists such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the notion of CLT was actually founded in the 1970s, when Hymes (1972) coined the term 'communicative competence' to indicate the knowledge of language use in addition to the knowledge of grammar. CLT methodological guidelines were then proposed in the 1980s (Littlewood, 1981; Johnson, 1982; Brumfit, 1984). The goal of language teaching in

<sup>6</sup> Communicative Language Teaching is also referred to as the Communicative Approach, Notional-Functional Approach or Functional Approach.



CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence which, in Richards's (2006: 3) words, can be defined as "the use of the language for meaningful communication". CLT was accepted with enthusiasm by language teachers who started to rethink their syllabi and teaching methodologies in a communicative perspective. Today the basic principles of CLT are widely accepted and they have been applied in a variety of teaching practices. According to Finocchiaro and Brumfit (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001) some of its principles are as follows: meaning is paramount, language learning is learning to communicate, effective communication and comprehensible pronunciation are sought after, any device which helps learners is accepted, attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning, teachers help learners in any way which motivates them to work with language and intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in what is being communicated. What is more, judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible and translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.

# Task-based Language Teaching

In the 1990s, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) came forward "as a recent version of a communicative methodology and [sought] to reconcile methodology with current theories of second language acquisition" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 151), as confirmed by Nunan (2004) who called TBLT a concrete application of CLT for syllabus design and teaching methodology. TBLT draws on CLT principles such as communicative language use, active participation of the learner, a use of activities and language which is meaningful to the learner.

The concept of the task in language teaching has captured more and more attention over the

years and various definitions of 'task' have been provided by scholars and researchers (Long, 1985; Dörnyei, 2002).<sup>7</sup> A 'task' usually indicates a piece of work to be done in everyday life and can be of any type. Nunan (2004: 4)<sup>8</sup> distinguishes the real word (or target task) from the pedagogical task and defines the pedagogical task as:

a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused in mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than manipulate form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right with a beginning, a middle and an end.

In the classroom, in order to perform a task and thus achieve a predetermined goal, learners are actively involved in communication and focus on meaning, rather than on the form of the communication.

Considering the important role of meaning-focused communication in SLA and language pedagogy, Ellis (2003: 3) distinguishes the terms 'task' and 'exercises' arguing that 'tasks' can be defined as "activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use. In contrast, 'exercises' are activities that call for primarily form-focused language use". To this end, Ellis also acknowledges the critique about the view of the learner's role in tasks and exercises. In tasks, learners primarily act as 'language users',

<sup>7</sup> See Ellis (2003: 4-5) for definitions of 'task' from SLA research and pedagogic literature.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Nunan's (2004) *Task-based Language Teaching*—as the subtitle of the book states— is a comprehensively revised edition of Nunan's (1989) well-known *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*.

which is preferable in a communicative perspective, whereas in exercises they primarily act as 'language learners'. However, tasks still leave opportunities to focus on what form to use, while conversely exercises can also allow learners to focus on meaning. The extent to which learners act as 'users' or 'learners' is not categorical but rather variable.

Skehan (1998: 95) proposes another definition of 'task' as "an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some communication problem to solve; there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities; task completion has some priority; the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome". The focus on meaning is also highlighted and, interestingly, Skehan presents the task as a problem-solving activity where, as in real life, the completion of the task is the main concern. The learner is thus seen as a 'language user'.

Continuing with Nunan's definition of the pedagogical task, another relevant factor is that a task should be an independent and self-contained language activity. With this aim, Willis (1996: 52) proposes a task-based learning framework in which the communicative task is central. A single task usually includes receptive (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) and its practical application is as follows:

Learners begin with a holistic experience of language in use. They end with a closer look at some of the features naturally occurring in the language. By that point, the learners will have worked with the language and processed it for meaning. It is then that the focus turns to the surface forms that have carried out the meaning.

In particular, Willis's task-based language framework is divided into three phases: pretask, task cycle and language focus. The pretask phase consists in the introduction of the task's topic and goals. This can be done, for instance, through brainstorming and pictures. The teacher can introduce vocabulary and phrases related to the theme but not new structures, learners have some time to prepare for the task or listening to/reading a text. These pre-task activities help learners to activate schematic knowledge of the communicative situation which will be presented to them and thus motivate them in undertaking the task as in real-life communication. In addition, exposure to L<sub>2</sub> can provide learners with the opportunity to notice the language (Schmidt, 1990) and set the basis for the focus on form which will take place in the last phase.

The second phase is task-cycle —the task itself- and it is further divided into three sub-phases. First, learners perform the task. This may be done when responding to oral or written input by using the language available to them. Teachers should encourage spontaneous communication in the target language. Successful completion of the task usually fosters learners' motivation. Second, in the planning sub-phase, learners can prepare for the next stage which consists of reporting on their task performance to their peers. Reporting in oral or written form has many advantages. Learners, in pairs or groups, can focus on the structure and accuracy of their public presentation, benefit from more language exposure and practice the L2 by taking part in discussions. Once the task-cycle is concluded, it is possible to move on to the last phase: language focus. Language-focused tasks can vary but their common objective is to reflect on input (analysis) and language use (practice). This framework is based on the four key conditions for language learning which Willis identifies: (1) exposure to a rich but comprehensible input of real language; (2)



opportunities for real language use; (3) motivation to listen and read, and use the language to speak and write; (4) focus on language. Willis's framework aims at providing these essential conditions for language learning but, at the same time, it is quite flexible and it can be adapted to different learners and contexts. Carreres and Noriega-Sánchez (2011) acknowledge the recent application of a task-based approach in translator training and how it can benefit practice in the language classroom.

### oThe Postmethod

As discussed above, the continued search for an ideal method for language teaching in the twentieth century led to a criticism of the notion of method itself and to a progressive rejection of any method. According to Brown (2002), there are four main reasons for dismissing methods. Methods are generally too prescriptive and, sometimes, also abstract in nature, which makes their practical application rather difficult. Usually individual methods are clearly applied at the beginning of a language course but tend to be combined with others as the course progresses. Empirical testing of language teaching methods is often impracticable and it is therefore not possible to prove their effectiveness in language learning. Furthermore, political or economic interests can influence the diffusion of certain methods to the detriment of others. Richards and Rodgers (2001) added that in the traditional view of methods, the learner-centeredness concept is absent, which is a major weak point of methods. Methods should be applicable in any context and under any circumstances: teachers should apply a method independently of learners' learning styles, their progress during the teaching program and their interests and needs.

The limitations of methods encouraged the emergence of a Postmethod condition which started in the 1990s and still reflects the current state of affairs of language teaching. According to Kumaravadivelu (2001), this new view of language teaching and teacher education requires a reconsideration of pedagogy in terms of classroom strategies, curricular objectives, instructional materials and evaluation. Furthermore, he identifies three general parameters which can be followed: particularity, practicality and possibility. These parameters are intertwined and interact with each other. Particularity refers to the specific situation in which the teaching and learning takes place. This parameter asserts that pedagogy should be tailor-made to a specific context, taking into consideration teachers and learners as well as political and social settings. Practicality refers to the relationship between theory and practice and aims to overcome the issue of theorists' theory vs. teachers' theory. Teachers should be enabled to put theory in practice and theorize their everyday teaching practice. The last parameter, possibility, is related to factors which shape learners' identity such as their social, economic and cultural environment. The pedagogic parameters just outlined have the potential to provide teachers with some broad guidelines which, although allowing for eclecticism, can encourage consistent reflection on individual teaching practices. In view of the Postmethod condition, González Davies (2004: 6) argues that "the key to efficient training lies with flexible teachers trained to put into action different approaches and methods and to adapt to their students" and addresses her book Multiple Voices in the Translation Classroom "to translation trainers and students, and also to foreign language teachers who wish to include translation activities in a communicative and interactive way in their classrooms".

Over the last decade, within the Postmethod era, there has been a renewed interest among scholars regarding Translation in Language Teaching (TILT). According to G. Cook (2010), after nearly a century of absence it is now time for a revival of TILT. This is in no way a revival of the Grammar-Translation Method but rather an application of translation in language teaching based on a communicative approach (Zojer, 2009). Although there is little empirical research on the benefits of translation in SLA, recent studies have promoted the use of translation in foreign language learning (Malmkjaer, 1998; Stoddart, 2000; Laviosa and Cleverton, 2006; Witte et al., 2009; Carreres and Noriega-Sánchez, 2011).

The reasons for exclusion of translation from academic discourse can be found mainly in socio-political factors and long-established teaching habits. The arguments against the use of translation in second language teaching are still those which were raised at the end of the nineteenth century as an attack on the GTM. These widespread misconceptions are some of the reasons why translation has been largely ignored and often discouraged for so many years. However, G. Cook (2007: 396) points out that:

Yet although translation has long been glibly dismissed in the inner-circle academic literature, it has rather stubbornly refused to die elsewhere, notably in locally written syllabus around the world, and in the teaching of languages other than English. Most significantly, it has persisted in the spontaneous strategies of actual language learners (as opposed to the controlled learners studied in much SLA research) whose natural inclination, as in

other areas of human learning, is to try to apprehend the unknown by relating it to the known



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In fact, quite commonly when performing communicative tasks, learners tend to think of what they want to express in their L<sub>I</sub> and then say it in their L<sub>2</sub>. Sometimes they ask the teacher for the L<sub>2</sub> equivalent of the lexical item or expression they do not know but need in order to complete the sentence (Atkinson, 1987).

The use of translation and the mother tongue are considered strictly related. However, the use of the MT does not necessarily imply translation nor does translation always involve use of the MT. For instance, learners can use their MT in the study of L2 grammar. Conversely, translation can be carried out between two or more languages and none of the languages involved are necessarily the learners' MT. Since the rejection of the Grammar-Translation Method, the MT, together with translation, has been a taboo among language teachers. According to Zojer (2009), translation has carried on a 'shadow existence' in the FL classroom over the years, as language teachers' 'forbidden friend'. V. Cook (2001) notes that since 1880 most teaching methods have discouraged the use of L1 in the classroom either by totally banning it (strongest form) or minimising it (weakest form). The strongest form can take place in classroom situations where the teachers do not speak learners' Li or when learners have different Lis. The weakest form takes place in most classroom situations and can also be defined as a maximisation of the L2. In both forms, L2 use is seen as positive while L1 use, to whatever extent, is often perceived as negative. Deller and Rinvolucri (2002) attempt to reintroduce the use of the MT in the FL classroom (multilingual or monolingual) by proposing more than 90 activities. They (ibid: 3) acknowledge that the aim of



their controversial book was "to free [teachers] from this guilt and to think about ways of using the mother tongue, not just for convenience but as a real and vital resource for [...] learners". In the introduction of the book, Prodromou (as cited in Deller and Rinvolucri, 2002) proposes interesting metaphors which exemplify the role of MT in the language classroom:

- a drug (though with therapeutic potential, it can damage your health and may become addictive);
- 2. a reservoir (a resource from which we draw);
- 3. a wall (an obstacle to teaching);
- 4. a window (which opens out into the world outside the classroom; if we look through it we see the students' previous learning experience, their interests, their knowledge of the world, their culture);
- 5. a crutch (it can help us get by in a lesson, but it is recognition of weakness);
- 6. a lubricant (it keeps the wheels of a lesson moving smoothly; it thus saves time).

Based on their experience, teachers and learners might agree or disagree with these metaphors but all should be aware of the potential of using the MT as well as the danger of misusing it. Atkinson (1987: 242) suggests the existence of:

several general advantages of judicious use of the mother tongue. The most significant of these is presumably that translation techniques form a part of the preferred learning strategies of most learners in most places, the importance of which should not be underestimated.

If the MT plays an essential role in learning any second language, a planned and careful use of it can greatly benefit learners and teachers (Deller and Rinvolucri, 2002). On the one

hand, besides feeling 'safe and grounded' in the FL class, learners can progress faster, especially at the beginner level, while more advanced students can fully enjoy linguistic exercises. In general, learners can be introduced to new vocabulary in a more definite way. In addition, making learners aware of their MT and how to make the most of it might even reduce their dependence on it. Teachers could also benefit from a judicious use of their students' L1 in the classroom since comparing two languages —LI and L2— allows for raising awareness about the collocational, grammatical, lexical, metaphorical, phonological and prosodic aspects of both. Finally, from an intercultural education perspective, it would be a great contradiction to teach an L2 and consequently focus an L2 culture, without making any reference to the learners' L1 and culture.

Benefits of the use of the MT in language learning can be optimized when the MT is combined with translation. When planning and delivering a course, teachers usually take into consideration learners' needs as well as the need to maintain their motivation throughout the entire learning process thanks to the communicative approach and TBLT. Translation seems to fit into this paradigm very well. Besides being a 'preferred learners' strategy', translation could be considered as a fifth skill (Ferreira Gaspar, 2009) along with listening, speaking, reading and writing. In fact, mediation (interpreting or translating), together with reception, production and interaction, is among the communicative language activities described in the CEFRL (2001). Given today's multicultural and globalised society, translation is an especially useful language skill (G. Cook, 2007), and thus, could indeed motivate learners. However, as Dörnyei (as cited in G. Cook, 2007) points out, there are no L2 motivation studies yet available which have investigated L<sub>I</sub> as a motivational variable in the classroom.

Translation as a teaching tool is furthermore acknowledged as having many points in its favour. When scrutinising the 'pros and cons' of using translation in the FL classroom, Zojer (2009) identifies a number of advantages:

- Translation as a cognitive tool for contrastive analysis between L1 and L2 can prevent interference mistakes;
- Translation is an integrative activity closer to real-life language use in opposition to more selective language activities which focus on single aspects of language;
- 3. Translation forces learners to expand their linguistic range since avoidance strategies are not allowed. A text should be translated in all its parts;
- Translation can be used to present new vocabulary effectively. It allows for fulfilment of learners' innate request for semantic representation in L1 thus avoiding possible misunderstandings;
- 5. Translation requires learners to develop reading and comprehension strategies;
- The translation task is more straightforward in terms of instructions compared to some other tasks;
- 7. Translation can assess syntactical, semantic and textual comprehension;
- 8. Translation can improve learners' competence in their own LI;
- 9. Translation enhances metalinguistic reflection;
- Translation fosters the acquisition of transferable skills;
- II. Translation as a mediation activity can be used in learners' professional or personal lives.



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All of these positive elements can also be extended to subtitling. It is necessary, nevertheless, to consider that the translation process in subtitling differs from common translation due to the polysemiotic nature of the AV text. In line with this, there are also other advantages, as well as limitations, to be considered.

The main advantages of subtitling are those related to translation that have been mentioned. However, when subtitling, learners are not only translating the source text (ST) into the target text (TT) but they are also watching, and listening to, an AV input. To this regard, Zabalbeascoa et al. (2012: 21) point out that:

The four language learning skills as traditionally used and as adopted by the Common European Framework may be too restrictive if they are seen as reflecting a strict binary division of just two modes of expression (writing, speaking) and understanding (reading, listening) and with no room for audiovisual communication and multimodality.

Therefore, they propose an enlargement of the traditional 4-skill division by defining six audiovisual skills: AV watching, AV listening, AV reading, AV speaking, AV writing and AV production. Subtitling thus involves four AV skills: AV watching (understanding of the meaning conveyed through a complex combination of verbal and non-verbal signals); AV listening (comprehension of oral elements in connection with visual and other elements of the AV text); AV writing (captioning of the AV text) and, in presence of subtitles as a support or text transcription, AV reading (written comprehension of the AV text).

In addition, a number of factors which differentiate subtitling from other types of translations can benefit language learning. Talaván (2010) defines subtitling —the active produc-



tion of subtitles by language learners— as a task. The subtitling task results in a concrete output which can be shared with teachers and peers. Besides being a motivating activity, it allows for autonomous and collaborative learning. When subtitling, learners must take space and time constraints into account. In this context, word for word translation is rather difficult since literal translation would exceed the number of characters and reading time allowed. Condensing the message is an excellent exercise for learners as they should focus on the meaning and decide whether to partially reduce or omit some information (Lertola, 2015).

As a receptive and mediation activity, standard interlingual subtitling promotes L2 listening comprehension (Talaván, 2010, 2011; Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014a), vocabulary acquisition (Williams and Thorne, 2000; Bravo, 2010; Lertola, 2012), pragmatic awareness (Lopriore and Ceruti, 2015; Incalcaterra McLoughlin and Lertola, 2016) and intercultural education (Borghetti, 2011; Borghetti and Lertola, 2014). Reverse interlingual subtitling fosters L2 writing skills (Talaván and Ávila-Cabrera, 2015; Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014b; Talaván et al., 2017) and pragmatic awareness (Lertola and Mariotti, 2017). These studies indicate the increasing interest of scholars in the application of subtitling and, more in general, of AVT tasks in foreign language learning and encourage further investigation in different settings and with diverse language combinations

Like translation, subtitling also presents some limitations. In order to carry out a subtitling task, no translation experienced is required but learners should have an adequate knowledge of the L2. Low proficiency learners can perform basic subtitling tasks such as captioning key words of the AV text or ordering

ready-made subtitles. As for teachers, finding appropriate AV material can prove to be challenging and preparing subtitling activities can be time consuming. However, the offer of ready-to-use subtitling activities in several languages is increasing. ClipFlair offers more than 350 activities for all CEFRL levels in 15 languages and teachers can also modify these activities according to their leaners' needs (Lertola, 2016).

#### CONCLUSION

Although the pedagogical role of translation in foreign language learning has been often debated, translation has never completely disappeared from the language classroom either upon teachers' or learners' initiatives. This paper has attempted to trace the role of translation throughout the years within the diverse methods and approaches applied in SLA in order to help better understand translation's ambiguous reputation, while emphasising how, at any rate, theorists and teachers have recognised its applications and how learners can benefit from them. The CEFRL's acknowledged importance of language mediation activities which imply the reformulation of a text in order to communicate is a prime example of this reality. Audiovisual Translation —the transfer of verbal language in audiovisual media through captioning or revoicing-fits well into this paradigm, and subtitling in particular, one of the most used and studied AVT modes, has been successfully employed in the foreign language classroom.

Besides offering the pedagogical benefits of translation, due to its multimodal nature, subtitling allows for the development of AV skills, namely AV watching, AV listening, AV writing and, in some cases, AV reading. Furthermore, recent research has reported that subtitling fosters vocabulary acquisition, pragmatic aware-

ness and intercultural education. Subtitling practice is a motivating activity, its time and space constraints challenge learners to avoid word for word translation and, importantly, to identify the core message to be translated. It is a task suitable in classroom and online contexts both for autonomous and collaborative learning. Subtitling has proved to have a great potential and is thus capturing scholars and teachers' attention. Further research in subtitling is desirable in view of a fuller integration of subtitling in the foreign language curriculum.

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