

## **THE ROLE OF SUBTITLES IN TEACHING ENGLISH WITH VIDEOS AT TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES**

**Summary:** The role of subtitles in teaching English with videos at technical universities is examined in the article. The definition and three types of subtitles are specified. The analysis concerning the most efficient type of subtitles for students of technical specialties studying English as a foreign language is provided. The advantages of using subtitled videos, including movies and TV programmes, in English classes at technical universities are presented. Disadvantages of the use of subtitles in the English class are also mentioned in the paper.

**Keywords:** subtitles, English, teaching, students, video, film, movie, TV programme, technical university.

**Introduction.** At present, the number of university English teachers who use various videos in English, including movies and TV programmes, is constantly increasing. This is due to the fact that the aforementioned aids are becoming more and more accessible every day with the appearance of the high-speed Internet and numerous online sources, where an educator can find video clips suitable for presentation of almost any topic of the lesson. Thus, audiovisual aids are becoming effective tools in the process of the English language teaching and studying. The only issue that still remains without a clear and ultimate answer is whether these videos should be subtitled for students' clearer understanding of the heard information in a language foreign for them. If yes, the second question arises: in what language should the subtitles be: L1 (native

for the students) or L2 (the target language, for instance, English)? The problem is even more serious when an English lecturer decides to use authentic videos in their English class at the technical university. It is much harder to predict the presence of the need for subtitles of students of technical specialties than that of students-linguists during watching videos in a foreign language. These two main issues that English teachers working at technical universities face now are examined in the present article.

**Literature review.** Many researchers have studied the efficiency of subtitling and proved that it has a positive effect on learners' vocabulary acquisition. According to Y. Akbulut [as cited in 4, p. 2591], visuals combined with text facilitate vocabulary learning more effectively than the traditional provision of only words' definitions. Koskenin et al. [as cited in 10, p. 1303] studied the influence of subtitled videos on reading vocabulary. The results of their study showed that videos with captions considerably enhanced reading vocabulary knowledge of non-native English speakers. Snyder and Colon [as cited in 9, p.718] stated that those students who had studied English as a foreign language using videos showed better results in vocabulary learning and comprehension compared to those who were not exposed to audiovisual materials. Canning-Wilson & Wallace [2] shared the opinion on the efficiency of subtitled movies. According to their study, films with subtitles significantly motivate foreign language learners to consciously use new vocabularies and idioms.

**Unresolved issues.** Many scholars and researchers have studied the use of subtitles in education, namely in teaching English as a second language, but the role of subtitles in teaching English as a foreign language with the help of videos at technical universities is still not fully examined, and a more in-depth research is needed.

**Aim.** The aim of the research is the comprehensive examination of the role of subtitles in teaching English with videos at technical universities.

**Subtitles and their types.** Subtitles (captions), according to Oxford Dictionary of English [8, p. 1762], are the text displayed at the bottom of a (TV or cinema) screen that transcribes or translates the audio (dialogue/narrative) of the video.

There are three types of subtitles, which can be used in teaching (as well as studying), a foreign language [6]:

1. Interlingual (standard): dialogues heard on the video (e.g. English) are translated into the viewer's native language (e.g. Ukrainian) and shown in the form of an on-screen text.

2. Reversed: a film's dialogues are in the learners' mother tongue language (L1), e.g. Ukrainian, and the subtitles are shown in the target language (L2), e.g. English.

3. Intralingual (also known as bimodal, unilingual, same-language): transcription of dialogues in the same language as heard (e.g. English audio and English subtitles).

Among the above-mentioned subtitling types, the latter is of the greatest value in teaching students English for Special Purposes (ESP) at the technical university. This is due to the fact that intralingual subtitles allow students with an intermediate and advanced level of language proficiency to maximize the gaining of correct English pronunciation and intonation, as well as to enrich their vocabulary and expressions base.

Numerous English teachers are continuously searching for alternative activities that are high in linguistic content but have a communicative feel, encourage students to work in teams, or some new and improved task-based methodology. The work with authentic subtitled videos is highly beneficial for a foreign language teaching at technical universities: with their help the "real world" can be brought into the class, and such videos may have a potential professional focus (i.e. help students develop work-related skills for their future professions), offering, at the same time, a bulk of useful vocabulary/terminology, phrases, and even grammar for a particular lesson or module [3].

To achieve the best results in the English class at the technical university, a video should be no longer than 5-10 minutes and can comprise various combinations of audio and visual input. A clip may be presented with no sound and only English subtitles, or with audio track in English without captions. However, intralingual subtitles are the most favourable combination with a video in English for international students of

technical specialties, who study English. There is no difference, whether the studying is happening during their first or last year at the university.

Students of technical specialties are in need of not only studying new English words but connecting this new terminology with its visual representation, making some kind of an associative link. Intralingual subtitles help to achieve this aim. The studying process with the use of subtitled videos is as follows: ESP students watch a video in English (no matter if the clip is a movie, a TV programme or an extract from them, and whether the theme is primarily scientific or it is a feature film with a plot depicting events related to students' specialty), they hear authentic dialogues or monologue speech in English, see the visual representation of the oral speech in the form of subtitles (in the same language) and eventually combine a heard English word (general or technical) with its written form via associative links in the brain.

When working with a class of different individuals, it is recommended to utilize more than one medium of communication [7]. The efficacy of intralingual subtitles in teaching English at technical universities is explained by the fact that, from the educational perspective, subtitles may be viewed as a third channel of communication, in which the visual and the auditory information are enhanced by the textual. Subtitles present this extra potential for the reception, providing the effective aid that a printed text gives students in need of a backup for their comprehension of oral speech in English. This may be useful for presentation of coherent and memorable information (topic) in the English class [3].

**Movies and subtitles.** At present, subtitles can be easily used in English classes at universities, including technical ones, while they are present on every DVD of a film in English produced in the countries where English is an official language.

Movies as an audiovisual aid help students with (general and technical) lexis recognition, recall, and retaining, grammar, as well as greatly advance listening skills. The blend of sound and image highly motivate students to fulfil all lesson tasks,

especially listening and speaking ones, achieve the studying process aims, and increase students' interest in the studied language [4].

When authentic subtitled films are used in teaching students of technical specialties English, they are usually introduced by pre-viewing and followed by post-viewing activities. This infers that students watch the clip in English with an encouraged reflective attention to information in the oral and written form, having prefixed learning tasks in mind, not just a task of listening attentively.

As an audiovisual material used in such contexts may serve an episode from a TV series or a short extract from a movie or television programme since long viewing time decreases concentration and encourages passive watching to the detriment of language-studying objectives (e.g., improvement of vocabulary and pronunciation, studying new idioms, etc.). When the viewing activity starts, students instinctively generate interrelated cognitive processes which make them focus on the video clip with the aim of picking up what was required prior to the viewing [6].

The positive influence of subtitled movie or programme extracts on students' achievements in the English language studying can be explained by the fact that subtitles may help make the audio input more clear by joining reading comprehension skills (that are frequently more advanced) and listening comprehension [5, p. 69-70].

It is well-known that the most common way of communication and information reception is by means of visual/spoken and written media. For this reason, students are likely to be better stimulated by subtitled audiovisual aids (movies, TV programmes, and extracts from them) than by printed materials (e.g. course-books) to study English.

**Benefits of using subtitles in English teaching at technical universities.** Authentic subtitled movies in English increase authenticity in the students' watching experience and provide greater closeness to the real-life oral speech due to the presence of the original audio, preserving all its peculiarities (real-life emotions, conflicts, humour, authentic pronunciation and intonation, accents, specific lexis, and idioms, etc.). With such movies, students can discover common variations in the communication

of the native speakers of the foreign language, which they study, or non-standard forms by themselves without listening to the teacher's instructions and, simultaneously, increase their cultural and specialty awareness.

English subtitles can assist in the attempt to enrich the linguistic experiences of the students and, at the same time, shed a clear spotlight on what is going on when the English language is used [3].

Authentic oral language input heard in movies, TV programmes, and other videos in English, eventually, should boost students' listening comprehension and speaking skills in direct communication with native speakers of the English language. Mainly, this is due to subtitling that increases language comprehension and leads to additional cognitive benefits, such as a greater depth of processing [5, p. 67]. The aforementioned information is proved by Bird and Williams [1, p. 2], whose research suggests that students who have seen the written version of a spoken word will be able to better perceive and distinguish it when encountering this word in the future.

**Disadvantages of subtitles in teaching English at technical universities.** Often among the drawbacks of subtitles is mentioned the need to read them rather than just watch a movie or a clip and that, in its turn, dissipates students' attention, interrupting the video's narrative flow. When this happens (i.e. students are taken "out of the story"), appears the risk of reducing the authenticity of the viewing experience.

From the pedagogical point of view, with showing only subtitled videos to students of technical specialties, there is a danger of them becoming lazy in terms of listening comprehension or text-dependent (unable to understand the foreign language spoken when faced with a video without subtitles in the future) [3, p. 3-4].

It should be remembered that subtitling may not be advisable for all video aids and students at all language proficiency levels. Intralingual captions may be helpful to students only if the information contains understandable terminology that can be activated and strengthened by the clip viewing. If the vocabulary used in the clip is too advanced, and at least one-third of it has not been listed and worked on in the pre-

viewing activities, subtitles cannot adequately compensate for the rapidity of speech and the hard-to-understand vocabulary. Hence, even with subtitles, immense exposure to authentic videos which have not been properly selected to correspond to students' language expertise level or made accessible to students who are non-native language speakers can be an unproductive pedagogical approach [5, p. 71].

### **Conclusions.**

1. Subtitles (captions) are the text shown at the bottom of a (TV or cinema) screen that transcribes or translates the audio (dialogue/narrative) of the video.

2. There are three types of subtitles: 1) interlingual, 2) reversed, 3) intralingual.

3. Among the types of subtitles, the most beneficial in teaching students English for Special Purposes (ESP) at the technical university is intralingual.

4. When authentic subtitled films are used in teaching students of technical specialties English, they should be introduced by pre-viewing and followed by post-viewing activities to encourage students' reflective attention to oral and written information.

5. The studying process with the use of subtitled videos is as follows: 1) students of technical specialties watch a video in English, 2) they hear authentic dialogues or monologue speech in English and see the visual depiction of the oral speech in the form of subtitles (in English), and 3) the students eventually combine a heard English word (general or technical) with its written form via associative links in the brain.

6. Movies as an audiovisual aid in teaching English at technical universities help students with recognition, recall, and retaining of general and technical vocabulary, grammar, as well as greatly improve listening skills.

7. There are the following advantages of using subtitles in English teaching at technical universities: 1) increase of authenticity in the students' watching experience, 2) provision of greater closeness to the real-life oral speech, 3) increase of language comprehension and depth of the spoken language processing by students, 4) ultimately,

improvement of students' listening comprehension and speaking skills in direct communication with native speakers of the English language.

8. Among the disadvantages of using subtitles in teaching English at technical universities are: 1) the need to read captions rather than just watch a movie or a clip may dissipate students' attention, interrupting the video's narrative flow, and, subsequently, the authenticity of a viewing experience may decrease, 2) students of technical specialties may become lazy in terms of listening comprehension and/or text-dependent (unable to understand the foreign language spoken when faced with a video without subtitles in the future), 3) if the vocabulary used in the clip is too advanced and has not been worked on in the pre-viewing activities, intralingual subtitles will not help students understand the spoken language and the plot better and will not be able to adequately compensate for the speech rapidity and the complex terminology.

9. In order to prove or refute the examined beneficial or, vice versa, hindering role of subtitles in teaching English with videos at technical universities, English lecturers need to conduct practical experiments among their students.

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## **РОЛЬ СУБТИТРІВ У НАВЧАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ З ВИКОРИСТАННЯМ ВІДЕО В ТЕХНІЧНИХ УНІВЕРСИТЕТАХ**

### **Анотація**

У статті досліджується роль субтитрів у навчанні англійської мови з використанням відео в технічних університетах. Надано визначення субтитрів і зазначено особливості їх 3 видів. Проаналізовано, який із видів субтитрів є найефективнішим для навчання англійської мови як іноземної студентів технічних

спеціальностей. Представлено переваги використання відеозаписів із субтитрами, включаючи фільми й телепередачі, на заняттях із англійської мови в технічних університетах. У роботі також вказані недоліки використання субтитрів на заняттях із англійської мови.

**Ключові слова:** субтитри, англійська мова, навчання, студенти, відео, фільм, телепередача, технічний університет.

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## **РОЛЬ СУБТИТРОВ В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ С ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕМ ВИДЕО В ТЕХНИЧЕСКИХ УНИВЕРСИТЕТАХ**

### **Аннотация**

В статье исследуется роль субтитров в обучении английскому языку с использованием видео в технических университетах. Дано определение субтитров и указано особенности их 3 видов. Проанализировано, какой из видов субтитров является самым эффективным для обучения английскому языку как иностранному студентов технических специальностей. Представлены преимущества использования видео с субтитрами, включая фильмы и телепередачи, на занятиях по английскому языку в технических университетах. В работе также указаны недостатки использования субтитров на занятиях по английскому языку.

**Ключевые слова:** субтитры, английский язык, обучение, студенты, видео, фільм, телепередача, технический университет.