Diplomarbeit
über das Thema

Teaching Audiovisual Translation
**Theoretical Aspects, Market Requirements,
University Training and Curriculum Development**

dem Prüfungsamt bei der

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vorgelegt von
Christine Sponholz

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Introduction

The political and economic unification process of Europe has resulted in a growing need for language transfer in the audiovisual media. The European Commission has recognised the importance of language transfer in television and cinema as a means of promoting understanding between the different national cultures of the peoples of Europe and therefore supports the transfer of foreign language films or television programmes. Additionally, the globalisation of communications has resulted in a proliferation of audiovisual media distribution. The increase in transmission capacity and the growing number of broadcasting channels that result from it have led to an increased demand for foreign television programmes to fill the channels' programme schedules.

'Audiovisual language transfer' denotes the process by which a film or television programme is made comprehensible to a target audience that is unfamiliar with the original's source language (Luyken 11). Among the different forms of audiovisual language transfer, subtitling is gaining growing importance due to several factors. First, the ever-increasing demand for foreign television programmes to feed the accelerating number of television channels has led to a growing interest in subtitling as a relatively inexpensive way of audiovisual language transfer even in countries where dubbing has been the rule. Moreover, among audiences there is a growing demand for authenticity that goes hand in hand with a better knowledge of foreign languages in the unified Europe. Furthermore, in many countries, subtitles are being used as a means to revive and teach minority languages, improve mother-tongue literacy, teach a country's official language to immigrant groups and promote foreign language competence. Another trend in many countries is the increase in subtitling of television programmes for the benefit of the deaf and hard-of-hearing. This trend is the result of hard work on the part of lobbyist groups that fight for the right to entertainment and information for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. In the United Kingdom, for example, legislation was introduced in 1990 that stipulated that at least 50% of television programmes should be subtitled for the hearing impaired by the end of 1998 (Ivarsson and Carroll 7). Other countries such as Germany, Italy and Spain still lag far behind these figures. However, the increasing awareness of the rights of the deaf and hard-of-hearing will result in an increased amount of subtitled television programmes even in these countries. Additionally,

new digital technologies, particularly the advent of DVD (Digital Versatile Disc), will make it possible to distribute various types of language transfer simultaneously. A DVD disc, for example, can contain up to eight different dubbed versions and up to thirty-two different subtitled versions of a language programme or film. All these developments will lead to a growing demand for high-quality subtitles, a demand that can only be met by professional subtitlers who possess special expertise.

It is the aim of this thesis to show that the need for professional subtitlers can only be satisfied if institutions of higher education in Europe offer the opportunity of specialized tuition to translation students who want to enter the subtitling profession. I intend to prove that subtitling poses demands on the subtitler that differ considerably from the demands text translation poses on the translator, and that, as a consequence, translation students need to be equipped with a set of special skills that complement their translation skills to be able to produce high-quality subtitles. Over the course of the thesis I will examine precisely what constitutes these skills, whether they are recognised and expected by the market and how, if at all, they are conveyed at higher education institutions that offer courses on audiovisual translation. In a final chapter I will explain why subtitling should also be introduced as a module in translation studies in Germany and I will provide a suggestion on how this could be done at my home university.

The first part of the thesis covers theoretical aspects. It examines the actual task of subtitling, i.e. the work process, norms concerning layout, presentation and editing of subtitles, the peculiarities of subtitling that arise from its audiovisual context and the difficulties they pose on the subtitler. The second chapter presents the results of a survey on market requirements and employment criteria adopted by subtitling agencies in Europe. The third chapter examines course offerings on screen translation at universities in different European countries with a special focus on course contents and assessment criteria for assignments. The final chapter examines the situation in Germany with regard to subtitling training and the subtitling industry and offers suggestions for curriculum development at the School of Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies of the University of Mainz in Germersheim.

Research questions:

- Which criteria need to be fulfilled to produce high-quality subtitles?

- Does subtitling pose special demands on a translator and therefore require special skills that are not taught in a 'traditional' translation degree?

- If so, what exactly constitutes these skills?

- How can they be taught?

- Does the market expect them of new employees?

- Are they being taught at universities that offer courses on subtitling?

- How is the situation in Germany with regard to university course offerings on subtitling, the television market and the subtitling industry?

- What benefits could subtitling provide for translation students, television audiences and the free market in Germany?

It is not the aim of this thesis to offer universally applicable answers to these questions but rather to provide incentives for further research in the field of teaching audiovisual translation and to help define more precisely which questions need to be resolved in order to improve teaching.

The system of documentation used follows MLA style.

1 Theoretical aspects

1.1 Forms of audiovisual language transfer

As mentioned above, there exist several forms of audiovisual language transfer. The main methods are dubbing, subtitling, voice-over, narration and free commentary.

● **Dubbing:**

Dubbing is the replacement of a programme's voice track by a version translated into another language which attempts to reproduce the timing, phrasing and lip movements of the original (Luyken 73).

The aim of dubbing is to create the illusion of allowing the audience to experience the production in their own language without diminishing any of the characteristics of the original (Dries 9). A programme is well dubbed when no one is aware of the fact that he or she is watching a dubbed version (Dries 9).

● **Subtitling:**

Subtitles are condensed translations of original dialogue, which appear as lines of text usually positioned towards the bottom of the screen (Luyken 39). The subtitles follow the rhythm of the original and appear and disappear synchronised with the corresponding section of original dialogue.

● **Voice-over:**

Voice-over is the faithful translation of original speech, which is delivered in an approximately synchronous way (Luyken 80). It contains elements of dubbing and subtitling since it is transmitted orally but the contents of the original are condensed in a way which is similar to subtitling and no effort is being made to achieve lip-synchronicity (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 39). Except for Poland, where voice-over is the preferred method of audiovisual language transfer for all genres, voice-over is normally used in a monologue context, such as interviews (Luyken 80). Usually the person starts talking for a few seconds, than the volume is reduced and the voice-over is inserted.

● **Narration:**

Narration is basically an extended voice-over, which is used for the language transfer of narratives rather than spontaneous interviews. The difference between narration and voice-over is mainly a linguistic difference since the narrative is usually prepared in advance and the re-voiced narration often has a more formal grammatical structure than the voice-over, which tends to have the more spontaneous structure characteristic of casual speech (Luyken 80).

● **Free commentary:**

In a free commentary, no attempt is made to faithfully reproduce the original speech. It is rather used as a means of adapting a foreign language programme for an audience that speaks a different language. The commentary is an original creation in itself and its content differs from the original programme's soundtrack with information being added or taken away (Luyken 82).

Common to all forms of audiovisual language transfer is the requirement of synchronicity between image and sound. In the case of subtitling, the coordination of sound and image is made even more complex with the addition of a textual component (De Linde 2). This textual component distinguishes subtitling from other forms of audiovisual language transfer and brings it closer to the field of text translation. The focus of this thesis will be on subtitling as the form of audiovisual language transfer that shares most similarities with translation and therefore offers interesting aspects for the training of prospective translators.

1.2 The evolution of subtitling

1.2.1 History

Subtitles evolved out of the 'intertitles', which were used in the early days of film as devices to convey the dialogue of the actors to the audience. Text was printed on cardboard, filmed and inserted between sequences of the film. Those intertitles already showed similar characteristics to modern subtitles in that each intertitle attempted to communicate a complete idea, and punctuation was used to facilitate the reading, such as the use of three dots at the end of an intertitle to indicate that

the sentence was not yet finished. In the era of silent films the translation of films was a relatively easy task. The original intertitles were removed, translated, printed on cardboard, filmed and reinserted in the film. The very first subtitles in the modern sense, however, were also already developed in the early years of silent films. In 1909 a patent was registered by M.N. Topp for a kind of slide projector that would project the subtitles onto the screen beside or below the intertitles (Ivarsson and Carroll 9). The invention of sound film in 1927 led to a gradual disappearance of the intertitles and the problem of language transfer in the film industry took on new dimensions. At first, the big film studios solved the language problem by shooting several versions of the same film in different languages using different teams of actors. This multilingual filming method was soon found to be too expensive (Ivarsson 7) and filmmakers found a different solution by letting other actors speak the parts translated into the target language and replacing the original soundtrack by the new recording: dubbing as a form of audiovisual language transfer was born. By 1929 the major US production companies already had fully equipped dubbing studios in Europe with a permanent staff of actors (Ivarsson and Carroll 10). However, subtitling as a less complicated and cheaper method of language transfer also developed further. The first countries to use subtitles were Denmark and France in 1929. Soon different preferences of the two main methods of audiovisual language transfer developed in the individual European countries. Dubbing was favoured in nationalistic countries such as Germany, Italy and Spain, since it served to defend the national language. With the rise of Fascism, it was even used as a form of censorship (Ivarsson and Carroll 10). In addition, dubbing became the preferred form in larger European countries as it attracted a larger audience. In these countries with a large domestic language market investment in the considerably higher cost of dubbing paid off, while in the smaller linguistic areas, such as the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, the cheaper method of subtitling was favoured. Thus, it was essentially for economic, not for aesthetic reasons that countries opted for either method (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 62). Another strong argument in favour of dubbing was (and still is in some countries) the high level of illiteracy in many countries at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 137).

The technique of inserting subtitles onto the film was improved over the years. Different methods were tried from photochemical subtitling over optical subtitling to the introduction of laser subtitling in the late 1980s[1].

1.2.2 The current situation

The European audiovisual market is characterised by linguistic fragmentation. Aside from the five major European languages, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish and the four minor languages Danish, Dutch, Greek and Portuguese, there are a number of traditional languages that are used as official languages in certain regions such as Basque and Catalan in Spain, Irish Gaelic in Ireland and Welsh in the United Kingdom (Luyken 10). With the enlargement of the EU, Eastern European languages such as Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Slovak or Russian will acquire greater weight in the European audiovisual market as well (Luyken 11).

In terms of national preferences, a decision on which of the two main forms of audiovisual language transfer to choose is still primarily based on economic considerations and habit rather than on cultural characteristics and aesthetic considerations (De Linde 1). Countries with relatively smaller audiences tend to favour subtitling as the cheaper method while larger countries usually favour dubbing as it potentially attracts larger numbers of viewers. Subtitling is favoured in the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Portugal, Greece, Luxembourg and most of the Eastern European countries while dubbing is the preferred alternative in Germany, Spain, Italy, France and Britain. However, this division has ultimately become less pronounced, not least of all due to economic pressure which forces broadcasters in high-cost dubbing countries such as Germany and France to revert to a mix of the different methods of language transfer and to consider subtitling in particular as the cheaper alternative in order to reduce total costs (Luyken 38). Moreover, audience attitudes are changing. In Spain for example, subtitling was traditionally linked with an idea of elitism and exclusivity, since it was mainly 'art films' that were subtitled (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 30). With a growing number of 'commercial films' also being subtitled in Spain, this attitude has changed and the educational value of subtitles in foreign language learning and in re-strengthening languages such as Catalan or Basque, which were

neglected under Franco, has been recognised. As a consequence, in cinemas in large Spanish cities such as Madrid, Barcelona or Valencia, it is already possible to watch a given film in two versions, either dubbed or subtitled (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 32). In France, well into the 1990s, only two or three prints of a popular film used to be subtitled for art-house audiences for every 95 copies that were dubbed for mainstream cinemas. Today, up to 50% of the film prints distributed in France are subtitled, and subtitled versions are screened all over the country (Ivarsson and Carroll 1). Conversely, in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, dubbed versions of films have been introduced into the home video market (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 32).

Audience preferences are influenced by several factors such as age, educational level or knowledge of foreign languages. However, they are mainly determined by familiarity with either of the two key methods of audiovisual language transfer and therefore might be transformed by familiarisation with other alternatives (Luyken chapter 5).

To conclude, even though there still exists a division between 'subtitling countries' and 'dubbing countries' in Europe, this division is becoming less pronounced and there is a tendency to mix the two main methods of audiovisual language transfer for economic reasons as well as due to changes in audience attitudes.

1.3 Dubbing versus subtitling

In view of the heated discussion that has taken place over the years between the supporters of dubbing and those in favour of subtitling, it seems appropriate, despite the developments described above, to look at the advantages and disadvantages of both methods of audiovisual language transfer. The cost factor that clearly speaks in favour of subtitling, which is between ten and twenty times less expensive than dubbing, has been pointed out so many times (see for example Luyken 102-105; Ivarsson and Carroll 36; Díaz Cintas 2001c, 48) that there is no need for further discussion at this point.

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[1] For a detailed description of the various techniques see Ivarsson and Carroll chapter 2.

1.3.1 Subtitling

Subtitling is generally criticised for a number of disadvantages, which are fairly obvious to the viewer. A successful summary of the main disadvantages is provided by Ivarsson and Carroll (34-35). First, subtitles divert the viewer's attention from the picture. This particularly affects viewers who are not accustomed to watching subtitled films and who, therefore, either miss major parts of the film itself while reading the subtitles, or only read a fragment of the subtitles, thus missing relevant information.

Furthermore, subtitles obscure parts of the picture and distort the composition of the film as an artistic production. This distortion increases where black boxes are used to facilitate the reading of the subtitles, as is often the case for television and video subtitles. Furthermore, subtitles often flit in and out of the picture without being synchronised with the takes, disregarding the film's rhythm and intention, and irritating the eye. As a consequence, watching subtitled films or television programmes often becomes a straining experience requiring a high degree of concentration.

The advantages of subtitling are not as obvious at first sight. However, there are some strong arguments in favour of subtitling: First, the viewer hears the original sound of the film with all the nuances intended by the director, captured by the actors, and reflected in the rhythm of the words, the pauses and the intonation (Ivarsson and Carroll 34). Subtitling does not interfere with the close link between the spoken words in the original language and gestures, body language and facial expressions; whereas different words in another language laid over these visual elements can often lead to bizarre results (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 48). Thus, in preserving the original sound with intonation, pauses and word rhythm and the interaction between spoken words and body language subtitling preserves authenticity.

Furthermore, subtitles have a strong educational value, both in the acquisition of foreign languages as well as in the improvement of reading capacities. In subtitling countries such as Denmark or Sweden, the population has a far better command of English than in other countries and it has been shown that the reading capacities of children in the Netherlands are higher than those of children

from dubbing countries. In addition, some claim that there is a co-relation between the acceptance of subtitles and a higher tolerance towards other cultures (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 48).

Finally, subtitles serve to preserve and revive minority languages such as Catalan, Basque and Welsh and they are an important language-learning tool for immigrant groups (Luyken 28-29).

1.3.2 Dubbing

The major disadvantage of dubbing is that authenticity is lost with the loss of the voices of the original actors who have been instructed by the director on line delivery. The text of a dubbed film can be changed beyond recognition and can be censored to conform to local morals or political viewpoints without the audience having the slightest suspicion (Ivarsson and Carroll 36). Often, not only the text but also the content of the script is altered for the sake of better lip synchronisation and changes are made that not only affect finer details but even the main point of a scene.

The prerequisite of lip-synchronicity together with a relaxed attitude of dubbing directors towards linguistic responsibility since they deal with spoken language can even lead to dubbing interfering more with the syntax and grammar of the target language than subtitling does by condensing the dialogue (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 47).

The advantages of dubbing are just as obvious as the disadvantages. First, the original composition of the picture is preserved and the attention of the viewer can focus undivided on the image. Furthermore, those who have reading difficulties or are illiterate can understand a dubbed version, a factor that is decisive in many countries. When executed well, it is difficult to distinguish a dubbed film from the original, thus having the same effect on the target audience as the original had on the source audience, an accomplishment audiovisual language transfer endeavours to achieve.

1.3.3 Summary

As mentioned above, the division between supporters of subtitling and of dubbing has recently become less pronounced and will continue that trend in the future. Luyken (chapter 9) provides an interesting suggestion to determine the choice of method according to the genre of a television programme, i.e. to use subtitles for programmes where the linguistic content and the character of a programme are closely linked (such as cultural programmes and educational broadcasts) and to dub programmes where the entertainment is the predominant factor (such as cartoons, sport events and fictional programmes). This would lead to a mix of methods within programme schedules rather than the use of one method based on national habit.

1.4 Different forms of subtitling

● Interlingual and intralingual subtitles

The two main categories of subtitles that need to be distinguished are interlingual subtitles for the benefit of foreign language audiences and intralingual subtitles for the benefit of the deaf and hard-of-hearing. The soundtrack of a film or television programme carries two sources of information: linguistic information derived from the dialogue and non-linguistic information such as sounds and images, which also contribute to the overall meaning of a programme (De Linde 1). Interlingual subtitles transfer the meaning of utterances while relying on the remainder of the soundtrack to convey the full meaning of a film sequence, whereas in intralingual subtitles many of the soundtrack elements also have to be transferred. The different requirements of the target viewers impose different objectives on the two forms of subtitling. The objective of intralingual subtitling is to substitute dialogue and other important features of a soundtrack by a written representation, while interlingual subtitling aims to achieve something approaching translation equivalence (De Linde 2). Apart from their monolingual aspect, intralingual subtitles also differ from interlingual subtitles in several ways. Aside from conveying important features of the soundtrack, such as 'steps on the stair' to explain a panic stricken face of a young woman alone at home, they also have to indicate who is speaking, either by giving the character's name or simply stating 'man' or 'child'. Furthermore, viewer reading speeds among the deaf and

hard-of-hearing are usually far below those among hearing audiences. As a consequence, the rules concerning the duration of intralingual subtitles differ greatly from those concerning interlingual subtitles. Despite these differences, however, both types of subtitling share strong common elements: they take place in the same audiovisual context, both convert spoken dialogue into written text, and in both subtitling forms, language is being transferred between distinct linguistic systems while functioning interdependently with another, visual, semiotic system (De Linde 1). Nevertheless, intralingual subtitles constitute an independent scientific platform, their main function being a communication, not a translation aid. This thesis focuses on interlingual subtitles as a special form of translation.

● **Open and closed subtitles**

Open subtitles are inserted onto the television image electronically prior to transmission and are seen by all the viewers when the programme is broadcast. They are mainly used for interlingual subtitles at cinema screenings or foreign television programmes.

Closed subtitles are hidden in the blanking lines of the broadcast signal. With the help of a decoder and a character generator the signals are decoded and the subtitles can be seen on the television screen when a specific teletext page is selected. Unlike open subtitles, closed subtitles are optional and only appear on the screen when selected by the viewer. Closed subtitles are mainly used for intralingual subtitles intended for the hard-of-hearing television audience (Ivarsson and Carroll 129-130).

● **Live subtitling**

Not unlike simultaneous interpreting, in live subtitling subtitles are being inserted live on the screen with a time lag of only a few seconds. So far, this method has been mainly used for the benefit of the hard-of-hearing in order to transfer live interviews, news broadcasts, etc. However, in the Netherlands, experiments have been conducted with interlingual live subtitling as well. With the advent of DVD, interlingual live subtitling is likely to develop into a valuable alternative to voice-over in countries where audiences are accustomed to reading subtitles (Karamitroglou, 1999).

● **Pivot subtitling**

In pivot subtitling, the programme is first subtitled into a pivot language (often English), which is better known in the target language culture than the source language. The exact timing of all subtitles is downloaded to a disk. Then, subtitles in new language versions are produced by using the timing of the pivot subtitles and merely retranslating the words on the disk. No further technical work needs to be done. The practice of pivot subtitling implies potential pitfalls such as repetition of translation errors present in the pivot subtitles or the transfer of pivot-language features not acceptable in the target language (Gottlieb 2001, 32). It is therefore not excessively used.

● **Subtitling for the blind**

According to Ivarsson and Carroll (138), a system has been developed in Sweden in which the subtitles in the teletext are transmitted to a speech synthesizer, which allows blind viewers to receive an oral rendering of the subtitles via an earphone. Blind viewers hear both the original sound and the translation. However, the system has not yet been put into operation commercially.

In this thesis, the term 'subtitling' refers to open interlingual subtitles, which transfer original dialogue from one language into another and from spoken dialogue into a written, condensed translation, which appears on the screen.

1.5 The work process

1.5.1 Work station and tools

A subtitler with access to state-of-the-art equipment works at a personal computer, which is connected to a video recorder with a monitor, a time coder and a keyer to generate the subtitles on the monitor screen. The computer is equipped with a word processing program specially designed for subtitling that displays, preferably both on the computer screen and the video monitor, the subtitles as they will appear on the television or film screen (Ivarsson and Carroll 143). The

appearance and disappearance of the subtitles is regulated by the time codes. A time code provides an 8-digit address for every frame of a videotape or every image of a film. The numbers in a time code indicate "hours: minutes: seconds. frames" (e.g.: 10:15:23.08). The number of frames per second depends on the system and on the standard (film or video). PAL and SECAM, the two systems mainly used in Europe, have 25 frames per second, whereas NTSC, which is used in the USA and Japan, has 30 frames per second. Film material has only 24 frames per second and therefore at least one frame less than video material. The moment when a subtitle appears (in-time) and disappears (out-time) is determined by the time code. When the videotape is played back, the time code information is picked up and the subtitles are displayed accordingly by the connected subtitling equipment (Ivarsson and Carroll 141).

Presently, there are two principal time code formats in common use: the *Longitudinal Time Code (LTC)* and the *Vertical Interval Time Code (VITC)*. In the case of LTC, the time code is recorded alongside the images on one of the audio tracks. This has the major disadvantage that time code signals cannot be read at slower jog shuttle speeds and still-frame, an indispensable prerequisite for the spotting (the defining of the in- and out-times) of the subtitles (Ivarsson and Carroll 141-142). In addition, it is almost impossible to copy an LTC code, since after the first copy, the time code signal is so distorted that an error-free reading can no longer be guaranteed. In the case of VITC, the time code is recorded outside the visible picture on the so-called 'blanking lines' (usually the lines 19-21). A VITC can be read at very slow jog shuttle speeds and even still-frame and is therefore the only useful time code for subtitlers (Ivarsson and Carroll 142).

Subtitlers today either work on the premises of subtitling or television broadcasting companies or, which is more often the case, as freelancers. The tools they need for their work are spell-check programs, translation tools such as Trados, CAT (Computer Assisted Translation) or MT (Machine Translation), specialised dictionaries and of course online research machines and dictionaries[2].

1.5.2 Task description[3]

The task of subtitling can be divided into several stages.

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[2] For a detailed description of a subtitler's tools see Ivarsson and Carroll 149-151.

The first step, after the client has delivered a copy of the material to be subtitled, is to either scan (if it is film material) or copy (if it is video material) the client's version onto video. When scanning or copying the material, it is extremely important that the copied version has the same time code as the original supplied by the client. This is particularly the case when film material is scanned onto video, since this process involves generating a new time code due to the fact that film material has one frame less per second than video material has (24 frames in film and 25 frames in PAL or SECAM videos). In a 100-minute film the discrepancy between film and video amounts to 4 minutes. Therefore, in order to have the subtitles appear at the same moment in the video version as they do in the film version, one frame per second has to be added during the scanning process.

Once an in-house master copy with an identical time code has been made, several working copies of the master are made. The subtitler works with a working copy and, ideally, a post-production dialogue list which includes names, an explanation of abbreviations, local jokes and expressions that have been used, the origin of quotations, as well as the name of a contact person to resolve linguistic problems. The importance of a good dialogue list for the quality of subtitles has been stressed by a number of authors (see Díaz Cintas, 2001a; Dries; Luyken).

Preferably, the subtitler watches the entire film or programme before starting with the actual subtitling, noting potential problems and listing references that will require research. Afterwards, he[4] spots the subtitles, i.e. he defines the in- and out-times of each subtitle. This process is also called timing or cueing. Spotting is one of the most important aspects of a subtitler's work and involves striking a balance between the rhythm of the film, the speech rhythm of the individual characters and the viewer's reading rhythm. When spotting, the subtitler has to take cuts and sound bridges into consideration and has to strive at achieving the highest possible level of synchronism between the spoken word and the actual subtitle (Ivarsson and Carroll 82). In some countries such as Spain, the task of spotting and phrasing the subtitles is divided between two different persons, sometimes even three if a typist feeds the translated subtitles into the computer (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 106). Many authors claim that this division leads to a considerable deterioration of the

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[3] Statements that are not referenced contain information gathered in a one-week subtitling course given by Mary Carroll from TitelBild GmbH in Berlin.

quality of the subtitles, since the spotting and the phrasing of the subtitles are inextricably linked (Ivarsson and Carroll 12; Wildblood 42; Díaz Cintas 2001a, 208).

When the subtitles for the programme or film are completed, they are proofread by the subtitler and, if possible, at least one other person before being given to the client who generally wants to view a VHS-copy of the subtitles together with a script before they are engraved on the film or recorded for broadcasting or distribution. After the client has expressed his approval, the production can be released and the files containing the subtitles are submitted to the technicians who either convert them for the laser engraving (for film material) or key them in on a Digibeta tape (for video material).

1.6 Guidelines for good subtitling

One of the major problems of the subtitling industry is the lack of a unified code of subtitling practices, which would establish a clearly outlined standard for high-quality subtitles. Instead, within the various European countries, different subtitling conventions are applied. However, the need for a unifying code of subtitling practices in order to improve subtitling quality and thus heighten acceptance of subtitles among audiences has been recognised by the subtitling industry and several suggestions for a set of subtitling standards in Europe have been made, such as the "Code of Good Subtitling" (1998) by Ivarsson and Carroll, "A Proposed Set of Subtitling Standards in Europe" (1998) by Fotios Karamitroglou or the *ITC Guidance on Standards for Subtitling* (1997) published by the Independent Television Commission. The following chapter provides a summary of these suggestions with regard to layout, duration, punctuation and text editing of subtitles[5].

1.6.1 Layout

● **Position on the screen**

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[4] To facilitate reading, only the male form will be used when referring to the subtitler.
[5] To facilitate reading, recommendations quoted in this section are not referenced individually. However, they all stem from the sources indicated above and do not express personal opinions.

Subtitles should be positioned at the bottom of the screen and cover an area of the screen, which is usually occupied by less important image action. In exceptional cases, subtitles can be positioned towards the upper part of the screen if visual material of vital importance for the comprehension of the film is displayed in an area where the subtitles would otherwise be inserted.

● **Text positioning:**

In cinema screening, subtitles should always be presented centrally to avoid discrimination of viewers sitting to the far right or far left side. In general, television subtitles should also be centralised since most of the image action circulates around the centre of the screen and centralised subtitles thus enable the eye of the viewer to travel a shorter distance from the image to the start of the subtitle. An exception, however, are two-line subtitles that render dialogue fragments. Those should be presented left-centred, each line introduced by a dash to indicate direct speech.

● **Number of lines:**

A maximum of two lines of subtitles should be presented at a time (exception: bilingual subtitles which can have up to four subtitles in two different languages). A one-line subtitle should be placed on the bottom line rather than the top line in order to minimise interference with the background image action.

● **Number of characters per line:**

The maximum number of characters per subtitle line ranges between 35 and 40, depending on the standard (cinema or television) and the target audience (subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing usually contain more characters). An increase in the number of characters of over 40 per line leads to a reduction of legibility because it requires a reduction of the font size.

● **Font colour and background:**

Subtitles for the cinema are always white since the subtitles are laser engraved on the emulsion coating of the film and the subtitles are in fact the absence of the emulsion on the film surface. Subtitles for television can be presented in different colours and against a darker strip usually referred to as a black box, letter box or

ghost box. Coloured subtitles can be used as an identification aid in subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, however, in interlingual open subtitles they should be avoided, since they are more blurred and less clearly defined than white letters which makes them more difficult to read. They should be presented against a grey, see-through ghost box, which gives the impression that it does not entirely block the background image while at the same time it facilitates reading.

1.6.2 Temporal parameters/ duration

● **Duration**

The average reading speed of television viewers ranges between 2½ and 3 words per second. Therefore, a full two-line subtitle containing 14-16 words should remain on the screen for a maximum time of approximately 5½ seconds. A full one-liner should be kept on the screen for about 3 seconds and one and a half lines for about 4 seconds. The minimum duration for a single-word subtitle is 1½ seconds. The importance of keeping the subtitles on the screen long enough to allow ample reading time is equal to the importance of not exceeding the duration times indicated above, since this would result in an automatic re-reading of the subtitle.

Film subtitles require about 30% less reading time since legibility is improved by the large cinema screen, the increased letter size and the greater resolution of the images.

● **In-times and out-times**

Subtitles should appear up to ¼ of a second after the start of speech in order to give the viewer time to identify the speaker and to guide the eye towards the bottom of the screen anticipating the subtitle. However, this rule should not be applied to monologues or narrative sequences. In such cases, it is preferable to synchronise the in-times of the subtitles strictly with the onset of speech.

There is no need to remove the subtitles the moment the characters finish speaking. However, they should not be left on the image for more than two seconds after the end of an utterance to preserve the illusion of synchronicity between what is said and what appears as a text on the screen.

● Consecutive subtitles and camera takes

At least four frames should be inserted between two consecutive subtitles in order to avoid the effect of a subtitle overlay. This time break is necessary to signal to the brain the disappearance of one subtitle and the appearance of another.

Because the eye is sensitive to the twitch that occurs when a subtitle break does not coincide precisely with a cut, subtitles that go over a cut between camera takes should be avoided. Subtitles should disappear at least four frames before the cut and should be inserted no earlier than three frames after the cut in order to avoid a flashing effect. Where it is unavoidable for a subtitle to go over a cut, it should stay on for at least one full second after the cut.

1.6.3 Punctuation

The overriding principle concerning punctuation in the case of subtitles is that it should help the viewer understand the meaning and that it should avoid any form of irritation since the viewer has so little time to absorb the text and is unable to go back and re-read something he might have missed.

● Suspension dots

Three dots without spaces are used to indicate hesitation in mid-sentence:

> You mean…you won't do it?[6]

while three dots followed by a space indicate interruption:

> you mean… No, I won't do it.

Moreover, the three suspension dots should be used at the end of a subtitle to indicate that the sentence is not finished and will continue in the next subtitle. In this case, three dots should also be used just before the first character of the following subtitle to indicate the arrival of the remaining part of the incomplete subtitled sentence. There is some doubt regarding the benefits of using suspension dots to indicate sentence continuation over more than one subtitle since the dots take up restricted space for conveying information (Ivarsson and Carroll 114).

● **Full stops, commas, colons and semicolons**

The full stop should be used just after the last character of a subtitle to indicate the end of the subtitled sentence. This signals to the eye to return to the image since there is no consecutive subtitle to anticipate.

A comma should only be used if it facilitates comprehension of the text and not solely for grammatical reasons.

Colons and semicolons are used to suggest a short pause in the reading pace, however, they should be used with caution, since they are easily confused with one another.

● **Italics**

Italics indicate voices of speakers in the off (e.g. on the telephone or in another room), interior monologue, dream scenes and echo effects, as well as foreign-language words. Since they are more difficult to read than plain text they should be used sparingly.

● **Hyphens**

Hyphens should only be used to indicate dialogue within a single subtitle and they should never be used between consecutive subtitles. When subtitling for the deaf, hyphens may be utilized as a reading aid to divide particularly long or difficult words.

● **Others**

Exclamation marks and question marks should be used sparingly and not according to the dialogue list but rather according to the tone of the voice. Underlining and bold face should generally be avoided. Quotation marks are used to indicate quotations or to indicate nicknames, plays on words, unusual usage of words, brand names, etc. Upper case letters may be used to represent shouting, however, since it takes longer to read upper case they should be used sparingly.

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[6] Examples are taken from Ivarsson and Carroll (113).

1.6.4 Text editing

● Line breaks

Where possible, text should be supplied in one single line in order to minimise the area of the screen obscured by the subtitle and to minimise eye movement. Where the amount of text and the time available make a two-liner the better option, the upper line should, where possible, be shorter than the lower line. The more important principle, however, is that lines should be divided according to sense blocks, i.e. words closely connected by semantics, logic or grammar should be written in the same line. Where a new sentence starts within a subtitle, it should always start with the beginning of the second line.

● Altering syntactic structures

Simple syntactic structures are shorter and easier to understand than complex structures and should therefore be preferred. When altering syntactic structures, however, the subtitler should be careful to maintain the semantic load, the function and the stylistic features of the original. Examples for replacing complex syntactic structures by simplified ones are the use of active instead of passive constructions, of positive instead of negative expressions and of temporal prepositional phrases instead of temporal subordinate clauses.

1.7 The peculiarities of subtitling

1.7.1 Subtitling as a form of translation

> Subtitled television comprises three main components: image, subtitles and spoken dialogue. The integration of these components, combined with viewers' reading capacities, determines the basic characteristics of the medium. Subtitles

have to synchronize with both speech and image, present an accurate interpretation of a dialogue and remain on screen long enough to be read by viewers. (De Linde 39)

Due to the additional audiovisual components of subtitling outlined in this quotation, interlingual subtitling differs from text translation in several important aspects. It must synchronise with the two other semiotic components of film, image and sound, it involves a switch from spoken to written language and it includes a substantial reduction of the original dialogue. In view of these differences, it has frequently been questioned whether subtitling can be seen as a form of translation at all. Luyken (153) refers to a definition of translation as a process in which a message in one language is replaced by the same message in another language. Consequently, he argues that subtitling cannot be seen as a form of translation, since only the language component in a message which comprises a whole range of audiovisual components (such as image, sound, acting and language) is replaced (154). Gottlieb (2001) defines 'text' as "any message containing verbal material" (1) and 'translation' as "any process, […] , in which a text is transferred from one speech community to another, and where verbal elements are replaced by other verbal elements" (2) and he explicitly matches subtitled film material to each of these definitions. De Linde shares his opinion and argues that subtitling "in its altered form must still relate to the source utterance, thereby warranting the same kind of analysis as a translation" (4). Also Díaz Cintas (2001c) maintains that it is necessary to apply a flexible and heterogeneous definition of translation which leaves room for a whole range of empirical realities and he therefore advocates referring to subtitling as 'audiovisual translation' (24).

Today's media oriented world comprises new forms of linguistic and cultural transfer and therefore requires a wider and more flexible definition of translation than the one Luyken promotes. The arguments of de Linde, Gottlieb and Díaz Cintas are therefore more convincing, because they take into account the new media in which translation nowadays also occurs. To conclude, although subtitling differs from text translation in several relevant aspects, it can still be seen as a very special form of translation.

1.7.2 The core peculiarities of subtitling and the problems they cause

The following section focuses on the three main peculiarities of subtitling, which are the change from spoken to written language, the condensation or reduction of the original dialogue and the obligation of synchronicity, and the difficulties they pose for the subtitler.

1.7.2.1 The change from spoken to written language

The major problems a subtitler encounters when transforming spoken dialogue into subtitles stem from the stylistic and structural differences between speech and writing. Written texts typically have a more formal language style and a higher lexical density coupled with a simpler sentence structure, while spoken language is characterized by elements of redundancy and repetition, a complex sentence structure and an informal language style (De Linde 26). In subtitling, the change between these different stylistic and structural systems must not be too pronounced, since subtitles are a representation of spoken dialogue and therefore they still need to maintain a certain oral flavour (Kovačič 1998, 126). De Linde calls them "a mixture of speech and writing in the sense that they represent oral utterances in discrete written captions with the transitoriness of speech" (26). Thus, a 'successful' subtitle needs to convey roughly the same information as the dialogue fragment by employing the higher lexical density of a written text while at the same time retaining enough interpersonal features to maintain a strong spoken orientation.

One of the main difficulties in subtitling when transferring spoken words to written words lies in the fact that subtitles, like all printed texts, lack intonation. Intonation relates to the subtext of a phrase or term and can provide it with a meaning that is the very opposite of what it reads when printed (Reid 1990, 101). When delivering the lines of the dialogue, the actors add something to the text, which should be reflected in the subtitle. Therefore, a skilled subtitler needs to convey not only the words themselves, but also the influence of intonation on the words (Reid 1990, 101).

Gottlieb (2001, 17) describes another problem a subtitler is confronted with when transforming speech to writing. In spoken discourse, the characters share a situation via their dialogue, which produces an implicit language where things are not being verbalised. Usually the subtitles need to explicate or extend the message

in order to fill the gap this implicit language produces and to transfer the full meaning of the dialogue.

When rendering spontaneous speech in writing, the subtitler will also have to decide how to deal with typical elements of speech such as false starts, unfinished sentences, grammatically incorrect constructions and slips-of-the-tongue. In addition, he needs to resolve difficulties such as interruptions or situations where several people talk at the same time (Gottlieb 1994a, 105-106).

Other difficulties arise from the translation of dialectal or sociolectal features, 'dirty language' (which is more offensive when being read), culture-bound references, humour and forms of address (in English the universal 'you', whereas in Spanish 'tú' and 'Usted'). Although a translator encounters the same difficulties, other than the translator, the subtitler cannot take refuge in footnotes, introductory notes or similar explanatory aids. He must transfer all these elements directly in his subtitles (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 134).

1.7.2.2 Reduction

Due to the spatial and temporal restrictions described under 1.6.1 and 1.6.2, subtitling involves a substantive reduction of the source dialogue. Reductions in subtitling are either partial ('condensations' or 'paraphrasing') or total ('omissions' or 'deletions'). Usually, omitting part of the text is the better strategy since it is easier than compressing the text and less irritating to those who have some understanding of the original language (Ivarsson and Carroll 86). Kovačič (1994) suggests that omissions should be relevance-dictated, i.e. the function of the omitted dialogue fragment for the particular scene and for the film or television programme as a whole should be taken into consideration. Gottlieb recommends a focus on the communicative function of subtitles. Thus, when reducing the dialogue, the subtitler ought be less concerned with the words of the speaker than with the intention behind the words (2001, 19).

Díaz Cintas states that often both forms of reduction go hand in hand, i.e. first the subtitler eliminates those parts of the dialogue, which are not essential for the understanding of the original message and then he rephrases the remaining passages in a condensed form. At the same time, he must be careful not to omit information that could at a later stage in the film be essential for the understanding

of the story. Despite the necessary element of reduction, the subtitler should always strive to preserve the original syntax and style (2001c, 124-126).

Usually, the elements of redundancy which are characteristic of spoken dialogue ('actually', 'you know', 'well') are the first to be omitted. De Linde, however, warns that an omission of these elements should always be the result of a conscious decision by the subtitler who needs to be aware of the fact that they may be integral to a character's style of speech and thus relevant for the portrayal of his personality (4). Moreover, they can make all the difference between an ironic statement and a neutral statement (5).

In general, about 40% of the original disappears in the subtitled version (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 124). The levels of reduction vary according to factors such as the pace of the original, the number of cuts, the complexity of the text, the genre (espionage tale or love story) and the medium (cinema film or television programme).

There are several pitfalls attached to the task of reduction. First, as De Linde (30) points out, subtitlers need to pay special attention to the omission of cohesive elements in the text, such as conjunctions and collocations. Cohesive devices play an important role in text comprehension by making relationships between entities and events explicit. Yet, they are often omitted in subtitles, as they are non-content bearing. The omission of cohesive elements can lead to a text becoming more difficult to process and thus can result in a loss of meaning; it also implies the risk of changing causal relationships (De Linde 30). In addition, the omission of redundant elements can result in making a subtitle more difficult to process. As Kovačič illustrates in her paper on subtitling reduction (1994, 250), the omission of partly redundant elements in an utterance which would have facilitated the interpretation of another part of the utterance can result in the opposite of what was intended, i.e. processing is not facilitated but rather made more difficult. Lastly, the omission of repetitious elements can lead to an alteration of atmosphere and even to a muddying of the plot (De Linde 31).

The art of skilful reduction is regarded by many as the very core of subtitling (see Gambier; Díaz Cintas, 2001c; Ivarsson and Carroll). Gottlieb (2001, 20), however, claims that reduction is not a defining feature of subtitling but a necessity when crossing over from speech to writing, since most of the dialogue reduction is the result of the deletion of redundant, oral features. In his opinion,

apart from the omission of these typical features of spoken discourse, there is no need for further reduction. He argues that reading speeds, particularly among young viewers, are much higher than is generally assumed and that even a generation ago, 50% of the Danish viewers were able to read a two-liner in three seconds, which would suggest that a higher amount of information could be presented in the subtitles, reducing the need for reduction to a minimum. He acknowledges that there is a minority, which would have significant reading difficulties with fast and complex subtitles. However, he argues, with the advent of digital television, it will soon be possible to comply with the needs of such viewers by offering a choice between different subtitle versions transmitted simultaneously. Thus, he concludes, slow readers could opt for a condensed version with longer insertion times while fast readers could select a more complete version with a minimum loss of semantic and stylistic information.

All in all, it cannot be denied that reduction still is a decisive feature of subtitling and that it is one of the most difficult elements in the art of subtitling.

1.7.2.3 Synchronicity with audiovisual elements

The obligation of synchronicity between subtitles and audiovisual elements can be subdivided into three aspects: synchronicity between sound and subtitle content, synchronicity between image and subtitle and synchronicity between subtitles and camera takes.

The synchronicity between sound and subtitle content mainly concerns the correct insertion of the subtitles, i.e. an optimal definition of in- and out-times. According to Ivarsson and Carroll (72), exact in-times are of particular importance and the subtitler should pay special attention to avoid a subtitle starting too early before a speaker can be identified, since this leads to a major disruption of the reading process. It is of less importance to remove a subtitle the moment a character finishes speaking, since faster readers will return to the image anyway once they have absorbed the information. A far more important task for the subtitler is to establish and adhere to a regular reading rhythm, i.e. to provide the same amount of time for the same amount of text (Ivarsson and Carroll 69). The prospective reading speed of the target audience and the film pace are factors, which need to be taken into consideration when establishing the regular reading rhythm. Different target audiences can have very different reading speeds. Cinema fans for

example, aged between 15 and 30, are accustomed to watching subtitled music programmes such as MTV and have grown up with computers and habits such as flipping between different television channels. As a result, they are generally able to read very fast, whereas a television audience is usually more heterogeneous and is comprised of a variety of viewers such as aged persons, children, hearing- or vision impaired and migrant viewers, who have a slower reading speed. Furthermore, subtitles on video or television require more reading time due to inferior quality than those on a cinema film. A subtitler should therefore always be aware of the target audience for whom he is subtitling (Reid 1978, 425). As a general rule, the reading rhythm suitable for the respective target group should be established within the first 30 seconds of any film or audiovisual production and then be adhered to throughout the whole of the production (Ivarsson and Carroll 73).

A further important aspect of the synchronisation between sound and subtitle content is the necessity to provide distinctive words in the soundtrack (such as 'fantastic', 'catastrophe'), which are easily recognised by most foreign language audiences because of their phonetic similarity, synchronised in the subtitles. If the subtitler fails to do so, the reaction among his target viewers will be negative because they will feel deprived of information or, even worse, claim the subtitler 'has forgotten' to translate the relevant fragment (Díaz Cintas 2001c, 138).

The basic rule concerning synchronisation between image and subtitle is that subtitles should always reinforce the images on the screen (Ivarsson and Carroll 74). It is therefore very important for the subtitler to avoid any contradiction between image and subtitle, since "each irritation or inconsistency experienced by the viewers slows down the comprehension process and distracts from the real issue at hand, the film itself" (Ivarsson and Carroll 75).

The third aspect of synchronicity in subtitling is the synchronicity between subtitles and camera takes. Adhering to the rhythm of the film is a prerequisite of good subtitling and is generally achieved by synchronising subtitles with takes and coinciding subtitle breaks with cuts (Ivarsson and Carroll 75). Where it is unavoidable to have a subtitle go over a cut, the norms outlined under 1.6.2 should be observed.

1.8 Subtitling strategies and how to teach them

The peculiarities of subtitling as described in section 1.7 suggest that subtitling requires more than 'mere' translation skills and that students or translation professionals who want to enter the field of audiovisual translation need to develop certain subtitling skills to complement their translation skills.

The following section examines what comprises these skills and how they can be taught. In recent years, these questions have been discussed repeatedly by subtitling teachers and professionals. It is the aim of the next section to summarize the opinions and arguments expressed by the authors of several conference papers and articles and to illustrate the key points of focus in the training of subtitlers. The content of the section is mainly based on the following articles and papers:

- James "Screen Translation Training and European Co-operation" (1998);
- Díaz Cintas "Teaching Subtitling at University" (2001b);
- Klerkxx "The Place of Subtitling in a Translator Training Course" (1998);
- Agost Canós et al. "La traducción audiovisual" (1999);
- Blane "Interlingual Subtitling in the Language Degree" (1996);
- Carroll "Subtitler Training: Continuing Training for Translators" (1998);
- Bartrina and Espasa "Doblar y subtitular en el aula : el reto hacia la profesionalización mediante la didáctica" (2001);
- Díaz Cintas "El subtitulado como técnica docente" (1995);
- Brondeel "Teaching Subtitling Routines" (1994) and
- Laine "Training Them: The Subtitlers of Today and the 'Converters' of Tomorrow" (1988).

Where recommendations are given, they stem from the articles and are not the expression of a personal opinion. Personal suggestions on subtitling training will be presented in Chapter 4.

1.8.1 Course contents

When looking at the several suggestions concerning course contents that can be found in the literature, a general distinction between theoretical and practical

aspects can be deduced. Some teachers suggest focusing more on the linguistic side of subtitling and neglecting the technical side since students with word-processing skills will acquire them quickly (Brondeel 30). The majority, however, stresses the importance of hands-on practice at a subtitling workstation since only this way students can become aware of the complexity of the task and learn to match language to images and identify cuts (Carroll, 266; James 247; Agost Canós et al. 183).

Díaz Cintas (2001b) suggests a course structure that divides the course contents into four dimensions: the introductory dimension, the professional dimension, the linguistic dimension and the technical dimension. In the following section, the recommendations concerning course contents that can be found in the articles mentioned above are summarized according to these four dimensions.

The introductory dimension: the first lessons of the course ought to be aimed at providing students with a theoretical framework or basic knowledge they can draw upon in the practical sessions. The different modes of audiovisual language transfer (dubbing, voice-over, narration and subtitling) should be presented in order to give students a complete picture of the market and make them aware of the similarities and differences between the various approaches (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 30). Further aspects that could be investigated are the different types of subtitling (interlingual and intralingual, open and closed, life subtitling, pivot subtitling), as well as the different audiovisual genres (comedy, documentary, film) and the different demands they pose on a subtitler (Bartrina and Espasa 430). Moreover, it is recommended that students be assisted in developing an understanding of the design of verbal language, the interaction that takes place in subtitles between image and text, as well as the main constraints (space and time) that characterise audiovisual translation (Agost Canós et al. 187).

The professional dimension: the part of the course dealing with the professional dimension of subtitling ought to cover all relevant aspects that influence the task of subtitling as a profession. These include an outline of the different stages of the work process, from the submission of the film material by the client to the broadcasting of the subtitles, and a list of the people involved in the process (Agost Canós et al. 186). Further aspects that might deserve to be discussed in class are contract types (in-house working versus freelancing), expected salaries and pay rates, tax responsibilities and copyright ownership (Díaz Cintas 2001b,

31). The market practices concerning editing, punctuation and presentation and the fact that they differ according to country and even between different companies or television stations ought to be presented to students as well (Brondeel 26). The professional dimension could be complemented by additional information about prospective employers (public and private television stations, subtitling companies, broadcasting companies, etc.) and professional associations (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 31).

<u>The linguistic dimension:</u> most authors place special emphasis on the linguistic dimension of the course because most of the major difficulties a student will encounter when learning how to subtitle lie in this field.

One of the main linguistic strategies students need to master in order to become good subtitlers is reduction. As explained in section 1.7.2.2, reduction can be either partial (condensation) or total (omission). Students will need to understand the difference between both types of reduction and to develop different strategies for each type. As far as condensation is concerned, students ought to be aware that the need for semantic condensation must not jeopardise the syntax or style of the original (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 32). As far as omissions are concerned, students need to be aware that they cannot dispose of information, which later on in the film may be essential to the dramatic development of the story (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 33). Reduction strategies can be developed prior to any proper subtitling by preparation exercises such as gist summaries that force students to renounce a word-to-word approach, consider the essence of the message that is being conveyed and then rephrase it in their own language in an idiomatic way (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 32). Another excellent preparation for audiovisual translation is drama translation since it shares the task of (re-) creating texts that resemble spoken discourse although they are in fact written texts (Bartrina Espasa 430).

For the sake of consistency, it is recommended that strict rules be established and applied for subtitle punctuation, layout and duration in the classroom, even though there is still no unified set of such rules in practice in the 'real world' (Brondeel 26; Bartrina and Espasa 435). However, students ought to be made aware of the lack of unity in this field in the professional world and they should be encouraged to discuss the pros and cons of different punctuation and layout standards (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 36).

There is no consensus in the literature on whether students should be equipped with a dialogue script when practicing or whether they ought to be trained to work without one. Some argue (James 248; Blane 197) that working without a dialogue script reflects the reality of the profession, since many professional subtitlers have to work without one, and that it has the advantage of enhancing listening comprehension in the foreign language. Others (Diáz Cintas 2001a; Agost Canós et al. 187) stress the importance of a detailed dialogue list for high-quality subtitles and claim that learning how to read and make effective use of a dialogue script should be part of the course. Díaz Cintas (2001b, 38) suggests a combination of both approaches, establishing a gradation in difficulty by using a dialogue script in the initial exercises and later moving on to exercises where students must transcribe the dialogue from the soundtrack.

It is recommended in several articles that a wide-ranging choice of different programme genres be subtitled in the classroom since different genres require different language registers and different levels of reduction (James 248; Agost Canós et al. 189). Genres that could be covered are children's programmes, comedy, documentaries, films, game shows, soap opera, news and television advertisements. The choice of the film material with which the class is to work is decisive for the success of the activities (Bartrina and Espasa 433). There are several features a film or programme sequence needs to fulfil in order to be useful for classroom activities. First, it should be a prototype of filmic material in the sense that it ought to call for a maximum of audiovisual translation strategies. It should also be thematically independent from the rest of the film or programme, ideally constituting a world in itself, where the information presented is neutral and does not affect the rest of the film discourse. If possible, the sequence should contain difficulties such as humour, dialect or a special language register (Díaz Cintas 1995, 13).

Error analysis and comparison are very useful pedagogical techniques in order to clarify students' understanding of what comprises good subtitling. In this context, identical exercises for all members of a group have proved an effective teaching method since they allow scope for comparison and illustrate that there are always several feasible solutions (Carroll 266). The same idea applies to comparing students' versions with the professional version if one exists. Blane (198) advises to discuss the qualities (and possible defects) of the professional version in class.

She asserts that focusing on inferior editorial practices and awkward constructions can be even more instructive than examining successful solutions. Additionally, it serves to make students aware that professional versions should not be slavishly imitated but rather serve as models for adaptation according to students' own personal preferences (Blane 198).

Technical dimension: as far as the technical dimension is concerned, the question of what to teach and what to expect of students depends on whether or not the institution has access to dedicated subtitling programmes.

If subtitling equipment is available and students have the possibility to work (preferably on their own rather than in pairs or groups) on a subtitling workstation, a main focus should be placed on teaching them how to spot and place their subtitles (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 36). Skilful spotting takes a great deal of time and practice, two factors not available in the classroom, however, students can at least become familiar with the task and learn the rudiments in order to perfect their spotting skills at a later stage in their professional life (Klerkxx 262). When practising spotting, it is recommended that special attention be given to the synchronisation of subtitles, the observance of the minimum and maximum insertion times and the segmentation of subtitles (Bartrina and Espasa 435).

The placing of subtitles can pose a problem if there is the possibility of a collusion of the subtitle with the information provided by the images on the screen, such as captions at the bottom of the screen, or if the background photography is too light to create a proper contrast for the subtitle to be read. Students could be taught to recognise such possible collusions and to adapt the placing of subtitles accordingly (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 36).

If no subtitling equipment is available, teachers can use exercises that do not require technical equipment. A simple and inexpensive way to practice subtitling is to show students a clip of the scene they are to work on, give them an already spotted dialogue list and ask them to translate the content according to a maximum number of spaces the lecturer has worked out (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 39). A designed sheet with the allowed number of spaces per line (not more than 40) can be given to the students to spare them the time-consuming task of counting letters, spaces and orthographic signs. A major disadvantage of such exercises is the fact that they focus mainly on the semantic and stylistic transfer of the original version while they fail to instruct students on the interaction between subtitles and

the other two major audiovisual components, image and sound (Díaz Cintas 2001b, 39).

1.8.2 Course structure

All of the authors promote practice-oriented teaching methods based on an interaction between students and teachers. Bartrina and Espasa (431) even suggest simulating a situation in the classroom that resembles a situation on the labour market, with the teacher assuming the role of the client and the students the role of the subtitlers. They perceive the teacher as a coordinator, chairing discussions, encouraging students to produce quick and creative solutions to problems and providing basic theoretical background knowledge. Most authors recommend that students participate as well in the teaching by giving oral presentations on theoretical aspects of subtitling. Seminars, guest lectures and workshops given by professional audiovisual translators complement the training, offering students the opportunity to ask questions about practical aspects of the profession (Bartrina and Espasa 431; James 247). Additionally, some teachers recommend the use of individual revision sessions, offering personal feedback for each student, combined with group evaluation sessions (Laine 394; James 247).

1.8.3 Assignments and assessment criteria

The majority of the authors suggest assignments where students are asked to subtitle several extracts from different types of television programmes or films. Whether they work on the basis of the soundtrack alone or with a dialogue list depends on the view of the lecturer as discussed above. In addition to the subtitling tasks, which can be done at students' leisure, most teachers suggest an examination at the end of the course in which students have to subtitle an extract of a certain length within a certain amount of time and which is designed to reflect the time pressure under which professional subtitlers are required to work.

The assessment criteria applied by all authors consider linguistic and technical skills, both equally weighted. If students must work without a dialogue script, the accurate aural comprehension and interpretation of the original meaning is taken into consideration as well. The absence of a script means that students will struggle to interpret dialects, accents, localisms and lexical interference, and they

should gain extra marks for imaginative or creative solutions to translation problems caused by such linguistic variations (James 249).

Díaz Cintas (2001b) and James offer a detailed description of assessment criteria. Díaz Cintas suggests assessing the linguistic skills on three dimensions:

- The informative dimension: has all the information from the original been transferred? Which elements have been omitted, which utterances have been given priority? What is the impact of these omissions on the subtitles?

- The semantic dimension: have the meaning and the nuances of the original message been transferred correctly to the subtitles?

- The communicative dimension: how successfully has the shift of medium from oral to written been conducted? Does the target language used by the student still contain an idiomatic flair?

James differentiates in the assessment of linguistic skills between the following aspects:

- Portrayal: how well has the student preserved the register and style of the genre?

- Language quality: has the student succeeded in using a language, which is devoid of literal translation and opted for the most idiomatic expressions in the target language?

- Grammar: has the student applied correct grammatical usage? Has the syntax of the subtitles been kept simple and do the subtitles form coherent logical and syntactical units?

- Punctuation: has the student used punctuation correctly and in order to give clues to the syntactic structure of the subtitles? Has he applied the general rule that punctuation should be helpful without being obtrusive?

- Spelling: are there any spelling mistakes that indicate that the student has not proofread carefully?

With regard to the assessment of technical skills, both authors suggest the application of the following set of parameters:

- Time coding: has the student allowed for sufficient reading time? Has he avoided exceeding the maximum insertion times?

- <u>Synchronisation</u>: does the appearance and disappearance of the subtitles coincide with what is happening both on the screen and on the soundtrack, while at the same time ensuring a certain reading rhythm?

- <u>Formatting</u>: has the student inserted line breaks within subtitles according to sense blocks? Has he strived at presenting two-liners with a shorter upper line and a longer bottom line in order to facilitate reading?

- <u>Breaks between subtitles</u>: has the student preserved coherence between individual subtitles? Has he provided sufficient duration between two subtitles (at least four frames)? How successful has he dealt with cuts?

All articles quoted in this section stress the importance of subtitling training at universities and other institutions of higher education to ensure professional standards in audiovisual language transfer. It seems that the importance of subtitling training and how it should be conducted has become an issue of growing interest among translation professionals and university teachers. This trend is likely to continue with an increased use of subtitles in European television.

1.9 Summary

It has been the intention of the theoretical part of this thesis to demonstrate the complex nature of subtitling. Not only does the subtitler transfer the dialogue from one language to another, he must also reduce the original speech, sometimes by a substantial amount. While doing so, the subtitler converts spoken language to written language, constantly taking into consideration what is occurring on the screen (such as action, movement and facial expressions). Therefore, subtitling implies far more than a translation of the source dialogue. It is rather a combination of translation, interpretation and editing skills. The establishment and maintenance of professional standards in subtitling is a challenge which must be addressed by universities as well as subtitling companies. As Heulwen James states: "The complex nature of subtitling demands specialized tuition." (245). The following practical parts of the thesis examine how subtitling agencies and universities in Europe approach the task of offering this ‚specialized tuition'.

2 Survey on market requirements

2.1 Preliminary remark

In order to establish the market demands subtitlers trained at universities would have to meet after graduating, I conducted a survey on employment criteria among subtitling companies in Europe. The survey was designed to meet three main goals:

- To establish where the industry recruits new employees and according to which employment criteria. A special focus was placed on establishing a set of skills a subtitler should be equipped with according to the practitioners. It was my intention to analyse which of these skills were teachable and usually not conveyed in a 'traditional' translation degree course.

- To examine whether and to what extent there exists an interest in the market sector to co-operate with universities and thus have both sides, theory and practice, profit from each other. I was particularly interested in establishing where subtitling companies see the advantage in a partnership with a university that offers a course on subtitling.

- To obtain an assessment by those working in the subtitling industry on the usefulness of university courses on subtitling and to examine whether this assessment differs according to different countries.

I sent out a questionnaire[7] to 66 companies in Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, The Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Ireland and Norway and received, despite repeated inquiries, 14 replies, fortunately from a wide range of different countries. Due to the limited number of replies, the results

presented below do not purport to provide general answers to the survey questions mentioned above but rather suggestions for interpretation as well as incentives for further research on the topic.

The questionnaire consisted of seven questions, the results of which are presented below in the same order in which they appeared. Questions 1-4 dealt with recruitment and employment criteria, questions 5 and 6 inquired about the companies' attitude towards university training in subtitling and question 7 asked for an assessment of future developments in the subtitling sector. In order to facilitate interpretation, the individual questions are cited at the beginning of each section presenting the result of the respective question.

2.2 Survey outcomes

Question 1.: Our company subtitles mainly
ȋ from foreign languages (primarily (please list languages)…………………...)
ȋ for the deaf and hard-of-hearing
ȋ other (please specify)……………………………………………………….

It was the intention of this question to establish the main types of subtitles produced by subtitling companies in Europe. In particular, I was interested in learning how many companies also produce subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. It was permissible to check off more than one option.

Table 1

Forms of Subtitling

Forms of Subtitling		
From foreign languages	For the hard-of-hearing	Other*
14 (100 %)	1 (7.1 %)	1 (7.1 %)

* Into a foreign language

Not surprisingly, the majority of companies subtitle from foreign languages. The most frequently subtitled languages are English, French and Spanish. Also quite

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[7] See Appendix 1

frequently subtitled are German and Italian, whereas languages such as Russian, the Scandinavian languages, Portuguese or Dutch are only mentioned by a few companies. As can be seen in Table 1, only one company out of 14 offers subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing in addition to subtitling foreign language programmes. This result seems to reflect the situation of the hearing impaired television audience in Europe and it is not surprising that the company offering this special form of subtitles is located in the United Kingdom where the lobby for the deaf and hard-of-hearing is quite strong. Considering the fact that one out of seven persons in the world is hearing impaired (Carroll, Interview), there seems to be a huge market potential that is not being tapped by the industry. This thought will be discussed more in Chapter 4 with a special focus on the German subtitling industry.

Question 2: How do you obtain new employees?
ⁱ job advertisements
ⁱ blind applications by people interested in working in the field
ⁱ by contacting universities
ⁱ other (please specify) ……………………………………………………

This question intended to establish where subtitling companies recruit their employees, and in particular to what extent they recruit new employees from universities. Additionally, I was interested in finding out whether recruitment methods differ between individual countries.

It was permissible to check off more than one option.

Table 2

Recruitment of New Employees

Recruitment of New Employees			
Advertisements	Blind applications	Universities	Other**
9 (64.3 %)*	9 (64.3 %)	5 (35.7 %)	6 (42.9 %)

* 14 = 100 %
** 2 recommendations from current employees
   2 word of mouth
   1 internship
   1 CV on the Internet

The data suggest a balance between recruitment by placing job advertisements and by choosing from a range of blind applications. This balance, however, can probably not be applied to the company policies in the sense that companies recruit about 50% of their employees via job advertisements and about 50% from blind applications. In fact, in some countries, such as Belgium, the Netherlands and also Germany, there seems to be such a strong interest in working in the field, that it appears there is no need for companies to place advertisements because they can choose among the numerous blind applications they receive.

Although the data seem to indicate a substantial number of recruitments by contacting universities, the picture is probably distorted since they were mainly companies located in subtitling countries such as Belgium and Sweden who indicated that they recruit new employees by contacting universities, whereas companies in countries with a new subtitling industry, such as France and the UK, indicated that their recruitment still takes place via advertisements or blind applications. This result could probably be explained by the fact that the few university courses on subtitling that exist are offered by universities in subtitling countries with a potential market for graduates.

Networking and word of mouth seem to be a rather important factor in the recruitment of new employees in the subtitling industry. If this impression was proven accurate, it would be another convincing reason for universities to establish close contacts or even partnerships with companies. This idea will be examined more closely in Chapters 3 and 4.

Question 3: What professional qualification or professional background does the majority of your employees have?
ן university degree in translation /interpreting
ן university degree in media sciences
ן television professionals with language skills
ן other (please specify) …………………………………………………………

It was the purpose of this question to establish which professional qualification or background subtitling companies expect of their employees. I hoped to prove the hypothesis that a university degree in translation/ interpreting is seen as the most useful qualification for a subtitler.

It was permissible to check off more than one option.

Table 3

Professional Qualification/ Background

Professional Qualification/ Background			
University degree in translation	University degree in media science	TV professional with language skills	Other**
10 (71.4 %)*	0 (0 %)	5 (35.7 %)	6 (42.9 %)

* 14 = 100 %
** 3 technicians (who do the spotting while the translation is done by freelancers at home)
   2 very talented mother tongue speakers
   1 university degree in one or more languages

Keeping in mind that my assumption can only be based on a limited number of replies, the data support my belief that the main professional qualification for a subtitler is a degree in translation and/ or interpreting. However, there also seems to be quite a large percentage of television professionals with language skills as well as a substantial percentage of talented mother tongue speakers of a foreign language with a different professional background being employed as subtitlers. This could indicate that there is a need to raise the awareness in the market sector that subtitling is a specialist field of translation and that it should be recognised as such. To raise such an awareness would be mainly a task for the academia.

The fact that not one company participating in the survey employs someone with a degree in media science could either indicate that such a degree is not seen as an appropriate professional background for a subtitler or, simply, that media scientists apply for different positions.

Question 4: What are the main skills you expect of fresh recruits?
Please list in order of importance.

With this question I intended to establish what skills subtitling companies expect of their future employees. I was particularly interested in finding whether there is a general agreement on the most important skills and if so, what constitutes them. Furthermore, I wanted to examine which and how many of these skills could be taught in a university course and whether among these there are some that are not developed in a 'traditional' translation degree course.

Table 4

Most Frequently Named Skills

Most Frequently Named Skills	
Frequency	**Skill**
10 (71.4 %)*	excellent mother tongue skills
6 (42.9 %)	good translation skills
	editing and spotting skills
5 (35.7 %)	good computer skills
4 (28.6 %)	fluency in source language
	teamwork skills and social competence
3 (21.4 %)	ability to prioritise and summarise
	a questioning nature
	film/ media and technical knowledge
	ability to understand and to use idiomatic language
2 (14.3 %)	interest in the audiovisual media
	communication skills
	ability to keep deadlines/ reliability
	internet and other research skills
	accuracy
1 (7.1 %)	love for precision work/ patience
	good knowledge of culture and slang of the source language
	ability to combine images with language
	ability to work fast but still accurate

* 14 = 100 %

Table 5

Most Important Skills

Most Important Skills

• excellent mother tongue skills • good translation skills • fluency in source language • editing and spotting skills • good knowledge of culture and slang of the source language • ability to understand and use idiomatic language • accuracy • a questioning nature

Table 6

Important Skills

Important Skills
• interest in the audiovisual media • film/ media and technical knowledge • good computer skills • ability to prioritise/ summarize/ adapt • love for precision work/ patience • ability to combine images with language

Table 4 indicates how many times a certain skill has been named without indicating its position in the order of importance. Tables 5 and 6 list the skills that have exclusively been placed among the three most important skills, table 5 indicating the skills ranking on positions 1 and 2 in the order of importance and table 6 indicating the skills ranking on position 3.

Most of the skills that have been listed are, at least to a certain extent, teachable. The only exceptions are an inquisitive nature and an interest in audiovisual media, the latter implying an eye for the 'language' of images, as one of the participating companies stated.

As can be seen in Table 4, excellent mother tongue skills, good translation skills and editing and spotting skills are the three most frequently named. They are also listed among the skills that seem to be considered the most important ones.

Table 6 represents interesting results, since the majority of the skills listed are directly connected with the audiovisual context in which subtitling takes place and are therefore generally not conveyed in a 'traditional' translation degree course. The same applies to editing and spotting skills. This result seems to support the

assumption that subtitling requires special training that goes beyond university translation training.

Some of the skills that have been listed by the participating companies are skills that should be taught in a translation degree course but that are usually not given much weight in the curriculum. These are skills such as the ability to understand and use idiomatic language and slang, both, in the mother tongue and in the foreign language, or the development of excellent mother tongue skills covering different language registers. This thought will be addressed again in Chapter 4.

Question 5: How important do you feel it is to offer courses on subtitling at universities in your country?

<div style="text-align:center">Scale</div>

Extremely Unimportant   1 2 3 4 5   Extremely important

Why?

It was the aim of this question to establish how important or useful practitioners consider university training in subtitling. I was particularly interested in the reasons they gave for their estimation and in finding out whether attitudes towards university courses differ from country to country.

Table 7

Estimated Importance of University Subtitling Courses

Estimated Importance of University Subtitling Courses				
Extremely unimportant	Rather unimportant	Rather important	Important	Very important
1 (8.3 %)*	3 (25 %)	4 (33.3 %)	1 (8.3 %)	3 (25 %)

* 12 = 100 %

Explanation of limited number of replies: two companies employ exclusively technicians, who do the spotting, and work with freelance translators whose sole task it is to translate the spotted subtitles. These companies have not expressed an opinion on the importance of university courses since they are of no relevance for their employees.

Reasons provided for estimation:

Extremely or rather unimportant:

The most frequently named reason for a low assessment of the importance of university training in subtitling is the small size of the market, which could easily be over-saturated by a higher number of trained subtitlers. A further reason given for a negative assessment is the belief that translation studies provide a sufficient basic knowledge that can easily be expanded by in-house training and practice.

Rather important:

Quite a number of companies opted for a neutral position on the assessment scale. The general attitude among them seems to be that although they tend to a positive assessment of the usefulness of university courses, they are sceptical about the efficiency of such courses. In particular, companies seem to doubt that the working conditions in the subtitling sector, such as the need to meet extremely tight deadlines, could be simulated at a university. Furthermore, some argue that although university courses can give students a general idea of the difficulties of subtitling, they will not train them to become subtitlers since this requires months of intensive practice. A further argument is that new employees must start at the beginning anyway, since every subtitling company uses its own specific guidelines and quality standards.

Very or extremely important:

Not surprisingly, all companies that consider university subtitling courses to be very or extremely important back their assessment by referring to the need of well-trained professional subtitlers. An important aspect seems to be that university courses would reduce the need for extensive in-house training, thus, saving time and money. Furthermore, companies seem to believe that students who have undertaken a university course, and thus understand the basic concepts and difficulties of subtitling, become better subtitlers in less time than colleagues that have exclusively received in-house training.

As far as it is possible to draw a conclusion from the minimal data available for an interpretation, it seems that companies located in countries with a small market, such as Switzerland or Austria, and in countries where the task of spotting and translating is divided between two persons, such as Spain, tend to consider university training in subtitling rather unimportant. Companies located in

countries where there is a growing interest in subtitling, such as the United Kingdom and Germany, tend to take a favourable position towards university courses but are still sceptical as to their efficiency. Companies located in traditional subtitling countries, such as Sweden and Belgium, where the need for professional subtitlers is probably the strongest, seem to consider university courses on subtitling to be very important. However, companies located in former dubbing countries, such as France and Germany, also seem to place great importance on university courses. In these countries the cost factor of saving time if new employees need less training seems to be the main argument in favour of university courses.

Question 6: Do you think your company could profit from a partnership with a university?
î yes
î no

If so, how?
If not, why not?

Question 6 can be seen as a supplement to question 5 and aimed to establish how interested companies are to form close co-operation with universities that offer courses on subtitling.

Table 8

Subtitling Companies Could Profit from a Partnership with a University

Subtitling Companies Could Profit from a Partnership with a University	
yes	no
10 (76.9 %)*	3 (23.1 %)

* 13 = 100 %

Reasons provided for affirmative answer:

The two main reasons why companies believe they could profit from a partnership with a university are contact with potential new employees and knowledge exchanges between theorists and practitioners.

Some companies reason that co-operation with university teachers which could provide them with the names of students with excellent grades would facilitate the selection process before candidates are invited for an interview. Internships are also seen as a possibility to select talented prospective employees who would not require excessive in-house training.

As far as knowledge exchange is concerned, companies feel they could profit from learning about training (what should be taught and how?) and thus improve their in-house training. Furthermore, they see an opportunity to participate in the training of prospective new employees and correct erroneous subtitling practices that are being taught at universities. Lastly, companies see a possible advantage in that universities could provide suggestions for improvement on equipment and subtitling practices on the basis of research results.

Reasons provided for negative answer:

The reasons given by companies that do not think they could profit from a partnership with a university are basically the same given for a low assessment of the importance of university courses. In their opinion, a university degree is not the main requirement to become a good subtitler and there is no need to look for university-trained new employees since the techniques of subtitling can be sufficiently taught by the company. Furthermore, in their opinion, an increased number of subtitling graduates would flood the already limited market.

The data suggest that the majority of companies believe they could profit from a partnership with a university that offers courses on subtitling. Less interest in a partnership might be found in countries with a small market where university training is considered rather unimportant.

Question 7: What developments in the subtitling sector do you expect in the near future?

It was the purpose of this question to establish what developments the market expects in the near future and the implications these expectations have for the need for well-trained subtitlers.

Table 9

Future Developments

Future Developments	
Frequency	**Development**
5 (35.7 %)*	expansion of the industry
	increase in the use of DVD
4 (28.6 %)	improvement of subtitling software
3 (21.4 %)	further digitalisation
	greater importance of the internet
2 (14.3 %)	machine/ computer aided translation (automation of parts of the subtitling process)
	better and cheaper equipment
	more subtitled programmes for the hard-of-hearing
1 (7.1 %)	subtitling on the web
	a unified subtitling technique for all agencies

* 14 = 100 %

Table 9 lists the developments the companies that participated in the survey expect and indicates how often individual developments were named. Developments such as the expansion of the industry and the increased use of DVD seem to imply a growing need for trained subtitlers to meet the demand that would concur with such developments. Internet competences will gain an even greater importance in the future.

2.3 Summary

On the basis of the data gathered by the survey, one can conclude that the majority of the subtitling market sector in Europe seems to be positive about the usefulness and importance of university courses on subtitling. Differences in opinion can probably be explained by different market sizes in individual countries and by the presence (or lack) of a subtitling tradition in the respective country.

The same applies to an interest on the side of the market to establish partnerships with universities that offer training in subtitling. The overall opinion appears to be that both sides could profit from such a partnership. This result could be of particular interest to universities who could greatly benefit from a co-operation with the market sector in terms of provision with equipment and professional advice.

The survey has helped to establish a set of skills a subtitler should, according to the subtitling industry, possess. These skills can be divided into translation skills and specific skills that are linked with the audiovisual context in which subtitling takes place. In this aspect, the survey seems to underpin the assumption of this thesis that there is a need for subtitling courses at universities that convey the skills a student cannot acquire in a 'traditional' translation degree course.

It must be stressed again that the results presented in this survey report do not aim to provide generally valid answers to the research questions mentioned above. The data that served as a basis for interpretation were far too limited for such generalizations. It was rather the intention of this report to help clarify where there is a need for further research and to proceed one added step in the process of formulating the questions that need to be resolved.

3 Survey on university training

3.1 Preliminary remark

The following chapter examines subtitling training at European universities and institutions of higher education. I wrote to a number of university teachers who are offering courses on subtitling in different European countries and asked them to answer twelve questions[8] concerning course aspects such as structure, assignments and assessment criteria. I examined the responses to each individual question with a special focus on similarities, differences and special aspects of individual courses. The results are presented in the following section. In addition to outlining and comparing the major course offers on subtitling in Europe, it was my intention to find answers to the following specific questions:

- How are classes organised?
- How practice oriented are courses, in particular, is there a close co-operation with the subtitling industry?
- Do all teachers share the same opinion about any of the course aspects?
- Which course aspects have turned out to be of less, and which to be of greater importance over the years?

The overall question I hoped to answer was the following:
Does training reflect what is needed in the professional world, in particular, does it convey the peculiarities and pitfalls of subtitling as established in Chapter 1 and does it teach the strategies and skills the market expects of employees as established in Chapter 2?

3.2 Survey outcomes

3.2.1 Overview of course offers in Europe

Most of the existing screen translation courses in Europe concentrate on subtitling with only some of the Spanish universities running parallel courses on dubbing. Currently, courses are held at the following locations: Brussels, Mons, Dublin, Toulouse, Vic, Ljubliana, Antwerp, Granada, Turku, Helsinki, Barcelona, Copenhagen, London (Roehampton University of Surrey), Leeds, Vigo, Lampeter, Castellón and Maastricht. Most of the courses are available to undergraduates, however, courses at Brussels, Copenhagen, Lampeter and Leeds also specialize in postgraduate study.

The majority of the courses available are offered in the form of course options as part of a translation curriculum. Their duration and weight within the curriculum differ considerably, ranging from two-year courses in Maastricht and Ljubliana to introductory modules in audiovisual translation in Helsinki and Mons. The majority of the courses are designed for final year students. A plan to introduce subtitling-based exercises in the first year programme of the curriculum in Maastricht has not materialized.

Subject to approval by the university boards, the University of Leeds will introduce a new Master of Arts in Screen Translation which will begin in the next academic year and which will be the first course that also comprises intralingual subtitling for the hard-of-hearing.

The following section examines the courses offered at the Roehampton University of Surrey (London), the Universitat de Vic (Spain), the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting (Netherlands), the University of Ljubliana (Slovenia), The University of Wales (Lampeter), the University of Turku (Finland), the Universitat Jaum I de Castelló (Spain), the Hogeschool Antwerpen (Belgium) and the University of Copenhagen (Denmark).

3.2.2 Details of course offerings

3.2.2.1 Course structures and contents

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[8] See Appendix 2.

All courses show a strong practice orientation with the average ratio between theory and practice being 25% theory and 75% practice. Some courses, such as the ones at Maastricht and Lampeter, focus even stronger on the practical aspect of training, leaving the acquisition of theoretical background knowledge almost exclusively to the students. The course in Copenhagen places a stronger weight on theory since the Danish students are already familiar with subtitling, as it is the method of audiovisual language transfer with which they have grown up.

Training techniques constitute a mixture of workshops, (guest) lectures, oral presentations given by students, practical subtitling activities which are subsequently discussed in class, as well as background reading, cultural referencing and preparation of translations at home. The teaching method at the Universitat de Vic is purely interactive with the teacher taking on the role of a coach, chairing discussions and giving incentives for problem solving strategies while the students organise classroom sessions, conveying theoretical background knowledge in group presentations.

Theory mainly covers the principles of subtitling, (rules concerning line breaks, duration, punctuation, etc.), other forms of audiovisual language transfer (voice-over, dubbing), genre- and audience- specific subtitling strategies, the polisemiotic character of subtitles (text-picture interaction on the screen) and linguistic specifics of subtitles (subtitles as a mixture between standard written and colloquial language, etc.). In Turku and Antwerp, theory also includes exercises in script writing and film dialogue analysis. In Copenhagen, students may specialize in the second semester in how to subtitle specific programme genres or how to subtitle for special audiences, or they may take up other language combinations than English-Danish or German-Danish.

Practical experience is gained in classroom sessions in which students subtitle fragments of different film genres, using subtitling software and equipment. In carrying out these exercises, students work on their own at subtitling units, with the exception of Antwerp where they work in groups of two or three.

In Ljubljana, the range of practical exercises is particularly wide, including exercises in pivot subtitling and subtitling into the students' first foreign language. In London (Roehampton University), class activities include gist translations in order to practice reduction skills, Internet research exercises and voice-over translations. The one-semester course in Vic offers an introduction to three

modalities of audiovisual translation, subtitling, dubbing and drama translation, with each modality being trained for one month with an additional month of revision. The practical course in Castellón (Universitat Jaum I) is complemented by an optional course on screen translation theory.

3.2.2.2 Course objectives and learning outcomes

The main objective of all courses is to prepare students for entering the professional subtitling market and to help them decide whether subtitling is a field they would like to go into after graduation. All teachers are explicitly aware of the fact that they cannot teach students to become professionals, but can merely convey the basics of subtitling, i.e. the theoretical knowledge and some practical experience, as a first step towards professionalism. One exception may be the course in Copenhagen, which is aimed at mature postgraduate students (average age between 30 and 45) and which focuses more on the theoretical aspects of subtitling and does not seek to supply the Danish subtitling industry with manpower.

The course in Maastricht strives to achieve a further objective which is to give all students, whether or not they want to become subtitlers, some training in subtitling as a special form of translation, in which the restrictions imposed by the format force them to identify and rephrase the essence of the spoken message in as few words as possible, thus improving their flexibility as translators. The teachers of the course claim, that the skills students acquire in the subtitling course can therefore also be useful in other types of translation. This concept will be further discussed in the following chapter.

3.2.2.3 Assignments

Class activities: in all courses, class activities include the subtitling of short film or television programme sequences which are then analysed and discussed in class. In Maastricht and Ljubliana, participation in these discussions is subject to assessment and has an impact on the final grade. Some courses complement these assignments with an oral presentation or a written course dossier on certain theoretical aspects of screen translation. In Turku, class activities also comprise transcription, i.e. the writing of a dialogue script on the basis of the sound track. In Copenhagen, students are expected to read at least 1000 pages of theoretical

literature on subtitling. In Castellón (Universitat Jaum I) students work on 'real life tasks', i.e. they subtitle for an actual client, such as a television station or a film festival, with whose requirements concerning format, punctuation and layout they must comply.

With the exception of London (Roehampton University) and Ljubliana, where students also subtitle into their first foreign language, assignments in all courses require subtitling into the students' mother tongue.

Exams: exam assignments consist either of subtitling a longer film or television programme sequence (of about 100 subtitles) or, in some courses, of subtitling one or two shorter sequences under time pressure (about 20 subtitles in one hour). Teachers who choose the second option maintain that it reflects professional working conditions and that students who want to become successful subtitlers must be able to produce high-quality subtitles under time pressure.

In Ljubliana and Lampeter, these exam assignments are complemented by a short analytical commentary by the students on the strategy they adopted, parts of the sequence they encountered that were particularly difficult to subtitle, on their solutions of these difficulties and why they opted for them.

In Copenhagen, exams also include a 25-minute oral exam on audiovisual translation theory and a 20-page paper on a specific audiovisual translation topic.

3.2.2.4 Assessment criteria

The main assessment criteria adopted in the courses can be divided into three categories: linguistic criteria, audiovisual criteria and technical criteria.

Linguistic criteria: concern the content of the subtitles. The main criteria mentioned by the teachers were:

Appropriate language register and style depending on the programme genre, semantic correctness, authentic rendering of dialogue, idiomatic use of language, authentic portrayal of individual characters, successful dealing with linguistic difficulties such as humour, dialects and culture-specific expressions, as well as correct grammar and spelling.

Audiovisual criteria: concern the coherence of subtitles with other audiovisual information carriers, in particular image and sound track.

They mainly refer to appropriate reduction (selection with an eye for how much information is conveyed by image and sound track) and observance of the interaction between image or sound and dialogue.

<u>Technical criteria:</u> concern the form of the subtitles, such as successful spotting and segmentation, which follow the rhythm and speed of dialogue, readability, observance of guidelines concerning punctuation, duration and layout.

In Castellón, a further assessment parameter is applied which examines whether the student has met the client's requirements concerning format, number of characters per line, etc.

In Lampeter, assessment criteria were developed in co-operation with the Welsh television station S4C and are therefore particularly practice oriented.

3.2.2.5 Skills

When asked about special skills students would need to acquire in addition to their translation skills, all teachers listed three main additional abilities:

First, the ability to select and condense the essence of a message, an ability that, some teachers claim, resembles interpreting skills. Second, the ability to identify and exploit the interaction between image, sound and text. And third, the ability to adapt to the rhythm and speed of dialogue.

Further skills mentioned were knowledge of film language as an artificial language and a sense for film aesthetics.

All courses strive to teach these skills through a mixture of practical exercises and classroom discussions.

In all of the examined courses students are trained to spot and edit their subtitles. Most teachers consider this a necessity without which the course would be useless. A tight university budget does not seem to be a severe impediment to the training in technical skills as can be seen in the example of Ljubliana, where only two subtitling units are available. The answer to the problem is a limited number of students and a weekly schedule, which allows students at least two hours of practice.

3.2.2.6 Partnerships with the market sector

The majority of the universities that provided information on their subtitling courses have partnerships with subtitling companies and/ or television

broadcasting companies. These partnerships are considered extremely important by all teachers since they offer insights into subtitling practices and market standards and therefore are a prerequisite for practice oriented teaching. The two universities that have not yet established such partnerships (Antwerp and Copenhagen) show at least some practice orientation by having students subtitle for film festivals (Antwerp) and by employing external examiners from public television companies (Copenhagen).

Some universities have an agreement with subtitling or broadcasting companies that offer internships to students, and others are currently working on such agreements.

In Ljubliana, the fact that there is no subtitling company in Slovenia is compensated for by a partnership with the two major Slovenian television companies and by the fact that both teachers of the course are practitioners themselves, working as freelance subtitlers.

In some cases, co-operation with the market sector is particularly strong. In Maastricht, for example, one of the major subtitling companies in Holland, NOB translations, has helped to develop the fourth year course, which follows the introductory course of the third year. In Lampeter, the television station S4C helps to establish assessment criteria, provides course material, advises on subtitling standards and acts as external examiner.

3.2.2.7 Modifications

Some courses, such as London, Castellón and Ljubliana, have only recently been established and therefore no major modifications have been made. The few modifications mentioned are slight and merely concern work material, such as the introduction of new audiovisual genres.

Courses that have been offered for a longer period of time have been modified over the years. These modifications mainly result from the need to adapt to evolving working conditions due to technical developments, in particular the introduction of digital technology. As a consequence, a shift of focus has taken place. Technical skills have become increasingly important. At the Universitat de Vic, for example, assignments have been changed from group work to individual work on the subtitling units in order to comply with the demand for technically well-versed graduates.

In Maastricht and Lampeter, courses have been such a success that they have gained an important place in the curriculum. In Maastricht, the original fourth year course has been moved to the third year, making room for an optional follow-up course in the fourth year for those interested. At the same time, the number of hours has been significantly expanded. In Lampeter, the pioneer of subtitling training at universities, a postgraduate course has been introduced in addition to the successful undergraduate programme.

3.3 Summary

The overall impression I gathered from my survey on university training in subtitling is very positive. It appears that teachers are aware of the demands the market will place on their students after graduation and that they succeed in conveying the necessary skills, strategies and background knowledge students will need to meet these requirements. A survey outcome I consider particularly positive is the strong practical orientation of the courses. It seems that subtitling courses succeed in overcoming the conventional separation of theory and practice, where university training takes place in an 'ivory tower' with little interaction with the professional world.

There is a general agreement among university subtitling teachers on the importance of teaching spotting and editing skills and of closely co-operating with the market sector. As a consequence, course aspects concerning technical skills seem to have turned out to be at least as important as linguistic aspects.

Training is rather interactive with the students taking on an active role in the design of class sessions and the development of their skills.

To conclude, university training in subtitling appears to fully meet the demands of the professional subtitling market and leaves little room for improvement. In the following chapter, a personal suggestion for a course offering on subtitling will be presented that is based on the courses that have been examined above.

4 Curriculum development

It is the aim of the following chapter to

(1) Establish that German universities and the German market could profit from course offerings similar to the ones described in Chapter 3, and

(2) Provide a suggestion as to how such a course could be implemented in the curriculum at my home university, the School of Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies of the University of Mainz in Germersheim[9].

4.1 The training situation in Germany

University subtitling training in Germany is limited to a few restricted teaching activities at the Saarland University in Saarbrücken and at the FASK in Germersheim. These teaching activities consist of seminars or translation classes with a focus on subtitling as a specific translation activity. This academic term, the Saarland University is offering a block seminar on subtitling which will be held at the premises of TitelBild GmbH in Berlin and which was organised in collaboration with TitelBild. The FASK in Germersheim has offered several seminars on subtitling in recent terms. Thanks to a student's connections, the School has established contact with one of the leading subtitling companies in the Netherlands, SDI Media. The company has supplied it with several subtitling units. So far, course modules such as the ones described in Chapter 3 are not

being offered in Germany. However, the introduction of an elective module on subtitling is currently being discussed at the FASK in Germersheim. In the further course of this chapter I will suggest how such a module could be designed for the English department of the FASK, with the intention to provide ideas and incentives that could be taken into consideration once the discussions about the module enter the actual planning stage.

Prior to presenting the module suggestion, however, I will illustrate in the following section that both the academic domain and the market sector in Germany could profit from course offerings in subtitling and that it is therefore time they were introduced into university translation curricula in Germany.

4.2 Benefits of subtitling training

4.2.1 Benefits for the market sector

The following section examines the German television market with respect to subtitling services and shows that subtitling activities in the field of intralingual subtitling for the benefit of the hearing impaired are likely to increase in the near future. In addition, two arguments are presented as to why German industry could also profit from an increase in interlingual subtitling services for foreign language programmes.

Subtitled television programmes are still an exception rather than the rule in Germany. Particularly subtitled foreign language programmes are only shown occasionally at late broadcasting times, the sole exception being the French-German channel *Arte*, which shows subtitled foreign language programmes on a regular basis, and third channels of public stations, such as the *WDR*, whose aim it is to promote films of artistic worth that cannot easily be dubbed, even if they are not likely to achieve high viewing figures (Hecht). Acceptance of subtitles among German television audiences is quite low, not least due to the inferior quality of subtitles shown on German television (Hecht). With respect to intralingual subtitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, however, the situation is somewhat different. Almost all public television stations show subtitled programmes for the hearing impaired (Schneider). The number of subtitled broadcasting minutes at

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[9] Hereafter referred to as FASK (*Fachbereich für Angewandte Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft*).

public television stations has increased considerably in recent years. At the ZDF, for example, the percentage of subtitled broadcasting minutes has increased from 4% in 1996 to 14% in 2001, the latter figure including live subtitles (qtd. in Schneider). Until recently, private television stations have not offered subtitling services for the hearing impaired, with the argument that they finance themselves through advertising and do not receive television fees (Karthäuser and Welter). However, in April 2000 *ProSieben* began to offer a subtitled film every Saturday night at the prime broadcasting time and *Kabel1* followed its example this year in October by offering a subtitled film every Sunday night (Schneider). In addition, *ProSieben* intends to include teletext-subtitled advertisements in its programme to provide hearing impaired viewers access to basic product information (ProSieben). In view of the fact that 14 million people in Germany are hearing impaired or deaf (Karthäuser and Welter), there exists a target group of a considerable size that is deprived of basic product information although it is just as interested as the hearing television audience in buying the products the private stations are advertising. It is therefore probably only a question of time until other private stations recognise the market potential of subtitled advertisements as well.

A further reason why it is to be expected that the amount of intralingual subtitles for German television programmes will increase is the *Gleichstellungsgesetz für behinderte Menschen* (law on equal opportunities for people with disabilities) that came into force on May 1st of this year. The act seeks to further integrate handicapped people into community life. On the basis of this new legislation, representative bodies for the handicapped are in a position to negotiate agreements with business to ensure the removal of barriers that hinder the handicapped from participating in community life, and to fight discrimination where such negotiations fail. The *Deutscher Schwerhörigenbund (DSB)* (German hearing impaired association) has been among the first representative bodies recognised by the *Bundesministerium für Arbeit* (German Federal Ministry of Labour). It seeks to remove communication barriers in the audiovisual media by forcing an increase in subtitled broadcasting minutes on German television (Karthäuser and Welter). It is therefore to be expected that the amount of subtitled programmes for the benefit of the hearing impaired will further increase in the near future, both on public as well as on private television channels. The German television industry should understand this development as an opportunity and a market potential

rather than a necessary evil since it implies access to a new target group that constitutes a substantial proportion of the German population.

The market potential for intralingual subtitles is not the only reason why the German industry could profit from an increased subtitling activity in the German television market. An increase in the amount of interlingual subtitles for foreign language programmes would also imply considerable benefits for the market sector. Aside from the fact that interlingual subtitling is the most cost-effective audiovisual language transfer mode and therefore a valuable alternative to other expensive transfer methods such as dubbing, there are two strong arguments in favour of watching subtitled foreign language programmes. First, watching subtitled programmes or films fosters foreign language acquisition. When watching a subtitled foreign language programme, the viewer is subject to a situation in which the meaning of the original message is clarified in a twofold manner: by the translation offered in the subtitles and by the pictures which reinforce the meaning of the original message by showing what the speech refers to. The 'availability' of the original dialogue, which offers the opportunity to compare and link words from the original message with their translation in the target language implies an active learning process, which involves constant mapping of what is being heard in the foreign language and what is being read in the translated version. With growing European integration, foreign language skills are becoming increasingly important for all professions. The advantage of subtitles as an inexpensive effective language-learning tool should be made use of, particularly since it could reduce the need of German companies to pay for expensive language training for employees. In addition, watching subtitled foreign language programmes could become an essential language-learning tool for German pupils, for whom foreign language skills are also becoming increasingly important, since they are likely to have competitors from other European countries for jobs on the European labour market upon graduation.

The second argument for the benefits of increased subtitled television programmes is that watching subtitled programmes improves reading skills. For the substantial part of the population (especially the younger generation) that has shifted from reading newspapers, magazines and books to relying mainly on television and the Internet for information and entertainment, subtitled television

programmes might even be a means to keep reading abilities alive. In addition, it could play an important role in the development of reading abilities in children.

To summarize, German industry could profit considerably from an increased subtitling activity in the German television market, not only because of the economic potential of subtitles (in particular intralingual subtitles), but also because subtitling helps to overcome deficits in foreign language skills and reading abilities and, consequently, increases the competitiveness of German employees both in the German and the European labour market.

However, these benefits of subtitling only apply if the subtitles shown on German television meet the quality requirements established in Chapter 1. As a consequence, a potential for subtitles in the German market implies a need for subtitling training at German universities to provide the market with professionals who possess the necessary expertise to create high-quality subtitles.

4.2.2 Benefits for translation training

It is not only because of market-economic considerations that it would be desirable to introduce subtitling in the translation degree at German universities. German translation students could also benefit considerably from acquiring subtitling strategies, regardless of whether or not they want to enter the profession of subtitling. When developing subtitling strategies, students acquire a range of 'transferable skills' they can draw upon in other areas and particularly in the field of text translation. Consequently, there are several strong arguments that speak in favour of introducing subtitling as a module in the curriculum of translation studies:

First, the interaction with new technologies and the use of video, image files, different software programmes and the web as a research tool furthers students' information technology skills and provides them with experience of working in a technological environment, an experience they usually lack at university.

Second, teaching subtitling is a task of a highly practical nature with a strong link to the market sector, also something rather unusual for the theory-laden atmosphere at German universities.

A further important benefit of subtitling training for translation students is that it fosters the development of mother tongue skills. Excellent mother tongue skills are an absolute necessity for a good translator, yet, translation students often

spend years at university concentrating on foreign language acquisition and perfection while neglecting the development of their own language. Subtitling training offers an opportunity to at least partly adjust this imbalance. In addition, it also furthers idiomatic language skills and genre-specific language use both in the mother tongue as well as in the foreign language.

The most important argument in favour of subtitling training, however, is that by acquiring subtitling skills, students are likely to improve their translation skills. The typical constraints of space and time a subtitler is faced with force students to consider what exactly is the essential message they have to convey and then to render it, sometimes in very different words. As a consequence, they are likely to shed, to some extent, the bad habit most translation students struggle with, which is to focus on individual words and sentence segments rather than on semantic units and larger segments of the text. Subtitling offers an opportunity to learn how to move away from the original and to produce idiomatic translations. Thus, subtitling could become a whole new translation experience for students, an experience they could transfer to other translation activities.

Further translation skills improved by subtitle training are text analysis skills, the use of translation strategies according to different genres and a better understanding of the problems of interference.

In summation, subtitling training should be offered as a module in translation studies at German universities, not only as a response to the growing demand for subtitles on the German market that is to be expected, but also because of the didactic potential of subtitling, both with regard to translation skills as well as to skills usually neglected in academic translation courses, such as IT and mother tongue competence.

4.3 Proposal for curriculum development at the FASK

The M.A. translation course offered at the FASK is structured into the *Grundstudium* (undergraduate studies), which comprises four semesters and terminates with the *Vorprüfung* (the German equivalent to the B.A.), and the *Hauptstudium* (graduate studies), which comprises four semesters and one additional exam semester. The total number of hours of instruction for the whole

course amounts to 160 *Semesterwochenstunden (SWS)* (number of class hours a student attends per week over the course of a semester), 80 SWS for undergraduate studies and 80 SWS for graduate studies. These 160 SWS are divided onto 22 modules of 4 - 12 SWS. 12 modules are allotted to the first foreign language (B-language) and 7 to the second foreign language (C-language). Aside from these 19 modules, students have to choose two required elective modules *(Wahlpflichtmodule)* and they may choose one additional elective module for further qualification *(Wahlmodul)*.

Table 10

Distribution of SWS

Distribution of SWS			
	Undergraduate studies	Graduate studies	Total
First foreign language (B-language)	40	42	82
Second foreign language (C-language)	25	18	43
2 required elective modules + 1 elective module	15	20	35
Total	80	80	160

The following proposal describes a four-semester required elective module for 3rd and 4th year students in the graduate programme. It is based on the course offerings examined in Chapter 3 and merges those aspects of the examined courses I consider particularly useful.

Module title:

Screen translation

Prerequisites:

Students who want to take the module need to have successfully passed the *Vorprüfung* to prove that they have developed adequate translation skills and a sound knowledge of the B-language and culture. Ideally, students should take the module after they have spent one or two semesters abroad and possess a profound understanding of the culture from which they will mainly subtitle.

Language combination:

The module is designed for students whose mother tongue or B-language is either German or English. Students will mainly subtitle into their mother tongue. To preserve the valuable teaching device of comparing individual versions with fellow students' versions, the module is limited to these two mother tongue groups and cannot be interdepartmental. However, in view of the large number of foreign students at the FASK and the demands of the market for language combinations other than English-German, it is recommended that the module also be introduced in other departments.

Teachers:

Adjunct instructors with at least two years of professional experience will teach the module. To have practitioners teach the module is an absolute prerequisite since the highly practical nature of subtitling requires a teacher who knows the art and who has experienced the routines adopted by the market. Theoretical knowledge gained from literature and supplemented by a few practical exercises prior to teaching can never be an adequate alternative to professional experience in the field.

Module objectives:

The module seeks to

    (1) Provide a decision aid for students who are interested in entering the subtitling profession,

    (2) Convey basic subtitling skills and background knowledge students can draw on when entering the professional market, and

(3) Offer an opportunity to all translation students, regardless of whether or not they want to enter the subtitling profession, to improve their translation skills by acquiring subtitling strategies (as established in section 4.2.2)

Module outline:

The module comprises

    (1) one advanced seminar or one translation seminar   2 SWS

    (2) four practical translation classes   8 SWS

Table 11

Module Structure

Module Structure	
Advanced or translation seminar	2 SWS
Translation class B-language – mother tongue (1. semester)	2 SWS
Translation class mother tongue – B-language (2. semester)	2 SWS
Translation class intralingual subtitles (3. Semester)	2 SWS
Translation class on 'real life task' (4. Semester)	2 SWS

Module description:

The seminar:

The advanced seminar should be taken during the first semester of the module, since it serves to convey the theoretical background knowledge students will need for the practical translation classes. The first classes of the seminar will be held in the form of introductory lectures and will cover theoretical aspects of subtitling,

such as norms (on duration, punctuation, line breaks, etc.), other forms of audiovisual language transfer and principles of reduction. A special focus will be placed on the parameters of dubbing, as the preferred transfer method in Germany, and intralingual subtitling, as a potential industry for the German market. The introductory lectures will be complemented by exercises on script transcription and dialogue analysis to familiarise students with the peculiarities of film language. Later sessions will be organised by students in the form of workshops and group presentations on specific audiovisual topics. Such presentations offer an important opportunity to students to improve their teamwork abilities and to present results of their work in a unified manner, abilities they will need in the labour market. During the final session of the seminar, practitioners will come into class to talk about professional aspects of subtitling, such as tariffs, copy right and forms of employment, and to answer students' questions on the profession.

Upon successful completion of the seminar, students will acquire a *Schein* (evidence of academic achievement) on the basis of the group presentation they have held with two fellow students and a 20-page paper on a specific theoretical aspect of audiovisual translation.

Translation classes:

Preliminary remark: the main focus of the translation classes will be on subtitling into the mother tongue, i.e. English mother tongue students will mainly subtitle into English, and German mother tongue students will mainly subtitle into German. Students will be divided into two groups according to their mother tongue and will compare their subtitled versions within their group, while also offering suggestions for improvement (as mother tongue speakers) to the other group when subtitling into the B-language. Thus, both groups can learn from the mother tongue competence of the other group and expand their B-language competence accordingly. Out of the four semesters comprising the module, only the second semester will focus on subtitling into the students' respective B-language. This weighting reflects the demands of the market where subtitlers mainly subtitle into their mother tongue.

Semesters 1 and 2: the translation class in the first semester will be used to familiarise students with the technical equipment and to help them develop spotting and editing skills. During the first semester, students will only subtitle into their mother tongue, whereas the second semester translation class will comprise subtitling assignments into students' respective B-language. During the first two semesters, students will be given subtitling class assignments with a low level of difficulty. The assignments will cover the main genres, such as film, documentaries, comedy, soaps and news programmes. During classes, students will work on their own subtitling units and will receive assistance from the teacher. Classes will be structured into two weeks of practical activities and one week of discussion. Students will be given two class sessions in succession to create subtitles for a specific assignment, while every third session will be used for evaluation and discussion of the subtitled assignments in class. Thus, students will gradually be taught to meet deadlines (the evaluation session). Where the two practical sessions do not offer sufficient time, students need to be provided with an opportunity to work on the subtitling units outside of the class sessions.

Assessment: At the end of the second semester, students will be given a two-week assignment to subtitle a longer film or television programme fragment of about 100 subtitles into their mother tongue. The assignment will be complemented by a short analytical commentary on the difficulties students encountered during the assignment, and on the strategies they used to solve them. In doing so, students will become more aware of their strategies and will employ them more consciously in the future. Furthermore, writing such a commentary will help to develop a pronounced awareness of problems connected with subtitling and should enable students to spot difficult film segments in advance and to pay special attention to the translation of such segments.

Semesters 3 and 4: During translation classes in the third and fourth semesters, the level of difficulty of class assignments will be raised and deadlines will be tightened by increasing the quantity that must be subtitled between evaluation sessions. The third semester will mainly focus on the creation of intralingual subtitles. Particularly students whose mother tongue is English and for whom the market is therefore more restricted, because the majority of film material to be subtitled is produced in English, could profit from acquiring additional skills in

intralingual subtitling. But also for German mother tongue speakers, intralingual subtitling is a profitable learning outcome given the fact that it has considerable market potential and will probably develop into a thriving industry in Germany in the near future (see section 4.2.1). During the fourth semester, students, if possible, will work on 'real life tasks', i.e. create subtitles for an actual client, such as a film festival or art house cinema. This will help students understand the need to comply with clients' expectations and demands and the absolute necessity to meet deadlines. The class structure of two practical sessions alternating with one evaluation session will be maintained during the third and fourth semesters.

Assessment: At the end of the fourth semester (i.e. the end of the module) students will be given a 90-minute assignment to subtitle a shorter film or programme segment of about 30 subtitles into their mother tongue. This exam intends to reflect the working conditions of subtitlers, requiring the ability to create high-quality subtitles under considerable time pressure. After the assignment, students will be given three days to write an analytical commentary on their strategies (as described for the second semester).

The successful completion of the module will be listed on the diploma certificate.

Recommendations:

While developing the module, a partnership with a German subtitling company and/ or television station should be established. The partner company could help to develop course contents and assessment criteria, provide teachers with technical equipment and material to work on and act as an external examiner in the final exam. Alternatively to a partnership with a German company, the co-operation with SDI Media Netherlands could be expanded though a partner company operating in the German market would be preferable.

The prospective adjunct instructor responsible for teaching of the module should establish contacts with other subtitling teachers in Europe to share experiences concerning course contents, structure, assignments and assessment criteria. An excellent forum for such a knowledge exchange is offered by the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST) (www.esist.org), which is an association of professional translators, researchers and academics specialized in the field of screen translation.

Finally, those responsible for the implementation of the module should establish links to other university departments, in particular to film academies. Subtitling students need to understand film features and film language, whereas students studying at a film academy could profit from understanding the factors that will impede or facilitate the transfer of their films into other languages. Such collaboration could also include the joint organisation of film festivals where films created by students of the film academy are subtitled by students of the FASK during their fourth semester translation class.

Concluding remarks:

When establishing a course offering on subtitling, there are two main difficulties a university is usually faced with. One is the lack of qualified teachers who possess the necessary expertise to train students; the other is the need to buy expensive subtitling equipment. The FASK could solve the first problem by employing professionals on the basis of an adjunct instructorship. The second difficulty is less pressing at the FASK, since it has already been equipped with some subtitling equipment by SDI Media Netherlands. A further partnership with a German subtitling company might completely solve the problem. In addition, as the course offered in Ljubliana proves, the problem of limited equipment is not an insuperable impediment for subtitling teaching and can be solved by restricted student numbers and a well-organised schedule. Thus, the impediments for the introduction of a module on screen translation at the FASK do not seem to be insurmountable and it is therefore to be hoped that such a module will soon become part of the translation curriculum.

4.4 Possible research options

The final section of this chapter is dedicated to research questions, which might deserve attention in further investigations. A special focus is placed on questions that are relevant for the improvement of teaching. The section closes with a short discussion on how existing subtitling practices could be enhanced with a focus on the implications such improvements could have on teaching.

Until now, one of the main points of focus in research on subtitling has been the processing of subtitles. A number of experiments carried out at the University of

Leuven in Belgium have examined eye movement patterns of subjects while watching subtitled programme fragments. The researchers compared eye fixations and reading times of subjects when reading one- and two-line subtitles (see Praet et al., 1990) and researched attention division (between image, sound track and subtitle) while subjects were watching a subtitled film (see Praet et al., 1991). There has also been some research on the interaction of the two hemispheres of the brain while processing subtitles (see Grillo and Kawin).

The results of such research projects are only of limited value to the teaching of subtitling in that they might be used to improve or correct the guidelines for good subtitling with respect to insertion times, subtitle placing on the screen and avoidance of two- or one-liners. There are a few research issues, however, that have not been subject to deeper investigation so far and that might provide more valuable results for the teaching of subtitling. One issue remaining for further investigation, for example, is the reading behaviour and reading skills of different target audiences. With the advent of DVD, which will make it possible to offer several subtitled versions of a film to meet the varying requirements of different target audiences, there is a need to identify and define these requirements and replace the somewhat stringent rules concerning subtitle duration and dialogue reduction in subtitles. In this context, the reading speed of the heterogeneous group of the deaf and hard-of-hearing as well as the viewing behaviour and reading skills of children should be given special attention. Teaching could profit from the results of such investigations by equipping students with a set of different subtitling strategies, particularly with respect to reduction and editing of the original dialogue, which they could apply according to the respective target audience for which they subtitle. This would lead to a considerable improvement of subtitle quality and as a consequence would probably enhance the acceptance of subtitles among television audiences.

A particularly interesting research topic for translation scholars and teachers might be the one of common translation mistakes in subtitles. Cay Dollerup has raised this issue in his article on subtitles in television programmes and has identified a few translation mistakes, which appear frequently in television subtitles. Further investigation should be undertaken in this domain in order to improve language quality in subtitles and to define typical translation errors in subtitling that students could be made aware of.

Finally, the advantages and implications of new technologies for subtitling need to be researched. Investigations in this field should include the question of whether new technology, such as translation memory or work recognition, could be used in subtitling software, as well as the effect automatic language translation could have on the profession of subtitling. The results of such investigations could have an effect on the definition of course contents with regard to the kind of technical expertise students should possess.

It is hoped that the market segmentation that characterizes the subtitling industry will be overcome in the future and a unified set of rules concerning subtitle presentation and quality will be established. The need for a common set of conventions will become even more apparent with the advent of DVD and the targeting of film sales to an international market (Ivarsson and Carroll 117). Such improvements would also have a positive effect on training since subtitling would become a less heterogeneous activity and it would be easier to decide on course contents and on which rules students should follow. In addition, the claim of subtitling agencies that university training is pointless because they have to train new employees according to company rules anyway would become moot.

Conclusion

It has been the endeavour of this thesis to prove that the complex nature of subtitling requires special training for translation students and to establish how this training could be conducted.

Chapter 1 outlined the theoretical aspects of subtitling and subtitling training in order to provide the reader with basic knowledge he could draw upon in the following practice-oriented chapters. Sections 1 to 6 of Chapter 1 focused on the different forms of audiovisual language transfer in general and of subtitling in particular, as well as on the actual task of subtitling with regard to the work process and norms on layout, editing and presentation of subtitles. Section 7 explained the main peculiarities of subtitling that result from the audiovisual context in which subtitling takes place. In particular, the section clarified the difficulties these peculiarities pose for the subtitler and the strategies and skills he needs to develop to cope with them. Section 8 examined how, according to publications by several subtitling teachers, these strategies and skills could be taught at universities and other institutions of higher education.

Chapter 2 presented the results of a survey on employment criteria adopted by subtitling agencies in Europe. The data gathered by the survey suggested that the introduction of further university course offerings on subtitling in Europe would

be welcomed by the market sector. The survey also seemed to support the notion that subtitling requires the acquisition of skills that go beyond those usually conveyed in a translation degree course and that, consequently, there is a need for specialised training. Since the data that served as a basis for interpretation were very limited, further research needs to be done in this sector. Such research should focus particularly on the differences between subtitling markets in individual countries and their implications for university training in the respective countries.

Chapter 3 examined subtitling course offerings at European universities and institutions of higher education. The outcomes of the survey were positive without exception and suggested that the few university course offerings on subtitling that currently exist, meet the demands of the professional subtitling market and succeed in equipping students with the necessary skills, strategies and background knowledge to enable them to enter the subtitling profession. Universities or institutions of higher education that intend to introduce a course offering on subtitling are therefore strongly advised to use the existing course offerings as role models and to consult with the respective teachers of the courses described in Chapter 3. Several of the teachers are members of the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST) and can be contacted through the ESIST forum.

Chapter 4 established that there is a potential for subtitles in the German television market and that both German industry and German translation students could profit from the introduction of subtitling course offerings at German universities. The chapter showed that it is to be expected that the amount of intralingual subtitles in German television will considerably increase in the next years. In addition, it was pointed out that interlingual subtitles could also have great value for the German market in terms of foreign language acquisition and raising literacy levels, beside being a valuable means of improving children's reading skills. Moreover, translation students could greatly profit from acquiring subtitling skills by improving their translation and mother tongue skills, as well as becoming familiar with state-of-the-art word processing software, the use of image files and the web as a research tool. It is therefore recommended that subtitling course offerings be introduced into translation curricula at German universities. Chapter 4 provided a suggestion on how such a course offering could be implemented in the curriculum at the FASK in Germersheim.

I trust that this thesis has contributed to promoting subtitling as a complex, challenging and intriguing translation activity and that it has given an incentive to increase teaching activities in this interesting field in my home country. Subtitling enhances information technology skills and fosters translation and mother tongue skills. It provides opportunities for group work and oral presentations in class, while at the same time promoting independent, autonomous learning and working. The most appealing aspect of subtitling, however, lies in its authenticity, its provision of an opportunity to students to experience professional working methods, i.e. to develop genuinely useful translation skills while working on professional equipment and applying the demands of the professional world, outside of the artificial working conditions usually found at German universities. In this respect, more than other teaching activities, subtitling training offers students an opportunity to advance a few steps further towards professionalism. As Jan Klerkxx, former subtitling teacher at the Maastricht School of Translation & Interpreting, states:

> Thus, subtitling could not only be an *end*, preparing people for a career in media translation, but also a *means*, a means of producing better translators. (264)

It is time that this potential of subtitling is also recognized at German universities.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Instructions:
questions 1.- 3.: please check the appropriate box and complete the statements as necessary.
question 5.: please choose a number from the scale.

Company location (please name the country in which the company is located):
……………………………………………………………………………...

1.Our company subtitles mainly
ⅰ from foreign languages (primarily (please list languages) …………………..)
ⅰ for the deaf and hard-of-hearing
ⅰ other (please specify) ……………………………………………………………

2. How do you obtain new employees?
ⅰ job advertisements
ⅰ blind applications by people interested in working in the field
ⅰ by contacting universities
ⅰ other (please specify) ……………………………………………………………

3. What professional qualification or professional background does the majority of your employees have?
ⅰ university degree in translation /interpreting
ⅰ university degree in media sciences
ⅰ television professionals with language skills
ⅰ other (please specify) ……………………………………………………………

4. What are the main skills you expect of fresh recruits? Please list in order of importance.

5. How important do you feel it is to offer courses on subtitling at universities in your country?

		Scale				
Extremely Unimportant	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely important

Why?

6. Do you think your company could profit from a partnership with a university?
ⅰ yes
ⅰ no

If so, how?
If not, why not?

7. What developments in the subtitling sector do you expect in the near future?

Appendix 2

Survey questions for university teachers

1. What are the major contents of the course?
2. When establishing the course contents what were the main objectives and learning outcomes you wanted to achieve?
3. What assignments do you give your students?
4. What are the assessment criteria?
5. In your opinion, in which way do these assessment criteria differ from assessment criteria for 'normal' (e.g. literary) translations?
6. Do you think there are special skills a student needs to develop to become a good subtitler, skills that are not conveyed in a 'traditional' translation degree course?
7. If so, how do you try to convey these skills in your course?
8. Does, and to what extent, the course involve training in technical requirements and skills such as computer editing, spotting of subtitles, etc.?
9. Does your university have partnerships with the commercial sector (television companies, subtitling agencies, etc.?)
10. If yes, how important do you consider these partnerships?

   Extremely unimportant   1   2   3   4   5   extremely important

11. Are there aspects of the course which have been modified over the years?
12. If so, why?

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Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Ich versichere hiermit, dass ich zur Anfertigung vorliegender Arbeit keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt und keine fremde Hilfe in Anspruch genommen habe.

Germersheim, den 28. November 2002