

Lost in translation? The one-inch truth about Netflix's subtitle problem

Level: Elementary – Teacher's notes

Article summary: How the increase in TV and film streaming services and the availability and popularity of foreign-language TV has led to demands for greater investment into accurate subtitles.

Time: 90 minutes

Skills: Reading, speaking, translating & writing

Language focus: Vocabulary & phrases

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. As a lead into the topic, students briefly discuss the questions.

2. Key words

- a. Students write the words from the wordpools next to the definitions on the lines provided. Then they should find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

Key:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. series | 7. subtitles |
| 2. scripts | 8. closed captions |
| 3. characters | 9. dubbing |
| 4. ignore | 10. deaf |
| 5. culture | 11. viewers |
| 6. debate | 12. accurate |

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand and know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| 1. closed captions | 4. series |
| 2. culture | 5. ignore |
| 3. deaf | 6. viewers |

3. Understanding the article

- a. Students decide whether the sentences are true or false and correct any that are false.
1. *False. He says that there are many amazing films with subtitles.*
 2. *False. Many are in foreign languages.*
 3. *True*
 4. *False. Subtitles usually give viewers the best translation.*
 5. *True*
 6. *False. They use the same words as the dubbing script.*
 7. *False. It is important to some people but not to everyone.*
 8. *True*

4. Key language

- a. With a partner, students write as many film and TV genres as they can think of in the box. Allow them to use a dictionary if they don't know the words in English.
- b. Students decide which genres or categories the named films and series are (they may name more than one genre per example). Then they think of other example films or TV series for each of the genres they wrote into their box in a.
- c. Finally, they use the sentence hints to say which they prefer and why, and share this information with the group.

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions directly connected to the article.

6. In your own words

- a. Students work with a partner and carry out the task to the best of their abilities (it doesn't need to be perfect – the process and reflection on the task is more important than the result). If they need ideas where to find short videos, point them towards TED talks, health and safety, or public information videos.

If your students are feeling creative and you have enough time, they could write and film their own 'How to ...' videos and then subtitle them afterwards.