

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

Level: Intermediate – 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 and check the article to find further information.

2. Key words

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

Key:

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>debate</i> | 6. <i>transcript</i> |
| 2. <i>versions</i> | 7. <i>script</i> |
| 3. <i>subservient</i> | 8. <i>challenges</i> |
| 4. <i>concept</i> | 9. <i>compact</i> |
| 5. <i>revealed</i> | 10. <i>gist</i> |

- 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. <i>revealed</i> | 4. <i>gist</i> |
| 2. <i>versions</i> | 5. <i>challenges</i> |
| 3. <i>concept</i> | |

3. Understanding the article

- a. Students choose the best answers, a, b, or c.

Key:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. <i>b</i> | 4. <i>a</i> |
| 2. <i>c</i> | 5. <i>c</i> |
| 3. <i>c</i> | 6. <i>b</i> |

4. Key language

- a. Students find and circle words in the article that describe people that are important to the film and TV industries.

Key:

director, (lead female) character, viewer, actor, translator, subtitler

- b. Then, they use each one twice, to talk or write about the article, and in other sentences not related to the article.
- c. Then ask them to expand the vocabulary field by adding words that describe other people who are important to the film and TV industries, e.g., *scriptwriter, editor, make-up artist, voice coach, producer, etc.*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the questions directly connected to the article. Note, the partner in the question is the partner the students live with or have a relationship with (not their class partner). If they don't have a partner, they can talk about a friend or family member with whom they usually watch TV.

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 students' 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.