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

Level: Advanced – 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.
b. They check the article to find further information.

2. Key words

a. Students write the correct word from the wordpool next to the definitions on the lines provided. Then they find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

Key:
1. earning
2. scripts
3. gripes
4. subservient
5. glossed over
6. notorious
7. awkward
8. gosh
9. irritated
10. abundance
11. talent crunch
12. profoundly
13. peers
14. linger
15. gist

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. notorious
2. profoundly
3. linger
4. abundance
5. gripes

3. Understanding the article

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

Key:
1. b
2. c
3. a
4. c
5. a
6. c
7. b
8. b

4. Key language

a. Students decide which verbs they need to complete the verb phrases from the article. Then they go back over the article to check their answers.

Key:
1. overcome a barrier
2. prove someone right
3. spark a debate
4. yield results
5. unpicking the flaws
6. supposed to do something
7. go round
8. put effort into something

b. Then they use them in sentences of their own that are not related to the article.

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).

6. In your own words

a.-c. Students work with a partner and carry out the task to the best of their abilities (it doesn't need to be perfect – in this task, the process and reflection on the task is more important than the result). If they need ideas on 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 and dub them afterwards.