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This volume offers a wide array of cutting-edge original research on the implementation of Foreign Language Pedagogy in translator and interpreter training, a still rather unexplored field of research in Translation Studies. It is divided in two distinct sections. The first section focuses on theoretical approaches to this topic. The chapters of this section will offer the reader valuable new knowledge and thoughts on how to update and enrich academic curricula as well as how to make use of cognitive linguistics and to implement a multicultural approach in the demanding domain of translator and interpreter training. The second practical section comprises a series of diverse methods and didactical means of Foreign Language Pedagogy which are creatively adapted to fit in language and translation/interpreting teaching for translation/interpreting trainees, aiming at fostering their translational sub-competences. The volume's overarching aim is to clearly emphasise that foreign language teaching for translation and interpreting trainees has to be approached and structured differently than conventional language teaching in other academic disciplines. It is useful for scholars and translation/interpreting teachers who want to enrich translator/interpreter training with new interdisciplinary ideas and knowledge which will significantly assist them in enhancing the translation/interpreting competence of their students.

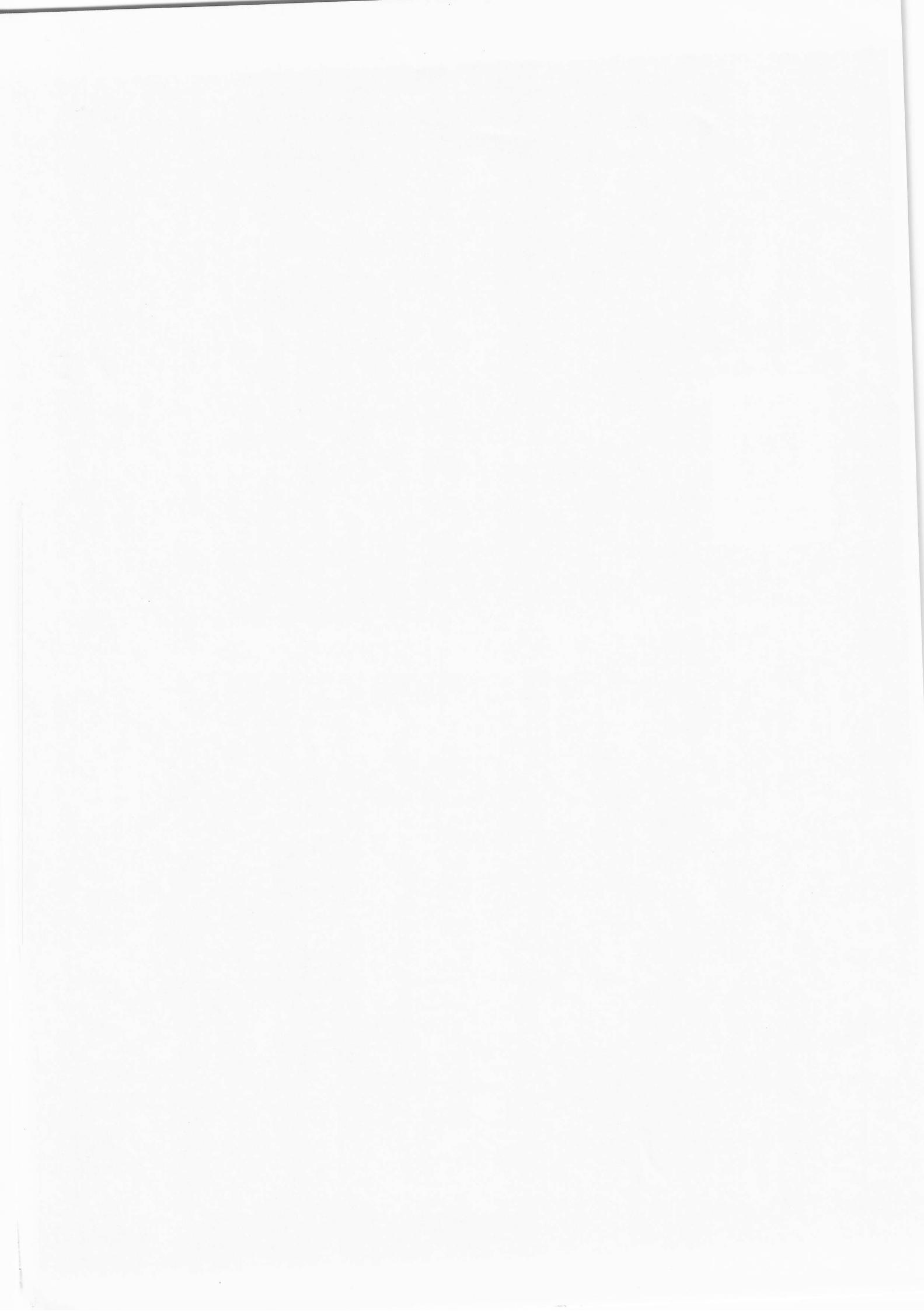
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## CHAPTER 6

# Combining subtitle creation and subtitle alignment in foreign language teaching A means to foster translation competence and communication skills

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Subtitling and alignment can be used as didactic tools as they contribute to the development of the linguistic, intercultural and instrumental competences that constitute the translation competence. Thus, the aim of this work is to present a methodological framework for translator training using subtitling and alignment as two activities applicable in language teaching to foster students' skills in a foreign language and their translation competence. Firstly, students are asked to transcribe the source subtitles of various video files and, afterwards, translate them into their mother tongue. Secondly, they are given the broadcasted source and target subtitles of several TV programs and nature documentaries to align them – these alignments will be later compiled into an electronic parallel corpus.

**Keywords:** alignment, didactic tools, foreign language teaching, parallel corpus, subtitles

## 1. Introduction

Translation as a didactic tool in foreign language learning has been traditionally disregarded in the last few decades (Cook 2007; Díaz-Cintas 2004, 2008; Witte et al. 2009; Leonardi 2010). However, recent research in audio-visual translation (AVT) and foreign language acquisition shows that translation can stimulate students' language awareness (Gambier 2003; Ghia 2011; Tsagari and Floros 2013; Incalerta and Lertola 2014; among others). In fact, the practice of subtitle creation has proven to have positive effects in foreign language learning (hereinafter FLL) – to improve not only students' communication skills (Talaván 2019; Ragni

2018; Torralba-Miralles 2018, 2020; among others) but also their intercultural communicative competence (Byram, Nichols and Stevens 2001; European Commission/Media Consulting Group 2011; Council of Europe 2018) and their translation competence (Prieto et al. 2007; Incalcaterra 2009; Panizzon 2012). Subtitling can also be used as a didactic tool in order to acquire other basic competences that are especially relevant in translators' training: linguistic competence, intercultural competence and instrumental competence, to which we will be referring later. Some even argue that various types of AVT activities may also enhance their translation competence in specialised areas, such as the scientific and technical field (Prieto et al. 2007).

On the other hand, although no previous research has been found surrounding the impact of the process of text alignment (i.e., to make each source string match the appropriate target string), aligned parallel corpora in two or more languages have also proven to be a useful didactic tool for FL (Sinclair 2004; Ajimer 2009; Doval 2018) and for translator training (Zanettin et al. 2003; Bernardini and Castagnoli 2008). Parallel corpora contain source texts together with their translations into one or more other languages, and are therefore sometimes also referred to as translation corpora (what is understood as 'parallel corpora' in translation studies (TS) matches what is called 'translation corpora' in Contrastive Linguistics [Nord 2010:13]). Boulton (2017) draws a timeline on the use of corpora in FL and points out that there is indeed a growing interest in exploring corpora in FL teaching, but that this interest is mostly shown towards the logical preponderance of English and focuses mainly on monolingual corpora. Our bibliographical research proves that "while many empirical studies refer to theoretical and pedagogical foundations, few seek directly to test them" (Boulton 2017:485), and this is precisely what the methodological approach described below aims to achieve, i.e., to put into practice what theoretical studies regarding corpora in FLL have been researching in recent years.

Despite the great contributions of subtitle creation and aligned parallel corpora, no previous work combining both subtitling and alignment has been found. Thus, this chapter aims to present a methodological framework for translator training using subtitling and alignment (and its combination) as two activities applicable in language teaching which are intended to foster the students' translation competences, considering the so-called *competence-based training*, in which curriculum design revolves around competences and has the aim of making learning more meaningful for students (Hurtado 2015:32). Lasnier (2000:32) defined *competence-based training* as complex know-how derived from the integration and mobilization of a set of abilities, skills and knowledge used in common situations in an effective way.

Our approach is based upon cognitive constructivist and socio-constructivist learning theories, and aims to make learning more meaningful for students, in the sense that competences are guided by these three principles: know-how-to-act, integration of different types of skills, and use in context. These principles relate to three of the traditionally considered translation sub-competences: (1) linguistic competence (by working with semantic cognition), (2) intercultural competence (by working on source and target language and cultural awareness and mediation) and (3) instrumental competence (by using information and communication technologies, hereinafter ICT) (Hurtado 2015; Hurtado et al. 2019).

As is well known, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – CEFR* (– Council of Europe 2018) is the referential document for FL teachers. It offers guidelines for teaching planning, and accounts for the aforementioned competences. Regarding (1), the descriptors considered within the CEFR are: vocabulary range; grammatical accuracy and orthographic command, among others. From a semantic point of view, the processes of translation and alignment go beyond the mere enlargement of vocabulary knowledge, in the sense that they make students aware of the existence of linguistic features in the source language that may be difficult to transfer to the target language. These activities are, therefore, connected with the "learner's awareness and control of organization of meaning" (Council of Europe 2018), as both translation and alignment require a deeper analysis and understanding of meaning (including lexical, and grammatical relations) in the source language and some dexterity in the target language to be able to properly convey source meaning into target textual units (sentence, paragraph). This approach is close to the *linguistic-functional paradigm* (Mackenzie et al. 2004). Moreover, subtitling creation also offers students the possibility of finding texts in the form of spoken discourse in natural communicative contexts, which allows them to notice features that provide additional *pragmatic* information (Alcón and Safont 2008) to the text to be translated, such as the context, the use of intonation patterns, deictic markers or even body language. The use of pragmatic information in the videos also facilitates language learning from an *experiential* point of view (Lakoff and Johnson 2003; Wilson 2002).

Regarding (2), the descriptors presented in the CEFR are: dealing with ambiguity modifying language, showing sensitivity to differences, and anticipating possible risks of misunderstanding (Council of Europe 2018). Translating is a mediation activity and, acting as a cultural bridge, mediation is considered in the CEFR as a communicative language activity in which the learner creates conditions for intercultural communication. Cross-linguistic mediation also involves social and cultural competences as well as competences in more than one language, all of which are present in any subtitling activity and, also, when aligning

parallel corpora. The CEFR (2018) does not include any AVT activity within its descriptors and planned activities, given that it is an educational document clearly not intended for professional translators or interpreters, and AVT is usually considered a strictly professional task. However, if subtitle creation is understood as ‘mediating a text’ (i.e., transferring a written or an oral text into writing), we could then extrapolate the CEFR key concepts that could apply here. Thus, when subtitling and aligning corpora, students would be carrying out some or all of the following activities: summarizing main points in a source text; collating such information and arguments from different sources; recognizing and clarifying to the intended audience the purpose and viewpoint of the original; capturing both the essential information and also nuances, and last but not least, creating comprehensible and target-culture-oriented texts that follow the relevant conventions in the target language (CEFR 2018:10–13).

Regarding (3), the descriptors presented within the CEFR are: enhancing motivation, promoting autonomous and cooperative learning, fostering critical thinking skills, encouraging innovation (EI) and promoting research. Both for the subtitling and alignment assignments, students will need to make use of ICT tools, such as Aegisub or complex spreadsheets previously prepared by the supervisors. By using these tools, students learn to deal with, and even master, the required software and therefore will be able to work autonomously – this high command of the tools and the results obtained might increase their motivation. The aligned strings are expected to be compiled in a parallel corpus so that it can be used by students (though it may also be useful for translators, linguists and researchers) for reflection purposes and critical thinking. This corpus will be the result of cooperative work and might be an innovative resource for students that might help them to increase their motivation as well.

## 2. Subtitle creation to develop communication skills

Several studies have already shown the numerous benefits of watching subtitled films when learning an FL (comprehension, vocabulary [recognition, association and vocabulary building], motivation, etc.) as well as its effects on speaking (Talaván 2010:287; Daman 2004; Araújo 2008; Ragni 2018). In fact, though no negative correlation has been found between being accustomed to dubbing or subtitling and knowledge of FLs, a correlation does seem to emerge with regard to language level, since speakers’ level of an FL (particularly in English) is higher in countries with a subtitling tradition (European Commission 2011).

After decades of translation having been denied its pedagogical role in FL, it is now clear that subtitling (both watching subtitled videos and creating sub-

titles) can be used as a successful pedagogical resource for FL teaching and its benefits are enhanced due to its ludic approach, which increases students’ motivation and participation, since learners feel they play an active role in their learning process (Talaván 2006, 2010; Tsagari and Flores 2013; Gambier et al. 2014; Ierotila 2019). The creation of subtitles “assists students in the development of oral comprehension skills, provides them with different types of support (visual, textual, and technological) for language development, encourages learners to face authentic input, and produces tangible output (the subtitles created by students) that can be shared with their peers (or even on the web)” (Talaván 2010:285).

These activities may also help students to foster their mediation and/or translation competence, since they acquire a better understanding of the process of the subtitling technique (which varies considerably from other modalities of translation) – this will increase their interest and stimulate their critical attitude towards future observations of the same phenomenon (Talaván 2006). In addition, the combination of different elements (i.e., sound, image and text) turns this activity into a useful resource for a wide range of students (Talaván 2006). As Neves states, “if students are made to think about text as a multi-layered complex that can be systematically taken apart to later be put back together, they will acquire knowledge that will speed up their performance and they will also gain awareness of the difficulties which are inherent to the job” (Neves 2004:137). Moreover, subtitling offers students their first glimpse into the translator’s real profession in a rapidly-changing and constantly-increasing market segment as is the audio-visual field, and it may even act as a means to integrate competences such as the “digital and information processing competence” and the “communicative competence” in students’ curriculum (López-Cirugeda and Sánchez 2013).

This last competence (communicative competence) has two sides: comprehension and production, both of which can be developed both by watching subtitled videos and/or by creating subtitles. Students improve on one hand their reading comprehension and written production, since subtitling urges them to read thoroughly to improve their understanding of the reading passages (Lee 2013:17). On the other, their listening skills (Huang and Eskey 1999), as this practice requires reading and listening at the same time: “The use of subtitling and subtitles combines a series of qualities that motivate, foster, and facilitate the development of oral comprehension: it is recreational, familiar and dynamic, utilizes multiple codes, and makes the achievement of this receptive skill easier, both individually and collaboratively” (Talaván 2010:295). Oral production can also be fostered with subtitling (Araújo 2008), due to the extra listening practice, and students’ pronunciation becomes also more accurate since they are better at phonetics (Garza 1991) – in this field, research is currently being carried out on the pedagogical role of dubbing and audio description activities, both in translators’ training as

well as in FL acquisition (see for instance Jüngst 2013; Ibáñez and Vermeulen 2013; Matamala and Otero 2016; Martínez-Martínez et al. 2019).

### 3. Aligned parallel corpora: A didactic tool in FLL

Parallel corpora have several applications and aims, and are therefore of great interest to researchers in TS (Molés-Cases 2016; Doval 2016; Bernardini and Russo 2017; Doval and Sánchez-Nieto 2019). Parallel corpora can be used to study language in use in two or more languages, to detect the translation strategies used by translators or to develop trainee translators' competences (Liu 2013; Gallego 2016; Bernardini 2016). These corpora are an extremely useful resource for professional translation, and they are used to study language in different environments, such as legal (Sánchez 2019), scientific (Soares et al. 2019), or humanistic (Leiva 2018), etc. Parallel corpora, and Corpus Linguistics in general, are also frequently used for didactic purposes since they have proven useful to improve both students' linguistic skills and translation competence (Doval 2018; De La Cruz 2019). They may include written texts, but also oral reproductions, which widens their intended applications to study the features of oral language as well (González-Rey 2014).

There are indeed several research studies that have already shown the potential of corpus-based inductive learning, as learners can discover patterns of FL use by observing and manipulating the authentic linguistic data provided by corpora, that is, by eliciting the meaning of certain words or the sense of hitherto unknown structures, in what Johns named data-driven learning (Johns 1991). Also, when using parallel corpora, learners can observe and obtain reliable data on the use of various linguistic phenomena in their contexts, their most frequent collocations, their grammaticality and frequency of use, as well as serving as a source of highly varied and context-specific translation suggestions (Doval 2018).

Within TS corpora are understood both as a research area and as a methodological approach (Zanettin 2016:7). In this sense, several descriptive and applied works related to Corpus Linguistics have been carried out, many of them aimed at observing the students' competence development (Liu 2013; Alfuriaih 2020) as well as the teaching methods based on corpora (Liu 2013; Laviosa 2016). But other areas have also been frequently discussed, such as corpus-based applied research, practice and the use of computer-assisted translation tools (Corpas Pastor and Seghiri 2016).

## 4. Guidelines for assessing the progress of the didactic unit

The theoretical framework outlined in the preceding pages, together with the fact that there are no empirical nor research studies that combine the use of subtitled with the alignment of parallel texts, has led to the development of a didactic model that supports the ideas presented above and provides a basis for future research in this respect. In the following sections, a methodological approach is presented in the form of a didactic proposal that is currently being put in practice at the University of Valladolid with the collaboration of the University of Oviedo. This approach has been addressed both to Translation students and to students of English or German as foreign languages.

### 4.1 Objectives

The main objectives guiding this proposal can be summarised as follows:

1. To contribute to foster several FL competences in the students: linguistic competence, intercultural competence, and translation competence.
2. To increase students' motivation and in-class participation.
3. To compile an electronic parallel corpus for teaching purposes, so that students can perform searches to observe translation strategies.

### 4.2 Task description

The project proposes three in-class activities related to subtitled and alignment tasks and is structured in three assignments: (a) a subtitled activity; (b) an alignment task; and (c) a reflection activity to identify cultural and textual characteristics in contrast.

For (a), students are given several short videos related to their degrees. They are required to listen to the audio in the source language (i.e., English or German) and, by using the free subtitled tool Aegisub, they are asked to transcribe the audio in the source language and then to translate it and create subtitles in their mother tongue.

For (b), students are asked to work alone aligning an episode of a medical TV programme and a nature documentary, both of which had been previously prepared by the instructors (as the project pivots on the transcription of audio records, the instructors check that the originally-broadcasted source and target subtitles do match the audio; they also export the files, divide the text into segments and delete all superfluous data, leaving the text ready for students to align it). Students are given a spreadsheet file with the transcription of the audio records

in both languages: under the first column is the transcription of the audio records in the source language (i.e., English or German), and under the second column is the transcription of the audio records in the target language (i.e., Spanish). Students are required to match each source string with the appropriate target string. These aligned texts are then uploaded to Sketch Engine in order to compile a parallel corpus, so that it can be mainly used to (b.1) perform multilingual searches, (b.2) compare the behaviour of the same string in two different languages, and (b.3) observe what cognitive and translation strategies have been used. This might become an interesting and useful resource for students and instructors to improve their skills in an FL and their translation competence (mainly, the competences stated above), but also for linguists and translators.

For (c), students are required to check and proofread the alignment performed by a different student, and then to identify and reflect on cultural characteristics (related to [b.2]), as well as to look for expressions that highlight differences between languages based on cognitive characteristics (related to [b.3]).

#### 4.3 Timing

The following is a generic proposal that each instructor can adapt to their students' profile (be it Translation students or FL learners), since this project has been designed to be implemented in a multimodal way that best suits the interests and goals of the courses in which the proposal is embedded. A possible outline of the proposal could be based on three 2-hour sessions (which should be combined and reinforced with self-study work at home), and each instructor could modify the length and intensity of each task. In the first session, the subtitling tool is explained, and students are asked to do their first assignment (i.e., transcription and translation). In the second session, which would take place the week after the first intervention, students carry out the alignment assignment. Finally, in the third week, students are required to perform the proofreading task and focus on some cultural characteristics.

#### 4.4 Data compilation and analysis procedure

To be able to identify the effects of participating in the programme, two complementary instruments can be used: (a) a pre- and post-activity questionnaire and (b) focus group discussions using a systematized grid. These tools should be designed in such a way that relevant data can be inferred as regards the following dimensions, using a data condensation process (Miles and Huberman 2013): (1) linguistic and intercultural competence development, (2) translation competence development, and (3) increment of students' participation and motivation.

Dimension 1 (*linguistic and intercultural competence development*) refers, on the one hand, to students' improvement of linguistic competence according to vocabulary range (VR), grammatical accuracy (GA) and orthographic control (OC). On the other hand, this dimension considers students' improvement of intercultural competences when dealing with ambiguity modifying language (AL), showing sensitivity to differences (SD), and anticipating possible risks of misunderstanding (AR).

Dimension 2 (*translation competence development*) is related to students' improvement of translation competence according to performing mediation (ME) and fostering critical thinking skills (CTS).

Dimension 3 (*participation and motivation*) assesses students' improvement of instrumental competence according to enhancing motivation (EM), promoting autonomous and cooperative learning (ACL), encouraging innovation and promoting research. All these items belonging to these three dimensions are considered the micro categories of analysis for their respective dimension.

The project-generated data can be analysed using: (a) a stylistic/semantic approach to identify progress in linguistic and translation competences (responding to dimensions 1 [*linguistic and intercultural competence development*] and 2 [*translation competence development*]); and (b) a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim to detect positive and negative aspects of the project according to the participants' opinions and experience (responding to dimensions 1 [*linguistic and intercultural competence development*] and 3 [*participation and motivation*]).

When analysing the data, three specific triggering questions (TQ) regarding the teaching and learning process should be kept in mind:

- TQ1. Do subtitling and aligning activities have positive effects on the students' linguistic and intercultural competence?
- TQ2. Do subtitling and aligning activities have positive effects on the students' translation competence?
- TQ3. Do subtitling and aligning activities have positive effects on students' motivation and participation?

The results obtained regarding each micro category stated above will give account of the development of the competences object of study. In other words, it can be assumed that any positive effect on any micro category can be considered a sign that linguistic, intercultural or translation competences are being developed, and/or that students are motivated and participate more frequently.

#### 4.5 Expected results

As this intervention is currently being implemented, only expected results can be presented here. They are based on the students' feedback regarding their motivation and language improvement. This feedback has been collected via semi-structured interviews conducted by the instructors, and is also supported by the positive response showed in the students' first assignments (Faya-Ornia et al. 2022).

As students work with authentic material, it is expected that they will find these assignments stimulating, challenging, and encouraging; and, thus their motivation and participation is promoted in class. Also, these activities might improve their command of the FL, mainly in four different areas: (a) lexical-grammatical aspects, (b) oral comprehension, (c) written comprehension and (d) written production. When subtitling, students are expected to gain new vocabulary naturally, remembering words and expressions effortlessly because of the context and the extra effort required to transcribe the source text and to provide a matching translation – they must pay extra attention, which makes them learn without noticing it. Also, the subtitling activity might have a positive impact on students' listening skills, since they have to listen carefully to the source text several times to be able to transcribe it correctly – after listening to the same string several times, they will be able to notice pronunciation issues which were completely unperceived the first time they listened to it. Finally, the alignment assignment may help students with their written comprehension and production skills, because they must focus on sentence level (not on a full paragraph or a long text), read them carefully and think about the structure of the sentence to make it match the target text, as well as to detect possible elisions or additions. This activity can be especially relevant for Translation students because it makes them reflect upon the translation strategies used.

#### 5. Conclusion

Although translation has often been disregarded as a useful tool in the past, it has already been proven that it can actually have very positive effects in FL. This chapter pivots on the idea and comments on the advancements related to subtitle creation and text alignment as didactic tools, and presents a generic didactic proposal combining both resources.

Subtitle creation is a successful teaching tool that has positive effects on students' communication skills, as well as on intercultural communicative and translation competences. Though no previous work has been found on the impact in

FLL of aligning the texts (i.e., to make each source string match the appropriate target string) of a parallel corpus (i.e., source texts and their translations), there is no doubt that parallel corpora are of special interest in TS, and they constitute a useful didactic tool which has several applications and aims.

The methodological framework presented here is innovative, as the combination of subtitle creation and alignment (which represents the main contribution of this teaching intervention) has not been implemented in a teaching environment before. We believe that the incorporation of activities that connect subtitled and aligning is an appropriate intervention strategy to foster students' motivation and to develop their language and translation skills.

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