

**David Drevs, M.A. (University of Applied Languages — SDI Munich)**

**Teaching Subtitling with Benefits: Best Practices in AVT Training**

**Paper at the Translation Forum Russia 2013, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

## **Extended Abstract**

### Introduction

Training for Multimedia Localisation poses a host of challenges, but also opens up manifold opportunities. The University of Applied Languages — SDI Munich, one of the most renowned interpreting schools in Germany, offers a post-graduate training programme in subtitling that tries to combine intensive academic studies with in-the-field, performance-oriented projects.

Since the late 1990s, the renowned Filmmuseum München (Munich Film Museum) and the SDI have been looking for ways to provide movie-goers with high-quality subtitles. In 2007, given the rising demand for well-trained subtitlers and enhanced technical possibilities, the SDI launched a special training module within the framework of its newly founded University of Applied Languages. A specific feature and well-perceived asset of this course is the cooperation with various external partners, thus creating a professional environment in which the course participants have to function as service providers.

The SDI Munich subtitling programme encompasses two semesters. Trainers and participants meet for two late afternoon sessions, except for semester holidays. Target groups are translators, interpreters and other language professionals with a strong interest in audiovisual media, or film experts with excellent command of at least one foreign language. Since the quality standards are rather high, the programme is designed for more experienced professionals, and can be viewed in the scope of postgraduate education.

### Theory and software training

The overall aim here is to develop the skills necessary to produce high-quality subtitles in accordance with the customary standards of the industry. A detailed description of these standards goes beyond the scope of this paper. It goes without saying, however, that the subtitles created by the course participants should always “provide maximum appreciation

and comprehension of the target film as a whole by maximising the legibility and readability of the inserted subtitled text” (Karamitoglou 1998).

#### Project work

Project groups are formed corresponding to the subtitling assignments given by the Filmmuseum. In most cases, one project group takes on the assignment for one feature-length movie or a set of short films. If a project group consists of more than one person, a chef d'équipe is appointed, who is responsible mainly for internal and external communication and alignment of processes.

#### Internal editing

The project groups work more or less autonomously, and the SDI very strongly encourages peer-to-peer evaluation, the spirit of which is cultivated even during the software training phase. Still, SDI staff continuously accompany the process, giving additional advice or suggesting solutions for controversial issues. This didactical concept aims to overcome the classical ex-cathedra teaching approach: the participants are invited to develop the relevant affective, psychomotoric and cognitive skills based on their own experience as well as on the experience of their trainers.

#### External revision

The next step, a kind of “acceptance test”, consists of a final session with an experienced subtitler (not connected to the SDI staff), who suggests some last adjustments of the material provided by the participants. Not only does external revision guarantee marketable quality of the final product (cf. Ivarsson/Carroll 1998), but it also gives additional reassurance to the participants of having chosen “the right path”.

#### Documentation and research

Throughout the project and revision phases, participants must carry out other important tasks such as documenting the progress of their work, developing a project style guide and a glossary of common terms and phrases, conducting ongoing internal and external discussions as well as dealing with other issues relevant to the project.

#### “Live” projection

Finally, the participants are given the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in public when the subtitles are projected “live” on the movie screen at the Filmmuseum München. The important challenges here consist in understanding the projection software, transforming and

adapting the subtitle file according to the customer's needs and monitoring the projection process during the screening.

### Conclusion

The specific benefit of the SDI subtitling programme can be summarized like this: participants learn the ropes of practical subtitling, including customer relations, technical problems, public screening and other organisational aspects. Providing, thus, a quite unique learning experience, the SDI subtitling programme covers the full spectrum of objectives developed by renowned educational researcher Benjamin S. Bloom back in the 1950s — from affective and psychomotoric skills up to the cognitive domain.

### Bibliography

Bloom, Benjamin S. (ed.) et al., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*. Longmans, Green, 1956.

Ivarsson, Jan; Carroll, Mary, *Subtitling*. Simrishamn: Transedit, 1998.

Karamitoglou, Fotios. "A Proposed Set of Subtitling Standards in Europe." *Translation Journal* 2 (April 1998). <http://accurapid.com/journal/04stndrd.htm>. Last accessed 30 March 2010.

(740 words)