Gianna Tarquini

The Deployment of Audiovisual Databases in Foreign Language Learning

Usability Features and Didactic Affordances

Abstract

After reviewing the scientific literature devoted to the use of audiovisual materials and subtitles in foreign language learning, this paper introduces the Forlixt 3.0 multimedia database, a corpus designed for the quantitative and multi-semiotic study of audiovisual translation. By illustrating its usability features, I will attempt to map the variety of learning pathways that it supports, making the case for a pedagogy of audiovisual communicative skills.

1 Introduction

Subtitles are nowadays the most pervasive linguistic tool for the transfer and accessibility of audiovisual content on the Web, regardless of traditional preferences for dubbing or subtitling at the national level. As Teletext functions and multilingual DVD tracks have greatly contributed to popularise their use in previous media, Web 2.0 technologies enable a fully-fledged array of subtitling features. These range from Youtube automatic captions and video editing tools, allowing for the customisation of clips through subtitles and annotations, to collaborative crowdsourcing platforms and fansubbing communities,[1] which distribute ready-made translations of popular TV series and programmes shortly after airing in the original language. While challenging the very notion of "subtitling"[2] and revealing emerging tensions between mainstream audiovisual translation (AVT) modes, in terms of quality standards and industrial policies, and downstream amateur forms of

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[1]   The term crowdsourcing refers to the outsourcing of activities, traditionally performed by employees or contractors, to the "crowd" of users, often in the form of open calls. This process has had a considerable impact on the translation business sector and favoured the emergence of crowdsourcing platforms like Crowdin, dotsub and Amara. Fansubbing refers to unsolicited translation initiatives by fans for the community of fans. While crowdsourcing is a legal practice utilised by international companies as a labour organisation strategy, fansubbing is usually promoted by unofficial channels and has a dubious legal status.

[2]   Recent investigations into audiovisual translation have proposed a reclassification of subtitling techniques according to advanced linguistic, pragmatic and technical parameters. New subtitle types include, among others, subtiitles for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH), real-time subtitles, machine-translated subtitles, fansubs and subtitles for language learning purposes (Sokoli 2011: 80-82).

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appropriation (Dwyer 2012; Baker 2014), these trends point to new textual practices and fresh learning pathways, both in formal and informal educational settings. In parallel, in the last thirty years, research on the use of subtitles in foreign language learning has shown its positive impact on a variety of skills, including listening comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and memorisation as well as pragmatic and intercultural awareness. Most studies, however, are explorative in nature and lack consistency with regard to reference frameworks (pedagogy, language education, linguistics, psychology, etc.), objectives, scientific methods and results. Other factors of variation include the selection of audiovisual content, the linguistic combinations, the age and competence level of language learners and the scope and duration of the experiments (Gambier 2007, 2015). In addition, digital natives tend to develop cognitive patterns and learning styles that may differ significantly from older generations, especially when consuming and processing multimedia information. The scientific/technological methods and the results of studies carried out in the 1980s may therefore not yield the same level of generalisability today.

In the first part of this paper, I will introduce an overview of the use of subtitled audio-visual materials in foreign language learning, focusing on the key hypotheses and findings that have emerged in this area of applied research (Gambier 2007, 2015; Díaz Cintas/Fernández Cruz 2008; Zabalbeascoa et al. 2012; Panizzon 2013). After presenting the benefits related to the use of audiovisuals and intralingual subtitles, I will consider the main arguments regarding the impact of interlingual subtitles in formal and informal settings. Although a number of studies have provided evidence of the effectiveness of interlingual subtitles for incidental language acquisition, their use in educational contexts is still a matter of debate, and seems to require specific tailoring (Pavesi/Perego 2008; Caimi 2009) or a blended approach (Talaván Zanón 2010). More recently, the advances supported by open source and collaborative technologies and the increased availability of audiovisual content on the web have fostered the integration of active subtitling tasks into foreign language teaching. This approach seems to revive the classical grammatical method and the use of translation as a means for language learning, which had been outlawed from the L2 classroom in favour of the sole use of the target language (Díaz Cintas 2008a). Albeit recent, a number of studies yield positive results, not only in terms of receptive language skills, but also of more creative and active abilities, including writing, technical skills and integrated skills (Incalcaterra McLoughlin/Lertola 2014; Talaván Zanón 2015).

From a wider perspective, the use of audiovisual content, subtitles and subtitling activities in educational environments reflects the current communicative shift from monodimensional to multidimensional texts, where the boundaries between verbal language and other semiotic systems (images, music, gestures) are more and more blurred (Baldry/Thibault 2006; Díaz Cintas/Fernández Cruz 2008). The issue of digital literacies, namely of audiovisual literacy, has been addressed in particular in the context of the Clipflair project (2011-2014), funded by the *Life Long Learning Programme* of the European Commission. Drawing on the unique semiotic features of the audiovisual text, Clipflair proposes to integrate the traditional Common European Framework of Reference

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for Languages with a new set of communicative skills: namely audiovisual watch, audiovisual listen, audiovisual read, audiovisual speak, audiovisual write and audiovisual create (Zabalbeascoa/Torres/Sokoli 2012).

In the second part of this paper, I will present FORLIXT 3.0,[3] a multimedia database for AVT research, and illustrate its main functionalities and navigation features enabled by the remediation[4] of previous media (DVD films, TV series) through digital technologies and Web tools. Key to this discussion will be the concept of affordance, relating to how technology facilitates users in doing something (Mangiron/O'Hagan 2013). Featuring more than 90 films and episodes of TV series completely transcribed and indexed in multiple linguistic versions, Forlixt allows the user to "navigate" movies according to personalised search parameters, including a preliminary filter (language, genre, title, release year, etc.), a keyword search function (single words and/or parts of words/ sentences) and a search by attribute function, which retrieves pre-annotated phenomena of pragmatic, sociolinguistic, cultural, translational as well as non-verbal and semiotic interest. The platform presents the search results in the form of a hit list and provides links to watch the original scene and its dialogue transcripts along with the corresponding scene and dialogue in the dubbed or subtitled version, thus exposing students to highly contextualised linguistic input. Taking a specific example of the search by attribute function, I will discuss how the platform can afford a wealth of activities and tasks aimed at enhancing L2 students' skills at the linguistic, pragmatic, interactional, cultural, paralinguistic, translational, semiotic and technical levels.

2   Audiovisual Materials in Foreign Language Learning

Fostered by the advent of the communicative approach to foreign language instruction, the exploitation of audio cassettes, films, DVDs and clips is not a new practice in the L2 classroom. Audiovisual materials (with or without subtitles) offer realistic examples of native language in use in everyday situations, as they provide linguistic cues (accents, register, grammatical and syntactic patterns) along with non-verbal and paralinguistic cues (prosody, kinesics, proxemics), which place the students in a situated context of learning and stimulate their intercultural awareness. Videos are acknowledged to be particularly beneficial to oral comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, although their contribution to the development of reading and oral production skills appear to be less straightforward (Herron et al. 1995; Díaz Cintas/Fernández Cruz 2008). Linking second language acquisition with the cognitive processes spontaneously activated in first

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3   The project is an original concept of Christine Heiss, Marcello Soffritti, Cristina Valentini (database design and corpus construction), Piero Conficoni (software engineering) and Sabrina Linardi (data entry and scene indexing). Access to the database is protected by a password and authorised exclusively for scientific and didactic purposes: FORLIXT 3.0 (s.d.).

4   The concept of remediation, introduced in the field of media studies, refers to situations in which "a newer medium takes the place of an older one, borrowing and reorganising the characteristics [...] of the older medium and reforming its cultural space." (Bolter 2009: 23).

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language acquisition, Krashen (1982/2006) has formulated a number of hypotheses that are nowadays widely accepted:

- Input hypothesis: the input received by learners must be comprehensible and tuned to their stage of proficiency, i.e. slightly above their competence level, so that they can concentrate on the meaning rather than on the form of the message.

- Oral output is bound to the intake of comprehensible input, as "we acquire spoken fluency not by practicing talking but by understanding input, by listening and reading" (Krashen 1982/2006: 60).

- Affective filter hypothesis: language acquisition is enhanced by a low affective filter, intended as the level of anxiety, motivation and self-esteem that hinders the process of absorbing input and transforming it into intake.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of listening comprehension as the foundation of (foreign) language acquisition, these hypotheses posit a significant correlation between emotional factors and the subconscious acquisition processes activated by learners. In this perspective, audiovisual products have the merit of producing a positive attitude towards listening, vocabulary acquisition and memorisation, as well as to complementary activities involving written and oral production.[5]

2.1 Intralingual Subtitles

Building on these assumptions, a considerable amount of literature has investigated the potential of intralingual subtitles as language learning tools in a variety of settings (Danan 1992; Vanderplank 1998; Caimi 2006; Gambier 2015, among others). Commercial intralingual subtitles are nowadays widely accessible across audiovisual media and contain, together with supra-segmental and non-verbal information designed for the deaf and hard of hearing, scripted renditions of spoken dialogue that are also helpful to foreign language learners. The main benefits reported in the scientific literature can be summarised as follows:

- Redundancy of information provided through multiple semiotic inputs, which favours in particular students with oral comprehension or concentration problems (Gambier 2007, 2015). The classical "dual coding theory" processes (Paivio/Lambert 1981) are thus reinforced by the "redundancy function" (Marleau 1982), making it possible to combine three information layers (oral, visual and written).

- Support to message decoding and interpretation, especially for learners who have a more visual than auditory learning style (Gambier 2007, 2015). Furthermore, the co-presence of multiple semiotic resources allows learners to solve possible semantic ambiguities, thanks to the "anchoring function" (Marleau 1982).

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[5] The affective filter hypothesis also prefigures the advent of digital forms of edutainment and educational games for language learning purposes. These include virtual university platforms, like VirtUAM (Virtual Worlds at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) (Berns et al. 2013), commercial games such as My Japanese Coach for Nintendo DS, and a variety of educational apps.

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•   Improvement of oral comprehension and vocabulary (Vanderplank 1988; Caimi 2006; Gambier 2015).

The main drawbacks entail, instead, the development of automatic reading behaviour, the difficulty to shift attention between the written and the audio track and the cognitive overload and stress caused especially in the weakest learners. It is argued, in fact, that when watching subtitled videos the visual and aural sources of information cannot be processed simultaneously but only sequentially. Although frequency of exposure helps to accelerate and enhance this pattern, reading activities tend to bias visual and oral processing to a variable extent (Miquel Iriarte 2015). As Caimi puts it, the improved comprehension of the storyline and the retention of new words and phrases are to be attributed to good reading comprehension rather than to actual listening comprehension (Caimi 2006). Eye-tracking methods have substantially corroborated this argument, showing that viewers may spend a considerable time looking at subtitles – up to 67 % or approximately 80 % under particular conditions – depending on their native language and auditory skills and to subtitling speed (Kruger/Szarkowska/Krejtz 2015). The critical factor in the use of intralingual subtitles for foreign language learning seems therefore to rest with oral intake and the acquisition of oral skills. The preliminary selection of audio-visual input that is comprehensible and tuned to students' proficiency is a preliminary step that requires a careful appraisal of intelligibility and readability features (Pavesi/ Perego 2008). Pre-viewing and post-viewing activities, along with multiple views, are also crucial to compensate for this shortcoming and need to address the processing of the audiovisual text as an integrated communicative system.

From a wider perspective, intralingual subtitles also represent a powerful tool for promoting immigrant integration and reading skills in children and illiterate viewers. The EU institutions have recently funded two large-scale projects in order to assess the implications of subtitles and foreign language learning not only in educational settings, but also in the larger contexts of social and cultural integration within and across the member states. The Subtitles and Language Learning project, in particular, has con-firmed, among other results, the relevance and efficiency of intralingual subtitles in relation to other subtitle types, and has advocated a larger distribution of L1 subtitled content both within the source country and abroad, in order to support all groups of language learners (Gambier 2015).

2.2   Interlingual Subtitles

Early comparative experiments aimed at testing the potential of various forms of subtitles in language instruction have identified intralingual subtitles and inversed subtitles (video in the first language and subtitles in the foreign language) as the most effective aids (Lambert/Boehler/Sidoti 1981). In particular, inversed subtitles are suitable for beginners and intermediate learners, while intralingual subtitles seem more appropriate to

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intermediate and advanced students (Danan 1992; Díaz Cintas/Fernández Cruz 2008).[6] Interlingual subtitles have been found to be particularly effective for incidental second language acquisition, especially in subtitling countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian area. The exposure to foreign programmes subtitled in the viewer's native/first language enhances listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition and is helpful both for children and adults and for formal and informal learners (d'Ydewalle/Pavakanun 1996). Still uncertain are the effects on grammatical competence (Van de Poel/d'Ydewalle 1999) and oral production, although an experiment carried out by Santiago Araújo (2008) has suggested that interlingual subtitles may improve oral proficiency.

In this context, a distinction needs to be made between informal viewers/learners, who "are interested in developing lexical resources and pragmatic skills, as their main concern is to enjoy films, television programmes or live events", and formal viewers/ learners "who are more interested in acquiring grammatical rules to reach proficient communicative standards" (Caimi 2009: 246). On the one hand, a regular exposure of informal viewers to subtitled content leads them to internalise linguistic and grammatical patterns in the foreign language, and triggers receptive reading and oral comprehension skills. On the other hand, an irregular exposure of formal viewers is not sufficient to develop active written and oral production skills. Foreign language learning, as opposed to spontaneous second language acquisition, requires active cognitive efforts, decoding the original soundtrack and the conscious assimilation of linguistic rules that differ in the foreign language, as these cannot be acquired unconsciously by the formal learner (Caimi 2009: 246). Consequently, interlingual subtitles are believed to be helpful for the overall understanding of the source text and vocabulary retention, but less suitable for linguistic processing in formal learning contexts (Pavesi/Perego 2008). In addition, commercial interlingual subtitles are subject to specific reduction, simplification and adaptation strategies, which hinder a straightforward decoding and parsing of the source language patterns. Pavesi and Perego (2008) have thus proposed a set of criteria for the creation of tailor-made interlingual subtitles for second language acquisition, drawing on the assumption that translation should take into account the addressee's profile and needs.

2.3 Active Subtitling and Audiovisual Literacy

The possible shortcomings of a passive exposure to (subtitled) audiovisual content may be overcome through active subtitling exercises, which are nowadays acknowledged to be one of the most promising teaching aids in L2 classroom, although empirical results are still partial (Incalcaterra McLoughlin/Lertola 2014; Talaván Zanón 2015). Firstly, as a form of intersemiotic and "constrained translation" (Titford 1982), subtitling can improve an array of skills: advanced listening and comprehension prior to linguistic transfer;

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[6]   In this framework, subtitle types are classified as follows: intralingual subtitles, also called bimodal subtitles (audio in L2 and subtitles in L2), inversed subtitles (L1 – L2) and interlingual subtitles (L2–L1).

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audiovisual analysis and decoding; translation skills ensuring lexical and pragmatic consistency as well as visual coherence with the source text; writing skills pertaining to diamesic shifts (oral to written), register and morpho-syntactic construction; editing and synthesis skills; reviewing skills and critical discussion of the choices made (Williams/ Thorne 2000). Secondly, as argued by Incalcaterra McLoughlin (2009), the active connection of two linguistic systems through the same visual input stimulates students' critical thinking and contrastive awareness, also boosting their vocabulary retention and syntactic processing. Moreover, from a translation perspective, subtitling techniques contrast word for word rendering, forcing students to concentrate on semantic units. Thirdly, the use of subtitling software enhances students' technical skills and provides a task-based and personalised learning environment that can support self-learning, distance learning and collaborative exercises (Sokoli 2006). Clearly, professional subtitling is a complex technique subject to specific audiovisual and technical constraints (Karamitroglou 1998; Díaz Cintas 2008b) and does not appear to be suited to beginners. It is to be noted, however, that the creation of subtitles for foreign language learning does not necessarily have to comply with professional norms and conventions, as the implicit aim of the activities is not the commercial viability of the final output.

The Clipflair project (2011-2014) has addressed the challenge of language learning through a variety of captioning (adding subtitles, inserts and speech bubbles) and revoicing (adding free commentary, narration, dubbing) activities. The Clipflair infrastructure comprises a collaborative platform where users can create, upload and access the activities, a library of resources, containing a wide range of audio-visual material in multiple languages, and an online community where learners, teachers and activity authors can share information. Building on the specific features of the audiovisual text, the project has also proposed integrating the classical CEFR model (listen, read, speak, write) with the following communicative skills:

WATCH: The communicative skill of interpreting an audiovisual text (e.g. film) as a whole, single, complex semiotic communication act, being able to find meaning and sense from a combination of verbal and non-verbal sign systems. It should probably also include the communicative skill to interpret non-verbal pictures, icons, symbols, metaphors, cultural elements, etc. (similar to "reading" the visual arts or silent non-verbal video), and any combination of verbal and non-verbal reading items.

AVLISTEN: The communicative skill of linguistic oral comprehension enhanced by being able to listen more effectively than if the aural message were delivered without the combined effect of other elements of the AV text.

AVREAD: The communicative skill of linguistic written comprehension enhanced by being able to read more effectively than if the aural message were delivered without the combined effect of other elements of the AV text, and the ability to read according to the requirements of the screen (speed, focus, etc.).

AVSPEAK: The communicative skill of effectively revoicing an AV text for a specific purpose (dubbing, karaoke, voice-over, free commentary), being able to adapt to requirements of speed, voice quality, performance, character-portrayal, etc. Including several prompts, such as improvising, reading from a script, repeating, mimicking, etc.

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AVWRITE: The communicative skill of effective script writing or captioning in its various forms. As a specific component of "full" AV-production skills. Maybe it should include storyboard skills, and visual narrative skills involving the use of the camera.

AVPRODUCE: The communicative skill (or art) of effective filmmaking, as film director. In the context of education, students and learners being able to produce video films and clips to a certain standard, displaying a combination of other semiotic and communicative, linguistic and non-linguistic, technical and artistic skills.   (Zabalbeascoa/Torres/Sokoli 2012: 21-22)

3   The FORLIXT 3.0 Platform: Corpus and Usability Features

New media enable users to acquire audiovisual content extracted from previous media, and to watch it as if through a filter, or "a rearview mirror". Although content might look exactly the same, like a movie scene on a TV screen, its ontological status and usability have deeply changed, for an (online) movie scene can be searched, edited, shared or even manipulated to create a new fictional world. In this sense, the Forlixt platform can be considered not only as a structured collection of movie clips, but as an advanced infrastructure for the processing, indexing and retrieval of audiovisual content. By discussing its constitutional features and technological affordances, in the next sections I will highlight how the platform facilitates the exploration of audiovisual content for language learning purposes.

The Forlixt infrastructure has been built and developed in accordance with the conceptual framework of audiovisual translation and the methods of corpus linguistics. It comprises, in addition to data processing and entry applications, an audiovisual corpus, intended as: "an electronic collection of audiovisual material (films) and transcripts of film dialogue/subtitles allowing the user to retrieve data through dedicated query tools, and to display concordances with, both in their textual and audiovisual support" (Valentini 2008: 38). Drawing on a quantitative approach, corpus linguistics has changed the land-scape of applied linguistics and translation studies, as it allows scholars to examine systematically recurrent linguistic/translational patterns and to make solid generalisations based on vast and accurately selected pools of linguistic data. Audiovisual content poses unique challenges with regard to transcription, technical processing, multimodal analysis and annotation as well as labelling standardisation, and requires researchers to evaluate all the semiotically relevant components of materials in order to broaden the scientific scope of their studies (Baños-Piñero/Bruti/Zarotti 2013; Soffritti forthc.).

At present, the Forlixt corpus contains more than 100 films and episodes of TV series in a variety of languages (mainly French, German and Italian, but also English, Dutch and a Chinese movie) aligned to their dubbed or subtitled versions, for a total amount of 144 hours of fully transcribed audiovisual material and approximately 762,000 words. Basically, albeit not comparable in size, the database can be used similarly to Youtube in order to search clips via specific keywords, access the results pages and watch the desired content. Youtube search results, however, are not always coherent with our queries, since clips – as part of user-generated content – are uploaded and tagged by users and are rarely transcribed totally or accurately. The Forlixt system, being conceived

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for audiovisual translation research, presents highly relevant results, as audiovisual content has been completely transcribed, synchronised and annotated by qualified personnel according to an inventory of analytical categories, while also supporting parallel linguistic versions.

3.1 Full-text Search

The corpus can be queried and browsed via two main functions: the full-text search (keyword search) and the search by attribute (guided search). Prior to querying, the user can select a specific sub-corpus from the filter page, choosing from the following criteria: title, language, genre, year of release, original/translated version and director. The full-text search is based on indexing methods that are commonly used in written corpora and search engines. After entering a word or a sentence in the search box,[7] the system presents a list of concordances containing the keyword highlighted in yellow in its linguistic co-text, relevant information about the film and speaking character, and a hyperlink to the clip. The audiovisual sequence can then be displayed together with its transcript and compared to the available dubbed/subtitled sequence (Figure 2). Further-more, each scene comes with a group of pre-annotated tags, which indicate significant linguistic, cultural and semiotic phenomena. These features can be used to examine discourse markers, collocations and speech acts, false friends as well as morpho-syntactic patterns, combining at the same time descriptive, contrastive/translational and audiovisual insights (Heiss/Soffritti 2008). For instance, in order to familiarise Italian L2 students with the word "magari",[8] we can pre-select the corpus of original Italian films through the filter page and then search "magari". The system presents a hit list of 46 occurrences, which provide a rich base of examples for analysing its distributional patterns, its pronunciation and related audiovisual factors (prosody, mimics, gestures, proxemics) as well as the most frequently associated linguistic and pragmatic phenomena. In addition, the presence of aligned dubbed/subtitled versions (in German, English or French) may challenge students to find and analyse translation equivalents in their native language and to evaluate non-verbal factors that affect audiovisual translation. Finally, by pre-selecting the sub-corpus of foreign films dubbed into Italian and querying "magari", it is also possible to investigate its frequency in dubbed Italian language and compare the original version.

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[7]   The system also supports the logical operator OR and simple lexemes.

[8]   The word "magari", typical of colloquial Italian, is notoriously difficult to frame in a contrastive perspective and translate into foreign languages. According to the Italian Dictionary Zingarelli (2008), "magari" may perform three main functions: interjection (Magari!), conjunction (Lo farò. Dovessi magari impiegarci un anno), and adverb (magari non sapeva niente; sarebbe magari capace di negare tutto). In the first case it can be translated as "I wish!" or "You bet!" in a sarcastic sense, in the second case as "even if" (I will do it. Even if it takes me a year), and in the third case as "maybe" (Maybe s/he didn't know anything) or "even" (s/he would even be able to deny everything). The use of "magari" in spoken Italian and its translation into German has been investigated in particular by Heiss (2008).

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3.2   Search by Attribute

The search by attribute function (Figure 1) relies on an articulated inventory of categories and attributes assigned to each scene during the phase of data annotation. This query method allows for an advanced exploration of audiovisual materials not only through attributes pertaining to linguistic and cultural phenomena, but also through attributes related to significant paraverbal, non-verbal and semiotic features such as "prosody", "body language" and "graphic elements". The inventory of categories (also called a tagging tree) includes five analytical macro-categories and a hierarchical set of more specific micro-categories and attributes. These can be summarised as follows:

(1) Pragmatic categories:

- Communicative situation (job interview, shopping, telephone conversation, shooting, etc.)
- Communicative acts (greetings, leave takings, reassuring, giving instructions, etc.)

(2) Encyclopaedic categories:

- Geographical setting (Munich New York, Paris, Tuscany, etc.)
- Temporal setting (30's, 60's, 2000's, etc.)
- Cultural setting (immigration, cold war, emancipation of women, etc.)

(3) Linguistic-cultural categories:

- Linguistic specificities (idiomatic expressions, discourse markers, forms of address, etc.)
- Prosodic and paralinguistic features (prosody, mimicry and facial expressions, body language)
- Specific cultural references (quotes, proverbs, cultural stereotypes, etc.)
- Names of specific entities (food and drinks, famous people and characters, toponyms, etc.)

(4) Sociolinguistic categories:

- Social and regional varieties (dialects, jargon, language spoken by L2 speakers, etc.)
- Languages for specific purposes (legal, advertising, sports, etc.)
- Register (formal, vulgar, colloquial/substandard, diachronic variety, etc.)

(5) Audiovisual specificities:

- Visual channel (graphic elements, cultural objects, shot transitions)
- Audio channel (voice off, soundtrack, background noise, etc.)
- Major modifications to dialogue (removal of lines/scenes, integration of new lines/ scenes, replacement of the language of the line/scene, etc.)

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Each attribute can be selected to query the audiovisual materials contained in the corpus using the same indexing and extraction methods as the full-text search. This feature allows users to search a large variety of linguistic, cultural and semiotic phenomena, regardless of specific keywords. Selecting, for instance, the attribute "Austrian German" the system presents 23 occurrences of relevant film clips. These represent a source of examples that can be exploited, through a great variety of activities, to familiarise German L2 students with specific oral, pragmatic, sociolinguistic and lexical features of Austrian German. Furthermore, as highlighted by Heiss (2000), the comparative analysis of original and dubbed versions offers a powerful instrument to develop learner's skills at various levels: pronunciation, intonation and prosody, lexical, syntactic and semantic choices, collocations and phraseologisms, mimics, gestures and proxemics, forms of address, speech acts and cultural references.

3.3   Didactic Applications

In this section, I illustrate the practical use of the platform functionalities and how they can "afford" a variety of activities and learning pathways designed for a class of French L2 Italian students of various competence levels. To this purpose, we will select the category "Communicative situations" > "Shopping" and restrict our search to the sub-corpus of French films. The pragmatic categories indexed in the database (communicative situations and acts) are particularly beneficial to familiarise students with collocations and formulaic language used in everyday conversation. As a form of planned and scripted language, also called "prefabricated orality" (Baños-Piñero/Chaume 2009), film dialogue displays highly stereotypical traits at the level of discourse patterns, conversational turns, set phrases and marks or orality. Other properties that may contribute to making it appropriate to language learning include: the coherence of the visual story, the consistency of the narrative structure, the linear unfolding of events, accessibility features and specific paralinguistic features (rate of delivery, articulation, pauses, hesitations and repetitions) (Pavesi/Perego 2008). Furthermore, the visualisation of the film scene leads students to process typical situational, paralinguistic and extra-linguistic phenomena associated to formulaic expressions, also favouring acquisition and memorisation, as noted in sections 2.1 and 2.2.

After setting the preliminary filter on "Language: French" and launching the guided search on the attribute "Shopping", the system presents a hit list of 12 concordances (Figure 1):

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Fig. 1: Querying audiovisual content through attributes – results hit list

This screenshot shows the first page of results, which provides an array of significant examples of situated contexts of shopping. Each clip record contains the film language and title, the duration of the clip and a set of attributes describing the most relevant communicative features in each scene. On a preliminary analysis, the attributes most frequently associated to "shopping" are, not surprisingly, "formulaic language" (*formule in situazioni specifiche*), "food and drinks" (*cibi e bevande*) and "commercial and cultural products" (*prodotti merceologici e culturali*). Some of the entries listed in the results page are original Italian or English films dubbed/subtitled in French, and are particularly interesting for guiding students to "reverse" translational and contrastive analyses, as will be pointed out below. Selecting the hyperlink of any record, we are redirected to the multimedia display page (Figure 2) containing the complete dialogue list, the associated attributes, the streaming video and the GUI options. These can be used to hide the dialogue box and ask students to transcribe the scene and to show or hide the aligned dubbed/subtitled version on the right of the page. The listed clips provide a variety of shopping examples from a narrative, situational and sociolinguistic point of view (at the greengrocer, young women trying clothes on, shop assistants dealing with customers, etc.) and contain dialogue of different degrees of difficulty for activities of listening comprehension and vocabulary. However, they reveal recurrent conversational features at the level of planning and sequencing, turn-taking, set phrases, as well as lexical choices, to a certain extent. Clearly, the availability of parallel dubbed/subtitled versions

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or subtitles embedded in the streaming video is of particular importance during the preliminary evaluation of the search results.
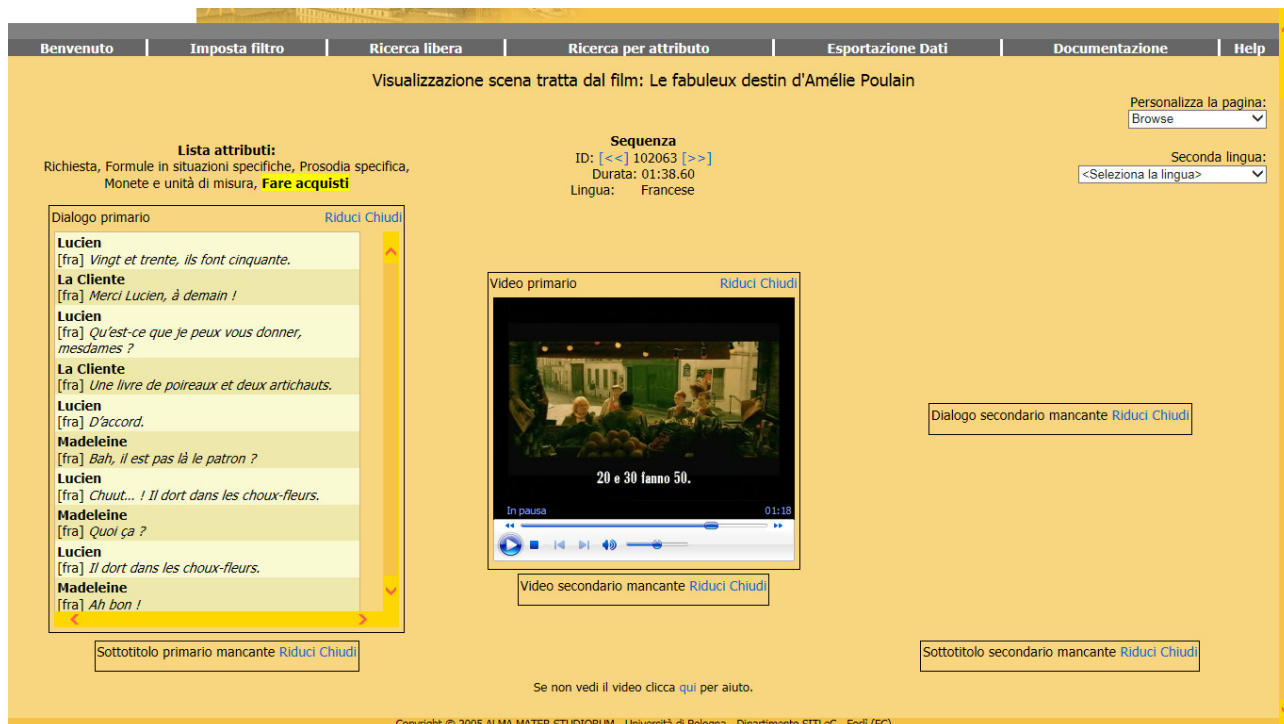

Fig. 2: Multimedia display page

The scene in Figure 2, for instance, extracted from the film *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* contains interlingual subtitles in the streaming video and may be suited to students of all competence levels. In this clip, the greengrocer's assistant Lucien, a naïf and kind young man, is giving some change to a customer. The setting is quite colourful and characteristic of the streets of central Paris. The framing of this video is quite interesting, as the camera is placed behind Lucien's shoulders and focuses on the vegetable crates and the customers' figures. Lucien addresses the twin customers with a formulaic expression "Qu'est-ce que je peux vous donner, mesdames?", labelled by the attribute "formulaic language". The twins order one pound of leeks and two artichokes (attributes: currencies and units of measurement, request). The use of pounds (livres) as a unit of measurement, connoted in French as old-fashioned or British, would sound instead unfamiliar to Italian learners, who are accustomed to the metric system. The noun "livre" is also polysemic in relation to "book", although the gender is feminine. The next customer, Madeleine, asks if the boss is there, omitting the negative particle "ne", a typical trait of orality. Lucien answers with the interjection "Chut" and explains that he is sleeping in the cauliflowers. Madeleine reacts abruptly and loudly "Quoi ça?" while Lucien repeats gently and slowly "Il dort dans les choux-fleurs" (attribute: prosody). The clashing attitudes and vocal features of the two characters are additionally emphasized

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by framing techniques, as the camera shifts to focus on their mimics and facial expressions. Close-ups can help students decode the sound input in this scene, but will pose, at the same time, major constraints on dubbed dialogue.

Before showing this sequence to beginners, it might be useful to prepare preliminary material such as illustrated glossaries of fruits and vegetables and a grid of typical exchanges and formulaic expressions related to shopping. Post-viewing activities may combine multifaceted and varied exercises, partly depending on the competence level of students and the availability of dubbed or subtitled versions in their native language. Drawing on the didactic proposals developed by Heiss (2000) and Valentini (2006), we can list the following activity types:

- Dialogue transcription: this practical task leads students to "crack the code", by actively parsing and chunking the speech stream and processing it for acquisition. The key factors assisting students in this process are utterance position, intonation, frequency of exposure and salience (Pavesi/Perego 2008). Indeed, speech transcription is a specialised activity subject to norms and conventions regarding significant prosodic aspects such as hesitations, disfluencies, pauses and other information about speech delivery (Baldry/Thibault 2006; Bonsignori 2009). This assignment may therefore range from the decoding of salient words/segments, to orthographic transcription and to prosodic transcription, designed to familiarise students with selected suprasegmental and non-verbal features.

- Questionnaires and guided activities focusing on relevant phenomena associated to each clip, including vocabulary, typical features of spoken discourse (discourse markers, cleft sentences, topicalisation), sociolinguistic variation (sociolects, dialects, languages for specific purposes, register, etc.), cultural references conveyed by the verbal and visual codes, paralanguage, non-verbal communication, and specific audiovisual techniques (sound effects, music score, graphic elements, camera movements, etc.). In this perspective, the analytical macro-categories and attributes used to tag the corpus can be regarded as a repertoire of learning pathways and signposts for enhancing linguistic, pragmatic, interactional, paralinguistic, cultural and technical skills in a situated audiovisual environment (Valentini 2006).

- Comparative and contrastive analyses: the availability of aligned and annotated dubbed/subtitled versions is an invaluable tool not only for the training of (audiovisual) translators, but also for foreign language learners. Dubbed versions, in particular, can be regarded as parallel texts, though sui generis, facilitating comprehension, vocabulary memorisation, grammatical and morpho-syntactic parsing, the retrieval of translation equivalents as well as critical analyses on the adaptation of cultural elements, the specific audiovisual constraints that affect dubbed dialogue, and possible errors or inadequacies in the official translations (Heiss 2000). Furthermore, as the database contains both original and dubbed films in German, French and Italian, students can be guided to examine or recognise the specificities of dubbed dialogue, also called "dubbese" (Antonini 2008).

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- Creative tasks: these are designed to stimulate active skills by playing with the audio-visual dimensions of texts and may include, for instance, asking students to write new dialogue based on the visual track of muted clips. Students are thus led to take into account not only macroscopic visual factors (backgrounds, locations, visual objects), but also microscopic synchronisation factors such as lip movements, mimics and gestures. Requiring the translation of newly created dialogue into their native language is an exercise that can add up to this challenge. Exposing students to the audio track only and asking them to describe or reconstruct the visual sequence is another task that can stimulate their imagination and productive skills. Starting from the script, students can be asked to rephrase dialogue according to pre-established criteria or to imagine the visual scene, also describing the foreign settings and characters' profiles or attitudes. This can enhance their cultural knowledge and spark their intercultural sensitivity (Heiss 2000).

- Active subtitling is another creative task that can be integrated into or after the previous activities. Asking students to subtitle the clip after analysing the dubbed version could be an interesting challenge, leading them to compare the audiovisual and technical constraints posed by these two translation modes. While the previous activities are directly supported by the platform, subtitling exercises require specific editing software. The most widespread free tools are *Subtitle Workshop* (s.d.) and *Aegisub* (s.d.). The latter, in particular, offers enhanced synchronisation and editing features, allowing students to customise the screen position, colour and font of subtitles and even to manipulate them for creative on-screen adaptations. The online collaborative platform *DotSub* (s.d.) offers further opportunities for creating captions, audiovisual glossaries and a wide variety of interactive and collaborative tasks, which can stimulate students both in distance and on-campus learning (Ciotoli 2015).

4   Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have addressed some key issues related to the use of audiovisual materials, subtitles and subtitling activities in the foreign language classroom. Spanning a scientific literature that ranges from the 1980s until today, I have finally presented a multimedia database designed for AVT research and for the didactics of foreign languages and translation. In this roadmap, ICT developments and the internationalisation of media have been shown to have deeply affected our relationship with foreign languages and have had a proportional impact on language teaching theories, methods and settings. Future avenues for research can be found in virtual learning environments and educational games, which are increasingly attracting the attention of scholars and institutions. In this sense, technology should serve as a means and not as an end in itself. Finally, in modern society increasingly dominated by the power of the image, audiovisual translation and multimodal analysis have a crucial contribution to make in order to enhance students' communicative skills as well as their understanding and critical assessment of audiovisual content distributed across global media.

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