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Reversed Subtitling and Foreign Language Learning: Investigating the Applications of Reversed Subtitling in Formal Language Learning Environments in Greece

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In light of the current generation's extensive familiarization with technology and exposure to a vast amount of audiovisual materials daily, researchers have been investigating the effects of subtitled audiovisual products in foreign language learning for years. It has been generally found that the polysemiotic nature of subtitled audiovisual content (Lertola 2019) enhances foreign language learning, as the message conveyed is supported by the audio and the visual and textual information (Talaván Zanón 2006) presented on screen. The relevant studies show that the various modes of subtitling (interlingual, intralingual, and reversed interlingual subtitling) offer benefits in different aspects of language learning, with reversed interlingual subtitling (L1 audio with subtitles in L2) having demonstrable advantages in the vocabulary and grammar acquisition of less advanced learners. A study was conducted to examine the current state of the integration of reversed subtitled material in the Greek learners' foreign language learning experience. This study investigated the perceptions and practices of Greek teachers who teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with regards to using reversed subtitles as a teaching method. It was revealed that the majority of the teachers participating in the study had not used this mode as a teaching practice due to their unfamiliarity with its educational potentials. Motivated by the findings, the paper concludes with suggestions of informal learning spaces where learners could have access to reversed subtitled materials and yield their language learning benefits incidentally.
Keywords: audiovisual translation; reversed interlingual subtitling; foreign language learning; didactic subtitling; formal education

1. Introduction

The rapid technological advancement of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century nurtured a new generation of individuals who were fundamentally shaped by technology and its exponential growth (Generation Z). When examining the characteristics of these "digital natives" (Ayten, Bulat, and İnceismail 2019, 1), technology and the different digital media

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should be considered as an important factor that fundamentally affected their learning behavior (Prensky 2010). While their familiarization with digital spaces is a widely accepted fact, Slavoljub Hilčenko (2017) takes this observation a step further stating that Generation Z's "senses are adapted to the stimuli emitted by modern media. 'Their language is a picture!'" (379) and thus equating the learners' linguistic system with visual representations. Darla Rothman (2014) adds that "the brains of Generation Z have become wired to sophisticated, complex visual imagery" which results in them benefiting more from teaching methods that exploit visual cues. In light of the pivotal role that the visual element occupies in the current learners' mechanisms for processing information, visual stimuli should receive an integral position in their learning journey.

Research pertaining to the effects of presenting information visually is mostly concerned with the attributes of videos in facilitating the acquisition of the foreign language. However, due to the fleeting nature of speech, the pictorial representation of information may not be enough to guarantee the comprehension of the message. This issue can be solved by adding subtitles to the videos and therefore presenting information through three channels: auditory, visual, and textual (Talaván Zanón 2006), thus creating a rich environment of visual stimuli (text and image) that can be exploited for the educational benefit of the learners. Motivated by this argument, the paper explores whether the educational value of subtitled products has been used for language learning purposes. After mentioning the relevant research in this area, it will eventually focus on the attributes of the reversed interlingual subtitling, aiming at understanding whether this method has been applied in formal language learning environments in Greece.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions

Depending on the linguistic condition under which the combination of audio and subtitle text is presented, subtitles are classified in different categories, with the three main ones presented below:

(i) Standard interlingual subtitles are the subtitles where the language of the audio is translated into one's mother's tongue (Talaván Zanón 2006, 47).

(ii) Intralingual subtitles (frequently referred to as captions) denote the transfer to the written form of the oral utterances in a specific language (within-language subtitling) (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007, 14).

(iii) Reversed interlingual subtitles are the subtitles that translate the learners' L1 in the audio to a foreign language (Talaván Zanón 2006, 47).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Irrespective of the mode of subtitling used, subtitled audiovisual programs constitute a rich linguistic source that might be very fruitful for language learning. Wang Yan-dong and Shen Cai-fen (2007, 7–9) outline the scientific theories that support the learning attributes of intralingual subtitles, but which could be deemed applicable to all types of subtitled products. Firstly, they refer to Stephen D. Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input hypothesis, according to which learning occurs when learners receive input that is understandable, and which includes language that is slightly above the learners' linguistic level. Wang and Shen (2007) maintain that these are features that describe the input provided by subtitled programs, an argument which explains their potential for learning. They also explain the learning value of subtitles through Richard E. Mayer's (2003) cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which argues that the information that individuals can parse through a single channel (visual, auditory) is finite. The amount of information that can be processed can be enlarged, by providing already acquired knowledge through a second channel (subtitles) in order to create referential connections with existing schemata and reduce the load of working memory. The information processing theory considers that information is first registered in the senses and must be concentrated in each cognitive level (working/short-term/long-term memory) in order to be converted to the next. The deeper parsing that is achieved through the subtitles strengthens the information received and consequently moves it to the long-term memory. Lastly, they mention Allan Paivio's (1971, 1986) dual coding theory, according to which while the visual and verbal information is stored in different systems, the simultaneous representation of the visual and verbal form of a word in subtitled products results in automatic and more substantial parsing and the creation of stronger associations. The interplay between visual and linguistic information reinforces encoding and consequently leads to better retention.

While the above theories referred to intralingual subtitles, it cannot be ignored that the conventional way of broadcasting foreign audiovisual products is with the standard interlingual subtitles. Therefore, it might be interesting to investigate whether the L1 in the subtitles hinders or facilitates language learning. Before this paper moves to explaining the effects of interlingual subtitles, it seems important to refer to the changing landscape in the relationship between translation and English Language Teaching (ELT).

2.3 The Reevaluated Role of Translation in ELT

It is a well-known fact that translation[1] (and the use of L1 in general) has traditionally been relegated in the field of applied linguistics, as it is believed that it inhibits the acquisition of the target language by enabling negative language transfer (Koletnik Korošec 2013, 65). However, in the recent years, the role of translation is being reevaluated, with serious arguments in favor of translation in foreign language learning being presented. A study conducted by Anthony Pym, Kirsten Malmkjær, and Maria del Mar Gutiérrez-Colón Plana (2013) pointed out that translation is a practice that is present in language learning, especially in the initial stages as an internal automatic process. When used in the language learning environment, translation raises the learners' awareness in the aspects in which the languages vary and aids in mediating between their differences (Koletnik Korošec 2013, 66). This argument can also be supported by the considerable number of empirical studies which reveal that using translation communicatively in foreign language education not only reinforces the writing skills in both languages, but also facilitates the learning of the L2 in general (Pym, Malmkjær, and Gutiérrez-Colón Plana 2013).

2.4 The Didactic Value of Translation

In line with current learners' preference to be interactive and engaged with different media, multiple researchers nowadays propose innovative translation tasks that could potentially lead to language learning benefits. Noa Talaván Zanón formed a methodological proposal for the integration of subtitling tasks in the foreign language curriculum, proposing

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[1] Following Melita Koletnik Korošec's (2013, 61) clarification, by the use of the term 'translation' it is not meant the use of the L1 by the students in the language learning environment. Translation is seen in this paper as a (teacher-mediated) educational practice which presupposes the use of both the target and the source language.

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that activities based on the simultaneous use of computer software and videos create a multimedia learning environment with which learners are well acquainted (2006, 42). Through these familiar conditions, learners pay special attention to the suprasegmental and extralinguistic features of the audiovisual text, as well as pragmatics and vocabulary of the target language, while becoming sensitized to the intricacies of each language (47), and practicing their writing skills (49). As noted by Valentina Ragni, the inevitable condensation for the reproduction of the utterances compels learners "to prioritise the message" and thus use the language communicatively rather than mechanically (2018, 18). By constantly replaying the audio in order to adequately understand it and produce the subtitles, the learners have meaningful interaction with the audiovisual text, which leads to more substantial parsing and to the formation of stronger associations (Lertola 2019, 488). This proposition is supported by the studies investigating the effects of subtitling practice, which show that the flexibility of this method contributes to the development of intercultural awareness and competence (Borghetti and Lertola 2014), pragmatic awareness (Incalcaterra McLoughlin 2009), vocabulary acquisition (Lertola 2012, 2019), and the learning of idioms (Bravo 2008).

2.5 Previous Studies on Subtitles and Language Learning

At this point, it seems important to refer to studies that have experimentally illustrated the merits of exposing learners to subtitled programs in order to understand the effects that the simultaneous presentation of text, sound, and image has on facilitating different aspects of language learning. Admittedly, most of them are concerned with intralingual subtitles, the interest in them being the provision of maximum L2 input. While this subtitling condition was initially used to facilitate the comprehension of the deaf and hard of hearing, Robert Vanderplank (2019, 189) claims that intralingual subtitles have recently revolutionized the learner's viewing experience by raising the foreign programs' accessibility and bringing it closer to the language learner.

Vanderplank conducted a study where advanced students watched television programs with subtitles and found that subtitles facilitated the comprehension of authentic linguistic input (1988, 275) and also helped them acquire some of the linguistic elements of the program they were exposed to (276). A few years later, Thomas J. Garza (1991) was concerned with whether

the discussion around the language learning benefits of subtitles could be relevant to target languages with different grammar and graphemic representations. In addition to the participants' improvement of vocabulary use and recall and enhanced comprehension, he remarked that subtitles may act as a mediator between listening and reading skills and facilitate the development of the listening skills that are often disregarded (Garza 1991, 246). Isabel Borrás and Robert C. Lafayette illustrated that intralingual subtitles are not valuable solely to the receptive skills (1994, 70), but also present demonstrated merits to the learner's proficiency in speaking production (69).

Admittedly, the vast majority of studies related to subtitled material measured its contribution to the acquisition of vocabulary. More specifically, Susan B. Neuman and Patricia Koskinen's research exemplified that intralingually subtitled materials provide fruitful conditions for incidental vocabulary learning, and further refuted the speculation that they burden the learner's cognitive load by the triple presentation of information (text, sound, image) (1992, 104). More recent studies have focused on specific aspects of vocabulary and have experimentally indicated the captions' contribution to learners' word knowledge with respect to form recognition (Chen, Liu, and Todd 2018; Peters 2019), meaning recognition and recall (Teng 2019a), as well as the learning of verb-noun lexical collocations by primary school learners (Teng 2019b).

Despite the demonstrated benefits of intralingual subtitles, they should not be considered panacea to language learning. Cees M. Koolstra and Jonannes W. J. Beentjes tested the effects of interlingually subtitled programs on young children and detected significant vocabulary gains, especially with respect to word recognition (1999, 58). These findings are corroborated by Ali Roohani and Somayeh Rabiei's study, whose data suggested that while the highest scores were yielded by the standard interlingual condition, there was significant improvement in one's incidental vocabulary learning, in all the conditions under which the subtitles were provided (2011, 113).

The current trends in research on the vocabulary gains through exposure to subtitled materials exploit the stylistic flexibility offered by subtitles and investigate whether the textual enhancement of target items results in the noticing of target forms and ultimately in more substantial vocabulary learning. More specifically, in Maribel Montero Perez et al.'s (2014) study, the groups that had been exposed to keyword-only captions or captions with highlighted

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keywords outperformed the groups that had not been presented with any textual support with reference to meaning and form recognition scores. A few years later, Myrna Cintrón-Valentín, Lorenzo García-Amaya, and Nick C. Ellis's (2019) study corroborated the results of Montero Perez et al.'s research in the vocabulary recognition tests and further indicated the positive effects of textual enhancement on vocabulary and grammar production. Elvenna Majuddin, Anna Siyanova-Chanturia, and Frank Boers's (2021) study also demonstrated the learning of multiword expressions by viewing captioned programs, with the groups presented with simple and typographically enhanced subtitles producing significantly better results than the no-caption group.

Nevertheless, other studies have revealed that subtitled audiovisual programs improve grammar (Van Lommel, Laenen, and d'Ydewalle 2006) and more specifically the acquisition of L2 constructions (Pattemore and Muñoz 2020), especially when these structures have been presented in a highlighted form (Lee and Révész 2020). The endless learning possibilities offered by subtitled products can also be illustrated by studies which have indicated their contribution to the facilitation of learning strategies employed by learners (Caimi and Mariotti 2015) and to pronunciation improvement (Wisniewska and Mora 2020).

In order to gain insights into the long-term effects of subtitles in a more representative number of participants, a study of the European Commission (2011) investigated the correlation between the countries' tradition in language transfer practices and their behavior towards foreign language learning. The results indicated that in countries where interlingual subtitling is the preferred mode of language transfer, most of the participants characterized their level of proficiency in foreign languages as near native. It may also be suggested that the regular contact with the foreign element creates a positive attitude towards the target language, while simultaneously contributing to the raise of one's proficiency level (26). Therefore, interlingual subtitles could be seen as a mediator between L1 and L2, which is not detrimental to L2 acquisition, but is rather conducive to the learning of the foreign language.

2.6 Reversed Subtitles

So far, this paper has dealt with the use of subtitles as a support for language learning, as well as a pedagogical tool. From this point on, it will focus on reversed interlingual subtitles

and will attempt to summarize the main findings of studies which investigated the learning value of this mode.

2.6.1 Previous Studies on the Benefits of Exposure to Reversed Subtitles. In 1981, Wallace E. Lambert, Inga Boehler, and Nelly Sidoti became the pioneers of the research in reversed interlingual subtitles. In their study, the participants were upper-elementary school students that had attended immersion programs in French. They were provided with the same material, while the channels through which L1 and L2 were presented varied. The results indicated that of the conditions that included some L2 input, the most beneficial mode with regards to L2 comprehension, contextual meaning, phrasing form, and spelling scores was reversed interlingual subtitling. Their explanation was that the L1 auditory input facilitated understanding and provided an abundant amount of time for effective L2 text observation and processing (Lambert, Boehler, and Sidoti 1981, 139).

Naomi E. Holobow, Wallace E. Lambert, and Liliane Sayegh (1984) conducted a similar study in order to test whether the positive effects of the subtitling intervention could still be detected in the long term. The study lasted 11 weeks and had the same profile of participants (students of grade 5–6 that had attended French immersion programs). The results illustrated the superiority of the reversed subtitling condition in the contextual meaning and comprehension tests (Holobow, Lambert, and Sayegh 1984, 70–71), which was maintained throughout and until the end of the study. However, they emphasized that the participants' immersive education presupposed their advanced L2 proficiency. Thus, they researched this issue further, in order to examine whether the same behavior would be exhibited by participants less familiarized with the L2.

The study conducted by Lambert and Holobow concluded that learners with limited exposure to the L2 face difficulties in L2 processing when the input is provided solely in the target language (1984, 8). The results were favorable in the conditions where L1 was present in at least one channel, as it immensely assisted the students' listening and contextual meaning comprehension. However, they were not so encouraging with regards to phrase form recall and spelling (7–8). Therefore, they suggested that reversed subtitling could be effectively employed in order to strengthen L2 processing since "reverse subtitling appear[s] to prompt L1 to L2

mapping, [and] it also establishes a relationship that could become habitual and increasingly more valuable for L2 processing over time" (9).

Martine Danan's (1992) paper examined comparatively the standard and reverse interlingual with intralingual subtitles and the single mode input, within the context of Paivio's (1971, 1986) dual coding theory. She contended that in reverse interlingually subtitled material, viewers receive comprehensible L1 input which enables more substantial and deeper processing of L2 text. In addition to processing, the L1 input activates already acquired knowledge and the creation of referential connections (Danan 1992, 503). According to Danan, "[t]hus, a subtitled video provides a triple connection, between image, sound in one language and text in another, sound and text being linked by translation. Given the additive effects of both image and translation, this combination should be very powerful" (504). This argument corroborates the conclusion that the instant association of the foreign word with its L1 referent leads to incidental vocabulary acquisition (523). Danan specifically advocates in favor of the use of translation in applied linguistics, as the positive outcomes of reverse subtitling in this study indicated that its role should be reinforced (522).

Dominique Bairstow and Jean-Marc Lavaur (2011) tested the different modes of language transfer (original, dubbed, with standard and reversed subtitles) in order to examine which is the modality that achieves best results with regards to both comprehension and vocabulary recall. While the findings with regards to comprehension were similar for the dubbed and subtitled versions, the scores on the vocabulary recall test were more successful in the reversed subtitling mode. Therefore, the best combination of comprehension and vocabulary recall seemed to emerge from the reversed subtitling condition. Continuing with the studies that tackled the different subtitling modes' effects on the learning of lexis, Ali Mohammad Fazilatfar, Shahin Ghorbani, and Leial Samavarchi's (2011) research investigated the effects of the standard, reverse interlingual, and no subtitling modes in incidental vocabulary acquisition. In the informal learning conditions created by the experiment, the findings showed a superiority of reversed subtitling mode in relation to word form recognition, meaning translation, and passive vocabulary learning.

A more recent study conducted by Na-Young Kim (2020) was concerned with the effects of the standard, bimodal, and reversed subtitling conditions on Korean learners' receptive skills. For this reason, the researcher exposed 108 English as a Foreign Language

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(EFL) learners to subtitled materials over the course of ten weeks and assessed their gains based on TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) listening and reading tests. Her study revealed that the reversed subtitling improved the participants reading and listening skills, while the standard mode increased the learners' reading skills.

Slavica Čepon (2011) exposed university level students to reverse subtitled videos and consequently investigated their perceptions with regards to this method. While they responded positively to all kinds of subtitles, they reported that reversed subtitles were rather beneficial towards language learning. The quantitative data also revealed that writing skills were facilitated, already acquired grammar knowledge was improved, and vocabulary acquisition was the most positively impacted. Another very important study which tested the effects of subtitled programs on grammar acquisition was Sven Van Lommel, Annouschka Laenen, and Géry d'Ydewalle's (2006) research. In this study, the subtitling intervention was firstly presented in the reversed subtitling mode and with standard subtitles in subsequent experiments. Both experiments demonstrated that when the rules are explained prior to the presentation of the movie, there is small positive effect on grammar, especially among primary school students (253).

2.6.2 Reversed Subtitles as a Didactic Tool. Since the positive impact of the exposure to reversed subtitles was explained, it seems fitting to explore the learners' active involvement in their learning experience. More specifically, Noa Talaván and Pilar Rodríguez-Arancón (2014) created collaborative activities in which students cooperated and created reverse subtitled material by transferring the meaning of the audiovisual text in their L2. The participants noted to have improved in different aspects of language learning, such as lexis, grammar, writing, and translation skills, as well as to have adopted a more positive attitude towards the use of the target language (Talaván and Rodríguez-Arancón 2014, 93–95). A few years later, a similar study focused on the writing skills of the participants was conducted by Noa Talaván, Ana Ibáñez, and Elena Bárcena (2017). This experiment illustrated that there was significant enhancement with regards to the learners' application of coherence and cohesion and discourse organization in general (55). The flexibility of using reverse subtitles as a didactic tool captured the interest of Jennifer Lertola and Cristina Mariotti (2017), who investigated their impact on the learners' L2 pragmatic awareness. The results favored the group that was engaged in

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reversed subtitling and dubbing, as they exhibited significant improvement compared to the group that had to translate in the L2 (113). Lastly, more recent studies conducted by José Javier Ávila-Cabrera (2021) and José Javier Ávila-Cabrera and Pilar Rodríguez Rodríguez-Arancón (2021) demonstrated that reversed subtitling practice could be considered an innovative, easy, and beneficial practice that can facilitate the writing skills of English for Specific Purposes students.

After having provided a brief introduction into the relationship between reversed subtitles and language learning, this paper will continue into the main research, investigating EFL teachers' perceptions of its use as a method for language learning.

3. The Present Research

3.1 Research on Teachers' Perceptions and Applications of Reversed Subtitling

3.1.1 Aim and Methodology. In order to shed some light on the extent to which reversed subtitles are being used as a support for language learning in institutionalized learning environments, this study reviewed the practices and perceptions of ELT practitioners with regards to this subtitling mode. Beginning the investigation, the main objective was to check whether this method has infiltrated the list of practices used by teachers of English, with the main expectation being that some level of uncertainty towards the use of reversed subtitles would be expressed. More specifically, three basic research questions underpinned this study:

(I) Are EFL teachers familiar with reversed subtitling as a method of language learning? / Have they incorporated it in their teaching?

(ii) Do they have any concerns about reversed subtitles as a means of teaching a language?

(iii) After being briefly informed about the demonstrated affordances of reversed subtitles in language learning, has their approach towards them changed?

Based on these initial queries, a questionnaire (see Appendix) addressing these issues was consequently designed. Questionnaires are considered a time-efficient means to collect data, allowing the retention of the respondent's anonymity and usually resulting in a high response rate (Munn and Drever 1990, 2). The questionnaire was created as a Google form and was administered to the participants via e-mail. It consisted of questions investigating the

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profile of participants (factual questions), questions examining their past and present practices with regards to the research aim (behavioral questions), as well as attitudinal questions, in order to analyze their views on reversed subtitles (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2009, 5). The questions were also presented in both open-ended and closed-ended formats, in order to yield quantitative data, but also to give the participants the space to voice their own opinions, thus providing us with the essential qualitative data. The EFL teachers were contacted in November 2020, and the responses were collected until December 2020.

3.1.2 Participants. Given that this research was conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown, reaching a large number of respondents was not feasible. The affiliations of the Aristotle University with the experimental and model schools of Thessaloniki enabled the contact with the English teachers at these schools, kindly asking them to participate in the study. All the three experimental/model schools of Thessaloniki share close ties with the university and especially with the School of English, with many students of the department conducting their mandatory teaching practice in these institutions. Another reason that determined the experimental-school teachers as the sample of the study was the particular nature of these specific schools, which enables educators to implement innovative methods and practices that are not extensively used in EFL teaching. In order to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of this issue, a larger sample of participants was needed, and thus, an attempt was made to contact more teachers from experimental/model schools all over Greece. Ultimately, the study concluded with having 19 EFL teachers in experimental schools as participants, of whom 3 (15.8%) were male and 16 female (84.2%). Their responses ascertained their great experience in the teaching profession, with 6 (31.58%) of them having 15–19 years of experience, 7 of them (36.84%) having 20–29 years of experience, and 6 respondents (31.58%) stating to have been teaching English for more than 30 years. Except for their extensive teaching background, the respondents were highly qualified, something that can be ratified by their high level of education. More specifically, 8 EFL teachers (42.1%) had completed their PhD studies, a larger number (9) of participants were on a master's level (47.4%), while 2 of them (10.5%) stated their level of education as a bachelor's degree in ELT.

3.1.3 Results. After the completion of the responses' collection, the results were coded for their assessment. With reference to the video presentation as a part of teaching English, the emergent conclusion was that all of the participants supplement their teaching with audiovisual input. This discovery demonstrates that the instructional practices employed by contemporary teachers align with the profile of the young generation of learners, who are better learning with the provision of visual cues. The data further pointed to the fact that 6 teachers (31.6%) prefer to provide beginner students with audiovisual material, possibly considering that the pictorial support could compensate for their underdeveloped language skills. Moreover, 5 of the participants (26.3 %) explained that they regard videos as being beneficial at the intermediate level, with only 2 of the respondents (10.5%) reporting that they include videos mostly when teaching advanced learners. Nevertheless, 6 participants (31.6 %) explained that they use videos to students of all levels of proficiency, recognizing the value of the creation of visual associations in language learning.

However, 13 of them (68.4%) reported that they opt to provide the videos without the textual support of the subtitles. This finding may be attributed to their different teaching objective when using videos, which is the practice of listening skills. Therefore, it may be suggested that they avoid exposing students to the subtitles, fearing that the prevalence of the textual information will lead them to ignore the auditory input and rely on the interlingual or intralingual text to decode the message.

Further into the questionnaire, the questions targeted the teachers' familiarity with reversed subtitles and thoughts on its use as a teaching resource. The findings indicated that only 8 of the respondents (42.1%) were acquainted with reversed subtitles, of whom only one had used it as a teaching practice. The latter maintained that reversed subtitles were not specifically chosen considering the particular mode's merits in language learning, but due to the enhanced benefits of bimodal and bilingual input, saying: "I do not use them very often. It has Just [*sic*] happened to use one or two of them. I was interested in the content of the videos, so I have shown them to the students. However, I think that it is useful to expose students to two languages at the same time coming from different channels."

To our view, reversed subtitles constitute an unconventional teaching practice that has not been extensively researched, and hence, there is a lack of information about its positive impact on the learning of a language. Admittedly, this unpopularity of reversed subtitles was

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anticipated, mainly because of the aforementioned prevalence of the L1 auditory input, as well as the lack of appropriate materials in Greek, which could be used for educational purposes. Therefore, the educators were consequently asked to further describe the source of their skeptical attitude regarding this method. While 5 of the respondents (26.32%) claimed that they had no doubts about the efficiency of reversed subtitles, more specific reasons why reverse subtitles were not previously used arose from the evaluation of the remaining responses:

(i) Three (3) participants think reversed subtitles require advanced learners (15.79%).

(ii) Four (4) teachers stated that the features of reversed subtitled content contradict with the teaching goals they set when presenting videos (21.05%).

(iii) Four (4) respondents had not considered it as an option for language teaching and learning (21.05%).

(iv) Two (2) of the respondents claimed that they would not choose it, as they want to increase the amount of target language that the learners are exposed to (10.53%).

Our assumption that teachers would reject reversed subtitles since they would want to minimize the contact with the mother tongue in the foreign language environment appeared in the participants' responses. One teacher noted that "I am trying to expose my students to authentic English language as much as possible in order to help them with their receptive skills but also give them a model for their productive skills," and continued by maintaining that reversed subtitles seem more appropriate for more advanced students. Similarly, another instructor claimed that "students should develop strong reading skills before using reverse subtitles." Both arguments reflect the misconception that reversed subtitles are better suited for students of higher proficiency, an argument that can be refuted by the relevant literature. Specifically, Lambert, Boehler, and Sidoti (1981), Lambert and Holobow (1984), and Danan (1992) contend that reversed subtitles are especially valuable to beginners, as the source language discourse is automatically processed through the transient auditory input, while, at the same time, the observation, encoding, and acquisition of the target language text is facilitated.

As was previously mentioned, when a broader analysis of the participants' responses was conducted, it was revealed that the use of reversed subtitles is in disagreement with the teachers' reasons for using videos in class. Indeed, some of the teachers confirmed that they introduce videos in the context of their lesson with the aim of facilitating the students' practice of L2 listening skills, a goal that by default cannot be met with reverse subtitled videos. One of

them also mentioned their hypothesis that reversed subtitles would favor the learners' syntax and structure awareness, an assumption which, to our knowledge, cannot be sufficiently supported by the literature. Adding to the explanations for not incorporating reversed subtitles, another instructor stated that they plan their lesson prioritizing the official curriculum and the material that needs to be covered, therefore leaving no time for the application of alternative methods.

In order to address the concerns that would have been articulated by the respondents, the last question briefly informed the participants about the existence of multiple studies that have demonstrated the merits of reversed subtitling, mainly on the acquisition of foreign language vocabulary. After this clarification was made, they were asked about whether they would consider adopting reversed subtitles as a support for their teaching, since their effects have been experimentally verified. Of the 3 respondents (15.79%) that declared they would not use reversed subtitles, two of them specified that they deem it inappropriate for the level they are currently teaching, but that they would consider using it for more advanced levels. One instructor seemed reluctant to use it in general, something that may possibly be explained by the overall methodology followed by the particular school where he teaches: "No given that at our school we avoid using the Greek language (L1) whatsoever in order to maximize L2 input. Reversed subtitles still involve L1 input which means less L2 listening input." Five (5) respondents (26.32%) attested that they would potentially use it, leaving the door open for the possibility of its future application in the lesson. The most encouraging outcome of this study was that 11 of the participants (57.89%) exhibited a positive stance towards using reversed subtitles for language learning purposes. More specifically, one of the respondents expressed the proposition that it might be beneficial to use reversed subtitles as a didactic tool, engaging students in the creation of the subtitles, as some kind of consolidation to what was previously learned.

Nevertheless, the general impression created after the analysis of their responses was that EFL teachers were not aware of the learning values posed by reversed subtitles. According to some of them, the main reason was that they had not previously noticed any teaching materials with reversed subtitles, which they could potentially use in their lessons. One of them specifically highlighted the low quality of broadcasted subtitles that would compromise the possible learning gains:

There are many instances where subtitles we see on TV or videos do not depict the meaning of the spoken language correctly. They are mere translations, often wrong translations, as, many times, what is said orally in Greek cannot be exactly translated in English and vice versa. I would be willing to use reverse subtitles only if I would be the one who would create them.

The following sections will attempt to summarize the main findings and provide suggestions for future studies on this topic.

4. Conclusion

The scope of the present study was to investigate the inclusion of reversed interlingual subtitles in formal language learning settings, through examining the EFL teachers' views on and applications of this method. In order to achieve this, it started by addressing Greek EFL practitioners, with the aim of finding out if they have implemented it when conducting the EFL lesson, with the initial expectation being that the prior application of reversed subtitles would not be detected in the participants' responses. While the results of the study cannot be generalized due to the small number of participants, their analysis provided useful insights on the participating EFL instructors' current perceptions that explain their practices so far. The findings of this study validated some of our assumptions, as it was revealed that the majority of the respondents had not used reversed subtitles as a teaching support and that most of them were not familiar with its language learning applications. This result may be associated with the fact that reversed subtitles do not abide by the features shared by the prevalent approaches to teaching English, which discourage L1 input. Reversed subtitles also contradict with the reasons for which videos are used in class, which in most cases is the practice of L2 listening skills. Nevertheless, the most interesting result of this study was that the majority of the EFL teachers exhibited willingness to employ reversed subtitles in the videos that would supplement their future lessons. This may be connected to the fact that the teachers were shortly informed about the illustrated positive effects of reversed subtitles, especially on the acquisition of L2 vocabulary, which might have aided in them considering to use this modality for specific teaching aims.

5. Limitations of This Study and Implications for Further Research

Though the current study may have resulted in some interesting findings, some of its limitations need to be mentioned and taken into account. Admittedly, the circumstances of remote working minimized the possibilities of contacting more participants though their schools, and consequently, this study reported only the responses of the practitioners that could be reached through their electronic addresses. For future reference, it would be interesting to expand the sample of this study by delving into the perceptions of EFL teachers in Greek state schools. Undoubtedly, the examination of a more representative number of participants could be very enlightening, as there is always the possibility of them implementing different methods in their delivering of the foreign language lesson. Considering that the general impression after this study was the lack of knowledge on the positive effects of reversed subtitles, research conducted in the Greek context seems to be needed, in order to experimentally verify the value of reversed subtitles to Greek EFL learners. It is expected that such a study would be very impactful in raising the awareness of applied linguistics' practitioners, with respect to the aspects of language learning facilitated through the exposure to reversed subtitles.

Since the participants' responses pointed to the fact that reversed subtitled videos are not widely accepted as an effective language learning practice and therefore are not frequently included in formal language environments, it would be interesting to investigate digital spaces where learners could benefit from the learning opportunities offered by reversed subtitles, while they are engaged in viewing videos for their own entertainment. When researching the television viewing behavior of the Greek Generation Z, Anna Podara et al. (2020) discovered that the Netflix and YouTube streaming platforms are their two most preferred digital spaces for the consumption of entertaining audiovisual content (10). By viewing programs in their L1 and by turning on the L2 subtitles offered by these platforms, learners could increase their exposure to the L2 and eventually be led to incidental language learning. While Netflix does not presently broadcast any original Greek content, programs dubbed in Greek have started to become present in the platform, allowing the viewer to enhance their experience by adding the L2 on-screen text (although it is not a verbatim translation of the original audio). Except for Netflix, the newly launched Greek streaming services ERTFLIX[2] (the Over-the-Top platform

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[2] https://www.ertflix.gr/.

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of the national broadcaster ERT) and CINOBO[3] have been added to the plethora of choices that Greek viewers-learners have. Although viewers of ERTFLIX have the option to view Greek programs only with intralingual subtitles, CINOBO is expected to constitute a fruitful environment for research, especially because it already offers learners the possibility of adding reversed subtitles to selected programs. TEDx talks and videos also provide a wide range of Greek content, which is translated by volunteers through the platform CaptionHub,[4] thus allowing viewers to benefit in their language learning journey by being exposed to the foreign language through the subtitles.

More recently, the chrome extension 'Language Reactor'[5] has become subject of research, as it enables the addition of bilingual subtitles (simultaneous presentation of subtitles in two different languages) in the content that exists in the aforementioned streaming services (Montero Perez 2022, 182). Research conducted by Aikaterini Gouleti, Giorgos Dimitriadis, and Michalis Kokonis on Language Reactor's original version, Language Learning with Netflix, indicated that viewers devote more time into processing the bilingual subtitles in comparison to the monolingual subtitles, possibly due to their unfamiliarity with having a viewing experience with this subtitling mode (2020, 131). In the reversed subtitled condition, assuming that learners understand the L1 audio while having access to bilingual subtitles, it could be hypothesized that such tools could expand reversed subtitles' possibilities for language learning to more than one target language at the same time. What is more, Sharon Black claims that "greater access to subtitled AV content in other languages would be a simple and inexpensive way to encourage [children] to learn other languages" (2022, 89) especially because the very few studies that examined their attitudes illustrated that they respond positively to interlingually subtitled products.

While the exposure to reversed subtitles has the demonstrable advantages outlined in this paper, another very promising research suggestion would be to study the Greek learners' engagement in creating reversed subtitles for their preferred audiovisual content. For these activities, learners could become familiarized with some of the user-friendly subtitling software available online (Subtitle Edit, AegiSub) or register in platforms that enable the online

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[3] https://cinobo.com/.
[4] https://www.captionhub.com/.
[5] https://www.languagereactor.com/.

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collaborative translation of content, such as the aforementioned CaptionHub or the Amara Subtitling Platforms.[6] According to Anna Comas-Quinn, such classroom activities that reflect on informal learning context simulate the interconnectedness of our contemporary "digital society," and "brin[g] knowledge production in the hands of the learners" (2019, 44). By participating in the creation of the translated program, learners are not solely consumers of the audiovisual text, but also assume the role of producer of the text, a joint status which is best described by the term "prosumer" (Pérez-González 2012, 337).

Based on the above suggestions, it is hoped that more extensive research related to the Greek environment would change the present landscape, and lead to the broader use of reversed subtitles for educational purposes, ultimately granting this method a more prominent place in the ELT process.

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[6] https://amara.org/el/.

Appendix

Questionnaire

*The asterisk points to the mandatory questions.

1. Gender*

   a) Male
   b) Female
   c) Other

2. Years of experience in English Language Teaching*

3. Level of education*

   a) Bachelor
   b) Master
   c) PhD

4. Do you usually present videos to your students when teaching English?*

   a) Yes
   b) No

5. If yes, at which levels do you use videos to a greater degree?*

   a) Beginner
   b) Intermediate
   c) Advanced
   d) Equally used in all levels

6. Are these videos accompanied by subtitles?*

   a) Yes
   b) No

7. Are you familiar with the reverse interlingual mode of subtitling? (audio in the learners' native language accompanied by target language subtitles)*

8. Have you ever used videos with reversed interlingual subtitles when teaching English?*

   a) Yes
   b) No

9. If you have used videos with reverse subtitles when teaching English, do you think the learners benefited from being exposed to reverse subtitles? How?

10. If you have not used videos with reverse subtitles when teaching English, is it because of any doubts regarding the benefits of reverse subtitles? Please explain.

11. There is a considerable amount of research illustrating that reverse subtitles contribute to multiple aspects of language learning, but mainly on the acquisition of foreign language vocabulary. Knowing this, would you be willing to integrate reverse subtitles in your teaching to a greater extent?*

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