

Reading Subtitles

Research has shown that reading subtitles—whether for programs produced in English or in foreign languages—challenge children’s decoding skills and speed of word recognition. Reading development aside, foreign language film study is an excellent strategy for teaching children about the history, culture, and values of a society while reproducing the language and music of its people.

Teacher may wish to emphasize these key points about subtitles:

- *Film subtitles are not always a literal or exact, word-for-word translation of the dialogue in a scene.* Instead, subtitles are often a type of shorthand, a synopsis of the main ideas being communicated in the scene. One reason is that providing an exact translation would fill the screen with words and obscure the images. Or, the words would flash so quickly across the screen that the viewer would not have enough time to read everything.
- *Subtitles alone do not tell the whole story.* The soundtrack contributes to the mood or atmosphere of the scene, but even the soundtrack plus the subtitles do not tell the whole story. What is missing are the moving images. Moving images show rather than tell. Once you add the images to the soundtrack and the subtitles, a greater understanding of the characters and the conflict results. With greater understanding comes greater enjoyment of the scene.