Efficient Use of Linguistic and Situational Contexts for Enhanced Understanding of the Content of English Screen Subtitles

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Abstract
Research in the production of powerful screen subtitles receives more attention from those who are interested in movies business for the benefit of viewers worldwide. Arguably viewers hardly benefit from screen subtitles due to the inconsistency between scenes and the pragmatic meaning of subtitles. Specifically, the study aims to examine the extent to which understanding pragmatic meaning of screen subtitles largely depends on understanding linguistic and situational contexts elements. The force of context is assumed to have powerful effect interpretation of the source text. Both descriptive and experimental methods were adopted. These included a test and paper-and-pencil-questionnaires where participants provided their impressions about the effect of context in eliminating pragmatic meaning of screen subtitles. Participants were experienced viewers of subtitled films. Results showed that linguistic forms and contextual cues together form a powerful element in understanding the pragmatic meaning of screen subtitles. Results also revealed that communicative translation fits the screen translation giving more attention to the effect of context. The association of context and communicative translation makes subtitles globally more economical and intelligible. Context forms a central pragmatic element for film language to be intelligible.
Keywords—Interpretation, context-dependent-interpretation, International context, scenes, linguistic context
DOI: 10.7176/JLLL/92-03
Publication date: October 31st 2022

Introduction

This paper attempts to describe how viewers can learn the pragmatic meaning of English language via films. Film viewers probably have difficulties reading and following a lot of film subtitles which cause them to lose a great deal of pleasure of events. In this concern, various factors may intervene triggering these difficulties. For example, reading speech of subtitles, lengths of subtitles, word choice, and the level of the language used combined often cause viewers experience difficulty keeping up with subtitles. According to Hefer (2013) length of subtitles of two lines which timed for few seconds often triggers a problem. Subtitles do not remain long on the screen for reviewers to read and this causes viewers fail to keep up with the film progression. Hefer adds that other possible influencing factor is language level. The more viewers enjoy high proficiency of language of subtitles, the easier they keep up with subtitles and vice versa.

Szakowska and Moron (2018) the subtitles' speed or reading speech forms a crucial element affecting viewers' reading and following of the events of films. The two measures used treating speed which includes character per second (cps) and word per minute (wpm). Szakowska and Moron add that reading speech measures vary from language to language and from people to people. However, in their conclusions, Szakowska and Moron found that reviewers could easily cope with fast subtitles. Interestingly, they confirmed that viewers prefer fast film subtitles to slower ones claiming that slower subtitles are frustrating. Szakowska and Moron suggested further research should focuses on language proficiency, film genre and complexity, and the assumption of whether speakers are natives or non-natives.

However, arguably linguistic and situational contexts form vigorous factors which help viewers successfully learn the pragmatic meaning of subtitles. Linguists distinguish between three types of context, i.e. linguistic and situational context [Song 2010]. Linguistic context refers to discourse context which readers need to understand a sentence. Linguistic context involves deictic expressions and coherence within a text. Situational context forms the non-linguistic environment or the general knowledge which an interlocutor has of the world [Franco and Galvis 2013]. Situational context relies on social conventions, interjections, facial expressions, gestures, economical, political. Situational context also comprises physical and socio-cultural context [Yule 1996]. Thus, linguistic and situational contexts form robust factors that translators should consider. Linguistic and situational contexts have powerful effects on the interpretation of the intended message (Yule 1996, Farwell, and Helmreich 1993). This study attempts to measure how linguistic and situational contexts play an important

role in the learning of pragmatic the meaning of English of films' subtitles.

1.   The Problem

Linguistic and situational contexts facilitate the interpretation pragmatic meaning (Depraetere 2019) of subtitles. Both linguistic and situational contexts can help viewers understand screen subtitles. Arguably the learning problems of pragmatic meaning which viewers face watching films are context specific. The communication and disambiguation of the content is only conveyed through interaction existing between linguistic and situational contexts which form inextricably interrelated elements (Sorea 2007). In this study viewers need to integrate linguistic and situational contexts for understanding the content of subtitles. Learning problems often occur where viewers misunderstand pragmatic expressions in the source text (English) for pragmatic expressions in the target language (e.g. Arabic). Arguably the misperception occurs here because some linguistic and situational elements that exist in the source language do not always exist in the target language. This study attempts to examine the effect of efficient use of linguistic and situational contexts in giving straight forward understanding of English screen subtitling. The study targets film viewers from Arabic speaking viewers because it is assumed that they do not benefit very much from factors such as the linguistic and situational contexts while watching these screen subtitles.

2.   Research creativity

The research topic of this study forms observations that accumulated from a long experience in the teaching of English language in a multilingual environment.

Research in this area will provide an understanding of the problems with screen subtitles in relation to the effect of linguistic and situational contexts.

Linguists come to believe that culture and language cannot be separated as the existence of each one is reliant on the second. So consideration of cultural differences forms a robust factor that responsible for good translation from language to language.

Results obtained by a study like ours may provide grounds for appropriate strategies regarding efficient use of linguistic and situational contexts for understanding subtitling.

3.   Hypothesis

This study will test the hypothesis that:

 Linguistic and situational contexts together have strong effect on understanding of the content of film subtitles.

4.   Literature review

Background: linguists classify context according to the following principles:

1. The nature of context suggests that context cannot include everything in the world; it is restricted to what is relevant only.
2. Linguistic context refers to language discourse or text. On the other hand, situational context comprises physical and cultural context [Connolly 2007, 16]
3. Relevance of context depends on the judgment of the analyst in a specific time and place. This suggests that there are no fixed standards for what is relevant and what is not.
4. Context goes through classifications that largely depend on the type of knowledge fitting each context.
5.   There is an ontological relationship between context and sentences where context changes due to change of sentences and vice versa. (Connolly 2007, Fetzer 2007)

Previous research: It has been observed that film viewers experience different problems following screen translation. Wrong translations often influence the intelligibility of the screen subtitles. Therefore, film translators tend to adopt word to word and literal translation methods. However, word to word and literal translation methods do not always fit well the interpretation of film. Translators need to shift 5etween two tools: literal translation or adopt the target culture to achieve fidelity [Liu 2012]. According to Balaci (2015) screen subtitling should be in line with what actors are performing on the screen. Any contradiction between these two dimensions compromises communication. With regard to space and timing the task becomes even more complex. Translators have to take in account when subtitles appear on the screen and when they should disappear. This implies that translators have to uphold textual synchrony with interactions. As reported by (Newmark 1981) and Bariki (2015) pragmatics has some importance to translation. It attempts to maintain the link between speech events and context. The assumption here is that context helps the audience understand the intentions of the interlocutors. Specifically, some linguists advocate communicative translation as an effective method to maintain intentions and to focus on comprehension by the receivers (Newmark 1981). Communicative translation is largely pragmatic-based and takes advantage of (culturally different) expectations on the part of the viewer, including beliefs and attitudes. Communicative translation operates on these expectations for the contextualization of meaning; establishing connections between contexts and meaning (Balaci 2015). Moreover,

the synchronization of the text with the images on screen has to fit the time constraints for each image. The problem is aggravated when elements of culture are involved. Screen translation, therefore, might be more complicated than it seems at first (Balaci2015).

Most research bears out the crucial effect of context. Form-based translation is not sufficient in helping reviewers understand target intents but contexts probably forms important elements for viewers to make inferences of the intended message (Farwell & Helmreich 1993). Teaching address forms in translation requires translators to consider the effect of context in spoken discourse. Szarkowska (2005) provided practical hints on how students interpret utterances, style and appropriateness in relation to situations. However, there is very little research done in the area of linking between language and its cultural and social contexts across-languages. One more study reports that teaching just the grammar of language, particularly in EFL classes, forms 'dubious dichotomies'. The company of context should be considered (Lund 2006). In utterance interpretation, linguists claim that viewers should follow the principle of local interpretation. This principle instructs hearers/viewers to use the most relevant and reasonable interpretation available. The principle instructs hearers not to construct a context that is sufficient enough for the interpretation (Brown & Yule 1988).

6.   The proposed enhancement

We assume that context greatly supports the interpretation of subtitles by narrowing down the pragmatic and cultural differences that frequently occur throughout the film events. Viewers need to make use of different elements like situations, context and physical environment to understand film subtitles. Both linguistic and situational contexts will affect the viewer's interpretation of subtitles as linguistic knowledge (locutionary act) by itself does not provide enough information to arrive at the intended meaning of film subtitles. This study attempts boost the interpretation of screen subtitles.

7.   Tools of data collection and analysis

Descriptive and experimental methods were used in this study. The experimental method comprises pre-and posttests while the descriptive method comprises a questionnaire. After finishing the tests and the questionnaire we asked five experts in the field to give their comments regarding validity of the tests. They confirmed face validity of the tests and of the questionnaire. Pre-and posttests are balanced against how linguistic forms including grammatical and phonological together looked at in situational context (cultural and physical contexts) work to give functions (interpretations)

8.   Material

The stimulus material used in the experiment included five episodes (1 Ali 2014) and Song (2010) Yule 1996 and 5) taken from "Jane Eyre 1983"video quoted.

9.   Participants

The first group of participants included 10 students from Albaha University in Saudi Arabia who were preparing for a BA in English. Importantly, these students at the time of the experiments took a course in linguistic pragmatics. The course focused on the major aspects of pragmatics such as linguistic and situational context, deictic expressions, reference and inference. Moreover, students received practice and training in identifying context, links between context and utterance and using context to understand the intended message and subtitles. The students were also enrolled in a course on communicative translation. This group of students participated in the experiments and filled in the questionnaire. A second group comprised 10 Sudanese students preparing for a BA degree in English language at Gadarif University in Sudan. These students were similar to the previou/s group in terms of educational level and demographic characteristics.

10. Training

Both groups of Sudanese and Saudi students received training on identifying understand the interaction between linguistic and situational contexts. The training comprised (i) explicit instructions and (ii) practice training with linguistic forms and situational contexts and cultural elements inside a classroom. The explicit instructions were intended to boost reviewers learning pragmatic meaning linguistic and contextual features together help viewers guess communicative functions of subtitles. Thus, students develop deep understanding of communicative functions and their relationship to utterances which form essential element in the process of interpretation. In the second stage of the training students were asked to watch a real film and to list as many linguistic forms and situational contexts as they could and to judge how linguistic forms together with situational forms helped them interpret the intended message of films language(subtitles). Here students have a list of representative linguistic forms and contextual elements which are supposed to frequently occur in subtitles (appendix 1). The purpose of this stage of training is to represent a mock test preparing students for the posttest. Students used the same list of linguistic and contextual elements in the posttest. Importantly, our students attended three courses including

pragmatics, discourse analysis and translation as part of their bachelor discipline. They did not receive any special training before the pretest.

11. Testing procedure

The experiment took place in a language lab where the film was displayed on a 50-inch plasma screen. The students were instructed to watch film events carefully while listening to the audio over loudspeakers and to rate the power of two variables which were manipulated in the experiment. These variables were: (i) linguistic context, and (ii) situational context. The students were asked to focus on how important these variables together contributed to the intelligibility of the subtitles. Before the test began, each student received a rating list with three columns; one for linguistic forms, one for contextual elements and the last column for the rating of total intelligibility (appendix 2). Students also have pen to use writing their total scores on the right columns. The experimenter played the film and asked students to indicate how linguistic and context together helped them understand the subtitling depending on experience they learnt from the training. When (also during) the film ended, students entered their total scores for each linguistic or contextual element given in the columns. Importantly, the answer sheet (appendix 2) covered representative points of linguistic and contextual cues.

12. Scoring procedure

Each linguistic or contextual element in the columns was given one mark (score), where each column includes 20 elements. Students are also asked to estimate the total intelligibility. They based their judgment on how linguistic and contextual cues together helped them interpret the subtitles. The full score is 20 marks, 10 equals half mark and scores below 10 are considered failure.

13. Results and discussion

This section addresses the performance of students in pre- and posttests in film subtitles. The tests include three variables: linguistic context, situational context and the total interpretation.
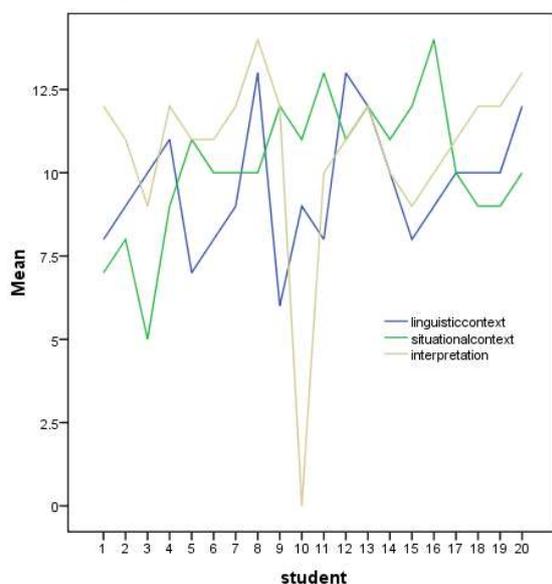

Figure (1) total mean of the students' performance benefiting from linguistic and situational contexts interpreting subtitles in the pretest

As figure (1) shows students obtained low scores performing the pretest in terms of the three variables (i) linguistic context, (ii) situational contexts and (iii) the interpretation of subtitles. The mean rates of the students' performance in the three variables are 9.6%, 10.20%, and 10.70%, respectively. The results imply that students have low scores. Moreover, table (1) provides the most unintelligible linguistic and contextual cues students experienced following the film before any training take place.

Table (1) Problematic linguistic and contextual cues experienced by students

| problematic contextual cues	Problematic linguistic forms
yellow rose	master (noble)
the red room	bad animals
from the chimney	the dickens
fireside	gipsying,
carriage road	names; Bessi, Miller, Reed, Lioyd,
a whirlwind into the nursery	Lowood, Gateshead,
convolvuli and rosebuds	my heart beat thick
Verse of a Psalm! angels sing Psalms	housemaid's apartment
double scorn	convolvuli and rosebuds
ceaseless reprimand	muslin frocks and scarlet sashes
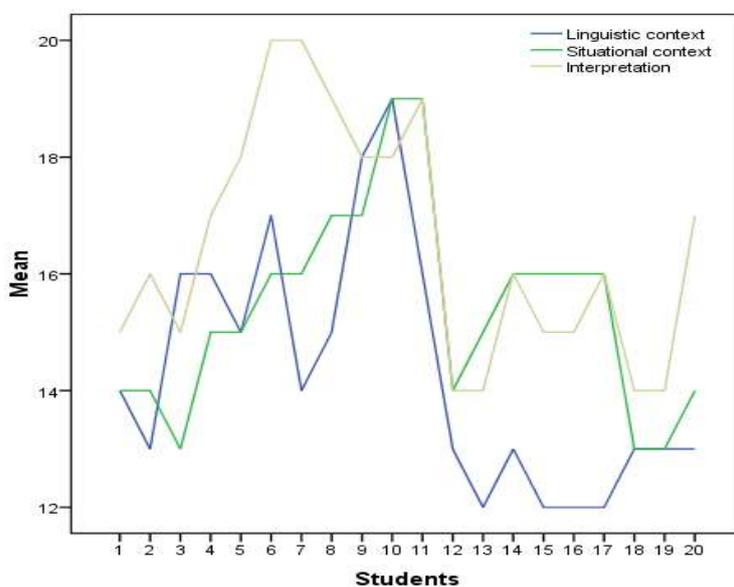
Figure (2) Total mean of experimental group benefiting from linguistic and situational contexts interpreting subtitles.

As figure 2 shows students have similar scores benefiting from situational and linguistic contexts. The total mean of the students benefiting from situational context in interpreting subtitles is 65% and from linguistic context is 60%. On the other hand, the interpretation of screen subtitles with the aid of two variables (linguistic and situational contexts) showed a total mean rate of 70% (appendix 3). The results suggest that the use of situational and linguistic context is relatively high. The results also suggest some relationship between the types of contexts involved in this study and interpretation of the subtitles. Importantly, the performance of Saudi students in the posttest is higher than in the pretest. This result suggests that the students benefited from the training.

14. Correlations

The performance of the students in linguistic context and situational context revealed a significant positive correlation ($r = .492$, $p < .05$). There are also positive correlations between linguistic context and the interpretation of subtitles ($r = .625$, $p < .01$) on the one hand, and situational context and the interpretation ($r = .646$, $p < .01$) on the other.

15. Hypothesis testing

Table (2) Paired Samples t-test of linguistic and situational context cues

Paired Samples t-Test

Sig. (2-tailed)	df	t	Paired Differences		Std. Error Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	
			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
			Upper	Lower				
.022	19	-2.5	-.178	-2.022	.441	1.971	-1.100	Linguistic cues Context cues

The results of paired sample Test in the table (1) shows that t-test value is -2.496 and Sig = .022. This result suggests that the value of probability mistake obtained is statistically acceptable.

16. Conclusions

Generally speaking, the results imply that Saudi students benefit from linguistic and situational contexts understanding screen subtitles. This is clear in the performance and total interpretation of students on the three levels. Moreover, the measurement of correlation coefficient suggests linguistic and situational context work jointly shows some pattern. This implies consistency between context and linguistic elements.   Difficulties experienced by students probably due to cultural differences. Finding of previous research converge the results of this study (Farwell & Helmreichn1993).

17. Results of Questionnaire

The Questionnaire was set up to collect impressionistic data about film language and the effect of context. This section presents the results of the responses of 10 Sudanese students and 20 Saudi students of English

Table 3. Mean score (across five scenes) by 10 Sudanese and 10 Saudi students of English in questionnaire.

no	Item		Sudanese	Saudi
part1	General impressions		Sudanese	Saudi
1.	if you benefit from film subtitles enjoying films		40	70
2.	if subtitles are clear		50	80
3.	if subtitles are correct		60	60
4.	if translation is associated with scenarios		50	65
5.	if subtitles are appropriate for scenarios		60	70
6.	if subtitles are too long		70	90
7.	if subtitles are too short		50	80
8.	if subtitles are good enough		50	90
9.	if film translation interrupts pleasure		30	60
part2	Intelligibility			
10.	if you find screen subtitles intelligible		45	90
11.	if context is crucial for intelligibility		70	90
part3	Communicative translation			
12.	if communicative translation fits film		70	80
13.	if communicative translation is intimate to context		75	85
14.	if communicative translation displays contextual meaning		80	90

The results in table 1 show that most of the impressions of Sudanese students of English range between 30% and 90%. In detail, in part 1, which treats general impressions about the nature and complexity of screen subtitles, the total scores of students range between 30% and 90%. The results suggest that students are not optimistic about film subtitles. In part 2, the scores range between 45% and 70%, i.e. the total impression of students about film subtitles being intelligible is only 45%. However, the students' impression about the effect of context is 70%. In part 3, which treats communicative translation, students seem more optimistic with scores ranging between 70% and 80%, in favor of communicative translation. Saudi students show higher scores than Sudanese students. Most scores range between 60 and 90. In detail, in part (1) "the nature and complexity of screen subtitles" the scores of students range between 60% and 90%. The result suggests that students are optimistic about film subtitles. In part 2, the scores range between 70% and 90%, i.e. the total impression of students about film subtitles being intelligible jumps to 90%, and also the effect of context reaches 90%. In part 3, which deals with the effect of communicative translation students scores range between 80% and 90%. This result suggests that Saudi students are more optimistic when dealing with screen subtitles than Sudanese. This is probably because Saudi students watch more films than Sudanese, which enables them to develop more understanding of screen subtitles. Moreover, Saudi students of English probably have more opportunities

speaking English with natives and foreigners (recruitment to Saudi Arabia) than Sudanese.

18. Conclusions

The interpretation of titles and names and some linguistic and contextual cues represent a problematic area.

Difficulties experienced are the result of differences of the cultural context existing between the source and target cultures.

Saudi students benefit from linguistic and situational contexts interpreting screen subtitles. This is very clear in the students' performance.

Most Sudanese and Saudi students show positive attitudes towards communicative translation as an effective translation method for screen subtitles.

Screen subtitles are more understandable when context and communicative translation are used.

19. Suggestions for future research

1. Culture difference should considered in future research.
2. Impressionistic studies of foreign viewers.

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Appendices

Appendix (1) This chart represents a mock test designed for the training of students

No	function	Physical and cultural context	Linguistic forms
1	Names and titles	talk / meeting	Titles e.g. Mr. dr.
2		Meeting	greetings, e.g. Hi, fine, ok?, etc.
3	Greetings, farewells	an airport	farewells: bye, I love you, see you, etc.
4		an office	Are you free on Saturday evening?
5		a coffee shop	Would you mind having some …
6	Invitation	a restaurant or	Would you like to …. Join me for dinner?
7		School	sounds great
8		café	Yes, why not
9		office	It is a good idea
10	Accepting invitations	Office	Let me check my calendar
11		office	I'd love to, thanks
12		office	That's very kind of you, thanks.
13		office	That sounds lovely, thank you
14	Declining invitations	factory	may be another time
15		office	I 'd love to but I have another commitment
16		hospital	I do not think I can
17		office	Sorry, I am afraid …..
18	sympathy	House	divorce
19	Religious expressions		prayers, rituals, slave, servant, etc.
20	interjections	a classroom	Oh, mm, wow, yah, etc.
20	Marriage expressions	a celebration Hall	congrats, etc.
21	declining apologies	a office	Thanks, no.
22	accepting apologies	a library	I'd love to, thanks
23	sentence type	talk inside a classroom	intonation types
24			Miscellanies

Appendix (2) An open list of applicable linguistic and contextual cues together [see 14].
Linguistic forms are not necessarily matching   contextual cues.

No	Contextual cues	Scores	Linguistic forms	scores
1	theater		understanding personal references	
2	office		formal and informal expressions	
3	traditions and customs		co-operative principle	
4	sympathy		religious, social terms/conventions	
5	clothes & wears		sentence structure /word order	
6	foods		demonstrative pronouns	
7	natural things		possessive pronouns	
8	entertainment places		elliptical uses	
9	concepts of good and evils		use of diglossia	
10	religion		cohesion	
11	costumes			
12	social conventions		sentence length	
13	nature, e.g. wild life		word choice	
14	arts and cultures		types of sentence, e.g. imperative, etc.	
1	forest		Onomastics (names)	
16	country side		tense and aspect	
17	weather / climate		interjections	
18	schooling		if dialect used intelligible	
19	market/shops		style	
20	natural environment		intonation & stress	