

## Interlingual Subtitles to Increase High School Students' Ability in Understanding Explanation Texts

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### Abstract

This paper explores the use of interlingual subtitles as media in teaching reading skill in one of private high schools in Surakarta. This research was initially conducted as the teachers found problems in teaching genres of texts, especially explanation text. Interlingual subtitle which is placed in videos is offered by the researchers as a solution and expected to help students in understanding the content of explanation text. This research uses classroom action research method with two cycles. The objectives of this research are to find out: 1) the implementation of interlingual subtitle in teaching explanation text, and 2) the impacts of interlingual subtitle on students' achievements. The subjects of this research are 33 students of social science class and 33 students of natural science class. It is found out that interlingual subtitles can be used as a supplementary material in teaching explanation text. Interlingual subtitle has also contributed positively to the increasing scores of the students during the pre-cycle test to the post-test.

**Keywords:** explanation text, interlingual subtitle, media, reading, video

### Introduction

This research is started with a pre-observation activity conducted by interviewing some English teachers and students in one of private high schools in Surakarta. The teachers said that they experienced problems in teaching the genre of text topic in reading comprehension. The most difficult thing to do is to make the students understand what the text is about within their limited vocabulary mastery. The problem becomes more obvious when it comes to explanation text, which, according to the K13 curriculum, is taught to the second-year students of high schools. The K13 curriculum states that the explanation texts discussed are those explaining about natural events, such as the process of volcano, earthquake, and flood. This type of explanation text usually contains difficult vocabularies which influences students' understanding of the texts



they are engaged with. Another problem faced by the teachers is the different characteristics of the students in IPA class (majoring in natural sciences) and IPS class (majoring in social sciences). The teachers stated that the students of IPA class are good in maintaining their focus during the teaching learning process. However, the students thought that they need a new atmosphere during the teaching learning process so that they will not be bored in learning reading comprehension. On the other hand, the students of IPS are more active than those in IPA. They easily lost focus in learning the materials. Considering that the discussion of genres of text is paramount for the national exam as well as the university entrance examination, the teachers said that they need an alternative of learning media that is accessible for them as well as the students. This learning media must be able to attract the students' attention, or give an interesting impression for the students, so that it will be able to help them in understanding the explanation text.

The researchers were then proposed an alternative by combining the theory of visual literacy (Bamford, 2003) and translation for ELT, specifically interlingual subtitles as ELT media, (Lunin & Minaeva, 2015). In this method, explanation texts are distributed to the students and these texts are equipped with videos of related topics. As an example, a text entitled Flood is given to the students. After the students read the text, the teacher will play an animation video about Flood. As the video is in English, interlingual subtitle is inserted with the aim of helping the students understand the content of the video as well as the text.

The application of visual literacy is done by presenting animation videos to the students. This activity had ever been done by the teacher previously, but it had not gained success as the videos used are in English. The students found it difficult to understand the contents of the videos due to their lack ability in listening skill. As a consequence, they could not maintain their focus and understand what the videos are about. In order to provide a solution for this obstruction, the researchers provide the English video with subtitles. The subtitles are written in Indonesian as it aims to help the students in understanding the English contents written in the texts. The decision of providing the English video with Indonesian subtitles (interlingual subtitle) is also based on the consideration that high school students are still categorized as language learners. Thus, the learning media must fulfill their inadequacy in mastering all the English skills. By providing interlingual subtitles, it is expected that the abstract pattern they have experienced while reading the text will be clearer after they watch the video and read the Indonesian subtitle.

In regard to interlingual subtitles as one of the types of translation, research on translation and ELT has been conducted by various experts. Unfortunately, there are pros and cons among experts whether the use of translation in ELT is effective or, on the other hand, impractical. Popovic (2001) states that translation in ELT is ineffective as it creates dependency to the mother tongue. In contrast, Liao (2006) argues that translation helps language learners to enrich their grammar and vocabulary mastery. Other experts (Duff, 1994; Atkinson, 1993; Eadie, 1999) explains that it is not impossible to use translation as one of the ways to learn foreign language as long as the



teachers plan the teaching-learning design comprehensively according to the characteristics of the students as well as the goals of the learning activity.

Specifically, this research underlines interlingual subtitles as a solution in teaching explanation text for high school students. Similar research has been conducted by Vanderplank (1988) who uses intralingual subtitles for teaching foreign language. Pavan (2013) uses the process of composing subtitles to learn foreign languages. In his research, he asked his students to watch The Simpson movie and translated some parts of the dialogue in the form of a subtitle. Although it is an interesting activity that can encourage students to be active in class, this activity is difficult to be applied as there is a rigid process in composing subtitles that makes it probably inaccessible for the teachers as well as students. Lunin & Minaeva (2015), on the other hand, discuss Translated Subtitle Language Learning (TSL), or interlingual subtitle, as a method in teaching foreign language. They argue that TSL can enhance the students' confidence in learning foreign language. Furthermore, interlingual subtitles are accessible for the teachers. However, Lunin and Minaeva (2015) do not explore specific skills in teaching foreign languages using interlingual subtitles.

This research is conducted to provide solutions for the aforementioned problems faced by the teachers and students in teaching and learning explanation text in English subject. The need of the teachers and students for an effective learning media is emphasized as the researchers come with a solution of providing interlingual subtitles as a learning media. This research attempts to find out: 1) the implementation of interlingual subtitle in teaching explanation text, and 2) the impacts of interlingual subtitle on students' achievements.

### ***Learning Media***

Learning media is an instrument made to increase students' academic comprehension based on the curriculum (Somnuek, 2014). In this technology era, traditional teaching methods seem ineffective to be applied during the whole teaching process. Students should not be placed as passive recipients while their teachers are the main actors. Information and technology, including the internet and software, provide us with abundant materials to make the class atmosphere become more active and interesting. Buckingham (2007) states about digital media as an alternative for innovative learning media. This type of media enables students as well as teachers to conduct teaching learning activity not only in the classroom but also outside the class. Thus, students may study in a time that they consider appropriate for them. Besides, digital media also provides various dynamic sources which enables teachers and students to interact within various levels, i.e. using forums in Google Classroom or Google Sites. Indeed, it can also be a good way of stimulating students to learn within a group.

Furthermore, Somnuek (2014) underlines the importance of innovative learning media as alternative media which are different from the traditional ones. These media are composed of pictures or voices that help teachers provide concrete experience about the materials they teach in class (Somnuek, 2014). Bamford (2003) calls this type of media as visual literacy. Visual literacy presented by pictures or videos may help



students in understanding materials, constructing knowledge, and apprehending the benefits of the knowledge. Video as a type of visual literacy can be a good solution for students who need to build their abstract pattern while studying one particular material. It is the duty of the teachers to be selective in choosing the videos to be presented in class. Considering this issue, Bonk (2011) says that humorous, informative, current, interesting, and engaging videos are preferable.

### ***Translation in Language Teaching***

It cannot be ignored that the teaching of foreign language is usually preceded by “translating” the mother tongue vocabularies to the foreign language. Teachers in junior high schools or high schools, for example, sometimes ask the students to translate an English text with the aims of understanding the content of the text. This kind of activity is obviously cannot be adjusted as a “translation” activity which aims to transfer the meaning from the source text to the target text.

Experts are divided into two arguments in perceiving this issue. Popovic (2001) states that translation activity during foreign language teaching invites the language learners' dependency on the mother tongue and denies the communicative purpose of learning foreign language. On the other hand, Liao (2006) says that translation activity may help students in learning foreign languages in terms of memorizing vocabularies, idioms, and grammar; expressing ideas in foreign language, reducing students' unconfidence, and increasing students' motivation.

Meanwhile, some experts believe that translation activity can be an effective way in learning foreign languages if it is designed comprehensively by the teachers (Duff, 1994; Atkinson, 1993; Eadie, 1999). Furthermore, the design of foreign language learning using translation must consider some crucial points, such as the students' levels and ages, goals of the study, procedures, and contents (Popovic, 2001; Malmkjaer, 1998; Carreres, 2006)

### ***Subtitle in Language Teaching***

Along with dubbing and voiceover, subtitle is one of the most popular types of audiovisual translation. There are actually two types of subtitle: intralingual subtitle (the languages of the original soundtrack and the subtitle are the same) and interlingual subtitle (the languages of the original soundtrack and the subtitles are different). In foreign language teaching, subtitle is considered as one of effective learning media as the original soundtrack (L1) is kept while the transcription of the original soundtrack or the translation (L2) is presented simultaneously on the screen. Vanderplank (1988) says:

“...far from being a distraction and source of laziness, subtitles might have potential value in helping the language-acquisition process, by providing language learners with the key to massive quantities of authentic and comprehensible language input.”

The above statement explains that although subtitles make the language learners become dependent on the subtitle instead of training their foreign language skills,



subtitles tend to provide comprehensive and authentic facilities. Parks (1994) also emphasizes that subtitles may also train learners' reading, listening, vocabulary, word recognition skills, as well as reading motivations.

Lunin and Minaeva (2015) explain that there are positive and negative sides of using intralingual subtitle as a media for language teaching:

“Students hear English words and see them on screen, thus improving their reading comprehension, listening skills, phonetics, spelling and, implicitly, understanding of grammar by seeing grammar patterns they learned from textbooks being applied over and over again in an authentic setting. The problem with L2 subtitles (intralingual), however, is that they are of little use for elementary and pre-intermediate students because a great number of new words and grammar structures make it hard for them to understand the video.”

Intralingual subtitle provides language learners with access to the verbal narration of the original soundtrack. This benefits the learners to improve their L2 skills in reading, listening, phonetics, spelling, and grammar. However, intralingual subtitle is difficult to be applied for learners in the level of intermediate or pre-intermediate as their abilities in vocabulary as well as grammar are still inadequate.

Lunin and Minaeva (2015) also say that interlingual subtitles also provide positive and negative sides for language learners.

“Advantage of L1 subtitles (interlingual) is that in this case the student hears English speech and does not get bored (providing the video itself is interesting for the learner), as s/he fully understands the meaning of what is being said. The disadvantage is that unless the student's level of English proficiency is high enough, s/he is unable to correlate the oral and written forms of the words s/he reads.”

The benefits of using interlingual subtitles is that it can make the students focus on the material and reduce their boredom during the lesson. Students can understand the content of the video by watching the visualization and reading the subtitle, which is written in the language they recognize. However, it can also make the students find difficulties in correlating the visual, the original soundtrack, and the subtitle.

## Methods

This is a qualitative research with classroom action research (CAR) design. This research was conducted in one of private high schools in Surakarta. The subjects are 29 students of social science class and 29 students of natural science class. The students were given treatments using videos with interlingual subtitles during the teaching-learning process.

The researchers, using the theory of CAR as stated by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart (1988), applied four steps in conducting the research: (1) planning, (2) action, (3)

23



observation, and (4) reflection. There were two cycles applied. The first cycle is pre-observation while the second cycle is post-observation.

In the planning step, the researchers began the research by identifying the problem of English teaching learning activities. The researchers interviewed the teacher as well as the students. It was found out that the problem was in organizing a fun and effective nuance in teaching reading. The students tend to be very passive during the reading session. Indeed, reading is a crucial theme in the English curriculum. Furthermore, among the many genres of texts, explanation is considered the most difficult genre. It was considered difficult for its vocabularies and processes overview. There was also a pre-cycle test in this step. The students were asked to finish a test on explanation text. The results of the interview and pre-cycle test indicated that the students need alternative media in learning explanation text. They needed visualization so that the process stated in the explanation text can be understood easily.

Based on this result, the researchers proposed audiovisual materials for the action step by establishing videos (in English) equipped with interlingual subtitles (in Indonesian) as the media for teaching explanation text. The researchers downloaded two videos from Peekaboo Kidz channel on youtube. The two videos are Dr. Binocs: Flood and Dr. Binocs: Hurricane. These videos were used together with texts on related themes. The researchers also composed the subtitles of those two videos in Indonesian. The treatment of the first cycle is concerned on Flood theme while the second is concerned on Hurricane.

The observation step cannot be separated from the implementation step. The researchers observed any important events happened during the actions in the action step. The researchers took notes on some important cases during the treatments and recorded the teaching-learning activities. Interviews were also conducted randomly to the students to find out their feedback of the media used during the treatments. Interviews were also conducted to the teachers in order to gain more information on the implementation of interlingual subtitles in teaching explanation.

During the observation, the researchers systematically observed the effects of using videos with interlingual subtitles for teaching reading. In the first cycle, the researchers directly gave a video which is related to the text the students are working on. Based on the observation, the interview to the students, and the results of the pre-cycle test 1, the researchers decided to use introductory videos to raise the students' attention. This introductory video is still related to the theme of the text, but it contains no verbal elements. For example, when discussing a text with flood themes, the video of flood disaster was played. The researchers then asked the students about things related to flood in English. The teaching technique was also improved by utilizing cards to learn about the generic structures of explanation text. These stimulations were applied in cycle 2.

The scores of the pre-cycle test as well as cycle test 1 and cycle test 2 were calculated to gain information whether the interlingual subtitle can increase students' scores or not. There are two types of tests conducted during this research: pre-cycle test and cycle test. Pre-cycle test was conducted individually before the treatments were started. It is used to figure out the initial condition of the students. Cycle test was conducted twice, each



of them was conducted at the end of each cycle. Cycle test 1 was conducted in a group of 4-5 students due to the class condition which forced the researchers to better conduct the test in group. It was also aimed to find the best method in applying the interlingual subtitle as the media in teaching explanation text. Meanwhile, cycle test 2 was conducted individually. The indicators of the assessment are KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal or the minimum criteria of completeness). KKM is set by the institution and the minimum score of KKM for English subjects in this particular school is  $\geq 70$ .

In the reflection step, the researchers evaluated the influences of the action to the students' achievements. The results of the pre- and post-observation were explored thoroughly to achieve comprehensive analysis.

## Findings and Discussion

### The implementation of interlingual subtitle in teaching explanation text

Based on the interview session with the teachers, the teachers said that they need an alternative method or media for teaching explanation text. This happens because the explanation text contains complicated processes which seem abstract for the students. Furthermore, the vocabularies contained in explanation text also become a paramount problem as the students still lack vocabulary mastery. On the other hand, the students said that they need a more interesting atmosphere during the teaching learning process. They believe if the teachers use different methods of teaching, the innovative ones, it will help them in understanding the materials discussed in class. The students explained that their teachers use tutorials quite often which invites boredom in class.

The researchers composed the interlingual subtitle to be used with the videos about Flood and Hurricane during the treatments. Besides, other learning media were also prepared, including introductory videos and cards for learning generic structures and vocabularies which were applied in Cycle 2.

The background problems in social science class (IPS) as told by the teacher is the characteristic of the students who find it difficult to focus on the lesson. The teacher added that many students from this class like to play online video game which distract their concentration in studying. Therefore, the researchers expect that by giving audiovisual materials, presented on the videos and subtitles, in class will invite the students' concentration on the lesson. Meanwhile, the students of the natural science class (IPA) are relatively easy in focusing their attention during the lesson. The problems they feel important is how to experience fun class activities that will help them apprehend the lesson easily during the class.

It was quite difficult to make the students of the IPS class focus on the discussion during the treatment. However, once the video was played, they put their focus on the video. The teacher and the researchers gave explanation texts on related topics and asked the students to analyze the video by asking some questions before the video was played. The students were then discussed the answers in a group of 5. During the treatments, it was obvious that the videos and interlingual subtitles successfully attracted the students' attention to learn about the materials and relate the content of the videos with the topic.



However, it was noticed that the duration of the videos should not be too long (not more than 15-minute-long) so that it will maintain students' enthusiasm. When a 20-minute video was played, the students seemed bored and lost their focus on the activity. Besides, the students prefer to watch the videos which are equipped with interlingual subtitles by saying that the Indonesian subtitle helped them in understanding the content of the video. Another important note is that the teacher must prepare other media to be used together with the videos and subtitles. Students' boredom was detected when the teacher played the same videos twice although each time the teacher played the video, the students were given different tasks. Thus, other media was used including cards for understanding the generic structures and vocabularies.

Meanwhile, the students of the natural science class were relatively easier to organize. They put their complete attention since the beginning of the lesson and followed the instructions given by the researchers as well as the teacher. The students in this class said that before the video was played, they still have some unorganized patterns related to the process stated in the explanation text they read. After the video was played, the unorganized patterns became more concrete and they finally understood the content of the explanation text. Their understanding was reflected when the researchers asked some students to retell the process of flood and hurricane as told by the texts and the videos. The students were able to retell the process successfully although they delivered it using Indonesian language. The interesting thing during the treatment in IPA class was some of the students asked different activities after watching the videos with subtitles. They said that they needed more exercises to understand the content of the texts and the generic structure of explanation text in general. Thus, the researchers and the teacher, as conducted in IPS class, gave quizzes to be completed in a group of 4-5. The observation shows that the students of the IPA class finished the group tasks comprehensively. All the students participated actively in the group tasks. Although group quizzes fitted well in this class, it was detected that these quizzes did not work effectively in IPS class, as there were only several students who attempted to complete the group tasks. Therefore, it is probably important for the teachers to prepare more innovative and interactive activities for the students in IPS class so that they still can manage their enthusiasm during the lesson.

### The impacts of interlingual subtitle on students' achievements

Students' achievements on this research is measured by the scores they got during the tests. The results of the tests conducted in social science class is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: The Results of the Tests in IPS class (social science class)

Test types	Pre-cycle test	Post-cycle test 1	Post-cycle test 2
<b>Criteria</b>			
<b>Average score</b>	73.6	83.4	91.0
<b>Fulfilling</b>	62.1%	100%	89.7%
<b>KKM (<math>\geq 70</math>)</b>	(18 students)	(29 students)	(26 students)





Students' scores increase from the pre-cycle test to the post-cycle test 1. There are still 18 students who failed to fulfill the KKM in the pre-cycle test. Indeed, the average score of the pre-cycle test is still low with only 18 students passing the KKM. After the treatment during the first cycle, the average score increases significantly and the whole students pass the KKM. However, it has to be noticed that post-cycle test 1 is the reflection of group quizzes. The researchers actually designed post-cycle test 1 as an individual test. Unfortunately, the class condition at that time was not appropriate for individual tests as the students seemed bored with the activities given by the teacher and researchers. In order to maintain students' enthusiasm, the researchers decide to conduct the test in groups by setting limited time to complete a quiz. Three groups which finished the quiz earlier got rewards by the researchers. This activity ran well and was successfully accepted by the students. Meanwhile, post-cycle test 2 is an individual test. In individual tests, the average score is considered high with only 3 students who do not pass the KKM.

The table below shows the results of the tests conducted in natural science class:

Table 2: The Results of the Tests in IPA class (natural science class)

Test types Criteria	Pre-cycle test	Post-cycle test 1	Post-cycle test 2
Average score	82.4	92.4	92.1
Fulfilling KKM ( $\geq 70$ )	82.8% (24 students)	100% (29 students)	100% (29 students)

Different from the pre-cycle test results found in the social science class, the results of the pre-cycle test in the natural science class is considered high with only 5 students failing in fulfilling the KKM. Similar case happened in post-cycle test 1 on which the test was conducted in the form of a group quiz. All the students pass the KKM in post-cycle test 1. Meanwhile, individual tests in post-cycle test 2 also show perfect scores with 100% completeness or all students pass the post-cycle test 2.

If we compare the score of the social sciences and natural sciences students, there are quite similar findings. The scores of the pre-cycle test and post-test increase significantly which mean that the treatments using interlingual subtitle as the learning media affect the students' achievement positively. The difference seems on the average score of the post-cycle test 1 and post-cycle test 2 in the social science class. The score of the group quiz (post-cycle test 1) in this class is below the individual test (post-cycle test 2). It is found out through the observation that not all students in social science class participated actively during the group quiz. Some students only relied the task to their other friends so that they did not work together to complete the task.

On the other hand, all students in the natural science class participated actively during the group quiz. Therefore, they could reach a high average score in post-cycle test 1.



This high average score increases in the post-cycle test 2 which reflects their independent skill in completing individual tasks.

The establishment of video with interlingual subtitles as learning media in this research is based on the opinion as stated by Bamford (2003) who states that the moving scene is a visual literacy product that can help students in compiling information and knowledge. The enthusiasm of the students found both in social and natural sciences classes proves that video can be an effective media in teaching. Furthermore, explanation text, as discussed in this research, is considered difficult by the students as it contains difficult vocabularies and complicated process. After the treatments were given, students said that they can construct the abstract patterns they experienced while reading the English explanation texts into the more organized patterns. These findings are in accordance with Bamford (2003) who states that "... with the help of visual literacy, including moving scenes or video on it, it is expected that students would get a more concrete description about the issues they learned."

Video with interlingual subtitles also helps students in understanding the content of the video. In subtitling, there are two types of subtitle: intralingual subtitle and interlingual subtitle. Vanderplank (1988) focuses the use of intralingual subtitle in teaching foreign language. However, during the development of subtitling and language teaching, interlingual subtitle is also used to enrich language learners' competence in apprehending the basic skills of foreign language (Vanderplank, 1988; Parks, 1994; King, 2002, Cintas & Anderman., 2009). Interlingual subtitling also becomes an ideal field for researchers to conduct research on translation and foreign language teaching (Liu, 2014).

In this research, interlingual subtitle is used after considering the background of the problems faced by the teachers and students. High school students are categorized as intermediate learners, thus, according to Lunin and Minaeva (2015) interlingual subtitle is more appropriate to use. The students either in social science or natural science classes agree that the interlingual subtitle helps them in understanding the materials of explanation text.

Based on the observation, there were some moments when the students' boredom occurred due to the monotonous method used by the researchers or the teachers in delivering the materials. Though interlingual subtitles and video are used during the treatments, teachers must also combine these media with other methods or media. There was a tendency that students only focused on the materials after watching a maximum of 15-minute video. This phenomenon proves the statement delivered by Damodharan and Rengarajan (2012) who say that teacher-centered learning will only be effective within 15-20 minutes and students' attention will fade away afterward.

In this research, the researchers prepared some other media and various activities to anticipate the boredom. The boredom moments can be overcome when the teachers explore their creativity in creating an active teaching-learning process. It is then highlighted by the statements of Prince (2004) who say that teachers must be facilitators, not main actors in teaching-learning activities. Furthermore, this result may lead to strengthen the theory proposed by Lunin and Minaeva (2015) stating that interlingual



subtitles can be used only as a supplementary media in teaching foreign language. Therefore, teachers' creativity in combining interlingual subtitles with other media as well as method is still needed.

Videos that will be used together with the subtitle can be found easily on YouTube. However, it must be noted that, based on the interviews with the students, students prefer entertaining videos which are not too long in duration and probably contain humor. This finding is in line with Bonk (2011) who says that humorous, informative, up to date, and amusing videos are preferable for students.

## Conclusion

Interlingual subtitle which is put on a video can be used as one of the alternatives of learning media in teaching explanation text. The visualization the students got after watching the video while reading the interlingual subtitles help them in understanding explanation text. However, it must be noticed that interlingual subtitles can only be used as supplementary media in teaching explanation text. In order to eliminate boredom during the teaching learning process as well as create an active atmosphere in class, the teachers must combine interlingual subtitle and video with other media or methods. Besides, the teachers must also be selective in deciding the videos that will be used in class. The criteria of a not too long video and an interesting content must be considered so that the use of the video and interlingual subtitle can be more effective.

Interlingual subtitle which is put in videos also contributes positively in increasing students' achievement represented in their scores during the tests. There is a tendency of increasing scores from the pre-cycle test to the post-test, either conducted individually or in groups. These results reflect the ability of interlingual subtitles to give positive contribution to the students' achievement.

This research still can be developed into a more comprehensive one. There is difficulty in finding appropriate videos which are suitable with the genres of texts discussed in the curriculum. Therefore, it would be a large field of discussion if this research is developed into a research and development one. Researchers may create their own videos instead of downloading videos from YouTube. Thus, the contents of the videos can be more suitable with the curriculum. The product will probably be more advantageous if it is designed as a friendly use software, instead of a final video with subtitle, so that the teachers may create their own videos as needed.

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