

## Code of Good Subtitling Practice

- 1** Subtitlers must always work with a (video, DVD, etc.) copy of the production and, if possible, a copy of the dialogue list.
- 2** It is the subtitler.s job to spot the production and translate and write the subtitles in the (foreign) language reputed.
- 3** Translation quality must be high with due consideration of all idiomatic and cultural nuances.
- 4** Straightforward semantic units must be used.
- 5** Where compression of dialogue is necessary, the result must be coherent.
- 6** Subtitle text must be distributed from line to line and page to page in sense blocks and/or grammatical units.
- 7** As far as possible, each subtitle must be semantically self-contained.
- 8** The language register must be appropriate and correspond with the spoken word.
- 9** The language should be (grammatically) .correct. since subtitles serve as a model for literacy.
- 10** All important written information in the images (signs, notices, etc.) should he translated and incorporated wherever possible.
- 11** Given the fact that any television viewers are hearing-impaired, .superfluous" information, such as names, interjections from the off, etc., should also be subtitled.
- 12** Songs might be subtitled where relevant.
- 13** Obvious repetition of names and common comprehensible phrases need not always be subtitled.
- 14** The in- and out-time of subtitles must follow the speech rhythm of the film dialogue, taking cuts sound bridges into consideration.
- 15** Language distribution within and over subtitles must consider cuts and sound bridges; the subtitles must underline surprise or suspense and in no way undermine it.
- 16** The duration of all subtitles within a production must adhere to a regular viewer reading rhythm.
- 17** Spotting must reflect the rhythm of the film.

**18** No subtitle should appear for less than one second or, with the exception of songs, stay on the screen for longer than seven seconds.

**19** The number of lines in any subtitle must be limited to two.

**20** Wherever two lines of unequal length are used, the upper line should preferably be shorter to keep as much of the image free as possible and in left-justified subtitles in order to reduce unnecessary eye movement.

**21** There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and subtitle content; source language and target language should be synchronised as far as possible.

**22** There must be a close correlation between film dialogue and the presence of subtitles.

**23** Each production should be edited by a reviser / editor.

**24** The (main) subtitler should be acknowledged at the end of the film (or if the credits are at the beginning, then close to the credit for the script writer).

**25** The year of subtitle production and the copyright for the version should be displayed at the end of the film.

## **TECHNICAL ASPECTS**

**1** Subtitles should be highly legible with clear lettering and a font which is easy to read. The characters should have sharp contours and be stable on the screen.

**2** The position of subtitles should be consistent, e.g.

- a) centred for film applications;
- b) left-justified or centred for TV and video applications<sup>2</sup>;
- c) two-person dialogue in one subtitle should be indicated by a dash at the beginning of each line.

**3** In video applications, character clarity can be enhanced by a drop shadow or semi-transparent or black box behind the subtitles.

**4** In laser subtitling, sharp contours and removal of residual emulsion can be achieved by precise alignment of laser beam focus and accurate adjustment of power output.

**5** In laser subtitling, the base line must be set accurately for the projection format of the film.

**6** The number of characters per line must be compatible with the subtitling system and visible on any screen.

**7** Due to the different viewer reading times and the different length of lines for TV/video and film subtitles, TV/video subtitles should be adapted for film application and vice versa.