

## Project Description

**University: Cairo University**

**Project (Challenge/Tool/Action): Challenge 5: To incorporate intercultural communication in the teaching of a foreign language**

### 1. Introduction:

E-Lengua aims at updating curriculum design in teaching of foreign languages using ICT. The leading universities in the consortium are joining efforts to develop resources and to create a catalogue of best practices for the inclusion of ICT in the teaching of foreign languages.

Seven challenges related to the use of ICT in Foreign Language Teaching are identified and each partner university would address one of these challenges by sharing with the consortium and the scientific community its approach and its innovative resources.

Despite the fact, that this type of projects addresses mainly European universities, Cairo University is the only non-European institution involved given its leading role in the Arab World and the Middle East in teaching languages. Since its establishment in 1908, Cairo University has always adopted an international approach open to the World supporting its scholars to travel and gain an international experience and welcoming international initiatives.

In E-Lengua, Cairo University is responsible for Challenge 5 focusing on incorporating intercultural communication in the teaching of a foreign language which is in this case is the Arabic Language. This challenge is indispensable for an approach fostering multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Although Arabic language is a non European language, it is a widely spoken language ranked five in the most widely spoken languages all over the World. In Europe only, Arabic speakers are estimated of a total of approximately 5 millions. Moreover, it is the official language of the Southern Mediterranean countries, i.e. considered as European Neighborhood Countries.

### 2. State of the art:

Foreign Language Teaching and its methodologies have been always in the core of Applied Linguistics. Along the years different approaches have been adopted in Foreign Language Teaching.

Early approaches adopted classical methods based on memorization of grammatical rules and translation of the vocabulary. These approaches mainly targeted the writing competence whether reading or writing. In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Berlitz Direct method succeeded to attract the scholars in the field with its rebel approach focusing only on spoken competences either listening or speaking leaving aside grammatical rules and written language skills (Marcos Marín & Lobato Sánchez, 1988).

Later, the scientific progress in media and communication technologies was reflected in the language class through the audio and video media tools. In the nineties, the communicative methodology in foreign language teaching started to gain more and more attention and succeeded in replacing previous methodologies. The communicative approach develops a methodology in which different language skills are taught based on the different communicative situations. The student skills are acquired in terms of the different situations in which he/she could face starting from the very basic situations such as presenting him/herself to more complex situations in advanced levels such as debates and critical views.

Intercultural communication is another dimension of communication which started to gain momentum in different fields since the sixties, mainly in sociolinguistics, pragmatic studies, immigration studies, international management, etc. In Foreign Language Teaching, a new notion of communicative competence is needed (Alptekin, 2002). This notion takes into account the cultural diversity in the foreign language class where at least two cultures meet: The native culture and the foreign culture of the language being taught.

The term Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has been coined to refer to “the knowledge, motivation and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures” (Wiseman & Koester, 1993). Foreign language is an important factor in the intercultural communication. This is the reason that modern approaches in Language Teaching consider culture as an integrated and indispensable part of the teaching/learning process and, thus, of any course design in this respect.

As Cairo University team is mainly concerned with intercultural communication in teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language, the task becomes more challenging given the cultural diversity and the stereotypes related to the Arab culture. Developing teaching material and resources for students of Arabic language focusing on the cultural component is the main objective of the team, especially many Arabic language manuals tend to offer a classical approach in language teaching. Moreover, in a later stage, the resources used

were found to be useful for Egyptian Spanish Language Learners as we will explain later.

An effective approach in introducing cultural concepts in the classroom is using movies and TV series, especially with historic content. Through the series or the movie, the student can contrast his native culture with the foreign culture. The student in this case is introduced to the foreign culture through the plot, the music, the scenery, the characters, etc. Subtitling has also been proved to be an effective technique when applied in Language Teaching/Learning process.

Based on the nature of the challenge in which intercultural communication and ICT should be addressed, Cairo University team decided to meet this challenge by developing a new resource for Arabic language learners in which cultural content is introduced through subtitling of an Egyptian TV series depicting the modern history of the Egyptian society and the main historic moments from the fifties till the Arab Spring through the life of an Egyptian middle class girl born in the early fifties and the different stages of her life. The TV series titled “Dhat” is an adaptation of a novel by the modern Egyptian writer Son’ Allah Ibrahim and was produced and presented in 30 episodes in the summer of 2015.



#### **Task developed by CU:**

The resource developed consisted in subtitling the first ten episodes of the series with a total of approximately 250 minutes.

#### **Subtitling in language teaching**

Subtitling and cultural references has been studied from the audiovisual translation perspective and from the language teaching perspective (Werner-Diaz Navarrete, 2010). Previous European projects such as Lingua 2: Learning via subtitling, funded through Socrates programme between 2006 and 2008 in which seven institutions were involved from six European countries.

Opting for subtitling in foreign language teaching is a modern approach, which proved to be effective, due to a number of advantages from both the teacher's and the learner's perspectives. Among the advantages (Talaván-Zanón, 2013):

- It is an active and motivating means for learners.
- It brings scenes and situations of real life to the class instead of the imaginary situations in books and listening exercises.
- It includes different language registers: formal, informal, vulgar, etc.
- It provides content rich with cultural references.

Including subtitling in FLT contributes to the development of different competences:

- Linguistic competence: In this respect, it is useful to distinguish between the linguistic competence gained through the comprehension of the audio-visual material in the original language and the linguistic competence gained through the process of subtitling/translation into the target language.
- Cultural Competence: This competence is gained through the exposure to the rich cultural content in movies or series with a variety of cultural references: historic, artistic, social, folkloric, gastronomic, musical, etc.
- Technical and professional competence: It is gained through using subtitling software tools.

### **Types of subtitling**

To set up the theoretical framework and to identify what linguistic competences could be targeted, it is important to distinguish between the different types of subtitling. According to Talaván-Zanón (2013) and Díaz-Cintas & Andreman (2009), there are five main types:

1. Standard Inter-linguistic Subtitles: It is the standard type in which the audio-visual content is in the FL (L2) and the subtitles are in the native language or OL (L1).
2. Inverse Inter-linguistic Subtitles: The audio-visual content is in the native language (L1), while the subtitles are in the FL (L2).
3. Intra-linguistic subtitles in L1 or "captioning": Both the audio-visual content and subtitles are in L1. This is used by learners or immigrants residing in a country which they are learning its language. In addition, users with limited accessibility, such as hearing impairment could use it.
4. Intra-linguistic subtitles in L2: Both the audio-visual content and the subtitles are in the foreign language (FL) or L2.
5. Bilingual subtitles: Subtitles are in both the original and the foreign language (FL) and (OL).

For the tasks in which CU is involved, we opted for the first two types: standard inter-linguistic subtitles and inverse inter-linguistic subtitles, as we are targeting two groups of learners:

- Spanish learners of Arabic language. This is the main target group. The

competences for this group are mainly focused on the listening and the cultural competences.

- Egyptian learners of Spanish language. This is the secondary target group. The competences for this second group are mainly focused on the translation and the writing competences. In some cases, cultural competence could also be addressed, since this group could try to find equivalences for some cultural references.

### **Subtitling and Cultural Communication**

On the other hand, subtitling and its role in cross-border communication has been studied from different perspectives; from the perspective of audio-visual translation (Díaz-Cintas, 2001) (Díaz-Cintas, 2003), localization and from the cultural and language teaching perspective (Werner-Diaz Navarrete, 2010). Different European initiatives have given special attention to promote subtitling as an effective means to increase the circulation of European work and to facilitate a flawless cross-border communication among European citizens. Some of the initiatives target the use of subtitling in Foreign Language Teaching and others are focusing on the localization and monetization of the European audio-visual market. The following are some of these initiatives:

- LeViS Project “LEarning Via Subtitling”<sup>1</sup>: The project was funded by the European Socrates programme between 2006 and 2008.
- ClipFlair Project <sup>2</sup>“Foreign Language Learning through Interactive Captioning and Revoicing of Clips. The project is funded by the support of the European Commission through the Lifelong Learning Programme. It builds on the success of the LeViS Project and it aims at developing, and sharing learning activities related to dubbing, revoicing and subtitling for 15 languages on an online web platform. A total of 358 learning activities were developed targeting the main skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking. Ten universities are forming the consortium including three Spanish universities: University of Pompeu Fabra, University of Deusto, University Aut3noma de Barcelona. The 15 targeted languages are: Arabic, Basque, Catalan, Chinese, English, Estonian, Greek, Irish, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian (Baños & Sokoli, 2015) (Sokoli, 2015) (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2014).
- In 2015, the European Commission destined one million euros to fund preparatory actions to crowdsource subtitling to increase the circulation of European works within the Digital Single Market strategy<sup>3</sup>. Few projects were funded under this call. Among these projects: Work\_Sub\_Title aiming “to find concrete, operational and industrial solutions to reduce the costs of producing subtitles (ST), and allow EU films to be distributed on

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<sup>1</sup> <http://levis.cti.gr/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://clipflair.net/overview/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/call-proposals-fostering-european-integration-through-culture-providing-new-subtitled-versions>

platforms across multiple countries (especially those listed as low capacity production countries)<sup>4</sup>. Other funded initiatives are: SubtitleX and SubUrbia.eu<sup>5</sup>.

The European Commission launched new call for proposals aiming at subtitling European cultural TV content across Europe within Creative Europe Programme.

The present work is based on the hypothesis that subtitling a series with a high cultural content could contribute to the community by introducing an innovative resources that could be adapted to target different objectives at different levels.

### **Cultural References:**

The term of cultural reference is widely used in the field of Translation and in Curriculum Design for Foreign Language Teaching, such as the case of the *Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* which implements the guidelines established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Cultural references are considered as essential parts necessary for developing the communication skills by the foreign language learners. On the other hand, cultural references are a challenge for translators.

According to Nedergaard-Larsen (1993), cultural references are defined as “explicit or implicit references to the social, cultural or political context in which a certain text is developed”. These cultural references could be classified into two major categories: intralinguistic and extralinguistic references. Intralinguistic references could be acts of speech, idiomatic expressions or grammatical categories. Extralinguistics references include “real world” references such as toponyms, institutions, music, food, etc.

Nedergaard-Larsen (1993) suggests a classification of extralinguistic references into four main subcategories: geographical, historical, social and cultural covering almost all aspects as in the following table:

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<sup>4</sup> [http://ipeda.eu/working\\_sub\\_titles/](http://ipeda.eu/working_sub_titles/)

<sup>5</sup> [http://ipeda.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PreparatoryActionOnSubtitling\\_29052017\\_web\\_ok-1.pdf](http://ipeda.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PreparatoryActionOnSubtitling_29052017_web_ok-1.pdf)

Referentes culturales extralingüísticos		
Condiciones geográficas etc.	geografía meteorología biología	montañas, ríos tiempo, clima flora, fauna
	geografía cultural	regiones, ciudades, calles, avenidas, etc.
Condiciones históricas	edificios	monumentos, castillos, etc.
	eventos	guerras, revoluciones, días memorables
	gente	personajes históricos
Condiciones de sociedad	condiciones industriales (condiciones económicas)	industrias, comercios, abastecimiento de energía etc.
	organización de la sociedad	servicio militar, sistema judicial, policía, cárceles, autoridades locales y regionales
	condiciones políticas	administración del Estado, ministerios, sistema electoral, partidos políticos, políticos, organizaciones políticas
	condiciones sociales	grupos, subculturas, condiciones de vida, problemas
	vivencias sociales uso y costumbres	tipo de vivienda, transporte, alimentos, comidas, ropa, utensilios, relaciones familiares
Condiciones culturales	Religión	iglesias, rituales, moral, sacerdotes, obispos, días festivos, santos
	sistema escolar	colegios, academias formación profesional, exámenes
	medios de comunicación	televisión, radio, periódicos, revistas
	vida cultural tiempo libre	museos, obras de arte, literatura, escritores, teatros, cines, actores, músicos, ídolos, restaurantes, hoteles, discotecas, cafeterías, deporte, deportistas

(Nederwaard-Larsen 1992: 31)<sup>60</sup>

For the proposed study, subtitles of the first type are the main concern.

### 3. Target groups:

#### Target Group 1: Arabic language learners

Opting for the subtitling of this TV series gives the opportunity to introduce to the learner a wide range of cultural references and at the same time could be used to enhance his language skills, especially at the intermediate and advanced levels given the nature of the colloquial language used.

#### Target Group 2: Egyptian Learner of Spanish Language:

On the other hand, the subtitling activities could also be introduced as part of the Translation classes for Egyptian students of Spanish Language as a Foreign Language. The Audiovisual Translation is an important aspect of Translation courses and introducing subtitling adds value to the content of any Translation course and help

students in developing new skills and competences.

#### **Options for students with special needs:**

It was difficult to adopt the captioning targeting deaf audience, given its high cost in terms of time and the infrastructure needed. Instead, for special needs audience, different colours were applied in the subtitling of the dialogue among different characters to help deaf students follow the series.

We consider that Arabic language is still under-resourced in terms of modern language learning models. More efforts should be spent to offer learners of Arabic language more interactive engaging resources rather than the traditional ones. Thus, the resource presented in this paper is a small step towards introducing the Arabic language and culture to the Spanish student in a modern motivating way. To our knowledge, no previous studies have directly addressed the case of subtitling for Spanish learners of Arabic.

It worth mentioning that in the case of introducing Arabic culture to European learners, the intercultural aspect gains more relevance, as there are many stereotypes associated with the Arabic culture. In many cases, these stereotypes are rather negative and based on misconceptions. Using audio-visual content might help bridging this cultural gap and could help introduce the European learners to the common cultural aspects as well as to the different aspects, creating in this way a dynamic dialogue within the learning experience.

On the other hand, training Egyptian learners of Spanish on the subtitling process is an added value to the learner, as it might enhance his/her employability opportunities in the media industry market. On a wider scope, capitalizing on subtitling in other languages rather than English would promote the Arabic audio-visual content and open new markets; specially that most of the Arabic subtitled audio-visual content is in English.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that opting for subtitling an Egyptian series has its limitations and its advantages. The limitations lie in that it introduces the Spanish student to the Egyptian dialect and the Egyptian culture, which represent just one modality of Spoken Arabic and culture, while the Arab World is rich with varieties and local cultures. However, the advantage is that Egyptian dialect and culture is widely spread and well-known variety in the Arab World, given the historic, social and geopolitical situation of Egypt in the region.

#### **4. Methodology:**

**The corpus:** The first 10 episodes of “Dhat” TV series. Each episode is of approximately 25 minutes duration. The study first aimed at subtitling the complete set of the 30 episode of the series in two stages. However, the subtitling process was so laborious and time consuming taking into consideration that one episode of 25 minutes took approximately 20 hours of work.

The selection of the series was based on its high historic and cultural content, as it could give the learner an overview of the Egyptian contemporary history.

Selecting a subset of the series was due to time constraints. The team preferred to carry out a pilot sample in order to be able to master the technique and to evaluate the impact of using this approach through workshops in real classrooms.

#### **Permissions on the audiovisual content:**

The team contacted the producer in the early stage of the project for two main reasons: 1) to discuss the possibility of obtaining the Arabic script as it would facilitate significantly the subtitling process; 2) to have the permission to subtitle the episodes. The first objective was not possible and for the second, there were no any obstacles to work with the episodes as it was for educational reasons with non-profit purposes.

The version used for subtitling is the available free online version on youtube.



The methodology adopted for subtitling consists of three phases:

- Translation
- Validation
- Subtitling using software tools

#### **Translation**

For the first phase of translation, the ten episodes were distributed among the five members of the team. Each was responsible of two episodes, so it was an individual task. The translation process resulted to be very time consuming, each episode of 30 minutes duration takes approximately from six to eight working hours. This means that each minute of audio-visual content needs from 12 to 16 minutes of work. This time is mostly spent in listening to what is said in the original language, segmenting and handling the software to segment the scenes and finally to formulate a translation. Given that the series is in Egyptian dialect and it is rich in idiomatic expressions, proverbs, irony, finding the equivalent translation was not an easy task, especially if the translation is into Spanish and it is done by an Egyptian team whose native language is not Spanish except for one member.

Moreover, the series included many background songs and fragments of historic speeches. All this content was translated.

### **Validation**

The validation process is usually carried out in groups of at least two members of the team and preferably different from the one who did the translation. This is to ensure a better quality and to apply an objective criterion in translation. The process of validation is carried out in group sessions. Despite the challenges encountered during the validation phase, it always triggered interesting academic debates. During the long hands-on sessions, the team worked with different resources (lexical resources, online search of proverbs, idioms, etc.). In some cases, it was necessary to check the etymology of some Egyptian expressions, in order to transfer the meaning correctly. Each episode took approximately another six to eight hours in the validation process.

Given the dense cultural content, the team decided to develop an additional resource for the learner consisting of supplementary list of some cultural references, such as typical food or folkloric songs, celebrations together with a brief explanation to assist the learner in developing better cultural skills and, thus, help in a better contextualization of the different uses of the language.

### **Subtitling**

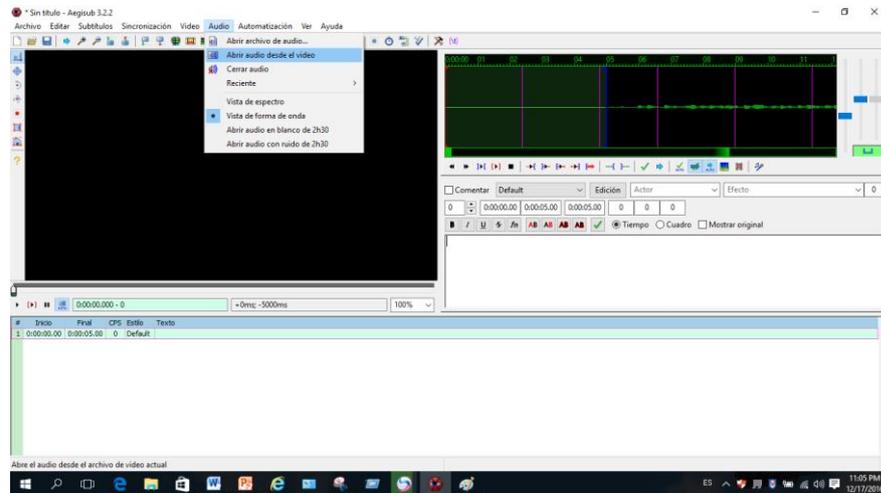
For the subtitling, the team decided to use Aegisub6 software. It is an open source, cross-platform software featuring useful tools to make the subtitling process flexible. The subtitling process was also challenging, as it needs time to slice the video and time the subtitle to the scenes. In addition, in subtitling certain limitations have to be taken into consideration in terms of space, time, punctuation system and orthography. In the professional industry, there are standards and well-known conventions normalizing the subtitling processes. Despite these standards, we adopted a flexible approach since the objective of the subtitling in our case is merely education. However, the following basic limitations were taken into consideration (Díaz-Cintas, 2003) (Talaván-Zanón, 2013):

- Number of lines in each subtitle should not exceed two lines.
- The position of subtitles is normally centered in the lower part of the screen.
- Number of spaces and characters should not exceed 48. However, the average is 35 in each line.
- Some colors were applied to the font to distinguish tone or sounds from spoken language. This is especially intended to the learners with limited accessibility.
- The maximum time for having the subtitle on the screen is six seconds.
- Synchronization between the subtitle and the dialogue. In some cases, a lack of synchronization is accepted if the dialogue is intense and long.
- - **Software** used are free open access software such as Aegysub
  - **QQPlayer:** Is a video editor allowing cutting the video shots and pasting shots to prepare the exercises.

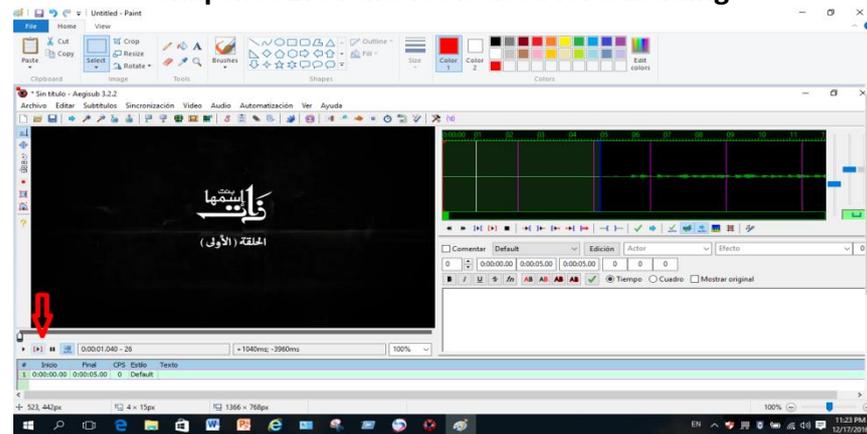
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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.aegisub.org/>

- **After Effect cc:** a software to prepare some video trailers used by the team for preparing the didactic materials.



Snapshot 1. of the Tools used for Subtitling



Snapshot 2. of the Tools used for Subtitling



Snapshot 3. of the Tools used for Subtitling

## 5. Development of the project:

E-Lengua at Cairo University has passed through different phases some of which have been progressing in a parallel way to ensure the continuity of the activities. Work at E-Lengua in CU could be divided into different work modules according to the nature of the activities.

**Management:** In this module and since the submission of the proposal, activities to follow up on the signature of mandates and providing institutional information, etc. have been going on at this stage. Upon the notification of acceptance, the Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible of the following main tasks:

First to obtain the necessary approvals from the university to start the project and to receive the allocated budget. This mainly includes notification of acceptance to the Department Council, Faculty Council, University Postgraduate Council and Ministry of Higher Education. These steps have been already achieved and the last approval was obtained last October.

Second, the creation and management of the Research Team. The team is formed up of five members, all young motivated females (2 seniors)+ 2 juniors and a native Spanish Language Lecturer at Cairo University.

The team is as follows:

- **Prof. Rasha Ismail (PI)**
- **Dr. Doaa Samy**
- **Dr. Maha Abdel Razek**
- **Dr. Mervat Ibrahim**
- **María Martín Noegurol-Lectora en la Universidad de El Cairo**

Third, the financial management of the budget allocated to Cairo University and taking the necessary procedures to cover the costs of the different activities according to the budget lines indicated in the grant agreement.



### Working session at Cairo University Nov 2016

On the other hand, the PI and other members have been active members in the Kick off meeting, the management meetings and the events held either face to face or virtually. CU team was keen to following up with the Coordinating team at Salamanca and the rest of the partners is essential to keep on track with the deliverables and the time plan.

**Research:** In this module, research activities are distributed among the team members. Regular meetings are held once or twice a week to discuss progress and work achieved. Synergy and harmony among the team members are essential. Motivation is a key driver as the idea and the discussion on subtitling becomes really interesting. Work is also distributed to survey state of the art in the field of subtitling and its challenges either from a theoretical perspective or from a technical perspective. In addition, group discussions are held to analyze the challenges of translation and subtitling or to develop the catalogue of cultural references.

#### **Development of Classroom Activities:**

In addition to the educational resource consisting of the 10 subtitled episodes, other didactic material has been developed for classroom activities. This material includes exercises for target group 1 and target group 2. Some on these exercises focused on the language competences such as gaining more vocabulary or certain grammatical features. Other exercises focused on cultural and pragmatic aspects focusing on cultural references. Also, exercises targeting translation aspects were developed.

### **6. Chronogram:**

CU Team divided the work on the TV series into three main phases:

- 1- Preparation phase: Feb 2016-Jun 2016: The main idea of the subproject was discussed among the team members.
  - Preparing the corpus of the series
  - Acquiring the necessary Intellectual Property Rights to use the series for research and educational purposes.
- 2- Jul 2016-Aug 2016: This phase included watching in detail the series and assessing the feasibility of the choice. Also episodes of the Spanish episode *Cuentame como paso* was watched and considered at the beginning, but after discussions, the team decided to opt for “Dhat”.
- 3- Sep 2016- Dec 2016: Piloting phase: In this phase only 5 episodes are to be subtitled. The aim of this phase is to get hands-on experience on the challenges of subtitling “Dhat” and the cultural references in the series. Also this phase was essential to decide upon the software and the techniques used.
- 4- Consolidating phase (Jan 2017-Jun 2017): In this phase, based on the experience of piloting, the team will complete the complete set of **10 episodes of the series** and will complete **an annex** of cultural references

with explanation as complementary material for language learners to help them better understand the cultural dimension.

- 5- Concluding phase (Jun 2017- Jun 2018): In this phase, didactic exercises will be included to the catalogue of best practices. Dissemination activities are held. Participation in conferences such as the Conference held in Seville in October 2017 on Translation and Interculturality. Contributing with an article to the volume published by Caracteres Journal.

### **7. Dissemination:**

CU team held a number of workshops and events at Cairo University and Salamanca University. Workshops at Salamanca University targeted group 1, while workshops held at Cairo University targeted Group 2. Questionnaires were distributed to assess the feedback of the attendees of the workshops.

An event was held in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Unit at Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. The event aimed at introducing to other departments at the Faculty the project, the experience and the lessons learned.

A talk was given at MSA University, Egypt.

A talk is planned to be given at Instituto Cervantes, Cairo

A talk planned to be given at the Centre of Foreign Language and Translation at Cairo University.

A list of all events is attached.

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