

Forced Narrative Subtitles Explained



Forced Narrative Subtitles Explained

Forced narrative (FN) subtitles are bits of text overlaid onto the screen, in a video. These are used to help inform or clarify for the audience a particular segment of the movie or show's narrative. These can be certain dialogues, location/time identifiers, textual graphics, etc. – which aren't explained via the audio.

How Are They Useful?

Forced Narrative subtitles help transcend language barriers and deliver a similar message for audiences internationally. In order to create a seamless viewing experience across devices, FN subtitles are localized and delivered separately as time-synchronized text files. The underlying imagery is expected to be subtitle-free. This is done to ensure that on platforms where users have a choice of turning captions/subtitles 'on or off', the FN subtitles don't visually overlap with the [closed captioning](#).

Examples of FN Subtitle Usage

1. Foreign Dialogue Segments

Occasional instances of characters speaking in a language different from the original language of the show or movie. Audiences may not necessarily speak the second language, but are still expected to follow the conversation. Producers may use FN subtitles to get the message across.



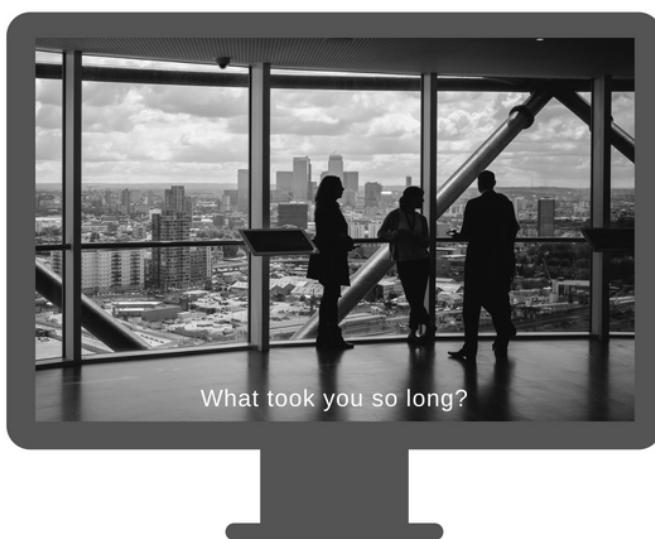
2. 'Label' Translations

On-screen labels, including location names, date/time, character IDs are often hard-coded into the imagery. When showcased in foreign languages, viewers need FN subtitles – positioned appropriately on the screen – to understand the text.



3. Text as a Visual Element

Viewers are often expected to read and understand textual elements on the screen to properly follow the narrative. Examples include an OTS shot of a person texting on their cell phone or reading a letter. Or an on-screen signboard/placard viewers are meant to read. When the show/movie is being broadcasted to foreign audiences, FN subtitles are used to keep the viewers clued in.



4. Transcribed Audio

[FN subtitles](#) are useful when the normal dialogue is inaudible or distorted, as in the case of a fight scene, background noise or just poor audio quality. The dialogue is transcribed and displayed on-screen for audience clarity in these cases.

5. Unusual Communication

Instances of characters communicating via sign-language or scenes that feature unconventional dialogue (think Elvish in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy or Klingon in *Star Trek*) call for FN subtitles.



All in all, forced narrative subtitles are a useful device to help keep viewers immersed and fully abreast with a show's narrative, avoiding the usage of say, disruptive audio overlays. And given the amount of content that is internationalized and broadcasted for foreign audiences, there's going to be a continuing uptick in the need for FN subs as well.

