Regarding Subtitles: Canadian Newspaper Coverage (May 2014-2018)

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Abstract

"I want to watch a film, not read it" is a familiar catchphrase used by those who loathe watching subtitled movies. A number of comments made recently in the media describe a noticeable shift towards a more positive attitude to subtitled productions and greater acceptance, or awareness, of subtitles among viewers worldwide. What about Canadians? Has their attitude towards subtitled films also changed? Was this reported in the Canadian news? How has the sentiment towards subtitles been reported and expressed recently in Canadian media? What are the views and relevant topics of discussion regarding subtitles in the Canadian context?

An online search was conducted through various databases between May 01, 2018 and May 04, 2018 and the results found in contemporary Canadian news articles were measured against findings from a mix of primary and secondary sources, which include the scholarly literature dealing with subtitle appreciation and consumption throughout cinematographic history. The contemporary materials consist of the most recent commentaries and critical evaluations regarding subtitled productions, both online and in traditional media, in Canada and abroad.

Has the sentiment towards subtitles changed with time, succeeding generations and the advent of supranational streaming media companies like Netflix, and what does this mean in the Canadian context? Understanding the sentiment, belief or knowledge of an individual or group about a given subject and identifying what causes that sentiment to change is far more complex. This study undertakes to achieve that understanding and identify the causes through a content analysis of Canadian newspapers that will reveal these attitudinal shifts within the Canadian context.

Keywords: subtitles, press coverage, Canada – content analysis (communications), qualitative thematic analysis, Netflix

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Introduction

I Want to Read a Film: A Positive Attitudinal Shift towards Subtitles?

Simply put, subtitles for film and television provide a translation that gives access to the dialogue to audiences who can't understand or hear the language of the original. In the early 2000s, during my brief career as a video store clerk in a suburb of Canada's capital, I often heard the same response when I recommended a subtitled film to a customer: "I want to watch a film, not read it." I asked myself what were the reasons for this resistance and why subtitles turned people off. While some completely refused to watch subtitled productions, others did not mind watching films that were dubbed. While comedians would be mocking the badly out-of-sync dubbing of 1970s Kung Fu films, the dubbed version in "joual" of the hockey comedy *Slap Shot*, starring Paul Newman, became a cult classic for generations of French-Canadians because of its translation into the vernacular. Viewers of foreign-language productions seemed to have a marked preference for either subtitling or dubbing, and a debate would quickly follow as to which of the two was the better option. In *Speaking in Subtitles: Revaluing Screen Translation*, Tessa Dwyer historically traces this "Sub/Dub War" back to the early 1960s when Bosley Crowther, the *New York Times* chief film critic, strongly advocated for dubbing in his column titled "Subtitles Must Go!" and thus generated considerable discussion for years to come. Dyer argues that the polarization around this issue, combined with criticism of the quality or authenticity of translations, not only dominated most debates but drew critical attention away from what is central: the value of translation. Dyer observes that Crowley's headline and his "lambasting" of subtitles signal "the negativity that pervades attitudes towards translations within the Anglo-American film culture" (Dwyer, 2017, p. 19).

Today, a huge number of Canadian consumers of TV, film and documentary productions are cutting the cord and getting their contents online, video stores are a thing of the past, and the average person spends more time streaming video content online than watching television. Some subscription-based services like Netflix are increasingly offering many productions that are subtitled in multiple languages. As modes of screen consumption have changed almost overnight due to emerging technologies and globalization, has the attitude of Canadians towards subtitled films also changed? A number of comments made recently in the media indicate a noticeable shift towards a more positive attitude to subtitled productions and greater acceptance, or awareness, of subtitles among viewers worldwide (Morgan, 2014; Nichols, A et al., 2015; Lauren, 2016; Walford, 2017; Keveney, 2017). Other analysts claim that the resistance to subtitles is still prevalent, especially among English-speaking North American audiences (Merry, 2015; Nicola, 2018). Could this be also the case with Francophone audiences in Quebec and the rest of Canada?

Netflix introduced its online streaming services in 2005 and began its international expansion in Canada in 2010, moving to many more countries since (Deshpande & Mazaj, 2018, p. 58). An important part of its growth strategy includes vigorously supporting the creation of subtitled and dubbed productions, which they view as "primary assets" (Netflix, FAQ, Partner Help Centre, 2017). In 2014, Sidneyeve Matrix estimated that "in English Canada, approximately 25% of residents have signed up for Netflix. In households with teens, that figure jumps to 33%, and it rises again to 37% in households with children under the age of twelve" (Matrix, 2014, p. 120).

According to *Finder.com*, in August 2017, the three highest-rated TV shows on Netflix Canada were, in first place, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, a Japanese animation series with original

audio in Japanese; in second place, *Narcos*, a TV series with original audio in both Spanish and English; and in third, *Rurouni Kenshin*, a Japanese animation series with original audio in Japanese. Trailing them were several English-language productions. In *MediaVillage,* Ainsly Andrade writes of *Narcos*: "The fact that the show is telecast entirely in Spanish with English-language subtitles doesn't take away from how engaging it is, either. Two minutes into the first episode and the subtitles are definitely the last thing on one's mind." (Andrade, 2017). In mid-December 2017, Netflix revealed the top shows for Canadians for the year. The top 10 dramas that were binged-watched by Canadians (more than 2 hours per day) included, in third place, *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (original audio in Italian), in 5th place, *Ingobemable* (original audio language: Spanish) and in 9th place, *Cable Girls* (original audio language: Spanish). Two TV series about the drug underworld, *Narcos* and *El Chapo*, both with most of their original audio in Spanish, were among the shows most watched by Canadians in 2017. Despite this apparent Canadian appreciation for foreign-language productions, a question that could be eventually explored in another study is whether or not there is actually a similar appetite or appreciation abroad for Canadian productions. Why have people been historically either repulsed or attracted by subtitled foreign-language productions? It has certainly to do with what is gained or lost when watching a subtitled production.

Literature Review

What is gained, what is lost? Observations from the history of subtitles

While one's attention is focused on reading the subtitles, less attention is devoted to watching the actors and the overall film image. In the introduction to her textbook on international cinema, Martha P. Nochimsom put the question in simple terms: What is lost or gained when watching a subtitled production? (Nochimsom, 2010, p. 5). This question is pervasive in the literature on subtitles. The fact that it has been raised in an education text is worthy of attention, since there is a substantial body of scholarly literature that explores whether subtitled films are a useful pedagogical tool for second-language or vocabulary acquisition (Gambier, 2013; Bairstow & Lavaur, 2015; Danan, 2015; Pridmore-Franz, 2017; Tillman, 2018). Subtitles are, in fact, translations, and most technical studies pertaining to subtitles are classified under the broader heading of audio-visual translations (AVT). Audio-Visual Translation (AVT) is a subfield of Translation Studies focusing on different aspects of the translation of audio-visual productions also referred to as screen translations, from their production to their reception by audiences. Christine York, in her 2017 doctoral dissertation on voice-over translations of the National Film Board of Canada's documentaries, observed that:

> [The field of AVT] has gone beyond its initial focus on interlingual subtitling and dubbing. AVT now encompasses other modes of translation such as voice-over and the various forms of media accessibility like captioning and audio description. At the same time, it has extended its purview from an almost exclusive focus on the feature-length fiction film to take into consideration other genres of audiovisual production like documentary and anime (York, 2017, p. 25).

Ultimately, what such mediations do is to allow access to narratives and worldviews other than our own. In *The Art of Watching Film,* a textbook reprinted many times, Joseph M. Boggs defended how subtitles help to preserve a "film's cultural integrity" and "emotional quality", as

well as contributing to respect for the "aesthetic" of the culture they originated in. Subtitling, he writes, does "not interfere with the illusion of reality to the same degree as dubbing" (Boggs, 1991, p. 375). He quotes the influential *New Yorker* film critic Renata Adler, for whom subtitles allow for a feeling of proximity with the foreign culture the film came from. Tino Balio mentions that "retaining the flavor of an import" is the most difficult hurdle and quotes the remarks of subtitle translator Herman G. Weinberg about the challenge of preserving, with as few words possible, the ingenuity and depth of the original dialogue (Balio, 2010, p. 87). This is because the visual editing and verbal exchanges in a film can be quite rapid. Both Nochimsom and Boggs address this very problem in their textbooks, and constraints related to timing are a leading topic in the literature on subtitles.

Boggs and Adler's positions are precisely what is challenged by some detractors of subtitles who see in this position a form of purism and elitism and consider dubbing to be more accessible. In a Letter to the Editor published in *Le Monde,* a reader writes about these "inconditionnels de la VO [version originale] tous azimuts – hors l'hypothèse, bien entendu, d'une parfaite connaissance de la langue originale –, je soupçonne fort que leur cas relève davantage du snobisme, sinon de la cuistrerie, que de la cinéphilie" (Goyat, 1994). The historical roots of this dichotomy are explored in various books and studies that focus on audience appreciation of the different forms of screen translations, including subtitling and dubbing.

Until Dyer's book appeared in 2017, one of the most comprehensive collections of writing on the subject of film subtitling was the anthology *Subtitles: On the Foreignness of Film*, edited by Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan and academic Ian Balfour. This book explores the social value and cultural capital of subtitles and the degree of importance they are given by filmmakers who use them regularly and rigorously in their productions. Still, the comprehensive

history of subtitling is a long one that had not been presented chronologically in any one specific book or research papers until the publication in 2018 in the Benjamins Translation Library series of *Reception studies and audiovisual translation*, edited by Elena Di Giovanni and Yves Gambier. Some of the essays in this volume provide comprehensive literature reviews that included a considerable number of historical accounts. First, Biltereyst and Meers offer a comprehensive historical overview of the field of film and cinema studies from the perspective of audiences (Biltereyst & Meers, 2018, p. 21). Second, Serenella Zanotti's chapter extensively covers "the methods available to researchers for investigating AVT reception in a historical perspective" (Zanotti, 2018, p. 134). Both articles aim "integrating audiences' experiences" (Biltereyst & Meers, p. 21). The breadth of the topic and the fact that it is history in the making may have inhibited the production of more integrated historical accounts. Such accounts are welcome, since the history of subtitles has so far been only sparsely surveyed by authors who closely examined one period or another of film history using varying approaches. The broader themes explored in the literature about subtitles cover resistance to the technology, critical rejection or public acceptance, and their potential in terms of accessibility, promotion and direct financial return for the movie industry.

An example of a period-specific historical account is *The Foreign Film Renaissance on American Screens 1946-1973* by Tino Balio, who examines media coverage of the boom in art house and foreign film screenings in the period 1946-1973. After the Second World War, a market devoted almost exclusively to artistic and foreign-language films developed in North America. For about a quarter of a century, subtitled features were shown in select, upscale theatres that were springing up everywhere and served a niche market of filmgoers hungry for greater cinematographic sophistication. Balio examines the sociocultural environment that

allowed the rise and later the decline of foreign film distribution in America. In contrast to the majority of cinema-goers who would attend mainstream Hollywood productions, the press called the foreign and art film audiences the "Lost Audience" and their fans "eggheads" (Balio, 2010, p. 81). When a subtitled film did exceptionally well at the box office, it would be first circulated to these venues and then dubbed by distribution companies to be released in commercial theatres and drive-ins (p. 87).

As Dwyer noted, the question "to dub or not to dub" was "exhaustively debated in the pages of the *New York Times"* (Dwyer, 2017, p. 19) and commented on by Balio (Balio, p. 89). Influential critics chimed in, both for and against subtitles. A fascinating example is critic Bosley Crowther, who initially supported subtitles because he believed that dubbing denatured the original cultural flavour of films, but "later came out in favor of dubbing when it became apparent that subtitles created an impenetrable barrier to the commercial market" (p. 89). Crowther's shift, argues Serenella Zanotti, "incited distributors to discard the anachronistic convention of subtitling in favour of English dubbed dialogue, stating that the time had come to 'abandon the somewhat specious and even snobbish notion that foreign-language films are linguistically inviolable.' … He argued that dubbing would have ensured a wider audience for foreign-language films" (Zanotti, 2018, p. 143).

Balio observes that there is one notable exception to this rule: Fellini's *La Dolce Vita.* "Released in a subtitled version … the film became a crossover hit and played in theatres that had never before shown a subtitled film. 'As a result, subtitles became somewhat more acceptable in the market-at-large,' said *Variety*" (p. 89). Despite this success, which carried over to a few other productions in the 1960s and early 1970s, attendance for subtitled films withered and specialized theatres closed.

In her hard-hitting 2004 essay *To Read or Not to Read: Subtitles, Trailers and Monolingualism*, cultural theorist B. Ruby Rich spells out the consequences for America's film industry of two decades of unfettered capitalism and xenophobic politics, which were reflected in attitudes to foreign cinema in the 1980's and 1990's. She lists a constellation of events that brought an end to the period described by Balio. Rich does not beat around the bush and addresses the difficult questions. In a text-dominated world that offers everything from karaoke and texting to live chat rooms, how can one explain the resistance to subtitles? Perhaps by recognizing that in the days of Reagan and Bush (and now Trump), a great number of Americans maintained a widespread ignorance of other worldviews, were afraid to acknowledge cultural differences, elected politicians with "narrow-casting vision," maintained a "deficit of cross-cultural understanding," etc. (Rich, 2004, pp. 157-167) If, during these two decades, she ironizes, "everyone had gone to more foreign language films, public opinion might be otherwise" (p. 167). In short, subtitle resistance, Rich argues, is a set of "blinders imposed by monolingualism and cinematic illiteracy" (p. 164). In other words, in cinema, the refusal to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers would explain the resistance to or rejection of subtitles.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

Rich is hopeful. There is a public hungry for change. Rich wrote her essay in 2004, four years before Obama won the presidential election. She cites one film, Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* from 2001, as emblematic of this change and as a sign for some film scholars that subtitles are progressively reaching critical mass and the studios and distributors may pay attention. Rich writes, *"Crouching Tiger* made over $135 million to become the highest-grossing foreign language film ever in history. The fact that it had subtitles didn't put anyone off" (p.167). It is an action film, "the exact genre that was said to have been unworkable

with subtitles – which suggests that films promising action may now be able to overcome an audience aversion to subtitles" (p. 167).

Translating Popular Film, Carol O'Sullivan's historical and sociological survey of the audience relationship to subtitles, was published in 2011, a decade after the release of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. O'Sullivan is skeptical of the optimism that such blockbusters generate amongst Western audiences (O'Sullivan, 2011, p. 105-06). Audiences may finally seem ready for subtitles, as demonstrated by increased use in mainstream cinema, from Tarantino's films to Mel Gibson's. But while the audience's approval of subtitles is one thing, their frequent and questionable use by filmmakers to reinforce existing cultural stereotypes is another. The experience of authenticity is sought out as long as it meets the public's expectations and does not challenge their worldview too much.

The film business is just that, a business, and financial reasons motivate decisions such as Netflix's announcement in 2015 that the actors in their sequel to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* would speak English, avoiding subtitles or dubbing altogether. In its trivia section, the online information database IMDb writes: "Unlike the first film which was shot with Mandarin dialogue, English is used to portray the story. The first film received much criticism from Chinese viewers due to the fact that only one of the four main characters spoke Mandarin fluently. It is possible that in order to avoid a similar review and maintain the freedom to cast whomever they chose, producers went with English dialogue." ("*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Sword of Destiny*," n.d., IMDb Trivia section, para. 3). As *Norwest Asian Weekly*'s Eric Card points out:

> The first thing that viewers will notice is that this is an English-language film, and — while also dubbed in Mandarin and Cantonese — is clearly a movie aimed at a Western audience. … An interesting aspect of the cast is that it is largely made up of Pan-Asians, comprising Australians, Costa Ricans, Chinese Americans, Hawaiian Chinese, among

> others. The diversity of the actors is certainly a good thing and makes for a great looking cast, but in the end, all of these aspects take away from the aura and lore of ancient China (Card, 2016).

This choice of cast and their limited proficiency in Mandarin provoked a major public outcry in online forums from fans of the original film and subtitle-savvy audiences, with comments that vindicated both Rich's optimism and O'Sullivan's skepticism. More recently, Colombian audiences of *Narcos* were very upset with the accents of Warner Moura, a Brazilian actor who plays Pablo Escobar "with a distinctly Brazilian accent – unforgivable for Colombians who expected to hear the distinctive lilt of the people of Antioquia, known as Paisas" (Brodzinsky, 2015). Quebeckers were disappointed and quite vocal about the eclectic mix of Francophone accents in the production of Alejandro G. Iñárritu's *The Revenant*, especially with the contemporary European-French accent of the actor playing a French-Canadian *coureur de bois* (Harvard, 2016). Finally, following the South African theatrical release of *Black Panther*, local audiences said, "It was humbling to hear isiXhosa spoken in a major Hollywood film, even if they found the accents of some actors a little eyebrow-raising. 'I'm not so impressed, but they tried,' said South African reality TV star Blue Mbombo with a good-natured smile" (Anna, 2018).

Film critics perceive the immense cultural and educational capital to be gained from watching subtitled films. Yves Gambier, for one, sees in subtitled audiovisual productions, which include television, the power to bring geographically and sociologically dispersed audiences together, reunite fragmented diasporas and forge hybrid identities (Gambier, 2013). Many of the essays in Egoyan and Balfour's anthology reach the same conclusion. The immense success of breakthrough films like *La Dolce Vita* or *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* may or may not prove that there is an audience reaching critical mass that is hungry for subtitled films. Are these

films the exceptions that prove an unwritten rule? Rich, O'Sullivan and Pinsker nonetheless agree that film companies have been so afraid that the public will reject subtitles that in the past they have gone so far as to use deceitful marketing strategies to conceal their very existence in movie trailers (Rich, 2004; O'Sullivan, 2011, Pinsker; 2005, also Hertz, 2017a). In her *15 Genuine Reasons People Asked for Cinema Ticket Refunds*, Sarah Dobbs lists this kind of omission as the Number 2 reason why filmgoers seek reimbursement at the cinema: "Film distributors are often sneaky about the marketing for foreign language movies, sometimes even keeping trailers dialogue-free so that audiences won't realize what they're in for until after they've paid for a ticket. Recent award-winning movies like *Amour* and *Rust & Bone* attracted cinemagoers who were annoyed to find they were expected to read subtitles to understand what was going on. Many cinema staff we spoke to said they now routinely warn people before they buy tickets for foreign language films, to prevent arguments later" (Dobbs, 2013). A variation on this deceptive tactic of tricking audiences into watching a subtitled film, first commented on astutely by Rich, is employed in the hit series *Narcos*. According to the *Washington Post*'s Stephanie Merry, the series' secret was to introduce subtitled Spanish dialogue later on in a show that includes both English and Spanish, "like a parent furtively adding the butternut squash to mac and cheese. ... The first scene is the equivalent of mom and dad saying, 'just try it, you'll like it.' See how easy a little reading is? By the time we're introduced to characters that are having entire conversations in Spanish, there has already been a shootout and plenty of intrigue, so we're hooked" (Merry, 2015).

Should the dominance of text and image in our contemporary world not, in theory, prepare audiences to be more receptive to and less defensive about the consumption of subtitled productions (Rich, 2004)? What Martine Danan and Yves Gambier suggest is that improvements

in the areas of policy-making that recognize the merits of AVT for second-language acquisition could also help to change mentalities (Gambier, 2013; Danan, 2015).

An international revolution

As previously stated, the spectacular growth of online streaming services like Netflix has completely changed the viewership landscape, not only in Canada but internationally. While the content available differs from one country to another due to various trade restrictions, agreements regarding copyright and censorship, common ground can be found in several sources. As Vikram Johri writes, "One of the advantages of streaming sites such as Netflix and Amazon Prime is the borderless world of entertainment that they provide, Netflix, in particular, has been at the forefront of featuring content in multiple languages, with its suite of Korean thrillers and European period dramas. The same content makes it to different geographies and dubbing – that staple of television channels globally – is done away with in favour of subtitles" (Johri, 2018). The Director of Content at S4C, a Welsh-language TV broadcaster, says that thanks to the success of Scandinavian drama series, "there's a greater awareness out there now that people can enjoy dramas from different countries with subtitles" and that *Y Gwyll*, a new program in Welsh, will be "giving our culture an international window" (Morgan, 2014). This sentiment is shared by fellow countryman Roger Williams, the creator, writer and producer of a show called *Bang*: "People are far more prepared to watch subtitled shows – *The Killing* was a breakthrough in that" (Walford, 2017). One of the film's actors concurs: "I think we need to trust audiences because we're plenty used to doing that with TV shows now: programmes such as *The Bridge* or *Narcos* where people are far more open to subtitles and the like" (Walford, 2017). This sentiment is echoed in the Canadian media. The *Globe and Mail*'s John Doyle praises the Danish

series *Borgen* as an example of a series that tells "stories that are revealing – in a political and sociological manner" (Doyle, 2015). A show that can "transcend one country's politics" commented his *Globe and Mail* colleague Jeffrey Simpson a year earlier, noting that it deserves to be more popular with Canadian audiences (Simpson, 2014). Doyle also mentions the successful Scandinavian series *The Killing* and *The Bridge* (Doyle, 2015). These series are also very popular in Canada and other English-speaking countries, such as Scotland. Rory Reynolds of *The Scotsman* reported on the huge success of the screening of the finale of *Borgen* in a local theatre, quoting a member of the audience: "We just love *The Killing*, *The Bridge*, and *Borgen* is fantastic. You just get engrossed in it in a way you don't with British drama. I can't think of anything like it in the UK. It's a completely new genre and we don't mind the subtitles at all. You stop noticing them after a while" (Reynolds, 2013).

Dan Dibbelt, an economic development consultant in Northern Alberta, wrote in a regional weekly newspaper that he took great pleasure in watching a Norwegian television series, *Occupied*, which he used to compare Alberta to Norway and show how much the two are alike, in his opinion. He claims that while watching this "series with English subtitles, whose premise is that Norway decides to end oil production ...you will get used to the English subtitles after the first show and you will be hooked by the second episode" (Dibbelt, 2016). Dibbelt does not go into great detail on how *Occupied* informed his opinion, but rather uses it as a lever to express his personal viewpoint about governmental spending, healthcare cost, housing, immigration, quality of life, etc.

It is not only filmmakers and producers who consider that subtitled productions provide a lucrative opportunity to expand and promote local culture abroad -- so do governments. Less than a year ago, in Canada, a controversial $500M Netflix deal with the Canadian government

was mapped out by the Department of Canadian Heritage as a "cultural export strategy" and is part of the broader program called *Creative Canada – A Vision for Canada's Creative Industries*.

Subtitles and identity politics: The Ottawa-Netflix Deal

According to a 2017 report published by the Canadian Media Concentration Research Project (CMCRP), in 2016 Netflix "had an estimated 5.3 million subscribers," a number "just under 38% of Canadian households (CMCRP, 2017). The question of how identity politics and subtitling go hand in hand is an issue that recently hit home in Canada, following the announcement of a $500M investment deal between Netflix and the Canadian government, whereby Netflix pledged to invest $100M a year, for five years, in Canada, with an additional $25M to support a growth strategy within Canada's Francophone market. Information about the substance of the deal is not publicly accessible and 90% of the document is entirely redacted (660 of 733 pages). Commentators can only speculate since the Canadian government maintains that the deal's contents are considered privileged information, protected under the Investment Canada Act (Saint-Arnaud, 2018; Saint-Pierre, 2018). Despite this, much has been written on the subject and editorialists across the country agreed that this deal has raised, and continues to raise, a number of issues with respect to fair trading and taxation practises, information disclosure, cultural sovereignty, official language policy, language quotas, and the impact of globalization on the Canadian film industry (Anderson, 2017; Dubuc, 2017; Hébert, 2017; Rastello, 2017; Rioux, 2018; Taylor, 2017b; Wyonch, 2017). One of the major points of contention is the ambiguity surrounding the relative proportion of English- and French-language content that will be covered under the deal. At his party's national convention, Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party, not only criticized the veil of secrecy surrounding the deal but pointed out that it was also not clear how much Indigenous content, if any, would be protected under the deal

(Crête, 2018). Covering the huge public outcry in Quebec about the agreement, Sandrine Rastello's opened her article in the *Financial Post* with the following line: "Netflix Inc. is getting a taste of Canadian identity politics" (2017, Rastello). Not having access to the document's contents makes it nearly impossible to comment on some of the clauses that may have pertained to the subtitling or dubbing of these productions, or the strategies put forward to market these new productions abroad with the support of Netflix's secured investment. This being said, John Doyle explains in the *Globe & Mail* that while "Netflix is a highly secretive outfit, one that believes its status as a disruptive force in the traditional TV arena means it doesn't have to supply ratings or specify the budgets of its shows to the public and the industry," it is not difficult for those who are on the inside to find out retroactively how much they actually spend (Doyle, 2017). In other words, it is only a matter of time before the Canadian public and film industry discover exactly how Netflix is spending its money. This last point has also been the subject of much discussion in the media from coast to coast.

When the *Georgia Straight*, Vancouver's long-lived entertainment weekly, interviewed panelist and Creative BC Vice-President Robert Wong at the 2017 Vancouver International Film Festival, there was speculation about the benefits to BC's film industry if the deal eventually led to "an opportunity of establishing a production office" (Takeushi, 2017b). The distribution of funds by Netflix preoccupies various members of the Francophone film industry in Eastern Canada. Acadian film producer Céline Chevrier is skeptical that Francophone producers will be receiving a share that is equivalent to what they would have received through taxing broadcasters (Mills, 2017). On a popular Franco-Albertan current affairs show, concerns have been also raised about whether Francophone film production companies based outside Quebec will also benefit from Netflix's investment (Radio-Canada, *La croisée*, 2017). In response to the criticism that

there is "no specific commitment to French-language content" in the Netflix deal, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Mélanie Joly, conceded in an interview that "there's anxiety about whether Quebec will be able to get a piece of the $500 million" (Marsh, 2017). The only official response to this massive outcry in the media was posted on the Netflix corporate blog in early October 2017. Corie Wright, Director of Global Public Policy, began his response by praising the quality of the Canadian film industry's workforce and saying that Netflix has "invested in Canada because Canadians make great global stories." He concluded by emphasizing that "Netflix is an online service, not a broadcaster. No online media service – foreign or domestic – is subject to traditional broadcast media regulations like quotas or content levies." Netflix, he asserted, "have to invest in the best content from around the world" since "people choose what they want to watch on our service." Giving examples of past Canadian productions they invested in, he argues that the company invested in them "not to fill a quota" but "because they are great global stories" (Wright, 2017). Political reporter Guillaume St-Pierre recounted that during a conference in Ottawa in February 2018, Elizabeth Bradley, Netflix's Vice President – Content, said that her company wishes to diversify its content, and that since the US represents only roughly 5% of the world's population, it should not produce all the content on Netflix. According to St-Pierre, Bradley continued by saying that developing new markets presents challenges such as picking up the best industry workers available and the goal is to produce the best content possible in the language of a given country, then to export it and make it widely known (St-Pierre, 2018). The crux of the matter for Netflix – and what is relevant to my study— is that their deal with the Canadian government is part of their much larger current international expansion strategy, in which the production of subtitles plays a major role. Netflix claims that if historically subtitles were considered "secondary assets," they have become a "primary asset" and a priority in the

company's "global reach" (Netflix, FAQ, Partner Help Centre, 2017). This expansion tactic is still perhaps too recent for the publication of significant scholarly research, whether it examines Netflix's overall relationship to subtitles or subtitles as a primary asset to their corporate global expansion strategy. Serenella Zanotti observes that in academic literature about film audience reception, "the strategies adopted by the major film industries for exporting their products to other territories and the measures designed by the importing nations to regulate the in-flow of foreign films and to protect the domestic film industry are increasingly well documented" (Zanotti, 2018, p. 136). The "exporting" and "regulat[ion] of the in-flow of foreign films" are definitely a topic of discussion about Netflix in Canadian media. That said, Netflix's "localization" strategy, consisting of the systematic creation of various forms of audio-visual translations (AVT) to drive their global expansion, has not so far been a topic examined by academics.

Against this backdrop, Canadians have also expressed concern that Canadian productions might be sidelined by foreign production companies and viewers, now that the gates are open. Canadian Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly is quoted as saying, in a speech at the Economic Club of Canada: "If we're complacent, this new wave of information can drown out our own content – our French-language TV and films, our Indigenous music, our multicultural programming … This worries me. It worries our creators. And it worries Canadians" (Smith, 2017). The *Globe & Mail*'s John Doyle is very critical of Joly's and the government's "fuzzy half-baked new plan." He writes, "It's peachy that some creatives involved in Canadian TV and movies will have their work seen around the world via Netflix, but that is neither new nor is it the rescue of Canadian TV that the federal government wants you to believe" (Doyle, 2017). Critics of the minister's new plan suggest that Canada should follow the example of some European countries who are

asking that streaming services respect domestic production quotas. In the *Globe and Mail*, Kate Taylor argues that the Canadian government should be concerned with an unregulated environment that will invite traditional broadcasters to also show less Canadian content.

That said, the CMCRP does recognize that "threats to the 'broadcasting system' — e.g. cord-cutting, Netflix, Google, etc. — are real but exaggerated," yet their "data and analysis suggest that a healthy amount of skepticism should meet claims that the soaring revenues and sky-high profits of the internet hypergiants come off the backs of 'content creators' and from cannibalizing the revenue that professional journalism and the music, film, television and publishing industries need to survive" (CMCRP, 2017).

In an essay written in 1996, Media Studies professor Aniko Bodroghkozy further explores Canadians' "seeming infatuation with American cultural products" and "voracious appetite for American mass culture" and whether or not their television consumption habits fall under this predilection (Bodroghkozy, 2002, p. 570). She asks what the "Canadian voice" means when "media corporations are now global entities," and argues that "it does *matter* that mass communications outlets are being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands as transnational conglomerates, through mergers and acquisitions, oligopolize the media." (p. 569). In short, one of her points is that as "these conglomerates gobble up more and more of the means, not only of mass cultural production, but distribution and exhibition as well, national cultural sovereignty increasingly becomes challenged" (pp. 569-570). She concludes her essay with a strangely premonitory warning concerning the advent of multinationals like Netflix: "McLuhan's Global Village may be upon us, but this doesn't mean that the transnational media conglomerates who have helped construct this village have any interest in letting us all tell our stories from our locales." (p. 585).

Zeitgeist

Two different open letters to the Government of Canada, sent only one day apart, allow us to tap into the cultural zeitgeist of the moment. The first, dated September 26, 2017, asking for the regulation of foreign-owned companies like Facebook, Amazon, Google, and Netflix and signed by 270 members of the Canadian television and film industry, expressed concern about the government's loss of control over its broadcasting system. Signatories included filmmakers Xavier Dolan, Atom Egoyan, Philippe Falardeau, Kevin Tierny and Denis Villeneuve (Alliance des producteurs francophones du Canada, 2017). On September 27, 2017, over 100 prominent artists, including Michel Tremblay, Margaret Atwood, Philippe Falardeau and Tantoo Cardinal, signed a letter asking the government not to trade away Canadian culture at the bargaining table during NAFTA negotiations (Council for Canadians, 2017). Both letters displayed a deep concern with Canadian "cultural sovereignty".

Methodological Considerations

Research design

The first section of my study examined a broad range of past and current topics in the literature on subtitles from a general perspective and resulted in the identification and outlining of key elements of the conversation about subtitles, such as the predominant role that Netflix plays. It reviewed scholarly texts on subtitles and foreign-language film/video productions, as well as abundant commentary to be found in the media and online forums, blogs and news sites.

My approach is nonetheless intended to be more systematic, as it is aimed at answering the following questions: Over a four-year period (May 2014 to May 2018), what are the opinions, attitudes and sentiment about subtitles that have been reported or expressed in Canadian newspapers? How are subtitles framed in English and French newspapers across the country? Are there any indications as to why Canadian audiences increasingly use subtitles?

The primary analytical focus of my study is the thematic analysis of the commentary relating to subtitled cinematographic and televisual productions in Canadian news articles over a four-year period and the primary approach is qualitative. Performing a qualitative thematic analysis of subtitles as they are discussed in this circumscribed body of news articles serves the broader interest of better understanding the role played by subtitles with respect to both access and accessibility, given the advent of subscriptions to online services in Canada and globally. In this context, thematic analysis refers to the identification and classification of data in thematic categories and "themes are patterns across data sets that are essential to a better description of a phenomenon" (Cassol et al., 2018, p. 2). For example, regarding audience development, platforms like Netflix report relying heavily on subtitles to grow their viewership, domestically and internationally, while film festivals and cinemas from coast to coast speak of the growth and

diversification of their audiences due to subtitled screenings. Under the broader theme of audience development, there are some overlaps that only this type of analysis can bring to light.

That said, no scholarly attempt has been made so far to assess the conversation about subtitles in Canadian newspapers, and my study is intended to fill the gap. As further detailed below, a keyword search of Canadian newspaper databases was used to identify relevant articles expressing critical stances, attitudes, opinions and sentiment with respect to subtitles. Those articles were identified and sorted manually, without the use of algorithms, according to categories discussed in the section below.

While this analysis assesses the "sentiment" reflected in these articles with respect to subtitles, it is not to be confused with the method called "sentiment analysis," which consists in detecting positive or negative statements in online data through computerized algorithmic processes. Given the advent of data mining technologies, this is an important distinction given that my study is based on a qualitative assessment.

That said, as an emerging field, "sentiment analysis" can be advantageous as it consistently pushes for a greater understanding of natural language statements in terms of values, lexicon, tone, emotive states, intention, etc. Bing Liu of the Department of Computer Science, University of Illinois at Chicago, describes sentiment analysis as "a field of study that aims to extract opinions and sentiments from natural language text using computational methods" (Liu, 2015, p. xi) and he uses "the terms sentiment analysis and opinion mining interchangeably" (p. 2).

Liu argues for "the term sentiment to mean the underlying positive or negative feeling implied by opinion ¨ (p. 2). As for the term "opinion", he refers to the "whole concept of sentiment, evaluation, appraisal, or attitude and associated information, such as the opinion target

and the person who holds the opinion (…)" (p. 2). Similarly, in his research note on the theoretical difference between attitudes, opinions and values, Manfred Max Bergman uses the "terms attitudes and opinions as synonymous," while arguing that "such acquired behavioural predispositions are related but have different conceptual foci" (Bergman, 1998, pp. 81-84). In my study, the term "attitude" is also taken to represent opinion and sentiment.

Why newspapers?

In their comprehensive literary review of different trends in film, cinema and reception studies, Biltereyst and Meers discuss Janet Staiger's "historical materialist reception research, that analyses and reconstructs the viewing strategies available to the viewer in a specific historical period through a contextual analysis of public discourses about a film" (Biltereyst & Meers, 2018, p. 31). In conducting this type of study, the authors stress "the importance of contextualizing issues of spectatorship and embodied viewers in terms of interrelations between text, intertextual zones and contextual forces" (p. 31). This approach, they argue, is rooted in and "inspired by literary traditions of reception theory or aesthetics of reception like the ones pioneered by Hans Robert Jauss" (p. 31). Contextual factors are critical to understanding audience reception and the meaning audiences make of these experiences. Biltereyst and Meers argue that Staiger's approach is effective if the audience's point of view is considered from various perspectives, and that there are specific sources that can help achieve this goal:

> Besides textual analysis and examining wider contexts around the film text, this approach tries to reconstruct the viewer's horizon of expectation; this encompasses a complex set of discourses, not just film or cinema-related ones, but also wider historical, political and scientific discourses. Among the sources used for examining filmic and cinematic contextualized meanings are press reviews, interviews, articles and letters to the editor" (p. 31).

It stands to reason that understanding the audience's reception, appreciation and reaction regarding subtitled television and cinematographic productions would benefit greatly from following a similarly holistic approach, especially with respect to the types of texts to be critically assessed and analyzed. In their review, Biltereyst and Meers also refer to "Barbara Klinger's 'histoire totale' approach to cinematic reception [which] pleads for acknowledging the 'deeply interactive' interrelations between, what she calls cinematic practices, intertextual zones and social and historical contexts" (p. 31). The purpose of my study is to draw attention to these interrelations and demonstrate how they impact the attitude of contemporary Canadian audiences towards subtitles in the advent of modes of consumption profoundly affected by new technologies and online streaming services like Netflix.

Limitations and relevance of the scope

An online search of databases was conducted to cover a four-year period from May 2014 to May 2018 in both English and French newspapers published in Canada. In the search for articles, reports, reviews, interviews and editorials that mention "subtitles" in English or "sous-titres" in French, as well as their truncated versions "subtitl*" and "sous-titr*", 244 articles were identified as being potentially relevant (139 in English and 105 in French).

Many duplications of the same items in the Canadian media show up from one news database to another. For that reason, in the interest of clearing out as much of the underbrush as possible, two main databases were consulted in the course of my study: *Eureka.cc/Newscan.com* and *Factiva*. They were selected for their ability to limit terminological searches to Canadian content or specific publications within a specific period. An advanced search performed in *Eureka.cc* for mentions of the terms "subtitles" and "sous-titres" between May 1, 2014 and May 1, 2018 turned up 3,685 items in Canadian publications (newspapers – print and online editions,

newswires, news blogs and newspapers exclusively online like *La Presse+*). This search was supplemented by a search in *Canadian Newsstream* and *Press Reader*.

The articles analyzed came from leading Canadian newspapers such as *La Presse* (Groupe Gesca), *Vancouver Sun* (Postmedia) and Halifax's *Chronicle Herald* (independent), and community papers such as *Journal Rosemont-Petite-Patrie* (TC Continental), the *Owen Sound Sun Times* (Postmedia Network) and the *Times & Transcript* (Brunswick News), which were accessed from the *Eureka.cc* newspaper database. Accessed through this database were also articles from francophone newspapers *Le Soleil*, *Le Droit*, *Le Nouvelliste*, *La Tribune* and *La Voix de l'Est* (Groupe Capitales Medias). Articles in the *Globe and Mail* (Woodbridge Company Ltd.), *Le Devoir* (independent), the *Toronto Star* (Star Media Group) were primarily accessed from the *Factiva* database.

To conduct my analysis, various sources in the literature review section were consulted, such as academic journals, books and news websites. They included 16 articles from both *Ici Radio-Canada* on the Web and *CBC News* online from across the country that appeared in the initial *Eureka.cc* search. An additional 76 articles that contained mentions of subtitles but that did not fit the criteria of my search were included in order to analyze the broader context in which subtitles are used; they dealt with topics ranging from subtitles in video games to their use in videos posted on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube.

Of the 244 news items written by 155 different authors, 15 were written by film critic Marc-André Lussier (*La Presse*, QC), 12 by television columnist Hugo Dumas (*La Presse*, QC), 11 by lead film critic Kate Taylor (*Globe & Mail*, ON), and 7 by freelance columnist Steve Malloy (*The Times and Transcript*, NB).

Thirty-eight (16%) of the 244 news items discussed or critiqued subtitled productions available on or produced by Netflix and/or the quality and production of subtitling/dubbing of productions available on Netflix.

Understanding the areas of focus in the discussion on subtitles in Canadian news includes considering the sentiment, attitudes and opinions expressed. No opinion search engines were used in the course of my study and the retrieval and ranking of sentiment have been performed manually. The articles were primarily tagged using the categories of "Like," "Neutral" and "Dislike," focusing on unambiguous statements such as "I hate subtitles." Following a deeper text analysis, they were re-tagged according to the overall "positive", "neutral" or "negative" connotation of the overall discussion. For example, if subtitles were discussed in a context related to the accessibility they provide to hearing impaired viewers, they were ranked as positive. If the discussion focused on their disruption of the viewing experience, they were then tagged as negative.

Including information about subtitles in a film festival's program, the catalogue of an on-demand video streaming service or a television programming schedule may be based on demand or the desire to create demand, and on taste and preferences which may evolve over time. The latter is more complex to measure. Computer scientists developing algorithms to measure topical sentiment change asked the following question: "Assuming all topics have been properly extracted and their sentiment distributions over time have also been properly calculated; given a corpus, how do we identify a sentiment change event? How do we identify the possible causal events of such change?" (Jiang, Meng & Yu, 2011). In my study, shifts in attitudes were analyzed for each year of the four-year period and, more importantly, special attention was paid to the articles discussing such shifts. For example, some writers remarked that movie-goers used

to really dislike subtitles but now, thanks to Netflix, they come in greater numbers to attend screenings of subtitled foreign-language productions. These shifts in the public's taste and preferences impacts the inclusion/availability of subtitles in various forms of programming.

Finally, understanding the conversation about subtitles going on all across Canada, and not just in the main urban centres, would require improvements to the indexing of small local newspapers and their inclusion in searchable text databases. My search has likely missed many excellent reviews of local film festivals because the newspapers in which they were published are not indexed at all. The upcoming Omerlo project to assist organizations like the Association de la presse francophone and the Quebec Community Newspapers Association in making the shift to digital and reaching audiences online is a step in the right direction (Larocque, 2018).

Criteria

Using advanced search fields, a search was run on the term "subtitles" or "sous-titres" in title headers, summaries and leads as well as anywhere in the records. Each document was ordered by the date of publication. A first reading of each entry was performed and the bibliographical information for the news items selected for analysis was recorded manually in an Excel spreadsheet. Each item selected was also flagged with check marks for inclusion in several thematic categories (see Appendix 1, page 133, for categories) for which the descriptors were eventually refined based on familiarity with the body of work (see Appendix 2, p. 135, for results).

Analyzing attitudes is context-dependent. Manfred Max Bergman stressed how any two individuals can share a similar, or the same, affective evaluation of an object in terms of their sympathies but for different reasons (Bergman, 1998, p. 84). He argued that in the evaluation of attitudes, more attention needs to be focused on explaining "*how* people understand something

and *why* it influences their lives in one way or another" (p. 85). The thematic categories were created in order to provide the context in which opinions/sentiment were formed and expressed. For example, a positive opinion about subtitles can be based on the fact that subtitles allow a filmgoer to understand the dialogue in a foreign language; or it might be because subtitled productions provide the opportunity to learn a second language. Similar affect, different reasons.

Criteria for inclusion in the study

To limit the sample size, the texts to be analyzed were chosen from media reports (including reviews, editorials and interviews) in which the terms "subtitles" and "sous-titres" had qualifiers attached that defined or described their **functionality, quality, attributes, sentiment** and **dimensionality.**

Examples of **functionality**

Beyond the primary function of subtitles, which is to provide an audience with the ability to understand the dialogue of a foreign-language production, including those with a hearing impairment, subtitles can be used as learning tools for language acquisition, promoting cultural awareness, etc. The positive or negative sentiment towards subtitles may not always be explicit, as in "Subtitles are great because..." but can be deduced when their function leads to a positive outcome, such as: "Viewing this film with subtitles gave me a better appreciation of the Québécois culture;" "Gurwinder gained greater understanding of his parents' culture when he watched this entire series in Punjabi;" "A lot less of the film's meaning was lost thanks to subtitles."

Examples

Language acquisition – "Diki taught himself English in about six months, by living in Singapore, reading English articles and watching English movies with subtitles,

> especially comedies. "Little by little, through osmosis, you can learn [a] language," he said. (Bellemare, CBC news, 2016-09-05)
>
> Increased cultural awareness – "The festival provides an opportunity to heighten awareness of Jewish and cultural diversity around the world to audiences of all backgrounds, and to present films in their original languages, with subtitles, in an effort to break down racial, cultural and religious barriers and stereotypes. " (*The City Centre Mirror*, 2016-04-27)

Examples of **quality**

Reviewers of subtitled film productions sometimes refer to the general aesthetics or synchronicity of subtitled text in relation to the cinematic image and the original audio and make comments with respect to their quality, which can refer to their accuracy or presentation. The positive or negative appreciation of subtitles is therefore directly related to the audience's perception, experience and evaluation of subtitles based on their quality.

> Examples
>
> Overall quality – "*Love* offers a gripping tale. Presented entirely in Korean, it would be improved immensely by better subtitles." (*McDonough, Times & Transcript*, 2014-07-28)
>
> Quality of translation – "On peut parler de scénario nullissime et de sous-titres abominables, dans une langue mal qualifiée de française. Pas beaucoup mieux en anglais. Une chance que les personnages ne disaient pas grand-chose..." (Tremblay, *Le Devoir*, 2016-08-29).

Examples of **attributes**

The aesthetics of subtitles are rarely discussed in news articles intended for a general audience. The study of subtitles from this angle is more predominant in academic journals in the fields of visual semiotics, cognitive psychology and translation studies. For example, a number of studies have been written up on eye movements while viewing subtitled productions, attention span and word recognition. That said, in some cases, film reviewers may comment on the general appearance of subtitles or their position on the screen.

Examples

> Aesthetics – "I'd always found Netflix's giant, yellow subtitles a bit jarring – until I realized they didn't have to be giant or yellow at all" (Tilley, *Toronto Sun*, 2017-04-21).
>
> Position on the screen – "It is filmed in luminescent black and white, and like the work of Danish master Carl Dreyer, it melds formalism and expressionism: Blank walls, shafts of light casting patterns, a studied placement of faces on the screen so that the spaces float above them (the subtitles are sometimes in the sky) and the action is cast downward, well below heaven" (Stone, *Postmedia News*, 2015-03-20).

Examples of **sentiment**

In selecting articles that contain positive or negative sentiments with regard to subtitles, special attention was paid to predicate statements, adjectives and linking verbs. The fields of opinion mining and social psychology offer several practical definitions of words commonly found in the sentiment and emotion lexicon. For example, Liu and Beaglehole's definitions are valuable as they focus on the underlying affective component of sentiment. Liu defines the term sentiment more precisely as "the underlying positive or negative feeling implied by opinion" (Liu, 2015 p. 2). In *Property: A Study in Social Psychology*, Ernest Beaglehole quotes social psychologist William McDougall, for whom sentiment is "*an organized system of emotional tendencies centred about some object* … In other words, a sentiment is a complex disposition to experience various emotions in regard to the object upon which these emotions are focussed" (Beaglehole, 1931/2015, p. 19).

Examples

> Like (Positive) –"Les deux copines ont apprécié les sous-titres" (Côté, *La Presse*, 2014-10-01).
>
> Like (Positive) – "There are a couple of scenes in particular I was glad there were subtitles for, because I wouldn't have been able to hear what was happening over the laughter of the audience" (Wells, *Monday Magazine*, 2016-10-17).

> Neutral – "The film can be viewed in French with subtitles, or in English, with superb voice talent either way" (Dickensen, *Telegraph-Journal*, 2016-12-06).
>
> Dislike (Negative) – "I don't love subtitles because I spend most of my time reading instead of actually enjoying the movie…" (Sculland, *The Golden Star*, 2018-04-15).
>
> Dislike (Negative) – "The point of criticism isn't so much to persuade you to stay at home or spend your hard-earned dollars on the art-house indie feature playing down the road, you know the one I'm talking about, the docudrama focused on the Indonesian artists who pay their way through school by collecting dung and are protesting child labor abuses. The one with, ew, subtitles. No " (Bunch, *Red Deer Advocate*, 2016-03-31).

Examples of **dimensionality**

According to sociologist Manfred Max Bergman, an attitude's relative strength is described "under the heading of attitude dimensions" (Bergman, 1988, p. 85). Bergman points out that "attitude extremity, for instance, relates to how much an object is liked or disliked, or how far away it is from a hypothetical neutral point with reference to its affective evaluation" (p.85). For their part, specialists in text and opinion mining Scholz & Conrad "define the polarity of sentiment as the distinction between positive and negative sentiment and the subjectivity as the distinction between subjective (positive and negative) statements and neutral statements" (Scholz & Conrad, 2013, p. 1829). Of particular interest to my study is the explicit mention of a turning point, where a shift in attitude/opinion/sentiment overtime is mentioned or commented on.

> Examples
>
> Attitudinal shift – "subtitles, long seen as a barrier for English-speaking audiences, no longer put off prospective viewers" (Nichols et al., CBC, 2015-11-07).
>
> Attitudinal shift – "Responsable de la programmation, Jacques Foisy soutient que les films sous-titrés qui obtiennent de plus en plus l'adhésion des cinéphiles trifluviens. 'Au début, on a noté une certaine réticence' … 'Les gens l'apprécient de plus en plus'" (Houde, *Le Nouvelliste*, 2015-05-27).

The term "attitudinal shift" is not to be confused with the term "polarity shift." The latter is used by sentiment analysts relying on the automatic (computerized) identification of complex semantic patterns and word clusters expressing an opinion that is context-specific. For the analysts using "machine-learning-based sentiment analysis systems," polarity shifts must be computationally detected, isolated and eliminated. Xia et al. (2016) provide clear examples of different classes of polarity shifts that present classification problems: "Explicit Negation. I don't like this movie. […] Explicit Contrast. *Fairly good acting, but overall a disappointing movie* … Sentiment inconsistency. *I don't like this movie. Great actor, awful scenario*" (Xia et al., 2016, p. 37). The categories listed by Xia et al. serve as a reminder that analysis of opinion statements is complex and vastly context-dependent, which can create a number of issues when data is extracted and analysed through computer calculations.

Prescriptivity: Influencing the reader

Of the 244 items, 31 (or 13%) contained statements either of a cautionary nature (warnings, words of caution or advice) or giving positive encouragement, that address the reader directly and recommend a specific course of action. These are what are termed prescriptive statements (e.g., "You must watch this film with subtitles."), which often derive from statements that are normative (e.g., "It is better to watch this series with subtitles.") or subjective (e.g., "Personally, I would rather watch a film with subtitles."). Marley and Levin define a prescriptive statement as "a recommendation that, if a course of action is taken, then a desirable outcome will likely occur" and "recommendations that follow the pattern, 'If persons take Action X, then Situation Y will improve'" (Marley & Levin, 2011, pp. 197-198).

Examples

- "A word to the wise; make sure your eyes are up to reading some hefty subtitles" (Knight, *National Post*, 2015-01-09).
- "Just so you can't say I didn't warn you, the film is foreign language with subtitles. I normally don't encourage people to watch a foreign language film with an English overdub, but if it's the only way you'll watch the movie, go ahead and do it" (Malloy, *Times & Transcript*, 2014-07-11).
- "We invite all of you to see a selection of films you might see in cities like Vancouver or Edmonton, films that stay with you, are powerful, and make you think. Yes, some of them have subtitles, but you can read, can't you? I challenge you" (Liebe, *The Williams Lake Tribune*, 2014-09-18).

Reviewers who comment on the virtues of subtitles, or lack thereof, and the sentiment towards them may rely on "language and grammatical features to create meaning, to persuade people to think about events in a particular way" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 1). Song ably summarizes Machin and Mayr's discussion by noting that "the representation of what people do also can have a great impact on the way we perceive them, thus encouraging us to take sides with or against them" (Song, 2014, p. 110). A close examination of the language used by reviewers can "help reveal the evaluative attitude and the ideological stance" they take (Chovanec, 2012, p. 79), and potentially suggest the sentiment they have towards subtitles. For example, a CBC Manitoba reviewer writes about the screenings of two films at the local cinematheque: "Saturday looks like the day to go with Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* on at 7 p.m. and Jean-Luc Godard's *Goodbye to Language* on at 9 p.m. ... Bring someone who isn't a baby about subtitles" (Beaudette, 2017).

Members of the media are opinion leaders and gatekeepers who pronounce on a vast number of topics, and subtitles are no exception. Do the critics in the Anglophone media hold and express the same or different ideas and opinions regarding subtitles as their Francophone counterparts?

Context

While a large portion of the academic literature about subtitles centres on their advantages versus their disadvantages, some of the commentary is dedicated to a sociological explanation of the motivations behind being "for" or "against" subtitles of certain individuals or groups. One position is that those in favour of subtitling belong to a highbrow, sophisticated class (i.e., Balio's *eggheads*), while those against it are the lowbrow, unsophisticated types. Since this broad interpretation is also tied to the pervasive sub-dub debate, at least historically, and can serve as a justification for positive or negative attitudes, two thematic categories were created to reflect those contextual aspects. This is of particular importance to this Canada-specific study because it has been argued that the "polemical 'for' and 'against' arguments are typically restricted to English-speaking territories such as Australia, Canada, Ireland, the UK and the United States, where mainstream audiences have little exposure to foreign-language media and translation" (Dwyer, 2017, p. 41). Geographical context does play an important role with respect to Canadian film productions both domestically and abroad.

Examples

- Geographical Context: representation of Quebec film productions in the rest of Canada – "To be seen outside Quebec is a great honour," says Philippe Lesage, director of the festival selection *Les démons*, an intense coming-of-age drama. "But I think somehow it's a little sad. From what I heard from my distributor, it seems hard to sell French-Canadian films to the rest of Canada. Very few [Quebecois] films make it into theatres outside the province" (Hertz, the *Globe and Mail*, 2016-08-01).

- Geographical Context: representation of Quebec film productions internationally – "Mr. Dolan is hardly the first Quebec director to be hailed abroad: Denys Arcand is a three-time nominee for best foreign film at the Oscars (he won in 2004 for *The Barbarian Invasions*, ... Jean-Marc Vallée directed the sleeper hit *Dallas Buyers Club* (which won three times at the 2014 Oscars) and Denis Villeneuve, who directed Incendies (nominated in the best foreign movie category

> at the 2011 Oscars) as well as *Prisoners* and *Enemy*, both well-received in Hollywood..." (Lagacé, the *Globe and Mail*, 2014-10-09).

In this Canada-specific study, special attention was paid to various aspects of geography (location of news outlets, the country's "two solitudes," etc.) and demographics (age groups or generations), since "sentiment can vary by demographic group, news source or geographic location" (Godbole, Srinivasaiah and Skiena, 2007). With the advent of the fansubbing phenomenon, the launch of Netflix's Hermes testing platform aimed at locating high-quality translators worldwide, and the relocation of its dubbing services from Quebec to France, the cost and availability of subtitle production as opposed to dubbing has been discussed in the media (Dwyer, 2017; Trefis Team, 2017; Woods, 2014). Different themes relating specifically to Canadian identity politics, ranging from the representation of minority and Indigenous languages to language policies, permeate the coverage of subtitles in Canadian media.

Exclusion from the study

In the majority of the entries identified, the words "subtitles" or "sous-titres" were only mentioned to indicate to the reader that a film or series was presented with, without or with only occasional subtitles, with no further elaboration in the form of either commentary or criticism about the subtitles themselves, their appreciation or functionality. The terms occurred most often in individual reviews of subtitled foreign-language films or series, or in the listings or reviews of films playing at film clubs and festivals specializing in productions in languages other than French or English, like the Festival del Cine in Moncton, the Latin American Film Festival in Ottawa or the Reel Asian Film Festival in Richmond Hill. The same holds for the listings of Francophone film festivals like Cinemania in Montreal or Cinémental in Winnipeg. These entries were excluded.

Examples of discarded items

"In French with subtitles."
"Told in Gujarati with English subtitles."
"Subtitles are available in English and French."
"Presented with Russian subtitles"
"Animated film in Japanese with English subtitles."
"The movie is classified general and shown in French without English subtitles."
"Languages are English and Latin, with some subtitles."
"To activate English subtitles, click 'CC'."
"*Hevn* is a Norwegian production with English subtitles."

Polysemy

In the context of my study, the term "subtitles" refers to the use of visual text to render the translation onscreen (film, TV, video or online stream) of a vocalized form of communication (monologue, dialogue). During database searches, the word "subtitle" would also appear with reference to the subtitle of a book, movie/series or play; i.e., *Quentin Tarantino: The Cinema of Cool* (book), *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (movie); *24: Legacy* (series) or *The Dybbuk: Between Two Worlds* (play). Such articles were excluded as they do not fit the object of my study. The term "subtitles" was also used in multiple instances to describe the live projection on the set or on an electronic device of translated dialogue at a live theatre performance (21 times) or lyrics at a live opera performance (13 times). Those items were also excluded from the sample. An exception was made for the live-film screenings of operas, like the Met series, and DVD screenings, as they fit the accepted definition.

Limitations

The goal of my study is to improve the understanding of the conversations that Canadians have with respect to subtitles. However, my study is limited to Canadian newspapers and news websites, and therefore omits the many conversations that took place in other media, such as current affairs programs on radio and television and in social media that would have been

relevant. This being said, from a sociological perspective, newspapers both in print form and online are "material artefacts worth researching" because they "reflect social and cultural values of a certain place and time and often contain unique information that cannot be found anywhere else. Moreover, they carry a reflection of the language structure of a certain time." (Tanacković, Krtalić and Lacović, 2014, p. 2).

Furthermore, since the majority of texts analyzed as part of my study were written by seasoned entertainment journalists and film critics, they may reflect the biases of those in a privileged position, therefore limiting us to the opinions of this professional group. That said, several letters to the editor published in newspapers about subtitles have been included in the sample. Some articles include the subtitle-related comments of interviewees. *La Presse*'s pop culture and television columnist Hugo Dumas has on a number of occasions commented on and reported his readers' attitude towards subtitles. More notably, in June 2016 he even launched an informal poll to take the pulse of his Francophone followers on social media by asking them how they watched their favourite American or foreign-language TV series, dubbed or with subtitles, breathing new life into the whole sub/dub debate (Dumas, 2016).

Objectivity of the news media

The question of subtitle appreciation presents an underlying tension: Are people's attitudes towards subtitles fundamentally individual, based on personal preference, or social, based on a general consensus? In case of the latter, journalists and movie critics likely exert influence over their readers and may play a determining role in changing what was at one point in time a negative consensual view – subtitles are to be steered clear of – to a more positive one – subtitles are to be desired.

According to *Elsevier's Dictionary of Psychological Theories*, one of "the most prominent components of an attitude is its "affective/evaluative (feeling) dimension" and for social psychologists, components in shaping and explaining an attitude are "who initiates the communication, and how credible is the person or institution," as well as "the channel," such as newspapers" (Roeckelein, 2006, p. 47). In addition, according to Balahur et al., opinions are expressed a little more frequently "in product or film reviews." Further, the authors argue that, in news articles, "automatically identifying sentiment that is not expressed lexically is rather difficult." (Balahur et al., 2010, p.1). These writers make an often-unstated truth claim to be presenting facts:

> [News articles] give an impression of objectivity so that journalists will often refrain from using clearly positive or negative vocabulary. They may resort to other means to express their opinion, such as embedding statements in a more complex discourse or argument structure, they may omit some facts and highlight others, they may quote other persons who say what they feel, etc. (Balahur et al., p.1).

Mahima Singh, who recently conducted the study "Trump and the Media: A sentiment analysis of news articles before and after his inauguration," expressed the belief that the high percentage of neutral articles she collected likely corroborated "the news media's objectivity" (Singh, 2018).

Several of the items examined for this research project were interviews with specialists such as film directors and film festival programmers or with members of the general public who attend screenings or watch films or TV series from their home. In these items, a significant proportion of text analyzed came from quotations. This text therefore did not necessarily reflect the opinion of the author. However, as Laura Anne Way noted, "Quotations give us insight into the views of the actor being quoted and into the nature of media coverage itself because journalists are forced to choose which comments from an actor are newsworthy." (Way, 2013).

Since a good percentage of the articles collected for my study were opinion pieces expressing subjective viewpoints (newspaper columns, film and TV reviews), the question of "media objectivity" had to be taken into consideration. Professor of linguistics and journalism studies Dr. Peter R.R. White argues that a "news item" is "a distinctive text type" with "rhetorical potential … to influence assumptions, beliefs, value judgments and expectations." (White, 2000, p.1).

In the research methods and practices section of her comprehensive study of the various historical approaches to audience reception of AVTs, Serenella Zanotti cautions, citing Mereu Keiting, that "Although a direct correlation cannot be made between critical reception and audience response, press reviews can still be useful in understanding how translated films were received in a given historical context, especially when there is a scarcity of primary source materials, as is often the case with intertitled films" (Zanotti, 2018, p. 147).

Semiotic and multimodal approaches

Viewers of subtitled productions simultaneously process text and images visually, and the semiotic approach lends itself well to studying the impact of subtitles on audiences. In the specialized field of translation for the screen or the stage, there is an interest in measuring the impact of subtitles and surtitles/supertitles (theatre, opera) on audiences and viewing behaviours. Authors such as Marvin Carlson favour the semiotic approach. Carlson has written a number of essays on how "supertitles" at the theatre trigger a "semiotic process within an audience" (Carlson, 2007, pp. 13-19). In this regard, the anthology of essays edited by Zoe de Linde and Neil Kay, *The Semiotics of Subtitling*, gives clear insights into the process of audience reception and can explain why some audiences dislike subtitles, which they find distracting and intrusive (Kristiansen, 2008, p. 99).

Since subtitles are inherently multimodal as images and text interact to create meaning, the field of multimodal discourse analysis, which draws on the semiotic approach, also offers useful insights into audience reception. For example, in their introduction to multimodal critical discourse analysis, intended to provide critical discourse analysts with a detailed overview of approaches "to analyze a range of media text," Machin and Mayr describe "mental processes" as "processes of sensing" that "can be divided into three classes: cognition…, affection…, and 'perception'… allow[ing] us to gain an insight into the feelings or states of mind of certain participants." Verbs describing affection that have been identified in text "… not only tell us what we should do, or what has happened, but also how people feel about things." They refer to Van Leeuwen's idea that "social roles, as reinforced in texts, prescribe not only actions and identities, but also feelings." (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 107-108). With regard to "affection", they give examples of "verbs for liking, disliking or fearing" such as "Peter liked the film a lot" (p. 107).

While some of the results and questions associated with semiotic and multimodal analytical approaches can be used to further explain the affective response of audiences to subtitles, my study is not rooted in the semiotic tradition with respect to subtitle analysis. The primary analytical focus remains the thematic analysis of the commentary about subtitles in the Canadian news media and not the analysis of the presentation of subtitles themselves.

In *Newspaper Coverage of Interethnic Conflict: Competing visions of America*, Shah and Thorton note the importance of textual analysis in identifying significant themes and stress the importance of determining "the specific ways certain aspects of issues are highlighted and given prominence, whereas other aspects are downplayed, de-legitimized, or ignored" (Shah &

Thorton, 2014, p. 17). Shah and Thorton reference Gamson's seminal essay *News as Framing: Comments on Graber*, suggesting that several strategies can be found to approach this challenge.

According to Gamson, for whom "the informational content of news reports is less important than the interpretive commentary that surrounds it," facts "take on their meaning by being embedded in a frame or story line that organizes them and gives them coherence, selecting certain ones to emphasize while ignoring others. Think of news as telling stories about the world rather than presenting 'information', even though the stories, of course, include factual elements" (Gamson, 1989, pp. 157-158).

Multi-method approach

Because the available sources in my sample primarily focused on the acceptance or not of subtitles more than the inter-relation of text and visual image on screen, this study embraces a multi-method approach drawing on different methodological and historiographical traditions of audience reception that focus on setting out how, overtime, various attitudes towards subtitles may or may not have shifted and using primarily as sources various news items that were published in Canadian newspapers between May 01-2014 and May 01-2018. Finally, as mentioned in the Limitations and relevance of scope section of our Methodological Considerations, on p. 28, 38 (16%) of the 244 news items examined as part of my study made direct reference to Netflix. My analysis will therefore be reflective of the fact that the online streaming giant occupies a large portion of the conversation relating to subtitles in Canada.

Discussion

As noted in my discussion of limitations in previous sections, my review provides a broad scan of scholarly opinion, in addition to my qualitative analysis of Canadian media texts and examples from cinema and TV, both of those elements in French as well as English. This allows me to provide a more general picture, rather than a statistical breakdown, of the changing reception of subtitles and attitudes towards them and the debates in which proponents, critics and audience members set out their positions.

The Scandinavian influence

As observed in international media, recent Danish television series have "captivated viewers worldwide" and they "take place in a country that few know, and in a language that even fewer understand" (Albrechsten, 2012). In an article about strong female characters in recent Netflix productions, Rick Blue writes in the *Montreal Gazette*: "If you are into reading subtitles, the great Swedish-Danish production of *The Bridge* also serves up a prime example of this new woman" (Blue, 2014).

The intent here is not to argue in a syllogistic manner that there is a causal relationship between these new strong female characters and enthusiasm for "reading subtitles." The point is that subtitles provide access and exposure to different worldviews, cultures and artistic productions. Saga Norén, *The Bridge*'s main character, is a modern-day "tragic heroine" who gets the job done despite her tragic personal past. She may or may not fit Rachel C. Falenstern's definition of tragic heroines, who are "distinguished by their willing submission to their own destruction for the sake of a larger cause" (Falkenstern, 2017). However, Blue and Falkenstern both acknowledged the recent rise of strong female characters in TV and film productions and Norén most certainly fits the bill.

What is then the secret of the "transnational appeal" of a series like *The Bridge*, and could it resonate with Canadians? Annette Hill, Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Lund University, did a case study of the reception and engagement of a mix of local Swedish and Danish audiences, and reached the conclusion that "engaging with multi-layered storytelling and reading subtitles makes for intensities of cognitive and emotional engagement with the drama, and suggests a sense of place and time is critical to understanding cultural engagement with transnational drama" (Hill, 2018, p. 3).

Hill discusses at length how the format, genre and characters of the series were the not-so-secret ingredients for engaging audiences:

> *The Bridge* has all the hallmarks of Nordic noir: it has a gloomy atmosphere evoking melancholy and fear, strong characters struggling with emotional issues, police procedural details, and a critique of social and political contexts. It also has elements that make it an original drama: there is the border territory and bridge between the two nations which is central to the narrative; dual languages that add subtitling, or dubbing, to audience engagement with the storytelling; and a female detective who has difficulties communicating with people, suggesting a personality of the autism spectrum and inscribing a notion of otherness that becomes part of the human drama (p. 13).

One of the characters that Swedish detective Norén has some difficulty communicating with is her Danish partner Rohde. In the Canadian context, the idea of cross-border cooperation between two cops of different cultures and languages has proven to be a successful one. Domestically, the 2006 action-comedy *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* became one of the highest-grossing Canadian films in history. The *Montreal Gazette* review of its sequel, released in May 2017, raised interesting points regarding the function of language in both movies. What made the trademark of the first film was "the linguistic rift" between the "loosey-goosey rock'n' roll franco guy and the uptight anglo" (Kelly, 2017). This is "secondary to the main story," in the sequel, writes Kelly, as the two cops work together to take on an American gang and the cultural differences are more marked between Canadians and Americans than between an Ontarian and a

Quebecer. (Kelly, 2017). Producer and lead actor Patrick Huard explained that this is in part because "as a country, as a province, as a society, we are 10 years later and our relationship to the language and everybody else on the planet is not the same. So for me, it would have been like telling old jokes to do the same thing" (Kelly, 2017).

Huard thus gives credence to the idea that on a national level, intercultural language dynamics have changed over the last decade, as they have internationally. His film had to reflect this shift and the idea that the cross-cultural narrative had changed over the time between the first instalment and the sequel. This reinforces Hill's argument that attention to place and time, the types of narrative in the genre and the storytelling are instrumental in achieving transnational success.

That said, the Scandinavian production was not discussed in Quebec newspapers from May 2014 to May 2018, since it was the North American spinoff produced by FX that was picked up by Télé-Québec earlier in 2013. In January 2014, Hugo Dumas of *La Presse* commented on the adaptation taking place at the USA-Mexico border: "C'est une mode présentement chez les créateurs de télévision, l'héroïne de *The Bridge* est une agente complexe, tourmentée et souffrant d'un désordre psychologique comme Carrie dans *Homeland* ou Sarah dans *The Killing*. Ça commence à sentir le cliché que cette flopée d'antihéroïnes atypiques" (Dumas, 2014). Where Rick Blue of the *Montreal Gazette* saw the beginning of a welcome trend, Dumas of *La Presse* wrote that this slew of unconventional anti-heroines is starting to smell like a cliché. Are then television or film productions at a turning point in terms of gender representation and empowerment? Are series like *The Bridge* or Marvel's *Jessica Jones,* both available on Netflix Canada, the exceptions, or are they becoming part of the norm? In a 2016 *Globe and Mail* article about the lack of diverse ethnic and gender representation in Hollywood,

both in front of and behind the camera, Kate Taylor recognizes that at the Academy Awards, "women fared much better this year than last, since three of the Oscar Best Picture nominees – *Room*, *Brooklyn* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* – all feature female protagonists" (Taylor, 2016a).

This may be the case for some productions with strong female lead characters, but not all of them have made their way into Netflix Canada's catalogue. Professor of Cultural Studies and Communications Latham Hunter announces in the opinion section of the *Hamilton Spectator* that she will be attending several screenings of the TIFF Kids International Film Festival with her children, to whom she writes: "You're going to have even MORE fun than the other kids because your screen time will have subtitles! Woo hoo!" (Hunter, 2017). She then describes the strong female lead of the German-language film *Mountain Miracle – An Unexpected Friendship* and observes, "When filmmakers build this kind of character and then challenge the audience to figure her out and care about her, they're not giving us an easy task. But when an audience meets such a challenge (and enjoys it ... *even with the subtitles* [my italics]) the whole process reinforces how understanding the messy complexities of humanity - getting beyond the idea that people can be divided into 'good' and 'bad' camps - is worthwhile" (Hunter, 2017). She concludes her article with the recommendation that Netflix add this kind of film to its catalogue. This recommendation also demonstrates the key role that online streaming services play in terms of the exposure given to foreign-language productions. Wanting to spend time with her teenage sons revisiting her favourite films, *Montreal Gazette* journalist Lesley Chesterman laments the difficulty she had in finding "black-and-white movies, and anything with subtitles - even the wonderful *Life Is Beautiful*. Sob! … Sadly, some of my favourite movies are still not available on Netflix or iTunes, like *Cinema Paradiso*, *Cocoon* and the sweeping Claude Lelouch film *Les uns et les autres*" (Chesterman, 2018).

Attitudes towards subtitles: One bite at a time

Subtitles provide access to the content of a foreign-language production that is deemed culturally valuable by the viewer, despite the effort required (i.e., "even with the subtitles"). Gambier discusses the various elements of AVT reception studies, which involve "the role that AVT plays in the circulation of foreign language films or how the presence of AVT influences choices about film viewing and cinema attendance" (Gambier, 2018, p. 56). He explains that there are different types of reception when watching a subtitled production, and one is termed "*repercussion*, understood as an attitudinal issue (what are the viewer's preferences and habits regarding the mode of AVT?), and the sociocultural dimension ... which influences the receiving process (what are the values, the ideology transmitted in the AV programmes?)" (p.57).

One argument is that video on demand and streaming services that provide increased access to foreign-language productions play a role in this shift in mentality in favour of subtitles. In a 2016 *Globe and Mail* article, the Ontario Media Development Corporation's Manager of Industry Initiatives, James Weyman, is quoted as saying that he believes "streaming services such as Netflix have whetted audience tastes for eclectic international fare, and made North Americans less allergic to subtitles" (Schneller, 2016). The allergy analogy is commonly invoked to describe the American's negative sentiment towards subtitles and highlight Netflix's role as a game changer, with series like *Narcos*. In Sherbrooke's *La Tribune*, Jean-François Benoît wrote: "Pour la petite histoire, même si les producteurs savaient le public des États-Unis allergique aux sous-titres, ils ont choisi de tourner *Narcos* principalement en espagnol lorsque les Colombiens échangent entre eux. Une belle démonstration d'indépendance qui donne à la série un cachet unique" (Benoît, 2015). But is this a matter of allergy or a matter of taste? If the latter is true, then another analogy, as in the *Narcos* model (of a parent "slipping in squash into the mac and

cheese"), mentioned earlier, page 15, would then be food-related, of which there is no shortage in the news items covered. In 2015, the *Toronto Star* republished an article by Mark Olsen, film reviewer with the *Los Angeles Times,* about the Palm Springs International Film Festival, for which he interviewed the festival's director Darryl Macdonald. Olsen observes that "though the festival's programming has a strong emphasis on foreign-language films, there is still some conventional star power as well. 'There are still so many people in this country who wouldn't cross the street to go to a film with subtitles or someone they don't recognize,' said Macdonald. 'And that's why you salt in some quality films with more popular appeal'" (Olsen, 2015). In a Q&A interview in the *Telegraph-Journal* with New Brunswick director Jon Dewar, the interviewer asked: "What trait do you despise most in others?" Dewar replied:

> I really despise it when people are dismissive of or scoff at a film because it's foreign or it has subtitles, it's black and white, or if it's a more art-house style than Hollywood. It bugs me because it can be so narrow-minded. I've always said to people I feel like that's like only eating from one food group - only eating protein and never eating vegetables. You have to get that whole range of an art form to really appreciate it (Dewar, 2015).

Along the same lines, the *Globe & Mail*'s Barry Hertz does not mince its words when reviewing the screen adaptation of *Ghost in the Shell,* which was released in theatres in March 2017 and made available on Netflix Canada in February 2018. First, he points out the distributor's deceitful marketing strategy of omitting from the film's promotional trailer the dialogues featuring all-around Japanese superstar Takeshi Kitano's "in his native tongue and subtitled for English audiences." This strategy is discussed on page 16 of my Literature Review. Second, Hertz comments on the much-publicized controversial casting of the film's lead, Scarlett Johansson, as its Japanese heroine: "Just as Paramount believes the mere presence of subtitles or foreign actors in a trailer can turn delicate North American audiences away, so, too, does the studio cling to the notion that Western moviegoers just cannot handle their entertainment unless

it is sandwiched between the whitest of white-bread elements" (Hertz, 2017a). Similarly, Netflix Canada has included only one short line in Norwegian in all of the four trailers promoting the streaming giant's hit series *Lilyhammer*. This proves that alike distributors, subscription-based streaming companies employ the same deceitful promotional strategy of hiding subtitles, despite their claim to be pushing for the mainstream distribution of subtitled productions.

Lilyhammer

David Zurawik's 2014 article in the *Baltimore Sun* titled "Lilyhammer on Netflix might just be the future of TV," republished in the *Toronto Star,* regards the Norwegian-American television series as a trailblazer in terms of the general public's acceptance of subtitles: "No matter what country you are in, there are so many different languages spoken among the characters that you can't view the series without subtitles. (I tried and missed a lot of the jokes)" (Zurawik, 2014). He quotes the series' lead actor, Steven Van Zandt, as observing: "The fact that I'm an American starring in a Norwegian show that's mostly in subtitles but not completely, it's an odd combination of things. But it's an integration of cultures, which lends itself to be a bit of an archetype for the future" (Zurawik, 2014). In the *Financial Pos*t, Josh McConnell reports that:

> Setting its sights on emerging markets…, Netflix is working to perfect subtitles and dubbing done in other languages. ... Netflix is also innovating when it comes to localization – the subtitles and dubbing done in other languages. 'In 2012, we launched *Lilyhammer* in seven languages and 96 language assets,' said Denny Sheehan, Netflix's director of content localization and quality control (McConnell, 2017).

In *La belle province*

The topic of a promising newfound acceptance of subtitles was very present in the Francophone media from May 2014 to May 2018. In 2015, the movie theatre Le Tapis Rouge in Trois-Rivières celebrated its second anniversary and announced a 43% increase in attendance

since it opened. President and film curator Jacques Foisy, interviewed by the local daily *Le Nouvelliste*, is reported as announcing that for upcoming programming, he would "poursuivre dans la direction actuelle en maintenant une bonne proportion de films sous-titrés qui obtiennent de plus en plus l'adhésion des cinéphiles trifluviens." Foisy is directly quoted as saying, "Au début, on a noté une certaine réticence mais on considère que c'est une plus-value de voir le film dans sa version originale et ça nous permet également d'obtenir de bons films qui n'ont pas de version française. Les gens l'apprécient de plus en plus, ce qui nous permet de rehausser la qualité de la programmation" (Houde, 2015). In other words, in his opinion, moviegoers are increasingly warming up to subtitled films, even if a certain reluctance was noted at first. Le Tapis Rouge considers it value added to see a film in its original version and allows the staff to seek out foreign-language productions that have not been released in a French-language version, which in turn enhances the quality of their programming. A similar point of view was expressed 90 km south of Trois-Rivières in the smaller city of Joliette, as it prepared its upcoming *Cinérépertoire* film series, featuring productions such as the 2017 Swedish production *The Square*. In the local newspaper *L'Action*, Frédéric Venne of Les Cinémas RGFM is quoted as saying that "Les sous-titres ne sont aucunement une embûche à la popularité d'un film" (Brouillette, 2018). In the *Journal de Montréal*, Maxime Demers reports that the American biographical drama *Straight Outta Compton* was shown in Quebec in 20 different theatres and brought in $415,000 in 10 days. He quotes Stéphanie Nolin, spokesperson for the Quebec City box-office agency Cinéac, as acknowledging that "Pour un film présenté uniquement en version originale anglaise et en version avec sous-titres français, la réception est plutôt bonne" (Demers, 2015). In the *Journal de Québec*, political scientist and reporter Christian Dufour is enthusiastic about the German film *Im Labyrinth des Schweigens* (Labyrinth of Lies). He comments that for

this fascinating work in German aimed at a wide audience, "On s'habitue vite aux sous-titres français" (Dufour, 2015b). Again, quickly getting used to subtitles seems intertwined with the quality of the cinematic production.

Attitude in the United States towards subtitles

Quebecers are also interested in the sentiment towards subtitles of their neighbours to the south. In *La Presse,* film critic Marc-André Lussier conveys Helen Mirren's criticism of Disney's Dreamworks Studios in the *Guardian* for having cut scenes originally shot in French for *The Hundred-Foot Journey*, as "La réalité, c'est qu'il s'agit d'un film de Disney. L'autre réalité, c'est que le public américain n'accepte pas les sous-titres" (Lussier, 2014). Lussier also reports a similar struggle that Quebec filmmaker Philippe Falardeau went through while producing *The Good Lie,* about the settlement in the US of a small group of childhood friends who are refugees from the Second Sudanese Civil War. Falardeau describes to the reporter the initial inclination on the part of the film's producers to have the scenes in the South Sudan refugee camps all shot in English:

> Je savais qu'au départ ... les producteurs auraient souhaité que le film se déroule entièrement en anglais, même au début, alors que l'intrigue est campée au Soudan du Sud. Personnellement, c'est une convention que je n'accepte pas. D'autant que la méconnaissance de la langue de ces réfugiés à leur arrivée en Amérique constitue un ressort dramatique. J'ai alors rappelé à Ron Howard que 15 % des dialogues du *Da Vinci Code* étaient sous-titrés. Il m'a dit que le public était prêt pour ça (Lussier, 2014).

Falardeau's producer, Ron Howard, finally admitted that the audience was now ready to have scenes shot in the original language with subtitles.

Netflix's *Narcos*, Omni's *Blood and Water*

In the *Journal de Québec*, Sophie Durocher applauds "la décision audacieuse de Netflix" to have all of the characters in *Narcos* speak Spanish with subtitles, "ce qui serait impensable sur une grande chaine généraliste. [On a mainstream TV channel this would be unthinkable]" (Durocher, 2015). Netflix's original series *Narcos* and *Orange Is the New Black* are cited as being gamechangers in the way viewers approach subtitled foreign-language productions. In 2017, *USA Today* attributes "Berlitz-ification" specifically to these two television series (Keveny, 2017). Hugo Dumas in *La Presse* observed that viewers subjected to conversations in alternating languages by characters in *Orange Is the New Black* watched the series without grumbling about the subtitles, and that the series' sex- and expletive-fuelled dialogue rings true and echoes the tough environments in which its characters grew up (Dumas, 2015a). Whether the viewer is won over or put off depends on the viewer's perception of verisimilitude in the dialogue, acting and subtitles.

> TV is suddenly speaking in many tongues. The small screen, once resistant to foreign dialogue with English subtitles, is becoming a modern-day Babel of sorts, as scripted American series, especially of the high-end variety, more frequently feature non-English-speaking characters. ... Reasons for the linguistic expansion range from creative to demographic to economic, but producers say verisimilitude is the motivating force. *The Americans* casts native Russians, even checking their accents, to play Soviet characters in the '80s spy drama (Keveny, 2017).

As discussed earlier, much of the decision-making about whether or not to include subtitles if characters will be speaking a language other than English depends upon the strategic decisions made by producers, production companies and executives, based on estimated reach and box office revenues. Will subtitles deter or augment that reach? Netflix's position is the latter. In the *ULG Daily*, Jake Schild discusses the online streaming giant's growth strategy and points out that, "according to the Center for Immigration Studies, there were roughly 65 million U.S.

residents who spoke a language other than English at home in 2015" (Schild, 2017). Demographics are also shifting in Canada. For example, according to the 2011 National Household Survey, "Toronto residents identified more than 230 countries of birth [in] 2011 (and) just over half (51%) claimed English as a mother tongue" (*Toronto's Vital Signs 2014 Report*). In 2011 the authors of *Representations of Diversity in Canadian Television Entertainment Programming: Case Studie*s concur that "Toronto in particular is regarded as a cosmopolitan city, and an important gateway for Canada's immigration system" (Media Action Media, 2011, p. 107). Yet, as the *Globe and Mail*'s Kate Taylor points out:

> Dramas shot in Toronto or Vancouver... never recognize the multilingual realities of those cities. That's why many observers were so excited by the arrival of *Blood and Water*, the Vancouver police drama that aired on the multicultural station OMNI last year [2015].... Seeing the cultural dynamism of any Canadian city reflected that accurately in a television drama is highly unusual but does suggest audiences may be ready for more multilingual TV (Taylor, 2016b).

The *Globe and Mail*'s John Doyle describes *Blood and Water* in the following manner: "It's a TV show with Chinese characters and some subtitles. It's not revolutionary. It's not a major public-service endeavour. *Blood and Water*... is it [sic] and it's a half-hour, eight-part thriller. Simple as that. There is nothing in it to alienate any viewer of contemporary TV thrillers" (Doyle, 2015). Nothing to "fuss" about, writes Doyle.

Following the election of Canada's new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on October 19, 2015, and the much-mediatized announcement of the full cabinet attaining new heights with respect to gender parity and diversity representation, CBC's "The National" held a discussion aimed at providing an overview of the country's film and television industry stance regarding diversity and representation: "There's been much talk this week about diversity in the federal cabinet, how it was built to look like Canada. Well, Canada's film and television industry is also

looking to this country's multicultural fabric to find new stories and new audiences." (Nichols et al., 2015). The following excerpt of this conversation addresses the shift in attitude in favour of subtitles, the need for more diverse representation in Canadian television, Netflix's *Narcos* notoriousness, verisimilitude, and the achievement of Scandinavian television series:

> DEANA SUMANAC-JOHNSON (REPORTER): ...The organizers of Toronto's Reel Asian Film Festival say there is a market for shows like *Blood and Water*. Since the festival's inception 19 years ago, they've seen their audience numbers quadruple. And subtitles, long seen as a barrier for English-speaking audiences, no longer put off prospective viewers.
>
> BETTY XIE (REEL ASIAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL):
> We have such a huge immigrant population, and we have such, like, a need for shows like that. So I feel like shows like that will only increase.
>
> DEANA SUMANAC-JOHNSON (REPORTER):
> Netflix's *Narcos*, for example, is increasing in popularity. It's broadcast mostly in Spanish.
>
> BEN LU (PRODUCER):
> This is the age of authenticity. There are a lot of Nordic shows speaking Swedish and Danish and they are subtitled. Last time I checked, most of us don't speak Danish. But the shows are still gripping.

Kim's Convenience

Kim's Convenience is a television comedy series produced by CBC about a Canadian-Korean family running a convenience store in Toronto. The series is available on Netflix Canada, Netflix US and to other international Netflix audiences. Korean characters in this show all speak English to one another, including the Korean parents. The show's lead actor, Paul Sun-Hyung Lee, who plays Mr. Kim, criticizes this aspect in an interview by the *Toronto Star*. Tony Wong reports in his review of the first season that "one thing Lee would like to see in Season 2, if there is one for *Kim's Convenience*, is for more Korean to be spoken between Appa and his wife,

Umma." He then adds "Other shows, most recently the Toronto-shot *Heroes Reborn*, have already helped make subtitles acceptable to mainstream audiences" (Wong, 2016).

In *LooseLeaf*, a bi-annual Toronto-based magazine, Elise Yoon also questions the verisimilitude of *Kim's Convenience* from the same perspective:

> I find myself disappointed. For one, I cannot get over the way Umma and Appa speak to each other in accented English. Why can't we have a multilingual show with English subtitles, CBC? In the play I remember the Korean dialogue, no subtitles, no translation, but a stunned, alienated audience that awkwardly, intrusively watched something so personal as a Korean family argument. That was beautiful. Why can't we have this on television? (Yoon, 2017).

When Tony Wong writes that "other shows have already helped make subtitles acceptable to mainstream audiences," he is pointing to the fact that the context is now different, that something has changed in the attitude toward subtitles from a production standpoint. Lee, quoted by Wong, adds:

> We're definitely not speaking enough Korean. In real life, of course they would be speaking non-stop Korean, but we understand that we have to set up the world for a broader audience. But layering in the Korean more and more would be a fantastic goal. If the audience has invested in us, they won't mind reading the occasional subtitle and it makes it more authentic (Wong, 2016).

Lee is treading carefully when he suggests that the CBC should be "layering in the Korean more and more." This points to the fact that there is still hesitation in calling for foreign-language dialogue in a mainstream Canadian production. Lee's advice is reminiscent of the *Washington Post*'s remarks regarding the gradual introduction of Spanish dialogue in Netflix's *Narcos* later on in the show. This operation is akin to "a parent furtively adding the butternut squash to mac and cheese" (Merry, 2015).

Canadian identity politics and the Two Solitudes

While only 12 (5%) of the news items reviewed as part of my study directly address questions related to Canadian identity politics, three of them pointed to a shift in attitude regarding subtitles. Part of the conversation around subtitles in Canadian media concerns speculation regarding the impact of an increased number of subtitled television and cinematographic productions in languages other than French making their way onto Quebec screens, at film festivals or in the catalogues of online streaming giants. In the rest of Canada, the dominance of subtitled French-language films in events such as the Canadian Screen Awards is challenging other perspectives. Until sentiment shifted in favour of subtitles, everyone in the Canadian TV-film world seemed to stay on their own official language side.

The *Globe and Mail*'s Barry Hertz provided an insightful analysis into the phenomenon in an article titled "Why Quebecois cinema finds itself trapped within its provincial borders" (Hertz, 2016). He noticed that at a Toronto International Film Festival event aimed at raising awareness of excellence in Canadian film, only two films produced in Quebec had had theatrical releases in the rest of Canada. In support of his argument, he interviewed French Canadian film directors and screenwriters Philippe Lesage (*The Demons*) and Philippe Falardeau (*My Internship in Canada*). Hertz discussed with them the challenges involved in promoting French-language films in the rest of Canada and concluded that "the obvious obstacle is, of course, language. It can be a difficult enough sell to get moviegoers to take in homegrown English cinema, let alone films with subtitles" (Hertz, 2016). In his conversation with Falardeau, the up-and-coming director flipped the question of how French-language films can be better distributed in the rest of Canada: '"How can we promote English-language films in Quebec? It's the same problem,' Falardeau adds, joking that Canadian films are like Canadian beers: There are great

products all over the country, they just don't cross provincial borders. (The fact that he admits he first made this quip when accepting a prize at the 2007 Genie Awards only makes the allegory more depressing.)" (Hertz, 2016).

The point is made, even if the analogy is not exact, because French-language films in Canada do reach audiences through Francophone film festivals such as the Festival international du cinéma francophone en Acadie (FICFA) and cultural organizations like the Alliance Française. English-Canadian productions do cross various provincial borders; for example, a film produced in Nova Scotia will be shown on select screens in Winnipeg and Vancouver, in Montreal at the Canada Independent Film Festival, and eventually on the CBC or other networks like OMNI television, Bravo (Canada) and now Netflix Canada. That said, Falardeau may have a different frame of reference since he directs relatively big-budget productions outside Canada. According to IMDB, Falardeau's *The Good Lie*, an American production starring Reese Witherspoon, had an estimated $20M budget, and it was available for six months on Netflix Canada, from August 2016 to February 2017.

In Quebec, Netflix is considered to be, among other things, a new competitor to contend with for the film festivals and movie theatres. Karen Hansen is the co-owner of La Maison du Cinéma in Sherbrooke, the biggest independent film theatre in the province. In May 2018, she shared her concern with *La Tribune*: "Le défi, c'est de concurrencer Netflix, les cinémas maison, les vidéos sur demande. ... [Nous présentons] une combinaison de films commerciaux et des films d'auteur parfois étrangers, parfois sous-titrés et plus on en offre, plus les gens en demandent" (Noël, 2018). In short, she argues, the more subtitled productions we screen, the more audiences want. This growing appetite for subtitled productions in Quebec is a cause of concern for some. *Le Devoir* published a response by Jeanne Gagnon to a special report by their

film critic Odile Tremblay regarding the poor representation of French cinema on Quebec screens. Gagnon essentially agrees with Tremblay on her diagnosis, but adds that Quebecers are in the thrall of the Anglophone film distribution market. She predicts that soon English-language films will completely take over Quebec screens, "car la majorité accepte de voir un film avec sous-titres ou encore de le voir dans la langue d'origine" (Gagnon, 2016). In short, the growing positive sentiment toward subtitles in Quebec means that more English-language and foreign-language productions will be making their way onto Quebec screens and potentially leave less room for French-language productions.

Mommy

Zanotti argues that "interesting insights on reception may be provided by viewers' comments and letters to the editor" (Zanotti, 2018, p. 149). One particular letter was written after Quebec director Xavier Dolan's critically acclaimed feature film *Mommy* had won over 50 awards in Canada and abroad, 13 of them from the Canadian Screen Awards (CSA). In a Letter to the Editor published in the *Toronto Star*, Ronald Weir of Thornhill, Ontario comments on *Mommy*'s crushing CSA win by arguing that the CSAs, in particular, are in his opinion "irrelevant to the English- speaking population of Canada" (Weir, 2015):

> When it comes to the CSAs, I don't feel connected. The main reason is that the big winner this year [*Mommy*], as in so many other years, was made in what, for the majority of Canadians, is a foreign language. I have nothing against subtitles; in fact, during TIFF, I seek out international films as opposed to North American films. But it's very hard to compare a subtitled (or dubbed) film against one in your native language. Furthermore, I don't know what kind of distribution *Mommy* had, but I suspect it was limited to one or two "art house" cinemas. The film simply wasn't on my radar.... By virtue of its linguistic difference, Quebec continues to foster a thriving filmmaking industry and produces some very high-quality films -- many of which vie for, and win, the CSAs. But they are rarely distributed widely in the rest of Canada, and so go largely unnoticed. That's why the CSA awards will continue to be irrelevant to the English-speaking population of Canada" (Weir, 2015).

Unpacking the various layers of Weir's commentary is no easy task. First, he describes Canada's second official language as "what, for the majority of Canadians, is a foreign language." Also, regarding his province of residence, Ontario, he argues in another Letter to the Editor of the *Toronto Star* that, "for the most part, Ontarians don't really need or care about French, while a significant number of Quebecers realize that, on a continent of close to 400 million anglophones, they must either learn English or exist as an isolated minority" (Weir, 2017). As for Francophones who live in Ontario, Weir disapproves of a provincial government that would "accommodate this minuscule demographic" by "wasting precious tax dollars on services that benefit so few" (2017). In his 2015 letter about the CSAs, Weir claims that he has "nothing against subtitles; in fact, during TIFF, I seek out international films as opposed to North American films" (Weir, 2015), which would presumably include films in French made in France and other Francophone countries. This argument of sympathy in favour of subtitles, and therefore an assertion by association for not being prejudiced towards foreign languages, and more particularly in this case not prejudiced towards the French language in Canada, is what is known in critical thinking as an association fallacy or "friend argument" ("Association fallacy", n.d.; "Friend argument", n.d.). Also, *Mommy* led the Canadian announcement of TIFF's 2014 line-up, as reported in the Canadian media (Jagernauth, 2014).

Weir also admits that he does not know "what kind of distribution *Mommy* had, but I suspect it was limited to one or two 'art house' cinemas. The film simply wasn't on my radar" (Weir, 2015). As a matter of fact, given its Jury Prize win at Cannes in May 2014, *Mommy* appeared in 32 different cinemas across Canada outside Québec between the film's release in 2014 and the CSA ceremony (Y. Sauvageau, Director, Theatrical Sales, Les Films Séville, personal communication, August 3, 2018). This is definitely more than "one or

two 'art house cinemas'", a baseless assumption that falls into line with some comments relative to elitism discussed in earlier sections of my study. *Mommy* may not have been on Weir's "radar", but according to a search in Eureka.cc, in the twelve months after its big win in Cannes and before its selection as Canada's bid for the Oscar nomination in the foreign-language film category, it was mentioned 531 times in different English-language newspapers across Canada, including a newspaper in Medicine Hat and the *Cape Breton Post*. The week of its big CSA win in March 2015, it was named Film of the Week by the *Guardian*'s Peter Bradshaw. Finally, Weir's point about the poor "distribution" of French-language films across the country echoes the observations made by Hertz, Lesage and Falardeau, that "Quebec ... high-quality films ... are rarely distributed widely in the rest of Canada, and so go largely unnoticed" and that the French and English film markets are "essentially mutually exclusive" (Weir, 2015).

In both French and English media, part of the conversation about Dolan's film directly involved subtitles. Since the actors spoke throughout the film in a French-Canadian dialect and accent, two sets of subtitles were used, in standard French and in English, at various festival screenings and in French cinemas across Canada (Lacey, 2014; Knight, 2014; Lagacé, 2014; Warren, 2014). Patrick Lagacé quotes his colleague at *La Presse*, Marc Cassivi, in a *Globe and Mail* article that sets out to explain Dolan's international success to Anglophone readers. Cassivi is enthusiastic about the fact that Dolan " ...makes movies not in the 'international French' that would be understood almost everywhere in the francophonie, no, he makes them in Joual, in a patois that made me happy that Mommy was subtitled in Cannes!" (Lagacé, 2014). This enthusiasm is far from being shared by everyone. The eminent Film Studies professor Paul Warren wrote in *Le Devoir* that the use of Québec slang throughout the film worried him and that "Dolan n'y voit pas de problème. On n'a qu'à sous-titrer le film en langue française pour les

spectateurs qui parlent français… et à s'exprimer en anglais lors des conférences à Cannes" (Warren, 2014). Using a rather flimsy argument, he accuses Dolan of reaping the benefits of vernacular language in his film and expressing himself in English at media conferences like those at Cannes. Cassivi tells a completely different story. He informs his *La Presse* readers that at Cannes, during a press briefing, he watched Dolan answer a question from a Swedish reporter in Quebec French, although he can speak English flawlessly. Cassivi had to explain to his Swedish counterpart that this was perfectly logical, since Dolan was a French-Canadian presenting a film in France. His puzzled interlocutor replied that the French were perfectly capable of understanding English and that if this conference had taken place in Sweden, everyone would have spoken English. Cassivi simply replied that "Pour nous, c'est plus compliqué" (Cassivi, 2015).

Warren's criticism is rooted in a long-standing debate among Quebec intellectuals regarding the use of vernacular language by Quebec artists (Gauvin, 2015). One such intellectual is journalist and media personality Denise Bombardier. In an editorial published in the *Journal de Montréal*, she attacks Quebecers by saying that they like to believe "qu'ils possèdent des qualités qui les distinguent des canadiens anglais, mais aussi de nombreux autres peuples. D'abord, ils se font croire qu'ils aiment leur langue alors qu'ils la maltraitent, réduisent son vocabulaire et la rendent incompréhensible aux francophones d'ailleurs, qui ont besoin de sous-titres pour comprendre les films et les séries télévisées produits ici " (Bombardier, 2016). In this example, subtitles are clearly part of a discussion relating to Quebec identity politics.

The *Globe and Mail*'s film critic Liam Lacey is fully aware of Canada's competitive film markets, which are described by Weir as "mutually exclusive." He recounts what happened when

a Canadian journalist asked whether Xavier Dolan would consider it a victory for Quebec or Canada if he were to win a Palme d'Or:

> Dolan laughed at the loaded question. "Well played," he said before, after a lengthy pause, answering: "Should we win anything at all, I'm from Quebec and Quebec is in Canada as a matter of fact we know for sure. Whatever my political views are, I feel my movie is very Québécois… For me, it's not about a country or a province, which my generation don't relate to. It would be an extraordinary message for people of my generation, which I think is filled with a message of hope" (Lacey, 2014).

Dolan's candid answer brings up the generational dimension. Findings in *What makes us Canadian? A study of values, beliefs, priorities and identity*, a 2016 national polling produced in partnership by the Angus Reid Institute and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, confirm Dolan's observation that the sentiment of Canadian millennials regarding questions of national or provincial identity is different from that of former generations: "A significant number of young people saying their attachment to Canada is conditional;... regional divides on national unity and pride are fading;... age is now more of a driver of division on national attachment and pride than region" (Angus Reid Institute and CBC, 2016). Shachi Kurl, Executive Director of the Angus Reid Institute, commented that the poll's results "revealed that only 40 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 said they were very proud of Canada" in a Roshini Nair report for CBC News. "This is the first generation of watching movies or TV from other parts of the world. It's not just what they're reading from a local newspaper but consuming from the internet, from the pipeline of communication and information that's coming at them, and shaping their views and thoughts" (Nair, 2016).

Furthermore, the complex relationship that Francophone Quebecers have historically had with English is different for Dolan's generation. Sherry Simon argued that in *Mommy*:

> …if Dolan's language sounds to some extent like the Joual of the 1960s and 1970s, it in no way carries the same political agenda. His is simply the language of Montreal today, its street

> language, full of swear words (maybe more than usual) and peppered with English words that are hardly "English" anymore. … Dolan's generation has a relationship to English that is playful, casual, flippant, and, at times, appropriative. English words are simply there for the using, and in fact become French words once they have inhabited the language for some time. This doesn't mean that defenders of French (including language purists) have given up the good fight against the English language. Perhaps predictably, *Mommy* set off a new version of the language debate in Quebec, with several commentators stepping in to criticize the English—and swear-word-inflected— language in which the main characters lead their highly expressive language lives (Simon, 2015, p. 508).

Diversity and young audiences

Roshini Nair also interviewed Erica Isomura, a 24 year-old fourth-generation Japanese- and Chinese-Canadian who has a special interest in Canadian identity politics. Nair concludes that Isomura's "generation — bolstered by online communities and networks — is willing to reject the idea of one dominant Canadian culture and embrace multiple identities.... It's a feeling that's reflected in the polling data" (Nair, 2016). As discussed earlier, Canada's growing and increasingly diverse demographic is changing the country's media landscape and having an impact on the sentiment in favour of subtitles. This is especially true in a city like Toronto. Jason Anderson writes in the *Toronto Star* that, "thanks to the Toronto International Film Festival, Hot Docs and the city's formidable plethora of other film festivals, this city is full of savvy, well-travelled cinephiles who can appreciate adventurous and scintillating new big-screen offerings from every corner of the globe" (Anderson, 2016). For this to happen, there is a need to foster an appreciation of diverse cinema among the younger generations, and he praises the TIFF Kids International Film Festival, which has a core demographic of participants aged 3 to 13 and shows an important number of subtitled productions: "TIFF Kids is such a valuable means of fostering that tradition of film appreciation when moviegoers [are] at their most impressionable" (Anderson, 2016). The *Globe and Mail*'s Barry Hertz interviewed the TIFF Kids Festival Director Elizabeth Muskala about the festival's young audiences. "This is going to be someone's

first experience seeing a subtitled film. When you think of the memories that you want to pass on to your children, if you love cinema, this is something you want your children to experience, too. I feel a great responsibility to ensure we're bringing the best cinema to our young audiences" (Hertz, 2017b).

In 2015, Radio-Canada's Ralph-Bonet Sanon reported on the Freeze Frame International Film Festival for Kids in Winnipeg and interviewed its Artistic Director and co-founder Pascal Boutroy. Boutroy believes that screening subtitled films and documentaries in foreign languages helps to dispel a lot of clichés and stereotypes, and allows young audiences to identify with situations much more than they would watching formulaic American films which, he claims, totally lack diversity. Sanon asked Boutroy if the children appreciated and understood the meaning of the films that were screened at the festival:

> "Oui, tout à fait", répond ... Pascal Boutroy. "Depuis le début, j'ai vu des réactions, et ça brise beaucoup de clichés et de stéréotypes.... M. Boutroy a aidé à créer le festival parce qu'il trouvait que le paysage audiovisuel manquait de diversité et ne montrait que certains types de situation. "On peut avoir des jeunes Canadiens du Manitoba qui se reconnaissent dans un film japonais, ou du Burkina Faso ou de l'Uruguay, beaucoup plus que dans un film américain" (Sanon, 2015).

Sanon's article addresses the cultural mediation function of subtitled films in the Canadian context. He describes a few different examples provided by Boutroy of First Nations audiences responding favourably to the festival's films. This specific function of subtitled films plays a role in the way individuals and communities feel represented in the television and film landscape. New Canadians of Korean ancestry voiced their concerns with the inaccurate representation of their community when the two lead characters of the CBC's *Kim's Convenience*, both first-generation immigrants, spoke to each other in English, which did not feel like a faithful representation of the reality. At the same time, this discussion in Canadian media raised awareness about the fact that new Canadians would be proud to hear their mother tongue on

television and that other Canadians, through subtitles, would broaden their horizons and understanding of the newcomers' daily life.

This is also true for the big screen. First-generation Indian Joyita Sengupta spoke to the *Globe and Mail* about reading Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* when she was 14 years old and living in Etobicoke, a neighbourhood in the western part of Toronto. She was preparing herself to take her parents out to see the book's film adaptation: "When the film came out in theatres, we drove to our local theatre. I'll never forget the look of elation on their faces as the film started and they heard their mother tongue in its signature Calcutta accent, proudly ignoring the subtitles emblazoned across the screen" (Lahiri, 2017). Sengupta's recollection underscores the fact that not everyone needs subtitles, which also means that they can enjoy a film in its original language in the company of others who don't understand it and who can be exposed to their culture. This story confirms the empowerment felt by minority groups when they are represented in mass media.

Diversity and Indigenous peoples of Canada

According to the Minority Rights Group International's *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, "some 1.3 million indigenous people ... inhabit Canada, approximately 3.3 per cent of the population..." ["Canada – First Nations", n.d., Profile]. In the Province of Saskatchewan, it is the fastest growing demographic, and more and more people are learning Indigenous languages (Warick, 2017). On CBC Saskatoon, Randy Morin, a Cree voice actor in *Guardians Evolution*, a claymated series broadcast on APTN Kids, talked about the pride the Indigenous children experience when they hear their native language: "[The kids] feel really proud to hear their language. A lot of them don't understand the language but with subtitles they can understand what's going on.... I think there needs to be more productions like this both in

Cree and English, especially in Canada and with all the indigenous languages, because we are losing them really fast and it's a good way to retain them." ("Aboriginal stories told through animation," n.a., CBC News, 2016).

François Houde of Trois-Rivières' *Le Nouvelliste* maintains that Atikamekw dialogue in Chloé Leriche's film *Avant les rues* allows viewers to become immersed in a culture that is foreign to them, and that subtitles allow the filmmaker to capture the true nature of the characters:

> Le film est en langue atikamekw et ce n'est pas une bête approche pour simplement singulariser le produit. Au visionnement, on comprend rapidement que c'était la meilleure façon de nous tremper un tant soit peu dans cette culture qui nous est étrangère et que ce bain est essentiel. Les soustitres ne me dérangent jamais au cinéma et je les bénis quand les dialogues originaux dévoilent plus de vérité des personnages, ce qui est assurément le cas ici. (Houde, 2016a).

In *Canadian Geographic*, Nick Walker provides statistics regarding the different Indigenous languages in Canada: "The most recent Statistics Canada census data reveals the country's Indigenous linguistic landscape, the places where 60 languages belonging to 12 overarching families — Inuit, 10 First Nations and Michif (Métis) — are being used now. Most of these have been spoken, and have been evolving, for thousands of years — far longer than English or French" (Walker, 2017).

In her article about the linguicide of the ancestral languages of Canada's Indigenous people, Lorena Sekwan Fontaine reflects on how "since the late 1800s, Canada's educational system has played a significant role in the destruction of Indigenous languages" (Sekwan Fontaine, 2017, p. 184). In her article she puts particular emphasis on the devastating psychological effects experienced over decades by the "children [in Residential Schools] who resisted speaking French or English" and the "extreme physical abuse, ridicule, and simply a profound sense of loss" they experienced (p. 189). Sekwan Fontaine calls for the promotion of

the use of Indigenous languages as a step to reconciliation: “For a respectful and peaceful Canada, the continuation of Indigenous languages must be a responsibility we all share.” (p. 201). This shows that Canadians, moving towards reconciliation is far more complex than territorial acknowledgement speeches, apologies or the shedding of crocodile tears by politicians. Are Canadians ready to share the responsibility Sekwan Fontaine calls for?

Iglukik filmmaker Zacharius Kunuk told Beth Brown of *Nunavut News North*, that: “I've been called an activist because I've tried to use Inuktitut first on my films and subtitles to other languages. I'm just trying to preserve the culture and the language” (Brown, 2017).

Diversity and the Deaf, Late-Deafened and Hard of Hearing

As groups marginalized by the entertainment industry, both newcomers and the Indigenous people of Canada stressed the need for their voices to be heard, literally, and more often. Because language and culture are inextricably linked, this is a powerful argument in favour of subtitles as opposed to dubbing, or having actors whose first language is not English perform directly in English, as was the case for Netflix’s sequel to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Sword of Destiny* (see Literature Review, p. 14 - 15), which was shot in English and later dubbed in Mandarin. Going beyond questions of historical authenticity and verisimilitude, it is about empowerment, gaining control of the narrative and putting up resistance to dominant discourses. Those who are hearing impaired or deaf, may not be able to benefit from hearing different (any) languages from an aural standpoint, but they can still access the narrative of films and TV productions that were shot in an original language through subtitles.

In 2015, *Métro* reported that the Cinéma Beaubien in Montreal invested substantial sums in equipping the theatre with a sensor technology that allows people who are deaf or hard of hearing to read the subtitles: “Un premier pas pour rendre la culture universellement accessible”

(Maunay, 2015). But this type of commitment is far from universal. The *StarMetro* reported on the four-year struggle of a Toronto lawyer who is deaf to "have Air Canada improve closed captioning on in-flight movies and TV shows on the airline's free app, installed on his iPad. After trying more than a dozen, he gave up when none came equipped with closed captioning or subtitles" (Battersby, 2017).

Surprisingly, apart from these two articles, there were very few items in Canadian newspapers between May 1, 2014 and May 1, 2018 that discussed subtitles specifically in relation to hearing impairment and deafness. However, a number of articles discussed the use of subtitles to compensate for accents that are hard to understand, local dialects and colloquialisms, bad audio, mumbled or whispered dialogue, etc. Articles relating to hearing impairment in combination with intelligibility accounted for 29 (8%) of news items reviewed for this period. In "Qu'est-ce qu'il a dit?", *La Presse*'s Hugo Dumas mentions that mumbling is a phenomenon of global proportions: "Les émissions *Happy Valley*, *Broadchurch* et *Taboo* ont suscité le même type de remarques de téléspectateurs irrités et forcés d'activer les sous-titres dans leur langue maternelle. Comme quoi, le marmonnage surmonte toutes les barrières linguistiques" (Dumas, 2017a). Josh Freed of the *Montreal Gazette* could not agree more: "many North Americans watched the terrific, award-winning show *The Wire* by turning on their subtitles, because they couldn't understand the ghetto slang of African-American street drug dealers" (Freed, 2017).

Vergonha or intelligibility?

One particular phenomenon of interest to a study on this subject is the humiliation felt by some Quebecers and other Francophones when films in Quebecois French are presented with French subtitles to other Francophone audiences. In *Le Journal de Montréal*, Mathieu Bock-Côté argues that "Il n'y a rien de plus humiliant, pour les Québécois, que de voir leurs films soustitrés

en France, comme si nous parlions un dialecte incompréhensible dans une capitale civilisée" (Bock-Côté, 2014). This was a key element in the debate over the subtitling of Xavier Dolan's *Mommy* for both French and international audiences when it was screened at Cannes (see page 64). Stephanie David, who directed and acted in *Le goût des belvas*, a short film about the Acadian language in Cape Breton, added subtitles to facilitate comprehension. As she explained in *L'Acadie Nouvelle*: "Des fois, on ne sait pas trop comment prendre notre place, mais je crois justement que c'est peut-être dû au fait qu'on s'est fait souvent dire qu'il faut changer notre langue. Me semble que si on dit quelque chose qui fait de l'allure, l'autre personne va faire un effort et finir par comprendre" (Mousseau, 2015). Others believe that some French people are disingenuous and don't make the effort to understand a particular vocabulary or accent from another part of the French-speaking world. Interviewed by Marc-André Lussier of *La Presse*, French journalist and film critic Jean-Claude Raspiengeas stated his belief that this actually comes from a place of ignorance: "J'entends souvent dire que l'accent, le langage, le fait que les acteurs soient peu connus, font en sorte que le public français a des réticences. Ce ne sont que de mauvaises raisons. Il y a du plaisir à entendre votre langue et ça vaut la peine de s'accrocher. Je trouve absurde qu'on mette des sous-titres. Cela indique un rapport d'ignorance" (Lussier, 2017a).

From an ideological standpoint, there is a double standard in both in the Franco- and Anglosphere that may explain the malaise Bock-Côté was talking about. Films or TV programs produced in France are never subtitled in Quebec, and US shows are rarely subtitled in Australia or the UK. In their book "Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong: Why We Love France But Not the French," Nadeau and Barlow mention that in "television interviews for a special on Celine Dion, her family members were even subtitled … French Canadian TV never subtitles

Parisians, even when they are incomprehensible…" (Nadeau & Barlow, 2003, p. 167). In her essay "The Politics of Subtitling," Ingrid Piller argues that "subtitling varieties of English (as opposed to foreign languages) is thus a matter of ideology and identity construction as much as a matter of intelligibility. … Native speakers of English are presumed to be universally intelligible on Australian TV, even if theirs is a distant and obscure dialect. The speech of non-native speakers, by contrast, is presented as problematic and unintelligible even if they speak educated Standard English" (Piller, 2011).

Diversity and the LGBTQ+ community

Montreal-based filmmaker Arshad Khan's documentary film *Abu* received special attention in the *Globe & Mail* from reviewer Aparita Bhandari. The film is about Khan's complicated relationship with his father, the challenges of his family's immigration to Canada and his coming out as a gay man to "his close-knit Pakistani Muslim family" (Bhandari, 2018). Bhandari specifies that the film "opens in select theatres in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver [and] will also be available in a Hindi/Urdu version in some cinemas in the Greater Toronto Area, and with French subtitles in Montreal" (Bhandari, 2018). Normally, this quote would have been discarded from the sample of my study (see p. 39-40, in Methodological Considerations) but it was retained because the author had incorporated this information into the body of the text as valuable information to share with the readers, and not at the end as a descriptor. It provides critical information regarding the accessibility of the film in three cities located in three different provinces. Of particular importance here is to note that subtitles will allow some viewers who don't understand Hindi/Urdu to see a documentary film that conveys important cultural information about new Canadians they would not have access to otherwise. Also, other members of the LGBTQ+ community who are new Canadians may closely relate to Khan's story, and the

film may heighten some viewers' cultural comprehension or challenge other viewers' assumptions.

Image+Nation, Montreal's LGBT film festival, was struggling financially in 2014 and was not able to present subtitled versions of all the films on the program. The festival's organizers aware of the criticism of this shortcoming by festival-goers still went the extra mile in programming additional subtitled films. Charlie Boudreau, the festival's director, said to *La Presse canadienne*: "Pour le film d'ouverture, on a payé deux fois plus cher pour en obtenir une version soustitrée en français et on a davantage de films soustitrés comparativement à l'an dernier" (Fortier-Gauthier, 2014).

Subtitled films helping to broaden cultural perspectives and diversify audiences was a topic very much discussed in Canadian newspaper articles from 2014 to 2018, in particular by organizers of various film festivals across the country.

Film festivals and subtitles

Of the news items that were examined as part of my study, 30% (45 in French, 27 in English) commented on one aspect or another of a film festival's relationship to subtitles. The *Winnipeg Free Press* reporter Simon Fuller interviewed Chantal Vermette, co-ordinator of the 2014 edition of Cinémental, Manitoba's Festival of French-language Films. Vermette does not think that subtitles should be a barrier for the festival's audiences, believing that her own bilingual upbringing made her open to trying different films. But most importantly, like Boutroy of the Freeze Frame International Film Festival for Kids, she believes that films produced outside the US industry, in particular, have the power to broaden one's horizons:

> "For me, Hollywood isn't the only place to watch movies. I also love travelling and if you open your panorama and your mind to different films, it's like you're opening your mind to different landscapes," she said. "My desire is for people who have never watched a French movie to come and give it a shot. The board wants to appeal to nonFrench

> speakers, too. Subtitles shouldn't be a barrier. Does the movie speak to you? What really matters is the content," Vermette added (Fuller, 2014).

Organizers of Francophone film festivals taking place outside Québec, like Cinémental in Winnipeg or the Festival international du cinema francophone en Acadie (FICFA) in Moncton, believe that subtitles allow them to attract new audiences hungry for films in the other official language. For Moncton's *Times-Transcript*, Kevin Nimmock described the festival's objectives and interviewed Marc Gauthier, the organizer of "New Brunswick's biggest film festival [who] wants Metro Moncton residents to know it isn't just for French speakers anymore. This year,... FICFA is set to offer 18 films with English subtitles – more than ever before – in an effort to welcome a broader audience to the 30-year-old festival.... Gauthier: 'Our vision ... is to try to get [the films] accessible to as many as possible. If two-thirds of the population in Moncton are not French speakers, quite obviously we want to show these films to them too'" (Nimmock, 2016). The Rendez-vous cinéMagine is a smaller Francophone film festival held in the resort towns of Canmore-Banff, where many young Quebecers and Francophones from other parts of the country work throughout the year in the hospitality industry. *Le Franco*, Alberta's French-language newspaper, reported in 2014 that "les films, en version originale française, étaient presque tous soustitrés en anglais pour permettre à tous les amateurs de cinéma de Canmore d'en profiter" (*Le Franco*, 2014).

As touched on earlier in the study, many languages other than French and English are spoken in Canada, especially in its big urban centres. As a matter of fact, the BBC named Toronto the most multicultural city in the world (Davey, 2016). In a short promotional article on the Toronto Jewish Film Festival, Toronto's *City Centre Mirror* repeats a portion of the festival's organizational mandate that stresses how it "provides an opportunity to heighten awareness of Jewish and cultural diversity around the world to audiences of all backgrounds, and to present

films in their original languages, with subtitles, in an effort to break down racial, cultural and religious barriers and stereotypes" (*City Centre Mirror*, 2016). What is specifically interesting in this mandate statement is that while one can't establish a direct causal relationship between presenting subtitled films and the breaking down of various societal barriers, the festival describes the films as a tool used "in an effort to" improve understanding and communication between people of different ethnocultural and religious communities. This function of subtitles is therefore regarded as positive.

Yet not only Canadian audiences living in the metropolis are reported to be enjoying seeing films with subtitles in increasing numbers. Just as in Canmore and Banff, Forest, a small community of Lambton County in Ontario with a population of approximately 3,000 souls, is currently running its 7th annual Forest Film Festival. As former committee member Glen Starkey remarked to Carl Hnatyshyn of Sarnia's *The Observer*: "Our audiences are pretty open-minded. We've actually shown foreign films with subtitles, films that we would have traditionally stayed away from, but people are willing to watch films like that. They have really broad tastes" (Hnatyshyn, 2017).

While small film festivals seem to be thriving, others have monumental fiscal and administrative challenges to tackle. This is the case of the Festival des films du monde (Montreal World Film Festival), which owes a significant amount in taxes to the public treasury and is facing imminent closure. The festival held its 2017 edition *in extremis*. Marc-André Lussier reports in *La Presse* that many regulars, both audience members and festival participants, were pulling to enable the festival to complete its run despite the trouble it is in and even though "le sous-titrage électronique ayant disparu en même temps que les subventions, certains producteurs étrangers ont quand même la délicatesse d'arriver avec une copie doublement sous-titrée dans les

deux langues officielles du pays. On apprécie le geste." (Lussier, 2015). This gracious mark of friendship to Canadians on the part of foreign film producers demonstrates their interest in the Canadian film market and recognizes the countries linguistic divide.

Language acquisition

Only seven (3%) of the news items examined as part of my study mentioned language acquisition as a useful function of subtitles. Yet, for an English-speaking Canadian who does not speak French or a new Canadian for whom French becomes another language to learn in addition to English, French is a foreign language, while being one of Canada's two official languages. The Government of Canada launched an action plan in 2018 stating that "As we forge ahead in the 21st century, our two official languages will remain essential tools for integration, inclusion, learning and dialogue." (*Investing in Our Future 2018-2023, Action Plan for Official Languages*, 2018, p.8.). Furthermore, at the international level, it confirmed its recent announcements of new investments in "funding to showcase Canada's cultural industries to the world" (p. 25). According to statistics from the country's different Ministries of Education in 2015-2016, compiled by the national network Canadian Parents for French, there were 3,916,439 students enrolled in a French Immersion program in Canada's provinces and territories, except Quebec and Nunavut. (*French as a second language enrolment statistics 2011-2012 to 2015-2016*, n.d., p. 4).

The language learning potential of theatre surtitles is the main focus of Milane Pridmore-Franz's Master's dissertation in Translation Studies on audience reception of theatre surtitles. In her comprehensive literature review on the topic of incidental language acquisition and audio-visual translations, which means both subtitling for film and television and surtitling for live performance like the opera or the theatre, she surveys "numerous studies which indicate that

intra- and interlingual subtitling can promote incidental foreign language acquisition" (Pridmore-Franz, 2017, p. 46) and reaches the conclusion that "there is much evidence that demonstrates the learning benefits of subtitles" (p. 49). Pridmore-Franz's comprehensive review of academic research on subtitling reveals that "subtitles are useful for vocabulary acquisition, … "help learners improve their listening comprehension […] serve as authentic and contextualized language input [and are] cognitively beneficial and less taxing on language learners [due to their] 'multimodal and intersemiotic nature'" (p. 47). Pridmore-Franz refers to research by Ivarsson and Caroll observing that "when viewers see a translation into their own language of the foreign (or their own) language on the screen it consolidates over time their familiarity with the language, especially if they happen to have a working knowledge of it already" (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998, as cited in Pridmore-Franz, 2017, p. 47). Pridmore-Franz is interested in Ivarsson and Carroll's findings with regard to a pedagogical and cultural function of subtitles, which is that they can be "use[d] as an effective means to teach, revive and maintain minority languages" (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998, as cited in Pridmore-Franz, 2017, p. 46), and argues that "in the Canadian Francophone minority contexts, the surtitles [at the theatre] can be seen as serving such a function" (Pridmore-Franz, p. 46). Pridmore-Franz's point can be applied to explain the strong interest on the part of small Francophone film festivals held outside Québec in promoting the attendance of French Immersion students at screenings of French-language films subtitled in English (Boklaschuk, 2017; "Le festival Cinergie veut encourager", 2018, para. 2; "En deux temps, et dans la diversité", 2015, par. 6). The French Immersion program model of language instruction is Canada-specific and was first initiated, according to Snow and Hakuta, "in the Montreal school system. They taught whole classes of English-speaking children French simply by giving them a French teacher who taught the entire curriculum in French" (Snow & Hakuta,

1992, p. 392-393). While the authors note that "immersion can be remarkably successful," the main challenge remains that "all the students in such programs are from the same, majority-language background. They have little or no contact with peers who speak the foreign language as natives" (p. 393). Seeing films in French with English subtitles at festivals provides students with examples of "real-life" interactive dialogues they may not get in the classroom, and the practice becomes mutually beneficial: festivals boost their audience numbers and students for whom English is either the first, second or additional language have access to valuable resources.

Through subtitled television series, films and documentaries, second or additional language learners are offered, outside of the classroom setting, contextualized experiences of language they would have not experienced otherwise. In a blog post about the "added value of subtitles," Diana Sanchez, General Manager of Red Bee Media Spain, argues that "watching subtitled movies (or even better, foreign films with intralingual subtitles) is a great way to learn a language. However much the dubbing industry might despair when this is pointed out, you really only have to compare levels of English in European countries which primarily use dubbing versus those that have only subtitling. Where do you think people speak better English? Spain or Denmark? Italy or Holland? You judge." (Sanchez, 2014). She delves right into the sub/dub debate from the angle that subtitles provide language acquisition that dubbing does not, but more importantly, she mentions the success of some European countries over others in learning and mastering a foreign language. The division of Europe's national audiences into those who favour dubbing versus those who favour subtitling and vice versa to which Sanchez refers has actually been appearing in academic commentary in the field of Translation Studies since the mid-1990s (Gambier, 1994; O'Connell, 1996; Ketonen, 2017). In the *Journal de Montréal*, a famous screenwriter in Quebec, Guy Fournier, goes even further back in time and provides some

historical context with respect to how in the post-war years, subtitled American television played a decisive role in English language learning by Europeans, particularly in Germany, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, and how English has thus gradually become the second language of several countries in Western and Northern Europe. That said, he argues that apart from Netflix, English-language networks in Canada do not present programs or films in Canada with French subtitles. Not only is bilingualism not promoted, but leaving out the French subtitles of English-language films and programs, in his opinion, unfairly favours anglicization:

> Dans les années d'après-guerre, la télévision américaine a joué un rôle décisif dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais par les Européens, notamment en Allemagne, aux Pays-Bas et dans les pays scandinaves. Les télévisions locales n'ayant guère de moyens financiers, elles diffusaient surtout des séries américaines sous-titrées dans la langue du pays.
>
> L'anglais est ainsi devenu graduellement la langue seconde de plusieurs pays d'Europe occidentale et d'Europe du Nord. À part Netflix, les autres services anglophones par contournement ne présentent pas au Canada d'émissions ou de films sous-titrés en français. Les sous-titres, on l'a bien vu en Europe, favorisent la « bilinguisation » des auditoires, mais des films et des émissions présentées juste en anglais sans sous-titres favorisent l'anglicisation, ce qui est encore beaucoup plus inquiétant. (Fournier, 2018).

Learning (or wanting to learn) a new language

As discussed in the literature review, subtitled productions provide an opportunity for governments to promote local culture abroad and give their country's culture an international window. Stemming from the same idea, according to the results found in Canadian newspapers between 2014 and 2018, Canadians become increasingly interested in learning about new cultures when they have watched a foreign film with subtitles, and they show interest in learning new languages with varying degrees of success, in part due to the historically hostile sentiment towards subtitled productions in the other official language.

In Montreal's *Metro,* Alice Mariette notes the linguistically immersive experience that takes place when you listen to an original language: "Apprendre une langue, c'est aussi découvrir toute

une culture.… Le fait de regarder des films et des séries en version originale (avec ou sans sous-titres) permet aussi de réaliser une bonne immersion linguistique!" (Mariette, 2017). In 2017, Radio-Canada carried cultural reporter Anne Michaud's reaction to the announcement of the screening of Christian Mungiu's *Baccalaureat* at the Festival du film de l'Outaouais. Michaud said that this is the type of film "qui va nous donner envie d'apprendre une nouvelle langue (et nous faire oublier qu'il y a des sous-titres)" ("FFO : la sélection (non) officielle des Malins," n. a., March 2017). Alexandra Heck of the *Free Press*, the newspaper serving south-eastern British Columbia, interviewed Chris Stockey of the Indie Films Fernie festival and commented on the closing film, *A Man Called Ove*. Heck writes that "while the film is in Swedish with English subtitles, viewers easily forget that they are reading the words, as they become drawn into the film. 'It's the definition of a foreign film,' [Stockey] said. 'It's just a different perspective on film making.' She says that foreign films are a cultural experience in themselves, that show a different view on life and people. 'It's like traveling to a foreign country'" (Heck, 2017). Both Michaud and Stockey argue that once audiences are immersed and engaged in a subtitled production, they forget the subtitles' presence, and in the case of Michaud, these productions give us the desire to learn a new language.

Subtitles can also be helpful for those who already have knowledge of a language but their command is not up to par, or when foreign accents may impede comprehension. For example, in his informal survey in *La Presse* (mentioned in Methodological considerations, p. 41), Hugo Dumas notes: "Beaucoup d'entre vous ne rechignent pas du tout à visionner une télésérie en anglais. Et si votre anglais n'est pas à point, les sous-titres aident toujours, surtout pour les productions britanniques ou australiennes…" (Dumas, 2016c). In her study on the audience reception of theatre surtitles, Pridmore-Franz makes the following observation: "Surtitles not

only reinforce comprehension of the play for audience members who do not know the source language [SL], but also play an active role in forming a deeper linguistic connection to the dialogue, and thus to the performance as a whole, for those members that have an existing knowledge of the SL" (Pridmore-Franz, 2017, p. 132). It stands to reason that this can be applied to subtitle reception as well.

New Canadians learn English with subtitles

In Hungary, where 16-year-old Laszlo Sarkozi comes from, the majority of people still prefer dubbing to surtitles (Vass, 2017). It's not like Denmark or Holland, as Sanchez was suggesting (Sanchez, 2014). The *Globe and Mail*'s Wency Leung observes that "You wouldn't know it by how fluently he speaks, but Laszlo didn't understand a single word of English when he arrived in Canada from Hungary five years ago. Although he attended ESL classes at school, Laszlo says his real English-language education came from watching YouTube, Netflix, Hungarian movies with English subtitles – and from hanging out with the guys he befriended in his Grade 9 gym class, who are now among his closest pals" (Leung, 2015).

In September 2016, 12-year-old science *wunderkind* Diki Suryaatmadja enrolled in Honours Physics. CBC News reported that he "taught himself English by watching TV with subtitles in order to become the University of Waterloo's youngest student" (Butler, 2016). "Diki taught himself English in about six months, by living in Singapore, reading English articles and watching English movies with subtitles, especially comedies. 'Little by little, through osmosis, you can learn [a] language,' he said." (Bellemare, 2016).

In these two cases, learning took place either outside Canada or by watching streamed videos or films on subscription-based services outside Canada's mainstream television channels. Are Sarkozi and Suryaatmadja's stories purely anecdotal or will Canada's main television

broadcasters make more subtitled productions available at peak viewing hours? One can seriously doubt this. Take for example France, considered among European countries to be particularly bad in the area of foreign language acquisition. In this respect, one could argue that its unilingualism is akin to that of the US. One of France's most prominent professors of Educational Sciences, Philippe Meirieu, proposed that foreign TV programs should be broadcast on prime-time television. This, he argued, would present a double advantage for children. On the one hand, they could hear a foreign language and, on the other, with the subtitles, they could learn their mother tongue in terms of both vocabulary and grammar. Year after year, he proposed his idea to several successive national education ministers and it was always rejected, because it would supposedly be inconvenient for adults who preferred dubbed programming (Frappier, 2011, p. 7.).

It would be reasonable to assume that in Quebec, where most English or foreign-language TV shows are dubbed, such a proposal would meet with the same fate. Sophie Durocher of *Le Journal de Québec* was probably right when she wrote that Netflix's *Narcos* success would be unthinkable on mainstream television (Discussion: p. 54). This would also most likely be the case in the rest of Canada, since no show in French with English subtitles is likely to appear in prime time on any of the country's main broadcasters' channels. Kenneth Hirsch, the producer and creator of the CBC series *21 Thunder* about Canada's professional soccer underworld, set in Montreal and filmed in English told *Metro Montréal* that "En général, les gens de l'extérieur du Québec n'aiment pas avoir de sous-titres. Ils y sont moins habitués que nous [in Quebec]" (Gagné, 2017).

Based on this, Canadians and newcomers like Sarkozi and Suryaatmadja will pursue their language learning journey via subtitles alone, by continuing to rely on the catalogue of online

streaming giants like Netflix or video on demand services like CRAVE TV to watch subtitled productions in either one of Canada's official languages.

Wendy Jacob stated in the *Globe and Mail* that "following a fascination with *Godzilla*, both my children asked if they could attend Japanese lessons on Saturdays so they'd be able to watch the movies without subtitles. Done. To this day they can only say 'peach' in Japanese" (Jacob, 2015). In order to overcome the obstacle of subtitles, learning a foreign language like Japanese seemed perfectly normal to Jacob's children. This enthusiasm, notes the mother, was short-lived.

As Meirieu suggested, the negative attitude towards subtitles is generational, and it is so engrained, he argued, that it ends up compromising the children's education when politicians choose under public pressure not to take advantage of the educational benefits of second-language acquisition through subtitles (Frappier, 2011, p. 7).

The Canadian context: Sub/dub and the Netflix catalogue

Given the large proportion of academic literature on the reception of AVT that has been devoted to the sub/dub dispute, it is surprising that only 15 (6)% news items in this study addressed this question, either in relations to their cost or the audience's preference for one or the other.

Last year, Hugo Dumas of *La Presse* recommended two Scandinavian series to his readers, *Trapped* (Iceland), and *Occupied* (Norway), but he forgot to mention that while the first episode of *Trapped* was dubbed in French, the rest of the series was in Icelandic and subtitled in French. His readers did not react kindly to this omission and took it upon themselves to tell him. Dumas made his *mea culpa*: "Je ne pensais jamais déclencher une telle fureur avec cette omission. De toute évidence, vous n'aimez pas lire des sous-titres à la télé… C'est noté." (Dumas, 2017b). However, this anecdote contradicts Netflix's 2014 claim that subscribers in Quebec far preferred

watching series like *House of Cards* with French subtitles to watching the dubbed version. Netflix also claims that subtitles are much more popular with their audiences, not only in Quebec, but everywhere they operate:

> Après avoir doublé au Québec les deux premières saisons de sa populaire série *House of Cards*, Netflix explique avoir choisi de doubler la troisième saison en France en raison 'de la faible demande pour du contenu doublé au Québec [in French Canadian]'. Netflix a observé que ses abonnés au Québec préféraient de loin regarder la série avec des sous-titres en français plutôt que la version doublée.
>
> Les sous-titres en français sont beaucoup plus populaires que le doublage, explique Anne Marie Squeo, de Netflix. Comme disait récemment Ted Sarandos [responsable du contenu de Netflix], les gens veulent entendre la voix de Kevin Spacey, ils ne veulent pas entendre la voix de quelqu'un qui joue le rôle de Kevin Spacey. Il semble que les sous-titres soient beaucoup plus populaires, pas seulement au Québec mais partout où nous opérons. Nous continuerons de faire du doublage, mais nous allons prendre ces décisions judicieusement (Brousseau-Pouliot, 2014).

Some Film reviewers recommend watching the German series *Dark* with subtitles (Renfro, 2017; Nguyen, 2018). One of them, Hanh Nguyen, in an *IndieWire* article, shines a light on a Netflix practice that favours dubbing: "Despite people's assertions that they prefer subtitles, however, Netflix claims it knows viewers better than they know themselves. In an eye-opening *Variety* story, Netflix reveals some of the secrets of its operations, including the fact that defaulting to dubbed dialogue is a deliberate strategy the streaming service uses to increase viewership" (Nguyen, 2018). This may explain why Netflix is not in any way considering abandoning the practice of dubbing; as a matter of fact, it plans on "reviving" it. Nicole Laporte, who interviewed Todd Yellin, Netflix Vice President of Product, for the online business news source *Fast Company*, writes: "Although Yellin admits that some still consider dubbing 'a dead art form' and that most people have grown accustomed to watching foreign TV shows and movies with subtitles, Netflix is devoted to reviving the practice" (Laporte, 2017).

Netflix's catalogue differs from one country to the next, due to various factors such as demand, "licensing deals and geographical restrictions" (Orrego-Carmona, 2018, p. 325). This not only impacts the amount of subtitled or dubbed content available, but the "limited libraries" resulting from these factors can explain in part why the illegal consumption of media is thriving, as audiences attempt to fill these gaps (p. 325).

In France, a film or series may be available in either a subtitled or a dubbed version, but while the same series is also available in Canada, the subtitle or dub option may not be. *Le Quotidien*'s Joël Martel acknowledges that while Netflix's original productions are always offered with French-language options, other productions rarely are. He says ironically that he usually feels like running to the convenience store to get a lotto ticket whenever he finds a production subtitled or dubbed in French in Netflix Canada's catalogue. Still, what seems to really upset him is that "une fois que j'ai réalisé que la France avait droit à un Netflix à 100 % de son contenu était offert dans une déclinaison francophone, ça m'a fait réaliser à quel point le français est si peu considéré ici au Canada. J'ai souvent lu ici et là que si le contenu doublé en français était pratiquement inexistant, c'était en raison d'ententes légales, mais aussi, en raison d'une faible demande qui avait été notamment dénoncée par la directrice des communications corporatives de Netflix, Anne Marie Squeo, lors d'une entrevue accordée à *Branchez-Vous* en 2014" (Martel, 2017). Martel questions the explanation given by Anne Marie Squeo, Netflix's former Head of Corporate Communications, that there is a low demand in Quebec for dubbed productions in French, and concludes his argument by saying that, if these French versions already exist in another Netflix catalogue, how complicated would it be to transfer them to the Canadian one? (Martel, 2017)

Along the same lines, the *Globe & Mail*'s political columnist Chantal Hébert has harsh words with respect to the Francophone and Canadian content available on Netflix: "About half of all this country's households subscribe to Netflix. Canada happens to be home to the largest number of citizens whose mother tongue is French outside of France. Based on the Canadian content available on Netflix, this country might as well be a unilingual cultural colony of the United States" (Hébert, 2017). This critique adds to the number of issues surrounding the $500M deal between the Canadian government and Netflix, detailed in Literature Review, pp. 19-24). The issue Hebert raises is pragmatic: if Netflix will be investing substantively in Canada, how is this going to ultimately impact the items in their catalogue? Between 2012 and 2014, *Radio-Canada* sold some of their French-language series (*Les Parent*, *Les invincibles*, *La galère*) and one documentary *Amour, haine et propaganda*) to Netflix. But aside from two series for children (*À la ferme de Zénon*, *G cuisiné*) no French-language series were sold to Netflix as of January 2015 according to *La Presse*. Netflix's Director of Communications danced around the issue: "C'est difficile pour moi de dire ce qui est assez ou pas assez de contenu québécois" (Brousseau-Pouliot, 2014)! The exception that proved the rule is *Série Noire*. Its first season was added to the Netflix Canada catalogue in July 2016 then removed in August 2017 and made available again in June 2018 along with the second season. *Série Noire* was added just before Netflix Canada dropped the police drama series *19-2* in September 2016.

In March 2016, *Metro* (Montreal) published an Agence France-Presse news report about the launch of Marvel's *Daredevil* series on Netflix that was also picked up by the UK's *Daily Mail* and the *Manila Times,* to name a few. The article reports Netflix's acknowledgement that the company is "aware that people in some countries have been disappointed that everything in the US catalogue of content is not available to them, and that there are languages missing from

the translation line-up," and that their focus has been "on getting rights to deliver all of its offerings to more countries while also backing original films and shows by local talent around the world" ('Daredevil' goes global in Netflix milestone, AFP, March 2016). Netflix co-founder and Chief Reed Hastings is quoted as saying: "We know what everyone wants, which is the same catalogue around the world… We are frustrated we are not there but we will get there before anybody else." (Idem.). These comments are based on the broad premise that everyone in the world wishes to have the same catalogue as the American one. Some audience research does indeed support the fact that Canadians from all provinces consume massive quantities of American television content as well as Hollywood films. Yet, in the context of the 2017 Netflix deal, editorialists like Hébert and Brousseau-Pouliot, raised concerns about the proportion of Canadian content, in English, French and Indigenous languages, and television critics applauded the emergence of television shows reflecting Canada's diversity (the immigrant and newcomer population). Moreover, with film festivals introducing more of the world's cinema to their audiences and TV and film reviewers expressing their admiration and enthusiasm for subtitled foreign-language productions, one aspect or another of the quality of the subtitles, their translation or their presentation has been addressed in 27 (11%) of the news items that were retained as part of my study. This involved criticism that such and such a show was poorly translated or dubbed, questions that touched upon the source and origin of the subtitling and dubbing.

Quality of translation and culture-specific references

An appreciable number (27/11%) of news items analysed as part of my study dealt with the quality of the translation of subtitles. If the quality of an audio-visual translation (AVT) affects the target audience's comprehension, it may affect their overall appreciation of the

apparatus itself, subtitles. Translating culture-specific references in an AVT context (subtitling, closed-captioning, dubbing, etc.) is "notoriously difficult" (Denton & Ciampi, 2012, p. 403). Furthermore, the question as to do with whether these culture-specific references will be understood by foreign audiences remains to be answered.

According to Denton and Ciampi, an "audience can gain an understanding of cultural references occurring in a film in three ways: Encyclopaedically or intertextually; Deictically (through the co-text or the context); Through the intervention of the translator…" (p. 415). Given the varying qualifications and training of the practitioners, from the translators to the actors performing the dubbing so as to ensure maximum lip synchronization, for example, how do translators define the "quality" of an audio-visual translation (subtitles or dubbing) and ultimately judge it, ask Denton and Ciampi? (pp. 403-404).

As discussed in *Lilyhammer*, p. 52, Toronto-based *Financial Post* columnist Josh McConnell reported that Neflix addressed the concern about culture-specific references outright:

> For Netflix and Sheehan's team [Denny Sheehan, Netflix's director of content localization and quality control], the way to nail localization is by focusing on context. In some cases, the company bypasses local companies that offer people for hire and hires translators directly, in case there are questions on things like cultural jokes, voice inflection and other contextual elements that might be missed in a straight translation. (McConnell, 2017).

The term "localization" employed by Netflix is synonymous with the company's global expansion strategy, which involves the systematic subtitling and dubbing of productions in order to conquer local markets worldwide, and with the production of original content created locally that could have global appeal and for which distribution rights would be negotiated at a global level (Brustein, 2016; Polanciya, 2017). What is key to take into consideration, as Gambier demonstrates, is that:

> The quality of subtitles... is linked, among other criteria, to the working conditions, the purpose of the work and the targeted viewers, with their reading habits and expectations. In their real or virtual network, commissioners (be they private local or multinational AVT companies, public TV broadcasting companies, non-governmental organisations, associations, private firms or festival events), distributors, freelance or in-house translators, and viewers are in an asymmetrical relationship, with different competences, objectives, resources and interests, where trust is at stake, involving delays, costs, and codes of good practices (Gambier, 2018, pp. 61-62).

In Quebec, the need for culture-specific translations is discussed in a number of news items, since in *La belle province*, dubbing is an actual industry, one that, according to Doublage.qc.ca, is estimated at $20M and provides a living to over "700 artistes et artisans" ("Raison d'être", n.d; Therrien, 2014). Despite this thriving industry, many original English-language films that end up on Quebec screens are still dubbed in France. Over there, by law, all productions dubbed in French must be dubbed domestically. This means that all productions dubbed in Quebec must be redubbed in France in order to comply with French legislation. Since no protectionist act of the sort exists in Canada, a substantial number of dubbed productions shown on Quebec screens are therefore dubbed in France, since some distributors, streaming or video on demand services do not wish to end up with varying versions of subtitled productions and therefore opt for the version translated in France. All of which leaves the challenge of culture-specific references, given the variations in the accent and vocabulary used in Quebec and the rest of the Francophone countries. Most Quebecers are familiar with the European French accent and vocabulary, since in the course of their lives they have watched a substantial amount of television and films dubbed in an accent foreign to their own. But the reverse is not true, since in France, Quebec productions with actors speaking Quebec French usually require subtitles for the audience to understand the dialogue, as discussed in the *Mommy* section, p. 62- 63).

This chasm between two Francophone cultures regarding subtitles was a particularly hot topic of discussion in Quebec newspapers when *Mommy* was screened in France, first at the

Cannes festival and then all across the country, where it reached over one million moviegoers, according to the *Montreal Gazette* (Kelly, 2014).

Xavier Dolan himself had a second career as a voice actor from a very young age, most notably providing the voice for *Harry Potter*'s Rupert Grint character, played by Ron Weasley. The money that his parents put aside for him during these years was used to finance his first film. (Ducharme, 2010; Houdassine, 2015; Simon, 2015). Sherry Simon suggests that Dolan's "early career as a voice actor, … perhaps alerted him to the importance and the difficulties of film translation, both subtitling and dubbing" (Simon, 2015, pp. 508-509). When Netflix moved its dubbing operations to France, Dolan was a natural ally to the cause, since he himself, a member of Quebec's Union des artistes, had never stopped dubbing throughout his career. That said, Dolan's *Mommy* has been presented to international audiences, as mentioned earlier (pp. 62-63), with two tracks of subtitles, which he translated himself (pp. 508-509).

Sub/dub: What is gained, what is lost

Going back to his article in *Le Quotidien*, Martel admits that while he is not a fan of dubbing, he suspects that an important number of Quebecers are: "Bien que je ne sois pas personnellement un grand adepte du doublage, je serais toutefois très curieux de savoir combien de Québécois et Québécoises préfèrent cette alternative aux sous-titres, par exemple. J'ose imaginer qu'ils sont beaucoup plus nombreux qu'on ne pourrait le croire" (Martel, 2017). There are a number of references in French-language news items between 2014 and 2018 that mention the preference many Quebecers seem to have for dubbing (Therrien, 2016; Martel, 2017), although Netflix says the contrary (Broussau-Pouliot, 2014). But then again, it is good marketing to claim as much, given that dubbing is usually a much more labour-intensive and costly option

(O'Connell, 1996; Hagman 2007; Ketonen, 2017), and even more so in Quebec, where voice actors are well protected by the Union des artistes (Lévesque, 2014).

Also, this might be not only a numbers game of how many Quebecers prefer dubbing, but rather how Netflix's conducts its global business practices. It has been revealed, for instance, that while Netflix invests in the French market, its offices are actually set up in Luxembourg in order to elude French tax laws (Therrien 2014; Maucur, C. & Battikh, 2014). The scaling down and subsequent retrieval of its dubbing activities in Quebec in 2014 also had broader implications for the Canadian film industry. Already in 2013, Quebec comedian Sebastien Dhavernas, who lent his voice to dub some episodes of Netflix's *House of Cards* series before the dubbing was removed from Quebec studios to be produced instead in France, deplored the fact that more than half of English-language Canadian series, produced partly with Canadian public funds, were being translated abroad (Therrien, 2013).

Quality of dubbing

It is therefore no surprise that badly dubbed productions are an irritant to Quebec viewers, especially when the dubbing is outsourced abroad and the art of voice dubbing in the province had been perfected over decades. According to the results of an informal survey on viewing preferences compiled by Hugo Dumas, mostly on social media platforms (p. 40), "les mauvais doublages vous agacent." Dumas supported his claim by citing the example of the American drama series *UnREAL,* for which the dubbing is "atroce" (Dumas, 2016c).

Still, bad dubbing might be better to some than none or a lengthy wait for access. Richard Therrien, in *Le Soleil*, directly tells his readers who prefer watching American series dubbed in French ("Dieu sait que vous êtes nombreux", he writes) that they are being duped by Canadian broadcasters who are inept at adapting to new television consumption models, i.e. Netflix, who

he says is the fastest. He believes that those viewers remain hooked on a model dating back to the 1980s, waiting for series dubbed in French to show up on their screens. In short, Quebec viewers are definitely not on their priority list. He points out that these series are dubbed and available to French-speaking audiences in Europe with little or no delay, and Quebec usually comes last in line. This model, he argues, not only penalizes Quebecers but encourages piracy. He provides several examples of such delays, among them the FX television network series *The Americans:*

> Et pour ceux que les sous-titres n'incommodent pas, Canal+ Séries diffusera en mars la quatrième saison de *The Americans* avec sous-titres français, simultanément avec FX aux États-Unis. Ici, AddikTV n'a diffusé que la première saison et enchaînera avec la deuxième en mai seulement, neuf mois après Paris Première. Priez pour que personne ne s'échappe et vous dise qui meurt à la fin (Therrien, 2016).

A number of elements in the Therrien article are interesting to my study. First, it is yet another confirmation in Quebec news articles that a number of Quebecers seem to prefer dubbing to subtitles. Second, when it came time for Therrien to provide an example of a series that is subtitled and not dubbed, like *The Americans*, he erred on the side of caution in his approach: "pour ceux que les sous-titres n'incommodent pas"… This type of cautionary statement will be compiled further on page 100. Third, Netflix is praised for being the fastest in terms of providing dubbed versions of their series, which is true, when they are original series that they produce. Finally, his article demonstrates that French-speaking Quebecers compare themselves to their European counterparts on matters related to availability of audio-visual translations, whether dubbed or subtitled, even if the markets are entirely different (France's market is 87% larger).

In the Quebec context, the frustration expressed by Therrien can be explained by the fact that he feels that Quebec is the poor cousin of its European counterparts. As noted by Orrego-Carmona in his chapter of *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation*:

> Netflix, HBO Go, other streaming services and even traditional channels have also started to rely more and more on subtitling to ensure that the international distribution of their content is not delayed by the time required to produce the translations. Even in traditionally dubbing countries, the industry has tried subtitling as an option to release audiovisual content at the same time or shortly after its original broadcast. Movistar in Spain, Canal + in France and Sky in Italy, for instance, have started to use subtitling to release the new episodes of popular TV series, such as *Game of Thrones*, only a couple of hours after their original release in the US (Orrego-Carmona, 2018, p. 329).

While French-speaking Quebecers have, at least historically, shown an evident preference for dubbing over subtitling, others, like novelist Louis Hamelin, admit to hating dubbing and would rather watch a series such as *Breaking Bad* with English subtitles because they can't stand its dubbed version in Parisian French. Hamelin questions the quality of its French subtitles. In his literary column in *Le Devoir*, he refers to himself in the third person when he writes: "Cet homme écoute aussi ses séries télé américaines en anglais, parce que le doublage, pas capable, *Breaking Bad* doublé en parisien, pas capable. Et ces versions originales anglaises, il les visionne avec des sous-titres anglais, parce qu'il a remarqué, amusant phénomène, que les sous-titres français avaient parfois tendance à s'éloigner considérablement, pour ne pas dire grotesquement, de la teneur des dialogues entendus à l'écran" (Hamelin, 2014).

The idea that certain elements get lost in translation in subtitles is why Quebec filmmaker Simon Laganière admitted he was quite surprised when his 2013 short film *Suivre la piste du renard* (Follow the Fox) was selected for a Canadian Screen Award in the same year as *Mommy*. He shared his impressions with François Houde of Trois-Rivières' *Le Nouvelliste*: "Je ne m'y attendais vraiment pas parce que le film n'avait pas été retenu pour les prix Jutra et en plus, j'imagine que le jury a dû voir une version sous-titrée et j'ai cru comprendre qu'avec les sous-titres anglais, on pouvait perdre certaines subtilités des dialogues" (Houde, 2015). In this response, Laganière shares a similar opinion with Weir, who wrote in his Letter to the Editor

about the CSAs (*Mommy* section, p. 60-62) that "it's very hard to compare a subtitled (or dubbed) film against one in your native language." (Weir, 2015).

Monolingualism and xenoglossophobia

The section above on Canadian identity politics and the two solitudes provided a glimpse into how the geographic distribution of language in Canada does play an important part in understanding the circulation of Canadian film productions both domestically and overseas. Canada's former Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, provides some relevant statistics:

> There are some 200 languages spoken in Canada, including 50 Aboriginal languages. But 98% of the 33 million Canadians speak at least one of Canada's two official languages, English and French. Of those 33 million Canadians, only five million are bilingual in English and French. There are 24 million who speak only English, and four million who speak only French. We are, in effect, two language communities, both of which are predominantly unilingual, living side by side (Fraser, 2011).

In the Context section of Methodological Considerations (p. 38), recent research by Dwyer (2017) is cited as indicating that the debate in favour of or against subtitles is carried out predominantly in English-speaking countries, such as Canada, where there is limited exposure to foreign languages. There is, however, a difference between "limited exposure" to a foreign language (accidental, circumstantial) and "closure to" other languages (deliberate, attitudinal), which is a phenomenon observed in English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom (Peel, 2001) and the United States (Rich, 2004; Olsen, 2015). In a thought-provoking Master's dissertation submitted to the University of Vaasa, Marjo Ketonen sums up as follows:

> Overall, the world can be divided into four sections as far as AVT is concerned: *source-language countries*, *dubbing countries*, *voice-over countries* and *subtitling countries*. The source-language countries have English as a native language and films or television programmes from other than English-speaking countries are rare. People are used to hearing mainly just their own language and, therefore, the imported films or programmes are not in favour of the masses and often seen as elitist. Dubbing, as a method of

> translating all foreign films and programmes, is favoured in countries where people speak mainly German, Italian, Spanish or French (Ketonen, 2017, p. 23).

While Canada is officially bilingual, according to the 2011 Canadian Census, 74.1% of Canadians spoke only English at home, and in Quebec, 72.8% spoke only French (Corbeil, 2012, p. 3). In a simple but heuristic exercise, placing Ketonen's broad categories in the Canadian context can yield interesting results. For example, some monolingual Canadians who only speak English and are "used to hearing mainly just their own language" may be resistant to subtitled films or programmes deemed "elitist". Dubbed foreign films or programs in languages other than French would be preferred in Quebec, where French is spoken by a majority of monolingual households. In short, antipathy for subtitles in English Canada could be due in part to anti-elitism and in part to xenoglossophobia, a fear of foreign languages, in this instance extending to audio-visual productions. These may include French-language productions coming from either the neighbouring province of Quebec, other Canadian provinces or abroad. And in Quebec, where there is a preference for dubbing to access English-language or foreign-language productions, an antipathy to subtitles could still also be due in part to anti-elitism and xenoglossophobia.

Another factor that Ketonen briefly touches upon, with reference to Gotlieb's research, is that "Subtitling, the most familiar method for Finnish people, is favoured in smaller countries where the literacy rate is high" (Ketonen, p. 23). Could Québec's preference for dubbing be due in part to a literacy issue? Over 50% of adults in the province are considered "functionally illiterate" according to an investigation conducted by *Le Journal de Québec* in 2016 (Dion-Viens, 2016; Cooper, 2016). A decade earlier, Sylvio Le Blanc, who is a staunch defender of dubbing (in France, not Québec) and the webmaster of *voxophile.neocities.org,* a website hosting over 800 news items entirely dedicated to the media coverage of the practice, published a Letter to the Editor in *Le Devoir* in which he criticizes la Cinémathèque Québécoise (CQ) for failing to

make its 1997 film program accessible in the French language with either subtitles or dubbing: "Ils [les "puristes de la CQ"] font montre ainsi de leur peu de considération à l'endroit des unilingues francophones qui voudraient voir, comprendre et apprécier ces films, et qui, en outre, préfèrent le doublage au sous-titrage (c'est aussi le cas des 800 000 analphabètes du Québec)" (Le Blanc, 1997). Le Blanc's use of the term "puristes" is commonly employed in the sub/dub debate to describe those who prefer movies in their original source language with subtitles, since they argue that dubbing alters the artistic integrity of a film (Leblanc, 1997).

In the handful of opinion and humour columns that appeared in my scan of Canadian newspapers from May 2014 to May 2018, some contained observations relevant to the negative attitude towards subtitles, and more referred in particular to the general allegation that subtitles are favoured by an elitist minority (Bunch, 2016; Foster, 2016; Beeber, 2018).

As exemplified by the case of *Mommy*, the film awards season seems to be the time when different opinions with respect to subtitles emerge in newspapers, alongside articles on nominations in general, those for the Best Foreign Language Film in particular, and issues of inclusion, diverse representation, AVT quality, etc. (Houde, 2015; Taylor, 2016a; Parker, 2017; Beeber, 2018).

Alberta's *Lethbridge Herald* columnist Al Beeber shared his 2018 Academy Award predictions with his readers as follows:

> A few other categories can be voted on but these are the major ones I'm interested in. Trust me, I know nothing about costume or production design. And being the least snooty kind of guy, you'll ever know, I'm also not a foreign film buff, either. If I want to read, I'll read a book, not squint at subtitles so I'm not guessing about the winner of that category, although I'm thinking it won't be in English. (Beeber, 2018).

For Beeber to automatically equate being a "film foreign buff" with being "a snooty kind of guy" is not uncommon, but it stands out as one of the only instances in my Canadian

newspaper scan in which it was articulated so clearly. This sentiment has historical roots. Citing the work of Mazdon and Wheatly, Zanotti traces it back to the idea that in the UK the establishment of foreign-film audiences was "largely the work of a small group of somewhat 'highbrow' film lovers," as represented by the Film Society or specialized cinemas such as The Academy in London, whose "highbrow tastes meant that early experiments in dubbed cinema were met with distaste as they saw the process as an attack on cinematic art" (Zanotti, 2018, pp. 143-144). Along with the *New York Times'* Bosley Crowther opting against subtitles in favour of dubbing (pages 5 and 11), Zanotti mentions Joachim Lembach, a specialist in post-war German cinema in the UK, for whom "the cultural and intellectual snobbery at the heart of highly polarised film culture for decades has contributed to preventing mainstream non-English-language films from becoming available to wider audiences in well-dubbed versions" (p. 144). It is difficult to say whether this analysis is also applicable to the North American context, but Zanotti makes the leap in writing that "in both the American and the British context, the presence of subtitles contributed to framing a film as auteur cinema, as opposed to popular cinema, which is essentially monolingual and therefore it does not require any linguistic mediation" (p. 144). When viewed within this historical context, Beeber's analogy finds its foundation. Zanotti concludes by citing a Lucy Mazdon observation about "how high/low distinctions determine one's expectations and reactions concerning dubbed versus subtitled films" (p. 144). After adding that his preference is to watch a film without subtitles (and possibly with dubbing?), Beeber ends his commentary with a remark that appears to be xenoglossophobic.

Making sense of the context surrounding a key subject of discussion can not only help explain attitudes and opinions but the beliefs and assumptions behind them. Nathalie Petrowski interviewed acclaimed american independent film producer Christine Vachon in *La Presse* about

her cinematographic career: "Avant mes débuts dans le métier, j'étais convaincue qu'il n'y avait que deux sortes de films : les films de Hollywood et les films expérimentaux. Quant aux films d'art qu'on allait voir dans des cinémas de répertoire tous disparus aujourd'hui, c'étaient toujours des films soustitrés qui venaient d'Europe ou d'ailleurs, mais jamais des ÉtatsUnis" (Petrowski, 2015). Vachon says that before she started her career she was convinced that there were only two kinds of films, those made in Hollywood and experimental films coming from Europe with subtitles. In her autobiography she later reminisces: "…check[ing] out the repertory theatres, the art houses that were scattered throughout the city. When you said you were going to an art-house cinema, everybody assumed the movie would have subtitles: most 'real' art films came from elsewhere." (Vachon, 2006, p. 21).

Prescriptive statements

Some film reviewers in Canadian newspapers took it upon themselves to persuade their readers that they should overcome their fear of subtitled productions. As described in the Methodological Considerations, on pages 36-37, there were enough rhetorical appeals by the media in favour of subtitles that this merited attention.

Gambier believes that the concept of the hermeneutical circle applies to the opinion of filmgoers:

> Before entering a cinema theatre, viewers have some idea of what they will watch through the title of the film, posters, video clips, trailers, interviews, awards, film reviews, tweets, blogs, fan magazines, online discussion groups, etc. Readers are not naïve, they bring 'scripts', 'schemata', previous knowledge, ideology, prejudices, experience, etc. with them." (Gambier, 2018, p. 46).

In order to help their readers get past these "scripts", six different types of rhetorical strategies have been identified, as highlighted in blue, in the following table.

If-Then Propositions	I challenge you. Don't let subtitles stop you.
Whether you're a fan of the manga/anime or not, this is a story [*Boruto: Naruto the Movie*] that can be enjoyed by many (if you don't mind subtitles). The idea is complex enough to keep you entertained, emotional enough to connect/re-connect you and deep enough to leave you wanting more (n.a., "Cheap Night: *The Peanuts Movie* and *Spectre* hit the theatres," *The Chronicle Herald*, 2015-11-06).	We invite all of you to see a selection of films you might see in cities like Vancouver or Edmonton, films that stay with you, are powerful, and make you think. Yes, some of them have subtitles, but you can read, can't you? I challenge you (Liebe, *The Williams Lake Tribune*, 2014-09-18).
[Iranian Director] Farhadi manages to pull astounding performances out of leads Taraneh Alidoosti and Shahab Hosseini, and if the subtitles don't scare you off, it's a can't miss before the big Oscar night (Parker, *The Chronicle Herald*, 2017-02-16).	Recently adapted for American television (and quickly cancelled), be sure to catch the French original [of *Les Revenants*] for a more nuanced story (and far superior casting); subtitles won't kill you (Ahsan, *National Post*, 2017-06-29).
If the children aren't in bed yet, … if they aren't averse to subtitles, I highly recommend the touching *Monsieur Lazhar*… (Taylor, *The Globe and Mail*, 2017-04-13).	Don't be put off by the 162-minute running time. Or the art-house label. Or the English subtitles on this German-language film [*Toni Erdmann*] from writer/director Maren Ade (Knight, *National Post*, 2016-09-08).
Sorting out the ensemble cast [of *Dark*] can be maddening, the show is ingeniously edited with split screens to help you follow along. If that still sounds too daunting, skip the subtitles and turn on the dubbed version. But be warned, the English voice actors can sound a little lacklustre compared to the onscreen performances (Volland, *The Hamilton Spectator*, 2018-21-02).	Ne vous laissez pas arrêter par les sous-titres. N'écoutez pas les puristes qui prétendent que les intégristes ont l'air trop modérés dans un film trop esthétique. … Courez voir *Timbuktu* si vous voulez quelque chose qui vous change des commentaires redondants que vous entendez sur le fondamentalisme musulman… (Dufour, *Le Journal de Québec*, 2015-02-28).
If you are into reading subtitles, the great Swedish-Danish production of *The Bridge* also serves up a prime example of this new woman (Blue, *Montreal Gazette*, 2014-12-15).	Saturday looks like the day to go with Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* on at 7 p.m. and Jean-Luc Godard's *Goodbye to Language* on at 9 p.m. ... Bring someone who isn't a baby about subtitles-(Beaudette, *CBC Manitoba*, 2017-02-17).
If you're not a fan of subtitled films, you may as well skip ahead. This is a French language film [*L'affaire SK1*] that you'll need subtitles to understand if you don't speak the language - which I do not (Malloy, *This Week Online*, 2015-10-15).	
This is a foreign language film [*A Man called Ove*] and is subtitled. If subtitles don't bother you, I highly recommend this magnificent film (Malloy, *Times & Transcript*, 2018-05-20).	
Et pour ceux que les sous-titres n'incommodent pas, Canal+ Séries diffusera en mars la quatrième saison de *The Americans* avec sous-titres français…(Therrien, *Le Soleil*, 2016-03-04).	
Make Sure That…	Don't say I didn't warn you
A word to the wise; make sure your eyes are up to reading some hefty subtitles (Knight, *National Post*, 2015-01-09).	Just so you can't say I didn't warn you, the film [*The Raid 2*] is foreign language with subtitles. I normally don't encourage people to watch a foreign language film with an English overdub, but if it's the only way you'll watch the movie, go ahead and do it (Malloy, *Times & Transcript*, 2014-07-11).
ENGLISH. More than half of the 285 features [at TIFF] will not be in that language. Bring reading glasses. White subtitles on light backgrounds can cause	… *Occupied* -- offert en norvégien avec sous-titres anglais, je préfère vous en avertir -- est un thriller géopolitique d'anticipation (Dumas, *La Presse*, 2016-04-16).

eye strain and missed plot points (Slotek, *Toronto Sun*, 2014-09-04).	
You won't notice them after a while	We recommend the subtitled version
Another pleasure: for the most part, Russians play Russians, Indians play Indians, Israelis play Israelis, etc. So we see a raft of sensational actors, most new to us, doing their thing in their own language. You won't even notice the subtitles (Schneller, *Toronto Star*, 2018-02-18).	Ceux qui la regardent en français [3e saison d'*Orange Is The New Black*] risquent toutefois d'être déçus, car Netflix Canada ne commande plus de versions françaises québécoises... Les sous-titres sont donc de mise! (Gaudreau, *Le Devoir*, 2015-06-06).
… *Wentworth* ne possède pas de piste en français, seulement des sous-titres. Autre avertissement : l'accent australien de même que le langage «de la rue» s'apprivoisent après plusieurs écoutes attentives (Dumas, *La Presse*, 2015-07-21).	For those who are strictly against subtitles, I would recommend *The Stanford Prison Experiment*, I guess, because it really is a story worth being told. The original film, however, is almost flawless and it should be definitely watched instead of (or at least before) this rather poor remake (Malloy, *Times & Transcript*, 2016-23-01).
	… aux oreilles moins exercées à l'accent du Midland, nous suggérons fortement la version originale avec sous-titres [de *God's Own Country*] (Lussier, *La Presse*, 2017-12-08).

One can find nearly identical examples in the international press for each of these types of statements; for instance, for the "You won't notice them after a while" argument, in the case of *Borgen* in the Literature review, page 18). According to the authors of an article published in the French magazine *Générique(s) : revue mensuelle des séries TV*, when subtitles are of a certain level of quality "… on a fini par ne plus les remarquer. Ce qui est exactement le but. Cet outil formidable pour apprécier une œuvre en langue étrangère à sa juste valeur sans être forcément bilingue, est de plus en plus populaire, notamment auprès des sériphiles" (Gougeon & Regourd, 2009). They argue that it is precisely the goal of subtitles to blend into the background, that they are a great tool for appreciating the true value of a foreign film without necessarily being bilingual, and they are increasingly popular amongst "sériphiles", those who love watching series. But for this to happen the subtitling must be high-quality. In the *Sunday Times*, Bryan Appleyard argues that it is rather the quality of the cinematographic presentation that makes a difference: "[Andrey Zvyagintsev's] *Leviathan* illustrates the point that in not flocking to all these foreign-language films, audiences are ignoring a crucial aesthetic, cultural and political resource. They are allowing their imaginations, their worlds, to be narrowed by American

cinema economics. Besides, what's the problem with subtitles? If the film is good, you don't notice them" (Appleyard, 2015). These two observations are obviously not mutually exclusive.

Comfort zones

Are film and TV critics capable of changing public opinion, influencing their readers to see a film and impacting the box office, or is their opinion purely anecdotal, from a persuasive point of view? The Eliashburg and Shugan study "suggests that [film] critics … appear to act more as leading indicators than as opinion leaders" (Elisashberg & Shugan, 1997, p. 68). In other words, they act more as predictors than as actual influencers. Their research indicates that "critical reviews may provide a useful forecasting tool for estimating the ultimate potential of a motion picture" (p. 68). But Eliashburg and Shugan argue that critics often preach to the converted, as they were usually hired by a publication in the first place because their taste already embodies that of the particular publication's readership (p. 72). Critics are basically hired to confirm the readers' taste and provide information about productions they are conceivably already going to like. New Brunswick's *Times & Trancript* film critic Steve Malloy, in his review of Hong-jin Na's *The Wailing*, confesses that: "I try not to review too many foreign films in this column because a lot of my readers aren't too fond of subtitles. That being said, sometimes a movie comes along that is so good I wouldn't be doing my job as a reviewer if I didn't share it with you. Such is the case with *The Wailing*" (Malloy, 2016b). In both the French- and English-language news items surveyed, many critics have felt the need to go beyond their readers' comfort zones and prescribe watching a subtitled film production, documentary or TV series, a cure which some may equate to taking a dose of cod liver oil.

Is this strategy a viable one? Eliashburg and Shugan concluded their study by stating that "Finally, reviews can provide information about the film that directly influences some moviegoers, but not always as the critic recommends" (p. 72). In other words, if a moviegoer loathes subtitles, to read in advance that there will be subtitles might discourage them from seeing the film at all, no matter how great it may be.

Sonny Bunch, executive editor of the *Washington Free Beacon* and its film critic, previously served as a film critic for the *Washington Times* and assistant editor of Books and Arts for the *Weekly Standard*. He clearly does not believe that a film critic's role is to persuade readers to watch a subtitled film. In a column that was picked up by Alberta's *Red Deer Advocate,* he argues that:

> The point of criticism isn't so much to persuade you to stay at home or spend your hard--earned dollars on the art-house indie feature playing down the road -- you know the one I'm talking about, the docudrama focused on the Indonesian artists who pay their way through school by collecting dung and are protesting child labour abuses. The one with, ew, subtitles. No. The point of criticism is to start a conversation, with filmgoers and filmmakers alike (Bunch, 2016).

Within their limited scope of influence, film reviewers and TV critics feel that they bear a responsibility for the conversation about subtitles and their benefits. Not only are they framing the normative debate about the role and appeal of subtitles but, through comments of a prescriptive nature, they are also contributing to a change that is favourable (or not) in our collective and individual attitudes about them. Because of these contributions, the conversation about subtitles is alive and well in Canadian newspapers.

Conclusion

"Subtitles must go!" was the headline of a 1960 Sunday column by legendary *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther. And "so began the eponymous sub/dub war," according to Tessa Dwyer (2017, p. 19).] Crowther's "anti-subtitling stance," contends Dwyer, was about "lambasting subtitles rather than championing dubbing" (p. 19), and was "provocatively atypical, bucking the enduring trend within Anglophone film appreciation to associate subtitles with authenticity" (p. 19). This trend is definitely enduring, as clearly assessed in my study of the representation of subtitles in Canadian newspapers over the four-year period from May 1, 2014 to May 1, 2018. Whether the viewer is won over or put off by subtitles depends on the perception of verisimilitude and authenticity in the dialogue, acting and subtitles themselves. Various other functions of subtitles engender a positive appreciation, such as their potential to foster appreciation of different languages and cultures or provide a pedagogical support for language acquisition. Prior to analyzing 244 key news items identified in Canadian media databases, I had found in the American and foreign press a considerable number of comments regarding a shift in attitude towards subtitles, mainly due to the popularity of a number of television series in languages other than English available on online streaming services such as Netflix.

I became increasingly interested in finding out whether that favourable shift in attitude towards subtitles was happening in Canada as well, given the country's specific political, geographical and socio-demographic context of an enduring linguistic divide between Francophones and Anglophones, the cultural genocide and linguicide of its Indigenous peoples, the indisputable monolingualism of its households, its significantly large consumption of American mass media culture and products, and its growing immigrant demographic, especially in large urban centres. In addition, according to media reports, the $500M Netflix deal with the

Canadian government received met with a rough reception among leaders of the film and television industry, political commentators and to a certain extent the general population, especially in Quebec, since it was not clear which one of Canada's linguistic groups would actually benefit from this deal -- Anglophones, Francophones, other minorities.

While media objectivity and influence were of concern in this study, especially since a "direct correlation cannot be made between critical reception and audience response" (Zanotti, p. 2018, p. 147), in order to provide a generalized thematic overview of the possibly changing appreciation of subtitles, I relied on a number of Letters to the Editor and remarks made by film makers and film festival organizers to film critics and reporters coast to coast. In her 2016 doctoral dissertation, Elizabeth D. White quoted the observation by Simon Beaudry, president of the Montreal-based box-office tracking firm Cineac: in Quebec, "English subtitled films are working much better than five or 10 years ago. I think there's a real openness from Anglophones partly because there's more media coverage of European and Quebecois film" (White, 2016, p. 9). An increase in media coverage of "European and Quebecois film", in Beaudry's opinion, has an impact on the attendance for subtitled films. There could, after all, be a tangible outcome when Canadian film reviewers and television critics use their persuasive tone, voice and charm to encourage their readers to watch subtitled productions.

Mona Baker, Director of the Centre for Translation and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester, insists that "A great deal of our experience of and knowledge about other cultures is mediated through various forms of translation, including written translations, sub-titling, dubbing, and various types of interpreting activities" (Baker, 1993, p. 233). Baker's argument is that, although translation is not about "building bridges" or "enabling communication," it is about the "active circulation and promotion of narratives" (Baker, n.d.

"Research interests"). The increased exposure to subtitled productions provides the opportunity to shape the way we understand and apprehend the world, and it therefore only makes sense that governments, cultural minorities and marginalized communities would wish to seize on it. Discussions about the controversial ongoing deal between the Government of Canada and Netflix set the scene for some pretty extreme points of view showing unmistakably that the politics of language are alive and well in Canada. For example, an opinion piece by Peter Menzies, a former newspaper publisher who served as a CRTC commissioner for 10 years, was circulated from coast to coast in *Postmedia* newspapers and also widely commented upon online. In "Blame Quebec when your Netflix bill goes up," he writes:

> Only three words really matter in this story: culture, protect and Quebec. They have been intertwined for at least 258 years and they will not be untwined. Ever. The preservation and protection of the French language and identity on this continent are so deeply ingrained in every francophone that nothing as petty as a technology revolution deter its instincts. As the former Conservative government discovered in 2008, even the slightest threat is punished and repelled. As Joly found out when she was pummeled in Montreal media for her eminently sensible decisions regarding Netflix in September, the tiniest hint that things might have to change is met with shouts in the street and gatherings of les patriotes on the barricades. When it comes to cultural symbols, language or public policies, it's one for all and all for one. No soldier is left behind (Menzies, 2014).

In the concluding paragraph, Menzies does end up admitting that some may "wish the rest of Canada was as protective of its traditions and cultures as those who maintain the francophone fortifications" (Menzies, 2014). From the advocates in the BC film industry wishing that Netflix would establish an office in Vancouver, to the members of the Acadian film community wishing that the Ottawa-Netflix deal would have included a language clause relating to funding distribution, everyone is trying to get a piece of the action, but not at any cost, and this has brought on a lively and polarized debate in the media.

But how is this linked to the topic of the current state of appreciation of subtitles in Canada? What my analysis of the media coverage in both the Canadian and international press uncovered is that in the advent of global online streaming and the key role of audiovisual translations in the growth of international markets lay an opportunity for Canadian films, TV series and documentaries to receive international exposure. This exposure not only makes it possible to share different aspects of Canadian culture, both domestically and internationally, but also provides much-needed employment to members of Canada's film and television industry. It is therefore not surprising that the debate in Canadian media focussed in part on who would get the biggest piece of the pie in the Ottawa-Netflix deal. What my analysis also revealed is that important demographic groups, such as newcomers to Canada and other minorities, were under- or misrepresented on Canadian television, and a recent subtitled series like *Blood and Water* held out hope that the attitude of Canadians towards subtitles was changing to a more favourable one. Yet the example of *Kim's Convenience* and the off-putting remarks received by Iglulik filmmaker Zacharius Kunuk proves there is still a long way to go. Are Canadians then really ready, as some film reviewers, television critics and film festival organizers suggest, to get past their bias against subtitles?

If they are not, they ought to be. Canada's former Commissioner of Official Languages, Graham Fraser, argued that in the country's plurilingual society and in a globalized world, Canadians are already living through a technological revolution that is aimed at facilitating access to any text in the language of their choice. In his "Notes for a Pre-Recorded Address at the Empowering Language Professionals Conference: Plurilingualism in a Globalized 21st Century," delivered in Graz, Austria, Fraser concludes by focussing on the topic of new technologies, globalization and the role of Internet giants like Google and YouTube. While he

does not mention online streaming giants like Netflix or make any specific reference to audiovisual translations, he highlights the fact that:

> The Canadian thinker Marshall McLuhan was prescient, 40 to 50 years ago, when he reflected on communications and technology. Just as printing changed how humans communicate, technology is transforming human relationships. It is possible to imagine that, some day, the language one speaks will be neither obstacle nor advantage to world communication, because technology will allow everyone to interpret written text or spoken language in his or her language of choice (Fraser, 2011).

Yet Canadian Netflix Subscribers are still struggling to find Canadian-produced TV shows, films and documentaries among the 5,000+ titles currently available in the Canadian Netflix catalogue, especially in French or Indigenous languages. While several film festival organizers spoke of the appeal of lesser-known domestic and foreign films presented with subtitles as an antidote to the hegemony of Hollywood, a number of obstacles still stand in the way of a favourable sentiment towards subtitles, which are still regarded by some as inherently elitist and by others as annoying. For those who face literacy challenges, they are just not an option, and finally, some are just not interested in watching any production made in another language. To cite Ruby Rich, are North American audiences even interested in overcoming the "blinders imposed by monolingualism and cinematic illiteracy" (Rich, 2004, p. 164)? The younger generations of digital natives who grew up immersed in technologies that continually favour the proliferation of text on screen might, but this would need to be verified empirically. Do Millennials who love watching and making memes, watch hours of videos on their social media or video games in silent mode with subtitles, fansub their favourite Japanese anime, binge-watch series like *Narcos*, learn from RSA-style whiteboard animation videos such as those by Sir Ken Robinson, and get their news from the short online videos of *NowThis News* or *AJ+* have a more favourable opinion of subtitles than previous generations? This seems like a plausible hypothesis, but it would have to be demonstrated through quantitative research.

Future Directions

Analyzing the recent conversation in Canadian newspapers regarding subtitles in general and subtitle appreciation in particular is a good first step toward understanding the various issues and challenges specific to the Canadian context. One avenue for future research would be the launch of a Canada-wide survey of the general public regarding the acceptance and use of subtitles by Canadians who watch foreign-language productions. Another would be to conduct a sentiment analysis of how this phenomenon plays out and is debated in social media rather than newspapers, one that would include personal reviews of subtitled foreign films on Netflix, conversations about subtitles on discussion websites like Reddit, and contributions to review aggregation websites for film and television like Rotten Tomatoes.

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Appendix 1 – Classification Grid

French		☐
English		☐
Publication	Ex. *Montreal Gazette*	
Province & Territory	Ex. QC	
Author	Ex. Kevin Tierney	
Sentiment/Opinion/Attitude (whether expressed or reported by author)	Like	☐
	Neutral	☐
	Dislike	☐
Dimensionality	Changes or Not in Attitude(s)/Sentiment/ Acceptability over Time or Generations Attitudinal Shifts	☐
Sentiment/Opinion/Attitude (whether expressed or reported by author)	Positive	☐
	Neutral	☐
	Negative	☐
Prescriptivity	Prescriptive Statements | Warning / A Word of Caution Addressing the Reader Directly	☐
Functionality	Distraction from the screen | Staying engaged in the story	☐
	Hearing Impairment/Deaf | Mumbling/Whispering | Accent(s)/Dialects | Sound Quality	☐
	Promote/ Broaden Culture to Diversify Provide Accessibility to Foreign-Language Audiences Foster Appreciation	☐
	Language Acquisition	☐
	Understanding because of/ or Opportunity to listen to a Foreign/ (Un)Familiar Language	☐
	Availability: Expand the Supply of Productions Insufficient Titles in Catalogue	☐
Attributes	Aesthetics | Size | Style | Readability	☐
Quality	Quality | Accuracy | Consistency | Frequency Translation| Presentation	☐
	Authenticity of Voice	☐
Context	Politics of Subtitles: Elitism | Social Class |Post-colonial practices | Casting	☐
	Sub/Dub	☐
	$ Cost $ of Sub vs./or Dub	☐
	Netflix	☐
	Amazon or other streaming services	☐
	Canadian Context | Identity Politics |Two Solitudes	☐

Appendix 2 – Results (Numbers of Items by Category)

Total Items Published	**244** news items from **68** newspapers and **5** news agencies	
French	105	7 outside QC - *Le Droit* (2), *L'Acadie Nouvelle* (2), *Le Franco* (3)
English	139	7 in QC - *Montreal Gazette* (7)
By Publication	*La Presse*	40
	The Globe and Mail	38
	The Toronto Star	14
	Le Devoir	12
	The Times & Transcript	10
	The Montreal Gazette	7
	Le Journal de Montréal	7
	Le Journal de Québec	7
	The Chronicle Herald	6
	Metro	6
	National Post	5
	Winnipeg Free Press	5
	Other	87
By Province & Territory	QC	104
	ON	78
	NB	20
	AB	9
	BC	8
	MB	8
	NS	7
	NL	2
	SK	2
	NU	1
	Unknown	5
	Others	0
Authors	Total	155
Sentiment/Opinion/Attitude (whether expressed or reported by author)	Like	9
	Neutral	222
	Dislike	13
Dimensionality	Changes or Not in Attitude(s)/Sentiment/ Acceptability over Time or Generations Attitudinal Shifts	20

Sentiment/Opinion/Attitude (whether expressed or reported by author)	Positive	126
	Neutral	79
	Negative	39
Prescriptivity	Prescriptive Statements | Warning / A Word of Caution Addressing the Reader Directly	31
Functionality	Distraction from the screen Staying engaged in the story	4
	Hearing Impairment/Deaf | Mumbling/Whispering | Accent(s)/Dialects | Sound Quality	29
	Promote/ Broaden Culture to Diversify Provide Accessibility to Foreign-Language Audiences Foster Appreciation	29
	Language Acquisition	7
	Understanding because of/ or Opportunity to listen to a Foreign/ (Un)Familiar Language	14
	Availability: Expand the Supply of Productions Insufficient Titles in Catalogue	19
Attributes	Aesthetics | Size | Style | Readability	4
Quality	Quality | Accuracy | Consistency | Frequency Translation| Presentation	27
	Authenticity of Voice	13
Context	Politics of Subtitles: Elitism | Social Class |Post-colonial practices | Casting	16
	Sub/Dub	6
	$ Cost $ of Sub vs./or Dub	9
	Netflix	36
	Amazon or other streaming services	4
	Canadian Context | Identity Politics | Two Solitudes	12