

# Social Meanings of Dubbed and Translated Media in Argentina

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## Introduction

### “Voice” in sociolinguistics/linguistic anthropology:

- “Who is speaking?” (Keane, 2001); participant roles (Goffman 1981); stance and positionality (Hill 1995), and forms of social differentiation and interaction (Bakhtin 1981, Volosinov 1986).
- Index personae/bodies (Agha 2005, Taylor 2009, Weidman 2003, 2011), authenticity/“naturalness” (Gallagher 1995), national identity (Danielson 1997 and Lohman 2010), among other constructs.

Processes of dubbing, subtitling, and translating can create visceral disruptions between “voices” and the interactional strategies they accomplish or social categories they index (Boelstorff 2003, Sherhouse 2015).

- Global spread of English-language media makes this disrupted state a common form of media consumption in a range of sociolinguistic contexts, so:

- how do non- L1 English speaking consumers of Anglophone media parse this disruption, and what meaning does it take on in local contexts?

## Background and Methods

- English has complex historical presence in Argentina—linked to prestige and wealth (Nielsen 2003). Contemporary discourses frame English as a tool for upward social mobility and cosmopolitan attitudes (Valentinsson 2018).
- 18 months of digital fieldwork + 4 months of in person fieldwork among Argentine fans of English-language media and pop culture.
- Discourse analysis of
  - “Media consumption narratives”: stories of how, when, and why Argentine research participants became fans of Anglophone mass media (oral interviews and text-based surveys)
  - Digital discourse: posts, comments, memes, etc., shared on fan pages, social networking sites.

## Interview Responses

- Last year – no the year before right?—when Jamie Lannister came there was a live interpreter [...] for Tonks they did subtitles [...] which they did live [...] but with Jamie Lannister the interpreter was horrible [...] because he only translated half of the things and there were things that weren't what he was saying so it was like the people there understood the actor and we laughed too soon or we would yell shut up to the translator.
- It's also faster more dynamic [...] [the actor] speaks English and you want to hear him not the interpreter [...] but for example when Nymphadora came she spoke Spanish because I think her – one of her parents is Spanish or something like that. I wanted to hear her in English because in the films you see her speaking English. So it was like weird to hear her in Spanish.
- I like the original sound. The original voices. The way they do the sounds—like I said before I studied [English] [so] I know that you lose something translating to Spanish. I'd rather go to a different movie theatre than see a movie at one with dubbing.
- [For my friends who prefer dubbing] the typical response is they can't read and watch at the same time. We kind of make fun of them for that, it's a bit lazy.

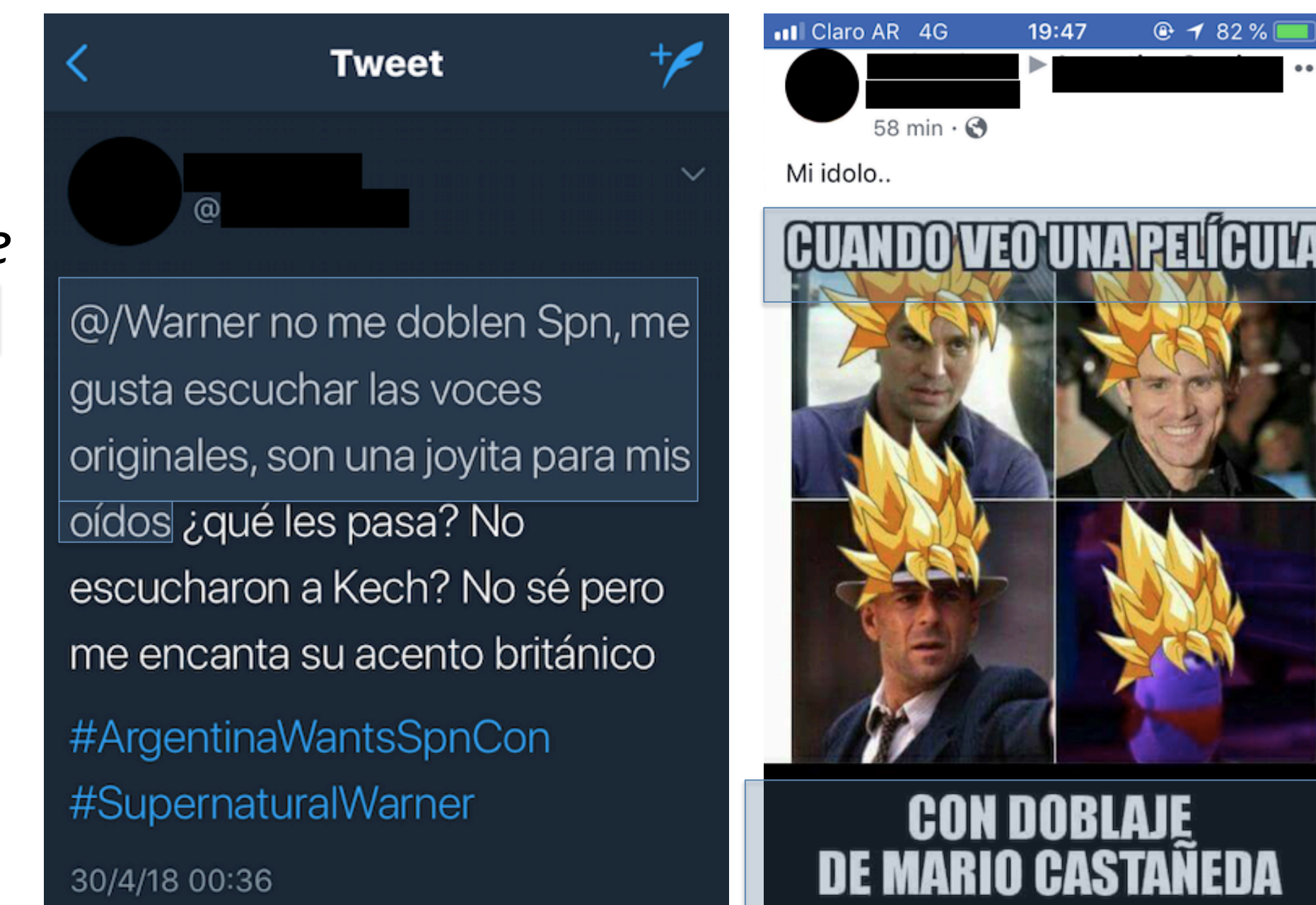
## Themes

AGE/MATURITY

EDUCATION/CLASS

AUTHENTICITY

Claro si, que me parece re logico, a mi incluso los shows de Syfy que he visto en ingles me ha chocado la primera vez que los vi en castellano, pero no me parece que sea lo mas terrible que nos ha pasado en el fandom. Ademas me parece re lindo que este DW en la tele, mas alla de no estar de la forma que yo lo vi o todo el DW que me gustaria que este, yo pienso por ejemplo en mi yo mas pequena, antes de manejar el ingles que manejo, cuando era chica y podia ver Los Expedientes secretos X (o incluso CODIGO X) porque Fox me lo pasaba en castellano, o ahora que no se coreano pero gracias a que esta doblada puedo seguir la novela esta que me da Telefe (Si chicos, la novela de la tarde y con mucho orgullo eh xD), o en mi papa o mi abuela que si, pueden leer, pero les es mas comodo VER lo que pasa y escucharlo, como hago yo que tengo la posibilidad de hacerlo tanto en castellano como en ingles



## Survey Responses

- As far back as I can remember, at first [I watched series/movies/etc.] dubbed into Spanish, but since I have use of reason I've been exposed to Anglophone media and pop culture.
- A few years ago shows originally in English tended to be subtitled, now you see more dubbing on cable to public TV, since there's a push by the state to support the industry and favor Spanish-language content... I prefer subtitling because I think there are certain meanings that can get lost in translation... Higher socio-economic classes tend to prefer subtitling rather than dubbing...
- Around age 13, I watched [dubbed] shows in Spanish on channels like Disney and Cartoon Network; later on I started searching on the internet for videos and information in English.
- Many channels show dubbed shows now, but it's hard for me to watch them (and I think that's why I prefer subtitles) because, first of all, you've already gotten used to the original language, and second, it's more authentic to the original work.
- Before everything was subtitled, but after the law of obligatory dubbing was passed ... nearly all broadcasts are done dubbed in to Latin American Spanish, to help people from lower classes who can't read the subtitles as they watch the shows and/or movies. Personally I prefer subtitling because in dubbing you lose a lot of jokes that are only funny in the original language [...] but I like that films can reach all kinds of people with dubbing.

## Discussion

- Preference for subtitled media among Argentine fans of Anglophone media is framed in terms of linguistic authenticity (e.g., fidelity to the actor's “original” voice, fidelity to “original” meanings).
- Fans frame others' preferences for dubbed media as indexes to social characteristics:
  - It is fine for children and the elderly to prefer dubbing, but young adults might get called “lazy” for openly preferring dubbing.
  - Explicit comments about one's educational background, and about the Argentine federal law requiring public media to broadcast shows, films, etc. in the country's official language (or indigenous languages) link dubbing to socioeconomic/educational status.
- This suggests that, for Argentine fans of Anglophone media, consumption of dubbed media is linked to a more “casual” fan positionality, and to a more local/“provincial” sociocultural positionality. Meanwhile, fans' own preferences for media with the “authentic”, “original” voices preserved indexes a more serious fan positionality, and in turn more global, cosmopolitan socio-cultural positionalities.
- These indexical relationships reflect more general language ideologies within Argentina, particularly discourses linking knowledge and use of English to prestige lifestyles (Nielsen 2003, Valentinsson 2018).
- Broadly, this work shows how particular “voices” take on new social meanings when transported to and circulated in new sociolinguistic contexts, and how linguistic processes such as subtitling, dubbing, and translation shape those processes.

References available upon request.