Pedagogical devices

On the subtitling of Atayalic speech in Indigenous films from Taiwan

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The “partial translation” of Inuktitut-language lyrics in the Indigenous film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (directed by Zacharias Kunuk, 2001) has been interpreted as a means of challenging outsiders to understand the film “emically,” meaning from insiders’ perspectives. On this interpretation, *Atanarjuat* is linguistically exclusionary, because the challenge of partial translation effectively excludes most outsiders from a full understanding. But given the problem of language shift in Indigenous communities, we should not expect Indigenous films to be linguistically exclusionary in general, or they would exclude young Indigenous insiders along with outsiders. We should instead expect Indigenous films to adopt an inclusionary approach to subtitling, consistent with projects of language revitalization. To see what form such an approach might take, I analyzed three Indigenous films from Taiwan in which speech in Atayalic languages is subtitled in Mandarin. Staggered over three-and-a-half decades, these three films index the subtitling approach as a function of concern about language shift. I found that all three films were fully, not partially translated, but that the two films made in a context of concern about language shift were subtitled pedagogically. The two pedagogically subtitled films are “devices” for the pedagogy of Atayal, the most widely spoken Atayalic language. This result from Taiwan suggests that a pedagogical approach might be common in the subtitling of Indigenous films in settler societies around the world.

Keywords: Indigenous film, subtitling, Taiwan, language shift, language revitalization

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1. Tough love: On the politics of partial translation in *Atanarjuat: The fast runner*

In her article on *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, the winner of the Golden Camera award for best first feature at the Cannes Film Festival in 2001, Sophie McCall (2004) observed that some of the lyrics in the Inuktitut-language songs in the film were not translated in the English subtitles. McCall termed this subtitling approach "partial translation" (20). According to McCall, partial translation was employed in response to the decontextualization of Inuit songs by outsiders like the "anthropologist-explorers" Franz Boas and Knud Rasmussen (21). McCall argues that "the film challenges historical constructions of Inuit songs as decontextualized oral 'poems,' removed from the contexts of performance and reception" (21). Out of context, these songs were "fragments" (21). Director Zacharias Kunuk and his collaborators apparently translated partially to prevent outsiders from fragmenting their culture. They also did so to "resist the powerful explanatory impetus of the genre of the ethnographic film" (27), particularly Robert J. Flaherty's 1922 documentary *Nanook of the North* (28–37). "I can only sing this song to someone who understands it," says a character called Kumaglak to a mysterious stranger at the beginning of the film (19), but for McCall, it is as if Director Kunuk and company did not make the film for mysterious strangers – cultural outsiders – in the audience to understand. It seems, however, that outsiders who made the effort to understand Inuit culture on insiders' terms would be able to understand the film, including the song. One such outsider was Kunuk's collaborator Norman Cohn, who grew up in New York City, but who became an ally of Kunuk's community: the village of Igloolik in the Territory of Nunavut in northeastern Canada.

In her response to McCall's article, Nicole Nolette (2014) explained the partiality of *Atanarjuat*'s translation with appeals to major figures in translation studies, starting with Lawrence Venuti. She noted Venuti's claim that all translation is "partial," meaning "incomplete and inevitably slanted towards the domestic scene" (Venuti 2004, 487; cited by Nolette 2014, "Partiality and Translation," par. 1). Translation is indeed inevitably incomplete because things get lost in translation. As for a slant towards the domestic scene, meaning that a translation tends to cater to the target audience, Venuti famously argued that translators should minimize loss by foreignizing, in order to challenge outsiders to try to understand the original text on insiders' terms. Without Inuktitut language ability, neither McCall nor Nolette was able to discuss foreignization in the subtitling of *Atanarjuat*. For them, *Atanarjuat* was partially translated simply because not all of the lyrics in the film were subtitled. Nevertheless, for Nolette, partial translation in the film had

the same purpose as Venuti's foreignization: it was a way of challenging outsiders to try to see and hear "emically," through Inuit eyes and ears.[1]

According to Nolette, the challenge of partial translation in *Atanarjuat* would be extremely tough for outsiders to meet. *Atanarjuat*'s translation was not only "tough" (Spivak [1983] 2000; cited by Nolette 2014, "De-centering the Space of Practical Social Power," par. 2) but also "abusive" (Nornes 1999; cited by Nolette 2014, "Orality, Subtitles, Translation," par. 2) and "resistan[t]" (Cronin 2000, cited by Nolette 2014, Countertranslation Tactics," par. 2). Such a tough, abusive, and resistant translation would submit outsiders to what Antoine Berman called the "trials of the foreign" (Berman [1985] 2000; cited by Nolette 2014, "Partiality and Translation," par. 1). Nolette certainly submitted herself to a trial of the foreign. She went through the bilingual screenplay for *Atanarjuat* (Angilirq et al. 2002) and noticed romanized Inuktitut words, for instance *qulliq*. By using this word without translation in her article, Nolette submitted the reader to a trial of the foreign. I submitted gladly, by consulting Wikipedia to find that a *qulliq* is an oil lamp. Halfway through the decade between McCall's article and Nolette's, an article on the topic was created on The Free Encyclopedia. It is getting easier for outsiders to meet the challenge of partial translation.

Even so, Nolette's "tough love" interpretation of partial translation in *Atanarjuat* is still exclusionary. Most of *Atanarjuat*'s audience is going to be partially excluded. Few audience members are going to do the tough work of emic understanding.

Atanarjuat is among the world's most famous Indigenous-made films, but is it typical of Indigenous-made films with respect to subtitling? Should we, in other words, expect that in general Indigenous-made films would employ "partial subtitling" to exclude outsiders, or at least make it tough for outsiders to understand?

We can try to answer this question in theory by considering the linguistic demographics of Indigenous communities. A national household survey published a decade after *Atanarjuat* premiered at Cannes found that nearly nine out of ten people in Nunavut "reported the ability to conduct a conversation in an Inuit language" (Statistics Canada 2011, 8). It appears that by subtitling partially, Kunuk and collaborators were *not* thereby excluding most of the younger members of their community. But not all Indigenous communities in Canada had such healthy linguistic demographics as communities in Nunavut around that time. According to the 2016 census, only about 15% of Canada's First Nations population had the ability to carry on a conversation in an ancestral language (Statistics Canada 2017, 3). In communities in which only 15% of people can speak

1. This phrasing is inspired by Arnold Krupat's claim that *Atanarjuat* "challenges" outsiders "to see with a Native eye" (2009, 133; cited by Nolette 2014, "Translation as a Telling," par. 1).

the ancestral language, most speakers will tend to be older, as a consequence of language shift (Fishman 1991). In such communities, whether in Canada or around the world, filmmakers who employed partial subtitling would be excluding most young people from their communities from full understanding. We should therefore not expect films from such communities to employ partial subtitling.

We should also try to answer the question empirically. To this end, I analyzed three films from Taiwan that contain speech in Indigenous languages, particularly Atayalic languages. I found that the Atayalic-language speech was subtitled fully, not partially, in all three films. While watching the films, I discovered that in the two most recent films, which were made in a context of concern about language shift, the Atayalic-language speech was subtitled pedagogically. By "pedagogical subtitling," I mean an approach to subtitling that takes advantage of what Henrik Gottlieb (1994) called the "diagonal," speech-to-text mode of audiovisual translation, in order to make it easy, and not tough, for anyone with ears to hear to learn the sound, not just the sense, of words or even phrases in an unfamiliar language. Pedagogical subtitling can be understood as a kind of foreignization that is not tough, abusive, or resistant and that can contribute to language revitalization (Zuckerman 2020).

Would Indigenous films tend to be fully and pedagogically subtitled? I believe they would, because most such films have been made in a similar sociolinguistic context. To show this to be the case, one would have to survey subtitling in Indigenous films from around the world. What I offer here is an analysis of three case studies from Taiwan that suggests that such a survey would be worthwhile. In the next section, I contextualize and analyze the three cases.

2. Language shift and subtitling practice in Taiwan

Taiwan's Indigenous peoples are the progeny of pioneers who settled Taiwan about 6,000 years ago. Han Chinese settlement of Taiwan's west coast only started in the seventeenth century, but Indigenous peoples had long dwelled in the mountains and on the east coast. They continued living a stateless and mostly autarkic lifestyle of hunting and horticulture until they were forced to submit by the Japanese, who colonized Taiwan from 1895 to 1945. The Atayal, who lived in the northern reaches of the resource-rich Central Mountain Range, were known as the fiercest of Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, especially after they rebelled against Japanese rule at the hill station of Musha in 1930. Particularly after 1930, Atayal villages were moved and amalgamated; Atayal people were addressed as

Takasago, a term of respect, and educated in Japanese. A dozen years later, children of rebels volunteered to fight for Emperor Hirohito.

Before 1895, Atayal people would have identified with their village communities, perhaps with village alliances, not as Atayal. The word *tayal* meant "person" or "people," and only became an ethnonym and a linguonym through Japanese ethnological and linguistic analysis. By 1945, at least some Atayal people identified as Atayal, as Takasago, and as potential Japanese citizens. Yet, they were kept separate from the Han, not just by geographical isolation but also by colonial administration. Hence, Paul Barclay (2017) has argued that contemporary Indigenous identity is partly a product of state policy since the early twentieth century in settler states like Taiwan.

After the war, the Kuomintang-Republic of China (KMT-ROC) party-state adopted many policies that the Japanese had tested out. Indigenous villages continued to be moved and amalgamated, but remained isolated both by geography and by policy: access to the mountains was restricted during martial law (1949–1987). At the same time, lip service was paid to social integration, in that Indigenous people were referred to as "mountain compatriots," where the word for "compatriot" in Mandarin suggests familial belonging. When they left their communities to seek employment in the cities, Indigenous people were certainly not treated like family by the Han petty capitalists who exploited them. As for linguistic integration, monolingualism was instituted, and students were punished if they spoke any language at school but Mandarin.

This was an attempted "linguicide" (Zuckerman 2020, 186–192). Although the authorities were trying to kill the languages, the church threw a lifeline. Unlike in Canada, where Indigenous children were stolen from their homes and forced to board at church-run residential schools in the Sixties Scoop, in Taiwan churches supported local languages, if not local cultures, through Bible translation and bilingual evangelization (De Busser 2019). By the 1980s, however, Taiwan's Indigenous languages were no longer being passed down to school-age children. Revitalizing these languages has been one of the goals of activists in the local Indigenous movement over the past four decades.

Taiwan was under martial law until 1987, but the authorities began relaxing control of civil society in the early and mid-1980s, allowing Indigenous activists to articulate their demand for the state to respect their rights as *yúan zhù mín*, literally "original resident citizen." This was their translation of "Indigenous." As "Indigenous" had been used in a global movement dating to the 1960s (Niezen 2003), local activists were demanding that the state govern them according to evolving international norms. The most important norm, autonomous Indigenous self-development, was articulated in the International Labour Organization

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention in 1989, a precursor to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

In Taiwan, the state responded to Indigenous demands in the 1990s with constitutional amendments recognizing Indigenous people and then Indigenous peoples, with a mechanism for further recognition of peoples who considered themselves distinct. The Truku of the east coast were recognized as distinct from the Atayal in 2004 in advance of one presidential election, and the Sediq (also known as the Seediq) in 2008 just after the next presidential election. Truku and Sediq are mutually intelligible, but linguists are not the ones who decide who is who in the politics of Indigenous recognition in settler societies (Taylor [1992] 1995).

In addition to recognizing the Atayal, the Truku, the Sediq, and other peoples as Indigenous, the state has also responded to calls by Indigenous activists to support Indigenous language revitalization (McNaught 2021). There are two types of programs, educational and translational. Educationally, Indigenous languages have been taught in once-a-week classes at certain elementaries since the late 1990s (McNaught 2021, 129). There are now language-nest preschools and experimental elementaries, and an Amis immersion elementary is planned. In terms of translation, dictionaries have been compiled in each of Taiwan's sixteen officially recognized Indigenous languages, and Wikipedias are being built in many languages. The news is delivered weekly by anchors who sight-translate stories from Mandarin into their ancestral languages.

How have these language-support programs been working? Atayal communities have been assessed (Chen 2010) at six or seven on Joshua Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), which only goes up to eight (Fishman 1991; see Lewis and Simons 2010, 105, Table 1). Fishman's is a scale of language shift, which is often discussed in terms of language endangerment (Lewis and Simons 2010). In communities at six on the scale, children are still using the language; at seven, parents are using it but not passing it down; and at eight, only grandparents are using it. Six seems right for the year 1980 in Taiwan but overly optimistic for 2000, let alone 2020. Atayalic languages today are mostly grandmother tongues.

In the absence of additional studies and statistics, a survey of films containing speech in Indigenous languages is a way of indexing language shift in Indigenous communities in Taiwan, at least since martial law was lifted in 1987. Before then, Indigenous languages were poorly represented in films featuring Indigenous peoples. Since then, all such films have contained scenes with speech in Indigenous languages. These films have been studied in terms of Indigenous representation and director identity (see Sterk 2021 for bibliography), not in terms of

language shift or subtitling practice, except for *Seediq Bale* (directed by Wei Te-sheng, 2011), the subject of a monograph (Sterk 2020).

Instead of trying to cover all the relevant films, I will focus on three films containing speech in Atayalic languages, as presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Films containing speech in Atayalic languages

Year	Title	Director	Identity	Language	GIDS	Subtitling
1989	*Two Sign Painters*	Yu Kan-ping	Mainlander	Truku	6	Standard
2001	*Maya's Rainbow*	Cheng Wen-tang	Taiwanese	Atayal	7	Pedagogical
2016	*Lokah, Laqi!*	Laha Mebow	Indigenous	Atayal	8	Pedagogical

As Laha Mebow is herself Indigenous, *Lokah, Laqi!* can be described as an Indigenous-made film. Neither *Two Sign Painters* nor *Maya's Rainbow* can be described as Indigenous-made, but they are at least Indigenous films. Neither is an exploitation film. To the contrary, both were more or less realistic, and presented from plausible Indigenous perspectives. Both were made with significant Indigenous community participation by a director who was an ally of the community. Yu Kan-ping and Cheng Wen-tang were not as involved in the communities featured in *Two Sign Painters* and *Maya's Rainbow* as Norman Cohn, Zacharias Kunuk's collaborator, has been in Igloolik, but both Yu and Cheng tried in their filmmaking to make contributions to Indigenous communities. After *Two Sign Painters*, Yu spent fifteen years making a documentary about traditional Indigenous musical culture. Cheng made a number of films about Indigenous communities, including an "Indigenous-village trilogy" for public television. In the present context, both films are grist for my mill, because they contain speech in Atayalic languages that is subtitled in Mandarin.

Staggered over three-and-a-half decades, the films index shifts in cultural capital, language use, and subtitling approach. Mainlanders like Yu Kan-ping still had a monopoly on cultural capital in the 1980s. By the 2000s, native Taiwanese directors like Cheng Wen-tang were more competitive.[2] There were no Indigenous directors yet besides Mayaw Biho, a documentary filmmaker. But future Indigenous directors had entered the industry in other roles. Laha Mebow acted in one of Cheng Wen-tang's made-for-TV movies.

2. In Taiwan, Mainlanders were born in China or to Chinese people who immigrated to Taiwan in the late 1940s after the KMT lost the Chinese Civil War. Han Taiwanese people, by contrast, were born in Taiwan to progeny of Han Chinese people who settled Taiwan starting in the seventeenth century.

As for language shift, I assigned the GIDS score based on whether children, parents, or grandparents are using the language in the film. I define "using the language" as carrying on a conversation in the language. On this definition, using an Atayal word in the middle of a mainly Mandarin utterance does not count as using Atayal. But any young person who uses Atayal words might acquire the ability to carry on a conversation in the language, thus reversing language shift. This is a source of hope in *Lokah, Laqi!* It is the hope that Indigenous communities might display linguistic "resilience," the capacity to bounce back from disruption due to colonization (Roche 2017).

The GIDS score relates to the approach to subtitling. For simplicity's sake, allow me to describe this study as if it were a scientific experiment: let the independent variable be concern about language shift, and the dependent variable the subtitling approach. I will show how the subtitling approach indexes concern about language shift in the three case studies, the first of which is like a control case.

2.1 Two sign painters *(Yu Kan-ping, 1989)*

Two Sign Painters was released a year after a large protest was held in Taipei against the appropriation of Indigenous land. The film is critical of land appropriation, in particular by Asia Cement in the Taroko Gorge area of Hualien County on the east coast (see Simon 2007, 229–230). Against a background of austere strip mines and sublime landscapes in the Gorge, a pair of Truku boys in their early twenties fall in love with a Han Chinese girl named Mimi, a college student who spends a summer volunteering in their community. One day Mimi asks Buya, one of the boys, to ask an elder why he is unwilling to move down into the village to be closer to "civilization." Obviously, the old fellow cannot understand Mandarin, because Buya has to translate Mimi's question into Truku.

Baki, s<m>iling ka weewa nii, h<m>uwa nii, ini namu osa m-eniq truma?
elder <AF>ask NOM girl this <AF>why this not 2P go AF-live inside
Elder, this girl asks, why don't you all go live inside [the village]?

The actor who played Buya was not himself Truku. The line in the Mandarin screenplay was translated into Truku by a local, who taught the actor the line syllable by syllable. The subtitle in Mandarin was as follows:

Zhè wèi xiǎojiě yào wǒ wèn nǐ wèishéme bù bān xià shān ne?
this CL girl AUX 1s ask 2s why not move down mountain INT
This girl wants me to ask you, why don't you move down the mountain?

Despite the shift from "inside" to "down the mountain," the Mandarin is a full and idiomatic translation of what Buya asks in Truku. The old fellow answers in Truku that the Japanese forced him to move once, and now the KMT wants him to move again. No doubt the KMT will want him to move somewhere else later on. That is why he is unwilling to move. He takes about a minute to answer. His answer is translated fully and idiomatically in the Mandarin subtitles. Then Buya summarizes the answer in Mandarin.

Figure 1. Mimi, the elder, and Buya in *Two Sign Painters*

As you can tell from Figure 1, the subtitle is bilingual. Strictly speaking, the Mandarin is a same-language subtitle, in other words a caption, while the English is an interlingual subtitle. The English is less than idiomatic, but it is a full translation of the Mandarin. The Mandarin is idiomatic, but it hardly a full translation of the Truku. Buya's one-line summary recalls the similar summaries in the Suntory Whisky scene in *Lost In Translation* (directed by Sofia Coppola, 2003). Like those summaries, Buya's is intended to be amusing. But in contrast to the Suntory Whisky scene, where the director's instructions in Japanese are very partially translated in the English subtitles, the old man's explanations in Truku are fully translated in the Mandarin subtitles in this scene from *Two Sign Painters*. Mimi is the only one who has to rely exclusively on Buya's one-line summary. Buya's translation is partial only from Mimi's perspective, but its motivation is not to make it tough for outsiders like Mimi to understand, as in Nolette's interpretation of *Atanarjuat*. Rather, Buya is repurposing the old man's utterance, to try to amuse and impress Mimi.

The sociolinguistic significance of the scene is that sixty-year-olds still talk in Truku to twenty-year-olds, and that twenty-year-olds can reply in Truku but are also fluent in Mandarin. In other scenes shot in Hualien, the two Truku boys, Buya and his friend Awi, talk in Truku, but apparently not because they are in the habit of doing so. Rather, they codeswitch to prevent Mimi from understanding.

For instance, Buya switches to Truku to tell Awi he is piggybacking his “bride” (Mimi) across a stream. He intends to make Awi jealous, and he succeeds. After they go to Taipei in search of Mimi and employment, they talk to each other in Mandarin. They still swear in Truku, however, especially when they argue about Mimi, as in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Buya (left) listens sullenly as Awi (right) insults him in Truku[3]

For Truku speakers who can read Mandarin, there is an interesting shift from Truku to Mandarin, as shown in the following analysis (Mandarin above and Truku below):

Nǐ shénjīng-bìng!
2s nerve-illness
You’re crazy!
Ya =su empunu?
QUERY =2s feverish
Are you feverish?

The Mandarin word *shénjīng-bìng*, 神經病 in the subtitle, is a vernacular borrowing of a technical term, the translation of “neuropathy.” The Truku utterance *Ya su empunu?* employs a traditional term for a fever. Awi is insinuating that Buya is not in his right mind. Awi does not articulate the line very clearly, making it next to impossible to hear, let alone to learn. It is highly unlikely that any audience member could learn any Truku by watching this film.

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3. According to the bracketed characters, (泰雅語), the utterance is in the Atayal language. At the time, the Truku were lumped in with the Atayal. Since 2004, they have been recognized as distinct, although to linguists Truku is a dialect of the Atayalic language Sediq.

At the time, an Indigenous ally like the director Yu Kan-ping would have been concerned about issues like land appropriation and labor exploitation. Although young people like Buya and Awi were shifting from Truku to Mandarin, the shift had not attracted much notice, and a language revitalization response had not yet been formulated. A dozen years later, the youngest native speakers of Atayalic languages were mostly in their thirties, and the first attempts at language revitalization were about to be made.

2.2 Maya's rainbow *(Cheng Wen-tang, 2001)*

Maya's Rainbow premiered on public television in 2001, a few years after the first Indigenous-language classes were taught in elementary schools, including in Atayal-speaking areas to the north of Hualien in Ilan County, where the director Cheng Wen-tang grew up. Cheng set a scene in *Maya's Rainbow* in one of these classes. The teacher, an activist for two causes, the rescue of child prostitutes and the rehabilitation of drug addicts, returns home to the village to teach Atayal to high school students, in the hopes that they will not turn into child prostitutes or drug addicts.[4] In the scene, the teacher stands at the blackboard as three students sit watching. The students are just a few years younger than Buya in *Two Sign Painters*, but unlike Buya they could not carry on a conversation in their ancestral language.

Figure 3. Atayal class in *Maya's Rainbow*

4. Zuckerman (2020, 266–280) has documented how reconnecting with ancestral languages and cultures can be life-affirming for Indigenous youth.

The guitar in Figure 3 is significant, because the language lesson draws on the lyrics of an Atayal-language popular song entitled “Maya’s Rainbow.”[5] The first two lines of the chorus of this song appear on the blackboard in the same scene.

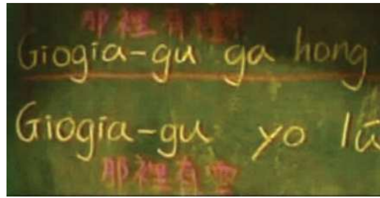

Figure 4. The blackboard in the class scene (detail)

The Mandarin is in pink and the Atayal in yellow in Figure 4. These are not subtitles or captions, which are non-diegetic. They are instead diegetic, part of the mise-en-scène. The students can read the Mandarin, so they know the semantic content of the lesson. They also know the alphabet, so they can read the Atayal in romanization.[6] The teacher pronounces the Atayal lines one by one for the students to repeat. In the following bilingual (Mandarin above and Atayal below) analysis, I have “translated” the Atayal words into the standard spellings:

(1) *Nàlǐ yǒu shù.*
there exist tree
There’s a tree there.
Cyux kya qu qhuniq.
exist.PRG there NOM tree
There’s a tree there now.

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5. “Maya’s Rainbow” won a “sound effects” award at the Golden Bells, Taiwan’s Emmys, because it was the theme song to *Maya’s Rainbow*. The song is sung in Atayal, but the director Cheng Wen-tang is credited as the lyricist. Cheng wrote the lyrics in Mandarin and asked the singer Bulang Yukan to translate them into Atayal and set them to music. Cheng may have gotten the idea to commission an Atayal-language song for his film after a Puyuma-language song “Myth” won a best-songwriting award at the Golden Melodies, Taiwan’s Grammys, in 2000. By introducing “Maya’s Rainbow” in a scene set in a language classroom, Cheng highlighted the pedagogical potential of Indigenous-language popular music.

6. This is the first time in Taiwan’s film history that an utterance in an Indigenous language was romanized. Previously, a valediction in Atayal was transliterated in Chinese characters in the title of a 1983 feature film, *Lǎoshī, Sīkǎyědá* (romanization mine), literally *Teacher, Goodbye*, known as *Lily of the Valley* in English. The Atayal valediction is *sgagay ta’*, literally “we part.”

(2) *Nàlǐ yǒu yún.*
there exist cloud
There's a cloud there.
Cyux kya qu yulung.
exist.PRG there NOM cloud
There's a cloud there now.

The last two lines of the four-line chorus are sung at a concert at the end of the film:

(3) *Nàlǐ yǒu yí zuò zǔ líng qiáo.*
There exist one CL ancestor spirit bridge
There's the bridge of the ancestral spirits.
Cyux m-aki' kya qutux hongu'.
exist.PRG AF-exist there one bridge
There's a bridge there right now.

(4) *Nà shì Tàiyǎ-zú de mèng.*
That COP Atayal-people SUB dream
That's the dream of the Atayal people.
Qasa ga spi na Tayal.
That TOP dream SUB Atayal
That's the Atayal dream.

The Atayal dream is crossing the "rainbow," literally the "bridge of spirits" (*hongu' utux*), into the afterlife.

This scene suggests that Atayal language teachers in the early 2000s were not using the standard romanizations (Li 1992) that linguists had adopted a decade earlier. Language teachers still spelled words as they thought they sounded. Judging by the way the teacher in this scene spells in Atayal, she does not understand its phonology very well, or its grammar: she treats the demonstrative adverb *kya* and the nominative marker *qu* as morphemes and splits up *qhuniq* and *yulung* into *ga hong* and *yo lū* respectively, as if each syllable is a separate word. But it is significant that she tries to spell it. Buya in *Two Sign Painters* would not have thought of romanizing Truku, even if he saw Truku romanized in the Bible. The teacher offers her students a romanized Truku utterance for another purpose besides spreading the "good word": language revitalization.

The scene presents the language learning classroom as a vector of intergenerational language transmission, in contrast to the scene in *Two Sign Painters* where the elder talks to a member of his grandchildren's generation in Truku out of doors in an informal situation in daily life. Unlike the contents of a conversation, which are dependent on communicative need, the teacher's lesson is typical

of a traditional language learning classroom, with basic vocabulary words and sentence patterns to plug them into. There are two patterns, existential and categorical. Any language user has to be able to say that something exists somewhere or that something is a kind of something. The lesson initially appears to be planned according to the discredited grammar translation approach (Pym et al. 2013, 34 and throughout), where a language is taught in terms of literally translated sentence patterns, not through conversations; but we might reassess the lesson's pedagogical value in light of the realization that the lines on the blackboard are lyrics from a song that invites the audience to see and hear through Atayal eyes and ears.

Members of the audience of *Maya's Rainbow* are addressed both as students of Atayal in a language learning classroom and as listeners to Atayal-language popular music. With the subtitles, and the lesson on the blackboard, they are invited to study and sing along with the three teenage students, not just watch the film. There are of course limits to what the average audience member could learn. Unlike the teenagers, who can ask the teacher what the words mean, the television audience would have to listen to the first two examples of the existential sentence pattern multiple times to figure out that *qhuniq* (in line 1) means "tree," and *yulung* (in line 2) "cloud." The audience could not consult the interlinear analyses I provided above. But it would have been a lot easier to learn some Atayal from *Maya's Rainbow* on television than it was to learn some Truku from *Two Sign Painters* in the theater.

As we shall see, *Lokah, Laqi!* made it even easier for the audience to learn some Atayal, but through a conversational approach to language pedagogy.

2.3 Lokah, Laqi! *(Laha Mebow, 2016)*

Born in 1975, Laha Mebow might have learned to speak Atayal in childhood, except that she grew up in the city, not in her natal village. To learn to speak it in adulthood, she joined the return to the village movement after graduating from university. The movement had started in the early 1990s, a few years after Buya and Awi left their natal village in the Taroko Gorge area of Hualien County to work in Taipei and a few years before the activist in *Maya's Rainbow* left Taipei to teach in her natal village.

Both of Mebow's feature films are set in Atayal villages. *Finding Sayun* (2011) is set in her natal village in Ilan County, in the part of the country where Cheng Wen-tang set *Maya's Rainbow*. *Lokah, Laqi!* (2016) is set in a village in the mountains of central Taiwan. Both films can be described as community productions, with locals cast for almost all the roles, as in *Atanarjuat*. Unlike in *Atanarjuat*, many of the actors in Mebow's movies were playing lightly fictionalized versions

of themselves. Many of the characters' names are similar to or the same as the actors' actual names.

Particularly in *Lokah, Laqi!*, Mebow lodged her aspiration to recover her ancestral language in the titling, subtitling, and mise-en-scène. To start with, the title is in Atayal.[7] *Lokah* can be a stative verb meaning "healthy," but as an imperative it is also an expression of encouragement. *Laqi* means "child" or "children." The English translation of the title is nearly literal, *Hang In There, Kids!* One could guess what the words in *Lokah, Laqi!* mean in apposition to the English translation, just as *atanarjuat* is meaningful in apposition to "the fast runner." The Mandarin translation of the title, however, is misleading. Literally translated into English, it would be: "As Long As I Grow Up." But in an early scene Laha Mebow makes it easy (not tough) for Mandarin speakers to guess what the Atayal title means.

Figure 5. The *lokah* scene in *Lokah, Laqi!*

Jiahu, the young farmer in Figure 5, is the mostly monolingual grandson of the older lady sitting with her back to the camera. He converses with his grandmother in Mandarin. The grandmother starts a conversation in Mandarin with a male peer, who is off-camera in Figure 5, about Jiahu. The peer asks the grandmother what Jiahu is up to, and she switches to Atayal to tell the peer that the kid has to go "down the mountain" to get a job. The peer does not agree. He thinks Jiahu should stay with his grandmother and help out around the farm. Then he addresses Jiahu in Atayal: *Lokah, lokah!* he says. The Mandarin subtitle is *jiāyóu*, literally "add oil," meaning, as the English subtitle has it: "Keep up with the good work!" With the oral utterance translated diagonally into the written subtitle, the audience can learn the pronunciation and the meaning. By the end of the scene, the audience

7. *Lokah, Laqi!* is not the first film from Taiwan with a title entirely in an Indigenous language. *Wawa no Cidal* (*Children of the Sun*) was released with an Amis-language title in 2015.

might know almost as much Atayal as Jiahu. Sociolinguistically, the scene shows that bilingual grandparents can converse with each other in Mandarin, but switch to Atayal when they do not want their grandchildren to listen in. Except for a few words like *lokah*, bilingual seniors tend to address their monolingual juniors in Mandarin.

However, Jiahu has a kid brother named Watan who contrasts with Jiahu. Watan is an Atayal name that indexes the character's attachment to his Atayal identity. Unlike his elder brother, Watan has been raised by his grandmother, who has taught him some Atayal. Watan could not carry on a conversation in Atayal, but he knows quite a few words. By using these words in Mandarin sentences, he shares his knowledge with the audience. In particular, Watan uses Atayal to refer to the prey animals he spends his spare time trapping, especially *para*, Reeves's muntjac (*Muntiacus reevesi*). He uses the word in several early scenes featuring muntjac trapping and the sale of a muntjac for its meat, so that the audience knows it, too. In a later scene, on a field trip to the Taipei Zoo, Watan sees a muntjac in its enclosure and exclaims *para!* When the guide asks what a *para* is, Watan replies with the Mandarin name, *shānqiāng*. He goes on to relate how tough the animal's skin is, and how to soften it up through cooking. Then Watan teaches the shocked guide and everyone in the theater audience a mnemonic for *para* in the funniest moment in the movie.

Figure 6. A mnemonic for *para*, Atayal for Reeves's muntjac

As the off-camera guide tries to explain that the muntjac is an endemic subspecies in Figure 6, Watan says, "It doesn't mean guava." The joke in the original Mandarin has gotten lost in translation in the English subtitle. In Mandarin, Watan says:

Bú shì chī de bālà.
not COP eat SUB guava
It's not the guava that you eat.

Para is the official romanization of the word, but the *r* in Watan's pronunciation is an alveolar flap. In other words, *para* [pa'ɾa], the Atayal word for "muntjac," is almost identical to *bālà* [pālà], the Taiwanese Mandarin word for "guava."[8] The joke is that edibility is not a way of distinguishing between muntjac and guava, because both muntjac and guava are edible. Watan eats both all the time. The joke seems to be unintentional on his part, but it is not at his expense. It is one of the ways that the director Laha Mebow made the scene memorable.

The sociolinguistic point of the joke is that for Atayal kids like Watan, *para* is as familiar as *bālà* is to an audience of Taiwanese Mandarin speakers. *Para* is a familiar term for a familiar animal. The Mandarin *shānqiāng* by contrast is formal. A *shānqiāng* sounds like a deer-like animal that lives in the mountains (*shān* means mountain) and that most people would only see in the zoo or in visual media, while a *para* is part of the lifeworld of rural Atayal youngsters. Laha Mebow's film invites the audience into that lifeworld.

3. Discussion

These three Taiwanese cases militate against generalizing McCall's and Nolette's exclusionary interpretations of the partial translation of Indigenous-language speech in *Atanarjuat*. In *Two Sign Painters*, partial translation does not imply the exclusion of the theater audience. The only one who is excluded from the conversation between Buya and the old man is Mimi. Yet although *Two Sign Painters* did not employ partial translation to exclude the audience from a full understanding of the content of the conversation, it made no attempt to address audience members as learners of Truku, let alone to invite them to take a few steps into the Truku language community. By contrast, since Indigenous activists and their allies noticed the problem of language shift in Indigenous communities in the 1990s, films containing Indigenous speech have been subtitled pedagogically so as to teach the audience a few words, even a sentence pattern or two, of the language featured in the film.

The second and third films I discussed adopted distinct approaches to language pedagogy. *Maya's Rainbow* reflects a non-Indigenous director's faith in formal education as a vector of intergenerational language transmission. *Lokah,*

8. *Bālà* (romanization mine) is the Taiwanese Mandarin transliteration of the Taiwanese Hokkien word for "guava," *puát-á*. Taiwanese Hokkien is the language of the majority of Taiwan's settlers since the seventeenth century, Mandarin is the language imposed upon the population through the national language policy, and Taiwanese Mandarin is Mandarin as it is spoken in Taiwan, under the influence of Taiwanese Hokkien among other languages.

Laqi! displays an Indigenous director's conviction that the language can be passed down from grandparent to grandchild in the informal settings of daily life. Both films address audience members as language learners and invite them to take a few steps into Atayal communities. According to Japanese colonizers, Atayal people were once regarded as the fiercest and most rebellious in Taiwan, but there is no linguistic resistance to monolingual Mandarin speakers in any of these films, because resistance to linguistic outsiders would also exclude young people of Atayal ancestry like Jiahu and Watan in *Lokah, Laqi!*, who have not yet acquired the ability to carry on a conversation in their ancestral language.

In this regard, I respect McCall's generalization from partial translation in *Atanarjuat* to a politics of resistance to the decontextualization of Inuktitut-language songs, but am wary of overgeneralization. There is nothing inherently wrong with taking something out of context. In a film like *Maya's Rainbow* or *Lokah, Laqi!*, the audience can comprehend a lexeme or a meme in a certain context – a scene in a film – but can then take it out of context to use it in other contexts, without any loss to the language or culture. If we were unable to extract lexemes and memes from their immediate contexts, we would be unable to learn to use them. We would also be unable to learn the languages or cultures they constitute. Lexemes and memes are like building blocks in ad-hoc structures, not like bricks in a wall. Whatever form "an integrated social context" (McCall 2004, 32) takes, it has to be deconstructable and reconstructable, block by block.

For McCall, partial translation in *Atanarjuat* had to be understood in terms of anticolonial politics (2004, 39), and it may seem as if I have not paid enough attention to the politics of the three case studies. As Nicole Nolette reminded us, resistance in translation as in other areas of social life may be in response to what Tejaswini Niranjana called "the very asymmetrical power dynamics" in colonial contexts (1992, 59; cited by Nolette 2014, "Partiality and Translation," par. 1). Given that Indigenous peoples like the Atayal remain colonized, surely Indigenous directors like Laha Mebow would express resistance to colonization? Indeed, we should expect them to, but we should try to confirm our expectations empirically through case studies that should impress us with the variety of forms resistance can take.

In *Lokah, Laqi!*, for instance, the character Watan expresses resistance in many ways. He uses the Atayal word for Reeve's muntjac when many of his peers have shifted to Mandarin. He refuses to live like Taiwanese youngsters do, preferring to spend his free time emulating his Atayal ancestors by hunting. He hunts even though the way he does it is illegal according to the government.[9] In creating

9. Article 19.1 of the Indigenous People's Basic Law (2005) guarantees the right to hunt, but other laws and regulations restrict who may hunt, as well as when, where, why, and how. Watan,

such a character, the director Laha Mebow was expressing her own resistance to state restrictions on hunting and her solidarity with legal challenges to those restrictions.[10] She did not, however, express her resistance linguistically through partial subtitling. Rather, she subtitled her film fully and pedagogically, to convey the sound, not just the sense, of Atayalic words like *para*, to anyone with ears to hear. Instead of excluding outsiders through partial subtitling, she included them through pedagogical subtitling. So did Cheng Wen-tang, the director of *Maya's Rainbow*.

A tendency is therefore evident in the three case studies, that a concern about language shift will tend to motivate a pedagogical approach to subtitling. This tendency can hardly be understood scientifically, at least not in terms of a single independent variable that determines a single dependent variable. Concern about language shift is overdetermined and therefore hard to predict, as are people's responses to it. Any Indigenous case study is therefore unique in terms of language variety, severity of shift, technological development, media environment, local politics, national policy, international norms, and individual proclivity. I expect, however, that the tendency I observed in films containing Atayalic speech is a theme with variations in other cases in Taiwan and around the world. In Taiwan, an Amis-speaking scholar might take a look at the subtitling of *Wawa no Cidal* (directed by Cheng Yu-chieh and Lekal Sumi, 2015), which is more explicitly political than either of Laha Mebow's feature films. For scholars in other settler states, there are many "native features" (Wood 2008) that are political in different ways, that contain subtitled speech in Indigenous languages, and that have not been studied in terms of subtitling.

How might such cases interest translation studies scholars? Such cases can be situated in the intersection of audiovisual and minority translation studies, a field that has been mapped out by Eithne O'Connell and her colleagues. O'Connell ([1993] 2011) has shown how audiovisual translation, including subtitling, captioning, and dubbing, can be used pedagogically to support minority languages, whether in classrooms or the mass media. More recently, in a pair of co-written articles (a state of the field article, De Ridder and O'Connell 2018a, and a corpus-based case study article, De Ridder and O'Connell 2018b), she has

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for instance, breaks the law because he is too young to apply for a permit, because he uses traps, because he traps an animal classified as a "rare and valuable species," and because he sells one to supplement his family's meager income.

10. I suspect Mebow had Tama Talum's case in mind when she was writing the screenplay for her film. In 2013, three years before *Lokah, Laqi* was released, an Indigenous man named Tama Talum was arrested for failing to follow the rules around hunting. He appealed his conviction all the way to the Supreme Court and then the Council of Grand Justices. For discussion, see Simon 2020.

added a language planning dimension, in which audiovisual translation practice is understood in a larger sociolinguistic context. I have tried to follow suit, by explaining Cheng Wen-tang's and Laha Mebow's pedagogical subtitling sociolinguistically, as a response to their concern about language shift.

Yet O'Connell and others have mapped the field only partially. Despite their inclusion of cases like Prakrit languages in India or French in Canada (De Ridder and O'Connell 2018a, 406, 407), most of their cases remain European, and the Indian, Canadian, and European cases involve languages that are much *less* endangered than Atayalic languages in Taiwan. We would do well to keep in mind Michael Cronin's point that minority expresses "a relation not an essence" (1995, 86; cited by De Ridder and O'Connell 2018a, 404). A language like Irish is in a precarious position relative to English, the global lingua franca, but many languages are in even more precarious positions. There are "not much more than 100,000" native speakers of Irish, and "[a]nother 1.5 million [who] can speak the language with varying degrees of fluency" (O'Connell [1993] 2011, 168). By contrast, there are very few fluent native speakers of Atayalic languages, and tens of thousands of people who can speak with varying degrees of fluency, most over the age of fifty. More audiovisual translation research should be done on media productions from Indigenous language communities like the Atayal, the Sediq, and the Truku. Scholars have begun to argue that translators have important "roles" to play in language revitalization (Kuusi et al. 2017). Scholars of audiovisual translation could explore the roles that subtitlers, captioners, and dubbers can play as language revitalizers. They could study Indigenous films like *Maya's Rainbow* and *Lokah, Laqi!* as "pedagogical devices" in language revitalization projects in settler states around the world.

The title of my article was inspired by Colleen McGloin description of the Australian Indigenous short film as "a pedagogical device" that teaches viewers about racism by "interpellating" them (2015, 134). Like "address," which both McCall and Nolette use in their articles without definition (McCall 2004, 19; cited by Nolette 2014, introduction, par. 2), Louis Althusser's term "interpellation" is a way of understanding the relationship between a film and its audience. Interpellation assumes an authority figure who demands a response, while address makes no such assumption. I would like to thank one of my anonymous peer reviewers for pointing out that address was theorized by the sociologist Erving Goffman and subsequently developed by media studies scholars. Like people in real life, characters in a film can address one another in different ways depending on relation and situation. In moments of dramatic irony, for instance in the scene in *Two Sign Painters* where the audience knows more than Mimi, it is particularly apparent that a film also addresses its audience. Scholars in media studies have described a film as being a message that is addressed to an audience (Scannell

1991, 1; Hutchby 2006, 11–12, 14) by "[a] film crew," conceived of as "[a] *collective* sender" (Dynel 2011, 1629, italics original). One way a film might address its audience is non-diegetically, through subtitles. Scholars in translation studies (e.g., Bruti and Zanotti 2012; Meister 2016) have studied the subtitling of "terms of address," such as the formal and informal French second-person pronouns *vous* and *tu*, but not address in the more general sense used by media studies scholars. McCall and Nolette used address in the more general sense, as have I. I have tried to show how the subtitles from *Maya's Rainbow* and *Lokah, Laqi!* work together with other elements to address audience members as language learners.

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Résumé

La « traduction partielle » des paroles en inuktitut dans le film autochtone *Atanarjuat : The Fast Runner* (dir. Zacharias Kunuk, 2001) a été interprétée comme un façon de mettre les étrangers au défi de comprendre le film de manière « émique », c'est-à-dire du point de vue des initiés. Selon cette interprétation, *Atanarjuat* est linguistiquement excluant, car le défi de la traduction partielle impliquerait que seraient effectivement exclus la plupart des étrangers d'une compréhension complète. Mais si l'on examine le problème de la conversion linguistique au sein des communautés autochtones, l'affirmation selon laquelle les films autochtones seraient excluants sur le plan linguistique est à reconsidérer, car ils excluraient alors à la fois les jeunes Autochtones membres de la communauté linguistique et ceux qui n'en font pas partie. Il faudrait au contraire s'attendre à ce que les films autochtones adoptent une approche inclusive du sous-titrage, en correspondance avec les projets de revitalisation linguistique. Pour voir quelle forme une telle approche pourrait prendre, l'auteur a analysé trois films autochtones de Taïwan dans lesquels le discours en langues atayaliques est sous-titré en mandarin. Échelonnés sur plus de trois décennies, ces trois films donnent une idée de l'approche du sous-titrage en fonction de l'inquiétude suscitée par le phénomène de conversion linguistique. L'auteur a constaté que les trois films ont été entièrement, et non partiellement, traduits, mais que les deux films réalisés dans le contexte d'une telle inquiétude ont été sous-titrés avec une visée pédagogique. Ces deux films sous-titrés sont devenus des « dispositifs » pour enseigner l'atayal, la langue atayalique la plus parlée. Les résultats obtenus à Taïwan suggèrent que l'approche pédagogique du sous-titrage des films autochtones pourrait être commune dans différentes sociétés colonisées ailleurs dans le monde.

Mots-clé : film autochtone, sous-titrage, Taïwan, substitution linguistique, revitalisation linguistique

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