

An Effect of Subtitle on User's TV Show Interpretation

Focused on TV Variety Shows of Korea, USA and Japan.

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Abstract: How does the subtitle of recently-increasing TV variety shows affect the show interpretation of users? What does such the phenomenon mean? Marshall McLuhan defined that TV was 'the cool media' because it led the user's participation by utilization of many senses. If the show is focused only on a visual stimuli by taking away a chance to listen by unnecessary subtitle or taking very sensational scenes, the show will depend on only one sense unlike the meaning defined by Marshall McLuhan and will be progressed to 'the hot media' of suppressing other senses. Accordingly, this study is intended to examine it through comparing and analyzing the TV variety shows of Korea, USA and Japan.

By classifying the subtitle used for the program by type and analyzing how much it subjectively intervene in the users' interpretation by frequency, the results are derived. Because the third party conversation subtitle which has been sharply increased in the Korean variety shows directly delivers the subjective opinions to the viewers by writer or PD, the show prevents the users from thinking by themselves and leads them to the producer's intention. As the result of comparing and analyzing the frequency, it can be known that the variety show of USA has mainly used the objective situation subtitle not the subjective third party conversation subtitle. But, the variety shows of Korea and Japan show the subjective subtitle a lot in almost all scenes. So, they take out the chance to listen.

Barthes pointed out that the things most common to us are actually the cultural products, and this is the result of a conceptual framework being too familiar and overlooked. This is to clarify how the denotative meaning of each situation has been delicately implemented up to now by searching overlooked situations in a daily life. Barthes categorizes the message given by "advertisement" as 1) "the linguistic message", 2) "the connotational message" and 3) "the denotational" message. From the three messages mentioned above, viewers will usually want to verify the language

message. The sub titles of variety programs – these are called anchors – provides important information of the program being shown, thus the anchors of the meaning.

Such the result says that the variety show of Korea has been controlled by one visual sense. Because it is difficult for the public to distinguish the manipulated image and the fact, they don't see a source of causal relationship in a fantasy, truth & manipulation, and causal relationship and they try to judge by superficial approach and similar experience. So, because they are likely to get into a confusion and error, they must take precautions against the visual which depends on one sense.

Key words: TV Program, Subtitle, Barthes, Media.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Television transmits messages through video and audio. It is a media that applies both the senses of vision and hearing simultaneously. It can be said that it is a media where complex information is provided through the visual appearance of performers and the auditory information of their utterance. Subtitle is a secondary language mechanism provided to help the TV viewer's understanding. In the beginning of its use, subtitles were tools to complement broadcasting through the preciseness and flexibility of written language. Its role mostly limited to translation of foreign movies and drama and news titles. Since the mid-1990's, subtitles began to be aggressively used as a directing tool to stimulate interest in variety programs. The importance of subtitles has increased to that of visual and colloquial language. They do not only express the status of the program, movement and mental state of the performer, but also transfer all that utterances of the performer into writing. In previous times, subtitles were placed in the top or bottom of the screen as to prevent hindering the visual. Recently, they appear in all parts of the screen, and sometimes take up the entirety of it.

Subtitles came to play such important role when Variety programs started being hosted by group MCs instead of a single individual MC. With the appearance of multiple characters, the need for an explanation comprehensible at one glance was inevitable. Witty and sensible subtitles add fun to the program and play a big role in stimulating interest and laughter in the viewers. Visual effects at the adequate timing may also help with the viewer's understanding of the program. However, subtitles these days have become very aggressive as in the fixation of the performer's character. In the "Family Outing" portion of the SBS "I like Sunday", Chonhee Lee is called "Chonderella" and Suro Kim who constantly harass Lee has the nickname "Stepmom Kim." Subtitles may also be a means for the director to directly intervene into the program. "I'm out of words, so sorry Bongsun", "You know how to do it", "Journalism more yellow than the color of the hair" are some of the subtitles used by the directors to communicate directly to the performing characters. The excessive intervention into the program and establishing specific situation may standardize the viewer's understanding of the program.

1.2 Objective

How do recently abused subtitles affect the viewer's understanding of the Korean variety program? Also, what do these phenomena mean? For television, the application of several senses is used to draw out the participation of the viewer as prescribed in Marshall McLuhan's "Cool Media." However, the recent unnecessary subtitle treatment deprives viewers of their opportunity to hear or place a really provocative scene, and if the media is progressively emphasizing on the visual stimulus, depending on a single sense unlike what McLuhan said, and suppress other senses, one must consider whether this is becoming a "Hot media." This research aims to perform a comparative analysis between the Korean variety shows and the program in the USA and Japan.

2. Theoretical background

Barthes pointed out that the things most common to us are actually the cultural products, and this is the result of a conceptual frameset being too familiar and overlooked. For example, the "Mythology" describes wrestling as such. "Wrestling is not a sport, it is a spectacle. The public is completely uninterested in knowing whether the contest is rigged or not. What matters is not what it thinks but what it sees. We are therefore dealing with a real Human Comedy. What the public wants is the image of passion, not passion itself. There is no more a problem of truth in wrestling than in the theater." This is an implication of the modern viewer who accepts and even enjoys such well manufactured visual image.

Regarding tautology, "And it is true that tautology is always aggressive: it signifies a choleric break between the intelligence and its objects, the arrogant threat of an order in which we are not to think. Our tautologists are like masters tugging sharply on their dog's leash; thought must not range too widely, the world is filled with suspect and futile alibis, we must play our common sense close to the chest, reduce our leash to the distance of a computable reality." The dual installation of choosing certain contents can be understood through the audio, and unnecessarily inscribing it visually can be considered tautology.[3]

Programs with subtitles, in their process of transmitting the meaning, can be viewed as being mythified. Program contents taking a dual function more effectively become that much more justifiable. Myth, that is, modern variety programs, designate and notify, emphasize and provide understanding.

Barthes categorizes the message given by "advertisement" as 1) "the linguistic" message, 2) "the connotational" message and 3) "the denotational" message. If this is substituted into images, uncoded icon messages become the instructions of "exactly as is," that is, the object that viewers can verify within a given program without the producer's help. From the three messages mentioned above, viewers will usually want to verify the language message. The subtitles of variety programs – these are called anchors – provides important information of the program being shown, thus the anchors of the meaning. And thus, the viewer becomes limited to a limited frame in the process of interpreting the meaning of the program, and their scopes of thought become narrow.[4]

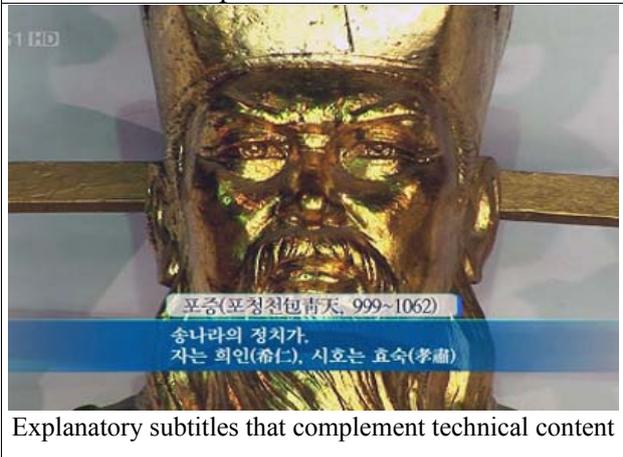
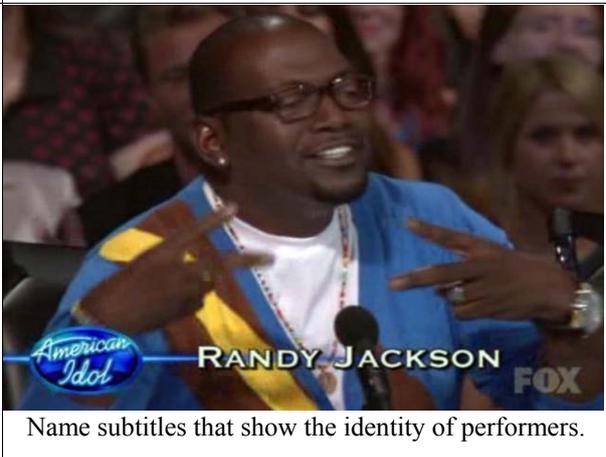
3. Research Method

Subtitles used in programs are categorized by type. The results were analyzed and conclusion drawn based on the subjective interference of the production, considering that higher the frequency of subtitles with greater subjectivity corresponds to more influence on the viewer.

3.1 Types of Subtitles

Subtitles can be largely divided into basic subtitles and the rest of them. Basic subtitles include subtitles for situations, words, explanations, names and such. First, Situation subtitles express objective information about the situation shown on the screen. Second, Narrative subtitles have the role of providing in written format spoken words when there is a possibility for miscomprehension. Third, Explanation subtitle provides further information necessary to understand the program contents or additional explanation of terms used. Fourth, Name subtitle shows the identity of the performers. The rest of subtitles include emotional subtitles of a prologue nature depending on the characteristics of the program and third party subtitle which transmits to the viewer any subjective opinion that the writer or producer would like to transmit to the audience. The latter one is the type which uses rapidly increasing in Korean programs, and such subjective opinion of the writers and producers are blocking the viewer's own thoughts leading them in the direction intended by the producer.

Table 1. Types of Basic Subtitles

Situation subtitle	Narrative subtitle
 <p data-bbox="245 1503 740 1536">Situation subtitles that show time and location</p>	 <p data-bbox="820 1503 1394 1565">Written representation of spoken words of the performer the sake of precise transmission of contents</p>
Explanation subtitle	Name subtitle
 <p data-bbox="197 2016 788 2049">Explanatory subtitles that complement technical content</p>	 <p data-bbox="820 2016 1394 2049">Name subtitles that show the identity of performers.</p>

3.2 Form of the Third party subtitles and Method of analysis

This research aims at checking the frequency of subtitles that have been manufactured according to the production's taste and transmitted to the viewer and does not refer to the subtitles that provide objective

Table 2. Types of Third party subtitles



Third party explanation subtitle



Narrative subtitle directly input by the producer



Third party emotional subtitle



Regular narrative subtitle (top)
Emphasized narrative (bottom)

information necessary for the comprehension of the program. Such subtitles are called third party subtitles and they can be categorized as third party explanatory subtitles, third party narrative subtitles and third party emotional subtitles. The first, the third party explanatory subtitles explain to the viewers the actions of the performers as though their minds were being read. This is similar to the omnipresent writer's point of view in literature. Subtitles that sometimes are input by the production to substitute the performer's feelings in form of conversation are called narrative subtitles. The third party emotional subtitles are visual expressions of the performers' emotions, onomatopoeia and mimetic words that are not shown on screen emphasized through text or graphic. Here, subtitles of spoken contents of the program are considered to emphasize the contents to the viewers and thus included in the third party emotional subtitles in the verification of the frequency of such subtitles. Regarding subtitles expressed visually, regular narrative subtitles and subtitles more strongly expressed are considered to have different levels of emphasis, and therefore verified separately. That is, the frequency of

the three types of subtitles was verified. The high value of frequency was considered as high levels of intervention by the producers and thus more influence on the viewers watching the program.

4. Subject of analysis

Variety shows with high audience ratings for two years in Korea, Japan and the United States, based on the results of reputable audience rating company, were selected. The choice for variety shows lies in the fact that they are the arena for the recent activity for subtitles while documentaries and news programs have not undergone much change regarding subtitles. The selected audience rating companies are Korea's AGB Nielsen Media Research, Japan's <http://www.videor.co.jp>, American Nielsen Media Research. The variety programs ultimately selected for analysis were Korea's MBC "Muhan Dojon", Japan's TBS "Utabang", United States' FOX "America's Next Top Model".

4.1 Korea's Muhan Dojon

Korea's program "Muhan Dojon" is an entertainment program broadcasted since April 23, 2005 by a terrestrial station MBC at 6:35PM every Saturday, and is advocated as the "nation's first real variety show". Fans abbreviate the title and call it "Mudo". The show is broadcasted with the title of "Korea's first "real variety program", and has reached a rating of 30% in the Lee San Special of January 19, 2008 and Guerilla Concert of February 16, 2008, a figure very rare in game programs. Also, Muhan Dojon has been contacted by New Line Cinema, an American movie and TV program production company, in the later part of 2007 about exporting their format. A format export to Sweden was scheduled for 2008, 2008), but problems with formalization led to its cancellation. Currently, the original broadcasting on MBC at 8:10 PM on Saturdays, and their rerun is on 9:55 AM on Saturdays under the title "Muhan Dojon Special". The show exclusive of advertisements lasts for an hour and fifteen minutes.

The subtitles by the producer in Muhan Dojon's entertainment value can be attributed not only to its nature of "real variety" but also to the subtitles by the producers. As opposed to the subtitle formats of expressing the lines the performer, the producer intervenes with the subtitles and expresses his or her own thought freely in Muhan Dojon. The most famous ones are the Gung-Seo subtitles with a dual white and black outline and the balloon outlined in green that show the condition of the performers. Regarding the green outline balloon, it is common to add skull subtitles around or on the face of the performer when he has lost a verbal battle or experienced a surprising situation. Furthermore, some other famous Muhan Dojon subtitles are the situation explanation in Yoon font, questions marks, and purple exclamation marks in Kokuryo font. In particular, Gung-Seo font subtitles are called the seventh member of Muhan Dojon and played its role in establishing awareness of the show's producer Taeho Kim to the public. Not only programs of the same broadcasting company(MBC), but from other companies(SBS, KBS) as well.

However, some take a negative position regarding Muhan Dojon because they usually misspell words or use internet terms and slangs without discrimination. Some common examples are "kk", "hope you~", "bottle taste (strange) execution" and such condition has forsaken the idea that terrestrial broadcasting must use proper Korean and be exemplary. Such use of incorrect language actually aggravates confusion in language. For such

reasons, Muhan Dojon has received warning on language deprivation according to the Korea Communications Standards Commission two times already, and selected a s "destroyer of our language" by the Korean Culture Association.

4.2 Japan's TBS "Utabang"

This show has completed five hundred episodes on August 28, 2008 and is a long living program of the Tokyo Broadcasting Company (TBS), which had celebrated thirteen years of private broadcasting on the October of the same year. There are many manias as well. It is a music program that caused much debate on from multiple points of view, but it has also acquired continuous popularity from the viewers. There had not been any shows such as 「The Best 10」 or 「Yan Ya nMusic studio」 that treated artists as entertainers and taunted them. Unlike today where there are other shows of the same kind, it was of revolutionary nature. The special episode that celebrated its 400's episode anniversary of 「The Television」, it was evaluated as the "Great veteran of music programs". There are many times where contents of such taste that cannot be seen in other shows appear. One example is having a person, seemingly a member of the audience, read the script. It is also common for the performer to use contents that he like in one program and used it in another. As an external characteristics, many TV programs are focusing and making heavy use of CG production, and adding unique effects to subtitle TELOP. The music portion is characterized by the use of sets that lack uniformity with the talk portion of the show. They also use CG and exotic production methods.



Figure 1. Utabang's CG showing a unique style that involves both 2D and 3D. The hat on top of the man's head is CG. The woman appearing as CG is the main character of a drama made into a character. In order for the male performer to play the counterpart of the woman more dramatically, the hat CG was produced.

4.3 USA's "America's Next Top Model"

America's Next Top Model (often shortened to Top Model or abbreviated as ANTM) is a reality television show in which a number of women compete for the title of America's Next Top Model and a chance to start their career in the modeling industry. The show was created and is hosted by former model and current talk-show host

Tyra Banks, who also serves as the head judge and executive producer of the show. The first "cycle" premiered in May 2003 and was one of UPN's highest rated shows. The show's seventh cycle was the first of the shows among regular programming on UPN's successor network, The CW, and thus far is the network's highest rated series. The show will continue until at least the 2009-10 season. The opening theme is performed by Tyra Banks and is produced by Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins. Banks co-produces the show with Ken Mok and Anthony Dominici. For the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 television seasons, ANTM was the #1 show in average viewers on The CW.[1]



Figure 2
Subtitles in America's Next Top Model that only show time and location.

5. Program Analysis

Table 3. Program Analysis

	Korea (60minutes)	USA (44minutes)	Japan (60minutes)
Information Subtitle	24	73	61
Narrative Subtitle (Regular)	265	32	67
Narrative Subtitle (Emphasis)	400		246
Third Party situation subtitle	363		14
Third Party Narrative subtitle	14		16
Third Party Emotional subtitle	551		16
Total 1,	617	105	420
Average subtitle per minute	26.95	2.06	7

The result of the analysis of variety programs from Korea and USA showed very high frequency of third party subtitles in Korean and Japanese variety programs as opposed to American ones where subtitles were shown only seventy three times. Korea demonstrated great difference from Japan with 26.95 and 7 respectively, a fourfold variation.

5.1 USA's "America's Next Top Model"

Regarding the American program, there were only 105 subtitles that communicated objective information. The use of subtitles was limited to that of transmitting basic information. There are tens of performers on program, so it had 72 subtitles for name to know who they were, 1 subtitle for time and location. Also there were 32 narrative subtitles not emphasized important information of the program, but carried correct information on the scene lots of performers talked simultaneously. These subtitles were used as complement tool - the original purpose that made a subtitle birth. Subjective subtitles of intervention nature by the producer were not used at all. This provides the viewers the most objective environment as well as the opportunity to think for themselves and make a judgement.

5.2 Japan "Utabang"

The Japanese subtitles showed a tendency of repetition to bewitch the viewers and to explain every detail about everything. Even with transmitting information for the purpose of understanding the program, Japanese subtitles carried much more information than the American ones. For example, with regards to an apple, its definition "Fruit of the genus Malus (about 25 species) belonging to the family Rosaceae, the most widely cultivated tree fruit." is added together with an additional screen size picture of it followed by the opinion of producers. This is no different than spoon feeding the viewer in fear that they might not digest a single grain of rice or miss on any side dishes. The original concept of "apple" introduced in the speech of the performers, is then emphasized once through text, emphasized a second time through the image and then again a third time by the inclusion of the production's opinion.



Figure 3 In order to explain a building called Origami, text and three images were presented aside from the explanation by the performer.

5.3 Korea's "Muhan Dojon"

Korean programs are much more intense, with subtitles covering the entire screen and subjective opinions of the producer very frequently appearing. As opposed to Japan's case where the intervention is at least superficially

minimized, Korea is much more aggressive in the term and attitude of the producer's intervention. The method includes fixing the character of the performer through text and visual effects and even coercing the viewers' evaluation and emotion about that character. Such expansion of subtitle abuse involves the high danger of blocking the broad and diversified interpretation of the program and leading them to have a standardized thought.

6. Conclusion

Compared the USA, the variety programs of Korea and Japan are excessively "showing" subjective subtitles in almost every scene violating the right of the viewer to "hear." Such method is a sort of defense mechanism that keeps the viewers from interpreting the symbols on their own. Born in Japan, this method has been imported into the Korean mass media.[2] For the first reason is that Korea imported thoughtlessly the variety programs of private management broadcasting, accepting subtitles without any censorship. The subtitles of programs will play a bigger role. That's why already written language had used broadly as a means of giving information on internet, mobile phone, and so on. As we tend to prefer visual information, we expect that the role of written language would be growing up. It's a problem not written language as subtitle makes up a bigger place on broadcasting, but we not ready to handle it that sharply has increased. Also, the second cause is that Korea broadcasting system has become chronic. Unlike on U.S. broadcasting's condition which has setted an advance-producing system, the Korea has not, having a trouble of a thorough ready producing a program. They have to make subtitles with in a short bursts, which occurs with frequency. So they don't have much time to make what they want to write for, can't help transmitting messages as a direct written language. In this situation, the thought of transmitting messages exactly, under the stress and nervousness, will be brought unnaturally a lot of misusing of phenomenon subtitles. Such results demonstrate the Korean variety programs are excessively dependent on the single sense of sight. The visual domination must be avoided because the audience will find it difficult to differentiate such manufactured images and reality becoming unable to find the foundation of reality and fantasy, true and manufactured, causality and others. They are left to make judgments based on superficially formed approaches and the experience of the similar, being in the danger of falling into confusion and error.

7. References

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