

## Netflix Disrupting Dubbing: English Dubs and British Accents

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### Abstract

In 2017, English dubbing entered the mainstream on the initiative of the subscription video-on-demand service (SVoD) Netflix. Recent English dubs have taken advantage of the largely convention-free English-language dubbing industry and, in 2019, dubs outsourced by Netflix to VSI London pioneered the dubbing strategy of using domestic linguistic variation in English versions of Spanish originals, such as *Alta Mar (High Seas)* (Campos et al., 2019–2020) and, most notably, *Hache* (Cimadevilla et al., 2019–present). In these series, a medley of British accents is used for characterisation, as an alternative to standardisation strategies that conflate cultural identities into one, which are prevalent in many consolidated dubbing industries. In addition to the lack of industry precedents and an argued associated malleability of viewers, the diegetic quality of dubbed dialogue seems to have allowed the implausibility of linguistic variation to be accepted by viewers in an extended “suspension of linguistic disbelief” (Romero-Fresco, 2009, p. 49). In this paper, I explore accents as “unit[s] of cultural transmission” aka “memes” (Dawkins, 1976, p. 206), and the specific sets of connotations associated with accents, i.e., “dialectal memes”, that are evoked in the original and dubbed versions of the aforementioned series. Emerging norms, or trends, in UK dubs of Spanish originals are then elucidated and contextualised in the broader mediascape of English-language dubs.

**Key words:** accents, audiovisual translation, cultural identities, dialectal memes, diegesis, English dubbing, linguistic variation, Netflix, standardisation, suspension of linguistic disbelief, translation norms.

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## 1. Introduction: the Industry

Scholars have not traditionally included English-speaking countries amongst the so-called “dubbing countries” (Chaume, 2012, p. 6), such as France, Italy, Germany and Spain, aka FIGS. Nonetheless, there have been the English dubs of: European films in the 30s, e.g., *M* (Lang, 1931) from German (O’Brien, 2019, p. 184); Spaghetti Westerns in the 60s, e.g., *Lone and Angry Man* (or *A Coffin for the Sherriff* in the US) (Caiano, 1965) from a mixture of Italian and Spanish (Sanderson, 2020); cult classic martial arts films in the 70s, e.g., *The Big Boss* (or *Fists of Fury* as per the US dub) (Lo & Wu, 1971) from a mixture of Mandarin and Cantonese (IMDb); and, last but not least, there has been a longstanding dubbing tradition to the present day for cartoons (from a variety of languages), anime (from Japanese), ads (from different languages as well as between Englishes) (Chaume, 2012, pp. 6–10), and video games. Lest we forget these examples, it should be acknowledged that English dubbing is no novel creation; however, its recent meandering into the mainstream is indeed still a novelty. The bold move by Netflix, the subscription video-on-demand service (SVoD), to dub, as well as subtitle, certain of its own products into English in 2017, such as *Las chicas del cable* (*Cable Girls*) (Diaz et al., 2017–2020) from Spanish and *Dark* (Berg et al., 2017–2020) from German, disrupted industry norms for mainstream audiovisual translation (AVT) into English. The following year, Chaume (2018) noted “an interesting contemporary trend can be observed in the new dubbings into English that Netflix is currently broadcasting.” The first normative change to emerge, to which Chaume referred, was the mode itself, given that non English-language mainstream audiovisual products (films and series)—with the exception of historical examples (which constitute a small minority of films to have been translated into English since the advent of sound film)—had to that date been subtitled only, in the vast majority of cases, both on TV and in cinemas (in terms of dubbing as an AVT minority in a British context, for example, see Mazdon and Wheatley, 2013, pp. 11–14). The second significant change brought about by these dubs was their incorporation of linguistic variation into the main dialogue. Interlingual dubbing practices in historical and niche English dubs generally strived and strive still, respectively, for standardisation, to the extent of attempting Mid-Atlantic renditions (see Magnan-Park, 2018, p. 232), although exceptions have seen different British accents used in some 1950s London dubs of Italian films (Mereu Keating, 2021). Whereas Netflix’ 2017 dubs had used standardised American English accents, 2018 was a turning point, witnessing foreign accents in English emerge as a dubbing strategy, such as Hispanic-accented English in *Fariña* (*Cocaine Coast*) (Campos et al., 2018) (Hayes, 2021). By 2019, a past exception became the modern norm with native Anglophone variation pervading the dubs of *Alta Mar* (*High Seas*) (Campos et al., 2019–2020), *Hache* (Cimadevilla et al., 2019–present) and *Criminal: Spain* (Escolar et al., 2019–present) as Netflix opted for British English and, at that, accents ranging from Scottish to Estuary English and from Received Pronunciation to Cockney-colouring.

Mainstream media (Bylykbashi, 2019; Newbould, 2019) have reported a positive reception enjoyed by the “first” English dubs (in US English), quoting Greg Peters (Bylykbashi, 2019), Netflix’ chief product officer, who revealed that stats showed US viewers were far more likely to finish “international”, or non-English, series when consuming the dubbed—rather than subtitled—version.

Peters (Bylykbashi, 2019) also highlighted that whereas perception studies indicate viewers would be unlikely to opt for dubbed versions, reception studies suggest otherwise. Indeed, whereas “audience research has shown that people tend to prefer whatever form of [audiovisual] translation they grew up with” (Nornes, 2007, p. 191), and this has held true in consolidated AVT industries such as Poland where Netflix failed in its attempt to replace Polish voiceover (aka lektoring) with dubbing (Rodriguez, 2018), Anglophone viewers have been more amenable to the “new” AVT mode. This might owe to the fact that fewer products are imported into the Anglosphere than exported, thus marginalising foreign products and a consolidated subtitling industry. On 16 April 2018, in an earnings report to shareholders for the March financial quarter, Netflix (2018, pp. 2–3) asserted that its investment in international production had increased and that, in that quarter, “*La Casa de Papel (Money Heist)* in English language territories), a Spanish language heist thriller, became the most watched non-English series on Netflix ever.” Peters attributed the increased viewership of non-English “titles” (as series and films are termed in industry) to dubbing and the quality of the dubbed versions (Bylykbashi, 2019).

While similar information, regarding perception and reception, has not been made available for the British dubs released in 2019, it can be surmised that the great success of series such as *La Casa de Papel (Money Heist)* (Pina et al., 2017–present) incentivised more English dubbing of Spanish originals, in general, and experimentation in dubbed dialogue, i.e., the diversification of linguistic variation, in particular. Debra Chinn, the international dubbing director at Netflix, declared that the company was “taking this new [dubbing] initiative very seriously” (Bylykbashi, 2019), which is substantiated by the SVoD’s job openings for Creative Dubbing Supervisors in 2019:

The ideal candidate will have a great passion for language, experience with the production of dubs, **a deep appreciation of regional cultural differences**, and a high level of intellectual curiosity. The role requires you to develop a relationship with our originals content and be able to strategically identify the challenges and complexities localization will face before it even begins. **Preserving creative intent** will be your mission and **developing creative approaches** to the challenges at hand will be your passion. (Netflix, 2019; emphasis added)

Though the SVoD is financing its dubs, it should be acknowledged that the medley of British accents used in the UK dubs are the fruit of choices made during VSI London’s labour: Netflix outsourced the dubbing of *High Seas* and *Hache*, among other titles, to the London offices of the dubbing-specialised AVT company. Given that mainstream English dubbing is, largely speaking, in its infancy, and that the dubbing infrastructure in place prior to 2017 was largely convention-free, English-language dubs have been a blank canvas on which to experiment with different (supra)segmental strategies. In *Translating regionalised voices in audiovisuals*, Federici (2009, p. 19) called on Cronin’s (2006) assertion that regionalism is tied to notions of linguistic and cultural identity and added that “when a regional voice appears in an audiovisual, the choice is automatically born out of identifiable narrative needs.” To date, the standardisation norms that pervade the dubbing industry have seen layered identities, created through the use of dialects and accents, reserved for viewers of original versions, while audiences of dubbed versions are met with standardised accents devoid of culturally weighted connotations. Exceptions include the use of accent for humoristic effect (see Arampatzis,

2013, regarding the rate of frequency of this strategy in Castilian-Spanish dubbing) and the “Italian phenomenon” whereby Italian-American and Italian accents in English dialogue tend to be dubbed into Sicilian-coloured Italian (Chiaro, 2008) and Italian language into Sicilian (Parini, 2009), as well as more ad-hoc approaches in Italian dubbing availing of *romanesco* (Bruti, 2009), Neapolitan, and Tuscan with teen speak (Dore, 2020), for native-English accents and speech types.

## 2. Theoretical Perspective: Where Theory Explains Practice

### The Diegesis

Unlike subtitling and voiceover, dubbing strives to be a diegetic form of AVT. Given that dubbing operates within the oral plane of the text by supplanting—but not supplementing—the audio track of the original, it can be referred to as a “horizontal” (Gottlieb, 1994, p. 104) mode of AVT. This preservation of the audiovisual text’s “semiotic structure” (Bosseaux, 2015, p. 85) in dubbed versions facilitates the audience’s “willing suspension of disbelief” (Coleridge, 1817), which is further helped by efforts at lip synchronisation, isochrony, persuasive acting or a “credible display of prosodic (and paralinguistic) traits” (Sánchez-Mompeán, 2020b, p. 33), such as intonation and speech tension, and, where necessary, narrative interference. Despite best efforts, ideological and psychological demands are imposed on dubbed-version viewers who must reconcile the visualisation of foreignness (people, places, cultures, and labial movements pertaining to another language) with the acoustics of domestic language (invoking a new setting and giving rise to imprecise lip synchrony). Nonetheless, dubbed-version viewers do overcome the potential dissociation of the new audio track from the original visuals in a “suspension of linguistic disbelief” (Romero-Fresco, 2009, p. 49) that allows them to suspend disbelief at the implausibility of the foreign narrative taking place in a domestic linguistic setting. Part of what helps viewers to obviate cognitive dissonance and achieve the suspension of linguistic disbelief is what Romero-Fresco (2020, p. 31) has called “the dubbing effect”, according to which viewers of dubs tend to pay 95% of their screen attention to characters’ eyes and 5% to their mouths, whereas for viewers of original versions, the attention distribution oscillates around 75% to 25%, respectively. The simple fact that “[dubbed-version] spectators feel a fatal attraction to that sublime immersion in the film’s diegesis” (Nornes, 2007, p. 228) helps too.

### Extending the Suspension of Linguistic Disbelief

The question arises of whether the suspension of linguistic disbelief can be extended to the acceptance of linguistic variation in the main dubbed dialogue (as opposed to isolated cases of accents used for characterisation). To date, dubbing practices in countries with consolidated dubbing industries have generally ascribed to standardisation strategies. Federici (2009, p. 22) has pointed to the fact that translating dialects, along with their political and social implications, “puts forward several queries on what audiences are ready to accept. Yet what audiences seem to accept implicitly does have an impact on their lives as viewers and consumers.” For this reason, it is particularly challenging for countries such as Spain to move away from the standardisation norm and AVT experts

are often conscientiously sceptical about the idea. Chaume (2012, p. 141), for instance, categorised the use of dialectal equivalents as a trait of “dubbed films in the past” and the use of dialects to dub sociolects and ethnolects “a decision not without its dangers.” The negative associations with dialects in Spanish dubbing may owe to the current colonialist stigma vis-à-vis political incorrectness in the past, such as the example provided by Chaume (2012, p. 141) of a maid’s African-American English conveyed through Cuban Spanish in the Castilian-Spanish dub of *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming, Cukor & Wood, 1939).

Certain norms in Italian and Spanish dubbing do, however, suggest that viewers are able to overlook the incredible: linguistic variation in Italian dubs (see Ranzato, 2016) is accepted by viewers; and the impeccable diction and standard accent of all characters in Spanish dubs, irrespective of diastratic and diatopic realities within the text, as well as prosodic features in dubbese such as the “prefabricated orality” (Baños-Piñero & Chaume, 2009) that is particularly salient in the intonation of Castilian-Spanish dubs (Sánchez-Mompeán, 2020a, p. 296), are accepted too by Spanish audiences. The marginalised and largely convention-free status of English dubbing has been conducive to experimentation. What audiences supposedly accept transpires to be that to which they are accustomed and, therefore, it takes a bold move—though not without some market research—and a transitional period for new practices to become established and accepted. Ultimately, by employing target-language varieties, Netflix’ new British dubs have created character depth and achieved a potentially greater suspension of disbelief in the viewership, thanks to the suspension of *linguistic* disbelief.

### **Dialectal Memes**

The use of linguistic variation in UK dubs, which has predominantly involved the use of accents, has allowed for multidimensional character identities to be realised at the audiovisual interface. The reason accents are capable of invoking connotations that paint characters’ identities is that they have been previously enregistered in linguistic communities with indexed social values. Agha (2003, p. 231) has defined enregisterment as the “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms.” During this process, metalinguistic and metapragmatic commentary is made (Beal, 2020, p. 10). The former involves the recognition that certain phonetic characteristics pertain to an accent, e.g., *happy* pronounced in RP (Received Pronunciation) as /'hɛp.i/ instead of /'hæp.i/. The latter are comments attributing social values to the accent, e.g., RP found to be posh, elite and “supra-local” (Agha, 2003, p. 233). Once an accent has been enregistered along with geographical and/or social connotations in the mainstream, its utterance becomes a “unit of cultural transmission” or, in other words, a “meme” (Dawkins, 1976, p. 206). Given that cultural signs are linked to and triggered by linguistic variation, a specific type of meme called a “dialectal meme” can be postulated. A dialectal meme, then, denotes all of the connotations associated with an individual or character due to the accent that features in his or her speech. These connotations are typically composed of diatopic (geographic), diastratic (social-class), idiosyncratic (individual peculiarities or those unique to a group), and diachronic (temporal) memetic signs (Hayes, 2019). Once viewers and/or listeners perceive an accent, a mental image, or memory,

of cultural identity containing some or all four memetic signs engages in their psyches. Individuals in the same community of speakers tend to share common memetic signs as they consume fictional representations of accents in many of the same audiovisual texts wherein the accents' enregisterment is perpetuated (Hayes, 2019). By conducting a dialectal memetic analysis on the original and dubbed version of an audiovisual text to gauge which memetic signs are evoked in each, the extent to which the memes are comparable, but not equivalent, can be ascertained, and the depth or superficiality of the dubbed characters' identities then elucidated.

### 3. Methodology

The aim of this article is to provide a snapshot of current English-dubbing strategies that can be used in further research as a reference against which to trace the evolution of mainstream English dubbing. The focus is specifically on British dubbing and the strategies in question pertain to the use of linguistic variation for characterisation. To this end, the English dubs of two Spanish originals are documented and analysed. The reason the scope of this article covers two series only is the depth of analysis required to study linguistic variation in audiovisual texts: on ideological, technical, and translational levels. With north of 30 "Netflix-original" (see Robinson, 2018) series and films already, not to mention documentaries, cartoons and anime (What's on Netflix, 2020), Spanish-language products constitute the largest cohort of Netflix originals from the 17 international "markets", or languages other than English, in which the company is creating and/or distributing original content (Arabic, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Norwegian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, and Urdu). While Netflix does dub material generally, it is more likely to dub its originals first, in line with its "local-for-global" (Brennan, 2018) production outlook, and Spanish is among the languages it is dubbing into English. Spanish-language products, therefore, currently offer the most substantial sample for analysing English dubs and developing a sound set of AVT norms. The analytical research approach for this article owes to non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and the ongoing nature of the series selected at the time of writing, which curtailed the corroboration of information about accent-related decision-making from the dubbing studio: VSI London. No studio was involved in or contributed to the production of this article; information regarding dubbing studios included herein has been obtained from publicly available sources.

#### 3.1. Case Study I: *Alta Mar* aka *High Seas*

*Alta Mar* or *High Seas* is a Spanish-language "Netflix-original" series produced by Bambú Producciones that was released in May 2019 and whose dubbing was outsourced to VSI London. The series is set in the 1940s, initially in Northern Spain, from where the *Bárbara de Braganza* (previously *La Covadonga*), a luxury passenger liner, sets sail on a transatlantic voyage to Brazil. The ship's original name implies links to Asturias in Northern Spain (Covadonga is an Asturian municipality housing a famous Marian shrine after which many Spanish army units have been named for hundreds

of years), and she sets sail from Vigo in Galicia (next to Asturias). Once the ship leaves port, the passengers are absorbed in a series of murders and an Agatha-Christie-esque murder mystery begins. The vast majority of characters in the original speak in a “standard” Castilian-Spanish accent (SCS), also referred to as “Central-peninsular standard Spanish” (Méndez-G<sup>a</sup> De Paredes & Amorós Negre, 2016), although their speech differs in register and diction (refer to Tables 1a and 1b for examples of phonetic realisations characteristic of each accent discussed). It should be noted that Spanish originals set in regions with notably “non-standard” accents do tend to convey accentual realities; however, Asturias is not one of these and its inhabitants’ Spanish accents differ somewhat in intonation from but are closest to SCS, which is spoken in Central and northern-Central Spain. There is no indication as to whether or not characters have travelled from SCS regions for the journey to Brazil. If so, the use of a standard accent is coherent, and if not, the nuances of Northern accents, or indeed the more divergent phonetic features of other peninsular Spanish varieties, have been replaced by SCS.

### **The Upper Class**

In the original version, upper-class characters speak SCS with formal register and exceptionally clear enunciation, or diction. This repertoire interwoven with SCS can be considered Upper SCS. In the dubbed version, this speech style has been conveyed through a Standard British English (SBE) accent, which is typical of the upper class in the South of England, in general, and of non-Southern upper-class Britons who have been educated at boarding schools. SBE and Upper SCS dovetail insofar as their dialectal memes are concerned: both are associated with the capital (London and Madrid) and the parts of surrounding counties or Autonomous Communities, i.e. Spanish regions, closest to the capital, the educated, the upper classes and formality.

### **Lower-Class Women**

Lower class characters in the original also speak in a standard accent but with informal register and, to a greater or lesser extent in an SCS continuum, unclear diction, e.g., elisions. For clear comparison, this can be termed Lower SCS. Older characters have a slightly more refined way of speaking in Spanish, somewhere between Upper and Lower SCS, veering towards clearer diction and, therefore, their speech can be conceptualised as Mid-Lower SCS. On the other hand, the younger women’s Spanish accent is slightly closer to Lower SCS. The dubbing of lower-class characters is particularly interesting as a general sex-divide as well as age-divide emerge, which are not notable in the original version. Middle-aged and older women render an SBE accent (e.g., *Francisca*, a maid) whereas the younger generation speaks in an Estuary English accent (e.g., *Verónica*, a maid, *Luisa* aka *Sofía Plazaola*, a stowaway, and *Clara*, a singer). “Estuary English” (EE) (Rosewarne, 1984) is an accent that emerged in London by the 80s from the blending of prevailing accents, such as RP and Cockney, sprawling southeastwards out of the capital and across the middle and lower classes, while upper classes maintained SBE and in some cases RP. Therefore, the use of EE in the fictional 40s is anachronistic and the fact that it is used exclusively by young (female) characters is suggestive of its emergence in that decade. In any case, the presence of EE does serve to distinguish between

generations and to highlight the social standing of younger characters, which are more prominent in the plot. Lower SCS and EE memes coincide in depicting modern, informal and nonconformist characteristics. Unlike EE, however, Lower SCS is not diachronically marked. Against the EE backdrop, SBE used by women of an older profile serves to reflect their age and culture of tradition. Although anachronistic, availing of the EE meme for characterisation is effective because modern-day audiences are familiar with its connotations, or signs.

### Lower-Class Men

As for the male characters in steerage—and, therefore, of lower-class—the more salt-of-the-earth types (e.g., *Dimas*, a servant) have an SBE accent and those involved in the underworld (e.g., *Raúl*, a spy-cum-hit man) as well as older characters (e.g., an unnamed sailor) render Cockney accents. The SBE accent used by younger men, instead of Cockney or EE, seems to characterise the propriety, virtue, and intelligence of the character. These qualities are especially salient in the identities of characters rendering marked SBE, such as *Dimas*. This use of SBE to characterise virtue involves an old meme, often used in Dickensian novels and later in writing contemporary with the era of the series. As regards the use of Cockney, it should be noted that the Cockney in question is a Cockney-coloured accent, as opposed to the Cockney variety in its entirety, which would include the use of a dialect replete with rhyming slang. This Cockney devoid of—or sometimes of diluted—dialect is a fictional representation of the linguistic variety that is popularly used in audiovisual texts, including original versions, for intelligibility purposes (Ranzato, 2019, p. 244). It is also true that this type of Cockney reflects the variety as it exists in modern-day London. As regards diachronic factors, Cockney fits aptly into the 40s era of the series, given that it was more prominent before the emergence of the EE accent. On the other hand, the Cockney rendition by the voice talent for the aforementioned sailor could fall in line with the modern-day Cockney meme's diachronic sign: the character is in the same demographic as current Cockney-accented speakers. The use of Cockney exclusively by male characters is unusual; however, there may not have been any female characters that fit the Cockney profile.

Similarly to the Upper and Lower SCS continuum mentioned in the case of female characters, it can be observed that male characters closest to the Lower SCS pole (who are minor characters, few and far between) are dubbed into a Cockney accent and those more distanced from that pole, speaking Mid-Lower SCS, are dubbed into SBE. The subtleties between the characters' Spanish accents become much more accentuated in English. The diversity of accents used in English to dub these subtleties could be deemed a strategy to nuance the identities of the characters in question. The choice to vilify Cockney in the case of the character *Raúl* is reminiscent of the Italian dubbing strategy that often employs Neapolitan accents and dialectal marks to characterise criminals. The utilisation of Cockney might seem an immoral incrimination of its cultural identity; however, Cockney has traditionally been used in English texts to connote amorality, such as Dickensian Cockney linked to thievery and criminality, and the Cockney accent in character *Alfie Solomons'* speech in *Peaky Blinders* (Mandabach et al., 2013–present) who is a London quasi-mafia boss.



### Hispanic Variants (L1<sup>1</sup>) and Foreign Accents in Spanish (L1<sup>3</sup>)

The original version also features non-Spanish characters with extrapeninsular and foreign accents. Whereas accent variation has replaced standards in previous examples, the opposite is true for this linguistic variation, which *is* present in the original, yet standardised in the English dub. In order to discuss these realities alongside internal variation, it is useful to employ a notational system. L3 is usually used to denote multilingualism in a text wherein L3 is a foreign language in relation to the main language of a dialogue (L1); L2 being the language of the translated, e.g., dubbed, text. Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2019, p. 81) have extended the scope of L3 to include foreign accents: “considering that accents can be used to mark otherness and thus they can be considered as L3, we have examples such as *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) where L3a is French and L3b is English with a French accent” (Corrius, 2008). L3b could also be thought of as L1<sup>3</sup> given that L1 is the language in use, coloured with an L3 accent but not language. Using superscript is useful to differentiate accent from language and allows for accents native to a language and different variants to be conveyed as L1<sup>1</sup>.

In *Alta Mar*, *Capitán Santiago Aguirre*, the ship’s captain, has an Argentine accent in Spanish (L1<sup>1</sup>), which is significant in light of the fact that he is returning to his home continent and because he is superstitious and spiritual, which are key features of characters in Magic Realism novels (which are originally and often still Latin American). Nonetheless, he has an SBE accent (L2) in English. The specificity of Hispanic accents is, however, generally lost on Anglophone audiences (see Hayes, 2021) and, in any case, the diatopic sign of his accent would have been lost through any variety of British English. One of the captain’s officials, *Pierre*, is French. The actor who portrays *Pierre*, Daniel Lundh, is Franco-Swedish. While his accent might well be closest to a French accent in Spanish, it is not quintessentially French given the actor’s—sometimes excessively realised—trilled /r/ instead of the French guttural /r/, or uvular fricative. In fact, using the same natural accent, Lundh portrayed an Arabic-speaking Moroccan in another Spanish series, *Tiempos de Guerra (Morocco: Love in Times of War)* (Campos et al., 2017). In the English dub, despite maintaining *Pierre*’s name, he has an SBE accent (L2) like the rest of characters who speak in SCS in the original, instead of a (quasi-) French accent. It is noteworthy that Cockney was used to characterise minor characters (*Raúl* and the unnamed sailor), yet main characters such as these were stripped of the diatopic signs of their identities, even though the French accent, at least, could have been emulated in English.

### 3.2. Case Study II: *Hache*

*Hache* (the same title in Spanish and English), another “Netflix original”, produced by Weekend Studio, was released on the SVoD in November 2019: six months after *Alta Mar*. The same dubbing director at VSI London, David John, carried out the dubbing for this series, using some of the same voice talents. The use of different accents in the English dub is much more salient in this series and it can be speculated that the success of earlier series in their dubbed versions promoted further experimentation in dubbing strategies. This is another period series, although set in a Barcelona of

the 60s. The main character, *Helena*, “*con hache*” [“with a h”], becomes the personal prostitute of *Malpica*, a club owner and mafia boss of heroin-smuggling into the city’s port. Once Helena enters the world of the mafiosos, or gangsters, she adopts the pseudonym *Hache*, i.e., (h)aitch (/h/). The etymology of the title involves a pun on the protagonism of Helena (the heroine) and heroin (the drug). In the original version, characters speak SCS, with no traces of Catalan pronunciation. Significant diastatic differences can be perceived in the linguistic gap created between Upper and Lower SCS that are much more salient in *Hache* than in *Alta Mar*, due to the markedness of Lower SCS renditions in the former.

### The Upper Class

Upper class characters (e.g., *Detective Vinuesa* of the police force, *Julio Senovilla*, *Malpica*’s corrupt lawyer and *Tito Laguna*, a journalist) speak Upper SCS, which is dubbed into SBE accents that seem to be, more specifically, upper-class London ones, agreeing with the urban setting. On the other hand, *Malpica*’s accent has brushstrokes of RP: a prefabricated accent that was taught in British schools and, notably, boarding schools, from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> through the mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Agha, 2003, p. 261), for which reason it is associated with privileged echelons of British society. It is a diastatically marked accent with no strictly regional associations. Given that prescriptive pronunciation in English is no longer a part of the curriculum at educational institutions in the UK, RP now belongs mainly to older members of the upper class and is often associated with the older generations of the royal family, hence its synonym: *The Queen’s English*. Therefore, this idiosyncrasy in *Malpica*’s speech nuances his identity in line with the RP meme that is often linked to pretentiousness. *Malpica* tends to wear dress suits and tuxes, which ties in with the formality of the accent. He is to a certain extent a villain and *Hache*’s antagonist, which is another reason RP works: SBE and RP are often used in cinema for vilification against the backdrop of American-English accents; however, in the context of a British text, RP has negative connotations while SBE is relatively neutral, except when emphatically contrasted against other accents. While RP dovetails with the era, it must be acknowledged that the dialectal meme used in the series is a modern one with quite negative connotations, whereas RP would have enjoyed a meme with more positive connotations in the 60s. In any case, modern-day memes resonate more readily with modern audiences.

### The Lower Class

Characters of the lower classes speak in SCS and have notably elided diction and informal, sometimes vulgar, register. Their Lower SCS is distinctly stronger than that in *Alta Mar*. Consequently, in the dubbed version, characters involved in the underworld (e.g., *Arístides*, owner of a boxing club in business with *Malpica*) render Cockney accents significantly more pronounced (e.g., featuring more traits from Table 1b and/or realising these more emphatically) than those that feature in *High Seas*. The characters in question also have much more screen time and plot significance. Additionally, there are some minor characters, such as unnamed police officers, that speak Lower SCS and have hints of Cockney. On the other hand, two policemen who speak in the same SCS as *Arístides* in Spanish have not been dubbed into Cockney but into alternative British accents instead. The first of whom is *Eladio*,

*Detective Vinuesa's* right hand and an upstanding police officer, whose Spanish is closer to Mid-Lower SCS and whose voice talent has hints of a Mancunian accent, most notably in his vowel pronunciations. This accent evokes a Northern English meme, whose most prominent memetic signs are currently those of loyalty, integrity, “an aversion to pretentiousness” (Taylor, 2017) and “blue-collar masculinity and machismo” (Beal, 2009, p. 230). These positive qualities fall in line with *Eladio's* character and with some Mid-Lower SCS memetic signs, such as propriety and virtue. It is also noteworthy that the diastatic markers of *Eladio's* Northern accent and the detective's SBE accent are put into relief against one other, whereby the Northern twang stands out as being less refined and the SBE accent as more polished.

The second policeman dubbed into an alternative British accent is *Girón*, a corrupt officer that volunteers his services to the drug mafia. His Lower SCS is dubbed into a thick Scottish Borders accent. Given that the Cockney accent was used in *High Seas* in the case of *Raúl*, and that it has historically been used for crooked and crafty characterisations in English originals, it is surprising that it did not feature in the dub of *Girón's* character. Nonetheless, while it is unusual for a Scottish accent to be used to connote vice, the independent spirit of the Scots does resonate with the character, at least insofar as both he and Scots tend to, at least stereotypically in the latter's case, act independently with disregard for those imposing authority over them. It is also relevant that the Scottish accent is thick and from the Scottish Borders as the former is a diachronic sign of older speakers or eras (BBC News, 2015) and the latter is a diastatic sign of lower social class (Knox, 2017), both of which match the character. The voice talent for *Girón*, Kenny Blyth, who has a natural Scottish Borders accent but renders many different accents in his acting, has confirmed that, in (English) dubbing, “it's largely a discussion between the director and the voice as to what [accent] suits the character” (K. Blyth, personal communication, April 8–9, 2020).

With respect to the female characters of lower class, a similarity can be observed between *High Seas* and *Hache* insofar as EE is used to drop diastatic signs into the identities of these characters. *Hache's* namesake is the character with the most notable EE accent and is portrayed by the same voice talent, English actress Tamaryn Payne, who dubbed *Luisa/Sofía Plazaola* in *High Seas*. This is the most pronounced EE accent in both series and evokes diastatic signs that reflect the characters' working class and uncouth manner. The EE accent seems more appropriate in *Hache* than in *High Seas*, owing to the former's urban and slightly more modern setting. It should be noted that there is an isolated, seemingly ad hoc, fleeting instance (Season 1, Episode 2) of a working-class, elderly, female character, *Mrs. Planell*, that has a Cockney accent.

### **Foreign Accents (L1<sup>3</sup>) and Foreign Languages (L3)**

Beyond the prominent dichotomy between Upper and Lower SCS, foreign accents and languages are also highly prevalent in *Hache*. Whereas intralinguistic (L1<sup>1</sup>) and interlinguistic (L1<sup>3</sup>) foreign accents were neutralised (L2) in *High Seas*, these have been preserved in the English dub of *Hache*. This is likely because entire groups of characters speak in foreign ways, and are characterised by the associated dialectal memes. Examples in the dub are: Italian accents (L2<sup>3</sup>) and language (L3) (e.g.,

*Caruso*, an Italian mafioso in business with *Malpica*, as well as *Malpica* speaking Italian as a second language); French accents (L2<sup>3</sup>) and language (L3) (e.g., *Jean* and *Marie*, a French couple also belonging to the mafia world); and a Sicilian accent (L2<sup>3</sup>) and language (L3) (e.g., *Luciano*, the mafia boss). In terms of authenticity, however, it should be noted that in the case of the Italian and Sicilian characters mentioned, both voice talents, Massimo Marinoni and Vincenzo Nicoli, respectively, are bilingual in Italian and English (Voice Shop; People Pill, 2020) and certain characteristically Italian pronunciations in English, such as the terminal epenthesis schwa, are not present in their renditions of Italian- and Sicilian-accented English. As for Sicilian as L3, the original audio track was maintained for Sicilian-language scenes in the dubbed version, meaning Nicoli dubbed the L2<sup>3</sup> instances of Sicilian only, likely because he has mainland-Italian and not Sicilian origins (People Pill, 2020). On the other hand, voice talents for French and Italian rendered both L2<sup>3</sup> and L3 French and Italian variation, respectively. Considerable efforts at preserving foreign accents (L2<sup>3</sup>) and languages (L3) have led to layered characterisations whereby, in both versions, French accents were used to depict the sophistication, elegance and trustworthiness of the characters, Italian accents lent themselves to elegance and duplicity, and Sicilian to formality, tradition, respect, power (for which reason it is significant that Sicilian is usually L3 instead of L1<sup>3</sup> or L2<sup>3</sup>) and mafia.

As concerns L3 coincidences with the target language, the translation is, inevitably, compromised. Voellmer and Zabalbeascoa (2014, p. 246) noted that “translations may be as heterolingual as their source texts, provided there is no coincidence between the target language for the translation and one of the languages of the heterolingual ST,” as this tends to result in the disappearance of code-switching in the translation process. In *Hache*, this occurred with three American characters (the US Consul, his wife *Anna McVeigh* and *Walter Kopinski*, consulate worker and *Anna’s* lover) that speak an almost authentic SCS, dispersed with American pronunciations (L1<sup>3</sup>) and occasional English-language usages (L3), as well as speaking English (L3) in isolated scenes of the original. In the English dub, in what seems a timely characterological consideration, the American accents (L2<sup>2</sup>) are maintained against the backdrop of otherwise British accents; however, the code-switching is lost. While American accents are “foreign” in both the original and dubbed version, they have the added effect of creating a sense of exoticism, as L3 and L1<sup>3</sup>, in the original.

### 3.3. Diachronic illusion

It should be acknowledged that any British accent can be considered a diachronic marker suited to a period series, whereby, from the US standpoint of Netflix, British English has an old flavour that serves to transport the home audience back in time. Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the use of British English to create fictional, non-Anglophone pasts has been commonplace in original versions to depict eras spanning from the Roman Empire of 180 AD in *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000) to a pseudo-mediaeval fictional continent reminiscent of an Anglo-Saxon and Celtic past in today’s Great Britain in *Game of Thrones* (Benioff et al., 2011–2019), and a Paris of 1900 in *Phantom of the Opera* (Schumacher, 2004) despite the fact American English could have been a contender by that date. In

Spanish, marked Upper SCS, such as that notably featuring in *Alta Mar*, is so infrequent nowadays that it can also be considered a diastratic marker conveying the formality of former epochs.

Table 1a.

*Some Prominent Features of Hispanophone (L1) and Italian and French (L13/L23) Accents Discussed*

Accent	Phonetic realisations	Examples
Argentine accent	<i>Seseo</i> /ll/ and /y/ as /j/ or /z/	Gracias* <sup>1</sup> as <i>gracias</i> : /græ.θi:.æs/ as /græ.si:.æs/ Yo as <i>sho</i> or <i>jjo</i> : /jəʊ/ as /ʃəʊ/ or /zəʊ/
French accent	Uvular fricative /r/ Nasal vowels Tensing close vowels	Over as <i>oveR</i> : /'əʊ.vəʀ/ as /'əʊ.vəʁ/ Dance as <i>do(n)s</i> : /dɑ:ns/ as /dɑ̃s/ Be as <i>beey</i> : /bi:/ as /bi:y/
Italian accent	/h/ dropping Closed Italian /o/ Tap/short trill, i.e., rolled /r/ Terminal epenthesis schwa	Help as <i>elp</i> : /help/ as /elpə/ Totally as <i>tot-ally</i> : /'təʊ.təl.i/ as /'tɔ.təl.i/ More as <i>moRe</i> : /mɔ:'/ as /mɔ:(r)/ or /mɔ:r/ Madrid as <i>Madriduh</i> : /mæ'drɪd/ as /mæ.d(r)ɪd.ə/
Lower SCS* <sup>2</sup>	Elided pronunciations	Estoy cansada as <i>toy cansah</i> or <i>toy consaw</i> : /es.ðɔɪ/ /kæn.sæθ.æ/) as /ðɔɪ/ /kæn.sæ/ or /ðɔɪ/ /kɒn.sɔ/
Mid-Lower SCS* <sup>2</sup>	Clear diction	Estoy cansada as <i>estoy cansatha</i> : /es.ðɔɪ/ /kæn.sæθ.æ/) as /es.ðɔɪ/ /kæn.sæð.æ/
Upper SCS* <sup>2</sup>	Exceptionally clear diction	Estoy cansada as <i>estoy cansATHA</i> : /es.ðɔɪ/ /kæn.sæθ.æ/) as /es.ðɔɪ/ /kæn.sÆθ.Æ/

\*<sup>1</sup> From a Castilian-Spanish perspective

\*<sup>2</sup> These accents are also accompanied by ranging registers (vulgar, informal or formal).

*Note.* Compilation by the author. Phonetic notation conventions based on <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, from where symbols have been sourced as well as from <https://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/wells/phoneticsymbolsforenglish.htm>

Table 1b.

*Some Prominent Features of Anglophone Accents Discussed (From an Adopted SBE Perspective)  
Using Phonetic Notations*

Accent	Phonetic realisations	Examples
Cockney	/l/ vocalisation Diphthong shifts Monophthong shifts Th-fronting /h/ dropping /t/ glottalling	Milk as <i>miwk</i> : /mɪlk/ as /mɪɔk/ Say as <i>sigh</i> : /seɪ/ as /sɔɪ/ Mother as <i>moth-er</i> /'mɒð.ə/ as /'mɑð.ə/ Both as <i>bofe</i> : /bəʊθ/ as /bəʊf/ Hard as <i>ard</i> : /hɑ:d/ as /ɑ:d/ Butter as <i>bu-er</i> : /'bʌt.ə/ as /'bʌʔ.ə/
Estuary English	/t/ glottalling Intrusive /r/ /l/ vocalisation	Out as <i>ouh</i> : /aʊt/ as /aʊʔ/ Drawing as <i>drawing</i> : /'drɔ:.ɪŋ/ as /'drɔ:.rɪŋ/ Pull as <i>puw</i> : /pʊl/ as /pʊw/
RP	Vowel smoothing Monophthong shifts	Here as <i>hih</i> : /hɪə/ as /hɪr/ Can as <i>ken</i> : /kæn/ as /kɛn/
SBE	/t/ realisation Standard diphthongs	Butter as <i>butter</i> : /'bʌt.ə/ as /'bʌt.ə/ Say as <i>say</i> : /seɪ/ as /seɪ/
Scottish Borders*	Alveolar tap [r] Diphthong>monophthong Diphthong shift Monophthong shift	Murder as <i>muRdeR</i> : /'mɜ:.də/ as /'mɜ:.r.də/ Case as <i>kes</i> : /keɪs/ as /kes/ Found as <i>fuwnd</i> /fɑʊnd/ as /fʌʊnd/ Was as <i>wawz</i> : /wɒz/ as /wɔz/
US/American accent	Yod-coalescence Alveolar tap for /t/ No bath-trap split	Duke as <i>dook</i> : /dʒu:k/ as /du:k/ Party as <i>pardy</i> : /'pɑ:.tɪ/ as /'pɑ:.r.tɪ/ Bath as <i>bahth</i> : /bɑ:θ/ as /bæθ/

\* This accent is also accompanied by dialect, e.g., “wee” for “small.”

Note. Compilation by the author. Phonetic notation conventions based on <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, from where symbols have been sourced as well as from <https://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/wells/phoneticsymbolsforenglish.htm>

#### 4. Memetic Comparison

Tables 2a and 2b, and 3a and 3b below present the accents discussed in the original and dubbed versions, respectively, of *Alta Mar (High Seas)* and *Hache*. By separating each accent discussed into its memetic signs, the connotations of the accents used can be compared in both versions. Although accents from both series are depicted in the tables, it must be acknowledged that they are

significantly more salient in *Hache*, both in its original and dubbed versions, with the exception of Upper SCS being more marked in *Alta Mar* (original version). Analysis reveals that through linguistic variation, dialectal memes attached to accents have achieved characterisations of noteworthy resemblance in both the originals (Tables 2a and 2b) and dubs (Tables 3a and 3b), although dubbed identities are somewhat more nuanced.

Table 2a.

*Memetic Signs of Spanish Accents in Alta Mar and Hache (Spanish Original Versions)*

Accent	Diatopic signs	Diastratic signs	Idiosyncratic signs	Diachronic signs
<b>Lower SCS L1<sup>1</sup></b>	Madrid and surrounding regions in Central and northern-Central Spain	Informality; lower class	Modern; nonconformist	Often used by younger generation
<b>Mid-Lower SCS L1<sup>1</sup></b>	Madrid and surrounding regions in Central and northern-Central Spain	Lower class	Traditionalism; intelligence; virtue; propriety	Used by older generation women
<b>Upper SCS L1<sup>1</sup></b>	Madrid and surrounding regions in Central and northern-Central Spain	Education; upper class	Intelligence; formality	Older eras of formal culture

Table 2b.

*Memetic Signs of Extrapeninsular and Foreign Accents in Alta Mar and Hache  
(Spanish Original Versions)*

<b>Accents</b>	<b>Diatopic signs</b>	<b>Diastratic signs</b>	<b>Idiosyncratic signs</b>	<b>Diachronic signs</b>
<b>Argentinian L1<sup>1</sup></b>	Argentina	–	Spirituality; superstition	–
<b>French L1<sup>3</sup> &amp; L3</b>	France	Sophistication; elegance	Exoticism; trustworthiness	–
<b>Italian L1<sup>3</sup> &amp; L3</b>	Italy	Elegance	Exoticism; duplicity	–
<b>Sicilian L1<sup>3</sup> &amp; L3</b>	Sicily	Formality	Tradition; respect; power; mafia	–
<b>US English L1<sup>3</sup> &amp; L3</b>	USA	–	Exoticism	–



Table 3a.

*Memetic Signs of Anglophone Accents in High Seas and Hache (English Dubbed Versions)*

Accents	Diatopic signs	Diastratic signs	Idiosyncratic signs	Diachronic signs
<b>Cockney L2<sup>2</sup></b> (dubbed from Lower SCS)	London	Lower class; informality	Unscrupulousness; criminality	Middle-aged and older male characters; older era
<b>Estuary English L2<sup>2</sup></b> (dubbed from Lower & Mid SCS)	Southeast of England	Informality; middle and lower classes	Nonconformist; anti-establishment	Modern; younger female generation
<b>Mancunian L2<sup>2</sup></b> (dubbed from Mid-Lower SCS)	Manchester	Informality; unrefined	Loyalty; integrity	–
<b>RP L2<sup>2</sup></b> (dubbed from Upper SCS)	The South of England or non-geographically marked	The highest echelon of social classes	Intelligence; superiority; pretentiousness; prestige; villainy	Older generation; older era
<b>SBE L2<sup>2*1</sup></b> (dubbed from Upper & Mid-Lower SCS)	The South of England or boarding-school educated	Education; upper class; formality	Intelligence; virtue; propriety	Middle-aged and older female characters* <sup>2</sup> vs. men of all ages
<b>Scottish Borders L2<sup>2</sup></b> (dubbed from Lower SCS)	Scottish Borders, Scotland	Lower class	Independence	Older generation; older era
<b>US English L2<sup>2</sup></b> (accent maintained)	USA	–	Characterises Americans	–

\*<sup>1</sup> SBE can be considered standard (L2) or a variety (L2<sup>2</sup>).

\*<sup>2</sup> From a US perspective, all British accents, including SBE, can seem old-fashioned.

Table 3b.

*Memetic Signs of Non-Anglophone Accents in High Seas and Hache (English Dubbed Versions)*

Accents	Diatopic signs	Diastratic signs	Idiosyncratic signs	Diachronic signs
French L2 <sup>3</sup> & L3*	France	Sophistication; elegance	Exoticism; trustworthiness	–
Italian L2 <sup>3</sup> & L3	Italy	Elegance	Exoticism; duplicity	–
Sicilian L2 <sup>3</sup> & L3	Sicily	Formality	Tradition; respect; power; mafia	–

\*French linguistic variation is only present in the dub of *Hache*, although it features in the originals of both series.

## 5. Emerging Norms in the British Dubs of Spanish Originals

We can draw conclusions from the analyses in terms of dubbing norms (in a Tourian sense)—or *emerging* norms, i.e., tendencies—in UK dubs of Spanish originals, such as the following:

- Upper SCS (a standard Castilian-Spanish accent with formal register and exceptionally clear diction) tends to be dubbed into Standard British English (SBE) accents (typical of the South of England and boarding school students and alumni).
- Mid-Lower SCS (a standard Castilian-Spanish accent with informal register and relatively clear diction, veering towards Upper SCS) tends to be dubbed into an SBE accent for males and middle-aged or older females, and into an Estuary English (EE) accent for young females.
- Lower SCS (a standard Castilian-Spanish accent with notably informal or vulgar register and unclear diction) tends to be dubbed into EE for young, female characters and into Cockney for middle-aged and older male characters.
- Foreign accents are more likely to be conveyed in dubbed versions when these have been used as diatopic rather than idiosyncratic signs and when used by groups of characters, rather than individuals.
- L3–L2 coincidence prevents code-switching in UK dubs but where the L3 variant is not British, accented Spanish (L1<sup>3</sup>) is dubbed into accented English (L2<sup>2</sup>).
- Identities created via Spanish sociolects, i.e., linguistic variation in register and diction (Lower through Upper SCS), are conveyed by geographically diverse accents of British English in their

dubbed versions, whose selection is a function of the Spanish sociolect (as well as of the character's age and sex). Examples are Upper SCS, Mid-Lower SCS, and Lower SCS dubbed into: SBE accents and Received Pronunciation (RP); SBE, Mancunian and EE accents; and Cockney, Scottish and EE accents, respectively.

## 6. Contextualising Netflix' British Dubs<sup>1</sup>

We cannot ignore that mainstream English dubbing is in nascent stages. Unless an extremely unlikely situation came about whereby short-lived norms became a permanent feature of English dubbing, it is safe to say that the practice is currently being revamped and going through an experimental phase, finding its feet in the dubbing world among more consolidated dubbing industries. For instance, Netflix has opted for British dubs for some audiovisual products and American for others, in what seems to be an arbitrary decision, if one considers originals of the same language and genre have been outsourced differently. US dubs have experienced significant experimentation, from standardised US English to foreignisation of L1<sup>3</sup> and even L1. For example, in the case of Spanish originals dubbed in the US, standardised English was used in *Cable Girls* (although these US accents are sometimes not true-to-life and echo enunciation and intonation particular to video games, which may owe to the voice talents' careers, and therefore merit an analysis of their own). On the other hand, in *La víctima número 8* (*Victim Number 8*) (Bazzano et al., 2018), Upper and Lower SCS as well as starkly contrasted Andalusian and Basque accents were standardised, while Arabic-accented Spanish was reflected in a generic foreign accent whose provenance is difficult to ascertain. Then, in the dub of *Fariña* (*Cocaine Coast*), a cast of Hispanic American, Latin American, and Spanish voice actors rendered a mixture of generically Hispanic, Latin American and Spanish accents in English (L2<sup>1</sup>) throughout the entire dubbed text (Hayes, 2021). This last strategy has traditionally been more common in English voiceovers of non-fiction as well as in English-language original versions set in foreign places native to the characters but which, at least initially, are targeted at an Anglophone audience.

These three US strategies differ notably from one another, which may owe to the different dubbing studios in question: Dubbing Brothers USA, Studiopolis, Inc., and Post Haste Digital, respectively. The third strategy has become a trend in US dubs. For instance, *The Rain* (Allen, et al., 2018–2020) and *Dogs of Berlin* (Alvart, Kamml, & Zygouris, 2018–present) were dubbed into English using the original Danish and German actors' voices, respectively, similarly to MLVs using the same actors (see Nornes, 2007, pp. 225–6), only this time using automated dialogue replacement, (aka ADR). The question of whether strategies are studio- or dubbing-director-specific is unclear: *The Rain* and *Dogs of Berlin* were dubbed at VSI Los Angeles but *Ares* (Berendsen et al., 2020–present) also used the original actors' Dutch accents in English and was dubbed at Dutch studio Wim Pel Productions BV, yet all

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<sup>1</sup> All series referenced in Section 6 (Contextualising Netflix' British Dubs) and Section 7 (Conclusions) have—whether elsewhere as well—been distributed internationally on Netflix, and Netflix undertook the outsourcing of their dubs.

three dubs were directed by Torsten Voges. On the other hand, Devin Hennessy directed *Fariña's* dub at Poste Haste Digital, where the same strategy was used in the English dub of *La catedral del mar* (*Cathedral of the Sea*) (Banacolocha et al., 2018) whose dub director was Tyler Rhoads. Whether accents are considered for synchronisations by dialogue writers or other dubbing practitioners is another question. Netflix' style guide for dubbing does, however, suggest that dubbing studios have creative licence, at least until the point of Quality Control by Netflix: "creative choice [on accents is] to be determined by production with consistency maintained by Netflix. If creative decisions are made prior to dub script QC, include relevant information in consistency sheet so that Netflix QC has visibility" (Netflix, 2015).

The contrast between strategies in US and UK dubs highlights that experimentation in English dubbing is taking off in different directions on either side of the Atlantic. This transatlantic binary created by separate dubbing industries for different variants is reminiscent of the divergence between peninsular and Latin American Spanish dubs. Though it should be noted that Latin American dubbing conflated the region's many variants into one "neutral" Latin American variant—"often easily recognized as actually Mexican Spanish" (Fuentes-Luque, 2019, p. 826)—and Latin American Spanishes differ more significantly than US accents and dialects. A pluricentric approach to linguistic variants, however, may render major-language binaries inadequate, to which it should be added that Hindi is being dubbed into Indian English on Netflix, e.g., *Sacred Games* (Sharma et al., 2018–).

## 7. Conclusions

Although dubbing studios have been the agents of change in dubbing strategies, e.g., VSI London in the case of the introduction of linguistic variation into British-English dubs, Netflix is to thank (or blame) for enabling such changes by commissioning English dubs in the first place. That said, the rate at which Netflix is growing, expanding its activities and developing new expertise, makes it plausible that, instead of being outsourced, dubbing will be brought in-house once post-production has created the infrastructure for it. Alternatively, a more likely scenario is that the SVoD will continue to work with preferred vendors with whom they will collaborate more closely, and possibly develop proprietary cloud software for dubbing as has happened already with the company's subtitling (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda, 2019, p. 266). Should this happen, it is likely that further experimentation will take place, not only in English dubs but also in other languages, many of which have consolidated dubbing industries in place and whose audiences may be less amenable to new strategies. The acceptance of English dubs, in general, and strategies incorporating linguistic variation, in particular, does nonetheless suggest viewers can become accustomed to new practices. The fact that Netflix is offering English dubs is in itself an experiment by the company and, therefore, indicative of more change to come. The question arises: how far will Netflix go? What is certain is that Netflix is not dabbling in dubbing. The company is making sharp inroads into the industry, disrupting norms at both modality and strategy levels. Conventions in consolidated dubbing industries can curtail change but, whereas small and medium-scale language-service providers (LSPs) and dubbing studios cannot afford to run the risk of experimentation, Netflix has been able to incur the costs and, in the case of

English dubbing, the investment is now paying dividends. Thanks to the plunge taken by Netflix, “foreign” films, which were largely reserved for art-house cinemas in Anglophone countries, and “foreign” series, which have rarely if ever made it to English-language TV channels, are now reaching wider Anglophone audiences in the SVoD-dominated almost borderless (consider virtual private networks) mainstream. UK dubbing studios have taken advantage of the quasi-conventionless English-dubbing industry, and viewers have proved accepting of the AVT mode and, in turn, malleable to dubbing strategies. This freedom has allowed linguistic variation to be brought into the dubbing mix and for dub viewers to experience multidimensional characterisations similar to those experienced by original-version viewers.

Finally, the limitations of this study and avenues for future research on the topic should be made clear. First and foremost, the Castilian-Spanish selection of originals ultimately means that the emerging norms are most accurately described as reflecting British dubbing practices for Spanish originals, rather than English dubbing trends in general. Nonetheless, the two dubs analysed in this article have been contextualised in a broader Anglophone context, e.g., in relation to US dubs, as a reminder that British accents in English-language dubs constitute one “school of English dubbing”. Secondly, as concerns the advantages of diversifying audiovisual product and genre within a corpus, the analysis in this article is limited to period series. In terms of product, however, it could be argued that both the production and postproduction of series is becoming closer to, and therefore less distinguishable from, their fictional-text counterpart of movies, merging the two into a “blockbuster” audiovisual product. As for genre, dubbing strategies used in series of other genres have also been referenced for further contextualisation. Last but not the least problematic was corroborating information with primary sources, such as voice actors, dubbing directors/studios and Netflix itself, obstructed by NDAs, the ongoing status of many series, and difficulties in establishing contact with certain relevant players. This ultimately obscured the identity of who is calling accent-related strategy shots behind the scenes, although research-based speculation has been made. In terms of future research, it is worth mentioning that VSI London has also created British-English dubs for non-Spanish originals, such as from French, e.g., *Criminal: France* (Escobar et al., 2019–present), German, e.g., *Criminal: Germany* (Escobar et al., 2019–present), and Italian, e.g., *Luna Nera (Black Moon)* (Buffoni et al., 2020–present). In order to establish norms of Netflix’ British-English dubbing across the board, analysing series such as these, which come from different languages as well as different eras (*Criminal: France* and *Criminal: Germany* are set in the present day while *Luna Nera* is set in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), would serve to elucidate the bigger picture. Indeed, in light of emerging trends across different English-language territories, the target-language variant may be a more appropriate reference point than a corpus whose texts share a source language.

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