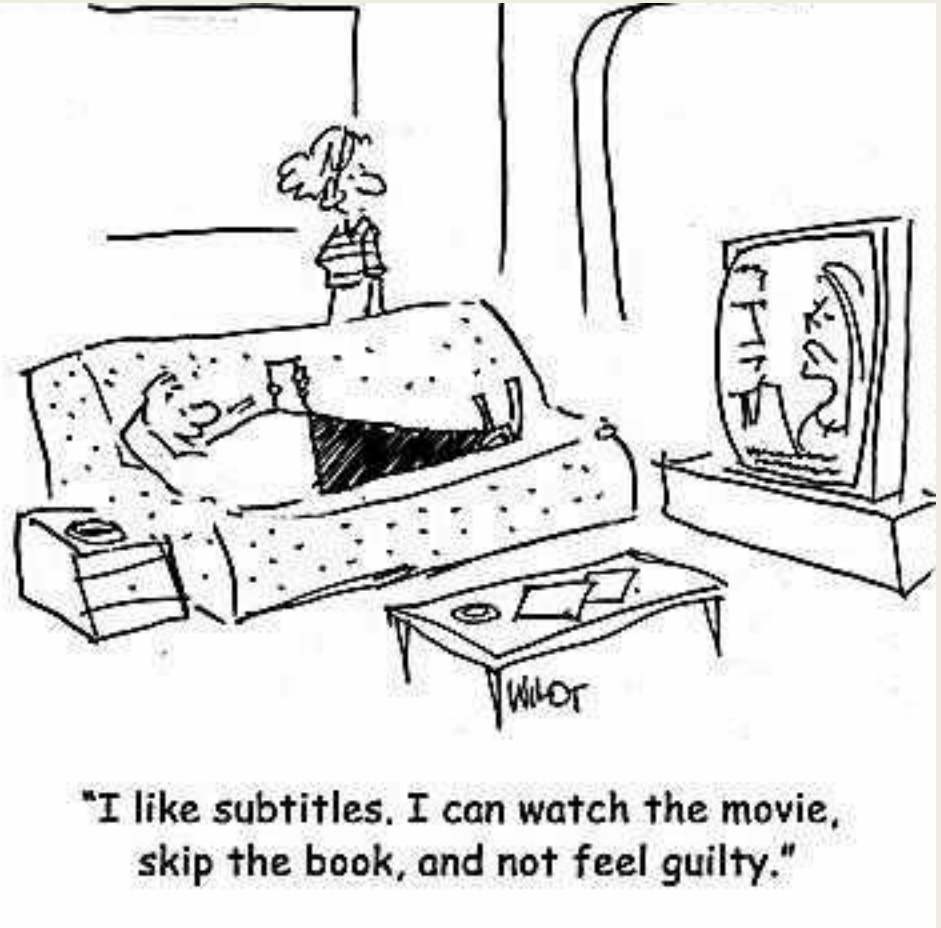
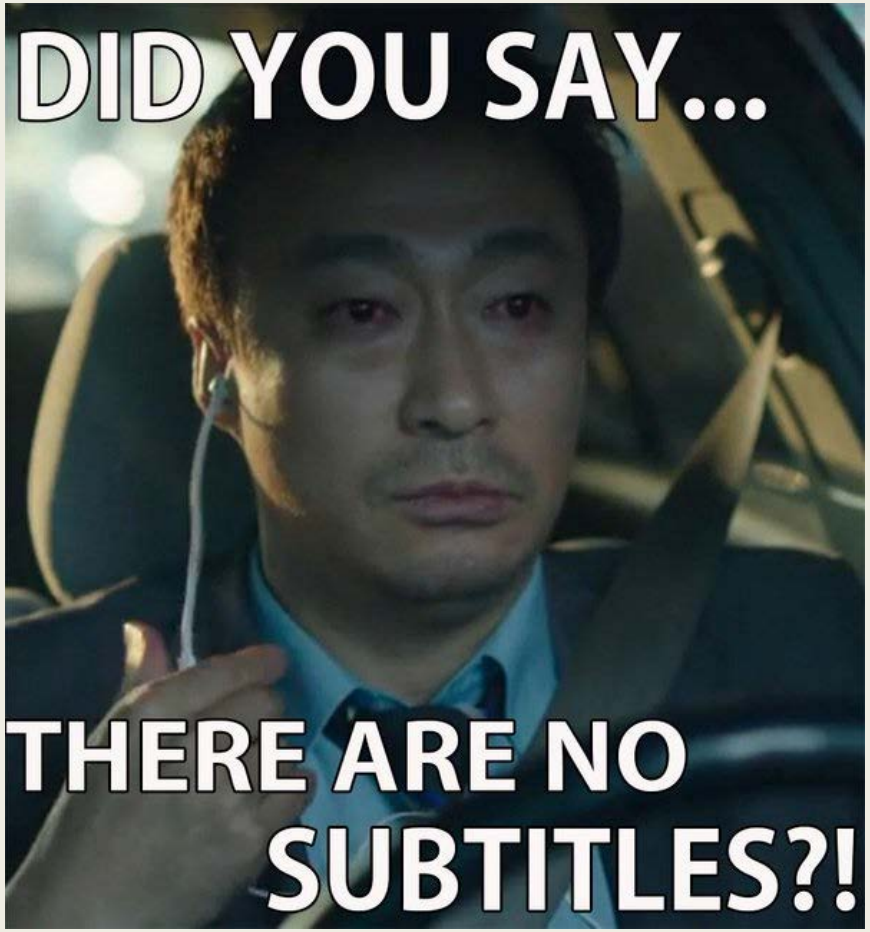
CAPTIONS AND SUBTITLES

What would we do without them?

CC BY NC

What's your story?





What is a subtitle?

Text translation of the source language of the video that shows up on screen; linked to a time code that matches a certain point of time within the video

CAPTIONS

(also called closed-captions)

- Commonly used as a service to aid deaf and hearing-impaired audiences
- It is a **transcription** of what is being said (same language as the audio)

SUBTITLES

- Most frequently used as a way of translating a medium into another language
- It is a **translation** from a foreign language to the own language

Subtitling best practices

- **Adaptation** is needed (transform a spoken word into a written word) – removing "junk words"; you are not translating word-by-word, but rendering meaning

  Speech: Speed wins is kind of a great concept
  Subtitle: Speed wins is a great concept

- Subtitle **appears** on the screen when the person **starts** speaking and **disappears** when the person **stops** speaking

- Subtitles should be **as "invisible" as possible** – they should not take the viewer's eyes away from the screen

Position

Horizontal, bottom of the screen (1/3), aligned to center

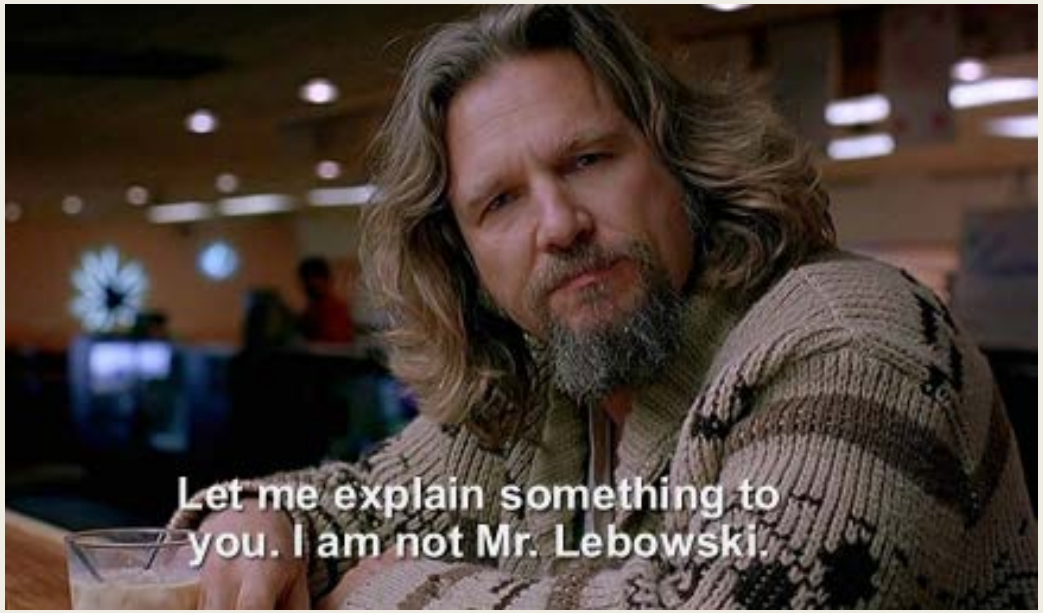
Incorrect

Correct

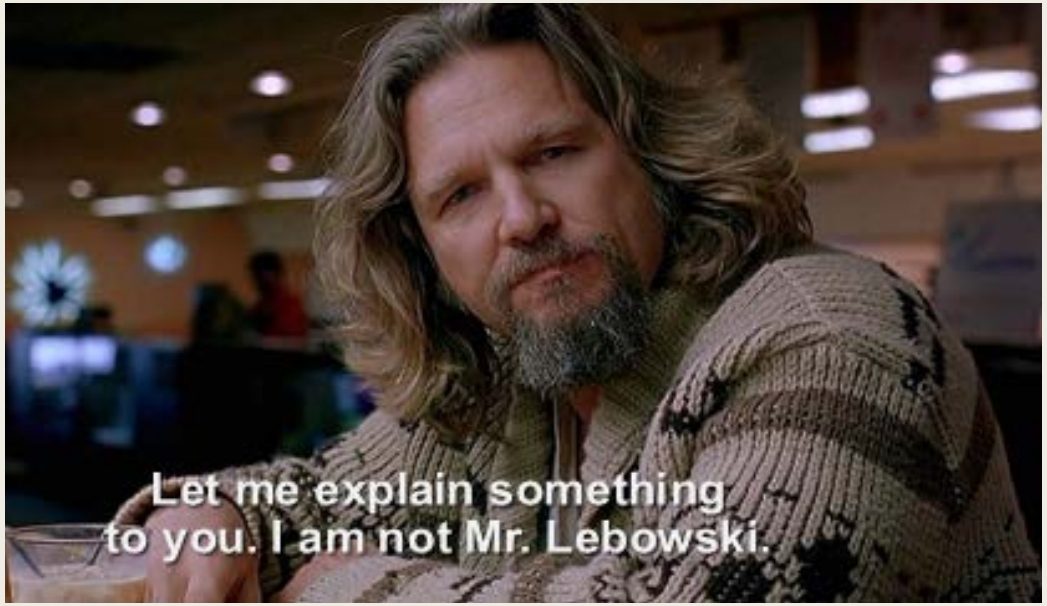
Breaking a subtitle into two lines

Do not divide semantic and grammatical units
(set expressions, adjective+noun, etc.)

Incorrect

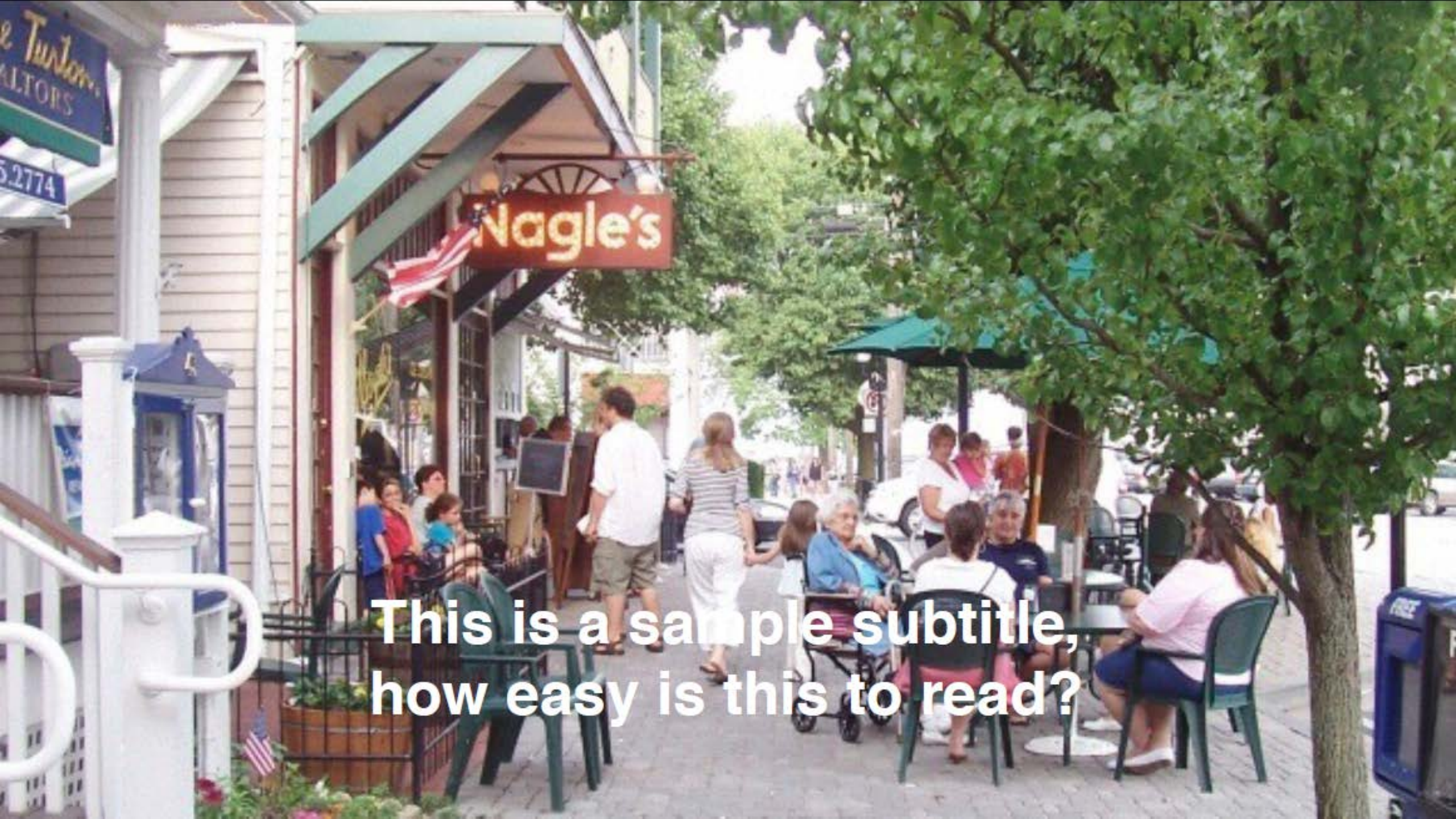


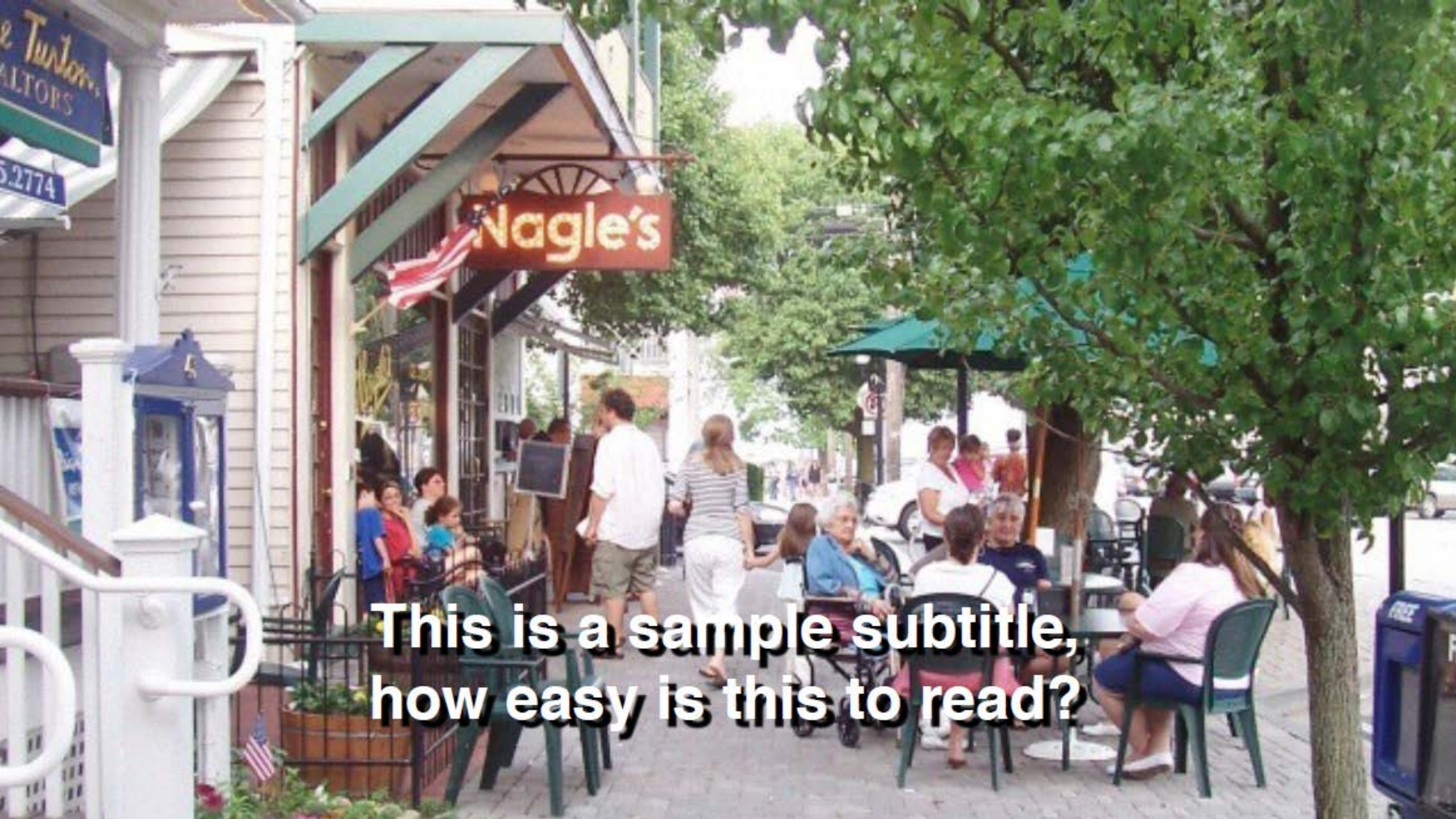
Correct

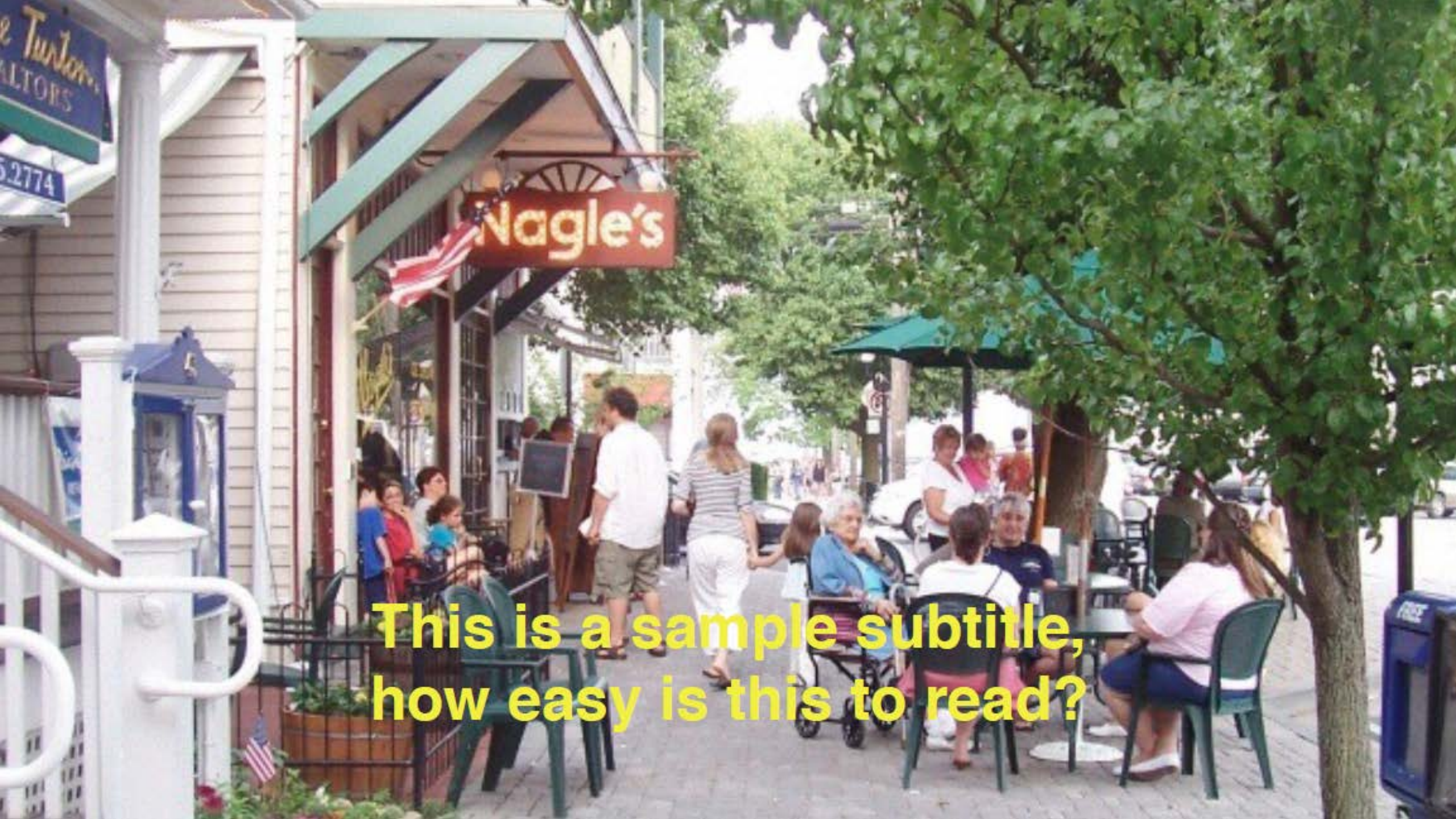


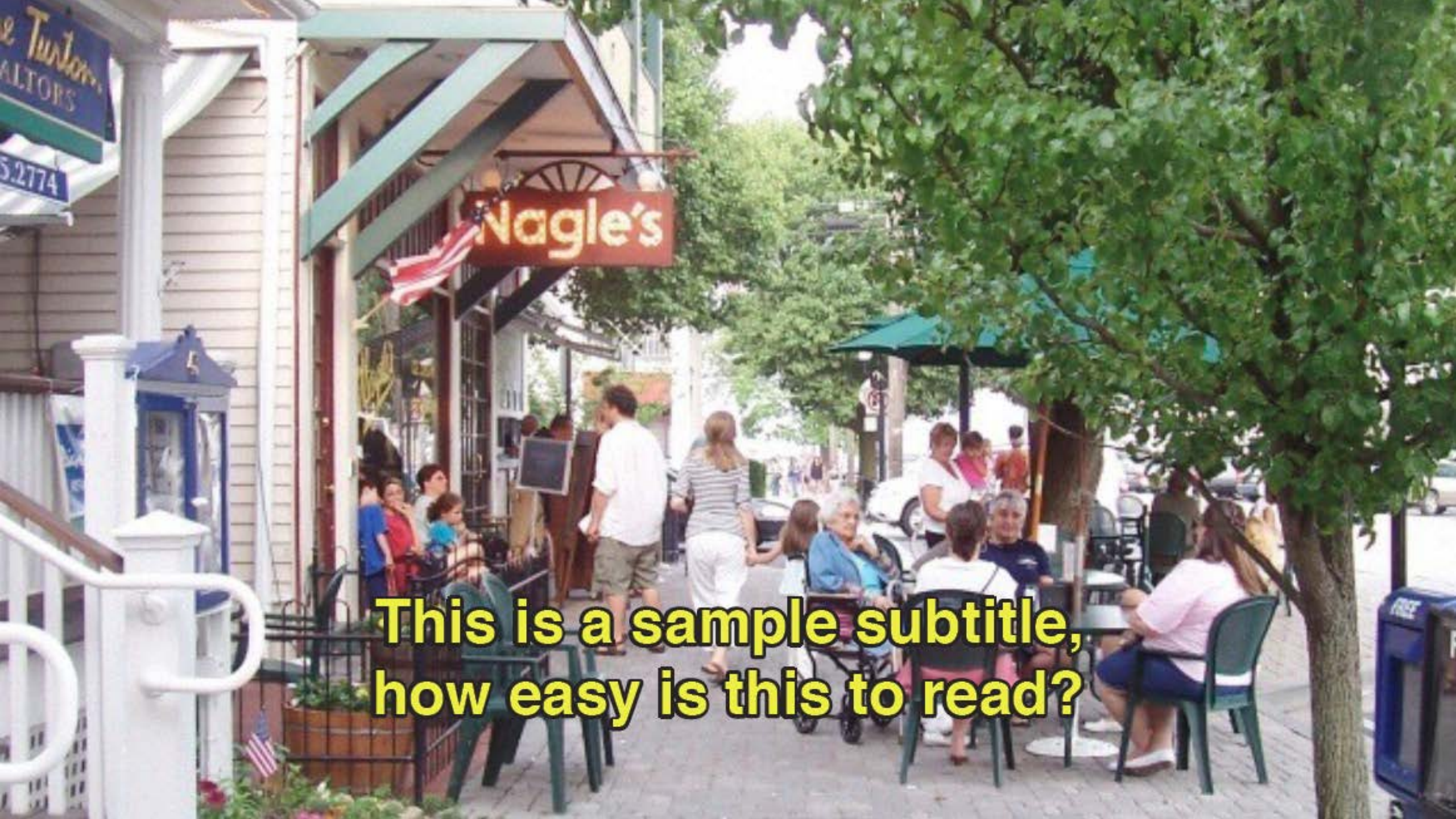
Format

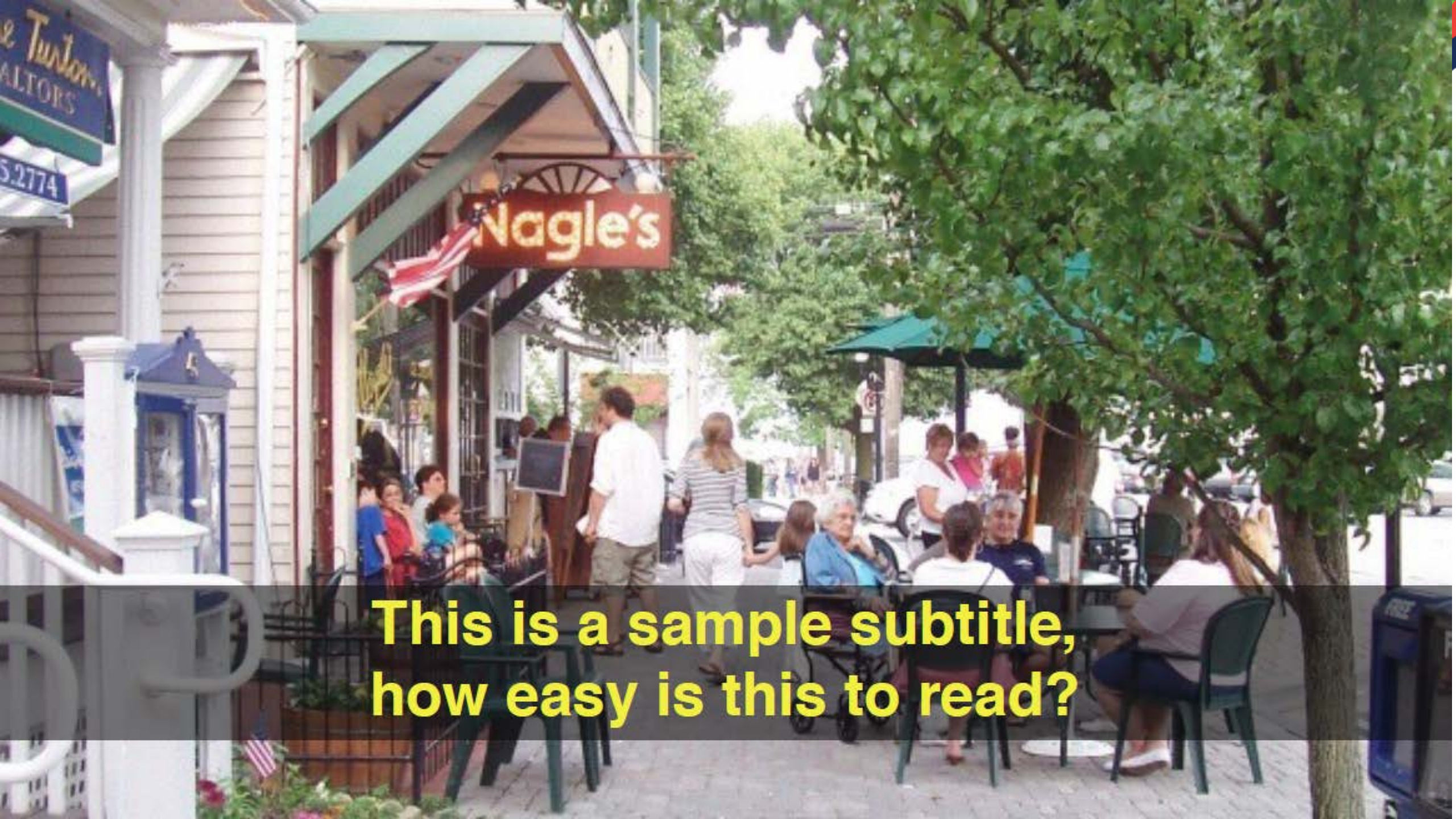
- ✓font: sans serif (Arial)
- ✓color: white (or yellow)
- ✓effects:
  - ❖ shadow,
  - ❖ outline,
  - ❖ black/grey background


Nagle's
This is a sample subtitle,
how easy is this to read?


Nagle's
This is a sample subtitle,
how easy is this to read?


Nagle's
This is a sample subtitle,
how easy is this to read?


Nagle's
This is a sample subtitle,
how easy is this to read?



This is a sample subtitle,
how easy is this to read?

Four Golden Rules

- 2-line rule
- 40-character rule
- 6-second rule
- “Gap” rule

2-line rule

Subtitles cannot have more than 2 lines, and the higher line should be shorter than the lower line. Every rule about subtitle layout is designed to make subtitles legible, but not cover too much of the image.

Incorrect

Correct

40-character rule

One line of a subtitle has a 40-character limit
This one is for Latin alphabet, 35 for Cyrillic alphabet, 14 for double-byte languages (Japanese and Korean), 16 for Chinese characters.

Incorrect (54 characters)

Correct (24/29 characters)

6-second rule

A subtitle should not be on the screen for more than 6 seconds (otherwise the reader starts re-reading the subtitle) or for less than 1.5 seconds (otherwise the reader will not have enough time to read it).

The “gap” rule

There should be a small gap between subtitles – 0.125 sec

Guidelines

- BBC Subtitle Guidelines

  http://bbc.github.io/subtitle-guidelines/

- TED Talks

  https://www.ted.com/participate/translate/guidelines

- Amara

  https://about.amara.org/2011/08/09/best-practices-for-subtitling-videos/

What problems can we encounter...?

Cultural differences
(no, you cannot use translator's notes)

- *Lost In Translation* (Suntory Time scene)

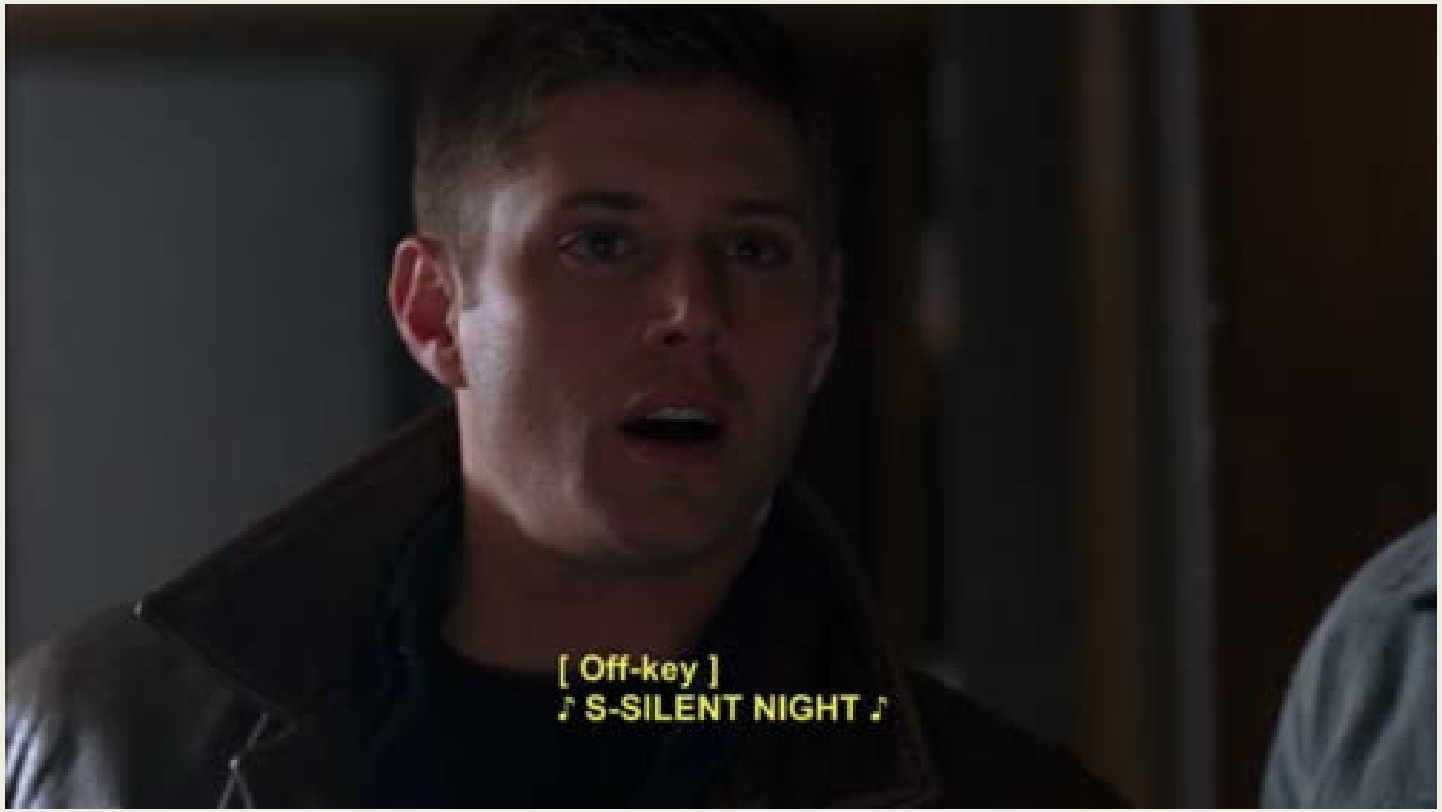
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXGXZiX0pCA&list=PL_YZwmWa6kZh7BAGK6ww-9G2j948PMzCK&index=2&t=2s (without sub)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qG6GaQI6wwA&index=3&list=PL_YZwmWa6kZh7BAGK6ww-9G2j948PMzCK (with sub)

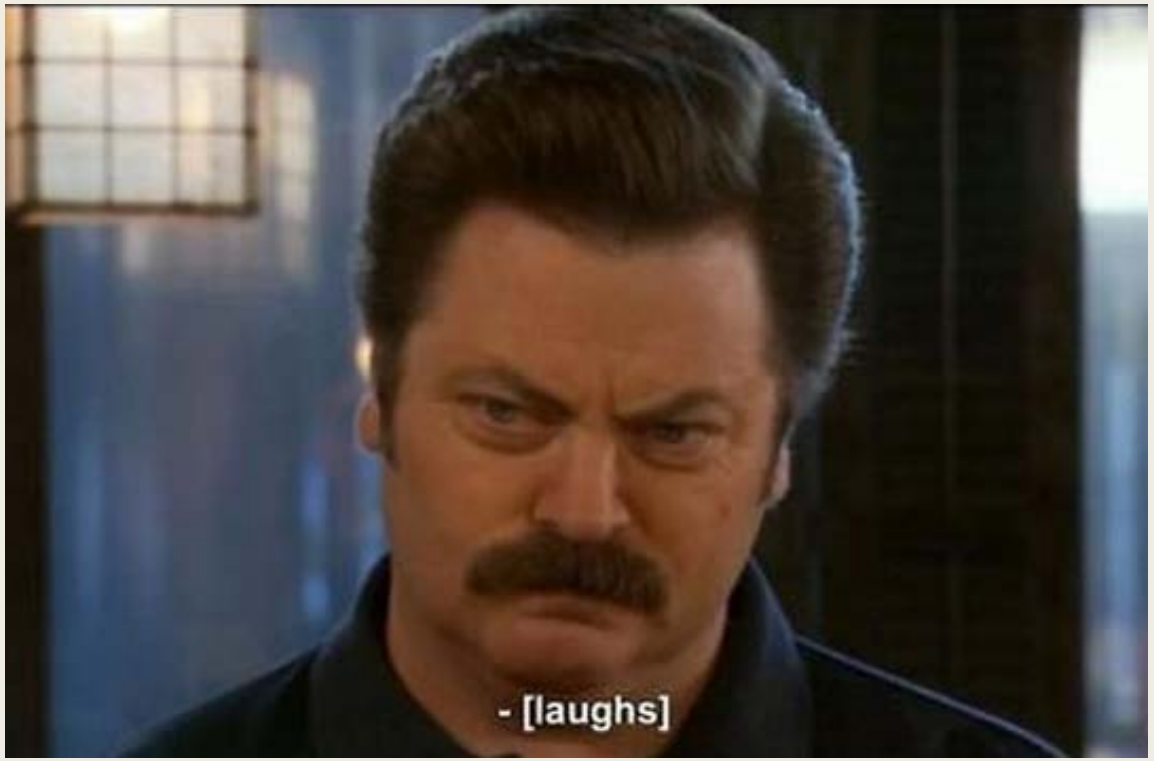
Idioms and word games
(how would you translate that?)

Description of non-speech elements

(some people overexplain stuff…)



[screams internally]


- [laughs]

[LOOKS AT NACHOS] I'M BUSY

(zombies banging)

[LOUDLY IMPLIED CANNIBALISM]

Pew Pew! Pew! Pew Pew!

(SPEAKS CHINESE)

[stares in Japanese]

[GETS SHOT IN SPANISH]

Conversation in alien language

[The translator refuses to translate
the nonsense she is rapping.]

Something in Chinese.
I don't know what. I'm just the editor.

(screaming stops)
(and so does this presentation!)