FANSUB CYBER CULTURE IN CHINA

A Master’s Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Communication, Culture and Technology

By

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Washington, DC
April 26, 2011
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ABSTRACT

With the popularization of Internet in China, fansubbing foreign movies or television programs became a rising phenomenon in Chinese cyberspace. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese netizens organized as fansub groups work collaboratively subbing foreign mass media products and put them online for free downloading.

This thesis investigates the fansubbing practice and constitution of these Chinese fansubbers of American TV shows - a unique Internet community of practice and affinity, which is, by definition, also a community of interculturality. Through a longitudinal participant observation in the community and my experience in watching the fansubbed shows, I analyze the textual characteristics of fansubtitles of American TV shows, attributing its difference from traditional audio-visual translation and its interculturality catering to the demand of the members of the community. My analysis also centers on the intercultural features of fansubbing community, which shows that the fansubbing practice that bridges and reflects both American and Chinese cultures shapes its members’ identities construction, in terms of their language, sense of humor, and national and international personalities. Based on these, I argue that this particular cyber community contributes to the process of globalization, which in turn help to influence and precipitate China’s cultural and even political reform.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to my beloved advisor Mirjana N. Dedaic for all of the support, guidance, and love she provided along the way.

I am grateful to the members of the fansubbing community for agreeing to be interviewed, for providing information and friendship during my fieldwork, and for their hard work that enriches millions of Chinese people’s life.

Many thanks to all my friends, especially to Nuo Zhao, Yingzhen Zhao, and Katherine Dale for their great help, support and encouragement in accomplishing my thesis. I would also like to give my special thanks to my parents, Li Tian and Zhongling Zhao, for their love and dedication during my study in the United States. Their positive attitude towards life and their belief in me have given me the confidence and courage to follow my inclinations.

TIAN YUAN
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................... 1
  Bibliography .......................................................................................................................... 4

### CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................ 5
  2.1 Intercultural Interactions through Mass Media Products .............................................. 5
  2.2 Computer Mediated Fan Culture .................................................................................. 7
  2.3 Interculturality of Mass Media Products Translation .................................................... 11
  2.4 Fansubtitling Translation .............................................................................................. 13
  Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 14

### CHAPTER 3 DATA AND METHODOLOGIES ............................................................................ 19
  3.1 Ethnography on the Internet ....................................................................................... 20
  3.2 The Field Site ................................................................................................................ 22
    3.2.1 Multisited Ethnography ......................................................................................... 22
    3.2.2 Major Fansub groups and their online forums ...................................................... 23
    3.2.3 Baidu Post Bar ...................................................................................................... 31
    3.2.4 Locating myself in the field .................................................................................. 32
  3.3 Data ................................................................................................................................. 34
    3.3.1 Online Data and Observation .............................................................................. 34
    3.3.2 Interviews .............................................................................................................. 35
    3.3.3 Survey .................................................................................................................. 37
  3.4 Methodological and Theoretical Approach to Data ....................................................... 38
  Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 39

### CHAPTER 4 FANSUBBING AS A PRACTICE ................................................................................ 41
  4.1 Background .................................................................................................................. 42
  4.2 Methods ....................................................................................................................... 43
  4.3 General Operating Procedures .................................................................................... 45
  4.4 Text Typology .............................................................................................................. 47
    4.4.1 General Translating Norms ................................................................................. 48
    4.5.2 Authorship and Readership ............................................................................... 51
  Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 57

### CHAPTER 5 THE INTERCULTURALITY OF FANSUBBING TRANSLATION ................................ 59
  5.1 Alienation .................................................................................................................... 61
  5.2 Use of Annotations and Comments ............................................................................. 65
    5.2.1 Annotation ............................................................................................................ 65
    5.2.2 Comments ............................................................................................................. 68
  5.3 Localization .................................................................................................................. 71
    5.3.1 Localization of cultural references ....................................................................... 71
    5.3.2 Localization of language ..................................................................................... 74
  5.4 Self-regulation on sensitive content ............................................................................. 78
  Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 81

### CHAPTER 6 THE FANSUBBING COMMUNITY AND THE NEW CULTURE ............................. 82
  6.1 Qualifications of the Fansubbers ................................................................................. 83
    6.1.1 Skill Requirements ............................................................................................... 84
6.1.2 Time and Dedication ................................................................. 86
6.1.3 Tests and Workshops ............................................................... 87
6.1.4 Summary ............................................................................... 91
6.2 Ethical Norms of Fansubbing Community ..................................... 92
  6.2.1 Non-Commercial and Fair Use of the Fansubs ...................... 92
  6.2.2 Loyalty to the Fansub Group .............................................. 97
  6.2.3 Building Community Respect ........................................... 101
6.3 Members’ Cultural Identity ....................................................... 104
  6.3.1 Inter Group Structure ....................................................... 105
  6.3.2 Animosity and Alliance ................................................... 106
  6.3.3 Hierarchy and Family ..................................................... 110
  6.3.4 The National and International ....................................... 114
6.4 Summary ................................................................................. 117
Bibliography .................................................................................. 119
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS ................................................................. 122
  7.1 Limitations and Opportunities: Recommendations for the Future 127
  Bibliography ............................................................................... 128
BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................. 130
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*The best thing on translation was said by Cervantes: translation is the other side of a tapestry.*  

---- Leonardo Sciascia

In 2006, the New York Times reported a special community in China “slake thirst” of U.S. TV shows and did a remarkable job in “making American popular culture available in near-real time free to Chinese audiences”\(^a\). This thesis examines the practice and constitution of these Chinese fansubbers of American TV shows - a unique Internet community of practice and affinity, which is, by definition, also a community of interculturality.

The community of fansubbers investigated in this thesis is an online community of fans of American TV shows in China, a fast expanding and busy place with millions of netizens participating daily in the practice of translating and subtitling American entertainment shows for free downloading by Chinese audiences. Thus, they serve as the intermediaries between American and Chinese languages and cultures. Concurrently, they are following the emergent culture of fandom on the Internet while simultaneously building their idiosyncratic organizational and structural formula.

Fansubbing (short for fansubtitling) is a particular type of non-commercial translation subtitling process of foreign mass media products. Unlike other translation work, such as official subtitling or pirate DVD subtitling, fansubbing is carried out by the fansub groups with no formal organization and commercial motives. Fansubbing practice originated during the explosion of anime production during the 1980s in Japan (Black 2008). In China, the premier

fansub groups were also founded for popular Japanese animations in the middle of 1990s. It emerged with a task to provide nationwide fans with the most authentic experience of foreign culture that due to the strict governmental media regulation could not have been easily accessed through legitimate channels. With the popularity of American media products, fansub groups for American TV shows mushroomed since 2000, and among the most popular and influential groups are YTET, YYeTs, Fengruan and Ragbear. They represent highly efficient teams with distinct characteristics, preferences, strengths, weakness and supporters. Hundreds of thousands fans wait anxiously at specific times every week for their subbed new episodes to come out, cheering for their hard work.

The fansubbers practice a unique kind of Audiovisual Translation (AVT), which is a new and hot field in translation studies and comparative literature studies. With the advent of Internet technology, AVT changes accordingly, especially in terms of ways of adding subtitles to popular media products. The highly professional work, which used to be controlled by the government or professional corporations, is now possible and increasingly popular among efficiently organized volunteer amateur translators. Although the practice is similar to traditional fansubbing in some aspects, the current Chinese fansubbing for American TV shows is executed in a different new style that is more intercultural, intertextual and complex. There emerges a new culture based on the interaction among three cultures: American, Chinese, and the web culture. This new phenomenon, however, has received little scholarly attention.

A detailed analysis of the fansubbing community helps us to understand not only how mass cultural products cross the language barrier and spread mediated by Internet, but it also offers an interesting perspective into the birth of spontaneous multicultural communities in the era with
huge expansion of global media markets. The crucial question of this thesis is: how is this new community built and organized as to reflect both the Chinese and American cultures, and how it reflects back by co-creating and influencing both cultures.

In order to answer this question, the rest of this the thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides a review of literature that provides the backdrop for the empirical analysis. It consists of four focuses; regarding the interculturality embedded in the community practice and community construction, I first introduce studies on intercultural interaction through mass media products. In order to understand the construction of fansubbing community, I discuss the literature dealing with online communities and online fandom. The properties and characteristics of fansubbing processes are examined in the section on cross-cultural audio video translation, and more insights is provided by the studies on fansubbing practice and translation, mostly describing the initial work on Japanese anime fansubbing.

In chapter 3, I discuss the data for this study and the methods of analysis. I first justify my selection of choosing online ethnography as the principle research method. This is followed by an introduction to the fansubbing community, including major fansub groups, their online forums and Baidu Post Bar as another major communication platform for American TV shows fans in China. Along the way, I outline the struggles and barriers I encountered during the research process and the choices I made.

The analytical part of this thesis includes chapters 4, 5 and 6. In chapter 4, I discuss the fansubbing procedure and analyze the textual characteristics of fansubtitles. It includes a discussion of the general operating procedure of fansubbing and fansubbing’s properties as a specific type of translation with the focus both on the language and the format. In the next
chapter, I proceed to analyze fansubtitles as text within the intercultural frame, focusing on what strategies the fansubbers adopt to achieve the “balance” of translation according to the audiences’ cultural background and cultural competence. Finally, chapter 6 examines the cultural identity construction and community building in the Internet fansubbing. Here, I discuss the process of selection and qualifications of fansubbers, as well as the ethical norms I observed in the fansubbing community. With the illustration of the in-groups and inter-groups structure of fansubbing community, I explain the identity construction and composition of the members within the community. This analysis provides the ground for my outline of the characteristics of the new emergent fansubbing culture.

The last chapter summarizes the findings of this study and provides insights on the existing limitations and future research directions.

Bibliography
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to deepen the understanding of the context of this thesis and to set guidance for further analysis, I provide a review of literature in this chapter. Despite that fansubbing has become wildly popular among Chinese audiences of foreign media products, the fansubbing practice, as well as the fansub culture in China, hasn’t attracted much interest from the academia yet. Academic publications and high quality research are extremely limited if not completely absent. Therefore, this chapter focuses on research on relevant issues in similar context other than specifically about China.

Basically, there are four bodies of literature that are relevant to this thesis: intercultural interactions through mass media products, computer mediated fan culture, interculturality of mass media products translation, and fansubtitling translation. The literature that sheds lights on cross-cultural audio video translation helps to the understanding of the properties and characteristics of fansubtitlings. The literature that deals with the context of fansubbing, such as online communities and online fandom serves as a background to this thesis and contributes to understanding the construction of the fansubbing community.

This chapter discusses four fields. I begin with the literature on intercultural interactions through mass media products, and then discuss each aspect of aforementioned literature one by one. And finally, I conclude this chapter with limitations of previous studies and the research space left for this thesis.

2.1 Intercultural Interactions through Mass Media Products
Richard Dawkins invented the word “meme” in The Selfish Gene (1976), stating that like genes, ideas, concepts and cultural phenomena can be spread and transmitted from a person or a group of people to another. It is generally accepted by the academia that media is an important carrier of cultural memes that accelerates memetic evolution and distribution (Tanaka 2003). Fansubbers are heavy consumers of foreign media products that externalizing series of cultural memes. To understand the effects of American TV shows consumption on the fansubbers’ beliefs, emotions and identity constructions, the media socialization theory is worth consulting.

Since the middle of 20th century, mass media became a vital aspect of people’s everyday life. Sociologists and cultural theorists started to recognize media’s importance in the process of people’s inheriting norms, customs and ideologies. There always have been concerns about the links between television, education and socialization (e.g. Brown et al 1990; Arnett 1995; Mangleburg et al 1997). Just like McQuail (2005) argued in his book, the media can teach norms and values by way of symbolic reward and punishment for different kinds of behavior as represented in the media.

As the assumption of media being a socializing agent is confirmed, scholars became interested in media cultivation in an international context. Numerous studies, both in theory developing and empirical data gathering, gave been done. Bell and Garrett (1998) affirmed media’s impact on language and communication. They noted that media could tell people a great deal about social meanings and stereotypes projected through language and communications, and reflect and influence the formation and expression of culture, politics and social life. Some scholars examined and reported the relationship between television exposure and audiences’ belief in reality (e.g. Weimann 1984; Morgan 1990; Gerbner et al. 1994). Among the existing
researches, the exports of American culture goods and its impact have been studied the most, since the United States is the biggest cultural goods exporter. Weimann (1984) reported that adolescents and young college students who watched a huge amount of American TV shows were more likely to overestimate the wealth and the general economy situation of America. Tan and his colleagues (Tan et al. 1986; Tan et al. 1997; Tan et al. 2003) have explored the process by which international audiences develop American values and norms as well as stereotypes about America through the experience of watching American television series. Also, a Greek researcher, Zaharopoulos (1997) found that high school students who watched more American TV shows were more likely to have a positive attitude toward American cultural beliefs and America as a country. During the late 1990s and thereafter, media markets in East Asia experienced a phenomenal expansion (Goonasekera 1997; Waterman and Rogers 1994). And the explosion in Chinese consumption of foreign media products draws some scholars’ eyes on communication studies. Most of this research is about Korean mass media products. Rhee and Lee (2005) explored the ways in which Chinese beliefs, emotions, and attitude towards Korea are affected by mass consumption of Korean culture products.

Although some of the studies in this category have mixed findings (Elasmar and Hunter 1993; Beadle 2003) whose effects of foreign media consumption on value systems are not statistically significant, most of existing researches support the assumption that audience will accept and adopt values they know from television shows and programs.

2.2 Computer Mediated Fan Culture
While most of the foreign media consumers from last subchapter get access to these products via traditional media such as television or movie theatre, the fans of American TV shows access and distribute the media products through another platform, Internet, which as the setting for this thesis research, should be considered and analyzed.

As it is stated by many scholars and understood by daily experiences, Internet is a medium that distinct from traditional media, such as television or radio. On these traditional mass media platform, people are more likely to be assumed as “passive audience”, a concept developed by Frankfurt School, who views the individual as irrational and easily influenced by the media (Wicks 2001). Also the audiences are supposed to be only involved in acting as a one-sided receiver (Mitra and Cohen 1999; McQuail 2000) and not to communicate with each other (McQuail 1997). In a sharp contrast, the Internet is a decentralized communication system where the users are both the consumers and producers of information (Kitchin, 1998). With Internet’s global reach, users may easily disseminate the information they produce to plentiful people around the world (Rheingold 1993; Kitchin 1998; Slevin 2000).

With the help of the Internet technology that breaks the geographical restrictions, people with shared interest gather in the cyberspace and form communities. During the early 1990s, while the Internet was still in its infancy, scholars tended to view this new public sphere as a “virtual” space opposite to the real world (Shield 1996; Wellman and Gulia 1999). However, the popularity of the Internet keeps increasing and gradually dissolving into people’s lives, scholars started to perceive the Internet as an indispensable part of the real world (Robin 1996; Baym, 1998a; Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 2000; Castells 2001; Howard et al. 2002; Wellman et al. 2003; Howard 2004; Orgad 2005). Based on this, some scholars found evidences that against the
idea of “virtual community”. For example, Baym (1998a) discovered in her ethnographic study of an online community called ‘r.a.t.s’ that some online relationships among members also moved offline.

As a big category of online communities, online fan communities won a great deal of academic interests (e.g. Baym 1995; 1997; 1998a; 1998b; 2000; MacDonald 1998; Pullen, 2000; 2004; Darling-Wolf, 2004). As mentioned above, the development of Internet contributed to the research paradigm of fan culture shifting from “passive audience” to “active audience”. Jenkins (1992) classified the members of online fan communities as a special category of media audiences that are more active than other common media audiences. He wrote that fans are like consumers who also produce, readers who also write, spectators who also participate. It is widely accepted that with out the limitation of time and space, Internet enhances the fandom. Many researches reported that online fandom broadens and facilitates socialization among fans (MacDonald 1998; Baym 2000; Darling-Wolf 2004).

According to previous researches, the general activities of online fan community and offline fandom are not very different from each other, most of which are the discussions about the shared interest (Pullen 2000). However, some scholars also noticed that mere shared interest is not enough for bringing people together and maintaining a strong sense of belonging in the community. They believe that the practices developed within an online community are also vital to sustain the community in terms of a long period of time (Jones 1995; Baym 1997; Reid 1999). This may help to understand how is the fansub community organized and functioning based on the translating and subbing practice.
In addition, there are scholars who analyzed the power structure within online fan communities. Baym (1997) stated that members of online fan communities find empowerment by collectively gathering their voice into a group. This in accordance with Watson’s (1997) finding that the community’s collective power exceeds those of its individuals. When Internet first came into daily lives, people were surprised by the brand new way of communication and predicted that it would affect the existing social structure. Because without distance limitations, space boundaries and cues about social status, there seemed to be no center or hierarchy on the Internet. Originally marginalized people may have the same speech rights as the powerful ones in the real life (Mele 1999). Many scholars stated the more equal nature of CMC thanks to anonymity and easy accessibility (Keisler et al. 1984). However, contrast to the utopian idea about complete democracy of cyberspace, clues of hierarchies have been found to exist (MacDonald 1998; Reid 1999, Darling-Wolf 2004). For example, Reid’s (1999) study illustrates the hierarchy of users in both adventure and social types of the MUD system in different degrees.

One criterion for deciding the hierarchy of the members is the degree of online involvement (Baym 1995; Parks and Floyd 1996; Miyata 2002). For example, Miyata (2002) noted that those who are more active participants seem to receive more social support and respect. Besides participation, knowledge is also very important in fan communities. Baym (1997) noticed the ‘skilled performances’ of online community members whose posts stand out always got the recognition and respect from other members. He summarized four criteria that contributed to making an outstanding post, which are humor, insight, distinctive personality and politeness. This will help to achieve a better understanding on fansubbers being celebrities and centers of the broader fan community of American TV shows.
2.3 Interculturality of Mass Media Products Translation

Thanks to the globalized media market that allows intercultural media exchange, how are media products translated to other language and other culture became a phenomenon that attracts scholars in translation studies. In this subchapter, I intend to organize and introduce these studies.

Fernando Ortiz coined the term transculturation in 1940, referring to the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures. Successive scholars find out that many of these kinds of cultural crossings are made possible by media and translation (Lull 2000). It has been a long time that scholars of translation studies started to realize that ‘translation’ and ‘culture’ can make up an incredibly popular pair for study. Since the acknowledgement of the cultural turn (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990), culture oriented translation studies have been constantly developing. A new expression, ‘culture translation’, is even coined for this matter. This relatively newly developed branch is not very much similar to the traditional translation studies. As pointed out by some scholars, (Trivedi 2004; Apter 2006), the mixing of these two issues has brought about new interpretations of the concept of translation, some of which are far from what translation originally implies, in theory as well as in practice. In these studies, mergence and hybridization are valued in the light of multiculturalism, while the theme of ‘interlingual transfer’ seems to be no longer that relevant (Giovanni 2008).

As for the sub-discipline of multimedia translation, it has been rapidly growing in the past decades, with impressive amount of publications and conferences covering this issue. The introduction of ‘culture’ aspects injected new vitality of this field. The academic community is getting interested in analyzing the intercultural aspect of mass media products translation. There
are some theories that they usually consult. Toury (1978) raised the concept of “translation norm”, pointing out that culture has great restraining power on translations. There are two schools of theorists with opposite attitude toward this issue. Nida (1993) was the representative of the “Domesticating translation method” who believes that the behavior pattern of the source language should be restrained in the audiences’ cultural systems. On the other hand, Venuti insisted in maintaining the integrity of source culture and trying to be as exotic as possible. Following them, Katharina Reiss (2004) conducted perhaps the most influential research on the norms for translators. She developed a model of translation criticism based on the functional relationship between source and target texts, within which there are several categories of text that need different translational styles. The content-focused text demands reproducing every detail in the content of original accurately and rapidly to the audiences. The form-focused text concerns more about aesthetics that the style of the language is prior to the exact content of the language. Fansubbing is somewhere in between this spectrum.

With the globalization of media market, countless American mass media products flooded in to Chinese people’s life. As Susan Bassnett (1996) rightfully pointed out, ‘this is the age of mass communications, of multi-media experiences and a world where audiences demand to share the latest text, be it film, song or book, simultaneously across cultures’. In accordance with this trend, much research has been done in analyzing and describing how English films are translated to Chinese and how well they were received (Tang 2007; 2008; O’Connell 2007). For example, Jun Tang (2008) did a cross-cultural analysis of the Disney animated film, Mulan, trying to investigate the Chinese perspective on it, especially on the acceptance of the film translation with subtitles in the context of globalization. Although one of the advantages of subtitling is its
respect to the original, the author still found out that in the case of Mulan the Chinese subtitles employed a variety of linguistic strategies to make them more familiar to, rather than foreign for, potential Chinese viewers. Some words that are reminiscent of ancient China have been used to fulfill the somewhat nostalgic expectations of the local audience. A large number of colloquial, slang expressions, dialect words have been employed to make the subtitles more in line with contemporary popular taste and young viewer’s linguistic preferences. And additionally, English rhetorical devices are often replaced by Chinese ones to please the local audience.

2.4 Fansubtitling Translation

The history of fansubs can be traced back to the 1980s when fans used VHS tapes to record their favorite shows and translated them to bring it to those who did not understand the original language. This has developed surprisingly fast during the last three decades. Modern fansubs are made by highly organized groups of people and distributed widely across the world through Internet. This peculiar phenomenon catches some researches eyes.

Besides studies that are conducted in light of the copyright law from a legal perspective (Hatcher 2005), studies focused specifically on fansubbing translations in English publications are carried largely by Cintas (2004,2005), Sanchez (2004), Gonzalez (2006) and Ortabasi (2007).

Jorge Dias Cintas is a productive writer in the field of AVT. As a leading researcher in AVT, he not only comments on the development on the latest technologies such as DVD and the Internet but also mentions the fansubbing phenomenon in several of his articles. In a joint research with Sanchez they cover the people and phases involved in the whole fansubbing process of Japanese animation and the legality and ethics of fansubs, and pay attention to the
actual translation of fansubs and their unique features with a reflection on the work done by fansubbers and the possibilities opened by this Internet phenomenon. Cintas (2005) also points out that the free distribution over the Internet of audiovisual programs with subtitles done by fans are far less dogmatic and more creative than that which has traditionally been done. Ortbası (2007) whose research covers film and popular culture and translation theory, reported in one of her studies that some fansubbers had already adopted the method of ‘thick translation’ sometimes by adding so much text onscreen as to completely obscure the image and, with the advent of digital technology and the booming of the Internet, fansubbers will certainly suggest a completely new viewing protocol where the viewer can stop and start the video at will. Gonzalez (2006) wrote an overview of ‘fansubbing process’, and reasonably predicts that fansubbing will challenge basic western assumptions about the nature of translation and scholarly interest in fansubbing is likely to grow in the near future.

As can be seen from the brief review, the researches in this field are extremely limited. Most of the researches on fansubbing are translation studies that focus solely on the translation work, such as the quality, strategies or mistakes. There is no high quality research focusing on this particular group of people as a community. Studies mentioned fansub groups were confined within Japanese animation in the western world. Academic researches and publications in terms of the fansubbing situation in China are almost none.

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15


http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art_diaz_munoz.pdf


CHAPTER 3 DATA AND METHODOLOGIES

It is believed that the year 2003 is the ‘debut year’ for online fan communities of American TV shows in China (Ouyang 2009). In this year, in response to the wild popularity of *Friends*, an online forum named F6 was established and became the earliest Internet forum for discussion, communication and exchange of American shows. Actually, *Friends* has been the earliest and most influential American TV shows that transmitted through Internet. Before *Friends*, there were several American TV series that were introduced in China by state-owned media and aired on television networks, such as *Garrison’s Gorillas* and *Growing Pains*. However all the shows were dubbed and altered to meet the demand of Chinese censorship. The sharing of *Friends*, along with F6, marked the inception of a new era in which fans of American TV shows gathered together, shared the recorded videos on the Internet, and added amateur subtitles to the shows. At that time, as a tech-savvy high school student with eagerness to learn English, I became a member of the community and fortunate to witnessed the grand moment. And then, being fascinated by this phenomenon, my ongoing interest and long journey of researching fansubtitles and fansubbing community began.

Fans and fansubbers have been actively participating in the netsphere since 2003 when F6 was established, but their participation has not been systematically documented and organized. As I stated in chapter 2, previous studies on fansubbing practices mainly focus on the translation process with little attention to the community behind this social phenomenon. Therefore, in my thesis research, I was driven to do what I wish the researchers before me should have done. I desired to go beyond the analysis of the production of subtitles per se and get to know the construction of this special community, their practices, and the norms and identities underlying it.
In order to achieve my goals, I decided to embark on an ethnographic study of the fansubbing community of American TV shows, since ethnography is a good way to take account of the social contexts and to describe how relationships, interactions and communications are created in a certain social sphere. As I mentioned, I was there when the first online fan community of American TV shows appeared in China, and have been well positioned to watch the community gradually enlarges. I consider that as my advantage and use my knowledge to track different fandom websites in my research. My fieldwork is led by my interest on identity, norms, culture and relationships in this particular online community.

This chapter is an overview of my methodological approach and data. Along the way, I outline the struggles and barriers I encountered during the research process, and explain my decisions.

3.1 Ethnography on the Internet

An ethnographic approach is very suitable for this particular research for several reasons. First of all, ethnography originated from cultural anthropology whose aim is to understand cultural practices in a certain social context (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Machin 2002). Danah boyd (2008) defines ethnography “as a description account of social practices, grounded in data attained through ethnographic fieldwork and situated in conversation with broader theoretical frameworks”. The fansubbing practice as social practice, and the cultural logic and social significance are exactly what I want to examine. Ethnographic approaches vary among different scholars, and the techniques and theories keep evolving. However, among all of them, ethnographic fieldwork is present and no other than observation (both participant and non-participant), qualitative interviews and surveys.
Secondly, online settings bear many advantages in terms of ethnographic research. In the earlier stage of fansubbing communities, some of the members who lived in the same city maintained offline relationships (this would be discussed in detail in following chapters). However, with the groups of people keep enlarging and the physical geographical locations keep scattering, offline activities and interactions became really scarce. It is generally admitted by many scholars that the phenomena being studied are modified by the very act of observing them (Paccagnella 1998). The peculiar advantage of online ethnography is that under most of the circumstances, the observation of the subjects can be carried out without people’s noticing, which means zero interference of the observed community’s normal practice.

Moreover, the technology enables the researcher to collect and organize data in the online settings conveniently. There are huge archives of digitally recorded information out there publicly. And according to the work of the “Project H Research Group”- an international team of scholars who in the mid 1990a who studied electronic discussions - it is ethical to record and analyze public posted messages without seeking permission from the original authors (Sudweeks and Rafaeli 1995). These advantages explain the fact that ethnography has long been used and constantly been used to comprehend computer mediated practices and online communities (e.g. Reid 1991; Baym 1993 among others).

As I stated in Chapter 2, one of the major focal problems in online community studies is the boundary between mediated and unmediated social lives. Earlier cyber theory scholars believed that Internet was like a utopia that freed people from their physical and corporeal limitations (Stone 1995), their social restrictions (Turkle 1995), and political and ideological regulations (Barlow 1996). With more and more ethnographic research on this issue, two major opinions
emerged. Some scholars labeled the Internet as a “third place” with its own cultural dynamics (Bruckman and Resnick 1995; Soukup 2006). Some other scholars think Internet is a medium that inflected as well as reflected people’s everyday life (Haythornthwaite and Wellman 2002). As for my thesis study, fansubbing practice is a unique online practice that without the help of technology would never happen. Technology does not just expand this community from physical limitations as it does for other online communities, but it to some extent created this community. The community is based on the practice, and the practice is realized by technology. Therefore the interplay between online and offline is not the concentration in this study. However, from my perspective, mediated and unmediated life could never be completely separated. As Christine Hine (1998) claims in her study “the Internet can be understood as both a culture and a cultural artifact”. Therefore both the mediated and unmediated elements are taken into account during my ethnographic observation and cultural construction analysis.

3.2 The Field Site

3.2.1 Multisited Ethnography

Originally, I planed to choose one bounded site to observe the fansubbers’ activity. However after an examination of major fansubbing communities and online fan community for American TV shows, I found it difficult to select only one and to look at this practice panoramically. Facing the fierce competition among fansub groups, fansubbers have been very active on many different fan websites to establish their reputation and to gain more support from fans. Also the relationships among different fansubbing sites and fan community sites are very interesting. On one hand, they are peers belonging to the same community of practice with the same cultural identity. On the other hand, they are competitors trying to be different from other groups. So
instead of being bound to one site, I decided to track a series of sites and relate people, events
and spaces together.

With the increased awareness on the networked society, multisited fieldwork is increasingly
popular among social science scholars (boyd 2008; Green 1999; Marcus 1995). Several scholars
declared mediated landscapes’ transcendence of space that needs ethnographers to traverse
different sites (Appadurai 1996; Burrell 2007). Boellstoroff (2008) says explicitly that multisited
project was better than single fieldwork in terms of online ethnography. These arguments
influenced my decision to conduct my study at a series of fan sites. In the section, I will describe
the field sites for my ethnographic research.

3.2.2 Major Fansub groups and their online forums
The actual number of fansub groups subbing American TV shows can hardly be counted.

With the improvement of the technology and the increasing popularity of the fansubbing practice,
new fansub groups are springing up like mushrooms. Due to fierce competition, some fansub
groups existed only for a while and disappeared. As I stated in chapter 1, earlier fansub groups
usually did the translation of only one show or one particular genre of shows. However, the
“modern” fansub groups have much more sophisticated structures and provide much more
different kind of services. In this research, I intend to focus on professional fansub groups that
provide various subtitling services. Based on my years of experience in this field, the biggest and
most influential fansub groups in China nowadays are *YTET, YYeTs, Fengruan* and *Ragbear*. All
of them have their own Internet forums with not only the list of their latest subbed works but also
interactive discussion platforms for the fans to exchange their ideas about the shows. Each of the
groups has their own characteristics and specialties.
To better introduce the fansubbing field, I need to explain Chinese government’s involvement in fansubbing practice in China. Basically, Chinese policy makers’ attitude toward fansubbing is in accordance with its general Internet policy – “push and control” (Zhang 2006). China’s media policy work has been undergone huge changes since 20 years ago because of the Open and Reform Policy. Social advances brought up by the economic growth and open door policy awakened the Chinese public’s demands for information, communication, entertainment, and a more modern lifestyle. Therefore the traditional way of strict media supervision no longer fit its social condition. Instead, policymakers choose to turn blind eyes on things occasionally. Public interest is now a very important driving force behind China’s policy toward Internet regulation (Zhang 2006). As for fansub groups, Chinese government acknowledges their existence and even gives them a big compliment by referring fansubbers as the “knowledge disseminators in the Internet era”\(^ b\) in People’s Daily, the newspaper providing direct information on policies and viewpoints of the Communist Party of China (CPC). Although the shows the fansub groups subbing are not imported legally, Chinese government would not forbid the practice completely which would definitely lead to some cyber turmoil. However, the governmental control never stops and even gets strict on at least two levels. First, the distributing channels for fansubbing work are diminishing due to governmental regulation, which is in accordance with the fact that China has been driven to improve its copyright system since its entry in WTO. In December 2009, 200 video-sharing and video downloading sties were shut down by the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT) for showing videos without license. Till the middle of 2010, watching American TV programs online became

\(^ b\) See http://culture.people.com.cn/GB/87423/13891313.html
impossible, because all video sharing sites such as Tudou or Youku were forced to delete all unlicensed American TV shows. Second, the content of subbed shows are under control. Under most circumstances, Chinese authority would not bother to chase fansub groups around. However when the content really seems to affect stability of Chinese ideology, the authority would definitely censor on that. In August 20th 2010, YYeTs was shut down for 3 days and its server got confiscated by SARFT because their subbed Yale open courses went wildly popular on the Internet, which were considered dangerous.

Influenced by this context, all fansub groups share the same characteristic. Although they are happy to distribute their subbed work as widely as possible and raise reputation, they have to remain a rather low-profile about their internal affairs, not willing to reveal too much about the community to the general public. Therefore, to large amounts of people, fansub groups are very mysterious. Next, I introduce the four major fansub groups that I examine in this study in turn.

- **YTET**

  The YTET (“伊甸园” in Chinese; Meaning: Eden) fansub group was named in Chinese ‘Yi dian yuan’, which is literally translated as ‘the Garden of Eden’. For several years, it has been one of the earliest and biggest fansub communities on the Internet with hundreds of thousands of registered members, and several hundreds of fansubbers. It spearheaded many new services in this field, such as American TV shows news blog, American TV shows encyclopedia and so on. It is the role model for many later big fansub groups.

  The following figure illustrates the first page of the YTET’s online forum.
Figure 3.1: YTET website

Source: http://bbs.sfleydy.com/

The YTET online forum consists of three principle parts. The subsections for administrative affairs contain the posts related to group development and recruitment, announcement for group events, and discussion about the subtitles. The topics related to subtitles include mistake reports, new show suggestions and asking help on finding the resource for a particular show. The second important part is comprised of subsections where the subbed works could be found and downloaded. The posts are sorted in the order of the updating time. The biggest chunks of posts are the discussions about the TV shows. The subsections are divided according to the genre, including general discussions, comedy, crime drama, medical drama and reality show. Also some popular shows and classic ones have their own section, such as CSI, True Blood and 24 etc.
Initially all the sub-sections of its forum are open for visitors. However now, due to gradually tighter Internet censorship and copyright issues, the section with downloadable resources become accessible for registered member only, and the registration service has been stopped. Fortunately, I registered as a member 2 years ago, which allowed me to have access to the subbed works.

- **Fengruan**

The *Fengruan* (Abbreviated as FR, “风软” in Chinese) fansub group was named in Chinese ‘Feng Ruan’, which is literally translated as ‘soft wind’. Established in 2005, FR was for a while the most renowned fansub community after *YTET* for a certain period of time. It has between 300,000-400,000 registered members and it was once the largest fan community of American TV shows. By 2006, it reached the peak of its fame with numerous famous and respectful fansubbers. However in 2007, the “Big Split” occurred, which affected the group greatly both organizationally and reputationally. In this year, the headman of the subtitle timeline team, 酒囊饭袋 (pronunciation: chiu nang fan tai) left the group with a bunch of group members because of a major dispute, and established *Ragbear* (this incident will be discussed later in this paper).

The following figure illustrates the first page of the *Fengruan’s* online forum.
Figure 3.2: Fengruan website

Source: http://www.1000fr.net

The head of the page is marked with the slogan of the fansub group, ‘Paradise for American TV shows’. The basic structure of Fengruan’s Internet sphere is similar to YTET’s, which also has subsections for administrative affairs, subsections for downloadable resources and subsections for opinion exchanges about TV shows. One major difference is that unlike the other three big groups, Fengruan does not have a specific section dedicated to the discussion about the quality of the subtitles. Also, the classification of sections for TV forums is not as fine as YTET. Fengruan does not have sections for single shows, but only has sections divided based on genre, including drama, comedy, crime drama, medical drama, si-fi shows, legal drama and reality shows. Fengruan has a distinguishing feature, which is that it has a special section called ‘0day shows’. This section provides subbed works for extremely popular shows in China. The name
‘0day show’ was given by the fansubbers because the subbed episodes are released within 24 hours after the original show is aired in America. Visitors to this website can easily find the resources of the most hit shows.

All the sub-sections and pages in Fengruan are open for public.

- **Ragbear**

As mentioned before, the fansub group Ragbear (“破烂熊” in Chinese, pronunciation: p’o lan hsiung) was founded in 2007 by a flock of fansubbers leaving from Fengruan.

The following figure illustrates the first page of the ragbear’s online forum.

![Figure 3.3: ragbear website](http://www.ragbear.com/)

The slogan blinking in the conspicuous place of the website says ‘Fresh new shows, all in Ragbear’. Ragbear has a section called ‘original subtitle seminar’ which is an interactional platform for fansubbers and audiences. It also has a section specifically for UK TV, which

29
reveals a distinct characteristic of Ragbear. Instead of competing with other groups in terms of the speed in distribution of popular shows, Ragbear takes a different route. It focuses more on the niche market and translated many shows that are not introduced by other groups, which makes it very popular among non-mainstream audiences.

Most of the content of the websites are open for view for the visitors. But some services such as downloading subbed work, are for members only.

- **YYeTs (“人人影视” in Chinese; Meaning: Everyone Entertainment)**

  The fansub group that develops fastest in recent 2 years is YYeTs (“人人影视” in Chinese; meaning: everyone entertainment; pronunciation: jen jen ying shih). The group was established in 2003 and had been in the shadow of YTET and Fengruan. However, the fansub group shoots to fame recently because of its characteristic bilingual subtitles. After the group’s website and server got shut down by the government because the introduction and translation of Open Course of foreign universities in 2009, the group’s fame got even greater that many people who didn’t know about this group before knew about the practice after the incident.

  YYeTs is a very ambitious group that expands quickly. The design of its website is a little different from other fansub groups’ websites. Instead of displaying the content in the common online forum view, its website is more similar to a professional news website. The interface is very user friendly and contains abundance of useful information. Besides the display of subsections on the front page, YYeTs provides a searching service for the members as well as site visitors for finding resources or postings more easily. The group also has a ranking board of the
shows that are downloaded the most in 24 hours. A little window is displayed on the front page with the introduction of some newly subbed works. One characteristic of YYeTs’ work is bilingual subtitles, which is claimed by its fansubbers to meet the audiences’ demand of English learning. This is in accordance with YYeTs’ slogan, “share, learn and make progress”.

The following figure shows the design of YYETS’ website.

![Figure 3.4: YYeTs website](http://yyets.com/)

**3.2.3 Baidu Post Bar**

Baidu Post Bar (BPB) is the biggest platform for online communities in China. It was activated in November 2003. After 7 years of development, it already became a way of life for dozens of millions of Chinese netizens. According to the data gathered in 2006, there were more than 6 million people visiting BPB per day, and in the most popular bars the highest new post counts per day could be over 3 million (Chang 2007). These numbers are getting bigger and
bigger in recent years, which makes BPB the largest Chinese online community. Unlike other online forums or fan websites, the organizing and operation of BPB is completely based on users’ key word search. The principle is “whatever keyword you can think of, you can establish a bar upon it”. Among all the bars in BPB, there are extremely popular ones like super stars or hit shows, and also some relatively uncommon ones like writer Bohumil Hrabal or Vladimir Nabokov. Therefore BPB is a space that not only attracts mainstream population but also appeals to niche groups.

The post bars for American TV shows are very active with hundreds of thousands of participants post things there everyday. They have been important platforms for common fans to interact with fansubbers. Also, fansub groups use the bars as a place to announce their releases of their works and post the address to downloading links. Each week, there are plenty of American TV show viewers waiting in the bars of the shows for the release of newly subbed work. Since 2005, I have been a member and frequent visitor of BPB, regarding it as a very good information source for American TV shows. I am familiar with the environment, and it is this platform through which I was able to get in touch with a number of famous fansubbers. Compared to the forums of fansub groups, the number of members and visitors of BPB is much bigger. The range of audiences is much wider. All of these explain why I include this site into my fieldwork.

3.2.4 Locating myself in the field
It is confirmed by scholars that computer-mediated communication system exhibit a fair amount of interpretative flexibility, which means same content could mean different things to different individuals or groups, and their use continues to be interpreted and reinterpreted with the passing of time (Croft, Lea and Giordano 1994). Therefore, I feel that it is necessary for me
to provide my personal background, which might partly explain my relation to the subject of study and my interpretation of it.

I am a 24-year-old, Asian, Chinese-born, college-educated woman. During the most years of my life, I lived in Shanghai, one of the biggest and most modern cities in China. I went to Peking University in Beijing for my undergraduate study. I majored in world history and psychology, which initiated my interest in people and society. After graduation in 2009, I came to the United States pursue master degree in the Communication, Culture and Technology Master program at Georgetown University. My cultural background shaped my desire to look into the cultural interaction between China and the United States.

I have been a heavy consumer of American TV shows since I was in high school. I have watched no less than 30 series of TV programs and I consider myself as an American culture adapter, who is familiar with American life style and the values behind it.

In terms of Internet use, I have also been online since I was 12, and the Internet has influenced my daily life and my identity constructions in numerous ways. I believe I am a native of the cyber-culture. As a fan of American TV shows and a skilled Internet user, my usage of these online fansub forums and fan community sites are similar to common fans.

My experience as a fan, my relationship to the Internet, my familiarity with both Chinese and American culture, and my expertise in communication studies positioned me in a unique place in the field. I retrospect on this constantly throughout my thesis. I consciously take advantage of my familiarity of this field and try to remain as a fresh eye when observing.
3.3 Data
The data for this research were collected from a variety of different sources during an extended period. Formally, my ethnographic data collection process started in September 2010. Informally, it began much earlier and still continues. The main part of data used in my analysis consists of digital texts gathered at my field sites, online surveys and in-depth interviews. Moreover, I also use materials attained through a wide array of diverse sources. For example, I collected data from digital magazines published by fansub groups and articles on this issue in popular media coverage.

3.3.1 Online Data and Observation
My role as an observer in websites and online forums related to fansubbing community occurred in two stages. The first stage began at the point when I initially ‘lurked’ in multiple fansubbing sites as a fan and a potential researcher choosing possible research sites. Then, after I decided to use the four major fansub groups’ online forums and Baidu Post Bar as my ethnography sites, I continued to observe the opinions rose in these sites and the interactions among members in order to gain familiarity with the community and its practices.

The second stage occurred after I registered as a member of all these four fansub groups’ online forums and the Baidu Post Bar. My activities during this period consisted of acting as a participant observer, making appropriate comments in the right places, but basically letting others lead the discussions and trying not to interfere members’ normal interactions.

During my study, I check these five sites two times a day, one in the morning right after I get up and one in the night before I go to bed, for new threads of posts and messages containing relevant information to this study. I choose this two time frame particularly because around
12:00am EST is when the prime time shows are just aired and fansubbers and some of the fans have watched the episodes, while 9:00am is when the fansubbed shows are done and released for the audience. These are the times that hot discussions happen among members in the sites. Besides focusing on the new posts in the sites, I also searched in the sites’ archive for useful information. During this process, I take fieldnotes and save relevant posts and messages immediately after I observed them, as suggested by Emerson, Fertz and Shaw (1995). As for the messages and posts I collected for analysis, I copied the content and paste it in a word document with the URL of the original post.

One thing need to be mentioned is that most of the data I gathered through the online ethnographic are in Chinese originally. Thus the examples I cite in this thesis are translated from Chinese to English by me.

3.3.2 Interviews
Apart from conducting an ethnographic observation of online activities of the members of fansubbing community, I also conducted in-depth interviews with the several fansubbers. This method of data collection helped enrich the data gain from the ethnographic approach.

I conducted interviews with 6 fansubbers from the four major fansub groups I examine. These interviews were carried out from August 2010 to March 2011. All of the interviewees are skilled fansubbers with at least 2 years of subbing experience. I originally intend to interview more people on different positions in the group see the different perception of community culture and member relationships. However, as I explain in the previous chapter, most fansub groups want to remain mysterious and low-profile to the public both to avoid being beaten up by the government and to raise public’s curiosity. Therefore, to avoid causing trouble and leaking
important information, most fansubbers I contacted refused my request for interview. All of the 6 fansubbers that accept my interview request claimed that they could only do the interview on behalf of themselves, not representing their groups. Whatever they said in the interview is their own opinion that doesn’t represent the official stand of the fansub groups.

I contacted fansubbers by sending messages via the online forums and also by email. In the message, I explain briefly about my research purposes, letting them know what I am interested in. I am aware of the difficulty to get people to take the interview, so I sent out about 40 messages to all the fansubbers whose contact information I could find, among which 6 replied my message with consent.

The interviews I conducted were all through Tencent QQ, the most popular instant messaging computer program in Mainland China, which is also the common internal communication tool for fansub groups. I know that face-to-face interviews encourage interviewees to provide more detailed answers and enable interviewer to catch more facial and body cues (Orgad, 2005; Turkle, 1995). However, fansubbing is a completely web-based practice. Communicating online is more effective to observe fansubbers’ normal behavior and personality in doing the practice. And also due to the geographical difficulty and my intension to protect fansubbers’ identity in the real world, I chose to do these interviews online.

The interviews were conducted on one-on-one basis. I did not conduct group interviews because I had already captured many of the group discussions in my fieldsites, and so I chose to capture the opinions and experiences of the individual regarding the practice and the community.

The interviews were designed to get more information about each fansub groups, including the structure of organization, the operating procedure and the recruitment process. The
interviewees were also asked to provide insights into their experiences as fansubbers, the qualifications for being an outstanding fansubber, the relationships among members, the inter-group relationships and the concern about government censorship. For a list of the interview questions, please see Appendix A. All the interviews last more than half an hour, and three of them took more than an hour. The content of the interviews are saved in my computer. Also, during the interviews, I took notes on my computer about important things that I noticed.

3.3.3 Survey

In addition to the observation and interviews, I also designed and conducted a survey, using survey monkey, a tool that enables user to create customized online surveys. After the survey is created, a link to this survey is provided. For a copy of this survey, please see the Appendix B. The survey aims to reveal the cultural impacts of Chinese people’s consumption of fansubbed American TV shows, and their opinion about these shows and the fansubbing community. The anonymity of the survey allowed participants to express their opinion freely.

The survey was created and open for public on January 29th 2011, and I closed the survey 1 month after. I wrote posts with the survey link in the four fansub groups’ online forums and Baidu Post Bar requesting participation. Also I sent out mass e-mail to my Chinese contacts and asked them to participate. In total, 237 people participate in this survey, among which 67.1% are women and 32.9% are men and most are in the 18-30 age range.

The survey consisted of 11 multiple choices questions and 5 demographic questions. In order not to overwhelm the participants and make them quit the survey, I allow them to skip the questions they do not want to answer. The total number of completed survey is 196 (82.7% of 237).
3.4 Methodological and Theoretical Approach to Data

From the discussions of the fansubbing community members in the online forums and Baidu Post Bar, I collected messages to analyze their discussions. In interviews, discussions between me and fansubbers are saved as texts. In addition, I used field notes during my observations and collected statistical information from the online forum to keep a record of the number of messages posted on the online forum.

Scholars have pointed out that making sense out of online textual messages without knowledge of social context and the reference of the particular individuals involved can be problematic (Mann & Stewart 2000). In my thesis research, I used discourse analysis to complement the data collected from observations and interviews. The collection of online messages and the findings from observation and interview mutually support each other throughout the analysis.

From the observation in my online fieldsites and the message collected, two themes emerged, the messages related to fansubs and the messages related to the community. Baym divided online posts into four themes in her study of the r.a.t.s online fan community, which are informing, speculating, criticizing and reworking (Baym 2000). The messages about fansubs majorly fall into the criticizing theme. In my discourse analysis of these messages, I focus on comments and critiques on particular fansubs or fansub groups. Meanwhile, in my analysis of messages about the community, I emphasis on the members’ perception of the norms and relationships in the community, and I also focus on their attitudes and emotions about them.

For my survey data, I run a series analysis including descriptive summary of data, t-test, ANOVA and crosstabs with the help of SPSS. The analysis is presented in the following chapters.
Bibliography


CHAPTER 4 FANSUBBING AS A PRACTICE

My goal of this chapter is to reveal the fansubbing practice procedure and to give an analysis of the textual characteristics of fansubs. These are two topics that anyone who does fansubbing researches cannot avoid. The lack of regular channels to consume foreign TV shows leads to the thrive of Chinese fansubbing and makes it have many properties that common fansubbings don’t have.

Audiovisual Translation (abbreviated thereafter as AVT) has been a rising and comparatively new field in translation studies since the global media market began to expand. There are two general methods for AVT, subtitling and dubbing. The advent and widespread of DVD technology helped to raise AVT’s profile in both the professional practitioners’ and academic researchers’ mind. As I stated in chapter 2, it is from that time that academia started to notice this practice. However, what really made AVT going through major shifts and gaining new developments is the Internet. Especially in the field of subtitling, the previous extremely professional and official-only work has become possible and increasingly popular among amateur translators. Among these amateur works, there is an important category, which is fansubtitle.

The fansub groups are usually highly efficient teams with distinct characteristics, preferences, strengths, weakness and supporters (see chapter 3). Some of them focus more on the speed and others are better with the artistic quality. Hundreds of thousands fans just wait at specific times for their works to come out every week, cheering for their hard work. While so many fans enjoy the fruit of fansub groups’ hard work every day, the procedure of creating fansubtitles still remains very mysterious to most of people. One of the big developments of current fansub
groups comparing to earlier ones is that the former ones have much more clear divisions of work in facing the fierce competition of the speed for distribution. Thus, a close look and detailed presentation of how fansubtitles are made are very essential.

Different types of text require different methodologies in terms of translation. As a branch of literary translation, subtitling shares similarity with written-text translation, but differs in terms of its function and purpose (Ouyang 2006). It is a special type of AVT with some special characteristics that formal AVT subtitling doesn’t have.

To understand fansubbing culture, a comprehensive review of the text typology and general style of the fansubbings is necessary. This chapter discusses the general operating procedure of fansubbing and fansubbing’s properties as a type of translation with the focus both on the language and the format.

4.1 Background
Fansubbing practice originated during the explosion of anime production during the 1980s in Japan (Black 2008). In China, the earliest fansub groups were also founded for popular Japanese animations in the middle of 1990s. It appeared and arose to provide nationwide fans with the most authentic experience of foreign culture that due to strict regulation of media can hardly be possibly accessed through legitimate channels. With the popularization of Broad Band Internet, the sharing of latest media products are with the uploading and downloading services such as Bittorrent or Emule, and video sharing websites such as Tudou and Youku became as easy as clicking the mouse and at almost zero cost. And with the popularity of American popular media products, fansubs for American TV shows mushroomed since 2000, among which the most popular and influential ones are YTET, YYeTs, Fengruan and Ragbear.
Unlike earlier fansub groups that were dedicated to one show or one particular type of shows only, these fansub groups are much more professional with translation services of numerous programs. Some of them even offer AVT other than English. For example, YYeTs recently started to translate Japanese drama, which caused some disturbances among fansub groups (for details, see chapter 6). With some of the groups becoming more like a professional translation agency rather than fan communities usually with loyalty to one particular type or one particular genre of work, a crowd of people starts to go back to old tradition and focus on one show. As discussed in chapter 6, the differences between these two types of fansub groups are significant to understand the nature of the community and its construction.

4.2 Methods
Currently, there are usually two methods for encoding the fansubs. One is called “hard subtitles” that are encoded into the video; thusly it is difficult to be removed from the video without losing some level of quality. The other one is called “soft subtitles” that are superimposed on the footages and can be mixed directly into the video or offered in a separate file. The fansub groups release both kinds of subtitles. However in order to avoid plagiarism, the groups usually release the “hard sub” version first. When the war of “first to distribute” is over, the groups will release the soft ones for the fans to download.

According to the number of languages that can be shown on the screen at the same time, fansubs can be classified into monolingual or bilingual fansubs. Among the biggest four fansub groups, YYeTs is famous for its bilingual subtitles. Many fans that have the ambition to learn English are attracted to consume the bilingual subtitles YYeTs produces. It seems that other subtitle groups do not give as much compliment to the YYeTs’ effort in making bilingual subtitles.
as common fans do. Since most of the shows are translated based on the closed caption subtitle (abbreviated as cc subtitle), what YYeTs does is simply adding the original English subtitle to the video clip. However, many fans that are not familiar with fansubbing practice may overestimate the workload of doing bilingual subtitles. There are several threads of posts on YTET’s online forum discussing about why YTET does not make bilingual subtitles. When facing a fan who named couva2y raising the question, “Since bilingual subtitle is a lot better than monolingual subtitle, YTET not doing bilingual subtitle is for the sake of speed, right?” some of YTET’s fansubbers clearly got annoyed. A fansubber named hangmem complained in his/her post, “why this question again?” A fansubber named bille.cn responded this question with a harsh attitude. The following is his/her post.

“Adding English subtitle is just a few mouse clicks work. There is no extra effort or technology in it. Anyone can do it with any normal subtitle software. To be honest, from my point of view, when I’m doing the collating work, it is hard for me sometimes to read all the Chinese subtitles within the time frame. If one is reading bilingual subtitle, there is no way for him/her to watch the show. Therefore learning English is just a placebo idea.”

Reasons for opposing to bilingual subtitles also include occupying too much space and covering bad Chinese translations. Some fansubbers don’t take effort in hiding their attitude toward YYeTs’ bilingual subtitles: bad Chinese translation and fawning the fans.

Next, I will introduce the general fansubbing process, from obtaining the original show to releasing the subbed work.
4.3 General Operating Procedures

The general operation of fansubbing involves not only translation but also other works such as timing, editing and collating. Although different fansub groups may vary in terms of specific division of labor, the basic operating processes don’t differ much from each other. The procedure I described as follows is my summary and generalization of a number of posts in online forums of fansub groups and Baidu Post Bars. Some former or current fansubbers wrote detailed posts on this issue, unveiling the inside stories of fansubbing practice for common fans, which resembles to celebrity culture.

The speed for releasing depends on the popularity of the show. Usually, major popular shows should be at least subbed and released within the same day, which is called 0day show by fansubbers. Take fansubbing a popular American TV 0day show airs on 9:00pm EST, which is 9:00am Beijing time for example.

Firstly, the original episode would be recorded by the raw provider oversea. This is the most mysterious group of people that no one knows who these people really are. They are the source of online piracy and they can be anyone, such as an oversea Chinese student, or an American postman. Commonly, they use extension filename such as “LOL” or “DIAMIND” to identify themselves. The mostly used recording tool is TV tuner card, a computer component that allows personal computers to receive television signals and capture the video. Primarily, there are two methods to obtain original episodes of TV shows. The first one is BitTorrent (abbreviated as bt) downloading from websites offering this service such as mininova\textsuperscript{c} or eztv\textsuperscript{d}. This is also a common way that those who do not need subtitles to get access to the shows. The second one is

\textsuperscript{c} mininova.com is one of the largest torrent downloading website in the world. It is based in Netherlands and was launched in January 2005.
\textsuperscript{d} \url{http://eztv.it/} is a BitTorrent TV releasing group
FTP downloading. A special team called the “movers” who are responsible for “moving” a newly aired episode from the recorders’ servers to the fansub groups’ servers.

One crucial link of this work is the transfer of CC subtitles, the English subtitles made for hearing-impaired people by the producing companies. With these subtitles, the workloads of the timing team and the translation team would be significantly reduced. If the CC subtitles are not recorded with the original video, it takes three or four times longer to do the subbing work. Almost all the fansub groups have a sticky post (the one that always appears on the top of the page) on their forum recruiting oversea students to record CC subtitles for them. According to Petergy, a famous fansubber originally from Fengruan who later switched to Ragbear, the CC subtitles are scarce resources that every fansub group values very much. And Tianyi (“天意” in Chinese) from YYeTs admitted in an interview that CC subtitles are never shared with the other group just as translated Chinese subtitles never are. All of the above work should be done by the time 9:30pm EST (9:30am Beijing time).

After obtaining the video file, the timing team starts to adjust the timeline of the cc subtitles. Since there are commercials in the original episode, the timing team needs to rectify the timeline of the show. The most popular software for timeline adjusting are “ansub” and “subtitle workshop”. This work usually takes a couple hours.

The translation team starts to do their job around 11:30pm EST (11:30am Beijing time). Normally, a 0day show would have four to five translators. A regular episode has 500-600 lines, so each translator is assigned 100-150 lines. It takes 3 hours to do the translation. After it is done,
the collators would use 1 hour to check the translators’ work, correct the errors, standardize the overall textual and linguistic style, and make adjustment to the number of lines and length of subtitles.

By 3:30am EST (3:30pm Beijing time), the encoders should have received the formatted and revised subtitles. Then it is their turn to encode the subbs to the given episode, after which they upload the subbed work to the fansub group’s homepage. Finally, they submit the soft subtitle on to the shooter.cn website, which is the largest online base supplying subtitles.

It should be noted that despite there are various roles to be performed during the process of fansubbing, Sometimes, the actual roles of timer, translator or encoder might be performed by the same person depending on whether the person has mastered the multiple skills required in fansubbing and whether he has enough time to consume on the task. Translating is not usually teamwork. Samuelsson-Brown (2006) comments that freelance translators may find it hard to work together with others on a project. Aesthetically, dividing a complete work of art to several different people is also not very wise choice, since people vary greatly from each other in terms of language style and usage. However, facing the fierce competition, in urgent and competitive cases, however, the task is usually coordinated by several members.

4.4 Text Typology
Earlier in this chapter, I have noted that the fansub is a special type of AVT that shares some similarities of common subtitles, even some of written text translation. In many ways, fansubtitling has the same elements as common printing books, signature of authors, producers

\[\text{Shooter.cn is a themed consulting and exchanging platform for Chinese subtitles of foreign media products. Until now, it is still a nonprofit individual website. It offers a platform for volunteer translators to store their translation and communicate with each other. See: http://baike.baidu.com/view/710737.htm}\]
and sometimes prefaces and postscript. Also the font and color are deliberately selected. In this section, I intend to analyze the general style of fansubtitling, including translating norms, authorship, readership and difficulties in translation.

4.4.1 General Translating Norms

Ultimately, TV shows are comprehensive containing not only verbal information, but also image, sound, music and signs. Gottlieb (2005) mentioned that there are four channels need to be considered during subbing foreign television programs or films, which are:

- The verbal auditory channel, including dialogue, background voices, and sometimes lyrics.
- The non-verbal auditory channel, including music, natural sound and sound effects.
- The verbal visual channel, including superimposed titles and written signs on the screen.
- The non-verbal visual channel: picture composition and flow.

In her research on text typology for translators, Reiss (2004) developed a model of translation criticism based on the functional relationship between source and target texts, within which there are several categories of text that require different translational styles. The content-focused text demands reproducing every detail in the content of original accurately and rapidly to the audiences. The form-focused text concerns more about aesthetics that the style of the language is prior to the exact content of the language. Fansubbing is somewhere in between this spectrum. On one hand, it is the fansubbers’ obligation to make the translated texts have as much information as the original text does. On the other hand, unlike written text translation, subtitling has to fit in certain time frame and to not disturb the audiences’ watching process. While the
subtitles are shown on a screen followed along with the dialogue, which would pass in a blink of eye and does not allow time for much thinking and, at the same time, should meet the literary level of general public. Thus, the fansubber often interprets what is meant, rather than translating how it is said. In general, meaning is more important than the form and the form is further subjected to temporal and spatial limit. The followings are some general principles for fansubbers that I summarized based on relevant discussions in fansub group’s forum and my personal analysis.

First of all, be concise and make abbreviations. As confirmed by Petergyg\(^g\), a member in Ragbear who is specialized in collation, facing the text that translating every single word in the episode from English to Chinese is always the biggest nightmare for the collators. The most common mistake is to translate “comma phrase” (a term used by the fansubbers and called “parentheticals” in linguistics), such as you know; now you know; I mean; you see; you know what etc. The visual material already expresses a lot of meanings, while the subtitle only serve as a tool to help audiences understand the visual materials better.

For example, in Survivor S16E02:

Original text: Alexis is now on the air cushion.

Word for word translation: Alexis 现在踏上了气垫。

Fansubtitling version: Alexis 踏上了气垫。

The fansubbing version omitted the word “now”, because in the Chinese context the word “now” is redundant. Another common omission is the omission of pronouns. Unlike English,

\(^g\) See http://www.meijumi.com/article.asp?id=2240
Chinese language does not need the subject matter to appear in every sentence. It is a “pronoun-drop” language, which means pronouns such as he, she, they should be dropped whenever is possible. Sometimes, the Chinese subtitle of bilingual subtitles is blamed for being too “Engnese”, because it has to coordinate with the English ones.

Second, the line of subtitle can never be longer than the timeline. A good fansubber has to know when to start a new line. Technically, the length of a line is at most 2/3 of the length of the screen, approximately about 15 words within each line (including punctuation). If there are over 15 words in one line, it shall be broken into 2 lines according to the meaning clusters. There shall be no more than two lines under each time code. Only under some special circumstances, one line can contain more than 15 words including annotation. Here is an example for breaking lines:

The bad one:

00:21:17,859 --> 00:21:19,926

另外 竹木渔船和钓鱼工具你们可以拿回阵营

The good one:

00:21:17,859 --> 00:21:19,926

另外 竹木渔船和
钓鱼工具可以拿回营地.

Thirdly, the devil is in the detail. There are a lot of small things for fansubbers to be aware of. Passive voice is much more commonly used in English than in Chinese. Especially in colloquial
Chinese, people hardly use passive voice. Therefore, altering sentences written in passive voice to active voice is an important strategy to make the Chinese more audience friendly.

Also, in subtitling, the use of punctuation is forbidden. Period and comma at the end of a line shall be omitted while comma in the middle of a sentence shall be replaced by a blank space. Consistency is required. Punctuation with special meaning such as the question mark and exclamation mark shall not be omitted. The sign “…” is used as ellipsis while the sign “·” is used between the different parts of a name. Although the fansubbing seems to be far less restrictive and enjoy much more freedom of choice than professional subtitlers, they still value the quality of their work very much. Normally, the fansubbers are demand to watch their work before the release at least twice to make the work more user-friendly.

With the development of the fansubbing practice, the norms are getting more and more strict. It is partly because that the subbed shows are no longer personal works that shared among limited number of friends and peers. They are mature pieces with huge amounts of audiences. In the next section, I will discuss the authorship and readership of fansubs.

4.5.2 Authorship and Readership
Before 2000, in the earlier stages of development of Chinese fansubtitling, when fansubbers were barely organized together, they seldom revealed their name on the screen to mark their works. Not like the early modern women writers who chose anonymity as a protection of their reputation, the Chinese fansubbers just did not know that they had the choice to do that. As a member in a collectivist society like China, it was weird to add an individual’s name to a work that not even originally belonged to him/her. So when I tried to review the early fansubbing
works in China, especially the ones on DVDs when Internet was not yet popularized, it was impossible to identify the translators.

The early 21st century witnessed the giant transition that fansubbers became visible by adding their names on the screen, and this now became a tradition. This may be caused by the following reasons. Firstly, due to the fast development of Internet technology, all the fansubbing activities are now online and became completely non-commercial. Therefore, the only “profit” the fansubbers get from their hard work is “reputation”. Prior studies about online communities showed that stronger motivation behind online leadership comes from the social benefits and psychological payoffs they gain from the discursive power the leaders own in the community. The net ID they add on the screen is the first step toward gaining this kind of power. Secondly, the westernized conception like intellectual property flooded into Chinese people’s value system because of the globalization process. Chinese people are attaching more and more importance to the intellectual property nowadays. Unlike 20 years ago, they are used to getting credit for their intellectual work now. Thirdly, the fansub organizations are getting more and more mature with the development of fansubbing practice. Valuing group honor is a natural characteristic of Chinese culture. So when the groups arise, the credit has to be calculated.

The following picture is a screenshot from NBC’s drama, *Heroes* S01E01, translated by *YTET* (伊甸园). On the screen, lies the signature of the authors. The translation and analysis of the signature is as follows:

```
-=[YTET (English name of the fansub group who produced this work)- 伊甸园字幕组
(meaning YTET fansub group)=-
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The name of the group always appears first, which is evidence that the group’s honor surpasses the individual’s. As can be seen from the typical workflow of a fansub group discussed in earlier of this chapter, fansubtitling mainly contains three aspects of work, translation, collation and adjusting the timeline. The signature contains all the people that contributed to the work, which means everyone got the credit of his/her own work.

Sometimes when a certain show has a rather long opening theme song, the fansubbers’ “names” are not listed synchronously on the same frame. Instead, the names appear in turns. The following pictures are a screenshot from CBS’s sitcom, The Big Bang Theory S04E14, translated by YYeTs. The translation of the texts on this figures Synchronous is as follows.
Fig 1: The subtitle is translated and provided by YYeTs. Want to see more subbed American TV shows? Please go to www.yyets.com

Fig 2: Translation: MADD Veronique Xiaomanyao(小蛮腰) YY

Fig 3: Post-production: Fish Bones; Timing: Sea shell

Fig 4: Collate: Vin; Director: YY

As you may see, the name of the group appears the first, and the font is bigger than any individual. The names of fansubbers also appear in the order of work division, very much alike showing casts’ and staff’s names on the beginning of a show. Adding signature serves more as a promotion for the fansub group.

The pseudonyms the fansubbers use are usually their net IDs that they use for other online activities. This accordance makes some IDs gain huge amounts of fame and popularity, and be
easily recognized by common fans. They became celebrities among their audiences. The names
they use are turned into a brand name whose appearances on the screen are bound to draw an
audience. The detailed analysis of the fansubbers’ preferences when choosing pseudonyms can
be found in the following chapter.

With the competition getting fiercer everyday, it became a convention that the fansub groups
add recruiting advertisements at the end of each episode of the shows to attract more fans into
this practice.

Fansubbers are also fans for American TV shows themselves, so they have their preferences.
Some fansubbers are famous for dedicating to one particular show, while others are active in
many different shows and have high reputations in several fan communities. For example, 浅
(pronunciation: Chien) is a fansubber from fengruan and specialized in translating CBS’s crime
drama Criminal Minds. Her version of translation for this show is the most community-wise
recognized translation. Thousands of fans of this show sit in front of the computer every week,
cheering her up and waiting for her work to be done. She is addressed by her fans as 浅大
(meaning: Lord Chien). Here are some evidences I quoted from the Criminal Minds Post Bar, a
sub-section of Baidu Post Bar, the largest Chinese online community. I didn’t choose
Fengruan’s forum to avoid biases.

Banyao: Still downloading. Waiting for Lord Chien’s subtitle 4:20pm 2010-11-18
Dei_yi: Waiting for Lord Chien 5:25pm 2010-11-18
EternalLurking: Lord Chien, I have to confess my love for you. 11:32pm 2010-11-19
Xiaozhonghuan: A lot of people love her. Get in line dude. 9:09am 2010-11-20

酒囊饭袋(meaning walking dead) is a good example for the other kind of fansubbers. He is
currently the timeline team leader of *ragbear* group. He appears in almost every major work of *ragbear*, and is very famous in many sub-fan communities.

Adding “preface” and “postscript” is another important characteristic of fansubbing. The fansub groups’ yearly working timetables are in accordance with American’s TV season. Therefore, it is common for fansubbers to see a season of a particular show as a relatively completed work. It gradually became a ritual for the fansubbers to write some little speeches in the beginning of a show’s season premier and at the end of a show’s season finale. These little speeches are very similar to prefaces and postscripts of a book, which usually involve the fansubby’s inspiration about the work and the appreciations for the audiences’ support. The following paragraph is a speech that appeared at the end of *House* Season 1 Finale written by a fansubber named Qingzheng from *fengruan* fansub group. All of the words appeared line by line in the last minute of this episode.

*The following is some nonsense from Qingzhen* (the fansubber’s name). *If you don’t like it, please ignore it. Until now, our lovable, hateful, brilliant, crippled Dr. House’s story would be suspended for a while. I am here to represent all group members that contributed to the translation of the show to thank all the audiences for supporting us. It might be a little cliché, but I still want to tell you that your guys’ appreciation is the biggest motivation for our work. Also I would like to thank all the people overseas who provided us the source and composed the files every week in the forum. And don’t forget our bosses, such as Lord Fenglingxue. Without them, there is no meaning for us to do this. Lastly, also the most importantly, I would like to thank all the crew of House M.D for creating such a great show for us. Everyone, please wait with us for*
the next season when we will try as hard as we can to provide you the better subtitles. Please support fengruan’s website, forum and our team. Thank you very much.

From the little paragraph of text, we can see the how the author of the subtitles interact with his audiences in a formal way. Although the wording is colloquial, the content and motivations behind it are very much alike modern postscript which is a platform for the author to communicate with the audience outside the work per se. The fansubber identified herself in the beginning of the paragraph. It is an individualistic act and not fit in Chinese traditional cultural habit. However, after that the most part of this paragraph is lauding the group. She thanked all the people that contributed, confirmed this was teamwork and asked for supporting for her group. Especially, she mentioned her superiors and expressed her worship toward them. Complimenting the ‘above’ is an indispensable part of any kind of public speech in China. Only a few lines, but clearly gives an idea about the cultural integration, which I will discuss in detail in the next chapter.

Bibliography
“Culture is man’s medium[...]there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture, as stated by Hall (1976). American TV shows are encoded with large amounts of cultural symbols and references that cannot be interpreted correctly by common Chinese audience, and sometimes even versed American culture adapters have trouble decoding it. In my interviews with the fansubbers, most of them admitted that they encountered problems while translating. YYeTs’ fansubber Tianyi said in the interview that whenever they were unable to interpret the cultural meaning of certain scenes, they would discuss this with other fansubbers or consult some experts they hired. However, even so, there still exist many mistranslations. For example, in CBS’s sitcom The Big Bang Theory S01E06, on a Halloween party, a girl said to one of the protagonists, “How wasted am I”. In YYeTs’ subbed version, this sentence was translated to the sentence meaning “What a waste for me to be here.” Obviously, the fansubber misunderstood the meaning of “wasted” in this context. It is due to the fansubber lacking the cultural comprehension of “wasted” meaning ‘drunk’ in the United States. The language use is very colloquial and daily life-oriented that rarely appears in official textbooks. Unlike movies or TV shows that are introduced by governmental authorities, the fansubbed TV shows could not be re-edited to eliminate cultural difference, which makes culture the biggest obstacle on the path between American TV shows and common Chinese audiences.

The fansubbing practice is inevitably a product of culture. On one hand, it has to be loyal to the original text to satisfy the fans. Making the translation too distant from the original text would certainly cause fans’ resentment. In a thread of posts discussing interest translations in fansubbing in the American TV shows Bar of Baidu Post Bar, the largest online community in
China, a fan named s1425367898 replied, “I personally hate those translations that distort the original meanings intentionally to show off and please the crowd.” Another fan named hexagon starfish agreed and complemented in the same thread, “Adding some buzz words or catch phrases appropriately is acceptable, but adding too much is just annoying.”

Because of the same reason, the foreign television programs that are imported officially and aired on regular TV are usually not very popular among audiences. The biggest state-owned TV network in China, CCTV, once introduced several popular American TV shows, but the result was not as good as expected. The crux of the problem was the major alteration of the show aiming to fit in Chinese media regulation. All the introduced shows were revised beyond recognition. Anything not meeting Chinese government’s ideological demand would be cut, such as sexual scenes or lines related to politics. For example, in Grey’s Anatomy, a crucial plot about the character’s stolen underwear was revised as her stolen necklace, which caused old fans’ rage and other audiences’ confusion. On the other hand, dissimilar to written text translation, subtitling has to explain everything to the audience while fitting into temporal and spatial limits that accommodate the audiences’ watching process. Compare to other literary translating such as written text translating or traditional subtitling, fansubbing is more focused on catering to the needs of its audiences. **The highest demand is to make the language faithful to the original script while simultaneously take it into Chinese cultural frame.** Balance is the crucial point here. To achieve this, the fansubbers adopt various kinds of cultural strategies to make the text more user-friendly in terms of culture. Feng Yan, a professor from the Chinese Language and Literature Department of Fudan University, said in an interview conducted by a magazine named Oriental Outlook that “although these fansubbing translations were imperfect in terms of
literature, they were not as rigid as formal translation, but rather they are full of intercultural elements. “

Because culture plays such an important role in fansubbing, in the remainder of this chapter, I analyze fansubtitles as text within the intercultural frame, focusing on the strategies the fansubbers adopt to achieve the “balance” of translation according to the audiences’ cultural background and cultural competence.

5.1 Alienation
Greetz (1973) believes that language is a repository and transmitter of culture. Since English learning gradually replaced Russian becoming compulsory in China’s elementary education system since 1978, and at the same time the access to America’s culture products became possible, neither the English language nor the American culture are as strange and distant to Chinese people as they used to be. Therefore, most fansubbers nowadays choose to leave some English words in the subtitle instead of translating all the words into Chinese in the old fashion way. In formal literary translation of English to Chinese, proper nouns such as names of people and places are translated into Chinese characters that represent words with similar pronunciations. It is prescribed not to leave English names in the translation literature. Some common names have conventional translations, while the uncommon ones are translated with the Chinese characters whose selection is based on the translator’s preference. The principle is to use characters that are common for Chinese names. For instance, Tom is conventionally translated as “汤姆” (pronunciation: tang mu).

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English: Tom as in The Adventure of Tom Sawyer

Chinese: 汤姆 tang mu 汤姆索亚历险记 tang mu suo ya li xian ji

However, now names like Tom are no longer translated into Chinese characters. The “need not translation” category includes the following items: names of people, place names, abbreviations, special language usages such as youth slangs or netspeak and so on.

The following example is a good demonstration of partial foreignizing strategy by fansubbers.

It is a name from…

Example 5.1:

Original: DeBardeleben Bardella and so on…

Chinese subtitle: DeBardeleben Bardella 以及其他人（均为著名连环凶手）

The meaning of this subtitle: DeBardeleben Bardella and others (all these people are famous serial killers)

- Cited from Criminal Minds S4E16, subbed by Fengruan
As can be seen from the intercepted pictures from *Criminal Minds* S04E16, peoples’ names remain untranslated in the subtitle. These kinds of words in English are much easier for the audiences to understand rather than some nonsensical jungle of Chinese characters that approximate the pronunciation of the name. Both the fansubbers and their major audiences are American culture adapters. They are no longer comfortable with the translated English names in Chinese characters with the ‘last name then first name’ order as in other literary translation works.

However, I should mention that this alienation does not apply to all the names or special nouns. There are a number of traditionally translated names of some historically renowned figures that are culturally familiar to Chinese people. Certain translation of well known historical eminent people, places or events are culturally coded and fixed to common Chinese people. It would be really strange to replace these translated names with original ones. This is in accordance with the rule in literary translation that some conventional standardized translation of nouns should be used by all the translators. The following is a good example of this partly alienation strategy and the interculturality of fansubtitles.

Example 5.2:

Original: Hitler and Martha Stewart would have hated that wedding.

Chinese subtitle: 希特勒（Chinese translation of Hitler; pronunciation: Hsi te le）和 Martha Stewart 肯定恨死那场婚礼了。

- Cited from *30Rock* S05E11, subbed by YE
In the above example, Hitler is translated to Chinese “希特勒” according to convention, while Martha Stewart is left in English. The reason for this is a greater cultural familiarity of the Chinese audience with 希特勒 rather than with the name Hitler spelled in the original language and script. However Martha Stewart is a name that appears less frequently in the Chinese context. Therefore, leaving it in English fits better to audiences’ habits.

Chinese audiences are also quite familiar with common abbreviated proper nouns, such FBI, MRI and NCAA, or some special expressions like OMG thanks to the multilingual Internet. The culture habit has been changed. According to a report from *The Guardian*, about 300 million Chinese people are learning English. Going by English names and using English phrases in colloquial speech is very common and considered trendy among students and white collars in the cities. The foreignizing strategy displayed in fansubs is both a great evidence of the dissemination of American culture in China and a propellant of this process.
5.2 Use of Annotations and Comments
Generally speaking, brevity is a principle for subtitles. No one wants to overwhelm the audience with long sentences and frivolous explanations. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that there are many translational norms for fansubbers to keep the translation concise and brief. However, on occasion, additional information is needed for the audiences to understand the TV shows better. In this section, I present some examples where adding additional information in subtitles improves audiences’ understanding of the show.

5.2.1 Annotation
The scripts of American TV shows are created to be entertaining, with countless allusions, puns and cultural references, which are very difficult to translate. To overcome this obstacle, one widely adopted strategy in fansubbing practice is annotations. Annotations, which are not allowed in traditional subtitling, are frequently used in fansubbing with fansubber’s explanations either in parenthesis or on the top of the screen. This feature, observed by scholars in fansubbed Japanese animes (Cintas 2005), is very prominent in Chinese fansubs of American TV shows. It is a typical and logical strategy to eliminate cultural barriers and increase understandings.

There are several kinds of annotations, the introduction of culturally unfamiliar proper nouns, the illustration of the intertextuality and cultural reference containing in the scenes, and the explanation of puns and punchlines. In the following text, I explain these different kinds of annotations in turn with examples. I mentioned, huge amounts of people, places and special nouns exist in the lines of the shows. Among these names, not all of them are familiar to Chinese audiences. Therefore, sometimes the annotation is to provide information about people, places and events.
Example 5.3:

Original: A: Why is our daughter dressing like Donna Summers?
B: She is not Donna Summers. She is Diana Ross from the RCA years.

Chinese subtitle: A:为什么咱家女儿穿得像 Donna Summers 一样？(著名女歌手)
B: 她不是 Donna Summers。他是“黄金岁月”里的 Diana Ross (著名女歌手 该专辑 97 年发行)。

Chinese annotation in the first parenthesis is “famous female singer”. Chinese annotation in the second parenthesis is “famous female singer” and “the mentioned album released in 97”.

- Cited from Modern Family, S01E06, subbed by YTET

In the above example, the fansubber gives annotation to Donna Summers and Diana Ross who are famous in America but not known by many Chinese audiences. It is believed that audiovisual programs with subtitles can serve as an educational tool to improve audiences’ listening comprehension of second language learners, especially when the input is not too far beyond the listeners’ linguistic ability (Danan 2004). Meanwhile this kind of annotation benefit a lot to the audiences as a powerful pedagogical tool for learning not only language but also knowledge about American culture.

Sometimes the annotation is to explain cultural references or scenes encoded with cultural meanings that are not easily understood by the outsiders.

Example 5.4:

Original: I’d like to tell you about three television programs.

Chinese annotation in the parenthesis: Mimicking Apple news conference
In the example above, the fansubber indicates some cultural knowledge in the parenthesis to help the audience understand the parody in the show. In this scene, the main protagonist did a presentation for the consulting company by imitating the style of Steve Jobs in the press conferences of Apple Inc. Only a small portion of the audience who know American culture extremely well may be able to figure out the funny implications, so fansubbers deliberately made the joke clear by adding Chinese explanation. Fans appreciate these annotations in the condition that the annotations are not too wordy that interfere the watching experience. A fan named pqswayne complimented this strategy in a post saying that he liked the fansubbers annotating the intertextuality of scenes, for example, when a scene is imitating a classic movie. He believed it was a promotion and education of American culture.

Sometimes the annotation is linguistic explanation of proverbs, slangs puns or punch lines.
Example 5.5:

Original: A: But everybody else’s tobacco is toasted
B: No, everybody else’s tobacco is poisonous. Lucky Strikes is toasted.

Chinese annotation in the parenthesis: toasted both meaning “cooking and browning” and “raising glass to celebrate”

- Cited from Mad Men S01E01

In the storyline of this episode, the tobacco industry was severely influenced in 1960s because research confirmed the correlation between smoking cigarette and lung cancer. An advertising agency was trying to find a way to promote the Lucky Strikes brand cigarette. In this example, the original line contained a pun as toasted refers both to “cooking and browning” and “raising glass to celebrate”. However, people who do not know English very well could not get this pun. To solve this problem, the fansubbers explain it directly to the audiences.

5.2.2 Comments

The fansubbers don’t just add stuff in the subtitles to explain things. They also occasionally interact with their audiences directly by adding comments in the subtitles, expressing their opinions, emotions, judgments, and sarcasms about things happening on the screen. This strategy has been increasingly adopted by fansubbers. Comparing to annotations, comments are much less formal and more individual. In Chinese text theory, marginalia are usually serious academic comments or research notes, absolutely not personal opinions or feelings. Influenced by globalization, the younger generation in China contributes to greater and greater individualism than before, which became a hot spot for sociological and psychological research. The public self-expression and personal creativity the fansubbers put in the subtitles are exactly important
tokens of Chinese tending to western modernization. In the current public opinion direction, being outstanding is more valued than standing the crowd in China. Therefore, the strategy per se is an evidence of Chinese people’s acceptance of some individualistic values of western mentality. As far as the comments in the fansubbings, for most of the time, they are highly related to the content of the show.

Example 5.6:

Original: Hah! I’m not a betting man.

Chinese comments in the parenthesis: 太假了吧 (That is so fake.)

–Cited from Bones S6E05, subbed by YYeTs

The above is a very typical example in this category, which is a comment related to the former content of the show. The comment is based on the fact that all the fans have watched this show know that the male character is a betting man, so that the comment would entice some resonance from the audiences. Also, this kind of comments is a way of paying homage to the fan community. Because of their interactivity, a comment like this makes people watching the show
feel more bound to the fan community. It creates a sense of shared views, opinions and historical loyalty to the show.

It is not difficult to understand that many of the fansubbers are opinion leaders on the Internet. They like to express their ideas and make comments on hot topics and current events.

Example 5.7:

Original: A: Son of a bitch… Who wrote that on my wall?

Chinese comments in the parenthesis: 还好写的不是“拆”，你就知足吧 (meaning ‘You should be grateful that wasn’t a removing sign’)

– Cited from Criminal Minds S06E08

Example 5.7 is a fantastic improvise of a well-known fansubber named Chien, also addressed by the fans as “Chienda”, meaning Lord Chien. In Chinese, “da” is shortened form of “da ren”, which is placed after people’s name to express respect. The usage of this word is very similar to “sama” in Japanese. The plot in the original show is a homeless man found someone wrote some sentences on the wall of his ‘home’ (a street corner) with blood. Chienda’s comment is referring 70
to a prominent Chinese social problem—city management officials’ brutal enforcement. These people always leave a removal sign on the wall of certain architectures or temporary sheds and forced people, usually migrant workers, hawkers or other low pay groups, to leave with violence. ‘Chengguan’, the Chinese word for city management officials, are described as thugs in Chinese cyber-culture. Numerous jokes and satires are made and spread among Chinese netizens by Internet everyday. For example, there is a sarcastic sentence that has been very popular for a while – “Give me three thousands Chengguan, I can recover Taiwan” – indicating that these city management officials are much more violent than the army. Chienda’s comment has rich cultural meaning embedded that can only be decoded correctly by people who are familiar with Chinese cyber culture. Although the regular American TV shows watchers in China are America and American culture admirers, most of them are very concerned about Chinese society and social problems. These comments are good proofs of the interculturality of fansubbing and the community.

5.3 Localization

5.3.1 Localization of cultural references

Since the subtitles are transitory on the screen, it is really unwise to try explaining everything in the annotations, which would elude from the audiences’ eyes or compromise their watching process with too much reading. Therefore a trend emerged recently is to replace some American cultural reference with Chinese ones. This strategy became wildly popular among both fansubbers and audiences. Comparing to explaining culture with simple texts, using Chinese culture equivalents is more reader-friendly and much funnier. In both intercultural communication studies and daily cross cultural communication practice, people tend to use
symbols from one culture to explain another less familiar culture. Localizing cultural references in TV shows to make them closer and more familiar to the Chinese audiences is in accordance with this natural indications. Moreover, the nature of this strategy is to make accommodations to Chinese culture, the practice which according to the Accommodation Theory would make the audiences feel better. The following example with simple replacement of American things with Chinese equivalents helps to demonstrate my point.

Example 5.8:

Original: You could pick them up for a few dollars on **ebay**

Chinese version: You could pick them up for a few dollars on **Taobao** (Biggest online shopping cite in China)

– Cited from *White Collar*, subbed by **YYET**

Things like the above examples are abundant in the fansubtitles. It helps to let the audiences lose the cultural estranging feelings toward the show, and it is far more concise and clear than
explaining about what eBay is in annotation. Certainly, fansubbers’ localization strategy is not limited with simple replacement of things. The next example represents a more sophisticated kind of localization.

Example 5.9:

Original: My plan, chesty, is to land on hydra island.

Chinese version: My plan is to land on hydra island, Brother Sharp.

– Cited from Lost

In example 9, the localization is more deliberated that the usage of certain Chinese popular references would add more fun and new cultural meanings to the original text. The fansubber used ‘Brother Sharp’, an extremely well known beggar hailed by Chinese netizens as the most handsome beggar ever alive, to replace ‘chesty’, a nickname for the plump male character. In scenarios like this, the subtitle does lose some meaning of the English utterance, but it has more humorous effect in Chinese context. This kind of usage always leads to heated and long discussions among the audiences in the forums. Translations like this will receive many
complements from the fans. In every fansub groups’ forums and Baidu Post Bar, there are threads of posts with the titles like “Hilarious translations”, “The king of translators”, “Powerful translations” and so on. Fans post pictures intercepted from the subbed shows and discuss these translations.

In many localization cases, what’s improved is not just the basic understanding of the original line. With the comparison of the different references in the two languages, there is a special humorous effect that could be only comprehended in intercultural sense, which makes the subbed show even more interesting than the original one. Bilingual Chinese audiences enjoy this kind of subtitles very much. It was reported that some show watchers confirmed they sometimes liked the subtitle even more than the show itself. On a personal note, I am able to understand any American TV shows without Chinese subtitles, but I choose to download the subbed version for its intercultural brilliance embedded in the recreated texts. Till today, I still remember in an episode of Shark, a sentence, “I swear to god”, was translated to “I promise to Chairman Mao” (我向毛主席保证), which made me laugh for a really long time.

5.3.2 Localization of language
Another common accommodation in fansubbing is that under certain specific circumstances, the fansubbers tend to localize the original English scripts with Chinese idioms, classical Chinese style language, colloquial language, dialects or some web slangs to make them more reader-friendly, and also more entertaining. Sometimes, a new way of expression, counted as popular phrase of the year, also frequently appears in their translation.

Example 5.10:
Original: The prodigal son who returns home to the father who forgives him; the jealous wife who tricks the husband who trusts her, the desperate mother who risks everything for the child who needs her and the faithless husband who hurts the wife who loves him so deeply. Why do we listen again and again? Because these are the stories of family, look past the fighting, pain and the resentment, we occasionally like to remind ourselves. There is absolutely nothing more important.

Chinese Version: 浪子回头金不换，

善父宽容抛前嫌，

欲妻讹夫骗信任，

慈母护子为哪般。

为夫不忠留妻绝，

缘何悲剧总重现，

只因事关一家人，

蓦然回首

须自省，家为首

--Cited from Desperate Housewives

In the example, the original ending narration of an episode of Desperate Housewives was translated to an ancient Chinese language style poem by a fansubber named Shaoshupai from
YTET to maintain the poetic and philosophic weight of the original English text. This version of translation was very famous among fans. It is symmetrical in structure, terse in expression, perfect in rhyme and profound in implication. The fans all thought it was really clever that the subtitling is done in this way. A few years ago, in the earlier stage of fansubbing, when facing stylistically more demanding content such as lyrics or poems, the fansubbers usually chose to use the alienation methods by leaving the content in English. With the development of fansubbing practice, fansubbers are getting more and more confidence with their work and are more eager to show their talent to common fans. Therefore, more and more fansubbers are courageous enough to translate this heavy literary stuff conformed to the principle of “faithfulness, expressiveness and elegance” like the professional translators do. Take Fox’s hit show Glee for example. As a musical show, a huge part of the content is composed of numbers. A fansub group named the Glee fansubbing group established based on Baidu Post Bar is dedicating specifically to the show. In the first few episodes of their work, the lyric of songs are left untranslated. But after a few weeks, they decided to translate the lyrics to help the fans understand better of the content of the show. A member of the group 罐头 CCC said in the interview that it was a great challenge but also a lot of fun.

In formal AVT, English accents or foreign languages are usually not specified. If the audiences do not have enough foreign language competence, they would not notice these language changes. However nowadays, fansubbers are used to using Chinese dialects to explain these accents and foreign languages. Since 2006, there arose a trend to make characters on TV speak in different Chinese local accent instead of standardized mandarin. From then on, the usage of dialects became very popular among fansubbers.
Example 5.11:

Original: Dios mio, mi estomago

Chinese version: My god. I’m gonna die of the pain. (in the dialect of Shanxi Provence in the north west China)

-- Cited from House M.D.

In example 2, the original line was in Spanish. The fansubber wisely chose a Chinese dialect to achieve the same effect as in the original text, hinting that the man was moaning in another language. ‘Dios mio’ is translated into ‘额滴神哪’ (e di shen na). It is a dialectic phrase in Shanxi Province, which has become a nation-wide catchphrase since its frequent use in a widely loved Chinese sitcom My Own Sword Men. The show was rerun again and again, and the leading actors and actresses became famous and a-listers overnight because of the show. The two shows are cultural memes that spread among mostly overlapped audiences. Borrowing meme from Chinese popular cultural realm to elucidate another meme from American population is a convincing demonstration of the integration of two cultures.
5.4 Self-regulation on sensitive content

According to Wallerstein (1997), in our modern world-system, nationalism is the quintessential particularism, and culture has always been a weapon of the powerful. There are huge cultural differences between China and America, let alone the ideological gap in between. In the above analysis, no matter the fansubbers are writing annotations to explain American culture or localizing the original texts with Chinese cultural nutrients, they are injecting cultural meanings to the original text. However sometimes, cultural conflicts could only be solved by the loss of the meaning.

Although the fansubbed programs are distributed without much hindrance from ‘the above’ and they are not subjected to censorship from the authorities, fansubbers are self-regulated under some unwritten norms driven by their cultural beliefs and potential ideological reality. Anything in the original show that they think might offend the moral code or ideological positions of the intended readers will be eliminated or revised. It happens regularly when there are cursing words, vile language etc. One anonymous fansubber claimed in an interview that usually when they encounter some extremely dirty phrases or bad language, they just ‘purify’ it by skipping these words or replacing the words with some random symbols such as *\&^%$. The person used ‘purify’, which is a hierarchical and judgmental verb, indicating his or her cultural stand about what is good or not and what is acceptable or not. The next example is a good illustration of the self-regulation strategy using the so-called stop words. I explain such occurrences following the picture.

Example 5.12:

Original: I’m not going anywhere. I’ll give a lesson to that son of a bitch.
In Chinese cyber-culture, there are a certain amount of words called the ‘stop words’ that people cannot use in CMC. If someone uses a word in the stop word database in any online circumstances, his/her communication intent would fail. In this example, the fansubber deliberately used the phrase ‘stop word’ to replace the word ‘bitch’, which is a self-regulation and very funny.

Also in the Chinese language, exact names of human reproductive body parts are considered dirty; therefore in the subtitle these words in English will be translated to Chinese euphemisms, such as replacing words about sexual activity with Chinese phrases meaning “bed sports” (床上运动) or “bedroom life” (卧室生活).

Example 5.13:

Original: They’re a bunch of wieners and gonads.
This type of euphemisms is quite common in Chinese fansubbing of American TV shows. Apparently, the Americans are not afraid to say ‘penis’ and ‘testicles’ in sitcoms and dramas. Looking at the bilingual fansubs, it is not difficult to find out that actually fansubbers are comfortable with these words in English. But in Chinese, these are like some banned words that are really hard for the fansubbers to say, or to be more accurate, ‘type’ out loud. I believe this is another good example of the language being the carrier of culture.

The departure from mainstream restrictive organizations indicates less rigid rules imposed on the fansubbers, which will lead to a more creative and less dogmatic translation version. By all
the examples you can see that the efforts fansub groups make are directed to those who have some level knowledge of Chinese pop culture, American pop culture and web culture. This means that the fansubbers are intentionally trying to make themselves visible by establishing their own language instead of conforming to the prescriptive standard. They know their potential audiences. And they unite them by the manipulation of fansubtitling. Modern fansubs, as a bridge of two distinct cultures, a marriage of digital technology and traditional media, stand as a channel that reflect the way people perceive the world. The new texts they create are the sublimation of the original ones in the new cultural context.

**Bibliography**


CHAPTER 6 THE FANSUBBING COMMUNITY AND THE NEW CULTURE

Fansubbing is carried out by fans and intended for fans. It is a community-constrained activity. Understanding the community and understanding the practice are connected and complementary concepts. This chapter examines the broad context of Chinese fansubbing community of American TV shows, which includes a background of Chinese cultural consumption of American media products and the Internet culture in this country. Further, it provides specific information about this community, which includes qualifications and characteristics of its members as well as the triggers that motivate people to join this community. Along the way, I summarize the ethical norms observed in the community and the identity construction of its members. In essence, discussing both the external context and the inner structure helps to a better understanding of the panorama of this relatively newly established culture type.

At a macro level, this chapter examines the intercultural and cyber-cultural context. It shows roughly how this thesis specific case – the fansubbing community of American TV shows – fits, within the broader context, and how this context has an impact on the practices of members within this particular online community.

The community is composed of two types of members. One type is fansubber, while the other is a common fan of American TV shows. For the purpose of this thesis, I define the term “fan” as an individual who has interest in subbed American TV shows and comes into fansub groups’ online forums and American TV shows online fan community to exchange views about the shows and the subtitles. In this chapter, I examine the rationales of the fansubbers and common fans for joining this community.

82
This chapter consists of four parts. The first part gives a broad context, including Chinese cultural values and the development of Internet use in China. An understanding of this broader context helps to explain how the fansubbing community draws its members together. The second part and third part explain the qualifications, regulations and ethical norms of fansubbers. The fourth part discusses the cultural identities of fansubbers and common fans, explaining the motivations for these people to join the community. These discussions pave a way to analysis of the characteristics of the new culture.

6.1 Qualifications of the Fansubbers
All the fansubbing groups are badly in need of talents. Therefore, they are generally open to common Chinese netizens who have an interest in joining in. On their Internet forums, there is a long lasting advertisement aimed to recruit new fansubbers. In the following, I compare recruiting advertisements of the major fansub groups, and summarize their shared features and different focuses, trying to analyze the requirements for being a fansubber. Here is an excerpt of the post I received from YTET’s online forum\(^1\) (my translation).

The group’s announcement thread of posts:

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Group Announcement
1. Whoever wants to join YTET fansub group may apply here. However, this group is set up voluntarily by fansubbers to make and share subtitles. This is a nonprofit organization with no revenue at all.
2. Being a fansubber needs sense of responsibility, patience and perseverance, because it is demanding and laborious work, which requires a lot of time (those who in North America please think twice before applying, because the working time is after midnight in North America).
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Application Guideline:

1. Basically, the work distribution in YTET is by personal choice. The master of the forum posts the work on the forum, and then the fansubbers can choose and claim which one they would like to do. After claiming the work, one has to finish the work in 3 days. If the workload is heavy, one may apply for 1 day extension. The average translation speed is 400 sentences per day.
2. The group is recruiting translators for various languages, including English (proficiency: CET-6 and above), Japanese (proficiency: JLPT N1 and above), French (listening and translation preferred), Spanish, Korean and German.
3. The group is also looking for timing adjusters (former experiences required), people doing embedding (former experiences required), and people doing special effects (former experiences required).

Lastly, there is one thing that needs to be emphasized again: the fansubbing practice is completely unpaid.

This YTET’s post is a very typical recruitment announcement. Other posts in this kind from other fansub groups are very similar to this one. They all include information about the application process, the skill requirements and some other qualification needed.

6.1.1 Skill Requirements

From the above post, it can be seen that the group set clear qualifications of skills for prospective fansubbers. One has to provide relevant certificates to prove his/her language competency. However, I was a little surprised to find out that the minimum requirements for language skills are not very high. The College English Test band 6 (CET-6) is mandatory for graduate students in China who are not English majors. It is a prerequisite for master’s degree, but most of the undergraduates take this exam. From the personal example, I passed this exam.

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1 In China, people who in charge of the administrative affairs are called the “master” of the forum.
2 It is the abbreviation of College English Test, which is the national English as a foreign language test in China.
3 The Japanese Language Proficiency Test or JLPT, is a standardized criterion-referenced test to evaluate and certify the Japanese language proficiency of non-native speakers. The test consists of five levels: N1, N2, N3, N4, and N5, with N1 being the highest level and N5 the easiest.
with distinction in the freshman year during my undergraduate study. The vocabulary requirement of this test is 6000 English words. Thus, it seems to be not a very high demand, in terms of language ability. This is in accordance with the group’s effort to attract more people. The CET is the most widely taken English test in China. It is a reasonable choice for requirement.

As far as other technical jobs are concerned, the group uses former experience as a threshold. Since there aren’t publicly recognized certificates for these skills, former experiences become a standard for selection. Among the “technical” jobs, timeline adjusting is slightly different from others, for which the experiences are not that important. *Ragbear*, one of the four major fansub groups, claims in its recruitment post for timeline adjuster that former experience for this position is not that important as for other positions, because it is an easy job that can be picked up easily by anyone. The group wants those who are responsible and able to stay online everyday between 11am and 3pm. Also, based on my observation in this community, many translators learn the skills of timeline adjusting while doing fansubbing work. Most of the fansubbers have multiple roles in the community. *Fengruan*’s Chienda is the translator, timeline adjuster and collator of *Criminal Minds* and *Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior*, and also the collator of *NCIS* and *NCIS: Los Angeles*. The leader of *Ragbear*’s timeline team, yhjcoolcool, is also the administrator of the TV reviews subsection of *Ragbear*’s online forum. It can be seen from these facts that although the entry requirement for being a fansubber is not very high, fansubbers learn vast amount of things fast after they join this community. Besides the skill qualifications, time and effort investment is emphasized in every recruitment post, about which I discuss as follows.
6.1.2 Time and Dedication

Fansubbing is a competitive practice that demands large amounts of time and effort dedication. The fansub groups try to win over each other on the time for releasing the subtitle and the quality of the subtitles. In this battlefield, human capital matters a lot. When recruiting, all the fansub groups make it clear that they want people who are able to contribute time and effort for long terms. YTET states in the above mentioned post that the group generally does not accept people in North America, because the working time does not fit very well. Also in Fengruan’s recruitment post, the group mentions specifically, “we don’t want those who can only participate during the winter or summer vacations, because these time frames are usually hiatus for American TV shows. If you do not have enough time and spirit to contribute, please do not apply.” YYeTs stipulates that prospective fansubbers have to participate in this practice no less than 3 months once they join the group.

Because this is complete voluntary work and there aren’t real binding forces of the fansubbers, the commitment is particularly important. If there were a lot of unserious people joining the group just for fun, the group would have paralyzed.

Except for the demand of time dedication, some groups also state clearly about their rigid working schedules in the recruitment posts. YYeTs require their fansubbers to stay online and work from 9:00am to 4:00pm for at least one weekday. Since there isn’t many popular TV shows broadcast during the weekend, fansub groups usually don’t want people who are only available on Saturdays and Sundays.

All of the above are the prerequisite requirements for applicants. After being selected, there still is a series of workshops and tests before someone becomes an official fansubber. In the next section I briefly explain the trainings for new fansubbers.
6.1.3 Tests and Workshops

As I stated in chapter 3, I originally intend to join in one of the fansub groups to get more detailed personal experience as an insider, however, there are some ethical issues involving deceiving the group members that don’t allow me to do this. The information in this section is gathered and organized from my ethnographic field notes in the forums and my interviews with fansubbers.

In every fansub group, people who would like to become an official member of the group have to join their workshop and start the internship first. The first step is to register at the groups’ online forums and become a member there. In order to avoid troubles with Chinese government and American copyright lawyers, these forums’ open registration dates are randomly scheduled. In the earlier stage of these online fan communities, approximately 4 to 5 years ago, to register in these forums needed an invitation code from one of the present members. After a person becoming a member of this forum, he/she is allowed to leave a message, express his/her intention to become a fansubber, and file an application.

Usually, the workshops of fansub groups are organized through the most popular free instant messaging program in Mainland China, Tecent QQ, also referred as QQ. All the fansub groups have their own QQ group, which can only be accessed by those who have been successfully selected as prospective fansubbers. I use YTET as an example. Besides the its main QQ group, every team in the group has its own QQ group for members to communicate with each other. The team leaders are in charge of the workshop QQ groups, and the interns are supposed to learn about the subbing work through the remote seminars via QQ. The leaders are responsible for
solving any questions the interns have during the workshop, giving the assignments and informing the results.

After joining the workshop, there are several steps for the newcomers to follow. First, the newly admitted group members contact the team leader through QQ and introduce themselves to the leader, providing information about personal background. My interviews show that this is usually a binding moment for the old and new members. Then, the new members will be asked to study the workshop course-book about the translational code of fansubbing, which can be downloaded from the shared group space.

After the interns have studied the course book and gotten acquainted with the basic knowledge of FTP downloading and the translation format of this group, the team leader will give the intern an account to download the “raw” video and the English subtitles, which can be accessed through the group shared space. These are the materials for their assignment. The interns for the translator position are asked to translate the English subtitles to Chinese, while the interns for other technical job are asked to do things within their job responsibilities. As the members may join the group at separate times, they may have to wait some time before there are new assignments. So every newcomer should keep patience and pay attention to the updated notice and keep in touch with team leader. As for the future translators, with the downloaded resource, translation work will begin. Usually, when the assignment is a regular 43 minutes show, the time for finishing is one day. The intern can ask for a postponement if he/she failed to finish the assignment on time, but three days is the most time allowable for each assignment. One fansubber who has been doing this business for 7 years told me in the interview that the time for finishing the assignment is remarkably shortened since 2 years ago because of the increasingly
fierce competition in this field. Originally, some intern could have one week to finish their first
task, but now, the speed is a very important test item during the internship.

Certainly, different groups attach importance to different things in terms of translation. Some
concentrate more on the speed, while others concentrate more on quality. For example, as a
comparatively “older” fansub group, YTET focuses more on the quality of the subbed show and
pay less attention to the speed competition than other groups. It is the only big fansub group left
that tolerates shows be subbed in 3 days. Meanwhile, YYeTs adapts a different organizational
structure with more minute division of labor, trying to improve efficiency. While this act is
wildly hailed by those who want to see the subbed shows sooner, it also attracts particular
criticism about its sacrifice of quality. Several responses in a thread of posts titled “please
comment on the fansub groups such as YYeTs, Ragbear and so on” illustrate this point. The
thread is in the American TV shows bar of Baidu Post Bar. A fan started a discussion on which
fansub group is better.

tianlai- wolf: YYeTs is fast. YTET and Fengruan are relatively slower, but I prefer quality to
speed. There are so many subbed shows in my hard drive. I am not that eager to see the new
ones. So I support YTET and Fengruan.

Gained weight during vacation: I use YYeTs, because its incredible speed. But I know
Fengruan’s quality is higher.

116.224.39*: YTET’s subtitle has very good quality. I admit that YYeTs is faster, but the quality
is… Anyone who is familiar with this practice knows. There are many bad reviews of YYeTs
on the Internet.

Shuxiran: I like Ragbear and Fengruan. I think YYeTs’ translation is not very good.

It can be drawn from the above posts that fansub groups have different emphasis in terms of
the subtitles, and the regular consumers of these subtitles clearly know about this difference. The
emphasis gradually becomes the characteristic and tradition of the group. Therefore the fansub
groups’ detailed demands for the interns’ assignment might slightly differ from each other
Once an intern finishes the assignment, he/she can submit the subtitles to the team leader (the one who entrusts you with the assignment) or to be uploaded to the group shared space. The standard file name for YTET is “show’s name+number of translated lines+ intern’s name”.

Whether the workshop assignment is passed or not will be discussed and decided by experienced collators and the intern’s team leader. The collators will give their suggestions on the intern’s workshop assignment and the team leader will inform the interns. The result will come out within a couple of days after the assignment is submitted.

Before the results of the first assessment come out, it is not suggested to start the second assignment; collators will point out the mistakes and format problems in the previous assignment for future improvement on translation quality.

Wherever there is a test, people pass and people fail. The interns who failed the test can contact the team leader, learning about the ways to make improvement and wait for the next assignment. In order to assess the interns’ working attitude and their translation competence and guarantee the translation quality, YTET reiterates the translation requirements, the recommended translation methods and assessment standards. In chapter 4, I stated that details matter very much in the fansubbing practice, both for competition and for group’s self-ego. So normally, the collators decide whether someone passes the test or not based on the numbers of error he/she makes in the subtitles. YTET has stipulated the assessment standards to ensure objectiveness and fair play. In YTET’s course book, mentions that a finished assignment with over three places of format errors cannot pass, while a finished assignment with over five translation errors cannot pass. However, a experienced collator named Vee from YTET said in a post that collators may
flexibly decide the number of errors occurred according to the nature of the error and the genre of the TV show being translated.

As I write in previous part of this chapter. The fansub group has its QQ group for members to communicate, while each team of this fansub group has its own smaller QQ group for team members. During the whole process, the group’s QQ group and team’s QQ group are open for all the members to communicate with each other. As the same assignment is given to different interns, the QQ-based workshop provides an open and interactive platform for interns to conduct discussion online, solve translational problems together, share the resources available, compare their finished assignment with each other and make improvements. According to a “high rank” fansubber from Fengruan, this teaches the new fansubbers about the group’s work pattern and how to cooperate with each other. After successfully passing the assignment test, an intern becomes an official fansubber of the group and starts to work on a regular basis.

6.1.4 Summary

Becoming a qualified fansubber requires many things: a comparatively high level of language competency (both in English and in Chinese), knowledge reserve, and most importantly, time dedication. Skills can be learned through series of training workshops and tests. What matters more in fansubbing is the passion and perseverance for the practice. Therefore, every fansub group emphasis on time and effort contribution besides basic skill requirements in selection of fansubbers. Through the internship period, new fansubbers not only learn and improve their subbing skills, but also gain a teamwork spirit and a sense of honor, all of which are very essential in their future work.
Besides these stipulated demands of their ability and quality, the fansubbers are also constrained by ethical and cultural norms of the community. In the next section, I analyze these culturally embedded norms to provide a perspective of the culture form of this new community.

6.2 Ethical Norms of Fansubbing Community
In chapter 2, I claimed that scholars summarized their opinions on translational norms for subtitles in previous studies (Gottlieb 1992, Toury 1995, Karamitroglou, 1998). They claim that these norms greatly impact the subbers’ decision-making process and control their behavior. Besides these norms for translation, there also exist many ethical norms regulate fansubbers’ activities. These ethical norms, as called by network scientists, the “standards”, are the things that hold a network together (Grewal 2008). As I stated in previous chapters, translational norms and constraints are much more flexible for fansubtitles comparing to official subtitles. However, the ethical norms I discuss following are very serious in the community, which have to be obeyed by its members, highlighting the spirit of the community.

6.2.1 Non-Commercial and Fair Use of the Fansubs
From the recruitment post that I quoted in the previous section, it can be seen that one thing has been reiterated again and again, which is joining the group brings no economic income at all. The warning is emphasized by in bold font and red color. Obviously it’s a message that the group doesn’t want anyone to miss. Chinese people tend to be very practical culturally. Normally, altruistic behavior with no economic benefits will be considered weird and incomprehensible. Therefore, anyone who is not familiar with fansubbing community would assume it a paid work. “How do you guys make money from fansubbing” is a question that appears frequently in fansub
groups’ forums. Sometimes there even was inimical people wrote post questioning fansub

group’s motive.

春哥我大爷: Well, if the fansub groups hadn’t made a penny. What do they live on? How do they make money to buy food? Are they eating shit everyday?

Every time this happens, there would be fans and fansubbers jumping out defend fansub groups’ reputation. A former fansubber named Birdietail wrote a long post on October 8th 2010 on the Baidu Post Bar for American TV shows about his life in fansubbing group, emphasizing that fansub groups have no revenue at all, on the contrary, the maintenance of online servers may even cost the groups a fortune. His manner of speaking in the post is serious with some level of anger in it. He criticized those people who slandered fansub groups about making money harshly.

There is an excerpt from his post.

I can promise here that no one in my group ever make a penny from the fansubbing work. Let alone the revenue, sometimes when the Internet speed at home is slow, the fansubber has to go to pay-by–the-hour cyber café to upload the subbed shows. […] Today, I heard that some people saying that fansubbing groups’ online forums make money by selling advertisements. I want to ask these ignorant people, “Do you know how much are these ads? Do you know how much cost those servers and domains?” Many of the fansubbers are paying out of their own pocket to do this job. I wanted to be neutral at the beginning, but when I heard these jerks’ nonsense, I knew I had to fight. Sorry that I lost my temper.

He stated in the post that the main purpose of this action was to clarify the fact to the public that fansub groups definitely don’t make money from what they do. The non-commercial part of fansubbing practice is an important point making fansubbers feel good about themselves. Ariely (2008) claims in his book Predictable Rationality that social norms have great influence on economic behavior. Sometimes people are more willing to do things voluntarily rather than getting paid. In Ariely’s words, “people will work more for a cause than for cash.” The moment
money is involved the practice loses its original integrity. Actually, things that could not and should not be exchanged with money exist in abundance in our daily life. There is a tacky plot that appears repeatedly in TV shows, movies and plays, both in the eastern and western cultural contexts, about offering money to a person, asking him/her to leave his/her loved one. No matter how surprisingly huge this amount and no matter how poor the family is, the person would never accept the deal, and he/she would feel extremely insulted by this effort. Fixing a price on love is a devaluation of the invaluable love. Money is not always recognition of worth. On the contrary, for things in the social world, it is a denial of worth. Therefore it is understandable that most of the fansub groups wouldn’t engage in any kind of profitable activities.

Besides the emphasis on fansubbing as a completely gratuitous act, the fansub groups also state clear that members are banned from using fansubs for commercial motivations. Fengruan states the following paragraph in red bold font in its recruitment post.

All the translation and subbing works that Fengruan has been doing is only for fans of American TV shows and English lovers to communicate. This is a completely not for profit organization with no commercial purpose at all. Every fansubber should obey this rule. Those with impure motive who use the subtitles for money, once found, would be severely punished with no leniency.

The fansub groups not only make the fair use of subbed shows clear to their members, but also they take a lot of effort in educating audiences and other people about this in order to avoid any kind of legal disputes. The protocol is to announce openly about their position on this issue.

Example 6.1

The meaning of Chinese subtitle, my translation:

Subbed by Fengruan with honor. The subtitle is only made for learning and communication. Using for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited.
Some fansubbers also follow a tradition to add a rolling credit (from right to left) on the top of the screen. The content of the credit is as follows.

The source and subtitle of the shows are from the Internet and for learning filmmaking and communication. The copyright belongs to the film company. No organization or individual is allowed to publicly transmit it or put it into commercial use for profit. Any consequences thereby induced shall be upon that organization or individual. The website and the subtitle maker do not take any legal liability. Please delete it within 24 hours after downloading, and if you like the show, please purchase the licensed copy.

-fansubbed by Ragbear (my translation)

Obviously, the insistence on not making profit from the practice actually brings practical merits, among which the biggest is that it lowers the risk of being charged by the copyright owner. Besides these practical merits, the nonprofit cultural tradition also helps to constructing the community. It creates a sense of honor that their devotion is immeasurable, and also helps them to win a lot of esteem and support from fans. Every time a post announcing that an episode is subbed and ready for downloading, whether it is in the fansub groups’ forums, Baidu Post Bar
or on the Chinese twitter platform, there are always fans replying with appreciation and respect. The following tweets are examples of my point, translated by me.

YTET forum: CSI: New York Season 7, episode 17 uploaded. Please see http://sinaurl.cn/h4bLmJ
rabbit: TKS~! For the hard work~
Xiao欣_glee: Thanks!!!
落英_少校是初恋: (*¯`·°`)y Downloading… Many thanks to the lovely fansubbers.
rainysoul: Going to download this immediately. Hugs and kisses.

The fans’ respect to fansubbers gained by fansubbers’ unconditional devotion helps to shape the community’s structure, and then consolidates it. Although the fansubbers don’t get paid for what they do, they receive reputation and fame instead. Fans admire these fansubbers’ language ability, cultural competence, and fansubbers’ selfless contribution makes this admiration become reverence. A fan names Jieke describes this feeling in a post in the American TV show’s Bar.

These fansubbers are volunteers with no revenue at all. They are the real cultural emissaries. They are living a Lei Feng\[^m\].

The superior knowledge and ability, plus the superior moral standard, solidify fansubber’s core position in the fansubbing community. I give a more detailed analysis of this in the next section.

The other benefit of non-commercialization is the flexibility and freedom while doing the practice. Actually, with expansion of media market internationally due to the globalization, China’s copyright system and copyright law are gradually improved in recent years. Big portal websites and video sharing websites start to purchase legal copies of some American TV shows

\[^m\] Lei Feng was a soldier of China. After he died for saving his comrade, he was characterized as a selfless and devoting role model for Chinese people. Until today, he is a cultural icon of symbolized selflessness.
and seek cooperation with fansub groups. This is a good opportunity for fansub groups to make
money. For example, a famous Chinese video-sharing website company named Tudou just
bought the broadcasting right of CBS’s crime drama, *Criminal Minds*. However, when I asked
Chienda, who has been subbing *Criminal Minds* for 6 years from Fengruan, that whether she
would like to work with Tudou and make some profit from what she does, she said “no” with no
hesitation. She clearly told me that she doesn’t want other forces involved in her practice and
influence her style. “I like to comment on things in the parenthesis, “ she said in the interview,
“you know, to create a sense of interaction with the audiences.” In this circumstance, to
cooperate with official media means to give up the unique features that fansubbing has.
Fansubbers would have to obey the translational norms of professional literary translation and
submit to the official ideology. This is what most fansubbers don’t want.

6.2.2 Loyalty to the Fansub Group
In my thesis research, the fansubbing community is defined as the ensemble of fansubbers,
fansub groups and common fans and audiences of American TV shows. A key factor that drives
people into this community is their shared interest in American TV shows, which is called
“group purposes” by Baym (1995). But once they joined, the interactions are not limited to
American TV shows. A member of *Ragbear*’s online forum, zoojo, told me in the interview
about this.

[…] After we got acquainted with each other, we talk about everything. *Ragbear* to me is much
more than just an interactional platform for American and British TV shows. In the
communications, we become more and more familiar with each other. It is a wonderful
experience that a group of people with shared interest influence each other. We gradually
accommodate each other with our words, and become a part of each other’s life.
Originally, people coming to this community with one shared interest, but they develop emotional relationships beyond the sharing interest. It is in accordance with Walther’s (1996) observation that people tend to like those who share “greater similarity” with themselves.

However, this like-minded individuals loving each other phenomenon only occurs within the fansub group. The relational dynamics among people of different fansub groups are completely different. In terms of the general cultural identity, people from all American TV shows fansub groups are belonging to the same community. They speak the same language, share the same interest and submit to the same norms. However, because of the grim competition in this field, there is very much tension among fansub groups. I could compare this status by exploiting an economic metaphor. In neo-classic economics, there are four types of market structure, including perfect competition market, monopolistic competition market, oligopoly market and monopoly market. The field of fansubbing is very similar to monopolistic competition market, with low barrier to join the competition, certain numbers of providers and several big providers that control the market. Unlike in perfect competition market where the providers sell homogeneous products, in monopolistic competition market, products are differentiated but also similar to each other. In the fansubbing community, the translated subtitles are similar and easily inter-replaceable. However, because every fansub group has its own characteristic, every one of them has its own loyal customer base. If one group’s quality and speed were not greatly impaired, regular “customers” would choose the same group’s work according to their habit. In terms of this character, fansubbing field is very much like the detergent market. It is not very difficult and painful for customers to switch providers, but every provider to some extent has their own loyal customers. Two weeks ago, Fengruan’s Chienda, famous for subbing Criminal Minds, was very
busy with her personal affairs and didn’t have enough time for subbing the newly aired episode on time. She wrote a post on the forum, “this is the first time in 3 years that I’m not able to finish subbing the show according to 0day standard. Sorry guys.” Plenty of fans replied this message by saying that they totally understood and would wait for whatever how long it took for Chienda to finish subbing the episode. Then two weeks went by, and no one had heard from Chienda. During this time, other fansub groups all released their subbed work of the show. Still some fans kept waiting for Chienda’s subbed version. A fan named shjtuzh started a thread of posts with the title “Chienda Chienda please come back to earth from Mars.” The posts are as follows.

Shjtuzh: We resist temptation by our superior will power. We are waiting for you wholeheartedly.

等爱的狐狸水水: I’m waiting too. I have not watched the two new episodes yet.

Chien: Hahah… I’ve come back. Episode 15 is released. I’m still working on other ones.

爱鸟的飞机: I love you, Chienda. Kisses.

情迷刑警: Chienda, when will episode 16 be out? I’ve been waiting for this for so long, standing on my tiptoe. My legs are so sore.

Normally, speed matters a lot in fansubbing competition. Especially for popular shows, most of the fans would choose the one that is released earliest. However, there are some people loyal to a certain group or a certain fansubber.

This monopolistic competitive situation leads to tensions among fansub groups. On one hand, they all try to attract as many people as possible to guarantee a high speed for subbing, while on the other hand they all know the importance to retain their features and to make several “star” fansubbers. In both sense, human capital is essential. Therefore, being loyal to only one group is an ethical norm that shall not be violated in the fansubbing community. All fansub groups state clearly in their regulations that working in more than one fansub group at the same time is not
allowed. As different fansub groups compete with each other to provide near real time and quality transcript of the shows, the joining of more than one fansub group at the same time is strictly forbidden, and any fansubber who violates this rule will not be allowed to stay in the group. Also, all the subbing related resources are not allowed to be shared with people outside the group. For example, the close captioned subtitles that recorded with original shows are the resources that every group is competing for. Although “sharing” is the original starting point and core ideology of fansubbing community (Cintas 2005), the competition among groups makes the spirit of “sharing” limited with a group.

Although this is not a written rule, based on my observation and interviews, most of the fansubbers hold unfriendly attitude toward fansubbers from other groups. The tension among groups creates a tension among individuals from inhospitable groups. If personal relations between people from different groups were built up, the obvious conflict of interest would have jeopardized the practice\textsuperscript{n}. Certainly, this tension may not exist forever thanks to the ever-developing social network system in China. It is more and more difficult to stay isolated anyway.

Also because of the competition, tension and so-caused collective sense of honor, plagiarism is extremely prohibited in this community. Fansub groups value the originality of their translation though they work for free and share their work for free. As I mentioned in chapter 4, they will attribute their work to the fansubbers at the beginning of a show by indicating their net id. If different fansub groups work on the same show, they will avoid copying from each other and will launch a different translation version.

\textsuperscript{n} There is one thing that I need to mention here. Since Weibo, the Chinese twitter platform, became popular in 2009, most fansub groups are now on Weibo and start to have some tentative interactions on the platform. However these interactions are still remaining pretty marginal and only among groups not individuals, in general, it is not ethical for fansubbers in the community having personal relationships with fansubbers from other groups.
6.2.3 Building Community Respect

As a community of practice, the fansubbing community is organized around the core practice—subbing, but it is overlapping with the community of interest -- fandom of American TV shows. While the organization of fansub groups getting sophisticated everyday and the services are more and more various, it seems that the fandom feature of community is fading. With fansub group like YYeTs who has expanded its subbing service to films, Japanese drama and university open courses, it makes me think that current fansubbing in China is undergoing a transition from fandom-oriented to translation-oriented, comparing to traditional fansubbings. However, ultimately the practice was born because of the increasing need for cross-cultural multimedia experiences in fan communities, love and passion for American TV shows still is very important in this community. Certainly there are people joining the group because of their ambition to learn English, but of people I interviewed, all of them are fans of American TV shows before they became fansubbers. One of the leaders of Ragbear’s translation team, Bing gan (meaning ‘biscuit’ in Chinese), said, “My reason for joining is really simple. All people in my dorm including me are fans of Gossip Girls, and Ragbear’s subbed version is really good.”

When asked whether group members are more interested in shows or more interested in translation, Fengruan’s Chien’s answer in the interview also proves my point.

I haven’t investigated about this, but I think we definitely love the shows more. It was because of the shows that we gathered together. Our common interest made us a family.

Therefore, most fansub groups allocate the translation tasks based on fansubbers’ preference on shows. Since the definition of fansub is the fan-translated subtitles of foreign media products into a language other than that of the original, the shows should be subbed by fans. It is not
ethically allowed in this community to translate without watching the original show. Moreover as
the subtitles are an integral part of the show itself, understanding the context is extremely
essential in producing a nice work. Fansubbing is a very tedious work, as the fansubbers have to
watch the show repeatedly during translating and proofreading. Translating without watching the
original show reflects the fansubbers’ bad working attitude and will probably result in errors or
confusion. Thus, it is strictly prohibited.

In the readership and authorship section (see chapter 4.5.2), I mentioned the phenomenon of
fansubbers being worshiped by fans in the community. When Internet first went into daily lives,
people were surprised by the brand new way of communication and predicted that it would affect
the existing social structure. Without distance limitations, space boundaries and cues about social
status, there seemed to be no center or hierarchy on the Internet. Originally marginalized people
may have the same speech rights as the powerful ones in the real life. Many scholars stated the
more equal nature of CMC thanks to anonymity and easy accessibility (Keisler et al. 1984) and
believed that the emergence of the Internet, ending information monopolies might lead to the
eventually formation of the free equal public sphere. In my opinion, when speaking of the
Internet as a whole, this new more equally distribution of rights may exist and where however, in
terms of online communities of interest where clear boundaries do exist, there are always centers,
peripheries and inequalities in the communities. Having noticed the stratification of online
communities, a number of scholars have tried to classify online communities and to understand
how they structured. The model that has been borrowed the most times into explaining this issue
is a five-phase cycle brought up by Lave and Wenger (1991) to illustrate how a new comer gets
incorporated into a community of practice (CoP). The cycle is as follows.
• Peripheral (i.e. Lurker) – An outside, unstructured participation
• Inbound (i.e. Novice) – Newcomer is invested in the community and heading towards full participation
• Insider (i.e. Regular) – Fully committed community participant
• Boundary (i.e. Leader) – A leader, sustains membership participation and brokers interactions
• Outbound (i.e. Elder) – Process of leaving the community due to new relationships, new positions, new outlooks

It can be drawn from this model that blending into a community requires certain degree of commitment and participation. Contribution is the most important thing to be on a higher level in the community. Since fansubbers are devoting plenty of time and effort and translating shows voluntarily, it is very natural for the consumers of the shows to be gracious and thankful to the fansubbers. With the development of the practice and the community, it became a tradition for fans to compliment and respect fansubbers. In the fansubbing community’s sociolect, fansubbers are referred by the fans as *da shen*, meaning ‘god’. The followings are the fans’ posts in the forum, proving my point.

  bombX: The people I admire the most are the *da shen* of the fansub groups.
  Louluo81120: Without all the *da shen* of the fansub groups, how can ordinary people like us live?
  Scorpio: Fansubbing *da shen*, please keep up the good work and enrich our lives. Thanks.

Sometimes when famous fansubbers post something in the forums or in the Baidu Post Bar, fans would come out and show their respect. The protocol is to reply fansubber’s post with the opening sentence as “Falling down and worshiping *da shen*.”

Meanwhile the appreciation motivates fansubbers’ hard work and devotion. In real world organizations, a formal leading role and in-role leadership behavior creates further administrative competence and psychological role identity, which encourages further commitment to the group.
and more role activity (Piliavin & Callero, 1991). Prior studies of online groups suggest that people often participate as a way to gain access to otherwise obscure or inaccessible information that is relevant to their work, hobbies, health, and other topics in which they are personally interested (Galegher, Sproull, & Kiesler, 1998). However, as for the opinion leaders who usually provide more information than receive, the stronger motivation comes from the social benefits and psychological payoffs they gain as the leader of the community. Many fansubbers admitted in the interviews that the love and appreciation from fans were their biggest impetus for them to do this laborious job, which creates a sense of identity and sense of accomplishment.

The passion for American TV shows and fans’ respect for fansubbers are the cornerstones, also known as the “standards”, of the community, maintaining the stability and creating a virtuous circle of interactions. In the next section, I discuss the cultural identity of the members in the fansubbing community, trying to analyze their motivations to join in and the impact of their for being in the community.

6.3 Members’ Cultural Identity
The Fansubbing online community has been created for one important reason, the same as for other online fandom: gathering of people who love American TV shows. Due to China’s unique situation where importing foreign media products is strictly regulated, fans shoulder the responsibility to introduce, improve and promote the shows, removing language barriers and bridging cultural distance. With this practice, fansubbers acquire a richer identity in comparison to the general fans. This community is about cultural learning. Therefore, the value of the cultural similarities and cultural growing within this community are essential attributes for the community building.
6.3.1 Inter Group Structure

The early fans of American shows share the recorded videos of American shows on the Internet with other fellow fans after new episodes are aired in the United States. Later on fans became unsatisfied with just sharing “raw” videos without Chinese subtitles. When American TV shows first attracted the Chinese audiences, these never-seen entertainment products were culturally distant to most of the Chinese. Making and sharing subbed shows not only attracts more people into this community, but also enriches and enhances fans’ viewing experience. According to my survey results, of 237 respondents, 93.2% agree that the fansubtitles substantially aided their understanding [of] American TV shows. Originally, fansubbing was a loose and casual practice that carried out by general fans occasionally. However, with the development of fansubbing, the dividing line between fansubbers and other fans is getting more and more clear. Then fansub groups emerged, since when the fansubbing community is no longer divided according to shows, or genre of shows, but based on fansub groups.

It is true that the fansubbing community has two clear hierarchies, with one being fansubbers and the other being general fans. In previous section of this chapter, I argue that loyalty to one particular group is an ethical norm for fansubbers that are not allowed to be violated. However, audiences, also known as the general fans, are entitled to be members of multiple groups’ online forums and to choose subbed shows based on their “brand” preference, which makes the structure of this community slightly different from normal hierarchical online communities. The following chart illustrates the general structure of fansubbing community.
Figure 6.2  Structure chart of fansubbing community

From the above chart, we can see that inside the fansubbing community there are fansub groups who prefer to hang separately rather than together and a sizable audience that connects the groups together. Meanwhile, the governmental force exists as an external force pressuring the entire community from upside. In China’s unique media market situation, with the particular structure, the community is endowed with the following dichotomous characteristics: animosity and alliance, hierarchy and family, and national and international. I discuss them in turn as follows.

6.3.2 Animosity and Alliance

In my discussion of the tension among different fansub groups, I raised the point that the fansubbing field is similar to a monopolistic competition market, so that joining and working for more than one fansub group is strictly forbidden. Moreover, since individual loyalty is highly valued in this community, fansubbers usually don’t socialize with fansubbers from other groups.
on personal bases. To avoid a conflict of interest, fansubbers are supposed to be indifferent if not hostile to fansubbers outside their own group. When asked “since you are fans of the same thing, do you have friends in other major groups?”, Tianyi from YYeTs said without hesitation:

No. Do you know what is “never contact with each other”? The relationships among fansub groups are like this. Beside the isolation, we frequently fight and argue at Verycd\(^o\) ferociously accusing others plagiarizing. Actually, it’s kind of childish. We understand that sometimes selecting a particular fansub group’s work is just a our fans habit. People tend to keep watching the same fansub group’s work all along, because they are used to its characteristics. Within the group, all members are friends and comrades. However, outside the group, people are enemies.

Actually, verbal fights and arguments mentioned in the interview occur regularly in fansub groups’ forums, American TV shows fan sites, video sharing and downloading sites. Every fansub group thinks itself is unique and better than the others. According some fansubbers, hating people from other groups is a good thing for boosting the morale. In the interview, Tianyi admitted the childishness of fansub groups slandering each other, but it seems that there is a tradition for them to do so. Also all fansub groups like to emphasize their uniqueness and distinction from others, both in terms of fansubbing style and in terms of community characteristics. Sometimes, even a small relevant topic appearing in fansubbing cyber places would incur a war among fansubbers. An anonymous person started a thread in Baidu Post Bar with the topic, “Why do you like to go to YYeTs for fansubs?”, which along with its following replies of angry fansubbers are good examples of my point.

221.239.49: I just don’t get why there are people who like YYeTs. I cannot find anything there. After this bomb had been dropped, bombX, a member of YYeTs, stepped out and fought back, “It is not necessary for you to disguise your true identity and slander YYeTs like this. It’s so

\(^o\) Verycd is a Chinese website that shares files via eD2k links. It is usually used by fansub groups for uploading subbed shows.
unsportsmanlike. Then another YYeTs member piled on this, and he/she was not as restraining as bombX.

“Do you know how fast YYeTs in translating shows? Do you know how many shows YYeTs has been subbing while other fansub groups don’t do? How many people are using YYeTs’ subtitles to study English? You don’t know a shit about YYeTs. So please shut up and stop being an ignorant jerk.”

Just after this post, a member of YTET wrote: “I admit being bilingual having some merits, but YTET sure has better translation quality.”

Although the one who started the fight didn’t identify himself/herself, people from YYeTs clearly believed it is someone from other fansub groups. In the defense speech of YYeTs’ work, two things are particularly emphasized, its speed and its bilingual subtitles, both of which are YYeTs is famous for. Meanwhile, YTET, who does not have to be involved in this argument, participated in the discussion only to claim YTET’s specialty in artistic translation. Believing in the specialties helps to feel good about oneself and to belittle opponents, in a word, to construct members’ identity. Research revealing that being categorized, on a minimal or trivia basis, causes people to discriminate in favor of their own group (Tajfel et al. 1971). Fight like this happens really often, so sometimes fans are annoyed about this. In the above quoted thread, a fan replied with the following paragraph, which verifies my point.

“I would say that each group has its own merit. I like them all. I am extremely irritated about thread like this. It’s cutthroat competition. Let fans choose what they like by themselves. Whoever wrote started this thread wanted to tarnish the image of YYeTs deliberately, but I’ve seen YYeTs’ people slandering other fansub groups maliciously. Why bother to do all of these?”

However, despite that everyone knows these are childish arguments, things like this go on as usual, which confirms Hirsch’s (1986) claim that “members of a community must cohere around
something – including some set of beliefs – and a common hatred or fear of the outsider or the ‘enemy’ is just as likely as anything else to lie at the core of a community’s ideology”.

After all the above analysis, it may seem a little bit disharmonious and full of smoke of gunpowder inside the fansubbing community. What fansubbing community members love, meaning their shared interest, clearly makes them compete and fight with each other. However, there is something uniting them together – their common “enemy”. When the tension among groups consolidates the groups, the fear of government control is one of the things that bring all fansub groups together. Social identity theory suggests that identifying an “enemy” can be a strong force that unites ingroups against outgroups (Korostelina 2007). It is illustrated in the community structure chart, Chinese government serves as an external force that press the community together. As I explained before, Chinese policy makers’ attitude toward fansubbing is in accordance with its general Internet policy – “push and control” (Zhang 2006). Although the government doesn’t completely forbid the fansubbing practice, the control over never stops and even gets stricter. The fear of governmental censorship on the community is one thing that brings fansub together the groups that usually hate each other. According to my participant observation in the fansubbing cyber places, it is not easy to identify interactions between groups, or even friendly communications among fansubbers from different groups. But every time when a new policy is announced or a new governmental action is started, people ignore the boundaries among groups, unite in forums and discuss for solutions. In a thread named “American TV shows are disappearing. I’m sad” in Baidu Post Bar, there are posts that verify my argument.

1999online_game: we are encircled, pursued, obstructed and intercepted. Soon there will be no American TV show in China. I’m sad.
SuperBrazilFan: Tragedy~
Deleste: No worry. Can they really prevent us from subbing and watching? It is not that difficult to climb over the “wall”.
Qianxiao: It doesn’t matter. Cultural defense exists everywhere. The real problem is how do we face this serious situation. At least we still can go to fansub groups’ online forums to find things we want.
Coolesting: We’ll find our way out. Using inappropriate analogies, we are like the sex industry and gang community. No matter how much the authority wants to eliminate us, they just can’t.
WTEMNW: Calm down guys. Situation is not really that bad. Even if one day fansub groups are banned in China, we can always move the server abroad. YYeTs already did this. Other groups can do that too.

We can see from the above interaction that under pressure, people from different group identify themselves as the same community. They constantly use “we” to address members of the whole fansubbing community. Moreover, instead of regular fighting, they comfort each other and give each other ideas. Someone from YYeTs even suggests other groups also move their servers abroad to survive. Normally, they hate each other, but facing the same enemy they are trying to save each other. The community identity gains priority over the group’s identity.

6.3.3 Hierarchy and Family
By observing the practices of fansubbing community, I noticed the existence of a clear hierarchical gap between fansubbers and general fans. Certainly, different groups attach importance to different things in terms of translation. Some concentrate more on the speed, while others concentrate more on quality. For example, as a comparatively “older” fansub group, YTET focuses more on the quality of the subbed show and pay less attention to the speed competition than other groups. It is the only big fansub group left that tolerates shows be subbed in 3 days. Meanwhile, YYeTs adapts a different organizational structure with more minute division of labor, trying to improve efficiency. While this act is wildly hailed by those who want to see the subbed
shows sooner, it also attracts particular criticism about its sacrifice of quality. Several responses in a thread of posts titled “please comment on the fansub groups such as YYeTs, Ragbear and so on” illustrate this point. The thread is in the American TV shows bar of Baidu Post Bar. A fan started a discussion on which fansub group is better.

tianlai- wolf: YYeTs is fast. YTET and Fengruan are relatively slower, but I prefer quality to speed. There are so many subbed shows in my hard drive. I am not that eager to see the new ones. So I support YTET and Fengruan.

Gained weight during vacation: I use YYeTs, because its incredible speed. But I know Fengruan’s quality is higher.

116.224.39*: YTET’s subtitle has very good quality. I admit that YYETS is faster, but the quality is... Anyone who is familiar with this practice knows. There are many bad reviews of YYeTs on the Internet.

Shuxiran: I like Ragbear and Fengruan. I think YYeTs’ translation is not very good.

It can be drawn from the above posts that fansub groups have different emphasis in terms of the subtitles, and the regular consumers of these subtitles clearly know about this difference. The emphasis gradually becomes the characteristic and tradition of the group. Therefore the fansub groups’ detailed demands for the interns’ assignment might slightly differ from each other. The norm of “respecting fansubbers” discussed in 6.3.3 is not entirely conventional. Fansubbers do have higher ranks in groups’ online forums. For each work they have done, they are rewarded with virtual credits. With the credits accumulating, their ranks rise. With higher ranks, people are endowed with bigger power. There are two major benefits for being a fansubber with the higher status in the community.

First, in groups’ forums, fansubbers usually attract more attention, more support and more trust. The discourses generated by senior fansubbers with a high rank always draw more attention than the ones generated by common fans in the community, which means fansubbers are more influential. Hundreds of thousands of new posts appear in the bar every day. No one is
able to read all of them, let alone to reply. Every time, a famous fansubber post something, there are many fans of him/her in the community not only read the post, but also reply to it. The Internet is considered to be a place that everyone can voice their opinions. Reduced social cues are seen to lead to correspondingly reduced social constraint and a reduced impact of social norms. The results include greater equality of participation (Siegel et al., 1986) or, in other words, reduction in status differentials (Dubrovsky et al., 1991).

However, in the online community, there is no equal power of speech. Whenever there is a conflict or dispute among members, fansubbers always get more support from the fans. The following post shows how fans defend fansubbers against some accusations.

I have to say something to those who criticize fansub groups. The fansubbers are selfless volunteers who work for no economic gain. If you think you are better, please contribute first. Your criticizing fansubbers is like scolding the chef after having finished the meal. It’s just unethical. So shut your mouth up.

The anonymous and disinhibiting characteristic of the Internet is believed to widely lead to aggressive and hostile interactions (O’Sullivan & Flanagin, 2003). However, it is never a good idea to challenge or attack the fansubbers, since majority of group members are always on their side.

The second hierarchical cue among fansubbers and fans is what MacDonald (1998) calls the “hierarchy of access”. The fansubbers have access to information and services that common fans don’t have. Fansubbers have the password of the group’s ftp server where large amounts of American TV shows are stored. This benefit is one of the reasons that drive people to participate in fansubbing practice. During the interviews, most of the fansubbers admit that this is a good
pay back for their hard work. The hierarchy of access is also recognized by other members in the online community. It is quite often that general fans express envy regarding this privilege.

The hierarchical structure does not necessarily lead to hierarchical interactions and hierarchical relationships. “Respecting fansubbers” is not a rule set by fansubbers. Actually, it is not like in the real world where the superior has the power to punish the inferior economically or organizationally, fansubbers don’t have actual controlling power over the lower level members of this community. Instead, the respecting tradition is created by fans who both make up the rules and obey them. As for the relationship among members, based on my observation and interviews, members develop close personal relationships in which they perceive others as part of their close social networks. Many fansubbers and general fans describe the online community as family-like and perceive the closeness of the other members as familial relations.

The following paragraph written by one of the founders of Ragbear I intercepted from Ragbear’s three-year anniversary electronic magazine supports this point.

It was in 2007. Your father and me (also thanks to some aunts and uncles) decided to have a baby. Finally, after long-time thinking and organizing, you, Ragbear, were born in April 21st 2007. […] Because you father and I were in different cities, most of time it was your aunts and uncles who looked after you, giving your food and wiping your drool. […] Days fly by, and you find out that more and more people are around you. There is so much happiness to share everyday, along which you and every one of the people around you become a family that no one can separate. Thank you everyone for your love, passion and devotion in the passed days. Without you, there would have been no Ragbear.

In the above article, the author identifies herself as the mother of the group, and other people as the group’s aunts and uncles, which indicates that they are like brothers and sisters. To her, every member joining this group is like “a family that no one can separate”. From the article, the close relationships of the members and the perceptions of their relationships of being family-like
within the community are clear. Some people are even attracted to join the community because of the family-like environment. Also in the electronic magazine I mentioned above, there is an article named *Family*, written by Cofelink that illustrates this point.

Before I joining the group, one day I said to Tuanzi on QQ, “I want a home.” Tuanzi replied, “Come and join Ragbear.” Then I joined and found my family here.

Members are conscious about this family-like environment, and they are really proud of it. This close social relationship creates a sense of belonging, which is very important in gluing members together and keeping them loyal. Members of the fansubbing community often refer to other people as brother, sister, or other terms normally reserved for relatives to maintain the family feeling. This community feature is in accordance with Chinese cultural tradition, whose system of address is deeply rooted in a social system that “attaches great significance to kinship” (Lee-Wong 1994).

As an intercultural community, the relationship within the group shows both Chinese and American cultural elements. In the next section, I discuss how these people feel about China and America as nations.

6.3.4 The National and International
The issue of belonging and membership is extended further to the realm of the national, prompted by the fact that the focus of fansubbing groups lays upon the inter-cultural exchange of TV shows. TV has long been seen as a socializing agent in the academia. Therefore, it always comes as the first option to study media’s socialization effect. The United States is the biggest cultural products exporter in the world. One of the central themes of U.S. foreign policy since World War II has been to expand a network of global trade. The entertainment industry has long
been important to this strategy, but has gained even more importance in recent years (Wan and Kraus 2002). It helps the economy and self-promotion through media. Prior studies show that exposure to American TV shows does influence people’s beliefs and attitude toward America (Weimann 1984, Tan et al. 1986; Tan et al. 1997; Tan et al. 2003). My observation in the fansubbing community to some extent fit this rule. Members of this community are more likely to like and to be attracted toward American life style. The following post with the name “After watching so many American TV shows, do you start to envy American life” in Baidu Post Bar written by a regular American TV show watcher illustrates my points very well.

Myshow1988: large lawn in front of house, swimming pool, forest nearby, a bar in 15 minutes of driving distance… No confliction of interest, no continuous sabotaging of each other… Everyone has his/her own life. American life rocks. Don’t you think so?

Based on the post, it is obvious that audiences are attracted to the comparatively wealthier and easier American life presented in American TV shows. My survey result shows that among 235 respondents, 74% of them haven’t been to America. These shows, which are designed to communicate American’s value and promote its image, are a major source for their perception of America. It is understandable that heavy consumer of American TV shows are more likely to have better beliefs about America. In my survey, I asked people to locate America on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 as poor and 5 as affluent. The results show that people who identify themselves as regular American TV show watchers are more likely to think of America as an affluent country (mean=4.48) than people who watch American TV shows occasionally (mean=3.82, t=11.733, p< .001). This supports Weimann’s (1984) finding that Israeli adolescents and undergraduates who watched a great deal of US television were likely to overestimate the rates of wealth and income in America. Sometimes the love for American TV shows may expand to other fields of
American pop culture. The following posts in the American TV shows bar of Baidu Post Bar comment on this issue.

Serena_Heat: I don’t know since when I started to love America. Besides its TV programs, I also a fan of its movies, music and almost everything. Does anyone here have the same feeling as me?

Xuanfengling: Me, me, me. You are my soul mate. I like American TV shows and American movies. After watching the TV shows, I started to learn many things about American culture and values. It is the country that I would like to visit the most. I hope that I could go to America to study.

IamBarbie: I love American TV shows, pop music and movies, like you.

Agent_crime: I am a fan of NBA and electronic games, and don’t let me start to talk about my love of its TV shows and movies.

Through the massive consumption of American TV shows, people develop a feeling of familiarity with America, despite the fact that most of them have never been there.

While the admiration of the United States is ubiquitous in the fansubbing community, it is still not acceptable to disparage China in the discussions. With the development of online technology, cyber nationalism emerged and has been going through rapid growth in China (Wu 2006). Chinese netizens, especially young netizens, use the Internet as communication center for expressing patriotism and political views. Although the fansubbing community is oriented towards the American culture, the members, - the majority of whom are young Chinese netizens - are not comfortable with over fawning on foreign things and looking down on China. After a person left a message in the forum, saying that he/she would rather be a poor worker in America than a normal person in China, many people replied and criticized him.

Xiriluoyan: There should have been many people that hate you for saying this. If you are not comfortable with this, please leave the community. Actually most of people here do love America. So do I. I am planning to go to America for further education and maybe get a green card. But I also love my birth country deeply. I want to ask you, even if your mother were really ugly, are you ethically allowed to not love her?
Serena Heat: **Dude, everybody here loves America, but it doesn’t mean that you could disparage your own country.** If one day you had gone to America, you still represent China. I don’t think the Americans would think highly of a person who doesn’t have nationalistic pride at all.

Dr_Gay: America is not heaven, and China is not hell. The America in American TV shows is not the real America. The problem is not where you are, but is what your mindset is.

From the above posts, we can see that it is acceptable for members to admire America, but at the same time they are demanded to respect Chinese heritage. This is in accordance with Chinese cyber cultural environment, where nationalism is one of the dominant values. Also, it is because the community is about American culture, the members seem to be more cautious about this issue. When I asked Fengruan’s Chien about her impression about America, she used a very distant tone and said to me seriously, “I am not interested in politics. As for me, every state apparatus works in a largely identical way. America is good, and so is China.”

Being patriotic is considered “politically correct” in the fansubbing community, especially when there is a side to choose. In 2008, when the last episodes of the final season of American TV show Boston Legal was aired, fansubbers found out that they were full of hostile attacks of Chinese human rights issues and discrimination of China. In order to protest, all the fansub groups agreed on not translating these two episodes and made an announcement suggesting fans not watching them. This happened for the first time in the fansubbing history. During the interviews, several fansubbers brought up about this incident and used it as an example for future reference, indicating that this is a very good solution for similar situations.

### 6.4 Summary

This chapter examines the cultural identity construction and community building within the fansubbing field. The finding shows that the two levels community, with one being the
fansubbers in quite a few fansub groups and the other being general fans, represents characteristics from both the American cultural elements embedded in the shows and the local host Chinese culture in terms of community inner structure, members’ relationship and communication pattern, and cultural values.

Fansubbers are selected based on several things, including both skill qualifications and time commitment and personality qualifications, such as loyalty, integrity and perseverance. Facing the fierce competition in the field, the tension among fansub groups always exists if it is not getting bigger. This tension only disappears once in a while when the government puts pressure and control over the fansubbing community as a whole, which accords with social identity theory that an outside crisis may help to solidify a previously relatively fractured community. With more responsibility comes more power. Fansubbers are on a higher level of the hierarchy of the community with much respect and support from general fans, and the access to more information. However, with all the hierarchical cues, members in this community still develop a family-like intimate relationship with each other, which is probably influenced by Chinese cultural tradition that emphasizes kinship in human communications. As a unique fan community of American culture products, this fansubbing community members are American culture admirers, and they are influenced by the cultural values embedded in the shows they have been subbing and watching, which contributes to the international part of their identity construction. On the other hand, due to the growing cyber nationalism in China, the members show patriotism when there is an ideological confliction whether it is in the shows or in daily community interactions.
In the next chapter, the conclusion, I summarize the conclusions I get from analyzing the textual fansubtitles and the community activities. The key research question is answered. And also, I state the limitation of this thesis study and provide thoughts on future research.

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*International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 8.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS

In today’s age of mass communication, people are able to access the latest multi-media text across cultures easily. The popularization of English as a lingua franca and the process of globalization do not decrease the significance of translation and subbing of foreign media products as an important way of communication, cultural integration and self-expression.

In this thesis, I provide a detailed account of the American TV shows fansubbing in China, including the operation of the subbing practice, the characteristics of fansub translation and the community construction of fansubbers, which demonstrates that this particular cyber community reflects and contributes to the process of globalization which in turn help to influence and precipitate China’s cultural and even political reform. Through a longitudinal participant observation in the community and my experience in watching the fansubbed shows, I analyze the textual characteristics of fansubtitles of American TV shows, attributing its difference from traditional AVT translation and its interculturality catering to the demand of the members of the community. Along the way, I investigate the intercultural features of fansubbing community, which shows that the fansubbing practice that bridges and reflects both American and Chinese cultures shapes its members’ identities construction, in terms of their language, sense of humor, and national and international personalities.

As far as language translation is concerned, fansubbing shares some similarities with traditional audio-visual translation on the most basic level. However, with the input from fan culture, cyber culture and both Chinese and American culture, fansubbing practice establishes a system of translational norm and presents series of translation phenomena that challenge traditional AVT and literary translation standards and requirements. As actual products from the community’s practice, fansubtitles are more interactive, with annotations, comments and
speeches directly addressing the audiences those who are not allowed in formal translation, which successfully provide cultural learning resources, bring close the member audiences and create a sense of community.

My study shows that people are attracted to this community because of three major reasons: knowledge pursuits, entertainment quests and sense of belonging and uniqueness. According to my survey result, 95.8% of respondents have watched fansubbed American TV shows, while only 24.9% of them claim they can’t understand the shows at all without subtitles. And with even stricter governmental regulation on fansubbed shows’ distribution channels inside Chinese Internet “Great wall”, finding “raw” shows on foreign websites without subtitles is relatively easier comparing to finding subbed ones. Still there are many people who are able to, as the fansubbers would call it, “eat the raw meat”, meaning “watching shows without fansubs” choose to watch fansubbed shows. One of the major reasons for people to join this online community is information and knowledge pursuit, since Internet is an information provider for its users (Rheingold, 1993; Rafaeli and LaRose, 1993; Wellman and Gulia M., 1999; Kollock, 1999). The annotations of special language use and cultural references fulfill members’ need for knowledge and information about American culture. Meanwhile, passing on the knowledge to members in the community reassures fansubbers’ identity as culture disseminators, which brings them the psychological payoff for being higher in the hierarchy of knowledge and the actual respect from other members.

The study confirms that another primary reason for American TV shows fans to become members of fansubbing community is to express their interest in the shows and to share the fascination with others who also have the same interest. Fansubbers’ adding comments, prefaces
and postscripts increases the interactivity of the fansubtitles and creates a sense communication with the audiences in front of the screens, which satisfies fans’ desire to discuss their interest with others. All of these traditionally prohibited extra information in subtitles work perfectly with a clear like-minded audience. The interculturality contained in the fansubtitles produces a special kind of humor that can be appreciated only by people with both Chinese and American cultural competence. These insider jokes also serve as a power to bind members together, generating a sense of sharing understanding. Sometimes this information takes a guidance role in creating a sense of shared views, opinions and historical loyalty to the show that in some level consolidates the whole community.

Besides the textual fansubtitles, my analysis reveals that intercultural elements are embedded in other aspect of fansubbing practice. Members in the fansubbing community are intercultural people. Their behaviors and mentalities reflect their culture with both eastern and western elements.

Although the ‘individualism vs. collectivism’ dichotomy seems a little outdated, I argue that it is still central in analyzing a culture. Current fansubbers’ self-empowered and self-commissioned practice and their diverse translation skills make the role of the translator very visible. Individualism is expressed overtly by becoming a celebrity fansubber. Meanwhile, fansubbing is a teamwork that requires full cooperation and mutual accommodation. Facing the cutthroat competition in the field, the community puts a great emphasis on loyalty and a sense of group honor. If the emphasis on group’s internal solidarity and group’s honor proves the collectivism in the community value, each group also likes to insist on its uniqueness and its differences from other groups. The “no-sharing” principle and the tension among fansub groups

124
indicate the existence of individualism at another level. Only when the governmental pressure outside the community is getting bigger, the community’s interest gains priority, and the separate groups would unite, cooperate and accommodate. All of the above evidence shows that the value choice in the fansubbing community has both individualist and collectivistic emphasis. This is consistent with my survey results. When respondents are asked to choose on a 1 to 5 scale about whether individualistic or collectivistic interest is more important, the category chosen most often is “the equal important” (40%).

Both reflecting and contributing to the cyber-movements in China, the fansubbing community builds up a hierarchy based on meritocracy. In the environment where everyone has equal shot in displaying meritocracy of talent, the fansubbers have a higher status in the community because they are voluntary providers of knowledge and fun. Fansubbers own the control of administration, the level of knowledge and the access to insider information and resources. Because of fansubbers’ excellence, fans spontaneously show respect and appreciation for fansubbers, which develops to be a tradition in the community. Although the hierarchical gap exists, members in the community develop family-like relationships, which contain much intimacy and equality in their daily interactions and communications. The relationships within fansub groups display both meritocracy based hierarchy and family-like equality. This new type of cyber society to some extent prompts and accords the social change and political culture alteration in China. With China’s economic reform and Internet’s increasing importance in people’s life, fansubbing community serves as a pioneering epitome of social formation and ideological trend in China.
Nurtured by elements from both cultures, the new unique fansubbing culture recognizes the advancement of the United States and its cultural values, but still respect Chinese cultural heritage. It is not standing in the middle of a spectrum with two extremes, but it rather integrates of the two. My study recognizes this exquisite product of the fansubbing culture: they unconsciously choose a perfectly intercultural way to introduce an American cultural meme into China. Or, following Dennett (1995) and Blackmore (1999), I could say that the meme chose the best way to live and reproduce in a new frame. While doing the fansubbing, the fansubbers do not fawn foreign culture and head to the road of wholesale westernization. Neither do they alter all culturally unfamiliar items and “chinize” the entire cultural text of the American TV shows. They establish a new culture with a new standard of language that can be understood and appreciated only the people who are familiar with both Chinese and American culture; who are, in a word, bi-cultural. By doing that, the construction of a new community is fulfilled, and the completely web-based efforts illustrate how the Internet contributes the forces of globalization, which then hasten back to influence a specific culture. The fansubbing cyber culture analyzed in this thesis offers an egress for globalization. In both academia and public opinion, globalization is considered as a double-edged sword. While it is often celebrated as a great progress of individual freedom with the right to choose life-styles based on preference, globalization also induces a lot of criticism, complaining that it helps privileged countries set up global standards according to their own. Especially the United States, critics of globalization have been arguing that globalization would ultimately lead to an “Americanized” way of life (Grewal 2008). However, the fansubbing practice proves that globalization may not lead to the destruction of cultural diversity. On contrary, the interaction between cultures may increase cultural diversity.
by creating new culture type. Furthermore, fansubbing practice changes Chinese culture by seeping through the “great cyber wall” of China imposed by the government, and it may further accelerate China’s social and political reform.

7.1 Limitations and Opportunities: Recommendations for the Future
While this study definitely demonstrates the new values of the community under scrutiny, I can see the ways to extend this research both in terms of data completion and fansub groups’ differentiation.

First, since I am not a practicing fansubber, all details about fansubbing practice provided in the thesis come from other people. Despite my familiarity with written and unwritten rules of this community as being a peripheral member of fansubbing community for several years, being a fansubber, the core member of this community, could have gained much more useful information and insight into this issue. Moreover, although fansubbers gladly share subbed work with the general audience, they are rather a group closed to outsiders, unwilling to reveal their internal affairs. They have to remain low profile to avoid governmental intervening and to keep a sense of mystery to the public. Based on my interviewing experience with fansubbers and my observation of regular online interactions in my fieldsites, fansubbers tend to have some reservations. For future study, the first-hand data may be invaluable.

Second, with the development of the fansubbing practice, fansub groups are beginning to differentiate, with established old brands like YTET choosing to keep the tradition and simplicity of the practice, while new rising ones like YYeTs trying to expand to Japanese drama and university courses subbing, and even commercial translation. Recently YYeTs started to cooperate with video-sharing sites with broadcasting right and sub shows for money, which will
completely change the group’s operation and cultural atmosphere. Thus a future comparative
study of fansub groups of different sizes, geographic distribution and economic operation may
provide more insight on the continuation of community building.

Third, copyright issue involved in the fansubbing practice has always been a sensitive topic.
Actually, the discussion about fan distribution of unauthorized texts never stops, especially in the
realm of Internet regulation and intellectual property law. However, due to the sensitivity,
fansubbers were reluctant to talk about it. Therefore, I decided to avoid discussing it in this thesis
in order to protect the community. If allowed, further investigation about the members’
perception of copyright and how this perception impact on the community’s sense of morality
and sense of honor would bring deeper understanding of the fansubber’s identity construction
and cultural beliefs.

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133


