Fansubbing in China – With Reference to the Fansubbing Group *YYeTs*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines fansubbing as a social phenomenon in the complex socio-political context of China. With reference to the fansubbing group *YYeTs*, the discussion will focus on both textual and extra-textual levels of Chinese fansubbing in order to explore how it strives to introduce contemporary foreign audiovisual products into the Chinese context. The emerging discussion will draw briefly on the persistent development of fansubbing in China in spite of repression by the government. It will explore the inner structure of YYeTs in terms of the distribution of labour among members of the group and its methods to recruit and train newcomers. A further focus will be the creativity in fansubs (e.g. the use of explanatory notes and colloquial language) and the influence of such creativity on the subtitling in state-sanctioned subtitling practice in mass media.

KEYWORDS

Fansubbing, China, *YYeTs*, controversy, creativity, influence.

1. Introduction

In recent years, popular foreign audiovisual products have attracted a large and growing audience in the People's Republic of China (China). Foreign audiovisual programmes are prominent in state-level television networks, particularly Central Chinese Television (CCTV), which has broadcast several popular American television series (e.g. the nationwide broadcast of *Game of Thrones* and *Under the Dome* in 2014). A greater variety of foreign audiovisual programmes are videostreamed by major private Chinese websites such as Sohu and Youku. Despite this, stringent appraisal policies tend to stifle access to foreign electronic entertainment products in those officially sanctioned domains where the Chinese government maintains a stronghold in censorship without implementing a comprehensive and transparent rating system (Wang and Zhang 2016). The government often intervenes in the private sector by forcing video websites to remove particular series and films from their videostreaming outlets and depriving private enterprises of their autonomy in appraising and translating copyrighted audiovisual programmes (Hu 2013; Zhang and Mao 2013). Against this background, fansubbing groups have emerged and proliferated as "self-appointed translation commissioners that choose what is to be subtitled" (Pérez González 2007: 71) in spite of drastic official persecutions (Wilson 2011).

Fansubbing is "translation for fans by fans" (Díaz Cintas and Sanchez 2006), in which fans "digitise, translate, add subtitles to and make available online unauthorised copies of TV series and films" (Condry 2010: 194). Fansubbers, as self-motivated viewers seeking the experience of an "authentic text" (Cubbison 2005), utilise their professional expertise and

language skills to enhance audiovisual accessibility (O'Hagan 2012). In China, a vast number of individuals gather to not only participate in the networked production of fansubs but also strive to build a consistent, iconic and unified identity of their group as a subtitling agent. It is through the identity of the fansubbing group that the audience accesses and comprehends foreign originals, and it is with that identity that target audiences communicate via a wide range of interactive social activities online (Wang and Zhang in press). As consumption of fansubbed materials in China expands beyond like-minded peers, fansubbing has become a prominent social phenomenon in which fansubbing groups foster a nationwide culture of downloading and help target audiences "transgress national limitations and get in touch with global popular culture" (Hu 2013: 440).

Despite its expansion in the last three decades or so, fansubbing has only recently begun to be recognised by research in translation (Munday 2009: 190), while its status as an academic subject still raises controversy due to its "resolutely esoteric, niche" nature in many cultures (O'Hagan 2012: 31). By subtitling and disseminating items as "unstable" (Hemmungs Wirtén 2013: 133) as digital, audiovisual media on the Internet, participants of fansubbing are among the forerunners of crowdsourced translation (O'Hagan 2012: 28). They have also influenced the professional practice of subtitling with their "groundbreaking innovations" (Díaz Cintas 2009: 11), such as explanatory notes. Research in Translation Studies (TS) "can no longer afford to overlook the fan translation phenomenon" (O'Hagan 2008: 179). As for the research focusing on the Chinese context, Ding (2013) analysed the creativity of fansubbing in maintaining the register of the original and acceptability of the meaning of the source-language dialogue. She asserted that the official translations are "Lao Shao Jie Yi" (老少皆宜, 'appropriate to the young and the old' [my translation]) but "Wei Tong Jiao La" (味同嚼蜡, 'makes one feel like one is chewing wax' [my translation]). In viewing the popularity of foreign television series, Nie (2013) states that the limitation on foreign sitcoms in officially sanctioned broadcasting outlets is due to the challenge these foreign sitcoms represent in translation; vulgar dialogue, in particular, is considered unacceptable by the vast majority of Chinese viewers. In contrast, empirical findings by others have shown that young people, who form the majority of the audience of foreign audiovisual programmes, are often accepting of strong language and expect it to be preserved in translation (Gao 2012; Hsiao 2014; Wilson 2011). Ma (2013) considers the popularity of American TV series in China an inevitable consequence of the rise of the Internet in China. He also states that the Chinese audience must treat popular American television series critically, so as to prevent a cultural invasion. Hu (2009) emphasises that the non-profit activities of fansubbing are nevertheless illegal but recognises the neoliberalism behind this fan-based cultural phenomenon. Despite the rising interests in relevant subjects in Chinese translation scholarship, research can still explore more systematically the development, operation

and creativity of fansubbing in order to justify the contribution of fansubbing to the transfer of cultural and linguistic knowledge from elsewhere in the world to China.

This paper explores Chinese fansubbing as a social phenomenon at both textual and extra-textual levels. With reference to the fansubbing group YYeTs (人人影视), the largest fansubbing group in China, the discussion will, first, provide an overview of the controversial and persistent development of Chinese fansubbing. Second, it will draw briefly on the methods adopted by YYeTs in distributing labour among its members and recruiting and training newcomers. Third, it will elaborate on the creativity of fansubbing in adopting explanatory techniques and using colloquial language, and the influence of such creativity in the subtitling practice in state-sanctioned mass media.

Although the Chinese fansubbing network has developed significantly since the submission of the previous manuscript in 2014, this revised version will not seek to elaborate extensively on those latest changes which are under exploration elsewhere (Wang and Zhang in press). The main objective is to fill the gap between what has been studied and what is about to be revealed in the burgeoning area of fansubbing in the field of Translation Studies.

2. The Development of YYeTs between the Early 2000s and 2014

The Chinese fansubbing network should be considered an efficient venue of audiovisual piracy, which is a stubborn and persistent business in China due to censorship, restriction on imports and high costs of cinema tickets and officially released home-video entertainment products (Cai 2008; Gao 2014). While the international community makes China comply with the obligation for copyright protection (Yang 2009), efforts in repressing fansubbing groups place the government on the horns of a dilemma. The authorities acknowledge fansubbers as "knowledge disseminators in the Internet era" (Chen 2010) but never stop curtailing the distribution channels of fansubbed materials in an effort to enforce copyright laws and, more importantly, to censor any content that is deemed unfriendly to socialist culture (He 2014: 18). Fansubbing groups strive to provide a valid basis for free downloads while seeking to provide subtitling services for major domestic online entrepreneurs who wish to be seen to abide by the law (Meng and Wu 2013). This section seeks to explain how the Chinese fansubbing network is developing by referring mainly to YYeTs' strategies to adapt.

Fansubbing emerged in China in 2001 when broadband networks were established in every major city of the country (Tian 2011), joining the worldwide phenomenon of subtitling and sharing anime. Between 2001 and 2003, single anime episodes were subtitled, segmented into several shorter video clips and attached to individual posts made by fansubbers in Bulletin

Board Systems or shared among acquainted fans by using the online social networking programme *Tecent QQ*. Fansubbing of English audiovisual programmes, particularly American television series, began in 2003 when the sitcom *Friends* was introduced to mainland China through the Internet and pirated DVDs. An online forum named "F6" was founded in response to the popularity of the series, marking the beginning of the fansubbing of American television series in mainland China and the point at which the word *měi-jù* (美剧, 'American television series') was added to the Chinese vocabulary. Although fansubbing primarily focuses on entertainment and popular culture, and most of target audiences are driven by curiosity and their imaginings about celebrities, television, film franchises, video games and so on, the reception of fansubbed materials inevitably subverts the efficiency of censorship. Consequently, since 2008 the government has made serious moves to crack down the network of fansubbing groups for their sharing of "lewd, obscene, and violent content" (Xie and Huang 2010: 429). In response, fansubbing groups now seek to cooperate with licensed domestic video websites which need capable partners to translate copyrighted foreign media contents (Meng and Wu 2013). Although cooperation with private video websites is freeing some fansubbing groups from accusations of infringement of copyright, their cooperation is also vulnerable to repression by the government which seeks to deprive the private sector of the rights of self-management and self-surveillance (Hu 2013: 441-443).

Besides subtitling popular foreign television series, cooperation with the private sector also includes translating materials for civic education. For example, YYeTs was contracted by the Internet technology company NetEase to translate a series of courses from Yale University. The screenshots in Figure 1 and 2 appear, respectively, at the beginning and the end of each session of the course *Dante in Translation* (NetEase), showing the following information:

- The participants in the subtitling project: students from the English Faculty of Xi'an International Studies University and members of YYeTs
- Acknowledgement of these students
- The tasks completed by the participants: members of YYeTs did the spotting and editing; students from the English Faculty of Xi'an International Studies University produced the translation
- An emphasis on the non-commercial subtitling activity undertaken by YYeTs.

Figure 1. Screenshot taken on 07.03.2016

Figure 2. Screenshot taken on 07.03.2016

China Daily, China's national English-language newspaper, reported the subtitled version of Yale open courses produced by YYeTs, regarding the group as "China's top-ranked volunteer translation group," as shown below:

> Yale professor Shelly Kagan doesn't speak Chinese, but thanks to online subtitling groups, thousands of Chinese students can now listen to Kagan's lectures. Over the past few months, China's top-ranked volunteer translation group, YYeTs, has subtitled 10 of Yale University's Open Courses for viewers to download for free, including Kagan's philosophy class on death… Volunteer translation, or 'crowdsourcing,' is one solution that is increasingly popular in China, with Kagan's course receiving over 10,000 visitors per day … YYeTs has traditionally translated US TV shows like CSI and Grey's Anatomy, but Fang Si, an English editor who joined the group in 2008, explains that they started the

> Open Yale Courses project because so many of their users are students. With this new project, the group is channeling its experience and passion for translating American entertainment (Tsao 2010).

The report focused on the effort made by *YYeTs* to make the open courses accessible to Chinese audiences. Although mentioning their history of "translating American entertainment," the journalist was reluctant to further question the legitimacy of such activities. Despite this, such a positive comment from this state-owned English-language newspaper inevitably improved the public image of YYeTs. Its contribution to the progress of public literacy in China is now known to every reader of this report and, more importantly, to those who watch the subtitled video recordings of the open courses. However, as is the case with foreign entertainment media, open courses have become extremely popular and therefore are of concern to many who consider the popularity of open courses from world-famous institutes a threat to domestic education in China (Duan and Yu 2013; Tian and Hu 2012). Therefore, this area of cooperation may also be susceptible to potential repercussions from the government (Tian 2011).

Another venture in public education by YYeTs was the short-lived website *Ren Ren Xue Yuan* (*人人学院*, 'the YYeTs Institute') in 2014. Besides subtitled video clips, it also provided transcriptions of original dialogue and that of corresponding Chinese subtitles that could be used to help foreign-language learners improve their knowledge of colloquial language usage, their listening skills and source-language cultural references. A user can view a video clip by choosing different modes. As Figure 3 shows, there is: 'viewing-mode' ('观看模式') which plays the chosen clip in a normal subtitled version for the audience; 'study-mode' ('学习模式'), which shows a transcription of subtitles in the blocks below the video window; and 'challenge-mode' ('挑战模式'), which engages the viewer in different kinds of quizzes when viewing the video. In addition, a viewer can communicate with others by typing messages into the block which is under the heading 'online chat' ('在线聊天'). The website had its IP address eliminated in late 2014, due perhaps to the lack of participation from Internet users, and hence was considered as a failed project by YYeTs. Coincidentally, the Chinese government was targeting several fansubbing websites, including YYeTs, around the same time.

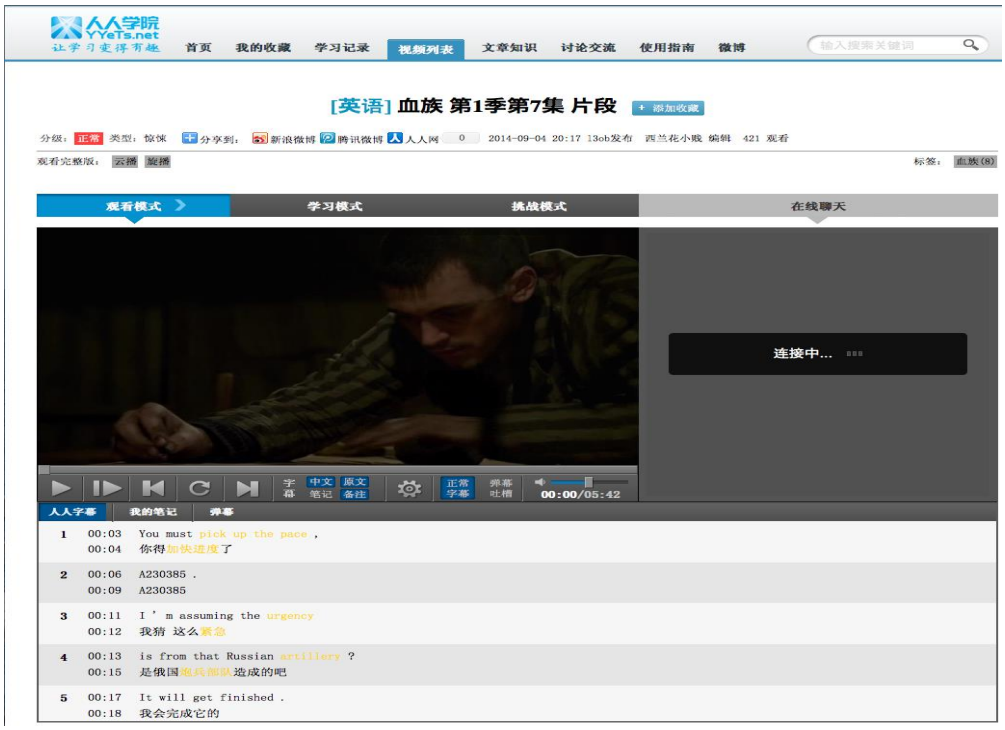

Figure 3. Screenshot taken on 07.10.2014

To remain active, some fansubbing groups tried to operate with multiple servers and downloading platforms. Between 2012 and 2014, although YYeTs did not provide download links to some films on its own website, its members still produced the subtitles of these films and provided links to other websites where these films could be downloaded for free. Figure 4 below shows the webpage supposed to provide the link to download the film *Lone Ranger*. Instead, a notice was put up in bold, red characters, saying: "For copyright reasons, no download service is provided for this film. Only the text files of subtitles and the trailer of this film are provided" ('版权问题本片不提供下载，只提供字幕文件和预告片'). However, another notice written in bold, black characters was given right below the first notice, stating "Our resources are from the websites below. You can go to these websites and find out if they provide download links of the film" ('本站资源来源于以下网站，你可以到这些网站查看是否有下载').

Figure 4. Screenshot taken on 04.10.2013

One of the links provided by YYeTs opens the relevant webpage of yayaxz.com, as shown in Figure 5. Besides video resources, viewers can also find a description of the plot of the film and options to share the information on Chinese social networks, the links of which are shown below the poster, as is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 5. Screenshot taken on 04.10.2013

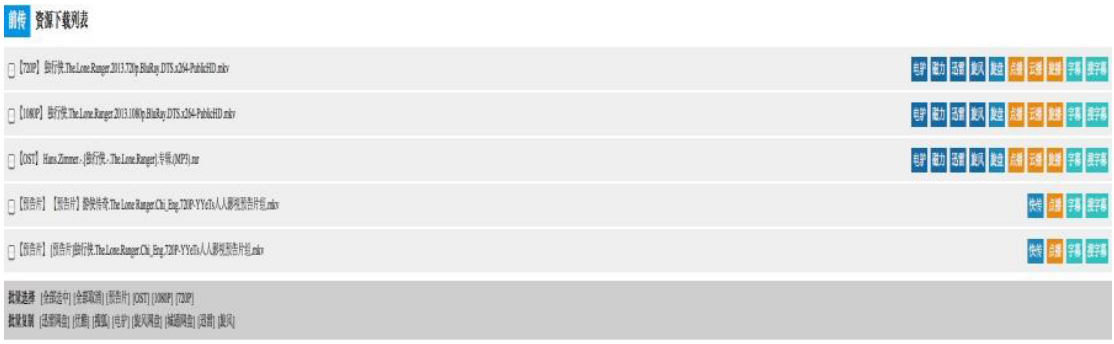

Figure 6. Screenshot taken on 04.10.2013

The fact that YYeTs refrains from providing downloading links suggests that they recognise fansubbing is illegal under Chinese legislation and thus make themselves plausible to a government striving to improve the copyright legitimacy in China in order to win global recognition (Pang 2012). As the Government is determined to tighten its supervision over the Internet in order to 'purify' the content shared online and eliminate online piracy, the Action 'Sword-Net'[1] was launched on 11 June 2014. While being forced to erase all the resources from their websites, members of fansubbing groups still emphasise their conviction to target audiences — youth and young adults in particular (Lv and Li 2015) — who are craving more foreign culture products in spite of persecution by the government. To fansubbers, any means to this end should be the means serving public interests (Hsiao 2014: 221). On 6 February 2015, YYeTs returned after the elimination of its original IP address and has been operating in two separate platforms since then. One is Ren Ren Mei Ju (人人美剧, 'YYeTs American TV'), a social network for enthusiasts of foreign popular entertainment media; and the other is SUBTITLES, where YYeTs continues its fansubbing and free-sharing activities.

3. Working Methods of YYeTs

This section will briefly introduce the inner operation of YYeTs, with regards to the fansubbing process, and the recruitment and training of new members. Investigating the internal affairs of fansubbing groups is no easy task. Due to the official repression, fansubbers are discreet about their true identities in order to avoid drawing unwelcome attention to themselves and their organisations (Hsiao 2014: 219). Their discretion is well described by Gao, who was 'kicked out' of a fansubbing group when she disclosed her intention to study its operation for her sociological research (Gao 2012: 8). Despite this, it is important to gain the perspective of those who participate in fansubbing as well as that of a researcher, and to observe the fans' operations as closely as possible. To achieve this, I acted as a volunteer and completed the first phase of training under the instruction of a tutor or tutors (the email address I submitted my application and template of subtitles to might be used by several members who are assigned to assess applicants). Unfortunately, I could not continue the trial period as, through

my own experience and following communication with members of YYeTs, I realised the workload was unsustainable (see the description of the selection process below). However, I collected valuable information during this short-lived venture (which lasted for two weeks) into the world of fansubbing and thus was able to verify second-hand information gained from other channels such as journal articles, theses, news reports and fan blogs.

At present, members of YYeTs are producing fansubbed versions of a great variety of American television series. The group often recruits people living in America and Canada to act as "raw providers" (Díaz Cintas and Sanchez 2006) to record television series and produce transcriptions of closed captions[2]. YYeTs requires that raw providers should have an operating system of Windows Vista or Window 7 installed on their personal computers (Figure 7). They also need to purchase and install various hardware and software programmes in order to use their personal computers to complete their tasks. Most importantly, they need to use Hauppauge WinTV-HVR-950Q USB2.0 or ATI TV Wonder HD750 to record television series broadcast on channels including NBC, ABC, CBS, CW and FOX (Figure 8). After a particular episode is recorded, its closed captions can be extracted by using the programme CCExtracterGUI (Figure 9).

Recorded materials are sent to different project teams for translation and conversion. At this stage, subtitles of original programmes are produced by using the subtitling programme Time Machine (Figure 10), developed by the technological team of YYeTs. The translated subtitles are saved as SubRip Text (SRT) files and sent to a team of editors together with the original audiovisual programmes. The editors revise the translation before producing fansubbed videos in the format of RealMedia Variable Bitrate (RMVB); the latter process is conducted in cooperation with a group of time-coders who are responsible for spotting. Following this, a post-production team converge the RMVB to MPEG-4 Part 4 (MP4) format with the resolution of High Resolution High Definition Television (HR-HDTV). For some fansubbed videos, the post-production team has an additional task to produce the so-called *Te Xiao Zi Mu* (特效字幕, 'subtitles with special effects'). In a fansubbed video enhanced with *Te Xiao Zi Mu*, subtitles can appear in different colours, forms and at flexible positions as if they are part of the original. At the final stage, the fansubbed videos are submitted to a team of senior members who upload them to various websites for viewers to download.

Figure 7. Screenshot taken on 10.03.2016

==========具体操作流程==========

基本流程是这样的：

在您确认自己有电视线之后（至少需要有NBC, ABC, CBS, CW, FOX这些基本的电视台）需要购买一块电视卡才能录制
操作系统可以是VISTA, WIN7。
请您按照以下流程录制字幕试试。

以下为WIN7下录制过程，其他的过程都差不多。

PC电视卡：Hauppauge WinTV-HVR-950Q USB2.0(官方支持win7) 80美金，亚马逊50美金左右。
或者：ATI TV Wonder HD750 60美金左右
操作系统：windows 7 简体中文旗舰版

如果你电视全部是数字信号，建议买Hauppauge WinTV-HVR-950Q USB2.0
如果你的模拟信号多，推荐买ATI TV Wonder HD750

Figure 8. Screenshot taken on 10.03.2016

CC字幕提取流程：

01. 在WinTV v7软件下 选择您的节目，然后按下红色按钮 开始录像，待节目结束后再次按下以结束录像。

02. 打开CCExtractorGUI这款软件，然后找到已录制好的节目，拖拽视频文件至 Input files下面的大大的空白处。

03. 单击Execution这一栏，然后单击Start，系统开始提取，等待提取100%结束。

04. 打开录制目录，发现 已经生成了 同视频文件名称 相同的srt字幕。

Figure 9. Screenshot taken on 10.03.2016

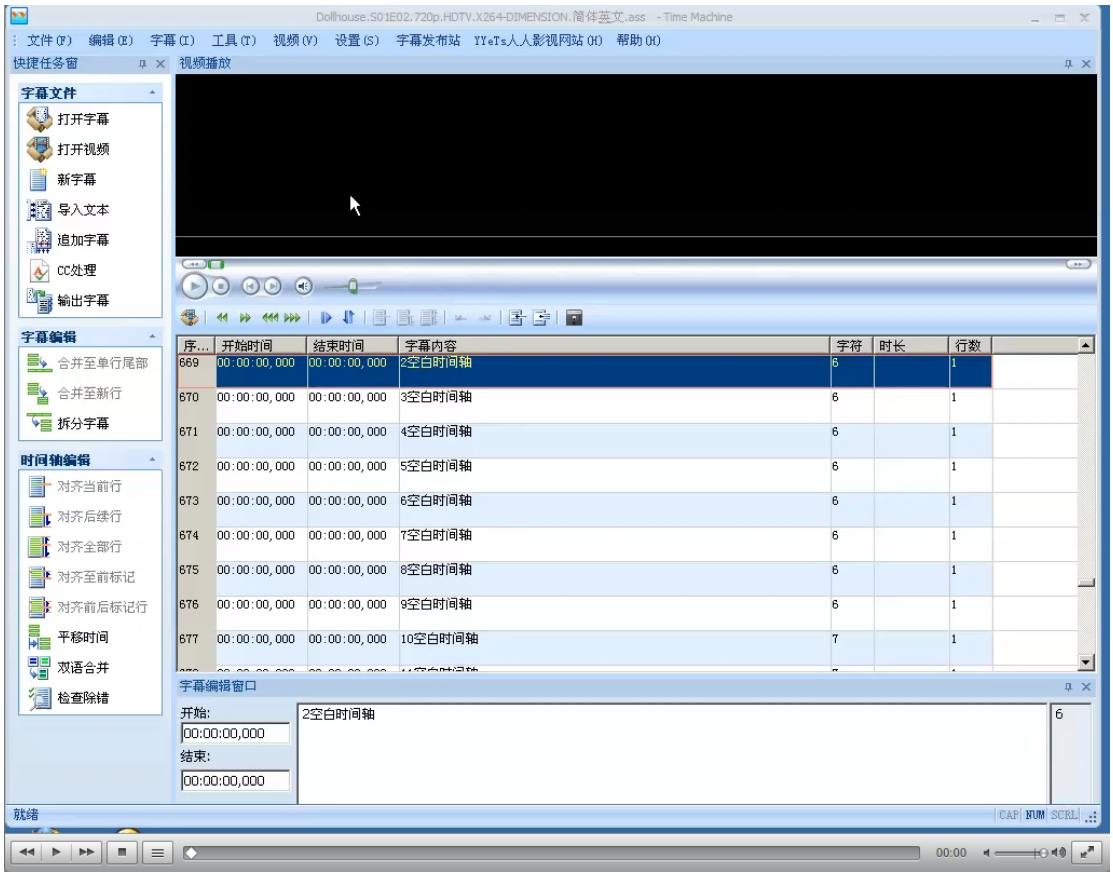

Figure 10. Screenshot taken on 10.03.2016

Before new members can be recruited as members, it is important to ensure people's capability to complete the work and their commitment to the group. The human resources team of YYeTs will contact a candidate within 24 hours of his or her application having been submitted. The candidate will receive links to download the training and test materials. These links can only be accessed during the period in which the candidate is under consideration for recruitment. The candidate then needs to complete a subtitling test after studying all training materials. These are video instructions for using Time Machine, a 25-minute video clip and a memo about rules applied to Chinese subtitling under the working standards of YYeTs. The instruction videos are put into three sections: *Zi Mu Chu Li* (字幕处理, 'Producing Subtitles'), *Shi Jian Zhou Chu Li* (时间轴处理, 'Adjusting Time Codes') and *Hou Qi Ya Suo Zhi Zuo* (后期压制制作, 'Post-Production Video Conversion'). YYeTs provide detailed instructions on the production of subtitles, the synchronisation of the subtitles and the original video using

the Time Machine programme, the production of fansubbed videos in the format of RMVB, and the conversion of the RMVB format to other video formats with HR-HDTV resolution. If the candidate passes the test, he or she will undergo a further training program online after joining the YYeTs' forum on Tencent QQ. If the candidate does not make contact with the tutors of YYeTs on Tencent QQ in time, his or her access to the forum will expire; the candidate will be considered either irresponsible or unable to follow the working schedule of YYeTs and therefore incapable of being a dedicated member of the group.

The fansubbing process and the tests and training sessions for accessing prospective members imply the existence of a hierarchy which represents a vertical and tight-knit structure allowing members of YYeTs to cooperate with and provide constant support to each other, and to improve the translation and technological competences of newcomers. This hierarchy is similar to that seen in many web-based communities of non-professional translation (see Pym *et al.* 2016). Such community-based collaboration and division of labour shares common ground with the "co-creational subtitling" in fansubbing networks of anime, where viewers constituting "a geographically dispersed and linguistically diverse audience whom digital technologies have allowed to reach beyond their immediate personal environments and become members of transnational communities of affinity to produce and share versions of their favourite series." (Pérez-Gonzalez 2012: 9). Yet, translation competence of fansubbing groups is a subject of enduring debate (Bogucki 2009; Dwyer 2012), and their technological expertise seen mostly in the use of explanatory techniques is also questioned due to the intrusive presentation of additional information on screen (McClarty 2013; O'Hagan 2012). Despite this, both aspects bear witness to the creativity of fansubbing in linguistic and cultural mediation.

4. Creativity in Fansubs

This section seeks to explore the creativity in fansubs in two aspects: the use of explanatory techniques for providing extra contextual and cultural information (4.1), and the use of colloquial language in vernacular Chinese to closely render the meaning and register of the source-language dialogue (4.2). Some noticeable influences of such creativity on state-sponsored subtitling will also be discussed.

4.1 Explanatory Techniques

In their "co-creational" (Barra 2009: 511) subtitling procedures, fansubbers acquire and apply cultural and genre knowledge, as well as a wide range of technological expertise, in order to provide an in-depth viewing experience (O'Hagan 2008: 178-179). They tend to "manipulate media texts and reform conventional representations of reality through transformative subtitling to effect aesthetic change" (Pérez-Gonzalez 2012: 10). This is most typically represented in their explanatory techniques. To date, two

types of explanatory techniques have been seen in fansubbed videos produced by YYeTs: explanatory notes, which mostly appear in the same font or style as the corresponding subtitles, and textual inserts, which often have more sophisticated designs and flexible positioning than explanatory notes.

Explanatory notes are inserted into the original audiovisual medium, tackling cultural references and language-specific elements and thus contravening the professional code which prohibits any form of "interference and presence of the translator" (Díaz-Cintas 2005: 12). These messages may appear next to the translation of a (source language) line, as in Figure 11, in which the note in square brackets explains who Steve Wozniak is by showing "Ping Guo Gong Si Chuang Shi Ren Zhi Yi" (苹果公司创始人之一, 'one of the founding members of Apple'). Notes can also appear at the top of the screen, as in Figure 12, in which the note explains the connotation of "wood" as "Bo Qi De Yin Jing" (勃起的阴茎, 'erect penis'). In the scene, the source-language dialogue alludes to "wood for sheep" during a round of the popular board game *The Settlers of Catan*. A joking hint arises among players of the game when a player intends to trade his or her resource card showing a sheep against another player's resource card showing a piece of lumber. Without the note, the humour may be lost in the target context when the character Sheldon says calmly, "I want to build a road, but I need wood," while his friends burst into laughter.

Figure 11. *The Big Bang Theory,* Episode 2, Season 4 [2010-2011]. Screenshot taken on 14.03.2016

Figure 12. *The Big Bang Theory,* Episode 13, Season 5 [2011-2012]. Screenshot taken on 14.03.2016

The positioning of notes has become more and more flexible, as fansubbers seek to maintain the coherence between subtitles and visuals. As in Figure 13, an explanatory note appears next to the chin of the speaker, telling the audience what is presently referred as "Serbia" is formerly known as "Servia." The note thus functions as a textual insert blending with the "visual surroundings" (Pérez González 2007: 76), which can also be realised in the manner shown in Figure 14. Textual inserts are presented through a more dedicated design to comply with the original which applies the same technique to provide information related to the narrative plot. In Figure 15, the translations are in the same colour, font and angle as the English text. By complying with the display of source-language textual inserts, fansubbers strive to form a "linguistic non-diegetic dimension" for the viewers in order to guide them to understand the contextual and narrative information (Pérez González 2007: 75-76). In this sense, the visual inserts are similar to the "floating texts" seen in *Sherlock* (2010 –), integrating textual messages to the audiovisual narrative which is traditionally made to be viewed rather than being read (Dwyer 2015).

Figure 13. *37 Days,* Episode 1 [2014]. Screenshot taken on 14.03.2016

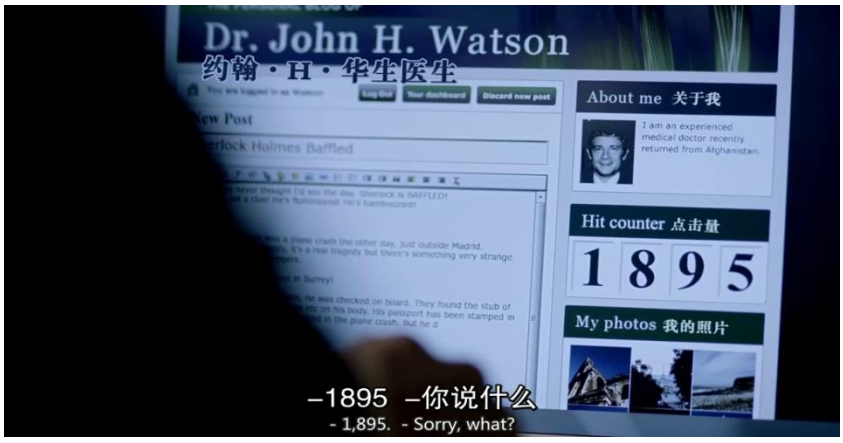

Figure 14. *Sherlock,* Episode 1, Series 2 [2012]. Screenshot taken on 14.03.201633

Figure 15. *Sherlock,* Episode 1, Series 2 [2012]. Screenshot taken on 14.03.2016)

Another favoured method is to display 'endnotes' when the background or contextual information does not fit within the space and time limits. Fansubbers often write such information in paragraphs and display them on

screen while the credits are shown, assuming the audience will be interested in learning more about the background or contextual information. The 'endnotes' may be a more functional approach, as they seem less intrusive than other note-displaying techniques. In Figure 16, the information provided is about the positions held by Francis Underwood, the protagonist, and the two politicians who are having lunch with him in the early part of the episode. In addition, the sentence in the bottom line explains that, at the time of broadcasting, the actual majority in the United States House of Representatives is held by the Republicans, and thereby highlights the difference between the drama and the reality.

Figure 16. *House of Cards,* Episode 2, Season 1 [2013]. Screenshot taken on 14.03.2016

The displaying of notes finds its application in the DVD distributions of anime, where additional cultural and linguistic information is inserted into the "film track" through "optional popups" (Ortabasi 2007: 288). Explanatory notes are also used by television networks in China to produce intralingual subtitles of variety shows. As Figure 17 shows, an explanation is provided in brackets, explaining the term NPC as "You Xi Zhong Fei Wan Jia Kong Zhi Jue Se" (游戏中非玩家控制角色, 'those characters in video games who are not controlled by the players'). Explanatory techniques are yet to be used for interlingual subtitling in state-sponsored and commercial productions.

Figure 17. Episode 11, Season 1 of *Ben Pao Ba Xiong Di* [奔跑吧，兄弟!, 'Run, Brothers, Run!'] [2014]. Screenshot taken on 11 May 2015

Dwyer (2012: 227) considers the use of explanatory notes a kind of the "thick translation," as proposed by Hermans (2003), aiming to enhance the depth of the audience's comprehension of background or contextual, cultural and historical information. This is realised further in the use of textual inserts, which presents the fansubber's "subject position" in a "highly visible form" (Hermans 2003: 387). Hence, by adopting explanatory techniques, fansubbers seek to register rather than neutralise the foreign. This outcome is in contrast to their use of colloquial language which naturalises the foreignness of the original in its fansubbed versions.

4.2 Colloquial Language

Fansubbers often resort to a colloquial style of usage in their translation so as to create a kind of intimacy for the target-language audience. In comparison, official subtitling maintains a formal and neutral tone of speech which is comparable to the so-called *Wu Tai Qiang* (舞台腔, 'stage tone') in official translations; the "stage tone" of official translation hardly reflects the mood of the original dialogue (Du *et al.* 2013: 126), as the following examples show. In Example 1, the original line is uttered by a first-year university student who considers his roommate difficult to communicate with. Although both versions of translation realise the meaning of the speaker in the target context, it is the fan's translation that displays a slang expression which corresponds to what a Chinese speaker of comparable age and background would say in a similar situation. In Example 2, while the source-language swearing is 'sanitised' in the official translation, the fansubs show a dialectically taboo expression *Ta Ya De* (他丫的, 'his maid's').

Source Language Dialogue	Official Subtitles	Fansubs
Example 1: Dude, what kind of tool are you? (*Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* 2009)	你真傻假傻？('Are you really that stupid?')	你火星来的？ (Are you from the Mars?)
Example 2: -What's his fucking problem? -He wants to be president. (*The Expendables* 2010)	一那家伙怎么回事？ ('What's wrong with him?') 一他想当总统 ('He wants to be the president.')	一他丫的就这么走了 ('He just fucking leaves?') 一忙着竞选总统呢 ('Busying with his campaign for the presidency.')

Colloquial register has been seen in official translations of many Hollywood blockbusters exhibited in China in the past few years, and particularly in animated comedies such as *Rio* (2011). The subtitles in Examples 3, 4 and 5 below contain the popular slang expressions *Nao Can* (脑残, 'brain-retard'), *Gei Li* (给力, 'give strength') and *Da Jiang You De* (打酱油的, 'buying soy sauce'). *Nao Can* was initially a term seen on the Internet, denouncing the controversial behaviour and social comments of the generation of Chinese born during the 1990s. It has later been used more often in its literal sense as a personal insult which is comparable to 'idiot.' *Gei Li* was coined by Chinese Internet users as an alternative to the word *Ku* (酷, 'cool') and is used more frequently in daily conversation than the latter; the use of *Gei Li* as the target-language solution for 'cool' is therefore closer to the contemporary colloquial context. Also appearing first on the Internet, *Da Jiang You De* has been used widely among young Chinese speakers in referring to bystanders in a particular situation.

Source language Dialogue	Official Subtitles
Example 3: (*Rio* 2011) Do you think I'm an idiot?	你们把我当成脑残了 ('You have considered me brain-retard.')
Example 4: (*Rio* 2011) This is the coolest place I've ever seen.	这地方是我见过最给力的 ('This is the coolest place I have ever seen.')
Example 5: (Rio 2011) I don't know what's going on here.	我是来打酱油的 ('I am here buying soy sauce.')

The words mentioned above have comical meanings known commonly to the target audience and hence can preserve the humorous effects in the original dialogue. However, while the colloquial register in fansubs closely reflects that in the original, official subtitling can be overzealous in domesticating the foreign by adopting target-language cultural references,

as shown below.

Source language Dialogue	Official Subtitles	YYeTs' Subtitles
Example 6: [*Madagascar 3* (2012)] No traffic!	不限号 不堵车 ('No restriction on plate numbers'; 'no traffic jam')	畅通无阻 ('No barrier')
Example 7: [*Madagascar 3* (2012)] That is one ugly, mug-ugly lady!	这是麻辣凤姐吧 ('This must be the hot phoenix sister.')	那女人真是丑得惊天地泣鬼神 ('That women is so ugly that she would shock Heaven and Earth and make ghosts and gods cry.')
Example 8: [*Madagascar 3* (2012)] 'Cause all you have to do is put them around your partner.	我们做个夫妻档/像小沈阳一样上星光大道 ('We do spousal teamwork, just like what Little Shenyang does on Starlight Avenue.')	因为你只需要搂着你的舞伴 ('Because you only need to put your arms around your partner.')

In Example 6, the subtitle would be more appropriate to the original context without the phrase *Bu Xian Hao* (不限号, 'no restriction on plate numbers'), as *Bu Du Che* (不堵车, 'no traffic jam') conveys the meaning of "no traffic" sufficiently. The expression *Bu Xian Hao* refers to a regulation established in China to schedule automobile access to particular areas of a city according to their plate numbers in order to prevent traffic jams. This reference to a local traffic regulation does not comply with the original context where the character, a lion escaped from a zoo in New York, is admiring a model of New York City made of sand. In Example 7, the official subtitle for the line "one ugly, mug-ugly lady" is *Ma La Feng Jie* (麻辣凤姐, 'hot phoenix sister'), referring to a Chinese 'online celebrity' whose nickname is *Feng Jie* (凤姐, 'phoenix sister'). She is widely criticised by Chinese Internet users for her controversial comments on social affairs, and for her unpresentable appearance and exaggerated manners. The reference to "phoenix sister" corresponds to the speaker's emphasis on the meaning of "ugly" but contrasts with the actual reference made by the speaker. The speaker refers to a monkey dressed in an exaggerated fashion and gambling in a casino in Monte Carlo. In comparison, the YYeTs' translation is closer to the meaning of the speaker. The expression *Jing Tian Di Qi Gui*

Shen (惊天地 泣鬼神, 'shocking Heaven and Earth, and making ghosts and gods cry') corresponds to the meaning of the speaker who considers the monkey extremely ugly. In Example 8, the official subtitle is a re-creation distorting the original context in which the speaker is trying to encourage her timid friend to dance with her; the fansub is closer to the source-language meaning. In the official subtitle, the word *Fu Qi Dang* (夫妻档, 'spousal teamwork') is used to refer to teamwork between a man and a woman and is sufficient to convey the corresponding source-language meaning. However, it is followed by another line of subtitle containing references to the Chinese comedian *Xiao Shen Yang* (小沈阳, 'Little Shenyang') and the talent contest called *Xing Guang Da Dao* (星光大道, 'Starlight Avenue') broadcast on Central Chinese Television Channel One; the comedian achieved his fame by winning the talent contest in 2009.

The subtitlers use references to domestic affairs in order to re-contextualise the original for the TL audience, at the same time causing the subtitles to depart from the original context. Although the ideal outcome of subtitling is to immerse the audience into the original narrative, an overzealous subtitler turns the original narrative into a completely different entity (Fong 2009: 58-59). Despite this, the use of colloquial languages in official subtitling at least demonstrates the efforts by professionals to mimic this typical creativity of fansubbing (Lv and Li 2013).

5. Concluding Remarks

Fansubbing in China involves a great number of people who have made significant efforts to produce subtitles for a considerable number of foreign audiovisual programmes in a wide variety of languages. Most of these people are working voluntarily outside the officially sanctioned distribution channels. While being pressured by copyright protection and official prosecutions, fansubbing groups have brought contemporary foreign audiovisual entertainment into the daily life of Chinese people. Fansubbing groups strive to enhance fansubbed versions by providing extra contextual and cultural explanations through various explanatory techniques and by rendering source-language dialogue creatively with colloquial register associated with vernacular Chinese. Although the foreign elements in a given original are domesticated in the latter case, the domestication is achieved without disregarding the original context. Hence, the naturalisation in fansubs should be distinguished from that seen in official subtitles. Further, fansubbers aim to provide an in-depth understanding of the original by adding explanatory notes, particularly when the information is unfamiliar or unknown to target audiences. A subtitle with an explanatory note attached occupies more space on the screen (and intrudes into the visual field further if the note appears on the top of the screen), which may cause the audience to have difficulty in following the pace of the narrative, as they have to make an extra effort to read the notes. By conducting trial exhibitions with volunteers who agree to partake in eye-tracking analysis,

research elsewhere has drawn positive feedback from viewers as to the extent to which explanatory notes assist them in their viewing experience (Caffrey 2009; Orrego Carmona 2015). This outcome can be further verified among Chinese-speaking audiences in different geo-political contexts. Potential studies in this remit may also shed light on the influence of fansubbing on the broader socio-political context of China where, according to Lin (2002), translation has been functioning as a catalyst for social change.

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[1] For more details, see *National Copyright Administration of the People's Republic of China, State Internet Information Office, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China and Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China on the Special Operation "Sword-Net" in 2014 (An Abstract)* (国家版权局 国家互联网信息办公室 工业和信息化部 公安部关于开展打击网络侵权盗版"剑网 2014"专项行动的通知（摘要）): http://www.gapp.gov.cn/govpublic/97/210459.shtml (in Chinese) (consulted 23.04.2015).

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