

AUDIENCE ACTIVITY IN THE NEW MEDIA ERA:
CHINESE FANSUBS OF U.S. TV SHOWS

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To my parents, Jinjun Guo and Fang Qiu, for their moral and financial support
throughout all these years

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LIST OF GLOSSARY TERMS

AVI	An uncompressed video file format with good image and sound quality. Normally, the size of an AVI file of a 40-minute episode is 350 megabyte.
BitTorrent	A peer-to-peer file sharing protocol, especially used for transferring large files which are divided into small pieces shared by peers within a network
eMule	A peer-to-peer file sharing application free for Internet users with features like credit systems and download queue
FTP	File Transfer Protocol, allowing Internet users to transfer files between a local computer and a remote server
MP4	MPEG-4, a highly compressed video file format playable on QuickTime and portable devices like iPod and PlayStation
QQ	The most popular instant messaging program in mainland China
RMVB	RealMedia Variable Bitrate, a compressed video file format commonly used by Chinese fansub communities to distribute their subtitled video resources

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This thesis focuses on fansubbing, an emerging audience activity in cyberspace, from three perspectives: active audiences as prosumers, peer production, and uses and gratifications theory. In order to provide an in-depth exploration, this study utilized a qualitative approach, with both web-based questionnaires and Skype™ interviews, to investigate Sfile which was a famous Chinese fansub community producing subtitles of U.S. TV shows.

This study found that six kinds of fansubbers were involved in the fansub production process: closed-caption providers, timers, proofreaders, translators, encoders, and distributors. They collaborated in three areas of responsibility (i.e., Subtitle Synchronization, Subtitle Translation, and Subtitle Sharing), and used several new technologies to create high quality Chinese subtitles. This research uncovered four motivations which led to participants' engagement in Sfile, including their love for U.S. TV shows, needs for latest resources, curiosity about fansub culture, and interests in languages. Although participants worked voluntarily with no monetary rewards, they gained knowledge, a sense of achievement, and exclusive resources, and, in the meantime, they met like-minded friends.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background

With the development of personal computers and high-speed Internet, there has been a trend towards watching television on digital interfaces (Chamberlain, 2010). In May 2006, for example, the ABC Television Network launched its Full Episode Player, an online streaming service which allows audiences in the United States to watch current TV shows freely and legally on ABC's official web site (Loughney, Eichholz, & Hagger, 2008). To date, most American television networks have offered this "Watch Full Episodes" service, and thus people can enjoy the latest episodes of their favorite shows on their Internet-accessible computers the day after the episodes are originally aired. Major broadcasting companies such as NBC, Fox, and ABC even allied to create Hulu™ - a video streaming site offering a wide range of television programs and other media content. Meanwhile, more and more people have started downloading inexpensive TV shows from the iTunes Store®, watching the programs on computers and portable media players. However, both the official full-episode streaming services and buying episodes on iTunes Store® are available only for people in the United States. Those whose Internet Protocol (IP) addresses are located outside the United States cannot watch full episodes on the TV networks' official web sites and Hulu™; people who do not have U.S. iTunes® accounts and U.S.-issued credit cards are unable to buy and download episodes via iTunes Store®.

Unlike people in America, who can watch TV shows via a traditional TV set or through legal channels on the Internet, fans of U.S. TV shows living in other regions have to depend on file sharing technologies (e.g., BitTorrents, eMule, File Transfer

Protocol) and web sites (e.g., <http://www.eztv.it>) from which they are able to download episodes of American TV series not available in their own countries. Therefore, Internet downloading has become the primary way for audiences outside the United States to consume American TV shows.

Recently, American mainstream news media, including *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Seattle Times*, pointed out a new phenomenon: U.S. TV shows enjoy great popularity in China with the help of the Internet and other related technologies (Alexandri, 2008; French, 2006; Osnos, 2007). Thanks to various file sharing web sites and software, Chinese people can download and watch the latest episodes of shows on their own personal computers, in most cases within 24 hours after these episodes air in the United States. What is noteworthy here is that videos downloaded by most Chinese people have been embedded with Chinese language subtitles, for the convenience of individuals who do not understand English. The majority of these embedded subtitles are created by groups of Chinese people who are U.S. TV fans, good at English, and familiar with western cultures. In China, these groups are called "fansub groups" whose members are "fansubbers," voluntarily producing Chinese subtitles for popular U.S. TV shows, which are subsequently published on the Internet for free download.

Fansubs, also known as fan-made subtitles, refer to amateur subtitles of media products (e.g., movies, anime, TV shows) translated and distributed by fans, who are called "fansubbers", usually in countries where the originals are not accessible. This form of fan-produced content originated from Japan in the 1980s when anime fans started establishing their own anime clubs (Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006). At

that time, in order to popularize anime culture in western countries, fans bought videocassette tapes to record original Japanese anime, used specialized equipment to add fan-translated English subtitles to those video tapes, and distributed or traded subtitled anime by mail (Hatcher, 2005). To date, fansubbing has extended its scope to foreign movies, television programs, and printed materials (e.g., magazines, newspapers, comic books), not limited to Japanese anime. Meanwhile, new technologies have been utilized during the production of subtitles. For example, "digisubbing" has become the common practice when individuals create fansubs, meaning that the Internet and digital technologies are indispensable for the production of fansubs (Leonard, 2005). However, little research has investigated fansubs from the aspects of fan culture and new media. Fansubbing deserves more attention because it demonstrates some crucial concepts in today's digital world: active audience, participatory culture, and peer production.

In order to provide an analysis of Chinese fansub groups, this qualitative study focuses on Sfile, a famous Chinese fansub community, to achieve three objectives: (1) to investigate the community structure and the way its members collaborate over the Internet, (2) to gauge the motivations that inspire these fansubbers' active participation, and (3) to examine the rewards that they may receive. The current study first provides an overview of U.S. TV consumption in China and Chinese audiences' viewing preferences. Subsequently, Chapter 2 presents two important concepts, namely active audience and peer production, and the Uses and Gratifications theory. Chapter 3 details the methodology including the sample selection, research instruments and data

analysis. Findings are reported in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 provides summary, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

The Popularity of U.S. TV Shows in China: An Overview

The United States has dominated the global media marketplace for decades. There has been some research on the export of U.S. television programs to Latin America and Europe (Antola & Rogers, 1984; Bens & Smaele, 2001; Dupagne & Waterman, 1998), but few scholars investigate the popularity of U.S. TV shows in Asian countries. In recent years, American TV shows are sweeping China, and a unique consumption experience of imported media products is emerging.

Before the U.S. TV fever, dramas imported from Japan and South Korea were quite popular with Chinese audiences. They were the first huge successes of foreign television programs in China. Considering the principle of "cultural proximity," referring to "a desire for cultural products that reflect a person's own language, culture, history, and value" (Gershon, 2006, p. 224), shared cultural backgrounds and values among East Asian countries may explain why Chinese people love watching Japanese and Korean dramas. But what explains the popularity of TV shows imported from the United States, whose cultural values are widely acknowledged to be different from those of China?

First, it is worth noting that the audience makeup for U.S. TV shows is different from those of Japanese and Korean dramas in China. The majority of consumers of U.S. TV shows are college students and young white-collar workers "with economic strength, a comfortable life, material and spiritual enjoyment, and keenness to fashion" (Jiang, 2008, p.10). Research has shown that Japanese and Korean dramas, most of

which feature themes of romance, fashion, and family, are enjoyed especially by middle-aged, female audiences (Hu, 2005; Yang, 2008a; Yang, 2008b).

Second, the Internet plays an important role in Chinese viewers' consumption of American TV shows, meaning their consumption is closely related to resources on the Internet. There are a growing number of web sites, blogs, and forums themed on American television programs where fans can receive the latest information and decide what shows to watch. Subsequently, fans download shows directly from the Internet, enjoy them on personal computers, and exchange ideas regarding their favorite shows in virtual fan communities. However, audiences are more likely to consume Japanese and Korean dramas via national and local television channels. There are several reasons why Chinese audiences turn to the Internet to consume U.S. TV shows. The first is that only limited number of American television programs are officially imported and aired by TV stations in China, compared with 67 Korean dramas being broadcast during the year of 2002 (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008). Second, TV series are produced and broadcast season after season in the United States, and normally, most of them have more than one season. This is different from the situation in China, Japan, and South Korea, where audiences can finish watching a native television series in a relatively short period of time, normally three months at most. The majority of Japanese and Korean dramas have 10 to 20 episodes in all, and one or two episodes are aired every week. A Chinese television series which normally has 20 to 30 episodes is broadcast weeknights. As a result, not all seasons of American TV shows are officially imported, and broadcast schedules of most shows far lag behind those in the United States, due to the redundant processes of subtitling and dubbing. For example, China Central

Television Station (CCTV) aired the first season of *Desperate Housewives*, which is currently in its sixth season, at the end of 2005. Third, the strict censorship of public broadcasting materials leads to the reduction of viewers' understanding and enjoyment of imported TV shows. When *Brothers and Sisters* was broadcast on CCTV's pay channel, all kissing and sex scenes involving Kevin Walker and Scotty Wandell, a gay couple, were deleted. According to Chinese media regulations, specific depictions of homosexuality are not allowed to be shown in public (Anonymous, 2004).

There are no legitimate copies of U.S. TV shows selling in the Chinese market, and fans used to buy pirated DVDs. However, pirated DVD makers convert original video files into smaller ones in poor picture quality so that they can compress as many episodes as possible into one DVD disc to reduce costs. Nowadays, since people can download video files from the Internet, some even in HD, pirated DVDs of American TV shows have become obsolete. In addition to poor image quality, pirated DVDs of most TV shows are released on the market after a whole season is completed, not after each episode is aired.

File sharing systems, which enable audiences to download the latest episodes of television programs in high definition quality with fast speed, serve as the primary way for Chinese people to follow their favorite American TV shows. However, English has been a significant barrier preventing Chinese people from understanding what is going on in TV shows. Chinese audiences nonetheless can become confused while watching shows such as medical dramas and sitcoms, which are full of jargon, slang expressions, and culturally specific references. In order to cope with this issue, a group of people who were good at English and familiar with western culture got together in virtual space

and voluntarily created Chinese subtitles for popular U.S. TV shows, then distributed these subtitles on the Internet for free.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Active Audiences as Prosumers

The active audience is not a new concept. It has a tradition dating back to the 1950s when television became popular, and subsequently people could choose media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, radio, television) through which they liked to receive information (Ruggiero, 2000). Later on, audiences were not satisfied with the passive media consumption experience; instead, some ardent ones became "textual poachers" who produced and circulated derivative works based on original media texts on their own (Jenkins, 1992). However, the contemporary idea of active audiences is more advanced because of the rapid technological development.

Traditional media, which conventionally offered one-way flow of information, provided limited interaction with audiences. With the advent of personal computer, the Internet, and other new technologies, a convergence culture has been gradually established, and the coexistence of traditional and new media offers audiences a new way to experience media products in a flourishing participatory environment (Jenkins, 2006). Television was once regarded as a low-involvement medium (Ehrenberg & Wakshlag, 1987), and watching television programs was a passive behavior. However, active TV audiences, in this digital age, are educated, communicative, and computer-literate, significantly different from the stereotypical image as home-bound, isolated, and uneducated individuals (Baym, 1998). A "dual media use" pattern (Derry, 2003), combining television and Internet-accessible computer, has gradually become the dominant media consumption experience for most TV viewers, encouraging communication, interaction, and creation. This inclusion of the Internet into people's

experience of watching TV has been employed by the media industry on purpose since the 1990s. For example, Ross (2008) uncovered that industry professionals usually embed three types of invitations (i.e., overt, organic, and obscured) into television shows, aiming to trigger audiences' tele-participation on the Internet. In the meantime, viewers may spontaneously choose cyberspace as a new place to consume media information.

The convergence of the Internet and television successfully enriches the TV viewing experience, and the virtual space is filled with new forms of audience activities, which are important criteria to distinguish active audiences from passive television spectators. Audiences can be classified into several categories according to the kind of activity in which they are engaged and the level of their involvement (Andrejevic, 2008; Baym, 1998; Costello & Moore, 2007). At the lowest level, audiences use the Internet to watch their favorite TV shows, and seek related information, including broadcasting schedule, spoilers, insider information and gossip. At the next level, audiences create their own platforms (e.g., fan communities and web sites) on which they can share every possible kind of fan-generated content such like reviews, critiques, and fan artworks. The above two kinds of audiences enjoy "making the show interesting to themselves" (Andrejevic, 2008, p.26). The most active audiences on the Internet are those who try their best to interact with actors, creators, and producers because they are eager to influence the programs they like, "taking on the role of production assistants and attempt to provide feedback to writers and producers" (Andrejevic, 2008, p. 26).

These aforementioned studies indicate that if TV audiences are placed along a continuum from "passive" to "active," at one end are isolated spectators who sit on their couches, staring at their TV screens; at the other end are active individuals who produce all possible kinds of content related to the programs they have watched (e.g., thoughts, critiques, fictions, fan-made videos), and expand their television consumption experience in virtual space where they participate in various audience activities. Therefore, the recent concept of the "active audience" values audiences playing dual roles which are consumers of TV programs and producers of derivative content. These active audiences can be described as "prosumers," a word coined by Alvin Toffler (1980) and referring to individuals who contribute their leisure time to create goods, services or experiences for their own use and satisfaction, rather than for the purpose of living or monetary exchange, in a society with blurring boundaries between consumers and producers (Toffler, 1980; Toffler & Toffler, 2007). The idea of "prosumers" has been used to analyze successful mass collaborations, from the commercial and business perspectives, in which consumers act as creators, co-innovators, and contributors under companies' control (Tapscott and Williams, 2006).

Viewed from the active audience perspective, people who actively produce content related to media products they consume can be regarded as prosumers. Several activities exemplify audiences' prosumption experience, which is a combination of consumption and production. With a long history even before the widespread use of the Internet, fan fiction might be the most representative activity of prosumption, which has been studied from the perspectives of literacy (Black, 2005; Lewis, Black, & Tomlinson, 2009), fandom (Jenkins, 1992), and new media (Hellekson & Busse, 2006). Fans make

use of characters, settings, or storylines from books, movies, or TV series that they like to create their own stories, and circulate these stories within fan communities. Recently, researchers have focused on several new forms of audience activities as well, which depend on new media technologies, and take place in virtual communities. These activities include, but are not limited to, fan activism (Menon, 2007; Scardaville, 2005), fan-made subtitles (Cintas & Sánchez, 2006; Barra, 2009), and manga scanlation (Lee, 2009), a new audience activity in which individuals scan comic books, and put scanned versions online for free download.

This study focuses on Chinese fansubbers who are well qualified to be the representative of active audiences as prosumers. After perceiving the need for Chinese subtitles for foreign TV programs which have not been officially imported, they expand their media consumption experience from simply downloading and watching TV shows to voluntarily participating in fansub communities, producing and distributing subtitles for free. This illustrates that audiences, who used to be stereotyped as passive consumers, can be productive as well.

Peer Production

With the arrival of Web 2.0, individuals no longer passively consumed information when surfing the Internet. New interactive applications and technologies gave Internet users more autonomy and power in their media consumption experience. Individuals with common interests came together in virtual space to share information and launch activities. One characteristic of Web 2.0 is that people socially interact and collaborate in online communities to create and distribute user-generated content (UGC), which refers to information and material created by Internet users themselves (Beck, 2008). Researchers have become interested in the possible organizational structures and

economy underlying mass collaboration over the Internet (Benkler, 2002; Brandes, Kenis, Lerner, & van Raaij, 2009; Kollock, 1999; Tapscott & Williams, 2006).

Markets and firm-based hierarchies are two traditional models used to organize production. However, Yochai Benkler (2002) argues that the newly emerged "commons-based peer production" is a third model, ideal for information production and exchange in today's networked environment. Peer production is characterized by a "radically decentralized, collaborative, and nonproprietary" network to share information among "widely distributed, loosely connected individuals," who are cooperating with one another to produce tangible end results (Benkler, 2006, p. 60). Open source software and Wikipedia are two most prominent examples of successful peer production (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). In the field of audience and fandom studies, peer production is also an important and popular way for fans to create both tangible and intangible products based on the media content that they consume. Long before the advent of computers and the Internet, fans collaboratively created unofficial magazines dedicated to their favorite media products (Jenkins, 1988). Present-day fandom with the help of the Internet and computer applications allows its participants with common interests to interact and create peer-generated content more efficiently. Jenkins (2006) introduces several fan communities in detail which are qualified to be considered as peer production. Examples include Star Wars amateur video-sharing communities where fans show their creativity by using computer software to produce their own version of Star Wars based on the original sci-fi masterpiece. Moreover, Harry Potter fans write their own stories about the fictional characters after consuming the original

work, and develop a peer review system which turns fanfiction writing into a collective and social activity.

Fansubbing activities are peer production projects as well. Normally speaking, fansub communities have a well-organized system in which every member has their own task, and at the same time cooperate with one another. Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006) and Barra (2009) describe the process of fansubbing, which generally involves several people in six different stages. First, raw providers are in charge of obtaining original videos, sometimes with transcripts of these episodes, from the Internet, usually from P2P file-sharing sites. Second, it is the timers' responsibility to synchronize subtitles and original videos, make sure that no gap exists between subtitles and actors' voices, and then export subtitles as accurate transcriptions, which are distributed to amateur translators. In the third stage, translators, who know one another via online communities and work as teams, are assigned to their own tasks by leaders, translating and typing subtitles on their personal computers. Proofreading subtitles is the fourth stage. Fansubbers who are better in English work as proofreaders, responsible for the accuracy and consistency of produced subtitles. Encoding is the fifth step, where encoders use software to create subtitle files (usually with a file extension of .srt), and embed these files into the original video files. Sixth, two kinds of files are published and distributed on the Internet. One is soft subs, which are solely subtitle files, suitable for those who have already downloaded original video files without subtitles. Soft subtitle files can be directly imported into videos if the media players (e.g., Media Player Classic) have installed the codec to encode subtitle files. Another is hard subs, meaning the subtitle files have already been embedded into video files by

encoders. People download these video files with embedded subtitles, and no subtitle codec or plug-in software is needed is needed to view them.

The aforementioned process of making fansubs reflects the two core characteristics contributing to the success of a peer-production project (Benkler, 2002). The first one is modularity, meaning a project can be broken down into small pieces that "can be independently produced before they are assembled into a whole" (p. 100). The second one is granularity, implying that the size of every module to be produced should be appropriate for people to invest their time and effort in the project.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory (U&G) was brought into the public's view in the 1940s, and became popular in late 1950s and early 1960s when the advent of television provided individuals more choices in media consumption (Blumler, 1979). Researchers began to show interest in audiences' engagement in various types of media, such as newspaper reading, radio listening, television viewing (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994). Thereafter U&G has been gradually developed as one of the most influential audience theories.

Rather than concentrating on effects of media on audiences, U&G is an audience-centered theory focusing on "(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generates (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) different patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (Blumler & Katz, 1974, p.20). The core assumption of U&G is that audience members are active, and their selection and use of media is purposive, goal directed and motivated to satisfy their social and psychological needs or desires (Rubin et al., 2003).

Possible motivations which trigger individuals' media use (gratifications sought) and actual rewards or satisfactions received from their media use experience (gratifications obtained) are at the center of U&G (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980). Katz, Hass, and Gurevitch (1973) identified five primary social and psychological needs that media users might expect to gain or could actually receive: (1) cognitive needs related to information and knowledge acquisition; (2) affective needs related to aesthetics, emotions, and pleasurable experience; (3) personal integrative needs for credibility, confidence, stability, and status; (4) social needs such as close connections with family, friends, and the world; (5) escape or tension release needs allowing individuals temporarily to be detached from their social roles.

Viewed from the above introduction of U&G, its fundamental concept of an active media user makes U&G as a suitable theory to understand emerging online activities. The Internet and new technologies create an interactive virtual space in which individuals actively communicate and collaborate to fulfill their various kinds of needs. Several research studies have successfully applied U&G to investigate individuals' motives for using the Internet in general (Flaherty et al, 1998; Kaye, 1998; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000) and other information and communication technologies including blogs (Li, 2007), instant messaging services (Flanagin, 2005; Hwang, 2005), mobile phones (Wei, 2008), social networking sites (Bumgarner, 2007), and virtual communities (Sangwan, 2005). However, one problem with these studies is that audiences are continuously treated as consumers of media content, instead of creators or producers. Researchers still pay most of their attention to possible explanations for why audiences prefer to use new technologies rather than traditional media to seek information or

communicate with others. There are only a small number of studies focusing on the individuals' motives for producing user-generated content or their engagement in new types of audience activities in the digital networked environment (Mendes-Filho, Tan, & Milne, 2010; Rafaeli & Ariel, 2008; Shao, 2009; Soukup, 2006).

Although the notion of an active audience is suited to understand online audience activities, the above-mentioned typology of audiences' needs prior to the advent of new media is unable to be fully applied to understand today's media users (Brabham, 2008; Haridakis & Hanson, 2009; Velsen & Melenhorst, 2009). Nowadays, active audiences tend to play dual roles, both consumers and producers of media content in the participatory culture. For example, Haridakis and Hanson (2009) discovered that the participants selected and watched videos on YouTube™ for the purposes of entertainment and information seeking, which were similar to the reasons that people watched television. However, participants' discussion and video-sharing behavior were motivated by their need for social interaction.

This study tries to examine fansubbing activities from a uses and gratifications perspective, exploring fansubbers' incentives for participation and the gratifications they may receive. Although there is no existing research concerning fansubbers' motivations for and rewards obtained from participating in fansub production, studies focusing on individuals' motivations for creating other kinds of user-generated content may shed light on this study. Tapscott and Williams (2006) indicated that the foremost reason that people voluntarily got involved in peer production communities was their passion for "their particular area of expertise" (p. 70). Moreover, Hars and Ou (2002) analyzed programmers' motivations which resulted in their participation in open-source software

project. Among several internal factors, which were rooted in individuals' beliefs and values, and external rewards, human capital (i.e. knowledge, skills, and capabilities) and self-determination (i.e. feelings of competence, satisfaction, and achievement) were two highest-rated motivations. After comprehensively reviewing academic materials, Rossi (2004) also categorized open source software developers' motivations as extrinsic ones and intrinsic ones, and pointed out that their desire to satisfy other user needs was a great incentive. As for the possible rewards that are received by media users, Benkler (2002) asserted that hedonic and social-psychological rewards, rather than monetary gains, might inspire individuals' voluntary production and free sharing of information.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection

In this study, research participants were Chinese fansubbers recruited from the Sfile community (Sfile), a fan-created forum about popular U.S. TV shows with more than 1,200,000 registered users. It is also one of the most influential fansub communities in China (Wang, 2008). This forum has three major sections: the Sfile official section, the discussion section and the resource sharing section. The official section is where forum rules, announcements, recruitment information, feedback and suggestions regarding Sfile-produced subtitles and the forum are posted. The discussion section is divided into several sub-sections named after popular TV series (e.g., *Desperate Housewives*, *Lost*, *24*, *Brothers and Sisters*) or genres of shows (e.g., medical dramas, comedy dramas, crime dramas, teen dramas). Threads regarding free download resources, including Sfile-produced subtitles, Chinese-subtitled video files made by Sfile, original video files without subtitles, and original soundtracks from TV shows, are posted in the resource sharing section. After creating an account by entering any verified Email address, registered fans become members of the Sfile community for free. They exchange ideas about the shows they like in the discussion section, and find those who have similar tastes. They also have free access to download resources posted in the resource sharing section.

In order to recruit Sfile fansubbers, the researcher's focus was on the resource sharing section for the reason that almost all threads, excluding those music sharing ones, are posted by Sfile fansubbers. It is noteworthy that only Sfile-produced subtitle files and subtitled video files are allowed to appear in this section. If someone published

a post with attached subtitles made by other Chinese fansub communities, it would be deleted by the moderators soon. This implies that Sfile and other Chinese fansub communities are in a competitive relationship for the quality of subtitles and the speed to produce subtitles. In order to build and maintain a good reputation, Sfile has recruited a large number of fansubbers who work in collaboration so as to create its own version of subtitles and release these Sfile-produced subtitle files in its own forum and other file sharing sites for free download.

Participants were recruited through two ways. First, after creating an account on the Sfile forum, the researcher located potential participants by observing its resource sharing section where several fansubbers could be identified because they actively posted subtitle and video files created by themselves in this section. Moreover, Sfile fansubbers had a unified badge shown under their screen names, identifying them as members of the Sfile fansub community, which helped the researcher distinguished Sfile fansubbers from regular forum users. Invitation messages were sent out to the fansubbers directly by using the "Private Message" function. Second, the researcher contacted the webmasters to get the permission to post a brief introduction of this study as a means to invite more fansubbers.

Research Instruments

This study aimed to explore the organizational structure of a Chinese fansub community and its fansubbers' motivations and rewards. Qualitative research methods, rather than quantitative ones, are better suited to this study because they allow exploration and discovery of new issues (Morgan, 1998). Considering the fact that there was little prior knowledge about the fansub culture, this study used mixed methods, with web-based surveys consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions

followed by in-depth, semi-structured interviews, to obtain an insight into the Sfile community and its fansubbers.

Fansubbers who agreed to participate in this study received a link directing them to the web page of the survey via private messages. After reading the informed consent document (see Appendix A) at the beginning of the survey, they filled out a questionnaire (see Appendix B) which included basic demographic questions such as gender, age, occupation, education, level of English skill, and some specific questions relating to their fansubbing experience and the community where they subtitle U.S. TV shows. At the end of the survey, the participants were asked whether they would like to schedule a 60-minute interview with the researcher via Skype™ software that provides online voice call service. They were also asked when it would be convenient for them to take the interview.

Skype™ was used to conduct all the interviews in this study because the participants are located in different areas in or outside China, and thus it is difficult to arrange face-to-face interviews. Second, fansubbers can maintain anonymity because Skype™ does not require them to reveal their personal telephone numbers. Third, several free Skype™ recorders can record Skype™ calls and save them as MP3 files with good sound quality automatically. The researcher used iFree Skype™ Recorder in this study.

The participants who accepted the interview request were asked to create their own Skype™ accounts or use their existing ones, and add the researcher as a friend. All interviews were conducted when it was convenient for the participants, and they answered questions in Mandarin Chinese, which is their native language, in order to

clearly and fluently express their ideas. The researcher translated the interviews from Chinese to English. An interview guide (see Appendix C) was designed in advance to help interviews proceed smoothly and stick to salient topics.

In total, 34 fansubbers in the Sfile community were recruited to participate in this study. Thirty-three of them completed the survey via Qualtrics. Ten participants agreed to schedule a Skype™ interview with the researcher, but three of them were unable to make it due to unforeseen personal reasons. Therefore, seven individual interviews were successfully conducted in July, 2010 (see Appendix D for interviewee profiles).

Data Collection and Analysis

This study used Qualtrics which is an online research suite, allowing the researcher to design and distribute surveys, collect data, and conduct analysis. After the participants filled out the survey on Qualtrics, survey data were automatically saved, and the researcher downloaded all the responses data for analysis. For those who participated in the Skype™ interview session, their interactions with the researcher were recorded and saved as MP3 files by iFree Skype™ Recorder for future transcription.

Since the survey had both closed-ended and open-ended questions, the closed-ended ones regarding participant demographics data were analyzed by Qualtrics to present their general background. All responses of the open-ended ones concerning their fansubbing experience would be analyzed together with the interview data. After the Skype™ interviews, the MP3 files were transcribed by the researcher. During the transcription phase, participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity and confidentiality. In order to improve the accuracy of data, the researcher listened to the MP3 files for a second time and read every transcript to make sure there was no mistake.

Inductive analysis was used to analyze the open-ended data in this study. This method of data analysis in qualitative research refers to “approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). The researcher read collected data thoroughly to identify meaningful themes and categories related to the structure of the Sfile fansub community, the fansubbing process, the participants' motivations and rewards. Findings were reported with supported quotes from the participants' responses.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Demographics of Participants

First, the recruited participants answered questions concerning their gender, age, occupation, education, English proficiency, and viewing habits of U.S TV shows. The following statistical analysis was offered by Qualtrics research suite.

In all, there were 18 female respondents (54.5%) and 15 male respondents (45.5%). There was not a significant gender skew. The majority of the participants (67.7%) were between 21 to 25 years old, and 10 participants belonged to the 26-30 years old age group. Only one participant was younger than 20 years of age.

Over half (54.5%) of the respondents were students. Of these, five specifically mentioned they were graduate students. Other professional occupations included auditors, a copywriter at an advertising agency, a human resources assistant, a doctor, software engineers, a business project manager, an employee at a travel agency, a bank clerk, employees of foreign investment enterprises (with unspecified positions), and freelance workers. Two participants were currently unemployed. These 15 participants who had already graduated from college were well educated as well: seven of them had a graduate degree and eight earned their bachelor's degree. Since subtitling work required strong English skills, 32 out of 33 participants (97%) took at least one English proficiency test or GRE (Graduate Record Examination). CET-6 (College English Test Level 6), CET-4 (College English Test Level 4), and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) were the three most commonly taken tests.

All participants were avid fans of American television shows. Approximately 40% (13 out of 33) participants said they watched more than ten episodes of U.S. TV shows

per week, four of whom even watched over 20 episodes. As for the rest, 12 watched six to ten episodes and eight participants watched five episodes or less. Fansubbers said they enjoyed U.S. TV shows for various reasons. Some of them were interested in American culture, and these television shows had a wide range of themes, offering a portrayal of different facets of American society. Some of the fansubbers felt bored watching Chinese series, which they said were filled with unattractive characters and predictable storylines. As a result, they turned to U.S. TV shows because of intriguing plots and high quality production. Improving English language skills was another incentive to watch American television shows, especially for those who had already graduated from college, for they had little chance to practice English.

Structure and Collaboration

The first research focus of this study is to explore the inner structure of the Sfile fansub community and how its fansubbers collaborate to produce Chinese subtitles for American TV series. Four themes were revealed from the participants' descriptions in the survey and the semi-structured interview.

Theme 1: Clear Roles and Responsibilities

The Sfile fansub community was divided into three main areas of responsibility, one for subtitle synchronization, one for subtitle translation and one for subtitle sharing. These three sections included fansubbers performing different job responsibilities.

The Subtitle Synchronization Section was composed of closed caption providers (CC providers) and timers who were responsible for capturing closed captions and editing English subtitles respectively. The Subtitle Translation Section was the place where translators and proofreaders cooperated with one another to produce Chinese subtitles. The Subtitle Sharing Section was comprised of encoders who embedded

Chinese subtitles to original video files and converted subtitled videos into different formats, and distributors whose responsibilities were to upload subtitle files and video files to various platforms for free download. Potential fansubbers could apply for their desired positions, and they were assigned to different sections based on their roles when they were admitted to the community. The participants were asked to describe how these three sections and fansubbers with different roles work together to produce subtitles in detail. The following paragraphs illustrated the flow of making fansubs, based on their responses, through which the responsibilities of three sections and roles were clearly introduced.

CC providers were individuals who extracted closed captions from video files recorded by their TV tuner cards installed on their computers, which allowed television signals to be received by the computers. Applicants who volunteered to record closed captions for the Sfile community had to meet basic requirements: having access to real-time television programs, possession of a TV tuner card, a well-equipped computer, and sufficient time at night, when TV shows were on air. Knowledge of TV tuner cards and closed caption extraction was not required because senior fansubbers in the Section would teach newcomers how to record and extract closed captions once they became CC providers.

Although no CC provider participated in this study due to their invisibility in the forum, some second hand information was given by Alessia, who had been a Sfile fansubber for four years. She told the researcher that, in the Sfile community, most CC providers were Chinese who studied or worked in the United States and Canada.

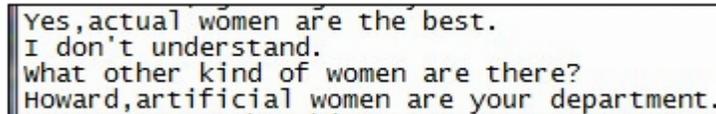
Volunteers in the Eastern Time Zone were more desirable because they could watch the latest episodes of most TV series earlier than people in other areas of America.

We decide a number of shows whose subtitles we are going to make before a TV season starts. So typically, one CC provider is responsible for recording prime-time shows on one television channel on a particular night of the week. They extract all closed captions of these programs right after finishing recording, export raw captions as text files, and send these files to the timers who can be reached by QQ (which is a popular instant messaging service in Mainland China)... For some popular shows, like Prison Break at that time, more than one CC provider was arranged to record closed captions in case one of them failed to capture captions. (Alessia, a regular proofreader)

The closed captions sent from the CC providers in the form of text files were not well organized. A single text file might include captions of several television programs and TV commercials. Moreover, all sentences were squeezed in one paragraph. A supervisor, who was a senior timer in the Section of Subtitle Synchronization, immediately divided the raw English closed captions into several parts according to different television shows, and distributed captions of each show to a timer who was in charge of that show. Next, it was the timers' responsibility to edit and synchronize closed captions.

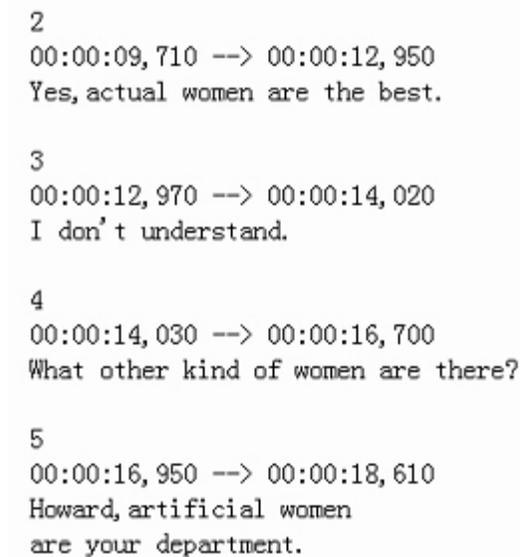
The process of editing and synchronization was very time-consuming. First, the timers had to download the latest episodes of TV shows right after download resources were released by Oday groups over the Internet. Members of Oday groups specialized in ripping the newest episodes on their computers and sharing these files on the Internet the same day as those episodes' original airings. Since there was no gap between the original airings and the release of download resources, these groups named themselves "Oday (zero-day)". After obtaining the video files and the closed captions at hand, the timers started to watch videos of episodes while transforming raw captions into time-

coded English subtitles. In order to help the researcher clearly understand timers' responsibilities, Charlie, who had been a timer for more than six months, sent two screen captures pertaining to the unsynchronized and synchronized subtitles of an episode of *The Big Bang Theory*, illustrating the differences between well-organized subtitle files and plain captions.



```
Yes, actual women are the best.  
I don't understand.  
what other kind of women are there?  
Howard, artificial women are your department.
```

Figure 4-1. Unsynchronized closed captions of *The Big Bang Theory* Season 3 Episode 12: The Psychic Vortex



```
2  
00:00:09, 710 --> 00:00:12, 950  
Yes, actual women are the best.  
  
3  
00:00:12, 970 --> 00:00:14, 020  
I don't understand.  
  
4  
00:00:14, 030 --> 00:00:16, 700  
What other kind of women are there?  
  
5  
00:00:16, 950 --> 00:00:18, 610  
Howard, artificial women  
are your department.
```

Figure 4-2. Synchronized English subtitles of *The Big Bang Theory* Season 3 Episode 12

First, the timers needed to rearrange the content of closed captions by separating each sentence into a new line, instead of all sentences in one paragraph. Second, all unnecessary sentences of TV commercials were deleted because video files downloaded from the Internet were completed without any advertising. Third, the timers should use software such as Pospub and Subtitle Workshop to add a start time and an

end time to each sentence based on the video files playing on the timers' computers. These time codes ensured that subtitles and images stayed in sync, meaning all the sentences appeared on screen at the right time. Once the time-coded English subtitle files were successfully established, they were ready to be distributed to the Translation Section.

The Translation Section had three groups, and each had its own list of shows to translate weekly. Every group had its regular proofreaders, regular translators, and substitute translators who collaborated together to make Chinese subtitles for 20 U.S. TV shows per week on average. Therefore, the Sfile fansub community was able to subtitle more than 60 popular U.S. TV shows during a season.

The proofreaders were experienced fansubbers who were former translators with excellent translation skills and extensive knowledge of Western culture. Each of them claimed one or more TV shows, proofreading every episode of those shows for an entire season. In order to complete a translation task efficiently, a proofreader usually had to work with three to four translators who were good at both English and Chinese. In short, almost every popular show had a regular proofreader and at least three regular translators. For some shows with fewer viewers, a regular proofreader was essential and responsible for finding translators for every episode.

After receiving English subtitle files of the shows that they claimed from the timers, the proofreaders assigned translation work to the translators on the basis of the quantity of sentences that needed to be translated. Subsequently, the translators started working on searching related information on the Internet and translating sentences from English to Chinese. Normally, a 40-minute episode had about 600 to 800 lines which required

four translators to work together, and each person translated 150 to 200 lines. Two to three translators are enough for a 20-minute comedy show. As for popular shows, one or two additional translators were needed for quick production of Chinese subtitles because fans wanted to watch the latest episodes as soon as they were released. However, for some shows with fewer viewers, a regular proofreader was essential, and responsible for finding available translators for every episode.

After both Chinese and English subtitle files had been created, these files were sent to the Subtitle Sharing Section, which was comprised of encoders and distributors whose jobs were to produce video files with embedded Chinese subtitles and upload these files to various Chinese file sharing sites and services for free download.

The Sfile community produced two kinds of video files with embedded Chinese subtitles. One was RMVB (Real Media Variable Bitrate) files due to their small size with fair quality; the other was MP4 (MPEG-4) files compatible with many handheld devices like iPod, iPhone, and PSP (Play Station Portable). The former was suitable for watching on computer while the latter was convenient for TV fans to enjoy their favorite shows anytime and anywhere. Therefore, the encoders added Chinese subtitle files to original video files with .avi extensions, and then compressed these AVI files into RMVB and MP4 files with embedded Chinese subtitles. In the final step, the distributors were to upload compressed subtitle files of both English and Chinese subtitles, Chinese-subtitled RMVB and MP4 files across multiple file sharing platforms.

Theme 2: Quality Control

The goal of the Sfile fansub community was to produce high quality subtitles as quickly as possible. In order to meet this objective, the community had several methods to ensure the quality of its products, both subtitles and subtitled video files.

First, fansubbers had to meet certain requirements to enroll in the Sfile fansub community. Supervisors of each section would make recruitment posts with job descriptions and requirements in detail. Besides, applicants for the position of fansub translator had to take an extra test. If they passed, they still had to work as interns for a period of time to prove they were qualified to be regular Sfile fansubbers.

Senior proofreaders pick some shows which are not that popular or with no existing Chinese subtitles, and let applicants translate one part of it, normally two or three hundred sentences, within a limited time. If they pass the test, they still need to complete a three-month internship before they become regular translators. (George, a regular proofreader)

Second, the subtitling process demonstrated Sfile's endeavor to produce high quality subtitles. Every section had a few supervisors in charge of administrative duties of the community. According to Alessia, the supervisors would make sure that each TV show had its regular fansubbers, and oversaw them to ensure that good quality subtitles could be released on time every week. "If any fansubber suddenly quits, that supervisor has to find a replacement as soon as possible, so the whole subtitle production of that show will not be delayed," said Alessia.

Proofreaders had an important role in quality control. They had several obligations, including coordinating with translators and supervising the content of subtitles. As for the coordination part, the proofreaders had to check who among the translators would be available for translating subtitles one day before new episodes were broadcast. If something unexpected happened to one of the regular translators which made that translator failed to participate in subtitle translation, the proofreader had to find a substitute translator as soon as possible. The proofreaders were required to correct mistakes in the draft versions of Chinese subtitles created by the translators, and polish the subtitles to perfection. Moreover, the proofreaders needed to type basic information

regarding who had participated in the subtitle production, the name and the episode of a show, and insert this information into the beginning of subtitle files.

In addition to recruitment and the subtitling process, Sfile initiated a process for fan feedback after subtitle files were distributed. A post was made in its forum where fans could point out any mistake they found in subtitles.

We visit this post constantly and read their (fans) comments to improve our work.... If there is any huge mistake such as failing to synchronize subtitles and video pictures or inaccurate translation of a long sentence which affects fans' understanding of what happened in the show, we will reproduce and redistribute subtitles. (Mandy, a regular proofreader)

Theme 3: Effective Integration of Technologies

Fansubbing has existed for more than twenty years. Nowadays, it continues to thrive on the Internet with the help of new technologies and media. The Sfile fansub community integrated several technological innovations into its community operation and subtitle production to ensure efficiency and productivity.

The forum not only allowed fans to communicate with others and download the latest resources, but also was a good place to recruit potential fansubbers. It had a recruitment subsection under the Sfile official section where the supervisors of the Sfile community made several posts regarding different fansubber positions. These posts briefly introduced application requirements and job responsibilities. In the study, the majority of participants mentioned they responded to these recruitment posts in the Sfile forum after they decided to be a fansubber. "If you are interested in any position, you can comment on that post with information about your desired position or contact them very easily by PM (Private Message)," said Penny, the supervisor of one translation group in the community.

In addition to using the forum as a way to recruit new fansubbers, Sfile's integration of technology was also reflected in its fansubbers' communication during the subtitling process. All participants used QQ, an instant messaging program, for fansubbing purposes. When asked why QQ was the most frequently used communication tool, participants attributed their choice to its multiple features, including group chat, embedded email client, file hosting service. Mandy told the researcher that fansubbers were required to open their QQ when translating subtitles because every section had and used its own QQ group to update its members with important announcements and latest changes. "If some shows are temporarily short on hands, proofreaders just need to say it in the group. Available members will come to help," said Mandy. In addition, Qmail allowed fansubbers to upload up to 1 GB attachments which were automatically stored in its file hosting service. Mandy explained, "It is really important because it means we can use Qmail to sending original video files on which we make subtitles. Other Email services do not allow its users to upload such a large file attachment."

Moreover, the Sfile community took advantage of several distribution channels to share its subtitles and video files. In addition to the Sfile forum, which was the base for resource sharing, Vicky, a distributor in the subtitle sharing section, illustrated how Sfile utilized new technologies to make its subtitles accessible to more Chinese fans. "We used WordPress to set up a Sfile official blog to share subtitles produced by our fansubbers. Besides, we created accounts on Twitter and Sina microblog. Therefore, fans can subscribe to the blog via our RSS feed or follow us on microblogs to get the latest subtitles." As for video file sharing, four methods were used to satisfy fans'

different requirements: BitTorrent, eMule, FTP, and file hosting services (i.e., regular HTTP download).

Theme 4: Emotional Involvement

When participants were asked about their most memorable subtitling experience, they listed the following as kinds of subtitling tasks they would not forget: the first shows that they worked on, the most demanding translation projects, the shows that they viewed for a long time, and last episodes of their translated shows. It could be perceived that they were emotionally involved in what they were doing.

When the study was conducted, the 2009-2010 TV season came to an end. Two very famous shows, *24* and *Lost*, and one popular comedy drama, *Ugly Betty*, reached their series finales. George, who proofread *Ugly Betty* regularly, shared his experience of making subtitles for the last episode of that show.

Normally it takes one timer, one proofreader, and three translators to produce subtitles for an episode of *Ugly Betty*. However, before the series finale, some fansubbers contacted me. They used to participate in this show but quit for some reasons later on.... And they wanted to take this last chance to make some contributions to *Ugly Betty*....At last, two timers, two proofreaders, and eight translators participated in the subtitle production of the last episode. We also inserted a sentence at the end of the show - Thanks for your support and companionship over the past four years. This was for the fans who enjoyed watching *Ugly Betty* with Sfile produced subtitles. (George)

Motivations

Since fansubbers voluntarily devoted themselves to peer production of Chinese subtitles, the motivations behind their involvement merited exploration. Based on their survey responses and interviews, participants' motivations for being fansubbers could be classified into the following categories.

Theme 1: Love for U.S. TV Shows

Fansubbers said they loved U.S. TV shows, consuming on average more than five shows per week. Some even watched 20 to 30 episodes each week. Ten participants mentioned that their love for certain U.S. TV shows motivated them to become involved in the Sfile community. Unlike American viewers who could watch live broadcasts to show their support for their favorite TV shows, these Chinese fans regarded making subtitles as a way to express their passion for the shows they liked. Subtitling for American television shows in Chinese was also a good way to increase the popularity of these shows in mainland China, where people lacked official access to the latest episodes of these shows.

I love *CSI: Miami* and the leading character Horatio Caine very much. I hope to make some contributions to the popularity of this show in China. Making subtitles for it, which allows more Chinese to watch this show, is the best way to show my support. (Nancy, a regular translator of *CSI: Miami*)

However, Alessia mentioned that not every fansubber was lucky enough to make subtitles for their ideal TV shows, although they were asked which shows they would like to work on when they first joined the community. This was more likely to happen to newly recruited members because their favorite shows already had regular timers, translators, and proofreaders. As a result, these newcomers worked as substitute translators in case the regular ones withdrew temporarily, or were assigned to other groups producing subtitles for shows which were short on labor. In this circumstance, the fansubbers' love for U.S. TV shows in general, not limited to a particular show, played a significant role in potential fansubbers' participation in the community.

As a loyal viewer of *Without a Trace*, Alessia was not assigned to translate that show right after being admitted into Sfile. She had been waiting for a long time until a

position in the translation crew became available after a regular translator left. When asked whether she would drop out of the community if the job of translating her favorite show had been taken, Alessia answered, "Maybe my passion for *Without a Trace* triggered my desire to participate in the community at that time, but I am willing to translate other U.S. TV shows even if they are not my favorite." She was still in the Sfile community when *Without a Trace* had already been cancelled for one year. "This is because, in my opinion, translating every episode of any show is a good chance for me to know what happens on the other side of the Earth and to experience different ways to live our lives."

Theme 2: Needs for Resources

Before a typical TV season began, the Sfile community picked up a number of new and returning U.S. TV shows based on their popularity and whether or not any proofreader would take charge of these shows. Sfile produced Chinese subtitles for these shows on a weekly basis in the following season. Subtitle production of hit TV shows such as *Lost*, *Prison Break*, *The Big Bang Theory* and *Grey's Anatomy*, was usually completed within 12 to 24 hours, after the original airing of new episodes. Fans of these popular shows only had to wait a short period of time to get available download resources, including soft subtitle files and Chinese-subtitled video files both made by the Sfile community. This also meant TV shows that attracted smaller audiences were not the community's top priority. It might take three to four days to complete Chinese subtitles for an episode due to the lack of timers, translators, and proofreaders. In order to shorten the wait time for available resources, some potential fansubbers decided to participate in the Sfile community and helped make subtitles for some less popular shows which they liked.

I had to wait several days until the Chinese subtitles for the newest episode were available. I heard that the delay of its subtitle release was due to the lack of fansubbers taking care of this show. Therefore, I applied for the position of *Smallville's* translator in the Sfile community, and hoped my help would make Chinese fans wait less time for latest subtitles. (Frank, a fan of *Smallville*)

Sometimes it was possible for the Sfile community to give up translating some shows in the middle of a season which were discussed less often by fans in the forum, and put more effort and human resources into making subtitles for popular TV shows. In addition, certain TV shows were abandoned from the beginning due to the fact that no proofreader was willing to take charge of them. The Sfile community would not sacrifice its reputation for a TV show without a proofreader because it meant the quality of its subtitles could not be guaranteed. However, these shows still had a small number of loyal viewers who longed for the early release of Chinese subtitles. Zoe belonged to a group of fansubbers who were motivated to be fansubbers because there were no Chinese subtitles available for the shows they watched.

...No existing fansub community produced subtitles for *The L Word* at that time, a drama about a group of lesbians, probably because not so many people were interested in such kind of theme which might be too sensitive. Therefore, I decided to join Sfile and took charge of translating subtitles for *The L Word*. (Zoe, a regular translator of *The L Word*)

The above two kinds of fansubbers were motivated by their needs for subtitle resources and actively used their initiative to join the Sfile community, creating subtitles for shows whose Chinese subtitles were delayed or which were originally not included in the community's schedule. Moreover, some participants valued early access to latest episodes of most U.S. TV shows and respective English subtitles provided by the Sfile community to its fansubbers through its FTP server. They could watch most U.S. TV shows, though with English subtitles instead of Chinese ones, earlier than ordinary

Chinese fans do. A fansubber might work in a group for making subtitles for one U.S. TV show, but he had access to all the other videos and English subtitle files stored on that FTP server. As a regular translator for *Mad Men*, Cherry thought back to 2005 when she decided to be a fansubber, and said that available resources related to U.S. TV shows on the Internet were not as pervasive as they were today.

At that time, not many websites provided file hosting services, and peer-to-peer technology had not been well developed. I remembered Bit Torrent was my primary way to download U.S. TV shows, but the download speed was not very high and stable, especially when I am downloading old television shows....In short, it was more difficult to get resources related to foreign TV shows. This made all resources stored on the Sfile's FTP server really attractive to me. (Cherry, a regular proofreader)

Theme 3: Curiosity about Fansub Culture

Fansub communities were mysterious to the participants because their members were active in cyberspace, staying far away from the spotlight. In this case, the participants said the Sfile community did not allow its members to take any interviews with media. Their low-profile existence made it hard for ordinary people to get an idea of how these communities operate and how their members collaborate with one another.

In this study, seven participants attributed their involvement in the Sfile community to the curiosity about fansubbing activities. They all felt inquisitive about Chinese fansub communities since the day they became fans of U.S. TV shows, and expressed their admiration to fansubbers who cooperated efficiently to produce a great number of resources accessible to the public over the Internet for free. Their constant curiosity led them to discover the fansub culture by being a member of a fansub community.

With regard to their choice of which fansub community to join, participants were inclined to engage the one from which they most frequently received benefits, such as downloading subtitles and videos. Once they had their preferred fansub community,

they stayed loyal to it. None of the participants had joined fansub communities other than Sfile. Before voluntarily working as fansubbers, they were fans of Sfile-produced subtitles and videos. They watched U.S. TV shows with Chinese subtitles made by the Sfile community most of the time because of its fast release times and accurate translations, and in turn Sfile became the fansub community with which they were most familiar. This familiarity helped to establish potential fansubbers' loyalty to the community and made it as their first choice when they decided to take part in fansubbing activities. In their eyes, the Sfile fansub community stood for high quality subtitles. Therefore, they preferred to voluntarily work in this community and contribute their efforts to it.

Theme 4: Interests in Languages

Most fansubbers who participated in this study were equipped with adequate English skills, but a few of them, especially those interested in the position of translator, had great enthusiasm for English. Five participants were college students majoring in English, and English-Chinese translation was a core component of their study programs. When they watched U.S. TV shows with Chinese subtitles, these English professionals were critical of the quality of subtitles, and were more likely to notice mistakes in translation. As a graduate student in the English department at a Shanghai-based university, Mandy noted that she tended to pay more attention to the quality of translation when watching U.S. TV shows.

Sometimes when I found mistakes in the subtitles for shows like *Criminal Minds* and *Bones*, I thought I could be a more qualified fansubber than some who were already in Sfile. Moreover, considering my interest in both English to Chinese translation and Chinese to English translation, I decided to give a shot at making more accurate subtitles. (Mandy, a regular proofreader)

For some of the participants who were non-English majors or employees but interested English as well, they regarded translating subtitles for U.S. TV shows as a way to maintain and improve their English. Although having little chance of practicing English in their daily study or work, they wanted to successfully maintain their proficiency in this language by translating up-to-date materials from popular U.S. TV series.

Furthermore, one participant studying abroad mentioned subtitle translation required broad knowledge of Mandarin Chinese as well, not just a good command of English. He became a fansubber in order to prevent himself from forgetting Mandarin because he spoke English most of the time.

Rewards

Participants in this study worked voluntarily and did not receive monetary compensation from their fansubbing experience. However, they gained primary four types of non-monetary rewards which resulted from their voluntary participation.

Theme 1: Knowledge Acquisition

Participants gained intangible benefits, and knowledge acquisition was one of the frequently mentioned rewards. It required various kinds of knowledge to successfully produce subtitles, especially when people were amateur fansubbers.

For CC providers, timers, and encoders, they acquired knowledge of how to operate TV tuner cards and subtitle editing software by self-learning or from their colleagues in the Sfile community, and applied this knowledge into practice through subtitling projects every week. With regard to subtitle distributors, they became familiar with the Wordpress publishing platform and various social media since they needed to

update the official Sfile subtitle sharing site and social media accounts once new subtitles came out.

As for translators and proofreaders who were responsible for the content of subtitles, they made great efforts to search for what they did not know and applied what they did know to subtitle translation. When asked to name one particular kind of knowledge that they gained from fansubbing activities, the majority of participants listed translation techniques and vocabulary enlargement. Medical TV series, crime and legal dramas, and sitcoms were regarded by participants as the most helpful kinds of television shows to learn new words, terms, and slang. Zoe was an employee at a travel agency, and often met people from English speaking countries. Subtitling for American TV shows every week had equipped her with a good sense of English language and helped her feel more comfortable and confident when talking to foreign people and speak more standard English instead of “Chinglish”, a combination of Chinese and English.

In addition to English improvement, fansubbers who were college students gained major-related knowledge from subtitling certain kinds of shows. Alessia, whose undergraduate major was law, had been a proofreader of crime and legal dramas for four years. She distinguished between fansubbers and television audiences, and demonstrated how she gained valuable knowledge of her area of interest from proofreading the shows that she liked.

An ordinary TV viewer may not think that deep when watching television shows. It is all about entertainment. However, for me, making subtitles for a single episode of these shows is like taking a class in American history and law because I have to search for a large amount of related information to ensure my translation is accurate, especially when I worked on *Cold Case* in which detectives dealt with unsolved cases several years ago. By

subtitling these shows I have learned how to investigate cases, how to prepare for court, and some famous figures and incidents which I would never know if I did not proofread these shows. On the contrary, what I learned in school was too general and superficial. (Alessia)

However, Chinese Internet censorship created difficulties for fansubbers when they searched information on the Internet. Molly had already been in the United States for two years, but she still clearly remembered the days when the Great Firewall separated her from Cyberspace. "Wikipedia was banned by the government in 2007 and the first half year of 2008, which was really inconvenient for us because it was one of our primary sources of knowledge and information when we encountered difficulties in the process of translating subtitles," she recalled. Afterwards, fansubbers started to learn how to find and use free proxies to get on Wikipedia and other sites which were blocked in China. In the meantime, they shared information about where to find available proxy servers in case the current ones did not work.

Moreover, Molly mentioned she felt familiar with American culture and adjusted to the new environment very quickly when she arrived in the States. Compared to other Chinese students who came with her, she experienced less culture shock, which she thought resulted from her making subtitles for U.S. TV shows for five years.

Theme 2: Like-Minded Friends

After being recruited into the Sfile community, fansubbers cooperated with one another to complete every subtitling task via instant messaging services such like QQ. In case of anything urgent, some exchanged their mobile phone numbers and communicated by SMS (short message service) as well. Therefore, it provided good opportunities for them to know about and subsequently make friends with their coworkers who shared the common interest in American television shows. They often

chatted online or sent short messages to keep in touch with other fansubbers when they were off subtitling work.

Participants expressed their joy in meeting new friends through fansubbing activities. They stayed connected with one other via instance messaging or social networking sites. Several participants naturally transformed cyber friends into real life friends if they and their fansubbing pals lived in same cities. It was convenient for them to hang out, have dinner together, sing Karaoke, and go shopping. Even if they lived in different cities from one another, they showed their hospitality once their friends came to visit their cities. During their gatherings, the conversational topics were not restricted to U.S. TV shows anymore. "We gossip about other members in the Sfile community, talk about other hobbies, and share our life experience," noted Zoe, who just had a good time with her friends the day before her Skype™ interview.

Theme 3: A Sense of Achievement

Research participants got a sense of achievement from their subtitling work. Some participants mentioned they felt proud when seeing their names appearing on screen at the beginning of every episode where subtitle information was shown. Some participants liked to visit the discussion forum where ordinary fans exchanged ideas about latest episodes of their favorite shows, and also made comments regarding subtitles. "Fans discuss our translation, point out mistakes, and give applause to our voluntary work," said Penny, a senior proofreader, "I like reading their posts, and value every compliment and criticism from fans. We stay up late, spending one hour or even more to make a sentence perfect, and some of us even suffer from neck pain. Their comments make me feel that our hard work is paid off."

That sense of achievement helped bring courage to participants who lost confidence in themselves. George, who joined the Sfile community after he failed the national higher education entrance exam, was one of them.

I got admitted by a university which was not good enough, and spent the first year of college on regretting and complaining. However, becoming a fansubber was the turning point during that time. I started to put my attention on translating subtitles, learning useful English from television shows, and making friends with other fansubbers. From that time on, I did not waste my time anymore. Instead, I learned how to manage my spare time.... When I look back, it is lucky for me to devote the remaining years of my college life to such a worthwhile activity because it helped me gain back confidence, and positively influenced my life. (George)

Theme 4: Exclusive Resources

After being fansubbers of the Sfile fansub community, exclusive resources regarding U.S. TV shows was another reward valued by the participants. Participants indicated that the Sfile community had two FTP servers, one for the registered users on the forum and one for its fansubbers exclusively. Resources on the former FTP server used by regular forum members were RMVB and MP4 files with embedded Chinese subtitles. After episodes were subtitled, distributors uploaded them to this FTP server for download. However, this was not a free service like other file sharing methods (e.g., BitTorrent, HTTP, eMule). Sfile had to prevent its FTP server from overloading due to the high volume of visitors. Fans needed to earn virtual money by posting in the discussion forum. Only those with enough virtual money were able to purchase download quota which was the allowed download limit for registered forum member. One gigabyte cost 50 virtual monetary units, which could be earned by publishing 50 posts in the forum. The more money fans had, the more episodes they could download.

In addition to the FTP server available to regular forum users, fansubbers in the Sfile community could login to an exclusive FTP server where original video files (in AVI

format without subtitles) of the latest episodes of U.S. TV shows were uploaded once they were released on the Internet. This server facilitated fansubbers' quick and efficient production of subtitles by providing fast and stable download speeds. Fansubbers obtained video files from this FTP server and started to synchronize and translate subtitles based on these video pictures. Prior to 2010, most video resources, both old and new shows, were hosted on the FTP server. Based on participants' description, this fansubbers-only FTP server had two distinctions compared to the one for regular users. First, no virtual money was needed for fansubbers to visit this FTP server. Second, all video files stored on it were AVI files which had better image quality than RMVB and MP4 files offered to regular forum members. It was a great incentive to participate in the Sfile community, since fansubbers could collect their favorite shows for multiple viewing.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings and Implications

The Internet now allows large numbers of people around the world to collaborate to work efficiently. A diverse range of grassroots activities take place in the realm of cyberspace, and fansubbing is one of them. To date there has been limited research focusing on this new online activity, and questions like the structure of fansub communities and the motivations of its participants have been rarely discussed. The purpose of this study was to fill the knowledge void by using a survey and in-depth interviews to analyze Sfile, a famous Chinese fansub community and its fansubbers. Three primary foci have been explored in this research: (1) the inner structure of the community and the way its fansubbers collaborate; (2) the motivations that lead fansubbers to engage in fansubbing activities; (3) the rewards gained by Sfile fansubbers through making subtitles for U.S. TV shows.

This study presented the inner structure of the Sfile fansub community and described the effective collaboration among its fansubbers. In all, Sfile had six kinds of fansubbers including closed-caption provider (CC provider), timer, proofreader, translator, encoder and distributor. They were allocated to three different sections which were the subtitle synchronization section, the subtitle translation section and the subtitle sharing section. Different roles and sections clearly defined Sfile fansubbers' responsibilities, and allowed the community to achieve its goal of high quality Chinese subtitles. This finding was similar to the human resources and stages involved in the fansub production of Japanese anime described by Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006).

A hierarchy based on time spent in the community existed in Sfile, differentiating new fansubbers from senior ones. New fansubbers were self-nominated for their preferred roles, and senior members determined whether they were qualified based on certain requirements. After being interns supervised by experienced fansubbers for three months, new fansubbers became regular ones assigned to different groups to produce subtitles of various U.S. TV shows. Several new technologies were involved in the production of subtitles and participants' communication: the web-based platform to recruit new fansubbers, instant messaging programs to facilitate communication among fansubbers, and the utilization of social media to distribute its fansubbed work.

A major finding of this study was identification of four motivations to voluntarily participating in subtitling American television shows. The first was fansubbers' passion for a certain series or U.S. television shows in general. They were loyal viewers of various shows, and considered subtitling for these shows as a way to show their support for their favorite shows.

Participants' desire for resources was their second motivation. They longed for fast release of Chinese subtitles and early access to video files and English subtitles, and therefore they decided to join the community and made the subtitling progress faster.

Participants' curiosity about fansub community was the third motivation. This curiosity began when the participants were ordinary fans who downloaded and received benefits of Sfile-produced fansubs.

The final incentive for the participants to get involved in fansubbing was their interests in languages. Since fansubbing required a great amount of time dealing with

English to Chinese translation, some participants treated fansubbing as a way to maintain their interest in both English and Chinese.

This study also gauged rewards obtained from participants' fansubbing experience, including knowledge acquisition, friendship, a sense of achievement, exclusive resources. Participants acquired knowledge rarely taught in school such as how to edit subtitle files and how to bypass the Internet censorship in China. They were also entitled to exclusive resources, including English subtitles and good quality video files, which were not accessible to ordinary fans. Moreover, participants expanded their social circles by knowing other fansubbers in the Sfile community and making friends with them. Another important reward was a sense of achievement gained from participants' voluntary contributions.

The findings in this study have several implications for understanding new audience activities over the Internet. First, this study illustrates new trends in fandom. Television fans have been stereotyped as brainless individuals who waste their time consuming worthless information and/or social misfits who isolate themselves from other social interactions (Jenkins, 1992). However, the situation has changed since personal computers and the Internet have become ubiquitous. Fans have used their own initiatives to launch new types of activities in cyberspace which require knowledge and skills. They collaborate with people who share their interests and leverage their varied talents to produce user-generated content, which, in turn, benefits them intellectually, socially, and psychologically. Researchers should pay more attention to this transition of television consumption experience in which TV fans change from passive consumers to active prosumers.

Second, according to participants' description of the Sfile fansub community, Sfile was not completely egalitarian. New fansubbers were supervised by senior ones, or the proofreaders took charge of the translators. This demonstrates the difference between the ideal model of peer production and the real organizational structure of a common-based peer production community. Ideally, peers create products based on their shared interests in a flat or horizontal organizational structure. In reality, however, "peer production mixes elements of hierarchy and self-organization and relies on meritocratic principles of organization," meaning, the community is led by most skilled and experienced members (Tapscott & Williams, 2006, p. 67).

Participants' motivations were self-interested or self-oriented ones, meaning they decided to be fansubbers because of their personal needs and desires. This supports that uses and gratifications is an appropriate perspective to understand Sfile fansubbers' engagement in fansubbing. Even though all participants voluntarily made contributions, altruism was rarely evident in their responses as to why they took part in fansubbing activities. A rare example was one fansubber's explanation that he wanted to contribute his help so that Chinese fans of *Smallville* would wait less time for subtitles of the newest episode. In general, the participants did not think much about whether subtitles they produced might benefit a large number of fans of U.S. TV shows in China. Previous studies have identified altruism as an important motivation for individuals' participation in peer production activities or their creation of user-generated content (Bergquist & Ljungberg, 2001; Hilton III, 2009; Rossi, 2004). However, altruism was not a common theme in this study.

In addition, the researcher tried to gain access to more Sfile fansubbers, but it was found that some fansubbers seemed reluctant to participate in this study due to their fear of possible lawsuits from copyright owners of U.S. TV shows or against illegal downloading and file sharing. They did not want to jeopardize their fansub community by exposing themselves in the public. This implies a conflict between what people can do with new media and the existing legal restrictions repressing grassroots creativity and user-generated content. This issue was also addressed by Lawrence Lessig in his book *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (2008). Unfortunately, the gap “between what the law permitted and what the technology allowed” has been consolidated by both the law and the technology “aiming to strengthen the control over the content” (Lessig, 2008, p. 98).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has some limitations. First, survey respondents were not randomly selected and the sample was relatively small because it was not easy to locate fansubbers who only made their presence known in a virtual community. Second, the response rate for the Skype™ interview was low. Ten Sfile fansubbers agreed to participate in the interview session, and only seven actually were interviewed by the researcher. An important explanation for the low response rate was that fansubbing was a sensitive issue for the participants because their subtitle production involved illegally downloading videos of U.S. TV shows from the Internet and copyright infringement of television programs, even though this was the only way for Chinese audiences to watch these shows. In order to ensure the existence of fansubbing as long as possible, some fansubbers said they preferred to keep low profile and avoid unnecessary exposure to media. Third, most participants were translators and proofreaders, and fansubbers who

play other roles (e.g., CC providers, encoders) were hard to recruit. This might be explained by their different job responsibilities. Proofreaders and translators were active in the forum in order to read fan feedback regarding their subtitle translation which resulted in their greater exposure in the forum.

In the future, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of fansubbing activities and individuals who devote themselves to these activities, more research should focus on other kinds of fansub communities devoted to different media products including, but not limited to, movies, anime, music videos, television programs, and magazines. When fansubbers translate foreign language texts into their native languages, the processes and individuals involved may vary.

With regard to U&G, this theory can continue to be used to understand individuals' interactions with new media. Future researchers should take a close look at specific new types of online activities which take place in the digital sphere where audiences are both consumers and producers of information, apart from investigating why people like using the Internet or other new media channels in general.

In the meantime, future researchers may try varied methods to conduct studies. They can create an account in a fansub community and try to build rapport with participants of different roles so as to get diverse answers regarding their fansubbing experience. Moreover, participants can be asked to fill out diaries, which will provide useful and comprehensive data to help depict a typical day or week of a fansubber.

In conclusion, this study can be used as a basis for further research on the fansub culture. It provides detailed information on the organizational structure of a Chinese fansub community and participants' motivations and rewards. It is hoped that this study

can inspire scholars to focus on new types of audience activities in the new media era to generate more nuanced theories of fans' mass collaboration in cyberspace.

APPENDIX A INFORMED CONSENT

You are being invited to participate in a research study about Chinese fansubs of U.S. TV shows. This research is conducted by Peng Qiu, a graduate student in the College of Journalism and Communications at University of Florida.

It is important for you to carefully read this consent document before you decide to participate in this study.

Protocol Title:

Audience Activity in the New Media Era: Chinese Fansubs of U.S. TV Shows

Purpose of the Research Study:

This study will explore the general background of people who participate in the production of fan-made subtitles (a.k.a. fansubbers), and to investigate how the fansub community is organized. Meanwhile, the study will also gauge the motivations that inspire this audience activity and rewards that fansubbers may receive.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Study:

First, you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about your background and your experience as a fansubber. At the end of the survey, you can choose whether to accept a Skype™ interview. If you agree to be interviewed, you will be required to create a Skype™ account or use your existing account, and schedule an interview with me on your experience as a member of your fansub community.

Time Required:

The questionnaire can be completed between 15 and 30 minutes, and the interview will last about 60 minutes.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no anticipated risks and direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. But you can take this opportunity to reflect on your experience as a fansubber.

Compensation:

There is no compensation to you for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

In this study, your confidentiality will be strictly protected. Your real name will not be used. In other words, you can use any pseudonym or username on the fansub community during the process of answering the questionnaire and the interview. Your IP address will not be collected, and your Skype™ account will not be published in any report. Your data will be safely stored, and only I and my supervisor will have access to this information.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation will be completely voluntary. You will be entitled to decline to answer any question which you do not want to answer.

Right to Withdraw from the Study:

If you decide to stop participating in the study, you can withdraw from it at any time without consequence. Your data which has been collected, if any, will be destroyed immediately.

Whom to Contact If You Have Questions about the Study:

Peng Qiu, Graduate Student, Department of Mass Communication, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611, U.S.A.

Email: pengqiu@ufl.edu

Phone: 86-13917849082; 01-352-870-7625

Whom to Contact about Your Rights as a Research Participant in the Study:

IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; phone 392-0433.

Agreement:

I am 18 years old or older, and have read the information above. I have understood the nature of this study, and voluntarily agree to participate. Provision of my pseudonym or username on the fansub community below indicates my consent.

Name: _____

(The Chinese Version of the Informed Consent form below is translated by Peng Qiu, the researcher of this study, whose native language is Chinese.)

同意书

您被邀请参与一个关于美剧粉丝字幕的调查中。此次调查由美国佛罗里达大学新闻传播学院学生邱芃设计并负责。

在您决定参加此次调查前，请仔细阅读以下内容。

调查题目：新媒体时代的观众行为：美剧粉丝字幕

研究目的：

本调查将探索美剧粉丝字幕组成员的基本背景、粉丝字幕组的结构、以及粉丝们加入字幕组的动机和他们的收获。

在调查中您要做的事情：

首先，您需要填写一份关于您基本背景资料的问卷（其中问题会涉及年龄、性别、教育情况等）。在问卷的最后一部分，您将会被邀请接受一个 Skype™ 采访。如果您同意，您可以与我约定采访时间，详细畅谈您作为字幕组一员的经历。

所需时间：

第一部分问卷大约需要 15 至 30 分钟完成。第二部分采访则需大约 60 分钟。

风险与获益：

您的参与将不会对您有直接的利害影响。但是，您可以借此机会回顾您的字幕组生涯。

报酬：

您参与本次调查将不会获得任何报酬。

保密协议：

在此次调查中，我将会严格保护您的隐私。您不需要提供您的真实姓名。在问卷及采访中，您可以使用假名或网名。同时，我也不会记录您的 IP 地址，而您的 Skype™ 帐户将不会公布在任何报告文件中。所有关于您的数据将会被妥善保管，只有我和我的导师有权接触到这些数据。

自愿参与：

您的参与是百分之百自愿的。您有权拒绝回答任何您不想回答的问题。

退出权：

如果您不想继续参与本次调查，您可以在任何时候选择退出，并且无需承担任何结果。您的数据将会被立即销毁。

如果您对本次调查有疑问，请联系：

Peng Qiu, Graduate Student, Department of Mass Communication, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611, U.S.A.

(邱芑: 佛罗里达大学新闻传播学院研究生, 盖恩斯维尔, 佛罗里达, 美国)

电子邮件: pengqiu@ufl.edu

电话: 86-13917849082; 01-352-870-7625

如果您对在本次调查中您的权利有疑问, 请联系:

IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250;

电话: 01-352-392-0433.

同意书:

我已年满 18 岁, 并且仔细阅读了以上内容。我已了解本次调查的性质, 自愿加入本次调查。以下提供我的假名或字幕组网名代表我同意参与此次调查。

名字: _____

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your gender?
 - A. Male
 - B. Female

2. What is your age?
 - A. 18-20
 - B. 21-25
 - C. 26-30
 - D. 31-35
 - E. >35

3. What is your current occupation? _____

4. Does your current occupation have any relationship to your fansubbing experience? If yes, please provide the details of the relationship.
 - A. Yes _____
 - B. No

5. What is your education level?
 - A. ≤ High school
 - B. Still in college
 - C. College graduate
 - D. Post graduate

6. What English test(s) did you take?
 - A. CET-4 (College English Test-4)
 - B. CET-6 (College English Test-6)
 - C. TEM-4 (Test for English Majors-4)
 - D. TEM-8 (Test for English Majors-8)
 - E. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)
 - F. IELTS (International English Language Testing System)
 - G. GRE (Graduate Record Examination)
 - H. Other (please specify) _____
 - I. None

7. How many U.S. TV shows do you regularly watch each week?

8. Why do you watch U.S. TV shows?

9. How long have you been a member of the Sfile fansub community?

10. How were you recruited to be a fansubber in the Sfile community?

11. Were you a member of any other fansub community? If yes, which one(s)?

12. What is your role in the Sfile fansub community (e.g., regular translator, proofreader, technical supporter, etc.)? Please describe in detail. _____

13. During the last week, how many U.S. TV shows did you sub?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5
- F. >5

14. During the last week, approximately how much time did you devote to your subbing work?

- A. < 3 hours
- B. 3-5 hours
- C. 5-8 hours
- D. 8-10 hours
- E. >10 hours

15. As a fansubber, is your work voluntary or paid?

- A. Voluntary
- B. Paid

16. If you work voluntarily, what non-monetary benefits do you gain from the production of fansubs? List as many as you can.

17. Do you work individually or in a team?

- A. Individually
- B. In a team _____

18. If you work in a team, please describe how your team operates (e.g., How many team members? How do your team members work collectively in the process of making subtitles? How do you communicate with other members? etc.)

Please think back to the first day when you became a fansubber, and answer the following questions as detailed as you can.

19. What motivated you to be part of your fansub community?

20. What requirements were needed at that time?

Please reflect on the tasks that you have completed, and answer the following questions as detailed as you can.

21. Which task is your favorite one? Why?

22. Which task is the most memorable one? Why?

Thanks for completing the questionnaire.

I would like to know more about your experience as a fansubber and your fansub community. I appreciate if you can schedule a Skype™ interview with me. This interview will last about 60 minutes.

23. Are you willing to accept this interview request?

A. Yes

B. No

24. When will it be convenient for you to take this interview?

If you already have a Skype™ account, feel free use your existing account. If not, you can visit Skype™'s official web site (<http://www.skype.com>) and create your account for free.

25. What is your Skype™ account?

APPENDIX C
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you tell me something about yourself?
 - Age, occupation, education background, hobbies.
 - How long have you been a fansubber?
 - What U.S. TV shows do you watch lately?
2. What is your role in your fansub community?
3. What is your latest experience of making fansubs?
 - Can you help me walk through the process of making fansubs?
4. What software do you use during the production of fansubs?
5. What does your working environment look like?
 - Individual work or teamwork?
 - If work as a team, how do you communicate with each other?
 - How is your fansub community structured?
6. Can you describe your workload in a typical week (e.g., last week)?
 - How do you devote your time to your fansubbing tasks?
7. When you think back to the day that you became a member of the fansub community, what motivated you to be a fansubber at beginning?
8. What requirements were needed at that time?
9. What have you gained from making fansubs?
 - Monetary rewards
 - Non-monetary rewards

APPENDIX D INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

Alessia

Alessia is an employee of a foreign-invested corporation. She studied international law when she was an undergraduate student, and therefore she likes watching legal and crime dramas like *Boston Legal*, *Cold Case*, *Without a Trace*. Having been a member of the Sfile fansub community for four years, she is an experienced proofreader currently responsible for *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*.

Cherry

Cherry joined the Sfile community in 2005 when she was in the second year of her undergraduate study. At that time, she participated in translating *Prison Break* which was the most popular American TV shows in China. Now, she is a PHD candidate at an American university. Due to heavy academic load, she uses her spare time only to proofread *Mad Men*.

George

George is a senior college students and an experienced proofreader of shows such like *The Big Bang Theory*, *Lost* and *Ugly Betty*. He also takes charge of recruiting new translators by assigning them original video clips for the translation test, and decides whether they are qualified.

Mandy

Mandy is a Master's student majoring in English with specialization in linguistics. She is a senior proofreader taking care of shows such as *Criminal Minds*, *Brothers and Sisters*, and *Bones*.

Molly

Molly is a regular translator of the Sfile fansub community. In the meantime, she studies as a Master's student in the United States. Currently, she is not in charge of any show due to personal reasons.

Penny

Penny is both a senior proofreader and a supervisor of the Sfile community. Her responsibilities include proofreading shows, recruiting new members, and reading fans' feedback published in the forum.

Zoe

Zoe was an English major, and decided to be a fansubber because the Sfile community did not produce subtitles of *The L Word*, which was her favorite show. Now she works for a travel agency. Since *The L Word* was cancelled in 2008, she currently translates most Showtime's original dramas including *Californication*, *Nurse Jackie* and *Weeds*.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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