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# **Non-Professional Subtitling in Iran: A Study on Quality, Motivation, and Audience Perception**

PhD Dissertation

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## ABSTRACT

Dubbing is the practice of replacing the original language of a film or TV show with a different language, and it is a common practice in Iran. Due to Iran's strict censorship regulations, scenes containing political or controversial content may be removed completely or replaced with more appropriate alternative scenes. This type of censorship can be applied more easily through dubbing since the dialogue can be changed without altering the visual content. However, fansubbing, a type of non-professional subtitling, has allowed Iranians to bypass these restrictions and access a wider range of media. Iranian fansubbers typically work on popular TV shows and films from countries such as South Korea, Japan, and the United States. Nevertheless, the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance decided to grant permission to Iranian official and online video-service providers such as Namava and Filmio to subtitle overseas AV products.

As the subtitling industry in Iran continues to grow and evolve, it is interesting to see empirically how the quality of the professional subtitles and fansubs differ. Furthermore, most Iranian studies in the field subtitling have only focused on the linguistic and cultural aspects. However, far too little attention has been paid to the reception of subtitling, particularly fansubbing, in the Iranian context, and it is not apparent empirically why Iranian fansubbers do subtitling and why Iranian audiences watch them. Finally, regarding the statement of the problem, this study investigates the following main problems: (a) there has been no empirical comparison between the quality of Persian professional and fansubs, (b) there has been no academic investigation of the motivations for subtitling among Iranian fansubbers, and (c) there has been no academic investigation of the reception of fansubbed television programs by Iranian audiences.

Therefore, in this project, the following objectives are addressed: (a) to determine the quality of Persian pro- and fansubs, (b) to identify the main categories of motivations and reasons for subtitling among Iranian fansubbers, (c) to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of Iranian fansubbers regarding the quality of professional and fansubs, and (d) to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of Iranian viewers regarding the activity of fansubbing and quality of fansubs. This study explored the reception of non-professional translation among fansubbers and audiences of fansubbed programs in Iran. Furthermore, the Persian contextualized version of the functional

equivalence, acceptability and readability areas (FAR) model was used to assess the quality of pro- and fansubs in the Iranian context.

Since professional subtitlers often maintain a quality control process to ensure accuracy, consistency, and readability, the quality assessment results showed that professional subtitlers performed better than fansubbers in terms of functional equivalence, acceptability, and readability. The results of the interview and survey revealed that the low quality of the current official subtitling and dubbing in Iran can be attributed to a lack of respect and recognition for subtitlers. Additionally, they felt that the translators selected for the official translations were not solely based on their qualifications. In addition, there was a strong emphasis on providing free fansubs to users, and the reasons for translating for free included religious reasons, good intentions, and charges for official translation services. According to the results, some fansubbers believed that working in a team was beneficial, while others preferred to work alone. It was important for those who preferred to work alone to maintain their independence and freedom when translating. Although most fansubbers feel some connection to the fansubbing community, there is no clear consensus regarding the strength of this connection, or whether they prefer it over other types of communities. The study also revealed that fansubbers gain satisfaction from seeing their work reach a wide audience and being appreciated. Based on the results of the netnography survey, fansubbing was considered an acceptable method of free online content sharing, and Persian viewers appreciated that fansubbers took the time and effort to translate and subtitle the shows they enjoyed. There was a mixed opinion among viewers regarding the quality and speed of the Iranian fansubs' creation. While some viewers appreciated the high quality of the fansubs and the speed at which they were created, others expected more and compared the Iranian fansubbers to others from other countries. As a result of the study, some audiences expressed their gratitude by naming their favourite fansubbers or groups. In addition, some users believed that the website provided subtitles, when in fact it only uploaded films. In sum, this mixed-methods study provided the first empirical evidence on the (non) professional subtitling in the Iranian context, their opinions and motivations behind doing subtitles, as well as Iranian viewers' feedback on this type of activity which have both theoretical and applied implications.

## **DISSERTATION DECLARATION**

The present dissertation is my original and individual work under the supervision of Dr. Erzsébet Barát. It should be noted that I have not submitted the results of this research for any other degree or award or any other qualification with my name at this university or at any other institution. In this thesis, all previous studies are cited and referenced. I agree that this final version of my thesis is to be made available through the university's research repository, the research engines, and the university itself.

Szeged, 18-09-2023

Milad Mehdizadkhani

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

- AD:** audio description
- AV:** audiovisual
- AVT:** audiovisual translation
- DMCA:** digital millennium copyright act
- FAQ:** frequently asked questions
- FAR:** functional equivalence, acceptability, readability
- IRIB:** The Islamic Republic of Iran broadcasting
- SDH:** subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing
- SLI:** sign language interpreting
- TS:** translation studies

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Throughout this project, the issue of the subtitling quality of Persian professional subtitles and fansubs will be extensively examined and empirically compared, as well as investigated from the perspective of both fansubbers and viewers. This chapter serves as the introduction and contextualization of the study, as its title indicates. Then, the study objectives are explained and the importance of the project is established. Towards the end of the chapter, the considerations of the ethics are explained and the structure of the dissertation is outlined.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

According to (Pérez-González, 2009), audiovisual translation (AVT) refers to "a branch of translation studies concerned with the transfer of multimodal and multimedial texts into another language and/or culture" (p. 13). The type of text is multimodal, meaning that it combines numerous semiotic resources, including language, colour, image, and music. In contrast, multimedial refers to the presentation of all these resources in sync through various media. Briefly, AVT is the translation of any material in an audio, visual, or audiovisual format (Díaz-Cintas, 2010; Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2014). Furthermore, the AVT process differs from that of translating written texts due to the unique nature of AVT's texts. Although AVT is undoubtedly discussed in relation to the theory of translation in general, its uniqueness in combining audio and visual spheres demands a specific type of theoretical approach that may assist translators in understanding the general expectations of target audiences.

AVT has received increasing interest due to the development of the film industry, which has resulted in the rapid development of this previously neglected area in the field of translation studies (TS) (Bogucki, 2013; Assis Rosa, 2016; Chaume, 2002, 2004, 2018). Research into audiovisual language transfer methods is increasingly being acknowledged by scholars and specialized conferences and special issues of journals on AVT studies, as film translations are much more common than other forms of translation (Díaz-Cintas, 2009; Pedersen, 2010; Gambier & Ramos Pinto, 2016). Additionally, AVT can be analysed using established theories and procedures that were initially considered inapplicable because of its technical limitations (Evans, 2022; Mangiron, 2022).

During the 1990s, AVT became more engaged in professional, academic and scholarly activity (Gambier, 2012). As far back as the late 1950s and 1980s, there were few "superficial contributions", but since the early 1990s, "we have entered a period of vigorous activity, which points to a very promising future for the next few decades" (Daz-Cintas, 2003, p. 193). There are several distinct areas that can be included in this engagement and development process. In the first place, there is technological advancement that is evident in equipment such as CDs, DVDs, and video recorders. As a result of these technological advancements as well as "geopolitical changes," (Pérez-González, 2016, p.7), the demand for audiovisual products is increasing (Szarkowska, 2011). Second, there is the scholarly and academic side of the AVT, which forms part of the above group. The 1990s saw the publication of a number of key references in the field such as journal articles and books (for example, Delabastita, 1990; Luyken, Herbst, Langham-Brown, Reid & Spinhof, 1991; Ivarsson, 1992; Whitman-Linsen, 1992; Pommier, 1998). The last but not least area of development should be arbitrarily referred to as "socio-forensic" since it is related to various European Union Directives which influence the acceptability of audiovisual media as well as the ability of main groups to "promote and reinforce their language and cultural identity" (Gambier, 2003, p. 171). One of such directives, notably the EU Directive 2007/65/EC of the European Parliament, was introduced in Poland in 2011 and forced broadcasters of the member state to make 10 percent of their air time available for audio description (AD), subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing (SDH), and sign language interpreting (SLI) (Szarkowska, 2013).

The process of subtitling involves taking the audio from the media and converting it into text and then the text is translated into the desired language, timed, and formatted so that it can be read on the screen (Ivarsson, 1992; Gottlieb, 1994). The purpose of this is to ensure that the text is legible and synchronized with the audio. As a result, viewers will be able to follow the dialogue accurately and understand the meaning of the content. In addition, professional subtitlers must ensure that the subtitles are synchronized with the action of the film and that they are easy to read, even when there are multiple lines of dialogue on the screen (Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998). In this regard, it is important to reflect the original dialogue and meaning accurately in order to avoid misinterpretations that could lead to confusion for the viewer. As well as cultural references, idioms, and colloquialisms, translation can be difficult and can result in a loss of meaning or even jokes that are unintelligible in the target language (Pedersen, 2007). Non-professional subtitling, on the other hand, is performed by individuals who are not trained or have no experience in

subtitling. Fansubbing is a common type of non-professional subtitling performed by fans who are passionate about a particular film or television show and wish to translate it into their native tongue (Díaz-Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006). Fansubbing may also be performed by individuals who provide subtitling services on a part-time or hobby basis (Massidda, 2015). The creation of fansubbing by a fansubber may involve the use of free software or online tools. In spite of this, the quality of the subtitles may vary significantly, as fansubbers may not possess the same level of expertise as professional subtitlers (Bogucki, 2009). The fansubs may be poorly timed, contain grammatical errors, or even convey an incorrect message, which can lead to confusion for the audience.

The translation of media into different languages ensures that the message is conveyed accurately regardless of the cultural or linguistic background of the audience. As a result, the text is able to reach a broader audience and serve its purpose more effectively. Without a viewer, audiovisual (AV) texts would be of no significance; this is why a systematic effort is necessary to find out more about audience reception (Tuominen, 2012). Nord (2012, p. 32) further explains how subtitlers are aware of their viewers' needs; "In fact, it is easy to talk about the audience's expectations, but much more challenging to obtain empirical evidence of what audiences really expect (for certain genres or in certain non-linguistic fields)". Despite the fact that the reception of AV products has been widely studied, Antonini (2005) argues that the impact that dubbing and subtitling have on the perception of these products has been neglected. Chaume (2013) also confirms it and contends that the role of reception processes in AVT studies must be further investigated in order to provide insights into how different audiences experience and interact with AV products and the way these products are created, distributed, and consumed worldwide.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

Dubbing is the practice of replacing the original language of a film or TV show with a different language, and it is a common practice in Iran. Due to Iran's strict censorship regulations, scenes containing political or controversial content may be removed completely or replaced with more appropriate alternative scenes. This type of censorship can be applied more easily through dubbing since the dialogue can be changed without altering the visual content (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2014; Nord et al., 2005; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018; Mehdizadkhani & Khoshsaligheh,



2021). The relationship between dubbing and censorship is complex and multifaceted. Dubbing can be used to both censor and promote, to both control and liberate. It is a tool that can be used for both good and evil. Ultimately, the impact of dubbing on censorship depends on the specific context in which it is used. In a similar vein, Keating (2014) contends that dubbing was not simply a technical process of language translation, but rather a political tool used to reinforce the regime's ideological messages. She illustrates how the dubbing process was often used to alter or remove politically sensitive scenes in order to promote the regime's values. Scholars have also explored how dubbing has been used to censor films in China (Zhang, 2004; Du, 2015), the United States (Díaz-Cintas, 2019), and Italy (Bucaria, 2009; Keating, 2013; Ranzato, 2013). The mentioned studies provide a valuable backdrop, offering insights into how dubbing practices intersect with political agendas in different parts of the world. Although my study aligns with the broader scholarly discourse on the political use of dubbing, as mentioned in the interview data, it distinguishes itself through its specific focus on the Iranian context and its empirical approach to comparing professional subtitles and fansubs.

Fanubbing, on the other hand, has allowed Iranians to bypass these restrictions and access a wider range of media. Iranian fansubbers typically work on popular TV shows and films from countries such as South Korea, Japan, and the United States (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2016). They translate the media into Persian, the official language of Iran, and distribute the translations online. The popularity of fansubbing in Iran has also had a significant impact on the media industry in the country. Many Iranians now prefer to watch foreign media with Persian subtitles. This has led to a shift in the media landscape in Iran, with foreign media becoming more widely available and popular among Iranian audiences (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020). The Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance decided to grant permission to Iranian official and online video-service providers such as Namava and Filmio to subtitle overseas AV products (Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2016). As the subtitling industry in Iran continues to grow and evolve, it is interesting to see empirically how the quality of the professional subtitles and fansubs differ. Furthermore, most Iranian studies in the field subtitling have only focused on the linguistic and cultural aspects. However, far too little attention has been paid to the reception of subtitling, particularly fansubbing, in the Iranian context, and it is not apparent empirically why Iranian fansubbers do subtitling and why Iranian audiences watch them. Finally, regarding the statement of the problem, this study investigates the following main problems: (a) there has been no empirical comparison

between the quality of Persian professional and fansubs, (b) there has been no academic investigation of the motivations for subtitling among Iranian fansubbers, and (c) there has been no academic investigation of the reception of fansubbed television programs by Iranian audiences.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

In this project, the following objectives are addressed:

- To determine the quality of Persian pro- and fansubs;
- To identify the main categories of motivations and reasons for subtitling among Iranian fansubbers
- To investigate the perceptions and attitudes of Iranian fansubbers regarding the quality of professional and fansubs
- To investigate the perceptions and attitudes of Iranian viewers regarding the activity of fansubbing and quality of fansubs

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Reception and quality assessment of subtitles have received relatively little academic attention in Iranian Translation Studies (TS) and AVT studies. As Gambier (2009a, p. 52) points out, "few studies have examined the issue of reception in AVT and even fewer have examined it empirically, even though we continue to refer to readers, viewers, consumers, etc.". The Iranian context does not appear to have been adequately studied in terms of AVT on reception, despite some research being conducted by researchers from other countries. Furthermore, the project has implications for researchers, trainers, trainees, and practitioners, including subtitlers and subtitling policymakers. Apart from the lack of research as a rationale for this study, it is also anticipated that this project will provide valuable information regarding reception norms in the Iranian context in the context of fansubbing, which will broaden the horizons of Iranian TS in general and AVT in particular. In order to achieve the multifaceted objectives of this study, a series of qualitative and quantitative analyses as well as a materials construction and validation phase were conducted. Through an examination and materialization of the theory of reception, this study represents one

of the earliest attempts to popularize the idea of reception at macrolevels among TS and AVT researchers and practitioners.

This project can be used by AVT, TS and even cinema and film studies researchers in their own research or projects. Translation trainers, trainees, and translators may consider applying these findings to their work so that their translations are based on the ideas of those who participated in the study. The final group could include official subtitlers and subtitling policymakers who can use the results to modify their activities. In terms of its significance, this study is primarily relevant because (a) it is probably the first academic study that assesses the quality of Persian pro- and fansubs, (b) it is most likely the first academic study provides a clear picture of fansubbing reception among Iranian fansubbers and viewers, and (c) this research is important both theoretically and practically; it employs an emerging method known as netnography in TS and AVT.

## **1.5 Consideration of the Ethics**

Since the main part of this project favoured a participant-oriented research methodology, it was highly imperative to consider the project's ethics. Due to the fact that this research was conducted inside Iran, there were no ethical issues with regard to cultural consideration and diversity (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Data collection was conducted online, which ensured participants in all phases were protected from physical and psychological harm. In the study of the reception of fansubbing among fansubbers, the subjects were aware that they were being investigated and agreed to be part of the study even though I asked them to give their consent. In order to achieve ethical approval, the participants were provided with adequate information about the project and its objectives at all stages of the study. All participants were volunteers, and they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. Regarding confidentiality and anonymity, the participants were assured that their identities would not be disclosed. Furthermore, in collecting the netnography data, the study was conducted on a public forum and on previous posts and comments made by users. In the thesis, I also anonymized the names of the users.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

This project consists of seven chapters and is organized as follows: The first chapter presents the topic under discussion as well as ethical considerations. In the second chapter, theoretical perspectives on AVT are discussed, ranging from AVT to discussions on fansubbing and reception studies. In the third chapter, the methods and analytical procedures employed in the study are described in detail. Chapter 4 explores the quality of subtitles produced by the Iranian fansubbers and professional subtitlers and discuss the findings with the previous research. Chapter 5 is concerned with the motivations and reasons of the Iranian fansubbers behind doing the subtitles. Additionally, it discusses the results from the interview questions as well as the survey addressing the reception of Iranian fansubbers in the bigger scale. Chapter 6 is concerned with the perceptions of and value judgements of Iranian viewers about fansubbers' translations into Persian. It also discusses the fieldnotes, archival data from the website [film2movie.ws](http://film2movie.ws), and elicited audience's opinion about the subtitles provided by fansubbers. Chapter 7 provides concluding remarks, theoretical and pedagogical implications as well as implications for practice. It also discusses the limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

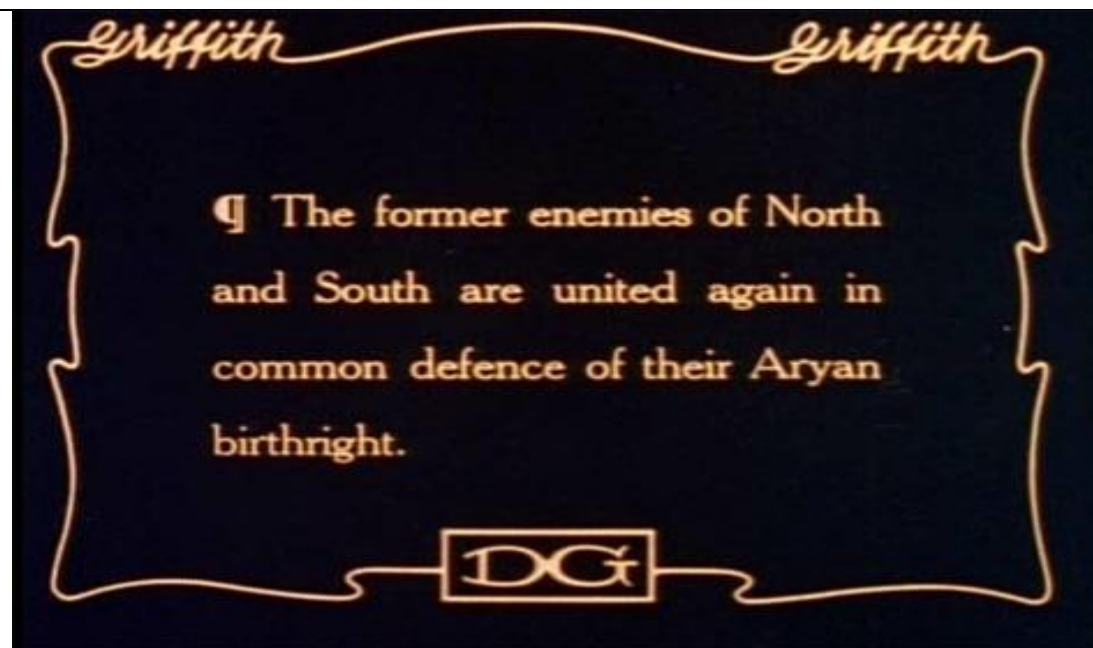
This chapter is primarily an overview of the literature on audiovisual translation (AVT), particularly the phenomenon of non-professional subtitling. It reviews the history of AVT as both practice and a research paradigm, AVT texts, different modes of AVT, and norms in AVT. It then goes on to define the different types of non-professional subtitling practices and critically elaborates the various kinds of practice of subtitling in Iran.

### 2.1 The Emergence of Audiovisual Translation

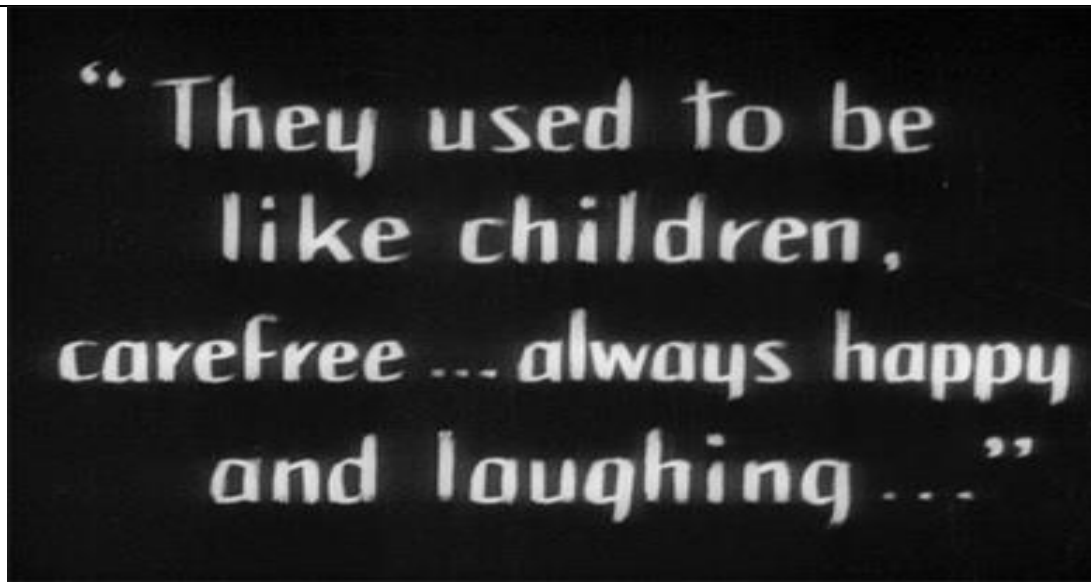
Although AVT is a concept broader than film translation, it originated from the practice of making films (Díaz-Cintas et al., 2010). The first films were pioneered in France in the 1890s (Gunning, 2004). Photography had been around before then, but no one was able to make moving pictures. In the 1890s, the Lumière brothers develop a technology that makes it possible for people to record the moving images and they make the very first film called *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (Gunning, 2004; Newell, Salmon, & Chang, 2006). It is less than one minute long and shows real people leaving in a factory, more than a hundred years ago. To many people back then, the film and the technology itself were so amazing that they were prepared to pay good money to come into a room and see those moving pictures.

Since these films had no soundtrack yet, they were shown accompanied by music. This is the silent era in the history of film lasting until 1929 (Gunning, 2004), the beginning of the word era. Film Studies and AVT scholars agree that since this short period of time was marked by rapid technological and cinematic advancements, it is appropriate to refer to it as an era (Lack, 1997; Nornes, 2007; Romero-Fresco, 2013). In other words, as a term, 'era' does not necessarily refer to a long period of time, but rather to a specific period in history which is characterized by significant cultural, social, or technological developments. In terms of filmmaking, the silent era was characterized by significant innovation and creativity, with filmmakers developing new techniques for visual storytelling, such as close-ups, montages, and camera movement. Despite the short duration of the silent era, from the late 1890s to the late 1920s, it had a profound impact on the development of cinema as an art form as well as a commercial enterprise. Therefore, it is considered an important period in film history and is referred to as an 'era'.

In terms of this project's interests in translation, silent movies in their early times were shown with in-house interpreters describing the events of the films (Lack, 1997). However, the directors very quickly come up with the idea that they need to show the film without any need of in-house interpreters, which were called intertitles (Díaz-Cintas, 2008). Therefore, we can say that the first practice of AVT originates in the silent movie era where these intertitles were “introduced between the frames to narrate the plot” (Bartolomé Hernández & Mendiluce Cabrera, 2005, p.89). In other words, intertitles are like long shots showing words on the screen. There are two kinds of intertitles: expository and dialogue intertitles (Chisholm, 1987; Nagels, 2012). The word ‘exposition’ means telling people things that they are believed to need to know; therefore, in the silent films, the audiences see shots with explanations of what is going on with the help of expository intertitles (see Figure 1). The dialogue intertitles, on the other hand, represent the film dialogues on the screen enclosing them within quotation marks (see Figure 2).



**Figure 1** An Example of Expository Intertitle in *The Birth of a Nation* ( “*Birth of a Nation*” - *US History Scene*, 2017)



**Figure 2** *An Example of Dialogue Intertitle in Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans (Network, 2015)*

The interesting thing about intertitles in translation is that a screen translator can easily replace the original shots with the text in the target language. In the context of Iran, for example, Motazedi photographed and inserted Persian intertitles into original films in his personal lab (Naficy, 2011a) (see Figure 3). It should be noted, however, that the common method used for rendition of intertitles was revoicing; that is, the original intertitle is shown in its original language while a narrator reads a translation of that intertitle (Naficy, 2011b).



**Figure 3** *An Example of Persian Substitution of an English Dialogue Intertitle in Steamboat Bill Jr. (فیلم استیمبوت جونیر)* [Steamboat Bill, Jr's Film], 2016)

## 2.2 A Historical Overview of AVT as a Research Paradigm

AVT “is a branch of translation studies concerned with the translation of multimodal and multimedial texts into another language and/or culture” (Pérez-González, 2009, p. 13). Multimodality refers to the use of multiple semiotic resources or modalities in a text, including but not limited to language, visual images, sounds, gestures, and typography. The different modalities work together to convey meaning and create a cohesive whole. In multimodal advertisements, for example, images, text, and music may be used to convey a message. On the other hand, multimediality refers to the use of different media to present the content of a text in a coordinated or synchronized manner. An effective method of conveying information and engaging the audience may include video, audio, animation, and interactive elements. The use of multimedia presentations, for example, can provide students with a comprehensive and engaging learning experience by combining text, images, videos, and sounds. Through the use of multiple communication modalities and media, both scenarios aim to create more dynamic, engaging, and effective communication experiences. For translators, this presents unique challenges and opportunities, since they must preserve the meaning and impact of multimodal and multimedia texts in the target language and culture. Briefly, AVT is the translation of any material in audio, visual or audiovisual formats (Díaz Cintas, 2010; Remael & Díaz Cintas, 2020). The specific nature of AVT texts makes its translation process distinct from that of written translations. In light of this, although AVT can be discussed in terms of the general translation theory, its uniqueness in joining the audio and visual modalities requires a specific approach that can assist translators in understanding the expectations of the target audience.

It was during the 1990s that real engagement in AVT and its academic and scholarly activities could be observed (Gambier, 2012). Since the early 1990s, a period of intensive activity has begun, which points to a very promising future (Díaz Cintas, 2003, p. 192). This engagement and development can be comprised within several discrete areas of interest. We must first consider the technological advancements evident in such items as CDs, DVDs, video recorders and streaming. Similarly, to the conversion from analogue to digital TV channels, the internet itself



has also broadened the horizons of the AVT (Perrino, 2009). Several technological advancements, in combination with the impact of geopolitical changes on the access to films (Perez, 2016, p.7), have led to an increase in demand for audiovisual products (Szarkowska, 2011, 2013). The second concern relates strictly to the academic and scholarly aspects of the AVT. In the 1990s, a number of key studies were published in the field, such as . Luyken et al. (1991) on introducing concepts of dubbing and subtitling for the European audiences; Ivarsson (1992) studying norms and conventions for practice of subtitling; and Whitman-Linsen (1992), exploring the quality of dubbing American films into German, French, and Spanish.

However, out of the vast majority of themes explored and the various scholarly models in studies on AVT (such as models informed by pragmatics, discourse analysis, second language acquisition), the purpose of this research project is to assess studies that have addressed non-professional translation, in particular, the practice of fansubbing and the views of its practitioners, the fansubbers.

As a separate, independent branch of translation, despite its almost a century of existence, AVT has received the attention of theorists and researchers only since the second half of the 1980s (Orero, 2004; Tomaszewicz, 2006; Bogucki, 2013/2015; Gambier and Ramos Pinto, 2016). Delabastita (1990) early on notices this trend, stating that there is a "blatant discrepancy between the obvious significance of translation in the media and the limited attention that it has received thus far" (p. 97). In his view, the disregard of AVT in translation studies is due to its perception as a less prestigious activity than other fields of translation practice. Gambier (2009a) identifies two possible reasons for this phenomenon: (1) the literary and linguistic background of many translation studies (TS) researchers, and (2) the practical constraints of publishing work on AVT before the 1980s. As a result, it is almost impossible to pinpoint the actual origins of the discipline. Furthermore, without easily access to books and other materials, the scholars were unable to build upon existing research, which meant that it was difficult to trace the development of the discipline. This also meant that scholars were unable to benefit from the collective knowledge and experience of those who had did research on AVT before them.

Although until quite late in the twentieth century various TS researchers were claiming that AVT was not a "real translation", as a newcomer in the field of TS, AVT studies "exploded" to

visibility and recognition in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They were included in this field with the publication of chapters on the topic in three companions to translation studies (O’Connell 2007; Chiaro 2009; Pérez-González, 2014b), the third and fourth editions of *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (Munday, 2012/2016), *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation* (Pérez-González, 2017), and numerous special issues of reputable translation studies journals (*The Translator* 2003, *Meta* 2004, *Jostrans* 2006, *Target* 2016, and *Translation Spaces* 2022), in addition to countless panel discussions in TS conferences., among the most recent were those held at the University of Aarhus in September 2022<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, there came the point when the independent journal on AVT was published by the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation under the title of *Journal of Audiovisual Translation* in 2019. Karamitroglou (2000, pp. 11-12) provides the following reasons for the acceptance of AVT studies in the field of TS:

- “There has to be some common grounds between AVT and written translation; many AVTs are now performed with a written form of the original text;
- Presenting the various modalities of AVT through the general frameworks of TS, or the link between general translation theory and AVT modes, such as, overt translation and subtitling, and covert translation and dubbing;
- Both AVT and other written translations require overcoming the language barriers erected by language differences;
- The similarity between AVT and written translations in terms of the hierarchy of factors, constraints and parameters which operate in translation processes, procedures and products which constitutes a major task for translation theory”

Additionally, according to Chaume (2002), AVT is a good example of a field of study that has found its proper place within TS as “firstly, there is the consideration of audiovisual translation as the process which transforms one audiovisual text into another, with the strategies employed, the textual configuration of each one, etc. Secondly, there is the study of the translation itself: the

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<sup>1</sup> There was a strong focus on "the moving boundaries of translation (studies) from a disciplinary, methodological, conceptual, professional and/or geographical aspects" at the 10th EST Congress (Call for papers, n.d.).

product; in other words, the translated audiovisual text is studied from linguistic-discursive, cinematographic, ideological, cultural and other perspectives” (p. 5).

It is now widely acknowledged that audiovisual translation research is thriving. I agree with Matamala’s observation that the ongoing “transformation of a society where audiovisual content is ubiquitous, technology is paramount and citizens are becoming ‘netizens impact directly on audiovisual translation practices’ and, by extension, on audiovisual translation research” (Matamala, 2016, April).

In their introduction to the special issue on audiovisual translation (AVT) in context, Díaz Cintas et al. (2023) argue that AVT is a complex and multifaceted field that is constantly evolving as technology and culture evolve. The authors emphasize the importance of understanding AVT in context, which takes into account the specific needs and requirements of the target audience, the production environment, as well as the wider social and cultural context. In their view, AVT has played a crucial role in promoting access to multilingual content and shaping the way we experience and interpret audiovisual content. After discussing the key challenges and opportunities that AVT faces in the digital age, they proceed to discuss some of the key opportunities facing AVT. The authors note that streaming services and social media platforms have become increasingly popular, which has led to a proliferation of audiovisual content in multiple languages. As a result, it has created new opportunities for AVT professionals, but it has also created new challenges, such as the need to produce high-quality translations as quickly as possible. Additionally, the authors discuss the increasing importance of cross-cultural communication in the digital age. Consequently, they argue that AVT professionals should be able to bridge cultural divides and produce translations that are both accurate and sensitive to cultural differences. In addition, they emphasize that collaboration and interdisciplinarity are important in AVT, as AVT professionals need to work with other professionals, such as filmmakers, media producers, and educators, in order to create accessible, high-quality audiovisual content. However, my study provides a focused, empirical investigation into the Iranian context, shedding light on the specific challenges and dynamics within that region.

## 2.3 Forms of AVT Text

With the development of the genre, such as films, TV series, and console games, various modes of translation have emerged, including the most popular ones (Ramael & Díaz Cintas, 2020): dubbing, subtitling, and voice-over. Since the introduction of these three modes of AVT to the market, scholars have been discussing these forms in terms of their superiority and effectiveness to each other (Díaz Cintas, 1999; Tveit, 2009; Riggio, 2010). Each of these three methods dominates in some specific countries or regions. East and west European countries' choice of AVT modes, for instance, has been shown to vary systematically. In some European countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Hungary as well as some Asian countries such as China and Iran audiovisual materials are dubbed whereas in Greek, the Netherlands, Croatia, Poland, to name but a few, the dominant form is voice-over or subtitling to avoid additional expenditures (Pedersen, 2010). In addition, the modes of AVT and the ways in which these products are intermediated for an audience are affected by a variety of political and social factors. For instance, authoritarian governments and dictatorships are said to use dubbing to censor audiovisual content (Díaz Cintas, 1999; Chaume, 2013; Matamala et al., 2017; Díaz Cintas & Ramael, 2021). In research, less attention seems to be devoted to how different modes and types of intermediations used in AVT in parallel with political, cultural, and even historical realities serve the adoption of transformations affecting society (Biro, 2015; Okyayuz, 2016, April). This is because the focus of research has primarily been on the technical aspects of audiovisual translation, such as the translation strategies and techniques used. However, it is equally important to consider the socio-cultural context in which the translation is produced, as this can have an impact on how the translation is perceived and accepted by the target audience.

With the proliferation of audio visual (AV) texts toward the end of the 20th century, AVT modes have boomed, resulting in increasingly interdisciplinary research. As has been the case with the globalization of audiovisual distribution and production systems, the economic development of television shows and film production has also had a significant impact on the audiovisual landscape (Scott, 2004).

Audiovisual texts are complex mediums in which a translator faces verbal and non-verbal information, interpretations that are clearly voiced and others that are implied by complex means of communication, like an increase in intonation or a body movement associated with an utterance

(Pettit, 2004). As a result of the interaction of different sign systems, the audiovisual text is a much more complex structure than the simple sum of its parts, in which the configuration of the text “is determined by the sign systems that surround it” (Remael, 2010, p. 13). In addition, Pérez-González (2014b, p. 121) writes “Audiovisual textualities – including films, dramas, or videogames – represent another crucial locus of interaction between verbal and non-verbal signifiers. Faced with a complex ensemble of semiotic choices from different sign systems, the translator’s mediation of audiovisual texts is grounded in processes of perceptual hermeneutics”.

Accordingly, AV products comprise a network of visual codes, including aspects like costumes, gestures, postures, and expressions on face, or in the words of Chiaro (2009, p. 142), they are 'polysemiotic'. Based on his study, Table 1 illustrates the polysemiotic nature of AV inputs. In his view, all these codes work together to create a single effect, which allows the viewer to both hear and see the audiovisual products.

**Table 1** *The Polysemiotic Nature of Audiovisual Products* (Chiaro, 2009, p. 141)

	Visual	Acoustic
Non-verbal	Scenery, Lighting, Costumes, Props, etc. Also: Gestures, Facial Expressions; Body Movement, etc.	Music, Background Noise, Sound Effects, etc. Also: Laughter; Crying; Humming; Body Sounds (Breathing; coughing, etc.)
Verbal	Street Signs, Shop Signs; Written Realia (newspapers; letters; headlines; notes, etc.)	Dialogues; Song lyrics; Poems, etc.

Other scholars have also presented this classification in slightly different ways, including Delabastita (1989), Gottlieb (1998), Chaume (2004), Zabalbeascoa (2008), and Gambier (2012).

Delabastita (1989, pp. 196-197) comes up with some codes which shape the movies as a meaningful sign so that the audiences and film producers would be able to take them in:

- “the verbal code (which is actually an aggregate of various linguistic and paralinguistic subcodes: think of the various geographical, temporal, stylistic and social dialects of a language, etc.);

- literary codes and theatrical codes (conventions of plot construction, models for dialogues, acquaintance with narrative strategies, with argumentation techniques and with literary genres and motives, etc.);
- proxemic codes, kinesic codes, vestimentary codes, make-up codes,
- politeness codes, moral codes, and so forth (enabling us among other things to understand and assess the non-verbal behaviour of the characters);
- the cinematic code (rules and conventions of the cinema; its techniques, genres, etc.).”

Delabastita (1989, p.199) also distinguishes between such verbal and non-verbal signs resulted in four categories:

- a) visual presentation - verbal signs
- b) visual presentation - non-verbal signs
- c) acoustic presentation - verbal signs
- d) acoustic presentation - non-verbal sign.

According to him, “the distinctions between (a) and (b) and between (c) and (d) respectively are maintained by certain technical features” (p. 198).

Introducing a new paradigm in AVT based on Film Studies, Chaume (2004a/2012) identifies ten signifying codes that affect translational operations in the AVT. He believes that, mainly in dubbing, “the visuals are even more powerful than the words” (Chaume, 2012, p. 110); that is why only one of the ten codes is linguistic (see Table 2). Moreover, Munday points out that this classification is “a huge departure from the norm in most translation studies work” (2016, p. 285).

**Table 2** *Meaning Codes Involved in the Meaning Network of Audiovisual Texts*  
(Chaume 2012, p. 110)

The acoustic dimension	The visual dimension
Linguistic Code	Iconographic Code

Paralinguistic Code	Photographic Code
Musical Code	Mobility Code
Special Effects Code	Shot Code
Sound Position Code	Graphic Code
	Editing Code (Montage)

Considering the acoustic and visual dimensions in film translation, Gottlieb (1998, p. 245) also mentions the four simultaneous channels as:

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

Chaume (1997, p. 27) points out that from among the “four channels that make up the cinematic medium, the only one available to the translator to manipulate is the verbal channel.” However, nowadays, thanks to the technology used in the process of AVT, all four channels can be manipulated. In terms of this study’s interests in the verbal visual channel, for example, a dubbing studio can easily edit and insert new subtitles in place of the original and delete the original one from the film.

Another leading scholar in AVT, especially in humour and film translation, Zabalbeascoa (2008, p.29) identifies four different configurations of codes in terms of two sets of modes of communication, i.e., audio and visual versus verbal and non-verbal: “audio-verbal (words uttered), audio-nonverbal (all other sounds), visual-verbal (writing), visual-nonverbal (all other visual signs)” (see Table 3). As a result of this condition, “what is prototypically audiovisual is placed at the centre of the double axis” (p. 30) (see Table 4).

**Table 3** *The Four Components of the Audiovisual Text (Zabalbeascoa 2008, p. 29)*

	Audio	Visual
Verbal	Words	Words
	Heard	Read
Non-verbal	Music	The picture
	Special effects	Photography

**Table 4** *The two axes of audiovisual communication (Zabalbeascoa 2008, p. 30)*

	A	B	C	D	E
1			+verbal		
2					
3	+audio				+visual
4					
5			+non-verbal		

A: only audio	1: basically verbal
B: more audio than visual	2: more verbal than nonverbal
C: audio and visual alike	3: both verbal and nonverbal alike
D: less audio than visual	4: less verbal than nonverbal
E: only visual	5: only nonverbal

## 2.4 AVT Modes

The growth of branches such as films, TV series, and console games results in the development of different modes of translation, including the most popular ones: dubbing,



subtitling, and voice-over. A number of scholars mention distinct modes of AVT and also offer a valid and systematic framework for their analysis. Chaume (2012), for example, classifies all AVT modes into revoicing (e.g., dubbing, voice-over, and audio description), subtitling (e.g., fansubbing, subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH), and intertitling), and a combination of the traditional modalities (e.g., videogames, commercials, comic books). However, Pérez-González (2014a) identifies Chaume's (2012) third category as assistive forms of AVT including AD, SDH, and respeaking. In another study, Gambier (2009b) provides 12 modes of AVT, adding consecutive interpreting and sight translation. However, O'Sullivan (2011, p.13) believes that these similar categories of AVT modes are "conventionally operations carried out upon a pre-existing or source text to produce a second text, which can be categorized as a translation". A full discussion of different AVT modes lies beyond the scope of this thesis, therefore, in regards to the objectives of this thesis, I review only the four relevant AVT modes, including dubbing, subtitling, and voice-over.

### **2.4.1 Dubbing**

Luyken et al. (1991, p. 31) defined dubbing as "the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which attempts to follow as closely as possible the timing, phrasing and lip-movements of the original dialogue." In addition, Chaume (2013) pointed out that dubbing "consists of translating and lip-syncing the script of an audiovisual text, which is then performed by actors directed by a dubbing director and, where available, with advice from a linguistic consultant or dubbing assistant" (p. 107). In practice, it means substituting the original actors' voice – known as source text – with those of foreign actors – target text –, and these actors read out the translated text in a dubbing studio (Gambier, 1994). Thanks to the development of technology, each speaking character has their own separate voice track which enables the producers to leave other sound effects intact.

However, the most crucial and at the same time highly problematic task of dubbing is achieving synchrony (Whitman-Linsen, 1992). Chaume (2004b) distinguishes between three major types of synchronies in translation techniques. The first type is lip synchrony, which means that the translation is supposed to correspond to "the lip movements of the character on the screen" (ibid., p. 40) as closely as possible. It is most effectively achieved by repetition of a source

language (SL) item (when it is used in the target language (TL)), change of word order, reduction, and amplification among others. Chaume draws on Díaz-Cintas's work (2001, p. 41, as cited in Chaume, 2004b, p.43), and indicates that requires "maintaining synchrony between the sounds of the language of the translation and the actors' lip movements". The second one is isochrony which demands that translation is the same duration as the film actor's statement. This requires the use of interjections, repetition, paraphrase, deictic words instead of nouns and phrases. The last type, Chaume identifies, is kinetic synchrony which is adequate when translation matches the body movements of actors. He goes on to propose the following definition of synchronization that covers all three types: "Synchronization is one of the features of translation for dubbing, which consists of matching the target language translation and the articulatory and body movements of the screen actors and actresses, as well as matching the utterances and pauses in the translation and those of the source text" (ibid., p.43).

#### **2.4.2 Subtitling**

Taylor (2000, p. 309) describes subtitling as "the superimposition on the screen of a written version of the soundtrack". Szarkowska (2008) adds that those captions are synchronized and usually placed at the bottom of the screen. In their book dedicated to both practical and theoretical views on subtitling, originally published in 2007, Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2014, pp.8-9) defines subtitling

as a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off). In some languages, like Japanese, cinema subtitles are presented vertically and tend to appear on the right-hand side of the screen.

Researchers, having left behind the dated discussions on the superiority of one AVT mode of subtitling over the others, they can now take advantage of new, exciting opportunities, which have been opened up in the wake of technological developments. For example, using research tools such as eye tracking, researchers can better understand the processes behind the act of the subtitling production on the one hand, and that of subtitle text reception on the other (Szarkowska et al.,

2013). Moreover, videos with subtitles are believed to be a practical learning resource, especially in terms of listening and/or reading skills (Caimi, 2006; Sokoli, 2006; Incalcaterra McLoughlin & Lertola, 2011; Bisson, Van Heuven, Conklin, & Tunney, 2014; Rędzioch-Korkuz, 2016), which result in identification of effective teaching practices and exploration of cultural and linguistic diversity in the way that this can have important implications for language policy and pedagogy in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

The integration of subtitling into the broader framework of translation theory is essential for a complete understanding of its distinctive challenges and importance. Consequently, subtitles require a profound understanding of temporal dynamics and pacing to be successfully synchronized with audiovisual content (Díaz-Cintas and Remael, 2014, p. 18). Translators engaged in subtitling have the difficult task of conveying meaning within strict time constraints while maintaining the essence of the dialogue or narration. This task is further compounded by the spatial constraints inherent in subtitles, requiring translators to craft translations that are both succinct and meaningful. A delicate balance must be struck between fidelity to the source text and readability for the intended audience. Subtitling is a convergence of written text with visual and auditory elements, requiring translators to consider the intricate interaction between these modalities in order to ensure subtitles do not obscure vital visual information or disrupt the holistic audiovisual experience (p. 78). Additionally, subtitling requires an understanding of cultural nuances and contextual context. To communicate effectively with the target audience, subtitlers often encounter idiomatic expressions, humor, and cultural references. In addition to being proficient in specialized software tools, subtitlers must also possess technical expertise in order to precisely time subtitles, format text appropriately, and seamlessly integrate translations with the audiovisual presentation (p. 97).

### **2.4.3 Voice-over**

The mode of voice-over has been referred to as “the earliest and most faithful of the audiovisual translation modes” (Luyken et al., 1991, p.80). It is defined “as a narrative technique in which the voice of a faceless narrator is heard over different images and this for different purposes” (Franco et al., 2010, p. 18). In addition, it has been found the preferred mode according

to the research conducted in 2002 by Inst. SMG KRC Poland. They have found that 50.2% of Poles prefer voice-over as compared to 43.4% who opt for dubbing, and 8.1% who are in Favor of subtitling (Bogucki, 2004). Nevertheless, most scholars and viewers have a complicated relationship with this mode of AVT. For example, it is claimed that “Poles are so accustomed to voiceover that they simply disregard its disadvantages when compared to subtitling” (Chmiel, 2010, p.1). Orero (2004) also refers to voice-over as “the ugly duckling” of AVT while Tomaszewicz (2006) mentions it as a technique without a future. Despite all this, voice-over is still alive and well in many previously communist countries throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Additionally, there is a wide use of voice-over in documentaries, educational programs, and factual entertainment shows in Europe. It is particularly prevalent in countries like France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain, where documentary filmmaking has a long tradition and there is a large audience for non-fiction programming. The use of voice-over in European non-fiction programming is often characterized by its clarity, authority, and engaging presentation (Franco et al., 2010). In the United States, voice-over is also extensively employed in non-fiction programming, spanning documentaries, historical dramas, reality shows, and science programs (Orero, 2004). Woźniak (2012, p.216), one of the few unconditioned defenders of voice-over method, even suggests transforming voice-over into “voice-behind or voice-in-between” and proposes that the focus of the translators “should be on a suitable reduction of the original dialogue”. Whether such an idea gets implemented at all, remains to be seen.

## **2.5 Translation of Graphic Codes**

A comprehensive definition of graphic codes is presented by Chaume (2012, p.117) as follows:

Conventions and translation norms exist to represent any written language that appears on the screen. The spectator sees written language (captions) in the form of titles, intertitles, texts, and subtitles: what may be termed graphic codes in Film Studies. The presence in a film of these four conventional genres directly influences the translation, since most of the time the translator needs to transfer their meaning to the target text, within the formal constraints that each one of them entails.

Exploring and reviewing graphic codes in the realm of AVT studies, scholars coin other terms for written texts on the screen, for example, ‘impact captioning’ (Sasamoto, 2014), ‘decotitles’ (Kofoed, 2011), ‘beyond screen text messaging’ (Zhou, 2014), ‘authorial titling’ (Pérez-González, 2013/2014a), and ‘on-screen text’ (Dwyer, 2015). However, other scholars, who also mention non digital texts on the screen, such as shop and street signs, use the general term ‘visual verbal’ (see Delabastita, 1989; Gottlieb, 1998; Zabalbeascoa, 2008).

In this project, the term ‘graphic codes’, borrowed from Chaume (2004a/2012), is used as an umbrella term to describe any texts on the screen such as title, email, sign, newspaper headlines, SMS text, and internet language among others. Graphic codes also can be seen as intralingual subtitling or in the words of Lambert (1993, as cited in Taylor, 2000, p.317), “support text” O’Hagan (2010, p. 72) believes that these kinds of subtitles may “highlight and frame humour” in entertainment TV programs.

Much of the available literature on graphic codes asserts that translation of the target language’s graphic codes may increase the viewers’ understanding in both subtitled and dubbed versions. There is no better way to describe this situation than that given by Sasamoto (2014, p. 9): “[Graphic codes] in Sherlock enable the viewers to share thought processes with Sherlock himself, or at least provide a medium for sharing the stimulus these characters are processing ... [and] would lead to enhanced viewer experience and hence increased programme popularity.”

Similarly, considering the non-translational use of graphic codes, Pérez-González (2013, p. 14) asserts that graphic codes are befitting for “foregrounding spectacularization [...] or facilitating the process of mutual recognition or affinity between the director [...] and the viewer”. Likewise, Zhou (2014) argues that graphic codes are both cheaper and more efficient because they eliminate the need for close-ups by showing them on a screen. He also argues that the shot/reverse shot<sup>2</sup> is slow because the phone must stay on the display for a sufficient amount of time in order to be understood. As a result, graphic codes help filmmakers “to combine action and reaction in

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<sup>2</sup> In film and video production, shot/reverse shot is commonly used to illustrate a conversation or interaction between two characters. In this method, one character is filmed (the "A" shot) as they speak or react, followed by a shot of the other character (the "B" shot) as they respond or react; throughout the scene, this back-and-forth pattern is repeated, alternating between A and B shots in order to portray the conversation from different angles (Smith, 2012)

the same frame so that viewers are able to view the actor's performance uninterrupted” (Mehdizadkhani & Khoshsaligheh, 2021).

## **2.6 Norms in AVT**

The move beyond prescriptivism and the emergence of descriptive translation studies (DTS) urged translation scholars to set about the study of norms and develop guidelines for the localization of media products (Chaume, 2020). Toury (2012/1995, p. 63) defines norms that should assess “the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community – as to what would count as right or wrong, adequate or inadequate – into performance ‘instructions’ appropriate for and applicable to concrete situations.” The instructions are value ridden, specifying the scale of right and wrong, tolerated and permitted.

The concept of norms is heavily culture-bound and locale-specific since different audience groups bring with them a different set of expectations as to what can be considered a successful communicative behaviour. A line of distinction can be drawn between descriptive and prescriptive understanding of norms. Prescriptive norms function as codes of best practice and guidelines that model a correct form of behaviour: “such rules are meant both to explain translation regularities and to predict certain structures (thus limiting choices), and typical formats are ‘if — then’, or ‘translators must, should, ought to” (Schaffner, 1998, p. 7). On the other hand, the descriptive understanding of norms is primarily concerned with the study of products of translation to identify and provide an account of the forms of normative behaviours and pattern that tend to govern a particular type of translation in a given cultural context (Hermans, 1996).

The concept of norms within the context of AVT has been challenged in response to the emergence of the latest technological developments. The proliferation of fan translation activities, e.g., fansubs that go against the grain and evince norm-breaking behaviours that eschew the established conventions for the rendering of AV inputs, entails a rethinking of the concept of norms in AVT with relation to the technical constraints of the practice (Gambier, 2009). Along the same lines, Sokoli (2009, p. 37) seeks to adapt Chesterman’s (2016) expectancy norms to the context of

audiovisual translation and defines it as “the expectations that viewers of subtitled audiovisual programmes have with regard to what the subtitled product should be like.”.

AVT professionals operate in a norm-governed world and, as in any other form of human interaction, their work is regulated by the expectations they are to meet either on the commissioners’ or audiences’ side (Pedersen, 2020). Within AVT, norms are embodied in the guidelines that are developed for going about the task of dubbing or subtitling. Therefore, the translators’ work is heavily regulated by norms that are based on collective and informal consensus between commissioners, translators, and final users about what they expect from translators (Pym, 2010).

Within an audiovisual apparatus, one of the channels through which norms can be discovered is by analysing the final product. Arguing for the existence of regularities in the practice of subtitling and the potential of norms in clarifying the decision-making processes of audiovisual translators, Sokoli (2009) compares the Spanish and Greek subtitles of two films, *The English Patient* (1996), and *Notting Hill* (1999). Interestingly, the study revealed that the number of subtitles included in the Spanish version was substantially higher than that in the Greek one. This increase in the number of Spanish subtitles could be partly credited to the greater number of one-liners in the Spanish version and two-liners in the Greek version. Moreover, more acoustic verbal information was omitted in the Greek version compared to the Spanish one. In the Greek version, utterances that were considered easily recognizable for the Greek audience (e.g., basic greeting expressions) or irrelevant to the plot (e.g., hospital or airport announcements) were omitted.

Pedersen (2018) examines how interlingual subtitling norms have evolved and how local they have become over time. According to him, subtitling norms have become increasingly international in recent years, with Netflix playing a significant role in this development. According to Pedersen, subtitling norms have evolved from their origins in cinema subtitling to their implementation in television broadcasting. As he notes, subtitling norms were originally developed by public service broadcasters at the national level. Subtitling norms became more international with the rise of commercial television and DVDs. According to Pedersen, the future of subtitling norms remains uncertain. Subtitling norms are likely to continue to be internationalized due to the

growth of streaming services such as Netflix. In addition, he maintains that local subtitling norms will continue to play an important role in the process.

Mubenga (2010) examines norms in interlingual subtitling from a systemic functional perspective. The author argues that systemic functional theory provides a useful framework for understanding how linguistic and cultural factors influence subtitlers' choices. In his observation, subtitlers are governed by a number of norms, but there remains a lack of consensus as to what and how these norms operate. In order to analyze norms in interlingual subtitling, Mubenga proposes a systemic functional approach. Using systemic functional theory, he argues that it may be possible to understand the relationship between the source text (ST), the target text (TT), and the context of subtitling. Following this, Mubenga applies his approach to the subtitling of French films in English. Subtitlers appear to follow a number of norms, including the requirement to produce subtitles that are (p. 92):

1. Accurate: Subtitles should convey the meaning of the ST as accurately as possible.
2. Fluent: Subtitles should be easy to read and understand.
3. Culturally appropriate: Subtitles should take into account the cultural context of the TT audience.

Mubenga also notes that subtitling practices vary to a certain extent. Many factors contribute to this variation, including the subtitler's individual style and the film's specific context. Finally, Mubenga argues that systemic functional theory provides a useful framework for understanding the norms that govern subtitling practice. To better understand the variations in subtitling practice and to develop more specific guidelines for subtitlers, further research is required.

Considering the translation norms for subtitling taboo words, Xavier (2022) focuses on the subtitling of English-to-Portuguese movies broadcast on Portuguese FTA (free-to-air, open-signal) television between 2001 and 2015. By combining corpus and questionnaire data on subtitlers' attitudes regarding the subtitling of taboo words, Xavier uses a data triangulation approach. According to Xavier, the most common subtitling strategy for taboo words is deletion, followed by euphemisms and adaptations. According to Xavier, these strategies reflect the fact that Portuguese free-to-air television is a conservative medium with strict guidelines regarding the use



of profanity. Additionally, Xavier finds that subtitlers' attitudes towards subtitling taboo words are complex and varied. The majority of subtitlers believe that taboo words should be omitted altogether, while the minority believe that they should be modified or euphemized. As a result of these different attitudes, Xavier claims that subtitlers perceive their roles and responsibilities differently.

In a different context, Ameri and Ghazizadeh (2014) examine strategies used to translate swearing from an American film dubbed and subtitled into Persian. According to the authors, both dubbed and subtitled versions were target-language focused, with deletion being the most frequent strategy. In the dubbed version, the vulgarity and offensiveness of the swearing were euphemized, while in the non-professional subtitled version, the swearing was translated directly and forcefully. Four basic strategies were identified for translating swear words (p.81):

- **Direct translation with strong force:** This involves translating the swearing word directly into Persian, without any attempt to euphemize or mitigate its vulgarity.
- **Direct translation with weak force:** This involves translating the swearing word directly into Persian, but using a less vulgar or offensive equivalent.
- **Deletion:** This involves omitting the swearing word altogether.
- **Foreignization:** This involves retaining the swearing word in English, without translating it into Persian.

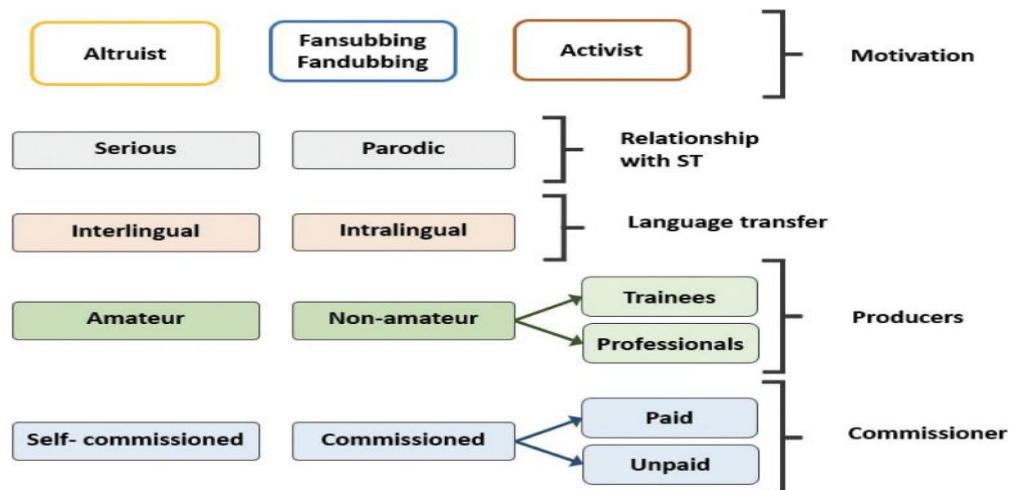
According to the authors, deletion was the most frequently used strategy in the dubbed version (54.8%), followed by direct translation with weak force (31.6%). As with the professional version, the non-professional version used deletion as the most frequently used strategy (41.8%), but it also used direct translation with strong force (28.5%). Several factors play a role in the differences in translation strategies between the dubbed and subtitled versions, according to the authors. These include the differences in target audiences, the differences in constraints imposed by the two media, as well as the differences in cultural norms and expectations regarding swearing. My study, while not directly dealing with swearing and taboo language, investigates the quality of professional subtitle and fansubs in the Iranian context. However, understanding how the professional subtitlers and fansubbers deal with taboo language is essential to make the rating scores for my dissertation.

## 2.7 Fansubbing and Fansubbers

Fansubbing means a form of non-professional subtitling that can cover a wide spectrum of subtitling activities produced by groups, amateurs, fans, and students. 'Non-professional translation' refers to any kind of “linguistic and cultural mediation obtained with the assistance of technological advancements by unpaid volunteers” with no actual training in the field (Antonini and Bucaria, 2015, p. 7). Often, a non-professional translator is an Internet user who works in a collaborative environment (Ribeiro, 2022). There are several types of non-professional translations, one of which is fansubbing. Pedersen (2019, p. 43) states “fansubbing has evolved as a social phenomenon”. A recent paper by Baños & Díaz-Cintas (in press) examines the influence of digital media on two new forms of AVT: cybersubtitling and cyberdubbing. The process of cybersubtitling involves the creation of subtitles by fans and non-professional translators, often using online tools and platforms. In cyberdubbing, fans and non-professional translators create dubs by using their own voices and recording equipment. To emphasize the fact that these are new forms of AVT produced in the digital age, the authors used the terms cybersubtitling and cyberdubbing instead of fansubbing and fandubbing. Unlike fansubbing and fandubbing, which have negative connotations, cybersubtitling and cyberdubbing are neutral terms. Additionally, the authors classified each type of AVT based on the following criteria:

- **Commissioner:** Who commissioned the AVT?
- **Producer:** Who produced the AVT?
- **Aim or purpose:** What is the purpose of the AVT?
- **Relationship with the source text:** How does the AVT relate to the source text?

It is argued by the authors that the cybersubtitling and cyberdubbing communities are becoming more professionalized and that they are having a significant impact on audience consumption and interaction with audiovisual content. In Figure 4, they show how "motivation behind these practices sets them apart from other forms of dubbing and subtitling, which tend to respond largely to commercial imperatives" (p. 9). Nevertheless, I designated fansubbing as the umbrella term for the activity which has been carried out by amateur or non-professional translators, and its products can be accessed freely online.



*Figure 4 Cybersubtitling and cyberdubbing practices (Baños & Díaz-Cintas, in press, p. 9)*

Fansubbing has been known to have emerged in the context of translating Japanese animations into English in the USA (Pérez-González, 2017), following their first import in 1975. A considerable amount of modification was made to the imported animations. Cubbison (2005, p. 52) observes that “the audiovisual market altered the stories and characters to suit [the] perception of the tastes of American children and their parents”. At that time, American children's television was supposed to be sanitized and these animations were seen violent and sexual in nature (Leonard, 2005, p. 285). A network of US fan clubs formed in the late 1970s, allowing fans to watch the animations together as often as possible. Over the years, by the early 2000s, the concern about Japanese products in the USA was not one of moral norms but that of languages spoken. As a result of this problem, “fans began producing their own translations in an effort to provide a more accurate and authentic experience of Japanese products” (Dwyer, 2012, p. 229). As a result, the fans of the Japanese genre, who were not trained in the art of subtitle translation, practiced it quite instinctively (Nornes, 2007, p. 182). Dwyer (2019) provides an overview of fan AVT, tracing its origins in the anime fandom in the 1980s. The author then discusses various types of fans AVT, including fansubbing, fandubbing, and fan translation of games and comic books. Furthermore, she discusses the motivations behind fan translations, which include a desire to share favourite media with others, to improve one's own language skills, and to contribute to the fan communities. After discussing fan AVT and fandom, Dwyer moves on to discuss the relationship between fandom and fan AVT. According to her, fan AVT is a form of participatory culture, in which fans

actively participate in and contribute to their favourite media. Furthermore, she points out that fan AVT can play a significant role in promoting linguistic diversity and cultural understanding.

Subtitling “by fans for fans” (Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez, 2006, p. 51), we could argue, emerged in response to either viewers’ unhappiness with the official translations of AV inputs, or merely, due to the absence of translations for specific products (Massidda, 2015; O’Hagan, 2009). Currently, fansubbing, also referred to as non-professional subtitling, is extended to cover all (not only Japanese) products. Its broader definition means “the act of subtitling television dramas and films by fans involved in collaborative co-creational practices as part of networked and often transnational collectives” (Pérez-González, 2014a, pp. 78-79).

Fansubbing has emerged as a significant and dynamic area of study in TS, reflecting the evolving nature of translation practices in the digital age. In fansubbing, subtitles are created by fans for audiovisual content, such as anime, movies, or TV shows, in languages other than the original language. Since its unique characteristics, such as collaboration among fans of different cultures, rapid dissemination of content through online platforms, and blurred lines between amateur and professional translation, this phenomenon has gained considerable attention in TS. There has been an increasing interest among scholars in understanding the motivations, strategies, and challenges faced by fansubbers, as well as how their work intersects with issues of copyright, ethics, and cultural representation. Specifically, the study of fansubbing sheds light on the complexities of fan communities, as well as the intricacies of translation processes, audience reception, and the negotiation of cultural identities in a globalized media environment. A growing collection of journal articles, book chapters, and entries in encyclopaedias have addressed nonprofessional subtitling over the last decade (see, for example, Antonini & Bucaria, 2015; Massida, 2015). It has been argued by translation scholars that in order to attain a complex insight of nonprofessional subtitling, four points need to be considered: “training, remuneration, recruitment ethics, and standards of practice” (Robinson, 2019, p. 69). As stated by Wang (2017, p. 169) non-professional translators “do not receive and do not require monetary remuneration for the activities they perform and the translations they provide”. Lee (2017), distinguishes between fan translation and non-professional translation in that the former focuses on original sources which is of interest to a fan group. My research falls within the last point, exploring the standards and reasons of the chosen fansubbing practice in Iran.

Fansubbing is also characterized by an unsuccess or refusal to meet the standards of commercial subtitling. Several attempts (Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2019; Fan, 2020; Jiménez-Crespo, 2021) have been made to, however, claim that non-professional subtitlers are less likely to reject to or decline to follow established subtitling norms. Researchers differ considerably in their perspectives on this issue, making it important to stress that non-professional subtitles are “culture-specific and context-dependent, and may not be indicative of the same practice in all cultures” (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020).

In general, abusive approaches to nonprofessional subtitling include an exploratory approach to foreign sources by using “compositional parameters such as number, layout, and positioning of subtitles”, as well as “uses of colours, typefaces, [and] typography” (Pérez-González, 2020, p. 175), to refrain from using “novel uses of notes and glosses superimposed on visuals to provide explanatory comments” to help the audiences’ understanding of the foreign material (Guillot, 2019, p. 37).

Nonprofessional subtitling is concerned with highlighting the foreignness of the film’s source language through foreignization methods, like ‘retention and glossing’ (Díaz Cintas, 2018; Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018; Diaz Cintas & Massidda, 2019; Locher, 2020). Therefore, these kinds of translations are “closer to the original, wordier, [and] more word-for-word” (Gambier, 2013, p. 54). The rationale behind doing this is to heighten “the visibility of the mediator and the process of mediation” and “increase awareness of the foreign culture and encourage the viewer to engage with it on its own terms” (Dwyer, 2019, p. 459). Contrary to the Western and Iranian fansubbing apparatus, the Chinese fansubbing apparatus appears to be focusing on target (in this case, Chinese) audiences and uses domestication approaches (Xiu-xing, 2015; Zhang & Cassany, 2016; Wang & Zhang, 2017) to provide "a means of best entertaining Chinese audiences" (Lee, 2018, p. 573).

Fansubbers have been claimed to have a variety of incentives (Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2019; Jones, 2019; Čemerin, 2021). It could be that they are simply interested in making sure others have access to their preferred original programs using a language they are familiar with, or perhaps it is simply a competitive environment for them, or they may be trying to improve. For others, it is important to be involved in order to be recognized within their social circle as essential

agents. It has been reported that some of these subtitlers are required to engage in this activity because of activist motivations. Subtitles such these, noted as 'Guerrilla subtitles', “are produced by individuals or collectives highly engaged in political causes” in order to circumvent censorship or create a novel interpretation that differs from the dominant mass media narrative (Diaz Cintas, 2018, p. 134).

In his PhD thesis, He Yuan examines how fansubbing is becoming an increasingly popular way to access foreign media on mainland China. Due to China's strict censorship laws and the lack of access to official foreign translations, fansubbers have begun creating their own translations of Western media. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the unique characteristics of Chinese fansubbing and to argue that fansubbed media may be more comparable to the original English-language source texts (STs) than professional translations. Yuan employs a mixed-method approach, combining a quantitative questionnaire survey with a qualitative case study analysis of two popular fansubbing groups. According to the quantitative survey results, fansubbing has become increasingly popular in China, with over 80% of respondents reporting that they have viewed fansubbed media in the past year. According to the survey, over 70% of respondents rated the quality of fansubbing translation as good or excellent. It is evident from analyzing the qualitative case studies of the two fansubbing groups that fansubbers are motivated by a variety of factors, such as their love of foreign media, their desire to share their favorite media with others, and their commitment to promoting cultural understanding. According to the analysis, fansubbers use a variety of translation strategies depending on the specific text they are translating and the needs of their target audience.

In the Iranian context, Taghavi and Bahraman (2022) investigate the degree of conformity between Iranian fansubbers and professional subtitle presentation standards. For this purpose, they developed a diachronic corpus of subtitles consisting of 50 films from 2008 and 2018, a decade later. The corpus was then analysed for compliance with a set of 19 professional subtitle presentation standards. According to the study, Iranian fansubbers have become more conformist in their presentation of professional subtitles over time. The corpus of subtitles in 2008 contained only 44% of subtitles that met all 19 standards. As of 2018, the compliance rate had increased to 72%. Over time, Iranian fansubbers have improved their compliance with professional standards in a number of specific areas. As an example, in 2008, only 56% of the subtitles in the corpus met

the standard for maximum subtitle duration. In 2018, however, this compliance rate had increased to 88%. It is concluded by the authors that the fan AVT in Iran has developed in terms of professionalism over the past decade. They suggest that this is likely due to a number of factors, including the increasing availability of professional subtitling software and the growing popularity of fansubbing in Iran.

The practice of non-professional subtitling, particularly fansubbing, poses several legal and ethical concerns because unauthorized materials are translated and subtitled (Diaz Cintas, 2018; Szarkowska et al., 2021; Yang, 2021). It should be noted, however, that Pérez-González (2020) asserts a subtitle produced by fansubbers "is now more widely accepted and, in some cases, actively promoted by distributors and broadcasters" (p. 176). His latter claim which mentions that in some cases official and professional subtitling companies use the fansubbers' work as their main production without applying any changes has been examined in this dissertation regarding the Iranian context. As far as Iran is concerned, however, there are both positive and negative opinions. Although fan-produced subtitles have been criticized "from the perspective of the Iranian audience for their translation accuracy and technical quality" (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018, p. 69), fansubbers have produced free and unhindered connections to non-Persian audiovisual productions which are unlikely to receive the prompt official translations in the Iranian AVT market. However, I agree with Sasamoto (2014, p. 11) in that she suggests further research would be beneficial, "particularly in the area of user experience" in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of different translation techniques and strategies, and how these affect the viewer's perception and understanding of the content.

In a recent paper, Massidda and Sandrelli (2023) explore fansubbers utilize localization workflows to subtitle audiovisual content for online distribution. They examine the case of Spanish fansubbers who have developed an efficient and sophisticated workflow that allows them to produce high-quality subtitles quickly and efficiently. The authors begin by discussing the different stages of the fansubbing workflow, which include (p. 305):

1. Downloading and encoding the video: The fansubber downloads the video file from the internet and encodes it into a format that is compatible with their subtitling software.
2. Spotting: The fansubber watches the video and identifies the time codes for each subtitle.

3. **Translating:** The fansubber translates the audio from the source language to the target language.
4. **Timing:** The fansubber aligns the subtitles with the audio and video tracks.
5. **Quality control:** The fansubber checks the subtitles for accuracy and consistency.
6. **Encoding and uploading:** The fansubber encodes the subtitled video and uploads it to a file-sharing site.

Spanish fansubbers have developed a number of strategies to overcome the difficulties involved in the fansubbing workflow, according to the authors. Often, they work in teams, with each team member responsible for a different stage of the workflow. Furthermore, they use a variety of tools and resources, such as online dictionaries, translation memories, and subtitle software. A discussion of the impact of fansubbing on the localization industry is also provided by the authors. It is their contention that fansubbers have played an important role in promoting access to multilingual content and in shaping the way we consume audiovisual media. Additionally, they contend that fansubbers have developed innovative localization workflows that can be adopted by the professional localization industry.

## **2.8 The Practice of Subtitling in Iran**

This section outlines the evolution of subtitling in Iran as well as the various practices of subtitling.

### **2.8.1 Quasi-Professional Subtitling**

In addition to government censorship and restrictions on the media translation, the specific reason for the prevalence of fansubbing in contemporary Iran is the difficulty for anyone to be able to study and assume a job of professional subtitling. A 'real' profession, as defined by Dam and Zethsen (2010), involves specific ethical standards, a concentrated education that is monitored by its members, professional autonomy, a solid knowledge base, the authority to regulate certain types of activities, users' appreciation for the occupation, a strong and an authoritative professional organization, and recognition and a salary that is commensurate with the profession's reputation. Considering the context of media translation, subtitling professionals have the ability to deliver a translation that is of high quality and is remarkably faster, most likely due to their familiarity with norms and guidelines (Beseghi, 2019). The European Association of Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST) as well as several studies such as Ivarsson and Carroll (1998) and Karamitroglou (1998)



have sought to standardize practices of subtitling. As a result, ESIST has developed standards and norms for the subtitling occupation. Since the norms of other languages may differ from those of English, in case of those subtitling organizations that provide services in non-English languages, the proposed principles possibly be applied “to establish minimum standards in the subtitling profession and to protect subtitlers’ rights” (Remael & Díaz Cintas 2020, p. 140).

Although entry into other professions, like law, medicine, and engineering, in the Iranian context is rigorously controlled, the translation market does not have any regulations at all (Kafi et al., 2018). It is important to note, however, that Kafi et al.'s study (2018) does not take into account the 'General Qualifications [صلاحیت های عمومی]' that are essential to becoming a dubbing or subtitler on Iranian state television and official channels. First and foremost, all dubbing and subtitling applicants must have the approval of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. In order to have one, the translators must not have any criminal records, commit to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, have a mandatory military service completion card or permanent exemption for men, suitable health and physical and mental ability for the desired service, have no addiction and reputation for buying and selling drugs, alcoholic beverages and the like, have belief in Islam or one of the religions recognized in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and have no history of membership or affiliation with political groups opposed to the Islamic regime of Iran<sup>3</sup>. The dubber or subtitler must also provide the Ministry with an undertaking that they will not produce any translations that include the following<sup>4</sup>:

- contrary to Islamic standards and is detrimental to the Islamic Republic's foundation
- obscenities and vulgarity, and offensive
- extravagance
- results in creating differences between the social strata, especially through raising racial and ethnic issues

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<sup>3</sup> The list is available on the website of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (<https://shs.farhang.gov.ir/fa/laws/aainnameha/samandehi>)

<sup>4</sup> I translated these regulations from Persian; the detailed version can be found on the website (<https://www.farhang.gov.ir/fa/intro/rules/rule1>)

- encouraging and encouraging groups to commit acts against the Islamic Republic of Iran's security, dignity and interests inside or outside.
- Disclosing and publishing confidential documents, orders and issues, secrets of the Islamic Republic's armed forces, maps and military fortifications, and
- Insulting Islam's religion and its sanctities, as well as insulting the Supreme Leader and Muslim authorities

The AVT applicants' interviews and cases are usually reviewed by people who are not expert in the field of AVT (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020; Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2016) It can be asserted without a shadow of any doubt that the current regulations for Iranian subtitling applicants are completely unrelated to other countries' codes of professional conduct. From the academic perspectives, current Iranian dubbers and subtitlers, have not been educated because there is no academic institution in this field. Because of this, most dubbing translators have gained experience in writing and translating without formal education, especially literary translations. The lack of education might be disregarded when dubbing translation is seen as “less technical and complicated than a subtitling translation because the translators are not required to follow a synchronized version of their translation” (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020, p. 61). In contrast, subtitling requires more technical expertise, and the translator may be expected to present a subtitling file, such as a .ssa file, created by a subtitling software program.

Based on the code of ethics as well as to the lack of public recognition and respect for the profession criteria outlined by Dam and Zethsen (2010), It is most likely that there are no professional subtitlers in Iran at the time of writing this dissertation. There is also the absence of formal education, directed and controlled by professionals. It is also mentioned that a professional association is also lacking, which guarantees the due respect and reasonable payment of practitioners to ensure their qualified status. As a result, it is difficult to claim that Iran has a subtitling industry that is comparable to a professional one. I believe, a subtitler fulfils at least three of the professional translation criteria to be referred to as a 'quasi-professional subtitler'. These criteria include charges for services, standards of professional conduct, and the question of quality. When an official audiovisual translation training is missing, the last criterion can hardly be met “through rigorous training and intensive courses provided by universities and academic

institutions” (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020, p. 61). The service fees for subtitling are not set and differ from company to company, depending on each case. Considering the professional codes, due to the absence of an Iranian subtitling association at the present time, the Iranian official AV translators have their own norms and conventions that govern the process of subtitling. Although the guidelines are not currently available online, it is recommended that further research be conducted to review the actual conventions in practice and evaluate them compared to other international norms. Khoshsaligheh et al. (2020, p. 63), however, claim that “professional codes, if available, would at best be secondary to cultural regulations issued by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.”

Since the mid-2010s, Iranian VOD services have offered “subtitled and dubbed foreign films and TV series, as well as Iranian fiction and non-fiction programs” (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020, p. 58). In terms of quality, VOD services are rarely compliant with commercial subtitling guidelines, such as non-professional subtitling (see part 2.9.2). VOD subtitling services differ from amateur subtitling services primarily because of the national-required 'cultural gatekeeping'. “VOD services are legitimate, commercial” (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020, p. 59) entities that operate under a government authorization. Thus, in order to comply with the principles governing the marketing of foreign cultural products, their produced content must be censored (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018). Due to “the basic requirements of a 'real' profession, subtitles produced under official licenses for national television channels, streaming services, and authorized companies” can only be considered quasi-professional (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020, p. 63).

### **2.8.2 Non-Professional Subtitling**

Subtitling by amateurs has become the predominant prevalent form of subtitling in Iran (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020). The majority of non-professional subtitlers are involved with websites that distribute video piracy and television programs and, in some cases, they get paid or compensated for their productions. In Iran, non-professional subtitling falls between, primarily, fansubbing, which does not follow mainstream subtitling standards, and secondly, quasi-professional subtitling, in which the producers are compensated financially. Amateur subtitlers typically have a background in a foreign language or are newly trained in another relevant field, such as computer science, and are seeking employment as subtitlers (Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2019). In spite of this, because of their lack of familiarity with translation standards and norms as

well as that of the absence of official, state-developed norms for Persian subtitling regarding technical aspects, “their work does not enjoy high standards for frequent translation-related and technical issues” (Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2019, p. 34). Since the 1990s and 2000s, when American audiovisual productions were widely available in Iran, there has developed a long tradition of underground and non-official subtitling. The non-official subtitles were, according to Naficy (2012, p. 89), “inaccurate' and 'goofy' as if they were rendered by machine translation.” The introduction “of CDs and DVDs allowed Iranian video stores and customers to trade uncensored versions of products” easily in the early 2000s, according to Zeydabadi-Nejad (2016, p. 107). As a result of availability of the Internet, a significant number of Persian-subtitled movies are currently available on the internet or can be accessed via portable hard drives and flash memories. It is increasingly common for “individuals or groups with social or political agendas” to resort to subtitling in order to achieve the objectives because of “the prevalence of digital media and the widespread influence of social networks such as YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and by far Telegram” (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018, p. 670). As a means of disseminating activist multimedia content across national and international boundaries, subtitles are the most commonly used AVT technique (Baker, 2019). There are many purposes for the use of subtitles in this context, including raising questions to the enduring regime and relations of power, as well as triggering social and political changes, as well as calling for further change (Bolaños-García-Escribano et al., 2021). According to Chaume (2019, p. 330), these kinds of subtitling involve "engagement, civic empowerment, and dissent visible in audiovisual translations", which are created by common individuals on online platforms. He also maintains that “fansubbers ridicule politicians and leaders by creating fake subtitles that either expose their hidden agenda or simply make them sound ludicrous through absurd utterances” (Chaume, 2020, p. 329).

Many antigovernmental protesters and progovernment groups have used these types of subtitles in the Iranian context, especially over the past few years. Although Twitter has been filtered in Iran, it has been used widely to share short clips and films relating to political and social concerns. The activists must render their protest inputs into foreign voices, usually English, in order to be heard throughout the world. In addition, the messages are written again on Telegram, which is the most popular social networking site in Iran, in order to ensure that the content is available for an extensive spectrum of individuals. I believe it is possible to divide the current

Iranian fansubbers into two groups, namely 'white hats' and 'black hats'. The latter group of fansubbers translates films and video clips that oppose “the established ideological doctrines and the way of life in contemporary Iran” (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018, p. 675), which is regarded as a threat to the current regime. On the other hand, the former one translates movies and video clips, which advocate for “the established ideological doctrines and way of life in contemporary Iran” (ibid.) and surprisingly, they are considered 'fansubbers' by the regime and the 'black hats' ones as 'underground fansubbers'.

## **2.9 Audience and Reception Studies in AVT**

The purpose of this section is to review the studies that have been conducted in the field of methods and audience experiences. As social theory is influenced by empirical social research, media reception studies are extremely valuable for developing the multidisciplinary fields they inform. The study of media reception is an experimental study of how people produce meaning in response to media discourses (Di Giovanni, 2016). According to Schrøder et al, (2013, pp. 148-149) a reception study is designed to

find out how people make sense of a particular media product, or it addresses the sense-making question towards higher level units. A few reception studies have also extended their scope, encroaching on the territory of media ethnography in aiming to explore people’s uses, taste preferences and experience of one media”.

My study of the fansubbers’ perception of their own work can be considered a form of such ethnographic study. Over the past twenty years, AVT researchers have given increasing attention to reception studies, contributing to a “deeper understanding of the audience’s behaviour and attitudes towards the consumption of translated audiovisual productions” (Díaz Cintas, 2020, p. 221). Elena Di Giovanni and Yves Gambier (2018), two leading AVT scholars, have curated a collection of essays by esteemed media studies and AVT experts in *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation*. This comprehensive volume explores the theoretical foundations and methodological considerations of reception studies, offering a thorough review of existing literature and insightful recommendations for future research endeavours. By seamlessly integrating AVT and reception studies, this edited volume establishes itself as an essential and authoritative resource for aspiring researchers embarking on reception-oriented investigations.

The concept of reception experience, as defined by Tuominen (2018), encompasses the audience's response to translated programs and their underlying translational expectations and attitudes. To effectively investigate audience reception, Tuominen recommends employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative tools, such as interviews, focus groups, observation, and questionnaires. Kruger and Doherty (2018) adopt a multifaceted approach to examining audience reception in AVT, utilizing both offline measures (questionnaires, interviews, comprehension tests) and online measures (eye trackers, heart rate monitors, electroencephalograms). They advocate for a triangulation of subjective and objective measures to gain a holistic understanding of audience reception. Zanotti (2018) explores historical reception studies, reviewing past research on audiences in early cinema and emphasizing relevant approaches, such as archival methods and oral history, for examining reception from a historical perspective.

AVT research dominates the landscape of AVT reception studies, as evidenced by the current literature. Subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, audio description, dubbing, game localization, and non-professional subtitles follow in terms of research prevalence. While there have been initiatives to investigate AVT reception in the other parts of the world, expanding research beyond Europe is a crucial endeavour. This project sets out to examine firstly the reception of the Persian non-professional subtitles' reception and secondly the relationship between the viewers and the fansubbers through interviews made with the translators.

In sum, this chapter on AVT pointed out how the increasing access to audiovisual materials intensifies the market of AVT, making its short history very dynamic. It also indicated a relative lack of interest in researching AVT. Although it is nowadays perceived as a professional practice, it has been a relatively neglected field of research. The particular focus was on the particular practice of fansubbing and the different types of current practices of subtitling were explained. I reviewed the relevant literature with regards to reception and audience studies on AVT in order to indicate the current gaps in the field.

## **2.10 The FAR Model**

Pedersen (2017) introduces the model and then applies it in the Swedish context in another study (2019), for comparing the quality of fansub and subtitles created by professional subtitlers. There is no published study so far using the FAR model for other languages. My study is an

important contribution that applies the model in a different cultural and language context. Pedersen defines the basic unit of assessment in subtitling as the “(one or two-line) subtitle itself” (2017, p. 216). According to Pedersen, this unit has two benefits:

Firstly, it is a clearly defined unit, which is also ideally semantically and syntactically self-contained. Secondly, an error in a subtitle breaks the contract of illusion and makes the viewer aware that they are reading subtitles and that may affect not only a local word or phrase but also the processing of information in the whole subtitle. Breaking the contract of illusion happens when viewers find that they have to return to complicated subtitles after watching the image. (p.216)

The letters, F-A-R represent the three categories of quality assessed by the framework. F stands for ‘Functional equivalence’, which entails measuring whether or not the text's message or meaning is translated accurately in the subtitles. The letter "A" stands for the ‘Acceptability’ of the subtitles, measuring how closely they follow the conventions of the translated language. The third letter, R, means the criterion of ‘Readability’, which refers to how easy it is for the audience to understand and receive the subtitles. Pedersen also contends that the term "how well" as a measure of the quality of translation is ambiguous because his framework is grounded in the analysis of errors (p.216). Norms and conventions applied to the model result in penalty scores. The proposed scores are on a scale of 0.25, 0.5, 1, 1.25, 1.5 and 2, respectively. It should be mentioned, however, that the penalty scores for each element of FAR might have a different range. For the semantic errors, the range of penalty scores is 0.5, 1, and 2. In general, the range of penalty scores across all three criteria has three scores labelled as minor, standard, and serious errors. Minor errors (which could have 0.25 or 0.5 penalty scores) “might go unnoticed, and only break the illusion if the viewers are attentive” (Pedersen, 2017, p. 219). Standard errors (which could have 0.5 or 1 penalty scores) “are those that are likely to break the contract and ruin the subtitle for most viewers” (p. 219). Serious errors (which have the range between 1 and 2 penalty scores) “may affect their comprehension not only of that subtitle but also of the following one(s), either because of misinformation, or by being so blatant that it takes a while for the user to let go of it and resume automated reading of subtitles” (p. 219).

### 2.10.1 Functional Equivalence Errors

Pedersen divides functional equivalence (F) errors into two categories: semantic and stylistic ones. Semantic equivalence penalty points are 0.5, for minor, 1 for standard, and 2 for serious errors of equivalents. Table 4 represents an instance of a minor semantic error found in a Swedish fansub translation of an English-language film (Pedersen, 2017, p. 220). A small book is discovered by the protagonist of the film *The Number 23* (Schumacher, 2007) in a second-hand bookshop. This book has the following title:

**Table 5** *An example of minor semantic error (Pedersen, 2017, p.220)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Swedish)	Back Translation
A Novel of Obsession by Topsy Kretts	En novel av besatthet av Topsy Kretts	A short story of obsession by Topsy Kretts

He states that the pairs “novel” in English” and “novel” in Swedish are false friends because the latter means ‘short story’ in Swedish. It is therefore incorrect to translate novel as ‘novell’. According to Pedersen, it is not a serious error, though, due to the fact that both terms refer to a kind of book and the viewers can understand the differences. Therefore, it is considered a minor error, which has the penalty point of 0.5. These errors are primarily lexical in nature, including terminological errors that do not have any bearing on the original storytelling of the film. He adds that two such errors occurring in the same unit should be included as a standard error, which has a penalty point of 1 as is the case, for example, in the voice-over narration of the same movie, *The Number 23* (Schumacher, 2007), when the male protagonist reflects on the value of time (see Table 6).

**Table 6** *An example of a minor semantic error (Pedersen, 2017, p.220)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Swedish)	Back Translation
Time is just a counting system; numbers with meanings attached to them	Tiden är bara ett räknande system, nummer med betydelse som slår ihop dem.	The time is just a system that counts, numbers with meaning that bang them together



He states that although the Swedish translation is a nearly verbatim rendition of the source content, much of the meaning is lost, indicating that verbatim translation may easily result in standard errors. Standard errors, however, could be an instance of a standard semantic equivalence error in a translation yet it does not seriously interrupt the audience's understanding of more than a single subtitle. In addition, there may also be standard semantic errors when key utterances, i.e., ones that have a significant impact on viewers' understanding of a film, are not translated.

A serious semantic equivalence error is penalized by a score of 2 and is defined “as a subtitle that is so erroneous that it makes the viewers’ understanding of the subtitle nil and would hamper the viewers’ progress beyond that subtitle” (p. 220). An example from the same film is given (Table 7), in which the protagonist reflects upon how life differs from what was as predicted by the stars.

**Table 7** *An example of a serious semantic error (Pedersen, 2017, p. 220)*

Source Text (English)	Target Text (Swedish)	Back Translation
I am living proof of the fallacy of astrology	Jag lever ständigt av en orimligt hög av "lustingar."	I am constantly living off an Unreasonably[sic] pile of “lusties.”

In Pedersen’s view, this error is so severe that it makes the translation undoubtedly inaccurate, and "would likely cause frustration for more than just the subtitle" (p. 221).

The severity of stylistic errors is considered less serious than that of semantic errors because “they cause nuisance, rather than misunderstandings” (p. 222). The scale of penalty points in their case is 0.25, 0.5, and 1. Pedersen provides examples of stylistic errors, such as “erroneous terms of address, using the wrong register (too high or too low), or any other use of language that is out of tune with the style of the original” (p. 223), using the wrong register and styles.

### **2.10.2 Acceptability Errors**

Considering the acceptability measure (A), Pedersen (2017) states that the errors “are those that make the subtitles sound foreign or otherwise unnatural” (p.224). As a result, the following errors have been identified: (1) grammatical errors, (2) spelling errors, and (3) idiomatic errors. He claims that in his assessment framework, “idiomaticity is not meant to signify only the use of

idioms, but the natural use of language; i.e., that which would sound natural to a native speaker of that language” (p. 221). To put it differently, such errors cause re-reading, interfere with understanding, and have a negative effect on reading speed. The penalty points for these errors are 0.25 for minor, 0.5 for standard, and 1 for serious errors. Occasionally, interferences between the source and target text may turn so severe that they become an equivalence issue, as shown in Table 7.

### ***2.10.3 The Readability Area***

The readability section “is medium-specific in that it deals with factors that are to do with how easily and fluently the subtitles can be read” (p. 223). This category refers to technical conventions and norms. The accuracy of this area is determined “by computing errors in segmentation and spotting, punctuation, graphics, and reading speeds and line lengths” (Pedersen, 2019, p. 67).

As a matter of fact, segmentation is crucial in the sense that incorrect segmentation may distract the viewer, which can result in a longer subtitled length. Errors in segmentation occur when the semantic and syntactic structure of the utterance is ignored. It is considered a minor error if the errors are between the lines. Errors that occur between subtitles are regarded as standard errors.

The occurrence of spotting errors is the result of poor synchronization with speech. It means that subtitles start before speech or end after speech, or that subtitles do not take into account the hard cut in the image view. It is possible that the subtitle will begin with a delay that causes the viewer to search for it before it begins.

While segmentation would not be subject to seeing them as serious errors, spotting would be. Serious errors in spotting occur when subtitles are not synced with more than one speech. Errors that last less than a minute are considered minor. The scores for these are 0.5, 1 and 2, respectively.

According to Pedersen (2019), punctuation is of greater importance in subtitling than in other types of writing. Pedersen points out that “the ‘irrealis’ use of italics is a good example: Italics are used in many countries to mark a voice or text that is ‘not there’: voices on the phone, on TV, in dreams, in people’s heads, in flashbacks, in hallucinations, etc.” (p.225). The erroneous

use of this layout is regarded as a standard error in several contexts, as it has become standard practice and therefore a part of the illusionary contract. Dashes are used in a variety of ways. It is used to indicate the speaker, to continue the utterance between subtitles, and sometimes to indicate that the speaker is talking to someone else. Pedersen observes that “what decides how severe these errors are depends on which guidelines are used to feed the model (in that some allow variation) and consistency of use” (p.226). The penalty points for these are 0.25, 0.5 and 1, respectively.

According to Pedersen, the length of a subtitle line depends on the medium of viewing, such as tablets, cinema screens, or TV screens. Additionally, “it matters if the system that is used for viewing subtitles is character or pixel based” (p.227). Nevertheless, this is something that is always governed by standards, primarily in characters, so it can be evaluated easily and automatically. Overly long lines can be slashed so that their ends aren't visible, or halved when over two lines are shown. Additionally, depending on the software, the lines can be rendered in a smaller font in order to improve readability. With reading speeds increasing, viewers are required to spend more time reading subtitles. At 15 characters per second, they spend approximately two-thirds of their time reading subtitles. At 16.5 characters per second, viewers spend 80% of their time reading subtitles (Pedersen, 2019, p. 68). The penalty scores for these are 0.5, 1, and 2, respectively.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the logic of the research design and the methods and how I collected and analysed data in order to answer the research question. The first section provides an account of the methodological framework: it introduces the research questions and research design. It is followed by the explanation and description of the methods used for collecting data and comments on how I processed the data.

### **3.1 Research Questions**

It was necessary for the researcher to undertake several qualitative and quantitative analyses in order to fulfil the multifaceted purposes of this study. Overall, based on the following research questions, the study was designed: The three questions are as follows:

1. How good is the quality of subtitles in my sample produced by the Iranian fansubbers and professional subtitlers using the FAR framework (Pedersen 2017, 2019)?
2. What are the motivations for doing the subtitles of the Iranian fansubbers in my sample?
3. What are the audiences' expectations of and comments on the fansubbers' translations?

### **3.2 Research Design**

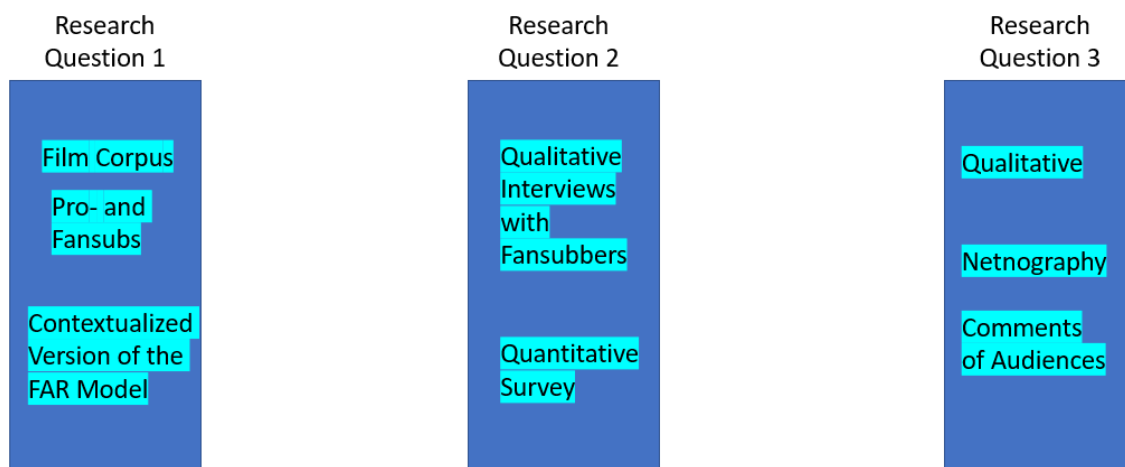
Methodologically speaking, this project was designed as a mixed-methods and triangulated study in which data was collected and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This study is empirical (rather than conceptual) and exploratory rather than experimental (Williams & Chesterman, 2002, p. 87),. Its main objective was to study the reception of subtitling among Iranian viewers and fansubbers of foreign programs fansubbed into Persian. According to Gambier (2006), various methods can be used to study the reception of audiovisual translation (AVT); questionnaires, interviews, eye-tracking, among others so that viewers' responses and attitudes can be elicited.

Although Translation Studies (TS) are primarily either qualitative or quantitative, mixed-method approaches have gained considerable interest due to, partly, their practicality, but more importantly, because mixed methods may extensively explore new insights. As Babbie (2010, p.

24) puts it, at the outset every observation is qualitative, whether it is the researcher's experience or “someone’s intelligence, the location of a pointer on a measuring scale, or a check mark inserted in a questionnaire”. However, since neither one of them is statistical or quantitative by nature, bringing them into numerical formats could be of use in some circumstances. In this respect, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) point out:

Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (p. 5).

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), there are 15 classifications of mixed-methods approaches in different fields of study. They draw on Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and adopt his basic account of the combination of the two methods as “dominant– less dominant model” (2011, pp. 56-57), which can be sequential and/or concurrent. In this thesis, the quantitative phase followed the first qualitative phase, but the qualitative method was dominant. Moreover, the third research question, which also was approached through a qualitative method, was added in order to explore the reception of the viewers. The research instruments used in this research comprised a combination of building a film corpus, designing questionnaires, making interviews, and an extensive document analysis of viewers’ comments (netnography). An overview of the study's design can be seen in Figure 5.



**Figure 5** *The methods used in relation to the three RQs, respectively*

### 3.3 Research Question 1

This research question aims at comparing the quality of subtitles created by Iranian fansubbers and professional subtitlers. After obtaining the pro and fansubs, I used the contextualized version of the FAR model by Pedersten (2017) for assessing the subtitles' quality.

#### 3.3.1 The FAR Model Adapted in Persian

Since the translation of taboo language and graphic codes includes a significant proportion in the Iranian AVT studies, these topics should be considered when a researcher wants to apply the FAR model in the Iranian context. The main question the researcher should ask is: If the taboo items are censored in Persian subtitles, should it be considered as an error? On the basis of the studies on norms and guidelines on both Iranian official and non-professional subtitling (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018, 2020; Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2019), it is safe to conclude that taboo language is toned down in official subtitling while non-professional subtitlers tend to keep the meaning of the original content even if it should take a taboo term. According to Khoshsaligheh et al. (2018, p. 665), the Iranian both fansubbers and official use at least one of the following five strategies dealing with taboo items:

1. maintaining – the taboo language item is directly translated to a taboo language item in Persian with the same force;

2. substituting – the taboo language item is translated to something which is not regarded as taboo in Persian;
3. mitigating – the force of the taboo item is reduced in the translation;
4. deleting – the taboo item is totally omitted in the translation; and
5. amplifying – the non-taboo item with a weak contextual taboo in the original is translated as a taboo in the translation which could be primarily seen in the fansubber and students’ translations.

While Iranian professional subtitlers must adhere to their (non) translation guidelines and norms and tone down or eliminate the taboo force, when assessing translation quality, both professional subtitles and fansubs must be evaluated according to the same standard, which is presenting a correct translation of the source content. For this reason, I consider it a serious error (penalty score 2) to delete, substitute and amplify the taboo language. I consider it a minor error (penalty score 1) if the translators mitigate the force of the taboo language.

In their example, Khoshsaligheh et al. (2018), represent an instance from *Deadpool* (Miller, 2016) (see Table 8) and illustrate how a taboo item can be substituted. In the English subtitle, the sentence (I don’t take the shits) was replaced with (There’s no benefit in it for me [Back translation]) in Persian. The original taboo, which is a slang term, refers to (I’m not going to fight them). In this case, 'shits' means disrespectfully referring to an individual or group of individuals. There is no sense of taboo in the translation, which is a departure from the original.

**Table 8** *An instance of substituting (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018, p. 668)*

Source Text (English)	Back Translation (From Persian)
The bar’s owner: Remind me what good will come of this?	The bar’s owner: Tell me, what good will come of this?
Deadpool: <u>I don’t take the shits</u> , I just disturb them	Deadpool: <u>There’s no benefit in it for me</u> . I just wanna disturb them

For the strategy of amplifying, Khoshsaligheh et al. (2018) showcases the movie, *Grown Ups 2* (Dugan, 2013) as an example, where the line (I do not have to go to the bathroom) is

translated as (I do not jerk off [Back translation]) in the target subtitle, in contrast to the original one, where 'urinate' was simply meant to be used for urination, not as a metaphor for masturbation. A further example of using this strategy can be found in the Persian fansubbed version of the same film. The scene depicts Lenny searching for his daughter's doll when he notices a gay man and tells him (you're not fooling around with my wife and you have a pee stain on your clothing). As translated into the target language, this sentence is (don't fool around with my wife and you seem to have jacked off [Back translation]). A misunderstanding of the original resulted in a taboo in the translation that refers to 'masturbation', an inherently taboo practice for the Iranian viewers.

There is also the question of what item in Persian is considered taboo. Sharifi and Darchinian (2009) to provide a framework for understanding what is taboo in the original for Persian language translators (translated into English by Khoshsaligheh et al. (2019, p. 668) . They are as follows:

1. intimate relations between men and women whether legitimate or illegitimate and words related to them such as kissing, hugging, sleeping with, and cheating on;
2. terms meaning boys' and girls' romantic relations before marriage like boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.;
3. calling or naming external sexual organs and related words;
4. words and expressions related to alcoholic drinks and drugs;
5. swearing, curse, and impolite expressions; stating features of immoral behaviours and habits like thieving, etc.;
6. issues related to religion and belief that are other than those of the translator's society;
7. statements concerning political issues that are officially defined threatening to the translator's society and cause political situations that could be highly unstable.

Another issue, which is not discussed in the FAR model, is the assessment of graphic codes. As stated, in Chapter 2, Chaume (2004, 2012) uses the term 'graphic code' to describe verbal visual information on screen represented on the screen, including emails, signs, newspaper headlines, SMS texts, and Internet texts (Mehdizadkhani & Khoshsaligheh, 2021, p. 83). This term is derived from film semiotics, studying different kinds of codes in films. I have decided that the



penalty score is 1 when the translation is incorrect and 2 when the graphic code is ignored and not translated.

Additionally, the issue of footnoting in Persian subtitles becomes bold nowadays (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2018 and 2020). Subtitlers (mostly a practice by fansubbers) tend to add footnotes and comments to the translations. This could be for the definition of a word in the film or their personal opinions. Adding footnotes and comments will increase the characters in a subtitle which results in causing problems for the viewers in terms of length and reading speed. In case it is incorrect, the penalty score is 0.5 where the comment is fewer than 15 characters; the score is 1 when the length of the comment is between 15 and 25 characters, and 2 when it is more than 25 characters. It should be mentioned that the accepted norm (in the European contexts) of the number of characters per line in a subtitle is 38. Hence a footnote over 25 characters is in fact impossible for the viewer to make use of. Hence, in this project, these factors were explored instead of grammar and spelling errors mentioned by Pedersen (2019)

Considering the reading speed, there is no norm or study on reading speed in the Iranian context, therefore I take over the penalty as following based on my experience of being professional translation subtitler: It should be 0.5 when it exceeds 15 characters per second and score 1 when the speed exceeds 20 characters per second; in case of the latter most people would simply be able to read subtitles only - or stop using them altogether (Pedersen, 2017). Having previously been a fansubber and currently working as a professional subtitler, I myself assessed the quality of the subtitles.

### **3.3.2 The Corpus of Film Subtitles**

I selected a total of eight English-language feature films with Persian subtitles created by fans and professionals alike. Three criteria were used to select and form the corpus: (1) language features in English such as adjectives and metaphors, (2) various types of taboos and graphic codes used, and (3) availability of fan and pro-produced Persian subtitles. First, I developed a list and selected sixty movies (fan and pro-subbed in 2018–2019) based on my own familiarity with them, as well as recommendations and feedback from my supervisor and AVT translator colleagues. A wide variety of genres were represented in the films, including adventure, action, comedy, crime, horror, drama, and animation. Based on a simple random sampling technique, eight cases were

picked to form the final corpus of eight movies and keep the size manageable. I assigned a number to each movie: to generate random number for each, I used the random number generator available at <https://stattrek.com/statistics/random-number-generator>. Then I selected the first eight movies on the list to include in my corpus. Using the random selection method meant that “every unit in the sampling frame ha[d] an equal chance of being selected” (Mellinger & Hanson, 2017, p. 11). This way I could eliminate any bias regarding, for instance, my preferences for genre, or familiarity with the translators.

The sample includes *Black Panther* (Coogler, 2018), *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (Ramsey et al., 2018), *Searching* (Chaganty, 2018), *The Old Man & the Gun* (Lowery, 2018), *Mortal Engines* (Rivers, 2018), *Johnny English Strikes Again* (Kerr, 2018), *Ant-man and the Wasp* (Reed, 2018), and *Ralph Breaks the Internet* (Moore & Johnston, 2018). The subtitles, both professional and fansubbed, were obtained from the official websites described in the next section.

The subtitles produced by the professional translators were hard-subbed to the films; these films have official authorization from the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, which is a kind of a gate-keeping institution giving permissions to audiovisual products. The number of the films which have the professional Persian hard-subtitle are 110, ranging from 2018 to 2019 (honar-aval.com). These productions can be purchased from the official media markets. The name of the subtitlers and translators are indicated in the films. With the enhancement of the internet speed in Iran, the films are not produced in the DVD version and therefore subtitlers and translators are now working with the websites, such as [namava.ir](http://namava.ir) and [filmio.com](http://filmio.com), which have official authorization and provide the censored version with the hard-sub. The total number of 94 hard-subbed films from 2018 - 2020 are available on these two websites. Their audiences should pay in order to download the films. Moreover, since the websites are censoring and editing the original versions, they provide the films after several weeks of their original release. It should be also noted that the reason for the delay also could be that these official channels provide the high-quality versions of the films alongside their subtitles. In contrast, fansubbers create subtitles even for the low- quality pirated versions. Nevertheless, the Iranian official websites do not have the films’ copyright and they obtain them from pirated versions as well.

The subtitles produced by the fansubbers are selected from [Subscene.com](http://Subscene.com) (I use [Subscene](http://Subscene.com) hereafter to use the website). It is one of the most popular subtitle websites, which shares available

subtitles for all languages with free download links. Firstly, the fansubber(s) create an account in the website and then upload their fansubs. They only need a name (public) and email address to open an account. They should clarify the format of the fansub (for example, for which quality of film it is created such as HD-rip 1080p, Blu-ray 720p, and Blu-ray 480p) and then state whether the subtitle is created by a team. In case of teamwork translation, they need to state the team's name or their public names separately. According to the website, by making an account, the user agrees that they

(1) will not post contributions that violate the websites or any other person's privacy rights, publicity rights, intellectual property rights (including without limitation copyrights) or contract rights;

(2) have fully complied with any third-party licenses relating to Contributions, agree to pay all royalties, fees and any other monies owing any person by reason of Contributions that they posted to or through this Site; and 3) will not post or submit Contributions that: (i) are defamatory, damaging, disruptive, unlawful, inappropriate, offensive, inaccurate, pornographic, vulgar, indecent, profane, hateful, racially or ethnically offensive, obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, threatening, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable; (ii) incite, encourage or threaten immediate physical harm against another, including but not limited to, Contributions that promote racism, bigotry, sexism, religious intolerance or harm against any group or individual; or (iii) contain material that solicits personal information from anyone under 13 or exploits anyone in a sexual or violent manner (Legal information, n.d.).

Additionally, the website has a section called "Content Verification Program". Copyright holders and official websites can use this section to identify and take down content that is considered to be infringing their rights. The purpose of this service is to address the requirements of large copyright-holding companies with an ongoing need to remove content from Subscene. It is only intended for the removal of content that is claimed to violate the third party's rights.; this means that Subscene never cooperates with the legal and government entities, which find the available fansubs, as against their regulations religiously and ideologically.

Subscene.com provides scoring for the fansubs so that the viewers could rate them according to their preferences. In this study, the top-rated Persian fansubs were selected for the comparison. Since there were so many top-rated versions available for each film, the researcher used one of the fansubs through random sampling technique as each fansub was assigned with a number and selected through a random number generator<sup>5</sup>. However, as can be seen in Table 9 only one prosub version was found in the official websites.

**Table 9** *The availability of the pro- and fansubs*

Title	Official subtitling ( <a href="http://www.namava.ir">www.namava.ir</a> & <a href="http://www.filimo.com">www.filimo.com</a> )	Fansubbing Subscene.com (The date of sharing of fansubs is unknown)
<i>Black Panther</i> (Coogler, 2018)	Only 1 version January 2019	115 Persian Fansubs by the website's users.
<i>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</i> (Ramsey et al., 2018)	Only one pro-sub March 2019	93 Persian fansubs 68 fansubs were rated as 10/10
<i>Searching</i> (Chaganty, 2018)	Only one pro-sub November 2018	54 Persian fansubs 23 fansubs were rated as 10/10
<i>The Old Man &amp; the Gun</i> (Lowery, 2018)	Only one pro-sub February 2019	99 Persian fansubs 64 fansubs were rated as 10/10
<i>Ralph Breaks the Internet</i> (Moore & Johnston, 2018)	Only one pro-sub February 2019	217 Persian fansubs 144 fansubs were rated as 10/10
<i>Johnny English Strikes Again</i> (Kerr, 2018)	Only one pro-sub December 2019	124 Persian fansubs 65 fansubs were rated 10/10
<i>Ant-man and the Wasp</i> (Reed, 2018)	Only one pro-sub October 2018	205 Persian fansubs 102 fansubs were rated 10/10
<i>Mortal Engines</i> (Rivers, 2018)	Only one pro-sub March 2019	86 Persian fansubs 31 fansubs were rated 10/10

<sup>5</sup> <https://stattrek.com/statistics/random-number-generator.aspx>

## 3.4 Research Question 2

This research question aims to explore the group of Iranian fansubbers' motivation behind doing the subtitles. I first interviewed a small sample of fansubbers about their motivations, the quality of their work, and their opinions on the consumers of fansubbed content. The results of these interviews were then used to develop a questionnaire that was distributed to a larger sample of fansubbers. The overall results showed the core categories as the quality assurance of the fansubs, reasons for fansubbing, the relationship among the fansubbers themselves and their feedbacks on official dubbing and subtitling.

### 3.4.1 Participant Selection

In order to find out about fansubbers' reasons for participating in the activity, I carried out nine individual interviews with Iranian fansubbers both on WhatsApp and Telegram platforms. The questions are provided in *Appendix A* (in their English translation). Since the activity of fansubbing in Iran is considered an underground form of labour, contacting potential participant fansubbers for the project was a demanding task and one that required considering the safety of the participants. Hence, I approached them an Iranian Telegram channel, called LODFILM (<https://t.me/LODFILM>) with almost 1,300 members. The channel is administrated by Iranian fansubbers and it regularly releases information and updates about new fansubs, subtitling software and call for fansubbing. Therefore, I assumed that some of the users of the channel would be fansubbers. First, I contacted the administrators through their Telegram ID users and introduced my research objectives. I requested them to share my request for interviewing with fansubbers in their channels. As a sort of snowball sampling, I could find nine participants for the interviews. It is a non-probability sampling technique of identifying and recruiting research participants (Dörnyei, 2007). It was necessary to use this method because fansubbing is an underground activity and the participants are difficult to reach.

Three out of the nine fansubbers I talked to on WhatsApp and the rest, based on their preferences, I texted them on Telegram. I could negotiate the participation of nine fansubbers: two women and seven men between the between age of 16-30 (See Table 10). They were all informed about their possibility to withdraw from the participation at any point of the project and the procedure of anonymizing their identity. We agreed on pseudo names that I could choose for them. Fortunately, none of them withdrew their consent. The relatively low number of participants is not

considered as a limitation since the textual data reached the level of saturation when winning the consent of Participant 7, (Jack). During the interviewing process, saturation occurs when no new information or themes can be gleaned from additional interviews (Dörnyei, 2007). The way I understood it was that different participants such as 8 and 9, Oscar and David, provided ideas that had been mentioned by the previous participants expressed the same themes and ideas repeatedly.

**Table 10** *Interviews: Demographic information of the nine fansubbers, platform and length of interviews provided in the order of their making*

Participants	Age	Fansubbing experience	Platform of interviewing	Duration	Word count
Anna	21	2 years	WhatsApp (Voice call)	40 minutes	1,240
Jazmin	19	10 months	Telegram (Texting)	1 hour	670
Tomas	30	5 years	WhatsApp (Voice call)	2 hours (in two sessions)	4,786
Steve	18	1 year	WhatsApp (Voice call)	45 minutes	1,490
Oliver	24	9 months	Telegram (Texting)	1 hour	490
Harry	26	1 year	Telegram (Texting)	1 hour	571
Jack	20	3 years	Telegram (Texting)	1 hour	665
Oscar	23	2 years	Telegram (Texting)	1/5 hour	870
David	22	2 years	Telegram (Texting)	1 hour	941

### 3.4.2 Grounded Theory and Coding

The methodology of grounded theory was initially proposed in the social sciences in order to improve the validity and reliability of qualitative studies (Babbie, 2010; Friedman, 2011). It also provides a safeguard against dispensing with analytical rigor. The method involves three main stages of ‘coding’ that have been established by as follows:

- (1). Initial coding (open coding), in which the data are broken down into segments (a long phrase, one line or a short paragraph), and they are labelled;
- (2). Axial coding, in which the analysis follows an abstracting process towards making connections between first-order and higher-order concepts;
- (3). Selective coding, in which the core category- relating to previous codes- is determined, and it is the basis of the new proposed theory as well (Cohen et al., 2007)

Following the collection of all data, the process of data analysis took place; thus, the process of data analysis did not coincide with the process of data collection. Since the data obtaining from Telegram platform were textual materials, they required no transcription while the voice calls from WhatsApp were transcribed. Each person's interview text was saved in a separate word file. The size of the corpus is 11,723 words altogether (See the word count for each interview in Table 3.5.) The codes were not formulated prior to the analysis but constructed in the course of the reading the data in three stages – in accordance with the grounded theory approach.

First of all, I went through all nine files to grasp a clear picture of the data. I then conducted a separate analysis of each file. As a first step, the data was broken down into smaller segments and each segment was given a label. The process was repeated for all files. As the second step of coding, I reviewed the small codes identified, comparing and contrasting them several times. A new set of abstract categories was established, and the codes of the previous stage were grouped and categorized according to their suitability. Finally, in the third step of coding, the abstract categories of the second stage were reviewed and examined on multiple occasions in order to determine the core concepts. As a result of the analysis, four core concepts were identified: quality assurance of the fansubs, reasons for fansubbing, the relationship among the fansubbers themselves, and their feedbacks on official dubbing and subtitling.

### **3.4.3 Situating fansubbers' self-perception**

In order to situate the analysis of the interview data, I decided to distribute a questionnaire to Iranian fansubbers. Since the population of fansubbers in the Iranian context seems to be unknown – mostly due to its underground status –, my purpose was not to achieve representativeness. The results of the analysis of the interview data cannot be extrapolated beyond the actual group of participants, yet the results of the analysis of the questionnaires could function as an interpretative context for strengthening the validity of my reading of the interviewees' responses.

#### ***3.4.3.1 Development of the Questionnaire***

In developing the questionnaire items, insights from both the existing literature and qualitative interviews with Iranian fansubbers were incorporated. As a result, all questionnaire items addressed the research questions comprehensively and provided a comprehensive understanding of fansubbing practices and motivations in the Iranian context.

The purpose of reviewing the literature was to gain a comprehensive understanding of fansubbing, including its historical evolution, fansubbers' role, and the impact of fansubbed content on both audiences and the industry in different contexts. As a result of the literature review, it was possible to identify some common motivations and challenges associated with fansubbing. The references used for this purpose were Wang (2017), Wongseree (2020), and Luczaj et al.'s (2014) studies conducted on exploring the motivation and reasons of Chinese, Thai, Czech and Polish fansubbers, respectively. The in-depth review of each study is presented in the second chapter.

A qualitative research approach was used to enhance the development of the questionnaire as well as contextualize it within the Persian context. Unstructured interviews were conducted with Iranian fansubbers who had direct experience in the field. During the interview process, rich and contextual information was gathered regarding the motivations and reasons driving their participation in fansubbing activities. By conducting these interviews, it was possible to uncover key categories that were central to the Iranian fansubbing community's experiences and perspectives. As a result, the questionnaire items were formulated in order to probe these core categories obtained through the interview data.



From the interviews, four core categories emerged as central to the motivations and practices of Iranian fansubbers (see Chapter 5 for the in-depth results):

1. **Official Translation:** This category pertains to the fansubbers' engagement with official translations of media content, exploring the reasons behind their decision to create subtitles for content already available through official channels.
2. **Reception of Fansubbing:** This category delves into how fansubbed content is received by the audience, investigating the impact and implications of fansubbing on viewer preferences and behaviors.
3. **Quality and Speed:** This category focuses on the standards of quality and speed in fansubbing activities, examining the factors influencing these choices and the trade-offs involved.
4. **Building a Networking:** This category involves understanding the role of fansubbing in building social and professional networks among fansubbers, as well as its broader implications on the fansubbing community.

The items within each category have been carefully crafted to capture the nuances and diversity of motivations and experiences. It was necessary to refine the wording of the items in order to ensure clarity and relevance to the study's objectives. Additionally, I sent the English and Persian versions to several Iranian PhD and MA students of TS, and two Iranian AV translators whom I have approached on grounds of redundancy, overlap, repetition, and matters of priority in order to verify the translation of items. Then, the questionnaire was sent to 10 MA students of TS for face validity in order to identify and correct the ambiguous parts and ungrammatical sentences in the surveys' formulations.

#### *3.4.3.2 The Distribution of the Questionnaire*

Telegram is a cloud-based messaging application for mobile and desktop devices. The channels of Telegram “are a tool for broadcasting messages to large audiences. They can have an unlimited number of subscribers, they can be public with a permanent URL and each post in a channel has its own view counter” (Channels, supergroups, giga groups and basic groups, n.d.). It should be noted that on Telegram channels only the administrators could share posts and news, that is why I could approach them only and ask to cooperate, contact and distribute my requests with the users of the platform. According to some recent statistics, out of the 80 million of the

Iranian population, 50-55 million people are using the application (Asr Iran, September, 2021). As one of the Telegram channels supported the protests in in November 2016, the application was temporarily blocked by the Judicial system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, as Telegram refused to delete this channel at the request of the Iranian government, Telegram was by the Islamic Republic of Iran's judicial orders from May 10, 2017 to date –As a result, its users keep connecting to the application by using Virtual Private Networks (VPN), myself included for the purpose of this project.

Due to the underground type of the activity of fansubbing, I contacted and sent the link of the questionnaire ([www.cafepardazesh.ir/form/view.php?id=۵۲۷۴۶۲۲](http://www.cafepardazesh.ir/form/view.php?id=۵۲۷۴۶۲۲)) to two popular Iranian Telegram Fansubbing channels, called LODFILM (<https://t.me/LODFILM>) and Serial Film Download ([https://t.me/Serial\\_Film\\_Download](https://t.me/Serial_Film_Download)) with more than 1,300 subscribers altogether. Firstly, I contacted the channels' administrators and asked them to share with the users the links of both the English and Persian version of the survey and make it available between 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 and 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. The administrators were also requested to include in the announcement a consent form (see Appendix B) as well as a note in Persian that “only participants with fansubbing experience should fill in the questionnaire”<sup>6</sup>. Finally, 96 questionnaires were completed – 39 from the first and 57 from the second channel obtained. The language of the questionnaire was both Persian and English and created with the help of Cafepardazesh.com and freeonlinesurveys.com, respectively (see Appendix C). Cafepardazesh.com was chosen for the Persian version since it shows the Persian alphabet without any problem. The questionnaire included the consent, demographic information, general instructions, the items themselves, and closing greetings. The responses options were ordered based on a Likert Scale of 1= Strongly Agree; 2= Agree; 3= No idea; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly Disagree.

#### *3.4.3.2 The Demographic Information of the Questionnaire*

According to the gender distribution of the participants, 78.1% of the respondents were male. There was a wide range of ages among the participants, with 40.6% falling between 19

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<sup>6</sup> The LOD Telegram channel, also involved in the interview phase, shared the links free of charge; however, the Serial\_Film\_Download Telegram channel charged 2,500,000 IT (250 US \$).

and 22 years old and 25% between 23 and 26 years old. Additionally, 17.7% of respondents were between the ages of 27 and 30, and 5.2% were over the age of 30.

As far as participants' educational backgrounds are concerned, 70.8% of the respondents hold a Bachelor's degree. Meanwhile, 23.9% had attained a Master's degree, and 2% were below the Bachelor's level. A Ph.D. degree was not held by any of the participants in the study.

In terms of language proficiency, 68.7% of the respondents considered their English proficiency to be good, while 20.8% rated it as very good. Additionally, 89.5% of the participants rated their Persian language proficiency as very good. Neither language was reported to be proficient or very poor by any of the participants.

In terms of employment status, the majority (60.4%) of respondents were unemployed, whereas 18.7% were employed as fansubbers. In addition, 9.3% worked as professional subtitlers or translators, while 8.3% were freelancers or employed in other fields.

Furthermore, information regarding the participants' residences revealed that 11.4% resided in the capital, 21.8% in large cities, and only 1% in small towns. There were no details available about 65.6% of the participants' living places.

### **3.5 Research Question 3**

This research question addresses the reception of fansubbing by consumers and see how they receive the fansubbing as well their opinions on the quality. In order to be able to explore the question I collected my data by drawing on the method of netnography In other words, this stage was designed to gather naturally-occurring data, while Stage 2 was designed to elicit data.

#### **3.5.1 The Method of Netnography**

The data collection technique of netnography was developed in the late 1990s by Kozinets (1997) for the purpose of examining online contributions to marketing and consumer research. As an anthropological method, netnography has acquired popularity in sociology, cultural studies and consumer research (Kozinets, 2002, 2010). Netnography, as the name entails, means a “participant-observational research [technique for data gathering] based in online fieldwork”, which involves the collection of textual data from online communities, blogs, forums, and social networking websites (Kozinets, 2010, p. 60). At the same time, as an approach to data, netnography is a new of type of ethnography in the virtual space, which is “conducted on the Internet; a

qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of the online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications [...]” (Kozinets, 2006b, p. 193).

In the course of sharing, members of computer-oriented cybercultures and consumer-oriented cultures, have been found to do more than merely exchange information (Kozinets, 2010); but they mostly share their ideas and opinions as well as their fansubs when joining an online community, such as Telegram. This, originally marketing research method allows for the researchers in other scholarly fields as well to gain the perspectives of online groups in which people “can present themselves using digital rather than physical referents” (Schau & Gilly, 2003, p. 385), and communicate with each other becoming a social or cultural group (Kozinets, 2010, p. 71). Netnography is usually considered time-consuming but inexpensive, and more elaborate because it does not entail the researcher’s intervention, requiring a smaller amount of intrusiveness since it is done in a nano-fabricated setting that allows unlimited, permanent access to informants on social networks (Kozinets, 2002, p. 62).

As an open-ended practice as well as participant-observational research method, a Netnographic study may take three forms of data collection. In its first form, as a result of a content analysis of pre-existing online messages, posts, comments, etc., in a given online community, a set of archival data is generated. The second type of technique involves interviews, texting, and online conversations with the members of the selected community to collect data. I have adopted the first form for my research purposes. According to Kozinets (2010), netnography has a series of six steps to be followed carefully for validity:

(1) Planning and Entrée: In the first stage, the researcher has research questions. Finding appropriate online communities is a necessity; acting as the main enabler for answering the raised questions. Thus, research goals should match the targeted online forum. Once the community is identified, it is needed to consider some criteria of that community: if it has relevant segments, topics or groups to the objectives of the study, if it has a high traffic of postings, if it has very rich data, and if it has a bunch of interactions among the members. Finally, before starting the next steps, the researcher should explore the online community in order to become more familiar with it.

(2) Data Collection: The netnographer may obtain three types of data: archival data, elicited data, and fieldnotes. Since these types of data are somewhat ready-made transcriptions, it facilitates the process of research. Considering a large amount of information available on such online forums, the netnographer may determine which data are appropriate for the study. It is recommended that data collection be continued until no further information can be gathered or until saturation has been reached.

(3) Data Analysis: After collecting the necessary size of data, the researcher utilizes qualitative data analysis techniques like content analysis or grounded theory. It has been recommended by some scholars to make use of software programs like QSR NVivo if the data cannot be dealt with manually.

(4) Trustworthy Interpretation: The researchers should exercise caution in analysing qualitative analysis in terms of validity. One of the pitfalls of netnography, is the researcher's interpretive skills so that they can come up with a systematic contextualization of data. The generalization of the study outside of particular online groups is to be undertaken with caution but accompanied by triangulated methods and the immersion of the researcher in the community for a long period of time can be secured.

(5) Ethical Consideration: The ethical questions to consider include (a) if the online community or fora are private or public, (b) sharing the researcher's participation, affiliations, purposes, and membership eligibility with the group members, (c) ensuring that informants remain anonymous when quoted, (d) obtaining permission from the members before directly quoting their ideas.

(6) Member Checks: The final results are suggested to be sent to site members, in particular those whose posts have been analysed, to modify the researcher's interpretation and achieve more specific insights. It not only develops the findings but also highlights its errors. Although member checking is a simple task, more often than not it becomes burdensome and it is commonly excluded.

In order to meet the first step (Planning and Entrée) of quality control, I googled the key words in relation to my RQ3 – in Persian - securing an appropriate community or fora. The subject terms were: download films, fansubbing and comments. The Google Search Engine revealed many unrelated websites (About 4,310,000), which indicated I had to fine-tune the search. I reviewed the terms and came up with the two websites that allowed me to identify two related

websites. One was an online community of film sharing and the other was a film distribution website, (<http://www.film2movie.ws/>). While the latter (<http://www.freefilm2Pers.ns>) had not been updated and shared no posts since January 2012, the former was dedicated to discussions on pirated films and the last update on the website was July 2020. The link, <http://www.film2movie.ws/> is a pirated film website in Persian managed by an unknown person where it is registered outside of Iran<sup>7</sup>. In order to download the films and comment on the pages, this website does not require any registration. However, only the site administrators are able to upload the films and fansubs while users can only comment on the posts. It is publicly available and potentially anybody interested in sharing idea on fansubbing and films on the web can access it. Since it provides a free film download service, the websites take advantage of pop-ups and online advertisement to compensate the websites costs.

I posted an initial request on the website for the administrators, requesting their permission for researching the comments about fansubbing. The site manger agreed. During the process of collecting the archival data, it was necessary to collect some field notes data through observation, taking part in a few interactions, reading the verbal reports and messages the members made. Broadly speaking, observation is a neglected tool in TS but it is very effective to gain a clear understating of what people do as oppose what they say they do (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013). The archival data were downloaded and saved on a word file. The process of data collections continued until it reached saturation. The data collection process began on December 2018 and continued until February, 2020.

As for the step 3, drawing the grounded theory, the archival data were organized and memoed manually (see section 3.5.3). Due to the process of analysing, these codes were not developed beforehand. For the purpose of explaining the relationships among the coding classifications, the data were tagged. The elicited data were also analysed via grounded theory. I would like to point out that the data were analysed manually, without the aid of any software. It was necessary to use quotation marks in their original form (including apostrophes and capital letters, among others) and punctuation. Due to the length and repetition of the contents of a number of quotations, some of them were condensed. The overall analysis consisted of analysing 43 posts which included almost more than 4,500 replies. Analysing this sort of observation data, the

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<sup>7</sup> Domain information and Registrant contact can be found here: <https://www.whois.com/whois/film2movie.ws>

grounded theory technique was employed so that the data could be memoed and coded (see also section 3.5.3).

Considering Step 5, the concerns of research ethics in this context, affiliations and intentions were publicly disclosed on the website. The site members already used alias names for discussing the issues without any further need for registration.

To establish the validity and trustworthiness of the project, in line with Step 4, I explained all stages of the study in detail, as well as how the data were gathered, organized, and examined. The results would be also generalizable only to this website or any other similar websites.

At the time of writing this thesis, however, film2movie.ws was down and I could not share the results with the users and administrators; I could not meet the requirement of Step 6, Member Check.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE COMPARISON OF THE QUALITY OF SUBTITLES PRODUCED BY THE IRANIAN FANSUBBERS AND PROFESSIONAL SUBTLERS ACCORDING TO THE PERSIAN CONTEXTUALIZED VERSION OF THE FAR MODEL

The first research question I want to explore is the quality of subtitles produced by the Iranian fansubbers and professional subtitlers. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Persian contextualized version of the FAR model was used to answer the question. In this section, the overall results of the quality assessment were given, followed by the presentation of each area of the assessment: functional equivalence, acceptability, graphic codes, footnotes, and readability. The discussion of findings is also provided in the end of the chapter.

### 4.1 Functional Equivalence

This area is dealing with both semantic and stylistic errors. Table 11 shows that fansubbers did their best to achieve equivalence.

**Table 11** *The scores of Functional Equivalence errors in both pro- and fansubs*

*Note: Major Errors= Maj E; Standard Errors= St E; Minor Errors= Min E*

Movie	Number of FE errors (Fansubs)	Number of FE errors (Prosubs)	Total FE error score (Fansubs)	Total FE error score (Prosubs)
<i>Ant-man and The Wasp</i>	2 Maj E: 1 Min E: 1	1 Min E: 1	1.5	0.25
<i>Black Panther</i>	2 Min E: 2	0	1	0
<i>Johnny English Strikes Again</i>	1 Min E: 1	1 Min E: 1	0.5	0.5
<i>Mortal Engines</i>	2 Min E: 2	0	1	0



<i>Ralph Breaks the Internet</i>	2 Min E: 2	1 Min E: 1	1	0.5
<i>Searching</i>	1 Maj E: 1	0	1	0
<i>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</i>	1 Min E: 1	0	0.5	0
<i>The Old man &amp; the Gun</i>	7 St E: 2 Min E: 5	1 Min E: 1	3	0.25

However, in the few cases such as in the fansub of *The Old man & the Gun* (Lowery, 2018), the fansubbers produced more formal or literal equivalence rather than “a pragmatic kind of functional equivalence, representing speaker intention” (Pedersen, 2019, p. 66). The examples in Table 12 and 13 contain certain instances of semantic errors in the fansubs translated literally.

**Table 12** An instance of semantic error from *The Old man & the Gun* (Fansub) (13':16'')

Context: One of the John's daughters asks him to leave her in the car to listen to radio	
Original	Back translation from Persian
Can I have the keys so that I can listen to <u>the radio</u>	Can I have the keys so that I can listen to <u>the radio</u> (Police radio) <sup>8</sup>

The standard error in the first example reveals that the fansubbers misunderstood the meaning of the word *radio* in the context and translated it literally since the words are false friends in Persian and English. The reason for considering them as false friends could be that since John's car was an undercover police car and his daughters were playing with its police radio before the given scene the fansubbers could think that the girls wanted to continue playing with it. However, it is showed in the t scene that the girl was changing different radio stations.

میتونم کلیدا رو داشته باشم تا به رادیو گوش بدم؟<sup>8</sup>

The second example shows the only minor semantic error of the prosubs found in *The Old man & the Gun* (Lowery, 2018). The professionals translated the word *book-on-tape* into *book*. However, the two men in the scene are in a car and the focus was on the functionality of the tape of the book rather than the book itself.

**Table 13** *An instance of semantic error from The Old man & the Gun (Prosub) (22':10'')*

Context: Forrest asks his friend about the ride with his girlfriend	
Original	Back translation from Persian
-So how was the ride?	-So how was the ride?
-Romantic, but she didn't like my <u>book-on-tape</u>	-Dreamy, but she didn't like my <u>book</u> <sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, most of the functional equivalence errors are stylistic ones. Since the address terms are different between English and Persian, it is quite difficult sometimes to translate, for example, singular or plural *you* as there are two different pronouns in Persian *تو* and *شما* respectively. Table 14 reveals that the fansubbers seemed to have translated the address terms out of the context and made major stylistic errors. However, in contrast, the professionals correctly translated them with the help of the context since the dialogue was made between the old couples who met each other for the first time so it could be unlikely that the singular *you* are considered. Additionally, in the whole of the film *Forrest* is referred to as a gentleman by different characters.

**Table 14** *An instance of stylistic error from The Old man & the Gun (Fansub) (22':10'')*

Context: A dialogue between Forrest and Susan who met each other for the first time	
Original	Back translation from Persian
Can I ask your name?	Can I ask your (singular) name? <sup>10</sup>

سفر چطور بود؟<sup>9</sup>  
 بد نبود ولی کتابم رو دوست نداشت  
 میتونم اسموتون رو بپرسم؟<sup>10</sup>

## 4.2 Acceptability

In the Persian contextualized version of the FAR model, a subtitle's acceptability is assessed based on the amount of taboo language and idiomatic errors it contains. These errors are summarized in Table 15.

**Table 15** *The scores of Acceptability errors in both pro- and fansubs*

*Note: Major Errors= Maj E; Standard Errors= St E; Minor Errors= Min E*

Movie	Number of A errors (Fansubs)	Number of A errors (Prosubs)	Total A error score (fansubs)	Total A error score (Prosubs)
<i>Ant-man and The Wasp</i>	5 St E: 4 Min E: 1	0	4.25	0
<i>Black Panther</i>	3 St E: 1 Min E: 2	1 Min E: 1	1.5	0.5
<i>Johnny English Strikes Again</i>	3 St E: 1 Min E: 2	1 Min E: 1	1.5	0.5
<i>Mortal Engines</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Ralph Breaks the Internet</i>	4 Maj E: 1 St E: 2 Min E: 1	1 Min E: 1	2.5	0.5
<i>Searching</i>	1 Min E: 1	0	0.5	0
<i>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</i>	0	1 St E: 1	0	1
<i>The Old man &amp; the Gun</i>	5 St E: 3 Min E: 2	1 Min E: 1	3	0.5

Considering the norms of taboo language translation in official film translations from English to Persian, the strategies of deleting and euphemizing them are accepted as request approaches among the professionals and audiences (Mehdizadkhani et al., 2020; Khoshsaligheh & Ameri, 2017). Therefore, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the strategies of amplifying and substituting taboo language would be considered as errors in this study. Nevertheless, as can be seen in Table 16 almost a-two-minute-dialogue of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (Ramsey et al., 2018) is substituted in the prosub version when Miles and his uncle were talking about Miles's beloved girl at school. Since the scene aimed at showing the good relationship between Miles and his uncle as well as the feeling of Miles toward the girl, the audience would face a problem in the film's storytelling. Hence, it was considered as a standard taboo language error.

**Table 16** *An instance of taboo language error from Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse (Prosub) (09':10'' – 10':58'')*

Context: A dialogue between Miles and his uncle about the girl Miles's beloved girl fancies at school	
Original Version in English	Back translation from Persian
... so who is she?... well, we just met	... so how is the school?... it is really boring <sup>11</sup> ...
..	

The example in Table 17 shows an application of the amplifying strategy in the fansub version of *The Old man & the Gun* (Lowery, 2018). There is no taboo language in the original sentence in English. However, the fansubbers used a term of amplification in Persian by adding the word *hell* in the translation. The act of holding his little sister in his arms is considered as a major taboo that is reflected in the language choice. Consequently, I consider this as an error of taboo.

**Table 17** *An instance of taboo language error from The Old man & the Gun (Fansub) (18':21'')*

<sup>11</sup> مدرسه چطورره؟... یسپار کسل کنندس

Context: John's friend who is a cop meet him with a kid in his arms

Original	Back translation from Persian
John, what are you doing here?	John, what <u>the hell</u> are you doing here? <sup>12</sup>

The example in Table 18 is an excerpt from the prosub version of *The Old man & the Gun* (Lowery, 2018) and the translation is to demonstrate what counts as taboo language and how it is substituted. The original segment *to grab my boob* is replaced with *to hit me*. In this scene, a wife is complaining to her husband about the unwanted and indecent touch of her breasts by her husband's brother, who is only 13 years of age. Since it is quite unlikely that a 13-year-old adolescent boy could hit an adult woman, it is considered as a major taboo language error.

**Table 18** *An instance of taboo language error from The Old man & the Gun (Prosub) (36':09'')*

Context: a mature woman is complaining about her boobs being touched by his husband's brother who is only 13

Original	Back Translation from Persian
- Your brother is... he tried to grab my boobs ...What kind of man let his brother try to touch someone's boobs?	- Your brother is a bad guy... he wanted to hit me What kind of man let his brother try to hit the woman
-He's 13	-He is 13

Considering errors of idiomaticity, the example in Table 19 demonstrates the tendency when the fansubbers are source language oriented and opt for the literal translation of the idiom while the professionals give a correct and idiomatic translation in Persian.

**Table 19** *An instance of idiomaticity error from Ant-man and the Wasp (Fansub) (06':10'')*

Context: Luis was explaining how to schedule a job interview with Karapetyan to Ant-man

Original	Back translation from Persian
----------	-------------------------------

<sup>12</sup> جان، اینجا چه غلطی میکنی

-I mean, we gotta land this bird...      -I mean, we gotta land this bird...  
 -And the expression is land this fish      -And the expression is land this fish ... -Ok we are  
 ... -Ok we are gonna land Karapetyan      gonna land Karapetyan

---

Another example of idiomaticity error from the Persian fansubbed version of *Searching* (Chaganty, 2018) is presented in Table 20. In general, Iranian people say the word *Seeb* meaning *apple in English* when they want to take a picture. Nevertheless, the fansubbers tended to be source language oriented and they kept the word *cheese* used in the English-speaking contexts.

**Table 20** An instance of idiomaticity error from *Searching* (Fansub) (1':03'')

Context: Dad is taking a selfie with his family	
Original	Back translation from Persian
-Let's take a picture ... 1, 2,3 say	-Let's take a picture ... 1, 2,3 say <u>cheese</u>
	<u>cheese</u>

---

### 4.3 Graphic Codes

Graphic codes are an umbrella term including all types of errors in written texts on screen, such as street signs, SMSs, or emails. Table 21 shows the distribution of graphic codes errors in professional and fansub translations in the eight movies. Interestingly, none of the graphic codes were translated incorrectly in either the pro- and fansub versions due to the fact that the graphic codes are left untranslated.

**Table 21** The scores of Graphic Codes errors in both pro- and fansubs

Note: Major Errors= Maj E; Standard Errors= St E; Minor Errors= Min E

Movie	Number of GC errors (Fansubs)	Number of GC errors (Prosubs)	Total GC error score (fansubs)	Total GC error score (Prosubs)
<i>Ant-man and The Wasp</i>	0	0	0	0

---

<i>Black Panther</i>	3	1	1.5	0.5
	St E: 1	Min E: 1		
	Min E: 2			
<i>Johnny English</i>	3	2	1.5	1
<i>Strikes Again</i>	St E: 1	Min E: 2		
	Min E: 2			
<i>Mortal Engines</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Ralph Breaks the</i>	4	2	2	1
<i>Internet</i>	Min E: 4	Min E: 2		
<i>Searching</i>	2	0	2	0
	St E: 2			
<i>Spider-Man: Into</i>	0	2	0	1
<i>the Spider-Verse</i>		Min E: 2		
<i>The Old man &amp;</i>	2	2	1	1
<i>the Gun</i>	Min E: 2	Min E: 2		

The most striking example in this section is from the fansub version of *Searching* (Chaganty, 2018) where all of the graphic codes rendered in the way that it violated spotting and readability factors. As can be seen in Figure 6, the audiences would inevitably focus on the subtitles and it would hinder the storytelling. The subtitle was not segmented and there is no spotting time for the length of the subtitles. Moreover, in compared to its length the subtitles remained only in a short time on screen not also possible to be read completely.

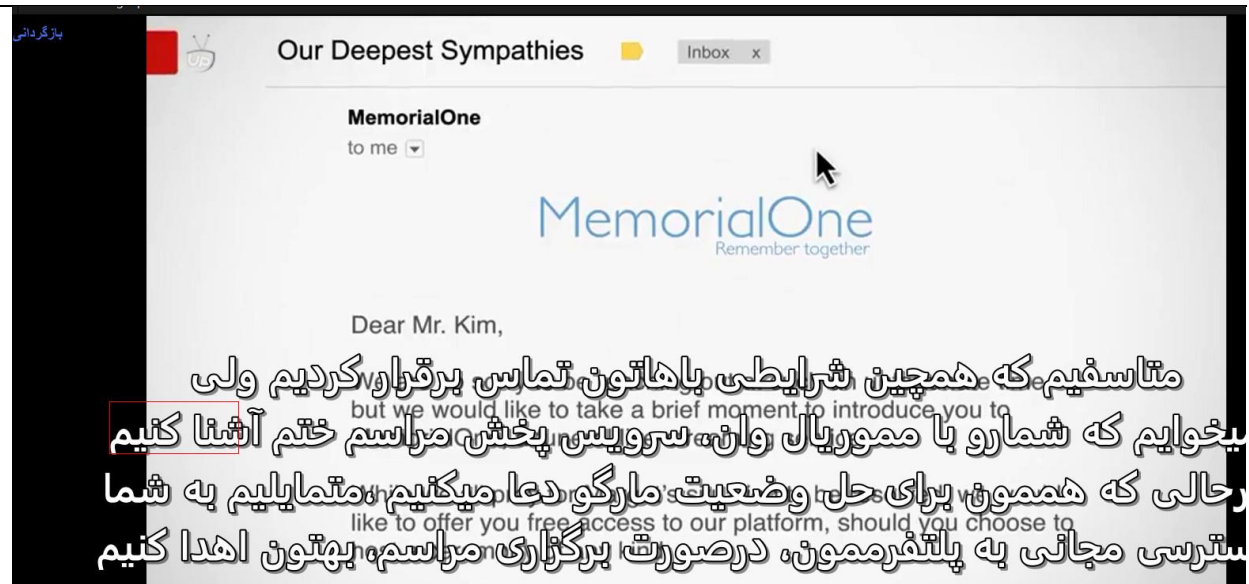
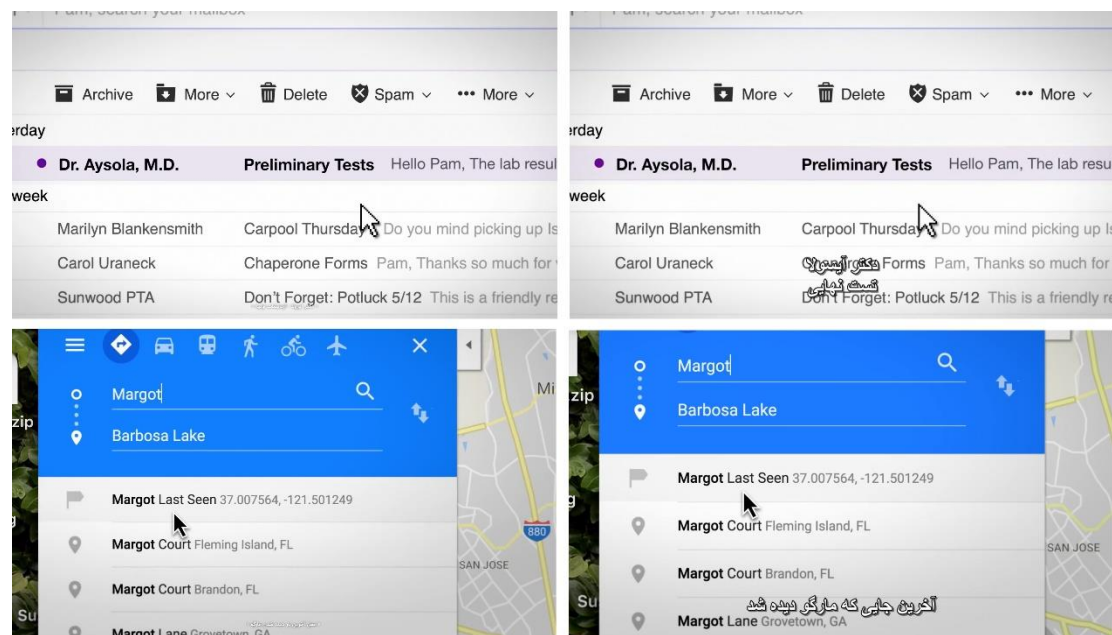


Figure 6 An instance of major Graphic Codes error in Searching (Fansub) 1:58:21”

It is clear from Figure 7 that the professional subtitling did not translate two important graphic codes, "Preliminary tests" and "Margot Last Seen", which play an integral role in understanding the narrative of the film. In contrast, the fansubbers provide the correct translation of these two graphic codes into Persian.





**Figure 7.** An instance of subtitled graphic codes of the film “Searching” by the professional subtitlers and fansubbers on the left and right sides, respectively 1:24’:47”

#### 4.4 Readability

The focus of this section is looking for errors in segmentation and spotting, punctuation, and reading speeds and line lengths. Through a quick comparison of the previous tables, one can conclude that readability is the area that fansubbers increased their error scores. Table 22 represents the readability and footnoting scores.

**Table 22** The scores of Readability and Footnote errors in both pro- and fansubs

Note: Major Errors= Maj E; Standard Errors= St E; Minor Errors= Min E

Movies	Number of R&F errors (fansubs)	Number of R&F errors (prosubs)	Total R&F error score (fansubs)	Total R&F error score (prosubs)
<i>Ant-man and The Wasp</i>	7 Maj E: 3 St E: 2 Min E: 2	1 Min E: 1	7	0.5
<i>Black Panther</i>	9 Maj E: 4 St E: 5	2 St E: 2	9	2
<i>Johnny English Strikes Again</i>	17 Maj E: 7 St E: 10	0	16.5	0
<i>Mortal Engines</i>	16 Maj E: 8 Min E: 9	1 St E: 1	14.5	1
<i>Ralph Breaks the Internet</i>	16 Maj E: 9 St E: 9	1 Min E: 1	15	0.5

<i>Searching</i>	25	1	23	1
	Maj E: 14	St E: 1		
	St E: 10			
	St E: 1			
<hr/> <i>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</i>	13	0	12	0
	Maj E: 8			
	St E: 5			
<hr/> <i>The Old man &amp; the Gun</i>	2	0	2	0
	Maj E: 1			
	St E: 1			
<hr/>				

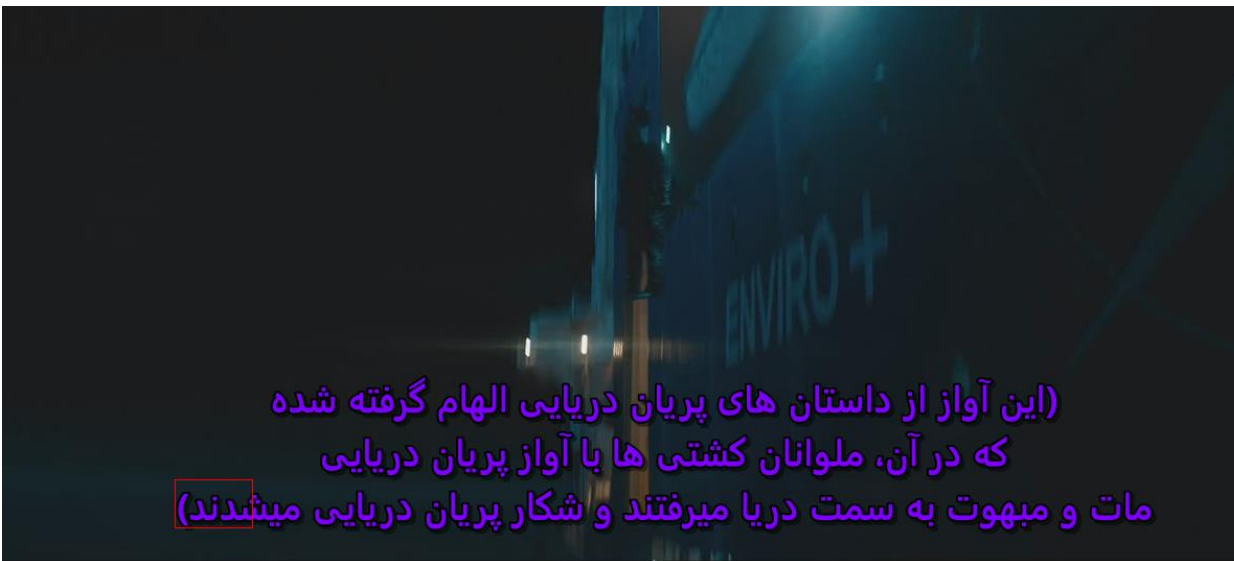
Considering the provision of footnotes in the fansubbed versions, most of them are presented as one or two words so that they would not hinder the reading speeds. However, in a few cases such one in *Ant-man and the Wasp* (Reed, 2018), the fansubbers used a sentence as a footnote to explain who *Babayaga* is. Hence, the length of the subtitle is longer and demands the audiences to spend more time reading them. I have decided that it should not be considered as a major or standard error but a minor one since, as will be discussed in the chapter 6, Iranian viewers in my sample acknowledged this strategy as informative.

Another example of footnoting error can be found in *Black Panther* (Coogler, 2018) as translated by fansubbers. In Figure 10, it can be seen that the fansubbers created an original subtitle in Persian that means "#for free Iran", reflecting the fansubbers' opposition to the current regime. Although it does not violate the reading speed and segmentation, based on my subtitling quality assessment, it is nonetheless a serious error of creating information which hinders the viewers from the film's storytelling that is penalized by two scores.



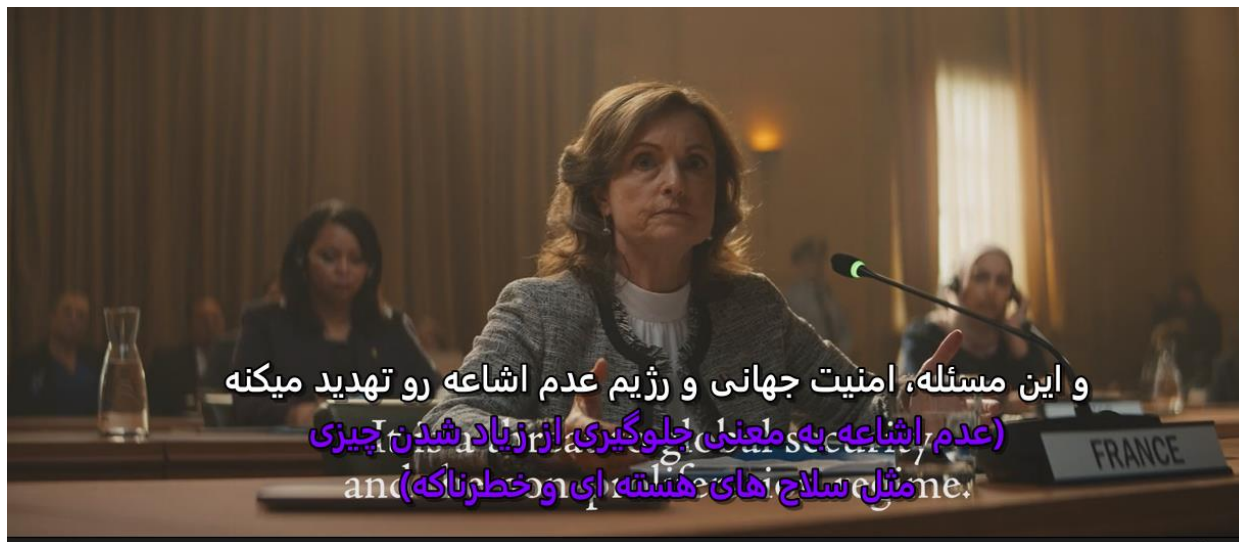
**Figure 10** An instance of creating a footnote in *Black Panther* by the fansubbers 0':12''

Conversely, in another instance, the fansubbers provide relevant information as footnotes, but this violates both the segmentation and reading speed criteria. It can be seen in Figure 11 that the fansubbers provide information regarding the song broadcast in the background of the film, *Mortal Engines* (Rivers, 2018). The fansubbers did not segment the subtitles correctly and used three lines, making it difficult for the viewers to read them in a short time. This is considered a serious error and carries a two penalty point penalty.



**Figure 11** An instance of footnoting error in *Mortal Engines* translated by fansubbers 58':12''

Another example can be found in *Johnny English Strikes Again* (Kerr, 2018), where the fansubbers provide information on the English phrase "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" in Persian. As can be seen in Figure 11, in spite of the fact that their information is accurate, they violated the reading speed and segmentation requirements, resulting in a serious error and receiving two penalty points.



**Figure 12** An instance of footnoting error in *Johnny English Strikes Again* translated by fansubbers 1:28':12''

Figure 12 shows an instance from *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (Ramsey et al., 2018) a segmentation error leading to reading speeds error as well. In this segment, the fansubbers could have simply removed the unnecessary segments such as *his job passing* as the professionals did. In other words, *Pay* is translated through seven characters in the Persian fansubbed version and requires more time for being read.



Figure 11 An instance of segmentation and reading speeds error (Fansub) 47':31''

As a rule of thumb in audiovisual translation literature (e.g., Remael & Diaz Cintas, 2020; Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998), the subtitle segments should not be presented as three lines since it mars readability. Figure 12 illustrates an instance of the violation of this rule, a three-line-subtitle from the fansubbed version of *Searching* (Chaganty, 2018).

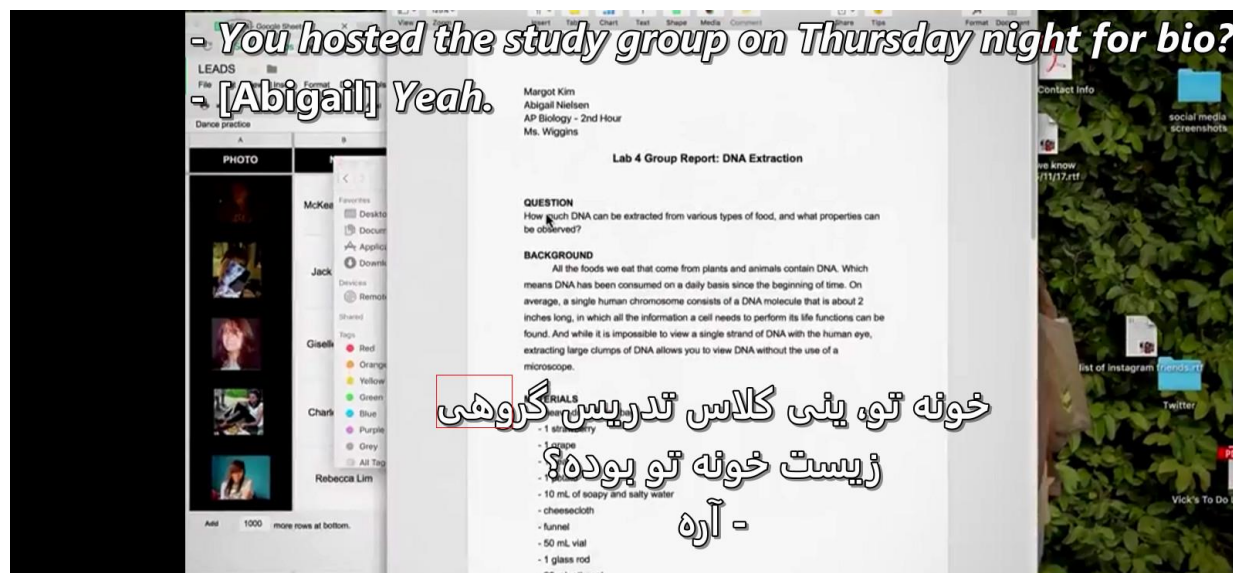


Figure 12 An instance of a three-line-subtitle from *Searching* (Fansub) 31':57''

It is also recommended in the literature that a long segment of one-line-subtitle should be broken into two lines for enhancing readability; therefore, a standard error score is considered for such errors. Figure 13 is the example from the fansubbed version of *Searching* (Chaganty, 2018):



**Figure 13** An instance of a long one-line-subtitle from *Searching* (Fansub) 43':00''

#### 4.5 Overall Results

Table 23 shows the overview of the results of assessing the quality of professional and fansub subtitles for the chosen eight US movies, using the contextualized version of the FAR model. For both fansubs and prosubs, the number of subtitles refers to the number of subtitles displayed at each spotting and segmentation time. To put it differently, the difference between the pro- and fansubs' number of subtitles shows that “the same film, with the same amount of dialogue, can be segmented in rather different ways” (Pedersen, 2019, p. 64) which may affect the subtitles' quality in the readability area.

**Table 23** The overall scores of subtitle quality of both pro- and fansubs

Note: Major Errors= Maj E; Standard Errors= St E; Minor Errors= Min E

Movie	Number of the subtitles (Fansubs)	Number of the	Number of errors	Number of errors (Prosubs)	Total error Penalty	Total error Penalty

		subtitles (Prosubs)	(Fansubs)		score (Fansubs)	score (Prosubs)
<i>Ant-man</i>	1,618	1,685	14	3	12.5	1.5
<i>and The</i>			Maj E: 5	Maj E: 1		
<i>Wasp</i>			St E: 3	St E: 1		
			Min E: 6	Min E: 1		
<i>Black</i>	1,465	1,520	16	5	10.5	4.5
<i>Panther</i>			Maj E: 4	Maj E: 1		
			St E: 3	St E: 2		
			Min E: 9	Min E: 2		
<i>Johnny</i>	1,297	1,356	21	4	18.5	2.5
<i>English</i>			Maj E: 7	Maj E: 1		
<i>Strikes</i>			St E: 4	St E: 2		
<i>Again</i>			Min E: 10	Min E: 1		
<i>Mortal</i>	1,256	1,354	18	5	21.5	2
<i>Engines</i>			Maj E: 5	Maj E: 1		
			St E: 7	St E: 2		
			Min E: 6	Min E: 2		
<i>Ralph</i>	2,027	2,145	22	6	24.5	3.5
<i>Breaks</i>			Maj E: 10	Min E: 2		
<i>the</i>			St E: 5	Maj E: 4		
<i>Internet</i>			Min E: 7			
<i>Searching</i>	1,059	1,256	29	1	27	0.5
			Maj E: 11	Min E: 1		
			St E: 9			
			Min E: 9			
<i>Spider-</i>	1,460	1,495	15	3	12	2.5
<i>Man: Into</i>			Maj E: 6	Maj E: 1		
<i>the</i>			St E: 5	St E: 1		
<i>Spider-</i>			Min E: 4	Min E: 1		

Verse	fansub					
<i>The Old</i>	973	995	16	7	9	3
<i>man &amp;</i>			Maj E: 2	Maj E: 2		
<i>the Gun</i>			St E: 3	Min E: 5		
			Min E: 11			

The total score errors also indicates that most of the errors found in both of the pro- and fansubs are minor and standard ones since the scores are less than the total number of errors. However, in the cases of fansubs of *Ralph Breaks the Internet* and *Mortal Engines* contains more major errors. The relatively low error score among the fansubs could confirm the trustworthiness of the *Subscenes.com* rating score since all of the fansubs were selected from the top ones. Moreover, it may confirm the quality control of fansubs which was mentioned by the fansubbers in the interviews (see section 4.3). The varying error score also shows how much the quality issue is important among different Iranian fansubbing communities since each of the fansubs was created by a different group. Without making any bold claims, it is clear that the Persian fansubs, on average, are of very high quality and they are more of a help than a hindrance for watching the original materials

#### 4.6 Discussion of the Findings

The first research question addressed to compare the subtitling quality of the Persian subtitles produced by Iranian professionals and fansubbers. The data for this question was collected through the two Iranian official websites, producing professional subtitles as well as *Subscene.com* for the fansubs. In order to analyse the quality of the subtitles, the FAR model (Pedersen, 2019) was applied; however, since the model was designed and used only in a Swedish context, I needed to take into account whether it might be used in the Iranian context. Therefore, I took consideration the following subjects in my quality assessment because they include a significant proportion in the Iranian AVT studies: taboo language; graphic codes; and footnoting.

The overall results showed that the professionals did better than the fansubbers in terms of the functional equivalence, acceptability and readability area. Although the results are in line with



Pedersen (2019) where he found that Swedish professional subtitlers performed better than the fansubbers, the differences among the penalty scores varied significantly. To go further details, I found that the highest penalty scores which the fansubbers received was 99 in the readability area; however, the same result for this area in Pedersen (2019) was more than 140 for eight films. According to Dwyer (2012), an experienced subtitler has the skills and training necessary to produce accurate subtitles expressing the original content's meaning and nuances. As Lee (2017) also asserts since the professional subtitlers are proficient in the both target and source languages and cultures, they can translate the subtitles accurately and timing them accordingly. However, Pérez-González (2021) claims that being dominant in the both languages are not the only reason that professional subtitles have a better quality; to ensure that subtitles meet the highest standards, professional subtitling team often have a quality control process in place. In other words, the subtitles are reviewed by a team of editors and proofreaders for accuracy, consistency, and readability.

Considering the functional equivalence, the results showed that the professionals did better than the fansubbers with the penalty scores of 3 and 9.5, respectively. Lu and Lu (2021) state the reason why fansubbers may have difficulty translating functional equivalence like professionals is that they may not have access to the same level of information and resources as professionals. They assert that technical, specialized, or culturally specific terms and expressions can be accurately translated by professional translators by using specialized dictionaries, glossaries, and reference materials. It is common for professional translators to have extensive experience working with specific types of content and are trained to adhere to strict standards of accuracy and quality (Orrego-Carmona, 2019). In the same vein, McClarty (2012) argues that the professionals are able to work as part of teams and have their translations reviewed and edited by other professionals, which can result in catching errors and ensuring consistency. Nevertheless, since the difference between the penalty scores in this area is only 6.5, it can be claimed that the Iranian fansubbers have an access to the same level of information and resources and they are quite experienced in subtitling like the professionals.

Considering the acceptability area, the results showed that the professionals did also better than the fansubbers with the penalty scores of 5 and 21, respectively. Wongseree et al. (2019) argue that fansubbers may place a greater emphasis on conveying the tone and style of the source

material than on ensuring that the translation is as accurate as possible. Consequently, idiomatic expressions may be translated in a more creative or loose way that does not always secure their exact meaning (Wongseree, 2020). Without a thorough understanding of the underlying language, it can be difficult to translate taboo language accurately. The results indicated that the professionals performed better than the fansubbers in translating the written texts on screen, known as graphic codes in this project, with penalty scores of 3.5 and 8, respectively. A rendering of the graphic codes is an important and timely task according to Mehdizadkhani and Khoshsaligeh (2021). Consequently, fansubbers may be working on a tight deadline, so translating on-screen text may not be a priority. Additionally, they may place a higher priority on translating spoken dialogue over written text. Similarly, Taghavi and Bahraman (2022) believe that fansubbers may not have access to high-quality raw footage or tools for extracting the text from the screen. Therefore, they may skip translating the text or provide an inadequate translation.

Based on the results of the readability area, fansubbers had the highest penalty score (= 99), compared to professionals (=4). This significant difference can be attributed in large part to the fact that fansubbers are not familiar with industry standards for subtitle timing and segmentation (Ribeiro, 2022). It should be noted, however, that Ameri and Khoshsaligeh (2023) state that timing and segmentation in fansubbing vary depending on the individual fansubber and the software they use. Furthermore, some fansubbers have difficulty accurately timing the subtitles to match the spoken dialogue or may segment the subtitles in a manner that is difficult to follow or comprehend. Furthermore, Leksawat (2022) asserts that fansubbers may rush the subtitling process in order to release their fansubs as soon as possible, which may result in poor timing and segmentation. According to Wang (2017), while investigating the Chinese fansubbing group YYeTs, working in a team allows for multiple individuals to contribute to the subtitling process, which can result in the subtitling process being more accurate and consistent. This highlights the importance of collaboration in fansubbing to ensure accuracy and consistency. Moreover, it is evident that working in a team can result in better quality fansubs.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: IRANIAN FANSUB TRANSLATORS’ MOTIVATION FOR DOING THE SUBTITLES**

The second research question I pursue is concerned with the motivations and reasons of the Iranian fansubbers behind doing the subtitles. Therefore, observing the requirements of ethnographic data collection (Kozinets, 2010), I decided to make in-depth interviews with nine fansubbers in Iranian. Developing interview questions for a research project involves careful consideration of the study's objectives, the target population (in this case, Iranian fansubbers), and the overall research design. To understand the motivations, priorities, and perspectives of fansubbers, I have designed a series of questions. The following is an explanation of how these questions were constructed and the factors that were considered:

### **1. Why do you translate?**

The purpose of this question is to gain a deeper understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of fansubbers. It is designed to reveal underlying factors, as discussed in the second chapter, such as a passion for producing the content, a sense of community, or a desire for recognition, to name but a few.

### **2. When translating, what is most important for you?**

The purpose of this question is to obtain an understanding of the subjective priorities of fansubbers during the translation process. It aims to reveal whether fansubbers prioritize linguistic accuracy, cultural nuances, or viewer satisfaction, among other factors.

### **3. What is your opinion of the official AVT?**

This question explores fansubbers' perspectives on official Audiovisual Translation (AVT) practices. It is intended to reveal attitudes towards professionally translated content and whether fansubbers view it as complementary or competing with their own work.

In recognition of fansubbing's sensitive nature as an underground activity, an indirect approach has been adopted. The interview questions are designed to encourage interviewees to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives without directly confronting their underground nature. As a former fansubber, I bring insider knowledge to the construction of questions. By gaining a deeper understanding of the fansubbing activity, this familiarity enhances my rapport

with interviewees and allows me to ask more nuanced questions. In order to minimize discomfort associated with direct questioning about a potentially underground activity, questions are phrased in a conversational manner. As a result of this approach, interviewees are more likely to provide genuine insights when interviewed in a relaxed environment. The questions have been formulated with the idea of their potential scalability in mind. Based on the insights gained from these initial interviews, a broader questionnaire can be developed to be administered to a larger sample of fansubbers.

## 5.1 The Coding of the Interview Results

Having broken their responses into small segments for the entire question, each of them were labelled. It should be mentioned that there were many similar segments among the interviewees; however, they are not showed in the tables. This process continued for all the files. Then I went through the achieved small codes, they were compared and contrasted several times. New abstract categories were introduced, and the previous stage's codes were put into a category and group that it best fit. The abstract categories of the second stage were compared and contrasted several times for finding the core categories. Finally, the core categories of each question are explained in detail.

### 5.1.1 Why Do You Translate?

Considering this question, the initial codes turned out to be free, people, job, money, censorship, and God were the most frequently reoccurring ones in the nine interviews.

**Table 24** *Segments and initial codes driven from the answers to the first question*

Segments	Initial codes
<i>I do the subtitles free (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Free
<i>I do it for God's satisfaction (Anna, Tomas, Oliver, Steve, Oscar)</i>	God
<i>I do it for people (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	People

<i>People need to watch this movie (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	People/watching
<i>It is good for our second world (Anna, Tomas, Oliver, Steve, Oscar)</i>	God
<i>I am happy when people download it (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	People/download
<i>Why people should pay money for subtitles (Jazmine, Tomas, Oscar, Steve, Anna, David)</i>	People/pay/free
<i>I am jobless (Oliver, Oscar)</i>	Job
<i>God will help me in other issues (Anna, Tomas, Oliver, Steve, Oscar)</i>	God
<i>Doing something for people same as doing it for God (Anna, Tomas, Oliver, Steve, Oscar)</i>	People/God/helping
<i>People cannot understand English (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	People/lack of English
<i>Even those who know English cannot understand the movie (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Lack of understanding of the film
<i>I need to help people at least be entertained for 2 hours (Tomas, Anna, Jazmine, David, Oscar, Steve)</i>	helping to entertain
<i>People are poor now, cannot pay the translation service (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	helping with costs
<i>I need to do something at least (Tomas, Jazmine, Oliver)</i>	Job
<i>People don't like the censored versions (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	People/censorship
<i>I need to find friends in my interest (Anna, Oliver, Steve, Oscar, Tomas)</i>	Friend/colleague

<i>People need to be happy in current situation in Iran (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	People/current situation in Iran
<i>Watching films can help them to forget their problems (David, Tomas, Anna)</i>	People/watching
<i>Doing free gives you good feeling (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Free/ good feeling
<i>When you upload the subtitle free, you have a peace heart (David, Oliver, Anna)</i>	Free
<i>Why not, sometime I want to be recognized (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Recognition
<i>I want people know my name as a good translator (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Recognition/people/good translator
<i>Doing the free subtitles at least make me a professional in this field (Anna, David)</i>	Free/job/professional
<i>I think it is also good for my resume if I want to continue (Anna)</i>	Resume/ job
<i>I want people to watch a better-quality version (Anna, Oscar, Jazmine, Tomas, David, Steve)</i>	People/quality
<i>Sometime, you see other fansubbers are not good in translation (Steve, Oscar, Tomas)</i>	Other fansubbers/good in translation
<i>People have right to choose what they want to watch (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	People/right
<i>I do it free, but you know maybe it is because my first year (David)</i>	Free/thinking as a job
<i>After a year I can get money from advertisement (Oscar)</i>	Money/advertisement
<i>You even cannot find in the TV (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Iranian official TV

<i>They cannot be translated and broadcasted (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Unable to be translated
<i>They are so many others working in this field, why not me (Oscar, David)</i>	Others
<i>I am happy to spend time with my (fansubbing) friends (Oscar, David, Anna)</i>	Fansubbing friends
<i>I need to make money (Tomas, David, Jazmine, Harry)</i>	Money/job

The achieved small codes and labels from Table 24 were compared and contrasted several times for finding abstract categories. Table 25 below shows the new, abstract codes. Having compared and contrasted the initial codes, the two core categories were found as follows; the official AVT and building a networking

**Table 25** *The abstract categories driven from the initial codes in the answers to the first question*

Initial codes	New abstract categories
People; free;	Fansubbing free for people
God's satisfaction; helping; good feeling	Fansubbing as an altruistic act
Money; job; advertisement; resume	Working in the field
Fansubbing friends, colleagues	Staying in the community
Censorship; Iranian official TV	official translation's censorship

### 5.1.2 When Translating, What is Most Important for You?

Regarding this question, Initial codes such as quality, speed, other fansubbers, people's comments, and scoring were the most frequently reoccurring ones.

**Table 26** *Segments and initial codes driven from the second question*

Segment	Initial codes
<i>I want people to watch a better-quality version (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Quality of fansubs

<i>In our field, speed is very important (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Speed
<i>Sometime, you see other fansubbers are not good in translation (Anna, Oscar, Jazmine, Tomas, David, Steve)</i>	Quality of fansubs
<i>Yes, why not, I ask from my friends about the translation problems (Harry, Steve, Anna)</i>	Consulting friends when encountering translation problems
<i>You know, you have to sacrifice quality for speed (Oscar, Steve, Tomas)</i>	Speed of fansubbing over quality
<i>Because you cannot be first in this competition (Tomas, David, Steve, Oscar)</i>	not entering competition in fansubbing
<i>People just want to download subtitles, don't care about the quality (Tomas, David)</i>	Audience's disinterest in quality
<i>There are a few high quality fansubbers (Tomas)</i>	Few Quality translators
<i>Once I impressed my girlfriend because of my high-speed subtitling (Harry)</i>	Impressing girlfriend by translator's speed
<i>The film websites upload the new movies very quickly, so you know (Jazmine, David)</i>	Speed of film websites
<i>Quality and speed both make the difference in choosing the fansubs (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Quality/speed of fansubs over professional ones
<i>People give good comments on translation (David, Tomas)</i>	Audience's instructive comments
<i>Good comments come with high quality fansubs (Anna, Teams, David, Oscar, Steve, Jazmine)</i>	Audience appreciative Comments
<i>In challenging films, from linguistic point of view (Jazmine)</i>	Linguistically challenging films



<i>I ask my friend to recheck the quality (Anna, Steve)</i>	Friend's evaluation of quality
<i>The website asks us to produce a fansub as soon as possible (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	The website's demand of speed
<i>I try to focus on quality (Tomas, Steve, Oscar)</i>	Quality
<i>I try to find films which don't have not been subtitled (Oscar)</i>	Not subtitled before
<i>I really care for what my users think about my fansubs (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Care for user's satisfaction
<i>People prefer quicker fansubs for new films (Oscar, Steve)</i>	Speed (fast availability) of new films
<i>And don't care about the quality (Steve)</i>	Quality of fansubs
<i>Viewers care about the quality for older films (Steve, Anna, Harry, Jack)</i>	Viewers' expectations of quality in older film
<i>I put some traces in my fansubs So that if anyone copies them I would know (David, Harry)</i>	Traces/professional translators copying
<i>Other fansubbers give u low score Because they want their fansubs have the most score (Tomas, Oscar)</i>	Other fansubbers' low scores irrelevant for their bias
<i>I really love the moment when people ask me to translate a material (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Motivation by viewers' request to translate
<i>I check regularly the website's scoring of my fansubs (Anna, Jazmine, Jack, Tomas, Harry)</i>	Checking scoring on Subscene.com website
<i>Yea, I also check people's comment (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Checking viewers' comment on quality of translation
<i>I am angry when other fansubbers don't care about people's request (Tomas)</i>	Angry at other fansubbers' disregard for audience's request

<i>Yea, why not, if a film is not interesting, I won't translate it (David, Harry)</i>	Personal interesting in the given movie
<i>If it is up to me, I would translate only new films (Jack)</i>	new films only
<i>If a film is about anti-Islam or anti-Iran, I wouldn't translate it (Anna, Jazmine, Tomas, David, Oscar)</i>	No translation of anti-Islam/anti-Iran movies
<i>We have other troubles let alone this one (Anna, Oscar)</i>	Other troubles (such as peruse of government for translating anti-Islam/anti-Iran movies)
<i>I translate a film whose topic is not sensitive (Anna, Oscar, Jazmine, David)</i>	non -sensitive topics only (for instance, anti-Islam/anti-Iran movies would count as "sensitive")
<i>I don't care about the scoring, (Anna)</i>	Disregard for scoring by users of Subscene.com
<i>I don't care about the downloading counts (Anna)</i>	Not care for downloading counts
<i>I only care about people's requests (Anna)</i>	Care only for viewers' requests
<i>People's good comments on my fansubs make me happy (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Happiness by viewers' comments on film downloading websites
<i>My only consolation is that people write good comments on my fansubs (Jazmine, Oscar, David, Harry, Jack)</i>	Only consolation/ viewers' comments on Subscene.com
<i>Everything is not money (harry, Jack)</i>	More than money
<i>I am looking for some prays which I could use in my next world (Anna, Tomas, Oliver, Steve, Oscar)</i>	Prays/the next world
<i>Putting smile on people's faces is important for me (Anna, Tomas, Steve)</i>	Audience's pleasure

The achieved small codes and labels of the nine research participants presented in Table 26 were compared and contrasted several times. Table 27 below shows the new, abstract codes Having

compared and contrasted the abstract categories, the other two core categories were found as follows; Reception of fansubbing and the issues of speed and quality in fansubbing

**Table 27** *Initial codes and new abstract categories driven from the second question*

Initial codes	New abstract categories
Quality; recheck; others; friends; challenging films; copying	Issue of quality
Speed	Issue of speed
People’s face; people’s comments; smile; the next world; sensitive topics; people’s request; scoring	The audiences’ reviews

### 5.1.3 What is Your Opinion of Being a Professional Translator (In Future)?

Considering this question, the initial codes that recurred most frequently in the nine interviews, such as money, famous, and copy, are presented in Table 28.

**Table 28** *Segments and initial codes driven from the answers to the third question*

Segment	Initial codes
<i>They copy from my translation (David, Tomas)</i>	Plagiarism
<i>Those fansubbers, who seek jobs, want to work with official section (Tomas)</i>	Job/official
<i>The translators with big names do shit (Tomas)</i>	Big names afford shitty translation
<i>How is it possible they translate the same? (David)</i>	The similarity between both fansubs and prosubs
<i>I add footnotes but they don’t (David)</i>	Problematic absence of footnotes
<i>But I knew they copy (David)</i>	Copy/plagiarism
<i>They fell into my trap (David)</i>	Putting some traces in the fansubs so it would be clear how the professionals copy from them

<i>For a period of time, it was only me translating so quickly (Oscar)</i>	Professionals translating slowly
<i>But I saw the same versions in official ones (Oscar)</i>	Same
<i>If a fansubber looks for money, I won't let him in (Tomas)</i>	Money/not let
<i>One must just love translation to come in (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Love/come in
<i>Some fansubbers do censorship (Oscar, Anna, Jazmine, David, Tomas)</i>	Censorship
<i>To go to official ones Oscar, Anna, Jazmine, David, Tomas)</i>	Official
<i>They think they can be famous by doing like that (Anna, Jazmine)</i>	Famous by doing censorship
<i>But people should make someone famous (Anna, David)</i>	People/famous
<i>We (fansubbers) also have official ones in our group (Tomas, David)</i>	Fansubbers/official
<i>Fewer than 6 people check the quality (Tomas)</i>	Check/quality
<i>Check which films need to be translated (Tomas)</i>	Check/films/need to
<i>Check who can come in the group (Tomas)</i>	Check/come in
<i>A fansubber translates free, makes himself famous (David, Anna, Oscar)</i>	Free/famous
<i>Then asks people to vote a fansubber in Iran's parliament election (Oscar)</i>	viewers/Iran's parliament election
<i>They (officials) charge people so much money (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	High charge for access

<i>You can get everything free in internet (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Free availability on internet
<i>Why paying then? (by all of the nine interviewees)</i>	Refusal to pay
<i>They (officials) also translate very quickly (Tomas)</i>	Officials translate quickly
<i>They also know that people can choose nowadays (Tomas)</i>	Consider competing translations

The achieved small codes and labels from Table 28 were compared and contrasted several times. The following new abstract were introduced the codes of the previous stage were put into a category and group that it best fitted as Table 29. Having compared and contrasted the abstract categories, the same core category, found in the first question – official translation – was observed.

**Table 29** *Initial codes and new abstract categories driven from the second question*

Initial codes	New abstract categories
Quality; recheck; officials; copying	Issue of quality
Speed	Issue of speed
Official translation/ money/ internet/ free	Official translation

All in all, four core categories were found from the interviews: official translation, building a networking, reception of fansubbing, and the issues of speed and quality in fansubbing.

## **5.2 The Core Categories**

### **5.2.1 The Official Translation**

In this category, much focus and attention were directed towards professional and official AVT. The participants were invited to reflect on official translators' roles in the dubbed and on the quality of their subtitled products, discussing if the selection process of employing official translators was right or wrong. Considering the official translation, it was mentioned several times that the low quality of the current official subtitling and dubbing in Iran is due to the low salary of

the subtitlers and dubbers and lack of respect and recognition for them. As Tomas elaborates more on this:

*The industry of dubbing has deteriorated over the years due to low salaries, underemployment of talented voice actors, favouritism, jealousy, no willingness to share skills and experiences, pride of the young voice actors and lack of interest among newly hired dubbing and subtitling professionals. (Tomas)<sup>13</sup>*

Dubbing studios, the manager of the dubbing studios and subtitling service providers were other issues discussed by the participants. They believed that in dubbing studios, the movies are (self) censored too much in a way that sometime the half of the movie is removed due to the ideological issues. The dubbing directors, voice-actors and translators are not selected based their abilities but based on the subjective criteria like connections and favouritism. They select their own friends, relatives regardless of their abilities and talents in dubbing. The participants also indicated that the dubbing studios should select blockbuster movies for dubbing, however, the dubbing studios are used to dubbing awful and boring movies. The following quotations by Jack and David, respectively, show what it meant:

*Some voice actors are not appropriate candidate for this job. It is really disappointing to hear his voice acting. It has been suggested that one should work hard in this profession, but I do not agree with this idea, since I cannot see why a person with no talent should remain in this profession. There is no doubt that he entered the profession through an unfair process and simply wished to receive public recognition. (Jack)<sup>14</sup>*

*I am deeply annoyed by favouritism of those who are responsible for official translation . He has subtitled all his films with some professional translators. (David)*

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<sup>13</sup> صنعت دوبله در اسن سالها به دلیل حقوق کم، کم کاری صداپیشگان مستعد، طرفداری، حسادت، عدم تمایل به اشتراک گذاری مهارت ها و تجربیات، غرور صداپیشه های جوان و عدم علاقه در میان متخصصان تازه استخدام شده دوبله و زیرنویس حرفه ای رو به وخامت گذاشته. (توماس)

<sup>14</sup> برخی از مترجمان صداگذار کاندیدای مناسبی برای این شغل نیست. شنیدن صدای بازیگری او واقعاً ناامید کننده. همه میگویند که باید در این حرفه سخت کار کرد، اما من با این نظر موافق نیستم، زیرا نمی توانم ببینم چرا یک فرد بی استعداد باید در این حرفه بماند. شکی نیست که او از طریق فرآیندی ناعادلانه وارد این حرفه شده و صرفاً آرزو داره به رسمیت شناخته بشه. (جک)

Regarding official translation in Iran, participants were more interested in well-established and proficient dubbing professionals who had been in the industry for a long time and did not like the new and young dubbing professionals. For example, Tomas states:

*I have stated on numerous occasions that Persian dubbing has come to an end. In the same way that baking and carpet weaving [by hand] are about to disappear, dubbing is also about to disappear. Is it true that purists prefer to produce bread and carpets using unconventional methods? In Iran, neither the movies nor the translations are accurate or appropriate. Professional translators are no longer among the talented, knowledgeable, and diligent voice directors. Where are they now? However, we now have amateurs to choose from! The industry of dubbing was once dominated by professionals, and yet, what is the situation today? (Tomas)<sup>15</sup>*

However, other participants, namely Oscar, stated that young dubbers and translators should be invited to the dubbing industry, as the old ones would not exist forever, and the young group should be trained by them. They also mentioned that the old voice-actors no longer could perform the young characters in the movies:

*All the other guys' debates seem to be about nostalgia and the past. My only point was that it is inevitable that the leading Persian dubbing managers and actors will leave it, eventually. Thus, we should look for talented individuals among the young, regardless of their age, but rather based on their experience. Can we find those who could be followers of this art despite their low abilities in dubbing? As long as we continue to have the opportunity to watch and admire great dubbings, I do not believe that dubbing has ended. [...]. This industry should be carried on by this younger generation, which we deny exists. In the same way that we respect the previous group, the future generations will honour this*

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<sup>15</sup> چندین بار ذکر کردم که دوبله فارسی به پایان رسیده. همان طور که شیرینی پزی و قالی بافی [با دست] رو به از بین رفتن است، دوبله نیز در شرف از بین رفته. آیا صحت دارد که الان ترجیح می دهند با روش های غیر متعارف نان و فرش تولید کنند؟ در ایران نه فیلم ها و نه ترجمه ها دقیق و مناسب نیستند. بسیاری از صدابیشگان با استعداد، آگاه و کوشا نیستند. آنها الان کجا هستند؟ با این حال ما الان فقط آماتورها را برای انتخاب داریم! صنعت دوبله روزگاری تحت سلطه حرفه ای ها بود و با این حال، وضعیت امروز چگونه است؟ (توماس)

*generation. Although we may not be able to find the greatest dubbing practitioners like this, we can keep the young capital [the young in the industry]. (Oscar)<sup>16</sup>*

Additionally, ideas towards the dubbing and subtitling directors and translators were negative, in particular, when the participants compared the current dubbing directors and translators with the old ones. My participants found out that the new translators were not familiar with cinema, dubbing, or the movie genres. They said that the translators do not have a perfect command of the Persian language and culture, either. They are also weak at translating idiomatic and colloquial expressions. They believed that dubbing and subtitling directors did not have enough experiences for having these jobs. Knowledge about cinema and films could also help them to improve the quality of dubbing and subtitling. Such opinions can be seen in the following quotations from the participants, Oliver, Harry, Tomas, and Steve:

*These problems come from not paying attention to the new dubs and subtitles, and sometimes the dubbing directors don't have access to the international sound track. The movies are dubbed and subtitled in the lowest quality when the dubbing director doesn't care too much about quality (unfortunately, this happens a lot these days). There's nothing special about old movies or new movies; it's about the dubbing director and the movie supplier. (Oliver)<sup>17</sup>*

*It is possible that dubbing directors are one of the reasons. I believe that the process of dubbing a film should be conducted in the same manner that engineering is conducted, i.e., using procedures that have been developed as a result of previous working practices. In any other case, it would not be good, and would result in failure. In addition to being a*

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<sup>16</sup> به نظر می رسد همه بحث های دیگه بچه ها در مورد کودکی و گذشته باشه. تنها سخن من این بود که خروج مدیران و بازیگران برجسته دوبله فارسی در نهایت اجتناب ناپذیر است. بنابراین، ما باید بدون توجه به سن، بلکه بر اساس تجربه، در بین جوانان به دنبال افراد مستعد باشیم. آیا می توانیم کسانی را پیدا کنیم که با وجود توانایی های کم در دوبله بتوانند دنبال کننده این هنر باشند؟ تا زمانی که ما همچنان فرصت تماشا و تحسین دوبله های عالی را داریم، باور نمی کنم که دوبله به پایان رسیده باشه. [...] این صنعت باید توسط این نسل جوان انجام شود که ما وجود آن را انکار می کنیم. همانطور که ما به گروه قبلی احترام می گذاریم، نسل های آینده نیز این نسل را گرامی خواهند داشت. اگرچه ممکن است نتوانیم بهترین دوبله کاران را مانند این پیدا کنیم، اما می توانیم سرمایه بچه ها [جوانان در صنعت] رو نگه داریم. (اسکار)

<sup>17</sup> این نقطه ضعفها همه از عدم توجه به دوبله ها و زیرنویس های نویمان و گاهی مدیران استودیو دوبله هم به قطعه صوتی بین المللی دسترسی ندارند. زمانی که مدیر دوبله به کیفیت خیلی اهمیت نمیده فیلم ها با کمترین کیفیت دوبله و زیرنویس می شن (متأسفانه امروزه این اتفاق زیاد می افتد). هیچ چیز خاصی در مورد فیلم های قدیمی یا فیلم های جدید وجود ندارد. این در مورد مدیر دوبلاژ و تامین کننده فیلم است. (الیور)



*voice actor, a dubbing director must also have a solid understanding of the film industry, as well as the culture and language of the place in which the film was produced. (Harry)<sup>18</sup>*

*Umm, the idioms of American culture. Moreover, I am confident that Milad, you will agree that no one has been able to translate movies featuring complex and difficult idioms more effectively who studied Cinema in the UK and US (on the whole, during the recent past) who translated the film Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead. You know, I watched 2 Days in the Valley last night in its dubbed version. Idioms used by James Spader and Charlize Theron in the movies were rendered quite poorly or were substituted with incorrect translations, which was not a good result. It is true that the translator of the movie is one of the most skilled translators in the world, however, the colloquial expressions (which are not found in any dictionaries) can be interpreted and rendered correctly by someone knowledgeable in the language's culture. It would have been great if someone else had translated that film. (Tomas)*

*Our contemporary translators (sorry for using this word) are too stupid and uneducated to translate the text literally. Even the alphabets and sounds are foreign to them, let alone the Persian and English proverbs we expect them to know. (Steve)<sup>19</sup>*

Finally, two of them, Tomas and Harry blamed the official translators for copying from their fansubs:

*[...] I always put this statement in the first of my fansubs: Filmio [one of the official subtitling service providers] is not allowed to use this fansub. [...] I have seen their*

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<sup>18</sup> ممکه مدیران دوبله یکی از دلایلهم باشه. من معتقدم که روند دوبله یک فیلم باید به همان شیوه ای انجام شود که مهندسی انجام می شود، یعنی با استفاده از رویه هایی که در نتیجه اقدامات قبلی ایجاد شده. در هر صورت، خوب نخواهد بود و منجر به شکست خواهد شد. یک مدیر دوبلاژ علاوه بر صداپیشه بودن، باید درک درستی از صنعت فیلم و فرهنگ و زبان محلی که فیلم در آن تولید شده است نیز داشته باشه. (هری)

<sup>19</sup> مترجمان معاصر ما (با عرض پوزش برای استفاده از این لغت) آنقدر احمق و بی سوادند که نمی توانند متن را به معنای واقعی کلمه ترجمه کنند. حتی حروف و صداها هم برایشان بیگانه است، دیگه برسه به ضرب المثل های فارسی و انگلیسی که انتظار داریم بدونند. (استیو)

*translations; they were all copied from mine... I found it after I out some traces and errors in my fansubs and I realized that they did the same in their translations. (Tomas)<sup>20</sup>*

*They [the official translators] don't care about the quality. They only want to produce the subtitles and be paid; that's all. They don't have any love in this field. They only care about censoring and then copy from our fansubs. easy-peasy, right? (Harry)<sup>21</sup>*

Interestingly, four of the participants complaining about the plagiarism and copy-pasting of the official translation from their fansubs, including Tomas, Steve, Harry and David. One of them, Tomas, even provided a screenshot (see Figure 13), which he had taken few years before to prove that the Iranian state TV channel copy and paste from the fansubbers' works. The back translation of the Persian subtitle is "I received a stolen statue whose balls were hanging". As I have established in Chapter 3, the words relating to the human sexual organs are considered to be an extreme case of tabooed language. Yet, it was taken over from Thomas's fansub version. Thomas also stated "it is difficult to think that it is just an error made by the official subtitler. The Iranian state TV has so many monitoring layers censoring the translation errors; therefore, it is a copy paste from the fansubbers' subtitle and I'm sure they don't even use a subtitler for the films and the channel itself does the copy paste".

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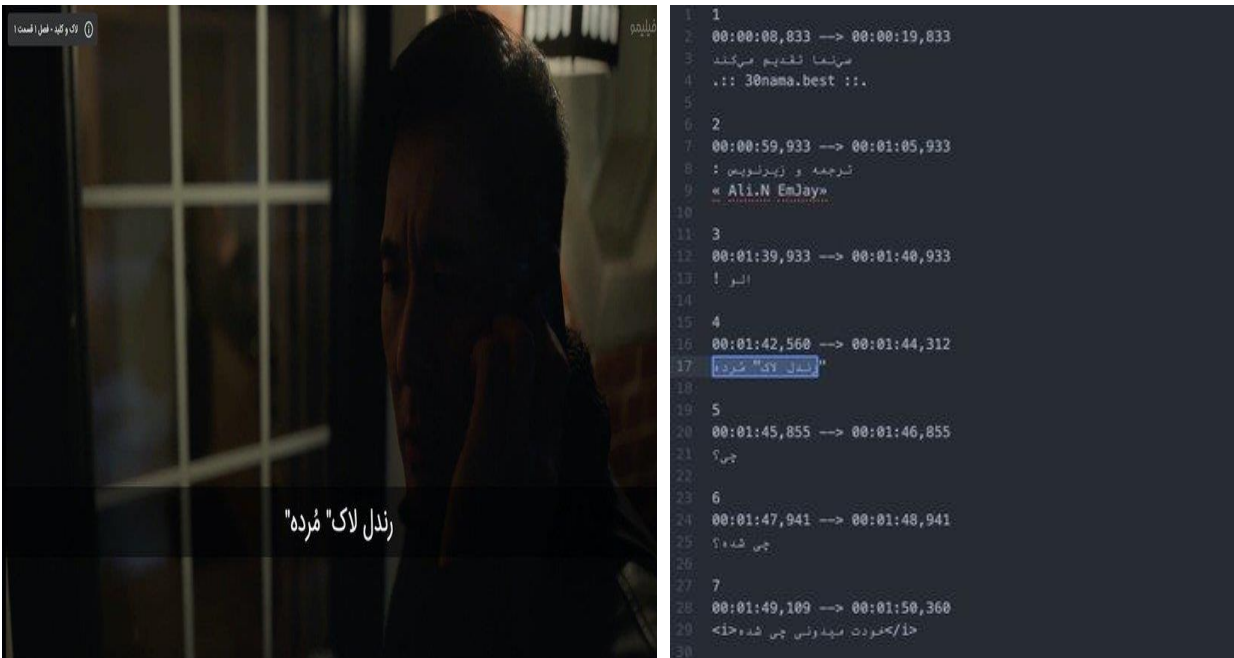
<sup>20</sup> میلاد تو زیرنویسهای من رودیدی؛ من همیشه این عبارت رو اول زیرنویسها میذارم. فیلمیو حق هیچگونه استفاده از این زیرنویس را ندارد. میبونی، چنتا از زیرنویسهاشون رو دیدم و همشون کپی بودن ازم... از اونجایی فهمیدم که چنتا ردپا و اشتباه تو زیرنویسها قرار دادم و فهمیدم اونا همونجوری زیرنویس رو انجام دادن. (توماش)

<sup>21</sup> اونا اصلا به کیفیت اهمیت نمیدن. فقط میخوان زیرنویس تولید کنن و پولش رو بگیرن؛ فقط همین عشقی در این کار ندارن. فقط به سانسور اهمیت میدن و بعدش از فنسابهای ما کپی میکنن. به همین سادگی، نه؟ (هری)



**Figure 13** An instance of “copy-pasting” of fansubbers’ work shown in an Iranian state TV channel (Provided by Thomas)

Considering the issue of “copy-pasting the fansubbers’ work”, another participant, David stated “After I realized the official channels and VOD services copy and paste mine and my friends’ translations, I made an intentional translation error – to the point where the translation did not make any sense at all – in the beginning of the film and it was funny that the official channel did the same error in their subtitle.” He also provided me with a picture of this translation error (see Figure 14).



**Figure 14** The official subtitle (on the left side) and the fansub (on the right side) (Provided by David)

## 5.2.2 Reception of Fansubbing (From the fansubbers' Point of View)

Some of the participants emphasized on the free aspect of their translations, which they provide for the users. Among the reasons for translating free, they named religious and altruistic intentions, and their disagreement with the fee charged for official translation services:

*We, who work free in this field, the payment, as I always say, will be paid by God when we go to Him. God is our sponsor. (Steve)<sup>22</sup>*

*I really become happy when I see someone write a comment on my translation and they are happy, too. What is bad in working free for people? You work free for people and God will give you back more, don't worry. What goes around, comes around. (Tomas)<sup>23</sup>*

<sup>22</sup> ماه‌ها که رایگان کار میکنیم هزینه‌ش بقول خودم از همون بالابیع که اون ور بریم برامون حساب میکنه اسپانسرمون خداس (استیو)

<sup>23</sup> واقعا کیف میکنم وقتی یکی میاد کامنت میده و میگه از کارم خوشش اومده. خب چی میشه مگه رایگان واسه مردم کار کرد. تو رایگان برای مردم کار کن خدا جبران میکنه برات، نگران نباش. از هر دستی بگیری از همون دستم پس میگیری. (توماش)

*There is no need for me to care whether my fansub is good or not. It does not matter whether it receives a good rating or not. I just want to make them happy because I am spending time on that so I do something useful which they can pray for me in the next world. I swear to God, I fansub from morning to night for free. I am looking for a day which God asks me David what you have done for people so I have something on that day. (David)<sup>24</sup>*

*You know that people's current economic situation is really bad. Sanctions from one side; unemployment and inflation from the other side. So why should people spend money to watch films under such conditions?! It is not really fair. At least, I can make them happy by working free and they don't need to pay for the official translations. (Jazmine)<sup>25</sup>*

At the same time, a few of the participants, Tomas and Jack, blamed some of their colleagues for working free, for self-exploitation of their activity. Additionally, it is even more problematic for them, when these fansubbers eventually abuse their cultural credit with the audience for their party-political purposes.

*I know a fansubber who has been in this field for so many years and working free. He always advertised his work and believed in free work of fansubbing. But few months ago, I realized that he posted his Iranian election advertisement in his blog and asked his fans to vote for him. This is not good! (Tomas)<sup>26</sup>*

*I often saw that so many people request a film translation to a fansubber because they really want their favourite translator translate their popular film and TV series; but this fansubber ignore their requests; I cannot understand why. You [the fansubber] are now*

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<sup>24</sup> به خدا کار ندارم دانلودش چقدر ریت میخوره نمیخوره چطوری هست نیست خوب هست یا نیست کاری ندارم یکی در خواست میکنه میاد وقتشو میزاره تایپ کنه میگم بچه برای شادی دل بنده ای خدا هم شده برای رضای خدا بابا به تایمه بزاریم چرا که نه من به خدا صب تا شیم شده کار کردن چرا نیام اقا چرا نیام برای مردم کار کنم که به خدا بیامورزی حداقل یکی باشه پشتم خدا ما رو دید نقشه منو کنار بگه خب دیوید چیکارا برای بند های من کردی چه کاری رو برای رضای من انجام داد اقا نه ده تا نه صدتا حداقل یکی داشته باشم بگم من اینجا همچین کاری کردم (دیوید)

<sup>25</sup> شما الان میدونین که وضع اقتصادی مردم خرابه. تحریمها از یه طرف، بیکاری و تورم هم از طرف دیگه. خب چرا باید مردم تو این شرایط بیان برای دیدن فیلم هم پول خرج کنن؟! واقعا انصاف نیست. حداقل با رایگان کار کردن کمی اونا رو خوشحال میکنم و لازم نیست هزینه ای بپردازن. (جازمین)

<sup>26</sup> یکی رو میشناسم در این عرصه که سالیان سال داره رایگان کار میکنه. همیشه کارش رو هم تبلیغ میکرد و واقعا به کار رایگان ایمان داشت. ولی چند ماه پیش به پستی در ویلاگش دیدم که نوشته بود برای نمایندگی مجلس کاندیدا شده و از هوادارانش خواسته بهش رای بدنو این خوب نیست واقعا. (توماش)

*very popular and then he says "my fans, my economic situation is not good. Transfer a little money to me and then I translate"! (Jack)<sup>27</sup>*

### 5.2.3 The Issues of Quality and Speed

Two of the participants, Anna and Oscar criticized their colleagues for producing low quality subtitles.

*In today's society, the majority of those who studied English produce low quality translations of a film transcripts using a computer. There are also so many fansubs on the Internet that contain many loan translations of expressions and phrases, misspellings, and writing and punctuation errors. (Anna)<sup>28</sup>*

*With these fansubs, they are just embarrassing us in front of people. They think they are helping them but it's better not to translate at all. (Oscar)<sup>29</sup>*

However, one of the participants, Steve believed that the best rated fansubs in Subscene.com have been translated with high quality.

*[...] I agree that some of the fansubbers have low quality translation and sometimes they even use google translations and only change the English sentences with Persian ones; however, If you go to subscene.com and analyse the quality of the best scoring ones , I promise they are very good. (Steve)<sup>30</sup>*

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<sup>27</sup> چند بار دیدم چند نفر میان به درخواست به مترجم میدن که بیا این فیلم رو تجربه کن، چون واقعا دوست دارن مترجم محبوبشون فیلم و سریال مورد علاقتون رو ترجمه کنه؛ ولی میاد این مترجم چیکار میکنه، طاقچه بالا میذاره؛ آخه چرا من نمیفهمم. تو که دیگه مردمی شدی بعدش میاد میگه "وضع اقتصادی خوب نیست بهم پول واریز کنین بعد ترجمه میکنم"! (جک)

<sup>28</sup> در جامعه امروزی، اکثر کسانی که انگلیسی خوند در یونی، ترجمه های با کیفیت پایینی از متن فیلم را با استفاده از کامپیوتر انجام می دن. همچنین تعداد زیادی فن ساب در اینترنت وجود دره که حاوی ترجمه های قرضی بسیاری از عبارات و عبارات، غلط املایی، و اشتباهات نوشتاری و نقطه گذاری هستند. (آنا)

<sup>29</sup> با اینکاراشون فقط آبروی ما رو میبرن؛ فکر میکنن دارن به مردم کمک میکنن ولی بهتره همون ترجمه نکنن. (اسکار)

<sup>30</sup> ببین میلاد من قبول دارم برخی از این فنسابها کیفیت ترجمه پایینی دارن و حتی بعضی وقتا از ترجمه گوگل استفاده میکنن؛ ولی اگه الان بری Subscene.com و اون زیرنویسهایی که بهترین امتیاز رو گفتن از نظر کیفیت بررسی کنی، بهت قول میدم خیلی خوب ترجمه شدن. (استیو)

Nevertheless, another one of the participants, Tomas, didn't accept the rating score of the website for the following reasons:

*All of the best rated ones are not really good. During a period, I was challenging a few fansubbers and Milad, you know that I am not translating such bad quality [...] and I realized, [...] all of my uploaded fansubs in that period were not rated good. I didn't know in the beginning that they had rated my fansubs very low scores, but why do you do that? You also produce high quality fansubs and get high scoring from real people... the reason was that I posted a few of their translation errors in my weblog. (Tomas)<sup>31</sup>*

Regarding the criterion of speed, the participants appeared to be in a quandary as they see it in contradiction with the criterion of quality of translation. It was particularly a concern in relation to fansubbing of new films and "older" ones that have been uploaded long enough for them to have several translations uploaded in the meantime

*[...] fansubbing in Iran is a really competitive activity. When a new film is uploaded, people look for the fansub. They only want to watch the film and it seems that they don't care about the quality. So, in this case, the speed of producing the fansubs is really important. But, sometimes, there are so many fansub versions of an old film and in that case, people look for a high-quality version [...] by the old film I mean a film that was uploaded only a month ago and not the very old ones (Oscar)<sup>32</sup>*

*See, if a fan is a real fan, he or she will wait until their favourite fansubbers produce the subtitles because they love his or her fansubs' quality; but it could not be true for very new*

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<sup>31</sup> همشون واقعا خوب نیستن، ببین من در مقطعی با چندتا فنساب در افتادم و میلاد خودش میدونی من بد ترجمه نمیکنم ... آره، بعد دیدم بلههههههههه، همه فنسابهایی که انجام داده بودم تو به ماه همشون امتیاز کم گرفته بودن. اولش نمیدونستم بعد فهمیدم اینا میرفتن منفی میزدن واسم. خب آخه بگو چرا اینکار رو میکنین؟ خب تو هم با کیفیت تولید کن و امتیاز بالا بگیر از مردم واقعی... آره دلش این بود در وبلاگم در مورد خطاهای ترجمشون پست گذاشته بودم. (توماش)

<sup>32</sup> میلاد میدونی، فنساب تو ایران خیلی رقابتیه. وقتی به فیلم جدید آپلود میشه، مردم بدنیاال ترجمش میگردن. فقط میخوان فیلم رو تماشا کنن و معلومه که به کیفیت بها نمیدن؛ و در اینجا سرعت آپلود و ترجمه فنسابها حرف اول رو میزنه. ولی بعضی وقتا برای فیلمهای قدیمی چون فنسابهای زیادی از به فیلم موجوده، مردم بدنیاال با کیفیتاش میگردن و در اینجا کیفیت مهمه... میلاد میدونی، منظورم از فیلم قدیمی اون فیلمیه که یک ماه پیش آپلود شده نه حتی اون قدیمیا. (اسکار)

*and hot uploaded films. Just imagine that Tenet comes out. Most of them won't wait and I am sure they will watch the film with any available fansub at the moment. (Tomas)*<sup>33</sup>

*[...] I really push them to produce high quality fansubs even if they could not meet the timeline. I never sacrifice the speed over the quality; but you may say I can lose my fans for new films. Milad, if they are real fan, they will wait no matter what it takes. (Tomas)*<sup>34</sup>

*I have been practicing fansub for a while. I used to just copy the English translations into google translation [laughing] and replace the Persian ones; but I am learning a lot since I have jointed this group and they help to produce high quality subtitles and very quickly. (Jazmin)*<sup>35</sup>

A few of them also believed that working in a team is one of the requisite conditions for producing high quality subtitles quickly. This issue is discussed in the following core category.

#### **5.2.4 Building a Networking**

This category concerns the participants' opinions of working within a team or alone and how they interact with other fansubbers. Those participants who said they tend to be working in a team believed that this organization of the work helps them to produce high quality fansubs and fast. They are David, Harry and Tomas.

*Absolutely; teamwork is better than working alone. You have at least people of your own kind and you can get help from them in your translations. Sometimes also, you get very*

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<sup>33</sup> ببین، آگه هوادار، هوادار واقعی باشه، اونقدر صبر میکنه تا فنسابهای مورد نظر زیرنویس اون فیلم رو تهیه کنن چون واقعا با کیفیت اون حال میکنن؛ ولی این میتونه در مورد فیلمهای جدید و داغ آپلود شده درست نباشه. فقط تصور کن فیلم تنت بیرون بیاد. همه اون هوادارا صبر نمیکنن و مطمئنم فیلم رو با هر زیرنویس موجود در اون موقع تماشا میکنن. (توماش)

<sup>34</sup> میلاد، تو گروه من رو میشناسی، واقعا اصرار میکنم از شون ترجمه با کیفیت ارائه بدن حتی اگر به تایم لاین نرسه. هیچوقت سرعت رو به خاطر کیفیت قربانی نمیکنم؛ بله البته ممکنه بگی هوادارام رو ممکنه از دست بدم. میلاد آگه اونا واقعی باشن صبر میکنن تا هر وقت که بکشه. (توماش)

<sup>35</sup> من برای مدتی هست فنساب رو شروع کردم. عادت داشتم ترجمه ها رو بزnm تو گوگل بعدش فارسیها رو کپی کنم؛ ولی از اون موقعی که با این گروه آشنا شدم یاد گرفتم چجوری با کیفیت و با سرعت ترجمه کنم. (بازمین)



tired of just translating the films; so, you can change your role of fansubbing into spotting for a while and your friend can do the translations. (David)<sup>36</sup>

[...] if you work in a team with your friends, you can produce your fansubs very quickly because you can do the translations and your teammates will do the spotting and timing. You can have more time for checking the quality as well. Or the third person can do that. (Harry)<sup>37</sup>

Tomas also mentions another element of building an identity as “fansubber”: celebrating group achievements in addition to helping out the teammates in bad economic situations:

[...] just imagine you become famous and your fansubs are the most frequently downloaded ones and you are also working alone. What next? You will celebrate this achievement with your Mom? With your Dad? With your brother or sister or friends who don't know anything about fansubbing? No, you cannot. You cannot even share it with other fansubbers because they are jealous of you. So, working in a team and having friends of your own is really better in this case and you can share good moments together. (Tomas)<sup>38</sup>

[...] let me tell you this story. You know I am working free but one of my friends in my group needed money. None of us had such big money; so, we decided to get sponsor and advertisement for our fansubs in the moment. We gained the needed the money after a month and all of us agreed to give it to him. (Tomas)<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>قطعا کار تیمی بهتر از تنها کار کردنه. حداقلش اینه که آدمایی از جنس خودت دور و برتن و میتونن بهت در ترجمه کمک کنن. بعضی وقتا از ترجمه خسته میشی؛ براحتی میتونی نقشت رو در تهیه فنساب به وقت اسپانینگ یا تایم گذاری تغییر بدی و دوستت برای منتهی ترجمه کنه. (دیوید)

<sup>37</sup> ببین، اگه تو تیم کار کنی با دوستان، میتونی فنسابها با سرعت بالا تولید کنی چون تو ترجمه میزنی یکی دیگه تایمینگ و اسپانینگ. حتی وقت اضافه برای چک کردن کیفیت هم داری. یا شخص سومی میتونه اینکار رو کنه. (هری)

<sup>38</sup> میلاد، تصور کن بهترین و معروفترین فنساب شدی و دلتود میکنن مردم فنسابهاتو و تو تنهایی کار میکنی. خب بعد چی؟ میخوای بری این موفقیت رو با مامانت جشن بگیری؟ یا بابات؟ یا داداش یا آجی یا دوستایی که اصلا از فنساب هیچی نمیدونن؟ نه، نمیتونی. حتی نمیتونی با فنسابهای دیگه در میونش بذاری چون اونا به اندازه کافی بهت حسادت دارن. پس اگه تو تیم کار کنی و دوستانی داشته باشی میتونی با همدیگه لحظات خوبی داشته باشی. (توماش)

<sup>39</sup> میلاد، آه، بذار تا یادم نرفته این داستان رو برات تعریف کنم. میدونی که من رایگان کار میکنم ولی یکی از دوستام تو گروهمون نیاز فوری به پول داشت. هیچکدوم از ما اون پول رو نداشتیم؛ پس تصمیم گرفتیم برای اون مدت برای کارامون اسپانسر و تبلیغ بگیریم. بعد یه ماه پول رو دراوردیم و همه توافق کردن و دادیم بهش. (توماش)

However, the other participants, namely Jack, Anna, and Steve are more inclined to work alone for the following reasons:

*I agree that working as a team can be very helpful in so many cases but I prefer to work alone. You know some of the groups have sponsors or advertisements but I prefer to work free; but I cannot accept that I work free but others gain money because of my fansubs. (Jack)<sup>40</sup>*

*Since some of the groups are working for a film website or organizations, they ask you sometimes to translate for their purposes. Sometimes you must censor. Sometimes you cannot translate your favourite film because you are not allowed to upload any other fansub. Yea, because of that I am thinking to work alone after a few years. I want to have my own fans and my own name in this field. (Anna)<sup>41</sup>*

*But Milad, I have seen so many new fansubbers who came to my group and left after few months. Nowadays they are working alone. Because I asked them to help the experienced translators for four months and then if approved, produce their own fansubs with their names. They didn't want to work in others' shadow even for few months. (Tomas)*

*If I wanted to observe their [fansubbing groups'] rules and guidance, why should I waste my time for working free. I can easily get a job. The only thing I hate about the official is that they force you to do something which you don't like to do. And the translation which is broadcasted in the end is not your translation, it is their translation. I hate to see people's blames and insults for the translation which I hadn't done. (Steve)<sup>42</sup>*

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<sup>40</sup>قبول دارم کار تیمی خیلی مفیده در بسیاری از موارد ولی من ترجیح میدم تنها کار کنم. میدونی بعضی گروهها اسپانسر میگیرن یا تبلیغ میگیرن. ولی من میخوام رایگان کار کنم. نمیتونم قبول کنم من رایگان کار برای دیگران که ازش پول دربیارن. (جک)

<sup>41</sup>از اونجایی که برخی گروهها برای وبسایتهای فیلم یا برخی سازمانها کار میکنند، از اونا میخوان که برای اهداف خودشون ترجمه کنن. بعضی وقتا باید سانسور کنی. بعضی وقتا نمیتونی اون فیلمی رو که میخوای ترجمه کنی چون نباید به تنهایی آپلود کنی. آره به خاطر اینا فکر کنم بعد از مدتی تنها کار خواهم کرد. میخوام هوادار خودم رو داشته باشم و اسم خودم در این زمینه باشه. (آنا)

<sup>42</sup>اگه واقعا میخواستم قوانین و راهنمایی اونا رو انجام بدم، خب چرا وقتم رو تلف کنم و کار رایگان انجام بدم. میتونم راحت استخدام بشم. تنها چیزی که بدم میاد از ترجمه رسمی اینه که مجبورت میکنن کاری رو انجام بدی که دوست نداری. و در آخر ترجمه ای هم که پخش میشه ترجمه تو نیست، ترجمه خودشونه. بدم میاد فحش و حرف مردم رو در مورد ترجمه ای ببینم که انجام ندادم (استیو).

### 5.3 The Interview Overall Results

The most important findings concerning the second research question about the motivations of the fansubbers behind doing the fansubs were as follows. The fansub translators in my sample agree that

- the official AVT in Iran produces low quality translations due to the low salary of the translators and lack of respect and recognition for them;
- the criteria for employment in the official AVT are based on favouritism and connections rather than considering translation abilities and skills;
- The official AV translators do not have perfect command of both English and Persian languages;
- The official AV translators do not have knowledge related to cinema, film and foreign cultures;
- the official AV translators tend to (self) censor and copy from fansubbers' translations sometimes even terms of taboo;
- the reasons for translating for free among the fansubbers are of religious origin, altruism, and the fees charged by official translation services;
- the fansubbers care about their audiences' comments and translation requests;
- some of the fansubbers, working free, are thought to exploit their activities;
- some of the fellow fansubbers are believed to produce very low-quality subtitles;
- some of the fansubbers abuse the subtitle websites' rating system; the criterion for choosing between speed or quality of fansubs among the fansubbers is the audiences' opinions and comments;
- The audiences intend to prioritize quality of fansubs over speed (instant availability) in case of "old" films with several translations available over time; the 'real' fans choose only their favourite fansubbers' translations
- the reasons for translating as member of team among are seeking help from them in their translations and in life and sense of belonging (sharing the moment of celebrating their success, shared life experience)

- yet, for some of them, the reasons for translating alone are individualism (refusing to follow the norms of the groups), choosing to fansub for free, and recognition (competitiveness)

## 5.4 The Survey Results

The survey was designed to explore if the nine Iranian fansubbers' most common reasons for working in a team was a general practice motivated by a sense of belonging and establishing shared criteria of self-assessment. For addressing this question, I had to address a relatively large number of fansubbers, and collect data by the quantitative research method of survey and produced a descriptive statistical analysis. The results for each category and item obtained from the survey are presented in the following tables, contains the number of items (N), number of respondents (n), means (M), and percentage distribution per every category of Likert scale answers.

### 5.4.1 Reasons for Doing Subtitles

Guided by the interview data, nine items were designed for this category. As can be seen in Table 30, the most common reasons for fansubbing were N2 ( $M= 1.09$ ) 'when I make subtitles I feel that I **am** doing something useful' and N20 ( $M= 1.21$ ) 'I translate so that others have access to the content they would otherwise have to pay'. Although the average mean score for the group of statements is 2.11, the fansubbers did not make a clear difference between agreement and disagreement for items N19 ( $M= 2.84$ ) 'I translate because I believe in the free sharing of content via Internet', N22 ( $M= 2.94$ ) 'my fansubs are frequently copied by official translation', and N24 (2.91) 'I translate because I believe the quality of official translation is poor'. Additionally, considering item N13 ( $M= 2.91$ ) 'I translate to enable others access to contents that are inaccessible to them due to the lack of language knowledge', half of the participants agreed to the statement while the other half believed that was not the reason for fansubbing.

**Table 30** *Results of Reasons for Doing Subtitles*

Questionnaire scale options: 1= Strongly Agree; 2= Agree; 3= No idea; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly Disagree

N	Item	n	M	1	2	3	4	5
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2	When I make subtitles I feel that I am doing something useful	91	1.09	86.4	8.6	2.4	2.6	0
7	I translate because I want to work in this field	92	1.91	19.7	67.1	6.4	0	6.8
8	I translate to enable others access to contents that are inaccessible to them due to the lack of language knowledge	93	1.47	64.7	21.4	3.6	7.1	3.2
13	I translate to enable others access to contents that are inaccessible to them due to the delay or lack of translation versions in official channels	93	2.91	21.4	31.2	2.6	28.4	16.4
15	I translate to enable others access to contents that are inaccessible to them due to official norms and regulations	93	1.74	31.7	57.6	0	10.7	0
19	I translate because I believe in the free sharing of content via Internet.	93	2.84	13.4	8.7	69.7	0	8.2
20	I translate so that others have access to the content they would otherwise have to pay.	91	1.21	73.8	12.4	6.4	7.4	0
22	My fansubs are frequently copied by official translation	93	2.94	26.3	1.7	69.4	2.6	0
24	I translate because I believe the quality of official translation is poor	90	2.91	17.6	14.2	43.2	8.7	16.3
<b>Mean Average</b>			2.11	39.4	24.7	22.6	7.5	2.2

#### 5.4.2 The Act of Fansubbing

Another main category, obtained from the interview data, was the act of fansubbing itself. As can be seen in Table 31 except for items N3 ( $M= 2.91$ ) ‘I am more satisfied with a successful translation of films which were linguistically challenging but the process of translation lasted longer, than the successful translation of films I translated quickly and easily’ and N17 ( $M= 3.87$ ) ‘failure of a translation often discourages me from further translating’, the participants agreed to

the statements in this group ( $M= 1.92$ ). This can be noticed, in particular, with items N6 ( $M= 1.08$ ) ‘I feel the need to make every translation as quickly and well as possible’, N4 ( $M= 1.21$ ) ‘I frequently compare my translation achievements with other members of the community where I publish my translations’, and N18 ( $M=1.39$ ) ‘I feel discouraged when no one is downloading my translation’ where over half of the participants completely agreed.

**Table 31** *Results of Reasons for Establishing Self-assessment*

(Questionnaire scale options: 1= Strongly Agree; 2= Agree; 3= No idea; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly Disagree)

N	Item	n	M	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am more satisfied with a successful translation of films which were linguistically challenging but the process of translation lasted longer, than the successful translation of films I translated quickly and easily.	92	2.91	12.7	17.5	51.6	6.4	11.8
4	I frequently compare my translation achievements with other members of the community where I publish my translations.	93	1.21	69.1	16.7	6.4	7.8	0
6	I feel the need to make every translation as quickly and well as possible.	93	1.08	91.6	8.4	0	0	0
10	The speed of translation must not affect its quality.	93	1.64	55.1	29.8	8.4	6.7	0
17	Failure of a translation often discourages me from further translating.	93	3.87	8.7	17.6	33.1	17.7	22.9
18	I feel discouraged when no one is downloading my translation	93	1.39	67.2	24.3	8.5	0	0
25	I give up on a started translation if I realize that the film does not interest me.	93	1.73	21.7	62.8	0	15.5	0

26	I rather translate new than older films.	93	1.54	38.1	47.	11.4	2.9	0
					6			
<b>Mean Average</b>			1.92	45.5	28	24.9	14.9	4.3

### 5.4.3 Reasons for Building a Networking

As stated in the interview results, one of the reasons that one become a member of fansubbing community is that they tend to ask help from others and share information about the issue of translation. In overall, the descriptive statistics of the ten items showed the highest mean rating of the participants ( $n = 93$ ) for the this category ( $M = 2.21$ ) including instances such as N1 ‘using others’ help about translation, N3 ‘gratitude of the users’ of my translations encourages me to continue translating’, N9 ‘using others’ help about personal life issues such as consultation and economic’, N11 ‘preferring my fansubbing community to other translation communities’, and N21 ‘my fansubs are frequently copied by other fansubbers’. To go further in details, it can be concluded that less than half of the participants were not a member of a specific fansubbing community. In other words, the fansubbers neither agreed nor disagreed with the group of statements that represent the items (N11,  $M = 2.73$ , N12,  $M = 2.65$ , and N14,  $M = 2.81$ ) asking about their community which could mean that they had not an experience of working within a team or community.

As can be seen in Table 32, the lowest ratings were given by the participants to N3 ( $M = 1.18$ ) ‘gratitude of the users’ of my translations encourages me to continue translating’ and N5 ( $M = 1.32$ ) ‘receiving up to date information about the activity of fansubbing from a portal’ with very close mean ratings showing that the fansubbers’ most common reasons for building a networking are being acknowledged by the users as well as up-to-dated in the field. The participants expressed their either disagreement or complete disagreement with only N21 ( $M = 3.79$ ) ‘participating in direct (live) social activities of a translator community fulfils my need for affiliation’.

**Table 32** Results of Reasons for Building a Networking

(Questionnaire scale options: 1= Strongly Agree; 2= Agree; 3= No idea; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly Disagree)

N	Items	n	M	1	2	3	4	5
---	-------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

1	Using others' help about translation	93	2.01	41.8	8.3	47.2	2.7	0
3	Gratitude of the users of my translations encourages me to continue translating	91	1.18	74.5	22.1	3.4	0	0
5	Receiving up to date information about the activity of fansubbing from a portal	93	1.32	72.1	21.8	0	2.5	3.6
9	Using others' help about personal life issues such as consultation and economic	93	1.92	51.6	38.9	0	9.5	0
11	Preferring my fansubbing community to other translation communities	90	2.73	23.2	14.5	48.1	14.	0
12	Feeling strong affiliation with the community	93	2.65	24.5	17.2	53.5	4.8	0
14	Preferring my fansubbing community to any other type of community	93	2.81	23.2	16.4	42.2	18.	0
16	My fansubs are frequently copied by other fansubbers	93	1.95	52.4	24.3	9	2.8	11.
21	Participating in direct (live) social activities of a translator community fulfils my need for affiliation.	90	3.79	11.8	14.2	7.2	49.	17.
23	Translating for the approval of my colleagues after a successful translation	93	2.76	21.4	11.5	38.8	26.	2.1
<b>Mean Average</b>			2.21	39.6	18.9	24.9	13	3.6

## 5.5 Discussion of the Survey and Interview Results

The second research question was posed in order to gain the opinions of Iranian fansubbers in terms of their motivations and reasons behind doing the fansubs. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to address this question. The results of the interviews were used to develop a survey that addressed the broader issue of Iranian fansubbers.

There was a consensus among the participants that the low quality of the current official subtitling and dubbing in Iran could be attributed to the low salaries of the subtitlers and dubbers as well as the lack of respect and recognition for them. This has resulted in a lack of experienced



professionals in the field, leading to a decrease in the quality of the final product (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020). Furthermore, the limited budget of the production companies has prevented them from investing in better technology and higher quality translations (Mollanazar & Nasrollahi, 2017). Also, they believed that the official subtitlers and dubbers were not selected solely on the basis of their translation and voice skills, but rather because of their connections and favouritism. It was believed that these positions were awarded to individuals with strong ties to the production companies, rather than those who were most qualified for the job. This was seen as unfair to those who had put in the hard work to hone their skills, yet was overlooked in favour of those who were connected. The survey results suggested that there was no consensus among fansubbers about the quality of official translations and that they may be more likely to make their decisions based on other factors such as availability or cost, for example, "I translate because I believe official translations are poor" ( $M= 2.91$ ).

In the Chinese context, Wang (2022) states professional subtitlers may use fansubs as a reference when creating their own subtitles for a show or movie. Interestingly, in the Iranian context, the participants believed that using fansubs as a reference have been equated to copying. In the Iranian context, participants believed that using fansubs as a reference was similar to copying the whole translation. As was demonstrated in the results, copy-pasting fansubs can be a double-edged sword for the professionals, as fansubs may contain errors and inconsistencies. However, fansubs can also be a valuable resource for professional subtitlers, as they can provide a sense of the cultural and linguistic context of the content, as well as an understanding of how fans respond to it (Lakarnchua, 2017; Liang, 2018; Wang & Zhang, 2017). Nevertheless, on the larger scale, fansubbers did not clearly differentiate between agreement and disagreement with regard to the survey item "my fansubs are frequently copied by official translations" ( $M=2.94$ ). This could indicate that they did not see the issue as a threat to their work or a violation of their rights. According to the survey results, fansubbers' work is frequently copied and redistributed among themselves as a result of its popularity and ease of access. As an example, they agreed with the item "My fansubs are frequently copied by other fansubbers" ( $M= 1.95$ ). The reasons for doing fansubs in my study were not in line with Yuan's (2021) study, in which he finds Chinese fansubbers are motivated by a variety of factors, including a love of foreign media, a desire to share favourite content, and a desire to promote cultural understanding. Nevertheless, both his and

my studies demonstrate that fansubbers employ a wide range of translation strategies depending on their target audience and the specific text they are translating.

There was a strong emphasis on providing free fansubs to users. The interview results revealed that the reasons for translating for free included religious reasons and good intentions, as well as charges for official translation services. Participants indicated they translated for free because subtitles should be available to all people, regardless of their financial situation. Furthermore, it is important to note that the provision of free fansubs can also contribute to the growth and promotion of a particular fandom or media franchise. Wongseree (2020) argues that in addition to making content more accessible to fans who may not have access to official translations, fan translators can also help foster a passionate and engaged fan community by making content more accessible to them. As a result, the creators and distributors of original content will benefit from increased sales and revenue. It is also possible to preserve and promote media that may not be officially licensed or distributed in certain regions through fansubs. She claims that this allows fans around the world to enjoy and appreciate a wider range of media. However, she stresses that the distribution of fansubs without the consent of the original creators or license holders may be illegal and potentially harmful to the industry as a whole. In the same vein, the quantitative results revealed that the most common reasons for fansubbing were “when I make subtitles I feel that I am doing something useful” and ( $M= 1.09$ ) “I translate so that others have access to the content they would otherwise have to pay” ( $M= 1.21$ ). On the contrary, it was found that the participants believed their colleagues who worked for free exploited their free time. They felt that their colleagues were taking advantage of them by getting the same job done without being paid, which took away the opportunity for them to be compensated for their work. Similarly, the survey results revealed that the fansubbers agreed with the item “I translate because I want to work in this field” ( $M= 1.91$ ). Thus, fansubbing may serve as a stepping stone to a career in the entertainment industry which was discussed in the literature (Pérez-González, 2021; Čemerin & Toth, 2017; Yao, 2021; Boonchutima & Lou, 2022).

Some of the results vividly contradicted each other. Working in a team and building a network was considered beneficial by some participants, while others preferred to work alone. It was advantageous to work in teams due to the availability of financial support and translation assistance from peers, being able to celebrate with them, and the ability to produce fansubs that

were quicker and of higher quality. On the other hand, some participants felt that working with others caused delays in the process, added more workload, and was distracting. Creating fansubs alone was primarily motivated by the desire to be independent in their translation choices. In other words, those who chose to work alone felt it was important to maintain their own independence and freedom when translating and creating fansubs, without being influenced by the opinions of others in terms of censorship. Similarly, while the majority of fansubbers feel some level of connection to the fansubbing community, according to the quantitative results, there was no clear consensus with regard to how strong that connection is, and whether or not they prefer it to other types of communities, for example, "feeling strong affiliation with the community" ( $M= 2.65$ ), "preferring my fansubbing community to other translation communities" ( $M= 2.73$ ), "preferring my fansubbing community to any other type of community" ( $M= 2.81$ ), and "participating in direct (live) social activities of a translator community fulfils my need for affiliation" ( $M= 3.79$ ). However, the fansubbers find the translation process to be a collaborative effort, and that they are open to getting help from experienced translators in areas beyond just translation. The high mean scores suggest that fansubbers view collaboration and consultation as an important part of their work, for example, "using others' help with translation problems" ( $M= 2.01$ ), and "using other translators' help with personal life issues such as consultation and economic issues" ( $M=1.92$ ).

A contrary consensus was also expressed among the fansubbers regarding the production of higher-quality fansubs at a slower speed. The fansubbers reported that taking extra time to ensure accuracy and quality was worth the effort. They argued that the quality of the fansubs should be the highest priority, even if it took longer to complete. As a result, they opted to produce fansubs at a slower speed in order to maintain a higher quality. The other participants, however, believed that they had to produce the fansubs as soon as possible, even if that meant sacrificing the quality. According to them, if they were able to produce fansubs faster, they would be able to reach a greater audience. Similarly, several studies have indicated that speed of release is more important than quality for fansubbers, since it allows them to be the first to release subtitles for a particular show or film (Dwyer, 2016; Rong & Omar, 2018; Park, 2019; Yao, 2021). The survey results showed the fansubbers recognize the importance of speed but also understand that quality must not be compromised, for example, they agreed with the item "The speed of translation must not affect its quality" ( $M= 1.64$ ).

According to the qualitative results, the fansubbers consider the viewers' comments as valuable feedback that can be used to improve their subtitles. The fansubbers reported that the viewers' comments were often detailed and provided useful insight into how to improve their subtitles. They also stated that they could use the comments to identify and correct any mistakes they had made in the subtitles. Additionally, fansubbers consider viewers' comments to be a means of gaining recognition and reputation within the fansubbing community. In Massidda's (2020) opinion, this is due to the fact that fansubbers are often unpaid volunteers, so the recognition and reputation they receive from viewers' comments motivate them to continue their efforts. It is also possible for them to improve their fansubbing skills and technique by reading detailed comments (O'hagan, 2009). Similarly, the survey results indicated that the participants felt that failure of a translation is part of the process, for example, they did not agree with the item "failure of a translation often discourages me from further translating" ( $M= 3.89$ ) but when their work is not appreciated by others, it makes them feel more discouraged as they completely agreed with the item "I feel discouraged when no one is downloading my translation" ( $M= 1.39$ ).

## CHAPTER SIX: RECEPTION OF IRANIAN FANSUBBING

The last research question is concerned with the perceptions of and value judgements of Iranian viewers about fansubbers' translations into Persian. The data for analysis was collected through three methods: fieldnotes, archival data from the website *film2movie.ws*, and elicited audience's opinion about the subtitles provided by fansubbers, following the guidelines drawn up by Kozinets (2002, 2006, 2010).

### 6.1 Fieldnote Results

My fieldnotes data include the notes I acquired through the observation of the field in question. Reflective notes are recommended for contextualizing the ethnographic (!!) data. They include the netnographer's observation of subtexts, pretexts, contingencies, situation, and personal emotions arousing during the research (Kozinets, 2002, 2006, 2010).

*film2movie.ws* is a site that streams and provides free direct and indirect download links for pirated movies and TV series for a Persian speaking audience. Its home page is divided into several sections, namely, download films, download TV series, frequently asked questions (FAQ), Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), and a big-size figure of Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) previous and current leaders with the caption "*This website observes and follows all of the IRI's laws.*" written in Persian at the bottom. The users can download the films as well as share comments about the films and their translations on the website without any need for registration. In the FAQ section, the users can find questions and responses in relation to subtitles and technical issues of downloading. In the DMCA tab, the following disclaimer is written in English:

None of the files linked in this website are hosted on the server of FILM2MOVIE. All the contents in this website are for personal use only. This site does not accept responsibility for content hosted on other websites and does not have any action into the downloading and uploading of series. If you believe we have violated your rights, please contact us at [Film2movi@gmail.com](mailto:Film2movi@gmail.com)

Like their statement about observing IRI's laws, the DMCA declaration are equally a mere act of hypocrisy. Considering the former one, as mentioned in the literature review (2.6), the

website in fact violates the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's regulations for censoring any material that count as offences of Islamic principles. As for the latter, the DMCA makes a gesture as if observing the copyright law of the internet, which should prohibit the distribution of AV programs even in cases when they are not hosted on the website's server (Ministry of Islamic Guidance and Culture, n.d.). The FILM2MOVIE.WS website declares at the bottom that "*all material and intellectual rights of this website are reserved and belong to its owners*". Consequently, should the contents shared violate ..., it should not be the responsibility of the owners of the website. Yet, it flaunts the regulation in that, as another website copying programs from other sources they would be pursued legally. However, should the website address this responsibility openly, that would make it necessary for them to warn the users as they would also be punished for downloading materials breaching Islamic values. Additionally, it also states that "*This website does not upload Persian dubbed works for downloading due to the protection of copyright.*" However, that is untrue. There is a search box in which the audiences can type it's the title, year of production, genre and director's names of the AV program they are searching. The website also uses a lot of advertisements and pop-ups to compensate its costs.

- Each film or TV series is provided with a direct and indirect download link to its own webpage. Above the download links, each actual program is presented with its poster and information about the genre, language, running time, actors and directors' names as well as the IMDB score. Additionally, a brief summary of the films is also provided below the information lead. The website also emphasizes that "*The program is not censored*". Below the download links section, the website provides some advice on how to proceed with the downloading concerning

What is most important for my data collection, at the bottom of the program's homepage, there is a comment box designed for the website users. Unlike downloading though, for writing comments, the users must provide a name and email address. Even if it can be an alias name and email address and the website does not send an email link inviting the user to confirm, there can be users who would be concerned about their safety and do not use the option. It should also be mentioned that the website does not provide any information about the total number of uploaded AV programs and subtitles. However, the website provides their visiting times and number of comments. In order to collect data for the users' comments, I visited the comments section for each AV program on the website with comments, excluding those AV links that did not include any

comments. Out of all the programs, the TV series *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) and *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) and the films *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018) and *Deadpool 2* (2018) had the most visiting times over the period of my data collection visits of the website. Table 33 provides the total number of comments in relation to each program on the webpage.

**Table 33** *The most visited AV programs' webpages with the number of comments*

Title of AV programs	Number of visits	Number of comments
<i>Game of Thrones</i>	29,675,890	2,509
<i>Breaking Bad</i>	13,003,854	1,461
<i>Avengers: Endgame</i>	11,254,701	1,865
<i>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</i>	6,475,291	378
<i>Deadpool 2</i>	6,214,664	1,021
<i>John Wick</i>	5,141,732	597
<i>Friends</i>	5,002,412	627
<i>The Dark Knight</i>	4,851,009	174
<i>The Simpsons</i>	4,847,869	614
<i>Logan</i>	4,823,674	384

Consequently, I included the total of 43 AV programs that were the most visited one on the website during the data collection period, which meant altogether 16,547 comments altogether

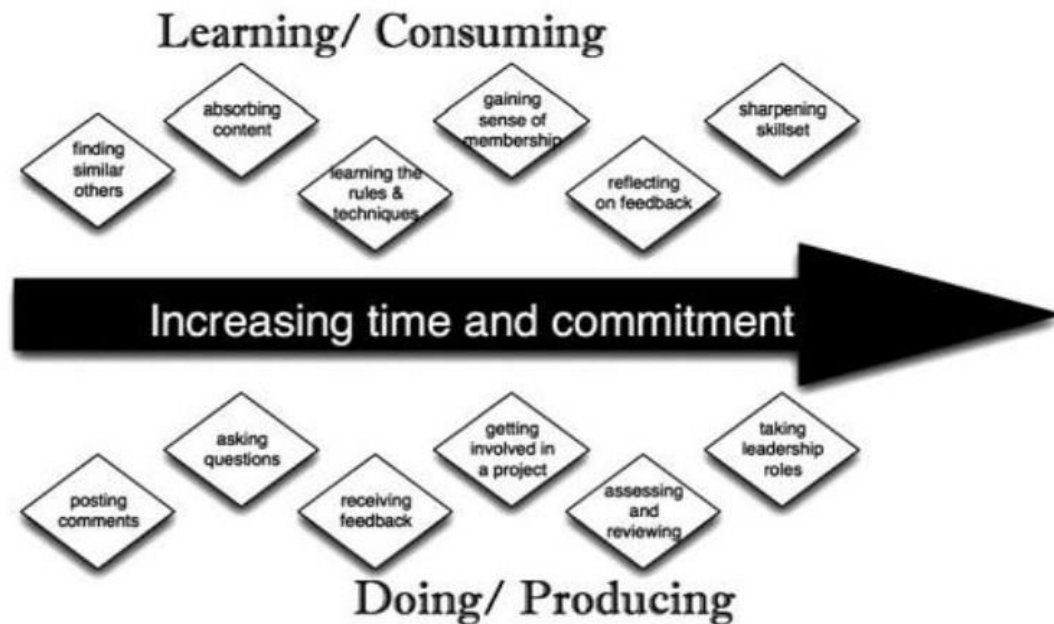
If a user writes a new comment, others can reply to the comment as well. The debates or quarrels even between the users is most common posting unreliable information, talking against a film or subtitler what/who is the favourite one of the other users. If a user enjoys/agrees with a post, they can show this preference by pressing the LIKE button. In addition to the LIKE ikon, the use of other emoticons can be seen as well, showing the commenters' current feelings and emotions.

As mentioned in the third chapter, 43 AV programs' webpages – the top visited ones – were investigated and finally more than 4,500 out of 16,547 comments were collected related to translation and subtitling.

## **6.2 Collecting Archival Data**

In this part, I was collecting already available data (users' comments on *film2movie.ws*) to find out what had been talked about subtitling on the website providing the service free. Kozinets (2006) argues that in such non-participative approaches, the researcher cannot obtain personal information of the users. However, for the purpose of research, personal information was not important but the general tendencies of the users' perception of the service. Although a non-participatory approach was preferred, my identity, as one of the subscribers on the website, had to be revealed to the users of the website by using an alias name – in line with the website's requirement. I opted for “*PhD researcher in AVT*”; thus, a ‘covert’ approach was utilized (Langer & Beckman, 2005). In my capacity as netnographer though, I did not interfere in the ongoing discussions: I wanted to “observe” what was going on so that I could compare the results later. Additionally, the current project did not study sensitive topics that the netnographer's presence may cause ‘the Hawthorn effect’ (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013, p. 31). But the netnographer used both observational and active approaches; hence, it is avoided to use a covert approach which is carried out due to the sensitivity of topic or unwarranted interferences. Figure 15 illustrates the potential forms of doing netnography using a participant observational approach.






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**Figure 15** *The Potential Forms of Netnographic Participation* (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008, p. 342)

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Kozinets (2006) himself emphasizes that “netnography is an adaptation of ‘participant observational ethnographic procedures’” (p. 135). Yet, he warns that obtaining the posts or messages with no connections to the social network “puts the researcher at risk of gaining only a shallow and cursory cultural understanding” (2010, p. 97). I decided to make up for that potential risk by including the most frequently visited AV programs that also meant relatively highest number of comments (See the discussion of principles of selection informing my netnographic data collection in Section 6.1).

### **6.3 Content Analysis of Netnographic Data Through the Three-Step Coding Process**

The total number of words of 12,145 in the 1,008 comments I retrieved from the website were analysed using the same method of coding adopted for the interview data collected in relation to RQ2. It should be mentioned that there were too many exact repetitive segments among the comments; therefore, they were taken into consideration only once for coding purposes and their

frequency is not shown in Table 34 below. Initial codes such as people, quick, quality, IRIB, and no subtitle, were the reoccurring ones. It is important to establish as well that the comments are in Persian, the language of communication of the website, and I provide them in my own English translation. The original quotes in Persian can be seen in appendix D .

**Table 34** *Segments and initial codes driven from the comments*

Segment	Repeated times in the comment	Initial codes
<i>For God's sake be quick in doing the subtitles</i>	241	Quick/speed in the wake of release of the film
<i>It has been more than few months, there is no subtitle for this film</i>	112	Concern for Months passing without subtitle Fansubbers' busy timetable with exams
<i>Admin, please upload the subtitles</i>	74	Urging Admin to upload the subtitles
<i>Please tell the fansubbers to translate</i>	71	Asking the fansubbers to create subtitles
<i>But nowadays, they are dealing with their exams</i>	14	The viewers understand the busy schedule of the fansubbers
<i>IRIB will broadcast it earlier than you</i>	29	IRIB (The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting) will produce one sooner
<i>Because of Iran's low speed internet, we download films with difficulties and see in the end they don't have subtitles yet</i>	1	Iran's low speed internet results in downloading difficulties
<i>Admin, please pay attention to subtitles</i>	21	Urging Admin to pay attention to the subtitles section

<i>Your film website is very good but you upload the subtitles very late</i>	18	Comparing the film section to the subtitles one of the websites
<i>New and good films have always very quick subtitles</i>	1	New and popular films always get the attention of the fansubbers
<i>But why this one hasn't any?</i>	1	Asking the fansubbers or admin why the particular new and popular film has no subtitle
<i>My English is very bad</i>	1	Urging the fansubbers or admin to create the subtitle because their English is not good
<i>if there is no subtitle, I will watch it without it or I will learn English</i>	1	Watching the film without subtitles if they are not ready soon or trying to learn the language
<i>I am waiting for a long time If there is no subtitle for this film, tell it in advance</i>	1	Urging the fansubbers or admin to tell the viewers in advance if a film's subtitle would not be created
<i>I really thank Ali and Giti for subtitling this film</i>	1	Acknowledging their favourite fansubbers by calling their names
<i>A masterpiece, well done</i>	1	Calling a subtitle as a masterpiece
<i>I also thank them, I was waiting</i>	1	Acknowledging the subtitles even they wait to download it
<i>Download the LOD group's subtitles, much better</i>	1	Encouraging the other viewers to download their favourite fansubbing group

<i>God help you</i>	57	Asking God to help the fansubbers (kind of complement in Persian meaning the fansubbers are doing the right thing to provide free subtitles)
<i>Since I don't have a girlfriend, I just watch films with your translations. Thank you</i>	1	The subtitles help the viewers to watch the films
<i>The quality is really good. Thank you</i>	47	Acknowledging the quality of the subtitles
<i>Admin, why it takes so long for uploading the subtitle?</i>	1	Asking only admin to create and upload the subtitles
<i>Bro, why you speak without thinking? There should be a subtitle that admin could upload it</i>	1	Helping the consumers understand that the Admin only uploads the subtitles to the website and the fansubbers translate and create them
<i>Yea he is right, admin is just for films</i>	1	Acknowledging the previous comment written by the user
<i>Please contact the subtitler him/herself</i>	1	Asking the viewers to contact the fansubbers personally
<i>Please translate The Black Mirror as well. Thanks</i>	1	Asking the fansubbers to translate a particular film or TV series
<i>Even the Vietnamese are better than us in translation</i>	1	Comparing the Iranian fansubbers with the Vietnamese
<i>In the same day of uploading the films, they put the subtitles after 12 hours</i>	1	Comparing the Vietnamese's speed of creating and uploading the subtitles

<i>bro, the Arabs' subtitles were uploaded quicker</i>	1	Comparing the Arabs' speed of creating and uploading the subtitles
<i>There is no one in and out of Iran to subtitle for their countrymen?</i>	1	Asking the fansubbers living inside or outside of Iran to translate a particular film
<i>Admin, why do you write in the download title that it has a subtitle when it doesn't</i>	1	Asking the Admin that no to give misinformation about subtitles availability
<i>IRIB's translators must learn from you</i>	57	Comparing the fansubbers with the IRIB translators
<i>We get old but the subtitle has not uploaded yet</i>	1	Emphasizing that they are waiting for a long time to have the subtitles
<i>This is a very good TV series but why there is no subtitle after the two seasons?</i>	1	Asking the fansubbers to translate particular popular TV series which has not been subtitled after the two seasons
<i>No one can subtitle the second season?</i>	1	Asking the fansubbers to continue doing the subtitles for the second season as well
<i>I really thank Reza for his quick and high-quality subtitles</i>	1	Acknowledging their favourite fansubbers' quality and speed by calling their names
<i>You are translating better than IRIB</i>	97	Comparing the fansubs with the pro subs.
<i>Some people think the translators owe us quick translations</i>	1	Supporting the fansubbers that it is not their duty to create the subtitles quickly

<i>Thank God that they even translate</i>	1	Asking the viewers be thankful that they are available and can translate
<i>Do you know how much it is time consuming to do subtitling free?</i>	1	Supporting the fansubbers that creating the subtitles is a time-consuming work
<i>Do you know how hard it is to translate in Covid situation?</i>	1	Supporting the fansubbers that even they create subtitles in the pandemic and bad situations
<i>Thanks to the translators we are saved from IRIB</i>	141	Acknowledging the fansubbers' translations which the consumers do not need to watch the IRIB produced contents

The achieved small codes and labels from Table 34 were compared and contrasted several times and new abstract codes were established as presented in Table 35. On the basis of the comparison and contrasting of the abstract categories, three core categories were identified: acknowledging the activity of fansubbing and the users' expectancy norms of translation and the issues of quality and speed.

**Table 35** *New abstract categories driven from the initial codes*

Initial codes	New abstract categories
Viewers; free	Fansubbing free for the audience
Thank; fansubbers' name; IRIB; Admin	Acknowledging fansubbers
Quality; quick; no subtitle, good film and TV series; request	The issues of quality and speed

## 6.4 Demonstrating the Core Categories

One of the three major topics discussed in the website's comments section in relation to fansub translations is captured by the core category of acknowledging the activity of fansubbing by the users. The reasons for acknowledging the activity, captured by the abstract codes, are its

free access, quick and high quality of subtitles in comparison with the official ones, and absence of the users' favourite AV programs on the official channels.

*Thank you very much, you are the real heroes; since you are translating free and without expectations. (M.K)*<sup>43</sup>

*If the website hadn't had you translators, we wouldn't have been able to watch this film (Sani)*<sup>44</sup>

*Thanks to the translators we are saved from IRIB (Sanaz)*<sup>45</sup>

*Thanks for your translation; I don't think IRIB would broadcast this film (Man)*<sup>46</sup>

Some of the comments include even their favourite fansubbers' names or groups. Additionally, other users, thanking the same fansubbers, replied to the comments:

*I really thank Reza for his quick and high-quality subtitles (Mohammad)*

*I also thank him (Mona)*

*His works are masterpieces (شاهین)*

*Dear Reza, if you can see this comment, I am thanking you (Ali)*

*I am following his translations for a few years; quicker than others and the best quality (Mehrddad)*<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>بابا دمتون گرم خدایی، خیلی مردین؛ اینجوری مفت و رایگان و بدون هیچ چشم داشتی دارین ترجمه میکنین (S.K)

<sup>44</sup>آگه وبسایت شما مترجم رو نداشت، غیر ممکن بود بتونیم این فیلم رو تماشا کنیم. دمتون گرم (Sani)

<sup>45</sup>شکر که این مترجم هستن و از صدا و سیما خلاص شدیم (Sanaz)

<sup>46</sup>دمتون گرم ترجمه کردین، من که فکر نکنم صدا و سیما این فیلم رو پخش کنه (من)

<sup>47</sup>از آقا رضا بابت ترجمه های خوب و سریعشون تشکر میکنم (Mohammad)

منم تشکر میکنم (Mona)

واقعا کارشون عالییه (شاهین)

آقا رضا آگه این پست رو مبینی دست مریزاد بهت میگم (Ali)

چند ساله دارم کارشون رو دنبال میکنم؛ از همه سریعتر و با کیفیت تر (Mehrddad)

An interaction was also occurred among the users for supporting their fansubbers:

*I really thank Ali and Giti for subtitling this film (Sahel)*

*Download the LOD group's subtitles, much better (محسن)<sup>48</sup>*

*Where are the translators? Why no one translating this film? (Sasha)*

*Some people think the translators owe us quick translations. Thank God that they even translate. Do you know how much it is time consuming to do subtitling free? Do you know how hard it is to translate in Covid situation? Be thankful please (KC)<sup>49</sup>*

The other major issue in the comments is captured by the core category of Users' expectation of translations means The data obtained from the comments and encoded through the three-step process shows that the participants referred to their expectations in terms of speed, quality and requesting for translation. Considering the issue of speed, the users asked the fansubbers to subtitle very quickly.

*This film has been uploaded for a day, why there is no subtitle? (ن.ث)<sup>50</sup>*

*I swear to God, I want to watch this film. Why don't you translate it quickly? (M.W)<sup>51</sup>*

Some of the users also compared the Iranian fansubbers to the ones with different nationalities in terms of speed of subtitling.

*Even the Vietnamese are better than us in translation. In the same day of uploading the films, they put the subtitles after 12 hours (Moin)*

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<sup>48</sup> واقعا از علی و گیتی برای زیرنویس فیلم تشکر میکنم (Sahel)  
برین زیرنویسهای گروه LOD داتلود کنین، خیلی بهترین (محسن)

<sup>49</sup> این مترجم کجان؟ چرا کسی این فیلمو ترجمه نمیکنه؟ (Sasha)  
بعضیا از مترجمین طلبکارن که زودتر بزارن. همین که میذارن خداروشکر کنید. هیچ فکر کردید چقدر تاہم میبیره زیرنویس؟! اونم مجانی محض رضای کرونا فقط... والا خوبه که منصف و قدردان باشیم همیشه (KC)

<sup>50</sup> این فیلم به روزه اومده، چرا زیرنویسی براش نیست؟ (ن.ث)

<sup>51</sup> بابا بخدا، میخوام این فیلم رو نگاه کنم. چرا سریع ترجمه نمیکنن آخه؟ (M.W)



*Dude, the Arabs' subtitles were uploaded quicker (Sahand)<sup>52</sup>*

Some of the users suggest solutions to solve the problem. They think that they should learn the language so that they do not need the subtitles.

*My English is very bad; but if there is no subtitle, I will watch it without it or I learn English. I am waiting for a long time. If there is no subtitle for this film, tell it in advance (مانا)<sup>53</sup>*

The other users recommended the website's administrator to upload the films when the fansubs are available. However, the administrator did not agree since they want to have an updated website.

*It's better to upload the films when you make sure that the translators have uploaded the subtitles (JQ)*

*No, other users would complain why I upload the films lately (Admin)<sup>54</sup>*

It was also found that some of the users did not know that the website was only uploading films not the subtitles. In a few cases, a few of them think that the administrators were the translators.

*Admin, why it takes so long for uploading the subtitle? (H.A)*

*Bro, why you speak without thinking? There should be a subtitle that admin could upload;*

*do you expect admin does it himself? (Beni)*

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<sup>52</sup> حتی وی‌تایپها بهتر از ما ترجمه میکنند. در همون روز آپلود فیلم زیرنویس رو میذارن (Moin)  
دادا، عربا سریعتر ترجم میکنند (سهند)

<sup>53</sup> انگلیسی من خیلی ضعیفه؛ ولی آگه زیرنویس نتونم پیدا کنم میرم انگلیسی یاد میگیرم. خیلی وقته وایسادم. آگه زیرنویسی نداره زودتر بگین  
(مانا)

<sup>54</sup> بهتره که فیلم رو وقتی آپلود کنین که مترجم زیرنویسها رو آپلود کرده باشن (JQ)  
نه، چون ممکنه بقیه کاربرا شکای بشن چرا دیر به دیر فیلم میذاریم (Admin)

*Yea he is right, admin is just for films (Admin)<sup>55</sup>*

*Admin, please pay attention to subtitles (Mia)*

*Your film website is very good but you upload the subtitles very late (نت ضعیفه)*

*This is a film website not a subtitler one (Admin)<sup>56</sup>*

They also asked the fansubbers to subtitle the new and famous films quicker.

*New and good films have always very quick subtitles; but why this one hasn't any? (Reza)<sup>57</sup>*

*There are two and three new and good films which don't have any subtitle. Why?(Saeed)<sup>58</sup>*

Interestingly, ideas and comments, concerned about the issue of quality, were positive. The users praised the fansubbers for the producing the fansubs with high quality. Such comments can be seen in the following quotations from the users:

*Absolutely the quality of translations is perfect (Ronaldo)<sup>59</sup>*

*You are even translating better than IRIB (شینا)<sup>60</sup>*

*IRIB's translators must learn from you (Mama)<sup>61</sup>*

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<sup>55</sup>ادمین چرا اینهمه طول میکشه تا فیلم دائلود بشه؟ (H.A)  
داداش چرا یه حرفی میزنی بدون اینکه فکر کنی؟ باید زیرنویس باشه تا ادمین بتونه آپلود کنه. نکنه انتظار داری ادمین خودش آپلود کنه؟  
(Beni)

بله ایشون درست میگن ادمین فقط برای فیلمه (Admin)

<sup>56</sup>ادمین میشه به زیرنویسا بیشتر توجه کنی (Mia)  
سایتتون خیلی خوبه ها ولی زیرنویس رو خیلی دیر میدارین (نت ضعیفه)  
این سایت فیلمه نه زیرنویس (Admin)

<sup>57</sup>فیلمای خوب و جدید معمولاً همیشه زیرنویس سریع دارن؛ ولی این چرا نداره؟ (Reza)

<sup>58</sup>دو سه تا فیلم جدید و خوب هستند که زیرنویس ندارند. چرا؟ (Saeed)

<sup>59</sup>ناموسن کیفیت ترجمتون عالییه (Ronaldo)

<sup>60</sup>شماها حتی بهتر از صدا و سیما ترجمه میکنین (شینا)

<sup>61</sup>مترجمای صدا و سیما باید بیان از شما یاد بگیرن (Mama)

The users also expected that the fansubbers respond to their requests for subtitling their favourite films.

*This is an underrated film. Can anyone translate this? (Thrall)<sup>62</sup>*

*This is a very good TV series but why there is no subtitle after the two seasons? (ایران)<sup>63</sup>*

*No one can subtitle the second season?(Xantia)<sup>64</sup>*

*My nephew is asking me always for this film's translation. Can you please translate it?  
(سارا)<sup>65</sup>*

## 6.5 Analysis of Elicited Data

In this part, some elicited netnographic data were acquired. According to Kozinets (2010), such data can be obtained through communal interactions and interviews. This type of netnographic data can help the researcher obtain an in-depth understanding of the community and its culture. To do so, four questions in the form of comments were asked on the 42 AV programs' webpages. The data were analysed as follows:

### *Why film2movie.ws?*

In the first question, I asked why such a website was created and if it would have any positive effect on the current state of fansubbing in Iran. Very few responses (only eight ones) were received from the viewers. Based on all responses, the viewers believed that the website was created in order to facilitate the downloading of films, and later to provide fansubs for the uploaded films. Based on the high number of visiting times, as can be seen in Table 40, the website has a large number of users who regularly use the website to download and watch films. The website has become a popular destination for the consumers who are looking for new and popular films with Persian fansubs. Nevertheless, the administrator mentioned that the website was established

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<sup>62</sup>این فیلم محروم مونده. کسی میتونه ترجمه کنه؟ (Thrall)

<sup>63</sup>این سریال خیلی خوبیه چرا بعد فصل دوم زیرنویس وجود نداره؟ (ایران)

<sup>64</sup> کسی نیست بتونه فصل دوم رو ترجمه کنه؟ (Xantia)

<sup>65</sup>بردار زادم منو کچل کرد واسه نبود ترجمه این فیلم. میشه ترجمش کنین؟ (سارا)

since there were some other film websites on the internet like *Tinymovies* and *Filmd2* and they were terminated. Additionally, as responded by the users the previous visitors of those websites also found *film2movie.ws* a suitable place for downloading the films and sharing their ideas on translation as well. Most of the users, responding to this question, believed that this website may influence the current state of fansubbing in Iran, since the fansubbers would see what the viewers state or request. Taking viewer feedback into consideration and responding to it is essential for enabling the positive influence viewers can have on fansubbing practices. As we learnt from the interview data, the fansubbers demonstrate this receptivity by acknowledging the value of user comments and committing to producing high-quality translations that resonate with their target audience. Therefore, this collaborative approach fosters a sense of shared ownership and ensures that fansubbing remains a vibrant and dynamic community-driven endeavour.

### ***Why Fansubs?***

The second question asked the audiences' reasons for using the fansubs. 28 responses received for this question indicated that the nature of subtitling and the absence of the AV program in the official translation channels were the main reasons. 15 users mentioned that they preferred to hear the original actor's voice rather than the dubbed version. One user stated that they even had not known about the availability of the fansubbing activity in Iran for so many years and thought that the only mode for this channel of translation is dubbing. Interestingly, based on all of the comments most of the users were not familiar with the words *fansubbing*, *fansub*, and *non-professional subtitling* in Persian since they used *subtitling* "زیرنویس" and *translation* "ترجمه" referring to both types of activities.

### ***The Current Quality of Fansubbing***

A very critical question was raised. They were asked to rate the quality of the current fansubbing in Iran and provide reasons for that. Twelve responses were received from consumers who believed that fansubbing has reached an unprecedented level of quality, marking the onset of a "Golden Age" for this translation practice. According to the comments, several factors contribute to the perception, including the proliferation of fansubbers and fansubbing groups, the competitive nature of the industry, the promotion of collaboration among fansubbing entities, the perceived

shortcomings of official translation services, and the professionalization of the fansubbing industry.

In Chapter 5, it was found that there is a consensus among fansubbers that producing high-quality fansubs takes more time, and they value quality over speed. They are willing to take extra time to ensure accuracy. Additionally, some fansubbers believe that fansubs should be produced faster in order to reach a wider audience. It is interesting to note that both consumers and fansubbers seem to agree that fansubbing is a highly competitive activity, with consumers attributing the high quality of fansubbing to a high level of competition, and fansubbers acknowledging that a higher level of competition would increase audience reach.

### ***The Current Quality of Dubbing and Subtitling in IRIB and VOD Platform Providers***

To assess the quality of official AVT and fansubbing, I asked the consumers to make a comparison. According to the 45 responses received, all of the respondents agree that they use fansubs because they cannot watch the AV content on the official channels at all. In order to watch their preferred AV content, consumers are willing to tolerate some degree of loss of quality. According to 34 of the comments received, the quality of official AVT, primarily dubbing, is poor. The results in Chapter 5 indicate that the fansubbers have criticized the low quality of the dubbing because of the low salaries of the official translators and the lack of respect and recognition they receive. Furthermore, they maintain that the official AV translators lack a thorough knowledge of both English and Persian languages as well as knowledge of cinema, film, and foreign cultures.

The quality of Iranian VOD platforms is different from that of Iranian national TV channels, as discussed in eight comments. Based on consumer feedback, VOD platform providers such as Filmio exhibit less censorship than Iranian national television. According to them, these platforms devote more time and resources to dubbing and subtitling, which results in higher-quality translations. Conversely, Iranian national TV channels place a higher priority on speed than quality, resulting in less meticulous and potentially inaccurate translations.

## **6.6 Discussion of the Netnography Results**

In order to gain insight into the expectations and feedback of Persian fansub viewers, the third research question was posed. The purpose of this question was to determine how Persian

fansubs viewers addressed fansubbers and to measure their satisfaction with the current content of Persian fansubs.

According to the netnography results, one of the most widely discussed topics was the recognition of users' fansubbing activities. The practice of fansubbing was considered an acceptable form of free online content sharing that enabled users to access content that would otherwise be unavailable. It was also found in Kung's (2016) study that fansubbing was seen as a way for Chinese users to experience content that was not officially available in their language. In addition, Persian viewers of fansubs appreciated the fact that the fansubbers were providing the service for free. It was appreciated that fansubbers worked hard and dedicatedly to translate and subtitle the shows they enjoyed. Consequently, fansubbing has become a popular activity in the Persian community (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020; Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2021).

A contrary consensus was observed among the viewers regarding the quality and speed of the Iranian fansubbers' creation. While some viewers appreciated the high quality of the fansubs and their speed, other viewers expected more and compared the Iranian fansubbers to other fansubbers from other countries who provided the fansubs with higher quality and quicker speed. Interestingly, some other viewers reacted to such comparison by stating this is not a fair comparison as they may work with different resources and under different circumstances. It has been suggested by Wongseree et al. (2019) that viewers have different standards of quality and speed, which could explain why some viewers find their fansubs to be of higher quality and provided more quickly. In my project, the fansubbers' opinions regarding speed and quality were also found to be similar, as some viewers may prefer fansubs that were translated more accurately, while others may prefer fansubs that were created quicker.

The results also revealed that some audiences expressed gratitude in their comments by naming their favourite fansubbers or groups. When viewers have high expectations and appreciation, fansubbers will generally strive to improve the quality of subtitles, which in turn will benefit their viewers in the long run; however, that high expectations can place a lot of pressure on fansubbers to deliver high-quality subtitles, which can be stressful and overwhelming. As found in the survey results, it may lead to disappointment on the part of both fansubbers and viewers if the fansubbers are unable to meet the high expectations of their viewers.

Additionally, some users were unaware that the website only uploaded films and not subtitles. A few of them believe that the administrators were the translators in some instances. As a result of the confusion, the website received several complaints from users who were unsatisfied with the lack of subtitles. The administrators had to issue an apology and make it clear that they do not provide subtitles. For some popular films, they also provided a link to a website where users could find subtitles for the films they wanted to watch.

Using a contextualized version of the FAR model proposed by Pedersen (2017), this chapter discussed the findings of the quality assessment of Iranian pro- and fansubs. Interview results with a few experienced Iranian fansubbers were also used to discuss the quality and speed of fansub creation. Using the survey results as a basis, the contrary opinions reflected in the interview results were discussed on a broader scale. In addition, the netnography results were used to examine whether fansubbers and viewers have a complete understanding of one another's expectations and needs in terms of issue of quality.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

Since many free or low-cost subtitling tools and software are available, non-professional subtitling has improved recently and may even now often provide a good alternative to professional subtitling services. However, the evidence for the claim that subtitles produced by professionals have a better quality is inconclusive. This study explored the reception of non-professional translation among fansubbers and audiences of fansubbed programs in Iran. Furthermore, the Persian contextualized version of the FAR model was used to assess the quality of pro- and fansubs in the Iranian context. Since professional subtitlers often maintain a quality control process to ensure accuracy, consistency, and readability, the quality assessment results showed that professional subtitlers performed better than fansubbers in terms of functional equivalence, acceptability, and readability. The results of the interview and survey revealed that the low quality of the current official subtitling and dubbing in Iran can be attributed to a lack of

respect and recognition for subtitlers. Additionally, they felt that the translators selected for the official translations were not solely based on their qualifications. In addition, there was a strong emphasis on providing free fansubs to users, and the reasons for translating for free included religious reasons, good intentions, and charges for official translation services. According to the results, some fansubbers believed that working in a team was beneficial, while others preferred to work alone. It was important for those who preferred to work alone to maintain their independence and freedom when translating. Although most fansubbers feel some connection to the fansubbing community, there is no clear consensus regarding the strength of this connection, or whether they prefer it over other types of communities. The study also revealed that fansubbers gain satisfaction from seeing their work reach a wide audience and being appreciated. Based on the results of the netnography survey, fansubbing was considered an acceptable method of free online content sharing, and Persian viewers appreciated that fansubbers took the time and effort to translate and subtitle the shows they enjoyed. There was a mixed opinion among viewers regarding the quality and speed of the Iranian fansubs' creation. While some viewers appreciated the high quality of the fansubs and the speed at which they were created, others expected more and compared the Iranian fansubbers to others from other countries. As a result of the study, some audiences expressed their gratitude by naming their favourite fansubbers or groups. In addition, some users believed that the website provided subtitles, when in fact it only uploaded films. In sum, this mixed-methods study provided the first empirical evidence on the (non) professional subtitling in the Iranian context, their opinions and motivations behind doing subtitles, as well as Iranian viewers' feedback on this type of activity which have both theoretical and applied implications.

## **7.1 Theoretical Implications**

It is important to note that this study proved that triangulated studies are useful in Translation Studies (TS) as the findings can be cross-validated, laying the foundation for future studies regarding the (non) professional subtitling reception in Iran. It is highly recommended that TS and audiovisual translation (AVT) scholars use netnographic methods in other domains of research, including Interpreting Studies. A study of fandubbing, user-generated translations on the web, and the sociology of translation can benefit greatly from the application of this methodology. The use of online research methodologies or conducting research online can create a new realm of



research that could contribute to impressive achievements in the field of TS and AVT. Furthermore, the results provided a comprehensive map of how people perceived non-professional subtitling in Iran, which is useful for future research and study in AVT, TS, and Fandom Studies.

To my best knowledge, this project is the first study in the Asian context which used the FAR model (Pedersen, 2017) to compare the quality of the pro- and fansubs. Furthermore, it added the Persian contextualized version to the model, which includes graphic codes, taboo language, and footnotes that were not included in the original model. Researchers from other countries can use the results and contextualize the model according to their subtitling norms and conventions.

## **7.2 Implications for Practice**

In addition to the theoretical implications of the thesis that could be useful for the research purposes, the findings also have application implications for film translators, subtitling directors, subtitlers, and other agents involved in the process of subtitling since the thesis extensively discussed the issue of quality, expectations and needs of viewers and fansubbers. Additionally, the first two research questions shed light on the shortage and weakness of official subtitling in Iran. To go into further detail, those who make decisions in the subtitling industry should consider the opinions and comments of the fansubbers in order to enhance the quality of official subtitling and eliminate favoritism and nepotism in the hiring process. The same can also be said for fansubbing.; fansubs can be improved by understanding the motivations and opinions of fansubbers, as well as collecting the opinions of viewers about fansubs. A better understanding of the needs and preferences of viewers can facilitate the development of better fansubbing practices.

## **7.3 Pedagogical Implications**

As a result of the findings discussed in the earlier sections, the current project can be considered to have pedagogical implications for language instructors, translation trainers, translation students, and syllabus designers since Diriker (2011, p. 9) argues that "trained students should be provided with a critical awareness of the demands and expectations of real-life situations".

Fansubs can provide valuable insights into cultural differences and context, which may assist language learners in better understanding the target language and culture (Benson & Chen, 2010; Bolanos-Garcia-Escribano, 2017; Lakarnchua, 2017). Fansubbers' translation choices can be compared to prosubs to identify areas where the cultural context may be lost or misunderstood and help language learners avoid similar errors. Translation students can identify common errors made by fansubbers by comparing the quality of fansubs and prosubs and provide suggestions on ways to improve their translation skills by comparing the quality of fansubs and prosubs. Developing better translation strategies can assist translation students in becoming more effective translators.

#### **7.4 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research**

Given the limitations of the present project, additional research could be carried out in areas that are not covered in this study but are potentially interesting and new research avenues. The pro- and fansubs compared in this study were created in Persian from the English source language; other studies may be conducted with other language pairs and apply their own contextualized versions of the FAR model. The study also included a relatively small sample of films in English; future research is highly recommended to use a larger sample of films other than English, subtitled or fansubbed in Persian. As a result, it can be seen whether the quality of subtitles differs from when it was translated from English to Persian. The study also included eight films of various genres as part of its corpus. In future studies, it would be beneficial to compare the quality of pro- and fansubs from two different genres, such as eight films in the action genre and eight in the animation genre. This comparison could provide further insight into the strengths and weaknesses of professional and fansubbers in different genres in which the results are interesting in the sense that they can be used to determine which genres the professional and fansubbers performed better in.

The study is primarily concerned with the study of Iranian fansubbers; therefore, the project did not include a sample of Iranian professional subtitlers as well AVT policymakers. The results of this study can be used to design some of the interview questions or survey items used in future research. It would be interesting to see how the professional subtitlers respond to the arguments raised by the fansubbers and what their feedback would be regarding the viewers' comments.

This study did not consider the division among fans, avid viewers, otherwise known as superfans, and daily viewers. Despite the fact that these categories are not mutually exclusive, and that individuals can move between them depending on their level of interest and dedication to a particular series or franchise, further research can be conducted to compare their opinions and comments in terms of fansubbing.

Netnography findings may not be generalizable to a broader audience in some cases. Moreover, some online activities or discussions may be restricted, private, or difficult to access, especially in my case, where the website's administrators review the comments in accordance with the website's policy. For the purpose of addressing these limitations, it is recommended that future research combine netnography with other methods, such as interviews and surveys, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

Among the primary limitations of the present study was that it did not address deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. In order to better understand the needs and exceptions of this large group of subtitling receivers, new methodologies should be formulated. In order to understand the motivations of fansubbers behind creating the fansubs, the study's survey was subjected to a variety of validations; thus, it may be used for future studies by Iranian and international researchers, provided that cultural consideration is taken into account when the survey is applied in very different contexts. The netnography study focused exclusively on one website, so the results cannot be generalized to other websites. Researchers are encouraged to consider other websites, such as Facebook or Twitter. The research presented contradictory results regarding the quality of fansubbing in general; although the participants in the netnography study were satisfied with the quality of fansubbing and appreciated the fansubbers, the empirical quality assessment found that the fansubbers did not significantly outperform the professionals. Perhaps the generalizability of these findings can be confirmed through large-scale survey research that focuses on the perceptions and beliefs of new professional viewers of fansubbing or adding films in different genres to the corpus. The results could also be partially confirmed through a series of case studies, although this is not highly recommended.

As a result of this scholarly inquiry into fansubbing and reception, it is hoped that interest will be piqued in the notion of reception, which has been absent from much of the discussion in TS and AVT to date. Additionally, this thesis aims to attract the attention of subtitling practitioners

like translators, subtitling policymakers, and subtitlers in order to develop viewer-centered subtitling and better meet the needs of audiences.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: The Interview Questions (English Version)

In order to find out about fansubbers' reasons for participating in the activity, I carried out nine individual interviews with Iranian fansubbers both on WhatsApp and Telegram platforms. The questions are provided in below

### **Why do you translate?**

1. What are the reasons behind doing your subtitles?
2. Why do you keep translating?
3. Why do you translate for free?

### **When translating, what is most important for you?**

1. Why does the factor of quality important for you?
2. Why does the factor of speed important for you?
3. How can you keep both quality and speed in subtitling?
4. Do you prefer to work in a team or alone?
5. Why do you think working as a team help you?
6. Why do you want to work alone?
7. Do the viewers' comments and feedback affect your subtitling?

### **What is your opinion of being a professional translator (in future)?**

1. Do you want to work officially in this field?
2. Why do you want to work in this field?
3. Why don't you want to work in this field?
3. How is the difference between subtitling officially and fansubbing?

## **Appendix B: The Announcement Consent Form (English Version)**

In order to share my questionnaire's link with fansubbers, I was asked to write the following announcement consent form and send it to the Channels' administrators so that they could upload it to their Channels and the subscribers fill the questionnaire.

Dear friends and colleagues working on fansubbing film,

My name is Milad Mehdizadkhani, PhD candidate in English Applied Linguistics, University of Szeged, Hungary. My dissertation's title is "Non-Professional Subtitling in Iran: A Study on Quality, Motivation, and Audience Perception". My second research question aims to explore the group of Iranian fansubbers' motivation behind doing the subtitles. Please find attached the questionnaire in the link below and fill it. It will take around 10-15 minutes. The survey links do not request your personal information so that you will be completely anonymous throughout both filling the questionnaire and research.



## **Appendix C: The Survey (English Version)**

### **Reasons for Doing Subtitles**

1. When I make subtitles I feel that I am doing something useful
2. I translate because I want to work in this field
3. I translate to enable others access to contents that are inaccessible to them due to the lack of language knowledge
4. I translate to enable others access to contents that are inaccessible to them due to the delay or lack of translation versions in official channels
5. I translate to enable others access to contents that are inaccessible to them due to official norms and regulations
6. I translate because I believe in the free sharing of content via Internet.
7. I translate so that others have access to the content they would otherwise have to pay.
8. My fansubs are frequently copied by official translation
9. I translate because I believe the quality of official translation is poor

### **The Act of Fansubbing**

1. I am more satisfied with a successful translation of films which were linguistically challenging but the process of translation lasted longer, than the successful translation of films I translated quickly and easily.
2. I frequently compare my translation achievements with other members of the community where I publish my translations.
3. I feel the need to make every translation as quickly and well as possible.
4. The speed of translation must not affect its quality.
5. Failure of a translation often discourages me from further translating.
6. I feel discouraged when no one is downloading my translation
7. I give up on a started translation if I realize that the film does not interest me.
8. I rather translate new than older films.

### **Reasons for Building a Networking**

1. Using others' help about translation
2. Gratitude of the users of my translations encourages me to continue translating
3. Receiving up to date information about the activity of fansubbing from a portal
4. Using others' help about personal life issues such as consultation and economic
5. Preferring my fansubbing community to other translation communities
6. Feeling strong affiliation with the community
7. Preferring my fansubbing community to any other type of community
8. My fansubs are frequently copied by other fansubbers
9. Participating in direct (live) social activities of a translator community fulfils my need for affiliation.
10. Translating for the approval of my colleagues after a successful translation

## Appendix D: The Comments in Persian

### Segments and initial codes driven from the comments (In Persian)

Segment	Initial codes
تو رو خدا سریع زیرنویسها رو آماده کنین	سریع در آماده کردن زیرنویسها
دوماهه هیچ خبری از زیرنویسه نشده	ماهها صبر کردن برای زیرنویس
ادمین لطفا زیرنویسها رو آپلود کن	درخواست از ادمین برای آپلود کردن زیرنویسها
ما به مترجمان گفتیم که زیرنویس رو آماده کنن	درخواست از مترجمان برای زیرنویس
ولی این روزا امتحاناشونه	بینندگان میفهمند که مترجمان مشغول هستن
بابا چه وضعشه صدا و سیما ز شما زودتر ترجمه میکنه	صدا و سیما زودتر از فنسایرها ترجمه رو آماده میکنند
بابا بخاطر اینترنت نمیتونیم فیلم رو سریع دانلود کنیم، بعدشم میبینیم که زیرنویس نداره	سرعت پایین اینترنت ایران برای دانلود
ادمین لطفا به قسمت زیرنویسها توجه کن	درخواست از ادمین رای توجه به بخش زیرنویس
وبسایت فیلمتون خیلی خبه ولی زیرنویسها رو خیلی دیر آپلود میکنن	مقایسه بخش فیلم به زیرنویس و بسایت
فیلمای خوب ترجمه سریع میشن	فیلمای محبوب سریع توجه مترجمان رو میگیره
ولی چرا این ترجمه نداره؟	درخواست از مترجمان برای ترجمه فیلم
انگلیسیم ضعیفه	درخواست از مترجمان برای زیرنویس فیلم بخاطر ضعیف بودن توانایی زبان
اگر زیرنویس نیستش بگین برم انگلیسی یاد بگیرم یا همینجوری فیلم رو ببینم	تماشای فیلم بدون زیرنویس و بالا بردن یادگیری زبان انگلیسی
بابا خیلی صبر کردم ترجمه بشه این فیلم. آگه همیشه زودتر بگین	درخواست از مترجمان برای اطلاع دادن از قبل اینکه ترجمه انجام میشه یا نه
از علی آقا و گیتی خانم تشکر میکنم بابت ترجمه فیلما	تشکر از مترجمان با عنوان کردن اسمشون
واقعا شاهکاره دمتون گرم	خطاب کردن زیرنویس بعنوان شاهکار

تشویف کردن بینندگان دیگر به تماشای زیرنویس گروه مورد علاقه خود	دانلود کن خیلی بهترن LOD از
قدردانی از شاهکار مترجمان	واقعا خدا بهتون خیر بده
تماشای زیرنویس فیلمها	بابا دمتون گرم من دوست دختر چیزی ندارم و فیلماتون رو میشینم نگاه میکنم
تشکر و قدردانی از مترجمان	کیفیت واقعا عالیه دمتون گرم
درخواست از ادمین برای آپلود فیلمها	ادمین چرا زیرنویسها آپلود نشدن
کمک به درک این موضوع که مترجمان زیرنویس رو انجام میدن و نه ادمین	دادا چرا از رو شکم حرف میزنی؛ ادمین فیلم آپلود میکنه و زیرنویس رو مترجمان انجام میدن
تشکر از مترجمان زیرنویس	ادمین فقط میتونه فیلم آپلود کنه
درخواست از بینندگان برای تماس با مترجمان	لطفا خودت با مترجم تماس بگیر
درخواست از مترجمان برای زیرنویس فیلم مخصوص	لطفا این سریال رو هم دانلود کنین؛ ممنون
مقایسه سرعت ترجمه فیلم	بابا چه وضعشه ویتنامیها از شما زودتر ترجمه میکنن
مقایسه ویتنامیها با ایرانیها در ترجمه فیلم	وقتی فیلم میاد بیرون، 12 ساعت بعدش زیرنویس امادس
مقایسه مترجمان عرب با ایرانی و ویتنامیها در ترجمه زیرنویس	دادا عربا از اونا هم سریعترن
درخواست از مترجمی برای زیرنویس فیلم	کسی واقعا پیدا نمیشه این رو زیرنویس کنه؟
درخواست از ادمین برای ندادن اطلاعات غلط در مورد موجود بودن زیرنویسها	ادمین چرا از لکی میگی فیلم زیرنویس داره ولی دانلود میشه زیرنویس نداره
مقایسه مترجمان رسمی و پیشرفته با فانسابرها	صدا و سیما انصافا باید از شما یاد بگیره
تاکید بر صبر کردن برای دانلود زیرنویس	پیر شدیم و ترجمه نیومد
درخواست از مترجمان برای زیرنویس فیلمه و سریالهای محبوب	این سریال خوبیه چرا کسی ترجمش نکرده
درخواست از مترجمان برای ادامه ترجمهکردن فیلم و سریال	کسی فصل دوم رو ترجمه نمیکنه؟
تشکر و قدردانی از مترجما با ذکر اسمشون	واقعا از آقا رضا بابت ترجمه سریع و با کیفیتشون ممنونم
حمایت از مترجمان مبنی بر اینکه سریع ترجمه میکنن	برخی آدما فکر میکنن که مترجما بهمون بدهکارن بابت ترجمه سریع
درخواست از بینندگان برای شکرگذار بودن	خدا رو شکر که هنوز ترجمه میکنن

حمایت از مترجمان بعنوان اینکه ترجمه امری زمانبر است

میدونی چقدر زمانبره ترجمه

حمایت از مترجمان مبنی بر اینکه ترجمه در زمان کوید  
19 سخت است

میدونی چقدر سخته ترجمه کردن در زمان کوید 19

تشکر از مترجمان که نیازی به تماشای صدا و سیما نیست

واقعا این مترجمان ما رو از صدا و سیما نجات دادن