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Processes and collaboration in French subtitling: A translator-centred analysis of two production contexts

Thesis presented by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the roles, tasks, and interactions of subtitlers in two distinct French subtitling contexts: fansubbing and industry subtitling. Audiovisual translation (AVT) has traditionally been analysed from a product-oriented perspective (Beuchert, 2017), while this thesis takes a sociological approach. Adopting a Translator Studies paradigm (Chesterman, 2009), this research project explores processes and collaboration in English-French subtitling production, placing emphasis on the concepts of community and production networks. The primary research question explores how the translators' processes, practices, and collaboration patterns compare between fansubbing and industry subtitling.

This research is based on two different datasets from two case studies. The first provides a comprehensive examination of fansubbing, non-professional collaborative translation performed by fans in online communities, utilising covert netnography – a form of online ethnography – in a French fansubbing community. The second case study focuses on industry subtitling, involving seven subtitlers in the French AVT industry working for cinema and Video on Demand (VOD) platforms. Employing a human-centred approach, this study includes introductory and retrospective semi-structured interviews as well as non-participant observations of each subtitler's workday.

The investigation uncovers the translators' workflows and interactions within their production networks by examining collaboration with fellow translators and other agents – an aspect rarely explored in AVT research. This approach enables a comparative examination of subtitling processes. It identifies three primary workflows within the fansubbing community, and outlines the individual subtitling habits and processes of industry subtitlers, differentiating between two distinct production and distribution workflows in the French industry. The study also delves into the intricacies of collaboration in subtitling practices, shedding light on cooperation, communication methods, challenges, and the evolution of both environments over time.

The findings of the first case study allow for the categorisation of four collaboration areas within the fansubbing community. In the second case study, three collaboration

areas emerge within industry subtitling processes. The analysis extends to the translators' community collaboration in each distinct context, both within the fansubbing community and within ATAA (*Association des Traducteurs/Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel*), the French association for audiovisual translators. While the benefits of community collaboration are evident in the case of fansubbing, in the industry, the increased vulnerability of subtitlers' working conditions coupled with the lack of recognition for their pivotal role in the cultural industry, emphasises the essential need for a deeper understanding of the current social dynamics governing the subtitling profession. This understanding is crucial to address challenges to effective collaboration, which in turn can impact working conditions and, ultimately, subtitle quality (Abdallah, 2011).

This leads to an innovative comparative thematic analysis of these aspects between both environments, providing a contemporary perspective on subtitling practices in two different production contexts. The study contributes to awareness of an overlooked profession and encourages learning from different types of translators, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of subtitling in varied settings.

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism and intellectual property.

Sevita Caseres

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATAA: *Association des Traducteurs/Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel* (Association of Audiovisual Translators/Adapters)

ANT: Actor-Network Theory

AVT: Audiovisual translation

AVTE: AudioVisual Translators Europe

CC: Closed Captions

DVDRip: file ripped from DVD

IRC: Internet Relay Chat

KNP: Key Names and Phrases

LSP: Language Service Provider

OTT: Over-the-Top (platform)

P2P: Peer-to-Peer

QC: Quality control

RQ: Research question

SACEM: *Société des auteurs, compositeurs et éditeurs de musique* (Society of Authors, Composers and Publishers of Music)

SCAM: *Société Civile des Auteurs Multimédia* (French-speaking society for non-fiction authors)

SNAC: *Syndicat National des Auteurs et des Compositeurs* (National Union of Authors and Composers)

SDH: Subtitling for the d/Deaf and the hard of hearing

SVOD: Subscription Video On Demand

TVOD: Transactional Video On Demand

TVRip: file ripped from TV

UGT: User-Generated Translation

Urssaf: *Union de recouvrement des cotisations de Sécurité sociale et d'allocations familiales* (Social Security and Family Benefit Contribution Collection Offices)

VOD: Video On Demand

VOSTFR: *Version originale sous-titrée en français* (French subtitled version)

VF: *Version française* (French dubbed version)

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalised audiovisual translation (AVT) landscape, the dynamics of translation have evolved significantly, leading to shifts in subtitlers' practices. It is therefore essential to gain a deeper comprehension of the current and evolving social aspects in subtitling production, including the subtitlers' roles, tasks, and interactions. Traditionally, AVT has predominantly been examined in terms of product (Beuchert, 2017, p. 2), rather than through sociological approaches (Perego, 2022, p. 265) looking at profiles, processes, and practices. This is particularly evident in the domain of subtitling, where the valuable experiences and perspectives of translators have often been overlooked, despite their importance as cultural mediators.

To address these gaps, this research project conducts empirical research on subtitling practices, processes, and collaboration patterns in two distinct French subtitling production contexts; fansubbing and industry subtitling. It approaches subtitling from a human-centred perspective, employing a Translator Studies paradigm (Chesterman, 2009) to compare these environments, their challenges, and their practices. The two important concepts arising from these contexts are the notion of "community" and the concept of "production networks", which echo findings from prior studies, asserting that "[r]esearch has shown that translation is essentially a collaborative endeavour" and that "most translations are produced in networks of agents who usually do not work in the same place" (Risku et al., 2020, p. 46). Understanding the subtitlers' social context reveals collaborative strategies, roles, knowledge exchange and interactions between agents, which ultimately contribute to the long-term sustainability of their community. While collaboration in subtitling has been studied in amateur contexts, there is limited research on this aspect among industry professionals. This study aims to underline "the collective nature of the translation process" (Buzelin, 2011, p. 10) and examine the extent to which subtitlers in both environments are integral parts of closely-knit communities within broader constellations of production networks, which significantly shape their practices. While past comparisons between fansubbing and professional subtitling have focused on the final product, this research offers a novel comparative exploration of their underlying processes and collaboration dynamics. Exploring the translation environments through real-time fieldwork observations

offers an innovative perspective for understanding the role and interactions of the translator in each context.

Case Study 1 delves into the world of French fansubbing, a form of non-professional collaborative translation performed by fans in online communities. The term "fansubbing" was created through a contraction of "fan" and "subtitling" (Barra, 2009, p. 516). As pointed out by Díaz Cintas (2005, p. 16), these amateur translators often prefer the term "subbing" to emphasise the distinctive nature of their activity. Consequently, in the context of this study, the terminology employed to describe these volunteer translators is "fansubbers" and their resulting translations are termed "fansubs". My journey into the study of fansubbing began in 2017 during the writing of my MA dissertation, a time when it was widespread and a primary mode of foreign content consumption, including for myself. However, its popularity has decreased due to the emergence of official channels for accessing translated audiovisual content. This practice has undergone various shifts, and evolved alongside technology and the Web, making it essential to investigate this subject to gain insights into contemporary fansubbing practices, given the possibility of the eventual disappearance of these communities in the not-so-distant future. To analyse this phenomenon, I employed covert netnography (Kozinets, 2015), an innovative approach to online ethnography, to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date view of a fansubbing community over a span of 20 months. This method allowed me to shed light on their habits, collaboration and communication methods, and how the community has evolved.

Case Study 2 focuses on industry subtitling through the work of seven English to French subtitlers affiliated to ATAA (*Association des Traducteurs/Adaptateurs de l'Audiovisuel*), the French association for audiovisual translators. Each practitioner participated in an introductory interview, followed by a non-participant observation of their workday, and a retrospective interview. These multiple data sources enabled the triangulation of information regarding the subtitlers' practices, processes, and collaboration patterns.

Given that each methodology presented distinct ethical challenges, it is important to note that ethical approval was sought and granted for both case studies. Furthermore, data collection was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus generating its

own set of challenges regarding precise logistical planning and adherence to ethical and health guidelines during interactions with subtitlers for Case Study 2. In turn, this has given me an insight into the industry's response to these challenges, leading me to conclude that new research is needed to analyse the long-term effects of the pandemic on the AVT industry.

In order to address the primary research question – *How do the translators' processes, practices, and collaboration patterns compare between both subtitling environments?* – the analysis is structured around three secondary research questions:

1. How is the translators' work organised within each production context?
2. How is subtitling production organised in different distribution media?
3. How does collaboration and communication with stakeholders in the subtitling process occur within each network?

This in-depth exploration of "translating agents" (Buzelin, 2011), while focused on a small-scale study, not only makes substantial methodological and theoretical contributions to the field but also enables a thorough comparative analysis of both communities. By delving into the work of subtitlers, this research project offers a contemporary perspective on their practices and illuminates the challenges, evolutions, and mutual influences shaping their work environments. This study provides a clear understanding of the context in which French subtitles are created, which is essential as it helps us identify factors that could enhance the quality of translations for viewers, while improving working conditions and remuneration for subtitlers. Moreover, it positively influences professional services and the development of human capacity, allowing subtitlers to acquire insights into the workings of different distribution environments and to share knowledge amongst themselves. This ultimately fosters mutual learning and contributes to the training of both current and future practitioners, enabling them to learn about diverse practices and the realities of the profession. It thus helps bridge the gap between AVT practitioners, researchers, and trainers, raising awareness of a somewhat overlooked profession, while encouraging positive changes in working conditions. These improvements, in turn, could considerably impact the quality of the final product, ultimately influencing the global transmission of cultural products and thus foster heightened cultural awareness.

Following this introduction, **Chapter 1** provides an overview of prior relevant studies in subtitling, fansubbing, and AVT collaboration. **Chapter 2** outlines the research methodologies employed in both case studies and addresses ethical considerations. Following a thematic structure in line with the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the subsequent chapters delve into the subtitling practices and processes based on themes that emanated from the data. **Chapter 3** explores the fansubbing community while **Chapter 4** shifts focus to the professional subtitling industry, facilitating a comparative analysis between both subtitling production environments in **Chapter 5. Chapter 6** sheds light on the collaboration patterns within each community and production network. This chapter thus allows for a classification and comparison of collaboration in both environments, a discussion of their challenges, and an exploration of their evolution. This sets the stage for a detailed comparative analysis of collaboration and communication practices, which is further elaborated upon in **Chapter 7**. Finally, in a **Reflections and Conclusions** section, the key findings of the thesis will be synthetised and critically examined to provide a basis for future research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of AVT has undergone four turns as outlined by Chaume (2018): the descriptive, cultural, sociological, and cognitive turns. The present study positions itself within the sociological paradigm. It explores the intricate dynamics of subtitling processes, focusing on the key agents involved, the roles of translators, their working conditions, and their habits. This study contributes significantly to an area that has been relatively underexplored by adopting the Translator Studies paradigm (Chesterman, 2009). Within this paradigm, my main focus is on the sociological branch, because "agent is a sociological concept" (Buzelin, 2011, p. 6). My study delves specifically into "the sociology of the translating process", in order to examine what Chesterman (2009, p. 17) refers to as "translation practices and working procedures, quality control procedures and the revision process, co-operation in team translation, multiple drafting, relations with other agents including the client". Additionally, I extend my examination to "the sociology of translators" by exploring their attitudes toward their work, as well as motivations for voluntary translators, such as fansubbers, including the related ethical considerations (Chesterman, 2009, p. 17).

In order to establish the background in which this study of the translators' processes and collaboration in different subtitling production environments takes place, this section provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge within the AVT field. It explores prior relevant research on subtitling, with a specific focus on the French industry, and delves into the phenomenon of fansubbing and its intricacies, also known as "amateur subtitling" (Bogucki, 2009; Li, 2017; Pérez-González, 2012, 2013a) or "non-professional subtitling" (Beseghi, 2021; Orrego-Carmona, 2016a, 2019). Additionally, this chapter synthetises relevant studies related to collaboration and production networks in audiovisual translation.

1.1 Subtitling

Within the field of translation studies, the sub-field of AVT has attracted increasing scholarly attention since the 1990s (Remael, 2010). AVT, as defined by Gambier (2012, p. 45), primarily revolves around "the transfer of multimodal and multimedia speech (dialogue, monologue, comments, etc.) into another language/culture".

Audiovisual texts combine the acoustic and visual channels (Díaz Cintas, 2020) and the distinctive characteristic of AVT thus lies in its polysemiotic system. As highlighted in studies of multimodality, meaning is constructed through four primary communication channels: verbal-acoustic, verbal-visual, nonverbal-acoustic, nonverbal-visual (Delabastita, 1989; Gambier, 2023; Zabalbeascoa, 2008). AVT encompasses various methods for translating audiovisual content, such as dubbing, voice-over, audiodescription, and subtitling, among others. Notably, subtitling has emerged as one of the key areas of interest, encompassing both intralingual subtitling within the same language, such as subtitling for the d/Deaf and the hard of hearing (SDH), and interlingual subtitling, facilitating communication across different languages.

This thesis falls within the latter category, exploring the sphere of interlingual subtitling between English and French. Scholarly investigations in this field have analysed diverse linguistic and cultural contexts over time. As subtitling is "subject to norms of exposure times, reading speed constraints and subtitle density" (Gambier, 2012, p. 49), historically, the study of subtitling was centred on constraints and guidelines (e.g., Dries, 1995; Ivarsson & Carroll, 1998), or was considered alongside other modes of AVT (e.g., Chaume, 2004; Delabastita, 1989; Díaz Cintas, 2009; Gambier, 2008, 2012). In the last decade, the focus has expanded to explore subtitling norms (e.g., Pedersen, 2016, 2018), technology (e.g., Bolaños García-Escribano et al., 2021; Bywood, 2020), and quality (e.g., Abdallah, 2011; Künzli, 2021; Kuo, 2020; Szarkowska et al., 2021). While subtitling reception studies considering audiences have also gained attention (e.g., Di Giovanni, 2018, 2019; Orrego-Carmona, 2015), research in subtitling has predominantly been product-oriented. The numerous angles for studying subtitled products have highlighted the multi-faceted and evolving nature of subtitling as a form of AVT.

A noteworthy facet of subtitling is that it can be considered as a "vulnerable translation", because viewers can instantly compare the source and target texts which is not possible in other translation methods (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, pp. 76–77). In this context, it becomes evident that subtitling is a unique challenge:

> Not only must subtitles respect space and time constraints, they must also strike a close relationship with the original dialogue, linguistically and quantitatively, so that they can

> somewhat stand up to the scrutiny of an audience that may have some knowledge of the original language. (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 77)

Consequently, there is a prevalent notion that the best subtitles are "those that viewers do not notice" (Díaz Cintas, 2020, p. 152). However, this very invisibility also extends to the subtitling profession, where processes, roles, and practices often remain mysterious. As stated by Tuominen (2021, p. 88), "[a]udiovisual translation is a visible field, because its products are seen by a wide audience, especially in countries where foreign-language programming is prevalent, but its practitioners can be invisible and undervalued" and therefore "giving voice to practitioners is crucial in combating the invisibility that limits our understanding of audiovisual translators' work". Similarly, Silvester (2018, p. 82) advocates for a holistic approach in the study of subtitling, emphasising the need to consider not only the technical aspects but also the subtitlers' working conditions and the overarching cultural context as a means to "counteract the invisibility of the subtitler". Subtitling processes have received limited attention (e.g., Beuchert, 2017; Orrego-Carmona et al., 2018; Tardel, 2023), and even fewer studies have approached subtitling practices and production from a social perspective that adopts a subtitler-oriented focus.

1.1.1 Subtitler-oriented research

The translator-oriented focus encompasses a broad spectrum of issues related to translators such as "the status of (different kinds of) translators in different cultures, rates of pay, working conditions, role models and the translator's habitus, professional organizations, accreditation systems, translators' networks, copyright, and so on" (Chesterman, 2009, p. 17). An overview of these aspects is provided in Díaz Cintas & Remael's (2020) volume on subtitling concepts and practices which includes social insights into the professional ecosystem, notably regarding working conditions, common practices, and industry challenges. This volume also highlights the globalisation of processes and the migration to the cloud. Such sociological insights are essential, because the subtitlers' practices are considered "veiled in mystery", as they often work alone as freelancers, making it difficult to obtain information about their working conditions (Kuo, 2015, p. 163). This perspective has been relatively underexplored in the context of subtitling, despite the fact that "[t]he study of

interlingual subtitles involves examining the process of translation between languages, but must also take into account additional factors, such as the working conditions and workflow" (Silvester, 2022, p. 399).

The limited knowledge regarding how professional subtitlers work represents a significant gap that needs to be addressed. To bridge this gap, Kuo (2015) conducted a worldwide study involving 429 subtitling professionals in 39 countries. This study gathered data on their profiles, backgrounds, and aspects related to working conditions and status, such as remuneration, clients, royalties, credits, and deadlines. The findings revealed concerning trends, including an increased vulnerability among subtitlers, and a high level of disparity in rates between and within countries (Kuo, 2015, p. 171). The scholar also emphasised the importance of quality in subtitling, stressing its direct connection to the challenges that the subtitlers face in their working conditions.

Regarding subtitling quality, Robert & Remael (2016) conducted a global survey involving 99 subtitlers that offered valuable insights into the quality assurance processes employed by subtitlers. While focusing on subtitling quality perception, Szarkowska et al.'s (2021) survey study, which included 237 subtitlers from 27 countries, highlighted the critical role of working conditions and deadlines in determining subtitling quality. Survey participants raised issues regarding recognition of the subtitling profession and little awareness of the complexity it entails, which often leads to misunderstandings with clients. They identified a decline in quality attributable to factors such as "the fall in rates, the rise in subtitle display rates, the widespread use of templates, the lack of quality control procedures and the influx of inexperienced people into the profession" (Szarkowska et al., 2021, p. 666). Furthermore, the results underscored that the quality of subtitles varied depending on the distribution medium. Television and cinema presented differences to DVD subtitling, where lower rates, tighter deadlines, and more frequent template use resulted in decreased quality (Szarkowska et al., 2021, p. 667).

Templates are files that already contain subtitles, usually in English, with their corresponding entry and exit time codes (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 43). Template files can be created for content with English as the source language, but can also "be used as a first or pivot translation in the subtitling of an audiovisual

programme originally shot in a third language" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 43) and can later be translated into numerous other languages. Oziemblewska & Szarkowska's (2022) survey of 344 subtitlers from 47 countries provided valuable insight into their views on templates used in cloud-based subtitling. Their study revealed that, although many companies have embraced this shift, not all subtitlers welcomed the trend, and it recognised that templates can negatively impact rates and professional status.

In 2023, the European AVT practitioners' association AVTE (AudioVisual Translators Europe) released the results of their 2022-2023 survey on working conditions conducted among 1,966 audiovisual translators, including subtitlers, from 35 European countries. While the survey did not focus specifically on subtitling, it brought to light compelling findings, such as the fact that 95% of AVT translators work exclusively as freelancers, bringing along the associated difficulties (AVTE, n.d.-a). Additionally, it highlighted that 61% of these translators earn incomes that are "equal to or below the median wage of their country", a situation misaligned with the cost of living, thereby creating a discrepancy between their earnings and their skill levels (AVTE, n.d.-a). The survey also illuminated that in the current AVT industry, rates did not improve with higher education or experience and were thus also not correlated with translation quality. All these general overviews of subtitling professionals converge to underscore the industry's common challenges. A more in-depth examination of specific contexts further confirms similar trends in working conditions.

In Poland, Jankowska (2012) conducted an online survey involving 48 audiovisual translators, with 38% of them specialising in subtitling. Her extensive analysis of profiles and practices revealed concerning trends, such as that a lack of available information regarding rates and payment calculation for novice translators had resulted in a substantial reduction in rates. The participants also voiced concerns about the absence of standardised practices for rate determination, particularly in relation to factors such as content difficulty, deadlines, or time-consuming content. Consequently, translators in Poland found themselves compelled to work longer and faster, including weekends and holidays, to meet increasingly tighter deadlines. Regarding job satisfaction, there was a contrast between perception and reality, as the

audiovisual professions were generally seen as "prestigious, well paid and interesting" (Jankowska, 2012, p. 53). While novice and junior translators reported satisfaction or high satisfaction, the survey unveiled that, in contrast, experienced translators expressed dissatisfaction, predominantly due to challenging working conditions "including falling rates, tighter deadlines and not enough attention given to the quality of the translations" (Jankowska, 2012, p. 54).

In Croatia, Nikolić's (2010, p. 106) survey study, which analysed subtitlers' backgrounds, challenges and realities in the subtitling industry, reported similar difficulties regarding shrinking deadlines and that professionals "feel that they are underpaid and that the rates do not reflect the difficulty of the job they have to perform". The 19 German-language subtitlers interviewed by Künzli (2023) in relation to perception of changes in the subtitler's workflows over the last decade have also reported to have experienced deterioration patterns in rates and working conditions, in addition to virtualisation and acceleration of processes, resulting in decreased face-to-face and personal contact. In Finland, Tuominen (2021) conducted interviews with 25 subtitlers, which shed light on work processes and current challenges in the Finnish subtitling industry by focusing on the subtitlers' perspectives. Her research findings unveiled that challenging working conditions had an effect on the multimodal aspects of the process, leading to the omission of essential phases, such as previewing the video before translating its content.

When analysing subtitling processes in the Danish context, Beuchert's (2017) mixed-methods project included a large-scale quantitative survey as well as small-scale qualitative observations, screen-recordings, and interviews of five Danish subtitlers. Despite being mainly process-oriented, this study provided insights on profiles, work practices and working conditions, and underscored that some subtitlers received recognition for their skills and took pride in their profession, even if it "has a low status, is underpaid and underestimated" (Beuchert, 2017, p. 143). Capitani (2016) examined multilingual subtitling processes from her practitioner perspective in Italian film festivals, shedding light on the challenges and realities of the professional field. Emphasising the significance of time for subtitling as "an essential variable to consider" – notably in relation to quality (Capitani, 2016, p. 257) – she advocated for adequate training in AVT coupled with practical experience to be able to master the

subtleties and technicalities of subtitling. A list of recommendations to improve the subtitling market has also been suggested by Jordán et al. (2017), who conducted group interviews in Peru, in order to compare subtitling processes between different institutions and contexts.

All these studies used interesting qualitative methods upon which this project builds, and highlight disparities in the profession depending on the context. Highly valuable data can be retrieved in these very diverse linguistic contexts, highlighting different realities of the subtitling market, the subtitling process and organisation of tasks. While this underlines a lack of research on workflows (i.e., the subtitlers' different steps in the translation process) in different subtitling production contexts, it also highlights the need for further research on working conditions and practices in subtitling to analyse the complexity of each individual context, because "subtitlers may engage in different working practices depending on location, client, training, available tools, and many other factors" (Tuominen, 2021, p. 87). In addition, it should be noted that in light of globalisation and outsourcing, freelancers now may work remotely for a different country than the one they live in (Beuchert, 2017). As detailed in the upcoming section, the French subtitling industry remains relatively underexplored in the area of processes and social practices. This is particularly notable in studies focusing on series, a field which, despite its growing momentum, has only recently attracted scholarly attention compared to the more established focus of AVT in relation to cinema (Loison-Charles, 2022, p. 19). This thesis seeks to contribute to the understanding of these overlooked aspects by delving into the specific intricacies of different areas of the French subtitling landscape and providing a unique perspective on this underrepresented domain.

1.1.2 The French subtitling industry

While being one of the largest audiovisual markets, in France, AVT research has not made much impact compared to other large markets such as Spain or Italy (Valdeón, 2022, p. 373). In particular, the French subtitling industry remains rather underexplored in the current literature, as practices in this field have not been the main focus of attention in research on French subtitling. This field has been primarily

analysed alongside dubbing, in a historical perspective, in terms of norms, and translation strategies and challenges (Cornu, 2014), whereas few studies have looked at the processes or the translators from a social perspective. The key contributions concerning subtitler practices and social interactions in the French context are found in the work of Silvester (2022) and Eisenschitz (2013). Silvester conducted interviews with six French-English subtitlers, examining their backgrounds, working practices, and the challenges of translating non-standard French found in independent films into English. This investigation provides crucial insights into workflows, processes, and collaborative aspects of subtitling, notably the fact that these subtitlers reported relatively good working conditions and rates compared to other contexts, despite tight deadlines and a lack of brief (Silvester, 2022, p. 410). Eisenschitz's (2013) personal perspective on his own practice as an English-French subtitler offers valuable glimpses into collaboration with various agents involved in the subtitling process. However, the examination of collaboration within French mainstream subtitling remains underexplored. While ATAA is proactive in making visible the work and working conditions of audiovisual translators in France through their blog (ATAA, n.d.-c) and journal[1] (ATAA, n.d.-f), these aspects have not frequently been given due consideration in academic discourse.

Additional insights into the industry are drawn from literature on AVT in the French context, notably Genty et al.'s (2021) collective book, which encompasses chapters addressing AVT norms, transgressions, new forms of subtitling, fansubbing, and translation challenges. While not exclusively focusing on subtitling as a type of translation, or subtitling processes, the editors of this work highlight substantial disparities in the professional practice of AVT in France across various post-production laboratories and TV channels, and underscore differences with processes outside of France. Another publication that delves into multilingualism in AVT, specifically explores the French translation of anglophone series (Loison-Charles, 2022). While predominantly centred on dubbing, this study occasionally addresses subtitling. Loison-Charles (2022, p. 16) sheds light on the pronounced lack of recognition for translatorial professionals – a concern already evident in literary

[1] For more information, see the ATAA blog (n.d.) available at https://www.ataa.fr/blog and *L'Écran Traduit,* ATAA's (n.d.) AVT-focused journal managed by a dedicated editorial team of volunteers available at https://www.ataa.fr/revue.

translation but even more prevalent in the AVT domain. Her study aims to bring visibility to these translators, despite the important challenge she emphasises: identifying the names of the translators for specific episodes, as they were seldom credited in the platform and TV content she analysed.

Additional pertinent literature comes from Rosnet (2012), whose work concentrates on the aims and challenges of French subtitling, encompassing norms, the intricacies of transferring oral elements into written text, and market contradictions, specifically the imbalance between the demand for high quality and the pressures of reduced rates. The reduction in wages is an overarching concern in subtitling, which was already raised in 2008 by Froeliger & Audinot, two subtitlers who reported on the French subtitling market and education sector in subtitling. This decrease has not seen any improvement in the last decade, at least not according to the ATAA (2019b). Beyond concerns in the industry, Rosnet's (2012) work aims to illuminate how subtitling can either enhance the cinematic experience by "serving" the film or potentially have adverse repercussions on its transmission. She articulates the constraints of subtitling, framing it as an "audiovisual adaptation" that considers the semiotic dimension of translation (Rosnet, 2012, p. 76).

While in the present study, for clarity purposes, the term used to describe the practitioners is *subtitlers*, it should indeed be acknowledged that in the French context, AVT translation is also called *adaptation* and therefore translators also refer to themselves as *adapters*, *translator-adapters*, or *author-adapters*, according to their claims and preferences (Gourgeon, 2014, p. 5).[2] These different denominations for AVT translators are notably due to their legal recognition under the author status. According to French law (Intellectual Property Code), audiovisual translators are considered as authors. They are protected by copyright over their translations, which grants them both moral and economic rights (Gourgeon, 2014, p. 6), and allows them to receive royalties for their subtitles (Genty et al., 2021, p. 8), thus making the French industry a rather unique context (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 58). According to the AVTE Survey 2022-2023, over 28% of French audiovisual translators' income

[2] As the French AVT industry involves many stakeholders and processes, ATAA proposes a glossary of terminology in the field (Gourgeon, 2014), which helps to define the stakeholders and their collaboration, as well as to clarify the terminology used in this study.

comes from royalties and author rights, which is the highest percentage reported, with Romania following at 24%, Slovakia at slightly over 23%, and Poland at 18%, while the rest of the countries were all under 9% (AVTE, n.d.-a). It is important to acknowledge that additional information on copyright systems is essential. This is highlighted by Jankowska (2012) who noted that in the Polish context, for instance, copyright law is not often respected. She found that despite the assertion that "a significant part of the income received by audiovisual translators should be generated by royalties", employers frequently neglect to include royalty provision in contracts, in a context where the prevailing rates amount to only a tenth of the European average (Jankowska, 2012, p. 51). Therefore, delving deeper into these figures within specific contexts would provide valuable insights, including in the French context.

Marignan (2019) sheds light on challenges in the French subtitling industry by describing the negative developments in the profession prompted by the new demands of the French audience. Referring to this phenomenon as "uberisation", she underscores its considerable impact on working conditions, remuneration, and subtitle quality. These changes include the acceleration of the translation and dissemination process, which is attributed to the necessity of legally competing with fansubbing, with French TV channels constantly trying to speed up the broadcast turnaround time through new practices (Marignan, 2019). The author argues that the surge in French audience demands has given rise to the US+24 model, aiming to broadcast series on TV with subtitles within 24 hours of their original US broadcast, thereby shortening deadlines for subtitlers, a development also discussed by Bréan (2014).

However, in the current landscape, there have been further shifts in subtitling practices, notably the emergence of VOD platforms adopting the strategy of releasing all episodes simultaneously. This trend has led to an important increase in subtitling volumes and substantial alterations to traditional workflows (Aleksandrowicz, 2022; Massidda, 2022), which have not yet been studied in depth. Challenges in the industry are also attributed to amateur practices according to scholars such as Loison-Charles (2022, pp. 16–17) who cited the role of fansubbing in the accelerated deadlines for subtitling tasks, or by professionals like Bréan (2014), who argues that qualities defining good professional subtitling are often misunderstood by the broader audience. According to this practitioner, amateur translators inadvertently devalue the

professional activity, fostering the misconception that subtitling is an easy task accessible to anyone. Baldo De Brébisson (2016, p. 280) contends that all forms of special subtitling, including those found in fansubbing, should be regarded by professionals as an evolutionary and alternative form of subtitling, rather than as a threat. While acknowledging the potential impact of fansubbing practices on the industry and the blurred boundaries of the profession, the present study does not delve into these effects in depth. It distinctly separates practices between production environments and highlights evolutions in both areas.

Despite the challenges facing subtitlers, the French industry remains one of the most lucrative, as highlighted by Kuo's (2015) study in which the French subtitlers reported the highest average rates. This may be explained through the support of ATAA and the fact that they "can benefit from union membership and work in a context where the rights of subtitlers are advocated" (Silvester, 2022, p. 403), notably through the union for French authors and composers (SNAC – *Syndicat National des Auteurs et des Compositeurs*). In contrast to disparate practices observed in other contexts, Kuo (2015, p. 189) found that the presence of such strong unions and associations resulted in a homogenisation of working conditions, such as rates, royalties, and credits. Therefore, the involvement of ATAA in the industry is particularly interesting to study because it greatly benefits French AVT professionals and contributes to the sustainability of their industry.

1.2 Collaboration in the AVT industry

While there is a common perception that translators work in isolation at their desks, it is crucial to recognise that they are embedded in social networks (Buzelin, 2011; Risku & Rogl, 2022). Collaboration in translation is not a new phenomenon, it occurs "not just between multiple translators but also between translators, authors, clients, project managers, editors, and myriad other (both human and textual) stakeholders in the translation process" (Alfer, 2017, p. 276). The presence of collaboration is especially evident within the dynamic realm of AVT, as underlined by Remael (2010) :

> Most forms of AVT have always involved some form of collaboration, rendering AV translators and their work dependent on other agents in the production process. New

> technical and socio-economic developments are enhancing that process, sometimes to the detriment of translators' status and working conditions, and a focus on quantity rather than quality. (p. 15)

Despite often operating as freelancers, audiovisual translators are intricately connected to production networks that involve a complex web of interconnected stakeholders, yet our understanding of the various workflow steps, processes, and the agents involved remains limited. The framework of production networks introduced in subtitling by Abdallah (2010, 2011; Abdallah & Koskinen, 2007) has played a pivotal role in examining subtitling processes. Abdallah employed Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1996) in her investigation of agency, quality, and ethics in Finnish subtitling networks, particularly focusing on a translation company that hired students as translators. Abdallah's (2011) conceptualisation of subtitling production networks distinguishes such constellations from traditional in-house or freelance models, where subtitlers work directly for clients. She defines these networks as entities forming "relationships that bind a group of firms of different sizes into a larger economic unit" (Abdallah, 2011, p. 173). Emerging in response to economic globalisation and content outsourcing, these networks often involve intermediary suppliers. However, this intermediary role can limit the translators' agency in determining how translations are executed, as "the subcontracting translators have little say in this and they are typically only linked to the end client via the intermediary supplier" (Abdallah, 2011, p. 173).

Applying ANT, the scholar conducts an analysis of quality within the complex power dynamics of these networks. Her analytical approach encompasses various factors beyond human interactions, including client and translation companies, social and economic elements, technical tools, skills, technology, and more, all of which collectively influence the workflow of subtitlers. She thus emphasises that the social dynamics and working conditions within these production networks must be understood, as they have an important impact on product quality. The examination reveals that actors within these production networks often hold contrasting perceptions of quality, creating a disconnect between translators and the business side (Abdallah, 2011, p. 183). This framework and methodology were subsequently expanded upon by Artegiani (2021a, 2021b) in her qualitative interview research involving six professional subtitlers working on cloud subtitling platforms. Artegiani (2021a)

analyses both human and technological actors, exploring job assignment, quality assessment and communication dynamics on these cloud platforms, and argues that cloud subtitling as it stands is unsustainable, because it isolates the subtitlers and decreases visibility, communication, and collaboration between agents in the network. Although my research is not rooted in ANT, the concept of production networks will provide a relevant and guiding framework for my exploration of interactions and processes in two distinct subtitling environments.

Several studies highlight the importance of collaboration in various facets of the AVT field, such as Romero-Fresco's (2019) investigation, which underlines the crucial role of collaboration in the production of accessible films. His research emphasises the need for translators and filmmakers to work together during the production process, to consider the challenges of translation and accessibility issues and their effect on the final product. The collaborative nature of translation processes is also highlighted in the work of Korhonen and Hirvonen (2021), which analysed collaboration and communication between sighted and blind Finnish audio describers as part of the co-creation process. Collaboration has additionally been observed in Zanotti's (2020) study on Stanley Kubrick's interventionist approach into the Italian dubbing and subtitling process of *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), which showcased a high degree of production involvement in the AVT process. Zanotti (2020) analysed collaboration through the framework of "translaboration", which investigates forms of collaboration and aims to bring the practices of translation and collaboration "into a fruitful dialogue with one another" (Zwischenberger & Alfer, 2023, p. 7). Pavesi and Perego (2006) discovered that, in addition to uneven distribution of work and isolation, Italian dubbing professionals faced a lack of direct communication with colleagues. In his investigation of labour division in English-Polish subtitling and voice-over, Aleksandrowicz (2022) notes that the evolving distribution and consumption trends on platforms have led to shortened deadlines, impacting the translators' division of labour. While Jankowska's (2012) study revealed that 75% out of the 48 audiovisual translators surveyed typically produce subtitles based on their own voice-over, Aleksandrowicz's (2022) research observed frequent changes in translators. Nonetheless, the findings show that their collaboration has a positive effect on consistency across translation modes and seasons, thus suggesting that a "lack of communication between translators is detrimental to their work" and emphasising that

"communication between translators should be enabled and encouraged" (Aleksandrowicz, 2022, p. 29-31).

In subtitling, research on collaboration among agents has primarily been studied in amateur subtitling environments – which are inherently collaborative (e.g., Massidda, 2015; Orrego-Carmona & Lee, 2017) – but has received less attention in professional settings (Zanotti, 2020, p. 218). Since previous studies have acknowledged that subtitlers "hardly ever work alone" (Di Giovanni, 2016, p. 6), it is necessary to understand which forms of collaboration and communication occur and what influence they might have on subtitling processes. The significance of collaboration within workflows has been emphasised by Menezes's (2022) study which found that the roles and tasks of subtitling revisers remain unclear, notably in their collaboration with other agents, including subtitlers, despite their important contribution to the workflow and quality. The study proposes that gaining a deeper understanding of the revisers' work could strengthen work ethics and their role in the process. In his study of quality control of subtitling, through a questionnaire distributed amongst various agents involved in subtitling production networks, Nikolić (2021) investigates different processes established by LSPs (Language Service Providers, i.e., companies that specialise in providing translation services in multiple languages) and broadcasters to ensure quality in subtitling. The author's findings extend beyond the subtitlers and their profiles, encompassing the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the subtitling projects. He highlights interesting aspects of interactions between agents, such as that "[s]ubtitlers often don't have direct lines of communication with broadcasters and streaming services that broadcast their subtitles, but with vendors to which broadcasters often outsource their requests for localisation services" (Nikolić, 2021, p. 77). The results reveal a spectrum of views on the subtitling process, notably identifying that deadlines are often too short to ensure quality control, and not all clients allocate the same time and importance to this step.

All these studies highlighting collaboration across various AVT modes, through different stages of the workflow, and within diverse linguistic contexts, and pave the way for exploring collaboration dynamics in French subtitling.

1.2.1 Collaboration in French subtitling

Collaboration within the French context has predominantly been observed in the realm of subtitling independent cinema. When sharing his experiences in the French subtitling industry, Eisenschitz (2013) noted that in addition to collaboration with colleagues and agents, subtitling *auteur* films could involve more (sometimes "forced") collaboration with filmmakers. Similarly, in her study of English subtitlers of French *auteur* cinema, Silvester (2022) identified a high degree of collaboration between subtitlers but also with producers and directors, facilitated by the higher status of these subtitlers and the different power dynamics at play in their work. In the subtitling of independent films, subtitlers were found to lead the collaboration with directors, who, for their part, were available to answer questions and attend in-person simulations. In contrast, the simulation process for quality control in mainstream subtitling involves subtitlers presenting their work only to clients and simulation operators (Gourgeon, 2014).

In her examination of French translations of TV series, Loison-Charles (2022) highlights the impact of multiple stakeholders on the translation workflow, challenging the notion that the end product solely reflects the work of the officially commissioned translator. She emphasises that the pursuit of continuity throughout a series involves collaboration initially among multiple screenwriters and a showrunner, and subsequently also in the translation phase. Notably, she identifies subtitlers as potential collaborators with dubbing teams to ensure consistency (Loison-Charles, 2022, p. 14). Furthermore, in subtitling production, she mentions that translators can work as a team, emphasising the collective nature of the translation process.

Recognising and understanding these collaborative processes sheds light on the collective nature of the translation process, thereby influencing how translation is perceived and valued within the broader landscape of audiovisual content creation. However, there remains a notable gap in addressing these collaborative practices in AVT processes.

1.2.2 Community collaboration in AVT

Beyond translation processes, a form of community collaboration can be identified across the broader AVT field. Professional associations for audiovisual translators exist in different contexts, such as AVTE created in 2011, of which ATAA was a founding member alongside Danish, Polish, Norwegian, Finnish, Slovak, and British national associations and organisations. AVTE is "a federation of national organizations" (Valdeón, 2022, p. 373), which represents audiovisual translators across various media and coordinates efforts to promote the profession, facilitate networking, and improve their working conditions, while also engaging with EU authorities to raise awareness about the significance of good practices in AVT. In 2022, AVTE (n.d.-b) stated that it "brings together 23 organisations of 20 European countries". In 2023, the association has strengthened community collaboration by joining forces with the European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL). The agreement aims to promote quality and professionalism in creative translation, ensure copyright protection and facilitate information exchange (CEATL, 2023). The emphasis of this collaboration is on the importance of uniting their networks to combat translator isolation and enhance their cultural visibility, ultimately improving their socio-economic status (CEATL, 2023).

Further successful collaboration can be found in the European Association for Studies in Screen Translation (ESIST), "[a] body encompassing higher education teachers, practitioners, academics, and students in the field of AVT", which "has been instrumental in raising awareness and creating visibility on the topic as well as in stimulating synergies among the many stakeholders" (Bolaños-García-Escribano et al., 2021, p. 2). In 2018, this association notably funded the *Journal of Audiovisual Translation*, the first journal dedicated to AVT (Bolaños-García-Escribano et al., 2021, p. 1), thus further contributing to creating a community specific to AVT. This journal has in turn highlighted the importance of community collaboration in a special issue aiming to further develop collaboration between practitioners and academics (Tuominen & Silvester, 2021), as well as in a recent survey of AVT stakeholders (Nikolić & Bywood, 2021), which identified the need for greater cooperation and standardisation in the industry. Similarly, the subtitlers surveyed by Szarkowska et al. (2021, p. 669) highlight the necessity for closer collaboration and transparent

communication among key stakeholders, including "professional associations, academia, practitioners, clients, audiovisual translation vendors and the general public, so that awareness on subtitling and audiovisual translation can be raised in society". Notwithstanding these recommendations advocating for comprehensive collaboration among all agents involved, the reality within the profession differs significantly (Szarkowska et al., 2021, p. 673), despite the evident benefits these collaborative approaches have demonstrated for the industry.

Community collaboration has proven successful specifically in the practical field of subtitling, as seen in the online collaboration among subtitlers in the Finnish industry that resulted in harmonising their working conditions (Tuominen, 2018), and in the creation of SubComm, a community proposed by Silvester and Tuominen (2021) to bring together subtitling practitioners and academics to increase subtitlers' visibility and recognition. Widening the scope of collaboration could improve the working conditions of subtitlers (Kuo, 2015; Szarkowska et al., 2021), and as such, it is clear that cooperation between subtitlers, academics, and other industry stakeholders could also improve recognition, visibility, and ultimately the sustainability of the profession.

1.3 Fansubbing

In the sub-field of subtitling, fansubbing has gained increased scholarly attention over the past decade. Fansubs, a sub-category of cybersubtitles as defined by Baños & Díaz Cintas (2023), originated in the 1980s, when Japanese animation faced censorship in the US because it was deemed inappropriate. To bypass this, fans shared fansubs on VHS tapes at anime fan conventions (Bréan, 2014). In the early 2000s, this practice expanded beyond the field of Japanese animation, propelled by the Web 2.0's development, which enabled the downloading of films and series and marked a "web revolution" that gave rise to this new type of amateur translation (Bogucki, 2009, p. 49). The internet's almost infinite storage capacity, allowing everyone to access a wide range of content, has been instrumental in the success of this phenomenon (Massidda, 2015, p. 4). It transformed the way fans engage with video games, films, television series, and other media, allowing unprecedented involvement (Desjardins, 2017, p. 30).

The rise of the participatory culture on the internet has empowered users to actively contribute to the production process (Orrego-Carmona, 2014). Chaume (2018 p. 47) notes that in this participatory context, formerly passive consumers have thus become "co-creators in audiovisual production processes […] in the complex interplay of collective creativity", evolving into "prosumers" (Tapscott & Williams, 2008), who shift power away from producers (Chaume, 2018 p. 47). Fansubbers operating in this context decide what to subtitle independently of broadcast or distribution, making the sociological paradigm particularly apt for studying such volunteer endeavours (Chaume, 2018). Participatory culture has given rise to non-professional translation, encompassing various categories, such as crowdsourcing – a term formed by the words "crowd" and "outsourcing" that refers to a collaborative work model (Fernández Costales, 2013, p. 94) – and User-Generated Translation (UGT) (Orrego-Carmona, 2014). Crowdsourcing involves companies seeking user translations following specific instructions, exemplified by Facebook's initiative to have users volunteer to translate its website into multiple languages (Fernández Costales, 2013). UGT, which includes fansubbing, is produced voluntarily by independent communities (Orrego-Carmona, 2014). Scholars have increasingly explored collaborative translation and crowdsourcing (e.g., Fernández Costales, 2012, 2013; Jiménez-Crespo, 2017a; O'Hagan, 2009, 2011) and analysed the functioning of online communities and collaborative labour (e.g., Agostini & Mechant, 2019; Chapelain, 2017; Chapelain et al., 2002). Various studies delve into the participatory culture of the Web 2.0 (Pérez-González, 2013b) and the blurring of the lines between consumption and production by consumers (O'Hagan, 2009; Rogl, 2016), which are essential aspects for understanding the logic and collaborative dynamics of online work and amateur translation.

1.3.1 Collaboration in fansubbing

Baños & Díaz Cintas (2023, p. 3), defined fansubbing as having evolved from a context of "by fans for fans" into a broader "by fans for all" concept. Despite originating in the Japanese anime community, fansubbing has expanded across genres and languages, internationalising and increasing access to unlicensed movies, TV

series, manga and anime (Baheti & Sharma, 2018). Noteworthy for its voluntary nature, fansubbing involves distinct processes, workflows, and adherence to standards and criteria distinct from industry subtitling, as it aims to "satisfy a specialized audience that shares the fandom experience and is very different from the much broader TV audience" (Beseghi, 2013, p. 402). Fansubbers adhere to community-specific guidelines, addressing technical and translation aspects crafted to align with the very specific expectations of a niche audience (Beseghi, 2013). Beseghi (2013, p. 402) notes that fansubbers tend to "keep the original cultural references unchanged" and "try to respect the cultural and stylistic flavour of the original", including slang, idioms, and swear words – contrary to norms in some areas of the industry.

Fansubbers can consciously deviate from professional subtitling standards, such as the maximum two-line constraint, often incorporating overlay subtitles to convey on-screen textual elements on top of subtitles (Dagiral & Tessier, 2008, p. 6; Pérez-González, 2013b, p. 8) or leaving portions untranslated (Bréan, 2014, p. 28). The additional information is prevalent in anime, offering viewers a deeper understanding of the source material and an opportunity to learn more about the culture that shaped the product (Lakarnchua, 2017, p. 34). In terms of quality, Pedersen (2019, p. 73) assesses Swedish fansubs, noting that while "quality varies from almost professional to useless […] on average it is a great deal below the quality of prosubs" (i.e., professional subtitles).

This collaborative form of translation aims to make content available to diverse language communities (Bogucki, 2009, p. 49), without any financial benefit, driven instead by a "high motivation" (Barra, 2009, p. 518) rooted in the members' passion as fans, their goals of learning English, or the joy of sharing their work with like-minded fans (Lakarnchua, 2017; Massidda, 2015). Fansubbing emerged as a response to fan demand, addressing delays in official translation (Massidda, 2015) and dissatisfaction with TV channels' slow broadcast of their favourite series (Bréan, 2014, p. 24). It filled gaps in professional subtitling (Massidda, 2015, p. 17), particularly in American TV series and films in non-English-speaking countries (Bréan, 2014, p. 23), including the francophone market. Interestingly, the trend reversed, with the first fansubbers translating from Japanese into English and not having English as source language (Fernández Costales, 2012, p. 9). The primary motivation was speedy

turnaround, offering the audience a provisional solution to watch their favourite shows until official translations were available (Marignan, 2019). The second reason was the desire to find an alternative to dubbing, which is perceived by some as outdated, unfaithful to the source (Massidda, 2015), and as an oversimplification of the source content's semantic and cultural complexity (Barra, 2009; Beseghi, 2016). Fansubbing, as a form of "social disobedience", was a reaction to professional translation falling short of audience expectations (Massidda, 2015). This collaborative goal can be seen as "a revolutionary way of returning the target text to its original core" (Bucaria, 2018, p. 933) by aligning fansubs more closely with the source text and satisfying the fans in unique ways.

Several scholars examining fansubbing communities in various linguistic contexts have noted the existence of internal hierarchies based on factors like seniority, merit, or time spent on subtitling (Barra, 2009, p. 518). In these communities, a managerial or moderating figure, often referred to as a "manager" or "moderator", plays a role in organising forums (Orrego-Carmona, 2016b, pp. 219–221) or assigning tasks among members (Barra, 2009, p. 518). In such contexts, each member has a specific task and role within the community structure (Lakarnchua, 2017, p. 36). Some communities may require a translation test for membership (Barra, 2009, p. 518; Fan, 2020, p. 342; Massidda, 2015, p. 43) and internal training may be facilitated by "moderators" (Orrego-Carmona, 2016b, p. 221). Orrego-Carmona (2015, p. 219) identified three distinct workflows in the Argentinian community he studied: the administration workflow, the translation workflow, and the forum maintenance workflow.

The fansubbing process has been studied in the past in various contexts (Bogucki, 2009; Dagiral & Tessier, 2008; Massidda, 2015; Orrego-Carmona, 2016b). Li's (2017) netnographic study in the Chinese context provides a valuable methodological reference for this study. Focusing on online textual communication within a fansubbing community and adopting a distinct overt approach in which she openly disclosed the nature of her study to participants, Li's (2018, p. 389) investigation explored the unique dynamics within a Chinese fansubbing community shaped significantly by state censorship. However, as this issue is not directly relevant to the francophone cultural context and has been extensively studied by Chinese researchers

(e.g., Chang, 2017; He, 2017; Hu, 2014; Li, 2017; Rong, 2017; Wu, 2017), it will not be further addressed in this work.

Another pertinent study is Massida's (2015) research, offering insights into the specificities of fansubbing through covert immersion in Italian fansubbing communities. However, her focus on humour, censorship, and target textual material differs from the emphasis on human translators, processes and practices, which is the focus of the present comparative study. Prior studies of fansubbing have indeed often examined fansubbing in terms of product rather than process, notably regarding quality (Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006; Jiménez-Crespo, 2017b; Orrego-Carmona, 2019), perception (Caffrey, 2008, 2010) and reception (Di Giovanni, 2018; Orrego-Carmona, 2014, 2016a). The impact of fansubbing on professional subtitling and the difference between them have also been analysed (Bogucki, 2009; Marignan, 2019; Pérez-González, 2013b; Pérez-González & Susam-Saraeva, 2012). Fansubbing has been extensively studied in diverse linguistic contexts, including Japanese, (e.g., Denison, 2010, 2011; Lee, 2011b; Mattar, 2008), Italian (e.g., Barra, 2009; Massidda, 2015), Spanish (e.g., Orrego-Carmona, 2014, 2015, 2016a; Pérez-González, 2013b), Portuguese (e.g., Bold, 2011; Spolidorio, 2017), Swedish (e.g., Pedersen, 2019), and Thai (e.g., Wongseree, 2016, 2020), but rarely in francophone environments, where research on practices and communication within fansubbing communities remains relatively scarce and, at times, outdated considering the constantly evolving nature of fansubbing. This gap in the literature opens the way for a focused investigation into the unique dynamics of fansubbing within the French context.

1.3.2 French fansubbing communities

According to Bréan (2014, p. 23), it was only in 2004 that fansubbing gained prominence in France, driven by dissatisfaction with TV channels broadcasting series exclusively in VF (French dubbed version) rather than VOSTFR (original version with French subtitles), often disrupting the logical order of episodes or seasons and inundating viewers with excessive advertising (Dagiral & Tessier, 2008). While French translation studies have shown limited interest in fansubbing (Bréan, 2014), focusing primarily on anime (e.g., Genty, 2021), scattered mentions in French

subtitling studies allude to its influence on professional norms or the blurring of boundaries between professional and amateur practices (Cornu, 2014; Flichy, 2010, 2017; Rosnet, 2012). Research on professional and amateur French subtitling has also identified the proliferation of fansubbing teams and other amateurs as impacting on the work of professionals in France through file sharing, with recognition that these practices target a specific market audience (Genty et al., 2021, p. 8).

While Dagiral & Tessier's 2008 analysis provided early insights into French subtitling workflows, offering a step-by-step process from series selection to final distribution, knowledge on contemporary practices remains scarce. Dagiral & Tessier (2008) describe the traditional process with fansubbers working collaboratively as teams in a community; they choose a series that will give them visibility, find a high-quality file of the original episode that they rip from TV (TVRip) or from DVD (DVDrip); share it through IRC (Internet Relay Chat) or P2P (Peer-to-Peer) networks, translate it remotely through online collaborative tools (taking from six hours to a few days for a 45-minute episode); and synchronise the subtitles with the episode, which are subsequently proofread by an "editor" (Dagiral & Tessier, 2008). The editor also ensures coherence in appearance (size, font, etc.) and adds team and author credits, with the final step being encoding and distributing the fansubs. These always include the episode and team names in opening or closing credits. The authors note that some French fansubs are available less than 24 hours after the official US broadcast, primarily for highly anticipated series. However, it remains to be seen whether practices have evolved given the shifts in the industry since 2008.

Existing scholarship on French fansubbing is limited, consisting mainly of critical perspectives from professionals like Bréan (2014), and an exploration of its impact on professional subtitling by Marignan (2019). These studies, however, lack direct engagement with fansubbers' perspectives and field research, emphasising the need for more comprehensive understanding through direct field study in the French context. Studying fansubbing as a medium of subtitling distribution can raise controversial opinions, but insight into this subtitling production network is needed in today's globalised world, where it has played an important role in the transmission of cultural artefacts across linguistic and cultural boundaries to new audiences, and has notably had impacts on professional practices (Bréan, 2014; Marignan, 2019).

1.3.3 The legality of fansubbing

The legality of fansubbing remains a contentious issue, sometimes described as existing within a "grey zone" (Bogdanov, 2016) or "liminal grey spaces" (Denison, 2011), due to its heterogeneous nature. This complexity arises from the varied practices, with some considered legitimate and others not, and the blurred boundaries between public and private spheres (Denison, 2011). Scholars differ in their opinions on the legality of fansubbing, particularly its compliance with international copyright conventions.

Some researchers argue that translations made by amateurs constitute illegal adaptations of an artistic work that infringe upon the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, as viewers access fansubs without purchasing the copyrighted content (Baheti & Sharma, 2018; Fernández Costales, 2012). Additionally, the Uruguay Round Agreement and the Universal Copyright Convention are cited as frameworks that fansubbing might violate (Baheti & Sharma, 2018; Rembert-Lang, 2010). Indeed, fansubbing is rooted in illegal downloading (Bréan, 2014), production and distribution of unauthorised translations of copyrighted audiovisual materials without financial compensation (Massidda, 2015), and redistribution through the same channels (Bréan, 2014). Rembert-Lang (2010, pp. 32–33) argues that, in the American context, while fansubbing is deemed illegal, "copyright law needs to offer protection to fansubbing". Indeed, some scholars highlight that the benefits of fansubbing largely outweigh the damages, notably in social and cultural exchange, and it should therefore be protected (Baheti & Sharma, 2018; Rembert-Lang, 2010). Since fansubs are produced online, members can come from totally different geographical zones (Denison, 2011) and therefore be subject to a variety of different laws.

Divergent opinions exist. Pedersen (2019, p. 55), for example, acted as an expert witness in a fansubbing trial in Sweden, following which he wrote that while sharing fansubs is illegal because the copyrighted content is protected by the Bern Convention, "[t]he illegality of fansubs themselves has not yet been tried in any court", thus the activity of fansubbing in itself has not been considered illegal. Bogdanov's (2016) analysis of fansub legality in Bulgaria concludes that downloading and ripping content

is illegal, but translating content may exist in a legal "grey zone". Some argue that "there are valid arguments for allowing fansub translations under the doctrine of fair use" (Rembert-Lang, 2010, p. 31). This doctrine permits the distribution of copyrighted material in the US if it is used for educational purposes without profit (Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006). The varied legal interpretations surrounding fansubbing are further complicated by its online nature, with differing political and linguistic contexts considerably influencing perspectives. Lee (2011a) observed a notable divergence in fans' views on copyright infringement across countries, highlighting the importance of closely examining each context individually.

Despite being deemed illegal in many contexts, the practice of fansubbing is generally tolerated and even accepted. The ethics of fansubbing have been the subject of extensive study and debate (e.g., Ito, 2012, 2017; Lee, 2011a; Massidda, 2015; Wongseree, 2016). This practice is frequently regarded as being ethically oriented and governed by altruistic and communitarian motives. Scholars advocate for the moral and ethical merits of this practice (Massidda, 2015; Wongseree, 2016), leading to a tendency to overlook its illegality. The value of studying fansubbing outweighs the disadvantages, as emphasised by its ability to bring together a community and a specific audience that either prefers it to official subtitles or lacks access to the latter.

In the French context, Marignan (2019, p. 3) and Bréan (2014, p. 24) assert that fansubbing does not comply with Article L. 122-4 of the French Intellectual Property Code, making it forbidden to disseminate unauthorised translations of copyrighted content. According to Bréan (2014, p. 25), fansubbing in France is considered a counterfeiting offense.

To address copyright concerns, some fansubbing communities have found an alternative: soft subs as opposed to hard subs. Soft subs are downloadable in .srt files without the video material and can be added to certain online video players, whereas hard subs are embedded in the content (Baheti & Sharma, 2018; Massidda, 2015). This distinction between the two different types of fansubs can impact their legality. In certain contexts, soft subs may not infringe upon any laws as they do not involve the dissemination of copyrighted content.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined our current understanding of the French subtitling industry and fansubbing practices, uncovering gaps in existing literature. The identification of these shortcomings signals the need to address the oversight of sociological aspects in current research. The nuanced insights into contemporary research on the subtitlers' processes and practices in various different linguistic contexts not only set the stage for subsequent analysis but also underscore the urgency of addressing the lack of attention to human-centered aspects in current research. The intentional shift towards translator- and process-oriented studies aims to depart from the conventional product-oriented approach, fostering a comprehensive exploration of practices and collaborative dynamics across different types of subtitling production contexts. The recurring themes of community and collaboration will thread through the entirety of this thesis, emphasising that while obvious in fansubbing, these themes are also present in industry subtitling. Despite subtitlers often working as freelancers and intervening at the end of the chain, they do not produce subtitles in a vacuum (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998, p. 3), an aspect that has received limited consideration in AVT research. By spotlighting the pivotal role of collaboration in subtitling creation, this study reveals that there currently are limitations in our understanding and advocates for increased collaboration across various areas of the AVT industry to improve working conditions and ensure sustainability.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this comparative research project, two case studies were carried out, in order to analyse each of these categories of subtitling production environments through a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim is to answer the following preliminary Research Questions (RQs) that explore different aspects of the processes within each production environment.

RQ1: How is the translators' work organised within each production context?
RQ2: How is subtitling production organised in different distribution media?
RQ3: How does collaboration and communication with stakeholders in the subtitling process occur within each network?

As fieldwork is perfectly suited to analysis of translating agents within their structures (Buzelin, 2011, p. 10), the subtitling production contexts were examined through a combination of different qualitative research methods focusing on the translators.

Case Study 1: Fansubbing was examined through passive netnographic observation in a French fansubbing community.

Case Study 2: Industry subtitling for cinema and Video on Demand (VOD) platforms was examined through passive observation of seven French professional subtitlers working for cinema and VOD projects, as well as introductory and retrospective interviews with the same participants. A triangulation strategy was used for this study, for which two different methods, which each have their strengths and weaknesses, were employed with each participant in order to complement one another and provide reliable data (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 217).

This chapter is therefore structured around two main sections corresponding to each case study.

2.1 Case Study 1: Fansubbing for an online community

The aim of Case Study 1 is to examine practices and processes in the production network of an online fansubbing community. The answers to the research questions will provide an up-to-date understanding of the ways in which a French fansubbing community works and collaborates nowadays.

2.1.1 Netnography

As fansubbing is produced through collaboration and a shared workflow in online communities, this data was collected through netnography. Netnography is a qualitative research approach to studying online social interactions in specific online ecosystems through non-intrusive immersion (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 14). The term is a combination of "internet" and "ethnography" (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 13) and refers to an ethnographic study in the online field, a methodology that was first proposed in the late 1990s (Kozinets, 1998) and redefined throughout the years (Kozinets, 2015, 2019). Other terms have been used in the last decade to define this type of research, such as "digital ethnography" or "virtual ethnography", but in this project I refer to this methodology as netnography, as it is the least problematic terminology (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 13) that defines a specific process.

The methodology of netnography is similar to an ethnographic approach, as the researchers immerse themselves in the heart of their field (Jouët & Le Caroff, 2016, p. 165) and their primary source of information is observation (Gobo & Marciniak, 2016, p. 113). Beaud & Weber (1997, p. 15) specify that for research to be qualified as "ethnographic", it must be conducted in a field containing an inter-knowledge, which means that the subjects must have something in common with each other and not be chosen based on random criteria. According to the authors, the most appropriate inter-knowledge environments for ethnographic field research are little-known or unknown professional environments or practices that are not illegal but are not official (Beaud & Weber, 1997, p. 10), thus making fansubbing perfect to analyse from an ethnographic perspective.

However, netnography does slightly differ from traditional ethnography, particularly in terms of integration into the community, because the virtual environment can facilitate interactions and the concealment of identity (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 16). In addition, the anonymity offered by the Internet allows a totally different immersion approach than traditional ethnographic research (Kozinets, 2015, p. 73). It has been suggested that netnography is a simplified and revisited ethnographic form of research, because unlike the slow work traditionally done by the researcher to gain acceptance in a social group, online ethnography offers the great advantage of immediate data accessibility (Jouët & Le Caroff, 2013, p. 157) and the possibility to analyse trends in real time as well as over time (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 16). Although the netnographic collection method is based on the same schema as traditional ethnography, it is less intrusive, does not require a physical presence in a certain environment (Addeo et al., 2020, pp. 15–16) and can thus be more easily carried out. In the end, the two approaches are quite similar, especially as the researcher can choose to collect data through various research methods depending on their needs (Li, 2017, pp. 40–41). The netnographic methodology can thus take many forms to analyse online textual interactions (Li, 2017, pp. 40–41). Netnography provides three types of data to be analysed: (1) archival data, which consist of pre-existing communications between members of a virtual community; (2) elicited data, which are data created through personal and common interactions between the researcher and members; and (3) fieldnote data, which are the researcher's observations and participation in community experiments (Kozinets, 2010; Li, 2017). In my case, mostly archival data was collected, alongside fieldnote data. This study deliberately limited the collection of elicited data, focusing solely on a minimal amount, such as the creation of my profile or registration in the fansubbing community. This was done due to my non-interaction with the community, aligning with the study's passive and covert approach.

Netnography is carried out through different phases, which can be defined differently and adapted, but generally follow the same procedure (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 18; Kozinets, 2010, p. 60):

- Planning: defining the research questions and the topic;
- *Entrée*: selecting the research field and gaining access;
- Data collection and analysis of the data;
- Ensuring ethical standards;

- Presentation of the findings in a research report.

In my case, after the planning process, the second step was to ensure ethical standards, as I needed to design a Data Management Plan for data storage and seek ethical approval for the data collection from the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork. Indeed, my *entrée* had to be particularly carefully planned, as I registered anonymously on the website in order to undertake covert research.

Covert research means that field observation is carried out in secret and that the participants are not aware of being studied and have not provided informed consent (Silverman, 2011, p. 91). The covert methodology is most often used in passive online research (Roberts, 2015, p. 320), which minimises intrusiveness. Eysenbach and Till (2001, p. 3103) distinguish three types of research within online communities: passive research (the use of data without researcher intervention within the community), active research (the active participation of the researcher within the community) and a third method in which the researcher identifies themselves as such and obtains online information in the form of semi-structured interviews such as focus groups, online questionnaires or online participant recruitment for "traditional" research. Roberts (2015, p. 315) elaborates on this theory by pointing out that although these categories are still appropriate for categorising most qualitative online research, hybrid approaches are now being adopted in new types of online communities, which increases the complexity of ethical issues. In this study, the non-intrusive observation technique was passive as it analysed existing conversations and material on the website and the forum. I did not participate in the fansubbing community's practices, and I therefore played the role of a non-participant observer of interactions within the community.

To the best of my knowledge, to date, only four publications have employed netnography for research in the AVT field. Among these, two investigated the Iranian context, one examined video games translation (Afzali & Zahiri, 2021), and the other focused on dubbing (Ameri & Khoshsaligheh, 2020). Fansubbing has been analysed only twice in the Chinese context through netnography (Li, 2017; Zhang & Cassany, 2017). All these studies differ in the methods that were applied but most of them have in common the use of an overt approach, whereas the covert approach has still rarely

been applied as a research method in translation studies. While not strictly classified as netnography, covert digital research has only been used by a few scholars in the field, such as in the covert descriptive observation combined with overt techniques in the study of a Chinese online translation community (Yu, 2019). In the sub-field of AVT, it has only been used three times, in combination with overt methods in an LGBT+ Chinese subtitling group (Huang et al., 2023), in covert participatory research methods to study Italian fansubbing (Massidda, 2012, 2015) and Iranian video games translation (Afzali & Zahiri, 2021).

In a netnographic approach, some scholars caution against employing covert research methodologies in field studies. The rationale behind this perspective is that the researcher should refrain from deceiving participants by concealing their identity or research purpose (Kozinets, 2015. p. 150; Li, 2017, p. 44). While overt netnography was contemplated for this study, apprehension arose regarding the potential repercussions of openly disclosing the scientific nature of the investigation to the observed community. This concern stemmed from the possibility that such transparency might induce alterations in the behaviour of fansubbers or prompt them to withhold critical information, thereby introducing bias into the collected data. It is noteworthy that the selected community explicitly allows information gathering from their website and supports interviews with team members for both research and journalistic purposes.

Although interviews were considered, past experiences, such as the categorical refusal I encountered during my MA dissertation inquiry in 2018, led to reservations about the willingness of the community to participate. Anticipating a similar reaction, the apprehension was that engaging with the same kind of community through interviews might not only limit access but also introduce bias to the field. Given the nature of the fansubbing community's activities, the preference for maintaining a low profile to avert unwanted attention and potential exposure is understandable. In light of these considerations, a deliberate decision was made to avoid placing undue scrutiny on the community and, consequently, to refrain from direct interaction with its members.
Covert netnography has been used in the past by some scholars in a range of different online communities and different fields and has demonstrated considerable benefits for scholarship. This methodology was used, for example, in sensitive topic studies

regarding cosmetic surgery (Langer & Beckmann, 2005), tourism marketing (Roth-Cohen & Lahav, 2019), and commercial hospitality (Lugosi, 2006) among others. However, in the field of audiovisual translation, covert research has only been used by Afzali & Zahiri (2021) through netnography, and Massidda (2012, 2015), but not through an ethnographic perspective. Afzali and Zahiri's (2021) study of Iranian video game players was carried out without obtaining informed consent, and by using deception techniques to join a community of male gamers aged between 14 and 20 years old and obtain their opinion on video games' translation. Massidda (2012, p. 20) covertly joined two Italian fansubbers communities without obtaining informed consent, nor revealing that her purpose was scientific, because she stated that "in order to understand the phenomenon fully, it was necessary to join the two communities in the role of fansubber". The contribution this research has made to the field of amateur subtitling is of great importance and underlines the urgent need to study the phenomenon from this angle. Massidda's pioneering research has revolutionised the world of audiovisual translation and the information that was previously available on fansubbing, although she focused more on a comparative analysis of subtitles and did not qualify her methodology as netnography. Through her covert methodology, Massidda's (2015) research offered a complete and detailed overview of Italian fansubbing communities in terms of functioning, composition, guidelines and translation strategies. The lack of other research of this type indicates that there is a large gap in the subject and that it should therefore be studied in greater depth using similar techniques.

2.1.2 Ethical considerations

Before conducting qualitative research in online communities, the researcher has an ethical obligation to identify the potential risks and benefits of the research for members of the online community (Roberts, 2015, p. 322). As this study analyses human participants, and through covert methods, it needed to undergo an ethical approval process. Case Study 1 has been granted ethics approval by the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork (Log 2020-041). In relation to ethics, I drew on Eysenbach & Till's (2001, p. 1105) recommendations and considered

the following aspects in depth: potential harm, intrusiveness, perceived privacy, vulnerability, informed consent, confidentiality and intellectual property rights.

Potential harm assesses the individual and community harm that can be caused by the intrusion. Indeed, the primary purpose of ethics is to ensure that research minimises the risk of harm to participants (ESRC, 2015, p. 2). It is important to understand that the harm that could be caused depends on the data collected, how it is transmitted and the degree of vulnerability of the community or subject, as well as the degree of interaction between the researcher and community members (Eysenbach & Till, 2001, p. 1104). This explains the use of a non-intrusive data collection through observation and a complete anonymisation process in the analysis of a non-vulnerable public community. All necessary storage measures were taken to prevent the community from being recognised. The main aim in this case was to avoid a loss of anonymity for fansubbers, as it could have created the risk of them leaving the community.

Intrusiveness determines the extent to which the research is intrusive (passive or active approach). In my case, although I did not reveal my true identity as a researcher, no false information was given about the reasons why I joined the community. I observed the other members through a passive approach without participating in their work, thus adopting the role of the complete observer (Gold, 1958, pp. 221–222). It should be noted that given the anonymity of the space and the fact that it does not forbid observation, there was no real way of knowing whether other members of the community also joined it for research purposes. Moreover, the selected community is open to anyone, and forums are public, which means that any Internet user can join the community. I created an account in order to have access to all interactive functionalities, but almost all information is public, and registration is mainly needed to take part in the subtitling process. This completely passive approach in a publicly open community minimised intrusiveness and the degree of interaction with the community members.

Perceived privacy determines to what extent the community is part of the private or public sphere (community size, norms, etc.). Nowadays, the websites of French fansubbing communities are often public, and everyone can read the forum regarding norms or special discussion topics about translation. Most communities require

registration in order to comment publicly on the forum and to participate in the subtitling process, but anyone can have an account in order to check how the subtitling is progressing. Previous studies have shown that 90% of the members in online fansubbing communities are *lurkers*, "who read and observe the communities' activities but do not contribute to content production" (Orrego Carmona & Richter, 2018, p. 65). Therefore, the level of privacy is not considered very high in this type of community, as this is rather a public space in which most members are passive.

Vulnerability defines the degree of vulnerability of the community. The community selection criteria (explored in the next section) were developed specifically in order to minimise the harm that could be done to the fansubbers as well as the risk of being identified. Furthermore, online fansubbing communities are usually not composed of vulnerable people dealing with sensitive data, considering that fansubbers joined it for the primary purpose of producing subtitles.

Informed consent assesses whether consent is required and how it can be obtained. In this case, informed consent was not sought. Although covert research can be frowned upon and generate controversy, it is defended by a certain number of scholars. Indeed, it allows for the preservation of the authenticity of interactions, whereas overt research can distort research results by affecting the subject's behaviour and therefore the integrity of the research purpose (Doyle & Buckley, 2017; Langer & Beckman, 2005; Roth-Cohen & Lahav, 2019; Spicker, 2011; Williamson & Sundén, 2016). The lack of informed consent does raise ethical issues, but since the community members are anonymous, consent could not be obtained. It is understandable that, due to their activity, members work in the shadows and hide behind pseudonyms. Obtaining approval would have been very difficult and revealing my identity to them would have prevented me from achieving productive results, because as Eysenbach & Till (2001, p. 1105) point out, the risk is that the announcement of the scientific purpose of the research influences future communication within the community or causes some members to leave, which would have been detrimental to the community. As highlighted by Huang et al., (2023b), obtaining informed consent can indeed harm the community members:

> [O]btaining informed consent in the form of a participant signature or a selected button on a graphic user interface, as institutional ethical approval norms prescribe, may in fact

> collect participants' personal information and bring chances of extra exposure to them. In this case, it is debatable whether informed consent offers more protection or harm, and whether it offers more protection to the participants or the researchers. (pp. 163–164)

Moreover, covert research can be justifiable if it "is necessary for the integrity of a research project's goals (e.g. investigating the social processes of humans engaged in illegal activity)" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 60). Indeed, in my case, this method can be justified by the fact that it is not possible to obtain some of this information other than through covert research, given the legal and ethical implications for online fansubbing communities. The ESRC (UK Economic and Social Research Council) also adds in this regard that if illegal groups are involved, written consent could create unnecessary risks for the subjects and alter the studied phenomenon, which could compromise the research results (ESRC, 2015, p. 31). This is the case in this research project, because if informed consent had been sought, the community could have suffered an alteration. Eysenbach & Till (2001, p. 1103) underline that sometimes in online qualitative research, consent is not mandatory, if the data remains confidential in the transcription and subjects do not suffer any inconvenience.

Confidentiality ensures that the anonymity of participants can be guaranteed. To ensure confidentiality, I did not mention the community's name in order to avoid exposing the fansubbers or risking the dissolution of their community for fear of repercussions. I therefore applied a method of confidentiality: anonymisation. I changed the existing pseudonyms, and participants were thus provided with double anonymity, as pseudonyms were subjected to an anonymisation process alongside the rest of the data. I avoided including any identifying material containing names or direct verbatim quotes. It should also be noted that some of the original quotes were in French, so the translation to English added another level of confidentiality. Saunders et al. (2015, p. 617) describe confidentiality as a generic term that refers to all information that is not disclosed to anyone except the primary research team. Qualitative research on online communities creates unique challenges, as data, mostly citations, can be continuously traced back to the source (Roberts, 2015; Beaulieu & Estalella, 2012) and the content of sensitive information can potentially have an impact on them (Roberts, 2015, p. 315). In my case, the data I am dealing with is not defined

as sensitive, as I am not dealing with personal data. Despite this, I had to ensure that it could not be deanonymised later. By anonymising the data just after collection, an added layer of protection was created so that the person cited can never be traced back to the data that have been presented about them (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 617). The anonymisation process can take many forms and aims to find a balance between protecting the participant's identity while ensuring the integrity of the data (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 617). Anonymisation is therefore a constant sacrifice: sacrificing data integrity to maximise anonymity or sacrificing anonymity in order to maintain data integrity (Saunders & al., 2015, p. 627). In this research, my aim was to maintain a certain balance between the very important notions of data integrity and ethics in order not to harm the fansubbers' community, while ensuring objective data for empirical research. Even though the forum and website are public, no one except myself and my supervisors has access to the data that I retrieved from them, which ensures total confidentiality for the fansubbers. It is also important to note that my data are not available for reuse or citation because of the ethical aspects related to informed consent.

Intellectual property rights: some data should not be published without mentioning the source if the source wishes to be acknowledged (as opposed to anonymity). In this research, data was retrieved from public forums and through a user account that could have been created by anyone, therefore the site owner's permission was not needed. It should therefore be noted that, due to ethical and legal considerations, the source is not acknowledged in my data analysis as I used an anonymisation method. Although copyright-protected material was examined during this research, all measures were taken to avoid disseminating or reusing this material in any way, notably by choosing a French fansubbing community which distributed exclusively soft subs. Therefore, the observation of the practice of fansubbing in itself did not generate any legal repercussions in my research.

2.1.3 Sampling criteria for participants

Drawing on Kozinets' (2010) recommendations for sampling an online community that is relevant, active, interactive, substantial, heterogeneous and data rich, I selected

an online fansubbing community according to the criteria below, which follows on from the ethical considerations, in particular in relation to vulnerability:

- **The community needed to produce subtitles from English into French and to be active at the time of data collection.** Indeed, I noted that many communities are not as active now as in the past, and some of them even stopped their activities in the last decade. Therefore, the study focused on a community which still produces French subtitles on a regular basis.

- **The community needed to be public in order to allow for a non-intrusive and passive approach.** The level of privacy should not be considered high for covert research. The selected community is therefore an interactive public space, which allowed me to join it easily and observe the members' practices without participating in their work or interacting with them in any way.

- **The community needed to have a public forum.** These spaces of discussion were needed in order for the community to be considered substantial and to provide sufficient insight into processes and practices, while minimising intrusiveness. In the same manner, analysing a public space minimises deception, as the researcher does not have to join the community under false pretences and therefore does not mislead the members of the community.

- **The community needed to be composed of more than 1000 members and needed to have been working for numerous years, in order to be considered "less vulnerable" and data rich.** This allowed me to minimise the harm that could be done to the fansubbers as well as the risk of being identified. This number of members and years of existence would have allowed the community to withstand changes in structure and membership and survive even if some members had decided to leave. Furthermore, a large community is more stable and data rich, and has developed working practices that are particularly interesting for my study. Therefore, I selected a big community that translates a variety of content from and into numerous languages, and has a significant French section with considerable content to analyse.

2.1.4 Critical views on method: strengths, weaknesses, and limitations

The main advantage of netnographic observation compared to traditional ethnography is that this methodology is less intrusive, as no physical presence is required in the field. This aspect was particularly important in my case, considering that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, access to field research was uncertain and restricted. Moreover, the immediate data accessibility offered by the Internet can allow the researcher to "lurk" (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 16), which allows the observation of actions and behaviour in their natural settings (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 22) through covert research where an overt method could lead to biased results. The ethnographic method is therefore suitable, as it seeks to observe behaviours and actions and not only attitudes or opinions (Beaud & Weber, 1997, p. 10). Interviews or questionnaires could have led to inaccurate results or concealed data, whereas netnography allowed for deep insight into the process through direct observation. Furthermore, netnographic observation is "a particularly suitable approach to familiarize the unknown, i.e. to describe backgrounds of social life that are difficult to access otherwise" (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 14). Therefore, the particularity is that this methodology allows for an analysis of a little-known phenomenon according to aspects and data that arise during research without the need to define these aspects beforehand. Another important aspect of this study is "the permanence of online material", which allows for the analysis of current trends as well as their evolution over time (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 16).

However, the permanence of online material can also be a weakness of this method, as the "excessive availability of information" can make it difficult to decide which aspects are important and worth considering, in which case the researcher should "always be guided by the research aim and objectives" (Addeo et al., 2020, p. 25). This methodology has provided rich data, which is essential for insight, but the different format and large amount of data can generate difficulties in the analysis phase. Thus, the limitation of this method is that the large amount of data for collection in the online fansubbing community does not allow for the retrieval of data from a different community to cross-reference the results, with due regard to time and space constraints. Therefore, despite the important knowledge that the findings provide on subtitling practices for an online fansubbing community, these cannot be extended and generalised to all fansubbing communities.

2.2 Case Study 2: Industry subtitling for cinema and VOD platforms

The main aim in Case Study 2 is to delineate practices and processes in subtitling production networks in two main areas of the French industry: cinema and VOD subtitling. The results allow for deep insights into the subtitlers' workflow for comparison, notably through the consideration of the same key factors as for Case Study 1, i.e., practices, processes, collaboration, and communication. Through this observation, I mainly wanted to understand how these French subtitlers work in order to delineate their practices in two different sets of production contexts and enable a response to the overarching comparative question.

2.2.1 Interviews and passive observation

Case Study 2 was carried out through a combination of methods: interviews (introductory and retrospective) and passive overt observation of seven professional subtitlers for a full working day. Prior to data collection, a pilot study was undertaken in order to test and refine the methodology, which was later included in the main data set (see Section 2.2.5).

2.2.1.1 Interviews

During a preliminary discussion, participants were reassured, allowed to ask questions, and given general information relative to the study, including about my observing role, which would only consist in taking notes regarding their working day. During this discussion, participants were also informed about the design of the methodology, the length of the interviews, and were asked about the language in which they preferred to be interviewed, because participants should be able to answer in the language in which they feel most comfortable to talk about the topic (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 177). Participants were also reminded about ethical aspects, such as the anonymisation process, recordings, and their right to ask for their information to be withdrawn within 2 weeks, or for the observation to stop at any time. In addition to this discussion, two interviews were organised with each of the seven subtitlers. During the introductory interview, key information about each subtitler's work and background was recorded, and later anonymised for analysis. The second was a retrospective interview, which took place at the end of the day.

In order to have enough time for the discussion and the introductory interview, as well as to avoid disrupting the translators' schedules, I aimed to arrive around 30 to 45 minutes prior to the start of their working day, according to the participants' indications and preferences. The retrospective interview, which allowed for further investigation of some of the tasks they performed in order to dig deeper into their process, was done after they had finished their working day. Additional questions to the retrospective interviews were added according to the particular tasks performed by the translators and collected during the day. Some questions related to the subtitlers' processes were purposefully asked only in the retrospective interview, in order to avoid influencing the participants in their practices prior to the observation, because it could have altered and biased their processes if they had known which aspects of the workflow I was observing. The retrospective interviews also allowed participants to ask questions about the study or comment on the tasks they performed and could serve as a debriefing and a comfortable way for participants to close the day.

Both interviews took around 30-60 minutes, depending on the participants' answers, and followed a semi-structured approach. This approach means that the interviews were prepared in advance with open-ended questions (Appendices 1 and 2), however the researcher is free to add new questions or change their order according to the participant's answers (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, pp. 172–173). This approach to interviews is particularly suited to this type of case study, where the researcher does not possess all the factual information on the participants beforehand and their aims are too broad to conduct a fully structured interview (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 173). This allows the participants a large scope to share with the researcher everything they find relevant and does not restrict them in their answers, which provides richer data for analysis.

Both interviews were recorded on two devices and transcribed according to anonymisation measures in order to be later analysed thematically, as "taking notes presents a problem of fidelity, does not allow the capture of nuanced responses and disrupts the interviewing process" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 186). In the analysis, quotes were translated into English, which adds a level of interpretation of the data but also a higher level of anonymity as the quotes are thus not verbatim.

2.2.1.2 Passive observation

Passive or non-participant observation is a qualitative context-oriented research method. In translation studies, this approach can be used to "investigate external factors affecting individual translators, the circumstances in which translations take place and how translations influence the receiving culture" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 205). This type of research focuses on case studies, which can be a person, a text, or a whole organisation, but "can also be a process or an event" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 207). Therefore, this methodology was particularly suited to analysis of processes and workflows for case studies such as production networks.

The role I adopted in this observation was therefore mainly passive, and more specifically as an observer-as-participant. This refers to an approach in which the researcher informs the participants of their observation, but does not actually participate in the activities in the environment (Gold, 1958, p. 221). This type of research is observational, and can be interview-oriented, as it can be used in one-visit studies (Gold, 1958, p. 221). Therefore, this role was pertinent in relation to the observed process and the aims. The observer-as-participant role was also adopted by Beuchert (2017, p. 104), one of the only scholars to have undertaken an observation of the subtitling process in the professional field. She observed five Danish subtitlers through passive participation and described her role as involving "being placed somewhat behind the subtitlers in order to be as invisible as possible, observing them without talking to or with them, and taking notes on the subtitling process" (Beuchert, 2017, p. 104). In order to observe the subtitling processes and practices chronologically, I adapted Beuchert's (2017, p. 105) handwritten "field note template" to take notes electronically. I used the following format for each new task:

Time	Produced task	Physical artefact used

In the fieldnotes for each task, I also added physical artefacts (or non-textual objects), such as the tools and the technological devices used for each task, which "can be helpful to visualize possible trends and relations between different sets of data" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 226). As each task was noted with the adequate time stamp, this kind of data collection can be qualified as "event sampling" over a

delimited period of time (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 222). Considering that the subtitlers were working with confidential materials, these fieldnotes are not shared to ensure the confidentiality of participants and their clients.

The data for each participant was therefore composed of a pre-observation interview, fieldnotes and a retrospective interview. The aspects I observed and analysed were related to the technical aspects of how the translators worked, collaborated, and communicated.

2.2.2 Ethical considerations

Case Study 2 has been granted ethics approval by the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork (Log 2019-219). The methodology and design have also been granted ethics approval by the *Comité d'Éthique de la Recherche* at Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, where the field study was carried out. The main ethical considerations explored throughout this section are the following: ethical sampling and data collection, informed consent, intrusiveness, confidentiality and anonymisation.

Informed consent was sought from all participants. They all consented to observation, and were thus aware of my status as a researcher, without knowing which aspects I planned to observe specifically, in order to prevent data bias. After being selected and given all information regarding the research project, participants had about a month to decide whether they wished to participate in the research and were sent an information and consent form they had to read, sign, and send back at least 2 weeks prior to observation (see Appendix 3). Participants were informed that they were allowed to ask for their information to be withdrawn at any time within 2 weeks of completion of the observation. In other words, if they changed their mind after signing, participants had at least 4 weeks in total to withdraw their consent to observation and/or the storage of their data. Prior to observation, I briefed participants to ensure that they all understood that they should try to work normally as on a regular workday and did not have to change their behaviour or habits. At this stage, participants were also informed that their participation would remain anonymous, and all data would be anonymised upon collection. Participants were debriefed after data collection in a retrospective

interview and were allowed to ask any questions relevant to the research. In addition, I informed them that I would be available to discuss the study or answer any other questions that they might have.

Intrusiveness needed to be considered because this overt passive observation method is characterised by the fact that the participants are aware of being observed and the researcher does not participate in the participant's activities (Giroux & Tremblay, 2009, p. 190). As Beuchert (2017, p. 104) stated, although the subtitlers were aware of the researcher's presence and the purpose of the observation activity, "it is important not to disturb their subtitling processes as well as to make them feel that they are working as usual without an observer behind them". Therefore, during observation, I did not participate in any way in the subtitlers' activity and tried to be as unintrusive as possible. If I had questions, I wrote them in my fieldnotes and asked the subtitlers at the end of the observation to avoid interrupting their work.

Confidentiality and anonymisation measures have been designed and implemented through a Data Management Plan. As the analysis only examines participants in regard to their professional activity and in relation to their practices, the subtitlers were therefore not required to disclose sensitive data and their confidentiality was respected. Participants remained anonymous throughout the research and were only described using criteria relevant to the research and an identifier code only known to myself. Their data were entirely anonymised upon collection by removing any identifying information regarding names, companies, or places. Indeed, in order to ensure full anonymity, once the interviews were completed with each participant, the recording was immediately transferred to an encrypted laptop and wiped from the recording devices. The interview was then transcribed, and all identifying information removed. Once this was done, the audio-recording was also deleted and only the anonymised transcripts remained. These were stored on the University College Cork Google Drive system for the duration of the research and will subsequently be stored in a data repository. All anonymised data and information will be safely stored on the University College Cork Google Drive for 10 years following collection, in order to meet the requirement of the UCC Code of Research Conduct and will remain accessible only to myself and my supervisors.

Four ethics amendments have been undertaken to finalise the research design. A few minor modifications were made, but one amendment was major as it concerned the changes made to comply with the COVID-19 regulations in place in France, where Case Study 2 was conducted. As a matter of fact, at the start of this data collection, Ireland was in level 5 lockdown due to the third wave of the pandemic and did not allow any face-to-face research. In France however, except during the month of lockdown (April-May 2021), face-to-face research was allowed, but all protection measures had to be respected, including social distancing, curfew and wearing facemasks at all times. Therefore, prior to data collection, all additional precautions related to COVID-19 were agreed with the ethics committees at Sorbonne Nouvelle and at University College Cork.

2.2.3 Sampling criteria for participants

Given the heterogeneity of profiles in the profession, it should be noted that some of the subtitlers work across other subtitling production contexts than those I focus on. These are however beyond the scope of the research and are thus not further examined. The following definitions highlight the differences in each of the two main distribution channels that were chosen for analysis in this thesis:

- **Cinema** refers to the distribution of films in French movie theatres.

- **VOD** distribution encompasses a large spectrum of platforms to highlight the hybridity of systems. Subtitlers can work for different types of VOD platforms, as some of these overlap. VOD streaming platforms refer to platforms available online (e.g., Netflix, Disney+, etc.), also referred to as OTT (Over-the-Top) or SVOD platforms (Subscription VOD), for which viewers pay a monthly or annual subscription fee. Other VOD platforms offer a TVOD (Transactional VOD) system, which allows the viewer to pay for each content individually without paying a monthly subscription fee, however, it should be noted that in France some VOD platforms do additionally also offer an SVOD system with monthly subscription to the platform or through cable TV subscription. This is however not the same as TV channels VOD platforms, which refers to the

platforms belonging to TV channels (e.g., Canal+, M6, TF1, ARTE, etc.) that make some content available online for free and other content available for those who have a TV subscription.

In order to allow for a balanced observation in each case study, the boundaries of the case studies have been defined according to the elements highlighted by Saldanha & O'Brien (2014, pp. 215–216), who argue that delimiting the case study boundaries to specific social, spatial, and temporal criteria is important in order to choose aspects on which to focus. Thus, the professional subtitlers were observed according to the following criteria:

- In terms of **spatial boundaries**, each subtitler needed to be located in the Parisian region, aligning with both my academic affiliation and the proximity to a considerable number of post-production companies, making it the predominant residence for subtitlers.

- In terms of **social boundaries**, all subtitlers needed to translate audiovisual content intended for a European francophone audience interlingually from English into French.

- Furthermore, each subtitler needed to have at least 1.5 years of experience in the subtitling industry. This criterion does not imply that translators with less experience in the AVT industry are not professionals. It was simply needed in order to ensure that participants have worked in the subtitling industry before the COVID-19 outbreak, because collaboration and communication are areas of interest in this research and these work patterns might have changed due to lockdown. Subtitlers who are relatively early-career were of interest to the study, as were those with many years of experience and well-established client bases, as perspectives between them can differ.

- A further social criterion was that the subtitlers' activity could be part-time or full-time, but it had to constitute a remunerated employment commissioned by an official client. Indeed, according to Orrego Carmona (2016a, p. 165), monetary reward is the main element that differentiates professional from non-

professional subtitling. Official means "commissioned and sanctioned" (Pedersen, 2019, p. 52), which means that the client, the distributor or the producer, has given approval for the content to be translated and distributed and has assigned a subtitler to a specific translation task.

- The last social criterion is that the 7 translators were selected specifically according to the type of project they were working on (cinema or VOD platforms). There were no specific criteria regarding the type of audiovisual content translated.

- In terms of **temporal boundaries**, the data collection was initially planned to be carried out between 25 January 2021 and 30 June 2021, as these were the dates of my exchange in Paris. However, as France entered a third lockdown between 3 April and 3 May 2021, data collection had to be interrupted during this period. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic created numerous difficulties such as curfew and social distancing measures which did not allow me to undertake all interviews and observations of Case Study 2 during my time in Paris. I had to return twice to finish collecting my data, and therefore performed the last data collection on 13 January 2022.

In Case Study 2, participants were thus chosen by considering "whose perspectives will best represent the diverse landscape of the social and cultural setting" (Saldaña et al., 2011, p. 33). As criteria were therefore defined before selecting participants and based on pre-defined critical parameters, purposive sampling was applied to my data collection (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 34). Participants were recruited through a variety of methods. Initially, I approached organisations and personal contacts, yielding no results. The first two participants (Participants A and G) were recruited by reaching out to ATAA via an initial email through their website's contact form. In this email, I provided details about the research criteria and objectives. Another sampling strategy employed was convenience sampling, particularly snowball sampling (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 34). The first participant, Participant G, enthusiastic after his observation and interviews, facilitated additional recruitment by sharing my email with colleagues and recommending other subtitlers. While the sampling method's limitation lies in the potential similarity of profiles and practices, it

nonetheless yielded fruitful results. Notably, Participant B, recommended by Participant G, presented a distinct profile, mitigating concerns about homogeneity.

Additionally, I utilised social media platforms, specifically Facebook groups for audiovisual translators, to advertise the study. Employing diverse recruitment methods aimed to capture a broader range of profiles and insight into various practices, including the identification of non-ATAA translators. Despite the pursuit of varied sampling methods, all participants were ultimately affiliated with ATAA. While this may limit diversity in profile representation, it highlights the significance and value of this community within the French AVT industry. Posts about the study garnered positive responses on Twitter and LinkedIn, with associations and educational groups reposting them. However, within Facebook groups, some members expressed scepticism or mockery about the research. Despite the challenges, this approach led to the successful recruitment of Participant C, who responded to a Facebook post in a French AVT translators' group, aligning with the study's criteria.

Further recruitment involved individually emailing subtitlers. Using the ATAA (n.d.) database[3], I identified 325 potential participants meeting the specific criteria. After reaching out to 196 subtitlers, 58 responded, expressing interest but often citing reasons for non-participation, such as residing outside Paris or facing limited subtitling projects, notably due to the pandemic. While some subtitlers were open to interviews without observations, I opted against this to maintain data balance. The consideration of traveling outside Paris for interested subtitlers was entertained but ultimately dismissed due to pandemic-related concerns. This strategy resulted in the positive responses of three participants (D, E, and F) to the research. Additional recruitment was deemed unnecessary as I had reached the point of "saturation", where subtitlers expressed similar ideas, which was likely associated with the homogeneity of the selected group (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 193).

In the recruitment of industry subtitlers, the most effective strategy thus emerged as a blend of dissemination on the ATAA mailing list, personal email outreach and

[3] For more information see ATAA Annuaire (n.d.) at https://www.ataa.fr/annuaire, containing over 600 members when last accessed (29 November 2023).

snowball sampling, notably facilitated by the enthusiastic engagement of Participant G, because several participants expressed interest in the research after learning about it through the association or this participant. It is crucial to note that convenience sampling by recruiting "the most easily accessible" participants (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 34) was not employed in the sense of selecting friends and colleagues to prevent any potential bias on their behaviour during observation. Prior to the research, I had no acquaintance with any selected participants.

Regarding the sampling criteria, it must also be taken into account that these translators also work for different distribution media, depending on the clients or the projects. Therefore, when I observed all subtitlers, the specific type of project(s) they were working on followed my sampling criteria, but it might not be the only way in which the professionals are working, as their practices can differ for other projects that target a different distribution medium.

2.2.4 Critical views on method: strengths, weaknesses, and limitations

A constant challenge in this type of method is bias. Indeed, interviews allow for the collection of data related to the participants' opinions and thoughts, however the weakness of this method is that there might be a difference between what participants say and what they actually do (Beaud & Weber, 1997, p. 10). This is why interviews are perfectly combined with direct observation through a triangulation method. Indeed, the advantage of observation is that it can give direct access to people's actions "as opposed to what they say they do, or what we infer they do from analyzing the products of their work" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 221).

One inherent bias effect of observation is the Hawthorne effect, which implies that participants may act differently when aware of being observed (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 31). In order to mitigate these biases, retrospective interviews were designed in order to allow participants to reflect on the produced tasks, notably whether the observed tasks were characteristic of their usual workflow. Moreover, by spending an entire day with each subtitler, without intervening, I intended to reduce self-awareness and "make them feel that they are working as usual without an observer behind them"

(Beuchert, 2017, p. 104). Another mitigation strategy was to avoid disclosing to the participants the specific aspects being observed or the anticipated results, in order to prevent any alterations in behaviour that might introduce bias and compromise result accuracy (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 222).

The main challenge of the method was in the end the planning and design of the data collection. Indeed, in addition to the technical aspects related to the organisation of interviews or case studies, it can be very challenging to recruit participants as well as to find an adequate time slot to organise the data collection. It is important to note that certain subtitlers were bound by Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) with their clients, restricting content access to others. However, in an effort to uphold transparency while simultaneously protecting confidentiality, I enabled these subtitlers to examine the transcripts of their interviews. This review process allowed them to verify that no identifiable confidential information was disclosed, ensuring their anonymity in relation to their clients. Moreover, data collection was particularly challenging given the prevailing situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a positive aspect that emanated from this research design was that once the selection of participants was done, the combination of techniques allowed for the application of a different methodology without the need to recruit new participants. As the methodology is time-consuming, it can be difficult to recruit participants who are willing to take time to participate and are available or accessible. This is why studies including interviews "often rely on small numbers of participants which do not often constitute representative samples of the population", which rarely makes it possible to generalise this data to a wider population (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 169). Indeed, it must be specified that one of the limitations of the findings on subtitling in these different production networks is that it will only be based on a few samples of subtitlers of a similar category. These samples were observed in Paris for the French audience and cannot be generalised to the whole francophone market nor to other linguistic areas.

Another limitation of the methodology is that, similarly to Tuominen's (2021, p. 87) research, despite building on existing work in the field of Subtitling Process Research to explore participants' subtitling processes, the present case study "does not adhere to the definition of process research proper". Drawing on the little research that was

done on this topic (Beuchert, 2017; Orrego-Carmona et al., 2018; Pagano et al., 2011), at first, I considered including different recording methods, such as eye-tracking or screen recordings to be able to better delineate the process and ask specific questions to the subtitlers in the retrospective interviews. However, due to confidentiality issues, a few participants mentioned prior to the interview that no recording at all was allowed as they were working on confidential projects. This was the case for Participants A and C, as their clients did not want the name of the company, or the name of the films divulged. Therefore, this ruled out the use of screen recordings, or eye-tracking devices. Moreover, it could be argued that this would create an imbalance with the case study of netnography which relied only on passive observation, without allowing for tracking the fansubbers' process in real time. A further point for consideration was also that such a large amount of data would not be processable in the context of a thesis and that the few studies that applied a screen recording method did it within a shorter amount of time, such as 3 hours (Beuchert, 2017) or in application to a specific task that the subtitlers were given (Orrego-Carmona et al., 2018). Thus, the research design has some limitations, but these highlight further avenues of exploration on completion of this project through the use of such tools, which are very specific to process research.

2.2.5 Pilot study

An important part of designing a methodology is the piloting phase, in order to test it with an appropriate sample. In this research project, the piloting phase allowed for the assessment of aspects such as the time required for the interviews, feedback on the clarity of the questions during the interview, the functioning of the recording material and the fieldnote collection method. I conducted an initial pilot study with Participant PS, who later became Participant G when his data was included in the main study. This allowed me to verify that the methodology developed for Case Study 2 was suitable for my research. Participant G also provided some positive feedback on the research design and the relevance of the questions, as well as additional participants. The pilot study was recorded, transcribed, and analysed in the same way as for the other participants in order to self-evaluate my performance and to check if this methodology worked (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 178). This was needed to evaluate the

requirement for changes to be submitted to the Social Research Ethics Committee at University College Cork.

It was during this phase, that I realised that the research design carried out with Participant G would be applied to all participants, as it was highly successful, and the data proved to be so valuable that it was therefore decided with the participant's agreement to include him in the main study as a participant. As the data collection and analysis process were the same as for all the other participants, approval of the ethics committee was obtained.

Where, on the one hand, the data collection methods were found to be adequate to the aims and were not changed, the sampling criteria, on the other hand, needed to be re-evaluated. The pilot study thus allowed for the refinement of the methodology, because it shed light on the heterogeneity in subtitling practices and led to a shift in my perspective. The pilot study findings indicated that my initial sampling criteria for participants was not adequate to the current reality of the French subtitling market. This influenced the decision to analyse French subtitling by dividing criteria in terms of distribution medium (cinema or VOD subtitling) instead of considering other aspects such as the profile of the translator.

2.3 Comparative analysis

In order to carry out a comparative study, the findings of Case Study 1 and Case Study 2 were established using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process to analyse the data, identify and report patterns. As stated by Saldanha & O'Brien, (2014, pp. 189–190), thematic analysis is the identification and interpretation of key ideas or themes, some open-ended answers can refer to more ideas or themes and therefore multiple codes can be assigned to one response. The coding step is frequently used in qualitative research to identify themes and patterns and regroup these units under a label (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 189). The thematic analysis follows a 6-phase coding process, which I applied using the NVivo Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis software:

1) Data familiarisation – writing notes to capture initial observations;

2) Generating initial codes – creating open codes emanating from the data that are not pre-established;
3) Generating initial themes – reorganising and merging codes to develop categories;
4) Developing and reviewing themes;
5) Defining and naming themes – in which a framework is developed;
6) Writing a report.

By considering a range of different themes arising from the data retrieved during the subtitling process, this analysis method allowed me to generate upper-level categories and themes in order to highlight work practices and processes (Chapters 3 to 5) and collaboration and communication patterns (Chapters 6 and 7) comparatively in the two communities of subtitlers. As I set up preliminary RQs linked to work processes, collaboration, and communication, I used a "theoretical" thematic analysis. However, my study also included an inductive analysis, wherein additional themes emerged organically from the data rather than being predefined. The utilisation of an inductive approach proved instrumental in recognising collaboration as a pivotal factor in the analysis of industry subtitling, unveiling insights into community collaboration and its important impact on subtitling processes and working conditions that were previously unforeseen. To grasp the key elements presented in the comparative analysis of processes and collaboration, it is essential to first understand the concept of community. As defined by Risku & Dickinson (2009), a community is composed of core elements:

> [a] community needs to have had a founder (or group of founders), some kind of **leadership** or **structure**, centre on a common interest (**shared purpose**) and focus on member-generated **content**. It also needs a critical mass of members who meet membership requirements (**identity/boundaries**), form relationships (**reputation/ trust**) and see the need to communicate over time (**motivation/loyalty**) in an appropriate manner (**standards/values**). Its **history** and **dynamics** are influenced by the formalisation brought about by the standards and network effects. (p. 56)

The framework of communities thus fits groups that interact face-to-face, but also virtual communities in which "[p]eople can live on the other side of the world, yet still form a community around a common interest", because "both local and virtual

communities are in essence about people and interaction and all communities share certain characteristics" (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 52). Hence, these fundamental aspects will be mapped onto both communities to examine their social interactions. Moreover, expanding beyond the translators' immediate community, I extend the observation to their production networks – a complex system of individuals and organisations (Abdallah, 2011, 2012).

Throughout this study, the emphasis is thus on underlining the significance of collaboration, along with the exchange of knowledge and skills within each community and their extended subtitling production network. This highlights how these important factors actively contribute to the dynamic nature of subtitling production, reflecting the reality of this practice as a collaborative effort among diverse stakeholders rather than an individual activity (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 37). This investigation ultimately delivers a comprehensive overview of both subtitling contexts, revealing inherent similarities, differences, and challenges. It elucidates the pivotal role of cooperation and knowledge exchange in ensuring the well-being and sustainability of each community.

The study acknowledges limitations, particularly in sampling, emphasising the need for caution in generalising findings. In the fansubbing community, despite examining various French communities until selecting the present one, the analysis focuses solely on one community, thus preventing generalisation to the entire spectrum of French fansubbing. Similarly, the practitioners in Case Study 2 also constitute a small heterogeneous sample that cannot be generalised to the entire French market. This is evident, for example, in the fact that despite attempting various recruitment methods, only ATAA members participated, highlighting that these individuals are already interested in collaborating with universities and communicating with students and scholars about their professional practice.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the methodologies applied in this research project were designed to focus on each study in an equal manner, despite the difference in collection and sampling methods. The non-participant covert netnographic observation method used

in Case Study 1 and the observer-as-participant role used in Case Study 2 allowed for the adoption of a passive approach to examining processes and practices in subtitling production networks in full consideration of the ethical impact of the research project. The design of the sampling for the data collection aimed to give central importance to the subtitlers, as the contributions of each participant were highly valued, reflecting the essential role of subtitling in cultural transmission. Shaped by a focus on translators within the environment, the thematic analysis allows for drawing conclusions based on emerging elements from the data, avoiding reliance solely on predefined aspects. This approach results in findings presented thematically, contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The exploratory comparative analysis resulting from this methodology aims to contribute to new ways of studying subtitling directly in the field through the examination of collaboration in production networks and to give a voice to the primary actors: the translators.

3. SUBTITLING PRACTICES AND PROCESSES IN FANSUBBING

This chapter employs a thematic approach to present the findings of Case Study 1, which focuses on subtitling production and distribution within a French fansubbing community. The aim of this section is to address the initial research questions by delineating practices and processes in the fansubbing context. Data for this case study were collected between September 2020 and May 2022 through an online netnographic study within a French fansubbing community, which is not named for confidentiality reasons.

The qualitative dataset is mainly composed of three documents containing data collected from three different areas of the same fansubbing community:

1) The general website
2) The general forum
3) The French sub-forum

The entire dataset comprises over 250 pages of notes. These records encompass a variety of elements, such as screenshots, excerpts taken from the website and forum, notes on members' comments and perspectives, descriptions of relevant processes, forms of collaboration and communication and the evolution of these aspects. Additionally, I incorporated personal reflective fieldnotes on all of the aforementioned components, and occasionally gathered data from the community's social media accounts. Following netnographic data collection guidelines (Kozinets, 2010; Li, 2017), this aligns mainly with archival data and fieldnote data, with elicited data only representing a minor proportion due to my passive approach.

To present a contemporary and comprehensive overview of the functioning of a French fansubbing community, this chapter is organised around three key themes: (1) General features of the fansubbing community, (2) Technical aspects and organisation, and (3) The French sub-community. Each of these overarching themes is further divided into sub-sections. In this thematic structure, I consistently specify the source of information – whether it stems from the website, the forum, or the French sub-forum. This

approach facilitates a holistic view of the community's dynamics by presenting a cohesive synthesis of varied sources of the dataset. The detailed examination of the community's collaboration and the classification of communication and information exchange will be further developed in Section 6.1. Nevertheless, given the inherent role of community and collaboration in the fansubbing co-creation process, these key factors are introduced and also discussed throughout the various sections.

3.1 General features of the fansubbing community

3.1.1 Introduction to the community

This fansubbing community was created in 2008 by two TV series fans who, according to their profile information, are now between their late thirties and early forties. Prior to starting this community, they had no previous experience either in subtitling or in website administration. Their aim was apparently to offer English subtitles to other fans that were of a higher quality than what was available at the time, as well as to avoid waiting for days for their favourite shows to be released in translated versions. They thus engaged in English synching of subtitles and allowed other members to translate the content directly on their website in their desired language(s). These primary motivations for the creation of the community therefore align with observations undertaken in other linguistic contexts, such as Italian (Massidda, 2015) and Spanish (Orrego-Carmona, 2016b), and with the fact that professional translation did not meet the audience's expectations (Massidda, 2015). As stated in their FAQ, their aim is thus to "provide subtitles of good quality, as fast as possible". Although French is the main target language into which the general community translates, they translate into almost every language, as anyone can decide to provide subtitles in their mother tongue and take part in the translation process. Up to 2022, there are 66 language suggestions when uploading an episode or a film. The community's activities mainly focus on TV series, with a specific section dedicated to these on the website, but the community also covers recent movies to a lesser extent. Most of the content includes two synched versions: a "standard" English version and English SDH. Although I will not go further into details regarding SDH versions as this lies beyond the scope of my research, it is worth underlining the existence of these subtitles on the website for this demonstrates the community's commitment to accessibility. As the

community has stated in the French forum, this also constitutes one of their main motivations for the creation of subtitles: “We like helping others. It can benefit hearing-impaired people”.

In 2009, the community reformed the website and created a separate forum, which both remain active. The community is thus divided in two parts. The first part is the main general website containing a list of shows and films being translated, a profile for each member, and software embedded in the website to collaboratively translate content. The second part is a separate forum, on which members need to create another account with the same username. According to the statistics available on the forum, as of 2022, there are over 20,000 members, and over 50,000 messages. There are no specific statistics on the forum members’ age, but in a 2020 survey filled out by 69 members, the majority of the respondents were over 40 years old, and 15 of them were even over 60. While this differs greatly from the numbers collected in Li’s (2015, p. 119) study of a Chinese fansubbing community, where the majority of the participants were between 21 and 25 years old, the small number of participants is not representative of the whole community. It could be due to the fact that probably only the most active members participated in this poll. The forum contains a general introduction section in which the English language is required as this is an international section, and in which members can communicate under different topics listed in order of publication. The forum also contains sub-sections for members to introduce themselves, announcements, suggestions, and a general sub-forum specific to subtitling. The next sections are divided by languages: French, Romanian, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish. The French community is the largest sub-section of this general forum. It contains over 15,000 messages, which makes it the most active language team inside this community. In a 2017 statistics report, a moderator indicated that from the totality of the episodes subtitled on the website, around 62,5% are translated into French, which underlines the important activity of the French sub-community.

The website language is set to English by default, but since 2015, it can also be set to French and 16 other languages. Surprisingly, despite offering translations in the form of subtitles, on the website, not all menu options have been translated, as some sections remain in English despite the settings change. The language settings on the forum can

also be changed, however the only options are English and French. This is also the case for the translation software extension, which was created by the French sub-community. This highlights the long-standing predominance of the French sub-community within the general community.

3.1.2 Registration and profile

A particularity of this community is the requirement to register twice as it has two webpages: the main website and the forum. To be able to take part in the translation process, it is necessary to create two separate profiles linked to a single e-mail address. I thus created an email address under the same pseudonym for both registrations. To avoid standing out, I examined the other pseudonyms and decided to make my pseudonym the name of my favourite TV show character. Pseudonyms are important in online communities because they are the members' persistent identity and "serve to uniquely identify a person to the community" (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 54). After the registrations, I had to wait for a few days before obtaining access to the translation process to analyse it, as all profiles need to be validated by a moderator to avoid "trolls", unreliable people who are spamming and ruining the translation process. This system allows the moderators of the website to have control over new members and thus to "define [the community's] boundaries" (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 54). Moderators are ultimately the ones who decide who needs to be temporarily blocked or definitively banned from the community for its well-being and to continue upholding the community's standards.

1) Forum profile

While I was waiting for my profile to be activated on the main website, I set up my profile on the forum. My rank was "newbie", which never changed as I have never been active inside the community. This rank evolves according to the number of messages and interactions inside the community and there are also special ranks for moderators and administrators. Many settings can be selected from the menu, such as notifications settings, e-mails, and following a topic or a sub-forum – which I did for the French sub-forum, allowing me to receive a notification for each new message and monitor its activity. The table below outlines the elements of the profile on the forum.

My pseudonym
Class: Member, Moderator, Administrator
Joined: Date I created the profile
Last visit: Date
Warning points: Restrictions applied
Followers
About: Rank, *Birthday*
Social: Link to social media
Profile information: Gender, Location
Recent profile visitors

Table 1. Fansubbing forum profile.

The categories highlighted in italics can be deactivated or hidden. Therefore, forum profiles can look very different according to the information members wish to share with others. Unfortunately, this also makes it impossible to draw up statistics about demographic aspects of the community such as age, gender, or geographical location. The specificity of the forum profile compared to the website is also that its functioning is similar to social media: members can add a status to their feed which can be "liked" and commented on by other members, they can follow each other, see other members' full activity on the forum, and write public messages on each other's feed, as well as send private messages.

2) Website profile

When registering on the website, the community describes the advantages as follows: more downloads available, keeping track of watched series and episodes, accessing subtitle packs for entire seasons, the rights to correct and edit online documents and improve the quality of the subtitles, collaborating on any online translation for almost every existing language and finally, being able to send and receive private messages to and from other members. Once the account is created on the website, the profile displays some personal and public information that can be consulted by any member. The personal profile information on the website looks as follows:

Public profile	Pseudonym
Since	Date of creation of profile
Website	A link can be inserted here
Signature	Can contain a signature in the form of a quote or a pseudonym
Gender	The user's gender is displayed here (options: male, female, non-binary)
Downloads by User Today	Number/40 (maximum)
Downloads by IP Today	Number
Class	Type of membership (Hierarchical organisation detailed in Section 3.2.2)
Last seen	Date
Last IP	IP address
Episodes created	Number

Table 2. Fansubbing website profile.

A panel also allows users to add shows they have watched or to follow shows to make sure they receive a notification when the files are available. Creating a profile on the website offers additional communication options for members. Once registered, the website allows for a private messaging functionality. Any registered member of the community can be contacted through this inbox. Under every episode there is also a comments section for registered members, which is mainly used to thank the synchers (i.e., the members who synchronise subtitles to a specific video file with adequate time and speed settings to match the dialogues on screen) and translators for the episode, to report mistakes, and to a lesser extent to provide feedback. In an announcement made on the website, the administrators encouraged thanking the members through this channel, as it shows recognition for their great work. Nevertheless, from my observations, comments are seldom made to give positive feedback on the quality of the translation, but instead are used to mention mistakes in the subtitles. Other communication modes however are also available to the general public, as I will detail in Section 6.1.

3.1.3 Public and private access to the general community

These aforementioned registration steps are not necessary to access all content. Without creating an account, any user can access numerous publicly available functionalities, including downloading subtitles for episodes for free, reading comments, and consult the forum. As mentioned earlier, there are a few advantages to registering on the community, such as being able to take part in the translation process. Nonetheless, a passive use of the website is also possible for outsiders. In their analysis of an international fansubbing community, Orrego Carmona & Richter (2018, p. 81) found out that lurkers are an important part of the community, as they are "heavily engaged viewers of audiovisual products".

The passive users thus contribute in an important way to the consumption of material inside the community, but also have implications on the global media environment as their demands for immediateness and the ways in which they engage with audiovisual content can influence the industry (Orrego Carmona & Richter, 2018, p. 81). Therefore, although lurkers are not actively participating in the community's activities, their importance lies in the fact that they keep the community alive by consuming their materials and engaging with it, albeit for a short period of time. Lurkers might not produce subtitles themselves but can post messages and reply to threads in the forum despite never getting more involved. In spite of remaining passive in terms of collaboration, they can thus engage in an active manner in the public communication process of the community.

On the forum, statistics on lurkers are available in real time, as it is possible to check how many people are currently connected on the forum and which of its sections they are looking at. These statistics also state which members are logged in (under their pseudonym), if they are anonymous, or invited (someone who does not have a registered profile). Unfortunately, this is not possible on the website, therefore except by looking at the number of downloads of fansubs for an episode, there is no way of analysing its traffic. As of 2022, top downloads for recent popular shows are around 500 for French versions and over 1,000 downloads for English. For popular shows such as the last season of *Game of Thrones* in 2019, the number could reach over 15,000 downloads for English files. It is therefore not possible to make estimations on

how many people look at the website and what percentage of them are lurkers that do not possess a registered profile. The community is aware that most users are lurkers, and consider themselves functioning as a "Wiki" structure. Administrators and moderators do not seem to consider lurking to be an issue, as highlighted by a public announcement on the website, in which they invited members to check out new topics in the forum by stating "lurk or join the discussion".

In order to include lurkers and passive users, various open communication channels are available. There is a public form of communication on the website, for which no registration is needed. Important information is indeed communicated publicly to any user in an announcement panel on the home page. This section is used to announce new or changed functionalities, bugs or maintenance on the website, encourage donations, recruit new synchers or redirect users to useful pages to consult on the forum. Outside of the website and the forum, the community is also rather active publicly on social media but does not generate a lot of interaction. They have Twitter, Facebook and used to have an IRC channel. The latter functionality has disappeared as this instant messaging communication mode is not as popular anymore. They use social media to share information about new subtitle releases and updates about TV shows, in addition to making announcements, such as letting members know that the website is down or undergoing some maintenance. They can also be contacted that way to reply to questions and comments about the website.

On the forum, while additional functionalities are available upon registration, it is not needed in order to comment, as an e-mail address is sufficient, but it is required in order to react to other members' comments. Although all topics, rankings, information on team members and comments posted on the forum are public and can be consulted by anyone, further information on members, however, is only available to registered members. These advanced functionalities include searching specifically for a member or observing how many users are currently looking at the forum, as well as which section they are reading. The forum therefore only allows registered members to obtain deeper insight into how many people consult the forum and to which end. According to the forum's statistics, the highest number of users connected on the forum at the same time was 6,000 in 2018. Two years later, when I started my observation in September 2020, there were only slightly over 100 users simultaneously connected on

the forum. However, I have been monitoring these numbers between 2021 and 2022 and have observed a decrease in the number of users. From my observations, during the 1.5 following years, there were regularly between 40 and 70 people connected on the forum, mostly during peak times (after 19:00 or on Sundays), with a majority of "invited" users or lurkers and never more than 10 registered members at the same time. There is no concrete explanation for this decrease, except the hypothesis that when lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic ended and people resumed work and their regular activities, they had less time to watch shows and movies or engage in their translation. This could also be related to the fact that Netflix and other VOD streaming services have gained in popularity and thus reduced the number of consumers of fansubbing services.

3.2 Technical aspects and organisation

This section examines the internal organisation of the general community. It firstly analyses the fansubbing workflows, then examines the internal hierarchy and their rules, as well as the type of software used in the community. This section will later offer insight into legality, motivation, and funding. Obtaining an in-depth understanding of these aspects is essential as it addresses the secondary research questions in terms of structure, work organisation, and subtitling distribution inside the community.

3.2.1 Three fansubbing workflows

This section explores the three different possible workflow options in the creation and distribution of fansubs inside the community. I have identified two main workflow processes, which are either real-time translation on the website, or uploading a previously translated file. I have also identified a third process in which raw subtitles (that are not synched or corrected) need to be synched first, however this is of lesser importance in comparison with the two first workflows, as raw subtitles are not allowed on the website and need to be uploaded separately on the forum (see point 3).

1) Synching and real-time translating in the software embedded in the community's website

The synching team is in charge of providing the English synching file. This subtitle file will later be used as a template for other languages. To become a syncher, members can express their interest on the forum and will therefore subsequently be contacted by a synching team member, or they can contact the administrators through the website, the forum and social media. Synchers need to be able to communicate in English and need a Facebook account as this is how the synching team communicates. The synching team is a private team dedicated to specific shows, and their task is rather time-consuming. Synchers need to be reliable and available in the morning (GMT time zone) and weekdays. Previous experience is preferred, but the synching team also accepts newcomers, "newbies", as they will be trained by senior members in the team. As this is the only "private" team, it is also the only one offering training. There have been occasions in which there was a shortage of synchers. This resulted in longer waiting times for shows and films and therefore also a delay in the translation process. Historically, they used the transcripts and synched the content manually, however nowadays most content is ripped from official sources and is therefore rather resynched. Synchers typically collaborate by proofreading each other's English subtitles. However, sometimes synchers also proofread their own subtitles independently.

The concept of providing a subtitle file that is already correctly timed and contains an English template resembles practices that occur in the professional subtitling industry (Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2022). It is interesting to note that the fansubbing community also uses English templates as a pivot translation to other languages, i.e., the English synching files will be used as templates to collaboratively translate into other languages on the website, despite English not being the source language of the original content. Some translations will thus rely solely on the English synching file, as not all members possess proficiency in the original language they are translating from. In this context, synchers within the fansubbing team take on a role akin to industry template creators or "templators" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 37). The use of English templates has been observed in other fansubbing communities, notably in Spanish subtitling of Thai content that also used pivot translation (Leksawat, 2022).

In the present community, the synching process is orchestrated by the synching team, who creates each episode on the website and shares a template, which will later allow users to upload their subtitles for each episode. This process can occur between a few hours and a few days after release, depending on the popularity of the TV show or movie. After the synching is released and uploaded, the translation process can begin. There is no specific time frame for this process, as administrators of the website state in their rules "it will be done when it will be done". Whenever someone decides to undertake the translation, it can take between a few hours and a few days. There are no specific teams assigned to shows, or tasks assigned to members. Everyone is free to create their own small teams by deciding on the forum who they would like to collaborate with, joining an existing group, or taking part in the translation process in real-time by "joining the translation".

When starting, a warning message appears that needs to be read and accepted. It contains rules, including the specific instruction that the member needs to have previously watched the episode entirely before translating, and it includes a link redirecting to translation rules on the forum to avoid subtitles that in the community's opinion are of poor quality. Not adhering to these rules could result in being blocked from participating in the translation process. Translations that are underway are marked with a percentage corresponding to the number of segments translated, to allow members to follow the progression of the translation and take part in it. Once the translation has reached 100% of segments translated, it is automatically uploaded as a finished translation on the website in a separate category. However, this does not mean that the translation has been proofread and corrected yet. Although the option to join the translation disappears, this translation can later be edited numerous times by other members or moderators through an editing mode. According to Fernández Costales (2012, p. 14), popular translations can be edited more than 900 times by up to 50 different people. In the present community, this number cannot be verified, as each segment edit is not systematically reported. However, there is a "verified mark" to highlight that an episode has been proofread and follows the norms of the community. This guarantees that the segments have been verified and validated by a member.

Collaborative practices have often been evoked in research on fansubbing communities (Fernández Costales, 2012, 2013; Orrego-Carmona, 2016b). However, the distinction between the private collaboration of the synching teams and the public collaboration available to anyone in translation has never been mentioned. This is however of utmost importance, as fansubbing communities have often been blamed for the low quality of their translations. Although the functioning of this community's collaboration therefore ensures that the original English files synched by a private team meet their quality standards, the open collaborative nature of the translation process does not allow for quality monitoring. Moderators of the website often check translated files and can be alerted to poor translations through the website in order to edit or delete them, but the extensiveness of the content does not allow them to verify all the materials uploaded to the website. Although the process of synching an English template is very similar to processes occurring in the industry, the fact that subsequently each sentence of a given episode can be translated by different members collaborating synchronously is unique to fansubbing.

The figure below illustrates this first possible workflow, which starts when synching is undertaken by the private team, which will release the file to be translated and proofread in the website's embedded software.

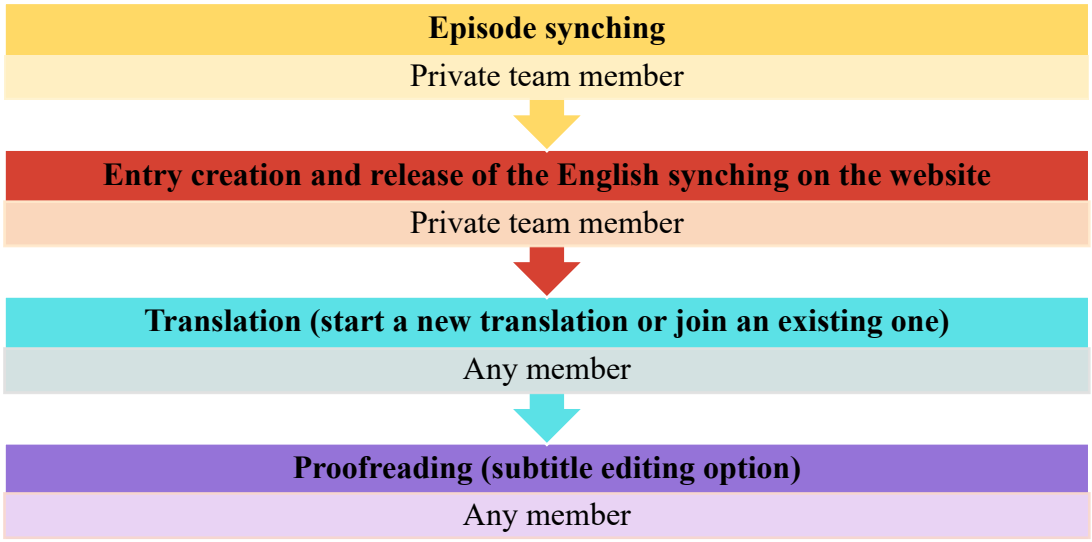


Figure 1. Fansubbing workflow 1.

2) Synching and translating in external software and uploading fansubs to the website

The website also allows members to upload subtitles that are either ripped from official sources or created individually or collaboratively in external software. On the forum, the recommended external software to synchronise subtitles is Subtitle Edit, which is freeware. It offers the special feature of allowing members to set it up as a collaborative translation network, which they can use to collaborate outside the embedded software. The ripped subtitles from official sources can originate from DVDs, as well as from Web video files, which are ripped from VOD streaming platforms. When such subtitles are used unchanged, there is an indication on the website stating that these are official professional subtitles. Although the authors of the official subtitles are usually credited, this raises legal issues, as these versions distributed on the website are copyrighted translations. Further legal issues arise sometimes when, despite using the official translations, synchers make slight changes to the subtitles in order to make them match their specific norms and in this case, they add their logo and do not consider it an official translation. I compared a certain number of subtitle files between Netflix and the community's and noticed that in some cases the versions are the same, but line segmentations were changed, as well as punctuation to match the community's subtitling norms (see Section 3.3.1). In other cases, the official version was slightly different from the version shared in the community.

I observed a concrete example with the case of the Danish Netflix TV series *Kastanjemanden* or "The Chestnut Man" (Sveistrup, Foldager Sørensen & Serup, 2021). I delved into the case of this series as I sought a recently released show, that did not have English as source language, providing an opportunity to observe potential differences in English subtitles – an uncommon occurrence considering the community's predominant focus on anglophone content. Furthermore, the challenge was to find a series available on Netflix, the only official platform accessible to me, enabling a comparison of subtitles. On the Netflix platform, two English versions can be found: SDH with CC (Closed Captions) and the English standard version. These versions are different in terms of translation and content, as according to the official

Netflix guidelines, SDH is based on the English dubbing[4], whereas the English subtitles are a different version based on the source language and content. On the fansubbing website, however, both files (SDH and standard) contain the same translations and content, with or without CC. In other words, the original English subtitles file was ripped from the SDH version and adapted to the community's norms for both SDH and standard files, but they did not use the official English standard version. This aspect draws attention due to the community's decision to share a different version on their website, despite the presence of an official English version. This was probably easier for uniformisation, as from my findings, to change English SDH subtitles into standard English subtitles files, they can use software that has been specifically created by a member of the community in order to automatically delete the marks of SDH and format the text to standard subtitles instead. This application recognises SDH marks and symbols such as brackets, bolds, italics, songs and speakers' names and deletes them. It also offers settings on segmentation, such as the maximum of characters per line, changes in punctuation and capital letters. Similar formatting functionalities are also supported in Subtitle Edit. Creating the SDH version first thus allows them to ensure accessibility for everyone, while avoiding the considerable loss of time of creating a different "standard" English version, when the SDH marks can simply be removed to create the second version. Nevertheless, although it offers advantages, this simplified process can also be challenged. SDH presents additional unique characteristics and differences with intralingual and interlingual subtitling (Gambier, 2012, p. 49), which through this process are not rendered in fansubbing. In the industry, each version undergoes a different translation process and is independent from the other, as SDH and "standard" versions are not aimed for viewers with the same needs and expectations. Thus, this represents another special aspect of the translation process in the fansubbing community. It has been argued before that it is because they are based on SDH that fansubs are so detailed, given that these are verbatim and thus contain more information than professional subtitles for a hearing audience (Massidda, 2015, p. 55).

[4] The English Timed Text Style Guide produced for Netflix translators states the following: "Where content has been dubbed into English, please refer to the dubbing script or dubbed audio as the basis for the SDH file and ensure that the two match as much as reading speed and timings allow" (Netflix, n.d.-a). Guidelines available at https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/217350977-English-Timed-Text-Style-Guide.

In examining the episodes of *Kastanjemanden* uploaded on the fansubbing website, an intriguing aspect to explore would have been the potential utilisation of English as a pivot language. Specifically, it would have been insightful to observe whether the translators opted to create a new file following their own synching, instead of uploading the official Netflix versions in different languages. Nonetheless, for this show only English subtitles are available on the community's website, with no additional uploads or suggestions for translations in other languages. To assess this process and compare it with official subtitles, I reached out to the credited subtitler on Netflix. The subtitler confirmed that the official French version derived from an English pivot template and not from the original Danish script. This aligns with observed practices on the platform and corroborates discussions with other French professional subtitlers. Initially, I did not find the subtitler's name in the credits when the show was released in 2021. Upon my re-examination in 2023, I realised that Netflix had credited her. When I brought this to her attention, she explained that the absence of her name from the credits probably resulted from a platform malfunction. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether this issue was specific to my end, constituted an actual bug, and, if so, how long it persisted, as I did not check in the meantime. The subtitler clarified that she was unaware of this at the time and should have been credited from the start. Indeed, as Díaz-Cintas & Remael (2021, p. 59) state, "subject to their consent, the names of subtitlers should always appear in the credits", a topic which is also very strongly defended in the French industry (see Section 4.2.4).

For "The Chestnut Man" (2021), the English fansubs have not been created by the synching team, as they have not been uploaded by an official team member. Figure 2 below highlights the process of this second workflow, in which any member can upload subtitles for content that has been synched or translated outside the website's embedded software.

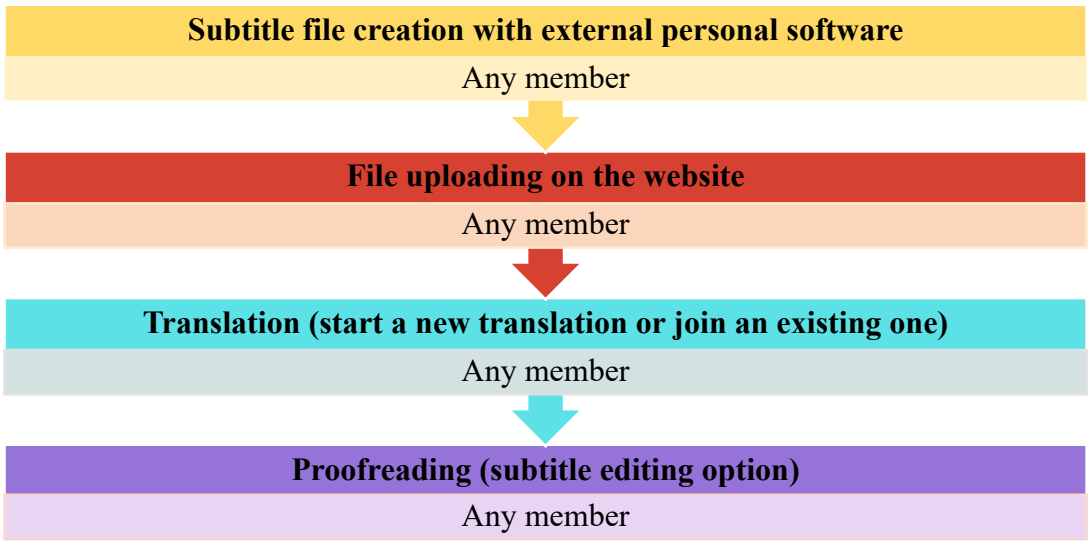


Figure 2. Fansubbing workflow 2.

Uploading these subtitle files for existing shows can be done through a dropdown list or on the page for an existing episode. This can be used for example when uploading a new improved version for an already existing episode or adding a different language. A new entry can only be created when a show or movie is not indexed on the website. Uploaded subtitles must be synched to a specific video file, for which the source and format need to be specified. Subtitles can be resynched to match a different video file, but this information needs to be visible and resynching credits need to be added to the previous synching credits. These uploaded files can also be replaced by new ones if better versions are available. Administrators encourage members who see their files deleted not to get offended, as this is just a way to ensure maintenance of the community's quality standards. Credits are important among fansubbers, with past instances of unauthorised fansub usage without proper acknowledgement sparking strong community backlash, leading to strikes until this practice ceased. The community offers a feature where users can select "friends" websites to credit when uploading subtitles acquired from another community, allowing other communities to receive recognition by displaying their logos on the website.

3) Uploading raw subtitles to the forum

This third workflow (see Figure 3 below) is rarely used, as it is not as efficient as other methods. This occurs if some members do not have the skills themselves to complete subtitles that are considered of high quality by the community but still wish to share

their work or a file they obtained. A dedicated section of the forum allows them to upload raw subtitles. If other members have time, they can thus synchronise these subtitles and correct them to allow for these to meet the websites' requirements.

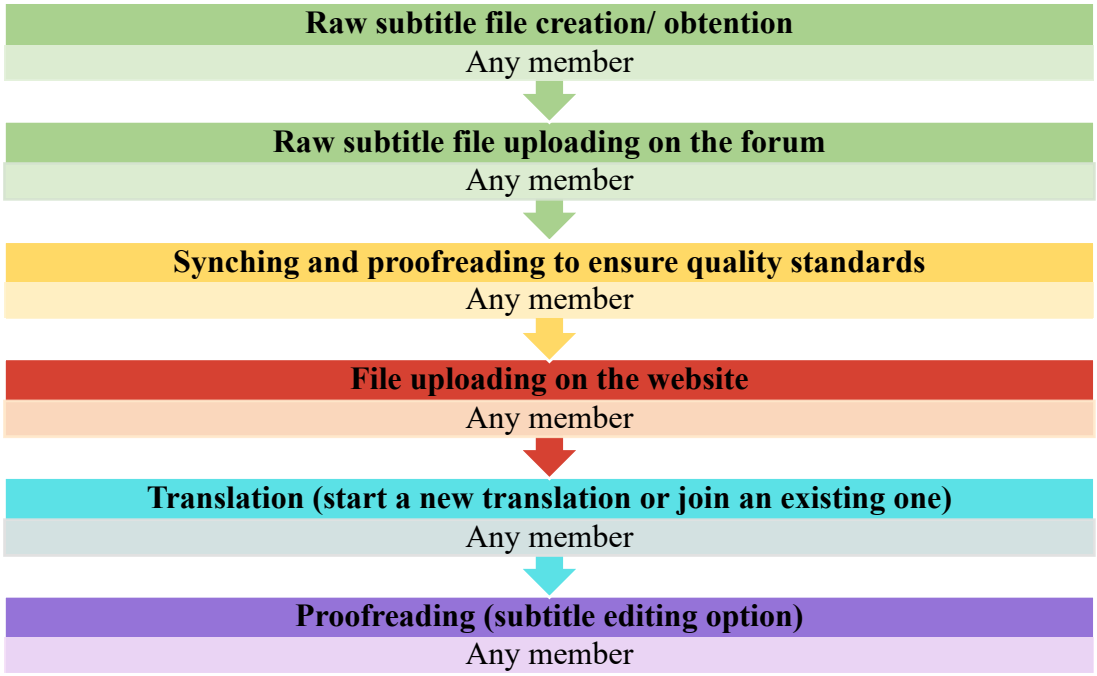


Figure 3. Fansubbing workflow 3.

Apart from raw subtitles, subtitle files are not usually uploaded to the forum. However, it can occur when the main website is under maintenance or malfunctioning for any technical reason. In such situations, finalised English subtitles can be uploaded in a pinned section on the forum in order to allow members to download them from there if access to the main website is impossible. There is also a counterpart in the French sub-forum for French translations. This provision enables synchers and translators to maintain a backup to ensure the continuity of their work even in the face of technical incidents. In this scenario, a special folder, separate from the raw files folder, is available on the forum, although such instances are infrequent.

3.2.2 Hierarchical organisation

In this community, I identified two distinct hierarchical systems for the website and the forum. However, these hierarchies are unrelated to the translation process. In contrast to findings in previous research (Lakarnchua, 2017, p. 36), there is no specific

team or assigned tasks associated with the translation process in this fansubbing community.

3.2.2.1 Hierarchical organisation on the website

On the one hand, there is a primary organisation on the website with the following hierarchy:

a. Unregistered: any users visiting the website.
b. Registered: members possessing an account.
c. VIP: members who improved their rank by participating in contests, by being helpful to the community or donating. This rank allows them to obtain privileges, such as double the subtitle downloading capacity. This status is thus not only earned but can also be bought through donations.
d. Team members: Synchers and proof-readers, trusted uploaders, who hold the same privileges as VIP members and more.
e. Moderators: members who oversee every aspect of the website, as well as regulate members, and check and correct translations. They have the same privileges as team members and more. This rank can be obtained by being considered trustworthy and productive inside the community by senior moderators or administrators.
f. Administrators: the highest category, the members that are in charge and have all the aforementioned tasks and privileges.

3.2.2.2 Hierarchical organisation on the forum

On the other hand, the forum contains a section allowing users to visualise the list of the 19 "staff members" in charge of the forum (who are the same as e. and f. above): as of May 2022, there are 9 administrators and 10 moderators. The name of their hierarchical rank changes according to their time in the community and the number of posted comments, but some of them are "newbies" and "junior members", which means that although they have not been in the community for a long time, they provided good services. On the forum, as this hierarchical organisation is different from the one present in the website's translation process, VIP members or Team

members do not possess a special staff title. Only the rank can evolve according to the number of interactions in the forum.

In the French sub-community, there are seven "staff members": one French website administrator, three administrators of the French forum who also serve as website moderators, and three additional website moderators. All seven are included among the previously mentioned 19 "staff members". Their responsibilities include ensuring adherence to forum rules, responding to inquiries, and overseeing the organisation of discussions and translation processes. While communication on the website is mainly related to translation and content, most of the communication regarding resources, guidelines, norms, rules, issues, social aspects, and suggestions takes place on the forum. This highlights that the website allows for a space of collaboration in translation, but on the forum the form of collaboration is related to communication, support, and help (see Section 6.1). The numerous sections and surveys in this forum show that feedback is an important part of the community, as the moderators and administrators constantly aim for improvement and member satisfaction, and are open to any suggestion or comment.

On the forum, there is an essential part of collaboration through communication, because of the aforementioned self-organised hierarchy in place on the forum and website that allows moderators, administrators, and senior members to communicate with members and offer guidance in the subtitling process. They collaborate in helping and advising members or redirecting them to the most relevant team member. Although most of them have the same privileges, their collaboration is also divided into roles, as some are in charge of blocking and banning members, whereas others oversee the syncher recruiting process, others do announcements or take care of software and programming. Therefore, although there is no hierarchy or team amongst regular translators in the fansubbing community, there are people overseeing the process and collaborating under a specific self-created organisation to manage the technical aspects of the website and the forum.

In his study of an Argentinian community, Orrego-Carmona (2016b, p. 219) identified three workflows: the administration workflow, the translation workflow and the forum maintenance workflow. This does not seem to map onto the hierarchical organisation

of the community studied in this thesis, where their methods are rather participative, and the workflows are blended. Indeed, there is a translation workflow, but not in the sense of specifically assigned tasks and roles. Members have the freedom to choose the shows they want to translate, select the languages they prefer, and determine the level of commitment they wish to dedicate to this endeavour. Therefore, the only hierarchy in this workflow would be the difference with the synchers, who have applied to become official team members, thus making the translation process a flat hierarchical structure.

In his study, Orrego-Carmona (2016b, p. 220) found out that "[e]ach forum section has a moderator or a group of moderators that coordinate that specific section and their activity is primarily restricted to that area", whereas in this community, administration and maintenance workflow are one category, as they undertake similar tasks although they each have their preferred tasks. Moderators and administrators have an important role in the community, as in addition to managing the forum and the website they also guide new members throughout the subtitling process by posting in the forum.

In addition to the rules and norms they have established in the forum, that need to be read and understood by every member before engaging in the translation process, these experienced members also provide numerous useful tutorials. A section of the forum is dedicated to tutorials in which all information needed to take part in any step of the workflow progress has been detailed. These tutorials are very thorough, by including images, screenshots, extensive explanations, and step-by-step guides. Therefore, although there is no official training for new members in order to join the translation process (except for synchers), this form of exchange of knowledge from senior members can be considered a form of independent training. In other communities, a formal internal training can occur as was observed in the Chinese (Li, 2015) and Argentinian (Orrego-Carmona, 2016b) contexts. The Italian context also showed an interesting feedback system in which revisers (senior translators) act as mentors and provide feedback for junior translators who have passed an entry test followed by a trial period (Massidda, 2012).

In the present community, at one point, in 2015, the French sub-community had also discussed finding a way for the moderators to test the subtitling skills of their members

before allowing them to participate in translations, but this idea was abandoned for several reasons. Firstly, the test was too difficult. Secondly, it would have been time-consuming to add new features to the website and correct each test. Thirdly, as it was stated by a moderator of the French sub-forum, creating a private team only with trusted translators would have changed the community's essence, which has always aimed to be public, free, and open to anyone. Such a shift in the structure of the community would also have involved setting up new methods of collaboration and communication, and probably thus also changing the features of the website and its codes, in order to restrict access to the translation process to trusted members. This could perhaps also have reduced the distribution of fansubs, as it would have involved less members and thus slowed down the process. As speed and the satisfaction of an impatient audience were the main motivations for fansubbing communities (Marignan, 2019, p. 4), this could thus have reduced the fans' interest for the community and led to a drastic reduction in size. The current structure of their system allows the community to distribute their fansubs as "fastsubs", which highlights the rapidity of their open process, as opposed to doing "proper" subs in which there is a dedicated team, and the process is longer. However, as they have emphasised multiple times on their forum, the term "fastsubs" does not inherently imply poor quality. Instead it denotes their collaborative approach to satisfy fans by providing subtitles that adhere to their established standards within short timeframes.

3.2.3 Software

The community has created its own software, with an extension that can be downloaded and added to the Mozilla Firefox and Chrome browsers to allow for more functionalities when translating. This extension was released a decade ago in the French section of the forum and used for one year by its French members before being officially used in the general forum for other language users. It is available either in French or English, depending on the language settings chosen on the website. It is regularly updated and has over 200 users. This extension provides some useful functionalities. These include:

- information on reading speed and characters per line through colour codes;
- better management of timing and text editing;

- modifying previously translated and edited sequences;
- information on how the translation is progressing;
- information on SDH subtitling;
- a chat box system and a user toolbar to contact users personally and consult or report their profiles (see Table 14 in Section 6.1.2 on communication on the website);
- A video toolbar for synchronisation of the video file with the translation directly in the community's software. As some videos might not have the correct format, there is also a possibility to synchronise the embedded software with an external one allowing members to watch video content, such as VLC player.
- Options to display the English subtitles at the same time as the translation.

Collaboration and communication are therefore inherent in the design of the software and have been explicitly integrated in the fansubbers' tools and workflows. Despite occasional technological bugs, the software and its extension thus seamlessly cater to the members' needs and undergo regular updates based on their feedback. In this section as well, the emphasis on feedback highlights its significance as a vital aspect of the community's essence. This commitment allows administrators and moderators to continually improve their process, ensuring responsive solutions to members' requests.

From my observations, most fansubbing communities only use free subtitling software such as Subtitle Workshop, Aegisub, or Subtitle Edit, which do not present the same collaborative features. Some fansubbing communities have found ways to incorporate customised settings in freeware tools. For example, in one of the Italian communities observed by Massidda (2012), the author pointed out that although fansubbers can choose different software options, the community has designed a special Italian customisation of Visual Sub Synch that can be downloaded. This has also been done by some French communities, that have also used the same software and added their own customised settings. However, to the best of my knowledge, the fansubbing community I observed is the only French community that has developed its own subtitling software. This emphasises the uniqueness in the organisation of this particular community.

The following table highlights the functionalities of the extension. When clicking on a sequence the specific information on reading speed appears. In the time codes section there are colour-coded squares according to the reading speed rate. The categories for reading speed are the following: perfect; good; slow acceptable; a bit slow; too slow; fast acceptable; a bit fast; too fast. When the sequence is open, a translation editing box also appears where the translation can be written, and edited in bold, italics or underlined, and subsequently validated or cancelled.

Segment number	Version of translation of the segment	State of segment (whether validated or not)	Author of segment	Time codes of segment (with reading speed category and colour-codes	English synching text	Translation box (with translated segment number and editing options)

Table 3. Fansubbing software.

A topic on the French forum regularly informs the users of the software about the added functionalities. This topic also underlines some rules regarding the software, notably that translators are not allowed to change the original version's time codes (entry and exit time of a subtitle) and should not touch the French translated time codes either unless they have experience with synching. The out-time is the only modifiable one, and it should only be done so when there is no alternative, and if the timing is too short for the adequate translation or if the subtitles are not synched with the dialogue. Indeed, as synching is done by a private team, the time codes are expected to already be adequate and of high standards. To avoid having users changing the time codes, a moderator can be asked to block sequences of the timing in the form of a locked template. Changing too many time codes or not respecting the translation norms can result in the banning of a member. The timing can also be changed when merging subtitles. The procedure before changing time codes should be the following: proofreading, condensation, and only then adapting the exit time code and notifying the other members about changes.

Their software is also available for tablets and mobile phones, however, on the forum, administrators have mentioned that this is not the most comfortable way to work. It should also be noted that over time individual members have created their own software for different functionalities they needed (such as the aforementioned option to remove the marks of SDH), and that they have a section dedicated to this in the forum in which they can share these special functionalities.

3.2.4 Rules of the community

The first item of the general forum are the rules, which need to be read prior to posting on the forum. Further rules are also present in another section containing the "Requests" for separate categories: films and TV series. This section highlights that this is the only way to make a request for subtitles that perhaps someone will decide to complete if it follows the rules. The rules contain a strict list of the behaviours that are forbidden in the community and can result in being banned. In order to have a complete overview of the rules, I have paraphrased and condensed the forbidden behaviours into a single section:

- Harassment and abuse: members must remain courteous with one another.
- Illegal content and behaviour: providing video content or illegally acquired material or software, and asking privately or publicly where to find this information or sharing information about this.
- Spam and advertising for any commercial product or service.
- Cross-posting and bumping publications: it is not allowed to flood the forum with multiple requests for the same topic.
- Asking the team about the subtitling process and talking about it in the forum. (This section seems surprising as an important part of this information is freely available on the forum anyway.)
- Requesting subtitles for shows that are less than three days old.
- Requesting subtitles for current TV shows which are usually quickly provided by the community. As they often state, patience is key and sometimes waiting a few hours or a few days is sufficient. A topic in the "Requests" section also

suggests members look on other community's websites, notably the ones they collaborate with, in case their request is not available on their own website.

The FAQ for the forum and website is "pinned" on the general forum and also contains a French translation of the rules in the French sub-forum. It adds a few other interdictions and recommendations to the rules.

- Watch out for typos and respect grammatical rules when writing.
- Do not make requests for leaked episodes.
- Do not make requests for synching, as synchers are very busy, or translations and their deadlines, as these can be done by anyone.
- Do not post links to other sites when the episodes are not yet uploaded.
- Do not post spoilers or discuss shows or episodes on the website.
- Avoid complaining or asking about why the process is taking a long time.

All this, in addition to previously mentioned rules, can result in warnings, messages being deleted, and members being blocked from the translation process or banned from the community.

On the website, the announcements make it very clear that insults towards fellow members will also result in banning, and so will uploading raw subtitles, because, as previously mentioned, these cannot be uploaded on the website, same as machine translated subtitles. As detailed in Section 3.2.1, these subtitles need to be uploaded to the forum instead, where someone else can decide to synchronise and correct them. These subtitles are deleted from the website without warning, and the members who uploaded them are banned from uploading subtitles on the website.

The initial self-created rules that have been disseminated in different parts of the forum for over 10 years are thus still valid and have been respected throughout the years despite changes in administration and newcomers. This is mainly due to the fact that they were based on initial strong collaboration between founding members. However, these scattered rules are also very representative of the general lack of organisation on the community's forum and website. Indeed, it can be difficult to find information as many different topics are started in different sections of the forum and the website,

thus newcomers might miss instructions, which can result in banning if not respected (see Section 3.3.3 on Blocking and banning members).

These different sets of long-established rules in place highlight a long-lasting sense of collaboration and uniqueness within the community. These rules have endured fluctuations in membership over the years, serving to maintain the community's nature and infrastructure. Exploring these community rules is crucial for addressing the research question related to organisation, providing a comprehensive understanding of the community's intricate functioning and fundamental essence. Similarly, it is necessary to examine the aspects of legality and ethics to fully understand the context in which the fansubbers operate to produce fansubs.

3.2.5 Legality and ethics

While legality in the context of fansubbing is a subject often debated in academic discourse, it is not a topic frequently discussed within the community itself. To mitigate legal repercussions, the community has forbidden members to share copyrighted content or to discuss methods of obtaining it. Additionally, as I have mentioned in Section 1.3.3, they have made the decision to exclusively distribute soft subs, fansubs which are not embedded in the video (Baheti & Sharma, 2018; Massidda, 2015). Nevertheless, a moderator noted in 2012 that a recurring challenge stems from users of the website promptly downloading French translations upon reaching 100% completion, and later burning them onto video files and sharing them on illegal streaming websites. This poses both a legal dilemma for the community, as the subtitles transform into hard subs, and ethical concerns, given that these translated files are typically not proofread at this early stage. Consequently, the versions of the translation circulating online not only violate copyrights laws but also deviate from the community's established translation norms for quality subtitling.

Mirroring the ongoing debates on legality within academic discussions, a similar controversy exists within the community itself, with some members acknowledging that they are working in a grey area. However, as a former moderator stated in 2022, according to European law, their activity is not "borderline" or "in the grey area" but

illegal. Another member also added that they have received threats from some major companies and when this happens, they remove the concerned copyrighted subtitles. In the general forum, they dedicated the section "deleted shows" to sharing which TV series have been deleted from the website due to legality issues. These series cannot be reuploaded on the website due to copyright infringement. In order to make a legal complaint, a contact form available on the main website offers a section on legality to allow users to report when files need to be taken down to respect copyright law. This highlights that despite knowing that their activity is illegal, the community aims to reduce their legal controversies as much as possible to keep sharing their content and passion. As O'Hagan (2016, p. 124) pointed out, fansubbers "seem to consider their work to be ethical because it is done mainly for the common good as opposed to personal or commercial gain".

3.2.6 Motivation and funding

Consistent with findings from previous studies on fansubbing communities, the primary motivation for this community aligns with the shared goal of aiding fellow fans. This commitment involves swiftly creating subtitles for their favourite content, making it readily available and accessible. Another primary motivation for fansubbers is the recognition obtained from their peers, which is linked to the sense of strong belonging to a community. This may not mean much to the outside, but to them being offered recognition is a motivation. This aspect is demonstrated through the fact that there are rankings available on the website and on the forum for the most productive members.

On the website, the 50 "top uploaders" are ranked according to the number of files they have uploaded. This does not mean that they have translated the files themselves, as some subtitles are ripped from official sources. This means that they have uploaded subtitles either made by themselves or emanating from other sources and made them available for the community to download. On the forum, the ranking system for "member of the day" depends on the number of positive "reputation" points that they have received for their comments. Risku & Dickinson (2009, p. 54) highlighted in this regard that reputation is the members' status in the virtual community and that it "is

earned based on actions, behaviour and the impression left on others". Thus, in the forum of the community studied here, having posted the most comments ultimately allows members to appear in the rewarding ranking for "best members" in the "most content" section or in the "best reputation" section if they have received the most "reputation points" on their comments. Some senior members appear in both sections of this ranking. Recognition for work on the forum does not systematically equal with the translation tasks that have been undertaken on the website. Recognition and reputation can thus be identified as an essential part of the member's motivation to belong to the community (see Section 7.1.3).

Regarding funding, it must be noted that fansubbers do not get any remuneration for their work, which is thus not a motivation factor. This also constitutes the main distinction with official subtitling for the industry. A form of funding is nonetheless needed in order to keep the community alive. In the past, the website used to be funded mainly by advertising, but many members complained about the nature of this advertising, because it used to contain pop-ups of explicit content. In 2018, pop-ups were deleted and replaced by other forms of advertising. The community's website still uses advertising but through a different form: it has two sponsor websites, for which links are available in the website's toolbar. The community also found a way to obtain funding through donations in order to pay for performance, features, server costs and redesigning the website. There is a link on the website to a crowdfunding site, which allows users to make donations through a form. They suggest a monthly payment of 4.50 euros, however, members are free to donate monthly as much or as little as they wish. The website has 249 sponsors through this funding site, and members need to fill out the form with their pseudonym, in order to later receive a VIP rank on the website (see Section 3.2.2 on Hierarchical organisation of the community). Despite the inherently voluntary nature of fansubbing, some uncertainty remains regarding the exact allocation of these funds, reflecting a lack of transparency in how donations are managed. In order to promote their social media, the community has also created contests to win a VIP account in exchange for participation and following them on their social media accounts. VIP accounts have also been given to deserving members. Therefore, not all VIP members are paying members and there is no way of knowing with certainty how many of them are funding the website. This funding system still allows for an incentive linked to the previously mentioned concept of

recognition, as it allows them to be recognised inside the community as more important members.

In 2009, the community almost disappeared, due to a lack of donations. Donations were not sufficient to cover their expenses, such as the payment of the website and it was therefore taken down. The community alerted members through all their channels and received enough donations after a few days. Combined with the use of advertising on their website, this helped them to pay for the website again. Furthermore, the lack of funding can have major repercussions on the community, as when the website was shut down, members have lost their accounts and needed to recreate a new account when the website was back online. This had an impact on their rank and hence their recognition which is essential to their identity inside the community.

3.3 The French sub-community

As previously mentioned, the French sub-community represents an important part of the general community. It has its own hierarchy (see Section 3.2.2) and channels of communication and collaboration. This sub-forum contains more messages than any other language sub-community and includes a very specific organisation of topics related to the French translation. This sub-forum contains numerous topics similar to the general forum, such as the FAQ translated in French, their own announcements section, help for bugs and maintenance and so on. In this section, I will highlight some of the most interesting features of this sub-community, mostly in regard to translation norms and guidelines. This exploration aims to address the research questions, seeking a deeper understanding of the sub-community's structure, organisation, and translation management.

3.3.1 Translation norms

The French sub-forum contains an encyclopaedia for translators, which was established in 2013, and mostly resembles the professional norms and follows the recommendations of the Code of Good Subtitling Practice (Carroll & Ivarsson, 1998). This encyclopaedia, available on the French sub-forum, details specifical rules such as

segmentation, in which the sequences need to be divided in maximum two lines of 40 characters per line, the coherence in line breaks (not splitting verbs and prepositions or subjects and verbs, etc.), dialogues formatting, in which each new speaker's line should begin with a dash, etc. Each explanation contains an example of correct and incorrect subtitles. The encyclopaedia also details many typographical specificities for French translations such as capital letters, French accents, conjugation, punctuation, italics, and so on. In order to shorten subtitles to allow for concision without having to modify the synching, the subtitling norms of the community recommend the following: avoid translating interjections, and internationally understood words such as "yes", "no", or "ok", as well as phatic expressions and hesitations. Repetitions of the same word should not be emphasised over 2 times, and the same goes for names of characters, which can be deleted after one or two appearances if clearly understandable in the audio. I will not go further into details here, because the majority of these rules follow Carroll & Ivarsson's (1998) recommendations or redirect members to official dictionaries and other useful resources.

Fansubs aiming for professional standards and norms have been labelled "pro-am" fansubs (Orrego-Carmona, 2016a, p. 165) to define "the type of non-professional subtitling that tries to imitate professional subtitling", because "[t]he goal of these groups' members is to produce subtitles that are comparable to the subtitles they see at the cinema or on television, while still taking into account the specific needs of their target audience". In his analysis, the scholar opposed this category of fansubbing to "innovative" (Orrego-Carmona, 2014, pp. 78–79) or "traditional" fansubbing (Orrego-Carmona, 2016a, p. 165). Innovative fansubs feature unique elements, such as different font colours for different speakers or symbols such as #, *, or music notes for subtitling songs. Therefore, it is interesting to underline that this French fansubbing community mainly follows the guidelines of professional subtitling to offer to their users what they refer to as "good quality" in their subtitles, and thus blurs the line between fansubbing and industry subtitling practices.

An aspect worthy of mentioning, as this is very different from industry subtitling, are credits and comments in the subtitles. The guidelines mention that the number of the episode and its official title need to be in the first subtitle. This also states that translators are usually not personally credited for their work, as opposed to good

practices in the professional industry. The synchers are named by their pseudonym, but as translation can be collaborative and not all members participate to the same extent, the translation is just signed in the name of the general community. The pseudonym of the translator can only be added if they have done at least 70% of the translation (this information is visible and based on the count of translated segments). As mentioned in section 3.2.1, sometimes members decide to be part of small teams with people they like to collaborate with. In this case, if they decided to give themselves a common team name usually related to the show, they can sign the episode that way. However, these are self-organised and not officially sanctioned teams, and anyone can decide to join. O'Hagan (2016, p. 124) underlines that "despite their typically illegal status" fansubbers insert credits as a way to show "their pride in releasing the work". In the same way, if the fansubber has done an important job on the episode, they are also allowed to add a little introduction comment, such as "enjoy the episode". This is very particular to fansubbing and highlights a different form of communication and complicity between fansubbers and fans who share the same passion. This also underlines the uniqueness of fansubbing communities, in which consumers of a specific content become prosumers (Tapscott & Williams, 2008), i.e., "fan viewers [who] interact with their fansub providers" (Denison, 2011, p. 456). These unique interactions between translators and audiences are fascinating in terms of communication, but non-existent in the professional industry. As Leksawat (2022, p. 122) points out, these interactions with the audience through headnotes "foreground the translator's visibility as opposed to the preference in professional conventions to pass unnoticed".

Under the aforementioned French sub-community's guidelines, other members have also suggested an appendix containing a list of frequent mistakes to avoid, such as for numbers, syntax, interjections, etc. One user also recommends keeping swearwords and taboo language in the target version. This resembles guidelines for VOD streaming platforms, such as the Netflix guidelines for French subtitling, which also recommend that the "[d]ialogue must never be censored. Expletives should be rendered as faithfully as possible. To give viewers a truly immersive experience, subtitles should

render the vernacular and reflect the original creative intent".[5] Another section of the sub-forum aims to provide one rule a day. These add new elements provided by moderators, which are corrections of mistakes they often encounter. However, as for other parts of the forum, the different location of rules in the sub-forum can make it difficult for users to find specific information. In 2014, a moderator tried to create a PDF version of the encyclopaedia that could contain the entirety of all rules disseminated on the different parts of the forum. Unfortunately, this project was abandoned despite its obvious potential in helping new members to find all information in one place.

3.3.2 Rules and style guides for the translation of each TV series

This section allows users to create a new topic for each TV series, in which members familiar with its translation can create a style guide with the adequate translations of titles, names of characters and details of their background stories and in which season they appear, their language registers, as well as the correct spelling for names and places, equivalences, information on *tutoiement* and *vouvoiement*[6] between characters, etc. They have also created glossaries for each show containing frequently used expressions, vocabulary, and terminology. This demonstrates the thoroughness of the French team and their search for consistency throughout the episodes and seasons. Moderators encourage copying and pasting these rules in the chat box when translating a specific series in order to make them available to anyone wishing to translate on the software interface. In the past, this section also contained a sub-section in which users could inform others about which series they were translating, as they used to have "their own" series. However, this topic is rarely in use anymore as members are free to choose the content on which they wish to work. Members sometimes still use this functionality to ask for help on a specific translation, which also allows them to recruit other motivated fansubbers by posting messages such as "I am working on the new

[5] French Time Text Style Guide (Netflix, n.d.-b). Guidelines available at https://partnerhelp.netflixstudios.com/hc/en-us/articles/217351577-French-Timed-Text-Style-Guide.

[6] Translating from English into French presents the challenge of choosing the appropriate form of address between the formal "*vous*" and the informal "*tu*" when translating the word "you", which "must be evaluated carefully" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 187). Many factors must be considered and therefore, "subtitlers have to resort to other visual, linguistic and narrative clues in the source film to determine relationships between characters" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 187).

season of *Westworld*, would anyone be interested in translating the last episodes with me?". This section also offers topics for translation queries in which members can ask questions on specific segments if they are at an impasse with their translation.

3.3.3 Blocking and banning members

An extensive section of the French sub-forum, containing over 300 messages, concerns the topic of blocking and banning. This highlights that throughout the years, numerous people have been restricted for the well-being of the community. The introduction to the topic indicates that if the web page is blank when trying to join a translation, the member probably has been blocked because of translations of insufficient quality in their opinion or inadequate behaviour. Blocking is temporary and only affects the member's ability to participate in the translation process. Blocked members are still part of the community, and usually receive a private message from a moderator explaining the reason for the blocking and providing feedback on how to improve their work. Indeed, moderators encourage users to report subtitles that do not meet the community's requirements thanks to a button available under each episode. Moderators have highlighted that these rules have been created in order to reduce complaints about the poor quality, which has given the community a bad reputation. If after the blocking the members at fault are compliant and understanding, they will be unblocked and able to translate for the community again. Nevertheless, new members tend to miss this information, as they do not systematically check their inbox and recreate a secondary account to get around the restriction, which is forbidden according to the community's rules. Their secondary accounts end up being immediately deleted by moderators and the users banned, as they do not accept several accounts linked to a same IP and email address. Banning is extreme and rather rare, and as one member has stated "only happens once every 100 blockings". Banning is a result of the following misconduct: insults towards other members or moderators, complaining and asking multiple questions about the blocking, sharing illegal content, spams and advertising, creating multiple accounts, and after 3 blocks or warnings. These rules may seem severe, and can create disappointment for newcomers, but they allow the community to maintain their standards and credibility.

3.4 Conclusion

Data collection for this netnographic study extended over 20 months, from my first ever fieldnote to the final one, exceeding the originally envisaged duration. Retrieving data proved challenging due to the extensive nature of the information and informatic issues such as bugs or maintenance. The findings detailed in Chapter 3 are extensive, requiring meticulous thematic organisation, given that the data was spread across two distinct web pages and social media platforms. As my findings have demonstrated, the community's forum has different sections and numerous sub-sections, thus requiring efforts to consolidate and reorganise the information in order to provide a full overview of the practices.

Through this process, I have identified three main workflows for the distribution of French fansubs. I concluded that although the community allows members to upload and share ripped content, they still produce a substantial amount of content themselves. This exploration extended to an examination of community rules, the functioning of the community, as well as translation guidelines and style guides, which revealed resonances with the norms of professional subtitling. Delving into motivational aspects, my research has ultimately shown that the essence of the fansubbing community lies in a sense of belonging and collaboration. In spite of the challenges that members have had to overcome, their bond based on trust and solidarity and their common passion have kept them together and ensured the community's sustained existence. Alternative strategies for funding, motivation, and member engagement were consistently developed, forming pivotal elements crucial to compare to the community of industry subtitlers.

Researching French fansubbing is fascinating, because these communities have rarely been investigated in academia (Bréan, 2014; Dagiral & Tessier, 2008; Marignan, 2019) in spite of their long-lasting existence. Even in the hypothetical scenario of all fansubbers ceasing translation activities, the communities could persist as conglomerates (Massidda, 2020), evolving into repositories for subtitles. My observations indicate that, despite reduction in their activities due to the proliferation of official distribution channels, fansubbing communities such as the one under scrutiny remain indispensable for a certain type of viewer. With their altruistic and

non-lucrative mission, fansubbers share subtitles not only for an audience seeking foreign content without subscribing to VOD streaming services or waiting for traditional broadcast platforms, but also for individuals who might otherwise face challenges in accessing translated content. This endeavour acts as a bridge for cultural exchange and enrichment, overcoming language barriers for a wider audience.

4. SUBTITLING PRACTICES AND PROCESSES IN INDUSTRY SUBTITLING

This chapter focuses on Case Study 2, exploring the processes and practices of subtitlers working in the French professional industry. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 focus on the examination of the subtitlers' practices and habits collected through preliminary and retrospective interviews. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 build upon this data by triangulating the interviews with passive observation and their corresponding fieldnotes. The data for this section were collected between March 2021 and January 2022. These different methods allowed me to examine the subtitlers' backgrounds, profiles, subtitling projects, practices, processes, habits, as well as their clients and other agents, elucidating the roles each plays in the subtitling production network. Taking a human-centred perspective on production networks, this study explores their complex collaboration with organisations, individuals, and their use of technologies involved in the creation, distribution, and consumption of subtitled audiovisual content. A detailed categorisation and analysis of these collaborative dynamics will be further explored in the subsequent chapter.

The focus of this case study is on cinema and VOD subtitlers, with the latter category encompassing a diverse range of platforms offering content through diverse subscription methods. It is important to note that these results derive from a small sample of seven subtitlers and therefore may not be generalised to the entire French industry. Nevertheless, these subtitlers represent various areas of the industry and thus provide deeper understanding of diverse processes, which can be drawn upon for further research.

Similarly to the approach used in the previous chapter, Chapter 4 adopts a thematic structure organised around four key themes: (1) The research participants, (2) Subtitling production networks, (3) The subtitlers' schedule and process, and (4) Specificities of the subtitling processes. Within each of these overarching themes, the section is further divided into sub-sections. This intentional structure aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of various dimensions within the contemporary working methods among seven subtitlers operating in the professional French AVT industry.

4.1 The research participants

In order to enable a deeper understanding of the subtitlers' working patterns, this section focuses on introducing each research participant, their background, employment, type of project and working habits.

	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**
Gender	female	female	female	male	female	female	male
Age range	41-50	21-30	51-60	41-50	41-50	31-40	41-50
Experience	20 years	1.5 years	28 years	19 years	21 years	13 years	18 years
Education	under-graduate English-Spanish post-graduate translation studies	under-graduate English post-graduate 1 translation studies post-graduate 2 AVT	under-graduate English-German diploma cinema school	under-graduate English-Spanish under-graduate cinema post-graduate AVT (experience validation)	post-graduate AVT[7]	post-graduate 1 English-German post-graduate 2 technical translation	PhD cinema
Position and main status	freelancer author	freelancer author	freelancer author	freelancer micro-entrepreneur	freelancer author	freelancer author	freelancer author
Language pair	EN / ES > FR	EN > FR	EN > FR	EN / ES > FR	EN / IT > FR	EN / DE > FR	EN > FR
Distribution medium	cinema VOD[8] streaming platform	TV channels VOD streaming platform	cinema VOD streaming platforms	DVD / Blu-ray TVOD platforms[9] film festivals	TV channel VOD streaming platform	TV channels VOD streaming platforms	cinema VOD streaming platforms
Main type of content	films	series	films	films series documen-taries	films series documen-taries	series TV films documen-taries institutional content	films series
Other work in AVT	dubbing	voice-over dubbing	dubbing	N/A	voice-over	voice-over dubbing	dubbing
Preferred software	EZTitles	EZTitles	EZTitles	Ayato Annotation Edit	EZTitles	EZTitles	EZTitles

Table 4. Description of research participants.

[7] Participants E, F, and G only referenced their most recent degree and did not provide details about their undergraduate degree. This omission could be attributed to either it being in a different field of study or because it may not have appeared relevant to the context of the discussion.

[8] **VOD streaming platforms** refer to platforms accessible online (e.g., Netflix, Disney+, etc.), also referred to as OTT (Over the Top) or SVOD platforms (Subscription VOD).

[9] **TVOD platforms** refers to platforms that offer a transactional VOD system, which allows the viewer to pay for each content individually (e.g., iTunes Store).

4.1.1 Participant A

Participant A is female and is between 41 and 50 years old. She has just over 20 years of experience. She works full-time as a freelancer and has author status. She did an undergraduate degree in English and Spanish and a master's degree in translation studies. She started as a freelancer in a subtitling company which is now a global LSP. During her time there, she underwent a 1-week in-house training, with a particular focus on mastering the use of subtitling software. When the company lowered the rates, she stopped working there and joined an English post-production company but later had to stop for the same reasons. She then worked part-time for 7 years in a French post-production company, where she started doing spotting (i.e., marking the exact timecodes for when each subtitle should appear and disappear, aligning them with the audiovisual content), simulations, and synchronisation, thus learning everything about the post-production workflow. She notes that it was in this French post-production company where she "paradoxically did not do much translation, nor subtitling, that [she] learnt the most about the profession". These invaluable lessons were mainly the result of receiving guidance and advice from more experienced peers. While working part-time there, she was also working as a freelancer in subtitling and newspaper translation. After creating a network and finding contacts, she started as a full-time freelance subtitler. She works from English and Spanish into French and the main type of content she subtitles are films for cinema. However, during the COVID-19 lockdown, cinemas were closed, therefore she also exceptionally worked on content for one platform, for which she recently subtitled a series. A few years ago, she also started working on French dubbing.

Hardware and software material

She rents an open space office close to her home with two other translators, which has been her main workplace for 5 years now. Her hardware material is a laptop that she uses as a hard drive with an additional big, elevated screen. On the day of the observation, she had an issue with the screen that did not work but connected a backup screen to her laptop instead. She also works with an external keyboard, a mouse and headset, because she cannot have the sound on speakers as it would bother her colleagues.

She works with EZTitles, a software that emerged from collaboration with two subtitlers in a French post-production laboratory. They were able to share their expertise with developers to guide them through the functionalities they needed from their software, and it was created specifically for their use. She bought it early on and has never purchased any other software ever since because she is still happy with it. "Although some argue that it is expensive", she thinks it is a very convenient tool compared to others. She believes that the good quality justifies the higher price and that the renting option is a good alternative for people who do not subtitle all the time. The only times she had to work on other software was when she worked for a specific major company that now works through an LSP as a technical service provider and therefore had to use their cloud software.

Current subtitling project and distribution

She was working on one project at the time of the observation; a film for cinema distribution, which is based on comic books. Prior to this, she had already subtitled the trailer for which she and the dubber agreed on terminology. The dubbing and subtitling were done around the same time, but the dubbing had to be finished before the subtitling.

4.1.2 Participant B

Participant B is female and is between 21 and 30 years old. She has almost two years of experience and is currently working as a freelancer with author status. She did an undergraduate degree in English, a master 1 in Translation Studies, and a master 2 in AVT. During her studies, she did two internships in post-production companies, where she was subsequently hired as a freelance subtitler almost two years ago. At the beginning, she used to work full-time on numerous projects without taking any breaks for months. However, after the COVID-19 pandemic started, she occasionally found herself in a situation where she did not have any projects to work on for a couple of months and is thus now working part-time. The type of content she subtitles is mainly TV series, mostly for VOD streaming platforms, as well as for a few TV channels. She also works on voice-over, mostly for the aforementioned French post-production

company, on a few dubbing projects, and has started translating film scripts with her ATAA mentor.

Hardware and software material

Participant B works mostly from home, she organises her setup on the dining table in the living room or works on the couch. She uses a cardboard box as a stand to elevate her laptop for comfortable use. She also has an external keyboard, a mouse, and headset. She uses the latter only when she has spotting to do, in order to hear the sound more clearly, but usually does not use it when translating.

She works on EZTitles that she purchased at the beginning of her career. She is very satisfied with this tool and said she would never change for another software. Despite working for VOD streaming platforms, in the LSP she works for, the use of cloud-based subtitling software has never been imposed on her.

Current subtitling project and distribution

She was working on one subtitling project that had undergone a considerable delay: a series produced by and distributed on a VOD streaming platform. She had to subtitle 4 of a total of 8 45-minute episodes and was translating episode 5 on the day of the observation. She worked in tandem with a colleague who was translating the 4 remaining episodes – they alternated one episode each.

4.1.3 Participant C

Participant C is female and is between 51 and 60 years old. She is a freelancer with 28 years of experience and has author status. She started by doing an undergraduate degree in German and Spanish. Thanks to translators she contacted who were dubbing and subtitling for a translation company, she obtained a subtitling internship in a French post-production company. After completing a second degree in a cinema school in the US, she decided to start working in AVT. She began her professional journey as an intern in a second French post-production company. Through hands-on experience and direct collaboration with industry professionals, she acquired comprehensive knowledge in the field. Subsequently, she secured a permanent

position at the same company and gradually enhanced her skills and expertise in subtitling over a span of seven years. She started by entering subtitles manually from listings on disks and sorting them in the right order, then she did spotting, and ended up doing simulations with clients. Afterwards, she transitioned to part-time work in order to pursue her own subtitling projects as a freelancer. With her diverse professional background and an extensive network of clients, she quickly received assignments to subtitle films, marking her entry into the world of cinema subtitling. Over the course of 12 years, she gradually reduced her hours at the company until she finally made the leap to becoming a full-time freelancer. During her first year as a freelancer, she also embarked on the journey of learning dubbing, undertaking a dubbing internship that introduced her to influential artistic directors, who guided and offered her opportunities to dub films. Her main type of project is films for cinema and for VOD streaming platforms. She works with the English to French language pair in subtitling and dubbing.

Hardware and software material

She primarily works from home, benefitting from a dedicated office space. However, she also enjoys the flexibility of working from anywhere. Her hardware material is composed of a fixed laptop with two big screens, a keyboard, speakers, and a mouse. She has simple intra-auricular headphones that she often uses, even when alone, because she said that it allows her to hear more precisely and be more focused on her work. She said, however, that she would not use the headphones on the day of the observation in order to allow me to hear the audio content. As she works for cinema, she needs to be in Paris to do in-person simulations in the laboratory with the clients from time to time. However, for the most part, she enjoys the freedom to travel. When traveling, she has a laptop with a smaller screen on which she can also add a second screen, thus allowing her to work on two screens even outside of home. When she is abroad, she enjoys working in cafés “as a way to get to know the city, change places and walk around”.

For the past decade, she has been working on EZTitles, which she finds very convenient and user-friendly. She used Ayato before but switched to EZTitles upon its launch on the market. When working for her two global VOD clients, she is obligated to adhere to the LSP’s guidelines. As a result, she cannot use her personal software

and is required to work with their online cloud-based software, which varies between the two clients.

Current subtitling projects and distribution

The two subtitling projects she was working on were the following: Project 1 was a film for cinema, Project 2 was a film for a VOD streaming platform. She also had received a third project which was a film that she believed to be for cinema but was not sure and that she would start at a later stage. She also still had another earlier project to review later on, for which she had finished her subtitles, but would need to edit them as a new version of the video would arrive and she would need to update Key Names and Phrases (KNP) files with her translations, i.e., recurring names and terminology in the audiovisual content that are either pre-established by the client or agreed on amongst translators to ensure continuity. On the day of the observation, she worked on the project for cinema and on the second film for VOD, in which she had already subtitled 25% of the content on the cloud-based software. Her schedule was very busy, because projects overlapped, and the dates were continuously changed because of COVID-19, which frequently happens. Therefore, she had started Project 2 first, and then went back to Project 1, because the spotting for Project 1 was not available first thing.

4.1.4 Participant D

Participant D is male and is between 41 and 50 years old. He has 19 years of experience in subtitling and is working as a freelancer with micro-entrepreneur status. He is aware that he should change his status, as it does not protect the profession and the translators' rights, but finds it convenient for him. He holds an undergraduate degree in English and another undergraduate degree in cinema. He then started a master's degree in cinema, but quit when he started working in a production company, which produced content and websites for film festivals. He began translating content very often from English into French and sometimes also did French to English translation under the supervision of an American Editor-in-Chief. He really began subtitling when he created his own production company with friends and started producing content for DVD editors in the early 2000's. He took a break and around 2014, he started

freelancing as a micro-entrepreneur after being contacted by a former client to carry out a subtitling project. Other clients also started giving him series to subtitle and he started working full-time as a freelancer. In 2018, he was able to convert his experience into a master's degree, through a VAE (*Validation d'Acquis et d'Expérience*) and writing an MA dissertation. His main client is a DVD and Blu-ray distributor, thus the version he is subtitling is often a second or even third version of content that has previously been broadcast elsewhere, with these existing translations sometimes made available to him to update. He also has a second big client for whom he translates for two film festivals per year. For these festival projects, he works with a colleague and friend – a literary translator who also subtitles – as this kind of project entails a high workload for a short period of time (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 55). Participant D also started working for VOD platforms, but only platforms available in France through TV or monthly subscription, not for streaming or OTT platforms. He subtitles mainly films and series, and sometimes documentaries. He translates mostly from English to French and sometimes from Spanish to French. Occasionally, he receives requests to provide subtitles from French and Spanish into English, which he willingly accepts due to his proficiency in English. However, considering English is not his A language, he lowers his rates and includes extra revision to maintain quality.

Hardware and software material

He works mostly from home; he has a desk set up in his living room. His partner also works from home in the same room at a different desk. He likes to work with headphones, notably to spot the sound precisely, and to avoid bothering his partner while they are working.

His material is a small laptop with the Ayato software and a MacBook elevated on a tilted base to work on Annotation Edit. He alternates between both depending on the projects. He has another laptop that he uses as a backup. For some projects, when he is asked to insert subtitles, he works with Final Cut. He also uses transcoding software to adapt the format and size of the films to work on them, and sometimes encodes subtitles using Handbrake and Shutter Encoder.

Current subtitling project and distribution

He was working on revising, re-spotting and resynching a translation done by a colleague on a 1990s Australian horror film for a DVD editor that he submitted to the client upon my arrival. The project I observed was an Italian movie for a VOD platform that he translated through an English template.

4.1.5 Participant E

Participant E is female, she is between 41 and 50 years old and has 21 years of experience in subtitling. She works as a freelancer and has author status. She has a master's degree in AVT, through which she found her first job in a post-production company which was looking for someone to replace their only in-house subtitler during his holiday. She was lucky to live in the Parisian suburbs and to be available, so she got the job. The company was offering a one-month in-house training programme. After doing the replacement, she was hired full-time in the company as an in-house subtitler. She worked there for 6 years, and contributed to developing the department, until a redundancy scheme in 2005 that forced all subtitlers to shift to freelancing. One year later, with a sense of reluctance, she made the decision to embark on her freelance career, which she ended up enjoying. She now works mainly for the same VOD streaming platform and a TV channel, which also has a TV VOD platform. In terms of content, she works mostly on films, documentaries, and series, the latter of which often come with bonuses and featurettes ('making of' of each episode, audio-com to promote the film directors and screenwriters) when working for the streaming platform. She primarily works with the language pair English to French but also subtitles a few niche projects from Italian to French. She has worked mainly on subtitling for the past couple of years, but also does voice-over projects for documentaries.

Hardware and software material

She always works from home, and sometimes goes to in-person simulations when a translator she knows simulates her episode and is not living too far away. She also on rare occasions does in-person simulations at the post-production laboratory, but in most cases she does it by herself in her house or goes to a colleague's house, as she prefers to do it in-person whenever possible. In terms of hardware materials, she has a

desk set up in her bedroom. She fixed her laptop with EZTitles on a cardboard box, and also has an older laptop which has Ayato on it, but no longer uses it. She bought EZTitles 3 or 4 years ago and said that she finds it to be a great tool that is well designed, user-friendly and allows her to save time and do her spotting very quickly. She also finds it convenient that on EZTitles she can work on more video formats and that it is compatible with multiple new versions of Windows. When working through one post-production company for the VOD streaming platform, she has been pressured to use their cloud-based software due to security concerns. However, she managed to decline so far, primarily because her workload has been too demanding to accommodate learning new software simultaneously. She also uses an external keyboard, headset, speakers, and an external hard drive. She works only with the headset when she needs to hear the sound clearly, or when her neighbour is being too loud.

Current subtitling projects and distribution

She was taking a break from the project on the day of the interview. The most recent project that she had submitted and was simulated by a colleague during the same week was a film for the TV channel for which she usually works, that will be broadcast the following week and perhaps subsequently on the TV channel's VOD platform. She answered the last feedback questions a couple of days ago and submitted it to the laboratory the day before the interview. Lately, she has also been very busy working on three series at the same time for her usual VOD streaming platform. These were the second seasons of shows with 10 episodes (which were split between two or three subtitlers) and bonuses. As for Participant C, these projects were postponed due to COVID-19, and were initially not supposed to overlap. She said that she did only one film for a TV channel in the meantime but had to decline many projects because her schedule was full due to all the bonuses of the VOD series. The week of the observation, she also did a bonus for one of these series and the simulation of its last episode, for which she went to her colleague's home to watch his episodes with the third subtitler. She was still waiting on the featurette of one episode of the same series which would arrive soon. She described the recent months as incredibly intense and revealed that she did not have any upcoming projects, nor did she wish to take any at this point. Her priority was to go on vacation the following week and spend two weeks to unwind and relax. Even in the subsequent month, she planned to be highly selective,

only accepting a minimal number of projects. She emphasised the necessity for rest and self-care, acknowledging the accumulation of numerous concurrent projects over several months.

4.1.6 Participant F

Participant F is female and is between 31 and 40 years old. She has 13 years of experience and is a freelancer with author status. She did a master's degree in English and German and a subsequent master's degree in technical translation with an option in AVT. Then, she did an internship, after which she tried for between 6 and 12 months to get started as a freelance subtitler. She was later hired in-house in a post-production laboratory for subtitling and voice-over reviewing, synchronising, and spotting. She was subsequently hired in the same company as a production manager for around 4 or 5 years, while still working on translation revision and quality control. Therefore, these years she built experience with the process but did not specifically work on subtitling. She stopped working for this company in 2009 when she did not agree with their change of practices, as she was required to impose difficult working conditions on translators that she would not have accepted herself. She decided to do something completely different for 6 years, after which she went back to subtitling as a freelancer. She started working for different clients, including in the beginning for the company where she used to work in-house, albeit exclusively for voice-over projects. She declined further subtitling projects from them due to inadequate rates. AVT now constitutes her only professional activity and she works full-time. The type of content she mostly works on are series, TV films, documentaries, and institutional content such as commercials, but rarely films. She works mainly for TV channels and VOD streaming platforms. She stated however that often she is not aware of where her subtitles will be broadcast when she submits them. Her language pairs are English and German into French. She does subtitling, voice-over and dubbing with these language pairs.

Hardware and software material

Participant F always works from home, except when she goes to subtitling simulations. She works in her partner's office, which is on an open office space in her house, so

when he works from home and needs it, she works in another room, usually the kitchen. Her material is a laptop, and she bought a new screen the week prior to the observation because she was starting to receive dubbing projects again and needed a bigger screen. She has a separate keyboard and paper dictionaries in a big bookcase behind her. She prefers not to work with the headset, but sometimes uses it when the sound is not clear or when someone else is in the house.

Participant F uses EZTitles, which she really enjoys working on. She used to work on Ayato, but prefers EZTitles now because she can automate multiple processes and set the parameters she needs according to her different clients. She finds it user-friendly and thinks its spotting and spell checker functionalities are good and useful. Its only disadvantage is that it can be a bit too complex for some functionalities and that it does not support teletext format, which she sometimes needs when working for television. Compatibility of her subtitle settings can also be an issue as her client for this current project is working on Ayato. However, overall, she is happy with the software.

Current subtitling project and distribution

She was working on the subtitling of season 5 of a series to be broadcast on a TV channel and on its VOD platform. She started this project a few years ago with another subtitler during the first season, because after the first episode was aired, the channel noticed that the subtitles were of very poor quality. Therefore, they sent an urgent request to a company she was working for, as the season needed to be completely revised before the distribution of the rest of the episodes. She started the subtitles again from scratch and since then, she has done all the seasons of this show for the same distribution with the same colleague with whom she splits the episodes. She estimated that this season would span around 4 months, anticipating that her subtitles would be distributed not only on TV channels but also on VOD streaming platforms, which I was able to confirm at a later stage once the series was released. This is due to the fact that her primary client was a major company that supplies content to both TV channels and platforms.

4.1.7 Participant G

Participant G is male and is between 41 and 50 years old. He has 18 years of experience, has been a freelancer since 2003 and has author status. He did a PhD on American cinema and taught for 2 years at university. He left academia and started doing newspaper translation until a friend sent his CV to one of his subtitling clients and recommended him. This was an LSP who had contracted him as a freelancer despite being entirely new to subtitling. He worked in a big shared open space with other subtitlers who were able to guide him as he had never been provided any official training. He stated that learning norms and guidelines was easy, but that "[his] translations were bad in the beginning" and saw significant improvement over time, thanks to the invaluable proofreading and guidance provided by more experienced peers. Nevertheless, he disapproved of these practices and stated that it is "very unserious" to throw someone into the unknown and give them work without any experience or training in subtitling. After a couple of years working for this company, he found more clients and was able to start working for cinema, which offered him higher rates and better working conditions, while still working on newspaper translation. At the time, he had a partner who was doing the same profession and they worked for the same important client, who one day asked them to start dubbing for each movie they were subtitling. He therefore started dubbing with his partner who had considerably more experience in the field and was therefore always proofreading his work. AVT is now his only professional activity. He works mainly on films for cinema. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic started and cinemas closed down, he experienced 4 months without being offered any cinema projects. He managed to find series dubbing projects to work on during this time. Except for the streaming platform he was subtitling for during the observation, he usually does not accept subtitling series for other clients, because the rates are too low, and he says these subtitles are usually outsourced in countries where labour is cheaper. His language pair is English into French, and he works on subtitling and dubbing projects.

Hardware and software material

Participant G works from home, he has an open office corner in his living room. He has a computer with two screens. He does not like to work with headset and only uses it if he cannot hear the audio clearly. One particular aspect of Participant G's working

space is that he works standing at a high desk. He highlighted that sometimes he also alternates with sitting as it is better for his back, but on the day of the observation he only worked standing. He also specified that he had moved the orientation of the desk against the wall, so I could have a better view of what he was doing.

For this project, he was working with the LSP's cloud-based subtitling software, which – interestingly enough – crashed on the day of the observation and had to be restarted. For all his other projects, he usually works on EZTitles, which he said works well and is the one that most translators use.

Current subtitling project(s) and distribution

He was working independently on the first season of a 6-episode series for a VOD streaming platform, which went through a global LSP who acted as an intermediary service provider.

4.1.8 Conclusion

This section revealed a variety of profiles among participants. While this investigation does not delve into gender distribution, it is worth noting that a significant majority of participants were female, reflecting the industry's demographics, in which "a large majority of subtitlers are women" (Nikolić, 2021, p. 75). Furthermore, participants entered the profession from varying backgrounds, with some subtitlers originating from linguistic fields, while others had a background in cinema. Interestingly, only two participants possessed a specific AVT degree prior to embarking on their professional journey, underscoring the various paths that can lead individuals to this profession. Regarding industry-specific training, it is noteworthy that a majority of subtitlers (five out of seven) mentioned receiving internal training or being mentored by more experienced peers during their internships or early career stages. Consequently, it is intriguing to observe that their professional development was significantly influenced by the feedback and collaborative support received from their peers, fostering knowledge exchange. While all participants had English-French as their main language pair, some of them offered additional languages such as Spanish, Italian, and German, though to a lesser degree. Regarding the organisation of

subtitlers' work, the analysis of participants' habits sheds light on their ability to simultaneously handle multiple projects for different distribution media. In terms of hardware habits and software preferences, a notable tendency emerged among the participants. The majority of subtitlers (six out of seven) worked from home, and the preferred subtitling software among the participants was EZTitles (six out of seven subtitlers). However, it is important to note that the subtitlers did not always have the autonomy to use their preferred software, particularly when working for LSPs that often imposed the use of their cloud-based software.

4.2 Subtitling production networks

The purpose of this section is to examine data collected on the aforementioned subtitlers' practices in their production networks, as well as to understand how these are organised, by analysing clients and distribution medium differences, how the subtitlers find clients, are remunerated, negotiate rates, and if they are always credited.

4.2.1 Clients and distribution medium

Clients varied a lot between distribution medium and therefore processes, guidelines and materials were different from one project to another. The main distribution media for which subtitlers were working were VOD and OTT platforms, cinema, TV channels, DVD and Blu-ray, and film festivals. In this analysis, I focused on cinema and VOD projects, although it should be noted that some subtitlers also worked for other distribution media. These categories of clients and distribution medium in the French AVT industry will not be further discussed here as this lies beyond the scope of the research. As some of the content analysed will be distributed on VOD streaming platforms but will also be distributed on TV channels, notably considering that their process is rather similar, I mention some aspects of TV distribution. The participants often referred to this broad category as "video" subtitling, as opposed to cinema subtitling.

A recent study by Ferrer Simó (2021) in the Spanish AVT industry identified three levels in the production network of AVT: the superior level represents the client, such

as major companies, TV channels, and distributors; the intermediary level represents the first sub-contractors, such as post-production companies, dubbing studios, and AVT companies; the translation service providers are in the inferior level as a second sub-contractor. As there are many similarities with the French industry, I have thus adapted this model to the French subtitling industry in Table 5 below.

Role	**Agent**	**Function**
Primary client	Production/Major company Distributor TV channel VOD streaming platform	Distribution of subtitled content Subtitling commission Answering questions and giving feedback to subtitlers[10]
Intermediary–secondary client	French post-production company Multinational LSP (French branch or at global level)	Subtitling project attribution/commission Technical aspects Providing materials and information Answering questions and giving feedback to subtitlers
Translator, Reviser	Freelance subtitler Freelance reviser (simulation operator)	Subtitling, adaptation, revision, and other linguistic tasks

Table 5. Subtitling commission network in the French subtitling industry. Adapted from Ferrer Simó (2021).

The table above details the agents generally involved in a project. Clients for mainstream subtitling projects can be divided into two levels: primary and secondary clients. The primary client level is constituted of *production companies*, the creators and producers of the audiovisual content, that are sometimes *majors or major companies* based in the US; as well as French *distributors*, the purchasers of the rights to distribute the audiovisual content in France; and *VOD streaming platforms* and *TV channels* who can have the same tasks as major companies or distributors (Ferrer Simó, 2021). These will be the first to decide about the commissioning of subtitling.

[10] Answering questions and giving feedback directly to translators takes place for cinema projects whereas in VOD projects this exchange of information goes through the sub-contractor.

At the intermediary level, the secondary clients are *post-production companies*, also called *laboratories* in the French context. These are composed of project managers, linguistic project managers and technical managers, who can either be in charge of commissioning subtitles from freelance subtitlers themselves or be used as technical intermediaries by the primary clients who have already commissioned projects from the subtitlers of their choice. In this role, intermediaries are responsible for providing the necessary materials to the subtitlers and clients. Nowadays, laboratories are not always French companies, but are often multinational *Language Service Providers* (LSPs), who are typically multilanguage vendors (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 33), hired as "intermediaries in the business chain" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 55). Some multinational LSPs have established a French branch, functioning as an independent local post-production company under the umbrella of the LSP. This offers enhanced working conditions compared to the operations at global level. This observation has been elucidated by Participants A and G, who expressed their preference to exclusively engage with the French branch of the same LSP.

The translator and reviser level is composed mainly of freelance subtitlers, whose perspectives I focus on in this project. These freelancers have different workflows and patterns of interaction according to the distribution destination of the subtitles. In the French context, revisers, who are simulation operators, are not systematically included in projects, as for VOD subtitling the simulation process is nowadays often replaced by quality control (QC) done by clients. Here, the difference between cinema and video projects is highlighted by a slight difference in interactions with clients in the workflow.

In cinema subtitling, there is a direct line of communication with primary clients, which enables these subtitlers to seek clarifications, ask questions, and obtain feedback from them, notably through simulations. The cinema workflow has been defined as more direct and transparent, as highlighted by Participant A who interacts with technical directors of the French distributors or the major company. This primary client informs the subtitler about which intermediary she will interact with, she only goes through this secondary client for technical aspects, such as to receive the materials. Participants C and G undergo a similar process when working for cinema, as well as to some extent when working for VOD projects. In these scenarios, the primary clients

usually initiate the request and rely on post-production companies as their technical service providers. Therefore, subtitlers interact with clients at both levels: the primary clients for content-related aspects and the secondary clients for technical considerations and quality assurance processes in their laboratories.

Drawing insights from the subtitlers' responses, I constructed two figures to underscore their role and interactions with the agents involved in the subtitling commission process.

Figure 4 below illustrates the aforementioned dual level of client interaction observed in cinema. Considering the consistent occurrence of simulations in cinema projects, an additional layer of interaction is introduced with the involvement of a reviser.

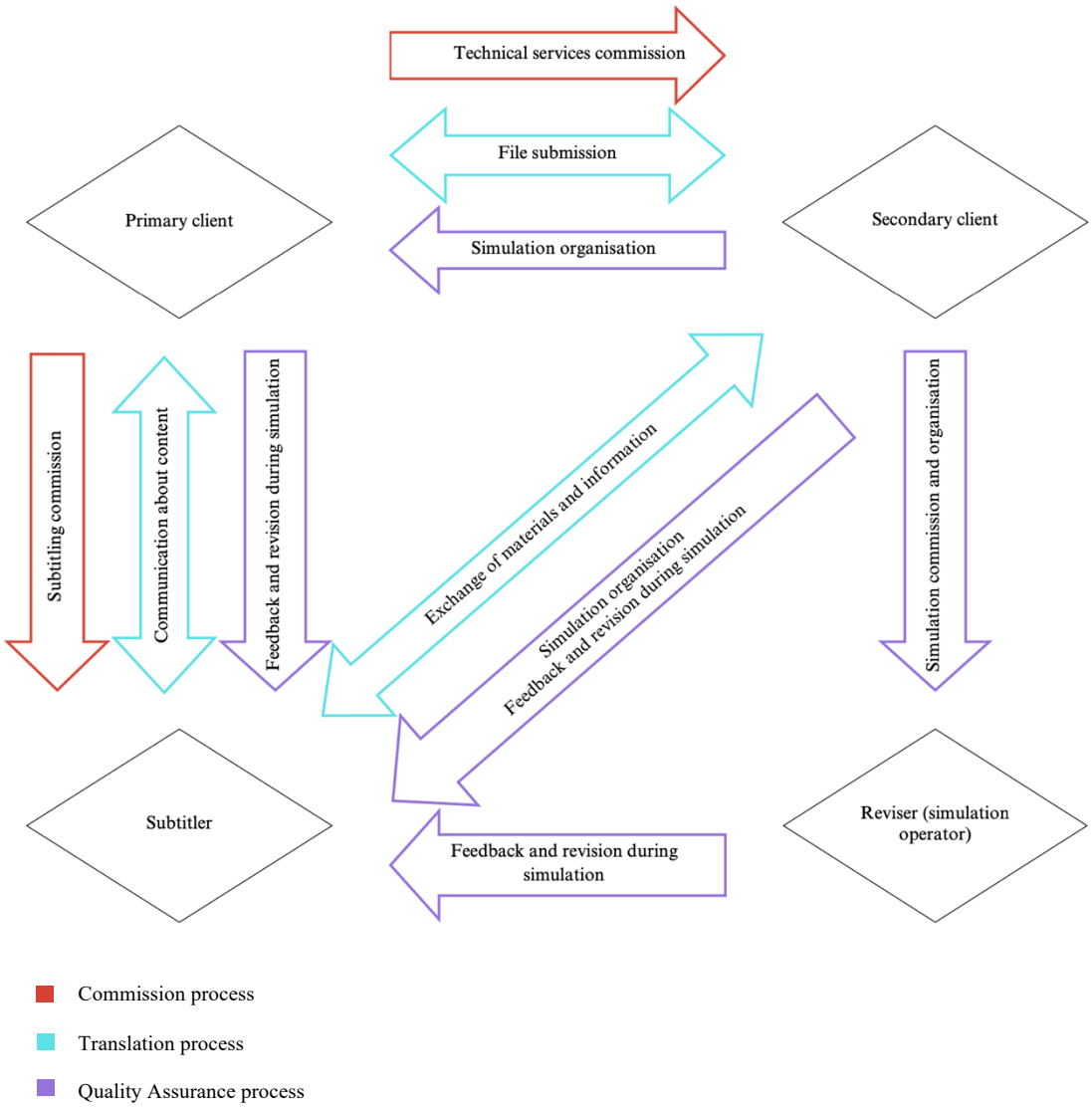


Figure 4. The agents and interactions of cinema subtitling.

On the other hand, when working for video subtitling, the subtitlers almost exclusively interact with the secondary client; a project manager, or a technical manager specialised in subtitling, or sometimes both at a post-production laboratory or an LSP. The subtitlers are commissioned directly by this intermediary client, negotiate rates, communicate, exchange files with them and are paid by them. In this workflow, they rarely interact with the primary level agent who has commissioned this project from the secondary client. This was the case for Participant B, for example, who interacted with a project manager and a technical subtitling manager at a post-production company, as well as for Participant D, E, and F who interacted mainly with project managers. Figure 5 below illustrates the usual roles and interactions for video subtitling projects, wherein the secondary client serves as the intermediary between agents. In this context, it is important to note that revision is optional and may not be commissioned by all clients or for every project.

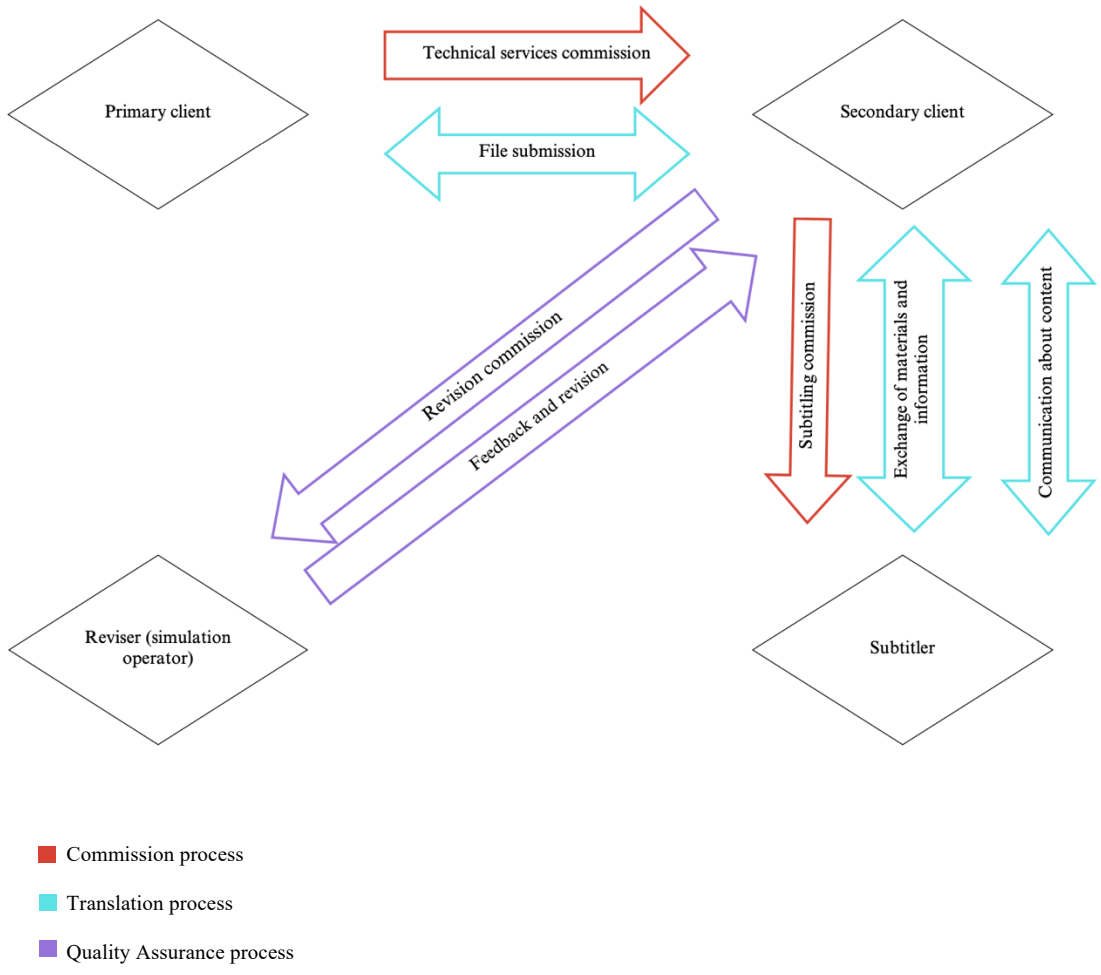


Figure 5. The agents and interactions of video subtitling.

Beyond this dichotomy in commissioning processes, when asked about their role in the subtitling production network, most of the participants expressed a lack of comprehensive understanding and shared that they were unfamiliar with the processes preceding and following their file submissions.

4.2.2 Finding clients

Finding clients, which can be a difficult task, is a very important step for freelance translators, as they need them to obtain projects. Approaches to finding clients vary from one translator to the other, as well as according to subtitle distribution medium.

In both cinema and VOD, the most common way to find clients is networking. In most cases, the subtitlers created their network when they were employed in post-production laboratories at the beginning of their career. Participant A, F and G started in big LSPs at a time when these were not as famous and globalised as they are now. At some point, however, each of them found that they did not agree with working conditions and practices anymore and started as freelancers, including by working for some of the clients they had met through networking. For instance, Participant A met distributors and a few producers, thus creating a client base throughout the years, notably in the French company where she learned the profession. This now allows her to work equally with "little-known producers and distributors" as well as prominent entities in the market that "pay [her] well and allow [her] to work well in good conditions". Participant C learned subtitling in the same company as Participant A, and when she left to start as a freelancer, all her former clients contacted her and then recommended her to other clients. Participant B has two regular clients who were the two companies in which she did her internship during her studies. Participant D's two main clients are also contacts he met when he started his career in a production company. Participant E has three regular clients who come from her network and offer her projects regularly. Participant G mentioned a dozen regular clients which results in a great variety of projects for him.

Another way of finding clients is to make requests or to be known to them. As subtitlers working for the cinema are in direct contact with distributors, they can be contacted by them if they have managed to establish a relationship of trust over time. For instance, Participants A, C, and G are sometimes called when they have already worked on a similar project by the same directors or screenwriters. Participant C explained that for big cinema productions, she is contacted by the technical directors of the distribution of the film in France, and for smaller productions she is often contacted by the post-production director. However, more often, the three cinema subtitlers call these clients themselves to request specific films they are interested in. Participant A stated that she used to be reluctant to request projects in the beginning, but managed to create a solid client base through this method. Participant C has been encouraged by her clients to request films she is interested in. These subtitlers stay informed about new releases and thus adopt a proactive approach. Participants A and C mentioned that they usually look on *Allociné* (n.d.)[11] for the biggest releases and subsequently contact their distributors. As Participant C points out "when clients know you, it is great because they prefer working with passionate people who are interested in the project and want to do it".

When working for video, subtitlers can also request projects, however not in exactly the same way. Usually, when working for this distribution medium, they do not know which specific projects the companies are working on and therefore just notify them of their availability and their interest in being considered for projects. Participant B, for example, very often tried to get in touch with French post-production laboratories, called numerous times, but only received very few replies that were not fruitful in the end. Despite being very proactive, she struggled to find new clients considering the state of market in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant F is also very proactive in canvassing post-production laboratories through e-mails, calls, or via LinkedIn, by indicating that she is available to work. She is now also trying to find new clients by contacting distributors directly, such as TV channels, because she stated that working directly for the final client without an intermediary offers the best working conditions (thus confirming the statements of the three subtitlers working for cinema). This has not really been fruitful for her yet, but she remains hopeful.

[11] For more information, visit the Allociné (n.d.) website available at https://www.allocine.fr/.

Participant G, who was mostly working on cinema subtitling before the COVID-19 pandemic, also had to use this strategy to find new clients as he did not have any cinema projects when cinemas were closed because of lockdown. He therefore contacted post-production laboratories to start working on series for a VOD streaming platform. He highlighted that he enjoys working for this platform which belongs to a major company, as they offer good remuneration and fair working conditions for both their cinema and VOD projects because "they take it seriously and are respectful". After working successfully on a season of a series, he is now usually asked to do the next seasons as well, as clients tend to re-hire the same teams.

Another effective way to find clients – which is linked to community collaboration, including in the ATAA community – is being recommended to clients by other subtitlers. Participants A and C have found numerous new clients thanks to other subtitlers, colleagues who were not available for a task and recommended them, because they knew their work. Referrals have also been useful for Participant F who was called by companies thanks to word of mouth; for Participant B who has a mentor in ATAA who helps her by recommending her to his own clients; and for Participant D who was referred to a VOD client through a colleague. Participant E also found new clients through colleagues, notably when these made the request to work with her by splitting the episodes of a season between them. She also makes the same request for other colleagues that she wishes to include in her projects. Participant F shared that ATAA also has a group chat on Discord in which translators suggest their clients to other translators if they do not have time for a project. This is very valuable, because as she stated, "the most difficult task is to manage to find a new client"– once they have been in touch with the client who has seen the quality of their work, it is easy to contact them again to ask if they have other projects. Beyond offering a strong network of colleagues who recommend each other, ATAA also offers clients the chance to find them through their members database (ATAA, n.d.-a), in which they can find information on the subtitlers' language pairs, AVT services, and any other information they wish to display. ATAA translators are free to add any information they wish to this directory, such as their past projects, their CV and education background, or their professional affiliations (SACEM, SCAM, etc.).

In summary, finding clients varies according to each distribution medium. Networking

and leveraging existing connections are common approaches used to find clients. Requests and proactive efforts also play a role, as well as recommendations from fellow subtitlers and the ATAA network. Finding clients can therefore be described as an ongoing process that requires adaptability and persistence, emphasising the significance of building strong professional connections within the industry.

4.2.3 Remuneration and negotiating rates

As for distribution medium, remuneration also varies according to distribution type and clients: as Díaz-Cintas & Remael (2020, p. 56) state, "subtitlers can be paid per whole audiovisual programme, per number of words, per subtitle, or more commonly these days, per minute of video". Based on my observations, this is similar in the French industry, in which I observed three remuneration possibilities among participants: per subtitle, per minute, and per project.

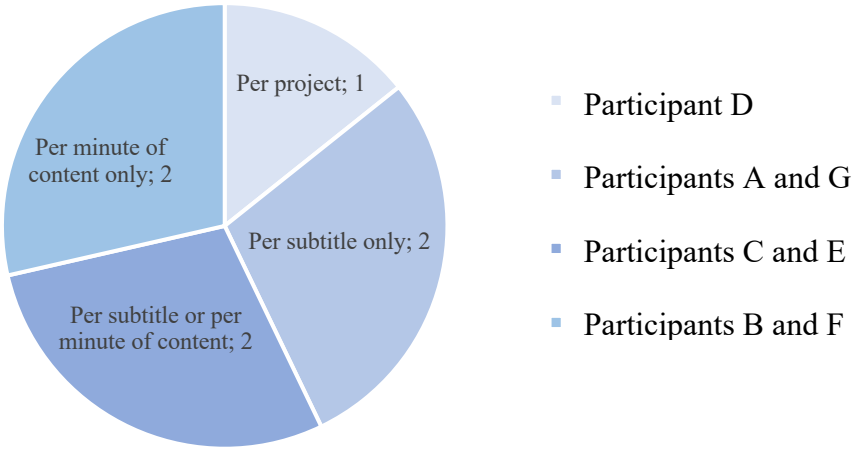


Figure 6. Type of remuneration.

The first category, which is the fairest according to the subtitlers I observed, is to be paid according to the number of subtitles. This is mainly for films and more specifically films for cinema distribution, however some of the subtitlers who have long-term clients also managed to negotiate this remuneration type for their video projects. As Díaz-Cintas & Remael (2020, p. 55) note, "[w]orking directly with clients

in need of subtitles may be more challenging, at least in the early years of a professional's career, but it also tends to be more financially rewarding". This was the case for Participants A and G, who work mainly for cinema distributors through the intermediary of a laboratory or the French branch of an LSP. As they are in touch directly with the primary client (the major company), they can negotiate their remuneration with them and not with the LSP. They are thus paid per subtitle at a good rate, and not per minute of video.

Participant G successfully negotiated remuneration for all of his projects on a per subtitle basis. However, he emphasised that his rates for cinema projects are higher than his rates for video projects. Participant C also noted that there is a difference in rates between cinema and video projects. For cinema distribution, she always works for the same rate and is paid per subtitle. For VOD distribution, however, she can sometimes be paid per minute of content. She stated that overall, cinema subtitling is the only area that is still protected: it is well-paid and offers comfortable working conditions, she thus "feels privileged to work in such a niche market". This market is indeed limited because, as a professional subtitler recently stated, there are between 400 and 500 French subtitlers, but only about 20 of them work exclusively for cinema (Boiron and Syssau, 2020, p. 18). This emphasises the aforementioned dichotomy between video and cinema subtitling and highlights the challenges in entering the exclusive cinema market. Participant C usually does not have to negotiate her rates, as she negotiated well in the beginning and is well-established in her profession and in the cinema market. She stated however, that recently she has had to negotiate, and sometimes even decline VOD projects, because the rates were too low. She shared that she is aware of the struggles that new translators on the market go through and the derisory amount they can be paid, and wishes to encourage them to defend good rates and to decline low-rate projects, in order to defend their value and be able to make a living from the profession. Participant E does not work for cinema distribution, and therefore not for the primary client, nevertheless, she also requests to be paid per subtitle, which is usually the case with her regular clients. On rare occasions, she accepted payment per minute of content from one post-production company, but she usually insists on being paid per subtitle because she considers it fairer, especially for series that contain lots of dialogue.

For video distribution, the subtitling projects tend to be paid per minute of video. This was the case for Participant B, who considered herself lucky, because despite paying by minute of content, her main client generally offers her good deadlines, rates, and working conditions. She shared that she does not have to negotiate too often, yet she encountered challenges in establishing boundaries and declining low-paying offers that undermine the value of her work. Finding a balance proved challenging as she was still at the early stages of her career and wished to diversify her portfolio. Participant F also stated that she is "unfortunately" paid per minute of content. She also refuses projects at low rates because they threaten the profession and are not worth the time and effort, as she emphasised: "you might as well read a book! It's true, if you count taxes and everything, it doesn't actually add up, there is no point in this. And in addition, you're ruining the profession".

Another type of remuneration, which was mentioned by Participant D, is a fixed price per whole audiovisual project, that he sometimes successfully re-negotiates when it is not high enough. His DVD clients have always been fair and have encouraged him to tell them if he judges that they need to reassess his rates and increase them. Nonetheless, he stated that he has to negotiate more often when working on VOD projects than other projects and highlight to the client that it is not worth it for him to accept some projects. Similarly to the other participants, he notes that rates are becoming lower with time and that it can be difficult to say no early in one's career. He stated that it is important "to find a balance between the client's needs and one's own mental and physical health".

Subtitlers with the ability to negotiate their rates is a significant improvement compared to the European standard as "78% of people negotiate only sometimes, rarely or never" in spite of the fact that "a proactive approach on the part of the freelancer accounts for better rates" (AVTE, n.d.). This is problematic because as audiovisual translators "are legally considered as individual companies, [they] should be the ones setting [their] rates", which is not often the case and "shows an unbalanced distribution of power between the actors on the market" (AVTE, n.d.). However, despite examining three distinct modes of remuneration, the findings of the present study suggest an overall decline in compensation across all areas of the profession. Even though the three well-established participants working in the cinema industry

receive fair rates and deadlines, they observed downward trends and expressed concerns regarding declining rates and the long-term sustainability of the profession.

4.2.4 Credits for subtitling

Practices seem to be homogeneous when it comes to subtitling credits. All participants stated that they should be and are always credited as authors for their work because it is a legal obligation in France. They all usually write their name in a subtitle at the end of the content (*Sous-titrage: Name Surname*), however, not all of them check or are completely sure about what happens with their name in the credits. Only Participant B stated that she is sure she is always credited because she checks systematically. While Participant C is always credited for cinema and VOD projects, she is unsure about what happens when the subtitles are released on TV channels afterwards. She also stated that even if credited, her name appears "too late", "once everyone has left [the cinema], at the end of the credits" – although this is better than nothing, her name "is often unseen". Participant D is credited as translator most of the time, except if he only adapts an existing translation, such as for new versions for DVD, in which case he credits himself as proof-reader. The creation of distinct adaptations for DVD has been emphasised by Cornu (2014, p. 281), as well as by Rosnet (2012, p. 78), who noted that, while sometimes subtitles can be reused for multiple media, generally the first version is tailored for cinema, followed by a video version crafted for DVD, and ideally, a third version designed for television, because of the different norms inherent to each medium. Participant E is always credited, except for bonuses and featurettes. Participant F thinks she is always credited but does not verify, as sometimes she does not even know where her subtitles are broadcast. Nonetheless, she always makes sure to sign her subtitles, except when changes have been made in the revision phase that she did not agree with, in which case she removes her name. This raises concerns over copyright and recognition, given that French law mandates proper crediting of subtitlers, and that they are required to declare each translation for royalty purposes.

To summarise, subtitling credits are generally guaranteed and considered a legal obligation, providing subtitlers with recognition for their work. While participants have varying levels of certainty and verification regarding their name appearing in the

credits, the overall trend towards visibility represents a positive development. The fact that all subtitlers are credited represents an important achievement in the French subtitling industry, as this is not always the case in other linguistic contexts (Kuo, 2015, p. 9). Too often audiovisual translators have worked in the shadows and not received any recognition or visibility for their work, including historically in the French industry, as stated by Participant A. Invisibility has often been evoked in subtitling, notably in light of the general consensus that the best subtitles are those that go unnoticed, by allowing for a balanced harmony of image, sound and speech that gives the audience the impression of watching a film without reading it (Rosnet, 2012, p. 75). However, invisibility is a tricky concept, as "invisible subtitles" tend to be praised and thus often have repercussions on the translator's visibility. The fact that their name is now always displayed at the end thus marks an improvement in terms of visibility. However if this subtitle appears too late on screen, they are only visible to cinephiles who watch the film until the end of the credits (Rosnet, 2012, p. 80).

4.3 The subtitlers' schedule and processes

The first part of this section examines the schedules of each participant, followed by a comprehensive table presenting a descriptive grid of their respective processes. These findings aim to provide valuable insights into each subtitler's work and habits to start drawing insightful conclusions regarding various aspects of their subtitling workflows and collaboration patterns. As it was not feasible to observe the complete subtitling process for a film or series in a single day, the grids outlining the approach employed by each subtitler were constructed based on both observations and individual interviews with each participant. Although the observation focused on a specific project, each grid contains the general subtitling process usually followed by each subtitler. Hence, this process is applicable to other projects of a similar nature undertaken by each participant, intended for the same distribution medium.

4.3.1 Participant A

I met with Participant A at 9:30 in front of her co-working office. The introductory interview was held in a café nearby and lasted 1 hour 15. Therefore, once we went back to her office, she started working at 11:15 am. We took a lunch break which

lasted 1 hour 10. She stopped working at 4:45 and the following retrospective interview lasted 1 hour. On that day she therefore worked 4 hours 30 and stated in the retrospective interview that she did not do anything prior to my arrival and would not work on anything else on that day. As her deadline was not urgent, she considered that she has done enough work for that day. Participant A stated that when she is not stressed, she works around 6 hours a day and usually around 30 hours a week on her subtitling projects. When she is a bit more stressed, it is around 8 or 9 hours a day. When deadlines are tight, she can work up to 11 or 12 hours a day, which she tries to avoid. Most of the time, she avoids working on weekends, but if she really needs to, she sometimes works on one day of the weekend. Therefore, in terms of hours of arrival and departure, she stated that this matched her current schedule as she tends to have regular hours adapted to the times her child is at school. She noted that she usually organises her day in the same way as during the observation and follows the same process. The only aspect that was different was that she tends to be a bit more distracted when she is not observed, as she often reads newspapers during the day and then ends up looking up more things online.

Drawing from the insights gleaned through interviews and observation[12], Table 6 provided below elucidates the subtitled process and different steps undertaken by Participant A for a film destined for cinema distribution.

Initial information provided to the subtitler	- Film title and name of director - Deadlines - Name of intermediary client
Collaboration with clients via	- Distributor (primary client) - Post-production company (secondary client)
Materials provided	- *Film in 7 separate reels (non-final video files with watermarks)* - *Dialogue lists separated in reels (password-protected)* - *Spotting files separated in reels (unlocked)*
Translation resources	- *English dictionaries: Onlook Dictionary, Free dictionary* - *French dictionary: Larousse* - *Bilingual dictionary: WordReference* - *Terminology: IATE, scientific articles*

[12] Elements that were directly observed are highlighted in italics, while the remaining details are derived from the interviews. It is worth noting that these emphasised elements remain consistent across all seven tables for each participant.

External tools	- *Notebook: details of challenges, different translation options,* suggestions for informal pre-simulations, established terminology or elements that require harmonisation with dubbing. - *Diary: deadlines and project availability.* - *Individual paper sheets: writing different options and organising ideas.*
Pre-translation tasks	- Reading the comic book on which the film is based. - Watching the whole film. - Taking notes on translation ideas, elements that will require harmonisation with dubbing. - Subtitling trailer and harmonising names and terminology with dubber.
Translation process	- *Reviewing each scene for familiarisation, going back to the first subtitle to begin first draft.* - *Reviewing each scene individually to ensure consistency.* - *Comparing audio and dialogue list by listening to scenes multiple times while reading the printed dialogue list, pausing video at challenges.* - *Research.* - *Checking consistency and terminology by referring to previous reels and trailer subtitling.* - *Revision and error correction.* - *Marking challenges in subtitles with asterisks and taking notes on translation suggestions in comments for later consultation and harmonisation.* - Assessing number of elements marked with two asterisks and reviewing. - Addressing comments or notes. - Correcting and overcoming translation challenges.
Collaboration with colleagues or other agents	- Harmonisation with dubber. - Consulting specialists about terminology and concepts. - Consulting English subtitlers.
Proofreading process	- Multiple proofreading for naturalness, idiomaticity and fluidity. - Incorporating any changes if new versions arrive (e.g., deleted, edited, or added scenes).
Quality control process	- Informal pre-simulation with colleagues for feedback. - Attending dubbing verification for harmonisation. - Final proofreading. - Submission. - Official simulation with primary client at the secondary client's laboratory.

Administrative tasks observed	- N/A

Table 6. Subtitling process for Participant A.

Comments on process

She first received the video files to watch, followed by the dialogue lists and spotting files which were sent around the same time. This enabled her to begin her translation directly with the spotting, although this is not always the case. On the day of the observation, she did her first draft for reels 4 and 5 out of 7. Her approach allows her to generate a preliminary draft for each reel that will subsequently undergo revision, collaboration, proofreading, and quality control processes. She mentioned that, on average, for a straightforward film, she could complete her first draft within a week, and two further weeks would be required to complete the subsequent steps before submitting her files. For more complex content, she estimated that a comfortable workflow would necessitate between three weeks and one month. In her current project, she had been given a one-month timeframe to complete it before the simulation. She acknowledged that she may still need to make further changes even after the simulation, as she had already received numerous different versions, and this director tends to make adjustments until the final stages.

Comments on collaboration

Participant A's engagement with clients encompassed both primary and secondary clients, involving communication through email or phone calls, depending on the nature of their relationship. Within the context of this film, Participant A primarily collaborated with the dubber via email, as their work was carried out synchronously. Moreover, Participant A engaged in informal collaboration with field specialists and English subtitlers, seeking their expertise and guidance regarding the source content. Additionally, Participant A mentioned that whenever time permits, she organises informal pre-simulations with colleagues.

4.3.2 Participant B

I met Participant B at 10:00 at her apartment, we had coffee together and did the introductory interview, which lasted slightly over 30 minutes. She started working at 11:00. At lunch, she cooked and invited me to eat with her, this break lasted 1 hour 35.

She took one 15-minute break during the afternoon. She stopped working at 19:35 and thus effectively worked for 6 hours 45 minutes as she did not do any tasks prior to my arrival. In the subsequent retrospective interview, Participant B stated that this day matched her current working schedule, as she likes to take her time whenever she can when she is only working on one project. This observation seems to suggest that, as was the case for other subtitlers who agreed to participate in my study, Participant B participated because she was not in a rush and had the flexibility to work at her own pace. On busier days, she would work around 9 to 10 hours a day and sometimes at night between 22:00 and 2:00. She stated that she usually works on weekends but not the entire day. She uses this time to make progress on some of her projects, mostly if her partner is also working. She mentioned however that she is trying more often to avoid working during the weekends. She stated that the process she followed matched her usual tasks on a working day. Similarly to Participant A, she admitted that she was more focused than usual because I was observing her. She would normally take more breaks to do other things. She also recognised that she looked up more of her translations to verify her solutions, which made her translation process less fluid.

Table 7 below illustrates the subtitling process and different steps undertaken by Participant B for a series destined for a VOD platform distribution.

Initial information provided to the subtitler	- General topic of the series - Duration of episodes - Remuneration - *Deadlines*
Collaboration with clients	- *LSP* (project manager and *subtitling manager)*
Materials provided	- *Video files separated in episodes (non-final video files with watermarks sent to watch and then final videos when ready for subtitling).* - *Locked template files for the dialogues for each episode and each episodes' forced narratives.* - *Online Excel glossary shared between French subtitlers and dubbers to fill out KNPs and terms of addresses between characters (provided by the laboratory).* - *Online Excel file to fill out with forced narratives in multiple languages (provided by the VOD streaming platform).* - *Dubbing script for each episode (provided by dubbers).*

Translation resources	- *French dictionary: Larousse, CNRTL* - *Bilingual dictionary: WordReference* - *Conjugation: Le Figaro* - *Synonyms: CNRTL* - *Idiomaticity: Wiktionary or forums*
External tools	- *Notebook: questions for subtitling manager, inconsistencies, translation challenges or elements to check.* - *Second notebook: accounting, budget, and invoicing.* - *Diary: meetings and deadlines.*
Pre-translation tasks	- Watching all the episodes of the season. - Preparing Excel files with forced narrative inserted by graphists for French subtitling and dubbing with co-subtitler and dubbers. - Preparing KNPs with co-subtitler.
Translation process (in chronological order)	- *Reviewing all previously translated scenes, watching the next scene multiple times for familiarisation, going back to the first subtitle to begin first draft without looking up difficulties.* - *Going back to the beginning of each scene to review the overall appearance and ensure consistency.* - *Research.* - *Checking consistency and terminology by referring to previous subtitling files, forced narratives, and dubbing files.* - *Comparing audio and template by listening to scenes multiple times.* - *Marking challenges with comments: taking notes on translation suggestions, terminology, harmonisation, inconsistencies, and making comments for her co-subtitler and subtitling manager.* - Searching for all remaining instances with "XX" marks and resolving them to produce a second draft. - Research, revision, and error correction. - Addressing comments, correcting, and overcoming translation challenges. - *Consultation of her co-subtitlers' episodes for client feedback.*
Collaboration with colleagues or other agents	- *Collaboration with co-subtitler for questions and mutual feedback.* - Retroactive collaboration with dubbers about dubbing scripts.

Proofreading process	- *Proofreading of first draft with English template.* - Pre-simulation of French subtitles. - Proofreading of each subtitle one by one. - Checking spelling.
Quality control process	- Formal simulation by co-subtitler. - Receiving co-subtitler feedback and incorporating it. - Informal pre-simulation with colleague for feedback (optional). - Final proofreading. - Submission to client. - *Receiving and incorporating client feedback for each episode.* - *Resubmission.*
Administrative tasks observed	- *Calls related to tax declaration.* - *Invoicing.*

Table 7. Subtitling process for Participant B.

Comments on process

Participant B was working on episode 5, marking it as her third episode contribution. She estimated that it takes approximately one day to complete the initial draft, followed by two days for proofreading, research, and ensuring technical accuracy. Additionally, she allocates two to three more days for her personal pre-simulation of the French subtitles, individually proofreading and checking spelling for each subtitle. This totals to around 7 days of work for each episode. Nonetheless, she considers herself fortunate in this scenario, as she has been given a minimum of two weeks per episode as her deadline. It is worth noting that she was provided with an English template prepared by the LSP but was not given dialogue lists.

Comments on collaboration

Participant B communicated with the project manager for information, contracts, and invoicing. A subtitling manager also assisted with questions and materials, serving as an intermediary. Participant B noticed errors in the content and the forced narratives, i.e., textual elements that appear on screen (Georgakopoulou, 2019, p. 153), which she reported to the client. However, given the long production chain, she was uncertain whether the responsible party at the primary client's company would be informed. In terms of colleagues, Participant B collaborated with a co-subtitler, conducting formal simulations and providing mutual feedback for consistency. She prefers in-person, but

remote work is also possible. Participant B mainly collaborated with the dubbers during pre-translation stages to establish terminology and terms of addresses for forced narratives but then during the subtitling she only had access to the dubbers' files with limited communication. Furthermore, whenever time permits, Participant B enjoys organising informal pre-simulations with more experienced colleagues, such as her ATAA mentor, seeking valuable feedback from them.

4.3.3 Participant C

I met with participant C at 9:30 in her apartment. We had coffee before starting the introductory interview. It lasted slightly under an hour, and she began working at 11:00. We took a lunch break together, which lasted 1 hour. She took a 25-minutes break to go for a walk during the afternoon and then a 10-minutes break in the evening to make coffee and check some emails and messages. She finished working at 19:20 and we started the retrospective interview which lasted around 55 minutes in which she stated that she would not work after this. As she had not done any tasks prior to my arrival, she thus effectively worked for 6 hours 45 minutes. She stated that the tasks and the process matched her usual working habits. However, her schedule is very variable; it is not systematically organised and changes according to her deadlines or her side activities. At the time of the observation, she was working on two subtitling projects, but had also received a third one, as well as a dubbing project. Therefore, she had a lot of work and had no other choice than to work all day every day. She usually works full days of 7 hours, which can be variable – on average she said that she works between 5 and 10 hours a day, and between 5 to 7 days a week. Her weeks can thus go up to 50 hours. She also works on weekends, which she does not mind. Similarly to Participant B, she shared that she enjoys adapting her working schedule to that of her partner who also has a flexible schedule, enabling them to jointly plan their time and not restrict themselves to weekends only. She stated however that this was a rather intense day and that sometimes she has lighter days. She usually takes a longer lunch break, such as to watch a series and starts working again between 15:00 or 16:00, which means she can sometimes finish at 21:00 or 22:00 if she does not have any plans for the evening. As for the previous participants, she stated that this was probably because she knew I was here, nonetheless she found it very good and stimulating to be

observed, because she made good progress on her work and said that she should probably work like this every day in order to have proper free evenings.

Participant C was working on a film intended for cinema distribution during the morning of the observation and on a film for VOD platform distribution in the afternoon. Therefore, Table 8 below highlights the subtitling process and different steps she has undertaken for each distribution medium based on my observations which were triangulated with the retrospective interview.

	FILM FOR CINEMA DISTRIBUTION	FILM FOR VOD PLATFORM DISTRIBUTION
Initial information provided to the subtitler	- General topic of the film and length - Film title - Information on dates of arrival of materials - Deadlines	- General topic of the film and length - Film title - Deadlines - *Login and technical explanations for subtitling platform* - Information on available materials - Reference to norms and style guides
Collaboration with clients	- Distributors - Post-production company	- LSP
Materials provided	- *Video files separated in 10 reels (non-final video files, encrypted, with watermarks).* - *Dialogue lists separated in reels.* - *Spotting files separated in reels.* - *Dubbing files separated in reels (provided by dubber).*	- *Video file available on platform (preliminary version).* - *Locked template file.* - *Dialogue list with change list.* - KNPs available for consultation.
Translation resources	- *English dictionary: Dictionary.com* - *French dictionary: Le Grand Robert, CNRTL* - *Bilingual dictionary: WordReference* - *Synonyms: CNRTL*	

	- *Idiomaticity: Reverso, Linguee* - *Terminology: historical and scientific articles, specialised forums.*	
External tools	- N/A	
Pre-translation tasks	- Watching the whole film.	- Watching the whole film. - Re-watching the film to identify technical vocabulary (optional).
Translation process (in chronological order)	- *Reviewing each scene for familiarisation, going back to the first subtitle to begin first draft without looking up difficulties.* - *Checking consistency and terminology by referring to dubbing files.* - *Comparing audio and dialogue list by listening to scenes multiple times with headphones while reading the dialogue list and annotations.* - *Research.* - *Marking challenges with asterisks, incomprehension with question mark, multiple translations with one slash, and edits to the template with a double slash. Adding initials next to the asterisks when it is for a terminology question to a consultant.* - *Verbal pronunciation of subtitles to assess idiomaticity.* - *Addressing multiple translation options, asterisks, or question marks.* - Incorporating dubbers' feedback.	
Collaboration with colleagues or other agents	- *Collaboration with dubber for mutual feedback, decisions, and consistency.* - Informal discussions with friends with English as their first language for questions.	- *Collaboration with dubber for decisions on names, expressions, terms of addresses.* - Informal discussions with friends with English as their first language for questions. - *Facebook posts for questions about terminology.* - External informal consultants for terminology: a specialist of informatics and internet and another one for physics.
Proofreading process	- Proofreading of first draft. - Pre-simulation of French subtitles.	

	- Proofreading of each subtitle one by one.	
Quality control process	- Resynchronising subtitles if needed with final version of video. - Informal pre-simulation with colleague with English as their first language for feedback. - Submission to client. - Formal simulation with primary client.	- Resynchronising subtitles if needed with final version of video. - Informal pre-simulation with colleague with English as their first language for feedback. - Receiving and incorporating LSP feedback for each episode. - Receiving and incorporating primary client feedback. - Resubmission.
Administrative tasks observed	- *Calls related to SACEM declaration.*	

Table 8. Subtitling process for Participant C.

Comments on process

In her cinema project, she was nearing completion, working on reel 9 out of 10, indicating that she was close to finishing her initial draft. She was also working on the first draft of her VOD project. She mentioned her preference for allocating two weeks to write the dialogues, by completing the first draft in 10 days, including weekends. Following this intensive writing phase, she would take a day off before revisiting the dialogues for proofreading. Interestingly, during her first draft, she relied on multiple online resources for immediate reference, reserving further research and assistance for specific areas during the revision process. It should also be emphasised that although collaboration patterns varied due to the constraints inherent to the platform, in terms of the translation process, she adhered to the same steps, regardless of whether she worked with her own desktop subtitling software or the cloud-based imposed software.

Comments on collaboration

Her collaboration with the dubber for the cinema project was characterised by close interaction. They regularly exchanged files, provided feedback to each other, and engaged in discussions to find translation solutions. Upon completing reel 9, she promptly shared it with the dubber. In the case of the VOD project, due to limitations on file exports, their collaboration was more constrained, primarily relying on email

communication to address doubts and uncertainties. It is worth highlighting that she stood out as the subtitler who collaborated extensively with external consultants, utilising her network of specialists from diverse fields for fruitful collaborations with these external agents. However, this was mainly observed in her VOD project due to the specialist terminology of the film, in contrast to the cinema film that did not contain many terminological translation challenges.

4.3.4 Participant D

I met Participant D at 11:00 in his apartment in the outskirts of Paris. When I arrived, he still had to finish reviewing a DVD subtitling project to submit it to his client at 12:00, in time for his deadline. During these 30 minutes, I had a coffee and read his MA thesis about his subtitling experience and background. Then we did the introductory interview, which lasted around 55 minutes, after which he started working on his VOD project I came to observe at 12:25. We took a 25-minute break to buy something to eat and have lunch together. He took another 10 minutes break during the afternoon and stopped working at 16:00 because he had to go pick his child from school in Paris at 16:30. The retrospective interview lasted 40 minutes, during which he told me that he had already started working for around 30 minutes on the DVD project that he had to submit that day before driving his child to school. He thus effectively worked around 4 hours and stated in the retrospective interview that he would probably work until 23:45 once his children were asleep. He has a variable schedule but usually spends a lot of time on subtitling projects. His weeks can represent around 50 hours of work, and he often works on weekends. Therefore, he stated that he could not say if this matched his usual schedule or not, as it changes every day according to his children's schedules. However, the tasks and the process were similar to his usual ones, the only difference in his process was that he pronounced the sentences out loud, which he usually does not but he did it to give me insight into his thinking process, in a similar way to a Think Aloud Protocol, mostly because I could not hear the original sound of the content as he was wearing headphones.

Table 9 below elucidates the subtitling process and different steps undertaken by Participant D for a film destined for a VOD platform distribution.

Initial information provided to the subtitler	- General topic of the film - Deadlines - Available materials
Collaboration with clients	- Post-production company
Materials provided	- *Video file* - *Unlocked English template file*
Translation resources	- *Synonyms: Synonymo* - *Terminology: scientific articles* - *Idiomaticity: Wiktionary, Reverso*
External tools	- N/A
Pre-translation tasks	- Transcoding and preparing video files. - Looking for existing versions online (dubbing, subtitling, fansubbing).
Translation process (in chronological order)	- Machine translation using Google Translate for his English template. - *Reviewing each scene for familiarisation, going back to the first subtitle to begin first draft without looking up difficulties.* - *Spotting and subtitling by adapting time codes and post-editing machine translation.* - *Listening to scenes multiple times with headphones.* - *Research.*
Collaboration with colleagues or other agents	- Informal collaboration with Italian speaker for questions.
Proofreading process	- Pre-simulation of French subtitles. - Exporting subtitles file in Word and proofreading them one by one without video for difficulties, typos, and errors.
Quality control process	- Error-checking for short-timed subtitles. - Submission to client. - Receiving and incorporating client feedback. - Resubmission.
Administrative tasks observed	- N/A

Table 9. Subtitling process for Participant D.

Comments on process

Participant D employed an interesting workflow, translating an Italian film without prior viewing due to time constraints, relying on both the Italian audio and an English template. He started with machine translation and post-edited that preliminary translation. He used a proactive approach, immediately researching and addressing challenges rather than deferring them. For other projects, he would receive more resources such as dialogue lists, previous French subtitle files, or even fansubs from clients, which he would adapt and enhance for new releases. When not provided with materials, he would search for them online. He estimated that this particular film would require approximately 7 days of work, including weekends.

Comments on collaboration

Participant D's collaboration involves the use of Facebook Messenger in addition to emails, to communicate with certain clients, to inform them when the subtitles are ready. In terms of seeking language-related assistance, he relies on his network of friends, including an English speaker with whom he frequently consults for questions regarding English audio (not applicable in this Italian project). He also mentioned an Italian friend who he can turn to for support in understanding and resolving language-related queries. Furthermore, for technical content, he reaches out to experts from federations and associations to ensure accuracy. In the interviews, he also mentioned a unique aspect of his process, involving the utilisation of pre-existing translations and fansubs available online. Unfortunately, I could not observe this practice during my observation since he was not working from an existing translation at that time.

4.3.5 Participant E

The observation with Participant E was not representative of her workday, as she had just finished working on her subtitles and only had a new version which would arrive later and a bonus to subtitle. The criteria for my research participant recruitment were met as the project was still ongoing because some modifications still needed to be done in the next versions of the videos. This made me realise that this was also part of the reality of the profession: sometimes translators must wait for other people in the

production network to send them documents, and they do not have work. This shows the irregularity of the job and the fact that not two days look alike.

Nevertheless, she showed me all the tools and software she typically uses, explained how servers work and how she retrieved her files. She spotted one file for me, which was on the project she was working on at the moment, to show me her process. It was very informative, and I noticed a lot of similarities with what I had already observed with the previous participants. She stated that this is representative of all the tasks she does during a regular workday.

I arrived at her apartment at 10:00, we had tea and then the introductory interview lasted around 1 hour. I observed her work and explain her process to me for 2 hours. The retrospective interview lasted 1 hour. She explained that she usually starts around the same time; that is 9:30 or 10:00. She does not enjoy working under pressure and therefore rarely accepts emergency projects. She can have very busy weeks and often works on weekends, because it allows her to take more time for herself during the week. She enjoys going to the cinema during the day as well as seeing friends. For example, if she watches a movie in the morning, she will then work from 14:00 to 22:00. Her schedule is very variable, which she enjoys. However, she stated that she generally prefers working evenings and weekends. In the last 7 months, she had to work 7 days a week and felt overwhelmed, she very rarely took breaks and had to keep going as projects kept coming. The situation has also been complicated because this VOD client has specific requests; she usually does 5 episodes per show and then has to do bonuses (summaries of the episode, character clips, and recaps before a new season), featurettes, and multiple trailers. However, the client does not provide schedules to inform her when all these extra files will arrive. This is difficult because every project thus requires a lot of extra planning, which can be time-consuming.

Although I could not observe each project in-depth, Participant E was working on a film intended for TV distribution at the time of the observation and on three series intended for a VOD platform. Therefore, Table 10 below highlights the subtitling process and different steps she has undertaken for each distribution medium based on my observation which was triangulated with the retrospective interview.

	FILM FOR TV DISTRIBUTION	3 SERIES FOR VOD PLATFORM DISTRIBUTION
Initial information provided to the subtitler	- *Film category* - *Film title* - Film script - *Clear information and specific deadlines and broadcast dates*	- *Approximate deadlines and information* - *Name of translators and simulation operator*
Collaboration with clients	- Post-production company	- Post-production company
Materials provided	- *Video file* - *Dialogue list with annotations* - *Dubbing file*	- *Video files separated in episodes (non-final versions)* - Template files (that she did not use) - Dialogue lists with annotations. - Bonuses, featurettes, trailers, and recap video files to subtitle. - Dubbing files (optionally provided by dubbers for some projects)
Translation resources	- English dictionary: Free Dictionary - French dictionary: Le Grand Robert, CNRTL - Synonyms: CRISCO - Idiomaticity: WordReference - Terminology: newspaper or academic articles.	
External tools	- *Notebook: writing challenges identified during first draft, alternative translation suggestions, and elements to check in simulation.*	
Pre-translation tasks	- Downloading the film the day before. - Watching the whole film when spotting.	- Downloading episodes the day before. - Translating episode summaries. - Translating episode titles. - Watching available episodes one by one when spotting. - Filling out and submitting localisation report with forced narratives for dubbing.
Translation process	- Assessing length and challenges to overcome.	

(in chronological order)	- Translating first draft without looking up difficulties, sometimes leaving multiple translation options. - Marking challenges with question marks for audio misunderstandings. - Comparing audio and dialogue lists with annotations by listening to scenes multiple times (with headphones if necessary). - Addressing question marks, ensuring accuracy for second draft. - Research.	
Collaboration with colleagues or other agents	- Retroactive passive collaboration with dubber who sent script.	- Collaboration with co-subtitler(s), agreeing on terminology, feedback, and filling out shared glossaries. - Collaboration with dubbers for terminology, forced narratives and consistency.
Proofreading process	- Proofreading of any remaining issues for third draft. - Exporting subtitles in Word or RTF and proofreading them one by one without video for challenges, typos, and errors.	
Quality control process	- Formal simulation by external simulator. - Consulting with simulator and incorporating feedback. - Submission to client. - Quality control by laboratory. - Internal simulation by TV channel and validation of episodes. - Incorporating client feedback. - Resubmission.	- Simulation with co-subtitler(s). - Formal simulation by external simulator. - Consulting with simulator and incorporating their feedback. - Submission to client in multiple formats. - Paper proofreading at laboratory (by AVT interns). - Receiving and incorporating client feedback for each episode. - Quality check by primary client. - Receiving and incorporating client feedback for each episode. - Resubmission.
Administrative tasks observed	- N/A	

Table 10. Subtitling process for Participant E.

Comments on process

She highlighted that her film for TV distribution had been initially subtitled for cinema distribution by another subtitler, thus requiring a new version due to differing norms. Nevertheless, she was not given access to the cinema subtitling file and translated from scratch. She began the spotting process without previewing the content beforehand. She mentioned that spotting a film typically takes her one day. She estimated that subtitling a film would require three weeks. She also pointed out that working on a VOD project posed challenges as she had to submit multiple files without having viewed the final episodes of the series. This lack of information could significantly impact her choices and orientation while subtitling. Similarly, she was often asked to translate summaries and titles of the episodes before watching the content. Participant E's experience with VOD clients suggests that their global approach may not be the best practice, and she believes that TV projects are more organised, with better communication and collaboration. Additionally, she has been able to decline using the subtitling platform and templates provided by the client thus far.

Comments on collaboration

Collaboration proved challenging for Participant E's VOD series due to frequent changes in the platform's planning and schedule, requiring constant communication and coordination. However, she did not encounter such issues with her TV client. While she does not collaborate with other subtitlers for films, she shares episodes of her series projects with second and sometimes even third subtitlers, engaging in revision, simulations, and mutual feedback. They communicated through a mailing list and collaborated on a shared glossary. The VOD platform also facilitated collaboration between subtitlers and dubbers to establish terminology and forced narratives through a shared document. In specific fields like documentaries, Participant E contacts external experts and consultants, often reaching out to federations or individuals with specialised knowledge.

4.3.6 Participant F

I arrived at 8:30 at her house, we had coffee and started the introductory interview which lasted around 35 minutes. She started subtitling at 9:20 and took three short 5-

10 minutes breaks. We had lunch together in a restaurant nearby, which lasted 1 hour 40. She worked until 16:35, when she had to stop because she had family obligations. She effectively worked for 5 hours 20 and stated in her retrospective interview, which lasted around 35 minutes, that she would have to work at least two more hours later in the evening. She usually follows a similar schedule as she takes time for her family at some point during the day and starts working again later. She stated that she has a very variable schedule depending on the days. She finds that the advantage of her profession is that she can adjust it to her family needs, to which she gives priority. She said she works on average between 40 and 45 hours per week. On some days, she works 2 or 4 hours and on other days she is totally overwhelmed with a large number of hours. She usually avoids working on weekends, except unforeseen emergencies. Her tasks were representative of what she does on a regular day, except that she usually takes a bit more time to be involved in ATAA.

Table 11 below delineates the subtitling process and different steps undertaken by Participant F for her episodes of a series destined for a TV channel and its platform, and subsequently for VOD platform distribution.

Initial information provided to the subtitler	- Duration of episodes - Deadlines and schedule for steps and broadcast dates
Collaboration with clients	- Post-production company
Materials provided	- *Video files separated in episodes (non-final video files with watermarks)* - Production scripts (number of scenes, character descriptions, etc.) - *Dialogue lists with annotations.*
Translation resources	- *English dictionary: Longmann (paper), Collins (online)* - *Bilingual dictionary: Robert & Collins EN-FR (paper)* - *Terminology: medical web pages* - *Idiomaticity: Reverso*
External tools	- N/A
Pre-translation tasks	- Watching all the previous episodes of the season. - *Watching available episodes one by one when spotting and writing the last subtitle with her name in the credits.*

Translation process (in chronological order)	- *Assessing challenges to overcome and referring to previous subtitling files for previously established translations.* - *Reviewing each scene and checking the spotting, going back to the first subtitle to begin first draft without stopping at difficulties.* - *Comparing audio and dialogue lists by listening to scenes multiple times for challenging scenes and medical terminology.* - *Research.* - *Checking consistency and terminology by referring to previous subtitling files, glossary, and forced narratives.* - Revision and error correction. - Reviewing subtitles for second and third drafts.
Collaboration with colleagues or other agents	- *Collaboration with co-subtitler for questions and mutual feedback, terminology* - *Collaboration with co-subtitler and dubbers to fill out a shared glossary for vocabulary and terms of addresses.* - Collaboration with doctor for medical terminology. - Passive "forced" collaboration with dubbers who received her subtitling files.
Proofreading process	- Printing subtitles for proofreading (optional). - Proofreading subtitles one by one by with verbal pronunciation. - Pre-simulation of French subtitles.
Quality control process	- Formal simulation by co-subtitler. - Receiving feedback from the co-subtitler and incorporating it. - Submission to client. - Receiving and incorporating client feedback for each episode. - Conformation for potential changes and resynchronising subtitles if needed with final version of video. - Resubmission of files with different versions (with and without forced narratives, and txt export with additional information). - Final QC by the TV channel client (optional).
Administrative tasks observed	- N/A

Table 11. Subtitling process for Participant F.

Comments on process

Participant F was working on episode 8 out of a total of 10 episodes. She typically allocates one week for each episode. Due to the project involving multiple non-final versions, she was unable to watch all episodes in advance. As a result, she watched the episode for the first time while performing the spotting. Participant F also mentions that the project deadlines have been subject to frequent rescheduling.

Comments on collaboration

Participant F stated that she faces communication challenges with clients who often do not respond to her inquiries, leading to a lack of information regarding distribution medium and subtitling norms, which later requires multiple "conformations" to fit specific broadcasters' requirements. Collaboration patterns vary among clients, with some providing detailed information while others rely on Participant F to research the content online. On this medical series, she had a close collaboration with her co-subtitler, maintaining a shared glossary for terminology and character relationships across multiple seasons. They often continue to update it as needed and include decisions made by dubbing teams. Participant F also had formal collaboration with a hired doctor who reviewed her subtitles in text format, compared them with video files and dialogue lists, suggested changes, and provided explanations, allowing Participant F to make translation decisions. For other projects, she informally collaborates with experts in technical fields by contacting clubs and occasionally meeting them in person for projects requiring specialised knowledge.

4.3.7 Participant G

Participant G was initially designated for a pilot study; however, upon recognising the efficacy of my research process, obtaining explicit validation from the participant, and considering the participant's enriching background and extensive experience, I made the informed choice to integrate his data into the study on par with that of any other participant. I arrived at his apartment at 10 am, we had coffee and started the introductory interview, which lasted 35 minutes. He started working at 10:50, and took a 1 hour 05 break, so we could get take away and eat together at his apartment. He only took two short breaks during the afternoon, between 5 and 10 minutes. He stopped

working at 18:35, and we started the retrospective interview, which lasted around 45 minutes. Therefore, he effectively worked for 7 hours 30. He stated that before my arrival he had not done any work on the project but had replied to a few emails. He also highlighted that lately his usual work schedule would be from around 9:00 to 13:00 and then from 14:00 to 19:00. On average, he stated that he works around 40 hours a week, 7 to 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, but is sometimes forced to work on Sundays. This happens for example for the VOD client for which he was working during my observation. Therefore, despite his day being sometimes a bit longer, all the tasks he performed during that day and his translation process were representative of his usual practices.

Table 12 below presents the subtitling process and different steps undertaken by Participant G for his series destined for VOD platform distribution. Therefore, as he usually works for cinema, this process is somewhat different from his usual workflow, notably in terms of materials provided (see Section 4.4.1).

Initial information provided to the subtitler	- Duration of episodes - Deadlines and schedule for steps and broadcast dates
Collaboration with clients	- *Distributor* (for contract and remuneration negotiation, *and questions about content*) - LSP (for technical services)
Materials provided	- *Video files available on platform, each episode one by one (non-final video files with watermarks).* - *Unlocked templates (made by the LSP).* - *Dubbing scripts available for consultation.* - Dialogue list *(request made to the LSP)* - KNPs available for consultation.
Translation resources	- *French dictionary: Le Grand Robert* - *Synonyms: CNRTL* - *Bilingual dictionary: Robert & Collins* - *Conjugation: Le Figaro*
External tools	- *Word documents for writing multiple translation suggestions and rephrasing them.*
Pre-translation tasks	- Watching each available episode twice.
Translation process	- *Watching each scene, translating without stopping at difficulties until the end of the scene for the first draft.*

(in chronological order)	- *Adapting template time codes.* - *Going back to the beginning of each scene to review the overall appearance and ensure consistency (around 3 or 4 times).* - *Marking challenges with an "XX", as well as instances when the client has to be consulted.* - *Checking consistency, terminology, and terms of addresses by referring to previous subtitling and dubbing files, as well as watching excerpts of previous films of the saga.* - *Research.* - *Searching for all remaining instances with "XX" marks, and resolving them for the second draft.*
Collaboration with colleagues or other agents	- *Collaboration with a colleague to ask about her previous translations of character names.* - Retroactive collaboration with dubber.
Proofreading process	- *Creating third and fourth drafts by proofreading and trying to find solutions to all remaining challenges.* - *Simulation of the episode.* - *Proofreading each subtitle one by one.* - *Automated spell-check on cloud-based platform.*
Quality control process	- *Submission to client.* - Receiving and incorporating client feedback for each episode. - Informal proofreading with colleague. - Resubmission. - Quality check by distributor.
Administrative tasks observed	- N/A

Table 12. Subtitling process for Participant G.

Comments on process

Participant G worked independently without a co-subtitler. He submitted episode 3 on the morning of the observation and started working on episode 4 out of 6. He typically had a one-week timeframe to subtitle each episode, which he divided into 3-4 days to translate and 2-3 days for proofreading. His entire process and files were available on a cloud-based subtitling platform, which also served as the delivery method for his completed files. Nevertheless, the platform does not provide the dialogue lists, so he had to request it to the client. He received the videos for each episode individually, which posed a challenge in terms of contextualising his translation choices within the broader context of the full season. Further challenges of working with this subtitling

platform included crashes that resulted in a loss of some subtitle segments, and numerous issues in playing video files.

Comments on collaboration

As the LSP serves only as an intermediary, Participant G has the option to contact the primary client, the distributor, directly for additional clarification. He notably had a phone call with the technical director of the distributor to ask about character names and content consistency. His workflow with the LSP presents various communication challenges, often requiring him to request extended deadlines and work with limited project information. Typically, a fixed deadline is provided at the start of the project, and remains unchanged for most clients. However, the current LSP's process is somewhat disorganised, and collaboration can be challenging due to the requirement to submit subtitles in advance for global localisation, thus resulting in potential deadline changes. Upon subtitle submission, the client provides minimal feedback, mainly highlighting areas requiring minor changes rather than detailed translation review, with a focus on technical aspects. Therefore, he likes to organise informal pre-simulation with colleagues. Due to time constraints, Participant G was unable to conduct this step, but instead had his subtitles proofread by a colleague. During the translation, Participant G could consult the same colleague who had translated the previous film in the saga, assisting with character name consistency.

4.4 Specificities of the subtitling processes

4.4.1 Information and materials provided

In this section, I synthesise the information and materials sent for the specific translation project I was observing for each distribution medium. Although it is significant to underline the primary similarities and distinctions between distribution media to identify patterns, it is also important to recognise that certain aspects may exhibit slight variations from one project to the other.

4.4.1.1 Information

A common element across all distribution media is the absence of a brief or pertinent information about the target audience. This observation aligns with findings on French

to English subtitlers who are rarely provided a brief (Silvester, 2022, p. 410), as well as with Beuchert's (2017, p. 131) findings which mentioned that "relatively few subtitlers get information about the end consumers/viewers". The absence of audience information is intriguing because it "makes it very difficult for the subtitler to take an informed approach to audience design" (Silvester, 2018b, p. 116) when awareness of the target audience "could inform the subtitler's choice of strategies", notably in terms of cultural references (Silvester, 2018b, p. 88). Sometimes the subtitlers in the study were not given the exact distribution destination, such as for Participants D and F, who are not entirely sure about which VOD platform will broadcast their subtitles.

For cinema projects, Participants A and C received general information from the distributors regarding the titles and directors of the films, the rates and which intermediary would be the technical service provider. Then, the intermediary sent an email with all the details and materials of the film, as well as the pre-established deadlines. This is also usually the case for Participant G's cinema projects, nevertheless I could not observe this as he was working on a VOD project at the time of the present study.

When working for VOD projects, the organisation of the information process I observed varied considerably from one intermediary to the other (i.e., post-production company or LSP). Participant D stated that usually the information process is rather messy with his post-production company and the only information he is given is the distribution medium (DVD, VOD, etc.) and the deadline. Participant B, on the contrary, had a particularly meticulous client who sent her information on the type of content, the rates, the duration of episodes, and the general theme of the series, although they did not disclose the exact title in case she refused the project. Nevertheless, as they did not have the episodes yet, they could not provide her with the schedule and deadlines at the beginning. This project was delayed and therefore deadlines had to be constantly re-evaluated and changed. For the same end-client, but through a different LSP, Participant C received detailed written information about all the deadlines, which is not the case with all her clients. This difference in organisation between clients was also highlighted by Participant E who noted a clear difference between her TV and VOD projects. While the deadlines for TV tended to be planned in advance and broadcast dates were clearly pre-established, for her VOD projects, she

had to guess broadcast dates as she did not receive clear information on this. Similarly, Participant G, who usually is given fixed deadlines for other projects, noted that in the current VOD project, the LSP may change deadlines as they were not very well organised.

In summary, most subtitlers often lack essential information about their projects, including details about the target audience, clear deadlines, and in two occurrences about distribution destination of video projects. While cinema projects typically provide more comprehensive information, in video subtitling, the disparity can lead to significant variations in the subtitlers' work processes across different distribution media and clients.

4.4.1.2 Materials

On the one hand, when subtitlers can work on their preferred desktop software, they are sent video files through different encrypted methods, including through password-protected file transfer websites or encrypted software available through a dongle (a password-protected USB flash drive). On the other hand, subtitlers who are required to work on a cloud-based subtitling platform can only stream the video file online to watch it but cannot download it. It is important to note that, independently of the distribution medium, many subtitlers usually work on non-final video files. It can thus happen that they need to adapt their subtitles at different stages of the process to incorporate changes, such as adapting timing or including subtitles for new scenes.

In cinema, subtitlers work with *spotting files* (*repérages*), which can be considered "blank templates" (Nikolić, 2015, p. 193). These files are created by spotters (*repéreurs*) and can be edited by the translators to suit their needs, thus highlighting "two very distinct activities: technical spotting and linguistic translation" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 43). While in this study, the three subtitlers working for cinema (Participants A, C and G) noted that they enjoy working on pre-spotted files as they can focus on the creative translation process, in other studies, professionals have reported that these files slow down and complicate the process (Nikolić, 2015, p. 197) or decrease quality (Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2022, p. 450).

In France, a subtitler interviewed by Silvester (2022, pp. 409–410) highlighted that "spotting is also a task that technicians have been trained to do, and many of the trained technicians are now losing their jobs due to these changes in subtitling practices". In contrast, in different linguistic contexts, such as Denmark, separating these tasks is not the norm (Beuchert, 2017, p. 134) and in the German-speaking context it has shown to lead to a fragmentation of processes, and more competition on the market "as no specialist knowledge of subtitling is required anymore" (Künzli, 2023, p. 13). Cinema subtitlers are usually also sent a *script*, also called *dialogue list*, or *spotting list*, which contains the dialogue in the original language and is sometimes accompanied by comments on elements such as idiomatic expressions, context, etc. (Gourgeon, 2014, p. 33). Participants A and C were sent both dialogue lists and spotting files for their projects alongside the whole film separated in reels. Separating films into reels is specific to cinema, despite being in digital format nowadays. Participant G highlighted that when he works for cinema he is always sent two files as well: the script and spotting files. Nevertheless, as his project was a series for a streaming platform, here he was forced to work with a template that he found to be of poor quality. Fortunately, this template was unlocked, so he could change the time codes and was paid extra for this adaptation. He stated however that he "would waste less time by doing the spotting [himself]".

In video subtitling, there are two approaches to materials. In the globalised chain of LSPs, *templates* are often sent to subtitlers to centralise subtitle creation (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 43), as well as to reduce time and costs (Nikolić, 2015, p. 196) thus possibly having adverse effects on both rates and professional status (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 43). These master files can be of variable quality and will subsequently be used to translate all languages, thus not leaving subtitlers much room for flexibility in adaptation, notably with non-editable pre-established segmentation in the case of locked templates. Therefore, any error or misunderstanding in template files will then "most likely be replicated in the other languages too" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 43). Nikolić (2015, p. 201) argues that "templates are here to stay", but that better communication and understanding between subtitlers and clients could result in better products for viewers. Improving template files and understanding the needs of the translators could thus increase quality, and guidelines for doing so have already been proposed (see, for example Georgakopoulou (2019) and Oziemblewska

& Szarkowska (2022)). In this study, four Participants (B, C, D, and G) worked on a template for VOD projects, the first two locked and the latter two unlocked. Participant E also received a template for her VOD project, which was done in the US by a post-production company, but refused to use it. Participant D considered his unlocked template to be of high quality, though he tried to rely more on his understanding of the Italian audio. Participant B stated that the VOD streaming platform she is working for is the only client from whom she receives a template from the LSP. Despite being locked, the template was also well done even though time codes were not always perfect – she was able to slightly adapt it by asking the project manager to merge, split, or make subtitles longer, but she could not change the template herself. For her VOD project, Participant C was also sent a locked template, for which the time codes she asked to adapt will only be changed in the final version through the same kind of "forced collaboration" with the project manager as for Participant B.

In non-globalised video subtitling, on the other hand, the norm is for the subtitlers to perform their spotting themselves, as they would only have the video and a script. This was the case for one of Participant E's projects, as well as Participant F's series which would both be broadcast on TV and the TV channels' platforms. Participant D, E and F expressed enjoyment of the technical aspects of this task. Participant F specified that it allows her to use a different part of her brain, and Participant E that this step allows her to watch the content and immerse herself in the project to have a first overview of the length of the project as well as of the difficulties and challenges it presents. In addition, Participant E does not like the fact that someone else spots for her, she thinks that the spotting style is personal. As Participants B and E mentioned, spotting the files adds one or two extra workdays per project.

While video subtitlers now consider spotting part of their workflow, this is not the norm in cinema, and this has not been the norm in video subtitling either since the 1950s, as the subtitler typically used to wait for the spotting files before starting their translation (Cornu, 2014, p. 242). The subtitlers who had considerable experience in the French industry shared that they considered this to be a shift in practices, because these tasks used to be separated. Spotting was considered a technical task and was performed in laboratories. As Participant G points out:

> In TV subtitling now translators have to do their spotting, because there is no more money to do it in post-production companies. Therefore, they have this additional step of spotting all their subtitles, but at least it is well done because they know how to do it. In cinema, there is always someone external doing [the spotting file], I receive it, but don't have anything to do, I upload it. […] This is an additional luck that we have in cinema. Because they are paid to do [the spotting], but this is not paid well.

It has indeed been argued that the reasons for this change are financial, and that merging these tasks is notably what contributed to the clients paying flat rates per minute or film without taking into account the number of subtitles or the degree of complexity (Rosnet, 2012, p. 77). Rosnet (2012, my translation) defines subtitling as "un ensemble d'opérations" regrouping:

> spotting, which defines the display time on-screen for each subtitle; the translation of all relevant information (dialogues, as well as voice-over, songs, titles, signs, letters...); adaptation, which involves adjusting the translated dialogues to the allowed number of characters; proofreading, to check spelling, formatting, and the appropriateness of the translation; and finally, the final simulation with the client, before encoding it on the image (if applicable), to visualise the result and make final changes" (p. 77)

Rosnet (2012, p. 77) emphasises that, theoretically, distinct professionals should handle these tasks, but that in contemporary practice, they are frequently skipped or undertaken by the same subtitler to reduce time and costs. She points out that this approach may compromise quality, creating a paradox as clients seek high quality at minimal costs, ultimately degrading working conditions (Rosnet, 2012, p. 87).

Figure 7 below sums up the use of templates and spotting files I observed in these projects, and highlights the fact that except for Participants E and F's TV distribution of series, all the other subtitlers were sent a spotting or template file for other distribution media. Nonetheless, the quality of this file was variable and thus did not always improve the subtitling workflow, notably when the templates were locked. Similarly to Participant C, Participant E was also working on multiple projects at the time of the observation, which is why in the figure below these subtitlers are included in two categories.

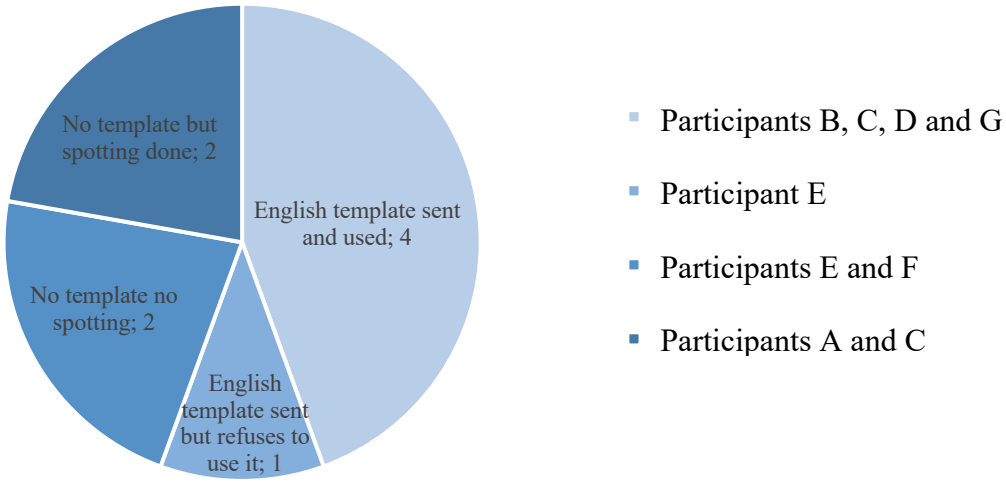


Figure 7. Templates and spotting files received from the post-production company.

In addition to the files sent by the primary clients, for the VOD projects, Participant B, C, and G also received the dubbing files from the dubber in order to ensure consistency between both versions (see Section 6.2.1.2 on collaboration with dubbers).

As the types of materials received highlight a significant difference between distribution media, Table 13 below sums up which files were received by the subtitlers according to distribution medium observed:

Distribution Medium / **Files received**	**Cinema** *(2 participants in total)*	**VOD (streaming) platforms** *(5 participants in total)*	**TV channels (+ TV channels' VOD platforms)** *(2 participants in total)*
Templates files	-	5 (Participants B, C, D, E, G) [13]	-
Spotting files	2 (Participants A and C)	-	-
Dialogue lists	2 (Participants A and C)	2 (Participants C and E)	2 (Participants E and F)

Table 13. Files received from the post-production company according to the subtitlers' distribution medium.

[13] Total number of subtitlers who were sent templates, however only 4 subtitlers used them and 1 refused to use it.

The table above reveals a noteworthy distinction within the video category regarding the materials provided to translators. Projects associated with VOD (streaming) platforms typically adhere to globalised guidelines, notably the use of templates, while TV VOD platforms affiliated with French TV channels do not follow these guidelines. In the case of TV projects, subtitlers received minimal materials, limited to dialogue lists. Additionally, it is worth noting that among the five subtitlers who received a template, only two also received a dialogue list, because as Participant G notes, clients "consider that the template they have created, which includes English, is sufficient". Despite this, Participant G specifically requested the dialogue list as well.

In summary, in video subtitling, as opposed to cinema subtitling in which spotting is already done by a spotter, subtitlers tend to carry out the spotting themselves, or use locked or unlocked templates imposed by some VOD streaming platforms. This aligns with the conclusions drawn by Genty et al. (2021, p. 8), which note that AVT professional practices are far from homogeneous despite being governed by many traditions and conventions, as these are evolving.

4.4.2 Pre-translation tasks

All participants working on films, whether for cinema or VOD, were able to watch the full film upon reception. Participant C said that when she has time, she likes to watch it a second time while reading the dialogues to identify technical vocabulary for which she will need a consultant. If there are no difficulties, she watches the film only once and then starts translating. Participant D had received the full film, but began adapting the spotting and translation of the template the first time he watched it, as he does not like pre-translation tasks and does not always have time to watch the film multiple times. This aligns with findings from other studies that have similarly noted how, given the current rates and tight turnaround times, the preview step is occasionally omitted, especially when working with templates (Tuominen, 2021). Nevertheless, before this, he had to transcode the film to change the resolution and size of the file to avoid his subtitling software crashing and the file taking up too much space on his computer.

On the other hand, when working on series, Participant B was the only subtitler able to watch the full season in advance. She watched all the episodes upon reception because continuity was needed. In this specific project, she had to start by filling out KNPs and translating forced narratives one month before the translation. These are textual elements that will be added in the video file by a graphist and once these are validated, they cannot be changed. They had to agree on specific translation terms with the dubbing team as well. Having already viewed the episode at that point but not revisited it since, she expressed that she would quickly rewatch her co-subtitler's last episode to ensure she was well-prepared for her translation and to avoid forgetting any details. Participants E, F and G were not able to watch the full season of the series before starting their episodes as they had not received all the video files. All participants agreed on the fact that this is an issue, because they have to submit their files for the first episodes without having seen the end of the season and can thus not adapt their translations once they are submitted, even if a plot twist would change their translations. This can lead to incoherence in the continuity of their subtitles, but often their clients do not care and do not allow them to change their subtitles. Participant G stated that he insists with the LSP on regaining access to previous episodes to change them when this happens, and luckily as he is in contact with the primary client, he copies him in the e-mail to ensure they have to agree to his changes. Participant E stated that she also had to translate the title of the episodes and the summaries of each episode without having watched the episodes, which makes no sense to her as she does not know what the context or the story behind these are.

Analysing these pre-translation tasks highlighted that beyond the dichotomy of cinema vs. video subtitling, there is a second layer that divides video processes and could in addition subsequently impact continuity and thus quality: films vs. series and the availability of the full content, further compounded by the imperative of swift content delivery, whether for VOD or TV broadcasts.

4.4.3 Quality assurance processes

Although subtitling and revision processes differ from one subtitler to another, subtitling quality assurance is important for each of them, and they all have their own

strategies, such as simulating them in real-life settings or reading subtitles one by one in text format. Beyond this personal quality assurance process, there are instances of collaboration with clients to ensure the accuracy and quality of subtitles. Nikolić (2015, p. 72) proposes the term "revision" to encompass both quality control and proofreading that can be done by clients or revisers. The distinction lies in proofreading being primarily a linguistic revision, which is not always consistently carried out while watching the video as also noted in other studies (Tuominen, 2021). Proofreading can be a form of "self-revision" (Robert & Remael, 2016, p. 581), carried out by the subtitlers themselves, or a revision undertaken by another agent. Following proofreading, quality control (QC) comes into play, encompassing control on both linguistic and technical aspects of subtitling (Nikolić, 2015, p. 72). In the cases examined in the French context, when simulations take place, the operators who act as revisers undertake a full revision examining both linguistic and technical aspects, sometimes in collaboration with the subtitlers. The quality assurance collaboration patterns present similarities according to distribution medium.

When working for cinema, Participants A, C, and G can often attend in-person simulations at laboratories with a reviser, whereas participants who work on video projects rarely or never attend such simulations. Only Participant E reported that the QC processes of her VOD and TV projects involve a formally commissioned simulation, which is arranged by the post-production company who appoints an external subtitler as reviser. Whenever they can, Participants B and E prefer to attend simulations in-person with their co-subtitlers, and reviser when there is one, at either one or the other subtitler's home. Unfortunately, this approach is not always feasible, particularly in situations where the co-subtitler is not based in the Parisian area, as was the case in both their current projects. Subsequently, Participant E mentioned an additional simulation done internally by her TV client "who has an in-house simulation operator".

When working for video projects, the other subtitlers (Participants B, C, D, F, and G) usually carry out their simulations themselves or remotely with their co-subtitler(s). Once subtitlers have completed their own simulations, or their cross-revision (*simulation croisée*) of each other's episodes, they submit their subtitles and subsequently receive written feedback from the client, typically through email. This

feedback is provided as part of the internal quality control process overseen by the project or subtitling manager at the post-production company. Some subtitlers believe that after incorporating this feedback, there might be a simulation or verification of the revised versions by the primary client. However, they cannot all ascertain whether this step takes place. During these "quality checks", subtitlers sometimes receive a second round of feedback. However, it is not always clear whether the feedback is from a subtitling reviser or a project manager at the primary client's company. This indicates a lack of synchronous collaboration between subtitlers and revisers in the quality control process. While some studies have emphasised that "quality controllers are usually more experienced subtitlers" (Nikolić, 2021, p. 67), in French video subtitling it remains unclear whether the revisers are themselves subtitlers, which could potentially bring two sets of translation competences into the process, as suggested by some (Di Giovanni, 2016; Menezes, 2022). Nevertheless, this supports Menezes's (2022) suggestion that further investigation is needed into the roles and responsibilities of subtitling revisers. Regardless of the source of the feedback, subtitlers are responsible for addressing it and making the requested changes to the subtitles. Occasionally, Participant F disagrees with the edits and changes made by clients, leading her to remove her name from the credits (see Section 4.2.4 on Credits for subtitling).

These quality control processes thus demonstrate a range of collaboration patterns with clients, which are far from homogenous and vary between in-person simulation, remote simulation, or written feedback. This mirrors the findings of Nikolić (2021, p. 68) who emphasised that "[p]ractices vary depending on whether subtitlers, QC-ers and proofreaders are hired by the broadcaster/SVOD provider or the vendor/LSP, or both." It also aligns with findings from a study of Danish subtitlers' working practices that "all respondents ensure the quality of their subtitles in some way, but [that] some agencies may not have a procedure in this regard" (Beuchert, 2017, p. 141). While in cinema subtitling, practices seem to be harmonised and to encompass the highest degree of collaboration, in most video projects, the subtitlers' needs and concerns are not considered in the quality control process. In-person simulations are preferred by most participants as they provide an opportunity to correct errors, discuss translation strategies, and improve the quality of subtitles. Nevertheless, written feedback and remote communication are often privileged by clients, indicating

a divergence in preferred approaches to quality control between the two parties involved.

4.4.4 Administrative tasks

Participant A did not engage in any administrative tasks during observation. However, she mentioned her involvement in ATAA and occasionally having to fill out declarations such as for Urssaf (social contributions such as unemployment insurance, health insurance, etc.), which can make her day longer. On the other hand, Participant B had to handle several tasks, including making a call regarding her tax declaration and preparing an invoice for a client. While invoicing is frequent and was mentioned by all subtitlers, Participants B, C, E and F also mentioned the occasional requirement to deal with SCAM or SACEM declarations that need to be signed by clients in order for them to obtain royalties for their translations. Participant C stated that she has an accountant who takes care of her tax and Urssaf declarations. Participant D stated that he does not often have to deal with administrative tasks, but that he would like to become more involved in translator associations such as ATAA. Participant F stated that administrative tasks represent 1/8 of her time and that such tasks are an important part of the job that is often overlooked by newcomers. This was confirmed in the AVTE Survey 2022-2023 that highlighted that "[o]n average in Europe, audiovisual translators spend 3h45mn [a week] performing non-translation activities" which "is often overlooked by audiovisual translators themselves" (AVTE, n.d.-a). In addition, while it is also apparent that all participants engaged in communication with clients or colleagues, notably through emails or phone calls, and addressed relevant translational or administrative matters, such routine activities are omitted in the tables due to their inherent obviousness and the sensitivity of some confidential information involved.

4.5 Conclusion

After examining the differences in participants' profiles, backgrounds, practices, and habits in Section 4.1, the focus shifted in Section 4.2, where I explored the intricate world of subtitling production networks by exploring how subtitlers navigate their practices for different clients and distribution media. The process of understanding

how each subtitling production network is organised involved understanding who the subtitlers' clients are and how subtitlers find them, as well as how they negotiate rates and secure recognition for their work through credits. The diversity of clients between various distribution media highlighted distinct processes, guidelines, and materials for each project type. Remuneration also showed variations, with subtitlers being paid per subtitle, per minute of video, or per project. While some subtitlers have the ability to negotiate their rates successfully, concerns remain about declining rates across the industry. In terms of recognition, in France, subtitlers are usually credited as authors in the subtitles, but some discrepancies raise concerns about copyright and the recognition of subtitlers' contributions, making it imperative to ensure that subtitlers receive proper acknowledgment for their work. In conclusion, subtitling production networks are multifaceted, comprising interactions with various clients, negotiations, and the quest for recognition. Addressing challenges related to fair treatment, remuneration and recognition is essential in upholding the value of subtitlers' contributions and the sustainability of the French AVT industry.

In conclusion, all subtitlers worked to highly variable schedules, but these variations aligned with their typical workflow. Most subtitlers stated that their weekly work hours range between 30 and 50, with a prevalent inclination towards dedicating substantial time to their professional tasks, often including weekends. Despite the demanding nature of their schedules, subtitlers generally expressed satisfaction with the flexibility their profession provides, as it allows them to adapt their work hours to their preferences. The observations also revealed that participants adjust their schedules to accommodate personal commitments and deadlines, frequently taking breaks for personal activities and family responsibilities. These findings offer valuable insights into subtitlers' schedules, preferences, and work-life balance, highlighting the inherent variability and adaptability of the subtitling profession.

Participants also demonstrated diverse workflows and resources that aligned with their individual requirements. To accurately represent this diversity, these workflows are organised into separate tables. Unlike other contexts where models of subtitling workflows can be consolidated into single diagrams (Beuchert, 2017; Tardel, 2023), it would not be appropriate in this case due to the significant variations observed, notably between distribution media. Hence, while Section 4.2 emphasised the different

commission processes for cinema and video subtitling in Figures 4 and 5, Tables 6 to 12 in Section 4.3 illustrate each subtitler's individual workflow. It should be acknowledged that participants may not have explicitly mentioned every item received or every step in their process, as certain aspects may have been considered self-evident. For instance, while only a few participants specifically mentioned creating files and folders for each project, it is a common practice I observed among all of them. However, some steps of their personal workflow matched aspects that have been observed in the literature, such as the use of asterisks (*), (XX) or question marks to come back to subtitles later (Beuchert, 2017, p. 203). When asked about the time required for subtitling projects, responses varied, often highlighting discrepancies between the desired timeframe and the allocated time.

Finally, in Section 4.4, the analysis of specific aspects of the subtitling process brought to light significant variations in the professionals' workflows, particularly in how information and materials are received, and which pre-translation tasks need to be carried out. These distinctions were often influenced by whether the subtitles were intended for cinema or video distribution. While cinema projects often provided more comprehensive information and collaborative opportunities, video subtitling, especially for VOD platforms, tended to lack essential details, leading to variations in subtitlers' approaches. The use of templates and spotting files varied across distribution media, highlighting that the quality of these materials can impact the subtitling workflow, an aspect that had also been mentioned in previous research, with templates impacting quality in DVD subtitling in comparison with cinema and TV subtitling (Szarkowska et al., 2021, p. 667), although the difference between cinema and video workflows has never been studied. Additionally, the distinction between films and series, and the availability of the full content, introduced further complexities in the translation process. Furthermore, the quality assurance processes demonstrated diverse collaboration patterns between subtitlers and clients, with variations between in-person simulations, remote simulations, and written feedback. While frequently underestimated, administrative tasks constituted a crucial component of the workload for some subtitlers. These tasks encompassed invoicing, managing tax declarations, and handling various other administrative duties. In summary, this highlights the nuanced and evolving nature of audiovisual translation practices, with subtitlers

showing high adaptability to the specific demands and challenges posed by different clients, distribution media, and project types.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

In the present study, two very distinct subtitling production contexts are thematically analysed, with significant differences in their processes, practices, collaboration agents and patterns. This chapter delves into the shared aspects and divergent methods that influence how these groups of translators undertake and complete their subtitling tasks within their respective production network. At a later stage, Chapter 7 will comparatively analyse aspects specific to collaboration and communication. After having conducted an in-depth examination of processes and practices within both subtitling production contexts it becomes evident that there are substantial differences in the processes involved in the subtitle production and distribution. As such, this section aims to further explore the key similarities and differences that define these aspects.

The following sections examine different specific aspects of practices and processes employed by each community to highlight points of convergence and divergence between both subtitling environments (fansubbing and industry subtitling): Translation processes, Feedback and revision processes, and Software.

5.1 Translation processes

Processes between both environments are obviously different, generating diverse translations tailored for different audiences and adhering to unique rules and norms inherent to their respective production context. However, it is important to note that this comparative analysis does not delve into the evaluation of translated products or their quality. Instead, it aims to accentuate the most prominent aspects in processes.

In both environments under examination, a noteworthy difference with prior studies worth highlighting is the concept of agency. Both fansubbers and industry professionals exhibited a considerable degree of agency in their production contexts. French fansubbers, who operate as volunteers, possess a notable level of agency in spite of community guidelines. They have the autonomy to choose which content they

want to translate, establish their own timelines, and make decisions about interacting with other community members. Similarly, French industry professionals, while subject to time constraints and specific collaboration requirements with clients that can prove challenging, maintain a significant level of agency, notably in terms of negotiation power and acknowledgement in comparison to other professional subtitling contexts (e.g., Abdallah, 2011; Künzli, 2023). The French industry subtitlers in this study exhibited authority in deciding whether to accept or decline projects, recognition in terms of status that grants them rights, and showcased community support that encourages them to decline projects with inadequate compensation rates, a negotiation power (see Section 7.1 on community collaboration) which is not possible in all subtitling markets (AVTE, n.d.-a).

In the subtitling industry, projects are typically commissioned by clients or distributors, and subtitlers are contracted for specific assignments. In contrast, in the fansubbing community, the decision to work on subtitling projects is voluntary and made by fansubbers themselves. This fundamental difference leads to distinct challenges in processes and workflows between the two. Within the professional industry, the subtitlers' workflows can vary significantly from one client to another. Challenges may arise due to their clients' divergent processes, including differences in working conditions, software, rates, and deadlines. Additionally, a clear distinction exists in the professional industry between cinema and VOD subtitling, which impacts subtitlers' working conditions, rates, and deadlines. In contrast, the fansubbing environment operates differently. Fansubbers follow a consistent workflow offering the same three creation options regardless of the content they are subtitling. There are no fixed deadlines, and the operating environment remains generally consistent across all content. The translation process is driven by the motivation of fansubbers, leading to variations in the timing of content translation. This process can range from just a few hours to several days, and, in some cases, certain content may never be translated into French if no one is willing to undertake the task, as was exemplified with the Danish series mentioned in Section 3.2.1. This differs from the professional subtitling world, as distributors decide the languages in which their content is translated. In fansubbing, there is no control over which content gets translated. However, some content may enjoy greater popularity, creating a sense of urgency among fansubbers to deliver subtitles quickly to eagerly awaiting audiences. This urgency can sometimes

lead to insufficient time for proofreading before fans download the subtitles, potentially impacting the quality of the translations for these viewers. This sense of urgency, however, is common to both subtitling networks, as in the professional industry, clients often need the content translated as fast as possible for global distribution.

A further notable similarity exists in both fansubbing and the industry regarding the separation of tasks. In the fansubbing community, synchers play a crucial role by preparing English template files, which serve as model for the French version. It is worth noting that the synchers' template creation process in fansubbing is somewhat secretive, as they constitute a private team within the community. This secrecy may come from the fact that their process involves downloading, ripping, and resynching copyrighted subtitles, in particular SDH subtitles, which raises legal and ethical concerns. As these files are not supposed to be edited during the translation process, moderators can choose to lock segments to prevent fansubbers from changing them. Within the VOD platforms industry, a similar practice can be found through the use of locked templates. Their purpose is to streamline the process while guaranteeing that subtitles retain their initial timing. This leads to subtitlers sometimes needing to engage in a "forced collaboration" with subtitling and project managers in order to request adaptation of the time codes.

Interestingly, in the present study, most industry subtitlers were unaware of the origins of these templates. Some assumed they were created by the post-production company, while others speculated that the primary distribution platform generated them. The consensus among participants was that these English templates appeared to be the work of a human template creator, except for Participant G who believed they were machine-generated. This was confirmed to him by the primary client who noted that the quality of the template suggested it might not have undergone post-editing at the intermediary LSP. While templates are used in the industry to save costs by centralising the global translation process in LSPs, in France, this process is to date solely used in the world of VOD platforms, which operate at global level. Based on my observations, the utilisation of templates has not yet expanded to cinema or TV subtitling practices, which remain at national level, and in which subtitlers either receive spotting files in the first case, or perform their spotting themselves in the latter.

In both fansubbing and VOD subtitling, English templates served as pivot translation for French subtitles of productions originating in languages other than English, notably in the case of Danish source language in the fansubbing community and Italian in the industry subtitling process of Participant D. This practice originated in the DVD industry (Georgakopoulou, 2019), and it is thus interesting to note that before the advent of streaming platforms, fansubbers had been working in this way for over a decade.

Regarding automated workflows, it is essential to highlight a significant difference between fansubbing and the industry. The fansubbing community's guidelines explicitly prohibit the use of machine-translated subtitles, setting them apart from other fansubbing communities (e.g., Wongseree, 2017, 2020), as well as from the industry, where machine translation is becoming a more prevalent practice. Additional practices prohibited in the fansubbing community include initiating the subtitling process without prior viewing of the content. In contrast, industry practices, as mentioned by Tuominen (2021), indicate that this step is contingent on the deadlines imposed by the client. This was also illustrated in the present study in the industry with Participant D mentioning that adhering to this practice was not always feasible due to time constraints.

5.2 Feedback and revision processes

The revision process remains somewhat unknown in both environments analysed. In the fansubbing community, content is continually editable, making it difficult to track how many times segments are edited. Some members may review the quality and approve segments, leading to subtitles being marked as verified during proofreading. Nevertheless, the identity and experience of those who perform proofreading and revisions may not be ascertained. Similar to the revision practices in the fansubbing community, the revision process of video projects within the professional industry is also relatively opaque and warrants additional investigation (Menezes, 2022), while in cinema projects revision is consistently carried out by simulation operators.

In the fansubbing community, feedback is particularly important as illustrated by the different areas that allow for user feedback, such as the designated comments section serving as a platform for providing feedback, expressing gratitude towards community members such as synchers and translators, and reporting subtitle errors for moderation, editing, or removal. This practice aims to recognise and acknowledge the fansubbers' valuable contributions to the community and allows them to learn from these interactions. While community members often show appreciation for submitted subtitles, the predominant use of comments is to address issues rather than offering constructive feedback. This tendency sometimes results in less nuanced input on the improvement of translation and subtitling skills. Moderators play a crucial role in providing feedback when blocking members due to low-quality translations, pinpointing areas for improvement to prevent further issues. However, beyond these instances, individuals are responsible for enhancing their skills autonomously by leveraging the multiple available resources such as tutorials or engaging in discussions within the forum.

In the professional industry, cinema subtitlers have the advantage of benefiting from simulations that provide constructive feedback from both primary and secondary clients, along with input from a reviser to ensure the overall quality of their subtitles. In contrast, in video projects, subtitlers often find themselves lacking feedback, particularly on linguistic aspects. While feedback from clients, primarily subtitling managers and project managers, is not uncommon, it predominantly focuses on typographical or timing concerns. This observation is in accordance with the findings of Szarkowska et al. (2021, p. 667), who emphasised that stakeholders frequently prioritise technical aspects over translational considerations. This perspective resonates with the insights shared by Capitani (2016):

> [E]ven if the client provides feedback to the subtitler, this will not necessarily coincide with the quality of a subtitled product for two reasons. Firstly, the assessment would be based not on quality parameters but on the client's expectations, that may vary according to the text type and to the client's requirements. Secondly, a client might not be an expert in the field and may not have technical knowledge to be able to assess the product from an objective point of view. (p. 258)

In the present study, Participant G's experience exemplifies this phenomenon, noting that the feedback he received was primarily technical, as it was not performed by a linguist, and did not address some inconsistencies, thus presenting a challenge in the collaborative process. This differs to the findings of Nikolić (2021, p. 77), who determined that "broadcasters not only care about the technical parameters of subtitling, but also about the quality of translation itself", and suggests instead that perspectives on quality processes vary among different stakeholders.

Although feedback is thus frequently limited, it plays an important role in the continual improvement of the subtitlers' skills. Consequently, as evident in each participant's table of processes, subtitlers often actively seek additional feedback from their network of peers through informal and voluntary channels.

5.3 Software

Although there are significant software differences between both environments, the fact that fansubbers work online within their customised software embedded in their website resembles some industry practices that use cloud-based subtitling platforms. However, fansubbers maintain the freedom to select their preferred desktop software if they would rather not work online in real-time with other subtitlers, a choice that is not always available to professional subtitlers when working for certain VOD platform clients. Another similarity lies in the fansubbers' ability to create tools tailored to their requirements, such as the functionality to remove SDH marks, or the extension which is based on user feedback that can be incorporated to enhance subsequent versions of the software. This emphasises the significance of collaboration and feedback in the community's processes and technology. Their software has therefore gradually seen improvements, which have significantly enhanced the translation process by facilitating communication and collaboration, for instance through adding the chat box function to offer an additional opportunity for synchronous communication. While some industry software already incorporates similar functionalities, this addition could serve as a valuable model for other platforms that have not yet adopted this functionality. This underscores that collaboration and communication are integrated into the design of the software and are explicitly embedded in the fansubbers' tools

and workflows. As mentioned by multiple participants in the study, professional subtitlers within the French industry have also actively contributed to shaping their preferred software, EZTitles, aligning it with their specific needs as practitioners. The adoption of this desktop software provides them with a range of customisable features, including the ability to select preferred settings and shortcuts, support various file formats and utilise an asynchronous comment function for giving and receiving feedback, e.g., with clients, co-subtitlers, or other agents.

In both environments, these tools have thus been developed to cater to their specific practice requirements. Consequently, subtitlers can express discontent when they are not allowed to use their own software and are instead compelled to use different automated cloud-based tools, which can be perceived as a "step back to the Stone Age", as emphasised by Participant G, and can impact their usual workflows.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, by undertaking a detailed exploration of variations in processes, workflows, feedback and revision mechanisms, and software usage within both subtitling production environments, it is evident that substantial differences exist in member engagement and the processes involved in subtitle production and distribution between these two communities. While differences in processes, such as voluntary vs. commissioned work and consistent vs. variable workflows, are notable, there are also significant similarities, such as the use of locked templates to preserve time codes and the development of custom software tools to enhance communication and collaboration. It should be highlighted that these similarities between fansubbing and professional subtitling are mainly applicable to the globalised VOD subtitling context, with occasional instances in TV, and notably, such parallels have not been observed within the realm of cinema.

6. COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Collaboration, which encompasses both communication and cooperation among team members, is a crucial aspect of subtitling workflows. Communication involves the exchange of information and ideas between individuals, whereas collaboration allows for a more comprehensive and efficient approach to subtitling tasks through a collective effort. While McDonough Dolmaya (2018, p. 347) states that "[c]ollaboration cannot happen unless people are working together, interacting with one another and thereby forming connections, which are a fundamental feature of networks", O'Brien (2011, p. 17) defines collaborative translation as follows: "when two or more agents cooperate in some way to produce a translation. Collaborative translation can also have a more narrow meaning, referring to the situation where two or more translators work together to produce one translated product".

Both kinds of collaboration were identified in this study. In this chapter, I delve into the analysis of collaboration and communication observed in the fansubbing community in Section 6.1. Subsequently, I explore the interactions among industry subtitlers in Section 6.2, paving the way for a comparative analysis in Chapter 7. This exploration aims to provide a categorisation of collaborative patterns within subtitling workflows. Each section concludes with an overview of challenges and evolutions that hinder effective collaboration in both subtitling environments.

6.1 Case Study 1: Collaboration and communication in fansubbing

As emphasised throughout the preceding sections, collaboration and communication are major components of the activities of the fansubbing community studied here, shaping its operations and influencing the three possible translation workflows. In the collaborative processes, communication unfolds at various stages and across different areas of the community. The ways in which fansubbers communicate on their website and forum can be challenging to synthesise due to the diverse and heterogenous nature of communication forms inside the community. Nevertheless, I have categorised collaboration into four distinct levels (Section 6.1.1), delineated three primary communication channels (Section 6.1.2), and explored challenges in collaboration and the community's evolutions (Section 6.1.3).

6.1.1 Classification of collaboration

Case Study 1 has highlighted that, similarly to other studies (e.g., Fan, 2020; Orrego-Carmona, 2016b; Wongseree, 2017), collaboration is and has always been a crucial aspect of this fansubbing community's process. This collaboration, which is predominantly internal to the community, and occasionally extends to a broader production network with other fansubbing communities, remains an essential element. In the present community, I identified four different levels of collaboration taking place in the private or public sphere that can be categorised as follows:

1. **Private collaboration in synching:** synchers constitute the only private organised team collaborating inside the community. This collaboration ensures that the English file meets the community's standards before being distributed to be translated or downloaded.
2. **Public collaboration in translation:** collaboration during the translation process is essential, as fansubbers can simultaneously translate the same content. They need to work hand in hand, as their collaboration has a direct impact on the final product.
3. **Public collaboration in communication:** most of this type of collaboration takes place on the forum. The self-organised hierarchy in the community allows moderators and administrators to collaborate on different levels to keep the community functioning.
4. **Public collaboration with other fansubbing communities:** members of this community collaborate with 31 "friends" websites. These include other French fansubbing communities, but also other multilingual fansubbing communities. This collaboration is mainly dedicated to sharing subtitles from another community, but in some instances administrators and moderators have reported collaborating with moderators from these "friends" sites to resolve issues with credits or ensure they do not work on the same audiovisual content.

The concept of "friends" website is an interesting aspect in terms of external collaboration with members of other communities. In cases where the fansubbing community lacks the requested subtitles, they readily recommend other communities

they believe provide high-quality subtitles. This reflects a sense of active collaboration and solidarity not only within the community, but also with other fansubbing communities. Nonetheless, despite the use of official subtitle files, any indication of active collaboration between the fansubbers and professional or official sources does not seem to appear anywhere on the community's webpages, indicating a passive stance in this regard.

The delineation of the four levels of collaboration within the community illuminates the intricate dynamics that contribute to the overall functionality of the community. Here, collaboration constitutes an important part of the translation process and the distribution of fan subtitles. Having explored the main collaborative dimensions, the subsequent section will detail the three primary communication channels available to the French fansubbing community.

6.1.2 Communication channels

This section illuminates the various channels through which the French fansubbers in the community can communicate: on the website, the forum, or through external communication channels. Tables 14 to 16 below provide further insights into the authors of the communication, the purpose for which this mode of communication is utilised, whether it is openly accessible or restricted to members only, and if it is synchronous or not.

6.1.2.1 Communication on the website

As noted in Chapter 3 on fansubbing practices and processes, the community's website serves mainly for the production and distribution of fansubs. It is in this part of the community that the aforementioned public collaboration in translation occurs. Table 14 below delineates the features of communication modes on the website, encompassing both synchronous interactions among fansubbers and asynchronous communication with other agents in the community such as moderators and administrators. These communication modes extend to other communities or outsiders.

Functionality	Utilisation	Authors	Public/ private	Temporality
Announcements	On the homepage when there is an announcement to make	Moderators and administrators	Public for reading No registration needed	Asynchronous
Comments on episodes	Under each show or episode	Any registered member	Public for reading Registration needed for commenting	Asynchronous
Private message inbox, outbox and compose	To contact a member of the website or be contacted by administrators and moderators	Any registered member	Private Registration needed	Asynchronous
Private message in the user toolbar embedded in the software	To communicate with specific co-fansubbers during the translation process	Any registered member	Private Registration needed	Synchronous
Chat box in the software	To communicate with all co-fansubbers during the translation process	Any registered member	Private Registration needed	Synchronous
Contact form	For members or non-members to contact administrators and moderators	Anyone	Public	Asynchronous

Table 14. Communication on the fansubbing website.

The most interesting feature on the website is the possibility of synchronous communication during the collaborative translation process (either in translation or editing modes). If a software extension has been added to the browser (detailed in section 3.2.3), a chat box appears at the bottom of the embedded software in which any participant in the translation can join in the conversation with each person using one of the two modes. The chat functionality is used to split the work, discuss

translation issues, ask fellow fansubbers to change a specific translation or ask questions during the translation process. During this process, a private messaging option is also available on the side of the software, in which the members participating in the translation can be contacted, reported, and their profiles can be consulted. The integration of such communication tools significantly enhances the collaborative translation experience, enabling seamless coordination and immediate problem-solving. It is also noteworthy that the community does not impose any formal training or subtitling test as prerequisites for joining the translation process, showcasing a remarkable level of openness in collaboration compared to other communities (e.g., Barra, 2009; Fan, 2020; Massidda, 2015).

6.1.2.2 Communication on the forum

As the forum is totally independent from the website, it also has different communication channels, which are illustrated in the table below. Enabling public collaboration in communication, these asynchronous modes of communicating mainly occur between active fansubbers in the community, and can be managed by moderators on the forum.

Functionality	**Utilisation**	**Authors**	**Public/ private**	**Temporality**
General forum sections	General topics in English about the community's functioning ("pins" to highlight important topics), rules, translation norms, surveys, suggestions, etc.	Any registered member	Public for reading E-mail address needed for commenting	Asynchronous
French sub-section of the forum	Topics in French for French members	Any registered member	Public for reading E-mail address needed for commenting	Asynchronous
Private message inbox	To send a private message on the forum	Any registered member	Private Registration needed	Asynchronous
Message on a member's profile	To write publicly on a member's profile	Any registered member	Public for reading Registration needed for commenting	Asynchronous

Table 15. Communication on the forum

It is important to highlight the prevalence of multilingualism within the forum context, with sections clearly delineated for two different languages. The French fansubbers actively engage in English within the general sections, while also communicating in French within their sub-community. Although the forum extends the possibility of contributions in other languages, this occurs to a lesser extent. The communication functionalities on the forum predominantly cater to registered members, such as private messaging or interacting with members' profiles, however, it is noteworthy that much of the content is publicly accessible and commenting does not require registration but only the provision of an e-mail address. This dynamic unveils an interesting aspect of transparency within the community, providing an open window for non-registered members and lurkers to observe and engage with the discussions and collaborative efforts happening within. The upcoming section will delve into the

external communication patterns tailored for non-registered members, shedding light on how the community extends its reach and inclusivity beyond its registered user base.

6.1.2.3 External communication channels

Members of the community also communicate publicly with other agents outside of the website and the forum. Table 16 below outlines the features of these various external asynchronous communication channels.

Functionality	**Utilisation**	**Authors**	**Public/ private**	**Temporality**
Social Media page	Facebook, Twitter Previously: IRC	Anyone	Public for reading and commenting	Asynchronous
Private message on social media	To send a private message through the community's social media	Any registered member	Public	Asynchronous
E-mail	Members give their emails on the forum to be contacted (e.g. when volunteering for synching). One administrators' email is available on Facebook. In addition, in special occasions administrators have announced that they could be contacted by email.	Any registered member	Public	Asynchronous

Table 16. Communication on social media and per email.

6.1.3 Challenges and evolution in the fansubbing community

The netnographic research has allowed me to gain an up-to-date understanding of the ways in which this French fansubbing community works nowadays and how its

collaborative practices have evolved. On the fansubbing website, this is made possible through the history of the "announcements" section that was created in 2009. This allowed me to observe that multiple functionalities are not in use anymore, mostly because they are outdated due to the evolution of the Web and technology. In some cases, functionalities still appear but have been left unused, such as the section on "TV series analysis" that used to be offered in the French sub-community to exchange thoughts about the latest releases and analyse shows. This demonstrates how their passion used to unite them, as they could bond over their favourite content. In other cases, functionalities have completely disappeared such as the community's former blog to share news about series and releases, as this is now shared on their social media accounts instead. In the same way, the "schedule" function, which was historically used to inform fans about release dates for episodes and allowed members to register manually to volunteer for the subtitling of an incoming episode also disappeared in 2017. This was not needed anymore, considering the number of apps and other functionalities available nowadays to keep updated on new releases in a less time-consuming fashion.

At the time, members could also use this option to join a "subtitlers crew" or a "proof-readers team", which used to work as private teams focusing on specifically selected and assigned shows. This aspect was regularly mentioned in previous literature on French fansubbing (Bréan, 2014; Dagiral & Tessier, 2008; Marignan, 2019), however, as my findings have demonstrated, these teams do not exist anymore and the community has embraced open practices and a public approach in providing soft subs.

Massidda (2020) refers to the practices of uploading soft subs produced in various languages by different communities to online repositories as "conglomerates" rather than fan communities. However, in the community I observed, although practices are public, there is an active production of content inside the community itself, an established hierarchical organisation, collaboration, as well as a strong sense of belonging to the community's identity. This French community does therefore not fall completely into the category of conglomerates.

Throughout the years, many members have tried to bring in new functionalities, to revive old ones, or to bring the old-fashioned functioning and graphics of the website

and the forum up to current standards. However, most of them seem to have realised this was difficult considering the lack of financial resources. Moreover, there is a general lack of appetite for change and fewer and fewer members actively investing time to contribute to the community. They thus seemed to have accepted it will remain that way and have moved on.

The lack of updates in the community and the disappearance of many functions reflect the reduction in the activities performed inside the community due to the fast evolution of technology and the subtitling industry. Since the emergence of Netflix and other VOD streaming platforms, the demand for fansubbing has decreased. Indeed, consuming audiovisual content legally has never been easier and platforms offer a significant catalogue of shows and movies with multiple audiovisual translation options. This represents a victory for the professional subtitling industry, which has gained importance and popularity considering the increasingly high demands of viewers, but is a considerable loss in the world of fansubbing. As a matter of fact, through Netflix and their increasing production of non-Anglophone content (Leksawat, 2022, p. 120), subtitles have gained in popularity and have encouraged viewers to enjoy foreign-language content in original subtitled version instead of using dubbing. This is interesting, because "one of the causes of fansubbing in the beginning" was "the attempt to fulfil a gap for niche audiences" (Leksawat, 2022, p. 120).

Furthermore, avoiding dubbing and its long waiting periods has been the fansubbing community's aim for over a decade (Massidda, 2020, p. 192). In multiple ways, fansubbing may have helped shaping the industry, as it could be at the origin of the taste and expectation for subtitles. Ironically, today's industry and the emergence of VOD streaming platforms, are also elements that have precipitated the decline in the success of fansubbing, as their ideas have been enhanced, professionalised, and democratised to a large extent. These communities, driven by passion, and an often-evoked creativity, are disappearing. Beyond the present community's aims for professional standards in subtitling quality, research in other communities highlighted that these tended to opt for more creative subtitles (Bréan, 2014, pp. 28–30), which are now very difficult to find. This type of subtitles followed different guidelines which were established for a niche audience with different expectations (Bucaria, 2018,

p. 943). They are still produced in the world of Korean and Japanese fansubs, mostly in anime (in which fansubbing was born), but are increasingly difficult to find in French subtitling of Anglophone content. Therefore, in addition to the loss of a community, in my opinion, this evolution of the industry in a way has also led to a loss in creativity, as the fansubbers follow guidelines that tend towards standardisation. This has also been observed in Swedish fansubbing, in which Pedersen (2019, p. 72) reported that there were "hardly any traces of creativity" in his investigation of fansubs, despite these being a characteristic "that fansubs often have been credited with in the past" (Pedersen, 2019, p. 73).

Some scholars, such as Marignan (2019) argue that fansubbing has had a real impact on professional subtitling practices and argue that the phenomenon is responsible for the "uberisation" of subtitling through their aim for speed. However, on the other hand, fansubbers also highlight the impact of new practices in the professional industry. As a member of the French sub-community underlined in 2022 on the forum, content consumption habits have changed and so have the audiences' expectations:

> Series today have taken the bad habit of releasing all the episodes at once instead of broadcasting them weekly, which would have left time to translate them quietly. So, a dozen episodes at once, and everyone wants to binge watch in French too, and this can frankly discourage translating (the number of episodes and the impatient [members]). I can see the difference today compared to when I started five years ago. In the past, [viewers] were already impatient, today they are even more so, and are almost intolerant.

The motivation to translate, according to Barra (2009, p. 518), was "the real engine of all the work" behind fansubbing and this lack of motivation could therefore explain the reduction in their activities. This demonstrates the value of monitoring these evolutions to understand the ways in which amateur and professional subtitling practices have impacted one another, both in positive and negative ways.

In the not-so-distant past, this fansubbing community was thriving, as a bridge connecting impatient fans with foreign content, offering a place to collaborate, learn, and contribute to the subtitling cause to allow people to enjoy their favourite shows and movies in a language they understand. But today, these communities are not as

easy to find. As Massidda (2020, p. 200) states "once a necessary evil able to make foreign products accessible and available in the local language, fansubbing activities, as of now, have no *raison d'être* anymore". Fansubbing has thus experienced a marked decline, leaving its dedicated adepts to adjust to a rapidly changing landscape. Fansubbers find themselves in a constant battle to keep their communities active. The demand for their services has reduced, resulting in fewer fansubbers dedicating their time to translation and thus in a decreased ability to provide translated content compared to the past. The audiovisual field, now abundant with official translations produced in shorter timeframes, no longer relies as heavily on the contributions of fansubbers.

With the decline of fansubbing as a mainstream practice, the French fansubbers in the present community have shifted their efforts towards more open, collaborative practices. The days of meticulously creating subtitles from scratch through complicated processes and separation of tasks (Bréan, 2014; Dagiral & Tessier, 2008) have given way to a simpler approach: ripping subtitles that are available on platforms, slightly adapting them, and sharing them on the community's website. While this was already an option before, fansubbers have thus adapted to favour such practices and keep ensuring the accessibility of foreign content to viewers how may not have access to it otherwise. However, their traditional roles have evolved introducing heightened legal challenges, especially when relying solely on sharing ripped files.

As fansubbing has transformed, many of the functionalities that once defined the present community have disappeared. These functionalities, once essential for ensuring the quality of fansubs and their synchronisation with video content, are no longer as relevant. In the last years, there has been a lack of development in functionalities within the community, which mirrors the reduction in activity due to the rapid evolution of technology and the subtitling industry itself.

The world of fansubbing has certainly evolved, and members within the community examined here have adapted to shifting trends. While the decline of analogous traditional fansubbing communities may seem inevitable, their legacy endures in the form of collaborative freely available sharing of subtitles in the aim of keeping content accessible to all. Nevertheless, the continuity of fansubbing communities in distinct

contexts, which may face unique challenges not encountered in the French context, remains uncertain. For instance, Chinese communities, where fansubbers often assume activist roles (see for example Huang et al., 2023; Wang & Zhang, 2017), may potentially persist in their endeavours due to different motivations.

6.1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this section has explored the multifaceted aspects of collaboration within the fansubbing community. The synergy of communication and cooperation among team members emerges as a pivotal element in the fansubbers' operational framework. The four levels of collaboration identified, spanning private and public spheres and the three communication channels, stand out as integral components in the synching process, the translation workflows, and the subsequent distribution of fansubs. Notably, the chat box that opens in the software's extension during the translation process, which is accessible to any registered member, serves as the sole live chatting option in the community, distinguishing itself from all the other communication modes that operate asynchronously.

While the general community is characterised by its multilingual nature, allowing translation into almost every language, a notable predominance of collaboration in the French sub-community has emerged. This is particularly evident in the leading role played by its members in the creation and suggestion of new tools and functionalities throughout the years.

In light of the diverse communication channels available, accessing the necessary information or finding effective communication methods can prove challenging for members, particularly newcomers. Consequently, many members resort to public comments on the forum to seek assistance. This practice not only underlines the community's openness but also reflects its unique accessibility, allowing any internet user to read messages on the website and forum without the need for registration, a departure from other communities where registration is a prerequisite for information or communication access. In this fansubbing community everything is publicly available and detailed in the forum, but despite this openness, navigating the extensive

forum content covering various unrelated topics can be daunting for new users. Regrettably, some newcomers, unaware of community norms and making unintentional mistakes, end up receiving blockings and bans. This highlights the community's commitment to maintaining quality and longevity in their activities, demonstrating an uncompromising stance on adherence to well-established rules. While the community excels in fostering openness, collaboration, and communication, members are resolute in upholding the standards that contribute to its success and longevity.

This section has ultimately explored the challenges and evolution of communication and practices within the French fansubbing community. The community studied has adapted, embracing almost exclusively open collaborative practices, and thus aligning with Baños & Díaz Cintas's (2023, p. 3) new definition of fansubbing communities as groups of "fans for all". From the changing functionalities and reduced activities due to technological advancements and to the impact of VOD platforms on demand, the decline of traditional fansubbing practices is evident.

6.2 Case Study 2: Collaboration and communication in industry subtitling

Section 6.2.1 examines the industry subtitlers' collaboration, for which I have developed a categorisation into three distinct areas: **with clients, with colleagues, and with other agents**. These can then belong to one of two modes: **formal or informal**. While the first area of collaboration (with clients) is formal because it is part of the subtitlers' commission, collaboration with colleagues and other agents can be classified as either formal or informal, as it is not always required by clients, nor officially part of the brief, but can be encouraged or even entirely voluntary. In this section, I group together cooperation in the workflow and communication within the broader umbrella of collaboration. Each area of collaboration is considered in turn, with a focus on understanding the prevalence of the formal and informal mode in each case. In Section 6.2.2, I delve into the challenges in collaboration in the industry that have been raised by the subtitlers and how these inform working conditions.

6.2.1 Classification of collaboration

6.2.1.1 Collaboration with clients

While there are some similarities depending on distribution medium, collaboration and communication patterns can vary considerably from one client to another, and some clients have clearer and more organised processes, which can impact workflows. Subtitlers who often work for cinema distribution, such as Participants A, C, and G, reported that they communicate mainly with the primary clients, such as the technical directors of distributors or majors. They usually communicate via email or telephone, depending on the formality of the relationship between them. In cinema subtitling, there are no intermediaries in these discussions, as secondary clients provide solely technical services. Therefore, the communication of project details, as well as negotiation of deadlines and rates are conducted directly with the primary client, which is consistent with findings from previous studies that have shown this approach to be more rewarding than working through intermediaries (Abdallah, 2012; AVTE, n.d.-a; Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020). In the project under investigation, Participant G was working for a VOD platform but was also able to collaborate with the primary client, allowing him to negotiate good rates and "comfortable working conditions" in his opinion.

Apart from him, the five other subtitlers who work on video projects reported that their interactions are generally limited to contact with French post-production laboratories or the French branches of LSPs. They do not communicate with the primary client directly, because the laboratory requires all communication to go through them. Instead, they liaise with a project manager or a subtitling manager who oversees the projects, commissions the translations, and provides feedback. In confidentiality-driven contexts, most subtitlers also reveal communication challenges due to incomplete information from clients regarding processes and broadcast dates, resulting in shorter deadlines and constant rescheduling, and impeding effective collaboration.

Participant E shared that her experience differs between her VOD clients' global approach and her TV projects, which are more organised and offer better communication. For TV projects, she usually receives detailed information, a purchase order, and all the video files in advance, which is crucial for efficient subtitling. As

previous studies have highlighted, missing or asymmetrical information is a potential factor impacting the processes and quality of subtitling (Abdallah, 2012; Artegiani, 2021a). Participant F, who works for TV and VOD platforms, reports that communication can be challenging, notably when she is not informed about where her subtitles will be broadcast, which can later result in a necessary conformation of her subtitles to a specific destination broadcaster's subtitling norms. This has already generated problems with copyright declarations, as she declared subtitles for one medium, which in the end had been done by a different translator, while her subtitles ended up elsewhere. Di Giovanni (2016, p. 6) highlights that this is due to the ease of reproducing subtitles compared to purchasing copyrighted files and reusing them, as well as to a "lack of communication/ collaboration among the operators". These issues are compounded by the absence of client archiving. In Participant F's case, the lack of archiving could be mainly attributed to her laboratory acting as an intermediary to a major client, who then resells the subtitles to various media (TV channels or VOD platforms). However, the intermediary client with whom she collaborated had no information about the whereabouts of her subtitles once they were sold to the major client.

In summary, one clear distinction between cinema and VOD projects is a lack of collaboration between translators and primary clients in the latter, which manifests itself in various ways, including limited information exchange, reduced rates, and a less influential role for translators in the overall process.

6.2.1.2 Collaboration with colleagues

This form of collaboration consists of communication and cooperation with a diverse range of colleagues through formal or informal modes, and can be required or encouraged by clients, or may be voluntary.

1) Formal collaboration with colleagues

The first colleagues that are generally formally involved are co-subtitlers, with whom video subtitlers tend to split series in half. Participants B, E, and F, who work on series, are required to collaborate with a co-subtitler, to harmonise the translations across seasons and revise each other's episodes. This collaboration may also be voluntary, as in the case of Participant E who requested to add a third subtitler to one of her VOD

projects. In addition to proofreading, she meets in person with her co-subtitlers to do simulations, they communicate via group emails, and collaborate on a glossary. All video subtitlers reported exchanging ideas with co-subtitlers on a regular basis to harmonise their translations with respect to terminology, relationships between characters, and language register. The exception was Participant G, who translated a mini-series for a platform by himself as it only contained 6 episodes. In contrast to Aleksandrowicz's (2022) findings in the Polish context, which often highlighted inconsistencies due to changes in translators between modes, seasons or individual episodes, in the present case study, the episodes are usually shared among the same teams from season to season. They agree from the outset to collaborate in order to ensure consistency between episodes and maintain it throughout.

Formal collaborations required by the client also commonly involve the dubbing team, to ensure consistency between both versions. They usually collaborate on shared documents, through emails, or send each other their translated files. In her VOD series, Participant B was required to collaborate with the dubbing team prior to the translation process to deliver files containing terminology and forced narratives. Subsequently, however, she was disappointed by the lack of communication with the dubbing team, because she would have liked to be included in the discussion of some translation choices that were made without consulting the subtitlers. Participant B thus collaborated retroactively and asynchronously with the dubbers, which was similar to Participant G's collaboration patterns on his mini-series. They were sent the dubbing files after their submission and could only check for consistency between the two versions, ensuring there was no major difference in meaning or terminology. This allowed them to review important translation decisions made in the French version, as clients require consistency. Nevertheless, Participant B reported inconsistencies in the dubbing dialogue to the two dubbers she was communicating with, which allowed for corrections in a second recording session, thus highlighting the advantage of collaborating synchronously between translation modes.

In cinema, subtitlers work alone on the subtitling of their films, they usually are encouraged or required to consult with dubbing teams to harmonise their versions. For her VOD film, Participant C reported that collaboration with the dubber presented challenges, because the LSP's cloud-based platform does not allow them to export

their files in order to share them with one another, despite their translations "being their property". This new phenomenon in the French industry has also been highlighted by Boiron & Syssau (2020, p. 19), and presents legal and ethical issues that would warrant investigation. Nevertheless, the client asked Participant C to communicate with the dubber and follow their choices for important catch phrases, as she said that the dubbed version is the reference "that will be remembered by audiences". A similar request was also made of Participant E by her VOD client, who required collaboration with the dubbers to agree on terminology and forced narratives. As the dubbing was already done, she had to change her subtitles to match what is said in the French audio to avoid inconsistencies, despite sometimes disagreeing with the translation. Although this is frustrating, she noted that she needs "to put [her] ego aside". This highlights a power dynamic in which dubbers hold more decision-making power than subtitlers, which can be linked to consumer preferences as France is traditionally a "dubbing country" (Díaz Cintas & Zhang, 2022, p. 12; Gambier, 2012, p. 46).

Participant F was not required to work with dubbers or to work on a cloud-based platform. Nevertheless, she was surprised to learn about a "forced" passive collaboration with dubbers that she had previously been unaware of. She found out about this "when a dubber recently wrote to [her], [about] a typo in a subtitle". The laboratory had sent her subtitling files to the dubbing team without her knowledge, which she finds disrespectful. The unauthorised sharing of copyrighted content not only highlights communication issues and raises ethical and legal concerns for intellectual property rights, but also has significant implications for the professional status of audiovisual translators, as it undermines their copyright ownership and rightful recognition for their work.

These collaborations with dubbers highlight the importance that clients place on consistency between modes. Four participants mentioned a "bible", provided by the clients or self-made, to harmonise terminology. The "bible" is a list of translations for character names, recurring places and events that appear in the series, as well as the characters' relationships with one another throughout the episodes, including forms of address such as *tutoiement* and *vouvoiement*, which is shared with dubbing teams to avoid continuity errors (Loison-Charles, 2022, p. 14). Another form of collaboration that is required by clients and can be defined as passive, is to collaborate globally

through filling out multilingual files with previously established translations, forced narratives or KNPs in every language, which was the case for Participants B and C's VOD projects. This highlights wider formal collaboration and centralisation of translations as a new area of exploration. Although his study focuses on the Polish context specifically, Aleksandrowicz (2022) identified that when translators collaboratively edit online KNP files, consistency is improved throughout the content. However, within the French context, the proliferation of these supplementary pre- or post-translation tasks, prompted by the advent of VOD streaming platforms, such as the completion of glossaries, KNPs, or summaries, has been identified as problematic due to the increased workload they impose, without corresponding remuneration or extended deadlines (Penot-Lenoir & Renard, 2023). At European level, these tasks, which can be considered "free work", account on average for 1.56 hours per week for translators (AVTE, n.d.-a).

2) Informal collaboration with colleagues

As regards informal collaboration, voluntary pre-simulations were reported by four participants (A, B, C, and G), who enjoy inviting colleagues over to carry out an informal viewing. Nevertheless, this is not always possible with short deadlines, because as Silvester (2022, p. 409) notes "[t]he length of time given for a translation can clearly influence the subtitler's approach and choice of strategies". The pre-simulation with colleagues is listed in Gourgeon's (2014, p. 30) glossary as a preparatory step to refine the text before the official simulation, although here it was sometimes the only in-person simulation. Most subtitlers enjoy sharing their work and exchanging thoughts about translation, because as stated by Participant A "subtitling is a rather solitary job" and professional growth is fostered through discussions with peers. Participant D also regularly voluntarily engages in informal collaboration with another translator, with whom he either splits episodes and films, exchanges ideas, or condenses and synchronises his first drafts. Many informal exchanges among colleagues also take place on social media, notably on Facebook groups, which aligns with findings in other linguistic contexts such as in Denmark (Beuchert, 2017, p. 138).

To conclude, in terms of formal collaboration among the participants, film translation is primarily performed by a single subtitler, whereas in the subtitling of series, splitting seasons between two (or more) subtitlers seems to be the norm, except for mini-series.

In these collaborative settings, subtitlers agree on terminology and forms of address between characters, discuss solutions, and give each other feedback. Apart from Participant D's Italian film, for which no dubbing seemed to be planned to date, all participants also highlighted collaboration with dubbers, to varying extents. This collaboration is mainly required by clients, and, in some cases, may underline the need for further investigation into legal and ethical considerations. Informal collaboration, on the other hand, occurs frequently when translators voluntarily decide to engage in collaborative practices, revision, or simulations with colleagues who are external to the project.

6.2.1.3 Collaboration with other agents

Where the subtitlers' collaboration with other agents is concerned, this is often informal. Six subtitlers mentioned informal collaboration with experts on specialised forums and through calls to associations, when working on projects requiring specific terminology. Participant C shared that she also often contacts experts she finds through social media to ask questions or recruit them for later projects. Sometimes, she collaborates financially with the dubber to pay these external consultants, and in rare cases she makes a request to her primary clients to pay them, thus officialising the collaboration in the process. The only other occurrence of formality in such exchanges is in Participant F's medical series, in which she collaborated with a doctor hired by the client, who provided feedback and suggestions on the translation of terminology.

Three participants regularly collaborate informally with colleagues or friends for whom English is the first language that they consult for proofreading or to ask questions. The same number of subtitlers also informally collaborate with other language consultants when translating from English as a pivot language. Among them, Participant G specifies that he pays these consultants a daily rate, while Participant D mentioned a friendlier exchange with translators and friends who are speakers of other languages than English, who proofread or contribute to his translations, which aligns with the concept of collaborative translation (O'Brien, 2011). Participant D engages in further informal and voluntary collaboration, which can be characterised as passive. This includes his utilisation of pre-existing translations and fansubs. Notably, this has led to active collaboration through his amicable interactions with fansubbing communities of Japanese content, wherein fansubbers permit him to use their files and

subsequently remove theirs once his official version becomes available. This collaborative practice aligns with Genty's (2021, p. 64) observation, which highlighted that in Japanese anime translated into French "some adapters use the translation proposed by a fansubbing team as a draft for their own adaptation". Genty (2021) also notes the cessation of fansubbing activities and the removal of fansubs once the official translation becomes available.

The three cinema subtitlers report that they are only rarely in touch with film directors or producers, who do not come to simulations and do not interact with post-production. Occasionally, they may be able to email them questions if the distributors have put them in contact. This seems to differ with what has been observed in other areas of the French subtitling industry, such as Silvester (2022) and Eisenschitz's (2013) studies on independent cinema which involved a higher degree of collaboration with filmmakers.

Despite significant informal collaboration between subtitlers and specialists of a field or language consultants, subtitling for mainstream distribution thus revealed a lack of inclusion of the subtitlers during the pre-production or production phases. As Participant C stated, "Tom Cruise doesn't come to check the subtitles", and subtitlers primarily collaborate at post-production level with clients, colleagues, and experts. It is, however, essential to note that seeking input from colleagues or external agents is subject to time constraints and deadlines, meaning these steps are not always feasible (Rosnet, 2012, p. 80).

6.2.1.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the classification of collaboration offered in Section 6.2.1 outlines three distinct areas: collaboration with clients, with colleagues, and with other agents. This section has shed light on the formal and informal modes prevalent in each collaborative dimension. Formal collaboration with clients has exhibited variations in interactions and challenges based on the distribution medium, emphasising different interactions between cinema and VOD subtitling projects. The examination of formal collaboration with colleagues has illustrated the intricate relationships subtitlers maintain with co-subtitlers and dubbing teams. From harmonising translations across seasons to retroactive collaboration with dubbers, the study outlines the multifaceted nature of

these collaborative endeavours. Informal collaboration with colleagues, such as voluntary pre-simulations, further enriches the collaborative landscape within the industry. The subtitlers' collaboration with other agents has highlighted informal collaboration with specialists, language consultants, and external colleagues. Subtitlers engage in voluntary exchanges, seek expertise on forums, and occasionally contribute financially to remunerate specialists, thereby enhancing the quality of their translations. However, the limited interaction with film directors or producers underscores a distinction in collaboration practices between mainstream distribution and independent cinema subtitling.

6.2.2 Challenges and evolutions in industry subtitling

Aligning with the Translator Studies (Chesterman, 2009) orientation, collaboration patterns are particularly interesting to analyse from the translators' perspectives because they can pose significant challenges and impact working conditions for subtitlers. The findings of this chapter emphasise the importance of collaboration among stakeholders in subtitling and identify barriers to effective collaboration. Several key factors contribute to challenges in collaboration and working conditions: globalisation, automation, declining rates and tighter deadlines, changes in practices that impact quality, and a lack of transparency. Each of these factors is considered in turn in this section, alongside positive aspects within the subtitling profession.

6.2.2.1 Globalisation and automation of the workflow

As current trends shift towards an increasing consumption of content through SVOD systems like Netflix, Amazon, and others, there has been a consequential impact on AVT workflows, particularly driven by the forces of globalisation (Massidda, 2023, p. 7). The convergence of factors such as the surge in audiovisual productions and the advent of SVOD systems, coupled with the urgent demands of clients, has compelled proficient subtitlers to transition from conventional in-house to freelance and decentralised workflows over the past decade (Massidda, 2023, p. 8). The globalisation of processes has subsequently generated changes to the subtitlers' traditional workflows, leading to a "cloud turn" (Bolaños-García-Escribano & Díaz Cintas, 2020), in which social dynamics have shifted. As observed by Massidda (2023, p. 8),

this revolution occurred in phases, beginning with a shift towards freelance workflows, followed by the adoption of templates. However, the final advancement towards globalised and decentralised ecosystems materialised through the transition from desktop subtitling software to cloud-based platforms (Massidda, 2023, p. 8). Research conducted in other contexts has shown that this subsequently led to a primary change in collaboration due to the shift from traditional face-to-face interactions to online collaboration (Artegiani, 2021a; Künzli, 2023), particularly when working for VOD clients. The decrease in face-to-face collaboration has also been observed in this study. According to Participant E in the study, in France, this started with some VOD platforms forcing subtitlers to follow "illogical" globalised guidelines instead of applying the well-established French translation norms and processes. This had a very negative effect on the industry, because these platforms started producing a lot of content with low remuneration for translators. In addition, the clients' increased need for confidentiality for the projects has generated further challenges, notably the practices of sending episodes one by one or requesting translations of episode summaries and titles for VOD projects prior to sharing the content.

Four out of seven respondents in the study mentioned globalisation and automation as factors that have decreased the quality of collaboration. They reported experiencing challenges in regard to the imposition by LSPs of non-user-friendly cloud-based subtitling platforms. Participant C said she does not feel restricted by cloud-based software, because she is comfortable enough with IT to go and check the parameters and change them or deactivate what could be constraining for her workflow. Nevertheless, Participants C and E both noted that a high-speed internet connection is needed in order to be able to work on these cloud-based platforms, which is not possible everywhere for everyone. Participant A, who had to use cloud-software when working for one client, stated that in the beginning clients did not seem to have consulted with translators, as all the processes were automated, restrictive, and not considered from a human perspective to ensure readability. She acknowledged, however, that it has now slightly improved, despite them still imposing locked templates.

Beyond the need for high-speed internet and the challenge of working with such master files, the subtitlers noted that these platforms generate further challenges. For instance,

Participants C and G raised concerns about the limited rights they retained over their copyrighted translations once the files were submitted. Consequently, Participant C faced restrictions in her collaboration with the dubber for her VOD project, as file export options were limited. She had to primarily rely on email communication to address any doubts and uncertainties. Additional challenges include limited access to the full and final video content and the elimination of in-person simulations. Participant E stated that she has been pressured to use cloud-based software for her VOD projects, but she has always been able to refuse. Not only does she find it inconvenient due to the inability to work with her preferred settings, but her main concern lies in the fact that her subtitles are available for everyone to read at any point in her process, allowing the post-production company to monitor her real-time progress online. Künzli (2023, pp. 9–10), who has identified similar evolutions in German-language subtitling, notes that collaboration on subtitling platforms has been "marketed as an advantage for subtitlers", when in reality it has increased anonymity and the monitoring of productivity, thus generating further ethical challenges. Massidda (2022, p. 27) states that "[t]he future of subtitling is in the cloud" and that "the shift from desktop-based to cloud-based environments […] has been smooth and well-received by Languages Server Providers (LSPs) and professionals working in the global AVT industry". While the former agents obviously express satisfaction because "the central production of subtitles meant an immediate reduction of costs for the spotting needed to be done only once and then shared among the many translators" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 45), in the French industry practitioners appear to challenge this perspective. Notably, ATAA (2023) takes a contrasting stance, contending that this is a "way of working that completely transforms [their] working conditions and also, doubtless, the work itself and - in the long term – [their] status". Artegiani (2021a) also argues that cloud subtitling platforms are unsustainable, because they isolate subtitlers and decrease visibility, communication and collaboration between agents in the network. Her study analysed platforms that automated many processes, including task assignment, which did not allow for much collaboration outside the platform. In contrast, the present study found that despite reduced collaboration in cloud-based environments, participants also communicated externally to the platforms, e.g., via emails, with project and subtitling managers, notably regarding information on the project, deadlines and rates negotiations, as well as with dubbing teams and other agents.

Most participants are unhappy about the globalisation of the process. Participants E and G, for example, note that this means that they do not have as much time to work on projects as they would need. Participants E and G also agree with the fact that working for some VOD streaming platforms can be very constraining in terms of unnecessary guidelines to apply and the control that the secondary clients have over the translation process. Participants A and G also have strong opinions on the fact that LSPs are now globalised and outsource template creation and other subtitling tasks to countries where labour is cheaper, such as India, a practice that had already been mentioned as problematic a decade ago (Rosnet, 2012, p. 78). These two participants stated that, from their observations, new translators do not receive proper training, but are simply given online tutorials. Therefore, in addition to the challenge posed by outsourcing, it also impedes the improvement of skills and the exchange of knowledge between generations through interactions and threatens the established learning practices of the community. Participants A and G find that this is a pity because if no one supervises the training, these inexperienced subtitlers are going to keep making the same mistakes and never learn properly or progress in the profession. O'Brien (2011, p. 19) argues that "to exchange ideas and debate with a fellow translator will most likely lead to higher quality translation and might contribute towards skills enhancement of novice or junior translators", a perspective shared by Participants A and E. Participant E notably expressed a sense of stagnation in her skills development, as she has been forced to work alone as a freelancer after the post-production companies fired all in-house translators. In light of these insights, these subtitlers' perspectives align with existing research findings that have shown that "[g]lobal virtual teamwork has resulted in new team dynamics and a work environment characterized by a lack of interpersonal relationships, a lack of face-to-face communication, a lack of social events to build trust, and a lack of close supervision, among other factors" (Rodríguez-Castro, 2013, pp. 39–40). Digitalisation and automation of processes were also an often-evoked topic, such as for Participants A and C who fear the fact that they will at some point be forced to become straight forward post-editors or proof-readers.

The decrease in the quality of collaboration is thus reflected in the nature of globalised practices, but also arguably in the reduced readability of subtitles, a point argued by

Participant E, who believes these factors have had a significant impact on the overall product quality. Participant F also mentioned that in the company where she started her career, they used to produce high quality subtitles and to employ people in good working conditions, but after it was bought by a multinational LSP, the conditions changed, and quality did not matter anymore. All these changes to the subtitlers' workflow can subsequently hinder the perceived quality of the final product. Over half of the interviewees expressed concerns about the decrease in subtitling quality and reported a lack of interest from LSPs in producing quality content. These findings are consistent with other studies that have highlighted concerns about declining quality as a result of deteriorating working conditions (Künzli, 2023; Szarkowska et al., 2021). By prioritising speed for global distribution and accelerating processes, the multinational companies create challenging time constraints that reduce possibilities for collaboration. Abdallah's (2011, p. 182) research underscored that the disparities in quality perception between subtitlers and the translation company that employs them generated "symptoms of professional ethical stress". She also emphasises that translators are not solely responsible for quality, as it depends on collective decisions and the involvement of multiple agents and factors that can influence the outcome (Abdallah, 2012, p. 40). Hence, in an era where audiences hold substantial influence over content and actively engage in its distribution (Kuscu-Ozbudak, 2022), including occasional instances of critiquing subtitle quality on social media, it appears perplexing that major distributors have not yet adapted their practices to prioritise working conditions, adherence to deadlines, and robust quality control measures. This oversight fails to fully consider the important objective of enhancing the viewing experience for their audience. This highlights the need for further research exploring the link between collaboration, working conditions, and the quality of subtitles.

In this study, it is important to note that the majority of participants had extensive experience in the industry and had been following the well-established French guidelines and processes for decades, before encountering significant changes due to globalisation. From their perspective, these changes might have significantly altered their workflows, similarly to global observations that have revealed a "detrimental impact of large subtitling multinationals in the domestic ecosystem" (Szarkowska et al., 2021, p. 667). However, investigating the attitudes of new subtitlers towards globalised practices would be insightful, as those who have not experienced different

working conditions may express less concern. Participant B, for example, expressed overall satisfaction with the processes and collaboration with globalised clients, but raised concerns about low rates and tight deadlines. This aligns with the results of other studies which have shown that new subtitlers with up to 5 years of experience tend to work more often for international companies (Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2022, p. 4).

6.2.2.2 Decline in rates and tighter deadlines

Globalised practices have not only changed the working methods of French translators, but have led to a decline in their working conditions, especially in terms of rates and deadlines. Participants A and F left the LSPs in which they were previously employed (the former as a freelancer and the latter as an in-house employee), because they disapproved of the decrease in rates and working conditions. Participants A and B both noted that the current working conditions highlight a lack of consideration for the audiovisual translator's profession and the creative process behind it, which devalues their work. Participant C also stated that some streaming platforms are "really ruining working conditions for everyone" and mentioned that she refused this type of project. She feared that it will only become worse, which will impact the quality of subtitling if translators are not given good working conditions. She noted that when starting in the profession "it is tempting to accept any price". However, she also said that when starting out, "it is important [for subtitlers] to try to defend their rates in order to […] be able to make a living from this job". All the long-established subtitlers stated that this is specifically difficult for new audiovisual translators, such as Participant B, who said she finds it difficult to fight for her rates and decline projects she would be interested in. She also regretted the fact that her rates are not re-evaluated or increased with experience, because she cannot make plans for her future if she does not increase her rates. As she noted:

> Many young translators work like crazy, around 70 hours a week for 1,200 euros a month, which is not enough to live in decent conditions. Once they turn 30 or 35, they are too tired, it is not possible to live in these conditions anymore.

She stated that when she thinks about "the many years [she] studied, and all the time [she] sacrificed, including weekends and evenings for this", she cannot agree to

devalue her work in this fashion and has to set her limits. These practices are common in the AVT industry, as underscored by the AVTE (n.d.-a) survey findings, which revealed that "[a]udiovisual translators in general often say they are expected to work at weekends by their clients, which may affect their family life, work-life balance, and their overall well-being". Furthermore, the report indicated that "[t]he tendency to compensate the lack of income with a heavier load of work seems to be confirmed by the general trend to work long hours and take very little time off" (AVTE, n.d.-a) which has also been mentioned in the literature (Abdallah, 2011, p. 183). Despite these insights, which highlighted that French translators work long hours including weekends, Participant G stated that in France they are still lucky with working conditions in AVT, and the author status is really recognised and respected. Participants A and C have the same impression, because they managed to find good clients and work for cinema distribution. While with the increasing online content consumption "the cinema industry is currently suffering a serious setback" (Massidda, 2023, p. 7), Participant C felt that she was living in the "last golden years of cinema translation" and said that she "enjoys every minute of it", because this is the only area of the industry still protected from declining working conditions. In addition to good rates, she stated that cinema subtitlers are given enough time to complete their translations: "usually around two or three weeks to subtitle a film, which is not the case at all for other projects". Hence, the responses from the cinema subtitlers suggest that working conditions and rates seem to be more favourable when working for local primary clients. This diverges from observations at the broader European level, in which audiovisual translators that primarily engaged with international clients reported higher incomes that those working locally or with both local and international clients (AVTE, n.d.-a).

Nevertheless, all subtitlers witnessed how much newcomers are subject to difficult working conditions in video subtitling. Participants D and E also regretted the shortening of the time allocated to subtitling and the lack of planning with very short deadlines, which has also been witnessed in other contexts (Künzli, 2023, p. 8). Participant D, for example, used to always have 3 weeks to subtitle a film, which can now sometimes be reduced to one week, which he finds mentally exhausting. This also impacts the approach in projects, as he stated that he starts working on his subtitles directly because he does not have time to watch the film first. Participant E voiced her

concern regarding the recurring issue of clients' persistent emergency and their desire for immediate results and delivery. This can create "a major challenge for the delivery of multiple versions of subtitled content in a tight turnaround time" (Massidda, 2023, p. 2). Participant E thinks that quality does not matter to clients anymore, as they only care about speed. As Participant E stated: "we are constantly asked for greater versatility and shorter deadlines", when the "rates are decreasing despite the cost of living increasing". Although all the subtitlers in this study expressed their enjoyment of their work and commitment to staying in the profession, the presence of these issues among all of them underscores a concerning trend in the industry's evolution which aligns with observations in other contexts. As Massidda (2023, p. 13) points out:

> As a result, the most experienced subtitlers are leaving the AVT sector for better translation jobs or have already exited the localisation market altogether. This is the unfortunate result of a profit-based business model that has had a dramatic impact on experts working in the AVT sector.

While the AVT industry often refers to a "talent crunch" to describe the situation where there is a "small pool of skilled professionals available in the AVT sector working for a multitude of LSPs worldwide" (Massidda, 2023, p. 13), it is noteworthy that despite the escalating production of audiovisual content, a decline in rates and working conditions is in fact linked to this phenomenon. Hence, the scarcity of translators is not indicative of the subtitlers' lack of expertise, but rather of clients' inability to compensate them adequately, thus dissuading subtitlers from continued engagement. Similarly, in Künzli's (2023, p. 7) research among German-speaking subtitlers, the participants expressed a sense of helplessness in negotiating rates and enhancing industry practices, ultimately leading many to consider professional reorientation as their only option. As Massidda (2023, p. 16) highlights "[t]he pressure is now on the large language service conglomerates to produce a better price model for freelance resources in order to retain talent and counteract the global shortage of AVT professionals". Such shifts are essential to ensure the sustainability of the profession.

6.2.2.3 Lack of transparency

The responses from most of the subtitlers seem to reveal a lack of transparency regarding workflow, quality control, task assignments, and the overall subtitling

process. This lack of transparency can lead to a decrease in the subtitlers' status, pushing them further down the post-production chain, and can be traced back to the fact that many video subtitlers' interactions are often limited to the secondary client, who may not possess all the necessary information. This aligns with Abdallah's (2011, p. 181) results, which unveil striking similarity in the way companies, such as the one she investigated, function as intermediaries with primary clients, establishing themselves as indispensable and hindering direct communication between translators and end clients. Abdallah (2011, p. 181) rightly emphasises that this lack of collaboration "also affected the flow of information and knowledge". This observation resonates with findings in the present study, where this limitation of communication with primary clients significantly impacts the exchange of important information.

For instance, Participant A in the study blamed the fact that many subtitlers are not informed about what happens with their subtitles, which leads to subtitles being broadcast elsewhere than expected, and multiple re-translations of the same content, without even acknowledging that there were previous versions. This was for instance the case for Participant D who was not informed about the final destination of his subtitles – he knew it would be for a VOD platform, but did not know which one exactly. This has also happened to Participant F, who was expecting to see her subtitles on TV, but noticed when she started watching that someone else had redone them and that her subtitles were actually on a streaming platform. This highlights an important lack of communication, transparency, and archiving on the part of clients, which does not allow subtitlers to ensure continuity, and creates an additional task of conformation to a different medium, as well as copyright issues. If two subtitlers have subtitled the same content unknowingly for different distribution media, they could subsequently claim authorship over the same translation to obtain royalties. As Díaz Cintas & Remael (2020, p. 29) point out, "it is not unusual to find the same programme on the market with different sets of subtitles", because sometimes the rights to the content "are sold to different distributors and TV stations that decide not to use any previous translations", notably when changing formats from cinema to TV due to technical constraints. While it is therefore normal to retranslate content after a few years for a different distribution medium, such as Participant D does for DVDs or Blu-ray, some participants suspect that clients order new translations to cut costs, rather than purchasing the rights to existing files. Participant D confirmed having observed this

phenomenon and pointed out that “everything is perpetually redone”, and reported frustration when his subtitles were not used for a second film festival, and interns and students were commissioned to produce new translations instead. Nevertheless, multiple simultaneous translations should not occur as the copyright issues could easily be avoided through adequate collaboration and communication from and/or between clients.

All these changes in working conditions thus seem to match what has been observed in other contexts and studies. In his study of working conditions among German-speaking subtitlers, Künzli (2023) mentions the growing precarity of the subtitling profession, the acceleration of production processes and the virtualisation of collaboration. These seem to be the prevailing aspects mentioned by the participants in this study as well, which shows similar developments in the industry that need to be further investigated.

6.2.2.4 Impact of COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the AVT industry has not been analysed in depth. The pandemic was mentioned by participants as a challenge and a cause of instability, notably because France was under strict lockdown and curfew rules. COVID-19 was heavily impacting the industry at the time of the interviews, which were carried out for 10 months between 2021 and 2022. At the time of my data collection, I could only ask about the impact the participants were experiencing at that moment. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to ask participants again at a later stage how they managed to overcome these challenges and if they managed to regain stability in the industry. For Participants A and G, for example, who were forced to accept projects for VOD platforms as cinemas were closed and new film releases cancelled, it would be interesting to see if they will go back to working only for cinemas, or if they will keep their VOD clients in the future. What is certain is that the participants’ workloads have been impacted. Participant G remained without employment for 4 months before finding a series to subtitle. Participant B also experienced a couple of months without projects, despite working for video subtitling. She used this time without work to try to contact new clients but was unsuccessful as no one was hiring during the pandemic and projects became rarer. She considered herself lucky to have received financial contributions through the French COVID-19

support system that helped her survive in this challenging period. At the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020, ATAA (2020) conducted a survey involving 283 audiovisual translators. These results shed light on a disconcerting trend, as the preliminary assessment revealed that, with only a few rare exceptions, "no author had received any orders since the beginning of the lockdown". Furthermore, it was anticipated that there would be a period of one or two months with no projects and, consequently, no income. Additionally, the survey brought to attention that "numerous authors have reported a lack of communication from their intermediaries in the laboratories and studios, even in regard to pending author rights compensations". In 2021, ATAA collected new data, but as of 2023, the results have not been made public.

The root causes of these project delays and cancellations can be attributed to disruptions in production. As outlined in a 2021 UNESCO report addressing the economic impact of COVID-19 on the cultural and creative industries, "[i]n the UK, 65% of film and high-end TV production was estimated to have been halted during the first lockdown" and "COVID-19 delayed up to 60% of scripted television programming worldwide in 2020" (UNESCO, 2021, p. 17). As a result, in France, everything was at a standstill, but when the lockdown ended, suddenly some of the participants were overwhelmed with projects that had been postponed and all were scheduled again at the same time and overlapping. This happened to participant C who constantly needed to rearrange her schedule to fit in all the projects. She found this "risky" because it is difficult to juggle too many projects at the same time and there is a risk of not being able to proofread them correctly, focus enough on them and do all the research on the topic. Participant E experienced the same difficulties, as all the seasons of her series were delayed due to the pandemic, and then rescheduled around the same time with short deadlines. She had not planned to have all the projects overlapping at the same time, and consequently had to work non-stop for months without taking any breaks. This sudden overlap of projects could also be due to the fact that SVOD platforms gained in popularity due "the disruption caused by the pandemic in the audio-visual industries" and traditional consumption models that shifted even more toward "trends that were already well established and underway pre-COVID-19", thus challenging traditional broadcast services at the benefit of global streaming services (UNESCO, 2021, pp. 34–35). Indeed, "the Covid-19 pandemic has further increased the demand for internet connectivity, video accessibility, and

audiovisual content for entertainment purposes which has reinforced the dominant role of streaming giants" (Massidda, 2022, p. 22).

Participant D also experienced changes in deadlines that impacted his schedule, as in some instances video files could not be retrieved due to the companies working remotely without access to the content. As a final repercussion, COVID-19 had also changed working habits for some subtitlers such as Participants B and D who sometimes liked to work in cafés to change their working environment and now had to work exclusively from home. Consequently, it would be intriguing to explore whether these alterations in the industry have enduringly transformed working practices or if subtitlers have reverted to their pre-pandemic habits.

6.2.2.5 Positive aspects of the profession

For many subtitlers, the aforementioned challenges, which are often linked to flawed collaboration patterns, highlight a lack of consideration for their profession. This decrease in recognition for the subtitlers' work in turn negatively impacts the profession's sustainability and the quality of subtitling. In spite of this, these subtitlers generally expressed high job satisfaction, which was closely linked to collaborative practices. It is interesting to highlight this in comparison to previous studies on subtitlers' job satisfaction, such as in Croatia, where subtitlers reported that the numerous challenges, including shrinking rates and deadlines, outweighed the positive aspects of their work (Nikolić, 2010, p. 105). During the preliminary interviews, I solicited insights from the French subtitlers regarding aspects they appreciate in their profession. Figure 8 below illustrates positive opinions conveyed by the practitioners in this study towards their profession.

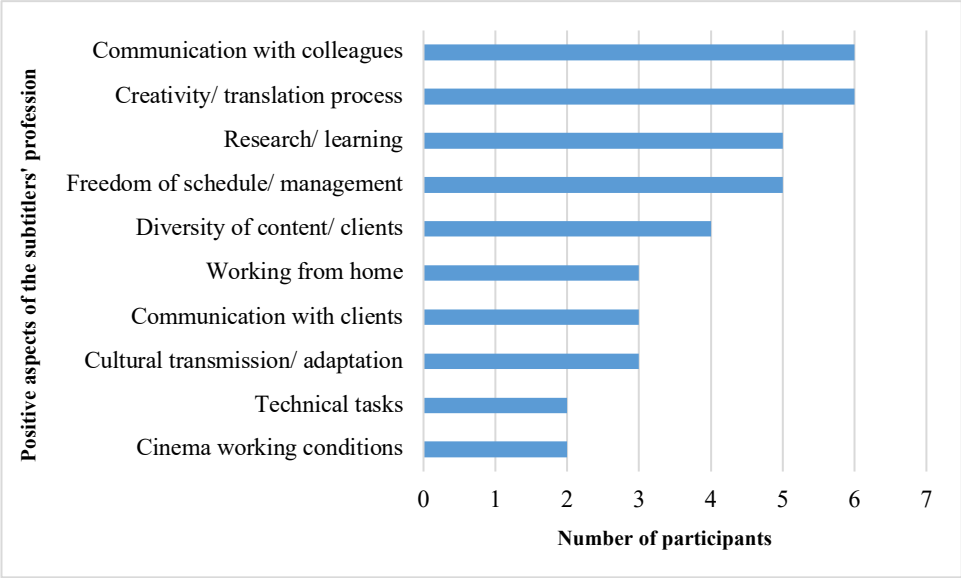


Figure 8. Positive aspects of the subtitlers' profession.

As highlighted in the figure above, six out of seven subtitlers expressed their enjoyment in collaborating with colleagues and the satisfaction derived from engaging in the creative process of translating subtitles. This highlights that, while collaboration can generate its own challenges, it also contributes significantly to the well-being of subtitlers in their profession.

6.2.2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, collaboration patterns and working conditions for subtitlers are influenced by various challenges. The globalisation of processes has led to changes to traditional workflows, shifting towards decentralised freelancing and online collaboration. Participants in the study noted negative changes in the industry, often attributed to globalisation, particularly to streaming platforms. This shift has created difficult conditions for subtitlers, who often lack direct communication with clients. The use of non-user-friendly cloud-based platforms, non-editable templates, shorter deadlines, and limited access to the content before subtitling are also common challenges faced by subtitlers. All subtitlers also highlighted a decline in rates and consideration for quality, impacting their livelihoods and work satisfaction, due to the prioritisation of speed over quality. Lack of transparency and communication from clients regarding the final destination of subtitles and potential copyright issues were also highlighted. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted the industry, causing instability and affecting workloads. Despite these challenges, subtitlers expressed job

satisfaction in collaborating with colleagues and the creative process. Therefore, finding ways to address the challenges while preserving the positive aspects of subtitling are crucial aspects for improving working conditions in the industry and ensuring its sustainability.

7. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Collaboration is inherent to the practice of subtitling and is thus a fundamental aspect of both the fansubbing and professional subtitling environments, but it manifests in different forms and contexts and with different stakeholders. The extensive findings of the previous chapters have set the stage for a comparative analysis in the present section, exploring the parallels and distinctions in collaboration and communication patterns. In this section, both the notion of community and of production networks are essential as these constitute different levels of collaboration.

In Case Study 1, centred around the French fansubbing community, the production network primarily encompasses the community itself and all its members. However, this network extends slightly beyond community members to include fans and occasional lurkers. These individuals engage with materials and may contribute to the forum, despite not being official members or participants in the subtitling process, and their crucial role contributes to the broader production network. An additional aspect of extended collaboration also emerges in the studied community's translation process through the sharing of the labour performed by other fansubbing communities.

Shifting to Case Study 2, which focuses on the professional environment, it becomes apparent that all these subtitlers participate in some form of collaboration in the subtitling process – classified in detail in Section 6.2. These collaborative processes are notably evident through client sharing and mutual recommendations among subtitlers, as well as the voluntary collaboration in translation and quality assurance processes. This aligns with Risku & Dickinson's (2009, p. 57) idea that "[d]espite the popular misconception that little or no support is needed from clients, authors, subject experts or peers, such communication is an essential part of the translation process". As highlighted by my findings, collaboration and communication permeate the French AVT industry and the functioning of subtitling workflows. Therefore, associations for translators prove highly beneficial to practitioners, as they help to connect members, but they also encourage collaboration with broader networks. The industry subtitlers' community can thus mainly be analysed through the ATAA umbrella that serves as its focal point with the core of their activities revolving around the professional practice

of AVT. Beyond the ATAA community, the industry subtitlers in this study all reported an engagement in collaboration with an extensive ecosystem of other agents in the subtitling process. These diverse collaboration patterns form their production network, encompassing interactions with clients and other essential actors, such as speakers of another mother tongue than French and domain experts.

Given the distinctive composition of each environments and the diverse range of agents that translators collaborate with, it is noteworthy that the fansubbing community primarily operates within the community structure. Conversely, in the professional industry, while the significance of community collaboration is undeniable for the sustainability and working conditions of the profession, the day-to-day reality involves complex production networks encompassing multiple actors, notably formal agents such as clients, which can impact on the outcome of the subtitling process.

Section 7.1 focuses on the notion of community collaboration. As noted by Risku & Dickinson (2009, p. 57), translation – albeit not specifically restricted to AVT– can be "a solitary profession" and thus "access to a means of collaborating, communicating, sharing knowledge and learning can be of great benefit to translators in their work". While the fansubbing community's essence is generally viewed as collaborative, the conventional perception of subtitling portrays it as a predominantly solitary practice, which is often associated to the freelancing model (Kuo, 2015, p. 163). This section serves to highlight how freelancers can also be identified as part of a community, evidenced notably through the inherently collaborative nature of their work practices and the frequent social interactions that characterise their profession.

Section 7.2 focuses on the agents of collaboration in production networks. In contrast to Abdallah's (2011) use of the ANT framework (Latour, 1996), my investigation of subtitling production networks primarily revolves around the dynamics of human collaboration. While I do take into consideration the subtitlers' interactions with company clients and various technologies, including hardware, software, and subtitling platforms, my translator-oriented sociological approach places emphasis on the human dimension within these networks because "[a]gents are usually understood to be human" (Buzelin, 2011, p. 6). Consequently, this comparative analysis diverges from ANT perspectives by not treating non-human factors as actors. Nonetheless,

technological aspects are explored, even though they are not considered as active components within the network or the process.

Now, having established that the two subtitling contexts can be seen as both communities and as integral components of broader production networks, let us delve deeper into the details of how these communities and subtitling production networks compare.

7.1 Community collaboration

Based on Risku & Dickinson's (2009) "core elements of communities", this section thematically examines and compares the manifestation of these elements within each community, by regrouping themes as they emerged from the data, instead of following Risku & Dickinson's (2009) original categorisation. In Case Study 1, the application of the "virtual community" framework (Risku & Dickinson, 2009) provides valuable insights into the dynamics and structure of this inherently collaborative online fansubbing community. In Case Study 2, the French industry subtitlers within ATAA can also be characterised as "communities of like-minded individuals" (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 66) who mutually engage in the community for common purposes.

As highlighted by Risku & Dickinson (2009):

> Freelance workers increasingly look to such communities to fill a need in their working lives for collaboration, mutual learning or knowledge exchange. Membership is often voluntary, and people join because of their interest in the subject matter, making virtual communities ideal 'places' for constructive exchange. (p. 53)

Although ATAA is not essentially a virtual community as it involves in-person interaction as well, the association's online presence through various diverse channels is highly important for the community who benefits from a shared foundation that not only streamlines subtitling processes but also encourages collective learning, and fosters a sense of belonging and unity within a community with common objectives. Therefore, for Case Study 2 both online and in-person community collaboration are mapped.

7.1.1 Shared purpose, identity, and member-generated content

Each community is united by a "shared purpose", which is the basis for the type of content they will generate and engage with (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 56). In the fansubbing community observed, fansubbers exhibit a deep level of mutual engagement through their passionate and voluntary involvement in subtitling projects. They are driven by their shared love for TV shows and films and a commitment to breaking language barriers to make this content accessible to a wider audience, including audiences with hearing impairments. The "shared purpose" of the fansubbing community therefore centres around collaborative efforts to provide and distribute subtitles on their website. In parallel to the fansubbing process, the fansubbing forum operates similarly to social media platforms, enabling members to post on each other's profiles, express gratitude by liking content, and communicate via private messages. Upon registration on the website, members gain access to the translation process and to an inbox for private messaging, thus offering more communication options. This is made possible by the fact that each member has distinctive identity in the community through the use of a unique pseudonym which is recognisable among members and allows them to interact. The resulting cultural exchange and sense of community stimulate personal growth through interactions with other members, similarly to the observations in other communities (Orrego-Carmona, 2016b, p. 227). In this setting, collaboration and communication are thus an inherent part of the collective mission that binds members together as a community. This mutual engagement forms the core motivation of their community, as fansubbers come together to contribute their time and skills voluntarily during their free time.

In Case Study 2, six out of seven participants highlighted the role of ATAA in promoting fruitful community collaboration among subtitlers to build networks and collaborate with colleagues, including through peer-recommendations and informal pre-simulations. Only Participant D, despite being a community member, was not actively involved in ATAA but acknowledged the association's advocacy for important issues. Nevertheless, he also engaged in similar collaboration with subtitlers who might also be members of the association, therefore also aligning with the concept of community collaboration. Community collaboration inside ATAA (n.d.) is multifaceted and is centred around the following common objectives:

1. **Enhancing recognition and visibility:** ATAA aims to promote awareness of AVT professions to receive greater recognition and visibility within the industry.
2. **Fostering a supportive community:** The organisation seeks to unite audiovisual translators, encouraging them to share their experiences and provide mutual assistance.
3. **Advocating for subtitlers' rights:** ATAA is dedicated to advocating for the status and rights of subtitlers. This includes active collaboration with influential legal and administrative bodies within the profession (e.g., SCAM, SACEM, SNAC) and engaging with other international translators' associations such as AVTE.
4. **Monitoring industry trends:** The association actively monitors developments, trends, and news within the AVT industry, sharing valuable insights and findings with its members, notably on the ATAA blog (ATAA, n.d.-c). This allows the association to support French audiovisual translators by defending their rights and encouraging proper working conditions and fair rates (e.g., Blake et al., 2023).
5. **Supporting future careers:** ATAA plays a vital role in nurturing future careers in AVT by conducting awareness-raising activities for students, publishing articles in their journal, *L'Écran Traduit*[14], delivering presentations, and offering mentorship programmes for new translators entering the market.
6. **Facilitating industry interactions:** ATAA acts as a bridge, facilitating interactions between subtitlers and their clients, ensuring adherence to best practices in translation. ATAA's guidelines and reference documents, particularly the subtitling and dubbing guide (ATAA, 2019a), have been recognised as essential in promoting best practices in the industry.

The member-generated content thus encompasses a broad spectrum of subjects relevant to the profession, which provides support, offers guidelines and recommendations for best practices, to encourage the well-being of both the community and the profession. The content encompasses various avenues for social interactions, as well as various networking opportunities, which are fundamental to the subtitlers' identity. Indeed, social interactions play a vital role not only for fansubbers, but also for industry freelancers, serving as essential channels to find clients and establish long-term professional and personal relationships with peers.

[14] The articles of the journal (ATAA, n.d.-f) are available at https://www.ataa.fr/revue.

Similarly to the ways in which the French fansubbers recommend other communities they trust when they cannot provide requested subtitles, collaboration and recommendations from colleagues within the industry community play a significant role by allowing members to shape their professional identity. This reflects the importance of reputation and trust inside the community (Risku & Dickinson, 2009), a factor similarly crucial in the context of the fansubbing community. The collaborative spirit within the French industry community actively fosters the sustainability of professional connections, notably with clients through the directory. When analysing how translators collaborate in online environments, McDonough Dolmaya (2018, p. 352) stated that such directories are "designed to help translators interact with one another, with translation agencies, and with end users seeking translation services", while Risku & Dickinson (2009) define these as "virtual business card[s]" which contribute to creating an identity in the community. The community also offers various avenues for personal interaction, such as open days and assembly meetings. The socialisation in ATAA is thus achieved through a multifaceted approach that encompasses online communication as well as in-person interactions.

7.1.2 Leadership, structure, and boundaries

Risku & Dickinson (2009, p. 55) underline that "[w]hilst a high degree of self-rule and democracy is common, virtual communities do not manage themselves. Somebody has to found them and take on the role of **leader**" to avoid "dissolving into an unstructured mess or fading away due to lack of interest". Both communities studied exhibit elements of self-organised hierarchies in their leadership and structure, which "lay down the boundaries of personal and group interaction and are essential for building trust among members" while also supporting the community's "standards and values" (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 55)

In the fansubbing community, similarly to hierarchies observed in other non-professional communities (e.g., Fernández Costales, 2012; Massidda, 2015; Orrego-Carmona, 2016b; Zhang & Cassany, 2017) moderators and administrators play an essential role. In their studies, Fernández Costales (2012) and Orrego-Carmona

(2016b) stated that the workflow and separation of tasks can resemble the system of translation agencies. On the contrary, in the community studied here administrators and moderators do not manage subtitling projects or subtitlers, but their roles are crucial in maintaining the community infrastructure and order, such as managing the forum and website, thus "play[ing] a key role in the **structure** and continuity" of the community (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 55). These highly ranked members also assume an essential role in welcoming and mentoring new members, contributing to the transfer of knowledge from experienced members to newcomers, which is similar to observations of mentoring in the industry community. This exchange of knowledge and collective intelligence between generations has often been mentioned in fansubbing research (Yang, 2020; Zhang & Cassany, 2017) and is essential in integrating new members, given that fansubbers come and go within the community. The fansubbing community often experienced fluctuations in membership, encompassing a mix of long-standing and transient members. While in the fansubbing community there currently is a discernible decrease in active involvement, coupled with a decline in new member enrolments, posing a potential threat to its existence, in the industry community, ATAA is thriving, constantly increasing, and aiming for continuity through structured membership and recruiting more members for volunteer positions.

The proper functioning and longevity of the ATAA community also relies on the active involvement of its members. In addition to their translation work, members volunteer on the board to ensure the smooth functioning of the association and the protection of practitioners' interests. Each year, members participate in the election of the board, which subsequently selects the executive committee among its members, highlighting a high degree of trust from other members. It is worth noting that all board and committee members serve on a voluntary basis, thus exhibiting considerable loyalty to their community. As of 2023, the board is composed of eight dedicated practitioners who meet monthly to represent the association's 600 members, nevertheless as the president of ATAA has announced in a recent blog post, it is not enough to sustain the association, prompting her call for new members to join (ATAA, n.d.-b).

Notable boundaries to both communities are evidenced in the process of joining each community. In the fansubbing community, there is a mandatory registration process to

participate in the translation, which is managed by moderators. These are thus in charge of enforcing clear boundaries within the community by taking action to block or ban members who fail to adhere to established guidelines or behavioural norms. The registration process typically takes a few days, which is intended to discourage unreliable individuals who may seek direct participation in the subtitling process. On the other hand, although most of its website content is available freely, the ATAA community also employs a registration process, which grants professional membership and access to additional services through a paying membership. Nevertheless, it should be noted that none of this remuneration goes to the volunteers on the board or the executive committee, who do this during their free time in order to fight for translators' rights, but is only used to support the association's activities. There is an annual membership fee of 45 euros, which reflects trust from translators in the benefits of contributing to this paying membership (Risku & Dickinson, 2009). For recent graduates who enter the profession, a reduced rate of 25 euros per year is available, highlighting the community's commitment to integrating newcomers. Membership offers several benefits, including access to exclusive content, priority access to community events, participation in a mentorship programme, and enhanced visibility by registering on the directory for potential clients (ATAA, n.d.-a).

Similarly, in the fansubbing community, although membership comes at no cost, it also provides unique advantages. Beyond enhanced content engagement and access to more downloads, registration is particularly important as it provides access to active participation in the translation process and to opportunities for deeper engagement in social aspects through additional communication options, such as private messages. Additionally, both ATAA and the fansubbing community welcome donations to support their mission of promoting high-quality translations of the audiences' favourite content.

7.1.3 Trust, loyalty, motivation, and reputation

Trust and loyalty "gradually evolve" (Risku & Dickinson, 2009, p. 54), with loyalty further generating a "sense of belonging" through "repeated interaction" (Risku &

Dickinson, 2009, p. 55). Belonging to a community can further generate a strong motivation for sustaining engagement.

The notions of trust and loyalty play an essential role in Case Study 1 as a strong sense of belonging to the community has emerged among these fansubbers from their collaboration and exchange. This bond amongst members has also been discussed by Li (2015, p. 154) in her study of a Chinese fansubbing community:

> A great majority of participants are attracted to the fansubbing group because it offers them a sense of togetherness, a feeling that they are part of a larger community dedicated to a set of common goals: supporting each other; expanding access to the group's work among wider audience; and promoting freedom for self-expression and personal fulfilment.

This sense of solidarity can be observed in other communities as well, such as in Massidda's (2020) research of Italian fansubbing communities, in which she identified the same sense of community and belonging, as well as a strong bond generating trust amongst Italian fansubbers. In the present community, the idea of belonging is supported by the fact that there have always been topics allowing for socialisation on the forum and exchanging ideas and news has been encouraged. As a result, some members have really become friends after years of virtual collaboration. In some sections of the forum, some of them have wished each other happy birthday, or supported each other through important steps in life. They have also stated that they have sent each other gifts, which shows that beyond being online collaborators, their relationships have evolved into real-life friendships. Similar aspects related to friendship have also been identified in the Chinese context (Li, 2015, pp. 151–158), in which fansubbers socialised in dedicated chatrooms that united them as a community and allowed them to create a shared identity with a common goal. This is also demonstrated in the fansubbing community I observed, because their interactions, and the ways in which they communicate and collaborate are important factors of their motivation.

Both communities share the motivation for visibility at their core. In the fansubbing community, members mainly obtain visibility and a high status within their

community through their interactions. The fansubbing community thus rather emphasises recognition within the community through hierarchical status and rankings. In the community's internal structure, the importance of visibility and recognition is evident. Members are not only motivated by the desire to help fellow fans to access content, but also by the prospect of earning recognition from their peers within their community. The importance of recognition within the community is demonstrated through incentives such as ways of gaining higher hierarchical status, rankings for best uploaders, and positive reputation points for best members (see Section 3.2.2 on Hierarchical organisation and 3.2.6 on Motivation).

In contrast, ATAA prioritises recognition and visibility of AVT professions within the broader industry, and fostering motivation is evident in their practice of awarding prizes for outstanding audiovisual translations across diverse audiovisual content categories. The need for visibility and recognition is a highly discussed topic in the community and can thus be a motivation for members to engage in it.

Crediting subtitlers holds significant importance within both communities and allows them to receive well-deserved recognition for their work. However, there is a key difference in the crediting system: while professionals in the industry usually receive both credits and financial royalties for their subtitles, fansubbing credits primarily offer visibility and acknowledgment without any financial compensation. Nonetheless, fansubbing credits emphasise visibility because fansubbers can communicate directly with their audience through these credits. This contrasts with "the widespread opinion that the best subtitles are those that viewers do not notice [that] runs deep in the profession" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2020, p. 59) and instead allows for a deeper connection between producers and consumers of subtitles. It has also been argued in this matter that "non-professional subtitlers enjoy visibility for the work they produce, sometimes more consistently so than their professional counterparts do" (Orrego-Carmona, 2016b, p. 225). The matter of the translator's visibility has been an often-evoked subject of discussion among scholars, with Díaz Cintas & Remael (2009, p. 59) noting that when "distributors and language vendors do not acknowledge the name of the subtitler" it "can be considered as an attempt at enforcing invisibility". However, the authors highlight that "this practice varies enormously, with some companies and countries being more respectful than others" (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2009, p. 59). A

good application of this practice is evident in the French context, which is particularly respectful as legal obligations ensure recognition of the subtitlers' work as authors, thus providing French subtitlers with high status and visibility.

7.1.4 Standards and values

The member-generated content in the fansubbing community is multifaceted and is visible in multiple interaction spaces created by the community: the website, the forum, and the sub-forum. It includes the informal adoption of online tools for subtitling – including the development of their own tools – the creation of various communication channels, and collaborative efforts to translate and ensure that their subtitles align with the community's norms and guidelines. These fansubbers have developed their own set of community rules, which include not only behavioural norms but also guidelines for subtitling processes and translation standards, which are quite similar to the professional standards employed in the subtitling industry. Other studies that have looked at translation norms in fansubbing communities have reached similar conclusions, highlighting "a convergence between their guidelines and the traditional rules of subtitling" (Orrego-Carmona, 2016b, p. 226). However, the fansubbers' style guides also reflect the unique culture and values of the fansubbing community, notably in the collaborative essence of the process. This shared content has evolved organically throughout the years as fansubbers exchanged ideas, techniques, and resources, collaborated on tasks, and faced challenges when there were not enough members or funding was insufficient. Despite these obstacles, the fansubbing community's enduring bonds based on trust, solidarity, and shared passion have allowed them to persist over the years. They have consistently found innovative ways to secure funding, create new functions and task management, boost motivation, and maintain active engagement with their members to ensure their long-term existence, thus further strengthening their sense of community through its development.

Subtitlers often encounter various challenges during their work, such as technical issues, linguistic complexities, or client-specific demands. They can rely on the help of ATAA members to address these issues collaboratively. The challenges subtitlers

commonly face and discuss in the industry (see Section 6.2.2), such as the often-evoked issue of declining rates (e.g., Künzli, 2023), can be linked to the community's ongoing reflection on its practices and its shared commitment to addressing these challenges affecting its members. This collaborative endeavour holds paramount importance within the community and is exemplified by collectively established norms and expectations related to remuneration, ethical standards, and quality. This constant process of exchange of knowledge and strategies in the community is facilitated by a variety of digital documents such as codes of ethics, translators' guides, glossaries, forms, etc. (ATAA, n.d.-d)[15]. The association's online platforms like the blog, their social media, and Discord forum further encourage mutual engagement among members to exchange knowledge, share experiences and techniques, and support peers. The emphasis on community and knowledge exchange allows for social learning, where practitioners actively engage with peers to enhance their skills and knowledge. The study has notably highlighted how these social interactions significantly contribute to the high job satisfaction reported by the subtitlers. This parallels the collaborative dynamics observed in online spaces available to fansubbers, providing a platform not only for sharing their knowledge and their passion for audiovisual content, but also for providing advice to enhance members' skills through peer support.

Further knowledge-sharing between newcomers and experienced members is observable in both communities. In fansubbing, it is through guidelines and tutorials created by administrators and moderators, whereas the professional community offers a mentorship programme that was notably used by Participant B in the present study. This collaboration can empower new subtitlers by encouraging negotiation with clients despite their novice status. They can therefore gain the ability to reject substandard practices and rates that deviate from the community's established standards. As has been observed in other contexts, power relations can be asymmetric, with junior translators lacking "the negotiation skills necessary in the network-based environment", leaving them with limited agency to assert their rights and their perception of quality (Abdallah, 2011, p. 185). In parallel with Jankowska's (2012) observation of dropping rates in Poland due to the absence of available information

[15] For additional information see ATAA Guide (n.d.) available at https://www.ataa.fr/guide.

for novice translators and the lack of consistency, the ATAA mentorship programme assumes a crucial role in the community's structure. It encourages members to adhere to codes of good practice and contributes to the harmonisation of practices across the industry, thus improving working conditions, and ultimately the sustainability of the profession. Despite multiple challenges, the community has demonstrated resilience when adapting to shifting practices in the industry, such as globalisation and automation of processes while maintaining the overall functionality of the community.

In summary, both communities offer mutual engagement in a shared purpose, a self-organised hierarchy, and extensive knowledge-sharing. However, they differ in their core focus, motivations, approaches to recognition and crediting, and membership structure. Each community has a purpose, whether it is the transfer of accessible content out of passion or the sustainability of the AVT industry. Although these purposes are differently realised, they can contribute to the broader discourse on collaboration within specialised domains like subtitling and demonstrate the necessity of community collaboration in such contexts.

7.2 Collaboration in the production network

While the previous section emphasised the role of community collaboration from a social perspective, broadening the spectrum to production networks focuses mainly on how translators interact in their processes. The agents taking part in collaboration are indeed the primary difference between both production networks.

In the fansubbing community fansubbers cooperate with peers within their community and occasionally with external fansubbing communities when working on joint projects. This willingness to collaborate with other fansubbing communities demonstrates a sense of solidarity and mutual support that can extend to a different network. Within their own community, fansubbers collaborate closely and, importantly, communicate synchronously online during the translation process, especially when translating the same episode or film. Since different fansubbers may translate individual sentences independently, they address questions and maintain consistency within the episode. Collaboration is integral to their translation process,

and they work closely together, using their specialised software extension for this purpose.

In professional subtitling, collaboration primarily occurs within the professional network in three different areas: with clients, colleagues, and other agents. Therefore, the harmonisation process discovered among fansubbers resembles practices that can be found in the professional subtitling industry with colleagues. Nevertheless, industry collaboration unfolds at the level of a series' season, with co-subtitlers working on the same series to ensure consistency across the entire season (Marignan, 2019, p. 5) or across different translated versions when subtitlers work with dubbers to align translations between VF and VOSTFR. The collaborative process between subtitlers and dubbers has been mentioned as a possibility (Loison-Charles, 2022, p. 14) but has never been studied in the French subtitling industry, as the rare studies examining collaboration tended to focus more on the cooperation between subtitlers and filmmakers (Silvester, 2022; Eisenschitz, 2013).

While collaboration in French mainstream subtitling remains underexplored, it is certain that it is a crucial aspect of subtitling production. However, from my observation in mainstream subtitling, collaboration remains at post-production level and does not occur with production teams or allow for the same power dynamics as in independent cinema. The present study has indeed highlighted that these subtitlers do not always have the final word, notably in relation to their collaboration with clients, but also with dubbers who seem to hold more decision-making power in the making of the VF, which is perceived as the more important version according to the general preferences of French audiences.

An interesting similarity between both contexts lies in the voluntary nature of collaboration, a principle that seems obvious in fansubbing but not so much in the professional industry. While subtitlers in the professional sphere often adhere to required collaboration patterns specified by clients, they also voluntarily engage in collaborative efforts with colleagues and other stakeholders when they find it necessary or have the time to seek feedback, assistance, or advice. This is similar to Eisenschitz's (2013) observations of collaboration with linguistic stakeholders, but in the present study this also extends to non-linguistic agents such as contacting experts

in a field regarding terminology. Communication within the context of industry subtitling is primarily conducted through email or phone calls, which is inexistent in fansubbing, where all communication occurs through their platforms. While some VOD clients require subtitlers to use cloud-based subtitling platforms which also include direct communication channels, it should be highlighted that practitioners still mainly communicate outside the platform.

The French fansubbing sub-forum offers its members a range of style guides, KNPs, glossaries, and information related to previously established translations. This includes guidance on various aspects such as terms of addresses (e.g., *tutoiements* and *vouvoiements* between characters) and descriptions of prior events in the content. Fansubbers can access and utilise these resources in real-time during the translation process, ensuring consistency and adherence to community guidelines. These resources are thus similar to the materials sometimes provided by clients in professional subtitling, but the extent and accessibility of such resources varies considerably across different companies and projects. Therefore, both communities can engage in a form of passive collaboration as they continuously both refer to and update these style guides and glossaries. It should be noted that while updating such resources are based on voluntary collaborative endeavours in the fansubbing community, in the industry, despite contributing to consistency, such collaborative practices are usually not remunerated and thus raise challenges in working conditions.

Another shared characteristic between these environments is the dynamic nature of subtitles. In the fansubbing community, new translations can be proposed, not necessarily indicating inadequacy in the initial version, but rather improvements or adaptations to different video files. Similarly, in the industry, as illustrated by Participant D, subtitles are also redone when transitioning to alternative distribution media after their initial presentation in cinemas, film festivals, or television broadcasts. However, as emphasised by other participants in the study, the subtitling process for these new versions never demonstrated collaboration with previous subtitlers, and, in some instances, previous versions were not even acknowledged. This lack of interaction with earlier contributors raises interesting questions about the clients' continuity and archiving methods.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to highlight that the present study did not reveal a distinct link between both production networks, indicating a clear demarcation between the two environments, with limited instances of intersection in practice. In Case Study 1, fansubbers did not interact with professional subtitlers and rarely mentioned official subtitling, except for the illegal use or ripping of these files. In Case Study 2, only Participant D stated to have interacted with fansubbing when he used part of fansubs to retranslate content for DVD or Blu-ray. Although this overlap can be mainly categorised as a form of passive collaboration, it has occasionally transformed into active collaboration in the past when he has contacted fansubbers to request the use of particularly well-translated sections from their files. These fansubbers have consistently granted permission for such use. Some have even expressed their willingness to remove their subtitles from their website upon his file delivery, as they have no intention of competing with official translations but aim solely to fill the gap when subtitles are unavailable. This underscores ethical standards that align with findings in other studies in which, according to anime fansubbing groups, "when released by the industry, fansub production should cease and fansubbing groups should not compete openly with the industry" (Denison, 2011, p. 459). It should be noted that Participant D highlighted that these instances happened when creating French translations of Japanese content that had never officially been translated, not in his current project. This underlines the special role in transmission and the distinct functioning of communities working on Japanese anime. In this context, Participant D emphasised the role of fansubbers in bringing "new life into series, reviving them by creating and offering fresh translations that have not yet been undertaken by experienced translators".

Except for Participant D, the majority of participants in Case Study 2 did not report any engagement with fansubbing practices. However, Participant A in the study offered an interesting perspective, emphasising that she does not perceive fansubbers as a threat to the profession. In her view, "there will always be individuals with inherent skills even if they haven't undergone formal training". She believes that "as long as there is a genuine love for the profession, they can do it well". Nevertheless, Participant A voiced her concern about what she considers a more significant issue. She pointed out that "it's not these passionate individuals who pose a problem" but instead "big companies that have reused similar processes falsely claiming that tools

can accomplish everything, when in reality intellectual work is indispensable". She underscored that the belief within these companies that tools are the primary drivers of translations and that "humans are merely accessory, when it actually is quite the opposite", because "a tool remains just a tool". Therefore this leads to professionalisation of unverified practices, with large companies outsourcing subtitles abroad to untrained and inexperienced people in order to reduce costs.

Participant A highlights that it is the digitalisation of practices that has had an important impact on the industry and generated such practices. Similarly to Bréan (2014), she states that with the digitalisation of subtitling processes, many tasks have become more accessible, leading to "a perception of easiness". This is similar to the insights shared by Massidda (2022, p. 22) who noted that it is "[t]he Web 2.0, or the new interactive version of the Internet generated in the new millennium, [that has] has democratized access to advanced technologies allowing the creation of freeware versions of subtitling editors, making them accessible to the general public". However, as Participant A argues, this ease of access has created a disconnect between subtitlers and the intricate mechanisms and professional standards inherent in the field.

Desplanques (2014) also believes that the real threat to professional subtitling are not fansubbers but instead American giant post-production laboratories that use globalised practices; through interviews with a French subtitler who works for a multinational LSP without having any qualification in translation, he discovered that she only had to pass an English test and attended a very short training session on software prior to starting in the company. Participant G in the study also commented that such practices, particularly within large multinational LSPs such as the one in which he started his career are often perceived as "not serious" and more "on amateur level". He stated that some members of professional associations like ATAA may occasionally take on projects for these companies, despite prioritising working with "more reputable clients". He noted that assignments for LSPs are typically viewed as "mundane jobs". Unfortunately, none of the subtitlers working for such globalised compagnies volunteered to take part in my study. While this highlights that the participants in the study aim to work in fair working conditions and defend good practices in the industry, it consequently remains challenging to ascertain the extent to which the participants' practices diverge from subtitlers working directly for clients of this nature.

In summary, while there are certain similarities in processes, collaboration patterns are intricately tied to the distribution medium, leading to substantial variations between the two subtitling production networks. As a result, intersections between these networks are infrequent.

7.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, fansubbing and professional subtitling communities exhibit different forms of collaboration based on their unique contexts and stakeholders. By examining collaboration in subtitling practices and processes, noteworthy differences, but also a number of similarities have been identified. The exploration of collaboration has notably highlighted diverse agents involved in both environments engaging at various levels: both within the community and the broader subtitling production network.

Within the analysis of community collaboration, core elements pertaining to the social nature of subtitling have been identified. The fansubbers' voluntary, passionate engagement, shared purpose, collaborative efforts, self-organised hierarchy, and established community norms all contribute to a resilient and tightly-knit community. This community not only serves as a platform for subtitling and distributing subtitles but also as a space for social interaction, learning, and recognition among its members. The analysis of the French industry subtitling community represented by ATAA has also highlighted the association's added value as a community in contributing to improving working conditions and sustainability in the industry. ATAA members' shared purpose focuses on enhancing recognition, fostering a supportive community, advocating for subtitlers' rights, monitoring industry trends, supporting newcomers, and facilitating industry interactions. Motivation and loyalty is highlighted by active engagement with its members, providing networking opportunities, collaborative platforms, knowledge exchange, and mentorship programmes. The community effectively addresses challenges, including declining rates, through collectively established norms, promoting fair rates, and maintaining quality standards in order to secure the sustainability of the AVT professions within the broader production network.

When extending the examination of the environments to production networks, one unifying thread emerges – collaboration is indispensable in the co-creation process. The notion that subtitling is not a solitary activity has become evident as we delved deeper into the collaborative dynamics within the field. Whether in fansubbing or industry subtitling, the creation process thrives on collective efforts. Subtitling is inherently a communal effort, where the contributions of various individuals shape the final product. Therefore, the underlying commitment to collaboration, and maintaining quality and consistency in subtitles serves as a common thread connecting these two distinct communities.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated the value of adopting the Translator Studies paradigm in exploring the processes and practices of translators and their roles in subtitling production from a sociological perspective. A distinctive feature of this study lies in its comprehensive exploration of processes in each subtitling context and the collaborative dimension in both subtitling and fansubbing, thus addressing a notable gap in existing literature. While it has been acknowledged that translation is a collaborative endeavour (Alfer, 2017), particularly in AVT where subtitling production contexts can impact the product (Abdallah, 2011), these collaboration patterns have rarely been the centre of focus. In addition, the comparative analysis between fansubbing and industry subtitling processes from a sociological stance represents a novel contribution. Such comparisons that map specific areas of AVT are essential as we navigate the rapid technological developments impacting the field, underscoring the need for frequent updates, notably in the context of fansubbing processes. Up-to-date overviews of practices can allow different kinds of translators to learn from each other and develop skills by looking at each other's evolutions in practices.

Addressing the core research question "*How do the translators' processes, practices, and collaboration patterns compare between both subtitling environments?",* Chapters 3 and 4 have been dedicated to delineating practices and processes in each subtitling environment, followed by a comparative analysis of striking similarities and differences in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the functioning of subtitling workflows and how agents collaborate were then outlined in each production context. The ensuing comparative analysis in Chapter 7 delves into collaboration and communication, unveiling previously unexplored patterns corresponding to community collaboration in social practices and cooperation between agents in production networks in subtitling processes.

The investigation into secondary research questions has provided valuable insights into how subtitlers organise their work and manage the subtitling production process within each environment. These questions explored profiles and structures, as well as practices and workflows, specifically:

RQ1: How is the translators' work organised within each production context?
RQ2: How is subtitling production organised in different distribution media?
RQ3: How does collaboration and communication with stakeholders in the subtitling process occur within each network?

This study significantly advances our understanding of subtitling practices by mapping the intricacies within the fansubbing community and each subtitler's individual workflow within the broader production network of the French AVT industry. Noteworthy is the identification of three distinctive fansub production workflows, diverging from processes observed in the predominant distribution media recognised among industry subtitlers. The contrast unveiled by participants between cinema and video projects reveals variations in processes and interactions with stakeholders, especially clients. These divergences encompass various facets, including pre-translation and administrative tasks, quality control processes, as well as information and materials provided to the subtitlers. The significance of this contribution lies in the exploration of two previously overlooked professional and non-professional subtitling production contexts. The discovery of similarities and differences in translation processes, feedback and revision processes, and software utilisation adds an extra layer of interest. It emphasises the interconnected nature of these practices across diverse subtitling domains and the importance of context-specific approaches in the subtitlers' practices.

In addressing RQ3 centred on collaboration and communication within subtitling environments, the exploration and categorisation of collaboration in each setting have revealed distinct challenges. In the French fansubbing community, a decline in activities has been observed. The evolving nature and open strategies of the community reflect a departure from the formerly well-organised small-team cooperation that was tailored to meet the specific needs of fan audiences, as documented in the past (Dagiral & Tessier, 2008; Bréan, 2014). The current changing realities in French fansubbing of Anglophone content have highlighted that, while no longer driven by past imperatives to fill gaps, community collaboration remains integral to the work of fans, despite now occurring mostly passively in the collaboration with non-participant members, underscoring the enduring significance

and impact of these collaborative practices in AVT even if they were to disappear completely at some later stage. As this work has highlighted, both subtitling production networks have experienced shifts in practices and challenges that have impacted practices and workflows. With developments in the industry, consumption patterns have shifted towards binge-watching distribution types, which "gave viewers the possibility to watch and re-watch a series' episodes at any time and in any sequence" (Aleksandrowicz, 2022, p. 17) and to consume full seasons of series with globally distributed subtitles upon its release. As a result, fansubbers find themselves challenged by the quicker turnaround times of official releases, which they struggle to compete with. This situation is somewhat ironic, given that, historically, fansubbers have been known to be the ones who prioritised rapid subtitle releases to cater to viewers' eagerness to access new content as quickly as possible, often outpacing the long waiting periods associated with TV broadcast (Bréan, 2014, p. 24; Massidda, 2015, p. 4). Fansubbing initially emerged as a response to digitalisation in the industry, which allowed the utilisation of freeware. It might be suggested that some evolving practices and challenges in the subtitling industry, such as outsourcing of tasks to untrained individuals in globalised contexts, reflect an intersection between the realms of amateur and professional subtitling. In turn, new developments in the industry or in the legal field might generate further challenges for the fansubbing community, and it would be interesting to see how members react to these and how they adapt in the coming years.

While in fansubbing communities collaboration in processes has long been recognised and emphasised, it is intriguing that industry subtitling, where collaboration plays an equally vital role, often receives less visibility in this regard. In the present study, the impact of collaboration can be seen across multiple dimensions of the subtitling profession. The degree to which agents involved in the subtitling process are able to collaborate influences working conditions, subtitle quality, the ability to tackle challenges effectively, and ultimately could have an impact on the sustainability of the profession itself. In the evolving landscape of subtitling, therefore, the importance of collaboration cannot be overstated. It binds together diverse communities, fosters knowledge exchange, and paves the way for collective growth. As the subtitling profession continues to transform and meet new challenges, understanding and nurturing these collaborative dynamics is essential for upholding the standards and

integrity of the field. Among the participants in this study, a positive experience of collaboration was seen to significantly benefit job satisfaction, helping to mitigate the sense of isolation that subtitlers can feel from working as freelancers and improving their skills and productivity. However, this study has also identified areas where a lack of collaboration, such as with filmmakers, primary clients, and revisers – notably in globalised and virtualised practices – negatively impacts the production networks and ultimately the quality of subtitles. The analysis of the industry highlighted further challenges of collaboration such as inadequate transparency and communication within the workflow, which may give rise to ethical concerns regarding copyright and translation ownership. France is notably highlighted as a distinctive context for recognising subtitlers under the author status, with community collaboration emerging as a key area that could positively influence the future and sustainability of the profession. ATAA's role has been recognised as crucial in advocating better working conditions, leading to visible benefits across many areas in which French subtitlers seem to experience better circumstances in comparison to other European contexts, in relation to, for instance, negotiating power, rates, and royalties (AVTE, n.d.-a). My work has thus highlighted the benefits of community collaboration in contributing to the homogenisation of working conditions, thus aligning within the existing research on subtitling practitioners (Kuo, 2015; Silvester, 2022; Tuominen, 2018).

By spotlighting translators and their diverse professional realities, this study elevates the visibility of their importance and the nuanced impact of other agents on their working conditions – an aspect often overlooked in academia, as well as by the broader audience. While viewers are often highly critical of the suboptimal quality of subtitles, it is crucial to acknowledge that the subtitlers do not bear sole responsibility for the final product; their work is dependent on an entire network of agents with associated working conditions (Remael, 2010, p. 15), in which they sometimes do not have the final word. In light of this, and in line with Romero-Fresco (2019), I advocate for integrating a consideration of translation across different areas of audiovisual content production, by including collaboration from pre-production and production stages, instead of considering subtitlers as an afterthought at the very end of the post-production chain. This kind of collaboration could be beneficial to all agents in the production networks and even extend to enhanced quality for viewers.

Avenues for further exploration

The impact of globalisation and automation on subtitling practices warrants investigation and underscores the need for ongoing dialogue and adaptation within the industry to maintain quality, professional standards, and sustainable working conditions. Subtitlers operating directly for globalised clients have not participated in the present study, thus making it impossible to map and compare their practices. While this study highlights that many subtitlers in the French industry work under relatively good working conditions, it remains unclear whether other subtitlers, particularly during the challenging times of the pandemic, felt obligated to accept assignments in globalised settings due to the challenges of finding other opportunities. The disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and its repercussions on the French AVT industry remains an area to be explored. It would also be interesting to further explore job satisfaction and subtitlers' attitudes towards globalised working conditions, notably for new subtitlers, as the majority of the subtitlers in this sample had extensive experience. Despite not noting any major differences in processes with the participant who had less experience, there was a difference in satisfaction with current collaborative patterns, which would be worth investigating with other similar junior profiles.

Another avenue for exploration involves establishing clear links of interaction between the different subtitling environments. Although not the primary focus of this study, evidence of converging practices has emerged, particularly in the uniformity observed in subtitle presentation. Despite their historical reputation for creativity, fansubs, as guided by the community's standards, now closely align with industry norms. Similarities in terms of processes such as template utilisation, or adherence to similar translation norms thus seem to indicate that both environments are somehow linked and that boundaries between them are becoming blurred. While in this study both environments have undergone shifts in practices and are experiencing challenges, it can be suggested that some of these are linked to the interconnection between fansubbing and professional subtitling, which has shaped the subtitling landscape in various ways. The decline of fansubbing and the professionalisation of amateur practices in the current globalised, fast-paced nature of the industry could reflect the complex interplay between both environments and merit further exploration.

The findings offer valuable insights for informing future research in the AVT industry by encouraging further investigation into the relationship between collaboration and subtitle quality. For instance, it has been emphasised before that different stakeholders present different priorities in terms of quality control processes (Nikolić, 2021). Nevertheless, the study of collaboration in subtitling networks has never been extended to include other stakeholders in the analysis. It would thus be interesting to integrate the perspectives of other agents and capture a holistic view of collaboration, including, for example, the opinions of clients and simulation operators, to see if they have different perspectives on their workflows and examine the impacts that collaboration has on them and on the final product. Additional avenues for exploration could also include the ramifications of global collaboration through multilingual files, such as glossaries and KNPs, on final subtitled products, as well as an analysis of how incorporating these additional tasks impacts subtitling rates, sustainability, and working conditions.

This study's findings can inform practices by emphasising the need for greater transparency and communication within the context in which subtitles are created in order to address ethical concerns. Analysing cooperative efforts through the collaboration framework can allow for further examination of how shared goals, mutual engagement, and knowledge exchange between different stakeholders, including practitioners and academics, could contribute to the growth, recognition, and sustainability across all areas of the profession. This study ultimately emphasises the importance of fostering community collaboration among subtitlers, as well as with the various stakeholders involved in the AVT industry. As subtitling practices continue to evolve in response to the digital age, examining the collaborative and social aspects of these communities, comparing them, and monitoring their evolution remains paramount. The subtitling industry stands at a crossroads, where recognising the influence of digital practices, addressing challenges, and preserving the positive aspects of subtitling are essential for ensuring the industry's sustainability through standards and working conditions.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Preliminary interview

1. In which age range are you? (20-30/ 31-40/ 41-50/ 51-60/ 61-70/ 70+)
2. Which gender do you identify with?
3. How many years' experience do you have in subtitling?
4. What is your educational/training background?
5. What type of position do you currently hold and at what percentage do you currently work?
6. How long have you worked at your current position?
7. What position did you hold before?
8. Where do you work?
9. What equipment do you use in your work?
10. Do you have any working languages other than EN-FR?
11. How do you go about finding clients?
12. What type of content do you subtitle? And do you have any preference?
13. What guidelines and norms do you use for subtitling?
14. Are you always mentioned in subtitling credits?
15. How many hours per day/per week do you usually work on a subtitling project?
16. What subtitling project(s) are you currently working on? How far along are you in this (these) project(s)?
17. What type of information did you receive in the brief before you started translating? Is this the same for all your projects?
18. Did you watch the whole season/film before starting the translation?
19. What tasks or steps did you complete before starting the translation of the subtitles?
20. And which tasks were carried out by another person?
21. Can you explain the process and your role in the translation production network?
22. Are you working on any other projects related to translation or audiovisual translation?
23. What do you particularly like about your job?
24. What do you like a little less about your job?
25. Do you have any general comments about your job?

Appendix 2: Retrospective interview

1. Does what you have done today correspond to your usual process and schedule?
2. Can you tell me about the software you used (advantages/disadvantages)?
3. Do you also work with other subtitling software?
4. Can you choose the software?
5. Do you ever work with different translation resources to those you used today?
6. In what form did you receive the project(s)? (Video file/ script/ spotting/ template/ additional information)
7. Do you sometimes receive projects in a different form?
8. Can you explain the process/workflow you generally follow?
9. Does your usual process correspond to what you have done today?
10. What steps will you take once you have finished translating the subtitles? (Revision/ conformation/ simulation/ quality control)
11. What is the next step once you have submitted your subtitles?
12. How do you ensure subtitling quality?
13. Do you carry out the revision yourself or is there an external revision?
14. Do you also do revision/quality control for subtitles produced by someone else?
15. How long does it usually take you to subtitle an episode/season of a series?
16. And how long does a film take?
17. What tasks do you generally carry out during the working day?
18. Was this day representative of your daily tasks?
19. Do you work with colleagues on subtitling?
20. If yes, how do you collaborate and communicate with colleagues?
21. Do you have any contact with other people working (or not) in the production network?
22. Any additional questions in relation to what I have observed.
23. Comments or questions from the participant.

Appendix 3: Information and consent form



UCC
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

Information Sheet

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the work is about and what your participation would involve, so as to enable you to make an informed choice.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the communication and workflow (i.e. work patterns and practices) which take place in a professional subtitling environment, in order to examine how it differs from other subtitling environments. Should you choose to participate, you will be observed in your regular work environment for a day. Only questions and information relevant to your workflow and profession will be asked and collected. A few questions relevant to the observation will be asked prior to it in an introductory interview. During observation, no questions will be asked. In case some point requires clarification, questions will be asked at the end of the observation in a retrospective interview. The non-participant observation will be carried out in your work environment and aims to observe a regular day in your work routine. Therefore, your habits or behaviour should remain normal and not affected by the observation. Each of both interviews will be audio-recorded, and is expected to take 30 minutes to complete.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no obligation to participate, and should you choose to do so you can refuse to answer specific questions, be observed on specific aspects. You can decide to withdraw from the study at any time during the observation. All information you provide will be confidential and your anonymity will be protected throughout the study.

You maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any stage at any stage up to the [date], two weeks after completion of the observation.

All of the information you provide will be kept confidential and anonymous, and will be available only to the researcher (Sevita Caseres) and her supervisors (Dr Hannah Silvester and Dr Mary Noonan). The only exception is where information is disclosed which indicates that there is a serious risk to you or to others. Once the interviews are completed, the recording will immediately be transferred to an encrypted laptop and wiped from the recording device. The interview will then be transcribed by the researcher, and all identifying information will be removed. Once this is done, the audio-recording will also be deleted and only the anonymised transcript will remain. This will be stored on the University College Cork Google Drive system and subsequently in a data repository.

All anonymous data will be stored on the University College Cork Google Drive system. The analysis grids and Excel sheets regarding the observation will be totally anonymised and will not be traceable back to you or your client. Digital data will be stored for 10 years on the University College Cork Google Drive system.

The data will be stored in the form of Excel sheets and Word documents. Analysis results will be completely anonymised, stored in a data repository and will be made available according to the FAIR Guidelines enabling independent discovery, citation and reuse. The information you provide will be analysed in a thesis aiming to delineate the work patterns and practices in place in different subtitling production networks and may contribute to research publications and/or conference presentations.

We do not anticipate any negative outcomes from participating in this study. Should you experience distress arising from participating in the research or have any queries, you can contact the researcher, Sevita Caseres, at scaseres@ucc.ie or the researcher's supervisor, Dr Hannah Silvester, at hannah.silvester@ucc.ie.

This study has obtained ethical approval from the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee.

If you agree to take part in this study, please complete the consent form overleaf.

Consent Form

I.....agree to participate in the research study "French subtitling practices: a comparative study of translation processes and communication in amateur and professional subtitling environments".

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Sevita Caseres to be audio-recorded.

I allow Sevita Caseres to store the anonymised data (analysis grids and transcripts) in a data repository, for subsequent research.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data of the interview, I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview and observation in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

In order to avoid any risk related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher will proceed with data collection in compliance with all French regulatory measures relating to Covid-19, including wearing a face mask at all times and respecting social distance. I understand that I have to comply with these regulations, will wear a face mask and respect social distance at all times.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications and/or presentations if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview ☐

Signed: ……. Date: ……..

PRINT NAME: …….

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GLOSSARY

Distributors: The purchasers of the rights to distribute the audiovisual content in France (Ferrer Simó, 2021) who oversee legal and technical aspects related to distribution.

Forced narratives: Textual elements that appear on screen (Georgakopoulou, 2019, p. 153) and need to be translated by the subtitler for French versions.

French post-production company: Also called laboratories in the French context, these companies can either be in charge of commissioning subtitles from freelance subtitlers themselves or be used as technical intermediaries by a distributor or a major company which has already commissioned projects to the subtitlers of their choice.

Key Names and Phrases (KNP): Recurring names and terminology in the audiovisual content, for which the translations are either pre-established by the client or agreed on amongst translators to ensure continuity.

Language Service Provider (LSP): Global company that specialises in providing translation services for audiovisual content in multiple languages.

Major company: Big production company based in the US (Gourgeon, 2014, p. 25), which creates and produces audiovisual content (Ferrer Simó, 2021).

Simulation: Quality control step of a subtitle file, during which the subtitler is typically assisted by one or more observers (a colleague who is a simulation operator, and the clients such as producers, distributors, etc.), to show the subtitles in real viewing conditions in a laboratory to correct or enhance the text or adjust the timing of the subtitles (Gourgeon, 2014, p. 35).

Synching: The task of synchronising the fansubs to a specific video file with adequate time and speed settings to match the dialogues on screen.

Video subtitling: In the French subtitling industry, this terminology encompasses VOD platforms and TV subtitling projects, as opposed to cinema subtitling.