

Why Audiovisual Translators Downplay the Interpersonal: The Case of “Interjections” in English-to-Chinese Movie Subtitling

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ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to what appears to be an increasing interest in interpersonal meanings in translation studies scholarship (e.g., Munday 2012; 2015). Specifically it attends to the observed tendency in audiovisual translation (e.g., Díaz Cintas 2013) for the interpersonal elements commonly termed “interjections” (and “minor clauses” in the systemic functional linguistic literature) to be omitted or translated at reduced rates in interlingual subtitling. We adopted systemic functional linguistic perspectives to investigate the translation of “interjections” in seven different subtitlings of the English-language movie, *The Croods*, into Chinese. Focusing on the frequently occurring “interjections” *hey* and *oh*, we found both tended to be omitted but that this omission rate was significantly higher for *oh*. We referenced the SFL differentiation of “interjections” (minor clauses) which variously function as “calls” (e.g., *hey*), as “exclamations” (e.g., some uses of

oh), and as “continuatives” (e.g., some uses of *oh*). By this we were able to show that difference in meaning/function does seem to exert a consistent, systemic influence on omission/inclusion. Thus, while the study did confirm a tendency for subtitlers to underplay non-experiential meanings, it also provides evidence that this is not an entirely automatic or “indiscriminate” process; that subtitlers are sensitive to the possibility that “leaving out” one type of interpersonal meaning may be more harmful to the communicative functionality of the target text than leaving out another type.

The findings of the paper are significant in providing a clearer picture than is available in the literature as to what is at stake interpersonally when interjections are omitted in the process of subtitling, and consequently a clearer picture of how such omission can result in translations which are more muted than the source text, or less explicit interpersonally. They also provide useful new insights into a key feature of audiovisual translation that of “condensation”. This is the frequent need for some elements of the original dialogue to be omitted from the subtitles, due to the limited display time and screen space available for written text. This effect has frequently been commented on in the subtitling literature but there have so far been few attempts to track in a systemic way just which meanings tend to be lost.

KEYWORDS

subtitling, fansubbing, interjection, omission, function

1. Introduction

In a recent publication, leading translation studies scholar, Jeremy Munday, pointed to a gap in the literature in connection with work which attends to the translation of the interpersonal meanings by which speakers/writers position themselves and those they address interactively, perform social roles, negotiate personal relationships, evaluate and convey attitudes (see, for example, Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: chapter 4). Munday asserted:

the [...] subjective interpersonal function, which is central to ‘meaning as an exchange,’ has been relatively overlooked, despite being crucial for the relative positioning of text producer and receiver [...] and, by extension, of the translator/interpreter who intervenes in the communication (Munday 2015: 407).

Somewhat earlier, in his influential monograph *Evaluation in Translation: Critical points of translator decision-making*, Munday (2012) similarly observed that translation studies scholarship has tended to focus on the textual and the ideational, at the expense of the interpersonal.

This paper attempts to contribute, if only in a small way, to an ongoing redressing of this imbalance. Its concern is with the translation of a set of related expressions which for the most part serve interpersonal functions—what have traditionally been termed “interjections” (see, for example, Quirk, Greenbaum *et al.* 1985). These include such expressions as *Ouch!*, *Wow!*, *Hurray!*, *Hey!*, *Help!*, *Quick!*, *Hullo.*, *Bye.* and *Oh!* The trigger for this paper is the observation that these “interjections” are often omitted in Chinese subtitles (audiovisual translations) of popular English-language movies and that, at least at first glance, this omission seems unpredictable—there are no immediately obvious reasons why, in some instances, they are included in the subtitles and in other instances they are omitted. We believe this raises interesting questions as to whether the tendency to omit these expressions can be interpreted as poor audiovisual translational practice in that it would seem to result in a target text which, at least potentially, is missing some key meanings—for example the expression of a character’s spontaneous affectual reaction (*Wow!*, *Oh!*) or his/her calling for attention (*Hey!*). Also, this observation perhaps provides

more evidence in support of prior findings by translation studies scholars that interpersonal elements in general are particularly prone to omission in subtitling (e.g., de Linde 1995; Rosa 2001: 216; Kovačić 1998: 78). In investigating these expressions and possible reasons why they are sometimes translated, and sometimes not, we can thus contribute to understandings of why and when source-text interpersonal meanings apparently lose out to experiential meanings. To our knowledge there has not been any work which attends directly to these issues and questions, at least in the context of these “interjections”.

These expressions have traditionally been grouped together as a single category—“interjections”—primarily because they do not easily fit into any other already identified word class like nouns or verbs. Many of them are said to be “purely emotive” and no interjections “enter into syntactic relations” (Quirk, Greenbaum *et al.* 1985: 853). They do not take inflectional or derivational forms and they always stand alone as complete and non-elliptical utterances (Ameka 1992: 105). For the purpose of this paper, we rely on the more functionally and semantically oriented treatment of these expressions in the systemic functional linguistics (SFL) literature. Here they are classified as “minor clauses” on the basis that, displaying no Mood or Residue, they are not “arguable” (e.g., Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 115-116, 153-154). They are grouped into subcategories according to the function they perform. Thus there are four sub-types which realise a series of “minor speech functions”: “exclamation” (e.g., *Aha!*, *Ouch!*, *Wow!*, *Hurray!*, *Darn!*), “call” (e.g., *Hey!*, *Mum!*), “alarm” (e.g., *Help!*, *Careful!*, *Quick!*), and “greeting” (e.g., *Hullo.*, *Goodbye.*, *Congratulations!*). All these are obviously interpersonally oriented, either expressing the speaker’s affectual reactions (exclamation) or functioning to manage conversational

exchanges between interlocutors (call, alarm, and greeting). The final sub-type of minor clause is realised by the “continuative” (e.g., *oh*, *well*). While it does not perform any such minor speech function, the continuative can nevertheless be treated as a “minor clause” on account of its “ability to function on its own in dialogue” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 154). These continuatives indicate “the listener is tracking the current speaker’s contribution” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 154). While they thus do perform a textual function, they can also be seen as interpersonal in that they contribute to the maintenance of relations and communicative rapport between interlocutors.

In this paper, for reasons which will be outlined below, we focus primarily on just two of these expressions, *hey* and *oh*. *Hey* typically functions as a “call” (the means by which the speaker seeks to gain the attention of some addressee), while, depending on the context, *oh* may either have the function of “continuity” (indicating the speaker is directly responding to the preceding utterance by an interlocutor, or the speaker is about to move to another point) or of “exclamation” (for example, indicating surprise). Our key findings with respect to the relative frequencies with which these expressions are “translated” (i.e., to end up in the Chinese subtitles) and with respect to possible linguistic factors influencing their omission or inclusion are as follows. We found that there was a tendency to omit both *hey* and *oh* from subtitles but that *oh* was omitted much more often than *hey*. That is to say, while both *oh* and *hey* are typical interpersonal elements, they are treated significantly differently in subtitling: *oh* is generally discarded in subtitling, whereas *hey* tends to be preserved. We propose that it is at least partly possible to explain this difference by reference to differences in the interpersonal functionality of these expressions.

2. Background—data and methodology

Our findings are derived from an analysis of how the “interjections” (*hey* and *oh*) were dealt with in seven different audiovisual translations (subtitlings) into simplified Chinese characters of the dialogue of the English-language movie, *The Croods*¹. This is an animated movie dealing with the lives and adventures of a family of “cave persons”, set in a fantasy prehistoric era. It is possible to access these seven different subtitlings (seven different versions of Chinese subtitles) on account of the relatively recent growth in what is known as “fansubbing”². This is an internet, social-media dependent phenomenon in which anyone interested in subtitling can voluntarily (i.e., without any form of payment) contribute, usually in groups, to the subtitling of a range of different audiovisual products. Our dataset did also include one commercial (officially released) subtitling of the movie, i.e., not a “fan-subbed” version.

We believe that, with respect to the issues addressed in this paper, there were significant methodological benefits to be derived from such a dataset, i.e., one which includes multiple translations of a single source text. By investigating patterns of inclusion and omission of these “interjections” across these multiple versions, we were able to largely factor out variability on account of subtitlers’ individual styles or levels of expertise and experience. This increased the likelihood of identifying generally-operational linguistic factors that condition inclusion or omission.

The use of such fan-subbed versions might perhaps be questioned on account of some concerns which have been raised as to the “quality” of such material (see, for example, Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006). However, we believe such concerns are not relevant in the context of this paper. Firstly, we note that the

omission of interjections is not specifically confined to fansubbing and reportedly occurs regularly in “commercial” subtitles as well (cf., Luyken, Herbst *et al.* 1991: 55, 154; Hatim and Mason 1997: 79; de Linde and Kay 1999: 51; Kovačić 1998: 78; Rosa 2001: 216; Chuang 2006: 376; Georgakopoulou 2009: 27; Pedersen 2011: 18-21). This was certainly found to be the case with our data—the commercial version had a higher rate of interjection omission than one of the fan-subbed version, and a roughly similar rate to two of the fan-subbed versions.

Secondly, the major difference between fan-subbed and commercial versions of subtitles by no means necessarily lies in the professionalism of the subtitlers (fans versus officially licensed translators), but rather in whether the subtitling is done free of charge. Professional translators may work voluntarily as fansubbers (cf., Hsiao 2014), so there is no reason to assume ahead of time that fan-subbed versions will be inferior to commercial versions. In addition, while translators and interpreters can be licensed, this is not yet the case with subtitlers, and as Gottlieb (1994a: 108) points out, “[e]xcellent translation skills and fluency in the target language alone do not make for a good subtitler”. Last but not least, subtitling groups in the Chinese Mainland form a culture of healthy competition—to ensure their subtitles rank top among those various subtitling groups, and thus to build up, or to sustain, their reputation, these groups compete in terms of both quality and time³. Besides, regulations and the organisation of these groups are quality-oriented. For example, they have strict entry requirements for recruitment to ensure their subtitlers’ language competence. Internet-based discussion forums are also created to improve the quality of subtitles (Hsiao 2014).

3. Interlingual subtitling as audiovisual translation

The two main forms of subtitling are “intralingual” and “interlingual”. Intralingual subtitling involves the transcription of spoken dialogue in one language into written subtitles in the same language. This is often termed “(closed) captions” and is typically done to assist the deaf or hard-of-hearing. Interlingual subtitling, of course, involves the translation of spoken dialogue in one language into the written subtitles of another language. It thus differs from other forms of translation in that it involves two transformations – from speech into writing, and from one language into another. It is noteworthy in this regard that these two stages are typically separated in the actual interlingual subtitling process. As reported in the literature regarding the process (e.g., Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007: 30, 74-75; Gouadec 2007: 48; Luyken, Herbst *et al.* 1991: 64, 67; Pedersen 2011: 14), the original audiovisual product is first transcribed to the source-language written text, i.e., intralingual subtitling; then the intralingual subtitles are translated to the target-language subtitles, i.e., interlingual subtitling. Our analysis of the material available online also confirms this procedure—a first step of transcription of the original spoken English dialogue into written English subtitles, and a second step of translation of the English subtitles into Chinese subtitles. This is important because it means that the decisions as to what is included or omitted in the final Chinese subtitles depend to a large extent on whether a given element is included or omitted in the English subtitles in the first place (even though the online subtitling groups instruct subtitlers to watch the audiovisual products before translation). As evidence for this we observed that there was only one instance across all the seven subtitling versions where an interjection (*Ow!*) was present in

the Chinese subtitles but not in its corresponding version of the English subtitles. That is to say, with this single exception, it is only interjections which are present in the English subtitles that are candidates for inclusion in the Chinese subtitles.

The target-language subtitles (in this case the Chinese subtitles) are obviously designed to be read synchronously with viewing of the original movie, with the original spoken dialogue (in this case English) still accessible to the viewer. Díaz Cintas (2013: 274) offers the following definition of this interlingual subtitling:

a translation practice that consists of rendering in writing, usually at the bottom⁴ of the screen, the translation into a target language of the original dialogue exchanges uttered by different speakers, as well as all other verbal information that appears written on screen (letters, banners, inserts) or is transmitted aurally in the soundtrack (song lyrics, voices off) (Díaz Cintas 2013: 274).

Thus interlingual subtitling is clearly different from other forms of translation in that it is spatially limited to the bottom of the screen, and temporally determined by the speaking speed. A key consequence of this is that it will often not be possible for subtitlers to attempt to include in the target-language subtitlings all the meanings (ideational, interpersonal, and textual) which are present in the original source-language spoken dialogue. (Strictly speaking, of course, translation is not about the transfer of meanings from one language to another, but rather the search for meanings in the target language which most closely correspond to, or correlate with, meanings in the source text.) It is frequently the case that there is simply not the time or space on the screen to deal with all the meanings in the original spoken dialogue. Often, therefore, there is a need for what the literature terms “condensation”, the need to “leave

something out”.

This issue of the need for “condensation” has been quite widely dealt with in the literature on subtitling, although it is often by way of the provision of instructions or guidance for subtitlers, rather than by way of accounts of what has actually been observed in subtitling texts. For example, Luyken, Herbst *et al.* (1991: 55) instruct subtitlers to omit “all non-essential information” even while interestingly not specifying what elements should be regarded as “non-essential”. Along similar lines, Rosa (2001: 216) states that subtitles need to “omit overlaps, repetitions, hesitations, reformulation, and expletives, ellipsis, emphasis markers, interjections, incomplete sentences, forms of address, reference to mental processes, etc.” Georgakopoulou (2009: 27) offers a similar list of elements which can or should be omitted. By way of a more descriptive account, Kovačić (1998: 78) reports on a study which found that interpersonal elements were often discarded in six versions of subtitles of the same TV drama. The omitted elements she observed included what were termed “exclamations”, “reinforcing formulas”, “vocatives”, and “disruptive interventions” in conversation (Kovačić 1998: 80). Yet research on the omission of interpersonal elements is still in its early stages and the different kinds of elements identified are largely assumed without detailed definition. For instance, it is unclear how “interjections” differ from “exclamations”.

The literature provides the following by way of a more detailed account of the bases of the need for condensation, and hence the motivation for subtitlers to omit some elements of the original text:

- i) Spatial constraints: the size of the screen allows around 35 characters or 12-16 Chinese characters in a one-line subtitle (Díaz Cintas 2013: 274), usually no more than two lines to minimise

- their impact on the image (de Linde 1995: 9);
- ii) Temporal constraints: the exposure time of subtitles is 3 seconds for one full line (de Linde and Kay 1999:7) and 6 seconds for two (Gottlieb 1992: 164; Fong 2009; Díaz Cintas 2013: 276);
 - iii) Intersemiotic redundancy (across different semiotic modes including language): certain meaning in movies can be distributed in different modes at the same time (i.e., including both visual and verbal), and thus can be considered redundant (Gottlieb 1994b: 273). For example, if the English for a given interjection is phonetically very similar to the Chinese for the commensurate interjection, then it might be redundant to include a written transcription of the expression in the Chinese subtitles—the Chinese viewer will have direct access to the original meaning via the English-language sound track;
 - iv) Intrasemiotic redundancy (within language): oral features like repetitions and false starts may be considered redundant or unnecessary (Gottlieb 1994b: 273);
 - v) Linguistic factors: spoken language is more concise than written language (e.g., de Lind 1995), and some languages are regarded as inherently more economical than others (e.g., Kovačić 1994: 245; Luyken, Herbst *et al.* 1991: 55; Fong 2009: 94).

With respect to item iii above (intersemiotic redundancy), de Linde (1995: 18) has made some proposals specifically with respect to interjections. She claims that interjections are universally understood across languages (cf. also Ameka 1992) and hence, if this is indeed the case, might generally not be needed to be included in subtitles. However, de Linde does not make clear what is meant by the term “universal”. For example, is de Linde proposing that (1) the same set of meanings are conveyed via “interjections” across all languages and that (2) essentially the same sound is used for a given interjectional meaning across all languages? This would presumably need to be the case for “interjections to be universally understood across language”

but de Linde does not explicitly state this, nor provides the type of evidence which would support such a proposition. With respect to our own data, admittedly it is the case that most English interjections sound similar to their Chinese equivalents (e.g., *hey* and 嘿 *hei*, *oh* and 哦/噢 *o*⁵). Hence there may possibly be some support for de Linde's proposals as to "intersemiotic redundancy", i.e., that there is no need for these particular sounds to be rendered in the Chinese subtitles because the particular meanings at stake will be available to the Chinese viewer via the sound itself. Thus there would be no loss of meaning on account of this omission. This is a problematic proposition, however, since it would require it to be the case that, in attending to the movie, the Chinese viewer switches back and forth between the subtitles and the soundtrack as he/she seeks to engage with the totality of the meanings being conveyed. For it to be unnecessary for the interjections to be included in the subtitles (i.e., for there to be no loss of meaning), the viewer would need to be able to separate out "redundant" elements (i.e., soundtrack soundings/wordings which he/she does need to attend to because they will not be translated in the subtitles) from "non-redundant" meanings (i.e., meanings which he/she can expect to be included in the subtitles). While this might possibly be the case, it would seem methodologically and theoretically unwise to assume this is necessarily what happens with subtitled movies. Against this are our findings, as reported below, which indicate that, even while many of these possibly "intersemiotically redundant" interjections are omitted, this is by no means always the case, with a significant number still transcribed and included in the Chinese subtitles. Presumably this would not be the case if, indeed, the designation of such soundings as "redundant" is unproblematic. That is to say, inclusion/omission would not be variable if subtitlers are

operating with the assumption that the Chinese viewer will understand these soundings as conveying the same meaning in Chinese as they do in English. The notion of “intersemiotic redundancy” thus cannot provide a principled account of why some interjections are included and others are not.

Also, there is the possibility of “intersemiotic redundancy” associated with the movie’s visuals, specifically via depicted gestures and facial expressions (see, for example, Ameka 1992: 112). Thus, for example, a character in the movie may indicate surprise simultaneously via a verbal interjection and a facial expression indicative of being startled. Thus there is the possibility that the reason why a given interjection was omitted from the subtitles is that the same “meaning” was conveyed visually. With this possibility in mind, we included in our study an analysis of the movie’s visuals in order to determine (1) where there were visual correlates occurring simultaneously with the verbal interjections under consideration and (2) whether the presence of such a visual correlate typically resulted in the omission of the associated verbal interjection in the subtitles. We found no such tendency.⁶ That is to say, we were not able to identify a pattern by which interjections were more frequently omitted when they co-occurred with a gesture or facial expression which conveyed a similar meaning. Potential intersemiotic redundancy associated with gesture or facial expression thus does not seem to satisfactorily explain why some interjections are included while others are not.

It is clear that “interjections” (as we have defined them above by reference to the SFL notion of “minor clause”) are not the only meanings which tend to be omitted from subtitles, presumably on account of the need for “condensation”. Given this need for abbreviation, an intriguing question is raised as to why some

interjections are omitted but others are included. Is it the case that, in context, some are more “expendable”, given the need for “condensation”, while others are simply indispensable if the target subtitling text is to function effectively? To what extent may local issues of the current pace or volume of the source-text dialogue be a factor with respect to individual instances? That is to say, when the interlocutor speeds up, does this increase the likelihood that interjections generally (or some particular sub-types) will be omitted? Such questions are addressed in the later discussion.

As indicated above, the interlingual subtitling with which this paper is concerned was in almost all cases a two-step process – the English movie was first transcribed into English subtitles, and then the English subtitles were translated into Chinese subtitles. Since interjections are potentially omitted from the English subtitles in the first place, the analysis needs to attend carefully to which instances of *hey* and *oh* were in the English subtitles, and then to which instances of these interjections were actually rendered in some form⁷ in the Chinese subtitles. The dataset of this research thus consisted of paired versions in both languages.

While most subtitling groups did provide Chinese subtitles in both simplified and traditional Chinese, only those in simplified Chinese (the official written form in Chinese Mainland) were included in the investigation. The subtitles were downloaded from <http://subhd.com/>, which serves as a platform for subtitlers to study and discuss, with access to subtitles rendered by different groups⁸.

As indicated, the analysis investigates patterns in the omission and inclusion under subtitling of *hey* and *oh*. We chose to focus on these expressions primarily because they are the two most frequently occurring interjections in the dataset (20 and 21 tokens (see below)

respectively), because they significantly outnumber any of the other interjections in the dataset and because they represent a range of the functions performed by these expressions—*hey* is a “call” and *oh* can perform the function of either “continuity” or “exclamation”. Having this larger number of instances to consider increased the likelihood that we would discover general tendencies with respect to possible influences on omission/inclusion. This would be less likely in the case of expressions which occurred only a few times in the data.

Below we supply some examples of *hey* and *oh*. Each subtitle (with the speaker added) is presented in an individual line. The letter in brackets is the ID assigned to each token (see below). The examples include: (1) *hey* performing its usual “calling” function:

Thunk: He is a big guy. How could he just disappear like that.

Thunk: (q) **Hey, hey**, wait! Let’s ask that ugly lady if she’s seen Dad.

The family are looking for Grug (the father). Thunk (the son) sees a person dressed as a female and calls on the rest of family to address her.

(2) *oh* performing its “exclamation” function:

Ugga: (c) **Oh**, it’s a baby sun!

This is the first time Ugga (the mother) has seen fire. She responds with surprised delight.

(3) *oh* performing its “continuity” function (token (o) is “exclamation” though):

Grug: Croods, get down here.

Ugga: Grug, they okay. Guy’s with them.

Grug: (o) **Oh**, Guy's with them. (p) **Oh**, okay.

Grug: Well, thank you.

Grug: Thank you for bringing me that interesting Guy update.

Grug is worried about the children and plans to call them back, while Ugga believes Guy (the prehistoric genius) can protect their children and says to Grug, "they're okay. Guy is with them". Grug gets irritated at hearing this, and speaks in a sarcastic tone repeating Ugga's words. Token (o) indicates surprise and is thus regarded as exclamation, while in token (p) Grug continues his speech, thus continuity.

It should be noted that, for practical reasons, we did not go back to the original spoken English dialogue and undertook our own transcription of this into English subtitles. Rather we cross-checked each instance of the interjections in each version of the English subtitles, and arrived at a conflated file of interjections (see the tables in the Appendix) which were transcribed at least in one English subtitling. The interjections from different versions that correspond to the same utterance in the movie are referred to as the same token. In this file, the tokens were listed with their starting time⁹ in the movie. For ease of reference, they are ordered chronologically and then identified by a letter (token ID). Thus, every reference in the following discussion of *hey* identified as instance (a) refers to the same token of *hey* in the movie. When the same interjection occurred consecutively in one subtitle, e.g., **Hey! Hey, I did it!**, it was counted as just one token. When the same interjection was separated by other elements in a subtitle, e.g., **Oh, Guy's with them. Oh, okay.**, it was counted as two tokens. In terms of spelling, slight differences (e.g., *ooh* versus *oh*) were treated as the same token. Where inconsistency occurred in English subtitlings (e.g., an utterance transcribed as *Hey!* in some versions but *Here!* in others),

the form adopted in more versions was used. Each of the tokens was annotated in terms of its function in the context—whether it was used to express call, exclamation, or continuity.

The study then tracked whether (1) a given token was present in the English subtitles associated with a given subtitling group and then, (2) if it was present, whether it was then carried over into that group's Chinese subtitles. Findings are then provided to demonstrate whether or not a given token from the original sound track is included in the English subtitles of a given subtitling group, and then whether or not a token found in the English subtitles of a given group is found in the Chinese subtitles of that group. For example, it was observed that *oh* token (a) is present in the English subtitlings of Groups 2 and 4, but is only present in the Chinese subtitlings of Group 4. This would mean that for this token, the transfer from the English subtitles into the Chinese subtitles was 50%. (See the tables in the Appendix for a listing of all the *heys* and *ohs* and a detailed analysis of the rates at which they were transcribed into the English subtitles and, if transcribed, then translated into the Chinese subtitles.)

4. Key findings of *hey* versus *oh*: different interjections, different treatments

As indicated above in the introduction, the analysis established that:

- (1) Both *hey* and *oh* were susceptible to omission, both in the transcription stage (spoken dialogue into English subtitles) and in the translation stage (English subtitles into Chinese subtitles);

- (2) The omission rate for *oh* was significantly higher than that for *hey*, both at the transcription and the translation stages.

4.1. Rates of inclusion/omission in English subtitles

More specifically, when comparing inclusion/omission rates for the two interjections at the transcription stage (English subtitling) we found the following:

- The number of *heys* in the English subtitlings ranged from 11 (subtitling Group 4) up to 19 (subtitling Groups 1 and 6) out of a total of 20 tokens, with an average of 17 (out of 20) across the seven subtitlings;
- The number of *ohs* ranged from 0 (subtitling Groups 1 and 3), up to 15 (subtitling Group 4) out of a total of 21 tokens, with an average of 7 (out of 21).

(For the analyses from which these findings are derived, see Tables 1 and 2 in the Appendix.)

Here are some examples (non-consecutive subtitles, each in an individual line, applicable to all the examples in Sections 4 and 5) of *heys* which were included in all the English subtitlings:

- (a) **Hey**, Dad, can we eat now?
Really, she already doesn't listen to me. (b) **Hey!**

Examples of *heys* which were included in only three of the English subtitlings (the lowest occurrence rate):

- (e) **Hey!** No! It's mine.
(h) **Hey!**

In the case of token (h), the "hey" is uttered by Grug when Eep (the daughter) kicks a cobble that hits his head, thus triggering this response.

Here are the *oh* equivalents (“-” indicates utterances by different speakers, but still in the same subtitle as shown in the same line):
in four subtitlings (highest rate of occurrence):

(c) **Oh**, it's a baby sun!

- Who are you people? - (d) **Oh**, I'm sorry. We're the Croods!

In only one subtitling:

(s) **Oh**, Grug. Is that what this is all about?

(u) **Oh**, let's do it again. I think I blinked.

These findings suggest that neither interjection is generally, or at least not universally, regarded as “redundant” in the context of transcription into English subtitles. In other words, there is a tendency to include at least some of both expressions in the English subtitles (although, as indicated, subtitling Groups 1 and 3 are the exceptions to this pattern with regards to *oh*). As already discussed briefly above, due to the fact that *hey* and *oh* are very similar phonetically to their Chinese equivalents (嘿 hei and 哦/噢 o respectively), it might have been postulated that the English subtitlers and, in turn, the Chinese subtitlers, might have omitted these items on the basis of some perceived intersemiotic redundancy – they might have assumed it could basically always be left up to the spoken audio to convey these meanings (no need to subtitle *hey* and *oh*). As foreshadowed, this hypothesis is clearly not supported by our findings. Despite this apparent intersemiotic redundancy, both forms do get subtitled with some regularity.

In addition, the findings indicate that all the subtitling groups “leave out” at least some of the *heys* and some of the *ohs* in their

English subtitles, suggesting there is a significant tendency for both these interjections to be treated, in some contexts, as communicatively superfluous, redundant or at least “expendable”. Further discussion is provided below as to the possibility of discovering any consistency in the factors influencing omission versus inclusion.

Arguably, however, the most interesting finding with respect to the English subtitling is that *oh* is omitted much more often than *hey*. In this regard, it was telling that, as noted above, two subtitling groups included no instances of *oh*. At least for these groups, *oh* does appear to be “redundant”. It is also useful to note that there was no observable tendency for particular subtitling groups to generally favour either omission or inclusion of interjections. For example, while Group 1 included no instances of *oh* in its English subtitles (i.e., it was omission-oriented re *oh*), it was one of the groups with the highest rate of inclusion for *hey* (with 19 instances it was obviously inclusion-oriented re *hey*). There was therefore a consistent pattern across the seven subtitles in terms of the greater frequency of *oh* omission – some groups leaving out *ohs* entirely; an average across the seven subtitles of 70% of *heys* being included, versus an average of only 38% of the *ohs* being included. This is surely suggestive that, while individual cases of omission might be the result of incidental, contextual factors (for example, a momentary span of faster speech), this broader tendency suggests a more stable factor is in play here. It seems likely that this “more stable factor” is meaning difference, i.e., the different functions, as identified in the SFL literature, performed by these different expressions. This possibility is addressed in more detail below.

4.2. Rates of inclusion/omission in Chinese subtitles

Some key findings were as follows with respect to the frequency with which an interjection, once included in the English subtitles, was then translated into its equivalent in the Chinese subtitles:

- On average, 70% of *heys* present in the English subtitles were translated into Chinese in some form, while, on average, only 38% of *ohs* were translated in the Chinese subtitles;
- There were FIVE tokens of *hey* where, if the *hey* was present in the English subtitling, then its correlate was always included in the Chinese subtitles;
- There were THREE tokens of *oh* where, if the *oh* was present in the English subtitling, then its correlate was always included in the Chinese subtitles;
- There were NO instances of *hey* where *hey* was present in some of the English subtitlings but was omitted from all Chinese subtitlings;
- There were FOUR instances of *oh* where *oh* was present in some of the English subtitlings but was omitted from all Chinese subtitlings.

Here is an example of a *hey* which is present in six English subtitles but is only included in two of their Chinese subtitles (the lowest translation rate):

(q) **Hey, hey**, wait! Let's ask that ugly lady if she's seen Dad.

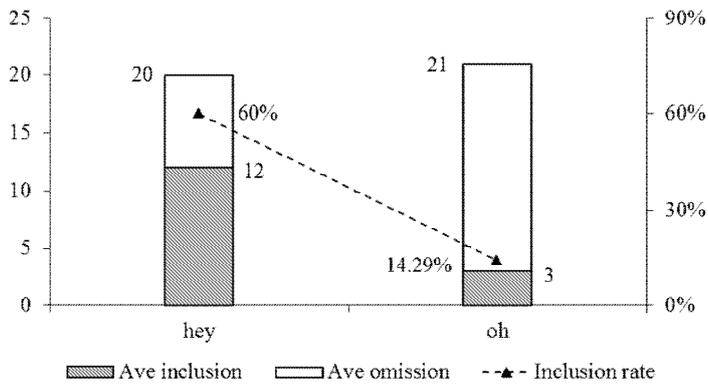
Here is an example of an *oh* which is present in two English subtitlings but was omitted from their Chinese subtitlings:

(k) **Oh**, the shoes are great, where do you get these ideas?

Our findings for omission/inclusion in English to Chinese subtitles were very much in line with the above findings for omission/inclusion in English subtitles. We identified a consistent tendency for *oh* to be omitted much more frequently than *hey*. We propose that omission from the Chinese subtitles is subject to the same influences as omission from the English subtitles, i.e., differences in the meaning/functions of these expressions. We return to this issue below.

In terms of the end translational result following from these two stages (firstly transcription into English subtitles, then translation of English subtitles into Chinese), the discrepancy increased in the extent of inclusion of *hey* and *oh* in the Chinese subtitles (referred to as the inclusion rate). Thus, as discussed above, firstly the tokens of *hey* and *oh* in the original spoken audio are filtered as the English subtitling (transcription) is done, and then further filtering occurs when the English subtitles are translated. For *hey*, with an average transcription rate of 85%, an average of 17 tokens (out of 20) were transcribed, and then 70% of the transcribed 17 tokens were translated, which is 12. This means 8 out of 20 tokens in the original movie were omitted from the Chinese subtitles. For *oh*, the average tokens of transcription is 8 (out of 21), and those 8 tokens are further filtered in translation with an average of 3 retained in the Chinese subtitles. This discrepancy in inclusion rates is illustrated graphically in the following figure.

Figure 1. Average number of tokens and inclusion rates of *hey* and *oh*



5. Discussion on the different treatments

We return now to the proposal introduced above that “meaning” or “function” is a key factor underlying the significantly higher rate of omission for *oh*. As already indicated, the function of *hey*, at least in our data, is always to realise a “call”. For instance,

(n) **Hey**, um, do you have a minute?

Thus *hey* is employed by the speaker to engage the attention of someone with whom they are interacting, or with whom they wish to interact.

With regard to *oh*, half of the time in our data (10 out of 21) it is used to provide the setting for the clause (continuity). For example,

- Who are you people? - (d) **Oh**, I’m sorry. We’re the Croods!

Thus the expression functions to sustain the unfolding dialogue, linking what is about to come with what came before.

Almost equally frequently (11 out of 21), *oh* is used to realise an exclamation. For example,

(t) **Ooh**, I've got it.

Here the speaker indicates excitement at coming up with an idea.

That is to say, the expression acts to convey what presents as a spontaneous reaction by the speaker—either a reaction of surprise, pleasure or distaste.

With respect to these different meanings/functions, it needs to be noted that we observed no significant difference in rates of omission/inclusion of *oh* according to whether it was functioning as a continuative or exclamation. Both “types” seemed to be omitted/included at roughly equal rates, both in English transcriptions and Chinese subtitles. This suggests that we needed to discover some aspect of the functionality of *hey* (as a call), which sets it apart from both these functions of *oh*. We propose that what is crucial here is the central role that *heys*, as calls, play in managing the unfolding or directionality of the dialogue or in directing the actions/behaviours of others. Thus they may function to bring someone into the conversation who was previously not involved—e.g., (n) **Hey**, *um, do you have a minute?*. Or they may function as a form of command—e.g., (d) **Hey, hey, hey!** (uttered by the prehistoric genius Guy by way of seeking to have Eep stop lifting him up and smelling him as if he were an animal when she first sees him). Thus, we can say that *heys* are clearly interactive, directed outwards from the speaker by way of an attempt to control either the flow of the dialogue or the flow of action.

In contrast, neither of the functions of *oh* (exclamation and continuity) are outwardly interactive in this way. Exclamatory *ohs* (like other exclamations) present as a spontaneous outburst, a kind of reflex, not deliberately intended as a form of communication on the part of the utterer. They certainly do not obviously present as attempts on the part of the speaker to control the flow of dialogue or action. They are not directly positioning any addressee. They might be said to be not so much “interpersonal” as “personal”. Tellingly, in this regard, Martin (1992: 44) treats such exclamation as “reacting” rather than “exchanging”, and Matthiessen (1995: 436) treats them as “non-role assigning” and as “self-oriented”. Something similar might also be said of continuative *ohs*. As essentially textual elements, they obviously are not directly interactional. They indicate attentiveness on the part of the current speaker to what has just been said. However, they do not function to control the flow of the dialogue or the action. It is plausible then that as “role assigning”, actively “interactive” elements, calls such as *hey* are more likely to be seen as a required element in any transcription/translation than the non-interactive exclamatory or continuative *oh*. Thus, it seems that interactional language concerned with positioning interlocutors has greater salience for transcribers/translators than either affectual self-expression (exclamatory *oh*) or the maintenance of textual cohesiveness (continuative *oh*).

This is not, of course, to ignore the possibility of other factors conditioning omission/inclusion, i.e., factors which may operate separately from, or in conjunction with, the meaning-based factors which have been outlined above. With respect to the exclamatory *ohs*, for example, we noted a correlation between omission and the presence in the following wordings which similarly conveyed a sense of surprise or delight. That is to say, there was a tendency for *ohs*

which could be interpreted as conveying a sense of surprise or delight to be omitted when the speaker also conveyed this meaning through his/her follow-up utterance. For example,

(k) **Oh**, the shoes are **great**, where do you get these ideas?

In this case, the *oh* was included in only two of the English subtitles and in none subsequent Chinese translation. It seems possible that in this case, five of the transcribers and all the seven translators (i.e., those who omitted this token) assumed that the *great* could be relied on to convey the sense of delighted surprise associated, in this case, with the *oh*.

The same impulse for omission would seem to apply with the following additional tokens of exclamatory *oh*.

(b) **Oh, great**, now he's broken.

(transcribed by only two groups, translated by only one)

(l) **Oh, wow!** I **love** those!

(transcribed by only three groups, translated by only one)

(n) **Oh, good** boy. Who's my **good** boy?

(transcribed and translated by only one group)

Local contextual conditioning was also observed to be a factor in conditioning omission of *hey*. The following instance demonstrates such an effect:

(e) **Hey! No!** It's mine.

This token was associated with low transcription rate (relative to

other tokens of *hey*) of 42.86% (transcribed into English subtitles by only three groups). Here the attention-drawing function of *Hey!* seems to be overshadowed by the immediately following *No!*, functioning as a warning, which inherently attracts attention. *Hey!* thus may be seen by a transcriber as “redundant”, given the presence of *No!*. In addition, the utterance appears in an up-tempo speech situation where the speakers are scrambling to grasp a torch.

There were also two tokens of *hey* with low translation rates (42.86% and 33.33% respectively):

- (a) **Hey, Dad**, can we eat now?
- (q) **Hey, hey, wait!** Let's ask that ugly lady if she's seen Dad.

Token (a) is similar to instance (e) above in that *Hey* is followed by an element that also functions to capture attention – *Dad* as Vocative. This utterance also occurs in a fast-paced situation where the speakers are competing with beasts to hunt for food. Token (q) is somewhat similar – the following imperative *wait!* serves a similar function of calling for attention.

It is also possible that the role played in exchange structure by an utterance headed by a continuative *oh* may have some influence on the likelihood of it being omitted or included. Thus, for example, it is plausible that an *oh* is more likely to be retained in an utterance which is a challenge (a dis-preferred response) to a prior utterance than an *oh* in an utterance which is a compliant reply (a preferred response). This possibility was not one which we were able to explore in our current study.

6. Concluding remarks

In this paper we have demonstrated that, while incidental, local co-textual conditioning may sometimes be influential in omission/inclusion of these interjections, our analysis strongly suggests that differences in meaning/function are more consistent, systemic influences. In this we relied on the treatment of these “interjections” in the SFL literature by which this “grab-bag” category of “interjection” is divided into sub-categories according to meaning, i.e., as minor clauses performing a variety of different functions. Thus, the significantly higher inclusion rates for *hey* could be explained by reference to its interactional functionality, a feature which distinguishes it from both exclamatory and continuative *oh*, neither of which are inherently interactional.

More generally, our analysis supports prior research which reports a general tendency to omit interpersonal meanings during the subtitling process. We have added to this scholarship in providing new insights into what may be at stake communicatively in the case of one particular type of omission, that of interjections. Specifically we showed that, on account of this tendency for subtitlers to leave out these wordings, their subtitlings can end up more muted interpersonally than the source text, less explicit when signalling that one character is seeking to attract the attention of another character (i.e., through the use of *hey*) or that one character is reacting affectually (i.e., through the use of *oh*). We showed, however, that in the case of our data, this is not an entirely indiscriminate underplaying of the interpersonal. Rather frequencies of omission/inclusion do seem to be conditioned by a relatively nuanced sense of the different roles performed by these expressions.

Our findings may also provide some useful insights for the

practice of translation. They point to a need for any translator, who might be considering omitting one of these expressions for condensation purposes, to consider carefully the context and co-text. They might consider whether or not there are similar meanings in the co-text which might make such an omission less damaging to the target text's communicative effectiveness. They might consider whether or not they really do want to reduce the affectual impact of the movie (by omitting exclamatory *ohs*) or to make the text less cohesive (by omitting continuative *ohs*).

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NOTES

1. *The Croods* (2013) Directed by Kirk DeMico and Chris Sanders. Berlin: DreamWorks Animation.
2. Fansubbing as a term is confined to subtitling of Japanese anime products in some research (e.g., Diaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006), but is also more broadly applied to amateur (but not necessarily) or informal voluntary subtitling of various audiovisual works (e.g., Hsiao 2014). The present project adopts the latter usage which foregrounds the difference between commercialised (official) and voluntary subtitling rather than that between anime and other types of audiovisual products like movies.
3. The competition in time happens at the beginning of the release of a new movie to cater for eager audiences who cannot wait for the release of commercial versions of subtitles. Fan-subbed versions continue to appear even after the publication of commercial versions, as fansubbing groups seek to perfect or improve previous versions.
4. Subtitles may occasionally be placed at the top of the screen, especially when the bottom part is already occupied by other texts, and some subtitles in China, Korea and Japan are placed vertically on the right of the screen.
5. 哦 and 噢 are used in an exchangeable manner in contemporary Chinese, and they share the same *hànyǔ pinyin* ("Chinese spelling", the official roman orthographic system) of o.
6. The data were annotated in terms of whether a given interjection was accompanied by

some form of body language conveying similar meaning. By this it was determined that about 75% of the tokens of both *hey* (16 out of 20) and *oh* (16 out of 21) co-occurred with gestural or facial elements which might be interpreted as conveying similar meanings to the accompanying verbal interjections. However, *heys* were subtitled at a significantly higher rate (see Section 5) than the *ohs*, despite the fact that *heys* and *ohs* were equally often accompanied by a visual correlate (i.e., they were equally often “intersemiotically redundant”, at least potentially, on account of accompanying visual elements conveying similar meanings). This pushed us to look for other reasons that can better explain the findings.

7. An English interjection may not be necessarily translated as an interjection in Chinese. Some other forms are also possible.
8. The website provides subtitle files (for study purpose only) without audiovisual products, which avoids legal and ethical issues. Viewers can insert the subtitle files in a legal copy of the video with the help of software.
9. Different subtitling versions actually vary slightly in terms of the starting time. Since the discrepancy is only about one second, they are not strictly standardised.

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APPENDIX

In tables 1 and 2 below, "ES" refers to English subtitles; "CS" refers to Chinese subtitles; "SG" refers to subtitling group. The ID corresponds to the examples in the discussion with the starting time provided.

An "E" is placed in a subtitling group's column when a particular token is included in its English subtitles but not in its Chinese subtitles. The combination of "EC" in a column indicates that the token was present in the group's English subtitles AND was also translated in the group's Chinese subtitles.

The entries in the "ES" column are a count of the number of English subtitlings in which a given token occurs. The entries in the "CS" column are a count of the number of Chinese subtitlings in which a given token is translated.

The listings in the "ES/7" column are a count of the number of English subtitlings of a given token in comparison to the total number of English subtitlings (seven in this case). Thus a figure of 85.71% indicates six out of the seven groups transcribed a given token. The listings in the

rightmost column under “CS/ES” indicate the rate at which a token which is present in a subtitling group’s English subtitles is also present in its Chinese subtitles. Thus, a figure of 50% indicates that only half of the groups which had the token in their English subtitles also included the translated correlate in their Chinese subtitles. The average rates of transcription and translation for one token (i.e., the averages of columns “ES/7” and “CS/ES” respectively) are provided after the rate of the last token.

The bottom part of the table provides in turn the number of transcribed tokens for each English subtitling (“Frequency in each English subtitling”); the number of translated tokens for each Chinese subtitling (“Frequency in each Chinese subtitling”); the number of transcribed tokens in comparison to the total number of tokens (“Transcription rate of each subtitling”), i.e., a figure of 95% indicates 19 out of 20 instances are transcribed in a subtitling group; and the number of translated tokens (in Chinese subtitling) in comparison to the number of transcribed tokens (in its corresponding English subtitling) (“Translation rate of each subtitling”), i.e., a figure of 36.84% indicates that 7 out of the 19 transcribed tokens are translated in the corresponding Chinese subtitling. The average rates of transcriptions and translations for each subtitling group are provided in the lower right corner of the table.

In the “Subtitle” column of table 2, the “e” that precedes each subtitle indicates that *oh* functioned as an “exclamation”, and “c” that it functioned as a “continuative”. In the case of token (g), the single *hey* is uttered by Eep when Guy suddenly leaves, and she intends to call him back.

Table 1. *Hey* – rates of transcriptions and translations

Starting time	ID	Subtitle	SG1	SG2	SG3	SG4	SG5	SG6	SG7	ES	CS	ES/7	CS/ES
00:07:46,360	a	Hey, Dad, can we eat now?	E	E	E	EC	EC	EC	E	7	3	100%	42.86%
00:12:09,040	b	Really, she already doesn't listen to me. Hey!	E	E	EC	EC	EC	EC	EC	7	5	100%	71.43%
00:18:13,760	c	Hey, hey, hey!	EC	7	7	100%	100%						
00:18:20,360	d	Hey, hey, hey!	EC	EC	EC		EC	EC	EC	6	6	85.71%	100%
00:19:01,040	e	Hey! No! It's mine.	E		EC			EC		3	2	42.86%	66.67%
00:20:10,880	f	Hey, those are cold!	E	E	EC		EC	EC	EC	6	4	85.71%	66.67%
00:21:32,400	g	Hey!	EC		EC		EC	EC	EC	5	5	71.43%	100%
00:22:00,440	h	Hey!	EC		EC			EC		3	3	42.86%	100%
00:30:13,551	i	Hey, look! This cave has a tongue! Awesome!		E		EC	EC		EC	4	3	57.14%	75%
00:33:54,200	j	Whoa! Hey! Stay back! We don't know what it wants.	E	E	E		EC	EC	EC	6	3	85.71%	50%
00:34:16,960	k	Hey. Stay back.	E	E	EC		EC	EC	EC	6	4	85.71%	66.67%
00:34:27,120	l	Hey! It's biting me!	E	E	EC		EC	EC	EC	6	4	85.71%	66.67%
00:36:13,960	m	Hey, where is Guy?	E	E	EC		EC	EC	EC	6	4	85.71%	66.67%
00:48:36,600	n	Hey, um, do you have a minute?	EC	E	E	EC	EC	EC	E	7	4	100%	57.14%
00:48:48,600	o	Hey, Thunk...	E	E	E	EC	EC	EC	EC	7	4	100%	57.14%
00:51:33,960	p	Hey. Wait! Whoa!	E	E	E	EC	EC	EC	EC	7	4	100%	57.14%
01:04:04,040	q	Hey, hey, wait! Let's ask that ugly lady if she's seen Dad.	E		E	E	EC	EC	E	6	2	85.71%	33.33%
01:12:28,400	r	Hey! We're okay!	EC		EC	EC	EC	EC	EC	6	6	85.71%	100%

01:20:13,030	s	Hey, Hey, I did it!	EC	E	EC	EC	EC	EC	EC	7	6	100%	85.71%
01:24:21,360	t	Hey, I know that guy.	E	E	EC	EC	E	EC	EC	7	4	100%	57.14%
Frequency in each English subtitling			19	15	19	11	18	19	18	Ave 17		Ave	Ave
Frequency in each Chinese subtitling			7	2	13	10	17	19	15	Ave 12		85%	71.01%
Transcription rate of each subtitling (out of 20) %			95	75	95	55	90	95	90	Ave transcription rate 85			
Translation rate of each subtitling %			36.84	13.33	68.42	90.91	94.44	100	83.33	Ave translation rate 69.61			

Table 2. *Oh* –rates of transcriptions and translations

Starting time	ID	Subtitle	SG1	SG2	SG3	SG4	SG5	SG6	SG7	ES	CS	ES/7	CS/ES
00:29:13,769	a	e Oh, man, they are really tough to get then.		E		EC				2	1	28.57%	50%
00:33:50,280	b	e Oh, great, now he's broken.				E	EC			2	1	28.57%	50%
00:33:51,960	c	e Oh, it's a baby sun!		E		E	EC		EC	4	2	57.14%	50%
00:35:24,695	d	c - Who are you people? - Oh, I'm sorry. We're the Croods!		E		E	EC		EC	4	2	57.14%	50%
00:38:19,145	e	c Oh, come on, just think.		E			EC		E	3	1	42.86%	33.33%
00:41:09,786	f	e - Not enough. I need more. I need more! - Oh, look at that.		E		E	EC		EC	4	2	57.14%	50%
00:43:04,177	g	e Oh, no, there, sorry.				EC				1	1	14.29%	100%
00:43:07,240	h	c - Oh, there's not a clue. - Excuse me.				EC				1	1	14.29%	100%
00:44:36,440	i	c Oh, we never had that much food.		E					EC	2	1	28.57%	50%
00:47:17,013	j	c - You can't see it! - Oh, yes. Yes, It is. I've seen it.		E		E	EC		E	4	1	57.14%	25%

00:51:41,661	k	e Oh, the shoes are great, where do you get these ideas?		E		E				2	0	28.57%	0
00:52:13,880	l	e Oh, wow! I love those!		E		E		EC		3	1	42.86%	33.33%
00:54:17,871	m	c - Careful. - Oh, really? Okay.		E		EC				2	1	28.57%	50%
01:00:15,544	n	e Oh, good boy. Who's my good boy?						EC		1	1	14.29%	100%
01:01:04,802	o	e Oh, Guy's with them. Oh, okay.		E		EC	EC		E	4	2	57.14%	50%
01:01:04,802	p	c Oh, Guy's with them. Oh, okay.		E			EC			2	1	28.57%	50%
01:01:13,137	q	c Oh, okay. I'm gonna go up,					E			1	0	14.29%	0
01:03:44,630	r	c - He... - Oh, face it.		E			E		EC	3	1	42.86%	33.33%
01:06:04,595	s	c Oh, Grug. Is that what this is all about?		E		E	EC		E	4	1	57.14%	25%
01:10:46,135	t	e Ooh, I've got it.				E	E			2	0	28.57%	0
01:28:49,177	u	e Oh, let's do it again. I think I blinked.				E				1	0	14.29%	0
Frequency in each English subtitling			0	14	0	15	13	1	9	Ave 7		Ave	Ave
Frequency in each Chinese subtitling			0	0	0	5	10	1	5	Ave 3		35.37%	42.86%
Transcription rate of each subtitling (out of 21) %			0	66.67	0	71.43	61.90	4.76	42.86	Ave transcription rate 35.37			
Translation rate of each subtitling %			0	0	0	33.33	76.92	100.00	55.56	Ave translation rate 37.97			

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