Fansubbing in Brazil: Fan translation and collaborative production in light of Participatory Culture

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ABSTRACT

Audiovisual translation (Gambier 2001; Romero-Fresco 2013) is as old as cinema and older than television. However, just recently, academic researchers have been focusing on it and its many categories. This study aims to contribute to this emergent discussion by addressing concepts of translation related to the area of audiovisual translation and, mainly the category of subtitling (Diaz-Cintas and Remael 2007) with a specific focus on fansubbing (Diaz-Cintas and Sanchez 2006). Fansubbing refers to the type of subtitles produced in a non-professional manner by communities of fans, and distributed free of charge on the Internet. In order to better understand this relationship between fans that produce these subtitles and fans that consume them, we will investigate the definition of 'fan' (Grossberg 1992; Jenkins 1992), and also the communities of fans, known as the fandoms (Jenkins 2006; Duffett 2013). We will also discuss the process of collaborative production of fan-made subtitles (O'Hagan 2009) taking into account how and why those subtitles are produced and consumed, while also examining the aspects related to the (il)legality of fansubbing in relation to copyright infringement (Mendonça 2012) in Brazil.

KEYWORDS

audiovisual translation, subtitling, fansubbing, fandom, fan translation
영상번역, 자막번역, 팬서빙, 팬덤, 팬번역

"I have been in the fandom for so long and poured so much time and energy into it that I really have no idea what non-fandom people do with their lives"[1)]
(Anonymous post from website FanSecrets!)

Fans can have a really special relationship with their object of affection, dedicating a lot of time and energy to it, as claimed by the fan in our epigraph. As a matter of fact, all this devotion can be shown in many ways, whether buying every product and merchandise related to their idols, or even spending many hours a day online involved in activities such as chatting with other fans about all the details and theories regarding their favorite book. This article aims to present and discuss a specific form of fan engagement known as *fansubbing*.

In order to better understand the practice of fansubbing, we will also explore Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and its main modes, especially subtitling and fansubbing, the latter being a user-generated translation mode produced in a collaborative process. These users who make themselves responsible for the creation and distribution of subtitles for free on the Internet are fans who work to help other fans, then we will also discuss what it means to be a fan and to be part of a fan community.

Finally, because the fansubbing phenomenon in Brazil presents significant differences in comparison to fansubbing produced in other parts of the world, a brief explanation of the peculiar dynamics in Brazilian fansubbing group will also be explored.

1) "I really have no idea of what non-people do with their lives": a multimodal and corpus-based analysis of fanfiction, is an academic paper published by Maria Grazia Sindoni on Lingue e Linguaggi v.13 (2015). The article's title refers, partially, to an entry posted by an anonymous fan on the website FanSecrets!

1. Audiovisual translation, subtitling, and fansubbing

Translation Studies as an academic discipline is relatively new, regardless of the fact that translation has been practiced for a long time. The same happens with audiovisual translation practice and studies, as explained by Romero-Fresco (2013: 205), “even before the introduction of sound in cinema, silent films required the translation of the intertitles used by the filmmakers to convey dialogue or narration.” Thus, even though it is possible to date the beginning of audiovisual translation by the advent of silent cinema, which predates spoken cinema and television by a wide period, it is only after the turn of the millennium that audiovisual translation started to receive some attention within academia.

Since the end of the 19th century, both cinema and AVT have evolved in order to meet the demands created by the new audiovisual mediums. In review of the specific theoretical input for AVT, introduced in previous studies, Diaz-Cintas (2015) declares that “AVT is seen by many studies as the most prosperous and successful branch”, and he also credits this notoriety to the inherent relationship between AVT and technology.

In this context, as there is a constant overhaul of theoretical concepts because of issues raised by new mediums and language usages, or even the need for translation as a way to overcome linguistic barriers, it is important to consider the advent of different AVT modes that go beyond the most well-known ones (subtitling and dubbing).

As a matter of fact, AVT modes, as initially mentioned by Gambier (2001), were more numerous and included not only modes like screen translation (AVT related to cinema, television and/or computer screens), but also live modes in which there was a combination of visual and sound aspects (therefore earning the ‘audiovisual’

categorization).

Nevertheless, in *Questões terminológico-conceituais no campo da tradução audiovisual*[2] *(TAV)*, Franco and Araújo (2011) questioned the division presented by Gambier (2001), claiming that some modes related to live interpretation, such as consecutive, simultaneous, sight translation and sign language, can already be classified under another independent area of studies, namely, Interpretation Studies, and therefore they are not considered AVT modes in the studies proposed by AVT nowadays.

Hence, AVT must be limited to modes previously defined by Gambier (2001) as *screen translation*, those that utilize a screen (cinema, television or computer), which can be inter or intralingual and in oral or written mode (referring to the studies of Diaz-Cintas and Remael and Jakobson to justify this delimitation). Eliana Paes Cardoso Franco and Vera Lúcia Santiago Araújo are two of the most prominent names in AVT studies in Brazil, dedicating intensely to the disclosure and consolidation of the area in the country, so the branching and terminology suggested by them will be used in this research because it better represents both AVT studies in Brazil and AVT services that are more usual in the Brazilian translation market.

According to the authors, AVT modes are divided into written and oral. Written modes include subtitling for listeners, subtitling for deaf and hard-of-hearing, and electronic subtitling; while oral modes include dubbing, voice-over, narration (or voice-off), and audio description (Franco and Araújo 2011).

As this work deals with the AVT mode 'subtitling for listeners', as defined by Franco and Araújo (2011), this will be the only mode presented with more detail. For that, we use the definition proposed by Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) as a starting point:

2) The title of the article can be roughly translated as "Issues of theory and concepts in audiovisual translation field"

> Subtitling may be defined as a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards, and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off) (2007: 8).

As stated by the authors, the inherent relationship between the subtitling process and technological advances is, simultaneously, the greatest asset and one of the greatest complications for academic studies in the field. Even though technology allows for more types of subtitles to be available, to attempt to assign a classification for these types and modes that constantly change is not an easy task. However, Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) group the types of subtitling according to four different criteria: linguistic aspects; preparation time aspects; technical aspects; and distribution format aspects.

Regarding linguistic and preparation time criteria, we can divide subtitles into *intralingual* or *interlingual* and *online* or *off-line*, respectively (Diaz-Cintas and Remael 2007: 14). Considering the technical criteria, subtitles can be *open* or *closed*. With the advent of the DVD and technology that allows for switching audio and inclusion of subtitles in television channels and streaming platforms, the option for closed subtitles has become more popular and is now the most common type (Diaz-Cintas and Remael 2007: 22-23).

As for distribution formats, the most common ones are cinema, television, general videos like CD-ROMs, DVDs and Blu-Rays, and more recently, the Internet. The fansubbing type of subtitles distributed on the Internet will be detailed later.

The process of subtitle creation is in constant change, what makes classification and description challenging. That is the case of the processes presented by Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007), for example,

as they do not consider most current forms of production such as online platforms or free software. As the main goal of this paper is to discuss the collective and collaborative process of production in fansubbing groups, we will not go into detail about the use of subtitling tools.

Once the specifics of subtitling are presented, it is important to differentiate professional and amateur subtitling practices. 'Professional subtitling' are productions formally commissioned by a client or subtitling company, with financial compensation for the service while 'amateur subtitling' are all the other forms of subtitling that have not been ordered by clients or companies, and more important, they are not financially compensated for the subtitles.

There are many possibilities beyond fansubbing in amateur subtitling, such as subtitles for educational purposes, in which language students offer to subtitle audiovisual products for video sites such as *YouTube* merely to practice their studied language; or even volunteer subtitling, in which users subtitle videos for sites like *Ted Talk* and *Coursera* free of charge.

Even though they share several aspects, the volunteer practice of these sites and fansubbing have a crucial difference that, in our point of view, highlights fansubbing among other modes: the interaction between producers and consumers of these subtitles within online communities. Therefore, while their value is acknowledged, these other amateur subtitling modes will not be detailed here.

The practice of amateur subtitling within fan communities, known as *fansubbing*, started with animes (Japanese animation), which were translated by the very few fans that were proficient in Japanese or those who had access to copies with English subtitles. Then, this material would be shared on the Internet so other fans could have access to the episodes.

From the start, the product of *fansubbing* activities was always

made 'by fans for fans' and, thereby, made available free of charge by the authors themselves, in order to help increase the popularity of the animes/series/films/etc among other fans. Authors Jorge Diaz-Cintas and Pablo Muñoz Sánchez are considered trailblazer scholars in the topic because of their academic paper *Fansubs: Audiovisual Translation in an Amateur Environment* (2006), considered the first text approaching this subtitling mode in a more detailed way[3]. The authors define this practice as:

> a fansub is a fan-produced, translated, subtitled version of a Japanese anime programme. Fansubs are a tradition that began with the creation of the first anime clubs back in the 1980s. With the advent of cheap computer software and the availability on Internet of free subbing equipment, they really took off in the mid 1990s. It would be no exaggeration to state that fansubs are nowadays the most important manifestation of fan translation, having turned into a mass social phenomenon on Internet, as proved by the vast virtual community surrounding them such as websites, chat rooms, and forums (Diaz-Cintas and Sanchez 2006).

Despite starting with animes, currently, fansubbing is not limited to the Japanese animated episodes, but also covers many other types of audiovisual translation, such as films, documentaries and, mainly, television shows. Due to the easy access and the growing popularity of foreign culture, especially the smashing influence of American culture, it is not surprising that specialized fansubbing groups for the most popular television shows arose in such a short time.

As stated by the authors above, fansubbing is not only a specific subtitling mode but also an important social phenomenon on the

3) Maria Rosario Ferrer Simó had already briefly addressed 'fansubbing' in her article *Fansubs y scanlations: la influencia del aficionado en los criterios profesionales* (2005) and is credited for it in Diaz-Cintas & Sanchez (2006), but it was not her main objective to present this translation practice.

Internet, and this aspect will be discussed in-depth in Section 2 of this paper.

While there are also individually produced subtitles, our focus is the importance of collaborative production of subtitles, which begins with the selection and training processes many groups enforce for new members. Once accepted, these members are required to improve their practice constantly in order to keep up with the time and quality demands established by the group leaders. So, it is the focus of this study to think about this mutual relationship for the construction of meaning in the digital environment and for the collaborative production of subtitles by fansubbing groups.

2. Fans and fandoms in Participative Culture and Convergence Culture

Recently, the word 'fan' refers to individuals who have special admiration for something or someone, acting in a passionate and enthusiastic way toward the object of their adoration. Grossberg (1992) relates the affection of fans to what adds "colors and textures", in the sense of giving meaning, to their lives, as he points not only to the relationship between fans and the object of their passion, but also to the interaction with other fans and social practices that involve them. Examples of these practices are attending rock concerts and waiting long hours in line to get the best view, searching for the opportunity to meet the bands in person, collecting comic books and action figures, etc.

As a result, he states that it is impossible to assume that fans define themselves and behave the same way in all historical or social situations, because

> the fan can only be understood historically, as located in a set of different possible relations to culture. In fact, everyone is constantly a fan of various sorts of things, for one cannot exist in a world where nothing matters (Grossberg 1992: 589).

In fact, it is the search to build these affection and importance relationships that gives origin to *fandoms*. According to *Merriam-Webster Online,* it is the group of "all the fans" and "the state or attitude of being a fan", by the fusion of the words "*fan+kingdom*", resulting in the idea of the "kingdom of fans" and "fan community". For Jenkins (2006: 247), fandom "is born of a balance between fascination and frustration: if media content didn't fascinate us, there would be no desire to engage with it; but if it didn't frustrate us on some level, there would be no drive to rewrite or remake it".

Thus, this mix of worship, admiration, enthusiasm and fascination with the cultural product drives fans to gather to talk, discuss and celebrate together; but it is the frustration, dissatisfaction and refusal to accept that what is available is finite and represents everything that exists and all there is to know about the topic that makes fans interact actively creating new material to promote, propagate and perpetuate the available content.

Technological advancement has significantly changed the way fandom members access and consume cultural products. Nonetheless, the biggest change was in the way fans interact with each other. According to Duffett (2013), with the popularity of the Internet, fans have been playing online interactive videogames, debating the plot of their favorite books, films and series, and also creating blogs, forums and entire websites dedicated to their idols.

This increase in consumption and interaction between fandoms provided by new technologies has allowed 'breaking the barriers' and accessing cultural products from other countries and cultures in a faster and easier way. For Chin and Morimoto, "fans understand and

deploy the objects or texts of another culture through the means they have at their disposal within their own popular cultural contexts" (2013: 103).

According to the authors (2013: 104),

> shorter lag time between domestic and international distribution of popular cultural texts, as well as relatively easy access to overseas fan culture afforded by the Internet translates in some cases to transcultural fandoms that are predicated on the same kinds of homological affinities that exist between fan cultures within a homologous national/linguistic context. As Paul Booth argues, '[fans] use digital technology not only to create, to change, to appropriate, to poach, or to write, but also to share [across national borders], to experience together, to become alive with community' (2010: 39).

As Booth (2010, as cited by Chin and Morimoto 2013) highlights in the quote above, the interaction of fans with the community in the creation, appropriation and reproduction of new content related to the fandom keeps the fan community alive and engaged, which also maintains a constant process of modification, reformulation and update of the cultural products.

These products and redefinitions can be seen in several forms, with the best-known being the *fanfics*, *fanarts*, *fanvids*, *fanzines* and *fansubs*. Among the most common platforms for interaction between these *online* communities and sharing of these products are forums, blogs and specific pages for each fandom and also social networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest*, etc.

Jenkins (1992) revisits some of the prejudices related to fan activity and fandom constitution, refuting the conception of the fan as a mere passive, uncritical and fanatic consumer. For the author, members of a fandom are, in fact, active producers of meaning and subversive promoters of the produced content. In other words, fans

are individuals included in what the author calls “participative culture”.

Jenkins (2009) resumes this concept by defining it as

> Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of information mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. (...) A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connections with one another (at least they care what other people think about what they have created) (Jenkins 2009: ix)

So, from this definition, Delwiche and Henderson (2013) proposed a categorization of participative culture: consensual culture, creative culture and discussion culture. According to the authors, consensual culture bases itself on mutual agreement and has a “productive” nature, since it has an objective or result to be accomplished or problem to be solved. Situations in which experts in one area gather to share knowledge and balance the collective intelligence or even situations in which ordinary citizens join to exercise democracy are examples of this culture.

In counterpart, creative culture is that in which individuals are encouraged to create, share and comment productions within an inviting and solidary environment. Within the field of fan production, the best examples are fanfics, fanarts and fansites – environments that allow for participants to engage both with their own creative activities and with the media objects that inspire them.

Lastly, we have the discussion culture, in which the subject itself is the core focus, and there is not necessarily a production related to it. Sports fandoms, news sites, food blogs, etc., are the most common examples, even when there is more disagreements and

misunderstandings about participants' personal or professional interest topics than anything else.

The main conceptual change between participative culture first introduced by Jenkins (1992) and his new proposal of convergence culture (2006) is the passive-active relationship between consumers (in this case, fans) and the industry. If fan activity was once limited to interaction with other fans and members of the same fandom in participatory culture, in convergence culture the consumer has become a lot more active and decisive.

In this new way of interaction, as it has already been stated, fans have more power of decision and can see their interests reflected in the presented content, as the media content is planned to "maximize the elements that attract fans" (Jenkins 2006: 62). A greater number of fans can ensure the continuation of the show because shows with more spectators have better chances of being renewed. This makes the fans an active decision factor for TV producers and executives.

Other main characteristic of convergence culture is the intersection between different media types, old and new, commercial and amateur, with new technological practices for old cultural practices. For Jenkins (2006: 18),

> convergence, as we can see, is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. Corporate convergence coexists with grassroots convergence. Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets, and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers.

So, specifically about fandoms, convergence has allowed for the fans to cease being passive consumers of media products (with sporadic

productions of their own products divulged to small groups) and start interacting through a larger number of different platforms, not only consuming media products, but also discussing the episodes in real-time through social media, creating campaigns to avoid the cancellation of their favorite shows or to enlist the participation of actors in events and conventions, etc.

3. Collaborative production and copyright

As many other fandom practices, fansubbing begun long before Internet access was a commonplace. Some authors that study fansubbing as a translation mode (Simó 2005; Diaz-Cintas and Sanchez 2006) indicate that *fansubs* originated around the 1990s, taking into account the current format for production and consumption of these subtitles.

However, some articles about fandom practices point out that a more primitive format already existed (Hatcher 2007), beginning in the 1970s with VHS tapes, but only really taking off in the 1980s with the advent of the personal computer and, finally, popularizing in the 1990s, with the technological advancement that allowed for new means of production, distribution and consumption of these subtitles via the Internet.

Thus, as more options were offered by the market, anime fandoms have grown stronger. With so many 'official' options available, fansubbing production concentrated on animes that were not available yet. Even after the 1990s, with the popularization of computer, the advent of the Internet, and the drastic change in the fansub production and consumption scenario from the 2000s onward, respecting copyright was always a hallmark of the anime fan community.

This practice is clearly defined by the *New Ethical Code for Digital Fansubbing* (2003), a collective production of forum *Anime News Network* (considered to be the largest and most complete *online* anime community in the world, where many different fandoms interact) in which six basic rules (with some specific subdivisions) were defined to regulate production and distribution of fansubbing on the Internet.

In short, the rules emphasize that the biggest concern has always been the distribution of unavailable material and, consequently, the strengthening of the fandom as a whole. Despite its utopic aspect as the lack of inspection would make it impossible to verify their implementation, the fact that many fans and fansubbers gathered in the online community to discuss parameters to be adopted[4] and followed by the whole community nonetheless reveals aspects of Participative Culture (Jenkins 1992; Delwiche and Henderson 2013) and of Convergence Culture (Jenkins 2006), previously presented.

There are many sites dedicated to fansubbing in these anime communities, such as *Infusion Fansubbing* and *Fansubbing Blog*, that present the production of a fansub divided into eleven steps. This division is also detailed in articles by Simó (2005) and Diaz-Cintas and Sanchez (2006): raw acquisition, translation, rough timing, edit, fine timing, translation check, typesetting, quality control, encoding, distribution and release.

However, current subtitling software and easier ways of acquisition and distribution of episodes via Internet have significantly shortened not only the time, but also the entire process of subtitle production. Today, this process can be summarized in five steps: video acquisition, audio translation, time marking and synchronization, revision and release.

4) This topic was active between May 28th and June 16th, 2003, with more than 120 messages from 50 different members, and can be accessed via link <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/bbs/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=2118&postdays=0&postorder=asc&start=0>. Accessed in 05 Jan. 2017.

Spite of the differences, as affirmed by Bugocki (2009), both fansubs and other amateur subtitling forms are based on the same principle as a crucial aspect of the collaborative production, taking advantage of the notion of collective intelligence to produce subtitles while challenging notions such as authorship and legality.

Philosopher Pierre Lévy has defined collective intelligence as "a form of *universally distributed intelligence*, constantly enhanced, coordinated in real time, and resulting in the effective mobilization of skills" and has as basic principle and greater goal the "mutual recognition and enrichment of individuals" (1994: 13).

Thus, in fansubbing groups, the usage of this collective intelligence is particularly relevant, since the job is divided into several steps among several members. This way, each individual's multiple skills can be better used, and even members with little to no experience in subtitling can be useful to the group.

Beyond the usage of these multiple skills, collaborative production is also a particular aspect of fansubbing. It is important to note, however, that this notion of collaborative production goes further than simple task division or teamwork as we know from other social situations or professional translations.

Particularly with professional translations carried out in a collaborative way, for instance, in technical translation, a long text or a set of different texts is divided between many translators for a faster release of the final user's guide or set of content. Despite of sharing this 'work division' feature, fansubbing production goes beyond it because more than one person is involved in all the several stages of translation, reviewing, syncing and even post-release correcting.

This form of collaborative production – just as participative culture and media convergence – is intrinsically connected to the advent of *web* 2.0, understood as the "second generation of services and network applications, and resources, technologies and concepts

that allow for a greater degree of interactivity and collaboration in the usage of the Internet"[5] (Bressan 2008: 2).

Collaborative production is also a fundamental aspect of *user-generated translation*, especially when related to the localization of open software and videogames. O'Hagan (2009) explains that the advent of software localization, briefly followed by videogames, was an important factor for the advent and establishment of user-generated translation, because it demands previous knowledge of the software/videogame by the translator, not just knowledge of the languages involved and translation strategies.

O'Hagan (2009) highlights not only collaborative production through interaction among members of a given community, but also the motivation behind this activity, since translation is done by volunteers, "on the basis of their knowledge of the given language as well as that of particular media content or genre, spurred by their substantial interest in the topic" (2009: 8).

Besides the voluntary and the collaborative means of production and distribution of subtitles, one of the main hallmarks of fan translation is the familiarity with technology and the way that knowledge and tasks are shared between team members that can be both physically and geographically distant from each other.

Thus, O'Hagan (2009) points out that matters related to the quality and legality of translations produced by fan groups are highly discussed topics. However, opposing many authors who consider the final results to be of poor quality, she gives examples of an anime fan group whose work was so respected by the fandom that the team was formally hired to create the translations when the show was licensed in the United States. Therefore, she agrees with Diaz-Cintas and Sanchez (2006) that "'fans' apparent lack of formal translator training

5) Except when explicitly stated otherwise, all citations from texts originally written in languages other than English were translated by the article's author.

being compensated for by their genre-knowledge" (O'Hagan 2009: 12).

Albeit, when it comes to fansubs produced for popular TV shows or blockbuster movies rather than rare art films and obscure animes, the matter of the legality of the practice is a little more complicated than presented above. Despite the fact that the content producers seem to care little for this practice, local companies that hold the content copyrights for its distribution to international audiences are known to carry out a witch-hunt against fansubbers.

In addition, translation professionals and students usually harshly criticize the practice as well, deeming the fansubs poor in quality and lacking technical standards. Such critics tend to be stronger when fan motivation for producing subtitles is related to not the lack of access to the content, as is the case with some art films and anime fansubs, but from delay or (supposed) inaccuracy of commercial subtitles.

This criticism is understandable if we consider only the arguments given by cable television channels – those that consume fansubs are doing so via Internet piracy and not via paid TV services – or even by translation professionals – this practice can undermine the job market, removing opportunities from professionals who make a living from it. However, as we will address later, other factors motivate the production of this material, therefore, other arguments have to be considered.

Moreover, starting by the creation of the *Creative Commons* licenses, which has a goal "to increase cultural creativity in 'the commons' – the body of work freely available to the public for legal use, sharing, repurposing, and remixing", even while recognizing the possible conflicts between digital culture practices and copyright laws. According to the creators, "licenses help bridge that conflict so that the Internet can reach its full potential" (Creative Commons 2017).

Nonetheless, if fansubs can fit within *Creative Commons*, the same cannot be said about the audiovisual products that they are based

off, such as the animes, movies or episodes of foreign series. This content is protected by national and international copyright and anti-piracy laws. Mendonça (2012) seeks to systemize some of these legal matters confronting subtitle production by fans and the legality of the practice.

According to the author, even though the legislation does not specifically address the subtitle production itself, the (now extinct) Brazil's Cinema and Music Anti-Piracy Association (APCM – Associação Anti-Pirataria Cinema e Música) has waged intense combat against websites where subtitles are available and even brought down some of their servers based on the Brazilian national law for Copyrights and the 1971's Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Work.

Beyond the legal matters involving production and availability of fan subtitles, Mendonça (2012) also brings interesting user statements that argue fan subtitles do not replace consumption of the original product and does not stop fans from watching the series in television channels, buying the DVDs, soundtrack CDs and other items based on the series and movies they like.

This way, fansubbing groups state (and repeat many times over varied platforms – subtitle guides, websites, social network pages, press and online media interviews, etc.) that they do not profit in any way from subtitle production and, because of that, 'signatures'[6] are considered such an important element within the fansubbing universe as it serves of a form of recognition to the fan-producers by the fan-consumers.

6) Identification of fansubbing and legender group names, often using specific typographical markings to highlight word(s) and signal within the subtitles and also in other environments the authorship of that material.

4. Brazilian fansubbing groups: A special case of fansubbing

Similarly, to previously reported, fansubbing for animes in Brazil emerged in a very analogous way and time when compared to other places in the world. However, in 2004, it went through a drastic change both in the content being subtitled and in motivation that shaped fansubbing in Brazil as we see it today. And it is consensus among scholars and the media that the reason for this change was the TV show *Lost*, exhibited from 2004 to 2010 by the American channel ABC.

Due to its mystery-filled plot and intriguing story lines, the TV show quickly became a worldwide sensation with fans interacting intensely through many of the fan practices and platforms mentioned above. *Lost*'s fandom forms of interaction were a great example of all three aspects of Participatory Culture defined by Delwiche and Henderson (2013): consensual, creative, and discussion cultures.

Some examples are the blogs and web pages to discuss the episodes and characters, several fan practices and fan products such as fanfics, fanvideos, fanzines, etc., and, especially, the forums in which fans gathered and detailed all the clues from every episode in order to weave theories to explain all the series mysteries. Because this passionate interaction in the global fandom, Brazilian fans felt left out of the main discussion because the cable TV channel responsible for airing the show in Brazil would exhibit episodes 2 or sometimes even 3 weeks after it was first aired in the USA.

So, once the fandom interaction happens in an environment where information is shared so rapidly, this delay in exhibition caused big commotion among Brazilian fans who could not participate in full in the discussions and/or would find out about developments in the show through other means rather than watching it. To solve this

problem, a group of Brazilian fans started the first fansubbing group called *Os Psicopatas* devoted to an audiovisual product that was not related to Japanese animes or rare art films (as these groups were already in activity since the 80s).

Therefore, if the motivation for fansubbing of animes and art films was the inexistence and unavailability of official subtitles for these products, the motivation for groups such as *Os Psicopatas* was actually the delay in the availability of the official subtitles by the television network for Brazilian fans.

Following on *Os Psicopatas*' footsteps and borrowing the practices established and the collaborative production process from anime fansubbing groups, many other groups of fansubbing for TV shows started to be created. In most of them, the motivation was also the big delay in the date of exhibition by Brazilian cable channels. In some other specific cases, also terminology inaccuracy was part of the motivation.

The group *N.E.R.D.S.* was created by a physicist and a comics fan specially to subtitle the TV sitcom *Big Bang Theory*, in which references to Physics concepts and comics/science-fiction characters are important to the comedy aspect of the show. Below, an example in which the subtitle found in the DVD box is considered too general and leaving part of the joke out.

Table 1. Example 1: Analysis of a *Big Bang Theory* episode with a science-fiction reference

Season 4, Episode 8 - *The 21 Second Excitation* - 9"47'	
Audio	Well, if it isn't Wil Wheaton, the Jar Jar Binks of the Star Trek universe.
DVD subtitles	Veja só, se não é Wil Wheaton, o personagem mais insignificante de Jornada nas Estrelas.
N.E.R.D.S fansubs	Bem, olha lá se não é Wil Wheaton, o Jar Binks do universo de Star Trek.

In this scene, characters Raj, Howard, Leonard and Sheldon are attending a special exhibition of *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* containing a 21-second extra scene. There is a very long line and Sheldon is very impatient, becoming even more aggravated when Wil Wheaton arrives and proceeds to skip the line because of his 'celebrity status'.

It is important to notice that there is a long history of jokes piled up in relation to character Sheldon and real-life actor Wil Wheaton. In previous seasons, it had been established that Wil Wheaton, a former child actor that played character Wesley Crusher in the TV show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, used to be young Sheldon's idol until Wheaton cancelled his participation in an Comic-Con event in which Sheldon was present with the sole objective of meeting him. This trauma had caused Sheldon to hate Wheaton and other interactions with the actor in their adult lives cemented the animosity, dubbing Wheaton Sheldon's 'nemesis'.

The joke, however, goes even further into the science-fiction universe bringing character Jar Jar Binks from the *Star Wars* universe into it. Among fans, Jar Jar Binks, created mostly for comic relief in *Star Wars Episode I – The Phantom Menace*, is considered the most pointless and annoying character of the whole saga. Therefore, comparing Wil Wheaton to Jar Jar Binks was intended to be a very serious insult. Understanding the joke requires the audience's previous knowledge regarding who Wil Wheaton is, his part in Star Trek franchise, who Jar Jar Binks is and his part in Star Wars franchise, and also Sheldon and Wheaton's feud.

As commercial subtitles have a broader target audience, leaving such specific references in the translation could cause loss not only of the joke but also the general comprehension of the scene. So, the translation used tried to explain the joke by saying "the most insignificant character in Star Trek" instead of using Jar Jar Binks as

a reference.

Meanwhile, fansubs are created by fans with a very specific target audience in mind: other fans. Hence, not only is implied that all the fans using fansubs will have the previous knowledge necessary to understand the joke but they also strongly *prefer* to see these references (such as character and TV show names) kept 'as in the original' as they preserve the content fans are so protective of and also add layers to the humor of the show.

Other Brazilian fansub groups were created with similar purposes, in order to provide more 'accurate' (to fan standards) subtitles. Shows with legal and medical content such as *Good Wife*, *How To Get Away With Murder*, *Grey's Anatomy* and *House M.D.* are usually among the shows whose fans are very protective of what is considered 'correct terminology'.

Another interesting case is the group *AllRuPaul* that creates subtitles for the reality TV show about drag queens hosted by worldly famous RuPaul. However, instead of keeping the translation as close to original as possible, it actually includes in the subtitles many slangs from the Brazilian LGBT+ community and references to Brazilian pop culture as shown in the example below:

Table 2. Example 2: Analysis of a *RuPaul's Drag Race* episode with a pop culture reference

Season 7, Episode 1 - *Born Naked* - 4"26'	
Audio	Is this the Maury Povich show?
Netflix Subtitles	Este não é o set de Maury Povich.
AllRuPaul Subtitles	Aqui é o De Frente com Gabi?

This scene happens in the beginning of the very first episode so the participants are presenting themselves by saying their 'catchphrase' as they enter the set. This is the entrance of drag queen Trixie Mattel as she refers to tabloid TV show "The Maury Povich Show", in which polemic issues are discussed in a sensationalistic way. While the

commercial subtitles offered by Netflix use a literal translation and keep the same reference to the American TV program, fansub translation substituted it for a famous Brazilian TV show that brings its own set of cultural references and implied meanings, 'recreating' the original joke in Portuguese.

These different approaches in translation for fansubbing are made possible because the groups establish their own rules and style guide for translation, aiming to please their very specific target audience rather than make the content available and understandable to a broader audience as commercial subtitles do.

Similarly to AVT, fansubbing terminology is also varied and requires a more specific definition. The nomenclature for those that produce amateur fansubs is among the terms that appear in numerous ways and need to be addressed in more details. The term *legender* is the most commonly used term for people who produce fansubs for TV shows in Brazil, in a clear distinction from *fansubbers*, as they are known in the rest of the world.

The term *legender* is a neologism formed by the word 'legenda' with the suffix 'er', which in English refers to the idea of "a person who does an action" (sing+er = singer). As explained by Bernardo (2011), the word *legender* configures as a neologism created by Brazilian fan communities, as this term does not exist in English, because the terminology for those who create subtitles is 'subtitler'. The difference is explained by the word '*legenda*' in Portuguese, a false cognate to the English word 'subtitle'.

It is also important to distinguish *legenders* from *fansubbers*, as the production of fansubs in other countries is mainly focused on animes, so the most used term by the groups around the world is '*fansubber*'. Brazilian groups that dedicate themselves to translation and subtitling of animes also use this term. This distinction aims to state the differences between them and the *legender* groups that do

not produce subtitles for animes, but for television series (mostly North-American and British ones).

Most of these *legender* groups share their subtitles through a centralized platform that also provides a forum, where the fans (both producers and consumers) can exchange information and interact. These groups also have 'signatures' that they insert in the subtitles as a form of identification.

Examples of these signatures are the use of the word *N.E.R.D.S.* (written in all capital letters and with periods between the letters as if it was an acronym) every time the word 'nerd' or 'geek' was mentioned in subtitles made by the namesake group. Other example is the translation of several words such as 'mad', 'crazy', 'lunatic', and similar ones as 'inSano' (insane) even when this translation does not necessarily meet the context from the original dialogue. Nonetheless, this change and the use of a capital letter 'S' in the middle of the word is done with the purpose of claiming the authorship of those subtitles by the *legender* group *InSanos*, currently the largest one in activity in Brazil.

Figure 1. Screenshots of TV shows *Vikings* and *Once Upon A Time* in which different words ('crazy' and 'mad') translated as 'inSano' (insane) in order to use the group's signature.

Other form of identification the groups use is to insert initial and final credits, indicating not only the episodes info (season/episode number

and name) but also the group's name and the *legenders* who took part in that specific fansub:

Figure 2. Screenshots of TV shows *Teen Wolf* and Flash with initial and final credits presenting the individual *legenders* by their nicknames and the *legender* group responsible for these fansubs.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, and repeatedly restated by fansub communities, fansubbers and *legenders* do not make any financial profit from fansub production. So, these elements serve not only to identify the groups producing the fansubs, but they also help the fans —consumers and producers—to establish a closer relationship, in which there is an interaction between them based on gratitude and the passion that they share.

In the end, this recognition motivates fansubbers and *legenders* to keep the good work and the establishment of this relationship between fans strengthen the whole fandom and the online communities where they gather and interact.

5. Conclusion

This article aimed to present fansubbing as an AVT modality based on subtitling in which the translation and the subtitles are made by

fans in a collaborative way. Contributions from Participatory Culture and Convergence Culture were used to explain this collaborative production process and to highlight the particularities of this practice in relation to other forms of subtitling, especially regarding the condition of 'being a fan' and part of a 'fandom' and its implication to the production and reception of these fansubs.

Thus, one of our main objectives was to show how the two most common research paths regarding fansubbing (Translation Studies/ATV and Participatory/Media Convergence Culture), that usually used separately to discuss the fansubbing phenomenon from a Translation Studies point of view or from a Fan Studies point of view could actually be used together and greatly benefit from this dialog.

In specific, we aimed to present the differences between the practices of subtitling and fansubbing, as well as between fansubbing of animes and of television shows, as the latter is prominently more common in Brazil. We have also presented the Brazilian context in more depth, in order to highlight the major aspects of fansubbing phenomenon in Brazil with the discussion of examples from different *legender* groups.

As a matter of fact, many other aspects of fansubbing were not properly addressed in this paper due to lack of time and space. Among possible future topics to be explored are if other countries such as China and Italy, which also have higher production of fansubs for American/British TV shows rather than Japanese animes, also differ these two as different modalities and, if so, how it is done and its impact in the fandom community.

Finally, regarding fansubbing in Brazil, it has gained considerable media attention the fact that some subtitles used by Netflix and cable TV channels are actually of fansub production (identified by the initial/final credits and signatures insert into the subtitles). This fact

can lead to an interesting discussion about the legal and moral implications of subtitling versus fansubbing and even a reconsideration of what is and what is not 'piracy'.

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