Amateur Translation and Pop Music Fandom

A study of the role of translation in the fan communities within the Chinese fandom of AKB48 based on Communities of Practice theory

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ABSTRACT

Driven by fundamental economic, political, and social changes in China during the past three decades, participatory fandom culture has become a significant part of the contemporary cultural landscape of China. Lying at the heart of Chinese fandoms of foreign popular culture, translation-oriented fan communities have been making substantial contributions to shaping the audiovisual flows from foreign countries to China. Drawing on Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) theory (1998), this study adopts a sociological perspective to the study of the AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, one of the major fansubbing communities in the Chinese fandom of Japanese pop music group AKB48. Informed by this perspective, this study aims to reveal about how volunteer translation practice contributes to building and maintaining a fan community of practice and how the experience of fandom helps shape the identity formation processes of fans. In order to answer these questions, this research adopts a multimethod framework informed by Kozinets' (2015) netnography and thereby gathers various types of data, including archival, elicited, and produced data. By analysing the collected data, the researcher finds that along the community's three organisational dimensions, namely 'mutual engagement', 'joint enterprise', and 'shared repertoire', members of the Daba Fansubbing Group have negotiated a set of relations, strategies, and mechanisms which help them effectively maintain the community and connect the community to the AKB48 fandom. Also, community members' experience of fandom has allowed them to develop complex trajectories of identity formation. These findings allow the researcher to evaluate to what extent this study of fan audiovisual translation can contribute to our theoretical knowledge of online transnational fandoms, to the methodological inventory applicable to studies of fan translation, and to our understanding of the social impact of the participatory fandom culture. It is hoped that this study will deepen our understanding of fan audiovisual translation as a significant part of contemporary participatory fandom culture.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Now standing at the finish point of a four-year-long journey, I can finally look back at the road that I have trodden as a PhD student at University of Manchester. Although this road is certainly not an easy one, I have enjoyed the view of every turn, every cross, and every landmark encountered. The most important revelation that I realised at the end of this journey is that I am now already among a small circle of lucky people who enjoy a rare luxury of pursuing free and independent thinking on the daily basis. I believe that, with all the training that I received in my PhD career, I will continue to make more original contribution to human knowledge and thereby help make the world a little better place.

In the process of finishing this PhD thesis, I received support from a significant number of people to whom I must not withhold my gratitude:

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis aims to explore how voluntary translation in a Chinese transcultural fandom network (Chinese fandom of the Japanese pop music idol group AKB48) contributes to developing fan communities and forming fans' identities. As such, before delving into specific details of the research, I will first contextualise this study by setting out the social and cultural background, which have given rise to the said fandom network, i.e. the Chinese fandom cultures in the digital age (1.1). Then, in 1.2, I will review the existing body of literature regarding translation and/in fandom culture, in order to contextualise this study in the current academic knowledge of fan audiovisual translation. This review helps me identify existing research gaps for my research and therefore allows me to state my research rationale and objectives in 1.3. And finally, in 1.4, I will introduce the chapter outline of my thesis.

1.1 The Chinese fandom cultures in the age of digital culture

1.1.1 The emergence of online fandom cultures in the Chinese digital age

Since fandom is a type of community built on consumption of popular culture products, the emergence of fandom cultures relies on a social context in which people are continuously exposed to various flows of popular culture. In China[1], the formation of such social context has been taking place as a result of the political, economic, social, and cultural changes that the country has undergone during the past four decades.

Following the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Communist Party of China adopted a new 'reform and opening-up' policy in late 1970s under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Though usually referred to as an economic reform policy, this new national policy has also fundamentally transformed China culturally and socially. Specifically,

[1] The term 'China' used in this chapter refers to the Chinese Mainland, unless otherwise specified.

the implementation of the policy has made China the largest industrial powerhouse in the world, which produces nearly half of the world's major industrial goods (Wen 2016); also, during the past four decades, China's urbanisation rate has grown to a record 64% from less than 20%. According to Storey (2012: 12), industrialisation and urbanisation are essential premises for the emergence of popular culture. Such is also the case with China, where those trends have contributed to creating an economic foundation and an audience for popular culture: The relative openness of the new 'socialist market economy' (Chinese: '社会主义市场经济') allows cultural products to be traded and consumed as commodities (which was prohibited by the planned economy regulations in Mao Zedong's period); the progress of urbanisation has led to a rapidly growing urban population who have the recreational need and the ability to appreciate modern popular culture. In addition, the gradual relaxation of Communist Party's control over the cultural sphere has enabled private capital and even foreign capital to be invested into media-related sectors (Latham 2007: 40).

These political, economic, and social changes have generated a huge consumer market potential which has motivated many Chinese mass media institutions (e.g. publishing houses, TV stations, and newspapers) to transform from their original status of Communist Party's 'mouthpieces' (i.e. a mechanism which communicates political messages from the party to the masses) to producers of diverse types of media content, including political propaganda content, news, entertainment programmes, advertisements, among others (*ibid.*). Such transformation efforts reflect the Chinese media's determination to survive in the intensely competitive environment of the new cultural market. On the other hand, those changes have also led to a rapid increase in the importation of foreign media content (e.g. films, TV shows, fictions, and video games), especially after China's entry into WTO in 2001, as a way to supplement the country's relatively weak cultural industry. Since the 1990s, the production and consumption of the said media content have given rise to a sphere of popular culture, which permeates every corner of Chinese society and fundamentally shapes contemporary Chinese life (Sun 2009: 16). In this sphere, fans of popular culture began

to emerge. They exploited the opportunities offered by the new social environment to express themselves in various activities in physical spaces, such as attending pop music concerts, forming underground rock bands, cosplaying their favourite *anime* characters, holding arcade game competitions, and so on.

After the beginning of the new millennium, the coming of the digital age brought about another fundamental transformation of the country's cultural landscape. According to official data (CNNIC 2021), since the Internet service was first established in China in 1994, the total number of Chinese Internet users has grown to 986 million as of 2020, making up more than 70% of the country's total population. This tremendous Internet population has contributed a total data traffic consumption of 165.6 billion GB in 2020 (which is almost 40 times as much as the consumption in 2015). During the period of 2015-2020, Chinese Internet users spent approximately 26-31 hours per week online. Chinese people's massive and rapidly growing Internet use represented by these figures has been offering immense opportunities to the country's Internet technology companies, which have developed Internet applications widely covering various aspects of people's everyday life, including information search, social networking, shopping, education, healthcare, and entertainment (*ibid.*). As China's Internet censorship system has been restricting their foreign rivals' entry into the Chinese market effectively, a number of Chinese Internet companies have made the most of the market opportunities and become world-class giants in their respective areas, such as Tencent (instant communication and online gaming), Sina (microblogging), Alibaba (e-commerce and big data), and Baidu (online search engine and storage service). In terms of online entertainment media, Chinese netizens have witnessed the rise of video sharing websites such as Youku and Bilibili, video on demand (VOD) platforms such as iQIYI, online video game development companies like MiHoYo, digital literature platforms such as China Literature Limited, among companies in other sub-areas.

The boom of Internet services in the digital age has created an unprecedented environment where multiple media systems coexist and 'media content flows fluidly

across them', i.e. an era of 'media convergence' (Jenkins 2006: 282). As digital devices such as personal computers and smartphones have become an essential part of people's everyday life, Chinese audiences can easily access and re-circulate information from different media channels at their fingertips. On the other hand, a vast amount of domestic and international media corporations have invested considerable efforts to diversify their media channels (with special focus on the digital ones), which deliver media content in order to reach wider audiences. As a result, it has been easier than ever for Chinese audiences to receive, archive, appropriate, and disseminate various types of media content from the global cultural industry, whether in legal or illegal ways. Moreover, powered by the new digital technologies, Chinese media audiences have gained the abilities to re-edit and produce media content which were previously exclusive to media institutions. These trends have in fact empowered Chinese media audiences and thus turned a considerable proportion of them into 'prosumers' (first proposed in Toffler 1980) of popular culture, i.e. consumers who actively participate in the production and dissemination of media content in order to express their interpretations of cultural products and phenomena. As prosumers gradually built connections with one another through the Internet, a phenomenon called 'online participatory culture' emerged in China. According to Jenkins et al. (2009: 5), participatory culture is defined with regard to five dimensions: (1) Low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement; (2) members who perceive a certain degree of social connection with each other; (3) members who believe that their contributions matter; (4) strong support for creating and sharing creations; and (5) some kind of informal mentorship whereby experience is passed from veterans to novices. Though these features existed in some communities predating the digital age, it is the digital networks that have allowed participatory culture to transcend geographic distances and boundaries between different social networks (Jenkins 2018) and therefore reach a much larger population.

In China, the emergence of online participatory culture has caused fandom culture to evolve into a new era in which geographically dispersed and socially diverse fans are

able to build connections, express their opinions and feelings, and collaborate in various fan activities. Jenkins et al. (2009: xi-xii) define four forms of participatory culture, i.e. 'affiliations', 'expression', 'collaborative problem solving', and 'circulations'. In Chinese participatory fandom culture, one can find features of all the four mentioned forms. (1) Many transcultural fandoms (i.e. fandoms centred around foreign cultural products or celebrities) make the most of the Internet technologies to bypass the state-controlled censorship system and the industry-dominated copyright system so that they can acquire the desired media content in time. By doing so, they have reshaped the patterns of international media **circulation**. (2) Participatory fans are keen on **expressing** themselves by sharing their opinions and affects and by participating in the re-editing and creation of media content. In the creative process, they collaborate with each other and contribute their individual expertise in order to **solve the problems** that they encounter. (3) Fans' collaborative practices allow them to build communities to which they have the sense of **affiliation** to different degrees. This hybridity shows that Chinese participatory fandom culture has become a sophisticated and complex grassroots cultural phenomenon which keeps shaping the country's media landscape and young people's modes of social participation against a cultural context under intense state and corporate control.

Based on the media genres that fans consume, contemporary Chinese participatory fandom culture falls into a number of main categories such as: film and TV fandoms which are centred around domestic and foreign films and TV programmes; *anime* fandoms where fans of Japanese anime works build connections with each other; popular music fandoms revolving around music genres from different countries and regions; celebrity fandoms made up of fans of Chinese and foreign celebrities active in different media genres, such as film actors, pop music artists, Internet influencers, and *anime* voice actors, among others.

In 1.1.2, I will focus on a particular type of fandom culture which is directly related to this research — fandoms of foreign popular music.

1.1.2 A brief overview of Chinese fandoms of foreign popular music

As a part of Chinese media fandom cultures, Chinese fans of foreign popular music have been heavily influenced by certain perspectives and conventions of media fandoms. Such influences have led most of them to treat popular music fandoms as situated in a number of large fan 'spheres' (Chinese: '圈') centred around different regional popular cultures. Among the most popular of those spheres are the 'Western Sphere' (Chinese: '欧美圈', literally the 'Euro-American' sphere), the 'Korean Sphere' (Chinese: '韩圈'), and the 'Japanese Sphere' (Chinese: '日圈'), each of which is composed of many fandom communities around various media genres. While popular music fandom communities in these spheres share general commonalities such as presence across different online platforms and media genres, strong intentions of self-expression, and active participation in community building, they have been influenced by the spheres respectively to adopt distinctive modes of consumption and participatory activities, which will be briefly introduced in the following paragraphs.

Popular music fandoms in the Western Sphere cover artists from the Americas and Europe working in a wide variety of music genres, e.g. hip-hop, country music, British rock, electronic dance music, Latin pop, among others. According to the views expressed by many Chinese fans of western pop music (e.g. those posted in Zhihu 2014, 2020a, and 2020b), they are often informed by the overall value system of western pop music industry to prioritise the music talents of the artists over other personal characteristics such as physical appearance and involvement in intimate relationships. As a result, the most significant fan activity in their fandoms is consuming the music of their idols (audio tracks and music videos) by purchasing CDs and using online streaming media (e.g. the music application NetEase Music and the video-sharing web Bilibili). Also, like other online participatory fandoms, fandoms of western popular music utilise various online media platforms to express themselves in different text genres and thereby participating in creating media content. For example, they share

their opinions and feelings about western pop music artists by participating in text-based discussions on social media such as Douban (a social networking service which mainly targets users interested in films, music, books, and offline cultural activities) and Zhihu (a question-and-answer forum); and on Bilibili, they share fan-produced media content, including fanvids aimed to help promote their idols and fansubbed music videos and TV shows. In addition, it should also be noted that Chinese fans of western pop music are often at the same time fans of other prominent western popular culture genres such as Hollywood superhero movies and American TV dramas (Zhihu 2014). In this way, the Western Sphere as a whole can be seen as composed of a number of overlapping sub-spheres.

Compared to their counterparts in the Western Sphere, fans of Japanese popular music concentrate on a smaller range of music styles which are collectively termed Japanese popular music, or 'J-pop'. As a product of the age of globalisation, J-pop integrates many music styles from the western world with the Japanese music traditions and thereby has formed unique sub-genres such as Japanese hip-hop, 'visual-kei' rock music[2], and *anime* songs. Unsurprisingly, while most of these sub-genres can find their lovers among Chinese fans of J-pop, they enjoy different levels of attention from the J-pop fandoms. The most familiar J-pop sub-genre for today's Chinese audience is perhaps *anime* songs because of the high popularity that Japanese *anime* works enjoy in the country. This popularity can be corroborated by facts such as: on the social website Sina Weibo, a number of microblogs dedicated to fans of anime songs have attracted more followers than even the most popular fan microblogs for the general J-pop genre[3]; also, the two most used online music services in China — NetEase Music and QQ Music — have both established a separate *anime* music section.

[2] Visual kei (Japanese: ビジュアル系, literally 'visual style') rock is characterised by the use of heavy makeup and flamboyant costume in live rock performance.

[3] For example, a microblog named 'Japanese *anime* music Lis_Ani' ('日本动漫音乐 Lis_Ani' https://weibo.com/u/7014060203 has attracted more than 590 thousand fans, more than the fan size (350 thousand) of one of the most popular microblogs dedicated to J-pop called 'J-pop sonic' ('日音 sonic', https://weibo.com/u/6552667200?is_all=1#1626814260543)

Another J-pop sub-genre popular among Chinese fans is Japanese pop idols, or '*aidoru*' (アイドル). In the Japanese context, an idol refers to a young boy or girl who debuts in the showbiz as an (semi-) amateur. As such, idols are usually dominated by their production companies in their training and growth processes. During the past two decades, the industry has seen a trend of assembling young idols into hundreds of groups. Among them, only the most popular ones in Japan have been enjoying a significant number of Chinese fans, e.g., male idol groups run by the production agency Johnny & Associates such as Arashi and female groups produced by Yasushi Akimoto such as AKB48[4].

As is also the case with fans of western pop music, J-pop fans are under strong influence from the value system of the Japanese music industry. Japan's record companies and music lovers are well-known for their preference for physical record copies as CDs and vinyl still made up two thirds of the country's annual record trade revenues in 2020 (Ingham 2021). Affected by such general preference, J-pop fans in China tend to believe that it is mandatory for true fans to purchase physical record copies and merchandises of their favourite artists (Zhihu 2018). Some fans are obsessed with this awareness to the extent that they describe other fans who do not do so as '白嫖' (literally 'having fun for free') and therefore inferior in this fandom culture. Also, many J-pop fans consider it important to keep a low profile (i.e. avoid exposing their fan identity to non-fans) mainly for two reasons: first, they want to avoid trouble caused by the negative sentiments towards Japan, which exist in the Chinese society due to Japan's historic invasion of China; second, they are influenced by the Japanese culture industry, which sees modesty as a virtue necessary for artists who work to survive in a highly hierarchical system (Zhihu 2015).

Similar to other participatory fandoms, J-pop fandoms are active across various online media platforms and media genres. Since Japanese music companies and talent

[4] For more details about Japanese idols and their fans, please refer to 4.2.1.

agencies generally lack sufficient presence on Chinese online social media, Chinese J-pop fans have to bypass the country's comprehensive Internet censorship and transfer news articles and pictures from banned international social media (e.g. Instagram and Twitter) to Weibo; on online fora such as Baidu Tieba and on social networking services such as QQ, they organise various fan practices (e.g. fansubbing and creating fanfictions) and establish their own communities[5]; and on Bilibili, they share with other fans the videos that they created. In addition, it should also be noted that J-pop fans often converge with fans of other Japanese popular cultures. For example, on conventions featuring Japanese *anime* and games (e.g. ChinaJoy), cosplayers of AKB48 members often perform on the same stage with cosplayers of Japanese *anime* characters.

Developed under the influence of western popular music and J-pop (Lie 2012), Korean popular music, or K-pop, has swept the world during the past two decades in a global culture trend called 'Hallyu' (Korean: 한류), or Korean Wave[6]. In East and Southeast Asia, Korean pop artists have attracted millions of fans and significantly reshaped the regions' cultural landscape. Even in the United States, where Asian pop culture has long been in a marginal position, Korean artists such as BTS and Blackpink have successfully promoted the popularity of K-pop during recent years. Lying at the centre of K-pop is South Korea's idol industry, which is dominated by entertainment conglomerates such as SM and JYP. These companies introduced the idol training and management system from Japan to Korea in late 1990s and have since improved the system to a new stage (MasterClass 2021). Instead of marketing the training process of the teen idols to the public, Korean talent agencies usually demand that young trainees receive intensive training behind closed doors for several years. As trainees are continually eliminated during the training process, only a small proportion of them will be able to debut in a group eventually (Chua 2017). After their debut, the talent agencies have control over almost all the factors related to their artist career, including means of

[5] Typical examples include 'Oricon Bar' (Oricon 吧) on Tieba and 'AKB48 Supporting Group' (AKB48 应援会).
[6] According to Romano (2018), the Korean Wave represents the idea that South Korean pop culture as a whole has grown to become a 'major driver of global culture'.

promotion, opportunities for stage performance, fashion, and even relationships with fans (Yuzu 2019). Media content of different genres are continuously released on various international media platforms and idols are encouraged by their agencies to actively communicate with fans across the world frequently through various online channels. In doing so, they can effectively orient their fans to follow an ongoing storyline about their character and career (Music Ally 2020).

Impacted by these sophisticated promotional strategies, K-pop fans in China appear to be exceptionally stimulated and engaged. Their passionate participation in fan activities has given rise to perhaps the best-organised fandom culture in China. This culture is so deeply rooted in the digital media platforms that it has become a 'data' fandom culture, i.e. one entirely built around a datafied reality of the Korean idol industry (Zhang and Negus 2020). This means that many K-pop fandom organisations in China are established on the basis of a division of data labour and therefore incorporate certain functional units. For example, there are fansubbing groups who translate and disseminate media content originally in foreign languages (primarily Korean). 'Chart beating teams' (打投组) are responsible for raising and maintaining their idols' positions on visualised commercial ranking charts such as weekly MV view charts on video sharing websites, music streaming amount charts on QQ Music and NetEase Music, idol popularity voting charts on Weibo, among many others. 'Comment controlling teams' (控评组) keep monitoring changes in online opinions and comments regarding their idols and are always ready to intervene with those changes by sending a large number of positive expressions. In the meantime, 'counter anti-fan teams' (反黑组) are responsible for locating anti-fans who 'attack' their idols and doing their best to neutralise the anti-fans' negative impact on the image of the idols. There are also 'statistics teams' (统计组) who summarise data metrics about their idols each day and report those metrics to fellow fans[7]. In participating in the forms of data labour mentioned above, Chinese K-pop fans exert their influence on the circuit of content of

[7] The typology of fandom functional units used here is partly inspired by Zhang and Negus (2020).

the idol industry and adopt a unique identity which is defined through data (Zhang and Negus 2020). In fact, many Chinese K-pop fans treat participation in fan labour as a way to distinguish true fans (i.e. themselves) from ordinary audiences — one has to contribute to their idol in order to be recognised as a proper fandom member (Sun 2020).

As a result of the participatory fan labour of passionate K-pop fans, the Chinese fandoms of K-pop have expanded rapidly online during the past decade and therefore have become one of the most prominent fandom cultures in China. According to Yinyue Xiansheng (2020), five out of the ten most popular fan communities on Weibo are dedicated to K-pop idols. Because of this popularity, the ways in which K-pop fandoms operate have become models emulated by many fandom organisations of Chinese pop stars (*ibid.*). In this way, the Korean cultural industry has been exerting its impact on the lifestyle of young Chinese people.

Based on the overview provided in this section, it can be said that the Chinese fandoms of foreign popular music have created a large space in which topics such as fans' influences on global media flows, fans' interactions with the global culture industries, and fan communities formed around various practices can be investigated. Moreover, as fan translation, especially fan audiovisual translation, has been playing an essential mediating role in this culture, it is believed that a study of AVT practices in this culture will yield original contributions to the understanding of the mechanisms driving fan AVT phenomenon and the phenomenon's impacts on the society. Therefore, it is imperative to carry out a review of the current body of research on fan AVT in order to tease out the specific potential contributions that this study may make.

1.2 Research context

Since the late 1990s, translation studies as an area of research has been witnessing a 'medial turn', i.e. researchers have begun to pay more attention to the role that the fast-evolving media technologies play in reshaping the global translation landscapes (Littau

2011). The most visible and significant change brought about by this turn is the burgeoning of audiovisual translation (AVT) studies. Scholars working in this field have investigated an extensive list of AVT practices such as subtitling, dubbing, voice-over, theatrical surtitling, game localisation, among others (Pérez-González 2019). In order to respond to the new forms of translation enabled by the advent of new media platforms and formats in the digital age, AVT scholars have been confronting the challenge of continuously 'reinventing' the field during the past two decades (Dwyer 2019). One major outcome of their efforts is a growing concern about an area which has become particularly prominent in the digital age — fan-based non-professional translation.

Non-professional translation refers to translation performed by people not only without formal training in translation but also working for free (Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012: 151). Although non-professional translation had long been a major way of mediating different languages before the advent of translation training programmes, its role has been traditionally overlooked as a cheap alternative to professional translation by the community of translation scholars,which stresses the importance of professional expertise. Yet, since the coming of the digital age, non-professional translation has been continuously widening its scope to include translation practices contributing to new trends in heterogenous social areas, such as participatory civic engagement, the reconfigurations of global media flows, and the consolidation of new mediation paradigms occurring in diaspora groups (*ibid.*: 152). As such, non-professional translation nowadays is situated in an unprecedentedly prominent position in the global translation landscapes and therefore has become a legitimate part of TIS which is attracting the attention from a growing number of scholars (Antonini et al. 2017: 2).

As a major type of non-professional translation in the digital age, fan-based AVT used to be dismissed by translation scholars as an amateur practice prone to errors and inconsistencies and therefore in a marginal position of the discipline (Dwyer 2019: 436). However, it is because of the amateur nature of this practice that it has risen to become

a phenomenon with global significance. Being unregulated, unbound, and sometimes even illegal, fan AVT intrinsically possesses the ability to quickly evolve in response to the fast-changing media technologies. In fact, through their explorations of the potentials of new technologies, fandoms around the world have been highly successful in establishing new forms of AVT centred around three major practices, namely 'fansubbing' (fan subtitling), 'fandubbing', and 'translation hacking' (translation by hacking read-only game files) (*ibid.*: 437).

Among these practices, fansubbing is undoubtedly the most established and popularised form of fan AVT and thus has received the most attention from scholars. First invented in the age of VHS technology as a way to produce fans' own translations of Japanese *anime* works (in 1986), fansubbing was initially a highly time-consuming and costly practice due to the technological constraints (Leonard 2004: 33). Later in the 1990s, the ubiquity of the Internet allowed fans to acquire raw *anime* videos required for fansubbing through ripping of DVDs or downloading, making it possible for fansubbing to become a global phenomenon which boosted the dissemination and popularity of Japanese anime around the world (Pérez-González 2020: 173). When the transition from the electronic culture to the digital culture took place in mid-2000s, the new advances in digital technologies and the emergence of new media platforms moved fansubbing around the world to evolve from the *anime*-centric phase to a 'post-anime' phase (*ibid.*) in which fansubbing became a practice widely conducted by people outside the *anime* fandoms. It is also in this transition period that fansubbing began to be systemically investigated by translation scholars who were primarily concerned with the interventionist nature of fansubbing, i.e. fansubbers' tendency to resist the rules of the traditional referential subtitling practice and adopt inventive approaches to language use and aesthetic elements (such as fonts, colours, and layout of subtitles) in their subtitle works. Scholars such as Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006), Pérez-González (2006 and 2007), and Caffrey (2009) carry out comprehensive investigations of the 'abusive' (Nornes 1999) translation experimentations performed by fansubbers and conclude that those efforts have significantly improved the audience's experience

of enjoying the original audiovisual materials as well as boosted translators' visibility by breaking the conventions of referential translation. Furthermore, apart from the abusive experimentations of the fansubbers, the workflow of grouped fansubbers became another central topic which is discussed in studies such as Díaz-Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006) and Pérez-González (2006). By exploring fansubbing conducted by networked fans working on different text genres, those studies discover similar models of the general workflow of fansubbing composed of a number of phases such as translating, timing, and editing.

The discussions of fansubbing workflow reveal the fact that although there are fan translators who work in isolation, translators in the digital media fandoms generally tend to work in collectives established around certain cultural objects or phenomena (Dwyer 2019). The formation of such collectives is a result of the boom of networked cultural prosumers who actively contribute to the production and re-editing of media content in the digital age and therefore indicates that fan translators have joined the wave of participatory culture which swept the global media landscape[8]. In the translation studies academia, the emergence and fast evolution of participatory AVT has attracted substantial attention from an increasing number of scholars.

A primary topic for the research in this area is the changing relationships between fan AVT and the culture industry. Traditionally being a practice promoting 'unauthorised and unregulated exploration of new technologies' and new platforms (Dwyer 2018: 436), fansubbing inevitably involves infringement of the media industry's regulations such as copyright laws. Therefore, it used to be seen by the industry as equal to piracy and thus as something to be prohibited (Lee 2011). On the other hand, it is because of fansubbers' efforts to bypass the industry's regulations that fansubbing has become a force transcending the hierarchies of the industry (Rembert-Lang 2010) and addressing various forms of inequalities such as those caused by geopolitics and language issues

[8] For the definition and characteristics of prosumer and participatory culture, please refer to 1.1.1.

(Dwyer 2019: 443). In this sense, fansubbing can be seen as a form of cultural resistance to the workings of the culture industry. Yet, as a part of the participatory fandom culture, fansubbers are of a hybrid nature which resists and relies on the media industry at the same time and therefore are situated in a liminal status between complicity and resistance (Booth 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising to find that in recent years, a growing number of fansubbers have been co-opted by corporate institutions which realised the potential of fansubbing (Wang and Zhang 2017) and participated in translation projects launched by the media industry. This new trend of co-operation between fansubbers and corporate players has given rise to a new form of collaborative translation practice named crowdsourced translation. In contrast to fan AVT, which is a form of unsolicited 'bottom-up' practice, crowdsourced translation is a solicited form usually based on a 'top-down' mechanism organised by corporate powers (O'Hagan 2011: 31). In this sense, crowdsourced translation is similar to the traditional 'patronage' mode of the translation industry and therefore legitimises and legalises fan-led free translation methods represented by fansubbing (Dwyer 2019: 444). The corporate powers' active intervention with the participatory translation practices has blurred the line between the voluntary and professional modes of AVT and led to new forms of AVT practice such as that conducted by Viki (see Dwyer 2012, 2016), i.e. a mixture combining voluntary participatory fansubbing and for-profit professional translation which makes the most of the innovative power of fan AVT as well as of a 'big picture' regarding social and political issues offered by the media industry (Dwyer 2019: 445).

Another important yet much less studied research theme related to participatory AVT is the participatory fansubbing communities *per se*. Studies under this theme usually draw on theoretical frameworks from social research, such as complexity theory (Li 2015), Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Wongseree 2020), and Communities of Practice (CoP) theory (Kung 2016), to conceptualise the organisational, operational, and technological aspects of the communities in question. In order to gather data from the target communities, studies in this area have utilised various methods, such as archival survey which enables the collection of diverse documents stored online (Kung 2016) and

virtual ethnographic methods which allow the researcher to conduct surveys and interviews with fansubbers (Wongseree 2020). Also, there are studies such as Li (2015) and Zhang and Cassany (2017) which take one more step ahead and adopt an inside participant view of fansubbing communities. Using netnography (Kozinets 2015) as the main methodology, these researchers gained access to the inside of the target communities and collected various types of data, including archival data (e.g. electronic communications and community regulations), elicited data (e.g. surveys and interviews), as well as fieldnotes and reflective journals. Such a diversity of data allows researchers to achieve a holistic view of the organisational and operational mechanisms of fansubbing communities and thereby gain insights into issues such as the construction of a collective identity, the management of shared knowledge and technological tools, interactions with the audiences, among others. In this study, I will generally follow Kozinets' (2015) methodological approach with a number of minor revisions of research procedures and rearrangements of data collection focus.

1.3 Research rationale and objectives

As can be understood from the previous section, since the mid-2000s, there has emerged a substantial and still fast-growing body of literature regarding fan AVT practices. Yet, most of the existing studies are concerned with a limited number of topics, such as creative interventionist experimentations by fansubbers, workflow of fansubbing practice, the relationships between fansubbers and the culture industries, as well as the organisational and operational mechanism of standalone fan-based AVT communities. As such, this body of literature lacks sufficient knowledge about how communities built around fansubbing are organised and maintained in the context of the complex fandom networks formed in the digital age (as mentioned in 1.1). To be more specific, the following gaps in research can be identified from the research context:

(i) Few studies have been conducted on the internal organisational mechanisms of communities built around fan AVT practices. As mentioned previously, there already a

number of seminal studies concerning the workflow models of fansubbing communities. Yet, despite a few studies providing an overview of factors that influence the production processes of fansubbing groups (e.g. Li 2015), it is still unclear how these models are implemented through community members' communication activities, be they routine or contingent. Also, it is not clear enough what mechanisms allow members of a fansubbing community to build stable relations and how those relations enable them to maintain their community through challenges and contingencies. The researcher believes that by answering those questions, we may gain better insights into fan AVT communities as a form of social organisation.

(ii) Little attention has been paid to how fansubbing communities are connected to the complex fandom networks that they are located in and how they contribute to organising and maintaining those networks. As shown in 1.1, fans empowered by the technological advances in the digital age have developed complex fandom networks in which they can conduct various practices (including fansubbing) around the cultural products or phenomena that interest them. As fans engage with each other in different practices, they form communities pursuing different goals, requiring different expertise and technologies, and enveloping different social relation networks. Such diversity entails that when constituting part of a fandom network, a fansubbing community interacts with other communities (including other fansubbing communities) through various negotiation processes mediated by different tools and resources. Studying the connections created by those interactions may shed light on the role of fansubbing communities in shaping participatory fandoms.

(iii) As a participatory fandom is usually composed of numerous communities, it is quite common that fansubbers have the experience of participating in more than one of them. Yet, the complex processes through which fansubbers develop their identities as a result of their multi-community experience are yet to be scrutinised. Those processes include coordinating roles in different communities, transferring knowledge and resources between communities, among others. It is believed that investigating those

processes will lead to a better understanding of fan translators as cultural agents who keep shaping and being shaped by participatory fandom culture.

(iv) Few studies have focused on fan AVT practices conducted in the context of international media flows within Asia where regional culture industries have been 'newly interconnected' (Wang, Zhang and Kuo 2020). In 1.1, I briefly demonstrated the significant roles that Korean and Japanese culture industries have played in shaping the popular music fandom culture in China. It will be worthwhile to investigate fansubbing conducted in this cultural context in order to understand how the cultural influences from other Asian countries have motivated Chinese young people to become prosumers and what impacts this phenomenon have made on the Chinese society.

In order to address the research gaps identified, this study draws on Etienne Wenger's Communities of Practice (CoP) theory (Wenger 1998) as the main theoretical framework to theorise fan AVT communities from the perspectives of community organisation and identity formation. Data needed to analyse those aspects will be gathered using Netnography (a special form of ethnography designed for studies of online social spaces) proposed by Kozinets (2015). Restricted by time and resources, this study chooses to focus on only one fansubbing community called AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group (AKB48 大吧字幕组), which has been continuously producing and uploading subtitled videos featuring the Japanese pop music idol group AKB48 and has therefore developed a reputation within the Chinese fandom network of the idol group. Informed by the selected theory, methodology, and dataset, this research will address an overarching research question:

What does a Communities of Practice (CoP) theoretical approach reveal about the contribution of volunteer translation to collective processes of meaning negotiation which maintain a translation-oriented fan community and shape fan translators' identity?

To make this study more viable, this overarching question is further divided into two more specific questions according to the major aspects of CoP framework:

Research Question 1: How do CoP's three dimensions of practice — mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire — contribute to organising and maintaining a translation-oriented fan community like AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, as well as to its interconnections with other parts of the AKB48 fandom in China?

The first question is concerned with the three organisational dimensions of a community of practice, namely 'mutual engagement', 'joint enterprise', and 'shared repertoire', as well as with the diverse connections to the AKB48 fandom that the community has built based on the organisational dimensions mentioned earlier. To answer this question, the archival data collected from the Daba community (including archived communication records and documents) will be used as the primary data source.

Research Question 2: How do *AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group* members build their fan identity as a nexus of trajectories and what role does translation play in the formation of their identities?

The second specific question of the study focuses on Daba fansubbers' identity formation processes which are shaped by their trajectories of multi-community activities. Also, their trajectories out of the fandom network, including those shaped by their experience of fan affectivity and their relations with the culture industries, are encompassed by this question. This question will be primarily be addressed by drawing on interviews conducted with selected members of the Daba community.

1.4 Chapter outline

This PhD thesis consists of six chapters which explore how voluntary fansubbing practice contributes to organising fan communities and shaping fans' identity. In **Chapter 2**, 'A Communities of Practice Approach to Online Fandom', I adopt Communities of Practice theory as the main theoretical framework of the study, which can be used effectively to explain the organisational mechanisms of AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group. To be specific, I first introduce the key concepts of CoP theory which constitute the major dimensions of a community of practice. With these concepts, I then theorise the fansubbing group in question as a community of practice in which members with mutual affinity use various categories of technologies to pursue their purpose of translating audiovisual content related to their favourite idols. Moreover, the said key concepts also contribute to the fansubbing community's connections with other parts of the fandom and to the identity formation processes of its members.

Chapter 3, 'Methodology', sets out to present netnography as the main methodology of the study. Invented as a special form of ethnography aimed at investigating online interactions and online communities, netnography allows researchers to immerse themselves in the activities of the communities in question and thereby collect various types of data. In this chapter, I introduce how I locate my target community, AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, and how I collect different types of data from this community. The methods used to analyse the collected data are also introduced. Furthermore, I discuss the potential ethical issues which may occur during the data collection processes and how I will address each of those issues.

As the first analytical chapter, **Chapter 4** ('Organisational Dimensions of the Daba Fansubbing Group') focuses on analysing the collected archival data (e.g. online communication records, stored documents and fansubbing project files) in order to answer RQ1. Based on evidence from the said data, I discuss issues pertaining to the organisational mechanisms of the Daba community, such as the patterns of online communications between members of the Daba community, mutual recognition between members, members' mutual accountability to a joint enterprise, and members'

negotiations over a shared repertoire of resources. And the second analytical chapter, **Chapter 5** ('Identity Formation of Translating Fans'), mainly relies on the collected interview data to illustrate how Daba community members' fandom experience contributes to forming their identity. Furthermore, this chapter also explains how processes out of the fandom (e.g. the culture industry's agendas and restrictions) influence fans' identity formation.

In the last **Chapter 6**, 'Conclusion', I summarise the research findings and thereby provide answers to the research question. In addition, I discuss the theoretical, methodological, and social implications of my study as well as the potential opportunities for future research.

Chapter 2 A Communities of Practice Approach to Online Fandom

2.1 Introduction

As virtual media fandoms continue to proliferate across the globe, they have attracted ever more attention from scholars working in areas such as media studies, communication studies, and sociology, all of whom have attempted to theorise this phenomenon and contributed to a burgeoning body of literature on this topic.

Acknowledged as the founder of fan studies, Henry Jenkins is one of the first scholars to have identified the productive nature of fans. He argues that fans are 'consumers who also produce, readers who also write, spectators who also participate' (1992: 208). Fiske (1992) defines such a creative nature as a type of 'semiotic productivity', i.e. the engagement of fans in the creation of meanings and pleasures that help to define a fan community. Busse and Gray (2011) also pay attention to the fans' tendency to conglomerate through meaning production and argue that fans seldom exist in isolation. Rather, they tend to form different types of fan communities in which they do not only engage with texts (e.g. movies, TV series and best-sellers), but also with one another. They further argue that this mutual engagement among fans defines a fandom, a term denoting both a whole collective of fans and a particular identity that influences and shapes members of such a collective 'in ways beyond shared media consumption' (*ibid.*). Therefore, in this sense, a fandom may be treated as a concept that integrates fan community with fan identity. In this project's case, fandom takes the form of a complex network of fan communities that keeps shaping its members' identity.

Departing from the perspective of 'classic' fan studies as outlined above, which usually focuses on 'pre-internet' and 'pre-convergence' fandoms (i.e. fandoms that predate the age of media convergence) (Busse and Gray 2011), Lee (2014) focuses particularly on

transnational fandom, a special type of fandom that came into being as a result of globalisation, or more precisely, as a result of the 'disjunctive order' of cultural globalisation (Appadurai 1990: 296). This means that transnational fandoms usually exist at the gap between territory-based cultural industries and 'transnationalised' needs of consumers, and their members need to rely on digital technologies to disseminate and produce media content (Lee 2014). As introduced in the previous chapter, the global and digital dimensions of transnational fandom have led to profound changes in the meaning production processes, the structures, as well as the identity formation processes in fandoms. Yet, most of the social mechanisms behind those changes are still not fully understood by scholars. To address these research gaps, this chapter therefore draws on Etienne Wenger's Community of Practice theory as the main theoretical framework of this study.

So far, the body of studies by translation studies scholars that use CoP theory is highly limited. As one of the TS scholars who adopted the framework, Neather (2012) employs the theory's assumptions about meaning negotiation and inter-community interactions in combination with Bhatia's (2004) theory of expert genre production to explore how museum communities negotiate translational expertise with other stakeholders (e.g. translation service providers and tourists) in translation-related activities taking place around the museum exhibitions. Another pioneer, Mason (2014), uses CoP theory in translation studies, in combination with discourse theory, arguing that such a combination sheds light on the connection between sociological perspectives of translation and the process of micro decision-making in translations. From this perspective, issues such as power relations in translation and translators'agency can be comprehensively addressed.

More recently, CoP began to be used in studies of participatory translation and audiovisual translation. Yu (2017) employs CoP theory's assumptions about organisational dimensions of a community to investigate the Chinese online

crowdsourcing translation website Yeeyan, and reveals how members of this website construct and maintain sub-communities under the website, which is treated as an overarching community of practice, and how they exploit existing and new resources through mutual engagement and joint enterprise. Kung (2016) is perhaps the first published work that uses CoP theory in the study of audiovisual translation. In this work, archival data from a number of Chinese fansubbing groups are analysed, in order to reveal how audiences of fansubbing groups form communities of practice that consolidate mutual affinity and extend the connectivity of the audienceship, through assemblages of expert knowledge and collective intelligence, and making the most of the latest online networking technologies.

Inspired by those predecessors, this study uses CoP theory to theorise, conceptualise, and systematically describe transnational fandom as a complex network of fan communities. Furthermore, the Chinese fandom of AKB48 will be used as the context for the said theorisation process, in order to help us critically understand and interpret online fandoms within the theoretical framework of Communities of Practice. In 2.2, I will first introduce the basic concepts of CoP theory and explain how the theory can be used to theorise online fan communities. Then, in 2.3, I will draw on Fuchs' theory to explain the sociality of an online fan community with respect to the three levels of development of Internet technologies. 2.4 will move the focus from the inner organisation of a fan community to the connections between fan communities and how such connections contribute to establishing a fandom as a complex network of virtual communities. In 2.5, I will introduce how the experience of fan CoP can contribute to fans' identity formation processes. And finally, in 2.6, I will give a brief account of the further development of the CoP theory since Wenger (1998) was published and discuss in what way the previous scholarship about virtual amateur translation CoPs may inform and inspire my study.

2.2 Online fan communities as Communities of Practice

2.2.1 Learning and practice in fan communities

As a social theory that addresses issues regarding learning, the concept of learning serves as the starting point of the theoretical framework of Communities of Practice (CoP). Based on their empirical research on apprenticeship, —a learning process that makes a new-comer in a community of practitioners become a full participant in that community — Lave and Wenger (1991: 33) argue that learning is a situated process, i.e. where it unfolds, the learning process always interacts with specific agents and circumstances (*ibid.*: 33). In particular, they set out to examine the position of learning in social practice, pointing out that learning is not merely situated in practice, but is 'an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world' (*ibid.*: 35). This statement separates their perspective on learning from traditional learning theories which treat learning as a special kind of activity that is isolated from daily socio-cultural contexts. Wenger (1998) further elaborates on the nature of learning, arguing that it differs from 'mere doing' in that it changes how we define ourselves by changing our ability to participate, to belong and to negotiate meaning as part of different types of groups (*ibid.*: 226). To be more specific, social practices that incorporate learning as an inherent component enable people to produce meaning, which is defined as our changing ability to experience and engage with the world (*ibid.*: 4), through a process called 'meaning negotiation' (*ibid.*: 52). Based on the observation of online fan communities, it is safe to say that learning is an essential element of these communities, because through the practices that characterise a fan community, members of the community are constantly involved in negotiating meaning and belonging.

Wenger's view of meaning as a personal 'experience of everyday life' (*ibid.*: 52) stems from the philosophical tradition of Martin Heidegger's phenomenology (*ibid.*: 281). Heidegger argues that the world is an 'interconnected context of involvement' that gives meaning to everything that one encounters within one's individual world. This 'interconnectedness' is reflected in the unitary relation between human beings and other

things/people. This relation is possible only because of the unique structure of being human (or '*Dasein*') (Johnson 2000). In this sense, we can define meaning as an experience of the world as a context for interconnected involvement in different entities. This experience permeates everyone's everyday life.

'Negotiation' as in 'meaning negotiation' has a twofold meaning: 1) reaching an agreement between people; 2) an accomplishment that requires sustained attention and readjustment (Wenger 1998: 53). In a CoP framework, Wenger attempts to 'capture' both aspects (*ibid.*). Meaning negotiation is the result of the interplay between two complementary component processes, 'participation' and 'reification' (*ibid.*: 52). Wenger (1998: 55) defines the former as a 'social experience of living in the world' with particular regard to 'membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises'. Later, in Wenger (2010: 180), he gives a more specific and transparent definition: a 'personal, active, and direct involvement' in different aspects of social life, such as activities, conversations, and reflections, among others. Such involvement can create a subjective aspect of meaning as an experience. In the scenario of involvement in the practices of a community, the experience of participation has to be based on the mutual recognition between participants in this practice, and it may create equal and unequal relations at the same time (Wenger 1998: 56). In a fandom, members of fan communities are mutually involved in a variety of practices. For example, in the Chinese fandom of AKB48, there are a large number of fan communities with different foci. In some communities, members focus on different stages of fansubbing — translating, post-editing, timing, project coordinating, etc. In other communities, members may participate in other aspects of fan activities, such as initiating and joining fan topics on bulletin boards, translating and uploading news articles, producing fan-made promotion materials, raising funds, etc.

To make these things happen, fans need to establish mutual recognition of each other's fan identity and capabilities. With reference to my discussion of fandom culture in Chapter 2, we can say that the most basic and important element of fan identity is a

fan's experience of affinity with the artist or product at the heart of the community, i.e. a persistent intention to know more about various aspects of these artists and products. In the Chinese fandom of AKB48, fans usually make their first attempt to participate in fan practices because they are affectively drawn to certain aspects of the group. At this stage, they have to learn to display their interest in an acceptable way (e.g. by adopting some elements of fan jargon) in order to attract attention from others. It is only after their persistent displays of affinity are subsequently recognised by other fans that they virtually begin to be mutually involved in fan practices and therefore in meaning negotiation processes entailed by these practices. Fans' personal capabilities also play key roles in mutual recognition, including experience as a dedicated fan, practical skills (e.g. Japanese-Chinese translation skills, video making skills, website building skills), knowledge of the group, etc.

Through such recognition, participation in fan communities is always creating relations between fans that can be either harmonious or conflictual, equal or unequal. For instance, in fansub communities within the AKB48 fandom, the relations between community members vary. The organiser of a community is usually more entitled to decide which videos are to be translated; editors usually have the power to assess the qualification of each translator; meanwhile, the relations between translators tend to be more equal. In the process of fansubbing, these relations may lead to harmonious collaboration across the whole community, but at times they may also lead to conflicts, e.g. when an editor decides to disqualify translators because of their failure to submit their contribution on time.

Another point worth making is that the effect of participation extends beyond the scope of communities (Wenger 1998: 57). A fan's experience in fan communities does not 'turn off' when s/he is temporarily absent from those communities. Rather, it will continue to have impact on other areas of fans' life. For example, the experience of being a fan of a Japanese pop music group may motivate a person to take up Japanese language courses. When equipped with confidence in Japanese, s/he may choose to

study in Japan, in order to receive better education as well as to become able to attend events of his/her favourite group (Zhihu 2015; 2017).

The other component of the meaning negotiation process, reification, refers to the process of giving form to our experience of the world through the production of objects that solidify this experience into 'thingness', or concreteness (*ibid.*: 58). Also, it can be used to denote products of such process (*ibid.*: 60). In social practices, reification usually serves to provide points of focus that help organise negotiation of meaning (*ibid.*: 59). For example, typical reifying processes include making, naming, describing, interpreting, using, etc. From the perspective of reification, fans' experience of practices in fan communities is congealed into a rich variety of forms. In the Chinese fandom of AKB48, production activities, or fan labours, such as fansubbing and fanvidding (the act of making fan-oriented videos using existing video clips and music tracks), yield objects like fan-subbed TV show clips and fan-made music videos; discussions and debates around fan topics may result in the renewal of norms and regulations in a fan community, be they tacit or explicit; the innovative use of translated materials usually results in new contributions to fan discourse, such as new jargon and new memes; attending a live performance of AKB48 may motivate a fan to write a long story of life as a fan; bodily representations of fan experience, such as cosplay activities, lead to stage performances, costumes and posters.

Furthermore, participation and reification always exist as a pair and are inseparable from each other. This seamless coupling between them creates a unitary and self-contained existence of meaning (*ibid.*: 63). Practices in a fansubbing community entail members' active involvement in fansubbing procedures. At the same time, they also inevitably entail the concrete results of meaning negotiation process in these practices — subbed audiovisual materials. Similarly, discussions in a fan bulletin board community may involve fans' participation in debates on fandom etiquettes. As such debates unfold, they are reified into renewed versions of guidelines of fandom discussion etiquettes. This duality of meaning negotiation helps define a community of

practice, which is the primary type of social configuration investigated in Wenger (1998).

As its name suggests, a community of practice is primarily characterised by 'practice', i.e. doing in a socio-cultural context that gives structure and meaning to what we do (Wenger 1998: 47). Meaning negotiation (or production) lays the foundation and potential for three dimensions of relation that associate practice with community and thus establish coherence in a community of practice (namely 'mutual engagement', 'joint enterprise', and 'shared repertoire'). Since meaning negotiation results from the interplay between participation and reification, all these dimensions are characterised by the inseparable duality of participation and reification.

Because these three dimensions play the critical role of connecting practice with the concept of community, they are treated as the core and defining characteristics of a community of practice in Wenger (1998). In the next section, these aspects will be discussed in detail, with regard to the context of my research, in the hope that such discussion can shed light on the features of fan communities.

2.2.2 Core dimensions of fan communities as communities of practice

2.2.2.1 Mutual engagement

First, the participation component of meaning negotiation gives rise to the dimension of mutual engagement in a community. This characteristic refers to the fact that people in a community of practice are always engaged in actions and negotiating meaning for those actions with one another. According to Wenger (1998: 73), such engagement is the source of membership in a community, i.e. it helps people tell who are members and who are outsiders. Also, within a community, it creates diverse and complex relationships between members who participate in a shared practice (*ibid.*: 77). In a given context of practice, it takes certain efforts to enable such engagement. These

efforts usually entail creating opportunities for people to interact with each other in the right place and at the right time. In the Chinese fandom of AKB48, in order to trigger interactions, members of a fan community make use of a wide variety of technological means to enable interactions and therefore create different levels of sociality within the community. These aspects of technology will be further discussed in 2.3.

Another factor that enables mutual engagement is the tension between diversity and homogeneity (Wenger 1998: 75). At the beginning, members of a community of practice join together because of a common reason. In the context of a fan community, that reason is usually fans' shared affinity with the target artist or target product. Yet, such affinity may appear in a variety of forms. For example, in the AKB48 fandom, some fans are attracted by the natural beauty of group members, some are attracted by the group members' stories of hard-work and aspirations, while others may be fascinated with the fashionable styling of group members. Diversity also exists in the social background of these fans. For instance, in terms of occupation, a large proportion of Chinese AKB48 fans are secondary school and university students, who are thought of as having plenty of time and money at their disposal. There are also a considerable number of fans who have full-time jobs and thus may only participate in the fan communities during their free time. High diversity can also be observed in other aspects of fans' background, such as age, place of residence, personality traits, political views, etc. When entering fan communities, they are also being driven by different aspirations and prefer different roles. Some want to gain visibility and prestige through and within the fandom, so they may choose to pursue core roles in the community, such as general convenor or event organiser; others may prefer to stay at the periphery and decide not to take up active responsibilities.

Diversity also exists in fan identity and fans' capabilities. Some fans' affinity for the group is stronger, other fans' is weaker; some are more experienced in Japanese pop culture while others are less so; and when entering the fan communities, many fans are equipped with different types of practical skills. As stated in 2.2.1, it is through the

mutual recognition of these abilities that practices become possible. Such recognition suggests that mutual engagement is partial, i.e. members have to rely on each other to provide and receive contributions and knowledge (Wenger 1998: 76). In a fan community, members usually assume different roles in accordance with their aspirations and capabilities, therefore, their contributions to the community are significantly complementary.

In fan practices, these types of diversity in social background, aspirations and capabilities are always in interplay with the homogeneity entailed by fans' mutual involvement. Such interplay creates differences as well as similarities as fans do things with each other (Wenger 1998: 75). When it comes to a specific fan community, where mutual engagement may take place at different levels and stages of practice, these differences and similarities can create diverse and complex relations which connect participants in more profound ways than obvious similarities in terms of social background and personality traits (*ibid.*: 76). The terms 'community' and 'mutual' do not necessarily connote peace and harmony in the relations between participants. In fact, in most situations, mutual engagement may generate a fair amount of tensions and conflicts as well (*ibid.*: 77).

The discussion above raises more issues regarding meaning negotiation in fan communities, such as focus of practice, participants' interpretation of their situation and their sense-making of changes in the events. These issues are further discussed below.

2.2.2.2 Joint enterprise

The second dimension of a community of practice, joint enterprise, stems from members' sustained mutual engagement. It denotes that participants in social practice are always negotiating a shared cause that keeps a community of practice together. In other words, the joint enterprise of a community is the result of a collective process of negotiation which reflects the complexity of mutual engagement (*ibid.*). In.2.2.1, we

had a glimpse of that complexity, mainly in terms of community members' diverse and complex backgrounds as well as the complex relations created by mutual engagement between them. One aspect of that complexity, community members' aspiration, is particularly relevant to the negotiation of a joint enterprise. When fans join communities within a fandom, they all have their own aspirations with respect to life prospects as a fan. These aspirations reflect the instrumental (i.e. acquiring or improving beneficial abilities), the personal (i.e. satisfying internal emotional needs), and the interpersonal (i.e. establishing connections with others) aspects of their lives (Wenger 1998: 78). To give examples, in terms of the instrumental aspect, there are Chinese AKB48 fans who aspire to acquire or consolidate practical skills, such as Japanese language skills, video making skills, social networking account management skills, etc. There are also fans who attempt to start up their own profitable fan-oriented businesses. Typical personal aspirations include deriving fun from watching the performances of the group, finding courage and sense of hope in the inspirational stories of group members and improving personal appearance by learning from AKB48 members' makeup and styling. As for the interpersonal aspect, there are fans who are keen on building up connections with others in the fandom. Such disposition may motivate them to pursue a career in managing and coordinating a fan community, or to act as a mediator between different communities. Moreover, some fans may attempt to transfer their fandom relations from online to offline by holding offline meetups, parties, and other types of events. A typical example of such online-connection-turned offline community is cosplay groups that perform songs and dances of AKB48 on stage. Therefore, it is safe to say that fans' enterprise is much more than just finding some easy entertainment, though it is surely a significant component of their practice in the fandom.

These aspirations, though diverse as they are, are not randomly juxtaposed in a fan community. On the contrary, they are inevitably involved in the mutual negotiation of a joint enterprise of the community. One common misunderstanding about joint enterprise is that it is a static, clear, and stated goal that the entire community agrees on

or a creed that community members unanimously believe in. According to Wenger (1998: 78), the reason why an enterprise can be called 'joint' is because it is constantly and communally negotiated by community members. Such negotiation process of a joint enterprise represents the community members' joint effort to respond to their common and individual 'conditions' (e.g. challenges, influences, situations, etc.) as well as to create a context of practice in which their differences and respective aspirations are effectively coordinated (*ibid.*: 79). Although a fan community's members may eventually choose different ways to respond to their conditions, these responses are always interconnected in the members' joint effort to ensure that their fan career is enjoyable, inspiring, productive, and sociable.

A community's negotiation of enterprise is an essential source of its stability in that it gives rise to relations of mutual accountability among involved community members (Wenger 1998: 81). For members of a fan community, this means that when pursuing their joint enterprise, members are all accountable to each other on a number of fronts, e.g. being easy-going, sharing resources and information, coordinating their differences, deciding the focus of their practice, interpreting the context of their practice, and adjusting the sense they make of events around them. Such accountability creates a 'communal regime', in which people can effectively negotiate their joint response to changing conditions (*ibid.*). This can be shown in an example of a fansub group within the AKB48 fandom. In the AKB48 fandom, a fansub group usually aims at producing quality subbed videos for their favourite members. Yet, they do not treat all relevant videos as equals. When a much-expected special TV programme is aired, they may spend a whole sleepless night subtitling it, in order to upload it as soon as possible and thus attract the largest possible audience. When it comes to old and less favoured videos, they may sub them in a lax and inattentive manner. Sometimes a translation project of old videos may even be suspended indeterminately, only because most members do not want to give priority to it. In this sense, an enterprise serves as a resource of coordination, sense-making, and mutual engagement (*ibid.*: 82).

By referring to this example, we can understand that in a fan community, the negotiation of a joint enterprise creates relations of accountability as a set of tacit norms of practice, which may provide resources to and set constraints on practice at the same time (*ibid.*). Although these norms may sometimes be reified into guidelines, rules, and stated goals, they will not take effect without people's interpretation of them (*ibid.*). As negotiation of a joint enterprise is a dynamic process, these norms are always evolving as the practice goes on. In this way, we can say that the pursuit of an enterprise sets a 'rhythm' for the practice of a community, in the sense that just as rhythm of music coordinates the process of music playing and generates dynamism for the music, an enterprise provides fundamental dynamism to the practice of a community (*ibid.*).

2.2.2.3 Shared repertoire

The third dimension of a community of practice, shared repertoire, refers to shared resources available to meaning negotiation processes in a community (*ibid.*). In the history of a community's communal pursuit of a joint enterprise, its members produce and adopt different types of resources, which then become constituent elements of the community's shared repertoire. Therefore, a shared repertoire usually encompasses a wide variety of heterogenous elements (*ibid.*). These elements combine both participative aspects and reificative aspects. Among them, the reificative side is usually easier to perceive because of their 'thingness', or concreteness (*ibid.*: 58). Taking the AKB48 fandom as an example, members of a fansub community within this fandom usually make use of a wide range of technological resources, including social networking platforms that the community is based on (e.g. QQ, Weibo and Baidu Tieba), subtitle and video editing programmes (Aegisub, Maruko Toolkit, etc.), video streaming websites that allow members to share fansubbed videos (Bilibili, Youku, Miaopai, etc.), online forums organised by AKB48 fans where they can publish news of their latest works and share download links of high-definition fansubbed video files (e.g. Maeda-atsuko.cn) and cloud storage services where high-definition videos can be

stored and downloaded (e.g. Baidu Wangpan).

Another common and important aspect on the reificative side is the use of fan discourses and styles. They encompass a highly diverse inventory of meaning-making items and patterns of action that are essential to the status of being a fan. By adopting and using them, fans can effectively create meaningful statements and express their membership and identities in their context of practice. Here we may only have a quick glimpse of a few typical examples: there are certain narratives that fans often quote, appropriate, and modify when they talk about the histories of AKB48 and its Chinese fandom. The most notable narrative is arguably AKB48's trajectory of growth from a little-known indie group to the most popular female pop group in Japan's history. Fandom members also use fan jargon when referring to people, objects and concepts unique to this fan culture. Elements of fan jargon are usually created under the joint influences from Japanese and Chinese languages. For instance, it is quite common for fandom members to adopt a nickname for an AKB48 member because the name's Chinese pronunciation resembles how her Japanese nickname is pronounced. For example, the Chinese nickname for Takino Yumiko is 'Yumilin', which literally means 'a forest of corns', while her Japanese nickname is 'Yumirin'. In addition, many fans are keen on displaying their fan status online by using various types of marking items. For example, in the QQ group of a fan community, members may use specific titles to indicate their fan experience; AKB48 fans on Weibo may use a picture of their favourite member as their user portrait to announce their fan membership to people outside the fandom. In addition, as is mentioned in 2.2.2.2, sometimes tacit norms in a community may be reified into guidelines and rules. They also form an important part of shared repertoire, in that they reflect the relations of accountability in a fan community and thus contributing to setting a 'rhythm' for practices in that community.

The participative side of a shared repertoire may be less obvious, but it is no less important than the reificative side in that it is the result of mutual engagement process in a community. Some of the resources mentioned above were created or adopted earlier,

some later; some have been in the repertoire for a long time, while others are relatively new additions. They were all created or adopted in specific contexts as community members participates in negotiations over responses to different conditions. In this sense, we can say that a shared repertoire reflects the history of mutual engagement in the community that it belongs to (Wenger 1998: 83). Throughout this history, the repertoire has always been evolving, therefore, it is virtually impossible to draw a clear boundary for the repertoire or to maintain unchanging interpretations of the resources within the repertoire. In Wenger (*ibid.*), this feature is described as an inherent 'ambiguity' of shared repertoire. He argues that because of this ambiguity, resources in a repertoire can not only be used as references to the history of mutual engagement, but also can be re-engaged in new situations where they can be used to produce new meanings through members' subsequent mutual engagement efforts. Therefore, we can say that ambiguity is 'a condition of negotiability and thus a condition for the very possibility of meaning' (*ibid.*). In the Chinese fandom of AKB48, we can find that a large proportion of existing resources are reinterpreted and reused from time to time, such as fan jargon, fan narratives, community guidelines, video clips, photos, etc. Again, as complexity is an inherent feature of mutual engagement, it does not assume agreement in the interpretation of resources in a shared repertoire as its precondition or outcome. It is only when mismatches in interpretation and understanding jeopardise mutual engagement that they need to be addressed (*ibid.*: 84).

2.2.2.4 A 'competent' membership

According to Wenger (1998: 74), membership is not equivalent to social category, belonging to an organisation, having a title or having personal relations with people. It requires a competence that is neither purely individual nor merely collective, because this competence simultaneously entails the negotiated dimensions of a community, as well as the community members' own personal experience and manifestation of the competence (*ibid.*: 136).

Moreover, this competence has to be acquired through the process of participation in the practices of a community. Therefore, a fan may join the QQ group of a fansub community with the invitation from a friend and acquire a system-assigned member title in that group at the same time, yet, we can hardly say that her/his relation with a member of the community and that title of group member automatically grant her/him 'competent' membership in the community. From the perspective of the three dimensions of a community within CoP framework, if this fan does not participate in the practices within the fandom, then s/he will not be able to mutually engage with others in practices, be accountable to the community's joint enterprise or negotiate the shared repertoire of the community. These three elements play essential roles in defining competence, and therefore competent membership in a community. Wenger (1998: 136) argues that competent membership in a community consists of three aspects which are derived from the three dimensions of a community of practice, and that he defines as follows (*ibid.*: 137):

1) mutuality of engagement: the ability to engage with other members of the community in meaning negotiation and respond properly to their actions, and therefore the ability to build relations that contribute to shaping an identity of participation;
2) accountability to the enterprise: the ability to properly understand the enterprise of the community, and therefore the ability to take responsibility for it as well as contribute to its pursuit and to its negotiation process within the community;
3) negotiability of the repertoire: the ability to utilise the repertoire of the community in order to engage in practices. This ability requires sufficient personal participation in the history of a community. It also requires the ability (both capability and legitimacy) to renegotiate the meaning of the history.

With this framework, we now have a set of criteria to decide who are full, competent

members and who are outsiders. This framework also allows for a spectrum between those two poles (*ibid.*). For example, a person who adequately fulfils all the criteria may be called 'full member', while a person who does not fulfil them at all may be defined as an outsider. Between these two extremes, there are also other people who only partially fulfil the criteria, they may be termed as 'partial' or 'peripheral' members. Therefore, in this way, different types of membership can exist in a community. In this sense, we can say that a community of practice plays the role of a locally negotiated 'regime of competence'. Within this regime, 'knowing' can be defined as a process of recognisable competent participation in the practices (*ibid.*).

In 2.2.1, I argue that meaning is a personal experience of the world and it is produced by a process called 'meaning negotiation'. According to Wenger (*ibid.*: 138), it is only when this experience enters into interaction with a regime of competence that learning in practice can become possible. Although competence has to be based on meaning negotiation and can in turn produce new experience of meaning through negotiation, they do not determine each other. As a result, they may sometimes be out of alignment with each other.

There are occasions where competence takes the dominant position and therefore overrides experience. For example, when a fan joins a fansub community within the AKB48 fandom, s/he may already have some experience of fansub practices in this fandom. Yet, this experience may not fit within the regime of competence (e.g. the manner of communication, selection criteria for videos to be translated, fansubbing software used) defined by this community. In this situation, this newcomer has to transform her/his experience in order to 'achieve' (*ibid.*) the competence.

Similar mismatches also happen in the opposite direction, i.e. occasions where experience takes the dominant position and overrides competence. Sometimes some old-timers in the same community may come across a new experience that does not fit within the current regime of competence of the community. In order to reaffirm their

own membership, they may try to adjust the community's regime so that it includes their experience. For example, when an old-timer in a fansub community finds a new file-sharing service better than the one currently used in the community, this member may try to persuade the whole community to adopt this new way of sharing. To achieve this goal, this fan may invite other members to participate in the positive experience of the service and reify this experience into a short appealing report. If this fan is widely recognised as a successful full member, it may be more likely for her/him to convince the others to replace this sharing service for the old one in their shared repertoire and therefore change the regime of competence.

Such bidirectional interaction of experience and competence has the potential for the transformation of both, and therefore for learning. In Wenger's framework, learning is known as a transformation of knowing that results from an ongoing process of realignment between experience and competence (*ibid.*: 139).

2.3 Online fan communities as virtual communities of practice

Our preliminary observation tells us that the Chinese fandom of AKB48 is essentially an online fandom which contains a large number of online fan communities. As is introduced in the previous chapter, it is the rise and development of Internet technologies that has facilitated the proliferation of online fan communities as a particular type of virtual community. In this section I will briefly explore some features of these technologies and analyse how they fundamentally shape various dimensions of online fan communities.

Since the current research is focusing on digital culture and self-organising virtual communities, it is necessary to find a theoretical framework — beyond Wenger's Communities of Practice — that is well positioned to yield insights into those issues. As one of the prominent scholars in the area of online social media studies, Fuchs proposes a theoretical framework which productively links the technological aspect of

the Internet with its social dimension and, more specifically, enables the formation of different types of online communities. As Fuchs (2005: 67) puts it, the Internet is a global 'self-organising socio-technological system' that can store 'objectified' knowledge. Human agents are constantly re-creating previously stored global knowledge by consuming existing content, communicating within the system, and producing new content (*ibid.*) — hence Fuchs' claim that the Internet combines a technological dimension and a social dimension.

Based on this perspective of techno-social duality Fuchs (2010a: 764) further argues that there are three levels in the development of the Internet which are named 'Web 1.0', 'Web 2.0', and 'Web 3.0' respectively. In each of these stages, various technologies are employed to enable different levels of sociality in the knowledge production process. By referring to previous studies (Hofkirchner 2002, Fuchs and Hofkirchner 2005), Fuchs (2010a: 767) defines the knowledge production process as a 'threefold dynamic process' involving three significant levels of sociality: 'cognition', 'communication', and 'cooperation'.

Cognition in this framework is the 'activity of human mind' (Fuchs 2011: 202), which can be understood as the mental activity that establishes connections between a person's mind and the outside world around her/him (Fuchs and Hofkirchner 1999). By perceiving, interpreting, and evaluating signals from the outside world, this person can generate her/his own 'individual information', e.g. individual values, norms, opinions, ideas, and beliefs (*ibid.*). Relating this information-generating process to CoP theory, we can say that it is comparable to the cognitive aspect of meaning negotiation process that produces and objectifies meaning as a person's experience of the world. Then, as this person connects her-/himself to other people in the outside world, they will enter an 'objective mutual relationship' which allows for communication (Fuchs 2010a: 767), which is defined by Fuchs (2011: 202) as a process in which signs and symbols are given a certain meaning by a group of people who share those meanings among themselves. This stage is comparable to the dimension of mutual engagement within

CoP framework, through which people can establish direct interactions and relationships with each other. Eventually, the communication process may in turn allow people to cooperate with each other, i.e. they can act together to achieve a shared goal and thus produce a 'shared consciousness of belonging together' (*ibid.*). In this cooperation process, shared or jointly created resources can emerge (Fuchs 2010a: 767). This final level of sociality in knowledge production can be compared to the establishment of a CoP, in which a joint enterprise is negotiated, a shared repertoire is formed, and community members' identities are shaped.

In Fuchs' system, the evolution from Web 1.0 to Web 3.0 matches the progression of sociality levels from cognition to cooperation. Being the earliest stage, Web 1.0 is termed by Fuchs (Fuchs 2010a: 778) as a 'computer-based networked system of human cognition'. This type of system allows human beings to cognise with the help of data obtained from a networked 'information-space' (*ibid.*: 779). Taking one step ahead, Web 2.0 is a networked system of human communication based on Web-mediated cognition. In this system, humans interact using symbols that are stored, transmitted, and received through computer networks. Without cognition, no communication process can take place (*ibid.*). Web-mediated communication further enables web-mediated cooperation, which is the central quality of Web 3.0[9]. This networked system of human cooperation enables the formation of 'virtual communities, co-operative knowledge, co-operative labour' (*ibid.*: 784).

Fuchs then creates a typology of Internet technologies by combining these three evolutionary levels with two other dimensions of those technologies— the type of temporality and type of network-mediated relationship. For the former aspect, he identifies two types of temporality: 'synchronous', which means that uses are actively online simultaneously; and 'asynchronous', i.e. users' actions are temporally detached (*ibid.*: 778). As for type of relationship, he argues that Internet technologies enable the

[9] In recent years, there has been a new understanding of Web 3.0 which is based on the emergent blockchain technology. Please refer to Banerjee (2022).

following types: one-to-one relationships (o2o), which means a person can communicate with another; one-to-many relationships (o2m), which denotes the connections between one person and many others; and many-to-many relationships (m2m), which means that many people can reach many others.

Based on this typology, we can now briefly investigate the technological organisation of the Chinese fandom of AKB48. In the communities within this fandom, fans need to use a wide variety of technologies — websites, social networking services, collaborative applications, among many others — to enable different levels of sociality. In Table 2.1, I provide a list of these technologies, with examples of applications based on each technology.

	Synchronous	**Asynchronous**
Cognition (Web 1.0)	Real-time peer-to-peer file-sharing protocols (o2o, o2m, m2m), e.g. the real-time file transfer component of Tencent QQ, BitTorrent	Websites (o2m), e.g. the official website of AKB48, tokyonothot.com Cloud storage services that allow for file-sharing (o2m), e.g. Baidu Wangpan, Tencent Weiyun Conventional music/video streaming services (o2m, m2m), e.g. Youku, Tencent Video, Netease Music

Communication (Web 2.0)	Instant messaging services that integrate audio/video chat components (o2o, o2m, m2m), e.g. Tencent QQ, WeChat	E-mail services (o2o, o2m) Online bulletin board services (m2m), e.g. Baidu Tieba, maedaatsuko.cn Blogging services (o2m, m2m), e.g. Ameblo Microblogging services (o2m, m2m), e.g. Twitter, Sina Weibo Interactive video streaming services (o2m, m2m), e.g. Bilibili
Cooperation (Web 3.0)	Real-time collaborative editing tools, e.g. Shimo Documents	Shared working software, e.g. Aegisub, Maruko Toolkit Shared financial platforms, e.g. Alipay, PayPal, Modian, etc. Knowledge indexing and sharing services, e.g. Baidu Baike, akb48fun.com

Table 2.1 A typology of Internet technologies used by the Chinese fandom of AKB48

Diverse as they are, these applications have complex and fundamental impacts on different dimensions of AKB48 fan communities. The most obvious and immediate influence can be seen in the shared repertoire of the communities. As is introduced in 2.2.2.3, the rich collection of online technologies account for an essential part of the resource inventory of a fan community. Having been incorporated into the repertoire at different points to deal with the evolving needs of the community, they reflect the history of members' online participation in the community. Also, their openness to re-interpretation allows them to be re-used by members in future engagement.

As argued in 2.2.2.1, online technologies play a key role in enabling mutual engagement among community members. Various levels and temporality types pertaining to these technologies allow for diverse levels and modes of engagement. When a person

becomes interested in AKB48 and intends to know more about this group, s/he may browse the basic information of the group on the official website and watch videos of the group on conventional video streaming websites (Web 1.0); s/he may also acquire translated news of the group from fan microblogs and learn about the new trends in fan topics on fan bulletin boards (asynchronous Web 2.0 applications). At this stage, a fan begins her/his participation in cognising the reified knowledge of the group and its fandom, without mutually engaging with fandom members. In this process, her/his preliminary personal experience of the community is moulded. Then this newcomer may find some fan activities interesting and thus attempt to join a fan community. This can be done by joining the community's bulletin board (asynchronous Web 2.0) and/or instant messaging group (synchronous Web 2.0). In the former case, this fan may encounter a great number of people and take part in the discussion and debate on a wide variety of fan topics. And, yet, because of the asynchronous and many-to-many nature of the technology, the engagement in this context usually tends to be loose and transient; in the latter case, this new fan may engage in narrower yet more focused forms of practices (e.g. fansubbing). Because of the synchronous nature of this technology, and because of the diverse relationships that this technology allows (o2o, o2m and m2m), this fan's engagement with others can be deep and long-lasting. At this stage, it can be said that this new fan has started mutual communication with other fans and has thus gained at least a peripheral membership of one or more communities. In some communities (e.g. fansub communities), to become a full member requires cooperation that is enabled by Web 3.0 applications. To acquire the competence that defines a full membership, newcomers need to learn to work with synchronous tools such as Youdao Yunxiezuo and asynchronous tools like Aegisub. In this process of learning, they can establish collaborative relationships with other members and become full and core members of these communities.

The Internet technologies also have an impact on the negotiation of joint enterprise. Internet technologies provide resources as well as impose constraints on online fandoms. Factors such as changes in a website's user conduct standards, alleged copyright infringement, and the closure of an application can create restrictions and

challenges to the practices within fan communities. To tackle these conditions, a community may re-negotiate its enterprise and adjust its norms of practice.

As the relationship between Internet technologies and online fan communities is a highly intriguing topic, it will be further discussed based on data discussed in the analytical chapters.

2.4 Online fandom as a network of virtual fan communities

In the previous sections, I have drawn on Wenger's CoP theory as my main theoretical framework. Against the background of this theory, I have introduced and analysed the main theoretical aspects of the fan communities that I am studying, with many detailed examples. I will now turn to discuss whether some of these communities may be defined in principle as CoPs and how they are interconnected to each other.

Wenger (1998: 124-125) describes the concept of community of practice as a 'midlevel category', i.e. it is neither a narrowly defined activity nor a broadly defined aggregate that is abstract in a historical or social sense. Thus, it would be best not to define a specific interaction like an event or a conversation as a community of practice because they are transient in nature and lack sustained engagement between people — i.e. it is impossible for participants in these interactions to negotiate a well-defined enterprise. Over a longer span of time, these interactions happen in the service of enterprises whose definition is not limited to a single event (*ibid.*: 125). In this context, it would not be productive to define a broad concept such as a nation or a culture as a community of practice: doing so would gloss over the inherent discontinuities within these structures, which are caused by various localities of mutual engagement.

In the light of the specific context of the Chinese fandom of AKB48, we can substantialise the three dimensions of a community of practice into a set of characteristics that define a fan community as a community of practice. They are

grouped around the three CoP dimensions (*ibid.*: 125-126) and can be summarised as follows:

> *Substantial mutual engagement*: 1) Mutual, direct and sustained relationships between a significant portion of the community population; 2) Shared ways of engaging in doing things together and shared channels of information flow, which are established using various types of Internet technologies;
>
> *A continually negotiated enterprise*: 3) Continuous efforts to negotiate a joint enterprise in changing contexts of practice; 4) Accountability to a joint enterprise felt by a significant portion of the community population; 5) Community norms as representations of mutual accountability (usually partially reified); 6) Activities and events regularly organised to serve the joint enterprise;
>
> *An evolving local repertoire*: 7) Ongoing adaptation and local production of negotiable resources, which include the following aspects; 8) Specific technologies, tools and fan artefacts shared by members; 9) Shared discourse and narratives which provide specific perspectives on the fandom and on the world beyond; 10) Use and production of jargon and other linguistic shortcuts that ease communication and intensify mutual affinity; 11) Specific life and work styles as ways to display membership.

The first characteristics in these groups (i.e. No.1, 3, and 7) can be treated as the 'primary' features of a community of practice in that they are the key characteristics that distinguish a CoP from other types of structures such as a personal network, an event group or a random aggregate of fans. Other features that follow should be regarded as secondary characteristics derived from the primary one. Wenger (1998: 126) argues that the distinction between a CoP and a non-CoP is not a simple dichotomy. Instead, it is a continuum of typicality, i.e. the more these features can be found in a

community, the more it can be called a community of practice, and vice versa. Therefore, if a community adheres to all the primary features and most of the secondary features, it may be called a 'typical' CoP; conversely, if any one of the primary features is missing in a community, then we can hardly treat it as a CoP.

A CoP never exists in isolation, instead, it is always situated in relations to the outside world. Hence, having identified those fan communities in a fandom that qualify as CoPs, we then need to discuss the boundary issues of a CoP, i.e. what happens on the boundaries of CoPs. Wenger (1998: 103) treats a community of practice as a 'shared history of learning', in the sense that mutual engagement, negotiation of an enterprise and evolution of a repertoire are all ongoing processes. As time elapses, this history may create discontinuities between participants and non-participants, and these discontinuities define the boundaries of a CoP.

Yet, apart from boundaries, communities of practice also develop ways of sustaining connections to the rest of the world through the duality of meaning negotiation (*ibid.*). On the reificative side (*ibid.*: 104), the products of reification can enter different practices by crossing boundaries and therefore become a type of connection called 'boundary objects' (*ibid.*: 105). In the AKB48 fandom, these objects may include technologies such as the bulletin board system and microblogging service, artefacts like fansubbed videos and graphic memes, terms such as fandom-specific appellation for AKB48 events, and many other forms of reification which provide focus points for interconnections. By using these objects, various communities of practice can coordinate their different perspectives for certain purposes (*ibid.*: 106). In this sense, a boundary object serves as a 'nexus of perspectives', one that obtains meaning by incorporating partial interpretations from different perspectives (*ibid.*).

On the participative side, members of different communities may encounter each other in various ways: two members of two communities may start to communicate and thus establish a 'one-on-one' boundary relation, which is characterised by the partiality of

each participant; a member of a community may visit another community and gain an 'immersive' experience of that community, which provides a one-way connection; when delegations of a number of participants from different communities encounter, meaning negotiation can take place within each community and across the boundaries at the same time, which can create two-way connections (*ibid.*: 112-113).

Also on the participative side, a person can go beyond boundary encounters and actively participate in different communities of practice at the same time. In this process, s/he can introduce elements from one community to another. Such cross-boundary participation can create an experience of 'multimembership'. By investing this experience, another type of connection named 'brokering' can be generated (*ibid.*: 105). Brokers are able to create new connections across communities by processes of translation, coordination, and alignment between different perspectives (*ibid.*: 109). To give an instance, in AKB48 fandom, when a concert video needs to be translated, members from different fansubbing groups may gather to form a temporary task group, which is coordinated by one or a number of members who have experience of multimembership in these fansubbing groups.

Over time, the work of brokering, boundary encounters, and boundary objects can effectively help practice extend beyond the boundaries along the three dimensions of CoP (*ibid.*: 114): encounters and brokering process can offer things to do together and therefore create sustained mutual relationships between people across boundaries. Maintaining these connections by negotiating diverging perspectives and meanings may become a part of the enterprise of a community; also, boundary objects that articulate forms of membership can integrate into repertoires of different communities.

As a result of such extension, practice *per se* can become a form of connection. This process happens in three ways (*ibid.*: 114-118), which are summarised in my words as follows:

1) *Boundary practices*: when a boundary encounter — especially a delegation encounter — becomes established and offers an ongoing platform for mutual engagement, a new 'boundary practice' is likely to emerge. Sometimes, such practice may gain its own momentum and become a community of practice in its own right. To give an example, in the AKB48 fandom, when a long-running TV programme needs to be subbed, members from different communities may come together to form a temporary project team. Yet, after this project is over, some teams of this type may continue to exist and become a new and sustained CoP which is dedicated to a new enterprise (e.g. AKB48 member promotion, news article translation and posting, etc.);
2) *Overlaps*: Practice-based connections do not always require an independent enterprise. Instead, they can be established by a direct and sustained overlap between two distinct practices. For instance, in AKB48 fandom, a fansubbing community dedicated to a specific AKB48 member may sometimes exist alongside a general supporter community dedicated to the same member. Those two communities may have a number of core members in common, therefore the overlap in mutual relationships. Naturally, the promotion of their favourite member is an essential part of the enterprises of both communities, hence the overlap. Moreover, they share a wide variety of boundary objects, e.g. high-definition subbed videos, local fan lore, a uniform prefix of online pseudonym that marks their fan identity, etc.
3) *Peripheries*: a community can also create connection by opening a periphery to the rest of the world. In this way, people who are not on a trajectory to become a full member can gain casual but legitimate 'peripheral experiences' without committing themselves to the demands of full membership. Therefore, the periphery of a practice acts as a transition area between outside and inside which encompasses the practice with a certain degree of permeability. In this sense, we can say that a community

> of practice is a node of mutual engagement that offers multiple layers of participation, which become progressively looser from core membership to extreme peripherality. The renegotiations of the relations between these layers can create opportunities for the community to develop. In most fan communities within AKB48 fandom, we can observe such a hierarchy of participation. For example, when fans become interested in a AKB48 member, they can choose to join the instant messaging group of a supporter community for that member, and begin their peripheral experiences of that supporter community. Eventually, only a minority of the newcomers will enter the core of the community. The majority of them will remain in the periphery by staying in the group yet seldom interacting with the others.

All the connections introduced above can serve to consolidate the interconnectedness of a collective of CoPs and thus link them to form a broader configuration called 'constellation of practices' (Wenger 1998: 127). This is a highly useful concept when used to discuss a social structure which is too broad to cohere as a CoP yet still displays a great many commonalities across its components. These commonalities, as enabled by the connections across the boundaries, become some key characteristics of a constellation. I will use an example from the AKB48 fandom to illustrate the concept's relevance to this study, as well as introduce the characteristics of a constellation.

In the AKB48 fandom, a number of communities created by fans of the same AKB48 member are usually closely interconnected: these communities are usually established when that particular member's popularity begins to grow, and hence they share common historical roots. These communities normally make use of the same Internet technologies, such as a common instant messaging application, so they are virtually 'close' to each other. They usually have a number of members in common, some of whom act as brokers between these communities while others are just peripheral participants. Their enterprises are related in that they all contribute to promoting their favourite AKB48 members to the outside world to various degrees. Their practices take

place under the same constraints, e.g. those imposed by the environment of China's Internet services. These communities also share artefacts, such as fansubbed videos that feature the AKB48 member in question, as well as overlapping styles, discourses, and narratives. Finally, they also compete for the same resources, e.g. two fansubbing communities in this collective may compete for competent translators. With all these connection-enabled characteristics, this collective of communities can be regarded as a constellation. According to Wenger (1998: 127), a given community of practice can establish connections with an indefinite number of other communities, and hence be part of any number of constellations.

Based on the discussions developed so far, we can tentatively draw a general image of the structure of the Chinese AKB48 fandom. As the focus community type of this research, communities of practice serve as the start point of this account. In this fandom, we can locate a great many self-organising fan communities that qualify as CoPs. Some of them are communities of general supporters, while others are 'special-purpose' communities, e.g. fansubbing communities and fund-raising communities. According to the previously proposed defining characteristics of CoP, these CoPs are located across a continuum that spans from typical CoPs, which meet all the key criteria, to extremely partial CoPs, which only meet a few of the characteristics. Most of these CoPs are interconnected through various types of connections, in this way, they form many constellations of practices which are usually mutually interwoven through complex inter-community links. Apart from the CoPs, there are also non-CoP configurations in the fandom, such as event groups, chat groups, personal networks, etc., which tend to be less organised and thus are usually peripheral and less connected to other configurations within the fandom.

Having identified the Chinese fandom of AKB48 as a network composed of a large number of CoPs, non-CoP configurations and constellations, I now explore how this network can be characterised from a CoP perspective. When analysing social configurations at different levels, Wenger foregrounds the concept of 'culture' (*ibid.*:

291), defined as a macro-level structure whose scope is too broad to enable sustained mutual engagement and the pursuit of a joint enterprise, As a result, we can only define a culture by a 'composite repertoire'. This repertoire is a product of the 'interaction, borrowing, imposing, and brokering' among the CoPs and other configurations that constitute this culture (*ibid.*). In this light, we may draw an analogy between the concept of culture and a fandom that encompasses many fan communities. As a network composed of CoPs, non-CoP configurations and constellations, the Chinese fandom of AKB48 can be treated as the online culture of Chinese fans of AKB48. This culture is situated in larger global contexts, such as the world of Internet, the global media industries, international relations in East Asia, etc. The participants of the fandom usually do not engage directly with these contexts. However, they can still create connections with these contexts through other forms of participation, such as 'imagination' and 'alignment', which will be introduced in 2.5.3.

The study of fandom structure requires the analysis of archival data. Therefore, in this chapter, I can only present a provisional scheme for mapping the structure of the AKB48 fandom. This scheme is open to adjustments and reformulation through my analysis. By conducting this research, we may examine the validation and applicability of CoP theory in fandom culture, and consequently contribute to its development.

2.5 Identity formation in the fandom

2.5.1 Identity and practice

Having paid much attention to issues of practice, learning, meaning, and community, I now turn my focus to people who participate in communities. Since the understanding of a person's identity relies on elicited data, at this stage, it is impossible to gain a systemic and detailed insight into the identities of fans in AKB48 fandom. Therefore, in this section, I will only provide a concise framework of identity formation which is open to scrutiny and readjustments later during the stages of data collection and analysis.

Wenger (1998: 149) argues that since practice requires people in a community to engage with others and recognise each other as participants, it inevitably entails the negotiation of ways of being human in that context. This negotiation usually takes place through the ways they engage with each other in action and the ways they relate to each other. Therefore, we can say that formation of a community of practice is at the same time the negotiation of identities. In this way, identity can be characterised by the characteristics of practice which are introduced in previous sections. As a result, identity also shows the richness and complexity of the notion of practice (*ibid.*: 148).

Practice as…	Identity as…
● Negotiation of meaning (in terms of participation and reification)	● Negotiated experience of self (in terms of participation and reification)
● Community	● Membership
● Shared history of learning	● Learning trajectory
● Boundary and landscape	● Nexus of multimembership
● Constellations	● Belonging defined globally but experienced locally

Figure 2.1 Parallels between practice and identity (Wenger 1998: 150)

Figure 2.1 displays the parallels between the characteristics of practice and the features of identity. Our engagement in practice keeps offering us lived experiences of participation. At the same time, we keep reflecting on our experiences and receiving feedback from others. Such self-reflection and feedback reify our participation into a social discourse of the self (e.g. narratives of self-image) and social categories (e.g. roles and positions in a community) (*ibid.*: 151). In this sense, identity is a history of events of participation and reification. By bringing the two aspects together, we can construct who we are as a complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections (*ibid.*). This ongoing process is named 'negotiation of identities'.

Based on this interplay between participation and reification, our membership in a community of practice can constitute our identity acquired within the community, not

only through reified markers of membership, but also the forms of competence that the community entails (*ibid.*: 152). In this sense, identity is an experience as well as an exhibition of competence. As membership constitutes our identity, the three dimensions of competence introduced in 2.2.2.4 become dimensions of identity (*ibid.*: 152-153), which are presented in my words as follows:

> *Mutuality of engagement*: mutuality of engagement entails that we learn ways of properly interacting and working with other people in a community, and therefore ways of becoming a part of the whole. As an identity, this partiality translates into a form of 'individuality' defined with regards to a community.
>
> *Accountability to an enterprise*: when we pursue an enterprise, we sense a form of accountability to that enterprise. This accountability makes us look at the world in certain ways, gives us a certain focus on practice, and motivates us to consider certain possibilities. As an identity, this accountability translates into a 'perspective', i.e. members of a community tend to come up with certain interpretations, make similar decisions and value specific experiences.
>
> *Negotiability of a repertoire*: our sustained engagement in practice gives us an ability to interpret and make use of the shared repertoire of that practice. As elements of a repertoire represents the history of engagement in a practice of which we are a part, we can make use of that history through our personal history of participation. From the perspective of identity, this personal history of participation can create individual relations of negotiability in terms of the repertoire of a practice.

As has been argued at the beginning of this section, an identity is negotiated through participation and reification. Therefore, it is not a fixed, unchanging object, but is an ongoing process (Wenger 1998: 154). As people go through successive forms of participation, their identities form along 'trajectories' within and across communities

of practice. Those trajectories are continuous motions that have momentum of their own, and they develop constantly as time goes by. Our identities are defined through the interaction of various convergent and divergent trajectories (*ibid.*). In the context of CoP, there are various types of trajectories: peripheral trajectories, i.e. trajectories that stay at the periphery of a CoP and never lead to full participation; inbound trajectories, which means newcomers' progress to becoming full participants; insider trajectories, which refers to the renegotiation of full participants' identities as their practice evolves; boundary trajectories, i.e. trajectories that span boundaries and link different CoPs; and outbound trajectories, which lead out of a community (*ibid.*: 154-155).

As has been mentioned, people's trajectories of identity can span across different communities. This is a quite common situation, because we all belong to many communities of practice at the same time, where we participate in different ways: in some of them we are full members, while in others we are only peripheral participants; some of these communities are more central to our identities while others may be quite insignificant (*ibid.*: 158). On the one hand, these different forms of participation suggest that we engage in different communities in different ways, which construct different aspects of identity; on the other hand, these different forms of participation can interact, influence each other, and may require coordination (*ibid.*: 159). Therefore, an identity can be viewed as a 'nexus of multimembership' rather than a single trajectory. This notion of nexus connects our experience of participation in different communities together and thus adds a multiplicity to our identity, i.e. in a nexus, multiple trajectories become part of each other, whether in clash or in harmony (*ibid.*).

Moreover, even though aspects of an identity may be formed in a specific community of practice, that identity is not only local to that community. In communities of practice, we come together not only to pursue a joint enterprise, but also to find our how our engagement fits in the broader contexts that encompass our practice. Therefore, identity in practice is always shaped by an interplay between the local and the global. Yet, no matter how grand or sublime a global context may seem, its meaning is usually shaped

by the practices where it is 'lived' and experienced as an engaged identity (*ibid.*: 161). This aspect is significant particularly for the case of the AKB48 fandom, because of its members' focus on a foreign, remote context of Japanese pop music industry. When talking about their identities, members of the fandom may prioritise their allegiance to the pop group over their membership in fan communities, but the experience of participation in those communities may have a stronger impact on their perception of the group than the group's own promotion efforts.

2.5.2 Participation and non-participation

Our engagement in practices is not the only way to produce our identities. In addition, we can also define ourselves through practices that we do not actively engage in. In this sense, our identities are composed not only of what we are, but also of what we are not. Therefore, our relations to CoPs include both participation and non-participation. The combination of these two aspects jointly shapes our identities (*ibid.*: 164).

As we are living in a world structured by interconnected communities of practice, we inevitably keep crossing boundaries. It is impossible that all that we encounter can become significant to us and that we can identify with all the people and things that we meet. Yet, they can all contribute to our identity in their own ways through the interaction between participation and non-participation (*ibid.*: 165). Such interaction usually takes place when a person's participation is located in the periphery of a community and thus can only participate in a part of the practice. There are two main types of interplay between participation and non-participation (*ibid.*): peripherality, which denotes that certain degree of non-participation enables a partial participation in which participation dominates and defines non-participation as its 'enabling factor'; marginality, which means that a form of non-participation prevents the trajectory towards full participation, in this case, non-participation dominates and defines participation as restricted.

The difference between peripherality and marginality should be understood with reference to the trajectory types introduced in 2.5.1 (*ibid.*: 166): newcomers now in a peripheral position in a community may be on an inbound trajectory that is expected to lead to a full participation in its future; conversely, old-timers of the same community may be kept in a marginal position for a long time, therefore, for these old-timers, the path to full participation has been closed.

From this discussion, we can expand the range of forms of engagement in a community mentioned in 2.2.2.4, to include four categories (*ibid.*: 167): full participation (insider); full non-participation (outsider); peripherality (participation enabled by non-participation, whether it leads to an inbound trajectory or remains on a peripheral trajectory); and marginality (participation restricted by non-participation, whether it leads to an outbound trajectory or to a continuous marginal position).

2.5.3 Modes of belonging and the process of identification

So far, I have talked about identity as belonging to communities of practice. Yet, as has been mentioned in 2.5.1, identity is a result of the interplay between the local and the global. Participants in a practice are constantly in touch with social processes and configurations that extend beyond their direct engagement in their practice, and from time to time, they reflect on their positions in those processes and configurations (Wenger 1998: 173). Therefore, to make sense of the formation of identity in terms of larger contexts, it is necessary to consider other 'modes of belonging', which can be understood as forms of participation in social life, apart from engagement in practice (*ibid.*). Each of these modes can become constitutive of our identities by creating different experiences of participation (or bonds) and experiences of non-participation (or distinctions) in which we become invested. This process of identity formation is called 'identification' (*ibid.*: 191).

Wenger (*ibid.*) argues that there are three modes of belonging that need to be considered,

which can be summarised as follows:

1) *Engagement*: as a critical dimension of practice and of CoP, this mode has been discussed throughout this chapter. To revisit its definition, it denotes direct, active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning, which take place in a participant's own immediate time and space;
2) *Imagination*: this mode means creating images of the world and discovering connections across time and space by taking an excursion from our direct experience of engagement;
3) *Alignment*: this refers to our way of coordinating our energy and activities in order to fit within configurations larger than communities and make contribution to broader enterprises.

Here, I will focus on discussing the latter two newly introduced modes, in order to see their impact on formation of identity. According to Wenger (*ibid.*: 176), imagination is an important component of our experience of the world. It has the transcending power of expanding our self beyond direct engagement and projecting it to other times and spaces. Yet, this does not imply that imagination necessarily leads to personal fantasies, withdrawal from reality, or opposition to facts. Rather, the term is employed to suggest the creative power of this process, which can substantially contribute to constituting identity. In fact, the aspects of identity produced by imagination are no less 'real' or 'significant' than those produced by direct engagement (*ibid.*: 177). This fact is particularly obvious when imagination is used to create collective identity. For instance, a nation may use history to evoke a sense of common origin among its members. Such sense usually plays a substantial and vital role in maintaining the coherence of a state (*ibid.*: 178).

Creative as such, imagination can establish links between people who do not engage with each other and therefore become an important source of identification that moves the process beyond the immediate time and space in various ways (*ibid.*: 194). As a

result, identification through imagination can lead to a sense of affinity based on commonalities between people, and thus an identity of participation; on the other hand, it may also lead to a sense of dissociation because of differences between people, and thus an identity of non-participation (*ibid.*: 195). This is particularly important for the case of the Chinese fandom of AKB48, because members of this fandom are constantly experiencing processes of imagination, in the sense that they treat AKB48 members as the embodiment of their visions, desires, and aspirations. Through such imagination processes, those fans can initially gain a sense of affinity with each other and create an identity of participation. Furthermore, through this initial sense of affinity, they begin to engage with each other and develop relationships between each other. Therefore, it can be assumed that the work of imagination is a foundational power for AKB48 fan communities.

Alignment can also create links between people who do not directly engage with each other. It can bridge different times and spaces and form broader enterprises. Through these enterprises, participants become connected by coordinating their energies, actions, and practices. In this way, alignment can make us become part of something big. The connections enabled by alignment are different from those enabled by imagination in that people who are connected through imagenation may not care or know what to do about this connection (*ibid.*: 179). Also, these connections do not have much to do with commonalities or differences between people. People who commit themselves to the same movement may come from highly diverse backgrounds and they may pursue very different personal goals in this movement. Yet, the alignment with the overall enterprise of the movement can create a vast community united by a joint purpose, regardless of their commonalities and differences.

Alignment can also become constitutive of our identities. This form of identification usually takes place through relations of power. As a mode of belonging that concerns directing and controlling energy of people, alignment inevitably has much to do with power. In this context, 'power' refers to the power to exercise alignment and the power

to inspire or demand alignment (*ibid.*: 180). Those who hold more power can demand or inspire others' alignment, therefore they gain a sense of control over others. This sense can in turn lead to an identity of participation. As for those who hold less power, there are two possible scenarios: if they willingly choose to align themselves with a large enterprise, then they may acquire a sense of willing allegiance, which leads to an identity of participation; yet, if they are forced by an authority to serve an enterprise, they may gain a sense of passive compliance, which leads to an identity of non-participation (*ibid.*: 196).

Alignment also plays a significant role in the AKB48 fandom, especially in shaping the relationships between the fandom and the entertainment industry. For instance, it can be said that Chinese fans of AKB48 and the management company of AKB48 are pursuing the same large enterprise of supporting the group. Yet, the power balance between them is quite unequal. The company has the power to employ the group members, to organise events that feature the group, and to request fans to contribute to supporting the group by investing their time, energy, and money. On the other side of the balance, because of the barriers of nationality, language, and market restrictions, Chinese fans of AKB48 do not enjoy a significant role in the global fandom of AKB48. As a result, sometimes they may feel that the company is making use of their alignment with the group to do things that they do not favour. As an example, during an annual general election of the group, the company may distribute unequal promotion opportunities to different group members. The fans of a less promoted girl may feel humiliated, however, since the result of the election will have a strong impact on the girl's development trajectory in the next year, they still have to comply with the arrangement made by the company and devote a large amount of money to this event. In this case, we can assume that this experience may create a sense of passive compliance with the company's business arrangements, and therefore an identity of non-participation.

It should be noted that although engagement, imagination, and alignment are distinct

modes of belonging, they are not mutually exclusive (*ibid.*: 182). In fact, just as a person's identity can be constituted by all the three modes, a specific community can also be constituted by all of them in different proportions. As a result, these different combinations can create communities with distinct qualities (*ibid.*: 183). When the dominance moves from one mode of belonging to another, the character of a community changes. This process can be observed in the early stage of a fan community within the AKB48 fandom, when it gradually evolves from a community of affinity to a community of practice in which the community members actively engage with other in negotiating and pursuing a joint enterprise. Also, One mode of belonging may affect another (*ibid.*). For example, in a supporter community for a specific member, the sense of affinity shared by the members may substantially reinforce their alignment with the large enterprise of supporting this member to gain more success in her career. In this sense, the three modes of belonging provide a framework for analysing the variety of community types, as well as for understanding the transformation of these communities over time (*ibid.*). Therefore, I will revisit them later in analytical chapters.

2.6 Further development and applications of the CoP theory

Since Wenger published the seminal work that defines the CoP framework in 1997, the theory has undergone further development carried out by various scholars and management practitioners in three main strands, i.e. two analytical strands and an instrumental one (summarised in Omidvar and Kislov 2014). The first analytical strand represents Wenger's own efforts to shift the analytical focus on the internal processes shaping CoPs to the constellations formed through interconnections between CoPs. As the seminal work that defines this strand, Wenger (2010) proposes a concept called 'landscape of practice' which refers to a social system constantly shaped by the complexity of interrelated practices. In this landscape, a community of practice represents the simplest social learning system that constitutes the landscape. As multiple communities constantly form, develop, compete, merge, and disband in the landscape, they contribute to producing a specific body of knowledge (e.g. vocational

knowledge of a certain profession) through dynamic interactions. Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the boundaries between those communities where creations and innovations emerge out of peace and harmony as well as competitions and conflicts.

The second analytical strand, which is also established by Wenger as part of his social discipline of learning, focuses on broadening the theoretical horizon of the CoP from competence developed in single CoPs to the notion of 'knowledgeability' (Omidvar and Kislov 2014). According to Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015), knowledgeability refers to complex relationships built with regard to a landscape of practice through people's efforts to gain knowledge about institutions and communities in which they have no membership and no claim to competence. As such, these relationships are mainly negotiated through people's individual claims to how they relate to those institutions and communities, and are thus different from competence in that they are negotiated without recognition from members of a community. In modern social systems, knowledgeability is essential for people who constantly travel between organisations and practices because it allows those people to be recognised as legitimate actors in the said systems. Omidvar and Kislov (2014) argues that this strand marks the CoP theory's return to the original notion of learning. Nevertheless, in this strand, this central concept is relocated in the context of complex social systems.

The third strand mentioned by Omidvar and Kislov (2014), refers to an instrumental perspective on CoPs as spaces for knowledge production and management in institutions and organisations. This strand complements the analytical perspective of the theory by introducing CoP as a knowledge production tool and by deliberately cultivating CoPs within and across organisations. Table 2.2 demonstrates four main directions of this strand and a number of studies which represent each of the directions. It can be understood from the body of literature listed here that CoP has been applied widely used in studying institutions and organisations across a variety of fields to help people solve managerial problems and boost competitiveness.

Deliberate cultivation of communities of practice by organisations to boost their competitive advantage	Probst and Borzillo (2008); Saint-Onge and Wallace (2004); Wenger and Snyder (2000)
Virtual communities of practice as a way to organise project work and enhance learning	Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling (2003); Hildreth (2004)
Communities of practice as a way to enhance inter-organisational and inter-professional collaboration	Bate and Robert (2002); Ranmuthugala et al. (2011)
Challenges arising when trying to manage, control or cultivate communities of practice	Swan, Scarbrough, and Robertson (2002); Thompson (2005); Kislov, Walshe, and Harvey (2012)

Table 2.2 Instrumental perspective on communities of practice and its critique (re-produced from Table 1 of Omidvar and Kislov 2014)

Among those directions, the application of the CoP theory to virtual communities is of particular relevance to this PhD research on virtual translation-oriented communities. While the virtual-community-related studies mentioned in Table 2.2 represent an earlier trend among researchers to focus on virtual communities located within structured institutions and organisations, there has been a new trend among education and management scholars during recent years to shift their attention to more self-organising and informal virtual CoPs (e.g. Da Silva et al. 2020 and Romoro-mas et al. 2020). This trend has also spread to translation scholars, who have conducted a number of high-quality studies of virtual communities established by amateur/fan translators.

Previously introduced in 1.2 and 2.1, Kung (2016) is one of the earliest studies of virtual amateur translation communities that exist in the current literature. The methods used in this study to collect archival data from virtual fansubbing CoPs make a helpful example for the data collection processes of this research. Also, its discovery about the audienceship of fansubbing CoPs will surely inspire this study to pay attention to the audiences' interaction with fansubbing CoPs within the AKB48 fandom.

The PhD study conducted by Yu (2017; later published and expanded in Yu 2019 and Yu 2020b), also previously mentioned in 1.2 and 2.1, is perhaps the most systematic and sophisticated investigation of virtual amateur translation CoPs so far. Based on the basic theoretical assumptions of the CoP theory, Yu modifies certain elements of the framework in order to make the theory better fit for a study of amateur translation communities. The most significant modification is her argument (Yu 2019) that the term 'mutual engagement' can be used interchangeably with 'practice' because the former already possesses the latter's status as an 'overarching force' which embraces participation and reification simultaneously. Therefore, in Yu (2017), she substitutes mutual engagement with 'mutual recognition', which is originally an ill-defined concept in the CoP theory. When used in Yu's research context, mutual recognition refers to various forms of mutual understanding and mutual acceptance established between members of an amateur translation CoP through their negotiations of a shared practice which take place between different participants in the practice, including those take place between co-translators, between translators and editors and between translators and the audience, among others. Since my PhD research also focuses on an amateur translation CoP, I will draw on Yu's emphasis on mutual recognition as a concept central to mutual engagement in amateur translation practice and explore how this perspective can be used to investigate the organisational dimensions of my target fansubbing CoP.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has established a theoretical framework for the current study of the Chinese online fandom of Japanese pop music group AKB48. I argue in 2.2 that based on Wenger's Communities of Practice theory, this framework revolves around social learning processes. In this process, participants are always producing meaning through a process called 'meaning negotiation', which is composed of two components: 'participation' and 'reification'. When people directly participate in interactions between each other, they can trigger a process called 'mutual engagement', which in turn allows them to negotiate a local 'joint enterprise' and a 'shared repertoire', therefore a local practice is established. All of them are discussed in detail with reference to examples from my dataset. These three elements effectively connect 'practice' with 'community', therefore they act as three dimensions that generate and sustain the coherence of a 'community of practice'. These dimensions then translate into dimensions of community membership as a 'competence'. As a social configuration in which 'competent membership' is negotiated, a CoP can be defined as a 'regime of competence'.

The discussion has also explored the technological side of fan communities (2.3). According to Fuchs (2010a), the Internet offers three levels of technologies which enable different levels of sociality. In this way of combining technical aspects with social aspects, these technologies have profound impacts on the different dimensions of fan communities as virtual communities. And in 2.4, I introduce various kinds of connection which can be built on the boundaries of these communities. These connections can link many communities to form a larger configuration called a 'constellation of practices'. In a fandom, there are a large number of such constellations as well as other discursive communities and individuals. Together, they form a fandom as a complex network of virtual fan communities. As such a network can be described as a 'composite repertoire' shaped by its constituent communities, we may draw on Wenger's definition of a 'culture' and thus define it as the online culture of Chinese fans of AKB48.

2.5 turns our attention to the issues of identity. All the previously discussed aspects of a community — community membership as a competence, boundary relations and practices, a community's relations to larger configurations and contexts such as constellations and the world of Internet — can all contribute to constituting a member's identity. Moreover, apart from what we actively participate in, what we do not actively participate in, or an experience of 'non-participation', can also become constitutive of our identity. Finally, apart from direct engagement, other forms of participation in the social world, such as 'imagination' and 'alignment', can also generate different experiences such as a sense of affinity or a sense of allegiance. These experiences can all contribute to constituting our identity.

And the last section of this chapter (2.6) provides an account how the horizon of the CoP theory has been significantly broadened through two analytical strands of development since the publication of Wenger (1998). Furthermore, this section introduces an instrumental strand which applies the CoP theory to various social areas, especially to the study of virtual fan translation communities which is directly relevant to this study.

By building this theoretical framework, we lay a solid foundation for formulating our methodology, which in turn helps us answer research questions regarding issues of meaning, practice, community, and identity. On the other hand, the results of this research may give us an opportunity to comprehensively assess CoP theory's validity and applicability in the context of a celebrity fandom as well as to see if and how this framework needs to be modified in order to effectively explain the social realities in the fandom. These are the potential theoretical contributions that this research may make to the existing literature about fan AVT.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As signalled by the research questions driving this study, this thesis aims to investigate the organisation of fan communities as well as the processes of fan identity formation. These aspects can only be understood by gathering first-hand knowledge from the inside of the communities in question. In light of these objectives, ethnographic methods — a methodological strand that allows us to research and experience social processes and configurations from the inside — appears to be particularly relevant to the current study.

The fact that it focuses on face-to-face communication, however, means that traditional ethnography does not provide the means to address the challenges that arise in studying online interaction. These include, for example, the need to identify and enter online spaces; the collection of the various types of data that we will encounter, such as communication records, documents, videos, and images; the challenges derived from ethical issues that are unique to research of online interactions; among others. To deal with these challenges, netnography as a specific form of ethnography adapted to online reality is introduced as the overarching methodology used in this research.

Also, rooted in the context of East Asian transnational fandom culture, this study seeks to investigate an online community thoroughly. As such, the study requires me to have a clear holistic view of its nature and its overall structure. Therefore, after reflecting on the context of and the dataset used in this study, I opted to structure my project as a case study[10].

[10] For detailed discussions of this issue, please refer to 3.2.3.

This chapter starts with a brief introduction to the dataset and the context to this study, (**section 3.2)**; then netnography is introduced as the methodology underpinning this research (**section 3.3**); in **section 3.4**, I discuss how I identified, observed, and participated in my fieldsite; **section 3.5** introduces the main data collection methods that were used to collect archival data, elicited data, and produced data; in **section 3.6**, I introduce the data analysis methods used in this study; finally, **section 3.7** discusses the ethical issues related to this study.

3.2 Dataset: a case study of AKB48 fandom

Although a number of examples from this fandom have already been used throughout Chapter 2, this section will deliver an overview of the historic trajectories and current configuration of AKB48 and their fandom in China, in order to facilitate the presentation of my proposed methodology.

3.2.1 AKB48 as a female idol group

AKB48 is a large-scale Japanese female idol group based in Akihabara, Tokyo. Founded in 2005, it has been continuously increasing the number of members. As of November 2018, there were 120 members whose ages range from young teenagers until adults in their mid-twenties (AKPedia 2018), making it the world's largest pop music group (Guinness World Records 2013).

The emergence of AKB48[11] is rooted in Japan's idol culture, which has developed to become an important and 'formidable' part of the country's pop culture industry — encompassing record companies, talent production agencies, and digital media (Otmazgin 2013: 131). In the Japanese context, Idols, or *Aidoru* (アイドル), are usually

[11] The name 'AKB48' consist of two parts: 'AKB' is short for Akihabara, an area in Tokyo where the dedicated theatre of the group is located; '48' was added because the pronunciation of number 48 in Japanese is similar to the name of one of the group's founders, Kotaro Shiba. AKB48 is composed of five teams that are named after each of the five letters in the group's name, i.e. Team A, Team K, Team B, Team 4, and Team 8.

considered as different from professional artists, in that the latter are known for their extraordinary talent and appearance. By contrast, idols typically have 'fairly standard' or slightly 'above average' looks, which makes their fans perceive them as 'a girl or boy next door chosen to be lucky stars' (Aoyagi 2000: 311). Females idols are usually portrayed as cute (or *kawaii*, 可愛い) girls who seem approachable to fans, yet actually are out of their reach (Kaneko 2015). As can be understood from their fairly average image and their young age (usually less than 18 years old when debuting), Japanese idols usually start their career without sufficient professional skills and experience in the showbiz — a status which is referred to in Japanese as a '*Genseki*' (原石), or a 'rough gemstone'. This allows their production companies to dominate their training, market the process of growth to the audiences, and invite fans to participate in the 'upbringing' (育成) of idols. In fact, witnessing and participating in the growth of an idol is the most significant experience for idol fans. As a result, such sense of participation creates affective bonds between idols and their fans, and redefines fan experience as a bi-directional 'interactive media activity', which is clearly different from the one-directional artist-fan relationship defined by 'talent supremacism' in the Western media industry (Inamasu 2015).

Within the context of Japanese idol culture, AKB48 was founded on the principle of 'idols that you can meet' (Japanese: 会いにいけるアイドル). Members of the group are divided into five teams, each of which holds at least one live song and dance show (Japanese: 公演, 'public performance') per week in their dedicated theatre, performing songs from one of the albums that are exclusively written for the group's theatre shows. There are more than a dozen of such albums, or 'stages'[12], which are shuffled regularly among the five teams every six to twelve months. This is done in order to ensure the freshness of the performance, as well as to allow the teams to deliver differentiated performances in the same period. Apart from regular live shows, the group also holds

[12] In AKB48, 'stage' (ステージ) is used as a Japanised English word that refers to an album of songs which share a common theme, and the songs are usually arranged in a specific sequence.

interactive activities, such as 'handshake events'[13] (Japanese: 握手会), which fans can access using the event tickets enclosed in the CDs that they have previously purchased. To ensure that the group is present all over Japan, the management company AKS, in collaboration with Toyota Automobile, established Team 8. Formed by 47 members (out of the 120 of the whole group) chosen to represent the 47 prefectures of Japan, Team 8 routinely takes part in local commercial, public service, and sports activities across the whole country (AKB48 Team 8 2018). Their regular presence throughout the country has effectively boosted the group's nationwide influence and attracted active public engagement. Moreover, members of the group also appear frequently on TV series, variety shows, advertisements, etc. Some members have even worked as voice talent in popular *anime* series and games (Misa Harada 2016). Another widely-known event is the annual popularity voting, or 'general election' (Japanese: 総選挙), in which fans can cast voting tickets[14] for their favourite individual members, in order to decide their positions in the group's popularity ranking. The top members in the ranking will then appear in prominent positions in the promotion of the next CD single, and gain the most opportunities for media exposure during the following year. It can be said that this event maximises the management company's exploitation of the bonds between group members and their fans.

In addition to these forms of participation and interaction, AKB48 also inherited the music style and aesthetics of the Japanese idol industry. As is also the case with most other Japanese female idol groups, a significant part of AKB48's music repertoire consists of sweet songs accompanied by relatively simple and synchronised choreographies which reflect the mentality and dress-up styles of late teen or early adult Japanese girls. This music style well reflects the conventional aesthetics of Japanese idols — young, cute, and innocent girls who wear uniforms and never enter a romantic relationship with any male. For this reason, the group is negatively viewed by some as

[13] Handshake events are similar to what is known in the English-speaking world as 'meet and greet', though the former usually involve less physical contact (usually only handshake is allowed) and their duration of meeting is strictly controlled by members of staff.
[14] Voting tickets are usually enclosed in copies of a CD single released shortly before the general election.

representing the ‘patriarchal infantilisation of women’ (Kelts 2015), or even as ‘slaves’ manipulated to satisfy socially-dysfunctional male fans’ fragile fantasies about the innocence of girls (Martin 2013; Galbraith 2018).

Although it conforms to these stereotypes in many cases, the group’s style and aesthetics are not influenced exclusively by idol traditions. As a matter of fact, the ‘total producer’ (Japanese: 総合プロデューサー) of the group Akimoto Yasushi wrote a large number of songs for the group that deviate from conventional idol music — some are love songs written from a male’s point of view, some are concerned with social issues such as campus bullying and natural disasters; most notably, quite a number of songs were written to display the bravery and power of the girls, which are critical qualities when they experience personal and collective challenges and setbacks. Also, because of the size of the group, its members are encouraged to develop their unique characters in order to gain attention from fans and do well in the fierce intra-group competitions. As a result, it can be observed that a significant number of members adopt images that deviate from conventional idol aesthetics. For example, despite often being viewed as lacking cuteness, Sashihara Rino decided to participate in variety shows and has become one of the most popular female variety show MCs in Japan; former member Uchiyama Natsuki published a book that explains the Constitution of Japan in plain language, which made some people seriously consider the possibility of her becoming a politician in the future (Takupath 2017). Based on these observations, it seems reasonable to conclude that AKB48 provides an environment that, to a certain degree, fosters diversity among its members, in terms of aesthetic style, character, and personal talent.

All the above-mentioned activities, promotional strategies, and managerial agendas have resulted in AKB48 members taking part in frequent events with fans, a significant exposure of the group in public events, and a high popularity-to-revenue conversion rate. For these reasons, the group successfully responded to the downturn of Japanese CD market brought about by the digitisation of pop music and their popularity

dramatically boomed after the first general election in 2009. As a result, they have grown from a barely known group catering for a small constituency of core fans to one of the most popular music groups in Japan's history. They had sold more than 50 million copies of records as of June 2017 (Oricon 2017) and have held the title of best-single-selling artist in history since December 2015 (Oricon 2015). In addition, they have been hailed by many mass media as 'National Idols' (国民的アイドル), i.e. idols that are known and liked widely in the country and abroad.

In the process of creating this enormous commercial success, total producer Akimoto has created a number of idol groups that share the same concepts with AKB and that are all named in the fashion of three-letter abbreviation plus the number 48. These include several sister groups based in other Japanese cities (e.g. NMB48 in Osaka and SKE48 in Nagoya) and overseas cities (e.g. AKB48 TeamSH in Shanghai, MNL48 in Manila, and BNK48 in Bangkok). Similar to AKB48, these groups give regular performances in their home cities and are considered as icons of those cities' cultures. This business expansion project has resulted in a constellation called 48Groups. On the other hand, Akimoto has collaborated with SONY Music Records in creating another constellation called Sakamichi Series, which includes AKB48's 'official rival' Nogizaka46 and its sister groups (AKB48 Wiki 2017).

Yet, with the 'graduation' of the old-generation members and the emergence of similar groups, AKB48 has encountered hurdles on their path of development and its popularity has been gradually declining in recent years. Nevertheless, there are also people who believe that their decline will come to an end as the new-generation members mature (Pianomezzo 2018). Yet, a number of high-profile negative events in recent years, including the Yamaguchi Maho Incident[15] and Yahagi Moeka's romantic scandal[16] in

[15] In January 2019, NGT 48 member Yamaguchi Maho was assaulted by two men by the door of her flat. It was widely believed by fans and media that the two offenders were closely related to a number of other NGT members who had allegedly bullied Yamaguchi. As a result, the incident has become a typical example of the bullying activities within Japanese idols groups and thus has attracted substantial attention from the Japanese society.
[16] In June 2019, AKB48 member Yahagi Moeka, who was then seen as a new top member of the group, was found by Japanese media to be dating a male classmate. Since AKB48 members are strictly banned to date with males, this news stirred up fierce controversies among fans of the idol culture.

2019, seem to have made this hope quite faint. As their fans' and sponsors' confidence and interest in the group have been significantly undermined by those events, AKB48 members had to face a quick decline of their media influence: in 2019, two major TV shows dedicated to the group were terminated (i.e. *AKB48 SHOW!* and *AKBingo*); also in the same year, the annual general election events were suspended for the first time; and in January 2021, AKB48 failed to be invited to NHK *Kouhaku* Song Contest for the first time during the past ten years. Having witnessed AKB48's trajectory of decline, it is no wonder that some began to question whether the group could still be called the national idol of Japan (Urban Life Metro 2020).

3.2.2 AKB48 fandom in China

Since the founding of AKB48 in 2005, the group has drawn attention from fans of Japanese pop culture in China. Therefore, the history of its Chinese fandom is almost as long as the history of the group itself. Yet, it was not until its phenomenal success (since 2009) that the group gained significant attention in China. Subsequently, at the peak of the group's popularity in Japan (2010-2014), the size of its fandom in China also expanded substantially. This can be corroborated by the number of fansubbing groups founded in this period. However, the group's popularity in China has followed a trajectory that does not rely on officially marketed products and mainstream media content. Due to the fact that in the past, the management company AKS lacked sufficient interest in developing international market for the group[17], there has been a continuous lack of official copyright authorisations for AKB48-related products and content. Therefore, fans can hardly find the said products and media content published in the Chinese market. In addition, because of the Chinese government's restrictions on the importing and exhibition of Japanese cultural products [18], AKB48 has hardly had the opportunities to feature in China's mainstream media. As a result, AKB48's

[17] This is a common phenomenon in the Japanese pup music industry because record companies and management companies believe that they can make enough profit from the lucrative domestic markets, thus making it unnecessary to put much effort in developing international markets.
[18] Such policy is the consequence of the historical and territorial disputes between the two countries.

popularity in China greatly relies on the dissemination of fan-mediated content within the sizeable fan population of Japanese pop culture, especially fans of *anime* and J-drama, who to some degree also rely on fan-mediation to spread their interests. Many of these fans were first attracted by TV series, *anime* and variety shows featuring members of the group. Then they would typically choose at least one 'favourite member', or *Oshimen* (Japanese: 推しメン), to start and drive their experience as fans of the group.

As has been stated in Chapter 2, the Chinese fandom of AKB48 exists as a well-established fan network. This takes the form of a constellation made of different types of fan communities pursuing different purposes, e.g. translating and circulating a vast volume of media content (such as concert videos, variety shows, TV interviews, magazine articles, etc.), sharing news of group members and events, holding discussions on fan topics, as well as raising funds for the group's commercial events. This last activity has attracted considerable attention from China's media. For example, in the 2014 AKB popularity general election, Chinese fans of the member who won the first place, Watanabe Mayu, raised more than 1.8 million Chinese Yuan (approximately 0.27 million US dollars) to help her gain the top 1 position in the election, which means that she would stand in the centre of the next CD release and receive a proportionately bigger amount of media exposure than other group members in the following year (China News 2014). Against the backdrop of the strained Sino-Japanese relations, the popularity of that campaign sparked a surge of Chinese nationalist sentiment on the Internet, where some people holding negative images of Japan asked the donors if they had forgotten about Japan's invasion of China. There are also others who questioned the legality of this fund-raising activity, because the organisers did not seek approval from the official financial regulators, as required by relevant Chinese financial legislation (Sina Entertainment 2014). Despite these negative comments from Chinese netizens, the fan-mediated promotion of the group has not been significantly hindered by the government's censorship. This may be mainly because the group has been rarely involved in politics and has actively promoted the 'Sino-Japanese friendship' (an

official diplomatic term that usually refers to the positive side of the Sino-Japanese relations) (Sina News 2012).

The above observations of this fandom show that it provides me with ample opportunities to discuss various topics related to my research questions, such as the translation and circulation of an almost limitless volume of media content, the relations between fandom and entertainment/media industries, the impact that fans' viewing activities have on the Chinese media context, the development of trajectories of fan identity, and so on. Among all these possibilities, the most productive feature of the fandom for a researcher is its nature as a complex fan network, which allows me to investigate the interactions between different types of communities, including translation and non-translation ones. In the existing body of literature, this aspect of fan translation has been little scrutinised. Also, apart from the community-oriented perspective, such complexity gives me a good opportunity to study the position and identity formation of individual amateur translators embedded in a large-scale digital media fandom network.

3.2.3 The study of AKB48 fandom as a case study

Because amateur translation and amateur translators are embedded (as well as other fan activities) within the context of a fandom, i.e. they cannot be investigated when separated from the context, this research qualifies as a case study. A case refers to a unit of human activity embedded in the real contemporary world, and this unit cannot reasonably be analysed when separated from the context: it is hard to draw a boundary between it and its context as the researcher does not have control over the phenomenon under scrutiny (Gillham 2000: 1). This contrasts greatly with quantitative methods, where the researcher's ability to control experimental conditions allows for the object of study to be effectively 'divorced' from the context (Susam-Sarajeva 2009). Moreover, to be regarded as a 'case', the object of study needs to be a real-life phenomenon instead of an abstraction — such as an argument, a topic, or a hypothesis (Yin 2009: 32). Based

on the above definitions, a case can be anything from a specific person or a text to a whole organisation. It can also be a process or an event (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 207). In this research project, I aim to study a real-life fandom phenomenon over which I have little control in order to provide answers to a number of 'how' questions. Therefore, the notion of case study provides a suitable holistic methodological platform to carry out this research project.

As a case study, this research can make original contributions to knowledge in the following ways: 1) It allows me to test the validity of CoP theory in the area of fan translation, as previous researchers have rarely done so; 2) It helps me answer the 'how' questions in my set of research questions by enabling me to explore the complex mechanisms of causation behind the case in question; 3) It can help me formulate new hypotheses in the area of fan translation regarding how translation and other activities contribute to meaning negotiation and identity formation within the fandom context — which, as any other case study, can be tested by larger scale studies in the future (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 209-211). In addition, according to Susam-Sarajeva (2009), a case study can create 'transferable' in-depth knowledge of a phenomenon, which can be later used to help people understand other different phenomena. To achieve this goal, I will make use of what Geertz (1973) calls 'thick description', i.e. a description of a human behaviour which not only explains the behaviour, but also its context and symbolic importance, in the way that outsiders can effectively understand the behaviour. Therefore, in this section, a systematic introduction to the context of the case in question is given.

As a case study, this research requires me to pay careful attention to the selection and delimitation of units of study. More details regarding these processes will be discussed in section 3.4.

3.3 Netnography

This section focuses on a range of methodological considerations pertaining to data collection and analysis that befit an online qualitative case study, i.e. finding a research methodology that is specifically tailored for qualitative studies of online interactions, online communities, and online sociality. Netnography is a specific form of ethnography adapted to the 'unique computer-mediated contingencies' of contemporary social spaces (Kozinets 2010: 1). It encompasses a whole set of mutually related data collection/analysis methods, ethical considerations and representational practices for study of online sociality. Under a netnographic approach, the main body of data is typically collected from networked digital communication encounters through a participant-observational method (Kozinets 2017).

Netnography differs from ethnography in that the latter is typically conducted in a face-to-face fashion (Kozinets 2015: 72). Instead, netnography pays specific attention to the radical 'alterations' in human communication resulting from the change of medium: it focuses on the patterns of communications between Internet users. Indeed, one of the biggest advantages of netnography is the fact that digital technologies — i.e. the medium facilitating this strand of research — enables the researcher's access to the field under study; in other words, it provides netnographers with an unprecedented level of accessibility to a wide range of data and social spheres. One of these advantages based on the archival dimension of online social media is the fact that a netnographer can rely on naturally occurring, user-generated information that is publicly available in online platforms to trace online social interactions (Kozinets 2010: 56). Faced with this unprecedented wealth of data, netnographers have to develop strategies for mass data capture and analysis, which means that they need to possess the skills required to mine, collect, code, and monitor data flows. Significantly, the new modes of interaction that lie at the heart of virtual interaction bring about a range of specific ethical issues to be discussed in Section 3.7.

Another particularly notable difference between ethnography and netnography is that the netnographic analysis of existing records of online interactions enables study

options that are simultaneously naturalistic and unobtrusive, i.e. it allows researchers to investigate naturally occurring online interaction data without directly intervening with online interactions. Yet, conducting research entirely in an unobtrusive manner has its own limitations, as acknowledged by Kozinets, the founder of this methodology (*ibid.*: 56). In his view (2015: 84), netnography should faithfully 'export' ethnography's theoretical and methodological stances to the study of online social experience, including the researcher's immersion in the social field under investigation. More specifically, he (2017) argues that the practice of netnography needs to include active participation as one of its core elements, i.e. the researcher should be fully present in the 'data stream', and needs to be considered as a member of the community in question. The main reason for this is that the researcher's reflective understandings are the most effective means to acquire 'cultural understandings' of the target community (*ibid.*). Thus, it is important for researchers to be always reflective and remain constantly aware of what they are assuming, doing and feeling (*ibid.*). This stance will also be adopted in this research, i.e. I will enter the communities to be studied and actively take part in the practices and interactions within those communities.

In recent years, there has been a new methodological strand called 'digital ethnography' (systematically introduced in Pink et al. 2016), which also investigates online communications and communities using ethnographic principles and methods. Similar to netnography, this new strand also stresses investigating cultures embedded in contexts rather than decontextualised digital artefacts and products (Varis 2016). In this sense, like netnography, digital ethnography is rooted in the tradition of 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) of culture. Moreover, also similar to netnography, digital ethnography encourages researchers to participate directly in the activities of the target community and understand the 'very lived reality' (Varis 2016) of community members. In this sense, digital ethnography can be treated as a process of learning and discovery where research is guided by experience acquired from the target site(s) (*ibid.*).

Apart from the mentioned similarities between digital ethnography and netnography,

there is one major difference between the two methodological strands, i.e. unlike netnography, digital ethnography treats the Internet space as an extension of the physical fieldsite. Therefore, digital ethnographic studies are not confined to data collection from only online communities, but may also collect data from informants' activities in offline settings (Yu 2020a, based on arguments from Pink et al. 2016). In this way, digital ethnography can serve as a powerful tool for researchers who aim to track people's activities across the boundaries between online and offline worlds.

From the body of translation studies literature, it can be found that a number of researchers have used netnography or similar approaches as the main methodology in their research projects. For example, Li (2015); Ameri and Khoshsaligheh (2020); and Yu (2020). Methodological insights from the first of these studies have influenced this research in terms of interview design and ethical considerations.

When carrying out netnographic research, it is necessary to follow a series of steps. Kozinets (2015: 97) identifies 12 phases in a typical netnography study, which I have summarised into six major steps in order to highlight the key points and avoid becoming verbose. Planning consists of the 'introspection' and 'investigation' phases, i.e. an insight into the researcher's rationales for conducting the current research and the formulation of research questions, which have already been covered in the previous chapters. Preparation covers the 'information', 'interview', and 'inspection' phases, i.e. identification of target fieldsites and considerations on potential ethical issues (it should be noted that these three terms from Kozinets are not used in their everyday meanings). Data collection procedure consists of 'interaction', 'immersion', and 'indexing' phases, which entail entrée into the target sites, participating in data-creating processes, and collecting data that are directly relevant to research questions. Data analysis includes the 'interpretation', 'iteration', and 'instantiation' phases, i.e. the interpretation of data in order to formulate an overall explanatory theory accompanied by rich and concrete supportive examples. Finally, representation consists of the 'instantiation' phase alone, which requires the researcher to present the process and results of netnographic research

in a concrete way, be it a dissertation, a journal article, or a video.

In the following sections, I will focus on the second, third, and fourth steps (i.e. preparation, data collection, and data analysis) and discuss the actions to be taken and the issues to be considered under each.

3.4 Locating and entering target fieldsites

3.4.1 Fieldsite identification

As mentioned above, the Chinese fandom of AKB48 contains a vast number of different communities. This feature poses a substantial challenge to a researcher in that it is obviously impossible to investigate all existing communities within a single research project. Therefore, locating fan communities that fit my PhD project became a top priority at the beginning of my fieldwork. This issue should be addressed with regard to three aspects: the research questions that I was asking, the current degree of activity of the communities, and the communities' willingness to accept new members.

As a four-year fan of the group, I had become quite familiar with the history, popular members, events, and media content of AKB48 before data collection began. Also, I had gained experience of joining different fan activities, especially fansubbing practices. Such familiarity with the group and the fandom allowed me to quickly evaluate the communities that I might potentially research. Yet, as a researcher, I still needed to make a proper investigation of my fieldsites, in order to gain a more systematic and comprehensive understanding of my research case.

To start with, I made the most of one of the advantages of netnographic method — instead of travelling a long distance to make a contact with potential social groups to study, netnographic researchers can achieve this just by sitting in front of a computer connected to the Internet. The search started with the use of Google, which helped me

locate a number of websites and social networking accounts established by the group's fans from both inside and outside Japan which were not known to me before the start of this research, e.g. wiki sites 48pedia.org (in Japanese) and stage48.net (in English). These findings served as quick reference resources when I required information about AKB48.

Because of the relative closedness of the Chinese Internet sphere caused by the country's Internet censorship system, when it comes to locating the AKB48 fan sites in China, I needed to switch to the major Internet services available in the country. First, I used the search engine Baidu, which accounts for 65.05% of China's search engine market (Statcounter 2018), to make a search of AKB48's presence on China's Internet sphere. After entering the key word 'AKB48', the top hit in the result page was AKB48 Tieba (Figure 3.1), which is a forum established by Chinese fans of AKB48 using the Baidu Tieba bulletin board service (BBS) system (which is the most used BBS system, or online forum, in China). This was not a surprise to me, since I was aware of the popularity and position of this forum in AKB48 fandom before this project began. AKB48 Tieba was founded in 2006, shortly after AKB48 was established. As of Dec 2018, it has attracted more than 680,000 registered users. Every day, the fans registered in this forum post a vast number of messages in the form of 'threads', i.e. a group of messages composed of an initial topic posted by one user and replies to that topic by other users. Based on this form of communication, in this forum, fans of AKB48 can post about all the aspects of the group, including but not limited to official news, media contents (photos, links to videos, and so on), fan topics (gossips, rookie Q&As, etc.), fan works (especially fansubs, fanvids, magazine scanlations, and fanfics). Therefore, it is safe to say that it is a large-scale 'general fan community', i.e. a community that gathers different types of fans and is not dedicated to a special purpose (e.g. fansubbing, fund raising, event organising, among others). During its 12-year history, AKB48 Tieba has built a vast and complex platform for information exchange and socialisation within the Chinese fandom of AKB48.

Figure 3.1 The home page of AKB48 Tieba

Starting from this centre of socialisation in the fandom, I moved on to identify a translation-oriented community. In the Chinese fandom of AKB48, translation exists in various forms, including fansubbing of AKB48-related videos; scanlation (i.e. scanning and translation) of magazine articles and photobooks; instant translation of latest news reports, etc. Despite AKB48's official concept of 'idols you can meet' and the large number of fan meeting events that take place in Japan throughout every year, most of the group's fans in China do not have opportunities to meet their idols face to face. Thus, for these fans, the easiest and most common way of getting to know AKB48 and accessing updates on their idols' activities is through different types of media content related to the group. Among them, videos play a central part, because they present the idols through multiple sensory channels, allowing fans to view them in a holistic and vivid manner. Due to the fact that most Chinese fans' Japanese proficiency is not sufficient for understanding the Japanese dialogue and texts featured in the videos, they have to rely on the efforts of fansubbers.

Therefore, my focus was further narrowed to fansubbing communities within the fandom. Based on my experience of the fandom, the most straightforward way of locating potentially suitable communities was by investigating the AKB48-related fansubbed videos uploaded to Bilibili. Established in 2009, Bilibili has become one of the most significant subcultural spaces in China where users consume and discuss Japanese animations as well as other forms and manifestations of Japanese pop culture (Abacus News 2018; Yin and Fung 2017). Apart from its basic function of video streaming, Bilibili also allows users to comment on videos using its signature function called 'bullet comment', or *danmu* (Chinese: 弹幕), i.e. user comments that float directly over the videos that users are watching (as illustrated in Figure 3.2). By integrating this function, Bilibili has expanded beyond video streaming service and has become a social media platform where every video becomes a forum where users are encouraged to communicate with each other (Abacus News 2018).

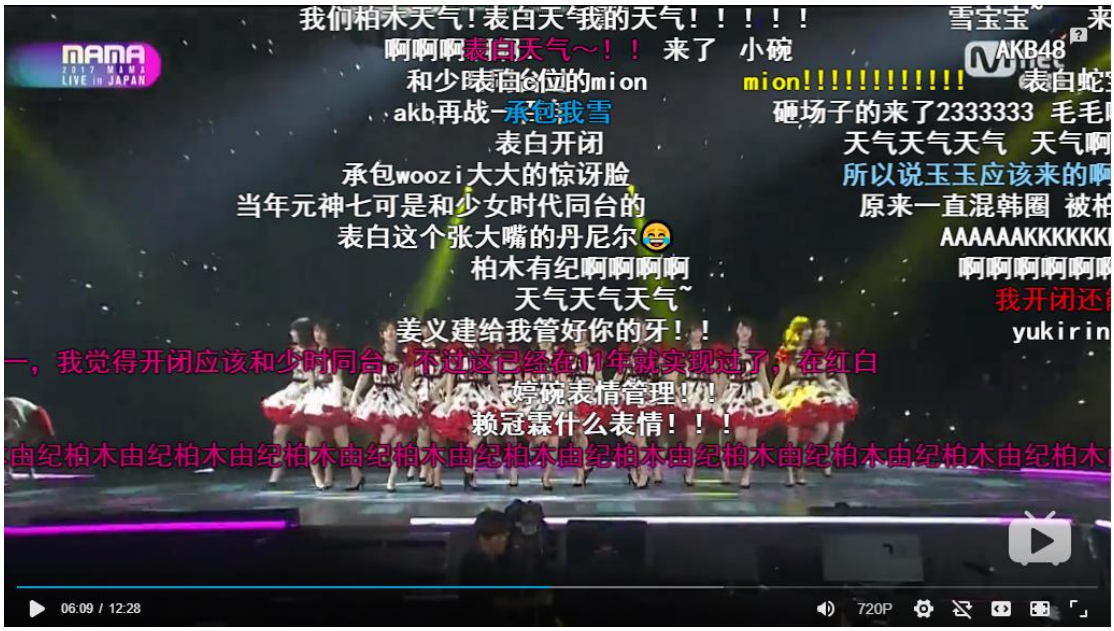

Figure 3.2 Screenshot of an AKB48-related video covered with bullet comments

I started my search by entering the keyword 'AKB48 subs' (AKB48 字幕) in the search engine of Bilibili. On the titles of the found videos, the names of many fansubbing groups could be immediately identified. Though the abundance of fansubbing groups certainly brought about rich possibilities for my study, it could also lead me to get lost

in the vast sea of data. In order to manage the process more effectively, I first made a list of the fansubbing groups I found and set a few criteria to filter them. First, the candidate communities should be active and stable at the time of the search, i.e. they should be regularly producing and uploading. They should ideally be fully functional as a typical fansubbing group; in other words, they should be able to carry out the full fansubbing process — from the acquisition of the original source videos to the uploading and maintenance of the final subbed videos. Finally, they should have a certain level of influence on the general fans. The first criterion entails that the fansubbing groups that are no longer active should be excluded, including a number of well-known ones that I was previously acquainted with, such as AKB Jiuke (AKB9 课). Then, based on the final criterion, I ruled out fansubbing groups that are dedicated to translating videos around one single member of AKB48 (e.g. Douru fansubbing group (豆乳字幕组), which is dedicated to Sashihara Rino), because they target mainly the fans of that particular member, which leads to a limited degree of influence on the fandom. Finally, in the last step, I excluded the fansubbing communities that are not fully functional as a typical fansubbing group. For example, although T.K.M.N has yielded a large number of widely viewed and acclaimed fansub works, they do not have their own account on any video hosting websites. Instead, they always ask other fans or fansubbing communities to upload their works.

After the screening work, I focused my attention on a few communities that are currently active in translating and uploading videos that are widely viewed by AKB48 fans. For instance, Mengnver (萌女儿) focuses on translating and uploading TV shows that feature NMB48 (AKB48's sister group in Osaka); TCF 47 translated a large number of videos related to Team 8 of AKB48; and Feiguanfang NGT Oshi (非官方 NGT 推し) is focused on TV shows of NGT48 (AKB48's sister group in Niigata). All of these groups are able to finish the whole fansubbing process and their Bilibili channels all have gained thousands of subscribers and hundreds of thousands of views.

Apart from the aforementioned communities, one group on my list, AKB48 Daba

Fansubbing Group (AKB48 大吧字幕组) drew my attention because it is presented by its members as a fansubbing group affiliated to AKB48 Tieba, the general fan community that I have introduced above (it should be noted that 'Daba' means 'the primary Tieba' in AKB48 fandom, i.e. AKB48 Tieba). Founded in May 2018, this community was quite young and was still developing its influence within the fandom. Nevertheless, the two leading founders of this group are not rookies: both of them are the main administrators of AKB48 Tieba and fans with long and rich experience of the fandom. When I noticed the Daba Fansubbing Group, the members of the community were focusing on making fansubs for *AKB SHOW!*, which was one of the most viewed regular TV shows of AKB48. This show was produced by NHK (or Japan Broadcasting Corporation, which is Japan's national public broadcasting organisation) and aired weekly on the satellite channel of NHK since 2013. The show usually features studio performances of AKB48's songs, short dramas, and interviews of AKB48 members. Every week, AKB48 Daba subbed and uploaded the translated version of the show to its official account on Bilibili, only a few days after the content was first aired. Apart from its own works, AKB48 Daba also uploaded videos subbed by other fansubbing groups, including AKBingo subbed by T.K.M.N[19] (AKBingo is another highly-popular long-running regular TV show of AKB48 and features activities that are typical of variety shows, such as quizzes and sports). These translating and uploading activities ensured the community's stability and influence. The daily communication and cooperation within the community took place on its QQ chatroom, which is a closed space that requires newcomers to apply for an approval to join. In principle, this rule might raise the difficulty for researchers to join a community, yet, according to its Bilibili main page (https://space.bilibili.com/325386223/#/, illustrated in Figure 3.3), AKB48 Daba was continually recruiting participants. Consequently, it was safe to assume that it would not be difficult to join in the its chatroom and directly contact its members.

[19] The collaboration between the two communities will be further discussed in 5.3.2.

Figure 3.3 Screenshot of AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group's main page on Bilibili

Based on the steps outlined above, I made a decision to formally join and participate in AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group[20], which I was previously not familiar with as a fan. By studying the Daba Fansubbing Group, I can have an insight into how people in a common translation-oriented community in this fandom work on fansubbing and circulating audiovisual contents. Such insight can help me understand how a fansubbing community is organised through its three dimensions of practice and how it is related to other communities. These findings can help us answer RQ1. Also, by investigating the formation processes of the fan identity of the community members, I can find clues that will help me answer RQ2.

3.4.2 Observation and participation

[20] In different contexts, this fansubbing community is referred to with different names: on Bilibili, its channel (Figure 3.3) is named 'AKB48 Daba Buhu Fansubbing Group' (AKB48 大吧不糊字幕组), whereas its QQ chatroom is called 'AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group' (AKB48 大吧字幕组). Since the QQ chatroom is the main fieldsite of this study, its name is adopted to refer to the fansubbing community.

After identifying the target fieldsite, it was time to start my first observations of the community. To start the entry process, I first followed and investigated the Bilibili channel of the AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, which does not require any approval from the administrators. Then, having acquired the chatroom ID from the channel, I managed to locate the community's chatroom on QQ and join the room with the approval from the community host.

Initial observations of the chatroom allowed me to gain some basic knowledge about its structure. To be specific, according to the introduction page (Figure 3.4) of the QQ chatroom of the community (which can be found by anyone using the room ID 644736705 in the QQ app), it was established in May 2018 as a standard chatroom which allows a maximum capacity of 500 people. As of early April 2019, there are 30 members in the chatroom who can be seen as comprising all the members of the fansubbing group. Using the 'name card' function of the QQ system, the names of chatroom members are displayed in the format 'role-name'. Therefore, we can easily tell the number of members with each role (Table 3.1, all names of roles are translated from Chinese by the author).

Figure 3.4 The introduction page of the QQ chatroom

Role	Number
Host	1
Administrators	2
Translators	10
Timers	9
Editors	3
Lyrics	1
Art designer	1
Video provider	1
Video compressor	1
Post-producer	1

Table 3.1 Number of members with roles in the community

These roles constitute the basic organisational structure of the fansubbing group, which entails each member's contribution to and influence on the community as well as allows the fansubbing practice to unfold in an orderly manner. To give a brief introduction to the each of the roles: the host ('群主') is the person who created the chatroom in the first place, while administrators ('管理员') are those who assist the host in managing

the community; like translators in professional contexts, the translators (‘翻译’) of this community assume the role of reproducing source texts (almost all in Japanese) into target texts (all in Chinese); ‘lyrics’ (‘歌词’) in this context denotes a translator dedicated to translating only lyrics of songs; ‘timers’ (‘时间轴’) refers to the people who assign points along the timeline of a video to lines of subtitles; editor (‘校对’) is a role essential to a fansubbing community, because they are usually responsible for proofreading and polishing translation drafts from amateurs, in order to guarantee the quality of the final subtitles; a video provider (‘片源’) denotes a person who supplies source videos which fansubbers rely on in their translation projects; art designer (‘美工’) and post-producer (‘后期’) are responsible for decorating the fansubbed videos with special visual elements such as colourful fonts, fansubbing group logo, and subtitle animations; and a video compressor (‘压制’, whose role is often assumed by a post producer in this community) refers to a person who merges the source video and the relevant subtitles into a final subbed video at the last stage of a translation project. As I moved to the data collection phase of the research, this role classification effectively helped me formulate ad-hoc questions for different types of participants in my interviews. This will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Another important site of the Daba Fansubbing Group, its Bilibili channel, started to post AKB48-related videos in May 2018 when the community was established. As of mid-April 2019, this channel had posted 113 videos and had attracted more than 9320 subscribers. Out of the uploaded videos, 33 are episodes of *AKB48 SHOW!* Subbed by the Daba fansubbing group. *AKB48 SHOW!* Is a TV programme featuring studio performances of AKB48 songs and short comedies. From the community’s establishment in May 2018 until the show’s end in late March 2019, this show had always been the focus of the fansubbing activities of the group. In addition, the fansubbing group subbed a small number of episodes from other AKB48-related TV shows, such as those from AKB48 *Nemouse Terebi* (‘ネ申テレビ’, or ‘God Television’, a variety show which has been aired for more than 30 seasons) and *Egao No Mokuji*

('笑顔の目次', or 'the Catalogue of Smiles', a sightseeing TV show that guides the audience through tourist attractions across Japan), and uploaded them to the group's channel.

Apart from the videos subbed by the Daba group itself, this channel also played the role as a proxy that uploads videos subbed by other fansubbing groups, such as *AKBingo* (a long-running regular TV show of AKB48 that features typical variety show activities such as quizzes and sports) subbed by T.K.M.N (Weibo homepage: https://www.weibo.com/tkmn0408?is_all=1) and ANNASUKI (their social networking service accounts not found). Based on the video catalogues on the main page of the channel, the categories of uploaded videos are summarised in Table 3.2.

Video Categories		**Number**
Videos subbed by Daba	*AKB48 SHOW!*	33
	Egao no Mokuji	2
	Nemousu Terebi	2
	AKB De Arubaito	2
	MVs	4
	Live performances	2
	Subtotal	**45**
Videos subbed by others	*AKBingo* by T.K.M.N	19
	Miscellaneous	45
Unsubbed videos	Miscellaneous	4
	Total	**113**

Table 3.2 A summary of video categories in the Bilibili channel

Furthermore, the initial observations of the selected community allowed me to identify an interesting characteristic, i.e. their members' fan activities were not confined to either of these two mentioned sites (the Bilibili channel and QQ chatroom of the Daba Fansubbing Group). On the contrary, they were also active on other social networking platforms as well as on video streaming websites. For example, some Daba members participated in the AKB48 Tieba forum (e.g. the host of the fansubbing community, pseudonymised as Alice, was also the host of the AKB48 Tieba forum) to communicate

with other Chinese fans of AKB48. Furthermore, they made use of an online forum called Maeda-Atsuko.cn and a wiki service named AKBfun to share, index, and download AKB48-related audiovisual material. This fact brings about a question with regard to where the boundary of my fieldsites should be drawn. As noted by Kozinets (2015: 170), a netnographer 'must be always attuned to the unexpected'. This means that we need to take a flexible stance when presented with the complexity of Internet users' behaviour. Following the precedent set by Li (2018), I decided to tackle this challenge by following Olwig and Hastrup's guidance (1997:8). They argue that, when dealing with a community whose members are active on multiple platforms, a researcher should start from a particular starting online site, and next s/he should follow the trans-platform connections that were established by the members. Therefore, when it came to studying the activities and identity of individual community members, I took a flexible approach to data collection by not confining myself to particular online sites as pre-determined fieldsites. Instead, I adopted a participant-oriented approach, i.e. keeping track of their activities across the Internet world and interacting with them across the platforms that they were using. This does not mean, however, that I would analyse every community and platform encountered, because doing that would be neither viable nor necessary for a case study focusing on one community.

After subsequent observations of the community, I gained basic understanding of the structure of the community and the patterns of behaviour of its members (these aspects will be elaborated on in Chapter 4). Therefore, in order to acquire first-hand experience of working as a member of the community and to observe the workflow of fansubbing projects from within a project team, I decided to volunteer to actively participate in the main task of the community — the *AKB48 SHOW!* Projects, as a translator. Consequently, after negotiating with other community members, I was appointed as one of the two translators for the last episode (Episode 216, aired on 24 March 2019) and finished the project with the other participants on 1 April 2019. This experience of limited participation in the community's fansubbing practice benefited my study in that it helped develop a sense of trust between me and other community members and thus

facilitated my subsequent data collection process (especially the collection of elicited data, as will be introduced in 3.5.3). Furthermore, a limited degree of participation allowed me to keep an appropriate distance from the cultural community in question, thus preventing me from getting too closely associated with the community members and running the risk of losing my self-reflexivity as a scholar (Spradley 1980: 61).

3.5 Data collection methods

3.5.1 Three data types

According to Kozinets' definition, there are three types of data that I can collect through netnography: archival data, elicited data, and 'produced data' (Kozinets 2015: 165). Archival data are created by community members and can be found in the archives of the communities under scrutiny, e.g. fansubbed videos, communication records, bio information of communities, among others. Elicited data are co-created through the researcher's own interactions with community members; produced data are created by the researcher and are of reflective nature. The most typical example of this data type is fieldnotes (*ibid.*).

This typology provided by Kozinets is adopted in this study, because it allows me to systematically and effectively collect different types of data needed to address my research questions. To illustrate my approach to data collection, I will introduce the data types needed for each of the research questions, which are reproduced here for convenience:

Research Question 1: How do CoP's three dimensions of practice — mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire — contribute to organising and maintaining a translation-oriented fan community like AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, as well as to its interconnections with other parts of the AKB48 fandom in China?

To answer this question, I viewed the AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group from a participating researcher's perspective. This required me to focus on collecting archival data. To be specific, I mainly focused on gathering historic communications generated by community members as well as biographic information of the community and its members, in order to understand the organisational structure and interactional patterns of the community, especially the aspects related to mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and the community's connection to other parts of the fandom. In addition, to gain an insight into the creation and use of the community's shared repertoire, some of the documents and subbed videos created and circulated by the community needed to be investigated. Furthermore, it was helpful to trace the dispersion and reception of the fansubbed videos produced by the community. Such data are usually gathered by using search engines embedded in social media (e.g. Weibo) and video streaming websites (e.g. Bilibili), as well as by following and keeping track of the updates from the community's accounts on these platforms. It is worth noting that in this study, fansub texts are relatively de-prioritised in the collection of archival data compared to the bulk of the AVT literature. This is because as shown in RQ1, this PhD research mainly focuses on the organisational dimensions of a fansubbing community instead of its translation products. As such, this research required me to focus on collecting archival data that would directly address organisational issues of the community (which usually do not involve the content of the fansub texts) within the limited data collection period.

Research Question 2: How do *AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group* members build their fan identity as a nexus of trajectories and what role does translation play in the formation of their identities?

To address this question, I needed to shift my perspective from communities to individual participants in my research. This requires me to focus on collecting elicited data from semi-structured interviews with my research participants, because they provide a privileged access to people's thoughts and opinions about a particular subject

(Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 169).

In my data collection process, I realised that the two types of data mentioned above had laid a solid foundation for finding the answers to the two research questions. Therefore, in this study, I decided to treat the third type of data, produced data, only as a secondary and auxiliary source which might make up for the shortage of the other two data types, especially in terms of a self-reflexive dimension of the fieldwork. In this study, self-reflexivity entails mainly two issues — intersubjectivity and an insider/outsider dilemma. The former denotes a decentred view of subjectivity (Schrag 1986) which entails that when conducting netnography in an online community, a researcher needs to always bear in mind the inseparable and mutual connections with the research participants. As such connections allow the two parties to perceive and judge each other, a mutual vulnerability may arise (Yu 2020b), which needs to be dealt with discreetly in fieldwork. The second issue, an insider/outsider dilemma, refers to the difficulty a researcher encounters when conducting an immersive netnography as to when s/he is an insider (i.e. an AKB48 fan and a member of the target online community) and when s/he is an outsider (i.e. an observing scholar) (Merton 1972). In this study, I will try not to be restricted by a dichotomy between my insider and outsider positions. Rather, I will actively attempt to discover and record how my two seemingly contrastive positions inform each other in the fieldwork.

3.5.2 Data collection methods

Gathering these different types of data requires different collection methods. In fact, it is quite common for netnography to be used in combination, or triangulation, with other methods (Mkono and Markwell 2014). According to Kozinets (2015: 87), nearly 60% of the body of literature published as a netnography relies on a combination of multiple methods as a way to maximise the adaptability and flexibility of the chosen methodology when exploring different research questions and different fieldsite types. Therefore, Kozinets (*ibid.*) argues that today netnography is more used as a 'grounding

for improvisation of multimethod' and 'a branching out into online social space' which allows us to generate our own research experiences.

Similar to the situation in netnography, translation studies scholars also recognise mixed method approach as a significant methodological approach that promotes the scope and quality of translation research. Saldanha and O'Brien (2014: 23) argue that triangulation (i.e. using two methods to collect and analyse data on the same research question) provides us with opportunities to cross-check the results provided by one set of data with results from another set of data. According to Lather (1986), doing so can help us establish better data credibility in qualitative research. Also, Pérez-González (2014: 174) believes that a mixed method approach to the same set of data can facilitate the validation of research findings derived from the application of each method. A good example of translation studies employing mixed-method is Li's work (2015) in which archival work is cross-checked through the use of questionnaires that investigate participants who created the collected archival data (as reported in Pérez-González 2014: 175). In this research, I took a similar approach by combining the collection of archival data and elicited data.

3.5.2.1 Strategies for archival data collection

To locate and acquire archival data, I relied on archival indices and search engine technologies available on relevant online sites. More specifically, when investigating AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, I used the communication history function of Tencent QQ to access the past communication records of the community. Also, the file storage function of QQ was used to access the documents created by community members, including the announcements from chatroom organisers and fansub files. To locate the fansubbed videos created and circulated by community members, I accessed the index of videos on the main page of the community's account on Bilibili.

Considering the heavy workload involved in collecting and analysing these archival

data, it was sensible to concentrate on securing the data with primary significance, i.e. the data that can help me the best when answering my research questions. This stance is also advocated by Kozinets (2015: 175), who argues that netnography is a 'humanist' research technique that focuses on the search and analysis of 'small data' (as opposed to big data) and on 'human scale readings' of people, human groups, and practice (as opposed to large-scale quantitative methods). Therefore, I adopted a set of specific strategies in my data collection processes. For example, in order to understand how members of a fansubbing community worked together to finish the process of fansubbing, I paid particular attention to collecting communication records when a fansubbing project was underway. In order to look at the ways in which AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group interacts with other communities, I collected communication records generated when certain events occur. One example of such events is when the group needed to cooperate with other communities in order to subtitle a video of a major event of AKB48. When collecting data from the Bilibili main page of AKB48 Daba, I prioritised the collection of paratextual information of the uploaded videos (e.g. video descriptions, video uploading and indexing records, spotlight comments on the videos, crediting information of the videos, etc.) over that of the fansub texts, because this study is primarily concerned with the processes and agents that create translated texts, rather than the quality of the texts *per se*.

As a result of the mentioned strategies, I collected a total of 7533 lines of online communications which were generated between 13 August 2018 and 1 April 2019, i.e. a period of approximately 33 weeks. These messages cover the 23 *AKB48 SHOW!* Projects finished by the community during this period. In addition, I also collected all the project files of every fansubbing project of the community, which were stored in the file storage of community's QQ chatroom. Furthermore, from the community's Bilibili channel, I downloaded all the uploaded videos subbed by the community so that I could understand the basic characteristics of the final products of the translation projects. In the meantime, I also took screenshots of the paratextual information related to each video, including the time of uploading and highlight comments.

3.5.2.2 Elicited data

Interviews are being increasingly employed in translation and interpreting studies as the area continues to develop its sociological dimensions, insofar as it gives analysts privileged access to people's thoughts and opinions about a particular subject (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 168-169). Interviewing is seen by many as a straightforward research method because it is commonly seen in our life and work. Yet, when it comes to using interview for research purposes, certain challenges need to be tackled and certain decisions need to be made. In addition, the process of conducting interviews requires careful preparation. Therefore, it becomes necessary to design the interview in a systemic and reflective way (*ibid.*).

The first decision I had to make pertains to the type of interview I should use. There are three major types that can be selected from: structured interviews, where the interviewer simply goes through a sequence of carefully prepared questions to ensure that the order and the wording of the questions is the same in each case; unstructured interview, where the interviewer uses a series of guiding questions to elicit the required information in the way that best fits the circumstances of the interview; and there is an in-between type called semi-structured interviews, where the interview schedule is used as in structured interviews, but most of the questions are open-ended and flexibility is allowed to ask the questions in different orders and to introduce new questions (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 172-173).

In this research, I selected the semi-structured interview method to elicit data regarding research participants' thoughts and opinions about the issues central to my research. This is done to allow me to elicit data in a well-scheduled, systemic manner, while retaining the flexibility to discover new dimensions of the issues and raise new questions that can potentially address these dimensions. Also, this approach can shift the balance of power away from the researcher and towards the participants, allowing

them to share their knowledge and opinions and to co-construct knowledge more actively (*ibid.*: 173).

The next step of interview design is the design of the interview schedule. Regarding the language used to formulate the questions, there were several points that I had to consider: the questions should not make assumptions or be leading; they should not be used to elicit more than one piece of information at a time; and they should be unambiguously phrased, i.e. without opaque elements such as jargon or double negatives (*ibid.*: 174). The last point is of particular importance because as researchers, we are used to technical terms and complex sentences, often without sufficient awareness of their difficulty for non-academics. In fact, even well-formulated research questions would be too complex and too general to be asked directly in an interview. Instead, they can be used as a basis for developing a specific set of interview questions and probes (*ibid.*: 175).

When formulating the list of interview questions, all the above-mentioned considerations needed to be integrated in a systematic way. Firstly, the list must contain a number of fixed interview questions that serve to introduce the main topics of the research, and each question is followed by a number of 'probes', or hints for potential follow-up questions, which can be flexibly selected and expanded during the interviews. Secondly, in order to effectively investigate participants with different roles in fan communities, I formulated questions that are particularly aimed at the identified roles, and placed them after the more 'basic' questions for all the participants, thus a 'general-to-optional' interview schedule had been used. Then, as a result of applying this schedule, there is no one-to-one correspondence between the thesis research questions and the interview questions, and in some cases several of the latter can be used to answer one of the former. For example, the theme of fan identity formation that is central to RQ2 is investigated through multiple interview questions, such as questions 1, 2, 4, and 5. Also, I tried to ensure that the wording of the interview questions is understandable for participants and conceal the reasons why the question is being asked.

For example, in question 1, which was designed to investigate the developing trajectories of fan identity, the word 'experience' is used instead of the technical term 'identity formation'. Finally, regarding the scale of the interviews, around ten participants would be recruited from the community in question and each interview was estimated to last for 45-60 minutes. This was decided after balancing between the need to elicit adequate data, the manageability of data analysis, and the time and energy cost for interviewees.

The final version of interview questions can be found in Appendix I.

Another issue to be considered is the sampling of participants. As a qualitative case study, this project does not assume that the composition of participant cohorts will be representative of the wider population. Instead, it focuses on eliciting in-depth and diverse information from key participants. Therefore, the principle of purposive sampling is adopted as the main strategy of sampling. By selecting participants on the basis of specific criteria, the key aspects of my research questions can be adequately covered (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 180). As mentioned above, the investigation of the community under scrutiny aims to identify certain member roles. Therefore, when recruiting interviewees, it would be sensible to purposefully screen the fans I encountered until the ones who are most representative of the different roles in a community remain.

Furthermore, I needed to make a decision on the mode in which the interviews were to be carried out. Since my research participants are a group of people who conduct legally problematic activities online with pseudonyms, it is proper to assume that they might prefer to protect their personal information and privacy to the best of their ability. Based on this assumption, I decided to conduct the interviews in the mode of real-time written-text-based online chats. Moreover, QQ, the online communication application which the chatroom of the Daba community is built on, was selected as the platform for the online interviews so that the interviewees would not need to spend time in downloading

and learning to use another application. It is believed that this selection would ensure the efficiency and convenience of the interviews. Immediately after each interview, I would gather the communication record data which contain the written interview texts (in both webpage form and spreadsheet form) from the local data storage of the QQ application. When extracts from the interviews needed to be used in data analysis, I would translate the extracted texts from Chinese to English using plain and idiomatic language to the best of my ability. As for how the written interview data are stored, please refer to Appendix III.

When I had collected most of the archival data needed for this study, I began to search for candidates for the interviews. Using the selective criteria stated above, I sent interview request to 11 members of the Daba community who were assuming different roles. Consequently, nine of them agreed to participate in the interview. Among these interviewees, seven participated in online real-time written-text-based interviews, while the other two (Alice and Zen) opted for writing their opinions and thoughts on a document containing the interview questions because they could not find a time slot for the interview on their personal schedules. The basic information on the interviewees can be found in Table 3.3.

Name	**Sex**	**Age**	**Japanese proficiency**	**Occupation**	**Role(s)**	**Technical experience**	**Managerial experience**	**Date of Interview**
Alice	Female	24	Elementary	Company employee	Founder/Host	No	Yes	7 October 2019
Daisie	Female	33	Advanced	Marketing manager	Translator	Yes	No	26 October 2019
Joan	Female	30	Elementary	State-run institution employee	Timer	Yes	Yes	25 October 2019
Kenny	Male	N/A	Advanced	N/A	Lyrics translator	Yes	No	27 October 2019
Lin	Male	22	Advanced	University student	Editor	Yes	No	24 October 2019
Momo	Female	22	Advanced	University student	Translator and timer	No	No	23 October 2019

Popper	Male	25	Intermediate	N/A	Timer	Yes	Yes	1 November 2019
Zach	Male	23	Intermediate	N/A	Post-producer	Yes	Yes	2 November 2019
Zen	Male	28	None	N/A	Video compressor	Yes	Yes	3 December 2019

Table 3.3 Basic information on the interviewees (as of the time of interview)

3.5.2.3 Considerations on creating fieldnotes

As stated previously, fieldnotes only played an auxiliary role in the data collection process of this study. To be specific, in this study, three fieldnotes were created during my participation in the Daba community. In these notes, I recorded my experience as a participant in the community's translation practice. Also, with my dual identity as a fan and a researcher, or an 'acafan'[21], I kept a reflective dimension in the fieldnotes, especially in terms of how my previous fan experience informed my participation process or was reshaped by this process. Furthermore, screenshots of webpages and images were included when necessary.

3.6 Data analysis methods

When analysing data of a case study, the foremost task is trying to find a holistic explanation to all pieces of collected data so that the pieces can fit together to form a large puzzle. Therefore, data analysis is a process of inductive theorising which relies on researcher's interpretation of collected qualitative data (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014: 228). As such, it is susceptible to biases (e.g. confirmation biases and elite biases) and random interpretations from the researcher. Thus, in order to guarantee the quality of this inductive process, it is important to adopt a systemic approach to data analysis.

Since the data to be collected in this study are primarily in verbal form, the major

[21] I.e. A person who identifies as an academic and a fan at the same time (Jenkins, Rand and Hellekson 2011).

analysis method to be used is qualitative content analysis, as defined by Saldanha and O'Brien (2014: 190). The core process of this method is the 'coding' of qualitative data, i.e. identifying units of analysis in the collected qualitative data. Such units usually appear as segments of text that contain a piece of information that helps answer the research questions. Then, these segments are tagged with specific labels in order to group them around certain broad categories or identify features that needs to be scrutinised. I expect that, once this labelling work has been completed, I will be able to identify specific patterns behind the collected data (*ibid.*: 189).

A qualitative content analysis usually consists of analytical rules such as identifying themes, finding patterns, making interpretations, and building a theory as holistic explanation to the patterns recognised (Dörnyei 2007:246). This means that coding in this approach proceeds gradually from superficial to abstract levels. Following Dörnyei's suggestions, Saldanha and O'Brien (2014: 190) propose a two-level coding process: The first level, 'initial coding', requires transparent labels that directly describe the meaning of the code; then in the second-level coding, the researcher should go beyond mere descriptions and discover emerging abstract patterns, usually by grouping similar categories under a broader label and building hierarchies.

In this study, a similar analysis approach was followed. To be more specific, in the first-level coding, I analysed the collected verbal texts and gradually identified units of analysis. Then I grouped these units under descriptive themes. For example, when analysing my interview data, I extracted different participants' responses to a question regarding copyright issues in fansubbing practice and labelled them as 'reaction to copyright issues'. In the second-level coding, these themes will be further grouped under more abstract labels informed by the theoretical framework. For example, the previously mentioned copyright-related theme was moved into a category called 'negotiation of a joint enterprise', because tackling copyright issues constitutes a significant part in negotiating the enterprise of a fansubbing community.

After this two-level coding work, I was able to organise the collected data into systematic categories of relevant concepts, topics, and ideas that could contribute to articulating the answers to the research questions. Then, the patterns behind these categories was further interpreted, in order to form a holistic explanation that answers my research questions. For example, patterns behind categories related to mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire were interpreted in relation to each other, in order to build a coherent answer to RQ1. It should be noted that in this step, it is important to cross-check data collected from different sources, e.g. past communication records and semi-structured interview texts, because the convergences and the divergences discovered in such check can help us examine the validity of the theory that is being built. The social reality is chaotic and complex, and it does not always fit into the neat framework of our theories. When incoherence is found in cross-checking, it is the theory that needs to adapt to my case, not my case to the theory.

It should be noted that the said qualitative data analysis processes benefited significantly from my experience of participation in the Daba community as a fan translator. To be more specific, participation in the community has allowed me to understand certain essential characteristics of the community, including the basic patterns of inter-member interactions, the ways in which members carry out translation projects, and the values shared by community members. In data analysis processes, the said knowledge allowed me to become efficient when trying to identify specific activities, events, and topics out of the seemingly chaotic communication records. This was particularly helpful when I was trying to generalise analytical themes from units of thematic analysis. Also, direct participation in translation projects has allowed me to gain first-hand knowledge of the fansubbing procedures of the Daba community (mostly recorded in the produced fieldnotes), which helped me greatly when I was trying to produce a precise account of the community's fansubbing workflow.

Apart from the qualitative content analysis method, I also used quantitative methods to analyse the communication records between members. In many previous studies related

to online communities (especially those in education, health, and business studies), such approach has been pursued following different strands because it is efficient in handling a large amount of data and enabling direct numeric comparisons (Mercer et al. 2006). For example, basic descriptive statistics are widely used to reveal the basic patterns of various forms of online interactions, such as those taking place on social media pages (e.g. Meng et al. 2017), discussions on online forums (e.g. Dawson et al. 2004), and collective knowledge building in online education settings (e.g. Gabriel 2004). Moreover, there are also studies using more complex quantitative tools, such as factor analysis methods which help understand how online interactions impact users' experience and identities (e.g. Dawson 2006) and social network analysis which allows researchers to map interpersonal networks evolving through ongoing online communications in order to discover the characteristics, structures, and impact of those networks (e.g. de Laat, Lally, and Lipponen 2007; Brown, Brodeck, and Lee 2007; Yang 2020).

Yet, so far, fan studies and translation studies scholars have seldom used quantitative methods to study how people engage with each other in the practice of fan communities or translation communities. Therefore, viewing the above-mentioned examples, I believe that using a quantitative analysis of online communications can bring a new perspective on how people create and maintain a fan translation community. Considering that this research is primarily a qualitative case study which focuses on a relatively small dataset, I chose to use only simple descriptive statistics which would be able to unveil the basic patterns of online interactions between Daba members and thus paved the way for the subsequent qualitative analysis of community building and maintenance.

3.7 Ethical considerations and solutions

Collecting the different types of data required by this project may cause different ethical risks. There are four major aspects of ethical considerations that arose in this research,

which will be introduced in the following paragraphs.

The first issue is the potential conflict between the public availability of materials that I plan to include in my archival data set and the right to privacy of the individuals involved in the production of the said data. To address this issue, I have adopted Kozinets' (2015: 138) stance. Under Kozinets' netnographic approach, the collection and study of archival material that can be legally and easily accessed by researchers via public websites qualifies for 'human subjects exemption' status (*ibid.*). In other words, analysing that material is not technically regarded as involving human subjects and informed consent from the authors of such material is not required. Indeed, the data to be analysed from online public sites such as AKB48 Tieba, Weibo, and Video Streaming Websites (e.g. Bilibili) is publicly available and interacting with human subjects is therefore not required to access the material. Moreover, the data to be collected should only be used to gain a better understanding of AKB48 Tieba's organisational principles as well as the online activities of the participants in my study. Accordingly, neither the real names nor the pseudonyms of the data creators will be disclosed as part of my thesis (they will be replaced with a set of aliases instead).

Secondly, the need to preserve the anonymity of the participants involved in the production of my archival data, for the reasons outlined under the first issue above, entails that I will be unable to give them full credit for their work — for example, when I discuss the documents and images that they translated or uploaded to online public sites such as AKB48 Tieba, Weibo, or Bilibili. Another strand of archival data consists of fansubbed videos. As far as this type of data is concerned, full crediting will also not be given, because a proportion of their subtitle works potentially involve copyright infringement. In the past, fansubbing used to be regarded by many as a copyright infringing activity. Yet, it is now widely accepted and even promoted by many enterprises as a form of expertise that can be used to improve the experience of viewers of media content. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that even with potential legal issues in place, collecting data from fansubbed videos will only pose no more than minor

distress. Nevertheless, in order to minimise the potential risks, I have chosen to sacrifice a part of their crediting rights, i.e. I anonymised their works when presenting my data collection and analysis processes.

The third issue is the need to preserve the anonymity of historic communication records available within non-public online spaces within the websites of my chosen fandom communities, e.g. their QQ chatrooms and personal QQ spaces. I will access those data by explicitly exposing my identity as a researcher to the participants and acquiring their consent The same degree of caution is required when creating produced data (mainly reflective fieldnotes) while communicating with other fans. According to Kozinets (2010: 151), it is not necessary to secure the participants' informed consent to collect and analyse data arising from the interaction between the researcher and other individuals online (particularly when that interaction resembles the sort of interaction that takes place routinely in that setting), or when taking fieldnotes informed by that interaction. Yet, data records from non-public spaces usually contain private content that data creators do not wish to publicise, e.g. expressions of emotion that could be potentially deemed as improper outside the context where they were made. As a result, the public exposure of these data may make community members vulnerable in some ways. Therefore, when quoting these non-public data, I must anonymise the source of such material and paraphrase it, where necessary.

The last issue is the potential risk for participants who take part in my online research interviews. To conduct interviews, I have to join the Daba community and directly interact with members of the said community. My presence within the community and interaction with community members will be different from the interaction that normally takes place in an online community. Therefore, there is a very small chance that eliciting data may cause unease and distress for participants; it could also breach the participants' right to privacy. To address these issues, I must secure informed consent from those participants who agree to provide me with elicited data, prior to the beginning of the interview. The consent form (Appendix IV) and the participant

information sheet (Appendix III) designed for this purpose have been informed by the templates provided by the university. Caution is required if/when it is necessary to quote the participants responses to my questions during the interviews. I should therefore replace the real names and pseudonyms of my participants with a set of aliases that I designed. In addition, when quoting their words, I should paraphrase any (fragment of) response that may allow readers to trace individual participants or disclose their identities.

In addition, there are also institutional ethical requirements that I need to fulfil. The University of Manchester requires the submission by all PhD students of a research ethics declaration form at the beginning of the second semester of the first year (in my case, it has been submitted on 31 January 2018). If human research subjects are involved, the researcher needs to assess the risk level of the study by referring to guidelines of University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), and submits a complete research ethical application form to the research ethical committee of the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures. This form was submitted on 19 December 2018, along with all the required documents[22]. Eventually, the ethical approval was granted on 6 February 2019 by the School without a further need to attend a hearing hosted by UREC[23]. Acquiring the approval means that I could formally start my participation and data collection processes with due protection by the institution (University Research Ethics Committee [n.d.]).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological framework for the study of the Chinese fandom of AKB48. The context of research, AKB48 as a female idol group, and the dataset, the Chinese fandom of AKB48, are first introduced in this chapter. This

[22] These include interview questions, introduction message, data management plan, participant information sheet, and consent form. Please refer to the indices for the texts.
[23] In a UREC hearing, a student, together with her/his supervisor, is usually required to provide convincing explanations to address the committee's concerns over different ethical issues.

brief overview of the context and the dataset allows me to understand the relations between them and results in adopting case study as the holistic view of the nature and the construct of the research. From this view, the study of the AKB48 fandom is in nature a qualitative study and is inseparable from the context of the East Asian fandom culture. The dataset, the AKB48 fandom as a whole, constitutes a holistic case in which a large number of different types of communities exist.

After identifying the nature and overall construct of the research, netnography as a specific form of ethnography adapted to the online reality is adopted as the overarching methodology of this project, because it can suffice the methodological needs arising in a study of online interactions and online communities. Using this methodology requires me to follow a cycle of specific procedures when conducting research, which are adhered to throughout the remaining sections of this chapter.

Then, following the procedural cycle of netnography, I discuss the processes of identifying and making the first contact with my target fieldsites. By making the most of the power of Internet technologies, I gradually narrowed down my search for fansubbing groups on Bilibili and decided to use AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group as the target community to be investigated. The first observations of this community allowed me to understand the structure and the translation products of the community. In addition, the mentioned observations revealed the fact that community members operate across various online platforms. Based on the mentioned basic knowledge about the community, I formally began my participation in the community's translation practice.

The next section discusses the ways in which I collected the three types of data as proposed by Kozinets (2015: 165). — archival data, elicited data, and produced data. Archival data are stored in the archives of websites and other online services. In the dataset of this research, they usually exist in the form of communication records, documents, images, and videos. Therefore, they were collected by downloading or

screenshotting. To elicit data, I conducted one-to-one online interviews which are semi-structured and based on written messages. As for produced data, fieldnotes were created through my participation process.

Since most of the data to be collected are in verbal form, qualitative content analysis is proposed as the major method for data analysis. The core process of this method is 'coding', i.e. identifying units of analysis in the collected data and grouping them into larger categories related to the theoretical framework of the study. In this study, I followed a two-level coding process: in the first level, collected verbal units were analysed in a descriptive way and grouped under different themes. Then, in second-level coding, these themes were further grouped under more abstract labels related to the theoretical framework which helped me find answers to the research questions. In addition, basic descriptive statistics were used to reveal the basic patterns of online interactions between community members. Furthermore, this section also briefly discusses how my experience of participation in the Daba community benefited the data analysis processes.

In the final part of this chapter, I discussed a topic that is essential to netnography — ethical issues. Considering the dataset and the types of data that I will collect, I list a number of potential ethical risks for this study, including the conflict between publicly available data and the privacy of research participants, the crediting of archival data, the anonymity of non-public data, and the potential risks for interviewees. To address these issues, I proposed a set of viable solutions. In addition to these considerations, the process of applying for ethical approval from the University of Manchester is also briefly reported.

Chapter 4 Organisational Dimensions of the Daba Fansubbing Group

4.1 Introduction

Having gathered needed data using the methodology presented in Chapter 3, in this chapter I will analyse the organisational dimensions of the Daba community, based on the archival data as the primary data source, and the interview data as a secondary source. According to Wenger (1998: 72), practice acts as the source of coherence of a community through three organisational dimensions, i.e. mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, each of which involves various types of meaning negotiation processes (For discussions of those dimensions, please refer to 2.2). Therefore, by analysing these dimensions, we should be able to understand how the Daba Fansubbing Group was organised and maintained as a CoP.

This chapter will start from the analysis of the mutual engagement dimension in the Daba community (**4.2**), which will be explored through an analysis of the overall quantitative pattern of the online communications generated by members' collaborative fansubbing practice, the workflow of fansubbing projects of this community, and the forms of mutual recognition and mutual relations that were established in the fansubbing practice. Section **4.3** will then analyse two aspects that are key to members' negotiations over the joint enterprise, i.e. global-level project management and copyright issues. In section **4.4**, which focuses on the community's shared repertoire, I will analyse how members negotiated over the repertoire of translation quality norms and the technological repertoire of the community, in order to shed light on how knowledge was created, shared, adapted, and stored in the community. Based on the understanding of the above three dimensions, **4.5** will discuss how these dimensions contributed to forming various types of connection to the fandom. Finally, in **4.6**, a conclusion to the whole chapter will be presented.

4.2 Mutual engagement

As a community of practice, the existence of a fansubbing community relies on the practice that is central to it. According to Wenger (1998: 73), practice does not exist in abstract terms, but is constructed through people's engagement in actions 'whose meanings they negotiate with each other'. This feature defines a community of practice as something different from a mere aggregate of people who happen to share similar characteristics, e.g. social category, social title, belonging to an organisation, sharing personal relations with some people, or geographical proximity (*ibid.*: 74). Instead, a community of practice coheres because of the relations of mutual engagement created through practice.

To explore how members of Daba Fansubbing Group engage with each other in meaning negotiation and how such engagement contributes to the coherence of the community, in this section archival data (as the primary data source) and interview data (as the secondary source) from the community will be analysed to reveal how mutual engagement became possible, how community members formed a stable pattern of mutual engagement, and what forms of mutual recognition are entailed by the mentioned engagement pattern at different levels and dimensions of the fan CoP.

4.2.1 Enabling mutual engagement

Making mutual engagement possible in a community requires certain efforts. This usually entails creating opportunities for people to interact with each other in the right place and at the right time. In the Daba Fansubbing Group, members make use of a variety of technological means as enablers of mutual interactions. According to the taxonomy of online technologies proposed by Fuchs (2010a: 767), these technologies fall into three categories, namely 'Web 1.0', 'Web 2.0', and 'Web 3.0', which create

three different levels of sociality. To be more specific:

(a) 'Web 1.0' technologies include those which allow potential members to establish their basic perceptions and evaluation, or '**cognition**', of the community. A typical example of this category is the video storage of the Bilibili channel of the Daba Fansubbing Group where community members regularly upload their subtitling works (as mentioned in the methodology chapter). This collection of subtitling works serves as the 'portfolio' of the community which attracts fans of AKB48 who browse the AKB48-related audiovisual content on Bilibili. By watching the subtitling works on the channel, many of those fans gradually develop their perceptions of the fansubbing group and therefore become interested in participating in the practice of the community.

Besides their Bilibili channel, members of Daba also make use of social networking services (e.g. Weibo and Tieba) to spread promotional messages aimed to attract more fans to join the community. Compared to the uploaded subtitling works, these text-based messages provide the basic information of the community in a more explicit way, including the community's goals, member lineup, and entry requirements. The perception and evaluation of those details may help AKB48 fans to decide to contact and join the community. Although the original recruitment messages cannot be found on Weibo or Tieba, we can still see a similar version on Bilibili, as shown in figure 4.1. For example, the interviews with Lin and Momo reveal that both of them joined the community because they saw Daba community's announcement of recruiting new members for *AKB48 SHOW!* projects.

Figure 4.1 A recruitment message posted on the Bilibili channel of the AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group

(b) Taking one step further, 'Web 2.0' technologies allow members to establish direct **interactions** with each other in their practice. In the case of the Daba community, this category is represented by community-exclusive spaces where members can communicate with each other without the interference from the outside. The most significant example is the QQ chatroom of the group, in which community members can communicate by sending and receiving synchronous messages. In this way, their translation practice can be carried out in an efficient manner.

Also, community members use various technologies to interact with the outside. For example, the comment and *danmu* functions of Bilibili are used to help members receive direct feedback on the subtitling works from the audience; and a general fan community associated with the fansubbing group (AKB48 Erbenzhu fan community) provides a space where members can have direct chats with AKB48 fans with regard to various

aspects of the community.

(c) Finally, 'Web 3.0' technologies enable members to **cooperate** with each other in translation projects. Unlike the technologies in the two previous categories, which are shared by most fan communities in the fandom, technologies in this category show the uniqueness of a fansubbing community: all members of the Daba community make use of a subtitle editing application called 'Aegisub' to add, spot, and adjust subtitles; a video-processing toolkit called 'Maruko' is employed by the community to integrate finalised subtitles with the original videos, in order to produce the final products of subtitling projects. While the use of these applications is necessary for the community members, they are barely known to non-translating fans.

Also, when working on the subtitling projects, the community members rely on certain technologies to share and deliver files. For example, at different stages of a translation project, participating members use the file storage module of the QQ chatroom to deliver the products of each stage. And when members need to share high-definition source videos, they usually rely on high-speed file-sharing protocols such as Baidu Wangpan cloud service and BitTorrent.

Based on the above categories of technologies, members of the Daba community have established a multi-level mechanism for enabling mutual engagement: at the level of cognition, fans gain basic knowledge of the community and thus become attracted to participate in the translation practice; at the communication level, members engage with each other effectively in the practice; and the technologies at the cooperation level allow the subtitling projects to take place as the focus of the translation practice and thus distinguish the community from the general fan communities in the fandom.

It is notable from this mechanism that despite the somewhat 'rigid' taxonomy of online technologies (i.e. a certain technology can only appear in one category) by Fuchs, in the context of this research, a technology platform may contribute to enabling multiple levels of sociality. For example, members not only use the instant-messaging service QQ for synchronous communications, but also use it to deliver and store product files when cooperating in translation projects. This finding sheds light on the fact that at this age of 'Web 3.0', Internet companies tend to focus on developing products and services that integrate functions which can impact different levels and aspects of people's experience of online social life. Also, it should be noted that the technologies mentioned above are by no means mutually exclusive to each other. On the contrary, most members in this community are expected to be able to use all of the technologies in the fansubbing practice.

However, merely having the necessary, reificative technologies does not necessarily guarantee a lasting and effective engagement between people. According to Wenger (1998: 74), enabling a stable mutual engagement and transforming it into the coherence of a community requires members to make efforts at the participative side of practice. In the case of the Daba community, members need to ensure 'community maintenance', which is intrinsic to any community of practice. Yet, in most cases it is much less visible than the technological tools facilitating the practice. In the case of Daba Fansubbing Group, community maintenance efforts take the form of contributions by members to the various communication exchanges within the group. This is because apart from online communications, an online community can hardly rely on other means to make its members engage with each other.

Despite the fact that more than 90% of the members of Daba Group (28 out of 30) hold formal reified roles, they vary greatly in terms of the frequency of their participation in the group communications. According to a brief analysis of the communication records

of the QQ chatroom[24] (Table 4.1), the top contributor (Alice) sent 2387 out of 7533 messages sent in total, i.e. 31% of all messages. Moreover, the top five contributors combined sent 4604 messages, which make up for more than 61% of all messages. Also, the communication records show those five members' engagement with other community members which is exemplified by the number of adjacency pairs[25] occurring in Alice's conversations with the other four members (Table 4.2). As can be seen from the table, Alice as the host of the community exchanged a significant amount of communication transactions with each of the other top contributors throughout the data collection period. This serves as a good proof that the top contributors communicated frequently with each other in their efforts to maintain the community. On the other hand, the gap between the number of adjacency pairs displayed in Table 4.2 and the total number of messages sent by the top five contributors implies that those members were also effectively engaged with community members other than Alice. In contrast to the cases of the top contributors, 6 out of 30 members of the community (including 5 translators and one member without a specific role) never contributed any messages to the communication records. Considering the central role that the QQ chatroom plays in the practice of the community, it is safe to say that these 6 members never engaged in the practice effectively during the period of the communication records. This comparison reveals the fact that most community maintenance work is carried out by a relatively small proportion of people. Therefore, we can say that the top contributors within the Daba community play a decisive role in creating a stable mutual engagement between members.

Member	Total number of messages
Host-Alice	2387
Timer-Alex	639
Editor-Lin	628

[24] As explained in 3.5.2.1, the communication records were generated between 13 August 2018 to 1 April 2019.
[25] 'Adjacency pair' is defined here (with reference to Thornbury and Slade 2006: 115) as a pair of online messages sent by two different chatters in which the second message (i.e. the 'second pair part' or SPP) is identified as functionally related to the first message (i.e. the 'first pair part' or FPP).

Timer-Peter	530
Translator-Daisie	420

Table 4.1 Top contributors to communications within the community

Member	*Number of adjacency pairs where Alice sent the FPP*	*Number of adjacency pairs where Alice sent the SPP*	*Time span*
Alex	85	95	13/08/2018-27/03/2019
Lin	64	49	03/09/2018-30/03/2019
Peter	60	59	24/08/2018-28/03/2019
Daisie	63	57	01/09/2018-01/042019

Table 4.2 Number of adjacency pairs occurring in Alice's conversations with the other four top contributors

4.2.2 Interacting for translation projects

As is mentioned in the previous section, with the help of the technologies mentioned in 4.2.1 and members' efforts to maintain interactions, a stable pattern of mutual engagement was established. The existence of this pattern can be understood through quantitative analysis of the communications between members as mentioned in 3.6. Figure 4.2 shows a significant piece of evidence for the stable mutual engagement in the Daba community, i.e. the pattern of the community's cumulative daily communication frequencies across the period of data collection (13 August 2018—1 April 2019)[26]. By observing the curve of accumulation, we can see that despite a few sudden rises in the cumulative frequencies (e.g. on 5 December 2018), there is a generally linear and stable pattern of accumulation across the whole period.

[26] Most dates in this period are hidden on this figure for the convenience of display.

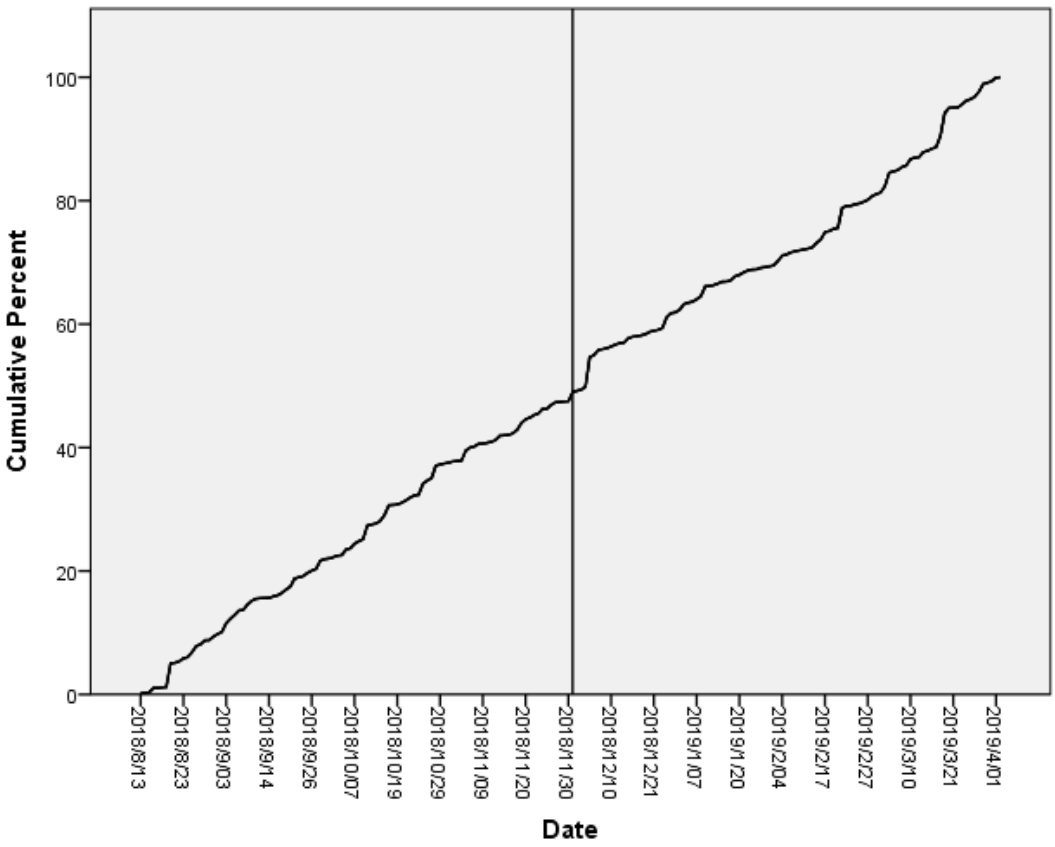

Figure 4.2 Cumulative percentage of communication frequencies on each day[27]

Since Daba is a fansubbing community, the communications between its members mainly centre around the translation projects related to AKB48 audiovisual content, which fall into two categories. The first category is the *AKB48 SHOW!* projects. Since the establishment of the fansubbing group, its members had focused on translating the latest episodes of *AKB48 SHOW!*. Therefore, the translations produced by the group have normally been almost synchronous with the airing of the show. In total, the fansubbing group has translated 33 episodes of *AKB48 SHOW!*, 23 of which were translated during the period of data collection (which is approximately 33 weeks long， as explained in Chapter 3) on a weekly basis. The *AKB48 SHOW!* Project represented the main bulk of the community's fansubbing practice. As a result, members' communications in these projects formed a stable pattern of communications which unfolded in weekly cycles (details about this pattern will be provided later in this

[27] Most dates in the data collection period are hidden on this figure for the convenience of display.

section).

Meanwhile, apart from *AKB48 SHOW!* projects, the fansubbing group also finished a small number of other translation projects, such as two episodes of *Nemousu Terebi*, two episodes of *Egao no Mokuji*, and the music videos of new AKB48 songs. Compared to *AKB48 SHOW!* projects, these other projects only account for a small proportion of the projects finished by the community. Accordingly, their contribution to the total online communications is relatively small. This means that we can hardly find sufficient activity to conduct a comparable analysis with the *AKB48 SHOW!* projects. Moreover, unlike the *AKB48 SHOW!* projects, most of these projects focus on translating historic episodes of AKB48-related shows and therefore are not synchronous with the airing schedules of the shows. As a result, without the pressure of having to finish a project before the next episode is released, such historic projects could take a long time to finish. In this way, members' communications around these projects generally lack a routine pattern. Based on these two points, we can say that *AKB48 SHOW!* projects play a dominant role in shaping the weekly patterns of online communications. Therefore, in this analysis, I choose to mainly focus on analysing *AKB48 SHOW!* projects.

From the results of the quantitative analysis, we can find that members' commitment to *AKB48 Show!* is reflected in the frequency of communication occurrence on each day of the week during the data collection period. As shown in Figure 4.3, throughout the whole period of data collection, members communicated with each other on 33 out of 34 Mondays. In contrast, they communicated only on 26 out of all the 33 Fridays and 27 out of 33 Saturdays. This contrast can be easily observed through the much less continuous points on 'Friday' and 'Saturday' columns. Therefore, we can say that people tended to communicate more frequently on Mondays than on Fridays and Saturdays.

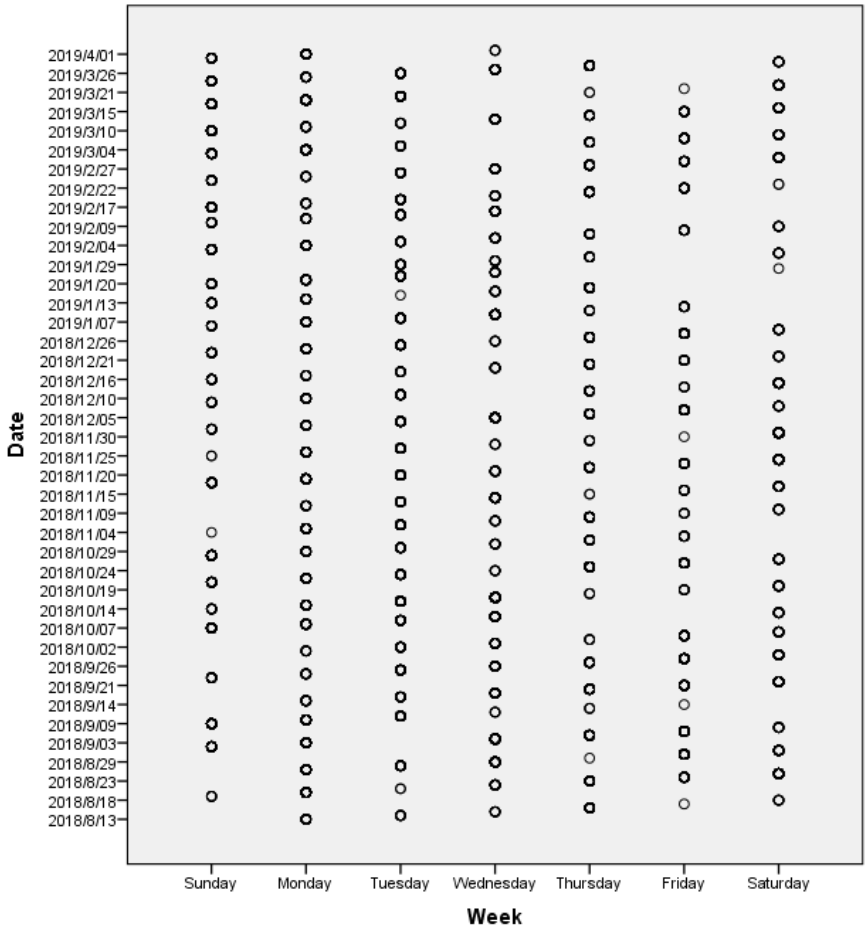

Figure 4.3 Occurrence of communications in weekly cycles of dates

This tendency is also reflected by the total numbers of messages sent on each day of the week. As shown in the 'percentage' column on Table 4.3, we can see that the total message number on Mondays is apparently higher than any other day in the week, with 24.4% of all collected messages. On the contrary, according to the same figures, messages were sent the least on Fridays and Saturdays, with 9.2% of total messages sent on Fridays and 9.6% on sent on Saturdays. Also, according to the table, the first three days of the week account for more than half of the total number of sent messages (53.6%), while only less than one third were sent on the last three days of the week (32.7%).

Week

	Frequency	Percentage[28]	Cumulative Percentage
SUNDAY	1049	13.9	13.9
MONDAY	1841	24.4	38.4
TUESDAY	824	10.9	49.3
WEDNESDAY	1380	18.3	67.6
THURSDAY	1021	13.6	81.2
FRIDAY	691	9.2	90.4
SATURDAY	726	9.6	100.0
Total	7532	100.0	

Table 4.3 Communication frequencies on each day of the week

From these numbers, we can understand that communications within the community generally peaked on Mondays and reached the lowest on Fridays and Saturdays. Furthermore, members of the community tended to be much more active during the first half of the week than during the second. This tendency implies the existence of a weekly cycle of communications in the Daba community. This is unlikely to be a mere coincidence, because Monday was usually the day on which members of the community acquired the source video of an episode of *AKB48 SHOW!*. Thus, Monday is the time when members needed to communicate with each other in order to let a project start. This includes efforts such as recruiting members who wish to participate in the project, sharing the source video file, etc. Then, often on Wednesday and Thursday, translators finished the translated texts, which were subsequently timed by timers, who then turned the files with time stamps to editors. Later, after a busy Friday and Saturday, editors submitted the final draft of the fansubbed text to the post-producer who usually yielded the final translation product and made it published on Sunday. And often on the next

[28] Percentage' in this figure refers to the total percentage of messages sent on one day of the week during the data collection period. And 'cumulative percentage' refers to the accumulation of message percentages throughout all days of the week.

Monday, community members repeated the weekly cycle again. In this way, the airing schedule of *AKB48 SHOW!* deeply shaped the pattern of communications of the Daba Fansubbing Group.

By contrast, work on other community projects unfolded following a different pattern. For example, two episodes of the 9th-anniversary special show of *Nemousu Terebi* were originally aired in July 2017, yet, it was not until Mar 2019 that Daba group started a translation project for them as part of their efforts to translate the AKB48-related TV shows which had never been translated before. After that, the project took eight months to finish and the product videos were finally uploaded in August and November 2019 respectively. From this example, we can understand that a stable pattern of mutual engagement did not occur in all types of translation projects. When members worked on historic videos, mutual engagement between them could become sporadic and thus unstable. In this sense, we can say that the synchronous pursuit of newly emerging audiovisual content is essential to the formation of a stable pattern of communications. In fact, such pursuit plays a central role in the joint enterprise of the Daba community, just as in many other fansubbing communities which focus on translating newly emerging content. This will be discussed in 4.3.

4.2.3 The typical workflow of a translation project

Having investigated the general quantitative patterns of the Daba members' communications around translation projects, it is now time for us to identify the general 'workflow' of those projects, i.e. what phases constitute a typical translation project and what processes take place in each of these phases respectively. In this section, I will first present how a detailed analysis of the collected data helped me identify a typical workflow of translation project in this community. This is done to provide a holistic view on how members worked on a translation project. And in the next section (4.2.4), I will delve into the workflow and carry on my analysis of each of the processes that constitutes it.

To date, a number of scholars have published studies on the flow of fansubbing process. Being one of the earliest studies on fansubbing, Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006) investigate the general process of fansubbing based on one of the author's experience as a fansubber. They found that a fansubbing process usually involves seven phases, namely source acquisition, translation, timing (i.e. synchronising the translated dialogue with the original audiovisual file), typesetting (i.e. defining the appropriate fonts for subtitles), edition (i.e. proofreading the translation and correcting typos), encoding (i.e. using the original video and the final subtitle script to create the final product), and distribution (which takes place mainly through online file sharing in this case). Published in the same year, Pérez-González (2006) mainly focuses on investigating how Internet-based fansubbers work on translating Japanese *anime* into English. Informed by data provided by fansubbers and fansubbing websites and inspired by the process framework from Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006), he concludes that a fansubbing process includes seven recursive stages which are almost identical to the seven phases proposed by Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez except for minor differences in names and definitions. They are called acquisition of original audiovisual captures, translation, timing, typesetting (here defined as finding appropriate fonts and colours for different types of screen text), editing (here seen as the main quality assurance process), encoding, and distribution.

Released a few years later, Lee (2011b) views the fan translation phenomenon from the perspectives of the global mediation of cultural products. She argues that the globalisation of cultural products requires distributors who carry out a complicated process called 'mediation', which typically involves translation of written texts, subtitling or dubbing, and editing. In the case of a media fandom, members often invest efforts in mobilising and coordinating their collective intellectual capabilities in order to mediate foreign cultural texts. In this sense, they assume a role which is equivalent

to a distributor in the global cultural industry. In this participatory culture[29], the work of mediation takes the form of a number of specific phases, such as copying (which refers to obtaining and sharing the original texts), translating, editing, encoding (i.e. merging the subtitles with the video), distributing and managing (the distributed content) (*ibid.*).

All the three studies mentioned above provide us with effective approaches to understanding the workflow of fansubbing. It should be noted the fansubbing projects central to this study took place in a time and space that is quite different from the contexts of those studies. Most data used in those mentioned studies were collected in the first decade of the 21st Century, while the data in this study were collected at a much later date (2018-2019); and while the mentioned studies focus on *anime* fansubbing communities in the English-speaking world, this study investigates a Chinese fansubbing community which focused on a Japanese pop music idol group. Yet, despite those differences, it is surprising to find that the bulk of the flow of the fansubbing process has remained unchanged. To be specific, in all the *AKB48 SHOW!* projects, it is found that translation, timing, and editing phases took place in the same order as in the mentioned frameworks. This fact reflects that in this age of cultural globalisation, a basic procedure of producing subtitles is widely shared by the participatory fansubbing cultures across the globe: translators first translate the source texts into the target texts, which are later synchronised by the timers with the original audiovisual file. Then the editors produce the finalised version of subtitles through their quality assurance efforts.

Yet, differences also exist. For example, in the Daba Fansubbing Group, the acquisition of the original video does not constitute an independent phase that only takes place at the beginning of a translation project. Rather, according to the collected data, it happened across various phases of a project. Therefore, it should be treated as one of the stages that constitute those phases (this will be elaborated in 4.2.4). Also, according

[29] For a full definition of this term, please refer to 1.1.

to the data, there is no evidence that typesetting exists as an independent phase in the translation projects. Instead, the adjustment of fonts usually took place when the post-producer worked on the effects of subtitles. Moreover, in the Daba community, the encoding work was usually done by a role called 'post-producer'. While taking care of encoding, a post-producer also needed to be responsible for typesetting and adding special effects to subtitles (e.g. subtitle animations and the logo of the fansubbing group). And after the final product was completed, sometimes the post-producer would be asked to publish it to the fansubbing group's Bilibili channel, which is different from the delivery phase in the mentioned frameworks in that the latter relies on file sharing technologies (such as P2P programmes). Because of the post-producer's capability to handle and manage various processes at the same time, in this analysis, I use the term 'post-production and publishing' to refer to the phase that encompasses all these processes. After the above analysis, the typical flow of a translation project in the Daba community is identified, which is mapped in Figure 4.4.

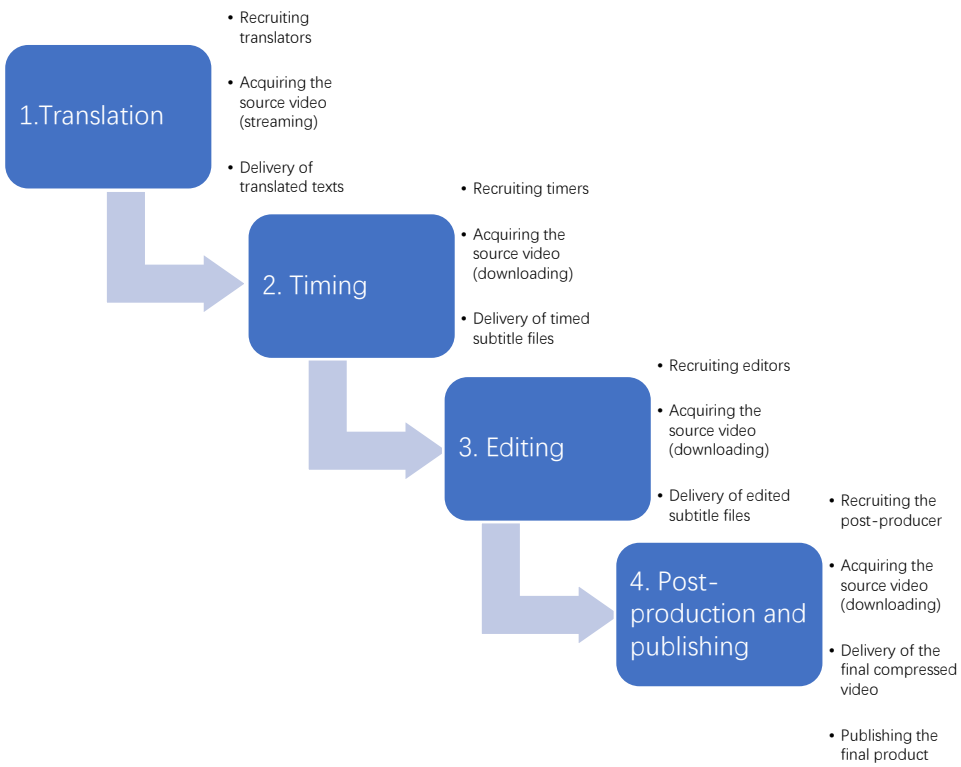

Figure 4.4 Outline of the translation project workflow in the Daba Fansubbing Group

According to Figure 4.4, a typical translation project in this community is made up of four phases. To give specific definitions for each phase, the 'translation' (Chinese: '翻译') phase is generally equivalent to 'translation' or 'translating' in the above-mentioned frameworks. In this phase, translators produce written translations of the spoken (e.g. dialogues and voice-overs) and written texts (e.g. original subtitles) contained in the source video. In the 'timing' (Chinese: '时间轴') phase, timers match the translated texts to the source video by adding time stamps to the texts. 'Editing' (Chinese: '校对') phase means that editors work to correct the errors in the translated texts after they are delivered and unify the language style. And finally, in 'post-production and publishing' (Chinese: '后期/压制/发布') phase, the final subtitled video is created and uploaded to the video-streaming channel of the fansubbing group. According to the collected archival data, this workflow recurred throughout every *AKB48 SHOW!*, only with minor variances in the specific stages that each phase contains. This will be discussed in more detail in 4.2.4.

Furthermore, each phase can be seen as including a sequence of what I propose to label as 'communicative stages'[30] which are defined by various subtitle-making processes, as shown in Figure 4.4. We can see that the stages occur in a highly recursive pattern across the different phases. Generally speaking, each phase starts from recruiting the human resource for the role essential to the phase (e.g. translator for the translation phase); then participants make efforts to acquire the source video as the basic material to work on, sometimes through personal efforts of searching on video streaming websites, and other times through downloading URL shared in the QQ chatroom; finally, after they finish their share of work, they deliver the products to the QQ chatroom to make the project move forward to the next phase. These communicative stages will be explained in detail in 4.2.4.

The recursive phases in the translation projects at the 'macro' level of the community

[30] This term is used in this way because each of these stages is characterised by communicative acts conducted for a certain purpose.

history and the recursive communicative stages at the 'micro' level of a project represent a stable pattern, or what I propose to call a 'rhythm' in the practice of the community. Such rhythm can be seen as a cause for the message occurrence and frequency patterns revealed by the quantitative analysis of the communications data in 4.2.2[31].

Since Daba Fansubbing Group is a community which lacks an enforcing central authority, the establishment of such rhythm requires the existence of certain principles that drive the mutual engagement in the community. This will be discussed in the next section where each communicative stage will be analysed with examples from the collected data.

4.2.4 The communicative stages in a translation project

As is mentioned in the previous section, each of the phases in a translation project is constituted by a number of recursive communicative stages. By carrying out those stages, participants in the project formed a work routine by which the project could move forward from one phase to another. In this sense, they can be seen as basic units of the subtitling workflow in this community and thus reflect a stable pattern of the mutual engagement between community members. In this section, I will move my focus from the general patterns of communications in translation projects to the specific actions of participants contained in these stages. According to Wenger (1998: 56), members' participation in a CoP is based on mutual recognition between them, which in turn can create various relations. Analysing the activities in the communicative stages should yield rich and direct insights into how people engaged with each other in translation projects and thereby reveal the mechanisms behind mutual engagement, which is based on various types of mutual recognition and relations.

[31] The finding of this two-level workflow pattern represents an innovation in our understanding of fansubbing practice because it has never been proposed in the existing body of literature on fansubbing. Future studies can be conducted to examine whether similar patterns generally exist in fansubbing communities.

Recruiting participants: In a participatory fan translation community such as the Daba Fansubbing Group, members' participation plays an essential role in translation projects. Therefore, this stage occurred at the beginning of all phases of translation project. Generally speaking, a translation project starts with finding people who are willing to make contributions. Here I will present a few examples of how the recruitment process works.

In this community, the role of recruiting participants is usually assumed by Alice —the host of the QQ chatroom and the *de facto* project convenor of the group. In fact, the collected data show that she assumed the role of recruiting in 20 out of the 23 *AKB48 SHOW!* projects. Also, sometimes Lin (who labelled himself as 'editor') assisted her by checking the progress of recruitment in the chatroom. Since the show was aired on Sunday night, Alice usually began to recruit members for translation on Monday.

Extract 4.1 is a sequence of messages that were sent on the night of Monday, 22 October 2018 and the morning of Tuesday, 23 October. As is shown in the messages, Alice was looking for community members who wished to translate Episode 201 of *AKB48 SHOW!* (aired on 21 October). In lines 1 and 2, she asked other community members for their participation in an unassuming and patient way. In line 3 and 4, she tried to make this project appeal to potential translators using the power of fans' affection for their idols. Lines 6-10 show that this strategy successfully attracted interest from two community members — Momo and Alex. Momo provided a convincing explanation for not being able to participate, while Alex agreed to participate and delivered his part of the translation afterwards. Hours later, other members gradually took over the remaining untranslated parts. At this point, the recruitment of translators was completed successfully.

Participant	Conversation[32]	Line
Handyman-Alice	*Just want to ask if any Juju[33] wants to translate?*	1
Handyman-Alice	*If not, I'll ask again later.*	2
Handyman-Alice	*I took a look (at the source video), the main content of this week is about STU48[34].*	3 4
Handyman-Alice	*Anyone who likes the 'Ship Group'[35]?*	5
Translator-Momo	*I love them, but I have a TOEFL test on this Sunday, so I have to ask another Juju to take this job.*	6 7
Editor-Lin	*It must be hard for you. [The Emoticon 'Good Job']*	8
Timer-Alex	*I can try that part of STU48.*	9
Timer-Alex	*I can't translate the opening short comedy.*	10
…	*[Interval of messages]*	…
Editor-Kate	*I've finished the second half of the short comedy (in the video).*	11
Editor-Lin	*It must be a lot of work.*	12
Translator-Daisie	*I'll translate the start (of the video).*	13
Timer-Peter	*[The Emoticon 'Hold Fist']*	14
Editor-Lin	*Dude, you worked very hard.*	15
Handyman-Alice	*Wow, everyone's terrific.*	16

Extract 4.1 (Thread 20181022 and Thread 20181023)

After investigating the translation projects covered by the collected communication data, it is found that the transactions of recruiting translators occurred at the beginning of 18 out of the 23 projects. From a chronological perspective, they marked the initial process of most translation projects in the community. In all of these transactions, Alice hardly showed any intention to impose the translator role on members of the community. Instead, she often used polite expressions to ask if there was any member who wished to take a certain role, as is shown in Extract 4.1. And if there was no response within hours after the request was sent, she would sometimes remind members of the need for translators again by using sentences like 'Is there really no translator?' (Chinese: '真的没有翻译吗', which appeared in the project of Episode 199) until a member eventually

[32] All the names of people that occur in this thesis are originally in Chinese. They are presented here in the form of English pseudonyms. Also, all the conversations in the extracts are originally in written Chinese and are translated by the author into English.
[33] In the AKB48 fandom, the word 'Juju' (聚聚) is used as a respectful title to address a fellow fan. Its meaning is close to 'veteran fan'.
[34] STU48 is AKB48's sister group based in Seto Inland Sea Area in West Japan.
[35] In Chinese fandom of AKB48, STU48 is sometimes referred to as the 'Ship Group', because its dedicated theatre is located in a ship touring on Seto Inland Sea.

assumed the role[36].

These transactions regarding recruitment provide a good insight into the principles that mark the participation mechanism in the practice of the community. The main principle reflected in these meaning negotiation processes is voluntariness, which can be proven by the lack of examples where Alice imposed her will on members. This principle is related to two fundamental facts of the AKB48 fandom: first, as a fan translation community, Daba Fansubbing Group is a self-organised agglomeration of AKB48 fans, which means that the community is not for profit or accountable to any higher authority. In this sense, members' participation in the translation practice can be treated as a type of 'immaterial labour' or 'cocreational labour', i.e. voluntary efforts by clustered people to articulate and promote shared cultural values and practices on the basis of mutual affinity and shared affiliations (Pérez-González 2012). Second, since the establishment of the community, its members had been facing a reality that is common to the fansubbing groups in the AKB48 fandom — the lack of competent translators and editors. As a result of this gap, it was unlikely for a project convenor to impose his/her will on translators and editors, in case they become reluctant to participate in projects. Therefore, it was difficult for a convenor to hold a dominant position when requesting members to work for the project. In addition, the degree of voluntariness is also influenced by the personal work style of the convenor. To be specific, according to the interview with Daisie, in the fandom, Alice was known to be a patient and modest person. As a result of those characters, she preferred to work in a moderate and non-dominant style. Discussions over Daisie's work style will continue in 4.3 where her role in negotiating the joint enterprise will be analysed.

When viewed from the perspectives of the CoP theory, it can be said that the principle of voluntariness reflects certain aspects of mutual recognition between members. To be specific, as a community focused on immaterial fansubbing labour that promotes shared

[36] Such cases occurred in 5 out of the 22 projects.

cultural values, the maintenance of Daba Fansubbing Group is based on members' mutual recognition of each other's common identity as producing fans. This aspect of mutual recognition includes recognising each other's 'reification' of identity as an AKB48 fan who wishes to contribute labour (e.g. through members' personal statement of fan experience and proficiency of fan jargon) as well as each other's knowledge of the Chinese fandom of AKB48 (including awareness of the not-for-profit nature of the participatory culture and the scarcity of competent translation participants). This type of recognition creates a shared 'domain of interest' (in this case the shared identity as producing fans) for members which gives a unique identity to the community and thus distinguishes the community from merely a random club of friends or acquaintances (Wenger 2011). With this mutual recognition of fan identity, members can make their contributions to the translation practice with strong motivation and with appreciation for like-minded fans around them. The existence of a 'community identity' is also mentioned by other literature about fansubbing culture. For example, based on her investigation of the 'Last Fantasy' fansubbing group, Li (2015) argues that there is a collective identity in the community which gives group members a sense of 'togetherness', i.e. a feeling that they belong to a larger community dedicated to common goals. Because of this sense, members are strongly attracted to participate in the fansubbing activities of the group. In this sense, we can say that in participatory fansubbing culture, the recognition of a common fan identity plays an essential role in motivating fansubbers to engage with each other in a shared practice[37].

When multiple community members volunteered for a translation project, sometimes it became necessary for the community to coordinate their wishes and roles. Extract 4.2

[37] Similar meaning making processes also take place in the 'traditional' face-to-face communities of practice which widely exist in organisations such as corporates and governments. In those communities, there also exist domains of interest in which people can engage with each other, be it expertise in certain business areas or concerns about solutions to government problems (such as education and health) (Wenger 2011). Based on these domains, members can participate in creating and managing knowledge that is important to the organisations they belong to. Yet, since the establishment of these communities is usually deliberately fostered by the superordinate organisations as an effective way of knowledge management, members' participation in the communities cannot be seen as a form of immaterial labour as can be found in fansubbing communities. Rather, their participation should be seen as paid professional labour which can bring potential benefits (commercial or social) for the superordinate organisations. Therefore, it can be expected that the principle of voluntariness can hardly play a central role in the participation mechanism of these communities.

presents a record of my own participation (with the pseudonym 'Anderson') in a translation project. This record occurred on Monday 18 March 2019, immediately after the subtitling project of Episode 215 of *AKB48 SHOW!* started. As can be seen in lines 1-2, I sent a message to check if there was still an opportunity for me to participate in the translation phase of this project. Then, other members immediately replied to my message and helped me gain the chance to participate by encouraging another translator to take a break in this week. Later in lines 6-8, I stated my willingness to participate again. Seeing this, Peter referred me to Alice. Alice responded with an invitation to work for the next episode, which is the final one of the show. This proposal attracted the attention from another translator, Momo. In lines 14-15, she volunteered to take the translating job for this final episode of *AKB48 SHOW!*, because she wanted to have a satisfactory end to her career as a translator for the show. In lines 19-23, Momo and I decided how we would divide the translation work for the final episode as a response to Alice's coordination effort (lines 17-18).

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Translator-Anderson	*I'm wondering if translators are still needed for the episode of this week?*	1 2
Editor-Lin	*Any Juju who wants to take a break?*	3
Translator-Daisie	*Can you do it next time? Because I've finished the translation of the short comedy during mid-day break.*	4 5 6
…	*[interval of other messages]*	…
Translator-Anderson	*Okay okay. Is there any other job that I can do? [The Emoticon 'Grin']*	7 8
Translator-Anderson	*I can do any job.*	9
Timer-Peter	*@Handyman-Alice*	10
Handyman-Alice	*Can I book you for the final episode? [The Emoticon 'Grin']*	11 12
Incompetent[38] *Translator & Timer - Momo*	*I want to book a place for the final episode. [The Emoticon 'Quiver']*	13 14
Incompetent Translator & Timer - Momo	*I want to have a good beginning as well as a good end.*	15 16

[38] 'Incompetent' ('渣') is a part of the original title, which was created by the owner herself.

	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*Momo and Anderson, would you please divide the translation work for the last episode?*	17 18
	[interval of other messages]	
Incompetent Translator & Timer - Momo	*I want to translate the Mion Corner*[39] *in the last episode.*	19 20
Handyman-Alice	*@Translator-Anderson, then can you please translate the short comedy corner?*	21 22
Translator-Anderson	*Sure. [The emoticon 'OK']*	23
Handyman-Alice	*We secured translators for the last two episodes.*	24
Handyman-Alice	*I'm so happy.*	25

Extract 4.2 (Thread 20190318)

This extract serves as a typical example of members' ability to coordinate the progress of a translation project without directives from a superordinate authority[40]. This is reflected in their initiative in assisting my request and in sharing the translation workload of the next project. These activities are not only based on their mutual recognition of each other's willingness to contribute their voluntary work, but also on their mutual recognition of each other's actual roles in the community. Such recognition helps convert the enterprise of the community into members' mutual accountability, i.e. members are aware of their accountability to each other when pursuing their mutually negotiated joint enterprise (in this case, subtitling practice). This accountability can be proven by lines 24 and 25 of the extract, where Alice expressed her happiness because her role as the project convenor was fulfilled as the translators for the final episode were secured. It can be said that with the existence of this accountability, this community is not merely a group of people who share a domain of interest. Rather, it becomes a space where people can learn together by pursuing a clear joint enterprise. This learning process is what defines the practice of a CoP.

In traditional communities of practice located in organisations, people also have the

[39] 'Mion Corner' refers to a corner in *AKB48 SHOW!* where the general manager of AKB48 Mukaichi Mion interviews members about their experience as an AKB48 member.
[40] For similar instances, please refer to Threads 20180918, 20181010, 20181126, and 20180318.

sense of mutual accountability to each other. Yet, since these communities are bound by a superordinate authority (e.g. the directors' board of a corporation or the executive council of a regional government), their joint enterprise is inevitably influenced by the agendas of the organisation. For example, many business organisations have adopted the concept of CoP as a way to strategically manage knowledge creation and sharing in the organisation (Wenger 2011). As a result, the communities of practice formed in such context are expected to align their joint enterprise with the knowledge management agenda of the organisation. Therefore, in parallel to members' mutual accountability to each other, there exists a strong accountability to the agenda of the organisation. Meanwhile, in a fan community focused on immaterial labour such as Daba, members are rarely bound to account for any higher authority outside the community. Therefore, they do not need to align their joint enterprise with a higher agenda[41]. This allows them to enjoy a high level of autonomy over their joint enterprise.

Recruiting not only occurred at the beginning of a project, but also in phases other than translation[42]. Extract 4.3 shows a recruitment stage that occurred when the translation work of Episode 196 of *AKB48 SHOW!* had finished and timers were needed to spot the translated text. It can be understood from lines 1-7 that a timer was needed to finish the work that Alex could not finish. After sending the request, the second timer named Shawn soon took the task. This reflects members' voluntariness in working for a project is not limited to assuming tasks at the beginning of each phase: it also applies to situations where substitutes are needed for unfinished tasks.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Timer-Alex	*I don't have so much free time.*	1
Timer-Alex	*Timing for the songs is the best I can do.*	2
Handyman-Alice	*Ah, okay.*	3
Handyman-Alice	*Any timer who is free now?*	4
Handyman-Alice	*Not many lines (of subtitle) to work on.*	5

[41] The autonomy of the Daba community is well evidenced by the community's negotiation processes for project management and solutions to copyright issues. Please refer to 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.
[42] From the collected data, I found 11 instances of recruiting timer, 3 instances of recruiting editor, and 3 instances of recruiting post-producer.

Timer-Shawn	*Let me do it.*	6
Timer-Shawn	*But I can't do it until tonight.*	7

Extract 4.3 (Thread 20180911)

Acquiring the source video: Apart from the human resource that is guaranteed by the recruitment stage, a translation project also requires the 'raw materials' to work on. The source video(s) plays the role of raw material in that they contain the source texts (e.g. dialogues and original subtitles) for translation. Therefore, they play the role of the focal objects in a subtitling project. In the communication records of Daba Fansubbing Group, 17 extracts were found to feature the stage of acquiring the source video. They occurred at different points of a project, i.e. they might appear prior to the beginning of translation, in the middle, or near the end, depending on the need of different phases[43].

An example of interaction for acquiring the source video before translation begins is shown in Extract 4.4:

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Editor-Lin	*[URL of a file shared on Baidu Web Drive[44]]*	1
Editor-Lin	*The source video is here. It's incredibly huge.*	2
Translator-Daisie	*Is it different from that one on Bilibili? The connection speed is so bad, I'm afraid I may not be able to download it.*	3 4 5
Editor-Lin	*It is the same (as the one on Bilibili).*	6
Translator-Daisie	*[The emoticon 'Okay']*	7
Handyman-Alice	*The video on Bilibili is segmented.*	8
Handyman -Alice	*You need to reconfirm the starting time (of your part) in the video as it will be different from the time provided by Lin.*	9 10 11
Editor-Lin	*Emm*	12
Editor-Lin	*Then you may need to calculate it [the start time of the untranslated clip] by yourself.*	13 14
Translator-Daisie	*This afternoon I found that the last MC [a talking session in the interval between two songs] segment on the Bilibili video is 20 minutes long. I wondered if I*	15 16 17

[43] From the communication records, I found 6 instances of acquiring source video at the translation phase, 11 at the timing phase, 2 at the editing phase, and 8 at the post-production phase.
[44] Baidu Web Drive, or 'Baidu Wangpan', is a cloud storage service provided by Baidu, Inc.

	may be translating the wrong part.	18
Handyman -Alice	*The last MC segment must be very long, because it contains the part of counting the votes (cast for the general election).*	19 20 21
Translator-Daisie	*No problem with the time now. In order to avoid the Parkinson Rule [an entertaining way of saying 'forgetting'], I will do it as soon as possible.*	22 23 24

Extract 4.4 (Thread 20180929)

This extract occurred at the beginning of a translation project that aimed to subtitle a video of AKB48's general election. It shows that members of the community shared the source video using cloud storage services, which provide enormous and long-lasting storage spaces to users. These features ensure that high-quality videos (which are usually huge in size) can be uploaded and shared without being subject to the restrictions from video streaming services, such as those on copyright licence (which limit the promotion of videos involving copyright infringement) and resolution of videos (which are set to limit the consumption of the storage and bandwidth of the streaming service). In translation practice, these high-quality source videos are usually used to produce end product videos which integrate the final subtitles as open captions. In this way, the quality of the final uploaded videos can be guaranteed.

Yet, as Daisie said (lines 3 to 5), downloading a high-quality video usually takes a long time because the connection speed is often limited. This sometimes means that translators cannot start to work on time after their tasks are assigned. Since translation work does not require the use a high-quality source video as long as the quality does not cause any difficulty of understanding, Daisie chose to use the source video uploaded to the streaming website Bilibili eventually, which does not cause any undue delays. Her choice of the not so high quality yet immediately playable video is highly typical of the translators' preference of source videos in this community, since it happened for all the AKB48 SHOWS! projects (including the project that I participated in). As a result, as the source videos on streaming websites could be easily searched and found, participants in the projects rarely shared the access to acquiring source videos (e.g.

streaming or downloading URLs) in the chatroom at the translation phase of the projects (3 records in 23 *AKB48 SHOW!* projects). In other words, it is widely assumed in this fansubbing group that the translators can and should acquire the non-high-quality source videos by themselves.

Extract 4.4 presents a precious example of subtitling practice because it manifests two major ways of acquiring the source video in one instance. This flexible use of online resources reflects members' ability to negotiate the shared repertoire of the community, i.e. they understand how to adopt, share, and make use of various resources (e.g. video files and file sharing technologies) as responses to different difficulties and challenges in their practice. To be more specific, members' assumption of each other's ability to acquire the instantly usable source videos signifies that there exists a certain form of mutual recognition of members' technical capabilities to participate in the translation projects, i.e. they have trust in each other's abilities to properly use 'reified' technical knowledge (as part of the shared repertoire), such as knowledge of using relevant tools, translation norms, and technical know-how, to fulfil their roles in translation projects. Yet, it should be noted that the mutual recognition of technical capabilities does not suggest that members' technical knowledge remained static throughout the community's history. Instead, such knowledge had been constantly negotiated and acquired by members through their learning trajectories in the Daba community as well as in other parts of the AKB48 fandom. This topic will be expanded on in 4.4.

Delivery of intermediate products

The third key stage in a translation project is the delivery of intermediate products. As a project that includes multiple phases, participants with different roles deliver various types of products, which can be grouped into two categories — intermediate products and end products.

Intermediate products refer to the products created in one of the middle phases of a

project (i.e. all the phases before ‘post-production and publishing’), which need to be passed on to the next phase in order to let the project progress. Generally, these products include unspotted translated texts (delivered by translators), timed subtitle files (delivered by timers), and edited subtitle files (delivered by editors). In most cases, the delivery of intermediate products relies on participants’ spontaneous submission after their parts are done, i.e. the progress of the project pauses at a certain phase until relevant members deliver sufficient intermediate products to allow the project to move on to the next phase.

The most typical example of this spontaneous work style is the lyrics translator Carol. She not only contributed lyrics translation to every *AKB48 SHOW!* project, but she was also the earliest translator to deliver the translated texts in most of these projects (e.g. Episode 195, Remix Episode 5, Episode 199, among many others). Unsurprisingly, this highly efficient work style was repeatedly praised by her fellow participants. In the collected data, I found 8 extracts from 8 projects which contain such praise. For example, in Extract 4.5 (from the project of Episode 213), Alice marvelled at the speed of Carol’s (here referred to as ‘Miss C’) work after she delivered the translated lyrics for this episode only a few hours after the release of the source video. And in Extract 4.6 (from the project of Episode 216), after Carol delivered the translated lyrics for the final episode of the show, Alice expressed her acknowledgement for Carol’s incessant contribution to the *AKB48 SHOW!* projects.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*Miss C did it really fast.*	1

Extract 4.5 (Thread 20190303)

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Lyrics-Carol	*[Files of translated lyrics]*	1
Lyrics-Carol	*My AKB48 SHOW! journey is over now.*	2
	[Interval of messages]	

Handyman-Alice	*We should give Miss C a reward for her attendance in all the projects.*	3 4

Extract 4.6 (Thread 20190323)

The extracts above show that in a not-for-profit fan translation community which relies on members' voluntary participation, the sense of mutual accountability to the joint enterprise can be a highly important matter for the maintenance of the community: Carol showed her outstanding awareness that the regular participation in the projects and the timely delivery of products could be of much help to the pursuit of the enterprise. As a result, she was greatly praised by her fellow members.

Yet, in three other cases, there are also times when participants (usually the convenor) needed to actively check the progress and request the intermediate products. Extract 4.7 shows an instance of communications occurring in the middle of the translation project of Episode 195 of *AKB48 SHOW!*.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*@Timer-Alex Have you finished timing the songs?*	1
Timer-Alex	*Oh, I forgot.*	2
Timer-Alex	*Please wait a moment.*	3
Timer-Alex	*It's finished (but I forgot to deliver it here).*	4
Timer-Alex	*I just forgot to deliver it.*	5
Timer-Alex	*Allow me to get up and boot up the computer*	6
Timer-Alex	*[File of timed subtitles of songs]*	7
Handyman-Alice	*Good job.*	8
Translator-Momo	*Good job.*	9
Timer-Peter	*[File of consolidated timed subtitles]*	10
Timer-Peter	*I've integrated all subtitles. Now waiting for a Juju to edit them.*	11 12
Handyman-Alice	*@Editor-Kate I'd like to ask you to edit the subtitles of this episode of AKB48 SHOW!.*	13 14
Editor-Kate	*Ok.*	15

Extract 4.7 (Thread 20180831 and Thread 20180901)

From this extract, we can understand that prior to the time of the conversations, Alex

had been recruited as a timer for the project. Yet, she did not deliver her product on time. Thus, the convenor Alice talked to Alex to check her progress. Alex soon delivered her contribution and apologised for the delay. This shows that in the progression of a translation project in this community, members did not always show a strong sense of mutual accountability as Carol did. Sometimes they needed to be reminded of their accountability for their role performance in the project (i.e. to what extent they have fulfilled their role in the project). With this sense in place, community members could effectively avoid situations where participants' personal situations (e.g. waning motivation, procrastination, a bad memory) made a significant impact on the progression of the project.

In the second half of the extract (lines 10-12), another timer Peter soon delivered a file which merges all the previously delivered timed subtitles. After this file was delivered, Alice immediately contacted the editor Kate to start the next phase of the project — editing. This extract is a good example that shows how delivery of intermediate products plays a critical role in the progression of subtitling practice — it connects the preceding phase of a project with a succeeding phase; in this sense, the recursive delivery processes relay the momentum of practice and keep the workflow of the project moving forward.

Delivery of the end product and publishing

Finally, we come to the delivery of the end-products of translation projects. Unlike the previous three stages, this stage only occurs at the final phase of a translation project (post-production and publishing). In the Daba Fansubbing Group, the final products take the form of videos with embedded subtitles, or open captions. They are usually made through a process called video compression (Chinese: 视频压制). In this process, a participant (usually a post-producer) uses a video-processing software application such as Maruko Toolkit — an application dedicated to making videos that meet Bilibili's requirements for video specifications — to define the parameters of a video

(e.g. height-width ratio, bitrate, resolution, etc.) and embed the finalised subtitles into the video file. After defining the parameters, the participant only needs to start the automatic processing of the video and wait for the end product.

In the QQ chatroom of the fansubbing group, I found communication transactions regarding the end-products of translation projects (which occurred in 16 projects). For example, Extract 4.8 shows how members usually worked on the end-product of a translation project. This extract of communications occurred near the end of the translation project of Episode 201 of *AKB48 SHOW!*. After the delivery of the final edited subtitle file, the convenor tasked Peter with making the compressed video. This example is typical of how people worked on video compression, because as shown in the identified transactions, this process was usually taken care of by one of a few selected members, depending on their availability when needed. These include the project convenor Alice, the timer Peter, the post-producer (i.e. a person responsible for adding special effects to the subtitles) Zach, and the video compressor (i.e. a person dedicated to compressing videos) Ken. Among them, only one identified themselves as 'compressor' in their ID. When comparing this figure to the large number of translators (10) and timers (9) in this community, we can say that video compression does not require much collaborative effort from members.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*@Timer-Peter Can you please compress the video?*	1
Timer-Peter	*I can do it at night.*	2
	[Interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*But I won't be home tonight.*	3
Handyman-Alice	*I can't upload it until tomorrow.*	4
Timer-Peter	*Let me do the uploading, too.*	5
Handyman-Alice	*Okay.*	6
Handyman-Alice	*181021 AKB48 SHOW！Episode 201*	7
Handyman-Alice	*[Introduction message that accompanies the uploaded video: the content and the narrator of this episode]*	8 9
Timer-Peter	*Ok.*	10

Extract 4.8 (Thread 20181027)

Having investigated the 23 *AKB48 SHOW!* projects, I found in almost all cases that the compressed video was delivered to Alice, who would finish the project with the final move — publishing the video on the Bilibili channel of the group. This is because, in her capacity as the project convenor, she was managing the channel as the major online space where videos produced by the group can be uploaded and seen by their audience. However, as is shown in lines 3-6, when Alice was temporarily unavailable for the job, other people could also take her place. From this fact, it could be inferred that the confidential login details of the account (e.g. the login password) were shared among community members. Therefore, people other than the convenor could upload the end products as long as they had gained the permission from Alice and followed the uploading norms (e.g. providing an accompanying introduction in a certain format).

This way of managing the Bilibili account reflects the members' mutual recognition of technical capabilities and roles in the community. As the host of the Bilibili account, Alice trusted other members' abilities to publish the end products in a proper manner and to keep confidential information (e.g. password for the account) from unauthorised people; and on the other hand, those members recognised Alice's power as the host to define the manner in which the publishing should be done. In this sense, it can be said that Alice held a higher position in the meaning negotiation processes (e.g. recruiting participants and making key decisions) that took place in the community. Yet, as she lacked the power to enforce her will to the members, we should refrain from treating her as a real central authority which can be found in institutions such as schools and enterprises. Rather, she should be seen as a figure who enjoyed a higher power to make decisions on various matters related to the community after carefully considering members' negotiations regarding those matters. This 'soft' and limited leadership represents the complexity inherent to relations created by members' mutual engagement. Wenger (1998: 77) mentions a community of practice focused on claims processing in

an insurance company[45]. In that community, Wenger found that the relations between members are not easily reducible to a single principle such as equality or hierarchy. Rather, these relations can be seen as a mixture of equality and hierarchy as well as of authority (caused by the power hierarchy of the company that the CoP belonged to) and collegiality (as a result of members' mutual recognition of a shared identity). Although Wenger's community is an institutional one which focused on professional labour instead of immaterial labour, the identified complexity can still be applied to the Daba fansubbing group. This similarity between an online fansubbing community and a pre-digital professional community suggests that the complexity of relations is inherent to both face-to-face and online CoPs despite the differences in the media that they are based on. Such complexity helps maintain a balance in the fansubbing community: while equality and collegiality are certainly elements inherent to fan communities focused on immaterial labour, a proper level of authority and hierarchy can help the practice remain efficient.

In his later article on the CoP theory, Wenger (2010) mentions two different types of power structure. The first type is based on 'vertical accountability' associated with a hierarchy in which the subordinate are held accountable to a decisional authority. As such, this type of structure plays a dominant role in institutions such as governments or corporations. In contrast, the second type is based on 'horizontal accountability' associated with mutual relationships between people engaged in joint activities. Not surprisingly, this type of structure can be commonly found in CoPs. While these two types of power structure are different in nature, they co-exist in every organisation and remain constantly in tension (*ibid.*). In the case of the Daba community, it can be understood from the mentioned complex power relationships between members that these two types of structure certainly co-exist in the community. Moreover, Alice's soft leadership suggests that in this community, the balance between the two structures

[45] Wenger (1998) uses a claims processing unit in an insurance company pseudonymised as 'Alinsu' as his primary example of CoP. Members of this community worked every day together in Alinsu's building to process insurance claims from all across the world. This means that they worked in a pre-digital face-to-face manner, which is significantly different from the context of the Daba community.

generally inclined to the horizontal one as decisions were usually made through negotiations between members in which Alice held a slightly higher decisional power. Discussions about Alice's role and position in the community will continue in the following sections of the data analysis.

The final stage of a translation project marks the end of the momentum of the project. This means that this stage turns, or reifies, the experience created by the collaborative participation of members into an embodied object. As such, the end product automatically becomes a part of the shared repertoire of the community. In addition, as the end product is published, it becomes open to the viewers outside the fansubbing group. In this sense, it plays the role of an object that connects the community to other parts of the fandom.

4.2.5 An evolving mutual engagement

In the previous sections, I investigate the interactive patterns and workflow that lie behind the translation projects of Daba Fansubbing Group and argue that such workflow reflects the existence of certain forms of mutual recognition in the community. This section moves on to provide a holistic explanation of how mutual recognition created various types of mutual relations and how these relations made essential contributions to the coherence of the community.

According to Wenger (1998: 56), in a community of practice, mutual relations are created by community members' personal experience of participation in the practice, which is in turn significantly determined by the mutual recognition between members. Therefore, we can say that the previously identified forms of mutual recognition led to the forging of different mutual relations between members:

The first form of mutual recognition mentioned in the previous section is the **recognition of the shared identity as subtitling fans of AKB48**, i.e. AKB48 fans who

are interested in producing subtitles for AKB48-related media content. I have argued in 4.2.4 that this form of recognition created a domain of interest where people were strongly motivated to engage in the fansubbing practice with like-minded people. Yet, it should be noted that as a type of cultural 'prosumer', the concept 'subtitling fan' entails not only a 'producer aspect', i.e. participating in translation practice as producers with expertise, but also a 'consumer aspect', i.e. taking part in other fan activities as general fans of AKB48 and consumers of information related to the group.

One good example of members' mutual recognition of the consumer aspect is a type of incident that occurred frequently in the communication records of the group (12 instances were found) — exchanging comments on the shows that they worked on as consumers of AKB48-related content. For example, Extract 4.9 shows an occasion in which community members exchanged information and comments on the content of one episode of *AKB48 SHOW!*. In line 1, Alex informed other members that the next episode of *AKB48 SHOW!* would exclusively feature Nogizaka46 — the official 'rival' group of AKB48 whose signature colour is purple. Then in line 5 and 6, Alice wondered if Keyakizaka46 — a sister group of Nogizaka46 that is represented by green colour — would be featured exclusively in a future episode. Having seen these exchanges, in line 7, Anning made a slightly sarcastic comment on the two rival groups' appearance (or prospective appearance) in the show, because as was believed by many fans of AKB48, such appearance signified that the two rival groups were taking unfair advantage of the media resources originally allocated to AKB48 and therefore had caused the media exposure of AKB48 to decrease[46].

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Timer-Alex	*Next week we'll have the purple show again.*	1
Editor-Yiyi	*What? Was AKB48 SHOW! aired yesterday? Why did I see nothing after turning on TV at 10:30 PM?*	2 3

[46] Nogizaka46 was originally founded as an 'official rival' of AKB48 in 2011. As such, their rise to fame partially relied on making use of the popularity and media exposure of AKB48. One example of such exploitation is the fact that Nogizaka46 has been repeatedly featured in AKB48-related TV shows (e.g. *AKB48 SHOW!*), while similar situations rarely occurred in the reverse direction. Founded as the sister group of Nogizaka46, Keyakizaka46 also adopted a similar strategy.

Editor-Kate	*It was.*	4
Handyman-Alice	*Then will we see the green show in the week after the next?*	5 6
Timer-Anning	*You can even see AKB48 in AKB48 SHOW!.*	7

Extract 4.9 (Thread 20180827)

Through these conversations, members of the community exchanged their concerns for the media exposure of AKB48 as well as their attitudes towards an external rival of the idol group. These exchanges reflect a duality in the source of identity formation: identity is shaped by both participation (i.e. the process of taking part in meaning negotiation and the relations that reflect such process) and non-participation (i.e. not taking part in meaning negotiation) at the same time (Wenger 1998: 164). To be specific, in this case, the consumer aspect of the fan identity shared by members was on the one hand shaped by their participation in the activities within the fandom of AKB48 (as represented by their care for the group's media exposure), and on the other hand, it was also shaped by their 'non-participation' in the Nogizaka46 fandom, here marked by their dissatisfaction with Nogizaka46's exploitation of AKB48's opportunities for media exposure. As a result, this complexity of the consumer aspect had complex impact on the 'producer' aspect of the fan identity: On the one hand, community members' shared affection for AKB48 motivated them to subtitle AKB48-related media content with like-minded people; and on the other hand, community members' s non-participation in the Nogizaka46 fandom led to their unwillingness to translate any of the *AKB48 SHOW!* episodes dedicated to Nogizaka46, e.g. Episode 196 aired on 2 September 2018 and Episode 207 aired on 23 December 2018. Over the history of the community[47], such interactions between the consumer aspect and producer aspect of fan identity led to stable mutual relations of fellow subtitling fans between members, i.e. community members are fellow consumers and fellow voluntary subtitlers of AKB48-related media content simultaneously. These relations allowed members of the community to maintain their passion for contributing their immaterial labour to the idol group they like. Discussions on the duality of members' fan translator identity will

[47] For members' accounts of the community's history, please refer to 5.2.2.

continue in 5.2.1.

The second form of mutual recognition mentioned in the previous section is the **recognition of members' roles in the community**. According to my analysis of the collected data, in this community, this form of recognition is mainly represented by people's recognition of each other's roles in translation projects. As we can see in the analysis of the communicative stages in translation projects, each of the phases of a translation project required recruiting participants for a particular role, be it translator, editor, or timer. At the time when they were recruited, they became recognised as having assumed the responsibility of that role, and as being held accountable for their performance in that role. Also, according to my analysis of Extract 4.2, when problems happened in terms of matching volunteering members with appropriate roles, the community had a coordinative ability which allowed those members to fulfil their recognised roles in an alternative way. In this way, the recognition of roles allowed members to achieve an effective division of labour so that the efficiency of participation could be achieved. Based on such division, participants were able to interact with each other in order to accomplish different phases of the project. In this way, they became able to keep the momentum of the project moving forward until the end. Furthermore, it can be found in the archival data that roles of community members could become fluid in certain cases. For example, Joan labelled herself as both a translator and a timer (as can be seen in Extract 4.2); in Extract 4.1, Kate, who labelled herself as an editor, translated part of the short comedy in Episode 201 of *AKB48 SHOW!*; and Extract 4.8 shows that Peter, who labelled himself as a timer, assumed the roles of post-producing and uploading the final product of a translation project. These examples demonstrate that in this community, members were allowed to flexibly choose the specific fansubbing roles that they would like to assume, and those choices were generally recognised by the community host Alice and other members. Such flexibility suggests that in this community, mutual recognition of each other's roles not only means that members were held accountable to specific roles that they assumed in translation projects, but also means members' spontaneous sense of accountability to their freedom

of actions in a domain of shared interest.

Over the history of the community, members' continuous participation in successive translation projects allowed them to develop their accountability to their roles in individual translation projects into a mutual accountability to the joint enterprise of the community. This means that members are aware of their accountability to each other in terms of properly understanding the joint enterprise of the community and contributing to the pursuit of it. According to the community's Bilibili homepage (Daba Fansubbing Group Bilibili Channel 2020), the general purpose of the community is to translate audiovisual content produced in the name of AKB48 as an entirety (as opposed to the content that only features specific individual members or teams of AKB48). By observing the list of the fansubbed videos in the community's Bilibili channel (shown in Figure 4.5), we can tell that this purpose has been well observed and continuously pursued by community members: Since the establishment of the fansubbing group, its members have committed to translating almost all the new episodes of *AKB48 SHOW!* (which is one of the most important shows produced in the name of AKB48 as a whole) until the show's end. In this process, most of the community members participated in those translation projects through their efforts to contribute their abilities and address the challenges that occurred. In this sense, we can say that over the history of the community, the accountability to the enterprise has firmly established among members a relation of mutual accountability which helped them effectively turn their passion for fansubbing into sustained negotiations of a joint enterprise through their pursuit of the general purpose of the community[48].

[48] For more discussions regarding the joint enterprise of the community, please refer to 4.3.

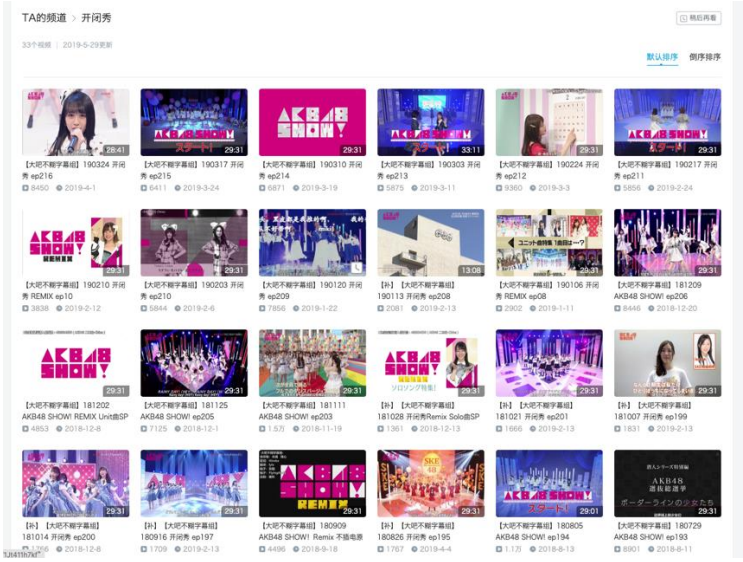

Figure 4.5 The list of subtitled episodes of AKB48 SHOW! on the Bilibili channel of the Daba Fansubbing Group

In order to finish translation projects, community members not only need to assume and be accountable to their roles, but also need to possess the actual abilities required by the roles. Therefore, the third identified form of mutual recognition is members' **recognition of each other's technical capabilities to participate in the translation practice**. From the perspectives of CoP theory, such recognition not only entails the recognition of similarities in members' technical knowledge (as exemplified by the acquisition of the instantly playable source video in Extract 4.4), but also entails the recognition of diversity among members. This means that members' mutual engagement in practice draws on what they can do and what they know (e.g. their knowledge and skills), as well as on their ability to connect meaningfully to what they cannot do and what they do not know, i.e. to the contributions and knowledge of others (Wenger 1998: 76). In this sense, every member's capabilities are complementary, and members need to rely on each other in order to accomplish the projects. This is well exemplified by Alice's performance as shown in extracts above: as a convenor who lacked adequate language skills, she was well aware of her own 'shortcomings' (according to the interview with her). Thus, she actively recognised members with sufficient technical knowledge in translation and editing and encouraged them to

contribute to the translation projects. In this way, her ability in community maintenance and other members' specialities complement each other.

Over the history of the community, such mutual recognition of complementary capabilities has developed a relation of mutual negotiability of the repertoire. This refers to members' shared abilities to utilise and negotiate the shared resources (e.g. technical knowledge and tools) available to the practice of the community. This relation allowed members to base their passion for subtitling and pursuit of a general purpose on a solid pool of technical resources which they could continuously use, update, and redefine. Discussions about the negotiation of a shared repertoire will continue in 4.4.

The analysis in this section reveals that over the history of the subtitling practice in the Daba Fansubbing Group, there existed 'evolving forms of mutual engagement' (Wenger 1998: 95): members had been discovering how to best engage with each other in the translation projects by developing a workflow, developing sustained mutual relations through different forms of mutual recognition, and integrating each other's partial capabilities and contributions into a pool of resources that allowed them to accomplish their goals. According to Wenger (1998: 86), a community of practice is in nature a history of learning. The evolving mutual engagement discussed in this chapter makes up the first of the three main processes involved in this history (*ibid.*: 95). The other two, 'understanding and tuning the enterprise' and 'developing the repertoire, styles, and discourse' will be discussed in the next two sections.

4.3 Joint enterprise

As members of Daba Fansubbing Group engaged with each other in their practice, they had to face various 'situations'[49] (Wenger 1998: 77) together: There could be situations within the community, such as the completion of translation projects, the difficulty of

[49] 'Situations' here are understood as changes, challenges, events, and incidents that have impact on the practice.

maintaining the general purpose of practice set up at the time of founding and the need to coordinate members' personal schedules, needs, and interests; situations also occurred outside the community, e.g. the collaborations and conflicts with other fan communities in the AKB48 fandom, the pressure from the tightening copyright policy of video-streaming websites, among others. These situations reflect the full complexity of mutual engagement, which includes the personal, interpersonal, and instrumental aspects of our life (Wenger 1998: 78).

As mentioned in 4.2.5, over the history of the community, members have developed a mutual sense of accountability to their joint enterprise. As a response to these situations, members of the community were constantly driven by this mutual accountability to engage in a process called negotiation of a joint enterprise. Because of the complexity of the situations that the community members face, the enterprise of the community should not necessarily be equated with completing translation projects, though this surely makes up a significant part of the enterprise. Instead, the enterprise of the community should be viewed as a series of complex, collectively negotiated responses to the situations that community members had to face through their mutual engagement in practice (*ibid.*). The negotiation processes that produced such responses usually took the form of members' negotiations over solutions to specific incidents. Therefore, they represent members' continuous efforts to fulfil the general purpose of the community.

Although the negotiation of a joint enterprise is influenced by many situations outside the control of community members, it should be noted that the enterprise of the community is 'indigenous', i.e. it is inherently produced by the community's internal negotiation processes within the constraints of the resources and situations (*ibid.*: 79). In this sense, no conditions, resources, and demands can become a part of the practice without them having been first negotiated among members.

In this section, I will analyse the processes through which members negotiated a joint enterprise of the community. To make the analysis succinct and illustrative, I will focus

on two significant aspects which occurred within and outside the community respectively: project management and copyright issues. Both of them will be exemplified by a number of instances from the collected data.

4.3.1 Global-level project management

Section 4.2.3 outlined the typical workflow of translation projects in the fansubbing community and revealed how practice worked at the local level of individual translation projects. Yet, above this local level, negotiations constantly took place regarding what the community needed to translate or not. Here I define this type of negotiation as a 'global-level' mechanism of project management. Such a mechanism allowed members to maintain the orientation of their practice by launching one translation project after another. In this way, the general purpose of the community as set up by the founders could be maintained through continuous negotiations.

According to the interview with Alice, the initial purpose for founding this community was explicit — to carry on the subtitling of *AKB48 SHOW!*. This is because another fansubbing group which previously focused on this show had announced that they would stop working on it. Therefore, from the establishment of the community, members treated the weekly *AKB48 SHOW!* as the primary task that they needed to work on almost every week. As shown on the community's Bilibili page, such pursuit generated 33 translation projects for 33 episodes of the show. Later, with the intervention from other members, other types of content (e.g. music videos and concerts) were introduced to the list of their projects. As a result, the purpose of the community evolved to be more general and inclusive. This can be corroborated by the homepage of the community's Bilibili channel, which states that Daba Fansubbing Group is a 'group exclusively dedicated to the Japanese female idol group AKB48' (Daba Fansubbing Group Bilibili channel 2019). This statement suggests that the community is dedicated to translating audiovisual content produced in the name of AKB48 as a whole, rather than to content only related to particular teams or members of the group.

Hence, in addition to this primary task, members frequently had to negotiate whether to launch other types of translation projects which usually centre around newly emerging content from AKB48 (e.g. concert blu-rays, MVs of new singles, live TV broadcast of large events, etc.). This evolution of the general purpose suggests that defining a joint enterprise is an ongoing process, not a simple, static agreement between community members (Wenger 1998: 82).

Similar to what happened at the local level with their translation project counterparts, global-level negotiations normally involved the convenor Alice as a central decision-making figure. Extract 4.10 shows an incident where a new member joined the fansubbing group on 16 August 2018. Peter told the new member to wait for the launch of the next project and referred to Alice as the person who could make the final decision on what video would be chosen for translation. Peter also actively suggested some candidate videos for members to consider as new translation projects.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Timer-Peter	*Let's wait for Alice to come online and see what we can do next. Anyhow there are many episodes of Nemousu Terebi that we can work on.*	1 2 3

Extract 4.10 (Thread 20180816)

Alice's central position in the global-level management is best exemplified by her presence as an active role in the negotiations over launching a new project. In the collected communication record of the community, I found three instances of such presence on 23 August 2018, 28 September 2018, and 25 October 2018. In the instance of 28 September 2018 (Extract 4.11), Alice proposed a project to translate the AKB48 *Kouhaku* Song Contest[50] 2017. When making the proposal, she stressed that it was done at Lin's request. In response to this, Lin also joined the discussion and asked for members' participation (line 10). Then, in order to make this large project look less

[50] AKB48 *Kouhaku* Song Contest (AKB48 紅白歌合戦) is a major event in which two teams of members compete to win the most votes from judges and members by singing and dancing.

intimidating to members, Alice told the members that a significant part of the project had been outsourced, therefore there would not be much workload for them. Not long after Alice and Lin made their requests, two translators appeared and picked up the clips that they wanted to work on. According to the interview with Lin, completing the *Kouhaku* 2017 project was a personal aspiration of hers, because from her perspective, this symbolised a proof of her competence as a sophisticated editor.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*Dear all.*	1
Handyman-Alice	*Lin said she wanted to sub the AKB48 Kouhaku Song Contest last year.*	2 3
Handyman-Alice	*All lyrics have been outsourced.*	4
Handyman-Yani	*What a big project.*	5
Handyman-Alice	*All we have to do is translate the MCs (i.e. talks between the songs of the concert).*	6 7
Handyman-Alice	*There are less than 10 MCs.*	8
Handyman-Alice	*Do our translators want to take the job?*	9
Editor-Lin	*Please give me a face, bosses*[51].	10
…		
Handyman-Alice	*There should be seven MCs.*	11
Handyman-Alice	*Not too much if we divide them.*	12
Translator-Momo	*Where can I find the source video?*	13
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*So, do you want to take one of the MCs?*	14
	[interval of messages]	
Translator-Momo	*Yes.*	15
Translator-Momo	*I'll choose it randomly.*	16
Translator-Momo	*Let's say the fourth and the fifth one.*	17
	[interval of messages]	
Translator-Daisie	*Can I take one of the MCs?*	18
Handyman-Alice	*Of course!*	19
Handyman-Alice	*You may also pick up two MCs!*	20

Extract 4.11 (Thread 20180928)

From the mentioned instances, we can understand that all the projects proposed by Alice revolved around media content that features AKB48 as a whole, just like *AKB48*

[51] In Chinese fandom culture, the term boss, or 'Dalao' (大佬), is frequently used to show respect to experienced or talented fans.

SHOW!. According to the interview with her, similar to the case of *AKB48 SHOW!*, Alice proposed new projects for these videos partly because no one else in the fandom would work on them. This means that when making such proposals, Alice was well aware of the main purpose of the community. In these cases, she attempted to support this purpose by adding new types of projects to the task list of the community. As shown by Alice's support for Lin's aspiration in the *Kouhaku* project, apart from her own sense of accountability to the joint enterprise, Alice also recognised other members' personal needs as producing fans when she considered whether to launch a new project. Another noteworthy point is that in these instances, members did not show any sign of objection to Alice's initiatives. Rather, Alice's proposals attracted members' prompt and spontaneous participation. This reflects again members' recognition of Alice's central role in making key decisions for the community.

Compared to actively proposing new projects, Alice was more inclined to handle proposals from other members. In fact, from the collected communication records, six instances of this type were identified[52]. It is highly notable that in all of those instances, Alice eventually declined members' proposals to launch the proposed projects. An example can be found in Extract 4.12, where Daisie asked Alice if the community should start working on a particular video - the *Kanshasai*[53] of AKB48 general election (9 Jan 2019). Before Alice was able to respond, Zach expressed his wish to work on the project. Daisie then proposed that a fan community she joined (later understood as one dedicated to HKT48 member Miyawaki Sakura) could provide manpower for this project. Alice later joined the discussion and expressed her interest in the suggestion, though eventually she decided not to start this project because of her discords with the Miyawaki fan community[54]. As an alternative solution, she suggested the interested members participate in the new translation project in a personal capacity.

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[52] On 10 October 2018, 26 October 2018, 5 December 2018, 9 January 2019, 28 February 2019, and 18 March 2019

[53] In Japanese,'Kanshasai'(感謝祭) literally means a 'gratitude ceremony'. In this context, it denotes an event after the general election in which members can express gratitude to fans who voted for them.

[54] According to the communication records on 9 January 2019, Alice was once severely attacked by fans of Miyawaki. The reason for this attack is related to Miyawaki fans' discontent with the AKB48 Tieba forum, of which Alice was an administrator.

Participant	Conversation	Line
Translator-Daisie	*@Handyman-Alice Shall we work on the Kanshasai video?*	1 2
Post-production-Zach	*Let's do it. I have the same plan, too.*	3
Translator-Daisie	*My fan community can deploy editors to this project.*	4
Handyman-Alice	*Sounds really cool.*	5
	[interval of messages]	
Translator-Daisie	*If you want to do it, I'll drag her (an editor) into our group chat.*	6 7
Translator-Daisie	*We can also provide the source video.*	8
Handyman-Alice	*Is she from the Miyawaki Sakura fan community?*	9
Handyman-Alice	*No, don't do it.*	10
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*You can create a new chat group for the project.*	11
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*I'm really afraid of the Miyawaki community.*	12

Extract 4.12 (Thread 20190109)

In this example, we can see a certain type of equal relation between members: they recognised each other as having equal rights to propose new projects and to discuss how the potential projects should be started. Yet, when it comes to the final decisions, Alice's role seemed more powerful than the other members' roles. In this example, she decided to forbid the interested members from using the collective identity of the community in the proposed project only because of her own unhappy experience with fans of Miyawaki[55].

In other instances of declining members' proposals, Alice showed considerations towards the main focus of the community's practice (i.e. *AKB48 SHOW!* projects). For example, in Extract 4.13, Joan asked other members if they should work on an upcoming episode of *Nemousu Terebi*. In the following discussion (lines 2-4), Peter and Lin pointed out that it was not wise to start new projects when the human resource for the main task was already insufficient. After Peter consulted Alice for her opinion, she

[55] This example will be expanded on in 4.5.

decided that their resources should be focused on the main task of the community. This example shows members' shared awareness of the essential role of the main task in the pursuit of their general purpose, as well as an internal situation that they had to face — the shortage of resources necessary for working on projects. Based on this awareness, Alice made a decision which aimed to ensure that the community's efforts were to be invested in the matters essential to the enterprise of the community. There are also three other instances (on 10 October 2018, 26 October 2018, and 28 February 2019) in which Alice declined members' proposals for similar reasons. Therefore, it can be said that the sustainability of the main task is one of the main factors that influenced Alice's decisions.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Timer-Joan	*Do we need to sub next week's Nemousu Terebi?*	1
Timer-Peter	*Let's wait until AKB48 SHOW! Ends.*	2
Editor-Lin	*We're already short of hands.*	3
Editor-Lin	*We shouldn't think about any other projects.*	4
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Peter	*Let's ask the leader.*	5
Timer-Peter	*@Handyman-Alice*	6
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*Let's finish the AKB48 SHOW! First. I'm afraid we won't be able to work on Nemousu Terebi.*	7 8

Extract 4.13 (Thread 20190318)

When we bring our view back to the primary task of the community — *AKB48 SHOW!*, we find that this task did not always progress or unfold automatically. Rather, the progress of the task also required maintenance through members' negotiations. This is because when working on the show, members had to face various unexpected external situations. Extract 4.14 and 4.15 show an example of such negotiations. These examples occurred after the airing of Episode 203 of *AKB48 SHOW!* (11 November 2018), which features content related to Yamamoto Sayaka[56]'s graduation concert. Knowing that

[56] Yamamoto Sayaka was the leader of NMB48 (AKB48's sister group in Osaka) from 2011 to 2018 and was regarded the best-known member of the group.

Yamamoto enjoyed a large fan base in China, before starting a new translation project, Alice proposed to wait and see if Yamamoto's fans would translate this episode. However, in the end, she found that Yamamoto's fans only translated the parts related to Yamamoto. Hence, Alice decided that they still needed to translate the whole episode.

This instance allows us to understand that the community's negotiation of a joint enterprise was sometimes affected by the actions of other fansubbing communities. Such influence proves that the community was connected to other parts of the AKB48 fandom. It is because of these connections that members recognised the contributions from other fansubbing groups and therefore negotiated to make sure that the contributions from different communities could complement, instead of overlap, each other. Issues related to inter-community relations will be further discussed in 5.3.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*Shall we work on this week's AKB48 SHOW!?*	1
Handyman-Alice	*How about we wait and see if Yamamoto Sayaka's fans will do it?*	2 3

Extract 4.14 (Thread 20181112)

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*Yamamoto's fans have released their translation.*	1
Handyman-Alice	*But it's only 19 minutes' long.*	2
Handyman-Alice	*They must've cut out something.*	3
Handyman-Alice	*We may still need to do it.*	4
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*It turns out that this episode also features SKE48, NGT48, and Matsui Jurina.*	5 6
Handyman-Alice	*It seems that we can't stay idle this time.*	7
Handyman-Alice	*Let's do the whole episode.*	8

Extract 4.15 (Thread 20181113)

The frequency of negotiations over *AKB48 SHOW!* Projects culminated after the rumour that the show would soon end began to spread. Faced with such unexpected news, members began to express uncertainty about the future of the community. As

shown in Extract 4.16, Kate questioned if the community would cease to operate because the main task of the community was soon to be lost. Alice and Zach then proposed possible solutions to this crisis. Yet, they did not reach any decision because the rumour had not been officially confirmed.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Editor-Kate	*Are we going to lose our job?*	1
Handyman-Alice	*We are going to lose our job.*	2
Translator-Daisie	*There remains one month.*	3
Translator-Daisie	*Can we get a new job?*	4
Post-production-Zach	*That's easy. There are many untranslated episodes of Request Hour.*	5 6
Handyman-Alice	*I think we can do Nemousu Terebi.*	7
Translator-Daisie	*I agree with you.*	8
Handyman-Alice	*Maybe this only means a change in the airing time of the show.*	9

Extract 4.16 (Thread 20190213)

After the end of the show was official announced on 20 February, this issue became more pressing for the community. Extract 4.17 shows a subsequent instance that took place on 13 March: on this day, the official news of AKB48 announced that the annual general election event would not be held in 2019. This announcement suddenly stirred up a wave of uncertainty about the future AKB48, and further on, about the fansubbing group. In line 1, Daisie asked if the community was to disband after the end of *AKB48 SHOW!*. Then in line 2, we can see that Alice did not deny Daisie's speculation; instead, she just proposed that the community should finish the three remaining episodes of the show, even if they were to disband.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Translator-Daisie	*Are we going to disband?*	1
Handyman-Alice	*Let's finish AKB48 SHOW! Before we disband.*	2
Timer-Shawn	*How many episodes are left?*	3
Handyman-Alice	*10 Mar, 17 Mar, and 24 Mar*	4
Handyman-Alice	*Three episodes remain.*	5

Extract 4.17 (Thread 20190313)

On 24 Mar, the final episode of *AKB48 SHOW!* Was aired. Extract 4.18 shows the communications between community members before they began to work on the translation of this episode. Carol was speculating that Alice was going to turn away from the fansubbing group, but Alice clarified that she wanted to stay here and needed support from other members to make future plans (lines 1-6). Then she proposed a new task that the community could work on in the future (lines 7-10). Several members volunteered to participate (lines 11-12).

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Translator-Daisie	*What's your plan after next week, Alice?*	1
Lyrics-Carol	*Alice is going to run away. [The emoticon 'Squint']*	2
Lyrics-Carol	*I, Alice, am graduating from Daba Fansubbing Group.*	3
Handyman-Alice	*This is not true. I think even if I want to do something, I still need the sincere support from the translators and timers. If it's only my daydream, it won't work.*	4 5 6
Handyman-Alice	*Anyway*	7
Handyman-Alice	*Let's first finish the episodes of the ninth anniversary of Nemousu Terebi.*	8 9
Handyman-Alice	*If you guys wish to do it.*	10
Timer-Peter	*I'm in.*	11
Handyman-Yani	*I'm in.*	12

Extract 4.18 (Thread 20190324)

Finally, when the final *AKB48 SHOW!* Project was finished, Alice looked back at the community's joint achievement, and others cheered for their efforts (Extract 4.19).

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*We've done 33 episodes of AKB48 SHOW! In total.*	1
Handyman-Alice	*Everybody, you've done a great job.*	2
Handyman-Yani	*Great job. [The Emoticon 'rose']*	3
Lyrics-Carol	*Great job. [The Emoticon 'rose']*	4

Extract 4.19 (Thread 20190401)

The above-mentioned members' reactions to the end of *AKB48 SHOW!* Reflect again

the significance of the show to the joint enterprise of the Daba community: since the establishment of the community, it had served as the main task for the community's fansubbing practice and thus had played a central role in members' pursuit of the general purpose. Members were so used to working on the show every week that to some extent, they seemed to equate translating the show with the general purpose of the community. This tendency is corroborated by members' speculations about the end of the community when they heard about the show's termination plan. Also, in the interview with her, Alice explicitly saw the end of the episode as an event that marked the accomplishment of the community's initial purpose. Such heavy reliance on a single task distinguishes the Daba community from those fansubbing communities which pursue multiple sustained tasks over their history, such as *The Last Fantasy* fansubbing group, which worked on the subtitling of multiple TV series and online courses at the same time (Li 2015). This difference reminds us of the fact that as a fan community dedicated to one particular celebrity (as opposed to those communities which work on general media genres), the joint enterprise of the Daba community was inevitably under strong influence from the situations of AKB48: As the popularity of AKB48 gradually dwindled during the past years, the shows and events related to them stopped one after another (e.g. *AKB48 SHOW!*, *AKBingo*, and the general election event). This means that the amount of content that communities like Daba can work on has also been decreasing. Without a sufficient supply of new AKB48-related content, it became difficult for members to carry on their negotiations of the joint enterprise[57].

From the above analysis of the global-level project management, we can see that over the history of the community, the relations of mutual accountability have allowed members to establish a project management mechanism which is defined by a 'communal regime of mutual accountability' (Wenger 1998: 81), i.e. a social space in which people can effectively negotiate their joint responses to various situations. It should be noted that as there lacked formal rules, guidelines, and regulations regarding

[57] Up till October 2021, the Daba Fansubbing Group still exists and works occasionally on new translation projects.

project management, it can be said that most primary aspects of the communal regime are not reified. In other words, this regime primarily relied on the mutual interactions between members as they participated in the fansubbing practice. As shown by those interactions, Alice played a central role in the project management mechanism in that she set the initial purpose of the group and played a central in making key decisions when members negotiated what to translate. When making those decisions, it can be seen that Alice was influenced by various internal and external situations, including her own preference, other members' needs, the limit of available resources, actions of other fansubbing communities, and the fate of AKB48.

4.3.2 Copyright issues

Another aspect that plays a significant role in the members' negotiation of a joint enterprise is the copyright issues that they have to face in their efforts to promote their translated works. Throughout the history of fansubbing, fansubbers have been relying on unlicensed, copyright-protected cultural products (Lee 2011b), which means that their practices inevitably involve copyright infringement. In order to legitimise their fansubbing practice, when working on these products, fansubbers follow an alternative consumer ethics which claims that the non-commercial use of these products should be treated as a morally permissible behaviour necessary for accessing, consuming, and promoting the products (Lee 2011a). According to the collected data and my experience in participating in the Daba Fansubbing Group, such ethics was also generally observed by members of the community.

For example, in Extract 4.20, we can clearly sense community members' intense awareness of the relations between the cultural industries and the fandom, which makes up an important part of their sense of accountability to their joint enterprise: In a conversation about the copyright issues that the community was facing, Wen stated the difference between the working principles of fansubbing groups and commercial institutions. While the former pursue non-commercial and fan-oriented purposes (e.g.

promoting AKB48 among a larger audience for no material rewards), the latter pursue exclusively commercial profit. This difference determines that when pursuing their general purpose, a fansubbing community may generate a joint enterprise that could potentially jeopardise the commercial logic of cultural industries, and hence expose the community to certain risks. Following Wen's statement, Popper expressed community members' clear awareness of the copyright-infringing nature of their video-uploading activities and the risks that they were taking by doing so. Then, the words of Wen (lines 11-12) explain the reason why the members persisted on pursuing their purpose despite those risks: they did it because of their affection for AKB48 and they would continue doing it as long as they felt comfortable. In this sense, this conversation serves as a perfect piece of corroboration to Lee's (2011a) definition of copyright as a cultural and social construct: copyright is not only an exclusive legal right of cultural producers, but also a concept open to consumers' own understanding and interpretation. In the case of the Daba community, members constructed a shared understanding of the copyright issues out of their mutual relations of fellow fans, which allowed them to negotiate their unique solutions to the specific copyright situations that they encountered.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Art Desginer-Wen	*We're all doing this for non-commercial purposes while a big company certainly has its commercial purposes. I think these two things are different. Yet your high awareness of this issue is really good for promoting AKB48. It's totally alright as long as you feel comfortable in your heart.*	1 2 3 4 5
Timer-Popper	*After all we're doing a job whose risks we're perfectly aware of.*	6 7
	[Interval of messages]	
Timer-Popper	*Even if you do it for non-commercial purposes, it's still copyright infringement, though certainly the use for commercial purposes will face more severe punishments.*	8 9 10
Art Designer-Wen	*Infringement is for sure. What I tried to say is that we're doing this for our own affections, but the company is not.*	11 12

Extract 4.20 (Thread 20181203)

Most of these situations occurred with regard to the community's Bilibili channel, because it is the primary space where the community uploaded their translated videos and where these videos were under direct influence from the situations of the cultural industries. As China's leading online space for fans of Japanese pop culture, Bilibili is famous for allowing users to upload fan-made videos (including fansubbed videos), which are usually made up of copyright-protected content. It is unsurprising that doing so has caused a large number of problems for Bilibili. For example, when the site launched its initial public offering at New York Stock Exchange in March 2018, it announced that the company was facing 50 copyright-infringement lawsuits (Jianshu 2018). Meanwhile, the Chinese government launched a campaign that aimed at regulating the dissemination of online audiovisual content in the same month, which demanded that video-streaming websites in China strengthen their copyright measures (*ibid.*). As an influential publicly-listed company that has to assume the responsibility for copyright protection, Bilibili responded to these external pressures by introducing a three-layer system — including automated review (done by artificial intelligence) and artificial review (done by human reviewers) of copyright issues, as well as a reporting system by which users can report potential infringements directly to the reviewers — to protect the interests of the copyright owners.

The potential challenge from this new system was immediately grasped by AKB48 fans active on Bilibili, because they found that AKB48-related videos became deleted from Bilibili much more quickly than before. In the collected communication records, I found 6 instances in which members of Daba Group discussed the deletion of subtitled videos from Bilibili. Extract 4.21 shows one of these instances. On 13 August 2018, members of the community found that all videos related to *Janken Taikai* were removed from Bilibili. Then they discussed the true reason why those videos were deleted. Instead of attributing the deed to AKS, the management company of AKB48, they seemed more inclined to believe that the removal was the result of Bilibili's own deeds, undertaken in the name of the supposed copyright holder. Such discussion reflects community members' strong concerns over the pressing situation of copyright issues,

which is crucial to the community because all the videos that they had uploaded were not properly licensed by the respective copyright holders.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Video-source-Siyang	*All videos related to Janken Takai*[58] *were deleted.*	1
Timer-Alex	*AKS is really powerful.*	2
Video-source-Siyang	*It may be Bilibili's own decision.*	3
Timer-Alex	*Yep, I think it's Bilibili who imposed this deleting rule.*	4 5
Timer-Alex	*But every time they did this, they did it in the name of AKS.*	6 7
Video-source-Siyang	*They directly made AKS take the responsibility.*	8

Extract 4.21 (Thread 20180813)

Not long after this discussion, as a result of the dubious copyright status, the fansubbing community was finally made to face their own copyright challenge (Extract 4.22). On 26 September 2018, a video was deleted from their Bilibili channel for the first time. This is a video that features AKB48's performance at Tokyo Idol Festival. The deleting act immediately caused concern for Alice, who announced the incident in the chatroom in the first instance. As a response, she then began to worry about the fate of another video related to the deleted one.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*[Screenshot of a deleted video]*	1
Handyman-Alice	*I feel so sad.*	2
Handyman-Alice	*The first deleted video.*	3
Handyman-Yani	*How could they delete this?*	4
Handyman-Alice	*The Fresh Senbatsu video is not deleted yet.*	5
Handyman-Alice	*Don't want to talk about it anymore. Perhaps it will be removed tomorrow.*	6 7

Extract 4.22 (Thread 20180926)

When we compare this extract to another conversation (Extract 4.23) that took place on

[58] 'Janken Taikai' (じゃんけん大会, or literally 'Finger-guessing Game Championship') is an event of AKB48 in which members play several rounds of rock-paper-scissors game to determine who can win the chance to release her own solo single.

the previous day, we may better understand Alice's worries. In this extract, members articulated their response to the robust copyright-protection mechanisms that they were facing. Instead of adopting the external copyright-protection 'mandates' from Bilibili as a part of their enterprise and hence stopping uploading fansubbed videos to their channel, they chose to find their own ways to bypass Bilibili's copyright measures in order to continue fulfilling their general purpose.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Timer-Peter	*We should think about how to prevent the video from being deleted.*	1 2
Handyman-Alice	*Let's continue using that cover of Five Centimetres Per Second*[59].	3 4
Handyman-Alice	*The titles of every episode should be in the fashion of 'under girls', 'next girls', 'future girls', 'upcoming girls', '80-100'*[60]*, and 'showroom'.*	5 6 7
Handyman-Alice	*And don't add 'AKB' to the tags of the video.*	8
Handyman-Alice	*Let me think about the general title of the video.*	9
	[interval of messages]	
Editor-Kate	*[Proposing a very long title for the video.]*[61]	10
Editor-Kate	*A 76-charater style title.*	11
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*Is it over the limit of character count?*	12
Handyman-Alice	*If it's not, we can use it.*	13
Editor-Lin	*I found nothing wrong with this title.*	14
Handyman-Alice	*Then that's it.*	15

Extract 4.23 (Thread 20180924)

To be specific, after completing their translation of the MVs of the songs in the 53rd CD single[62], they began to negotiate the strategies which would allow their post to survive

[59] *Five Centimetres Per Second* is an *anime* film directed by Shinkai Makoto.
[60] These are all tiers in the final ranking of AKB48 general election.
[61] The title used is '某一个夏天我穿着沙滩拖鞋种下了爱的种子而波浪突然间对我传递了我们其实是朋友的真相' [In one summer I sowed the seeds of love with beach sandals on my feet yet the waves suddenly convey the truth to me that we are just friends.]. It integrates the name of six songs in the 53rd single: 'ひと夏の出来事 [Encounters in one summer]', 'サンダルじゃできない恋' [Romance that is impossible with sandals on feet], '"好き"のたね' [Seeds of 'I love you'], '波が伝えるもの' [Things conveyed by the waves], 'ある日 ふいに' [One day, suddenly], and 友達じゃないか? [Aren't we just friends?].
[62] In the Japanese context, a 'CD single' usually refers to a CD that contains three to four pop songs together with their instrumental tracks. The 53rd CD single of AKB48 ('センチメンタルトレイン', 'sentimental train') is the result of the group's general election event in 2018. It consists of 8 songs in total, each of which is written for a tier of members in the final result of the election.

longer on the website. These include using the cover of a film as the thumbnail of the video to disguise the true identity of the video, adopting elusive titles for each song included in the post, and avoiding using video tags that can be easily identified by the copyright-protection system. These techniques were also frequently used to address the copyright issues of other works of the community. When it comes to the negotiation over the general title of the post, Kate appeared to be enjoying the potential of wordplay: she imitated the style of the AKB48 single with the longest title[63] (76 Japanese characters) in the group's history and came up with a title that integrates the names of several songs in the 53rd single. Such title may seem rather meaningless to other people, yet, when AKB48 fans see it, they may understand it immediately and be amused. This example proves how relations of fellow fans had an impact on the negotiations over responses to external situations: when members of the community faced a common external situation which threatened their general purpose, they tended to negotiate a response out of their shared fan identity to the situation. In this way, members' shared domain of interest helped them negotiate their local and indigenous resistance to the rules and restrictive measures of the global cultural industries which they never had a chance to engage with directly.

4.4 Shared repertoire

The meaning negotiation processes that take place in a community of practice always involve the use of various types of heterogenous resources which collectively make up the shared repertoire of the community (Wenger 1998: 82). As stated in 2.2.2.3, these resources are produced or adopted by the community through its very activities. Therefore, they integrate reificative aspects and participative aspects at the same time. Usually, the former are easier to perceive because they represent the 'thingness' or 'concreteness' of the practice; by contrast, the latter are harder to perceive, because of

[63] The title of the 34th single is '鈴懸の木の道で「君の微笑みを夢に見る」と言ってしまったら僕たちの関係はどう変わってしまうのか、僕なりに何日か考えた上でのやや気恥ずかしい結論のようなもの' ['How will our relationship change after I said to you "I dream of your smile" on a road full of plane trees? I thought about this in my own way for several days and drew a somewhat embarrassing conclusion'].

their abstractness, though they are no less important than the reificative aspects.

The participative aspects of the shared repertoire reflect the fact that the resources in the repertoire are constantly open to (re)negotiation between members so as to enable meaning production processes in the community. As a result of the ongoing negotiation processes, the shared repertoire is inherently 'ambiguous', in that its boundaries are constantly changing, and its meaning and usage are constantly open to new interpretations (*ibid.*: 83). In this sense, the shared repertoire of a community can be viewed as representing a history of mutual engagement of that community and a pool of resources that are shared in a 'dynamic and interactive sense' (*ibid.*: 84).

As mentioned in 4.2.4, when participating in the community's subtitling practice, members recognise each other's technical capabilities, i.e. abilities to properly use technical knowledge such as knowledge regarding software applications, translation norms, and technical know-how, which are essential for fulfilling their respective roles in the community. In this sense, these categories of knowledge constitute a significant part of the shared repertoire of the community. In this section, I will discuss how members of the Daba community (re)negotiated two important aspects of the technical knowledge: subtitling quality norms and knowledge of technological tools.

4.4.1 Quality norm repertoire

The major products of the translation practice of Daba Fansubbing Group are the subtitled AKB48-related videos. Such output can be viewed as the reification of the mutual engagement processes. Also, from the perspective of the community's joint enterprise, they can be seen as the reification of community members' efforts to negotiate responses to the situations that they face (e.g. members' personal conditions and external challenges) and thereby to fulfil the community's general purpose. It is reasonable to expect that, in these efforts to fulfil the general purpose of translating and promoting AKB48, the community will have adopted certain norms to assess and

ensure the quality of products.

According to Bartsch (1987: xii; cited by Schäffner 1998), each community enforces a set of norms that it regards as the knowledge of correct or appropriate behaviour. Such is also the case with translation communities, where there are translational norms which play a central role in the translation practice (Toury 1980: 57). These norms can be understood as 'internalised constraints' (Schäffner 1998) which turn 'the general values or ideas shared by community members into specific performance-instructions appropriate for and applicable to specific situations' (Toury 1980: 51). In the specific context of a fansubbing community such as the Daba Fansubbing Group, translational norms shared by members are applied to different aspects of their subtitling practice, including the production aspect (e.g. norms regarding how to properly participate in different stages of a translation project) and the product aspect (e.g. standards for the quality of the subtitle products). By observing and negotiating these norms, members can effectively ensure the quality of their work.

Yet, as Daba Fansubbing Group is a community characterised by the lack of a hierarchical management system and an institutional authority to report to, it is not surprising that we can hardly find systematic written guidelines or rules on the quality of translation in the archive of the community. This fact implies that the existence of a shared repertoire in this community is implicit, or 'ambiguous' (Wenger 1998: 83), and the awareness, usage, and negotiations related to the shared repertoire are mostly tacit. Therefore, in light of the ambiguity of the norm repertoire, it is necessary for us to find evidence of its existence and to gain a better understanding of how it was constantly negotiated and shared between members.

In Extract 4.24 we can see how members were clearly aware of their accountability to the quality of the subtitles. This extract starts with Joan's announcement that he had just obtained his driving license and was now returning as a contributor to the community. This news was then used by Lin to playfully create a link between Joan's competence

as a driver and as a subtitler. Zach responded to this news with a road safety slogan that appears in a Chinese sci-fi movie, which was soon adapted by Alex into a slogan on the importance of quality in subtitling works (line 7-9). The first two lines of this slogan explicitly articulate the importance of quality in subtitling works, while the lines that follow imply that Alex was seeing Alice as a person central to overseeing the quality of subtitling products.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Incompetent Timer & Translator-Joan	*I've just received my driving license, lol. Now I'm back to download and translate the source video.*	1 2
Editor-Lin	*Now you're doing the job with a license [The Emoticon 'Good Job'].*	3 4
Post-production-Zach	*When you're driving on the roads, safety is always the first priority.*	5 6
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Alex	*When you're working on the subtitles, quality is always the first priority. When the subtitles are improperly timed, Alice will shed tears.*	7 8 9
Lyrics-Carol	*Indeed, it's true [The Emoticon 'Squint'].*	10

Extract 4.24 (Thread 20190218)

This impression of Alice's significant role in negotiating and enforcing the quality norm repertoire is supported by additional evidence from the communication records, where I found seven cases featuring Alice's participation in discussions about the quality norms. As the person in charge of the publication of subtitled videos, she was particularly concerned with the norms for non-verbal sub-modes of subtitles such as font, colours, and spacing (an aspect of subtitling that typically receives significant attention within fansubbing communities, as explained by Pérez-González 2014); and over the norms on the features of the posted videos, e.g. file size, number of episodes, video introduction, etc. In the subtitling practice, norms for these aspects mostly fall into two categories which I call subtitle formats and video formats. Therefore, it is no wonder that at several points, she played an active role in negotiating and implementing the formats used in the practice of the community.

For example, in Extract 4.25, she actively provided guidance to a member who was not familiar with the formats of subtitling in this community. From this example, we can infer that the repertoire of formats (as a part of the norm repertoire) of this community was relatively stable because members could refer to any previously subtitled episode of *AKB48 SHOW!* to become familiar with the relevant template. This stability is further evidenced by two facts: first, we can scarcely find communications in which members negotiated and therefore made changes to the format norms; second, an investigation of the uploaded videos shows that the subtitle formats and video formats used by members remained consistent across *AKB48 SHOW!* videos produced at different times, with only occasional minor variances in elements such as the position of the staff credits and the use of italics in lyrics subtitles.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*As for the format of the subtitles, you can refer to any timed subtitle file of AKB48 SHOW! in the file storage of the chatroom.*	1 2 3

Extract 4.25 (Thread 20181105)

This stability of format norms reflects how the continuity of the norm repertoire in the history of the community contributed to the continuity of product quality: as members adopted the existing knowledge of format norms from the shared repertoire repeatedly, the quality of the product formats could be maintained at a consistent level without much need for intense negotiations on the part of members. Also, the existing minor variances in formats indicate that the norm repertoire of the community should not be seen as a set of rigidly binding rules. Rather, when implemented, this type of repertoire gives members the possibility of using their discretion when making their own judgements. Such flexibility reflects the ambiguity of the shared repertoire of this fansubbing community, i.e. the norm repertoire is inherently open to changes brought by members' own judgements and habits, unlike what happens with the guidelines and rules of professional translation.

Alice's central role in this community does not mean that she always had a visible presence in the negotiation of the norm repertoire. In fact, when it comes to areas outside her main domain of expertise, she rarely played a central role in the negotiation processes. This reflects a fact already mentioned in 4.2.5: members' technical capabilities are partial and complementary, which means that they need to rely on each other's experience and expertise.

For example, in Extract 4.26, Peter and Lin discussed an issue related to the norms of timing — how best to handle laughter when timing subtitles for conversations. Peter shared his personal experience of subtitling laughter in different situations. In most cases, he explained, he chose to keep the transcription of laughter at the end of the subtitle line corresponding to the fragment of speech that contains the laughter; in other cases where laughter appears in isolation, he might consider giving it an independent line. From this example, we can infer that Lin was less experienced than Peter in handling the complexities of timing work across different contexts. Therefore, he relied on an 'expert' in this area to elicit further instructions on the norms for timing. This implies that in this encounter, and in other similar ones (e.g. a discussion on the use of traditional Chinese characters in Thread 20181205), the member with more 'expertise' in subtitling work was recognised as having stronger technical capabilities. As a result, this member gained more power in the negotiation of the norm repertoire. Yet, at the end of the encounter, we can see that Peter shared his experience with Lin, but did not impose his solution on Lin. Rather, he chose to encourage Lin to establish his own style through his practice[64].

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Timer-Peter	*My habit is starting from the beginning of the conversation and leaving elements like laughter in the previous line. Or, depending on the situation, sometimes I may create an*	1 2 3

[64] More examples regarding the negotiation of timing norms can be found in the records from 7 November 2018 and 19 February 2019.

	independent line for something like 'hahaha'.	4
Editor-Lin	*Okay.*	5
Editor-Lin	*I'll go give it a try.*	6
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Peter	*It also depends on if the laughter is included in this sentence. Usually such adjustment [of subtitles] should be done in your own personal style after the end of timing.*	7 8 9
Editor-Lin	*Understood.*	10

Extract 4.26 (Thread 20190205)

This example proves that the personal experience of members played an important role in the knowledge creation processes that created a norm repertoire. Through the negotiations between members, the personal history of expertise could be converted to technical knowledge that was shared and re-negotiated between members, and thus became adapted by members as a part of their capabilities. Also, the process of sharing experience reflects the complex relations that shaped the negotiation of the norm repertoire in this community: Lin's acknowledgement of Peter's expertise in timing work reflects her recognition of Peter's technical capabilities; while Peter shared his knowledge with Lin out of his sense of accountability to the subtitling practice (in terms of ensuring that the project is finished in acceptable quality) and to other members (in terms of helping increase the knowledge that the members could make use of). Also, the fact that Peter did not impose his experience reflects his recognition of members' shared fan identity: in their capacity as fellow voluntary subtitling fans, Peter treated Lin as an equal member and thus respected her right to establish her own styles.

On similar occasions, the negotiation processes that took place in relation to the norm repertoire were also influenced by factors outside the community, especially those regarding linguistic norms. As the products were published online and became available to the audience, viewers' feedback could sometimes trigger negotiations between Daba members over the quality of language. The communication records of the community feature three instances of this negotiation (on 20 August 2018, 25 October 2018, and 7 February 2019). Extract 4.27 shows the first occasion, which occurred after the subtitled

video of AKB48's performance at Tokyo Idol Festival 2018 was posted on Bilibili. As the only translator in this project, Kate confessed that she typed in a number of erroneous Chinese characters in the final version of subtitles. Yani told her that fans in AKB48 Erbenzhu fan community (based on Tencent QQ) had noticed these mistakes and suspected that members of the fansubbing group intentionally made them because of their dislike of certain AKB48 members in the video (lines 6-8). In response to this charge, at the end of this encounter, Peter volunteered to re-edit the subtitles and upload a new version to the Bilibili channel.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Editor-Kate	*I typed in three erroneous characters in total.*	1
Handyman-Yani	*Emm…*	2
Editor-Kate	*In Sayonara Crawl*[65]*, I presented 'zhídào [直到, literally 'until']' as 'zhī dào [知道, literally 'to know']'.*	3 4
Editor-Kate	*I know I was wrong.*	5
Handyman-Yani	*Someone sent this error to a QQ chatroom and said we did it out of bad intention [The Emoticon 'Smile With Tears'].*	6 7 8
Editor-Kate	*Now we see the necessity of editing work.*	9
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Peter	*Is there any other mistake? I'll correct them all and upload a new version.*	10 11

Extract 4.27 (Thread 20180820)

This example shows that a linguistic norm as understood by external fans (i.e. intolerance with erroneous characters) was accepted and adopted by members of Daba Fansubbing Group. In order to meet the expectations of this norm, community members chose to solve the problem of a few mistaken characters in a way which required the use of extra resources (e.g. the time cost for re-editing the subtitles and re-uploading the video) and may cause certain losses (e.g. the loss of comments and *danmu*[66] lines in the original post), instead of only posting a few lines of *danmu* to correct the flawed subtitles, which was a common way of error correction used by the fansubbing groups

[65] *Sayonara Crawl* (さよならクロール) is a song of AKB48.
[66] For the definition of *danmu*, please refer to 3.4.1.

in the AKB48 fandom (based on my observation). In this sense, it can be said that as a fansubbing community pursuing the goal of subtitling and promoting AKB48-related media content, the Daba community recognised the importance of the feedback provided by their audience who never directly participated in their subtitling practice. Such recognition reflects how members' sense of accountability worked in terms of establishing relations with the external audience: the experience of the external audience, when reified through comments on the subtitled videos, played a significant role in consolidating members' recognition of their accountability to the linguistic quality norms and thereby prompted them to take actions to improve the quality even after the videos had been published. In this way, the external audience became indirectly involved in the relations of negotiability regarding the community's norm repertoire. This is similar to how people in many other communities deal with the feedback from their audience. For example, according to Wang and Zhang (2017), some Chinese fansubbing groups openly invite their audiences to help them improve the quality of subtitles: shortly after their subtitled works are published, they receive feedback from audience members based on which they are usually willing to improve their translations. Therefore, it can be said that audiences' involvement in negotiating the quality norm is a phenomenon that widely exists in the world of fansubbing.

Nevertheless, it should also be noted that compared to examples such as Wang and Zhang (2017), audience feedback is less involved in the shared learning processes of the Daba community (as mentioned previously, only three instances of such involvement can be found in the collected data). This lack of involvement of audience feedback suggests that despite community members' recognition of the importance of external quality norms, their sense of accountability to translation quality were predominantly oriented to the community's internal quality norms. Another noteworthy phenomenon is that members of the AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, which is a translation-oriented community, did not discuss translation issues (i.e. issues related to translation of texts *per se*) on a regular basis. This tendency is proven by the fact that out of the communication records collected during the 33-week data collection period,

only 18 instances of discussions of translation issues were found. This low frequency suggests that first, members who assumed the translator role were used to relying on the editors for assurance of translation quality, thus they seldom brought translation issues to discussions in the community's chatroom. And second, the quality of the final subtitle texts (which were usually finalised by the editors) were generally recognised by community members and external audiences who watched the fansubbed videos. Therefore, it can be said that editors' central role in the negotiations and maintenance of the translation quality norms as well as their commitment to an accountability to translation quality had been recognised by other community members throughout the community's history[67].

Finally, my dataset shows that the personal experience of members could sometimes even go beyond the share-and-adapt approach mentioned above and play a dominant role in determining the quality norms on certain occasions. One example of such occasions is related to Kenny, a member who focused mainly on translating lyrics. In Extract 4.28, Kenny discovered that the editor Lin had made major changes to his translation of the lyrics in AKB48 *Kouhaku* Song Contest 2017[68]. He then (lines 6-9 and lines 12-15) insisted that his original translation should be used because every word was the result of careful thinking. The editor Lin and the post-producer Zach (who was in charge of the special effects in the subtitles) approved Kenny's request to restore the translation, as long as he agreed to maintain the formats used in the current version. In response to Kenny's request, Lin even offered her apologies for making changes to the lyrics.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Kenny	*Lin, I read the file edited by you and found that the lyrics translation has been modified a lot. Can I use my original translation?*	1 2 3
Editor-Lin	*Yes, you can. Just beware that the format shouldn't be changed.*	4 5

[67] For discussions of the role of editors in negotiating the shared repertoire, please refer to 5.2.3.
[68] For a definition of the event, please refer to Extract 4.11.

Kenny	*The current version is different from my original intentions.*	6 7
Kenny	*Can you please give me a final version and I'll restore the lyrics line by line.*	8 9
Post-production-Zach	*Do you want to re-edit only one song or the whole file?*	10
	[interval of messages]	
Post-production	*If it's only a few songs, then I can do it.*	11
	[interval of messages]	
Kenny	*I didn't know the lyrics translation had been modified so much. I'm really sorry.*	12 13
Kenny	*Thank you, Zach, because every character in my translation comes from careful reflections.*	14 15
Editor-Lin	*I'm sorry, I just wanted to make the lyrics look more succinct.*	16 17
Editor-Lin	*So I deleted some characters.*	18
	[interval of messages]	
Editor-Lin	*Please just align the format of the subtitles.*	19
Kenny	*Yes, I will.*	20
Editor-Lin	*(Pay attention to) the number of spaces and the format of the punctuations.*	21 22
Kenny	*Understood.*	23

Extract 4.28 (Thread 20181205)

It is noteworthy that before this instance began, Alice listed names that should be included in the credits of this project. In that list, Kenny was referred to as 'Master Kenny'. This title reflects members' respect for Kenny, which was based on his expertise in lyrics translation. Extract 4.29 provides a solid proof for members' recognition of this expertise: Kenny provided a creative translation of the name of a song, which was immediately praised by Alice and Carol as being of high quality and superior to an earlier translation of the name. Here, Alice called him 'master' again, thus showing her recognition of his strong translation ability.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Kenny	*I translated the lyrics of the new single.*	1
Kenny	*AKB48-55th ジワる DAYS」渐上心头[69]DAYS*	2

[69] The title of the 55th single of AKB48 is 'ジワる DAYS', which literally means 'days that come slowly yet steadily'. Here Kenny translated it to '渐上心头'(Jianshang Xintou, literally '(thoughts or emotions) gradually

Handyman-Alice	*Good job, master Kenny.*	3
Lyrics-Carol	*Great job.*	4
Lyrics-Carol	*This surely sounds much greater than 'Zhenxiang [真香[70]]'.*	5 6

Extract 4.29 (Thread 20190228)

Extract 4.28 illustrates how the established recognition of high technical abilities could allow a member to play a dominant role in negotiating the norm repertoire: when mismatched interpretations of the linguistic norm repertoire occur, a respected translator can lead an editor to give up the edited text and use the original translation instead as the finalised text. Hence, the translator's personal style directly became a part of the repertoire. Nevertheless, such acceptance came at a cost — it required the community member in dominant position to adopt other existing elements of the norm repertoire in return (e.g. format norms in this example).

4.4.2 Technological repertoire

As mentioned in 2.3, Daba Fansubbing Group made use of various types of technologies in their practice, which can be divided into three categories according to their levels of sociality, i.e. 'cognition', 'communication', and 'cooperation'. Since this chapter aims to analyse the organisational dimensions of practice of Daba Fansubbing Group, this sub-section will focus on the technological means that members used for web-mediated cooperation.

The first aspect is the means used for acquiring and sharing source videos. As shown earlier in 4.2.3, acquiring the source video was one of the key stages in various phases of a translation project. It allowed members to have materials to work on and determined the quality of the final product of the project. Therefore, it was highly important for members to make sure that they had convenient access to source videos

entering the mind'), which comes from a well-known poem by the 12th-century poet Li Qingzhao.

[70] '真香' means 'how fantastic it is'. It was used in the earliest translation of the song name.

of adequate quality.

The communication records included in my data sample contains more than twenty instances of acquiring the source videos. Most of them occurred as one communicative stage in a translation project, as discussed in 4.2.3. However, there are also four such instances which did not occur as a communicative stage[71]. These encounters are longer than most instances found in translation projects and more focused on discussions of technological means. For example, in Extract 4.30, members discussed possible ways to download the source videos of *AKB48 SHOW!*. Carol first asked why it was difficult to acquire the source videos and Kate responded that it was due to the difficulty of downloading the videos. This was mainly caused by the unstable connection speed: most *AKB48 SHOW!* video files were stored in computers/servers out of China and shared through peer-to-peer sharing protocols such as Bittorrent, which greatly rely on the uploading speed of the individual devices holding the files. Peter then recommended her to use a software application called Xunlei, which supports various peer-to-peer protocols. In his view, this application is able to guarantee a high downloading speed for the source videos. In the last three lines, Lei asked what 'AO' stands for. As Peter explained, it refers to aidoru-online.org, a forum where AKB48 fans around the world (including Daba members) share downloading links to AKB48-related media content. Also, he pointed out that it is a substitute for a historic forum called 'Hello! Online', which was closed due to members' infringement of copyright (line 8).

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Lyrics-Carol	*Is there a shortage in the source videos of AKB48 SHOW?!*	1 2
	[interval of messages]	
Editor-Kate	*No, there isn't. The only problem is that downloading them can be quite inconvenient.*	3 4
Timer-Peter	*I usually download AKB48 SHOW! with Xunlei. It usually takes only 5-10 minutes.*	5 6
Translator-Lei	*What is AO?*	7

[71] These instances are found in Threads 20180905, 20180907, 20181102, and 20181229.

	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Peter	*It's a substitute for HO after it was closed.*	8
Timer-Peter	*https://aidoru-online.org/*	9

Extract 4.30 (Thread 20180903)

From this example, we can find traces of how members negotiated over the means to access source videos. In the excerpt under scrutiny, they shared their personal experience of adopting and using specific technological means and hence turned them into shared resources in the technological repertoire of the community. And in response to external situations that occurred over time, such as the termination of the use of certain technologies or platforms due to copyright reasons, they kept locating and adopting new resources in order to allow the community to continue pursuing its general purpose. In this sense, we can say that the use and negotiation of this community's technological repertoire not only reflects the history of members' mutual engagement processes at the local level of translation projects, but also the history of the community's ongoing efforts to negotiate its joint enterprise.

The second aspect of the technological repertoire that needs to be discussed is the file management system used in translation projects. As explained in 4.2.3, translation projects produced a large quantity of intermediate and end products. Among them, end products take the form of videos with open captions that were published on the community's Bilibili channel. Conversely, the intermediate products of the projects, such as the text files delivered by translators (usually in .txt and .docx formats) and the subtitle files delivered by timers and editors (usually in .ass format), were not open to the public. In most cases, members put the files into the file storage of the community's QQ chatroom. Figure 4.6 illustrates the interface of the file storage. It can be seen that in this storage, members have created a number of folders which correspond to different projects, such as '*AKB48 SHOW!* 20190324 ('开闭秀 20190324') and 'music video of the 54th single ('54 单 PV')' (marked by red arrows).

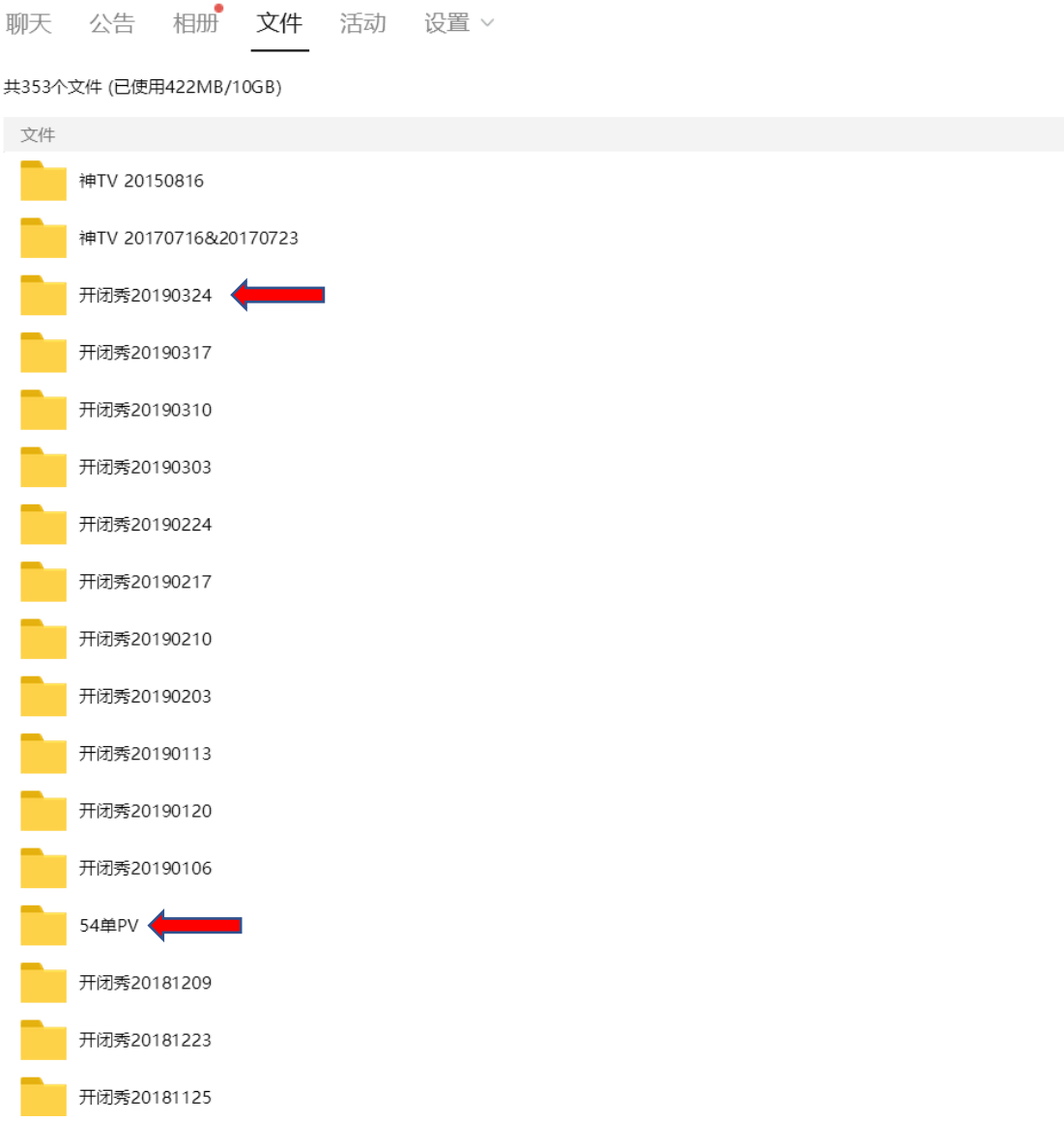

Figure 4.6 File storage of the QQ chatroom

While members worked on a project, they kept uploading the intermediate products into the dedicated folder to achieve efficient collaboration. A typical example of such updating work is shown in Extract 4.31, where Lin said that she had updated the version of a subtitle file so that the timer Peter could continue working on it. As the result of such negotiation processes, the file folder for a project became a space that illustrates the progression of the whole project. For example, we can clearly see how different phases in a project became reified in the folder dedicated to the last episode of *AKB48 SHOW!* (Figure 4.7): first, the lyrics translator uploaded her translations of the lyrics

(‘Lyrics Translation’ 1 and 2); then the source video provider uploaded two dialogue-rich clips from the episode in order to facilitate the work of translators (‘Video Clip’ 1 and 2); after this, the translators uploaded two text files containing the translations for the two halves of the episode (‘Translation’ 1 and 2) and the timers converted them into two subtitle files (‘Timed subtitles’ 1 and 2); then the editor merged them into one edited subtitle file (‘Edited subtitles’); finally, the post-producer added special effects to the subtitles and uploaded the final version of the subtitle file (‘Final version’). In this sense, we can say that a project folder reifies the whole workflow of the project that it is dedicated to. As the project folders were created and archived one after another, they constituted a knowledge management system which reifies the whole history of translation practice in this community. This system not only allowed members to efficiently organise their translation projects, but also provided a space where the knowledge accumulated through the past projects (e.g. linguistic norms, quality norms, standard workflow of a project, etc.) could be stored, adapted, and re-negotiated by members.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Editor-Lin	*I updated the subtitle files for the theme song of the single.*	1 2
Editor-Lin	*They’re all in the folder for 53rd single.*	3
Timer-Shawn	*Alright.*	4
Timer-Peter	*You only need to edit the previous version.*	5

Extract 4.31 (Thread 20180922)

Figure 4.7 Storage folder for Episode 216 of AKB48 SHOW!

The last aspect of the technological repertoire to be discussed concerns the software applications used by members in subtitle-making processes. In the practice of Daba Fansubbing Group, members made use of a repertoire of software applications to enable their collaborative work, including subtitling applications (e.g. Aegisub), video compression tools (e.g. Maruko Toolkit), video-editing applications (e.g. Adobe Premiere), among others. Among them, Aegisub played a central role in the translation practice because it is a tool essential to timers, editors, as well as post-producers: timers use it to spot translated texts and thus turn them into subtitle lines; editors use it to proofread the timed subtitles and thus improve their quality; post-producers rely on Aegisub to add special effects to the edited subtitles. Since this application integrates a wide variety of subtitle-making functions (e.g. time-spotting, codes for special effects, batch processing, etc.), mastering the techniques of using it requires efforts and experience. As a result, gaps exist in community members' abilities to apply Aegisub in translation practice.

In the communication records, I found a number of instances where members exchanged their experience of using Aegisub (five extracts from five threads). For example, in Extract 4.32, we can see that when editing a subtitle file, the project convenor Alice encountered a special effect code that she was not familiar with (lines 1-3). Therefore, she consulted other members about its meaning and usage. In response to her enquiry, Zach and Peter explained the function of the code and shared their experience of using it. In this way, their technical experience was adapted into the technological repertoire of the community and became a part of the regime of competence that Alice could learn from.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*{\be10}*	1
Handyman-Alice	*What does this mean?*	2
Post-production-Zach	*It means blurring the frame of a character.*	3
Handyman-Alice	*Sounds classy.*	4
Timer-Peter	*You just need to add this to the subtitles of lyrics.*	5
Post-production-Zach	*But my memory tells me that there are only '0' or '1' for 'be'. '1' means on and '0' means off.*	6 7
Handyman-Alice	*I'm done adding the code.*	8
Post-production-Zach	*I've been always using 'blur'.*	9
Handyman-Alice	*It's added at the beginning of every line.*	10
Timer-Peter	*You can try changing the value to 100 [The Emoticon 'Squint'].*	11 12
Timer-Peter	*There is an automatic function called 'add corner blurring'. You can select all lyrics subtitles and add the blurring to them. Then you only need to substitute {\be1} with {\be10}.*	13 14 15 16

Extract 4.32 (Thread 20181016)

Sometimes the exchange of technological experience can go beyond the 'share-and-adapt' mode and become an opportunity to share their life story. For example, in Extract 4.33, members exchanged their past experience of learning to use various software applications: Yu disclosed that Charlie used to work in an inefficient way because of his ignorance of a basic function of Aegisub. This disclosure soon attracted the attention

from Alice, who confessed that she was still working in the same way today. After her confession, Peter and Kate also shared their negative history of using software in improper ways. Other members' reactions to these confessions show that they were shocked by how improper ways of using software could lead to proper products and saw such instances as proofs of talent.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Timer-Yu	*I still remember when Popper had just begun to do timing, he manually copied every line of subtitle into the Aegisub. Yet he was so efficient that no one realised that he actually didn't know he could import the whole text directly into Aegisub.*	1 2 3 4 5
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Yu	*It was not until he confessed this history when he taught other newbies about timing techniques that I finally came to know it. It's so incredible.*	6 7 8
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*I'm also manually copying the subtitles line by line.*	9
	[interval of messages]	
Editor-Kate	*Alice is also incredible.*	10
Timer-Peter	*You only need to drag the .txt document into it.*	11
Timer-Peter	*If not so, why do we have to ask translators to segment their translations into lines?*	12 13
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Popper	*I want to cry because Yu revealed my negative history.*	14
Timer-Peter	*Self-learners all have their negative history. I kept using the text-editor to substitute erroneous characters until I realised I could do this in Aegisub.*	15 16 17
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Kate	*My negative history of self-learning is that I heard people using AE to make subtitles and I first thought it refers to Adobe After Effects…*	18 19 20
Timer-Kate	*Then I worked with this AE for several projects…*	21
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Alex	*You're even more incredible.*	22
Post-production-Zach	*You're even more amazing. You can use AE.*	23
	[interval of messages]	
Incompetent Timer &	*You're all big bosses.*	24

Translator-Momo		
Editor-Lin	*How talented our members are.*	25

Extract 4.33 (Thread 20190328)

This extract unveils a fact about the management of technological repertoire of the community: despite the occasional share-and-adapt instances, this community lacked a mechanism which provided systematic and formalised training or induction about the knowledge of the technological repertoire before members assumed their roles. Also, as is shown by the experience of Peter and Kate as well as by members' reactions to Kate's case, for members who already began participation in their respective roles, the community lacked a mechanism which allowed them to regularly share their technological knowledge and support each other with their experience. The lack of the mentioned mechanisms can be partly explained by the demography of the community: according to my interview data, all the interviewees (who account for a significant proportion of active members) reported that they had acquired fansubbing experience before joining the Daba Fansubbing Group. Upon joining the community, they usually reported their experience as a proof of their abilities. As a result, they were highly likely to be viewed by Alice and other members as having mastered sufficient knowledge in using relevant technologies and thus not needing training or regular knowledge sharing. Unlike the Daba community, it is reported by some scholars that training mechanisms were established in some other fansubbing communities. For example, according to Li (2015: 184), in *The Last Fantasy* (TLF) fansubbing group, newcomers to the community had to first receive a 'newbie's test' which assessed their translation abilities. Then, they would be required to participate in a training mechanism called 'Newbie's Probation Period'. During this probation period, newcomers to the group were required to finish a number of training tasks devised by the group in order to enhance their skills in translation. This contrast between the Daba community and the TLF community reflects that in different fansubbing communities, fansubbers may adopt different approaches to the management of technical knowledge. Some expect new members to make the most of the relevant knowledge extracted from their past experience, and

others prefer to better integrate members to their knowledge management system through proper training mechanisms.

The lack of training and sharing mechanisms in terms of technological knowledge means that in most cases, they needed to learn how to properly use the necessary technological tools through their direct participation in translation projects. Therefore, it is not surprising that they sometimes had similar trajectories of learning the technological knowledge. This example shows that when members shared their similar trajectories of learning, these trajectories could offer shared experience that helped consolidate the coherence of the community. By sharing their experience and expressing their affirmation for each other's efforts and competence, community members recognised their shared history of learning in the community. Such recognition allowed their learning trajectories to intertwine with each other and thus helped shape their shared identity of fellow subtitling fans.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how Daba Fansubbing Community is organised and maintained by examining its different dimensions as a community of practice. This chapter therefore helps to address Research Question 1 of this study (except the part about the community's interconnections to the AKB48 fandom, which will be addressed in 5.3):

How do CoP's three dimensions of practice — mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire — contribute to organising and maintaining a translation-oriented fan community like AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, as well as to its interconnections with other parts of the AKB48 fandom in China?

In 4.2.1, I set out to analyse the overall pattern of mutual engagement of the Daba community by investigating its communication records. Using quantitative data, I

uncovered a generally stable pattern in the communications between community members across the whole data collection period. Also, the analysis of the data unveiled the existence of a weekly cycle of communications, which was shaped by the airing pattern of the *AKB48 SHOW!*. These findings can be said to bring new insights into how fans engage with fellow fans in subtitling practice, since previous studies of amateur subtitling rarely involve quantitative analysis of communication records.

Subsection 4.2.2 proceeded to delve further into the collected communication records and gained a better understanding of the general workflow of translation project in this community. This workflow consists of four major phases, each of which contains various recursive communicative stages. This double-layered structure of workflow — which has not been reported on in previous research on fansubbing communities — can help us understand how recursive communicative processes contribute to keeping the momentum of translation projects. By studying instances of these stages from the CoP perspective, I identify three types of mutual recognition between community members: (i) recognition of members' shared dual identity as subtitling fans; (ii) recognition of members' roles in the subtitling practice of the community; and (iii) recognition of members' technical capabilities to participate in the translation practice. Over the history of the community, those types of mutual recognition have fostered the development of various types of relations between members. With the help of those persistent relations, community members' continuous participation in their practice was sustained.

In section 4.3, my focus has then shifted to the joint enterprise dimension of the community. The analysis of members' communications throughout the data collection period has allowed me to gain a better understanding of the negotiations driving the global-level project management, i.e. deciding what (not) to translate. The use of CoP theory has helped me understand the community host's 'soft' leadership: although Alice rarely imposed her will on other members, she certainly retained a high degree of power in deciding what projects to work on and thus held a central position in shaping the

trajectory of the community. The analysis in this chapter has also found that the pursuit of the major task of the community, i.e. translating the *AKB48 SHOW!*, which was set upon its establishment, played a decisive role in the negotiations over the community's joint enterprise. When the show eventually terminated, the life cycle of the community came to a stage where the momentum of the subtitling practice began to decline continuously. Furthermore, investigating the communication records has allowed me to understand how the community dealt with the copyright issues that posed challenges to members in their subtitling practice. In their negotiations over ways to address those issues, members showed their sophisticated fan-oriented awareness of the issues as well as their high creativity in finding solutions to tackle the issues.

My study of the shared repertoire (section 4.4) has first focused on the quality norms of the community. Using the CoP theory, my analysis has found that, as members with different roles and levels of expertise participated in negotiating the norm repertoire, the quality norms became ambiguous. This appears to be the case because members' interpretations of the norms became flexible and the boundary of the norms was constantly reshaped by various processes of meaning negotiation, e.g. the 'share-and-adapt' approach and the talent-dominated approach to negotiating the norms. I have also analysed how members negotiate the technological repertoire of the community. The most revelatory finding regarding this aspect is the lack of formal mechanisms for members to receive trainings about the relevant technological tools, as well as to share their technological knowledge.

Chapter 5 Identity Formation of Translating Fans

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I have answered Research Question 1 by analysing the collected archival data and discussing the findings. In this chapter, I will turn my focus to another fundamental issue of the CoP theory, i.e. the identity formation of community members, in order to answer Research Question 2. In addition, in 5.3, I will discuss the community's interconnections to the AKB48 fandom and thereby answer the second half of Research Question 1.

According to Wenger (1998: 149), there exists a profound connection between identity and practice: as CoP members engage with each other in practice and relate to each other as participants, they are inevitably involved in negotiation over the ways to be a person in that context. Therefore, it can be said that the formation of a community is underpinned by the negotiation of identities. In this sense, the formation of a fansubbing community can contribute to the formation of its members' identity.

As shown in Figure 2.1, practice can contribute to identity formation on various levels. Following this pattern, this chapter starts from a discussion (**5.2**) of how the three organisational dimensions of the Daba community (as presented in Chapter 4) translated into dimensions of the membership of its members. **5.3** will then turn away from the 'core' of the community and discuss how CoP as a 'shared history of learning' created various types of boundaries as well as connections to the other communities in the AKB48 fandom; with their diverse experience of roaming across the boundaries of fan CoPs and participating in different practices, members of the Daba community formed their unique trajectories of multimembership which makes up a substantial part of their identities (**5.4**); furthermore, in **5.5**, I will analyse how their contact with and involvement in social processes and structures beyond the immediate context of fan

practices established different 'modes of belonging'; **5.6** will be a conclusion to the discussions in this chapter.

5.2 From community to identity

When analysing the identity formation processes for members of a community, the CoP theory provides a unique perspective, insofar as identity formation is simultaneously shaped by the dual aspects of meaning negotiation process, i.e. participation and reification (Wenger 1998: 150). To be specific, identity in practice is not merely defined by the 'reified' social categories, labels, roles, and self-images, though these elements definitely contribute to our identity (*ibid.*: 151). Identity is also shaped by the way we live and experience the world. From the perspective of a CoP, our engagement in practice provides us with lived experiences of participation through which we give unique and specific meanings to the reified elements mentioned above.

This interplay between participation and reification helps shape a CoP's membership which constitutes a significant part of community members' identity. As discussed in 2.2.2.4, this membership requires a competence in three aspects derived from the organisational dimensions of a CoP, namely 'mutuality of engagement', 'accountability to the enterprise', and 'negotiability of the repertoire'. This three-fold competence is not purely individual or communal, because in a CoP, we experience competence in a personal way, and we are recognised as competent by other members at the same time (Wenger 1998: 152). In this section, I will discuss how these aspects contribute to the identity formation processes of Daba members at both individual and communal levels.

5.2.1 Mutuality of engagement

As argued in 4.2, practice does not exist in abstract terms, but is constructed through people's mutual engagement. In the subtitling practice of the Daba community, the mutual engagement between members was sustained by complex and persistent

relations between members (especially those who regularly contributed). In the process of developing these relations, the subtitling practice of the Daba community facilitated the formation of 'mutuality of engagement'. According to Wenger (1998: 137), this competence refers to the ability of community members to effectively engage in action with each other and thus to establish stable relationships. As shown in my discussions in 4.2.5, the development of the complex and persistent relations between members was fostered by three inherent forms of mutual recognition between members (i.e. recognition of members' shared identity as subtitling fans, recognition of members' roles in the subtitling practice of the community, and recognition of members' technical capabilities). In this sense, it can be said that the formation of mutuality of engagement is fundamentally a result of mutual recognition. Therefore, in order to understand how mutual engagement translated to mutuality of engagement of community members, I will rely primarily on the elicited interview data[72] to find out how different types of mutual recognition have contributed to the formation of mutuality of engagement.

Recognition of shared identity as subtitling fans

As argued in 4.2.5, as members engaged in immaterial fan labour that promotes shared cultural values, they recognised each other as fellow AKB48 fans interested in making subtitles for the group. As a result, they formed a 'domain of interest' which gave the community a unique identity. In order to achieve the mutual engagement in the community, a prospective member had to possess certain qualities so that they could enter this domain and be recognised as a competent fellow subtitling fan.

The first component of such qualities that emerged from the analysis of interview data is a recognisable individual fan identity cultivated through their affection for AKB48 and their fandom experience. As the interview data show, all interviewed members of the community were already fans of AKB48 before they joined the community. Yet,

[72] For methodological details about the collection and analysis of the interview data, please refer to 3.5 and 3.6.

their affection for AKB48 was motivated by different reasons.

For all interviewees except Kenny[73], their affection for the pop group primarily lies with its members and is usually triggered by certain characteristics that the pop group members possess. For example (Extract 5.1), according to Momo, she had two favourite AKB48 members: Takahashi Minami (who was the first 'general manager' of AKB48) and Okada Nana (who is currently one of the most popular members of AKB48). In Momo's opinion, Takahashi and Okada shared a hardworking trait which attracted her and made her treat them as her favourite members. Also, Momo highlighted how Takahashi's outstanding leadership as the former general manager of AKB48 could inspire a management student like her. As Takahashi set a model as a hard worker and a good leader, Momo felt strong affinity with her and was encouraged by her excellence to do better in work and life.

Researcher: ***What is your reason for becoming a AKB48 fan?***[74]

[…]

Momo: *In one of the general election events, Takahashi Minami burst into tears. (It. could be any general election event, haha). From that moment, I chose her as my top favourite member. How should I put it? It's probably because I'm not so hardworking as she is. So, my two favourites are both hard workers.*

Researcher: Oh? Who's that second favourite member?

Momo: *Takahashi Minami and Okada Nana. My top favourite now is Okada.*

[…]

Researcher: ***Can you tell me more about the reasons for liking Okada and Takahashi? Except for the hard worker trait.***

Momo: *Perhaps I prefer people who are good at singing. Moreover, I think*

[73] For Kenny's case, please refer to Extract 5.4.
[74] In the interview extracts, questions from the researcher are highlighted in bold characters.

Takahashi's leadership is really good. I studied management as my major. And I always wanted to become a person who integrates everyone. […] Every time I saw her [Takahashi], I felt like wanting to work harder.

Researcher: So, she inspired you?

Momo: Yes.

Extract 5.1

From Extract 5.2, we understand that the inspiration that Momo had received from AKB48 were mostly based on the free audiovisual content that she had consumed. Therefore, in order to make up for the unpaid value of the inspiration, Momo decided to make her own contributions to promoting the group's popularity: she joined the Daba community and thereby began her career as a subtitling fan.

Researcher: ***How many fansubbing groups have you joined?***

Momo: Only two, Daba is the first one that I joined.

[…]

Momo: The first reason is that having enjoyed AKB48-related content for free for so many years, I decided to do whatever I could [for the group.]

Extract 5.2

Apart from Momo, a number of other Daba members also reported the specific personal traits of AKB48 members that attracted them: Popper reported that he tended to be attracted by members who worked hard but could not achieve high popularity, because he felt that these members' stories mirrored his own experience; Zach said that he was attracted by Maeda Atsuko's sense of responsibility and leadership as a top member of the group; Joan reported that she chose to 'follow' Okada Nana because of her perseverance and unyielding spirit; and Lin stated that AKB48 members' hard work against their tough environment (characterised by intense competitions and challenges)

resonate with her.

As is also the case with most other female idol groups in East Asia, the physical beauty of AKB48 members has always been marketed by the management company as one of the group's major attractions. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that seven interviewees (Alice, Daisie, Joan, Ken, Lin, Popper, and Zach) explicitly expressed that physical beauty is a major factor that sparked their affection for AKB48. Among them, Daisie represents an extreme case (Extract 5.3), because she treated physical beauty as the highest priority when choosing her favourite members.

Daisie: I'm a Yangou[75]. I only like good-looking idols

Extract 5.3

Apart from AKB48 members' traits and attributes, sometimes fans' affection for AKB48 is not driven by the group members. For example (Extract 5.4), Kenny, known as an expert in lyrics translation, reported that he did not have a favourite AKB48 member. Instead, what made him become an AKB48 fan, and later a dedicated translator in the fandom, was the lyrics written by Akimoto Yasushi[76].

Researcher: ***Which members have you supported so far?***

Kenny: I'm basically a dd[77]. I support Akimoto Yasushi.

Researcher: OK. Do you think Akimoto is a person that you admire?

Kenny: It's the lyrics.

Researcher: So, you're a lyrics fan.

Kenny: I've always been interested in lyrics. I really admire the lyrics he

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[75] In Chinese fandom culture, the term 'Yangou' ('颜狗', literally 'face-loving dog') refers to fans who prioritise physical beauty over any other attribute of an artist.

[76] Akimoto Yasushi is the 'total producer' of AKB48. Since the foundation of the group, he has written the lyrics of all the AKB48 songs.

[77] In the context of the AKB48 fandom, the acronym 'dd' stands for the Japanese phrase '*daredemo daisuki*' ('誰でも大好き'). This phrase literally means 'loving everyone'. When used in this context, it connotes that the speaker does not have any favourite member.

wrote.

Extract 5.4

The above examples show that Daba members' experience as AKB48 fans is highly diverse in that their affection for the group was driven by various factors: whereas some were more attracted by member-related factors, others were more interested in non-member ones; some chose to focus on supporting one member, while others had multiple favourite members in their experience as a fan. Further, these preferences could be combined together in diverse ways (e.g. Popper reported that he was attracted by AKB48 songs and multiple members at the same time), which results in myriad of possibilities for fan experience. Naturally, on the individual level, such diverse experience allowed Daba members to develop individual fan identities distinctive from each other. Meanwhile, because of certain habits that members commonly acquired through their fan experience (e.g. using jargon commonly known by AKB48 fans, recalling milestone events in the pop group's history, and integrating fandom-specific memes in their conversations), those distinctive identities could be recognised effortlessly by other AKB48 fans as their fellows. On the communal level, as Daba members recognised and respected each other's diverse individual fan identities revolving around AKB48, they developed an inclusive space where they could engage in a wide range of topics regarding the entire AKB48 group (e.g. the one exemplified in Extract 4.9). In this sense, it can be said that a recognisable individual fan identity as well as recognition of the diversity of others' fan experience are inherent parts of Daba members' mutuality of engagement.

The second quality essential for becoming a recognised fellow subtitling fan is the knowledge of how to work effectively in a subtitle group. This quality was primarily cultivated through community members' previous subtitling experience. Six out of the nine interviewees from the Daba community included in my dataset reported having subtitling experience before joining the community. Such experience enabled them to understand how to work as a member of a subtitling group as well as how to be

recognised as a competent subtitler.

Learning from previous fandom generations was a main way in which the interviewees developed their abilities to work effectively in a fansubbing group. For example, in Extract 5.5, Lin reported that in his earlier experience as a translator, editors in subtitle communities revolving around AKB48 provided detailed feedback on his translations. Under those editors' guidance, Lin not only improved his translation techniques, but also learned about how to collaborate effectively with other community members in translation projects. Therefore, he considered those editors as enthusiastic about helping the next generation fansubbers to thrive. According to Wenger (1998: 90), such interaction between successive generations of CoP members allows some of the history of the practice to remain embodied in the inter-generation relations of the community. As new generations participate in the practice, such history of the practice can become constitutive of their individual experience. Since most fansubbing communities within the AKB48 fandom share similar organisational structures and work processes, Lin could transfer his previous experience of subtitling to his technical role in the Daba community and thereby be recognised as able to collaborate effectively in translation projects. Therefore, based on Lin and other five interviewees' reports, it can be said that transferable technical experience plays a significant role in the community membership for those assuming technical roles.

Researcher: ***Are there any unforgettable predecessors who had significant impact on you?***

Lin: *I'd like to mention an editor who took care of me when I was a rookie who just joined a subtitling group. In the past, editors were quite serious about their work. They'd tell you which places you'd done wrong in a project. Like the grammar points that you hadn't mastered yet. It feels like they were seriously cultivating the next generation subtitlers.*

Extract 5.5

Another main way in which the interviewees learned to work effectively in a subtitle community is playing managerial roles (five interviewees reported having such experience). For example, Joan, one of the Daba members interviewed as part of this study, reported that she is a co-founder of a subtitling community called 'Okada Pingban' (Chinese: '冈田平板') dedicated to AKB48 member Okada Nana. In this community, Joan was the host and the main project convenor, i.e. similar roles to the ones played by Alice in the Daba community. This experience allowed her to gain an insight into the managerial processes and dynamics of both Pingban and Daba communities and thus helped her understand how differences in convenors' personal managing styles created different leadership styles (see Extract 5.6): Alice's supportive and delegative managing style enabled the formation of a relatively 'soft' leadership in the Daba community (as is also mentioned in 4.2.4), whereas Joan's tendency to put pressure on project participants placed her in a more authoritarian position and therefore led to a more transactional leadership. Joan concluded that the manager of a subtitling community is a major factor in determining the unique identity of that community, as is also the case with companies. Also, Joan mentioned that compared to the Daba community where she felt overwhelmed by the aura of veteran fansubbers, the Pingban community was a place where she could comfortably work on interesting projects with community members who supported her managing style.

Researcher: ***What do you think is the difference between Okada Pingban and Daba in terms of the work environment?***

Joan: *I think the difference lies in the distinctions between my character and. Alice's. She doesn't like pushing people. If there are participants, she'll do it; if there aren't, she won't push anyone. I'm different. I push people to make progress. And all the people over there [in Daba] seem to be veterans. Somehow, I feel that I'm not able to talk much over there.*

Researcher: There're indeed many experts.

Joan: *I've spent a long time here (Okada Pingban) and everyone's helpful. So, if I wish to do something, people usually cooperate with me. Actually, the differences between subtitling groups are closely related to their managers. Just like companies.*

Extract 5.6

This example indicates that previous experience in other communities not only allowed fansubbers to ease into particular technical roles, but also provided them with opportunities to gain a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the managerial mechanisms of different fansubbing communities. By developing this awareness, they were able to adapt effectively to the leadership and the work environment of a newly joined community, and thus be recognised as a competent fansubber able to engage in effective collaborative relations within the community. Moreover, this awareness also allowed them to reflect on their past multimembership experience and to build their own unique subtitler identity[78]. Therefore, for a community which has assimilated a significant number of seasoned fansubbers and community managers like Daba[79], the awareness of diverse managerial mechanisms is a significant constitutive element of its membership.

Mutual recognition of members' roles and technical abilities

As discussed above, Daba members' technical and collaborative abilities acquired through experience in multiple communities allowed them to take on distinctive and specialised roles in the fansubbing practice of the community. Also, their abilities allowed them to be recognised as qualified for playing these roles. Because of the diversity and specialisation of their roles, members' positions in the community entail an inherent partiality, i.e. limitations of what one knows and can do. According to

[78] For a discussion of multimembership trajectories, please refer to 5.4.
[79] Among all the nine interviewees, only Momo reported not having any previous experience of technical and managerial roles.

Wenger (1998: 152), such partiality gives value to community members' competence because it translates into a constitutive part of members' identity as a form of individuality defined with regard to the community.

During their interviews, all the interviewees explicitly expressed their awareness of what their roles in the Daba community involve. As their experience as fansubbers differs, their descriptions of their own roles entail various types of partiality.

The first type of partiality stems from community members' perception of limited abilities (reported by four interviewees). A typical example of such partiality can be found in Extract 5.7, where Popper reported that the only position that he had held in all the communities he has been a member of is that of a timer. He claimed that his work experience as a timer in those communities had hardly varied. In addition, Popper explained that the reason for holding on to the same position throughout his fansubber career was his belief that he lacked the competence to take on other positions. This explanation suggests that Popper's experience as a fansubber revolved around a hierarchy of fansubbing positions that he had constructed, based on the technical difficulties that he associated with each role. In this hierarchy, the work of a timer may only occupy a low position because it usually does not require high-level technical abilities (e.g. translation abilities).

Researcher: ***What is the main role that you assumed in the communities [that you have joined]?***

Popper: *I'm a timer. I'm really incompetent, so this is the only job I could do.*

[…]

Researcher: So, you're also a timer in the Daba community, right? ***How does your experience in Daba differ from your experience in OTMG?***

Popper: *There's no difference in terms of work experience. I just sit there*

typing for a few hours, and it's done.

Extract 5.7

Similarly, Alice's awareness of her roles in the Daba community was also informed by a sense of hierarchy of the various fansubbing positions that exist within the fan community. As illustrated in in Extract 5.8, Alice reported that she was not competent enough to properly handle the timing work, let alone other more demanding positions. As a result, Alice claimed that it was this lack of competence that would make her feel embarrassed if she tried to push other people to do better in their roles. It is also noteworthy that throughout the interview, Alice rarely mentioned her role of host and the project convenor. This tendency to emphasise her shortcomings over her competence is consistent with other interviewees' perception of Alice as a modest and supportive leader. On the other hand, Alice was widely respected by other members as a competent leader, and those members did not appear to share her perception of her own lack of abilities. Therefore, it can be said that this example shows a mismatch between Alice's awareness of her personal experience and the recognition that she receives from community members. Through Alice's participation in the subtitling practice, her partiality, as defined by this mismatch, led to a unique individuality which allowed her to better understand the complementarity between members' abilities and thus become able to effectively coordinate members' roles in translation projects.

Researcher: ***How do you view your position and role in the subtitle group ?***

Alice: *Although I learned how to use AegiSub, my spotting techniques are still terrible. And I'm still unable to translate, edit, or compress videos. So, it feels like I've been playing an insignificant role in the community. This is the reason why I'm reluctant to push other members, haha.*

Extract 5.8

The second type of partiality found in members' awareness of their roles is caused by the shortage of human resources in the community (reported by three interviewees). For example, in Extract 5.9, Lin reported that when he first joined the Daba community, he wanted to take on the position of translator. Yet, after community members realised that they were short of competent editors, Lin took over the role of main editor and participated in most of the community's translation projects in that capacity. His competence for this job is mainly based on his high Japanese proficiency: before joining the Daba community, he had passed the highest level (N1) of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) and had been studying at a Japanese university for two years. Over his career in the Daba community, Lin's partiality—as defined by his acceptance of an unexpected and unfamiliar role—translated into an individuality which allowed him to keep developing his competence as a fansubber. This learning trajectory culminated when he became the convenor for the translation project of AKB48 *Kouhaku* Song Contest 2017 (introduced in Extract 5.11). According to Lin, the success of this project demonstrates that he has become a competent and sophisticated editor.

Lin: *We were really short of hands. At the beginning, I wanted to be a translator. When we worked on the first AKB48 SHOW! project, we realised that there was no editor in our group.*

[…]

Lin: *I've made my personal contributions [to the community].*

Researcher: ***Then what roles have you assumed in the Daba community?***

Lin: *Basically, only the role of editor.*

Researcher: *OK.*

Lin: *There may be only three to four projects in which I was not an editor. I did the editing job for all the rest projects.*

Extract 5.9

The third type of partiality results from the overlapping of roles in the community (reported by one interviewee). In Extract 6.10, Kenny reported that he and Carol were

assuming the position of lyrics translator at the same time. Therefore, they had to divide their roles within the community—Carol was responsible for translating the songs featured in the *AKB48 SHOW!* episodes, while Kenny focused on the new songs included in the new CD singles and albums of AKB48. As he kept contributing lyrics translations to the Daba community, Kenny's partiality defined by this division of work translated into an individuality which allowed him to focus on the quality of translation and therefore become recognised as a translation expert with high-level competence.

Researcher: ***How did you usually work in the Daba community?***

Kenny: *I only provided lyrics translation.*

Researcher: Did you provide lyrics for all the projects? Or did you do it selectively?

Kenny: *Because Carol was there, usually it was her who translated the lyrics [for. the AKB48 SHOW! projects]. I translated new AKB48 songs really fast, so they used my translations for the new songs.*

Extract 5.10

By analysing the interview data, 5.2.1 sheds light on what remains opaque in the discussion of mutual recognition in 4.2.5, i.e. what factors led to Daba members' recognition of each other's subtitling fan identity and how such recognition caused them to find their unique places in the community and thereby develop their unique identities of participation which were further integrated into the definition of a community membership.

5.2.2 Accountability to an enterprise

In 4.2.5, I argue that members' accountability to their roles led to their sense of mutual accountability to the enterprise of the Daba community. Also, in 4.3.1, we understand that such sense of accountability has developed into a mechanism called 'communal regime of mutual accountability' where members could make contributions to the

enterprise of the community. According to Wenger (1998: 152-153), the forms of accountability inherent to this regime allow CoP members to look at the world in certain ways, or to be more specific, it gives members a certain focus in their practice and moves them to understand certain conditions and consider certain possibilities. In this way, members develop a competence called 'accountability to the enterprise', i.e. the ability to take responsibility for the joint enterprise of the community and contribute to its pursuit (*ibid.*: 137).

According to the collected interview data, the primary issue that the sense of accountability moved Daba members to focus on is the purpose of the community. This issue especially concerned the community host Alice, who reported extensively on her experience of the issue. For example, in Extract 5.11, Alice summarised the evolution of the community's purpose. The community was initially established to take over the *AKB48 SHOW!* projects left behind by another subtitle group. Throughout the history of the community, these projects served a central role in shaping the community's purpose. Then, with proposals and demands from members, the community expanded their fansubbing practice to various optional content. In this way, the focus of the community's practice expanded from one single task to cover all types of content featuring AKB48 as a whole. It can be said that this process of evolution represents a historic trajectory of the community's subtitling practice[80].

Researcher: ***What's the overarching goal of the community?***

Alice: *At the beginning it was working on AKB48 SHOW!. Yet, no one expected that the show was to end in less than one year. Meanwhile, with the persistence of one editor, we finished a big project of the 8th AKB48 Kouhaku Song Contest. We also worked on a number of music videos and the Tokyo Idol Festival videos. Now we're mostly idle, except that we occasionally work on an*

[80] This observation based on the interview data corroborates the findings about the dynamic process of defining a joint enterprise in 4.3.1.

episode of Nemousu Terebi.

Extract 5.11

As the *AKB48 SHOW!* ended in April 2019, the initial and main task of the community came to an end. This incident marked a major turning point in the community's history and therefore gave community members an opportunity to evaluate their achievement up to this point. For example, in Extract 5.12, Alice summarised that since the community had translated all the *AKB48 SHOW!* episodes aired after the takeover, the initial purpose of the community had been successfully achieved. Alice's interpretation of the community's purpose and evaluation of the community's achievements demonstrate that as the *de facto* leader of the community, she was clearly aware of the trajectory of the community and she had a positive view of the overall performance of the community.

Researcher: ***After the end of AKB48 SHOW!, how do you view the trajectory of the. Daba community? Do you think the subtitle group has achieved its initial goal?***

Alice: *Although we didn't expect the show to end so soon, we managed to stay with this show until its very end. Since we took over this show from the Chujiao Geming fansubbing group, we have finished and published all aired episodes, including the retrospective ones (except Nogizaka46 SHOW! episodes and single member episodes). I think we've achieved our initial goal.*

Extract 5.12

Such awareness and view were not solely possessed by Alice, but were also shared by other community members. For example, in Extract 5.13, Lin expressed her understanding of the purpose and the performance of the community, which was highly similar to the version reported by Alice. Also, although Popper held a critical view of the efficiency of the community (Extract 5.14), he also admitted that the initial purpose

of the community had been achieved. This agreement between members implies that the communal regime of accountability has allowed Daba members to come up with similar interpretations of certain issues and events central to their fansubbing practice.

Researcher: After the end of the AKB48 SHOW!, the major task of the Daba Fansubbing. Group has also ended. ***How do you view the trajectory of the fansubbing group? Do you think the initial goal has been achieved?***

Lin: I think it's a big success.

Researcher: Why did you say so?

Lin: We translated all the episodes of the AKB48 SHOW! [aired in this period]. This already served to fulfil the initial goal. Not to mention that we also finished other projects.

Extract 5.13

Researcher: ***How do you view the overall performance of the subtitle group? Has it achieved the initial goal?***

Popper: The overall performance is fine. Because the host was too gentle [to everyone], members generally procrastinated when working on projects. Nonetheless, we've made up subtitles for every episode of the AKB48 SHOW! and thus achieved the historical mission.

Extract 5.14

Alice's sense of accountability also drove her to play a central role in the negotiations of the community's enterprise (as shown in 4.3.1). These negotiations allowed community members to develop certain criteria on what content to translate and what not to. Alice's account (Extract 5.15) demonstrates two fundamental elements of these criteria: first, the community should focus on translating AKB48-related content unhandled by other fansubbers; second, among the untranslated content, the group

should prioritise the 'small' projects over the 'big' ones, because of the limited resources available to the community (as reported in 4.3.1). In addition to these criteria, it can be seen in Extract 4.13 that Alice decided that the community should prioritise the *AKB48 SHOW!* task over other types of content because of the same reason. Alice's interpretation of these criteria suggests that her accountability to the community's enterprise has allowed her to adopt a specific perspective on the subtitling practice of the community, i.e. a tendency to make certain choices and to take certain actions when facing various situations (e.g. a lack of human resource, limited time, potential copyright infringement, etc.).

Researcher: ***In what manner and on what criteria did the subtitle group select the videos to translate?***

Alice: *We just worked on those videos that no one else wanted to handle.*

Researcher: Can you explain in detail that how you selected the videos to work on from those videos that no one else wanted to handle? For example, did you prefer 'big' projects or 'small' projects? Or did you focus on specific video types?

Alice: *At first, we found that fansubbers stopped working on the AKB48 SHOW!, so we took it over. We also worked on the untranslated Nemousu Terebi episodes and untranslated music videos. Because big projects take a long time to finish, we prefer to work on small projects. In fact, the only big project we've finished so far is the Kouhaku project. Others are all small ones.*

Extract 5.15

Similar to Alice's case, other Daba members demonstrated their perspectives with regard to the community's joint enterprise. For example, in Extract 5.16, Daisie reported that when she was working as a translator in the Daba community, she tended to take over all the unhandled translation tasks and do her best to finish them on time. This tendency shows that although Daisie did not play a major role in negotiating what

content to translate, she chose to take positive actions to ensure that the launched translation projects could be finished on time. In doing so, she made her unique contribution to the community's pursuit of its main purpose.

> *Daisie: Usually, I would take over those translation tasks that no one else wanted to work on. I couldn't stand seeing Alice ask again and again. Even when I was busy with my job, I would do my best to make some time for translation. Basically, I never procrastinated.*
>
> *Extract 5.16*

Based on the above examples and analysis, it can be said that as a dimension of the competence inherent to the community membership, accountability to the enterprise translated into unique perspectives which constitutes Daba members' identity. These perspectives entail a tendency to develop similar interpretations of the purpose and achievements of the community; and on the other hand, they also involve members' tendency to take distinctive actions and make certain choices based on their respective roles and situations, in order to maintain the joint enterprise of the community (Wenger 1998: 153).

5.2.3 Negotiability of a repertoire

In 5.2.5, I argue that as Daba members participated in the fansubbing practice, they recognised a diversity of technical abilities among members and therefore learned to rely on each other's complementary contributions in order to complete the translation projects. Over the history of the community, members' sustained recognition of their complementary capabilities allowed them to develop an ability to interpret, utilise, and negotiate the shared repertoire of the community. Wenger (1998:153) names this ability 'negotiability of a repertoire' and sees it as one of the three dimensions of a competent membership.

In 4.4.1, I analysed how members negotiated a 'product aspect' of Daba community's translational norms — the quality norms. In this analysis, I found that the negotiations of the quality norm repertoire are based on members' recognition of their diverse and complementary technical abilities. Such is also the case with the 'production' aspects of the translational norms (i.e. the norms regarding how to work properly in translation projects). For example, in Extract 5.17, we can see Alice's lack of knowledge regarding the main quality-assuring process of a translation project—editing. Instead of trying to understand the details of editing work, Alice tended to commission the whole process to the editors of the community. This tendency shows Alice's clear recognition of the necessity to rely on members' complementary technical abilities. In this way, as the leader of the community, Alice delegated the power of negotiating the editing norms to the experts. Nevertheless, despite a lack of knowledge of the editing work, Alice was concerned about the performance of the editors throughout the community's history. Because of this experience, she was impressed by Lin's outstanding devotion to editing. This shows that Alice's action of delegating the negotiation power allowed her to develop an ability to evaluate the editors' contributions to negotiating the editing norms of the community.

Researcher: ***What is the main way in which the Daba community assured the quality of its subtitling works?***

Alice: *It all depends on the editors.*

Researcher: Could you please mention a few active editors? How many stages did their editing work usually involve? Did they often communicate the problems they encountered in the editing work?

Alice: *In fact, there are only three editors in our group. Since Faye was always busy, we mainly counted on Lin and Kate, especially on Lin, he worked really hard. As for how many stages were involved, I'm not really sure. Usually, if they encountered problems, they would communicate in the chatroom.*

Extract 5.17

Extract 5.18 reveals how Lin, the main editor of the community, summarised the procedure of the editing work. He saw the editing work as composed of three stages: First, he needed to solve the problems caused by translators' insufficient ability to understand the original spoken texts; then, he corrected the linguistic errors in the translated texts; and the final stage involved two simultaneous processes, i.e. unifying the overall translation style and adjusting the time spotting of the subtitles. From a technical perspective, this working procedure covers the main issues of the editing work and provides smooth connections to the preceding translation phase and the succeeding post-production phase of a translation project.

Researcher: ***How did you usually work as an editor?***

Lin: *As an editor, first I needed to understand what the translators failed to understand and correct the mistakes that they made. Then I needed to rectify their grammatical errors and improper expressions. Finally, I needed to unify the translations for certain terms such as members names and place names. At the same time, I also edited the spotting of the subtitles.*

Researcher: So, it's a quality-assuring role.

Lin: *Yes.*

Extract 5.18

Yet, the knowledge of this sophisticated procedure is not something that Lin already possessed when his career in the community began. In Extract 5.5, it can be seen that when Lin joined the Daba community shortly after its establishment, he hardly had any previous experience as an editor. Therefore, we can infer that the reported procedure of editing work is a result of his learning trajectory in the community—as Lin participated in the subtitling practice, he gradually learnt how to use and negotiate the procedure of editing work. Since Lin became the main editor of the community, the procedure that he developed through his learning trajectory has become a standard reference regarding

how to work properly as an editor in the Daba community and thus a main part of the editing norms of the community. Because of the essential role that editors have played in the history of the community's subtitling practice, it can also be said that on the communal level, editing norms as a part of the shared repertoire reify a significant part of the community's history of learning.

In Extract 5.19, Lin reported his own evaluation of his contributions as the main editor. He showed a high degree of confidence in his overall performance in terms of both the technical quality of his work and his consistent devotion to his role. On the other hand, he also admitted the minor problems that were caused by misunderstandings of the original texts. The self-reflection presented in this example shows that Lin's participation in the history of utilising and negotiating the editing norms has allowed him to turn that communal history into a part of his personal history. When constituting a part of his identity, that history translated into a set of personal experiences and references which help to negotiate his individual relations of negotiability with regard to the shared translational norm repertoire of the subtitling practice (Wenger 1998: 153).

Researcher: ***Generally saying, how do you view the quality of your editing work? Do you think you've fulfilled your own expectations and the community's expectations?***

Lin: *I give myself a score of 80. I've been quite serious about my work. But sometimes I also made mistakes understanding the spoken texts. I believe there's no problem with the overall quality, though there are surely some minor problems.*

Extract 5.19

Unlike the Daba community where developing the editing norms heavily relies on the efforts of a main editor, Li (2015: 201) reports that in *The Last Fantasy (TLF)* fansubbing community, these norms are the result of members' sustained participation in collective discussions: as multiple members frequently engaged with each other in

the discussions on the errors and issues that occurred in their subtitling practice, they developed a set of shared rules which they actively adhered to. Therefore, compared to the case of Daba community, the negotiation and utilisation of the editing norms in TFL depended more on the history of coordination and alignment between members. As a result, when this history translated into a part of TLF members' identity, it would become experiences and references more integrating the partiality of members' contributions to the collective negotiation of the norm repertoire.

5.3 Connections to the fandom and community boundaries

In 5.2, I analysed the three dimensions of a 'full' membership of Daba community and discussed how those dimensions translated into dimensions of members' identity. In this section, I will move my focus from the 'core' of the community to its boundaries.

According to Wenger (1998:103), a CoP is a 'shared history of learning', i.e. it is continuously shaped by the shared ongoing learning processes inherent to its three organisational dimensions, i.e. continuous mutual engagement, the ongoing negotiation of its joint enterprise, and the evolution of its shared repertoire over time (Wenger 1998: 103). As time elapses, such history creates discontinuities (boundaries) between those people who have been participating and those who have not. On the other hand, as I have argued in section 2.4, a fan CoP never exists in isolation. Instead, it is always situated in interconnections with the outside world which are also created by the community's shared history of learning processes.

In this section, I will primarily rely on the archival data to analyse several types of connections that were created through those aspects, in order to find out how they enabled Daba members to cross the boundaries of the community and establish various links between the community and the outside world.

5.3.1 Connections by objects

In Daba Fansubbing Group, we can find that a variety of subtitling products were used by members to sustain the community's links to the rest of the world. In CoP theory, this type of products is referred to as 'boundary objects', i.e. objects that transcend the boundaries of communities[81]. The most significant example among them is the videos uploaded to the community's channel on Bilibili.

In Chapter 4, I introduced the basic information about the channel and discussed how members negotiated with each other over the norms that ensure the quality of the videos uploaded to it. After being uploaded, those videos became artefacts that established connections to the outside world. This was done primarily through the inherent functions of Bilibili, including video playback, comment section, and *danmu*[82] function. By playing back the uploaded videos, fans of AKB48 and other viewers could watch the products of the community's subtitling practice; by posting comments, the audience could express their opinions and impressions on the videos; and by sending and reading *danmu* lines, they could react precisely to the moments that captured their attention and interest as well as interact with the reactions by other viewers. In this way, the uploaded videos established connections not only between the community and the viewers, but also between different viewers.

Apart from the videos uploaded by the community, boundary objects from other communities could also help Daba members establish connections to the outside, e.g. subtitled videos, Weibo posts, message threads on Baidu Tieba, among others. This type of connection is best exemplified by the community's competitions with other communities and people who uploaded or translated AKB48 media content[83] over issues such as subtitling speed and video view counts.

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[81] For more discussions about this concept, please refer to 2.4.
[82] '*Danmu*' is a commenting system which allows viewers of a video to directly post their comments on top of the video (So 2017).
[83] Instances of such competitions occurred on 29 Aug 2018 and 26 Oct 2018.

For instance, in Extract 5.20, Alice revealed the fact that she had been paying attention to the Bilibili channel of a fansubber (pseudonymised here as 'Fansubber A') who uploaded the subtitled version of an AKB48 music video (line 1 and 2). Since this video had also been subtitled and uploaded by Daba Fansubbing Group, it was highly probable that Fansubber A's version had somewhat diverted a part of the viewers who might otherwise have chosen Daba's version. Therefore, it is no wonder that Alice perceived the relation between Daba and the uploader as competitive. From line 3, we can understand that the two sides adopted different strategies when naming the video: Fansubber A chose to use the original full name of the single as the title of the video while Daba members decided to name it with a member-created title. This is a result of the members' attempt to make the video survive longer under the copyright protection mechanism of Bilibili[84]. Therefore, when Alice found that the rival video had survived longer than expected and gained more view counts than Daba's video, she expressed her disappointment with this fact.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Handyman-Alice	*One week has passed and why hasn't the MV of the 53rd single been deleted for copyright reasons?*	1 2
Handyman-Alice	*That subtitled video with the full name of the single has hit a view count of 6000.*	3 4
Handyman-Alice	*And ours only hit 1000.*	5
Handyman-Alice	*What a shame.*	6
Handyman-Alice	*I've been always expecting it to be deleted.*	7
Handyman-Alice	*Yet it didn't happen. The view count kept rising all the time.*	8 9
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*And the uploader is a fan of 46 series groups.*	10
Handyman-Alice	*What a shame.*	11

Extract 5.20 (Thread 20180829)

At the end of the extract, she mentioned that Fansubber A was a fan of 46 Series groups[85], which can be proven by the fact that most of the videos uploaded to his Bilibili

[84] Members' negotiation over this title can be found in Extract 4.23.
[85] 46 Series groups include Nogizaka46 – AKB48's 'official rival group', as well as its three sister groups

channel are related to those groups. This reflects another aspect of Daba's connection to him: apart from the competitive relationship in terms of subtitling work, members of Daba also viewed Fansubber A from the perspective of their fan identity, which is a result of their experience in the AKB48 fandom (as analysed in 5.2.1). In this way, they were influenced by the permeating antagonism that existed between AKB48 fans and 46 Series fans. This influence in turn consolidated members' perception of Uploader A as a rival. When we compare this rivalry to members' efforts to coordinate their work with fellow AKB48 fan communities (e.g. as shown in Extracts 4.14 and 4.15, under section 4.3), we can have a glimpse of how the collaborative competence inherent to members' subtitling fan identity can create different types of object-based connections (i.e. lacking direct person-to-person contacts) between Daba Fansubbing Group and the outside world. Through such indirect connections, the Daba community was woven into the AKB48 fandom as a community which could be potentially involved in the collaboration and rivalry between content-contributing communities and individuals.

5.3.2 Connections by cross-boundary encounters

On the participative side of practice, Daba Fansubbing Group has also established connections to the outside through different types of cross-boundary encounters of its members. The first type of those connections is the 'one-on-one' connections, i.e. connections enabled by encounters between two individuals from different communities. From the dataset, it is found that the traces of one-on-one connections occurred in a number of situations where the community needed to secure external resources necessary to their practice (e.g. Thread 20180903 and Thread 20190109).

For example, in Extract 5.21, members had a discussion on a Bilibili uploader (pseudonymised here as 'Uploader A') who regularly uploaded source videos of *AKB48*

Keyakizaka46 and Hinatazaka46. As the competition between AKB48 and 46 Series groups in pop idol market grew more fierce, antagonistic sentiments between their fans began to rise.

SHOW! with original Japanese subtitles[86]. Since Japanese subtitles could effectively help members improve the efficiency and accuracy of their practice, source videos from Uploader A are of significant value to the community. Yet, in lines 1 to 4, Kate reported that this uploader suddenly stopped providing source videos because he received negative comments from some AKB48 fans. These fans seemed to hold antagonistic sentiments against Nogizaka46, which led to their dissatisfaction with the episodes of *AKB48 SHOW!* featuring Nogizaka46 members.

Participant	**Conversation**	**Line**
Editor-Kate	*Speaking of that uploader who records TV shows with Japanese subtitles, every time he uploaded a video of Nogizaka46 Show!, some people commented 'this is not AKB48 SHOW!'. Well, now he's stopped uploading.*	1 2 3 4
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*He's still uploading.*	5
Handyman-Alice	*He's uploaded this week's episode.*	6
Handyman-Alice	*It's only that the Japanese subtitles came later than the Chinese subtitles.*	7 8
Editor-Kate	*He did it only in this week.*	9
	[interval of messages]	
Editor-Kate	*He got pissed off once when seeing those comments. Later I asked him for the source videos, and he restarted uploading two weeks later.*	10 11 12
	[interval of messages]	
Editor-Kate	*My opinion is that uploaders of Japanese variety shows such as him should not be made to care about the distinctions that matter only to people in the fandom.*	13 14 15

Extract 5.21 (Thread 20180903)

Seeing this situation that had made Daba Fansubbing Group unable to access source videos with Japanese subtitles, Kate attempted to establish a one-on-one connection to Uploader A by directly contacting him in person. Through this connection, she successfully convinced the uploader to restart to upload the *AKB48 SHOW!* videos (line 10-12). At the end of the extract, Kate reflected on the whole event and concluded that

[86] Japanese TV channels usually provide optional closed captions in Japanese.

as a person out of the AKB48 fandom, Uploader A should not be affected by the antagonism between AKB48 and Nogizaka46 fans. This conclusion implies that one-on-one connections to the outside could allow members to become aware of the necessity to prevent fan identity clashes within the fandom from having negative impact on people outside the fandom. In the world of pop idol fandoms where fan identity plays a major role in shaping people's trajectories of experience and thoughts, this awareness of self-imposed restraint can potentially help a community build sustainable and harmonious connections to the outside.

Sometimes community members might take one more step beyond mere boundary encounters and become immersed in the practice of another community. This was quite common for Daba members because as mentioned in 5.2, most of them had been the fans of AKB48 for a number of years and thus had gained experience of participating in various fan communities. Such cross-boundary participations created an experience of 'multimembership' for them, i.e. being a member in multiple communities[87]. According to Wenger (1998: 105), this experience can lead to a type of connection called 'brokering', in recognition of the fact that this member can coordinate and align between different perspectives of multiple communities.

For example, in Extract 5.22, we can see that Alice was keeping a connection to the host of AKBFun (here referred to as 'Host A') — a website widely used by Chinese fans of AKB48 as a space where they could update and share a catalogue of URLs to AKB48 videos on Bilibili. In fact, Alice was a frequent contributor to AKBFun and a member of the administrative community of the website. Since she was also the host of Daba, we can say that she possessed a multimembership. On the other side, besides being a member of the administrative community of AKBFun, Host A was also participating in the fansubbing group T.K.M.N. In this way, Alice and Host A connected the three communities with their multimembership status and established an indirect

[87] For more discussions about multimembership experience, please refer to 5.4.

brokering connection between Daba and T.K.M.N (shown in Figure 5.1). This brokering connection allowed Alice and Host A to coordinate the practices of Daba and T.K.M.N, as shown in line 2: On behalf of T.K.M.N, Host A requested Alice to upload T.K.M.N.-translated videos of AKBingo to the Bilibili channel of Daba, and Alice accepted the request. In this way, the brokering connections enabled the two communities to collaborate in translation projects without substantial involvement of members from the two sides or changes to the general purposes of the communities. Through negotiations between a few brokers, the two communities achieved a division of labour in the workflow of a translation project: T.K.M.N would be responsible for translation, timing, and editing, and Daba would take care of video compression and publishing.

Participant	***Conversation***	***Line***
Handyman-Alice	*The head of AKBFun Catalogue talked to me*	1
Handyman-Alice	*And asked us to post AKBingo translated by T.K.M.N.*	2
Timer-Popper	*What a happy thing.*	3
Handyman-Alice	*What does this mean?*	4
Source video-Siyang	*They'll give us the timed subtitles and we'll have to compress the videos by ourselves.*	5 6
Timer-Popper	*It means they'll give you the subtitle files.*	7
Handyman-Alice	*Does this mean they don't have people who can do compression in their group?*	8 9
	[interval of messages]	
Video compression-Ken	*They have people who do compression.*	10
Video compression-Ken	*But they're too busy.*	11
Video compression-Ken	*I haven't withdrawn from T.K.M.N's chatroom.*	12
Video compression-Ken	*There used to be a period when I did the job of video compression over there.*	13 14
Post-production-Zach	*How many fansubbing groups have you joined? 48?*	15
Video compression-Ken	*More than 20 at the highest.*	16

Video compression-Ken	*I left most of them in 2015.*	17

Extract 5.22 (Thread 20181120)

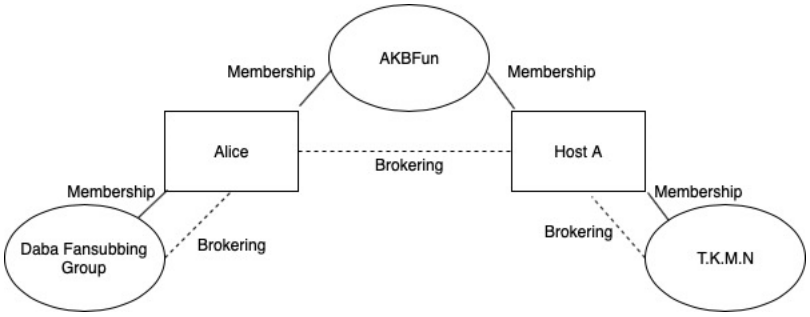

Figure 5.1 Brokering enabled by multimembership

In lines 8 and 9, Alice raised a question regarding the reason for the uploading request. In response, Ken shared the information that he learnt from inside T.K.M.N. He also revealed the fact that he had joined more than 20 fansubbing communities including Daba and T.K.M.N. Therefore, he had a highly rich experience of multimembership in fansubbing communities of AKB48 fandom. Through Ken's sharing activity, this experience was turned into technical knowledge in the shared repertoire and hence would possibly help community members improve the collaboration between the two communities.

5.3.3 Connections by practice

As boundary objects, boundary encounters, and brokering help practice extend beyond the boundary of a fan CoP, sometimes even practice *per se* can become a form of connection. In Daba Fansubbing Group, this kind of connection was mostly established when members tried to launch a collaborative project with members from other communities.

For example, in Extract 5.23[88], Daisie asked Alice if Daba should start a collaborative

[88] A part of this extract is also used in Extract 4.12.

project of AKB48 *Kanshasai* with a fansubbing community founded by fans of Miyawaki Sakura (already introduced in 3.2). As a member of the Miyawaki community, she then proposed to invite an editor from that community to join Daba as a guest. By doing this, Daba would open a periphery to the editor and allow her to have a 'legitimate peripheral experience'[89] in Daba without committing to the demands of a full membership. In this way, the periphery would create possibilities of 'partial' membership and therefore contributed to continuities across the boundaries.

Participant	***Conversation***	***Line***
Translator-Daisie	*@Handyman-Alice, shall we work on the Kanshasai video?*	1 2
	[interval of messages]	
Translator-Daisie	*My fan community can deploy an editor to this project.*	3
	[interval of messages]	
Translator-Daisie	*If we decide to do it, I'll drag her in.*	4
Translator-Daisie	*I can also provide the source video.*	5
Handyman-Alice	*Is she from a fan of Miyawaki?*	6
Handyman-Alice	*No, don't.*	7
	[interval of messages]	
Handyman-Alice	*Maybe you can create a new chatroom?*	8
	[interval of messages]	
Editor-Lin	*You can create a discussion group*[90]*.*	9
	[interval of messages]	
Post-production-Zach	*A collaborative project? I represent Niyou Yusan Fansubbing Group*[91]*.*	10 11
Timer-Alex	*A collaborative project? I'm the only one from my community.*	12 13
Timer-Charlie	*A collaborative project? Here's me from my community. Count me in.*	14 15
	[interval of messages]	
Translator-Daisie	*Shall we create a new chatroom?*	16
Art designer-Wen	*Please create a discussion group.*	17
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Alex	*It doesn't matter whether I'm working in the name of*	18

[89] This concept is already introduced in 2.4.
[90] A 'discussion group' on Tencent QQ is a temporary space where a group of people can have discussions on certain matters. A discussion group is different from a chatroom in that it does not have a unique group ID and members in it cannot use most of chatroom functions, e.g. file storage, group announcement, etc.
[91] Niyou Yusan Fansubbing Group (你有雨伞字幕组, literally 'You Have An Umbrella') is a fansubbing community established by fans of AKB48 member Kojima Mako.

	my community or not.	19
Timer-Alex	*I just want to be of help, no matter my community is credited or not. After all, I'm the only one left in the community.*	20 21 22
	[interval of messages]	
Translator-Daisie	*It's okay for me to participate in my own name, too.*	23
	[interval of messages]	
Timer-Charlie	*Yep. It certainly would be better if my community is credited. But even if it's not, it's totally okay for me. I just want to translate as much as possible so that other fans can benefit from my work.*	24 25 26 27

Extract 5.23 (Thread 20190109)

Yet, Alice declined this proposal because of her negative personal experience with fans of Miyawaki. Instead, she suggested Daba participants in this project use the opened periphery to go out of the community and create a new chatroom where they could engage with each other in the new project. Hearing this news of a collaborative project, Zach, Alex, and Charlie showed their interest in it by proposing to join as delegates from their respective fansubbing communities other than Daba. Then Wen suggested that instead of a chatroom, Daisie could create a temporary QQ discussion group for this project. This new space of mutual engagement could make delegates from different communities directly encounter each other, and such 'delegation encounters' would in turn make the collaboration for the new project a 'boundary practice' which connected the communities that the participants represented.

In a later discussion (line 18-27), the soon-to-be participants in the collaborative project stated that they did not really mind if they were to participate in the name of their communities (usually reified through crediting the communities in the final product video) or in their own names. This reflects that practice is in nature a matter of participation of real people, i.e. practice is possible because of real mutual engagement and mutual recognition between participants, not because of any reified object. In this case, participants recognised each other's identity as fellow subtitling fans who wished to make their own contributions to the fandom despite the differences in their

membership. Such recognition could help these participants establish new relations with each other, negotiate a new joint enterprise, and develop a new repertoire in their pursuit of the new practice. In this way, traversing community peripheries and participating in the new project created potentials for the delegates to establish a unique membership for a new community of practice.

5.4 The trajectories of multimembership

As mentioned in 5.3, members of the Daba community are involved in different practices across a range of fan communities. Evidence from the interview data shows that although some of these practices may be construed as belonging to the same category (e.g. fansubbing and fund raising), they resulted in the establishment of different networks of relations, pursued different purposes, and made use of different sets of resources. In this way, Daba members' involvement in these communities shaped different forms of participation. Over time, such participation allowed members' identities to form 'trajectories' both within and across CoPs (Wenger 1998: 154). The concept of trajectory suggests that the members' identity formation is a temporal and ongoing process which has its own momentum and thus connects the past, the present, and the future (*ibid.*).

As has been argued in 5.2, members' ongoing participation in the Daba community helped negotiate a community membership which encompasses a number of competences. This process has also been taking place constantly in other fan communities within the Chinese AKB48 fandom and has thus forged unique forms of membership for those communities. As AKB48 fans are involved in the different practices across various fan communities, those forms of membership may contribute to their identity formation trajectories in different ways. For example, those members who have participated frequently in the negotiations of a fan community's organisational dimensions since its establishment will have enjoyed a full membership status throughout, and thus have formed 'insider trajectories' (Wenger 1998: 154) in

that CoP. By contrast, others that have stayed on the periphery of a community (whether willingly or not) will never have gained a full membership in that community. For these fans, their participation has formed 'peripheral trajectories' (*ibid.*).

According to an analysis of the interview data collected for this research, all the interviewees have the experience of developing various trajectories when participating in multiple communities. For example, in Extract 5.24, Joan (a Daba member who labelled herself as a timer) reported that she had experience as a participant in three fan communities, including the Daba community and two other fan communities revolving around AKB48 member Okada Nana (namely the Okada Pingban Fansubbing Group and the Okada Nana Supporting Group). In those communities, she assumed different roles: in the Daba community, she was a timer; in the Okada Pingban Fansubbing Group, she was the community founder as well as a timer; and in the Okada supporting community, she helped 'transfer' Okada's blog posts (i.e. move blog posts released on an ad-hoc mobile app to the supporting group's Weibo page) and participated in raising funds to support Okada in the AKB48 general election events.

Researcher: ***What fan communities and organisations have you joined, such as supporting communities and subtitle groups?***

Joan: *I joined a supporting community and a subtitle group for Okada Nana. The subtitle group was actually founded by me.*

Researcher: Okay. Anything else?

Joan: *I also have stayed quite a long time in the Daba community. Apart from them, I hardly participated in any other community.*

Researcher: Understood. Have you assumed any particular role in the supporting community for Okada?

Joan: *I used to be responsible for transferring Okada's mobile blog posts for more than half a year. Also, I helped them raise funds for the general election. […] Currently I'm primarily focused on*

managing the [Okada Pingban] fansubbing group, so I hardly work for the supporting community.

Extract 5.24

Among those three communities, Okada Pingban community was of special significance to Joan for various reasons. First, she was the founder of the community (Extract 5.24). More importantly, since the establishment of the community, she had served as the host of the community (Extract 5.25). This means that she had invested an enormous amount of time and energy in maintaining the subtitling practice of the community. In this process, Joan had played a central role in shaping the relations between community members (by coordinating and integrating their efforts in every translation project), in managing the projects (by making decisions on the content to be translated), and in negotiating the shared repertoire of the community (by securing the source videos). Besides, Joan also participated in the timing phase of projects whenever she had free time. This implies that she was not only recognised as the group leader and the project supervisor, but also as a fellow collaborator directly involved in the technical processes of fansubbing. Joan's lasting and essential contributions to negotiating different dimensions of the community's fansubbing practice suggest that she had always been a full member of the community. Therefore, her experience of participation in the Okada Pingban community had formed an insider trajectory.

Researcher: ***What role do you usually play in a particular translation project?***

Joan: *First, I make decision on what content to translate and locate the source video. Then I recruit translators and timers. I need to confirm the number of participants and assign deadlines, because a big project requires collaboration between a number of people. Apart from the role of host, I'm also a timer. When I'm free, I help work on the projects. Basically, I play the role of coordinating people and integrating their efforts. Generally, every phase of a project is overseen by me, though I don't hold the final product. In*

more formal subtitle groups, such role should be called a supervisor.

Extract 5.25

Compared to Joan's experience in the Okada Pingban community, her role in the Okada Supporting Group is less central: She was neither a founder nor a host of the community. Nonetheless, as she used to participate frequently in the important activities of the community (e.g. transferring social media posts and raising funds, see Extract 5.24 and 5.26), she had substantial experience of establishing various relations with other community members (e.g. translators of social media posts, voting fans, and the community host), negotiating the joint enterprise of the community (by deciding what posts to be transferred to the Weibo account), as well as helping manage the shared repertoire (by sorting the voting serial numbers). Therefore, in relation to the Okada Supporting Group, Joan's experience after joining the community followed an 'inbound trajectory' (Wenger 1998: 154), i.e. a movement from a peripheral participation to a full membership. After shifting her primary focus to the subtitle group that she founded, Joan's subsequent experience of the community followed an 'outbound trajectory' (*ibid.*) which gradually led her back to the periphery of the community (see Extract 5.24).

Researcher: ***How did you work in these roles [in the supporting group]?***

Joan: *We requested the translators to translate the mobile blog posts, then we published the translations on Weibo. After that, I copied [the published translations] from Weibo to the AKB48 Tieba. As for fund raising, I just helped input the data [of all the purchased voting tickets] into a table. […] This was done so that the person in charge of casting votes could work with ease*[92].

Extract 5.26

[92] After the supporting group raised funds for the general election, they would purchase a great number of voting tickets. Then, one or a few members would be assigned the task to 'cast the votes', i.e. enter the serial numbers on the voting tickets into the official online voting system, in order to finish the voting process.

With reference to Joan's participation in the other two communities, her role in the Daba community was even farther from the core of the community. According to Extract 5.27, Joan joined the Daba community when the latter decided to recruit a timer on its periphery for a particular project. Since the completion of the project, she had only participated in one more translation project. Due to the lack of continuous participation in the community's fansubbing practice, Joan had always stayed on the periphery of the community and never become a full member. Therefore, her experience of the Daba community formed a peripheral trajectory.

Researcher: Okay, then I'd like to ask you ***why you wanted to join the Daba community****?*

Joan: They said they were short of timers, so I volunteered to help them, haha.

Researcher: Okay.

Joan: They were working on a Request Hour project at that time and needed a timer, so I helped them.

Researcher: Did you participate in any subsequent project?

Joan: I also helped them with a Nemousu Terebi *project. Apart from those two, I participated in no other project, because they had their own timers. Also, I was busy with my roles in the Pingban community, so I scarcely worked on Daba projects.*

Extract 5.27

Apart from Joan, there are three other interviewees who reported that they have experience of either founding a fan community as major leaders or co-founding a community with a major leader. For example, Popper founded a fansubbing group for AKB48 member Ma Chia Ling in a major leader capacity; for her part, Rachel co-founded the Daba community with Alice and assumed the role of the community's main editor. In the two mentioned communities, Popper and Rachel had stayed as core

members since the very beginning and therefore had developed insider trajectories. It is also worth mentioning that these members have the experience of participating in communities established by others. Therefore, it can be said that their experience in the AKB48 fandom has formed trajectories similar to that of Joan's.

Unlike the members mentioned previously, four other members did not report any experience of founding or co-founding a community. Rather, they only have the experience of joining already founded communities. For example, Kenny, a lyrics translator respected by Daba members, enjoyed a wide audience in the AKB48 fandom. According to his interview, he had been translating lyrics of AKB48 songs since 2011. As his reputation gradually increased in the fandom, his talent attracted attention from various fansubbing communities. Around five communities invited him to join in their fansubbing practices because they wanted him to help translate lyrics involved in their fansubbing projects (Extract 5.28). As demonstrated by his experience in the Daba community, as he participated in different translation projects (Extract 5.10), he gradually learnt how to engage properly with other members and thus established stable relations with them. This can be evidenced by the fact that between 22 November 2018 and 31 March 2019, Kenny sent 227 lines of messages in the chatroom (found in more than 20 instances) which concern various topics, including stages of translation projects, new AKB48 songs, AKB48 live events, etc. Also, as a lyrics translator, he made notable contributions to the shared repertoire of the community such as those regarding technical know-how and translational norms (e.g. in the instance shown by Extract 4.28). Yet, since he hardly participated in the main task of the community (*AKB48 SHOW!* projects), he did not make significant contributions to maintaining and negotiating the community's joint enterprise. Therefore, it can be said that he had developed an inbound trajectory in the Daba community and positioned himself somewhere between the periphery and the core of the community. In this sense, he has gained a partial membership in the community.

Researcher: ***How many fansubbing groups have you joined?***

Kenny: *When people wanted to use my translations, I joined in their communities. There are around four to five in total.*

Extract 5.28

Similar to Kenny's case, Zach, who tagged himself as a post-producer in the Daba community, also has the experience of joining different fan communities because of his particular skills. As shown in Extract 5.29, Zach mentioned three 'significant' communities that he has joined, here construed as communities where he has established stable relations and made substantial contributions as a technical expert, and thereby has acquired full or partial membership status. Apart from his experience in those three communities, Zach also participated in other fansubbing communities when his skills were temporarily needed for particular translation projects. In such cases, he assumed roles so temporary that they never helped Zach to develop an inbound trajectory. Moreover, such temporary collaborations could even be carried out without any reification of community membership, i.e. Zach and other fansubbers might work on projects completely as individual fansubbers. In these cases, Zach and his collaborators formed temporary task groups for particular translation projects, rather than proper CoPs defined by lasting mutual engagement and a long-term enterprise. In this way, Zach's participation in these individual-based projects did not lead to a community membership. Rather, it reflects Zach's efforts to build connections to the wider landscape of the fandom. Nevertheless, dimensions of the community memberships that Zach has gained would still shape these connections. For example, some collaborators might join the temporary task groups because of their relations with Zach established in a certain CoP; and the goal of a task might be the derivative of a particular translation project of a CoP.

Researcher: ***Can you please tell me which subtitle groups you have joined?***

Zach: *I'm now basically inactive in most of the communities that I've joined. [Among them,] the most significant ones are Niyou*

Yusan[93], Buyao Danhuangjiang[94], and the Daba community.

Researcher: Okay. What roles did you assume in those communities?

Zach: I mainly worked on timing, post-production, and video compression. […]

Actually, in most cases, I just jumped out of those fansubbing groups and worked on projects, not in the name of any of the subtitle groups [that I've joined].

Researcher: Do you mean temporary collaborations with other fansubbers?

Zach: When my acquaintances in other fansubbing groups were in need of. a timer or some other role, I would help them. Plus, I also collaborated with other fansubbers in projects of AKB48 live events, all in our own names.

Extract 5.29

Unlike Kenny and Zach whose community participation was mainly driven by their expertise in certain fansubbing processes, Daisie and Momo (both of whom were among the main translators of the Daba community) did not actively pursue to broaden their participation in a wide variety of fansubbing communities. Rather, they tended to stay in a small number of communities which helped them support their favourite idols and improve their Japanese abilities. To be specific, in her interview (Extract 5.30), Daisie reported that she joined the Daba community and a number of fansubbing communities around Miyawaki Sakura in summer 2018 because she believed that doing so would help her support her favourite AKB48 member and practice Japanese.

Researcher: ***Which fan communities in the AKB48 fandom have you joined?***

Daisie: I joined fansubbing groups around Miyawaki Sakura. […] There are a number of such groups. The most important one [that I have

[93] The Niyou Yusan Fansubbing Group ('你有雨伞字幕组', literally 'You have an umbrella') is a fansubbing community dedicated to AKB48 former member Kojima Mako.

[94] The Buyao Danhuangjiang Fansubbing Group ('不要蛋黄酱字幕组', literally 'Not needing mayonnaise') is a community revolving around AKB48 member Mukaichi Mion.

joined] is Alice's fansubbing group [i.e. the Daba community]. […] I just thought I could support my idol and practice my Japanese at the same time [in the Daba community].

Extract 5.30

Similar to Daisie, Momo reported that she only joined two fansubbing groups, the Daba community and the Okada Pingban Fansubbing Group (established by Joan). She mentioned that she joined these fansubbing groups because she treated fansubbing as a way to improve her Japanese (Extract 5.31) and support her idols who have brought her courage and joy (Extracts 5.1 and 5.2).

Momo: Another reason [for joining the Daba community] is that I wanted to practice my Japanese.

Researcher: Understood. So, you wanted to improve your Japanese-Chinese. translation abilities?

Momo: Yes, I'd already decided to study in Japan by that time, so I wanted to practice my listening abilities.

Extract 5.31

According to the analysis of the archival data, in the Daba community, Daisie and Momo have maintained lasting participation in the fansubbing practice and established stable relations with other members. To be specific, Daisie participated in ten *AKB48 SHOW!* projects from August 2018 to March 2019 as translator, whereas Momo assumed the role of translator or timer in 14 *AKB48 SHOW!* projects from May 2018 to March 2019. Therefore, both of them have acquired a full membership status as a result of their inbound trajectories into the community and have maintained that status thereafter. In addition, Momo also reported her rich experience of participating in the other community that she joined — the Okada Pingban Fansubbing Group. Based on this account, it can also be said that she has acquired and maintained a full member in the said community.

The analysis of Daisie and Momo's case shows that in the limited number of communities they joined, they tended to maintain stable engagement with other members and make continuous contributions to the enterprises of those communities. In this way, their multimembership experience differs from that of the community-founding fans (e.g. Joan) in that it is less diverse in terms of trajectory types. On the other hand, it also differs from the experience of those 'expert' fans hopping among fansubbing communities (e.g. Zach) in that it was shaped in a much smaller range of communities.

Having revealed certain patterns in the multimembership experience of Daba members, I now will move to discuss how that experience contributed to forming members' identities. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, fans' participation in different communities means that they are involved in different relation networks, pursue different community purposes, and make use of different sets of resources. This means that they behave quite differently in those communities. As a result, according to Wenger (1998: 159), trajectories in those communities form different forms of individuality and different perspectives. These different aspects should be considered as pieces that can be put together to form a puzzle rather than disconnected parts of self. In the process of integrating different trajectories together, one's identity becomes a 'nexus' of multimembership where those trajectories can interact and influence each other (*ibid.*).

A typical example of identity as a nexus can be found in the case of Joan. As is mentioned, Joan has established various types of trajectories in three communities. As a result, she gained different forms of individuality and perspectives in those communities. In the Okada Pingban community, her roles in founding and hosting the community translated into a form of individuality pertaining to a main organiser which allowed her to focus on coordinating and monitoring the fansubbing practice of the community. Therefore, her accountability to the community required her to make most

of the major and minor decisions in the community's pursuit of their enterprise. In the Okada Nana Supporting Group, Joan's roles in assisting various supporting activities have led to a form of individuality pertaining to a regular and versatile participant. Thus, her accountability to the community shaped her tendency to actively accept various tasks from the managers and finish them as best as she could with the limited power that she was granted. Meanwhile, Joan's role as a timer in a small number of projects allowed her to gain a form of individuality pertaining to a peripheral participant in the Daba community. As a result, her limited accountability to the community led to a lack of presence in the negotiation and maintenance of the community's joint enterprise.

When the mentioned trajectories interacted with each other in Joan's identity formation process, sometimes they collided with each other because of the competing demands of the practices that shaped them. As is shown in Extract 5.24, her roles in both the Okada Pingban community and the Okada supporting community demanded a large amount of time. When they competed for Joan's free time, Joan had to make a decision to keep her focus on the one that mattered more to her identity as a subtitling fan, i.e. her role as a host of the Okada Pingban community. As a result, her participation in the Okada supporting community decreased significantly.

Nevertheless, in other cases, different trajectories might also complement each other. For example, despite her peripheral position in the Daba community, Joan has become familiar with other members' expertise as well as their preferences for AKB48 members. Thus, when the Okada Pingban community needed new members, Joan would attempt to recruit the active Daba members who showed interest in Okada Nana to join the community that she managed. In her interview, Joan mentioned that Daisie and Momo were 'poached' into the Okada Pingban community in this manner. In this way, Joan's peripheral trajectory in the Daba community provided important resources which helped fulfil her role as an organiser and thereby helped develop her insider trajectory in the core of the Okada Pingban community.

Joan's case shows us that one's efforts to reconcile trajectories in different communities do not only entail trade-offs, it can also create new inter-trajectory connections which help maintain and develop certain aspects of practice. With all her efforts to build new connections and trade-offs, Joan developed an identity which revolves around her individuality developed in the Okada Pingban community and thus mainly serves her roles in that community. In this sense, Joan's subtitling fan identity formed in the AKB48 fandom can be further categorised as a 'community organiser' identity.

As mentioned previously, both Kenny and Zach have joined a significant number of communities because their particular subtitling skills were widely valued and needed. In most of those communities, they tended to only take part in projects which either interested them or required their particular skills instead of making regular contributions to as many projects as possible. As a result, they often did not maintain inbound or insider trajectories for a long period in the said communities, even though they were respected by other members for their skills. When forming their identity, this form of participation translated into a form of individuality pertaining to a key contributor, i.e. one who contributes high-value skills. In addition, as Zach established temporary task groups for specific translation projects, he developed a form of individuality not dependent on any community, i.e. a form pertaining to an independent fansubber.

These forms of individuality developed by Zach and Kenny allowed them to 'hop' easily between subtitling communities and other types of fandom structures. Thus, reconciling different trajectories did not require much of their efforts. As a result, compared to Joan's case, their identity as formed by fandom experience does not revolve around a trajectory in one particular community. Rather, it should be viewed as a nexus which embodies their efforts to develop their skills. Also, this identity reflects their accountability to the entire AKB48 fandom, which drove them to contribute their knowledge and skills. For example, Extract 5.32 shows Zach's strong intention to make continuous contributions to the fansubbing landscape of the AKB48 fandom. It should

be noted that this statement was made against the context that the number of fansubbers for AKB48 suffered a significant decrease along with the decline of the fandom. In addition, in Extract 5.33, Kenny showed his enthusiasm in providing high-quality lyrics translations so that more AKB48 fans would be attracted to appreciate the lyrics written by the AKB48 producer Akimoto Yasushi.

Researcher: ***Generally speaking, do you think that your personal preferences and emotions had impact on your attitude towards subtitling work?****Zach: No, they didn't. During the past four or five years, subtitling has become a kind of responsibility. I chose to enter this fandom in the first place, so I'll continue doing this job unless there's nothing to work on at all.*

Extract 5.32

Researcher: ***Is the overall low quality of the lyrics translations delivered by subtitle groups part of the reason why you want to contribute your translations?***

Kenny: Yes, it is. In my opinion, many good lyrics [in AKB48 songs] have been neglected by fans, though it's true that many people don't actually care about lyrics.

Researcher: Then can we say that you feel some kind of responsibility for encouraging fans to appreciate the lyrics?

Kenny: Yes, we can say that.

Extract 5.33

As mentioned before in this section, Momo and Daisie developed inbound trajectories which have led to full membership in a limited number of communities. When constituting their identity, these trajectories translated into a form of individuality pertaining to a regular participant. As different communities entail different networks of relations, their efforts to reconcile different trajectories are mainly represented by

learning how to properly engage with the members of the communities that they have joined. For example, similar to Joan's account in Extract 5.6, Momo reported that the Daba community was influenced heavily by Alice's casual managing style while the Okada Pingban community was more rigorously managed. Such observation of the organisational dimensions allowed Momo to behave quite differently in the two communities and thereby allowed Momo's insider trajectories developed in those communities to coexist in her identity for a long time.

Although clashes between multiple trajectories also existed in the cases of members of the Daba community, we can hardly observe examples of marginalisation as a consequence of failures to reconcile such clashes. This may be explained by the fact that since the communities that members joined belong to the same fandom culture, they shared a great deal of similarity in terms of organisational dimensions. When members dealt with their multimembership trajectories, this similarity greatly facilitated their reconciling efforts.[95]

5.5 Identity formation driven by other modes of social participation

As mentioned in 2.5, a person's identity is shaped by the interplay between the global and the local. Members of CoPs are constantly in contact with social processes and structures that extend beyond direct mutual engagement in practices (Wenger 1998: 173). In these larger contexts, CoP members establish modes of social participation different from engagement. When constituting members' identities, those modes of participation entail different 'modes of belonging' which can create different experiences of participation and experiences of 'non-participation'[96] (*ibid.*: 191).

[95] The concept of identity as a nexus of multimembership trajectories has also been employed by scholars working in other fields. For example, education scholars Nelson and Temples (2011) study how students in applied linguistics attempted to negotiate their multimembership experience during an international exchange programme in order to find out if their experience in an online course community helped them reconcile the clashes between their trajectories in the home university and the host university; also, behavioural scientist Nyström (2009) uses the concept of nexus of multimembership to understand how novice scholars negotiate their professional identity through dynamic relations between different life spheres.

[96] i.e. an experience of not participating in certain social processes, whether spontaneously or not.

According to Wenger (1998: 173-174), there are three major modes of belonging which contribute to identity formation, i.e. 'engagement', 'imagination', and 'alignment'. Engagement denotes active involvement in the mutual meaning negotiation processes within communities and has therefore been extensively discussed throughout this thesis. This section aims to discuss the other two modes which have not been touched upon so far. These two modes will be explored in less depth, as they fall outside the core remit of this study focused on fan CoPs.

5.5.1 Imagination

Imagination refers to the process one's self expands by establishing new connections to other times and spaces beyond the context of direct engagement. In this way, imagination represents an important component of our experience of the world (Wenger 1998:176). For Chinese fans of AKB48, imagination plays a defining role in their fan experience, because being a fan of AKB48 means efforts to establish connections to a group of people who live in a foreign land and do an unfamiliar job, to project emotions to events which took place in other spaces and times, and even to enable new possibilities and perspectives of life which have never been thought of before. Such efforts are primarily fuelled by fans' continuous consumption of information about the idol group which is mainly comprised of media content of various genres, including news reports, photos, concert videos, TV variety show videos, etc. According to Galbraith (2012: 185), these media genres are platforms of a material economy on which images of the idols are created and play off one another. Being constantly exposed to those images, AKB48 fans as 'text poachers' have constructed a 'reality' about their idols which serves as the foundation for their affective connections to the idols.

To be specific, in 5.2.1, I mentioned that my interviewees' affection for AKB48 was driven by different reasons, including images of their idols' physical beauty and specific

personal traits, as well as other 'non-member' features of AKB48, such as the group's songs and audiovisual content. As an analysis of the interview data shows, those driving factors have created diverse connections.

The most common type of connection is fans' affective connection to their idols based on fan-constructed images of AKB48 members. This type is usually represented by fans' empathy with AKB48 members. Extract 5.34 demonstrates a typical example of such connection. Popper's account of his experience of seeing AKB48 members' 'hard-working' spirit reflects the culture industry 's continuous efforts to promote the images of AKB48 as a group of ordinary girls striving to become stars. Under the constant influence of such images, Popper has developed his own version of reality about AKB48 in which he witnessed a number of 'non-top' members who worked hard yet failed to achieve high popularity. In the trajectories of those members, Popper recognised his own experience as an ordinary person who was fighting to live better. Moreover, in supporting his idols to realise their dreams, Popper felt that he was experiencing mental growth along with them. In this way, Popper's consumption of AKB48's media content allowed him to perceive strong affective intimacy with his idols.

Popper: Actually, what I admire is their hard-working spirit and how they look when they're fighting. It feels like looking at myself. I don't like the top members, because they're too far away from my life. My favourite members are all girls who have been working very hard and yet unable to achieve good results. But I really hope that my favourites will go really viral one day. If their dreams come true, then perhaps mine also will. I'm fighting and growing with them.

Extract 5.34

This is also the case with three other members who reported evidence of similar affective ties (i.e. Joan, Lin, and Momo). For example, in his interview, Lin claimed

that AKB48 members' hard-working status was similar to his own status when studying hard at high school. Therefore, following the idols for Lin felt like following his own trajectory of life. Based on this resemblance between the idols' images and his own images of self, Lin established close affective ties to AKB48 members.

As a result of those affective connections, Daba members demonstrated strong sense of empathy with AKB48 and the most notable type of empathy is that with the group's trajectories in recent years. In Extract 5.35, Momo was mourning AKB48's decline as symbolised by a number of incidents that happened in recent years (including the Yamaguchi Incident)[97]. Yet, despite being discouraged by the group's performance, Momo did not 'convert' to the fandoms of AKB48's rival groups (e.g. Nogizaka46 and Keyakizaka46), like many other fans did. Rather, her empathy with the group made her choose to stay in the AKB48 fandom and do whatever she could to help the group in plight. In doing so, Momo felt that she somehow repaid the benefits that she received from her affective ties to the group.

Momo: I really want to cry, the ship called AKB48 is sinking. Every Japanese I encountered is like 'oh, AKB is really going downward'. Looking back on what happened during the past years always brings tears to my eyes. Perhaps this is what 'dying as a fan' feels like. What's more, I don't know why, I can't get out of this fandom. Nogizaka and Keyakizaka are short of something after all. In the past it felt like I was led forward by the idols I admire. But now, it feels more like because they've become like this, I should do my best to help them out.

Extract 5.35

However, the perception of the negative images of the group could also have detrimental effects on fans' affective ties to it. For example, in Extract 5.36, Daisie

[97] These incidents are introduced in 3.2.1.

confessed how she felt about the Yamaguchi Maho incident in 2019, which is seen by many as one of the most destructive incidents that AKB48 has ever undergone. From this confession, we can understand that the insult of Yamaguchi had a shocking impact on Daisie and to a certain degree negatively impacted her perception of AKB48 as a place where she could find emotional retreat from real life. In addition, she saw the management company's negative handling of the incident as disrespectful to the supporting fans. As a consequence of this impact, it can be seen that a part of Daisie's admiration for the group has turned into a sense of non-participation which significantly undermined her affective connections to the group.

Daisie: *For me, the NGT48 incident is really a big shock. All of a sudden it felt like I wouldn't like AKB anymore.*

Researcher: Many people said so.

Daisie: *I became a fan because I wanted to have a retreat from the reality. Yet, it turned out that this place is darker than the reality. The most important thing is that the management company has been treating fans as fools.*

Extract 5.36

Imagination not only created affective ties between fans and AKB48. Moreover, it allowed fans to move their perspectives beyond the culture industry to reach the macro cultural context behind the idol group. For example, in Extract 5.37, Lin reported how being a fan of AKB48 allowed him to have an insight into the Japanese culture. At first, in his attempt to establish closer ties to the group, he began to learn Japanese language as a way to better understand the information related to the group. Then, as he gained more images of the Japanese culture and society through the idol group, he became unsatisfied with merely constructing a reality of the country through imagination. He chose to pursue an academic degree in Japan and therefore established direct 'physical' contacts with the country.

Lin: *Actually, I'm also interested in some background stuffs behind them [i.e. AKB48].*

Researcher: Can you be more specific?

Lin: *For example, I can learn more about Japan by following their steps. They're just a window through which I could know more about Japanese culture. My Japanese ability is also a gift from them.*

Researcher: Why did you say so?

Lin: *The reason why I began to study Japanese is because I wanted to understand what they said and attend concerts held in Japan. And my current Japanese proficiency is mostly a result of self-study plus viewing videos about AKB48.*

[…]

Researcher: ***Is your decision to study in Japan influenced by your affection for them [i.e. AKB48]?***

Lin: *It may not be really good to say so, but the reason why I went to study in Japan is because I wanted to have close contacts with them.*

Extract 5.37

In his work about the Japanese idol culture, Galbraith (2012: 196) pointed out three major types of pleasure that fans perceive when engaging with images of Japanese female idols: (1) seeing idols' images heals their stressed heart; (2) seeing young and happy girls brings fresh energy to them; and (3) seeing idols' growth allows them to stay closely connected to their favourite girls. This taxonomy covers many of the instances reported by the interviewees of this research. For example, in Extract 5.36, Daisie expressed her recognition of AKB48 as an 'escape from' reality, i.e. a place where her stresses could be relieved; in Joan's interview, she mentioned that she saw

Okada Nana as her 'son'[98] and she would continue to enjoy witnessing her growth; and Momo reported in her interview that she had been long receiving power from AKB48 members. However, Galbraith's taxonomy barely mentions those aspects of the affective ties established by AKB48 fans which allow them to engage in various immaterial labour (e.g. as shown in Extract 5.37) and those which allow them to turn their views to social landscapes beyond the idol industry. This negligence might be caused by the fact that the focus of Galbraith's study is on AKB48 fans living in Japan who could directly and frequently participate in the AKB48 live events. As their fan experience was mainly comprised of material labour (i.e. direct consumption of officially released commodities and services), immaterial participatory labour (which is mainly caused by cross-culture barriers and restricted media flow in this context) does not play a significant role.

Through a process called 'identification' (Wenger 1998: 191), the work of imagination becomes constitutive of fans' identities. This process takes place on both the participative side and the reificative side of their experience of imagination. To be specific, most members of the Daba group used reificative objects, such as online IDs, avatars, and slogans as proofs that they identified themselves as AKB48 fans and thus distinguished themselves from fans of other artists; on the other hand, and more significantly, by the processes discussed in this section, they created profound affective bonds to their idols. Those distinctions and bonds together constituted their identity as fan of AKB48. Moreover, the work of imagination not only created association for fans, but also opposition (*ibid.*: 194). This is proven by Daisie's reaction to the negative incident of AKB48 as shown in Extract 5.36. In this way, imagination as a mode of belonging can result in an identity of participation as well as an identity of non-participation.

5.5.2 Alignment

[98] This is because Okada is seen by many fans as having male characters.

Connections established by imagination alone do not constitute the whole picture of an individual's identity as an AKB48 fan. Apart from consuming images of their idols, Chinese fans of AKB48 are also constantly involved in various 'bigger' enterprises which exist beyond their communities, whether they are willing to be so or not. These include the consumerist agendas of the culture industry, the competitions between companies in the culture industry, the enforcement of copyright laws, and so on. By getting involved in these enterprises, fans of AKB48 become connected with other participants in the enterprises through the 'coordination of their energies, actions, and practices' (Wenger 1998: 179). In the CoP framework, this process of building connections represents a mode of belonging that Wenger (1998: 174) refers to as 'alignment'. Compared to imagination, which is also a process that takes place beyond the range of direct engagement in communities, alignment stresses a dimension of action instead of expansion of the sense of self.

Wenger (1998: 179) argues that alignment does not necessarily entail mutual engagement. This argument applies to AKB48 fans' connections to the 'bigger' enterprises mentioned above. Although they are inevitably involved in the enterprises of the culture industry and the law enforcers, AKB48 fans hardly have any opportunity to engage with the processes that have generated those enterprises. From the critical perspectives established by Frankfurt School scholars such as Adorno and Horkheimer who focused on mass culture prior to the digital age, the culture industry is a 'loose grouping' of corporations which aim to produce mass culture, or material culture, for mass consumption by audiences (Galbraith [n.d.]). Like other areas of economic activity under late capitalism, the culture industry is also characterised by the exchange principle and by the continuous pursuit of return on investment. In this sense, the products of material culture are inevitably subject to the commodification and reification effects of late capitalism and therefore inextricably embedded in the capitalist modes of production, distribution, and exchange (Cook 1996: 33) in which standardisation processes play a significant role. The culture industry tends to

standardise mass cultural products because (1) production corporations tend to imitate successful modes and styles; (2) the means of cultural production are increasingly concentrated in a small number of owners; and (3) audiences prefer forms and styles that are already familiar to them (*ibid.*: 44).As a result of the standardising processes common to the culture industry, cultural products tend to show the characteristics of 'sameness' and 'repetitiveness' (*ibid.*: 43), i.e. products of the same genre are often homogenous in nature and the same type of products are usually produced repeatedly.

According to Galbraith [n.d.], despite the significant differences in the historical and cultural contexts, the above observations based on contributions from the Frankfurt School scholars can be used effectively to theorise certain aspects of AKB48 as a product of the culture industry in the digital age. As mentioned in 3.2.1, AKB48 started from humble beginnings as a group of average-looking girls with less-than-professional singing and dancing skills. After 2009, the group's popularity boomed as the group became extremely successful in selling CDs and merchandise as well as holding various events. These products and services reflect the standardisation processes of the culture industry: successful modes of events were repeatedly held at a high frequency, e.g. theatre shows, hand-shaking events and general elections; millions of identical CD albums were produced and repeatedly purchased by fans only for the event tickets or voting tickets enclosed within the jackets; and similar strategies were reportedly used to select and promote different generations of members in order to evoke similar reactions of the audience. By providing those affluent choices of standardised products and services to fans, the culture industry aims to effectively capitalise on fans' attraction to and affection for the group (*ibid.*) by giving them a 'fantasy of empowerment' (Jenkins 2006: 64), i.e. fans are promised that they can make choices which have the power to pose significant impact on the fate of the girls. Based on such fantasy of empowerment, the culture industry has successfully cultivated affective ties between AKB48 fans and their idols which could effectively move the fans to consume more material cultural products, or, contribute more 'material labour' (examples of such ties can be found in 5.5.1), in order to prove their affections for the idols. It should be noted

that while the concept of standardisation effectively theorises the patterns of cultural production behind AKB48, Adorno and Horkheimer's mass culture theory barely explains how the industry utilises those patterns to interact with AKB48 fans: AKB48 fans are not merely passive recipients of the cultural products typical of the traditional mass culture industries; rather, as participants in the age of digital culture, they are treated by the industry as active audiences and productive consumers that possess certain means of cultural production and face diverse consumption choices offered by the industry. Therefore, for the industry, they need to be 'courted and won over' (*ibid.*: 62-63). In this sense, winning over fans through affective ties and making more profits out of such relationship became the major consumerist enterprise of the producers of AKB48.

Four members of the Daba community that I interviewed showed clear awareness of their participation in the mentioned consumerist enterprise that has led to the commercial success of AKB48. For example, in Extract 5.38, Joan talked about her opinions on AKB48 fans' fundraising activities. By stating that she supported AKB48 because she wanted the girls to realise her own dreams, she revealed the fact that her affective ties with the group were shaped by the culture industry's efforts to market the girls as dream chasers. In order to help the girls to realise their dreams, Joan chose to donate a significant amount of money to fans' fundraising campaigns for general election events. In doing so, she established a certain type of 'allegiance' (Wenger 1998: 197) to the enterprise of the culture industry and thereby became connected with AKB48 fans all over the world through coordinated actions.

Researcher: What is your personal view on ***fundraising activities for the general election event?***

Joan: I won't say that I don't approve of it, but I hope that everybody works for it only within their capacity. If doing this makes yourself poor, it becomes a bad thing. This is especially relevant for student fans. What I'm pursuing when I pursue the idols is my own dreams

— I expect others to realise the dreams that I cannot realise by myself. But after all, the reality is most important. If we ignore the reality for this [pursuing idols], it's been done too much. […] So, when I was single, I donated thousands [of yuan][99] to fundraising campaigns. But after I got married, I got to be responsible for my own family.

Extract 5.38

Yet, Joan's willingness to align with the culture industry's enterprise was not unconditional. In the same extract, we can see her reflections on the balance between consumptive efforts to support idols and one's real life. In her opinion, fans' consumption of idol-related products should be restricted to a certain extent so that it does not undermine a fan's own quality of life. Joan's argument proves again that AKB48 fans are not merely a group of people passively guided by the culture industry to repeatedly and excessively consume products and services capitalising on their affections for the group. Instead, they can actively decide to what extent they want to be involved in the enterprises of the pop idol industry. In this sense, their experience of alignment with the enterprises of the culture industry can contribute to their identities in the form of a conditional allegiance. This is different from the experience of alignment found in the claims processors described by Wenger (1998: 196), who combine active allegiance and passive compliance with the institutional requirements of the insurance company. The reason for this difference lies in the different power structures of the culture industry and the business corporation: whereas claims processors have to stay subordinate to their company in order to make a living, fans of AKB48 are considered by the entertainment industry as consumers that need to be won over.

Another interviewee Daisie expressed more explicit opinions on the cultural

[99] Roughly equal to hundreds of pounds sterling.

consumerism of the idol industry (Extract 5.39). According to her, the only reason why she wanted to pay for idols is that they brought 'happiness' to her. In reference to the text of her interview, this happiness can be understood as immediate emotional feedback from appreciating the beauty of the idols (especially physical beauty) and witnessing the growth of their stardom. In return for such happiness, she was willing to pay a commensurate amount of money. As she emphasised the immediacy of the happiness of being a fan, she did not buy products designed for the purpose of long-term collection (e.g. photobooks and CD albums). Daisie's attitudes towards the consumerism of the idol industry reflects her understanding of the exchange principle fundamental to the industry, i.e. one's enjoyment is primarily derived from the quantified exchange (market) value of a cultural product (Cook 1996: 35), not vice versa (i.e. the exchange value is derived from the enjoyment). Being aware of this fundamental logic of the culture industry, Daisie chose to consciously focus on the actual happiness that she felt by being a fan instead of on the commercial value that she contributed to the industry. Her example shows how active fans could find a way to play against the industry's enterprise to lure fans to consume repeatedly and excessively. In this way, Daisie's experience of alignment became constitutive of her identity as a reconstruction of the meaning of the industry's consumerist enterprise.

Daisie: Idols have brought happiness to me, so I ought to pay [for their work]. But if they fail to do so, then I won't pay anything. […] I think she deserves the amount of money as proportional to the happiness that she's brought to me. That's why I never buy CDs or photo collections for the purpose of collection. I just buy a service.

Extract 5.39

Apart from the consumerist enterprise to win over active fans, another essential enterprise of the culture industry's is to make sure that fans always pay for what they consume. For this purpose, copyright protection mechanisms are enforced all over the platforms where cultural products are provided. For example, in 4.3.2, I have introduced

the three-layer copyright protection system that Bilibili has implemented. Also, in the same sub-section, I have discussed how members' mutual engagement allowed them to negotiate their collective attitudes toward and their unique responses to copyright issues. Further to these strands of my previous analysis, here I will now draw on a few examples from the interview data to show how the culture industry's copyright protection enterprise shaped fans' identity.

Among the interviewees who participated in this research, Lin and Momo shared their opinions on the copyright protection measures concerning audiovisual content related to AKB48. In Extract 5.40, Lin reported that because a large amount of AKB48-related content had been removed from China-based online platforms due to copyright issues (not due to the Internet censorship system enforced by the Chinese government), he had to turn to services 'out of the wall' (i.e. foreign-based services out of the reach of China's Internet censorship system) in order to follow the new updates from AKB48. By recalling the old times when Chinese fans of AKB48 could easily find a massive amount of free AKB48-related audiovisual content (whose copyright status was, in most cases, rather dubious), Lin described the current situation 'unfriendly' to people who wanted to know more about AKB48.

Researcher: ***What websites and apps do you usually use to acquire information and videos about AKB48?***

Lin: *I use Twitter, Instagram, Showroom, and YouTube.*

Researcher: So, you mainly use services out of the wall [i.e. services out of the Chinese Internet shpere]?

Lin: *The environment today is just too bad. When I just joined the fandom, I could find all kinds of videos on the domestic services. The content on Maedaatsuko.com might take you years to watch. Now it's hard to find whatever you want to watch on the domestic services. The translations of mobile blogs have also become scarce.*

This [environment] is just too unfriendly to new fans.

Extract 5.40

In Extract 5.41, Momo also reported that the lack of accessible content resulting from copyright restrictions had made it difficult to promote AKB48 to new fans. Therefore, it can be said that both Lin and Momo saw the copyright protection enterprise as a major factor undermining the group's popularity in China. As the copyright protection measures made it difficult for potential audience members to access AKB48-related content, they also made it hard for AKB48 to win over more fans in China. In this sense, the copyright protection enterprise of the industry behind AKB48 was actually hampering the industry's consumerist enterprise itself. Without effective measures to attract more new fans, the idol business would become less lucrative. As a result, the management company of AKB48 would be unable to raise sufficient funds to support the career development of more than 100 group members. In this way, the copyright protection enterprise also clashed with fans' expectations for the group, i.e. helping their idols become successful in their star careers.

Momo: *But now the copyright restrictions are all too strict, and they [AKB48] no longer. release much content, so it's quite hard to promote AKB48 to others.*

Researcher: ***Did viewing works from these fansubbing groups have any impact on your attitudes and affections for AKB48?***

[…]

Momo: *A good fansubbing group is really important, especially in this situation of. insufficient information circulation. Although they're truly doing illegal things, viewing information circulated by them has inspired us [fans] greatly.*

Extract 5.41

Because of such conflicts between the industry and the fans as well as the difficulty of

accessing AKB48-related content caused by copyright issues, it is natural that fans' forced compliance with the copyright protection enterprise contributed to the formation of their identities as an experience of non-participation in the enterprise. This experience could easily lead fans to support fan-led efforts to bypass the enterprise of the industry. For example, in Extract 5.40, Momo acknowledged the significance of the fansubbing groups in the AKB48 fandom, even though she was fully aware that the activities of those groups were illegal. Fans' experience of non-participation in the copyright protection enterprise could strengthen their identification with immaterial forms of labour such as fansubbing.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed how practices and other forms of social processes contributed to the formation of Daba members' identities. Therefore, this chapter answers Research Question 2 of this study:

'How do *AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group* members build their fan identity as a nexus of trajectories and what role does translation play in the formation of their identities?'.

5.2 starts from discussing how the three organisational dimensions of the Daba community translated into three types of competence required by its community membership, i.e. 'mutuality of engagement', 'accountability to the enterprise', and 'negotiability of the repertoire'.

Regarding the mutuality of engagement, I argue in 5.2.1 that it denotes community members' abilities to engage properly with each other in actions and the development of such abilities is driven by the complex and persistent relations that exist between members which are further fostered by three inherent forms of mutual recognition between members. The first one, namely 'recognition of shared identity as subtitling fans', entails two essential qualities, i.e. a recognisable individual fan identity and the

ability to work effectively with others as fellow subtitlers. In a community composed of experienced fansubbers such as Daba, if one wants to become a full member, s/he usually needs to be equipped with the mentioned qualities before joining the community. This is proven by the collected interview data, in which Daba members mentioned how they learned to become a fan of AKB48 and a subtitler through their fandom experience before joining the Daba community. Since members' trajectories in the fandom differ from each other, their preferences for idols, motivations for subtitling, and acquired technical abilities are diverse. As these experiences could all be admitted by Daba community as a shared domain of fansubbers, it can be said that a diversity of fans' experience and a recognition of others' diverse fan experience are inherent parts of the community's membership.

As community members have acquired collaborative and technical abilities for subtitling work, they take on specific roles in the community, hence the second and third forms of mutual recognition, namely 'mutual recognition of members' roles' and 'mutual recognition of technical abilities'. These types of recognition entail an awareness of the diversity and specialisation of each other's roles and technical capabilities. In this way, community members become aware of the partiality of their contributions to the fansubbing community. Based on real examples extracted from the collected interview data, I found three types of partiality which stemmed from the diverse experience of Daba members, i.e. partiality caused by limited personal abilities, by the shortage of human resources, and by overlapping roles in the community. Through their participation in practice, these forms of partiality helped community members develop their unique individuality and learning trajectories.

5.2.2 turns to discuss accountability to an enterprise, which is the second type of competence that is essential to community membership. Daba members' sense of accountability (discussed in 4.2.5) to the community's joint enterprise constantly moved them to focus on certain issues regarding their practice, understand certain conditions, and consider certain possibilities. According to the analysis of interview

data, the primary issue that members were concerned with is the purpose of the community. Among the interviewees, Alice (the leader of the community) showed clear awareness of the evolution of the community's purpose. Also, when looking back on the history of Daba, Alice demonstrated a positive view of the achievement of the community. It should be noted that such awareness and view were not exclusively possessed by Alice but were shared by other members. Furthermore, the data analysis shows that when facing situations regarding the joint enterprise of the community, members were driven by their accountability to the enterprise to adopt similar perspectives on their practice and take certain actions according to their respective roles.

5.2.3 discusses the last type of competence that a community membership requires, i.e. negotiability of a repertoire, which refers to community members' abilities to interpret, negotiate, and utilise the shared repertoire. It is found in the collected data that Daba members not only engaged with each other in negotiating the 'product aspects' of the community's translational norms (discussed in 4.4.1), but also in negotiating the 'production aspects' of the norms. Using the community's main editor Lin as the example, this section shows that the community host Alice's partiality made her delegate the power to negotiate the production norms to 'experts', e.g. the editors of the community. With this power in hand, Lin developed the major part of the community's editing norms (as a part of the productions norms) embodied by a complete procedure of editing work. Such procedure not only represents a member's learning trajectories in the community, but also reifies a part of the community's shared history. Through Daba members' participation in the negotiations over the shared repertoire (e.g. the production norms), the said shared history could turn into a set of personal experience and references regarding their negotiability competence which constitute their identity.

In 5.3, I move from the core of the Daba community to its boundaries in order to see how the community created connections to the outside. According to the analysis of the collected archival data, the community has created various types of connections to the Chinese fandom of AKB48 through its three organisational dimensions: (i) boundary

objects established indirect connections to the outside which allowed the community to be involved in the diverse inter-community relations; (ii) boundary encounters between a small number of members from different communities allowed the communities to collaborate in translation projects without undergoing substantial impact on the practice that they were pursuing; and finally, (iii) boundary practice allowed members from Daba and other communities to directly engage with each other in a new task which could potentially evolve into a new practice and a new CoP. Through these connections, the Daba community became part of various constellations with other communities in the AKB48 fandom and thereby contributed to shaping the fandom as a complex network of fan culture.

As is shown by the collected data, it is highly common for Daba members to go across community boundaries and participate in the practices of multiple communities. Over time, experience of those different forms of participation allowed them to develop their unique trajectories of identity formation. In 5.4, I demonstrate three types of multimembership trajectories using examples from the interview data. First, there are 'community organisers' who had the experience of founding or co-founding fan communities. Although they might also participate in communities hosted by others, their multimembership trajectories tended to centre around their 'insider' trajectories as core members of the communities that they (co-)founded. On the other hand, there are also Daba members who had never founded any communities, i.e. they only had the experience of joining communities founded by other fans. Among these fans, there are 'community settlers', i.e. people who chose to concentrate on developing their inbound trajectories in a small number of communities that corresponded with their preferences as fans. In doing so, they had become stable core participants in those communities. Also, there are 'community hoppers' who tended to roam in the AKB48 fandom with the subtitling techniques that they possess. When they found translation projects that interested them, they would enter the relevant communities and contribute their technical abilities to the said projects. Despite their enthusiasm for those projects, they usually did not maintain stable engagement with other community members and thus

remained on the peripheries of the communities. As a result, their multimembership trajectories was mainly constitutive of peripheral trajectories developed in a large number of communities.

When integrating their diverse trajectories in different communities, Daba members' identity became a nexus of multimembership where those trajectories interacted with each other. When there were competing demands between the practices that shaped them, trajectories in different communities might collide with each other; on the other hand, trajectories in different communities might also complement each other when the experience and resources acquired from one community could help develop trajectories towards membership in other communities. The existence of such interactions suggests that when maintaining their identity across community boundaries, Daba members had to constantly make efforts to reconcile different forms of participation. This work is at the core of what it means to be a person (Wenger 1998: 160).

Having examined how Daba members' direct engagement in fan practices contributed to their identity formation, in 5.5, I move my focus to the other two forms of social participation introduced in Chapter 8 of Wenger (1998), i.e. imagination and alignment. As these two forms of participation take place in social processes and structures beyond the immediate context of CoPs, they represent Daba members' contacts with the global contexts.

In 5.5.1, I argue that it is through the process of imagination that Daba members have established connections to their idols who live in a remote foreign land. This process began with Daba members' daily consumption of various media content about AKB48. Based on the consumed information, members constructed their own version of reality about their idols. For most fans, this reality fostered their empathy with the idols and therefore created affective connections which boosted their participation in the fan practices. Conversely, consumption of negative images of the group could have detrimental impact on fans' affective connections to the idols and therefore lead to a

sense of non-participation in the fan practices. Furthermore, in some cases, the process of imagination even allowed Daba members to build connections to the macro cultural context of Japan behind the idol industry. When constituting fans' identity, the work of imagination converted into reificative objects which distinguish AKB48 fans from other fandoms and into emotional bonds to their idols.

Finally, in 5.5.2, I discuss how Daba members became involved in bigger enterprises existing beyond the fandom through the process of alignment. As participants in the cultural industry, fans of AKB48 were inevitably involved in the industry's enterprises, e.g. copyright protection measures and consumerist agendas. It is understood from the collected data that Daba members were clearly aware of those enterprises which were aimed to ensure the profits of the industry. As a response, they developed a form of conditional allegiance to the enterprises which constituted a part of their identity. Such allegiance is marked by a number of principles, including: (i) aligning with the enterprises must benefit their idols; (ii) aligning with the principles does not jeopardise their quality of life; and (iii) the money paid should be proportional to the happiness felt. When Daba members perceived that these principles were not met, they might take alternative actions to resist (e.g. refusing to buy excessively) or bypass the industry's enterprises.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In 2021, one of the best-known fansubbing websites in China — YyeTs (人人影视) — was reportedly closed because it allegedly made profits by disseminating copyright-infringing audiovisual content. Moreover, 14 main organisers of the group (including the website's head Liang Liang) were arrested by the Shanghai police and bound to face criminal charges (Mao 2021). This incident immediately became a hot topic on Chinese social media. For example, on Weibo, a hashtag related to this incident ('#人人影视字幕组因盗版视频被查#'，which translates in English as '#YyeTs was investigated because of copyright-infringing videos#') attracted more than 380,000 microblogging posts. Beyond social media, the incident was widely reported by major Chinese media.

These reactions to the YyeTs incident indicate that, as a participatory culture that mediates foreign audiovisual content for Chinese audiences, amateur translation draws substantial attention from society. Since the emergence of the fansubbing culture on the Chinese Internet sphere, many have considered fansubbing groups such as YyeTs as pioneers who greatly widened the range of audiovisual content available to the Chinese audience, while frequently flouting copyright laws (Yang 2021). For this reason, they have often been referred to fans of movies and TV dramas as 'Prometheus' who stole foreign cultural products in order to benefit Chinese people (Wunian 2021). Nevertheless, there are also people who were critical of this Prometheus metaphor. For example, Mao (2021) summarises YyeTs's commercialisation attempts since 2013, including the incorporation of advertisements in the published videos and the group's attempts to attract the interest of profit-seeking professional investors[100]. In Mao's view, these developments show that the fansubbing group has breached a widely recognised not-for-profit principle of fansubbing culture and had set a bad example for other

[100] According to Wang (2021), these investors are mainly from China's IT and media industries.

fansubbers. Therefore, Mao argued, YyeTs did not deserve to be called a Prometheus of pop culture in China.

The issues raised around the YyeTs closure incident, among many others, reflects the fact that China is a region where fandom culture has been undergoing enormous evolutions during the past decade. As a result, Chinese netizens have developed a typical understanding of the duality of online participatory cultures: while the participatory fans' immaterial labour has substantially enriched the cultural landscape of China, the legally questionable nature of their activities may cause grave problems which even threaten the ecology/sustainability of the participatory culture itself.

The emergence and consolidation of participatory networks in digital culture and their impact on society not only has attracted attention from the media and audience, but also from translation studies scholars all over the world. Yet, as I have explained in Chapter 1, there has been little work so far regarding how a group of fansubbers build their community in the context of a complex fandom network and how their practice shapes their identity formation processes. These questions constitute critical pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of studies of non-professional translation and therefore need to be addressed by new empirical studies of fans and fan organisations.

Aimed to fill the mentioned gaps, this study has adopted Communities of Practice (CoP) theory as its main theoretical framework and netnography as its main methodology. In this way, fansubbing community is viewed in this study as an online social aggregation defined by its unique practice. Through the continuous meaning negotiation processes undertaken by community members, its organisational dimensions are constantly reshaped; as a result, its members are undergoing constant processes which form their identities. Furthermore, a fansubbing community is usually connected to other fan communities in various ways and thereby contributes to shaping a fandom. In light of these basic theoretical understandings, this study set out by proposing the following overarching questions:

What does a Communities of Practice (CoP) theoretical approach reveal about the contribution of volunteer translation to collective processes of meaning negotiation which maintain a translation-oriented fan community and shape fan translators' identity?

In order to answer this question, I adopted netnography as my main research methodology. Guided by this methodology, I collected two types of data from my dataset 'AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group', i.e. archival data and elicited data. The analysis of these data yielded a range of findings with regard to my specific research questions, which will be introduced in 6.2. In 6.3, I will discuss the theoretical, methodological, and social implications of my research. Finally, in 6.4, I will summarise the limitations of this study and propose potential opportunities for future research.

6.2 Main findings of this study

The analysis of the collected data has allowed me to find answers to the two specific research questions which are derived from the overarching questions. In this chapter, I will introduce the research findings under each of those questions.

As mentioned previously, the theoretical framework of CoP allowed me to explore the organisational dimensions of the Daba Fansubbing Group, and hence respond my first specific research question:

Research Question 1: How do CoP's three dimensions of practice — mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire — contribute to organising and maintaining a translation-oriented fan community like AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group, as well as to its interconnections with other parts of the fandom?

In order to respond this question, I gathered archival data (e.g. communication records, translation project files, and subtitled videos) from the QQ chatroom and the Bilibili channel of the community. A quantitative analysis of the communications between community members delivers the first main finding of this study: there exists a generally stable pattern in the frequency of the communications between Daba members. This pattern takes the form of weekly cycles shaped by the airing times of *AKB48 SHOW!* This finding further unveiled that members of the Daba community continuously engage with each other in their shared practice of translating AKB48-related audiovisual content, thus confirming the existence of a stable mutual engagement dimension.

Having gained a better understanding of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the interactions between community members, I then performed an in-depth qualitative analysis of the communication data collected in my data set. This strand of my analysis revealed that the general workflow of subtitling work in the group is made up of four major phases: 'translation', 'timing', 'editing', and 'post-production and publishing'. Furthermore, each of these phases is constituted by a number of recursive communicative stages, including 'recruiting participants', 'delivery of intermediate products', and so on. Some of those stages can be found under all the phases (e.g. 'recruiting participants'), and the others only appears in specific phases (e.g. 'publishing the final product' in the 'post-production and publishing' phase). Finding evidence of this double-layered structure allows us to understand how Daba members organise their fansubbing projects through mutual engagement.

The study of the communication pattern and general workflow of the Daba community also helped me delve deeper into the core mechanism of the mutual engagement dimension — i.e. mutual recognition between community members. From the archival data set that I collected, I identified three types of mutual recognition: (i) recognition of members' shared identity as subtitling fans, which created a shared domain of interest

for fans who consume and subtitle AKB48-related content; (ii) recognition of members' roles in the community, which allowed Daba members to put in place an effective division of labour and thereby keep the momentum of translation projects going; and (iii) recognition of members' technical capabilities to participate in the translation projects, which made members mutually aware that their capabilities are complementary and encouraged them to rely on each other's contributions.

Based on my analysis, these forms of recognition have enabled community members to build three types of stable interpersonal relations during the lifetime of the community: (i) relations among fellow subtitling fans, which entail a shared consumer/producer dual identity; (ii) relations of mutual accountability to the joint enterprise of the community, which converted their passion into a joint pursuit of the community's general purpose; and (iii) relations of mutual negotiability of the shared repertoire, which refer to members' abilities to negotiate a common pool of resources by contributing their complementary capabilities. The existence of these stable relations allowed the community members to maintain their internal coherence, pursue their goals continuously, and integrate their partial contributions into a pool of resources.

As members of the Daba community pursued their goals in their subtitling practice, they faced a great deal of difficult situations and incidents which challenged their abilities to maintain the community. An analysis of the collected archival data found that their sense of mutual accountability prompted them to continuously negotiate solutions to those challenges and therefore develop a joint enterprise for the community.

The first major challenge for group members that I identified through the analysis of archival data was how to maintain the pursuit of the community's main purpose with a pool of limited human and material resources. Upon its establishment, the community positioned the task of translating *AKB48 SHOW!* as its main task, because this task best served their agreed main purpose of translating audiovisual content that features AKB48 as a whole. Apart from working on this show, members also proposed

additional potential projects on other audiovisual content related to the group. As a key decision maker faced with the lack of sufficient participants and working time, Alice had to prioritise the *AKB48 SHOW!* task whenever conflicts occurred. This strategy allowed the community to continuously focus its limited resources on the main task. On the other hand, Alice occasionally launched other tasks that she considered could enrich the community's product list, contribute to the AKB48 fandom, or satisfy other members' needs. In these ways, under the leadership of Alice, the community developed sophisticated criteria to decide what to translate and what not to, i.e. a global-level project management mechanism defined by the community's communal regime of mutual accountability. Also, the analysis of the mentioned mechanism revealed that the community's lifecycle was largely determined by its heavy reliance on the *AKB48 SHOW!* task: as the show terminated in April 2019, the momentum of community's fansubbing practice waned significantly, thus, the community entered a semi-dormant status.

Another major challenge that the community had to face constantly was how to handle copyright-related issues. Since most of the translated products published by the community are of copyright-infringing nature, they were often under the threat of being locked (e.g. not accessible to viewers) or even deleted by the copyright-protection mechanism of video sharing websites (mainly Bilibili). It was found in the collected data that members of the Daba community were clearly aware of the possible consequences of uploading those videos. Yet, motivated by their affections towards AKB48, they chose to persist in playing against the commercial logic of the culture industry. In order to allow the uploaded videos to bypass the copyright restrictions and 'survive' longer, Daba members made the most of their creative power and develop a set of indigenous and fan-oriented solutions.

As Daba members contributed their knowledge and abilities to the fansubbing practice, they constantly negotiated the community's shared repertoire as a pool of various resources. My study of the repertoire focuses on members' negotiation processes

regarding two aspects of the repertoire: the translation quality norms repertoire and the technological repertoire. An analysis of the former reveals that, as participants with different forms of expertise and roles participated in the fansubbing practice, the boundary of the norm repertoire became ambiguous and constantly reshaped by various meaning negotiation processes. Through those processes, the personal history of expertise could be converted to technical knowledge that was shared and adapted by community members. On the other hand, my analysis showed that Daba members' ongoing efforts to negotiate the technological repertoire reflect their engagement in translation projects as well as the community's history of negotiating its joint enterprise. Yet, despite their efforts, the patterns of negotiation of the technological norms reveal that the community lacked formal and systematic knowledge management mechanisms for members to learn how to use relevant technological tools and share technological experience.

The three organisational dimensions mentioned above not only helped Daba members organise and maintain their community, but also allowed them to build various types of connections to the AKB48 fandom. First, Daba members used 'boundary objects' (e.g. a variety of subtitling products) to maintain the community's connections to the rest of the fandom and thereby keep themselves involved in the inter-community relations. Second, some Daba members' personal encounters with members of other communities in the AKB48 fandom allowed them to establish brokering relations. Such relations enabled Daba to collaborate with those communities in translation projects without those collaborations having a substantial impact on the community's joint enterprise. And finally, on some occasions, fansubbing practice itself could become a form of connection between the Daba community and the outside. This usually happened when Daba members tried to launch new task groups in collaboration with members of other communities in order to work on certain fansubbing projects. On some occasions, the new forms of relations and recognition formed in those groups could not only build connections between Daba and the new task groups; they could also lead to potentials of forming a new community of practice.

After the first research question was answered, I turned my focus to another major issue that CoP theory is concerned with, i.e. identity formation processes of Daba members. Therefore, my second research question is:

Research Question 2: How do *AKB48 Daba Fansubbing Group* members build their fan identity as a nexus of trajectories and what role does translation play in the formation of their identities?

In order to answer this question, I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine members of the Daba community. Based on the collected interview data, and with occasional corroborations from the archival data, I confirmed Wenger's argument that the three organisational dimensions of Daba community's fansubbing practice translated into three key types of competence required by the community's membership and thus played a central role in its members' identity formation processes.

First, the mutual engagement dimension translated into a type of competence named 'mutuality of engagement', which denotes the members' abilities to engage properly with each other in their actions. My analysis has shown that the development of this competence relied on the three forms of mutual recognition mentioned above. In order to become a full member of the Daba community, one needs to be recognised by others as a fellow subtitling fan. Therefore, members made the most of their diverse past experiences and technical abilities as subtitling fans of AKB48 to become admitted into the community's shared domain of fansubbers. In this way, diversity became a characteristic inherent to the community's membership.

Equipped with collaborative and technical abilities for Daba's fansubbing practice, members took on specific roles in the community and became aware of each other's roles and technical abilities. Such forms of recognition entail an awareness of three types of partiality in terms of members' contributions to the community, i.e. partiality

caused by limited personal abilities, by the shortage of human resources, and by overlapping roles. As members participated in the fansubbing practice, those types of partiality helped them develop their unique individuality and learning trajectories.

Second, community members' pursuit of the joint enterprise translated into a form of competence named 'accountability to an enterprise'. Daba members' accountability to the joint enterprise constantly moved them to become concerned with certain issues, such as the purpose of the community. It is understood from the collected data that community members shared similar interpretations of the evolution of the community's purpose and of the community's achievements. Moreover, when facing situations related to the joint enterprise, members tended to make certain choices and take certain actions in accordance with their respective roles. These interpretations and tendencies reflect that, as it became a part of Daba members' identity, the sense of accountability translated into a certain perspective that allows members to look at the practice in similar ways and make their unique contributions.

The third and last organisational dimension — shared repertoire — translated into a form of competence called 'negotiability of a repertoire', i.e. members' abilities to utilise, interpret, and utilise the community's shared pool of resources. An analysis of the interview data reveals how members negotiated the 'production aspects' of the translational norms, i.e. the norms regarding how to produce subtitles properly. Because of the partiality caused by her limited technical abilities, the community host Alice delegated the power to negotiate the production norms to the technical 'experts', who dominated the negotiations and utilisation of the norms regarding different phases of a fansubbing project. Among them, the main editor Lin acquired the power to dominate the negotiations of the editing norms and thereby developed a complete procedure of editing work as the main body of the said norms. In this way, a part of the collective history of the community turned into members' personal history of participation and further became personal references which helped develop members' negotiability of the repertoire.

Apart from their experience in the Daba community, my results show that it is highly common for Daba members to participate in multiple communities. My data showed that members' multi-membership experience allowed them to develop three types of multi-membership trajectories: (i) There are 'community organisers' who had extensive experience of founding and managing communities. Therefore, their multi-membership trajectories usually centred around their insider trajectories as core members in those communities. (ii) 'Community settlers' tended to concentrate on developing inbound trajectories in a few selected communities founded by others. (iii) Also, there are 'community hoppers' who choose to roam among a large number of communities and contribute their technical abilities to a myriad of fansubbing projects. In doing so, they established multimembership experience which was mainly constituted by peripheral trajectories.

Efforts to integrate those complex trajectories turned members' identity into a 'nexus of multimembership' where the trajectories interacted with each other. Since the trajectories were shaped by practices which entail different demands and resources, they collided on some occasions and complemented each other on others. Therefore, Daba members made efforts to find diverse ways of reconciling different forms of participation according to their respective situations.

Furthermore, the collected data reveal that Daba members' identity formation was also shaped by two other forms of social participation, or 'modes of belonging', which took place in social contexts beyond fans' direct engagement in fan practices, i.e. 'imagination' and 'alignment'. The first of those modes — imagination — took place when Daba members, in their capacity as AKB48 fans, tried to establish connections with their idols who live in a remote foreign land. By consuming media content related to AKB48, Daba members constructed their own versions of reality about their idols. It is through such mental constructs that members established their own personal affective connections to the idols which make up an essential part of their identity as AKB48

fans. In most cases, such affective connections existed as empathy with idols which promoted Daba members' participation in fan practices. On the other hand, occasionally, some Daba members' affective connections to AKB48 were impacted by negative images of the group. As a result, those members developed a sense of participation in fan practices. Moreover, in some cases, fans' affective connections to the idols even led them to establish connections to the macro cultural landscape of Japan, which is the context for the idol industry.

The other form of participation — alignment — took place when Daba members were involved (willingly or not) in 'bigger' social enterprises beyond the range of their direct engagement in fan practices, e.g. the culture industries' copyright protection mechanisms and consumerist agendas. My analysis of the collected data reveals that Daba members were clearly aware of the said consumerist agendas. In response, some of them developed a form of limited allegiance to those agendas marked by a number of principles: (i) their allegiance must benefit their idols; (ii) it should not impact their quality of life; and (iii) the money spent on idol-related products should be proportional to the happiness that such products generate. If any of these maxims is breached, they may take action to resist the industry's consumerist agendas.

With regard to the copyright protection measures, my data suggest that there are Daba members who viewed them as mechanisms hampering the industry's enterprises, blocking fans' access to AKB48-related content, and contradicting fans' expectations for the group at the same time. For those members, their unwilling involvement in the copyright protection agendas constituted their identity as an experience of non-participation in those enterprises. When they participated in fansubbing practice, such experience naturally strengthened their identification with the legitimacy of the practice and directed them to find alternative measures to bypass the copyright protection measures.

6.3 Originality of the research

As mentioned in Chapter 1, fansubbing as a form of digital participatory culture has attracted substantial attention from academia. As part of this growing body of scholarship, this study takes further steps to explore how volunteer translation allows geographically dispersed and socially diverse fans to organise and maintain a fan community which plays a significant role in the fandom that it is embedded in by contributing fansubbed videos. In this way, this study has become one of the first to look at fansubbing practice embedded in a bigger fandom network. Therefore, my research may deepen our understanding of translation-oriented communities located in celebrity fandoms and broaden our knowledge of translating fans' complex identity formation processes. Also, since this study employs the Communities of Practice theory in a non-institutional context, it explores how the theory should be adapted in order to fit into such setting. Following these strands, in this section, I will introduce the implications of this study from a theoretical, methodological, and social perspective.

(i) Theoretical and methodological implications

The first implication of this study is that fansubbing communities gravitating around a celebrity fandom interact with and impact the fandom in various ways. In the current body of audiovisual translation studies literature, translation-oriented communities located in complex fandom networks are under-represented. The past studies of the organisational mechanisms of online translation communities are mostly concerned with standalone cocreational translation platforms (e.g. Viki in Dwyer 2012, *The Last Fantasy* forum in Li 2015, and *Yeeyan* website in Yu 2017). However, it is discovered in this study that online translators working in fandom environment often have multimembership experience, which makes the translation-oriented communities that they create closely connected to other communities in the fandom. Therefore, when studying such communities, it is impossible to separate them from the fandom context. The findings of the research indicate three main ways in which translation-oriented communities can interact with and impact a fandom network:

(i) Multimembership experience in the same fandom allows fans to be able to swiftly grasp similarities shared by communities within the fandom, e.g. same elements in community purposes and repertoires. In this way, it promotes human resources to flow into and between translation-oriented communities;

(ii) Translation-oriented communities contribute translated media content which is critical to the celebrity's reception in the target culture. In this way, those communities play a significant role in deciding how successful the celebrity can be. Conversely, when the fandom declines along with the popularity of the celebrity, the translation-oriented communities will gradually lose their momentum, too;

(iii) Translation-oriented communities establish various types of connections with the fandom through shared affections for the celebrity, reified objects, interpersonal relations, and practice *per se*.

Second, this study has developed a modified version of Communities of Practice theory that captures how my chosen fandom actually operates. CoP theory, in its original form (as found in Wenger 1998), was devised mainly to study communities in institutional settings. However, as this study and a number of previous studies (e.g. Li 2014) show, fan translation communities are normally not hierarchically subordinate to an overarching organisation or institution. Therefore, in order to understand the organisational mechanisms of a fansubbing community, this study draws on theoretical considerations from studies of online amateur translation communities (e.g. the one conducted by Yu 2017) and positions mutual recognition — the mechanism which enables fansubbers' self-organising activities — at the centre of discussions on organisational dimensions. Based on this modification, the findings of the research establish that the three types of recognition between community members lead to three types of stable relations over time. In this way, we gain a better understanding of how meaning negotiation processes in the mutual engagement dimension contribute to

community development and thereby resolve an ambiguity in the conceptual network of the original CoP theory — which, in its original formulation, was unable to identify which mechanism actually creates stable interpersonal relations between participants in a practice[101].

Also, as the original CoP theory is mainly concerned about institutional CoPs, it emphasises how CoPs process and enforce mandates and prescriptions from the superordinate institution into their own joint enterprise through mutual negotiations. As hierarchical dependency relations play no significant role in fansubbing communities like the Daba community, in this study I devised a concept called 'global-level project management' which befits the way in which fansubbing communities work on translation projects. With this concept, researchers can achieve an in-depth understanding of how members of a fansubbing community negotiate their indigenous joint enterprise through their spontaneous participation in different translation projects.

Nevertheless, despite the mentioned differences between the Daba community and institutional CoPs, which have led to theoretical modifications, it should also be noted that a number of significant similarities exist between the organisational mechanisms of the Daba community and those of institutional CoPs (especially the virtual ones). First, mutual trust based on mutual recognition (which exists in different forms because of different settings) is critical to establishing stable relationships which allow knowledge to flow freely between CoP members (as is also shown in e.g. Ardichvili, Page, and Wentling 2003). This significant role of mutual trust is mainly caused by the fact that virtual communities lack the opportunities for face-to-face communications between members. Therefore, it takes more efforts to enable engagement between community members and thereby build stable mutual trust and relationships between them (as discussed in 4.2.1). Second, CoP is a powerful space for producing, sharing,

[101] In Wenger's original formulation (1998:76), interpersonal relationships between CoP members are ambiguously described as created by mutual engagement, without any detail regarding the specific ways of creation.

and storing informal knowledge, which is not only central to the maintenance of 'informal' self-organising communities, but also to the operation of 'formal' institutions (such as the one introduced in Hidreth 2004). And lastly, despite the different social settings that they are embedded in, the organisational mechanisms of CoPs are never simple and ideal. Rather, as Wenger (1998: 77) argues, they always entail complex and even tense relationships (both between CoP members and between a CoP and external factors) that encompass harmony and conflicts, authority and collegiality, compliance and resistance, and trust and suspicion. This complexity shared by CoPs stands as one of the most important implications of the CoP theory and therefore every translation scholar using this theoretical framework should attach great importance to it.

Third, a holistic analysis of online communication data reveals multiple aspects of the overall pattern of fansubbing practice in an online translation-oriented community. Previous studies of online collaborative translation communities rarely treat online communication records as a main source of archival data. Rather, the archival data that they usually rely on are mainly comprised of target texts of translation, webpage texts, or archived documents (e.g. Li 2015, Fabbretti 2017, and Yu 2017). This study addresses this niche by collecting communication data generated by members of a fansubbing group over a period of eight months. A quantitative analysis of the data unveils the overall patterns of fansubbers' online communication behaviours. Moreover, a systematic qualitative analysis of the communication data has allowed me to identify a two-layered workflow of fansubbing projects which reflects that the unfolding of fansubbing practice depends on fansubbers' recursive communicative acts. This finding establishes the ground for discussions over the mechanisms behind fansubbers' collaborative acts.

Fourth, an interview-based investigation reveals multiple facets of fansubbers' identity formation processes. When investigating fansubbers' identity, previous studies of online volunteer translation communities usually focus on the identity formed through fansubbers' participation in the practice of the community in question. Whereas this

aspect of fansubbers' identity is also discussed in this research, the concept of identity as a nexus of multimembership is introduced to demonstrate how fansubbers' identity is formed through the trajectories that they developed in multiple communities. Informed by this concept, this research presents a variety of multimembership trajectory types based on concrete examples from the collected data. This discovery may inspire future researchers who intend to explore how fansubbers and other technical contributors negotiate their identities in a complex fandom network. Furthermore, the concept of mode of belonging allows me to gain an insight into fansubbers' complex responses to and interactions with the products and agendas of the culture industry. This finding corroborates Booth's (2015) argument that fans' identity is an ambivalent hybridity of 'conformist consumerism' and 'cultural resistance'. In this way, this research sheds light on social processes by which fansubbers as cultural agents are shaped by the culture industry.

Fifth, participation in the fansubbing practice of the Daba community reveals how a dual identity of insider/outsider may help as well as challenge researchers who study translation-oriented communities. To be more specific, as mentioned in 3.6, my identity as an insider (i.e. a member) of the Daba community has allowed me to gain first-hand essential information about how the community actually operates and how its members interact with each other. This essential information has benefited my identity as an outsider (i.e. a translation scholar) by facilitating the data collection processes and allowing me to gain richer and more in-depth perspectives for data analysis. Conversely, my outsider identity benefited my insider identity by allowing me to establish positive relationships with community members, especially with my interviewees. In fact, in this study, semi-structured interviews opened up a space in which I was able to establish empathetic ties with community members through which I could help them reflect on their experience as fan translator and on the significance and impact of their participation in fansubbing AKB48. Moreover, as a translation scholar, I responded to my interviewees' curiosity about my profession by sharing with them the basic information about my PhD study in lay language. In these ways, the identity as an

outsider could help a researcher establish relationships of mutual trust and understanding with research participants.

On the other hand, it should be noted that my dual identities might also collide in certain situations, especially when my identity as a fan translator interferes with my academic stance as a translation scholar. In response to this potential challenge, when conducting fieldwork, I constantly kept a proper distance from the daily practice of the community to the best of my ability by avoiding being involved in activities other than fansubbing projects, e.g. members' discussions of making important decisions related to the community and members' casual chats over non-fansubbing topics. In this way, I could effectively minimise the risk of losing my academic stance caused by a 'complete participation' (Spradley 1980: 61), i.e. a high-level involvement, in the fieldsite. In addition, a limited level of participation could also minimise the risk of the researcher's interference with the spontaneous development of the target community. In this way, a researcher could effectively manage her/his intersubjectivity with the target community and thereby reduce considerably the possibility of a 'mutual vulnerability' (Yu 2020b) between the two parties.

(ii) Social implications

The first social implication of this research for the Chinese society is that online fan communities have become a new prominent space for socialisation of teenagers and young adults. As shown by the case of the AKB48 fandom, young people group themselves in social configurations with what Deuze (2006: 71) calls 'self-referential properties', i.e. spaces where certain values and practices are preferred over others. Drawing on those values and practices, young people recognise each other as like-minded and competent and thereby develop new forms of Internet-mediated voluntary relations, free from subordination to a dominant higher authority. In the context of fandom networks, these values and practices serve mainly recreational purposes. According to the collected data, there is no sign that AKB48 fans (especially subtitling

fans) are interested in turning their fandom network into a space where they can intervene in political and ideological issues, whether in a direct or indirect manner. Therefore, it still remains to be seen whether these new forms of socialisation through and participation in virtual celebrity fandom will lead to what Li (2015) regards as new forms of 'networked civic participation'.

The second social implication is that activities of transnational fandom have become a driving force in mediating global cultural landscape to China. As shown in the case of the Chinese fandom of AKB48, fans are motivated by their affections for the foreign idol group to participate in practices seeking to support group members and foster the group's popularity in China. Through such practices, they often mediate media products that are originally not allowed to circulate on the Chinese Internet by the industry regulations and/or by the government-imposed censorship restrictions. Therefore, it can be said that transnational fandom networks have the potential to generate alternative cultural flows across linguacultures.

Yet, it should be noted that, as shown by the investigation of the AKB48 fandom, fans become fascinated with their idols mainly because of the latter's perceived individual charms and/or of the empathetic connections that they build between their own life trajectories and their idols. As such, their affections towards foreign artists do not necessarily lead to a strong identification with the Japanese cultural context behind the idols (as exemplified by the Daba members who barely have the knowledge of the Japanese language). Also, there is no evidence that fans are keen on building direct relations with like-minded people from Japan or other foreign countries. Therefore, it is questionable whether, and to what extent, participation in a transnational celebrity fandom can lead to a 'cosmopolitan' identity — i.e. an outlook which breaks with the 'insularity of national consciousness' by opening itself to others and internalising their perspectives, thereby establishing 'alternative paths' within and between different cultures (Beck 2006: 79).

6.4 Limitations and future research

In this study, I have attempted to use the AKB48 fandom as a case study to shed light on how fansubbers organise a translation-oriented community in a complex fandom network and how their participation in such a fandom network shapes their identity. In addition to the insights that it has revealed, this research also has certain limitations which can be treated as opportunities for improvement in future research.

First, this study has focused on only one particular fansubbing community. While such focus has ensured the depth of the discussions, it also leads to a risk of weak generalisability of the research findings. In order to improve our general knowledge of the online fan translation communities, more empirical studies of fan translation are needed. These potential studies could focus on translation communities embedded in fandom networks under different cultural contexts. It is envisaged that those studies would gauge to what extent the findings of this research can be applied to translation communities in other fandom settings.

Moreover, it is also imperative for scholars interested in fan studies to conduct more empirical research on participatory fan communities other than the translation-oriented ones. With studies of various types of fan communities, we may gain a more systematic understanding of how a fandom network is formed and maintained around a foreign artist or cultural product.

Second, as a study which follows a sociological approach to translation, this research predominantly focuses on the organisational aspects of a fan translation community and de-prioritises the fansubbed texts produced by community members. Therefore, in future studies of translation communities, researchers can potentially combine analysis of features of fansub texts (e.g. multimodal features and genre-specific items) with analysis of the organisational aspects, in order to discover how certain translation norms and text genres are negotiated in the interplay between community members' mutual

interaction and reified translation products.

Third, this study has been informed by the Communities of Practice (CoP) theory to focus on certain aspects of a fan translation community more than the others. This means that further research can make use of different theoretical frameworks to explore aspects that do not play a central role in this study. By way of example, using Actor Network Theory (ANT), researchers can investigate continually and systematically in a given period of time how volunteer translators interact with other human agents influencing their translation practices (e.g. online forum moderators and reviewers working for video-sharing services) and with non-human actors involved in the practices(such as translation software and online archiving services). In this way, researchers may be able to gain a better understanding of the impact that wider social networks have on participatory translation and of the role that material and other non-human elements play in the formation of societal order in a participatory translation community.

Also, future studies may choose to focus on aspects of CoP theory that are not elaborated on substantially in this study. For example, when discussing the identity formation of fan translators, researchers may focus on the roles that imagination (i.e. establishing mental connections to people, objects, and processes out of one's own context of life) and alignment (i.e. getting involved in enterprises existing beyond immediate contexts of practices) processes play. Such studies can potentially expand the use of the CoP theory to explain how fan translators' identities are constantly shaped by the larger social context.

Fourth, as a predominantly qualitative study, this research has focused on collecting and performing a theme-based, netnographic analysis of two major types of data, i.e. online communication records and interview data. This leaves room for future studies which mainly use quantitative methods to explore larger datasets. For example, a quantitative analysis of communication transactions within a fandom network may facilitate the

production of visualisations of social networks formed within the fandom, and represent the ties between different entities such as fan communities, individual fans, fan-made products, technological tools, and so on. Such studies may yield meaningful and comprehensive pictures of the internal dynamics of fandom networks as complex social structures.

The development of a sociological approach to online participatory translation is still at its early stage. It is hoped that this study makes an original contribution to our understanding of voluntary translation as a practice which contributes to the emergence of new forms of social relations, organisations, and identities. Moreover, I also hope that this thesis will become a theoretical and methodological reference for future researchers who are interested in the area of online participatory culture.

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Appendix I Interview Questions

Preliminary questions: How old are you? What is your gender? What is the highest education qualification that you have obtained? What is your proficiency in Japanese (which is the language that most media content of AKB48 is originally created in)?

1. (For all participants) Describe your experience as a fan of AKB48 until today.

Probes: How many years? The history of changes/shifts in favourite members/teams/sister groups? Participation in fan activities? Attitudes/commitment towards groups and members?

2. (For all participants) Describe the fan communities/fandom-related websites that you often visit, and explain in which capacity do you visit them?

Probes: Types of communities/websites; interactions and activities in the communities/websites; roles that participants take on.

3. (For participants with experience in fansubbing groups only) As a member of fansubbing group(s), how do you work in your role as translator/post-editor/uploader/project organiser?

Probes: Ways of interacting/collaborating with others; awareness of a common goal; contributing to shared resources (e.g. tools, applications, skills, guidelines, rules, untranslated videos, past translations, templates, jargon, memes, etc.).

4. (For participants with experience in fansubbing groups only) As a member of fansubbing group(s), how do you view your role as translator/post-editor/uploader/project organiser in relation to your role as an AKB48 fan?

Probes: The impact of affection/personal preferences (as a result of identity trajectories) on the choice of texts to be translated, translation strategies, translation choices, use of shared resources, commitment to the role, relations with others, etc.

5. (For participants with experience of joining general fan communities only) As a member of general fan community, how do you act in your role as organiser/administrator/content contributor/topic initiator/active lurker/passive lurker?

Probes: Interactions with others; contributions to and consumption of shared resources; awareness of/attitudes towards the general purpose and rules of the community; etc.

6. (For all participants) As a consumer of media content, how do you access and enjoy

the untranslated original media contents about AKB48?

Potential follow-up questions and probes: Do you wait for translation or do you view the untranslated version first? Do you think the role of translation in the fandom is significant or not? Have you adopted any of the terms/nicknames/wordplays (parts of fan jargon) created by translators? Are you aware of/How do you view particular fansubbing groups/translators in the fandom? Does translation have any impact on your preferences/affections towards certain AKB48 members/teams/sister groups? Etc.

7. (For participants who have experience of taking on particular managerial roles in more than one fan community) As a mediator between communities, how do you deal with inter-community relations?

Probes: launching and coordinating joint projects of different communities; reconciling in potential conflicts between communities (e.g. when two fansubbing groups want to fansub the same video); etc.

Appendix II Introduction Message

[This letter is originally written in Chinese and is translated by the researcher.]

亲爱的 AKB48 饭，

我叫谢睿捷，是一名英国曼彻斯特大学的博士生，同时也是一名 AKB48 粉丝。我已经关注 AKB48 超过四年了，所以我非常熟悉这个团体以及这个团体在中国的人气状况。在我作为粉丝的这段时间里面，我很享受参加不同的粉丝社群活动以及观看由 AKB48 饭制作的各种字幕视频作品。

作为粉丝的这段经历深刻地影响了我的重要人生决策——2017 年，我决定开始我的博士生生涯，研究媒体粉丝群体中的爱好者翻译现象。目前我就读的专业是翻译与跨文化研究博士项目。我的研究着力于探索翻译在粉丝群体的形成和发展之中所扮演的角色，而 AKB48 的中国饭群是我研究的具体对象。为了更深入地了解 AKB48 粉丝对于他们的粉丝经历和对于饭群中翻译现象及翻译者的看法，我决定诚挚地邀请你加入我的研究，因为我相信你的经历与我想要回答的研究问题高度相关。具体来说，我将会邀请你参加一次访谈。在这次访谈之中，我将会提出一系列与我的研究相关的问题，而你可以自由地表达你的意见和想法。

如果我能有幸邀请到你参与的话，我将会充分尊重你的看法、你的喜好和你的时间安排。并且，访谈的记录和你的个人信息将会被安全妥善地保存。在访谈之后，你将有权利知道我会如何在我的博士论文和其他出版物里使用你的访谈记录和个人信息。

诚挚地期待你的参与，谢谢！

谢睿捷

另：如果你对我的研究有兴趣或者有任何问题，请用以下方式随时联系我：

QQ 号：（研究者的 QQ 号）/电子邮件：（研究者的邮箱地址）/新浪微博（研究者的微博账号）

Dear Fan of AKB48,

My name is Ruijie Xie, a PhD student from University of Manchester and a fan of AKB48. I have been following AKB48 for more than four years and is very familiar with the group and its reception in China. In my experience as a fan, I’ve been enjoying joining different fan communities and watching fansub works created by other AKB48 fans.

This experience as a fan influenced a big decision in my life — in 2017, I decided to conduct a PhD research on amateur translation in media fandoms. Right now, I’m

studying in the PhD programme of translation and intercultural studies. My research is focused on the role translation plays in the formation and maintenance of a media fandom, exemplified by the Chinese fandom of AKB48. In order to know more about AKB48 fans' opinions on their fan experience and on translation and translators in the fandom, I decided to approach you and sincerely ask you to join in my study, because I believe your experience is highly relevant to research questions. To be specific, you'll be invited to participate in an interview in which you will be asked a number of questions related to my research topic and will be free to express your opinions and ideas.

If I have the pleasure of having you as my research participant, I'll respect your opinions, your preferences, and your schedule. Also, the record of the interview and your personal information will be securely stored. After the interview, you may request to know how I'm going to use the interview record and your personal information in my PhD dissertation and other publications.

Looking forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Ruijie Xie

P.S.: If you are interested in my research or have any questions about the research, please feel free to contact me through the following ways:
QQ: the researcher's QQ account number/ Email: the researcher's official email address/ Sina Weibo: the researcher's Sina Weibo ID

Appendix III Participant Information Sheet (PIS)\

Chinese Fandom Communities of Japanese Pop Artists: The role of translation in the communities of practice within the Chinese fandom of AKB48

Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

This PIS should be read in conjunction with The University privacy notice

You are being invited to take part in a research study which is being undertaken as part of a doctoral project conducted at the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester by Ruijie Xie. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the role that amateur translation — such as the one produced by communities of Chinese fans of the Japanese pop music group AKB48, plays in the formation and maintenance of those communities. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Who will conduct the research?

Name of researcher: Ruijie Xie

Name of institution: School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester

What is the purpose of the research?

This research aims to explore how amateur translation fits within the processes that facilitate the creation and maintenance of online fan communities, with particular reference to the Chinese online fandom of Japanese pop music group AKB48.

Why have I been chosen?

You were chosen because your experience of taking part in the AKB48 fandom in China is relevant to the aim of this research. The total number of participants is about 20.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to take part in an online one-to-one written interview in Chinese which contains a series of open-ended questions and will last between 45-60 min. You will be asked to give your opinions on your experience as a member of AKB48 fan communities, your

experience as member of relevant fansubbing groups, your experience as a consumer of fan-translated media content, etc.

It is not envisaged that your participation in this online interview will cause any pain, discomfort or distress. In the unlikely event of experiencing any distress, this will not be greater in and of itself than the one you ordinarily encountered in your daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

What will happen to my personal information?

In order to undertake the research project, we will need to collect the following personal information/data about you:

Age, gender, occupation, highest education qualification, proficiency of Japanese language, personal experience as a fan of AKB48.

We are collecting and storing this personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 which legislate to protect your personal information. The legal basis upon which we are using your personal information is "public interest task" and "for research purposes" if sensitive information is collected. For more information about the way we process your personal information and comply with data protection law please see our Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

The University of Manchester, as Data Controller for this project, takes responsibility for the protection of the personal information that this study is collecting about you. In order to comply with the legal obligations to protect your personal data the University has safeguards in place such as policies and procedures. All researchers are appropriately trained and your data will be looked after in the following way:

The **researcher** at the University of Manchester will have access to your personal identifiable information, that is data which could identify you, but he will anonymise it **as soon as practical**. However, your **consent form, contact details, etc** will be retained for **5** years after gathering in the researcher's database.

The written interview data will be saved in Microsoft Word documents, which will be stored on the personal data storage system (P Drive) of University of Manchester. By using the security functions of the drive, the data will be securely kept. As the research unfolds, the data will be regularly transferred to the servers of University of Manchester using the secure storage provided by the University[102].

You have a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example you can request a copy of the information we hold about you, including audio recordings or photographs. This is known as a Subject Access Request. If you would like to know more about your different rights, please consult our privacy notice for research and if

[102] A number of paragraphs are highlighted in the PIS and the consent form in order to notify the participants of the critical information contained therein.

you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL. at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office, Tel 0303 123 1113

Will my participation in the study be confidential?

Your participation in the study will be kept confidential to the researcher and those with access to your personal information as listed above.

Individuals from the University, the site where the research is taking place and regulatory authorities may need to review the study information for auditing and monitoring purposes or in the event of an incident.

In the event that there are concerns about the participants' safety or the safety of others, the research team may need to contact their GP/care team/family member

To protect your confidentiality, your real name will not appear in the final published account. On the occasions where quoting your words in the study would be necessary a fake name (different from your online pseudonym) will be assigned to you if your quoted words contain sensitive information. The purpose is to protect you from potential harm or embarrassment because a motivated person or other group members deliberately seeking to find you could do so through the online pseudonym provided in the written account.

The researcher who conducts this research will act as the custodian for the electronic data generated by the online interviews, under the supervision of his academic supervisors. The electronic data will be stored and analysed using the personal computer of the researcher. He will be carefully encrypted to make them unreadable to anyone who does not have some special knowledge, usually a passcode, to make the encrypted data readable again. The data for this research will be kept for five years in case there is a later allegation of research misconduct.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. However, it will not be possible to remove your data from the project once it has been anonymised and forms part of the dataset as we will not be able to identify your specific data. This does not affect your data protection rights.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No, you will not receive any type of payment for participating in this research. However, your participation will contribute to the understanding of the role played by amateur translation in the development of fandoms as networks of fan communities.

What is the duration of the research?

You will be asked to take part in an interview that lasts for 45-60 mins. In addition, you will need to spend 10-15 mins prior to the interview to read the Participant Information Sheet and sign the Participant Consent Form. Also, it is possible that the researcher may need to ask you to take part in follow up interview(s) which will take a similar amount of time to the first one. During the interview(s), you will be able to take a break whenever you want.

Where will the research be conducted?

The research will be conducted online using instant messaging software service such as QQ.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The main anticipated outcome of the research is a dissertation that will be submitted for PhD degree. Also, the researcher may convert parts of the research into articles that will be published in the future. As a participant, you will be informed of the major findings of the research and if the findings will be published.

Who has reviewed the research project?

The project has been reviewed by the Ethics Committee of the School of Arts, Languages, and Cultures, University of Manchester.

What if I want to make a complaint?

Minor complaints

If you have a minor complaint then you need to contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor in the first instance.

Contact details of the researcher: RUIJIE XIE, RUIJIE.XIE@POSTGRAD.MANCHESTER.AC.UK, 0784-2838738.

Contact details of the researcher's supervisor: PROF LUIS PEREZ-GONZALEZ, LUIS.PEREZ-GONZALEZ@MANCHESTER.AC.UK, 0161-2758265.

Formal Complaints

If you wish to make a formal complaint or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact

The Research Governance and Integrity Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 275 2674.

What Do I Do Now?

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher**: RUIJIE XIE, RUIJIE.XIE@POSTGRAD.MANCHESTER.AC.UK, 0784-2838738.**

☐ I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet (Version 4, Date 11/01/2019) for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester's Research Ethics Committee [ERM reference number: 4957]

Appendix IV Consent Form

MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester

Chinese Fandom Communities of Japanese Pop Artists

The role of translation in the communities of practice within the Chinese fandom of AKB48

Consent Form

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

	Activities	Initials
1	I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet (**Version 5, Date 28/01/2019**) for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2	I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my data from the project once it has been anonymised and forms part of the data set. I agree to take part on this basis	
3	I understand that the interview will be conducted online in written form and the interview data generated will be securely stored by the researcher.	
4	I understand that the interview will be conducted in Chinese and the researcher/interviewer will translate my answers into English.	
5	I agree that any data collected can be accessed by the researcher's supervisors.	
6	I agree that any data collected may be published, once it has been anonymised, in the researcher's thesis, conference presentations or academic publications.	
7	I understand that I can review how my answers are used in the researcher's PhD thesis or other publications related to this research project before they are submitted for revision or publication.	
8	I agree to take part in this study	

Data Protection

The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

☒ I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet (Version 5, Date 28/01/2019) for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Signature Date

_____ _____ _____

Name of the person taking consent Signature Date

The original copy of this consent form will be held by the researcher and will be securely stored on his personal computer; the copy for the participant is subject to the disposal of the participant.

Appendix V Original Communication Extracts Quoted in Chapter 4

Notes: All times are in UTC+1.

All names are pseudonyms used in this study.

Extract 4.1 (Thread 20181022 and Thread 20181023)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	话说这周的开闭秀有翻译巨巨吗	10/22/2018	1:15 PM
打杂-Alice	没有的话我过会儿再来问	10/22/2018	1:15 PM
打杂-Alice	看了下这周主要内容是 STU	10/22/2018	1:15 PM
打杂-Alice	有好感船团的聚聚吗	10/22/2018	1:15 PM
翻译-Momo	我爱船团…但是我星期天考托…请别的聚聚接锅/抱拳	10/22/2018	3:35 PM
校对-Lin	辛苦惹/赞	10/22/2018	3:50 PM
轴子-Alex	船团那段我可以试试	10/22/2018	3:51 PM
轴子-Alex	开场短剧我不行	10/22/2018	3:51 PM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Kate	把短剧后半部分补上了	10/23/2018	10:40 AM
校对-Lin	辛苦哇	10/23/2018	10:51 AM
翻译-Daisie	开头我来吧	10/23/2018	11:31 AM
轴子-Peter	/抱拳	10/23/2018	11:33 AM
校对-Lin	老铁辛苦啊	10/23/2018	11:45 AM
打杂-Alice	哇大家好棒	10/23/2018	12:53 PM

Extract 4.2 (Thread 20190318)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Date
翻译-Anderson	请问本周的这一集还需要翻译吗？	3/18/2019	9:42 AM
校对-Lin	有聚聚要休息嘛	3/18/2019	9:45 AM
翻译-Daisie	下集可以吗？因为我中午休息的时候把短剧已经翻完了，	3/18/2019	9:53 AM
[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Anderson	好的好的，那还有其他活需要分吗？/斜眼笑	3/18/2019	10:01 AM
翻译-Anderson	我都可以做的	3/18/2019	10:01 AM
轴子-Peter	@Alice	3/18/2019	11:17 AM

打杂-Alice	可以预定你翻最后一期吗/斜眼笑	3/18/2019	11:47 AM
渣轴&翻-Momo	我想预定最后一期/发抖	3/18/2019	11:58 AM
渣轴&翻-Momo	有始有终	3/18/2019	11:58 AM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	Momo 和 anderson 分一下最后一期？	3/18/2019	12:00 PM
[Interval of messages]			
渣轴&翻-Momo	最后一期我想要美音小黑屋	3/18/2019	12:07 PM
打杂-Alice	@翻译-Anderson 那巨巨翻奶队的短剧可以吗	3/18/2019	12:07 PM
翻译-Anderson	好的可以/OK	3/18/2019	12:08 PM
打杂-Alice	最后两期都续上了	3/18/2019	12:08 PM
打杂-Alice	开心	3/18/2019	12:08 PM

Extract 4.3 (Thread 20180911)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
轴子-Alex	我没那么多空额	9/11/2018	8:14 AM
轴子-Alex	能拉歌就不错了	9/11/2018	8:14 AM
打杂-Alice	啊好吧	9/11/2018	10:55 AM
打杂-Alice	有轴子有空吗	9/11/2018	10:55 AM
打杂-Alice	其实没几句/小纠结	9/11/2018	10:55 AM
轴子-Shawn	我来吧	9/11/2018	10:59 AM
轴子-Shawn	不过得今晚才能打	9/11/2018	10:59 AM

Extract 4.4 (Thread 20180929)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
校对-Lin	链接:https://pan.baidu.com/s/1GXOw7RHAMitL2bFWvg1Qlg 提取码:h8s0	9/29/2018	5:10 AM
校对-Lin	档在这里 巨大无比	9/29/2018	5:10 AM
翻译-Daisie	跟 B 站的档不一样吗？网速超烂，下不下来。	9/29/2018	10:49 AM
校对-Lin	一样的	9/29/2018	10:51 AM
翻译-Daisie	👌	9/29/2018	11:53 AM
打杂-Alice	B 站分段了	9/29/2018	12:51 PM

打杂 -Alice	Lin 巨巨写的时间段要重新找一下	9/29/2018	12:51 PM
校对-Lin	唔	9/29/2018	1:35 PM
校对-Lin	那可能要麻烦聚聚自己算一下了...	9/29/2018	1:36 PM
翻译-Daisie	下午在 B 张看到最后一段 MC20 分钟，还以为错了……	9/29/2018	1:44 PM
打杂-Alice	最后一段肯定很长。。。因为数票数什么的	9/29/2018	1:45 PM
翻译-Daisie	我没有问题了。为了避免帕金森定律，会尽快赶出来的。	9/29/2018	2:05 PM

Extract 4.5 (Thread 20190303)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	Miss C 真的快	3/3/2019	7:17 AM

Extract 4.6 (Thread 20190323)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
歌词-Carol	"{""fileSize"""	3/23/2019	3:35 PM
歌词-Carol	我的开闭秀之旅结束了	3/23/2019	3:35 PM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	应该给 Miss C 颁一个全勤奖	3/23/2019	3:38 PM

Extract 4.7 (Thread 20180831 and Thread 20180901)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	@轴子-Alex 歌拉好了吗	8/31/2018	4:23 PM
轴子-Alex	哦，我忘记了	8/31/2018	4:24 PM
轴子-Alex	稍等	8/31/2018	4:24 PM
轴子-Alex	做好了	8/31/2018	4:26 PM
轴子-Alex	忘记发了	8/31/2018	4:26 PM
轴子-Alex	等我起床开下电脑	8/31/2018	4:26 PM
轴子-Alex	"{""fileSize"""	8/31/2018	5:15 PM

打杂-Alice	辛苦啦	9/1/2018	1:45 AM
翻译-Momo	辛苦啦	9/1/2018	3:35 AM
轴子-Peter	"{""fileSize"""	9/1/2018	5:58 AM
轴子-Peter	合并了，等聚聚校对	9/1/2018	5:58 AM
打杂-Alice	@校对-Kate 聚聚麻烦校对这一期开闭秀	9/1/2018	5:58 AM
校对-Kate	ok	9/1/2018	5:58 AM

Extract 4.8 (Thread 20181027)

Participant	**Conversation**	**Date**	**Time**
打杂-Alice	@轴子-Peter Peter 能压吗	10/27/2018	6:17 AM
轴子-Peter	晚上	10/27/2018	6:22 AM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	不过我晚上也不再	10/27/2018	9:54 AM
打杂-Alice	肯定要明天传了	10/27/2018	9:54 AM
轴子-Peter	晚上我一起传了吧	10/27/2018	9:55 AM
打杂-Alice	行呀	10/27/2018	9:56 AM
打杂-Alice	181021 *AKB48 SHOW！* EP201 \n \n 本期内容：\n 在后台：冈部麟、小栗有以、小田绘里奈、清水麻璃	10/27/2018	10:01 AM
轴子-Peter	/OK	10/27/2018	10:04 AM

Extract 4.9 (Thread 20180827)

Participant	**Conversation**	**Date**	**Time**
轴子-Alex	下周又是紫紫兽	8/27/2018	2:43 AM
校对-Yiyi	咦 昨天有 show 吗 为什么我十点半打开电视没有看到？	8/27/2018	2:47 AM
校对-Kate	有	8/27/2018	2:48 AM
打杂-Alice	那再下周就是绿绿兽了吗	8/27/2018	2:51 AM
轴子-Anning	你甚至能在 akb48 show 看见 akb48	8/27/2018	2:52 AM

Extract 4.10 (Thread 20180816)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
轴子-Peter	等 Alice 上线看看接下来还有什么要做的吧，反正神 TV 那边一堆可以补的 w	8/16/2018	8:10 AM

Extract 4.11 (Thread 20180928)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	亲爱的们	9/28/2018	11:52 AM
打杂-Alice	Lin 聚聚说想要把去年村内红白搞出来	9/28/2018	11:52 AM
打杂-Alice	现在全部歌词已经外包了	9/28/2018	11:52 AM
打杂-Yani	哇，大工程	9/28/2018	11:52 AM
打杂-Alice	剩下就是 mc 的问题	9/28/2018	11:52 AM
打杂-Alice	大概有不到十个 mc	9/28/2018	11:52 AM
打杂-Alice	翻译聚聚们愿不愿意承包一个呀	9/28/2018	11:53 AM
校对-Lin	大佬们给个面子吧	9/28/2018	11:54 AM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	应该是七段 mc	9/28/2018	11:55 AM
打杂-Alice	大家分一分应该还好	9/28/2018	11:55 AM
翻译-Momo	哪里有生肉啊	9/28/2018	12:14 PM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	所以巨巨要不要承包一段 mc 啊	9/28/2018	2:33 PM
[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Momo	要	9/28/2018	2:33 PM
翻译-Momo	盲选	9/28/2018	2:34 PM
翻译-Momo	四五两段吧	9/28/2018	2:34 PM
[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Daisie	我可以分一段 MC 不？	9/28/2018	3:12 PM
打杂-Alice	可以可以！	9/28/2018	3:12 PM
打杂-Alice	两段也可以！	9/28/2018	3:12 PM

Extract 4.12 (Thread 20190109)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
翻译-Daisie	@打杂-Alice 我们字幕组做感谢祭不？	1/9/2019	12:02 PM
后期-Zach	做嘛 我也有计划	1/9/2019	12:54 PM
翻译-Daisie	这边站子可以出轴子校对	1/9/2019	12:55 PM
打杂-Alice	这么厉害的嘛	1/9/2019	12:56 PM

[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Daisie	要做我就把她拉进来	1/9/2019	12:57 PM
翻译-Daisie	档源也可以提供	1/9/2019	12:57 PM
打杂-Alice	樱花家的？	1/9/2019	12:58 PM
打杂-Alice	别了别了	1/9/2019	12:58 PM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	你们可以另外拉个群？	1/9/2019	12:58 PM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	樱花家的我怕	1/9/2019	12:59 PM

Extract 4.13 (Thread 20190318)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
轴子-Joan	下周神 tv 咱们这边要做吗？	3/18/2019	4:22 AM
轴子-Peter	等开闭秀结束再说吧	3/18/2019	4:22 AM
校对-Lin	已经快揭不开锅啦	3/18/2019	4:23 AM
校对-Lin	不敢操心	3/18/2019	4:23 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Peter	问组长	3/18/2019	4:24 AM
轴子-Peter	@打杂-Alice	3/18/2019	4:24 AM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	先把开闭秀操心完，神 tv 估计是救不上了	3/18/2019	5:21 AM

Extract 4.14 (Thread 20181112)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	这周的开闭秀要做吗	11/12/2018	4:12 AM
打杂-Alice	要不先看看彩姐家出不出档	11/12/2018	4:12 AM

Extract 4.15 (Thread 20181113)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	彩姐家出档了	11/13/2018	10:19 AM
打杂-Alice	但是只有 19 分钟	11/13/2018	10:19 AM
打杂-Alice	应该是 cut 掉了什么吧	11/13/2018	10:19 AM
打杂-Alice	那我们还是要做的吧。。。	11/13/2018	10:19 AM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	原来还有 ske ngt 和 nbb	11/13/2018	10:22 AM

打杂-Alice	看来想偷懒还是不行	11/13/2018	10:23 AM
打杂-Alice	还是做全集吧	11/13/2018	11:40 AM

Extract 4.16 (Thread 20190213)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
校对-Kate	我组要失业了吗	2/13/2019	12:24 PM
打杂-Alice	我组要失业了	2/13/2019	12:25 PM
翻译-Daisie	还有一个多月	2/13/2019	12:25 PM
翻译-Daisie	能不能再就业？	2/13/2019	12:26 PM
后期-Zach	/幽灵简单了 多少 rh 没人管	2/13/2019	12:27 PM
打杂-Alice	我觉得我们可以做神 TV	2/13/2019	12:28 PM
翻译-Daisie	我没有意见	2/13/2019	12:31 PM
打杂-Alice	也可能只是换时间段	2/13/2019	12:31 PM

Extract 4.17 (Thread 20190313)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
翻译-Daisie	准备散伙吗	3/13/2019	12:46 PM
打杂-Alice	散伙前先把开闭秀做完	3/13/2019	12:46 PM
轴子-Shawn	还有几集😂	3/13/2019	12:46 PM
打杂-Alice	310 317 324	3/13/2019	12:47 PM
打杂-Alice	还有三集	3/13/2019	12:47 PM

Extract 4.18 (Thread 20190324)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
翻译-Daisie	木偶下周之后有什么想法	3/24/2019	12:04 PM
歌词-Carol	木偶打算跑路/斜眼笑	3/24/2019	12:05 PM
歌词-Carol	我，木偶，从大吧不糊字幕组毕业	3/24/2019	12:06 PM
打杂-Alice	不是的。。。我是觉得就算我想做什么。。。也要有翻译和轴子真的愿意去做才行。。。我	3/24/2019	12:25 PM
打杂-Alice	托尼卡艾滋	3/24/2019	12:26 PM
打杂-Alice	我们先把神 TV 九周年那两期做出来吧	3/24/2019	12:26 PM
打杂-Alice	如果大家愿意的话	3/24/2019	12:26 PM

轴子-Peter	支持	3/24/2019	12:26 PM
打杂-Yani	支持	3/24/2019	12:27 PM

Extract 4.19 (Thread 20190401)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	我们一共做了 33 集开闭秀	4/1/2019	3:19 PM
打杂-Alice	大家都辛苦啦	4/1/2019	3:19 PM
打杂-Yani	大家辛苦了/玫瑰/玫瑰/玫瑰	4/1/2019	3:20 PM
歌词-Carol	大家辛苦了/玫瑰/玫瑰/玫瑰	4/1/2019	3:20 PM

Extract 4.20 (Thread 20181203)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
美工-Wen	我们都是非商业目的的　大公司有商业性质 我觉得还是不一样　不过聚聚们有这么高觉悟对	12/3/2018	10:53 AM
轴子-Popper	本身我们就是干着明知山有虎的工作/无奈	12/3/2018	10:53 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Popper	非商业目的也是侵犯著作权的，只不过用于商用处罚更重	12/3/2018	10:54 AM
美工-Wen	侵权肯定是的　我意思是我们确实是用爱发电 公司就不一定是了	12/3/2018	10:55 AM

Extract 4.21 (Thread 20180813)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
片源-Siyang	猜拳大会的又全被下了	8/13/2018	2:37 PM
轴子-Alex	AKS 厉害	8/13/2018	2:38 PM
片源-Siyang	应该是 B 站自己下的	8/13/2018	2:38 PM
轴子-Alex	嗯，我也感觉是 B 站自主一刀切	8/13/2018	2:39 PM
轴子-Alex	但是每次都写着 AKS	8/13/2018	2:39 PM
片源-Siyang	直接让 AKS 背锅	8/13/2018	2:42 PM

Extract 4.22 (Thread 20180926)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	哭瞎	9/26/2018	3:02 PM
打杂-Alice	第一个被下的	9/26/2018	3:02 PM
打杂-Alice	这个也能下啊	9/26/2018	3:03 PM
打杂-Yani	fresh 选拔倒没下	9/26/2018	3:03 PM
打杂-Alice	别说了，可能明天就下了	9/26/2018	3:03 PM
打杂-Alice	哭瞎	9/26/2018	3:02 PM

Extract 4.23 (Thread 20180924)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
轴子-Peter	你想下该咋防和谐	9/24/2018	12:39 PM
打杂-Alice	封面继续用之前那个秒速五厘米	9/24/2018	12:40 PM
打杂-Alice	每 p 的标题就 ug ng fg ucg 80-100 sr	9/24/2018	12:40 PM
打杂-Alice	tag 不要加 akb	9/24/2018	12:40 PM
打杂-Alice	标题我再想想	9/24/2018	12:40 PM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Kate	某一个夏天我穿着沙滩拖鞋种下了爱的种子而波浪突然间对我传递了我们其实是朋友的真相	9/25/2018	12:23 PM
校对-Kate	76 字风歌名	9/25/2018	12:23 PM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	超字数了吗	9/25/2018	12:30 PM
打杂-Alice	没超可以啊	9/25/2018	12:30 PM
校对-Lin	我觉得这个标题没毛病	9/25/2018	12:35 PM
打杂-Alice	那就这个呗	9/25/2018	1:00 PM

Extract 4.24 (Thread 20190218)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
轴子-Joan	我刚拿到驾照 hh 要回来下档开始翻啦	2/18/2019	7:54 AM
校对-Lin	持证上岗/赞	2/18/2019	8:03 AM
后期-Zach	道路千万条，安全第一条	2/18/2019	8:12 AM

[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Alex	字幕千万条，品质第一条。打轴不规范，Alice 两行泪。/斜眼笑	2/18/2019	12:07 PM
歌词-Carol	太真实了/斜眼笑	2/18/2019	12:07 PM

Extract 4.25 (Thread 20181105)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	格式的话你群文件里找个开闭秀的轴来看看就行了	11/5/2018	2:31 PM

Extract 4.26 (Thread 20190205)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
轴子-Peter	我习惯从开始说话拉，笑声之类的一般在上一句，或者看情况单独拉个“哈哈哈”之类的	2/5/2019	11:14 AM
校对-Lin	唔	2/5/2019	11:15 AM
校对-Lin	我去试试	2/5/2019	11:15 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Peter	也要看这个笑声是不是含在这句话里的，这种都是弄完后看一遍根据自己风格来调了	2/5/2019	11:16 AM
校对-Lin	了解	2/5/2019	11:20 AM

Extract 4.27 (Thread 20180820)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
校对-Kate	我一共打了三个错别字	8/20/2018	1:32 AM
打杂-Yani	额。。。	8/20/2018	1:32 AM
校对-Kate	自由泳还有个直到天涯海角打成了知道（）	8/20/2018	1:32 AM
校对-Kate	我错了（）	8/20/2018	1:32 AM
打杂-Yani	有人发群里说我们字幕组恶意/笑哭	8/20/2018	1:32 AM
校对-Kate	可见校对的必要性	8/20/2018	1:34 AM

[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Peter	还有哪里你们知道么？我一起改了传个新版本	8/20/2018	5:09 AM

Extract 4.28 (Thread 20181205)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
Kenny	Lin 聚,我看了一下，发现歌词改得蛮多的。我能按照我原来的歌词吗/擦汗	12/5/2018	12:12 PM
校对-Lin	可以呀 注意格式不要变就好了	12/5/2018	12:12 PM
Kenny	跟我翻译的意图有出入了	12/5/2018	12:12 PM
Kenny	那最终给我一个文件。我一句句改回去吧。好吗？	12/5/2018	12:13 PM
后期-Zach	是一首歌还是全部都要改	12/5/2018	12:14 PM
[Interval of messages]			
后期	如果就几首歌我也可以	12/5/2018	12:15 PM
[Interval of messages]			
Kenny	我没有想到歌词改动这么大。真的太抱歉了	12/5/2018	12:17 PM
Kenny	谢谢 Zach 聚聚。因为每一个用字，都是经过推敲的。	12/5/2018	12:18 PM
校对-Lin	抱歉呀 我更希望歌词能看着简洁一些	12/5/2018	12:18 PM
校对-Lin	就删改了一些	12/5/2018	12:19 PM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Lin	注意格式对齐一下呀	12/5/2018	12:20 PM
Kenny	会的。谢谢理解	12/5/2018	12:20 PM
校对-Lin	空格数量 标点符号的全角半角	12/5/2018	12:21 PM
Kenny	了解	12/5/2018	12:21 PM

Extract 4.29 (Thread 20190228)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
Kenny	翻了新单歌词	2/28/2019	12:03 PM
Kenny	【akb48-55th ジワる DAYS」渐上心头 DAYS】平假名罗马音日文中文...	2/28/2019	12:03 PM

打杂-Alice	厉害了 Kenny 老师	2/28/2019	12:04 PM
歌词-Carol	好厉害	2/28/2019	12:04 PM
歌词-Carol	比啥真香听着好听多了/斜眼笑	2/28/2019	12:04 PM

Extract 4.30 (Thread 20180903)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
歌词-Carol	开闭秀缺档源吗==	9/3/2018	9:16 AM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Kate	不缺啊，就是自己下载挺麻烦的而已（）	9/3/2018	9:16 AM
轴子-Peter	开闭秀这种我用迅雷下载，基本 5-10 分钟就下好了	9/3/2018	9:18 AM
翻译-Lei	AO 是什麽地方。。	9/3/2018	9:18 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Peter	HO 被和谐之后的替代品	9/3/2018	9:19 AM
轴子-Peter	https://aidoru-online.org/	9/3/2018	9:20 AM

Extract 4.31 (Thread 20180922)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
校对-Lin	主打我更新了一版	9/22/2018	11:34 AM
校对-Lin	都在 53 单 pv 的文件夹里了	9/22/2018	11:35 AM
轴子-Shawn	好哒	9/22/2018	11:36 AM
轴子-Peter	用之前的修改下就行	9/22/2018	11:39 AM

Extract 4.32 (Thread 20181016)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	{\be10}	10/16/2018	2:40 PM
打杂-Alice	这个是什么意思	10/16/2018	2:40 PM
后期-Zach	字的边框虚化	10/16/2018	2:43 PM
打杂-Alice	高级了	10/16/2018	2:43 PM
轴子-Peter	歌词加下这个就行	10/16/2018	2:44 PM
后期-Zach	但是我记得 be 只有 1 跟 0 啊 1 是打开 0 是关闭	10/16/2018	2:44 PM
打杂-Alice	我加好了	10/16/2018	2:44 PM
后期-Zach	我都是用 blur 的	10/16/2018	2:44 PM

打杂-Alice	就加在每一行开头嘛	10/16/2018	2:44 PM
轴子-Peter	你改成 100 看下/斜眼笑	10/16/2018	2:48 PM
轴子-Peter	\n 自动化里有这个添加边角模糊的选项，全选歌词行添加，然后查找替换里把{\be1}换成{\be1	10/16/2018	2:49 PM

Extract 4.33 (Thread 20190328)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
轴子-Yu	想到 Popper 刚开始拉轴那会儿纯手动一行一行把文字从 txt 里复制进 aegisub 然后拉轴的效率也是高到没人察觉他不知道可以直接全文汇入的程度	3/28/2019	1:27 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Yu	直到翻了好几个档之后在教别的新人拉轴的时候他自己说出来才知道简直天秀	3/28/2019	1:28 AM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	我也是一行一行复制的	3/28/2019	1:48 AM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Kate	Alice 也是神人（	3/28/2019	1:49 AM
轴子-Peter	把 txt 文档往里面一拖就行啦	3/28/2019	1:58 AM
轴子-Peter	要不怎么让翻译翻的时候分好段	3/28/2019	1:58 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Popper	快哭了 Yu 老板暴露我的黑历史	3/28/2019	2:12 AM
轴子-Peter	自学的多少都有点黑历史，用记事本打开的方法替换错字用了几个月后才发现软件里本身带	3/28/2019	2:28 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Kate	我当年的自学黑历史是看人家说用 AE 做字幕于是以为是 Adobe After Effects……	3/28/2019	2:35 AM
轴子-Kate	然后用这个 AE 做了好几个字幕……	3/28/2019	2:35 AM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Alex	一个比一个强	3/28/2019	2:36 AM

后期-Zach	那更牛了　还会 ae	3/28/2019	2:37 AM
[Interval of messages]			
渣轴&翻-Momo	都是大佬	3/28/2019	3:27 AM
校对-Lin	我组真是卧虎藏龙啊	3/28/2019	3:29 AM

Appendix VI Original interview and communication extracts used in Chapter 5

Notes: All times are in UTC+1.

All participant names are pseudonyms. The ID ‘mr.anderson’ presents the researcher.

In the case of Alice’s interview data, all the questions from the researcher are in bold letters.

Extract 5.1 (Interview with Momo)

2019-10-23 19:41:39 mr.anderson
那当时入坑的契机是什么呢？

[…]

2019-10-23 19:45:13 Momo
高桥南哭的稀里哗啦（这可能是任何一届总选啊哈哈哈）

2019-10-23 19:45:19 Momo
然后就首推高桥南了

2019-10-23 19:45:41 Momo
怎么说，大概是因为自己没这么努力

2019-10-23 19:46:01 Momo
所以推得两位都是努力家型

2019-10-23 19:46:14 mr.anderson
诶，还推过哪一位啊？

2019-10-23 19:46:17 Momo
高桥南和冈田奈奈

2019-10-23 19:46:25 Momo
现在首推冈田奈

[…]

2019-10-23 19:53:11 mr.anderson

那可以请你再说说喜欢奈酱和高桥南的原因吗？除了努力家属性以外

2019-10-23 19:53:27 Momo
我可能喜欢唱歌好听的人

2019-10-23 19:53:30 Momo
再加上

2019-10-23 19:53:45 Momo
高桥南的领导家属性我觉得真不错

2019-10-23 19:53:51 Momo
我自己学管理的

2019-10-23 19:54:12 Momo
就是想做一个能统合大家的人

2019-10-23 19:54:18 Momo
而且这样聚人心的人

[…]

2019-10-23 19:55:12 Momo
总觉得

2019-10-23 19:55:15 Momo
看到她

2019-10-23 19:55:24 Momo
我就能再努力努力

2019-10-23 19:55:51 mr.anderson
所以就是一种励志的作用？

2019-10-23 19:55:57 Momo
对

Extract 5.2 (Interview with Momo)

2019-10-23 20:34:59 mr.anderson
你一共加入过几个字幕组啊？

2019-10-23 20:35:12 Momo

就两个，大吧是我加的第一个字幕组

[…]

2019-10-23 20:38:44 Momo
原因一个是想说白嫖了这么多年

2019-10-23 20:39:00 Momo
总要做点力所能及的事

Extract 5.3 (Interview with Daisie)

2019-10-26 18:32:28 Daisie
我是颜狗

2019-10-26 18:32:35 Daisie
只喜欢长得好看的

Extract 5.4 (Interview with Kenny)

2019-10-27 20:07:47 mr.anderson
那你推过哪些成员呢？

2019-10-27 20:08:19 Kenny
基本是 dd

2019-10-27 20:08:34 Kenny
推康康

2019-10-27 20:09:26 mr.anderson
OK

2019-10-27 20:09:36 mr.anderson
你觉得秋元康是你很欣赏的一个人吗？

2019-10-27 20:09:48 Kenny
歌词吧

2019-10-27 20:10:24 mr.anderson
原来是歌词饭啊

2019-10-27 20:10:28 Kenny
从以前就对歌词有兴趣

Extract 5.5 (Interview with Lin)

2019-10-24 22:34:05 mr.anderson
有对你影响很大让你很难忘的前辈吗？

2019-10-24 22:35:03 Lin
那应该是我当加入字幕组，水平还不太好的时候，照顾过我的校对了

2019-10-24 22:35:31 Lin
以前的校对都很认真的

2019-10-24 22:35:40 mr.anderson
嗯嗯

2019-10-24 22:35:46 Lin
会告诉你这次视频具体哪个地方翻译错了

2019-10-24 22:36:00 Lin
具体是哪个语法没有掌握等

2019-10-24 22:36:29 Lin
是正儿八经在培养下一代的主力的感觉

Extract 5.6 (Interview with Joan)

2019-10-25 23:42:08 mr.anderson
那你觉得冈田平板和大吧不糊的工作氛围有什么不同吗？

2019-10-25 23:42:55 Joan
这个应该是我和 Alice 的性格导致的吧，她不喜欢催呢，有的就做，没得也不催

2019-10-25 23:43:02 Joan
我不一样，我是会催档的人

2019-10-25 23:43:19 Joan
所以我们这边相比起来效率比较高吧

2019-10-25 23:44:00 Joan

然后那边感觉都是大佬，反正我感觉我插不上什么话

2019-10-25 23:44:10 mr.anderson
高手确实多

2019-10-25 23:45:13 Joan
我这边在的时间长，大家也算帮忙，所以我说的大家还能帮忙做的

2019-10-25 23:45:47 Joan
其实组和组的区别真的和管理者有关

2019-10-25 23:45:52 Joan
和公司一样

Extract 5.7 (Interview with Popper)

2019-11-01 21:00:36 mr.anderson
聚聚主要承担什么职务？

2019-11-01 21:00:43 Popper
拉轴

2019-11-01 21:00:58 Popper
水平太差了我，只能拉轴

[…]

2019-11-01 21:30:04 mr.anderson
你在大吧字幕组也是主要做拉轴的对吧？那感觉和你在 OTMG 工作的体验有什么区别呢？

2019-11-01 21:30:55 Popper
工作体验没区别啊，都是坐在那噼里啪啦几个小时，完活交工

Extract 5.8 (Interview with Alice)

4.11 你是如何看待自己在字幕组里的位置和角色的？

虽然学会了用 ae，但打轴水平还是非常差，翻译校对压制也还是不会，所以觉得自己在组里挺酱油的，也因为如此往往不好意思去催其他巨巨，hhh

Extract 5.9 (Interview with Lin)

2019-10-24 22:01:29 Lin
实在是没人啊

2019-10-24 22:01:40 Lin
我一开始也想当翻译的

2019-10-24 22:01:59 Lin
结果做第一期发现群里一个校对也没有

[…]

2019-10-24 22:02:50 Lin
也算是尽了一份力吧

那你在大吧字幕组里面都做过哪些职位呢？

2019-10-24 22:03:13 Lin
基本就是校对

2019-10-24 22:03:22 mr.anderson
OK

2019-10-24 22:03:26 Lin
可能就三四个档不是我校对的

2019-10-24 22:03:34 Lin
剩下的都是我干的

Extract 5.10 (Interview with Kenny)

2019-10-27 20:28:08 mr.anderson
你在大吧字幕组一般是怎么工作的？

2019-10-27 20:28:35 Kenny
只提供歌词

2019-10-27 20:29:18 mr.anderson
所有视频的歌词都提供吗？还是有选择性的？

2019-10-27 20:29:55 Kenny

因为有 Carol 聚聚在

2019-10-27 20:30:33 Kenny
一般都是她翻

2019-10-27 20:31:28 Kenny
我主要 AKB 新歌翻得较快。新歌用我的

Extract 5.11 (Interview with Alice)

4.2 字幕组的总体目标是什么？

当时就是做开闭秀呗，没想到一年不到开闭秀就完结了。期间也在某位校对的坚持下做出了第八届村内红白这样的大档，也做过一些 PV、TIF 什么的，现在基本咸鱼，偶尔吐一集神 TV。

Extract 5.12 (Interview with Alice)

4.10 在 AKB48 SHOW！停播以后，你是如何看待大吧字幕组一路走来的轨迹的？是否认为字幕组达到了成立时设定的目标？

虽然没想到那么快就停播，但是至少我们陪这个节目走完了，从触角手里接过这个档以来每一集包括炒冷饭都出档了（除了 46 秀和个人秀），我觉得是达到了成立时的目标的

Extract 5.13 (Interview with Lin)

2019-10-24 22:27:24 mr.anderson
开闭秀结束以后，大吧字幕组的主要工作也告一段落了，你是如何大吧字幕组一路走来的轨迹的？

2019-10-24 22:27:41 mr.anderson
有达到一开始设定的目标吗？

2019-10-24 22:27:58 Lin
我觉得是大成功吧

2019-10-24 22:28:27 mr.anderson
哦？怎么说呢？

2019-10-24 22:28:40 Lin
我们做了每一期的 48show

2019-10-24 22:28:57 Lin
这就已经完成了当初的目标

2019-10-24 22:29:05 Lin
何况我们还出了其它档

Extract 5.14 (Interview with Popper)

2019-11-01 21:25:35 mr.anderson
那你觉得大吧字幕组总体表现怎么样？达到成立时候的目标了吗？

2019-11-01 21:28:07 Popper
总体表现还凑合吧，因为组长太软妹了，导致大家普遍拖档[表情]但是每一集的 akbshow 都补上了字幕，完成了历史使命

Extract 5.15 (Interview with Alice)

4.3 字幕组是以什么方式和标准来选择要翻译的视频的？

就是没人做的档我们来做呗。。。

可以详细说一下怎么从没人做的档里挑选要做的档吗？比如是偏向选择“大档”或者“小档”，还是侧重特定视频内容风格等

一开始是开闭秀没人做了所以我们来做，开闭秀完结之后就看索引，以前的神 TV 有哪些集没人做我们来做，还有单曲 PV 没人做的我们来做，大档工作量太大比较有难度所以还是倾向于小档吧，其实到目前为止大档也就出过一个村内红白，其他都是小档

Extract 5.16 (Interview with Daisie)

2019-10-26 18:48:21 Daisie
没有人接的翻译

2019-10-26 18:48:26 Daisie
我一般都会接

2019-10-26 18:48:49 mr.anderson
这样

2019-10-26 18:48:54 Daisie
看不得 Alice 一遍遍的问

2019-10-26 18:49:29 Daisie
工作很忙的时候我也会挤出时间来翻译

2019-10-26 18:49:35 Daisie
基本不拖稿

Extract 5.17 (Interview with Alice)

4.6 字幕组主要以什么方式来保证字幕作品的质量？

全靠校对巨巨_(:3)∠)_

比较活跃的校对聚聚主要有谁呢？他们一般有几道校对程序？会经常在组里沟通校对遇到的问题吗？

其实我们组里就三个校对，Fisher 巨巨比较忙，主要靠 Lin 和 Kate，特别是 Lin 巨巨非常辛苦，他们有几道程序我就不清楚了，遇到的问题是会在群里说的

Extract 5.18 (Interview with Lin)

2019-10-24 22:04:16 mr.anderson
作为校对你一般是怎么工作的？

2019-10-24 22:06:35 Lin
校对的工作就是先把翻译听不懂的听懂，听错的改正，然后纠正语法和不正规的用语，最后统一整个视频对成员或某些地点等特定用词的翻译，顺带着把轴子改了

2019-10-24 22:07:30 mr.anderson
就是一个质量把关的作用

2019-10-24 22:07:59 Lin
对

Extract 5.19 (Interview with Lin)

2019-10-24 22:13:58 mr.anderson 总体来说，你对于自己的校对工作的质量评价如何？ 2019-10-24 22:14:19 mr.anderson 觉得达到你自己和字幕组的期待了吗？ 2019-10-24 22:14:20 Lin 我给自己打 80 分吧 2019-10-24 22:14:54 Lin 我要求是比较严的 2019-10-24 22:15:03 Lin 但我也有听错的时候 2019-10-24 22:15:18 Lin 总体质量应该是没问题的 2019-10-24 22:15:24 Lin 问题也是肯定有的

Extract 5.20 (Thread 20180829)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	为什么这次 53 单 PV 快一周了还没被版权	8/29/2018	1:08 PM
打杂-Alice	那个挂全名的中字播放量六千了	8/29/2018	1:08 PM
打杂-Alice	我们这个和谐版才一千	8/29/2018	1:08 PM
打杂-Alice	苦呀西	8/29/2018	1:08 PM
打杂-Alice	我一直盼着它被版权	8/29/2018	1:09 PM
打杂-Alice	然而没有，只见播放量蹭蹭蹭涨	8/29/2018	1:09 PM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	而且那个中字阿婆主还是个 46 厨	8/29/2018	1:17 PM
打杂-Alice	苦呀西	8/29/2018	1:17 PM

Extract 5.21 (Thread 20180903)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
校对-Kate	那个录日字档的 up 主，每次只要有乃团秀下面就会有人评论这不是开闭秀，好了人家不投了	9/3/2018	6:53 AM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	投了啊	9/3/2018	9:11 AM
打杂-Alice	这周也投了	9/3/2018	9:11 AM
打杂-Alice	只是日字出的比中字还慢	9/3/2018	9:11 AM
校对-Kate	就这周	9/3/2018	9:11 AM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Kate	之前说的时候就生气了一次了 后来我在群里求档过了两周他又发了（）	9/3/2018	9:12 AM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Kate	就单纯觉得这种饭圈里才区分的事情没有必要非得让人家录日综的 up 来管	9/3/2018	9:14 AM

Extract 5.22 (Thread 20181120)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
打杂-Alice	akbfun 索引的老大找我说	11/20/2018	1:11 PM
打杂-Alice	让我们来投 TKMN 的病狗	11/20/2018	1:12 PM
轴子-Popper	是喜事啊	11/20/2018	1:12 PM
打杂-Alice	这是啥意思	11/20/2018	1:15 PM
片源-Siyang	给轴子，自己压	11/20/2018	1:15 PM
轴子-Popper	就是给你字幕文件	11/20/2018	1:15 PM
打杂-Alice	也就是他们组没有压制吗	11/20/2018	1:15 PM
[Interval of messages]			
压制-Ken	有压制	11/20/2018	1:21 PM
压制-Ken	比较忙	11/20/2018	1:21 PM
压制-Ken	Tk 的群我没退	11/20/2018	1:21 PM
压制-Ken	很久以前有段时间我也压过	11/20/2018	1:22 PM
后期-Zach	残心混了多少个字幕组 48 有没有	11/20/2018	1:22 PM
压制-Ken	最多的时候有个 20 多个吧	11/20/2018	1:23 PM
压制-Ken	15 年退坑的	11/20/2018	1:23 PM

Extract 5.23 (Thread 20190109)

Participant	Conversation	Date	Time
翻译-Daisie	@打杂-Alice 我们字幕组做感谢祭不？	1/9/2019	12:02 PM
[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Daisie	这边站子可以出轴子校对	1/9/2019	12:55 PM
[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Daisie	要做我就把她拉进来	1/9/2019	12:57 PM
翻译-Daisie	档源也可以提供	1/9/2019	12:57 PM
打杂-Alice	樱花家的？	1/9/2019	12:58 PM
打杂-Alice	别了别了	1/9/2019	12:58 PM
[Interval of messages]			
打杂-Alice	你们可以另外拉个群？	1/9/2019	12:58 PM
[Interval of messages]			
校对-Lin	拉个讨论组吧	1/9/2019	12:58 PM
[Interval of messages]			
后期-Zach	合作？我代表雨伞诶	1/9/2019	12:59 PM
轴子-Alex	合作？我家只有我？也算上吧/坏笑	1/9/2019	1:00 PM
轴子-Charlie	合作？我家有我，也算上吧	1/9/2019	1:00 PM
[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Daisie	要另外拉个群吗	1/9/2019	1:02 PM
美工-Wen	拉个讨论组呗	1/9/2019	1:02 PM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Alex	我挂不挂组名无所谓的	1/9/2019	1:09 PM
轴子-Alex	纯帮忙不写我们组也没关系，反正我家字幕组都只有我一个人了	1/9/2019	1:10 PM
[Interval of messages]			
翻译-Daisie	个人名义参与就行	1/9/2019	1:11 PM
[Interval of messages]			
轴子-Charlie	对呀，能挂名当然好，不挂也无所谓的，主要是想多出熟肉造福于人	1/9/2019	1:14 PM

Extract 5.24 (Interview with Joan)

2019-10-25 21:32:37 mr.anderson
你加入过哪些饭圈内的社群组织呢？

2019-10-25 21:32:43 mr.anderson

比如应援会字幕组什么的

2019-10-25 21:32:55 Joan
奈酱的应援会和字幕组

2019-10-25 21:33:05 Joan
而且字幕组算是我创办的

2019-10-25 21:33:22 mr.anderson
OK

2019-10-25 21:33:26 mr.anderson
其他还有吗？

2019-10-25 21:33:51 Joan
还有大吧字幕组算是待的比较久的

2019-10-25 21:33:58 Joan
其他的就很少了

2019-10-25 21:34:19 mr.anderson
明白

2019-10-25 21:34:51 mr.anderson
你在奈酱的应援会里是否担任过特定的职位呢？

2019-10-25 21:35:28 Joan
帮忙在大吧搬运过大半年的手机博

2019-10-25 21:35:52 Joan
然后就是 jz 的时候帮忙

[…]

2019-10-25 21:36:34 Joan
现在主要是在管理字幕组了，所以应援会那边没过去了

Extract 5.25 (Interview with Joan)

2019-10-25 22:15:24 mr.anderson
那在一个具体的翻译项目中，你一般会起什么样的角色？

2019-10-25 22:19:33 Joan

首先我会确定要做的档，然后先确定档源，然后开始找翻译人员和轴君，确定好人数和分配时间，毕竟一个大档需要多个人合作完成，我在字幕组除了管理也是轴君，在自己有时间的时候也会帮忙做档

2019-10-25 22:19:50 Joan
我基本是协调各方面人和统合的角色

2019-10-25 22:20:11 Joan
基本每一步都会经过我的

2019-10-25 22:20:21 Joan
但成品不会在我这里

2019-10-25 22:20:48 Joan
这个在正式的字幕组里应该是监制的角色

Extract 5.26 (Interview with Joan)

2019-10-25 21:36:26 mr.anderson
在这些职位上一般是怎么工作的？

2019-10-25 21:37:24 Joan
我们找回翻译的聚聚翻译好，发布到微博上，然后我从微博上复制到大吧里

2019-10-25 21:38:10 Joan
jz 的话是帮忙录数据

[…]

2019-10-25 21:38:31 Joan
我就是帮忙把字符串录入到表格里

2019-10-25 21:38:42 Joan
方便投票的人复制投票

Extract 5.27 (Interview with Joan)

2019-10-25 23:34:15 mr.anderson
好的，那接下来想问一下你当时加入大吧不糊的契机是什么？

2019-10-25 23:34:22 mr.anderson

大吧不糊字幕组

2019-10-25 23:34:51 Joan
她们说缺轴君，我就出于人道主义就进去帮忙了

2019-10-25 23:34:53 Joan
嘿嘿

2019-10-25 23:35:01 mr.anderson
OK

2019-10-25 23:35:13 Joan
她们之前在做 rh，没有轴君，我就过去帮忙了

2019-10-25 23:35:22 mr.anderson
喔喔

2019-10-25 23:35:35 mr.anderson
后续的档也参加过吗？

2019-10-25 23:35:49 Joan
还帮忙做过一个神 tv

2019-10-25 23:36:06 Joan
其他档就没有了，她们那边有轴君的

2019-10-25 23:36:18 Joan
我这边也比较忙，就没怎么做

Extract 5.28 (Interview with Kenny)

2019-10-27 20:20:55 mr.anderson
大概加入过多少个字幕组？

2019-10-27 20:21:01 Kenny
有人要用歌词就加进去了

2019-10-27 20:21:22 Kenny
4、5 个吧

Extract 5.29 (Interview with Zach)

2019-11-02 20:25:43 mr.anderson
可以说说加入过哪些字幕组吗？

2019-11-02 20:28:34 Zach
字幕组大部分也都是消失状态，最主要还是你有雨伞、不要蛋黄酱、AKB48 吧咯

2019-11-02 20:29:24 mr.anderson
OK

2019-11-02 20:29:34 mr.anderson
在这些字幕组都担任过什么职位呢？

2019-11-02 20:31:06 Zach
主要是时间轴、后期、压制

[…]

2019-11-02 20:45:34 Zach
[表情]其实最多的是我自己跑出去做

2019-11-02 20:45:43 Zach
没有挂字幕组的名

2019-11-02 20:46:07 mr.anderson
是指和其他的聚聚临时合作吗？

2019-11-02 20:47:40 Zach
认识其他组的人，那边缺个轴什么的就帮下忙，还有就是个人名义联合一下做场 live

Extract 5.30 (Interview with Daisie)

2019-10-26 18:43:32 mr.anderson
那你加入过范圈内的哪些社群组织呢？比如说应援会或者字幕组等等

2019-10-26 18:43:54 Daisie
我加入过樱花的字幕组

[…]

2019-10-26 18:44:27 Daisie

好几个

2019-10-26 18:44:46 Daisie
主要还是 Alice 的字幕组

[…]

2019-10-26 18:45:52 Daisie
我想着，既可以追星，也可以锻炼日语

Extract 5.31 (Interview with Momo)

019-10-23 20:39:32 Momo
还有一个是，也想练一练

2019-10-23 20:39:35 mr.anderson
懂的

2019-10-23 20:39:47 mr.anderson
提高日汉翻译水平？

2019-10-23 20:40:01 Momo
对，因为当时也确定说要去日本留学

2019-10-23 20:40:11 Momo
就想练一下听力

Extract 5.32 (Interview with Zach)

2019-11-02 22:14:44 mr.anderson
总体来说，你觉得你个人的喜好和情感会不会影响到你对于字幕工作的态度？

2019-11-02 22:19:45 Zach
不会，这 4、5 年来，做字幕更多地是一种责任，当初选择走进来，除非完全没活干了，不然还是会继续做下去吧

Extract 5.33 (Interview with Kenny)

2019-10-27 21:04:44 mr.anderson

字幕组歌词质量低的现状也是你想提供自己的翻译的原因之一吗？

[…]

2019-10-27 21:05:27 Kenny
应该是吧

[…]

2019-10-27 21:06:21 Kenny
我觉得很多好歌词都被埋没了。但确实很多人不关心歌词

2019-10-27 21:07:10 mr.anderson
所以可不可以说你觉得自己对于促进饭圈重视并欣赏歌词抱有一定的责任感？

2019-10-27 21:07:58 Kenny
应该是吧。

Extract 5.34 (Interview with Popper)

2019-11-01 19:59:47 馬嘉伶的棒棒糖🍭
其实是喜欢她们的努力，喜欢她们艰难奋斗的模样，就像看到了自己。我不喜欢推 Top，因为离自己的生活太远了。我推都是非常努力营业但是却无法拿到好成绩型的

2019-11-01 20:00:39 mr.anderson
OK

2019-11-01 20:00:41 馬嘉伶的棒棒糖🍭
[表情]但是我希望我推可以大火特火，她们能实现梦想的话，好像自己也可以。共同努力共同提高

Extract 5.35 (Interview with Momo)

2019-10-23 19:47:09 Momo
哭了，AKB 大船将沉

2019-10-23 19:47:20 Momo
碰到的所有日本人都是

2019-10-23 19:47:25 Momo
啊...AKB 啊

2019-10-23 19:47:31 Momo
正在走下坡路呢

2019-10-23 19:47:53 mr.anderson
这几年说多了都是泪啊

2019-10-23 19:48:22 Momo
大概死在坑里的心路历程就是这样了

2019-10-23 19:48:26 Momo
而且不知道为什么

2019-10-23 19:48:31 Momo
爬坑爬不出去

2019-10-23 19:48:49 Momo
乃团和绿团就是缺了点什么

2019-10-23 19:49:10 MomoS
以前可能是饭偶像带着我走的这么个心态

2019-10-23 19:49:29 mr.anderson
也有其他聚聚有类似的感觉哈哈

2019-10-23 19:49:30 Momo
现在更近于是，都这样了我要加油拉她们的感觉

Extract 3.36 (Interview with Daisie)

2019-10-26 19:09:07 Daisie
NGT 事件对我的打击很大

2019-10-26 19:09:14 mr.anderson
怎么说呢？

2019-10-26 19:09:28 Daisie
一下子就好像没有办法喜欢开闭了

2019-10-26 19:10:03 mr.anderson
很多人都这么说

2019-10-26 19:10:06 Daisie

因为为了逃避现实才来饭偶像的

2019-10-26 19:10:19 Daisie
结果这里比现实还黑暗

2019-10-26 19:10:47 Daisie
最重要的是运营把粉丝当傻子

Extract 3.37 (Interview with Lin)

2019-10-24 21:28:36 Lin
其实更多的还有她们背后的一些东西

2019-10-24 21:28:54 mr.anderson
可以具体说说吗？

2019-10-24 21:28:59 Lin
比如跟着她们的脚步可以了解到更多日本的东西

2019-10-24 21:29:12 Lin
她们只是一个窗口

2019-10-24 21:29:31 mr.anderson
嗯嗯

2019-10-24 21:29:37 Lin
透过她们可以了解到更多日本的文化等

2019-10-24 21:29:44 mr.anderson
确实

2019-10-24 21:29:47 Lin
包括我的日语都是她们给的

2019-10-24 21:30:01 mr.anderson
这句话怎么说呢？

2019-10-24 21:30:33 Lin
开始学日语是因为想听懂她们说的话，想去日本看演唱会

2019-10-24 21:31:00 mr.anderson
嗯嗯

2019-10-24 21:31:01 Lin
我的日语很大程度上是自学+看 48 的各种视频

[…]

2019-10-24 21:33:06 mr.anderson
那你决定去日本读书和喜欢她们有关系吗？

2019-10-24 21:33:19 Lin
虽然这么说不太好

2019-10-24 21:33:44 Lin
我去日本学习就是想更接近一下她们

Extract 5.38 (Interview with Joan)

2019-10-25 21:45:27 mr.anderson
那你个人对总选集资这种行为怎么看？

2019-10-25 21:46:54 Joan
怎么说呢，不会说不赞成，但希望大家是在力所能及的情况下做努力，要是为了这个让自己连饭都吃不起了就不好了，由其是学生党

2019-10-25 21:47:51 Joan
我追星追的是自己的理想，自己达不到的理想希望别人帮忙达到，但现实还是最重要的

2019-10-25 21:48:12 Joan
要是为了这个把现实忽略，那就有点过了

[…]

2019-10-25 21:49:11 Joan
所以，我在单身的时候，也会好几千的 jz，但是结婚后就没有了，毕竟有自己的家庭了，要为自己家庭负责的

Extract 5.39 (Interview with Daisie)

2019-10-26 19:12:36 Daisie
偶像给我带来快乐，我花钱是应该的

2019-10-26 19:13:07 Daisie

但是如果她不能带来快乐，我也不想花钱

[…]

2019-10-26 19:14:17 Daisie
我觉得她带给我的快乐值多少钱我就会花多少钱

2019-10-26 19:14:35 Daisie
所以我买碟也不收藏的

2019-10-26 19:14:45 Daisie
生写也一样

2019-10-26 19:14:55 Daisie
只是为了买这个服务

Extract 5.40 (Interview with Lin)

2019-10-24 21:48:15 mr.anderson
那你一般会用哪些网站和 app 来获取有关 AKB 的信息和视频呢？

2019-10-24 21:48:55Lin
推特 ins sr 油管

2019-10-24 21:49:23 mr.anderson
所以还是以墙外的为主？

2019-10-24 21:49:36Lin
现在环境太恶劣

2019-10-24 21:49:45Lin
以前我刚入坑那会

2019-10-24 21:49:55Lin
国内啥视频都有

2019-10-24 21:50:10Lin
酱坛能看好几年

2019-10-24 21:50:25Lin
现在国内想找啥都难

2019-10-24 21:50:25 mr.anderson
嗯嗯

2019-10-24 21:50:43Lin
手机博翻译也不太多了

2019-10-24 21:51:12Lin
对新饭太不友好了

Extract 5.41 (Interview with Momo)

2019-10-23 19:50:41 Momo
然而现在版权太严了，再加上也没什么档了，本来安利就难卖了

2019-10-23 19:50:47 Momo
更卖不出去了

[…]

2019-10-23 21:51:15 mr.anderson
那看这些字幕组的作品对你对于开闭的态度和感情有什么影响吗？

[…]

2019-10-23 21:53:41 Momo
一个好的字幕组真的挺重要

2019-10-23 21:53:51 Momo
特别是这种信息不是很流通的情况下

2019-10-23 21:54:02 Momo
虽然真的是在做着违法的事情

2019-10-23 21:54:21 Momo
但是光是能看到这些信息就对我们是很大的帮助