

## MASTER'S THESIS

### The Subtler's visibility management: a case study of WHV's and YYeTs's Chinese translations of The Big Bang Theory

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a study on the subtitler's visibility management as manifested by their subtitling approaches. The special textuality and the recent digitization of subtitling practices make the subtitler's visibility management through subtitling an issue that is rather distinctive from the translator's visibility in general. Previous studies that directly investigate subtitler's visibility tend to focus on subtitler's relatively restricted and/or linear social interactions, while relevant discussion that examines their non-linear social interactions such as subtitling is very rare. Almost no study has provided either a conceptualization of subtitler's visibility or a systematic analytical framework specifically for analysing the subtitler's visibility management through subtitling.

In the current study, the author examines the subtitler's visibility management through subtitling by comparing WHV industrial subtitlers' and YYeTs fansubbers' subtitling approaches to *The Big Bang Theory*. Based on Nornes's (2007) notions of corrupt and abusive subtitling and Ortabasi's critiques on the lack of multimodality in these notions, it has been hypothesized that the two groups of subtitlers' approaches differ in two dimensions and three aspects of issues. Accordingly, an analytical framework is constructed to systematically interrogate the two groups of subtitlers' visibility management as reflected by their subtitling approaches: 1) comparing their subtitling approaches to the verbal and nonverbal issues identified in the *represented* dimension; 2) comparing their subtitling approaches to the technical issues identified in the *representing* dimension; 3) comparing and discussing how their relatively different approaches in the two dimensions demonstrate their different visibility management.

The findings suggest that the ways in which WHV industrial subtitlers and YYeTs fansubbers manage their visibility differently are multifaceted and bidimensional. First, the industrial subtitlers tend to adopt a relatively corrupt approach and the fansubbers tend to adopt a relatively abusive approach in the *represented* dimension, while the relative differences between their approaches are more drastic in the verbal aspect than in the nonverbal aspect. Second, the above-found relative differences between the two groups of subtitlers' approaches are even more explicitly consistent in the technical aspect of the *representing* dimension. Third, in both dimensions, the industrial subtitlers gain less visibility through the relatively corrupt approach and the fansubbers acquire more visibility through the relatively abusive approach. More profoundly, by adopting the relatively corrupt approach, the industrial subtitlers perform gatekeepers in the *represented* dimension and adherents in the *representing* dimension; by using the relatively abusive approach, the fansubbers present themselves as educators in the *represented* dimension and as innovators in the *representing* dimension.

Beyond these findings, this thesis also makes broader theoretical and methodological contributions. It has demonstrated how a nonbinary and generative conceptualization of the subtitler's visibility from a sociological perspective, hitherto never provided by previous discussions, can lead to more fruitful investigations on the subtitler's visibility management. This combination of Nornes's (2007) notions of corrupt and abusive subtitling and Ortabasi's (2007)

critiques on them offers us a set of analytical tools for thoroughly investigating how subtitlers manage their visibility differently through subtitling.

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