

**Freelance Subtitlers in a Subtitle Production
Network in the OTT Industry in Thailand:
A Longitudinal Study**

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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List of Abbreviations

AD	Audio description
AI	Artificial intelligence
ANT	Actor-Network Theory
AVOD	Advertising video on demand
AVT	Audiovisual translation
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis
cpl	Characters per line
cps	Characters per second
CV	Certified vendor
LSP	Language service provider
MLP	Media localisation provider
MT	Machine translation
OPP	Obligatory passage point
OTT	Over-the-top
OTTP	Over-the-top service provider
PE	Post-editing
PM	Project manager
QA	Quality assurance
QC	Quality control
QLR	Qualitative longitudinal research
RQ	Research question
SPN	Subtitle production network
ST	Source text
SV	Small vendor
SVOD	Subscription video on demand
TA	Thematic analysis (referred particularly to 'reflexive' thematic analysis in this thesis)
TL	Target language
TS	Translation Studies
TVOD	Transactional video on demand
UI	User interface
VOD	Video on demand

Abstract

Title: Freelance Subtitlers in a Subtitle Production Network in the OTT Industry in Thailand: A Longitudinal Study

Wichaya Pidchamook

The present study sets out to investigate a subtitle production network in the over-the-top (OTT) industry in Thailand through the perspective of freelance subtitlers. A qualitative longitudinal research design was adopted to gain insights into (1) the way the work practices of freelance subtitlers are influenced by both human and non-human actors in the network, (2) the evolution of the network, and (3) how the freelance subtitlers' perception of quality is influenced by changes occurring in the network. Eleven subtitlers were interviewed every six months over a period of two years, contributing to over 60 hours of interview data. The data analysis was informed by selected concepts from Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Law 1992, 2009; Latour 1996, 2005; Mol 2010), and complemented by the three-dimensional quality model proposed by Abdallah (2016, 2017). Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2019a, 2020b) was used to generate themes and sub-themes which address the research questions and tell compelling stories about the actor-network. It was found that from July 2017 to September 2019, the subtitle production network, which was sustained by complex interrelationships between actors, underwent a number of changes. The changes affected the work practices of freelance subtitlers in a more negative than positive way, demonstrating their precarious position in an industry that has widely adopted the vendor model (Moorkens 2017). Moreover, as perceived by the research participants, under increasingly undesirable working conditions, it became more challenging to maintain a quality process and to produce quality subtitles. Finally, translation technology and tools, including machine translation, were found to be key non-human actors that catalyse the changes in the network under study.

Keywords: subtitle production network, freelance subtitlers, precarious work, three-dimensional quality model

Chapter 1 Introduction

‘The subtitling industry will evolve with new ways of producing, valuing, protecting and distributing subtitles. The rise of global players, the development of artificial intelligence, and the growth of demand and fast-paced production requirements can be overwhelming.’

- IPEDA (2017, online)

1.1 Introduction

Video streaming is big business as video streaming services worldwide reached a value of USD 42.14 billion in 2019 (Globe Newswire 2020), and the sector saw a surge in growth during the pandemic lockdown (Alexander 2020). This growth has been felt in Southeast Asia as elsewhere, with Thailand being no exception (Magdirila 2017). The expansion of such services in the region relies increasingly on audiovisual translation (AVT) practices such as dubbing and subtitling, and thus on the practitioners of AVT, who can be seen as forming production networks. Relatively little is known about such production networks in the Thai context however, despite the fact that their recent emergence offers a timely opportunity to reflect on a number of issues that have become important in translation studies (TS), including the status of translators and the sustainability of language industry practices, as well as the roles of technology and collaboration in translation in general, and AVT in particular.

Against this backdrop, this thesis sets out to investigate a subtitle production network (SPN) in the over-the-top (OTT)¹ industry in Thailand from the perspective of a group of freelance subtitlers who make video content accessible to Thai speakers. Using a qualitative, longitudinal approach, it tracks the development of the network over the course of two years. The study aims to shed particular light on two intertwined aspects in professional AVT, namely the work practices and working conditions of Thai freelance subtitlers, and to explore a third issue, that of how quality is approached in the SPN. The study thus addresses an absence of empirical studies on professional subtitlers in Thailand. Existing publications are mostly concerned with the European (Abdallah and Koskinen 2007; Abdallah 2011, 2012) and Greater Chinese contexts (Kuo 2014). Moreover, TS scholarship still lacks substantial research on translation agents in OTT services, despite the fact that video streaming platforms have become an increasingly popular option that can potentially

¹ OTT (over-the-top) is the practice of distributing video and other media content over the internet, as opposed to through cable or satellite channels, although the term is commonly used for video-on-demand streaming services, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video (Alonso 2019).

outperform traditional media as means of distribution and consumption of audiovisual content. Most past studies show burgeoning interest in actors involved in the production of literary or technical texts. The present study seeks to fill this existing research gap.

The current chapter, which serves as an introduction to the study, sets the scene by introducing the OTT video industry as a promising business, whose expansion relies on media localisation. The chapter goes on to discuss some prevalent employment trends in the language industry, particularly in the entertainment media localisation sector, as a prelude to the examination of the professional work practices carried out by freelance subtitlers, as significant actors in an SPN in the Thai OTT industry. The rationale for the study and three main research questions it asks are also presented, and the structure of the thesis is outlined.

1.2 The OTT Industry

It has become a global trend for viewers to consume various types of media content on digital devices in their preferred manner, time, and place (Crisp 2015). New types of media consumers also prefer to consume entertainment content from overseas at the same time as viewers in the original country (Bywood et al. 2017). This phenomenon is enabled and facilitated by advanced communication technological infrastructure. There is increasing demand for video content viewing, as OTT services have become more common and video on demand (VOD) content is now available on more than 1,000 devices (O'Donovan 2017). While OTT generally includes not only videos but also audio and other media content that uses the Internet as a distribution and access channel (Dhesi 2017), such as mobile VoIP apps and mobile instant messaging (Leesa-Nguansuk and Phoosuphanusorn 2017), in the present study, we use 'OTT media' to refer to VOD streaming services.

VOD services are typically classified into three main types based on a monetisation model. Subscription video on demand (SVOD) is a category of services whose subscribers pay a monthly or annual fee to access an unlimited amount of content in the catalogue (Moll 2016). Other VOD types include transactional video on demand (TVOD), a model where customers pay to watch an individual piece of media content, and advertising video on demand (AVOD), whose consumers must view advertisements to access their desired content for free (Narasamma and Khan 2016). Blinkbox, Univers Ciné, Orange, BT Vision, Apples' iTunes, TF1 VoD, Canal+ VoD, and Film4oD are among the most well-known TVOD services in the European Union (Grece 2014). Examples of AVOD providers include websites such as Crackle and YouTube (Nelson 2013). Major SVOD players in the global market are Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+. It is estimated that by 2025,

SVOD revenues for 138 countries worldwide will double to reach USD 100 billion, with 1,170 million subscriptions (Digital TV Research 2020). China, India, and Japan will become major contributors to SVOD growth in Asia Pacific, boasting 147 million subscriptions (ibid.). It is also estimated that by 2023 Asia Pacific will make up the majority of worldwide VOD subscriptions (Stears 2019).

In contrast, in Southeast Asia, only 3.6 percent of households were subscribed to legal streaming services at the end of 2019, and people who access content legally prefer AVOD to SVOD platforms (Dataxis Report cited in Digital TV News 2020). That said, as the world switches to video streaming media, Southeast Asia is slowly catching up (Stears 2019). Media research group Kagan predicts that, by 2021, the number of paid subscriptions for streaming services will reach 1.9 million in the Philippines, 1.2 million in Malaysia, and 1.5 million in Thailand (Magdirila 2017).

1.2.1 Fast facts on the Thai OTT video industry

Internet users in Thailand are spending approximately 4.2 hours per day online, much higher than the daily average time people spend online in the US (two hours) and UK (1.8 hours) (Google 2017 cited in Beschorner et al. 2019). In another survey, Thai Internet users claim top place (among 33 countries) in terms of time spent on online and streaming TV (Trendstream Limited 2019). According to PwC's Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2019-2023, OTT video in Thailand is predicted to experience a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.64 percent, and will be the fastest-growing entertainment and media segment in the country, whereas the traditional TV and home video segment is forecast to grow at CAGR of 4.76 percent (Ten Kate 2019). Among the territories with the largest revenue from online video in Asia Pacific (excluding China), Thailand is ranked behind Japan, Australia & New Zealand, India, Korea and Taiwan (Frater 2019). The revenue from online audiovisual and VOD content in Thailand is relatively small when compared with large markets but it has a potential for growth, owing to its high mobile Internet users penetration rate of 79 percent, advanced Internet infrastructure (Shackleton 2019) and affluent younger generation (Kingkaew 2019). In a market where AVOD has been the more popular option, the SVOD segment has nevertheless seen steady and stiff competition among global, regional, and local players in the past ten years (ibid.). By 2024, the revenue from OTT entertainment content in the country is expected to reach USD 490 million (Digital TV Research 2019).

According to TIME Consulting (2017), OTT TV service providers in Thailand can be categorised into five main groups.² Relevant to the context of the present study are companies that belong in the first category known as ‘independent OTT TV providers’ which consist of local tech start-ups, tech start-ups from abroad, and internationally recognised OTT service providers. By the time the participants in this study gave their first interview (July-August 2017), there were at least 11 independent OTT TV providers in Thailand, namely, Monomax (originally launched as Doonung in 2011), Hollywood HDTV (launched in 2014), LINE TV (2014), YouTube Channel (2014), DOONEE (2015), Primetime HDTV (2015), HOOQ (2015), iflix (2015), Netflix (2016), Amazon Prime Video (2016), and Viu (2017).³

Key marketing strategies of regional and international players in the Thai OTT market – such as Netflix, Viu, WeTV, and TVB Anywhere – include catalogues featuring both Thai and international programmes, titles curated to the taste of Thai viewers (e.g. shows from Asian territories), affordable pricing (e.g. Netflix’s mobile-only plans), exclusive content for paid subscriptions (in the case of platforms with ‘freemium’ plans such as Viu), partnerships with South Korean celebrities, and, last but not least, language localisation through subtitling and dubbing (Magdirila 2017; Digital News Asia 2019; Shackleton 2019).

1.2.2 Media localisation for VOD services

As multimodal texts have proliferated at an unprecedented rate, so has the need to localise audiovisual content. Since the advent of DVDs in the mid-1990s up until the era of streaming media in the mid-2000s, viewers have been provided with choices to consume audiovisual content in many different languages as well as with the support of access services such as subtitling for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH) and audio description (AD) for the blind and the partially sighted (Bogucki and Díaz-Cintas 2020). VOD services have driven these AVT activities, including subtitling and dubbing, to ‘an all-time high’ (ibid., p. 15). From ‘a sidekick of

2 The first group is called independent OTT TV providers (see details above). The second group, OTT TV from content providers, consist of local media production companies, such as Exact Co., Ltd., Sinerio Co. Ltd., and Polyplus Entertainment Co, Ltd. The third group, OTT TV from free-to-air TV providers, include Channel 3, Channel 7, Channel 8, Workpoint, Mono, and ONE. Examples of the fourth group, OTT TV from pay TV providers, are TrueVisions Anywhere, and PSI. The fifth group, OTT TV from telco providers, include such platforms as TOT IPTV, AIS IPTV, 3BB, and AIS Play. As for AIS Play, the app allows its subscribers to access programmes from various content providers, including HBO GO on-demand service (Hawkes 2017). However, HBO GO service was pulled out from AIS Play on 12 March 2020, and HBO GO has been operating in the Thai market since 30 March 2020 as an independent OTT TV platform. The company also partners with 3BB (a broadband Internet service provider), allowing 3BB’s customers who pay for the GIGATainment package to stream HBO shows.

3 As of November 2020, HOOQ filed for liquidation, and iflix was acquired by Tencent.

post-production work', AVT has turned into a core business in the media sector (Georgakopoulou 2019b, p. 3) but also a determining factor of success for video streaming services aiming to attract a wider audience in international markets (Díaz-Cintas 2020a). Major OTT players spend a large sum of money on localisation to attract and retain subscribers. Strears (2019) contends that without localisation, a connection between provider and consumers is missing, making it difficult for a product to succeed. In the context of OTT services, it is often quoted that 'content will always be king, which makes accessibility its queen' (Lim 2020, online). Although the term accessibility in the quote includes factors beyond the language barrier (e.g. flexible subscription plans), it is undeniable that localisation of content plays a significant role in making the content accessible.

Lack of localisation, on the other hand, can result in poor uptake of a service. The launch of Netflix in Slovakia, for example, was deemed to fail in steering people away from traditional TV viewing 'because it offer[ed] no Slovak localisation, dubbing or subtitles' (Austin et al. 2016, p. 175). This was despite the fact that viewers in European countries are known to prefer consuming transnational audiovisual content in their own language rather than in 'established communication languages such as English' (IPEDA 2017, p. 7), regardless of the platform. Similarly, Cheh (2017) notes that Netflix, with 195.15 million subscribers worldwide as of October 2020 (Lee 2020), seemed to have a sluggish start in Asia due to its lack of 'linguistic diversity', as evidenced in the company's limited offering of non-English content at the time. Realising the added value of linguistic diversity to their service, Netflix is now localising into more than 30 languages (Harrison 2020), growing from more than 20 in 2017 (Rodríguez 2017). Localisation for video streaming services also includes procurement of rights to local content in the market where they are trying to establish a business, translation of website interface, and the (co-)production of original content⁴ (Lobato 2019). The production of original local content contributes to greater assets for localisation. Against this backdrop, audiovisual translators who can translate from the shows' original language into other languages (particularly English) are therefore in high demand. Nowadays, it is not uncommon for viewers in the US to watch a Thai TV series with English subtitles, or in other languages of their choice (e.g. Spanish, Chinese). Demand for translations into local languages will also continue to grow as long as there are new releases of imported content and titles in back catalogues that have not yet been published on the platforms (Díaz-

4 Examples of (co-)production of original content in the Southeast Asian markets include HOOQ's co-production of an Indonesian film *Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts* (Siregar 2017), iflix's commission of an Indonesian drama series *Magic Hour* (Russell 2017), Netflix's productions of original Thai content sci-fi fantasy *The Stranded* and a supernatural thriller *Shimmers* (Itthipongmaetee 2018), and TVB Anywhere's plans to co-produce original content in Thailand and Vietnam (which have been interrupted by the pandemic) (Chow 2020).

Cintas 2020a). The relations between AVT and the growth of OTT industry in international markets can thus be seen as bidirectional. Translation is an essential component for a video streaming company to thrive beyond its home territory. Simultaneously, as OTT platforms have gained more audiences globally, an increasing amount of media content that needs to be localised has created job opportunities for translators (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020) and ‘turned audiovisual translation into a billion-dollar industry’ (Estopace 2017, online).

As for Thailand, many consumers of transnational media content rely on Thai subtitling and dubbing to enjoy the programmes. This is particularly vital for shows in languages other than English (e.g. Korean, Japanese). At present, all OTT service providers in the country distribute some (if not most) of their non-Thai content with Thai subtitles and/or dubbing to cater for local viewers’ needs. In the first quarter of 2020, Viu ranked first in number of users and time spent per week, and came behind only Netflix in terms of streaming minutes, in Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand (PCCW Limited 2020).⁵ The platform’s great success is attributed to high quality content but also top-notch language localisation and user experience (ibid.). Indeed, when Viu was launched in Thailand in 2017, due to the diversity of the Asian region in terms of Internet connectivity, technology, and language, the company realised that it had to localise (Nambiar 2017). In contrast, Giachi (2020) suspects that one reason behind Amazon Prime Video’s relatively small number of subscribers in Thailand is the company’s limited interest in localising its shows into Thai or producing original Thai shows. Since its launch in the country in 2016, it has acquired approximately 100,000 subscriptions (ibid.). It is also interesting to note that when Netflix was launched in Thailand along with other 17 Asian countries in January 2016 (Cheh 2017), the company did not offer Thai subtitling or dubbing, nor did it localise websites and mobile app into Thai (Bangkok Post and AP 2016). It was not until April 2017 that Netflix started being ‘Truly Thai’ (Netflix 2017, online) and ‘[taking] local route’ by localising its user interface (UI) and subtitling and dubbing into Thai (DTVE Reporter 2017, online). This shows the streaming giant’s growing awareness of the significance of language localisation. By 2019, Netflix had approximately 709,000 subscribers in Thailand (Giachi 2020). The company had added Thai subtitles to thousands of hours of its content (ibid.), besides dubbing, and AD in Thai for some local content. A similar approach has been adopted by other VOD providers. For instance, WeTV aspires to offer ‘premium, fully localised entertainment options’ for Thai viewers (Digital News Asia 2019, online), TVB Anywhere releases its original content dubbed into Thai (Chow 2020), LINE TV has Thai-dubbed Korean and Japanese programming, and Viu localises popular Asian shows into the local language through subtitling and dubbing (Mahavongtrakul 2020). What is special about Viu’s

⁵ The survey did not include YouTube.

language localisation is that viewers can watch some programmes dubbed in northern and north-eastern dialects (Ahn 2020; TopTen 2021). Although some providers focus on offering shows with Thai dubbing (particularly shows in Chinese and Korean), the most common translation mode on OTT platforms is subtitling.

1.2.3 Subtitling on VOD platforms in Thailand

In this thesis, which examines professional practices of subtitlers working for OTT platforms that mainly distribute transnational media content, the term ‘subtitling’ generally denotes interlingual subtitling. Interlingual subtitling is a distinctive type of translation that is challenging on many fronts. Subtitles are written translations presented together with the original aural, and visual, texts. Gottlieb (2001, p. 16 cited in Pedersen 2010, p. 11) calls interlingual subtitling ‘semiotic jaywalking’, given that it is the practice of rendering texts from one mode (oral) in one language to a different mode (written) in another language. Subtitling is constrained by spatial and temporal limitations. To facilitate the viewers’ comprehension of the story without distracting them from immersing themselves in it, subtitles need to be of certain length and appear on screen for an optimal period of time. Subtitling has been recognised as the preferred mode of AVT because it is more budget-friendly and faster to produce than other modes (Díaz-Cintas 2010).

Since there is next to no research that specifically addresses language localisation on OTT/VOD platforms in Thailand, it is my educated guess that VOD platforms generally offer more shows with Thai subtitles than shows with Thai dubbing. Having said that, Netflix offers shows with both Thai subtitling and dubbing, usually in the case of high-profile titles expected to attract wide audiences. These include: Netflix Originals TV series and films such as *The Crown*, *Stranger Things*, and *Sex Education*; popular US series such as *Star Trek: Discovery*; Korean series like *Vagabond* and *Kingdom*; Japanese anime, including *Hi Score Girl* and *Ultraman*; a big-budget TV series adapted from popular video games, such as *The Witcher*; and *The Irishman*, the movie deal between Netflix and a legendary film director Martin Scorsese. It is also possible to watch foreign shows with Thai dubbing on other distribution channels, such as in cinemas and on free-to-air and cable TV. Still, the availability of Thai subtitles for *some* shows on VOD platforms is not sufficient to satisfy Thai viewers.⁶ In a study of factors influencing consumer behaviour which surveyed a sample of Netflix subscribers (most of whom are male, secondary school or university students, and aged between 15 and 22) in Chonburi province (N= 365), it was found that the area that the

⁶ Thailand is generally considered a dubbing country (Commit, n.d.), with dubbing as a more common AVT modality. However, on OTT platforms, subtitling is predominant, particularly for shows other than children’s programmes.

platform could improve the most was its language support, including offering more shows with Thai subtitles (Tomcharoen 2019). It is important to note that Thai is now one of Netflix's 21 'official languages'⁷ or languages which are prioritised for interface translation and subtitling (Lobato 2019, p. 117-118).

1.2.4 Freelancing and outsourcing in the language industry

During its infancy stage, the OTT/VOD industry in Thailand relied extensively on freelance subtitlers (A. Chaidee [pseudonym, a former project manager at an OTT company] 2016, personal communication, 17 May). Media localisation, like the language industry in general, has followed a prevalent employment trend: reliance on freelancers and outsourcing. Approximately 90 percent of language services are now outsourced (Rodríguez-Castro 2015). In fact, a growing number of sectors in the labour market worldwide are gravitating toward 'non-standard' employment (Brinkmann 2020) and precarious work (Kalleberg and Vallas 2018). 'Non-standard' employment refers to a job that is neither full-time nor open-ended wage employment, and that is often associated with irregular and unpredictable income, and/or insecurity when compared to fixed-term contracts (Bobek et al. 2018), whereas precarious work generally means 'work that is *uncertain, unstable, and insecure* and in which *employees bear the risks* of work (as opposed to business or government) and *receive limited social benefits and statutory protections*' (Kalleberg and Vallas 2018, p. 1, original emphasis). If we follow the above definitions, then a great number of translators can be classified as precarious workers with 'non-standard' employment.

In line with the spread of contingent workers as a global phenomenon, the number of freelancers and remote workers in Thailand is growing every year (Kongcheep 2016). In the language industry, the shift toward a contingent workforce and the deployment of subcontracting (or outsourcing) models are accelerated by interconnected factors, including the prevalent use of the vendor model, technologisation of the workplace, and more flexible organisational structures (Rodríguez-Castro 2015; Moorkens 2017). Also known as the freelance model, the vendor model, which is characterised by the reliance on freelance workers (Moorkens 2017), has also become, and will remain, a preferred option among language service providers (LSPs) on the ground of flexibility, scalability, and cost-effectiveness (Kelly et al. 2012 cited in Moorkens et al. 2016). The translators to whom LSPs outsource, like other self-employed contractors, are usually responsible

⁷ The 'official languages' are as follows: Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, and Turkish. This is an extended list of an original one (consisting of English, Spanish and Portuguese) when Netflix still operated only in the Americas.

for buying equipment and tools (unless working on online platforms), and taking care of their own health and job-related security issues (Castles 2012). Moreover, freelance translators' job satisfaction can be affected by the absence of opportunities to choose their teammates, work on their preferred projects, or ask for reference and support materials, such as term bases and translation memories (TMs) from prior projects (Rodríguez-Castro 2013).

One relatively recent trend in the job market that has been mentioned in the TS literature is the emergence of the gig economy. Also known as the on-demand economy, this new economic configuration is based on a 'collection of markets that match providers to consumers on a gig (or job) basis in support of on-demand commerce' (Donovan et al. 2016, p.1). In the basic model, gig workers make formal agreements to provide services to the on-demand companies' clients, and clients' requests are processed in an online platform or smartphone application (ibid.). The framework is suitable for workers who want to earn extra salaries (Aloisi 2016). The gig economy is characterised not only by advantages – such as flexible working hours for workers, cost reduction for companies, best fit of workers to individual jobs, and short turnaround times – but also drawbacks, particularly on the gig workers' side, including unpredictable income and insufficient social security benefits (Kapur 2018). Do Carmo (2020) laments that 'freelance work' in translation is turning to simply 'gig work', and that translators in the vendor model are subject to issues encountered by other professions in the gig economy.

Although globalisation and technologisation have led to increasing demands for translation, the resultant changes in employment models have, in turn, presented uncertainties in professional translators' working lives. A growing number of translators have become precarious workers in a production network and engaged in 'non-standard' employment mechanisms, such as the vendor model and/or gig economy. Most translators work on a freelance basis (Pym et al. 2012). The income of freelance translators is not as consistent as that of in-house staff members or translators working for regular vendors (Beuchert 2017). As for the AVT sector, projects are usually outsourced to vendors who then commission the tasks to freelance translators (Gambier 2013). Subtitlers are usually hired on a freelance basis unless working in countries where subtitling is in incredibly high demand (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007). In general, freelance subtitlers are paid per whole programme, per programme minute, per word, or per subtitle; and remuneration rates tend to fluctuate from one country or company to another (ibid., Kuo 2014).

Even when they have flexible working hours, this does not mean that freelance translators will have total control over deadlines. This is exactly the case for those working in the OTT industry, where timely content release is one major factor leading to customer satisfaction (and thus

customer retention). And while OTT/VOD service providers (or media localisation providers that subcontract projects from them) that hire subtitlers on a freelance basis may benefit from effective resource management, with commissioners assigning legal drama series or history documentaries, for example, to individual freelancers with academic backgrounds in the respective areas, they can do so without any commitment to provide these freelance subtitlers with further jobs. In reality, freelance translators are usually pressured to make prompt decisions and work fast to remain competitive, relevant, and economically viable. That is, producing quality translations with quick turnaround times increases their chance of boosting the commissioner's satisfaction, receiving continuous projects, and earning enough for a living (do Carmo 2020). As Rodríguez-Castro (2019) argues, against the backdrop of the widespread 'non-standard' employment models in the language industry, translators' work practices have undergone transformations in many respects, ranging from the tasks they carry out, to the services they offer, to their professional identities in the language industry.

Media localisers started to widely adopt the outsourcing model at the dawn of the 21st century. Thanks to the ubiquitous broadband Internet, companies with main offices in the US and UK were able to outsource their projects to freelancers in territories with lower labour costs. It first started with English intralingual subtitling and captioning. The subtitling companies benefited from 'the scalability and flexibility to cater for increases in workload, as well as the possibility of a round-the-clock subtitling service by taking advantage of the time difference between Asia and America/Europe' (Georgakopoulou 2019c, p. 520). Criticism from practitioners, particularly in Europe, in relation to dubious quality of the output, despite it being produced in countries with good English proficiency (e.g. India, Malaysia, the Philippines), have forced some companies to hire native subtitlers for quality checking and set up branches in outsourcing countries (ibid.).

The outsourcing model is still relevant in the era of streaming media. For OTT media localisation projects to meet customer demands and boost revenues, they need to be completed within extremely expedited deadlines through practices such as collaborative workflows and/or crowdsourcing (Georgakopoulou 2019b). The media localisation industry has been increasingly driven by productivity and efficiency (Bywood et al. 2017). In relation to this, the fragmentation of tasks, and adoption of technological tools, including the use of template files for subtitling into multiple languages, have been dominant – often to the detriment of translators. Among the most common repercussions are the downward pressure on prices (Abdallah 2011; Kapsaskis 2011; Moorkens 2017), quality issues (Abdallah 2011; Dunne 2012), ethical concerns, e.g. to do with copyright ownership (Moorkens et al. 2016; Taivalkoski-Shilov 2019), and job satisfaction and motivation (Moorkens 2020).

1.3 Rationale for the Study and Research Questions

Despite TS scholars' interest in the agents of translation, which has been growing for over a decade (Wolf 2010), subtitling is still 'a relatively mysterious profession' as insights into this area require cooperation and collaboration from those working inside the industry (Kuo 2014, p. 105). Publications dealing primarily with freelance subtitlers in the OTT/VOD industry are still scarce, as are research projects on professional audiovisual translators in Thailand. The present study seeks to fill the existing gap by investigating the SPN in the Thai OTT industry from the perspective of freelance subtitlers, to specifically examine how their relations with other actors in the network influence their working conditions, work practices, and perception of quality. It is also one of a few longitudinal studies in TS that primarily attend to changes in freelance translators' career journey. This is considered a timely endeavour given that a large number of subtitlers work on a freelance basis in a fast-changing industry which has faced some disruptive factors, such as the implementation of MT.

Therefore, this research responds not only to the latest trends in the labour market but also to TS scholars' calls for more studies in relation to the working conditions of professional translators (Abdallah and Koskinen 2007). Williamson (2016, p. 192), who studies the social relevance of academic research on professional subtitling practitioners in Europe, contends that researchers should investigate what is actually going on in the professional world and pay attention to issues such as working conditions, remuneration, and 'the realities of subtitling practitioners' which stem from 'the centralisation of subtitling production'. The findings of the present study have also shed some light on the issues of quality from the translators' perspective, as also theorised by scholars such as Börjel (2007), and Olohan and Davitti (2017) by deploying qualitative interviews. Specifically, the study sets out to provide insightful answers to the following three research questions (RQs).

1. How are work practices of freelance subtitlers influenced by other actors, both human and non-human, in a subtitle production network in the over-the-top (OTT) industry in Thailand?
2. How did the network under study evolve over the course of two years?
3. How is the subtitlers' perception of quality influenced by changes occurring in the network?

1.4 Thesis Structure

This rest of this thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 presents the research context, followed by a review of theories and research studies which were used to refine the ideas for the present study. The literature review comprises two main parts, both of which have responded to the ‘sociological turn’ in TS. The first part focuses on the application of actor-network theory (ANT) in TS, and the second part on workplace-based research and studies on work practices and working conditions of professional translators.

Chapter 3 deals with research methodology and the handling of data. The chapter starts by introducing qualitative longitudinal research, before presenting details of the analytical frameworks used in the research, namely ANT and the three-dimensional quality model (Abdallah 2016, 2017). It then describes the research setting and participants and outlines how qualitative, active interviews were administered in the current research. The ontological and epistemological assumptions made and the ethical issues considered are also discussed. The chapter ends by presenting themes created from interview data through reflexive thematic analysis.

Chapters 4 to 7 present the data analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 address RQ1 from the perspective of one major theme that was generated from the interview data, namely *Freelance subtitlers’ constantly changing and increasingly challenging work practices* (Theme 1). This theme is broken down into two sub-themes, labelled *capacity and types of projects* (Sub-theme 1.1, addressed in Chapter 4) and *the subtitle production process* (Sub-theme 1.2, addressed in Chapter 5). Chapter 6 pursues RQ2 by focusing on the *intricate and dynamic subtitle production network* (Theme 2) identified in the same data, and dividing the analysis again into two sub-themes: *freelance subtitlers’ increasingly precarious status* (Sub-theme 2.1), and *a seemingly shrinking network* (Sub-theme 2.2). Chapter 7 presents Theme 3: *Quality is in the eye of the beholder – and the hands of many actors* as the response to RQ3. Chapter 8 provides a summary of the findings, contributions and limitations of the study, and implications for future research.

The interview transcripts are presented in Thai which is the native language of the participants and researcher. All extracts in English which appear in the thesis are my own translations. The anonymised transcripts can be accessed on <https://bit.ly/2YdZt5c>.

Chapter 2 Actor-Network Theory and Workplace-Based Research

‘[A]ny phenomenon is always part of much larger networks.’

- Christopher Gad and Casper Bruun Jensen (2010, p. 74)

2.1 Introduction

The current project is placed at the junction of two research areas: (1) ANT-inspired research in TS and (2) studies on working environments and work practices of professional translators – both of which respond to the ‘sociological turn’ in TS. Translation has been recognised as a social practice and TS researchers have started to employ sociological approaches to investigate translation phenomena. Sociologically oriented TS has paid increasing attention to the agency of translation practitioners and the social factors that pervade translation activities (Angelelli 2012; Wolf 2012). Notable sociological theories applied in TS include Bourdieu’s (1993) social theory, Luhmann’s (1995) social systems theory, and Latour’s (2005) ANT (Buzelin 2005; Inghilleri 2009; Tyulenev 2014). Accordingly, studies in the field have been expanded from being predominantly text-based to being more process- and agent-oriented. Objects of investigation include: the status and agency of translators and interpreters; the impact of professional institutions on translation practices; working conditions, social and biological trajectories of translation practitioners; ethics in translation; quality; resistance and activism; institutional and social factors in intercultural communication; training pedagogies (Inghilleri 2009; Angelelli 2012; Wolf 2012); and deployment and impact of translation technology (Olohan 2020a), among many others. In this chapter, I review those sources that are most relevant to the current study, starting with sources that adopt an ANT approach to translation.

2.2 Actor-Network Theory

Considering the growing number of researchers in translation and interpreting who have (either conceptually or empirically) explored, elaborated and utilised ANT,⁸ it should be safe to conclude

8 The list to date includes Aaltonen (2013), Abdallah (2011, 2012, 2014a), Bogic (2010), Boll (2016), Buzelin (2005, 2006, 2007, 2012), Buzelin and Baraldi (2016), Chesterman (2006, 2015), Córdoba Serrano (2020), Gurcağlar (2007), Devaux (2017), Eardley-Weaver (2014), Folaron and Buzelin (2007), Haddadian-Moghaddam (2012), Hekkanen (2009), Jansen and Wegener (2013), Jiang (2020), Jones (2009, 2011), Kung (2009, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2021a, 2021b), Luo (2020), Luo and Zheng (2017), Milton and Bandia (2009), Munday (2016), O’Hagan (2017), Qi (2016), Ramael and Reviers (2020), Risku and Windhager (2013), Risku et al. (2019), Risku et al. (2020), Sánchez-Nieto (2020), Sorby (2019), Stalling and Schleifer (2020), Tyulenev (2014), van Rooyen (2019a, 2019b), Wolf (2007, 2010), Wongseree (2018, 2020), Zhang (2015), Zheng (2017), and more.

that ANT has something to offer TS scholarship. Particularly when an object of investigation is presented as a network of heterogeneous entities like the SPN in the present study, ANT is unsurprisingly a promising candidate. Before deciding to adopt ANT, I also explored other network theories that could potentially serve as an analytical and conceptual framework. While each has its pros and cons, ANT is distinctive in its bold claims and assumptions that have altered and broadened my perception of networks, particularly the principle of generalised symmetry – a controversial concept that makes ANT an attractive approach for studies of networks, but also draws scepticism and criticisms. As I did more research, I became more aware of what it can offer as well as its limitations (or rather, challenges in applying it). Employing ANT as an analytical framework is, therefore, a conscious and careful choice. Below are a few points I want to make clear before presenting my ‘enactment’ of ANT in Chapters 4 to 7.

2.2.1 ANT in the present study: Beyond Bruno Latour

First, among ANT concepts deployed in the present study, some are considered ‘classical’ ANT concepts, while others can be said to belong to an ‘after’ or ‘post’ ANT phase (henceforth referred to as post-ANT).⁹ The emergence of post-ANT, however, does not imply the end of ‘classical’ ANT, for key ‘classical’ concepts have continuously been applied and expanded, being ‘translated’ into a number of post-ANTs, by researchers from a great variety of backgrounds beyond its home discipline Science and Technology Studies (STS) (Córdoba Serrano 2020). Two decades after the publication of the edited volume *Actor-Network Theory and After* (1999) – with such high-profile contributors as Bruno Latour, John Law, Michel Callon, and Annemarie Mol – post-ANT has not been much discussed by TS scholars, while it has been of interest to researchers in other disciplines for some time (Watson 2010; Michael 2017b; Landri 2021).

In TS publications, ANT is usually portrayed as if it was monolithic, and the exclusive result of collaboration between its three founding fathers: Latour (1986, 1987, 1996, 1999, 2005), Callon (1986a, 1986b, 1987, 1990) and Law (1984, 1992, 1994, 1999, 2007, 2009) – with Latour’s works being deployed most frequently as conceptual or methodological frameworks (Luo 2020). To address the imbalanced emphasis in favour of Latour’s works and to simultaneously attempt an ‘undistorted’ application of ANT, Luo (ibid.) integrates some concepts put forth by Callon and Law in her analysis of the translation network of a masterpiece of Chinese literature. The investigated network spanned over 26 years (from 1941 to 1966), involving a myriad of human and non-human

⁹ The division is based on Michael’s 8-chapter book on ANT (2017a), in which he devotes one chapter to detailed accounts of ‘classical’ ANT and another chapter exclusively to some post-ANTs.

actors that carried out more than 200 ‘translations’.¹⁰ Luo’s monograph, while impressively innovative, resourceful, and methodologically transparent, does not incorporate concepts from beyond the realm of ‘classical’ ANT. This could be because the selected concepts suffice to conduct a robust analysis for her object of study. As presented in Section 2.2.4, a number of ‘classical’ ANT concepts have been exploited to tease out complexity of translation networks in various contexts. Yet, it seems that post-ANT has fallen off the radar of TS researchers, except for Olohan’s (2020c) recent publication.¹¹ One main reason I have incorporated post-ANT concepts in the current study is to draw attention to some under-utilised concepts which could be of great advantage to the studies conducted in the contemporary context. Such concepts include enactment, multiple realities, and fluid technology, which will be further discussed in Section 2.2.3.

Second, for smooth reading, I will simply use ANT as an umbrella term when the contexts do not require me to elucidate the distinctions between ‘classical’ and post-ANT. As briefly mentioned above, ANT is no longer a single entity (if it has ever been at all). Undergoing a multitude of ‘translations’, ANT has been evolving and transforming in the past 30 years (Baiocchi et al. 2013), partly in attempts to address and respond to continuing critiques. Moreover, researchers tend to interpret ANT in different ways (Law 1999) and one way to conceive the coexistence of more than a monolithic ANT is the notion of ‘ANT Multiple’, that is, to perceive that there are diverse versions of ANT (Gad and Jensen 2010, p. 76).

The third point I would like to clarify is that ANT is treated in the present research as an analytical framework and ‘a set of sensibilities’ (Mol 2010, p. 265; Law and Singleton 2013, p. 500) that facilitate the unearthing of complex associations between actors, rather than as a theory *per se*. In fact, Latour, Law, and Callon have explicitly stated on many occasions that ANT is not a theory, despite its name (Czarniawska 2017). For instance, Callon (1999, p. 194) asserts that ‘ANT is not a theory. It is this that gives it both its strength and its adaptability’. Law (2009) also insists that ANT is not a theory as theories generally aim to answer *why* questions whereas ANT acts as a toolkit used for narrating stories about *how* relations give rise to networks, or fail to form networks.

¹⁰ Inverted commas signify the meaning as used in ANT, not the word’s common usage in TS.

¹¹ Although her monograph mainly features an exploration of translation practice by drawing on practice theory, Olohan (2020c) mentions Mol (2002) and Law and Mol (2008) and their notions of enactment and multiplicity of realities.

2.2.2 Main premises and key concepts of 'classical' ANT

ANT was developed in late 1970s to the 1990s (Law 2009), initially as a method of exploring the creation of scientific knowledge and technological innovation. However, it was not until 1982 that the term 'actor-network theory', coined by Callon, came into being (ibid.). ANT distinguishes itself from other competing theories by shying away from the hitherto dominant dichotomies, such as nature/culture, social/technical, macro/micro, human/non-human, macro/micro, actor/structure. Instead of such dualisms, ANT theorists see any entities as relational. Actors, human or otherwise, are always interacting with one another. It is impossible to separate them. Specifically, people, and their roles, are relational effects of both human and non-human entities (ibid.). Some scholars even contend that instead of labelling entities as human or non-human, it would be more accurate to call them hybrids. If a person, such as a doctor, scientist or manager, was separated from technologies (either 'low' technologies like a lamp, or 'high' technologies such as a computer, or both), they would not be able to operate their role as expected (Law 1994; Michael 2017a).

ANT is different from other sociological approaches that tend to 'move too quickly to a non-material version of the social', thus failing to pay attention to the material practices that give rise to a studied phenomenon (Law 2009, p. 148). Naming a particular network human or non-human is not a priority in the ANT agenda, for networks are materially heterogeneous, and society and organisations are never 'simply social' (Law 1992, p.379). Moreover, from the point of view of ANT, a network has a flat structure (also known as one-level ontology [Córdoba Serrano 2020] or flat ontology [Michael 2017b]), which means that one can achieve rich descriptions of social phenomena without presumed categories or high-level causal structures (Michael 2017b). When the distinction between macro and micro is eradicated, structures such as class or nation-state no longer work as a starting point of the analysis but instead become effects (Law 2009). Entities – be they innovations, or phenomena – come into being, and becoming, through their dynamic interactions and relations with other heterogeneous actors (Law 1999).

The terms sociotechnical network or heterogeneous network are often used in ANT accounts to reflect a central concept of *generalised symmetry*, which insists that humans and non-humans should be described in the same manner (Law 1992). The principle of generalised symmetry is one of the three tenets of 'classical' ANT, along with the principles of *agnosticism* and *free association* (Callon 1986a). Following the principle of agnosticism, researchers should respect the actors' voice, and refrain from censoring the studied actors' experience or imposing pre-determined qualities on any entities. Contrarily to a general misconception and radical application of this

principle, refraining from presuming or predicting does not suggest that ANT analysts cannot be critical or observant (Luo 2020). The tenet of free association denotes that any entities must not be predefined as social or natural. Instead, analysts should let actors interact freely with others, and closely follow traces of their associations. The three principles overlap – both by definition and in practice.

Since they must abstain from privileging any entities beforehand, researchers subscribing to ANT have to conduct their empirical studies while the network is unfolding so that they can identify which actors have significant roles in the formation and reconfiguration of a network. The main objectives of ANT research are to understand the nature of networks, *how* they are formed and reconfigured, or dissolved; as well as to describe relational ties ('associations') between actors and ongoing dynamic processes within a network, rather than to explain *why* a network exists. Theoretically speaking, a network will expand when a primary actor (*primum movens*) successfully 'translates' their goal by determining the task at hand and identifying actors that they need to ally with to achieve the established goal (problematizing), before convincing (interesting) the identified entities to accept their plan. Becoming interested, these entities are 'enrolled' into the network to 'mobilise' the agreed plan and goal (Callon 1986a). They also agree to let a primary actor who has defined the problem in the first stage act and speak on their behalf as their spokesperson (*ibid.*). In the context of organisation studies, the 'spokesperson' in a company is usually its CEO, board of directors' chairperson, or chief communication officer (Czarniawska 2017).

In practice, the four moments of 'translation' (problematization, interessement, enrolment, and mobilisation) often overlap (Callon 1986a). Based on her empirical analysis of a 26-year-long translation project comprising eight phases¹² and more than 200 'translations', Luo (2020) concludes that some 'translations' can be materialised with certain phases being skipped, and there do not seem to be typical patterns or sequences of 'translation' moments. Also pivotal in the 'translation' process is an obligatory passage point (OPP). Drawing on Callon (1986a), Latour (1987), and an extended application of the concept by Luo (2020), I propose in the present study that an OPP may refer to the common goal which all actors aim to achieve, a key actor through which other actors must pass to reach the established goal, or any indispensable entity that does not need to adjust its interest to ally with others. OPPs can be humans, such as the three researchers in the scallop project (Callon 1986a), or the court interpreters in Devaux's (2017)

12 The eight phases include (1) translating (where the translator translated the book before he proposed the manuscript to the publisher and convinced him to publish it), (2) initiating, (3) design, (4) proofreading, (5) printing, (6) binding, (7) marketing, and (8) expansion (a stage in which the novel was translated and marketed outside the UK).

study, or non-humans, such as the online research paper submission system explored in Baiocchi et al. (2013). Moreover, multiple OPPs that have acted separately in former ‘translations’ can collectively share the role of an OPP in a subsequent ‘translation’, such as when the translator and the publisher of an English version of the novel *Journey to the West* acted together as an OPP through which other publishers outside the UK had to pass when they wanted to translate and publish the novel for their local markets (Luo 2020).

‘Translations’ always imply some degree of displacement and usually some form of betrayal. As Latour (1987, p. 117) puts it, ‘[t]ranslating interests means at once offering new interpretations of these interests and channeling people in different directions’. When entities no longer perform their assigned role or stray from the shared goal, a ‘translation’ fails and network disintegrates. Callon (1990, p. 144, my emphasis) argues that when controversies or conflicts arise, ‘translations’ turn into betrayals and provides illustrative examples, the first of which is particularly relevant to the present study:

We find workers who do not want to play the role defined for them by the machine; consumers who doubt the quality and value of a product; scientists who denounce the arguments of their fellow-authors; borrowers who reject the conditions attached to a loan; or electrons that refuse to pass from one electrode to another.

Given the inherent insecurity of a ‘translation’ and likely failure of its process (Law 2009), we can say that networks are precarious. Law (ibid.) illustrates the network’s *precariousness* by using the Portuguese maritime empire in the late 15th and early 16th centuries as an example, and asserts that only when the network collapses are we exposed to ‘the whole web of reality’. The network’s precariousness is also illustrated by the scallop domestication project, which Callon (1986a) uses as a case study to present the four ‘translation’ moments. Although the researchers, fellow scientists in a scientific community, fishermen, and scallops, formed a network of relations and their actions revolved around the shared goal and their respective interests (i.e. knowledge, financial gains, and survival), these entities held together only precariously. The network destabilised when some fishermen fished the scallops against the researchers’ advice, and when the scallops refused to anchor to the collectors.

However, a network can become durable (albeit temporarily) when the actors’ roles are stabilised, often with the circulation of non-human elements in the network (Michael 2017a, 2017b; see also the discussion on *immutable mobiles* and *inscriptions* below). Callon (1990) uses the concept of *convergence* to describe the ways in which seemingly divergent elements in a network can work together. The firmer the associations between elements, the more difficult it is

for a network to be interfered with by alternative, competing associations. A convergent network, then, will become *irreversible* (ibid.). This can happen when human actors in a durable, convergent network do not question their roles. However, it takes 'long periods of investments, intense effort, and coordination' for a network to be strongly convergent (ibid., p. 148). Many networks are weakly convergent because 'actors find both that their status is constantly in question, and that it is difficult (albeit not impossible) to mobilise other parts of the network' (ibid.).

An irreversibilised network acts as a *black box*. One important characteristic of a black box is that with the same input, you receive a predictable output. Moreover, having been *punctualised*, a black box becomes an entire network which is counted as a single node in another network (Callon 1991). An actor network is, therefore, both an actor 'whose activity is networking heterogeneous elements' and a network 'that is able to redefine and transform what it is made of' (Callon 1987, p. 87). Law (2009, p. 147) contends that black boxing is an essential part of actor's agency, for 'an actor is always a network of elements that it does not fully recognise or know'. 'Classical' ANT analyses set out to open black boxes to reveal entangled elements (Justesen 2020), or particularly inner-workings of technologies which are usually taken for granted in social theory (Latour 1987). As for practicality in conducting empirical research, the concept of black box allows researchers to study an intricate network while keeping their analysis manageable. For instance, a word processor may be treated as a black box (e.g. as a tool, an intermediary) in a study exploring the translation process. It is not necessary to deconstruct it into individual components although it is important that the researchers are aware that the tool itself is a network which acts as an actor (a node) in the study. In the same manner, Luo (2020) considers the translation production process of *Journey to the West* the box that she aims to open, while treating the Chinese source text (ST) as a black box or a single entity in the examined network.

Another topic of interest for ANT researchers is the network dynamics. As Latour (2005, p. 143) contends, it is also important to emphasise 'the work, and the movement, and the flow, and the changes' of actors and their actions. An *actor*¹³ is a semiotic definition which can refer to both human and non-human entities which make a visible difference. Despite the common misconception, in ANT analyses, agency does not necessarily signify intentionality (Law and Mol 2008). No entities are automatically endowed with agency unless they make a difference and leave traces of their actions (Latour 2005). The scallops referred to in Callon's article (1986a) have

13 Another term that is often used in ANT-inspired research is *actant*, which Latour (2005, p. 71) defines as an entity which makes a difference but 'has no configuration yet'.

agency; they make a difference and leave traces (i.e. they did not anchor as anticipated by other actors and caused the project to fail). Agency formulations are understood as being distributive and attributive. Distributive agency is 'associated with an actor's heterogeneous composition', while attributive agency is 'ascribed to actors, rather than 'possessed' by them' (Michael 2017a, p. 47). To conclude, agency is neither an innate nor fixed property; it is an effect of dynamic relations among entities. In ANT-inspired studies, agency must be empirically observed within a specific context. For instance, Abdallah (2014a) investigates how the agency of eight Finnish professional translators changed over the course of six years by drawing on interview data.

Apart from the semiotic relationality, heterogeneity, and materiality of the network discussed above, Law (2009) also lists *power*, *space* and *scale* in his accounts of what he calls 'actor network theory 1990'¹⁴ (which I interpret as comparable to Michael's [2017a] 'classical' ANT). It should not come as a surprise that in ANT-guided studies, power is conceived as an effect, rather than as an explanatory framework or a cause. According to Law (2009, p. 146), power 'is a function of network configuration and in particular the creation of immutable mobiles'. ANT analysts are interested in the ways a particular actor, or a group of actors, acquire power through their associations with other actors, as well as how these actors exert their power in the network. Power is, therefore, studied in the making. The other two notions, space and scale, involve the way networks extend themselves, and how networks mobilise and displace distant actors (ibid.). *Long-distance control* and *immutable mobiles* are thus the other two important elements affecting networks' dynamics and durability. To achieve long-distance control, three types of entities are usually needed, namely, documents, devices and drilled people (Law 1984). The triad is by no means 'sacrosanct' (ibid, p. 257), and all three types must be analysed in the same terms (i.e. following the principle of generalised symmetry).

The concept of immutable mobiles is introduced by Latour to refer to 'physically durable meaning-making objects that can be moved from one location to another' (Johnson 2018, p. 66). In other words, immutable mobiles embody two properties: immutability and mobility (Latour 1986). Portuguese ships are an example of immutable mobiles as they maintained their form and shape while travelling, enabling Portugal to exert its power over half the world for centuries (Law 2009). Other examples include 'maps, spatial coordinates, sketches, graphics' which represent complicated processes of transforming information – such as locations in an ocean, size and shape of a territory – into tangible items (Hassard and Alcadipani 2010, p. 9). A category of immutable mobiles, *inscriptions* are defined by Callon (1991, p. 143 cited in Khazraee, 2013, p. 438) as 'the

14 Czarniawska (2017) notes that, unlike other ANT proponents, Law never uses a hyphen between the two words ('actor' and 'network').

process of translating an intention or interest into a material medium'. Although they can take any shape, we often see inscriptions in textual form which can travel time and space and thus are instrumental in enabling the actor to control other actors at distance (Latour 1987; Sakamoto 2014). Moreover, inscriptions are often presented as hard facts (Luo 2020).¹⁵

As mentioned above, the strengths of immutable mobiles (and inscriptions) lie in their maintenance of shape and form as they travel in time and space. On the other hand, some non-human entities can be beneficial for being *fluid*. De Laet and Mol (2000) introduce the term *fluid technology*, which Law (2009) sees as comparable to *mutable* mobiles as it designates objects that can adapt to fit a new context. In their paper, de Laet and Mol (2000) tell the story of the Bush Pump, a hand water pump which provides people in Zimbabwe with clean water. What the two researchers believe contributes to the success of, and people's immense love for, the Pump is its fluidity. Being 'adaptable, flexible and responsive' (ibid., p. 226), the Pump can serve people well without imposing itself. The Pump's fluidity is manifested through its flexible boundaries (i.e. its boundaries depend on what we consider it is: a mechanical object, a health promoter, a nation-building apparatus, etc.), and its multi-faceted possibility of success (i.e. the Pump may be successful in providing water while not successful in bringing good health, or it may work well only in some seasons but not in others). The authors also posit that being fluid is a good property of actors – humans or otherwise.

For TS researchers, the notion of fluid technology will be particularly useful for the discussion of the implementation of translation technology, particularly MT, in workflows. To my knowledge, the concept has not been introduced in TS literature before. On the other hand, the concept of inscriptions has already been incorporated into the examination of translators' work practices (Abdallah 2011; Sakamoto 2014), and the notion of immutable mobiles has recently started to gain visibility (Luo 2020). Investigating an AVT production network in Finland, Abdallah (2011, p. 179) uses the term inscriptions to include various items, such as 'contract, purchase orders, money, house rules, bills, billing instructions, copyright waiver'. It was found that without a written contract circulating in the network in question, the company easily exploited inexperienced freelance translators. We can therefore conclude that the network dynamics and the relations between actors, as well as the professional livelihood of practitioners are greatly influenced by the absence or presence of certain inscriptions. Likewise, Sakamoto's (2014) study

¹⁵ In the present study, inscriptions include various types of documents, such as official employment contracts; contracts with the content owner; regulations, guidelines, and instructions stipulated by the clients; as well as manuals and other supporting documents.

reveals that feedback and instruction (i.e. a translation brief) provided by the client are considered significant inscriptions for successful professional translators.

2.2.3 Selected post-ANT concepts

Most of the aforementioned concepts are usually associated with 'classical' ANT. This section, on the other hand, focuses on post-ANT concepts which have not been much exploited by TS scholars.

Enactment, fluidity, and multiple realities

In ANT-oriented research, to *enact* means to assign certain characteristics and properties to entities (Demant and Ravn 2020). In a network, actors are enacted by practices of entities around them, and it is through enactments that actors come into existence and keep on working (Mol 2010, p. 258).

The abovementioned story of the Bush Pump presents some clues of the concept of enactment. In another study, Mol (2002) traces how atherosclerosis is enacted into multiple things by practices of different people in a hospital. Mol contends that atherosclerosis is multiple, rather than a singular thing perceived in multiple ways based on people's perspectives. In other words, the concept of enactment is concerned with the way actors' different practices bring about multiple realities, rather than actors' different perspectives on a single reality. Reality enactment is situated and local (*ibid.*).

Law and Mol (2008) apply a similar lens to the study of Cumbrian sheep. With widespread foot and mouth disease (FMD), the sheep in Cumbria were enacted as the veterinary sheep, the epidemiological sheep, the economic sheep, and the farming sheep. A 'sheep multiple' is a slightly different sheep enacted in each practice. According to the authors, '[t]his multiplicity is not a plurality.' Instead, multiple versions of sheep interacted and formed complex entanglements (*ibid.*, 65-66). In the same article, the authors demonstrate the agency of all actors in the network (where agency does not denote intentionality, but ability to make a visible difference):

First, FMD (foot and mouth disease) is called upon as an actor: it is difficult to diagnose. Then farmers and vets do something: they miss the signs. And then, finally, the infected sheep themselves appear to be stubborn and specific as well. They display symptoms in a mild way only and suffer from other conditions that may be confused with FMD. So the fact that it is hard to establish whether or not a specific sheep hosts the virus is the result of joint action. Disease, farmers, vets and sheep, all make a difference to the end result.

To attribute all the agency to just one of these actors would be to miss the point. (Law and Mol 2008, p. 67)

As for the case of Cumbrian sheep, the authority's measures to resolve the issue failed, so too many sheep were needlessly killed. This is because they did not tackle the situation in Cumbria as a specific case but based their decision on data about other animals (such as cattle and pigs).

Interwoven with enactment is the concept of multiple realities or multiplicity of reality. These two notions can be used to guide researchers. Law and Urry (2004, p. 390) advocate using 'messy' methods, inviting the social sciences to revisit their methods so as to stay relevant 'in the twenty-first century where social relations appear increasingly complex, elusive, ephemeral, and unpredictable'. According to Law and Urry (*ibid.*), reality is not 'uncovered' by research methods but brought into being or enacted by a researcher. Their main argument is that research methods create social realities and social worlds which 'might be equally valid, equally true, but simply unlike one another' (*ibid.*, p. 397). As methods and practices overlap, they enact the realities that also overlap and interact with one another. Moreover, recognising the multiplicity and fluidity of reality enables the researchers to engage in a nuanced analysis of the ways in which things or events mean differently to different people and in specific contexts. For instance, in a study investigating implementation of a new IT system in healthcare settings where an old paper record system was replaced by electronic health records, Cresswell et al. (2010) gain understandings on how the practices of hospital practitioners changed after the introduction of new software as well as what different people thought about the new system. The notions help to remind the analysts that different properties of an entity may co-exist and these properties are dynamic. They also help to illustrate a number of roles each group of human actors assume when engaging with new technology. Cresswell et al. (*ibid.*) also emphasise benefits of applying ANT in longitudinal research on technology introduction in a specific context.

2.2.4 Emergence and applications of ANT in TS

Arguably one of the most popular sociological approaches among TS scholars,¹⁶ ANT has garnered robust attention in accordance with the emergence of the so-called sociological turn in TS (Wolf 2007), represented by the move from product-oriented to agent-and process-oriented studies (Buzelin 2005; Buzelin and Baraldi 2016). Specifically, TS researchers apply ANT to unravel *how* a translation activity takes place in a given context, as well as to find out *which actors* are involved

16 Other influential sociological approaches include Bourdieu's (1993) cultural production and Luhmann's (1995) social system theory (Munday and Blakesley 2016). The latter, however, is not concerned with agents (Buzelin 2011).

in the production of translation products, particularly when the said actors are not restricted to a few human agents (e.g. translators, editors, publishers).

Nevertheless, ANT has not been applied in TS *in toto* (Chesterman 2006), and the concepts utilised have been reduced and introduced only partially (Luo 2020). In fact, the situation is not exclusive to TS research, nor is it a bad thing *per se*. Given its multifarious nature, it can be immensely tricky to apply all (or even some) ANT concepts in a fully-fledged manner in a single study, not least the question of which ANT the researchers claim to use *in toto*. In fact, purist and rigid applications of the approach have not proved to be helpful, particularly when studies aim to investigate the introduction of new technology (Cresswell et al. 2010). As can be expected, TS research projects that adopt ANT as a sole theory are rare. An exemplary exception is Luo's (2020) monograph based on her PhD thesis (2018). The book offers valuable insights into not only the intricate translation network she studies but also the theoretical and methodological potential of ANT. Toward the end of the book, the scholar admits that when applying ANT alone, one might find it difficult to go beyond descriptions. She then encourages researchers to explore ways to fruitfully combine ANT with other theories or methods.

When it was first introduced and adopted in TS, ANT was often used in combination with certain aspects of Bourdieu's (1984, 1986, 1996) social theory, begetting unlikely collaborations which Buzelin (2005) envisions as 'unexpected allies'.¹⁷ To Buzelin, ANT enables researchers to discover the intricacy of translation networks that may be hidden if the analyses were to solely rely on Bourdieu's theory. Her argument has been well supported empirically. For instance, Hekkanen (2009) argues that the application of both ANT and Bourdieu's concept of habitus has proved beneficial in understanding the translation of Finnish literature in the UK. She also contends that while the former is suitable for the analysis of the structural context in which the translation activity is performed, the latter helps shed light on the practices of individual translators, which do not necessarily conform to norms and can be diverse. Likewise, Kung (2009) draws on ANT and Bourdieu's notion of capital to study the actors involved in the translation and publication of contemporary Taiwanese literature into English for the US market. Capitalising on Bourdieu's concepts of capital and field and Latour's ANT, Kung (2017) also investigates the mediated actors involved in the translation production and the implications of these actors' interactions for the quality of the *Harry Potter* series, in particular *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. An important take-away is that the translators into Chinese are affected to the greatest extent by other human and non-human actors (e.g. the ST which is very famous and highly anticipated

¹⁷ The combination of Latour and Bourdieu's theories can also be found in other disciplines, such as sociology (Eyal 2012).

among its dedicated fandom), which in turn results in errors in the translated version. In a more recent publication, Jiang (2020) bases her analysis of two case studies (two translation networks) on Bourdieu's field theory and Latour's conceptualisation of agency to investigate how women writers are promoted by translation actors in the field of contemporary Chinese literature in English translation. She finds that the multiple actors' traces of influence are found in not only the translations but also the paratexts.

Other researchers have investigated areas beyond literary translation. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Latourian agency, Abdallah (2014a) documents work trajectories of eight translators over the course of six years (2005-2011), elaborating on the roles and evolution of two participants in greater detail, using them to illustrate the explanatory power of the two adopted concepts. She argues that the concept of habitus allows the incorporation of affective factors (i.e. emotions) into the analysis of the participants' actions and decisions with regard to their roles and work trajectories, whereas Latourian agency, which does not privilege human actors, helps to bring to the fore multiple non-human actors that could have been invisible under a different analytical framework. Haddadian-Moghaddam (2012) relies on both Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, and publishing field, and ANT's doctrine of 'following the actors' as well as the notion of inscriptions, to analyse the translation production process, and the interactions and negotiations between multiple agents that drive the activities of a publishing house in Iran.

As evidenced in a good number of publications, there is no harm in (cautiously and purposefully) applying ANT together with other theories. We have witnessed TS researchers incorporating theories and concepts other than Bourdieu's in their ANT-guided studies, including: Speech Act Theory, and Complex System Theory (Stalling and Schleifer 2020); the concepts of affinity spaces, networked affect, and epistemic trust (Wongseree 2018); the concept of role-space (Devaux 2017); Activity Theory and situated cognition (Risku and Windhager 2013); Richard Schechner's Performance Theory (Aaltonen 2013); and Activity Theory and Game Theory (Jones 2009).

Among dozens of studies drawing on ANT concepts (either together with Bourdieu's concepts or other theories, or as a sole theory), most deal with literary translation (Bogic 2010; Boll 2016, Buzelin, 2006, 2007; Hekkanen 2009; Jiang 2020; Jones 2009, 2011; Kung 2009, 2010, 2017, 2021a; Luo 2020; Luo and Zhang 2017; Munday 2016; Qi 2016; Sánchez-Nieto 2020; Stalling and Schleifer 2020). These studies demonstrate the production of literary translation as a result of involved actors' complex interrelationships. Deployment of ANT in other areas is relatively scarce, and especially so in AVT and interpreting (Córdoba Serrano 2020). This might not be the case for long as research projects in diverse topics keep increasing in number, such as a study on court

interpreters' perception of their role in relation to the technology used in videoconference interpreting (Devaux 2017), an investigation into a social media platform's crowdsourcing localisation initiative (O'Hagan 2017), a study on opera translation which specifically explores accessibility of the translations catering for audiences with varying visual and hearing abilities (Eardley-Weaver 2014), a project investigating how socio-cultural factors influence the translation of the musical *Mamma Mia!*'s librettos for Chinese audiences (Sorby 2019), an interdisciplinary analysis of the translation process of the play *Incendies* into Finnish, in which the translation process is conceptualised as a performance as well as a network of relations (Aaltonen 2013), a PhD project that explores game localisation in China through teasing out the interactions between myriad actors, including material and social contexts (Zhang 2015), and an analysis of actors involved in the news translation production process in a community radio newsroom in South Africa (van Rooyen 2019a, 2019b). Moreover, Risku and Windhager (2013), combine ANT with Activity theory and situated cognition to explore tools that the translators use regularly in their everyday work, and present the concept of extended translation based on the discerned complex relationships between translators, other human actors, and artefacts. In addition to empirical studies, Latour's ANT has also been used to conceptually explain the historical development of media accessibility in both practice and academia, with technology being a significant actor (Remael and Reviere 2020). Remael and Reviere (ibid.) also recommend researchers to investigate media accessibility as a process, with the assistance of Latour's concepts of actants and complex relations between various actants. Of particular relevance to the present study are the contributions by Abdallah (2011) and Wongseree (2018). Both studies foreground the role of non-human actors in the translation of audiovisual productions, with Abdallah's focus on professional subtitlers, while Wongseree's main participants were fansubbers.

2.2.4.1 Applications of ANT in TS research

With distinctive assumptions and concepts, particularly its detachment from assigning *a priori* attributions (e.g. agency) to certain actors, and from establishing a division between human actors and non-human entities, ANT has become another beneficial approach to investigate the agency and roles of individual translation actors and complex relationships between diverse actors that give rise to and sustain specific translational activities (Gurcağlar 2007). Below are *some* examples of the ways TS scholars have applied ANT in their respective area of interests.

1. To trace the role of actors involved in the publication and introduction of literature from a less-dominant culture to a dominant one, as in Hekkanen's (2009) study of the publication of Finnish prose in the UK market, and Kung's (2009, 2015) articles on the translation of

contemporary Taiwanese literature into English and its publication for the US market which was made possible through a network of heterogeneous actors.

2. To investigate the influence of multiple actors on the translation process and product, and to show that – contrary to what is generally perceived – actors other than the translator are also responsible for the quality of end product and its reception, as in Buzelin’s (2006) study on the complicated work process taking place at an independent publisher in Québec for the launch of the French translation of a best-selling book by an English Canadian author; Bogic’s (2010) analysis of Parshley’s English translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe* based on more than 100 letters between Parshley, the author, the publisher, the publisher’s wife and the editor-in-chief in which it was found that the translator was pressured by other translation actors and by practices in the publishing house to omit some details;¹⁸ and Luo’s (2020) investigation of myriad actors taking part in the translations and productions of *Journey to the West* from Chinese into English and other languages.

3. To unravel negotiations among (human) actors within publishing houses, as illustrated by Bogic’s (2010) research which has been mentioned above; and Boll’s (2016) study on negotiation processes among translators, editors, and advisers at Penguin, which resulted in the publication in English of poetry from peninsular Spain and Latin America between the 1950s and 1970s.

4. To draw attention to working conditions of professional translators or novices (i.e. translation students), as illustrated by Abdallah’s (2011) study of an AVT production network in Finland, in which she found that inexperienced freelance translators were easily exploited by a translation company, as the latter can choose to circulate or not circulate certain inscriptions in the network.

5. To study networks where artefacts, particularly technologies in various forms, play a significant role in the (co-)production of translation, as well as the consolidation of multiple actors and group dynamics in the network, as in O’Hagan’s (2017) analysis of the Facebook translation crowdsourcing platform in which the interactions of human and non-human actors fail to promote a bottom-up and democratic decision-making process among Polish volunteer translators; and Wongseree’s (2018) examination of a fan community of the Korean TV show *Running Man*, in which technologies have a facilitative role in consolidating fansubbers and non-translating fans.

18 According to Bassi (2020), Bogic’s argument is different from that of other researchers (i.e. Moi 2002; Castro 2008) who suggest that the translator chose to abridge the texts on the basis of misogyny.

6. To demonstrate the influence of non-human actors on human actors' perception of role, as illustrated by Devaux's (2017) study in which he investigates the way video conferencing equipment affects court interpreters' perceptions of their role.

7. To illustrate that actors' roles are always in flux and that actors may assume more than one dominant role as the 'translation' is unfolding, as in Luo's (2020) study.

8. To allow researchers to incorporate external or contextual factors as non-human actors in the analyses, such as the legal framework in Wongseree's (2018) study; globalisation, neoliberalism, and free trade in Abdallah (2011); and the Second World War in Luo (2020).

To summarise, ANT concepts open up the possibility to explore complex relationships of multiple actors and their impact on translation, as well as to investigate translation in-the-making in a great variety of contexts. According to Risku et al. (2020, p. 41), the approach can be useful for conducting workplace research in which translation is studied as 'a process, product, service and industry', which influences and is influenced by 'cognitive, technological and social factors'.

2.2.5 Criticisms, controversies, misunderstandings, and responses

ANT has been heavily criticised for several things, having been characterised '(1) as managerialist, (2) as emphasising Nietzschean mastery, (3) as Machiavellian, (4) as colonising 'the other,' (5) as anti-humanist, and (6) as representing the powerful' (Ritzer 2005, p. 3). This is primarily because the stronger actor and their allies tend to receive more attention – a point that is also acknowledged by Latour (Czarniawska 2017). Czarniawska (ibid.) sees these criticisms as a result of researchers' lack of opportunity to access all actors, rather than ANT principles being problematic. Justesen (2020) reminds us that, from an ANT point of view, attributes such as strength are not predetermined to any entities before the networking process. That is, no actors are privileged or seen as stronger beforehand. Michael (2017b) points out that criticisms usually target the 'classical' ANT.

For one, ANT is often attacked for its principle of generalised symmetry. For instance, Collins and Yearley (1992) do not believe that it is possible to conduct 'symmetrical research' where all actors are equal as long as we depend on the researchers (humans) as gatherers of the 'evidence' of non-human actors' agency. Their epistemological-methodological concern is based on their assumption that every description is subject to human interpretations or measurements, and can thus be manipulated by the experts like scientists. Similarly to Collins and Yearley (ibid.), many

other researchers' interpretation of symmetrical research is different from what ANT proponents intend to convey. ANT theorists advocate for symmetrical research in the sense that all actors should be explained using the same vocabulary (Callon and Latour 1992). In an article written as a reply to Collins and Yearley (1992), Callon and Latour (1992, p. 353) say: '[Collins and Yearley] make the additional empirical mistake of believing that scientists must be 'naive realists' in order to do their job. If scientists were naive realists about the facts they produce they would not produce any: they would just wait'. Law (Law 2009, p. 142) also warns people to be sceptical 'even more of any text about actor network theory that pretends to the objectivity of an overall view'. To ANT analysts, human and non-human actors are interdependent and inseparable.

Devaux (2017, p. 80) groups criticisms of ANT into three main themes, namely, 'radicalisation of non-human entities, blurred boundaries, and feasibility of task'. As for the first, it is often due to the critics' interpretations that ANT pays more attention to non-human than human actors, which is not the intention of ANT proponents (Latour 2005). Instead, ANT analysts are advised to attend to both human and non-human actors and describe them in the same manner. Another common misunderstanding is that non-humans do not have agency because they cannot act with intentionality. As discussed above, in ANT studies, entities will become actors with agency when they make a visible difference or leave observable traces.

Regarding the issues of blurred boundaries, Devaux (2017) explains that these stem from the lack of a clear-cut category to put ANT into (i.e. whether it is a theory or methodology), and the lack of consistency in the way different researchers refer to it. The author, therefore, recommends that in order to avoid ambiguities, researchers should stipulate at the outset how they will define and employ ANT in their studies (i.e. as a theory and/or methodology). Drawing on key proponents' explanations, I argue that ANT may be considered a toolbox which offers researchers a set of sensibilities to guide them to conduct research – besides being seen as a theory and/or methodology. Moreover, if we subscribe to post-ANT concepts and perceive ANT as multiple and fluid, it is possible that ANT may be enacted as a methodology in certain practices, but as a theory in others. As Law and Urry (2004) encourage us to use 'messy' methods when examining increasingly complex and elusive social relations, blurred boundaries are not necessarily a bad attribute that one has to avoid. Rather, we can choose to embrace them.

The third theme of criticisms outlined by Devaux (2017) is feasibility of task, which deals with the probability – and practicality – of tracing all actors. ANT insists on refraining from making theoretically-based assumptions about the elements of the network beforehand, and it aims to have a complete description which 'has to cover all the details, since every detail counts' (Callon

1990, p. 155). This is very problematic for researchers, particularly when an actor itself is a network which can be further disentangled into an indefinite number of actor-networks. In relation to this, I argue that researchers have to admit that, based on time constraints and other practical factors, the actor-network under study may be only partially explored, and that it may be presented as part of other actor-networks. Moreover, certain nodes must be black-boxed to ensure that the data are manageable. Devaux (2017) perceives these as opportunities for conducting further research, i.e. to investigate additional actors which have not yet been covered in a given study. The present research takes a similar stance: as long as ANT principles and concepts are useful in guiding analysts to find answers to their RQs, I hold that ANT should not be completely disregarded, although its limitations need to be acknowledged. Cresswell et al. (2020) recommend that researchers conduct their investigations by taking the following factors into account: the RQs, practical limitations, and the focus of the study. Furthermore, I would like to argue that as long as we are aware that the phenomenon and social relations under observation are realities in-the-making and interpret the findings as enacted realities, not a full-fledged manifestation of realities, the analysis will still be valid.

According to Ritzer (2005), criticisms have prompted allies of ANT to respond by either making transformational changes or by combining it with other theoretical perspectives. The latter seems to be a popular option. For example, Cresswell et al. (2010) share their view that ANT should be complemented by other theoretical approaches, particularly for analysis and interpretation. As discussed in Section 2.2.4, it is not uncommon for TS researchers to incorporate other concepts into ANT-led studies. This is because when compared with other sociological theories popular among TS scholars (most notably Bourdieu's concepts), ANT is often criticised for its lack of tools to help researchers to gain insightful understanding of translators as 'subjective human actors' (Hekkanen 2009, p.11) and translator-internal factors, such as motivation (Albertsen and Diken, 2003, p.26 cited in *ibid.*). The limitation is partly due to comparable attention being paid to both humans and non-humans in the network (Hekkanen 2009, pp. 12, 18). To compensate for this shortcoming, some researchers decide to combine ANT with other theories.

2.3 Workplace-Based Research, and Studies on Work Practices and Working Conditions of Professional Translators

This section presents the discussion on workplace-based studies, reviewing publications and research findings that are of relevance to the current study, and homing in on subtitlers' work practices and working conditions. Although the present study does not follow the customary approach to workplace studies in which the researchers are present in authentic work settings to

observe practitioners as they carry out their tasks, translation workplace studies still offer insights into the current working environments and increasingly complex work situations encountered by professional translators in a well-rounded manner, as this type of research attends to the physical and spatial conditions at the workplace, as well as psychological and emotional wellbeing of translation professionals (Risku et al. 2020). Conducting workplace research allows investigators to hear the voice and learn the views of research participants who have an active role to play in the research dynamics. Findings which draw on the participants' first-hand experience will help to reveal the 'work realities' of translation practitioners, which may be different from what researchers had believed and anticipated (ibid., p. 51). By the same token, empirical studies which use different research methods and designs (e.g. deployment of surveys) have shown some illuminating recurrent and overlapping themes regarding the working environment and work practices of professional translators. Such studies are also reviewed here.

2.3.1 Translators' work environments

Translation practices in the past decades have been encountering changes as a result of technological advances and new market configurations, among other factors. A common scenario is one in which professional translators perform their task as one entity in a production network in which they do not usually have direct contact with clients. Instead, professional translators work for LSPs that act as turnkey suppliers in the long chain of multiple actors (Abdallah and Koskinen 2007; Folaron and Buzelin 2007; Abdallah 2011, 2012). Moreover, in the contemporary translation production landscape, a lot of companies adopt the vendor model where more and more translators are hired as contingent workers on a project basis (see Chapter 1). Under such circumstances, translators can easily be seen as replaceable spare parts in the production network with their status being marginalised and their needs often neglected (Abdallah and Koskinen 2007; Abdallah 2011, 2012). Challenges faced by professional translators – in-house staff members and freelancers alike – concerning issues such as quality and trust building can also be exacerbated as communication and collaboration among translation agents involved are now usually conducted in a computer-assisted environment (Risku 2014; Sakamoto and Foedisch 2017). That is, as more translators work as part of a virtual team in a highly-digitalised work environment, face-to-face communications – which can effectively foster a sense of belonging and promote cooperation among team members – are minimally available.

The following sub-sections present a selection of prior studies that examine contemporary work environments of translators from different, but related, angles.

2.3.2 Translation production networks

Adopting Sturgeon's (2001 cited in Abdallah 2010, p.11) definition of the term production network as 'sets of inter-firm relationships that bind a group of firms of different sizes, including micro entrepreneurs, into larger economic units', Abdallah (2011, p. 129) describes a translation production network as 'characterised by hierarchical structure, extreme division of labour, and the involvement of multiple actors'. In such networks, a translation company or LSP normally assumes the role of an intermediary between translator and client (Abdallah and Koskinen 2007, Abdallah 2012). Large-scale studies conducted in the European context demonstrate that translation production networks have become more complex, mainly as a result of 'decentralised organisational structures' and 'outsourcing (subcontracting) and offshoring of translation services' (Risku et al. 2020, p. 45). That is, LSPs downsize their in-house teams and outsource projects to geographically dispersed freelance translators whose work cycle, in turn, involves varied parties – such as editors, proofreaders, and accounting and IT staff members (Risku 2016 cited in *ibid.*).

2.3.3 The role of technology

The language industry has been transformed by '[g]lobalisation, technological advancement and big data' (Angelone et al. 2020, p. 2), with computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools playing a significant role in the evolution of the industry over the past two decades (Rodríguez-Castro 2013). Technology has created more jobs for translators, but also altered the way these professionals carry out their tasks. Translations have been produced using 'mass production language processing methods' (*ibid.*, p. 38), as illustrated by process standardisation widely adopted to control quality and costs. Automation and language resource reuse tools (e.g. translation memories and terminology management databases) have become an integral part of (mass) translation production processes, leading to the widespread adoption of microtasking and specialisations of skills (*ibid.*). In relation to this, as professional translators are increasingly engaging in a computer-assisted network economy (Risku and Dickinson 2009; Risku et al. 2013), computers, communication technology and translation tools have become vital, not optional. Risku and Windhager (2013, p. 40) find in their study of a translation business that in a period of only five years, the company's TM, which was once considered by the managing director as a 'real treasure', has now become an 'absolute prerequisite' for translators. From PMs' perspectives, CAT tools help to improve efficiency of translation production process and consistency of products, as well as to facilitate terminology management and project management (Sakamoto et al. 2017). TS scholars have responded to the new work environment by investigating the impact of technology on the workplace, work practices, and wellbeing of translators. They have touched

upon various themes, such as the way feedback is handled in a virtual translation team (Sakamoto and Foedisch 2017), socio-technical factors in professional translation practice (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2017), impact of technologies on the practice of managing translation projects (Foedisch 2017), uptakes of translation technologies among LSPs (Sakamoto et al. 2017), and ergonomics (Ehrensberger-Dow et al. 2016; Meidert et al. 2016; Ehrensberger-Dow 2017).

2.3.3.1 MT in professional translation

Among the technologies integrated into translation workflows, machine translation (MT) has become an extremely hot topic for academia, industry, and the public. Research topics regarding MT include, among others, the significant role of communication, collaboration, and flexibility for the successful integration of MT into workflows (Karamanis et al. 2011); professional translators' (non) adoption of MT (Cadwell et al. 2017); the way translators interact with MT-assisted TM tools and their attitudes toward such interaction (Bundgaard 2017); ethical concerns on the deployment of MT for literary translation (Taivalkoski-Shilov 2019); PMs' opinions on LSPs' implementation of MT and its use among their contracting translators (Sakamoto et al. 2017); an analysis of translators' comments in blog and forum postings regarding MT and rates (Vieira 2020a); views of translation agents (e.g. technology specialists, PMs, managing directors, professional translators) and other stakeholders (e.g. company owners, academics, students) on the use of MT with regard to workflows, editing process, quality, pricing, etc. (Vieira and Alonso 2018); and translators' and management's perceptions of MT in translation practices (Vieira and Alonso 2020).

From existing studies, it can be concluded that MT has influenced work practices and processes of individual translators and other translation agents, but also activities and services in the language industry. Post-editing (PE) of MT is expected to become a typical activity for translators and a regular service provided by LSPs (Sakamoto et al. 2017). The agency and livelihoods of translators are at risk of being threatened, at least at the beginning of the integration of MT, and decreases in price and quality are among common concerns. The adoption of this type of technology has also raised discussion on various ethical issues, particularly the confidentiality of clients' data (ibid.) and the ownership of output and engine training data (Moorkens et al. 2016; Moorkens and Lewis 2020). There are also concerns that translation might eventually become less appealing for talented linguists (Sakamoto et al. 2017).

2.3.3.2 Technology and AVT

Technology has given rise to the very existence of audiovisual content. In fact, technological advancements and AVT are inseparable (Díaz-Cintas 2015; Georgakopoulou 2019c). Subtitling started to be recognised as a profession following a series of technology-related events: the availability of VHS in the late 1970s, a growing demand for translations of content to feed the expanding cable and satellite TV in 1980s, and the introduction of the early versions of desktop computers and subtitling software in DOS format. Fast-paced progress in the industry took place in the 1990s with the prevalence of Windows-type interfaces and word-processors, the launch of more advanced subtitling software and the emergence of videos in digital formats (Georgakopoulou 2019c).

Gambier (2013) outlines five interrelated ways in which (relatively) new technology has impacted AVT. First, digital technology has been altering the 'production, distribution, and projection' of audiovisual products (ibid., p. 53). Second, new technology, such as video streaming and mobile telephony, has led to new demands which prompt us to revisit the concept of broadcasting and audience. Third, it has brought about the emergence of virtual communities and, in relation to this, non-professional practices such as fansubbing. Fourth, technology has given rise to new modes of AVT (e.g. AD, surtitling, live subtitling). Fifth, the working process of audiovisual translators has been affected by automation. Under the term 'automation', Gambier (ibid.) includes the use of subtitling software which allows subtitlers to focus on linguistic aspects without being required to cue the subtitles.

Additionally, the availability of more affordable subtitling software, together with the affordances of the Internet, have allowed freelance translators to work remotely for their clients (Georgakopoulou 2019c). Among the more recent technology-enabled changes to work processes are crowdsourcing and microtasking. Both have become more prevalent as translation vendors strive to complete projects faster and more cost-efficiently (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020). Back in the mid-1990s, the introduction of DVDs and popular adoption of templates for the production of subtitles in multiple languages drove the demand for subtitlers, revolutionised the subtitling workflow, changed the subtitler profile (e.g. in most instances, subtitlers working with templates were not required to spot subtitles), and allowed subtitling companies to kickstart a centralised and internationalised production and business model (e.g. outsourcing projects to translators and editors based in different countries). The model, however, really took off with the ubiquity of broadband Internet (Georgakopoulou 2019c).

At present, a lot of AVT production is ‘migrating to the cloud’ (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020, p. 264), which serves not only as a workplace for geographically dispersed team members in the translation production networks but also as distribution and consumption channels for OTT media content. Crowdsourced solutions are now increasingly employed by non-professional and professional translators alike (Georgakopoulou 2019c). The changes are predicted to lead to a paradigm shift yet again in the industry by ‘reshap[ing] subtitling workflows, client and LSP relationships, affect[ing] audience behaviour and challeng[ing] established norms’ (ibid., p. 530). New technological developments which have transformed the professional practice and profile of translators (Díaz-Cintas 2019) are welcomed by some as facilitative tools. Other practitioners, however, perceive them as a threat which could de-professionalise subtitling (Baños 2018).

2.3.3.3 MT in subtitling

MT, which has been utilised in specialised translation for some time, has recently started to make inroads into subtitling workflows. MT use for subtitle translation is also a potential research topic because the subtitle domain ‘stands in between restricted technical domains and fully open ones’ (Del Pozo 2014, online). Research funding bodies, particularly the European Union, have funded a number of projects and initiatives on AVT, including automation and MT integration in the subtitling process. Examples of EU-funded and co-funded subtitling or subtitling-related projects include MUSA (MUltilingual Subtitling of multimed*i*A content; 2000-2004),¹⁹ eTITLE (2004-2005),²⁰ SUMAT (SUbtitling by MACHine Translation; 2011-2014),²¹ SAVAS (Sharing AudioVisual language resources for Automatic Subtitling; 2012-2014)²², and MeMAD (Methods for Managing Audiovisual Data; 2018-2021).²³

An important milestone for the study of MT application in subtitling, the SUMAT project, which involved nine European languages grouped in seven bidirectional language pairs, was possible because of the cooperation of five technical partners and four subtitling companies (Bywood et al. 2017). Burchardt et al. (2016) consider the industry’s reluctance to provide researchers with subtitle corpora for MT training as a challenge for research and real-life application of statistical machine translation (SMT) in subtitling. Other challenges outlined are the limitations of SMT,

19 <http://sifnos.ilsp.gr/musa/index.html>

20 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/22160>

21 <http://www.fp7-sumat-project.eu/about-us/index.html>

22 <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/296371>

23 <https://memad.eu/>

which was the state-of-the-art MT engine at the time and distinctive characteristics of audiovisual texts, such as multimodality, oral-style language, and open domains (ibid.). The latter, however, is not seen as a big issue for some scholars who believe MT can be applied in open domains, including subtitles of entertainment content of various genres (Georgakopoulou 2019c). Results of the SUMAT project in terms of quality and productivity gains from the phrase-based SMT systems trained with subtitle corpora – derived from both professional human translations and crowdsourcing – were mostly positive, with 56.79 percent of the subtitles given a score of 4 or 5 (i.e. requiring little or no PE), and an overall productivity increase of 39.90 percent (Bywood et al. 2017). The study also reveals factors that affect productivity, namely, quality of MT systems, type of ST input, language pair, and subtitlers' proficiency on the PE task. Audiovisual texts pose challenges because of their high level of grammatical irregularity, which can be even more problematic in the case of live or unscripted programmes. Other determining factors to the success of PE tasks include subtitlers' psychological factors and their work experience. In relation to this, it has been recommended that subtitlers should be informed upfront of the limitations of MT systems and given a chance to ask questions they might have, which can eventually lead them to perceive MT as useful rather than threatening. It has also been found that more experienced and faster subtitlers likely find that editing MT output slows down their work process (ibid.).

The project's evaluation stage, which lasted a year and was carried out by subtitlers from four subtitling companies and using automated metrics, has made the project 'the most extensive evaluation to date of MT output by translator end-users in a subtitling scenario of entertainment material' (Georgakopoulou 2019c, p. 527). Comments from professional subtitlers on the PE process and overall impression of applying MT in subtitling workflows can be taken into account for the implementation of MT in subtitling process (Etchegoyhen et al. 2014; Bywood et al. 2017). The research team members also contend that objective results (i.e. productivity gains and usability) are as significant contributions as professional subtitlers' perception of PE (Etchegoyhen et al. 2014). In general, the subtitler-evaluators were not very enthusiastic at the prospect of using MT in their real tasks (ibid.). In addition to improving the quality of MT and improving quality estimation and filtering, the project also aimed to improve UIs for PE tasks. It has been recommended that to create PE interfaces that best serve post-editors, UIs should feature integrated short-cuts for easy corrections of commonly found error types, such as those linked to word order, and capitalisation (ibid.). Furthermore, the tools should provide subtitlers with suggested translations and concordances based on past translations to avoid repetitive and time-consuming steps (Bywood et al. 2017). All in all, the project team members believe that MT is a probable option 'for partially automating the subtitling workflow' (ibid., p. 504), particularly when the deployment of templates has given rise to a growing quantity of subtitle corpora suitable to

train MT engines. This, nevertheless, does not mean that human subtitlers will be replaced by the technology. The researchers contend that when MT is commercially adopted, academia and industry will have to address the need to create the job profile of subtitle post-editors (ibid.). The project's final report offers useful suggestions regarding the application of SMT in subtitling (Del Pozo 2014). For instance, given that PE is not a common task for subtitlers, the integration of MT in the subtitling workflow should be a gradual process and least disruptive to existing practice. MT engines should be designed to reduce the users' cognitive effort when post-editing machine translated subtitles and be adaptable for use with different subtitling software programs. In a nutshell, the design and execution of MT for subtitling must be user-centred and user-friendly. A similar suggestion is proposed by Karamanis et al. (2011), who assert that for the most efficient use of MT, it must cause as little friction as possible.

A recent study on user evaluation of post-editing machine translation (PEMT) for subtitling, in which 12 subtitlers participated, reveals that while PEMT can generally be slightly faster than translating from scratch, the results depend largely on language pairs, the participants' PE experience and preferences, as well as factors specifically pertaining to subtitles (e.g. the text's multimodal nature, and spatial and temporal limitations) (Koponen et al. 2020). A great number of available studies on MT application in subtitling have addressed the usability of MT output, its impact on productivity and role of PE in the implementation of MT (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020). Besides this, the impact of MT on working conditions and the livelihoods of subtitlers, particularly regarding their subtitling process and translation rates, has begun to open up as an avenue for research. Kuo (2014), whose PhD thesis deals with quality in professional subtitling, conducted two rounds of a survey, the first of which covered subtitlers from 39 countries - mainly in Europe (N = 429 valid replies), and the second of which narrowed its focus down to only subtitlers working with the Chinese language (N = 49 valid replies). Although her research does not focus primarily on MT, she anticipates that in the future, when it is more common to integrate MT in the subtitling workflow, subtitlers will be required to engage more in 'proofreading' (an activity which they rarely do now). Moreover, subtitlers will likely receive lower rates once 'the post-editing of machine-translated output [becomes] a reality' (ibid., p.154). Kuo (ibid.) believes this challenge will happen 'very soon'. In fact, MT has been used to produce close captions for broadcasting since the mid-1990s (Georgakopoulou 2019c). One of the first applications of SMT for commercial purposes was the translation of film subtitles from Swedish to Danish and Norwegian (Volk 2008). Free MT engines have been integrated with subtitling software such as Jubler Subtitle Editor, Subtitle Translation Wizard, and Subtitle Edit, all of which use Google Translate, and the last of which integrates both Google Translate and Microsoft Translator (Georgakopoulou 2019c). When properly applied, the technology is expected to increase

productivity, enabling subtitlers to handle a large workload within extremely short turnaround times (Díaz-Cintas 2020a).

2.3.3.4 Other tools and technologies in the subtitling workflow

CAT tools

When compared to MT, the adoption of CAT tools like TMs in subtitling has only been recently studied (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020). Prior studies on the potential application of TM (usually when combined with MT) in subtitling have often yielded mixed or modest results (e.g. O'Hagan 2003; Pérez Rojas 2014). Professional subtitlers do not generally use TMs (Burchardt et al. 2016; Baños 2018; Bywood 2020), despite probable time-savings when applied to genres characterised by repetitive segments, and likely consistency improvements in content found in series (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020), such as edutainment programmes, corporate videos, docurrealities, scientific and technical documentaries, and multi-season dramas (Díaz-Cintas 2015; Baños 2018). The results of Athanasiadi's (2017) online questionnaires probing into 456 freelance subtitlers' views on the integration of assistive (semi-) automated technologies reveal that most of the respondents would like to use subtitling software with assistive features, particularly TMs, term bases, and storage space. When given three scenarios to choose from: integration of MT in the subtitling software, integration of TM tools, and both MT and TM; the most preferable option is the integration of TM tools only, followed by the combination of both, while MT ranks the lowest. The author believes that TM tools are currently largely ignored in subtitling program development, partly because of the perception that subtitling is too creative a process to benefit from the tools.

Díaz-Cintas (2015) underscores the relative lack of serious consideration given to incorporating CAT tools (besides the spell-checker) into subtitling software, a situation which he believes may soon change. The scholar also envisions CAT tools to help optimise the process by allowing team members to consult and create glossaries, suggesting a synonym which helps with reduction, and proposing the reuse of past translations in similar contexts. In fact, it is becoming common to find subtitling software used together with a CAT tool because CAT tools (as well as MT) have been recently developed to be more applicable to multimodal and dynamic aspects of texts (Doherty and Kruger 2018). One of the rare examples of media localisers that have incorporated TM in their toolkits is hakromedia (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020). The Munich-based company 'integrates their subtitle editing workbench subCloud with Memsource so that subtitlers can create and edit subtitles in the browser whilst benefiting from TMs, term bases and MT systems' (ibid., p. 267).

The subtitlers who participated in the SUMAT project stated that the combination of MT with CAT tools like TMs will leverage the benefits of the MT system (Georgakopoulou 2019c). Drawing on prior studies, Georgakopoulou (ibid.) sees potential in the combination of these two technologies and believes that the integration of CAT tools and MT in subtitling software is the answer to an immense increase in demand for subtitle production.

Subtitling tools

Nowadays, subtitlers usually work with subtitling tools. The first round of the abovementioned survey in Kuo's (2014) study, which targeted subtitlers around the world, shows that more than 80 percent of the respondents use professional subtitling software, while almost 10 percent work with templates only, and less than 10 percent use free software.

Subtitling software serves as a helpful tool that can not only facilitate but also enhance the subtitlers' work process. Sophisticated subtitling software is equipped with functions that augment productivity, efficiency, and consistency – such as automatic backup, audio wave form bar, auto- detected shot changes function, character counter, customisable linguistic errors and typos detector (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020). Among quite a few professional subtitling programs available on the market, the leading ones include EZTitles, FAB, Screen Systems, Spot, and TitleVision, while some media localisers (e.g. Deluxe and SDI Media) use their own proprietary tools (ibid.). Moreover, there are free, open-source subtitling programs, such as Aegisub, Gaupol, Gnome Subtitles, Jubler, Subtitle Edit, and Subtitle Workshop (Georgakopoulou 2019c).

While desktop subtitling software is still in use, a number of companies have developed cloud-based subtitling platforms, either to be used mainly internally (e.g. ZOOsubs, Plint, iMediaTrans) or be available on demand (e.g. eCaption, OOONA). The development has given rise to the practice known as 'cloudsubtitling' (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020). Cloud-based subtitling platforms are usually featured with functionalities useful for subtitlers and the quality control team. They are also good for the integration of project management tools – such as a quality control function, cloud encryption, an internal workflow monitoring/managing system, a function to test and onboard new subtitlers, an automatic invoicing system, options to upload local video files or use the ones available in cloud storage or video-streaming platforms, customisable hotkeys, and a system that supports file conversion into different formats (Bolaños-García-Escribano and Díaz-Cintas 2020). Therefore, besides conveniently allowing translators, QC team members, project managers (PMs) and even clients to work on, manage, and monitor the subtitling projects online, 'cloudsubtitling' also helps to save 'costs [...] time and physical space in

the editing, post-production and delivery stages of the process' (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020, p. 266). OTT service providers and media localisers are increasingly reaping the benefits of working 'in the cloud' and the advancements in automation. In the case of the present study, through the cloud-based and semi-automated work mechanism, an *ad-hoc* team of subtitlers and editors (who are given a section of the programme to translate and edit) work simultaneously to ensure that the content can be uploaded on the OTT service platform in the shortest turnaround time possible. Regarding efficient project management, cloud-based solutions allow PMs to check the progress of all the translators and editors sharing the project, thus enabling them to make a timely decision to further divide down the tasks and assign those parts to other team members when needed (Bolaños-García-Escribano and Díaz-Cintas 2020). A number of companies' cloud-based subtitling platforms have integrated a translation management system (TMS) or workflow management software – usually a bespoke one – to serve their specific needs (Bywood 2020).

2.3.4 Communication

As translation practices take place in socio-technical networks which are sustained by interrelations of multiple actors, studies that investigate translation production networks usually discuss communications among team members and issues of trust. Professional translation nowadays is largely conducted in production networks where LSPs' in-house staff members and freelance translators work in a virtual team and communicate with each other through computerised means (Sakamoto and Foedisch 2017). On a positive note, virtual teams provide companies with easy access to qualified staff who may live far away and allow them to receive quick responses from team members (Rodríguez-Castro 2013). In Risku et al.'s (2013) study, the highly computerised work environment is seen by managers and staff members in a translation company as a positive change because it has enhanced the efficiency and transparency of the company's work. The transformation, however, has also led stakeholders to be more dependent on other actors in carrying out their tasks and interacting with technology. Translators are currently operating in complicated networks of geographically dispersed actors (Risku et al. 2020), including editors, proof-readers, and staff members from accounting and IT departments (Risku 2016 cited in *ibid.*).

Against this backdrop, translators are deprived of opportunities for face-to-face interactions, interpersonal relationships, access to social events for trust building, and close supervision (Rodríguez-Castro 2013). This adversely affects flows of communications, whereas prior studies have indicated that effective communications (e.g. open discussions, bottom-up communications) are instrumental to the following aspects of the translation production process: trust building

among involved actors, successful implementation of new tools and introduction of new practices (e.g. PEMT), and high product quality. Vieira and Alonso's (2018) report²⁴ on the deployment of MT in human translation workflows reveals that most of the representatives from the translation companies in question contended that successful implementation of MT in the translation production process requires effective communication and transparency of information. This is to ensure that all stakeholders, including freelance translators who may easily 'fall through the cracks' (ibid., p. 17), are well-informed of and in-sync on issues such as product specifications, process, procedures, and expectations regarding MT integration. In reality, it is not uncommon that certain stakeholders (e.g. client, translators) are not completely aware of the company's processes and procedures regarding MT deployment. The researchers assert that translators should be able to make free decisions which will influence the success of translations as product and contend that technological issues (with respect to MT, CAT tools, and others) can mostly be improved through open communications and accessible feedback channels.

2.3.5 Trust/trusting

Trust is an important component in a translation production network as it enhances task commitment and performance of team members (Rodríguez-Castro 2013). Generally, trust is created and maintained when members have positive, constructive relations with one another. Trust building and maintenance can be challenging in a virtual-team-style environment, in which opportunities for face-to-face interactions or social gatherings are minimal to none. In such environments, not only is trust restricted, but team cohesion and relationships are also hampered (ibid.).

It is of paramount importance that freelance translators successfully build trust with their commissioners. Risku et al. (2013) found that the company under investigation (whose core competence is translation project management) chooses to assign the translation, reviewing, and proofreading tasks to both translation agencies and individual freelancers. While the former are usually given large-scale projects because they are certified agencies, thus guaranteeing high volume and good quality work, the company names trust and personal control (i.e. a shorter chain of control) as two of the key criteria for outsourcing projects to their regular freelancers. A lack of trust has repercussions on translation workflows and product quality. Researchers have found

24 The findings are based on interviews with technology specialists, PMs, managing directors, and translators conducted between March 2016 and October 2017; and a knowledge exchange event on MT at the University of Bristol on 24 January 2018 which consisted of five presentations and a roundtable discussion with representatives from translation companies.

that in the production network that requires translators to use TM, MT, or crowdsourcing platforms, trust is not blindly given to any actors, be they human colleagues (e.g. freelance translators) or MT output (Karamanis et al. 2011), or other non-human actors (e.g. termbanks) (De Barra-Cusack 2014). A lack of trust results in more thorough monitoring and a lengthier process (Karamanis et al. 2011).

Trust, as a binding element for multiple actors, has been investigated from different perspectives. In addition to O'Hagan's (2017) analysis of the Facebook Translation crowdsourcing platform where trust among the involved actors was not promoted as anticipated, Abdallah and Koskinen (2007) examined contemporary translation production networks to determine the ways in which trust has been typically managed and how it should be managed for sustainable development. Abdallah (2010) further investigated causes of lack of trust and its ramifications on translators in the network. On a more positive note, Olohan and Davitti (2017) believe that trust in translation networks can be created and maintained under constructive conditions.

To conclude, past studies indicate that, when it comes to trust building and maintenance, freelance subtitlers are in a vulnerable position as they are exposed to less face-to-face communication and instant feedback than in-house staff members, coupled with translators' increasing reliance on intermediaries rather than having direct contact with end clients. As for the former, the limitations can be mitigated by frequent use of multiple communication channels, while the latter would be difficult to overcome, given the widely adopted outsourcing model in the media localisation sector.

2.3.6 Quality in professional subtitling

A great number of publications have addressed quality issues in professional translation and localisation (Bass 2006; Jiménez-Crespo 2009; Drugan 2013; Martínez Mateo 2014; House 2015; Doherty 2016; Calvo 2018; Pym 2020) and in non-professional subtitling (Dwyer 2017; Orrego-Carmona 2018, 2019). This section, however, will focus on prior studies on quality in professional subtitling, particularly pre-prepared interlingual subtitling. It will also include studies that address quality issues in relation to the following topics: translation production networks, and working conditions of professional audiovisual translators.

Despite there being no full agreement on how to define translation quality or translation quality assessment (Kuo 2020), it is commonly accepted that quality in professional subtitling and other modalities of AVT – and indeed translation and localisation in general – also depends on factors

beyond the translator. Quality is the result of a joint effort (Bass 2006; Gambier 2008; Gouadec 2010) and such effort is not limited to contributions of human actors. Although it might not be plausible to create categories with clear-cut boundaries, some factors may be said to be primarily sociological, such as lack of clear communications on the stakeholders' expectations of quality. Some are material and technological in nature, such as adoption or non-adoption of certain artefacts and tools in the workflows, while other factors are predominantly administrative, like the way quality assurance (QA) is managed by the commissioner.

Quality in professional subtitling has usually been investigated in terms of process quality and/or product quality – with an emphasis on the reception side (e.g. whether the product meets viewers' needs), the production side (e.g. what subtitlers do to achieve satisfactory quality), or sometimes both. Process and product quality are often judged against prescriptive criteria, such as quality parameters or quality models established with the interest of viewers. However, with technology like eye-tracking gaining prominence in reception studies in AVT (Kruger et al. 2015), some long-held norms may need to be revisited for the best viewing experience of present-day media consumers. For instance, 'the six-seconds rule' (i.e. that a full two-line subtitle should appear on screen for six seconds) has been challenged as the golden standard for subtitling by findings that viewers can follow faster subtitles, and that slow subtitles may lead them to re-read the lines, thus affecting their enjoyment of the show (Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón 2018). On the other hand, new findings have helped to validate the relevance of certain current practices, such as the recommended maximum number of subtitle lines being set at two (Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón 2019).

The quality debate is exacerbated as translation technologies such as CAT tools, MT, and automatic speech recognition (ASR) have been increasingly used to semi-automate the subtitling process. When a tool is of dubious quality, when the translator does not have competence to efficiently utilise it, or when the commissioner imposes the technology without careful consideration of plausible negative impact on subtitler working conditions (Abdallah 2017), process and product quality will likely be affected. On the other hand, with proper use of tools, quality can be effectively managed. It is also interesting to note that when MT is in the picture, discussions on quality generally revolve around the complexity it has added to an already elusive quality assessment. The incorporation of MT tends to further diversify stakeholders' expectations of quality (Way 2018). For successful deployment of MT, the management and staff members in the production team are required to communicate more often and more effectively, e.g. to align their goals and expectations (Vieira and Alonso 2020). MT might also pose challenges when used in the translations of creative texts, such as in literary translation (Taivalkoski-Shilov 2019). In a

similar vein, limitations of existing quality parameters should be addressed when MT is applied in subtitling and captioning as the use of technology can potentially add more challenges to AVT stakeholders (Doherty and Kruger 2018).

2.3.6.1 Factors influencing quality in professional subtitling

Szarkowska et al. (2020) classify factors that determine the quality of subtitles into three types. The first type refers to technical factors which can be easily checked with subtitling software, such as text and soundtrack synchronisation, accuracy of shot changes, and limitation of characters per line. The second type concerns the linguistic aspects of subtitles, including typos, omissions of plot-pertinent details, and translations failing to convey intended meanings or cultural references. The third category denotes subtitler working conditions in terms of remuneration rates, deadlines, quality of original texts, and training (Fawcett 1983 cited in *ibid.*). In line with Fawcett, Díaz-Cintas (2005, p. 22) maintains that the noticeable decline in the quality of subtitles has partially been caused by undesirable working conditions of subtitlers, including ‘[e]ver lower pay rates for translators, more and more precarious freelancing, little training for newcomers, absence of proper in-house guidelines, little time for doing enough research and impossible deadlines’. Despite awareness of the impact working conditions can have on end products, the issues of quality regarding audiovisual translators’ working conditions have not been sufficiently addressed in TS scholarship (Gambier 2007 cited in Abdallah 2011). Moreover, although quality in AVT is a popular theme for conferences and is ‘certainly a major issue’ for professional subtitlers (Robert and Remael 2016, p. 600), there is no consistency in practice; and research into both QA and quality control (QC)²⁵ is not yet abundant. To address the relative lack of research in these areas, TS scholars (Abdallah 2011, 2017; Kuo 2014, 2020) have lately extended their studies to encapsulate socio-technical factors that affect subtitling process and product, and to reflect the actual working conditions of practitioners. In this respect, Kuo (2020) contends that quality constituents in subtitling must be analysed from an integrated view (i.e. from both the theoretical and practical perspectives), and in tandem with the development of official standards and technological tools in subtitling.

Quality is arguably an elusive issue (Pedersen 2017) and quality in production networks is a highly subjective area (Abdallah 2010, 2014b). While every actor in the translation production network strives for ‘good’ translation, it is not easy to achieve that goal, given the complex and undemocratic nature of most networks and differing views on how to define quality. Moreover, a

²⁵ The issues concerning QA and QC will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

lack of trust is also found to affect the quality of translation products. Abdallah (2011) applies ANT in her case study of an AVT production network to gain insights into how the investigated network is formed, and how and why translators encountered quality-related issues – with the aim of mitigating these problems in the future. In the network in question, the subcontracted translators worked for a translation company that acted as a turnkey supplier of subtitles for a pay-TV provider. The study discloses not only quality problems but also the disempowered status of subtitlers in the production network. It has been found that the translation company successfully ‘translated’ its interests and exerted its agency by circulating inscriptions to translators in the network. The translation company also purposively enrolled students as cheap labour so they could offer low-priced services to their client (a pay-TV provider). As powerless actors in the network, these newly recruited subtitlers would do whatever they could just to gain work experience while studying, and they did not have a say in the circulated inscriptions which obviously worked against their work ethics (e.g. to produce high quality subtitles for viewers). It is also evident that translators defined quality differently from the other actors who would trade quality off against the price they could charge and prioritised low price over quality. There were no available written rules or guidelines on how to deal with quality-related issues. The resultant disparities left translators who worked as subcontractors faced with a dilemma, as they aimed to produce quality subtitles under undesirable circumstances, including tight deadlines and a high work volume. The company in question was exploitative of and unfair to the subtitlers. In addition to recruiting translation students, so they did not have to pay them a competitive rate, the company did not provide the full version of the subtitling software to new translators, and the translators needed to deal with tax and social security issues on their own. Eventually, the pay TV provider refused to pay for poor quality work and the translation company had to file for bankruptcy. As illustrated by this case, conflicting views on quality and lack of negotiations and communications among involved actors affected not only powerless translators at a personal level, but also the stability and sustainability of an entire network.

While the above study foregrounds the significant role of inscriptions as non-human actors in the production network, another paper by the same author focuses on a different, yet complementary, aspect of quality in the contemporary translation production network. Abdallah (2010) maintains that quality-related problems are caused by double and triple moral hazard. Moral hazard is defined as a situation where one party in the principal and agent dyad²⁶ has more information than the other and when the goals of the two parties are not aligned. The interviews with six translators working for a translation company in the translation production network

26 The dyad consists of the principal, who delegates her/his authority to the agent, who undertakes a task on the principal’s behalf (Eisenhardt 1989 cited in Abdallah 2010).

revealed that the translators often have a different goal in terms of quality from that of the company, and that involved actors cannot access information regarding (and leading to) the desired quality of the translation products. Asymmetric information, for instance, may occur when the translation company assigns the translators to work on a poorly written ST but fails to give them sufficient explanation or terminological support. Moreover, double moral hazard is likely to happen in the network when the two parties in the dyad behave unethically by cheating each other, in this case when the translation company exploits the translators or when the translators work half-heartedly. Worse still, triple hazard may arise when both parties collaborate to cheat a third party, that is, when the translation company and translators work just to serve their own interests but fail to deliver quality translations to the lead firm, which automatically means that they also 'cheat' the reader of the text. The author calls for the development of a quality classification system which she believes is 'an investment in trust formation in translation production networks, where lack of trust is currently widespread' (ibid., p.43). Any change in this respect will help promote translators' agency and sustainability of the translation industry.

In another study, Abdallah (2017) uses the three-dimensional quality model (see Figure 2.1) to illustrate the problematic workflow management in translation production networks. Two Finnish subtitlers, who translated subtitles for the movie *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, were forced to endure poor working conditions: they worked under a tight schedule, using post-production scripts without access to proper video files (i.e. most of what was shown on screen was blackened out to prevent content from leaking) on the studio's laptop, and using unfamiliar software in a secret place with a security guard on site. Given poor social quality (i.e. lack of cooperation and trust among involved actors), process quality and product quality were so unsatisfactory that the subtitlers refused to be credited for the project. This finding is in line with that of Kuo's (2015) study, in which 19.1 percent of the respondents revealed that they would prefer not to be credited in some situations, such as when they work against extremely tight deadlines, or when they do not like the shows they translate. Abdallah (2017) argues that stakeholders in translation production networks should respond to translators' needs and adopt a holistic approach to quality to optimise organisational ergonomics. In this way, translators' performance and wellbeing will be enhanced.

In practice, involved stakeholders often have divergent views and different expectations with regard to quality. Robert and Remael (2016) conducted an online survey to explore the issues of QC and QA in the subtitling industry. They formulated the questionnaire focusing on certain aspects of QC (i.e. the subtitlers' checking their own subtitles, and revision by another subtitler); and QA (in terms of human resources and technical resources). Based on the 99 valid replies, it

was found that when the subtitlers revise their translated texts, they refer to the client brief. However, the client brief usually places more emphasis on technical parameters than linguistic ones, whereas the subtitlers also pay attention to other aspects, such as content, grammar, and readability. Likewise, subtitlers in Szarkowska et al.'s (2020) study revealed that stakeholders are inclined to focus more on the technical aspects of subtitling. Bass (2006) contends that the chance of achieving the desirable quality can be significantly improved when the involved parties have clear standards on what comprises quality. Back to Robert and Remael's (2016, p. 600) research, nearly half of the respondents reported that they sometimes had to work with only a video file when translating subtitles for their client, which is 'far from ideal'. There is obviously a discrepancy between the commissioner's and subtitler's views on what should be provided to subtitlers so that they can produce quality subtitles.

Szarkowska et al. (2020) investigated the perceptions of both subtitlers (i.e. the production side) and viewers (i.e. the reception side) on subtitle quality by drawing on findings from two separate qualitative studies. It was found that the two groups – 237 professional subtitlers from 27 countries, and 74 viewers – have both similar and divergent views about important quality parameters of interlingual subtitling. That is, subtitlers and viewers generally agree that good subtitles should be free from errors, asynchronies, and inconsistencies that distract viewers from immersing themselves in the story. However, they have different views on text condensation. Professional translators believe that subtitles should not be translated literally, and text condensation is considered a prerequisite of skilled subtitlers, whereas a number of viewers complained of subtitles missing certain details from the original dialogue (this also involves individual viewer's level of proficiency in the source language). An interesting finding derived from professional subtitlers' answers to the survey is that subtitling quality has dropped because of many factors, including 'the fall in rates, the rise in subtitle display rates, the widespread use of templates, the lack of quality control procedures and the influx of inexperienced people into the profession' (ibid., online). One respondent mentions the inadequacy of quality metrics that focus only on the technical, linguistic, and cultural aspects without taking other parameters such as working conditions into account. The researchers conclude that other stakeholders are usually unaware of limitations on the subtitlers' part and call for an attempt to promote the social visibility of professional subtitling.

Kuo's (2015) publication, based on her PhD research (Kuo 2014), helps to shed light on some of the issues discussed above. One of her findings is that the quality of support materials substantially influences the quality of subtitles. In the subtitlers' opinion, most of the time, clients do not see the quality of end products as their priority, as shown by the fact that some agencies

prefer hiring translation students. Her research reveals key non-human actors that influence subtitling quality. These non-human actors include remuneration (e.g. subtitling rates, delay of payment, negotiation power to set the rates and royalties), notices and deadlines, social visibility of subtitlers (e.g. acknowledgement credits), QC procedures, work process, and the quality of subtitling software and support materials – all of which can be grouped as subtitlers' working conditions. The scholar uses the term 'support materials' to refer to dialogue lists, templates, videos, and other supplementary documents (e.g. consistency sheets). Similarly, previous studies have shown that the quality of subtitling processes and subtitles is influenced by the quality of materials such as dialogue lists (Díaz-Cintas 2001), template files (Artegiani and Kapsaskis 2014; Nikolić 2015; Oziemblewska and Szarkowska 2020), and video assets (Abdallah 2017) which, ideally, should be provided to subtitlers by their commissioners. As a study that explores subtitling quality based on both theoretical and practical considerations, aiming to investigate factors that determine quality of subtitles but also to probe into subtitlers' working conditions and their impact on product quality, Kuo's (2014, 2015) research has reached the illuminating conclusion that high subtitling quality can be achieved through effective work processes and QC procedures, provision of high quality support materials, reasonable remuneration and deadlines, as well as social recognition and visibility of the subtitling profession and subtitlers. As she aptly puts it, if subtitling quality could be attained by simply following the objective quality standards or guidelines, there should not be as many quality-related problems in professional realities.

Sayman (2011) investigates factors that lead to 'poor' quality of dubbing and subtitling in Turkey from the points of view of both the production and reception sides. While translators are generally seen as the sole culprit in the case of poor quality of end products, interviews with staff members from the translation department of Digiturk, a satellite television provider, and a translation coordinator at Saran Dubbing Studio as well as Sayman's own experience as a dubbing script writer and subtitler, have unveiled various contributing factors which can make or break the quality of final products, namely, translators' working conditions (particularly deadlines and rates), recruitment procedures, provision of on-the-job training (as most of audiovisual translators in Turkey do not have a translation degree), and reviewing/editing processes. All of these factors fall into the responsibilities of the commissioner. Representatives of both companies revealed that they often assigned projects to 'fast' translators as they would like the projects to be finished within a tight schedule. It is not uncommon that translations completed in unforgiving deadlines are released without any editing. As the companies prioritise fast delivery, the product quality is compromised. On the reception side, viewers believed that the poor quality of AVT is a repercussion from lack of training, translators' incompetency, and poor working conditions.

Earlier publications on quality in subtitling show a rather contrasting scenario. Nearly 20 years ago, when the quantity of audiovisual products that required translation was not overwhelming and the deadlines were not as pressing, the commissioners (usually broadcasters) would handle quality management with great care. Gummerus and Paro (2001) share their experience working for the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) as in-house translators and editors, as well as educators in charge of freelance translator recruitment and training. The authors name the following as determining factors for quality: 'criteria for the recruitment of translators (qualification, selection, testing), methods for and time-span of on-the-job training, continuing training, [...] revising and editing translations', 'the general working conditions' such as 'fees, tools, schedules, professional status', and the organisational and management factors such as the way the company organises translation production, and the position of the translation production department and translators in the organisation (ibid., p. 133). Although most translators did not have formal training or degrees in translation, the company aimed to recruit qualified candidates and provided new freelancers with the necessary training sessions (e.g. a one- or two-day crash course on subtitling, and assignment of a tutor for each new translator for a period of six months, or longer if needed). The reviewing system was employed to educate their translators rather than simply as a QC means (i.e. to monitor translators). Every year, the translation department organised a screening or seminar focusing on practical aspects such as subtitling rhythm. The translation team members assessed quality based on the following respects: overall viewer experience, and the role of translation in achieving positive viewer experience. They decided 'whether the translation 'works' in its audiovisual context' (ibid., p. 138) where quality was understood in terms of functional adequacy and as a relative rather than an absolute concept. Every team member was aware of their contribution to the quality and was equipped with skills and means to do their job properly. It was important for the team that translators knew their strengths and weaknesses and accepted only the projects that suited their competency. The coordinators were also expected to know each translator's skills so that they could assign the right job to the right person. In line with TS scholars' view mentioned above, the translation team perceived translation quality as relying on not only individual translator's skills but also on cooperation between all stakeholders involved in the production process, including the show producers, journalists, and staff members of the translation production team (i.e. the coordinators, reviewers and translators). The translation team realised that they needed to effectively communicate and cooperate with other actors, such as freelancers and the company's software engineers who developed subtitling programs. Overall, the translation department at YLE created a work environment, which they called the 'greenhouse effect', to cultivate discussion and cooperation among involved actors to achieve high quality outcomes.

Holding that '[a] subtitle can only be as good as the person who prepares it', Mueller (2001, p. 144), a German subtitler and editor of subtitles at the SBS, reveals the robust processes to recruit, train, and monitor both subtitlers and editors at his organisation at the turn of the millennium. SBS set high selection standards for their subtitlers (e.g. impeccable comprehension of the source language in all registers, high written English skills, a large breadth of vocabulary in both languages). New subtitlers were trained and monitored by senior subtitlers. Their performance was evaluated against transparent criteria and on a regular basis so that SBS could provide subtitlers with further training sessions that met their specific needs. Subtitlers could easily access helpful resources (e.g. dictionaries, reference books), a Subtitling Manual, and a Style Guide, or seek out other team members for consultation. The editors, who also passed through the rigorous selection process, finished the editing process by following clearly set standards and procedures. The 'conference' session between subtitler and editor was believed to be one of the major determining factors for high quality subtitles at SBS.

2.3.6.2 The three-dimensional quality model

Drawing on her empirical studies on work practices of translators, including subtitlers, in translation production networks, Abdallah proposes a three-dimensional quality model (Figure 2.1).

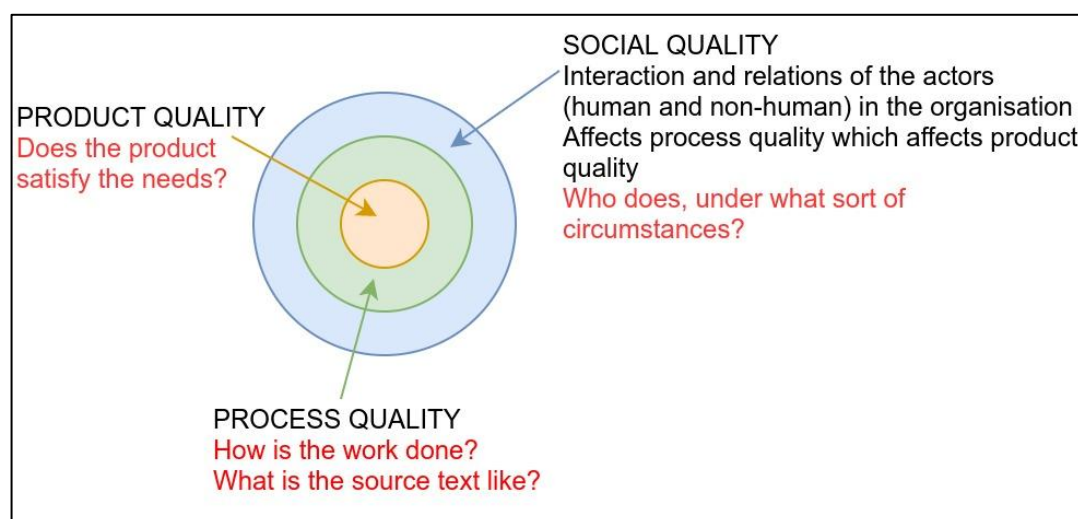


Figure 2.1: Three dimensions of quality (Abdallah 2016, 2017)

The model is special in that it incorporates the social dimension that was hitherto not explicitly included in other models, and conceptualises it as 'interaction and relations of the actors (human or non-human)' that 'affects process quality which affects product quality' (Abdallah 2016, PowerPoint presentation). The social dimension is sometimes referred to as collective quality, as

it indicates that a translation product is a collective contribution of multiple actors. Abdallah (ibid.) also posits that ethics make up part of collective quality. In relation to this, she advocates fair and sustainable working conditions for translators. Moreover, an expected level of quality and its criteria usually shared only between the translation company and end client should also be communicated to translators to ensure transparency and accountability. In her opinion, this will help to prevent a situation in which 'bad' translators drive 'good' translators out of the market.

Unlike some existing quality models, which usually aim to judge product and/or process quality by means of scoring, the three-dimensional quality model is a conceptual model that is useful in drawing attention to the interrelationships among multiple dimensions of quality, and in enabling stakeholders to understand quality in a holistic manner. It is also appropriate for qualitative and mixed-methods research. Even when the model is not explicitly referred to, a number of studies on quality in subtitling have generated findings that are in line with Abdallah's (ibid.) rationale. Additionally, Artegi (2018) proposes to study quality in professional subtitling through a holistic lens: quality as a product *and* a process. She argues that a high quality process will result in high quality product, and that in order to achieve the former, translation companies have to adopt a robust recruitment process and training. The scholar uses ethnographic methods to investigate workplace procedures, working conditions, and contextual factors, including technologies such as MT – all of which she believes directly influence quality of the final products. Artegi's (ibid.) assertion resonates with Abdallah's (2016, 2017) argument. Despite her claim to investigate quality as a process and product (without mentioning social quality), Artegi's (2018) attention to working conditions and other contextual factors (e.g. technology and tools) may be interpreted as comparable to the focus on social and process quality in Abdallah's model. By the same token, results from Robert and Remael's (2016), and Kuo's (2015) studies have empirically validated the correlations between the three dimensions in Abdallah's quality model, particularly Kuo's (2015) survey findings, which lead to the conclusion that working conditions of subtitlers play a significant role in determining the quality of the translation process and final products. For example, having to meet tight deadlines is a serious issue for most of the survey respondents because it has a repercussion on the product quality. To investigate quality issues in the SPN and answer RQ 3 in the present study, Abdallah's three-dimensional quality model is used as a complementary analytical framework.

2.3.7 Work practices and working conditions of professional subtitlers

Most of the aforementioned studies are related to professional audiovisual translators' work practices and working conditions in one way or another. This section will present another study

that has not been covered in preceding sections. The study was conducted as a PhD research project (Beuchert 2017) to investigate subtitling processes by drawing on situated cognition and Translation Process Research (TPR), and to determine whether the external and internal elements of the subtitling process are interrelated, and if so, in what ways. External elements refer to factors which are observable by outsiders, whereas internal elements are relevant to the translator's cognitive activities. The study has also revealed interesting findings regarding work practices and working conditions of Danish subtitlers.

Beuchert (*ibid.*) conducted two sub-studies using mixed methods and came up with the subtitling process model demonstrating three categories of elements that constitute the subtitling process. She concludes that the subtitling process consists of external, internal, and intersectional elements, the last of which are added by the researcher to designate 'elements which are observable to outsiders, but are also locatable in the mind of the subtitler' (*ibid.*, p. 168). All three types of elements influence the way subtitlers carry out their task. Internal elements may affect the external and intersectional elements, such as when the subtitlers choose to set up the subtitling software interface and shortcuts (external and intersectional elements) based on the personal preferences they have developed over time (internal element), or when the subtitlers' doubt (internal element) leads to changes in their subtitling workflow (external element), e.g. revisiting the points they have marked with asterisks or consulting their colleagues for the best translations. The high interdependencies among the elements of the three categories create a complex web of relations, hence the title of the thesis: *The Web of Subtitling*.

Findings from Sub-study 1 (derived from questionnaires completed in 2015 by 97 subtitlers – or approximately 40 percent of subtitlers in Denmark) reveal that most of the respondents work for the Danish subtitling agencies Dansk Video Tekst and Subline and/or international agencies (e.g. BTI, SDI), and that 95 percent of the surveyed subtitlers work as freelancers. It can be assumed that most Danish subtitlers are experienced, as shown by the fact that 86 percent of the respondents have been working as subtitlers for 5 years or longer, with 12 percent having more than 25 years' experience. Most of the respondents translate from English into Danish, which is seen by the researcher as a result of the popularity of foreign shows on Danish television, coupled with the increasing prevalence of streaming services such as Netflix and HBO. Moreover, it has been found that the subtitling brief, an element discussed in several previous studies (Robert and Remael 2016), has great impact on the subtitling process because it usually includes information about the deadline and technical requirements (e.g. reading speed) of each project. However, the subtitling brief does not usually contain details about the target audience or a glossary. It is worth noting that a majority of subtitlers in Denmark often or always receive a 'manuscript' together

with the subtitling brief, but they are rarely given a pre-spotted material. The researcher concludes that Danish subtitlers generally translate from scratch. What she does not explicitly state, but can be inferred from the findings, is that spotting is still considered a significant skill for subtitlers in the Danish market. Regarding QC, while all the respondents conduct quality checks, 7 percent answer that their commissioner does not have a QC procedure in place. It is unfortunate to learn that in general the respondents believe that their status is low, and that they are underpaid and underestimated, although some of them are proud of their job and believe that it is a well-recognised profession.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

As the present study aims to investigate the SPN and work practices of freelance subtitlers who act as significant actors in the network, the literature review chapter serves to present selected literature on two research areas, namely, application of ANT in TS, and studies on working environments and work practices of professional translators, particularly subtitlers. To produce quality translations, freelance translators are expected to work closely with other actors in a virtual team. Technological tools, therefore, play an increasingly pivotal role in the present work environment. Fostering a good relationship and trust – key elements for quality work and sustainable development of the network – can be quite tricky without good leadership (i.e. PMs) and effective use of communication avenues. The translation processes are increasingly automated. The introduction of new technology in the workflow is usually met with suspicion although the tools in question can be beneficial in the long run if implemented on fair grounds to every actor. The subtitling industry is not immune to such changes and challenges. Subtitlers are faced with unforgiving deadlines, uncompetitive remuneration, and demands to get familiarised with new technology, new tools, and new work processes. The commissioners (e.g. LSPs, media localisation providers) also need to maintain quality – to a certain extent – while keeping profit margins intact. Against this backdrop, effective quality management is urgently needed but seems to be neglected, as illustrated by a failure to provide translators with proper training or good quality support materials. It is hoped that through qualitative longitudinal data obtained from freelance subtitlers in the rapidly evolving SPN, we can gain a better understanding of these problematic issues. The next chapter will explain how the current study was carried out to achieve these objectives.

Chapter 3 Methodology

‘In practice research needs to be messy and heterogeneous. It needs to be messy and heterogeneous because that is the way it – research – actually is. And also, and more importantly, it needs to be messy because that is the way the largest part of the world is: messy, unknowable in a regular and routinised way.’

- John Law (2007, pp. 595, 597)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the principal aspects of qualitative longitudinal research (QLR) as the overarching design of the present study. It then goes on to discuss the analytical framework, sampling method, research participants, and data generation procedures. Some ways to address ethical concerns are also included. The chapter ends with the presentation of data analysis, and themes developed from interview data.

3.2 Fundamental Principles of Qualitative Longitudinal Research

QLR is distinctive for its intentional inclusion of temporality in the research process, thus making change ‘a central focus’ in the analysis (Thomson et al. 2003 cited in Holland et al. 2006, p. 5). Saldaña (2003) proposes that QLR encompasses three foundation principles, namely duration of the study, time, and change. The *duration* or length of the study designates the minimum required time for data collection so that the study can be considered longitudinal. *Time* in longitudinal studies tends to be conceptualised as fluid and contextual (Saldaña 2003; Neale 2019), in line with the widespread acknowledgment that time is culturally and socially constructed (Saldaña 2003). Moreover, time may be seen either as a ‘vehicle’ or ‘topic of enquiry that drives the generation and analysis of Q[ualitative] L[ongitudinal] data’ (Neale 2019, p. 24). Likewise, *change* – another focus in QLR analyses (Calman et al. 2013) – should be contextually defined and subject to an emergent new definition as the study progresses (Saldaña 2003). Admittedly, all of the above principles are elusive, making it difficult to fix their meanings in a concrete way. Researchers, therefore, have to create the constructs and definitions that best suit their own project (ibid.).

QLR is different from other types of long-term research, such as ethnographic and field research, or the extended case method in that it requires researchers to plan at least two rounds (or 'waves') of data collection at more or less fixed intervals, where the length from one interval to the next enables researchers to observe relevant changes (Winiarska 2017). Despite no hard and fast rules for researchers to follow or a 'clear definition of the meaning of 'long' in longitudinal research' (Corden and Millar 2007, p. 586 quoted in Derrington 2019, p. 2), a criterion put forth by Epstein (2002) can be helpful in determining longitudinal studies. According to the scholar, a study will be considered 'long-term' when the researcher engages with the project in the following manners: 'continuous research in the same small society over a number of years; periodic restudies at regular or irregular intervals; and/or returning after a lengthy interval of time has elapsed since the original research' (ibid., p. 64 quoted in Saldaña 2003, p. 2). In the discipline of organisation studies, Mari and Meglio (2013) name two major elements of longitudinal research: fieldwork, and engagement with the research setting for an extended period of time. White and Arzi (2005), whose research area is science education, propose two measures to characterise longitudinal studies: the length of time, and the nature of measurements. Specifically, the authors assert that a longitudinal study needs to continue for at least one year, and that the measurements of the same nature must be used to determine whether change has occurred or not. There are other researchers who stipulate one year as the minimum amount of time, such as Young et al. (1991 cited in Holland et al. 2006), who also add that QLR in social sciences should ideally comprise three waves of data collection, while Vogl et al. (2017) propose at least two waves. Notwithstanding the lack of a fixed formula across disciplines in terms of the number of waves of data collection or amount of time researchers should spend in the field, it has been acknowledged that mere prolonged engagement in the research setting is not sufficient for conducting a trustworthy longitudinal study (Denzin 1994; Wolcott 1995, p. 78 cited in Saldaña 2003, p. 33). Saldaña (ibid.) then suggests that researchers spend 'quality time' when doing fieldwork. That is, *how* and *what* they observe matter more than *how long* they are present in the field.

This research project fits the bill to be considered QLR, as the same cohort of participants were interviewed for in-depth qualitative data at six-month intervals over the course of two years, a duration which is deemed sufficient for the researcher to observe changes in the network under investigation.

3.2.1 Advantages of longitudinal research

Longitudinal research – whether quantitative or qualitative – pays attention to not only ‘how people change’ but also ‘how people respond to change’ (Corden and Millar 2007, p. 529 cited in Winiarska 2017, p. 6). Quantitative methods used to predominate in longitudinal studies, but qualitative methods have started to gain currency (Winiarska 2017). QLR is useful in ‘the exploration of subjective interpretations and motivations, perceptions and opinions as well as their variations through time, with particular attention given both to contextual details and individual characteristics’ (ibid., p. 6). On a similar note, scholars such as Mayock et al. (2008) and Hermanowicz (2016) contend that through QLR, processes, practices, and behaviours as well as their meanings (i.e. individuals’ perspectives and interpretations about events and experiences) can be explored as they develop and evolve. Spending extended time with participants allows researchers to gain insightful understanding of the phenomenon – or a movie of that phenomenon, rather than just its one-off snapshot (Derrington 2019). When compared with quantitative longitudinal research, QLR enables researchers to ‘produc[e] high quality, in-depth data, and provid[e] great explanatory value’ (Holland et al. 2006, p. 32). Moreover, QLR designs can incorporate different types of methodologies (Thomson and McLeod 2015).

As one of the most prominent advantages of conducting longitudinal studies is that the researchers are able to observe changes occurring through time (Saldaña 2003; Babbie 2007), QLR designs are particularly useful in examining the trajectories of people’s lives, including their careers (Farrall 2006, p. 2 cited in Svahn 2020). Thus, the design was appropriate for the investigation of freelance subtitlers in the SPN under study in the current research, an SPN which, by the time of the first round of data collection, had been recently formed and had already begun to experience changes. Changing circumstances – whether investigators intend to study them or they happen unexpectedly – are factors that longitudinal researchers should be prepared to deal with. It is also likely that researchers are required to change their adopted paradigms or methods during the project. Saldaña (2003, p. 64) proposes seven guiding questions for the analysis of data pertaining to changes:

1. What increases or emerges through time?
2. What is cumulative through time?
3. What kinds of surges, epiphanies, or turning points occur through time?
4. What decreases or ceases through time?
5. What remains constant or consistent through time?
6. What is idiosyncratic through time?
7. What is missing through time?

However, some caution needs to be exercised: researchers can anticipate only ‘the *possibility* of change’ as change might not occur at all to some participants, or it may happen after the project is finished (Saldaña 2003, p. 17, original emphasis).

3.2.2 Challenges in longitudinal research

Besides the apparent issues of time and budget (Babbie 2007), researchers should carefully consider the following practical aspects before embarking on a QLR project.

3.2.2.1 Attrition and retention

Attrition (‘a decrease in the number of research participants due to various reasons and circumstances’) and retention (‘keeping an adequate sample size throughout the research process’) are among the common challenges of QLR (Winiarska 2017, p. 10), particularly because the sample size in qualitative studies is usually relatively small (Hermanowicz 2016). Longer projects are at higher risk of unexpected circumstances leading to attrition (Derrington 2019) as changes in professional and personal lives may affect the participants’ availability or willingness to continue their contribution to the project (Winiarska 2017). Ethical researchers are expected to treat participant consent as an ongoing process (as opposed to as a one-off step in cross-sectional studies), ensuring that participants are aware of their right to withdraw from a project at any time (Neale 2013). Therefore, to reduce attrition and improve retention, it is essential for qualitative longitudinal researchers to forge relationships and maintain rapport with their participants. This can be achieved through many ways, including frequent communications through emails, cards, and newsletters; regular updates about the study’s progress; adjusting research methods to be motivating and facilitative to the life of participants; showing care; and expressing appreciation for the participants’ voluntary and vital contribution to the project (Hermanowicz 2016; Winiarska 2017).

3.2.2.2 Data management

Pettigrew (1995, p. 111 quoted in Neale 2019, p. 121) succinctly and metaphorically raises a concern that researchers may find themselves facing ‘death by data asphyxiation: the slow and inexorable sinking into the swimming pool that started so cool, clear and inviting and now has become a clinging mass of maple syrup’. Researchers must carefully plan and manage their time and resources, and stringent data management procedures are required to avoid such dreadful scenarios (Neale et al. 2016 cited in Neale 2019). As Neale (2019, p. 121) puts it, to successfully

conduct QLR, researchers need to be equipped with ‘an abundance of time, resourcefulness, sound organization, commitment, stamina, good luck and a dogged faith in the value of the journey and its eventual destination’.

3.2.2.3 *Creating and maintaining balanced relationships with participants*

In the past, forming relationships with participants was strongly discouraged, as it was thought to lead to biased data collection and analysis. Even now, the researcher-participant personal relationship is a questionable area for some researchers (Derrington 2019) and the recommendation is that researchers ensure that the relationships are ‘respectful’, ‘reciprocal’ and ‘professionally trusting’, rather than ‘overly friendly’ (Glesne 2016 cited in Derrington 2019, p. 37).

Reciprocity can be expressed in many ways, including communicating with the participants and giving them appropriate tokens of appreciation (e.g. sending participants thank-you notes and greeting cards for special occasions, or offering them snacks and refreshment during the interview). As another appropriate way to reciprocate, researchers should communicate and share research results with their participants, who are generally eager to learn the results.²⁷ It is also a considerate gesture that the interviews are scheduled to accommodate participants’ higher priority activities or emergencies (Derrington 2019). Researchers should also treat their participants with respect and listen carefully to them during interviews (Glesne 2016 cited in Derrington 2019).

3.2.3 Longitudinal research in TS

There have not been many longitudinal studies which examine work practices of professional translators and their interactions with other actors. It is also rare to find longitudinal studies that are conducted in translation workplaces to explore social, technological and organisational changes within companies and their teams (Risku et al. 2020). Most of the available agent-oriented research projects employ cross-sectional research design, while existing longitudinal studies in TS predominantly focus on translation competence and translation competence acquisition, and are often process- and/or product-oriented, such as Kujamäki’s (2019) study, the

²⁷ Regarding this, van den Hoonaard (2003 cited in Winiarska 2017) has an opposing view. He reveals that due to their limited access to research findings, research participants tend to forget or are not really enthusiastic to learn about the findings.

projects of PACTE²⁸ and TransComp²⁹ groups, and a number of PhD theses (Azbel Schmidt 2009, Cheng 2017, Kumpulainen 2016, Quinci 2015).

Among prior research projects, some are quantitative longitudinal studies (Azbel Schmidt 2009; Kumpulainen 2016) rather than QLR, and others involve translation students as the main research participants or respondents (Svahn 2016; Cheng 2017; Kujamäki 2019). QLR or mixed methods longitudinal studies in TS that examine professional translators are still scarce. Rare examples include contributions by Abdallah (2014a), Liu (2017) and Risku et al. (2019).

To follow changes in translation project management, Risku et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal field study. Their study, which took 15 years for data collection, is similar to the current research project in that the analysis was informed by ANT (although theirs relied mainly on Latour's [1987] work) and their participants consisted of professional translators rather than novices or students. Besides ANT, Risku and her colleagues applied Hutchins's (1995) distributed cognition theory and Schweizer's (1996) dynamic network model, and employed field research methods such as participatory observation and in-depth interviews with translators and translation PMs working for a translation agency in Austria. All the theories employed by the scholars emphasise the impact of tools and other actors in the work environment on practitioners' work practices. Data were collected in three waves: in 2001, 2007, and 2014 to investigate changes regarding work processes, challenges, networks, and tools. Between the first and second waves of data collection, the researchers noticed changes in terms of the company's growth, its intensified focus on translation project management as a core business (i.e. outsourcing translation projects), the integration of a project management software, and the launch of new criteria to recruit translators (Risku et al. 2013 cited in Risku et al. 2019). It was found that between the second and third waves, the company had further grown (e.g. the number of PMs had increased to 13 people, who managed new types of projects), their work processes had become more diversified and more flexible (mainly to meet preferences of PMs and/or clients), they had used a greater variety of tools, their staff members had developed their areas of expertise, the company's customers now ranged from very well informed clients to those who did not take translation seriously, and the translators had been subject to a more rigorous recruiting and evaluation system. Against this backdrop, the research team noticed that translators had become more invisible and powerless.

28 <http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/pacte/en>

29 <http://gams.uni-graz.at/fedora/get/container:tc/bdef:Container/get>

Abdallah (2014a), and Liu (2017)'s studies will be discussed in tandem with the research findings in Chapter 6.

3.3 Analytical Frameworks

In QLR, flexibility is also applied to the employment of theories. Researchers may aim to either test theories or use theories as tools to make sense of data (Holland et al. 2006). The latter is more relevant to the present study as the analysis was informed using selected concepts from ANT, complemented by Abdallah's (2016, 2017) three-dimensional quality model, as addressed in Chapter 2. In implementing ANT, following the three tenets of 'classical' ANT, I³⁰ constantly made sure not to leave out any details beforehand, nor to filter the participants' accounts, but to pay due attention to both human and non-human entities. I analysed data based on selected (post)-ANT concepts, namely, actors and agency, moments of 'translation', displacement, obligatory passage points (OPP), immutable mobiles and inscriptions, long-distance control, convergent networks, enactment, multiple realities, and fluid technology (see Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). Abdallah's (ibid.) three-dimensional model was used to complement ANT, as the latter is often criticised for its limitations in assisting researchers to gain insightful understanding of translators as 'subjective human actors' (Hekkanen 2009, p.1), a shortcoming that results from ANT advocates' intention to simply describe a phenomenon, rather than to explain it (Almila 2016). The three-dimensional quality model, therefore, helped to inform the analysis of interview data in relation to quality issues in the SPN, by drawing attention to the ways in which the interactions and relations of actors – conceptualised by Abdallah (2016, 2017) as social quality – exerted influence on the subtitlers' perception of process and product quality.

3.4 Research Setting and Participants

The present study set out to explore an SPN in the OTT industry in Thailand. The SPN was chosen due to its significant role in the OTT industry. In the network, a number of stakeholders interact and work together with the shared goal to produce and disseminate subtitles to serve the Thai audience. The analysis revolved around freelance subtitlers as salient actors, among others, in the network. Fifteen subtitlers were recruited as the principal research participants. However, when I started interviewing one of the participants, I found out that he had just started working as a PM at one of the leading SVOD service providers (a good example that unexpected changes can occur at any stage of the study). I decided to include him in the study, albeit as a secondary research

³⁰ Researchers can demonstrate their active and creative role through their uses of first person pronouns as they are writing (Foster and Parker 1995 cited in Braun and Clarke 2006).

participant, because he provided me with insights about the network that were beyond the freelance subtitlers' capacity. In total, I approached 14 freelance subtitlers (excluding the aforementioned PM). Having learned that the study would be a longitudinal project, one of my potential participants declined to participate. Another prospective participant was no longer eligible as she had taken a break from subtitling due to personal reasons just one month prior to the first round of interviews.

3.4.1 Sampling method

Sampling in qualitative studies is based on neither statistical logic, nor the concept of representativeness. Rather, it is 'characteristically purposively and conceptually driven' (Holland et al. 2006, p. 33). Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2019b) insist that, like many aspects of qualitative research, sampling is pragmatic practice. The sample size is often determined by the 'norm' or 'gatekeeper' (such as a journal editor, or funding committee). The authors do not subscribe to the idea that larger sample size equates with a higher level of acceptability as it implies a positivist empiricist philosophy.

As for the current study, I initially planned to adopt purposive sampling as the study sought to gain the participants' depth of knowledge and qualitative narrative data (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011). The method is widely used in research where a sample is selected based on certain significant characteristics (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014). Moreover, in TS, the technique is not uncommon for research projects which involve translators, and/or use interviews to collect data (ibid.). In the present study, the criteria for participant selection were their status as a freelance subtitler working for SVOD service providers, and one year or more of working experience as a subtitler. However, since three potential participants (including the PM discussed above) either were no longer eligible or refused to take part in the research project, I decided to include three participants (S4, S7 and S11, with 11, ten- and seven-month subtitling experience, respectively ³¹) in the study although they did not meet one of the predetermined criteria. Such a situation can potentially happen in interview research (Warren 1987 cited in Warren 2001, p. 87). Besides purposive sampling, I also used a snowballing technique of referral – one of the methods generally employed in qualitative interview studies (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 cited in Warren 2001). I accessed new participants using my social connections, through introductions by my

³¹ This was considered from when the participants first accepted subtitling project(s) (rather than when they passed the test or screening process to work for their respective commissioners) up to the day the first interview was conducted.

research participants or former students. Of all 13 participants who agreed to take part in the study, only one (Participant S3) was directly recruited by me.

Although I intended to collect data from 10 freelance subtitlers, by the first interviews I had successfully recruited a total of 13 participants: 12 freelance subtitlers and one PM, henceforth referred to as S1-S12 and PM.³² According to Saldaña (2003, p. 21), recruiting more research participants than needed is ‘a precautionary measure’ researchers should take, particularly when the participants will be involved in the project for at least three years. Despite the two-year data collection period, I decided to follow the scholar’s recommendation and recruited more than 10 participants as initially planned. I believe that the number of 12 subtitlers is suitable as the study does not attempt to make generalisations, but to qualitatively and longitudinally explore the network. In terms of practicality, too many participants would pose additional challenge for data management, particularly when the project was to be completed in less than four years. On the other hand, with two ‘backup’ participants, I was allowed to gain sufficient data even in the event of attrition. One of the subtitler participants dropped out from the project before the third round of interviews, whereas 11 subtitlers and one PM remained committed until the end of data collection. Although the loss of participants is usually beyond the researcher’s control (Saldanha and O’Brien 2014), in my case the damage was mitigated by recruiting more participants than needed at the outset.

3.4.2 Participant profiles

Figures 3.1 to 3.5 show demographic information for the subtitler participants, in terms of their gender, age, education, and full-time job as of the first interviews. Seven female (58.3%) and five male subtitlers (41.7%) participated in the research project (see Figure 3.1).

³² The participants were numbered by the order in which they gave the first interview, except for the PM.

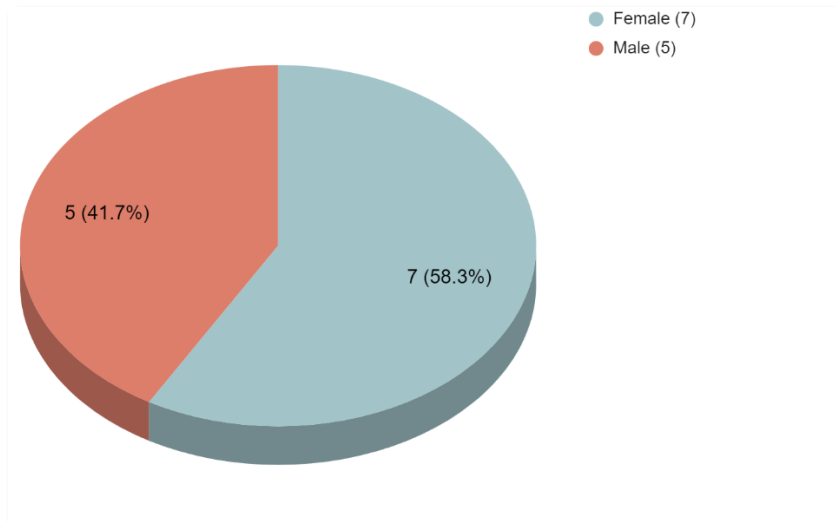


Figure 3.1: Gender of subtitler participants

When the first interview sessions took place in July-August 2017, all subtitler participants were in their 20s: seven of them (58.3%) were 25 or younger, while five participants (41.7%) were aged from 26 to 28 (see Figure 3.2).

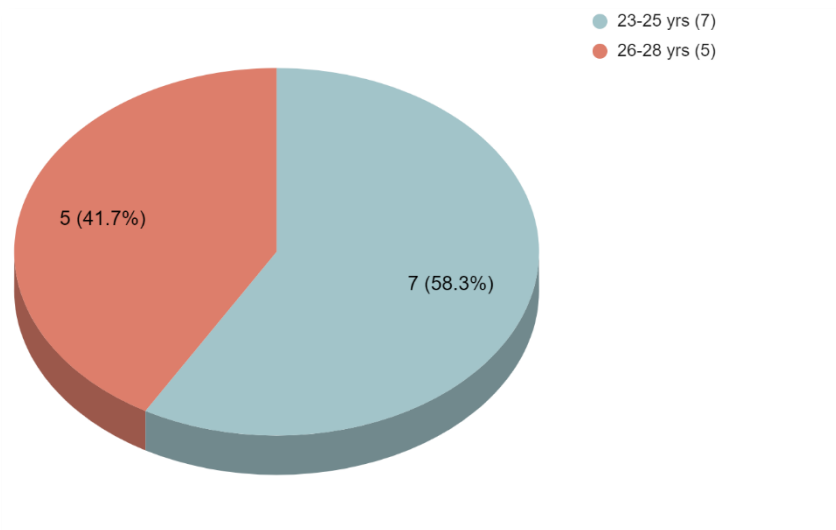


Figure 3.2: Age group of subtitler participants

With regard to their education, all held a bachelor's degree in social sciences or humanities, with six participants having majored in English language and one in another foreign language (see Figure 3.3). None of the participants had a degree in subtitling or translation.

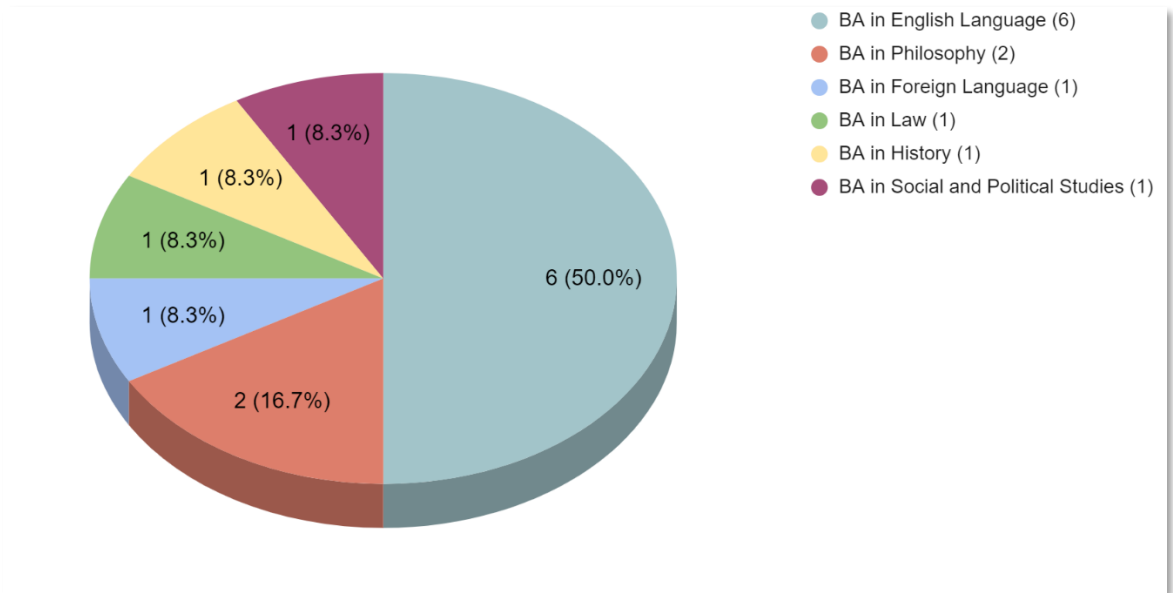


Figure 3.3: Education of subtitler participants

As for their subtitling experience, all except three participants (25%)³³ had at least one year of subtitling experience when the first interviews were conducted (see Figure 3.4).

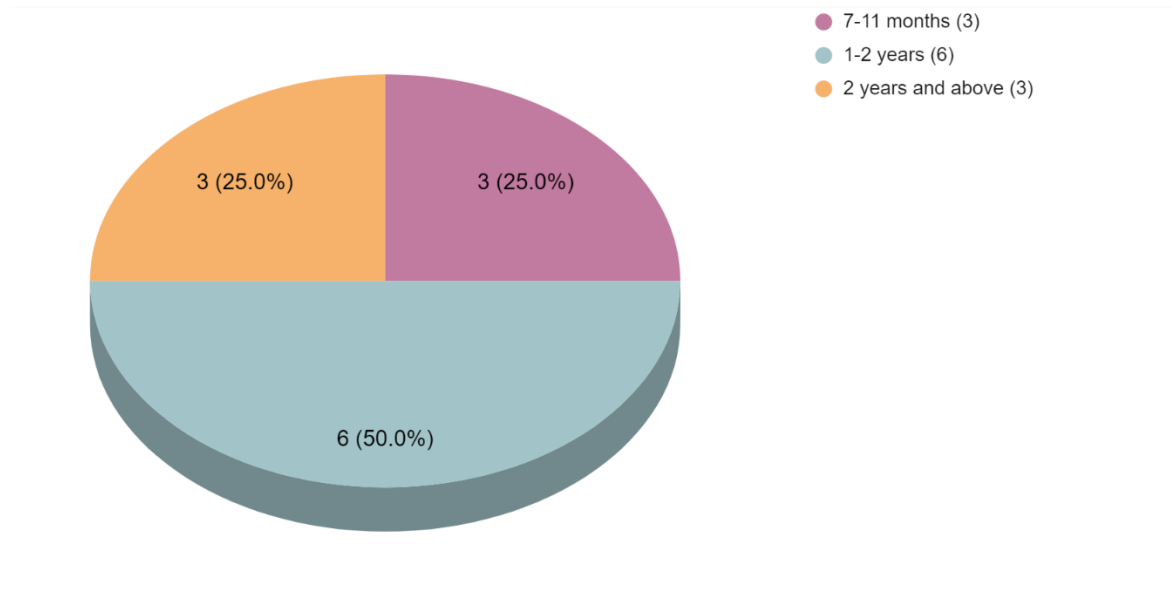


Figure 3.4: Subtitling experience of subtitler participants

The participants worked either directly or indirectly (i.e. through CVs, MLPs, or SVs) for OTT service providers as part of their portfolio of commissioners. That is, they translated subtitles for shows which were available on streaming platforms. Of all participants, eight (S2, S3, S4, S5, S7,

³³ Twenty-five percent was calculated from the total number of subtitler participants (N=12). However, it was initially planned that the study would include 10 subtitlers. Therefore, nine participants who had had at least one-year experience working as a freelance subtitler in the OTT industry makes up 90 percent of the intended number of participants.

S10, S11, and S12) had always worked as subtitlers in a part-time capacity, while four (S1, S6, S8, and S9) possessed, prior to and/or during the data collection period, experience working as full-time freelance subtitlers.

Like translators in the language industry in general, subtitlers operating in the OTT and media localisation industry are often found to be ‘multi-working’, that is, they may choose to receive projects from their commissioners on a part-time basis while pursuing a full-time job in another sector (Rodríguez-Castro 2016, p. 198). As shown in Figure 3.5, three of the subtitler-participants did not have a parallel full-time job when I first interviewed them. The full-time jobs of the other nine freelance subtitlers included copy writer, PM at a digital agency, journalist, state enterprise officer, private enterprise officer, service industry staff member, researcher in a government agency, and in-house senior subtitle editor.

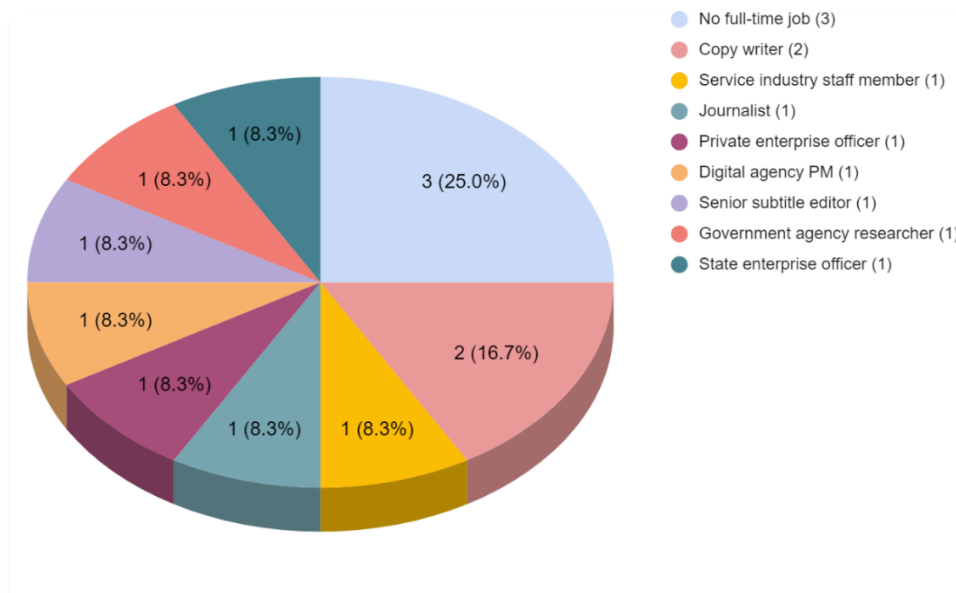


Figure 3.5: Full-time job of subtitler participants

In addition to one participant who was working full-time as a subtitle editor, four participants had had experience editing subtitles or doing QC jobs for OTT service providers and/or subtitling vendors. Demographic information of each subtitler participant is displayed in Appendix D.

3.5 Data Generation Procedures

The data are generated in the current research through interviews. This method is consistent with the basic ontological and epistemological positioning of the research, and with its choice of

analytical framework. It also necessitates careful administration of the interviews themselves. In this section, I outline how each of these factors played out in the research design.

3.5.1 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

The present research project is situated in qualitative research which aims to ‘look deeply into the world of individuals and phenomena’ (Lunenburg and Irby 2008, p.88), and in which the researcher takes practical steps to *generate* and *interpret* data concerning ‘the meaning of what their participants know and do’ (James and Busher 2009, p.7). In doing so, I adopted a constructivist ontological paradigm and interpretivist epistemological stance. From a constructivist ontological perspective, the social phenomena under study (such as an organisation or the law) are ideas or meanings that have been constructed, reviewed, and reworked by social actors. The iterative and ongoing process occurs through social interaction and reflection of the social actors (Matthews and Ross 2010). By the same token, interpretivist researchers value subjectivity in building, gaining, and communicating knowledge. They believe that humans are subjective in their ‘interpretations and understandings of social phenomena and their own actions’ (ibid., p.28). The view coincides with the assertion of the constructivist paradigm that researchers, as part of the social world themselves, bring their ‘own meanings and understandings’ to the study (ibid., p.25). In fact, the qualitative approach to research is commonly associated with interpretivism (Saldanha and O’Brien 2014), and the qualitative tradition requires researchers to use both inductive and deductive logic (O’Leary 2010, p.13 quoted in ibid.). As revealed in subsequent sections, the qualitative methodology I deployed, and my handling of data were resonant with my ontological and epistemological assumptions.

It is worth noting that post-ANT concepts which have informed my data collection and analysis (e.g. enactment and multiple realities) are consistent with constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. As put forth by Law and Urry (2004) and Law (2007), social realities and social worlds are constructed, or ‘performed’, by researchers’ (messy) research methods.

3.5.2 Qualitative, active, and in-depth interviews

Longitudinal studies were traditionally associated with quantitative methods (Winiarska 2017). Researchers in the 20th century often perceived interviews and longitudinal studies as somewhat contradictory to one another (Grinyer and Thomas 2012). Back then, a one-off interview was more common. Only recently have researchers adopted qualitative longitudinal methodology in

their respective disciplines. Nevertheless, the application of qualitative methods is still 'less developed' in longitudinal research (Winiarska 2017).

In general, researchers' application of methods in QLR will be informed by several factors, such as their perspective, the discipline, and the RQs. Interviews, case studies, observations, documents (e.g. diaries, videos), instruments (e.g. psychological tests), and visual, play and drawing methods are examples of those frequently used in QLR (Holland et al. 2006). In the present study, interviews were used for data generation. The method, together with observations, is a common tool in qualitative research in which interactions with participants are of paramount significance (Derrington 2019). To be consistent with the qualitative study paradigm and my philosophical assumptions, my administration of the interviews was guided by the notion of active interview as 'a form of interpretive practice involving respondent and interviewer as they articulate ongoing interpretive structures, resources, and orientation with [...] practical reasoning' where '[m]eaning is not constantly formulated anew, but reflects relatively enduring local conditions, such as the research topics of the interviewer' (Holstein and Gubrium 2012, p. 10). The interviews carried out in the present study can also be classified as qualitative ones because they aimed to acquire interpretations, rather than facts (Warren 2001, p. 83). Participants in qualitative interviews take the active role of 'meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers' (Holstein and Gubrium 1995 cited in Warren 2001, p.83). The interviews I conducted also share certain characteristics with 'in-depth interviews'. That is, they sought 'deep' information and knowledge, such as the participants' occupational ideology, which might not be obtainable from surveys, focus groups, or informal interviews (Johnson and Rowlands 2012).

Qualitative interviews are perfectly compatible with ANT-oriented studies. As social actors are constantly forming and refiguring the social group under study, they are no less significant than researchers in the task of describing networks (Inghilleri 2009). It is rare, but possible, to conduct ANT-informed studies that rely only on qualitative interviews (Demant and Ravn 2020).

3.5.2.1 Interview questions

Drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2013) contention that quality interview data are usually 'messy' data produced in a context that allows the interviewer to respond to the interviewee's account, the interviews in the current study were semi-structured. I conducted the interviews every six months over two years (from July-August 2017 to August-September 2019; see Figure 3.6 below).

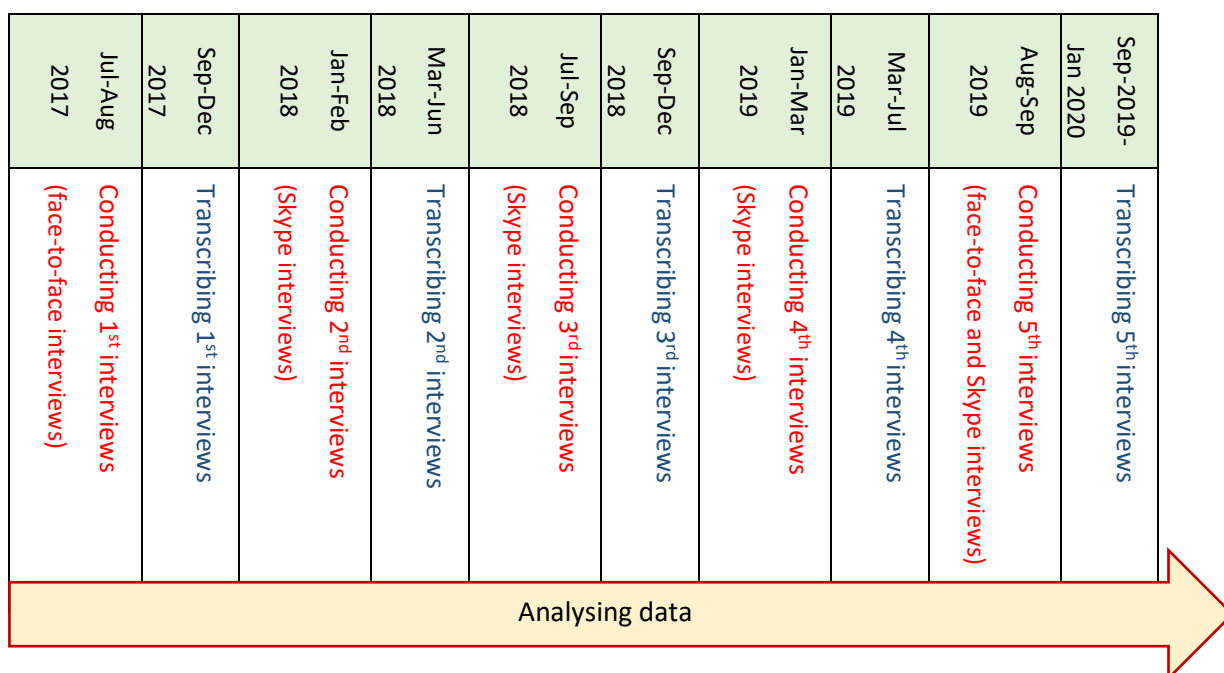


Figure 3.6: Timelines of data collection and data analysis

The number of questions and topics of discussion varied from some rounds of interviews to others (Appendix F). The adjustment of interview questions (or even the focus of the study) is not unexpected in QLR. It is recommended that researchers incorporate what they have learned from the previous stage to the next round of data collection (Holland et al. 2006).

As shown in Appendix F, there were 14 questions in the first round of the interviews, covering topics related to the general background of the participants and their views on subtitling as a freelance job, such as their past and current jobs (translation-related or otherwise), the pros and cons of working as a freelance subtitler, and their professional future, as well as topics relevant to their working conditions and practices as actors in the network, such as the participants' subtitling process and people they had to communicate with, and factors affecting the way they worked and the quality of the produced subtitles.

In the subsequent interviews, which aimed to follow-up the main points covered in the first interview, the questions were reduced to 10-11 in total. In longitudinal studies, it is expected that the data collection process is like a funnel (Spradley 1980 cited in Mari and Meglio 2013) in that it moves from being 'descriptive to focused to selective' (Mari and Meglio 2013, p. 309), and this is reflected in the interview questions. In terms of content, in the second round of interviews, conducted between January and February 2018, the only question which was not present in the first round was the last one which asked the freelance subtitlers to share their opinions on the Thai SVOD industry (later changed to the Thai OTT industry to cover both AVOD and SVOD). The question was added because I wished to hear the participants' views on issues such as growth and

sustainability of the industry, as well as opportunities for newcomers, all of which would likely affect their professional livelihood. In the third round of interviews, conducted between July and September 2018 (half-way through the data collection period), I added one more question, asking the participants the changes they wanted to see in the following areas: the video-streaming industry as a whole, the company they worked for, and the subtitling process (including translation tools and technologies). I wanted this question to encourage the participants (in a less direct and fresher way) to reflect on the factors that might have affected the way they worked and the quality of their work, as well as their professional future. The question was not included in the fourth and fifth rounds of interviews, conducted between January and March 2019, and between August and September 2019, respectively. In the fifth and final round, I added a 'wrap-up' question, asking the participants to narrate incidents or events that they considered the most significant changes – or 'epiphanies' (Saldaña 2003) – that had happened in their subtitling career over the past two years (see Appendix F).

Researchers must be wary to cover key topics throughout the study and not to get 'side-tracked' (Alfoldi and Hassett 2013, p. 278), as well as to balance between rich data and high 'dross rate'. Digressions or diversions can be very productive (Johnson and Rowlands 2012), but they can also pose a challenge to the researcher (Mari and Meglio 2013). This is because too many digressions can distract the researcher away from relevant data. I tended to let the participants digress when time allowed because I did not want to miss unexpected details. It is beneficial that the participants are given an opportunity to introduce topics that are important to them (Svahn 2020). In doing so, I followed the ANT principle of agnosticism of respecting the actors' voice and learned more about certain aspects of the profession which I did not expect to hear. Through listening attentively, I also developed rapport with the participants. According to Derrington (2019, p. 40), rapport can be created 'when participants know that the researcher cares about a topic important to them and desires to assist others in understanding the issues'.

Due to a limited number of freelance subtitlers who met the selection criteria and showed commitment to the longitudinal study, no pilot study was conducted. However, the interview questions were read, checked, and edited by my supervisors. Before the first round of interviews in Thailand, I also asked a professional acquaintance, who was an experienced freelance translator (albeit in other domains than AVT), to read through the questions. This is a highly recommended practice for the researcher when piloting is not possible (Saldanha and O'Brien 2014, p. 178).

3.5.2.2 Administration of the interviews

Face-to-face interviews

Of all the interviews, only the first and fifth rounds were conducted in person in Thailand, while the others were administered via Skype. At the beginning of the first interviews, the participants were presented with two copies of the Informed Consent Form (see Section 3.6.1 and Appendix B) and the Plain Language Statement (see Appendix C). I kept one copy of the signed Informed Consent Form and asked the participants to keep the other copy for their reference.

I sought the participants' permission to record the interview. For face-to-face interviews, I used two devices: a Sony voice recorder, and a voice recording application on my mobile phone. Before the participants arrived, I tested both devices to make sure they worked properly. I also informed the participants that I would take notes during the interview. Aware that taking notes extensively can interfere with the flow of the conversation (Brinkmann and Kvale 2018), I took notes of only major points, while making sure to make eye contact with the participants and be attentive to their responses. According to Johnson and Rowlands (2012, p. 104), 'trust can commonly be discerned through eye contact, facial expression, and bodily idiom'.

Having been granted permission to record the interviews, I started asking questions. After the first question, the sequence of the remaining questions varied from person to person although in most cases it moved from one item to the next on the list. As sometimes the participants' answers were relevant to a particular subsequent question, moving on to ask that question immediately helped create a smooth and coherent conversation. Every subtitle participant was asked all 14 questions, but follow-up questions for each of them were slightly different. The PM was asked only some of the prepared questions, while some of the questions were improvised at the scene (because I had not known in advance that he had recently started working as a PM). When I finished asking all prepared questions, along with probes, and follow-up questions, I inquired of the participants whether there were any points or details they would like to add to further clarify.

The fifth and final round of interviews was also administered in person in Thailand, except for two Skype interviews that I conducted with Participant S6, who was not available during my field trip in Thailand, and with Participant S10, who was living abroad.

Skype interviews

Subsequent interviews were conducted every six months via Skype (see Figure 3.6). I recorded the interviews using MP3 Skype Recorder (Pro Version). The participants received a transcript of the previous interview and a list of questions for the upcoming interview as email attachments. A few days before the interview appointments, I sent a reminder to the participants and asked them for permission to audio-record the interviews. After the second round of interviews, I also made sure to ask the participants which mode of Skype interview they preferred: a voice call or video call. This is because, before the second interviews took place, some of the participants asked me whether it was possible not to have a webcam on. The reasons were that they were not really prepared to be seen (e.g. as they were wearing casual clothes at home, or considered the room they were speaking in to be messy) and/or that the Internet connection on their part was not stable. Their requests impressed on me that they would be giving the interviews at home, usually in their bedroom, which was a very private setting where they would like to feel relaxed and less formal.³⁴ I sometimes suggested a voice call myself when conducting an interview in a place with an unstable Internet connection.

3.5.3 Member checking

In qualitative inquiry, member checking is often seen an alternative to inter-rater reliability in quantitative research (Barbour 2013) and is believed to increase trustworthiness of the study. The practice is generally done by sending the transcripts to the interviewees to check or asking them to comment on the analysis, or a summary of the analysis (Birt et al. 2016; Gibbs 2018). Member checking can be applied to comply with different epistemological stances. In this study, member checking did not conform to the traditional concept of member checking but instead was performed in a way that is consistent with the constructionist/interpretive epistemology. That is, I conducted the '*member checking interview – using the transcript*' (Birt et al. 2016), which involves giving the participants the opportunity to discuss the interview transcripts. However, instead of conducting a separate interview devoted to the verification of the transcripts, I incorporated this step at the beginning of the next interview, except for the transcript of the final interviews, when I sent emails to the participants and asked them to review the transcripts and reply to me if they would like to discuss any details. Accordingly, the second to fifth rounds of interviews consisted of two main parts. At the beginning, I asked the participants whether they would like to make any

³⁴ It is important to note that the online interviews in the present study were conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic would have changed people's perception of, and familiarity with, virtual meetings and interviews.

amendments in the transcript of the previous interview which I sent them beforehand. I would ask them for clarifications of some points if needed. The process proved to be useful because I sometimes misheard some words or did not know what the participants really meant. For instance, while transcribing, I heard Participant S8 say the word 'sub' but was not sure whether it was shortened from 'subcontractors'. As it was not clear from the context, I asked the participant to clarify this point at the beginning of the next interview and learned that she meant 'subtitles.'

It is important to note that my modified version of member checking as discussed above was not seen as a way to warrant the accurate representation of *the* truth out there about the participants' experiences or to justify my accurate interpretations of data; rather, it aimed to ensure the accuracy of the details in the transcripts. Braun and Clarke (2013) do not recommend using member checking *to determine quality* in qualitative inquiry as the researcher will understand and interpret participants' experiences differently from the participants themselves.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative inquiry generally poses a higher chance of intrusion into participants' lives than quantitative research (Hammersley and Traianou 2012 cited in Derrington 2019). In QLR, which requires prolonged engagement of participants, ethical issues can be of even greater concern and must be dealt with in an ongoing manner (Holland et al. 2006). Ethical issues are discussed in this thesis in terms of informed consent, anonymity of transcription, and long-term disposal or preservation of data.

3.6.1 Informed consent

All participants in the current study were asked to read the Plain Language Statement (see Appendix C) and sign the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B) before the first interview session. This is because it is considered good practice, and in fact mandatory, that the prospective participants are presented with details on the purpose, duration, and methods of the research project, as well as potential risks and benefits from participating in the study (Marzano 2012; Mellinger 2020). Potential participants must also be clearly informed of their right to withdraw from the project at any time (Gibbs 2018).

3.6.2 Protecting anonymity and confidentiality of participants

To minimise harm to participants, the researcher must protect anonymity and confidentiality of participants, which includes ensuring that no unauthorised people will access unanonymised data (Gibbs 2018). To successfully protect confidentiality entails the avoidance of *deductive disclosure* or *internal confidentiality* (Sieber 1992 and Tolich 2004 cited in Kaiser 2012). That is, the researcher must be aware that individuals' experiences, personal details and direct quotes can easily reveal the participants' identity, and, as such, steps need to be taken to avoid this situation. Mellinger (2020, p. 25), a TS scholar, suggests the researcher to use pseudonyms or numeric codes³⁵ to protect anonymity and confidentiality of participants 'throughout the research process up to and including dissemination of results'. It can be challenging when the researcher tries to strike a balance between data anonymisation and preserving 'the value and integrity of the data' because anonymised data may lack contextual details (Saunders et al. 2015, p. 617 quoted in Winiarska 2017, p. 18). In the present study, I anonymised the transcriptions and altered some details so that personal data will not lead to the identification of my participants, their commissioners, and people they had contact with. In doing so, I also made sure to maintain ample contextual background in my data analysis.

3.6.3 Long-term disposal or preservation of data

Generally, all data will be destroyed after a specified time although researchers such as Gibbs (2018) believe that, to maximise the benefits and make a greater difference, qualitative data (which are brought about by the participants' generous dedication) should be archived for re-analysis or for other researchers to use. This is based on the condition that the participants' confidentiality and anonymity are properly protected. Regarding this, Gibbs (ibid.) recommends the researchers to store their data as word processor, image, and video files, instead of the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) project files, and deposit them in a safe archival system set up for this particular purpose.

I addressed the above issues and sought approval from the Research Ethics Committee (REC), Dublin City University. See Appendix A for REC letter of approval.

³⁵ However, Gibbs (2018) prefers using pseudonyms as they are better than crude blanks, asterisks, or code numbers, for instance.

3.7 Data Analysis

In practice, qualitative data analysis is iterative and recursive (Braun and Clarke 2013; Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl 2016). An informal analysis of interview data actually takes place during the data collection process - before the researchers conduct a deeper analysis (Alfoldi and Hassett 2013). This is particularly evident in the present study, which employed a longitudinal design, as shown in Figure 3.6.

I side with authors who see researchers as active, reflexive, and interactive in their data collection/generation and analysis. For instance, Glesne (2016 cited in Derrington 2019, p. 81) believes that researchers are 'cocreators of the story reflecting on their experiences, feelings, and interactions with participants and the research site'. By the same token, Saldaña (2003, p. 46) sees the qualitative researchers not simply as the data collecting 'instrument' but also as 'the word cruncher'. It is their task to 'rigorously analyse and interpret primarily language-based data records to describe credibly, vividly, and persuasively for readers through appropriate narrative the processes of participant change through time' (ibid.). More specifically, QLR analyses critically engage with and capture the aspects of time, process, and change. Qualitative longitudinal data are analysed in accordance with the topic of inquiry, RQs, theoretical and methodological approaches, and methods employed in the research project (Holland et al. 2006).

3.7.1 What counted as data?

Data consisted primarily of the participant interviews. Nevertheless, according to Matthews and Ross's definition (2010, p. 181), the researcher's thoughts and reflections are also counted as data.

3.7.1.1 Interview transcripts

Audio files recording interview data are usually transcribed into textual format to facilitate the data analysis process, particularly when the content of the conversation is the focus of the analysis (Roulston 2013). Transcription requires both time and effort (Gibbs 2018). For the present study, it was a vital yet time-consuming task as all five rounds of interviews yielded approximately 67 hours of interview data. Appendix G shows the duration of the interviews, which lasted from 23 minutes to 2 hours and 40 minutes.

I agree with the notions that interview data are not simply collected by the researcher but co-constructed by all parties involved in the activity (Roulston 2013), and that transcription is an interpretive process (Brinkmann and Kvale 2018). Transcripts are indeed the product of the transcriber's interaction with the recording because the transcriber decides what to retain and how to represent data in the recording (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 162).

Although there is no standard way to render interview transcripts, as it largely depends on each study's purposes and the researcher's interests (Gill 2000 cited in Rapley 2018), the researcher should at least decide whether to transcribe verbatim or not (Brinkmann and Kvale 2018). The interviews in the present study were transcribed using the verbatim method (or orthographic transcription). A quality verbatim transcript includes every verbal utterance from every interlocutor and indicates spoken words together with the speaker's name or other identifier (Rapley 2018). I also made sure that the transcripts retained as many interactional features (e.g. laughter, pauses, stresses of certain words, and fillers like *um*, *um-huh*) as possible. Interruptions occurring during the interviews (e.g. when the participant answered an important phone call) were reflected in the transcripts as well. However, since the current study used thematic analysis (TA; see Section 3.7.2.1), as opposed to discourse analysis or conversation analysis, very detailed transcriptions were not required (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The interviews were administered in Thai and the data analysis was conducted on the Thai transcriptions of interview data. It took me six to eight hours to transcribe an hour-long interview. This length of time is considered standard (Rapley 2018). At the beginning, I intended to transcribe all the interviews myself as I realised the benefit of going through all the collected data and developing a sense of what the significant points or themes were. However, upon the completion of the first four participants' interview transcripts, I, with the advice of my supervisors, decided to pay for a professional transcriber. This was because at that stage I thought I should be spending time writing the first chapters of the thesis and conducting the 'actual' analysis. The transcriber was chosen on the ground of his experience working for major government agencies in Thailand, and his commitment to confidentiality of the data. I hired the transcriber to transcribe eight interviews for the first round, and 12 interviews for the second round (except for the PM's interview). Although the overall quality of transcripts was acceptable, I decided to transcribe all interviews from the third round myself. As I eventually adopted reflective thematic analysis to analyse data, transcribing the interviews was particularly helpful in familiarising myself with the data.

3.7.1.2 Interview logs

Starting from the third round of interviews, I also kept interview logs.³⁶ The logs mainly contain my remarks focusing on technical issues or concerns that I had while administering the interviews, such as when the voice of the participant became too low, or when some of the participants seemed to be less enthusiastic giving the interview than they usually were. My reflections or overall impression on the interviews were also included in the logs. For instance, I mentioned how well the interviews went, and/or my speculations as to why a particular interview seemed to be smoother and more productive than others, or why a certain interview did not go as well as expected. Besides helping me to prepare for the next round of interviews, the logs demonstrated the researcher's self reflexivity in research (Silverman 2007 cited in Saldanha and O'Brien 2014, p. 40).

3.7.1.3 Analytic memos

Researchers are recommended to keep memos (Gibbs 2018). Saldaña (2016, p. 44) defines analytic memos as 'a place to 'dump your brain' about the research participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more about them'. Analytic memos, therefore, are helpful in generating codes and categories (Saldaña 2016; Gibbs 2018). Saldaña (ibid.) maintains that data coding and analytic memo writing should be done concurrently, and that researchers should treat memos as data – which means they can be coded, categorised and searched using software. Memo content may range from '[f]uture directions, unanswered questions, frustrations with the analysis, insightful connections' to 'anything about the researched and the researcher' (ibid., p. 45).

In the present study, the analytical memos were different from the interview logs (Section 3.7.1.2) in that the latter primarily included the details about the administration of the interviews and some remarks regarding the interactions between the interviewer and interviewees. Overall, I did not incorporate the interview logs in my data analysis to a great extent (although they helped to jog my memory as to what was happening on the interview days), while the analytic memos were found to be useful. Even though I did not write the memos extensively, they helped to illustrate the development of my analysis and interpretations of data. Writing analytic memos is a good way to have conversations with myself, helping to refine my ideas not only when I was interpreting data but also when I was writing the draft for this thesis.

³⁶ I was recommended to do this by the Internal Examiner in my transfer from the PhD track to the PhD register.

3.7.1.4 Contextual details about the Thai OTT market

In Chapter 4, when addressing the first RQ, I use the details about the Thai OTT market obtained from online newspaper columns or articles on websites. They were complementary data helping to explain the factors that influence the work environment and work practices of freelance subtitlers.

3.7.2 Data analysis method

Interview data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis, which enabled me to generate three themes addressing the three RQs.

3.7.2.1 Reflexive thematic analysis: What is it (not)?

There are many forms of or approaches to thematic analysis (TA), each with its own underpinnings and procedures (Braun and Clarke 2013, 2019b, 2020a). Below I will discuss three types of TA: coding reliability TA, codebook TA, and reflexive TA.

In the present study, I adopted Braun and Clarke's (ibid.) reflexive TA, a concept settled upon quite recently. The authors maintain that their method 'reflects an approach to qualitative research that's reflexive and involves asking questions that are not just about very surface-level observations or simple descriptions of experience' (Braun et al. 2019, p. 5). This type of TA underscores researcher reflexivity and is highly flexible. It is '*fully* qualitative in terms of both its procedures and the underlying research values' (Braun and Clarke 2020b, p. 40, original emphasis), while other forms of TA may also work well with positivist assumptions (ibid.).

Reflexive TA is different from coding reliability TA and codebook TA as it does not encourage analysts to use a structured codebook. In the other two approaches, a codebook is usually created before the analysis starts, or in some cases, after early coding of some data. Codes in reflexive TA, on the other hand, cannot be pre-determined or fixed; they 'can evolve, expand, contract, be renamed, split apart into several codes, collapsed together with other codes, and even be abandoned' as a result of the researcher's reflexive interpretation of and deep engagement with data (Braun and Clarke 2019b, p. 7). Developed from such codes, themes in reflexive TA studies

offer 'clear, coherent and compelling stories about the data' (Braun and Clarke 2013, p. 249).³⁷ However, in coding reliability TA and some codebook TA, themes are pre-determined and coding is treated as a process to assign codes to those themes (Braun and Clarke 2019b). Sometimes the differences between codes and themes are not even explicitly spelled out in coding reliability and codebook TA, whereas in reflexive TA, the two always denote two different levels (ibid.).

Definition of codes and themes

A code in reflexive TA is an analytical tool that a researcher uses to generate initial themes. A code displays one facet (or more) about the data, while themes are like 'multi-faceted crystals' with a core that can be seen through different facets (Braun and Clarke 2019b, p. 8). So-called themes that are 'one-dimensional' and 'meaning-thin' and can be encapsulated in a few words (or a single word) should rather be seen as codes (Braun and Clarke 2020a, p. 13). In short, themes are developed from codes, cannot be pre-determined, and must contain central organising ideas (Braun and Clarke 2013, 2019a, 2020b).

Unlike some authors who view a theme as something that is already out there – which gives rise to the notions of a theme *emerging*, and a researcher *discovering*, *capturing*, *recognising*, or *noticing* a theme, Braun and Clarke (2016, p. 740) insist that a theme is 'actively crafted' through the researcher's creative and active engagement with data. In reflexive TA, researchers do not aim to create merely 'bucket themes'³⁸ (known as topic summaries, data topics, or domains) or themes that just sum up what the participants have said (Braun and Clarke 2020a, p. 14), which neither require the researcher's deep engagement nor lead to a thematic story (Braun et al. 2019). Themes in reflexive TA are developed to tell interesting stories about the data, and to find an insightful answer to the RQ (Braun and Clarke 2019b).

Drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2019b, 2020) conceptualisation of codes and themes, I defined a code as an extract of interview data which I assigned a label to. For instance, I coded the following interview extract 'use of EN templates for shows in other foreign languages':

In English subtitles, the characters address one another by name. In Korean, the character would address the other person by position, like when I address you as 'Acharn' [a Thai

³⁷ In the same vein, a good ANT analysis is the one that offers a rich, interesting, and inspiring description about the phenomenon under study (Justesen 2020).

³⁸ This name was coined by a student. Summary themes are called 'bucket themes' to signify that they are simply a 'topic dump' (Braun et al. 2019, p. 5).

word equivalent to ‘teacher’ or ‘lecturer’], while in English subtitles they would call you [by name] ‘Wichaya’. (Participant 1, Interview 2)

I then developed three main themes from selected codes that are relevant to the RQs. Corresponding to reflexive TA, all three themes (discussed in Chapters 4 to 7) are meant to be *fully realised* themes which tell interesting stories about the data (see also Section 3.7.3). I have tried to generate themes that reflect my interpretations of the participants’ experiences on a non-superficial level and avoided simply presenting topic summaries of the participants’ accounts.

3.7.2.2 TA and saliency analysis

Arguing that TA may fail to lead to a complete ‘understanding of the importance of coded extracts, including those that do not recur’, Buetow (2010, p. 124) suggests that researchers use saliency analysis. Saliency analysis, claimed to help to strengthen TA, takes into account ‘both the *recurrence* and *importance* of individual codes’ (ibid., my emphasis). This is despite the fact that, strictly speaking, important yet non-recurrent codes cannot be considered thematic (ibid.). To decide which codes are salient, the researcher uses the following criteria: whether the codes advance understanding, whether they help us to tackle real work problems, or both (Culler 1983 and Yardley 2000 cited in ibid.). In other words, Buetow’s (2010) saliency analysis gives due attention to codes that do not frequently recur but are potentially significant to the aims of a study and in addressing RQs. Agreeing with Buetow, Braun and Clarke (2016) stress that frequency is not necessarily a primary priority in theme development. The data analysis should focus more on meanings of codes (i.e. codes that are the most meaningful for answering RQs) than numbers (Braun and Clarke 2013). Although I did not adopt saliency analysis in a fully-fledged manner,³⁹ the concept of saliency reminded me to look not only for frequency of factors (i.e. codes) but also the significant influence of those factors on the participants’ work practices.

3.7.2.3 Six-stage process of reflexive TA

Qualitative analysis is not linear but recursive, and analysis guidelines should be adopted to fit researchers’ RQs and data (Patton 1990 cited in Braun and Clarke 2006). I coded data following Braun and Clarke’s (2020a) updated version of a six-stage process of reflexive TA.

39 To conduct saliency analysis, the researcher first decides whether each code is recurrent and/or important and puts it in one of the following cells in the matrix: (1) highly important and recurrent; (2) highly important but not recurrent; (3) not highly important but recurrent; (4) not highly important and not recurrent. For a complete process, read Buetow (2010).

'Official' data coding and analysis were conducted both deductively and inductively. Initial deductive coding and analysis were informed by selected ANT and (post-) ANT concepts, and Abdallah's (2016, 2017) three-dimensional quality model. (Post-) ANT concepts were used to identify actors involved in the production and distribution of subtitles in the SPN in the Thai OTT industry and to isolate the influence of these actors' relations on the network's dynamic transformation, while Abdallah's (ibid.) model was employed to address quality issues, in relation to the freelance subtitlers' working conditions (social quality), their subtitling process (process quality), and the translated subtitles (product quality). I also coded the data inductively by *actively* searching for patterns in the interview data. As stated earlier, I subscribe to the constructivism paradigm and agree with Harding and Whitehead (2013, p. 142) that '[t]he researcher's disciplinary background and preferred choice of method will influence the analysis'. The codes in my study, therefore, reflected my interpretations of the data.

By adopting reflexive TA, my coding process was unstructured, organic, subjective, and recursive (Braun and Clarke 2020b). Despite being 'messy' at times, the analysis always revolved around the RQs and objectives of the study. Below are my procedures for generating codes and themes from the interview data, following Braun and Clarke's (2020a) six-stage process. As Stage 5 and Stage 6 were closely intertwined in practice, I will discuss them together in the same section.

Stage 1: Data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes

The coding process 'unofficially' began when I immersed myself in the interview data by transcribing the interviews, and carefully (re)-reading through the transcripts. Although it is common to collect all the data before examining them (Chamberlain et al., 2004 cited in Vaismoradi et al. 2013), it was not feasible for me to wait until I finished all five rounds of interviews to begin the coding process. Therefore, I decided to divide the transcriptions into two batches. Batch 1 consists of the transcriptions from the first three rounds of interviews, and Batch 2 the transcriptions from the fourth and fifth interviews. I read through the transcripts of each round of interviews at least twice before beginning Stage 2. I then re-read all the transcripts after conducting five rounds of interviews. The coding process for Batch 1 started in late January 2019. During an entire coding process, I constantly re-read and analysed the transcripts. Although I did not count how many times I revisited the transcripts to (re-)analyse data, I am positive that I read each single transcript for at least four times.

Stage 2: Systematic data coding

I created initial codes in NVivo 12. As emphasised by Braun and Clarke (2006), this stage requires researchers' full and equal attention to every data item. Moreover, it is advised that researchers code as many potential patterns as possible and keep surrounding data to provide the context of the coded items. I coded several extracts in long chunks to preserve the context. Using NVivo is also helpful in that I could easily click to navigate to the full interview transcript from which each excerpt was taken (see Figure 3.7). An excerpt may be assigned to multiple codes. Incorporating analytic memos and interview logs in the coding process is another good way to help the researcher to understand the contexts surrounding coded items.

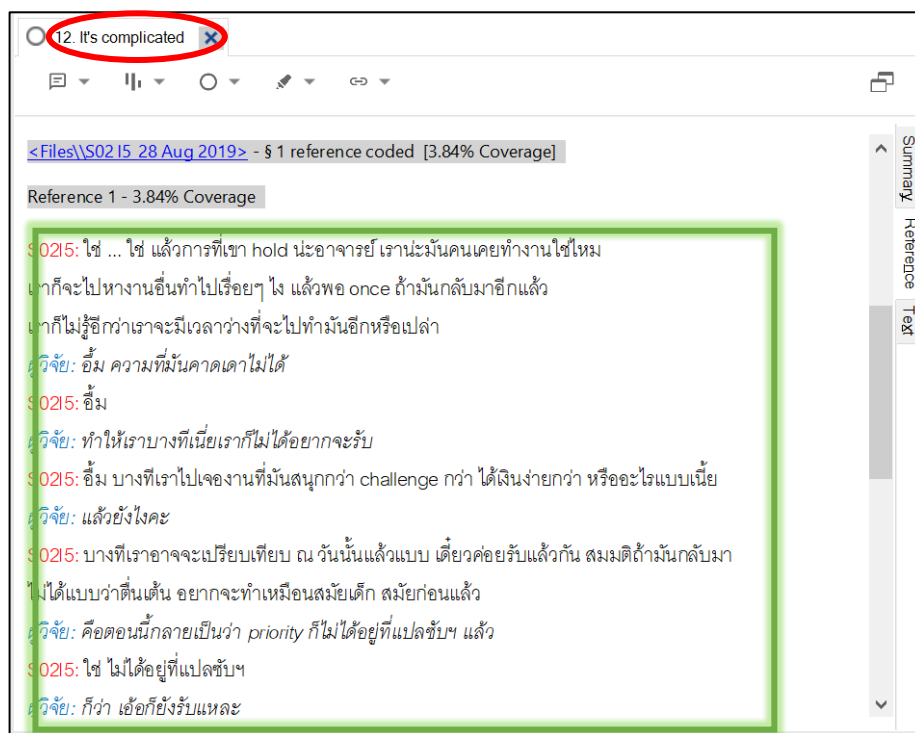


Figure 3.7: NVivo screenshot showing a code (in red circle) and collated data (in green box)

My initial codes were created and stored in two NVivo projects between July and August 2019. Figure 3.8 shows the screenshot of NVivo with (part of) my very first initial codes.⁴⁰ A full list of 167 codes developed at this point is shown in Appendix H.

⁴⁰ Before using the CAQDAS, I also tried coding manually to come up with lists of codes, and provisional themes addressing the research questions.

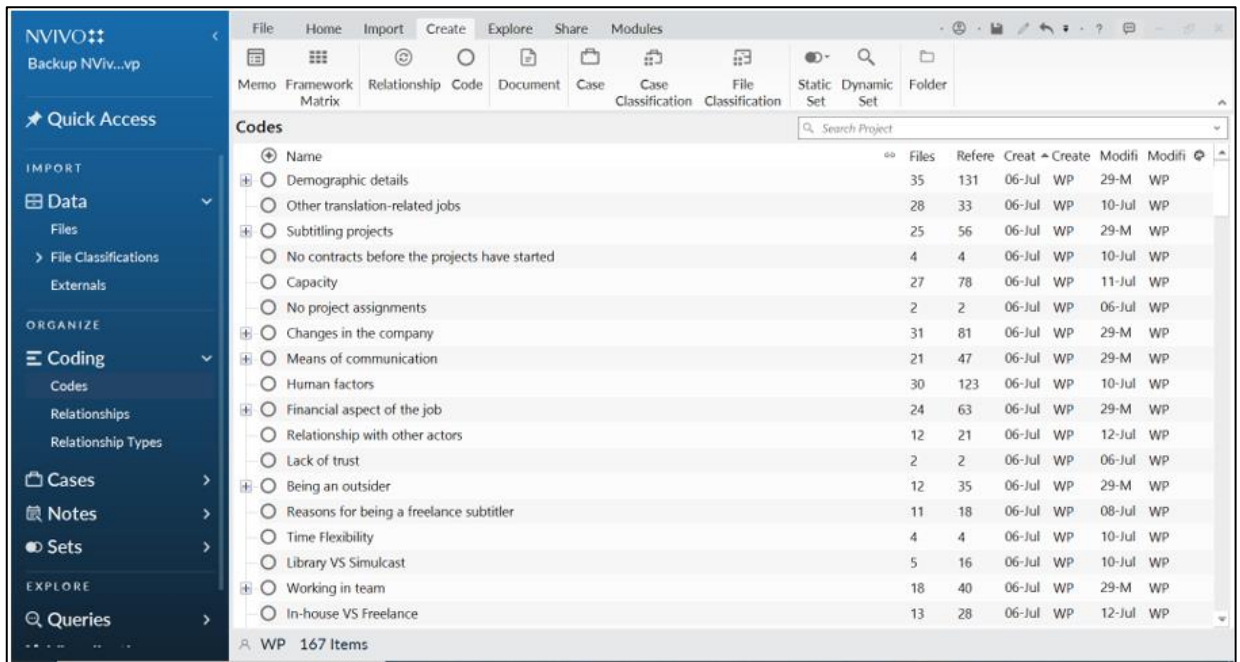


Figure 3.8: NVivo screenshot showing initial codes created from Interviews 1-3

In Figure 3.9, the results of my second round of coding for Interviews 1-3 are displayed. The codes were edited and expanded. I also redid the coding after coming up with the first version of Figure 4.1, which shows interrelationships among four categories of factors influencing freelance subtitlers' work practices. My ideas became clearer when I started writing up, created mind maps, and drew diagrams. In the second round of coding for Interviews 1-3, codes had grown to 304 items (see Appendix I).

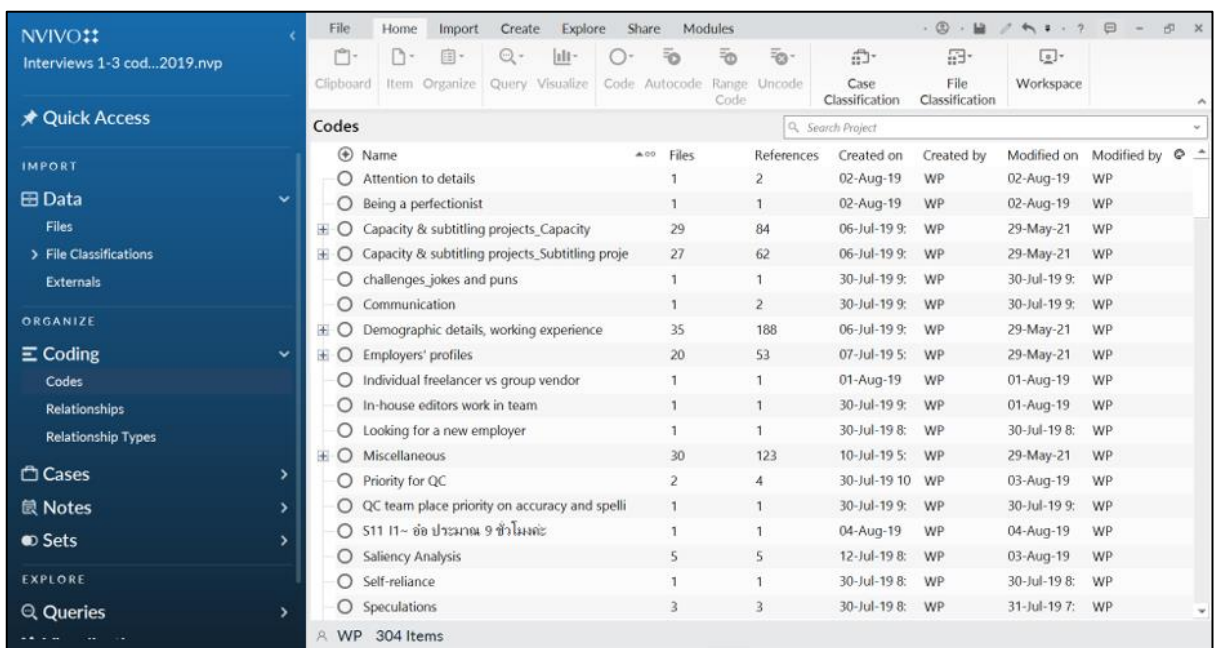


Figure 3.9: NVivo screenshot showing codes created from the second coding of Interviews 1-3

Generally, as researchers have coded more and more data, their coding will be likely more interpretive and result in codes with latent meanings. Initial codes, on the other hand, may focus on overt meanings which can be easily extracted from the surface level (Braun and Clarke 2019b). Upon the completion of the transcriptions of the final interviews, I started coding data from Batch 2, while continuing to revise the codes from Batch 1. Instead of creating a separate NVivo project for only Interviews 4 and 5, I coded interview transcriptions from all interviews in the same project. The screenshot of the last NVivo project, which contains 480 codes, is shown in Figure 3.10. A full list of codes is displayed in Appendix J.

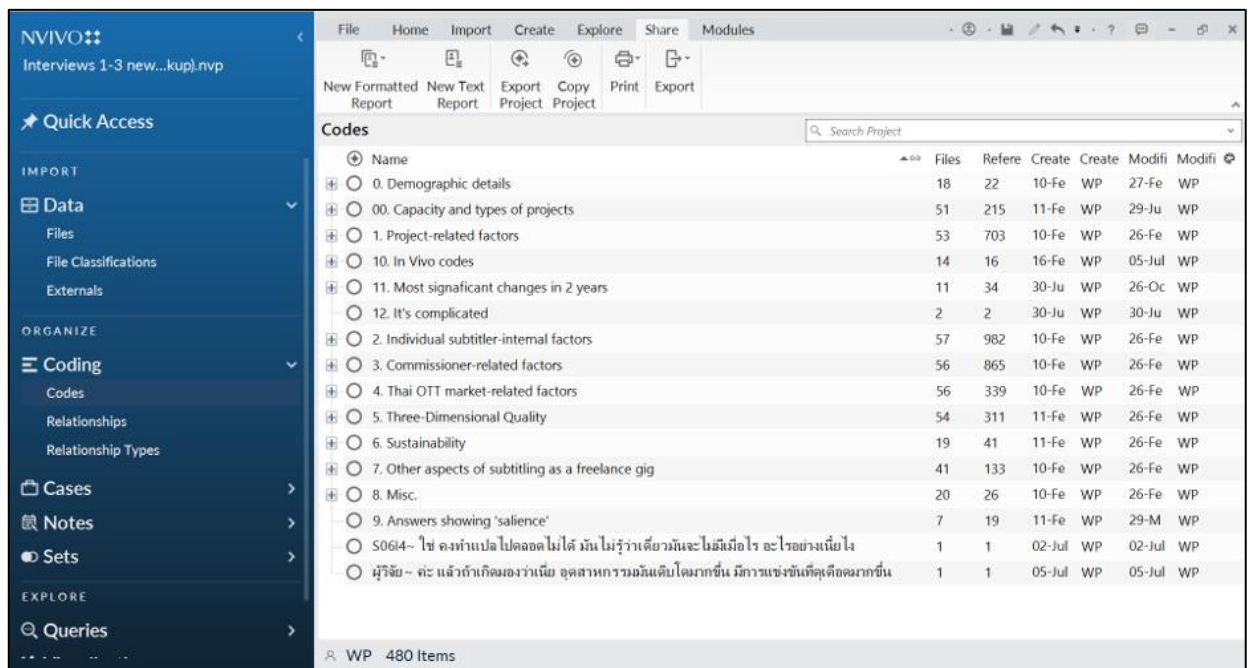


Figure 3.10: NVivo screenshot showing codes created from Interviews 1-5

I have found that using CAQDAS, like NVivo, facilitates the organisation and management of data. For instance, NVivo enables me to easily create multiple layers of codes (see Figure 3.11). The program does not do the analysis, but the quality of the qualitative analysis depends on the researcher's skills, experience, and their deep, thoughtful, and reflective engagement with data.

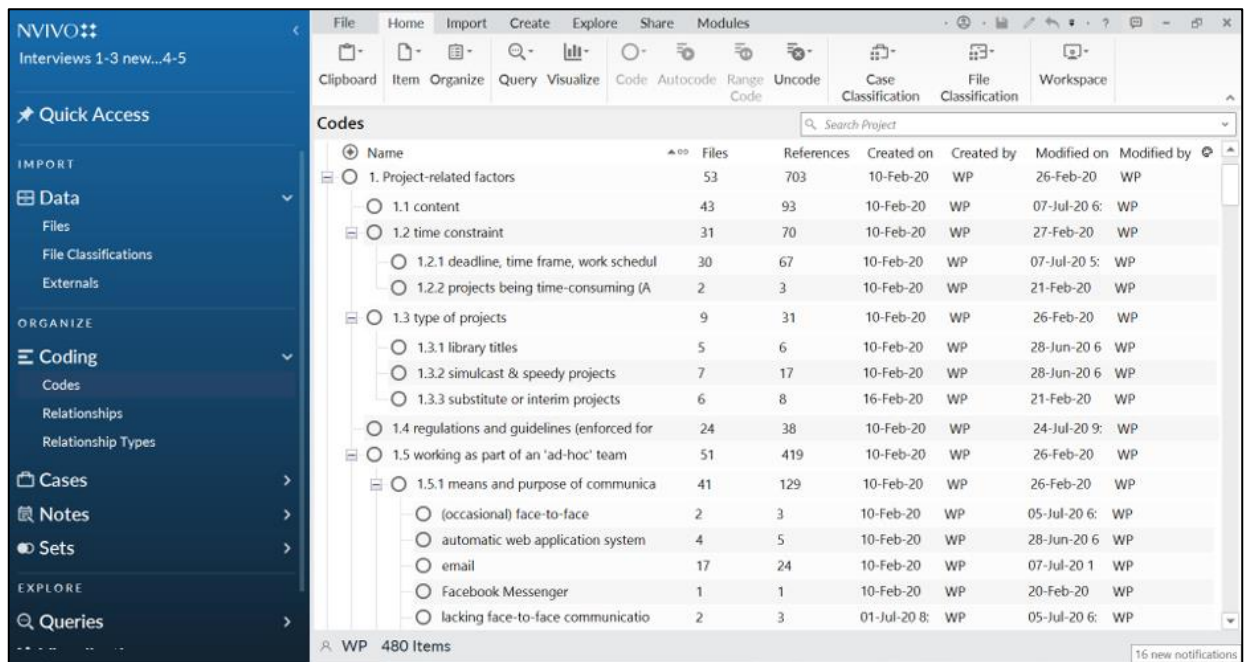


Figure 3.11: NVivo screenshot showing different layers of codes

Stage 3: Generating initial themes from coded and collated data

I found creating initial themes particularly challenging. Although I did not claim to be objective or that my analysis reveals *the* truth, I did not want themes to miss anything essential in the interview data. At this stage, I also returned to the transcripts many times to attend to particular points or details (rather than reading transcripts from the top) to refer to codes and corresponding collated data extracts (see Figure 3.7). It was my intention to create three main themes to address the three RQs. I reminded myself to generate themes that were succinct and multi-faceted. I decided whether each theme was big enough to have sub-themes. The initial themes and sub-themes are shown in Appendix K, along with revised and finalised lists of themes and sub-themes.

Stage 4: Developing and reviewing themes

Having generated initial themes, I started writing the analytical chapter. I found myself going back and forth across all coding stages. I took this as a positive sign because, as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2020a, p. 4), 'as one's analytic (craft) skill develops, these six phases can blend together somewhat, and the analytic process necessarily becomes increasingly recursive'.

Appendix K gives a glimpse of the results of Stage 4 (i.e. a more refined version than the outputs in-the-making). A criterion I applied when reviewing themes was to decide whether they were

multi-dimensional (Braun and Clarke 2020a). As I was conducting QLR, I also made sure that changes and evolution were reflected in each theme or in the analytical section addressing each theme.

Stage 5: Refining, defining and naming themes; and Stage 6: Writing the report

I started writing the first analytical chapter long before the themes were refined. Analysing and writing about your analysis cannot be separated from one another (Braun and Clarke 2013). Analytical memos became particularly useful during these stages. Writing notes and drawing graphic organisers are my idea boosters (although in hindsight I should have done this much more extensively). I found Braun and Clarke's (ibid., p. 258) ideas and suggestions on refining, defining, and naming themes especially useful. For instance, they state that naming themes requires thought and creativity, and that they like names that are 'evocative, catchy, concise and informative'. Nevertheless, when defining themes, I did not write definitions of themes *per se*, like they recommend. Instead, I treated writing analytical chapters as a way to define themes.

3.7.3 'Finalised' codes and themes

After several attempts, I was finally able to create compelling stories from the coded extracts to address the RQs in a meaningful way. These 'finalised' codes and themes from the coding process are the ones I am *currently* happy with. Just like when people say, 'you don't *finish* analysis, you stop' (Braun et al. 2019, p. 7, original emphasis). Interestingly, I eventually decided not to have sub-themes for Theme 3, making my finalised version essentially the same as when I started out (except that the most recent name is catchier than the first draft).⁴¹ This is mainly because when I was trying to write analytical sections so that each sub-theme of Theme 3 corresponded with a different dimension of the quality model, I found that the three dimensions were so closely related that it made no sense (to me at least) to write about them separately. On the other hand, each sub-theme under Themes 1 and 2 deals with distinct aspects of the parent themes.

3.7.3.1 Categories of codes from interview data

This section will start off by elaborating on four main categories of factors (i.e. codes) relevant to freelance subtitlers' work practices. These codes were selected on the basis of both salience and

⁴¹ I became even more positive that this is a catchy name when I found the article entitled 'Quality is in the eye of the stakeholders: what do professional subtitlers and viewers think about subtitling?' (Szarkowska et al. 2020).

frequency. The section ends with the presentation of themes and sub-themes which respond to the RQs.

It is important to note that the term ‘factor’ is used in a more general way: to refer to a topic raised by the participants, while ‘actor’ denotes a factor that is considered significant, i.e. leaving a visible trace, in a specific context under discussion. Some factors are called actors when they are perceived as salient or influential in that particular context.

Category 1: Project-related factors

Codes in this category are factors concerned with the nature and characteristics of each individual subtitling assignment, namely, *content* (e.g. genre, level of difficulty as perceived by the subtitlers), *time constraints* (e.g. time frame, deadline, work schedule), *type of project* (e.g. translating library titles or simulcast shows), and *working as part of an ad-hoc team* (e.g. sharing an episode with another subtitler chosen by the project coordinator).

Category 2: Individual subtitler-internal factors

Codes in the second category can vary from one subtitler to another, and range from affective or rather abstract factors to more concrete ones. Affective factors include such codes as the subtitlers’ *sense of (in)security and perceived (lack of) negotiation power*; their *level of happiness, satisfaction, passion, and stress*; their *perception of subtitling* (e.g. subtitle translation as an art form, or as another source of income); and *work ethics*, while more concrete factors are those concerned with subtitlers’ *health-related issues*, their *full-time job*, *subtitling experience*, *subtitle editing experience*, *value-added qualifications* (e.g. knowledge in foreign languages other than English, background knowledge in specific content, computer literacy), and *professional plans and goals*. In Figure 4.1, these factors are divided into two groups: (A) those which are influenced by factors in other categories, and (B) those whose relations with factors in other categories are less obvious.

Category 3: Commissioner-related factors

This category deals with codes centred around the commissioners of subtitling projects, namely, their profile, policy, practices, procedures, and other factors affecting subtitlers’ work practices to varying degrees. The codes include the commissioners’ *position in the subtitle production network (SPN) or type of company* (e.g. being OTT service providers or subtitling commissioners), their

localisation policy (e.g. reliance more on in-house staff or outsourcing), *localisation team structure and workflows*, *QA and QC procedures*, *remuneration and payment terms*, *subtitling program/platform*, *localisation project management ecosystem*, and *contracts from their clients*. Clients have been found to be an important actor because each commissioner's operational and management activities are largely determined by the contracts they can secure with their clients. The contracts stipulate agreements in terms of, among other things, content acquisition (e.g. which titles to be localised by the commissioners or their subcontractors), regulations and guidelines, translation procedures (e.g. translating from the original language of the programme or using English templates) and delivery period.

Category 4: Thai OTT market-related factors

Because it is impossible to discuss the results of a longitudinal qualitative study without putting them into context, codes in the last category are concerned with broader contextual factors. Unlike the other three categories, the Thai OTT market-related factors have been drawn on both the interview data (thus reflecting the participants' views and perceptions), and documents such as news articles, academic papers, and other sources reviewed in the introduction to this thesis. Factors in this category include *the growth and potential for growth of the Thai OTT market*, *main players in the industry and their competition*, and *the competition among freelance subtitlers in the market*.

3.7.3.2 Themes generated from interview data

The development of three main themes was informed by the RQs. The themes (and corresponding sub-themes) in turn helped to answer the RQs. The relationship between the RQs and themes is illustrated in Figure 3.12. The three themes, presented as the answers to the three RQs, will be explored in depth in the forthcoming chapters. Chapters 4 and 5 will address RQ1, whereas Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 will discuss the findings to RQ2, and RQ3, respectively.

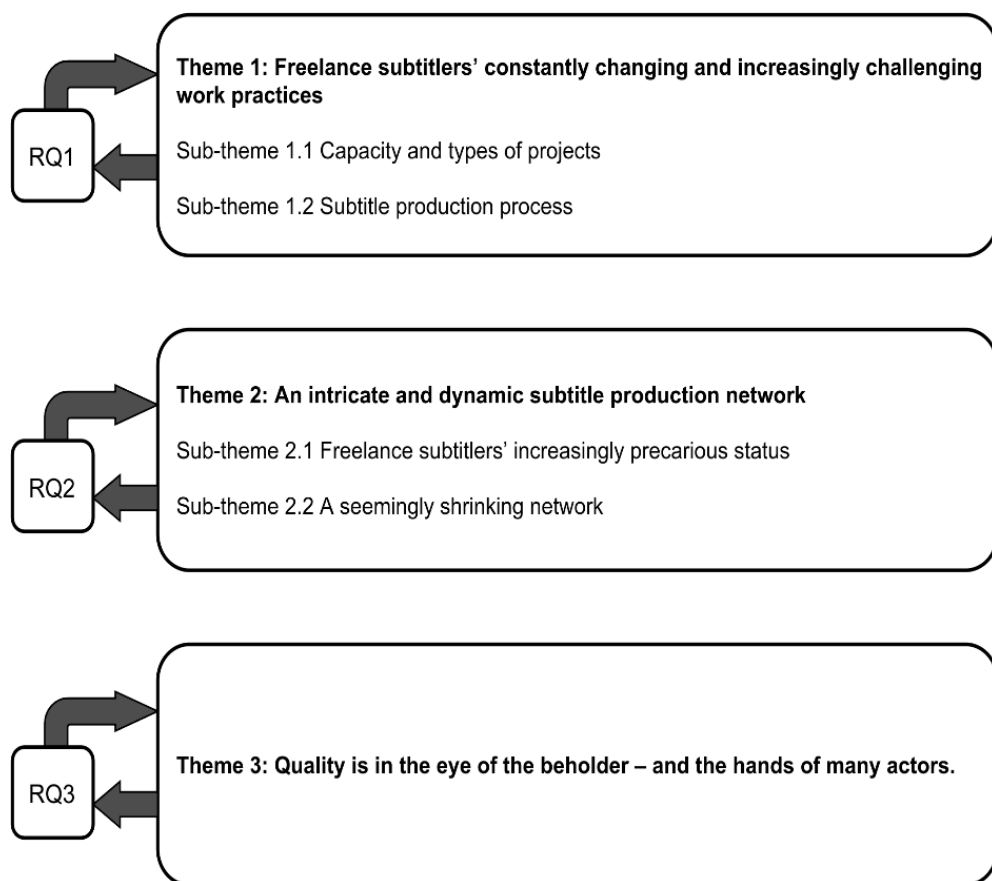


Figure 3.12: Finalised themes and sub-themes generated from codes in response to the RQs

3.8 Concluding Remarks

QLR is useful for elucidating changes over time. I conducted five rounds of qualitative interviews with my research participants over two years to learn about changes that occurred in the SPN. The deductive data analysis was informed by selected (post-) ANT concepts and Abdallah's (2016, 2017) conceptualisations of quality dimensions. The analytical process was also inductive or data-driven to agree with Braun and Clarke's (2019a, 2020a, 2020b) reflexive TA approach, which states that themes should be generated from codes to tell compelling stories about data. Specifically, the stories (presented as three main themes) were 'actively crafted' by me to address the three RQs. Due to my constructivist ontological and interpretivist epistemological stance, as well as the underpinning tenets of reflexive TA, subjectivity and reflexivity were embraced. My interpretations of data with respect to changes in the freelance subtitlers' work practices, the evolution of the SPN, and quality issues in the SPN will be presented in Chapters 4 to 7.

Chapter 4 Capacity and Types of Projects

4.1 Introduction

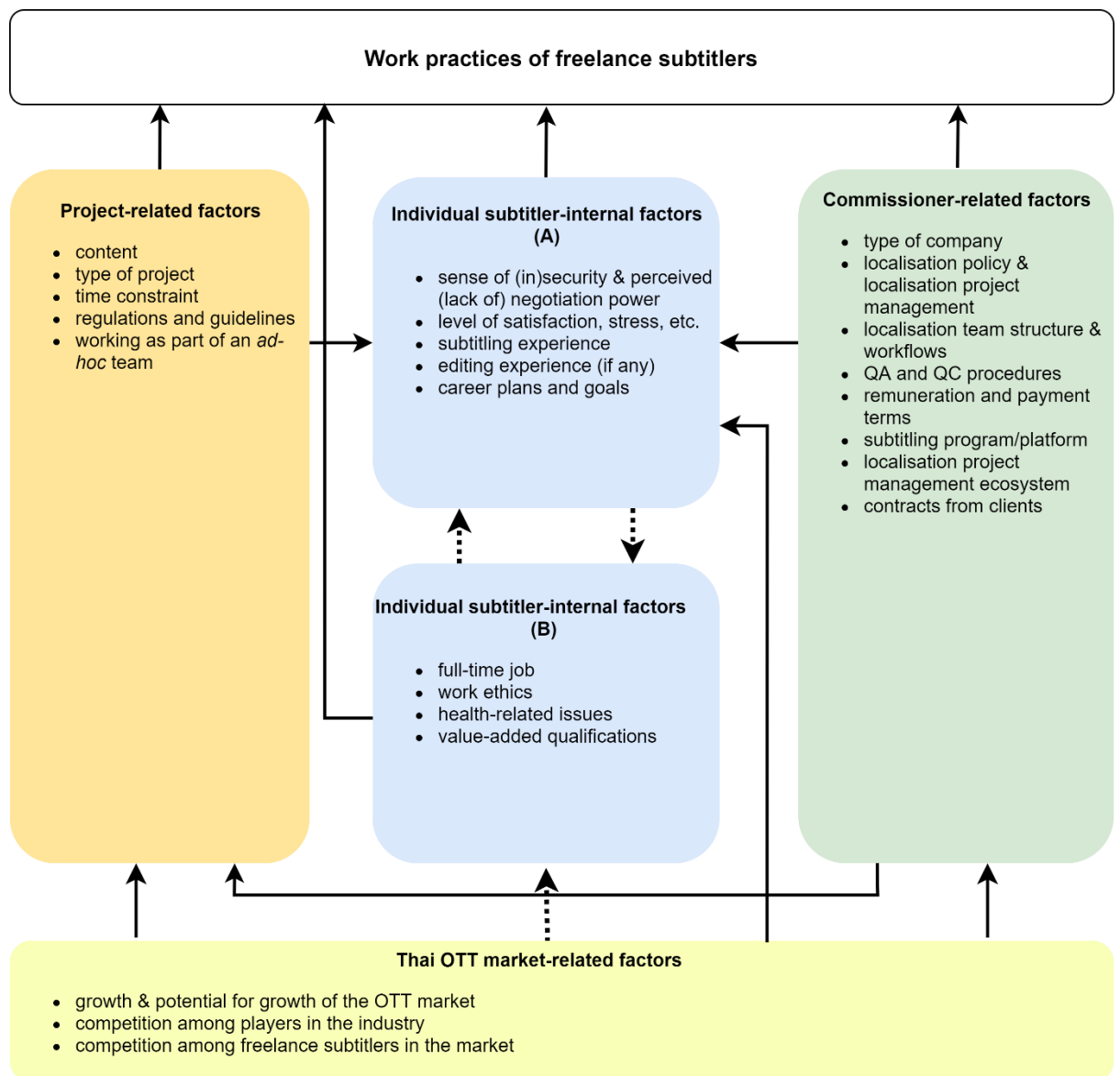
This chapter addresses RQ1 to investigate the work practices of freelance subtitlers in the Thai OTT industry. For convenience, RQ1 is repeated here:

RQ1: How are work practices of freelance subtitlers influenced by other actors, both human and non-human, in a subtitle production network in the over-the-top (OTT) industry in Thailand?

The theme associated with this RQ was Theme 1: *Freelance subtitlers' constantly changing and increasingly challenging work practices*. It was divided into two sub-themes, the first of which, the participants' capacity and types of projects (Sub-theme 1.1), is the focus of this chapter. Sub-theme 1.2, the subtitle production process, will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.1 depicts, in schematic form, how the work practices of freelance subtitlers have been influenced by a constellation of factors which comprise both human and non-human entities and whose interrelationships have given rise to an intricate network of 'associations'. The four categories of factors, however, should not be treated as clear-cut. Some of them tend to overlap and be closely related.

The categorisation of factors is helpful in demonstrating the interplay and relationship between selected salient actors, and the way they cast their influence on not only the subtitlers' work practices and career trajectories but also on the evolution of the network (Chapter 6). For instance, due to a fierce competition among OTT players, streaming TV providers aiming to attract a wider audience place more emphasis on their language localisation strategies. The situation affects the media localisers' localisation policies, and thus the capacity and types of subtitling projects that they assign to freelance subtitlers. Some of the commissioners' project management policies may force subtitlers to leave the network. The following sections will outline some important events that occurred in the Thai OTT industry during the data collection period, followed by a discussion on main factors that had ramifications on the participants' work practices in relation to their capacity and the types of projects they receive.



KEY: The solid lines indicate observable relations between actors, whereas the dashed lines denote less perceptible connections.

Figure 4.1: Interrelationships among four categories of factors influencing freelance subtitlers' work practices

By the time the study started, the Thai OTT market had witnessed a stiffer competition among dozens of international, regional, and local players (Section 1.2.1). Being aware of the significance of language accessibility to the success of their business, many OTT service providers localised their content through different AVT modalities (Section 1.2.2). In the second quarter of 2018, just before the third round of interviews – half-way through the data collection period – the OTT platform TVB Anywhere from Hong Kong launched its service in Thailand. Partnering with a Thai satellite TV company MMTV, the platform acts as a content aggregator of Thai channels, and offers

Chinese content dubbed into Thai (Chow 2018; Giachi 2020). In the second year of data collection (August 2018-September 2019), the country welcomed yet another player into its ‘very crowded’ OTT sector (Digital TV Research 2019). The arrival of the Chinese tech giant Tencent’s OTT platform WeTV in Thailand as its first market beyond China in November 2018 – before its official launch in June 2019 (ibid.) – is an indicator that the country was considered a potential market. Interestingly, when asked what kind of Tencent content they believed would be well-received in the Thai market, Jeff Han (cited in Shackleton 2019), senior vice president of Tencent Penguin Pictures (a production unit for the company’s VOD platform) said ‘exclusive original Chinese content with subtitles and dubbing [...] simulcast [...] to an overseas audience’. In line with Han’s answer, by the second year of data collection, Thai viewers were provided with more choices as to their preferred VOD platforms – with players striving to offer more non-English language programmes, larger dubbed show catalogues, and quicker access to their content. The aforementioned events have left a visible impact on freelance subtitlers in many aspects, as discussed in the current and following chapters.

4.1.1 Terminology relating to some key stakeholders in the Thai OTT industry and significant actors in the SPN

Before I present the findings, it is essential to describe the terminology used in this thesis in relation to some key stakeholders in the Thai OTT industry and significant actors in the SPN (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Terminology relating to some key stakeholders in the Thai OTT industry and significant actors in the SPN

Term	Definition in this thesis
Client	A company or an individual whom the commissioner serves.
Commissioner	A company (or a group of individuals) that commissions subtitling projects to the participants. Usually called an LSP in other contexts.
PM	A staff member who works for the commissioner and whose main responsibilities include managing subtitling projects and overseeing the company’s localisation activities. A PM may sometimes approach individual freelance subtitlers to assign them particular projects.

Project coordinator ⁴²	A staff member who works for the commissioner, under the supervision of the PM, and whose main responsibilities include assigning projects to freelance subtitlers on their team, onboarding new subtitlers, passing on the editor’s feedback to subtitlers, resolving issues faced by subtitlers, and, in some instances, working parallelly as a subtitle editor.
Subtitle editor/editor ⁴³	<p>A staff member who works for the commissioner and whose main responsibilities include proofreading and revising the translated subtitles, providing feedback to subtitlers, evaluating subtitlers’ performance, and, in some instances, working parallelly as a project coordinator.</p> <p>A subtitle editor in the present study assumes the role of both proofreader and QCer (as found in other contexts).⁴⁴</p>

During the data collection period, the commissioners, for which the research participants worked, consist of three main types:

1. Over-the-top service providers (OTTPs) who assign localisation projects to vendors.

Some of these providers also have their in-house content localisation team to manage some workloads, while others outsource all their subtitling assignments.

It is important to note that the term ‘OTTP’ in this thesis refers to an OTT service provider either as a VOD platform, where viewers consume video content, or a commissioner, who assigns subtitling projects to the research participants.

2. Certified vendors (CVs): well-recognised media localisers who can potentially secure big projects from content owners and/or OTTPs.

3. Media localisation providers (MLPs): vendors that act as (sub)contractors of subtitling projects from content owners, OTTPs, or CVs.

42 When referring to the significant actors in the SPN, the present study’s participants usually used the words ‘a project coordinator’ and ‘an editor’, while these two terms might not be commonly used in other contexts.

43 The role of subtitle editors will be discussed in detail in Section 5.3.4.1.

44 In some companies, proofreaders (or proofers) and QCers perform different tasks. That is, proofreaders check for possible mistranslations, typos or inconsistencies, and *may* send the file back to the subtitlers, asking them to accept or reject the revisions. When that is the case, the accepted translations will then be checked again by QCers, who attend to issues concerning consistency, and regulations and guidelines of their client. In some instances, they are also expected to correct translation errors and evaluate the subtitlers’ performance. QCers may send the file back to the subtitlers for the second time, if further revisions are needed (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2021).

Some participants occasionally worked for a small vendor (SV), which, in this research, refers to a group of individual subtitlers who may or may not know each other but are all recruited by a group coordinator so that altogether they can handle greater workloads subcontracted from content owners, OTTPs, CVs or MLPs. When subtitlers were not directly paid by either of these commissioners but by the group coordinator, I consider a small vendor to be their commissioner.

The abovementioned commissioners, in turn, commissioned subtitling projects to the participants in order to serve their clients. As for OTTPs, one of their direct clients was content viewers and/or subscribers,⁴⁵ whereas the main clients of CVs, MLPs, and SVs included content owners/copyright holders, and OTTPs that outsourced subtitling projects to them. The relationships among these stakeholders and the research participants are displayed in Figure 4.2.

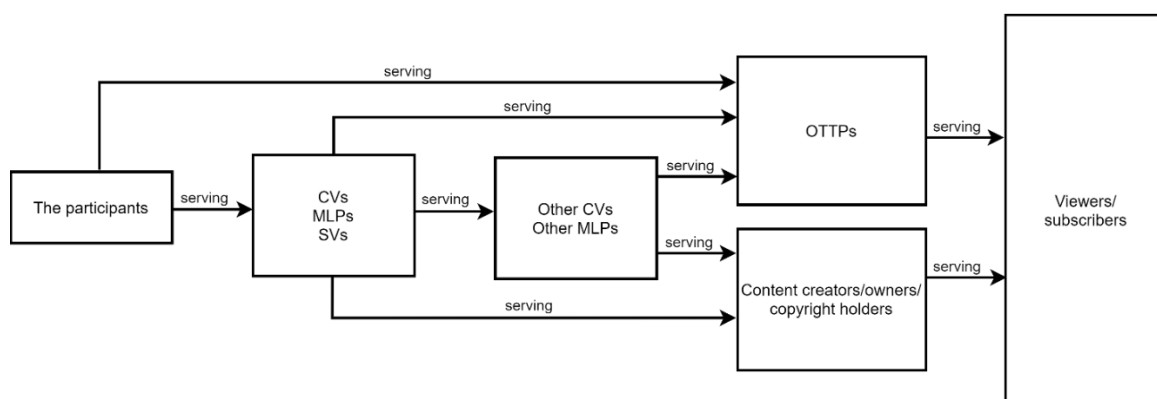


Figure 4.2: Relationships among the commissioners, their clients, and the participants

To familiarise the reader with certain aspects of the freelance subtitlers' work processes, the proceeding sections explore the participant's subtitling process (Section 4.1.2) and the subtitling tools (Section 4.1.3).

4.1.2 The participants' subtitling process

It is important to note that, unlike the participants in other studies (Kuo 2014; Beuchert 2017) who may be required by their commissioners and/or full-time employers to do both the tasks of spotting and translating, all participants in the current study used spotted templates, i.e. templates with the provided in time and out time of each subtitle (see Section 5.3.2 for a brief discussion on different types of templates).

⁴⁵ Other clients may include the companies that placed advertisement on their streaming services, for instance.

In general, the participants' subtitling process consisted of the following stages.

Pre-submission stages

Stage 1: Checking the audiovisual materials and templates (e.g. to make sure that the project coordinator has provided them with the right file for the assigned project)

Stage 2: Checking and consulting style guides and consistency sheets (such as KNP files or other documents of the same nature)

Stage 3: Researching about the show (through Wikipedia, IMDb, fansubbed versions, official DVD versions, etc.)

Stage 4: Watching the video to be translated

Stage 5: Translating and doing research (e.g. googling idioms, slang, expressions; reaching out for help from the content and/or language experts)

Stage 6: Consulting and updating consistency sheets, communicating with other subtitlers sharing the project when needed (to discuss word choices, pronouns, etc.) through Google Docs or other document sharing applications, and revising their translations on the fly, if the subtitle editor provided them with real-time feedback when translating simulcast projects

Stage 7: Revising the translated subtitles – manually or semi-automatically with assistance of a 'self QC' function on the subtitling platform

Post-submission stage

Stage 8: Making corrections for resubmission if the project is rejected by the QC Team

In practice, the process is more discursive than listed above. Also, some stages may be carried out concurrently. For instance, some participants watched only one scene of a show and translated that scene before moving on to the next. It is also difficult to neatly separate Stage 5 (translating and researching) from Stage 6 (consulting and updating consistency sheets). Moreover, consulting consistency sheets appears in both Stages 2 and 6, as it is more common that the subtitlers, expected to follow the guidelines for consistency and appropriate length of subtitles, would check these documents for the first time in Stage 2 to see if there were any elements that they would not have to come up with themselves (e.g. the predetermined references for characters' nicknames when translating Quentin Tarantino's films) and later in Stage 6 as they were translating the lines. It has been found that individual participants may decide to re-sequence the above stages or skip some to fit their preference. For instance, while some subtitlers revised an entire project after they finished the last scene, others may carry out self-revision after translating

each scene. Moreover, the way each stage was performed may be influenced by the commissioner's (or their client's) guidelines. For example, when translating Tarantino's movies, subtitlers were asked to strictly follow the provided consistency sheets and refrain from being creative for certain aspects.

Stages 1-2: Checking the audiovisual asset and templates, and consulting style guides and consistency sheets

Since all of the participants worked on templates with master subtitles, they did not have to learn how to time code subtitles. However, some participants taught themselves to do it. It was not very common to find poorly spotted segments, but when this happened, the participants adjusted the in and out times themselves (as the platforms usually allowed them to do so). Otherwise, they would report the issue to the project coordinator. This is why it is necessary for subtitlers to check the materials as soon as possible. Participant S8, in particular, took this step very seriously as there were times when she was sent the materials of a different project rather than her own, or the project coordinator delivered audiovisual assets which could not be played properly.

Stage 3: Researching about the show

Similarly to the results in Beuchert's (2017) study, in which subtitlers made use of sites such as Google, Wikipedia, and IMDb, it has been found that the participants would consult Wikipedia, IMDb entries, or fan-run websites of the show before translating. Researching about the show they were about to translate was helpful for setting the appropriate tone of the translations to match the genre (e.g. S3). Besides consulting consistency sheets, some participants (e.g. S4, S12) would try to find the websites created by fans of that particular show to learn more about the relationships between characters, or they would watch the fansubbed version (including other episodes than the one they would be translating) to better grasp the plot. Participant S5 revealed that he would consult IMDb for details of a film and relevant Wikipedia entries for a TV series. When translating library titles, he also watched a couple of episodes of the show with subtitles (usually fansubs) to study the 'mood and tone' of the translations. As he was translating, he may revisit this researching stage when encountered with issues concerning the plot, characters' relationships, or some references to former episodes.⁴⁶ Participant S10 insisted that it was important that she consulted the former episodes or previous seasons of the show to maximise consistency.

⁴⁶ In Year 1, the provision of KNP sheets was not strictly enforced in some companies.

Stage 4: Watching the video to be translated

The participants allocated their time to watch the video although the exact ways to do it varied from person to person. For instance, Participant S10 would watch the audiovisual material for a few minutes and then skip to the next 10 minutes. She would repeat the 'skim and skip' process for the whole episode. She also paused at certain scenes (e.g. ones in which the characters fight with each other or go on a date, and so on) to learn about the overview of the story. She played and paused the video as she started translating each line. Participant S3 said that she watched an entire episode when translating a project with complicated storyline, whereas for other projects, she would play the video and translate scene by scene or line by line. Participant S9 let the video play from the beginning to end and paid close attention to only some scenes. What he would like to achieve from playing the video was to understand the overarching plot. When he was assigned a library project to translate an entire season of a TV series, he would play only the first few episodes before starting to translate. In cases where he was assigned other seasons than the first, he would also play the last two or three episodes of the previous season (which he could find on the streaming platform).

Participant S1 usually watched an entire episode before translating. Participant S12, who had been subtitling for one year and nine months when she gave the first interview, revealed that at the beginning, she did not play a video before starting to translate the lines because she thought that it was time-wasting. However, having struggled to produce translations that made the show 'enjoyable' to watch, she changed the approach to watching the video (partly or entirely) before translating. In this way, she could produce subtitles of satisfactory quality. Participant S7 approached this stage even more vigorously. With relatively flexible deadlines when translating library titles, he always watched all episodes and then had a break for several days before he started translating. He spent the break to contemplate on how he could convey the characters' personality, portray their distinctive 'voice', and present the characters' relationships through different word choices. He also added that by knowing the story from beginning to end, he understood recurring themes or gags. To the participant, it was important to ensure that certain details would not be prematurely revealed through the subtitles, or the viewer experience would be spoiled. In the first interview, Participant S11 shared that although she did not usually watch an entire video first, she never failed to watch each scene before starting to translate subtitles of that particular scene. The participant revealed in the second interview that she had just changed to watching an entire show, as recommended by a more experienced subtitler. She found that her former method was 'too risky' and that it is better for subtitlers to understand the story line and how conflicts or running gags are resolved before the actual translation begins.

It can be concluded that the participants believed that watching audiovisual materials, at either a normal or accelerated speed, is a significant stage to produce quality subtitles. Participant S4 shared his view as a freelance subtitle editor that this is a crucial stage to prevent subtitles from containing obvious and distracting errors such as using a masculine pronoun for a female character. He added that the same characters, when present in different contexts (e.g. in a professional setting vs. while having an intense personal argument), should address each other with different pronouns. Subtitlers who skip watching a video are likely to miss such nuances. The view is in line with Ivarsson and Carroll's (1998) Code of Good Subtitling Practices and Díaz-Cintas and Remael's (2021) recommendation that subtitlers always watch a video.

Stage 5: Translating and doing research

All participants did research as much as time permitted. Some participants sometimes reached out to experts. However, they would resort to this option only when they could not find satisfactory answers on their own. Some needed assistance for language-related issues, such as when Participant S8 wanted to know the meanings of some French expressions (after failing to find satisfactory answers using Google Translate), or when Participant S12 asked her senior friend, who has a degree in Korean and worked with Korean people, to explain some Korean cultural concepts. She sometimes double checked with her friend whether she correctly understood the connotative meanings of certain words. When Participant S5, who did not have in-depth background knowledge in sports, was assigned to subtitle a sports programme, he reached out to his sport fanatic friend. In general, documentaries that take an in-depth look at unfamiliar topics and shows that revolve around main characters' professions, such as military officers, medical doctors, or lawyers which do not match the subtitlers' background or personal interests will require more researching time and effort than usual. Participant S12 revealed in the first interview that when she was translating a medical drama, she had to create a separate glossary for all unfamiliar terms and corresponding translations (as her commissioner at the time did not provide KNP sheets). Saying that she 'had no ideas where lungs, a liver, kidneys are exactly [in our body] or how they are different', the participant spent a great deal of time researching. She added that she did not want to disappoint the viewers. 'If I cannot do my job properly, I'd rather not do it at all. This is my weakness (laughing)'. Participant S7 was particularly meticulous. When encountering the 'Previously on ...' lines, he would get back to the referred scenes and copied the exact translations instead of translating those lines again. In this way, he put himself in the shoes of the viewers. 'As the characters said the same stuff, why wouldn't the translations be exactly the same?' (S7, Interview 1). The participant summarised his subtitling process as comprising four

main stages: watching, analysing, researching, and translating & self-editing. He normally spent approximately 50 percent of the total subtitling time researching.

Moreover, some participants revealed that they preferred to finish the translations of an entire project (be it a section of an entire episode, an episode of a series, or an entire movie) in one sitting. For instance, Participant S6, who started off as a fansubber at secondary school and is a fast subtitler, said in the first interview that it would normally take her two to four hours to finish subtitling a show of 40 minutes. She would not stop in the middle of a project as she believed that it would affect 'the flow of word choices' – among other things that could negatively ruin the viewer experience. Similarly, Participant S10 revealed in the first interview that she preferred to translate projects that were between 20 to 30 minutes long because she could complete it within two to three hours.

Stage 6: Consulting and updating consistency sheets, communicating with other subtitlers, and editing on the fly

In reality, Stage 6 cannot be separated from Stage 5. However, while all participants engaged in Stage 5, some were not provided with consistency sheets at all at the beginning of Year 1. Those who were assigned only library projects in Year 1 did not have to communicate with other subtitlers, and they would receive feedback (if any) after project submission. The participants who were working on simulcast projects were expected to consult with other team members to reach an agreement on translation-related problems and self-revise their translations accordingly on the fly. The *ad-hoc* team members shared their comments and suggestions through Google Docs or other online document sharing applications (see also Section 5.2).

Stage 7: Revising the translations

This stage also varied from person to person. For example, Participant S5 reported that he would check through the translated subtitles only roughly for some projects and thoroughly for others. He also said that he usually paid close attention to the following areas: mistranslations, typos, and line breaks. Similarly, most of the participants reported that during the self-revision stage they were more attentive to correcting typos and misspellings and making sure that the Thai subtitles followed the style guides.

Some participants reported that they *always* devoted a great deal of time to checking and revising their subtitles before submission. Participant S11 described some parts of her translation and self-revision stages as follows:

I watched each scene and translated that particular scene. After that, I re-watched that scene [to check my translations in contexts] [and repeated this until I finished translating all subtitles]. [Having finished translating an entire episode or film], I watched an entire video again with subtitles on. That is the process for shows in English. For projects in other languages, I replayed an entire video twice – in the first round, I checked Thai subtitles against the provided English lines to make sure nothing was missing, and in the second round, I [watched the video] and paid attention only to the Thai subtitles. Having checked accuracy of meaning [in the first round], I could now focus on checking pronoun uses and flow of the conversations, making sure that the subtitles wouldn't sound funny or out of place. (S11, Interview 1)

Participant S7 stated that self-revision enabled him to avoid word repetition and improve the flow and naturalness of the subtitles. However, he admitted that typos were almost inevitable despite thorough revision and checking. The QC Team was of great assistance to correct them. In the third interview when he no longer translated subtitles for OTT platforms, the participant said that he spent much more time self-editing his last few projects because he would like his subtitles to read smoothly and beautifully. As stated above, the participant was into minute details and wanted to give a distinct voice to each character. Likewise, when translating a 20 to 30-minute-long show, Participant S10 would spend two to three hours in total, of which up to half was allocated for revision. 'I read all subtitles on the text file to check if there were typos. Then I played the video with subtitles on in fast forward mode to see if the subtitles appeared in appropriate timing, particularly for scenes with overlapping conversations. I also checked the line divisions' (S10, Interview 1). Similarly, Participant S9 revealed in the first interview that he always watched an entire episode together with subtitles after he finished translating that episode because it was helpful for catching typos and mistakes caused by mixing up similar spelling or sounds (e.g. 'สงสัย' [doubt] and 'สงสาร' [take pity on someone]).

On the other hand, Participant S1 revealed that he no longer thoroughly checked through all subtitles but would only quickly glance through each line. This is because he learned from prior feedback that he did not make a lot of typos. He also said that his commissioner (OTTP1) seemed to mind more about typos and reading speed than other aspects. However, he admitted that his translations might not read very smoothly. We can conclude that as for Participant S1, his self-revision has been influenced by his past performance and comments from the commissioner's QC Team. This is despite the fact that the present study's participants did not generally receive regular or detailed feedback (see Section 5.3.4.1). Details given by Participant S6, who worked

full-time as an in-house subtitle editor for a leading media localiser, seem to be consistent with Participant S1's perception. She revealed that occasional mistranslations were more acceptable than typos because too many typos reflected that the subtitler was too careless and did not take work seriously. Mistranslations were also more difficult to catch. It must be noted here that her opinion might not be representative of all editors.

Stage 8: Making corrections for resubmission if the project is rejected by the QC Team

Being occasionally mentioned in the interviews, this post-submission stage is not a usual stage for the present study's participants. The QC Team normally edited the translations and *may* inform subtitlers of the changes they made. The editor will return the project to subtitlers for an extensive revision only when there are too many translation mistakes or typos. Participants S10 and S12 told me that they personally know subtitlers who were asked to correct the mistakes for resubmission as their initial translations were rejected by the QC Team.

4.1.3 The subtitling tools

At the beginning of the study, I observed a transition from the more traditional use of desktop-based subtitling tools to the cloud-based (online) platforms. Of all ten commissioners that the participants worked for during the two years of data collection, five (CV1, CV3, CV4, CV7, and MLP3) required their subtitlers to use proprietary cloud-based platforms, while others (OTTP1, MLP1, MLP2, MLP4, and SV1)⁴⁷ asked the participants to work on free subtitling tools. Some commissioners in the latter group allowed freelance subtitlers to choose any subtitle editing software of their choice, while others asked their translators to use a particular tool. The most popular open-source subtitling tool among the participants is Aegisub. The other two subtitle maker tools used by the participants are Subtitle Edit and Subtitle Workshop. The participants' perception of subtitling tools is explored in Section 7.3.3.1.

The research findings that correspond to sub-theme 1.1: *the participants' capacity and types of projects* are discussed in Section 4.2 and Section 4.3.

⁴⁷ Details concerning each participant's commissioners during the two years of data collection are presented in Appendix E.

4.2 Capacity

The first aspect of the participants' work practices explored to address RQ1 is their subtitling capacity. During the first year of data collection (hereafter referred to as Year 1), all participants reported lack of consistency in their subtitling projects, particularly the unpredictable volume of assignments. Some participants received no projects at all in certain months, usually without any notice (with few exceptions, such as when the commissioner announced the official 'temporary' halt of outsourcing subtitling projects to subcontractors and freelancers).⁴⁸ As shown in Appendix E, by the second interviews, some participants had experienced as much as a 70 percent cut in number of content hours. When the third interviews took place, almost all participants received fewer assignments than before. Five participants had not been assigned any projects at all in the past six months or longer. All of these subtitlers worked for the same commissioner whose new localisation policy was to rely solely on their in-house staff. Subtitlers with more assignments were those who had quit their full-time job or stopped working other part-time jobs, allowing them to work on the subtitling assignments around the clock as subtitling became their only source of income rather than working as a subtitler on a paraprofessional basis.

The data from the second year (hereafter referred to as Year 2) revealed a similar pattern, with almost none of the participants receiving more assignments than their highest job volume during Year 1. The only exception was Participant S8, who quit her full-time job to work solely as a freelance subtitler. Participant S4, who managed to keep his subtitling jobs until the end of Year 1, was not assigned any projects at all in Year 2. His commissioner stopped contacting him after he took a short break from subtitling for personal reasons. Of the five participants who lost their subtitling jobs altogether during Year 1 as a result of their only commissioner's new localisation policy, three (S2, S10, and S12) successfully re-entered the subtitling scene, signing a contract with a new commissioner, whereas two (S3, and S7) chose not to do so as both of them had other non-translation freelance jobs with better remuneration. Participant S3 revealed that she no longer wanted to be committed to particular commissioners and obliged to fulfil their requirements (e.g. accepting assignments on a regular basis). However, she would be happy to occasionally 'subcontract' projects from other freelance subtitlers.

In Year 2, two participants, namely S3 and S10, accepted subtitling projects from other individual freelance subtitlers officially commissioned by a CV or an MLP. While this practice was considered

⁴⁸ By the fifth and final round of interviews conducted in August-September 2019, this 'temporary' halt was still in effect.

a 'grey area' (S10, Interview 4),⁴⁹ both participants revealed that they were offered projects from these freelance subtitlers on the basis of their experience subtitling for a recognised OTTP, and their translations would be checked and edited by the subtitlers who assigned them the projects before submission. In this way, the process was not much different from the case in which subtitlers were commissioned by SVs.

By the time the final round of interviews took place, five participants (S2, S3, S4, S7, and S8) had not received new projects from their respective commissioners for at least five months, whereas the participants who worked for CV1, one of the leading vendors in the industry, had been forced to shift their role from subtitle translators to post-editors. The latter group includes Participants S5, and S6, while S1 and S12 had not been assigned any PE projects yet when they gave the final interviews. As for the case of Participant S6 (whose 25 percent of the assignments were subtitling and 75 percent PE), as soon as the show she had been translating ended, 100 percent of her new projects became PE. Those working for other commissioners – namely Participant S10 who worked for CV7, and Participant S12 who also worked for MLP4 besides CV1 – were among a few who, at least in the near future, would still translate subtitles from scratch. However, it was likely that they would be given fewer subtitling projects as time went by. Participant S11, who, by her choice, received consistently minimal job volumes (approximately between four and six content hours per month) can be said to be least affected by the changes as she had already been scouted by another commissioner⁵⁰ for which she would work on a very high-profile subtitling project.

4.3 Types of Projects

Regarding the types of assignments, as the study progressed, more participants became involved in simulcast projects than when the first interviews took place. Simulcast projects, with an ultimate aim to broadcast the show at 'near-live turnaround times' (Georgakopoulou 2019b) equate to a much shorter turnaround time (usually less than 10 hours per project) than translating library titles or back catalogue content (for which translators generally have up to 3 days per project). Despite being undesirable for freelancers, the former type of project, with a

49 Participant S10 assumed that the subtitlers who assigned her projects had to resort to this option because they were busy with other commitments but did not want to turn down the offers, fearing that the commissioner would no longer send them new projects. Participant S3 learned that the subtitler from whom she subcontracted projects was trying to establish a stable career from his non-translation job and no longer had time for subtitling projects.

50 From the interview data, it is not clear whether the participant would work directly for an OTTP or a translation vendor (a CV, an MLP, or an SV) that is commissioned by an OTTP.

minimal turnaround time, will become the norm, as the competition in the industry is getting fiercer.

When asked about the changes that had occurred in or had been initiated by the company, Participant S5 explained in the second interview that there was a new type of project: fast-turnaround simulcast projects in which the subtitlers were required to translate 30-minute content within four hours or less. Given the working conditions, he would prefer to avoid these projects at all costs, although he was usually reluctant to reject any assignments (partly because he would like to maintain a good relationship with the project coordinator).⁵¹ Being forced to race against such tight deadlines, he said, would inevitably lead to more errors.

The following example illustrates another extreme case. Participant S6 was involved in an 'irregular' project, that is, a fast-turnaround library project. For an unknown reason, the commissioner set a very short time frame to complete the subtitling of a whole season of a TV series at once. Working on this project, Participant S6 and three other subtitlers started translating their assigned sections of the same episode at the exact same time. To make sure each episode was finished by the deadline, the subtitling platform was reconfigured to allow subtitlers only three minutes to translate each line, otherwise that line would no longer be accessible to the subtitler and could be unlocked only by project coordinators (also serving as editors) who would complete the unfinished line. Four editors started editing a few minutes after the subtitlers had begun translating their assigned sections. Then subtitlers and editors simultaneously did their respective jobs. According to the participant, the management of this special project 'didn't work at all' (S6, Interview 3).

It has been found that while the library projects in Year 1 consisted of both newly released shows and shows which were first on air many years ago, the library projects in Year 2 were usually newly released shows and programmes that had been telecast in the original country only a few days prior to project assignment. The latter can be called 'near-simulcast' library projects. The participants revealed that in Year 2 their commissioners usually allowed them to complete one project, be it an entire episode of a show or half (or sometimes one-third) of an episode within two or three days. When the participants were given an entire episode to translate at a time, their current project and the next were usually in a random rather than consecutive order. To illustrate this, Subtitler A translated episodes 1, 5, 8 of the TV series while and Subtitler B dealt with episodes 2, 4, 11. In this way, an entire season could be available for viewers to binge-watch

⁵¹ The participant was assigned subtitling projects by the project coordinator, who would personally offer him new projects.

much more quickly. At the beginning of Year 1, some commissioners would assign an entire season of a show to one subtitler and give them one month to finish the project. Although this did not necessarily mean that the translator would have more time for each episode, it helped for both the commissioner and subtitler to control consistency across multiple episodes, and corresponded well to the recursive nature of the translation process.

Situations in which translators are required to meet increasingly shorter turnaround times are not uncommon in the AVT industry, not least in the OTT market where timely delivery of content is one key to success. A concerning point is that tight deadlines – ‘a common reality’ (Kuo 2014, p. 168) – were perceived by subtitlers in a number of studies to affect the quality of subtitles. In the present SPN, intense time pressure forced the participants to rush or even having to adjust their subtitling process (see Section 7.3.1.1).

Moreover, all but two participants (that is, S3 and S7 who did not accept new projects at all after the second interviews) had experience translating shows in other foreign languages using English pivot templates. This situation, too, has become commonplace as OTTPs seek to cater to the taste of Thai viewers who enjoy Asian content, particularly shows from Korea, Japan, and China. Participant S6 reported in the fourth interview that 100 percent of her projects for the past six months (between 30 and 35 content hours per month) were Korean shows. Another radical change in relation to the types of projects occurred around the end of Year 2 – when at least two participants (S5 and S6) revealed that they would no longer engage in subtitling projects commissioned by CV1, but would work on PE assignments instead.

To summarise, over two years, the participants were faced with constant changes in relation to their capacity and types of projects. **When the first interviews were conducted**, most participants worked exclusively on library titles, while some of them engaged in simulcast projects. For a majority of the participants, their capacity at the beginning of the study was the highest over two years. **By the time of the third interviews**, six participants remaining in the SPN had been assigned to translate library and simulcast assignments, without one type being predominant. Their job volumes were not as high as the amount reported in the first interviews.⁵² **In the fifth and final round of interviews**, six participants remained in the SPN. Two of them had been forced to switch to PE, two had not been assigned any new projects by their current commissioner, one participant noticed that there were fewer English-to-Thai projects on offer, and one participant had been scouted to work for a new company on a high-profile project. It was also found that the

⁵² The only exception was Participant S6, who did not have jobs other than subtitling.

number of simulcast projects slightly exceeded that of library titles. However, the library projects assigned in the second year came with shorter turnaround times than those in the first year (see Appendix E for in-depth details).

The most salient actors – or most influential factors – that determined and brought about changes to the participants’ capacity and types of projects over the two years of data collection are elaborated on below.

4.4 Salient Actors Affecting the Capacity and Types of Projects

Figure 4.3 displays the key actors influencing the participants’ work practices in terms of capacity and types of projects. Please note the different colour assigned to each category of factors (i.e. orange for project-related factors, blue for individual subtitler-internal factors, green for commissioner-related factors, and yellow for Thai OTT market-related factors).

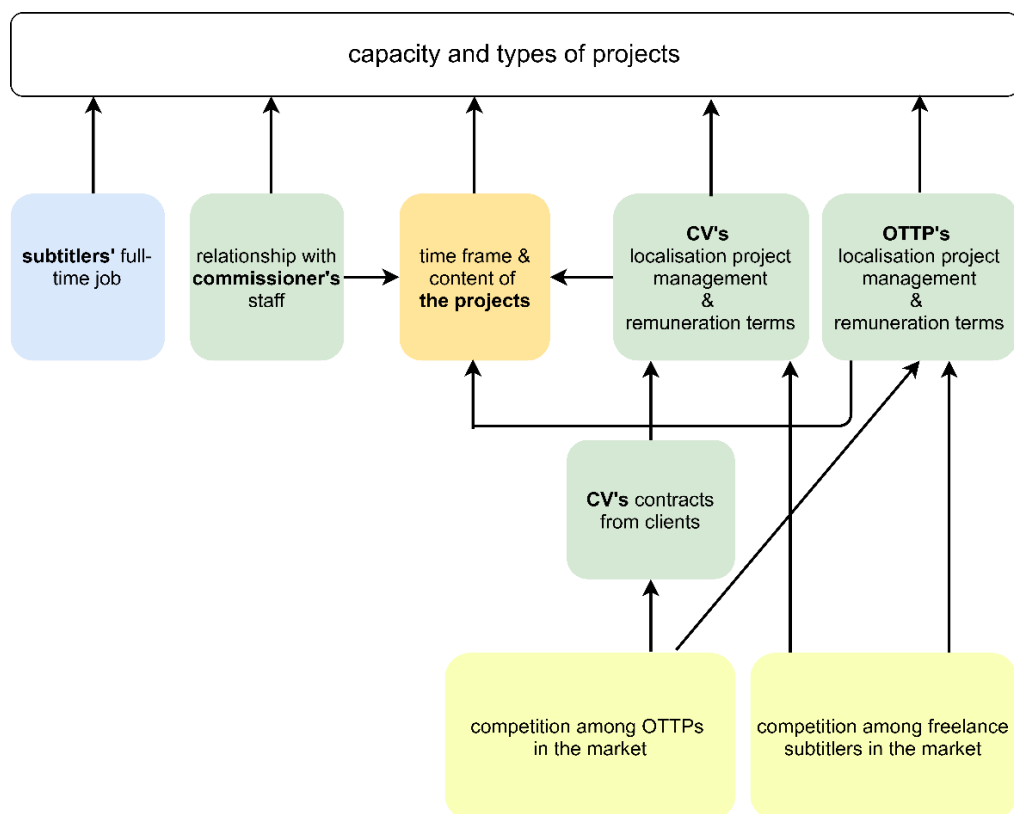


Figure 4.3: The most salient actors affecting freelance subtitlers’ capacity and types of projects

4.4.1 The commissioners' localisation policy and localisation project management

This actor was perceived by the participants as the most disruptive. When I was conducting the third interviews, five participants who worked for the same OTTP were not receiving any subtitling projects at all because of the new localisation policy. Since it was beyond their capacity to negotiate with the company, to improve their job prospects, some participants started to look for a new commissioner. Among these subtitlers, S12 revealed in the first interview (before she started to feel the effect of the policy on her financial livelihood) that she did not want to work for a new commissioner as she felt attached to the company.

During Year 1, other commissioners' localisation and project management policies did not change as drastically as in the case above, yet the changes also affected the volume and types of projects the subtitlers were assigned. For instance, CV1, a multi-branch media localiser which handled translations of dozens of languages for a number of OTTPs, shifted to focus on the production of subtitles for simulcast Korean shows, particularly Korean dramas and reality programmes, besides English-language library titles. The change was caused by their contracts with clients. After they successfully secured a contract with an OTTP whose marketing strategy was to release Korean shows to Thai viewers within 24 hours after on-air time in Korea, they expanded their Korean Shows Team by adding more editors and coordinators to the team, assigning more projects to regular freelance subtitlers, and asking subtitlers on other teams (e.g. English-Language Shows Team) whether they were interested in translating Korean shows using English templates. As a result, subtitlers who were available in a certain time slot and able to translate the shows as soon as the English pivot templates were finished would get more assignments. With fewer library titles to translate, other subtitlers who were not as time flexible would inevitably experience a decrease in job volume.

In this respect, subtitlers working for smaller media localisers, such as Participant S4, were at risk of lower or inconsistent work assignments when their commissioners did not have any new clients, or failed to secure new contracts with remaining clients.

Moreover, sometimes an OTTP (a commissioner with their own OTT platform) chose to acquire content with Thai subtitles, so they did not need to manage the translation projects. In some instances, an OTTP preferred to outsource projects to freelancers who could directly translate from the original languages of the shows. Subtitlers who were able to translate only from English (or from English pivot templates) were automatically unqualified for these assignments, as shown

in the following extract when Participant S10 (Interview 2) was explaining why she had not translated any new projects in the previous two months:

They [OTTP1] didn't have English-Thai projects. It seems like they only have projects in original languages – third languages, which require direct translations. My friends who can translate directly from Japanese or Korean have received those assignments. There are also in-house translators to handle the workloads.

When asked whether the OTTP in question would no longer use English pivot templates for new projects, the same participant answered that it would depend on 'the deal between the company and the content owner'.

Participant S12, who also worked for the same OTTP, learned (from an informal source) that she had not been assigned new projects for two months because the company had cut its budget for content acquisition and failed to close the deal with the copyright owners of some shows. The participant jokingly added, 'I have to try to come to terms with this, although I'm so flat-broke [as a result of the change].'

The extract below shows a similar situation faced by subtitlers working for a leading CV.

[I was on a two-month break from subtitling] because I can translate the shows [that run] on weekends only. [...] Then the show I translated ended, and the copyright owner of the new show [that was on air in the exact same time slot] signed a contract with a different company. My commissioner did not get the deal, and so I didn't get the job. (S5, Interview 3)

In Year 2, the commissioners' localisation policy and localisation project management were still perceived as significant determiners to both the quantity and nature of subtitling projects, as well as the evolution of the SPN (to be discussed in Chapter 6). The following extract shows that when the media localiser CV1 was commissioned by their clients to manage new projects of various types – namely, subtitling into the Thai language (the most typical type of projects for the past years), dubbing projects for international content, and Thai-to-English subtitling for local content (to be translated by native Thai speakers) – the participants who worked for this company were offered the opportunity to accept more projects than their regular capacity.

I learned from [CV1's staff members] that [one of their clients] was trying to expand their content catalogue. [...] They were adding Thai shows in their [VOD] platform and looking for subtitlers who could translate from Thai into English. [...] [This client] wanted highly qualified translators, so subtitlers [who would like to accept their projects via CV1] were required to take the test. [...] At first, I was interested, but [...] I didn't think it's worth the time and effort. [...] But who knows, I might not pass their

test anyway (laughing). [...] I also know that [CV1] are now expanding their dubbing division [...] to be able to handle more – a lot more – dubbing projects for their clients. (S8, Interview 4)

However, in the last interview, Participant S8, who formerly refused to take a screening test for Thai-to-English projects or to join the expanding dubbing team, revealed that with her commissioner managing much fewer subtitling projects into Thai, coupled with the integration of MT in their subtitling workflow, her workload was significantly reduced. If she wanted to continue working for this commissioner, her options would be to translate Thai programmes into English, to join their dubbing team, or to post-edit machine-generated Thai subtitles, the last of which was paid up to 50 percent less.

As briefly mentioned above, another significant change with respect to the commissioners' localisation and project management policies regards the companies' integration of MT output into the subtitling workflow. In Year 1, six out of eight participants who worked for OTTP1 (namely S1, S2, S3, S7, S9, S12) talked about the company's 'new program' or 'AI' which was integrated into their project management ecosystem. Two resultant changes noticed by some of those participants were the company's ability to track and monitor subtitlers' working behaviour (e.g. at what time they started and finished translating) while they were translating 'on the cloud', in tandem with the introduction of new template files which required subtitlers to edit Thai translations rather than translating directly from English subtitles.⁵³ However, there was no evidence to confirm a causal relation between the company's enforcement of the program in question and its policy to 'temporarily' cease all outsourcing activities. What did happen was that a few months after the new program was imposed on freelancers, the participants who worked for this company received the bad news that the company would not hire freelancers until further notice.

The change in CV1 which occurred just before the end of Year 2 presents a similar scenario. A few months before the fifth interviews, some freelance subtitlers were officially informed that the company would implement a new system, integrating machine-translated subtitles into the subtitle production pipeline. The consequence was the reduction (or suspension) of subtitling projects in the near future as new assignments would become PE tasks. By the time of the fifth interviews, out of the six participants who worked for this commissioner, two (S5 and S6) had already started working on new assignments as post-editors, while Participant S1 was anxiously

⁵³ The participants' perception of this type of template files will be presented in Section 5.3.2 and Chapter 6.

waiting for the company to assign him new (most likely, PE) projects. At the same time, Participant S8 had decided to quit working full-time as a freelance subtitler; Participant S11, who had not been informed of this new policy, noticed herself the decreasing number of subtitling projects at CV1 and was about to start a subtitling project with a leading commissioner; and Participant S12 – for an unknown reason – was not aware of this impactful change but had started to notice some alterations to the UI of the company’s subtitling platform.

Therefore, OTTP1 and CV1’s decisions to integrate MT into their subtitling workflow not only significantly decreased the participants’ subtitling job volume, but also transformed the nature of their work and their work activity in the most drastic way (see also Section 6.2.2.3).

4.4.2 Contracts from the commissioners’ clients

The contracts that the commissioners can secure from clients are an influential actor affecting the commissioners’ localisation policies and, by extension, the volume and type of projects assigned to subtitlers. The volume and types of projects (e.g. simulcast or library), as well as content of the assignments (e.g. English-language or Korean programmes) are dependent on the terms of contracts they have with their clients. For example, when media localisers closed the deal with an OTTP whose VOD platform’s selling point was to publish the show within a few hours after the on-air time in the original country, these commissioners would have a larger number of fast-turnaround simulcast and/or simulcast projects in their hands, and they had to manage the projects accordingly.

4.4.3 The participants’ full-time job

The participants’ full-time jobs were found to affect both their capacity and types of subtitling projects that they could take on board. In the present study, the freelancers with a full-time job were available to accept projects only after work and on weekends. These subtitlers were more likely to encounter time management issues, and had less flexibility in choosing the shows to translate than full-time freelancers (e.g. those who had quit their full-time job to work as a subtitler for a living). The former, due to the limitations, would translate the shows that fit their schedule rather than programmes which met their specialisation or preference, which is illustrated in the following comment:

It turned out that I was forced to translate a show I didn’t particularly like just because it suited me better, timewise. (S5, Interview 1)

This ironically means that these participants may need to work on projects which require them to do research more extensively under rigid time constraints.

Before quitting her full-time job as a subtitle editor for a well-recognised media localiser, Participant S8 would accept subtitling assignments from another media localiser when she was not overwhelmed with her full-time job. In the third interview, she revealed that sometimes she was so busy that she had to reduce her weekly translation capacity to only '0.5' (i.e. 30 minutes of content), rather than her usual capacity of 2.5 or 3 hours per week. Upon quitting her job, the same participant accepted subtitling projects from two commissioners (CV1 and CV4), and, with more flexible work schedule, her capacity increased to between 10 and 30 content hours per month.

Participants who had full-time jobs and thus had only minimum capacity also showed concerns that they might not be the commissioners' first choice. To most of them, it was totally understandable why the PMs and/or project coordinators would prefer to work with individual translators or vendors who can handle large workloads, as seen in the following comment:

If I were the project coordinator, I would want to deal with fewer vendors.⁵⁴ The more people, the more issues you have to deal with (laughing). (S12, Interview 2)

In reality, the commissioners' project management team generally make decisions in a more strategic way than simply having preference for either big vendors or individual freelancers. For instance, in Risku et al.'s (2013) study of a company whose core business was translation project management, it was found that the company outsourced projects to recognised and reliable translation agencies as this option could guarantee large workloads and quality products. The same company also assigned projects to individual and small groups of freelancers who, based on their regular transactions, could be trusted to meet the company's expectations in terms of 'quality, capacity and control.' This is because working with big agencies usually came with certain drawbacks, including 'higher costs, longer communication paths and lack of access to the actual translators' (ibid., p. 40). Therefore, in the company in the abovementioned study, quality is a key factor for their decision to assign projects to large agencies or individual freelancers.

⁵⁴ The participant used the term 'vendors' to refer to the subcontractors of subtitling projects, such as SVs, as opposed to LSPs (as the term would generally be understood in other contexts).

Nevertheless, the participants' concerns seem grounded. By the time other subtitlers started to feel insecure, as they had been assigned much fewer projects or had not been given any new projects at all from OTTP1, Participant S9, who always worked as a freelance subtitler full-time (for at least two vendors at a time), started to receive new projects from OTTP1 in a more continuous manner, despite the occasional inconsistent volumes (i.e. a few projects in some months, and overwhelming amounts of work in others). S9 (Interview 2) said that he never turned down any job offers, despite poor conditions like difficult content with a tight deadline. No matter how demanding the task was, he would do his best, translating all day and night. Although the way he worked took a toll on his health (he sometimes had very little sleep, had some symptoms of Office Syndrome, and gained 10kg in bodyweight within a year), at least he did not feel that 'the business has been stagnant'.

During year 2, Participant S5 revealed that when his commissioner (CV1) successfully closed business deals with more clients, he was approached by the project coordinators to accept additional projects besides his regular slots. However, he had to turn down the offer because he was too busy with this full-time job. On the other hand, Participant S8, who had quit her full-time job before the fourth interview to focus on subtitling, had much more flexible work schedules, which allowed her to accept more projects than Participant S5. In some months, she could serve CV1 (which she treated as her priority between the two commissioners she was working for at that time) more than 20 content hours.

4.4.4 Relationship with the commissioners' staff

Another important actor is a good relationship with the commissioners' staff members, particularly the PM and/or project coordinator. Freelance subtitlers in the present study did not have many opportunities to contact the PM. Instead, for most commissioners, the project coordinator served as the only contact point or obligatory passage point (OPP) (Callon 1986a) between the company and the translators. The findings help enrich the literature in TS, which has already underscored the significant role of PMs in the translation production network (Risku and Dickinson 2009; Risku et al. 2013; Rodríguez-Castro 2013; Olohan and Davitti 2015; Foedisch 2017; Sakamoto 2019a), by drawing attention to the influence of the project coordinator as another key actor. It was found that when subtitlers were able to maintain a good relationship with the project coordinator, the latter would facilitate the former by assigning a project within their most convenient time slot, as seen from the interview responses:

I have worked with [the coordinators] for a while, and we are quite close. Sometimes, they will ask for my availability in advance. [...] In January, they knew there would be this new project, so they asked me if I would be free to work on weekends for a new project in February. And I thought, OK, I could plan my schedule. [Knowing the arrival of a new project in advance] gives me enough time to think if it would suit me, or the proposed slot would clash with my other commitments. [...] I felt comfortable [dealing with them], so I decided to work for this company only [and stopped receiving projects from other vendors]. (S5, Interview 2)

When the former PM still worked here, I had so much negotiation power. She would sometimes send me a list of the shows, and I would pick the ones I would like to translate. I was so spoiled. [...] This was because we had known each other for a long time. It's not a good behaviour at all. [...] At some point, I would accept new projects every other month. Suppose last month I translated 20 or 24 episodes, and I was so exhausted. This month, I would tell her that I want to have a break, or I would like to translate only a few episodes, while actually, as a freelancer, consistency is really important. (S12, Interview 1)

When Participant S11 made a request to update her subtitling schedule and capacity, the new project coordinator happily agreed to facilitate her preference. Therefore, every week the participant would have weekday early mornings (before she went to work) to translate 2-3 episodes of the show(s), and submit all finished subtitles by the weekend. When asked for 'tips' for forging a relationship with project coordinators, she answered:

Open communication [is the key]. I don't expect them to reach out to me. I will write them first. I am consistent. [...] When I was still new, I tried to accept every project they offered, or I would negotiate [for a suitable work schedule]. [The relationship] should be sustainable. Don't over-promise, and always deliver as you have promised. (S11, Interview 3)

The same participant insisted that human actors (i.e. project coordinators) will not be an issue unless they are 'extremely' incompetent, such as forgetting to send the template files within the agreed date and time (S11, Interview 2). She also said that uncommunicative and uncompromising project coordinators 'can drive translators crazy' (S11, Interview 1).

Participant S8 shared her experience working for CV4, saying that because she was quite close to the former coordinator, she would occasionally call her to ask whether there would be new assignments in the coming weeks. Working with a new coordinator, however, she did not feel comfortable enough to reach out to her (S8, Interview 3). Other participants' (S1, S5) answers also point out that having a good relationship with a PM or a project coordinator who would inform them a job volume for the coming week or month in advance helps freelance subtitlers to manage their work schedules more efficiently. This is particularly important when the subtitlers work for more than one commissioner and/or have to juggle subtitling with their full-time job.

In some companies (such as CV1), project coordinators are in-house staff members whose job responsibilities include editing and/or rechecking subtitles. This means that, apart from assigning projects to translators, the project coordinators could be the same people who review freelance subtitlers' work performance. Over two years, all participants had to deal with a number of different project coordinators and subtitle editors, which poses some challenges in building strong relationships with particular staff members.

Some of the findings discussed above are consistent with those of prior studies. Svahn (2020, p. 264) confirms that for the majority of freelance translators in Sweden, being close with a PM and/or editors is 'part of their business success'. It was also reported that to maintain a good long-term relationship, freelance translators avoid rejecting any projects that a PM assigns to them. Moreover, they regularly communicate with their agencies via emails, making sure that their emails are polite yet personal. Rodríguez-Castro (2016) discovers a strong positive correlation between the variables 'dynamic relationships' and 'flexibility with schedules'. By the same token, freelance translators who receive projects directly from clients (without the need to rely on an LSP) need to maintain good relationships with clients so that they can negotiate reasonable deadlines and remuneration rates or reject unreasonable ones, which helps to reduce occupational stress (Courtney and Phelan 2019). It is interesting to note that to build good relationships with the commissioners' OPPs or direct clients, translators should avoid rejecting projects at the beginning, but once they have successfully established close and trusting relationships with OPPs and direct clients, freelance translators become more comfortable to reject some assignments.

4.4.5 Time frames and content

Regarding project-related factors, time frames and content (e.g. genre, level of difficulty as perceived by the subtitlers) were found to affect all participants' subtitling capacity. These non-human actors determined whether the subtitlers would accept or reject a project in the first place. The freelancers in the present study were willing to accept a project with unrealisable time frames (e.g. falling on the date and time they were at work). Some subtitlers preferred not to translate certain types of content. For instance, Participants S3 and S11 would never translate horror shows because they did not like watching them, and they consider that it was not good practice to translate subtitles without watching the videos. Likewise, Participant S10 avoided comedy as this was not her area of expertise and she did not want to produce subpar quality subtitles. The same participant also answered that the volume of work she was able to take each

month depended on a number of factors, including her own availability, and the content she was asked to translate.

In the extract below, Participant S1 (Interview 2), who was fortunate enough to have flexible office hours in his full-time job, explained the difficult time frames for a simulcast project.

[According to the schedule] I would receive the template files at 2 am to meet the deadline by 1 pm. It means I would start translating on Monday early morning at 2 am. [...] The issue is, I had a full-time job, so I needed to finish the translations no later than 7 or 8 am, and went to bed. I would wake up at midday and get ready to go to work.

Participant S5 (Interview 1), whose area of expertise is period TV series, revealed that the content of the projects offered to subtitlers depended on what was popular among the audience at that time. He gave an example:

Suppose you don't like translating military dramas, but there is a high demand for the genre. [...] If you reject the project, first, you lose an opportunity to earn money, and second, you lose your credibility. They will think this person cannot translate this show, so they will assign it to another subtitler. And it's likely that they will keep assigning new projects to this subtitler [instead of you].

Nevertheless, since the participants were generally reluctant to reject offers from the coordinator, as they felt they risked being 'forgotten', they would sometimes accept projects that neither matched their time preference nor expertise.

4.4.6 Competition among freelance subtitlers in the market, and remuneration terms

The categorisation of factors into four main groups does not mean the factors can be neatly separated. Most of them are overlapping and interrelated. This section, therefore, will discuss two actors together. One is under the *Thai OTT market-related* category, while the other belongs in the *commissioner-related* category. As far as the contextual background is concerned, with more OTT service providers entering the Thai market and vying for regular viewers to secure their market shares, freelance subtitlers should have more potential commissioners they could choose to work for, and receive more assignments from those commissioners. In reality, however, as Thai viewers became more accustomed to consuming subtitles on OTT platforms, some of them would like to try working part-time as subtitlers themselves. To the public, translation (including subtitling) is an occupation with few or no barriers to entry (Nakata Steffensen 2007; Kuo 2014; Williamson 2016). People tend to think that anyone possessing the knowledge in the source and target languages can be a translator. As for Thailand, audiovisual translators usually enter the field

with no formal training or qualifications in either AVT or translation in general (Wongseree 2018), and similarly to the situation in other countries such as Finland (Abdallah 2011), and the UK (Nakata Steffensen 2007), it is common for commissioners to hire university students who are willing to receive lower pay than experienced subtitlers. Kapsaskis (2011) argues that commissioners usually prefer novices to professional subtitlers because hiring the former helps them to save costs. The author, nevertheless, raises his concerns that newcomers might not be able to deal with the job's complexities, and that a number of new entrants do not have any translating experience (of any kind) at all. In the present study, as the competition among freelance subtitlers in the job market became more pronounced, it was easier for translation commissioners to find cheap labour, particularly for the subtitling of shows that were not considered 'high-profile' (i.e. high-budget shows aiming to attract a wider audience).

Due to a surplus of people who would like to work as freelance subtitlers, commissioners – irrespective of their sizes – were in a more advantageous position than translators. Participant S4 (Interview 1), who had experience working for commissioners of various types (starting off working for a leading CV and an MLP), admitted that because he 'screwed up', the CV he was working for at the time did not assign him more projects. Since the commissioner never sent him any warning or explanations, his educated guess was that he made a lot of mistakes in his last few projects, for which he was asked to work against tight deadlines continuously. When Year 1 ended, the participant was commissioned by an SV. However, in Year 2 he had not heard back from his only commissioner after he told them that he needed to take a short hiatus from subtitling for personal reasons. The scenario is illustrative of how replaceable freelance subtitlers can be in this highly competitive job market.

Some of the participants, who were forced by circumstance to find a new commissioner, decided not to accept any assignments from their prospective employer when they learned that the remuneration was so low that it was not worth their time and effort.

I was looking for a new commissioner [...] through my personal connections. They received projects from a big vendor. But when this company outsourced projects to freelance subtitlers, they offered low compensation rates – far too low, like half [of what I used to earn]. When I learned the volume of work and deadline, I didn't think it's worth it. [...] And [having learned] their payment due date, and everything else, I thought I would be even more stressed [than having no assignments at all]. (S12, Interview 2)

Answering a question concerning individual subtitlers' opportunity to receive projects (when compared with SVs), the same participant said:

Translators should be reasonably paid. [...]. It has become a misconception that when they offer you this price, your choice is to accept it or reject it. I think we should set a new standard. But I am among the minority who believe that we shouldn't receive projects with unfair compensation. (S12, Interview 2)

Similarly, Participant S7 would like to see a standard and fair price for subtitling. It is important to note that the participant can speak four languages (including Thai and English, the latter of which is of near-native proficiency). He insisted that he would only accept projects with reasonable compensation, and that he would never compromise on the quality of his work. One of the freelance subtitlers he knew told him: 'I was paid 20 Baht⁵⁵ [per 1-minute content], so I produced a 20-Baht quality of subtitles.' Experienced and qualified subtitlers' insistence on receiving reasonable rates as shown above is in stark contrast with typical cases in which subtitlers, particularly new entrants, will give in and accept poor rates and payment terms just to keep on working for the commissioner. Kuo (2014) assumes that such new subtitlers probably do not know the market well enough or just want to get started as subtitlers, hoping to be better paid in accordance with their growing experience. Furthermore, she points out that the financial crises in 2007-2008 forced the subtitling sector to reduce cost. Therefore, subtitlers who would be willing to accept lower rates would have high job volumes while those who insisted on their usual rates would experience a drop in workloads.

'The vicious cycle'

The status quo has led to what Participant S4 (Interview 5) calls 'the vicious cycle', where good subtitlers decide that they do not want to endure ridiculous remuneration rates and leave subtitling for a more financially rewarding job. Subtitlers who accepted low rates from the commissioner when they first started off their subtitling career will also look for another job upon learning that the higher rates that they have hoped for will not be realised as the commissioner can always find new entrants willing to accept even lower rates than them. Such downward pressure on price has driven qualified translators to leave the profession, leaving subtitling jobs in the hands of those who do not care much about quality. The participant believes that this situation does not have a profound effect on subtitlers on the top-tier who have built their reputation in the industry, whereas a majority of translators who aim to produce quality work are greatly affected. This trend is worrying, particularly when we consider the consistent lower pricing of outsourced translation projects, and 'talent crunch' – both in the AVT sector (Estopace 2017, online) and specialised translation (Dunne 2012). Dunne (ibid.) believes the unsustainability will eventually force highly qualified translators to quit the translation market.

55 20 Thai Baht equals approximately to 0.50 Euro.

Nevertheless, it was also found that remuneration rates are not the (only) most important factor determining whether the participants would continue working for a particular commissioner. Participant S6 shared with me in the second interview that she received much lower rates from CV1 than from her former commissioner, but she was happier with the company's more systematic and professional project management procedures (including the execution of invoicing and payment), and she was very satisfied with the content they assigned her (i.e. Korean shows).

4.5 Concluding Remarks

All in all, the most salient actors influencing freelance subtitlers' work practices in terms of capacity and types of projects are the commissioners' localisation and project management policies, the commissioners' contracts from their clients, and the subtitlers' parallel full-time job. Additionally, maintaining a good relationship with other key human actors in the network (particularly the project coordinator) is also crucial for freelance subtitlers. Being on good terms is found to benefit both parties. When they are in a good relationship, the coordinator will help subtitlers by giving them assignments that best suit their preference and availability. In turn, subtitlers will be able to produce the best quality subtitles and are less likely to jettison the project or turn down requests from the coordinator. Another influential actor (albeit to a lesser extent) under the category of commissioner-related factors is the commissioners' remuneration terms. In a competitive labour market, experienced freelancers who insist on receiving reasonable pay are at risk of losing their projects to newcomers, who would appear to be willing to accept minimal compensation and endure challenging working conditions – at least in the beginning. Moreover, with a good number of enthusiastic new entrants ready to take over their jobs, subtitlers who are not consistent in terms of quality and capacity will be forced to leave the market. As for project-internal factors, time frames and content were found to affect the number and types of projects the subtitlers can accept.

In conclusion, the current chapter has demonstrated that the participants' work practices are characterised by inconsistent, unpredictable workloads and increasingly difficult working conditions (e.g. projects with shorter turnaround times). It can also be seen that, in general, freelance subtitlers, despite forming an integral part of the SPN, have minimal negotiation power with their commissioners. Chapter 5 continues to deal with challenges faced by freelance subtitlers and elaborates on salient actors that influence the participants' subtitle production process (Sub-theme 1.2), whereas the precarious status of freelance subtitlers in the SPN will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5 The Subtitle Production Process

5.1 Introduction

As a continuation from Chapter 4, this chapter addresses RQ1, dealing exclusively with the work practices of freelance subtitlers in relation to Sub-theme 1.2: *the subtitle production process*. The term *subtitle production process* is used here in a broader sense than the phrase *subtitling process* (see Section 4.1.2). While the latter seems to put emphasis on the role of subtitlers,⁵⁶ the former implies that the translation process carried out by individual subtitlers constitutes only one part of a networked activity which includes contributions from others, such as the project coordinator's uploading template files, the editor's provision of feedback, and input from other actors working on the same project. This reality is in stark contrast with the 'traditional, academic perception of translation as an individual activity' (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007, p. 33). In fact, subtitling has always been the result of collective effort. For instance, subtitling for films and DVDs in the early days would normally involve tripartite teamwork consisting of the spotter, the translator, and the adapter (*ibid.*). Indeed, as we will see below, despite the prevalent view shared among the present study's participants at the outset that their work did not involve a lot of people, their subtitle production process involved more actors than they tended to first perceive. This chapter starts by first looking at those actors, before homing in on the more influential ones.

5.2 'Visible' Human and Non-Human Actors

As shown in Figure 5.1, a number of human and non-human actors were found to influence the subtitle production process. Some factors outside of the freelance subtitlers' awareness were not reported in the interviews and thus are not presented in the figure. The participants were sometimes made aware of the existence of certain actors only when the process did not go smoothly. This can be explained through the concept of *black-boxing*. According to ANT, certain parts of a complex network are black-boxed – or simplified – so the emphasis is placed only on the input and predictable output (Callon 1986b; Latour 1999). The internal workings will usually be revealed or made visible when things do not go well. For instance, when the English pivot template for a Korean show failed to retain the sense of formality and respect conveyed in the

⁵⁶ This, however, does not suggest that subtitlers work in total isolation when they are translating. As discussed in Chapter 7, the subtitlers' translating process is influenced by their interactions with actors. For instance, they might skip proofreading if they have never been informed by the editor to be more careful with typos and misspellings.

original dialogue,⁵⁷ the subtitlers in the present study would realise an important role of the Korean-to-English translator: they were expected to try their best to retain nuances of meanings or to leave notes on how certain expressions should be translated by other subtitlers who were to use the English pivot template. Interestingly, because the pivot template was presumably created by more people than just one translator, the contributions of other actors (such as the editor, or spotter) were, for the most part, still concealed in the black box. The participants never discussed these actors' roles. Only that of the English pivot template translator was 'visible' to them. Similarly, when the participants were using the English template to translate an English-language show and found spelling mistakes, they never blamed it on the 'template maker'.⁵⁸ It should be kept in mind that in a complex network like the SPN, it is highly likely that, even when a problem arises and the black box is (partially) opened, some internal workings will still be invisible to certain actors – in this case, freelance subtitlers. This coincides with the participants' perception of themselves as outsiders or, at best, semi-outsiders, who know very little about how things are run on the commissioner's side. The position and vulnerability of freelance subtitlers in the SPN will be elaborated on in Chapter 6.

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, the subtitle production process generally starts when freelance subtitlers receive a project offer from their commissioner, usually through the PM or project coordinator. The subtitlers then take all the details about the project into account, and decide to accept or reject the assignment. Having agreed to accept the project, the freelance subtitlers will then wait for the project coordinator to provide them with access to ancillary materials, which normally consist of audiovisual assets, English (pivot) template files, and key names and phrases (KNP) sheets⁵⁹ or other documents of the same nature. With essential materials at their disposal, the subtitlers start translating. They are also expected to do some research, and proofread the finished subtitles. Moreover, when KNP sheets are provided, the subtitlers are expected to keep referring to and updating the sheets. In this way, they are constantly 'communicating' with both

57 This is mainly because, unlike English, different pronouns in Korean and Thai reflect people's status and social hierarchy.

58 Nikolić (2015) introduces the term 'template maker' to refer to a professional who creates a template in the original language of the audiovisual asset. In this template making process, the spotting task is also included. As explained by Díaz-Cintas and Remael (2021), a 'templator' (or 'spotter') is a person who assigns time codes to subtitles, and creates the templates and master titles, along with annotations deemed useful for the subtitle translators.

59 KNP sheets, as explained by the participants, are glossaries or consistency sheets which subtitlers and editors use as a reference when they come across names and phrases that have reappeared in the same show, or across different shows of similar content or genre (e.g. a KNP sheet for Thai translations for terms referring to courtiers in Korean period dramas). The section that deals with the show characters usually include the characters' details (e.g. age), and relationships between characters, as well as appropriate pronouns to show their relationship.

the editor and other translators working on the same project. When the editor provides them with real-time feedback (e.g. suggestions on word choice), the subtitlers should make corresponding corrections. When an unexpected issue arises, such as when time-coded subtitles are not in sync with the audiovisual asset, the subtitlers will contact the PM or project coordinator, who attempts to resolve the issue as soon as possible. Upon the completion of the translation, the subtitlers submit their work and notify the PM or project coordinator, either manually (via their usual means of communication such as instant messaging) or automatically (through an automatic notification feature in the company's project management ecosystem or subtitling platform). Ideally, the editor should provide the subtitlers with feedback for every project, although past studies (Kuo 2014; Sakamoto and Foedisch 2017) suggest that this is not always the case. The present study's participants believe that the company's QC Team⁶⁰ keep records of the subtitlers' performance, and expect that the PM or project coordinator will attempt to assign new projects to the most appropriate subtitlers based on the merit of their past work, although it is more likely that the company has to assign projects that meet the subtitlers' availability, rather than their expertise.

The details about the actors and their respective roles shown in Figure 5.1 are generally true in cases where subtitlers are commissioned by OTTPs, CVs, or MLPs. When subtitlers work for an SV, the vendor head normally acts as a 'one-stop' service person who assumes the roles of PM and/or project coordinator, and subtitle editor. In the case of the participants in the present study, almost all commissioners will contact individual freelance subtitlers and offer them a new assignment (which subtitlers could choose to accept or reject), whereas some CVs or MLPs will post new subtitling assignments on their portal, allowing freelance subtitlers to accept only projects of their preference, which are to be formally assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. An example of the commissioners that adopt the second procedure is CV7, for whom Participant S10 worked not long before she gave the final interview (see Appendix E).

⁶⁰ The commissioner's staff members whom the participants referred to as 'QC Team' were responsible for executing certain tasks as part of QC and QA procedures.

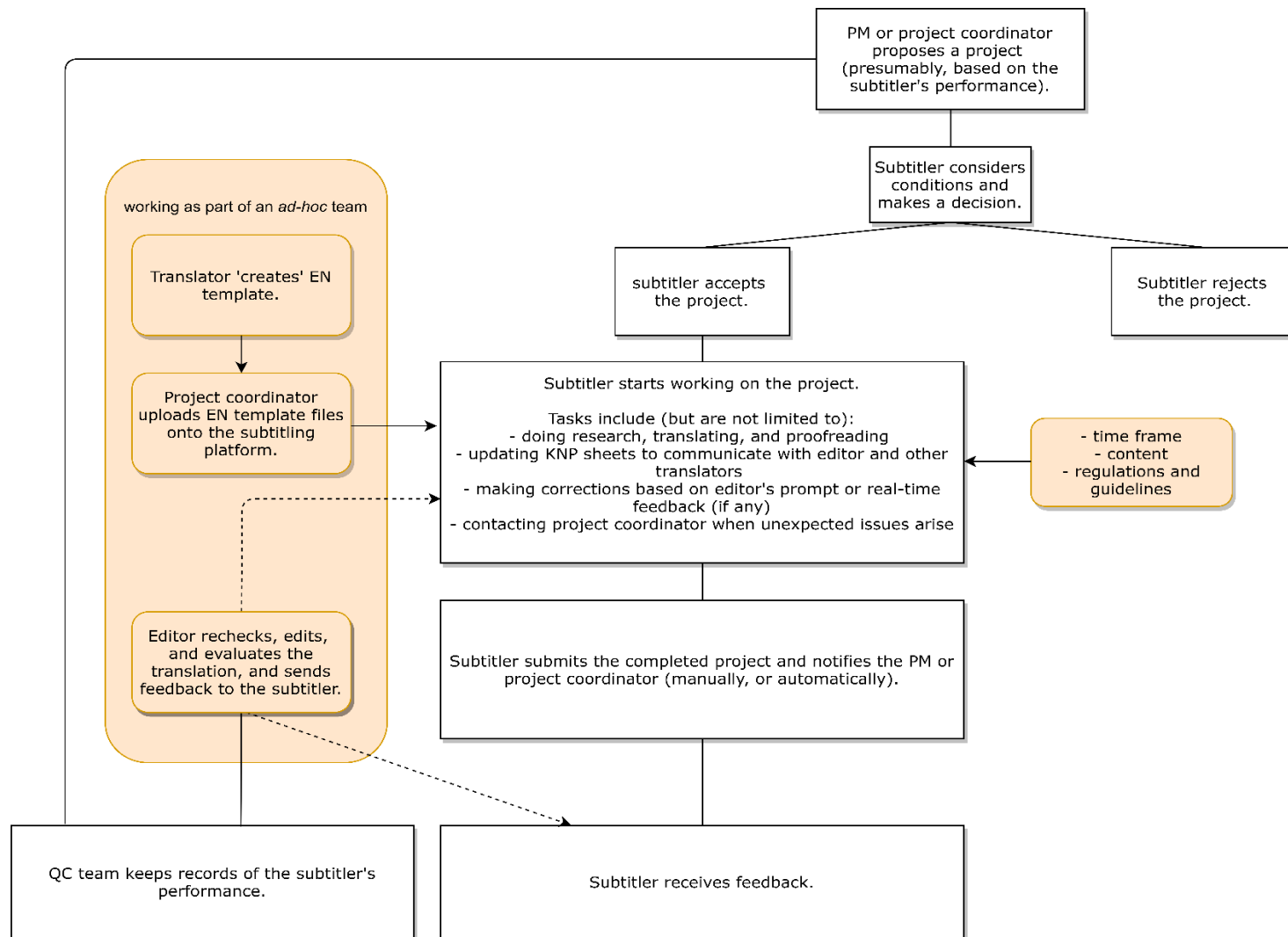


Figure 5.1: The subtitle production process, and the most salient actors influencing the process

5.3 Salient Actors Affecting the Subtitle Production Process

Referring to Figure 5.1, among the various actors ‘enrolled’ by the commissioner to assume their respective roles in the subtitle production process, the five project-related factors, namely, time frame (5.3.1), content (5.3.1), English pivot templates (5.3.2), regulations and guidelines (5.3.3), and working as part of an *ad-hoc* team (5.3.4), were perceived by the participants as the most important determining actors in the subtitle production process.

5.3.1 Time frame and content

As discussed under Sub-theme 1.1, the participants were often forced by a pressing deadline to rush their work process, which could potentially lead to more mistakes. It was revealed that a number of subtitlers had to adopt undesirable strategies – such as watching only some parts of the video, skipping consulting and/or updating the KNP sheets, or failing to do thorough research – despite realising that this could affect the quality of subtitles. The participants believed that such circumstances would place additional pressure on the subtitle editor who is obliged to work harder to compensate for the subtitlers’ oversights.

Regarding the content of the projects, the following aspects were found to be most influential: genre, level of difficulty, and original language of the show. The genre and level of difficulty were perceived by the freelance subtitlers to influence their subtitle production process in that both aspects affect the way they manage their extremely limited time. Translating an unfamiliar genre and difficult content requires them to do more research than usual. Participant S6, for instance, reported in the third interview that when she was translating medical dramas, she had to look up technical terms in almost every line. Under such circumstances, little time, if any at all, will be allocated for proofreading and checking for consistency of word usage. This means the subtitle editor will likely find more typos and a lack of consistency in the subtitles.

As for the show’s original language, the subtitle production process becomes more complicated when the subtitlers have to use English pivot templates to translate shows shot in other foreign languages (see also Section 5.3.2 below).

5.3.2 English pivot templates

Templates in the subtitling workflow can come in many forms, such as templates in the original language of the programme, templates with subtitles in a foreign language intended to bypass the timecoding step (rather than as a pivot language template), the ‘blank templates’ or ‘empty timecodes’ which contain only time-cued boxes for subtitlers to insert their translations without engaging in the spotting process (Nikolić 2015), pivot language templates (usually in English), and templates with machine-generated subtitles. The present study’s participants reported their exposure to three types of templates, namely, templates that used English as a pivot language for the translations of shows in such foreign languages as Korean, Chinese or Japanese,⁶¹ English templates for English-language programmes, and those which provided the subtitlers with machine-translated subtitles.

The use of template files, particularly English pivot template files, for the translation of an audio asset into different languages has been a common practice in the AVT industry since the rise of DVDs in the mid-1990s (Georgakopoulou 2019a). Also known as master (sub)titles, template files are ‘subtitles that have already been cued in the original or a pivot language’ (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007, p. 249). This means that the subtitlers are no longer required to time code subtitles. To be further helpful to subtitlers, template files – regarded as ‘one of the greatest innovations in the subtitling industry’ (Georgakopoulou 2019a) – normally come accompanied by annotations and comments (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007), including notes for culturally-bound words and phrases, cases of irony, and wordplay (Georgakopoulou 2009). The main benefits of template files include helping to streamline the subtitling process, enabling more competitive turnaround time and cost, facilitating the standardisation of quality in the production of subtitles into a number of languages, and allowing a larger pool of subtitlers to take part in the subtitle production process (Georgakopoulou 2006). However, the use of template files can adversely affect the subtitling process and quality of the final products. For instance, subtitlers translating into other languages are restricted to following the spotting and segmentation of the English subtitles (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2007). It is also likely that the standardisation will be prioritised at the expense of the subtitlers’ creativity (ibid.). Artegiani and Kapsaskis (2014) find that, due to the text reduction strategies used by the subtitler of the English templates, subtitlers into subsequent languages tend to adhere too closely to the subtitles in the template files, which may leave out some plot-

61 The examples and selected extracts in this section are mostly concerned with the shows in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese languages because they made up a large proportion of the shows in foreign languages translated by the participants, whereas shows in languages like Turkish or Lebanese Arabic were not as common and mentioned in passing by only a few participants.

pertinent details, distinctive features of the characters' speech (such as uses of sociolect), or certain words and phrases with connotative meanings even when there is scope to retain such details in the target language (TL). The authors also argue that subtitlers tend to be less 'creatively engaging with the film dialogue' when working with templates (ibid., p. 421) and conclude that quality issues in relation to template files are caused by their 'restrictive and normative format', leading them to encourage the practitioners to perceive templates as 'integrated aids' to the work of translators, rather than normative tools (ibid., p. 434). As previously discussed in Section 4.1.2, some commissioners' platforms allowed the subtitlers to alter the timecodes. Therefore, the templates used by the present study's participants were not as restrictive as those in the abovementioned study.

Challenges concerning the use of English templates for shows in other foreign languages can be summarised into two main issues. Firstly, it became tricky for actors involved in the subtitle production process to determine which was the actual ST of the translation– the audiovisual material, or the English subtitles in the template. In Kapsaskis's (2011) opinion, template files can potentially replace the audio asset as the ST. While Nikolić (2015) does not completely reject the above view, he believes that treating the templates as the ST is not problematic in itself, particularly if they have been rendered accurately. Nevertheless, Nikolić (ibid.) contends that subtitles in the template – whether they have been condensed or translated verbatim – will certainly influence the translations of subtitles into different target languages. Secondly, it has been found that different actors in the network under study had different expectations on the use of, and adherence to, the templates, which further complicated the subtitle production process for shows in third languages.

The nature of audiovisual texts does not only make it trickier to determine the ST but also challenges the dichotomy between source and target texts as well as the concept of an original. Translators of audiovisual texts usually engage in 'intermediate texts' such as 'production script, dialogue list, online documents in progress, software under construction and texts regularly updated' (Gambier 2013, p. 58). As for subtitling, there are many candidates for a ST, including 'a script in the language used for the spoken version, a previous text that the script itself drew on, a translation of that text into either the language used for the subtitles or any other language, a translated script, and [...] a combination of some (or all) of these alternatives' – not to mention 'the spoken version' (e.g. the original soundtrack) which does not usually function as an immediate source at all (Toury 1995, p. 76). To illustrate, when translating Korean-language shows, the present study's participants generally treated English subtitles in the template files and Korean audio material as primary and secondary STs, respectively. Unlike the participants in

Artegianni and Kapsaskis's (2014) study who had a good command of English, which is the original language of the show (and thus could have chosen to retain some significant features or details from the original dialogue), most of the subtitlers, who translated Korean TV shows understood only basic Korean through their exposure to media and entertainment from Korea (except for Participant S12 who took some Korean language modules in university). Despite their lack of the language proficiency, these Thai subtitlers managed to produce subtitles that reflected degrees of politeness and respect through appropriate pronouns and terms of address between characters – an element which was usually absent in the English subtitles. It has also been found that, while the commissioners' general guidelines stipulate that involved actors should follow the English pivot templates so as to enable both the subtitlers and editors who might not know Korean to do their respective jobs, some editors (especially those knowing the language) might expect the subtitlers to retain details or concepts that have been omitted in the English pivot templates. In most cases, the subtitlers will not be aware of either the editor's expectations or proficiency in the show's original language until they receive the editor's feedback or complaints.⁶² Participant S5 was considered lucky to be one of a few subtitlers who learned from early on that his subtitle editor did not expect him to produce Thai subtitles that perfectly reflected the original dialogue.

But there's always something lost in translation, like [when you translate] sayings or proverbs. When such expressions have been translated into English and then you translate them again from English into Thai, they might sound unnatural. However, the editor will not blame it on the subtitler because she understands that the subtitler doesn't understand Korean that well. [The company] has staff members who know Korean to take care of these issues. (S5, Interview 3)

In the fourth interview, the same participant mentioned again the role of the 'Korean-language experts' in the QC Team who would ensure that the finalised subtitles did justice to the original dialogue because, he thought, all the subtitlers (including those with basic Korean knowledge) based their translations mainly on English pivot subtitles. However, he did not know who these 'Korean-language experts' were, nor in which exact capacity they worked.

Moreover, according to the interview data, sometimes the commissioner's client (usually an OTTP or a content copyright holder) – without realising that not everyone taking part in the subtitle production process possessed a good command of the show's original language – questions why the Thai subtitles are different from the actual dialogue. It should be the commissioner's job to explain the working conditions to their client. Even so, the subtitlers might still be pressured to make sure that their translations are as close to the original conversations as possible. Whether it

⁶² Feedback, if any, will be provided either at the end of the project, or as the process is ongoing (through Google Docs or other document sharing applications), or both.

is the editor's preference or the client's demand, when requested to produce subtitles that strictly adhere to the actual foreign dialogue, subtitlers who can manage will try to listen to the exchanges repeatedly and/or look up Korean words or expressions that match the provided English equivalents in order to come up with the closest translations of those terms in Thai. Some may try to find the original scripts online. These additional steps have to be done against the pressing deadline. The situation can be worsened by the unpredictable and delayed delivery of English pivot templates.

However, not every subtitler was able to manage to meet such additional requirements, as reported by Participant S1 (Interview 2).

I couldn't catch every word by listening (chuckling). I'm not that familiar with the [Korean] language. I don't know it well enough to understand some vocabulary for corporate roles – words like President, Honorary President, Director, CEO. I just have no clue. [...] So I had no choice but to follow the provided source text [in this instance, English template files] (chuckling). [...] Then I would add the remarks [for the editor], 'I can't catch this word. Please help me edit it'.

On the other hand, in some cases the subtitlers have background knowledge in the show's original language, while the editors do not. Therefore, the subtitlers have to leave notes to inform the editors of the rationale behind their choices, as illustrated in the following extract.

Having taken a number of Chinese courses in high school, Participant S5's (Interview 1) knowledge of Chinese phonetics enables him to accurately transliterate Chinese names:

It's tricky to transliterate Chinese names [into Thai], as they use pinyin for proper names. For those who don't have some background about pinyin, they might not be able to transliterate some names accurately as the [Roman] letters and the sounds are sometimes idiosyncratic. For instance, the letter 'z' is pronounced as /ts/ [...] But pinyin does not pose any problems for me. [...] When I translate shows in Chinese, I always leave remarks to the editor to explain the ways certain letters are pronounced.

A dilemma can occur when the subtitlers understand the original language quite well and have to translate from English pivot templates in which the translations have been adjusted to fit the English stylistics. In such situations, some subtitlers may decide to adhere to the original dialogue and leave notes to inform the editor of the rationale behind their choice.

The following interview responses show the participants' perceptions of the limitations of English pivot templates for the translations of shows in foreign languages, particularly in relation to the translations of address terms and culture-specific references. Participant S1 (Interview 2), who is

interested in Korean culture and knows basic Korean expressions through his exposure to Korean media, said that he was sometimes not satisfied with the English translations provided in the templates:

In English subtitles, the characters address one another by name. In Korean, the character would address the other person by position, like when I address you as 'Acharn' [a Thai word equivalent to 'teacher' or 'lecturer'], while in English subtitles they would call you [by name] 'Wichaya'.

Participant S12 (Interview 1), who is big fan of Korean entertainment and took several electives on the Korean language in university, revealed her experience working on English pivot templates for Korean dramas:

For shows in a third language, literal translation [from English subtitles] does not always work. [...] Sometimes, an expression has already been adjusted in the English subtitles. But from what I hear [in the audio in Korean] I understand what it actually means and, as an Asian person, I might be able to convey it more accurately than [literally translating it from] the provided English expression. It is an advantage when subtitlers can understand Korean dialogue.

Concerning appropriate register and corresponding pronouns, using English templates to translate Korean dramas poses additional challenges due to constantly evolving relationships between characters, and the typical plot of a Korean drama in which the lives of the main characters usually revolve around their close-knit extended family. As revealed by Participant S5 in the fourth interview, one character might outrank another character half-way through the story, so pronouns and terms of address between these two characters need to reflect their respective new status. Subtitlers also have to learn who is more senior than whom among all characters and their extended family members, and use proper pronouns accordingly. When they translate variety shows, this aspect can become more complicated. Participant S12 (Interview 5) did extensive research to find out the age of all guests appearing in the variety shows because in Korea, 'you need to know how to properly address one another – [like calling the other person] 'big sis' or 'little sis', and this even applies to those born only a few months apart' (ibid.). Therefore, KNP sheets are expected to be constantly updated and usually become very information intensive. The editor may need to draw subtitlers' attention to the most recent changes in case some of the subtitlers do not (have time to) consult the sheets.

For subtitlers who do not understand the show's original language at all, the process can be more daunting. Participant S9 (Interview 2), for instance, was commissioned to translate TV shows from Hong Kong. He spoke neither Cantonese, which is the official language of Hong Kong, nor

Mandarin, so it was complicated for him to translate the shows by relying only on the English pivot templates and KNP sheets.

Translating Chinese TV series was such a headache! I translated Hong Kong TV shows, in which the language used was Cantonese, not Mandarin. [I had problems understanding] the original conversations. I didn't know the language, so I didn't know the way each character was called. And names in the English subtitles were already translated from Chinese names. [...] They were not transliterated but translated [into words with similar meanings]. A very funny example was when the character's name was translated in the English subtitles as 'fiery shit' (laughing). [...] How was I supposed to translate that name? The process became more complicated, as [subtitlers translating the same show] were also required to keep updating character names in the KNP sheets. I was sharing this project with a close friend of mine. In the beginning, we were trying to figure out the pronunciations of these names in Cantonese. When we were half-way through [this additional step], we were told that we had to use Mandarin for character names. This required us to communicate, to talk, more often.

It can be concluded, from the above examples, that although the use of English templates allows a larger pool of subtitlers and editors to work on foreign-language projects and helps streamline the process (albeit to some extent), it requires the actors involved to communicate with each other more frequently and to engage in additional steps.

While TS literature indicates that good template files should be accompanied by notes for items such as slang, culturally related expressions, or literary techniques deployed in the original dialogue (Georgakopoulou 2006), the interviews did not reveal the existence of such ancillary information in the English templates used by the participants. Nevertheless, the participants were usually (though not always) provided with KNP sheets which listed the frequently-used words and expressions in the original dialogue along with their Thai equivalents – besides the descriptions and relationships of main and recurring characters. The lists were typically categorised based on genres of the shows and topics (e.g. period dramas, food and ingredients, military ranks), and were constantly updated. It is possible that, in the future, the subtitlers will have access to more comprehensive lists of items such as address terms, slang, and culturally related expressions, which can facilitate their work process.

However, not every participant found using English pivot templates troublesome. In some instances, English subtitles in the template were perceived in a positive light. Participant S8 revealed in the second interview that she preferred to translate Japanese and Korean TV programmes because the English subtitles, having been translated from the show's original language, typically utilised uncomplicated sentence structures and simple vocabulary, particularly when compared with the scripts of English-language shows. She also added that, in the case of

Korean-language content, she would finish translating 500 lines in just two hours. English pivot templates, therefore, did not delay her work process but instead allowed her to work faster. This could be because the editor did not expect Participant S8, who did not know Japanese or Korean, to base her translations on the original dialogue. This suggests that English pivot templates will not pose additional challenges, provided that involved stakeholders are on the same page, such as when both the translator and editor regard the English template – not the actual dialogue – as the ST.

Having used English templates to translate Korean TV shows for three months before she gave the fourth interview, Participant S2 had a similar perception to Participant S6. She found that sentence structure and vocabulary in the English pivot templates for third-language shows were much simpler than English subtitles for English-language programmes. Therefore, she could finish translating a 1-hour show in three hours or less. Due to her current commissioner's policy to reward subtitlers who submitted subtitles prior to the deadline, she earned additional money from early submission. However, as she was not a fan of Korean content, she admitted in the fifth interview that it was not easy for her to find Thai words that perfectly reflected the mood and tone of Korean dramas, which were totally different from those of English-language shows she used to translate. The participant did not blame this on the quality of templates but on her lack of familiarity with the genre.

As for English-language shows, English templates did not cause as many issues other than the frustration expressed by some subtitlers due to occasional mistakes they found in the templates, presumably as a result of a pressing deadline on the template makers' side. For instance, Participant S1 reported that he sometimes encountered errors, ranging from grammatically incorrect sentences to misheard words or phrases. He always corrected the inaccuracies in the English subtitles himself and informed the editor of the errors so that other translators who would use the same template in the future could avoid repeating the mistakes, and also to contend that his translations really matched the original dialogue. To ensure that he heard the expression correctly, the participant would google it, usually finding the phrase in question being used in the context of the show. While this additional step does not take too much time, it is a nuisance for translators working against the clock. As revealed in the TS literature, it is not uncommon for the quality of templates to be questionable. Nikolić (2015) observes that template files produced under time constraints may contain misspelled proper names (such as 'Jon' instead of 'John') since the template maker does not have time to consult the provided dialogue list. Ideally, subtitlers, like template makers, should be given the post-production dialogue list. Díaz-Cintas (2001) stresses the vital role of dialogue lists, particularly in the working conditions under

which most subtitlers currently operate (e.g. impossible deadlines with almost no time to do research). A good dialogue list that can best enhance the subtitling process and product provides not only all the dialogue exchanges but also useful metatextual information (ibid.).

The present study supports results and conclusions from prior studies regarding the role of templates. Nikolić (2015) asserts that templates have a great influence on subtitlers' work in many aspects, including workflow and quality. Vermeulen (2011) concludes that the use of pivot languages affects the quality of subtitles. For instance, cultural references are often 'generalised' or omitted, colloquial expressions and word plays are not retained, and there can be misinterpretations and linguistic interferences. Templates may lack crucial information as a result of the text condensation process deployed by those preparing them to ensure that the spotted subtitles will not exceed the specified number of characters (Kuo 2014). The present study's findings, however, are different from those in Artegiani and Kapsaskis's (2014) study in that, when time and capacity allowed, most of the present research's participants – as well as their editors – would prefer to incorporate the dialogue in the original language into their subtitle production, rather than basing their translations only on the English templates. Compared with the respondents in Szarkowska et al. (2020), the subtitlers in the current study did not show strong dissatisfaction with the use of templates. Professional subtitlers in Szarkowska et al. (ibid.) believe that the use of templates is associated with a drop in subtitling rates, but is also responsible for higher presentation rates and a lower degree of text condensation (i.e. longer subtitles), which they see as indicators of poor quality.

The third type of template that some of the participants were required to use are those containing machine-generated subtitles. The freelance subtitlers who had experience using this type of template while working for OTTP1 did not find the templates helpful to their work process. In fact, the MT engine and provided Thai translations were perceived in a very negative light, with one participant describing them as 'abysmal'. As this type of template fundamentally transformed the role of subtitlers in the SPN, more details on it and other issues relevant to the adoption of MT in the subtitle production process will be explored in Chapter 6, which focuses on the evolution of the SPN.

5.3.3 Regulations and guidelines

Regulations and guidelines – imposed by either the commissioners or end clients – were found to influence the subtitle production process. While working on a particular project, both subtitlers and editors had to be cognisant of the timed-text style guides imposed by the end client (i.e. an

OTTP). Some commissioners, such as CV1, would assign projects from a particular OTTP to the same cohort of subtitlers and editors to mitigate possible mistakes caused by confusion in relation to different style guides of multiple clients. However, freelance subtitlers who worked for more than one commissioner would not be able to avoid encountering different sets of regulations and guidelines. When freelance subtitlers became confused or did not pay close attention to the style guides provided by their commissioners or end clients, they would receive negative feedback from the editors. Moreover, a discrepancy in terms of regulations and guidelines of multiple assignments could delay the work process of subtitlers (albeit not significantly) as they needed to make sure that the translated subtitles met each individual project's specifications.

These two factors – namely, regulations and guidelines, and template files – are associated with subtitling norms. According to Georgakopoulou (2019a, p. 154):

Template files have, out of necessity, become a representation of a golden mean between varying subtitling practices and norms, favouring the ease of production and quality assurance of increasingly larger volumes of content, whilst trying to allow for regional variation to the extent possible. The language-specific subtitling guidelines published by Netflix (n.d., b) are a good representative example of this process in practise, by standardising aspects such as characters per line and subtitle reading speed, while allowing for regional treatment in formatting issues of subtitles, such as the use of dialogue dashes and italics.

Pedersen (2018) examines Netflix guidelines in relation to subtitling norms by conducting a pioneering content analysis of Netflix's subtitling guidelines.⁶³ He selects the guidelines of nine languages to represent three audiovisual consumption traditions: Swedish, Danish, and Dutch for subtitling; German, French, and Italian for dubbing; and Russian, Polish, and Bulgarian for voice-over. As Pedersen (*ibid.*) does not include Thai in his corpus, I consulted the Thai Timed Text Style Guides (Netflix 2020), and found that the character limitation for Thai subtitles is stipulated at 35 characters per line (cpl), whereas subtitles in a great number of languages are recommended to contain up to 42 cpl. Thai is one of a few exceptions, as Netflix guidelines are not very diversified when it comes to areas such as character limitation and reading speed. The reading speed for a majority of languages, Thai included, is 17 characters per second (cps) for adult programmes, and 13 cps for children's programmes. Regarding the subtitling norms for distribution channels other than streaming platforms, it is typically maintained that one line of Thai subtitle consists of 28-32

⁶³ In Pedersen's (2018) view, the most influential impetus behind subtitling norms in the current mediascape is global VOD providers.

characters (Wongseree 2018),⁶⁴ rather than a general rule of thumb of 35-42 cpl (Díaz-Cintas 2020a).

Although international online streaming services usually set the limit between 17 and 20 cps (Szarkowska and Gerber-Morón 2018), Participant S1 revealed in the first interview that OTTP1 stipulates that each subtitle should not exceed 15 cps. He further explained that when the translation is longer than allowed, the text box will change its colour from white to pink and eventually to red when the line is deemed unacceptably long (at 20 cps or higher). Although the participant sometimes had to adopt shorter words or omit words that he did not think were necessary (usually adjectives), he did not perceive this as a big problem. He believed that the regulation benefits the general audience and also stated that the QC Team at OTTP1 seem to be serious about two aspects: typos and character limitation.

In practice, the enforcement of regulations and guidelines and the use of templates are closely related. The character limitation can be administered through the deployment of template files in tandem with the subtitling program or platform, as pointed out by Participant S1 above. Issues likely arise in the following scenarios: when subtitlers are not allowed to adjust the time-coded subtitles (Nikolić 2015), which is not the case for the present study; when the subtitling program does not permit them to submit subtitles that exceed the specified number of characters; or when the character limitation fails to take the nature of the TL into account. Some of the current study's participants expressed their exasperation at the regulations and guidelines of certain commissioners or end clients. Some specific requirements were perceived by these practitioners as impractical and/or negligent of the characteristics of the Thai language, such as when the permitted cpl was too small, or when every single symbol, including a superscript vowel or diacritic, was counted as one character.

5.3.4 Working as part of an *ad-hoc* team

Working as part of an *ad-hoc* team is another significant project-related factor affecting the subtitle production process. The word *ad-hoc* is used to imply that other human actors with whom the participants communicated would vary from one project to the next. As revealed in the interviews, the following team members contributed to the subtitle production process: a PM or

64 Due to Thailand's lack of formal subtitling guidelines in the public domain, Wongseree (2018) outlines subtitling norms by drawing on an interview with a professional subtitler (conducted in 2015) as well as her own experience as a subtitle editor for television programmes.

project coordinator who assigned a project, a translator who ‘created’⁶⁵ an English pivot template, a project coordinator (or any other staff member) who uploaded the template file onto the subtitling platform, a subtitle editor, and other subtitlers who were working on the same project and sharing KNP sheets with the participants. Among these human actors, the subtitle editors and the English pivot template translators were perceived by the participants to affect the subtitle production process to a significantly greater extent than others, which is why they are discussed in greater depth in the following sections.

5.3.4.1 Subtitle editors

As explained in Table 4.1, subtitle editors are the commissioner’s staff members – usually in-house employees – who proofread, and revise the subtitles before the project is delivered to the client. They are occasionally called QCers by a few participants. In some companies, a number of subtitle editors may also assume a role of project coordinators. It is interesting to note that the participants normally had no idea as to who edited their subtitles, except for a few cases. For instance, Participant S6 (interview 3) revealed in the third interview:

There were two coordinators on [Team A]. [...] One of them would contact me to assign projects. The other would upload the files [onto the subtitling platform]. And both of them also edited the translated subtitles – as the First Editor, and Second Editor.⁶⁶

Besides rechecking, proofreading, and revising the subtitles, subtitle editors are also expected to provide subtitlers with feedback on their translations. Although giving feedback is generally perceived as a post-delivery process (Sakamoto and Foedisch 2017), in the present study it is considered an integral element of the subtitle production process. In reality, however, the provision of feedback from the subtitle editors is not always realisable, as indicated by the dashed arrows in Figure 5.1. The freelance subtitlers in the present study did not receive official feedback for every project, and different commissioners seemed to have different policies regarding this matter. Such inconsistency in feedback delivery – dubbed by Participant S3 (Interview 1) as ‘of a capricious nature’ – is in line with past studies. Sakamoto and Foedisch’s (2017) findings suggest that the lack of consistent feedback, particularly positive comments, can be said to be common in the translation industry. A similar conclusion is reached by Rodríguez-Castro (2015, p. 35) who

⁶⁵ While in reality, it is unlikely that the translator creates the English template without other people’s contributions, the research participants only focused their attention on the role of the translator.

⁶⁶ At CV1, the translated subtitles are checked and edited by two subtitle editors. The First Editor will look out for and correct any mistranslations, inaccuracies and typos, as well as making sure the time codes are correct. The Second Editor, with more experience than the First Editor, will repeat the task done by the First Editor, and will also help revise the points that the First Editor is not sure about.

states that the provision of effective feedback in the language industry ‘tends to be the exception rather than the rule’. Likewise, in Kuo’s (2014) study on professional subtitlers, it has been found that 14.5 percent of the respondents from the first round of surveys (i.e. subtitlers based in 39 countries, most of which are in Europe) ‘always’ received feedback from their clients, while only 10.2 percent of the respondents from the second round of surveys (i.e. subtitlers working with the Chinese language) ‘always’ received feedback. Her survey results also shed light on varying practices in relation to feedback provision adopted by different companies, namely giving feedback on every assignment, providing comments only when required, giving feedback to subtitlers whom they have just collaborated with, and conducting regular sample checks. Different ways of feedback provision depend on each company’s financial and manpower resources. Moreover, when compared with institutional translators, freelance translators do not generally receive regular feedback or recognition for their work (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2017).

In the present study, it has been found that in Year 1 the participants usually received feedback a few weeks after the project was completed, or they would receive delayed feedback for a number of projects at once. In the participants’ perception, the feedback they received was mostly summative rather than formative. That is, its main function was to evaluate their performance, rather than serving as learning material to help them improve the quality of subtitles and/or enhance their translation skills.

To some participants, the absence of prompt and frequent feedback was understandable – though not desirable – because subtitle editors, like subtitlers, have to work against extreme time constraints to ensure that the end client can publish the subtitled show on their VOD platform as scheduled. Also, acting as one of the last contact points before the project is delivered to the client, the editors are expected to deal with all the mistakes made by the subtitlers who are forced by a tight deadline to skip some steps.

Sometimes, they would rush to upload [the show with Thai subtitles] without leaving me any feedback [on my translations]. They probably just forgot [to leave comments]. I would still insist that they commented on my work. [...] This will be beneficial to both the company and myself. [When I requested for the feedback], they would say, ‘We’re pretty busy now. But we’ll get back to you with feedback.’ And they did in the end. I personally would like to receive comments [on the submitted work] before I accept a new project. (S10, Interview 1)

Unsurprisingly, the participants would prefer to receive regular and timely feedback as they believed it could help them to avoid repeating the same mistakes, and improve the quality of their subsequent projects. Participant S6, who was so passionate about subtitling that she quit a

more secure job to work as a freelance subtitler on a full-time basis and who had been translating subtitles since secondary school (starting off as a fansubber), maintained that timely feedback, either real-time or shortly after the project is finished, will be beneficial to not only the subtitlers but the editors – and, by extension, the commissioners and their end clients.

Normally, it takes about a month to finish translating an entire season of a TV series. The final product can be much improved if the editor just communicates more with the subtitler [about the errors the subtitler has made.] It's not that difficult if she really wants to do so. For instance, there is a feature in the [CV1's] platform that allows both parties to communicate real-time. [...] In fact, if the editor just tells the subtitler - just communicates with the subtitler, it will be much easier for her to do her job, too. She doesn't have to make a lot of corrections. [...] I used to work as an editor, so I know that most subtitlers will likely repeat the same mistakes. It will be good [for both parties] to let the subtitlers know about their mistakes. [...] I'm quite surprised that there are hardly any editors who would contact the subtitlers, who would give them comments or feedback. I have worked with quite a few commissioners. Only [editors at OTTP1] provided me with consistent feedback. (S6, Interview 1)

Sometimes the editors provided real-time feedback (i.e. while the subtitlers were translating), particularly for fast-turnaround simulcast or simulcast projects in which two or more subtitlers were translating the same episode. The editor, who started the editing process shortly after the subtitlers started translating, would leave their comments and draw the subtitlers' attention to their preferred translations of certain words or phrases by flagging those words or phrases with different text formats in the shared documents (e.g. consistency sheets on Google Docs). The immediate feedback was useful for improving the quality of the work in progress. However, under time pressure, some subtitlers admitted that they did not have time to check the editor's real-time feedback or suggestions.

Normally, for fast-turnaround simulcast and simulcast projects, the fragmentation of tasks is not applied only among the subtitlers, but also editors. That is, an episode of the show will be segmented into two or three parts. Each part is then translated by one subtitler and edited by one editor. Although the participant did not know all 'behind-the-scene' procedures, it was assumed that one of these two or three editors would be responsible for the consistency issues of an entire episode. For some projects, an entire season of a show would be assigned to more than one editor, despite all episodes being translated by the same subtitler. From Participant S5's experience, when he worked with two editors (i.e. the first half of the season was edited by one editor, and the second half by another), he was sometimes asked to deal with the same translation problems twice as each editor had their own opinions and preferences. Although he did not think this was a big issue, he admitted that it created extra work for him.

Pressure on the subtitlers to meet an extremely tight deadline and microtasking do not affect only the subtitlers themselves. The editors also need to work harder to compensate for the oversights on the subtitlers' part. Participant S6 once worked on a rare fast-turnaround library project in which three subtitlers and three editors would simultaneously work on a single episode of the show so that an entire season could be ready for publication in a few days. She revealed that for such projects, subtitlers did not usually have time to consult any consistency sheets, and even if they did, the provided documents would not have been very helpful for the translations of pronouns. Moreover, with an extremely pressing deadline, the editors did not have time to provide real-time feedback that subtitlers could immediately apply in the task in progress. Therefore, she said:

All the burdens [regarding consistency issues] were placed upon the editors. You can't say it's the subtitlers' fault as all of us were required to translate [our assigned parts] at the same time. (S6, Interview 3)

The participants' levels of trust and satisfaction in the editors' capacity to provide quality and useful feedback were found to range from full trust and great satisfaction to a degree of reservation to total rejection, as shown in the extracts below.

I think the QC Team of [OTTP1] was very efficient. They were really proficient in languages. Sometimes I was not even sure if my translations were correct but they could manage to revise them until they made perfect sense. (S2, Interview 1)

As I told you, [the subtitle editor and I] worked closely to revise the translations. I sometimes disagreed with the corrections she made. [...] By authority, she could have a final say as an editor, as an in-house staff member. [...] There were times that I thought her word choices didn't fit [the tone of the show]. [...] I wouldn't be happy with the final product if I wasn't allowed to do it the way I believed was the best. [...] As this was a subjective issue, in the end I would normally adjust my translations as she suggested. [...] I wouldn't always give in to her ideas though. When I really insisted on my opinion, she would listen to me. But eventually, the final decision would depend on [the needs and preferences of] the end client. (S5, Interview 1)

There was once when the QC Team corrected my work. It was a Thai-to-English project. I replied to them, '[Your correction was] wrong. I think you might need to recheck the grammar' (laughing). [I was sure that] my translation was correct. [...] [In another project] I was questioned why the word 'call' was translated into 'แวะมาบอก' [meaning to pay a brief visit to deliver the news]. [...] I explained back that no one in [a city name] used telephone in 1700s. [...] That's why it's necessary to do research (laughing), and to take the context into account. (S7, Interview 1)

When two or more subtitle editors sharing the same project have different opinions and preferences, it may pose extra work for subtitlers. Additional issues can also arise when editors

and subtitlers have their own preferences. Unlike mistranslations or inconsistencies, which are easier to deal with, when it comes to subjective areas such as word choices, it is usually more difficult and time-consuming to find a solution that makes both parties happy. Most of the time, the participants would choose to give in so that they could move on to the next step. Participant S12 shared in the final interview that she usually agreed with the editors' suggestions because the editors might have encountered these same words more frequently than subtitlers like herself.

Editors' styles of feedback provision were also varied. Sometimes, the subtitlers would receive detailed comments, and other times the comments contained a general statement or two about their translations, like 'Overall, good job. There are occasional typos, though.' For certain projects, the participants were informed of the editors' feedback via emails in which they would find nothing but a dash (–) under each category of comments. In such instances, it can be inferred that sending out feedback to subtitlers was treated as just another procedure in project management rather than something to be taken seriously. It is worth mentioning that positive feedback was usually delivered in a 'short and sweet' manner, while more in-depth comments tended to be negative, with detailed explanations of areas of improvement. As revealed by Participant S12 in the fourth interview, when the QC Team were happy with her translations, they would simply say 'Good jobs' or 'It's really entertaining to read your translations', but the editor would ensure to list all typos and mistakes she made.

Positive feedback may be communicated to the subtitlers in an informal manner, as illustrated in the following extract:

I have noticed that positive feedback is rare (laughing). [The editors] usually make comments on points that they want me to take extra caution or to correct. [...] Positive feedback is not usually passed on to me via an official communication channel. The project coordinator [...] may drop me a message in LINE application [...], telling me, 'The client likes your translations and sense of humour'. The company has staff members who monitor feedback on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. [...] Sometimes I will receive a screenshot of the audience comment with the message, 'Look. They shared [a post on social media] that they liked your translation'. (S5, Interview 4)

The same participant confirmed again in the following interview that positive feedback was usually delivered to him via personal messaging. Moreover, he mentioned another type of 'informal' positive feedback that he received: when the project coordinator assigned him new projects, including interim projects. A further discussion on this type of 'informal' positive feedback is provided later in this section.

Although the lack of feedback could be a positive sign (indicating no serious mistakes), most of the participants preferred to receive feedback to improve the quality of their subsequent projects, and more importantly, to avoid repeating the same mistakes, albeit minor ones. However, understanding the nature of subtitling and the editors' working conditions, some participants learned to develop the 'no news is good news' mind-set, like the participants in Sakamoto and Foedisch (2017). When asked in the first interview whether he thought that it was good or bad not to receive a lot of feedback, Participant S9 replied, 'I don't know. I'd rather think that [I didn't receive feedback because] I didn't make even a single mistake'. He then added, 'Maybe [the QC Team] were just lazy or something,' before saying, 'I'm not sure if it's because I didn't make any mistakes, or [because of] something else.' It is obvious from his answer that the participant was left in the dark, and thus had to guess what was actually happening.

On the other hand, sometimes the commissioner's in-house staff members explicitly informed the subtitlers that they should be pleased for not receiving any feedback because it meant their work met the standards:

I haven't received much feedback lately. I asked for it, but [the project coordinator] told me that the editor didn't leave any feedback [on my work]. She also told me, in a kind of tongue-in-cheek manner, that it was good not to receive any feedback as it meant I did a great job. Otherwise, the editor would leave some comments. [...] Before that, I always received positive feedback, though. [...] [Lack of feedback from the editor] doesn't mean there is no room for improvement. But for now, I will just try to improve by translating [to practice my craft]. (laughing). (S11, Interview 3)

During the six months in which she regularly received projects from CV4, Participant S8 never heard back from the QC Team at all. Despite being told that it was nothing to worry about, she believed that the absence of feedback could do more harm than good:

I believe I mistranslated from time to time, but still, I never received any comments. This could make you reckless (laughing), like, you translate just to have it done and no one would say anything about your work. Then you wouldn't care as much as you should. [...] One day the company might decide to review all my past work, and give me a warning [before contract termination], or something like that (laughing). (S8, Interview 1)

The scenario faced by most of the research participants (particularly in Year 1) is consistent with the conclusions of Sakamoto and Foedisch's (2017) paper, which drew on the findings from the two authors' separate yet complementary studies. Foedisch's (ibid.) study reveals that while PMs in LSPs do not usually have time to deliver feedback on every project to translators, the feedback is used internally to monitor the translators' performance and to control the quality of work. Sakamoto (ibid., p. 338) found that freelance translators in her study did not normally receive

positive feedback and were 'left in the dark about the quality and acceptability of their translation'. The translators then chose to believe that it was a good sign to not receive (negative) feedback from the end client or company's in-house staff, e.g. the proofreader. Without positive feedback, commissions for new assignments, together with reasonable and promptly paid remuneration, were perceived by freelance translators as alternative indicators of their satisfactory performance (ibid.). Similarly, the participants in the present study viewed new project assignments and an increase in remuneration rates as rewards for their high quality work. Treating remuneration or salary as an indicator of good work is not groundless. CV1, for instance, conducts a quarterly review of all freelance subtitlers' performance and raises the translation rates of subtitlers who have had consistently satisfactory performance in the past three months. Participant S8 (Interview 4), who learned from the project coordinator that the company decided whether to increase remuneration rates based on each subtitler's performance, revealed that the raise made her feel like she had made 'some progress'. Drawing on Herzberg's (1959) two-factor theory, Rodríguez-Castro (2015, 2016) explains that job satisfaction is generally achieved through the intrinsic elements of the job itself, while job dissatisfaction is usually caused by external or 'hygiene' factors (e.g. the quality of team interaction, quality and style of supervision, and style of project management). Salary, which is seen by Herzberg (1959) as being closer to an external factor, can also be an internal factor bringing about job satisfaction when it is interpreted not simply as money but as 'a form of achievement', 'a recognition' (Rodríguez-Castro 2015, p. 37) or 'a job well done' (Herzberg 1959, p. 83 cited in ibid.).

The interview data also revealed that some participants would insist on receiving feedback as frequently as possible, and they would ask for it through either a PM and project coordinator (acting as an OPP between the freelance subtitlers and their commissioner). Participant S11 initially insisted on obtaining comments for every project, even though it was delayed feedback. She requested that the project coordinator ask for comments from the editor.⁶⁷ It should be noted here that although in some companies PMs and project coordinators were also responsible for editing as part of their day-to-day work, most participants did not think that their coordinators were the same people who rechecked their subtitles. Participant S10 was insistent on receiving regular and detailed feedback, but would also ask to see a brief from the editor before beginning a project. This is worth mentioning because, while all other participants mentioned that they would like to receive consistent feedback so that they could produce quality subtitles, they never requested a brief for each project. Some subtitlers revealed that they would contact the

⁶⁷ As Participant S11 was busier with other commitments, she no longer followed up her requests for feedback. Another reason could be that she no longer needed constant feedback as her subtitling skills had improved markedly. Starting off as an inexperienced subtitler, she earned the status as one of the best subtitlers in the company within the period of one year.

coordinator and request further clarifications when they encountered problems while translating, but not before they started working on the project. On the other hand, Participant S10 (Interview 1) requested to obtain specifications or a brief before she started every project and explained:

I always ask how [OTTP1] would like the translation to be like – whether they have any preferred styles or specifications, like should the language be very formal, how long or short should the translation be, should it be very easy to understand, or should I retain every detail? I always ask them to give more details about each project [than just general information like how many episodes there are, or what genre the show is]. [...] I don't want to be struggling in the middle of the project. I don't want to find out later that my work doesn't meet the [commissioner's and client's] expectations.

Drawing on the interviews with freelance subtitlers in the SPN and Sakamoto and Foedisch's (2017) paper, it can be concluded that freelance subtitlers working in the OTT industry still receive feedback more frequently than freelance translators working for LSPs in sectors other than media localisation, as the latter tend not to hear back about their work. However, some subtitlers in the present study received feedback only once in a while, such as Participant S9 who revealed in the second interview that, despite his huge volume of work, he had received feedback on only one project. As far as the receipt of feedback is concerned, it seems that some subtitlers have learned to be satisfied with the 'no news is good news' situation, whereas others – such as Participants S10 and S11 – prefer to be more proactive and adopt the 'if you don't ask, you don't get' strategy. However, there are some positive changes reported by the participants in Year 2. Some participants discussed positive changes occurring in the same company for which they had been working for a while (e.g. more regular delivery of feedback), whereas others mentioned positive changes that they had just encountered in a new company. A compelling example of the latter is provided by Participant S2, who started working for a new commissioner MLP 3 three months prior to the fourth interview:

[The QC Team at MLP3] works very systematically. Around three days after the submission of each project, the QC Team will send me feedback. [They send feedback] to every subtitler on every single project, with comments like 'You have improved a lot: 70 percent better [than last time]. But there were some mistakes [regarding the uses of tone diacritic]'. [...] These are not the vague and useless kind of comments. [...] [The comments are always] to the point and very well-detailed, so I know my mistakes [...] and what I can improve on subsequent projects. [...] They also informed me the criteria that they used to evaluate my work [which included] consistency of pronouns, correct spelling, use of a space both before and after 'mai yamok' [ไม้ยมก: a repetition symbol], and 35-character limitation, and so on. They take these issues very seriously. (S2, Interview 4)

It is interesting to observe that not only did Participant S2 (and other subtitlers at MLP3) receive feedback for every project, but the feedback was also very detailed. Unfortunately, by the time the final interview was conducted, the participant had not been assigned new projects for six

months as the company did not get commissioned by a well-known OTTP that was their major client.

Two other important roles of subtitle editors, which were not mentioned to a great extent in the interviews, are to give subtitlers encouragement (usually in tandem with the provision of feedback) and to give an ultimate answer to the translation problem under discussion. Participant S11 reported in the final interview that she really appreciated the editor's belief in her potential. She contended that support and positive feedback from the editor were pivotal in boosting her confidence to push boundaries until she became one of the best subtitlers in the company. In relation to this, Participant S11 also said that she is proud of herself and her work. Drawing on Herzberg (1959), Rodríguez-Castro (2015, p. 34) posits that 'translators exhibit a sense of pride in learning from the task, and professional growth is an inner attribute observed in them'. The scholar also highlights the association between feedback and task satisfaction. Based on past studies, feedback provision is an area that should be urgently addressed as absence of it can affect not only the quality of work but also translator satisfaction.

Moreover, the editor is expected to provide the final answer when subtitlers on the same team cannot find a satisfactory solution for a translation problem. In the fourth interview, Participant S12 shared her experience of working with other subtitlers,⁶⁸ saying that sometimes other translators proposed their translations, while she preferred to translate differently. However, in the end, everyone would follow the editor's suggestions.

5.3.4.2 English pivot template translators

English pivot template subtitlers were also found to play an important role in the subtitle production process. Participant S5 explicitly stated that the quality of his Thai subtitles for shows in third languages also depended on the quality of work done by the English template translators. It was found that the freelance subtitlers into Thai became aware of the role of the English pivot template translators when they were faced with some difficulties regarding the English templates. Such difficulties usually came in two forms: an unpredictable timeline or delayed delivery of the templates, and unsatisfactory quality of the translations, the latter of which was arguably subjective.

⁶⁸ This was a new experience for her because when working for OTTP1, the participant never translated the same episode with other translators.

Participant S1 revealed that he sometimes had to wait until half past three in the morning for the template files, which were supposed to have been ready by 2 a.m. Participant S6 also experienced the delayed delivery of templates for a simulcast show. While it was agreed that she would receive the files at 9 p.m., she did not receive them until 3 a.m. She reported the issue to the project coordinator via email at 2 a.m., but the problem could not be immediately resolved. The in-house staff in Thailand could do nothing but to wait until the English pivot template translator, based in another Asian country, finished the translation. According to Participant S6 in the second interview, the delayed delivery of English template files can potentially have repercussions on the quality because the deadline is not usually extended and, hence, the subtitler has less time to finish the same amount of work.

Moreover, regarding quality, templates which have been prepared in a rush are likely to contain errors. If the subtitlers know the original language of the show, this damage can be mitigated, as shown in the extract below, by Participant S11 (Interview 2), who, proficient in Spanish, could detect and correct some errors in the English templates for Spanish-language programmes:

During the last few months of last year, I was assigned to translate Spanish content quite often as they know I can speak Spanish. I helped correct some errors. For instance, when the English subtitles were mistranslated from Spanish, I could translate directly from the conversations in Spanish.

Participant S11 also mentioned that when they finally met in person at a company event, the subtitle editor for Spanish programmes told her that she really appreciated the participant's good work and would like to assign her a lot more projects. However, a number of subtitlers do not possess such value-added language skills. Even Participant S11 herself does not know Korean, yet she was frequently assigned to translate Korean shows. Despite her near-native English proficiency, the participant believed that by basing the translations on English pivot templates, a great number of elements would not be successfully transferred to the Thai subtitles.

With no direct communication between the English pivot template translators and the freelance subtitlers under study, the only way the former can share their ideas with and lend a further helping hand to the latter is through the remarks or notes found in the templates – provided that they want to and have enough time to do so. For instance, English pivot template translators might explain why a particular word is chosen in a certain context. In practice, this is not always realisable as the English template-making process is also constrained by a tight (or even tighter) deadline. Participant S6, who knows basic Korean and prefers to translate Korean shows using English templates, raised her concern that without background knowledge in the Japanese language, when she is assigned to translate a Japanese drama, she may end up producing subpar

quality translations. The participant also commented that the English pivot subtitles in general do not do justice to the original dialogue.

Some participants expressed empathy towards English template translators. Participant S5 admitted that it is inevitable that something will be lost in translation. He also emphasised that English pivot template subtitlers were 'extremely influential' on his work process. The contributions of these translators were particularly evident when the participant translated shows from languages he did not understand very well. He also expressed a concern that it is highly likely that most of the times he will not recognise translation errors in the English subtitles and will repeat them in his Thai translation.

Despite the drawbacks of using template files with questionable quality, stakeholders understand the subtitling industry will not stop using template files any time soon (Nikolić 2015). In the OTT market, as the service providers are releasing and funding more productions of local content than ever before to cater to diverse viewers' tastes and preferences, the use of templates in a pivot language (particularly English) will become even more prevalent. Audiovisual translators in European countries have for some time demanded for the incorporation of local norms into the guidelines and templates, as well as enthusiastically called for OTTPs to reconsider the across-the-board use of English templates for every language pair. At the Media for All 8 Conference held in Stockholm in June 2019, Allison Smith (online), a Globalisation and Innovation Manager from Netflix, revealed that the company has started researching other options to ensure better quality, including considering the removal of English as a pivot language for certain language pairs, e.g. Korean and Japanese. This solution, however, seems unlikely to materialise in Thailand, where proficient users of foreign languages other than English prefer to accept jobs with better pay, particularly in interpreting, rather than subtitling. A seemingly plausible way to help facilitate Thai freelance subtitlers is that the commissioner requests the template makers/translators leave notes, remarks, or any kinds of translation tips for translators of subsequent versions. This option, again, is not easy to bring about, given the tendency towards the 'near-live turnaround time', which puts great pressure on every involved party.

Regarding other human actors in the *ad-hoc* team, surprisingly, the participants did not perceive other translators working on the same project as influential actors in the process. This might be because they did not communicate very often, despite being expected to interact with one another via online document sharing applications. The extract below shows a rare example of such interactions.

I sometimes translated a two-hour show with two other subtitlers. [...] We needed to consult through a shared document, like, 'I would translate this word into this, and maybe both of you should use the same translation'. Sometimes, they disagreed with me and left a note: 'I think this word fits better.' So I would explain my reasons and we would discuss our options via Google Sheets. [...] This doesn't mean the three of us were discussing the same issue at the same time. The discussion might be between two subtitlers who were encountering the word in question, while another person didn't know anything about it [as he hadn't seen this word yet.] (S1, Interview 3)

Participant S6 did not believe that working with other subtitlers changed her work process to a large extent. The only difference she felt was that she needed to update KNP sheets more frequently. Instead of updating the sheets upon the completion of an entire season, like she would normally do when translating library titles, for simulcast projects (in which she translated each episode with one or two other translators) Participant S6 would instantly and frequently update the documents. However, communicating with other translators via shared documents may not be necessarily helpful. It largely depends on which translators the participants are sharing the project with. Participant S4, for instance, was annoyed to learn that other subtitlers did not consult the commissioner's regulations and guidelines before updating the consistency sheets. He also reported that his commissioner would constantly remind freelance subtitlers to refer to the provided consistency sheets because, he assumed, some translators failed to consult these documents.

The fragmentation of tasks and microtasking in the subtitling industry is here to stay. This is because timely release of content is considered one of OTT platforms' selling points. Thus, to most subtitlers working as part of an *ad-hoc* team, regularly updating shared documents has become a mandatory, rather than recommended, task. In the second interview, Participant S9 mentioned the need to update KNP sheets when he was translating a show with other subtitlers.

I received a project from [CV3] to translate the 30-episode series with other two translators, and all of us would consult the same KNP sheets. [...] Working with other subtitlers made the work process a little more complicated. [...] Each subtitler would not be assigned to translate 10 [consecutive] episodes. [...] I might have to translate episodes 2, 3, 6, 9, or something like that. We needed to constantly inform other subtitlers when we wanted to change something, like [the spelling of] a character's name. We also had to keep updating the characters' details. [With such requirements] things became more complicated. (S9, Interview 2)

In some companies, the task of updating consistency sheets and glossaries which used to be the sole responsibility of the editors is now being shared by freelance subtitlers.

I was only recently provided with glossaries. [In one project from CV4] the entire season consisted of eight episodes and each episode was translated by different subtitlers. To

deal with inconsistency of pronouns and other stuff, they asked us to consult the glossary, which was shared in Dropbox. The subtitlers needed to consult and update this document, and submit it together with the subtitle files. [...] This step was new [for subtitlers] although I believe the company has always had [this document]. [...] I think they have just started to share the glossary with subtitlers. In the beginning, they probably only used it internally – within the QC Team. (S8, Interview 2)

Participant S2 (Interview 4), who never shared a task with anyone in Year 1 and started working closely with other subtitlers not long before she gave the fourth interview, is the only participant that regarded other translators as a significant human actor:

I really appreciate my peer subtitlers [...] as all of them are so cooperative in keeping the [consistency] sheets up-to-date. Not just one or two of them, but all of them take this task very seriously. There is so many useful information [on the sheets] which is very helpful for subtitlers translating later episodes. [...] [Whenever I consult the sheets, I notice that] the 'last update' is almost real-time. [...] [Without other translators' updating the sheets regularly] I would have been so confused about how a character [in a Korean drama] should be called.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

The present chapter, dealing with Sub-theme 1.2, has discussed the most salient (and visible) factors that affected freelance subtitlers' work practices in terms of the subtitle production process. On the surface, all of the most influential actors are project-related factors, namely, time frame, content, English pivot templates, regulations and guidelines, and working as part of an *ad-hoc* team. Moreover, human actors that the participants believed affected the subtitle production process to a greater extent than others were subtitle editors, and English pivot template translators. Nevertheless, as I have emphasised early on, the categorisation of factors is not absolute, and factors are usually found to be interrelated. For instance, conditions imposed on a certain project, such as the deadline, and regulations and guidelines, are subject to the specifications stipulated in the contract between the commissioner and its client, and such details (e.g. tight deadlines) are influenced by an intense competition in the OTT market. Therefore, it can be inferred that the subtitle production process under discussion was also indirectly influenced by commissioner-related and Thai OTT market-related factors.

In line with Chapter 4, an important finding from all five rounds of interviews is that, as time went by, the participants engaged in projects with increasingly challenging conditions, often with shorter turnaround times and resultant task-sharing within a bigger team of subtitlers and editors. These changes in turn led to more demanding work practices as the participants needed to follow

additional steps, such as constantly updating consistency sheets and communicating more frequently with *ad-hoc* team members while rushing to meet deadlines.

In Chapter 6, the actors that have been found to be influential in the freelance subtitlers' work practices, and complex interrelationships among different actors will be discussed through an ANT lens, in an attempt to conceptualise the SPN under study as a materially-heterogenous network, which has undergone constant changes and perpetual transformations.

Chapter 6 Network Dynamics: an ANT Perspective

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses RQ2, by exploring the way the SPN changed over two years (from July 2017 to September 2019). RQ2 is repeated here for convenience:

RQ2: How did the network under study evolve over the course of two years?

The interview data regarding the configuration and evolution of the SPN⁶⁹ show that over the two years in question, the network was sustained by complex interrelationships between human and non-human actors, and that the network constantly underwent changes which affected the work practices of freelance subtitlers – as illustrated by an overarching theme, *An intricate and dynamic subtitle production network* (Theme 2) and two sub-themes: *freelance subtitlers' increasingly precarious status*, and *a seemingly shrinking network*, addressed below.

The SPN is conceptualised in the current study as both an actor-network and a subtitle production network. It is an actor-network in that it emerged, or rather, was enacted, as the study progressed. As Latour (1996) asserts, networks are not 'out there', waiting to be discovered by researchers. Investigating this actor-network, I followed the actors and visible traces they left. However, drawing on the concepts of enactment and multiple realities, I can at best present the network that is partial and include only some 'multiple realities' enacted by the research participants and myself. By function, the network under study operates in the OTT industry as a subtitle production network. Prior studies conclude that translation production networks consist of multiple human and non-human actors with interconnected relationships (Abdallah 2011; Risku et al. 2016), and that solving translation problems in LSPs is a collective effort involving interactions between in-house team members and uses of various resources, with the contributions from freelance subtitlers in some projects (Karamanis et al. 2011). In other words, translators and other translation actors work interdependently. Another aspect of translation production networks, which is often foregrounded in past research, is the ways work practices of the research participants – be they translators (Abdallah 2011, 2012; Risku et al. 2013, 2016) or PMs (Foedisch 2017; Sakamoto et al. 2017; Sakamoto 2019a) – are influenced by non-human actors, such as inscriptions (Abdallah 2011), diverse forms of technologies (Risku et al. 2013, 2016;

⁶⁹ Since the current chapter places an emphasis on changes (a significant aspect of longitudinal research), some parts of the analysis which need to factor in the continuity of time will not include data from the interviews with Participant S9 who withdrew from the research project after the second interview.

Foedisch 2017; Sakamoto et al. 2017; Sakamoto 2019a), or broader contextual factors like globalisation and free trade (Abdallah 2011). Drawing on ANT as an analytical framework, this chapter discusses *traceable* associations of various actors, principally associations that affected the freelance subtitlers and their activities in the network, and by extension, the evolution of the network.

One way to understand the evolution of a highly complex and dynamic network is through the examination of changes. It was found that the SPN perpetually evolved – presumably to respond to the needs of the audience in the Thai OTT market, and the evolution, for the most part, seemed undesirable to freelance subtitlers. Most of the changes, ranging from relatively trivial to immensely disruptive, heightened freelance subtitlers’ precarious status. Toward the end of the data collection period (August-September 2019), most of the participants were forced either to leave the network or to remain in the SPN with their main task being transformed to PE machine-generated subtitles. Their professional livelihood and career trajectories, therefore, were greatly affected. Also, as the study was progressing, more non-human actors were enrolled into the network. These non-human actors were aimed at facilitating the project management and leveraging the subtitle production processes (e.g. through the automation of some steps) – with the integration of MT in the subtitle production workflow bringing the most impactful changes. In accordance with the ‘saliency analysis’ (Section 3.7.2.2), changes that are considered epiphanies or turning points (Saldaña 2003), i.e. those fundamentally affecting freelance subtitlers’ work practices and work trajectories, will be discussed in this chapter in tandem with selected ANT concepts.

In understanding the configuration of, and changes occurring in the SPN, I find the following (post-) ANT concepts particularly illuminating: the tenet of generalised symmetry, actors and agency, moments of ‘translation’, displacement, obligatory passage point (OPP), immutable mobiles and inscriptions, long-distance control, convergent networks, enactment, multiple realities, and fluid technology (see Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3).

6.2 Freelance Subtitlers’ Increasingly Precarious Status

The first aspect of network evolution is the changes in terms of role, agency, and position of freelance subtitlers in the SPN. Sub-theme 2.1 (Freelance subtitlers’ increasingly precarious status) specifically focuses on details pertinent to how key human and non-human actors exert their influence on the freelance subtitlers’ status. Past studies show that translators and interpreters’ perception of role is influenced by other actors – humans or otherwise. For instance,

the interpreters in Devaux's (2017) study reported in the interviews that the judge and/or the videoconferencing equipment affect the perception of their role in the court. Another example is the way subtitlers' role has changed since the widespread use of template files. In the past, subtitlers possessed not only translation and language expertise but also technical skills because they were required to spot the subtitles. In Oziemblewska and Szarkowska's (2020) study, templates with timed texts are perceived by some participants as devaluing their role as specialists by changing them from subtitlers to 'ordinary' translators, and simultaneously increasing opportunities for inexperienced or unqualified translators to work as subtitle translators.

In the current study, it was found that the increasingly precarious status of freelance subtitlers is relevant to their (perceived) lack of power. As mentioned in Chapter 2, from an ANT perspective, power lies in the actors' ability to control other entities at distance, using immutable mobiles (including inscriptions). Luo (2020) uses the terms 'stronger actors' and 'weaker actors' to designate actors having more power and those with less power, respectively, which is a clever way to describe interdependent relations and interactions of the two (groups of) actors under discussion. In general, stronger actors possess resources that weaker actors do not have access to unless being enrolled into the network (Latour 1987; Luo 2020). In any given translation network, we will not know whether translators are stronger or weaker actors unless we follow their actions. Being stronger or weaker is not a fixed property of a particular actor. An actor can be stronger at certain stages but weaker in other situations. For instance, Luo (ibid.) has found that Arthur Waley, the translator of *Monkey: A Folk-Tale of China* (the English translation of *Journey to the West*), assumed his role as a stronger actor than his publisher (and other actors he closely worked with) in some phases of the translation production, but was a weaker actor in other phases (e.g. the design of the book jackets).

Unfortunately, freelance subtitlers in the Thai OTT market do not seem to possess as much power as literary translators, nor do they enjoy the same level of agency. In general, subtitlers have less visibility as their names do not always appear in the end credits, and few receive royalties from secondary use of their works (Kuo 2014). The present study's participants revealed that only a few OTTPs show the subtitlers' names in the credits lists, while the subtitlers themselves would like to see the same practice being applied across the industry. The reuse of translations is also associated with the translators' precarious position. That is, their previous works can be used in a way that becomes threatening to their job security and livelihood. Some of the participants who have been forced to switch to PE suspected that their previous translations have been used as training data for the company's MT engine. However, while these subtitlers-turned-post-editors

did not have a lot of positive things to say about the subtitles generated by the machine, they did not seem to have an aversion to the company's treatment of their work. Changes and issues related to MT will be discussed in Section 6.2.2.3.

ANT holds that 'translation' occurs and a network evolves as a result of power and resource imbalances (Luo 2020). Freelance subtitlers agree to be enrolled in the network because they are convinced ('interested') that they will get subtitling projects from their commissioners. The commissioners possess resources that freelance subtitlers lack, particularly localisation contracts from the shows' copyright holders. Drawing on Law's (1984) concept of long-distance control, the commissioners are able to control their freelance subtitlers through their possession of *documents* (e.g. work contracts that will not put the commissioners themselves in a disadvantaged position), *drilled people*⁷⁰ (e.g. their in-house staff members), and *devices* (e.g. project management portal designed to monitor translators' activities). Freelance subtitlers, on the other hand, are not guaranteed to receive regular work from their commissioners. Besides, they have few opportunities, if any, to bypass these vendors and receive projects directly from OTTPs or content creators/owners. It was found that in the present study, not only were commissioners able to circulate inscriptions or immutable mobiles to interest and enrol freelance subtitlers, but they could also de-enrol these subtitlers with their resources. It is not unknown for the commissioners to stop assigning new projects at any time as they are not obliged by employment contracts to give freelance subtitlers consistent jobs. Moreover, they may choose to enrol MT and de-enrol freelance subtitlers from their subtitling position before re-enrolling some of them as post-editors into the same network. In many respects, the freelance subtitlers were weaker actors than their commissioners, and their role in the SPN was being increasingly marginalised.

The participants reported a number of changes that diminished their role, weakened their agency, and affected their sense of security. This chapter focuses specifically on changes categorised as commissioner-related factors, particularly those relevant to the commissioners' localisation and project management policies and procedures, namely changes of project coordinators, changes in the commissioners' localisation activities, and integration of MT in the subtitle production process. Changes affecting the role and status of freelance subtitlers that have already been covered in Chapters 4 and 5, such as fragmentation of tasks (i.e. subtitlers being assigned to translate only a portion of an entire episode) and the commissioners' loss of clients (which affects the number of subtitling projects), will not be revisited in detail.

⁷⁰ Drilled people refer to those properly trained or coached to efficiently do their respective jobs, even when they have to control others from a distance.

6.2.1 Changes of project coordinators

There are three main reasons for changes of project coordinators within the same company: the company's restructuring plans, the job promotion of the project coordinator (e.g. to be a PM), and the internal transfer of staff to fit the job volume of each team. In general, the number of project coordinators on each team (e.g. Korean Shows Team, English-Language Shows Team) depends on the volume of work at a particular period. Some project coordinators of a team with a reduced number of projects may be transferred to help handle the workload of a team with increasing assignments. Moreover, freelance subtitlers working for more than one team at a time will have more than one coordinator as contact points. Changes of project coordinators were found to happen quite often. The interview data show that, on average, most of the participants who remained in the network continuously for the two years worked with four or five project coordinators. Participant S11, for example, worked with four project coordinators on the same team at CV1 (one of the two commissioners she worked for). Unlike other factors, particularly the integration of MT, this change did not drastically affect the subtitlers' status overnight and some participants perceived the changes as more or less neutral. Nevertheless, changes of project coordinators cannot be taken merely at face value, as they can affect the participants' agency and sense of security. Six participants reported that during the transitional period between the former project coordinator and the newly appointed one, they experienced periods of lost communication with the company and/or involuntary hiatuses from new project assignments.⁷¹ This is because the project coordinators act as an OPP between the commissioners' localisation team and freelance subtitlers. They are usually the only official contact point through which the freelancers can access official news and updates from the company.⁷² Participant S1 even said that the change of coordinator at OTTP1 affected his work process to a greater extent than the commissioner's implementation of MT because, as for the latter, he could just ignore the incomprehensible Thai subtitles generated by MT engine and translate from original English scripts. However, when it comes to working with a new coordinator, 'there is not any other workaround. I have to [rely on her]' (S1, Interview 1). Apart from project coordinators, PMs (especially those in LSPs) usually take the role of an OPP between the client and freelance

⁷¹ In CV1, there has been an improvement in this respect. The participants have noticed the smoother transitions where the new project coordinator will be introduced to the subtitlers by the current coordinator who will remain on the team for a while before leaving to work solely on another team (or in a different position in the company).

⁷² There are a few exceptions, such as when the company would like to make an important announcement regarding their policy which affects all freelancers. In such instances, freelancers will be informed of the change via email.

translators. Studies show that without direct communication with the client, it is important that a translator has an efficient PM to pass on their queries to the client (Karamanis et al. 2011).

Based on the interview data, project coordinators in media localisation companies have many roles to play, i.e. as 'one-stop' people. They are responsible for proposing new projects to the most suitable (and available) freelance subtitlers. The only exceptions are OTTP1 and CV7. As for OTTP1, this task had been performed by a former PM until she was replaced by a newly recruited staff member (presumably as part of the company's restructuring plan). Then the company assigned one of its in-house translators to be the coordinator in charge of contacting freelance subtitlers until the company halted outsourcing translation projects altogether. As for freelance subtitlers working for CV7, they will be notified via automatic email when there are new projects in the language pairs of their choice (e.g. English into Thai). The assignments will be given on a first-come-first-served basis (i.e. to those who click 'accept the project' first).

When urgent issues arise, such as when the subtitlers cannot meet the deadline due to unforeseeable circumstances, the subtitlers will enquire whether the deadline can be extended for a few hours or days (depending on the type of project). Moreover, when encountering a technical problem that they cannot solve on their own, most of the participants contacted their coordinators, who would then inform and liaise with a person directly in charge of the issue. On the contrary, when there are problems on the commissioners' part, the project coordinators will inform the subtitlers and come up with a solution that usually benefits the commissioner more than the subtitlers. For instance, when a subtitler does not receive the English pivot template within the promised timeframe, the coordinator will decide whether it is necessary to extend the deadline. If the same deadline is unrealisable, the coordinator may decide to find another subtitler to share the project with. The project will ultimately be finished on time, but the subtitler's compensation will be based on their proportion of the actual workload. In general, when things run smoothly, both parties do not communicate very often – usually just once when the coordinator proposes a new project, or twice if the coordinators are responsible for passing on feedback to freelance subtitlers.

In most companies, project coordinators are also in charge of keeping records of translators who jettison the projects and approach other available translators to substitute those who cannot finish the projects in time.

For participants who successfully build, and maintain, trust and a good relationship with their project coordinators, the latter embody the former's job security (e.g. continuity in project

assignments, and occasional reception of substitute projects). Another important responsibility of a project coordinator, as briefly mentioned above, is to pass on feedback from the editors to subtitlers, and inform in-house teams of freelance subtitlers' suggestions or concerns, although none of the instances happens very often.

Working with a new project coordinator requires freelance subtitlers to learn about, and adjust to, the other party's working style. Even the way they communicate or the actual medium of communication may need to change. When changes of project coordinators disrupt the usual flow of the freelance subtitlers' work process, the changes also affect the 'social quality' (Abdallah 2016, 2017). For instance, some participants working for OTTP1 reported that they were asked by a new project coordinator to re-submit the finished subtitles, and others were asked to edit their translations to comply with the new guidelines in relation to the use of italics, simply because the new coordinator failed to inform them of the new protocol for file submission or keep them updated on the new guidelines.

Participant S11 (Interview 2), who worked with three project coordinators on the same team within a year, expressed her opinion on the frequent changes of project coordinators:

The more frequent [the changes], the worse. Even when you have a new project coordinator who is efficient, it still affects the workflow. At the very least, there is a discontinuity of project assignments. You develop an increasing sense of uncertainty, insecurity – what is the new project coordinator like? Will we get along well? I need to get to know them and build a relationship again, so on and so forth. But I understand that this job is not for long term. People work in this position before they move on to something else. It's not okay for someone to be a project coordinator for 10 years. It's supposed to be [taken over by new people]. But so far there have been too frequent changes (laughing).

Unsurprisingly, when being asked in the last interview what she considered to be the most significant changes (or epiphanies) that had happened to her subtitling career in the past two years, Participant S11 (Interview 5) answered:

The first on my list is when the first project coordinator I worked with [was transferred to work on another team] ... I was back from holiday and learned about the change. The news was a big shake for me. I was really stunned. It was the first time I realised how uncertain a life of a freelancer actually was. Before that, I thought, 'Of course, freelancing is precarious, but I can deal with it.' In fact, it's not that easy. I had a full-time job at the time, but still [felt so shattered]. [...] That was my first realisation that I cannot rely completely on freelancing jobs.

Without official news from project coordinators, particularly during the transitional period between the old and new coordinators, freelance subtitlers feel insecure about their status with

the commissioner and some may choose to rely on ‘informal’ sources of information to learn about their prospects with the company. It is remarkable that when it comes to freelancers’ sense of job security, the inscription circulated by the commissioner – i.e. official employment contract – does not have as much weight as the subtitlers’ relationship with the project coordinators. This can be explained by the fact that, in general, the terms of employment do not oblige the commissioner to assign projects on a regular basis, while a good relationship with coordinators can help increase the chance of receiving new assignments.

It can be concluded from the interviews that efficient project coordinators with whom the participants are happy to work are those with the following attributes:

- A clear communicator.
- Efficient (e.g. not sending the wrong file).
- Responsive and accessible (including having ‘the human touch’).
- Passing on information from the commissioner to freelancers, and vice versa.
- Circulating inscriptions that are to the subtitlers’ benefit (e.g. manuals, updated guidelines).

According to ANT, networks emerge and are sustained by relational effects. Freelance subtitlers’ interaction with project coordinators is one such effect. Freelance subtitlers as ‘weak actors’ seek alignment with their commissioner. With the protocols or procedures (‘immutable mobiles’) set by the commissioner, subtitlers are required to pass through the project coordinators who act as an OPP. Apart from the commissioner as the key actor (Michael 2017b) or focal actor (Abdallah 2011; Luo 2020) who ‘interests’ and ‘enrols’ the subtitlers in the network, project coordinators also ‘interest’ freelance subtitlers to work on their team and keep producing quality work to ensure that they will receive new assignments on a regular basis. Acting as an OPP and assuming diverse roles,⁷³ project coordinators are significant human actors in the network. They are also ‘drilled people’ (Law 1984) that help the commissioner to ‘control’ freelance subtitlers. Big commissioners usually have two cohorts of in-house project coordinators working day shifts and night shifts to make sure that the localisation projects run smoothly around the clock. Unlike subtitlers, project coordinators are hired as in-house staff, which means that they hold quite a secure position in the network.

As posited by Risku et al. (2016), a client, who seemingly is the most influential person, may need to rely on a PM because the latter has a higher degree of betweenness centrality and therefore can efficiently act as a contact point between the client and the translator. Betweenness centrality is a concept of social network analysis (SNA) which is not exactly comparable, but to

73 As discussed in Chapter 5, some project coordinators also work as editors.

some extent complementary, to the notion of OPP put forth in ANT. Unfortunately, unlike PMs in Risku et al.'s (2016) study, or project coordinators in the current study, individual freelance translators do not usually assume the role of OPPs, nor do they possess a high degree of betweenness centrality. It is true that a dialogue list or subtitles in the source (or pivot) language need to pass through a subtitler before they become output as subtitles in the target language. In practice, however, a media localisation vendor (through their project coordinator or PM) can assign a project to any of their qualified subtitlers who are available to carry out the project in a specified timeframe. This means that individual freelance subtitlers will *become* an OPP only after the project coordinator chooses to assign them a project that suits them timewise.

6.2.2 Changes in the commissioners' localisation activities

Changes in the commissioners' localisation activities which were reported by the participants as having significant impact on their status happened when the commissioners assigned most or all of their projects to in-house translators, and when they shifted their focus to projects other than English-to-Thai subtitling.

6.2.2.1 Commissioners shifting to in-house translators

By the end of Year 1, seven participants who worked for OTTP1 (excluding S9 who withdrew from the study after the second interview) were affected by the commissioner' policy to halt all outsourcing activities and rely solely on their in-house translators. Participant S3 mentioned in the final interview that this change, which practically made freelance subtitlers redundant, is one of the most significant changes or turning points that happened in her subtitling career. From earning as much as she did from her full-time job, the participant was assigned fewer and fewer projects each month, to the point where she earned only 25 percent of the amount in her peak time, to eventually not making a single cent from subtitling. However, shortly after the company enforced the policy to stop outsourcing localisation projects, they recruited full-time translators to join the in-house localisation team (S3, Interview 2). The subtitlers who once worked for OTTP1 believed that there were a number of possible reasons why the company chose to halt outsourcing activities. For one, they claimed to have noticed a smaller number of new shows released on the VOD platform. Therefore, there was no need to pay extra for freelancers when in-house staff could handle the workload. The participants believed that from the management perspective, it is easier and more cost-effective to hire and manage in-house full-time staff than freelancers. It is important to note that OTTP1 had started implementing MT in the subtitle

production process some time before the first round of interviews was conducted in July - August 2017.

Some subtitlers working for other commissioners shared a similar experience. Participant S11 reported in the final interview that she noticed the decreasing volumes of projects at CV1. When she enquired about this with her coordinator, the answer she received was that due to extreme time constraints, subtitling tasks were being carried out in-house. Fortunately, she was scouted to work on a subtitling project for another reputable company, so this change did not affect her to a great extent.

Participant S4 had to change from one commissioner to another and worked for each vendor for a short period of time, before getting no projects from his latest commissioner albeit for a different reason (i.e. his commissioner stopped contacting him after he took a short break from subtitling for personal reasons). He shared with me what he learned from his friends who worked for a few different commissioners:

I think one of the most impactful changes [that affected me and other freelance subtitlers] is that the [commissioner's localisation] team chose to use in-house staff. In the first two years [of the launches of several OTTPs in Thailand], they relied almost exclusively on freelance subtitlers, like [names of two well-known OTTPs]. There were a lot of teams [consisting mainly of freelance subtitlers] in each company to ensure that [they can release a lot of shows]. Lately I have learned that they switched to relying more on in-house staff for both QC and translation tasks. Or they outsourced their projects to a vendor with an in-house localisation team. [...] They prefer this option to hiring [individual] freelancers because [managing freelancers] is more difficult. Once freelance subtitlers get paid, it is not always easy to ask them to edit or re-translate the projects. [...] Hiring in-house staff is also more cost effective. Paying a monthly salary to an in-house translator is less costly than hiring a number of freelancers [who altogether may be able to handle the same capacity as one in-house staff member]. (S4, Interview 5)

In his opinion, another benefit of hiring in-house staff is better communication within the team, which results in high quality products. Participant S4's view is supported by past research. At the two LSPs in Karamanis et al.'s (2011) study, freelancers were not usually given high-stake projects, and their work was also subject to more rigorous reviews. This is because freelancers cannot access the same materials as in-house staff. More importantly, working remotely prohibits them from having informal and immediate exchanges of ideas and solutions with other team members. The same participant also told me in the first interview that he passed the screening process to work for CV2, a well-known vendor in the localisation industry, but decided to turn down the offer as they wanted to give him a full-time position. At CV2, in-house localisation staff members, including both subtitle translators and editors, work on a shift basis. As a full-time in-house translator, he added, he would be required to produce a certain amount of work per month. In

the final interview, he admitted that freelance subtitlers with a full-time job like himself cannot accept consistently large volumes of work, whereas the OTT operators strive to feed the binge-watching habit of viewers by releasing, say, 10 episodes of the show at once. Media localisers, therefore, would like to have a cohort of subtitlers who can work on a full-time basis to deal with this type of project.

6.2.2.2 Commissioners shifting to different types of projects

Besides preference to hire in-house staff, the commissioner's focusing on localisation projects other than English-to-Thai subtitling⁷⁴ also affected the participants' position in the network although the ramifications were not evident from the beginning. During Year 2 (August 2018-September 2019), the freelance subtitlers working for CV1⁷⁵ learned that the company was expanding their dubbing division and looking for a great number of Thai-to-English subtitlers. The changes happened in the same period when international OTT players were vying to provide dubbed content to attract Thai viewers (e.g. WeTV, TVB Anywhere, Netflix) as well as to release more local content on their platforms (e.g. WeTV, Viu, Netflix). Participant S6 revealed in the second interview (during Year 1) that she was approached by an in-house staff member at CV1 to switch to work on the Thai-to-English Team, but she declined the invitation. She also reported that she tried this type of project once and realised that this was not her area of expertise. The participant believed that English templates should be prepared by highly qualified translators given that subtitlers into other languages will need to rely on them.

In the fourth round of interviews (at the beginning of Year 2), the participants were not yet much affected by these changes. They were continually assigned subtitling projects. Therefore, when approached by in-house staff to take screening tests to work on the dubbing and/or Thai-to-English subtitling teams, the participants did not pursue the offers. In other words, the commissioners' staff members were not successful in 'interesting' and 'enrolling' these freelance subtitlers to join their teams because their offers or 'interessement devices' (Callon 1986a), including a much higher remuneration rate, were not attractive enough to convince these freelance subtitlers to 'ally' with them to carry out new tasks. Participant S8 said in the fourth interview that that when compared with subtitling, dubbing script translation and adaptation is not a very attractive job due to the task's complicated nature. Moreover, translating from Thai

74 English-to-Thai projects here refer to both projects with English as the show's original language and those with English as a pivot language (i.e. those using English pivot templates).

75 The discussion in this section is exclusively about CV1, because the changes of this nature were not reported by the participant working for other commissioners.

into English is not her area of expertise, so it will take much longer for her to finish each project. The same participant, who quit her full-time job to work as a freelance subtitler shortly before the third interview (the end of Year 1), also revealed that she was satisfied with the types and volumes of projects that CV1 was offering her at that moment. She felt secure and was happy with her decision to quit her full-time job to accommodate more subtitling projects. It is worth noting that as the company was expanding the dubbing division and managing more Thai-to-English projects, they were also recruiting more freelance subtitlers to carry out (supposedly a considerable volume of) English-to-Thai subtitling projects. Participant S12, who had started working for CV1 a few months before the fourth interview, reported that, besides her usual Korean show projects, she was offered additional projects from another team. Likewise, Participant S5 revealed in the fourth interview that the project coordinator of another team asked him whether he would like to translate English-language shows, in addition to the offer from his regular Korean Shows coordinator, who wanted to assign him more projects. During that period, the participant was also contacted by a few college friends who had heard about the job openings at CV1. When asked whether he felt secure about his freelance status at this company, he replied, 'I do. *For now* (laughing).'

Situations in which freelance subtitlers are in an advantageous position, like the above (i.e. when the commissioners attempt to convince subtitlers to take on more projects than their regular volumes), are possible but not very common, and unfortunately, in the context of the current study, it did not last long. Approximately six months later, the situation changed drastically. By the time the fifth round of interviews was conducted, the participants had experienced sudden drops in job volumes. Participant S8, for instance, had not received a new library project as promised. Her monthly capacity was reduced from up to 30 hours to only eight hours, prompting her to start looking for a full-time job again. Participant S11 reported a drop in job volumes as well. During that period, the company's localisation activities seemed to revolve around dubbing and Thai-to-English projects. Moreover, interviews with Participants S1, S5, and S6 (who were still working for CV1 by the time the fifth interviews took place) revealed a new type of activity that became another focus of the company: PE of machine-generated subtitles. This change, as the most impactful one, will be discussed in detail in the next section.

As for the increasing demand for (post-)editors in the market, Participant S4, who had never worked with commissioners known to have implemented MT, stated in the final interview that while freelance subtitlers (including himself) were not assigned any projects, the demand in the market for (post-) editors seemed to be on the rise:

My situation has not improved much from the last interview. There have been no projects (laughing). I mean, zero. People I know who used to work as subtitlers are no longer offered subtitling projects. They have switched to work [on a part-time basis] on the QC Team instead. (S4, Interview 5)

However, the participant was not interested in editing tasks as they are too demanding, and he was fully occupied with both his full-time career and other part-time jobs – both translation-related and otherwise. He also added that personally he enjoys translating subtitles far better than translating legal documents, despite the latter being ‘easy money’ for him.

The roller-coaster career life stories of the participants, particularly Participant S8, who quit a more secure job to work as a subtitler before being forced to look for a full-time job again when her commissioner changed their policies on localisation activities, and Participant S6, who quit a well paid job to do what she was truly passionate about but started thinking of returning to work fulltime due to the lower number of assignments and reduced remuneration rates for switching to PE, demonstrate the precarious position of individual freelance subtitlers operating as part of the vendor model (Moorkens 2017).

6.2.2.3 Integration of MT in the subtitle production process

When asked the last interview question: what they considered the most significant changes or incidents that had happened in the past two years to their freelance career as subtitlers, three (S5, S7, and S8) out of 11 participants who worked with one or both of the commissioners that have been known to implement MT (i.e. OTTP1 and CV1)⁷⁶ mentioned MT (or ‘AI’ or ‘new program’) and/or repercussions of MT. Moreover, in the previous interviews, other participants also referred to MT as a factor or change that affected their work practices in several respects. Therefore, MT, as one of the most influential and most disruptive change inducers, will be discussed in greater detail than the former two changes.

6.2.3 MT in the Thai OTT industry: The future is now

MT development for interlingual subtitling has drawn interest of TS scholars since the early 2000s (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020). One of the most notable research projects with some relatively promising results is SUMAT (see Section 2.3.3.3). Still, MT has not been as widely adopted in the

⁷⁶ 11 of the participants (except Participant S4), have worked with the commissioners that are known to implement MT. However, only seven of them have actually been assigned to post-edit machine-translated subtitles (Participants S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, and S9).

AVT industry as in other localisation sectors (Bywood et al. 2017) despite a prediction that PE of machine-translated subtitles would become the main task of – as well as a new challenge to – subtitlers ‘very soon’ (Kuo 2014, p. 154).

In May 2018, the CEO of Zoo Digital, Stuart Green, said during his speech at SlatorCon that despite being a sector that has remained relatively unaffected by neural machine translation (NMT), video localisation will certainly be immensely influenced by this latest paradigm, and that it is a great challenge for media localisation vendors to make sure that they will not be left behind when, not if, this happens (Bond 2019). In the Thai context, there has not been any research to date that explores the use of this technology in the thriving subtitling industry, but international media localisers and OTTPs operating in the market seem to be more enthusiastic about the potential of MT. In July 2017 (almost a year prior to Green’s speech), when the first round of interviews was conducted, MT (though we do not know which model) had already been implemented in the subtitle production workflow at OTTP1, much to the dismay and scepticism of the freelance subtitlers, who struggled using it. Given the subpar quality of the Thai translations provided, the participants did not anticipate that it would presumably become one of the reasons they were assigned fewer and fewer projects and eventually none. About two years later, the freelance subtitlers at CV1 were informed of the launch of a new working mechanism in which subtitlers would be transformed into post-editors.

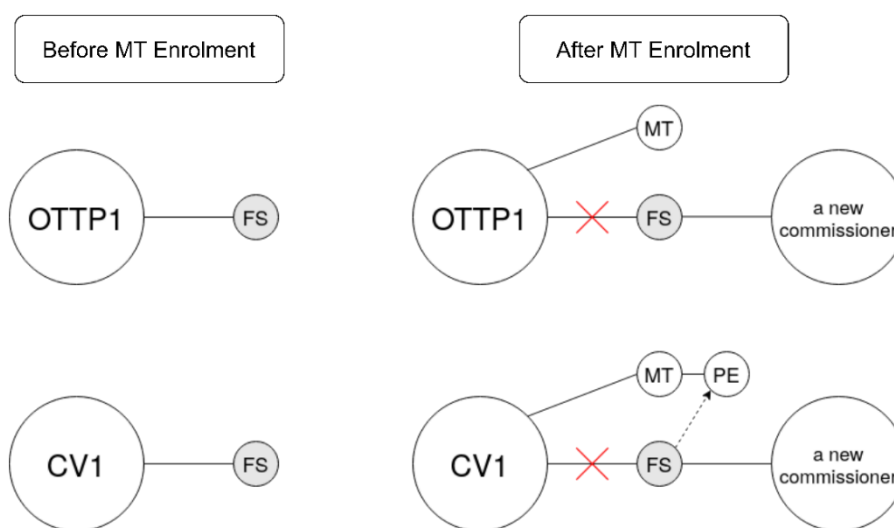
6.2.3.1 Repercussions of MT as a non-human actor enrolled into the SPN

ANT-inspired research pays undivided attention to both human and non-human actors which, altogether, make up social practices (Michael 2017b). It is also argued that no actors act in isolation. Rather, they only act within their networks (Justesen 2020). Therefore, ANT accounts concentrate on interactions and relational effects in a network of heterogeneous actors instead of focusing on the intentionality of individual actors. As such, non-human actors also possess agency although their agency may be manifested in different patterns from that of their human counterparts (Luo 2020). Moreover, ANT is a useful approach that perceives technology as situated and local (Dahlin 2020) and as ‘emerge[ing] from social interests and shap[ing] social interactions’ (Othman et al. 2020, p. 251).

In her study that analyses non-human actors as active agents in the *Monkey* project, Luo (2020, p. 190, my emphasis) argues that in TS, non-human entities, such as ‘*machine translation*, interpreting equipment, and most commonly, the source and target texts [...] have been presented as somewhat *inert objects with little agency*’. In the context of the present study,

however, MT is much more than a passive object. In fact, among enrolled non-human entities which exerted their influence on the evolution of the network, MT has left the most noticeable and impactful ramifications. For this reason, the current chapter focuses on MT, whereas details of some key non-human actors⁷⁷ will be discussed with respect to issues of quality in Chapter 7. It is important to note that the implementation of MT overlapped with changes in the commissioners' localisation activities discussed above. Specifically, participants speculated that this commissioner-initiated change was strongly associated with unforeseen decreases in subtitling projects and the commissioners' policy to stop outsourcing localisation projects.

In the SPN, MT is a non-human actor 'enrolled' by the commissioners to work on their behalf so that their plan is successfully 'mobilised' (i.e. to produce subtitles in shorter turnaround times). With the enrolment of MT, human subtitlers are 'displaced'. In other words, they are de-enrolled from the sub-network⁷⁸ (i.e. OTTP1, CV1) within the SPN. As illustrated in Figure 6.1, these freelance subtitlers can be re-enrolled into the SPN either when they are 'enrolled' by a new commissioner (another sub-network) who is looking for freelance subtitlers or when they agree to assume the role of post-editors within the same sub-network (i.e. CV1). The scenario foregrounds the position of freelance subtitlers as precarious workers and weaker actors than their commissioners in the SPN.



KEY: FS = freelance subtitlers, PE = post-editors

Figure 6.1: The positions and roles of freelance subtitlers before and after the enrolment of MT

77 Examples of such non-human actors include English (pivot) templates, KNP sheets, guidelines stipulated by clients, and subtitling platforms (some of which have already been covered in Chapters 4 and 5).

78 According to Callon (1987, p. 87), an actor network is both an actor 'whose activity is networking heterogeneous elements' and a network 'that is able to redefine and transform what it is made of'.

Moreover, MT was found to exercise its agency by altering the work practices of freelance subtitlers (who have now actually been transformed to post-editors) and roles of other human and non-human actors (e.g. QC Team members and template files). The participants' answers show that their role and agency when translating from scratch were different from their role and agency when they were post-editing. Working on templates with machine-translated subtitles, the participants were more reluctant to use their own word choice although they believed it was more suitable for the context. Participant S5 speculated that MT had changed the role and work process of in-house subtitle editors as well:

[The implementation of MT] changes work processes of involved people. Both translators' and editors' roles are fundamentally changed. As I told you, subtitle translators have become [post-]editors. So I think the [in-house] editors' work process has changed as well. They no longer compare my Thai translations against the English [source texts] only. Instead, they have to check my translations against both the AI-generated subtitles and the English [subtitles on the template files]. [...] I believe they still use English [subtitles] as the main source text, though. But in case of any mistake, they might have to check whether AI mistranslates it in the first place but I fail to correct it. [...] Or AI translates it correctly but I make a mistake myself. [...] If I leave the already-correct subtitles unedited, but the segments sound unnatural, or something like that, the editor may be hesitant to edit them. If the editor revises those lines, they have more work to do. If they leave them unedited, the text may suffer from inconsistencies [of word choice, tone, etc.]. (S5, Interview 5)

In the above extract, we also see that the role of templates has been changed: from containing only the English scripts (intralingual subtitles) or segmented English translations (when the show's original language is not English), the new templates now provide subtitlers with English lines and the corresponding Thai translations generated by the machine. The availability of both English and Thai subtitles – apart from the audiovisual assets – makes it trickier for subtitlers-turned-post-editors to determine which (or a combination of which) of the above they should take as a 'start text' (Pym 2013).

Below are the main effects of the integration of MT into the subtitling workflow, as reported by the participants. All of these effects overlap to a certain extent.

Change of the participants' role

As large and tech savvy LSPs are embracing MT in their workflows (Sakamoto 2019b), translators are moving closer to a task that traditionally belongs to QA, 'editing all the way up to guaranteeing, approving and vouchsafing the correctness of translations, working in partnership

with and supervising supporting technologies' (Bernardini et al. 2020, p. 299-300). The OTT industry, which – like the translation and localisation industry – is driven by the concept of efficiency (Moorkens 2020), is witnessing the transformation of translators' role to that of post-editors. However, in the present study, seven participants who were assigned to post-edit machine-translated subtitles did not seem to know exactly what the expectations of their new role were. Although they roughly knew that the commissioners would like them to 'edit' the subtitles, none of the participants used the word 'post-editors' in the interviews.⁷⁹ Participant S5 (Interview 5) revealed that, at the beginning, he did not completely understand what he was expected to do, so he asked one of CV1's project coordinators about his new role and learned that he would essentially change from being a translator to being 'editor/translator'.

Such confusion is not confined to the media localisation and AVT industry. Translators and PMs working for LSPs are also struggling with what it means to be translators and post-editors as the two positions are losing their clear boundaries (Sakamoto 2019a). There is a pressing need for both academia and industry, as trainers and users of translation practitioners, to gain a better understanding of profiles and skills of this emerging type of language experts whose work is assisted by technologies like MT and TM or, more likely, the combination of the two (Ginovart Cid et al., 2020). As stressed by the experts, despite the increasing adoption of automation in the translation industry, human translators – subtitlers included – will not be completely replaced by the machine. A changing role means that translators need to adapt and equip themselves with new competences to meet the market demands (Bernardini et al. 2020, Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020) and augment their agency (Moorkens 2017). Training subtitle post-editors to serve the media industry is of particular relevance (Bywood et al. 2017), provided that, at this stage, MT without human intervention cannot yield satisfactory translations for entertainment products (Doherty 2016). In fact, to empower the prospective translators, translator training courses should be designed to engage translators-to-be in as many possible stages of MT integration, in addition to PE (Kenny and Doherty 2014). Training sessions for practitioners are also useful. The commissioner is more likely to successfully onboard freelance translators to accept PE jobs by organising training sessions, among other strategies (Nunziatini 2019). However, none of the current study's participants were provided with any training sessions, nor were they required to take a test before taking on PE. This shows a prevailing (mis)assumption that a translator can automatically work as a post-editor.

⁷⁹ Some of them explained the task as 'rewriting' (S3, Interview 1) or 'working on the draft [produced by AI]' (S5, Interview 5), among other things.

Another role that the subtitlers have taken on, albeit without realising it at first, is that of contributors of the training data for their commissioners' MT systems. As for the case of CV1, some of the participants were informally informed that the subtitles which they and their fellow subtitlers produced over the past few years had been used to train the MT system. Participant S1 shared the following in the final interview: 'Subtitlers [of CV1] have translated a gigantic number of videos so far. [...] The AI⁸⁰ then remembers these human translations [...] and generates subtitles.'

Likewise, Participant S5 (Interview 5) said:

They have developed this program to generate automatic translations from the database of hundreds of thousands of projects we have completed. [...] My works in the past 2-3 years are also part of the database. [...] I also think this program will keep learning. It won't stop learning at this stage.

Since the details as to how the MT engines of the two commissioners (i.e. OTTP1 and CV1) have been trained and where exactly the training data have come from remain largely a mystery to the participants, the extracts above can at best give us a glimpse of what *might have happened* behind the scenes. Although the subtitlers were never specifically informed that their translations would be used to train the company's MT system, none of the participants expressed their feeling that they felt violated or mistreated regarding the reuse of their work for this purpose. This can partially be because Thai people tend to have a relaxed attitude about copyright issues (Wongseree 2018). Even though we do not know the terms of agreements between the two parties as exactly stipulated in the work contracts (e.g. who rightfully 'owns' the translations, and for what purposes the translations can be used), the scenario raises the question of whether this is ethical and fair treatment towards subtitlers. Ethical issues concerning the (re)use of human translation data have been discussed by TS scholars for some time (Kenny 2011; Moorkens and Lewis 2020). In the current state of affairs, with regard to the reuse of their works as MT training data, freelance subtitlers are weaker actors than their commissioners, and their agency is consequently marginalised in the SPN.

Reduction of remuneration rates

The interview data reveal two different scenarios regarding the reduction of remuneration rates. OTTP1, who implemented MT for a few months before the first round of interviews (July-August

80 The participants, including those who have never actually been exposed to machine-translated subtitles, usually use other terms to refer to MT, such as the program-assisted (translation), AI, robot, system, machine, and machine learning.

2017), did not reduce remuneration rates *per se* but they changed to pay subtitlers per minute, rather than per programme. With this new policy, some subtitlers may earn more from translating some episodes and less from other projects. Nevertheless, given the perceived poor quality of the provided Thai ‘raw’ subtitles, the participants did not think it was worthwhile spending more time to do the editing when they earned the same, or even less, money.

On the other hand, CV1 who started implementing MT at around the time when the final interviews were conducted (August-September 2019) explicitly mentioned the reduced rates in the email that they sent to freelance subtitlers. In the email, they also tried to convince these freelancers to remain working with the company. Despite the 25 to over 50 percent reduction from their usual rates, most of the participants chose to accept the PE projects, although some admitted that they were also open to new opportunities at other companies. Similarly to the subtitlers working for OTTP1, participants S5 and S6, who had post-edited their very first projects for CV1, revealed in the final interviews that they did not think that machine-generated subtitles enabled them to work faster. Concerning the remuneration rates for PE projects, Participant S5 (Interview 5), who had just finished his first PE project a few hours before he gave the final interview, said:

At this point, I cannot really tell if it’s worth it or not. [...] When I learned about this new work process on paper, I thought that it didn’t look too bad. If I spend less time working and earn less money accordingly, I consider it a fair play. I wouldn’t mind that. [...] But from my experience today, I spent the same amount of time.⁸¹ [...] I don’t see a significant difference in terms of time [spent on the task]. What is obvious to me is that I have lost [a portion of my pay]. (laughing)

He also added: ‘In the long run, I might have reached that point where I can work faster, like, when I have learned to let things go’ (S5, Interview 5). Participant S6, whose remuneration rate has been reduced by over 50 percent, said that the new payment scheme was not fair to post-editors, particularly when the machine did not help her save a substantial amount of time: ‘I used to spend three hours translating easy content. Now, when I edit [a project with relatively more lines than general], I spend five to six hours’ (S6, Interview 5).

While the commissioners tend to believe that the integration of MT allows subtitlers to finish the task more quickly and efficiently, which should justify the reduction of rates, in reality post-editors are confronted with more decisions to make than when they are doing the actual translation. They also need some time before going through the learning curve. There is a

81 He corrected almost every single segment.

question as to whether it is fair to pay these ‘accidental’ post-editors a reduced rate from the start, particularly when the company does not provide them with any tutorials, manuals, or even clear guidelines (as revealed by S6 in Interview 5). TS scholars advocate fairer treatment of translators when MT enters the equation (Kenny et al. 2020; Moorkens and Lewis 2020). In terms of remuneration, while studies demonstrate a common view shared by PMs that PE should be paid lower than translating (Sakamoto 2019a, 2019b), some researchers contend the opposite, arguing that post-editors should be reasonably compensated for carrying out this highly demanding and specialised task (do Carmo 2020). Others even believe that PE should be paid a higher rate than translating (Vashee 2013). It has also been found that translators in the financial services industry with no experience in PE are willing to try carrying out PE assignments when they are paid the same rate as actual translation (Nunziatini 2019). Olohan (2021) suggests that we should not underestimate the influence of remuneration rates on the post-editors’ motivation to adopt the new practice. The present study’s interview data show that subtitlers are motivated to do a better job (e.g. conducting more thorough background research) when they perceive that they are well remunerated. Salary has also been found to be strongly associated with translators’ perception of their status (Dam and Zethsen 2011).

Changes in the participants’ work process

To say the least, none of the participants working for OTTP1 were satisfied with the quality of machine-translated subtitles. Far from being useful, the Thai translations were seen to hinder the subtitlers’ regular work process. Participant S7 said that PE took him three times as long when compared with translating from scratch. The participants, therefore, deliberately circumvented the required steps. Despite being expected to rely on the machine-translated subtitles in Thai and original audiovisual assets, the participants ignored the Thai translations altogether and relied mainly on English dialogue lists or English subtitles which they either managed to find online themselves or were provided to them by the project coordinators upon request. While translating, the subtitlers worked on a separate window. Then they would delete all the machine-translated lines, copy the finished translations from another window and paste them in the now blank space. This workaround further ‘complicated the process’ (S2, Interview 1, S3 Interview 1). Literature reveals that lack of trust in MT has been found to prompt some translators to engage in additional checking (Karamanis et al. 2011) and to make ‘micro-decisions’ (do Carmo 2020, p. 52).

The participants sent feedback on the use of machine-generated templates to their new project coordinator and informed her that they would ignore the provided Thai translations altogether due to their poor quality. Some of the participants no longer bothered to open the provided files

with Thai subtitles (S1, S2, S3), while others still checked from time to time to see whether the machine had improved (S7, S9) although none of them really post-edited the available Thai translations. Despite the freelance subtitlers' disregard of the provided translations, Participant S7 (Interview 1), who was quite well-informed about translation technologies, believed that the MT system would learn from the Thai lines translated from scratch by human subtitlers, and gradually improve its performance even though the finalised subtitles were not based on the MT output. It will be very interesting to find out whether the quality of the engine has improved over time. Unfortunately, by the end of Year 1, all freelance subtitlers had been forced to exit this sub-network (i.e. OTTP1) due to the company's policy to halt outsourcing subtitling projects. Not long before the announcement of this policy, some of the participants were told that the company was going to launch an improved version of the 'program' (S3 Interview 2). Participants S1 and S7 reported in Year 2 that they learned from unofficial sources that the company had finally decided not to pursue MT and returned to depending solely on in-house human translators.

At CV1, by the time the last interviews took place, only Participants S5 and S6 had had first-hand experience post-editing their very first project(s).⁸² Both of them reported that their workflow was affected by inaccuracies found in machine-generated subtitles. Participant S5 said that he was distracted by inconsistencies of pronouns and discrepancies in usage of certain punctuation marks, presumably as a result of different sources of data used to train the engine (as different clients had their own guidelines). Overall, the provided translations looked like a patchwork quilt, devoid of his 'voice'. Likewise, Participant S6 did not see any benefits of using machine-translated Thai subtitles. She complained that the machine could not properly translate slang, for instance.

Dilemma over quality

Without clear guidelines regarding PE, the subtitlers in the present study were faced with a dilemma between 'language quality' and 'dynamic type of quality' (do Carmo 2020, p. 48). That is, on the one hand, the translators would like to produce the best translations. On the other hand, they did not want to spend too much time figuring out each translation problem, particularly when their compensation was significantly reduced. Not knowing the expectations of other

⁸² Participant S1 was waiting to hear from his project coordinator whether he would be given new assignments from the company, while Participant S8 had decided not to receive more projects because she would like to start working full-time on a more secure (though short-term) job during the gap months before she embarked on a very important plan. Participant S11 had already agreed to work on a subtitling project for another high-profile commissioner. Participant S12 did not seem to realise the company's implementation of MT, although she noticed that there were two available options to complete each project. What she did was that when she clicked on one of the provided links and saw an unfamiliar UI, she would click on another link and accept the project with the familiar UI. Then she started subtitling as usual.

parties also delayed the process as the subtitlers had more decisions to make than when they translated everything using their own words. Participant S5 (Interview 5) believed that the new work process, which required him to assume two roles, a subtitle translator and editor, adversely affected the quality of his work:⁸³

I know that it's my responsibility to make sure that the expressions are accurate and fit the contexts. What I think can be problematic is that I have to decide whether the [machine-generated] translations are correct or not. This [additional] decision-making step can slow down my work process, instead of being time-saving as anticipated. [...] It's like, you have to edit your friend's work, but your friend is not a competent translator. Compare this with translating directly from sentences in the source language, which one is faster? I think the latter is (laughing). [...] I would personally like to edit everything [...] but with time constraints, I might have to leave some correct segments as they are. The new process will affect the overall quality of my work as I will have to submit the work that I am not fully happy with. There might not be anything wrong with it *per se*. But I could have improved it [if I did not waste time making decisions on which words I should keep, which words I should edit, etc.].

Participant S5 also added: 'Personally, I don't think [the commissioner] expects less from us. They've changed only the work process [but haven't lowered their expectations]. And that may cause me some issues.'

Participant S1 (Interview 5),⁸⁴ who had not started PE when he gave the final interview, expressed his concerns over quality of MT output:

I discussed this with [a friend]. I asked him, 'Will the pay be worth the effort? Suppose that I'm too lazy and I see that the provided translation is correct although it does not sound very smooth or natural, can I leave it unedited? And if I do, will I be penalised?' [...] [In case that I have to correct everything], then it isn't different from translating from scratch, is it?

Five participants (S1, S5, S7, S9, and S10) explicitly stated that they did not believe that the machine will replace subtitlers, nor can it produce human-quality translations, particularly because translating entertainment content requires creativity and involves conveying appropriate 'mood and tone' (S1, Interview 5). As audiovisual texts resemble real-life conversations, they are 'colourful' and idiosyncratic, rather than being formulaic (S5, Interview 5). However, Participant S1 admitted that if the commissioner prioritises productivity gains, he will not be able to compete

83 This is his speculations because he had not yet received feedback on his first PE project from the QC Team.

84 He is the only participant who was working with OTTP1 and CV1 when the two companies started implementing MT (albeit two years apart). However, by the time the final interview was conducted, he had not been assigned his first PE project from CV1 yet.

with 'AI': 'If they really prefer quantity [over quality] ... [Using the machine] is much faster than waiting for a translator [to complete the task]. They just input the texts, and, voila, the translations are generated.' The findings are in agreement with past studies in that translators' negative views about MT are often caused by the technology's limitations and its consequences on market practices, rather than out of fear of being surpassed by the machine (Vieira 2020a).

Areas of MT output that the participants commonly complained were of subpar quality included pronouns (e.g. uses of feminine pronouns for male characters and vice versa, inconsistent pronoun references for the same character, or uses of inappropriate pronouns for senior characters) and word choices for specific contexts. Although Participant S5 prioritised the accuracy of meanings over pronoun consistencies, he corrected all improper uses of pronouns found in the texts. The same participant also mentioned that the machine did not understand nuances of meanings and sometimes even failed to distinguish between two words with similar spellings (e.g. translating 'bacon' for 'beacon'). Similar issues were discussed by the participants who briefly tried editing subtitles translated by the OTTP1's engine. Participant S7 reported cases where a person had been mistaken by the machine as an object. Considering the poor quality of the provided Thai translations, he said: 'Why bother using it, then?' He also added: 'Who would like to [post-edit machine-translated subtitles] when they need to spend much more time to make more or less the same amount of money?' Participant S9 estimated that if the machine keeps learning at this pace, it will take 10 years before it becomes a viable option for subtitling, at least for the English-Thai language pair.

It is also plausible that the integration of MT in the workflow can lead to the 'illusion of choice', i.e. that translators think they can choose to accept the suggested translations or not, when MT may in fact deprive them of their decision-making capability (Olohan 2020b). Irrespective of the nuanced views on the implications of MT on the translators' cognitive process, practitioners seem to agree that reviewing and editing machine-translated subtitles is a daunting task. In particular, the application of MT for audiovisual texts comes with challenges due to the texts' open domain and grammatical specificities (i.e. subtitles are speeches rendered as written texts), among other factors (Bywood et al. 2017). Challenges are more pronounced in cases of markedly different languages. The subtitlers who do not want to give in to 'the dynamic type of quality' will therefore spend the same, or an even greater amount of time to earn less. It can be argued that translators often have too high expectations from the machine. If that is the case, they should be informed upfront of both the benefits and limitations of the technology, and their commissioners and other team members should also be on the same page. As translators work in an intricate network, their

perceptions of MT are inevitably influenced by other stakeholders' perspectives (Vieira and Alonso 2020).

Besides the consequences directly resulting from the implementation of MT, there is another incident that may be (partially) caused by this change in the subtitle production workflow: unforeseen decreases in subtitling assignments. By the time the halt of outsourcing activities became effective (forcing freelance subtitlers to involuntarily leave the network), the participants working for OTTP1 had been instructed to work on templates prepopulated with machine-translated subtitles. They had also noticed other changes in the company in the previous few months, including the appointment of a new PM, absence of feedback from the in-house QC staff, change of payment rates (from per programme to per minute), and fewer project assignments to freelancers. Some of the participants (e.g. S9) believed that there was a connection between the introduction of the new 'program' (sometimes referred to as 'AI') and the decreased volume of outsourced projects. However, there was no evidence that the former was a direct cause of the latter and there might be other factors at play, such as the policy to be more selective as to what shows to be subtitled, while dubbed content had been observed to be on the rise.

Approximately two years later, freelance subtitlers at CV1 also experienced a similar situation. By the time they were informed that freelance subtitlers' tasks would be switched to PE, they had seen an inconsistency in project assignments. Some participants were not assigned the projects as 'promised' by the coordinators. Again, the participants did not confirm that the integration of MT was the cause of the reduced assignments. However, what was evident to them was that with MT in the picture, they had to switch to PE if they would like to remain working for the company (apart from the other two options: to translate from Thai to English, or to leave the 'subtitle' production network and join the company's dubbing team as dubbing script translators and adaptors). It is important to note that while the integration of machine-translated subtitles in the workflow came as a surprise to the participants, some of them had known for some time about the expansion of the dubbing team and an increasing demand for Thai-to-English subtitlers. The reduced quantity of work, therefore, may simply be a result of the company's shift to focus on new types of localisation projects.

6.2.3.2 Different enactments and multiple realities of MT

Amid burgeoning studies on MT integration, the social or sociological aspect of PE is increasingly of interest to TS researchers. Examples of theories and concepts employed include Bourdieu's notions of capital, field and habitus (Sakamoto 2019b), Social Construction of Technology (SCOT)

(Sakamoto and Yamada 2020), and practice theory (Olohan 2021). In this section, I would like to present an alternative approach to understand the implementation of MT and PE in the SPN by drawing on the concepts of ‘translation’ (Callon 1986a), convergent networks (Callon 1990), enactment and multiplicity of realities (Mol 2002, 2010; Law and Mol 2008), and fluid technology (de Laet and Mol 2010). That is, the way MT, as well as PE, was integrated into the workflow and the resultant resistance or reserved degree of acceptance can be understood through the selected (post-) ANT concepts mentioned above. The argument is that the way MT is introduced, managed, and used by other actors has influence on the translators’ attitudes toward this technology and relevant practice (i.e. PE). The participants’ disproportionately negative comments on OTTP1’s use of machine-translated subtitles and PE when compared with those of participants working for CV1 (see Table 6.1) as well as the subtitlers’ tendency to believe that MT benefits only the commissioners may indeed be caused by the commissioners’ project management procedures regarding MT implementation. In other words, the participants’ enactments of MT have been influenced by the way MT was presented to them by their commissioners.

Table 6.1: Some of the participants’ comments regarding their perceived quality of machine-generated subtitles and their experience with PE

Commissioner	Participant	Round of interview	Comment
OTTP1	S2	Interview 1	‘zero useful’
	S3	Interview 1	
	S2	Interview 1	‘completely incomprehensible’
	S3	Interview 1	
	S9	Interview 1	
	S2	Interview 1	‘Google Translate-like translations’
	S7	Interview 1	
	S9	Interview 1	
	S3	Interview 1	‘worse than Google Translate’
	S3	Interview 3	‘unlike human translations’
	S2	Interview 2	‘ruined the ‘flavour’ [of the text] ... ruined everything’
	S2	Interview 1	‘complicated the process’
	S3	Interview 1	
S7	Interview 1		

	S2	Interview 1	'delayed the process [...] due to mistranslations'
	S2	Interview 2	'more time-consuming [because] I needed to back-translate [the machine-translated subtitles into English first]'
	S1	Interview 5	'abysmal'
	S7	Interview 1	'might not even work well in 10 years' time'
	S9	Interview 1	'will probably take 10 years to work well'
	S7	Interview 2	'have improved only in terms of translating swear words [...] but sometimes the chosen word was too harsh for the context'
CV1 ⁸⁵	S5	Interview 5	'can be useful and time saving for uncomplicated sentences [such as 'It's okay.']'
	S5	Interview 5	'more time-consuming due to mistranslations, especially when English is used [as a pivot language]'
	S5	Interview 5	'contained inconsistencies [because training data were translations of different human translators.]'
	S6	Interview 5	'[in general] quite good when compared with Google Translate'
	S6	Interview 5	'A lot of contexts are lost [in the Thai machine-generated subtitles of Korean shows where English is a pivot language.]'
	S6	Interview 5	'contained pronoun inconsistencies [because training data were taken from diverse domains/genres.]'

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 5, MT was implemented in the subtitle production process at OTP1 not long before the first round of interviews. The MT system of OTP1 was perceived in a much more negative light than CV1's MT engine, which was first mentioned by the participants in

85 When the last round of interviews was conducted, only two participants had started working as post-editors for CV1.

the final interviews. As for the case of OTTP1, some participants learned about the 'new program' from one of the company's project coordinators, who requested to meet freelance subtitlers in person to discuss this change. Those who were not available to go to the coordinator's office learned about the change from other subtitlers whom they personally know. The subtitlers knew more or less that they had to edit Thai subtitles translated by 'AI'. Having checked the provided Thai translations, the participants, all native Thai speakers, hardly understood anything. Therefore, they decided to discard the machine-translated subtitles altogether and translated everything from scratch.

Participant S3 said that the management who implemented this new program would like to save cost and money but they 'have no clue' about the Thai language which 'cannot be literally translated from English.' This view was shared by other participants. Having tried using the new 'program' for a month, Participant S3 passed on her feedback which mainly consisted of 'negative comments' (S3, Interview 1) to the company's management through the project coordinator (i.e. an OPP). Participant S7 also communicated his opinions to the same project coordinator. He said that the system would work for languages such as Spanish, Italian, or French which are syntactically and lexically similar to English. The participant concluded that the system was totally useless as it could correctly translate four lines out of 800 lines. All of the participants complained that the system failed terribly at translating Thai honorific pronominals, because 'AI' did not understand how to use pronouns, kinship terms, and status terms – among many others. According to Participants S7 and S9, the system had proved to work well with languages of other Asian countries, particularly those based on the Roman alphabet, and this convinced the management that it would work with the Thai language as well.

Moreover, the new system, embedded with an activity-tracking function, required the subtitlers to be connected to the Internet. The participants perceived this particular function as inconvenient, unnecessary, and ineffective because freelancers with a full-time job will not usually finish an entire project in one sitting. They may start the project and decide to stop after translating one portion, before resuming the task two or three days later.⁸⁶ Past studies show that while LSPs seem to like using activity tracking and see this as 'a form of training where translators gain better awareness of their own editing process by having access to activity reports' (Vieira and Alonso 2018, p. 15), translators often think it is 'intrusive' and they do not feel comfortable 'being watched' (ibid., p. 10). Vieira and Alonso (ibid.) also assert that activity tracking is not an accurate pricing parameter and its use for that purpose is still a controversial issue. While it is not clear

⁸⁶ This timeframe was possible because all projects commissioned by OTTP1 were library projects.

whether the company used activity tracking as a pricing parameter, it is certain that the participants were not informed of the true reason for its use and did not see any benefits on their side. Some complained that they had to be connected to the Internet all the time,⁸⁷ while others did not like that they were 'monitored' by the commissioner.

Of all participants commissioned by OTTP1, Participants S10 and S12 did not mention the implementation of MT in the first interview but talked about it later. Participant S12 mentioned in the second interview that she learned from an informal source that the company 'bought' English and Thai subtitles. She also added that when the company learned that the Thai subtitles which were translated by the machine did not work, they assigned freelance subtitlers to re-translate them. Participant S10 revealed in the third interview that she heard that the company's management would like to use AI as 'a primary translator', which she did not think was a realistic option, given the slow progress in the technology for the English-Thai language pair and distinctive characteristics of audiovisual texts. Participant S11, who worked mainly for CV1 and chose to accept a minimal volume of work each month from OTTP1, did not mention the use of machine at this company in any interviews. Without effective communications between the company and freelance subtitlers, the participants had different – and, for some participants, delayed – information regarding the new technology and practice.

Furthermore, the company did not communicate the benefits (and limitations) of using the new system to freelance subtitlers. In other words, the subtitlers were not 'interested' by their commissioner and thus did not see the point of helping the commissioner to 'mobilise' their plan (e.g. producing quality Thai subtitles and training the MT system through PE). The interview data give an impression that the company skipped the interestment moment. They 'enrolled' the subtitlers to carry out PE tasks after they 'problematised' the subtitle production situation and decided to use the new technology. The company's long-distance control was not effective either. Their drilled people, e.g. staff members who built and initially trained the engine, and project coordinator, did not seem to properly do their respective jobs. The company did not send out the inscriptions (e.g. a manual, guidelines, or instructions) to freelance subtitlers. Although successful interestment and enrolment do not guarantee that the goal will be accomplished because an actor can betray other actors at any moment (Callon 1986a), the focal actor has a better chance of gaining other actors' cooperation if they can interest them. That is to say, the subtitlers could have been willing to use MT throughput had the commissioners successfully 'interested' them to

87 Before the implementation of the new system, OTTP1 did not provide their subtitlers with online subtitling tools. The participants, therefore, usually performed their subtitling tasks off-line, using free subtitling software of their choice.

engage in PE by being more transparent and informative about the new practice. Without the proper interest, the subtitlers thought that the technology would benefit only the commissioner. They did not see any positive changes on their end, and therefore resisted to be cooperative. Moreover, training an MT engine was not a priority for subtitlers, whose main goal was to produce quality subtitles within the deadline.

At CV1, where MT was enforced with an introduction of lower remuneration rates for PE tasks, the degree of resistance observed is not as evident as the above. There are many plausible reasons. One is more effective communications – with two emails. The first one asked for volunteers to try the new ‘system’.⁸⁸ The second email was sent to freelance subtitlers when the company officially started the new practice.⁸⁹ Another likely reason for a lesser degree of negativity in the comments is the quality of MT throughput. CV1’s engine seemed to produce better results, which may have resulted from a number of reasons, including the fact that the technology had come of age, and that the engine had been trained using a large corpus of human translations (i.e. reuse of subtitlers’ previous works). By circulating the inscriptions (emails), the company showed their attempt to ‘interest’ and ‘enrol’ freelance subtitlers to keep on working for them – albeit for reduced rates. However, they did not circulate another type of inscriptions which would benefit the subtitlers: a manual. The participants, therefore, did not see any benefits on their end.

In durable and convergent networks, multiple actors establish strong ‘associations’ and do not question their roles, whereas weakly convergent networks are the ones where ‘actors find both that their status is constantly in question, and that it is difficult (albeit not impossible) to mobilise other parts of the network’ (Callon 1990, p. 148). The situations in both companies – where subtitlers-turned-post-editors did not have positive relations with MT, nor were they happy with their new role – show that these two (sub-)networks are not strongly convergent. They are, therefore, susceptible to interference by alternative, competing ‘associations’ (e.g. more attractive part-time jobs) and can easily disintegrate.

⁸⁸ Some participants did not mention the receipt of the first email which asked for volunteers, because either they did not receive it or they just forgot to talk about it.

⁸⁹ This does not mean there were no communication problems at all. As mentioned earlier, when Participant S12 gave the final interview, she did not know that the company had started implementing MT. Participant S5 said that by reading the (second) email, he was not sure what he was expected to do, so he had to reach out to one of the project coordinators for clarifications.

Different actors' enactments of MT: Two sides of the same coin?

My argument is that through the concept of enactment (i.e. the assignment of certain characteristics and properties to entities), we can better understand different actors' positioning and perceptions of MT. However, because none of the participants had been exposed to MT for a very long time when they gave interviews, what we can do with the interview data is explore the participants' *initial* 'enactments' of MT. In other words, these enactments are the participants' perceived 'realities' about MT based on their limited experience and interactions with it.

In the network under study, MT acts, and is enacted, in relation to other actors. Different enactments are relevant to the way different actors perceive, manage, and use the 'MT Multiple.' Based on the interview data, on the subtitlers' side, these are: Useless MT, Abysmal MT, Not-Too-Bad MT, Sometimes-Useful MT, Slow-Learner MT, Funny MT (for translating 'beacon' as 'bacon'), etc. We can also interpret that, on the commissioners' side, MT is enacted as: Trainable MT, Time-Saving MT, Cost-Saving MT, Helpful MT, etc. Participant S5 said in the final interview: 'I think they believe they have provided us with something. Something helpful to our task. [...] They think we will use less effort [so they pay us accordingly].' The subtitlers' enactments of MT are based on their direct experience of using it, albeit not for long. On the other hand, the two commissioners' enactments of MT are based on past success stories of MT implementation in other language pairs, which reminds us of the story of Cumbrian sheep (Law and Mol 2008), where the authority made the wrong move by slaughtering a great number of sheep, based on past data related to other animals (e.g. cattle and pigs). In the SPN, it seems that the two commissioners, drawing on data from other contexts and language pairs, decided to adopt MT at the expense of the wellbeing of Thai freelance subtitlers.

6.2.3.3 Sustainable integration of MT in the translation production networks

An increasing body of TS literature demonstrates the pivotal role of company management for the successful and sustainable integration of MT in workflows. To begin with, MT and PE should be introduced in tandem with training sessions (Bywood et al. 2017; Vieira and Alonso 2018; Nunziatini 2019). As pointed out by Burchardt et al. (2016), there are not many trained post-editors working with audiovisual texts. The training provided may comprise both generic and language-specific sessions (Nunziatini 2019). With regard to payment, although past studies suggest that lower compensation is not the only, or main, factor affecting how translators feel about MT and/or PE (Viera 2020a), it is believed that in order to curb the prevailing negative attitude, MT and PE should be introduced with unreduced pay (Nunziatini 2019). Some scholars

even contend that it is better ‘to err on the side of caution’ and pay post-editors a higher rate than translators (Vashee 2013, p. 144). It is also recommended that the company deploy human-centred PE with interactive/adaptive MT to enhance human translators’ agency (Vieira 2020b), or alongside memory tools (Koponen et al. 2020). As for interactive MT, Taivalkoski-Shilov (2019) believes that for the technology to be the most beneficial to translators, ‘non-human elements should be adapted to fit the human and not vice versa’ (p. 694). Interactive/adaptive MT can be seen here as fluid technology (de Laet and Mol 2000) or *mutable* mobiles (Law 2009) in ANT terms. De Laet and Mol (2000, p. 226) assert that fluidity is a good property of both humans and non-humans, and they also contend that good technologies should be like the Zimbabwe Bush Pump: being ‘adaptable, flexible and responsive’.

As illustrated in the previous section, different stakeholders tend to enact MT in different ways. The ‘MT Multiple’ suggests that the same technology may become one thing or another depending on the context, i.e. the practice of people who enact it and their experience with it. In relation to this, translators who work as post-editors should be given opportunities to have open discussions and work with MT developers (Bywood et al. 2017; Taivalkoski-Shilov 2019). If that is not possible, translators should at least be able to pass on their feedback to the commissioner’s management. As revealed by some participants, OTTP1 invited their freelance subtitlers to submit feedback concerning the use of their new system after some translators started submitting their informal feedback to the project coordinator. Participant S5, who had just finished his first PE project for CV1 when he gave the final interview, said that he planned to send his feedback to the coordinator after his fourth PE projects, saying: ‘I’m sure that they would like to know our feedback too.’

Nevertheless, the same participant believed that feedback from freelance subtitlers like himself will carry little weight when compared with comments from clients. He said: ‘If clients keep complaining about downward quality, the company will reconsider whether it is a good idea [to use machine-generated subtitles]’. To successfully convince translators to embrace new technologies in their work process, Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2017) recommend that the company creates ‘a feedback culture’ and give translators opportunities to express their opinions and involve them in decision-making at the workflow level. The recommendations made by Vieira and Alonso (2018) are also fitting. The researchers call for improved communication and transparency so that all involved actors ‘are in synch regarding concepts, expectations and product specifications’ (ibid., p. 22). Society and end clients, they further recommend, should be educated on what to expect from the technology. Their suggestions are in line with those of others, including Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey (2017), who would like to see the deployment of

multi-directional communication channels through which LSPs, clients, and translators exchange their opinions so to effectively address issues – technological or otherwise – that impact the work process. Likewise, Sakamoto et al. (2017, p. 20) believe that the translation industry should develop a culture where different stakeholders ‘feel comfortable to discuss good practice of technology use in all areas’.

All of the changes discussed in the present chapter, as well as most of the factors explored in Chapters 4 and 5, are associated with the diminishing agency of freelance subtitlers in the SPN. That is, freelance subtitlers can bring about only minimal changes to the network. Instead, they are usually among the most affected stakeholders when changes occur.⁹⁰ The participants’ perceived powerlessness partially results from their inability to circulate immutable mobiles (including inscriptions) in the network (Callon 1987; Latour 1987). While TS researchers tend to place translators in the central position of their analyses and portray translators as key decision-makers, translators are often ‘pushed’ to the margins in the translation industry and the AVT field is no exception to this scenario (Jääskeläinen 2007). As for the current study’s participants who would be hired on a project basis, their marginal position is apparent, as illustrated in the following extract:

From my direct experience [that I haven’t had new assignments for a few weeks], I feel down with the industry in general. No projects. No job security. I’m wondering whether it will become a norm to assign projects with shorter and shorter turnaround times, which leads commissioners to use only their in-house workforce [...] and full-time freelancers who can complete a high volume of work within extremely tight timeframes, while part-time freelance translators will lose out. [...] This is just my speculation, without any tangible evidence, though. (S11, Interview 5)

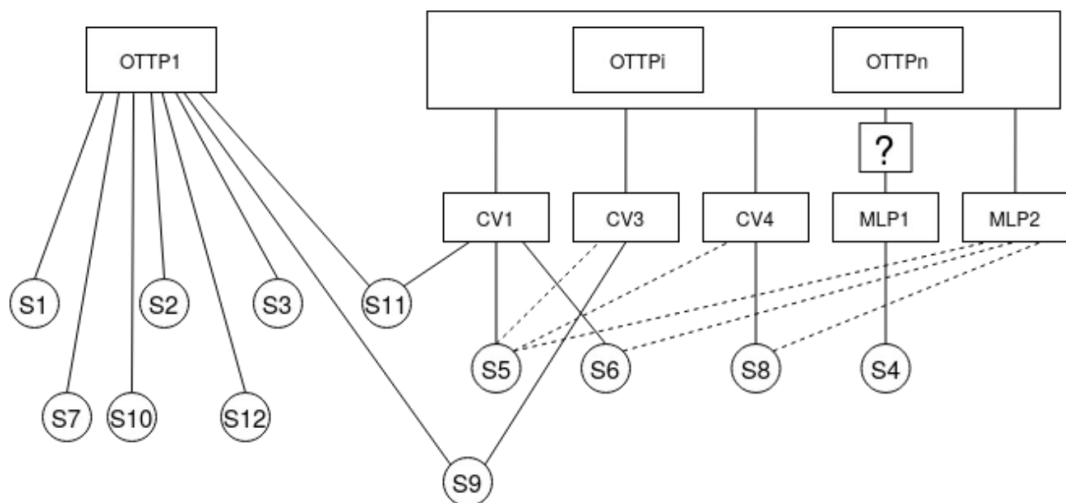
Translators’ perceptions of themselves as powerless, marginalised, and replaceable actors in a complex system are reflected in the ways the participants in the present and other studies describe themselves: ‘a small ant’ (S5, Interview 3), ‘a loose part’ (Abdallah 2014a, p. 123), and ‘a tiny cog in a large machine’ (Moorkens 2020, p. 23) – among others.⁹¹

90 The interview data suggest that in-house staff members, such as project coordinators and editors, may have also been affected by changes in the network. For instance, with the implementation of MT, the editors needed to compare the post-edited subtitles with both the English lines and the machine-generated Thai subtitles, while project coordinators were found to be rotating among different teams to accommodate the volume of work.

91 Besides the translators’ perception of themselves, researchers also mention this unfortunate situation in their analysis. For instance, Risku et al. (2009, online) discuss major changes observed in their longitudinal study, one of which is that ‘the translators had become more invisible and faceless than before’.

6.3 A Seemingly Shrinking Network

From an ANT perspective, a network is sustained by associations of multiple actors. Their dynamic relational ties constantly change the network configuration. The present sub-theme, which is a continuation of Sub-theme 2.1, focuses on this aspect of the SPN's evolution. Freelance subtitlers' precarious status is also reflected in the change of network topology over time. Some disclaimers are needed here. First, the figures presented in this section are simplified and incomplete representations of the SPN. Only freelance subtitlers and their commissioners are included, while factors in other categories (see Figure 4.1) are intentionally left out. This is because the interview data show that factors directly affecting the participants' role and position in the network are mostly commissioner-related factors (see Sub-theme 2.1). As Cresswell et al. (2010) posit, one will never be able to draw the full picture of a social phenomenon. ANT is helpful in enabling researchers to 'zoom in' on how networks are formed at a particular point in time (ibid., p. 5). The three extremely simplified figures (Figures 6.2-6.4), in which the inner-workings of each commissioner and subtitler are black-boxed and the commissioners and participants are presented as nodes, can nevertheless help to demonstrate the network evolution over the course of two years. From the figures, we see how the network changed from the beginning of the data collection period to the way it looked a year and two years later, respectively.



KEY: The solid lines indicate strong associations between individual freelance subtitlers and their commissioners, whereas the dashed lines represent relations between the participants and the companies that they do not consider their main commissioners (i.e. they work with periodically).

The box with a question mark shows that Participant S4 suspects that his commissioner acts as a sub-contractor from another CV, or MLP, instead of being directly commissioned by OTTPs.

Figure 6.2: The SPN at the beginning of the study (as of July-August 2017)

At the beginning of the study, 12 participants worked for one OTTP, three CVs and two MLPs. Five (S5, S6, S8, S9 and S11) participants worked for more than one commissioner. At the end of Year 1, after OTTP1 attempted to utilise MT and switched to rely solely on in-house translators, five of the participants (S2, S3, S7, S10 and S12), who used to work for this company, were forced to exit the network. Two participants (S1 and S11) managed to remain in the network, but were commissioned subtitling projects from CV1. Participant S8 stopped working for MLP2 but continued working only for CV4. Participant S4 was no longer assigned new projects from MLP1, but he had started working for his new commissioner SV1. It is interesting that at the end of Year 1, all of the participants who remained in the network worked for only one commissioner.

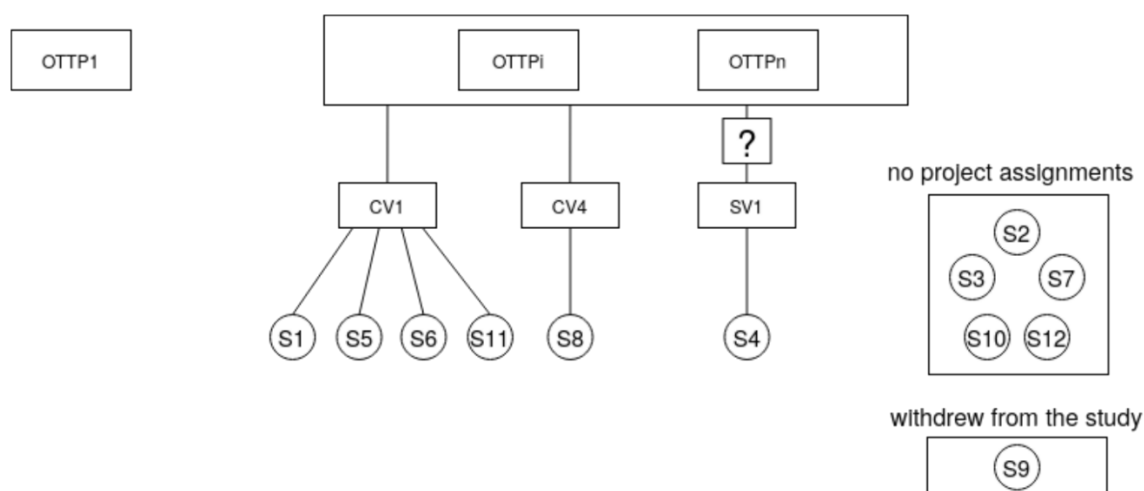
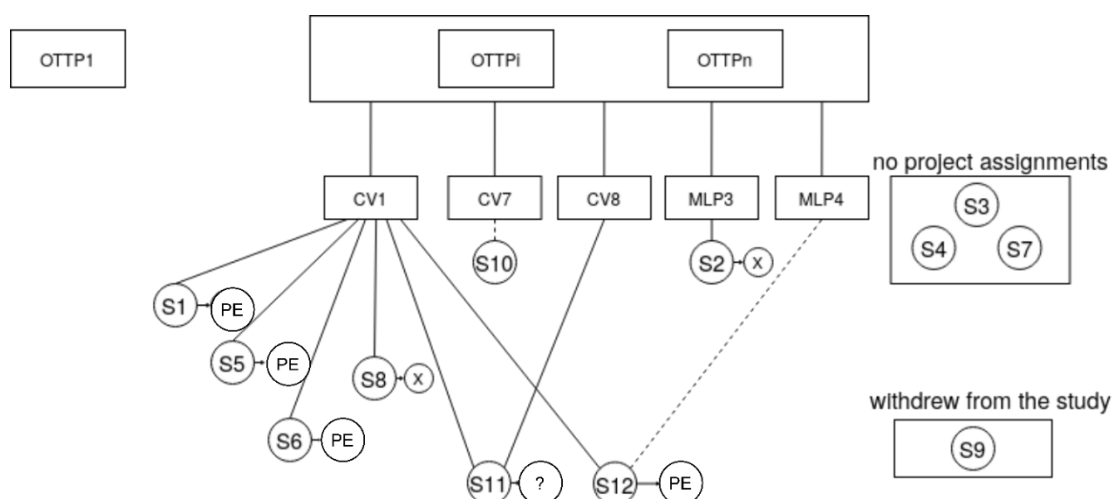


Figure 6.3: The SPN at the end of Year 1 (as of July-August 2018)

By the end of Year 2, three participants (S3, S4 and S7) had left (or rather, had been forced to leave), the network for over six months, while two (S2 and S8) had exited it for six months or less. Among those who remained in the SPN, four that would continue working for CV1 either had already started to work as post-editors (S5 and S6) or anticipated that they would have to take the role of post-editors for their upcoming projects, if any at all (S1 and S12). Participant S11 had worked as a subtitler for CV1 until a few weeks before the final interview. She reported that she would remain in the SPN by working for a new commissioner although she did not say what role she would assume in the new company. Participant S10 also remained in the network but did not regularly receive projects from her latest commissioner CV7.



KEY: PE = post-editors, X = The participants had stopped working as freelance subtitlers for six months or less.

A circle that contains a question mark means that Participant S11 has been assigned projects from her new commissioner, but it has not been clear whether her role will be a translator or post-editor although it is more likely that she will work as a translator.

The dashed lines indicate weak associations between the participants and their commissioners (e.g. ones which they work for only occasionally).

Figure 6.4: The SPN at the end of Year 2 (as of August-September 2019)

All in all, the SPN's configuration kept changing over two years, and individual freelance subtitlers were at risk of being made redundant at any point. Working for a commissioner with relatively high volume of projects (such as an OTTP or a leading CV) does not guarantee long-term employment. On the contrary, such companies tend to be more enthusiastic than smaller vendors to invest in MT which has forced freelance subtitlers either to exit the network or to remain in the network as post-editors. Even though some of the participants had left the network at the end of Year 2, we cannot conclude that the network became smaller. For one, MT had been enrolled into the network, which means that people involved in the implementation of MT had automatically become part of the network. However, if we apply that logic, the data analysis will not be manageable. What we can conclude from the interview data, as illustrated in the three figures above, is how the participants' work trajectories had changed over two years, and how unstable and unpredictable it can be to work as freelance subtitlers on a part-time basis in the Thai OTT industry.

6.3.1 Translators' work trajectories

The participants' unstable work trajectories resemble findings from prior studies in some respects. Abdallah (2014a) documents work trajectories of eight translators⁹² over the course of six years, during which only three of the participants had remained working continuously as translators. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Latourian agency, she lists actors that worked for and against the participants' agency, and how the participants' role and agency affected their work trajectories. Actors against the translators include factors such as low fees, low status, lack of contract, the company's poorly developed work processes, and rushed work. As could be expected, the participants who did not want to endure these conditions decided to leave the translation field to work in another area. In another longitudinal study, Liu (2017) finds that in less than five years more than half of her research respondents had decided to leave the job. She also concludes that freelance translators are less happy than other translators who are still active in the field. Svahn (2020) reports that 40 percent of the respondents who completed the questionnaire exploring Swedish translators' perceptions of translatorship admitted that they had thought of quitting translation from time to time, while 3 percent considered leaving their career on a daily basis.⁹³ The observed trend is worrying but not surprising given the undesirable working conditions mentioned in a great number of studies, particularly low fees/salary, low quality STs, absence of contract and/or benefits, low status, and tight deadlines. Most of these factors have also been revealed in Kuo's (2014) survey which specifically targeted professional subtitlers.

In the present study, it was found that a lack of job security and career path, and increasingly difficult working conditions, have resulted in some of the participants' reluctance to work as subtitlers on a full-time or long-term basis despite their personal passion for the job. Others involuntarily left the network as their commissioners decided to adopt a new localisation policy and/or 'enrol' MT into the subtitle production process. As discussed in Sub-theme 2.1, *commissioner-related factors* are actors with the most observable impact on the precarious status and thus unstable work trajectories of freelance subtitlers. However, the participants also reported a number of *individual subtitler-internal factors* and *Thai OTT market-related factors*. The individual subtitler-internal factors that affected the participants' decision to stay in or leave

92 The participants in Abdallah's (2014a), at the beginning of the study, included, 1 freelancer, 3 micro-entrepreneurs (i.e., those dealing directly with customers), and 4 in-house translators at a translation company. However, none of whom worked as in-house translators in a translation company at the end of the study.

93 Although she does not examine the reason why the high percentage of the respondents have thought of using the 'exit' strategy, Svahn (2020) notes that given the other indicators showing a rather high level of job satisfaction among the respondents, this area is worth further investigation.

the network include sense of (in)security and perceived (lack of) negotiation power, level of satisfaction, and their career plans and goals.⁹⁴ It was found that as the study progressed, most of the participants felt less secure and were exposed to an increasing level of powerlessness. This is particularly evident when we compare their perception of careers in subtitling⁹⁵ from the first interviews with that from subsequent interviews. For some participants, as their role and position in the network transformed, their attitude toward subtitling careers changed in a drastic way. Participants S2 and S3, who used to see subtitling as a highly fulfilling and rewarding job, admitted that they no longer wanted to be committed to it or give it priority. Participant S1 reported that although he personally enjoys subtitling, he can no longer financially rely on it. Subtitling used to be his only source of income, but he was forced to look for a more secure job when the job volume dramatically dropped. He said: '[Now that I have a full-time job], I feel more secure with my life. I don't have to be anxious whether there will be subtitling jobs or not. [...] So I have one less thing to worry about.' According to Courtney and Phelan (2019), uncertainty about the future, including unpredictable volume of work, is one predictor of occupational stress among translators. This is also true for the present study's participants.

Moreover, the subtitlers' level of satisfaction seemed to decrease as their capability to control the quality of the final products was diminished by several factors, such as the division of labour that resulted from their commissioners' focus on efficiency and productivity. Rodríguez-Castro (2019) concludes that career turnover is associated with professional dissatisfaction, and, as Abdallah and Koskinen (2007) argue, translators choose to 'exit' the subtitling industry partly because they are not given the opportunities to 'voice', i.e. show their dissatisfaction in an attempt to change undesirable states of affairs. Therefore, one way to improve the current situation – i.e. to create a convergent network (Callon 1990) whose members do not question their positions and continue their roles in the network – is to increase the level of satisfaction among freelance subtitlers by trying to listen to what they need to say about working conditions. Furthermore, by drawing on the concept of convergent networks, it can be said that the associations between freelance subtitlers and their commissioners have been interrupted by other alternative associations, such as other freelance jobs with better pay and/or more desirable working conditions (S2, S3, S4, S7), the participants' desire for work-life balance (S1, S5), and their discovery of new passions besides subtitling (S1, S2, S3, S6). Toward the end of the data collection period, some participants planned

94 Please note that *individual subtitler-internal factors* are influenced by *commissioner-related factors*, *project-related factors*, and, to a lesser extent, *Thai OTT market-related factors* (see Figure 4.1 for interrelationships of factors in different categories).

95 For conciseness, I use 'subtitling career' to mean working as a subtitler on a paraprofessional part-time basis (i.e. as an additional job besides full-time occupation).

to move into other sectors for their part-time gigs, including transcreation, journalism, copywriting, interpreting, private tutoring, and online retailing.

6.3.2 Just (semi-) outsiders

The participants tended to accept that their status as freelance subtitlers made them more vulnerable than their in-house counterparts. They did not point fingers at anyone, even when they related the stories about changes that affected their livelihood. However, the participants admitted that some changes came unexpectedly, leaving them in total shock. The participants' perception of their role and status seems to be related to lack of sense of belonging and their ambivalent relationship with the commissioner. They are part of the team (albeit usually in an *ad-hoc* manner and on a project basis) but most of them feel that they are 'just an outsider' (S1, S8), 'just a translator' (S6) or 'just a freelancer' (S10). They usually do not know how things work internally unless the changes affect them (e.g. S6, S12), such as changes of coordinators, updates on subtitling tools, and launches of new guidelines or protocols that they need to follow (e.g. S8, S10). When talking about his first commissioner, OTTP1, Participant S1 (Interview 1) said: 'I don't know what they think of us – maybe just someone who works for them'. The same participant answered in the third interview that one of the changes he would like to see on the commissioner's part is: 'I wish they told us how many projects we would receive each month. But I don't think it's going to happen anyway. Why do they have to tell us? Why do they have to care?' Similarly, Participant S2 (Interview 3) said: 'the change I want to see is to be informed three months ahead the approximate capacity for each month, so that I can plan my life accordingly. I would like them to treat us like partners, like part of the organisation. [I would like] security, rather than learning about the capacity month-by-month'. However, the participant admitted that it was just her wishful thinking.

6.3.3 Relationship status with subtitling: 'It's complicated.'

Interestingly, two of the present study's participants compared the unpredictability of freelancers' lives with romantic relationships. When Participant S1 was assigned some projects that did not meet his preferences, he did not enjoy doing them. However, without any assignments, he felt like something was missing from his life. 'It's like people who are very critical with their partners, but when they get dumped, they regret being too nagging' (S1, Interview 5). Likewise, Participant S2 confessed that due to unpredictable work schedules and volumes, her attitude toward subtitling careers changed, particularly after she had opportunities to try other part-time jobs, some of which were more challenging (in a positive way) and/or better paid. Subtitling was no

longer her top priority part-time job that she would wholeheartedly devote herself to. She said, '[My attitude has changed] because I haven't done subtitling for quite a long time now. This is like having a boyfriend who you thought was the right person for you at some point. And you two for some reason have been apart – haven't seen each other at all. During that, you have met a new person who might or might not be exactly your type, but this new guy suits your life better for the time being' (S2, Interview 5). Based on the way the participants talked about their on-and-off status with the subtitling career, we might be able to interpret that they did not have a very healthy relationship with their freelance subtitling career.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

The materially-heterogeneous SPN evolved in ways that generally did not benefit freelance subtitlers, who held a vulnerable and unstable position in the network. At the end of Year 2, some of the participants were forced to exit the network, whereas others who remained had to work under more challenging conditions and/or become post-editors – with their agency being further diminished.

Under the current market structure, subtitlers are weaker actors than their commissioners and thus have precarious status because they do not possess resources or inscriptions (e.g. contracts with content creators or copyright holders of the shows) and need to be aligned with the commissioners to be able to accept subtitling projects. In relation to this, subtitlers will not become an OPP unless they are assigned a project by a coordinator with whom they ought to build and maintain a good relationship. A lack of inscriptions and not being an OPP also affect these freelance subtitlers' sense of security and deprive them of negotiation power to voice their dissatisfaction regarding unfavourable working conditions. With the assistance of selected ANT concepts, we have seen certain 'pain points' in the weakly convergent network, including a lack of effective interessement device or effective communications between commissioners and translators.

Although the commissioner-related factors have been found to be the most salient actors affecting the role, agency, and work trajectories of freelance subtitlers, for the most part the commissioners constantly changed their localisation project management activities to respond to the demands of their clients (for their financial benefits). As discussed in Chapter 4, over two years, the Thai OTT industry became increasingly competitive, i.e. more players were entering the market. Driven by the efficiency, productivity and profitability imperatives, the commissioners 'enrolled' new actors into the network, such as MT and new subtitlers who did not mind working

under less-than-ideal conditions. The technology has left the most visible impact on work practices and career livelihood of the current study's participants. While TS scholars are positive that subtitlers as skilled workers will not soon be replaced by the machine, some of the participants had to switch to PE. The new role came in tandem with a reduced level of agency in determining the quality of final products and reduced remuneration rates by more than 50 percent.

As Luo (2020, p. 101) argues, we can evaluate the translator's status based on 'their role, say and pay'. The longitudinal data show that the freelance subtitlers in the SPN did not have favourable status: their role was threatened, they did not have much of a say, and their pay became increasingly unpredictable. Despite such a challenging environment, the participants felt pressured (and they also pressured themselves) to produce quality work. The next chapter turns to the discussion of quality, specifically the subtitlers' perception of quality over two years.

Chapter 7 Perceptions of Quality

We cannot forget that subtitling is the result of a team effort and the decline in standards must not be blamed solely on the figure of the translator.

- Jorge Díaz-Cintas (2005, p. 5)

7.1 Introduction

Although there have been a number of studies on quality in subtitling, research specifically dealing with quality issues in relation to work practices of audiovisual translators in the OTT industry is still scarce. The present chapter relies on the three-dimensional quality model put forth by Abdallah (2016, 2017) to unpack the quality and quality-related issues in the SPN. In this regard, the chapter aims to answer RQ3. For convenience, RQ3 is repeated here:

RQ3: How is the subtitlers' perception of quality influenced by changes occurring in the network?

As discussed in Section 2.3.6.2, the three-dimensional quality model defines quality in a more comprehensive manner. Abdallah (2016, 2017) conceptualises quality as multi-dimensional, consisting of social, process, and product quality. She defines social or collective quality as interaction and relations of human and non-human actors in the organisation, which also encompasses the ethical aspects of the involved actors' work practices. Social quality affects process quality (i.e. how the work is done), while product quality (i.e. whether the product satisfies the needs of stakeholders) is influenced by process quality (ibid.). By extension, therefore, social quality has a bearing on product quality. These interrelationships have been confirmed by prior studies, which point out that audiovisual translators' working conditions affect the (perceived) quality of translation products (Sayman 2011; Kuo 2014).

In the present study, which is ANT-inspired, any entities – human or otherwise – that leave *visible* trace and impact on the quality – through the perception of freelance subtitlers – are discussed in the same manner, regardless of how big or small they seem to be. Social, process, and product quality will be discussed together as it is extremely difficult to draw clear separation between these three interrelated dimensions.

7.2 Quality Is in the Eye of the Beholder – and the Hands of Many Actors.

Theme 3 (Quality is in the eye of the beholder – and the hands of many actors), was developed from interview data to address RQ3. Drawing on the concept of ‘associations’, the following section discusses the relations between freelance subtitlers and other actors, and the ways such relations affect the participants’ perception of quality in the SPN.

The relations between freelance subtitlers and other actors (i.e. social quality) and subsequent influence on process and product quality

As for the participants’ perception of quality in relation to changes in the SPN over the two years of data collection, it has been found that the way freelance subtitlers perceive quality was influenced by their dynamic ‘associations’ with other actors. The associations between subtitlers and other actors – both human and non-human – may be divided into two main types: those *obstructive* and those *facilitative* to the subtitlers’ work process. It is important to note that in general, the present study’s participants tended to normalise or justify difficult working conditions and believed that the quality of final products depended mostly on their skills.⁹⁶ This is a view commonly shared among audiovisual translators (Kapsaskis 2011). However, the participants also admitted that it became increasingly challenging to achieve their desired level of product quality when social quality and process quality were adversely affected by changes beyond their control. That is, certain aspects of social quality were reported to deteriorate over time, as illustrated by tighter deadlines, reduced remuneration, and frequent changes of project coordinators.

Despite the above ‘unavoidable’ factors which have become common realities in both the subtitling industry and translation industry as a whole, the participants reported some positive changes. The areas of changes which have led to better social and process quality are the commissioners’ continued attempts to improve subtitling tools (7.3.3.1), and to enforce more vigorous QA and QC procedures (7.3.3.2). To avoid being repetitive, the present chapter will elaborate on some selected salient factors that have not been extensively covered in the preceding chapters. Therefore, changes of project coordinators (as an OPP), integration of MT in the workflow, and their resultant effects on the work practices of freelance subtitlers will not be

⁹⁶ The following are some of the skills that the participants named as determiners of good subtitlers: excellent command of their working languages; ability to render non-literal but accurate translations which enhance viewer experience; savviness in the technical and temporal aspects of subtitling; being detail-oriented, disciplined, and good at time management; and having watched a lot of shows (which helps them to understand the nature of audiovisual texts).

discussed in detail here (See Chapter 6). Table 7.1 lists the most salient actors/changes that, according to the participants' perception, affected quality in the SPN.

Table 7.1: The most salient actors/changes influencing quality in the SPN

Factor/change	Category of factor	Type of relation between the factor and subtitlers
Increased subtitling experience	Individual subtitler-internal factor	Facilitative
Tighter deadlines	Project-related factor	Obstructive
Reduced remuneration	Commissioner-related factor	Obstructive
Frequent changes of project coordinators	Commissioner-related factor	Obstructive
Integration of MT in the workflow	Commissioner-related factor	Obstructive
Improved subtitling platforms and tools	Commissioner-related factor	Somewhat facilitative
More vigorous quality management	Commissioner-related factor	Somewhat facilitative

These changes were raised by the participants as the most influential to their subtitling process (see Section 4.1.2), and hence the product quality. In the next section, salient actors that the participants reported in the interviews as the most determining factors to their work process and quality of final products will be presented in detail.

7.3 The Most Salient Actors/Changes Influencing Quality in the SPN

The following are the salient changes that made perceivable difference in quality from the beginning of Year 1 to the end of Year 2 (see Table 7.1).

7.3.1 Obstructive factors/changes

Four factors/changes were perceived by the participants as the most obstructive to the quality, namely tighter deadlines, reduced remuneration, frequent changes of project coordinator (see Chapter 5), and integration of MT in the workflow (see Chapter 6). As for the unforgiving

deadlines, which most subtitlers had endured, they will only be accelerating due to an array of reasons, including consumer habits and stiffer competition in the industry. However, with proper tools and good management, effects of working against time can be alleviated to a certain extent – as illustrated in Section 7.3.3.

7.3.1.1 Tighter deadlines

Gambier (2008, p. 28) posits that deadlines, costs, and volume constitute the ‘threefold constraint’ that poses a challenge to quality subtitling. In this study, shorter time frames negatively affected the subtitlers’ (as well as other team members’) work process and quality of subtitles. Some participants reported in the later rounds of interviews that they decided to skip certain stages of their usual (and ideal) subtitling process, such as conducting extensive background research, watching audiovisual assets before starting to translate, and thoroughly rechecking and proofreading the translations.

However, some subtitlers were incredibly determined to produce quality subtitles despite some limitations. Participant S10 always watched the videos and proofread the subtitles. In the final interview, the participant who prioritised quality of her work and treated subtitling projects as extra part-time jobs (rather than her regular source of additional income) insisted that it is important that subtitlers watch the whole video before starting to translate. She believed that a lot of full-time subtitlers, whose main source of salary was from subtitling, skipped this crucial stage and considered it a waste of time. The participant was convinced that this was the case because her commissioner CV7 regularly sent out emails to remind their subtitlers to attentively watch videos to minimise translation mistakes. As a viewer of OTT content herself, she often noticed errors in subtitles which helped to confirm her speculation. She gave examples of discrepancies between the subtitles and ongoing events on screen, such as when a female character used a masculine pronoun. The participant added that inaccurate transliterations of culture-specific items (e.g. Italian or Spanish food) could have been easily avoided by watching and listening to the provided audiovisual assets. Even though she was faced with tight deadlines, she would allocate 30-50 minutes to quickly skim through the video to recheck her translations before submission.

Similarly, Participant S12 always utilised the videos but, unlike when she was translating back catalogue titles (library projects) in which she watched an entire video before translating, for simulcast projects she would start translating, watching a video, and listening to the dialogue in Korean simultaneously. Skipping watching the videos altogether is out of question for the

participant because translating Korean shows requires her to understand social rankings of the characters which are usually missing in the English pivot templates (although some well-prepared KNP sheets can be useful). She admitted that the time frame no longer allowed her to finish watching the video *before starting to translate* subtitles or to reach out to Korean-language experts. Otherwise, she would be at risk of missing the deadline.

Participant S8 stated in several interviews that when she was rushing to meet the deadline, she would decide to do minimal research. 'If I'm not sure at all [whether my translation is accurate], I will not leave it unchecked. But if it's like 70:30 or 60:40, I will just ... let it go' (laughing). The same participant used to spare some time for polishing her translated subtitles, including searching for the exact translations of the 'Previously on...' lines, a step which she gave up when working on simulcast projects. She mentioned that the QC Team did not expect the lines to be consistent with those appearing in former episodes anyway. '[Time was] so pressuring that I had to skip certain stages. This is a negative change' (S8, Interview 5).

Participant S1 mentioned in the last two interviews that, due to intense time pressure when translating simulcast projects, he spent less and less time proofreading. The participant justified his choice by explaining that he rarely received negative comments from the editors. Participant S4, who always gave consistent answers when being asked what factors affected his work process and quality of his translations, lamented that difficult time frames restricted him from proofreading, re-checking, and revising the subtitles. He also skipped researching on what he considered was not plot-pertinent, checking details in Wikipedia entries, or watching previous episodes to better understand the real meanings intended by the characters – all of which he would do if time permitted. He admitted that by skipping these steps, 'there's a chance that some mistakes would slip out', and that 'you cannot expect neat work [with such pressing deadlines]' (S4, Interview 1). Despite that, he always did as much research as possible to minimise potential errors.

Participant S5 admitted in the last interview that he did not have much time for proofreading when translating simulcast shows, whereas he used to check every single line for library projects. Tight deadlines also affected the arguably most important stage: solving translation problems, because translators did not have time to figure out the best translation solutions (Gottlieb 2005). This was reflected in Participant S5's remarks, 'your first priority has been changed to getting it done, rather than producing high quality work.'

In Year 1, when projects with longer, more flexible deadlines, e.g. library projects, were predominant, an individual subtitler would be responsible for translating (an) entire season(s) of a show. Consistency was better, but also the subtitlers' translation process was more recursive, which is how it should be. That is, they were able to revisit previous stages at any time. As subtitlers working on library projects would usually submit all episodes in bulk, they could correct or change translations of the early episodes after having been more informed about the characters and plot. In Year 2, Participant S12 recalled her work process in early days '[back then] as I was translating Episode 5, if I came up with a better translation for even a single word in Episode 1, I would [get back to that episode and correct it].' This is in stark contrast with latest projects where each subtitler was assigned only a portion of an episode. As expected, consistency was beyond the capacity of each subtitler, and the translating process tended to be linear. For the 'Three-Minutes-Per-Line' project, Participant S6 had to finish translating each subtitle (irrespective of the length) within three minutes. After the designated time, the box for that line would be automatically locked (see also Section 4.3). In this way, she could not get back to former subtitles even though she spent less time translating some lines and had extra time left. As the participant is a fast subtitler, she missed only one line for that project, so speed was not an issue for her. Still, the participant disliked this approach because 'subtitling is not just translating individual line and you consider it's done. As you keep translating on and on, you may think, 'this pronoun suits better' or you may realise later that these two people are actually father and son. You will want to make corrections, but it becomes such big trouble to do so' (S6, Interview 3). Participant S6 also complained that she could not even review her work before submission.

In Year 2, all the participants who were still active in the network worked on online platforms. Regarding this, Participant S7 raised an interesting point that technical problems such as an unstable Internet connection would create an additional challenge to those working against extremely fast turnaround times. In fact, Participant S6 told me in the fourth interview that her commissioner's server had been down several times in the past six months. It took around 30 minutes before the issue was resolved. 'If you cannot finish translating in time [because of that], losing half an hour *is* a big deal.'

Tighter deadlines did not affect only the subtitlers' work process but other team members' process as well. As discussed in Chapter 5, the participants believed that English pivot template translators and subtitle editors were also pressured by shorter time frames. It can be inferred that tighter deadlines forced all involved parties to involuntarily compromise on quality. This conclusion resonates with the findings of some past studies (Rodríguez-Castro 2016).

7.3.1.2 Reduced remuneration

Despite not being raised as often in the interviews as other factors, reduction of payment was found to affect the subtitlers' motivation to conduct extensive research or do thorough revision. Participant S12 revealed in the first interview that when offered good (or higher) remuneration, she was highly motivated to work much harder as she would like to produce impressive work and become the commissioner's first choice. When her commissioner halted hiring freelancers and she could not find new vendors that paid reasonable compensation, she took a break from subtitling, insisting that getting paid peanuts for work that requires skills and expertise 'is like you don't respect yourself' (S12, Interview 2). Participant S1 revealed that he did not feel encouraged to put great effort in the projects in which he engaged in additional steps (e.g. listening to Korean expressions and googling them to check if he caught the right words while being provided with only an English template) but earned little fees in return. 'It's so overwhelming, and I was like, 'Why bother? This is the best I can do!' (forced laughing)' (S1, Interview 2). Participant S11 associated a higher rate with making progress – that she became better at her job and her effort was appreciated.

In line with the present study's finding, Kuo (2014, p. 176, original emphasis) argues that remuneration rates 'can determine, **to some extent**, the quality of the end product'. She maintains that proficient subtitlers usually ask for higher rates – and rightly so. They have accumulated experience and are most proficient in their job. When not compensated fairly, 'subtitlers may lose interest in the task at hand and thus be unlikely to spend long hours weighing translation solutions, looking for the right terminology or meticulously revising their work' (ibid.). In Denmark, lower rates are correlated with more pressing deadlines and lead to more mistakes in subtitles (Bangsgaard 2015 cited in Beuchert 2017).

Nevertheless, some participants did not think that remuneration rate affected the way they work. However, they would like to see some changes in this respect. For instance, when asked in the third interview, what changes she would like to happen in the company she was working for, Participant S6 answered that she wanted to see a better pricing for certain genres – from the current 'per programme minute' to 'per subtitle'. She explained that translating Korean talk shows or variety shows requires more time and energy than translating TV series of the same length. In talk shows, for instance, there are usually more, and longer, lines. She added that she could not rely solely on the provided English pivot templates. Instead, she had to listen to each line twice to make sure all necessary details are retained in the Thai subtitles.

Another negative result of decreased pricing is that it drove some participants to look for part-time jobs in other areas. The unpromising scenario where seasoned translators chose to prioritise other jobs and turn down subtitling projects that they considered unworthy of their time has been discussed in previous studies (Kuo 2014).

7.3.2 Facilitative factors/changes

The participants believed that their increased subtitling experience, a salient actor categorised as individual subtitler-internal factor (see Figure 4.1), enabled them to produce better subtitles. With more experience, not only were they accustomed to the work procedures, but they were also faster and more efficient in solving translation problems. For instance, they can quickly come up with words that fit the designated reading speed. That is, their experience was transferred to better process and product quality.

Unfortunately, as discussed in Chapter 6, the Thai OTT subtitling industry did not seem to foster the subtitlers operating in the market. For instance, some commissioners adopted MT and offered translators post-editing projects with significantly lower compensation. As experienced subtitlers were unhappy to receive such rates, some commissioners – instead of trying to keep working with them to ensure the faster, more efficient work – preferred to hire new entrants who were willing to accept lower rates although their quality of work might be questionable. The present study's participants, as consumers of OTT content themselves, noticed the prevalence of poor and mediocre subtitles on OTT platforms and believed that the unsatisfactory quality of subtitling had spawned a lot of posts on social media sites complaining about the Thai subtitles.

7.3.3 Somewhat facilitative factors/changes

This section discusses the areas that saw some level of improvement, though it was not considerable enough to be an antidote to all the obstructive factors, as suggested in the interview data. However, it is possible that, with continuous development, changes in these aspects will narrow down the gap between the current and ideal states of affairs. Drawing on the interview data, it seems that the participants' commissioners invested in improving subtitling tools and showed interest in enhancing their management procedures, which were perceived as somewhat influential to the improvement of the process and product quality.

7.3.3.1 Improved subtitling tools

Improved subtitling tools, as an important infrastructure, were welcomed with a neutral to relatively positive view. They were not considered fully facilitative factors due to several reasons. One is that the improvement was usually based on top-down decisions rather than bottom-up suggestions provided by the users. The participants, therefore, tended not to be very enthusiastic about these changes, nor did they believe it would lead to *significantly* better quality. These non-human actors were moderately helpful to helpful in improving the quality by helping to streamline and automate some steps, thus saving time and possibly costs. In some participants' opinions, however, 'faster doesn't necessarily mean better' (S7, Interview 1).

As briefly discussed above, the participants tended to believe that their skills were the most determining factor to quality of final products. They generally did not think subtitling programs or platforms affected their work process in a great extent, particularly when compared with obstructive factors such as deadlines. However, to some participants, well-designed subtitling platforms helped to improve the pace of their translation process, mitigate the chances of mistranslations or accidental omissions, and enable them to carry out the self-revision stage more efficiently.

The extracts below show that most of the participants who have used both open-source programs and proprietary subtitling platforms preferred using the latter. In general, proprietary online platforms are more user-friendly and come with useful functionalities that better serve subtitlers' needs. Moreover, these platforms are regularly updated and improved by the companies.

When it comes to technology, I think the [subtitling] tools [can affect quality]. I personally like [CV1]'s [online] platform. It helps save time through some functions such as hot keys, and the feature to resume playing the video from the beginning of that line, something like that. [...] The UI is also user-friendly. When I first used Aegisub for projects commissioned by [OTTP1] after I passed their screening test, I realised that it was quite different. It's a good program in that you can see English subtitles on the screen, but when I really used it ... maybe it's because I was not familiar with [Aegisub]. There were certain things I wasn't okay with. Most of all, the English lines will be overwritten by Thai translations, while on [CV1]'s platform, you can still see the English texts in the adjacent column and can compare your translations against them. [...] Aegisub is very limiting in this respect. [Using CV1's platform] I sometimes glance through the texts and notice some mistakes. With Aegisub, this is not possible unless you play the video and listen to the soundtrack [to check if there are inaccuracies]. I think that, in this way, technology can accelerate or slow down my work process in a great extent. [...] [In terms of subtitle quality] it depends on myself more than anything. [...] However, using Aegisub can also affect the quality of subtitles as well because it is more difficult to catch mistakes. [...] Listening to the soundtrack is not [as effective as comparing the English lines against the translations]. But ... maybe it's just a matter of familiarity. (S11, Interview 1)

While Participant S6 did not have any difficulties using an open-source tool because she had been using it since she was a fansubber, she too preferred CV1's proprietary platform.

[CV1's project management ecosystem] is really good. Everything is professionally managed, and this brings about good results. We don't have to ... I mean, if you work for some commissioners, you are responsible for finding a subtitling program. You have to decide which tool to use. Here [at CV1], they provide you with everything. You just translate, and then click on a submission button. It's really easy for you to work in this way. [The commissioner] also gets good quality and punctual works in return. [...] (S6, Interview 1)

Interestingly, Participant S6 reported that the subtitling platform affected her work process to a more noticeable extent than human actors. In the second interview, she confirmed again that she found using CV1's online proprietary platform facilitative to her work and praised the company for designing the platform's back-end architecture to enhance subtitlers' performance.

Participant S10, who used Aegisub at the beginning of her subtitling career, expressed in every interview that she, despite having no negative comments on the open-source program, would like to see changes in the company in terms of resources and infrastructure they provided to subtitlers. In the second interview, she recounted that she had an opportunity to observe her friend who worked for another OTTP carrying out a subtitling task and was fascinated by the tool her friend was using:

[Seeing the tool of another commissioner] it's so obvious that tools are of paramount importance. It's like playing badminton using a typical or professional racquet. It makes such a difference. Working against deadline, [...] the right tool can help us save time, energy, and can even leverage our effort. [...] There's nothing wrong with the way I have worked so far. But there are other better options out there, which will facilitate our working process, and save time we would spend for error checking. It will even help to save time that we would spend converting files – everything. [The right tool] will prevent mistakes that could have occurred. [...] I told you about all these functionalities even before I had an opportunity to see [the platform my friend has been using]. [...] Now I am more convinced that tools can be a really facilitative non-human factor. (S10, Interview 2)

She specifically appreciated the self-QC and grammar checking functions, and the UI which allowed subtitlers to compare source and target texts. She also believed that these features would enable editors to work faster and more efficiently with less effort. The participant added that she was 'motivated' to work for the commissioners with such systematic procedures and effective tools. Tight deadlines, she said, were beyond her control, irrespective of which companies she would work for. However, using the right tool would reduce the chance for errors. In the third interview, she said that when it comes to the actual translating, no tool is better than

humans, particularly for conveying humour. The right tool, however, can be useful for QC activities, including proofreading and revising, because human errors are inevitable. In the final interview, the participant, who now worked for a new commissioner, CV7, told me that she finally had found the subtitling platform that encompassed all elements she once dreamed of using. CV7's ecosystem was very user-friendly. Once subtitlers have been trained how to use it, they will have a multitude of useful functions at their disposal, including an automatic converter for currencies, distance, weight, volume, etc., and glossaries for technical terms in Thai, all of which will result in better productivity and consistency.

When Participant S7 was asked what changes he would like to see in the company he worked for, the participant, as a user of an open-source subtitling tool who, like Participant S10, had an opportunity to observe another subtitler working on a proprietary platform, replied that he would like to see a subtitling tool with more user-friendly UI, designed specifically for subtitling (i.e. no functionalities that are not frequently used by translators). Through the investment in well-designed tools, the commissioner will benefit from 'getting faster works' (S7, Interview 3).

Participant S2, who used to use Aegisub when working for OTTP1, perceived MLP3's platform in a positive light. She particularly liked the character counter and QC checker functionalities. Likewise, Participant S12 who also used Aegisub at OTTP1, revealed in the final interview that she really appreciated CV1's subtitling platform. When she was asked by another commissioner (MLP4) to use any open-source program, she realised the difference that these two tools could make. Like Participant S11, she perceived the overwriting of English STs as a disadvantage of the freeware. On the platform of her regular commissioner (CV1), she could easily revisit the segments she was not sure about and compare them against the English lines. Besides, she liked its UI – with curated useful functions, such as a character counter. She said in a tongue-in-cheek manner that she had not yet finished the first project of MLP4 because she was 'frustrated' with the very open-source program that she once used on a regular basis.

On the contrary, Participant S1 who started off his subtitling career using Aegisub (like S2 and a few others) revealed that he was more used to and still preferred using this freeware than the online all-in-one platform of CV1, with the reason being that the former gave him more room for self-customisations. His view is in stark contrast with Participant S7 who was not very keen on Aegisub's 'cluttered' UI, resulting in the tool not being as user-friendly or intuitive as proprietary platforms. Participant S7 also appreciated that, when using the latter, subtitlers were working online with storage in the cloud, so they did not need to download anything onto their computer, nor worry about losing unsaved work. Loss of unsaved work due to program crash was

experienced by Participant S9 when he used Subtitle Workshop, which was not a very stable tool. Incidents in which the program froze and shut down that occurred ‘around ten times a year’ (S9, Interview 1) prompted him to constantly save his work in progress as a solution (S9, Interview 2). When compared with Subtitle Workshop, he said that CV3’s web-based subtitling platform was more user-friendly – with more intuitive hot keys.

Irrespective of personal preferences, an evident benefit of using a proprietary platform is the tool’s constant updates which the participants perceived as a (somewhat) positive change to their work process and quality of subtitles – albeit to a lesser extent than their skills and other factors. However, changes and improvements on CV1’s platform were assumed to stem from feedback from in-house QC Team members, rather than ‘outsiders’ like the participants themselves, who did not usually voice their views back to the company. Participant S5 shared in the second interview that, to prevent lost work as a result of the Internet connection failure, the newly updated platform enabled subtitlers to save subtitles that were still in progress (although the saved file could not be opened with other tools than the company’s platform). Besides that, the automatic QC checker could now detect more types of errors (e.g. use of ellipses which can easily slip off from tired eyes) to make sure that the end products would strictly follow each client’s style guide. In the first interview, he said that the function ‘Replace All’ was recently added which helped him to save a great deal of time correcting misspellings or typos. Obviously, such improvements benefitted not only subtitlers but also in-house QC staff and, by extension, the commissioner themselves. The same participant said in the third interview that the UI was being constantly updated and now subtitlers could access most frequently used functionalities with fewer mouse clicks, which helped them to save time.⁹⁷ He also reported in the first interview that his commissioner was trying to develop a spell checker for the Thai language, which he believed would be a very useful addition to the already good platform. However, he admitted that this was not an easy endeavour for a language with a *scriptio continua* writing system. In fact, this functionality had not yet been launched by the time of the final interview.

In general the participants believed that proprietary and commercial tools are easier to use than freeware, but not all tools of the former group are created equal. Participant S8 complained that she found CV4’s subtitling program more difficult to use than CV1’s online platform. For one, she needed to download the software onto her computer. Moreover, the software did not support Mac operating system, its function keys were not intuitive, and the UI was not very user-friendly.

⁹⁷ Some cloud-based ecosystems allow translators to personalise their own hotkeys or shortcuts (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2021).

Because these issues did not delay her work process to a great extent, she perceived them as inconveniences rather than significant problems.

Some participants did not believe that tools made much difference in the quality of subtitles, nor did they affect their work process in a significant manner. To these participants (e.g. S2, S4), tools provided them with some level of convenience, but did not matter as much as their own skills, and factors such as deadlines or content of the projects.

As seen above, the participants tended to have diverse views on the issue as they were exposed to different tools. Smaller commissioners (e.g. MLP4) and some leading media localisers (e.g. CV4) asked their translators to use open-source programs. In line with literature (Kuo 2014; Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020), the present study's participants revealed that platforms and some of their well-thought-of functionalities (particularly those of proprietary and commercial platforms) helped to speed up the process and ensure consistency to a certain degree. However, they were not of much assistance in improving accuracy and naturalness of the final products.

7.3.3.2 More vigorous quality management

Robert and Remael (2016) adopted Tricker's (2014) definitions of the terms to designate quality assurance (QA), as part of quality management which aims to provide confidence that quality requirements are met, and quality control (QC), as part of quality management that is concerned with meeting those quality requirements. QA includes, but is not limited to, the preparation of source file and other resources, human resources activities, and monitoring, while QC includes tasks such as self-checking, and participation in feedback cycles (Drugan 2013). Based on Kuo's (2014, p. 198) terminology, the former may be called 'preventive measures' and the latter 'remedial measures'. In the present study, the participants noticed that their commissioners showed an attempt to improve quality management in the following areas: provision of support materials and more frequent delivery of feedback. However, similarly to the subtitling tools discussed above, the changes could not counteract the negative influence of obstructive factors and thus were not considered fully facilitative to the quality of subtitling. The participants' perception of the company's subtitling quality management also varied from one commissioner to another.

7.3.3.2.1 Provision of support materials

Support materials can determine the quality of final products (Kuo 2014). In the present study, audiovisual assets and templates had always been provided by the commissioners since the beginning of Year 1,⁹⁸ whereas in the later rounds of interviews, some of the participants started to receive other support materials that they never knew had existed. The materials in question came in the forms of consistency sheets (including KNP sheets or glossaries), and style guides (or guidelines).

Some commissioners (CV1 and CV7) seemed to be more outstanding than others in their provision of support materials. Participant S10 was happy to work for CV7. Besides their comprehensive subtitling platforms and online resources, the company sent her KNP sheets – a useful material which she had never received before working here.

At CV1, consistency sheets would be updated real-time by team members. These documents, therefore, performed another function as a venue for communication and idea exchange on the translations of recurring names and words among subtitlers and editors. In a similar vein, Participant S2 was impressed by MLP3's use of consistency sheets and found the shared documents particularly useful when working as part of a team. Participant S4 too perceived the use of KNP files at SV1 as a positive change. Despite good reception from other participants, Participant S12 revealed that the quality of consistency sheets provided by CV1 was arbitrary. She had been involved in some projects in which other subtitlers did not care to update the sheets, while the files in other projects contained too many details, including unnecessary ones.

Participant S8 was given consistency sheets or character lists for some projects at CV4. The company only asked for cooperation from freelance subtitlers but did not require them to update these documents. Consequently, some sheets were neither up to date nor complete. The participant said that the documents were somewhat helpful but did not accelerate her subtitling process to a great extent. She admitted that she did not update the sheets for every project, but she was not the only one skipping this step. In fact, the present study's participants tended to underestimate the importance of updating consistency sheets and only updated them when they were required to do so. It then became a chicken and egg situation because we do not know exactly which is the case: that the subtitlers did not update the sheets because they did not gain

⁹⁸ A few participants (e.g. S1, S9, S11) complained about the missed time cues or missing lines in the templates provided by OTTP1, but they tended to perceive them as a nuisance, rather than a significant factor negatively affecting quality.

many benefits from them, or that the sheets were not very useful because the subtitlers failed to keep updating them.

Regarding the translation guidelines, only some commissioners (CV1, CV7, MLP3, SV1) seemed to be aware of the significance of these materials, while others never sent official style guides to translators or only provided them for some projects. Participant S8 received detailed style guides for the first time from CV4 only a few months before the fourth interview. She did not think the guidelines facilitated her work as much as it helped the editors and believed that it would be more beneficial for subtitlers if the vendor also prepared glossaries of technical terms or lists of frequently found words for specific genres. Participant S12 liked that CV1 always provided her with style guides. On the contrary, the commissioner MLP4 did not send her any guidelines, forcing her to figure out how to use hyphens, whether the numbers should be spelled out, etc.

As past studies suggest that the quality and perception of quality are affected by support materials, such as consistency files (Kuo 2014) and style guides (Szarkowska et al. 2020), the present research shows some positive changes with respect to the commissioners' utilisation of these support materials. However, a minority of the commissioners did not seem to take this aspect of quality management as seriously as others.

7.3.3.3.2 More frequent delivery of feedback

Certain aspects of the commissioners' feedback handling and provision (e.g. role and nature of feedback) have been included in Section 5.3.4.1 in relation to the role of subtitle editors. This section will include only some main points and focus on the discrepancies in practices that existed between different commissioners and within the same company.

The most obvious improvement reported in the interviews was the frequency of feedback delivery. This can be because in Year 2, a number of companies changed to submit feedback automatically via their project management ecosystems, instead of sending emails manually. However, as mentioned in Chapter 5, although some participants received feedback more frequently, the comments were not detailed enough to help them improve their performance to a great extent. Different editors in the same company seemed to be varied in terms of level of rigour. Some subtitlers received a lot of useful comments, while others feedback emails without many details (i.e. emails containing only a dash under each section). The editors are, therefore, the key factors in the implementation of effective feedback provision.

It was interesting to find that the commissioners' ecosystems can play a facilitative role in the delivery of feedback. In contrast to some commissioners that sent feedback in a word or spreadsheet file, CV1's online ecosystem automatically provided the subtitlers with a weblink that allowed them to access the finalised subtitles where the editor's corrections were highlighted in the track-change style (in addition to the delivery of emails with the editor's comments to individual subtitlers). Nevertheless, among the participants working for CV 1, only Participant S11 mentioned the existence of such weblinks in the interviews. This can be because other subtitlers were not informed of this facility by their project coordinators and/or editors or that they were aware of it but did not think that it was important enough to raise in the interviews.

I would like to argue that feedback will lead to better quality only when taken seriously by involved parties, e.g. the commissioners, QC Team, subtitlers. Unfortunately, some commissioners only used (negative) feedback simply as a warning message to subtitlers who did not perform satisfactorily, whereas others provided only summative feedback but failed to exploit formative feedback. Receiving frequent feedback (irrespective of how detailed the comments were) was still seen as a positive change. At the very least, when the participants received feedback that did not indicate serious points for improvement, they would assume that they were working on the right track. In this regard, provision of feedback was particularly helpful when the commissioners did not arrange training sessions for freelance subtitlers.

Nevertheless, the current work environment reveals asymmetrical communications in the SPN, as the editors generally had the last word about the finalised translation, while the subtitlers were not usually given an opportunity to accept or reject the editors' suggestions. Such imbalance of communications is associated with top-down management and little input from lower-level staff members (Grunig 1992), which in this case, include 'outsiders' like freelance subtitlers.

7.4 Concluding Remarks

The literature has shown that undesirable working conditions are associated with poor subtitle quality (Díaz-Cintas 2005), and poor quality of subtitles on OTT platforms is related to the working conditions of subtitlers (Elmelund 2015 cited in Beuchert 2017). In a similar vein, the present study shows that social quality influences the process and therefore product quality, which corresponds to Abdallah's (2016, 2017) multidimensional quality model (see Section 2.3.6.2).

Among changes occurring during the data collection period, the participants perceived the following as the most salient actors to quality: increased subtitling experience, tighter deadlines,

reduced remuneration, frequent changes of project coordinators, integration of MT in the workflow, improved subtitling tools, and more vigorous QA and QC procedures. Most of these factors are commissioner-related and were seen by the participants as obstructive to the quality of their work process and final products. The findings have again illustrated the difficult working conditions of freelance subtitlers and their marginalised role in determining quality. Moreover, it is worrying to learn that the adoption of MT and decreased payment have forced some experienced subtitlers to exit the network, while increased experience is the salient actor that the participant perceived as facilitative to subtitling quality. A seemingly silver lining is that some commissioners have invested in improving their 'immutable mobiles' and 'long-distance control' devices and documents – with the hope of producing good (enough) quality products within the restricted timeframes. It is interesting that while the commissioners seemed to pay more attention to non-humans (e.g. project management ecosystems, subtitling tools, procedures), subtitlers believed that subtitling quality in the most part depended on their skills and experience.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The current study set out to examine the work practices of freelance subtitlers and quality issues in the SPN in the Thai OTT market. Specifically, it aimed to find answers to three RQs through the lens of ANT and Abdallah's (2016, 2017) three-dimensional quality model. Interview data with 11-12 freelance subtitlers and a PM (the latter as a complementary source of data), collected between July 2017 and September 2019, were analysed by means of reflexive thematic analysis. Answers to RQs were presented as themes or compelling stories about the data.

In this concluding chapter, an overview of the SPN over two years (from July 2017 to September 2019), and the four categories of factors that influenced the work practices of freelance subtitlers in the OTT industry in Thailand will be discussed under Sections 8.1.1 and 8.1.2, respectively. The remaining sections will present the main findings to three RQs, contributions and limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

8.1.1 An overview of the SPN over two years

The SPN started off with a relatively positive outlook at the beginning of the study before it underwent a number of changes which have left impactful repercussions on the participants. **In July-August 2017 (when the first interviews were conducted)**, there were at least 11 OTT TV providers in Thailand, consisting of local, regional, and international players. The participants worked to serve the thriving OTT industry through different commissioners: one OTTP, three CVs, and two MLPs, with five of them (S5, S6, S8, S9, S11) accepting subtitling projects from more than one commissioner. Although they had started to experience inconsistent and unpredictable job volumes, all participants revealed in the first interviews that they would like to continue working as freelance subtitlers. As most of the freelance subtitlers engaged in library titles, they were not required to share an episode of the show with other translators. It was also found that the participants tended not to receive feedback on a regular basis, and some companies did not provide their freelance subtitlers with subtitling tools (OTTP1, CV3), or supporting materials, such as KNP sheets (OTTP1). Some of the participants who were commissioned by OTTP1 (S2, S3, S7, S9) reported that they had recently been required to use templates prepopulated with AI-generated translations, but they chose to ignore the provided incomprehensible Thai subtitles and continued to translate from scratch.

In July-September 2018, half-way through the data collection period, five (S2, S3, S7, S10, S12) out of eight participants working for OTTP1 were no longer in the SPN as their only commissioner halted outsourcing subtitling projects. Five of the participants remaining in the network (S1, S4, S5, S6, S8, S11) worked for only one commissioner. All of them were assigned (or decided to receive) fewer translation projects, except Participant S6, who quit her full-time job and relied on subtitling as her main source of income. Regarding the type of project, the participants translated both library and simulcast assignments, without one type being predominant. Two (S2, S12) of the participants, who had been forced to leave the SPN before Year 2, had managed to return to the subtitling scene by the time the third interviews took place. These two participants, for the first time, worked on the cloud-based ecosystems and as part of an *ad-hoc* team.

The second year of data collection witnessed the emergence of new OTT service providers in Thailand, including Tencent's WeTV, which was official launched in June 2019. Thai viewers were now offered more non-English language shows, larger catalogues of dubbed programmes, and quicker access to OTT content, particularly on SVOD and AVOD platforms. Against this backdrop, CV1 was looking for dubbing script adaptors and translators, as well as trying to onboard subtitlers to accommodate the increasing volumes of Thai-to-English subtitling projects. None of the participants who had continuously remained in the network (S1, S5, S6, S8, S11) were assigned as many projects as they used to in their peak time in Year 1. These subtitlers worked exclusively on English-to-Thai subtitling projects (with English as either the original language of the show or pivot language). Simulcast projects had become more commonplace, requiring the subtitlers to work under shorter turnaround times and sharing projects with other translators. On a positive note, the participants noticed some changes in the following areas: the delivery of feedback, provision of support materials, and subtitling tools.

However, as the commissioner, CV1, started to implement MT and PE, and shifted to focus on projects other than English-to-Thai subtitling, **by the time the final interviews were conducted in August-September 2019**, five participants had left the network. Those who remained in the SPN either had been transformed to post-editors (S5, S6), were faced with uncertain future in the same company (S1, S12), witnessed fewer project assignments (S10), or would start working for a new commissioner (S11). The professional lives of the freelance subtitlers in the SPN over the two years were, therefore, characterised by unpredictability and uncertainty.

8.1.2 The four categories of factors influencing the participants' work practices

Drawing on the interview data, the four categories of factors were found to affect the freelance subtitlers' work practices (See also Section 3.7.3.1, and Figure 4.1). Among a constellation of closely related factors, comprising both human and non-human entities, those with significantly greater influence are considered salient actors (Chapters 4 to 7).

Category 1: Project-related factors

The factors in this category are concerned with the nature and characteristics of each individual subtitling assignment, namely, content, time constraints, type of project, and working as part of an *ad-hoc* team.

Category 2: Individual subtitler-internal factors

Individual subtitler-internal factors include the subtitlers' sense of (in)security and perceived (lack of) negotiation power; their level of happiness, satisfaction, passion, and stress; their perception of subtitling; and work ethics, subtitlers' health-related issues, their full-time job, subtitling experience, subtitle editing experience, value-added qualifications (e.g. knowledge in foreign languages other than English, background knowledge in specific content, computer literacy), and professional plans and goals.

Category 3: Commissioner-related factors

The commissioner-related factors deal with the following aspects: the commissioners' position in the SPN or type of company, their localisation policy, localisation team structure and workflows, QA and QC procedures, remuneration and payment terms, subtitling program/platform, localisation project management ecosystem, and contracts from their clients.

Category 4: Thai OTT market-related factors

The following are the Thai OTT market-related factors which were found to affect the work practices of freelance subtitlers: the growth and potential for growth of the Thai OTT market, main players and their competition in the industry, and the competition among freelance subtitlers in the market.

8.2 Research Questions and Findings

The three RQs were formulated for the investigation of the SPN in terms of the work practices and working conditions of freelance subtitlers, the evolution of the network, and the freelance subtitlers' perception of quality in the SPN. This section summarises the main findings to each RQ.

RQ1: How are work practices of freelance subtitlers influenced by other actors, both human and non-human, in a subtitle production network in the over-the-top (OTT) industry in Thailand?

Theme 1: *freelance subtitlers' constantly changing and increasingly challenging work practices*, which addresses RQ1 reveals that, among four categories of factors illustrated in Figure 4.1, commissioner-related and project-related factors were found to be the most influential in the two aspects of freelance subtitlers' work practices, namely *capacity and types of project* (Sub-theme 1.1), and *subtitle production process* (Sub-theme 1.2).

As illustrated in Figure 4.3, the freelance subtitlers' job volume and types of projects were influenced to a great extent by the following commissioner-related factors: the commissioners' localisation and project management policies, contracts from their clients, and their localisation team structure that required freelance subtitlers to rely on – and maintain a good relationship with – a project coordinator as a contact point (or an OPP in ANT). A less influential but still significant commissioner-related factor is the remuneration terms. Influential project-related factors include the project's time frame and content. A salient actor under the category of individual subtitler-internal factors is their juggling of subtitling work with another full-time job.

With regard to the subtitle production process, five project-related factors were found to be the most influential actors. That is, the subtitle production process depended greatly on each assignment's time frame, content, English pivot templates (for non-English content), regulations and guidelines, and working as part of an *ad-hoc* team. Among the team members, the most influential human actors on the subtitle production process (on the subtitlers' side) were the subtitle editors, whose main responsibilities included editing the translated subtitles and providing feedback to subtitlers, and the English pivot template translators, while other subtitlers sharing the same project were not considered a significant actor by the participants. Despite the availability of online document sharing applications, which in theory enabled them to discuss the most appropriate word choice and expressions, extremely tight deadlines did not allow the subtitlers on an *ad-hoc* team to communicate frequently while translating.

RQ2: How did the network under study evolve over the course of two years?

Theme 2: *an intricate and dynamic subtitle production network*, which addresses RQ2, demonstrates the most compelling stories in relation to the vulnerable position of freelance subtitlers in the SPN through two sub-themes: *freelance subtitlers' increasingly precarious status* (Sub-theme 2.1), and *a seemingly shrinking network* (Sub-theme 2.2).

During the two years of data collection, it was found that freelance subtitlers in the Thai OTT industry were working in a network characterised by complex and dynamic 'associations' among human and non-human actors. Undergoing changes, the SPN constantly evolved – generally in the ways that diminished the freelance subtitlers' agency, role, and security. As weaker actors than their commissioners and the commissioners' 'drilled people' (Law 1984), particularly the project coordinators (acting as OPPs between the translators and commissioners), and the subtitle editors (who, besides evaluating the subtitlers' performance, usually had a last word in the finalised translations), freelance subtitlers' status was increasingly precarious. The commissioner-related factors which were the most influential in this respect include the commissioners' policies in relation to employment terms they had with freelancers, and policies to 'enroll'⁹⁹ new actors into the network to leverage efficiency. Among all influential actors, MT has left the most visible impact on not only freelance subtitlers' status but also the configuration of the SPN.

Drawing on interview data, the SPN *seemed* to be shrinking as a number of freelance subtitlers had left the network. MT was found to be directly or indirectly involved in this situation. The technology either was responsible for the reduction of remuneration, made the subtitlers redundant, or forced them to transform their role into that of post-editors. Of all 11 subtitlers who participated in the research until the final interviews, only one (S11) was still certain about her future subtitling projects (but with a new commissioner), while six participants who remained in the SPN either had already been transformed to post-editors (S5, S6), or were not certain about their role or when they would receive new assignments (S1, S10, S11, S12).

The ways MT was implemented were found to be problematic. For instance, the participants were not fully aware whether their past translations were (re)used as training data or not. The MT was introduced in the workflow in tandem with reduced rates, while TS scholars (Vashee 2013; Nunziatini 2019) contend that the technology and PE should not lead to lower compensation

⁹⁹ This is an ANT term, while in the industry, the term 'onboard' is frequently used.

rates. Additionally, the participants were neither provided with training sessions nor manuals to equip them with skills necessary for a smooth transition to PE.

RQ3: How is the subtitlers' perception of quality influenced by changes occurring in the network?

Theme 3: *Quality is in the eye of the beholder – and the hands of many actors*, which responds to RQ3, shows that the freelance subtitlers perceived most changes in the SPN as obstructive to subtitling quality. The commissioner-related factors that changed in a negative way include their policies to adopt MT, to reduce remuneration rates, and the frequent change of project coordinators on whom subtitlers had to rely as OPPs. Shorter time frames, as a project-related factor, was also an obstructive change to subtitling quality. The only facilitative change is the participants' increased subtitling experience, which is an individual subtitler-internal factor. Two commissioner-related factors/changes which were perceived as somewhat facilitative are improved subtitling tools, and more vigorous quality management, as illustrated by the provision of support materials, such as consistency sheets, on a more regular basis, and more frequent delivery of feedback. However, the participants working with different commissioners had different experiences in relation to these factors and thus had diverse views on the extent of their influence. As shown in past studies (Kuo 2014) and Abdallah's (2016, 2017) three-dimensional quality model, this research points out that poor working conditions had a bearing on the process and product quality.

8.3 Contributions of the Research

The present study has made a number of contributions to TS. To begin with, this research project is one of the first attempts to specifically examine the work practices of subtitlers in the OTT industry, a rapidly changing and promising business in the era of streaming content and binge-watching. It is also the first study dealing with working conditions of freelance subtitlers in Thailand, where sociology-oriented studies of translation and interpreting are relatively scarce.

Additionally, the study can be used as evidence of the usefulness of qualitative longitudinal research in examining translation phenomena, particularly in other aspects than translation competence and translation competence acquisition. Following the same cohort of participants for an extended period of time allows the researcher to gain insights into the participants' experiences, particularly to understand changes and the consequences of those changes on their practice. With the assistance of ANT, the findings show the high degree of unpredictability

observed in the professional lives of freelance subtitlers in the Thai OTT industry, whereas the commissioners held a much more advantageous position in the SPN.

While ANT has already been adopted in a great number of studies, the application of the theory is mostly limited to the deployment of its 'classical' concepts. The current research is pioneering in employing both 'classical' and post-ANT notions. Through the concepts of actors and agency, moments of 'translation', displacement, OPP, immutable mobiles and inscriptions, long-distance control, convergent networks, enactment, multiple realities, and fluid technology (see Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3), we understand the configuration of, and changes occurring in, the SPN, which affected the freelance subtitlers' work practices and livelihood. For instance, the concepts of 'translation' and immutable mobiles and inscriptions helped to unveil relationships between subtitlers and other human and non-human actors that exerted their agency in the SPN. More importantly, (post-) ANT concepts enabled us to see how different parties perceived MT differently, which caused not only the relatively sluggish start to the implementation of the technology in the workflows, but also the collateral damage to the practitioners. For a sustainable work environment, involved actors should promote open communications and fair treatment regarding the use of MT (Kenny et al. 2020). Therefore, besides gaining insights into the SPN, the present study helps to attest the applicability of selected ANT concepts in the examination of translation production networks in contemporary work environment where technology becomes more indispensable than ever. I have also found that ANT tenets work well with QRL as both ANT and qualitative research are highly flexible and thus afford the analysts to learn about the phenomenon under study in the way that they might not have anticipated.

Abdallah's (2016, 2017) three-dimensional quality model has proved to be relevant and useful for the investigation of quality issues in translation production networks. This research suggests that to achieve subtitling quality, the commissioners, their clients, and staff members (particularly the project coordinators and editors) – as stronger actors – should pay particular attention to subtitlers' working conditions, besides the improvement on non-human actors, which seems to be moving in the right direction. In QLR, the attention is paid not only to what has happened but also on what has been missing (Saldaña 2003). The findings point out that training is not currently provided to freelance subtitlers on a regular basis, and this area can benefit from some improvement. Any changes pertaining to quality in the SPN are a big challenge as it seems that the commissioners tend to adopt the 'good enough' mindset, while the subtitlers want to strive for the 'best possible' quality for their translations.

Drawing on the research findings, translator trainers, particularly in the Thai context, can design their courses to ensure that to-be subtitlers and/or post-editors will have been empowered and equipped with all essential competences when they enter the job market. To break the ‘vicious cycle’ and tackle the downward trend on pricing, translator trainers should ensure that rate-related issues are discussed in the curriculum ‘so subtitlers-to-be can gain a better understanding of where they should stand in the market, learn how to guard the bottom line when negotiating rates with clients and thus be able to act ethically towards the profession and other colleagues by requesting a ‘decent rate’ (Kuo 2014, p. 227).

While subtitlers themselves did not expect that MT would become reality this soon, it has now made inroads into the subtitling workflows and, like templates and short turnaround times, will be here to stay. PEMT, therefore, should be part of the translation curriculum, even when dealing with ‘creative’ texts like AVT, as recommended by Bolaños-García-Escribano et al. (2021). This research also helps to underscore the need for further discussion on the post-editor profile in the field of AVT, by drawing on prior studies (Bywood et al. 2017).

8.4 Limitations of the Study

Research on the language industry comes with three main challenges, namely, how to specify the scope of the industry, data (in)accessibility, and generalisability of the results (Mellinger 2020). The present study is faced with limitations in the three aforementioned aspects.

Although fully qualitative studies do not apply generalisability to determine quality, it is more beneficial to conduct a study with as many participants as possible and follow them as long as time and budget permit. In the present study, the data collection stopped after two years when, coincidentally, most subtitlers had started to experience the effect of MT on their work practices. It would be really interesting and more beneficial to examine medium-term and long-term effects of MT on the participants. However, with time constraints and for the practicality of data management, I could not keep following the participants after two years. Having used the purposive and snowball sampling methods, the participants were not very diverse in terms of demographic backgrounds (e.g. all of the participants were in their 20s, and held a degree in the humanities). Additionally, the discussion deals mainly with details regarding OTTP1 and CV1, where most participants (who were introduced to me by other participants) worked.

It is worth noting that despite setting out to understand the work practices of freelance subtitlers, the present research project is not a workplace study in the traditional sense. I relied only on

semi-structured interviews to examine the SPN *through the perspective of* the freelance subtitlers. Nevertheless, the massive amount of in-depth qualitative data collected over two years allowed me to insightfully answer the research questions aiming to unveil complex relations among different actors. As Olohan and Davitti (2017) suggest, when workplace studies of freelance translators are not possible, a qualitative interview approach can still be beneficial. After all, '[t]here are project-specific decisions to be made [...], since each research endeavour will focus on specific research questions and naturally cannot include the whole complexity of human cognition' (Risku 2014, p.339).

8.5 Implications for Future Research

The current study reveals that work practices of freelance subtitlers in the OTT market are characterised by the following:

1. Division of labour (associated with the use of templates, and shorter turnaround times)
2. Increasingly automatised process (through the adoption of MT, and cloud-based platforms prepopulated with features such as the self-QC and grammar checking functions)
3. Asymmetrical communications between freelance subtitlers and the commissioners' management and staff members, as illustrated by the top-down approach with minimal input from freelancers in relation to either significant changes, such as the implementation of new technology and practice (e.g. MT and PE), or routinised activities, such as solving translation problems
4. Precarious status of freelance subtitlers

We have seen the role of multiple human and non-human actors on freelance subtitlers' work practices and subtitling quality. As the subtitle production process is a joint effort of involved parties, and it is an essential part of the industry that serves OTT content owners and viewers, it is worth investigating the SPN from the perspectives of the audience and other industry players. On the commissioners' side, future research may delve into the work practices and perceptions of (post)-editors, PMs, and project coordinators. Moreover, learning about the constraints encountered by English pivot template translators will be illuminating in tackling quality issues pertaining to the use of pivot language templates. To achieve both the depth and breadth of the findings, future studies may employ a mixed-methods design (e.g. using both surveys and semi-structured interviews).

Although the application of translation technology and tools on subtitling practices has garnered attention from both academia and industry for a while, this area of research can be further explored. Research into the design and adoption of adaptive MT, and programs that combine MT and CAT tools (e.g. TMs) is of particular relevance to the subtitlers' workbench. In Thailand, subtitling technology is a relatively uncharted research territory. The application of ASR to subtitling, which is not covered in this thesis, is also a potential research topic. For instance, the Omniscien Language Studio (omniscien.com) has combined ASR with MT to automatically generate and translate subtitles. The platform has been adopted by an OTT service provider, iflix, to localise their content into 22 languages, with linguists conducting quality checks or PE (Georgakopoulou 2019c; Bywood 2020).

As an increasing number of translation projects and translators, including subtitlers, are 'migrating to the cloud' (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020, p. 264), more studies that investigate the potential of subtitling cloud-based platforms will also be particularly beneficial.

To study the above technologies and tools, social and sociological approaches, such as ANT, SCOT (Sakamoto and Yamada 2020), and practice theory (Olohan 2020a, 2020c, 2021) can yield useful findings that can be fed back to the commissioners and technology developers. At present, the cooperation between stakeholders in the industry and academia: linguists, media localisation providers, technology developers, and translator trainers, in creating technology that is most facilitative to subtitlers' work practices is very much needed. In this way, subtitling will continue to be one of the most attractive jobs for talented translators.

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Appendices

Appendix A DCU Ethical Approval

Oliscóil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Ms Wichaya Pidchamook
School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies

29th May 2017

REC Reference: DCUREC/2017/098
Proposal Title: A study of the subtitle production network of a SVOD service provider in Thailand
Applicant(s): Ms Wichaya Pidchamook, Dr Joss Moorkens

Dear Wichaya,

This research proposal qualifies under our Notification Procedure, as a low risk social research project. Therefore, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this project.

Materials used to recruit participants should state that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Dónal O'Gorman'.

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee



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Appendix B Informed Consent Form

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form

A Study of the Subtitle Production Network of a SVOD Service Provider in Thailand

School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies, Dublin City University

Principal investigators: Wichaya Pidchamook, Joss Moorkens, Dorothy Kenny

This research aims to study the elements, characteristics and workflows of the subtitle production network of a subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) service provider in Thailand. It will also investigate factors that influence subtitlers' work practices and quality of their work. The findings of this present research project will hopefully allow freelance subtitlers and other members within the subtitle production network to better manage their workflows, improve the communications between different staff members and develop a more productive working environment within the company.

The ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

If I agree to participate, I will be interviewed by the researcher every six months over a period of two and a half years, from July 2017 to February 2020. The interviews will be done in person or through video calls on Skype and they will be electronically recorded.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

<i>I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)</i>	Yes/No
<i>I understand the information provided</i>	Yes/No
<i>I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study</i>	Yes/No
<i>I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions</i>	Yes/No
<i>I am aware that my interview will be recorded.</i>	Yes/No

I may withdraw from the research study at any point.

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participants Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C Plain Language Statement

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Plain Language Statement

A Study of the Subtitle Production Network of a SVOD Service Provider in Thailand

School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies, Dublin City University

Principal investigators: Wichaya Pidchamook, Joss Moorkens, Dorothy Kenny

This research aims to study the elements, characteristics and workflows of the subtitle production network of a subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) service provider in Thailand. It will also investigate factors that influence subtitlers' work practices and quality of their work.

The participants will be interviewed by the researcher every six months over a period of two and a half years, from July 2017 to February 2020. The interviewees will be asked questions on their role as a freelance translator and factors that influence their work practices. The interviews will be done in person or through video calls on Skype and they will be electronically recorded.

The findings of this present research project will hopefully allow freelance subtitlers and other members within the subtitle production network to better manage their workflows, improve the communications between different staff members and develop a more productive working environment within the company.

Throughout the study, the participants will remain anonymous and their identity will be concealed. The researcher will change the names of the participants and other specific details that can be traced back to any of the participants. Moreover, all audio/video recordings and transcripts will be stored on the researcher's password-protected computer based at DCU.

There is no risk in taking part in the study as every effort will be made to conceal the participants' identity and to protect their privacy.

The participants can also request to find out about the research project from the researcher.

The participants may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.

The ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9.

Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

Appendix D Demographic Information of the Subtiter Participants

When the First Interviews Were Conducted

Participant	Gender	Age	Education	Subtitling Experience	Having Subtitle Editing experience?	Full-Time Job
S1	Male	24	B.A. in English Language	2 years	No.	Copy writer
S2	Female	27	B.A. in English Language	1 year and 7 months	No.	Service industry staff member
S3	Female	24	B.A. in English Language	1 year and 9 months	No.	Journalist
S4	Male	26	B.A. in Foreign Language	11 months	Yes.	Private enterprise officer
S5	Male	24	B.A. in English Language	Above 2 years	Yes.	Copy writer
S6	Female	23	B.A. in English Language	Above 2 years	Yes.	Digital agency PM
S7	Male	24	B.A. in Philosophy	10 months	No.	No full-time job (but having several part-time freelance jobs)
S8	Female	23	B.A. in English Language	1 year	Yes.	Senior subtitle editor
S9	Male	27	B.A. in Philosophy	Approx. 2 years	No.	No full-time job (but having several part-time freelance jobs)
S10	Female	23	B.A. in Law	1 year and 7 months	No.	Government agency researcher
S11	Female	28	B.A. in Social and Political Studies	7 months	No.	No full-time job (but having several part-time freelance jobs)
S12	Female	26	B.A. in History	1 year and 9 months	Yes.	State enterprise officer

Appendix E Participants' subtitling capacity and types of projects over two years

Please note that the pink areas in the table indicate that the participants had quit their full-time job or other part-time jobs, enabling them to receive more subtitling projects. The grey areas indicate that the participants accepted fewer or none of the projects due to personal reasons (e.g. health issues or other commitments) rather than a reduction initiated by the commissioner(s).

Participant Reference No.	Interview Round and Date	Commissioner(s)	Capacity (content hours per month)	Types of projects
S1	1 st – 20 Jul 2017	OTTP1 only	10-24 (0 in Jul 2017)	Library
	2 nd – 4 Feb 2018	OTTP1 & CV1	▼ 2-7 (70% less for OTTP1) & 1:10 -10	Library Library & simulcast
	3 rd – 26 Jul 2018	CV1 only	6-8 (0 in 4 months)	Simulcast
	4 th – 22 Jan 2019	CV1 only	6-10	Simulcast
	5 th – 24 Aug 2019	CV1 only	▼ 3-6 (approx. 50% less)	Simulcast
In the 5 th interview, S1 revealed that he had just finished his last project as a translator. He would start post-editing from the next project onward. However, his commissioner had not communicated with him about the details of a new project, nor assigned him a new project yet.				
S2	1 st – 21 Jul 2017	OTTP1 only	2:20-16 (0 in Jul 2017)	Library
	2 nd – 1 Feb 2018	OTTP1 only	▼ 3-5 (70% less)	Library
	3 rd – 22 Jul 2018	-	▼ 0	-
	4 th – 11 Jan 2019	MLP3 only	1-3 (since Nov 2018)	Library
	5 th – 28 Aug 2019	MLP3 only	3-4 (0 since Mar 2019)	Library
S3	1 st – 24 Jul 2017	OTTP1 only	6-24	Library
	2 nd – 10 Feb 2018	OTTP1 only	▼ 5-7 (70% less) (0 in 2 months)	Library
	3 rd – 8 Aug 2018	-	▼ 0	-
	4 th – 8 Feb 2019	-	0	-
	Although she did not have a work contract with any vendor, the participant reported in the fourth interview that she occasionally subcontracted some projects from a subtitler who was officially commissioned by well-known vendors.			
5 th – 9 Sep 2019	-	0	-	
In the fifth interview, the participant reported that she still occasionally subcontracted some projects from the same subtitler.				
S4	1 st – 27 Jul 2017	MLP1 only	4-6 (0 in 2 months)	Library

	2 nd – 15 Feb 2018	MLP1 only	▼ 3-5	Library
	3 rd – 3 Aug 2018	SV1 only	▼ 2-3 (0 in some months)	Library
	4 th – 9 Feb 2019	-	▼ 0	-
	5 th – 11 Sep 2019	-	0	-
S5	1 st – 28 Jul 2017	CV1 & MLP2, CV3, or CV4*	15-20 altogether	Library & simulcast
	* Besides CV1 which assigned him projects on a regular basis, Participant S5 would also receive additional projects from one or two of these vendors in some months.			
	2 nd – 3 Feb 2018	CV1 only	▼ 8-10	Simulcast
	3 rd – 2 Aug 2018	CV1 only	▼ 1:30-10	Simulcast & library (the latter as interim projects ¹⁰⁰)
	4 th – 12 Feb 2019	CV1 only	8	Simulcast
	5 th – 24 Aug 2019	CV1 only	8 + interim projects in some months	Translating: simulcast (regular projects), library (interim projects) PE**: simulcast
	**The participant had just started working as a post-editor for the first time on the day the fifth interview took place.			
S6	1 st – 28 Jul 2017	MLP2 & CV1	6-10 & 20	Library & simulcast
	2 nd – 2 Feb 2018	CV1 only	▼ 6-15	Simulcast
	3 rd – 19 Jul 2018	CV1 only	▲ 50	Library, simulcast & fast-turnaround library
	4 th – 23 Jan 2019	CV1 only	▼ 30-35	Simulcast, fast- turnaround simulcast & fast turnaround library (in some months)
	5 th – 26 Sep 2019	CV1	▼ 16	Translating: Simulcast

100 I use the phrase 'interim projects' for small projects offered to subtitlers by the project coordinators when there are no regular projects (e.g. a TV series that runs for three months) for subtitlers to translate, particularly when the show has just ended, and the localisation of a new show in the same on-air time slot has been outbid by another vendor.

		& MLP4**	4	PE*: Simulcast Translating: library
	<p>* In August and September 2019, 75 percent of her job assignments were post-editing projects, while the remaining 25 percent were translating.</p> <p>**The participant accepted the project from MLP4 for one month only. She revealed in the interview that she would not accept more projects from this vendor because she would restart working full-time. However, she planned to continue working part-time for CV1 even though all the new projects would be PE.</p> <p>Interestingly, up to the fifth interview, the participant had never rejected any subtitling project assigned to her.</p>			
S7	1 st – 30 Jul 2017	OTTP1 only	5-11	Library
	2 nd – 8 Feb 2018	OTTP1 only	▼ up to 5 (0 in some months)	Library
	3 rd – 23 Jul 2018	-	▼ 0	-
	4 th – 11 Feb 2019	-	▼ 0	-
	5 th – 12 Sep 2019	-	▼ 0	-
S8	1 st – 3 Aug 2017	CV4 & MLP2	3-10	Library & simulcast
	2 nd – 29 Jan 2018	CV4 only	2-12	Library & simulcast
	3 rd – 6 Aug 2018	CV4 only	5-6	Library & simulcast
	4 th – 6 Feb 2019	CV1 & CV4	▲ 10-30	Library & simulcast
	5 th – 6 Sep 2019	CV1 only (until April 2019) ☺	▼ 8 (0 after Apr 2019)	Simulcast
	<p>☺ Despite her initial plan to work as a freelance subtitler on a full-time basis until August or September 2019, she worked for CV1 until April 2019.</p> <p>Please also note that the participant quit her full-time job shortly before the third interview. However, having been assigned lower job volumes than expected and not having got the project she was promised, she started working full-time again from March until August 2019. During these six months, she signed short-term contracts to work on non-translation projects with two companies (one after the other).</p> <p>The participant went overseas to pursue her studies a few days after the last interview in September 2019.</p>			
S9	1 st – 4 Aug 2017	OTTP1 & CV3	15-24	Library
	He learned later that at the same time he was experiencing an unpredictable and fluctuating volume of project assignments, the company was experimenting with a 'new subtitling program' which incorporated MT.			
	2 nd – 9 Feb 2018	OTTP1 & CV3	▲ 30	Library
	3 rd			

	4 th	The participant had withdrawn from the study.		
	5 th			
S10	1 st – 5 Aug 2017	OTTP1 only	3-8 (0 in some months)	Library
	2 nd – 6 Mar 2018	OTTP1 only	▼ 0-4	Library
	3 rd – 16 Aug 2018	-	▼ 0	-
	4 th – 26 Feb 2019	-	0	-
	In the fourth interview, the participant reported that she occasionally subcontracted subtitling projects from subtitlers who were assigned the projects from leading vendors. She also submitted her job applications to several vendors, as she would like to resume working as a part-time subtitler.			
	5 th – 27 Sep 2019	CV7 only (starting in June 2019)	10-16 ⁺	Library
⁺ The participant had just started working for a new commissioner for four months. However, she noticed that, in the past months, the commissioner had fewer projects to offer to all freelance subtitlers in the English-Thai language combination (the projects were assigned on a first-come-first-served basis).				
S11	1 st – 7 Aug 2017	CV1 & OTTP1	9-10	Library
	2 nd – 16 Feb 2018	CV1 & OTTP1	▼ 3-7	Library
	3 rd – 21 Aug 2018	CV1 only	4-6	Library
	4 th – 16 Feb 2019	CV1 only	4-6	Library
	5 th – 23 Aug 2019	CV1 only	4-6	Library
	Although the participant was usually assigned a new project on a weekly basis, she did not receive any new assignments from CV1 in the last two weeks. Fortunately, she was commissioned for a big subtitling project by a different company.			
S12	1 st – 8 Aug 2017	OTTP1 only	16-24 (0 in some months)	Library
	S12 would normally choose to accept assignments in some months and take a break in others, before the situation swiftly changed over the last few months before the 1 st interview – from not receiving any project as her choice to not being assigned any project by the commissioner. See relevant details in Section 4.4.4.			
	2 nd – 22 Feb 2018	OTTP1 only	12-20 (0 in some months)	Library
	3 rd – 9 Aug 2018	-	▼ 0	-
	4 th – 13 Feb 2019	CV1 only (starting in Oct 2018)	6-10	Simulcast
	At CV1, Participant S12 was assigned the first few projects as a ‘substitute’ subtitler, covering other translators who could not meet the deadlines. She was given her own regular slots from November 2019 onward.			

5 th – 27 Aug 2019	CV1 & MLP4	6-10 & 1 (the first project)	Simulcast Library
The participant had just started working for MLP4 and by the time she gave the fifth interview, she was still translating their first assignment for them.			

Appendix F Interview questions

For subtitlers participants

<p>First round of interviews</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How long have you been working as a freelance subtitler? 2. Do you have a full-time job/other jobs? 3. Do you also translate contents other than audiovisual texts? 4. Have you worked for other SVOD companies besides the company X? 5. In your opinion, what makes a good subtitler? 6. What skills have you acquired from working as a freelance subtitler? Are there skills transferrable to your full-time job/other jobs? Also, are there skills you have acquired from your full-time job that help you work better as a subtitler? 7. Why did you decide to be a freelance subtitler? 8. What do you think are the pros and cons of working as a freelance subtitler, as opposed to an in-house translator? 9. Have you ever considered working as an in-house subtitler? 10. Can you please describe your subtitling process? 11. Who do you need to communicate with during the subtitling process? 12. What are factors, both in terms of human and technology, which affect the way your work and quality of your work? 13. Since you first started working here, how have things evolved in the company which affect the way you work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 14. How do you see your professional future?
<p>Second round of interviews</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you still working as a freelance subtitler? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If yes, which company/ companies do you work for? b. If not, what are the reasons you are no longer a freelance subtitler? 2. Do you also translate contents other than audiovisual texts? 3. Do you have a full-time job/ other jobs? 4. If you have started (a) new job(s), what skills do you think are transferable between your new job(s) and your freelance job as a subtitler? 5. Have there been any changes in the subtitling process? If yes, can you please describe your current subtitling process? 6. Who do you need to communicate with during the subtitling process, starting from the assignment of a translation project to the end of each project? 7. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 8. Since the first interview on [date], how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 9. How do you see your professional future?

Third round of interviews	<p>10. How do you see the SVOD (subscription video-on-demand) industry in Thailand?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you still working as a freelance subtitler? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If yes, which company/ companies do you work for? b. If not, what are the reasons you are no longer a freelance subtitler? 2. Do you also translate contents other than audiovisual texts? 3. Do you have a full-time job/ other jobs? 4. If you have started (a) new job(s), what skills do you think are transferable between your new job(s) and your freelance job as a subtitler? 5. In the past six months, have there been any changes in the subtitling process? If yes, can you please describe your current subtitling process? 6. Who do you need to communicate with during the subtitling process, starting from the assignment of a translation project to the end of each project? 7. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 8. In the past six months, how have things evolved in the company which affect the way you work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 9. How has the SVOD (subscription video-on-demand) industry in Thailand evolved in the past six months? In what ways have the changes affected freelance subtitlers, both in the positive and negative ways? 10. How do you see your professional future? 11. What changes would you like to see in the following areas: the video-streaming industry as a whole, the company they worked for, and the subtitling process (including translation tools and technologies)? <i>(New question for this interview)</i>
Fourth round of interviews	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you still working as a freelance subtitler? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If yes, which company/ companies do you work for? b. If not, what are the reasons you are no longer a freelance subtitler? 2. Do you also translate contents other than audiovisual texts? 3. Do you have a full-time job/ other jobs? 4. If you have started (a) new job(s), what skills do you think are transferable between your new job(s) and your freelance job as a subtitler? 5. In the past six months, have there been any changes in the subtitling process? If yes, can you please describe your current subtitling process? 6. Who do you need to communicate with during the subtitling process, starting from the assignment of a translation project to the end of each project? 7. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 8. In the past six months, how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways?

	<p>9. How has the OTT (over-the-top) industry in Thailand evolved in the past six months? In what ways have the changes affected freelance subtitlers, both in the positive and negative ways?</p> <p>10. How do you see your professional future?</p>
Fifth round of interviews	<p>1. Are you still working as a freelance subtitler?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. If yes, which company/ companies do you work for?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b. If not, what are the reasons you are no longer a freelance subtitler?</p> <p>2. Do you also translate contents other than audiovisual texts?</p> <p>3. Do you have a full-time job/ other jobs?</p> <p>4. If you have started (a) new job(s), what skills do you think are transferable between your new job(s) and your freelance job as a subtitler?</p> <p>5. In the past six months, have there been any changes in the subtitling process? If yes, can you please describe your current subtitling process?</p> <p>6. Who do you need to communicate with during the subtitling process, starting from the assignment of a translation project to the end of each project?</p> <p>7. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways?</p> <p>8. In the past six months, how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work and quality of your work, both in the positive and negative ways?</p> <p>9. How has the OTT (over-the-top) industry in Thailand evolved in the past six months? In what ways have the changes affected freelance subtitlers, both in the positive and negative ways?</p> <p>10. What do you consider the most significant changes or incidents that happened to your freelance career as a subtitler in the past two years? <i>(New question for this interview)</i></p> <p>11. How do you see your professional future?</p>

For PM

First interview	<p>1. How long have you been working as a PM?</p> <p>2. Do you have a full-time job/other jobs?</p> <p>3. You said you have been working as a subtitler too. Do you also translate contents other than audiovisual texts?</p> <p>4. Have you worked for other SVOD companies besides the company X?</p> <p>5. In your opinion, what makes a good subtitler?</p> <p>6. Why did you decide to be a PM?</p> <p>7. Can you please describe your job description as a PM?</p> <p>8. Who do you need to communicate with?</p>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Since you first started working here, how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work, both in the positive and negative ways 10. How do you see your professional future?
Second interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you still working as a PM? If not, what is your current position? 2. What are your job responsibilities and who do you <i>mainly</i> communicate with? 3. Do you have any part-time jobs? 4. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work, both in the positive and negative ways? 5. Since [date of previous interview], how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 6. How do you see your professional future? 7. How do you see the SVOD (subscription video-on-demand) industry in Thailand?
Third interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you still working as a PM? If not, what is your current position? 2. What are your job responsibilities and who do you <i>mainly</i> communicate with? 3. What are major challenges of working as a PM? (<i>New question for this interview</i>) 4. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work, both in the positive and negative ways? 5. Since [date of previous interview], how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 6. What are the pros and cons of (1) using in-house staff and (2) outsourcing? (<i>New question for this interview</i>) 7. What are turnover rates in your localisation team, particularly subtitlers? (<i>New question for this interview</i>) 8. Could you explain more about the criteria that you (as well as other teams) use to decide to translate a particular content? (<i>New question for this interview</i>) 9. How do you see your professional future? Do you have any part-time jobs? 10. How has the SVOD (subscription video-on-demand) industry in Thailand evolved in the past six months?
Fourth interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you still working as a PM? If not, what is your current position? 2. What are your job responsibilities and who do you <i>mainly</i> communicate with? 3. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work, both in the positive and negative ways? 4. Since the third interview on [date], how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work, both in the positive and negative ways? 5. What have been major challenges of working as a PM in the past five-six months? 6. Have the criteria that you (and involved people) use to decide to localise a particular content changed in the past five-six months? 7. How has the OTT (over-the-top) industry in Thailand evolved in the past five-six months? 8. How do you see your professional future? Do you have any part-time jobs?
Fifth interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you still working as a PM? If not, what is your current position? 2. What are your job responsibilities and who do you <i>mainly</i> communicate with?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. What are factors, in terms of both human and non-human factors, which affect the way you work, both in the positive and negative ways?4. Since the fourth interview, how have things evolved in the company which affect the way your work, both in the positive and negative ways?5. What have been major challenges of working as a PM in the past six months?6. Have the criteria that you (and involved people) use to decide to localise a particular content changed in the past six months?7. How has the OTT industry in Thailand evolved in the past six months?8. What do you consider the most significant changes or incidents that happened to your career in the past two years? <i>(New question for this interview)</i>9. How do you see your professional future? Do you have any part-time jobs?
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Appendix G Dates and durations of the interviews

Participant Reference No.	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5	
	Date	Duration (hours: minutes)	Date	Duration (hours: minutes)	Date	Duration (hours: minutes)	Date	Duration (hours: minutes)	Date	Duration (hours: minutes)
S1	20 Jul 2017	2:20	4 Feb 2018	1:03	26 Jul 2018	1:04	22 Jan 2019	0:57	24 Aug 2019	1:11
S2	21 Jul 2017	1:30	1 Feb 2018	0:50	21 Jul 2018	0:23	11 Jan 2019	0:50	28 Aug 2019	0:35
S3	24 Jul 2017	1:33	10 Feb 2018	0:51	8 Aug 2018	0:46	8 Feb 2019	0:55	9 Sep 2019	0:47
S4	27 Jul 2017	1:36	15 Feb 2018	0:23	3 Aug 2018	0:41	9 Feb 2019	0:37	11 Sep 2019	0:34
S5	28 Jul 2017	1:52	3 Feb 2018	1:27	2 Aug 2018	0:57	12 Feb 2019	0:54	24 Aug 2019	1:38
S6	28 Jul 2017	1:00	2 Feb 2018	0:50	19 Jul 2018	1:24	23 Jan 2019	0:43	26 Sep 2019	0:33
S7	30 Jul 2017	1:20	8 Feb 2018	0:38	23 Jul 2018	0:42	11 Feb 2019	0:10	12 Sep 2019	0:31
S8	3 Aug 2017	1:31	29 Jan 2018	0:57	1 Aug 2018	1:13	6 Feb 2019	1:09	6 Sep 2019	0:58
S9	4 Aug 2017	2:06	9 Feb 2018	1:00	No interview		No interview		No interview	
S10	5 Aug 2017	1:52	6 Mar 2018	0:59	16 Aug 2018	1:09	26 Feb 2019	1:12	27 Sep 2019	1:38
S11	7 Aug 2017	0:57	16 Feb 2018	1:08	21 Aug 2018	0:34	16 Feb 2019	0:31	23 Aug 2019	0:50
S12	8 Aug 2017	1:31	22 Feb 2018	0:55	9 Aug 2018	0:56	13 Feb 2019	1:11	27 Aug 2019	1:07
PM	28 Jul 2017	2:40	18 Feb 2018	1:22	10 Sep 2018	1:37	4 March 2019	1:13	14 Sep 2019	0:51

Appendix H Initial codes from Interviews 1-3

(corresponding to Figure 3.8)

Codes

Name	Description	Files	References
Affective aspect of the job		23	42
Feeling insecure_afraid to be cancelled without informing in advance		1	1
Feeling insecure_reluctant to reject the projects		5	5
Rejecting the projects		3	3
Job insecurity_no guaranteed or consistent assignments		15	21
Morale and motivation		2	3
Requires discipline		2	2
Sense of belonging		2	3
Stressed and depressed		2	2
The FUN side of subtitling		5	5
Being an outsider		12	35
เพราะเขาไม่ได้ inform เรานัดนั้นนะค่ะ		1	1
เพราะว่าเป็น freelance นะ เราไม่ได้เข้าไปนั่งในบริษัทเขา ~~ผู้วิจัย~ อิมอี ~S2 I1~ เราไม่ได้เป็น employee เขา เขาไม่ได้มีแบบ record อะไรเกี่ยวกับเราเลย เพราะฉะนั้น สิ่งที่เราจะมีให้เขาได้คือความเชื่อใจ แล้ว...แล้วเราก็ไปทำกับเขาแบบนี้ อะไรยังงี้ค่ะ		1	1
แต่อย่างอื่นนอกเหนือจากนี้ เช่นงบการเงินหรือนโยบายที่ลึกไปกว่านี้ [S10] ก็จะไม่มีแล้วค่ะ ก็อย่างที่บอกว่าเป็น part-time ที่ไม่ได้ติดต่อกับบริษัทนะค่ะ		1	1
แต่อันนี้คือหนูก็เข้าใจเนื่องจากว่าเรารู้สึกว่าเราเป็น freelance นะ หนูไม่สามารถจะบอกได้ว่าไม่บริษัทไม่ทำอย่างนี้ บริษัทไม่ทำอย่างนั้นนะค่ะ		1	1
แล้ว [S6] ก็ไม่เห็นความเปลี่ยนแปลงอะไรเท่าไรนะค่ะ เพราะว่าเราเป็นแค่หน้าแปล เขาไม่ค่อยบอก		1	1
ใช่ แล้วก็ไม่ว่าเขาจะมาให้ความสำคัญกับเราหรือป่าว ไม่รู้เลยว่าเขามองเราเป็นอะไร เป็นคนทำงานให้หรือป่าว		1	1
กลุ่มตัวอย่าง~ เพราะเราเป็นคนนอก		1	1
ถึงเปลี่ยนไป [S6] ก็ไม่ค่อยรู้หรอก		1	1
ประมาณว่าเป็นมดตัวเล็กๆ เรานึกอะไรไม่ออก (หัวเราะ)		1	1
ผมในฐานะที่เป็น freelance ที่ใช้บริการ ใช้งานของเขาแค่บางส่วนเนี่ย อาจจะเสนอแนะอะไรไม่ได้ แต่โครงสร้างภายใน ถ้าคิดว่ามีอะไรดีขึ้น แล้วนำเสนอมาให้ ก็ยินดีรับ (หัวเราะ)		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ เพราะเราเป็น freelance~~S2 I1~ นะ ~~ผู้วิจัย~ [S2] มองว่าที่เรายังงี้ เพราะเราเป็น freelance เขาคิดจะทำยังไงกับเราก็ทำอะไรยังงี้เธอ ~~S2 I1~ จะลด cost ต้นสังกัดอยากจะได้ cost แล้วเขาก็มาบีบกับเรา		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ เราก็กินส่วนของเรา เราก็กินได้มองว่าเราจำเป็นต้องรู้ภาพรวมถูกไหม~~S4 I1~ ใช่ คือผมมองว่าในแง่ ตรงทำที่ว่างงานมี แล้วเงินจ่ายตรงเวลา ผมโอเค แล้วได้ดังที่ตกลงกันไว้ ผมโอเค เพราะนาที่ละ 30 (บาท)เนี่ย ผมก็โอเค แพร่กับผมแล้ว เพราะ [Certified		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Benefits of working part-time as a subtitler		5	8
Building and maintaining trust		2	2
Capacity		27	78
Career		35	94
Career and future plans		35	75
Considering being an in-house subtitler		10	19
Changes in the company		31	81
CV1		11	27
CV3		1	2
MLP1		2	8
MLP2		3	4
MLP3		1	1
OTT1		17	37
OTT2		2	2
Common challenges		28	68
Consequences on health		9	13
Lower rate due to surplus & no pricing policy		5	6
Time consuming		1	1
Time frame		9	22
Unclear or lack of communication		4	7
Use of pivot language		12	19
Companies' profiles		18	41
Agents taking commissions		3	3
Company's structure & stability		1	2
Content in the catalogue & content acquisition & clients		11	13
Localisation depending on in-house or outsourcing		2	2
Localisation team structure		4	5
Pricing		2	2
Project management and flow (between company and subtitlers)		2	2
Quality subtitles		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Rates paid to subtitlers		4	6
Reputation		2	2
Timely content release		1	1
Competitors in the job market		19	40
Entering the market		7	11
Thriving and surviving		13	17
Considering quitting		1	3
Demographic details		35	131
S01		3	7
S02		3	11
S03		3	12
S04		3	12
S05		3	8
S06		3	12
S07		3	15
S08		3	13
S09		2	7
S10		3	14
S11		3	9
S12		3	11
Editors and QC team		4	6
Ethical aspect of subtitling		1	1
Experience working as an editor		9	21
Financial aspect of the job		24	63
Payment delay		1	1
Rate		11	28
Good workflows		1	1
Happiness and satisfaction		2	2
Human factors		30	123
In-house VS Freelance		13	28

Name	Description	Files	References
Knowledge in other foreign languages		13	19
Lack of resources for training		1	1
Lack of trust		2	2
Lack of welfare		0	0
Library VS Simulcast		5	16
Lost in mistranslations		1	1
Means of communication		21	47
(Occasional) face-to-face		1	3
Media localisation companies		4	5
Content acquisition		1	1
Working for media localisation companies		3	3
Miscellaneous		28	65
Changing people's perception of translation		3	3
Characteristics of good subtitlers		12	26
Fansubs		3	3
Personal connection and referrals		3	3
Problems experienced by others		1	1
Transferrable Skills		22	29
MT and other technologies		24	79
Google Translate		1	1
Needed tools		7	12
Subtitling programs or platforms		16	30
Negotiation power		3	6
Newbies VS experienced subtitlers		10	16
No contracts before the projects have started		4	4
No project assignments		2	2
No subtitles for some contents		1	1
Non-human factors		32	115
Non-subtitling AVT projects		2	2
Not worth		3	5

Name	Description	Files	References
Other translation-related jobs		28	33
OTT industry_overview		23	72
OTT service providers		0	0
Poor project management		1	1
Professionalism		5	7
Project coordinators		8	10
Project management		2	2
QC and QA		31	88
Comments from editors, QCers		19	44
Maintaining quality as perceived by subtitlers		15	19
No comments or feedback		7	10
Reasons for being a freelance subtitler		11	18
regulations		6	11
Relationship with other actors		12	21
S1 I2~ ตอนข้างเพิ่ม แต่ว่ามันไม่ได้หนักหนาขนาดนั้นนะอาจารย์		1	1
S10 I2~ ไม่มี ทุกอย่างที่ [S10] บอกพี่ [ชื่อผู้วิจัย] คือเกิดจากการ inform แบบ informal แล้วก็จับสังเกตเองละ		1	1
S11 I2~ มันเหมือนเป็นอะไรที่แบบคนไหนไม่ยอมออก แต่คนนอกอยากเข้า (หัวเราะ) เพราะว่าใครๆ ก็อยากทำ ส่วนมากแล้วใครฟังว่าแปลซัซๆ ก็จะ "หู้ว นำสนุกจิงเลย แปลซัซๆ" เขาไม่รู้หรือว่าจริงๆ แล้วมันแบบ เหน็ด เหน็ดไปเยอะ 10 ชั่วโมง (หัวเราะ)		1	1
S4 I1~ นอกนั้นผมไม่ค่อยเจอปัญหาอะไรนะครับ ถ้าว่า ... คือทุก genre ผมแปลได้หมด ~~ผู้วิจัย~ ละ ~S4 I1~ แต่ถ้าเวลามันมีบับบี้เนี่ย การที่เราจะทำให้งานมันออกมาเนียนแบบที่เราต้องการ มันก็ยาก		1	1
S6 I1~ อยู่ๆ ก็ทะเลไรอย่างเนี่ย หายไปเลย		1	1
S8 I3~ ไซ้ ซึ่งหนูจะชอบนะคะ หนู impressed กับวิธีที่ [Certified Vendor 1] ทำ เพราะว่านักแปลเขาก็อยู่กับบริษัทนาน เป็นเหมือนเป็นเพื่อนร่วมงานที่ไม่ได้เจอกันละละ ~~ผู้วิจัย~ ต่อให้เป็น freelance ก็เถอะเนอะ ~S8 I3~ ไซ้ แล้วเราก็รู้สึกว่ามีส่วนในบริษัทอ้อ		1	1
S9 I1~ ก็แบบหนึ่งๆ บางที ... มีอยู่ช่วงหนึ่งที่ทำงานหนักมากแล้วปวดช่วงนี้ (ชี้ให้ดูจุดที่มีอาการปวด) ก็จะมี ไซ้ แล้วข้อเสีย ผมว่างานมันค่อนข้างมีความกดดันสูง อะไรอย่างเนี่ย ถือว่าเป็นข้อเสียได้ไหมครับ		1	1
Saliency Analysis		4	4
Security		3	4
Seeing subtitling as art		1	1
Stakeholders in the Network		3	3
Subtitling Process		31	75
Process not affected by changes		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Subtitling projects		25	56
Genre or content of the projects		0	0
Time Flexibility		4	4
Value-added		6	7
Viewers		5	6
Subtitles are not necessary for some viewers		1	2
viewer attitude about copyright		1	1
Working in team		18	40
Changes within team		3	3
แต่เพราะว่าเหมือนจริงๆ แล้ว [S6] ก็ไม่เห็นความเปลี่ยนแปลงอะไรทำไรนะคะ เพราะว่าเราเป็นแค่นักแปล เขาไม่ค่อยบอก		1	1
แต่โครงสร้างภายใน ถ้าคิดว่ามีอะไรดีขึ้น แล้วนำเสนอมาให้ ก็ยินดีครับ (หัวเราะ) แต่คือ ณ จุดนี้ในส่วนที่เราใช้งานอยู่นี้ ผมเชื่อว่ามันดีและลงตัว แล้วไม่ได้ต้องการเห็นการเปลี่ยนแปลงอะไรที่ตัวเองสามารถเสนอได้ครับ ~~~ผู้วิจัย~ โอเค ~~~S5 I3~ ประมาณว่าเราเป็น		1	1
แต่ด้วยตัวแปรสำคัญอย่างเวลาเนี่ยลดลงครึ่งหนึ่ง ต่อให้งานจะลดลงก็เถอะครับ แต่มันจะมีความกดดันบางอย่างว่า ... คือสิ่งที่เราให้ความสำคัญที่สุดคือทำให้มันเสร็จ แต่ไม่ได้ทำให้มันดีนะครับ พุดง่าย ๆ แล้วก็		1	1
แต่พอมายูในตำแหน่งที่เป็นคนแปลจริงๆ ก็คือเราไม่ได้รับผลกระทบกับปัญหาอะไรตรงนั้นเลย~~~ผู้วิจัย~ เพราะเราเป็น freelance ~~~S6 I1~ ไซ้ละ		1	1
ให้เป็นชัยๆ ไทยที่เหมือนเอา Google Translate มาให้เรา อะไรยังเงี้ย ซึ่งมัน มัน zero useful เลยอะ		1	1
ก็ตีตรงที่ว่าเขารับฟังและเขาพัฒนา เพื่อให้งานของทั้งตัวเราเองแล้วก็ตัวเขาทำงานได้ง่ายขึ้นด้วยครับ		1	1
ก็มี [ชื่อโปรแกรมใหม่] เนี่ยครับ ที่เล่าให้ฟังไปว่าทำให้การทำงานข้างสามเท่า		1	1
คือแต่ก่อนหนูยังโทรไปหาได้ว่าแบบ “ขอโทษนะคะ ตอนนี้ออกได้ content เกาหลีจิง งานมันเยอะมากใหม่” อย่างนั้นอย่างนี้ได้นะคะ ตอนนี่คือไม่ได้เลย แบบมันดูห่างไกลมาก (หัวเราะ)		1	1
คืองานเร่งหรือว่างานข้ามวันก็เป็นสิ่งที่เราควบคุมไม่ได้ มันก็ต้องขึ้นอยู่กับนายจ้างอยู่ดี ต่อให้ทำที่บริษัทใหม่มันก็ต้องมีทั้งงานเร่ง เร่งกว่าที่ควรจะเป็น หรือว่างานแบบที่ส่งแก๊ยะๆ คือต่อให้บริษัทมีเครื่องทุนแรงมันก็ต้องมี(งานลักษณะดังที่พูดมาข้างต้น)		1	1
คือตอนแรก [S10] ได้รับบริฟ โอเคก็เป็นลายลักษณ์อักษรเวลาเรติดต่อกัน อาจจะใช้ Messenger คุยกัน แต่มันก็ไม่ได้ดีเทียบเท่ากับอะไรก็ตามที่มันเป็นชิ้นออกมา เป็น product ออกมาว่าโอเคยูรับสั่งนี้ไป ไปไปศึกษา แล้วยูก็ผลิตงานออกมาส่งกลับไปบริษัทยังงี้ๆ นะ คือหนู		1	1
คือตอนนี้ไม่ได้ขึ้นอยู่กับผมไป ขึ้นอยู่กับที่เขาส่งงานมาให้		1	1
ช่วงที่ผ่านมามีเหมือนว่าเขารั้ง 2 คนเลยนะคะ จะให้เวลาทำงานน้อยลง เหมือนจากแต่ก่อนที่แบบ 4 วันเอา อะไอย่างเนี่ย แต่หลังๆ มาเนี่ยแบบวัน สองวันเอา เหมือนให้เวลาทำงานน้อยลง สั่งงานชื่อนเยอะขึ้น จะเอางานเร็วขึ้น อย่างเนี่ยละ		1	1
ซึ่งถ้าเกิดมาชี้ให้ผมทำเร็วๆ ผมจะลน พอผมลนแน่นอนว่าเวลาโดนเร่งทำงาน มันจะต้องผิด มันจะต้องไม่ผ่านการคิด มันจะต้องไม่อะไร อาจารย์น่าจะเคยเจองานนักศึกษาที่อ่านแล้วรู้เลยว่าทำแบบ last minute มาส่งจริงๆ มันจะเป็นประมาณนั้นแหละครับ คือแบบมีส่งแล้วเอาไปเดี๋ยวยอะไ		1	1
ซึ่งหนูนะชอบนะคะ หนู impressed กับวิธีที่ [Certified Vendor 1] ทำ เพราะว่านักแปลเขาก็อยู่กับบริษัทนาน เป็นเหมือนเป็นเพื่อนร่วมงานที่ไม่ได้เจอกันนะคะ		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
ผู้วิจัย~ (หัวเราะ) เข้าใจ ก็คือ ... แต่ก็มองว่าในตัว [ชื่อโปรแกรมใหม่] ก็มีทั้งบวกและลบ~~S7 I1~ มันก็ทำให้ทุกอย่างเร็วขึ้นนะครับ แต่เร็วขึ้นมันไม่ได้แปลว่าดีขึ้น ไซ		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ ตะ เพราะฉะนั้นมันก็เป็นอาชีพเสริมที่ดูแล้วเป็นยังไงคะ ยังโอเคอยู่ไหม~~S4 I2~ โอเค แต่ไม่มีความมั่นคง ว่าอย่างนี้ดีกว่า		1	1
มันคือ Google Translate แยกว่า Google Translate อีก คือ Google Translate อาจจะมีแบบเข้าใจบ้าง แต่ก็คือแบบไม่เข้าใจเลย		1	1
มันจะมี threat บางอย่างก็คือ ... (หัวเราะ) เราก็ไม่รู้ว่าจะคอนโทรลงานมันมีเท่าไรนะ		1	1

**Appendix I Results from second coding from Interviews 1-3
(corresponding to Figure 3.9)**

NB: The word 'theme' in the table is not used to denote a fully realised theme that tells a compelling story according to Braun and Clarke's conceptualisation. Rather it is more like a 'bucket theme' (without a central organising idea).

Codes

Name	Description	Files	References
Attention to details		1	2
Being a perfectionist		1	1
Capacity & subtitling projects_Capacity		29	84
S01		3	8
S02		2	5
S03		2	5
S04		3	7
S05		3	8
S06		3	8
S07		1	2
S08		3	11
S09		2	6
S10		2	6
S11		3	11
S12		2	6
Capacity & subtitling projects_Subtitling projects		27	62
S01		3	6
S02		1	5
S03		2	3
S04		3	5
S05		3	7
S06		3	5
S07		2	5

Name	Description	Files	References
S08		3	7
S09		2	5
S10		1	2
S11		3	10
S12		1	2
challenges_jokes and puns		1	1
Communication		1	2
Demographic details, working experience		35	188
No project assignments		2	2
Non-subtitling AVT projects		2	2
Other translation-related jobs		28	33
Reasons for being a freelance subtitler		12	20
S01		3	7
S02		3	11
S03		3	12
S04		3	12
S05		3	8
S06		3	12
S07		3	15
S08		3	13
S09		2	7
S10		3	14
S11		3	9
S12		3	11
Employers' profiles		20	53
Agencies taking commissions or giving unfair rates		5	6
Company's structure & stability		1	2
Content in the catalogue & content acquisition & clients		12	16
Key players (employers) in the market		1	1
Localisation depending on in-house or outsourcing		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Localisation team structure		4	5
Project management and flow (between company and subtitlers)		2	2
Quality subtitles		1	1
Rates paid to subtitlers		5	7
Remuneration		2	2
Reputation		3	3
Timely content release		1	1
Individual freelancer vs group vendor		1	1
In-house editors work in team		1	1
Looking for a new employer		1	1
Miscellaneous		30	123
Changing people's perception of translation		3	3
Characteristics of good subtitlers		12	26
Fansubs		3	3
Issues of trust		3	3
Knowledge in other foreign languages		13	19
Lost in mistranslations		1	1
No subtitles for some contents		1	2
Personal connection and referrals		4	4
Problems experienced by others		1	1
Pros and cons in-house VS Freelance		13	31
Seeing subtitling as art		1	1
Transferrable Skills		22	29
Priority for QC		2	4
QC team place priority on accuracy and spelling		1	1
S11 I11~ อ้อ ประมาณ 9 ชั่วโมงละ		1	1
Saliency Analysis		5	5
Self-reliance		1	1
Speculations		3	3
Theme 1 - Common challenge - time consuming		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Theme 1 - Common challenge - time frame		10	24
S9 I1~ ก็แบบหนึ่งๆ บางที ... มีอยู่ช่วงหนึ่งที่ทำงานหนักมากแล้วปวดช่วงนี้ (ซึ่งให้จุดที่มีอาการปวด) ก็จะมี ไซ้ แล้วข้อเดียว ผมว่างานมันค่อนข้างมีความกดดันสูง อะโรยอย่างเนี่ย ถือว่าเป็นข้อเสียได้ไหมครับ		1	1
ช่วงที่ผ่านมามีเหมือนว่าเขาก็ 2 คนเลยนะอะ จะให้เวลาทำงานน้อยลง เหมือนจากแต่ก่อนที่แบบ 4 วันเอา อะโรยอย่างเนี่ย แต่หลังๆ มาเนี่ยจะแบบวัน สองวันเอา เหมือนให้เวลาทำงานน้อยลง สั่งงานข้อนะขึ้น จะเอางานเร็วขึ้น อย่างเนี่ยอะ		1	1
Theme 1 - Common challenge - types of projects		7	21
Library		3	3
Simulcast & fast track		5	16
แต่ด้วยตัวแปรสำคัญอย่างเวลาเนี่ยลดลงครึ่งหนึ่ง ต่อให้งานจะลดลงก็เถอะครับ แต่มันจะมีความกดดันบางอย่างว่า ... คือสิ่งที่เราให้ความสำคัญที่สุดคือทำให้มันเสร็จ แต่ไม่ได้ทำให้มันดีนะครับ พุดง่ายๆ แล้วก็		1	1
ซึ่งถ้าเกิดมาชี้ให้ผมทำเร็วๆ ผมจะสนใจ ผมสนใจแน่นอนว่าเวลาโดนเร่งทำงาน มันจะต้องคิด มันจะต้องไม่ผ่านการคิด มันจะต้องไม่อะไร อาจารย์น่าจะเคยเจองานนักศึกษาที่อ่านแล้วรู้เลยว่าทำแบบ last minute มาส่งจริงๆ มันจะเป็นประมาณนั้นแหละครับ คือแบบมีส่งแล้วไอเดียอะไร		1	1
Theme 1 - Common challenge - use of pivot language		13	22
S1 I2~ ตอนข้างเพิ่ม แต่ว่ามันไม่ได้หนักหนาขนาดนั้นนะอาจารย์		1	1
Theme 1 - Human actors - pivot language translators		2	2
Theme 1 - Human actors - project coordinators (important actors)		23	70
S11 I2~ Human factors จะมีผลก็ต่อเมื่อมัน extreme มาก เช่นที่เคยเล่าให้ฟังว่าแปลโปรเจกต์ของ [Pay TV Provider 2] แล้วคนให้งานตกลงวันเวลาแล้วก็แล้ว ไม่ส่งงานมาให้ นั่นแหละ มันจะเพิ่มความเครียด		1	1
เพราะฉะนั้นคนนั้นเหมือนเป็นกุญแจสำคัญ แต่อันนี้อาจจะเป็นเพราะเป็นวิธีการทำงานที่ [Certified Vendor 1] ซึ่ง [S11] ก็ไม่รู้ว่าจะมันเป็นที่อื่นเนี่ยจะมี contact points ที่ contact แต่ ของ [Certified Vendor 1] เนี่ยจะมี contact point แค่นั้นเดียวอะ เราจะไม่เคย		1	1
คือตอนแรก [S10] ใต้บริบท โอเคก็เป็นลายลักษณ์อักษรเวลาเราติดต่อกัน อาจจะใช้ Messenger คุยกัน แต่มันก็ไม่ได้ดีเทียบเท่ากับอะไรก็ตามที่มีเป็นชิ้นออกมา เป็น product ออกมาว่าโอเคยอมรับสิ่งนี้ไป ไปศึกษา แล้วเขาก็ผลิตงานออกมาส่งกลับไปที่บริษัทจริงๆ นะ คือหนู		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ มันก็เหมือนกับเป็นตัวกลางที่สำคัญมากระหว่างบริษัทกับนักแปล ~S11 I1~ มาก ไซ้ ซึ่งทำให้หนักแปลเป็นบ้าได้เลยถ้าเกิดไม่ดี		1	1
Theme 2 - Affective aspect		25	49
Affective aspect - feeling insecure_afraid to be cancelled without informing in advance		1	1
Affective aspect - feeling insecure_no guaranteed or consistent assignments		16	22
Affective aspect - feeling insecure_reluctant to reject the projects		5	5
Rejecting the projects		3	3
Affective aspect - FUN		5	5
Affective aspect - happiness and satisfaction		2	2
Affective aspect - morale and motivation		2	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Affective aspect - passion		1	2
Affective aspect - requires discipline		2	2
Affective aspect - sense of belonging		2	3
Affective aspect - stressed and depressed		2	2
Theme 2 - Being an outsider (having a hybrid status)		13	41
เพราะเขาไม่ได้ inform เรานานนั้นนะค่ะ		1	1
เพราะว่าเป็น freelance นะ เราไม่ได้เข้าไปนั่งในบริษัทเขา ~~~~~ผู้วิจัย~ อิมอี ~~~S2 I1~ เราไม่ได้เป็น employee เขา เขาไม่ได้มีแบบ record อะไรเกี่ยวกับเราเลย เพราะฉะนั้น สิ่งที่เราจะมีให้เขาได้คือความเชื่อใจ แล้ว...แล้วเราก็ไปทำกับเขาแบบนี้ อะไรยังงี้ค่ะ		1	1
แต่โครงสร้างภายใน ถ้าคิดว่ามีอะไรดีขึ้น แล้วนำเสนอมาให้ ก็ยินดีครับ (หัวเราะ) แต่คือ ณ จุดนี้ในส่วนที่เราใช้งานอยู่นี้ ผมเชื่อมั่นดีและลงตัว แล้วไม่ได้ต้องการเห็นการเปลี่ยนแปลงอะไรที่ตัวเองสามารถเสนอได้ครับ ~~~~~ผู้วิจัย~ โอเค ~~~S5 I3~ ประมาณว่าเราเป็นม		1	1
แต่ผมอยู่ในตำแหน่งที่เป็นคนแปลจริงๆ ก็คือเราไม่ได้รับผลกระทบกับปัญหาอะไรตรงนั้นเลย ~~~~~ผู้วิจัย~ เพราะเราเป็น freelance ~~~S6 I1~ ใช่มั้ย		1	1
แต่อย่างอื่นนอกเหนือจากนี้ เช่นงบการเงินหรือนโยบายที่ลึกไปกว่านี้ [S10] ก็จะไม่ทราบแล้วค่ะ ก็อย่างที่บอกว่าเป็น part-time ที่ไม่ได้ติดโดยตรงกับบริษัทนะค่ะ		1	1
แต่อันนี้คือหนูก็เข้าใจเนื่องจากว่าเรารู้สึกว่าเราเป็น freelance นะ หนูไม่สามารถจะบอกว่าทำไม่บริษัทไม่ทำอย่างนี้ บริษัทไม่ทำอย่างนั้นอะค่ะ		1	1
แล้ว [S6] ก็ไม่เห็นความเปลี่ยนแปลงอะไรทำไรนะค่ะ เพราะว่าเราเป็นแค่นักแปล เขาไม่ค่อยบอก		1	1
ใช่ แล้วก็ไม่รู้ว่าเขาจะมาให้ความสำคัญกับเราหรือป่าว ไม่รู้เลยว่าเขามองเราเป็นอะไร เป็นคนทำงานให้หรือป่าว		1	1
กลุ่มตัวอย่าง~ เพราะเราเป็นคนนอก		1	1
ถึงเปลี่ยนไป [S6] ก็ไม่ค่อยรู้หรอก		1	1
ประมาณว่าเราเป็นมดตัวเล็กๆ เรายังทำอะไรไม่ออก (หัวเราะ)		1	1
ผมในฐานะที่เป็น freelance ที่ใช้บริการ ใช้งานของเขาแค่บางส่วนเนี่ย อาจจะเสนอแนะอะไรไม่ได้ แต่โครงสร้างภายใน ถ้าคิดว่ามีอะไรดีขึ้น แล้วนำเสนอมาให้ ก็ยินดีครับ (หัวเราะ)		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ เพราะเราเป็น freelance ~~~S2 I1~ ค่ะ ~~~~~ผู้วิจัย~ [S2] มองว่าทำเป็นยังงี้ เพราะเราเป็น freelance เขาคิดจะยุ่งยากกับเราก็ทำอะไรยังงี้หรือ ~~~S2 I1~ จะลด cost ต้นสังกัดอยากจะได้ cost แล้วเขาก็มาบีบกับเรา		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ เราก็กินในส่วนของเรา เราก็กินได้มองว่าเราจำเป็นต้องรู้ภาพรวมถูกไหม ~~~S4 I1~ ใช่มั้ย ผมมองว่าในแง่ ตราบเท่าที่ว่างงานมี แล้วเงินจ่ายตรงเวลา ผมโอเค แล้วได้ตั้งคำถามที่ตกลงกันไว้ ผมโอเค เพราะหน้าที่ละ 30 (บาท)เนี่ย ผมก็โอเค แพร่กับผมแล้ว เพราะ [Certified		1	1
Theme 2 - Career-related issues		35	115
Benefits of working part-time as a subtitler		5	8
Career and future plans		35	75
Considering quitting		1	3
Ever considering being an in-house subtitler or not		11	20

Name	Description	Files	References
Security		3	4
Time Flexibility		3	3
ผู้วิจัย~ค่ะ เพราะฉะนั้นมันก็เป็นอาชีพเสริมที่ดูแล้วเป็นยังไงคะ ยังโอเคอยู่ไหม~~S4 I2~ โอเค แต่ไม่มีความมั่นใจ ว่าอย่างนี้ดีกว่า		1	1
มันจะมี threat บางอย่างก็คือ ... (หัวเราะ) เราก็ไม่รู้ว่าจะตอนไหนงานมันมีเท่าไรนะ		1	1
Theme 2 - Common challenge - consequences on health		9	15
Theme 2 - Common challenge - lack of negotiation power		3	6
Theme 2 - Ethical aspect		1	1
Theme 2 - Ethics_professionalism		5	6
Theme 2 - Experience working as an editor, rechecker		9	21
S04 - rechecker		2	5
S05		1	1
S06		2	3
S08		3	11
S12		1	1
Theme 2 - Human actors - myself and my health		7	14
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - environment (home vs outside)		5	6
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - ergonomically suitable desk		2	3
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - full-time job		8	12
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - Google Translate		1	1
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - Internet		6	7
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - knowledge in original source language		1	1
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - language skills		1	1
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - misc.		2	2
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - needed tools		8	14
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - pet		1	2
Theme 2 - Non-human actors - recreational activities		1	1
Theme 2 - Process quality - subtitling process		31	76
Process not affected by changes		1	1
S01		3	11

Name	Description	Files	References
S02		2	6
S03		2	7
S04		3	5
S05		3	4
S06		3	8
S07		3	9
S08		3	4
S09		2	7
S10		2	4
S11		3	6
S12		2	4
Theme 2- Non-human actors - dictionaries, Thesaurus		2	3
Theme 3 - Changes in the company		31	81
CV1		11	27
CV3		1	2
MLP1		2	8
MLP2		3	4
MLP3		1	1
OTT1		17	37
OTT2		2	2
Theme 3 - Common challenge - no contracts before the projects have started		4	4
Theme 3 - Common challenge - unclear or lack of communication		6	9
S6 I1~ อยู่ๆ ก็ทะเลาะไรอย่างเห็น หายไปเลย		1	1
แต่เพราะว่าเหมือนจริงๆ แล้ว [S6] ก็ไม่เห็นความเปลี่ยนแปลงอะไรเท่าไรนะคะ เพราะว่าเราเป็นแค่นักแปล เขาไม่ค่อยบอก		1	1
Theme 3 - Financial aspect		25	75
A job with decent income (for full-time freelance subtitlers)		2	4
Accepting jobs with reasonable pay or no hassles		6	8
Another (good) source of income		4	4
Change of subtitling rate (policy)		5	9

Name	Description	Files	References
Decreasing assigned projects = decreasing income		2	4
Financially affected from the company's policy (not to hire vendors)		3	3
Good pay = higher motivation		2	4
Hunting for companies with better rates		1	1
Long payment processing time		3	3
Low pay = lower quality and vice versa		3	6
Lower and lower rates as more competitors in the job market		1	1
Lower income due to management		2	3
Pay raise (based on good performance)		3	6
Rate lower than that of interpreters		1	1
Relatively lower rate for some shows (genre, level of difficulty)		4	6
Tax issues		2	2
There should be negotiations or reconsiderations for fair rate		4	5
Unfair rates, agencies taking commissions		2	2
You won't be rich doing this.		1	1
ถ้าเราอยู่เรื่อยๆ ของเรา แต่ถ้าเราอยากรวยนะพี่ (หัวเราะ) มันจะไม่ได้อะไร		1	1
Theme 3 - Human actors - clients of employers		2	2
Theme 3 - Human actors - editors and QC team (e.g. recheckers)		16	42
Theme 3 - Human actors - employers		1	1
Theme 3 - Human actors - the whole network (as human rather than non-human)		1	2
Theme 3 - Means of communication		24	74
(Occasional) face-to-face		2	4
Automatic web application system		2	2
Email		2	2
Facebook Messenger		1	1
LINE messages		8	10
Phone calls		2	2
S01		3	12
S02		1	3
S03		2	3

Name	Description	Files	References
S04		3	3
S05		2	6
S06		2	2
S07		2	2
S08		1	2
S09		2	3
S10		2	3
S10 I2~ ไม่มี ทุกอย่างที่ [S10] บอกที่ [ชื่อผู้วิจัย] คือเกิดจากการ inform แบบ informal แล้วก็จับสังเกตเองค่ะ		1	1
S11		1	1
S12		2	3
Sending feedback & informing when faced with problems or struggles		2	4
Shared documents or glossary		4	5
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - computer (hardware, operating system)		4	5
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - lists or software (idioms, frequently-used expressions, etc.)		1	1
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - monetary rewards		4	5
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - MT, machine-translated subtitles, AI		16	35
S5 I3~ แม้ว่าอันนี้ถ้าเกิดเป็นคนที่ไม่ได้ทำงานแปลอยู่ เขาอาจจะคิดอย่างนั้นได้ เพราะเขาคิดว่าแปลได้ก็จบ แต่เอาจริงๆ แล้วการแปลมันก็มีเรื่องความเป็นมนุษย์ในภาษาแปลกลับ ที่แบบ machine คงต้องเรียนเยอะมากแหละ กว่าจะถึงจุดนั้น เราก็คงยังไม่ตกงานง่ายๆ หรือ (หัวเราะ)		1	1
ให้เป็นชั้นๆ ไทยที่เหมือนเอา Google Translate มาให้เรา อะไรยังเจ๊ยย ซึ่งมัน มัน zero useful เลยอะ		1	1
ก็มี [ชื่อโปรแกรมใหม่] เนี่ยครับ ที่เล่าให้ฟังไปว่าทำให้การทำงานช้าลงสามเท่า		1	1
มันคือ Google Translate แยกว่า Google Translate อีก คือ Google Translate อาจจะมันแบบเข้าใจบ้าง แต่ที่คือแบบไม่เข้าใจเลย		1	1
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - quality of subtitle files (time code, etc.)		1	1
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - regulations and guidelines		7	14
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - shared documents, glossary		9	12
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - subtitling programs or platforms		24	53
S2 I3~ ใช่ค่ะ เพราะว่าถ้าในแง่ของการแปล มันก็ขึ้นอยู่กับทักษะของแต่ละคนเลยอะ ~~ผู้วิจัย~ [S2] มองว่าเครื่องมือไม่สำคัญเท่าทักษะหรือเปล่า~~S2 I3~ ใช่		1	1
ก็ตรงที่ว่าเขารับฟังและเขาพัฒนา เพื่อให้งานของทั้งตัวเราเองแล้วก็ตัวเขาทำงานได้ง่ายขึ้นด้วยครับ		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
<p>ต้องการหรือว่างานมาข้ามันก็เป็นสิ่งที่เราควบคุมไม่ได้ มันก็ต้องขึ้นอยู่กับนายจ้างอยู่ดี</p> <p>ต่อให้ทำที่บริษัทใหม่มันก็ต้องมีทั้งงานแรง เร่งกว่าที่ควรจะเป็น หรือว่างานแบบที่ส่งแยะๆ</p> <p>คือต่อให้บริษัทมีเครื่องมือแรงมันก็ต้องมี(งานลักษณะดังที่พูดมาข้างต้น)</p>		1	1
Theme 3 - Non-human actors - training sessions		3	3
<p>Theme 3 - Non-human actors - ผู้วิจัย~ (หัวเราะ) เข้าใจ ก็คือ ... แต่ก็มองว่าในตัว [ชื่อโปรแกรมใหม่]</p> <p>ก็มีทั้งบวกและลบ~~S7 I1~ มันก็ทำให้ทุกอย่างเร็วขึ้นนะครับ แต่เร็วขึ้นมันไม่ได้แปลว่าดีขึ้น ไซ้</p>		1	1
Theme 3 - Process quality - good workflows		1	1
Theme 3 - Process quality - project management		6	6
Theme 3 - QC and QA		31	117
Comments from editors, QCers (areas of comments, frequency, means of passing on comments, etc.)		22	50
Communicating with team members		2	3
Lack of resources for training		4	8
Leveraging tools and technologies		4	4
Maintaining quality as perceived by subtitlers		15	19
No comments or feedback after submission		7	12
QC within team		1	1
Reviewing and evaluating subtitlers		6	6
Roles of editors and recheckers		5	6
Screening and testing (both subtitlers and editors)		4	5
Subtitlers communicate with editors		1	1
The employer's quality standards (in relation to rate of pay, cost-cutting)		2	2
Theme 4 - Common challenge - lower rate due to surplus & no pricing policy		5	6
Theme 4 - Competitors, competitions in the job market		22	71
Entering the market		8	13
More competition = higher quality		2	2
Newbies VS experienced subtitlers		10	16
<p>S11 I2~ มันเหมือนเป็นอะไรที่แบบคนไหนไม่ยอมออก แต่คนนอกอยากเข้า (หัวเราะ) เพราะว่าใครๆ ก็อยากทำ</p> <p>ส่วนมากแล้วใครฟังว่าแปลซับฯ ก็จะ "ฮู้ว น่าสนุกจังเลย แปลซับฯ" เขาไม่รู้หรอกว่าจริงๆ แล้วมันแบบ เหน็ด</p> <p>นั่งไปทะเละ 10 ชั่วโมง (หัวเราะ)</p>		1	1
Thriving and surviving		14	20
Value-added		6	7
Theme 4 - OTT industry_overview		24	73

Name	Description	Files	References
Themes 1, 3 - Non-human actors - English subtitles (delay, mistranslated, lacking nuances)		7	10
Themes 1, 3 - Non-human actors - original source language		1	1
Themes 1,3 - Human actors - relationship with other actors		29	165
Close relationship = 'inside' news		1	1
Companies want to maintain relationships with subtitlers		4	7
Editors		8	13
Editors (+coordinators)		3	5
Efficient staff = positive effect		1	1
Family members		2	4
Interactions with members in a company- or agency- assigned ad-hoc team		10	12
Interactions with members within self-formed team	self-formed team acting as one unit of vendor	11	38
Maintaining good relationship and making sure to produce quality subtitles		1	1
No face-to-face interactions on a regular basis		2	2
Other subtitlers in the same company		4	5
People who know the original source language or content knowledge		6	9
People who knows how to use programmes better than subtitlers		1	1
People who upload files		1	1
PM		5	10
Project coordinator + PM		4	5
Project coordinators		17	31
S8 I3~ โช้ ซึ่งหมู่ชะชอบนะคะ หนู impressed กับวิธีที่ [Certified Vendor 1] ทำ เพราะว่ามันแปลกเขาก็จะอยู่กับบริษัทนาน เป็นเหมือนเป็นเพื่อนร่วมงานที่ไม่ได้เจอกันนะคะ ~~~~~ผู้วิจัย~ ต่อให้เป็น freelance ก็เถอะเนอะ ~~~S8 I3~ โช้ แล้วเราก็รู้สึกว่ามีส่วนในบริษัทอ		1	1
Subtitlers tend to think their jobs don't involve a lot of people		10	13
คือแต่ก่อนหนูยังโทรไปหาได้ว่าแบบ “ขอโทษนะคะ ตอนนี้อายุได้ content เกาหลีจิง งานมันเยอะมากใหม่” อย่างนี้นู่นอย่างนี้ได้ละคะ ตอนนี่คือไม่ได้เลย แบบมันดูห่างไกลมาก (หัวเราะ)		1	1
ซึ่งหมู่ชะชอบนะคะ หนู impressed กับวิธีที่ [Certified Vendor 1] ทำ เพราะว่ามันแปลกเขาก็จะอยู่กับบริษัทนาน เป็นเหมือนเป็นเพื่อนร่วมงานที่ไม่ได้เจอกันนะคะ		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ คะ เหมือนเดิมเลย โอเค แล้วคนที่เราติดต่อสื่อสารด้วยละคะ ตั้งแต่วันจนกด submit เนี่ย มีใครบ้าง เปลี่ยนไปบ้าง ทั้ง 2 ที่เลย~~~S9 I2~ อ้อ ถ้าเป็นที่ [OTT1] ไม่เปลี่ยนครับ เหมือนเดิม ทุกอย่างเหมือนเดิมเลย		1	1
Themes 1,3 - Non-human actors - time frame, deadline		11	17

Name	Description	Files	References
S4 I1~ นอกนั้นผมไม่ค่อยเจอปัญหาอะไรนะครับ ตามว่า ... คือทุก genre ผมแปลได้หมด ~~~~~ผู้วิจัย~ ตะ ~~~S4 I1~ แต่ถ้าเวลาฉันมีบั้นเนี่ย การที่เราจะทำงานนี้ออกมาเนี่ยแบบที่เราต้องการ มันก็ยาก		1	1
Themes 1-3 - Non-human actors - content (genre, level of difficulty, expertise, personal preference, lines)		17	22
Value-added for freelance subtitlers		3	5
Viewers		5	6
Subtitles are not necessary for some viewers		1	2
viewer attitude about copyright		1	1

**Appendix J Codes from Interviews 1-3 (new coding) & Interviews 4-5
(corresponding to Figure 3.10)**

NB: The word 'theme' in the table is not used to denote a fully realised theme that tells a compelling story according to Braun and Clarke's conceptualisation. Rather it is more like a 'bucket theme' (without a central organising idea).

Codes

Name	Description	Files	References
0. Demographic details	e.g. age, education	18	22
S01		1	1
S02		1	1
S03		2	2
S04		2	3
S05		1	1
S06		2	2
S07		2	2
S08		2	3
S09		1	1
S10		1	2
S11		1	1
S12		2	3
00. Capacity and types of projects	participants' work practice in terms of capacity and types of projects they have been assigned / RQ1	51	215
limitations		6	6
S01		5	22
S02		5	10
S03		3	11
S04		4	11
S05		6	22
S06		5	30
S07		2	8

Name	Description	Files	References
S08		5	21
S09		2	14
S10		5	14
S11		5	24
S12		5	21
1. Project-related factors		53	703
1.1 content	content-related factors, e.g. genre, level of difficulty, number of lines	43	93
1.2 time constraint		31	70
1.2.1 deadline, time frame, work schedule		30	67
1.2.2 projects being time-consuming (ADD MORE DETAILS)		2	3
1.3 type of projects		9	31
1.3.1 library titles		5	6
1.3.2 simulcast & speedy projects		7	17
1.3.3 substitute or interim projects		6	8
1.4 regulations and guidelines (enforced for each individual project)		24	38
1.5 working as part of an 'ad-hoc' team		51	419
1.5.1 means and purpose of communication		41	129
(occasional) face-to-face		2	3
automatic web application system		4	5
email		17	24
Facebook Messenger		1	1
lacking face-to-face communication or shared workspace		2	3
LINE & WhatsApp messages		27	43
phone calls		6	7
shared documents or glossaries		23	40
Skype messages		3	3
1.5.2 people a subtitler communicates with		47	275
all involved people as a network		2	3
editor		32	67

Name	Description	Files	References
EN template translators		8	9
Financial manager		1	2
head of SV		1	1
HR		1	1
MD of the company		1	2
other translators (working on the same project)	e.g. those working on the same project and/or being in the same group (acting as a vendor)	14	21
people passing on feedback		1	1
people who are not their team members		2	2
people who uploaded files onto the subtitling platform		1	1
PM		13	51
project coordinator		36	92
resource manager		3	4
staff dealing with invoicing		1	1
team members (sharing workloads, asking for translation suggestions, moral support)		5	16
1.5.3 quality of communication		11	15
negative or neutral		9	11
positive		4	4
1.6 use of EN templates for shows in other foreign languages		23	49
1.6.1 quality and limitations of EN templates	Issues, such as mistranslations, lacking nuances	15	21
1.6.2 original language of the show		12	18
1.6.3 delayed delivery of EN templates		4	4
1.6.4 benefits of using EN templates		4	4
1.6.5 others		2	2
1.7 quality of files	aspects like time-codes, etc.	3	3
10. In Vivo codes		14	16
S02I2~ ไซ แล้วหนูว่ามีสะดากกว่าดู YouTube บางทีดู YouTube อยู่ดีๆ ก็เรื่องไม่ต่อกัน หาสิ่งที่ไม่เจอ หรือไม่ก็ ... เอ้อ อยู่ดีๆ ก็ซาเจเลย YouTube อะไอย่างเนี่ย~~ผู้วิจัย~ อ้อ ที่ว่านั่นมันก็เกือบด้วยปะ- YouTube นะ ที่เขาเอามาปล่อยไม่ถูกกฎหมายใช้ไหม~~S02		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
S0312~	ใช่ แต่มันก็เหมือนกำลังตื่นอะอาจารย์ หมายถึงว่าคือเราไม่ต้องเลิกงานทุกวันแล้วกลับเข้ามาแปลซันฯ คือมันไม่ได้เยอะ suffer แบบนั้นนะ~~ผู้วิจัย~ จริง ๆ เราก็ชอบด้วยใช่ไหมไม่ได้เยอะแบบกระหน่ำ~~S0312~ กำลังดี ใช่ กำลังดี~~ผู้วิจัย~ คือเรามีวันที่ไม่ด	1	1
S0911~	เสียงตัวเองของผมนะ มันไม่ได้มองว่าวันนี้ เดือนนี้เราอยู่ได้ หรือปีที่เราอยู่ได้ ผมมองไปว่าถ้าแต่งงาน มีครอบครัว เรามีลูกหรืออะไรอย่างเนี่ย~~ผู้วิจัย~ อืม ... ซึ่งทำซันฯ มันคงช่วยเราไม่ได้ใช่ไหม~~S0911~ มัน ... น่าเกลียดไหม~~ผู้วิจัย~ ไม่น่าเกลียด	1	1
S1112~	มันเหมือนเป็นอะไรที่แบบคนในไม่โยกออก แต่คนนอกอยากเข้า (หัวเราะ) เพราะว่าใครๆ ก็อยากทำ ส่วนมากเล่าให้ใครฟังว่าแปลซันฯ ก็จะมี "หัว นาสุนัขงเลย แปลซันฯ" เขาไม่รู้หรือว่าจริงๆ แล้วมันแบบ เพื่อ น่ะไปเพื่อ 10 ชั่วโมง (หัวเราะ)~~ผู้วิจัย~ มันต้องอึดประมาณ	1	1
S1211~	จริงๆ หนูรู้สึกว่าปัจจัยหลักที่มีผลต่อการทำงานเลยคือตัวเองเนี่ย คือไม่ว่าจะด้วยสภาพอากาศอะไรยังไง หนูก็จะสามารถมีปัญหาคิดตลอด (หัวเราะ)~~ผู้วิจัย~ คือวิเคราะห์ตัวเองว่าตัวเองเป็นคน ...~~S1211~ เป็นคนที่มี conflict กับทุกอย่างได้ (หัวเราะ) ~~ผู้วิจัย	1	1
แล้ว [S7]	ก็พูดอันหนึ่งซึ่งดีมากเลย บอกว่ามันทำให้การ manage เร็วขึ้นแต่เร็วขึ้นไม่ได้หมายความว่าดีขึ้น	1	1
แล้วปัจจัย human factors, non-human factors	มีอะไรจะเสริมอีกบ้างคะ ~~S0613~ ไม่มีนะคะ เพราะว่าอย่างที่ [S6] บอกว่าชอบงานนี้มากนะ ก็เลยแบบไม่ค่อยมีปัจจัยอะไรมาส่งผล (หัวเราะ)~~ผู้วิจัย~ คือเหมือนกับว่าตัวเราเป็นปัจจัยหลักที่สุดแล้วแหละ~~S0613~ ใช่~~ผู้วิจัย	1	1
ก็คือ ...	แต่ก็มองว่าในตัว [ชื่อโปรแกรมใหม่] ก็มีทั้งบวกและลบ~~S0711~ มันก็ทำให้ทุกอย่างเร็วขึ้นนะครับ แต่เร็วขึ้นมันไม่ได้แปลว่าดีขึ้น ใช่~~ผู้วิจัย~ เร็วขึ้นที่ช่วยกวนการทำงานของเรานะ การ manage project งานนะเร็วขึ้น ถูกไหม~~S0711~ การรับส่งงานเร็วขึ้น	1	1
ทั้งๆ ที่ freelance	อะ บางทีก็ต้องเจอเหตุการณ์ว่า วันที่ช้อ 40 นาที 2 ตอนได้ไหม~~ผู้วิจัย~ ก็คือแปล 40 นาทีใน 1 คืนยังเจียเจี้ยหรือ~~S0111~ ใช่ (หัวเราะ)	3	4
ผมเชื่อว่าที่เป็นอยู่อย่างนี้ดีแล้ว	แต่ถ้าถ้ามันจะมีอะไรดีขึ้น ผมในฐานะที่เป็น freelance ที่ให้บริการ ใช้งานของเขาแค่บางส่วนเนี่ย อาจจะเสนออะไรไม่ได้ แต่โครงสร้างภายใน ถ้าคิดว่ามีอะไรดีขึ้น แล้วนำเสนอมาให้ ก็ยินดีครับ (หัวเราะ) แต่คือ ณ จุดนี้ในส่วนที่	1	1
อะมองอนาคตการทำงานของเราอย่างไรในงานแปลซันฯ	ลักษณะ freelance เนี่ย~~S0711~ ถ้าถึงวันหนึ่ง AI มันแปลได้ทุกอย่าง มันก็ไม่ต้องมี translators แล้วนะ ใช่	1	1
11. Most significant changes in 2 years		11	34
11.1 full-time job		3	3
11.10 changing the coordinator		1	1
11.11 remuneration rate promotion		1	2
11.12 self-realisation		1	1
11.13 good relationship and trust building with company's staff (e.g. coordinator)		1	1
11.2 content, type of projects		1	4
11.3 changes in localisation policy		4	4

Name	Description	Files	References
11.4 own inconsistency (quality, volume, punctuality, etc.)		1	2
11.5 MT, AI		2	2
11.6 finding new passion		1	1
11.7 working for the 'wrong' or 'right' teams or commissioners		4	11
11.9 receiving positive reinforcement (passing the test)		1	2
12. It's complicated		2	2
2. Individual subtitler-internal factors		57	982
(A) those influenced by factors in other categories		57	683
2(A).01 money-related issues		45	97
S01		5	12
S02		3	5
S03		3	6
S04		2	8
S05		5	7
S06		5	13
S07		5	11
S08		3	5
S09		2	3
S10		4	8
S11		3	5
S12		5	14
2(A).02 perceived sense of (in)security, (lack of) negotiation power	e.g. afraid to be made redundant without being informed in advance, no guarantee of consistent assignments, reluctant to reject projects that don't suit them	37	77
2(A).03 other affective aspects (level of satisfaction, stress, etc.)		30	60
2(A).03.1 happiness, satisfaction, fulfill ambition		15	30
2(A).03.2 stress, pressure		6	6
2(A).03.3 boredom		1	1
2(A).03.4 motivation, morale		5	7

Name	Description	Files	References
2(A).03.5 sense of belonging	e.g. having 'ambivalent' status (feeling like an outsider sometimes, and insider some other times)	11	16
2(A).04 subtitling experience		56	134
S01		5	15
S02		5	10
S03		5	11
S04		5	10
S05		5	10
S06		5	21
S07		4	6
S08		5	9
S09		2	5
S10		5	15
S11		5	11
S12		5	11
2(A).05 editing, rechecking experience		16	49
S04		3	11
S05		3	8
S06		2	4
S08		4	11
S10		1	2
S10 (for her group, not for the company)		2	9
S12		1	4
2(A).06 reasons for being a freelance subtitler		14	21
S01		1	2
S02		2	3
S03		2	3
S04		1	1
S05		1	1
S06		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
S07		1	2
S08		1	1
S09		1	1
S10		1	3
S11		1	1
S12		1	2
2(A).07 career plans, goals		57	163
S01		5	24
S02		5	11
S03		5	15
S04		5	9
S05		5	11
S06		5	18
S07		5	12
S08		5	15
S09		2	10
S10		5	19
S11		5	9
S12		5	10
2(A).08 use of tools and technologies		25	47
2(A).09 communication with others while translating	e.g. when they need help with word choices or expressions	12	19
2(A).10 physical readiness		9	12
2(A).11 availability, volume (See also Capacity)		2	4
(B) those MAY be influenced by factors in other categories		50	299
2(B).02 full-time job		35	74
S01		4	8
S02		3	4
S03		2	4
S04		3	6

Name	Description	Files	References
S05		2	5
S06		4	11
S07		1	1
S08		4	13
S09		0	0
S10		4	7
S11		4	8
S12		3	5
2(B).03 part-time jobs, excl. subtitling for OTT		33	60
2(B).03.1 other translation jobs		24	35
2(B).03.2 non-translation jobs		20	25
2(B).04 having required language skills		2	3
2(B).05 having or lacking genre expertise		21	32
2(B).06 work ethics	e.g. being professional; self-discipline; being responsible to commissioners (such as delivering work as agreed), co-workers, viewers	15	20
S01		1	1
S02		1	3
S03		1	2
S04		2	2
S05		3	3
S07		3	3
S10		3	5
S11		1	1
2(B).07 passion for subtitling, subtitling being a dream job, labour of love		6	13
2(B).08 perception of subtitling & good subtitlers		14	46
2(B).08.1 subtitling		9	11
S04		1	1
S06		1	1
S07		2	3

Name	Description	Files	References
S08		1	1
S09		1	1
S10		1	2
S11		1	1
S12		1	1
2(B).08.2 good subtitlers (freelancers or otherwise)		13	35
S01		1	6
S02		1	4
S03		1	2
S04		1	6
S05		1	1
S06		1	1
S07		1	2
S08		1	1
S09		1	4
S10		1	3
S11		1	1
S12		1	3
2(B).09 health-related issues	e.g. tolls on health	13	21
2(B).10 value-added qualifications (CHECK AND CREATE SUB NODES)		8	10
2(B).10.1 knowledge in other foreign languages		16	23
2(B).10.2 others		3	4
2(B).11 preferred environment, surrounding while translating	e.g. at home or outside	8	9
2(B).12 their family members, SO, and friends		4	4
2(B).13 their pets		1	1
2(B).14 reliance on 'relaxant'	e.g. smoking, drinking	1	1
2(B).15 'distractions'		3	5
3. Commissioner-related factors		56	865
3.1 profile, reputation, company structure, stability		14	20

Name	Description	Files	References
CV1		5	6
CV3		1	1
CV4		2	3
CV5		1	1
CV7		1	4
MLP1		1	2
not specific		2	2
OTTP1		0	0
OTTP2		1	1
3.2 localisation policy, team structure, workflows, project management	incl. whether the commissioner focuses on in-house or outsourcing	33	85
3.2.2 cons of dealing with freelancers		1	1
CV1		16	33
CV2		3	3
CV3		1	1
CV4		3	6
CV7		1	6
MLP2		1	1
MLP4		2	9
not specific		3	4
OTTP1		8	16
OTTP2		3	3
OTTP4		1	1
SV1		1	1
3.3 QA and QC procedures & practice		49	298
3.3.1 criteria for QCing & QC procedures		20	29
CV1		11	14
CV3		1	3
CV4		1	1
CV7		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
MLP1		1	1
MLP4		1	1
OTTP1		6	7
SV1		1	1
3.3.10 recruiting editors or QCers		1	2
CV7		1	1
OTTP2		1	1
3.3.11 others		1	1
CV7		1	1
3.3.2 provision of feedback	e.g. from whom, areas of comments, frequency, means of communication	32	73
CV1		18	31
CV3		2	2
CV4		2	4
CV7		1	2
MLP1		1	3
MLP4		2	4
not specific		2	2
OTTP1		8	24
3.3.3 system enabling communication with other translators in the same project		1	2
CV1		1	2
3.3.4 training resources, sessions	e.g. online tutorials, training sessions	14	24
CV1		5	7
CV4		1	1
CV7		1	3
not specific		3	3
OTTP1		6	10
3.3.5 screening, recruiting procedures		16	21
CV1 (to work as freelance translators)		6	7
CV1 (to work as in-house editors)		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
CV4		1	1
CV7		1	1
MLP1		1	1
MLP4		1	1
not specific		1	1
OTTP1		6	7
3.3.6 reviewing subtitlers' performance	for pay raise, assignments of new projects, etc.	19	31
CV1		16	23
MLP1		1	1
MLP4		1	1
OTTP1		1	1
SV1		1	2
3.3.7 role of QC team (editor, rechecker, etc.)	why they are significant actors in the network	38	99
CV1		21	49
CV3		2	4
CV4		3	3
MLP1		1	1
MLP2		2	2
MLP4		2	3
not specific		5	9
OTTP1		12	25
SV1		1	1
3.3.8 assigning the right job to the right man		3	5
3.3.9 the commissioner's priority (fast delivery, accuracy, etc.)		8	11
CV1		4	7
not specific		1	1
OTTP1		3	3
3.4 remuneration and payment (incl. invoice handling)		32	67
CV1		17	30

Name	Description	Files	References
CV3		1	1
CV4		1	2
CV5		1	1
CV7		1	1
MLP1		2	2
MLP2		1	1
MLP4		1	5
not specific		3	7
OTTP1		8	12
OTTP2		3	4
SV1		1	1
3.5 subtitling & project management platforms, tools, and technologies		47	228
3.5.1 proprietary or open source tools		35	121
CV1		20	44
CV3		2	6
CV4		3	4
CV7		1	3
MLP1		2	6
MLP2		2	2
MLP3		1	5
MLP4		2	4
not specific		2	5
OTTP1		15	34
OTTP2		3	5
SV1		1	2
3.5.2 shared documents, glossaries		22	46
a cable TV provider		0	0
CV1		9	16
CV3		2	4

Name	Description	Files	References
CV4		2	4
CV7		1	3
MLP1		3	4
MLP4		1	3
OTTP1		5	8
OTTP2		1	1
SV1		2	3
3.5.3 MT, machine-translated subtitles, AI		22	61
CV1		4	20
not specific		3	4
OTTP1		17	35
OTTP2		2	2
3.6 clients	content acquisition, contracts with clients	12	27
CV1		6	11
CV2		1	1
CV3		2	2
CV4		2	2
MLP1		2	6
MLP2		1	1
MLP5		1	1
not specific		2	2
SV1		1	1
3.7 changes in the company, or changes initiated by the company		41	116
CV1		21	60
CV3		1	3
CV4		4	11
CV7		1	1
MLP1		1	2
MLP4		1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
OTTP1		16	35
SV1		2	2
3.8 formal contracts with freelancers		7	10
CV1		2	2
MLP1		1	1
MLP4		1	1
not specific		2	2
OTTP1		3	4
3.9 maintaining relationship with freelance subtitlers		9	14
CV1		8	12
MLP1		1	2
4. Thai OTT market-related factors		56	339
4.1 growth, potential for growth		33	55
4.1.1 growth in similar business (e.g. music streaming)		4	4
4.2 main players and competitions		28	66
4.2.1 main players and selling points of some providers	only those providers mentioned by the participants (expressing their opinions as viewers and/or practitioners)	20	45
ifix		5	7
LINE TV		2	2
Netflix		17	23
Viu		7	12
4.2.2 competitions		10	18
4.2.3 strategy - publishing content quickly		1	1
4.3 competition among subtitlers in the job market	both freelance & in-house but emphasise on freelancers	54	181
4.3.1 entering the job market		13	24
4.3.2 surviving and thriving		23	32
4.3.3 more competition = lower rate (which MAY lead to lower quality)	due to surplus, no standard pricing policy, etc.	13	16
4.3.4 more competition = higher quality		5	5
4.3.5 opportunities for new entrants vs, experienced subtitlers		38	63

Name	Description	Files	References
4.3.6 value-added qualifications (so as to be hired)		7	10
4.3.7 job market where no one (voluntarily) leaves & attracting newcomers		6	6
4.3.8 personal connections or referrals		17	18
4.3.9 freelance editors vs freelance subtitlers	why participants prefer being subtitlers than editors	1	1
4.4 viewer-related factors	e.g. subtitles are not always needed by certain demographics, not or possible to produce for some genres	22	31
4.5 volume of content that needs to be localised at the time	e.g. 'high' and 'low' seasons	6	6
5. Three-Dimensional Quality		54	311
5.1 product quality		13	17
5.1.1 good VS poor subtitles		3	3
5.1.1.1 view as a consumer		10	17
5.1.2 tools and technologies		12	14
5.2 process quality		54	228
5.2.1 participants' subtitling process		45	132
S01		5	23
S02		3	6
S03		2	8
S04		4	9
S05		4	9
S06		5	15
S07		3	7
S08		5	11
S09		2	9
S10		3	10
S11		5	10
S12		4	15
5.2.2 within-group QC measures		2	4
5.2.3 tools and technologies		35	69
5.2.4 significance of prompt feedback (ADD MORE)		9	12

Name	Description	Files	References
5.2.5 monetary rewards as motivation (See also-motivation and morale, money-related issues)		4	8
5.2.6 other limitations (See also- time constraint)		2	2
5.3 social quality		25	66
5.3.1 informal interactions with the company, its staff	e.g. personal relationship, access to 'inside' news, company's way to maintain relationship with freelancers	11	15
5.3.2 formal interactions with the company, its staff	e.g. as part of workflows, project management, etc.	8	11
5.3.3 tools and technologies		10	11
5.3.4 company's efficient staff = freelancers' positive experience		6	7
5.3.5 within-group QC measures		2	5
5.3.6 'unavoidable' problems		1	2
5.3.7 subtitlers tend to think their job doesn't involve other people		12	15
6. Sustainability	factors likely to affect the network in long-term	19	41
6.1 unfair treatments towards other subtitlers or commissioners		6	10
6.2 negotiations for fair, standard rate	done through associations, or collective bargaining	7	11
6.3 no welfare		4	4
6.4 possibility of being replaced by machine (ADD MORE)		4	4
6.5 no career progress, career path		2	2
6.6 reasonable pricing and good quality are keys to success in this business		1	2
6.7 You won't be rich doing this.		1	1
6.8 vendor model		4	5
6.9 'subcontracting'		1	2
7. Other aspects of subtitling as a freelance gig		41	133
7.1 issues of relationship and trust		15	31
7.2 challenges while subtitling (excl. regulations and guidelines-related issues)		20	32
7.2.1 cultural references		8	10
7.2.2 characteristics of the Thai language		4	5
7.2.3 mistakes in EN templates		6	6

Name	Description	Files	References
7.2.4 jokes and word plays		4	5
7.2.5 no subtitles provided (aka from-screen translation)		2	2
7.2.6 technical terms or concepts		1	1
7.2.7 technical problems	e.g. problems with files, templates, etc.	1	1
7.2.8 maintaining 'flavour'		1	2
7.3 pros and cons of working as in-house staff VS freelancer		14	36
7.4 benefits of working part-time as a freelance subtitler		3	4
7.5 transferrable skills between subtitling and other (full time and part-time) jobs		23	30
8. Misc.		20	26
8.1 people's perception of translation		5	7
8.2 fansubs		9	10
8.3 Google Translate		2	2
8.4 tax-related issues		7	7
9. Answers showing 'salience'		7	19
S0614~ ไซ้ คงทำแปลไปตลอดไม่ได้ มันไม่รู้ว่าจะมีมันจะไม่มีเมื่อไร อะใช้อย่างเนี่ย		1	1
ผู้วิจัย~ อะ แล้วถ้าเกิดมองว่าเนี่ย อุตสาหกรรมมันเติบโตมากขึ้น มีการแข่งขันที่ดุเดือดมากขึ้น อะใช้อย่างเนี่ยอะ อะ คือกัก แล้วมีอะไรที่เป็นผลลัพท์นักแปลใหม่คะ ที่ทำงาน freelance ~S0814~ ผลลัพท์นักแปลที่ทำงาน freelance ~ผู้วิจัย~ หรือว่าจริงๆ มันมีแต่ด้านท		1	1

Appendix K Initial, revised, and finalised lists of themes and sub-themes

Initial themes and sub-themes	Revised themes and sub-themes (1)	Revised themes and sub-themes (2)	Finalised themes and sub-themes
<p>Theme RQ1.1 Capacity and types of projects</p> <p>Theme RQ1.2 Subtitling process and quality of subtitles</p>	<p>Theme 1 Freelance subtitlers' constantly changing and increasingly challenging work practices</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.1 Capacity and types of projects</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.2 Subtitle production process</p>	<p>Theme 1 Freelance subtitlers' constantly changing and increasingly challenging work practices</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.1 Capacity and types of projects</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.2 Subtitle production process</p>	<p>Theme 1 Freelance subtitlers' constantly changing and increasingly challenging work practices</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.1 Capacity and types of projects</p> <p>Sub-theme 1.2 Subtitle production process</p>
<p>Theme RQ 2.1 Size and configuration of the network</p> <p>Theme RQ 2.2 Activities in the network</p> <p>Sub-Theme RQ 2.2.1 Inscriptions and (im)mutable mobiles circulating in the network</p>	<p>Theme 2 The dynamic, intricate subtitle production network</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.1 Size and configuration of the network (or Configuration of the network?)</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.2 Activities in the network (or Network dynamics and activities?)</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.3 Inscriptions and (im)mutable mobiles circulating in the network</p>	<p>Theme 2 An intricate and dynamic subtitle production network</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.1 Freelance subtitlers' increasingly precarious status</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.2 A seemingly shrinking network</p>	<p>Theme 2 An intricate and dynamic subtitle production network</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.1 Freelance subtitlers' increasingly precarious status</p> <p>Sub-theme 2.2 A seemingly shrinking network</p>
<p>Theme RQ 3 Quality in SPN depends on many factors</p>	<p>Theme 3 Quality is in the eye of the beholder – and the hand of many others</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.1 Social quality: Working conditions becoming more challenging</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.2 Process quality: Subtitling process depending on factors beyond the control of subtitlers</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.3 Product quality: The 'best possible' and 'good enough' mindsets</p>	<p>Theme 3 Quality is in the eye of the beholder -- and the hand of many others</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.1 Social quality: Working conditions becoming more challenging</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.2 Process quality: Subtitling process depending on factors beyond the control of subtitlers</p> <p>Sub-theme 3.3 Product quality: The 'best possible' and 'good enough' mindsets</p>	<p>Theme 3 Quality is in the eye of the beholder – and the hands of many actors</p>