

## The Visibility of Iranian Fansubbers of K-pop Music Videos

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### Abstract

Audiovisual translation has been the subject of substantial scholarly inquiry, with fansubbing being recognized as a unique mode within this field. Fansubbing involves translating and subtitling of foreign videos such as films into another language by fans, rather than by licensed translators. Performing a kind of play labor, fansubbers typically do not receive monetary remuneration for their efforts. Instead, they are motivated by their fandom's satisfaction, gaining visibility and receiving likes. The concept of visibility has been subject to varying interpretations, with the first and most prominent example being Venuti's notions of visibility and invisibility. The advent of digital platforms provided translators with an opportunity to establish a digital presence and voice, which has opened up new avenues for enhancing the notion of translator's visibility. Adopting a quantitative strand of research, this study examines a corpus of 200 K-pop (Korean pop) music video subtitles translated by Iranian fansubbers, focusing on different aspects of translator's visibility across textual, paratextual, and extratextual domains. As per the study results, fansubbers exhibit a higher degree of visibility in the paratextual domain (47%), followed by the textual domain (26%) and the extratextual domain (17%). The most commonly employed strategy for enhancing visibility was mentioning social media ID before or after the subtitle content. Many other strategies were overlooked by fansubbers, either due to a lack of awareness or restrictions imposed by superiors. Different aspects of visibility identified in this study donate valuable insights for subtitlers seeking to enhance their visibility and engagement with respective communities.

Keywords: Visibility, Fansubbing, Textual, Paratextual, Extratextual

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## Introduction

Subtitling is a mode of audiovisual translation that entails the presentation of written text corresponding to the spoken dialogue in a source language, typically placed at the bottom of the screen. Additionally, subtitling encompasses the translation of any on-screen text elements, such as letters or information conveyed through the soundtrack.

Fan translation, including fansubbing and fandubbing, is a practice whereby those who possess an emotional investment in a particular cultural product engage in the translation of related texts as a means of expressing their affection. This mode of translation allows fans to actively engage with and co-create meaning surrounding their favored cultural products. While it may be carried out individually, it typically occurs within larger communities where fans interact, collaborate, and share their work with one another. Fandom, as a collective of passionate enthusiasts who share a strong attachment to a given cultural product, such as a celebrity or a film, has been identified as a key component of the fan translation phenomenon. The emergence of the internet and digital technologies has facilitated the growth of fan communities on a global scale.

The phenomenon of fansubbing, the production of translated versions of audiovisual content by fans, has been the subject of extensive inquiry within the field of fan translation. This is attributable to the wide consumption of fansubbing, given the global distribution of audiovisual content through online platforms.

Fuchs (2015) suggested that social media users view the “like economy” as the new norm, with recognition on social media being highly valued. Fansubbers engage in play labor, which is unpaid work done during leisure time that contributes to a company's value. To compensate for this labor, fansubbers should receive recognition through increased visibility and benefits in the like economy. The term “translator's visibility” pertains to the extent to which the work of a translator is recognized the end reader, serving as an indicator of the credit or recognition allocated to the translator for their work. In certain instances, translators may work surreptitiously, devoid of any visible acknowledgement for their endeavors. For instance, translators engaged in software localization may not receive public recognition for their contribution, although their efforts are indispensable to ensure the software's functionality in a different language. On the other hand, in certain situations, translators may be publicly credited for their work, for example, by having their name mentioned in the translation credits of a movie. Such recognition can escalate the translator's visibility among their peers and potential clients. The degree of translators' visibility can significantly impact their standing in the profession and career prospects. According to Desjardins (2017) The emergence of OSM (Online social media) has created new opportunities for translators to enhance their visibility, regardless of their area of specialization within the translation profession. Thanks to online professional networking sites that include real-time updates and user photos, translators can now establish a strong digital presence and engage with their audience in a more direct way.

The concept of visibility for subtitlers is intricate since there are no book covers or prefaces, making them visible to the audience. Despite the substantial role of subtitlers in facilitating global access to media content, their work is frequently disregarded, and they are not adequately recognized for their contributions which leads to undervaluation of the profession, lower compensation, and limited career advancement opportunities for subtitle translators. Furthermore, if translators are not given due recognition for their work, it can lead to decreased motivation and quality, which can ultimately impact the viewer's experience and the success of the media content. Therefore, it is imperative for subtitlers to increase their visibility and recognition.

To discover about the visibility of Iranian subtitlers, a specific community were opted, namely K-pop fansubbers. K-pop is a music genre originated in South Korea and recognized for its infectious melodies and visually appealing aesthetics. It has gained a massive following globally, and fans have formed dedicated communities and attend large-scale concerts and events to support their favorite K-pop artists. Additionally, the entertainment industry provides a natural setting for people to learn foreign languages, and language learners can refer to it to gain knowledge about foreign cultures and languages. Therefore, Korean music videos can serve as a source for learning Korean language and culture.

The challenging question which arises in this domain is:

1. How are Iranian K-pop fansubbers visible among their target audience?

Therefore, the thrust of this research is directed towards the visibility of Persian fansubbers of K-pop industry and the ways through which they have been recognized.

This research is propelled by the driving force of Kaisa Koskinen's (2000) idea regarding the visibility of translators in three different levels of textual, paratextual, and extratextual. The concept of textual visibility pertains to the ways in which the translator's presence is made apparent at the level of the translation itself. Venuti's concept of the minoritizing translator is a prime example of a deliberate use of textual visibility. However, it can also be argued that all translators exhibit some degree of textual visibility, as every translation is inherently shaped by the translator's individual "translational position" and perspective. In this sense, the visibility of translators is a natural and definite outcome of the translation process, and cannot be entirely avoided. Paratextual visibility pertains to the ways in which translators express their views or approaches regarding their work on the margins of the actual text which involves examples of different levels, from the translator's signature in the book to prefaces. Paratextual visibility have a significant impact on the reception and interpretation of the translation and allows readers to better understand and evaluate the translator's decisions and approach. And finally, extratextual visibility relates to the broader cultural and social context in which the translation is situated. Applying the perspective of Díaz-Cintas (2014) on the applicability of visibility to broader concepts such as the field of audio-visual translation, the researcher decided to classify K-pop fansubbers' visibility into the three aforementioned levels. Elements of subtitlers' visibility at textual level can be the use of a specific font or color, the use of a special register or words and inserting notes within the subtitle clarifying issues such as cultural elements. Examples of visibility at the paratextual level include information and content that are related to the translator and appear before or after the subtitle. This may include the translator's name or initials, watermark or logo, signature, social media account ID, and further explanations. Examples of Extratextual visibility can be seeing translator's name in promotional material, leaving additional notes or explanations in other platforms, their speeches and interviews about the work, and involvement in translational associations or events and social media presence.

The subsequent section provides a review of the existing literature and prior research related to the phenomenon of fansubbing. Subsequently, the methodology section delineates various dimensions of visibility across diverse levels, and expounds on the methodology employed for data collection and analysis. The ensuing section presents the findings of the investigation, accompanied by the inclusion of tables and figures to facilitate comprehension.

## Literature Review

The 20th century witnessed an increase in research of AVT which was all due to the emergence new technologies and the establishment of translation as an academic field of study. Subtitling is the most

widespread mode of translation in audiovisual programs due to its low cost and speed, and its popularity has been boosted by the availability of free subtitling and online editing sites and applications. Subtitling has also become a prominent field of study, and more scholars are devoting themselves to the analysis of audiovisual programs in recent years.

According to Evans (2019), fan translation is closely associated with fandom and is focused on translating texts and materials that are typically not addressed by the professional translation industry due to factors such as a lack of economic incentive or delivery speed. Fan translators are aware of the cultural and societal aspects of the content they are translating, which helps them develop a deeper understanding of their identity as fans and their involvement in fandom communities. This sociocultural approach to translation is an important aspect of how fans engage with and contribute to fandom culture.

Vazquez-Calvo et al. (2019) propound the view that Fan products are of four categories: The first is called "fansubbing," which involves fans creating translations of audiovisual content. The second type is "fandubbing," which refers to fans translating scripts and performing the translated dialogue for audiovisual content. The third type is the "fan translation of games or romhacking," which involves fans creating translations for video games. The fourth and final type is "scanlation," which refers to fans translating scanned comics and manga. Fansubbing, has been a common practice in online communities for many years. Cubbison's (2005) research analyzed the practice of fansubbing within the context of anime fandom and suggested that it can be seen as a form of resistance against corporate control over media. Fansubbing allows fans to take charge of the media they consume and offer a more authentic and culturally-sensitive translation of foreign works. This research highlighted the significance of fansubbing in facilitating wider access to anime and other foreign media, especially in countries where these materials are not officially available or promoted.

Nornes (1999) criticized subtitling practices in the film industry and introduced the concepts of corrupt and abusive subtitling to describe two negative approaches to translation. Corrupt subtitling involves modifying the original text to suit the target audience or fit within the constraints of the subtitles, which can result in an inaccurate or incomplete translation. Abusive subtitling involves adding or changing content that was not in the original text, potentially distorting the intended meaning or misrepresenting the source material. Nornes maintained that both practices can harm the translated text and compromise the integrity of the original work. He advocated for subtitlers to prioritize accuracy and faithfulness to the original text while also considering the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the target audience to achieve the best possible translation. Adopting a similar vision, Huang's (2019) thesis examined the management of subtitlers' visibility through their subtitling approaches. The study compared the subtitling approaches of WHV industrial subtitlers and YYeTs fansubbers for the TV series "The Big Bang Theory" to investigate how they manage their visibility. The study used an analytical framework to compare the subtitlers' approaches to verbal and nonverbal issues, technical issues, and how their approaches reflect their visibility. The findings showed that the subtitlers' approaches differ in two dimensions and three aspects of issues, with industrial subtitlers adopting a relatively corrupt approach and fansubbers adopting a relatively abusive approach in the represented dimension. It was also indicated that industrial subtitlers gain less visibility through their corrupt approach, while fansubbers gain more visibility through their abusive approach. Additionally, by using the relatively corrupt approach, industrial subtitlers act as gatekeepers in the represented dimension and adherents in the representing dimension, while fansubbers present themselves as educators in the represented dimension.

Dal Yong Jin's (2017) research described the evolution of South Korean entertainment from a regional interest to a global phenomenon aimed at tech-savvy youth. The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, capitalized on technological advancements and social media platforms, leading to what Jin calls Hallyu 2.0. The

government has played a significant role in supporting creative industries, which have become a crucial part of the economy with intellectual property rights as a key source of revenue. Jin also highlights the importance of social meaning in the development of lesser-known areas such as animation and online games. Lastly, Jin explores the political economy of Korean popular culture and digital technologies on a global level.

K-pop is a music industry that originated in South Korea in the early 1990s and is a fusion of various music styles. It has gained immense popularity in recent years, particularly among young people in Asia and North America, and has become a global phenomenon that encompasses music production, performance, fashion, and media content. K-pop groups feature young and talented performers who undergo rigorous training in singing, dancing, and other skills before debuting. Many K-pop groups also have their own fandoms, with devoted fans who follow their every move and support them through various fan events and activities. K-pop represents a unique and dynamic cultural phenomenon that has captured the attention of millions of people around the world. Translation has an undeniable role and importance in the success of entertainment industry. K-pop fansubbing refers to the practice of creating fan-made translations of K-pop videos and other related content, primarily from Korean to other languages. This practice has become increasingly important as the K-pop industry has expanded globally, and fans around the world seek to access K-pop content in their native language. Fansubbing activities are often carried out by netizens that share a common interest in K-pop, and modern technology has made the subtitling process easier than ever before, thanks to tools like V Fansubs and V LIVE applications developed by companies like NAVER. Overall, K-pop fansubbing plays an essential role in allowing fans to connect with their favorite artists and content, regardless of language barriers. Aisyah and Nam (2017) discussed the increasing importance of translators in the K-Pop industry as it is constantly expanding in global level. Fans eagerly anticipate translated versions of K-Pop videos, leading to active subbing activities. The Korean company NAVER has developed a V Fansubs application to assist with subtitling V LIVE videos, which is a platform that hosts K-Pop celebrity-produced videos. The tools in V Fansubs and V LIVE applications make fansubbing videos in Korean much easier than before, allowing netizen communities with shared interests to collectively work on subtitles using the software. The V Fansubs software exemplifies the "by fans for fans" concept, and the collaboration among the fansubber community has significantly improved the audio-visual subtitling process, making it faster and more dependable. Broadly speaking, the article offers valuable perspectives on the essential contribution of translators to the K-Pop domain, and how the contemporary technological advancements have influenced the practice of fansubbing.

Research on fansubbing in Iran has explored various issues related to subtitling English language films into Persian. One study by Mardani (2023) found that non-professional subtitlers prioritize faithfulness to the original audiovisual translation material and avoid manipulation, resulting in the transfer of many Western cultural and linguistic taboos in subtitling. Novice translators placed more emphasis on complete faithfulness to the original text regardless of any cultural and linguistic filters. The study highlights the significance of non-professional subtitlers in shaping audience taste, directing and stimulating public thoughts, and fighting censorship and government media restrictions. Another study by Khoshsaligheh et. al. (2018) analyzed the translation of taboo language in English language films subtitled into Persian by Iranian fansubbers. The study found that the approach of fansubbers is guided by source culture norms rather than target culture norms. Fansubbers attempted to keep as many taboos as possible, irrespective of the disapproval of the recipient dominant conventions. Such an exercise appears to be a subversion and resistance to the hegemonic doctrine and conservative ideology advocated in Iranian society and mass media. A qualitative research study aimed to explore the reasons behind the popularity of Korean films and TV series in Iran and the fan-produced subtitling of these products. The study involved qualitative interviews with 26 Iranian fansubbers and observational data collected in the Iranian fansubbing atmosphere. The study found that fansubbers

are interested in Korean culture and cinematic fiction due to shared cultural similarities and the non-physical sexuality portrayed in Korean films and series. They are also attracted to the advanced cinematography technologies used and the eastern color and philosophy portrayed in Korean productions. The fansubbers aim to help Persian-speaking friends and fellow enthusiasts access these foreign-language programs and support their favorite Korean actors and their work (Haghpanah & Khoshsaligheh, 2018).

Venuti (1995) coined the term "invisibility" to describe the traditional view of the translator as an invisible mediator between languages. Venuti challenges this notion and argues that translators should make their presence visible in the text, rather than erasing it. This approach, known as "foreignization," emphasizes the foreignness of the source text and resists the tendency to conform the translation to the target culture's norms and values. Venuti suggests that translators can make themselves visible by retaining elements of the source text that may be difficult for the target audience to understand or by introducing new elements that draw attention to the translation process. Prioritizing the visibility of translators in translations can lead to intentionally non-fluent and foreignized texts, which foreground the role of the translator and highlight the fact that a translation is a product of intercultural communication. Venuti's notion of translator's visibility has broader implications beyond the translation process. By making translators visible, he argues that the dominant cultural narratives and power structures that shape the translation process and the way foreign cultures are perceived, can be challenged. Venuti's work has influenced subsequent discussions on translation ethics, cultural representation, and the role of the translator in society. Despite Venuti's introduction of the concept of translator's visibility more than three decades ago, the idea of the translator's visibility has received little attention in the area of audiovisual translation and particularly subtitling.

According to Hermans (2010), translators possess a distinct voice that is independent from the original author of the text. Even though their contribution is significant, some translators may go unnoticed and fail to receive credit for their work. Hermans suggests that this could be due to the fact that translators are often unseen within the translated text, meaning that their presence is not immediately apparent or recognizable to readers. As a result, their contributions may be overlooked or undervalued, despite the crucial role they play in bridging language and cultural divides through translation.

Hong (2019) conducted research about the visibility of news translators in South Korea by examining how their names and other indicators of identity are presented in target texts. The study aimed to determine whether translators' identities are given in the target texts, what type of information is provided, and how it is presented in terms of location, size, color, and space. The corresponding data for source text writers, particularly reporters, were also analyzed for comparison. The results suggest that although more than half of the 11 organizations analyzed present the translators' identity in some form in the target texts, only two organizations provide the full name of the translators, and most identity indicators are only visible after much attention and search. In contrast, the identity indicators of reporters and other contributors are provided in a very detailed and prominent manner. These findings indicate that despite being key contributors to news production, translators are often invisible in the very texts they produce.

The notion and form of visibility have changed over time. In contemporary times, translators possess a digital presence and voice, as noted by Desjardins (2017). She suggested that online professional social networking is an effective method to address the issue of the lack of visibility for translators. Through creating their own professional profile or sharing user-generated content related to translation and the profession, translators can increase their visibility on social media platforms. This can help to shift the discourse around translators from being seen as secondary professionals to being seen as actively engaged professionals. Additionally, it can help to reframe translation from being

considered a derivative or less valuable profession to being seen as an essential means of cross-cultural communication.

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the concept of visibility through a novel lens that focuses on audiovisual content translators.

## **Methodology**

### **Data collection**

The data for this research consisted of 200 K-pop music videos, each with Persian subtitle and a duration of 3-5 minutes. The researcher selected the videos from different channels, pages and groups of social media platforms, attempting to avoid duplicates from the same translator. Another criterion for the selection of videos was their translation date, which was limited to the recent decade, spanning the years 2013-2023. The videos were selected manually and randomly from various online platforms, including YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, and two Iranian video sharing sites, namely Aparat and Namasha.

The study under consideration only focused on hard subtitles and excluded soft subtitles. Hard subtitles are permanently embedded into video files and cannot be turned off, while soft subtitles are added as separate files that can be turned on or off by the viewer. The study only considered hard subtitles to ensure a fair analysis, as they may contain pictures, logos, and watermarks that are not present in soft subtitles. Careful consideration was given to ensure that only fan-generated subtitles were selected for analysis, as opposed to officially produced subtitles created by the artists' agencies or companies.

### **Data analysis**

Following a quantitative strand of research, this study explores the new form of translator's visibility within audiovisual material, specifically focusing on subtitling of K-pop music videos, at the three levels of textual, paratextual and extratextual visibility. In order to do so, the researcher drew on existing frameworks and elements used to analyze visibility within textual material across three levels. For example, if a translator's name appears on the cover of a book, this may be analogous to seeing the translator's name displayed before the start of subtitle content. While the researcher developed some of these aspects for the audiovisual context, certain elements, such as the inclusion of a translator's name were previously identified in Diaz Cintas' work (2014).

Translator's visibility at the textual level was defined by the aspects of:

1. The use of a specific font or color: If subtitlers consistently employed a specific color or font type, it could be interpreted as a means of establishing a personal brand or signature within their work. For instance, "Googlekpop" is a YouTube channel that provides Persian fansubs of K-pop videos. The channel has developed a distinctive style by utilizing a specific font and assigning distinct colors to each member of the group. Subtitles change color in synchronization with the individual members' singing. This practice can be seen as a form of self-branding.



Figure 1. The use of specific font and color

2. The use of other registers: Different registers of language use include formal, informal, technical, literary, colloquial, and academic. Formal register is used in formal situations and is characterized by a serious tone, complex vocabulary and standard grammar. Informal register is applied in casual situations and is characterized by a relaxed tone, simplified grammar and use of slang. Technical register is utilized in specialized fields and is characterized by technical terminology and complex sentence structures. The usage of Literary register is in literature and is characterized by figurative language and artistic style. Colloquial register is used in everyday conversations and is characterized by use of familiar expressions and regional dialects. Academic contexts require Academic register and it is characterized by formal language, specialized vocabulary and technical tone. The expected register of fansubs is informal due to the informal register of song lyrics.



Figure 2. The main lyric is “How you like that? You gonna like that.” Which is informal but the translation is formal.

3. Leaving notes within the text: Subtitlers might include additional explanatory notes within the content of the subtitle, often enclosed in parentheses and placed after the completion of a translation unit. These notes may serve the purpose of clarifying cultural nuances, disambiguating vague phrases, or even conveying personal opinions.





Figure 3. More information about the meaning of “Black Mamba” is written in parentheses.

Translator’s visibility at the paratextual level was defined by the aspects of:

1. The existence of translator’s Name or Initials: The visibility and recognition of translators can be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of their name. Typically, this information is placed either before or after the content of the subtitle.



Figure 4. The name of translators is written before the content of subtitle.

2. Providing further explanation: Subtitlers may choose to provide additional notes either preceding or following the content of the subtitle in order to expound on topics that may not fit succinctly within the subtitle itself. Such notes may involve complex analyses of lyrics, introductions to the artist, elaborations on the translator's background, etc.

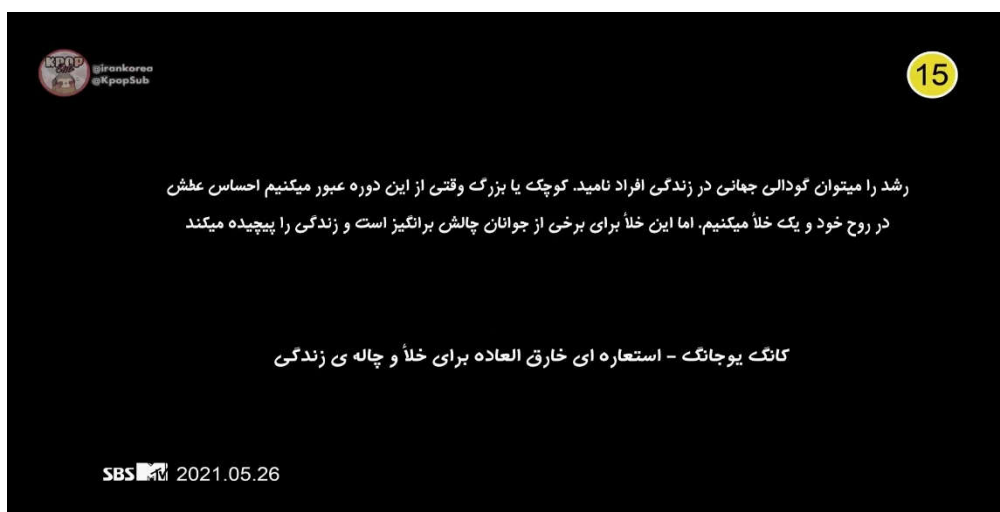


Figure 5. The translator has provided more information before the start of lyrics for the ease of comprehension.

3. Inserting watermark, Logo or signature: Translators can use personal branding elements such as watermarks, logos, or signatures to increase their visibility and distinguish their work from others. Incorporating such elements into their subtitles can create a recognizable and distinctive style that helps increase their profile and recognition by viewers. This is particularly useful when subtitles are shared or redistributed across multiple platforms. The use of branding elements can also contribute to the perception of the translator as a professional, established figure within the fan subtitling community.



Figure 6. Translator's logo can be seen on top of the video.

4. Adding social media ID: By including their social media ID within their subtitles, translators can provide viewers with a direct means of contacting and following them on social media platforms. This can help to build a following and increase their visibility within fans.



Figure 7. Translator's social media ID is mentioned at the beginning.

Translator's name, title or surname (if stated) were under search in different social platforms like Instagram, Telegram and also within communities of K-pop fans or fansubbers community such as their Telegram channels and groups. Their visibility at the extratextual level was defined by the aspects of:

1. The existence of Translator's name in promotions: Since fansubs are not considered official subtitles, there has been no known instance of fansubbers receiving credit in promotional materials such as posters, trailers, or online advertisements. However, subtitlers could potentially increase their extratextual visibility by creating promotional videos or teasers for upcoming subtitled content. Unfortunately, the present study did not yield any instances of this aspect despite an exhaustive search.

2. Providing notes in other platforms: Subtitlers may utilize their social media or internet pages to provide their followers with additional information about their subtitling process, the content of the subtitle, or deeper analyses of the music video or its lyrics. By doing so, subtitlers can increase their visibility and establish themselves as authoritative and knowledgeable figures within the community.

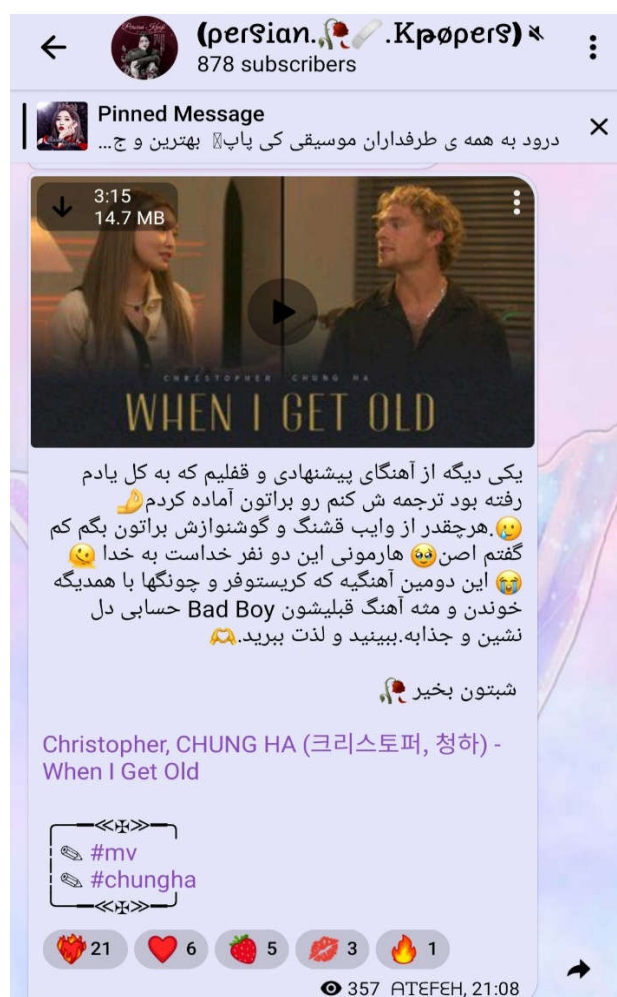


Figure 8. The translator offered their personal opinions on the music, also noting that this particular song marked the second collaboration between the singers.

3. Translator's speeches and interviews: Participating in speeches or interviews and sharing their experiences and insights into the subtitling process, can be a powerful tool for raising a translator's visibility. No examples of this phenomenon could be identified by the researcher.

4. Translator's involvement in associations: By joining associations and groups, translators can network with other industry professionals and gain access to valuable resources. Moreover, involvement in associations can help translators establish themselves as active and committed members of the translation community, which can help to build their reputation. Participation in associations can also lead to opportunities for collaboration and professional development.

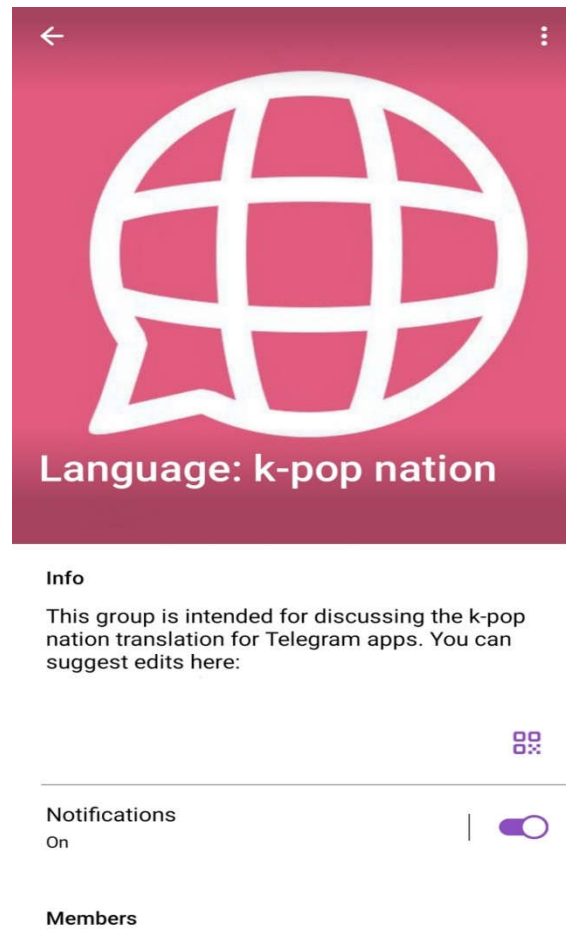


Figure 9. One of the gathering places of K-pop translators

5. Translator's Social media presence: By maintaining an active and engaging presence on social media platforms, translators can build a loyal following of fans who appreciate their work and insights. Social media can also serve as a platform for translators to share their latest projects and updates, promote their work, and engage with their audience.



Figure 10. The inclusion of social media IDs indicates that the translators maintain an active presence there.

The present study involved a systematic investigation of the various aspects of visibility discussed earlier. The research process entailed a careful examination of each of these aspects, with the findings being documented in three separate figures corresponding to three distinct levels.

To undertake data analysis, the videos were meticulously and comprehensively watched in their entirety, with particular attention paid to the various demonstrations of translator's visibility within them. A detailed record of these observations was then created. Subsequently, the researcher manually tallied the percentage of each aspect to ensure optimal accuracy and precision in the findings. The results were then presented in column charts to facilitate ease of interpretation. Ultimately, the study calculated an overall visibility percentage based on the findings across all three levels.

## Results

This section provides a comprehensive visual representation of the analysis results, using figures to display the calculated percentages of different aspects of visibility. Subsequent to this, a discussion section is presented, aimed at the contextualization and interpretation of the obtained results in relation to the research questions at hand.

### Visibility at the textual level

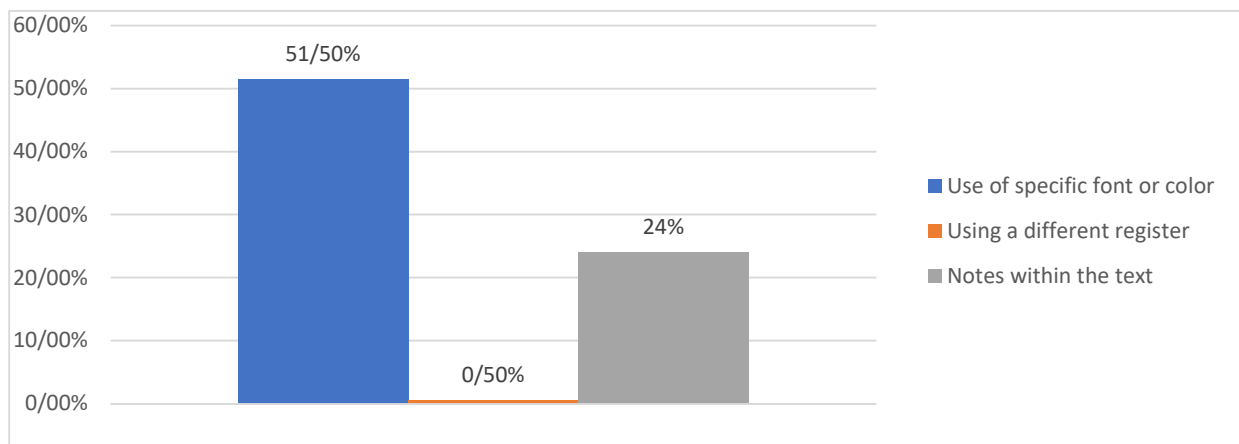


Figure 11. The proportional usage of various aspects for textual visibility enhancement

Among the 200 scrutinized subtitles, it was observed that a specific font or color was employed by the translators in 103 instances, while a different register was utilized in only one instance. Moreover, 48 of the subtitles featured translator's notes within the content. For the purposes of clarity and further elaboration, Figure 11 has been included above.

### Visibility at the paratextual level

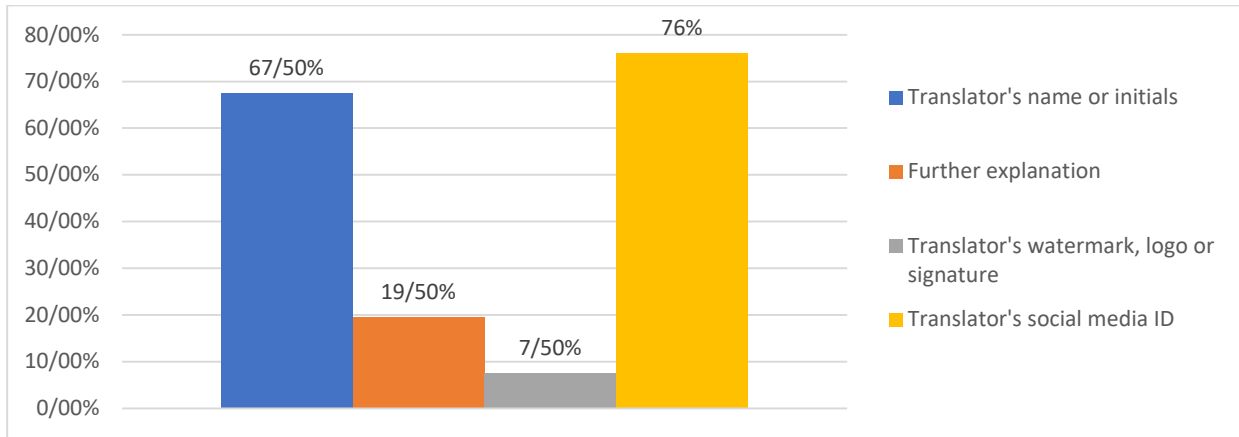


Figure 12. The proportional usage of various aspects for paratextual visibility enhancement

In the corpus of 200 scrutinized subtitles, it was found that the translator's name or initials were provided in 135 instances, while in 39 instances, additional explanation was provided before or after the main content. Furthermore, 15 of the subtitles featured the translator's watermark, logo, or signature, while the translator's social media ID was included in 152 of the subtitles. Figure 12 above has been included to facilitate comprehension and provide further details.

### Visibility at the extratextual level

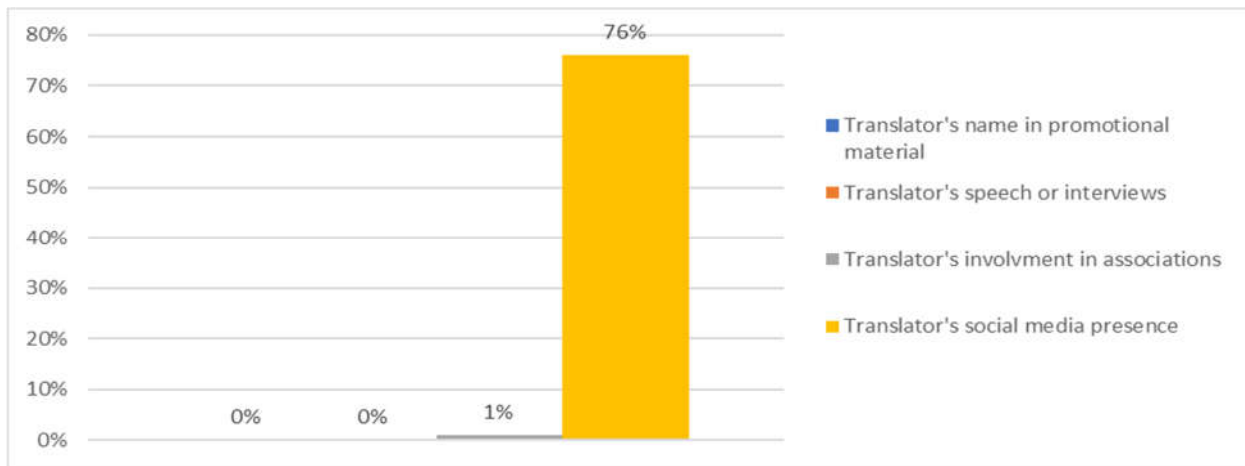


Figure 13. The proportional usage of various aspects for extratextual visibility enhancement

Within the corpus of 200 scrutinized subtitles, it was found that 10 of them had related notes in completely separate platforms. Only 2 of the translators of the subtitles were found to have participated in associations, while 152 were identified as having a presence on social media platforms. None of the translators were found to have their name featured in promotional material, nor had they been identified as having given any speeches or interviews regarding their work. Figure 13 above has been included to aid in comprehension and to provide additional information.

## Discussion

The objective of this research was to investigate the visibility of Persian subtitlers of K-pop music videos, who engage in a form of play labor without receiving compensation. Translators play a crucial role in bridging linguistic and cultural divides. However, their work often goes unnoticed and underappreciated. For subtitlers, visibility may often be the only form of remuneration they receive for their work.

Díaz Cintas (2014) proposed a range of initiatives to promote the subtitling profession, including the recognition of translators through program credits and national film databases, the establishment of an annual award for outstanding subtitling and dubbing work, the publication of works that credit both the program and the translator, and the creation of online platforms to showcase this information. However, some of these strategies may not be applicable to the field of fansubbing, particularly in Iran where fansubbers lack the support of any formal institution or union. As a result, fansubbers rely on their own initiatives to increase their visibility and recognition within the subtitling community. This helps them address these challenges and promote their vital contributions to society. By making their work more visible and accessible, translators can build their professional reputations, attract new clients or job opportunities, and gain recognition for their expertise and skills. As evidenced by this research, certain translators of K-pop content have made concerted efforts to increase their visibility, while others have opted to remain invisible. The latter group may have been either unaware of the significance of their visibility or may have deliberately chosen to remain invisible. It was found that sometimes agents and higher-ups may restrict the visibility of translators or even compel them to increase their visibility. In some cases, K-pop music video translation channels on Telegram were found to have imposed specific rules, such as using certain fonts or colors or including the channel ID at the beginning of the subtitles. However, some channels discouraged fansubbers from including their own names or social media IDs in the subtitles. The present research found that Iranian K-pop fansubbers were primarily visible at the paratextual level and least visible at the extratextual level. The evidence suggests that the Iranian K-pop fansubbers made themselves visible mainly by including their social media IDs within the subtitles, which allowed viewers to connect with them on external platforms. Additionally, the fansubbers occasionally provided their name or initials within the subtitles, allowing viewers to identify the individual translator responsible for the work. Ivarsson and Crofts (1992) indicated that subtitlers are entitled to the same copyright protection as writers. As such, they possess the right to have their names attributed to published works. Fansubbers can take more steps to increase their recognition in the industry such as creating their own promotional material, using their full name instead of nicknames, and developing a personal logo.

As posited by various scholars, including Cubbison (2005), fansubbers serve as agents of cultural and social transfer, and their work carries significant weight in the global and cross-cultural arena. Given the critical role they play, it is imperative that they increase their visibility and make themselves more known. Several studies have been conducted both within and outside of Iran, focusing on various aspects of the fansubbing phenomenon such as its process, motivation, and strategies. However, there appears to be a dearth of research on the crucial issue of fansubbers' visibility. However, all of these studies try to elaborate more on the notion of fansubbing and help it to thrive.

## Conclusion

The thrust of this study was directed toward investigating the extent to which Iranian translators of K-pop content, specifically fansubbers, experience visibility within their respective communities. This study sought to explore the various levels of visibility that these translators enjoy, as well as the means by which they achieve such visibility. Fansubbers experience varying levels of visibility across different



textual, paratextual and extratextual domains. The evidence from this study intimates that this visibility is highest in the paratextual domain, at approximately 47%, followed by the textual domain at approximately 26%, and the extratextual domain at approximately 17%. Notably, the most influential factor affecting their visibility was the inclusion of their social media ID either before or after the subtitle content.

This study was not free from limitations. Remarkably, the information regarding the subtitlers was obtained and analyzed from various platforms such as Instagram, which may have resulted in missing crucial details if the translator's name or social media ID was not provided. Additionally, the investigation was limited to a decade-long time span and it is possible that fansubbers from earlier periods may have employed different strategies to gain visibility. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings of this study to other contexts and time periods. It is important to acknowledge that the findings of this study are based on a limited sample size of 200 subtitles, which were chosen as a representative sample of the entire corpus.

The results have given us a new insight into the visibility of a distinct group of volunteer translators who operate within the realm of audio-visual media. By acknowledging their existence and worth, their visibility and appreciation is enhanced, thus they will be provided with the recognition and support they deserve. The aspects of visibility under scrutiny may serve as a valuable resource for subtitlers and fansubbers, providing recommendations on how to effectively increase their visibility within their target audience and related communities.

It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the area of the cultural differences that arise in the context of K-pop fansubbing. Such research could explore the strategies employed by fansubbers to navigate these differences, such as incorporating explanatory notes within the text or providing additional analysis through extratextual material. By gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by K-pop fansubbers in managing cultural differences, we may be better equipped to develop effective support mechanisms to facilitate their work. Therefore, future research should aim to address these gaps in knowledge to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the K-pop fansubbing phenomenon.

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