

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

Faculty of Philosophy

Sami Johannes Kaartinen

Where, How and Why? Fan Translations Unraveled

A Study of the Fan Translation Process Through Personal Experience

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Material	9
1.2 Method	11
2 THE FAN TRANSLATION SCENE EXPLAINED	13
2.1 Answering demand, official vs. fan-made	15
2.1.1 Distributing fan translations	17
2.1.2 Competition and cooperation in the fan translation scene	18
2.2 Issues of copyright	19
2.3 Moral gray areas in manga and hentai manga	21
2.4 Fan culture in the context of manga and doujin	24
3 INTRODUCING UCT AND O'HAGAN	27
3.1 O'Hagan and the position of fan translation in Translation Studies	27
3.2 UCT and its applications in the fan translation scene	31
4 ANALYSIS OF THE MATERIAL AND MY EXPERIENCES	35
4.1 Autoethnographic analysis	35
4.2 Analysis of the interviews and other data	38
4.2.1 General notions about the role of the translator	42
4.2.2 Fan translations as a communal activity	44
4.3 Fan translation and UCT	46

5 CONCLUSIONS	51
WORKS CITED	57
PICTURES	
Picture 1	14
Picture 2	22
Picture 3	45

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**Faculty of Philosophy****Discipline:** English Studies**Author:** Sami Kaartinen**Master's Thesis:** Where, How and Why? Fan Translations Unraveled

A Study of the Fan Translation Process Through Personal Experience

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ABSTRACT

Tämän tutkielman aiheena on fanikäntäminen ja siihen liittyvät prosessit sekä fanikäntämisen tämänhetkinen tila. Tutkielman ensisijainen materiaali koostuu omista kokemuksistani kääntäjänä faniryhmässä, vapaamuotoisista haastatteluista sekä faniryhmien nettisivuilta koostetuista tiedoista.

Metodina käytin autoetnografista analyysia omien kokemuksieni analysoimiseen, jonka jälkeen vertasin löydöksiäni käyttäjäkeskeisen kääntämisen teorioihin sekä Minako O'Haganin artikkeleihin. Analyysin tavoitteena on todistaa, että fanikäännökset voivat olla laadultaan ja toimintatavoiltaan samaa tasoa kuin ammattilaisten tekemät käännökset.

Tutkielman aikana sain selville, että fanikäntäminen on muutoksen keskellä. Harrastuksesta on muodostumassa pikkuhiljaa oma alansa, jolla on omat työnantajansa sekä vaatimuksensa työntekijöille. Fanikäntämisen parissa työskennelleet henkilöt ovat alkaneet vähä vähältä katoamaan joko henkilökohtaisista syistä tai oikean työpaikan perässä. Jälkimmäisistä monet ovat löytäneet töitä saman kieliparin ja saman tekstilajin parissa, eli kääntämässä mangaa japanista englanniksi.

Tulin myös siihen tulokseen, että fanikäännökset voivat nykyään kilpailla, ja kilpailevatkin, ammattilaisten tekemien käännösten kanssa. Fanikäännösten laatu on noussut ajan myötä kunnioitettavan korkealle, ja tämän myötä monet fanikäntäjät ovat päässeet käsiksi työpaikkoihin, joissa fanikäntämisestä hankituilla taidoilla on arvoa.

KEYWORDS: Fan translation, User-Centered Translation, manga, hentai manga, translator training

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to show the processes behind fan translations of manga and hentai manga from Japanese into English and introduce the actors involved in them, as well as explain what the current state of the fan translation scene is. The thesis also sets out to draw parallels between professional and fan translations and what exactly makes them so different from each other. Unveiling who exactly are making these translations, who these translations are made for, can these translations compete with professionally made translations and how it is possible for these translations to be made public are all core questions that I will answer in this thesis. Considering the current status of the fan translation scene, I will also do my best to explain the past and present of the scene and where it is likely going to be in the next few years.

Fan translation is a field that has not seen much attention on the part of the academic community, most likely due to its amateur nature. Fan translations have started to receive more attention in recent years though, with authors like Minako O'Hagan (2011), Jorge Díaz Cintas & Pablo Muñoz Sánchez (2006) and Luis Pérez-González & Şebnem Susam-Saraeva (2012) writing on the subject. I would argue however, that fan translations have evolved over the past decade or so to the point where fan translations can compete with professional translations. There are some examples of fan translation groups being contacted by publishers to get permission to use their translation, but this is not well documented and has only happened a few times so far to my knowledge. In the future, however, this might become more commonplace. O'Hagan referred to this as well in her article "Evolution of user-generated content: Fansubs, translation hacking and crowdsourcing" (2009: 110), but did not cite a source.

This thesis will focus exclusively on manga and hentai manga translated from Japanese into English, leaving out translations of light novels (short stories with illustrations essentially), novels and short stories and audio-visual works such as anime and movies. Manga and hentai manga generally see the most activity among the fan translation community. The fan translation community around manga and hentai manga has seen a huge increase in activity in recent years due to the general increase in popularity of anime

and manga, as well as the overwhelming amount of content constantly pouring out of Japan, only a fraction of which ever gets an official translation despite overwhelming demand for new content, allowing fan translations to thrive. To give some perspective, there are hundreds of manga magazines currently in publication in Japan, 64 of which are weekly and 275 monthly (Media arts database 2017). The fact that fan translations exist entirely online has also helped the scene develop, as literally anyone from anywhere in the world could theoretically take part in the fan translation process.

As a disambiguation, whenever manga is referred to in this thesis, this means the type of manga that covers traditional genres like action, romance, suspense, drama etc. and can be found on store shelves anywhere in the world. Hentai manga on the other hand specifically refers to manga that contains explicitly pornographic material. Hentai manga is almost exclusively distributed online outside of Japan due to the extreme nature of some of the content present, although some independent publishers have started to produce and market licensed translations of hentai manga in recent years. The most prominent example is fakku.net (2017), which used to host fan-made translations but is now selling books and offering a subscription service for money, which will provide access to some singular pieces of content. The transition began in late 2015 following a censoring or certain, more controversial tags and ultimately a site-wide purge of all fan-made content.

I will present a large amount of background information pertaining to the fan translation scene and the phenomena surrounding it. After this, I will give a brief summary of the methods used in collecting data and analyzing that data in this thesis. The analysis will include comparisons to the UCT model put forward by Suojanen et al. (2015) as well as examining where fan translation stands in the field of translation studies as a whole through Minako O'Hagan's works (2008/2009/2011).

First, I will briefly explain some of the terms used in this thesis that might not be familiar to most readers. Starting with some of the more common and general terms, *manga* refers to a style of comic books and graphic novels that was developed in Japan in the early 20th century (Gravett 2004). In order to be classified as manga, a comic book needs to first be

drawn in the visual style of manga, and secondly must be of Japanese origin in one way or another. This might mean that the story was written in Japan, the art was made in Japan or any other combination of things. In the context of this thesis, the most important distinctions are the style and the geographical significance (Bouissou 2010). Hentai manga on the other hand refers to the same style of comic book art, but with the important distinction of depicting graphic sexual acts. Hentai manga is comparable to pornography, and is distributed in largely similar ways as western pornography, out of sight of children in specialized stores or in designated and closely monitored 18+ sections in general stores as I could see for myself during my exchange study period in Japan in the fall semester of 2015.

Some language related terms in this thesis include *hiragana*, *katakana* and *kanji*. These are the three systems of writing in Japanese. Hiragana resembles the western alphabet in terms of functionality and hold the most basic units of Japanese writing; vowels and syllables. Katakana is similar to hiragana in that it contains only simple syllables, the main difference is that katakana is used to write out foreign words, differentiating them from purely Japanese text. Kanji are the most complex units of writing in Japanese, and are derived from the Chinese han symbols. Most Japanese text is formed by combining hiragana and kanji. Katakana is most commonly used in onomatopoeic expressions and foreign words. (Habein 1984)

A kanji dictionary (Spahn et al. 1996), which I will refer to in some places, refers to a dictionary made specifically for looking up kanji symbols. To find the correct symbol, the user has to know about radicals, which are specific parts of kanji symbols, and stroke count, or how many strokes it takes to complete the symbol when written with a pen on paper. Being able to use a kanji dictionary is a valuable asset in translating Japanese. However, many fan translators instead rely on copying and pasting symbols and cross-referencing them with Google search results on online Japanese-English dictionaries or just putting them in Google Translate. There are several kanji dictionaries available for free online as well, the most well-known being jisho.org (2017).

In relation to the language related terms, I will make comparisons to the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) rankings, acquired from the JLPT (2012) website. The JLPT measures the Japanese language skill of an individual in five ranks, from N5, the lowest rank, to N1, the highest rank, and is organized all over the world by the Japan Foundation and Japan Educational Exchanges and Services (ibid.). N5 language proficiency means that a person has a basic grasp of hiragana and katakana and knows some simple vocabulary. The official criteria are as follows;

Reading; One is able to read and understand typical expressions and sentences written in *hiragana*, *katakana*, and basic *kanji*. Listening; One is able to listen and comprehend conversations about topics regularly encountered in daily life and classroom situations, and is able to pick up necessary information from short conversations spoken slowly. (JLPT 2012)

N1 language proficiency means the person can read and understand complex text such as newspaper articles, news items and magazine articles, has an expansive vocabulary and can understand spoken Japanese, even when spoken at a natural speed. The official criteria are;

One is able to read writings with logical complexity and/or abstract writings on a variety of topics, such as newspaper editorials and critiques, and comprehend both their structures and contents. One is also able to read written materials with profound contents on various topics and follow their narratives as well as understand the intent of the writers comprehensively. Listening; One is able to comprehend orally presented materials such as coherent conversations, news reports, and lectures, spoken at natural speed in a broad variety of settings, and is able to follow their ideas and comprehend their contents comprehensively. One is also able to understand the details of the presented materials such as the relationships among the people involved, the logical structures, and the essential points. (JLPT 2012)

These rankings will be useful in identifying the varying skill levels of translators and giving these skills a concrete reference point.

I will use the Hepburn method of Romanization in this thesis. Romanizing refers to the act of transcribing Japanese text into the Latin alphabet. For example, if I were to Romanize the expression お邪魔します using the Hepburn method, it would come out

as ojamashimasu. There will be several Japanese words and expressions I will bring up later in the thesis, and I will provide them in their original form, in their Romanized form and then their English language equivalent. (Kindaichi et al. 1988)

1.1 Material

The main material for this thesis consists of my own experiences in translating as well as the experiences of the fan translation group I have been a part of for almost over a year now. Additional material will be collected via semi-structured interviews with various figures in the fan translation community, mostly group leaders. This should help provide a better picture of the types of people who take part in fan translating, as well as give insight into how the translation process is executed. Further data will be collected from fan translation teams' websites and blogs.

Teams consist of a varying number of members, depending on who is interested enough to stick around, but the core of any group is always the founder or founders. They act as the leaders of their group, interviewing people interested in joining, making decisions on what to translate, as well as setting a precedent on what type of content the group will focus on, if any. Other members tend to come and go on a whim, depending on their personal circumstances since there is no obligation for them to stay. After all, fan translations are essentially volunteer work, made for no monetary gain whatsoever.

I have chosen the interviewees based on their status in the fan translation scene. Individuals who have good reputation or are otherwise well-known in the scene will have priority. I will also try to choose people from groups of varying sizes to provide some contrast with my own group, which is very small. This might prove to be difficult to do since quite a few groups have recently become inactive or completely disappeared. I initially chose a total of 6 people to interview, but due to personal circumstances and lessened online presence, I was only able to interview 4 out of the 6 people I wanted to initially interview.

As the interviews I conducted were semi-structured, I will want to present some general talking points to the respondents and get their opinions on the topics presented. I have also collected additional data from the blog pages and websites of various fan translation groups. The interviews will be conducted online over IRC and/or Discord, depending on which service the respondents prefer. Both services automatically log text conversations, making it easy to access the interviews later. Even though Discord allows voice communication, the interviews will be conducted by text messages over Discord as well. This will make it much easier to analyze the interviews later.

The interview themes will be as follows, unless the information is already available somewhere else:

- What are the standards for new recruits, if any?
- What tools and /or services are recommended for translators and editors, if any?
- What services are used to communicate within the group?
- What are the standards for quality?
- Do you feel that fan translation groups are on the decline? If so, why might this be happening?

I will go over these themes myself while discussing the group I've been a part of. Correspondence between group members may also be used as additional material in this thesis. Correspondence between group members will shed light on the user centered translation (UCT) mentality that is prevalent in the fan translation community as well as some of the changes that get made between the initial script and the final release. Very rarely does a script go through without several changes between the initial version and the final release, mostly due to the non-professional translators and concerns about readability. Many rely on tools like Google translate to do most of the work for them, often resulting in mistranslations and awkward sentence structures.

The additional data was collected from a total of six fan groups' websites, more specifically their recruitment pages. Three of the chosen groups translate regular manga, and the remaining three translate hentai manga. These choices were made to provide a

reasonable amount of data with an even spread. Also, the data on all the sites seemed to be uniform for the most part, leading me to believe that including any more websites would have not added anything of substance.

1.2 Method

This thesis will primarily be driven by autoethnographic analysis of my own experiences working as a translator for a small fan translation group, which will be further expanded upon by the interviews that I have conducted. The interviews were conducted to provide different points of view, as well as to validate my own experiences. Most of the attention is focused on analyzing the responsibility of the translator and how a translation project is brought from concept to finished release. I will compare and contrast this process with existing studies of translation processes in a professional setting. The same is true of the UTC mentality. I will compare the translation process to the UCT model presented by Suojanen et al. and see whether there actually is a mentality present in the fan translation community that corresponds with the UCT model. (Suojanen et al. 2015)

The interviews will be analyzed on a case to case, qualitative basis. Since the interviews will be mostly free-form, I will be going through the interviews carefully in order to identify relevant comments. It is possible that each interviewee gives different answers to the question asked of them, possibly making it difficult to draw any broad conclusions, however this seems unlikely since most groups operate in mostly the same fashion. Since I will be interviewing people from groups of different sizes and standings, it is quite likely that they will hold different standards of quality and the bar for recruitment might be higher or lower depending on who is asked.

The material collected from team websites and blogs will help give a sense of what teams are looking for in new recruits as well as what their goals are, what their standards for quality are and how long they have been around. This information will be useful as

supportive information for the interviews on top of providing information on how strict the requirements to join a fan translation group actually are.

The collected interview data as well as additional data from websites and blogs will be analyzed using an ethnographical method and backed up by my own experiences. This method will be efficient in identifying consistencies in both the interviews and additional data. From here, the data, including the auto-ethnographical data, will be examined through UCT (Suojanen et al. 2015) and compared to more general notions about the position of fan translation in translation studies (O'Hagan 2011). The UCT analysis will be focused on pointing out the ways in which UCT strategies are employed in fan translation, which should in turn help validate the claim fan translations can compete with professional translations.

Discussing the position of fan translation in Translation studies should help provide a larger context into which fan translation can be placed, as well as speak for the validity of fan translation. While fan translation may still conjure an image of a collection of amateurs randomly doing things, there is a rhyme and reason to it. While there is not that much literature on the subject, there is some (O'Hagan 2008, Pérez-González 2012), and it would all seem to point to fan translation being an untapped resource for training translators and a surprisingly competent community in general, capable of competing with professional translators.

2 THE FAN TRANSLATION SCENE EXPLAINED

This entire chapter is quite heavily based on my own observations, from years of being a consumer of fan translations, official translations and other media, to then becoming a fan translator myself in early 2015. I've been paying close attention to the translation of manga and anime ever since Finnish translations started being published in the early 2000's, and after I'd exhausted all the Finnish translations I could find, the next step was to either spend large sums of money on English translated manga books or go find fan made version online. I chose to go online and look for free content, which to my surprise there was quite a bit of, although there was always the risk of it suddenly disappearing due to copyright issues.

Fan translations could not exist now were it not for fan culture. Many would pinpoint the advent of fan culture in the late 1960s and 70s when Star Trek and Star Wars spawned some very dedicated followings. Even before this though, sci-fi literature and comic books had their own fan groups, as early as 1926 (Coppa 2006). Fan translations however have only existed for a relatively short time. Some of the earliest fan translations of manga and anime began surfacing in the late 1990's and early 2000's and gained traction toward the late 2000's. This is mostly due to the fact that in order for fan translations to become possible, the internet was needed, but more specifically Web 2.0 with the capacity and reach that it entailed (Díaz 2006). It did not take long for crudely translated videos and comics to start appearing on forums, in chatrooms and on media sharing platforms. These early fan translations were often very poor in quality and presentation, since there was not much to base them on apart from professional translations that individuals could not adequately reproduce at the time.



Picture 1. An example of very early manga fan translations. The original text is still visible behind the squares, and it looks like the English text was put in using text boxes in Microsoft Paint. This excerpt is from *Great Teacher Onizuka* (1997–2002) chapter 44.

This thesis will focus exclusively on fan translations of manga and hentai manga from Japanese into English. This is due to the amount of activity seen in this specific medium and language pair. As mentioned previously, the amount of content produced in Japan is overwhelming, and western audiences will only ever see a fraction of it in their home countries through officially licensed translations. If one is actively looking for more content than has been made available through official means, fan translations are the most easily accessible, and, interestingly enough, the most consistent source of content.

Japan's laws governing pornographic material allow some fetishes and types of pornography that are illegal in most western countries to be published, since Japanese law permits any type of sexual content as long as the genitals are censored. This is especially true in printed material, and authors have found ways to circumvent some of the stricter rules. These include sexual acts involving minors, incest, rape, drugging, sexual violence and much more. This makes it just about impossible for any publishers outside Japan to release anything but a select few author's work. Only a handful of hentai manga books have been officially translated and distributed in English so far. The rest is all fan-made. One of the largest hentai manga databases and sharing platforms, exhentai.com (2017), currently has over 40,000 doujins and hentai manga that have been translated into English

by fans. When translations into other languages are considered, such as Russian, Korean and Chinese, there are more than 100,000 items available (as of May 2017).

However, after one of the most well-known content sharing platforms, fakku.net (2017), decided to forego fan-made content in favor of officially licensing content and negotiating deals with artists and publishers in late 2015, there has been a shift in the fan translation community. Numerous fan translation groups have either barely been publishing new material or just decided to quit altogether, effectively removing themselves from the internet. Groups such as Flatopia, Small white butterflies and Facedesk have completely disappeared, their websites and blogs have been removed and their members scattered. A number of other groups have become inactive, but not disappeared completely.

2.1 Answering demand, official vs. fan-made

While anime and manga have boomed in popularity in the last 15 years, publishers have always had a hard time finding material to license and publish, especially outside the US. The heavily fragmented nature of the anime and manga fan community makes it difficult for publishers to first, identify what fans want, and second, gauge whether publishing material is even worth it in the first place.

The anime and manga community exists almost exclusively online, and as with most online communities, includes people from all around the world. While the largest concentration of anime and manga fans is most likely in the United States, there are small pockets of fans in just about every country who all want more content delivered to them. Publishers in most countries seem reluctant to meet the demands of fans, since the amount of people demanding content might actually be very small, while the general population is for the most part oblivious or indifferent to the existence of anime and manga. The problem is compounded by the fact that audiences in other countries are interested in different types of content than the audience in Japan, leading some series that are immensely popular in Japan to receive only very little attention abroad. This can work the other way as well, allowing series that are failing in the Japanese market to achieve

notable success abroad, a notable example of which is the anime series *Cowboy Bebop* (1997–1998).

The process of licensing and distributing content outside of Japan is made even more difficult by the complicated bureaucratic procedures involved in the process, as well as the reluctance of Japanese publishers to expand outside of their home market. Japanese publishers are very comfortable publishing material to their home market since it is highly profitable, while going through the lengthy process of licensing, translating and distributing content outside of Japan is costly, time-consuming and might result in negative feedback from the fan communities, whose expectations are very high. Similarly, fan translations are expected to be close to or equal in quality to official releases, although readers are more forgiving with fan translations since they are one of the few regular sources of content that are available for free.

Subsequently, fan translations have started to fill this void of demand that publishers cannot fill. Fan translation groups have the capacity to get translations done significantly faster than most translation agencies. This is made possible mostly due to new releases being made in weekly chapters instead of monthly full-length volumes. A chapter is usually 20 to 30 pages long, where as a full-length volume can be anywhere between 200 and 300 pages long. Chapters allow fan translation groups to work with a manageable amount of text at a time, though it can sometimes take very long to release even one chapter due to the unstable nature of fan translation groups.

As of late however, the number of official resources offering manga and anime has risen to the point where they are now close to offering enough content to meet fans demands. As such, the fan translation scene has started to show signs of struggle, with many groups disappearing or becoming inactive, while those who still remain active are struggling to find staff members. Manga remains the one medium that will likely never have enough official content available, due simply to the sheer volume of content that still remains untranslated. In this sense, there is an endless amount of work for fan translation groups to do, provided that scans are made available.

2.1.1 Distributing fan translations

The way in which fan translations are distributed to readers deserves some discussion. The way most users come across fan translated content is through a hosting website/sharing platform that gathers and hosts translations provided by various groups, and in some cases, allow groups to make their own submissions. These sites sometimes host what are known as *raws* as well. A *raw* in the context of fan translation refers to the source language product. However, hosting websites are not the only way one can acquire fan translations.

Most groups who remain active for a long period of time will usually have a blog for their releases. Through these blogs, readers can access translations made specifically by one group, monitor progress on new projects, receive information about upcoming releases and possibly interact with the group directly by providing feedback or suggestions. This personal aspect is something that official translations have never had. Resigning to being invisible is closely tied to being a translator most of the time. Not many translators are recognized for their work, nor can most translators interact with their audience as freely as fan translation groups can.

Additionally, hosting sites have the disadvantage of burying content. The number of things constantly flowing in from numerous sources will quickly push singular pieces of content out of sight, and subsequently out of most users' mind. Blogs are a great way for groups to highlight their own content, especially if they are specialized in a certain niche. This way, those who visit their blog will have access to exactly the content they want to see.

The fact however remains that interested readers will have to be looking for extremely specific content from very specific sources to come across fan translations on their own. Most people seem to find the specific content sharing sites through search engines first, then possibly move on to identify groups that translate content that interests them specifically, which will in turn lead them to the blogs and websites of specific groups. In hentai manga, the first step can be skipped, since many groups specialize on very specific

content, which makes it easy to find groups dealing with specific fetishes or genres with a simple Google search.

2.1.2 Competition and cooperation in the fan translation scene

While one might imagine that fan translation is one large cooperative effort, it is not always true. While cooperative efforts are easy to co-ordinate and execute, the entire fan translation scene is also very competitive. The main source of this competition is *raws*, or the scanned, source language material which then needs to be edited and translated for consumption. Several different groups might be interested in the same raw, depending on the quality of the scans, which will then lead to a race of sorts to see who can translate it the fastest. This has been known to cause bad blood between groups who are frequently interested in similar content.

An even worse transgression is what is known as *sniping* in the fan translation community. This is when a group translates a project that has already been started by another group and finishes it first, causing the other group to have to cancel the progress they have made on their project. Sniping can happen unintentionally as well, for example when one group has listed something as a potential project, but another group picks it up first. In this scenario, the group who pick the project up are not aware that they have ruined the plans of another group.

However, communication and cooperation is also commonplace. The situations I described above can easily be avoided by communicating with other groups who are interested in similar content. This is usually left for the group leader to take care of, and it can lead to joint projects as well, where members from another group offer their help with a project. These agreements are beneficial for everyone, as both groups will get some visibility in the process.

There is also a gentlemen's agreement in place about translating something that has already been translated by someone else. The general consensus is that once something

has been translated, it is the property of the group that translated it, and no one else can translate the same thing again. This is why sniping is taken so seriously, and why it is important for groups to pick up high-quality scans as quickly as possible. Some groups are open to arrangements for retranslations though, provided that they are credited as the original translators. Retranslations usually take place when a group is interested in translating a previously translated project to another language, or when a group feels like they can significantly improve the quality of an already released project.

2.2 Issues of copyright

Fan translations have always been controversial due to the way in which they are produced, that is to say ripping content directly from publishers and then distributing the fan translated version freely. In most cases this heavily infringes copyright and distribution laws. AV fan translations are especially infamous for infringing copyright and distribution laws, causing Japanese broadcasters to threaten legal action (Díaz-Cintas 2006). Manga and hentai manga are not exempt from this either. Some publishers have taken a zero-tolerance policy with fan translations of their content, aggressively taking down every single piece of content that has originally been featured in their magazines. A well-known example in hentai manga would be Wani Magazine, who are very proactive in seeking out and taking down fan translations of their magazine content, and they of course have the right to do so. Self-publishing artists have sometimes voiced their displeasure as well over their content being distributed for free.

So how are there any fan translations out there at all if publishers in Japan have the right to take them down? The simple answer is that many publishers choose not to. Allowing fans to translate their content will give their content exposure outside of Japan, which will result in quite a few beneficial interactions. In a best-case scenario, fans abroad will get to form an opinion about the content, and will proceed to pressure publishers in their home country to license the content and make it available for purchase in their home language officially. The relationship between fan translation groups and Japanese

publishers is of awkward acceptance and simply allowing things to happen in exchange for some valuable exposure. (O'Hagan 2008)

Exposure abroad makes negotiations for licensing and distribution rights much easier for both parties if the Japanese publisher is willing to expand to foreign markets. Even before any of this though, increased exposure will lead to increased profit from merchandise, of which there is always an abundance of. Merchandising is always one of the key factors in publishing manga and anime. Most new series are released alongside various themed items such as keychains, figurines, folders, plushies etc. As such, the success of a new release is only loosely tied to book or DVD sales.

Fan translation groups also have an unspoken rule regarding copyright trouble. If a publisher or copyright holder approaches the fan translation community wishing their content to be removed, it is generally agreed upon by the community that all infringing content be removed immediately and without question. This way both parties can avoid conflict. However, there are always individuals who will disregard the wishes of copyright holders and continue to distribute material illegally against their wishes.

Since the fan translation community exists on the internet, it is subject to the unspoken laws of the internet as well, one of them being that once something has been on the internet, it will always be on the internet. This refers to the fact that there will always be someone who has downloaded any piece of content, and can therefore reupload it at any time. This is one of the reasons why illegal uploads of AV content on YouTube, torrent websites, Dailymotion and various other video-sharing websites continue to cause grief to publishers. There are also entire sites dedicated to illegally sharing anime. Sometimes some of these sites will get taken down, but inevitably, there will be new ones that will do the exact same thing again.

Illegal sharing is not as big of a problem with manga and hentai manga, though some artists, especially those who self-publish their work, have voiced their grievances over the practice of one person paying money for the content and then proceeding to share it for free on the internet to untold numbers of people. However, some artists have reported

seeing an outpouring of support from strangers after their work had been distributed online, and the general consensus does seem to be that, even among self-publishing artists, exposure is a better reward than raw sales figures.

2.3 Moral gray areas in manga and hentai manga

One thing in hentai manga fan translation that never fails to stir controversy is the nature of the content being translated. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Japanese laws governing pornographic content allow almost any content to be distributed, as long as the genitals are censored. This of course means that some highly dubious, and even material that would be considered illegal abroad, can make its way onto the computers of fan translators. In Sweden for example, one fan translator was arrested in 2010 for possession of child pornography. He owned a collection of hentai manga books in Japanese which he translated for a living (Orange 2012). These books were most likely of the loli genre, one of the most highly controversial subgenres in hentai manga. Loli content depicts sex involving girls who are underage or who appear underage, often as young as 10 or under.

Even hardcore child pornography depicting real children was legal in Japan up until 1999, so it is easy to see the difference in viewpoint between Japan and the rest of the world. Just about every other country would see this type of content as child pornography and inflict harsh punishments on anyone involved (Kubota 2008). The fact that the national minimal age of consent in Japan is only 13 also shows this attitude, although there has been a recent amendment, passed in May of 2016, that forbids adults having sex with anyone under 18 (Child Welfare Act 2016).

Japan has a long history regarding sex and sexuality. The earliest examples go as far back as the 17th century, when ukiyo-e, a form of woodblock print art, were extremely popular. A sub-genre of ukiyo-e called *shunga* depicts erotica, probably the most famous examples being *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife* (Hokusai 1814), or *Two Lovers* (Hokusai 1815). Other prints depict both lesbian and homosexual sex, with the important distinction that depictions of homosexual sex almost always involve a young boy or *wakashu*, aged 11 to

16, and an older man. Here lies the foundation for the attitudes surrounding underage characters in pornography today.

Moving forward to when manga started to gain a more significant audience in the 1960's through to the 80's (Ito 2008), artists would often depict young children naked in their stories. Possibly the most famous example would be in Akira Toriyama's original *Dragon Ball* (1984-1995) manga series where the main character Son Goku was depicted naked many times, genitals in full view, though crudely drawn. Depictions like this are probably intended to highlight the innocence of the character.



Picture 2. From volume 1 of *Dragon Ball* (1984) by Akira Toriyama, depicting a simple bathing scenario.

While the Japanese government has acknowledged that Japan is one of the largest providers of softcore child pornography in the world, banning this type of content has proven problematic due to the country's history and the opposition of artists (Reynolds 2008). The main counterargument for banning depictions of child pornography right now is that it would also mean banning several non-pornographic works of art, thus infringing on freedom of expression and limiting freedom of speech. The most recent development in the debate on banning content depicting children came in 2013, when a bill proposing restrictions and bans on this type of content was neither passed nor denied. Japan-centric site sankakucomplex.com, while not a reliable source for real news, quoted activist artist Ken Akamatsu as stating the following regarding the bill:

Regarding the ban, it looks as if the LDP has just about formed the consensus that the bill should be formally sent back for reconsideration rather than just abandoned. What is significant is that contents of the bill will be reconsidered after the current parliamentary session in this case, so what happens afterwards is the important part. (Akamatsu 2013)

This statement was reportedly acquired from Akamatsu's Twitter, but the original messages are unfortunately no longer accessible.

There is one type of content that is prevalent in both regular manga and hentai manga which has been a cause of controversy. Despite its perceived severity all over the world, incest and stories involving incestuous undertones are surprisingly common in anime, manga and hentai manga. While this type of content is not exactly considered illegal, it does tend to cause discomfort and disgust in people not familiar with its presence in these mediums. One might think that the presence of incestuous undertones, sometimes even overtones, would be limited to just a small number of lesser-known titles. However, this is simply not the case. Some of the most popular series in the last few years have featured this type of content, probably one of the most well-known in the west being *Ore no Imouto ga Konnani Kawaii Wake ga Nai!* (2010) or *Oreimo* for short. The name of the series translates roughly to *My Little Sister Can't be This cute!*. This series featured a story which concluded with the main character starting a serious romantic relationship with his younger sister.

2.4 Fan culture in the context of manga and doujin

Translated for *Mechademia 5: Fanthropologies* by Marc Steinberg, Japanese author and mangaka Ōtsuka Eiji wrote an essay describing the way in which fan culture has evolved from merely appreciating content and purchasing goods related to that content to fans actively creating content of their own and consuming their self-produced content (Steinberg 2010: 99–104). The title of the essay is “Sekai to Shukō: monogatari no fukusei to shōhi”. The book this essay is from, called “Monogatari Shōriron” or “A Theory of Narrative Consumption”, was written by Ōtsuka in 1989. This essay highlights the nature of fan culture in Japan very well, and happens to explain the underlying phenomena that facilitate fan translation in the process.

In this essay, Ōtsuka argues that the fan community surrounding manga in particular, tends to have a particular interest in the narrative aspect of any given series. Singular characters for example are much less important than their role in the overall storyline, or the *grand narrative*. The grand narrative encompasses all the characters and their interactions with each other, the setting and rules of the world they interact in and the relationships between characters. Ōtsuka argues that it is always the grand narrative that makes or breaks a successful manga series. He uses the example of Bikkuriman chocolates to illustrate his point. These were small chocolate candies sold in the late 1980’s that included a little bit of Bikkuriman lore in the form of stickers or little freebies. These chocolates were extraordinarily popular, and it soon became clear that kids did not even care about the chocolate itself, since they would opt to throw it away and save just the stickers. Even then, the stickers held no real world value either. What drew kids in was the grand narrative being told through the numerous different stickers. (Steinberg 2010: 104–113)

All of this relates back to the manga fandom in the way of fans wanting to expand the grand narrative through their own means, inserting their own ideas, character interactions, rules and settings into the already existing grand narrative while keeping the characters the same. This is what is now known as 同人 (doujin) content. This refers to any content

that is made entirely by fans, often reusing characters from popular manga and anime series. Doujin content is hugely varied. Games, music, art books, manga, hentai manga and animations are just some of the types of doujin content. The market for doujins in Japan is gigantic, but rather exclusive. The largest convention for fan-made anime and manga content in the world, Comic Market, or Comiket, which is held in Japan, draws close to 500,000 visitors every year. (Lam 2010)

With all of that said, it should now be clear that the anime and manga fandom is always desperate for any scrap of content that relates to their favorite series. As such, doujins are frequently requested to be translated, although they are unpopular among fan translation groups due to the inconsistent quality of their presentation and the reuse of already existing characters. The fact that the desire for new content among the manga fandom is so strong is one of the reasons why the demand for fan translations was initially so high, back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, allowing the fan translation scene to expand very rapidly.

Susan Napier (2006) also points out some characteristics of the manga and anime fan community in her essay “The world of anime fandom in America”, featured in *Mechademia vol.1: emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga*. In this article, Napier describes the anime and manga fandom through a case study of a specific group, who are fans of Hayao Miyazaki and his work, the man behind Studio Ghibli and their wildly popular and critically acclaimed movies, such as *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988), *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Spirited away* (2001) to name but a few. The types of fans she finds range wildly in age group, occupation and interests, but this specific group is interesting mostly due the dominant age group, which is 25 to 50-year old men and women. This is a significantly higher age than one might expect from a fan of anime and manga, both mediums being targeted mostly at a young or adolescent audience. For reference, the stereotypical image most people have of a manga/anime fan would be a 15 to 20-year old man or woman. However, as Napier herself states: “In my research into anime fandom over the last five years, I have found it increasingly difficult to draw a portrait of any one “typical” anime fan...” (2006), highlighting the fragmented yet simultaneously all-inclusive nature of the anime/manga fandom.

Having made all of this clear, the next section will discuss the theoretical aspect of this thesis, detailing the theories I have chosen to use as points of comparison with my own experiences and the state of the fan translation scene in general. I will introduce the central concepts of each theory as well as the way in which I have applied these theories to the data I have collected.

The most important theories employed in this thesis are User-Centered Translation or UCT (Suojanen et al. 2015), and Minako O'Hagan's existing research about this subject (2008). UCT helps determine the validity of fan translations by pointing out the translation strategies being used in the fan translation process. According to the authors themselves, the desire to make translations that answer the audiences needs should be inherent in any form of translation. Pointing out which strategies specifically are being used by fan translation groups should provide a better picture of a community that is capable of producing competent translations.

3 INTRODUCING UCT AND O'HAGAN

The main theoretical body of this thesis consists of the various works of Minako O'Hagan (2008/2009/2011), who is one of the very few authors who has written about fan translation specifically. While her texts mainly discuss fan translation as a mode of user-generated translations, she has made some good observations regarding fan translation in general, and I will be testing these theories. The second major contributor to the theoretical body of this thesis is Suojanen et al. (2015) with their theories on UCT or User-Centered Translation. Having read the theory, I immediately thought of my fan translation group, since we make use of many of the methods proposed by Suojanen et al. in their theory to produce translations, despite the very unprofessional nature of fan translation. I am confident in saying that no one has ever suggested using UCT methods in their fan translations, it is simply something that comes naturally to fan translation.

Both O'Hagan's (2008/2009/2011) and Suojanen et al.'s (2015) theories will be used as a point of comparison with my own experiences in translating and the experiences and opinions of the individuals in fan translation groups that I have interviewed. This should provide a comprehensive, intimate and easy-to-understand set of connections between all the materials while still being able to arrive at meaningful conclusions due to being able to look at the phenomenon of fan translation from several different yet familiar angles.

3.1 O'Hagan and the position of fan translation in Translation Studies

Minako O'Hagan is one of the few scholars who has published material specifically about the subject of fan translation. Having said that, O'Hagan is more interested in communal translations and crowdsourcing than in fan translation specifically. Fan translation is simply one way in which communal translations are made (2009). However, O'Hagan has made some excellent points regarding fan translation and was among the first to introduce the specific subject of fan translations of manga to the academic community (2008). In this thesis, I will discuss observations about the manga fan translation scene O'Hagan has made from the perspective of a partial insider, and see how well they hold

up. Since she has also written about the position of fan translation in Translation Studies, I will discuss this aspect of her research as well to help define a broader context for fan translation.

O'Hagan has in fact carried out a very small-scale study regarding manga fan translations specifically (2008). This study involved one fan translator and one professional translator, whose translation strategies and solutions were then compared to each other. The professional translator was someone who had not translated manga specifically. The result of the study pointed to the translation made by the fan translator being close to equal in quality to the professional-made translation. This was mostly due to the fan translator being able to more easily identify culture-specific terminology or already being familiar with these terms.

As O'Hagan points out in the same study (2008: 181), fan translators of manga have the same proficiency of pushing the limits of conventional translation as fansubbers have in the field of AV-translation (Díaz 2006). While the translation strategies and solutions to certain problems might not follow the guidelines given in Translation Studies classrooms, these strategies and solutions are undeniably effective in the context of the audience they are being made for. With the more recent developments in the fan translation scene, the line between professional and amateur translations has started to blur quite significantly.

This following section will describe the fan translation process and its stages, as outlined by O'Hagan (2008: 162–164) with some of my own additions as well, considering the time of release of O'Hagan's article. Fan translation groups are responsible for the vast majority of fan translated works, some small amount is made by individuals who are skilled enough in both the Japanese language and image editing techniques that they are able to handle the whole process on their own. Every fan translation group operates via the internet. A fan translation group can have anywhere from two or three to several dozen members. The key members of any fan translation group are the translators, the editors and the quality checkers (referred to as QC from here on).

Since manga and comic books in general are multimodal products with a visual and textual aspect to them, it makes sense to have dedicated people working on each aspect. The translator and QC are concerned with the textual aspect of a project while the editor focuses on the visual aspect. The translator's responsibility is to write the script. The script in manga translation refers to a document which contains all the raw text in the source material and its translation into English. Removing the original text and replacing it with the translation from the script is the editor's job. The editor can make some initial changes in this phase of the process to ensure the text fits in the bubbles and boxes. From here, the project goes to QC, who will check for mistakes in editing, possible problems in readability and grammar and will suggest changes. QC is usually done by multiple people at once, preferably by at least two and at most five people. This way, the editor and translator get useful feedback from several different points of view. After QC, the project is ready to release.

If there are concerns about the quality of the script that are caused by translation errors, a translation check may be conducted here as well, usually by another translator in the group. Translation checks are meant to identify and correct mistranslations. It is done separately from QC because QC is only concerned with correcting mistakes in the target language, in this case English.

However, there are more layers to the process as well that take place long before the translator ever starts writing the script. The very first step in the process takes place outside of the internet, when a new magazine is released in Japan with a collection of all the latest chapters and shorts, or an artist announces an upcoming digital release. This magazine then needs to be scanned so that fan translation groups can get their hands on the content in a format that can be edited at will. Digital releases do not need to be scanned, but do still need to be purchased and distributed by someone first. From here, various groups will pick chapters they are interested in translating. Manga groups might choose chapters based on the genre of the series, while hentai manga groups might choose to translate chapters that feature a certain type of female character, e.g. flat breasted, MILF, school uniforms etc. or cater to a specific fetish.

Once the group has identified something they want to translate, the translator starts to write the script. While the script is being written, a scanned chapter might be undergoing what is referred to as “cleaning”, where an editor or a dedicated cleaner removes all original language text from the material and fixes the color balance and possible scan lines. This makes editing much faster later on and generally serves to improve the quality of the files being worked on.

As is evident in the details of the process, the fan translation scene is more well-organized than one might think, considering that fan translation groups are ultimately collections of random people from around the world with no previous connection, nor any formal training in organizational skills or translating.

O’Hagan (2008) points out as well that fan translation groups make use of online resources available to them. These resources have grown more sophisticated and comprehensive over time as the scene has continued to evolve. It is now possible to find community-compiled vocabularies, editing tutorials etc. which are very comprehensive and detailed. Apart from these compiled resources, there are now several online services available for translators and editors to use for free. Google Translate remains a popular, though unreliable tool when inputting more than one word at a time. There are also numerous online dictionaries for the English- Japanese language pair and several Japanese dictionaries, which are valuable in looking up idiomatic expressions, internet lingo and other vocabulary which is unavailable in most Japanese-English dictionaries.

Concerning the position of fan translation in Translation Studies, O’Hagan (2011) has written specifically about the terminology surrounding the concept. Fan translation has several similarities with more popular topics in Translation Studies, such as user-created content, crowdsourcing and community interpreting. All over the abovementioned concepts have something to do with people coming together and creating translations despite an apparent lack of language expertise or translator training. The reception by the professional translator community has been divisive as well. Some see these community-driven modes of translation as either a threat or something that devalues the profession, while other see great potential for training future translators and language experts.

As for other points of view on the issue, Luis Pérez-González and Şebnem Susam-Saraeva (2012) have written a very interesting article about non-professional translating in general. In this article, they introduce the concept of natural or native translators and interpreters. These concepts bring up an important point of translation being partly a natural skill for individuals who grow up in a multilingual setting. With this in mind, it becomes clear that formal translator training only serves to introduce students to a set of rules and conventions for something they are already well-versed in, although these rules and conventions are required in the working world. What is more important is the ability of the person to communicate between two different languages, something that can definitely be learnt outside of the classroom.

Fan translation is one of the many ways in which untrained but interested individuals can interface with translating and experiment without needing to seek out formal training. Translating manga and anime already has a set language pair as well, making it an even more specific training environment. Despite this though, interest in fan translating seems to be waning. More people might be seeking out formal training more often now, due to the prevalence of anime and manga in mainstream popular culture and the increased number of job opportunities caused by this upturn in popularity.

3.2 UCT and its applications in the fan translation scene

Suojanen et. al. present UCT more as a strategy for translators to employ rather than just a method of researching translation and translators. UCT presents a set of tools that help translators make translations that are tailor-made for the receiving audience. Some of the main tools of UCT include audience design, where the translator will determine who might be reading the translation when it is finished, personas, where the translator will construct an imaginary persona that corresponds with a possible reader as accurately as possible, and intratextual reader positions, where the translators identifies parts of the original text that might hint at what kind of audience it was written for.

Using these tools, the translator can produce a translation that is easy to understand and fits the readers' needs. This is gauged later with usability tests, which are conducted with people who have used the translation. The usability tests gauge whether or not the audience found the translation to be useful and usable and if there were any problems with it. This is especially useful in translating user manuals for various products, but can be applied to almost any translation project.

In my case, I have identified some UCT strategies being used in fan translation and would now like to delve deeper into the matter and see just how dependent fan translations are on UCT strategies and how they affect the decisions fan translators make. As Suojanen et al. state themselves (2015), this is something that should occur naturally whenever translating any text, in theory at least. Making adjustments to translation strategies depending on the target audience should logically occur. In broad terms, if a translation is being made for a young or child audience for example, then that should rule out certain choices of words and certain ways of writing.

The specific UCT (Suojanen et al. 2015) tools that I will be attempting to identify in the fan translation process will be audience design, personas, readability assessment and audience feedback. These are some of the core tools of UCT, and should in theory exist in any form of translating. I have already made observations on my own that support these tools being used actively in fan translations of manga and hentai manga.

Personas in UCT (Suojanen et al. 2015) are imaginary, made-up people that are made to resemble possible readers of the end product as closely as possible. This way the translator or translators will have an easier time visualizing their audience and identifying the possible needs the readers will have or things the readers might complain about. Using personas is helpful in many ways, mostly in pre-emptively identifying possible problems, so that they can be fixed before they ever occur. Personas are often based on hard data from usability assessment forms that readers can answer. As such, it is not feasible to expect any fan translation groups to have a persona that is acknowledged in any real way. I do believe however that, over time, the fan translation community has created a sort of communal persona for itself. This persona has been formed over a long period of time,

consisting of data gathered from the trials and errors of hundreds of groups doing some things wrong and some things right, with the end result being an optimized translation strategy for a very specific audience.

The communal persona, at least judging by the way most groups seem to implement it, is a fairly young, maybe 16 to 25-year old male or female who has a little bit of existing knowledge about Japanese culture as a whole and manga in particular. This person is willing to forgive some significant mistakes in exchange for receiving free content, though they will voice their disappointment if a translation is simply too amateurish. They also find fan translations to be more exciting in many ways than official translations, mostly because they sometimes feel official translations are too safe and too localized.

This kind of persona gives fan groups significant freedom, while also establishing some clear boundaries and some requirements between the lines. Finding fan translations more exciting than professional translations is what makes fan translation groups very competitive with each other and motivates groups to invest as much time in editing and quality checking as they do. Being able to provide the highest-quality product possible while still having that intimate understanding of the readers is what has made fan translations as popular as they are.

Audience design is a more general thought exercise where the translator or translators identify their possible audience; who might read and use the translation, where could the translation hypothetically end up, what if someone not in the target audience reads the translation and so on. The specific categories of potential readers are addressees, auditors, overhearers, eavesdroppers and referees (Suojanen et al. 2015: 68-70). Addressees are the audience the translation is intended for, while auditors are people who will likely come across the translation, even though they may not be the primary audience. Overhearers are people who get acknowledged, but not in a way that would cause any changes. Eavesdroppers represent the element of the unknown. Any readers who are using the translation despite not being the intended audience at all fall into this category. Referees represent peers or higher-ups who the translation is made for in a more indirect way, such as through visual polish, low number of mistakes, beautiful typesetting etc. The idea is to

impress these peers or higher-ups by doing so, which could in turn raise the status of the person or people who made the translation.

Readability assessments and audience feedback, while paramount to successful implementation of UCT strategies (Suojanen et al. 2015), are not very realistic in the context of fan translations. These are usually carried out through sending readers questionnaires and closely analyzing the data the questionnaires yield, which will then be used to alter the translation strategies being used in translating. Readability assessment in fan translation happens through more indirect means, mostly through comments on the websites where the projects are released. Assessment also happens between team members after the project has been released. The group leaders monitor feedback and then communicate it to the rest of the team, pointing out things that worked well and things that did not work well. The QC team is also instrumental in assessing the readability of releases before the release is made.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE MATERIAL AND MY EXPERIENCES

This chapter will contain the main body of analysis. Here I will compare my experiences in working as a fan translator to those of translators and group leaders of other groups, as well as the theoretical work put forth by Minako O'Hagan and Suojanen et al. and some general theories concerning the role of the translator and the translation process. The analysis will be divided into parts accordingly; in the first part I will document my experiences in detail.

In the second part, I will compare my experiences to the general perceptions of the role of the translator and the translation process. In the third part, I will include the responses from the individuals I have interviewed and compare them to my experiences and the general theories. From here I will make comparisons first to Suojanen et. al. and UCT and then Minako O'Hagan and her observations on fan translation as a developing industry and what it can offer to the professional translation industry.

4.1 Autoethnographic analysis

In this chapter I will document my own experiences as a translator in a fan translation group. To preface this chapter, I must mention that the group I work in translates hentai manga, specifically the subgenre known as vanilla. We translate from Japanese into English. The group is also very small, consisting of only four active members. Our group has no release schedule, due mostly to the fact that translating, editing, QC and everything else is done asynchronously, which will sometimes mean that a project gets put on hold for long periods of time because there might be no one available to edit the project for example.

I would want to list the team members here, but since everyone is very protective of their identity, and the group normally operates using handles and nicknames, I've decided not to do so. What I can say however is that the group currently has two active translators, including me, two active editors and a few active QC people. Activity has slowed down

significantly, mostly due to my own absence, but the most recent release was made this April. One of our editors is also the leader and co-founder of the group, and one of our translators is the other co-founder.

The power dynamic of the group is very simple. The group leader scouts for potential projects that fit the image of the team and has final say over when, and if at all, a project is released. The translators, myself for example, hold the ultimate power over initiating a project, but have very little to do with the rest of the project after the translation is finished. Editors and QC simply do what they do when they are needed. However, no one holds a higher status in the group than any other member of the group. This is due to the fact that ultimately, we are all just passionate fans and the fact that fan translation is just a hobby that no one can be forced to take part in. This is something that every group member always has in the back of their minds.

The translator is in a key role in any fan translation group. Translators are often the only members of the group who have any knowledge of the source language, in this case Japanese, which means that a project can only start when a translator writes a script that the rest of the group can work with. Until a script is initiated, everything is essentially on hold. The lack of language expertise also often means that the initial script is never checked for any mistranslations or other similar mistakes. All that matters once the script is done is the target language text. Exceptions to this are scripts that have excessive amounts of obvious mistakes, such as a lack of coherent dialogue or words that have no place being in the script. These are telltale signs of a translation made fully with Google Translate or some other machine translation program.

Regardless, due to this lack of checking, the translator holds quite a bit of power in making decisions since the rest of the group will almost always fully accept whatever solution the translator has made. In larger groups this might not be the case, since they would have more people available who have the language expertise necessary to check for mistranslations. This also places a burden of responsibility on the translator. If the script is riddled with mistakes, the rest of the group will have difficulties fixing it due to

their lack of language expertise, making it essentially the translator's fault if the final version has problems.

While the translator does hold significant power, it is only for a very short time. Once the script is ready, the translator is technically no longer needed in the rest of the process. From there on, the editor and QC take over completely, making whatever changes are necessary to make the script work. In a perfect world scenario, once a script is finished, the translator can already move on to the next project, leaving the rest of the group to work with the finished script. If a script is good enough on the first try, the project can be ready for release after editing and a quick look through by QC, as quickly as within 12 hours of the script being finished.

Concerning translation tools, most fan translators rely on simple, free to use software and websites. The most common choices are Google Translate and whatever resource the translator prefers for looking up kanji, my personal choice being jisho.org (2017), which is easy to use and quite comprehensive and accurate with its own Japanese to English dictionary. The fan translation community has also compiled some useful resources for translators, such as a comprehensive list of onomatopoeic expressions and their most common translations, which is very helpful since Japanese has a plethora of them and some can be extremely specific in meaning. There are multiple community-compiled resources available for editor, cleaner and typesetter training as well.

Working as a translator in any language, I have always tried to make translations that accurately convey the author's intentions, or in simpler terms, what is *meant* rather than what is *said*. Fortunately, this mentality toward translation is a perfect fit for both the language pair of Japanese to English and the target audience who are always looking for authenticity in their translations.

This ties in with what O'Hagan (2008) points out in her article as well; the idea of an authentic translation that matches the source language text as closely as possible. Conveying the author's intent accurately is always the ultimate goal. There is very little tolerance in the fan translation community for translations that make too many changes,

unless it is on purpose to make a joke for example. Conveying the tone and the character relationships portrayed in the source language text accurately remains the most difficult aspect of fan translating, although the same could be said of professional translations as well. It is not uncommon nowadays to hear news about a Japanese into English translation being criticized because fans feel it does not sufficiently convey the intention of the source material.

4.2 Analysis of the interviews and other data

I conducted a total of four interviews with various people in the fan translation scene, including two group leaders, one translator and one editor. In the interest of privacy, I will not disclose who was who. All the respondents wished to either remain entirely anonymous or be referred to by their handle, so naming anyone directly would be impossible in any case.

The interviews yielded some excellent, detailed information regarding the current state of the fan translation scene. Every interviewee was asked about their opinion on the current state of the fan translation scene. The general consensus seemed to be that manga fan translation groups are still doing well, relatively speaking, although there are not nearly as many active groups around anymore. Hentai manga groups however have experienced significant losses in activity and number of active groups.

When this topic was discussed further, the first thought all the respondents had on why this might be happening was related to the volunteer nature of fan translation. As fan translations have become more competitive over time, to compete with other teams over exposure and with official translations, the investment of time and effort expected of people joining has slowly been increasing. It has now gotten to the point where potential new members simply do not feel like making fan translations for free is worth the effort, especially with an ever-increasing number of companies willing to hire translators specifically interested in translating anime and manga.

In all the interviews, I followed up this talking point by asking if money had now become a factor in the interest of potential new members. Most of the respondents did agree that the existence of paying alternatives could deter the interest of potential recruits, however, this was not a primary concern. Two of the respondents did bring up points about the skillsets of people involved in fan translation and how these same skillsets could just as easily be brought into the job market. The respondents generally felt using these skills to then do very demanding work for free is simply a waste of potential most of the time, the exception being self-improvement purposes.

In relation to the point about making money with their skillsets, two of the respondents brought up the concept of commissions, which very talented individuals have been doing as a means to make a profit off of translating and editing online for a very long time already. Translation commissions work as one would imagine, similar to art commissions for example. A customer will approach the individual, who will have set a price for their service, be it translation or editing, and the individual then completes the commission to earn money. Groups tend to not do commissions, though some have donation pages. Individuals who are working in a group will sometimes do commissions simultaneously however.

Some of the respondents, mostly those who are or have been involved with translating hentai manga, also brought up the issue of genre specificity hampering the recruitment of new talent. There have been many examples of translators who are brilliantly talented, but only wish to translate one certain genre and nothing else. This seems to be more severe in hentai manga, where some translators have been known to flat out refuse any projects not involving their favorite fetish or character type. Manga does have the same issue as well, though it does not manifest as aggressively as in hentai manga. Regular manga encompasses so many genres and styles of writing that one needs to have a surprisingly broad understanding of the Japanese language to be able to translate across multiple genres. Therefore, it is easier for people to first start with simpler, more predictable genres of manga, such as romance or drama, before moving to more specialized manga involving more complex vocabulary, like cooking or sports manga. However, it can be difficult to find a group that translates manga that covers the genres one is interested in, especially

now that there are fewer active groups around, and those that are around are demanding a large commitment of time.

In most cases, the interview questions I presented earlier were not even needed, since the information I wanted to gather with most of the questions was already available on team websites or blogs. I specifically visited Friendship scans (2017), life4kaoru (2015), Mangaichi scanlation division (2016), Yuri-ism (2017) and One Time scans (2017), on top of my own teams' blog (Team Koinaka 2014). Half of these sites translate manga while the other half translates hentai manga. The groups who translate regular manga tend to have much stricter requirements for potential recruits, though most of the groups also offer training for anyone interested in starting from scratch. This is likely due to the intimidating nature of the whole fan translation process and groups wishing to alleviate that initial fear. All the manga translation groups had some type of test in place for people wanting to join, for the purpose of determining initial skill levels presumably. This way, it is easier to tell which members will need more attention and guidance and which members can work independently. None of the groups made specific reference to the JLPT rankings on their recruitment pages, but a skill level of at least N2 seemed to be very desirable. Someone of that skill level would already know at least the basics and a decent number of kanji and could likely handle themselves with the aid of a dictionary.

While all the groups' websites stated in some way that previous experience is not necessary, every single group had one request in common; willingness to commit. The manga groups especially were aggressively promoting this point on their recruitment pages. The only exception was Friendship Scans who offered a role specifically for people who cannot commit much of their time, this being the role of assistant. The manga groups also had a tendency of recruiting several people for separate editing-related tasks. Friendship Scans and Mangaichi Scanlation Division for example are recruiting editors, cleaners and typesetters. All the hentai manga groups were recruiting only editors, who are often tasked with doing a mixture of cleaning, editing and typesetting tasks.

Regarding the decline of fan translations, one respondent also suggested that there might be a sort of reverse chain reaction going on right now, which is affecting the very first

and most important stage of fan translations; the actual scanning of physical copies of magazines and manga books. Since the fan translation scene as a whole is showing signs of significantly slowing down, there has been a decline in groups and individuals willing to go through the trouble of acquiring and scanning physical copies, as there are fewer groups who could even make use of the scans in the first place. Scanning full volumes of manga or the sometimes several hundred page-long magazines page by page is a very tedious and time-consuming process with very little guarantee for quality as well. Most groups are looking for high-quality scans that require only very little editing work to polish. If the scans are of low quality, there is a very low chance of any groups making use of those scans, despite the efforts of the person who made the scans in the first place

There are some digital releases out there, but these are mostly small releases from self-publishing artists. Weekly and monthly magazines and volumes of manga are still sold as physical copies for the most part, since that is still the preferred medium in the Japanese market. Whether this will change in the coming years remains to be seen, however the chances of the situation changing seem very low at the moment. Sales of physical copies are still in the millions for the more popular releases in Japan, which makes it unlikely that any other form of distribution could take over.

I also had a lengthy discussion with one respondent about the effect of educational institutions in the lack of potential new recruits. Through anecdotal evidence from my own experience in a Finnish university and the respondents' in a German university, it would appear that students are now encouraged much more than before to put a price on their services and ask for money in return for their contribution. This could theoretically lead to less people being interested in volunteering, especially in something like fan translation which requires quite a large commitment of time and effort, although the respondent and I both agreed that this is ultimately a good thing.

The respondent, a skilled editor, talked about their experience in fan translation being one of frustration. Editors are always needed, and skilled editors are in high demand everywhere in the fan translation scene. As such, the respondent said that they were being used for their skills while receiving nothing in return, apart from some empty words.

Editing, being the most time-consuming part of the fan translation process, requires the most work and a certain amount of artistic talent as well, so being forced to take part in projects all the time for no reward is certainly very frustrating.

4.2.1 General notions about the role of the translator

Oftentimes, translators are considered a necessity, something that is part of a larger system solely for the reason that it needs to be there for things to work correctly. A piece of a machine perhaps, and only rarely someone whose contribution receives praise or recognition. Almost no one remembers who made translations for their favorite books, sometimes the fact that the book even had to be translated in the first place is a surprise. The same goes for almost any other type of text. So far, the only type of text I have seen where people are keenly aware of it being translated is that of user manuals, and here it is warranted, since a badly translated user manual can be dangerous.

However, translation is an important enough procedure that it should be studied, and thankfully that has been done quite extensively. I will be comparing my personal experiences with translating in a more professional setting to translating in a non-professional setting. While it may sound like this is comparing apples to oranges as it were, I believe that there are more similarities than differences between the two.

The first point I'd like to discuss is the responsibility the translator holds. In a professional setting, the translator is responsible for any consequences of their own work, for example, if there are mistranslations, that could lead to significant real life consequences. A professional translation is also likely to be seen by many more people than any fan translation ever could. This is where fan translation and professional translating differ the most in my opinion. While the translator does hold some responsibility, mostly that of initiating projects, the actual finished project is no longer the translator's responsibility, strictly speaking. From the moment the script is ready, the translator is no longer involved in the project, or can only have very little impact. QC provides a safety net of sorts for

the translator, correcting most mistakes before a release is made. This can also happen in professional translating, but it seems to be quite uncommon. Most of the time the translator needs to do their own proofreading and quality checking. The exception to this are projects that are made for companies, since they might have someone look the translation over before using it.

Next, I would like to discuss communication. I personally feel like fan translation has a distinct advantage in this area. Not only is communication between other team members seamless, translators can choose to make direct contact with the audience as well. All of this is made possible through the various services provided for free on the internet. Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels are commonplace among fan translation groups, and have been for a long time. More recently, groups have started using Discord, an instant messaging and server hosting service released in 2015, to host their chat channels in along with Twitter in some cases. There are no explicit clients in fan translations, which eliminates one channel of communication entirely. Trying to communicate with a client in a professional setting can sometimes be frustrating due to the primary means of communication still being e-mail and phone. E-mail is not an immediate form of communication, and as such it can take anywhere from some minutes to a few days for a client to respond. The same is true for phone communication, where the client is not guaranteed to answer the phone.

Lastly, I would like to discuss project management skills. Fan translation groups are in fact very proficient at organizing complex projects and keeping track of files that are needed to complete said projects. My group makes use of the website trello.com, which is a website designed specifically for the purpose of organizing projects in a simple way. The website operates with cards that group members can move between columns, with the cards representing one project. Each column represents one stage of the process, so for example we have potential projects, currently being translated, needs typesetting, currently being typeset and QC. The cards then include all the necessary files for the specific project as well as all the discussion specifically about that project.



Picture 3. This is what a trello project board usually looks like. Notice the themed columns and the singular cards under each column. Screen capture from Yuri-ism’s public trello page (2017).

Even without the aid of a website made for this explicit purpose, it is easy to keep track of what is happening through instant messaging services like IRC, Facebook, Twitter and Discord. Unless working for a translation agency, a professional translator rarely has to do much organizing, apart from how they manage their own time to do the translation, then their own proofreading and checking before then contacting the client.

4.2.2 Fan translations as a communal activity

It is important to make clear that fan translation is first and foremost a hobby. There is no monetary gain to be had. All fan translation groups do what they do because they want to provide readers like them with the content that legitimate publishers cannot provide. Herein lies the universal understanding between fan translation groups, even in a community that can be so fragmented and divisive. O’Hagan discusses fan translations as

a form of communal translation (2009), or translations where passionate individuals come together to create a translation, despite their lack of language expertise and training in translation.

Given enough time, any person with a dictionary can produce some sort of translation, and that is one of the driving forces behind fan translation as well. Knowing this, some groups are willing to take in translators with no experience in Japanese or translating in general. Many people do fan translations to help them learn more Japanese, others want to try out translating, editing or proofreading in a non-committal, low risk setting. Fan translation groups are a great environment for this, since no one is forcing anybody to do anything, nothing is on the line if it proves too much and the project fails, and leaving a group is as easy as simply announcing your departure. O'Hagan also discusses this phenomenon in her article "Fan translation networks: An accidental training environment?" (2008).

Budding translators, editors and proofreaders will also get a chance to receive feedback on their work in this low-risk environment. If one has done badly in quality checking for example and let some mistakes slip through, the consequences are not terrible, and the feedback from readers and the group itself will be very useful if the individual chooses to continue working on other projects. Unfortunately though, many who enter the scene with only a passing interest in either translating, editing or the Japanese language will end up leaving as quickly as they appeared. O'Hagan (2008) stated in her article that there is a sense of solidarity and pride in the fan translation community. While this may have been true at the time she wrote her article, it certainly is no longer that way. People who are willing to commit their time to translating and editing are now few and far between, with many who are not ready to commit their time or face criticism being scared away very quickly.

4.3 Fan translation and UCT

Fan translations and UCT might at first seem far removed from each other. One is an advanced set of strategies for professional translators while the other is well known for being unprofessional. Fan translations have long had a reputation for being riddled with mistakes, being awkward in terms of sentence structure and grammar, and most alarmingly infringing on copyright and distribution laws. However, as Suojanen et. al. state at the beginning of their book (2015), translators always have a will to create translations that meet the reader's needs, and this is no different in fan translation. What is fascinating, however, is just how accurately fan translation groups follow the guidelines and just how well they employ the tools of UCT without even knowing it.

The main tools of UCT all have to do with mental preparation where the translator identifies the audience they are writing for, along with their wants and needs and accommodates their translation strategy accordingly. The same happens in fan translation quite naturally. Fan translators can make some general assumptions on the simple grounds that they are part of the same group as the readers; fans of the content that is being translated.

The most useful assumptions that can be made relate to certain expressions that can be left untranslated under the assumption that the readers will understand what is being said regardless. Common words like *imouto*, *nee-chan*, *senpai*, *sensei*, *sake* and honorifics like *-sama*, *-san*, *-chan* etc. can be left in as is. The assumption is born from the idea that if a fan is willing to go through the trouble of seeking out fan translations, they have most likely exhausted all the content that is available through official means, professional manga translations and anime on TV mainly. Fans who have already consumed so much similar content will most likely know what these words and honorifics mean, thus making it unnecessary to translate them. There are however limits to how much can be ignored.

As an example from a project I translated a while ago, I left the word 財閥 (*zaibatsu*) or business conglomerate in the script as a choice for the editor to make on which expression

to use. This didn't sit well with the rest of the group who were quick to point out that, were this word left untranslated, it would simply look like there was a word nobody knew and thus was left untouched in the final product, which would of course be very amateurish. The reason why I initially thought it might be okay to leave as is was an example from the game series *Tekken*, which features the fictional Mishima Zaibatsu prominently. In earlier installments of the game series, the word zaibatsu was not localized. This was however not a good enough reason to risk the translation looking amateur, so we eventually settled on using business conglomerate instead of zaibatsu.

Another example of this happening comes from my very first fan translation project. The word 姉—ちゃん (Nee-chan), or older sister, very frequently. While at first I chose to translate every instance of the word as "sis", I was quickly corrected by the rest of the group, who told me that translating this word is not preferred for multiple reasons. The most important reason I was given was because readers would feel like they are being talked down to or disrespected. They will already know what this word means, so translating it would make it look like we think our readers are stupid.

The same happened on another project by another translator, this time regarding onomatopoeic expressions like sighs and moans. It is common for these specific expressions to be translated phonetically instead of trying to find an English-language equivalent, so え~ (elongated e sound) for example will become *eeh* or *hee* instead of something like *whaa* or *I see*. Translating these expressions phonetically emulates the sound and feel of spoken Japanese much more closely than trying to replace the expressions with English expressions.

Most groups will also have an unofficial persona in mind. This persona is usually created by the group leader, who is responsible for putting up potential projects, uploading new releases and monitoring feedback, and who will then instruct translators and editors on what should and should not be done. The persona our group leader has made does not have a name, but does have a very specific set of needs. Our persona is a very needy and nitpicky male reader who will latch onto even the tiniest of mistakes. He does not know

Japanese, even though he likes to think he does, and has to seek out English fan translations. He is a large-scale consumer of hentai manga who has read terrible amateurish projects riddled with spelling errors and obvious mistranslations, but also some very high-quality projects. As such, his standards for quality are set very high and mistakes ruin his whole reading experience. He is also extremely specific about genres and what he does and does not want to read. If a release is made that has even a hint at something out of the ordinary, he will instantly begin voicing his disappointment.

Thankfully there are only very few readers who would actually act like this, but our group leader has seen it happen many times, and as such has made a persona that reflects the absolute worst type of reader. Most of the feedback we receive is positive or neutral, but sometimes there are people with very extreme opinions who are eager to voice them. Having a negative persona like this does put some stress on all parts of the project, particularly on editing and QC. This does not mean however that we try to make every single project flawless and perfect. That is impossible and everyone in the group knows it. Our standards for quality are set very high though, at least as far as fan translation groups go, something that has undoubtedly helped our releases reach as large of an audience as they have.

Lastly, Suojanen et al. (2015) talk about audience design. This is something that comes very naturally to fan translation groups. The field of interest is already so narrow, that the audience we write our translations for is very clearly defined by omission. One key factor here is the extra effort a reader must put in to seek out fan translations. Dedication that goes this far tells us that the primary reader is someone who has spent a lot of time on anime and manga and has subsequently run out of things to read and watch. This will then direct the reader to fan translations.

The problem with audience design like this is that outsiders, who might be familiar with manga on store shelves if even that, will most likely feel alienated, and someone who has no prior experience with manga or anime would, ironically enough, need a translator to read a fan translation. I discussed this at length with one of the respondents who was curious about what I am writing this thesis about. After I explained the idea of audience

design to them through a little flowchart depicting the stages of specificity, they did agree that simply the type of content we deal with limits the possible audience quite significantly. The flowchart I used was as follows: manga-> hentai manga-> fan translated hentai manga-> fan translated vanilla hentai manga. This depicts the stages of specificity a potential reader must be aware of to come across content I have translated as an example.

Fan translation groups deal with a different kind of audience though than publishers would. Readers of fan translations are always faceless and nameless, and they appear and disappear at random, as is the nature of most online communities. In this sense, there is little need for consistency or ironclad rules. If any given translation is readable and does not make the reader feel like they are being talked down to, it can be considered a success. Feedback on readability is paramount to fan translation groups as it lets groups know whether they are doing a good job of conveying the meaning of the original text.

A few of the responders did however point out that audience interaction is fairly minimal most of the time. While suggestions for projects are sometimes taken into consideration, there is not much else going on in terms of direct communication between groups and their readership. However, I would argue that audience feedback has a more indirect impact on the translation process, more specifically in identifying strategies and solutions that either worked well or did not work well. This goes for both translation and editing. The feedback mostly comes in the form of comments on sharing platforms, which are often not at all helpful or indicative of anything really. However, every once in a while, there is feedback that is helpful, if for nothing else than reaffirming that the current translation strategy is working well. One of the respondents also discussed these comments being a sort of reward for the time put in to translating and editing. However, the same respondent also pointed out that the comments are rarely useful in any way, but receiving positive feedback is always nice.

The source language being Japanese has a large impact on readability as well. Japanese is a high-context language where words can change meaning depending on who is talking

to who and in what context. There is very rarely a correct translation for anything, which makes it simultaneously easy and difficult to translate Japanese text in a way that makes sense. If one focuses on singular words too much, the translation will end up being very stiff and difficult to read. If too much freedom is taken, the translation will feel disconnected from the source material, only sometimes correctly conveying the author's intentions while being too colloquial in tone. The latter form of translation has spawned quite a few joke projects from the fan translation community, such as projects translated entirely in an Australian or Scottish dialect.

Another feature of the audience fan translators write for is that they prefer their translations to include untranslated cultural terms. Localizing or domesticating too much will make the readers feel like they are not being respected. A large majority of the target audience is also interested in the culture and language of Japan in a more general sense, so providing some insight through translator's comments on occasion or simply leaving untranslated expressions there and letting the reader do some research is preferred. For example, in two of the projects I have translated, I have had a chance to include translator's comments.

In professional manga translations one might see these comments used to explain relatively simple concepts and words, but in fan translation, due to the expectation of the knowledge of the target audience, these simpler concepts are never explained. Translator's comments are usually reserved for explaining extremely obscure references. In the projects I translated, the comments were used to explain joke about a character's name which was referencing a real-life celebrity, and a reference to a song from the late 1970s.

Localization is left for legitimate publishers to worry about, since they need to make sure their translations can reach a much larger audience and draw in new readers. This topic has come up in the correspondence between our group members as well, most recently in relation to the use of honorifics. One of our translators mentioned that professional translations rarely include honorifics, while fan-made translations almost always include them.

5 CONCLUSIONS

When I started working on this thesis, it was supposed to be a simple, descriptive study of the fan translation scene. However, as luck would have it, the status quo of the fan translation scene has shifted significantly in the past six months. As such, the focus of the study had to shift slightly, from simply describing the scene and the translation process in the context of fan translation groups, to explaining the various factors behind the recent decline in active fan translation groups. This revelation also broadened the scope of the study quite considerably.

Collecting data for the thesis turned out to be much simpler than I had imagined, due to the teams operating on the internet. As such, an abundance of information is available for anyone who is willing to look. Some of the websites I visited had some extremely detailed descriptions of various things pertaining to the fan translation process. The interviews were also very easy to conduct, mostly due to the instantaneous nature of internet communication services. If I saw a person online, I could interview them right then and there, no waiting for responses to e-mails or setting up call times. The answers I got from the people I interviewed were also surprisingly insightful, not to mention mostly uniform.

While I had begun to notice that fan translations were starting to become less frequent, especially translations of hentai manga, I never realized just how serious the situation actually was. As the interviews showed, almost all the interviewees agreed that money has now become a factor in fan translation as well. While some groups still insist on holding onto their vision of producing free content, the reality of the situation is that translators and editors have started to become reluctant to participate due to the lack of compensation for the time they spend making content that could very well be sold for money. Many more translators and editors have also started to become aware that their skillset is something that could be put to use making money elsewhere, for example doing commissions or joining one of the now numerous for-profit content providers.

I also believe that fan groups have now had enough time to experiment, gather experience and helpful resources that they are now capable of competing with paid content, or alternatively, putting up their own paid service or selling their work. People who have been working on fan translations since the late 2000's have now gathered more than enough experience to offer their skills on the job market and be competitive with formally trained people. Several of the interviewees pointed to fakku.net (2017) as a new company that made good use of talent coming from fan translation groups. Several groups have had to either become mostly inactive or disband because their translators and editors chose to go to work with fakku.net (ibid. 2017) instead. In the interest of privacy, I will not name any specific groups or individuals.

Having been able to convert a hobby into a real job, specifically the job of a translator, is quite impressive as it would normally require formal training. In this sense, O'Hagan's (2008) theory of fan translation communities being a virtual training ground for translators seems to be proven true. However, it is difficult if not impossible to say just how skilled these translators were with Japanese before they started working on fan translations, nor if they were formally studying Japanese concurrently.

The original aim of the thesis was to find whether the UCT model is used subconsciously in fan translating, however, with the number of active groups having gone down significantly, conclusive proof proved to be harder to obtain than I initially thought. However, I did still do my best to match the two up through autoethnographic analysis and practical examples from some of the projects I have personally worked on.

What connects all these things is the fact that fan translation groups have now reached a point where they are able to compete with official translations in production method, translation and editing quality and work ethic. For a random assortment of people from around the world to be able to coordinate such an effort and receive positive feedback for it is quite the achievement, as well as an indication that fan translation groups have been doing a number of things right.

What this ultimately boils down to is a sense of intimacy between the readers and the groups. Fan translation groups know exactly what their readers are looking for in the material they read because they are interested in the exact same content. Both parties are extremely passionate about what they do, which means that the readers sincerely appreciate the work fan translation groups do, and the fan groups feel deservedly accomplished. It feels like this passion has only now been fully recognized and being made real use of.

The discussions I had during the interviews seemed to also back up this thought. Most if not all the respondents were able to point out at least one person who had completely abandoned fan translation in favor of a paying position as a professional translator. What turned out to be a more complicated question was why there are almost no new people interested in contributing their talents to the fan translation scene, even as a form of practice. While the reason could technically be anything, the most reasonable conclusions were that potential new translators and editors are more keenly aware of real job openings that will secure them a decent pay, which in turn serves to deter interest in doing essentially the same job, but for no compensation whatsoever.

In terms of the theories implemented in this thesis, I believe it is well proven that UCT does exist in fan translation. The way it manifests in the fan translation scene is almost as a collective understanding across all genres and groups of what readers are generally looking for. This is something that has been developing for the time that fan translation groups have been active, so for almost 20 years by now. Some of the ground work was done by publishers in various countries though, as I remember some of the first Finnish manga translations for example being just terrible in terms of quality and readability, with frequent mistakes in page order and bubble order, mirrored reading direction to make them uniform with western books, every single tiny sound effect being translated which resulted in cluttered pages and so on. These early translations were however changed quite rapidly, mostly due to the feedback the publishers received from the readers.

Since these were official translations and manga and anime were new and interesting, emerging medium at the time, the readership was quite sizeable and vocal. The mirroring

for example was reverted very quickly, going back to the right to left reading direction. Sound effect were quickly left untranslated and instead made use of as a learning tool for hiragana and katakana with the assistance of translator's comments. I would have to imagine that a similar process has taken place in other countries as well, although much earlier than in Finland. In any case, these precedents set in professional translations have made their way into the collective knowledge of the fan translation community and honed further over time.

O'Hagan's research (2008) also showed that fan translating can definitely function as a training ground for translators and editors. My own research also showed that this has been proven conclusively, with several fan translators having been able to find real jobs as professional translators despite their lack of formal training in translation, although it is impossible to tell if these translators had in fact received any formal translator training. Translator training tends to make no difference in any case, since the material being translated requires such specialized knowledge. The initial language skills of these individuals will also remain a mystery. Due to the fickle nature of fan translation groups, details like this are either never disclosed in the first place or are simply forgotten after a while, especially after the individual leaves the group.

In any case, this thesis turned out to be almost like a continuation on O'Hagan's research (2008) with much of the same theory and methodology being employed. The study O'Hagan conducted was on a very small scale, involving just one fan translator and one professional translator. While This thesis did not include any professional translators directly for comparison, I was able to make some reference to professional translations through my own experience, as well as that of early professional translators of manga in Finland.

What remains the most important discovery of the entire thesis is the apparent decline in fan translation across all genres. Having seen fan translations both boom in popularity and now start to slow down and begin to merge with the professional anime and manga industry is a surreal feeling, mostly because this has all taken place in such a relatively small window of time. It has barely been twenty years since the very first fan translations

of manga began to pop up on the internet, and even less time since anime and manga reached the mainstream status it now holds in many countries.

Regarding my research question, stated as follows in the introduction of the thesis:

- Who are the people making fan translations?
- Who are fan translations being made for?
- How can fan translations exist?
- Can fan translations compete with professional translations?

I was able to definitively answer at least the following questions; How can fan translations exist, can they compete with professional translations and who are fan translations being made for. To quickly summarize, fan translations can exist because Japanese publishers allow them to exist, as allowing this behavior instead of taking down fan-made translations will give their series exposure overseas, something that Japanese publishers value very highly. From my interviews and with backing from O'Hagan's earlier study (2008), I was able to conclusively determine that fan translations are able to compete with professional translations. Similarly, I was able to fairly accurately describe the type of reader these translations are being made for, mostly through my own experience but also through using UCT tools (Suojanen et al. 2015) like personas and audience design.

The questions I was not able to definitively answer were; Who are making fan translations and does UCT exist in fan translation. Regarding the question of who are taking part in the process, it is very difficult to determine something like that in an online community. Every participant is fond of their anonymity and reluctant to disclose any sort of personal information, especially names, occupation etc. The only way I could glean any information of this nature was by observing conversations between members who are real life friends as well, but decided not to include information gathered this way because I felt that that would be an invasion of privacy. In general though, fan translations are made by passionate individuals who are willing to put in the effort to provide like-minded individuals with content they want free of charge. Nationality, educational background, names and other things which would be important to know in any other community are

almost irrelevant here. What matters more is the passion for the medium and the drive to create.

The existence of UCT strategies in fan translation was proven in some ways, but I felt like I could have done a better analysis of my data and perhaps conducted more interviews to specifically identify UCT strategies. This was the original primary aim of the thesis, but due to the shift in the fan translation scene and the subsequent disappearance of a significant number of groups and contributors put a damper on this initial plan. However, I was able to identify some UCT strategies being used through my experiences and the correspondence in my own group, but this is a very small sample size and not quantifiable in any real way. This is a topic that has potential for further study.

I set initially set out to make a thesis explaining the fan translation scene and how it operates, a simple goal in itself, but ended up having to expand the scope of the study quite significantly due to a shift in the fan translation community that has taken place over the last six months. Even so, I think I've managed to provide a comprehensive, inside look into the fan translation scene and its operations. Whether the fan translation scene will continue its decline or whether this is just a temporary downward phase remains to be seen. However, considering the way in which fan talent has been recognized recently,

I believe there is a merge of sorts happening right now where, instead of continuing to compete with fan translations, companies are willing to consider hiring talented fan translators and editors. If this keeps happening, it could be possible that the current manga and anime industry in the west could assimilate the fan translation community almost entirely. Then again, for most fan translation groups the very idea of providing free content is a matter of conviction, and something that should not be compromised for personal gain. The truth remains however, that with the current competitive nature of fan translations, the investment of time required from everyone involved has grown to the point where continuing to make content for free just seems entirely absurd. At this point it is almost easier to just apply for a job translating manga than it is to make fan translations.

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