Fansubbers. The case of the Czech Republic and Poland

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Abstract

The paper presents a comparative analysis of Czech and Polish "fansubbers." Fansubbers (also referred to as subtitlers) is a general term, which describes people who create subtitles for foreign language movies and TV series for free. The similarities between the Polish and Czech cultures, due to the current geopolitical situation and a shared history of being behind the Iron Curtain after 1945 (despite the obvious differences), led us to investigate whether the profiles of typical fansubbers would be congruent. The premium was put on: a) the socio-economic status of the subtitlers, b) their motivations for doing subtitles, and c) the tools they use during the process. The obtained results indicated that Polish and Czech subtitlers are similar in many respects. Our study showed that the age, economic status, worldview, and distribution of other basic socio-economic characteristics were similar in both populations. Both groups of respondents revealed similar patterns of participation in culture. Both also consisted of tech-savvy members. Yet, there are some differences. The most obvious one lays in motivations. While the Czech respondents have altruistic motivations to create subtitles, their Polish counterparts seem to be more self-centered motivated, indicating that they do it mainly to improve their language skills.

Keywords
Fansubbing, amateur translation, prosumption, collective intelligence

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The paper presents a comparative analysis of Czech and Polish "fansubbers." We consider fansubbers (also referred to as "subtitlers") to be people who create subtitles for free for foreign language movies and TV series.[4] The phenomenon of fansubtitling, also known as fan-captioning, basically occurs in countries suffering from lengthy delays in airing popular movies and TV series, and in countries where English is not in common use. Obviously, these countries may be very different, as fansubbing is popular in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Our aim is to compare two "subtitle scenes" in countries from Central Europe (see: Kroutvor 2001). The similarities between the Polish and Czech cultures, due to the current geopolitical situation and a shared history of being behind the Iron Curtain after 1945, led us to investigate whether the profiles of typical fansubbers would be congruent. However, Poland and the Czech Republic differ on the basis of many factors: both population and area size, dominating worldview, an attitude towards the Anglo-Saxon culture, an amount of English lessons at school, frequency of reading, etc. All those factors, as we presumed in our hypothesis, could have an influence on the way in which the culture of subtitlers functions in both countries.

In other words, we decided to examine two Central European cultures and see how the different "subtitle scenes" look like. We believe that our examination can be the first, relatively straightforward, step in the process of verifying if various national "subtitles scenes" share common characteristics. We mainly focused on: a) the socio-economic status of the subtitlers, b) their motivations for doing subtitles, and c) the tools they use during the process.

The article is divided into four main parts. First we indicate issues and problems that are discussed in research about subtitling TV series and movies. We draw upon existing research in the field and highlight the gaps we intend to close in our research. The second part discusses the methodology and sampling used in this research. The third part presents research results obtained in Poland and the Czech Republic. The special insight in this part comes from one of the manga fansubber who not only took part in our survey, but also described for us the entire production process. Finally, we point out difficulties and prospects for the further research.

Introduction: the subtitling phenomenon

The activities performed by subtitlers seem important in the context of the debate over "presumption," a debate taking place in media studies and sociology (see: Jenkins 2014; Siuda 2012). "Prosumers" are involved in both the production and the consumption of culture rather than focusing on a single aspect (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). In this sense, the subtitling can also be related to the ideas of "crowdsourcing" (Djelassi and Decoopman 2013; Sutherlin 2013; McDonough Dolmaya 2012) and "collective intelligence" (Noubel 2004). Hence, subtitling might be also put into the framework of

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[4] Some scholars do distinguish between "fansubbers" related to manga/anime fandoms versus "subtitlers" who create "general subtitles." We decided to analyze them together; however, some differences will be discussed. It should be noted that the activity in question is very similar in the case of both groups. The difference lies in the subtitled material (manga/anime vs. regular TV series or movies).

research on altruistic behavior observed in the Internet (see: Halfaker, Geiger, Morgan, Riedl 2013: p.664-688; Utz 2009: p.357-374; De Kosnik 2010; Jenkins, Ford, Green 2013). As such, the amateur subtitling case is a vivid example of the shift from an electronic to a digital culture (see Pérez-González and Susam-Saraeva 2012: p.155), with its consequences and ethical dilemmas (e.g., file sharing).

Two different explanations of the subtitling phenomenon are popular in academic literature. The first explanation is the limited availability of high-end quality TV productions in some countries. It seems as though downloading and subtitling foreign programming is due to the absence or lengthy delays in international airings (see: Barra 2009; Orrego-Carmona 2012; Vellar 2011). As one of the French respondents sarcastically summarized concerning this matter: "It's great to wait more than a year and a half to see a dubbed version on TV" (Dagiral and Tessier, 2008: p.118-120).[5] The most extreme example is China, where most foreign TV productions are not even officially distributed and the number of official movies is restricted by law (in 1999, China agreed to import 40 foreign films each year) (Hu 2013: p.227; Zhang 2013: p.30).

The second reason is the language barrier. Fansubbing usually occurs in countries where many people cannot understand the movies and TV series in English. In Poland, the Czech Republic and Eastern European and Mediterranean countries (Barra 2009; Vellar 2011; Massidda 2013), in contrast to Scandinavian countries and Germany, English is widespread only among young people. Therefore if there were no accompanying subtitles, many potential viewers would not have understood a film. A similar scenario can be observed in China (Li 2009; Jiang and Leung 2012; Chu 2013; Hu 2013; Zhang 2013) and South America (Orrego-Carmona 2012).

The third reason, according to the latest research, is related to the specific values of fandom members. Here knowledge of a particular TV series is more important than the language skills of the translator. In his qualitative study from the Czech Republic, Svelch (2013) provided a brilliant example of this. Fans, who refer to one of the most productive member of the group sometimes even as "savior", were reluctant to criticize the quality of his subtitles despite the obvious flaws (Svelch 2013: p.306). In other words, some fans are convinced that it is more important to be a fan of a particular TV series than it is to have flawlessly translated subtitles. This is probably caused by the fact that fansubs better recognize the specific character of the translated TV series or movie. This attitude has also resulted in the phenomenon of so-called abusive subtitles (Nornes 1999/2004; 2007). Such subtitles challenge some of the conventional constraints (graphic, grammatical, and semantic) imposed on subtitles in order to create (more) "authentic" text (Cubbison 2005; O'Hagan 2009). An illustration of this can be the Italian subgroup *Itasa*, which freely translates American cultural references into the Italian context in order to simplify the general comprehension of selected jokes. For example, in

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[5] The diagnosis is similar in the case of file sharing. This has been confirmed by the research conducted by the Hungarian scholars Bodó Balazs and Zoltán Lakatos, who analyzed which movies were downloaded most frequently via torrents. Their results indicate that people involved in file sharing in Hungary are mainly interested in films not currently shown in cinemas, but not interested in those that are legally available (Filiciak, Hofmokl and Tarkowski 2012: p.18).

an episode of *Pushing Daisies*, a dog's name, Bubblegum, was transformed into *Cingomma*, a dialectal term used only in some Italian regions (Barra 2009: p.519). Moreover, Italian fansubs reveal the actual language (strong language, implied meanings, and non-politically correct utterances) used by the American characters that are censored in official DVD releases and TV broadcasts (Massidda 2013: p.144-154).

Thus far, we have discussed questions and answers related to fansubbing. The other issue, a rarely investigated one, is related to fansubbers themselves: their identity, motivations, and work-related techniques. Until now, only a few empirical articles dedicated to fansubbers have been published. Among them we find texts about Argentina (Orrego-Carmona 2012), China (Li 2009; Jiang and Leung 2012; Chu 2013; Hu 2013; Zhang 2013), Italy (Barra 2009; Vellar 2011; Massidda 2013), France (Dagiral and Tessier 2008), and Poland (Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj 2014). Numerous studies have focused exclusively on manga fansubbers (e.g., Pérez-González 2006; Lee 2011). Most of such research takes the form of qualitative case studies, usually of a particular fansub group. The majority of these papers are micro-ethnographic studies, which have a clearly preliminary character: they discuss only a selected phenomenon on the basis of a purposive sample. Whereas such studies are very important and they had helped us to construct our theoretical framework, we would like to draw more general image of the two local 'subtitles scenes'. Our study was designed to compare them in terms of more countable qualities.

Only two studies about fansubbers have been based on quantitative research methods (Chu 2013; Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj 2014). It should be noted, however, that even in those cases, we are dealing with a small-scale web survey. This method, although it causes some methodological difficulties, is an efficient tool when the study only targets Internet users (Cooper 2000). The efficiency of this method, as we strongly believe, can be better exploited when the almost identical questionnaire (modified only due to some cultural differences) is used in different countries (the comparative allows the researchers to highlight the key features of the investigated subject – if some characteristic of the particular phenomenon appears in different environments, they may assume it is typical for the phenomenon). This is precisely what we have done. Our Polish-Czech study will provide the first comparison in the area of the fansubtitling studies.

Methods and sampling

The Czech survey was conducted from February through March 2014. The extensive questionnaire concerned the respondents' basic socio-demographic characteristics, their motivations to create the subtitles, the ways in which they did it, as well as a number of questions about the use of new technologies. Results obtained in the Czech Republic were compared to the closed Polish study from the previous year (January-March 2013) (see: Luczaj and Holy-Luczaj 2014). In both cases the survey was in the native language to avoid possible complications that might have resulted if we had chosen English.[6] The

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[6] Yet some of the respondents decided to answer in English in the Czech survey.

initial questionnaire consisted of 47 questions, of which 7 were open-ended questions. The Czech questionnaire was almost identical. Only the group of questions concerning political attitudes and the wording of certain questions was changed.[7] In the Polish case, we simply asked about attitudes toward religion and some political views, while in the Czech version we employed a modified version (i.e., updated, more relevant to the worldviews of potentially surveyed persons) of the Wilson-Patterson Conservatism Scale (Wilson and Patterson 1968; see: Oxley et al. 2008). The modification was due to the specificity of the Czech religiosity (very high percentage of atheists) which cannot be compared to old-fashioned Catholic, Polish religiosity.

Respondents who completed the questionnaire in response to the invitation sent by the researchers did so without financial incentive. The convenience sampling research technique was chosen due to the fact that it was impossible to estimate how many non-professional translators there were[8]. In other words, it was not possible to draw a random sample from the population of fansubbers because the latter remains unknown. Neither was it possible to meet the subtitlers during the specific events because, to our knowledge, there were no such rallies. In this case, we sent invitations to major subtitling groups via Facebook and e-mail. We also looked up the publicly available addresses of individual translators. In the Czech case, unlike the Polish case, when one of subtitling group posted our announcement on their forum, we also posted similar announcements on other forums.[9] It should be also noted that some Slovak translators also create Czech subtitles, and some websites offer subtitles in both languages. The Czech and Slovak languages, due to their similarity, shared customs, and history of being in one shared state, are usually not translated one into another. Czech is still understandable for some Slovaks, as Slovak is for some Czechs (Dickins 2009), although there is not an obligatory language education of the other language in those two states. Moreover the understandability differs when it comes to younger generations of Czechs and Slovaks. It is also a case of range: many Slovaks decide to write or read in Czech, because by doing so they have greater possibilities of reaching the potential audience. Similarly, some works are not translated into Slovak, as they have already been translated into Czech, or vice versa. When we consider that the Czech language is used by approximately 10.5 million people and the Slovak language is used by approximately 5 million people, the situation becomes more understandable. But we should bear in mind that the situation is still changing, especially in the case of young people (Dickins 2009). To avoid these

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[7] We also omitted (to shorten a lengthy questionnaire) a small number of questions that had not turned out to be useful.

[8] It is possible to count the nicknames on each website, but we assumed that it will only show the number of translators subscribed on each website. Except that a lot of users translate using more than one nickname.

[9] In the Polish case, we chose not to place the questionnaire on Internet forums (to be sure that we contact people, who actually create Polish-language subtitles and not only those who chat on forums dedicated to such subtitles), and thus we probably limited the range of potential participants of the survey. In the Czech case it was an initiative of people who we had contacted. We did not ask them to post our survey online but they did it anyway. Hence, in the Czech Republic, we decided to use forums as well.

definitional difficulties, we allowed some Slovaks (whom we contacted via Czech websites) to take part in the survey as well.

In the Czech Republic, we eventually drew upon 68 completed questionnaires (27 from "general" translators; 41 from manga fans). We were forced to reject some additional questionnaires due to information that seemed highly unreliable. In Poland we used 40 questionnaires (30 from "general" translators, 10 from manga fans). The number of questionnaires is certainly not impressive, but at the same time the number seems large when compared to other research employing small samples (2-12 participants, see: Barra 2009; Chu 2013; Dagiral and Tessier 2008; Hu 2013; Jiang and Leung 2012; Li 2009; Massidda, 2013; Orrego-Carmona 2012; Svelch 2013, Vellar 2011; Zhang 2013). Moreover, we should take into account the small number of non-professional translators in each country (as it may be predicted based on the very small number of subtitling groups), as well as reluctance of potential respondents to be interviewed or even surveyed (Błaszczak 2013; Massidda 2013: p.23).

To avoid a possible misunderstanding we would like to emphasize again that we do not claim our study to be a representative one. We could not draw a representative sample because the population remains unknown. Thus, we draw upon the answers submitted by those, who responded to our invitation. Yet, our sample has at least two advantages in comparison to ethnographic studies mentioned above. First, we have strong reasons to believe that our sample is as exhaustive as it could be done in these terms. We did invite all the translators who were active on all main subtitling-related pages in both Polish and Czech internet. Second, even if there is a vagueness of the information (some respondents might not want to answer our questions, others might prefer to be anonymous in the internet), we gathered a *relatively* large sample, in comparison to other similar research. Nevertheless, one cannot treat the following data as representative. We, based on the interpretative paradigm, prefer to speak about the image of the collectivity.

Results

Who are the "subtitlers"?

The basic socio-economic characteristics of both groups under review seem similar. In both countries subtitlers who responded to our survey were predominantly male. The gender disproportion was slightly bigger in Poland (68% males) than seen in the Czech Republic (60% males). In the Polish case the youngest respondent was aged 15 years; the oldest, 47 years. The average age was 27 years (median was 25 years). In the Czech Republic the youngest respondent was aged 15 years; the oldest, 58 years. The mean age was 25 years (median age was 23 years).[10] In general, Polish and Czech subtitlers were in

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[10] This difference is probably due to the overrepresentation of manga fansubbers in the Czech sample (who are usually younger than subtitlers) in comparison to the Polish sample. The mean age for manga subtitlers was 24 years (median: 23 years), and for "general" subtitlers it was 28 years (median: 26 years). For Polish

their twenties. Nevertheless, it should be noted that some people under the age of 18 years were also involved in fansubbing. Thus, the age of fansubbers is comparable to age of people involved in other fandoms (see, e.g., Rust 2002).

Figure 1. Gender of the respondents
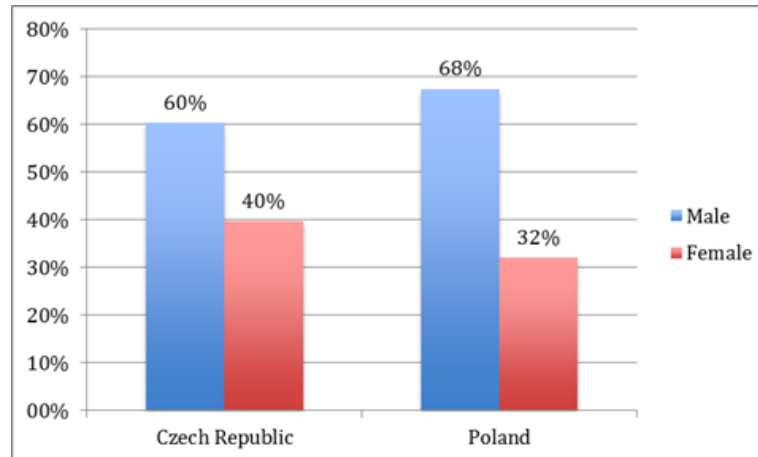
Respondents were also asked to place themselves on a 5-point scale according to wealth. Only 7,8% of the Czech respondents, and 5% of the Polish respondents, described themselves as poor or relatively poor. In total, 45.3% of Czechs and 57% of Poles said they had average material conditions. Next, 42.2% of the Czech respondents and 34% of the Polish respondents claimed to be relatively well-to-do. Furthermore, 4.7% of Czechs and 3% of Poles believed they could afford some luxury. Thus, in both countries we dealt with affluent populations.

We also measured the educational backgrounds of the respondents. In general, both samples were dominated by people who had already graduated from a university (50% in Poland and 31% in the Czech Republic) and many were still students. Surprisingly (one may expect people with humanistic background to be more fluent in foreign languages), among the graduates and university students we mainly found those who had a university degree in the technical, exact, or natural sciences (50% in Poland, 54% in the Czech Republic), slightly fewer in the humanities (45% and 32%, respectively), and relatively rarely in foreign philology (5% and 14%). We can presume that this result looks like that because students with degree in the technical and natural sciences must have the advanced knowledge of English because of the cases they studied. While Poland and the Czech Republic are similar in this respect, the Chinese study (based on 80 respondents), which we have already cited, indicated that 26% of the subtitlers studied languages, 16% business and administration, 11% engineering, 10% social sciences, fewer than 1% information management and computer science, and 0.5% medicine/pharmacy

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population of subtitlers these differences were similar. Czech manga sample is also predominantly male (71%), unlike the general sample (44,4%).

(Chu 2013: 265-66). The main difference concerns people with university-certified language skills (translators, philologists).

Figure 2. Educational background of the respondents
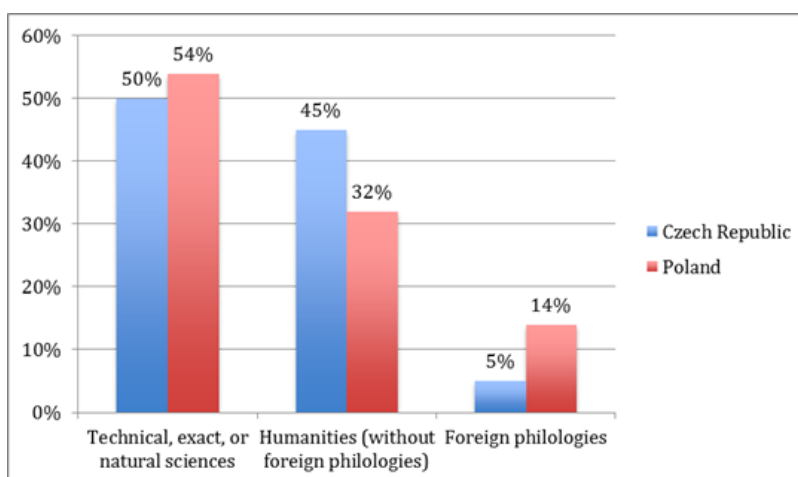
Moreover, we asked directly about language skills. In general, fansubbers knew a few languages (averagely: in 66.2% of the respondents in the Czech Republic and 67.4% of the respondents in Poland knew more than one language), but their proficiency was far ranging. The most popular language was English, known by all respondents in Poland and all but one in the Czech sample. A total of 77.5% of the Polish respondents and 60.3% of the Czech respondents declared knowing English at the B2 or C1 level (according to the classification of the Council of Europe, which measures the knowledge on six levels ranging from A1 to C2). Among the Czechs and Poles were also fluent English speakers (C2 level was indicated by 13.2% and 10%, respectively).

The second most popular language was German, the knowledge of which was declared by 65% of the Polish respondents and 50% of the Czech respondents. Out of all the respondents, 32.5% fansubbers in Poland and 36.8% of the fansubbers in the Czech Republic also knew Russian, but as with the German speakers they were more beginners (A1-B1) than advanced users. Also, French speakers (17.5% in Poland, 13.5% in the Czech Republic) and Asian language speakers (15% in Poland, 39.7% in the Czech Republic[11]) were typically less fluent. A total of 25% of the Polish respondents and 44.1% of the Czech respondents knew other European language. Czech respondents claimed to know Spanish, Italian, Polish; one person declared knowledge of Hungarian, one knowledge of Bulgarian, one of Norwegian, and two of Croatian. What should be pointed out is that 22% of the respondents marked Slovak as a foreign language they knew. Those answers

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[11] A total of 51.2% of manga fans knew at least one Asian language in comparison with 22.2% of general translators (among whom we might also have some manga translators, although they were found via "general" subtitles-related websites). In the Polish sample, these proportions were comparable (30% and 10%, respectively).

show what language translators know and/or use which can be a basis to another research, for example with more linguistic focus.

It turned out that in both samples we had representatives of very different professions. From professionals and middle management to prison-guards (Poland) and metalworkers (the Czech Republic). This is not surprising, because in China, a country very different from a cultural point of view, a variety of occupations (e.g., English teacher, a translator for an oil company, a marketing officer, and an Internet censor) has also been observed (Chu 2013: p.266).

The highest percentage of our Czech respondents (22.1%) lived in a relatively large city (301,000–999,000 citizens). An additional 17.6% lived in even bigger cities, which could not mean anything other than Prague. Summed up, big city dwellers consisted almost 40% of the entire sample[12]. In the Polish sample, 50% of the respondents had spent at least a part of their lives the metropolitan areas centered in Warsaw (1,717 milion, Krakow 755 546, or Wroclaw (632 561)[13]. In the Czech Republic, most respondents studied in Brno (25%) and Prague (28%). The remaining respondents had studied in other centers, among which the leader was Hradec Králové, with 5.9%.

In Poland, an average of three persons inhabited a respondent's household; the same was true for the Czech respondents. As many as 62.5% of the Polish respondents were not in a relationship (whereas the data gathered by the Central Statistical Office of Poland stated that nearly 60% of the population in Poland was in a stable relationship: 56.6% married, 1.3% in non-formal), compared to 27.9% of singles, see: GUS 2013: p.157). The analogous figure in the Czech case was 58.8%. Interestingly, the distribution of these responses was not related to the age of a respondent in both countries. Moreover, as many as 92.5% of the Polish respondents, and 89.7% of their Czech counterparts, did not have children. Of the former, three people who had children aged between 39 and 45 years. Similarly, in the Czech Republic the mean age of a parent was 42 years. These data allow us to conclude that subtitle creators are mainly people adhering to what one may want to call "a new model of a family" (see: Farrell, Van de Vusse and Ocobock 2012; Ornacka and Szczepaniak-Wiecha 2005; Panasenko 2013).

In Poland almost half of the respondents (52.5%) defined themselves as religious (but half of this group does not participate in religious ceremonies), while 35% were atheists or agnostics. As many as 40% of the respondents said that they were neither interested in politics nor had definite political views. Almost one-third (27.5%) of them did not want to answer this question. The views of other people were divided more or less equally between right-wing, left-wing, and liberal views. The reluctance for religion is not, however, typical for Polish society (see: Borowik, Ančić and Tyrała 2013). Thus, fansubbers seem to be more liberal than typical Poles. In the Czech society, i.e., a highly

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[12] In 2012, according to Czech Statistical Office (Český statistický úřad), there was 10 505 445 Czechs. 1 241 664 citizens lived in Prague, the biggest Czech city. Further down in size were Brno (378,965), Ostrava (329,961), Plzeň (184 871), and Liberec (170 702) (ČSÚ 2013). The remaining Czech cities have fewer than 100 000 inhabitants (the whole population of the Czech Republic is 10 521 468 people).

[13] In 2012, according to Central Statistical Office of Poland (Głowny Urzad Statystyczny) there were 38 525 670 Poles (GUS 2013: p.36).

secularized society (see: ČSÚ 2003), we did not ask these questions; instead, we employed a standardized Wilson and Patterson Conservatism Scale. It turned out that Czech respondents were also very liberal (the average score was 2.33, where 3.0 indicates a diehard liberal), e.g., most of the respondents favored abortions rights and were against prayer in school. This allowed us to conclude that, not unlike their Polish counterparts, Czech fansubbers are liberal and open-minded. This comparison, however, is only a rough one because different research tool has been employed. Nevertheless, the similarities are apparent.

Almost all Polish respondents lived in their native country (95%) at the time of a survey. The other two Polish respondents lived in England and Australia. The corresponding percentage in the Czech Republic was comparable but slightly lower (88.2%). However, 8.8% of the sample lived in Slovakia. In fact, only one additional respondent lived abroad (in Vietnam[14]). Moreover, only one person, who at the time lived in each country, had in the past remained abroad for more than six months. The Czech respondents, like their Polish counterparts, had only studied in their native country (90% in both samples). The remaining 10% in the Czech sample were divided between those who studied both abroad and in the Czech Republic (5.9%) and only abroad (4.4%). All remaining Poles completed a part of their studies abroad, but none of them only studied abroad.

This data allows us to conclude that the subtitle creators are in general young or middle-aged, affluent, liberal persons, which had strong bounds with a home country. They did not, as might be assumed, spend much time abroad. Nevertheless, they do not, usually, care about traditional cultural patterns of the traditional Polish or Czech cultures (i.e., model of family).

An interesting difference may be observed in the case of questions about the relationships with other subtitlers. The Czech subtitlers may be treated as a community. Only 7.4% of the respondents in the Czech sample did not know anyone who also created subtitles. A total of 75% of the remaining subtitlers got to know such people online. Nearly one-third had known other subtitlers before they started to create their own subtitles. Surprisingly, this is not a pattern that we found in Poland. Here, as many as 35% of the subtitlers did not know other subtitlers (either online or in reality). It might mean that Polish subtitlers work differently than their Czech counterparts. They seem to be much more individualistic. Moreover, the majority of Polish respondents did not belong to any of aforementioned groups. Amongst these affiliated, there were members of Hatak Group (15%), Project Haven (10%), Kinomania.org, and NAPIerce-SQUAD (each 2.5%). In the Czech case, as many as 64.7% of the respondents had an account on Titulky.com, definitely the biggest and most recognizable subtitle-related website in the country. As many as 23.5% of the respondents had an account on Serialzone.cz/titulky, 10% on Asiantitulky.cz, and 13.2% on Opensubtitles.org/cs. Although we should have in mind the common practice in fansubbing, it means working in pairs and groups. It can be

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[14] It may be somehow connected with a high percentage of Vietnamese who live or used to live in the Czech Republic, or in all of Central Europe.

observed in the individual fansubs, where in the beginning is put (in most cases) the name of the translator. There we can see that in a very large sample we are dealing with more than one translator (not mentioning the proofreaders and other people involved in making subtitles: we write about it in the further part of the article). All this can speak in favor of our hypothesis about community of translators. In fact the phenomenon of subtitling in pairs or larger groups was not clearly visible in Polish surveys what can lead us to the hypothesis about Polish fansubbers not perceiving themselves as a community, as it is in case of their Czech counterparts and surveys filled by them.

Therefore, in the Czech case, unlike the Polish case, a focus on entire subtitling groups, rather than on individual translators (see: Massidda 2013; Svelch 2013) seems promising. By conducting research focused on a group we can answer many questions related, for instance, to the power structure within the group. However, achieving our goal (i.e., measuring basic socio-economic variables, motivations, as well as cultural activity of subtitlers) would not be possible in that way even if a "collectivistic" form of organization were typical for local fansubbers. Because we wanted to know the profile of an average local fansubber, it was inevitable to focus on an individual, even if it may seem strange in a close-knit community that shares the work (see: Barra 2009: p.508-512; Diaz Cintas and Munoz Sanchez 2006: p.38-43; Hu 2013: p.213).

Thanks to one of our Czech respondents we know more about the work within a manga fansub group in this country. Usually a group fluctuates from 3 to 8 members, and in extreme cases to even more. In both countries we have some "leading" groups, such as Hatak in Poland and Titulky.com in the Czech Republic. They usually share the work, although – what was emphasized by our informer – everyone could do the whole thing on his/her own.

The process begins with searching for the appropriate movie or TV series. As wrote our informer (the e-mail was originally in Czech, as well as the surveys): "The team searches the Internet, watches annual listings of new anime that are published quarterly, but the best ones are in the last quarter of the year. From several examples of anime will be selected one, two, maximum three series and the work will begin." The next step is acquiring the video. There are some persons who are expected to find "the RAW". It is, as our respondent wrote, a film without subtitles: "simply put, it is the version which is aired on the TV". The easiest way to find quality RAW according to him is to use Torrents. Other members of the group, in the meantime, are looking for original subtitles. They can co-work with some of the many English-speaking groups, or they simply can gather the subtitles from somewhere else. Those are the steps after which the proper translation process becomes possible. Our informer is of the opinion that "good teams have two translators for one pair of subtitles". After translation, the work goes to a proofreader, who checks the translation. After checking, the subtitles are either sent back to translators, or mailed forward. At the same time as the translator works "the timer", the one who makes sure that every sentence matches the dialogue. This work is perceived strenuous. The next important person is the encoder, the one who can insert them into the video. Our informant said that "the encoder is like a magician", because each of them has a different approach and a different method and carefully guards his or her know-

how. The complexity of his/her work is visible in case of so-called "karaoke subtitles" (it is the case of animating the syllables of the opening/ending song). This effect is, as claims our respondent, difficult to achieve as well as time-consuming. The last important person is the uploader, so the person who puts the ready materials in the Internet. It can be someone from the team, but in larger groups it is a separate position, because the publishing takes long time.

It is very difficult to assess how much time one needs to prepare subtitles, but our informer tried to make some estimations. It turns out that production can take anywhere from about 16 hours to 48-72 hours, depending on many factors. They were listed by the respondent as follows: to find RAW: about 1-2 hours; to search for headlines: about 1-2 hours; to translate: about 2-6 hours (depending on the number of rows, understood as the number of individual conversations); to proofread: about 1-3 hours; to time: about 2-9 hours; to encode: about 1-12 hours (it depends on the power of the PC, the size of the file, video quality, etc.); to make karaoke: about 8-48 hours (karaoke is usually completed in spare time and subsequently used in the next version); to upload: about 30 min to 4 hours (depending on the size of the file and connection speed).

Subtitlers' motivations

We asked our respondents to rate (on a 5-point scale) a series of statements. This allowed us to evaluate, in a measurable way, their attitudes toward the results of their work. The mean score of the statement that subtitling helps them to improve language skills was 4.63 in Poland, 3.87 in the Czech Republic[15]). However, in Poland as much as 90% of respondents either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with this statement, as opposed to the Czech sample where only 75% agreed[16], and 23,5% disagreed. Here Polish respondents look more self-oriented than their Czech counterparts.

Respondents in both countries usually agreed also with the next statement ("When I make subtitles I feel that I am doing something useful") (4.47 in Poland, 3.96 in the Czech Republic). Here, again, Polish respondent agreed more frequently with the statement (87,5%), as opposed to their Czech counterparts (77,9%). Again 19,1% of Czechs disagreed. What is interesting here is the fact that these two main motivations occurred in the different order: while in the Czech Republic the "altruistic" motivation was the most popular one, in Poland it was outdistanced by "non-altruistic" (or self-interested) motivation. Our qualitative data also supports this claim. Despite the fact that most Czech respondents claimed that they wanted to improve their English (20%), a lot of them wanted to help people who did not know a foreign language, and/or that they treated it as a hobby (16%). The next 13% of the respondents, an important motivation was to make Czech subtitles better or to make them at all because prior to that there hadn't been any. If we sum the second and third answers, more people indicated these

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[15] In general, Czech ratings were significantly lower than the Polish ratings.
[16] Henceforth, we treat „agreed" as a combination of „I agree" and „I strongly agree", and conversely „disagree" as a combination of „I disagree" and „I strongly disagree" answers. In this sense the third option was: "I do not know".

two answers than answered the "self-interested" one. Other motivations indicated by respondents (in qualitative a qualitative part of a survey) in both countries included the opportunity to spread the knowledge of specific titles (especially anime), having too much free time, being curious if they could manage to do a translation, or meeting similar people.

Respondents in both countries frequently admitted that they found creating subtitles pleasurable (4.18 in Poland, 3.59 in the Czech Republic).[17] Some subtitlers treated it as their favorite form of spending spare time (2.90 in Poland, 3.31 in the Czech Republic). It turned out that only 20% of Poles and 47.1% of Czechs[18] indicated fansubbing as their favorite way of spending spare time. Again, the latter scores support our initial suspicion that fansubbers in the Czech Republic may be less self-interested than Poles.[19] It is also visible in the case of the next statement. It turned out that, in general, respondents chose to translate those movies and TV series that they had already planned to watch (4.15, and 3.49, respectively), but Poles were more confident about that. Poles (80%) agreed more frequently than Czechs (51,5%) with such a statement. Respondents were also asked if "they create subtitles at somebody's request." The average score here (2.73 in Poland, 2.68 in the Czech Republic) indicates that a personal request is only a weak motivation in the case of both countries. The differences related to the percentage of those who agreed with this statement between two countries were not very significant (35% in Poland and 23.5% in the Czech Republic agreed).

However, it should be noted that answers to most of our questions were usually positively correlated[20]. It means that many respondents agreed with them at the same time. For instance, those who thought that fansubbing is pleasurable also perceived it as useful (for others), both in Poland (r=0,496) and Czech Republic (r=0,785).

The correlations show also some differences. For instance, in the Czech Republic, the score of the statement about polishing language skills was correlated positively (r=0,493) with the statement, which says that doing fansubbing is their favorite way of spending spare time. Yet in Poland the correlation was a negative one (r=-0,234). Which means that those of Polish fansubbers who find their activity very entertaining did not necessarily want to polish their language (and vice versa). Moreover, in Czech sample respondents who agreed with the statement that fansubbing is useful agreed also with the statement that they do it to get some extra language skills (r=0,878). In Poland the relationship was significantly weaker (r=0,496). It seems like, unlike Czech respondents, some Poles were, more concentrated on a single motivation, which was related to their professional qualities (language skills).

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[17] This idea is consistent with the theory of translation, which says that only in the act of translation – not the reading or listening even having a good knowledge of the language – is where people appropriate the meaning of the work (see Dąmbska-Prokop 2005: p.9-10).

[18] Regular translators agreed even more than manga fansubbers. 55,6% of them agreed with the statement in question (in comparison with 41.5% of manga translators).

[19] It should also be noted that although the average score for all statements was lower in the Czech Republic than in Poland, this difference is visible.

[20] The one significant exception was a statement about copyright and downloading the movies.

Figure 3. Mean ratings of selected statements
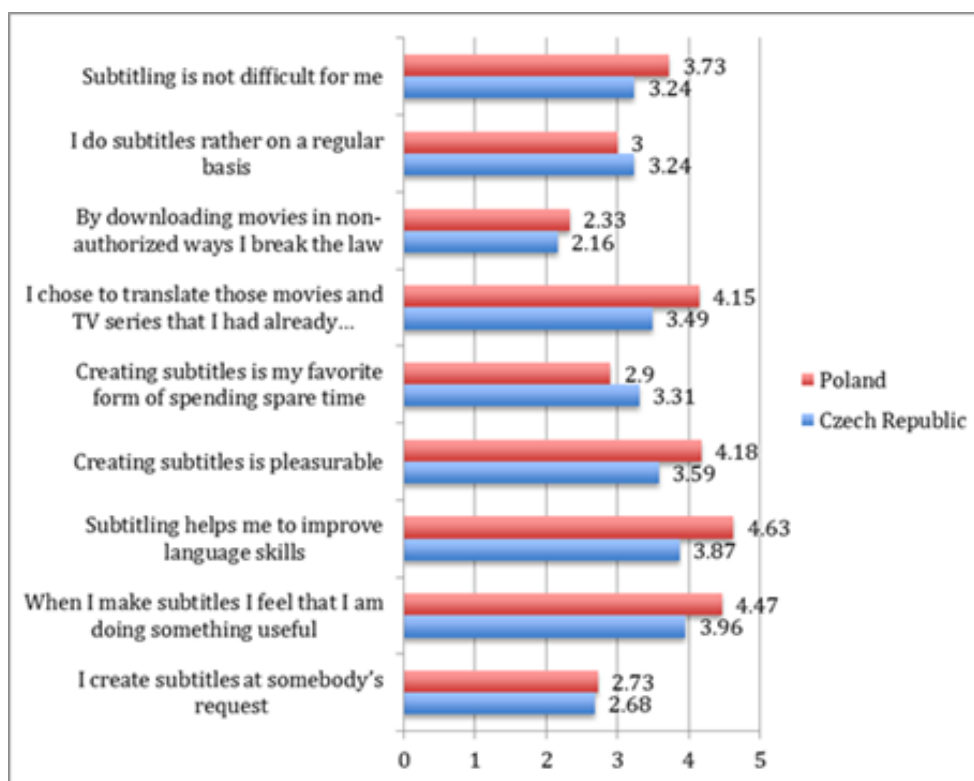
How do subtitles creators participate in culture?

We also checked how subtitle creators participate in culture. We were curious whether their participation was limited to Internet-based services, or it coexisted with more traditional culture, which was true in the case of torrent users (see: Filiciak et al. 2013).

It is hardly surprising that respondents actively used the Internet. According to their declarations, they spent online about six (Polish median) or eight hours (Czech median).[21] Subtitlers were also active in social media. As many as 82.5% subtitlers in Poland and as many as (83%) in the Czech Republic had a Facebook account.[22] Google+ was more popular in the Czech Republic than in Poland (61.8% and 37.5%, respectively), but it should be noted that the Czech study was conducted one year after the survey in the Polish context. During this period Google+ grew dynamically. Websites listed as favorites were mostly the most widely known Czech services, such as seznam.cz (the biggest Czech search engine) and YouTube. Websites connected to subtitles (edna.cz, cwzone.cz, serialzone.cz, filmweb.pl) were also noted as favorites in both samples.

Respondents went to the movies relatively often: 85% respondents in Poland and 75% of respondents in the Czech Republic did so at least once a year. This difference is

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[21] In both cases the median was equal to the mode. Means (8.5 hours for Poles and 9.1 for Czechs) was overstated by some extreme results.

[22] The fact of having an account on this website was not associated with the respondent's age.

highly likely to be an effect of dubbing, which is popular in Czech movie theaters, unlike Polish theaters. in the Czech Republic also TV series are dubbed, which is still not common in Poland, where they are mostly broadcast with voice-over. Perhaps some Czechs did not want to watch dubbed movies, so they watched the movies outside the official cinema. A rising popularity of dubbing in movie theaters can scare away those viewers who do not want to see films dubbed in their native languages.

Anyway, significantly fewer numbers of respondents decided to buy a movie on DVD or to use video on demand (VoD). Half of the respondents did it less often than once a year (52.5% in Poland, 48.5% in the Czech Republic), while only 15% in Poland and 13.2% in the Czech Republic said they did it at least once a month. When we compare data concerning watching TV and purchasing DVD's with data concerning time spent watching movies and TV series, it turns out that subtitle creators mostly watch films downloaded from the Internet. It is hardly surprising that 51.5% of the Czech respondents and 45% of their Polish counterparts had an account in local file sharing services (Uloz.to and Chomikuj.pl). When asked about the statement "By downloading movies from the internet I commit a crime", they strongly disagreed. Only 19,1% of Czech respondents, and 12,5% of their Polish counterparts agreed with this statement. At the same time, a vast majority of respondents in Poland said that their subtitles should have been protected by copyright law (mean: 3.53; median: 4.0).

A Polish respondent devoted 12 hours an average during a week to watching films and TV series (median: 10), slightly fewer than a Czech respondent, who watched films for 14 hours per week (median: 8). However, many subtitlers (55% in Poland, and 50% in the Czech Republic) did not watch traditional TV at all. In this context it should be said that fansubbers mainly watched content downloaded from the Internet. Given that services such as Hulu and Netflix were unavailable in both countries, it seems very likely that they downloaded this content illegally.

Visits to the theater were significantly less frequent among the members of both national groups of fansubbers: 75% of the Polish subtitlers and 55.9% of the Czech subtitlers went there less often than once a year. Respondents also sporadically participated in sport events (respectively, 77.5% and 73.6% respondents did it not more than once a year). Clubbing was slightly more popular, but in both countries more than one-third of the respondents visited clubs less than once a year. Thus far, it might be said that subtitlers are focused on popular culture (mainly cinematic culture). Nevertheless, the examination of levels of reading changes this picture. Despite a low percentage of people reading books in Poland (see: Chymkowski 2013), only 7.5% of Polish subtitlers do not read even one book a year, and a further 5% stop at a one book per year. In the Czech Republic, where the readership is much better than in Poland (Trávníček 2013), the subtitlers read even more: only 4.4% read less than one book annually. Of course we should have in mind that this date cannot be treated as representative. They do, however, serve as set of background information.

It should be also noted that respondents in both countries were tech-savvy. We tried to verify this hypothesis by asking about the electronic equipment used in a household. The biggest portion of respondents had a TV (80% in Poland, 79% in the Czech

Republic) or radio (80% in Poland, 72% in the Czech Republic). In total, 60% in Poland (65% in the Czech Republic) also had a DVD player, 30% (22%) a game console, and 10% (34%) a tablet.[23] The difference in possession of an e-book reader (20% in Poland, 29% in the Czech Republic) can show the difference in reading, which we have already mentioned, but it might also be a side effect of growing popularity of such devices in recent months.

Figure 4. Electronic equipment in the household
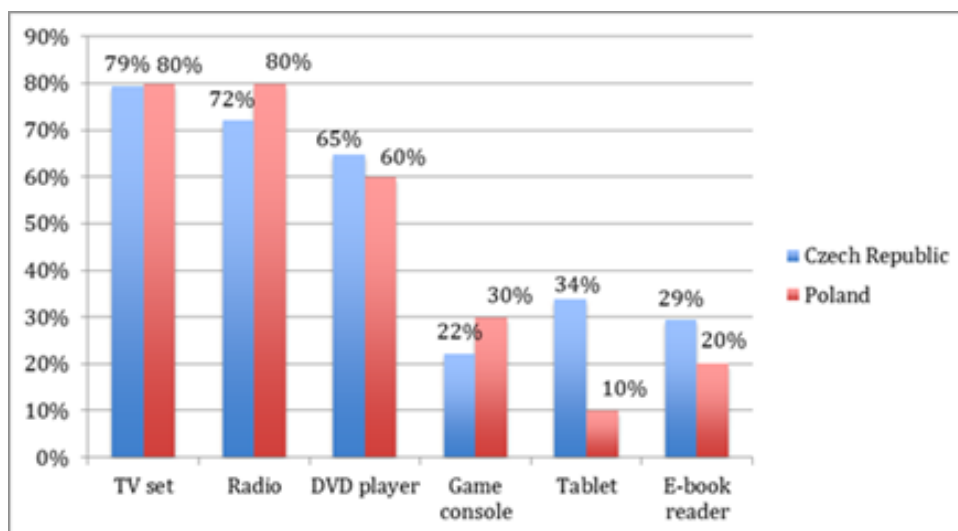
Creating subtitles

Many respondents thought that creating subtitles was not a very difficult task (the Czech mean was 3.24 on a 5-point scale; the Polish, 3.73). Nevertheless, Polish respondents assessed that it took more than 7.5 times the length of the original movie.[24]

A vast majority of Czech and Polish respondents created subtitles only by translating a foreign-language text (35,3% and 40%), or preferred to translate a ready text than to translate by listening (57.3% and 55%). The remaining 7.4% in the Czech sample, and 2,5% in the Polish one, translated subtitles in both ways but preferred to do it by listening. Nobody in the Czech sample (and one person in Polish one) translated only from listening.

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[23] See also a remark concerning Google+ on page 10.
[24] We asked about the time needed to create subtitles for a 40-minute film. We did not ask the question phrased this way in the Czech Republic.

Figure 5. Subtitling techniques
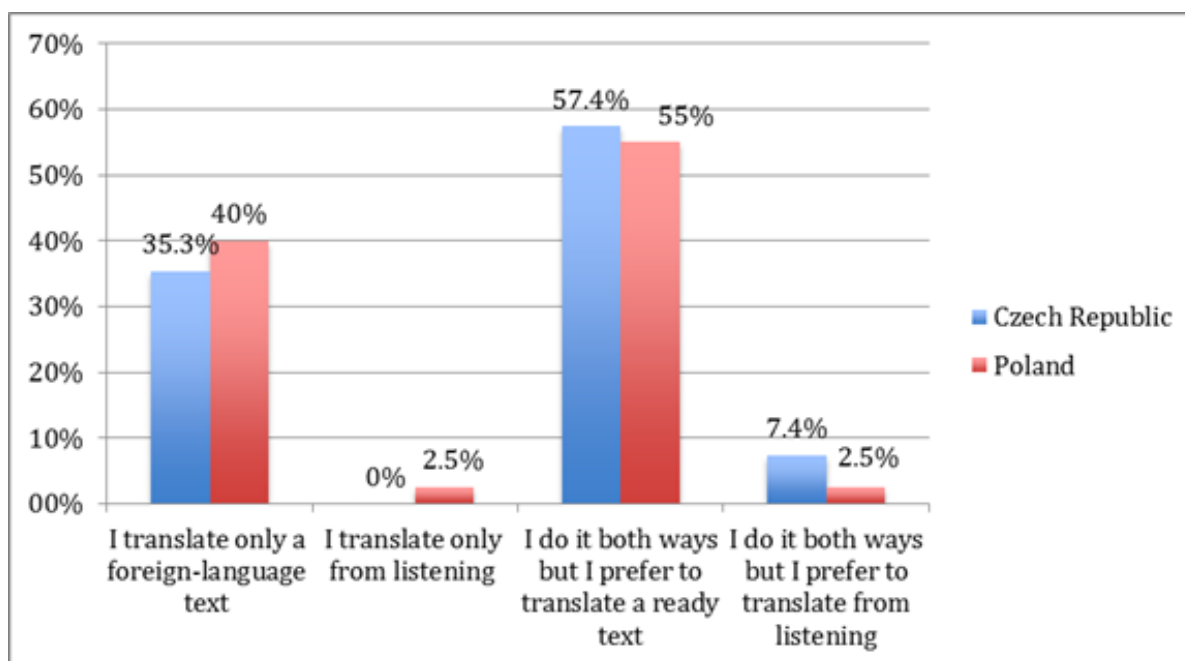
The average Czech subtitler started getting involved about 3.5 years ago (the median was 43 months). In that period, the subtitler created, on average, 58 subtitles (median). The Polish counterpart got involved slightly later (the median was 33 months), and created 30 sets of subtitles (median). The respondents also claimed that they did subtitles rather on a regular basis instead of a not regular basis (the mean of a 5-point scale was 3.2 in the Czech Republic and 3.0 in Poland). 35% of Polish respondents and 45,6% of Czechs agreed with this statement. This difference can also be treated as a form support for our argument for self-interestedness of Polish fansubbers.

The most helpful piece of equipment, according to subtitlers, was a foreign dictionary, used by 85.3% of the Czechs, and 87.5% of the Poles. The majority also used Google Translator (64.7% in the Czech Republic; 53% in Poland). In total, 59 % of the translators in the Czech Republic (and 45% in Poland) used other translation software. More than half of the respondents in both countries used language-related websites (53% in the Czech Republic, 58% in Poland). Out of all the respondents, 29% of Czech translators asked a native speaker for help, which is more than in Poland, where 20% sought such help. It is also important to emphasize that subtitlers cared about the quality of their work. Subtitlers frequently asked someone to revise the prepared subtitles. As much as 64% of the entire Czech sample, and 55% in the Polish sample ask someone to revise their subtitles. It can be the additional argument in favor of our hypothesis: it can be observed that translators usually work with one proofreader (called "beta"). Frequently we can find acknowledgments in the first part of fansub, where they thank "their betas" for the work. The bond between the translator(s) and proofreader(s) indicates some sense of community.

Figure 6. What kind of help the respondents need?
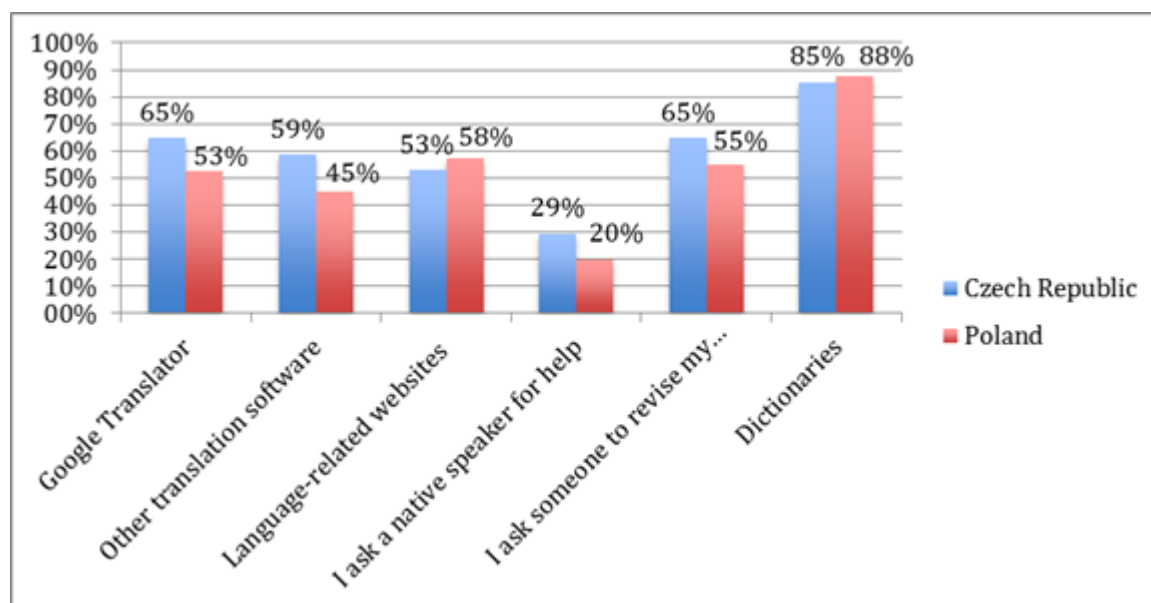
Discussion

The results indicated that Polish and Czech subtitlers are similar in many respects. Our study showed that the age, economic status, worldview, and distribution of other basic socio-economic characteristics were similar in both populations. Both groups of respondents revealed similar patterns of participation in culture. Both also consisted of tech-savvy members.

In both national cases, the largest subtitling groups (in Poland it was the "Hatak" group, and in the Czech Republic it was a group associated with "Titulky.com" website) were the most reluctant and suspicious regarding academic research. Only a few members of those groups participated in our survey. Smaller communities were much more avid; without their cooperation this project would not have been successful.

Although we can see that the Polish and Czech subtitles scenes are similar, and as such they may be treated as a "Central European" type (however it would be more fruitful to investigate more countries; there is a possibility that this "Central European" type would be falsified in the course of further research), there were some differences between the two samples of subtitlers. One difference lays in motivation. While the Czech respondents seem to be altruistically motivated, their Polish counterparts showed more self-centered motivations, indicating that they do it mainly to improve their language skills.

Despite those similarities, however, there is the question of how these two "subtitling scenes" differ from other scenes in the world. Drawing on research done by Chu (2013), we can hypothesize that some differences are likely to occur. In particular, it is not evident that the male sex and a technical educational background are typical for subtitlers from other countries and/or cultures (as it is in both analyzed cases). Our

preliminary research answered some of the most important questions. However, there are also some open issues. We have pointed out what can be considered as "known", what is still "unknown", and – from the methodological point of view – what is *knowable*. We learned for example that it is difficult to measure some aspects of fansubbers activity (such as the time needed for certain processes) and that a lot of similar phenomena are very subjective. Now we also know that some respondents may be reluctant to take part in quantitative research (we received couple of e-mails which such accounts), but some of them are willing to share their knowledge in qualitative interview (we also received couple of inquiries about further research). It was of course the limitation related to the specific "fieldwork" of the Internet, but it seems that it is not impossible to conduct such study, especially when this "fieldwork" is a natural environment of interviewees. Similar studies are more and more frequent in last years in so called netnography or virtual ethnography. The mix of sociological and ethnographical methods can be seen as fruitful in case of our study. It also shows that such an interdisciplinary approach should be continued. We can state the hypothesis that also other types of methodologies might turn out to be fruitful.

All in all, we can see two most straightforward options for further research. First of all, one may want to expand similar web-based surveys to other countries (especially other Central European countries to make the picture more solid). Second of all, other types of methodologies might turned out to be fruitful. Based on the information provided by this study it seems possible to design an in-depth study with focus group interviews as a central method.

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