

From Static to Carnival: The Emotionally Evolving Danmu Function of *Bridget Jones's Diary* Film Sequels (2001-2024) among Contemporary Chinese Audiences

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Abstract

This article explores how the British film sequels *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001-2024) is reshaped in danmu subtitling among contemporary Chinese audiences, extending the conventionally passive viewing experience to an active, carnivalesque audience engagement through multimodal resources. The former passive viewing style chiefly conveys meanings rooted in one fixed audiovisual work while the latter offers a cumulative, “customisable and accompanying” (Liang & Lu, 2025) viewing experience that provides communicative translation (Chen & Feng, 2025) and builds potential community (Lee, 2021). Through the danmu subtitling, the original story-telling order and focus of the Bridget Jones film sequels are reconstructed based on their counterpart’s dynamic, associated playful work, adding complexity and depth to the original story. The textual emotional discourse will be first analysed, followed by the empirical danmu comments analysis. It is argued that through the four emotionally-driven categories of the participatory danmu (humour, compliments, negativity and discussions), which redirect and re-interpret British heritage to cater for the digitally-borne Chinese audiences by using either formal or idiosyncratic Chinese discourses. The British film sequel of *Bridget Jones's Diary* is intriguingly reshaped to endure the legacy of digital work thanks to danmu subtitling in participatory culture.

Keywords: Emotion, Danmu Subtitling, Participatory Culture, Bilibili, *Bridget Jones's Diary* Film Sequels

Introduction

This paper explores how danmu subtitling reshapes the British film sequels *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001-2024) among contemporary Chinese audiences. By situating this analysis within the theoretical frameworks of multimodality and affective science, the study aims to uncover how the participatory subtitling practices contribute to new forms of audience engagement and meaning-making. The research addresses the research questions of the evolving identities, cumulative effects and shifting styles from original Bridget Jones film sequels to the digitally borne celebration. It is argued that the online collaborative translation practice created by

amateur subtitlers is moving beyond the textual and engaging in multimodality, building a new sense of transformative community identity building.

As a new form of subtitles first appeared in Japan in 2006 and then disseminated in Chinese fan-based platforms, e.g. Bilibili.com (thereafter B site) around 2007. “弹幕” (barrage), known as either danmu in Chinese phonetics, pinyin, or danmaku in Japanese, shapes as bullet curtain or bullet fires (Díaz-Cintas & Remael, 2021, pp.18-19) bombarding with running content such as foreign words, Chinese characters, moving emoticons, etc. Danmu (live comments running across the screen) subtitling is a contemporary creative translation practice where online users leave discursive translations with their thoughts and explanations of foreign untranslated videos (Yang, 2020). If fansubbing is “largely amateur, free, unregulated and even illegal” (Dwyer, 2018, p. 436), the act of danmu subtitling is much “simpler, wider, freer, or even random” (Yang, 2020, p.265) that offer viewers a platform where a new sense of belongings can be loosely and gradually built in a “casual, timely and collaborative manner” (ibid., p.271). In contemporary China, urban youth prosumes in a two-dimensional world that embeds a virtual and fictional space, unlike the three-dimensional world we currently live (Chen, 2018, p.2). B site is an iconic video-sharing social media platform nurturing such virtuality and vitality for anime, comics, games and novels (ACGN), fostering a complex and dynamic participatory culture (ibid.). As the largest video-sharing website signifying its danmu features in China, Bilibili.com ranks 4th globally and 2nd in China with Baidu the first (according to the global website traffic ranking site Alexa, accessed 25 October, 2024, and now has ended its service due to financial tribulations), which reaches a rocket-speed growth compared to that of 2018 (91st globally and 17th in China). Apart from the B site, different types of subtitles, from state-sanctioned subtitles, fansubbing to danmu subtitling in participatory culture, are drawn on the other successful and time-efficient social media platforms in China, such as Douyin, Xiaohongshu (Red Note), iQIYI, Weibo, etc. Users create their self-produced short videos and remake, revoice or remix (recreated) new stories of popular film adaptations (Yang, 2021, p.1). This trendy phenomenon for contemporary Chinese audiences is further explained in Wang’s (2022) research on fan-made videos via the case study of “寨见谢耳朵” (literal translation as meeting Sheldon at the site of grassroots cultural production). This fan-remix production provides “transnational audiences with more straightforward access to valuable information that is absent from official and other fan-mediated versions” that engages like-minded peers for more in-depth meaning-making and discussions on directly and/or indirectly related content with the original audiovisual products (ibid. p.13). At times, such fan-generated recreations do not always reflect the original works’ plots and/or characters, e.g. using fragments from different audiovisual texts to create new and exciting ones which present an addition and a variation of the original story. In light of this, audiences adapt the source text to align with the target culture, often re-narrating the audiovisual materials for comedic effect rather than preserving the original meaning. Against this backdrop, the concept of translation is substantially stretching and modifying (Rizzo, 2022, p.13).

Intriguingly, people’s views toward the same ACGN topics change significantly, among which

Bridget Jones's Diary (2001) and its film sequels is a key case in point. Previous research on the Chinese subtitles of this film focused on how sexuality and swearing have been downgraded and moderated in contemporary Chinese culture (Liang 2020, p.10). Simultaneously, the female gender identity has been promoted through talking the explicitness of taboo topics in public in the official subtitles (ibid.). What our case study will shortly show is that the film sequels are used to renew our understanding of how audiences participate and engage with their associated experience and/or audiovisual materials to rebuild connections, constructing themselves as the new stakeholders as significant and visible players in today's rapidly growing AI-driven mediascape (Liang, 2023).

Why *Bridget Jones's Diary* Film Sequels?

Danmu, embedded from the video on the question, is not isolated from the audiovisual products but is interconnected with them. As this paper wields, the participatory subtitling practice is the combination and interplay between danmu, the danmu subtitling process and the recreation of the pre-existing film adaptations. Apart from the film series *Bridget Jones's Diary*, available for inserting danmu, they are adapted into different spoiler versions on Bilibili. This *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) film has three sequels, the second film, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004), the third film, *Bridget Jones's Baby* (2016) and the final fourth film, *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy* (2024). The *Bridget Jones's Diary* series videos are selected as the object of the study because there is a dramatic subtitling shift in this *Bridget Jones's Diary* series from sexuality and swearing to other analogous films played by the same leading characters and domestic television series featured similar romantic plots.

If we search the Chinese translation, “BJ 单身日记” (BJ The Bachelor Diary), of *Bridget Jones's Diary* on Bilibili, there are more than 100 short video clips relating to this film. I selected the two spoiler versions of the film series with most danmu for analysis. They are adapted from the film and its second sequel, respectively. The first one is entitled [瞎看什么] 在这个浪漫的情人节，为大家带来一部意外怀孕的电影 ([What on Earth to Watch (if I am Blind)]) On this romantic Valentine's Day, We Bring Everyone a Movie of an Unexpected Pregnancy, thereafter, UP). It has been viewed 179.1 thousand times and filled with 15 thousand danmu entries. The second one is much less popular regarding the times this video has been viewed (83 thousand times) and has been left 268 danmu entries (both sets of data accessed on 11 December 2025). It is [娘子] 妹子穿着兔女郎的衣服去参加聚会，在场的所有人都蒙了！《单身日记》 ([Maiden] The Girl wore a Bunny Dress to the Party, Everyone Present was Puzzled! “The Bachelor Diary”, hereinafter, BD). It is intriguing that the spoiler version of the second sequel to the film on Bilibili is far more popular than the original film in terms of viewing time and danmu comments received. This is opposed to the common pathway that original films tend to be better received than their sequels based on user ratings (Kessler, 2018). The more successful receipt of the danmu-loaded spoiler version of the second sequel than that of the original film is perhaps because of the significant changes in female identity in mass media (AomineRyota5, 2019).

In the domestic market in China, female identity has changed dramatically from “chick flick” culture to “大女主剧” (big/major heroine drama). “Chick flick” derives from the parallel term “chick lit”, referring to a literary genre that features middle-class, frequently college-educated women and their social lives and romantic relationships (Ferriss & Young, 2010, p.98). The film series *Bridget Jones’s Diary* are one of the “landmark chick flicks” of the 1990s (Luo, 2015, p.iii). The authorised Chinese subtitles of this modern British chick flick *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (2001) created “a new iconography for femininity in Chinese culture” (Liang, 2022, p.31), in which female gender has increased within larger discourses (ibid., p.214). If chick flick genres are popular in the 1990s, major heroine dramas would be more frequently seen in cyber literature and TV dramas in the 2010s (Zhao & Ng, 2022, p.303). Instead, major heroine dramas recently gained popularity because they explore female growth and responsibilities (AomineRyota5, 2019). They are also known as “supreme heroine”, or “women’s inspirational” dramas, big heroine dramas are portrayed as a gradually gaining power “associated with intelligence, competence, assertiveness and willpower” in a male-dominated world (Bai, 2020, p. 363). In our study, major heroine drama discourse can be seen as part and parcel of the spoiler versions of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* sequels. These seemingly feminist audiovisual products tend to portray women climbing the social ladder while negotiating traditional expectations of Chinese femininity (Zhao & Ng, 2022, p.304). Furthermore, this paper intends to explore whether this new form of participatory subtitling transcends the chick flick genres and major heroine dramas centring on their own unique features and identities. To achieve the above objective, this paper revolves around three research questions that structure our analysis:

- (1). What identities are promoted by the spoiler versions of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* film sequels?
- (2). Is it possible to establish a relationship between the identity formation of this study and participatory subtitling that could underline the complex semiotic resources deployed in these short videos?
- (3). What does the new form of participatory danmu subtitling reveal about the unique major heroine drama style and beyond in these short videos for millennium audiences?

Data and Methodology

Despite the popularity of the short sharing videos adapted from *Bridget Jones’s Diary* film sequels released on Bilibili and their significance in promoting female discourses and identities, we have yet understood about how these short videos construct these discourses and identities via the means of participatory danmu subtitling. Previous research links the Chinese subtitles of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* sexual and swearing languages to improved female identity (Liang, 2018), while some argue that the Bilibili platform “provides more creative, less conservative renderings, without criticising the quality of the translation, and help viewers clear up confusion” regarding taboo language (Chen, 2022, p.17). Thanks to the normalisation of media culture, women enjoy higher and higher sexual liberation and neoliberal autonomy rather than being objectified as passive sexual beings (Gill, 2008). However, we still need an explicit understanding of the complexity and subtlety of how the improved identities are constructed

using participatory subtitling. Against this backdrop, this study investigates the two most distinguishable short videos on *Bridget Jones's Diary* film sequels on Bilibili.

The new female identity is constructed as a set of evaluative attributes (e.g., independent, open-minded, unfailing humorous, clumsy, etc.) in the videos, which are enabled by social semiotic theories of multimodality for conceptualising and analysing “a selected corpus of multimodal phenomena” (Kress, & van Leeuwen, 2006, p.2). Proceeding from Feng (2016) and Wang and Feng (2022) to determine the most relevant variables for analysis, we develop a coding framework to map out the verbal, visual, verbal-visual and auditory realisation of *Bridget Jones's Diary's* film sequels spoiler versions released on Bilibili, as illustrated in Fig. 1. The framework distinguishes between verbal, visual, verbal-visual and auditory choices. Regarding verbal choice, direct and indirect comments are made throughout the spoiler versions. Wishes and blessings are added based on Wang and Feng' (2022) frame because new year's wishes are used as danmu comments in the participatory subtitling practice in the spoiler versions when traditional blessings music for the Chinese New Year festival is replaced with the original background music. When it comes to visual choices, the new female identity construction is achieved by character design, setting design and special visual effects. In particular, the actional and analytical processes are used for the character design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The actional process refers to what Bridget Jones is projected in the spoiler versions of the film sequels, while the analytical process relates to parts that constitute Bridget as a whole, such as the way she speaks, her appearance, clothing and other possessions (Wang, & Feng, 2022, p.3). The remaining two evaluative attributes are new to Wang and Feng's (2022) frame. They are verbal-visual choice and auditory choice. Verbal-visual choices are shown in the creative use of virtual backgrounds, virtual plots and new insertion of relevant video clips based on Bridget Jones's film sequels. Auditory choices replace the original background music, dubbing and language choice with different relevant background music, a new set of dubbing and humorous dialects in the spoiler versions of Bridget Jones's film sequels.

Furthermore, to provide an explicit understanding of the improved identities in these two adapted, spoiler short videos, we adopt a social semiotic analysis approach, highlighting the multimodality of the video creators and danmu users that play a collaborative and creative role in the participatory subtitling process. Apart from semiotic resources, women's identity seems to be promoted by the “broader socio-cultural context” (Wang & Feng, 2022, p.3). TikTok videos enable us to comprehend “a new way of doing femininity” through interweaving wanghong (internet celebrity) women's “suggestive selling” behaviours with the activities associated with “life displaying, scientific explanation, instruction, socialisation, and entertainment” (ibid., p.8). This paper explores whether such multifaceted identities are replicated in the video-sharing Bilibili platform regarding the spoiler versions of Bridget Jones's film sequels.

The framework is used to code 2020 danmu entries. 1753 danmu entries are from UP, while 267 belong to BD. These two danmu files extracted from two spoiler versions of *Bridget Jones's Diary* film sequels are downloaded by Jijidown. It is a free PC software for

downloading videos and danmu files drawn on Bilibili, designed by fans for fans, enabling offline viewing and retrieving danmu entries (Zhang & Cassany, 2019, p.22). The retrieved danmu files (.xml) are imported into an Excel spreadsheet. The data collected from 30 December 2022 to 4 June 2025 is part of a larger corpus, as Section 2 of *Why Bridget Jones's Diary* Series mentions. These selective 1687 danmu entries are sorted for further multimodal analysis. The processed data is presented below. (Table 1)

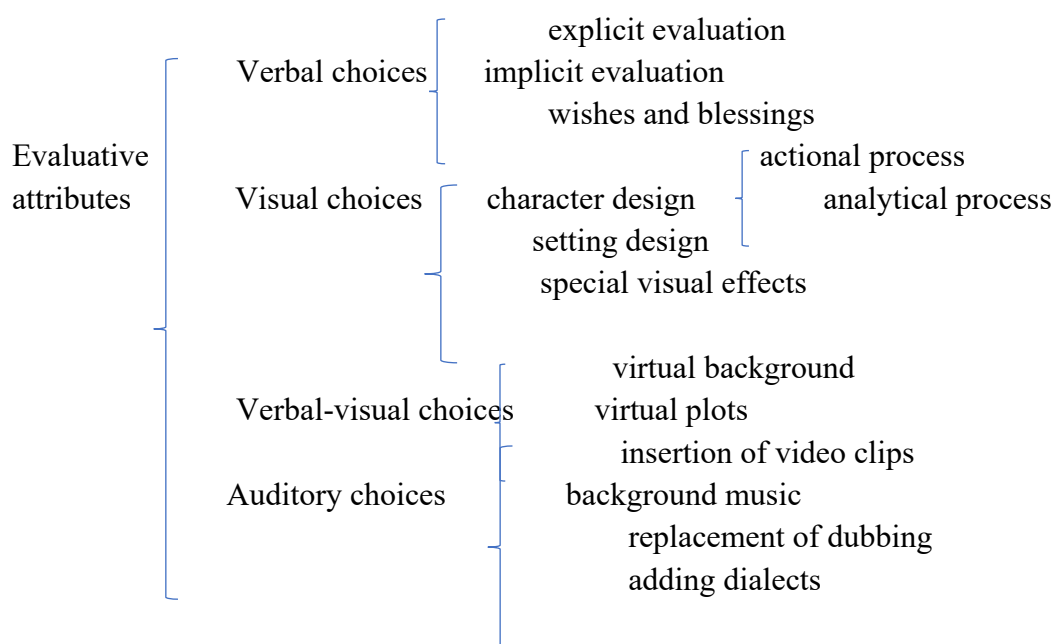


Fig. 1. The verbal and visual realisation of evaluative attributes

Table 1

The distribution of participatory subtitling attributes in the spoiler versions of *Bridget Jones's* film sequels

Themes of the danmu entries in the two spoiler versions of <i>Bridget Jones's Diary's</i> film sequels	Number of danmu entries
Humour	442
Humour and Funniness	213
Replacing Characters' Names	137
Quoting	71
Sexuality	14
Relating to the style of China Central Television news	3
Use of Dialects	2
Reflecting on Source and/on Target Culture	2
Compliments	332

New Year Wishes and Blessings	100
Handsomeness and/or Prettiness of the Characters	82
Liking the background music	41
Showing Support for the Narrators/Characters	35
Expressing the Fondness of the Film Sequels	11
Good Design of the Ending	10
Showing Support for the Pursuit of Love	8
Encouragements and touching gained from the film sequels	8
Showing Happiness	3
Negativity	211
Criticising other viewers and/or the film (plots, characters)	102
Swearing	53
Sarcasm	51
Dislike the Ending	4
Discussions	702
Discussing the Plots/Spoiler Versions/Narrators and/or the Film Sequels	320
Thinking of other Roles Played by the leading characters of these film sequels' and/or similar plots in other audiovisual products and/or other sequel of the film	210
Raising questions (providing answers) and/or engaging indirectly related to (with) the film plots	125
Sharing with One's Living Experiences and/or Personal Hobbies and Preferences	47
Sum of the themed danmu entries	1687

Discussions and Findings

This section details the results found in our study of the practice of participatory danmu subtitling, focusing on four specific aspects featuring the two most popular spoiler versions loaded with danmu of *Bridget Jones's Diary* film sequels. They are humour, compliments, negativity and discussions. In these four categories, there are 26 sub-categories with each main classification's unique natures, among which the most frequently appeared taxonomies lie in seven respects, which all reach 100 pieces of danmu in our selected 1687 danmu entries, as Fig. 2. shows. Each of the four sub-categories along with their most appealing seven danmu types will be analysed shortly, including discussions of the plots, humour and funniness, thinking of other roles played by these films, replacing characters' names, raising questions and/or engaging indirectly with the films, criticism and New Year wishes and blessings.

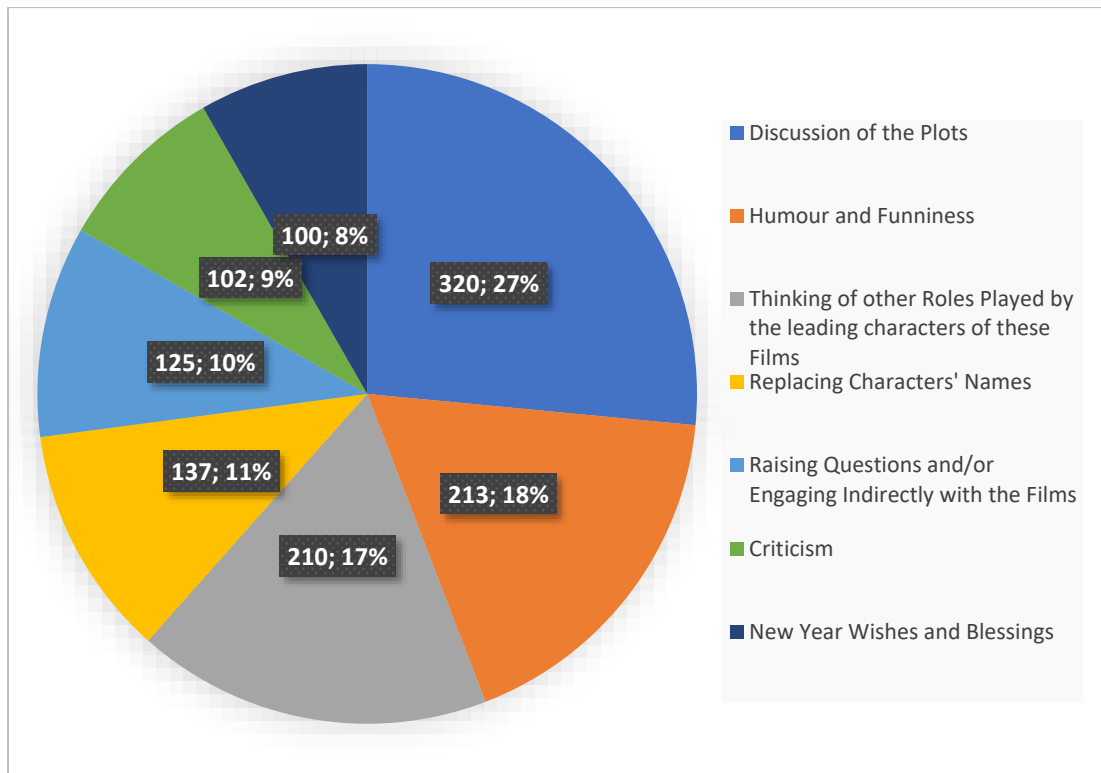


Fig. 2. Top seven categories of danmu entries in the two most popular spoiler versions loaded with danmu of *Bridget Jones's Diary* film sequels

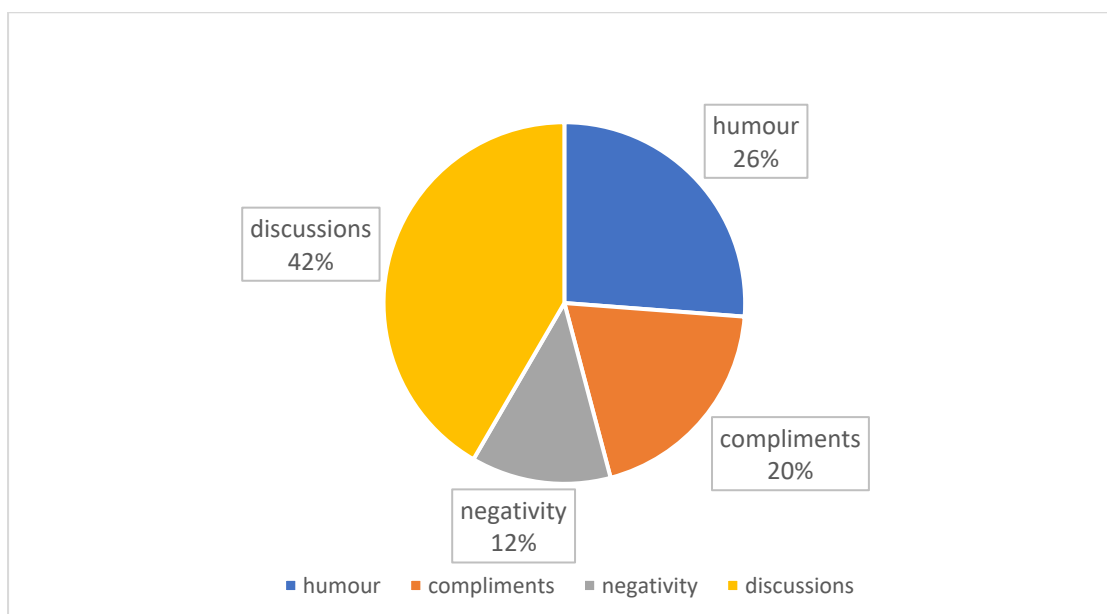


Fig.3. Themes of the collected danmu entires

As Fig.3 demonstrates, discussions, humour, compliments and negativity of the film plots and characters detailed account for the collected themed danmu entries in the participatory subtitling process. Non-thematic discussions gain the most popularity among viewers. Followed by humour, there are more than a quarter of the danmu entries relate to humorous expressions. The humour sub-category danmu entry specifically relates to seven sub-categories, ranging from humour and funniness, replacing characters' names, quoting, sexuality, relating to the style of China Central Television news, use of dialects and reflecting on source and/or target culture, as the following Figure 4 suggests.

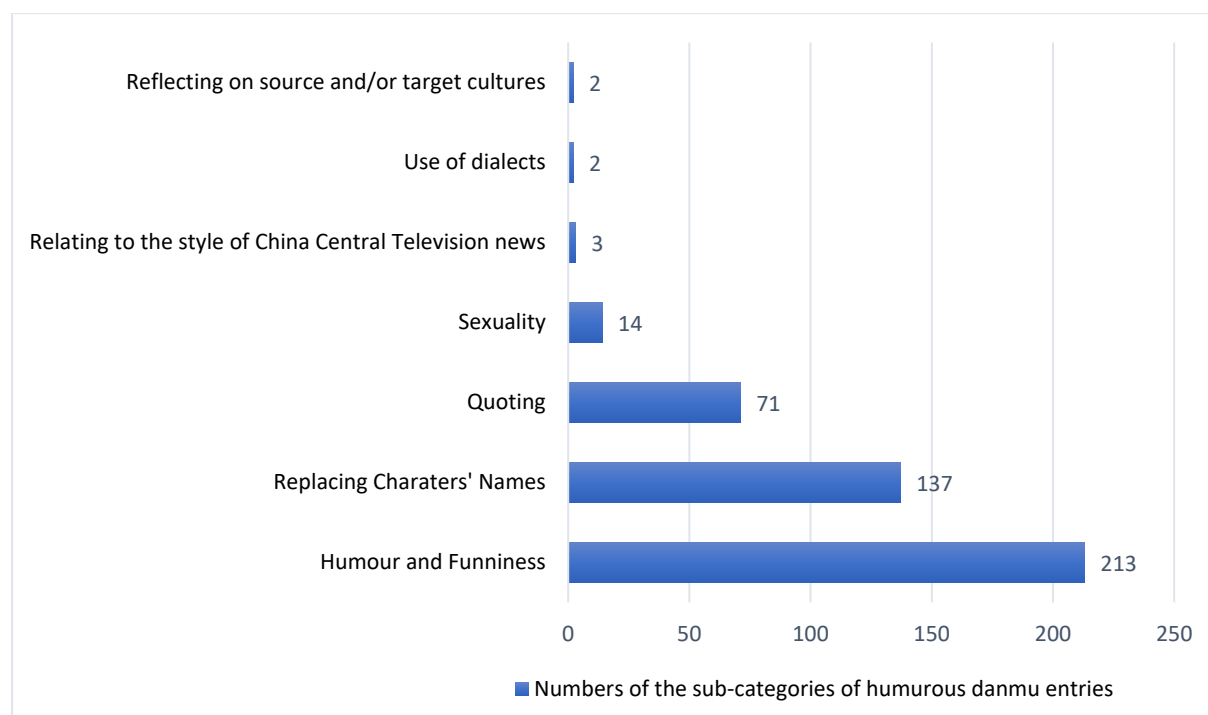


Fig. 4. The sub-categories of the danmu entries themed with humour

Under the classification of humour danmu, audiences actively take part in participatory subtitling in three major sub-types: humour and funniness, replacing characters' names and quoting. They comprise 48%, 31% and 16%, respectively, of the entire humour category. Interestingly, the viewers' creative participation in replacing characters' names transfers an extra layer of humour not presented in the source text, as Example 1 suggests.

Example 1: Replacing Characters' Names

Characters' Name	Creation of Names	Back Translation of the Creation of Names
Bridget Jones	柳成荫	An untended willow grows

	有容	Wide heart
Mark Darcy	铁柱	Iron pillar
	吴新	Xin Wu
	吴昕	Xin Wu
	无心	The Heartless

Table 2: Replacing the leading characters' names in the spoiler versions of Bridget Jones's film sequels

It is intriguing to note that the names of the leading characters in the source text are rooted in the filmic context, while the Chinese short video versions extend to their innate context that humorously connects associated meanings out of the specific filmic context. In the source text, Mark Darcy is hostilely recreated as “Arsey Darcy” by Cleave (Mark's rival in love). However, the Chinese short video version redirects the official Chinese subtitles of such bad-tempered swearing (Liang, 2022, p. 190) to an act of betrayal that denounces Mark as “the heartless” (无心) and iron-hearted (铁柱), as opposed to tender-hearted, in the amateur Chinese subtitles of the spoiler versions. When it comes to its connection with the female leading character's name, Bridget Jones, their names stem from a Chinese idiom “无心插柳柳成荫” (literally, an unintended willow grows; semantically, an unintended positive outcome). This Chinese idiom is a short-hand version of a fuller phrase “有心栽花花不开，无心插柳柳成荫” (A watched flower never blooms, but an untended willow grows). “无心” (the heartless Mark) refers to Mark while “柳成荫” (an unintended positive outcome referring to Bridget's love life) represents Bridget in the spoiler version because the Chinese character “插” implies having sexual intercourse that sexually and humorously interconnects them.

Hilariously, Bridget is also called “有容” (wide heart) in the spoiler short video version of the first film *Bridget Jones's Diary*. Similarly, “有容” is part of a Chinese idiom “海纳百川，有容乃大” (one should be as inclusive as the vast ocean which admits hundreds of rivers). From a phonetic perspective, the Chinese character involved, “乃”, pronounces the same as “奶” (breast), “奶大” means big breast. Bridget shows her body curves when wearing figure-revealing (e.g. large breasts and round buttocks) clothing (Wang & Feng, 2022, 4) throughout the film, which leads to the use of “有容” to present such sexiness euphemistically. This is because the expression of “有容” clearly reminds the audiences of the sexualised term “奶大”. In this case, sexually implicit “柳成荫 (an unintended positive outcome), 有容 (wide heart)” and connotative “无心 (heartless)” expressions are used to rename the two leading characters, Mark and Bridget, which humorously reflect their relationship and personalities. Character design is constructed via the visual choices when Bridget's sexy body is employed as “sex appeals” to attract “heterosexual male pleasure” (Uhm, 2021, 7). Supplementing the frame of “sex sell”, another leading male character, Mark Darcy, is denounced as heartless and iron-

hearted to align his derogative image with female viewers who intensely hate disloyal males in love. That shows liberated womanhood for the hedonism of the playboy lifestyle (Pitzulo, 2006, p. 260).

Apart from adopting sexual expressions and idioms, humour is transferred through other techniques such as using dialects to replace the narration of the spoiler versions and the imitation of the official, formal China Central Television News style to contrast the colloquial, casual dialogues, which causes humorous effects.

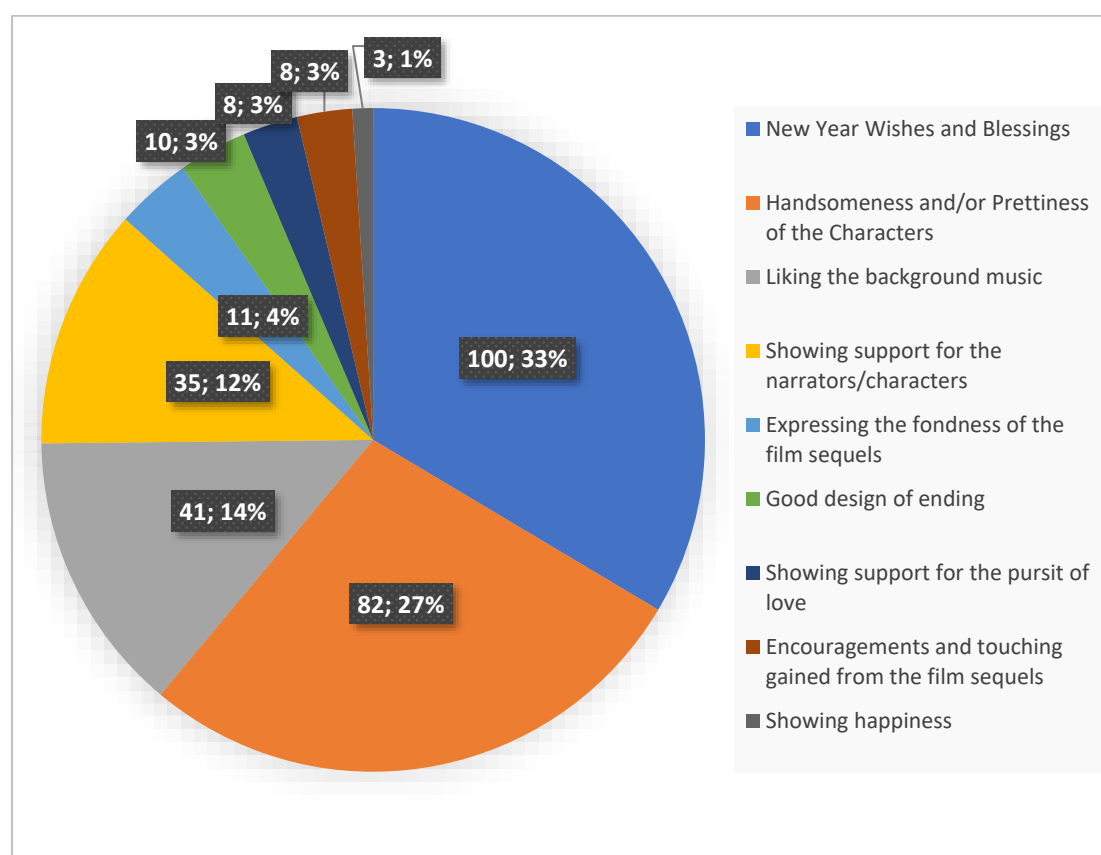


Fig. 5. The sub-categories of the danmu entries themed with compliments

It is surprising to find out that the danmu entries themed with compliments and positivity in the participatory subtitling practice of Bridget's Jones short-video versions mainly consist of New Year wishes, handsomeness, and prettiness of the characters, liking the background music, expressing the fondness of the film sequels and good design of end. Different from the conventional, official subtitles of the film *Bridget Jones's Diary* generally focus on the improved gendered discourses regarding the freedom of uttering swearing and sexuality in public (Liang, 2022), the spoiler versions of the film sequels extend the female gender identity to a multitude of new areas. They innovatively cover New Year wishes and blessings, accounting for 33% of compliment-related danmu entries. In terms of the auditory choices in

the video, the background music is replaced from the source with familiar festive Chinese music. When the familiar background music of the Chinese New Year starts playing, audiences naturally and actively participate in the warm wishes and blessings for the upcoming new year. A sense of community is gradually built when the collective New Year wishes and festive blessings concurrently appear in the videos.

An additional participatory subtitling gain comes from the appreciation for the handsome and pretty appearance of the leading male and female characters. In the source film, the handsome outlook of Cleve is emphasised in the dialogue, “Is that Cleaver chap still as cute as ever” (那个丹尼尔还是那么英俊). This Chinese subtitle is back-translated as “That Dannier is still as handsome as ever”. On the contrary, the short-video versions diversify the appreciation of looking for different characters, including Mark, Cleave, Bridget and Jack. The audiences directly address these leading characters’ real names to express their intense admiration. For instance, “阿拉 j 帅惨了” (Aladdin J is so damn handsome), “为什么这么帅啊 Colin 叔”(Why Uncle Colin is so handsome), 芮妮年轻的时候很漂亮(Renée is really pretty when she was young). These participatory danmu comments prove that audiences are fond of other leading characters, not limited to Cleave (played by Hugh Grant), in the official Chinese subtitles of the first film. Audiences are familiar with their real names and even create nicknames for them (Aladdin J, Uncle Colin), not confined to their characters’ formal, legal names in the film sequels.

The compliments from the audiences are diverse and multifaceted. They include the appreciation for the background music, the characters, and the narrators (Fig. 6.), the film sequels, the design of the film endings, the characters’ bravery in pursuing love, and the encouragement and encouragement and happiness gained from the viewing experiences.



Fig. 6. The screenshot of the opening narration of the spoiler version [*What on Earth to Watch*

(if I am Blind)) On this romantic Valentine's Day, We Bring Everyone a Movie of an Unexpected Pregnancy (UP) of Bridget Jones's Diary film sequels

In terms of the appreciation for the narrators of the video, humour is rendered thanks to the multimodal semiotic resources. Figure 6 shows the opening scene of the short video UP. It is hilarious when the two narrators debut wearing sunglasses indoors. The act of wearing black sunglasses has two implications and sarcasm. On the one hand, sunglasses reflect the blindness of the title of the video, "What on Earth to Watch (if I am blind)", which links to the Chinese subtitles "因为爱情都是盲目的" (Because love is always blind).

On the other hand, the appearance of shrimps in the background again relates to blindness. This is because the pronunciation of the Chinese character "瞎" (blindness) is the same as "虾" (shrimp). The intricate design of sarcasm is successfully and favourably rendered, as proved by the running danmu "表白代班虾酱" (expressing love to the acting host, Shrimp Sauce). "虾酱 (Shrimp Sauce)" is metaphorically referred the female host, while "虾菌" (Shrimp Fungus) is the male one. Both hosts' names have shrimp-related content. They have many supporters, as proved by the yellow danmu "虾菌是我的 bf 谁抢谁是我俩的继子" (Shrimp Fungus is my boyfriend and whoever takes him away from me is the stepson of us). The two large shrimps are connected as an inverted heart shape, which implies the blindness and speechlessness of the love relationship regarding the romantic betray of Mark to Bridget in the video.

The inverted heart-shaped shrimp, the sunglasses and the formal style of wearing suits contribute to the humorous effects when this informal, comedic chick flick film is introduced. The audience's feedback through the running danmu confirms such humour and compliments. These verbal (虾菌, 虾酱)-visual(shrimps) choices are combined into meaning wholes. The humorous and appealing expression toward the blind love of the video is made across different semiotic modes. The blindness in love is expressed visually (shrimps and sunglasses) and is said verbally (danmu and subtitles). Therefore, the way in which the intended message is conveyed through various verbal communication and visual compositional structures (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, 3).

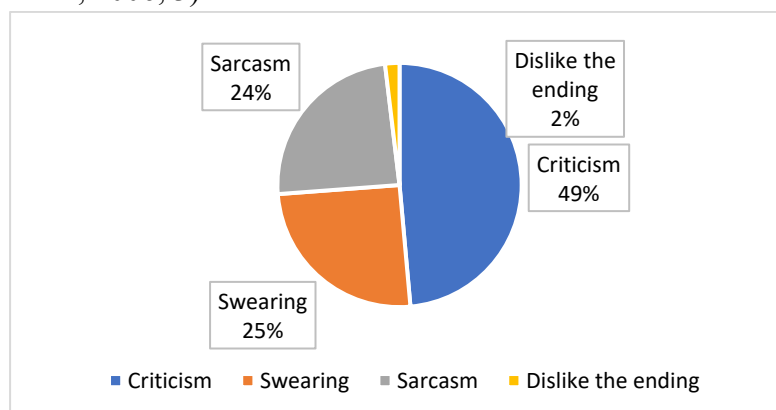


Fig. 7. The sub-categories of the danmu entries themed with negativity

The previous research regarding the Chinese subtitling of Bridget Jones's film sequel explores how swearing is implicitly transferred in the Chinese subtitles, specifically the offensive language used in pub conversations with close friends and flirtatious conversations (Liang, 2022; 2020). The present study suggests that the negativity can be more detailed when it comes to criticism, swearing and sarcasm embedded in the participatory danmu comments. For example, criticism takes up nearly half of the negative comments, as shown in Fig. 7. The subjects for criticism are diverse, ranging from the viewers, the plots of the film and the characters involved.

Example 2: Expressing Criticism

	Danmu Contents	Back Translation
1	没灵魂的解说 机器人似的	Soulless narration, a robot-like interpretation
2	孕妇坐摩托车，傻了吧？	Is it crazy that pregnant woman rides motorcycle?
3	都快生了还穿牛仔裤！	How come that she is about to give birth but still wears jeans!
4	有孕妇牛仔裤 肚子那是弹力布	There are maternity jeans made from stretch cloth.
5	合肥工业大学给您拜年了	New Year greetings from Hefei University of Technology.
6	合工大的别走 上网课开小差 你们导师看见你了	Don't leave, the students from Heifei University of Technology. You were found out by your tutors deserting your online class.
7	真的婊	Really bitchy.
8	你情我愿都没结婚互相需求有什么错吗 套坏了又不是故意人为的 对女人怎么这么刻薄哦	Why are you so mean to women if two unmarried man and woman involved are willing to have a sexual need? And what is wrong with a broken condom not made by them deliberately?

Table 3: Expressing criticism in the spoiler versions of Bridget Jones's film sequels

Viewers have more freedom and passion for engaging in plot discussions by sending criticised danmu in the participatory subtitling practice. The criticised topics overlap with the rest of the main categories such as humour, compliments and discussions. It can be seen that viewers' danmu comments are part and parcel of the analytical process in the making of character.

For example, the spoiler version dominates adapted and virtual plots that are not entirely faithful to the source film, which may lead to humorous effects and inevitably negative feedback. The negativity may come from replacing original, playful dialogues with official China Central Television (CCTV) News report style when audiences consume such an informal chick flick and comedy. This can be proved by the first criticised danmu entries in Table 3, “没灵魂的解说 机器人似的” (Soulless narration, a robot-like interpretation).

The 2-4 danmu entries critically engage in the discussion of film plot where Bridget is about to deliver her baby but wearing tight jeans. It invites heated debate from the audience that it is inappropriate and irrational for pregnant women to wear uncomfortable clothes. The disagreed danmu entries include “孕妇坐摩托车，傻了吧？” (Is it crazy that a pregnant woman rides a motorcycle?) “都快生了还穿牛仔裤！” (How come she is about to give birth but still wears jeans!). One of the possible reasons for this behaviour is responded to and explained by the No.4 danmu entry “有孕妇牛仔裤 肚子那是弹力布” (There are maternity jeans made from stretch cloth). This instance tells us that audiences do not merely complain and criticise the ongoing scenes but try to mediate and compensate for the potential misunderstanding. Based on these danmu-enabled visual choices, the viewing environment and community developed towards a healthy and positive setting. This is exemplified by the positive response to the danmu entry “你情我愿都没结婚互相需求有什么错吗 套坏了又不是故意人为的 对女人怎么这么刻薄哦” (Why are you so mean to women if two unmarried man and woman involved are willing to have a sexual need? And what is wrong with the broken condom which is not caused by them deliberately?) when Bridget is harshly criticised as “真的婊” (really bitchy) as she falls in love with two men at the same time. It is a proof of an improvement in female gender identity that it no longer held high standards of female chastity from the Qing dynasty (Yue, 2009, p. 568). Modern women search for independence, liberty and sexual pleasure, a vision traditionally opposed to Chinese patriarchy (Chen, 2012, p. 215). The participatory subtitles, as shown in Example 2, are more tolerant of women's determination to pursue sexual enjoyment and freedom of wearing style.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the New Year greetings (Danmu No.5) become the evidence that some absent-minded students send the danmu during the online class (Danmu No.6). To sum up, the sub-category of negativity danmu covers a wide range of topics in and out of the film plots that contribute to the improved female gender identity. Female audiences' sexual enjoyment and freedom of choosing wearing style are readily achieved through the participatory, criticised danmu.

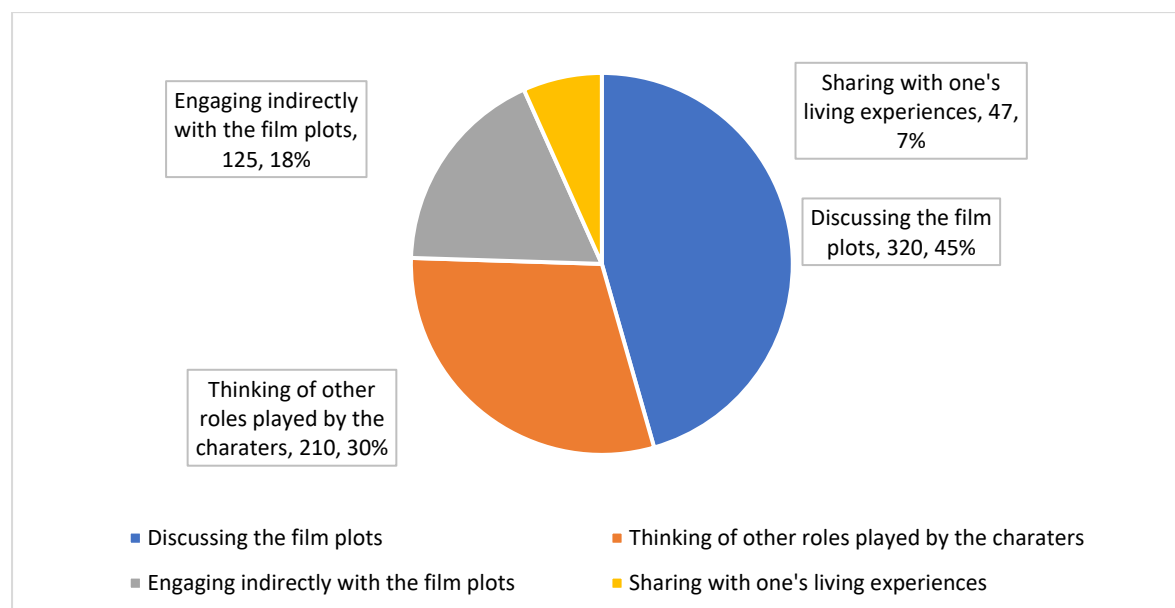


Fig. 8. The sub-categories of the danmu entries themed with discussions

As Fig. 8 demonstrates, danmu entries not explicitly related to the film plot per se reach 55% of the entire danmu entries themed with discussions, which combine thinking of other roles played by the same leading characters (30%), engaging indirectly with the film plots (18%) and sharing one's living experience (7%). Unsurprisingly, the discussion of the film text dominates, accounting for 45% of all the danmu entries.

Example 3 Associating with other Roles Played by the Characters

	Danmu entries	Back translation
1	国王的演讲里的男主！	The leading actor of <i>The King's Speech</i> .
2	心疼脸叔	comfort Uncle Face
3	阿拉 J 是金刚狼？	Is it Aladdin J, the leading actor of <i>X-Men Origins: Wolverine</i> ?
4	这不是王牌特工吗？	Is it the leading actor (Colin) the leading actor of <i>Kingsman: The Secret Service</i> ?

Table 4: Thinking of other roles played by the characters in the spoiler versions of Bridget Jones's film sequels

According to Table 4, the above four roles are most frequently mentioned by the viewers of the two spoiler versions of Bridget Jones' film sequels. Three out of four relate to Colin Firth,

possibly because of two factors. First, one of the spoiler versions of *[What on Earth to Watch (if I am Blind)]* On this romantic Valentine's Day, We Bring Everyone a Movie of an Unexpected Pregnancy (UP) in our study revolves around him rather than Hugh Grant. Second, Mark (played by Colin) is projected as a reliable man in the relationship with the leading actress throughout the film, which is more appealing to audiences, as Ritrosky-Winslow (2004) argues that Firth possesses “disarming sincerity that’s impossible to resist”. The fact that Chinese female audiences favourably receive Firth can also be proved by his well-known nickname “脸叔”(Uncle Face) picked up by Chinese audiences. He is called “脸叔” (Uncle Face) in that he is not only handsome but acts as a gentleman in the filmic context (Weini, 2021).

Unlike Mark’s (played by Colin Firth) popularity, in the narration of the spoiler version UP, Cleave (played by Hugh Grant) receives intense dislike, shown in Figures 9-10. The narration in the short video reads “(她收到很多生日礼物), 但最让她开心的还是前男友的死讯” [(She received many birthday gifts), but what makes her the happiest is the news that her ex-boyfriend was dead]]. Such joyfulness differs from the neutral tone of the original film text “.....an event I haven’t expected to attend so soon”. However, the pleasant mood is expressed by the relaxing background music in the source film. The auditory choice of the sarcastic dubbing in the spoiler version of UP is explicitly supported by one danmu entry in Figure 10, “渣休” (slag Hugh). The expected pleasantness of Bridget’s inner world from the viewers’ perspective is visualised and verbalised in the short video. It can be inferred that audiences are more tolerant of the actress than the actor when one simultaneously dates two lovers, which reflects the liberty of women who chase love, as Example 2 demonstrates.

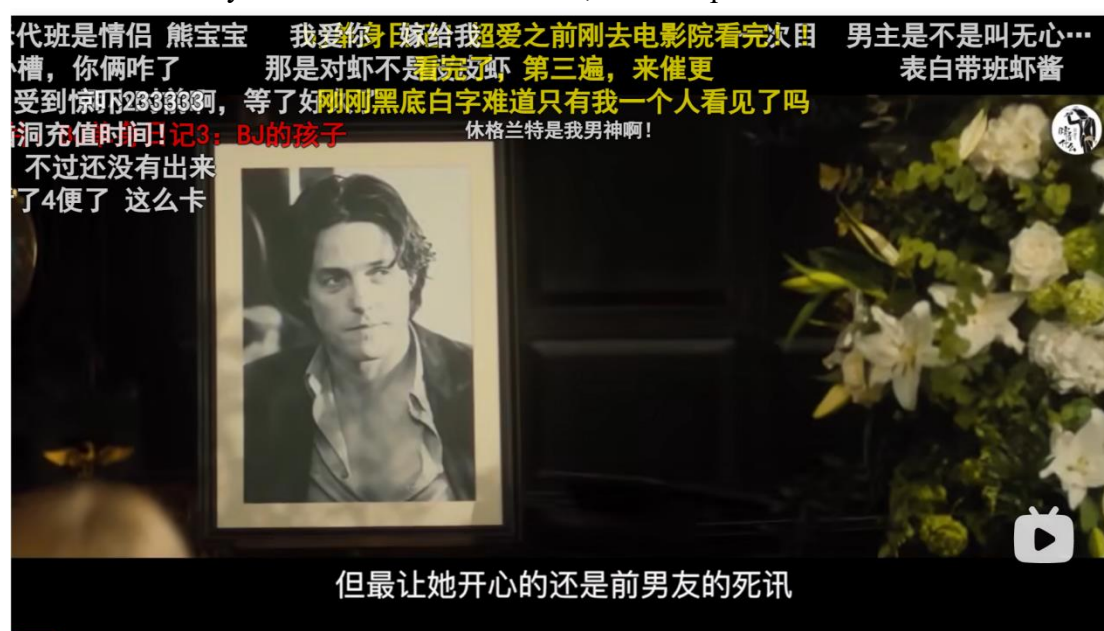


Fig. 9. The screenshot of how Daniel Cleave is described in the Chinese subtitles of the spoiler version of UP

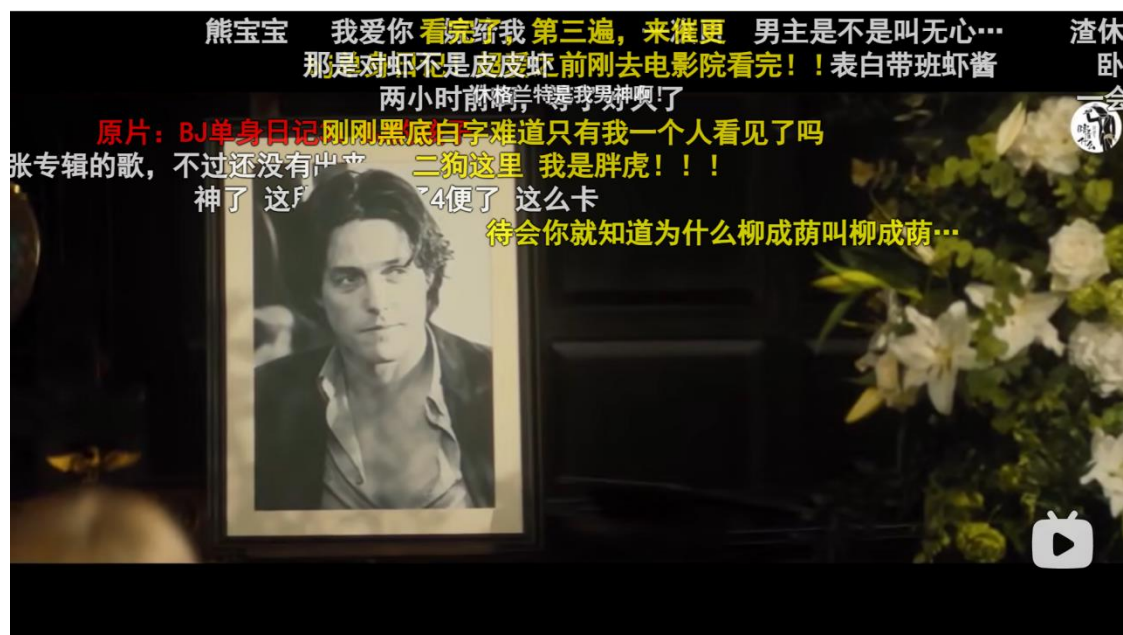


Fig. 10. The screenshot of how Daniel Cleave is described in danmu entries of the spoiler version of UP

Conclusion

The participatory subtitling practices observed in this study not only recreate the source audiovisual materials but also contribute to the theoretical understanding of multimodality and language use. By examining the cumulative danmu entries, the study demonstrates how these digital interactions facilitate new forms of meaning-making and community building. These findings underscore the importance of considering multimodal resources in the analysis of digital media practices and their impact on language use. It is crucial to conclude that the original context is dynamic and developing rather than static and fixed in the participatory subtitling practice, which instils new vitality into the recreated work. Cornell (1995) argues that context is both in the world and the construction of the world. To apply such argument into our study, Bridget Jones's comedic world is the main context, while the construction of the improved female identity and the established co-viewing and co-sharing community are the sub-context in the whole meaning-making process to understand the film and thoughts inspired directly and/or indirectly by it.

Specifically, to respond to the three research questions set at the beginning of the paper, the first question targets "What identities are promoted by the spoiler versions of *Bridget Jones's Diary* film sequels?". Based on the four categories, humour, compliments, negativity, and discussions, in the participatory danmu-driven subtitles of the spoiler short-video versions of Bridget Jones's film sequels, identities are promoted not confined to more improved, liberal female identity but to a virtual community building as co-viewers, co-content-creators and co-translators. Such collaboration adds clear contributions to the participatory subtitling ecosystem, in which all parts of life join to co-govern the online viewing environments. On the

one hand, collaborative viewing enables us to “spell out the semiotic complexity of identity construction” (Wang & Feng, 2022, p.8). On the other hand, the viewing experience is no longer isolated but interconnected, where accessible, humorous and creative ideas are communicated and self-corrected thanks to referencing cumulative peer danmu comments.

Second, as to the research question of “Is it possible to establish a relationship between the identity formation of this study and the participatory subtitling that could underline the complex semiotic resources deployed in these short videos?”, our study finds that such process reflects the identity formation of this virtual community enabled by the danmu participatory subtitling. A multifaceted and dynamic sub-category is observed of the four main categories in the process of danmu-enabled participatory subtitles. These sub-types of danmu entries prove that through verbal, visual, verbal-visual and auditory choices of complex semiotic resources, audiences are entitled to more freedom and creativity to discover more nuanced meanings in and out of the context of the film. These direct and indirect contextual discussions are equally inspirational. For example, the original chick flick comedy can resonate with the Chinese New Year when nostalgic background music is replaced in the narration of the spoiler videos. The instance argues that context is not fixed in a designated text but could “establish a single, unproblematic historical context” (Cornell, 1995, p.63). Furthermore, there is no clear-cut distinction among the four major categories of participatory subtitles. At times, they overlap and combine to make a new, exciting meaning that surprisingly embarks ongoing insights into the formation of collective memory rather than the dispersed individual thoughts (Ma & Ge, 2014; Zhu, 2017). Last but not least, to explore the third research question of “What does the new form of participatory subtitle reveal about the unique major heroine drama style and beyond in these short videos for millennium audiences?” this paper demonstrates that in order to cater to the millennium audiences, the way in which audiences communicate are cross-device, cross-genre, cross-modal in cyberspace. The original film genre is distilled into new life and vitality far extending the original film plots and characters to whatever appropriates and optimises the co-viewing experiences.

Multimodal approach is therefore served as a robust theory to study the critical patterns yielded from the danmu subtitling practice through the two spoiler versions of *Bridget Jones’s Diary* Film Sequels (2001-2024), where the contemporary Chinese audiences’ voices are made available to the digitally borne users. On the one hand, the originally geographically confined film sequels transcend to vibrant Chinese carnivalesque short videos thanks to danmu comments. On the other hand, meaning expansions take place through meaning potential of each semiotic system, inter-semiotic relations between semiotic choices and intersemiotic metaphors with shifts between semiotic resources (O’Halloran, 2025) that preserve the latest digital legacy at four emotionally intense levels: humour, negativity, compliments and discussions. This innovative and transformative impact on user agency reshapes participants’ engagement, perception, and reception of the various audiovisual translation practices and vice versa, and contributes to greater methodological sophistication and theoretical depth. We hope this will renew our understanding of user agency on a global scale and enrich the enduring

legacy of digital works in AVT. The investigation of agency in these digital mediascapes will help us better understand the shifting power dynamics taking place in the translation process and having an impact on the broader sociocultural paradigm. This paper is not without limitation if larger dataset is captured by looking at different geographical diverse contexts.

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