

How does multimodal creativity travel? A reception perspective on cyberdubbing

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This article examines three cyberdubbed versions of a trailer of Zootopia 2 on Bilibili to explore how multimodal creativity is produced and received in participatory media environments. It shows how cyberdubbers combine dialogue rewriting, vocal performance, subtitles, visual design and editing to create humor, authenticity, local resonance and media memory. Audience responses in danmu and forum comments further show that these creative choices are not simply received but cooperatively interpreted, explained and extended. This cooperative interpretation of authenticity provides the basis for contingent audience trust in cyberdubbers as alternative audiovisual translation products.

Keywords: cyberdubbing; audience reception; creativity; authenticity; cooperation

Introduction

Between 1949 and 1994, when foreign films entered Chinese mainland, they were predominantly distributed through dubbing. This was largely due to the low literacy rate of the population and the influence of Soviet film practices (Du 2018). As a result, dubbing became institutionalized within a state-controlled film production system. For example, the Shanghai Film Dubbing Studio became the primary institution responsible for translating and dubbing foreign films into Mandarin (Feng 2025). In this context, foreign films were translated to ensure immediate comprehensibility and lip synchronization and then performed by professional voice actors in ways that aligned with local audiences and ideological expectations (Zhang 2004).

Dubbed films in this period, commonly referred to as “译制片”, are distinct from contemporary dubbing practices in China due to their linguistic style, which Du (2018) describes as “Chinese dubbese.” This style is marked by phonetic idiosyncrasies, including drawls, prestos, padding, and unnatural pauses rarely found in everyday Mandarin. Although this vocal style has

gradually faded in contemporary dubbing, Chinese dubbese has recently re-emerged as a discursive resource on social media platforms. No longer confined to the screen, it is imitated, parodied, and remixed by Internet users in videos, comments and memes (Chen 2025). In this sense, a once institutionalized translation practice has been recontextualized within participatory digital culture.

In recent years, foreign films with Chinese subtitles show significantly higher viewing rates among viewers aged between 18 and 30, while for family-oriented viewing contexts, dubbed versions have a higher proportion of viewership, particularly on television and projector-based platforms (Cai, 2026). In dubbing practices, productions have experienced a deprofessionalizing process as dubbed films are no longer performed exclusively by professional voice actors. Online celebrities and idol actors are increasingly involved in dubbing, often to attract younger audiences. Further, advances in digital editing technologies and audio production tools have allowed viewers to produce derivative works through remixing, modification, revoicing, etc. One such practice is cyberdubbing, defined as dubbing activities produced in non-professional and non-commercial contexts and distributed primarily through online platforms (Baños and Díaz-Cintas, 2024). Although cyberdubbing takes diverse forms and is shaped by different motivations, including altruistic, fan-driven and activist purposes, its reception remains underexplored.

The case of *Zootopia 2* offers an opportunity to examine how cyberdubbed productions are created, compared with official dubbing and collaboratively interpreted by audiences in online spaces. The first *Zootopia* (2016) achieved remarkable success in China, grossing \$236 million and becoming the highest-grossing Hollywood animated film in the market (Masunaga 2025). This success created high expectations for the sequel after a nine-year interval. However, the announcement of the Chinese-language voice cast for *Zootopia 2* triggered widespread debate, particularly regarding the increasing reliance on celebrity voice actors. Many viewers questioned whether such casting decisions compromised performance quality and professional standards. Criticism intensified following promotional events and the premiere, where audiences noted issues such as unclear pronunciation, mismatched vocal performance and perceived lack of professionalism (Zhu 2025). Following its premiere on 26 November 2025, cyberdubbed versions of *Zootopia 2* trailers quickly circulated on user-generated video platforms, such as Bilibili and Xiaohongshu. These cyberdubbings offer sites where audiences and creators evaluate, reinterpret and at times challenge official dubbing practices.

Thus, the present study examines cyberdubbed trailers of *Zootopia 2* on Bilibili, focusing on three highly viewed videos and their accompanying danmu and forum comments. Through a multimodal analysis of selected cyberdubbed videos, together with keyword and attitude analysis of user-

generated content, this study investigates how cyberdubbers use different multimodal elements to produce creative alternatives to official dubbing, and how audiences respond to, extend and evaluate these creative practices. Building on Pym's (2020) insight that new forms of translation, such as adaptation, rewriting and transcreation, reshape the notion of authenticity, the study further examines how successful audience cooperation contributes to the formation of trust in cyberdubbers.

Multimodality and cyberdubbing

Audiovisual translation is inherently multimodal, as meaning is created and conveyed through the auditory-verbal channel, the auditory-non-verbal channel, the visual-verbal channel and the visual-non-verbal channel (Gottlieb 1998). Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) define multimodality as the use of several semiotic modes and the ways in which these modes are combined within a communicative product or event. Chaume's (2012) analytical framework provides a specific way to examine the multimodal structure of audiovisual texts. He conceptualizes audiovisual texts as being composed of meaning codes transmitted through the acoustic and visual channels. These codes interact with one another to shape meaning, interpretation and cinematography.

Chaume's framework has been adapted to the study of different audiovisual translation modes. Romero-Muñoz (2023) uses Chaume's classification of meaning codes to examine how objectivity and subjectivity coexist in audio descriptions of Netflix Spanish drama and thriller series. In the research on subtitling for the D/deaf and hard-of-hearing (SDH), López Salvador and Spiteri Miggiani (2025) use Chaume's taxonomy to compare conventional and creative SDH, showing how creative freedom reshapes the descriptive quality of SDH tags and makes subtitlers' authorial input more visible.

This framework can also be applied to dubbing, since dubbing involves replacing the original dialogue track with a target-language recording that reproduces the original message while synchronizing the target-language voice with the actors' lip movements (Díaz-Cintas and Orero 2010). Cyberdubbing in Chinese mediascape further complicates this. Unlike the contexts in which dubbing and subtitling are conventionally treated as separate audiovisual translation modes, Chinese dubbed products, including both official dubbing and cyberdubbing, are commonly accompanied by Chinese subtitles. Subtitles also form part of its multimodal presentation and need to be included in the analysis.

On Bilibili, this multimodal structure is further extended by danmu comments. Massidda (2025) identifies danmu as a form of in- and out-show comment within creative audiovisual translation in the digital age, alongside

in-show titles and web titles. Danmu, or danmaku, in Japanese, refers to a commenting system in which viewers post timeline-synchronized comments that appear across the screen while audiovisual content is playing, creating a “watching together” environment on Asian video-sharing and streaming platforms such as Bilibili, iQIYI, Tencent, Youku and Nico Nico Douga (Massidda, 2025). Because danmu comments are visually overlaid onto the video during viewing, they add another visual-verbal layer to the audiovisual text and turn audience responses into part of the audiovisual encounter. Cyberdubbing on Bilibili therefore involves not only the interaction between voice, image and subtitles, but also the participatory layer of audience comments, making it a particularly rich site for multimodal analysis. This study therefore examines cyberdubbing as a multimodal and participatory audiovisual translation practice, showing how cyberdubbers make use of acoustic and visual meaning codes to produce creative reinterpretations and how these creative strategies are received and evaluated by audiences.

Methods

This case study uses Chaume’s (2012) analytical framework to analyze the creative multimodal practices found in cyberdubbing. The analysis focuses on how cyberdubbers employ voice acting styles, regional dialects, humorous reinterpretations of dialogue and experimental subtitle practices to convey meaning. Danmu and forum comments are then analyzed to examine how audiences engage with, extend and evaluate these creative strategies.

I first conduct a keyword search on Bilibili using the term “疯狂动物城2 配音” (*Zootopia 2* dubbing). The search was performed in an incognito browser window without logging into a user account and without applying additional filters, in order to minimize the influence of personalized recommendations and reflect the platform’s default visibility structure. Of the 1,000 total search results, I arranged them based on relevance and view count and selected the three most viewed cyberdubbed videos based on the same international trailer of *Zootopia 2*. Focusing on the same source material allows for clearer comparison of translation strategies and dubbing choices across different versions. These videos attracted substantial audience engagement. Table 1 provides key information about the selected videos, including upload date, view count and number of comments.

This study examines how cyberdubbers used different multimodal elements in their practice and how the videos received on Bilibili. Video 1, 天津话配音《疯狂动物城2》，听过吗弟弟! (*Zootopia 2* Dubbed in Tianjin Dialect, Have You Heard This, Bro?), posted by 没6的沈龙Loong, is explicitly framed as a non-official, recreational production (“just dubbing for fun” in the video description). It is created by two cyberdubbers with the

female dubber voicing all female characters and the male dubber voicing all male characters. Video 2 (北京话配音《疯狂动物城2》(Zootopia 2 Dubbed in Beijing Dialect)), posted by 画家常小亮, does not provide a description and appears to be an individual production, dubbed entirely by a single male voice. Video 3 (假如用CCTV6老译制片的方式打开《疯狂动物城2》(What If Zootopia 2 Were Dubbed in the Style of Classic CCTV-6 Chinese dubbese?)), posted by 配音演员张小麦, reflects a more organized and professional production context. The uploader acknowledges the support of multiple voice actors in the description and the video is dubbed by a team of eleven professional dubbers, each performing a specific character.

Table 1: Basic information about the three videos

| Video number | Time posted | Duration | Views | Likes | Danmu comments | Forum comments |
|--------------|-------------|----------|-----------|--------|----------------|----------------|
| V1 | 28 Nov 2025 | 01:33 | 1,572,000 | 47,000 | 339 | 756 |
| V2 | 03 Dec 2025 | 02:08 | 643,000 | 22,000 | 329 | 630 |
| V3 | 09 Dec 2025 | 02:15 | 571,000 | 23,000 | 232 | 538 |

The analysis focuses on two types of data. First, this analysis incorporates multiple channels of information, including the visual presentation of subtitles (e.g., speed, font, color and style), visual elements such as inserted image and filters, and the acoustic channel (e.g., pronunciation, accent and intonation). Table 2 shows how selected codes from Chaume's (2012) framework are operationalized in this study. Examples are analyzed in detail in the Results section below.

The second dataset consists of danmu comments and forum comments posted by viewers. Danmu comments are time-synchronized with the video and include both timestamp and content, while forum comments contain the sender's name, posting time and content.

Keyword analysis was conducted to identify the most frequently mentioned terms in the danmu comments. Since the comments were written in Chinese, Jieba, an open-source Chinese word segmentation tool, was first used to segment the comments into individual lexical units. Keyword frequency was calculated by word occurrence rather than by comment. Therefore, repeated occurrences within the same comment, such as repeated instances of “哈哈” (haha), were included in the count (See Table 6). This analysis was used to identify the aspects of cyberdubbing that attracted the most immediate audience attention.

Table 2: Multimodal analysis using Chaume’s framework: Codes and examples

| Code | Description | Examples |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Linguistic code | How cyberdubbers create comic effects through dialectal vocabulary, humorous rewriting, colloquial expressions, forms of address and Chinese dubbese. | Humorous rewriting of the original trailer dialogue; CCTV-style “Chinese dubbese” in Video 3 |
| Paralinguistic code | Vocal features that shape the delivery of the dubbed dialogue, including pronunciation, accent, intonation, rhythm, pitch, emotional tone and voice quality. | Tianjin or Beijing accent; playful or comic intonation; added lines in response to non-subtitled whispers, gasps or exclamations in the original trailer. |
| Iconographic code | Visual symbols, images, objects and culturally recognizable signs that contribute to meaning making. | Fox and rabbit ears worn by the dubbers in Video 1; rabbit and fox drawings in Video 2; CCTV-6 logo in Video 3; |
| Photographic code | Visual qualities of the image, including color, lighting, contrast, brightness, filters and overall image texture. | Faded or blurred color filter in Video 3 to imitate older dubbed films; brighter and more playful visual presentation in Videos 1 and 2. |
| Mobility code | Coordination between dubbed dialogue and visual movement, including lip synchronization, facial expressions, gestures and action timing. | Target utterances timed to match characters’ mouth openings and closings; humorous lines delivered in response to characters’ gestures or facial expressions |
| Graphic code | Written language and graphic text appearing on screen, including subtitles, titles, captions, danmu comments, font, size, color, placement and subtitle style. | Stylized subtitles in Video 1; large subtitles and decorative layout in Video 2; conventional white subtitles with black outline in Video 3; danmu comments overlaid onto the video screen. |
| Editing code | The organization and rearrangement of visual elements. | Dubbers’ performance window inserted in Video 1; original trailer frame resized to create space for subtitles and graphic elements in Video 2; reconstructed CCTV-6-style layout in Video 3. |

Note. The remaining four codes are excluded because the associated elements are not applicable to the selected clips.

Attitude analysis was conducted through inductive coding of danmu and forum comments. Rather than using a pre-existing sentiment dictionary, the attitude codes were developed from recurring evaluative expressions in the comments. Comments containing explicit affective or evaluative wording, such as “太好了” (so good), “好笑” (funny), “地道” (authentic), “很烦” (annoying), “尴尬” (awkward), or “听不懂” (difficult to understand), were identified and grouped according to their evaluative focus. These codes were then organized into specific categories, such as performance quality, local authenticity, stylistic recognition, comprehension, etc. (See Table 6). In this

sense, attitude analysis captured the evaluative orientation of the audience comments, while thematic analysis was used to develop and interpret the categories.

Results

Creativity in cyberdubbings

Unlike conventional dubbing, which typically aims to minimize visual distraction and maintain lip synchronization, cyberdubbing foregrounds its own production process and creative intervention. In the three videos analyzed in this study, creativity is expressed not only through translation choices but also through various visual codes.

In Video 1, the uploaders use a creative font, a rounded typeface that produces a softer and more playful visual effect (see Figure 1). The subtitles have a blue glow and white outline, making them visually prominent against the video background. The video title appears in the upper left corner of the screen, while a small window is placed in the lower left corner showing the two cyberdubbers performing the voices in real time. The male dubber wears fox ears and voices all male characters, while the female dubber wears rabbit ears and performs all female characters. These graphic and editing codes not only reveal the dubbing process but also playfully match the performers with the animal characters in the film.

In Video 2, the original trailer is reduced in size to create additional space for subtitles and graphic elements (see Figure 2). The subtitles are larger than standard subtitle size and are presented in the Yahei font, which is commonly used in digital media for its clarity and readability. On both sides of the subtitles, simple line drawings of a rabbit and a fox are added as decorative elements. The uploader's username appears in the upper right corner, while the video title is placed at the top of the frame. These visual codes give the video a layout that resembles a fan edited media product rather than a conventional subtitled or dubbed video.

Video 3 imitates the esthetic conventions of classic official dubbed films in Chinese Mainland. As shown in Figure 3, the video carefully recreates many of the stylistic details associated with foreign films broadcast on China Central Television Channel 6 (CCTV-6). For instance, a CCTV-6 logo is displayed in the upper left corner of the screen. On the left side of the frame, a vertical text presents information about the film title and the country of origin, a format commonly used in 1990s' dubbed films. The subtitles also follow the conventional style of traditional dubbing subtitles, using the standard Yahei font with white characters and black outlines. The color of the video appears noticeably blurred and faded compared with Videos 1 and 2. This visual treatment creates a nostalgic atmosphere reminiscent of older films.

Figure 1: Screenshot of Video 1 at 00:14**Figure 2:** Screenshot of Video 2 at 00:14**Figure 3:** Screenshot of Video 3 at 00:14

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Table 3: Example of subtitles mismatch

| Start time | Original line | Dubbed version | Subtitled version |
|------------|--|----------------|-------------------|
| 00:02 | Hopps and Wilde in pursuit of suspect. | 朱迪和尼克在此嫌疑犯别想逃 | 朱迪和尼克正在追捕嫌疑人 |
| 00:04 | Back off, rookies. | 这轮不到你插手 | 让开 菜鸟 |
| 00:05 | We got 'em! Rolling spikes! | 交给我们就行伙计们钉刺准备 | 我们要抓住他们了放钉刺 |
| 00:07 | Rolling spikes! | 钉刺给我扎 | 放钉刺 |

Unlike Videos 1 and 2, in which the subtitles correspond exactly to the dubbed dialogue, Video 3 deliberately reproduces a mismatch between written subtitles and spoken dialogue. In classic dubbed films, subtitles were present

but did not fully correspond to the dubbed conversation. Minor discrepancies between what viewers read and what they heard were therefore common. During the dubbing process, the script often needs to be adjusted on the spot to match lip movements and other performance requirements without coordinating with the subtitle team (Zhang 2004). This characteristic is deliberately reproduced in Video 3. As shown in Table 3, in order to match the lip movements and syllabic rhythm of the English dialogue, the actual dubbed version is often longer than the corresponding subtitle version. Through this mobility code, the video not only parodies the historical style of Chinese official dubbing in the 20th century but also demonstrates a form of intertextual creativity that draws on the audiences' shared cultural memory of the tradition. These choices are recognized, praised and explained by viewers on danmu

00:00.9: 经典配音对不上字幕 [Classic dubbing where the subtitles don't match the spoken lines.]
 00:04.0: 细节影片后面加上国家地区名 [Nice detail: the country/region name is added after the film title.]
 00:17.7: 貌似上个世纪的产物 [Feels like something from the last century.]

and forum comments.

废号*: 为什么老电影喜欢字幕跟配音不一样? [Why do old films often have subtitles that don't match the dubbing?]
 春风* replies: 因为字幕是根据原台词在胶片上制作的而配音为了对上口型要对台词进行改变。[Because the subtitles are created based on the original script and embedded onto the film, while the dubbed lines are adjusted to match lip movements.]

Table 4: Basic information about subtitles in each video

| | Subtitle lines | Lines omitted | Lines added | Max length | cps |
|----|----------------|---------------|-------------|------------|-----|
| V1 | 41 | 15 | 6 | 15 | 8 |
| V2 | 52 | 5 | 4 | 12 | 12 |
| V3 | 58 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 8 |

Further, Table 4 shows that Video 3 does not add or omit any original subtitles, while Videos 1 and 2 exhibit a substantial degree of omission and addition. The omissions in Video 1 are mainly due to the uploaders deleting certain scenes from the original video. In Video 2, the omissions primarily involve brief discourse markers or interjections, such as “ow,” “hi,” and “oops” The additions, on the other hand, mainly take the form of extra monologues or inserted lines that enhance the dramatic effect of the scene, often contributing to a more humorous and exaggerated tone.

For example, in Video 1, during Judy Hopps and Nick Wilde's pursuit of Gary De'Snake, Gary reaches the tube station. Nibbles Maplestick warns them not to follow him into the Red Line. Gary jumps into the Red Line and

Judy immediately follows. Then, Nick reluctantly joins in after her. In this moment, an additional line is inserted: “你知道跳水大爷吗” (Nick: Do you know those old guys who go diving?). This line refers to a well-known local phenomenon in Tianjin, where middle-aged and elderly men perform highly distinctive public diving. Before jumping, they often deliver humorous opening remarks and interact playfully with the audience, creating a lively atmosphere filled with cheers and exclamations. By invoking this culturally specific reference, the cyberdub reframes the act of jumping into the Red Line as a performative and humorous spectacle, enhancing both the local flavor and comedic effect of the scene.

In Video 2, two hippo police officers are covered in spikes after being accidentally attacked by their porcupine colleague. As they attempt to squeeze through the doorway into a meeting room, the situation becomes highly comical. Additional two off-screen lines are inserted to amplify the humor: “哎呦喂穿孔打钉” (Ouch, looks like they’ve been studded full of piercings!) and “成亚比了嘿” (Looks like they’ve turned into some kind of punk!).

Further, creativity is also manifested in the highly localized dubbing practices adopted in the videos. Two of the analyzed versions are dubbed in Tianjin dialect and Beijing dialect respectively, incorporating distinctive local expressions, intonation patterns and dialectal vocabulary. The notion of “local” here refers to a strong regional flavor that resonates with viewers familiar with these speech styles. At the same time, the dialectal performances produce an effect that is both “exotic” but accessible for broader audiences. For viewers who are less familiar with the dialects, danmu comments often provide additional explanations or humorous interpretations, helping others follow the dialogue while reinforcing the participatory nature of the viewing experience.

In this scene, Nick and Judy urgently need to get to another part of the city as part of their investigation. Nick asks Flash, a sloth known for his extremely slow movements and speech, for help.

Original line: We need to get across town.
 Video 1: 天津站到瓷房子50块钱走不走 [Tianjin Railway Station to the Porcelain House, 50 yuan, deal or not?]
 01:18.4: 天津站到瓷房子, 三号线地铁坐到营口道下, 骑小黄五分钟骑到。花不到四块钱, 你要给我50? [From Tianjin Railway Station to the Porcelain House, you can take Line 3 and get off at Ying Kou Dao. You then use shared bike. It takes less than four yuan. You want to give me 50 yuan?]
 01:19.0: 用的了这么多吗? [Do you need to pay that much?]
 01:20.3: 《50块钱》 [FIFTY DOLLARS]

The Tianjin dialect version demonstrates creativity through strong localization and cultural referencng. In the original line “We need to get

across town” the cyberdubbers reinterpret the situation as a taxi negotiation in Tianjin. The line replaces the generic spatial reference “across town” with two well-known local landmarks. Nick’s proposal of a 50-yuan fare, presented as excessively high, adds humor while signaling the urgency. This reinterpretation evokes everyday street interactions characteristic of Tianjin’s local speech culture. Danmu comments further reinforce this effect, as viewers highlight the absurdity of the price and engage with the humor. The humor lies in the exaggerated specificity of the route and the familiar negotiation style, which resonates with local audiences while remaining accessible to wider viewers through shared context and participatory commentary.

Video 2 similarly relies on localization but employs a different strategy by embedding the dialogue in Beijing’s spatial and sociolinguistic references.

Original line: Nick: No snake has set foot in Zootopia in forever.

Video 2: 好多好多年啊 都没有长虫 进二环了 [It’s been many, many years since a snake has entered the Second Ring Road.]

00:29.8: 别说二环了, 现在北京城里都没有什么蛇 [Don’t even mention the Second Ring Road. There are hardly any snakes left in Beijing city now.]

00:29.8: 二环笑死哈哈哈哈, 合着还得给长虫半个京牌是吗... [The Second Ring Road bit is killing me, hahaha. So are we supposed to give the snake half a Beijing licence plate too?]

00:30.8: 进二环太地道了哈哈哈哈哈哈 [“Entering the Second Ring Road” is so authentic, hahaha.]

The reference to Beijing’s Second Ring Road, a well-known geographic and symbolic boundary in the city, within the second ring is considered the center of the city, replaces the fictional location of Zootopia. The term “长虫,” a colloquial and slightly humorous way of referring to snakes in northern dialects (not just limited to Beijing dialect), further reinforces the regional tone. This localization creates humor by framing the snake as if it were a migrant attempting to enter Beijing’s central district, echoing broader cultural associations with residency permits and urban access. Danmu comments amplify this interpretation, with viewers joking that the snake would need a Beijing license plate to enter the Second Ring Road. Through this playful reinterpretation, the cyberdub transforms the original narrative line into a culturally specific joke that draws on shared knowledge of the locale.

Another creative strategy is the incorporation of English sounding elements within the Chinese dubbing. Unlike straightforward transliteration, these examples involve a hybrid form that incorporates English phonetic patterns with Chinese expressions.

Original scene: Nibbles, Judy and Nick enter the reptile hangout, a
 secret speakeasy in Marsh Market.
 Video 1: Chow why did~

In Video 1, a new line is introduced in a scene where no dialogue exists in the original version. The utterance “chow why did~”, with the tilde indicating a wavering intonation, mimics the phonetic contour of the Chinese derogatory phrase “臭外地的” (damn outsiders). This example involves both the linguistic and paralinguistic codes. At the linguistic level, the cyberdub creates a pseudo-English phrase that looks like an English utterance but encodes a recognizable Chinese expression through sound. At the paralinguistic level, the wavering intonation reinforces the phonetic resemblance and helps make the joke identifiable to Chinese-speaking viewers. The humor is therefore produced through a playful friction between linguistic appearance and phonetic familiarity.

ST: Quilda (a female African crested porcupine): Rolling spikes!
 Video 2: 扎死他 独一无二

A similar strategy can be observed in Video 2. In the original line, Quilda exclaims “Rolling spikes!” which is rendered as “扎死他 独一无二.” The first part, “扎死他,” conveys the action of attacking by rolling spikes, thus maintaining semantic alignment with the source text. The second part, “独一无二,” imitates the sound of the English slogan “just do it.” This phonetic play introduces an additional layer of meaning, suggesting decisiveness and immediacy in Quilda’s action. Here, the translation operates simultaneously at the level of meaning and sound, combining semantic translation with phonetic creativity. This hybrid strategy enhances the expressive force of the line while embedding it within a broader network of recognizable cultural references.

What do danmu and forum comments tell us?

The keyword analysis, complemented by thematic interpretation of danmu and forum comments, shows that the laughter marker (haha) dominate across all three videos, suggesting that audience engagement is primarily affective and performative (Table 5). Further, Table 6 shows a clear dominance of positive audience evaluations across all three videos, with negative responses remaining minimal and marginal. These two sets of data provide clues about how audiences perceive and evaluate the three videos. These evaluative patterns, in turn, offer insight into how trust in cyberdubbing is formed and negotiated.

Table 5: Top 3 most frequent keywords in danmu comments

| Video | Keyword | Translation | Occurrences |
|---------|---------|-----------------|-------------|
| Video 1 | 哈哈 | Haha (laughter) | 176 |

| | | | |
|---------|----|-------------------|-----|
| | 天津 | Tianjin | 33 |
| | 配音 | Dubbing | 15 |
| Video 2 | 哈哈 | Haha (laughter) | 145 |
| | 二环 | The 2nd Ring Road | 27 |
| | 北京 | Beijing | 25 |
| Video 3 | 哈哈 | Haha (laughter) | 99 |
| | 译制 | Chinese dubbese | 36 |
| | 字幕 | Subtitle | 24 |

Table 6: Audience attitudes towards cyberdubbed videos

| Video | Attitude | Category | Codes (frequency) |
|-------|----------|-----------------------|---|
| V1 | Positive | Humor and engagement | Hilarious (45), many memes (24), enjoyment (12) |
| | | Performance quality | Good dubbing (15), better than official dubs (12), understandable (4) |
| | | Local authenticity | Authentic Tianjin expression (28), local accent (13) |
| | Negative | Performance issues | Awkward delivery (3), mixed accent (1) |
| | | Comprehension | Difficult to understand (1) |
| V2 | Positive | Humor and engagement | Hilarious (38), enjoyment (16) |
| | | Performance quality | Good dubbing (23), better than official dubs (8), Better than official dubs (6) |
| | | Local authenticity | Authentic Beijing expression (24), authentic accent (13) |
| | Negative | Performance issues | Sounds uncomfortable (1) |
| V3 | Positive | Humor and enjoyment | Fun (4), enjoyment (2), nostalgia (4) |
| | | Stylistic recognition | Excellent Chinese dubbese (25), attention to detail (14) |
| | Negative | Performance issue | Unpleasant voice quality (1) |

In Table 6, negative evaluations across all three videos are limited and largely confined to minor issues of performance or comprehension, while there are recurring codes regarding positive comments across the three videos.

In Videos 1 and 2, localization is a central evaluative dimension, as indicated by the frequent appearance of place-related expressions in danmu. In Video 1, “配音” (dubbing) directly reflects audience attitudes toward the cyberdubs. Of the fifteen occurrences, most express strong approval, such as “配音不错” (nice dubs). At the same time, five comments explicitly compare the cyberdub with the official version, often criticizing the latter and expressing a clear preference for the former. What is salient here is not the evaluation alone, but its comparative nature. These comparisons position cyberdubbers as more credible and appealing alternatives, suggesting that preference is not pre-given but relationally constructed through contrast with what is perceived as inadequate official dubbing.

In Video 2, the evaluation focuses on authenticity. Here, authenticity does not refer to staying true to the source text, but to the perceived credibility of the target-locale performance. Expressions such as “正宗老北京” (real old Beijing) and “地道北京味儿” (authentic Beijing flavor) suggest that viewers evaluate the dubbing in terms of how convincingly it performs “Beijingness.” The frequent occurrence of “二环” (the Second Ring Road) further anchors this response in shared knowledge of the locale. Humor is not only recognized but also extended, as viewers build on the “二环” joke in danmu. In this sense, the credibility of the cyberdubbing depends less on its closeness to the source text than on its ability to b target-locale linguistic and cultural resources.

In Video 3, keywords such as “译制”, “字幕” and “配音” indicate that viewers are responding less to content than to stylistic reconstruction. Evaluation focuses on whether the video successfully reproduces the conventions of “译制片” (Chinese dubbese). Codes such as “excellent Chinese dubbese” and “attention to detail” indicate an appreciation of stylistic imitation. Here, legitimacy is tied to recognizability: the more convincingly the video evokes a familiar dubbing esthetic and shared cultural memory, the more it is accepted as credible.

Discussion: How does creativity cross over to audiences?

The analysis above has shown that the three cyberdubbed videos mobilize different combinations of meaning codes to demonstrate distinct forms of creativity. These creative practices are recognized, interpreted and evaluated by viewers through danmu and forum comments. This discussion examines what viewers perceive as authentic and what this authenticity is oriented towards. It then considers how authenticity is constructed through multimodal elements and how such perceptions are later transformed into cooperation and trust.

As mentioned, authenticity is not understood as staying true to the source text. Rather, it refers to the extent to which a cyberdubbed performance is perceived as locally or stylistically convincing within a specific context. As Pym (2000) puts it, authenticity is an effect produced through the multiplication of variations and variations do not appear authentic because of one isolated marker. In Videos 1 and 2, authenticity is most visibly produced through the linguistic and paralinguistic codes. Dialectal vocabulary, colloquial expressions, humorous rewriting and forms of address integrate with accent, intonation, rhythm and vocal delivery to create locally recognizable performances.

At the same time, authenticity does not require every detail to be immediately understood by all viewers. Some culture-specific references,

such as “瓷房子” (Porcelain House) and “二环” (the Second Ring Road), may sound recognizably local while still requiring additional knowledge of the locale to understand the jokes. This is where danmu and forum comments become important. Viewers do not merely receive authenticity as a finalized effect; they help make it visible by explaining, extending and responding to these local details. The esthetics of detail is therefore amplified through audience participation, as viewers collectively identify what sounds authentic, clarify references for others and make more jokes around them.

While Videos 1 and 2 produce authenticity mainly through dialectal vocabulary and regional vocal performance, Video 3 constructs a different kind of authenticity: mimicking Chinese dubbese and reproducing classic dubbed-film esthetics. This authenticity is produced through (1) paralinguistic features such as tone, rhythm, intonation and delivery, (2) linguistic features associated with translated-film dialogue and (3) visual codes such as subtitle style, faded color, CCTV-6-style layout and broadcast-like editing. The video appears authentic because all these elements activate a recognizable media memory of older Chinese dubbed films and the nostalgic feelings attached to that viewing experience.

Cyberdubbers of the three videos draw on these meaning codes that allow to create interpretations and invite audience participation. These codes function as hooks: viewers who recognize them can explain, extend or play with them, while viewers who do not fully understand them can ask questions, read responses and gradually make sense of the performance. This process aligns with Pym’s (2021) observation that communication is not always governed by complete transparency or immediate understanding. Difficulty, ambiguity and partial understanding may themselves become part of cooperative communication. In this sense, communicative success becomes a “cooperative outcome of the communication act” (Pym 2021, p. 12).

We can therefore observe effort distributed across cyberdubbers and viewers who left comments. The former gain visibility, engagement and potential recognition within the dubbing field. The latter, in turn, gain humor, cultural insight and participatory experience. The willingness of both parties to invest effort is closely tied to the benefits involved. As Pym (2015) argues, cooperation depends on the distribution of effort and reward. When the perceived gains are sufficient, participants are more willing to engage.

It is through this cooperative recognition of authenticity that trust begins to emerge. When viewers identify the cyberdubbers’ choices as locally or stylistically convincing, they are also recognizing the cyberdubbers’ competence. This competence is not established by institutional authority but demonstrated through performance and confirmed through audience interaction. Viewers’ explanations, jokes, questions and appreciations therefore do more than extend the meaning of the cyberdubbed videos; they also help validate the cyberdubbers as capable and credible players in audiovisual translation.

This helps explain why some audience comments position cyberdubbed versions against official dubbing. Statements such as “this is much better than the official dubbing” or “I would go to the cinema if it were dubbed like this” do not simply express enjoyment. They suggest that these viewers perceive cyberdubbers as more responsive to audience expectations and more attentive to local and stylistic details than some dubbers in the official version. Trust here is thus formed relationally, through comparison with official dubbing and through the successful cooperative interpretation of cyberdubbed performances.

These viewers’ claims should, however, be understood cautiously. Active commenters represent only a minority of viewers, while many users are likely to be lurkers who watch the videos and read comments without posting their own responses. Moreover, enthusiastic comments should not be read as direct evidence of actual behavioral intention. A statement such as “I would go to the cinema if it were dubbed like this” may be exaggerated, performative, or shaped by Bilibili’s long-standing culture of playful, locally flavored fan production. Its significance lies less in whether the viewer would literally buy a cinema ticket than in the evaluative orientation it reveals. Such comments indicate that some viewers recognize and appreciate the cyberdubbers’ creative choices, especially when these choices appear more locally attuned, more stylistically convincing, or more engaging than official dubbing.

Conclusion

This study uses three cyberdubbed versions of a *Zootopia 2* trailer as a case to examine how creativity in cyberdubbing is produced and evaluated within participatory media environments. Drawing on Chaume’s (2012) framework of meaning codes, the study shows that cyberdubbing creativity is not limited to verbal rewriting or vocal performance, but is produced through the interaction of linguistic, paralinguistic, graphic, iconographic, photographic, mobility and editing codes. Through these codes, cyberdubbers create dialectal humor, localized cultural references, stylized dubbese, subtitle-dubbing mismatches and recognizable media memories. These creative strategies do not operate in isolation, but invite audiences to recognize, interpret and extend them.

The findings further show that audience engagement with cyberdubbing is not merely receptive but cooperative. What viewers evaluate is not on whether the cyberdubbed versions stay true to the source text, but whether they appear authentic in the situated context. Authenticity here refers to performances that are perceived as locally or stylistically convincing. Videos 1 and 2 construct authenticity mainly through dialectal expression, local knowledge and paralinguistic performance, while Video 3 produces a different form of authenticity through Chinese dubbese, subtitle-dubbing

mismatch, broadcast-like visual design and nostalgic media memory. In this sense, meaning is co-constructed between cyberdubbers and a subset of active viewers, with danmu and forum comments functioning as an interpretive layer that supports and redistributes communicative effort. As audiences recognize cyberdubbers' performances as locally or stylistically convincing, they also begin to attribute preference and credibility to these cyberdubbers. Trust is therefore not an additional theme separate from creativity and reception, but emerges from the successful cooperative interpretation of authenticity.

These findings also have implications for professional audiovisual translation practice. When official dubbing does not meet audience expectations, it can be readily challenged by alternative forms of production outside professional frameworks. Cyberdubbing shows that quality is no longer guaranteed by institutional authority alone, as audiences are capable of critical evaluation and willing to recognize non-professional alternatives when they better meet expectations of performance, style and cultural resonance. At the same time, this trust should be understood cautiously: active commenters represent only a minority of viewers and enthusiastic comments do not necessarily indicate long-term commitment or actual behavioral intention. Rather, they reveal a situated and relational form of trust shaped through comparison, participation and shared interpretation.

Declaration of AI use

In preparing this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT 5.5 for language editing. All AI-assisted content was reviewed, edited and verified by the author, who takes full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the final text.

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