

Issues and Strategies of Localising Sensitive Audiovisual Elements in Game Streaming: A Case Study on *Overwatch* League (OWL) Chinese Streaming

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Abstract

This paper is a participant-observer case study of the Overwatch League (OWL) 2021 Chinese streaming. Within the contemporary dynamic and diversified mediascape of China, esports streaming has become increasingly popular (Taylor, 2018; Wohn & Freeman, 2020). Esports streaming allows spectators to watch esports players' intense competitions in real time and interact through danmu (bullet comments), gift sending systems, or via streaming lotteries (Lee et al., 2019; Abarbanel & Johnson, 2020; Zhang & Cassany, 2020). The Chinese streaming of Overwatch League (OWL), a series of Overwatch (OW) esports tournaments owned by Activision Blizzard, on Bilibili can be considered a game streaming localisation practice which localises audiovisual content from the original English-language streaming source into Chinese and then innovates upon it in the form of a number of local streaming programmes. The OWL Chinese streaming has disclosed many issues and strategies taken toward sensitive elements like game slang, cultural differences, the presence of erotic or violent content, gambling, media accessibility and censorship laws. The analysis of the selected cases in this article extends the current theories dealing with game localisation (e.g. Zhang Xiaochun, 2012; O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013; Mangiron et al., 2014) into a new layer, dealing with game streaming localisation. The findings suggest the complications of game streaming content, including the controversial impacts of localisation strategies on sensitive elements, cross-media marketing of streaming practices and the participation of various stakeholders (e.g. officials, sponsors, fans) in game streaming localisation.

Keywords: Game streaming, game localisation, game streaming localisation, game streaming interaction, cross-media marketing, and game slang.

Since the first commercial arcade video game (a game machine typically in public places like malls, restaurants, or bars), *Spacewar!* (Steve Russell, 1962) was released in the early 1960s, the world has witnessed the rapid development of video games (Donovan, 2010). Today, lots of new practices on game genres and gameplay and diversification of programming talents and gaming skills have emerged. Video games are celebrated by players of all ages, genders, and social backgrounds, and are played on an assortment of platforms and devices (Donovan, 2010). Technologies used to play games in recent years include arcades, consoles, PC, mobile phones and virtual reality (VR) gear. As an omnipresent form of global entertainment, video games have exerted a significant impact on social-cultural development and technological advancement (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013). The evolution of video games has elicited a strong response within game studies concerning genres, playability, and audiovisual components. To meet the research gap on the integration of video games into streaming practices, this paper examines concepts and forms of sensitive audiovisual elements in game streaming and analyses related strategies and issues of the English-Chinese localisation based on an exploration of esports streaming in the case of the game *Overwatch* (2016). It aims to present a new academic

view of game streaming localisation, discussing variously definitions, content, features, stakeholders, and potential impacts.

The release of video games exclusively in just one or even a couple of languages can hardly meet the demands of global gamers, leading some scholars and gaming practitioners to acknowledge the importance of game localisation (Jooyaeian & Khoshsaligheh, 2022). Game localisation is not just a straightforward translation of game texts (Mangiron, 2018). However, limited by non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), localisers, no matter whether they are in-house or outsourced workers, usually have limited access to game files, lacking additional context. Meanwhile, most game companies adopt a *simship* (short for ‘simultaneous shipment’) mode that requires the simultaneous release of localised editions alongside domestic products, emphasising the urgency of localisation work. Therefore, especially in the early stages of the Chinese game localisation industry, there has been a degree of conceptual confusion between ‘game translation’ (*youxi fanyi* 游戏翻译) and ‘game localisation’ (*youxi bendihua* 游戏本地化). As the industry has evolved, the importance of game localisation across areas such as images, audio files, censorship law, advertising strategy and cross-media-marketing has gradually been revealed (Zhang Xiaochun, 2012). For instance, the localisation of game trailers, namely promotional videos to raise awareness, hype and ultimately sales for upcoming video games, has produced many collaborations between video game makers and film works (Švelch, 2017). Such new initiatives have, in turn, urged game localisation teams to subdivide and normalise localisation jobs and tasks. As shown in its official news, Blizzard’s Chinese localisation team have increased their numbers, adding positions such as outsourcing manager, localisation engineer, audio specialist, and quality assurance analyst. With game localisation becoming more extensive, both the issues covered, and strategies taken have evolved (Zhang Xiaochun, 2012). In academia, localisation phenomena have not yet been fully researched, but may serve as theoretical support to broader interdisciplinary fields such as translation studies, communication studies, linguistics, lexicology, and advertising.

Game streaming can be most simply defined as an activity whereby people stream video games via the internet (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017; Johnson & Woodcock, 2019). Since the mid-2000s, improvements to data speeds, decreases in broadband costs and the popularity of video games have created an explosion of game streaming activities (Burroughs & Rama, 2015), causing the commercialisation and standardisation of game streaming on global streaming platforms (Twitch, Youtube Gaming and Facebook Gaming) and via agencies (Upfluence, Viral Nation). Although in its early stages, ‘streaming’ referred primarily to TV streaming (e.g. Rodriguez & Bressan, 2012) or online-based content sharing like Netflix (e.g. Burroughs, 2019), current ‘streaming’ in both industry and academia is used in particular to denote streaming that provides real-time interaction as a form of tandem spectating between streamers and audience (see Lee et al., 2019; Shen, 2021).

Notably, popular game streaming in China includes two types of production, live and pre-recorded. Live game streaming allows streamers to play and stream a game in real time with no post-editing of content, while pre-recorded game streaming, as a kind of ‘fake live streaming’ in terms of the streaming authenticity, is usually embellished with pre-edited cuts, effects, transitions, stock footage, well-rounded storyline, subtitles, and voice-over. Streaming forms and interactions are closely connected to the purpose. For example, the streaming of closed game tests like Blizzard’s PvP (player versus player; as opposed to player versus environment, PvE) streaming of *Overwatch 2* (2022) is a pre-recorded streaming of what is in effect a commercial collaboration, with strict censorship of content to reduce the negative impacts of game bugs and to attract potential customers (Kang et al., 2017). Machinima-style

game streaming pre-records real-time computer gameplay in service of fan creations (Jones, 2019).

As game streaming studies is not yet a truly mature field of research, huge gaps exist in the literature, such as with regard to game streaming genres. Most game streaming platforms allow spectators to select a game streaming room (the streaming webpage) by the video game played, game genre, streamers' genders, or via keywords, and thus these standards could be considered to be practical indicators of genre. By contrast, game streaming genres in academia are determined based primarily by game streaming features like content or performance. Limited by the perception of researchers and the state of streaming development in its early stages, the three major genres proposed by Smith et al. (2013) include speedrunning (a fast game playthrough of a whole video game or a selected part), 'Let's Play' (a normal playthrough of a video game with no time goals) and esports (the streaming of competitive video games or game competitions). However, there is an inconsistency on the terminology both in research and practice about game streaming. Though digital games have been played competitively since the 1980s, they were not fully accepted as professional sports at that time (Szablewicz, 2016). Esports were originally defined as a form of competition using competitive video games across many genres of games, including sports games, racing games, action games and massive multiplayer online roleplaying games (MMORPGs), where competitors could be either individuals or teams (Burroughs & Rama, 2015). With practical expansion, the term 'esports' came to describe the official streaming of esports tournaments (see, for example, Smith et al., 2013; Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017) and for a time, self-conducted game streaming based on competitive video games in the first-person view was classified as a form of 'Let's Play'. However, the world has witnessed the rise of many new streaming genres related to esports gaming, such as post-analysis streaming hosted by fans or professionals on esports strategies or prize-giving quizzes based on esports tournaments. New jobs in the esports streaming industry are emerging, such as shoutcasters, observers or capture artists.¹ These changes suggest that mixed usages of the term 'esports' in gaming and streaming may cause ambiguity. Therefore, I retain the original definition of esports as a form of competition using competitive video games and use 'esports streaming' to include a wide range of streaming activities related to esports gaming.

Since the recognition of esports as sports by the General Administration of Sport of China in 2003, China has witnessed a significant development in esports and esports streaming (Lu Zhouxiang, 2016). In 2007, *FIFA 07* (2006), *NBA Live 07* (2006) and *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* (2005) were listed for the first time as official esports competitions at the 2nd Asian Indoor Games in Macau, China. For the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China will officially debut eight esports games as medal sports. The government's emphasis and the public attention on esports in China have led to a boom in development, wherein not only business streaming platforms such as Huya Live 虎牙直播, Bilibili 哔哩哔哩, DouYu 斗鱼 and NetEase CC 网易CC but also national franchises are broadcasting esports streaming. For instance, the final of King Pro League (KPL) Spring of 2020, an esports tournament of *Honours of Kings* (2015), was broadcast by China Global Television Network. This was the first tournament to be broadcast via a Chinese government-operated platform at a national level since 2003. In addition to this, the finals of *League of Legends* Pro League (LPL) 2018 Spring, an esports tournament of *League of Legends* (2009) held in Chengdu were live-streamed on both online

¹Shoutcasters provide running commentaries in live matches, observers control the in-game camera, and capture artists work after the game as directors and cinematographers to produce graphic artworks like posters or trailers.

game streaming platforms and the sports channel of Guangdong Radio and Television. Even amid the coronavirus pandemic around 2020, China's digital economy has proven resilient, experiencing an upsurge in game streaming upsurge via mobile streaming apps such as Douyin 抖音 and TikTok (Li et al., 2021). Key Opinion Leader (KOL) streaming, a streaming mode led by influencers who influence others' ideas, aesthetics and buying decisions, has been widely spread among game streamers (see Lu & Siegfried, 2021).

As much esports streaming was not initially conducted by Chinese organisations or streamed through Chinese platforms, Chinese spectators have been yearning for localisation. As might be expected, such practices, defined in this paper as 'game streaming localisation' are emerging. Game streaming localisation challenges the original concept of game localisation mainly at the level of game-content and brings it to an interdisciplinary area that involves media studies and marketing. Similar to cases of game localisation (e.g. Zhang Xiaochun, 2012; Mangiron, 2018), examination of game streaming localisation reveals significant audiovisual localisation phenomena displayed in the text, audio or image. Meanwhile, stakeholders such as streamers, spectators, streaming platforms, and game companies also shape the localisation from their stances by means of business collaborations, for instance, proposing localisation requirements for ads that appear in streaming (Pun, 2020). However, the lack of localisation foresight in game streaming causes many issues. To answer what potential sensitive audiovisual elements are in game streaming and what the underlying issues and strategies can be, this paper takes the Chinese-language streaming of *Overwatch* League (OWL), an esports tournament of the game *Overwatch* (Blizzard, 2016) as a case study for research. OWL has been researched in terms of its broadcast structure and game presentation (Turtiainen et al., 2016), fan impact (Välisalo & Ruotsalainen, 2019), the participation of female esports icons like Geguri (Cullen, 2018; Choi et al., 2020) and toxicity towards esports players (Tomkinson & Van Den Ende, 2021). Driven by practical phenomena, I use netnographical approaches such as participatory observation, transcribing, screenshots and screencasts to collect localisation samples of OWL-sensitive audiovisual elements. By using interdisciplinary approaches such as corpus studies and content analysis, I provide my analyses, discussions, and findings to extend relevant theory into new areas. The following sections introduce the case study and provide examples including ads, game slang, streaming notes, and streaming programmes. The findings shed light on the theoretical extension of game localisation on streaming practices by arguing for the importance of localisation, innovation, and fans' participation in game streaming localisation, and emphasising the significance of game slang in game streaming and online communication.

A Brief Introduction to the Localisation of *Overwatch* and *Overwatch* League in China

Overwatch (OW) is a team-based massively multiplayer online (MMO) first-person shooter (FPS) game, developed and published by Blizzard Entertainment in May 2016. OW is now available on various gaming platforms including Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch. It has four servers, located in the Americas, Asia, Europe and China respectively. The OW storyline is set on a fictionalised Earth 30 years after the resolution of the Omnic Crisis, a calamity caused by the conflicts between humans and robots. Due to the Omnic Crisis, the United Nations formed Overwatch, an international task force intended to combat the threat, maintain peace and restore world order. There are thirty-two playable characters to date, called as 'heroes' and identified as heroic fighters in the OW storytelling, including eight heroes classed as tanks, seventeen heroes classed as damage and seven heroes classed as support. Tank heroes lead the charge by soaking up damage, creating space, and breaking apart fortified positions. Damage heroes seek out, engage, and defeat the enemies.

Support heroes empower the allies by healing them, boosting the damage, and providing vital utility. Each hero has different abilities that diversify their responsibilities in team missions (e.g. 1v1, 3v3, 6v6). Gamers can select missions from the main menu.

The *Overwatch* League (OWL), owned by Blizzard Entertainment, is a series of professional esports OW tournaments. The OWL tournament was originally announced in 2016, while its inaugural season started in 2018. OWL is comprised of twenty international independent city-based teams to date, differentiated by their cultural identities (e.g. colour, logo), ownership and most importantly, their team players. In OWL 2020, OWL teams were divided on based on their city bases into Atlantic teams (ten teams) and Pacific teams (ten teams). In OWL 2021, due to city base changes and an updated schedule, OWL teams are reclassified into the East (seven teams) and the West (thirteen teams).

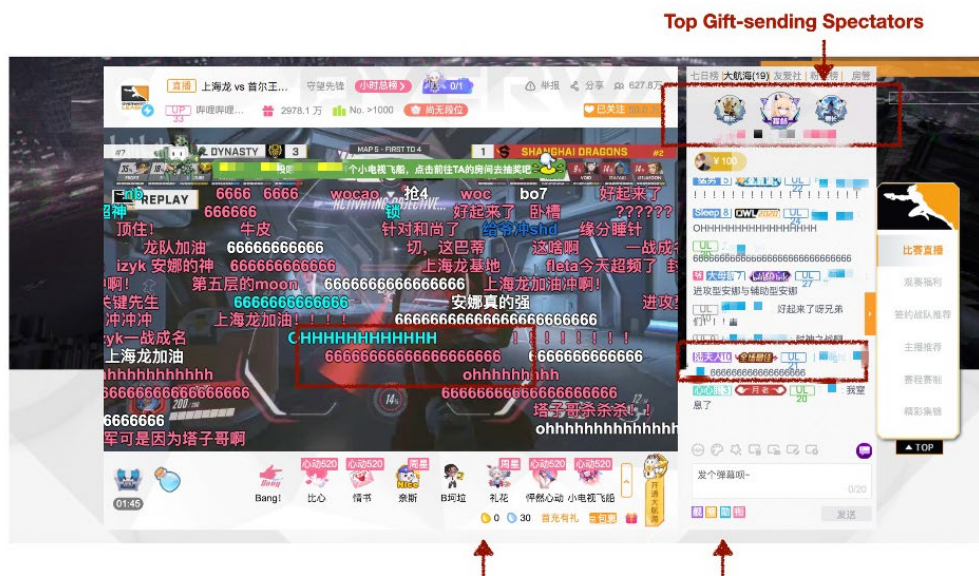
Blizzard has developed unique China-based localisation and advertising strategies in response to the fast-growing Chinese gamer community, taking on board many Chinese investors for OW (Chang, 2020). First, there is a separate OW China server operated by NetEase (*Wangyi* 网易) while the other three servers including the Americas, Asia and Europe are operated by Blizzard. Gamers on the China server are thus technically unable to team up with players on others. In addition, there are two localised versions for the Chinese market (e.g. websites, subtitles and dubbing). The one distributed in Mainland China in simplified Chinese is commonly described as ‘the Mainland server’ (*guofu* 国服), with the name of the game *Overwatch* translated as “*Shouwang xianfeng*” 守望先锋 (lit. The Watching Vanguard). The version in traditional Chinese is called ‘the Taiwan server’ (*taifu* 台服), with *Overwatch* translated as “*Douzhen tegong*” 鬥陣特攻 (lit. Special Attack of the Fighting Battalion). Gamers can switch between the two versions via the language setting on Battle.net, the Blizzard desktop app. There are two versions in existence as simplified and traditional Chinese characters have a profound influence on the target users’ written or spoken language and language habits (Yang & Wang, 2018). Simplified Chinese is officially used in Mainland China, Malaysia, and Singapore, while traditional Chinese is commonly used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. Additionally, the game markets of Mainland China and Taiwan are separate. As clarified in “The Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area” (Dalu weiyuanhui, 1992), profit-seeking enterprises based in Mainland China are not allowed to conduct business activities in Taiwan until they have obtained official permission and established branches or offices in Taiwan.

Although OWL is a global esports competition, Blizzard has set English as the default language for the gameplay interface, in-game text, and in-game speech in global OWL streaming. Internal factors relate to the fact that over half of OWL teams are USA-based to date, featuring large numbers of English native speakers. External factors may involve difficulties in localisation faced by English-speaking broadcasting teams. In contrast, in cooperation with local streaming platforms, local OWL streaming teams including teams from China, Korea, Europe, and Australia, differentiated by region or language, broadcast streaming sourced from OWL (English) officials and replaced the English content (e.g. English commentaries) with localised versions. Once local OWL teams initiate region-based OW tournaments such as *Overwatch Contenders*,² a high-level regional tournament series for pro players who dream of ascending to OWL, other OWL streaming teams similarly broadcast streaming sourced from the regional tournaments and replace any content that requires

² *Overwatch Contenders* 2021 has five regional tournaments including Contenders North America, Contenders Europe, Contenders Korea, Contenders Australia, and Contenders China, live-streamed to global spectators.

localisation. Currently, the official English streaming is available on the OWL YouTube English channel,³ and the Blizzard OWL official webpage.⁴ Before OWL 2021, Chinese platforms including Bilibili, Huya Live, NetEase CC and Zhanqi TV co-hosted an OWL Chinese streaming room. Following OWL 2021, exclusive broadcast rights have been given to Bilibili. The other Chinese streaming platforms thus cancelled all OWL streaming schedules but collegiate, fan-organised tournaments or OW gameplays are still available.

Bilibili has connected many interesting platform-based interactions to OWL's localisation, such as *danmu* (弹幕) commenting, gift-sending systems, streaming lotteries and cross-media collaborations to attract spectators and activate interactions. Danmu, or 'bullet-curtain' style comments, also known as danmaku after the Japanese term, are one of the most common forms of interaction on most Chinese and Japanese video streaming platforms (Zhang & Cassany, 2020). It allows real-time comments sent by registered spectators to zoom across the screen like bullets. It was first adopted by Niconico, a Japanese animation, comics, and games (ACG) content-sharing platform, and then gradually spread across Chinese media platforms such as AcFun and Bilibili in the 2010s (Yang Yuhong, 2020). Spectators are allowed to turn off danmu, block keywords or report toxic danmu. Significantly, on most Chinese media platforms, streaming and video sharing are two separate sections. Danmu in streaming are in effect a visualisation of comments made on the stream (see Figure 1), while comments and danmu are separate objects as displayed in video sharing.



Danmu (bullet screen comment) is displayed in two ways on Bilibili streaming, either in the chat bar or on the screen.

Figure 1: Display of danmu in OWL Chinese streaming on Bilibili, screenshot taken by the author, 24.05.2020

Case Study: Localising Sensitive Audiovisual Elements in *Overwatch* League Chinese Streaming

A video game is a manifestation of multiple semiotic modes (e.g. text, speech, gesture, image, moving image, sound effect, music, haptics, layout, olfaction, gustation, interactivity and immersion) and their coordination styles (Hawreliak, 2018). Sensitive elements in video games

³ For more information, please see: <https://www.youtube.com/c/overwatchleague>

⁴ For more information, please see: <https://overwatchleague.com/en-us/>

broadly refer to audiovisual content that can easily cause discomfort, misunderstanding, upset, embarrassment, anger, and fear (Metallinou et al., 2012). Potential sources for such sensitivities include controversial cultural orientations, any extreme political inclinations, changeable censorship laws, copyright issues and any elements that may incite pornography, gambling, violence or instigate crime (Zhang Xiaochun, 2012; Jooyaeian & Khoshsaligheh, 2022). To decrease the negative impacts of such content through game localisation, strict censorship over imported video games has been established in China (Liao, 2016). Notably, since 15 April 2022, unapproved video games have been prohibited from being shown in online movies and TV series, variety shows, game streaming and short video platforms (Guojia guangbo dianshi zongju, 2022). The removal reflects a huge gap between game streaming localisation practices and the relevant laws in China. The following sections introduce typical examples of sensitive content in OWL Chinese streaming, analyse localisation issues and strategies, and explore the attitudes of potential stakeholders. They provide an overview of game streaming localisation and extend the conventional game localisation theories surrounding in-game content to new aspects such as fan localisation and online communication.

Case Group A: Ads

Game streaming is inseparable from digital promotion and business collaboration (Lakomy, 2019). OWL business partners are shown on its official webpage, with ads in pop-up windows that dynamically appear and disappear in game streaming. There are both English and Chinese ads in OWL Chinese streaming, with typical localised cases shown in Table 1. Following a July 2021 lawsuit in which Activision Blizzard was sued by California's Department of Fair Employment and Housing for harassment and discrimination against female employees, business giants such as Coca-Cola, Kellogg, State Farm and T-Mobile temporarily reassessed partnerships with OWL and proactively removed their ads from global OWL streaming. It should thus be noted that the following examples were recorded before the lawsuit.

Table 1: Examples of Ads in OWL Chinese Streaming

Source Text	Target Text	Back Translation	Name of the Company	Product
Your Team Your Chair	你的队伍，你的椅靠	Your Team, Your Chair, Your Companion	Zipchair Gaming	Gaming chairs
(The Logo of) HyperX	内存合作伙伴	The OWL Partner for Internal Storage	Hyperx	Game headsets, keyboards and more
Taste the Feeling	可口可乐，劲爽一刻	Coca-Cola, the Moment to Refresh	The Coca-Cola Company	Drinks
Subscribe to youtube.com/overwatchleague to get the latest and greatest OWL videos!	Non-localised	Non-localised	OWL (English)	The OWL English Streaming on YouTube

Transcreation is a translation technique that paints the original intent, style, tone, and context of source text (ST) in translated text (TT) (Pedersen, 2014). Transcreation in ads localisation keeps the essence of ST, explains the utility of the product, and appeals to the target consumers (Benetello, 2017). In Table 1, a slogan for Zipchair Gaming is localised as “your team, your chair, your companion” (*nide duiwu, nide yikao* 你的队伍, 你的椅靠). 椅 *yǐ* refers to “the chair”, similar in homophonic pronunciation to 依 *yī*, a component character within the word *yikao* 依靠, meaning companion, or to rely on. It creatively delivers a similar-tone

association between different pronunciations of *yi* in Chinese, linking ‘a gaming chair’ to ‘a good companion’. Furthermore, Hyperx are localised as “the OWL partner for internal storage” (*neicun hezuo huoban* 内存合作伙伴). *Neicun* (internal storage) implies the market positioning and product features, while *huoban* (partner) indicates the partnership between OWL and Hyperx, and the potential relation between the product and the users. Lastly, the slogan “taste the feeling” is localised as “the moment to refresh” (*jin shuang yi ke* 劲爽一刻), thereby avoiding a literal translation of “taste the feeling”, which might be rendered as *pinchang ziwei* 品尝滋味 (lit. “experience the flavour”). The localisation imitates the physical and mental enjoyment of sipping Coca-Cola.

Notably, the ads of the OWL English YouTube channel, broadcast by the OWL Chinese streaming team from the English source are non-localised due to the lack of a realistic market. Although YouTube has an exclusive streaming deal for Activision esports, China has enforced standing national bans against YouTube since 2009 (Zhang Xiaochun, 2013). On the one hand, China’s concerns over political and ideological influence from abroad may lead to the banning or rewriting of imported audiovisual products (Moskowitz, 2019). On the other hand, since no age-rating system for audiovisual products has yet been established in China to date, any potential illegal and immoral content may still be beyond the government’s supervision.

Case Group B: Game Slang

Game slang, known as gamer-speak, gamer idiolect or ludolect, are context-dependent neologisms derived from the game environment (Strong, 2019). Game slang can be a word, a sentence, a number, a symbol, or even gibberish, following certain syntactic patterns (Olejniczak, 2015), produced through processes that can including compounding, blending, affixation, giving old words new meaning, creation of acronyms, conversion, and clipping (Liu & Liu, 2014), or no rules at all. Slang terms are initially attached to a game environment, and gamers may have similar or distinct recognitions of the slang terms, influenced by their gaming experiences, educational backgrounds, and cultural acceptance (Laato et al., 2021; Laato & Rauti, 2021). Slang terms have been observed in streaming titles, subtitles, danmu, in virtual gift-giving, the players’ in-game chats or in shoutcasters’ live commentaries. Those spectators who watch game streaming in effect immerse themselves in an interactive learning environment (Dizon, 2022) and potentially can thus take game slang as the default lexical choice (Strong, 2019). Through use of netnographical methods such as participatory observation, taking screenshots and screencasting, I record widely-used OW game slang terms in OWL Chinese streaming (see Table 2), as classified by language pattern.

Table 2: Selected Game Slang Examples in OWL Chinese Game Streaming

Category	Example	Connotation
Arabic Numeral	1	1 is to express “a positive answer”, which indicates the eagerness to join a team, or agreement with someone’s idea.
Symbol	+ and =	If a gamer invites you to a team, your responses can be +, = or “sorry, next time”. + means “please invite me” as it is similar to the player-invite button in OW. = means “wait for me”, because the equals sign in Chinese is called the <i>dengyuhao</i> 等于号, and <i>deng</i> 等 can also mean “to wait”.

Emoticon	☺	A bear's smiling face. In addition to this, diversified emoticons are sent in danmu.
English	Cloud 9, or C9	Cloud 9 is an OW esports team, famous for its dramatic performance in an OW tournament. All Cloud 9 players devoted themselves to killing the enemy but forgot the game mission of protecting the payload and they lost the game. Cloud 9 is thus to describe situations in which OW gamers forget their mission and are defeated.
	Gency	Gency is a compound word of Genji (a male character) and Mercy (a female character), a couple who have great popularity in OW fandom.
Chinese	永远的神, 永远滴神, or YYDS (the pinyin initials for <i>yong yuan de shen</i> 永远的神 or <i>yong yuan di shen</i> 永远滴神)	These word variations all mean “forever god”, with <i>yongyuan de</i> 永远的 or <i>yongyuan di</i> 永远滴 as “forever” and <i>shen</i> 神 as “god”. They are employed to compliment a player's talented gameplay. Although <i>yongyuan de</i> 永远的 and <i>yongyuan di</i> 永远滴 have the same connotations, the latter is more playful, using a non-standard character and the colloquial pronunciation <i>di</i> .
	明星球	The back translation of <i>mingxing qiu</i> 明星球 is “superstar's ball”. This term is uncommon in non-OW contexts. To describe a nice shot in ball games, Chinese people may say <i>hao qiu</i> 好 (nice) 球 (shot). In this case, <i>hao</i> 好 is replaced with <i>mingxing</i> 明星 (superstar), and is used to congratulate a player for a super-star-style nice kill or a nice kill from super-star player in OWL.
Chinese phrases or Pinyin (initials) with the same or similar pronunciation of borrowed words	西巴, or Xi Ba	<i>Xi ba</i> 西巴 or Xi Ba is close to the pronunciation of the Korean swearword <i>ssi bal</i> □ □ (what the hell).
	润	The pinyin of the character 润 with is “run”. 润 is thus equivalent to “runaway” in gaming slang. By using <i>run</i> 润, the gamer may express either “step back” or “I am getting offline”.

As fanatical Chinese OW gamers or OWL fans are not satisfied by only taking part in Sinophone cross-media activities, they actively watch Anglophone streaming or news and surf Anglophone fandoms like Discord, Twitter, or Reddit. English slang terms are likely to be learned, used, or recreated, thereby spreading across Chinese media (Han & Reinhardt, 2022). Due to their own distinct gaming experiences and recognitions, connotations of slang terms are self-constructed by users (Laato & Rauti, 2021), echoing the definition of audiovisual sensitive elements. To introduce correct connotations of popular slang terms in OWL Chinese streaming,

a series of Chinese video clips titled “*Tuo nide fu*” 托你的福 (“Thank you for blessing me”) were released on social media platforms (Douyin, Weibo) and streamed in OWL Chinese streaming as promotional videos in the interval since OWL 2021. Although the Weibo versions (see Figure 2) were originally designed to be viewed on a smartphone, causing some digital inconsistency and inconvenience for PC users, the videos imply potential ways to spread OW slang from streaming to other social media. Notably, Chinese localisers seem to notice the significance of slang localisation between English and Chinese contexts, because the title *Tuo nide fu* imitates the format of *tuofu* 托福 (the Test of English as a Foreign Language). The slogan of the series is “*kan liansai xue danci*” 看联赛学单词, which could be translated as “learn English vocabulary by watching OWL”.



Figure 2 OWL *Tuo nide fu* 托你的福: mobile view and webpage view on Sina Weibo, screenshot taken by the author, 30.08.2020.

Figure 3 shows an episode of *Tuo nide fu*, wherein “dive”, an English-language slang term from OW is compared to a Chinese slang item, “*fang gou*” 放狗 (free the dog). “Dive” and “*fang gou*” co-exist in the Chinese OW context and OWL streaming. “Dive” is used to refer to instances when highly mobile characters jump into an opponent’s front line as a dog might do, echoing *fang gou* which could be translated as “release the dogs”. In the Chinese gaming context, apart from in assassin-like gamers, *gou* (dog) is used to describe a gamer who is carefully watching for enemies and being very circumspect about potentially putting themselves into a situation where they might be at a disadvantage. The term is popular in games such as *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* (2012) and *League of Legends* (2009). The over-circumspection that such players show in certain in-game actions such taking shelter, hitting someone through the hole in a door or taking treatment packs can infuriate their fellow gamers. Insulting expressions such as “*ni zhege ren zhen gou*” 你这个人真狗 (You are really such as dog) have thus emerged, targeting such players. This could be glossed as “you are a very

insidious person who interrupts my gameplay enjoyment, shame on you”. Therefore, a direct comparison between “dive” and “fang gou” may break the neutrality that the strategy described by the slang term “dive” has, and hence distort the connotations of both slang items. It further extends the lexical borrowing of concepts between different language contexts (e.g. Daulton, 2012) into the context of gaming.



Figure 3 Game Slang: “dive”. Screenshot from Sina Weibo (<https://weibo.com/6399645614/JDUV29H05>), taken by the author; 19.01.2021.

Figure 4, below, shows the special danmu triggering system, which activates to allow spectators to send an uneditable danmu to Team Paris Eternal 巴黎永生队, after they had become the champions of the Summer Showdown tournament in OWL 2020. Although danmu are usually flexibly editable, in this case, a window pops up showing the message to be sent, reading “Congratulations to Team Paris! Dong dong dong!” (*gongxi bali yongsheng!!! dong dong dong! 恭喜巴黎永生!!! 咚咚咚!*), which will close automatically after the danmu message is sent. “*Gongxi Bali yongsheng*” means “congratulations to Paris Eternal”, while “*dong dong dong*” is an onomatopoeic phrase used in Chinese to imitate the beat of a drum in the festival or a victory banquet. The mimetic use of “*dong dong dong*” indicates a Chinese-rooted creative strategy to increase the sense of belonging of Chinese spectators. Though this particular danmu was a compliment to a specific OWL team, which itself may attract same-interest groups and provide a differentiation in the identities of spectators (Strong, 2019), for spectators, playfully deactivating the ads provides a combination of notifying the audience of the winner of the tournament (the victory of Team Paris Eternal) and of the reward given for sending the danmu (100 OWL tokens), reinforcing the OWL brand and psychological satisfaction of fans (see Altmeyer et al., 2019).

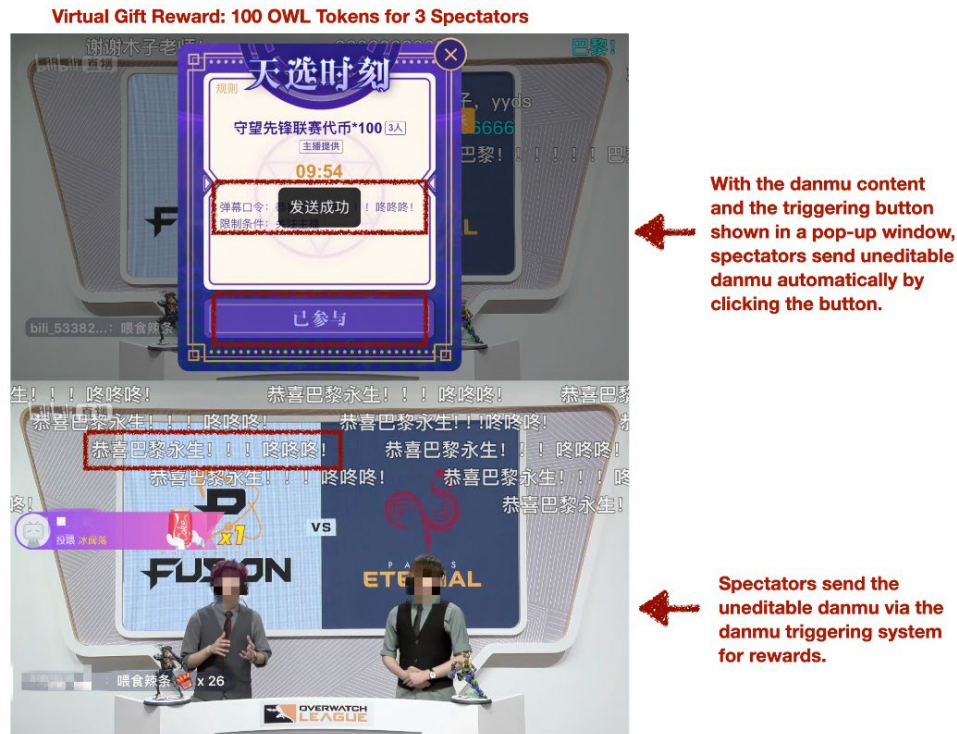


Figure 4: the danmu triggering system, screenshot taken by the author, 06.07.2020

Game slang is often adopted by OWL players and shoutcasters in streaming. For OWL players, due to time constraints and space limits, they tend to use game slang to talk to teammates through voice chat or to communicate with opponents in text chat. The public text messages are sometimes streamed by directors and the introduction of the live text communication may revive and enliven the streaming atmosphere. However, some Chinese OWL shoutcasters avoid translating English text communications. Figure 5 explains the reasons for non-localisation of chat messages in streaming. First, the text is too small to capture under the quick shot transition through the monitor for shoutcasters. Second, the lack of translation skills on the part of shoutcasters, their distracted attention and the pressure they are under to perform may influence the results of translation (Dwyer, 2017). Remarkably, the lack of localisation of the OWL players' text chat in streaming stimulates fans to participate in fan translation, an activity inspired by fans' affinity for creation of fan-made products to feed the audience (Vazquez-Calvo, 2022). Fans not only translate OWL in-game chat messages but also translate other audiovisual products that might be of interest to the fandom, such as social media posts (e.g. Tweet, Insta Story) and news reports. In Figure 6, the Tweets of Eternal players are localised into Chinese in the format of "Player: Content" on Eternal's Weibo fan page. Most game slang terms that originated in English are not localised in the Chinese context. OMG is an acronym for "oh my god"; "duo" describes a pair of fixed players who always play together; "GGs" means "good games"; "WTF" is an acronym for "what the fuck". They suggest lexical borrowing and English acronyms are frequently used in the Chinese context, and further indicates fans' participation in spreading slang terms.



Figure 5: Game slang in OW text chat in OWL Chinese streaming; screenshot taken by the author, 20.07.2020.

7-6 04:59 from 微博 ... Edited

【赛后】

Player 1 HOLY SHIT GGs 4: 3

Player 2 ggs 就是副T之神
Player's Name

Player 3 ggs 为我的队伍感到骄傲，大家都太棒
#元之永生 FiatLux Weibo Trending

Player 4 开心死了，同时也累得要死，我得猛睡一觉，可能会做个美梦 ggs

Player 5 ggs 健康状况不太好，比赛过程中有些难受，但我的队友们做的太好了，我永远爱我的队伍，NICE DUO
Two Players' Names

Player 6 ggs 最后一张图的时候已经很难全神贯注了...打的不够好，我会更加努力地，感谢大家 我们是冠军

Player 7 艰难的比赛，但我们做到了!!!! 太为我的队伍骄傲了

7-6 00:50 from 养鸡场的... Edited

【赛后】

Player 1 浑身发抖 wtf omg ggs

Player 2 jsjxbxyskxu 我爱我队

Player 3 ***冲冲冲 ggs 和 s 太强
Player's Name

Player 4 HUUUUUUUUGE, 再来一把!

Player 5 ggs 我爱我队, str 就是猎空滴神

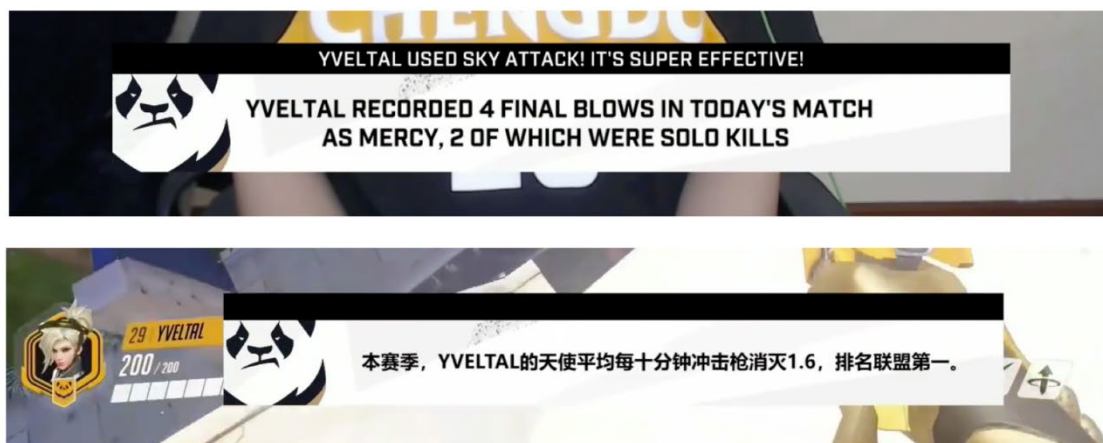
Player 5 GGs CARRY
Player's Name

Figure 6: Fan translation into Chinese of Tweets sent by Team Paris Eternal players; screenshots from Sina Weibo (left <https://weibo.com/6562805286/J9TRQaT8M>; right <https://weibo.com/6562805286/J9VuR3V4U>), taken by the author, 06.07.2020.

Case Group C: OWL Notes

“OWL notes” refers to the pop-up windows showing OWL statistics in OWL Chinese streaming. The main source for the statistics is OWL Stats Lab the Blizzard official online database.⁵ Evidence from streaming suggests that Chinese shoutcasters have real-time access to English-language OWL notes in streaming through their monitors, no earlier than online spectators.

Both English and Chinese notes appeared in OWL 2021 Chinese streaming. Limited by the real-time broadcasting of the English streaming source, the English version is normally replaced with the Chinese translation in a few seconds, but mistranslation and omission remain prominent issues. In Figure 7, the note above was replaced by the bottom one after approximately 2 seconds. Although both notes are to commend the Chinese Mercy (a support hero) player, Li “Yveltal” Xianyao 李先曜 for his commendable performance, the content of the Chinese note does not match the English one. Notably, the title of the English note indicates a famously quotable meme among game communities such as *Pokémon GO* (2016), and it is also a *Pokémon* game line, taking the form “A used B ability! It is super effective!”. Although no clear clue has been shown linking the source of Li Xianyao’s BattleTag (a player-chosen nickname for Blizzard games) to the *Pokémon* mascot “Yveltal”, the English note reflects that people who recognise “Yveltal” as the name of Li and the name of a *Pokémon* mascot may comprehend the in-joke provided by the game line. It also indicates a transmission of the humorous messages within game communities. Similarly, in Chinese online communities, the slang term “geng” 梗 is used to describe widely-accepted jokes that represent a particular phenomenon or theme, and “wan geng” 玩梗 (“play geng”) refers to the spread of such jokes through imitation, association, and quotation. Unfortunately, because of the lack of awareness of this joke and skills, the Chinese localisation team has not clearly distinguished and localised the joke made in the original note about Yveltal. The failure to localise the humour here indicates the potential difficulties in instant localisation of English-language OWL notes.



In OWL 2021, Yveltal has used Caduceus Blaster (an automatic weapon designed for the character Mercy) to kill 1.6 enemies per 10 minutes on average, ranking as the top 1 among all OWL Mercy players.

Figure 7: Chinese and English OWL Notes referencing Yveltal. showing the mismatch between English original and Chinese translation. Screenshot taken by the author, 21.08.2021.

⁵ For more information, please see <https://overwatchleague.com/en-us/statslab>

The difficulties of localising English notes in turn create a space for innovative Chinese notes in OWL Chinese streaming. Figure 8 shows two Chinese notes in the battle between Team Hangzhou Spark and Team Shanghai Dragons in OWL 2021. *Tu cao* 吐槽, a fansubbing and subtitling strategy used to embed translators' humorous comments in subtitles or as translators' notes (Zhang, 2013) is adopted. Since Dragons, the champion of OWL Grand Finals 2021, normally perform better than Spark in the seasonal team rankings, the Chinese note in Figure 8 below reads "The first time since 2019 that... Spark has taken points off the Dragons ..." (*Zhe shi Hangzhou shandian dui zi 2019 saiji...diyici zai Shanghai long zhi dui shou zhong nafen* 这是杭州闪电队自 2019 赛季...第一次在上海龙之队手中拿分), with the title as "We never expected that you would be seeing this note, so we hadn't prepared a title" (*Xiangbudao nimen neng kandao zhe yi tiao, suoyi women meiqi biaoti* 想不到你们能看到这一条, 所以我们没起标题). The bottom line states "There is not much time left for the Dragons" (*Liugei Shanghai long de shijian yijing buduo le* 留给上海龙的时间已经不多) and emphasizes again the unexpected scores.



Figure 8: Chinese OWL Notes in tu cao style, screenshot taken by the author, 23.04.2021.

Case Group D: Game Streaming Programmes

To better attract spectators in the OWL match interval, many different streaming programmes are offered as part of OWL Chinese streaming (see Table 3). Those with 'localised' tags have been localised from English OWL streaming with pre-edited Chinese subtitles and (optional) voiceovers, while the 'innovative' tag is applied to programmes that have been created by the Chinese OWL team.

Table 3 OWL Chinese Streaming Programmes

Programme (Chinese)	Back Translation	Pre-recorded or Live	Localised or Innovative	Description
赛场时光机	OWL Time Machine	Pre-recorded	Innovative	To introduce famous gameplay in OWL history

				and replay game highlights. Programmes follow certain themes, such as teamwork, unexpected kills, or talented players.
联赛监测站	OWL Watch Point	Live	Innovative	To commentate on famous rounds, give professional analysis and introduce the upcoming rounds.
联赛靶场	OWL Shooting Range	Live	Innovative	This programme is a live commentary on game strategy hosted by shoutcasters and analysts. They commentate based on screenshots or un-edited playback of OWL gameplay, broadcast immediately after the round finishes.
战术小抄	OWL Strategy Notes	Pre-recorded	Innovative	This programme is pre-recorded and provides analysis of game strategies, with a voice-over and advanced video editing techniques.
高光时刻	OWL Highlights	Pre-recorded	Localised	To introduce game highlights on a weekly or seasonal basis.
本周最佳	OWL Best of the Week	Pre-recorded	Localised	To introduce game highlights on a weekly basis.
赛场休息时间	OWL Time for Break	Live or pre-recorded	Innovative	To show the live performance of shoutcasters or pre-recorded promotional videos in the interval.
队内语音	OWL Team Voice Chat	Pre-recorded	Localised	To show pre-edited interesting voice chats between OWL players.

Almost all OWL gameplay and OWL Chinese programmes, localised or innovative, are uploaded onto the Bilibili OWL programme channel,⁶ an independent content-sharing platform that is separate from the Bilibili OWL Chinese streaming room⁷ and the Bilibili OWL match-sharing channel.⁸ However, most innovative Chinese programmes are not uploaded onto OWL English platforms like YouTube. Potential reasons include English spectators' distinct language preferences, cultural backgrounds, unfamiliarity with the OWL Chinese community compared with the Chinese spectators, and most importantly, ideological factors and censorship laws (Moskowitz, 2019). On the other hand, there are many localisation loopholes in the Chinese programmes, which may cause miscomprehension for non-Chinese spectators. For instance, the OWL Chinese team has not designed an English logo for *Liandai jiancezhan* 联赛监测站 (OWL Watch Point), but they provide an English logo for *Saichang shiguangji* 赛场时光机

⁶ For more information, please see https://space.bilibili.com/365902357?spm_id_from=333.337.0.0

⁷ For more information, please see https://live.bilibili.com/76?broadcast_type=0&is_room_feed=1&spm_id_from=333.999.0.0

⁸ For more information, please see <https://space.bilibili.com/50333369>

(OWL Time Machine) which reads “OWL Machine Time” (see Figure 9), breaking the more conventional top-to-bottom reading order. Meanwhile, the content of *Saichang xiuxi shijian* 赛场休息时间 (OWL Time for Break) is random, including pre-recorded programmes and live-streamer content. The director once streamed the Chinese female shoutcaster Li “Xiaoshuang” Yongshuang 李咏霜 in this programme while she dozed off at break time. Fan-made screenshots and videos of Xiaoshuang’s sleepiness (see Figure 10) resulted in heated discussions concerning her, including glowing compliments, toxic comments, and spoof videos.



Figure 9: OWL Machine Time, otherwise known as OWL Time Machine, screenshot taken by the author; 06.09.2021.

Title: When Xiaoshuang is Sleeping in OWL Chinese Streaming, YYDS (Recorded Streaming with Danmu)

Like: 1897 Coin(virtual gift): 153 Save: 810 Repost: 207

The large pieces of danmu are danmu sent by viewers who watch the recorded streaming clip.


The small pieces of danmu are recorded by the fan in watching OWL Chinese streaming.

The large pieces of danmu are danmu sent by viewers who watch the recorded streaming clip.

The small pieces of danmu are recorded by the fan in watching OWL Chinese streaming.

Figure 10: Fan-uploaded recorded streaming clip of Xiaoshuang on Bilibili. screenshot taken by the author on 13.04.2022.

The lack of messages from Chinese communities in non-Chinese OWL streaming thus motivates fans to utilise forms of online communication to offer a window by which parallel, non-Western cultures can reach out to new audiences (Cruz et al., 2021). For instance, a Reddit post (see Figure 11) introduces the proposal made by Chinese shoutcaster Liu “Roy” Yuanyi 刘远仪 to his fiancée, “Xiaoxiao” 萧萧 in Hangzhou Spark Homestand, a series of games played at the home field of Team Hangzhou Spark. The fan’s online introduction plays an important role in conveying messages that are omitted from game streaming and offers a comparatively neutral and accurate introduction to those involved. This said, it has been noted in other scholarship that fan activities can sometimes convey the biases of subsections of the fandom and mistranslations are also possible (Vazquez-Calvo, 2022; Zhang Xiaochun, 2013).



The screenshot shows a Reddit post from the user 'The Poster'. The post title is 'Chinese caster Roy proposed at Hangzhou homestand and she said yes' with 3.7k upvotes. The video shows a man in a white shirt kneeling on a stage, proposing to a woman in a blue and pink outfit. The video has 89 comments, 96% upvoted, and options to share, save, hide, and report.

The Poster
 11 mo. ago · edited 11 mo. ago

She's a content creator/cosplayer cosplaying her signature tracer for Hangzhou; Roy was a pro player from overwatch beta days who retired to become a caster; Another caster, Muzi, who's Roy's coach from the old days, burst into tears on the desk. Chat was spamming 999999 on the screen which has the same pronunciation as "forever" in Chinese.

926 upvotes · 11 mo. ago

The Poster
 11 mo. ago

Some more caster lore: Roy was the best genji in China in 2016 and was voted to be team captain to lead the World Cup team, but his visa was never approved. He kept his jersey and finally went to blizzcon as a caster three years later. He said it was a real dream come true.

292 upvotes · 11 mo. ago

Stan Fieta · 11 mo. ago

Fuck that's sweet

278 upvotes · 11 mo. ago

Continue this thread →

[View Entire Discussion \(89 Comments\)](#)

Figure 11: Fan's Reddit post on the proposal made by Liu Yuanyi to his fiancée, Xiaoxiao, screenshot from Reddit, taken by the author, 21.04.2022.

Findings and Discussion

As OWL localisation data is not fully open to the public, most instances are collected through participatory observation using netnographical methods to examine the forms, content, localisation strategies and issues surrounding sensitive audiovisual elements in OWL Chinese streaming. I have no concrete data from which to argue whether these localisation strategies are born from localisers' reactions in the moment, or if they are the results of mature consideration. However, many of the instances examined here echo localisation theories such as transcreation (e.g. Benetello, 2017), omission (e.g. Zhang Xiaochun, 2012) and cross-media strategies (e.g. Mangiron, 2018). Meanwhile, two layers of sensitive audiovisual elements of game streaming can be determined, namely sensitive in-game content and a further layer of sensitivity derived from video games' integration into streaming media. The first category includes erotic images, non-localised in-game speeches, or ideological differences (Zhang Xiaochun, 2012). This first category of sensitivity rarely occurs in OWL Chinese streaming due to the strict censorship and the adoption of considerate strategies for video games' publication and localisation in China (Liao, 2016). Although the English OW interface used in streaming is an exception to the general care taken over localisation in OWL Chinese streaming, the details of play are normally introduced by Chinese shoutcasters. In contrast, the second-type of sensitivity is reflected in a diverse range of examples, including ads, game slang, streaming notes, and streaming programmes, leading to unique streaming localisation strategies and issues as follows.

First, game streaming localisation cannot be considered a simple combination of video game localisation and game streaming. What officials do regarding OWL Chinese streaming is not exclusive to localising imported audiovisual elements but is instead related to producing streaming content infused with creativity and innovation. For imported content, they adopt strategies like literal translation, transcreation, and omission. Due to cultural differences, personal interpretation and the quality of localisation quality, spectators may self-interpret localised content. In terms of innovation, Chinese localisers not only create unique Chinese programmes to deliver local news but also creatively connect popular OW slang and special localisation techniques such as *tu cao* to streaming interactions (e.g. danmu, the gift sending system) to help create a common identity for Chinese spectators. However, such early-stage innovation, pursued with a lack of experience and foresight, can cause issues. For instance, in an episode of the innovative streaming programme OWL Time for Break, a fan-created comic painting depicting sexual intercourse between animals held up by a spectator in the streaming studio was live-streamed to spectators of all ages. This painting led to a dispute between fans of Team Chengdu Hunters, who have a panda logo, and Team Seoul Dynasty, whose logo is a tiger. The incident further exposed the absence of code of conduct for the audience and streaming workers, echoing the conclusions of Szablewicz (2016): although China plays an important role in technological production and digital game culture, the necessary regulations or laws to regulate the streaming industry are not fully established. Specially, for this instance, it highlights the lack of an age rating system for this kind of content and the absence of censorship laws specifically related to streaming content. My findings should spur localisers to study broadly in pursuit of cross-cultural insight and advanced localisation skills, and to work towards creating industry norms to guide the establishment of a complete and professional streaming system.

Second, this paper argues that fans contribute to game streaming localisation in diverse ways. OWL spectators have various personas (Cheung & Huang, 2011). Those with particularly strong interest can be considered fans, and such individuals will voluntarily post danmu, take part in streaming lotteries, and conduct cross-media localisation practices like fanrepost, fantranscript and fansubbing. Fans offer insights that work to remedy information omitted from game streaming and create fan-based audiovisual products. Their motives vary from a simple desire to share game news to an enthusiastic appreciation of certain teams or players. Fan localisation practices co-create a collaborative streaming localisation alongside the officials managing the formal game tournament environment, as in the live-streamed proposal. This reflects the importance of fan participation in the game community and further casts light on the inadequate resources provided for official localisation efforts. Meanwhile, because fan localisation is usually uncensored and unproofread, their works may contain mistranslations, omissions, non-translations, and self-interpretations. However, these same features also disclose unique features in the form of localisation or its content. My findings suggest that, as an indispensable part of game streaming localisation, fan localisers and their works should be taken seriously to optimise the impacts of localisation.

Lastly, the unique features of game language, namely game slang, reflected in gamer communications or shoutcaster commentaries, is observed throughout almost the entire process of game streaming localisation. Some slang terms may have previously existed in the video game environment as a kind of default language, but they can evolve to become part of the identities of specific players in streaming. Others may be created in streaming as in the case of Cloud 9, a term now used to describe an unexpected loss. Mixed sources and forms of slang terms are presented in OWL Chinese streaming in titles, descriptions, and commentaries, which are then imitated by spectators in what can be considered an online immersive learning environment through danmu, reposts, and comments. On the one hand, the imported slang reflects a translingual slang environment in streaming, and the Chinese-rooted slang indicates unique cultural identities and perceptions. On the other hand, the spread of slang terms via streaming platforms or social media through official programmes or fan posts implies a new state for game slang, in which it transcends the limits of specific video games (Strong, 2019). My findings emphasise the significance of game slang in the online game community and game streaming localisation, especially when internet communication is one of the dominant forms of communication within Chinese society and between Chinese citizens and the international community (Hu & Chen, 2022).

Overall, through the analysis of streaming localisation as in the case of OWL, I underscore the interdisciplinary nature of game localisation studies, touching on linguistics, lexicology, translation studies, communication studies and advertising. The results and findings shed light on game streaming localisation, a nascent research area with great commercial prospects and academic significance.

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Ludography

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