PROPOSAL:
IMPROVEMENTS TO RAKUTEN VIKI'S CROWDSOURCING

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About Rakuten Viki

Rakuten Viki is a video streaming service popular for its East Asian entertainment content. Founded in 2007, it has grown into a platform streaming thousands of titles from Korea, Japan, China, and more, reaching 40 million fans in over 190 countries. Boasting that it "remov[es] the barrier that has stood between great entertainment and its fans," Viki has a unique system of crowdsourcing its subtitling, asserting that its original goal was to "make language learning more fun by crowdsourcing translations for the subtitles of TV shows, movies and videos."

Translation Crowdsourcing on Viki

Before Viki, many fans were already engaging in volunteer subtitling of Asian content, but because shows were usually obtained without a proper license, this fell into a legal gray area. By streaming content on an official platform and offering fans a user-friendly way to do their volunteer subtitling, Viki has given fans a way to openly engage with their passions for Asian entertainment without worry of legal liability, which has fostered an organized crowdsourcing community that has subtitled millions of lines for thousands of shows. Some of the ways that Viki ensures quality in its crowdsourcing are:

- Interactive tutorials – all users can easily learn how to use Viki's subtitling tool by viewing video guides and practicing in a "sandbox."
- Light vetting of volunteers – users must "apply" (submit a brief form) to the show they wish to contribute to, and this form is reviewed by the show's moderator team.

Some of the ways that Viki maintains quantity in its translation crowdsourcing are:

- Community building through forums – volunteers are able to interact with each other on a forum, allowing for discussion about contributing, language learning, and the shows themselves, which builds community motivation to contribute.
- Gamification – Viki has a very elaborate rewards system that includes leaderboards for top contributors, tiered badges based on number of contributions, exclusive content, etc.

From my own analysis of the site, I propose several ways to improve on Viki's crowdsourcing system, which I have detailed below.

Suggestions for Improving Quality

Crowdsourcing Title Translations

While subtitling of content is all done by volunteers, show titles for all languages appear to be set by Viki staff and cannot be translated by the community. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, users have expressed instances where the title translations contained errors that were not

quickly fixed.[1] Incorporation of a community voting system could mitigate future occurrences of this issue, and this would also have the added benefit of increasing motivation by giving volunteers an extra chance to make a meaningful contribution to something as important as the title of a popular show in their language. It is recommended that the voting system be weighted, with votes from more established community members having more weight.

Community Involvement in Appointing Moderators

Each show's subtitling team contains a channel manager and at least one moderator for each language. Channel managers are picked by Viki staff rather than the community, which the community is understanding of due to the importance of the role, but all language moderators are picked at the sole discretion of this single channel manager. The community has expressed that this often leads to some channel managers giving moderator status to whoever asks first,[2] and there are users that express frustration with so-called "moderator hoarding,"[3] in which volunteers simply try to become moderators on as many projects as possible, leading to some projects being neglected and thus untranslated in that language. A couple of recommendations for this are:

- An evaluation system where negative feedback from trusted users will penalize moderators who hoard projects by limiting the number of projects they can work on.
- Appointing of some moderators through community voting. For example, many shows have multiple moderators per language; one can still be chosen by the channel manager, but others can be elected by the community through a weighted vote, boosting the chances of moderators being volunteers who have demonstrated reliability in the past.

Suggestion for Improving Motivation: Language Learning

I recommend that Viki expand its crowdsourcing into the realm of language learning to further realize its mission of making language learning fun. Seeing vocabulary and grammar patterns used in context on shows is a great way to learn a foreign language, and I propose that crowdsourcing can be used for the "tagging" of segments in shows where specific grammar patterns are used, thus building up a large number of contextual examples that users can refer to in their learning journeys. In addition to the language learning component serving as a new type of motivation for its existing volunteer community, this could potentially bring in an enormous number of new Viki users hoping to learn another language, especially given how prevalent Korean content is on Viki and the recent Korean culture boom in the West. Please refer to the attached appendix, where I have written about how such a system would work in great detail.

Conclusion

Community engagement lies at the core of all these recommendations. By further involving community in certain steps, aspects such as moderator reliability and translations of titles can see improvements in quality, and combining language learning with volunteers' shared passion for foreign entertainment has limitless potential in not only increasing volunteer motivation, but also increasing Viki's global brand with a wider language learning audience.

References

[1] "Collection of Volunteer Wishes/Demands/Suggestions/Complaints." https://discussions.viki.com/t/collection-of-volunteer-wishes-demands-suggestions-complaints-topics-you-made-at-viki-that-are-still-open-but-you-deem-vital-for-the-community/25306/7. Accessed 21 Jan. 2022.

[2] "Choosing Moderators." https://discussions.viki.com/t/choosing-moderators/38349/12. Accessed 21 Jan. 2022.

[3] "Moderators Who Hoard Channels." https://discussions.viki.com/t/moderators-who-hoard-channels/24418. Accessed 21 Jan. 2022.