The Circulation Network of East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia: Television and Pirated DVDs as Intermediaries

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Abstract

East Asian television dramas from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea have become a significant part of the cultural globalization process in the Indonesian mediascapes since the 1990s. The Indonesian cultural, political and social specificities have created significant distinctions on how these television dramas reconstruct the shared imagination of (East) Asia in comparison with how it is in other locales. The research findings have extended the discussion of geocultural/linguistic regions, which argues that the success of a television drama in one region, for example telenovelas in Latin America, is affected by a similar cultural and linguistic background. It echoes that the Asian case should be analyzed in a distinctive framework compared to other regional case studies, specifically in the circulation and distribution process. The research concerns a multi-layered analysis that draws on the methodological resources of textual analysis and institutional research, which contextualized these television dramas culturally, historically and geographically. The aim is to understand how the two primary media technologies in the in-between space of production and consumption, namely television and pirated DVDs, work as intermediaries and also as gatekeepers since they precondition commonalities between these television dramas with local expectations.

Kata kunci/Keywords:

Drama televisi, globalisasi budaya, media teknologi, intermediary/gatekeeper, DVD bajakan

Television dramas, cultural globalization, media technologies, intermediary/gatekeeper, pirated DVDs

Introduction

Previous research on intra-regional television products countries mainly focused on areas with historical, cultural and even linguistic backgrounds shared with the countries of productions. These studies, such as the analysis of Japanese dramas reception and circulation in Hong Kong (Leung 2002), Japanese dramas in Taiwan (Iwabuchi, 2001), Korean dramas in Hong Kong and Singapore (Lin and Tong 2008; Kim 2007) or telenovelas in Latin America (Straubhaar, 1991),
have concluded that a strong regional flavor and a desire of cultural proximity are the driving forces of these television dramas. However, with the developing complexity of the cultural traffic, especially in Asia, the analysis of television dramas “...should be oriented towards the structure and modalities through which the products partake into the political, social, cultural and economic material relations within the different locations where the products are produced, circulated and consumed” (Chua, 2012, p.12).

This case study focuses on how East Asian television dramas circulate in Indonesia and the process that occurs in the in-between space of production and consumption. The context to be analyzed has moved beyond the proximate East Asian markets of China, Taiwan and Singapore because the focus of the discussion will be a Southeast Asian market, located in a different sub-region of Asia. Two media technologies1, namely television and pirated DVDs, are taken into account as intermediaries, which sometimes also work as gatekeepers, because they precondition commonalities between these television dramas with local expectations. He arguments proposed in this article refute previous hypotheses of regional affinities as a driving force in the flow of television products within a region.

Intra-Asia Cultural Traffic

All kinds of cross-border connections are rapidly increasing in Asia. The dynamic flows of popular culture happen across national, geographical and geopolitical boundaries within a specific contextual environment.

...since the 1980s popular culture products have criss-crossed the national borders of the East Asian countries and constituted part of the culture of consumption that defines a very large part of the everyday life of the population throughout the region. This empirically highly visible cultural traffic allows for the discursive construction of an ‘East Asian Popular Culture’ as an object of analysis. (Chua, 2004, p. 202)

1The main focus of this article is the circulation process of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia by investigating the institutional practices of a broadcast television station and pirated DVD sellers and also by analyzing texts produced within those institutional practices. As an example, dubbing and subtitling are seen not only as cultural practices, for example the low-budget subtitling practices by pirated DVD producers could be analyzed not only from its institutional practices but also from a textual analysis of the (broken) English or Malay subtitles. Due to the research limitation, the article will not cover the audience or any viewership aspects. The writer of the article has explored this aspect in another article: Imaginary ‘Asia’ Indonesian Audience’s Reflexivity on K-Dramas. In Ainslie, M. J. and Joanne B.Y.L. (Eds). (2015). The Korean Wave in Southeast Asia, Malaysia: SIRD.

The flow of East Asian transnational popular culture products has affected the complex imagination of East Asia as a part of cultural globalization in Asia. Research working on this area has concluded that, in the end, cultural globalization cannot be understood within the existing media imperialism model of cultural globalization. Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) argues that the regional connection in Asia through the transnational flow of cultural products should no longer be analyzed from the West-Rest perspective.

Additionally, it is important to define what East Asia means, especially as it relates to this research specifically. What is the implication of using the term East Asia as a contrast to the location of the research, which is in a Southeast Asian country? As argued by Ainslie and Lim (2015), “While this area is still defined as ‘Asia’ and is part of the Asian continent, Southeast Asia is a wholly separate part of Asia from those countries considered to be a part of East Asia” (p. 3). Because these television dramas come from East Asian countries, analysis on how these products are circulated in Southeast Asia need to focus on the comparable characteristics of the countries of production and the country of consumption. These comparable characteristics, such as the cultural, political and social aspects and the “ordinariness” of the audience, are the main reasons why this research is expected to deal with new issues, which have not yet been explored by other research in this area of media studies.

The emergence of a regional East Asian popular culture connection, as argued by Chua Beng Huat (2012), was primarily affected by the liberation of media industries in several parts of Asia, which had opened up the market for these television dramas. By the late 1980s, the authoritarian regimes in the region, including China, began to liberalize the media industries even though the government continues to regulate the transnational flow even up until now. As a consequence, there was a speedy development of television stations. There was a massive amount of airtime that needed to be filled quickly and inexpensively. Imported serial dramas were considered the best options in filling extra airtime, and in early 1990s Japanese television dramas were the most accessible ones as they were produced abundantly. Consequently, television stations, such as STAR TV and Channel U in Hong Kong and Singapore, started to fill their airtime with Japanese dramas.

In early 2000, there was a significant shift from Japanese dramas to Taiwanese and Korean dramas. When Korean dramas first circulated in Asia, audience chose these dramas because they essentially had the same formulae with the previous Japanese dramas. The successful penetration of Korean dramas into the regional market was due to appropriate timing. The post-1997 Asian Financial Crisis had trampled the Korean nation-
al economy, forcing the government to step up the exporting of Korean popular culture as part of the national export industry. The result for this expansion of export resulted in: “...The confluence of these two separate industry strategies led to the rapid importation and screening of Korean TV Dramas in the rest of East Asia, except Japan, creating the so-called ‘Korean Wave’ in the region” (Chua and Iwabuchi, 2008, p. 4). At the same time, the crisis had steered television industries in other countries to look for relatively cheaper programs compared to the expensive Japanese dramas. By early 2000, Korean dramas started to replace Japanese dramas in most parts of East Asia, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China, and also in Singapore.

In order to contextualize the nature of East Asian television dramas, it is necessary to look at the development of the dramas in relation to one another affecting their textual formulation. Japanese television dramas, or what Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) characterizes as “trendy dramas,” generally centre on romantic stories between young professionals in an urban setting. This thematic element would then be formulated in Taiwanese and Korean television dramas. Referring back to an earlier discussion, Korean dramas were shaped in conversation with the development of Japanese dramas. As mentioned earlier, in early 2000, Korean dramas were replacing dramas from Japan as a cheaper option for television stations in Asia. Chua Beng Huat (2012) has explained that Korean producers came up with relatively the same formulae with Japanese dramas. A significant difference is that the characters in Korean dramas usually come from a younger generation. They remain entangled in familial relations while inserting an additional layer of drama, a combination of romantic and family themes. In the matter of thematic content, these television dramas share a comparable story line, mainly focusing on romantic involvements, familial relations, and more importantly, an urban context.

For this article, it is significant to bring forward these comparable elements even though to claim East Asian television dramas as a genre would require more intensive research. The fabricated thematic and visual elements echo how the dramas

2 There is also a categorization of “post-trendy drama” referring to dramas after 1990s because those before 1990s are already regarded as “trendy dramas” (Schilling (1997)). However, as argued by Iwabuchi (2002b), the “post-trendy dramas” could also still be categorized as “trendy dramas” because the notion of “trendy” refers to the visualization of urban consumptive lifestyle depicted strongly in these dramas. For this research, the notion “trendy dramas” is used in this sense without referring to Japanese dramas from before 1990s.

3...the economic downturn in Asia in the late 1990s made the cheaper Korean programming a popular alternative in these media markets. Korean television dramas were a quarter of the price of Japanese ones…” (Shim, 2008, p. 25)

from Japan, Taiwan and Korea have formulated the textuality, which is heavily influenced by their transnational disposition. As an illustration, the early development of Korean and Taiwanese television dramas came as a response to a regional market need. For that reason, there are a number of similarities in the thematic content and visual aspects as these dramas are produced based on dramas, which were circulated earlier. The circulation network has indeed shaped these comparable textual elements.

Besides its textuality, the popularity of these television dramas in the Asian region is also affected by strategies done by producers and distributors in order to extend the life span of these dramas. One way is by circulating them to locations outside the production countries and by creating “media spectacles.” Tania Lim (2008) identifies that most East Asian producers and distributors would create media spectacles in order to extend the life span and to increase the profile of their television products. She argues that:

Such spectacles include lavish concerts and road-shows in the largest cities around the world, advertising for global brands as a signifier of their success as a pop icon, and generating lots of news and more likely rumors of love triangles, rivalry and other kinds of stories that stir the public’s imagination, feelings and opinions about the stars behind the shows. (Lim, 2008, p. 47)

One example is Meteor Garden. After the rapid popularity of MG in many parts of Asia, and also some other parts of the world, there was “an F4-merchandising and advertising empire” appearing quite provisionally through concert tours, albums, music videos and celebrity appearances in mega events which lead to a huge fan following in 2001 to 2003. These Asia-based networks of production and distribution reflect the regional dynamics of cities, which are connected geo-linguistically in order to create a prospective market. For example, in Singapore, if there are new and popular television dramas or other television shows like reality shows and game shows, there will be a ready supply of program-associated merchandise to be distributed to all over the region. One particular popular culture product is complemented with other lifestyle products.

**East Asian Television Dramas in Indonesia**

The most prominent local Indonesian television station broadcasting East Asian television dramas is Indosiar. It was established during the period of changes, in late 1990s, when the broadcasting system opened up possibilities for more private commercial television stations to be established. Since the beginning, this television station has

“Douglas Kellner, in his work *Media Spectacle*, defines media spectacles as defining moments in a collective or society’s life. They are “...a phenomena that itself has been subjected to the logic of spectacle and tabloidization in the era of the media sensationalism, political scandal and contestation...” (Kellner, 2003, p. 2)
positioned itself to be the most prominent television station in broadcasting East Asian television dramas. When *Indosiar* was first established on 11 January 1995, it broadcast a number of Asian television programs ranging from *kung fu* series from Hong Kong like *The Return of the Condor Heroes* and *Bollywood* films from India. Subsequently, after establishing its position, receiving high ratings and attracting a large number of advertisers, it continued broadcasting Asian television products as its main focus.

The first development of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia started in 1998 when *Indosiar* first broadcast a Japanese television drama, *Tokyo Love Story*. It received high ratings and opened a new genre of East Asian television products on this television station, *Drama Asia* or Asian Dramas. Afterward, it began broadcasting more Japanese television dramas, such as *Long Vacation*, *101 Proposal* and *Ordinary People*. As a matter of fact, *Tokyo Love Story* was not the first Japanese television drama ever broadcasted in Indonesia. In 1983, *TVRI*, as the only television station in Indonesia at that time, broadcasted *Oshin*. Besides in Indonesia, *Oshin* was popular in 59 other countries, especially in other developing countries in Asia. This shows how East Asian television dramas have had a long-standing historical presence in Indonesia.

The next development of East Asian popular culture products was signified by the booming popularity of *Meteor Garden* from Taiwan in 2001. After a few years airing Japanese television dramas along with other kinds of East Asian television products, the broadcasting of *Meteor Garden* marked the high popularity of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia. At that time, “The rating for MG reached 5.1 with a 29.9 share and this was considered as a very high rating. This has also influenced other television station’s policy in importing East Asian television series” (Merdkianingtyas, 2001, p. 3). *Meteor Garden*, considered the highlight of East Asian television products in Indonesia, opened up a new discourse on Asianness. Another example of how popular culture has constructed Indonesians’ imagination of the country of production is reflected in the popularity of *F4*, which could be considered as a momentarily popular culture phenomenon in Indonesia at the time. Many fans decorated their belongings, including bags and t-shirts, with the faces of the boy band members, downloaded the series’ theme song as their mobile ring tone and even learned how to sing the song by heart, despite not understanding the meaning of the lyrics. At that time, one could find *F4* knick-knacks in shopping centers scattered all over Jakarta and also other cities in Indonesia. In January 2003, the *F4*’s concert was one of the biggest concerts ever held in Jakarta. The atmosphere was chaotic, as Setijjadi (2006) described: “Outside, thousands of eager fans who could not get hold of tickets stood on trees, on top of buses, climbed on gates and even risked their own safety by climbing on construction cranes just to catch a glimpse of their idols” (Setijjadi, 2006, p. 197). These fans crowded the concert venue to watch the Taiwanese boy band, famous from the television drama *Meteor Garden*.

Following the popularity of Taiwanese television dramas, especially *Meteor Garden*, there was a significant shift to Korean television dramas, opening up the flow of Korean popular culture products in Indonesia. In 2001, *Endless Love* (also known as *Autumn in My Heart*) was broadcast from Monday to Thursday, at 6 pm, considered prime time in Indonesia. The attractiveness of *Endless Love* opened up a barometer for a new wave of television dramas from Korea, continuing its predecessors from Japan and Taiwan. The emphasis on Japanese dramas in the 1990s, Taiwanese (especially MG) in 2001-2002 and also the era of Korean dramas from 2002 until now are important to give a contextual time frame on how they have become a part of the Indonesian audience’s everyday lives since the 1990s until now without disregarding other television dramas from other countries.

All in all, the emphasis on Japanese dramas in the 1990s, Taiwanese (especially MG) in 2001-2002 and also the era of Korean dramas from 2002 until now are important to give a contextual time frame on how they have become a part of the Indonesian audience’s everyday lives since the 1990s until now without disregarding other television dramas from other East Asian countries.

### Television and Pirated DVDs as Intermediaries

In analyzing these television dramas coming from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, the circulation practices need to be interrogated as an in-between space. Within this in-between space, the product is distributed from the country of production to country of consumption and there are several actors who are involved, namely the broadcast television stations and pirated DVD sellers. Both

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5 *The Return of the Condor Heroes* is a Hong Kong television series adapted from Louis Cha’s novel of the same title. It was first broadcast on TVB in 1983 in Hong Kong. It was broadcast on *Indosiar* in 1995 (from Monday to Friday.)

6 A Japanese television drama, which was aired on broadcaster *NHK* from April 4, 1983 to March 31, 1984. The series tells about the life of Oshin Tanokura during the Meiji period up to the early 1980s.

7 Translated from: “Rating MG yang mencapai 5,1 dengan share 29,9 terhitung bagus dan mempengaruhi kebijakan stasiun televisi lainnya dalam mengimpor serial Asia” (Merdkianingtyas, 2001, p. 3).

8 A Taiwanese boy band which become popular as the four male leading roles in *Meteor Garden* with members Jerry Yan, Vanness Wu, Ken Chu, and Vic Chou.

9 Before moving forward into detailed empirical
are types of technology that enable the circulation of these television dramas in Indonesia. Furthermore, these two intermediaries have become a part of the audience’s everyday routine. Television is a technology, which is available in every household, while pirated DVDs have become an alternative technology of distribution. Both have rapidly mediated these television dramas across time and space. In this circulation network, there are multiple layers of mediation and each layer is socially, culturally, economically and even politically contextualized in each institutional practices. In these layers of mediation, broadcast television station, in this case Indosiar, as the most prominent television station broadcasting East Asian television dramas, and pirated DVD sellers work as intermediaries in constructing commonalities and glossing over differences between television dramas from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. In other words, what are considered as affinities between East Asian countries and Indonesia are not in fact embedded in the television dramas. They are a part of the preconditioned reception context set up the intermediary practices of Indosiar and pirated DVD sellers.

First of all, this research has found that there is an interconnection between various intermediaries, such as when pirated DVDs sellers use television as references. The way they promote the latest titles is a part of their intermediary practices, which is how the sellers predetermine the reception context with marketing strategies such as: “This title will be aired soon on television.” This is used to entice audiences to watch the series in advance before it is aired on television. The audience is invited to be one step ahead of the television stations. This reflects how television is still a reference even for the pirated DVD sellers, for both kiosks and online vendors. Furthermore, this demonstrates the inter-connectedness between the two major intermediaries, which actually operate differently, legal and illegally.

Both intermediaries work to screen, select and filter what the Indonesian audience consumes. As an example, the screening process happens before the broadcast television station or the pirated DVD sellers choose particular television dramas to be broadcast or sold. They will screen what titles are available in the market, especially those that are popular in their country of productions. Indosiar, according to an interview with the PR staff10, in this practice, is legally constrained under the government broadcasting regulation, including the foreign program quota and content regulation. Upon screening what titles are profitable, Indosiar will then select a title (selecting process). The last stage is the filtering process and for Indosiar, this is a process of multiple layers of censorship based on particular regulations from the state. In this filtering process, the television drama would need to go through the Film Censorship Board and then the self-censorship process of the television station. Afterward, the television dramas would be censored through the dubbing process, which will be discussed later on in this article.

These censorship/regulating practices reformulate East Asian television dramas before the Indonesian television audience consumes them. This institutional practice does not only reformulate the content of the television dramas but also reflect how its institutional practices are bounded within the government’s regulations. As an example, Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) released a warning letter to Indosiar on 12 June 2012 regarding the scene in the Korean television drama, Protect the Boss11, which portrayed a scene in which the actors and actresses almost kissed. The broadcasting commission is tasked with ensuring that the content is acceptable and in line with the lawmakers’ definition of “norms of decency and pudency.”12 These multiple layers of regulations, as argued previously, ensure that television content remains in line with the morals and values espoused by the state. This turns television tool for state-sponsored moral policing.

Pirated DVD sellers (or producers)13, on the
other hand, are not under the constraint of the government regulation as it works in a non-legal terrain and their screening, selecting and filtering process are more bounded to the economic motives instead of the regulating practices. First of all, pirated DVDs exemplifies the role of technological transmission in understanding the in-between space of production and consumption because, in Indonesia, it relies heavily on the technological means, such as reliable high-speed internet access and the innovation of disc burners. For the pirated DVD producers, internet technology is essential because it is their primary means of obtaining the media, through the use of P2P (peer-to-peer) offerings\textsuperscript{14} on the internet. In screening titles to be disseminated in the Indonesian pirated DVD landscape, the motives are quite similar with Indosiar. The main consideration is to find the most marketable titles by referring to how popular they are in their countries of production.

After selecting which titles to be sold, based on the writer’s observation, the filtering process can be seen from the displaying of products and the packaging of the pirated DVDs. First of all, the kiosks classify the titles into various categories with a free-style classification, such as New Release, Drama, Comedy, Horror, Action, Asian Series, Western Series, and others. In some kiosks, East Asian television dramas are categorized according to its country of origins and because at the time of writing the most dominant one is Korean dramas, all Korean dramas are categorized into one. However, in other kiosks, there is an Asian Series category consisting of television dramas from Korea, Japan and Mandarin (Taiwan, Hong Kong or China). The popular titles would either be on full display, such as being hanged on top of the DVD boxes or plastered on the walls. In some kiosks, these popular ones are put on the front section of the DVDs in the box. Based on the observation, one factor in deciding which titles should be in full display is actually based on what is being broadcast on television. Eventually, the types of television dramas circulated in Indonesia, by both Indosiar and pirated DVD sellers, have been narrowed down preconditioning the reception context. The screening, selecting and filtering process, as a routinized practices of both intermediaries, are constructing acceptable features making these television dramas more proximate to the Indonesian context, at least in the lawmakers’ perspective. The next section will discuss another routinized practice of both gatekeepers and/or intermediaries, which has constructed commonalities between each type of television dramas: dubbing and subtitling.

**Dubbing and Subtitling: Altering Meanings and Constructing Commonalities**

Indonesian audiences rely completely on the translation of the original language because the language between the producing countries and the consumer’s country are different. In the circulation of East Asian television dramas, television stations and those who produce pirated DVDs reconstruct the product to adjust it to the Indonesian context. The meanings originally constructed in the production stage are necessarily altered before it even reaches the consumer. This is true for both methods of translation, namely dubbing on television and subtitling on pirated DVDs. The two intermediaries have marked a preference in the audience for either dubbing or subtitles. The audience will know what to expect. If they watch

\textsuperscript{14}The Indonesian piracy network relies on the Chinese-Malaysian piracy network, which uses the P2P offering method. This has affected the mediation process of the television dramas, especially how the pirated DVDs mediate the language. In this research, the mediation of language will be used to investigate the nature of the intermediaries in mediating the television dramas to the Indonesian audience as a preconditioning in the circulation network.

\textsuperscript{15}Article 41: “(1) The Government shall prevent the entry of import film contradictory to the religious values, ethic, morals, norm, and national culture. (2) The Government shall restrict the import film by maintaining the proportion between the import film and Indonesian film to prevent the foreign culture domination.” (Translated by the researcher)
the series on television, they will know it will be dubbed and if on DVDs, there will be options of subtitling, mainly English, Malay or Chinese.

Dubbing is the preferred method used by most television stations, specifically Indosiar which is famous for broadcasting East Asian television dramas since the 1990s. Economically, dubbing is more expensive than subtitling. Indosiar used to have a dubbing department, but in 2010, the department was closed and the dubbed process was outsourced to a production house\textsuperscript{16}. The production house used the same voice-over actors/actresses (henceforth dubbers) for a variety of East Asian dramas. This production house used the same voice-over actors/actresses for a variety of East Asian dramas. This repetition by using similar voices will affect the audience as they will hear the same voice coming out of the male and female protagonists or other typical characters like the mother or children because the production house will use the same dubbers for different television dramas. Furthermore, dubbing is a practice of censorship/regulation due to the government regulations and also the authority of the television station, the production house, the translator and even dubbers. Dubbers are a part of the occupational groups with their defined constraints and variables, such as their values and ideas, which are regulated by the censorship regulations as well as by the practices of their routines. This has created the style of dubbing affecting the final result of the dubbed version.

Subtitling in pirated DVDs offers a different experience to the Indonesian audience. Since Indonesia is a part of the Chinese-Malaysian network\textsuperscript{17}, the subtitle options are usually English, Malay, and Chinese. Due to the language similarities within the countries of the network, the pirated DVDs suppliers in Indonesia do not need to do their own subtitling, which cuts the costs associated with translation. Since the whole point of piracy is the low cost and speed, the choice of subtitling reflects this value completely. Moreover, unlike dubbing in television, subtitling in pirated DVDs is not regulated like the regulation of censorship. The main motive is economic, which is the lowest cost possible. That is why, most of the time the subtitles in the pirated DVDs of East Asian television dramas in Indonesia are in broken Malay or English, especially for the first edition copies. Subtitling is simply for the sake of getting-the-point, not for a complete understanding. For Indonesian audiences, choosing the Malay subtitle is a challenge on its own because even though Malay is actually the root of the Indonesian language, there are some significant differences, especially in vocabulary.

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The screenshots above show the significant difference in vocabularies for the two languages: Malay and Indonesian. On the top-right-corner screenshot, the Malay subtitle literally means: “to live a social noble life.” These vocabularies are used in a different sense in the Indonesian language. For an Indonesian audience, noble will imply high position in the social life. In this particular scene, the meaning is actually “to live a happy life” because the male character was telling the female character to go on the plane and move on with her life. This example reflects how the Malay subtitle could give different meaning for an Indonesian audience because even though the two languages have similar roots, the differences could obstruct the meaning-making process. However, despite this translation barrier, for those who do not understand English or feel more comfortable with the Indonesian language, the Malay subtitle is the best option.

There is a significant difference in the mediating action of dubbing and subtitling. First of all, in dubbing, the actor/actress’ original voice is eliminated, which is an important component in the performance. This changes the communication source that is the specific voice and also the conno-

\textsuperscript{16} In the interview, the PR staff was not able to give the name of the production house.

\textsuperscript{17} Baumgärtels’ research findings (2006) reveal that piracy in South East Asia has two major networks, which are the Muslim Connection (mainly in Indonesia and Malaysia) and the Chinese Connection (mainly from China, Hong Kong and Singapore), which usually have better quality. However, there is a lack of reliable, detailed information due to the limitation in conducting any kind of research on piracy. He also concluded that pirated DVDs in Indonesia usually come from the Muslim Connection (through Malaysia) even though the main source is actually the same with the Chinese Connection that is from China.
tations in relation to the image and the character.

Dubbing is often perceived to be less ‘authentic’ than subtitling, because the original performance is altered by the addition of a different voice. However, it could be argued that re-voiced film and television comes closer to the actual viewing process where only decoding of the moving images and sound is required and this is, in fact, more ‘authentic’. (Mera, 1999, p. 80)

As Mera argues, argued in the quotation, dubbing could be seen from two contradicting perspectives. In one point, the elimination of the actor/actress’ voice can reduce the direct experience of the television dramas; on the other hand, some will argue that dubbing will make the audience focuses on the moving image and sound without having to be distracted by reading subtitles. Furthermore, as argued by Chua (2008), “Through dubbing, audiences are ‘induced’ into consumption of the familiar, which facilitates real-time identification with characters on screen.” (p. 78)

Second of all, dubbing requires synchronizing specific words to a degree with specific lip-movements. In any dubbed version of television series (or films), perfect lip synchronization is almost impossible to achieve. Dubbers will attempt to create the best possible match for the lip movements, but slight incongruence is unavoidable. “… the bigger the cultural gap between the two languages, the greater the challenge for those handling the dubbing operation” (Kilborn, p. 645). Furthermore, television dramas, as argued by Kilborn, use an abundance of close-up shots intensifying the visibility of lip movements. In the context of this research, this aspect of dubbing is significant since the dubbed language is either Korean, Japanese or Mandarin, which have an entirely different linguistic system than the Indonesian language (including in pronunciation, intonation, and other linguistic elements). The specific dubbing style of East Asian television dramas in Indosiar is actually caused by this technical limitation of dubbing.

In the mean time, in subtitling, audiences are able to pick up “the ebb and the flow” of the language. It is argued within the translation community that subtitling can guarantee authenticity of the audio experience in listening to the original voice of the characters and also the original flavour of the language, the mood and the sense. “Hearing the real voices of the characters not only increases meaning in terms of specific dialogue or plot structure, but gives vital clues as to status, class and relationship” (Mera, 1999, p. 75). However, almost half of the dialogue is sometimes lost through subtitling because of the limited space for the subtitles. It also adds the activity of reading to the watching experience.

Subtitles change film from an audio-visual medium to a more literary medium which requires a greater level of attention from the viewer than a dubbed film. Time spent reading subtitles is time spent away from the screen action and this is clearly a problem when there is both a great deal of visual information as well as dialogue. (p. 79)

The subtitler must decide which information is most relevant to the audience and this is a mediation process, which is the transfer of meaning from the original text to the subtitle. As a result, subtitle and dubbing eventually can change the perceptions of a character, an intention or mood.

Another aspect to be taken into account is how meanings are transferred and even altered with the two methods of translation, dubbing on television and subtitling on pirated DVDs. The first sample will reflect this alteration of language, which eventually leads to the alteration of meaning. In Meteor Garden (2001), there is a famous line from the male protagonist:

“Kalau minta maaf itu berguna, buat apa ada polisi?”
(Indonesian: taken from the television dubbed version)
“What are the police for if apologies do any good?”
(English: taken from the pirated DVDs English subtitle version)

“道歉有用的話要警察干嘛?(流星花园)”
(Chinese)

In both, dubbed and subtitled version, there is, and will always be, a problem of interpretation. The above sentence is an example on how literal translation has the potential to disturb the interpretation process. In 2001, as Meteor Garden raised to popularity, this phrase also became very popular. The original meaning encoded in the Chinese text has been altered in both the dubbed and subtitled versions. Both the Indonesian and English translations are the literal meaning of the Chinese text. However, the original meaning refers to the mafia films in Taiwan, which often use this phrase showing how contextualized this phrase is. This is an example on how both dubbing and subtitling alter the meanings and how they are not able to translate cultural context. Most Indonesian audience members do not understand this particular sentence. However, it has become one of the most memorable and popular sentences from the television dramas continuously even until now. This reflects how complete understanding of meaning seems to be insignificant for both dubbed and subtitled version.

Another form of language alteration is the changes in the tone or mood of the language in the dubbed version. As I explained previously, the linguistic system of the original language and Indonesian language is completely different. All of the East Asian countries producing these television series have a different linguistic system with the Indonesian language. In translating the dialogues from the original television dramas, the dubbers will have to recreate the tone and intonation because it is being translated into Indonesian. This has created, as argued previously, a specific kind of dubbing language, which could be described as overly dramatized. Moreover, it also does not use a typical Indonesian conversational language style, which is more like a written language being used
QUEEN OF REVEARSALS (2011)
Transcribed by the researcher from the television version:

Woman: “Wah ... bagus sekali ... cantiknya ... cantik sekali ya?” (dramatized intonation) (pause)
Woman: “Aku ... aku harus ... mengatakan sesuatu padamu. Kalau aku tidak mengatakan-nya sekarang, Aku rasa aku tidak akan bisa mengatakannya lagi.” (formal sentence structure, uncommon in everyday conversation)
Man: “Apa itu?”
Woman: “Cobalah membaca pikiranku. Aku rasa ... kau pintar membaca pikiranku.”

Literal English translation (translated by the researcher):
Woman: “Wow ... so nice ... beautiful ... it’s really beautiful, right? (dramatized intonation) (pause)
Woman: “I ... I have to ... say something to you. If I don’t say it now. I don’t think I can say it again.” (formal sentence structure, uncommon in everyday conversation)
Man: “What’s that?”
Woman: “Try to read my mind. I feel ... you’re good at reading my mind.”

This sample is used to reaffirm that Indosiar has constructed a particular style of dubbing language in terms of diction and intonation style, for example the overly dramatized intonation and also the formal conversational style even though the context was non formal. As an audience, when watching a television drama in Indosiar, one would know what to expect. Audience members will hear the same voice from the characters because Indosiar will actually use the same voice-over actors/actresses for regular characters, like the female and male protagonists, male and female antagonists, the mother character or even the child character. It does not matter if the television drama is Korean, Japanese or Taiwanese, from an economic perspective; it is obviously more convenient to use the same voice-over actors and actresses. As an audience, this creates a line of similar experience when watching the television dramas from Korea, Japan or Taiwan constructing commonalities and glossing over differences.

Another evidence of the practice of constructing commonalities and glossing over differences, besides the screening, selecting and filtering process, is in the scheduling process. When this research was conducted (from 2011 to 2014), these television dramas are broadcast in three time slots every weekday in Indosiar: at 12, 1 and 4.30 pm. The last slot, 4.30-6 pm, is considered prime time. This prime time slot has been reserved for East Asian television dramas since Indosiar’s first broadcast Tokyo Love Story in 1998. This intermediary act needs to be analyzed by looking at how other Indonesian television stations schedule their programs. One will ask the question, why this time slot? According to the PR staff, officer, these time slots were chosen to suit the majority of East Asian television dramas audiences, which are mostly housewives, teenagers, domestic helpers (for the noon time slot) and also workers (for the late afternoon time slot).

However, in doing so, Indosiar is actually constructing commonalities of these television dramas in comparison with local products. After observing Indosiar’s broadcasting schedules, by reserving afternoon time slots and prime time slots, 4.30 to 6 pm, there is an indication that these television dramas are categorized in an equivalent space with the local programs. The ideal construction that East Asian television dramas are appropriate enough to be put in a time slot with the larger number of targeted younger audience members in parallel with the information received from Indosiar in the interviews.

Furthermore, Indosiar used the label: Drama Asia, which literally means Asian Drama. Even though in the schedules, there is the word “Korea” in brackets after the term “Drama Asia,” the usage of the word “Asia” to describe East Asian television dramas is in itself an essentializing mode. In other days, there is a “Mega Bollywood” program, which refers to films from India. One would say that by using “Asian” to refer to East Asian products while Indian (or Hindi) films are not labelled as “Asia,” this reflects how the television station constructs what it means by “Asia” as a part of the intermediary activity. The over-simplification of using the word “Asia” reflects that it does not matter whether they are Korean, Japanese or Taiwanese. They are “Asian” and not even “East Asian.” As previously discussed, in the analysis of pirated DVDs, these countries are lumped into one big category of “Asia” on the circulation level as well. Besides constructing commonalities through the routinized dubbing culture, the filtering process through language alteration is also a form of appropriating the content of these television dramas. Unlike the pirated DVDs, which are not regulated by the government regulations, since the pirated DVDs business is operating in the non-legal terrain, dubbing in the television version has to follow the strict public regulation of censorship. One of the most taboo content which has to be censored according to the Indonesian broadcasting law is anything related to sexual content. If the government censorship institution, or even the television’s own authority in censorship, can eliminate any sexual scenes, including kissing scenes, the production house and the dubbers need to make a filling-the-broadcast-time slot decision by putting it so early in the morning without targeting a large number of audiences.

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make sure any dialogs that have any sexual content are not translated literally. Most of the time, the translation is so different with the original version and if the scene is not explicitly related to the content of the conversation, the dubbed version can be accepted as it is without any confusion from the audience like the example I have chosen.

**Hanakimi**

**English subtitle (from a pirated DVD version)**:

B1: Who else is there that I don’t know about? Doesn’t matter if you’re talking about I Cup or a G-cup?

B2: Are you really that captivated by large-breasted women?

B1: Idiot! I love beautiful ones. For now, I just want to find the right one that will excite me.

**Dubb version (Literal English translation by the researcher)**

B1: Apa tidak ada foto lain? Misalnya foto cewek yang lebih cantik atau foto cewek yang lebih berani lagi? Are there any other pictures? Like a naturally beautiful woman or a more vulgar one?

B2: Hmm ... dasar ... otakmu itu payah sekali. Errr ... loser ... your brain is so dirty!

B1: Kau ini yang payah. Disini aku perlu itu ... perlu sesuatu yang lebih panas...

You’re the loser. I need that ... I need something hotter ...

In this scene, the characters are male students in an all-male school who are discussing women, specifically discussing breast sizes. However, in the dubbed version, the dialog is translated in a way that the word breast is no longer used, even though the dialog still implies (not explicitly) sexual connotations.

At this point, television plays a part of a gatekeeper by multiplying its censorship practice not only from the visual aspect but also the audio aspect. By making sure the mediated television drama no longer has any sexual content or simply minimizing the sexual content, the television station is making sure what enters the gate is reconstructed according to what is regulated by the authority. It does not only stand in the gate deciding what could enter the gate, but once the product enters the gate, there are some things which needs to be regulated and changed, such as what is being delivered in the dramas.

On the other hand, the pirated DVDs version does not have this issue in translating the language. However, as I explained previously, due to economic factors, the subtitles in pirated DVDs are not done for the audience’s complete understanding. One will find foul language in the subtitles of the first copies of the pirated DVDs. The language for these subtitles is usually broken English or Malay, which means it is grammatically incorrect and will sometimes be incomprehensible. If the technique in dubbing makes it possible for the television station to censored the television dramas, the subtitling in pirated DVDs is also reconstructing the content of the series with its limitation in delivering the original text. The pirated DVDs do not reduce or eliminate certain content, like sexual content censorship, but the foul subtitles and the fact that most of the subtitles are not in Indonesian (in Malay/English/Chinese) could affect the audience’s interpretation of the text and can even reduce any content incidentally.

The Malay subtitles are the most favoured subtitle for East Asian television dramas in pirated DVDs for those who do not understand English or feel more comfortable with Indonesian language. Also, subtitling is affected by this economic motive, which means it is not done in the purpose of precision of meaning. Since the pirated DVDs in Indonesia come from the Chinese-Malaysian network, it is apparent that the Malay, and also Chinese subtitles, is considered as the most economic and suitable subtitles for the pirated DVDs in this network. Subtitling in this kind of medium is simply for the sake of getting-the-point and not for a complete understanding of the original dialog. If the technique in dubbing makes it possible for the television station to censor the dialog in the television dramas, which will make the audience misunderstand elements of the storyline, the subtitling in pirated DVDs is also limiting the audience’s experience in completely understanding the television series. The subtitling is reconstructing the content of the series with its limitation in delivering the original text. The pirated DVDs do not reduce or eliminate certain content, like sexual content censorship, but the low-quality subtitles and the fact that most of the subtitles are not in Indonesian are actually distracting the audience from the narrative of the drama.

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20 A Japanese television drama, known originally as Hanazakarino kimitachihe/ Hana zakari no kimi tachi he: Ikemen paradaisu. Hanakimi was broadcast on Indosiar in June 2011, 4 years after it was first broadcast in Japan.

21 The researcher has cross-checked the English translation with the original meaning in Japanese.
Television (dubbing) and pirated DVDs (subtitling) re-constructed the East Asian television dramas in order to be consumed by the Indonesian audience. For the sake of a smooth reception, the television station has created a routine style of dubbing which increases this sense of commonalities as compared to the subtitles on pirated DVDs. As argued in the earlier section of this chapter, intermediaries deliberately try to manufacture a cultural-linguistic market from the common or shared elements by glossing over significant differences. Dubbing could be analyzed as the intermediaries’ strategies in glossing over the nuance specificity of the country of origin be it Japan, Korea or Taiwan. The dubbing style, the overly dramatized intonations and the same voice-over actors/actresses for all television dramas, has created these commonalities. They mark the audience’s preference and create what the audience expects when they choose to watch the television drama on television. This adds up to how *Indosiar* categorizes East Asian television drama as *Drama Asia* or Asian Dramas in its scheduling and packaging as intermediary activities.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, television and pirated DVDs first work as intermediaries in screening, selecting and also filtering what can be consumed by the Indonesian audience, even though both operate differently. This is especially true because television stations work under government regulations unlike the illegal business of pirated DVDs. The screening process is determined mostly by economic reasons for both intermediaries. In these practices, their cultural context and wider social relationships construct their ideas, values and practices. Moreover, research findings have indicated that there is an interconnection between various intermediaries, like how pirated DVDs sellers use television as its reference or how television uses tabloids to market the television dramas broadcasted. The mediation process has accommodated the various social relationships between these intermediaries, creating a web of mediating lines. It is not a linear transmission of a product along a straight line moving from the producer to the consumer. There are layers of mediation and each layer is socially, culturally, economically and even politically contextualized. Within these layers of mediation by the intermediaries, there will always be an alteration of meaning. There is endless textuality in which meaning is transferred and altered from one text to another, like in the practice of dubbing in the television version and subtitling on the pirated DVDs. In doing so, they are also vulnerable to the exercise of power, namely the governmental regulation for television or the economic drive that affects the way low-quality subtitling is used in pirated DVDs.

More importantly, the intermediaries work within the network while constructing commonal-
Bibliography


