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Translating the other: Communal TV watching of Korean TV drama

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ABSTRACT

Our research is situated in the field of the pragmatics of fiction (Jucker and Locher, 2017; Messerli, 2017), and explores a website that makes Asian drama series and movies accessible to an international audience by means of fan generated subtitles in over 150 languages (www.viki.com; Dwyer, 2012, 2017). The streaming site offers a social network and participatory element in that it provides viewers with different possibilities of participation. Next to producing subtitles in teams, members can comment on episodes and actors, rate shows, produce their own videos, write to each other, etc. This paper explores the possibility of viewers commenting on the episode while it is being watched as a dynamic form of active reception. These comments are time-aligned with the video, which acts as the pivot of the interaction. Viewers can read other fans' comments, and can contribute their own comments and thus their own voice to this additional communal layer of drama series reception. Despite the fact that viewers typically view episodes and read/write comments asynchronously, a simultaneous viewing experience among an international community is created. We present a case study of the viewing of the first episode of two series and show how the commenters negotiate a number of issues, which include expectations about genre, character development, intertextuality and culture. We demonstrate that engaging with the video through written comments, engaging with each other in these comments and participating cross-linguistically are highly interactive, pragmatic achievements between different modes of communication of which the video itself is the starting point. Crucially, the timed comments also contribute to translating and making sense of the cultural 'other' as rendered in the videos. This is particularly the case in the comments on culture triggered by the video but also transpires in dialogues between the members.

1. Introduction

In this paper, we present a study of a particular practice of online communal TV watching, where viewers post *timed comments,* i.e. comments that are time aligned with the videos being streamed. As posted comments appear together with the video, we hypothesize that viewers use the comments to engage in the communal negotiation of sense-making processes of the fictional artefact and thus engage in a process of translating the cultural other to themselves and each other. Our take on the pragmatics of translation here is thus to look at translation as an act of sense-making of a foreign fictional artefact, i.e. an act of

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interpretation of the cultural other as presented in the streamed video. Our understanding of the term translation is thus not limited to translation processes from a source to a target text. Instead, we include into translation also cross-cultural mediation (Bassnett, 2012) connected to the sense-making processes commenters engage in. By culture we mean first and foremost the vague notion that beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, etc. are tied to particular settings, as for instance those of a country. Adapting Eglin's (2014) discussion of the relationship between 'native' and ethnographer and the entailed definition of culture for our needs, we understand commenters not just as contributors to the computer-mediated discourse we examine and as performers of cultural actions, but potentially also as inquirers into, and more than that as negotiators and translators of "the values, mores, habits, rules, and ways of acting appropriate to the event, occasion, situation, setting, and society in which they find themsel [ves]" (Eglin, 2014: 143). Given this broad understanding of culture, we use "translating culture" and "negotiating culture" as synonymous terms to describe the transfer and co-construction of pragmatic meaning between source and target texts, which — as we shall see — becomes manifest in timed comments.

Our research is situated in the field of the pragmatics of fiction (Jucker and Locher, 2017; Messerli, 2017), and explores the international website www.viki.com (short Viki; Dwyer, 2012, 2017; Locher, 2020), which distributes fan-subtitled Asian drama series and movies to an international audience. The streaming site offers a social network and provides viewers with different possibilities of participation. Next to producing subtitles in teams, members can comment on episodes and actors, rate shows, produce their own videos, write to each other, etc. This paper explores the possibility of viewers commenting on the episode *while* it is being watched as a dynamic form of active reception.[1] These comments are time-aligned with the video, which acts as the pivot of the interaction. Viewers can read other fans' comments, which pop up in the upper left corner of the video (or in a side bar[2]) and disappear again once the next comment is posted. They can contribute their own comments and thus their own voice to this additional communal layer of drama series reception. Despite the fact that viewers typically view episodes and read/write comments asynchronously, a pseudo-simultaneous viewing experience with an international community is created. In other words, it appears as if viewers are co-watching in real time (see Section 2.2 for a discussion of this phenomenon).

To illustrate what we are interested in, consider the selection of comments on a scene of the Korean TV series *W*, where the male main character Kang Chul and the female main character Oh Yeon-joo first banter with each other and then negotiate their identities with respect to how they should address each other and, as a consequence, at what politeness level they should talk to each other in Korean. Example 1 presents the translation of this dialogue in fan-generated English subtitles (see Locher, 2020). The two characters are sitting vis-à-vis each other at a table in their kitchen and are eating a meal.

(1) *W*, episode 15, minutes 36 to 37, each line corresponds to a subtitle display; comments in brackets and italics are part of the original subtitles with the exception of [sic]

1	Kang Chul	I asked you to please call me Oppa. I'll shower you with compliments.
2	Oh Yeon-joo	Is being one year older something to boast about?
3	Kang Chul	Yeah. I'm very satisfied. *(Using informal speech)*
4		Why am I so satisfied? *(informal speech)*
5a		Oppa Yeon Joo is 31. You are just 30. Understand?
5b		*(Using information* [sic]*speech)*
6		It's nice to see you smile. *(informal)*
7a		It's been a year since we've seen each other. Smile often.
7b		*(Going back to formal speech)*

Due to a magical plot twist involving an alternative world, the male character Kang Chul is suddenly one year older than before (having spent time in a different world where time runs differently) and is now also older than his partner Oh Yeon-joo. Since age (difference) is one of the defining factors in how people address each other in Korean (Brown, 2011; Choo, 2006; King, 2006; Koh, 2006; Park, 2006; Rhee and Koo, 2017), Kang Chul wants to be called *Oppa* ('older brother' or boyfriend, addressed to a man by a younger woman) and points out that he is (now) older. In asking for this address term, he confirms their romantic relationship and highlights age difference at the same time. He also switches from formal to informal and back to formal to flag the new relationship situation.[3] This is indicated in brackets by the subtitlers, who relate this relationship negotiation to viewers who do not understand Korean. The translators thus reveal an interpersonal pragmatic message that is entailed in the original Korean but that cannot be easily indexed in English. This dialogue triggers the viewer comments displayed in Example 2.

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[1] Given the standard set of controls over the video stream — pausing and resuming, moving backward or forward to a different point in the streamed episode — different ways of posting comments exist. We assume that some viewers will pause the video, post comments and then go on watching, whereas others will likely return to key moments in the episode only after they have finished the episode.

[2] The placing and appearance of timed comments on the screen depends on the viewer's device choice (smart phone, tablet, computer) and preference settings. If the selection is to display on the top left corner of the video, in contrast to danmaku (Chen et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2016), the timed comments do not clutter the screen since always only one comment is shown at a time.

[3] The first switch from formal to informal is only implied in the first comment in brackets in subtitle 3, since it alerts the viewer to the fact that the character now uses informal speech. The change is confirmed in the last comment in brackets in subtitle 7b, where it is mentioned that there is a *return* to formal speech.

(2)   *W*, episode 15, minutes 36 to 37, timed viewer comments
          − Were they not formal before?
          − i never understood the formal and informal in korea
          − But if they are the same age and married why do they not use informal anyways??
          − Ofc you wouldn't its not like theres any respective level in english. I constantly feel like im being so rude to people when i speak...
          − Imma lay down some educational stuff: in the Korean language there is banmal and jeongdanmal (spelt those wrong) meaning there's formal...

As the comments in Example 2 show, some of the international viewers are puzzled by the dialogue, presumably because their cultures and languages do not call for distinctions and negotiations of relational work[4] of this kind. They reach out to each other in order to better understand what is going on in the streamed video and some viewers self-select to attempt an explanation ('*banmal*' being the term for informal Korean usage and '*jeongdanmal (spelt those wrong)*' referring to more formal speech). Interactions like these made us want to explore such practices of cultural translation further and led to our over-arching hypothesis that the timed comments are also used by commenters to translate the cultural other to themselves and each other. This cultural translation is not restricted to observations on dialogue alone but can also refer to other aspects of the streamed video (clothing, action, plot, etc.).

In this paper, we present a case study of the first episode of two Korean TV series and show how the commenters re-negotiate a number of issues: expectations about genre, character development, intertextuality and culture (their own and the Korean culture as portrayed in the artefact) among others. We demonstrate that engaging with the video through written comments, engaging with each other in these comments and participating cross-linguistically is a highly interactive achievement between different modes of communication of which the video itself is the starting point. In what follows, we will first position our study within research on computer-mediated communication, identity-construction and participation structure (Section 2). In Section 3 we describe the data and method, and in Sections 4–6 we present our analysis before concluding in Section 7.

2. Background and literature reviews

Our analysis of multilingual, but predominantly English timed comments on Viki takes place at the intersection of several avenues of research. As text-based communication by a community of online television viewers, timed comments are a type of computer-mediated communication (CMC) that is on the one hand unique in terms of its specific technological realization and on the other hand shares properties with other practices, such as *danmaku* (e.g., Wu and Ito, 2014; see Section 2.1). The individual comments and communication in the comments at large are shaped by user motivations and intentions, which have been addressed in communication studies in terms of utilitarian, hedonic and social needs (Chen et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2018; Zhang and Cassany, 2019a, b). In this study, we put our focus on socio-cultural aspects of communication through timed comments. We are interested in particular in the ways in which commenters position themselves as viewers and members of the Korean drama fan community more generally and how they negotiate the culture portrayed in the streamed episode and their own culture.

In order to analyze timed comments on Viki from this perspective, we will start by placing Viki as a platform (Section 2.1) and timed comments in particular (2.2) within the traditions of CMC and TMC (technology-mediated communication, Chovanec and Dynel, 2015). We will then theorize comments as individual viewer contributions − as acts of self-disclosure and as vehicles of identity construction (Section 2.3). To understand the social and community building aspects of timed commenting, we will then address not only participation structures on Viki but also their potential role in communal translation from the Korean source culture to the international target texts (Section 2.4). Finally, we will finish our literature review with the resulting research questions that guide our empirical study (Section 2.5).

2.1. Communication on a social streaming platform

As part of our larger research focus on the role of English in the international dispersion of the Korean Wave and Korean television drama (henceforth K-drama), we investigate several communicative practices on the video streaming platform Viki with regard to their function in community building and communal sense-making. Crucially, Viki is a platform that makes Korean content (as well as content from other Asian countries) available to viewers outside of Korea and thus encourages processes of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication on various levels. Our starting point for the role of English in these negotiations between the Korean cultural space of the streamed artefacts and the non-Korean, international space of the viewers were the fan-generated subtitles, which encode in writing (parts of) the complex relational work that takes place in the fictional Korean interactions onscreen (see Locher, 2020). While these English subtitles are created by the community for the community, they are a form of few-to-many communication through which self-selected experts transfer their knowledge to viewers who have no or less expertise in Korean. However, the many who do not participate in the creation of subtitles, as well as the few who do, have other means of contributing their own voices to the communal reception of K-

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[4] The concept of *relational work* (Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008) has been developed within (im)politeness research but is larger in scope. It refers to all work that people invest in shaping, challenging, contesting and confirming relationships in interaction and is multi-modal in nature.

drama. These include asynchronous forum posts and reviews of drama episodes, but also *timed comments*, which are the focus of this study.

In light of the mentioned communicative channels that are available to users of Viki, we regard the site as a typical social media platform. It provides its users with particular technological affordances that encourage them to not only act as passive video viewers, but to contribute content of their own. Hoffmann (2017: 5) finds that "social media want to transform the individual user experience into a joint, collaborative undertaking, in which form and content are not only chosen by *the few* (authors) but by *the many* (users)" (italics in original) — i.e. social media are part of often celebrated participatory culture (Burwell, 2010). This general effect of social media on the user experience needs to be specified not only for Viki, but also for the particular affordances it provides. Unlike Youtube, which is based around videos that its users produce or at least upload themselves (Johansson, 2017), Viki distributes professionally produced, licensed video streams of K-drama (among others) to viewers that pay for the service either by purchasing a membership or by watching with advertisements.[5] While Viki users thus have the power to choose when, where and with what device they view a video, they are in no way involved in the production of the audiovisual (unsubtitled and uncommented) content itself. However, the same users act as creators on other communicative channels, where they actively contribute to the artefact. A small group of expert community members produce the subtitles; a larger part of the community post the timed comments we focus on in this study. In line with the democratization of information production, the timed comments in particular are communication by *the many* with *the many* and create an enriched artefact (consisting of the streamed video, the subtitles and the timed comments; see Fig. 1 below) that is dynamically altered by the community itself. In this way, Viki.com is comparable (but not identical[6]) to bilibili.com, a Chinese streaming platform, which allows uploading of videos and facilitates lay subtiling and timed comments in the form of danmaku (Zhang and Cassany, 2019b).

2.2. Timed commenting as a communicative practice

The practice of timed commenting can generally be situated in the tradition of Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) or, given the Viki apps that exist for mobile devices running Android or iOS, Technology-Mediated Communication (TMC, Chovanec and Dynel, 2015). We will only address some of the documented generic communicative features of CMC/TMC when we focus on self-disclosure and identity construction in Section 2.3. Here, we limit our theoretical contextualization of timed comments to the Chinese and Japanese practice of *danmaku/danmu* (literally meaning 'barrage', Chen and Chen, 2019: 2), a system of anonymous text comments that float over a range of different video streams. The properties and effects of danmaku have been described in a number of studies (e.g. Chen et al., 2017; Chen and Chen, 2019; Johnson, 2013; Liu et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2018; Wu and Ito, 2014; Zhang and Cassany, 2019a, b), which serve as a benchmark for our understanding of Viki's timed comments. Our focus here will be on the similarities between danmaku and Viki's timed comments. It is worth noting, however, that there are also striking differences between the two practices. Most notably, danmaku is constituted by entirely anonymous text appearing on top of the picture. This creates a cluster of stimuli that can be either regarded aesthetically as polyphonic animation (Johnson, 2013: 298; Chen and Chen, 2019: 7) or in terms of information processing as a potential information overload (Liu et al., 2016: 284). The danmaku affordances also allow users to use different colours for their contributions and to choose different layouts for the movement of the text on the screen (Zhang and Cassany, 2019a: 6). Viki's timed comments, in contrast, appear either in a separate box below or to the side of the video stream, or one at a time in the top left corner or center of the video.[7] This means that the original streamed video is never cluttered and thus the platform gives priority to the streamed video over the additional written voices of the practice.

More important for our purposes are the commonalities between danmaku and Viki's timed comments, which can both be regarded at first glance as a "real-time commentary subtitle" (Wu and Ito, 2014: 280) that allows users to "synchronously post comments at any timestamp inside the video content" (Lin et al., 2018: 274). It is important to note, however, that while we can assume that many viewers are indeed looking for a synchronous viewing experience (Chen et al., 2017: 1),[8] the effect created by the timed comments as well as by danmaku when viewing previously recorded streamed videos is more accurately referred to as *pseudo-synchronicity* (Johnson, 2013: 301; see also Chen et al., 2017: 2; Zhang and Cassany, 2019a, b: 2).[9] The collection of comments that appear as automatically and dynamically as the next image in the streamed episode itself may

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[5] The Viki membership fee provides access to the videos and the technological interface to enable translation. The fee does not entail translation itself, since this is provided by the fans on a voluntary basis. Members new to Viki often misunderstand this fact and complain about missing subtitles, which can result in conflict with other viewers.

[6] In contrast to bilibili.com, Viki.com defines itself as a multilingual space. While English is usually the first language into which the streamed videos are translated, the fan community translates into many more languages.

[7] The exact appearance of the timed comments is in part subject to intentional choices made by viewers, but viewer choices are also constrained by the device or rather the software they are using to access Viki. For instance, when watching on iOS at the time of writing, viewers can select to turn timed comments on or off and to hold their phone in landscape or portrait mode. When turned on, selected timed comments will then appear at the top center and on top of the video in landscape mode and as a separate stream of comments below the video in portrait mode.

[8] In our data, this desire for actual co-watching is evident in timed comments that reveal date and time of watching and in explicit questions by viewers whether other viewers are watching at the same moment of real time.

[9] Note that danmaku affordances are available also for Chinese livestreaming platforms (Chen and Chen, 2019) — similar to Twitch.tv or Facebook live. We, however, are concerned with the watching of previously recorded streamed videos, similar to what Zhang and Cassany (2019a) describe for practices on bilibili.com in China.

seem to be contemporaneous communicative acts by members of the viewing community, but they are in fact the written statements of past viewers who shared their thoughts at the same moment in what in narratology is sometimes called text-time (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002: 45–48), but not the same moment in real time.[10]

The notions of synchronicity and pseudo-synchronicity are a useful starting point to define timed commenting as a communicative practice. Whereas synchronicity of comments and video allow and perhaps even prime users to react immediately to what they have seen and heard in the stream, the pseudo-synchronicity with the viewing experience of others means that commenters have an audience for their contributions, which remain, however, without immediate feedback. It would seem then that the technological properties of timed comments encourage immediate engagement with the streamed K-drama episode and with the existing timed comments, and that they do not technically facilitate multi-turn interactions between viewers, who would have to start the video stream again and move to the time of their own comment in order to read subsequent comments and respond to them.

2.3. Self-disclosure and identity construction

When asking Chinese viewers by means of questionnaire why they turn to using danmaku, Chen et al. (2017) reveal "that people view *danmu* to obtain: (1) information (e.g., background story, music, actors); (2) entertainment (e.g., complaints, parodies); and (3) social connectedness, i.e., a 'pseudo-synchronous' feeling of shared viewing (Johnson, 2013)" (summary quoted from Zhang and Cassany, 2019a, b: 2). The latter aspect on connectedness has to do with the creation of community and identity construction.[11] In line with previous findings that people tend to reveal more about themselves online than they do offline (see Nguyen et al., 2012), we assume that Viki's timed comments lend themselves to self-disclosure, which can also bring different cultures to the fore. Among the social functions that have been associated with self-disclosure in the psychological literature (see overview in Dayter, 2016: 38–42), we are particularly interested in relationship development. For instance, Collins and Miller (1994) find in their research into the connection between self-disclosure and liking that while self-disclosure is generally positively correlated with liking – we will self-disclose to those we like, we like those to whom we self-disclose, and we like those who have self-disclosed to us – this effect is stronger in cases where there is an ongoing relationship. Accordingly, we read acts of self-disclosure we find in our data as tentative indicators that the users see themselves as a community rather than a group of strangers.

In order to look for what Viki users tell us about themselves, we need to go beyond explicit acts of self-disclosure and think of the timed comments more generally as a site where individual and group identities are constructed. Following a discursive approach to identity (e.g., Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Locher, 2008), we analyze the comment texts for acts of positioning of the self and others and thus for emerging identities of commenters that may include cultural aspects. We are not so much interested in individual user profiles that could be inferred based on the collection of comments by any given user, as in gaining insights into the identity of the group. Collectively, instances where identity construction is foregrounded will first of all be informative with respect to the perception the users themselves have of their own community (if they regard the group of users as such). Moreover, we can gain further insights into the values the group adhere to, their understanding of K-drama and their motivation for communicating on Viki by finding common patterns in individual acts of self-positioning. We will return to these aspects of identity in Section 6 and discuss them in light of how Korean culture and non-Korean culture are made salient and negotiated in the timed comments.

2.4. Timed comment as translation

We have so far positioned the timed comments we are interested in as a type of technology-mediated communication similar to danmaku and as a site for identity construction and community-building. Zhang and Cassany (2019b: 23), in a study on how Chinese danmaku are used when discussing one episode of a Spanish TV series, reveal that the posts are discussing Spanish culture and language next to plot, character and genre concerns. The technological affordances that let the fan community communicate among themselves and actively engage with the subtitled artefact are thus also a tool for communal sense-making and interactive co-construction of meaning.

Telecinematic discourse in a more traditional sense, i.e. the mere viewing of films or television series, is typically understood as layered communication between a collective sender (Dynel, 2011) and the viewers, mediated through communicative acts within the fictional artefact itself, of which character interaction is the most prominent example (see overview in Messerli, 2017). Compared to intracultural and intralingual film reception, the participation structures of

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[10] Within the scope of this study, we cannot examine the implications of timed comments on narratological concepts of time. It is worth noting, however, that the polyphonic artefact comprised of video, audio, subtitles and timed comments is also a multitemporal text that consists not just of the conceptual story time and text time of the video, but whose additional voices are also defined by different temporal axes. Subtitles inherit the story time from the video and roughly adhere to its text time – albeit as discrete text chunks rather than (pseudo-)continuously like the audiovisual stream. However, they also show traces of the fact that in real time, they were a late addition to the artefact. Timed comments, on the other hand, share the mentioned temporal aspects of subtitles, but while they are fixed to the video stream in terms of text-time, they extend along several story times, which include the K-drama's own story time, where commenters orient towards past and future events in the drama's diegesis, but also the "story time" of the comments, which entails the (life-)times of the individual members and the community as a whole.

[11] In addition to timed comments, the fan-created subtitles have also been identified as a community-building device by Dwyer (2012: 238).

subtitled film and television are more complex, because they include subtitles as an additional voice of the collective sender, which is aligned with the viewers in terms of its orientation towards the artefact, but in having access to the source dialogue also speaks from a more authoritative position (Messerli, 2019). After all, viewers are likely to only read interlingual subtitles if the additional effort promises access to linguistic and cultural information they would otherwise not have. The interlingual subtitles on Viki are particularly interesting because they are created by fans for fans (see Locher, 2020). The general communicative setting of a subtitled streamed episode is identical to any interlingually subtitled artefact, but knowledge that subtitles are not simply provided as a feature of the stream but need to be created by the community potentially increases the recipients' awareness of their presence and appreciation of the way they are produced. In addition, the separation between the creators of the video and the creators of the subtitles is more tangible than in professional subtitles, which may be perceived as sanctioned by the producers. In contrast, the participatory element added by the affordances we analyze here means that the community changes the artefact and that the roles of producers and recipients of the artefact are less clearly separable than is the case in traditional film reception (see Section 2.1).

Understanding timed comments as a channel not just of fan communication, but also of translation is not as immediately self-evident as it is in the case of the fan-generated subtitles. However, as our analysis will show, these texts, which are closely tied in with the video, have the potential for the community to jointly look for (rather than explicate) meaning. As yet another voice of the nested, polyphonic artefact (Fig. 1), the traces of past viewers pre-interpret for the current viewers how the actions and interactions of the subtitled video can be understood. As such, timed comments can be regarded as a form of community translation from the cultural space of the Korean Wave more generally. We thus have a nested structure of voices.[12] As an addition to the video stream, the subtitles and the timed comments contribute to the artefact and its meaning and ultimately change it. This is because any next viewer who has activated the subtitles and timed comments function will encounter input from all three circles in Fig. 1.
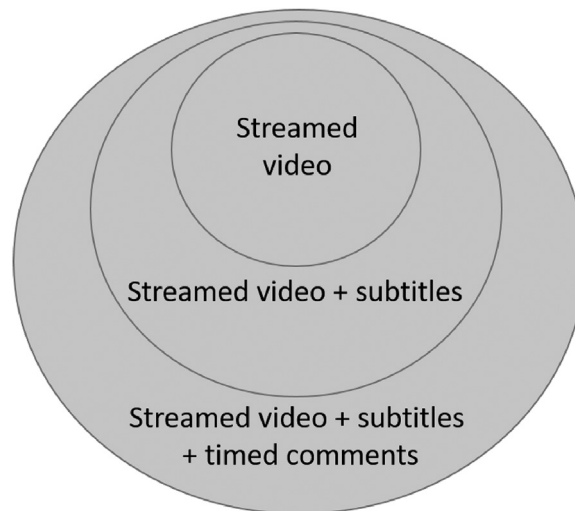

Fig. 1. Nested, polyphonic voices on viki.

2.5. Research questions

Based on the theoretical observation made in Section 2.1—2.4, we approach the timed comments on Viki and our hypothesis that they are employed in the discussion, negotiation and translation of culture, including pragma-linguistic aspects, with the following research questions:

(1) What do commenters do in the timed comments and what are potential cumulative effects of their contributions?

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[12] In the early stages, when the streamed video is made freshly available to the viewers, the fan subtitlers are working on the subtitles, while many viewers are already watching and commenting. This means that comments can precede subtitles.

(2) What aspects of K-drama culture and the viewers' own culture appear in the timed comments, and in what ways can this be seen as evidence of cross-cultural mediation?

3. Data and method

3.1. Data

The data for this study is derived from the online streaming platform www.viki.com, which distributes Asian (predominantly South Korean) TV series to international viewers. K-dramas have gained global viewership in recent years and are part of the Korean Wave, which, however, has already a history of more than 20 years of international followers (Hong, 2014; Kim, 2014; Kim, 2013; Lee, 2015). Within the general trend towards online TV reception, Viki provides this international audience the possibility to access K-drama. The platform is accessible without a subscription (but with advertisements) for those TV series that are licenced for a particular region. With a paid membership, content can be accessed without advertisement, and, depending on the region, more series are available. The timed comments of interest to this paper can be read without membership; however, in order to post, a commenter needs to be signed up. Since viewing comments is not restricted and openly accessible, we consider the use of this data permissible with respect to research ethics (Locher and Bolander, 2019). We will, however, not display poster names. The posts are also not searchable online, which further protects individual

Table 1
Overview of the case study corpus on timed comments.

TV drama	You're All Surrounded (너희들은 포위됐다, 2014, Episode 1)			Meloholic (멜로홀릭, 2017, Episode 1)		
Duration	59.21 min			55.24 min		
General description	3333 comments			2586 comments		
	11 languages (keyboard setting)			11 languages (keyboard setting)		
	1045 users			872 users		
	29991 words			20290 words		
Languages	English	1841	55.2%	English	1557	60.2%
	Spanish	356	10.7%	Portuguese	115	4.4%
	German	160	4.8%	French	113	4.4%
	French	105	3.2%	German	83	3.2%
	Portuguese	99	3.0%	Spanish	76	2.9%
	Other	772	23.2%	Other	642	24.8%
Users	1 comment	551	52.7%	1 comment	473	54.2%
	2–4 comments	316	30.2%	2–4 comments	261	29.9%
	5–10 comments	111	10.6%	5–10 comments	96	11.0%
	11–30 comments	63	6.0%	11–30 comments	39	4.5%
	31-68 comments	4	0.4%	31-70 comments	3	0.3%
	total	1045	100.0%	total	872	100.0%

posters.

When commenters wish to comment on a particular moment in a scene, they click on an icon, which stops the streaming and opens a text entry window. Once typing is finished, the posting is completed by pressing the Enter key. Subsequently, the content is accessible for all viewers watching this scene. The viewer comments cannot be responded to in an interlaced way (as e.g. in a blog format) and do not display a time/date of entry. Instead they are tied to the minute and second in the video. As discussed in Section 2.2., an effect of pseudo-synchronicity is created despite the fact that the comments might be written years apart.

For the larger research project, we have created the K-drama Time Aligned Comment Corpus (K-TACC), which contains around 325,000 comments to 80 episodes from 5 dramas, collected on 1 October 2018. Our qualitative analysis of timed comments in context in this study is based on a sample of two manually annotated episodes from that corpus. They are the first episodes of *Meloholic* (2017, henceforth MH), a romantic comedy, and *You're All Surrounded* (2014, henceforth YAS), an action and crime drama with romantic sub-plots. The two episodes were chosen because both series contain a comparable number of comments and are of slightly different genres. Table 1 gives an overview of the corpus for our case study. 5919 timed comments were posted. The languages employed in the comments are predominantly English in both cases (YAS: 55.2%; MH 60.2%), followed by French, German, Portuguese and Spanish (in different sequences; all of the comments are part of the corpus).[13] No information as to the first languages of the commenters or their nationality is available. Judging from the often non-idiomatic English use, it is safe to assume that both native speakers of English and users of English as a lingua franca write the posts written in English.

The numbers of posters are high in relation to the overall total of comments per episode (YAS: 1045 different posters; MH: 872 different posters), and of these the majority only post one comment. Others, however, post up to 68 comments in the case of YAS and 70 comments in the case of MH. In other words, taking the large overall totals of comments in both series into account, there are no individual participants who dominate the floor. However, when considering that the episodes only take about one hour, this means that a small number of commenters (7 in total) are quite active and post up to 70 comments within this time frame.

3.2. Methodology

While we had plenty of anecdotal examples of the negotiation of culturally relevant practices as shown in Examples (1) and (2) from our overall viewing experience, we wanted to understand more systematically for what purposes timed comments are used by viewers. In order to pursue our hypothesis that the timed comments are indeed used to translate culture to each other, we thus developed a code book bottom up, which aimed at establishing the types of contributions the posters make with respect to content. Following the method of establishing a qualitative code book for this content analysis (MacQueen et al., 2008), we refined the list of codes until over 75 per cent coder agreement was reached for each code individually by two independent coders. In order to reach this result, 5 coding cycles were made with MH. A sixth cycle was added after completing the coding of YAS since one more code surfaced. A post could be tagged with more than one code as multi-functionality of the posts quickly surfaced. This coding can be based on the entire post or on individual parts of the text. Unclear codes were jointly discussed.[14]

In what follows, we will first present the results of our coding typology since the codes themselves represent the spectrum of what kinds of activities the coders engage in (Section 4) and then turn to a brief discussion of their distribution (Section 5). These results will serve as a backdrop for our aim to discover how culture and the negotiation of pragmatic meaning emerges and is negotiated through the content of the posts. In Section 6, we discuss a number of codes and interactions in more detail to reveal the dynamic nature of the data and the scope of the discussions with respect to cultural translation processes and the emergence of a fan community.

Table 2
Coding overview, multiple coding of a comment possible, ordered according to likely sequence of appearance.

Artefact-oriented categories	Community-oriented categories	Artefact- and community-oriented
- Anticipation	- Time/place of watching	- Emotive stance
- Genre	- Nationality	- Culture
- Plot	- Number of watching experience	
- Intertextuality	- Knowledge of actors/groups	
- Character/actor	- General wisdom	
- Diegetic technique	- (Further) self-disclosure	
- Criticism of artefact	- Interaction with commenter	
	- Viki (subtitles, ads, etc.)	

4. Results of the coding typology

The first finding is that the commenters engage in a rich gamut of activities, which resulted in 17 different codes (Table 2). On the topmost level, the comments can be grouped into those directly linked to the streamed episode (Section 4.1), and those that are not primarily triggered by the episode (Section 4.2). The first group is more artefact-oriented, while the second one is more community-oriented. In many cases, however, commenters clearly orient towards both artefact and community

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[13] The metadata of the comments contains language information in the form of keyboard settings. However, since we found that this information is unreliable, we decided to employ language detection on the entire corpus and employed langdetect (Danilk, 2020, which is a Python port of Nakatani, 2014) to this purpose. Languages were tagged for the five main languages and only if the detector established a probability of at least 60%. Lower confidence, other languages and comments that did not contain any words (e.g. those only consisting of emojis) were tagged as 'Other'.

[14] As the code book is 17 pages long, it can only be made available upon request.

(Section 4.3). In order to provide the reader with a better understanding of what commenters post on, we will explain and exemplify each code.

4.1. Artefact-oriented categories

When it comes to orienting towards the artefact, comments are made about the plot and genre and the making of the ongoing episode. Commenters also look beyond the episode and drama they watch and speak about the larger context by referring to other artefacts as well as to their characters and the actors that play them.

The code **'anticipation'** is for comments in which the viewers express looking forward to the viewing experience. This code clusters especially at the beginning of the episodes and towards the end.

(3)   Finally!! waited months for this drama! (anticipation, YAS)
(4)   That was great!! looking forward to the next ep :) (anticipation, MH)

The codes 'genre' and 'plot' both deal with the content development of the drama. The code **'genre'** is applied when commenters make explicit mention of genre categories and/or display knowledge/awareness of expectations about fictional genres. In Example 5, mention of mystery crime is made, which displays awareness of fictional genre conventions. Example 6 is about a fairly explicit scene depicting sexuality. The commenter compares this to their experiential knowledge about K-drama, finds it at odds with their existing subjective understanding of genre conventions and finally expresses acceptance and even grants the drama permission to *carry on*.

(5)   So Is this gonna be a mystery crime drama too? (genre, MH)
(6)   I am so not used to all this "action" in Kdramas but I'm okay with it! Carry-on! (genre, MH)

The code **'plot'** is used for comments on the development of the story line, comments that make assumptions about potential past or future developments and those containing judgments on characters (Examples 7 to 9).[15]

(7)   So the woman who hit him was a woman I wonder if it's the girl he met (plot, MH)
(8)   Oh Crap! Is he gonna get murdered making him a suspect 'cause he was the last one seen w/ her? Hmm (plot, MH)
(9)   They were both out of line. That's how it is in a fight, you use what hurts the most. (plot, YAS)

The code **'intertextuality'** is used when posters draw analogies to other artefacts. In Example 10, the character in *Meloholic* magically gains the ability to read women's thoughts, which is similar to the plot in the US movie mentioned in the comment. In this case, intertextuality is thus employed for the purposes of plot interpretation and was also coded as 'plot'. In Example 11, in contrast, mention of the Korean TV series *Doctor Stranger* does not refer to the plot, but displays knowledge of Korean TV in general.

(10)   This is like *What women want* with me Gibson (intertextuality, MH, italics added)
(11)   he sounds like that north korean guy from *doctor stranger*... but i maybe wrong (intertextuality, YAS, italics added)

The final three codes in the artefact-oriented categories are 'character/actor', 'diegetic technique' and 'positive or negative criticism of artefact'. Example 11 is an example for **'Character/actor'** because this code is used for comments on a character's or actor's appearance, looks, or voice and love/hate declarations. Example 12 is another case in point (*gorgeous. I want her eyes*) as well as the explicit mention of the actress's name (Go Ah Ra; also coded as 'knowledge of actors/groups', see below).

(12)   go ah ra is absolutely gorgeous. i want her eyes. (character/actor, YAS)

The code **'diegetic technique'** is for any comments on the artistry of the video such as filming, the writers, producers, etc. Example 13 is a case in point and was also double-labelled with the last code in this category: **'criticism of artefact'** (Example 4 is another example for 'criticism of artefact').

(13)   Damn you K-Drama writers! Why do the mothers always die?!. (diegetic technique, criticism of artefact, YAS)

As is the case in Example 13, such comments can also make explicit reference to story events (and are then also coded as 'plot'). However, the different stance that is taken by commenters towards the artefact, including their orientation towards processes of *appreciation* of the artefact rather than *imagination* (Clark, 1996), warrants a separate category.

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[15] While we are aware of the traditional distinction in narratology and poetics between plot and story, i.e. between the surface and deep structures of narratives (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002: 12—17), we use a broad understanding of plot here that unites both concepts. In other words, we categorized any reference to story events and plot elements as 'plot'.

4.2. Community-oriented categories

The second cluster of codes are community-oriented rather than artefact-oriented in the sense that the commenters reveal aspects about themselves that are not directly linked to the artefact. In order to position themselves as part of the community, commenters identify the **'time and/or place of watching'** (Example 14, see also Example 16 below).

(14)   MCR STARTED PLAYING AND I FELL OF MY CHAIR AND MY MAM CAME UP TO MY ROOM TO ASK IF I WAS OKAY LMAO (time/place of watching, YAS)

Commenters also identify in terms of **'nationality'** (Example 15).

(15)   Vem BR ('I come from Brasil'; nationality, MH)

In some cases, comments simply express how many times the commenter has seen the current episode already: **'number of watching experience'** (Example 16).

(16)   3rd time watching this!! 23rd March 2018 😊🐾 xD (number of watching experience, time/place of watching, YAS)

Members of the community also display **'knowledge of actors/groups'** and their activities (names, being members of K-pop groups, dating, etc.) as in Example 12 above and Example 17, in which the names of the actors (rather than the names of the characters) are mentioned upon their appearance on screen (Go Ah Rah, Seungri):

(17)   Seungri oppaaa 😍😍😍😍 (knowledge of actors/groups, YAS)

At times, the commenters share **'general wisdom'** or insights, which are not directly linked to the plot, although probably inspired by it, as in Examples 18 and 19.

(18)   A man never understands a girl's hair. (general wisdom, YAS)
(19)   never wear a bookpack while being chased..EVER (general wisdom, MH)

All of the labels introduced so far can be argued to be related to self-disclosure since the commenters self-select to write and to share their insights. However, in addition, the code **'self-disclosure'** was used for comments that revealed a personal aspect about a commenter that could not be covered by the other codes or that complemented these codes. Example 20 is a case in point where a commenter reveals that s/he has brothers.

(20)   such a good son. better than my brothers at least (plot, self-dislosure, YAS)

We coded **'interaction with commenter'** when comments (a) address other commenters by user name, (b) contain the abbreviation "@lc" (addressed 'at last comment'), (c) are posted as questions, or (d) are otherwise identifiable as tying in with other comments (e.g., through proximity and semantic connection). Example 22 shows a reaction to Example 21.

(21)   for some reason i think she looks like anne hathaway...maybe its just me!! (character/actor, knowledge of actors, YAS)
(22)   @LC - it's not just you - she does resemble Anne Hathaway (interaction with commenter, YAS)

The last code in this group refers to any comments that are about the Viki community or the functioning of **'Viki'**, such as advertisements (Example 23) or the appearance of subtitles (Example 24).

(23)   Ads ads ads (Viki, MH)
(24)   The subltitles are late (Viki, MH)

4.3. Artefact and community-oriented

Since our coding scheme allows multiple coding, multifunctionality of comments can be modelled by combining codes from the artefact- and community-oriented categories we introduced in Sections 4.1 and 4.2. We found, however, that there are two types of comments that are clearly ambiguous in their orientation and thus need to be conceptualized as both artefact- AND community-oriented: 'emotive stance' and 'culture'.

The first code is entitled **'emotive stance'**. Here both positive and negative emotions as well as all types of humour were coded. Often, these posts just contained laugh particles (e.g. *hahaha, kkkk, jajaja*), acronyms (e.g. *lol, wtf*), emoticons (e.g XD, =)) or emoji (e.g. 😊). This code is also used when there is a particular lexical indication of positive or negative stance (e.g. the use of verbs such as *hate* or *love*). Comments of this type are often ambiguous in terms of reference and could either orient towards the artefact itself or express stance towards a previous comment.

Whereas other codes may implicitly refer to culture (see Section 6), we used the code **'culture'** for instances where we felt that the Korean culture is made salient or the commenter's own culture is reflected on. This was the case when lexical borrowings from Korean were used because they indicate knowledge of Korean culture. In Example 25, the English transliteration of *ballii* ('hurry up') and the address term *Oppa* (older brother and term used by women to address their older boyfriends or close acquaintances) are used to address the male character.

(25)   BALLII OPPA!! xD ('hurry up, Oppa', YAS)

The code was also used when cultural comparisons or evocations were made. These comments point to observations of the Korean culture or the commenter's own culture. For example, in Example 26, the European exchange student program *Erasmus* is mentioned, which opens a window into a culture other than the Korean culture portrayed in the artefact. Any comments about rudeness/im/politeness were included into the label 'culture' as well because the lexemes evoke norms of conduct which are culturally tied (Example 27).

(26)   AH, ça sent les étudiants Erasmus ! ;) ('ah, this feels like Erasmus students ! ;)', culture, MH)
(27)   I don't agree. Learning about someone is part of liking them, she could have guided him more and her break up was RUDE (culture, MH)

Finally, the code **'other'** was used to signal potential future code-development and **'unclear'** was used for all those codes that were unintelligible and could not be assigned to any of the other codes. In the next sections, we will discuss how these codes are distributed and afterwards how they are linked to the translation of culture.

Table 3
Distribution of coding for YAS and MH, episodes 1.

	You're All Surrounded		Meloholic	
	n	%	n	%
Artefact-oriented codes	**2562**	**38.6**	**2259**	**42.1**
Plot	1298	19.6	1165	21.7
Character/Actor	421	6.3	210	3.9
Criticism of artefact	212	3.2	310	5.8
Diegetic technique	231	3.5	303	5.6
Intertextuality	295	4.4	198	3.7
Genre	45	0.7	53	1
Anticipation	60	0.9	20	0.4
Community-oriented codes	**1393**	**20.9**	**946**	**17.6**
Interaction with commenter	620	9.3	547	10.2
Knowledge of actors/groups	517	7.8	192	3.6
Self disclosure	108	1.6	119	2.2
Viki (subtitles, ads, etc.	38	0.6	30	0.6
General wisdom	56	0.8	28	0.5
Nationality	0	0	12	0.2
Time/place of watching	23	0.3	10	0.2
Number of watching experience	31	0.5	8	0.1
Artefact- and Community-oriented codes	**2594**	**39.1**	**1904**	**35.4**
Emotive stance	2397	36.1	1825	33.9
Culture	197	3	79	1.5
Remaining codes				
Other	6	0.1	17	0.3
Unclear	78	1.2	89	1.7
Total	**6633**	**99.9**	**5215**	**97.1**

5. The distribution of codes

In Table 3 the codes are presented in their groups (distribution in bold) and are ranked according to their frequency within the groups.[16] Looking at the overall distribution of the codes, we can first state that the artefact-oriented codes make up the strongest group (YAS: 38.6%; MH: 42.1%), followed by the mixed group (YAS: 39.1%; MH: 35.4%). The fact that the latter group is so strong is due to the code 'emotive stance' which is the single most used code overall (YAS: 36.1%; MH: 33.9%). The community-oriented group makes up 20.9 per cent for YAS and 17.6 per cent for MH.

We interpret this distribution to mean that viewers turn to the comments for several reasons that are equally important and make up the appeal to write and read[17] the comments. This can be seen in the three codes that are used most: 'plot', 'emotive stance' and 'interaction with commenter'. These first three codes (i.e. the first in each group) make up 65 per cent of the comments in both episodes.

The first reason to turn to commenting seems to be the wish to share emotive reactions (the code 'emotive stance'), featuring the full range of sharing laughter, sadness, disgust, etc. As Zhang and Cassany (2019b: 21) report, this function has also been observed by Spanish viewers during the live watching of the Spanish TV series that they study on bilili.com. Sharing emotive reactions about a viewing experience of a TV drama is thus a strong motivation across communication channels. However, Zhang and Cassany (2019b) do not comment further on the importance of this for their danmaku data. In our data, this community-orientation is also strengthened with the third most used code in both episodes, which is 'interaction with commenters' (YAS: 9.3%; MH: 10.2%).

Secondly, sharing the interpretation of the artefact by engaging in interpreting the plot, commenting on its development and assessing the characters as expressed in the code 'plot' appears to be similarly appealing to the commenters. This code represents the second most used code (YAS: 19.6%; MH: 21.7%). The act of interpreting is also achieved by other, less-used codes in this group. In the case of the danmaku observed by Zhang and Cassany (2019a, b), plot-relevant statements also made up an important part of the practice.

Thirdly, in combination with the already mentioned codes, engaging in commenting by displaying knowledge of actors/ groups and genre, as well as drawing on intertextuality allows commenters to actively engage in a fan practice and construct their fan identities. By drawing on their own diverse cultural reference points, sharing these with others and juxtaposing them to what they see in the streamed episode, cross-cultural negotiation emerges. The fan community is thus reflecting on the K-drama from a multi-cultural vantage point. In what ways the possibility of commenting is used to negotiate culture is further discussed in the next section.

6. Discussion of distribution in light of the translation of culture

Table 4
The code 'culture' in its distribution.

	You're All Surrounded		Meloholic	
	n	%	n	%
Korean address terms	75	36	25	31
Korean borrowings other than address terms	41	20	27	33
Culture comparison or evocation	87	42	23	28
Relational work	5	2	6	7
Total	208	100	81	99

Our hypothesis for this paper is that the commenters also use their contributions to make sense of Korean culture as depicted in the TV dramas, and are thus engaged in processes of translating the cultural 'other'. Our case study of two first episodes shows this to be the case but not as frequently and straightforwardly as we had expected, or as clearly visible as in Examples 1 and 2 discussed in the introduction. Table 4 shows the distribution of the code 'culture' in more detail. Let us first discuss the more straight-forward examples where 'translating the cultural other' surfaces and then look at the overall picture of how culture surfaces in all codes more generally.

The first two categories pertain to lexical borrowings (see examples below). The Korean language is rich in specific address terms to index family relations as well as relations of seniority and hierarchy and prefers these terms to first names or pronouns (Koh, 2006; Locher and Larina, 2019; Rhee, 2019). This richness is present in the Korean original but reduced to a large extent in the English subtitles. The comments also do not reflect the richness of the Korean address terms, but are reduced to a number of more easily accessible borrowings, such as senior, mother, father, brother, sister. For the latter two, the viewers make the Korean distinction as to whether the person speaking is male or female; thus the choice of whether to use

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[16] There is a noticeable difference in the ranking of 'Diegetic technique' and 'Criticism of artefact' in *MH*, which ranked higher than in *YAS*. The reason for this is a shaky (hand-held) camera technique during one lengthy scene in MH, which triggered many critical comments by the increasingly annoyed viewership.

[17] Since viewers can deactivate the display of comments, we assume that the motivations to read them are similar to the motivations of the contributing members.

onni/nuna (older sister) as well as *oppa/hyong* (older brother) depends on whether you are male or female yourself. The second group of borrowings are made up of further lexical items indicating emotive stance such as *omo* (oh no), *aigoo* (oh dear), *heol* (wow), *daebak* (wow, cool), *aishhh* (sh*t), as well as borrowings of actual content words, such as *wheyo* (why), *joseon* (the Joseon dynasty time period), or *pabo* (fool) (all Romanized spelling taking from the original comments). Overall, the viewers display their knowledge of Korean culture by using these lexical borrowings from Korean. Since they are not translating these terms for each other, they assume, establish and draw on common ground (Clark, 1996) and thus create an in-group of K-drama fans.

The third category contains comments in which the Korean or the commenter's own culture is evoked and thus made salient. In the case of 'translating the cultural other', we can first state that drawing on and evoking one's own culture is an active process of analogy and thus provides a moment of cultural comparison and reflection during which similarities or differences can be made salient. Secondly, comments were also used to ask questions about Korean culture and engaging in discussions about the issues raised. In the case of YAS, the opening scene entails the four main young characters, who are all police rookies, and their two seniors in a car chase with a group of criminals. The police members all sit in a van and none of the four characters in the back put on their seat belts despite a very risky and dangerous driving style during the chase. This triggers numerous comments about wearing seatbelts. Example 28 shows a selection.

(28)   YAS, very beginning of episode 1, bold added
        a) umm seatbelt?
        b) Seatbelts! Is it so hard to understand that seatbelts are important?
        c) The real question is: why aren't they wearing seatbelts?
        d) I cringe **every time** they don't wear seat belts in **kdramas** 😖
        e) KOREA DOESNT HAVE SEATBELTS ?????
        f) seatbelts might be a good idea? just a suggestion xD
        g) Wow everyone knows that **Koreans are horrible drivers** :D
        h) Finally! someone put a seatbelt on hahah bravo seunggi
        i) yes seatbelt...LONG LONG TIME AGO should wear already dey
        j) he's just now putting on his seat belt?
        k) You know it's serious when K person puts on a seatbelt in the back seat.
        l) SOMEONE IS SMART. SEATBELT
        m) I think this is a very **accurate depiction of how Korean's drive in South Korea... they cray**!

This selection contains comments that simply point out that seatbelts should be worn for safety, but there are also some that make the practice of not wearing seatbelts in the back culturally relevant (see bold). Comment d) refers to k-drama as a genre and positions the commenter, who claims to have noticed this practice before, as a seasoned K-drama watcher. Comment e) asks the community about this practice in Korea (as a matter of fact, in South Korea wearing seatbelts in the backseats only became compulsory in 2018).[18] Other comments, such as g), k) and m), claim epistemic knowledge of how Koreans drive and behave in non-fictional contexts. A scene which is not at first sight particularly prone to trigger cultural reflection nevertheless provides the opportunity to engage in dialogue about practices specific to Korea and also reveals the commenter's own expectations derived from their own cultural vantage point.

Other instances in YAS are questions and comments about why knives are blurred out when shown in K-drama (a form of censure), the existence of witness protection programs, the role of women in society, and — an explicitly linguistic angle — the role of regional dialect (satoori), as shown in the selection of comments presented in Example 29.

(29)   YAS, episode 1, 29.50 min. ff
        a) i can hear the country in their accents
        b) Is this Korean???
        c) with this accent it ALMOST.....sounds like she's speaking japanese..sometimes
        d) CLEARIFICATION:in korea theres many difrent types of accents thats why they call it the ╲"seoul accent╲" or whatever place
        e) its country accent
        f) If i didnt watch kdramas then i would of thought she was speaking Japanese
        g) i love that they use satoori (accent)
        h) okay there is something weird! they don't speak right! it feels annoying seriously!!!

Being able to differentiate between different regional dialects of Korean, or at least being able to hear differences (but not necessarily having access to their indexicality) means that the commenters have in fact already developed an ear for Korean (see Planchenault, 2017 on the use of regional dialect features for fictional characters). Others not yet familiar with Korean language variation can learn by means of the comments that such differences exist.

In the case of *Meloholic*, there were clusters of comments that discussed the Korean drink Soju and its potency, the K-drama convention not to show explicitly sexual scenes which was broken in this episode, as well as an exchange about the compulsory military service for Korean men. This latter discussion was triggered because the main character interrupts his university studies to serve in the military and then returns a different man, while the actor who plays this character had just made his come-back after serving in the military himself.

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[18] See: https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/03/119_246469.html.

(30)   YAS, episode 1, 33 min. ff
        a) Who looks this happy to be going into the military? LOL
        b) The happiest boy to go to the military ever lol
        c) He very excited about military
        d) how ironic, Yunho oppa just got discharged from the military too
        e) its funny since he actually JUST GOT OUT of the military
        f) Every male is required to serve in the military for 2 years
        g) How long you stay depends on what you do while in the military. If it's the easier ＼"pathway＼" it can go up to 3 years
        h) Hmm.. why three years and not two?

The examples discussed above make aspects of Korean culture as portrayed in the TV series salient. The commenters raise issues they note, discuss them and negotiate them. There is of course no guarantee that what viewers share represents Korean culture accurately, but the point we wish to make here is that the commenters self-select to comment and ask questions. They thus turn to the other viewers for reactions. In turn, there are self-declared experts on Korean culture in the audience who volunteer to give answers.

Finally, we explicitly coded instances of discussions of relational work since there are plenty of meta-discussions of politeness and impoliteness and thus negotiations of relationship construction in the streamed episodes in general (see example (1); Locher, 2020). However, the two episodes that made up the case study for this paper did not receive many timed viewer comments on relational work. In *You're All Surrounded*, there are no clustered examples about relational work. In *Meloholic*, a number of comments use the meta-pragmatic marker *rude*, to refer to the act of breaking up by text (e.g., 'I don't agree. Learning about someone is part of liking them, she could have guided him more and her break up was RUDE'). The second scene that is explicitly commented on with a meta-pragmatic marker is about two professors getting ready to becoming intimate in one of the professor's office. He had just picked up his phone to tell his secretary that no phone calls should be forwarded for 10 min. One of the viewers labelled this behavior as rude and others also comment negatively (and humorously) on the duration of 10 min.

(31)   MH, episode 1, 28.50 min. ff, bold added
        a) Um, they getting ready to get busy...
        b) AT LEAST LOCK THE DAMN DOOR
        c) 10 minutes? That's it? **Rude**.
        d) really?
        e) ONLY NEED TEN MINUTES
        f) Lmao
        g) Only 10 minutes?
        h) 10 MIN IS ALL? BRO
        i) Only ten minutes? Like ＼"grab and run＼"?

As mentioned before, however, the surfacing of culture is not limited to the code 'culture'. In the drama-oriented categories, the code 'genre' and 'intertextuality' are particularly prone to transport cultural knowledge including knowledge of genre convention in general (romance, mystery, etc.) and K-drama conventions in particular. For example, in the comment 'Now all we need it the BIG WHITE KILLER TRUCK […]', the truck refers to the fact that small trucks in Korea are often white and are frequently used in K-drama plots to eliminate or incapacitate characters in that these are run over by such trucks. In referencing such genre elements, a shared understanding of genre conventions emerges, is reified and shared with others.

In the case of 'intertextuality', the commenters make many connections to other K-dramas but also to mainstream US American or British artefacts (e.g. *What Women Want*, *Harry Potter*, the genre superhero films, etc.). In this way, the commenters add their culture and references to the artefact for any future viewers to read. As we foreshadowed in the introduction, the commenters are thus inquirers into Korean as well as their own culture. By positioning cultural moments in K-drama relative to both cultures, the community — in terms of Tomaszkiewicz' (1993, quoted in Pettit, 2009, p. 45—46) translation strategies — employ a form of adaptation: They dynamically re-conceptualize Korean culture and jointly make sense of it by tying it in with their existing knowledge of Korean culture as well as of their source cultures.

Discussions of intertextuality and genre may also affect the appreciation of the individual drama or the genre in general. When viewers understand story elements as versions of previously existing ones from other artefacts, they potentially frame K-drama plots as derivative, or they discover a joint cultural reference point of Korean and non-Korean fiction.

In the community-oriented categories, any mention of the viewers' own context and experiences enriches engagement with the artefact as well as the artefact itself and enhances the international feel of the community. This is not to imply that there is only a strive for harmony and no conflict between the viewers at all. In the first two episodes of our case study, however, the critical stances towards each other are marginal (of the 1167 comments that entailed an interaction with another commenter only 45 contained explicit criticism).

We find that viewers use the comments to position both themselves and their viewing experience in absolute terms as well as relative to other members of the multi-cultural community. Whereas the timed comment feature on Viki foregrounds the text-time of the video and provides very little information about the real time when comments were posted, commenters share information about the time and the place of their viewing. Implicitly this form of self-positioning can be read as an appeal for others to disclose similar information and to find sub-communities of viewers that are streaming the episode at a

similar time or in a similar location. In addition, viewers also seek others from the same linguistic and cultural background explicitly. In community-oriented contributions of a more personal nature, viewers also self-disclose facts about their private lives − often tying them in with the video scenes they are watching. Moreover, viewers share their view of life in what we termed 'general wisdom' and they jointly negotiate their views on subtitles, ads and the artefact itself. As expected, we only find few and short dyadic interactions between commenters, but viewers do ask questions about such aspects as plot and culture and others self-select to answer the questions that have become part of the commented artefact. However, for the most part, and in particular when emotive stance is shared, viewers seem to jointly but separately talk about aspects of the artefact and its context rather than to engage in multi-turn exchanges about any given topic.

7. Conclusions and outlook

In Section 2, we asked:

(1) What do commenters do in the timed comments and what are potential cumulative effects of their contributions?
(2) What aspects of K-drama culture and the viewers' own culture appear in the timed comments, and in what ways can this be seen as evidence of cross-cultural mediation?

By establishing what viewers comment on (which resulted in a code book of artefact-oriented and community-oriented codes as well as codes that oriented to both sides) and how the discovered codes are distributed, we were able to first obtain an understanding of the complexity of the interaction (Sections 4 and 5, linked to research question 1). On the basis of the knowledge of the codes and their distribution, we were then able to address question 2 in Section 6. We discussed how the code 'culture' worked and also that discussions about the culture depicted in the K-drama and the viewer's own culture were not restricted to this code but emerged in creative combinations throughout the commenting practice. This resulted in a discussion of Korean culture as portrayed in the TV dramas, reflection on the viewer's own culture and the creation of a fan community, which creates and shares common ground. Just like translators can act as cross-cultural mediators (Bassnett, 2012), the commenters also contribute to cross-cultural mediation. The pivot is the Korean artefact itself but the voices that are shared are multi-cultural.

Throughout this paper, we have followed a broad understanding of 'translation' that goes beyond the prototypical processes of rendering the meaning of a source text in a target text (see Bassnett, 2012 on the metaphorical understanding of translation and cross-cultural mediation). Our claim is not that all timed comments should be primarily treated as products of translation, nor do we find evidence that the community itself thinks of this technology-mediated practice in terms of a translation process. However, our analysis has shown that in addition to the communication of source text meaning in interlingual subtitles (see Locher, 2020, for the challenges of translating the Korean original into subtitles), the Viki community members help each other to better understand aspects of the Korean source text. In references to text and context, we see evidence of the orientation towards the source text dialogue; in questions, intertextual links and explanations we find attempts to collaboratively make sense of those source text aspects. Zhang and Cassany (2019b) asked in their research whether danmaku will help Spanish language learning. Their findings show that commenters do engage with questions about language but, similar to the commenters on viki, they also talk about culture, plot, characters, and genre more generally. Danmaku use in bilibili as well as timed comments in viki are thus multi-functional. In this vein, our study provided insights into the contribution of timed comments to the understanding of the artefact and thus to the translation of culture. In further research, we will turn our attention to the community-creating potential of the comments and will in particular work on the display and functions of emotional stance. This code was the most important one in both episodes (YAS: 36.1%; MH; 33.9%) and expresses an entire spectrum of emotions. Among them, how laughter and humour is shared promises to be a particularly fruitful research avenue. In connection with this, we also wish to explore further how the fan-community creates an in-group feeling through appropriation of Korean lexical borrowings. Finally, we want to study further how the subtitles that contain comments by subtitlers and the comments by viewers (as in Examples 1 and 2 in the introduction) can work hand-in-hand in making culturally marked phenomena accessible to the international target audience. For this, we plan to work with a larger dataset. Communal viewing platforms such as Viki or bilibili with their complex participation structure thus offer much potential for future pragmatic research.

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