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Adapting Job Interviews: A Cross-Cultural Study of TV Dramas
İş Görüşmelerinin Uyarlanması: Televizyon Dizileri Üzerine Kültürlerarası Bir Çalışma

Abstract

This study conducts a comparative analysis of job-interview scenes from the South Korean series *She Was Pretty* (2015) and its adaptations in Turkiye (Seviyor Sevmiyor, 2016) and China (Pretty Li Hui Zhen, 2017), focusing on how visual elements such as mise-en-scène and shot-length-distributions reflect cultural differences and emotional proximities. By integrating qualitative textual analysis with quantitative shot-length analysis, this research examines the visual grammar of these adaptations through the lens of Multiple Proximities Theory. While mise-en-scène varies across adaptations, shot-length serves as a consistent visual tool for conveying emotional expressions, even when the distribution patterns differ. This interdisciplinary approach highlights the value of combining visual semiotics with statistical data to deepen our understanding of how cultural and aesthetic proximities are communicated in transnational television dramas.

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Öz

Bu çalışma Kore dizisi *She Was Pretty* (2015), onun Türkiye'deki (Seviyor Sevmiyor, 2016) ve Çin'deki (Pretty Li Hui Zhen, 2017) adaptasyonlarındaki iş görüşmesi sahnelerinin karşılaştırmalı analizini yaparak mizansen ve çekim uzunluğu dağılımının kültürel farklılıkları ve duygusal yakınlığı nasıl yansıttığını inceler. Nicel metin ve nitel çekim uzunluğu analizlerini birleştirerek adaptasyonların görsel gramerini Çoklu Yakınlıklar Teorisi çerçevesinde ele alır. Bulgular mizansenin adaptasyonlar arasında değiştiğini, çekim uzunluğunun duygusal ifadeleri iletmek için tutarlı bir görsel araç olduğunu ve bu tutarlılığın çekim uzunluğu dağılım grafikleri değişik olsa bile işlevini koruduğunu göstermektedir. Bu disiplinlerarası yaklaşım, görsel göstergebilimi istatistiksel verilerle birleştirmenin ulusötesi televizyon dizilerinde kültürel ve estetik yakınlıkları anlamak için nasıl kullanılabileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Keywords
Transnational dramas, tv series, shot length distribution, cinemetrics, television aesthetics

Anahtar Kelimeler
Ulusötesi dramalar, televizyon dizileri, çekim uzunluğu dağılımı, cinemetrics, televizyon estetiği

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Introduction

Television dramas are one of the most accessible forms of entertainment. Across cultures and countries, people sit in front of their television almost every day to watch various kinds of content and appreciate the stories being told. The variety of content is further expanded through transnational drama adaptations, where the success of a show in one country often leads to strong ratings in the adapted country. With the global reach and cultural resonance, television dramas offer a unique lens into social norms and values. As a form of popular culture, they both reflect and shape cultural perceptions in many ways. This study focuses on one specific visual element, shot length, for quantitative analysis, to explore how cultural differences emerge within the seemingly universal context of the job interview. By examining the job interview scenes in the South Korean drama *She Was Pretty* (2015) and its adaptations *Seviyor Sevmiyor* (*Likes Dislikes*, 2016) and *Pretty Li Hui Zhen* (2017), the aim is to uncover how shot length distributions can be used as a metric to gauge aesthetic and cultural proximities.

The selected series share a common narrative structure while originating from distinct cultural contexts, offering a unique opportunity to explore how a single storyline is reinterpreted across different markets. Their popularity across South Korea, Turkiye and China indicates strong cultural resonance and effective localization, making them ideal for analyzing cultural proximity and adaptations strategies. The job interview scenes, chosen for their narrative parallelism and cultural specificity, provide a focused site for comparison, helping to reveal how power dynamics, gender roles and workplace norms are portrayed differently in each version.

The guiding research question of this study is: How do shot length and mise-en-scène in job interview scenes reflect and shape aesthetic and cultural proximities across different cultures? Using the lens of *Multiple Proximities* Theory by Straubhaar and La Pastina (2005) alongside the Cinemetrics tool, which provides quantitative data on the shots and shot lengths, the study analyzes how cultural proximity is reflected in the formal elements of these scenes across different adaptations. Shot length distribution graphs offer a quantitative perspective on aesthetic proximity, highlighting how screen pacing can mirror business culture. The duration and number of shots help convey the scene's pace, meaning, and emotional tone. In parallel, the qualitative analysis focuses on mise-en-scène and décor, framed by Multiple Proximities Theory, with particular attention to its cultural proximity aspect. By combining the shot length distribution and the visual mise-en-scene analysis, this study reveals how a universally recognizable scenario, the job interview, serves as a site where global storytelling meets localized cultural expression.

Shots and Shot Lengths

Despite differences in the ways of unfolding stories, both films and television series share aesthetic details that enrich the story and support the narrative. The style or aesthetics of a content include details like camera movements, editing and sound which feed into the storytelling. Jolien Van Kaulen (2016) argues that aesthetic proximity corresponds to the production and audience contexts because both sides are affected by culturally shaped stylistic choices. While cultural boundaries guide production styles and decisions for producers, they also influence audience preferences by setting expectations for culturally resonant storytelling and aesthetics. "Style is a substantial aspect for reaching multiple audiences in a transnational television market, and that it should be considered from a dual, local and global perspective" (Van Keulen, 2016: 12). The complex style of the television contents helps to construct the stories in a very elaborate and specific way, which increases the realism and sentiment in the series. "Skilful editing also makes a huge contribution to the management of emotional responses, as it is used to shape visual information and to move between general framing and the greater intensity of close-up" (Zagalo and Barker, 2006: 172). Through editing, the mood of a scene can be carefully crafted, leading the audience's emotional engagement and reinforcing a sense of perceived reality.

Aesthetic choices such as camera movement and shot length determine the tempo and visual style, directly influencing the audience's perception of time. Adams et al. (2000) argues that "motion and shot length contribute equally to the perception of time" except in specific cases where techniques are used sparingly for artistic or narrative clarity (Adams et al., 2000: 354). Similar to film, shorter shot durations and increased motion in television can accelerate the perceived pace of a scene. Camera movement and shot duration serve as tools through which directors and editors influence the viewer's experience and temporal perception. Directors and editors use these techniques strategically to sustain viewer engagement, particularly in long-format episodes. By manipulating shot rhythm and visual dynamism, creators can maintain pacing to avoid viewer fatigue and reduce the risk of audience disengagement in a highly competitive broadcasting environment.

Since structural characteristics, such as shot length and motion, play a critical role in shaping how messages are delivered and received, analyzing these features becomes essential for understanding audience engagement. Viewers must keep up with the encoded messages embedded in both content and structural elements, such as narration, shot length, and sound, since they have no immediate control over the unfolding content, and failure to do so may lead to disengagement (Lang et al., 2000). To understand how these stylistic choices influence audience experience, we can measure shot lengths to identify moments where editing either accelerates or decelerates the narrative pace. Editing readily lends itself to statistical analysis because shot lengths are relatively easy to measure, allowing researchers to translate a qualitative stylistic element into quantitative data (Butler, 2014).

The length of shots in English-language films has been declining over the years. A study by Cutting et al. (2011) on the shot lengths, shot motions and luminance of Hollywood films show that shot lengths and motions increase over time while the luminance decreases. The possible reasons for the decline in shot durations are "to increase their control over viewers' attention, and possibly to increase viewer engagement." (Cutting et al., 2011: 570). While there is a broader trend of decreasing shot lengths in cinema, television dramas have distinct structures that are determined by episodic pacing and national formatting norms. Turkish dramas, for example, are known for their long episodes that are exceeding 120 mins, specific narrative and production styles (Öztürkmen, 2018). The differences between the television drama conventions of a specific country is reflected in the stylistic, aesthetic and cultural elements in the localization practices.

It is also possible that the increasing tempo of daily life is reflected in the pace of films and television contents in general. The changing editing patterns and the length of shots signal an evolving narrative style in the contents. The stylistic elements such as the number and length of shots, sound and music, flashbacks and mise-en-scene influence the audience and create effects that shape the watching experience. The "[...] serial narrative builds into 'affective moments', thereby producing a distinctive mode of aesthetic experience [...]" (Garcia, 2016: 8). Therefore, the analysis of the editing patterns and the shot lengths provides valuable insights to interpret these affective moments.

Methodology and the Analysis

This study combines quantitative analysis of editing patterns with qualitative analysis of visual and cultural elements in transnational adaptations. This integrated methodology allows for a more comprehensive examination of how narrative pace, stylistic choices, and cultural values are negotiated across versions of the same story.

Quantitative Analysis: Shot Length and Editing Patterns

The quantitative part of the methodology uses the Cinemetrics tool, an 'open-source film measurement software' that serves in quantitative analysis of films (Allen, 2015). It is a movie measurement and study tool database where data like shot length and number of shots are stored. Salt and Redfern offers detailed explanations and methods for Cinemetrics analysis (Salt, 2011; Salt, 2012; Redfern, 2013). The statistical figures and the graphs help to decipher the cutting rate, movie tempo and pace. For instance, Tsivian uses trendlines of shot length graphs to determine the dynamics of editing and the tempo of the story (Tsivian, 2013) while Redfern suggests that the use of graphical displays and methods allow testing the assumptions and sound analysis of styles and features (Redfern, 2013). Thus, the use of shot length distribution graphs along with the statistical insights support the discussion of the adaptations

of series from South Korea to Turkiye and China. These insights are then extended through a qualitative analysis of specific scenes, enabling a deeper understanding of how stylistic choices contribute to the localization of foreign content.

Average Shot Length (ASL) is the mean shot length of a film, calculated by dividing the total runtime by the number of shots. While widely used to describe a film's visual style, ASL alone can be misleading, especially if there are outliers (very short or very long shots) that skew the average. According to Redfern (2010) relying solely on Average Shot Length (ASL) can lead to misleading conclusions, as it is sensitive to outliers. He suggests using the Median Shot Length (MSL) instead, as it is less affected by extreme values and more accurately represents the midpoint of shot durations, providing a clearer indication of a film's editing pace, where shorter MSL values generally suggest faster cutting. On the other hand, Salt (2012) cautions against using MSL alone to assess the visual style of a film because the MSL ignores the shape of the shot length distribution graph, which is also essential for stylistic analysis.

As Redfern claims, lower ASL does not directly mean a faster editing style. MSL alone also could not explain everything about the content editing, because MSL ignores the shape of the shot length distribution graph as Salt argues. So, the shape of the shot length distribution graph is the most descriptive tool to explain the editing style and the pace of the content. The context of the graph helps us to make inferences beyond the scope of statistical figures. This graph not only reflects the editing pattern and pace but also offers deeper insights when matched with the context of individual shots. Analyzing the graph alongside statistical figures allows for a more precise assessment of editing styles and facilitates meaningful comparisons across different visual works.

By quantifying shot rhythms through median and average shot lengths and by looking at the shot length distribution graphs, it is possible to compare the narrative tempo across adaptations and relate these differences to local storytelling techniques and industrial norms. In this way, the measurement technique itself becomes a tool for unpacking how cultural identity is visually encoded and adapted across transnational formats.

Qualitative Analysis: Mise-en-Scène and Cultural Context

The qualitative dimension of the analysis complements the statistical findings by examining mise-en-scène elements, including camera movement, framing, spatial arrangement, sound, and actor positioning, to interpret how emotional tension and character psychology are conveyed. In addition to formal analysis, the study draws on Multiple Proximities Theory to understand how adaptations align with local audience preferences.

The concept of multiple proximities was introduced by Straubhaar and La Pastina (2005) as they drew attention to the contents that were sold to markets without any shared language or culture. They suggest that "shareability also refers to common values, images, archetypes and themes across cultures that permit programs to flow across cultural boundaries" (La

Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005: 278) because the cultural proximity is limited by three factors: Material and structural limits at the production level, economic or reception barriers, and other less tangible barriers. "Material and structural limits at the production level" occur as some countries do not have the production means for the originals that cater to the domestic demand; "structural barriers of income or economic capital at the individual reception level" occurs as people do not have access to media (their example of not having access to satellite could be extended by not having access to streaming networks or internet today); and "less tangible barriers of cultural capital at the individual level" occurs when people cannot choose or understand the media due to various reasons (La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005: 279). These limiting factors accompanied with the complex cultural identities bring out the necessity of multiple proximities.

The glocal culture trivializes the dichotomy of the similar with the foreign because localization and globalization erases the fine lines between the self and the other. Multiple proximities challenges this dichotomy and offers new perspectives to describe the preferences of the audience. Although domestically produced content is the most preferred type (Straubhaar, 1991) due to the relatable themes, familiar faces and localized storytelling, defining what audiences consider familiar is increasingly complex. The study of transnational adaptation gains new relevance when viewed through the lens of multiple proximities, since cultural proximity alone does not fully explain audience choices. Viewers tend to select content that is culturally, linguistically, or geographically relevant. However, establishing rigid boundaries of relevance is difficult because "these tendencies are dynamic and relational" and factors such as subgenre relevance and shared historical experiences also play important roles in shaping preferences (La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005: 273). As Straubhaar (2007) suggests, the cultural identities are multilayered and complex with geographical, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic dimensions.

Cultural proximity can explain the popularity of Korean Drama in East Asia but is not enough to capture the worldwide interest in Korean Drama. Similarly, Turkish series are not only popular in the Middle East; Turkiye is expanding the series market even to Latin America. There has to be more than geographical or cultural proximity that unravels the direction of the format and series adaptations overseas. Setijadi also argues that cultural proximity alone offers a rather shallow analysis of the transnational flow of contents, because there are "social, economic and macro-historical factors that may have affected audience's perception of cultural similarities in transnational media texts" (Setijadi, 2005: 200). Therefore, the Multiple Proximities Theory is a better way to discern the factors of popularity and power in transnational adaptation.

Multiple proximities offer fresh and interesting ways to examine certain contents and understand the underlying values, thoughts, inclinations and effects. Dynamics like thematic, religious, historical, value and genre offer more specific points of views that allow a more thorough analysis. Especially in the analysis of transnational adaptations, the Multiple

Proximities Theory presents advanced means to detect the particular attributes that are unique to the localized or most of the time glocalized content. Beyond deepening our understanding of audiences' interests in the different contents, multiple proximities create additional opportunities to look at how television formats are transformed when they travel to various locations. Thus, this approach not only reveals how these contents are tailored to be more familiar to local audiences in their destinations, but also indicates how the adapted versions remain connected to the original and its different variations through multiple proximities.

The Proximities and the Analysis

There are various levels of proximity, each shaped by different dimensions of lived experience and everyday life. To explore these proximities, job Interview scenes from the first episodes of *She Was Pretty* (South Korea), *Seviyor Sevmiyor* (Turkiye) and *Pretty Li Hui Zhen* (China) series are selected. These series were selected due to the clear and traceable adaptation patterns across culturally distinct television markets. As a popular romantic comedy with a global appeal, *She Was Pretty* presents a narrative structure that is both culturally specific and structurally flexible, which makes it ideal to explore a single storyline being localized in different socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, the shared plot structure in the adaptations enables a controlled comparison of the stylistic, narrative and cultural differences.

Job interview scene can offer a universal framework of job seeking, while incorporating culturally specific business norms, communication practices and gender expectations. Thus, the job interview scene becomes a significant site for observing how each adaptation recontextualizes the same situation according to the local job practices and adaptation strategies. Since all three versions, namely, the South Korean original *She Was Pretty* (2015), the Turkish adaptation *Seviyor Sevmiyor* (2016), and the Chinese adaptation *Pretty Li Hui Zhen* (2017), follow the same core script, it is possible to discover cultural, industrial and narrative details in a specific and easily traceable setting.

It is important to recognize the adaptation lineage in this case: the South Korean *She Was Pretty* (2015) serves as the original source, while the Turkish *Seviyor Sevmiyor* (2016) and the Chinese *Pretty Li Hui Zhen* (2017) are localized adaptations derived from it. Therefore, the discussions of the scenes start with the South Korean original, followed by the Turkish adaptation and then the Chinese adaptation. The South Korean original is an hour long, the Chinese version is 45 minutes, while the Turkish version is 2 hours. The South Korean and Turkish versions have the same episodic storyline although the Turkish version has a lot of filler scenes. The Chinese version does not use the full storyline of the first episode of the original and cuts the story just after the first encounter of the lead actors and leaves the rest for the second episode.

Job interview scenes in the South Korean original, and its Turkish and Chinese adaptations are inherently different from each other because of the contextual differences. The

South Korean original keeps the interview scene very short, adding other job related scenes later in the episode. In contrast, the Turkish version of the scene is very long with the preceding storyline in which the protagonist gets lost in the building. While the preceding scenes actually affect the storytelling and emphasize the protagonist's confusion and inexperience, the actual interview scene happens when she is faced with the boss and answers the questions along with the fellow interviewees. For the purposes of this analysis, I define the beginning of the interview scene at the moment she enters the interview room. The Chinese version portrays the protagonist very shy and hesitant; however, she manages to defend herself against the other interviewee, though she remains discouraged.

For the analysis, the business culture and the gender dynamics are explored through the mise-en-scene and a shot length analysis of the same scene is provided for the quantitative dimension. This approach makes it possible to examine how the cultural and aesthetic proximity is reflected in the shot length structure of the scene which makes up the visual structure. Shot length is not only a stylistic element, but also a culturally shaped choice that reflects each version's narrative rhythm and local expectations. The use of Median Shot Length and Average Shot Length helps to uncover the details of general pace. However, the Shot Length Distribution Graph is prioritized to understand the style, rhythm and adaptation, and to detect any outliers. The significantly long or short shots correspond to the specific moments in the scenes, which explains the differences between the versions.

The South Korean original She Was Pretty

In the South Korean version, the protagonist sits on the side and tries to answer the questions. Her rival speaks in English but her language skills are not enough, so she speaks in Korean. The interviewer addresses her with a code number and then her name, which increases the level of formality and thus the tension. Her rivals laugh at her answers. As other interviewees mock her, she tries to keep her composure while she gives explanations of her previous short work experiences and unfamiliar university. The protagonist is sitting on the left side and leaning towards the interviewers as she answers a question. Her body position tells her excitement even though we do not see her face. Male interviewer sitting in the middle is the decision maker, scrutinizing the interviewees. There are two male interviewers and one female while there are two female interviewees and one male. There is a male dominance on the higher hierarchical position.

She Was Pretty - (*approximately 10:47 - 11:52 mins of the first episode*)

Although the job interview scene plays a key role in the narrative, it is notably brief in the South Korean original, lasting only 1 minute and 4.6 seconds with a total of 30 shots. Figure 1 shows the Shot Length Distribution Graph of the Job Interview scene of *She Was Pretty*.

The opening shot is very long, especially compared to the following short shots throughout the scene. During that extended shot, we listen to another interviewee speaking in English about her achievements, but the camera slowly pans towards the protagonist as she anxiously waits for her turn. Once she starts her interview, the length of shots are short. The exchange of questions and answers during the interview results in shot and reverse shots.

Figure 1
Shot Length Distribution Graph of *She Was Pretty* - Job Interview Scene

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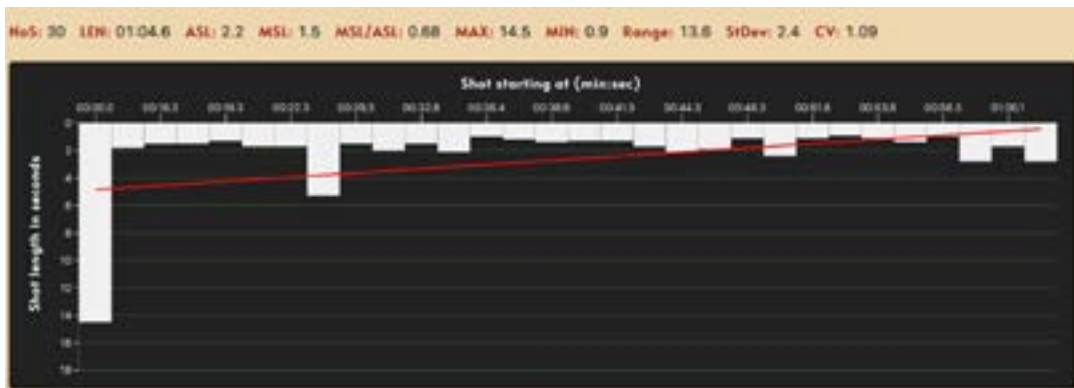
The shortest shot lasts only 0.9 seconds, highlighting the rapid pace of the editing. The continuous short shot lengths after one long length shot heightens the apprehension of the scene. Short length shots make the pace faster and the anxiety of the job interview is felt with the repeated shot length shots through the scene. The trend line shows a clear decline in the shot lengths on average.

The Turkish version Seviyor Sevmiyor

In the Turkish version, the preceding scenes are a lot longer than the South Korean original and the Chinese version. The protagonist continuously faces obstacles as she tries to find the correct interview room. She falls down just in front of the building, struggles with the malfunctioning automatic door, she cannot use the elevator, the room is changed, someone pranks on her about the new interview room, she frantically runs up and down the stairs asking people for the right room. Although she eventually finds the room, she arrives late and is initially asked to leave the interview. She leaves the room disappointed but bringing her motivation up, she enters the room to convince the interviewer to sit in the interview. All these details preceding the job interview scene prepare the audience for a successful interview as the protagonist keeps her head up. We sense she has nothing to lose after returning to an interview even though she was told to leave in the first place. Therefore, her confidence is exacerbated even more.

During the scene, the three interviewees sit across from two interviewers. The audience views the interaction from the interviewers' perspective. All three female interviewees sit on tall chairs, with pink backgrounds that actually frame the characters separately. The protagonist sits at the center even though she enters the room last, and wears a black suit which contrasts the colorful outfits of the other interviewees. The protagonist answers the questions in confidence even though she does not have the knowledge. Her limited English does not prevent her from speaking in English about fashion, which results in humorous moments. She appears pretty confident with her high pitched voice and sturdy composure. Her small talk about fashion in English does not mean much due to her lack of English, but this situation feeds the comedy as she confidently struggles with the language.

The two interviewers sit behind a long and low table. The female interviewer is the authority and the male interviewer is the assistant. The higher rank interviewer is a woman, differing from the other versions. There is a female dominance in the room, as the decision maker is the female boss and all of the interviewees are women. The boss is stern and judging, causing the humorous interview of the heroine to look ridiculous. The white wall, furniture and the outfits of the interviewers contrast with the large colorful picture of the magazine on the wall. Since they are interviewing for the magazine's internship role, the shot emphasizes the significance of the magazine and the pressure of the job. Although the male interviewer is with a lower rank, we later learn that he is the one to convince the boss to hire the protagonist.

Seviyor Sevmiyor - (*approximately 32:29 - 35:48 mins of the first episode*)

The job interview scene is longer in the Turkish version, lasting 3 minutes and 19.7 seconds with 80 shots. The preceding scenes are also interview related as the protagonist tries to find the interview room. Even when she finds the room, the boss tells her to leave the room because she is late. She leaves but then comes back with courage. For a better comparison, all the preceding scenes are left out of this quantitative analysis. The job interview scene starts at the moment the protagonist enters the room (second time) asking to be in the interview after she defends herself. Figure 2 shows the Shot Length Distribution Graph of the Job Interview scene of *Seviyor Sevmiyor*.

During the short shot lengths at the beginning, we see the faces of the boss, the editor and the protagonist as she explains herself. The spikes occur when she makes a determined speech about her wish to be included in the interview and get the job eventually. The long length shot at 0:59 is the spike of the scene that focuses on the protagonist and the audience feel her determination. The long length shot enhances her self-certainty.

The following shot length shots are during her interview. The short shots increase the pace of the scene as the protagonist tries to speak in English, or explains why she stopped working at her previous jobs. Her talk is shown in cuts to make her effort seem comedic. The one long length shot among the short length shots occurs when the protagonist takes a test for

her fast transcribing skills. Even though the shot length is long, the camera moves from the protagonist to the editor to his watch, then to the editor again and then to the protagonist. The camera movements in this shot act as cuts, so the long shot length does not decrease the pace.

Figure 2

Shot Length Distribution Graph of *Seviyor Sevmiyor* - Job Interview Scene

During the last spike, we see the protagonist's contemplation about her chance of getting the job. Her hopelessness is accompanied by the longer length shot. The trend line is showing a slight increase in the shot lengths, in contrast with the South Korean original, where there was a clear decrease in the shot lengths throughout the scene. We can say that the short and long length shots are scattered in the scene for the Turkish version with the changing focus from the comedic moments and the apprehension of the interview.

The Chinese version Pretty Li Hui Zhen

In the Chinese version, the five interviewers sit just across the five interviewees. During the interview, there is a male dominance in both sides, but we see the female rivalry during the interview as the other female interviewee degrades the main character by belittling her attire and appearance. When compared with the other versions of the series, the Chinese protagonist is represented as the least confident one. Her low voice trembles at times and she appears insecure compared to the protagonists in the South Korean and Turkish versions. The crowded setting and the numerical dominance of men highlight the adaptation choices that reflect the job interview context in China. Interestingly, despite this clear male dominance in the interview environment, the primary conflict arises from a female competitor. Similar to the South Korean original, the interviewees are addressed with a number and then with their names. The formality and the seriousness of the interview is further emphasized by the *mise-en-scene* elements. This is a job interview for a famous fashion magazine for an internship role, but the room appears rather cold and colorless, again differing from the other versions.

Pretty Li Hui Zhen - (*approximately 15:18 - 18:15 mins of the first episode*)

The job interview scene lasts 2 minutes and 56.9 seconds with 43 shots. Figure 3 shows the Shot Length Distribution Graph of the Chinese version of the Job Interview scene. The graph shows almost a uniform shape. Even though there is a spike towards the end, the trend line is almost linear which could mean that the pace does not change overall. The short length shots are not as short as the ones in the South Korean original or in the Turkish version. The fast pace of the South Korean original and the Turkish version could be explained by the comic mood of the scene and the high tension of the interview. The Chinese version is rather slow as the focus of the scene is the protagonist being an underdog. The only spike towards the end happens when the protagonist explains herself to the interviewers. Different from the Turkish version, we do not see a confident protagonist during the interview. Her voice trembles and she clears her throat. However, that long length shot around 2:57 is the only moment where she confidently defends herself after the other interviewee insults her careless appearance.

Figure 3
Shot Length Distribution Graph of *Pretty Li Hui Zhen* - Job Interview Scene

The stricter business atmosphere in the Chinese version is associated with a slower pace and longer shot lengths on average. The South Korean original has the fastest pace and the shorter scene; the excitement of the protagonist is shown with very short shot lengths. The Turkish version has the longest scene, and there are comical breaks with very short shot lengths. The combination of the short and long shot lengths corresponds to the lighter mood of the job interview, when compared to the other versions. These different trends in shot lengths correspond with the different cultural nuances that shape the scene in all three versions in a distinctive way.

Discussion

This section interprets the findings by combining the quantitative shot length data and the qualitative insights on mise-en-scène and sound design, examining how adaptation choices reflect local storytelling norms and audience expectations. The analysis focuses on three key aspects: pacing and editing, psychological depth and sound, and cultural and aesthetic proximity.

Pacing and Editing Styles Across Versions

Examining the statistical figures, the Chinese version has the highest average shot length (ASL) of 4.1 seconds and median shot length (MSL) of 3.4 seconds compared to the other versions. The Turkish version follows with an ASL of 2.5 seconds and MSL of 1.9 seconds, while the South Korean original has the shortest ASL of 2.2 seconds and MSL of 1.5 seconds. Thus, the South Korean version exhibits the fastest pace, as indicated by its lower shot length values, while the Chinese version has the slowest pace with longer average shot durations.

A comparison of the shot length distribution graphs across different versions of the same scenes highlights how shot length variations contribute to the scene's pacing. The South Korean version has the fastest pace. There are some similarities and differences among the versions, but the differences are not always consistent. For example, the Turkish version and the South Korean original are generally similar but the Job Interview graphs are different.

Psychological Depth and Sound Design

In addition to editing rhythm, the use of voice-overs and flashbacks provides insight into how psychological depth is communicated. The South Korean original and the Turkish version employs voice-overs and flashbacks. The flashback images overlay the face of the protagonist and we hear her telling about her childhood. All these overlapping elements add to the visual complexity of the narrative. According to John T. Caldwell, the image's complexity on the television "suggests psychological depth or subjectivity" (Caldwell, 1995: 149). The effort to convey the psychological depth suggests that the producers aim to keep the audience emotionally invested in the protagonist's journey. In contrast, the absence of voice-overs and flashbacks in the Chinese version results in a clean and simple narrative style positioning the audience more as external observers rather than emotionally immersed participants.

The use of sound in a series significantly influences the overall mood and viewer experience. "Although editing patterns construct self-sufficient narrative units, a specific manipulation of dialogue and music propels the story forward, beyond segmental boundaries, and beckons to the viewer to stay tuned," (Butler, 1986: 67). This is why all three versions of the series use music to support the mood changes in the scenes. When the protagonist is

contemplating life, there is slow music, or when the protagonist is running around to catch up with her life's duties there is faster and playful music. This common element in music choices accompanies the editing style and the shot lengths. No matter which country it is from, all three versions of the series have music throughout the scene to enhance the mood. If there is a higher pace, the short length shots come after another, and there is an entertaining or fast music accompanying those parts. During the longer length shots, a slow music enhances the effect of the shot. Most of the time, long length shots mean a moment of despair, realization, contemplation, or simply sadness. The underlying music accompanies the emotions that lingers in those longer length shots.

Aesthetic Proximity and Cultural Expression

While all three versions portray the protagonist as anxious and under pressure, the visual styles used to express these emotions vary. This points to the idea of aesthetic proximity; how culturally specific audiovisual languages are employed to express universally relatable experiences.

In the Job Interview scene, which indicates cultural proximity, the aesthetical differences result in different trends in the Shot Length Distribution Graphs. Aesthetic proximity is reflected through shot lengths and intersects with cultural identity by providing distinct visual structures of emotional intensity, social dynamics and authority that resonate with local expectations. Although in each version, the protagonist is anxious and feels as an underdog, the style of the scenes are distinctive. The South Korean original keeps the scene very short with one opening long length shot and then continuous short length shots, emphasizing urgency, social anxiety and hierarchical tension. In contrast, the Turkish version has a variety of shot lengths depending on the situation; there is even a comedic part with very short length shots that enhances the inaptitude of the character. The comedic beats and emotional pauses signal the melodramatic and character driven storytelling. The Chinese version has a steadier graph that stresses the nervousness of the strict environment with anxiety, conveying formality and quiet tension, which mirrors a collective harmony and restraint. The emotions are the same but how they are delivered differ between the versions, which means that the aesthetic choices stimulate the audience towards certain emotions. In order to represent the emotions locally in an emotionally proximate way, each series adopts stylistically different methods.

The concept of a job interview is common across cultures, as business practices often share universal elements such as interview questions, job requirements, and expectations. However, the variations in details across the three versions reveal how cultural nuances and hierarchical structures influence the setting and gender dynamics within the interview scenes. The South Korean original and the Chinese version show similarities in the formality of the business, as both address the interviewers with codes before their names. The colorless and minimal visual structure adds to the intensity of the interview and puts the protagonist in a

more strained situation. The similar business culture in East Asia is apparent through the comparison of the scenes. On the other hand, the colorful set up of the room in the Turkish version, bright colored costumes of the other interviewers and a large picture of the magazine on the wall creates a different *mise-en-scene* that actually elevates the mood and gives hope about the outcome of the interview while dramatizing the significance of the internship role. However, that hope is hindered by the stern female interviewer as she asks the protagonist, 'Do you really think that you belong here?' The question remains unanswered, and marks the end of the interview scene.

In all versions we see that the protagonist is being ridiculed in front of her competitors. Her talents and previous experiences are lacking and she seems worse off compared to the others. Yet, she manages to secure the internship job (which she later learns in the first episode for the South Korean and the Turkish versions, in the second episode for the Chinese version). In all versions, she gets the job because, being inexperienced and in a less favorable position compared to her competitors, she is more likely to endure the demands of the internship out of desperation. At this point, business practices and the nature of internship positions converge across cultures. However, the characterization of the heroine differs with their reactions to the gender norms in the business environment. The South Korean heroine is strong even during the moments of comparison and competition, while the Chinese heroine unconfidently tries to defend herself against her competitor. The Turkish heroine's take on the interview is humorous without intention, but she is still confident enough to come back to the room and fight for her place in the company.

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Conclusion

This comparative analysis of the job interview scenes demonstrates how a shared narrative framework can be reimagined through distinct cultural lenses. The micro-level, scene-based approach has proven effective in capturing subtle differences in style, social norms, and character portrayals, revealing how adaptation strategies reflect broader cultural, industrial, and narrative contexts. Moreover, the replicability of this scene-focused method presents opportunities for future comparative work, offering a scalable framework for studying transnational adaptations beyond this particular case.

It is compelling to observe how transnational drama adaptations alter the mise-en-scène and cinematography. To explore this further, analyzing the number of shots and shot lengths provides valuable insights into adaptation strategies and editing styles across different cultural contexts. The space and mise-en-scene is negotiated with the shot length distributions in the scenes across three cultures; Korean, Turkish and Chinese. The topic of business culture gets interesting as it can be examined through the lens of cultural proximity approach with both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The findings suggest that the Shot Length Distribution Graphs of each version of the job interview scene vary across cultures, a pattern

further supported by subtle differences in mise-en-scène. Among these differences, emotional expression emerges as the most prominent element influenced by shot length distribution. This divergence reflects aesthetic proximity shaped by the negotiation of space and emotion in each adaptation of the same scene.

The Job Interview scene places the protagonist in a very nervous situation because she struggles to convince that she deserves the job. The business practices, the strict business environment and the interview expectations indicate a cultural proximity. The insecurity of the Chinese protagonist, the gender dynamics and the humorous aspect of the Turkish version are among the localized parts of the scene.

Examining the pace of the scenes and analyzing the choices of short length and the long length shots reveals a pattern: moments of contemplation and despair are paired with longer length shots while the moments of excitement, danger and hurry are paired with shorter length shots in each version. However, how each version tells the same story differs with their aesthetic choices. For example, the Chinese version presents the strict and nervous job interview with a steady Shot Length Distribution Graph without much variation in the length of shots. However, the South Korean original starts with long length shots and keeps the following shots of the scene very short to emphasize the anxiety of the character. The Turkish version has a variety length of shots and chooses to deliver the feeling of anxiousness and inaptitude with stacks of short length shots. These differing stylistic choices accompany the emotional proximity.

In conclusion, looking at three shot length distribution graphs in total, emotional proximity becomes more relevant than the possible aesthetic proximity. The moments of excitement, joy, hurry and danger are shown with a series of short length shots, while the moments of despair, contemplation, sadness or loneliness are shown with long length shots. This emotional editing choice is apparent in all three versions of the series regardless of the country and culture. In this case, the Shot Length Distribution Graphs and the overall editing style bring out the localization practices while the single long length shots that show the moments of emotions indicate emotional proximity. Therefore, it is possible to claim an emotional proximity between the selected television dramas.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available in the: Cinemetrics Measurement Database. *The University of Chicago, Forum for Digital Culture*. Available at https://cinemetrics.uchicago.edu/database.

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