

## Superiority and Mimicry in Korea Reomit

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the hegemonic relationship between Jang Hansol and the other who initiate superiority and mimicry issues on the Korea Reomit channel. Jang Hansol's popularity clearly complements the hegemonic discourse of Korean colonialism in Indonesia, as obviously seen in the form of hybrid culture. The importance of this research lies in the absence of previous studies that examined the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer on YouTube. The researcher sees the presence of binary opposition between Jang Hansol and three content creators who play a role in their respective areas of subordination. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method by dissected three collaborative videos between Jang Hansol and Jerome Polin Sijabat, Alphiandi, and Natya Shina. It is readily apparent that the three videos serve as Jang Hansol's colonial strategy in maintaining his power as the superior while at the same time subjugating the position of the colonized. The findings show two hegemonic relations. First, the hierarchical relation shows that the colonizer expresses speech through native languages to strengthen his position as superior. Second, conflicting relations of the other show that the attempts to imitate the colonizer only produce imperfect imitation. These two relations show the Korean hegemony that has been built between Jang Hansol and the other along the surgin Korean Wave.

**Keywords:** Superior; Mimicry; Postcolonial; The Other; Youtube.

### INTRODUCTION

Since the Korean Wave hit Indonesia, the oriental look has been idolized and has become a spectacle. Enthusiasm for Korea is rooted in fans' desire to share values, temporal experiences, history, and culture (Iwabuchi, 2001). Moreover, Korea is a non-Western country that produces the most influential local culture (Kim, 2017) and has controlled the export of cultural products since the 2000s (Jin, 2016). At the same time, the digital mediascape is changing rapidly (Lee & Ahn, 2007), which significantly brings together the imaginary space of the Korean Wave's dissemination (Park, 2021). Through YouTube, anyone can watch the dissemination of a new identity discourse for Indonesian fans. Everything about Korea becomes fun and comforting. Not just imitating but also displaying the identity of mimicry.

Jang Hansol is one of many examples of participatory culture men who use this space as a medium to display identity. He joined YouTube in September 2013 with more than 14.94 million subscribers (Nox Influencer, 2022). Hansol, born in Daegu, South Korea, is popular for his Javanese language skills. The adaptation period, living in

Indonesia for 16 years and returning to his country, made Hansol have fond memories of Indonesia. All these experiences are narrated on the Korea Reomit channel. Hansol is known as the "*medok* Korean" because his Javanese accent was very thick. His love for Indonesia is shown in the video uploaded regarding the slavery of Indonesian on Chinese ships. His popularity causes several content creators, such as Jerome Polin Sijabat (Nihongo Mantappu channel), Alphiandi (Alphi Sugoi channel), and Natya Shina (Step by Step ID channel) interested in collaborating.

Hansol's popularity complements the discourse of Korean colonialism in Indonesia, in which hegemony appears in hybrid culture (Boxman-Shabtai, 2019). The subjectivity of the colonizer has always been related to the subject of the colonized, so the researcher sees the presence of binary opposition between Hansol and three content creators who play a role in their respective areas of subordination. This hybridity process challenges not only the cultural centrality of the colonizers and the marginalization of the colonized but also ideas that simply impact representation.

The researcher conducted literature observations on Andalas (2016) concerning postcolonial in films; Afdholi, Andalas, Talib, & Kamalia (2020) regarding postcolonial in advertising; Jeong, Lee, & Lee (2017) and Chang & Park (2019) about Hallyu fandom; Chung & Park (2020) exploring hybridity in the film; Oh (2017) on hybridity on YouTube; Kim (2017) regarding hybridity in Korean music idol groups; Cabalquinto and Soriano (2020) conducting a study on gender representation on YouTube. The absence of examining the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized on YouTube is why this research is significant. Thus, the researcher concludes that this research aims to explain the hegemonic relationship between Jang Hansol and the other who initiate superiority and mimicry issues in their video.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The Korean wave is a complex cultural and economic process in which the state's symbolic power is forcibly absorbed by the colonized. Media plays an important role in spreading the flow of information that satisfies one of the interests of the western world to dominate the whole world. Media is seen as a forum to present everything about information and ideas properly, thus generating responses and feedback. This absorption medium uses the YouTube platform as the second most popular purpose globally (Holland, 2016); Chang & Park, 2019; Chung & Park, 2020). Even Fitriana, Souket, & Yie (2020) emphasize that this platform can combine media production and distribution with social networking features, making it an ideal place to create, connect, share, and collaborate.

Media is also known as interlocutor, apart from being a place for the flow of information, as well as a communication partner that allows the emergence of interactive communication. By way of combining the technical skills of the young creators, YouTube offers a participatory culture to grow, interact, and learn. YouTube accomplishment in gaining a wide array of viewers reflects the contents it offers, the target viewers, and how users take advantage of it. The content is more than just entertaining but impacts psychological and interpersonal satisfaction (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017). Therefore, this trend precisely increases and accumulates the national symbol of Korea, creating prestigious and luxurious representation in colonized's minds (Jeong, Lee, & Lee, 2017).

The cultural influences in the colonial interaction between the colonizer and the colonized became the focus of postcolonial studies (Said, 1997). In addition, postcolonial attempts to uncover the sunk local insights due to the privilege of Western traditions. In line with Quayson's in-depth observations (2000), postcolonial involves past and present experiences observed locally and globally.

Said (1997) emphasized that the colonial works that gave birth to the orientalist had generated an extremely racist image of the relationship between the West and the East. The West as a colonial power has gained the dominant position to describe who is West and who is East. Such pattern of relations between the West and the East is always seen in a binary position and at the same time biased. While the West is labeled as the modern, the East is always seen as the outdated. Whereas the West is rational, the East is irrational, and so on. This perspective and paradigm will continue to be preserved even after the physical colonial period (independence) is over. The knowledge system of the orientalist has locked the Eastern world to remain in their inferiority while global capitalism ensure that profits continue to flow to the West.

The term postcolonial principally refers to several aspects. First, the term is frequently used to distinguish between the period before and after independence (the colonial period and the postcolonial period), as seen in the attempt to reconstruct national literary histories or present comparative studies between historical stages. Second, the term postcolonial also includes all cultures that have suffered from colonial rule from the early history prior to their establishment to the present. This is given to the sustainability of colonialism which has lasted since the start of the European imperial aggression until now.

The term postcolonial is a term that refers to the "aftermath" of colonialism. In fact, postcolonial does not only refer to the study of literature after the colonial era or the era of independence, but more broadly refers to everything related to 21st century colonialism which only leaves the United States as a late colonial nation.

In communication, postcolonial is seen as a representational practice between the colonizer and the colonized by using language, symbols, signs, and symbols. Text is deemed to play an essential power and position. For the colonialists, text serves as one of the most powerful tools of colonial control. As a means of communication, text plays a role as a supporting force and the most effective spreader of the hegemony of colonial power. Through the textual discourses that they spread, the colonizers shape the consciousness of the colonized and at the same time construct their identity. Bhabha (2007) proved that all models of colonialism in the universe are ambiguous and polysemous. Therefore, this practice is considered a colonial strategy for maintaining power as a colonizer and defending the position of the colonized.

Colonizers used the local community's image to maintain their power. The colonized people hoped to establish a common identity with the colonizers, and then the mimicry concept emerged, which became the main idea (Bhabha, 2007). Mimicry is a form of obedience to hide resistance to colonial subjects, a kind of local awareness to identify itself in hiding differences with the colonizer. In other words, mimicry is a form of obedience to express a rejection of the colonized to be different from the colonizer, which initiates ambivalence.

In society, mimicry results from the construction of the symbolic process of the colonial period. Mimicry is proof that the colonized are not always silent because they have the power to fight back. The mimicry concept is used to describe the process of imitating or borrowing various elements of culture. The mimicry phenomenon does not

show the dependence of the colonized on the colonized, but the imitator enjoys and plays with the ambivalence in the imitation process. The process of cultural exchange occurs through the identification and internalization of symbols of indigenous and colonial communities. The symbol is not merely a single meaning as a mere communication process but a colonial effort to maintain power or a new form of colonialism. As Spradley and McCurdy (1972) pointed out, cultural symbols produce appropriate behavior to accept these stimuli. Then Hall (1990) stated that mimicry becomes an identity that people unconsciously experience in the process of becoming.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method or descriptive research. Descriptive qualitative is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in written or oral expressions and observable behavior. The researcher watches three videos to answer the research objectives. The use of purposive sampling determines the requirements or prerequisites to specify the reference sample of the totality of Jang Hansol's video. First, the video is produced by Jang Hansol and others, as long as it collaborates with people born and living in Indonesia. Second, the video uses Javanese, Indonesian, or mixed languages. Third, according to the researcher's observations, the video does not contain postcolonial issues but is used as an example and comparison in determining the trend of diachronic thematic changes. Moreover, the analysis includes: listening to videos that have been taken as samples carefully and repeatedly; identifying, classifying, and comparing data; recording all results of data identification and classification; interpreting data; drawing conclusions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### HIERARCHIC RELATIONS

Hierarchical relationships, or those that tend to be dominant, are relationships that show differences in levels or categories between some particular aspects so that one element dominates the other elements. In other words, one element may be a sign of superiority, while another element is inferior. The hierarchical and dominant relationships in the text generally and reveal the similarities between Korean and Indonesian cultures.

In observing Jang Hansol's superiority, the researcher chose artifacts to show the binary opposition between superior and inferior. The initial observation was carried out on the collaboration between Jang Hansol and Jerome Polin Sijabat on the Nihongo Mantappu channel entitled *Battle Bahasa Jawa: Jerome vs. Korea Reomit*. Jerome Polin Sijabat named his Youtube account as Nihongo Mantappu. Nihongo Mantappu mostly contains the methods to learn math, Japanese, battle with content creators, and daily life in Japan. Jerome started his career as a content creator since December 23, 2017. Even though his contents are mostly related to academic aspect, Jerome has his own distinctive style in explaining materials while joking, giving the audience a pleasant impression. Thus far, Nihongo Mantappu has achieved 5.08 million followers and produced more than 400 videos.

Jerome Polin Sijabat is an Indonesian student who was awarded with a scholarship to study in Japan. While studying in high school, Jerome focused on getting scholarships abroad and participating in various Olympics. In February 2016, Jerome was declared to pass the selection for the Mitsui Bussan Scholarship, and in the middle of 2016, Jerome began his study in Japan after having a Japanese language training and Examination Admission in a Japanese University for a month. Jerome was admitted at Waseda University majoring in applied mathematics. The narrator explains the description of the context of the question asked, which is Javanese script. The narrator considers that Javanese script is a complex material to understand. Jerome was not familiar with Javanese script, and Javanese script is a symbol of Javanese civilization.



FIGURE 1. *Battle Bahasa Jawa: Jerome Vs Korea Reomit*  
(Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppUfTvVafgA>)

Hansol asked Jerome, "Don't you study? Never study?" Jerome replied, "I've studied it, just never used it. I don't know at all." Then Hansol replied, "Javanese script, I never got below nine." Hearing Hansol's confession, Jerome laughed and invited the narrator to read out a question.

The dominant relationship is seen in Hansol's reliability in understanding Javanese script. Jerome, incidentally a Javanese, born and lived in a Javanese-speaking environment, does not understand Javanese script. Moreover, Hansol emphasized that he had never scored below nine. Hansol's question to Jerome, "Don't you study? Never studied?" was an interrogative question that demonstrated Hansol's superiority. Jerome then laughed at Hansol's statement, which had two meanings: laugh at the oddity of a Korean who is good at reading Javanese characters and laugh at his incompetence as a Javanese.



FIGURE 2. *Battle Bahasa Jawa: Jerome Vs Korea Reomit*  
(Sumber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppUfTvVafgA>)

Hansol's reliability and dominance in battle were strengthened by his statement, "Keep your pride, *Rek!*". Jerome had previously shouted, "Crazy!" showing his admiration for Hansol's ability to guess Javanese script, which was very difficult to read. The word *crazy* means a compliment, something eccentric, beyond reason, and something that does not make sense because Hansol is not Javanese, and Jerome is the one who cannot read Javanese script.

Jerome's loss seems to add to the long list of Javanese tribes in Indonesia who are not good at reading Javanese scripts because of the crush of modernity that demands globalization. Whereas as a Javanese, Jerome should be able to read Javanese script, which contains philosophical values that uphold the relationship between God, humans, and nature.

Here, the other acknowledges Hansol's intelligence beyond his capabilities. The use of *pride* defines that Hansol consciously assigns value to oneself. The value is that he is a Korean who lived in Indonesia for a long time, fluent in Javanese, and good at reading Javanese script.



FIGURE 3. *Battle Bahasa Jawa: Jerome Vs Korea Reomit*  
(Sumber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppUfTvVafgA>)

*Rek's* pronunciation shows that Hansol wants to feel closer to the viewers of the Nihongo Mantappu channel or his fans with a typical East Javanese nickname. The word derived from *Arek* is a cultural identity from association or social interaction with high solidarity. Especially for Hansol, who used to live in Malang, the identity of *Arekan* Malang is in him.



FIGURE 4. *Restoran Mujigae Rasanya Beneran Korea Gak Sih!?*  
(Sumber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwYyRyY3Ykw>)

Alphi was one of the participants in the Indonesian Stand Up Comedy Kompas TV season 3 in 2013. Alphiandi has previously gained popularity as a K-Pop lover among the Indonesian viewers. In fact, he once participated in the K-Pop World Festival in Changwon South Korea in 2017 together with Tiffani Afifa and managed to get the champion. Alphi's passion for K-Pop is well portrayed on Alphiandi channel since he aired some videos of him doing various challenges, and his reaction to the performance of Korean girl bands and boy bands. Thus far, the channel has gained 718,000 followers and produced more than 430 videos. Sometimes, Alphiandi collaborates with other Youtubers, such as Raditya Dika, Sunny Dahye, Hansol and other content creators to cover K-Pop songs.

Alphiandi invites Hansol to eat Korean food at Mujigae (see Figure 4). Alphi's invitation shows a symbol of his strong passion for Korean food. In addition, Alphi did not even care if other people did not like Mujigae's food. Next, Hansol asked, "Compared to the Korean one, how similar is it to the original Korean one?" Alphi answered as follows:

"If it's very similar to Korea, it's definitely not. But to be delicious for Indonesians who want to feel the impression of eating Korean food, Mujigae is the right place."

According to Alphi, the food at Mujigae is delicious. As a K-Pop lover, this tendency is manifested through Alphi's efforts to imitate or mimic the taste, search, and selection of Korean food in the capital city. His words "If it's very similar to Korea, it's definitely not. But for Indonesian people who want to feel the impression of eating Korean food, Mujigae is the right place," explained that this restaurant does not have the authentic taste of Korean food. The Alphi's proclamation perspective can be interpreted as a form of anxiety or fear of the fact that Indonesians may not find a truly authentic Korean taste. By using the word *obviously not*, Alphi acknowledges the difference in taste. However, to get an impression of Korean food, according to him, Mujigae is a very appropriate place. The word impression hides the recognition of dissimilarity in taste and reflects the word of invitation for the possibility that people will trust Alphi's honest review more. However, Alphi's attempt to become Korean seems to be mocked and humiliated because he looks imperfect. The ridicule is also felt through the facts of Hansol's text:

"So that means it doesn't mean it's not good, right. Just not the same as food in Korea. Ok, so don't get me wrong. So I've never eaten at Mujigae at all. And because I'm Korean, I really want to know the taste and don't want to compare it. Ok, if that's the case, I'll try it, let's order."

The text shows an attempt at Korean imitation, which only resulted in an imperfect imitation, white but not quite. This imitation is called self-mockery, which means that by imitating the Korean style, the characters are mocking themselves because they will never be the same as Koreans. He wants to be a perfect Korean, but he will never be.

After that, Hansol and Alphi ordered food and were confronted with the menu. Hansol was surprised,

"Can add cheese in sundubu jjigae. It's like ordering pecel, but you can add cheese. (...) So just now Alphi asked, do you want to order a drink or not? No need, just drink water. Because in Korea, any restaurant, cheap, expensive, small, big, all of them give free water."

According to him, adding cheese to *sundubu jjigae* is strange, contradictory, and mixed. He then made an analogy like eating *pecel* and then adding a sprinkling of cheese on top. *Pecel*, a traditional and typical food of Malang, cannot be eaten with cheese. Hansol's metaphor shows how strange Mujigae restaurant's effort is for its diners by providing additional cheese. Cheese cannot be forcibly added to Korean food.

Hansol explained, "Because in Korea, any restaurant, cheap, expensive, small, big, gives free water." Mineral water has become standard to be given to customers. According to him, all restaurants in Korea will provide complimentary mineral water so that every customer does not need to reorder beverages.

In this case, the strangeness of Mujigae's presentation is represented by Alphiandi. He became a subject who accepted Mujigae's oddity for not denying these things. Because of that, Mujigae's mimicry was mediated through the other. Furthermore, the other gave excessive praise to Mujigae and even wanted to become Mujigae's brand ambassador.



FIGURE 5. *Restoran Mujigae Rasanya Beneran Korea Gak Sih!?*  
(Sumber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwYyRyY3Ykw>)

Alphi twirled the rice, trying to imitate the superior who knew more about Korean customs. Then, he re-explained what he was doing to a friend. Alphi's friend asked, "Then if it is round, then why?" Alphi chimed in, "So cool." The friend's question is a satire of the other's futile efforts. Twisting rice was considered an imitation of Alphi, which was not necessary.

At minutes 01:29, Alphi acted as if he was Hansol, "Yo... meet me again, an Indonesian who doesn't know me!" Alphi might say the sentence not with any particular purpose but just for fun. However, a postcolonial perspective sees it as an attempt to imitate, become like Jang Hansol, and use Javanese as a medium of expression. The ability to master and use language is a kind of superiority recognition. Therefore, the tendency to use and enjoy Korean in Hansol's narrative can be understood as residual Korean cultural hegemony.

The use of colonial language to express the other's ideas in the text symbolizes a pursuit of self-identity and finding new ways to enter the superiority space without authorization. Therefore, the use of a thick Javanese accent by Jang Hansol is an effort to meet the requirements of an ideal self-image and breakthrough barriers to entering the world of Jang Hansol's superiority as the ideal world of the other.

## CONFLICT RELATIONSHIP

The conflicting relationship found shows a contradiction between the attitude of Indonesian citizens towards Korea and the way they view Korea as a colonizer. This contradictory relationship is a form of relationship that places these elements in contradiction, or face to face with the other, situations, behaviors and understandings. Therefore, although it was suggested that the pattern of the relationship between Indonesians and Koreans showed a tendency toward an alliance, in reality, spiritual and cultural inferiority would never completely disappear.



FIGURE 6. *Diajak Makan Gurita Hidup, Tega!!*  
(Sumber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJ2Ut4bFWAI>)



FIGURE 7. *Diajak Makan Gurita Hidup, Tega!!*  
(Sumber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJ2Ut4bFWAI>)

In general, the text shows the influence of colonialism on Alphi and Natya's tendency to enter the ideal Korean world. This tendency then forms oneself as inferior and Hansol as superior. This tendency is manifested through efforts to imitate or mimic the superior style, and efforts to deny or turn their back on the value of their being Indonesian. In the text, the effort of imitation and denial is carried out solely as a prerequisite for entering his ideal world. How perfect the imitation and denial are cannot fully enter the ideal world.



FIGURE 8. *Diajak Makan Gurita Hidup, Tega!!*  
(Sumber: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJ2Ut4bFWAI>)

The other tries to break through the ideal world of being Korean through behavior and habituation. The text shows that the other tends to “become Korean” or modernize through changes in appearance and fashion. As the owner of the Step by Step ID channel, she has been in the dance field since she was only five years old. Natya is a Communication Science student at Parahyangan Catholic University who is currently pursuing her master's degree majoring in International Communication at Macquarie University Sydney. Even though she did not study dance in the formal dance academy, after graduating from her Master Degree Natya continued her hobby as a dancer and joined Pink Panda who played Rose Blackpink.

In 2016 Natya created a Step by Step ID channel. This channel allows Natya to broadcast her dancing talent, especially in covering dances from the YG girl group, Blackpink. Most of Natya's contents are related to dance covers with her friends, but apart from that, Natya also occasionally uploads videos with different contents, such as Natya Beauty, which contains reviews of Korean skincare and some other beauty tips. Natya Shina' Youtube channel has gained 525 thousand subscribers and has produced more than 270 videos.

Natya's hairstyle is colored golden, similar to a Korean singer group. Changes in hair, face shape, and fashion complement the gait, giving it a Korean-style elegance. This appearance is a Korean stereotype in the eyes of Korean people because colonial hegemony affects all aspects of life, including fashion.

A colonial culture forms the urban world among the natives. According to Kadir (2009), one form of the urban world recognizes the dapper concept. This concept originated among the urban natives who considered themselves to have a sense of dressing like a colonizer. Although not standard and considered imitative, this elegant style is a strategy for placing the body equal to modern colonial society. Thus, the imitation model does not threaten the colonizer. Clothes forming appearance unity and lifestyle attempt to demonstrate ideology and lead to the parameters of historical, socioeconomic, and anthropological conditions.

Fashion results from visual construction, social status, ideological possessions, political beliefs, and religion. Based on the collective experiences accumulated by colonizers in culture, innovative body structures are reintegrated into power. The individual structure defines that the body is lost and dissolves in blurring the boundaries between the colonizer and the colonized.

In the dressing rules, the colonizers create a dependence on lifestyle and fashion based on their references. A postcolonial perspective shows the ambiguity in colonial society. The colony emulates the community body to imitate all colonial styles, but, on

the other hand, it continues to define boundaries and, at the same time, interpret borders as not being part of the colony's unified whole. Therefore, the fashion in the text results from the formation of various disciplines because it must adapt to its expectations of the ideal world and the natural world that are considered to have power. Imitating becomes a symbol of the absorption of superior power.

Moreover, according to Kadir (2009), linguistic metaphors applied to objects ease identifying material culture and the symbolic characteristics of culture and goods consumed. This assumption concludes that clothing is the most expressive object conveyed by the human body's communication system. Fashion is an inherent language of the body, in which cultural principles, classifications, and processes are explained more specifically. This mimicry effort implies that the subject can be as beautiful, white, fashionable, modern, and civilized as Koreans, even though the reality is not perfect.

Furthermore, the text shows a tendency for self-mockery or making fun of oneself due to attempts at imitation or mimicry that do not produce perfect imitations, being entirely Korean. According to Bhabha (2007), mimicry is a sign of double pronunciation in the analyzed text. Its function is to fight the colonizers by imitating the colonizers. The imitation in the text manifests the colonial subject's desires and dreams about oneself and enters the colonial world. He believed that this was a guarantee of beauty, wealth and prestige, which was very different from the real world experience every day. In other words, the desire to identify with being Korean is imperfect, nor can it eliminate the boundaries or gaps between them.

Therefore, it concludes that imitation or mimicry leads to forming a part of the narrative character, not based on the desire or effort to put forward resistance or to resistance, but based on dreams and the realization of desires of a static subject. It is not only characterized by hierarchical and dominant relationships but also has contradictory relationships between fellow natives, as well as Indonesians and Koreans.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analyzed text shows that the relationship between the superior and the other in Korea Reomit can be understood from the speech, appearance, and taste. Jang Hansol educates the other and maintains a position as superior. Meanwhile, the other must acknowledge their superior position, explore their upbringing, and fight against superiors by performing mimicry, which is a manifestation of the desire to strengthen further the differences between being a native and the colonizers. It is seen in self-mockery or making fun of oneself due to imitation efforts that do not produce perfect imitations. In other words, the desire to identify themselves as being Korean is not complete and will not be able to erase the boundaries within them. The dreams manifestation through mimicry is to hide inferiority and the inability to reach dreams as their ideal world.

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