

Linguistic and Discursive Identities in
International Musical Collaborations: The
Case of 'Truth Hurts' by Lizzo ft. AB6IX*Identidades lingüísticas y discursivas en colaboraciones musicales internacionales: El caso de 'Truth Hurts' de Lizzo ft. AB6IX*

ABSTRACT: Music is a cultural product of undeniable importance as an entertainment product and a way of social and personal expression representing and reflecting aspects of the society that produces and consumes it (Frith, 1996). However, the globalization of music generates the contact of once geo-cultural targeted audiences and inevitably generates various processes of reconfiguration and cultural hybridizations. In this work, we aim to explore the influence of cross-cultural musical international collaborations, in this case, between the American artist Lizzo and the South Korean boy band AB6IX. Other works have pointed out that the K-pop music market benefits widely from these musical and linguistic hybridizations (Jie, 2023). However, this analysis focuses on a more specific sociolinguistic and discursive dimension. Thus, we seek to explore the various phenomena this dialogue produces at the cultural and linguistic hybridization level in a more profound and unintentional assimilation strategy. For this case, AB6IX's linguistic behavior has shown a tendency to assimilate and embrace some linguistic features of the singer Lizzo, being the most remarkable phenomena of code-switching, dialectal imitation, and discourse asymmetry in lyrics.

KEYWORDS: Music identity; Pop music; International Music collaboration; Identity hybridization

RESUMEN: La música es un producto cultural de innegable importancia como medio de entretenimiento y como forma de expresión social y personal que representa y refleja aspectos de la sociedad que la produce y consume (Frith, 1996). Sin embargo, la globalización de la música genera el contacto de públicos otrora geoculturalmente focalizados y genera inevitablemente diversos procesos de

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reconfiguración e hibridaciones culturales. En este trabajo, pretendemos explorar la influencia de las colaboraciones musicales internacionales transculturales, en este caso entre la artista estadounidense Lizzo y la boy band surcoreana AB6IX. Otros trabajos han señalado que el mercado musical del K-pop se beneficia ampliamente de estas hibridaciones musicales y lingüísticas (Jie, 2023). Sin embargo, este análisis se centra en una dimensión sociolingüística y discursiva más específica. Así, buscamos explorar los diversos fenómenos que este diálogo produce a nivel de hibridaciones culturales y lingüísticas en una estrategia de asimilación más profunda y no intencionada. Para este caso, el comportamiento lingüístico de AB6IX ha mostrado una tendencia a asimilar y adoptar algunos rasgos lingüísticos de la cantante Lizzo siendo los fenómenos más destacables el code-switching, la imitación dialectal y la asimetría discursiva en las letras.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Identidad musical; Música pop; Colaboración musical internacional; Hibridación identitaria

1. Introduction

Music as discourse is a medium of identity expression (Frith, 1996), serving artists as a way of communicating feelings and experiences artistically and transmitting them to other people, the audiences, often pre-delimited by specific rules and context (Scherer & Zetner, 2001, p. 373). However, with globalization, the barriers between music industries are beginning to disappear, and artists are increasingly aiming to connect with more internationally diverse audiences (Connell & Gibson, 2004), using various advertising strategies (Sargent, 2009), but also linguistic and discursive ones.

Whatever the artists' marketing strategies, their work is becoming more widely distributed worldwide, less limited by geographical aspects or linguistic and cultural boundaries (IFPI, 2023, p. 5). Music, then, is becoming increasingly international. However, this expansion also inevitably implies reconfigurations of local cultures, where the artist's expression must simultaneously aim to connect with a diverse audience from any location (Connell & Gibson, 2004, pp. 348-349).

In these musical contacts, which DeFrance calls 'musical syncretism,' the nego-

tiation of linguistic aspects is also essential (DeFrance, 2007, p. 15). Song lyrics are an excellent opportunity for contact between speakers worldwide, whose languages can mix to nourish our ears and the identities that blend and reconfigure during these processes.

Language in pop music has rarely been researched from a cross-cultural perspective. However, some works have pointed out the use of linguistic features in different music realizations that relate to the identity process. Thus, it would be interesting to deepen this topic and explore some cases of musical interaction from different linguistic perspectives.

In this work, we aim to analyze the different dimensions of dialogue between the languages and cultures of performers from diverse and well-defined musical markets (in this case, the USA and South Korea), but which, in the context of globalization, present suitable spaces for new identity configurations and cultural hybridizations reflected at different levels of artist construction.

Each of these markets represents neither a style nor a specific group of people but rather a musical culture in which

the strategies for creating products (songs, artists, performances, etc.) are viewed in a particular way and directed at a specific audience prototype (Peterson, 1997). Those differences involve a different language selection and many other identity implications, from the part of the artists and the public they address, that must interact to create a coherent product.

To this end, we have analyzed the musical collaboration of the American artist Lizzo, remixed by the South Korean band AB6IX, as a polyphonic discourse, i.e., one in which several entities interact at different levels. Thus, we seek to explore the various phenomena this dialogue produces at the cultural and linguistic hybridization level, starting from the base of socio-linguistic and discursive traits, to characterize and compare both music realizations.

It is important to note that we are speaking here only of the acts of identity approximation in the AB6IX part, as this is a remix version, i.e., an asynchronous collaboration whose verses by the artist Lizzo were already pre-recorded. However, future research projects might be interested in examining other modifications by synchronously collaborating artists that might or might not feature bilateral adaptations.

2. Pop music, (K)-pop and music internationalization

In the past years, music markets worldwide have presented significant economic growth that continues to expand and diversify economically and culturally globally (Bello & García, 2021). As the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry points out in last year's Global Music Report: "As

the music industry continues to grow globally, countries and regions are becoming increasingly interconnected while maintaining a strong sense of their own creative and cultural identity" (IFPI, 2023, p. 20).

This growth, and the consequent increase in competition and interconnections with ever more diverse artists and audiences, undoubtedly leads to dialogue between different cultures and, hence, to the mobilization of cultural identities (Weber, 2000, p. 120). Music, therefore, plays an essential role in transmitting cultural identities and actively participates in the dynamics of hybridization and reinforcement of cultural and transcultural identities across geographical regions.

This is also reflected in the distribution and consumption patterns of this kind of products in a reciprocal system.

We often talk of globalization and hybridization of cultures as a complex and ambiguous concept (Kraidy, 2002) that could be portrayed as a form of localized market assimilation of a dominant culture and neutralization of any trait of local culture, known as a deterritorialization of the music (Connel & Gibson, 2004).

The most significant markets are the USA, Japan, and the UK, ranked in 2022 (IFPI, 2023, p. 10). These countries, known for their economic proficiency, also wield substantial cultural influence in the global setting and, subsequently, highly influence other local music cultures in their internationalization and global distribution.

However, different ethnic localized music markets, such as the Latin American and Asian markets, still remarkably influence the global music panorama (Das, 2024).

As Connell and Gibson pointed out, the apparition of the term ‘World music’ represents a form in which these local musical cultures, often associated with ethnicity, accommodate and modify to be accepted by other cultures in their diffusion. They convey then to a process of commodification in which hybridization between the ‘international’ –often prescribed by Western markets– and the local identities mixed up:

Musical identities, like so much of popular culture, are now more transient and more evidently involved in fission and fusion than ever before. Escaping international influences – lyrical, ideological, stylistic or technological – is impossible, and rarely sought, while attempts to produce music with a specific local identity are necessarily shaped by global trends: the global and local are thus relational rather than oppositional (Connell & Gibson, 2004, p. 357).

That is the case in the South Korean pop music market. Korean popular music, or K-pop, has played an essential role in building and exporting Korean culture internationally and as a way of revindicating ethnic identification and consciousness (Kao, 2023). The success of K-pop as an international genre is due to various factors, one of the main catalysts being its tendency to include cultural mixtures and fuse them to attract diverse audiences.

Cultural fusions can be seen in the way bands are constructed. Korean music production companies have begun to borrow elements from cultures worldwide, not only

in the musical rhythms of hip-hop, R&B, or Western pop but also in the visual constructs of the artists’ images and performances (Jie, 2023, p. 671).

However, Ryoo (2009) mentioned that hybridization in the Korean Cultural Wave phenomenon (also known as Hallyu) is not reducible to a unique dimension. Instead, it is a communicative practice that defies the division of dominant and dominated cultures and creates a transnational community (p. 149).

Marwan Kraïdy (2003) proposed a globalization framework theory that defines this reciprocal process better. In this sense, not only is the local affected by the global level, but they are also a continuum that mutually influences the contexts of actions (pp. 38–41). Thus, these dynamics in music markets are not solely efforts to imitate a dominant culture—the American market—but constitute a complex dialectical system of constant negotiation of identities.

3. The link between music and identity

Musical practices display various aspects that implicitly or explicitly represent and engage with the social phenomena surrounding their production (DeFrance, 2007, p. 3). As a mass-mediated medium, the audience is simultaneously a ‘receiver’ and a ‘source’ of discourse (Hall, 1980, p. 53).

In the same way, musical identity is shaped by an individual’s personality and psychological and affective characteristics, which are innate and acquired throughout life (DeFrance, 2007, p. 2).

By doing so, music functions as a reflection of society and the everyday experiences of the context in which the artists find

themselves. It also creates and transforms the identities of those involved individually and collectively (Frith, 1996).

On another dimension, the artist's *persona* plays a vital role in how these are perceived, distributed, and consumed, considering specific prototypical characteristics attributed to an artist's image as a way of easier identification with audiences to be commercialized (Peterson, 1997).

Patti Donze (2011) described artists' *personas* as cultural constructs formed through representation conventions. These *personas* are designed to evoke specific emotional responses from the audience and foster identification along social identity lines (p. 48).

This musical *persona* can be influenced by voice, gestures, and perceived "authenticity" and is co-created by fans and social context. (Fairchild & Marshall, 2019).

Donze also identified 16 different types of artist personas common in pop music culture in the American market, each defined by a discrete mood classification and differentiated by gender. For male artists, these are Leaders, Emotypes, Romantic Singer-songwriters, Soul Singers, Summer Party Jammers, Sophisticated Singer-songwriters, Antiheroes, Thugs, and Absurd Extremists. For female artists, these are Underground feminists, Femme Fatales, Chanteuse Singer-Songwriters, Pop Princesses, Models of Femininity, and Divas (2011; 2017).

Thus, the singers' constructed image and perception are important elements of their artistic identity and musical products because they dictate an expected way of acting and an expected public to be addressed.

Musical identity results from the interaction between individual characteristics and those of the group to which one belongs or identifies, considering both psychological and social aspects (DeFrance, 2007, p. 4).

These complex systems of identity and music are still critical to research and explore as socialization. Globalization of music markets has become more common as they produce natural instances of identity reconfiguration. One of the clearest examples of this is in musical collaborations between producers and artists from all over the world, which are becoming more and more commonplace (IFPI, 2023, p. 16), and who, therefore, need to bring their own artistic identities into dialogue if they are to achieve success employing diverse strategies.

4. Language(s), dialect(s), Code-switching and music identity

Several researchers have associated various manifestations of cultural identification in music with this goal of self-definition through linguistic mechanisms, such as the association of a communication style used in hip-hop with a language recognized as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (Aleshinskaya, 2013, p. 434) and adopted by South Korean artists who also practice hip-hop (Jie, 2023, p. 675). We have already mentioned that K-pop, as a musical culture, benefits from integrating foreign cultures but, at the same time, responds to young people's desires to claim an autonomous identity, contesting traditional social norms (Niskakangas, 2019). Thus, the mechanisms of identification used in the South Korean

pop music industry are not only purely musical but also linguistic and, at deeper levels, ideological assimilation.

For instance, the ‘American accent’ has been widely employed in the music industry worldwide, e.g., in British rock music popularized by the Beatles (Trudgill, 1983). Trudgill identified this ‘act of identity’ as a possible explanation for this phenomenon, and that was, therefore, imitated by other bands (Gerwin, 2017). Similarly, the usage of phonetic traits of an ‘American variation’ was studied in New Zealand pop music (Gibson, 2019). Thus, adopting these phonetic traits would respond to an explicit and conscious desire to identify with a community of prestige as a form of pure imitation, in this case, of the American market, which has dominated the music industry since then.

However, others may imply that these phenomena of linguistic imitation happen unconsciously in the process of ritualization in music: “Recent evidence [...] suggests that these shifts happen largely unconsciously and that the use of one’s ‘own’ phonetic style in song, even when desirable from an authenticity perspective, takes effort and conscious control” (Gibson, 2019, p.13).

This way, the adoption of local linguistic traits by musicians would be associated with place indexing as a way to reinforce the image of ‘authenticity’ and ‘tradition’ in their musical productions (Gerwin, 2017, p.58) and the use of standardized or privileged variants would be used for internationalization ends.

In non-English speaking markets, such as the K-pop industry, linguistic traits of one ‘other’ are more evident, for example,

in code-switching between two languages –often English and Korean– but also in adopting linguistics dialectal traits.

Firstly, code-switching –understood here as switching between two language systems (Myers-Scotton, 2017, p. 218)– in K-pop songs has been widely studied from a linguistic and social perspective (Lee, 2004; Jin & Ryoo, 2012; Jocelin & Tryana, 2019; Niskakangas, 2019; Octaviani & Yamin, 2020; Nielbock-Yoon, 2020; Berliana & Anjarningsih, 2022; Schneider, 2023; Margaretta & Rangkuti, 2024) demonstrating that code-switching and language preferences in K-pop notably on English are a recurrent and growing strategy to facilitate communication and internationalize their reception.

Sanna Niskakangas concludes in her analysis of Code-switching phenomena in K-pop songs that the alternation between Korean and English responds to a desire for connection between the artist and their audience without needing to be a defining aspect in their ethnolinguistic context (Niskakangas, 2019, p. 11). In addition, code alternation in K-pop songs has also been identified as a conscious and considered linguistic choice associated instead with socio-cultural changes as a form of resistance to the traditional norms of Korean society to speak about taboo topics in lyrics (Jie, 2023, p. 675; Nielbock-Yoon, 2020).

Likewise, dialectal traits in K-pop have been demonstrated to be a popular linguistic strategy for identifying with other musical cultures, such as American hip-hop (Dubbledam, 2016). However, this differs from English-speaking musicians’ communities in that it is an African American Dia-

lect used and replicated as an identification strategy (Niskakangas, 2019).

According to the authors, the use of elements of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the lyrics of K-pop songs also represents a stylistic choice that not only responds to associations with international musical genres such as hip-hop (Aleshinskaya, 2013; Glatz, 2011) but also as a means of resistance and identity definition for young Koreans:

This resistance, which is rooted in a conscious decision to engage with languages and dialects associated with marginalized communities, reaffirms K-Pop's commitment to engaging with global audiences without losing touch with its local identity (Jie, 2023, p. 674).

In this way, the linguistic choices in K-pop songs meet the needs of linguistic and cultural identity construction by borrowing elements of English and Western musical cultures. It is also a way of defying social expectations without abandoning one's national identity and creating, instead of as a result, a new conscious and intentional hybrid linguistic identity.

5. Methodology of analysis

In this section, we explain how to proceed with the analysis and description of the corpus. First, we describe the analysis of the song in the three dimensions we will address: discursive, code-switching, and dialectal phenomena. Second, we introduce an overview of the song's context and production and describe the artists, following

the concept of the 'artist *persona*' (Donze, 2011) to interpret it later alongside their intervention in the song remix.

The song transcriptions were retrieved from Genius official lyrics (*Lizzo (Ft. AB6IX (에이비식스)) – Truth Hurts (AB6IX Remix), n.d.*). The given translations of Korean lyrics are personal and result in an approximate reference for illustrative purposes of this work only.

Song and artists' overview

The song chosen to carry out this discursive identity analysis is a collaboration between the American artist Lizzo and the South Korean band AB6IX. The song "Truth Hurts" is an original by singer-rapper Lizzo, appearing on her album released in 2017 and composed by her and Jesse Saint-John. The song gradually became a big hit thanks to its viralization on TikTok. In 2019, it became her first big hit and earned her several awards. It was recognized by Rolling Stone magazine as one of the 500 best songs of all time (Rolling Stone, 2021).

This collaboration is a remix, meaning AB6IX took the original song and versioned it alongside the original artist. In this way, the Korean band used only certain parts of the original song and reconstructed them, adding their style. In this case, the instrumental elements were unchanged, and only the lyrics were modified to include the South Korean artists.

Artists' profiles

Here, we summarize the artist personas of both artists in this song. We partially reprise Donze's discrete categorization (2011;

2017) to define their different images and contrast them with their musical discourse later in the analysis.

Lizzo is a singer, musician, lyricist, and rapper from Detroit, USA. Lizzo's media image is based on female emancipation and the reclamation of previously negative stereotypes of women. The singer is also committed to the visualization of women in society, the reclamation of overweight people (*plus-size women*), and the fight for women's rights, LGBTI+, and Afro-descendant people in the United States (Billboard, 2019). As a result, her image as an artist is founded on polemical aspects of American society, and she is firmly committed to these convictions and social struggles against normative stereotypes. In this sense, the artist seems to identify with the *Femme fatale* category, which is presented as an image of strength, independence, and control but also highly sexualized and with aggressive and explicit discourse:

These women are aggressive and boisterous [...]. Femme Fatales are hard-edged, colorful, and alluring and sexually naughty with a lot of attitude and confrontation. Their lyrics tend to be critical and often focus on explicit sexuality, sexual violence, sexism, or gendered power relationships (Donze, 2011, p. 60).

On the other hand, AB6IX is a contemporary boys' band under the direction of the *Brand New Music* agency. It is initially composed of 5 members: Woong, DongHyun, WooJin, DaeHwi, and YoungMin. They debuted in 2019, so they belong to what is re-

ferred to as the fourth generation of K-pop. This generation is known as "the most viral," achieving notable success right from their debut and having the support of companies who invest heavily in these groups (Verma, 2023). This group has enjoyed considerable success as it is the novice male group with the most sales in 2019 (Fandom, n. d.).

As for the band's image, the company had presented it at its inception with the keywords "*integrity, transcendence, growth, and sincerity.*" Even though the categories proposed by Donze do not consider non-English speaking artists as is, their *persona* appears to be nearer a Sophisticated Singer-Songwriter, which is associated more often with jazz and world musicians. This category is described as successful, confident, and not aggressive, viewed as a form of successful soft masculinity, and sometimes portrayed as ideal partners (Donze, 2011; 2017) matching the image marketed of the aggrupation.

Considering this, we can note a substantial discrepancy between Lizzo's *persona* and AB6IX's in musical style, gender, sexuality, and racial labeling (Donze, 2011, p. 45) that might implicate some identity conflicts in the discursive dimension. However, it is essential to remark that public preference revealed that the female population is inclined to these two artists' categories –Sophisticated Singer-songwriters and Femme Fatale– even if the commercialization of both differs and is modified in reason of female music consumers (Donze, 2017, p.350).

Analysis dimensions and instruments

In this study, we pretend to analyze the artist's identity through a linguistic perspec-

tive. Thus, we first consider a discursive dimension to compare the artists' interventions. To this end, we will rely on semantic structures and coherence (Van Dijk, 1977) to analyze the macro-structures presented by both artists. In this sense, the macro-structure of the song should result from the semantic structure of discourse determined by their semantic components. This way, we search for a parallel between the themes presented in the song. The artists' *personas* do not coincide regarding discursive image and expectations. Thus, their convergence in this song must be expected to present a sort of adaptation or dissonance at a discursive level.

In code-switching analysis, we define code-switching as using two or more languages in a linguistic exchange by one or more bilingual locators (Brasart, 2011). In the Matrix Language Frame Model, the principal language, the Matrix Language (ML), sets the grammatical frame in mixed elements. In contrast, the other languages that participate in speech are called Embedded Languages (EL) (Myers-Scotton, 2017, p. 220).

From a structural description, there are two types of code-switching: intrasentential and intersentential. Intrasentential Code-switching happens when a complementary phrase (CP) contains at

least one element with morphemes from an EL. At the same time, in an Intersentential Code-switching, each language is seen as switching between monolingual CPs in different languages. In the first case, the EL element is directed by the ML grammatical frame, i.e., the EL components adequate for its use in the matrix language morphosyntactic rules. Meanwhile, in an intersentential CS, each CP morpheme follows its grammar of the language without an opposition between the EL and the ML (Myers-Scotton, 2017, pp. 222–223).

For this work, we have designed English as the ML since it is the language of the original song. Meanwhile, AB6IX's interventions introduce a bilingual situation with Korean (EL).

Finally, we profit from a sociolinguistic analysis from a dialectal perspective. As hip-hop music and K-pop artists tend to assimilate African American vernacular English into their songs, we will analyze the phonetic traits that constitute this variant. We employ Lippi-Green's condensed model of grammar and phonological structures for AAVE (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 183). However, other linguistic aspects of this variation, such as rhetorical or prosodic features, were not considered for this analysis.

Feature	*SAE written form ¹	AAVE
Voiced stops /b/ /d/ and /g/ are often devoiced or dropped at the end of words	<i>Cab, hand, talked</i>	<i>Cap, han, talk</i>
Final consonant cluster reduction, for example, in word-final position /sp/, /st/, and /sk/ are reduced	<i>Test, list</i>	<i>Tēs, lis</i>
Postvocalic /r/ sounds are deleted	<i>Store, fourth</i>	<i>Sto, foth</i>
/l/ is often vocalized in word-final position, resulting in homonyms	<i>Tool : too</i>	<i>Tōo : too</i>
/ai/ > /a/ monophthongization,	<i>I think I've got something in my eye</i>	<i>Ah think ah've got somethin in ma ah.</i>
Merging of simple and past participle form	<i>So what we've done is, we have come together</i>	<i>So what we have done is we've came together.</i>
Existential it	<i>Sometimes there wasn't any chalk, any book or any teacher</i>	<i>Sometimes it didnt have no chalk, no book, no teacher</i>
Copula deletion	<i>She is my sister</i>	<i>She my sister</i>
Verb marker for perpetual action	<i>The coffee is cold</i>	<i>The coffee cold</i>
Perfect participle “done” before a verb referring to something completed in the recent past	<i>I have had enough</i>	<i>I done had enough</i>
Future tense marked for aspect	<i>I am going to eat you, Shine</i>	<i>I'ma eat you, Shine</i>
Negation strategies	<i>He didn't go any further than third or fourth grade</i>	<i>He ain't go no further than third or fourth grade</i>
Possessive marker ('s) deleted	<i>That's the church's responsibility</i>	<i>That's the church responsibility</i>
Syntax- uninverted questions inverted	<i>I asked Alvin if he could go</i>	<i>I as Alvin could he go</i>

Table 1. General features of African American Vernacular English (adapted from (Lippi-Green, 2012: p.183).

¹ “Standard American English” conceived as an hypothetical dialectal variation considered as the most accepted in American society (Lippi-Green, 2012: pp. 57-61)

6. Song analysis results

In this section, we analyze the song Truth Hurts. First, we analyze the song from a discursive perspective since the collaboration presents both artists' versions. We see how each artist's identity is reflected in the messages transmitted. Second, we analyze the phenomenon of code-switching present in the song and the role of the two languages in transmitting the message.

Discursive dimension: Two songs in one

When discussing musical discursive analysis, Evgeniya Aleshinskaya emphasizes that it cannot be reduced to music alone but must also consider psychological aspects and social, personal, and historical factors (2013, p. 424). Thus, to understand the semantic construction of the discourses of the two artists, we need to review their different contexts.

Firstly, Lizzo is an American artist. Her image as an artist in the context of the American market is much more liberal, sexually explicit, and in line with the militantism of female emancipation. Her identity is indeed reflected in the song's theme. According to the singer, the original song is about a romantic breakup she experienced, and the lyrics arose from a discussion the singer had with her friend Ricky, where she mentioned several phrases that eventually became the lyrics (Billboard, 2019).

Other linguistic aspects also seem to reaffirm her ideological positioning, for example, with the explicit use of criticism of men's behavior, adjectives of praise such as "Goddess," and the positive use of previously derogatory words (1 & 2):

- (1) « I just took a DNA test, turns out I'm a 100% that bitch »
- (2) « You coulda had a bad bitch, non-committal »

On the other hand, the South Korean aggragation uses a different message in its interpretation of the song. Contrary to the song's original theme, AB6IX's message is more critical of Korean *Idol* culture and the harmful attitudes of jealousy and competition they have experienced (3 & 4):

- (3) « I hate the frame about the idol 더 높
이 올라² Breathe like a title ».
- (4) « 다들 Blah Blah Blah 말들이 너무 많
아 »³.

Numerous positive reinforcement and self-encouragement phrases (examples 5 and 6) also appear, somewhat aligning with Lizzo's advocacy ideology.

- (5) « 여긴 내 Playground 어제의 나보다
더 위로. Rock it »⁴.
- (6) « 한계는 없어 Yeah »⁵

Other preserved elements are vocables like *yeah* or Bom Bom Bi Bom, which are considered more as "musical fillers" and, therefore, do not have a significant semantic charge (Niskakangas, 2019, pp. 13-14).

We thus observe the existence of two different but intertwined thematic pro-

2 Translation: *Climb higher.*

3 Translation: *Everybody Bla Bla Bla speak too much.*

4 Translation: *This is my Playground. More uplifting than yesterday's me. Rock it.*

5 Translation: *No limits yeah.*

gressions in the song's verses. Due to this apparent rupture of semantic-discursive progression, we could speak of a case of incoherence according to Reinhart's (1980, pp.163-167) definition of coherence conditions: Connectedness, consistency, and relevance. However, the only verse shared by the two artists, that is, the only one preserved for the Korean group and sung simultaneously by Lizzo and WooJin, gives us a clue to the thematic axis that was intended to meet the two postures:

(7) « We just keep it pushin' like aye aye aye.»

Then, as Van Dijk states, the textual coherence goes beyond the semantic level and can also be determined by a common communicative intention at a pragmatic level:

Coherence is not only semantic but may also be determined by pragmatic conditions. Clearly, connections between facts should be satisfied not only 'objectively', but also relative to language users and communicative contexts. Similarly, the connections must relate not only facts but also speech acts. (Van Dijk, 1977, p. 6).

In this case, we prefer to discuss discursive parallelism because there is no proper discursive incoherence. However, this approach is more like reinterpreting the song's explicit topic. Thus, we cannot correctly discuss a semantic rupture in the macrostructure; instead, we can discuss two juxtaposed discourses.

Following Hall's Encoding-Decoding theory (1980, p. 54), we can state that these

asymmetrical discourses correspond to a lack of equivalences in each artist's interpretation of the semantic message of the song's lyrics – additionally, about the artist's *persona*–.

Additionally, the Korean band also does not imitate the polemic and explicit tone used by Lizzo, for example, in the revindication use of derogatory terms or sexually explicit words. This can be related to their respective artistic *persona*, coinciding with the femme fatal archetype of explicit sexual content and the sophisticated singer-songwriter revealing a more prudent and softer register choice for their collaboration.

Therefore, even though the themes and tones chosen by both artists are different, the speech acts of the original song –expressing an opinion about a personal reality– are preserved at a global semantic level (Van Dijk, 1977) but are adapted by the aggrupation. Other minor acts and communicative intentions in the song, like self-empowerment messages, are also preserved.

Sociolinguistic dimension (1): Code-switching in Truth Hurts

Code-switching in K-pop has been defined as an arbitrary linguistic strategy of resistance to local ideologies (Nielbock-Yoon, 2020). In her analysis of the songs of two K-pop groups, Niskakangas showed that English was used to discuss taboo themes in Korean society, in their case, sexuality: “It has been a way for young Koreans to resist and break old norms that have deemed the expression of sexual desire as socially inappropriate” (2019, p. 19).

Thus, we observe that the alternation between English and Korean in the collab-

oration Truth Hurts also responds to the infringements of social resistance, as the song's theme for AB6IX is social criticism. It must be noted that, unlike actual K-pop songs where Korean is the primary language, this collaboration is, at the origin, an English song. Therefore, we consider this language the Matrix Language (ML), and Korean will be treated here as an Embedded language (EL).

From a structural point of view, we observe that most code switches are intersentential switches, alternations of complement phrases (CP) in two languages (Myers-Scotton, 2017, pp. 222–224). Thus, this experiment does not need to elaborate on the morphosyntactic characteristics of these alternates because each CP in ML and EL follows its proper grammatical structure without significant interference.

However, evaluating the meaning portrayed by each language at the semantic-discursive level is interesting because this could represent the ideological charges that led to code-switching.

In AB6IX's interventions, we can see that the content in English is more critical and contentious, while the content in Korean remains more neutral:

(8) « Everyday hustle songwriting 기대돼
오늘 바로 다음이 We don't care 누가
뭐라든 간에 »⁶

So, we might deduce that Korean would be used to appeal to the norms and ex-

6 Translation: Everyday hustle songwriting *Wait until the next day*. We don't care. *No matter what they say*.

pectations they wish to challenge while English remains its inner voice in the case of polyphony. We can interpret this phenomenon as the conformation of a modal subject (Perrin, 2004) in which bilingualism also represents an attitude associated with young artists' cultural values and identities.

(9) « I hate the frame about the idol 더 높
이 올라 Breathe like a title »⁷

Other types of intrasentential code change are also found throughout the song:

(10) « 여긴 내 Playground 어제의 나보다
더 위로. Rock it »⁸

These are less frequent because they are artistic choices used as easy-to-remember musical hooks for the international fan community (Niskakangas, 2019).

We observe that the tendency to include code-switching in the K-pop music industry preserves the intention to create a double discourse opposed to the conservative society of origin. Even if AB6IX does not adopt the tendency of other groups to include sexual or explicit content in their English interventions, English would, therefore, be an instrument of freedom of expression for them.

7 Translation: I hate the frame about the idol. *Climb higher*. Breath like a title.

8 Translation: This is my Playground. *More uplifting than yesterday's me*. Rock it.

Sociolinguistic dimension (2): AAVE and dialectal traits of identity

At the dialect level, Lizzo uses a form of expression that can be identified with the phonetic and morphosyntactic features of *African American Vernacular English* (Lippi-Green, 2012, pp. 182-184). For example, there is a reduction of consonants in the final position:

- (11) « You 'posed to hold me down » (elision of the pronunciation of the past suffix and the final d of the consonant group).

Similarly, there is sometimes a tendency towards monophthongation of the /ai/ → /a/ sound (12), without this being a systematically recurring phenomenon, so it could also be a stylistic choice to adapt to melodic needs:

- (12) « I got boy problems [...] Then I solve 'em » (monophthongation of /ai/ → /a/)

The singer also makes use of an existential *it* form :

- (13) « I don't play with tags, bitch, I been it » (instead of there as an existential-spatial deictic).

In morphosyntactic terms, the singer also uses future tense constructions characteristic of AAVE:

- (14) « I'ma hit you back in a minute » (future tense construction marks for aspect)

Finally, the elision of copulas (15) and the use of verbal markers for perpetual actions are also present in the song:

- (15) « Why men great 'til they gotta be great » (copula *are* elision).

On the other hand, given that all the members of the AB6IX group have a standardized or dialectal variant of Korean as their first language and only DaeHwi is known to have a high domain of English, we would assume that their stylistic choice when reversing the song would present a degree of standardization typical of second-language learners. However, we observe certain features of the English the group used that assimilate more to the dialectal features used by Lizzo, ergo, at AAVE.

For example, we observe a tendency to reduce syntactic groups with copula for perpetual action verbs:

- (16) « Everyday hustle songwriting ».

Other aspects of AAVE exploited by the singer in this piece are repeated by the South Korean band, such as the monophthongation of /ai/ or the elision of certain final consonants. For example:

- (17) « Breathe like a title » (elision of /θ/ sound).

- (18) « We don't care » (elision of /ɹ/ sound)

In the first example (17), AAVE tends to consolidate the /θ/ sound as /f/ (Sidnell, n. d.), while the artists tend to interpret it as an elision of the /t/ used by Lizzo in other parts of the song.

In the second example (18), in the verses eliminated from the original song, we observe that Lizzo tends to vocalize the final post-vocalic /r/ (19), whereas AB6IX assimilates it to the elisions retained in the final song (18).

(19) « Truth hurts, needa' something more exciting » (realized as /*mou*/)

This could, therefore, be interpreted as a choice of selective imitation (Trudgill, 1997) on the part of the Korean group from the material chosen to conform to the collaboration and not from the singer's complete idiolectal variant.

7. Conclusion

We found that in this musical collaboration, two well-defined identities of the artists are reflected in their thematic differences that can initially be considered incoherent in semantic structure. However, the contact of two heterogeneous musical identities in this collaboration also tends to draw closer and assimilate characteristics of the other.

That said, we note that at a discursive level, there is an asymmetry of discourse interpretation (Hall, 1980). However, by analyzing the semantic contents pragmatically (Van Dijk, 1977), we can conclude that both discourses serve the same thematic purpose. In this specific case, as stated before, we must limit ourselves to determinate that AB6IX's act of decoding supposes a reinterpretation and adaptation of the content of the lyrics incrustated in a more prominent structure based on the generalized theme of 'social criticism and self-empowerment.' The South Korean en-

semble modifies the song's original message –feminist and emancipatory for Lizzo– and adapts it to its social reality, that of social denunciation in the Korean idol world.

Therefore, this discrepancy of discursive perspective in the same song is intentional and could also be explained by the tendency of fourth-generation K-pop songs to tackle more mature and profound themes (Verma, 2023). In this way, the lyrical culture of K-pop would be more likely to show resistance to social values and expectations, being also a platform for rebellion and freedom of expression:

One key aspect of resistance in K-pop lyrics is the defiance of traditional values and rigid societal expectations. Often targeted at a young audience who may struggle with societal pressure regarding their identity and future path, K-pop songs frequently address themes of rebellion, freedom of expression, and self-discovery (Jie, 2023, p. 682).

Lizzo also uses explicit language, while AB6IX uses a more neutral vocabulary, even if the group intends to denounce a social reality critically. This could also be associated with their artistic personalities and images, given that Lizzo is openly explicit in polemical terms, while AB6IX is officially presented under values of integrity and goodness. All of this coincides with the *Femme Fatale* and *Sophisticated Singer-Songwriter persona* of these artists respectively (Donzen, 2011), so we can say that there is a concordance between artists' image expectations and their discourse intervention in the song.

This reveals an attractive first characteristic of this musical interaction, syncretism, in which Korean aggrupation assimilates a discourse axis to propose an equivalent pragmatic message adapted to their reality and intentions while conserving their artistic *persona*.

Similarly, the code-switching found throughout the band's interventions represents a linguistic means of ideological resistance also used by other bands (Niskakangas, 2019). English, then, is seen as an instrument of expression and a means of protesting against the criticisms of Korean society. Korean remains a more neutral means of preserving one's national identity, expressing unstable identities through a discrepancy between Korean and English speech (Lee, 2004, p. 438).

Concerning dialectal realizations in English code-switching, we have observed that the AB6IX recording shows a tendency to assimilate the form of AAVE used by Lizzo without necessarily responding to a complete imitation of phonetic variants but rather to replicate the dialectal features mobilized by the singer in these verses exclusively. Similarly, the band makes use of non-prototypical morphosyntactic forms like other K-pop bands (Niskakangas, 2019, p. 21), but this still results in ambiguous to determine as a conscious phenomenon of AAVE assimilation due to the low frequency of appearances and verses interpreted by the aggrupation in English.

In short, we observe that international musical collaboration produces identity reconfigurations on the part of the artists

at various levels. In this case, hybridization is used to accommodate dominant musical markets (Yeo, 2018; Schneider, 2023) and as a form of glocal agency, coinciding with the Hallyu phenomenon of cultural hybridization (Ryoo, 2019). At the same time, it acts as a form of resistance to traditional Korean culture and values.

In this sense, phenomena such as code-switching appear to be more conscious stylistic choices on the part of artists, for example, to coordinate with a specific persona associated with the genre (Dubeldam, 2016) or to express their opinions explicitly guided by ideological charges associated with each language: English as a free means of expression and Korean as a more traditional associated discourse.

Other adaptations, such as the assimilation of dialectal features, seem to be of a more unconscious order. However, the non-systematicity of certain features could lead us to suspect a selective, semi-conscious acquisition of AAVE's dialectal features, as Trudgill (1983) theorized and as observed in many other studies of Hip-hop K-pop artists (Lee, 2004; Aleshinskaya, 2013; Jie, 2023).

Finally, we remark that we focus solely on AB6IX's identity approximation in this remix, which involves asynchronous collaboration with pre-recorded verses by Lizzo. However, other identity modifications in contexts where music syncretism might be more abundant, such as synchronous collaborations with bigger interactions or different musical genres, are worth considering.

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