IDENTITIES AND LYRICS: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PHONOLOGICAL VARIATION IN KOREAN HIP-HOP ENGLISH LYRICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper extends the sociolinguistic investigation of Hip-Hop language and its performative usage more generally by examining English in the lyrics of three Korean Hip-Hop groups: Dynamic Duo, Epik High, and Drunken Tiger. This paper examines overall occurrence of English as well as the extent to which their English incorporates features associated with African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Alim (2002) argues that American Hip-Hop artists connect their lyrics to street culture by using features of AAVE such as copula absence however, in this study of Korean Hip-Hop lyrics, instead of focusing on syntactic features, phonological features are to be studied mainly. The use of English in Korean Hip-Hop songs varies from lexical items (e.g. Nwun tteponi yesterday swucwupten kuttay. From the song “paykya” from the album “Remapping the Human Soul” by Epik High 2006) to a sentences (When My body turns cold, you will know, I remapped the human soul. From the song “paykya” from the album “Remapping the Human Soul” by Epik High 2006), and sometimes, but not for all the artists, a whole paragraph. Given that English is not the dominant language in Korean Hip-Hop artists’ works, focusing on phonological features rather than features on different levels will provide clearer insight of the investigation yielding a more amount of data to examine. This study seeks to determine if Korean Hip-Hop artists employ similar linguistic practices to each other for similar identificational reasons. I conducted quantitative analyses of the variable
patterning of three AAVE features: /ay/ monophthongization and glide reduction, /t, d/ deletion in word final consonant clusters, and /r/ vocalization and reduction in word-final position. Each is coded with its internal linguistic context such as surrounding phonological environment, and external factors such as each artist’s degree of contact (intensive vs. non-intensive) with American culture. The three Hip-Hop groups’ works are exhaustively examined in terms of variation and change in each artist’s AAVE features over time. I also include comparative analysis of the artists’ speech in the less overtly performative context (e.g. interview) when artists are not performing their songs.

This quantitative analysis of phonological variation and change in the English lyrics of Korean Hip-Hop artists demonstrates that myriad factors need to be considered when examining stylistic variation, including situation (e.g. performative vs. non-performative), personal history (including, crucially, degree of language proficiency and cultural contact), and their desire to project particular types of identities. Further, the study is innovative in its focus on Hip-Hop music in a Korean setting and its examination of how identity is co-constructed not only between performer and audience but also among performers.
The research and writing of this thesis
is dedicated to everyone who helped along the way.

Many thanks,

JINSOK LEE
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1. INTRODUCTION

Western pop culture has dominated and influenced Korean pop culture and this phenomenon, not surprisingly, extends into the Korean pop music scene, namely K-pop. A mixture of Western genres of music became more and more popular since 1980s, and thus Western-style music is now common in gayo, a Korean term for K-pop (Morelli 2001). In 1992, the Korean pop music scene experienced an appearance of a new style of K-pop genre which had rap lyrics dominantly occupying the majority of songs. An idol group called ‘Seo Taiji and Boys’ burst on to the pop music scene in 1992 with the rap music number ‘Nan arayo’ (I know), which is one of the first rap tracks to mainly use the Korean language in rapping (Morelli 2001) and, moreover, it was also the first song to mainly use rap lyrics. The song of the idol group hardly can be considered as the first Korean Hip-Hop track technically; however, it seems quite reasonable to say that the song was the pioneer in bringing and adopting the genre, rapping, to the Korean pop music scene because since then, it has been a newly introduced standard to put rap elements in K-pop songs which is very common in nowadays K-pop. Until various Hip-Hop ‘labels’ or ‘crews’ such as ‘YG Family, the Movement, and Buddha Sounds’ were established in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Hip-Hop music did not exist as a separate category of a genre which can stand alone, and the term ‘rap’ or ‘rapping’ was only used to refer to a style of articulating lyrics lacking melodies. ‘Rapping’ is one of the four major elements of Hip-Hop, and Korean Hip-hop, at its first stage, did not achieve all four major elements of Hip-Hop reported in Alim (2003). These four major elements are widely accepted by other anthropologists such as Carbaugh (1988). The four elements are as follows:

**MCing**: MCing refers to rapping (Alim 2002). In Price (2006), the term “MC” is defined as “Short for Master of Ceremonies, the term MC predates Hip-Hop. The role of the MC also predates its incorporation into the Hip-Hop culture. Like the DJ and graffiti artist, the MC played a practical role in the urban...

**DJing:** DJing refers to spinning turntables to perform music (Alim 2002). In Price (2006), the term “DJ” is defined as “The DJ, or Disc Jockey, presents prerecorded music or sound to an audience” (Price 2006: 21).

**B-Boying:** B-Boying refers to street dancing (Alim 2002). It is also known as breaking or break-dancing (McLeod 1999).

**Graffiti:** Graffiti refers to writing or drawing on a surface or walls (Alim 2002). It is also known as tagging or bombing (Carbaugh 1988).

As the Korean pop music market grew bigger and the world got smaller, the market inevitably underwent several changes and evolutions in its styles of diversified genres. The change and diversification in Korean pop music genres inseparably accompanied dramatic adoption of western genres and styles. It is needless to say that this innovative phenomenon affected K-Pop lyrics as well. Lee (2004) describes in her work on Korean-English hybridization in K-pop that before the 1990s, there was a clear absence of English use in the main song texts and after 1990s, English emerged as part of the verbal repertoire of young South Korean pop artists and their fans and English is present in the main body of the lyrics in K-Pop (Lee 2004). Lee also asserts that this English mixing exhibits regular patterns in its forms and functions. In other words, English appears in certain favored conditions. According to Lee, the functions of mixing English lyrics in Korean Pop music are to assert the artists’ and youths’ self identity: to create new meanings, to challenge dominant representations of authority, to resist mainstream norms and values, and to reject older generations’ conservatism. The range of mixing English lyrics with K-Pop lyrics varies from a lexical/phrasal level to a full sentence or a paragraph, which can be referred to as code-mixing and code-switching (Bhatia and Ritchie 1989), and in styles from Koreanized English (e.g. loanwords) to Standard English and even to African-American Vernacular English (AAVE).

English adoption and mixing in lyrics is also a common phenomenon in Korean Hip-
Hop music. The following excerpt 1 shows an example of English mixing in Korean rap lyrics. The first row for every line is Korean lyrics and the second row is the English translation. Italicized words are the English lyrics.

(1) 
(a) That’s right swumanhun ttam silyenuy salm nwunmwuluy kang
   that’s right. much sweat, suffering life, a river of tears
(b) Ilhekami te manhassten sikaney mwutten cilmwunuy tap (nay haytap)
   at the time of loss, the answer to it (my answer)
(c) Everything’s gonna be alright
(d) I’m Okay kin pam cikhyenay My life
   I’m ok. Securing the long night. my life

Excerpt 1. “Yesterday” from the album “Swan Song” by Epik High (2005)

As stated above, English mixing is present in (a) and (c-d) showing a range of mixing varying from a phrasal to a sentential level as Lee (2004) argued about the range of code-mixing in K-Pop.

This paper focuses on phonological variation in English lyrics of Korean Hip-hop songs. I conduct quantitative analyses of the variable patterning of three following AAVE features: /ay/ monophthongization and glide reduction (e.g. [fla:] for fly), /t, d/ deletion in word final consonant clusters (e.g. [dʒʌʃ] for just), and /r/ vocalization and reduction in word-final position (e.g. [nɛvə] for never). By examining internal and extra-linguistic factors of those patterns as well, this study will reveal the tendency of patterns and the cause of the ongoing changes over time among Korean Hip-hop artists by exhaustively examining their albums.

2. Earlier Studies

This section will briefly summarize previous relevant studies prior to presenting of discussions of findings. The first three articles focus on stylistic variation between standard (or near standard) and non-standard (or other) varieties: Trudgill’s (1983) study examining British
English pronunciation converging to that of American English in British pop artists’ works (Trudgill 1983); Alim’s (2002) study of copula absence in Hip-hop nation language (Alim 2002), and Schilling-Estes’s study of an Ocracoke Islander’s performance speech (Schilling-Estes 1998). Although the data examined in Schilling-Estes’s study on the performance speech of an Ocracoke Islander does not argue about the performative usage of language in any musical context, the study is to be taken into account in this paper because it stresses the importance of studying performative, self-conscious speech. After these three studies, four articles which discuss stylistic variation between English and non-English varieties are presented: English mixing in Nigerian Hip-hop (Omoniyi 2006); English mixing in Japanese Hip-hop (Pennycook 2003); Code switching between English and Swahili/Chichewa in Tanzanian and Malawian Hip-Hop lyrics (Perullo and Fenn 2003); and linguistic hybridization in Korean pop songs (Lee 2004).

Style shifting between, or among, varieties of one form of a language is widely studied among researchers. A monumental study on stylistic variation in music performance dates back to Trudgill’s study on “Acts of conflicting Identity (1983)” examining phonological variation in British pop music. Trudgill examines British pop stars’ modification of their pronunciation on the perspective of Le Page’s (1968, 1975 and 1978) and Le Page, Christie, Jurdant, Weekes, and Tabouret-Kell (1974), cited in Trudgill (1983)\(^1\), theory of linguistic behavior, the acts of identity model. According to the theory, in linguistic behavior, people attempt to resemble as closely as possible the group with which they desire to identify (Trudgill 1983: 144). Trudgill argues that of British pop artists attempted to modify their phonology toward that of Americans due to American Pop music’s dominance of the world pop music market at that time (Trudgill 1983: 144).

\(^1\) Le Page (1968, 1975, and 1978), and Le Page, Christie, Jurdant, Weekes, and Tabouret-Kell (1974) cited in Trudgill (1983) was out of print. Arguments based on Le Page’s acts of identity model discussed in this paper are based on books “On Dialects” (Trudgill 1983) and “Acts of identity” (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985). In Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), four constraints are introduced in people’s ability of identifying themselves with whom they wish to identify: (i) the identification of groups, (ii) access to groups, (iii) positive and negative motivation to identify with groups, and (iv) ability to change one’s behavior, to accommodate.
The modifications by British pop artists, however, were not entirely successful due to artists’ lack of ability in perfectly imitating American phonological features and AAVE features in their works. They showed patterns that were somewhat sporadic and non-systematic (Trudgill 1983). To uncover more specific tendencies of those British artists’ phonological modification, non-prevocalic /r/s and intervocalic /t/s were chosen as variables to conduct a quantitative analysis over time in the records of two British bands, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. The frequencies of non-prevocalic /r/s and intervocalic /t/s employed by two bands showed a pattern of a decrease (although there are some differences in range among these falls). Trudgill points out several possible factors which can be accounted for this decreasing pattern such as change of musical genre, subject matters of songs over time. Those introduced factors of the phenomenon of modification are interpreted as, within the Le Page’s framework, the weakening of the strength of the motivation towards the American model and this weakening of the motivation is explained with the change of the cultural domination in the global pop music market, where the Beatles became very popular all over the world. In other words, the enormous popularity of the Beatles led to the changed the situation and led the British pop music to dominate the American pop market. Therefore, there were no significant reasons for British artists to try to resemble American pop artists after the subversion of the cultural dominance in pop music scene. As time progressed, the motivation for modification towards American features got diminished and, besides the subversion of the cultural dominance paradigm, another identity, the British working class identity, was chosen as a newly introduced identity. The new wave of British pop scene appeared with the punk-rock which intended British urban working class youth as the primary audience for the genre since the type of the music is aggressive and rebellious. Although the modified pronunciation used in punk-rock also used American features, the major features were mostly associated with low-prestige southern England accents. This covert prestige of non-
standard (socially) low prestige British working class vernacular remained in competition with the American pronunciation in British pop music.

There is also a study on Hip-hop Nation Language (HHNL) conducted by Alim (2002) which focuses on copula absence variation related to the African-American street culture. Alim (2002) argues that the attachment to the street culture is a major extra-linguistic factor contributing to copula variation. Two Hip-hop artists, Eve and Juvenile, were examined. In their usage of copula absence in their lyrics, Juvenile, who was considered to be more integrated into street life, and thus projected more attachment to the streets than Eve did, displayed more copula absence in his lyrics and sociolinguistic interview than Eve did. The common aspect of both artists is that they showed more copula absence in their lyrics than they did in their interviews. For the explanation of the case, Alim argues that Hip-hop artists design their lyrics for African-American street culture audiences by applying Bell’s (1984) work on audience and referee design which indicates that the most important factor influencing the speech style is the audience. The strategic use of style in copula variation enhances group solidarity and constructs identity of HHNL users and points out that Hip-hop artists are actually conscious of deleting copulas in their work. Alim’s work is not only significant in the field of stylistic variation dealing with syntactic variation but also from the perspective of stylistic variation indicating that stylistic variation does not always move towards formality when more attention is paid to the speech and Hip-hop artists use more vernacular forms to intentionally convey and construct identity.

Schilling-Estes’s (1998) work on Ocracoke English investigates the usage of informal forms of language in the perspective of performance speech. The term performance speech is defined as a “Register associated with speakers’ attempting to display for others a certain language or language variety, whether their own or that of another speech community” (Schilling-Estes 1998). In her study, Schilling-Estes focuses on stylistic variation in the
centralization of the nucleus of the /ay/ diphthong to [ʌˌɪ] and the variable /ay/ is compared in three stylistic contexts. The centralized /ay/ feature was selected to be studied because it is one of the unique features of Ocracoke English and the main informant in this study and Rex (pseudonym), the informant, often performed this feature especially when he recites the particular phrase starting with “It’s high ([ʌˌɪ]) tide ([ʌˌɪ]) on the sound side ([ʌˌɪ])…”

The group which the informant identifies himself with places a strong value on the traditional dialect features and use it to mark their identity as “authentic islanders”. The study utilized data from one speaker because the case-study format would provide more in-depth information on naturalistic style shifting. Schilling-Estes conducted an acoustic analysis measuring formants of the height and backness of relevant /ay/ nuclei (F1 and F2 of the target variable) to reveal the difference between performance speech and non-performance speech. The acoustic analysis conducted in the study indicated that even though the speech performances were self-conscious, they displayed regular linguistic patterning. Another intriguing feature of the performance speech in the study is that it does not fit in to reactive approaches to style shifting but rather is used proactively. Schilling-Estes’s study of performance speech was innovative in its rejecting language variationists’ tendency to dismiss self-conscious speech styles such as performance speech and showed that studying performance speech is also valuable for a number of reasons: first, it exhibits regular patterning just as speech traditionally characterized as non-performative in nature does, indicating that performance speech may be useful in further investigation of the patterned nature of language variation; second, speakers highlight features of which they are most aware when they give a speech performance and performance speech may strengthen our understanding of issues related to speaker perception of dialect variants; third, the proactive nature of style shifting forces the existing models for stylistic variation to be modified.

Shifting from one’s native language to a foreign language can be seen as a somewhat
dramatic change. This phenomenon is generally referred to as ‘crossing’ which Rampton (1995) defines it as “the use of a language or variety that, in one way or another, feels anomalously other”. This dramatic shift between two varieties of languages (dominant variety and the target variety) is now common in non-English speaking countries’ pop cultures, especially in pop music scenes. English mixing in non-English speaking countries’ pop songs is widely studied by many researchers from various nations. Omoniyi’s (2006) work on Nigerian Hip-hop lyrics focuses on features of Nigerian Hip-hop English, such as Nigerian Hip-hop English phonology, codeswitching, cross-referencing (asserting and identifying the artist’s membership in the target group by referring to an artist who can be clearly recognized to be in the target group or terms that are associated by the target group), colloquialisms (The coming together of the global and local colloquial forms by native-speakers), reinterpretation (the adaptation of phrases, rhythms and tunes of Western popular songs in popular music in indigenous language and vice versa), and Hip-hop names (the adoption of alternative “street names” or pseudonyms as a popular practice in the rap/Hip-Hop community) (Omoniyi 2006). Globalization facilitated western culture’s domination of other nations’ cultures to the degree that new identities are sometimes yielded between two cultures as a result. Omoniyi argues that African Hip-hop, of which Nigerian Hip-hop is a variety, is a reappropriation of a musical form that was originally domiciled in the region and became globalized only after transplantation through the Middle Passage (Omoniyi 2006). As a result, a new identity, rather than an identity that preexisted or was adopted, projected by Nigerian Hip-hop artists has surfaced. This article on Nigerian Hip-hop focuses on the creation of a new identity of Nigerian Hip-hoppers formed between globalization and the local culture by examining various peculiarities which are stated above.

There is another study focusing on global Englishes relating to non-American Hip-hop music. Pennycook (2003) starts with referring to the Rampton’s (1995) concept of ‘crossing’ in
terms of linguistics of contact to focus on English mixing in Japanese Hip-hop lyrics and suggests that a focus on popular cultural flows and a way of taking up performance and performativity in relationship to identity and culture to understand the phenomenon. The English lyrics of a Japanese Hip-hop group ‘Rip Slyme’ were examined to support the idea of constructing identity and English mixing. Pennycook argues that the ‘World Englishes’ and globalization paradigm do not perfectly buttress the argument to explain the phenomenon for several reasons (see Pennycook 2003), and suggests that Rip Slyme’s performance of English mixing is an act of semiotic reconstruction to express new identities. In other words, Rip Slyme’s lyrics are performed for particular effects such as cultural, aesthetic, commercial purpose, and such performance is part of the larger performative aspect of refashioning identity.

A study on Eastern African Hip-hop (Perullo and Fenn 2003) shows a somewhat different aspect of English usage in Tanzanian and Malawian Hip-hop lyrics. Instead of focusing on the phenomenon of code switching or code mixing of English with a native language of the country, the language choice and the accounting factors are studied. The process of language choice between English and Tanzanian/Malawian, Perullo and Fenn argues, is treated as a function of explicit and implicit language ideologies that underlie the social context of both countries. These ideologies lead artists’ codes to choose either English or the artists’ native language based on the music and social situations. Perullo and Fenn argue that in Tanzanian Hip-hop, the usage of English is separated from the usage of Swahili due to number of factors such as language history in Tanzania, language valuation and evaluation, and commercialism. For historical background, despite the long period of German and British colonialism, Swahili was promoted as the primary language for everyday communication and English was spoken by political and economic authorities. This historical process allowed Swahili to be the most widely spoken language in Tanzania up to the present time and English to be the dominant political and
economic language. This environment affected Hip-hop culture in the nations that use Swahili as the dominant language and English used in Tanzanian Hip-Hop music is just for mimicking American Hip-Hop and to communicate with outer Tanzanian audiences. In other words, Swahili was the dominant language to be chosen for Hip-hop music in Tanzanian Hip-hop, the use of English, which is less frequent than Swahili, at the same time, was rather to develop ones’ identity as a real Hip-hopper and identify themselves with American culture.

The situation in Malawian Hip-hop shows some different aspects. Unlike the Tanzanian Hip-hop’s language choice relying on historical background, the major factor in choosing Chichewa, the native language in Malawi, is the effectiveness of the message in Hip-hop lyrics. The language choice in Malawian Hip-hop depends on the receiving and transmitting of messages appropriately and effectively. In other words, Chichewa is the variety that most of the people understand. Although English is actually favored for mimicking American Hip-hop, its importance is far less than that of Chichewa. For both nations’ Hip-hop scenes, there are two conflicting ideologies and those acting in contrarian ways choose the favored language for Tanzania and Malawi. The common feature of those two situations, however, is that English is used to project the identity of real Hip-hopper and identify oneself with American culture.

Research more directly relevant to the topic of this paper on stylistic variation, and particularly of English mixing in Korean pop songs is the study of Korean pop lyrics’ discourse analysis conducted by Jamie Shinhee Lee (2004). Regarding the English mixing in K-Pop song lyrics as a conscious and purposeful performance which is not an instance of accidental improvisation, Lee discusses the purpose of the phenomenon, linguistic hybridization of English in Korean pop songs’ lyrics, as an act of self-assertion and resistance against the older generation’s conservatism. Through mixing English in K-Pop lyrics, assertion of sensuality, assertion of struggle with unsettled identities, and assertion of execration/resistance are present

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in the lyrics. For a better understanding of those three kinds of assertions in K-Pop lyrics mixed with English, following excerpts (selected from Lee 2004) are useful for a better insight.

a. Assertion of sensuality

(2)

1 Kunye kwiey bow wow I whisper bow wow into her ear.
2 My know howlo hanpeney With my know how
3 Knock out palo ponay peliko She gets knocked out with one try (instantly)
4 Ssulecinun kunyeuy meliwa Her hair is falling
5 Mwunecel nyalinun maumul And she begins to give her heart away.
6 Nay ekkayey mwutko And resting on my shoulder.
7 Ku mosupey yokhay kukelo OK I’m taken by the way she looks. OK, that’s it.
8 Kukelo mancok mothyay oh yeah I can’t be satisfied with that, oh yeah
9 Shake them and give me some Shake them and give me some
10 I guess I wish I guess I wish
11 Poinun nenun feel so good That you would feel so good


Due to the conservative Korean moralistic censorship, the Korean counterpart of those English lyrics in the line (9 shake them and give me some) would be very challenging to the Korean authorities, such as Younsangmul Deunggeup Wiwonhoy (Korean Media Rating Board, KMRB) and in terms of having sexual content in the lyrics, it would be socially inappropriate (Lee 2004). English is used to mitigate the content of sexual advance for those who do not understand the sexual connotation associated with this expression and, plus, it creates an instant emotional and linguistic bond between the artist and those who understand the “secret code” (Lee 2004: 438).

b. Assertion of struggle with unsettled identities

(3)

2 […] I’m leavin’ yo ass for good. I’m leavin’ yo ass for good.
6 […] Molunchek hamye cinay wassesse I’ve been pretending not to know
7 Nauy kancengul aysse swumkimyense I’ve been hiding my true feelings
Hanchamul mitko issessci
Neyka talon namca pwumul ttena
Tasi tolaontago
Why you always actin’ up love
Sleepin’ around with other niggas
When you said they just friends
[...]Niggas told me
You was givin’ up a piece of yo ass
[...]that you was right
[...]cuz all I wanted was yo lovin’
[...]uh what you think you smooth


The English lyrics (lines 11-28) present above show extremely acrimonious verbal attacks for criticizing his girlfriend’s immorality and promiscuity, while the Korean lyrics express his willingness to be patient with this cheating girlfriend and eventually forgive her. Using two languages, English and Korean, enables the crossing of boundaries between two unsettled identities and expressing two ambivalent feelings.

c. Assertion of execration/resistance

Excerpt 4. “Suck my dxxx” by Yang Dong Geun (Lee 2004: 438)

The singer is showing his resistance against critics who criticizes him as an illegitimate
Hip-Hop artist and counterattacking that he is not affected by those critics (6). Furthermore, he claims that he is the best in the industry (7) and also requires respect from those critics (11). Overall in his English lyrics, he uses highly derogatory words to assert his defiant self-assertion and rhetorical resistance.

Lee’s study of English mixing in Korean lyrics shows that K-pop is a field which is used by Korean youths, audiences and artists to assert their self identity, to create new meanings, to resist the mainstream norms and reject older generations’ conservatism by showing these particular ways of usage, in both English and Korean. Lee’s discourse analysis of Korean pop songs focuses on the content of English lyrics to discover what it means to use English in Korean pop songs and its effect on constructing identities.

All the articles summarized above discuss identities related to performative productions of English or English mixing in various contexts. Based on these studies, and because all of the studies on English mixing in Hip-Hop lyrics have examined the phenomena qualitatively, this paper takes a quantitative perspective to explain language production and identity.

3. Description of Data

For the quantitative analysis of English lyrics in Korean Hip-hop music, I used 16 albums from three groups: 4 albums from ‘Dynamic Duo’; 5 albums from ‘Epik High’; 7 albums from ‘Drunken Tiger’. All three groups are from a Hip-hop crew called ‘the Movement’ and all the Hip-hop artists in the crew pursue identity as Hip-Hop artists in their works not like ordinary pop artists who sometimes have partially adopted rap style lyrics in their works. The Hip-hop crew, ‘the Movement’ was first founded in 1999 consisting of several Hip-hop artists including

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2 The term ‘Hip-hop crew’ refers to an organization or a group of Hip-hop artists who gathered for their fraternization and also to achieve a common goal. The concept of ‘crew’ is not always considered as a recording label or artists’ management company and often times, there can be artists from various labels and management companies in a single crew.
Drunken Tiger and Dynamic Duo. The crew has proliferated and became one of the major Hip-hop crews leading the Hip-hop scene in Korea. Referring to the data, the chosen three groups are the most widely known to the public and thus they are relatively the most popular groups in the crew. Before examining each group’s usage of English lyrics, as well as AAVE and HHNL features as well, it seems appropriate to summarize the background information of the members of each group and relate them to this study.

- **Dynamic Duo**
  - **Gaeko**
  
  Gaeko was born in Korea in 1981. He started his career as a Hip-hop artist in the Korean independent (also called ‘underground’ contrasted to the ‘overground’ which refers to the major commercial music market) Hip-Hop scene and with Choiza, his best friend from his elementary school days, organized the Hip-Hop group Dynamic Duo. Since he was born and raised in Korea, he did not have much, if any, intensive contact with English. He is currently a university student majoring in advertisement design at Hongik University in Seoul, Korea.
  
  - **Choiza**
  
  Choiza was born in Korea in 1980. His career as a Hip-Hop artist started with his elementary school friend Gaeko on the Korean independent Hip-Hop scene. Also born and raised in Korea, Choiza also did not have any intensive contact with English. He is currently a university student majoring in hotel management at Sejong University in Seoul, Korea.

- **Epik High**
  
  - **Tablo**
  
  Tablo was born in Canada in 1980 and lived in Korea for his junior high and high school
years. He graduated from Seoul International School and achieved Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in English literature at Stanford University in the USA within three and a half years with a 4.0 GPA. After his academic achievements, Tablo came back to Korea and organized the Hip-Hop group Epik High with Mithra Jin and DJ Tukutz (DJ Tukutz is not examined in this study since his role in the group is musical and not vocal).

- Mithra Jin

Mithra Jin was born in Korea in 1983. He organized the Hip-Hop group Epik High with Tablo and DJ Tukutz. Since he was born and raised in Korea, he did not have intensive contact with English. He is currently a university student majoring music at Joosung University in Choongchungbook-do province.

- Drunken Tiger

- Tiger JK

Tiger JK was born in Korea in 1974 and immigrated to Los Angeles at the age of 11. After his arrival in the US, Tiger JK tried to rebel against negative stereotyping of Asians in the US and ended up joining an African American gang, ‘The Criminal Minded Kings’. While Koreans in LA criticized him for being black, he became more comfortable with the African American culture and familiar with Hip-Hop culture. According to his English website ‘Drunken Camp, which is also a website for the Hip-Hop crew ‘the Movement’ (http://www.drunkencamp.com)’, he describes himself as a pioneer in Korean Hip-hop of a setter of early precedents for Korean Hip-hop culture. In 1997, he organized the group Drunken Tiger with another Korean Hip-Hop artist, DJ Shine, from New York City and they made their debut in Korea in 1999.

- DJ Shine
DJ Shine was born in the US in 1974. Since he was born and raised in New York, the Hip-hop capitol of the world, he experienced the golden era of early 80s Hip-hop when he was growing up. At the age of 14, Shine started experimenting with DJ-ing and rapping and became a recognized DJ in both Chicago and New York. He organized the group Drunken Tiger with Tiger JK in 1997 and they made their debut in 1999. However, at the point of the release of their 6th album ‘1945 Independence’, DJ-Shine officially left the group.

The groups described above are to be examined for AAVE features in their English Hip-Hop lyrics. The reason to choose these three groups over many other Hip-hop groups active in Korea is that they are the Hip-Hop groups in the Korean music market for a similar period of time, from the late 1990s to now. The fact that all three groups release their albums fairly regularly (every 1 to 2 years) is also one of the reasons they were chosen because examining changes, if any, over time with regular release of their works will enhance the chance of analyzing their change over time on the regular time basis. Examining three groups active in a similar period of time with similar age, gender, and Hip-hop crew, will have the effect of controlling extra-linguistic factors which might affect style but are beyond the focus of this study.

4. METHODS

   • Linguistic Features

   Three AAVE features, /ai/ monophthongization, /t, d/ deletion in consonant clusters in coda position of final syllables and /r/ reduction/vocalization, are to be examined in this paper. All of the lyrics were collected from the open contents of a major Korean portal website ‘NAVER (http://www.naver.com)’ and were checked by listening to the music and comparing them to the lyrics. Lyrics which were omitted in the collected data, especially for some English
narrations and also English origin fillers (such as ‘oh, yeah, yo, and etc.’), were covered by transcribing the part. The lyrics to be examined come from total 16 albums total from Dynamic Duo, Epik High, and Drunken Tiger. All possible occurrences of the three AAVE variants in question were counted and their phonetic qualities were examined by listening to the tokens in the English lyrics. Criteria for determining the quality of each variable are as follow:

1. /ay/
   Monophthongized: when the glide (after the nucleus) part of the diphthong /ay/ is reduced or deleted.
   Diphthong preserved: when the quality of the diphthong is preserved.

2. /t, d/
   Deletion of final /t, d/ in the word final consonant cluster: When the quality of the /t/ or /d/ is deleted.
   Preserved /t/ or /d/ in the word final consonant cluster: when the quality of the /t/ or /d/ is glottalized, unreleased, or released.

3. /r/
   Deletion of /r/ in the word final position: when the quality of /r/ is deleted or vocalized.
   Preserved /r/ in the word final position: when the quality of /r/ is present.

Acoustic analysis by taking advantage of acoustic analysis program such as Praat was not helpful in determining the values of tokens since almost all the tracks had music flowing in the background, there is too much interfering noise when examining the song in an acoustic analysis program. Therefore, the values of tokens were determined based on personal human perception, and while coding the data, a headphone was used to enhance the audibility of the tokens. All the tokens were coded into a Microsoft Excel spread sheet with their general information such as the number of the track, the name of the album and artist, value of the token, and also the surrounding linguistic environment as well. Table 1 shows an example of the spread sheet for coding /ay/ monophthongization. First two rows above the coding cells show the artist
and the name of the album. The first column of the cells consists of tokens where the AAVE feature might be realized. The second column shows the coded value of the feature. The third column shows the following acoustic environment of the target feature of the token. The fourth and fifth column code voicing/voicelessness and manner of articulation of the following environment. The song number column shows the album and the number of the song in that album. For example, ‘5-1’ in the chart below indicates that the token is from the first song of the fifth album, which is also indicated in the third row, right above the cells (Album: Pieces, part one), of Epik High.

**Coding Sheet for /ay/**

Speaker: Tablo  
Album: Pieces, part one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Token</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>ff. env.</th>
<th>Voicing</th>
<th>Manner</th>
<th>song number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm</td>
<td>al</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>voiced</td>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>5-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>a:</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>voiced</td>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>5-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write</td>
<td>a:</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>voiceless</td>
<td>stop</td>
<td>5-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like</td>
<td>a:</td>
<td>wd-boundary</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like</td>
<td>al</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>voiceless</td>
<td>stop</td>
<td>5-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like</td>
<td>a:</td>
<td>wd-boundary</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Sample Spread Sheet for /ay/ monophthongization

For /ay/ monophthongization, the coding sheet shows the features of the syllable which contains the possible site. For /t, d/ deletion and /r/ reduction and vocalization, the value of the sound as well as the preceding and following sounds were put into the coding sheet. A sample coding sheet is present in Table 2. First two rows above the coding cells show the general information including artist and the name of the album. The first column of the cells consists of tokens where the AAVE feature might be realized. The second cell shows the coded value of the feature. The third column shows the sound preceding the variable and the fourth shows the following sound. The voicing column shows whether the voicing/voiceless value of the /t/ or /d/ in the consonant cluster.
Table 2. Sample Spread Sheet for /t, d/ deletion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Token</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Preceding</th>
<th>Following</th>
<th>Voicing</th>
<th>song number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>voiced</td>
<td>2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>movement</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>voiceless</td>
<td>2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fist</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>voiceless</td>
<td>2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>voiced</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monument</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>voiceless</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>voiced</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argument</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>voiceless</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bust</td>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>voiceless</td>
<td>2-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values of coded tokens were counted for each artist and album. Then the percentage of tokens which showed AAVE features were put into a graph to examine chronological change in the rate of AAVE features used by each artist and the amount of English used in those Hip-Hop Artists’ works was also examined as well by counting the average numbers of English words used in each album for each artist. Besides the frequency of AAVE features present in English lyrics, their styles of talking outside the musical performance were looked at to compare the styles between performing and non-performing situations (when interviewed or participating in a talk show.).

- Extra-linguistic features

Extra-linguistic features to be collected for the research consist of various kinds of information, including Korean Hip-hop artists’ interviews on mass media, focusing on the contents, as well as other non-verbal indicators of identification with African American Hip-hop culture such as the degree of contact with American English and culture to relate them to changes in frequencies of artists’ AAVE usage in English lyrics over time.
5. Results

Examining all the data from Korean rappers, patterns from each informant did not show the same tendencies in their frequencies and changes over time. However, they still displayed patterns that are quite intriguing to look at. Despite the fact that sixteen albums from three groups with a total of six artists were used as data in this study, total tokens were not many because even though they do rap in English to varying extents, the Korean language was dominantly used in the rap numbers. Considering the widely accepted notion that one of the significant idea of Hip-Hop culture is to communicate with the audience, this tendency of having Korean lyrics in the major part of Korean Hip-Hop artists is not surprising. Tokens for the three features were counted separately from each artist and they are presented in the following tables from number 3 to 9. Table 3 and 5 are the results of the quantitative analysis of three AAVE features from the works of Gaeko and Choiza of Dynamic Duo. Table 4 and 6 shows the average numbers of English words per song for each album.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamic Duo: Gaeko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ay/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t, d/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/a/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Frequencies of AAVE features in Dynamic Duo’s albums - Gaeko

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamic Duo: Gaeko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Average number of English words per song in Dynamic Duo’s albums - Gaeko
Dynamic Duo: Choiza

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ay/</td>
<td>25/35 (71.43%)</td>
<td>44/52 (84.62%)</td>
<td>1/12 (8.33%)</td>
<td>9/21 (42.86%)</td>
<td>79/120 (65.83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/a:]</td>
<td>10/35 (28.57%)</td>
<td>8/52 (15.38%)</td>
<td>11/12 (91.67%)</td>
<td>12/21 (57.14%)</td>
<td>41/120 (34.17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t, d/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>7/9 (77.78%)</td>
<td>12/12 (100%)</td>
<td>1/3 (33.33%)</td>
<td>8/9 (88.89%)</td>
<td>28/33 (84.85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>2/9 (22.22%)</td>
<td>0/12 (0%)</td>
<td>2/3 (66.67%)</td>
<td>1/9 (11.11%)</td>
<td>5/33 (15.15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/u/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deleted/vocalized</td>
<td>12/15 (80%)</td>
<td>5/11 (45.45%)</td>
<td>9/33 (27.27%)</td>
<td>10/12 (83.33%)</td>
<td>36/71 (50.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>3/15 (20%)</td>
<td>6/11 (54.55%)</td>
<td>24/33 (72.73%)</td>
<td>2/12 (16.67%)</td>
<td>35/71 (49.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Frequencies of AAVE features in Dynamic Duo’s albums – Choiza

Both members from Dynamic Duo showed relatively similar frequencies of AAVE features. For some features from both artists (/t, d/ deletion for both and /ay/ monophthongization for Choiza), there was a rising frequency between the first and second album but all the frequencies dropped moving toward the third album. Other features all showed a constant decline from the first album to the third one. However, after their third album, all three features abruptly increased. A similar pattern was present in the average numbers of English words per song. That is, a fluctuation of average number of English words through time was found in both artists. However, the fluctuation in average number of English words per song was not as dramatic as the fluctuation present in the change in frequencies of AAVE features of both artists.

Table 7 and 9 are the results of coding three AAVE features from albums of the group Epik High. 8 and 10 are the average number of English words per song for each album.
Changes over time in both of the group Epik High’s artists seem to be showing fairly different patterns from those of Dynamic Duo. Tablo, from Epik High, displayed fluctuating frequencies over time and did not show either a constant rising or falling pattern. However, in the
case of Mithra, it seems that the extreme fluctuation of AAVE features related to the average number of tokens is the one to look at. Compared to any other artist, and especially to the other member, Tablo, in the same group, Mithra’s number of English words is far smaller. The fluctuation in Tablo’s use of English is also displayed in the average number of English words per song.

Table 11 and 13 are the results of coding three AAVE features from the albums of the group Drunken Tiger. 12 and 14 are the average number of tokens per song for each album.

Drunken Tiger: Tiger JK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ay/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a:]</td>
<td>97/155 (62.58%)</td>
<td>29/44 (65.91%)</td>
<td>31/57 (54.39%)</td>
<td>27/48 (56.25%)</td>
<td>12/29 (41.38%)</td>
<td>28/42 (66.67%)</td>
<td>88/148 (59.46%)</td>
<td>312/523 (59.66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>58/155 (37.42%)</td>
<td>15/44 (34.09%)</td>
<td>26/57 (45.61%)</td>
<td>21/48 (43.75%)</td>
<td>17/29 (58.62%)</td>
<td>14/42 (33.33%)</td>
<td>60/148 (40.54%)</td>
<td>211/523 (40.34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t, d/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>33/49 (67.35%)</td>
<td>18/22 (81.82%)</td>
<td>10/15 (66.67%)</td>
<td>6/9 (66.67%)</td>
<td>10/11 (90.91%)</td>
<td>12/18 (66.67%)</td>
<td>35/47 (74.47%)</td>
<td>124/171 (72.51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>16/49 (32.65%)</td>
<td>4/22 (18.18%)</td>
<td>5/15 (33.33%)</td>
<td>3/9 (33.33%)</td>
<td>1/11 (9.09%)</td>
<td>6/18 (33.33%)</td>
<td>12/47 (25.53%)</td>
<td>47/171 (27.49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɹ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deleted/vocalized</td>
<td>79/81 (97.53%)</td>
<td>21/21 (100%)</td>
<td>28/30 (93.33%)</td>
<td>9/10 (90%)</td>
<td>28/28 (100%)</td>
<td>18/19 (94.74%)</td>
<td>40/51 (78.43%)</td>
<td>223/240 (92.92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>2/81 (2.47%)</td>
<td>0/21 (0%)</td>
<td>2/30 (6.67%)</td>
<td>1/10 (10%)</td>
<td>0/28 (0%)</td>
<td>1/19 (5.26%)</td>
<td>11/51 (21.57%)</td>
<td>17/240 (7.08%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. Frequencies of AAVE features in Drunken Tiger’s albums – Tiger JK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average no. of Eng lyrics</td>
<td>176.5 (1765/10)</td>
<td>43.08 (560/13)</td>
<td>46.08 (599/13)</td>
<td>27.21 (381/14)</td>
<td>36.92 (480/13)</td>
<td>37.54 (488/11)</td>
<td>68.22 (1228/18)</td>
<td>59.79 (5501/92)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12. Average number of English words per song in Drunken Tiger’s albums – Tiger JK

Drunken Tiger: Shine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/ay/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a:]</td>
<td>78/126 (61.9%)</td>
<td>51/81 (62.96%)</td>
<td>49/76 (64.47%)</td>
<td>31/55 (56.36%)</td>
<td>128/338 (38.17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>48/126 (38.1%)</td>
<td>30/81 (37.04%)</td>
<td>27/76 (35.53%)</td>
<td>24/55 (43.64%)</td>
<td>129/338 (38.17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t, d/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deleted</td>
<td>22/43 (51.16%)</td>
<td>19/26 (73.08%)</td>
<td>22/27 (81.48%)</td>
<td>13/25 (52%)</td>
<td>76/121 (62.81%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>21.43 (48.84%)</td>
<td>7/26 (26.92%)</td>
<td>5/27 (18.52%)</td>
<td>12/25 (48%)</td>
<td>45/121 (37.19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ɹ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deleted/vocalized</td>
<td>65/68 (95.59%)</td>
<td>26/27 (96.3%)</td>
<td>22/26 (84.62%)</td>
<td>36/36 (100%)</td>
<td>149/157 (94.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>3/68 (4.41%)</td>
<td>1/27 (3.7%)</td>
<td>4/26 (15.38%)</td>
<td>0/36 (0%)</td>
<td>8/157 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. Frequencies of AAVE features in Drunken Tiger’s albums – DJ Shine
Tiger JK and DJ Shine also showed a similar pattern to that of Tablo (fluctuating frequency without any constant decline or incline over time). Although DJ Shine officially left the group after the sixth album was released, his last work was on the fourth one. Moreover, the change in the average number of English words per song shows the same pattern of dramatic decline between the first and the second album for both artists. From the fifth, the album which Tiger JK started performing alone, the average number of tokens starts to rise. Results from coding are to be examined thoroughly, with each artist’s extra-linguistic features discussed in the next section.

### Table 14. Average number of English words per song in Drunken Tiger’s albums – DJ Shine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average no. of Eng lyrics</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>120.7 (1207/10)</td>
<td>26.62 (346/13)</td>
<td>48.62 (632/13)</td>
<td>41 (574/14)</td>
<td>50.18 (2759/50)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Discussion of Findings**

Tokens coded from each artist are re-organized into figure format to highlight changes over time and compare them to the change in average number of tokens per song for each album over time. Since this paper does not focus on generalizing a pattern of Korean Hip-hop artists’ way of projecting identities by manipulating their usage of language, analyses in this section examine the three groups separately, though there were perhaps some links among the three groups. This study focuses on how different groups in an identical Hip-hop crew, the Movement, with individually different backgrounds, achieved the same goal, projecting Hip-hop artist identity, and other individual identities, by focusing on their use of linguistic features and also by linking extra-linguistic factors to their linguistic features.
• Dynamic Duo

The first group to be discussed is Dynamic Duo. Dynamic Duo consists of two members who were born and raised in Korea without any intensive contact with English. Although they are probably exposed to American Hip-hop music and are familiar with it, the only context in which they use or mix English language is when they are performing on a stage. Other than the performance setting, in interviews or television programs, they do not use any English at all. Both members’ frequencies of three AAVE features are presented in a line graph to clarify the directions of changes over time in figure 1 and figure 2.

![Figure 1. Changes in frequencies of AAVE features over time-Dynamic Duo-Gaeko](image)

- : /ay/ -> [a:]
- : /t, d/ -> 0
- : /r/ -> 0

x axis: album no.  y axis: frequency of AAVE feature (%)
Both members of Dynamic Duo, by and large, show fluctuating changes of frequencies over time. The change in frequencies over time is rather dramatic in both artists’ features, which makes it difficult to look for constant patterns. This inconsistent patterning can be explained by both artists’ background information regarding linguistic ability. Le Page’s (1985) linguistic behavior model on linguistic modification may give a useful insight to account for these inconsistent patterns. Le Page’s model argues that in modifying our linguistic behavior, there are constraints that affect our modification. One of the constraints which affects linguistic modifications is the speakers’ ability to modify their linguistic behavior (fourth rider from the four riders which constraint speaker’s linguistic modifications), and this constraint can be applied to reveal the factors that cause those fluctuation of frequencies of both artists, Gaeko and Choiza. As British pop artists showed imperfection and irregularity in their imitation of American phonology in Trudgill’s (1983) study, both artists from Dynamic Duo also show patterns similar to those of British pop artists. It seems perhaps clear that this constraint, the speaker’s linguistic ability to modify his/her linguistic behavior, underlies the fluctuating frequencies of both members of Dynamic Duo. Their attempt to project Hip-Hop artist identity
by modifying their language seems to be half successful due to their lack of ability. This lack of ability is probably greater than that of the pop artists in Trudgill’s study if we consider that they are not even speakers of any variety of English. Their failure in language modification is inevitable because they are already unsuccessful in utilizing the language which they have to modify in order to identify themselves by emulating AAVE to project the Hip-Hop identity.

Although both members seem to display irregular patterns showing fluctuation of frequencies over time, there still exists something of a pattern. Both artists display changes similar to each other over time. Their overlapping pattern of changes in frequencies of AAVE features may indicate there is something else going on in their usage of AAVE besides the attempt of projecting Hip-hop identity. This overlapping of change in frequencies can be explained by their personal histories and their strong bond with each other. As it is stated in the Description of data section, their relationship as best friends from elementary school days indicates their strong bond and this is also clearly evidenced in their lyrics emphasizing their homogeneity. Excerpt is from their first track, irdyekse (résumé), in the first album, Taxi Driver (2004).

(5)

1 hollo twungcilul chaca ttetolatanimun oytholpak
(I was) a solitary man looking for a nest.
2 Amwuto mosmallye kocippwulthong ttolmani kuleten enu nal hayspich pichinun nal
No one could stop me. (I was) a stubborn freak. Once upon a shiny day.
3 Hakkyo wuntoncangeyse acwu tantanhaypoinun han chinkwulul manna
in the school play ground, (I) met a friend with a stout figure.
4 Ilikassta celikassta pwulal twu ccak manyang puthetanye
Wandering here and there, we were always together like two testicles, roaming around the whole town.
5 Cwunghakyolul kechimyense kacin choycawa kaykolan ayching kuli nappuchinun anhtela
Gaeko and Choiza, nicknames we got from the junior high school days, it was not bad.
6 Cwawutayching pisushan saynghwal hwankyeng sokey cala maycecin sotolika nemwo manha
A bisymmetry, raised in a similar background, we have too many stories tied up.

Excerpt 5. irdyekse (résumé) from the album Taxi Driver by Dynamic Duo

This sense of their assertion of sameness can be seen as it is reflected in their changes in
fluctuating AAVE frequencies over time thus showing a similar pattern which overlaps with each other despite the fact that those frequencies display irregularities. Their assertion of sameness can be interpreted as an introduction of homogenous group identity. Apart from the discussion that they show a failure to maintain a consistent pattern of AAVE features, they are projecting a group identity, stressing their sameness at the same time.

The second feature to be examined is the average number of English words per song for each album (all the English lyrics were counted by words and divided by the number of songs in each album) which are presented in figures 3 and 4.

![Figure 3. Changes in average no. of English words over time-Dynamic Duo-Gaeko](image-url)
Although the change of the number of the average English words per song over time shows a little changes, the average number of tokens per song does not seem to be fluctuating as dramatically, and tends to remain rather low and more consistently than the fluctuation of their AAVE features, less than 30, for both artists. There is no absolute standard to evaluate the average number of English words as high or low, but if these numbers are compared by those of other artists with intensive contact with American culture, which are presented below after this discussion, Dynamic Duo shows very small amount of English in their works. The small number of tokens indirectly indicates their low proficiency in English. Furthermore, the minor change of average number of tokens over time also shows a similar pattern between two artists, which may support the assertion of the group identity of sameness. Thus, it is not only the frequencies of their AAVE features, but also the average number of tokens, which indirectly indicates the amount of English used in each album, which shows an overlap indicating of homogenous identity.
• Epik High

The second group is Epik High. The group consists of three members, Tablo, Mithra Jin, and DJ Tukutz (Since DJ Tukutz does not participate in any verbal performance, he is excepted from this analysis, which will focus on the other two members, Tablo and Mithra Jin).

Revisiting the personal backgrounds of Tablo and Mithra Jin, the English proficiency of Tablo is relatively higher than people who have had little contact with English-speaking contexts, whereas Mithra Jin would fall into the category of people with little contact with English speaking communities. Excerpts 6 and 7 are from Korean variety shows where Tablo speaks English. Excerpt 6 is from a variety show program called *Brain Survivor* and the show host requests Tablo to reenact a scene from a Korean movie ‘Taegeukki’ in English with a Korean female singer J who is from the US (the language used in the original film was Korean and Tablo was not in the movie). Excerpt 7 is from a variety quiz show and panels are requested to explain a given Korean word to describe in English and have an English native speaker come up with the right word. In the excerpt, Mithra Jin uses a very simple phrase mixed with a Korean phrase and gestures to compensate his ability.

(6)
Show Host: yey. Tabullossi putakhapnita. Ca, ready, action!
   Ok. Tablo, Let’s go. And, ready, action!
Tablo: That’s *why* (diphthong) you should go. You can go instead of me!
J: Who do you think I’m running around breaking my back for!
Tablo: Don’t use me as an excuse! Did I (diphthong) ask you to do that?


(7)
(Given Korean word for Mithra Jin– Short track)
Mithra Jin: *This sports is…tonggyey ollimpik hyocaongmok.*
*This sport is…*which Korea wins many gold medals in Winter Olympics sports event.
(After this utterance, he acts like skating until the English native speaker comes up with the answer)

Tablo actually does not show any hesitation in speaking English when other people ask him to do so, even in non-performance settings when he is not on stage, but when Mithra Jin is required to speak English outside of stage performing settings, he performs non-verbally, like a mime, or uses very simple English. However, Tablo seems to use fewer AAVE features in non-performance settings than he does in his music performance. Both members’ frequencies of three AAVE features in their music are presented in the following figures five and six.

![Diagram showing changes in frequencies of AAVE features over time for Epik High-Tablo](image)

Legend:
- ◆: /ay/- > [a:]
- ■: /t, d/- > 0
- ▲: /r/- > 0

x axis: album no.  y axis: frequency of AAVE feature (%)  
Figure 5. Changes in frequencies of AAVE features over time-Epik High-Tablo
Both members of the group show extremely different patterns in their frequencies of AAVE feature use. Tablo’s frequencies are relatively stable and high. However, Mithra Jin’s frequencies fluctuate dramatically over time for example, from 0% to nearly 80% in /ay/ monophthongization between his fourth and fifth albums. This is a somewhat different situation from the one that Dynamic Duo was showing. In terms of LePage’s linguistic constraints in language modification, Tablo’s English proficiency leads to his maintaining his AAVE features. Given Mithra Jin’s low English proficiency, this may not be surprising at first glance. However, looking at the frequencies for his /t, d/ deletions and /r/ dropping, there is not even one token from Mithra Jin’s lyrics in the 4th album. This seems to be indicating that there might be something different going on in his amount of English used in his works. The following figure 7 and 8 display both members’ average number of English words per song from each album.
The average number of English words per song, ranging from 1.43 to 11.87 (see table 10 also), seems extremely small for Mithra Jin, this low numbers are probably more responsible for his fluctuating use of AAVE features than his lack of linguistic ability in English. This seems awkward since it violates the presupposition for this study that Korean Hip-hop artists are utilizing English lyrics and AAVE features to project their Hip-hop artist identity. However, this point of contention can be met with a solution by applying the concept of membership identity, which, at least for Epik High, works differently from the case of Dynamic Duo. Since Tablo and
Mithra Jin do not share much of a common background (such as education level and English proficiency), which creates the membership identity that ties both members to a group, Mithra Jin is able to project his Hip-hop artist identity simply by relying on membership in the group Epik High with his counterpart rap artist Tablo. Since Tablo is successful in using English and emulating AAVE features stably, Mithra Jin does not feel any obligation or pressure and may know, consciously or unconsciously, that it is redundant to put extra effort into using English and AAVE features, where he would probably be unsuccessful in emulating them proficiently. In other words, the membership identity in the group Epik High is compensating for linguistic ability in creating Mithra Jin’s Hip-hop artist identity.

Tablo’s change in average number of English words per song shows a fluctuation over time. Although his average numbers of English words per song are generally higher than those of members of Dynamic Duo, it seems unreasonable to set up an objective standard to distinguish between intensive and non-intensive use of English. Tablo’s average amount of English words leads to an argument that it indirectly shows his capability in using the English language. Since his capability in speaking English leaves no room for any doubt, the fluctuating pattern of the average number of English words over time indicates that even though the Hip-Hop artist may be proficient in utilizing English, this does not mean that he feels that he always use a large amount of English in his work. That is, despite the fact that the artist is fully capable in using English, it is unnecessary to maintain high levels of the amount of English usage. Examining the relatively stable frequencies of AAVE features and the fluctuating amount of English lyrics suggests the idea that, for Tablo, the relatively stable frequencies of AAVE features are more significantly connected to his Hip-Hop artist identity than his intensity of English usage.

- Drunken Tiger

The last group to be examined in this study is Drunken Tiger. It is far too complicated
to evaluate whether these Korean Hip-Hop artists are ‘authentic’ AAVE speakers since the notion ‘authentic speaker’ and ‘authenticity’ are complicated (See, e.g., Bucholtz 2003, Coupland 2003, 2007 and Eckert 2003). In this study, instead of attempting to determine which Korean artists are ‘authentic AAVE speakers’, the probability of being the speaker who is most/least comfortable in using AAVE is determined by examining the background information of each Hip-Hop artist. Given that the two group members of the group Drunken Tiger had the most intensive contact with African American culture in the US, it would be reasonable to say that Tiger JK and DJ Shine are the most proficient AAVE speakers, at least among artists examined in this study. In other words, as Tiger JK learned to speak AAVE becoming a member of the African-American gang ‘The Criminal Minded Kings’ after he immigrated to LA, and DJ Shine was born and raised in New York and became an active Hip-hop DJ, they seem to be more comfortable using AAVE than any other Hip-hop artists this paper has examined. Whether they are on the stage performing or being interviewed, their usage of AAVE features is evident. When they are interviewed in English, they tend to put Hip-hop markers such as ‘You know (what) I[a:] mean’ and ‘Wor(d)’ in between their speech. The following figures 9 and 10 show Drunken Tiger’s change of three AAVE features’ frequencies.
Both members of Drunken Tiger show what one might expect. Their frequencies of AAVE features are stably maintained at a high percentage, which is facilitated by their linguistic ability in using AAVE. Both members don’t show the exact same pattern, but they are successful in maintaining their features relatively constantly. However, the change in the number of English
words per song over time triggers more intriguing discussions. Figures 11 and 12 display both members’ average number of English words per song from each album.

A dramatic decrease in the average amount of tokens is present between their first and second albums and does not seem to increase before their fourth album. This dramatic decrease
and maintenance of a small number of tokens indicate their projection of another identity besides their Hip-hop artist identity. In their English interview which took place after they released their third album, they actually comment on this change, as shown in excerpts 8 and 9:

(8) DJ Shine: And uh…we are-we are Korean Hip-hop group, you know, so…
We wanted to add Korean flavor to it so…um...
Excerpt 8. DJ Shine’s comments on their change in the radio show RKI radio (2001)

(9) Tiger JK: We now do better rhyme in Korean than English, you know…
Excerpt 9. Tiger JK’s comments on their change in the radio show RKI radio (2001)

Their comments on changes in their music style and rapping reveal the reason why they show a dramatic decrease of their average amount of English words. As soon as they became comfortable with Korean music style and language, they seem to introduce a new identity to project, the Korean Hip-hop artist identity, by putting in more Korean-style music and more Korean lyrics. Now, it seems to be evident that they are asserting Hip-Hop identity by maintaining their high frequency of AAVE usage and, at the same time, they are asserting Korean Hip-hop artist identity with more Korean lyrics in their work. The re-increase of Tiger JK’s average number of tokens after their fourth album seems to represent the absence of the other member, DJ Shine, because Tiger JK’s amount of English in his work started increasing right after DJ Shine stopped his performance, after their fifth album, and it shows a bigger range of increase after his partner officially left the group, that is, before the seventh album was released. It may be rather flippant to make a clear assertion that his anxiety about performing alone leads to his attempting to compensate for the loss of his former partner by putting in more English lyrics but it is not unreasonable to simply suggest the possibility.
7. Conclusion

This study of English lyrics and three AAVE features in three different Korean Hip-Hop groups’ works revealed how quantitative research can enhance explanations for the correlation between the method of performing language and the identity of a speaker trying to identify oneself with certain target groups. Informants in this research showed two situations of performing English and AAVE: performing a language and a variety of that language which the speaker is not familiar with; performing a language variety which the speaker is familiar with or comfortable with. For the first situation, although there is no question that the Hip-Hop artists do use English and AAVE in projecting Hip-hop artist identity, they show a failure in emulation of the language variety due to their lack of linguistic ability. However, Dynamic Duo, the group consisting of two members who lack linguistic ability in emulating AAVE, asserted an additional identity of sameness, the membership identity, between its two members. In Epik High’s case, the membership identity showed an effect exactly opposite to Dynamic Duo’s. In other words, if there is a member in the same group who is capable of speaking English and utilizing AAVE features, a non-capable member can identify himself with the English-speaking member and project Hip-hop identity expending little effort on using English and AAVE. In Drunken Tiger’s case, where the speaker has the ability to use English and perform AAVE, the speaker shows a relatively stable pattern in performing AAVE features apart from the amount of English used in their works. This is also true for Tablo in Epik High. Both artists in the group Drunken Tiger also showed a usage of the average number of English words to project another identity besides the Hip-hop artist identity: the Korean artist identity.

As discussed above, in projecting similar identities, there can be differences in ways of asserting them and also differences in level of linguistic modification due to performers’ linguistic ability. However, focusing on three groups for just three features and the amount of
English words can limit those discussions and keep them away from the possibility of generalization. Another reason for those limitations is that the selection of the three groups was conducted to control for gender and focus more on a single community of practice (the Hip-hop crew ‘the Movement’). In future studies, to enhance the generalizability of this study, more data should be examined. Furthermore, since the surrounding environment for every token is coded as well, comparing them to the actual frequencies of patterns of African-American AAVE speakers would reveal more precise connections between performers’ linguistic abilities and the level of success in language modification. Such follow up studies will provide more insights into performative usage of language and identity.
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