

Code-Switching in Korean Hip-Hop: A Corpus-Based Study of English Usage in Korean Rap Lyrics

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Seog, Daria Soon-Young. (2024). Code-switching in Korean hip-hop: A corpus-based study of English usage in Korean rap lyrics. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 32(4), 111-129. This study examines code-switching between Korean and English in the lyrics of prominent Korean hip-hop artists. By analyzing a corpus of 40 songs from Jay Park, BewhY, Zion.T, G-Dragon, ZICO, Vinxen, and Okasian, it explores how these artists use English to express identity, modernity, and engage with global audiences. Code-switching is categorized into intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching based on Poplack's (1980) classification while the cultural contexts in the frameworks of Kim (2015), Lawrence (2010), Lee (2006), and Yang (2012) provided bases for enriched analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal that English in Korean hip-hop serves various roles: asserting identity, enhancing international appeal, and reinforcing themes of love, power, and ambition. The statistical analyses showed high positive correlations between code-switching types among the investigated artists, highlighting English as a strategic tool for artists navigating local and global music markets. Ultimately, the findings illuminate the interplay between language, culture, and globalization in Korean hip-hop, contributing to our understanding of English's role in Korean popular culture.

Key Words: Korean hip-hop lyrics, intra-sentential code-switching, inter-sentential code-switching, tag-switching, corpus-based study

1. Introduction

The globalization of hip-hop has led artists worldwide, including in Korea, to adapt it to their own cultural and linguistic contexts. Korean hip-hop, as a significant component of the Hallyu (Korean Wave), has emerged as a prominent cultural movement that blends global hip-hop elements with local linguistic and cultural narratives. English usage in Korean rap lyrics is a distinct phenomenon, where artists frequently alternate between Korean and English—a practice known as code-switching. This linguistic choice serves not only as a stylistic and communicative tool but also as a powerful means of identity expression, cultural affiliation, and social commentary.

In the context of Korean hip-hop, code-switching between Korean and English can be seen as a marker of identity, modernity, and global connectedness. English language education in Korea and the influence of globalization have shaped the way English is perceived and used in Korea. Often associated with sophistication, prestige, and international appeal, English becomes an attractive tool for artists who seek to project a cosmopolitan image and connect with both local and global audiences. Previous studies on English use in K-pop (Kim, 2015; Lawrence, 2010; Lee, 2006) have highlighted its role in engaging non-Korean listeners and creating a sense of modernity and global relevance. This paper builds on these findings by focusing specifically on Korean hip-hop and analyzing the linguistic and thematic roles of English within this genre through a corpus-based approach (Poplack, 1980; Yang, 2012).

Building on the literature, this study investigates the use of English in the lyrics of seven influential Korean hip-hop artists—BewhY, G-Dragon, Jay Park, Okasian, Vinxen, ZICO, and Zion.T—through a corpus of 40 songs. The analysis explores patterns and functions of code-switching, including intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching, following Poplack's (1980) framework. This approach allows for a unified examination of how English functions within Korean hip-hop, encompassing audience engagement, thematic emphasis, and the projection of a globalized identity.

By categorizing code-switching instances according to Poplack's (1980) typology and examining motivations behind these patterns through frameworks from Kim (2015), Lee (2006), and Yang (2012) while integrating Sankaran's (2023) expanded framework, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of English usage in Korean hip-hop. Sankaran's (2023) framework highlights code-switching as a dynamic tool for identity construction, cultural expression, stylistic signaling, audience engagement, and linguistic

creativity, allowing Korean hip-hop artists to navigate both local and global influences. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how code-switching not only adheres to grammatical rules but also serves broader communicative and cultural functions.

Additionally, the current study aims to uncover potential correlations between code-switching frequency, thematic elements, and artist-specific choices, addressing the following research questions:

- (1) What are the linguistic patterns of English code-switching in Korean hip-hop lyrics, and how do they vary across different artists?
- (2) What functions do these code-switching patterns serve in terms of thematic development, identity assertion, and global engagement?
- (3) Is there a correlation between the frequency and type of code-switching used and the thematic or stylistic choices of the artists?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Code-Switching in Hip-Hop and Global Contexts

Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a discourse, is widely observed in multilingual communities, especially in cultural expressions like music (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Poplack, 1980; Sankaran, 2023). In hip-hop, code-switching serves as both a linguistic and cultural tool, allowing artists to assert identity, engage global audiences, and blend local and international influences (Alim, 2009; Sarkar & Winer, 2006). For non-English-speaking countries, English often symbolizes global relevance, modernity, and credibility. For instance, Sarkar (2009) documented how French artists use English to connect with the international hip-hop community while maintaining a local perspective. Similarly, Androutsopoulos (2009) showed that German hip-hop artists blend English with their native language to create a hybrid identity.

2.2. English in Korean Popular Music and Hip-Hop

The integration of English in Korean popular music has gained attention as a tool for globalization and identity formation. Lee (2006) argued that English in K-pop functions as

a means of self-expression and cultural negotiation, helping artists project a modern image. Lawrence (2010) explored how English connects Korean music to global audiences, enhancing the international appeal of Korean artists. Specifically in hip-hop, Kim (2015) noted that artists like Jay Park and ZICO use English not only for stylistic purposes but also to align with global hip-hop norms and expand their fan base beyond Korea.

2.3. Typologies of Code-Switching

Poplack's (1980) typology provides a structural framework for analyzing three main types of code-switching:

- (1) Intra-sentential switching: Mixing two languages within a single sentence, commonly seen in Korean hip-hop when artists blend English and Korean.
- (2) Inter-sentential switching: Switching languages between sentences or lines, often indicating a thematic or stylistic shift.
- (3) Tag-switching: Inserting brief phrases like "you know" from one language into the discourse of another, used for emphasis or rhythm.

Poplack's framework focuses on the grammatical aspects of code-switching, analyzing how languages combine within sentences and the governing rules. In contrast, Sankaran's (2023) expanded framework broadens the analysis to include the roles of code-switching in identity construction and cultural expression, particularly within specific genres like hip-hop. It emphasizes the significance of social and situational contexts, recognizing that motivations for switching may vary by audience and setting. This framework highlights code-switching as a stylistic device that reflects the speaker's identity and cultural background, extending beyond mere language mechanics.

These typologies are crucial for understanding the patterns of code-switching in Korean hip-hop, where blending languages serves as an artistic choice and a means of engaging local and international audiences (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

2.4. Thematic and Functional Usage of English in Korean Hip-Hop

The thematic use of English in Korean hip-hop often reflects global hip-hop norms, such as power, resistance, and self-expression (Lee, 2016). Shin (2018) found that English

is strategically employed in hooks and choruses to enhance rhythm and accessibility, appealing to both Korean and international listeners. Terms related to wealth, luxury, and self-empowerment are prevalent, aligning with global hip-hop themes. This usage is not merely stylistic; it also serves as an assertion of identity as artists navigate their roles within global culture.

Kim (2015) explored these thematic elements, showing that English in Korean hip-hop is associated with success, authenticity, and a modern lifestyle. Jin (2007) emphasized that English allows artists to critique societal norms and express individuality, transcending the limitations of the Korean language.

Incorporating both Poplack's (1980) and Sankaran's (2023) frameworks enriches the understanding of how artists use English in their lyrics. While Poplack's typology aids in categorizing the structural elements, Sankaran's framework explores the broader cultural implications, revealing how artists assert their identities and connect with audiences on multiple levels.

2.5. Code-Switching in Korean Hip-Hop: Comparative Perspectives

In line with global hip-hop practices, Korean hip-hop employs English to signify global affiliation and create a unique artistic identity. However, Korea's distinctive linguistic environment—shaped by historical and educational influences—results in specific features of English usage. Artists like Jay Park, G-Dragon, and BewhY incorporate English phrases that resonate with global hip-hop themes while embedding them in narratives that reflect local realities, such as societal struggles or personal growth (Choi, 2018).

Park (2019) emphasized that Korean hip-hop artists use English to project an image of cosmopolitanism, frequently intertwining Western cultural references with Korean contexts. This blending of languages exemplifies the dynamic role of code-switching in constructing identity, as suggested by Sankaran's (2023) framework.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection and Corpus Compilation

To analyze code-switching practices, a corpus of lyrics, Korean Hip-Hop Lyric Corpus

(KHHLC), was compiled from seven influential Korean hip-hop artists. The study selected prominent Korean hip-hop artists (Jay Park, BewhY, Zion.T, G-Dragon, ZICO, Vinxen, Okasian) based on their influence, linguistic diversity, and global reach. Songs were chosen for their relevance to hip-hop, balanced representation, and richness in English integration, ensuring a meaningful analysis of code-switching trends. The lyrics were compiled using various websites and checked for accuracy, ensuring that both Korean and English elements were correctly represented. The KHHLC consists of 40 songs from 7 different artists with a total of 20,210 tokens of Korean and English segments. The corpus was designed to facilitate both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the artists and songs included in the corpus with the token count for each artist.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the Korean Hip-Hop Lyrics Corpus (KHHLC)

Artist	# of Songs	Total tokens	Song Titles
BewhY	6	2,570	Forever, Déjà vu, 9ucci Bank, Youth, My Star, Temptation, Michael Jackson
G-Dragon	6	3,240	One of a Kind, Outro, Intro, Temple, WHO YOU?, The Leaders
Jay Park	6	4,010	Me Like Yuh, All I Wanna Do, Drive, Yacht, Solo, Soju
Okasian	5	2,310	₩1,000,000, No Flex Zone, Get that Money, New Start, Spread the Word
Vinxen	5	2,450	Sinking Down With U, Blind, Why Does Ocean, Stupid Night, IMOK
ZICO	6	3,050	Paradise, Any Song, Bermuda Triangle, Spot, Tough Cookie, Okey Dokey
Zion.T	6	2,580	No Makeup, Complex, O, Merry-go-round, Sorry, Ideal

3.2. Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Utilizing WordSmith Tools 9, this study employed a mixed-methods approach, beginning with a quantitative analysis of English usage in Korean hip-hop lyrics. The frequency of English words, phrases, and morphemes was quantified to determine overall usage patterns across artists. Statistical tools were employed to calculate the percentage of English words used in each artist's lyrics and to identify the contexts where code-switching occurred (e.g., chorus, verses, hooks). Additionally, a chi-square test was

conducted to analyze the relationship between code-switching frequency and specific song segments.

Following the quantitative analysis, a qualitative approach was taken to explore English word usage in context through thematic analysis. Concordances were generated, using WordSmith Tools 9, to identify recurring patterns of code-switching instances and their stylistic, cultural, and social functions.

4. Results and Discussion

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze code-switching patterns in Korean hip-hop lyrics. Quantitative methods included frequency analysis of English usage, distribution of code-switching types (intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching), and statistical correlation tests. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between different types of code-switching, revealing strong positive correlations among them. Additionally, a chi-square test was used to determine whether the distribution of code-switching types significantly varied across artists, while Spearman's rank correlation assessed the consistency of linguistic strategies within the genre. Qualitative thematic analysis further explored the functions of English within lyrics, identifying recurring linguistic patterns and their roles in identity construction, cultural affiliation, and audience engagement.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Token Distribution

The analysis of the lyrics corpus, KHHLC, reveals a total of 20,210 tokens, with 14,260 tokens (approximately 71%) identified as Korean and 5,950 tokens (approximately 29%) as English. While Korean remains the primary language, the significant presence of English indicates its strategic integration, particularly in hooks, choruses, and thematic phrases. This bilingual approach reflects the artists' artistic intention to appeal to international audiences and emphasize themes that resonate more effectively in English. Ultimately, it underscores their efforts to merge global hip-hop influences with local elements, maintaining a strong connection with both domestic and international listeners.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and token distribution by artist in KHHLC

Artist	Number of Songs	Total Tokens	Korean Tokens	English Tokens	% of English Tokens
BewhY	6	2,570	2,230	340	13.23%
G-Dragon	6	3,240	2,120	1,120	34.57%
Jay Park	6	4,010	2,400	1,610	40.15%
Okasian	5	2,310	1,800	510	22.08%
Vinxen	5	2,450	1,620	830	33.88%
ZICO	6	3,050	2,200	850	27.87%
Zion.T	6	2,580	1,890	690	26.74%
Total	40	20,210	14,260	5,950	29.44%

Note: Token numbers of each song differed.

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 shows that Jay Park has the highest proportion of English (40.15%) in his lyrics with the next highest being G-Dragon (34.57%) and Vinxen (33.88%), respectively, while BewhY has the least (13.23%). This variation suggests that artists like Jay Park and G-Dragon integrate English extensively to establish a global persona, aligning with previous research by Kim (2015), which highlighted English as a tool for engaging international audiences and asserting global identity in Korean hip-hop.

In addition, Jay Park is an American rapper based in Korea, which can also explain the high rate of English usage in his lyrics in line with his cultural or self-identity. Research indicates that bilingual individuals often navigate their identities through code-switching, using multiple languages to express different facets of their experiences and affiliations (Pavlenko, 2001). This dynamic is particularly relevant for artists like Park, who blend English and Korean to reflect their hybrid identities and connect with diverse audiences (García, 2009; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Furthermore, Zhang (2016) emphasizes that bilingualism allows individuals to articulate their cultural hybridity, making it a significant aspect of their artistic expression. These insights suggest that Park's use of English is not merely stylistic but also serves as a crucial means of identity negotiation within the global hip-hop landscape, showcasing his unique position as a Korean American artist.

On the other hand, artists like BewhY emphasize a more Korean-centered approach, resonating with Lawrence's (2010) findings on the selective use of English to maintain cultural authenticity while engaging audiences. However, an investigation of a

comprehensive corpus encompassing all of the artists' songs is needed to reveal more accurate insights on the artists' tendencies and preferences.

4.2. Code-switching: Intra-Sentential, Inter-Sentential, and Tag-Switching

Table 3 presents the frequency of code-switching type by artist while Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of code-switching type by artist.

Table 3. Frequency of Code-Switching Types per artist

Artist	Intra-Sentential	%	Inter-Sentential	%	Tag-Switching	%	Total
BewhY	45	66.18	15	22.06	8	11.76	68
G-Dragon	85	69.67	25	20.49	12	9.84	122
Jay Park	110	66.67	35	21.21	20	12.12	165
Okasian	60	66.67	20	22.22	10	11.11	90
Vinxen	55	67.07	18	21.95	9	10.98	82
ZICO	90	62.07	40	27.59	15	10.34	145
Zion.T	70	68.63	22	21.57	10	9.80	102
Total	515	66.54	175	22.61	84	10.85	774

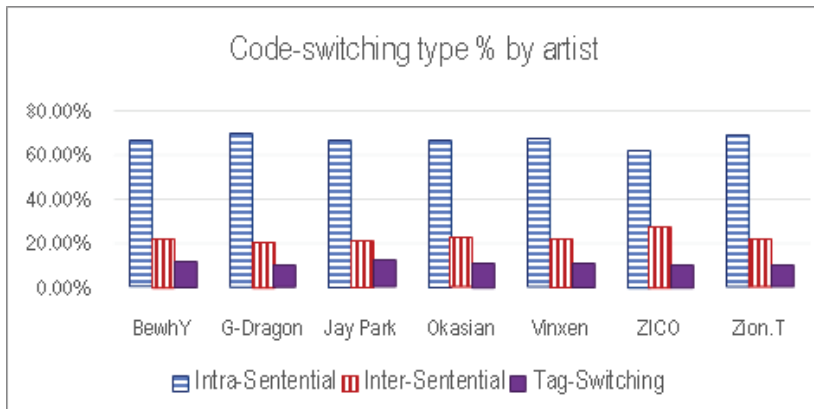


Figure 1. Proportion of Code-Switching Types by Artist

Intra-sentential switching emerged as the most frequent type, accounting for 66.54% of all instances. This aligns with Yang's (2012) findings in bilingual music contexts, where intra-sentential switching enables a fluid transition between languages. In Jay Park's "All I Wanna Do," English phrases are embedded within Korean sentences ("네가 좋아 me like yuh"), creating a seamless bilingual expression. Similarly, ZICO's "Paradise" integrates English ("너와 나의 paradise, I can't deny") to emphasize sentiment, supporting Jin (2016), who argues that English serves as a stylistic enhancement in Korean hip-hop.

Inter-sentential switching, where entire English sentences alternate with Korean sentences, was the second most frequent type observed, supporting Sarkar's (2009) and Um's (2003) findings that bilingual artists use this form to create thematic shifts and emphasize individuality. G-Dragon's "One of a Kind" serves as a prime example, where the English phrase "I'm wild and young" follows a Korean verse, creating a distinct thematic break that reinforces his rebellious identity. This pattern mirrors global hip-hop contexts where inter-sentential switching is used to distinguish themes and establish artist personas.

Tag-switching accounted for a smaller proportion of code-switching instances but played a critical role in enhancing the rhythm and flow of lyrics. Previous literature, such as Larsen-Freeman (1975), associated tag-switching with low proficiency, suggesting that it compensates for gaps in language knowledge. However, this study aligns more closely with Alim (2006), who argued that in global hip-hop, tag-switches are often employed as deliberate stylistic choices. Zion.T's use of English tags in "Complex," such as "yeah" and "okay," punctuates Korean sentences, adding a laid-back, conversational tone that matches the introspective nature of the song. Similarly, Jay Park's "Drive" utilizes English hooks following Korean verses, creating a dynamic interplay consistent with international hip-hop trends.

4.3. Quantitative Analysis

As presented in Table 4, Pearson correlation coefficients show strong positive correlations among the different types of code-switching highlighting the interconnectedness of linguistic strategies employed by Korean hip-hop artists. The use of code-switching not only reflects individual artistic choices but also indicates broader trends in how artists navigate their identities and cultural affiliations within the global hip-hop landscape.

Table 4. Pearson correlation coefficients

Comparison	Pearson Correlation Coefficient (R)	Coefficient of Determination (R ²)	Interpretation
Intra-Sentential vs. Inter-Sentential	0.8826	0.779	Strong positive correlation; as intra-sentential increases, inter-sentential increases.
Inter-Sentential vs. Tag-Switching	0.8705	0.7578	Strong positive correlation; higher inter-sentential usage corresponds with higher tag-switching.
Intra-Sentential vs. Tag-Switching	0.9529	0.908	Strong positive correlation; higher intra-sentential usage is associated with higher tag-switching.

In Korean hip-hop, the integration of English within Korean sentences enhances expressiveness and stylistic fluidity, showcasing the artists' bilingual artistry as shown in (1) and (2).

- (1) In Jay Park's "All I Wanna Do," English phrases are seamlessly integrated into Korean lines, such as "네가 좋아 me like yuh," creating a bilingual structure that appeals to both Korean and international audiences while maintaining the song's emotional tone. This supports Myers-Scotton's (1993) assertion that intra-sentential code-switching facilitates a fluid and expressive bilingual narrative.
- (2) ZICO's "Paradise" features intra-sentential switching with the phrase "너와 나의 paradise, I can't deny," using English to amplify the emotional depth of the song, consistent with Jin's (2016) argument that English enhances lyrical expressiveness in Korean hip-hop.

The calculated chi-square test yields a χ^2 value of 0.825 ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5. Chi-Square Test Results for Code-Switching Types

Artist	Intra-Sentential	Inter-Sentential	Tag-Switching	Total Instances	Expected Intra-Sentential	Expected Inter-Sentential	Expected Tag-Switching	χ^2 Value	p Value*
BewhY	45	15	8	68	46.42	15.34	6.24	0.095	1.0
G-Dragon	85	25	12	122	83.30	27.51	11.20	0.135	1.0
Jay Park	110	35	20	165	112.59	37.17	15.14	0.302	1.0
Okasian	60	20	10	90	61.43	20.29	8.26	0.066	1.0

Artist	Intra-Sentential	Inter-Sentential	Tag-Switching	Total Instances	Expected Intra-Sentential	Expected Inter-Sentential	Expected Tag-Switching	χ^2 Value	p Value*
Vinxen	55	18	9	82	55.98	18.50	7.54	0.006	1.0
ZICO	90	40	15	145	99.00	32.71	13.32	0.564	1.0
Zion.T	70	22	10	102	69.28	22.89	9.33	0.011	1.0
Total	515	175	84	774				0.825	1.0

* P -values rounded to the fifth decimal place.

The results in Table 5 indicate no significant difference in the distribution of code-switching types (intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching) across the artists, suggesting that these strategies are consistently employed within the genre, regardless of individual artist styles as in (3) and (4).

- (3) Artists like BewhY, who use fewer English words overall (13.2%), employ inter-sentential switching to emphasize reflective themes. In “Forever,” English lines such as “My soul is eternal” follow introspective Korean verses, highlighting thematic shifts and reflective moods. This supports Cho’s (2020) study on Korean hip-hop that emphasizes English for thematic reinforcement.
- (4) Conversely, Jay Park integrates English frequently (40.1%) and demonstrates higher rates of intra-sentential switching, illustrating his comfort with blending languages and his focus on engaging local and global audiences. This finding aligns with Lawrence’s (2010) discussion of English’s role in enhancing global appeal in Korean pop music.

For the spearman’s rank correlation, strong correlations are observed among the different types of code-switching highlight the systematic application of these strategies in Korean hip-hop. This allows artists to effectively express their identities and connect with both local and global audiences through their bilingual artistry.

Table 6. Spearman's rank correlation coefficients for Code-Switching Types

Comparison	Spearman Rho	<i>P</i> -Value
Intra-Sentential vs. Inter-Sentential	0.964	< 0.01
Inter-Sentential vs. Tag-Switching	0.954	< 0.01
Intra-Sentential vs. Tag-Switching	0.991	< 0.01

This finding aligns with Alim (2006) and Jin (2016), who emphasize the role of code-switching in constructing bilingual identities within globalized musical genres as in (5) and (6).

- (5) In Jay Park's "Solo," the frequent use of intra-sentential switching enhances the song's international vibe, reflecting his bilingual identity and appealing to a broader audience. This corresponds with Alim's (2006) view that artists strategically use code-switching to engage with global hip-hop culture while maintaining local roots.
- (6) Zion.T's "Complex" employs English tags and phrases to create an introspective atmosphere, blending them seamlessly within Korean lyrics to connect with listeners emotionally and stylistically. This supports Jin's (2016) argument that code-switching in Korean hip-hop facilitates thematic development and audience engagement.

Analysis of token distribution and code-switching frequency (Pearson's $r=0.68$) reveals a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that longer lyrical compositions provide more opportunities for code-switching. This trend indicates that songs with higher token counts often incorporate English to add layers of meaning and stylistic variation, consistent with previous findings in bilingual music contexts (Gumperz, 1982; Makino, 1979) as shown in (7) and (8).

- (7) G-Dragon's "One of a Kind," characterized by a high token count, frequently switches between languages, using English to emphasize thematic shifts and enhance narrative structure, supporting Sarkar's (2009) observations on bilingual

musical contexts where language mixing organizes discourse.

- (8) In Vinxen's "IMOK," selective integration of English in longer verses underscores personal vulnerability, demonstrating how code-switching enriches lyrical complexity and depth.

The analysis reveals that intra-sentential switching remains the dominant type of code-switching across all artists. This consistency (Spearman's $\rho=0.85$) indicates that artists share similar linguistic strategies influenced by genre norms and stylistic preferences within the hip-hop community, aligning with broader bilingual behaviors as discussed by Myers-Scotton (1993) and Poplack (1980) as shown in (9) and (10).

- (9) Jay Park, ZICO, and G-Dragon consistently use intra-sentential switching to blend English fluidly within Korean lyrics, demonstrating a shared approach to maximizing their international appeal.
- (10) BewhY and Okasian, despite differing in English usage, strategically employ inter-sentential switching to align with thematic breaks or reinforce specific messages, further illustrating stylistic coherence within the genre.

The findings confirm that code-switching in Korean hip-hop is systematic, following patterns that align with established bilingual behaviors. English serves as a strategic tool for artists, reinforcing dual identities and engaging with global hip-hop culture while retaining Korean linguistic elements. These trends are consistent with previous studies, such as Kim (2015) and Um (2003), which highlight English's role in modern Korean identity construction within music.

4.4. Qualitative Analysis

The analysis reveals distinct themes, including identity and ambition, philosophical reflections, stylistic effects, and more. Artists like Jay Park and ZICO often use English to highlight self-expression and global identity, consistent with Kim's (2015) findings that English serves to engage international audiences and assert a global persona as shown in (11) and (12).

- (11) In Jay Park's "Yacht," phrases like "Sail away on my yacht, let's get it" create a

cosmopolitan image, appealing to local and international listeners. This aligns with Alim's (2006) observation that English in global hip-hop emphasizes themes of wealth and luxury.

- (12) ZICO's "Any Song" features catchy English hooks that enhance his global appeal, echoing Lawrence's (2010) findings that English increases the commercial viability of songs.

BewhY and Zion.T incorporate English thoughtfully within their introspective lyrics, contrasting with artists who use English primarily for commercial appeal as shown in (13) and (14). This reflects Lee's (2006) argument that English serves as a medium for deeper self-expression.

- (13) In BewhY's "Déjà vu," the English phrase "This is my fate" emphasizes an introspective tone, supporting Cho's (2020) study that highlights English's role in punctuating reflective messages without overshadowing Korean.
- (14) Zion.T's "No Makeup" includes English lines that convey vulnerability, aligning with Lawrence's (2010) findings that English can express intimacy in music.

In Korean hip-hop, tag-switching is not a reflection of language proficiency but rather an artistic device, as noted by Myers-Scotton (1993) as shown in (15) and (16).

- (15) Okasian's "₩1,000,000" features tags like "Let's go" and "Yeah," enhancing rhythm and flow, illustrating how Korean artists creatively repurpose tag-switching.
- (16) In Zion.T's "Complex," the use of English tags contributes to a laid-back vibe, supporting the global hip-hop aesthetic while challenging conventional views of tag-switching as indicative of low proficiency.

Artists like G-Dragon, ZICO, and Okasian frequently use English to discuss power and wealth, aligning with findings from Alim (2006) and Um (2003) that assert English as a tool for projecting dominance as shown in (17) and (18).

- (17) G-Dragon's "One of a Kind" features lines like "I'm wild and young," reinforcing his rebellious persona. This reflects Um's (2003) argument that English asserts modern identities in Korean music.

- (18) ZICO's "Bermuda Triangle" uses English to assert authority with lines like "I came, I saw, I conquered," which aligns with Alim's (2006) analysis of English as a marker of credibility in hip-hop.

Jay Park and Zion.T leverage English to express vulnerability and personal emotions, which broadens their appeal. This aligns with Lawrence's (2010) and Lee's (2006) findings on English's role in conveying intimacy as shown in (19) and (20).

- (19) In "Solo," Jay Park's line "All alone, I need you" enhances emotional depth and resonance with listeners.
- (20) Zion.T's use of English in "No Makeup" fosters a personal connection, reflecting Lawrence's observation of English facilitating relatable narratives in K-pop.

Vinxen's lyrics often address themes of vulnerability and personal growth, employing English to mirror global narratives of struggle as shown in (21) and (22).

- (21) In "IMOK," the phrase "I'm not okay" emphasizes fragility and openness, highlighting how English serves to resonate with global themes of resilience while rooted in local context.
- (22) In "Blind," English terms punctuate moments of self-doubt, aligning with Cho's (2020) findings that English adds emotional weight to lyrics.

In summary, thematic variations among Korean hip-hop artists showcase distinct uses of English. Jay Park, ZICO, and Okasian strategically employ English to engage international audiences, focusing on themes of love, power, and wealth, consistent with research that views English as a tool for global outreach (Kim, 2015; Um, 2003). In contrast, BewhY, Vinxen, and Zion.T use English selectively in their introspective narratives, enhancing emotional resonance and supporting Cho's assertion that English enriches thematic depth without overshadowing Korean. G-Dragon's English usage reinforces his non-conformist identity, aligning with Alim (2006) and Lee (2006), who argue that English marks identity and self-assertion.

This study demonstrates that English in Korean hip-hop transcends mere code-switching; it is a strategic tool for global engagement and identity construction. The findings illustrate how artists like Jay Park and ZICO effectively connect with global

audiences, while G-Dragon's consistent integration of English solidifies his contemporary identity. These thematic variations indicate that Korean hip-hop artists adeptly adapt English to meet their artistic goals, reflecting both global influences and local expressions. The dynamic use of English in this genre combines stylistic, thematic, and cultural elements to engage audiences meaningfully. The observed patterns of code-switching—whether intra-sentential, inter-sentential, or tag-switching—align with bilingual behaviors in global music but are uniquely tailored within the Korean context to balance authenticity and international appeal.

5. Conclusion and Limitations

This study analyzed English code-switching in Korean hip-hop through lyrics from seven prominent artists: Jay Park, BewhY, Zion.T, G-Dragon, ZICO, Vinxen, and Okasian. The findings show that code-switching serves multiple roles beyond language, including identity assertion, thematic emphasis, and global audience engagement. Intra-sentential switching was the most common, especially among Jay Park and ZICO, reflecting their bilingual fluency and international aspirations, while BewhY used English more selectively to emphasize introspection. Thematic analysis revealed that English was strategically used to convey love (Jay Park), power (ZICO), and introspection (BewhY), highlighting stylistic differences. The study also found a correlation between English usage and global reach, with internationally focused artists using more English, while those prioritizing cultural authenticity, like BewhY and Vinxen, relied more on Korean.

Code-switching in Korean hip-hop is a strategic tool for artistic expression and identity formation, balancing local authenticity with global influence. It also holds sociolinguistic significance, reflecting social status, cultural hybridity, and international engagement. From an educational perspective, this study suggests integrating music into English learning and leveraging code-switching to enhance multilingual and multicultural skills.

However, the study's scope is limited to 40 songs, which may not fully capture the diversity of Korean hip-hop. Additionally, focusing solely on written lyrics may overlook the spontaneity of live performances. Future research should explore a broader range of artists and genres, incorporating live performance data and artist interviews for a deeper understanding of code-switching in this genre.

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