



## RESEARCH PAPER

### From Seoul to Mumbai: A Comparative Analysis of How K-Pop and I-Pop Shape New Forms of English in Global Entertainment

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## ABSTRACT

This research explores how English is used in two major Asian music industries which are K-Pop and I-Pop. In different digital platforms English is now spreading faster and it appears in new hybrid forms so, this study compares how Asian music adopt English differently. It uses a qualitative content analysis of 20 selected songs, 10 from each industry to understand the purposes. Using Kachru's (1985) Three Circles Model because it highlights each industry's position. The findings show clear contrasts. As in K-Pop, English is used mainly for symbolic reasons while on the other hand, Indian Pop uses English as a natural part of India's multilingual culture. Overall, this study contributes to cultural exchange, identity formation and ongoing evolution of world English. Future studies can look more deeply at how English in different industries changes over time. Researchers can study larger samples of songs to understand the language patterns more accurately.

**KEYWORDS** Asian Music, Braj Kachru, Code-switching, English Mixing, Globalization

## Introduction

All around the world, the growth of entertainment industries has made faster spread of English language and the change in new forms (Jenkins, 2009). 21st century music plays a powerful role in shaping the languages which travels across borders (Pennycook, 2007). This also helps people to adopt new linguistic styles. So, among all the cultural industries Korean pop (K-pop) and Indian pop (I-pop) are the highly influential forces. The main reason is that, it is actively shaping youth identities, digital communication patterns and global fan communities (Oh & Lee, 2013; Mankekar, 2015). This music rising globally by online streaming platforms, and through social media interactions. It increased the presence of English in non-English speaking contexts. The English language not only used as communication tool for global reach but it is also a stylistic and symbolic resource. That is used to construct modernity and cultural hybridity (Kachru, 1985).

K-pop is the music which is widely recognized for its planned adoption of English words, phrases and even full sentences in song lyrics (Jin & Ryoo, 2014). So, due to this blend this makes it more approachable for international audience. It also strengthens its position in global music markets or industries. The use of English in K-pop also reflects South Korean's larger sociolinguistic practices where English is associated with youth culture (Lee, 2004).

In contrast, I-pop influences from Bollywood, also regional Indian music traditions and the growing independent music scene. It shows the use of English due to India's multilingual social structure (Khubchandani, 2020). The coexistence of English in India creates hybrid form such as Hinglish. It is naturally appeared in Indian-pop (I-pop) lyrics and their music videos. It also plays a vital role in online fan interactions (Kachru, 2006). Indian pop contributes in new linguistic blends that reshape how English language is used as it is gaining greater digital presence across South Asia and the diaspora. This music also reshape interpretation and transformance of English.

This comparative study examines how English adapted and hybridized through K-pop and I-pop. It highlights the linguistic strategies and cultural implications in each industry (Jenkins, 2009). This research also shows that how global music helps to create new forms of English by studying the lyrics of the songs, fan activities and the media content (Pennycook, 2007). The study looks at how this English hybrid styles relate to global culture and identity. It shows the connection between language, music and cultural exchange (Kachru, 1985).

In South Korea which is an East Asian country, the music industry uses English to reach international audience. It makes music more modern and connect with global trends. English is added to create a unique style that is both local and global in songs, titles and also in promotions. This helps Korean music appeal to people around the world.

In India, English is already important in schools, business and everyday life but in music industry it exists in multilingual environment. It reflects that how people actually speak. It makes the music understandable for both local and international listeners due to this blend of languages.

Digital platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram and Spotify have made it easier to reach their music fans from all around the world. Listeners can also interact with these songs through comments, and as well as through discussions on different platforms. This helps in spread hybrid English forms even more, as the listeners copy and create their own English-based expressions from the music.

Even with this growth, few studies compare how English is used in K-pop and I-pop. Most of the researches focuses on only one industry. Understanding the new forms of English, its development and spread worldwide. It affects the way people see language, their culture and identity. So, this study aims to fill that gaps by looking at the patterns, it's reasons and effects of English use in both K-pop and I-pop.

### **Literature review**

In world entertainment the use of English has been studied for many years.

Crystal (2003) is one of the well-known who explained that the English has become a global language because of the spread of movies, music, and media. He says that the entertainment industries help many people to learn and also to use English, even if it is not their first language.

Later Sailaja (2009) studied that how English is used in India. She explains that people of India mix the English language with their local languages like Hindi and Telugu. So, this mixed style is known as "Hinglish" which is the part of daily life. Because of this, the Indian pop also uses mixed English naturally.

Bhatia and Ritchie (2013) also studied that the Indian media's code switching is very common. They say the use of English in India songs is because that the people in India already speaks this way. It also reflects their everyday speech.

Jung and lee (2014) explained that English language became popular in K-pop when South Korea started promoting their own culture. They promoted their culture worldwide during the Hallyu wave. So, that's why it helped Korean music to reach international listeners.

Lee (2015) adds that Korean pop or some music also uses short words of English. They also use few catchy lines of English in their songs. So, due to this use of simple English phrases, the international fans sing along easily and they make the songs more memorable.

More recent studies continue this discussion. Park (2019) shows that the K-pop uses English mainly for the style. The style which gives song an international and modern feeling.

Kim (2020) explains that K-pop uses English on purpose to attract global fans. K-pop companies and industries use English to promote their songs.

Finally, Chung (2022) focuses on the social media and also online platforms. He explains that YouTube, TikTok and Instagram help to spread mixed English forms. Fans share captions, write comments, they create memes and use translations which also makes hybrid English. It travels even faster across all the countries.

Together, all these studies that English language is used for different reasons in K-pop and I-pop. In K-pop, English is mainly used for the style and its global branding or promotion. While on the other hand, In I-pop, it reflects the natural way of people that already talk like this in India. Although many researchers studied each industry on their own, few studies compare both industries directly. This research fills that gap.

## **Material and Methods**

This study is based on qualitative content analysis. It examines that how English is used in the selected K-pop and I-pop songs released from 2010 to 2023.

The focus of this study is not on number or statistical frequency. It focuses on the interpretation of the meanings; it's functions and the patterns of English within the songs. The main goal is to understand the contribution of English.

The selected songs are based on three main criteria:

1. High popularity (the songs which are widely listened on digital platforms)
2. Clear presence of English (words, phrases, slogans or full sentences.)
3. Cultural influence (songs that shaped trends, represented artists and their styles, also had strong global reach.)

The steps include

1. Selection of 10 major songs from each industry (K-pop and I-pop)

The songs are chosen from well-known artists and groups to make sure that the sample represented the musical trends.

2. The extraction of English words, phrases, and full sentences.

The lyrics of each song are carefully read. All the English elements like single words, short expressions, repeated hooks and complete lines are identified.

3. Linguistic patterns analysis

The extracted English elements are studied using code-mixing (switching between Korean/Indian languages), hybridity (It is the mixing with local words like English and Hindi blend), and pragmatics (It is used for the purpose and function of English in the song like emotions, rhythm etc.)

4. Cross-category comparison

To see the similarities between both of the industries by the comparison of the patterns and to find out the differences and the cultural reasons behind them.

5. Interpretation through Kachru's Three Circle Model.

This is the final interpretation that explains how each industry shapes its use of English. It is linked with their historical, cultural, and sociolinguistic context. This connects the linguistic patterns to different themes such as globalization, identity and audience targeting as well.

So, this qualitative method helps to uncover that why and how English functions, and also what it symbolizes in K-pop and I-pop. The study is therefore focusing on the meaning instead of numerical measurements.

### **Theoretical framework**

Braj Kachru's (1985) Three Circles Model is used for analysis. It is a foundational framework in world Englishes studies. This model divides English used by different regions into three categories. These categories are based on historical and sociolinguistic development.

1. Inner circle: It includes the countries where English is a native language.

For example: USA, UK, Canada.

Here, English set's the norms.

2. Outer Circle: This circle includes the countries where English is widely used in education, government, and due to colonial history, it is also used in daily life.

For example: India, Singapore.

3. Expanding circle: In this circle countries where English is used as a foreign language for global communication are included.

For example: South Korea, Japan.

In these countries English doesn't have official status but it is taught for international purposes.

Relevance to this study:

Using this model, it will highlight the different roles of English in both of the music industries.

### In K-pop (Expanding circle)

South Korea belongs to the expanding circle which means that English is not an official language of South Koreans. People of South Korea mainly learn English through their schools. In this country the English is only used for international communication and not for everyday life because, In K-pop English is used in songs to make them modern and stylish. It helps the artists sound more global and to connect with the listeners that are outside Korea. English is often used in catchy lines, slogans or emotional expressions like "baby", "love", "forever", "You and I". It also adds rhythm in the songs even if the rest of the song is in Korean. K-pop English used for image building and for global marketing.

### In I-pop (Outer circle)

India belongs to the outer circle which means that English is used widely in schools, media, government, and daily life. Many people in India grow up by listening English in their surroundings alongside with their local languages. In India English is already a normal part of the communication. Because of this, In I-pop the blend and mixing of English with Hindi or their regional languages feels natural. The singers can easily use English words or phrases because of the audience to understand them properly. The use of English in lyrics is not only for style but it is also for conveying meaning, showing emotion, and expresses every day expressions. English in I-pop is used naturally because of the Indian society who is already bilingual.

## Results and Discussion

The analysis is divided into two parts for clear comparison.

### English in K-Pop: Symbolic, Strategic, and Global

K-Pop uses English to enhance international appeal and brand identity.

**Table 1**  
**Examples from K-Pop Songs**

Song	Artist	English Example	Function	Reference
DNA	BTS	"Love is nothing stronger"	Global branding	Big Hit, 2017
Ice Cream	BLACKPINK	"Ice cream chillin' chillin'"	Catchy global hook	YG, 2020
I Am the Best	2NE1	Full English title	Confidence, attitude	YG, 2011
Bad Boy	Red Velvet	"Who dat boy?"	Trendy slang	SM, 2018
Fancy	TWICE	"Fancy you"	Stylish phrase	JYP, 2019
Dynamite	BTS	Entire song in English	Global marketing strategy	BigHit, 2020
Kill This Love	BLACKPINK	"Let's kill this love"	Strong slogan, memorable hook	YG, 2019
Lovesick Girls	BLACKPINK	"Born to be alone"	Emotional message	YG, 2020
Next Level	Aespa	"I'm on the next level"	Futuristic branding	SM, 2021

God's Menu	Stray Kids	"Cooking like a chef"	Identity branding, metaphor	JYP, 2020
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### Interpretation (K-Pop)

- English appears mostly in titles, hooks, or repeated phrases.
- Used to signal modernity and identity.
- English maintains a symbolic role rather than conversational function.

## 2. English in I-Pop: Natural, Conversational, and Hybrid

I-Pop incorporates English within everyday multilingual discourse.

**Table 2**  
**Examples from I-Pop Songs**

Song	Artist	English Example	Function	Reference
Why This Kolaveri Di	Dhanush	"Why this...?"	Tamil-English blend	Sony, 2011
Love Dose	Honey Singh	"Baby girl you're my sunshine"	Hinglish romance	T-Series, 2014
Kar Gayi Chull	Badshah	"Party all night"	Urban youth slang	Dharma, 2016
Tum Hi Ho Bandhu	Shridhar	"Friendship forever"	Social expression	Eros, 2012
Gallan Goodiyan	Dil Dhadakne Do	"Good good"	Conversational English	Excel, 2015
Proper Patola	Diljit Dosanjh	"You know what I mean"	Punjabi-English urban slang	Sony Music India, 2013
Naagin	Aastha Gill	"Baby pull me closer"	Trendy English for modern image	Sony, 2019
Badtameez Dil	Benny Dayal	"Let's go crazy"	Youth appeal, Western influence	T-Series, 2013
Jugnu	Badshah	"Baby girl, light me up"	Romantic English line	Sony Music India, 2021
Bijlee Bijlee	Harry Sandhu	"Drop it like a bomb"	Western slang, pop effect	Desi Melodies, 2021

### Interpretation (I-Pop)

- English is woven into sentences naturally.
- Reflects real multilingual speech patterns in India.
- Conveys urban identity, humor, and emotional expression.

**Table 3**  
**Comparative Summary Table**

Feature	K-Pop	I-Pop
English Circle	Expanding	Outer
Type of English	Stylized	Hybrid/conversational
Motivation	Global branding	Multilingual reality
Common Mix	English + Korean slang	Hinglish, Tamil-English, Punjabi-English
Function	Symbolic	Functional

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study shows that the English plays different roles in both industries. K-pop and I-pop are different because each has its own background, culture, language and global goals. English depends on its use that who is using it and why.

### **K-pop**

In this music, English is used in a strategic way. As South Korea is a part of the global entertainment market. That's why K-pop industries want their music to reach listeners globally because it includes:

- Short English hooks
- Catchy titles
- Repeated English phrases

So, due to these elements, it helps songs to become more memorable and easier for international fans to sing along to. If Listener does not understand Korean, he or she can still connect with English phrases like "I'm fine", "love me right" or may be "let's go". This supports Park (2019) argument that English is a branding tool. It gives music a global shine and helps to create an international identity. This is the reason English in K-pop is used to increase popularity and to attract non-Korean fans.

### **I-pop**

India the country in south Asia, is a multilingual country and many Indians shift naturally between English and the local languages in their daily life. When Indian artists use this language, it does not feel forced or added just for "style" only. It just reflects how people actually speak, especially in urban areas.

It includes:

- Full sentences
- Emotional expressions
- Daily life vocabulary
- Hybrid words mixing

This supports Kachru's (2006) idea that Indian English is nativized. In India bilingual speech is normal. It also mirrors real communication patterns of Indian society.

### **K-pop vs I-pop**

By comparing, this study shows that global music does not simply borrow English which reshapes and transforms it. K-pop creates stylized pop English, which is short and as well as catchy. I-pop creates hybrid English which is mixed with South Asian languages. It is also reflecting natural multilingual speech. This shows that English is not fixed and artists mold it to suit their audience. It has a great impact on global audiences. Due to the rise of global streaming platforms like YouTube, Spotify and TikTok these creative uses of English travel far beyond their home countries. This exposure helps to spread K-pop's

rhythmic pop-style English and I-pop's hybrid, Indian-flavored English. So, K-pop and I-pop show that English is becoming a global and artistic tool. It changes based on culture and these styles of English are now influencing fans around the world.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this research shows that Asian music use English in different ways because of their unique backgrounds. English in K-pop is usually symbolic, the main reason is that, it uses mainly as global strategy. Short English hooks or phrases help the Korean artists to reach international audience and to build a global image. On the other hand, I-pop uses English more naturally and present their culture because Indian artistes mix English with Hindi, Tamil, Punjabi and other languages. That reflects their real speech. This creates hybrid forms such as Hinglish, which feels normal. Using Kachru's Three Circle Model, the study explains these differences clearly. South Korea belongs to expanding circle while India belongs to Outer circle. These sociolinguistic positions shape how each industry includes English in music. Their comparison shows that K-pop creates short stylish forms while I-pop creates blended conversational English.

### **Recommendations**

Future studies can research in depth at how English in different industries changes over time. Researchers can study larger samples of songs. They can also choose different types of music videos to understand the language patterns more accurately. This study can be compared with other Asian music industries such as J-pop, C-pop, or Filipino pop because of the spread of English language. That's why it will help to see how English mixing differs across regions.

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