

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ON MEDIA (ENGLISH WORDS IN
K-POP AND BOLLYWOOD)

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Abstract. The pervasive influence of the English language in global media has reshaped cultural industries, particularly South Korea's K-pop and India's Bollywood. This article investigates the integration of English words and phrases into the lyrics, titles, dialogues, and branding strategies of these two dynamic entertainment sectors. Through a detailed qualitative analysis, it explores how English serves as a tool for cultural hybridity, global outreach, and commercial success while reflecting the unique socio-linguistic contexts of each industry. The study reveals that K-pop employs English strategically to appeal to a worldwide audience, whereas Bollywood uses it as a stylistic enhancement within a multilingual framework. These findings highlight the interplay between globalization, language, and identity in modern media.

Keywords: English language, K-pop, Bollywood, globalization, media, cultural hybridity, linguistic influence, entertainment industry, multilingualism, global fandom.

Introduction. In an era of unprecedented global connectivity, the English language has solidified its status as a lingua franca, permeating media landscapes far beyond its native domains. Two of the most prominent non-Western entertainment industries—K-pop, originating from South Korea, and Bollywood, the Hindi-language film industry of India—exemplify this trend by incorporating English into their creative outputs. From K-pop songs laced with English hooks to Bollywood films featuring English dialogues and titles, this linguistic blending reflects both a response to globalization and a deliberate strategy to engage diverse audiences. This article delves into the mechanisms and motivations behind the use of English in these industries, examining its implications for cultural identity, artistic expression, and market expansion. By comparing K-pop and Bollywood, the study aims to illuminate broader patterns of linguistic adaptation in globalized media.

Relevance of Work. The integration of English into K-pop and Bollywood is a microcosm of how globalization influences cultural production. As these industries compete on an international stage—K-pop with its explosive rise in the West and Bollywood with its vast diaspora following—understanding the role of English offers valuable insights into the negotiation of local and global identities. This research is significant for linguists studying language contact, media scholars analyzing cross-cultural trends, and industry professionals seeking to optimize global appeal. Moreover, it addresses a gap in comparative studies of English usage across Asian entertainment, providing a nuanced perspective on how language shapes modern popular culture.

Purpose. This article seeks to comprehensively analyze the incorporation of English into K-pop and Bollywood media, addressing three key questions: How is English used in these industries? What drives its adoption? And how does it impact their cultural and commercial trajectories? By examining specific examples and contextual factors, the study aims to uncover the strategic and artistic roles of English, compare its application in K-pop and Bollywood, and assess its reception among audiences. Ultimately, it contributes to a deeper understanding of language as both a cultural artifact and a global marketing tool.

Materials and Methods of Research. This study adopts a qualitative methodology, drawing on a diverse range of primary and secondary sources. For K-pop, 30 songs from 2015 to 2025 were analyzed, including hits like BTS's "Butter" (2021), BLACKPINK's "How You Like That" (2020), and NCT 127's "Cherry Bomb" (2017). Lyrics, music videos, and official English subtitles were

scrutinized for English usage. For Bollywood, 20 films from the same period were selected, such as *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* (2015), *War* (2019), and *Jawan* (2023), with attention to dialogues, song lyrics, and titles. Supplementary data was collected from artist interviews (e.g., BTS's Grammy discussions, Shah Rukh Khan's promotional talks), fan reactions on X, and industry reports from sources like *Variety* and *Hallyu Times*. Thematic analysis was employed to code data into categories such as emotional expression, branding, accessibility, and cultural identity, allowing for a comparative evaluation of English's role in both industries.

Results and Discussion.

English in K-pop: A Global Sonic Strategy

K-pop's meteoric rise on the global stage owes much to its strategic use of English, which serves as a sonic bridge to non-Korean-speaking audiences. Entire songs like BTS's "Dynamite" (2020) and "Butter" (2021)—both fully in English—catapulted the group to the top of Billboard charts, a feat rare for non-English-language artists.[1] Even in predominantly Korean tracks, English words like "fire," "love," "crazy," and "dream" pepper the lyrics, as seen in Stray Kids' "God's Menu" (2020) and BLACKPINK's "Kill This Love" (2019). These terms, often simple and emotionally resonant, enhance memorability and singability for international fans.[2] Music videos further amplify this by pairing English lyrics with visually striking subtitles, ensuring accessibility.

Interviews with K-pop idols and producers reveal a conscious effort to globalize. For instance, RM of BTS noted that English tracks were crafted to "connect with fans worldwide," reflecting a shift from Korean-centric content to a more universal appeal.[3] However, this approach sparks debate. Some Korean fans and critics argue that excessive English dilutes the genre's cultural roots, a sentiment echoed in X posts like "K-pop isn't K-pop if it's all in English." Yet, the commercial success—evidenced by sold-out world tours and streaming records—suggests that English is a cornerstone of K-pop's global dominance.

English in Bollywood: A Multilingual Tapestry

Bollywood's engagement with English is more nuanced, reflecting India's multilingual heritage and colonial history. English appears in film titles (*Rockstar*, 2011; *Zero*, 2018), song lyrics ("I'll do the talking tonight" from *Agent Vinod*, 2012), and dialogues, often as a marker of urban sophistication or emotional intensity. In *Pathaan* (2023), Shah Rukh Khan's character mixes English phrases like "Let's go" with Hindi, appealing to India's cosmopolitan youth and diaspora audiences.[4] Unlike K-pop, Bollywood rarely produces fully English songs, preferring a hybrid approach that balances Hindi dominance with English flourishes.

This selective use aligns with Bollywood's audience diversity. Urban Indians and NRIs, fluent in English, appreciate its inclusion, while rural viewers remain anchored by Hindi. For example, the song "Senorita" from *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011) blends English, Spanish, and Hindi, showcasing linguistic versatility.[5] Industry insiders, like director Karan Johar, emphasize that English adds a "global vibe" without alienating local fans.[6] However, overuse risks criticism, as seen in reviews of *Befikre* (2016), where excessive English was deemed "pretentious" by some critics. Bollywood thus walks a tightrope, using English as a stylistic tool rather than a primary language.

Comparative Analysis: Convergence and Divergence

Both K-pop and Bollywood leverage English for global appeal, but their approaches diverge significantly. K-pop's aggressive adoption—whole songs, English nicknames (e.g., BLACKPINK's Lisa), and social media in English—targets a borderless fandom, particularly in the U.S. and Europe. Bollywood, while globally ambitious, prioritizes its domestic and diaspora markets, embedding English within a multilingual framework to maintain cultural authenticity. K-pop's English is functional and market-driven, often prioritizing phonetics over meaning (e.g., "la la la" refrains), whereas Bollywood's is narrative-driven, enhancing character or mood.

Audience reception also differs. K-pop fans on X celebrate English tracks as a sign of inclusivity, with posts like “BTS singing in English makes me feel seen.” Bollywood fans, however, show mixed reactions—some laud the modernity, others decry it as “Western pandering.” These contrasts underscore how globalization shapes linguistic strategies differently, with K-pop chasing universality and Bollywood embracing hybridity.

Conclusion. The English language has become an indelible part of K-pop and Bollywood, reflecting their ambitions in a globalized world. In K-pop, it is a bold instrument of international conquest, breaking linguistic barriers to forge a global fanbase. In Bollywood, it is a subtle thread in a rich linguistic tapestry, enhancing appeal without overshadowing Hindi roots. This study reveals that English is not merely a linguistic addition but a cultural and commercial catalyst, reshaping how these industries define themselves and connect with audiences. As media continues to evolve, further research could explore how this linguistic trend influences emerging artists and whether it risks homogenizing distinct cultural voices.

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