



Comparative Discourse on J-pop and K-pop: *Hybridity in Contemporary Local Music*

Dal Yong JIN

Abstract

Due to the close but complicated relationship between the Japanese and Korean music industries, J-pop and K-pop have several significant commonalities and differences. By analyzing the transformation of K-pop in tandem with Japanese influences through a convergence of political economy in terms of historical approach and textual analysis, this paper identifies several key elements involved in the growth of K-pop. It does not attempt to determine the major reasons for the success of K-pop, and/or the failure (or low degree of popularity) of J-pop in global markets. Instead, it comparatively discusses several major features—including idol production systems, copyright issues, and hybridity—of these two popular music genres, thereby mapping out J-pop’s influences and the remnants of such influences in the K-pop sphere, as well as the ways in which K-pop has become a model for J-pop. It aims to investigate the contemporary cultural stages and transition of popular music in Korea occurring within the unfolding logic of cultural globalization, known as hybridization.

Keywords: K-pop, J-pop, hybridity, comparative discourse, idol system, globalization, popular music

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Dal Yong JIN is distinguished professor in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada. E-mail: yongjin23@gmail.com.

Introduction

As an emerging music genre, K-pop (Korean popular music) has now surpassed J-pop (Japanese popular music) in terms of popularity and commercial success in the global music markets since the mid-2010s. K-pop was influenced by Japanese music starting from the late 1980s, with several Korean entertainment houses, including SM Entertainment (hereafter SM), developing their pop music partially based on their studies of J-pop. The Japanese-originated idol star system settled into the Korean popular music industry just before and after Korea's lifting of the ban on Japanese popular culture in the late 1990s. Several J-pop musicians, including X-JAPAN, Hide, and Namie Amuro, also became popular in Korea and influenced the trend of contemporary K-pop (Sung Hwan Kim 2013).

Starting in the latter part of the 2000s, however, the K-pop industry suddenly expanded its reach to several Western countries. As BTS, EXO, BlackPink, and TWICE exemplify, both boy and girl idol groups have made inroads into many parts of the planet, including North America and Western Europe. From a peripheral and small country, K-pop has attracted hundreds of thousands of global fans, mainly teens and youths in their twenties, who enjoy K-pop on social media and/or attend K-pop concerts around the globe. Although J-pop is still very popular in Japan and a few Asian countries, it has not penetrated global markets. Unlike J-pop, K-pop has achieved global popularity, as it advances its status as a global music genre by developing hybrid music. Consequently, K-pop seems to have overcome Japan's influences, and even greatly influenced J-pop in the 2010s.

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production systems, copyright issues, and hybridity of these two popular music genres, thereby mapping out J-pop's influences and the remnants of that influence in the K-pop sphere, as well as the ways in which K-pop has become a model for J-pop. This study aims also to investigate the contemporary cultural and transition stages of popular music in Korea occurring within the unfolding logic of cultural globalization known as hybridization.

Practicing of Hybridization in Local Popular Music

Popular music in many countries reveals how local music is the outcome of hybridity—the mixing of two or three different music genres. Hybridization emphasizes the mixing of cultures as a result of globalization, but “unique hybrid cultures are not reducible to either local or global culture” (Ritzer 2011, 159). Unlike focusing on global homogenization through the globalization process, hybridity focuses on the integration of global processes with diverse local realities to create new and distinctive cultures. In this regard, “hybridization is a positive, even romantic, view of globalization as a profoundly creative process out of which emerges new cultural realities, and continuing, if not increasing, heterogeneity, in many different locales” (Ritzer 2011, 159).

What is significant is that hybridity should not be understood as a simple mixing of two different cultures. While the term hybridity itself describes mixed genres and identities of different cultures, hybridization as a theoretical framework in popular culture is not merely the blending and synthesizing of different elements. Instead, the new global order has to be understood as “a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order,” while “defying existing center-periphery models” (Appadurai 1996, 32). As Homi K. Bhabha (1994, 218) points out, hybridity must open up “a cultural space—a third space—where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences.” In other words, hybridity needs to be interpretive and reflective in which beliefs of identity are interrogated (Bhabha 1994), and the local force plays a pivotal role in developing local

culture amid hybridization.

In popular music, we cannot deny the impact of Western pop-rock music; however, this does not eradicate the entire local culture, because localized forms of pop music continue to create hybridity. “Local discourses and practices help to resist and shape people’s perceptions of dominant western culture, often indigenizing music to serve their own cultural interests. In this process, dominant western culture has been deconstructed, altered, and reassembled in such a way that the resulting new forms resonate with and respond to local everyday life” (Bridge 2018, 125). In so doing, the newly emerging musical forms are marked by hybridization, in which the local and the global exist in a more complex interrelationship (Stokes 2007, cited in Bridge 2018). In particular, genre appropriation is a good example of cultural hybridization in popular music as a music text appropriates the schematic structure of another music genre. In other words, “genre appropriation pinpoints a particular kind of mixing and a particular kind of meaning making: an entire text appropriates the form of a text representing another genre in order to exploit the meanings related to a particular generic form for a particular purpose” (Mäntynen and Shore 2014, 746–747).

Both structurally and textually, J-pop and K-pop have utilized hybridization strategies; however, the nature of hybridity in the two music industries has been different due in large part to their unique approaches to hybridization. J-pop has attempted to penetrate the global market, however, its efforts were not promising because the J-pop industry was satisfied in the domestic market, while K-pop has vehemently targeted both the regional and global markets, which drives a full-scale hybridization process. Hybridization has occurred in both J-pop and K-pop; however, contra-flow—the flow of popular culture from non-Western to Western countries—has mainly happened in K-pop, as Korean music corporations broadly engage with Western popular music and Western musicians. In J-pop and K-pop, therefore, hybridity should be comprehended in its historical-structural as well as textual perspectives.

Most of all, what this paper emphasizes is the significance of the politicization of hybridization, a major difference between the two music genres. As is well-documented, Iwabuchi (2004) and Lu (2008) claim that in

a globalized world, popular culture must lose much of its original cultural odor so as to be promoted in the international market as a neutralized product to gain wider audience reception. The idea of odorless cultural products is considered as popular culture's de-politicized internationalization (Lu 2008). However, hybridization is one of the most distinctive forms of cultural politics, "because the power relations do not show any evenness between the global and the local forces. This hybrid dynamic can be thought of as the politicization of the realm of local culture. In fact, it is clear that the hybridization process is strongly based on the politicization of culture, because producers strategically weigh political considerations" (Jin 2016, 107).

Unlike Japanese popular culture, with its emphasis on odorless hybrid culture, Korean culture is culturally political, because it partially, if not entirely, represents some significant Korean mentalities, such as friendship, collectivism, and togetherness. In the hybridization process, the historical context makes itself felt, and national power structures, the imbalance of cultural flows, and the hegemony of Western capitalism are all significant factors making hybridization political (Lin 2011). As Pieterse (2009, 77) puts it, in many hybridity discourses, "we lack a theory of global political action." Hybridization is not only about text and structure, but also about political culture and political action (Jin 2016). In order to compare J-pop and K-pop in tandem with hybridization, which is one of the most significant characteristics of these two Asian local cultures, it is critical we understand the ways in which these local music genres develop either odorless and de-politicized hybrid culture or oderness and politicized hybrid music culture.

Emergence of J-pop in Asia vs. Growth of K-pop around the Globe

J-pop has been one of the major music labels in Asia since the late 1980s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Tokyo-based FM radio station J-Wave first began to use the term to differentiate new Japanese music from enka (traditional ballads) (G. Lee 2016). J-pop encompasses almost all genres of Western-influenced Japanese popular music. At first, J-pop was limited

to Euro-beat, however, the label was later “applied to many other kinds of popular music in the Japanese music chart, Oricon, including idol-pop, rhythm and blues (R&B), folk, soft rock—but exclud[ing] *enka*—easy listening and sometimes even hip hop” (Ng 2004, 24). Besides its hybrid artistic concepts, Japanese producers used the term J-pop to describe music that was openly commercial and aimed at the masses (Chapuy 2011).

Contrary to this, the term K-pop was allegedly used in Japan when a few Korean idol musicians, including H.O.T., were popular in China and Japan. In order to differentiate J-pop from Korean music, Japan began to call Korean popular music “K-pop” (G. Lee 2016), which was later “coined in 1998 to identify a new style of music” (Lie 2015, 96). K-pop is characterized by a fast tempo, simple repetition of pattern, and emphasis on dance-style music, such as reggae, rap, and hip-hop, developed from African-American music, rather than focusing on melody and harmony. K-pop also features a digital media-focused production system. Another major K-pop characteristic is its systematic group dance performed by attractive young musicians (S. Lee 2015).

What is interesting is that Japanese popular music has been influenced by Western music, and therefore, K-pop was influenced by Japanese music while simultaneously being influenced by American music. It is not easy to fully comprehend the relationship between Japanese and American music; however, US military bases in Japan were the primary venue for touring Japanese singers and musicians, and control of access to performing on these bases meant control of the pop industry until the 1970s, when Japanese popular music gained more widespread popularity among the Japanese populace (Martin 2011). In this regard, the “J” of J-pop “refers not necessarily to Japan, the nation, but to concepts that are associated with contemporary Japanese lifestyle and culture” (Ugaya 2005, cited in Stevens 2008, 11). As Iwabuchi’s notion of hybridity indicates odorless Japanese culture, “this lifestyle (or a longing for this lifestyle) is not limited to Japan’s geographical boundaries. The prefix ‘J’ illustrates the construction of a new national and transnational Japanese identity, built on ideas of the interactions of human beings, people, and technology, people and space” (Stevens 2008, 11–12). As Ng (2004, 24) argues, “J-pop is a hybrid music

which fuses different foreign music traditions with the Japanese touch.”

In Asia, J-pop, based primarily on the notion of *kawaii* (cute), has been one of the fastest growing and influential music forces since the 1990s, warmly embraced by young people in several Asian countries, including Taiwan, China, Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia. J-pop musicians, such as Ayumi Hamasaki, SMAP, Utada Hikaru, Kinki Kids, Winds, and AKB48, have become famous idols among Asian youths. However, with some exceptions, J-pop is far from enjoying major recognition beyond Asia. Several Japanese musicians like Utada Hikaru, Seiko Matsuda, and Toshinobu Kubota have released English albums following their huge success in the Japanese market, and have gained musical recognition globally; yet, their efforts did not translate to any significant success in the global markets. AKB48, one of the most famous idol groups in the 2010s, has gained huge success in Japan, but the group’s global recognition is relatively minimal. According to YouTube’s analysis tool, Music Charts & Insights, AKB48 garnered 16.2 million views between November 12 and December 9, 2018. Views from Japan accounted for 62.3 percent, with views from other countries accounting for 37.7 percent (Table 1). This cannot compare with the global popularity of K-pop girl groups. TWICE, one of the most famous girl groups of 2018, for example, received 191 million clicks during the same period. Among these views, the majority came from foreign countries, including Japan and the United States, with only 17 percent from Korea.

Table 1. J-pop and K-pop Viewers on YouTube by Country

	TWICE	191 million	AKB 48	16.2 million
1	Japan	39.3	Japan	10.1
2	Korea	32.5	Thailand	1.53
3	Indonesia	16	Korea	1.1
4	Philippines	14.3	Indonesia	0.85
5	Taiwan	10.8	Taiwan	0.39
6	US	9.6	US	0.38

7	Thailand	9.16	Philippines	0.31
8	Vietnam	8.45	Vietnam	0.23
9	Malaysia	6.6	Hong Kong	0.18
10	Brazil	5.78	Malaysia	0.15

Source: YouTube's Music Charts & Insights (November 12–December 9, 2018).

Note: The unit is a million hits.

As *BBC* (2014) reported, J-pop has had a following in Asia for decades, but to date has failed to capture the rest of the world's attention. The J-pop craze in Asia also peaked in the late 1990s and began to recede in the early 2000s (Otmazgin 2013). The decline in popularity of J-pop has been attributed to several factors, including the slump in the music industry in Japan and Asia, the rise of K-pop, the end of the Japanese drama boom in Asia, and issues of piracy (Ng 2004, 25). As Min et al. (2019) clearly point out, K-pop's rise has also paralleled the growth in popularity of K-dramas around the world, including in Latin America, as many K-pop fans discover K-pop while enjoying K-dramas and films. As such, the popularity of local culture, including broadcasting and film, has significantly influenced the rise and fall of local pop music in the global markets. In addition, thanks to Japan's huge population (127 million) and a captive market, for many J-pop musicians, there is little financial benefit or need for the Japanese pop industry to really branch out and try to appeal to outside audiences. That being said, its influence on the Asian music scene, in particular on K-pop, has not been inconsequential.

Idol Systems: A Reciprocal Relationship between J-pop and K-pop

The mid-1990s may be pointed to as the starting point of the emergence of contemporary K-pop. Until that time, conventional ballads, emphasizing sentimental love, unrequited love, or heartbreak, dominated the mainstream music trend. However, there were two significant developments that led structural shifts in Korean popular music: the advent of new music genres

and the adaptation of the Japanese idol system. The first and foremost historical event was the arrival of new music genres, including rap and reggae. Of particular note is the appearance of Seo Taiji and Boys, who introduced “Nan arayo” (I Know, 1992)—one of the first rap tracks (Morelli 2001; Um 2013). Seo Taiji and Boys became socially charged, targeting problems such as teen runaways and economic inequality in their lyrics, destroying many conventions of Korean popular music. This group mixed music genres like rap, soul, rock and roll, and techno to invent a unique musical form which employs rap only during the verses, but singing choruses in a pop style (Morelli 2001, 250) with dynamic dance movements. With the arrival of American hip-hop culture and rap music, Korean popular music became youth oriented, and a number of teenage boy and girl groups targeting young audiences have dominated K-pop ever since (E. Jung 2009).

Japan’s influence on Korean popular music has been conspicuous in the post-Seo Taiji and Boys era. As Lie (2015, 136) notes, “J-pop had a large following in Korea; Korean performers openly emulated, performed, and at times lifted J-pop tunes.” First, there was considerable piracy of J-pop by Korean musicians (Sung Hwan Kim 2013; Lie 2015). For example, Roo’ Ra’s “A Love of Heaven” (Cheonsang yuhae), released in 1995, allegedly plagiarized a song released by the Japanese group Ninja in 1990. When the Korean government lifted its ban on Japanese popular culture in the late 1990s, the major concern was actually popular music, as several Korean musicians seemed to copy Japanese musicians, including X-JAPAN’s “We are X” (Sung Hyun Kim 2017).

Second, Korean musicians, such as BoA, attempted to penetrate Japan by creating J-pop-like Korean music: “The late 1990s were a period of profound J-pop presence and influence in Korea. Korea’s success in exporting music to Japan was due not to K-pop but to J-pop; that is, SM promoted BoA as a J-pop star—one who just happened to be Korean. The company hired leading Japanese voice and dancing instructors for the singer, investing \$3 million in her debut” (Lie 2015, 101). Of course, her music and image also employed “a combination of elements from both American and Japanese pop music, evident in the singing and dancing styles strikingly

influenced by American artists such as Michael Jackson and Janet Jackson, and a look drawn from Japanese-pop idol visual styling such as those of Amuro Namie and Hamasaki Ayumi” (S. Jung 2013, 111).

More than anything, the emergence of the Korean idol system has been made possible through the influence of Japanese idol groups. In Korea, the new entertainment house system emerged when Lee Soo-man founded SM in 1995. By implementing the typical Japanese idol production system, music production companies focused on fostering television-friendly young talent—not just with singing ability (or the lack of it), but dancing and general all-round television entertainer capabilities (Jung-yup Lee 2009, 491–492). SM’s first boy band, H.O.T., was modeled after the popular Japanese SMAP developed by Johnny’s—a Japanese entertainment house (S. Jung 2011; Chen 2015). With the beginning of the strategic commodification and marketization of K-pop idols, SM’s production style of manufacturing idol bands became the exemplary model in Korea.

More specifically, the Japanese idol-making system, developed by Johnny’s *jimusho* (meaning office), was introduced to Korea. In Japan, *aidoru* (a Japanese pronunciation of ‘idol’) culture refers to those who sing and act simultaneously, while those who only sing are called “artists” (Cha and Choi 2011, cited in Jung and Hirata 2012). As Marx (2013, 36) argues, “Japan’s performer management companies—colloquially known as *jimusho*—are most responsible for the content of the entertainment world. The *jimusho* create performers of these genres from scratch and control every aspect of the performers’ public image and career.”

Like Japanese talent agencies, several Korean companies sign long-term contracts (usually 5–10 years) with good-looking teens and train them to sing, dance, and act. Lee Soo-man picked trainees to foster into idol stars, who all signed 13-year contracts. Due to controversies (see Howard 2014), however, the length of the contract term has been reduced to seven years if artists are only promoting within Korea, 10 years if going overseas (*allkpop.com* 2011). Korean entertainment companies and musicians have been learning from Japan about different aspects of music production and marketing, such as music composition, stage design, sound effects, costumes, make-up, dance, promotion, jacket design, and public relations

skills (Ng 2004). The entertainment agency systems of the J-pop and K-pop spheres are distinct, and neither are easily replicable in other Asian countries (Chen 2015). As Lee Soo-man states;

The U.S. couldn't establish a management system like ours. Picking trainees, signing a long-term contract, and teaching trainees for a long period of time, this just can't happen in the U.S.. U.S. agencies are hired as sub-contractors after an artist has grown and gained popularity on their own. As a result, the agencies only play roles of sub-contractors, and can't make long-term investments in singer-hopefuls. (*allkpop.com* 2011)

In Korea, "Japan is also playing the role of 'recycling' Western music. Euro-beat, R&B, and hip-hop have largely been introduced from Japan rather than directly from Europe and the U.S." (Ng 2004, 27).

Korean entertainment agencies, however, carefully design and produce idol groups based on their strategic idol-making system (see G. Lee 2014). Adopting the original J-pop idol-training technique, the Korean entertainment industry has created a more efficient and systematic idol management paradigm than that of Japan. SM has developed its own system, which is often called the incubating system, emphasizing a rigorous training period (Kwak 2018). The practices are indeed different in the contemporary music scenes of K-pop and J-pop, as K-pop emphasizes a stronger training system, the utilization of social media, and the convergence of music production, and therefore, different hybridization strategies, which will be detailed later. Meanwhile, unlike J-pop idol groups, which do not invite foreign members, Korean entertainment houses have developed trans-Asian idols in that they recruit Asian members, in particular English-speaking Koreans and Asians. For example, the nine-member girl group TWICE consists of five Koreans, three Japanese, and one Taiwanese member.

Overall, K-pop has developed its unique model and advanced a different form of local music. Due to K-pop's global popularity in the 2010s, many Japanese musicians claim that J-pop must learn from K-pop. Some experts in charge of K-pop groups' choreography are indeed called upon by Japanese agencies to upgrade their singers' dancing skills. Choreographer

Park Jun-hee, who is credited with choreographing GFriend's "Glass Bead" and "Me Gustas Tu," has taught AKB48. This was the first time AKB48 had enlisted the support of a non-Japanese choreographer, hired for their latest song "Teacher Teacher," released in 2018 (Kwak 2018). "The unarguably K-pop-flavored choreography features sensual moves previously never seen in the group's previous works and is the sexiest routine the girls have ever performed" (Billboard Japan 2018).

Several Japanese agencies long for K-pop choreography. They think that the relatively simple and easy choreography performed by J-pop artists can no longer satisfy audience demand for high standards. Learning K-pop styled choreography, which often includes point dances, referring to dances made up of hooking and repetitive movements, within the choreography of several K-pop idols (Kwak 2018), including Girls' Generation's "Gee" (crab-leg dance), Psy's "Gangnam Style" (horse-riding dance), and EXID's "Up & Down" (up and down dance), is a good way for idol stars in Japan (Kwak 2018). As Fuhr (2015, 9) points out, "K-pop is seemingly contesting (though certainly not replacing) the long-lasting Anglo-American hegemony over popular music.... As Korea was long at the receiving end of popular music flows spreading from the West and from Japan, K-pop signals a new stage on which these flows have become both reversed and decentralized." Although this last statement is controversial, what is certain is that in terms of influence, there has been no unidirectional flow from J-pop to K-pop; instead it has been reciprocal. Sometimes they learn from each other, and at other times, they develop their own music by advancing distinctive styles based on their respective media milieus.

Socio-cultural Differences between J-pop and K-pop in the Global Markets

J-pop and K-pop have shown distinctive variances in their national music markets, which influence their approaches to the global market. Admitting that numerous significant dimensions exist, two of the major differences that create disparities between J-pop and K-pop are their emphasis on digital

music or physical formats and copyright issues. These distinctions play significant roles in explaining K-pop's global popularity and J-pop's failure to gain global recognition.

To begin with, J-pop and K-pop emphasize dissimilar business models in music sales. While J-pop is still benefiting from the traditional marketing model, which is through the sales of material sources, including music CDs, K-pop has shown a fundamental shift toward digital music. In the global music markets, physical formats, including CD sales, have been going down ever since people began to access the Internet; however, Japan is obsessed with CDs, and of all music sales in the country, about 85 percent are CDs (McIntyre 2014). For example, AKB48 sold over 50 million CDs since launching in 2005, making it among the top four highest selling music groups in Japan (Liu 2017). Cultural elements may be at play, as Japanese consumers love collectible goods; "Greatest hits albums, for example, do particularly well in Japan, perhaps because of the elaborate, artist-focused packaging. AKB48 pioneered the sale of CDs containing tickets that can be redeemed for access to live events—a strategy credited with propping up CD sales, because it can lead the biggest fans to buy multiple copies of an album" (*Irish Times* 2014). The CD sales of several idol groups continue to increase because the customers have privileges; they can access the live concert ticket sales and handshaking-event coupons earlier than others.

Korea demonstrates a totally different trend. In 2015, of all music sales, 84.3 percent were digital, while only 15.7 percent were for physical formats, although this went up to 29.4 percent in 2017 (KOCCA 2018). The recent surge in sales of physical formats has been based on the popularity of a few idol groups, including EXO and BTS. According to Gaon Album Chart (Table 2), which has been recording the sales of physical music formats since 2011, K-pop idols did not make tangible physical format sales until 2016, when BTS sold more than 700,000 CDs for the first time by any Korean musician in 10 years. In 2017, with its album "Love Yourself," BTS sold almost 1.5 million physical formats, a number that soared to more than 2 million in 2018.

Table 2. Album Sales for Top Songs in Korea, 2011–2018

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
The Boys (Girls' Generation)	Sexy, Free & Single (Super Junior)	XOXO Repackage (EXO)	Overdose (EXO)	EXODUS (EXO)	WINGS (BTS)	Love Yourself Her (BTS)	Love Yourself Answer (BTS)
385,348	356,431	335,823	385,047	478,856	751,301	1,493,443	2,197,808

Source: Gathered from Gaon Album Chart's Annual CD Sales.

The different market conditions in Japan and Korea has led to the development of distinct business models and systems in those countries. J-pop musicians do not need to make inroads into other countries because they generate decent incomes by selling their CDs in Japan and elsewhere; however, K-pop musicians must turn to global markets.

Another major difference between J-pop and K-pop is each industry's approach to intellectual property. Japan has imposed very strong copyright protections on popular content, and the music industry has not fully utilized social media, including YouTube. Traditionally, only a handful of Japanese pop music videos are available legally to global audiences, and very few artists utilize professional or personal social media accounts (Herman 2018). In the past, Japan's big labels, including Johnny's, strictly guarded all their digital assets. They prevented videos and photo assets of their talent from being distributed and given exposure online in fear of the brand being damaged. Johnny's celebrities were always removed from press conferences that would be broadcast online (*Sankei Shimbun* 2018). After years of shying away from digital spaces, Japan finally began to utilize social media. Johnny & Associates opened its first YouTube channel in early 2018, showcasing five groups on different days of the week in early 2018 and released a music video in November. This signaled a major change for the J-pop world as "Johnny & Associates has long been one of the staunchest anti-Internet entertainment entities in Japan and has kept official images and videos of its artists tightly controlled and almost entirely analog" (Herman 2018). The new beginning started for Johnny's as its digital embargo was lifted for

certain photos used on online media. The company has finally made the decision to power up its marketing strategy by going digital (*Sankei Shimbun* 2018). Parallel to its selection in the YouTube Artist Promotion campaign, Johnny's joined the popular short-text social network service Twitter, opening an official account and raising its digital presence exponentially (*Sankei Shimbun* 2018). This new move aims at global audiences by easing accessibility to its content (Herman 2018).

The K-pop industry has advanced a different approach, as it allows K-pop musicians to upload their music free of charge on social media. One particular example is "Gangnam Style" performed by Psy in 2012. While several elements contributed to the Gangnam Style's success, to a large degree the success relied on effectively waiving copyright enforcement—both the distribution of the original video and the production and dissemination of parodies and remixes. Abstaining from enforcing copyright was critical for the viral success of "Gangnam Style" (*Governance Across Borders* 2012).

In the United States, for example, many of the "Gangnam Style" remixes have technically been illegal since they do not fall under the fair-use clause. Many remakes are parodies in that they poke fun at the "Gangnam Style" video and song. They creatively mimic Psy's original scenes in a comical way (Jacobs 2012). However, the line between parody and satire can be hard to distinguish, and this distinction can be the difference between free fair use and millions of dollars in monetary damages. Whether parody or satire, the K-pop industry and Psy have not challenged legally (Jacobs 2012). It certainly illustrates that cultural markets follow blockbuster logic to the disregard of copyright: attention is what matters. With regard to copyright regulation, the "Gangnam Style" phenomenon evidences that profits can be made even when waiving the enforcement of copyright (*Governance Across Borders* 2012).

Last but not least, the transition toward digital music and loosening restrictions on social media in K-pop are related to global fans' media consumption habits. In the 2010s, global fans use social media to not only enjoy music but also actively organize fan activities. People first learn about new songs through social media like YouTube and then begin to share their

feelings and opinions with other fans. Without fans embedded in social media, K-pop could not have gained its global fandom. For example, BTS has its official website (<https://ibighit.com/bts/>); however it also develops several social media accounts to connect with global fans, including its Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/bangtan.official>), Twitter (Bighit's BTS account: https://twitter.com/bts_bighit), YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/BANGTANTV>), and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/bts.bighitofficial>). This implies that J-pop has been missing out on one of the most significant tools for globalizing its music because Japan restricts the use of social media and follows severe copyright practices. Over the past decade or so, social media has brought about completely new ways of consuming music. J-pop and K-pop have different approaches to social media, resulting in huge differences in their respective places in global music markets.

Textual Hybridity in J-pop and K-pop

Music Content in J-pop and K-pop

J-pop and K-pop have several distinctive forms of hybridization in music. Among these, two major hybrid natures are embedded in music content and English mixing in lyrics. J-pop mostly emphasizes idol bands' cuteness and songwriting. Since the 1990s, J-pop has developed several rock bands who create their own songs. The rock group X-JAPAN, unlike other J-pop idol groups, made its debut not directly managed and controlled by an entertainment agency. X-JAPAN is exemplary as it wrote its own songs instead of simply singing songs written by others. J-pop's preference for songwriters has expanded to other music genres as J-pop musicians strive to express their own messages based on their own experiences (E. Kim 2000).

Contrary to this, K-pop has emphasized a few themes in lyrics, including love and parting among couples, resistance and social criticism, hedonism and self-disclosure, while J-pop focuses on diverse personal stories and lessons from artists' own lives (S. Lee 2015; 2016). K-pop has especially developed the music themes of resistance and social criticism

as K-pop mixes with African American hip-hop. As is well-known, hip-hop often speaks to several socio-cultural issues or protective measures of inferiority of some people, which are rampant in the United States. As Um (2013, 53) points out, born in the era of economic stability, Korean “teenagers embraced consumerism and Western popular culture including Anglo-American pop, while rebelling against established social and cultural rules.”

Several K-pop songs develop resistance and social criticism through their lyrics. As discussed, Seo Taiji and Boys opened the contemporary K-pop era by developing lyrics that engaged with socio-cultural issues. The group’s songs such as “Classroom Idea” (Gyosil idea; 1994) and “Come Back Home” (Keom baek hom; 1995), H.O.T.’s “Warrior’s Descendant” (Jeonsa-ui huye; 1996) and Sechs Kies’ “School Anthem” (Hagwon byeolgok; 1997) addressed contemporary social issues, in particular, high schoolers’ difficulties in studying and entering college. In addressing these social issues, idol groups target the young generation who sympathize with their music. Incorporating rap or hip-hop elements, these idol groups satirize Korean society and give expression to the deep distress of the young generation. Later, the girl group 2NE1, formed in 2009, also emphasized grandness and arrogance, instead of emphasizing their cuteness or sexiness. The group’s song, “I’m the Best” (Naega jeil jal naga) achieved global fame with its bold and cord-breaking attitude against traditional K-pop styles, differentiating the artists from other K-pop and J-pop girl groups. Greenberg (2012) described 2NE1 with their “bold, bright outfits and big, catchy hooks punctuated by rap verses and an in-your-face swagger seemingly borrowed from US-based hip-hop acts like Nicki Minaj.”

K-pop also expresses a hip-hop style of self-disclosure, although it largely addresses young people’s self-esteem amidst their daily or hedonic lives. Some K-pop musicians underscore the ways in which young people enjoy life with gusto, rather than being timid and lacking nerve. However, one can argue that this significant contribution is made possible partially because K-pop develops a hybrid production system by inviting several Western composers from North America and Europe. In fact, SM and other agencies have often looked abroad for songwriters. Pelle Lidell, a Stockholm-based A&R manager in University Music Publishing International,

who has worked for K-pop musicians such as BoA, TVXQ, and Girls' Generation, as well as Japanese companies like Sony and Avex, pointed out that K-pop has advanced a mix of local tastes and global trends. He stated, "SM Entertainment wanted a mix of U.S. beats but with a Scandinavian songwriting style" (Russell 2012). Both Korean and Scandinavian musicians "love to have fun, to dance and enjoy life," and therefore put out "catchy songs with danceable beats and a positive message" (J. Oh 2011). While K-pop has been criticized as a rip off of Japanese pop music, Lidell has noted how K-pop is easier for Western songwriters to get the hang of, as K-pop "follows the classic songwriting style: intro, verse, pre-hooks, b-hooks in the chorus" (Russell 2012). Of course, several major entertainment houses have mainly developed songs through domestic musicians. For example, JYP uses its publishing subsidiary company to find new domestic composers and YG also primarily uses domestic producing teams (Sung Hyun Kim 2017).

In this regard, the *Japan Times* once wrote that Korean acts took most of their cues from Western music, meaning many European electro houses (2NE1's 'Diplo-ish' and 'I'm the Best') and American R&B touches (Girls' Generation's 'Mr. Taxi' and KARA's 'Mister' [Miseuteo]) among other influences (Michel 2011). As Michel (2011) correctly observes:

A common stereotype about Japan is that it is a nation stubborn to change, and in regards to J-pop, this is completely correct. Most of the popular tracks of today could have been frozen back in the mid-1990s and thawed out at any time, the combination of goofy numbers and sappy ballads remaining basically unchanged for the past two decades. Japanese music plays it safe, resulting in a bland popscape where artists have very little opportunity to expand internationally.

What is certain, though, is that Western creators play a key role in many parts of K-pop music production and that K-pop has not yet fully developed a *third space*. Hybridity requires a unique third space through the mixture of two different cultures, and in order to do this, local creators must take a pivotal role (Jin 2016). However, in several K-pop songs, Western composers develop hybrid songs to target global audiences by introducing Western

mentalities, and therefore, many K-pop musicians lose the opportunity to develop a politicized hybrid culture, although in-house producers still select and develop idols' public personas by managing fashion styles, visual images, and performances.

English Mixing in Local Music

Another major dimension of J-pop's influence on K-pop is linguistic hybridization as English mixing in J-pop and K-pop is common. J-pop has greatly developed English mixing in its lyrics. As several researchers have shown (Hosokawa 1999; Moody 2006), nearly two-thirds of late 1990s and early 21st-century J-pop songs contain English lyrics, and those songs tend to be heavily influenced by Western styles but mixed with some Japanese in the lyrics, rhymes, melody, and arrangement.

J-pop musicians continue to use English in their song titles and names. According to the Oricon music chart, for November 2018, out of 50 top songs, 33 have English titles (66%), while 32 songs (64%) have singers with English names. Interestingly enough, while "No Way Man" by AKB48 reached the top position, several K-pop musicians also had their distinctive positions in the chart. For example, BTS ranked second with "Fake Love," followed by TVXQ's "Jealous" (3rd) and Super Junior's "One More Time" (10th), and therefore, some of these are K-pop songs with English mixing. Many song titles consist of one or two words ('Prisoner,' 'Azure,' 'Union,' 'Memorial,' and 'Secret Story'), like K-pop song titles. Many songs also utilize English mixing in lyrics, such as AKB48's "No Way Man," which begins with two lines in English followed by Japanese, and the chorus part uses very short English words, such as "hey," "oh," and "baby." Many Japanese pop songs have an English chorus and Japanese verses.

Influenced by J-pop, K-pop has also developed its English mixing in lyrics. Several entertainment powerhouses have found it necessary to mix English into the lyrics of K-pop, because they are targeting a global market. However, there are several differences from J-pop's use of English mixing. As Kristof (1995) explained, Japanese companies were "avid creators of English expressions because foreign names helped sell products domestically. Even

in Japan, Sony marketed the Walkman, not the Aruku Hito (the equivalent in Japanese).” Japan has always developed a delicate marketing model, and “similar motives could be seen behind the using of English elements in J-pop” (Nyman 2012, 51). English in J-pop also functions as a rhythmic device in the sense that it is possible to sing English faster than it is to sing Japanese (Loveday 1996, 131, cited in Nyman 2012, 49). “This is because more than one English syllable can be placed on one tone. As many Japanese words are multisyllabic, and thus take longer to sing, a song which has mainly, or entirely, Japanese lyrics, is likely to be slower, and the mood of the song heavier” (Nyman 2012, 49).

In K-pop, the use of English mixing is about the convergence of Western and non-Western linguistic cultures. K-pop performances have repetitive choruses, often interspersed with English, and synchronized dance routines that have become a prominent fad in Asia (Choe and Russell 2012). K-pop is also catchy due to addictive and repetitive choruses in English (referred to as hook songs) with synchronized dance moves that are easy to follow and sing along to (Jin 2016). The trend in K-pop has been to create music with fast beats. It is meant to be choreography friendly, and the guidelines, which have been previously introduced, encourage dance friendly, upbeat and catchy melodic songs with a hook phase and a lot of variations (J. Oh 2011).

In the 2010s, K-pop has diversified its style in terms of mixing English into its lyrics. On the one hand, the trend of English song titles in K-pop has increased since the late 1990s. In September 2018, among the top 50 songs on the Melon 50 chart, 47 K-pop musicians used English names, including BlackPink, Red Velvet, and TWICE, while English titles were used 23 times. While the number of English song titles has soared, a few English words are added to create song titles, such as “Power Up,” “Dance the Night Away,” “I’m Fine,” and “Mattress.” BTS had nine songs on this particular chart, seven of them with English titles, including “IDOL,” “I’m Fine,” “Fake Love,” and “DNA,” while only two songs had Korean titles—“The Truth Untold” (Jeonhaji motan jinsim) and “Spring Day” (Bom nal). Since many K-pop idol groups and solo artists use English in their lyrics, the number of K-pop songs with English lyrics has soared. As of September 2018, for example, of the top 50 songs on Melon, about 72 percent use English lyrics. The most

popular K-pop song of 2018 was BTS' "IDOL," which is a linguistically hybrid song. The song starts with a short English sentence—"You can call me artist"—and continues to mix English and Korean. It also consists of several repeating verses and choruses. BTS repeatedly shouts Americanized tropes, such as "Oh, Oh. Oh, Oh," and the hook song has become one of the most popular types in K-pop in the early 21st century.

By utilizing English mixing, however, several K-pop musicians advance their unique hybrid popular music. For example, although BTS uses English tropes, it also routinely uses Korean tropes like *eolssu*, *jihwaja jota*, and *deongkideok kungdeoreoreo* in Korean. IDOL reflects Koreaness, which is one of the major elements for the success of the song in global markets. Indeed, Bang Si-hyuk, the CEO of Bit Hit Entertainment, stated that English mixing itself is not a major reason why global fans like BTS, but rather because they find some of the Korean lyrics interesting (H. Lee 2017).

BTS' "IDOL"

You can call me artist

You can call me idol

...

You can't stop me lovin' myself

얼썩 좋다 (Eolssu jota)

You can't stop me lovin' myself

지화자 좋다 (Jihwaja jota)

You can't stop me lovin' myself

OHOHOHOH

OHOHOHOHOHOH

OHOHOHOH

덩기덕 쿵더러러 (Deongkideok kungdeoreoreo)

얼썩 (Eolssu)

OHOHOHOH

OHOHOHOHOHOH

OHOHOHOH

덩기덕 쿵더러러 (Deongkideok kungdeoreoreo)

얼썩 (Eolssu)

The music video itself is a distinctive hybridization of Western and Korean identities, as the background of the video shows Korea's traditional architecture and the *Bukcheong saja noreum* (lion-mask play of Bukcheong)—a traditional dance and an important intangible cultural heritage of Korea. One of the earliest songs performed by BTS also displays the group's unique approach. After the group had been given the name BTS and had only three members—Rap Monster, Suga and J-Hope—it released a song that gained wide popularity, and that song was “PalDoGangSan,” which took a form often referred to as *saturi* (dialect) rap.

Sechs Kies' "School Anthem"

Ah rise up Do not mess around
 The time is up Gotto scream now
 Who can mess with six not with this
 Mix Booh watch this
 Ah rise up Do not mess around
 The time is up Gotto
 Scream now who can mess with six
 Not with this mix Booh watch this

아리 아리요 스리스리에 아주아주아주먼 길을 찾아 왔네
 (Ari ariyo seuriseuriye ajuaajuameon gireul chaja wanne)
 아리 아리 아리 공부 고개를 오늘도 넘어간다
 (Ari ari ari gongbu gogaereul oneuldo neomeoganda)
 음악 미술은 저리 미뤄두고 국영수를 우선으로 해야
 (Eumak misureun jeori mirwodugo guk·yeong·sureul useoneuro haeya)
 아리 아리 아리 인정받고 일류대학으로 간다
 (Ari ari ari injeongbatgo illyudaehageuro ganda)

Several idol groups, including BTS, have composed their own songs. In so doing, they have politicized music, which means they create a third space, not simply borrowing Western components, but also reflecting local identities through their personal experiences. BTS's recent move in the global markets proves hybrid local culture's potential for global penetration.

As some argue, the key to K-pop's global success is not its Koreanness, but the lack of it (Russell 2012); however, creating the third space based on local culture and identity is also very evident in the case of BTS. BTS' authenticity, embedded in its musicality, songwriting, choreography, and visuals has resonated with fans around the world. Their lyrics contain socially conscious commentaries, from the hopeless Korean education system ('N.O.') to critiques of social inequality and political corruption ('Spring Day'). As Benjamin (2017) mentions in his interview with BTS, the group's albums contain deep social commentary, epitomized by the lyrics of "Go Go." By portraying the YOLO (You Only Live Once) phenomenon, "Go Go" is "a trendy song...about how our young generation are living their lives with low expectations and standards" (Benjamin 2017). BTS songs that give expression to the experiences of Korean youth find wide reception by global youth, who can empathize with their messages: global society is full of socio-economic hardship with little hope.

Overall, there have been two distinctive trends in the hybrid culture of K-pop. On the one hand, several idol groups (including solo artists), like BoA, Girls' Generation, and TWICE, have achieved global popularity through manufactured acts and hybridization strategies, including working with Western composers, English mixing, adding foreign or English-speaking members, and converging music genres. However, their music is far from creating a unique culture as Western and Japanese influences are rampant. With little variety and style, these K-pop musicians seemingly lose the major features that make K-pop a successful local music genre on the global music scene. On the other hand, musicians, including first-generation K-pop musicians, such as Seo Taiji and Boys and Sechs Kies, second-generation musicians, including 2NE1, and third-generation musicians like Psy and BTS who are some of the most successful musicians of their time, have developed a hybrid culture based on their own experiences and/or through satire, while touching upon socio-cultural issues embedded in Korean society. These latter artists mostly create their music as songwriters, although they mix Korean and English. Arguably, these forms of hybrid culture develop a third space representing local identities in the global context rather than emphasizing de-Koreanness.

Commercially, both approaches have found success. Artistically, however, the groups like BoA and Girls' Generation have not advanced the concept of a third space, while the latter group members, including 2NE1 and BTS, have created a unique politicized third space as well as attained global success.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed J-pop and K-pop from a comparative perspective in order to delineate the major characteristics of K-pop. As Japanese music deeply influenced K-pop starting in the 1990s, it discussed the transformation of K-pop in relation to J-pop. By analyzing the reasons why J-pop did not become a global phenomenon, while K-pop has suddenly achieved global fame in the 2010s, it also investigated the ways in which K-pop has achieved its current global popularity relative to J-pop.

In a nutshell, K-pop has been influenced by J-pop, from production systems to hybridization strategies, including English mixing in lyrics. There is no doubt that K-pop's system was influenced by Japan's idol system. However, these two Asian music genres have certainly developed different music cultures based on their respective socio-cultural milieus. Both J-pop and K-pop have been influenced by American pop music; the difference is that for K-pop, this has happened not only directly from the United States but also indirectly through J-pop, which makes K-pop different from J-pop.

K-pop has also strategically utilized social media, which has contributed greatly to its success in global markets. Unlike J-pop, which has not utilized social media, to include YouTube, until recently, K-pop appropriates social media, and through this gains global fandom. K-pop seems to have learned much from J-pop; however, K-pop has developed into a distinctive music sphere, which J-pop now attempts to follow. As Ju Oak Kim (2015) argues, the growth of K-pop has forced the J-pop world to refashion itself based on a study of the globally popular K-pop. Therefore, the relationship between J-pop and K-pop has changed to a reciprocal model, instead of a one-way flow.

Most of all, both J-pop and K-pop have developed cultural hybridity in advancing their own local music. J-pop and K-pop have developed their hybrid culture by mixing two or three different music genres, and their approaches to hybridization have some commonalities and differences. In other words, the hybridization of popular music in these two music industries has resulted in different receptions in the global markets. J-pop has been mixed with American popular music; however, its emphasis on bands, not dancing, and odorless English mixing did not boost its global popularity. “Although Japan maintained its own cultural stardom in Asia until the early 21st century based on its unique hybridization process, known as odorless Japaneseness, the depoliticized Japanese popular culture has lost its grip in the Asian market and has not been able to penetrate the global markets meaningfully” (Jin 2016, 176).

By contrast, K-pop has partially advanced its third space by not only fusing Korean and Western genres and styles, but also developing a unique space, as can be seen in the music of BTS. K-pop has successfully penetrated global music markets based on its hybridization strategies, both structural and textual. In the rapidly shifting globalization processes, K-pop has become one of the most noticeable local music genres to be enjoyed by a global fan base. This does not mean that all K-pop musicians develop this in-between third zone. Contemporary K-pop achieves commercial success in the global markets; however, in order to enhance the level of popularity, the major element the K-pop industry needs to develop is aesthetic success through the hybridization of culture.

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