

Vanessa Crowe

Professor Helmreich

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Dear Professor,

This was an interesting paper to write as I knew a lot about the topic before I wrote it. Unlike the rhetorical essay, my perspective here is one I agree with, but it was kind of hard to argue since the opposing side has many sensible ideas. I wanted my audience to be people who agree with me. I focused on catering to those who have noticed this happening in the United States music industry. However, I wrote it for people who are either millennials or generation z to read but not an academic crowd. The purpose of this essay was mostly to inform people on this issue and have them reevaluate their own biases like what they decide to listen to or support. Also learning to call out people if they try to force someone to speak English especially if they are obviously uncomfortable doing it.

From this research paper and phase, I mainly focused on four course learning outcomes. I used the course learning outcomes of 1, 2, 6, and 7. The first learning outcome, "Recognize the role of language attitudes and standards in empowering, oppressing, and hierarchizing languages and their users, and be open to communicating across different languages and cultures" was the largest part of this essay. I had to do a lot of research on mostly hierarchizing languages by using articles that compare how English songs were treated compared to non-English songs. If I did not use the second outcome, "Explore and analyze, in writing and reading, a variety of genres and rhetorical situations," I would not be able to fulfill the requirements of this paper. We had to find scholarly sources, multimedia sources and non-scholarly sources. The last two outcomes are very

similar, but I think I used them in different ways. The sixth, “understand and use print and digital technologies to address a range of audience” and seventh, “locate research sources (including academic journal articles, magazine and newspaper articles) in the library’s databases or archives and on the Internet and evaluate them for credibility, accuracy, timeliness, and bias” both had to do with how I found my sources for this project. The sixth one focused on the digital aspect since I did not use any print technology to complete this. The seventh outcome was the second largest part of this phase for me as we had several assignments to research authors of the sources we covered in class and what we used for our essay.

Did you know that in the 63 years of the Billboard Hot 100 chart, only 20 non-English songs have managed to top the charts? Keep in mind that the chart is updated on a weekly basis. Granted, it is extremely difficult to reach the top and less than 2,000 songs have managed to do so. Most of the songs that have topped the charts had to have been extremely impactful like The Jackson 5's "I'll be there," Michael Jackson's "You are not Alone," Destiny's Child "Say My Name," and Luis Fonsi's "Despacito." Of course, the playing field seems pretty even when it comes to the Hot 100 chart but if we look further at the elements it takes to reach a No. 1 on the Hot 100 like radio play, we will see that non-English songs definitely do not get the same treatment. This paper will be focusing on English in the music industry and how it affects international artists. How does the music industry react to non-English speakers and how are they treated differently? The pressure placed on artists from East Asian and Hispanic countries to speak English or make an English only song is so widespread and normalized in the industry. Why is that? Is it because the industry sees English as a superior language? It is important to really dive in and look at the overall treatment of international talent in American music and media considering the US has the largest music industry.

To begin, this mistreatment that many international artists face is not new. The US has exploited many cultures without credit and even aims to change them. The article, "Whose World, What Beat: The Transnational Music Industry, Identity, and Cultural Imperialism." written by Reebee Garofalo who is a professor of American Studies at the University of Massachusetts is a great source of information on cultural imperialism relating to music, especially pop and rock, as he has written several articles on different types of music. Garofalo's article focuses on the "cultural consequences of the emerging world system [including] challenges and opportunities as well as destruction and defeat" (Garofalo 29). The articles also

talks about how although music is a great way to bring cultures together, it is also a great way to erase someone's culture. As most of us know, technology is an important part of spreading different cultures in music as it makes the world feel like a smaller place. However, sharing cultures also puts preserving certain cultural music at risk. Even something that seems insignificant like learning English is a part of cultural erasure especially when language is a huge part of a culture. When US pop music entered a world of internalization with artists like Michael Jackson, Lionel Riche, and other big names in pop culture, the main foundation of this cultural imperialism was economics. As Garofalo said by 1990, billboard estimated \$20 billion which is more than double that amount in 2021. The increase in popularity can keep cultures alive to the general public but can also be manipulated to change.

Furthermore, the article was written in 1993 yet it is still very relevant to this day and how the U.S. market has treated international artists has not changed. It is still rooted in economic prosperity and Americanizing talent. Even in the successful talk show *The Ellen Show* where the host interviewed a 6-year-old Piano player named YiYi who came all the way from China has done its part in mistreating international talent. The idea of the segment was very heartwarming, but it seemed that Ellen tried to make jokes but instead of them being funny, they came off in a very mocking way. Many may see this interview as DeGenerous trying to relate to YiYi but the whole interview seemed kind of tone-deaf. The humor surrounding judging and making a joke out of another language is not acceptable and never was. This interview alone contributes to the idea that many Americans treat people differently based on how well they speak English.

To add on, the mistreatment of international artists is not limited to people who are not in the limelight. In fact, one of the most popular international artists in the U.S. right now, BTS, has

even come out to talk about their own experience on what they have faced promoting in the U.S. In their letter, they explained how they were mocked not just for how they looked but also asked “why Asians spoke in English?” They have both been asked and told why they spoke English and that they should speak English. Since they included this in the statement they came out with to give their take on the rise in hate crimes against Asians, this shows how much comments like those have affected them. It is quite interesting how the music industry will try to twist these artists in becoming who they want them to be. Even in their interview on “On Air With Ryan Seacrest” in 2017 when they were starting to get popular in the U.S., they were asked “Will you ever produce a whole album in English?” That question alone is quite strange when you consider the fact that they are a Korean-based group with only one member fluent in English. The question was followed up with the reasoning that they release Japanese albums. However, all the members speak Japanese and Japan has the second biggest music industry in the world so it would make sense why they release albums in Japanese. All RM (a member of BTS) could say was “That’s the question?” Unless, people have been in that situation, there is no way one can understand what was going through his mind at that moment. From interviews like these, it is important to think about why people feel the need to have wishes like these. It could be because there is that deeper connection when it comes to listening to a song in your native language. However, this reasoning does not make sense considering the fact that they had never made an album nor a song in English and never promised to do so.

Besides, there are artists who have had major success in the US and continued to keep their culture like Bad Bunny. The article, “Bad Bunny: Life in Puerto Rico for a Refreshingly Weird Latin Trap Star,” is written by Julianne Escobedo Shepherd who since 2010 used to be an executive editor for the Fader wrote this article to show that even a Latin pop star can get

recognition. She brings up the fact that he even has a unique fashion sense and he is singing solely in Spanish. This is a great article that is written in the form of a story and in the perspective of Bad Bunny. She gives several examples of how much success he has accumulated across his own career and how it has changed his life. As she says, he is living in a sprawling mansion and is almost on “constant tour across Latin America, the U.S., and Europe” (Shepherd). However, although it cannot be argued against that he is incredibly famous and is making his way up to be a household name, the U.S. is still not seeing non-English entertainment on the same level of English. There is almost a disconnect between the two worlds, especially in the music industry. In the article Bad Bunny clearly states that although he is learning English, he is aware that “it’s the English-speaking world that needs to catch up to the Spanish-speaking one” (Shepherd). Despite his immense popularity it is almost considered a given that he learns English just because he is getting popular in the U.S. Bad Bunny is absolutely right, he should not have to conform to the English-speaking world. Similar to other entertainers who do not make music in English, most of the time countries like the USA and the UK are the last to realize how popular and talented non-English speaking artists are.

Moreover, the idea that the music industry is changing and is starting to accept outsiders is true to some extent, but the change is not as dramatic as some make it seem. This article “English – Language music is losing its stranglehold on global pop charts” by Tim Ingham, founder and publisher of Music Business Worldwide since 2015 and a well-known music commentator for The Rolling Stone, compares several artists who are popular worldwide. He gave examples of Ariana Grande and Bad Bunny who are very popular in the US to bring out their similarities by using Grande who is an American-based artist while Bad Bunny is just starting to break into the US market. He claims that platforms like YouTube and Spotify are

disintegrating “the strength of native artists” (Ingham). Ariana Grande is always breaking Global records on Spotify, yet she is the only artist in the entire YouTube Top 10 whose first language is English while the rest are Bad Bunny, Ozuna, and many more. As YouTube reaches approximately 1.6 billion people, it is understandable why Ingham would think these streaming platforms are changing the way non-native English-speaking artists are viewed. However, it is more important to compare how artists are treated on forums that can be manipulated. Platforms like billboard and the radio are what really need to be studied because YouTube and Spotify simply measure an artists’ popularity.

Besides, Garofalo also said “the establishment of a star system and the introduction of restrictive radio formats can further the process and limit the diversity of music which are produced” (Garofalo, 23). This is seen in cases like BTS’ “Dynamite” and “Life Goes On.” The article by Eryn Murphy, “BTS: ‘Life Goes On’ Is Not Getting the Same Radio Treatment as ‘Dynamite,’” focuses on a specific artist, songs, and parts of the industry. Eryn Murphy -nicknamed a “K-pop expert” as she has received exclusive insights about K-pop and is known for reviewing trending TV and was a member of the International Thespian Society. She statistically compares the two songs by the group and how the one in English was treated vs the one in Korean. It does not take away from the fact that non-English songs are getting very popular, but it adds on to how they are treated differently even if their popularity is on par with native artists. As Murphy said, Life Goes On received significantly less spins than Dynamite even though they both achieved at No.1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. That goes to show that they were both popular. Some may even argue that Life Goes On was more popular because it nearly had no spins on the radio which is a huge part of the Hot 100 yet it still debuted on the chart. It cannot be denied that international artists are making an impact as Ingham said however,

it seems like popularity does not get recognized until there are songs in English. Dynamite received over 900 spins on the first day while Life Goes On struggled to get 10 (Murphy). Yes, this country is a majority English speaking country so it might be a bit unrealistic to expect them to prioritize other languages. However, what about Spanish? Songs like Despacito was on the radio everywhere in 2015 and even Bad Bunny managed to get a lot of radio plays. Songs in other languages might get some attention from the general public but that is only if they are extremely popular like Despacito. Meanwhile, songs in English are automatically seen as superior. The U.S. has the No.1 music industry in the world so it should not matter what language the songs are in. The pressure that is placed on international artists to speak English or make a song in English is very real considering that those two songs were treated very differently simply because of the language difference.

Thus, imagine how conflicted these artists must feel when it comes to deciding whether to produce a song in English or keep it in their own language. June Jordan's "Nobody Mean More to Me than You" is a great example of that but it is based on Black English. The author of this text is a poet, activist, and teacher who was active in the Civil Rights movement. This text is a story about one of her students' who lost his brother to a white police officer. They struggle to find what dialect they should use to write a letter on the issue. They could either use Black English which they were used to and born speaking or Standard English which they believed would get them taken more seriously (Jordan, 9). She expands on the topic by talking about how the usage of standard English pushes out Black voices and contributes to negative stereotypes (Jordan, 5). Although this situation is much more serious than the place of English in the music industry, the struggle around deciding how you will be seen depending on what type of English or if you speak English at all is something everyone experiences. It is especially prominent in an



international artist experience as they have seen their songs in English receive better treatment than those in other languages despite them selling the same number of units.

In conclusion, seeing this happen to “Dynamite” and “Life Goes On” really plays into the idea that the music industry feels English is superior. For international non-English speaking artists, it is almost a given that they will make a song in English as if it is the only way to get attention in American media. Artists like Bad Bunny and BTS are encouraged, even pressured to speak English and when they do, they are sometimes mocked. Although it does help so they can communicate more efficiently when they are in the US, translators exist, and it should not be an expectation placed on them.

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