



Influence of Hip-Hop Language over Young Pakistani Listener's Speech

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Cultivation theory,
Hip-hop language,
Influence,
Pakistani Listeners.

Hip-hop language due to its vocabulary and grammar has obtained interest in the field of sociolinguistics. The study attempts to explore the influence of hip-hop language over young Pakistani listener's speech. Based on previous studies, it is considered the most popular music genre among youngsters, worldwide. Data was collected from participants through interviews and was analysed in the lens of Cultivation Theory by Gerbner and Gross (1976). Results of the study shows that Pakistani youth is under the influence of hip-hop music which influences their speech in daily life. Furthermore, both lexical and phonological features show the shift towards the hip-hop culture of modern day. Future implications can be done using the present study to trace the reasons behind the inclination of youngsters towards the hip-hop genre.

INTRODUCTION

Hip-hop language has taken over the place in the world of music. The music is ruling the world for over three decades. Linguists has begun taking interest in genre-specific language. Hip-hop music stands out in the culture of rap music with reference to syntax, discourse, and lexical features (Alim, 2002; Emmett, 2009). United States is highly influenced by hip-hop language as it is being adopted by youth around the world. Countries with similar and diverse culture follow hip-hop language and culture in music (Alim, 2005). The genre was originated by the African Americans. Therefore, it is mostly heard or preferred by the oppressed people in every community who suffer hardships. It is a tool that helps them to talk over the common class; political, social and economic issues (Adjaye, 1997).

The genre was started by Rappers Delight which is the first hip-hop song and was released in 1980. The language of the song was not the Standard English used in United States. It was a colloquial language of African-Americans, which is also called (African American Vernacular English or Black English). Words like fly ("cool/attractive") and bad ("cool") that appeared in Rapper's Delight became popular normal standard English which is also known as Standard American in the 1980s (Chesley, 2011). Chambers (1999) states that it is not surprising to know

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that speakers of any language acquire vocabulary from movies and television shows. However, it is still not clear whether speakers learn language through music specifically hip-hop or not. Hip-hop language is often difficult to interpret and understand for the listeners (Collister and Huron, 2008).

Hip-hop language is easily approachable due to the social media and internet. In addition to that, it has impacts over the listeners' language who use HHL in their communication (Rose, 1994). According to (Smitherman 1997; Morgan 1994) the basic feature of hip-hop language is of its being embedded in African American English communication practice. It is considered as a variety of English used by AA (Alima, 2004). The language is used and borrowed by not only African American but also the non-Africans within and outside the USA (Bennett 1999).

For many generations, hip-hop has a great influence on English in United States as Hip-hop music has aided its progress in many aspects. African-American singers have enlightened the blacks' listeners regarding the liberation techniques; and recent events from the days before the spirituals and blues emerged, utilizing alternate language only understood by those within the cultural network (Emmett, 2009).

Coupland (2001) defined styles as "persona management tools." (1998) or distinct ways through which one chooses to portray him/herself in the circumstances. According to Eastman and Stein (1993) has highlighted the idea of language portrayal which are followed by the people of one community or group to make themselves different from the other. Linguistics styles are used to give an idea of the group and culture they belong to. According to (Coupland, 2001; Irvine, 2001) states that linguistic style followed by a person within and outside the social group it points out the same social meaning associated to it. Usage of HHL by white hip-hoppers is considered out-group since it is associated by the African Americans.

According to Dyson (1993) hip-hop language is vernacular in nature when features of the language are examined. Therefore, young people use this variety in their language because of the unique sentence structure and morphology. The structure of hip-hop language which is complex in nature and not understood by everyone is obtained from the language of black colloquial which is considered harsh as it highlights the sufferings of Africans in the United States of America (Baker, 1993). Dyson (1993) asserts further that many critics still believe that hip-hop language would be acceptable if it is sanitized from the anger hip-hoppers express through their language.

Aims and Objectives

- The study aims to explore the influence of hip-hop language over the young Pakistani listeners.
- The study highlights the linguistic features of hip-hop language which influences the language of the listeners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociolinguistics is interested in hip-hop language due to its dominant status. Hip-hop culture

consists of rap music, breakdance, deejay etc. It holds strong power in social cultures around world (Adjaye, 1997). Hip-hop language has a distinct influence on the communication of Americans. African- American music has performed a vital role in music evaluation in different ways (Price, 2019). There are several linguistic features in hip-hop language that makes it unique among the other music genres. These features are:

Grammar

The most frequently used verb in the hip-hop language is BE. It is the most highlighted feature in AAE language but difficult to understand in sociolinguistics (Wolfram, 2002). The verb “be” is also called copula in the grammatical features of AAE language. Using verb be as a finite verb shows the frequent habitual actions which is not possible in standard English. Both the language communicates the same meaning but the syntax is different. Yule (2014) states that verb be has dual functions in hip-hop language: it is habitual or invariant and the copula absence or the zero copula.

AAE

1. He busy right now (zero copula)
2. Sometimes he be busy (habitual Action)
2000)

SE

1. He is busy right know
2. Sometimes he is busy (Trudgill,

The variation in the use of verb *be* raises the possibility for AAE speakers to bring variations in language and use different grammatical structures (Alim, 2004). According to some linguists’ copula is omitted in present tense. there are also some cases where copula cannot be omitted. He is nice as he says he is. The sentence would be incomplete with the copula in such cases (Fromkin, 1998). This derivation is followed by the non- native listeners in their daily speech (Cutler, 2002).

Phonological Features

It has been observed that the phonological feature in AAE is the consonant clusters. Consonant clusters are comparatively lesser when a voiced consonant is following voiceless consonant. As coal and cold are pronounced the same in AAE (Tottie, 2002). Similarly, reduction also takes place when the initial syllables are omitted from the words when they are unstressed such as, as ‘re’ from remember is written as ‘member and ‘a’ from about is written as ‘bout (Tottie, 2002). Reduction is normal when it comes to omitting the syllables from words when they are unstressed as ‘re’ from remember is written as ‘member and ‘a’ from about is written as ‘bout (Tottie, 2002). In addition to that, expressions like ‘you all’ is pronounced as ‘y’all’ and ‘I’m going to’ is pronounced as ‘I’ma’ in AAE (Tottie, 2002). Hence, the consonant sound of / ð / in the beginning of the words ‘this’ and ‘that’ has changes into /d/ as ‘dis’ and ‘dat’.

Lexicons

Words that are considered slang in standard English are the part of AAE as well as the hip-hop language (Alim, 2006). Words as 'brother' has changed its connotation due to AAE which means 'a black man' when it is used. Words like 'yooo' which does not have a meaning, is used by the people who listens to hip-hop music (Tottie, 2002). Moreover, the contractions in English language are mostly formed by African- American English. Words like 'bro' 'hella' 'gotcha' are the result of the innovation brought in AAE by the hip-hoppers (Alim, 2006) The use of "da" rather than "the" is another noteworthy hip-hop characteristic. The word is spelled as it sounds, if spoken in a "hip-hop accent." This spelling often has a limited life span. The word "the" has replaced "da." It is reportedly owing to the prominence of "da," which becomes null and invalid as a word or spelling becomes over-popularized in hip-hop and extends to the mainstream.

According to Richard (2011), these lexicons are unfamiliar to most of the people. Deviations in syntax and lexicons make hip-hop vocabulary difficult to understand. These deviations are deliberately used by the hip-hoppers to make this genre, culture and themselves different from others specifically from those who use standard English in daily communication. meanwhile, hip-hop culture is a process of catharsis through which people explicitly express their emotion. It also has a political, economic power which enables every individual to access this genre. It is a way of communication and building relationship (Velture & Hadley, 2012). Recently it is observed that hip-hop music has built a bridge between youth and community also among themselves. Hip-hoppers through their music gives an idea of authentication of experiences faced by the audiences in society or a community which is also the reason of their attraction towards hip-hop music (Clay, 2006). DJs became more popular in the 1970s, and the spotlight was completely shifted from the break dancers to the DJs. The DJ shows also called the MCs, or the master of ceremonies. The lyrics of the songs were uttered in a way which is similar to speaking. It is called rapping as well. it is a type of hip hop music in which the vocals take precedence over the electronic instruments that forms the background music (Keeley, 2001).

Rap music is appreciated by 67 percent of black teens and 55 percent of all non-white youths in the Western World (Morgan, 2001). Rap music lyrics frequently reflect grief, fury, sorrow, desire, and joy, and typically feature personal insights and experiences (Thornberg, 2003) Furthermore, they are frequently given in a narrative and boastful manner, making the performers appear to be heroes (Andersson, 2003:10). Non-native speakers who speak English as their second language does not follow the whole AAE structure hence, they whole some of the features of AAE language. There might be complex reason as well for following AAE or HHL (Soukup & Trester, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The present study is qualitative in nature. The focus of the study is the imitation and use of hip-hop language in the speech of young Pakistani listeners. Data is collected through interviews from fifty participants using in-depth interview method. Data is analysed through the lens of Cultivation Theory by Gerbner and Gross (1976). Cultivation theory in its most basic form, suggests that exposure to television, over time, subtly "cultivates" viewers' perceptions of reality. This cultivation can even have an impact on light viewers of TV because the impact on heavy viewers has an impact on our entire culture (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p.21-34). Gerbner and Gross (1976) states that television is a medium of the socialization of most people into standardized roles and behaviours. Its function is within a word and enculturation. Language obtained in the selected data

is analysed through critical discourse analysis to get the linguistic features used by the young Pakistani listeners.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Grammar

When drake fans were asked question “how has hip-hop language influenced you?” one of the participants replied “*I be (habitual be) using them in my style. As he his style is different from other dudes, hoopin poopin sort of*”. Next answer was “*hip-hop culture is unique therefore it attracts people around the globe I guess*” no Grammatical error found. The third participant mentioned “*it infulecin (Zero Copula) people in hella ways and this bringin great changinn in world*”. Similarly, when next question was asked “is hip-hop language effective for communication? the participants replied “*the language is easy to communicate. Therefore, it is effective in communication*”. Hence, no grammar deviation was found in the answer. Next answer was “*we using this language in communication. it means it if effective*” (Zero Copula). Last answer was “*I am not sure as not every one considers this language as formal*”. Once again, no grammatical error. It shows that the participants were not fully but partially followed the grammar deviation followed by the rappers or hip-hoppers. The deviations show that listeners were not much aware of the grammar of hip-hop music. They mostly used proper sentence structure.

Talking about Snoop Dogg’s fans when they were asked this question “*How did you discover hip-hop?*”. The answers were “*my friend suggested me to listen to hip-hop music and it was amazing*”. Here, again no grammatical error is found. Next reply was “*hip-hop be the culture one cannot stay away from*”. Used in a present tense which shows that is still trending. As the answers given by the listeners shows that apart from listening, they do not follow the grammar deviation in their speech there are very few scenarios where the interviewees followed the grammar of hip-hop music as they are more into learning new vocabulary.

Phonological Features

There has been lot of expletives observed in 2Pac songs. When fans asked question is hip-hop effective for communication. one of the participants answered “*yes, it is effective. Lot of bisshess (bitches)*” use this language in their communication now a days. We also lookin forwad to see it grooming. Next participant answered the question “*we niggas also talkin ‘bout the thang yesterday. Many people think it is not effective since they think it is rude*”.

By analyzing the speech of the fans of one of the renowned rapper Snoop Dogg, it was seen that their speech is influenced by the language used in the songs of their idol. The first question from them was: “Is hip-hop effective for communication? One of the participants replied: “*the thang is that hip-hop is popular among people right now. This shit is easy to remember and words easy to use*”. The other replied “*it is hot to use such language in speaking. Bizzack (back) then it waz not in trend but it is now necessary for communication*” “*G's to the bizzack, now ladies here we gizzo*” (Snoop Dogg, 2004).

The above analyzed phonological features shows that the hip-hop language influences the listeners. Moreover, non-native listeners who are not familiar with the formal and informal variety pick the

S-language words more easily than the formal. It has also been observed that they use this language to express their knowledge about the music as well as the hip-hoppers. It shows that in order to leave an impression on people they use AAE variety in their communication.

Lexicons

The participants whose favorite singer is 2pac used the linguistic features in their conversation. In an interview when they were asked the influence of hip-hop language, their response was positive as well as they said *“hip-hop ain't bad, it's about the understanding”*. The other participant said *“woooo, it has brought an awareness among the people 'bout the social issues”* *“I'm 'bout to crash up on the curb 'cause my vision's blurry”* (2pac 1998). These lexical features are followed by every hip-hop singer or rapper in their songs and raps. They were asked the question how they discovered the genre to which one of the participants replied *“my nigga found 2pac song on his YouTube feed. After listening to dude's ALL EYES ON ME we thought maaan we found something worth listenin”* *“High fives 'cause another nigga played your ass”* (2pac, 1996). The second participant replied to the question *“I had an interest in this genre from the start and 2pac is 'freakin amazin' for which I listen to hip-hop more. For the next question ‘How has hip-hop language influenced you?’ ‘2pac has discussed the hardships of blacks also the ‘drak’ society that has a relation with our society as well. He talks about how his homies stabbed him which is very common in our society’*. How do you define hip-hop? *“The genre is ‘lit’ it has ‘chillin’ vibes as it is different from typical music. The other participant replied “hip-hop is popular among people now a days. ‘Rappin’ is not easy that ‘makin’ it ‘flyn’ higher.”*

The other four participants were Snoop Dogg's fan. By analyzing their speech, it was seen that his language had influences in their speech. After asking the question *“is hip-hop effective for communication?”* one of the participants replied *“the thang is that hip-hop is popular among people right now. This shit is easy to remember and words easy to use”* *“So if you ain't up on thangs”* (Snoop Dogg, 1999). The other replied *“it is a hot to use such language in speaking. Bizzack (back) then it waz not in trend but it is now necessary for communication”* *“G's to the bizzack, now ladies here we gizzo”* (Snoop Dogg, 2004).

Third rappers who is popular among youth in the present era is Drake. Three participants who were his fan had an enthusiastic response. When question was asked *“who is their favorite hip-hop singer?”* One participant replied *“woohhh man Drak... Aayyyy you gonna ask me question 'bout this dude... go on”*. Other participant replied *“Drake has this amazin vibe. I keepin attracting towards him”*. Third participant replied *“I love Drake. I wishin to meet him one day”*. *Word like woohhh and Aayyyy are the words originated by the rappers which does not have any meaning rather they are used as interjections. When they were asked the second question “how do you define hip-hop?”*. The replies were *“hip-hop is dope. it has fullin occupied the world by its amazin uniqueness”*. *“hip-hop is a universe in itself. People tellin me what is there in his songs. I say you ain't understand. Dope is used by many hip-hoppers in their music which means “cool”*. *“imma tell every person to listen to hip-hop. Nothin can take place of this genre and culture”*. When Drake fans were asked question *“how has hip-hop language influenced you?”* one of the participants replied. *“I be using them in my style. As he his style is different from other dudes, hoopin poopin sort of”*. Next answer was *“hip-hop culture is unique therefore it attracts people around the globe I guess”*. The third participant mentioned *“it infulecin people in hella ways and this bringing great changinn in world”*. The use of lexical by the speakers clearly shows the

imitation of their muse in their speech. Change in lexical features of non-native speakers is observed through the interaction. All the hip-hop music fans follow the features in their communication and have a positive view regarding hip-hop culture. These features were followed unintentionally in their speech. As they were not aware of their words in their speech.

As discussed in the literature review portion hip-hop language has an impact on the non-native speakers due to its unique features. It was started in 1979 and took over the place of all United States music (Chesley, 2011). The genre was not meant to live this long however, its unique features make this genre different from others. hip-hop is ruling the world from past 20 years which is the reason it has attracted the attention of the linguists (prince. 2019). There have been lots of differences observed in SE Standard English. The language has been evaluating from past 20 years. New words are formed by the hip-hoppers to make their language and genre different from others. These lexicons are sometimes difficult for people to interpret (Richard, 2011). The features the present study has analyzed are Grammar, Phonological, and Lexical Features. It has been observed that that hip-hoppers violate grammatical rules in their music. the use of verb BE; it expresses a habitual action also when there is verb missing in a sentence the structure is called zero copula (Yule, 2014). As for the phonological features Tottie (2002) states tha hip-hoppers omit the voiceless consonants when they are followed by voiced as in “remember” which is pronounced as “member”. The feature is also followed by the interviewees who are fond of hip-hop music as they imitate their muse while speaking. The last feature which is followed by every interviewee in their speech was the lexicons. According to Alim (2007) the contractions in English are formed by African- Americans. Some of the lexicons does not give the same meaning in both the varieties. The words like “gotcha”, “hella” “yoo” are the best examples.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that hip-hop language influences young Pakistani Listener’s Speech. The interviews expressed the affection of youth towards hip-hop music as well as their muse. It has been observed that most followed hip-hop linguistic feature followed by the participants is the lexicons. Participants are found familiar with most of the terms used by the hip-hoppers in their music. As far as phonological features are concerned, it is observed that the participants are not only influenced by the new vocabulary but also in its pronunciation. One of the reasons behind this influence found in the analysis is the idolization of artists. Youngsters idolizes the rappers to such an extent that they sound just like them both in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary. Since they love hip-hop music so much which is why they tend to used that language in their speech to show their affection towards the genre. The least followed feature by the participants is the grammar as many of the listeners does not give attention to the grammatical structure therefore, there was not grammatical deviation observed in their speech.

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