

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA  
FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

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Linguistic Specification of the Rap Microculture

Master thesis

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**Affirmation**

I hereby affirm that this thesis represents my own original research and writing and that I have referenced all appropriate source materials.

Date:

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(student's signature)

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I would like to thank my supervisor, PhDr. Tatiana Hrivíková, PhD. for her valuable advice and endless patience during my work on this thesis. I would also like to thank my parents, who provided me with love, care, and immense mental support.

## Abstrakt

KIŠAC, Filip *Lingvistická charakteristika rap subkultúry* – Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta aplikovaných jazykov; Katedra interkultúrnej komunikácie. – Vedúci záverečnej práce: PhDr. Tatiana Hrivíková, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ, 2020, 85s.

Cieľom predloženej práce bolo na základe štúdia odborných informačných zdrojov, ako aj konkrétnych umeleckých textov, preukázať vplyv súčasnej americkej hip-hopovej kultúry, konkrétne jazyka rapperov, na vývoj jazyka súčasných slovenských rapperov. Predkladaná štúdia bola vypracovaná s cieľom umožniť určitý pohľad do vzniku hip-hopovej subkultúry, rovnako jej vývoja, lingvistickej a sociálno-ekonomickej situácie. Takýto pohľad môže byť prínosný pre čitateľov neznalých hip-hopovej kultúry a jej prejavov.

V teoretickej časti som sa snažil získať informácie súvisiace so všeobecnými pojmami a opisom formovania konkrétnych javov. Teoretická časť diplomovej práce pozostáva z dvoch hlavných kapitol. V prvej kapitole sa sústredíme na kultúru mládeže spojenú s formáciou identity. Zaoberá sa tiež hip-hopom ako konkrétnou formou subkultúry mládeže. Druhá kapitola je rozdelená na dve hlavné podkapitoly, ktorými sú americká hip-hopová kultúra a slovenská hip-hopová kultúra. V oboch podkapitolách sa venujeme rovnakým javom akými sú ich vznik a vývoj, rovnako ako súčasný stav.

Praktická časť zachytáva globalizáciu ako jav ovplyvňujúci jazykový prejav konkrétnej subkultúry. Skladá sa z dvoch hlavných podkapitol a to globalizácie a jej následného vplyvu na hip-hop a jazyk. V druhej z týchto podkapitol študujeme súčasný jazykový prejav americkej hip-hopovej kultúry a jeho vplyv na súčasný jazykový prejav predstaviteľov slovenskej hip-hopovej kultúry.

Kľúčové slová: globalizácia, hip-hop, jazyk, rap, subkultúra, kultúra

## Abstract

KIŠAC, Filip: Linguistic Specification of the rap Microculture – the University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages; Department of Intercultural Communication. – The thesis tutor: PhDr. Tatiana Hrivíková, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ, 2020, 85p.

The objective of the presented work, based on the study of scientific information sources, as well as specific artistic texts, was to demonstrate the influence of contemporary American hip-hop culture, particularly the rap language, on the development of the hip-hop language of contemporary Slovak rappers. The presented study was elaborated to enable a certain insight into the emergence of the hip-hop subculture, as well as its development, linguistic and socio-economic situation. Such a view can be beneficial for readers unfamiliar with hip-hop culture and its manifestations.

In the theoretical part, I tried to obtain information related to general concepts and descriptions of the formation of specific phenomena. The theoretical part of the thesis consists of two main chapters. In the first chapter, we focus on the youth culture associated with the formation of identity. It also deals with hip-hop as a specific form of youth subculture. The second chapter is divided into two main subchapters, which are American hip-hop culture and Slovak hip-hop culture. In both subchapters, we deal with the same phenomena such as their origin and development, as well as the current state.

The analytical part captures globalization as a phenomenon influencing the linguistic expression of a specific subculture. It consists of two main subchapters, namely globalization and its subsequent impact on hip-hop and language. In the latter of these subchapters, we study the current language expression of American hip-hop culture and its influence on the current language expression of representatives of Slovak hip-hop culture.

Keywords: globalization, hip-hop, language, rap, subculture, culture

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## Introduction

The hip-hop subculture originated in America in the 1970s as a reaction of youth to the political and social situation. The term hip-hop refers to the subculture as well as the music corresponding to this subculture. Through rap music, which is a verbal expression and an important element of hip-hop culture, the artists expressed their feelings and moods from the environment in which they were placed. Since this music came mainly from impoverished areas of America, it significantly helped its artists to create identities. By doing so, it brought them wider recognition, and subsequently, this form of expression allowed them to escape from the conditions they found themselves in. Since this form of art required nothing more than a simple verbal expression formulated into rhymes, hip-hop began to spread and develop quickly. Gradually, the rappers' play with the word became more complex, and within 40 years of its existence, American rap music alternated many styles ranging from "Gangsta rap" through "Trap" to today's "Mumble rap". "Mumble rappers" do not emphasize the lyrical value of their lyrics, but on the style in which they present them. Because of this attribute, they have been the target of criticism from their artistic colleagues and supporters of classical rap. However, modern rap dominates the world's music charts, and what was once a subculture has now become a full-fledged part of mainstream culture. Therefore, the influence that hip-hop has on its surroundings is still growing, and this influence does not exclude the language, which is, together with a beat, the main component of rap music.

In addition to the influence hip-hop has on the English language in America, due to the globalization of the American music industry, the impact of hip-hop is reflected also in other world languages. Today, almost every nation has its own hip-hop scene, which stems from the foundations of American hip-hop, and uses its language. Slovakia is no exception and the Slovak language, which the rappers proudly presented during the formation of the scene, began to deform with the arrival of a new generation of artists growing up in a globalized era. In the last chapter of this thesis, we are studying the language of Slovak rappers, which is marked by Americanization. However, we cannot underestimate the influence that the hip-hop subculture has on the dominant culture and the language within which it exists. Through the analysis of Slovak rappers' lyrics, we will try to confirm the hypothesis that the Slovak rap language is directly influenced by the language of American



rappers. Methodology applied whilst proving the hypothesis includes accumulation, selection, comparison and induction.

# Subcultures

## Identity Formation and Subcultures

Identity formation can be conceptualized as an ongoing psychological process during which various characteristics of the self are internalized, labelled, valued, and organized. At its simplest, the basic hypothesis of identity development is that the transition from adolescence to adulthood involves progressive strengthening in the sense of identity. Many people begin developing a sense of identity during adolescence. They are trying to answer the question “Who am I?” During identity formation, individuals explore different aspects of themselves, including their gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and other social identities, as well as their personal interests and talents. These explorations are influenced by social and cultural norms, as well as by the individuals' own perceptions of themselves. Many things teens do, like trying new activities or wearing different kinds of clothes, are part of their search for an identity. Even though identity development often begins during the teen years, it can be a life-long process.

Subcultures can play an important role in the formation of an individual's identity. A subculture is a group within a larger culture that has its own distinct norms, values, and behaviours that differentiate it from the dominant culture. Contemporary urban societies are mainly multicultural comprising a great number of subcultures. Youth subcultural enclaves are genuine places where a variety of identities are formed. In general, according to the best-known classification scale, identities are divided into personal referring to individuality (“the self”, “ego” or “persona”), and collective ones referring to similarities. The basic kinds of collective identities are: social (group and class), national, professional, and cultural. All identities are relational and inter-penetrating. Namely, since identity refers to the meanings which are always a matter of convention and innovation, then, as stated by R. Jenkins, every human identity is a social identity (Jenkins 1997). In an endless chain of social and cultural communication, identities are shaped, integrated, or changed. If personal identity is an idiosyncratic variant of cultural identity, then, maybe, it even more so belongs to the layer located under the “roof” of general culture. In this context, it seems indicative to single out the “youngest” form of identity, the one which has been least explored so far, namely, subcultural identity. To study this acquired identity, we need to be able to correctly define and classify the terms.

A whole set of “-cultures” has been coined by sociologists to refer to young people. “Youth culture” was first used as a concept by Talcott Parsons (1942) in order to describe a set of professedly unique, distinctive patterns among young people, which emphasised values such as hedonism, consumption, and irresponsibility. Youth culture can take many forms, including music, fashion, art, and sports. It is often characterized by a desire for self-expression and a rejection of traditional social norms and values. Young people may use their style and appearance to differentiate themselves from the older generation and to signal their belonging to a particular subculture or community. Youth is viewed by Parsons as a unitary adolescent subculture transcending all other cultural attachments to home, neighbourhood, or class, expressing an antagonistic relationship to the social order (Muncie 2009). Phil Cohen (1972) saw youth cultural style as a reaction of young people against the circumstances of their time. Style-production was effectively a weapon in the ongoing class struggle. Hence, the word “subculture”, is a responsive, bottom-up initiative against “hegemonic” culture and its values. In line with social identity theory, the categorisation by the outside world of a group as deviant will reinforce this group’s identity (Jenkins 2008).

While youth culture can be seen as a positive force for innovation and creativity, it can also be a source of conflict and tension between generations. Firstly, we should not over-romanticise the intention of “subcultural” groups to resist dominant social norms. On the contrary, Malbon (1998) argues that we need to rethink this “resistance” because it does not necessarily challenge the dominant culture, rather it is located in every day, unnoticeable subtleties, in “routine transgressions” in which notions of identity are constructed rather than given and fluid rather than fixed. It may less be young people’s intention to challenge the mainstream than to carve out a niche for themselves (Hörschelmann 2012).

Secondly, the fragmentation and heterogeneity of growing up, even within a single geographical context, has made the use of blanket terms such as youth culture and subculture untenable: “There is no single defining youth culture, but a diversity of larger and smaller groups that frequent one another for a certain period of time, during which they share several characteristics” (Karsten 2001). Youth culture is not a monolithic entity, but rather a diverse and heterogeneous collection of subcultures, each with their own unique attitudes, values, behaviours, and lifestyles. This heterogeneity is a reflection of the wide range of experiences, identities, and backgrounds of young people around the world. “Young people no longer depend on subcultural affirmations for the construction of their identities but construct lifestyles that are as adaptable and as flexible as the world around them” (Muncie 2009). As

Amit-Talai (1995) suggests, there is now a staggering amount of evidence that requires both a reinterpretation and a redefinition of youth culture. Youth culture can take many different forms, ranging from punk and goth subcultures to hip-hop and skateboard cultures. Each subculture has its own distinct style, music, and symbols that differentiate it from other subcultures and mainstream culture. Instead of seeing young people as a group apart, all sharing the same values, their diversity, and difference need to be acknowledged.

Thirdly, the term divides populations into “inside” and “outside” subcategories, without giving much attention to what happens at the interfaces. Willis (1972) writes that there has not been an efficient analysis of the status of the culture a subculture is supposed to be “sub” to. “The notion implies a relative positioning which seems to give an altogether misleading sense of absoluteness and dominance of the main culture” (Willis 1972). Hannerz (1992), similarly remarks that the term has inched its way into everyday speech, and it has been a greater success socially than intellectually. He speculates if “sub” makes this type of culture simply a segment of a larger culture, or is it something subordinate to a dominant culture, or is it something subterranean and rebellious, or is it substandard, qualitatively inferior? Interestingly, in his criticism of the post-subcultural theory, Blackman (2005) seems to suggest that invisibility is a key component of a subculture, which would make the case for understanding the “sub” as something that refers to a phenomenon that is not noticed by uninterested parties such as law enforcement, media, or politicians.

Thornton (1995) considers subcultures as apolitical groups, arguing that mass media and culture industries are central to subcultural formation. From this viewpoint, it is easy to understand that culture and the understanding of individual and social identity are in a continuous state of fluctuation, change, and development. “The history of the world, rather than moving towards cultural homogenization, has demonstrated the opposite: a trend to cultural differentiation and cultural complexity. With these developments, each individual, especially the young generation, belongs to many cultures – people have multiple cultural identities. Increasingly, one goes through life picking up identities. In this sense, identity is never finished.” (King 1997).

Generally, the young wish to differ from the dominant culture in society and to belong to a certain community with its own way of thinking and living (Becker 2013). This subcommunity is said to have its way of life, dress, music, language, purpose, and behaviour (Becker 2013). The basis for the shaping of a subculture is a common way of life of one social group, not in terms of simple isolation but cultural diversity. A special way of life is based on a specific cultural pattern – certain value systems, ideas, norms and rules of behaviour,

symbol formation and their use, taste, fun, music, appearance, and speech of a particular social group. When it opposes the mainstream or dominant cultural model, this way of life gets transformed into a cultural style, that is subculture. Subcultures are formed within social layers as much as concerning age, professions, free professions, gender, and sexuality (Becker 2013). A sociologically important issue lies in the fact that subcultures indicate the disappearance of the idea of wholeness and announce symbolic violation of the social order. This implies the exertion of resistance through style, the distancing away from man's other or so-called false nature and the coming to the authentic expressive skill and authentic (underground) style (Hannerz 1992). There exist plenty of options the youth can choose from. Since this paper is devoted to hip-hop and rap culture, in the next part we are going to introduce this domain to elucidate the historical and social context of its existence.

### Hip-hop as Youth Culture

Hip-hop, which was originally considered a fad has become a cultural phenomenon influencing not only youth all around the globe but also the global market force. As more and more scholars research the complex and often contradictory landscape of the global hip-hop culture, the race, class, and gender aspects of this cultural practice are being challenged. Throughout urban America, hip-hop has become the standard that many young people live by. It is reflected in their manner of speaking, the way they dress, and the types of music they listen to. Greeson (2009) defines hip-hop culture as “an outgrowth of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, the hip-hop movement represents the African American youth initiative to define itself and construct an urban pedagogy, a way of understanding and renegotiating how life in these urban communities could and should be lived. As a culture, hip-hop deals with music, language, dress style, and politics”. Hip-hop culture has been a platform for political and social activism, providing a voice for marginalized communities and raising awareness of issues such as police brutality, poverty, and inequality. Additionally, Kitwana (2002) suggests that members of the “Hip-hop Generation” have a “distinct view of family, relationships, careers, racial identity, race relations, and politics that differ in part from previous generations” (Rovai et al. 2007). Hip-hop has had a significant impact on youth culture, particularly among black and brown youth, providing a platform for self-expression and a means of social and political engagement. Rose (1994) suggests that “hip-hop is a cultural form that attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutality, truncated

opportunity, and oppression with the cultural imperatives of African American and Caribbean history, identity and community.”

Rap music is the main component of hip-hop culture that is and is a combination of two of the major components; DJing and MCing. Rap music incorporates artists of different genres of hip-hop vocal expression and the music that the artists rap to. Hip-hop culture is a highly accessible, quickly incorporative cultural form that presents information through various forms of media (Rose 1994). The practicing and mastering of hip-hop culture are very accessible and affordable because aspiring rappers do not have to pay for lessons or musical instruments. Anyone can try to write rhymes and rap a cappella, free of charge, therefore, its popularity is on the rise. Oftentimes, the lyrical content of hip-hop is confronting, and in many instances, it includes the glorification of violence, substance use, and gender discrimination. But while many people struggle to look past the profanity, materialism, and high-risk messages often celebrated within mainstream rap music, hip-hop culture at its core, is built on values of social justice, peace, respect, self-worth, community, and having fun.

## American Hip-Hop

### Origin and Development of American Hip-Hop Music

In the late 1970s, hip-hop as a youth subculture emerged from the Bronx in New York City. The term hip-hop is used both for a musical style and a subcultural movement. Although hip-hop's origins were largely unrecorded, its roots lay at the intersection of the political protest movements of Black Nationalism of the early 1970s and the impoverished ghettos of urban America (Henderson 1996). Rap music, perhaps the best-known feature of hip-hop culture, has led the way in this cultural movement. It was the original guardian of the cultural and musical traditions of Latin Americans and African Americans, who at that time were not in the best position in American society. “Rap did for poor blacks in America in the 1980s what reggae had done for the “sufferers” in Jamaica a decade earlier. It got them noticed again and it helped to forge a sense of identity and pride within the local community” (Hebdige 2004). Hip-hop has become a form of self-expression. People wanted to be seen and heard, so this culture began to spread and develop rapidly. Like reggae, the music later found an international audience.

*DJ Kool Herc*, known as the founding father of hip-hop, was hosting parties where he would start experimenting with different records playing concomitantly on multiple turntables. This created music that could play for as long as he wanted. Hence, the first beat production was created from this process. *Herc* started noticing that rhythmically speaking into the microphone sparked something in the crowd, so he invited his friend *Coke La Rock* to be the stage host so *Herc* could focus on mixing the records. During one of these parties, *Coke* rapped his first line “There’s not a man that can’t be thrown, not a horse that can’t be ridden, a bull that can’t be stopped, there’s not a disco that I Coke La Rock can’t rock”. The term hip-hop popped up to describe the rhythm. When the *Sugarhill Gang* created the first hip-hop track ever in 1979, called “Rappers Delight”, the first lines of the lyrics read “I said a hip-hop, hippie to the hippie, the hip, hip a hop, and you don’t stop, a rock it out” (Sugarhill Gang 1979). The term hip-hop has been used interchangeably with rap music ever since.

The greatest popularity of hip-hop was evident in the ghettos, which were the districts of the largest cities where ethnic minorities lived. Hip-hop originally referred to the early stages of hip-hop dance, and it gradually developed into a greater concept. Hip-hop consisted of four, interrelated forms of expression: DJing, breakdancing, graffiti, and rap (Weinstein 2006). In the early years of hip-hop, the actual participants of the arts were referred to by the medium in which they were involved (i.e. taggers, DJs, break-dancers, breakers, or b-boys, and rappers or MCs). The MC of today is defined as a rap artist or rapper. As these arts became more and more popular around New York, the term hip-hop came to define the overall culture related to all four of the mediums (George 1985). Hip-hop culture and the genre of rap must be addressed as well. Rap is a musical genre that is inseparable from hip-hop culture. It is known that the musical genre of rap cannot be considered a genre detached from hip-hop culture, both are interrelated (Escoto 2012). But as *KRS-One*, a notable rap group, stated, “Rap is something you do. Hip-hop is something you live” (Krimms 2000).

“Trying to pinpoint the exact origin of rap is a tricky process that depends on when one acknowledges a particular cultural expression or product as rap. Rap can be traced back to the revolutionary verse of *Gil Scott-Heron*<sup>1</sup> and *the Last Poets*<sup>2</sup>, and even to *Bessie Smith*’s<sup>3</sup> rapping to a beat in some of her blues. We can also quote ancient African oral traditions as the antecedents to various contemporary African-American cultural practices.” (Dyson 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Scott-Heron (1949 – 2011) was an American soul and jazz poet, musician, and author, known primarily for his work as a spoken-word performer in the 1970’s and 1980’s

<sup>2</sup> The Last Poets are several groups of poets and musicians who arose from the late 1960s African-American civil rights movement’s black nationalism.

<sup>3</sup> Bessie Smith (1894 – 1937) was an American blues singer widely renowned during the Jazz Age of the 1920s and 1930s

Hip-hop went relatively unnoticed by the mainstream music and popular culture industries until the late 1970s. Once hip-hop rose in popularity, it quickly became seen as an internal threat to the dominant American culture and social order (Rose 1994). The era of commercial rap music begins with the *Sugarhill Gang*'s "Rapper's Delight" in 1979. After their initial success with the first commercial rap single, rap lyrics began to evolve as artists such as *Grandmaster Flash* and *the Furious Five* addressed social issues affecting the inner city and *Afrika Bambaataa*'s experimentation with the electro-funk musical movement took hip-hop to a global audience. Lyrical content became more geared toward street consciousness with the arrival of the now-defunct Profile Records and Rush Management's *Run-DMC*. Led by Russell Simmons, Def Jam Records was the first major hip-hop label and *Run-DMC* was the first hip-hop artist to attain a crossover white audience during the mid-1980s. Hip-hop's global influence continued to grow with its numerous video appearances on MTV<sup>4</sup> and the production of motion pictures depicting elements of hip-hop culture. During the 1980s, it was discovered that hip-hop music was not just limited to black neighbourhoods and was being consumed in white suburbia. Whereas 1970s and early 1980s hip-hop was typical of its light-hearted lyrics and simple sounds, with the *Beastie Boys* and *Salt-N-Peppa* as shining examples, hip-hop of the 1980s was rawer. West Coast rap music was powered by the gangster lifestyle, with pioneers such as *Ice-T* and Los Angeles' *N.W.A.* who are referred to as the founders of "Gangsta rap". They got nationwide attention and commercial success but also received considerable critique. Tracks like "Fuk the Police" were on top of the charts but were criticised for their aggressive lyrics at the same time, which even evoked the attention of the FBI at some point. The dominance of the gangster rap genre in the early to mid-1990s had caused a shift in label marketing practices, as common practices included highlighting an artist's criminal history in an attempt to bolster street credibility, which would boost record sales. During the current era of rap music, these practices have become obsolete, as artists whose individual criminal histories have not been validated, or have even been fabricated, continue to prosper while posturing themselves in the image of the criminalized Black male. This image continues to drive record sales, which are still primarily being supplied by the white suburban audience. The image and the tone with which people talked about rap music were far from positive, but many other new artists were inspired by the reality raps and started rapping about their own lives, and experiences of social inequity and political oppression. The following decade saw record after record being put out and is now seen as the golden era of hip-hop (Duinker & Martin 2016), with artists like the *Wu-Tang Clan*, *A Tribe Called Quest*,

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<sup>4</sup> MTV (Music Television) is an American cable channel, launched on August 1, 1981



*Slick Rick*, and *Outkast* innovating the style. Hip-hop reached new heights in the 1990s with artists like *2Pac*, the *Notorious B.I.G.*, and *Snoop Dogg*. They helped give a voice to black communities that suffered from political oppression (Iton 2008). Unfortunately, this was also the time when a rivalry started between artists from the East Coast and the West Coast which resulted in the death of *2Pac* and the *Notorious B.I.G.* among many others. Up to this day feuds, or “beefs” as they are called by the artists, are a part of hip-hop. Artists like *Jay-Z*, *Kanye West*, and *Nas* also experienced this, but when they first came up in the 1990s, they were praised for their creative wordplay and revolutionary sound. The genre penetrated the mainstream radio stations in the United States and was spread across other parts of the world by the end of the century. *Eminem* was put on stage by his mentor *Dr. Dre* a few years later. His mesmerising raps made him the most acclaimed white artist up to today. The new millennium began as a logical follow-up to the post-Gangsta rap era. Artist like *50 Cent* and *Puff Daddy* successfully promoted their hardship lifestyle by linking their lyrics to catchy beats. The genre continued to gain popularity as more and more artists were being booked by European festivals, with *Jay-Z* even becoming the first rapper to headline Glastonbury, the world’s largest festival at the time. At the same time, there was room for an alternative kind of hip-hop that did not revolve around the gangster lifestyle. Artists like *Lupe Fiasco* and *Lil Wayne* were pioneers of the skateboard genre. They represented a subculture with clever music about everyday struggles playing with heavy imagery in their lyrics. Whereas the alternatives in hip-hop emerged, mainstream hip-hop was losing support from the fans. The industry began experimenting with new sounds using technologies to make beats and alter vocals. The attempt to modernise hip-hop was not appreciated by everyone. *Jay-Z* responded with a track called “Death of Autotune”, referring to the automated rap voices of artists like *T-Pain*. *Nas* even named his new album “Hip Hop Is Dead” as a comment on the development in the genre. Despite the alleged critical state of the genre, the commercialisation continued successfully. This time, new artists were responsible for this development rather than gangster rappers. *Kanye West* mixed light-hearted lyrics with complex productions and vice versa on his “Graduation”, and *Lil Wayne* sold over one million copies in the first week with “*Tha Carter III*”. They excelled with creative and innovative sound productions using numerous short samples from other tracks to produce beats. A war about copyrights was lurking around the corner but after several lawsuits, it was decided that rappers could now buy samples they want to use. They were no longer limited in their creativity, albeit serious questions were raised about the originality of the music. Meanwhile, in the Southern states, artists invented the subgenre of Trap music, which centred around gritty and rebellious lyrics guided by heavy

kicks and drums (Stelios 2013). The discussion about originality ended when hip-hop legend *KRS-One* concluded the following: “hip-hop didn’t invent anything, but it reinvented everything”.

In the oral tradition of Africans, rap emphasizes the importance of the lyrics, often to tell a story. “Narrativizing takes commonplace anecdotes and rerenders them as fictional or semiautobiographical accounts. These stories intend to explain a point, to persuade holders of opposing views to one’s point of view, and to create word pictures about general, abstract observations about life, love, and survival” (Smitherman 1997). Rap is often produced by Blacks, who also make up the majority of their audience (Dixon & Brooks 2002). Nonetheless, the appearance of Eminem in the late 1990s, as a Caucasian man, becoming the hottest hip-hop star in only one year, completely broke the race question of hip-hop culture. “From the very beginning of its recent history, hip-hop music has faced various obstacles. Initially, rap was deemed a passing fad, a playful and ephemeral black cultural form that steamed off the musical energies of urban black teens. As it became obvious that rap was here to stay, a permanent fixture in black ghetto youth’s musical landscape, the reactions changed from dismissal to denigration, and rap music came under attack from both black and white quarters.” (Dyson 2004)

Originally, hip-hop was a subcultural form with counter-cultural tendencies which ran in the opposite direction of pop culture. However, in the current situation, it has not only become the mainstream culture, an important component, but hip-hop also experiences rapid development. Despite the proliferation of schools of production and performance, many rap records can appear virtually indistinguishable from each other to a new listener. “The market is saturated with repetitive beats and monotonously uncompromising slices of urban street life, to the point that they’ve lost a lot of both their musical novelty and shock value” (Rose 1994). As with all kinds of music, the more popular it becomes, the more likely you are to find both good and bad sides.

### Contemporary American Hip-Hop Music

The Billboard charts, which define the best in music across every genre, and are the most recognised and quoted music rankings in the world, show that rap songs, or songs which feature rap artists, are placed within the top 3 in almost every year since 2002. Nearly 40 years since the dawn of hip-hop, the 2010s was finally the decade when rap outsold rock

music. The Nielsen year-end report<sup>5</sup> said that the great upheaval finally happened in 2017 when hip-hop accounted for eight of the year's Top 10 artists (alongside two pop artists, *Taylor Swift* and *Ed Sheeran* – both influenced by hip-hop). In 2017 it was the year's most popular genre, constituting 24.5% of all music consumption, measured by audio and video streams and album sales (Caulfield 2018). That same year, four of the five Grammy nominees for Album of the Year, and all five for Record of The Year were hip-hop releases.

Throughout the 2010s, hip-hop continued in commercial success. Artists such as *Drake*, *Kendrick Lamar*, and *J. Cole* grew to the forefront with their ability to balance substantial lyrics and mainstream or popular sounds. Simultaneously, rappers from the South of The United States of America, specifically Atlanta, Georgia, began producing a sound that challenged the very notion of lyricism with the likes of *Young Thug*, *Future*, and *Migos*. These styles featured vocals that were allegedly either too fast or too warbled to decipher. This boom in Southern influence as well as the democratization of hip-hop spawned the modern era of hip-hop.

### Mumble Rap

Today's up-and-coming rappers, most rose to fame after encountering success by sharing their music online (with the assistance of social media and outlets such as SoundCloud<sup>6</sup>, YouTube<sup>7</sup>, and the presence of production equipment and software for personal computers), earning themselves the label of "SoundCloud rappers," often with a negative connotation. Their incomprehensible lyrics, basic delivery, and overuse of simple sounds have led to the characterization of this new wave's members as "mumble rappers". The contrast between the old and new generations isn't limited to the complexity of the lyrics though, as both waves also differ in the themes evoked through their respective songs. Mumble rappers, for the most part, centre their music around materialistic and accessible themes such as sex, money, or drugs. Even though their themes can stretch to more complex topics, such as depression and suicide, the new wave is a far departure from the social criticism that old-generation rappers used to express in their songs. It has flavours of rock music and more commercial notes that have resulted in more radio coverage. Often it contains less rapping and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/04/2017-year-end-music-report-us.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> SoundCloud is a European online audio distribution platform and music-sharing website that enables its users to upload, promote, and share audio.

<sup>7</sup> YouTube is an American online video-sharing platform

more elements of singing. The new school contains higher-pitched sounds and voices than other rap styles.

While criticisms of “Mumble Rap” are rampant, many true, comprehensive definitions are not, and its origins are also blurred at best. Some attribute the birth of modern “Mumble Rap” to Chicago artist *Chief Keef* who shocked the world with his abrasive hit “Love Sosa” in 2012 (Iandoli 2016). The track featured *Chief Keef* as his syllables faded into elongated moans. In June of 2013, Atlanta’s *Young Thug* achieved another level of mainstream success and criticism with his contribution to *Rich Gang*’s “Lifestyle”. His vocals on the chorus were, to many, wildly indecipherable, leading to many jokes and critiques on social media and in popular culture (Iandoli 2016). Despite this, HipHopDX’s Justin Hunte (2017) believes Atlanta native *Future* to be the one who started it all with his 2011 hit “Tony Montana”. He cites an interview with Peter Rosenberg where *Future* claims to have been so intoxicated that he could not even open his mouth while making the song.

## Slovak Hip-Hop

### Origin and Development of Slovak Hip-Hop

While Western Europe had enjoyed a variegation of musical genres from the nineteenth century, it was not until the interwar period and following the Second World War that these and other urban styles of popular music made their way to venues in Slovakia. Communist party rule in Czechoslovakia (1948-1989) profoundly retarded the development of popular music in Slovakia. The regime filtered and tried to control popular music which they considered to be a potentially dangerous medium to the ruling principles they attempted to enforce upon the population. The regime also censored all broadcasting from non-Soviet bloc Countries, especially Western Europe and the United States.

On November 17, 1989 inhabitants of former Czechoslovakia made an end to decades of repression from the Soviet Union. The end of the communist party rule enhanced an immediate change in popular music in Slovakia. Nevertheless, the 1990s were characterised by the continuing pre-eminence of performers from the previous decade and the imperfect imitation of newer Slovak artists of Western European and American styles. Gradually, the Slovak hip-hop scene has begun to form.

The first artist generally accepted by the Slovak hip-hop community as a rapper was *Dávid zo Senca* who appeared by the end of the 1980s. He coordinated the establishment of

the first rap group *Zvuk Ulice* (Sound of the Street). We can consider the period between 1984 and 1988 as the beginning of rap music in Slovakia. The first rap release in Slovakia was done by *Rap Steady Crew* from Košice in 1993, followed by *Jednotka slovenskej starostlivosti* (JSS) with their album *Kompromis* in 1997 as well as the duo *Trosky* releasing their record. Long-running crews are *Lúza* and *Drvivá Menšina*, who perform together as *Názov Stavby* with *DJ Hajtkovič. Vec*, formerly of the seminal duo *Trosky*, is considered by many today to be the most influential figure within hip-hop music in Slovakia, although, with time, newer artists appeared such as *Separ*, *H16*, *Čistychov*,

Slovak rap experienced a shift to the mainstream in 2003 when a trio called *Kontrafakt* released a highly popular video clip entitled “Dáva mi” which topped many video charts in Slovakia and Czech Republic, and the video even appeared on MTV. Since *Kontrafakt*’s enthusiastic reception by the young audience in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, significant works by other artists have been released to both critical and public acclaim. The propulsion of Slovak rap towards the position of serious cultural broker has come about primarily due to the style’s distinctive properties and fixations, hence the rap artists’ imperatives to remain sensitive to things such as informative value, their local affiliations, language choice, use of language and thematic preoccupations. *Kontrafakt*’s platinum debut album *E.R.A.* is considered to be one of the albums with “classic” status among Slovak listeners. The most controversial and prominent Slovak rapper and singer *Rytmus*, constituting the third of the trio *Kontrafakt*, is among the best-selling artists in Slovakia and the Czech Republic to date.

Until recently, rap artists used to project an image of a “pan-Slavic” solidarity: *Čistychov* for one affirms his associations with his “Slavic brothers” and *Rytmus* of *Kontrafakt* defiantly states that “the power of Slavic rap is coming up, it will not die out.” Cooperation with other Slavonic-language rap artists is most evident in collaborative tracks which feature and combine Slovak language passages with Czech, Polish, and Russian. The Czecho-Slovak fellowship in rap is particularly strong: as rapper *Dena* of *Drvivá Menšina* has proclaimed, “in unity, there is strength” when a common “Czechoslovak” rap identity is presented. Apart from the appropriation of brief English-language and Romani utterances in Slovak rap, its rapped lyrics appeared without exception in the Slovak language. The employment of a non-native language by an MC was deemed to be a betrayal of the audience and it was considered imperative to artistically present a localised reality. Rapper *Bacil* of *Drvivá Menšina* explained: “In Slovakia, [rap] in Slovak. That is the first step to success.” Despite this loyalty to the Slovak language, there is a constant theme of linguistic rebellion in

Slovak rap. In addition to its thematic fixations and regional dialects, the employment of foul language within Slovak rap sharply differentiates its lyrical content from other forms of Slovak popular music. The inclusion of foul language in Slovak rap is a deliberate means of expressing an MC's deep emotional investment in their lyrical material rather than simply being a form of shock value. Given the centrality of Slovak rap of identification with the "ordinary" members of the youth audience, it is particularly difficult to imagine this popular music style maintaining its emotional potency or popularity without the employment of such language. The common use of Romani words in Slovak rap's lyrical passages presents further evidence that on a symbolic level, Slovak rap is attempting to address Slovakia's most socially excluded citizens and indeed the only members of Slovak society who could be said to be living in "ghetto-like" conditions. While this suggests that Slovak rap artists are traversing ethnic boundaries with their stated alignment towards groups such as the Slovak Roma, such a finding is far from conclusive. For instance, Slovakia's Hungarian language rap scene has no substantial exposure in non-Hungarian speaking areas of Slovakia and appears to cooperate more closely with Hungarian-language hip-hop communities in Hungary and Romania rather than with other Slovak hip-hop networks. Certainly, the Roma presence within Slovak rap is slight. Excluding the significant persona of *Rytmus*, there are no rap artists of Slovak Roma origin claiming a nationwide reputation. Despite the stated aims of rap artists to represent all of Slovakia's citizens, Slovak rap is ultimately a reflection of Slovak society and its seemingly "impenetrable" divisions of ethnicity, culture, and language.

### Contemporary Slovak Hip-Hop

Another revolution in Czecho-Slovak rap came in 2013 when eastern-Slovak group *Haha Crew* released their first track "Rap & Móda" (Rap and Fashion). Their efforts to bring a new kind of sound to the local hip-hop scene escalated to general contempt from protagonists of above mentioned classical Slovak rappers and the audience split into two camps – conservative and progressive. Crew member *Samey* mentions on the beat from his musical partner, producer *Dalyb*, who later evolved into a rapper as well, fashion brands like Givenchy or Bape, which were not adopted by the general public, and several Slovak rappers until the following period. He also mentions the mixing of high fashion and streetwear, which is the preferred style of dressing up among the hip-hop community and especially young people. The group openly manifested their sympathies towards actual American hip-hop trends and disapproved of the domestic nation's hypocrisy with:

*Hejterov sere ten fame, 3XL triko*

Haters are mad about the fame, 3XL tee

<i>Nenosím sukne no dostávam hate,</i>	I don't wear skirts, but they hate me,
<i>držíte piču keď ich má Kanye a to je na smiech</i>	You shut your mouth when Kanye wears them, and that's funny

American influence on *Haha Crew* is unmistakable and along with explicitly naming *Kanye West* in their lyrics, who besides being an established American rapper and record producer is also a fashion icon. Moreover, they use English expressions such as “fame,” “hate” etc. Furthermore, they challenged the definition of the rapper based on his appearance:

<i>To že nenosím baggies<sup>8</sup>, som fake rapper?</i>	I don't wear baggies, am I a fake rapper?
<i>Tak ma tak volaj, no Haha Crew je trendsetter</i>	Then call me so, but Haha Crew is trendsetter

It is justifiable to mention that *Haha Crew*'s 2014 debut album “Vlna” had only one guest, apart from the label's colleague *Gleb*, young talent *6ix9ine* from New York. He was one of the newcomers at the time with his authentic style, which he confirmed in the song “Rollin Stones”. Nowadays, *Tekashi 6ix9ine* is one of the most popular and controversial rappers worldwide. After his early release from jail due to the coronavirus pandemic, his recent music video for “GOOBA” has broken YouTube's record for the most-watched hip-hop video in 24 hours with over 61 million views.

Eventually, the segregation of modern rappers and classical rappers has neutralized. Multiple mutual collaborations from aforementioned *Kontrafakt* members *Ego* and *Rytmus* with *Haha Crew* members can serve as evidence. Slovak “new wave” hip-hop artists, as much as their predecessors from the “old school”, still keep tight bonds between Slovak and Czech Republic in terms of music cooperation. Despite the shared history as one state being long gone, the similarity of the languages keeps these otherwise independent hip-hop scenes connected. In fact, *Haha Crew*'s second hit “F\*ck Swag pt. II” interconnected Slovak crew with Czech *YZO Empire*. Its frontman *Yzomandias* later retransformed *YZO Empire* into the label *Milion+* which provides a creative environment for its Czech members: *Yzomandias*, *Nik Tendo*, *Jickson*, *Hasan*, *Robin Zoot*, *Koky*, and producer *Decky*; as well as for Slovak *Karlo* (former member of *Haha Crew*), *Kamil Hoffman*, beatmaker and rapper *Konex*. Henceforth, the Slovak hip-hop scene commenced experiencing a transformation towards a modernized, global hip-hop that could compete with rap songs on an international level.

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<sup>8</sup> Baggies - baggy jeans

Although the professional careers of *Haha Crew* members later split, *Haha Crew* brought an innovation, not only in terms of self-presentation through the dressing style but primarily in terms of language stylization and linguistic variation.

## Globalization

Globalization is a process thanks to which the relations between the world's nations have become more interdependent. Although globalization is often mistaken as an exclusively economic phenomenon, it is obvious that "humans on all frontiers are being forced either to shift their ideational systems radically and quickly or to live in a thought-world that no longer fits the way their world is" (Keesing & Keesing 1971). This phenomenon touches various domains from the economy, culture, population, trade in goods and services, technology to flows of investment, people, and information. Since the early 1990s, "globalization" has meant a new phase in the global integration of economic, financial, ecological, and cultural phenomena. Its dominance is more and more visible, and it brings certain improvements to one's quality of life as well as new threats. Nevertheless, as Beck states "Threats create a society, and global threats create a global society" (Beck 2000).

But the process is not linear: the First World War and the great depression of the 1930s prompted the rise of state nationalism, a fragmentation of the markets, and the great return of protectionism. Globalization was no longer on the agenda until the Second World War. The Cold War and the building of blocs then froze the world for almost half a century. However, current globalization is already taking place.

Often described as inevitable, globalization represents the hegemony of the American model, but also the increasing desire of the population to discover other cultures and to share its own with other nations. Marshall McLuhan (1992) described the world as a global village, where each actor is interconnected, and where the space-time limits are abolished to allow the sharing of information flows. Keesing and Keesing, (1971) felt that time is more of a social construct in culture, rather than a natural condition. Man has been able to manipulate the flow of time through technical equipment, religious rhythm (the daily prayers of the Muslims), political organization, economy and even ecology. Concepts of time and space differ according to culture and country, social contacts, and personal preferences. Therefore, also the understanding and awareness of globalization differ from person to person according to what region and conditions he lives in. The literature full of conflicting and competing theories can serve as evidence for this statement.



Technological developments that cause the current age to be named “the information age” have also led to improvements in data transfer, information sharing, and information acquisition processes. Technological convergence and digitisation have allowed traditional media to be carried to new types of media thanks to audio, data, and mass communication taking place in the same channel. There is a stark contrast between the forced consumption style and feeling of restriction presented to the audience by traditional media and the feeling of comfort and freedom presented to the new media audience. “Rapid development experienced in communication technologies brings every culture of the world closer to each other. As a result of this, the interaction of every culture of the world with other cultures has increased” (Karacor 2009).

Social media are platforms where all virtual users with internet access can share content, and express opinions about a topic and where communication and interaction processes intensely take place without any time or place limitation. The structural advantages and advanced applications of new communication technologies offer an environment of freedom and ease of content customization. Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Myspace, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are examples of commonly used social networks. Social networks allow people to share their photographs and events with friends and to follow the profiles and events of their friends by creating a digital identity. People create a profile that represents themselves and interact with others aurally, through video, or in written form. Thanks to virtual environments, people can form groups of all sizes (Islek 2012).

### Globalization of Hip-Hop

“[Hip-hop] is now the most important musical idiom: What jazz was from the 1920s to the 40s or rock n’ roll was from the 50s to the 70s, hip-hop has been from the 80s on” (Straus, 2000).

There is a dilemma present within many subcultures in that their inherent opposition to the mainstream is always contradicted by their own growth. In particular, hip-hop culture has always been explicitly rooted in the principles of authenticity and resistance to authority while also becoming a global commercial phenomenon far removed from its origins in urban America. Tradition is very important for hip-hop culture. Every significant phenomenon in creativity arises in the process of crossing traditions and modernity. For each art, the organic sense of modernity is quite important. Each hip-hop representative has his own cultural background, but he respects the traditions of African-Americans. Despite this, the

representatives of hip-hop culture strive to create something new, and fresh, which would reflect their lives and their own needs. Entities as diverse as the U.S. Department of State and National Geographic found that “just about every country on the planet seems to have developed its own local rap scene” (Jackson 2009). Thus, there are such kinds of hip-hop as transnational and hybrids. It appears in the process of mixing forms of self-expression and existing traditions with forms of one’s own culture. This borrowed hip-hop culture is enriched with local cultural dynamics. Consequently, cultural integration is carried out, under which the processed material is processed into a culture of its own values and landmarks.

Hip-hop is continuously gaining recognition as a genre due to the globalization of American pop culture. Ray Browne (2001) characterised popular culture as “a way of life” and the “voice of the people.” The popularity of hip-hop spread quickly to mainstream consumers through movies, music videos, radio plays, and media coverage. According to Mills (2001), the culture of hip-hop “has infiltrated numerous aspects of mainstream white culture (or popular culture) including its fashion, movies, and vocabulary.” It is not, of course, the first popular musical art form to transcend geographical borders. Globalization promotes the meeting of musical cultures, whilst simultaneously encouraging regional differences. Local popular industries perceive their potential audience in international terms, and “local” pop markets are now awash with global sounds, since, as Wallis and Malm (1984) maintain, globalisation encourages popular musical practices to look towards global styles for possible inspiration, whilst also looking inwards to recreate national music styles and forms.

Traditional opinions believe that hip-hop presented as a subculture is characterized by some closeness to certain categories of the population. But there is also a completely contradictory opinion, which is that hip-hop is characterized by openness and it can be influenced by various processes and cultural forms, as it is popular all over the world. With society’s entry into the internet and mass media era, the dynamics of subcultural evolution have dramatically changed, and online cultural content is now capable of being shared on the scale of millions practically instantly. Its popularity has grown due to several important factors.

First, the main factor is the process of globalization of international cultural integration. Secondly, the role of the intensity of cultural exchange intensified, which contributed to the development of hip-hop on a global scale. Globalization directly affects the growth of production rates, as well as the distribution and consumption of certain cultural values.

Another reason could be the freeing artistic nature hip-hop music has on its cultural members. It is also a tool for not only artistic but also political expression since rap music, the verbal medium of hip-hop, allows one to pack a considerable amount of information into the lyrics in comparison to other musical genres. According to McLeod (1999), the nature of hip-hop allows its cultural members to actively engage in social action concerning their community and society as a whole. More and more people are using hip-hop to communicate their specific cultural narrative through songs. Though there are geographical borders that separate hip-hop cultural members, the collective concept of hip-hop as an emancipatory source of expression remains unified around the world.

Part of the uniqueness of hip-hop's growing presence can be attributed to the rise of global media networks. Hip-hop became a commercial direction and acquired features of a global commodity and economic product. And because hip-hop is not just music – it is also attitude and culture - these global media companies partner with fashion labels, beverage brands, and sports franchises to sell a total hip-hop lifestyle. From *Travis Scott's* Super Bowl 53 halftime show, one of the biggest showcases in American music, to rappers doing collaborations with sneaker brands. The outcome is oftentimes very valuable. Some of the most expensive sneakers ever made are those done in collaboration with rappers. For instance, *Drake's* Solid Gold OVO x Air Jordans shoes are worth astronomical two Million Dollars.

Another key element that is helping spread the hip-hop culture is the Internet. Through the development of information technology, access to hip-hop makes it much easier and therefore, it can capture the international youth community. The shift towards hip-hop also has a lot to do with changes in listening habits. 2017 was the year when streaming became the preferred form of consuming music, and online platforms favoured hip-hop. Spotify was introduced as a streaming platform in 2011, and streaming revenue eventually overtook physical sales in 2017. At the moment, paid streaming services (including Spotify, Apple Music, and others) account for 80 per cent of the music industry's revenue. Apple Music has joined Spotify as a global player, while video-focused YouTube has also launched a subscription music service. The variety of material on YouTube has made it one of the most populated internet sites: with radio and MTV long gone as promotional outlets, it has become a platform for discovering new talents.

## Global Language

The world has always been full of numerous nationalities, and consequently, numerous languages. The dream of a perfect world where everybody spoke the same language and, thus, could understand each other's feelings and ideas without any communication barriers has been present for a long time. Depending on the historical period, the world has had many accepted languages for international communication. Egyptian in the Ancient Egyptian Empire, Ancient Greek in the Greek colonies, the Hellenic world and the Macedonian Empire, Latin in the Roman Empire and the Catholic world, Classical Chinese during the Imperial era of Chinese history, Sanskrit during the ancient and medieval historical periods, Russian during USSR, and, finally English in the modern era. From this, we can deduce that the most important factor for a language to become global has been the power, the power of the language bearers, who intended to spread their rule over the weaker or less developed nationalities.

English, which is a language with a fixed sentence order, quite a complicated grammar, non-phonetic spelling, and accompanying cultural values, has become the closest to the idea of the international language. The importance of the English language today can be easily shown by the following figures. According to Statista, an online portal for statistics, there are around 1,500 million people worldwide who speak English, of whom only 375 million are native speakers. The most important factor for English to gain so many people is that English has influential native speakers. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, especially the latter, are nowadays considered to be a couple of the most powerful and influential countries in the world when it comes to the size of the economy, military power, and media influence. The United States of America was also the place where hip-hop music originated. Therefore, the omnipresence and dominance of English in this musical genre worldwide is very perceptible.

With the popularity of hip-hop music on the rise, the impact of this genre's original language on other world languages surges. Tsuda (2008) labelled the English language as English hegemony. According to Tsuda (2008), English hegemony is a situation where the dominance of English threatens and kills other languages, especially the weaker and smaller ones around the world. In fact, some of the languages became endangered and dead languages in some parts of the world. Nettle and Romaine (2000) noted that almost 6,000 to 7,000 languages worldwide had disappeared over the past 500 years. They claimed the number of

language disappearances is increasing faster these days. Tsuda expressed concerns that the dominance of English over other languages may and will cause “discrimination, injustice, and inequalities among those who speak it and those who do not and cannot write or speak English”. To a certain extent, this scenario is already occurring. For example, people are required to have very good English skills when they apply for jobs. In other words, it discriminated against those who want to apply for jobs but cannot write or speak English. Another example, as continued by Tsuda, is that almost 86 % of people around the world learn English as a foreign language. These people are likely to have a position that is more prestigious when they have more competence in English than their native language.

In contrast, English is seen as a connective instrument that links people worldwide. This language unites and connects all the people around the world regardless of their cultures, nationalities, beliefs, and countries. Crystal (2003) strongly believed that English turns and makes the big world into a small village. In short, English as a global language has united and connected all people worldwide in terms of communication. People around the world can share cultural understandings such as norms, values, and beliefs through English as a medium of communication. In this way, it can at least decrease and minimize cultural misunderstandings among people around the world. However, the language, as well as the values promoted by members of subcultures, for example, hip-hop culture, are not always compatible with those found in the language of the dominant culture.

## Hip-Hop Language

### Contemporary American Hip-Hop Language

“Everything that hip-hop touches is transformed by the encounter, especially things like language... which leaves [itself] open to constant redefinition.” (Jay-Z 2010).

For illustration purposes, we made a selection of suitable rap artists and songs, which will be detailed further in the paper. This part is concerned mainly with the description of grammar, phonetics and thematic context within the language of contemporary American rappers. However, the selection of specific artists is not haphazard. Certain songs contain at least one instance of phonemic readjustment. Considering geographical norms, all rappers are of North American origin. A time criterion is concerned with the year of production of the selected rap songs which is from 2010 upwards. The hip-hop culture is influenced by and reacts to the time period and the social atmosphere in which it is based. Therefore, the

verbalization of rappers adjusts as well. To keep the work relevant and actual, we are going to analyse only the last decades' American rappers' language, also informally called "new school" or "new wave" rappers or even titled by derogatory denomination "mumble rappers". Also, an important factor for the research is that only artists whose songs have been within the top 100 of the Billboard Hot chart at some point were chosen. It was decided to include the most listened artists and exclude the unpopular ones because of mass appeal. It is logical that the more popular the artist, the greater the influence on the public he has, in this case - influencing language and pronunciation trends. Thus, choosing popular rappers for research and analysis makes it more relevant and important than studying unpopular artists. The list of artists includes: *21 Savage*, *Future*, *Gucci Mane*, *Kodak Black*, *Lil Uzi Vert*, *Desiigner*, *Young Thug*, *Blueface*, *Lil Baby*, *Cardi B*, *Travis Scott*, rap group *Migos* consisting of rappers *Quavo*, *Offset* and *Takeoff*. The transcripts for the lyrics of the hip-hop audio tracks have been gathered from one source in order to keep the variety of mannerisms in transcribing song lyrics as minimal as possible. The source is called "Genius"<sup>9</sup>. It is a freely available database which can be accessed through an internet website and within which one can get a hold of song lyrics transcriptions and any other information about the songs and artists for almost every song that has been released for purchase and use to the public. Today, it is the most popular website for obtaining popular song lyrics amongst hundreds of other lyric websites, and for that reason, it has been chosen as the main source for rap song lyrics transcriptions for this analysis.

Hip-hop culture has now been around for several decades, originating in Bronx neighbourhoods, spreading across the USA and gaining popularity in countries around the world, but linguists have only begun to document the language associated with it. Most of that work explores the relationship of hip-hop language in rap music lyrics to African American English syntactic, discourse, and lexical features (Smitherman 1997). Less attention has been paid to hip-hop language use in everyday interaction, the regional language variation around the world, and processes of identity formation among hip-hoppers. Researchers often use the term "language" to describe the linguistic variety associated with hip-hop although it does not constitute a language in the true sense, but rather a "language style". Notably, in consideration of the fact that hip-hop language is highly variable and transitory as Morgan (1993) has pointed out. Coupland (2001) has described styles as tools for "persona management" or ways in which people choose to present themselves in various situations. Eastman and Stein (1993)

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<sup>9</sup> [www.genius.com](http://www.genius.com)

further discuss the concept of “language display” in which members of one group employ linguistic cues from another group in order to be seen as individuals with attributes associated with that community of speakers.

Whether a style is typically associated with one’s own social group (in-group) or with a group one does not belong to (out-group), its deployment sends a message by indexing the conventionalized social meanings associated with it (Coupland 2001). Thus, for example, white hip-hop artists may engage in a sort of “out-group” usage of linguistic elements of hip-hop language to index the more masculine, “streetwise” identities commonly associated with young urban African American males (Cutler 2002).

The language associated with hip-hop is rooted in African American English communicative practices (Morgan 1993), and it is just one of many language varieties used by African Americans. It is widely spoken across the country and is used, borrowed and transformed by African Americans and non-African Americans in and outside the United States of America (Alim 2004).

## Phonetics

In order to look deeper into the peculiarities of the pronunciation of American rappers, the issue of accent must be addressed first. Languages have different accents which means that pronunciation depends on age groups, education, social class and even the slightest geographical variations, with American English being no exception (Roach 1991). General American English is the standard accent of American English (Crystal 2003). American variants of English run deep in number, ranging from mainstream dialects to creoles or pidgins. Hip-hop was born in African-American communities and as such is founded in variants of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). It should be noted that there are numerous variants within AAVE itself and that AAVE is not a monolith. There is no standard of pronunciation for AAVE but it is clear that it features a lot of phonetic reduction. However, there remain a few notable characteristics that are consistent throughout many variants and dialects (Wolfram 2016). AAVE features phonetic reduction, perhaps most prominently in consonant cluster reduction. Often, final consonant clusters are reduced when preceding a vowel, such as in *trus*’ [trʌs] instead of *trust* [trʌst]. Middle and final *r* gets reduced as in *aight* [aɪt] instead of *alright* [ˌɔlˈraɪt] and *cah* [ka:] instead of *car* [kɑr]. With final position nasals, reduction causes the preceding vowel to become nasalized as in *mae*’ [mæə] instead of *man* [mən]. Furthermore, *s* in a final position is absent when used to denote a third-person

present tense verb, as in *he talk* instead of *he talks*; possession, as in *man dog* instead of *man's dog*; and plurality, as in *many time* instead of *many times*. AAVE also allows phonetic “relaxations” that are both accepted in standard and mainstream dialects, such as *coulda* or *hafta* instead of *could have* or *have to*, and relaxations that are criticized and found incorrect. These relaxations include the substitution of *skr* for *str*, as in *skreet* instead of *street* and even the metathesis, or rearrangement of sounds, found in *aks* instead of *ask*.

Observing the latest rap tracks, it seems that in frequent cases the pronunciation of some words can alter quite drastically to sustain a fluent rhyming and rhythmical pattern of the song, even though in regular speech and General American pronunciation, the lyrics would not share an identical or similar rhyme domain. In other words, rap artists tend to readjust the conventional pronunciation in such a way that two hardly or non-corresponding sequences would function as a rhyming pair. This effort of similarity strictly relies on psychoacoustic information and is governed by the principle of maximizing the psychoacoustic similarity between two elements. According to Kawahara (2007), psychoacoustics is the perceived similarity between sounds based on detailed acoustic information. Steriade (2003) states that speakers are aware of perceptual distances that occur between two phonological elements and by regarding that knowledge, they aim to minimize the perceptual imbalance of two relative elements in phonology. Kawahara (2007) has discovered that many works of other scholars regard psychoacoustic similarity as an important part of shaping phonological patterns which include the patterns of verbal art as well. This pronunciation alternation is demonstrated in *Young Thug's* song “Power” where he pronounces the word *taxi* as [tæks] instead of [tæksi]:

*I met Alex, I know Jimmy, he got racks<sup>10</sup> (Skrrt, skrrt)*

*Yeah, yeah, bitch I'm bleedin' like a tat<sup>11</sup> (Yeah, yeah)*

*Roll it, roll it for me on ya back (Roll it, roll it)*

*Just for show my diamonds yellow like a taxi (Woo, woo)*

## Semantics

Critics of popular contemporary hip-hop often point out a decline of lyricism in mainstream contemporary music (Bradley 2017). We are not going to evaluate or defend the

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<sup>10</sup> Racks - money, usually in thousand dollar amounts.

<sup>11</sup> Tat - tattoo



semantic value of lyrics to keep this work as objective as possible. Instead, we will try to elucidate the viewpoint of the artists during the process of music making.

While the meaning of rap music has traditionally been found in the content of the lyrics of a song, it can also be found in a lyric's manner of vocal production. Many modern mainstream hip-hop artists seem to have prioritized conveying meaning through their delivery and flow, or cadence and rhythm, over doing so through their lyrics (Morel 2017). In other words, the semantic value of lyrics has moved from the lyrics themselves to their manner of vocal production. This is not to say modern popular hip-hop music is devoid of any lyrics with intent or substantial meaning; there still exist mainstream artists such as *Kendrick Lamar* who can deliver meaning through both lyrical content and vocal production. However, many popular contemporary hip-hop artists claim their focus is more on how they say something than what they say. The sounds themselves function as the central part of rap music which can provide information associated with rhyme schemes and vocal delivery. This vocal delivery can be characteristic of different rappers, as MCs often boast of the uniqueness and superiority of their rhyming style (Hirjee 2010). In Rosenberg's interview with *Future*, the Atlanta rap star explained his thoughts on ambiguous vocal production. For *Future*, the ambiguity in a given production is what adds new meaning to the lyric. He compared the experience of hearing a variant production to that of seeing a compelling piece of art, suggesting that it is the experience of audition which provides semantic value for the auditor.

*“But I loved it! [...] Because like you say, when I freestyle something it-I be-I KNOW it’s a little something that you can’t really understand but it’s that that make you feel like you like it. That’s what you like it for. [...] Just the moment, a moment of just a phrase, just changes your whole perspective of the way you look at somebody - and people forget that. They get caught up in other things, but that’s what it is. You know what I’m saying? It’s graffiti on the wall. A good picture, just a word. [...] and you being able to see it in the right spot. Somebody just put a graffiti sign on the main highway of New York, man, they just get praise for that. You know what I’m saying? That’s what it’s all about to me – that’s art.” - Future (Hunte 2017).*

In the hip-hop of nowadays, it appears that the semantic value of a word or phrase has been subordinated by the utterance's contextual semantic meaning. Typically, we construe an understanding through the meaning of the words of a given lyric, but here we are more so to construe understanding from how the words are said. While delivery, the way one produces a lyric, has always been a key component of rapping, it has today become just as much the

vessel for relaying meaning as the delivered words themselves. As such, this new generation of hip-hop artists has innovated upon and transcended the traditional means of conveying semantic meaning through their music. This form of communication Darrin Flynn, an associate professor of linguistics at the University of Calgary, described it as “spontaneous speech” rather than rhyming, metaphor-laden poetry (Morel 2017). Flynn finds many of the usual linguistic points of interest in the raps of *Young Thug* - encrypted slang, elaborate similes, the particular reductions of a spoken dialect, double entendres, and cross-referencing - but he also believes that the difficulty of understanding the lyrics offers additional insight into the cadence of how people really speak (Morel 2017) adding to the uniqueness of the experience whilst listening. The “deliberate slurring” of *Young Thug*’s lyrics means his listener has to figure out what he means. In other words, *Young Thug* is not making music that you have to unravel in terms of meaning, he is just trying to generate some sort of feeling, and the feeling is the meaning.

Apparently, the artists are aware of their attribution of meaning. As traditional hip-hop artists consciously placed semantic value in their lyrics through the means of literary device, wordplay, or storytelling, modern hip-hop artists do so through their manner of vocal production. We can conclude that “mumble rapping” is the result of emotion in speech and hence intonation, pitch range, and enunciation energy are higher in “Mumble rap” tracks than in lyrical rap tracks.

## Themes

Throughout history, a diverse variety of rap styles were alternated, ranging from gangster rap and trap through mainstream, new school, and mumble rap. As the social atmosphere changes in each epoch, also the topics discussed in the songs are slightly altered, although the essence of hip-hop is preserved. In this part, we are going to examine the themes commonly found in the lyrics of contemporary artists.

## Boasting

Nowadays rappers’ thematic ambit includes “boasting” and it is exactly what it sounds like it is – bringing to light the superior skills in rhyming or toasting, whether it be truth or exaggerated (Perkins 1996). Rap also functions as a means of affirming and constructing individual identities for rap artists. This identity may border on narcissism and materialism that brags of its record sales and material possessions, but it is also a key mode of assertion in

an environment hostile to any form of African-American self-expression. Since rap music finds much of its form rooted in self-expression, boasting is an important aspect. Modern rappers prominently use visual displays of boasting, such as material goods or style of dress (Cummings 2002). The chorus of *21 Savage*'s "X" is dedicated to the action of "boasting" whilst employing equivalents of this term such as "stuntin" and "flexin'". In this case, he is boastfully displaying his accomplishments to his former girlfriend.

*Hah (Hah) I'm just stuntin' on my ex-bitch (Hah)*

*Huh (Hol' up) I'm just flexin' on my ex-bitch (Hah)*

#### Misogyny and Hyper-sexualization

As a genre, hip-hop music has faced heavy criticism for its supposed glorification of misogyny. In their study on misogyny in rap music, Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) found that misogyny was present in 22% of the 403 rap songs they sampled from all rap albums from 1992-2000 that attained platinum status. They chose this period because it had not been previously researched, and they began in 1992 because it was when the genre "Gangsta rap" began to flourish, a genre with a reputation for misogyny. Their sample ended in 2000, a crucial year marking a move towards commercialization of the hip-hop. The authors found five themes of misogyny in their songs: derogatory naming and shaming of women, sexual objectification of women, distrust of women, legitimization of violence against women, and celebration of prostitution and pimping (Weitzer and Kubrin 2009). Nevertheless, women play an essential role also in modern rap lyricism as well. A woman is expected to look beautiful and be sexual, with an emphasis on revealing clothing and sexualized behaviours. In many rap videos both past and present we see "scantly clad women surrounding men" (Perry 2004). Women are also "commodified, they appear in the videos quite explicitly as property the men are able to buy due to their wealth" (Perry 2004). The approach to women can vary, depending on what kind of role they play in a rapper's life. Rappers depict women as objects of violence or male domination by communicating that "submission is a desirable trait in a woman" (Stankiewicz & Rosselli 2008). These misogynistic themes first emerged in hip-hop songs in the late 1980s and are especially apparent today with women being portrayed as sex objects and victims of sexual violence (Russo & Pirlott 2006). When a woman is perceived only as a sexual object, the connotations are often pejorative, utilizing expressions like "hoe," "thot," "slut," or "bitch" as seen on the track "Bad and Boujee" by *Migos*:

*Fuckin' on your bitch, she a thot, thot (Thot)*

However, the term “bitch” is oftentimes used in neutral or even positive contexts to describe a woman.

*My bitch is bad and boujee (Bad)*

In this relation, the adjective “bad” refers to positive qualities meaning “sexy” or “good-looking” as opposed to standard meaning. By observation, we can assume that the possessive pronoun preceding the woman reference usually determines the context (*my* - positive, *your* - negative). The rap music is saturated with misogynistic lyrics that hypersexualize and give little to no respect to women and these lyrics run contrary to the progression of gender equality in the world. Still, the lyrical themes of objectifying women have not changed with the rise of female rappers in mainstream rap. While some counter the degradation of women with messages of their own gender power, the most popular female rappers such as *Nicki Minaj* and *Cardi B* hyper-sexualize their brand to appeal to the established norm of the genre. For example, *Cardi B* on *Blueface*’s “Thotiana” she hypersexualizes her body by likening her genitalia to drugs or saying she swallows seminal fluid instead of using another form of contraceptive:

*Take him to the crib, then I push him on the sofa (Sofa)*

*Have his breath smellin' like pussy and mimosas<sup>12</sup> (Ah, ah, ah)*

*Uh, we ain't finished, tell him beat it up (Beat it up)*

*And if the pussy stop breathin', give it CPR<sup>13</sup> (CPR, hah, hah)*

*It's so tight, he think he slipped in my butt (Slipped in my butt)*

*I don't swallow Plan B<sup>14</sup>, I just swallow the nut (Uh, nasty)*

*Pussy dope<sup>15</sup>, I'm the dope dealer*

Rose (2004) believes that women rappers’ lyrics are just as likely as their male counterparts to present anti-feminist notions of sexuality, heterosexual courtship, and body images. However, she also asserts that music videos and performances for female artists

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<sup>12</sup> Mimosa – a cocktail composed of sparkling wine and chilled citrus juice

<sup>13</sup> CPR - cardiopulmonary resuscitation

<sup>14</sup> Plan B - an emergency contraceptive pill designed to help prevent pregnancy after having unprotected sex

<sup>15</sup> Dope – drug

create opportunities to express sexual freedom, independence and in some cases explicit domination of men.

### Material Wealth

Another resounding topic in rap lyrics is material wealth. The most encompassing definition of materialism comes from a cohesion of two definitions: “the importance people attach to owning worldly possessions” (Solomon 1996), “which includes holding the belief that more possessions lead to more happiness” (Chan and Prendergast 2007). Since most rappers have come out of the impoverished inner cities, many consider the money and possessions earned as a rapper a vehicle for leaving their poor circumstances (Keyes 2002). Other possessions such as particular cars, jewellery, and specific types of dress, all come to symbolize the success of a rapper. Whether it is happiness, success, a better self-image, respect, independence, or fashion, people use their wealth to fill the gap between “extreme want” and “extreme happiness”. Kubrin (2005) found that possessing material wealth also leads to establishing a self-image and gaining respect. Although there is not a plethora of literature on the connection between wealth and rap music, we can draw the messages directly from the lyrics.

*First, you get that money then you get that power*

*If he tune his nose up, boy he on that powder*

*Now you walk around with 50 in your trousers*

*Diamonds boolin’<sup>16</sup> on my chest, no fuckin’ blouser*

Young Thug expresses in his song “Power” the idea that money brings power as he walks around with \$50,000 in his trousers and a diamond chain around his neck to show off his wealth and success.

### Gang references and violence

Although hip-hop culture’s language is very unique, the profanity and violence that exists in some of its lyrics disturb many adults (Dyson 1993). However, just as other music forms are not homogeneous, neither is rap music. It is far too simplistic to portray rap artists as perpetrators of behaviour deemed socially deviant without placing the artists and their life

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<sup>16</sup> Boolin’ - chillin’

experiences in context. Even though some hip-hop songs appear to advocate for a peaceful co-existence, some rap lyrics openly discuss aggressive behaviour as a part of an exciting lifestyle (Cook-Wilson et al. 2016). All sorts of antisocial behaviours, or activities considered reprobate by predominant cultural norms (e.g., shooting police officers or rival gang members) are explicitly expressed in rap music. 21 Savage's "Nothin New" is a suitable example:

*They thought I only rapped about murder and pistols (21)*

*I'm tryna feed my family, I ain't being political (Fuck)*

*[...]*

*Police gunned his brother down, this shit too hard to handle (Fuck)*

*Loadin' up his chopper<sup>17</sup> (Loadin'), he gon' show 'em black lives matter (21, 21, 21)*

Negative themes of criminal activity and violence must be understood in the context of themes relating to justice. Negative behaviours and criminal activity are a response to a negative reality, not a result of a bad culture in urban communities. Hip-hop artists may use these topics as a method of dealing with the realities of their lives in an urban poor environment which gave them few other options, due to concentrated poverty, racism, and other structural factors. Poor urban environments have greater opportunities for crime due to motivated offenders who cannot find monetary success in legitimate jobs, and they have suitable targets with a greater concentration of people and criminal hotspots. 21 Savage in *Metro Boomin's* "Don't Come Out the House" describes the conditions he was raised in, his gang membership as well as mentioning the fact that he committed his first homicide when he was only thirteen years old:

*13, got my first stripe, nigga (First stripe)*

*Glenwood Road, where they shiest<sup>18</sup>, nigga*

*Slaughter Gang so I keep a knife, nigga*

*We was broke so all we ate was rice, nigga*

Not all violence is equal. In the case of violence perpetuated on youth by police, artists may be crying out for justice. On the other hand, promoting gang members to kill rival gang

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<sup>17</sup> Chopper – automatic weapon

<sup>18</sup> To shiest – to hustle

members may be a qualitatively different type of expression. The larger point is that without critical dialogue with the creators of rap music and its genre, it is difficult if not impossible for outsiders to place lyrics in the intended context.

A quick, deep dive into the history of gangster rap shows that the style is mainly used to send a message. The War on Drugs, which was led by President Nixon to fix the country's apparent drug problem, instead terrorized the lives of Black and Brown people. Groups like *N.W.A.* depicted how wrongfully they were being treated with songs such as "Fuk the Police" and "Straight Outta Compton". The claims were that they were profiled as gang members because they fit a certain look. However, no one in the group was an active gang member.

Today, in the mainstream music world, people are willingly showing their gang ties. The rapper's name *Blueface*, for instance, relates to the notable gang of Crips and he even has a song titled "Respect My Cryppin'". The group, which is largely African American, is traditionally associated with the colour blue. Crips, a street gang based in Los Angeles is involved in various illegal activities, notably drug dealing, theft, extortion, and murder. The Crips gained national attention for their bitter rivalry with the Bloods. *Lil Baby* is another popular artist who identifies with the Crips. We can see the indication in the track "Southside" where he applauds his fellow gang member.

*Shout out Deezy and them locs<sup>19</sup> who cripin' on the Southside*

There are also plenty of acts that represent the opposite affiliation: the Bloods gang. The gang is traditionally associated with the colour red. Members of this group, especially rappers, renounce using the letter "c" at the beginning of words as it can be regarded as an allusion to the Crips gang. *Young Thug*, a Bloods gang member, made it clear in his track "Check" where he purposefully corrected himself after using the word "crack":

*If cops pull up, I put that crack in my crack*

*Or I put that brack in my brack*

Despite the perpetual antagonism between the two gangs, collaborations in terms of music production are not uncommon. For instance, *Young Thug* has collaborated with Crips artists like *Gunna* and *Lil Baby*. In addition, *Blueface* made a song titled "Thotiana" with Bloods rapper *Cardi B*. The music video for "Thotiana" stylistically plays on the two opposing gangs, with the red and blue colour theme and bandana prints. The video shows

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<sup>19</sup> Loc – fellow Crip gang member

Bloods and Crips coming together, which offers an idealistic and positive approach to gang problems from both of these rappers.

#### Illicit Drugs and Mental Health

Since the 1980s, rappers have referenced substance use in lyrics. Some have paid homage to drug use and its euphoric benefits. Others have expressed concern about drug culture, emphasizing the negative consequences, including addiction. Although many rappers in the 1980s warned of the dangers of drug use, a new wave of rap artists in the 1990s associated drugs such as marijuana with creativity, wealth and social status. One of the first rap artists to celebrate marijuana use was *Cypress Hill*, whose 1991 debut album included “Stoned Is the Way of the Walk” and “Light Another.” Around this time, rap songs praising marijuana use began to experience commercial success. However, rappers who have glamorized marijuana use often fail to mention its consequences which include short-term memory loss, hallucinations and psychosis. Long-term use of the drug has been linked to temporary paranoia, suicidal thoughts and worsening symptoms of schizophrenia. Despite its health risks, marijuana continues to be championed by rappers today.

In the 2000s, Xanax, ecstasy and codeine pervaded rap culture. Ecstasy is a frequently referenced drug in rap music. This synthetic drug contains mood-altering properties that produce feelings of pleasure, warmth and energy. Also known as Molly and MDMA, the drug often shows up at nightclubs and concerts. References to codeine, a drug repeatedly cited in music arose over the last decade. In recent years, a trend within the rap community has involved mixing codeine-based cough syrup with soda and candy to produce a drug cocktail called “sizzurp,” also known as “purple drank,” or “lean”. Codeine misuse can cause shallow breathing, hallucinations or confusion, low cortisol levels and seizures. Mixing codeine with prescription cough syrup can result in nervous system or respiratory depression.

*Money keep a nigga motivated*

*Molly<sup>20</sup> keep a nigga motivated*

*Percocet<sup>21</sup> keep ‘em motivated*

*Good drank keep a nigga motivated*

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<sup>20</sup> Molly - MDMA

<sup>21</sup> Percocet - prescription painkiller containing Oxycodone and Acetaminophen



Xanax is a benzodiazepine that is used to treat anxiety and panic disorders. The drug slows brain activity, helping people feel relaxed. Contemporary rap artist *Future* mentioned his drugs use in numerous songs, claiming it to have a positive impact on his life, for instance, to keep him motivated. In his track “56 Nights,” the rap star claims to have taken 56 Xanax pills in a month.

*I took fifty-six bars all in one month nigga and I'm still drinking*

Substance abuse and mental health issues are intertwined with rappers' lifestyles. Young rapper *Lil Peep* was found unresponsive in his tour bus before his show. His music covers topics ranging from depression and suicide to benzodiazepine use. Police believe that he might have overdosed on Xanax. Before his death, *Lil Peep* talked about his depression in an interview with Pitchfork where he stated:

*“Some days I'll be very down and out, but you won't be able to tell, really, because I don't express that side of myself on social media,”* he said. *“That's the side of myself that I express through music.”*- Lil Peep

Gonzales (2017) believes that artists have opened up about mental illness, which often co-occurs with addiction. Mainstream rappers have spoken candidly about topics such as anxiety and depression to raise awareness and eliminate stigma. This evolution in rap music may be one that benefits society.

## Fashion

Fashion and hip-hop are not stagnant ideas. They are constantly in flux, evolving in ways bold and barely perceptible. Both of them are always aiming to be in line with that ineffable quality of being “cool”. Producer and filmmaker Sacha Jenkins, director of the hip-hop fashion documentary “Fresh Dressed” said for Los Angeles Times that “Fashion has always been an important part of the hip-hop identity because fashion has always been an important part of black identity in America. Because when you don't have much ownership over where you can land in society, your financial situation, your educational situation, the one thing you can control is the way you look.” (Berlinger 2018)

Hip-hop fully embraced consumption and capitalism from the start, seeing dressing up as its own competition and every rapper boasted he dressed better than the rest. Hip-hop

culture has had the biggest influence on street culture, informing plenty of the style trends and clothing brands that rose to prominence. In just a few decades, it evolved from a fringe subculture to the most dominant force in pop culture. The idea of remix culture has been a core tenet of hip-hop music, taking existing musical motifs and mixing them together to forge a new sound. That ideology has extended to the genre's visual presentation as well. In hip-hop, it is common to wear high-end clothes mixed with oversized sportswear items. Mixing high and low, ironic and serious is now the industry standard and, in many ways, it reflects a world defined by the randomness of life in the internet age.

As early as 2011, when rapper *A\$AP Rocky* broke out with “Peso,” he was bragging “Raf Simons, Rick Owens<sup>22</sup>, usually what I’m dressed in”. His 2013’s debut album features an ode titled “Fashion Killa” which is little more than a directory of high-fashion brands (27 in total). Another *A\$AP Mob* track, “RAF,” featuring *A\$AP Rocky*, his affiliate *Playboi Carti*, and the *Migos’ Quavo* refers to the Belgian fashion designer Raf Simons and is ideally designed to demonstrate how tightly certain prominent strands of contemporary rap have woven themselves into the world of high fashion. All of the featured artists have made themselves known as style icons, referencing chic foreign brands and designers in their verses with the same frequency that they are seen wearing them. Of course, these rappers are not the only ones. A lot of contemporary rappers specifically name designer brands in their lyrics. *Travis Scott* has a song called “High Fashion” where he compares fashion brands to drugs.

*Maison Margiela*<sup>23</sup> blunts<sup>24</sup>, *Louis Vuitton*<sup>25</sup> double cups<sup>26</sup>

*Designer drugs, you get seamed up if it tastes cut*

For the past twenty years, two central themes in rap have been having money and finding ways to show it off. Therefore, it makes sense that certain artists gravitate toward the realm of European high fashion, which is exclusive, distinctive, expensive, and until recently had been inaccessible, unimaginable, and above all unaffordable. For instance, rapper *Gucci Mane* literally named himself after an Italian luxury brand. *Lil Uzi Vert*’s “Canadian Goose,” aside from its title, has several fashion brands references enclosed:

*Ayy, I need Canadian Goose*<sup>27</sup>, yeah (Huh)

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<sup>22</sup> Rick Owens, is an American fashion designer

<sup>23</sup> Maison Margiela is a French luxury fashion house

<sup>24</sup> Blunt - cannabis rolled with the tobacco-leaf

<sup>25</sup> Louis Vuitton is a French fashion house

<sup>26</sup> Double cup – codeine served in two stacked styrofoam cups

*I need to get a Moncler<sup>28</sup>, yeah (I do)*

*Diamonds so cold need some soup (What?)*

*Driving around in a what? (Skrr)*

*Saint Laurent<sup>29</sup> all on my boots (Yeah, what?)*

*Saint Laurent all on my boo (Yeah, yeah)*

*Two thousand dollar a tooth (Ayy)*

Hip-hop artists have learned quickly that making music is just one small part of their cultural imprint and that every man is a brand. Plenty of rap artists have attempted to create their own clothing line. Rapper *Kanye West*, who started fashion trends such as backpacks, shutter shades, leather joggers, and all-red sneakers, has evolved into a new frontier of clothing design. The streetwear brand, which sells clothing and sneakers in partnership with Adidas, was valued at \$3 billion by Bank of America in 2019. *West* is the brand's sole owner, according to Forbes. Forbes estimates that Yeezy alone adds \$1.26 billion to the rapper's personal net worth. His Yeezy line features a heavy emphasis on toned-down colours and basic designs with small detail. The bare designs and muted colouring have pushed hip-hop streetwear into a new phase. Multiple tracks dedicated to this brand were made from fellow artists such as "New Yeezys" by *Famous Dex* or "Yeezy Sneakers" by *Lil Wayne*, which remixes *Kodak Black* and *XXXTentacion*'s 2017 song "Roll in Peace" where *Wayne* portrays *West* as a god by transforming *Kodak Black*'s original lyrics "He don't even believe in Jesus, why you got a Jesus piece?" to "And you don't even believe in Yeezus, why you wearin' Yeezy sneakers?"

## Grammar and Syntax

Some scholars have written that the grammar of hip-hop language is essentially the same as that of AAVE (Smitherman 1997) Thus, in the song from *Migos* featuring *Lil Uzi Vert* called "Bad and Boujee"<sup>30</sup> and multiple others, we can expect to find forms such as zero copula "she a thot" and other AAVE forms such as doubling past participle in rap lyrics and the speech of hip-hoppers, as, in *21 Savage*'s "X" where he says: "you done made me wake my savage up" meaning "you already did it" and it cannot be undone. Alim (2002) looks at

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<sup>27</sup> Canada Goose is a Canadian holding company of winter clothing manufacturers

<sup>28</sup> Moncler is a luxury fashion brand mostly known for its skiwear.

<sup>29</sup> Yves Saint Laurent is a French luxury fashion house

<sup>30</sup> Boujee - high class

copula variation in rappers' lyrics and he attributes it to the importance of asserting a "street" identity in hip-hop culture. Despite the high degree of overlap between hip-hop language and AAVE, the correspondence is not complete. Thus, for example, Alim (2002) writes that hip-hop lyrics provide examples of habitual *be* before noun phrases (e.g., "I swear to God they be my clones" - *Lil Uzi Vert's* verse on *Migos'* track "Bad and Boujee") – an environment in which most oral conversation studies did not note it. Habitual *be* can be also classified as an AAVE "aspectual marker": just as tense markers indicate when the action takes place, aspectual markers indicate how the action takes place. Habitual *be* usually indicates an action that is repetitive or habitual as opposed to punctual or momentary. A sentence such as "Keysha be trippin'" (or overreacting) indicates that Keysha is *usually* or *always* trippin' – not that she is just trippin' right now.

### Terminology

Language is a product of society, and as society changes, so does the language. The language of hip-hop culture is an extension of the past and recent vernacular. Words like "hot" (1920s), "swing" (1930s), "hip" (1940s), "cool" (1950s), "soul" (1960s), "chill" (1970s), and "smooth" (1980s) have been redefined and usurped into hip-hop language. Whether it is the addition of the phrase "bling-bling" to the Oxford English Dictionary in 2003 or the inclusion of the term "crunk" in the 2007 volume of the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, hip-hop culture is changing the nature, the sound, and the rules of the English language.

According to the terminology developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1986), hip-hop jargon can be regarded as a "minor language". While culturally dominant "major languages" base their power on constants of vocabulary and grammar, the value of a minor language is based on linguistic dexterity, variance and flexibility (Potter 1995). Rappers can use English words with changed meanings such as "water" as in *Gucci Mane's* verse on *Migos'* track "Slippery" where he says "I rock water, diamonds, I'm drippin' but not slippin'" meaning expensive jewellery or invented terms such as "nawl" or "chillens" used in the same verse meaning "no" and "children".

Several online sources offer up entries for old and new expressions in hip-hop, for example, Urban Dictionary (<http://www.urbandictionary.com>). Users can post their definitions for listings, rate definitions that others have posted or add new words. The site includes example sentences or rap lyrics containing the word or expression in question. For

example, Urban Dictionary currently lists seven definitions for the term “floss”, a newly conceived hip-hop term, meaning either “to show off”, “to stick dental floss between your teeth” or “a dance move that involves your arms moving left then right”<sup>31</sup>. This model has opened limitless possibilities for tracking the emergence and trajectory of hip-hop slang but still remains an underexploited resource in linguistic analyses of hip-hop language to date. The hip-hop lexicon is being constantly expanded with new expressions while others fall out of use. As soon as new words and expressions appear in rap music, they become available for anyone to use.

#### Ad-libs

Traditionally, hip-hop songs are the product of a combination of lyrics and instrumentation. However, artists often employ additional vocals that are not the main intended lyrics, but rather vocal augmentations to the main lyrics or instrumental. These additional vocals are known as ad-libs and have been a part of hip-hop, and music in general, for decades (Raymer 2017). Within the context of hip-hop, ad-libs originated as the duty of the hype-man, one who supports the rapper by using exclamations to excite the audience. In the modern day, ad-libs are ubiquitous in contemporary hip-hop music. They have made their way to smooth out flows or rhythms, finish lyrics, and accentuate the main vocals of the track (Raymer 2017). Not only this but, like flows, ad-libs have come to be treated as public domain, as many rappers utilize the same ad-libs over and over for different songs (Ahined 2017). Often times these ad-libs are onomatopoeic, signifying the movement of cars or the sound of firearms. Perhaps one of the most famous ad-libbers is New York’s *Desiigner* who, in his debut single “Panda”, utilized large, boisterous “grrrrrrrrraaaah” and “gyeh, gyeh, gyeh” sounds to replicate the sound of a firearm in order to add to the hard-hitting nature of the song’s lyrics and instrumental. While ad-libs tend to live only in music, *Desiigner* has come to utilize his iconic ad-libs in his everyday speech, which serve as both a reference to his hit single and an index of his brand as an artist.

Furthermore, onomatopoeic ad-libs have been shown to transition from non-word productions to items in hip-hop’s lexical inventory. Such is the case with the popular “skrt” ad-lib which has gone from being used to mimic the speedy movement of a vehicle to meaning the act of leaving in itself as in Floridian rapper *Kodak Black*’s “SKRT” where he says, “Stick and move, then I skrt” or *21 Savage*’s “Skrrt Skrrt” with, “My wrist in the bowl

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=floss>

and I skrrt, I bought a new ‘Rari, I skrrt’. In this case, we can observe the dual meaning of “skrrt”, where the second sense stems from imitating the sounds of a fork scraping a pot while cooking crack cocaine.

## Identity Acquisition through Language

With a growing number of peoples’ lives now characterized by transnationalism, multiple cultural affiliations, migration, and diasporas, the study of identity has necessarily turned to explore how people establish authentic forms of belonging in this “runaway world” (Giddens, 2000). For more than a decade, sociolinguists have addressed how linguistic identities are no longer tied to enduring structures such as nation-states, ethnicities, or social classes, but rather are contingent, as seen in discursive negotiations that take place in everyday conversation, the mass media, social media, and in research interviews (Androutsopoulos, 2012; Coupland, 2001). Concurrent with these developments, the notion of authenticity has been replaced by the view that cultural belonging is a process, rather than a product and that speakers actively produce forms of cultural identity through language (Bucholtz, 2011; Rampton 1995). Still, while many studies demonstrate the hybrid nature of global contact zones in which speakers co-construct their identities, challenge conventional social categories, and refashion socio-political boundaries, it remains the case that multilingual must still navigate modernist claims to authenticity and belonging in their daily lives since certain forms of language are often treated as more and less legitimate, both in interactions and in ideological discourses about language, citizenship, social class, and whether a speaker is a legitimate member of a community. (Pratt 1992)

It is widely believed in sociolinguistics that language plays an instrumental role in the projection and creation of social identity (Labov 1980). Transcultural flows offer speakers more opportunities to cross and challenge borders linguistically. Recent work on language styles and stylization looks at how individuals play with language resources to construct and project distinctive configurations of the self. Stylization refers to how speakers “creatively use language resources often from beyond the immediate speech community such as distant dialects” (Bell 2001). Researchers increasingly are focusing on the “constructed” and “multifaceted” nature of identity, the agency of the speaker, and the use of language as a semiotic device to signal stances, alignments, personas, and other modes of self-presentation (Rampton 1995). This focus falls in line with more general research beyond the field of linguistics that conceptualizes social identity as “performative”, capturing the idea that people

use the semiotic resources afforded by different styles of language, gesture, gait, clothing, hairstyles, accessories and so on to create a variety of elaborate performances of social “selves”. Butler’s (1988) theory has adopted the term “performativity” to refer to the idea that identity is instituted through a “stylized repetition of acts” such as using particular language forms, bodily gestures, postures, and movements. In other words, a performed identity is the way we talk, walk, dress, dance, etc., and is all part of an elaborate, historically and culturally rooted and somewhat coerced performance. Following this line of reasoning, other aspects of identity like ethnicity can be viewed as consisting of several performative acts that are transmutable, learnable, and hence performable by anyone (Stolcke 1993). Ethnic markers including speech become stylistic resources that any person can adopt to project a persona or to signal stances towards or alignments with another group.

Hall (1995) observes that the use of linguistic practices associated with a given ethnic group may be sufficient for an individual to pass as a group member. Considerations such as passing, belonging, and alignment are central to several sociolinguistic studies that have looked at the White middle-class response to rap, hip-hop, and hip-hop language in the USA (Cutler 2002). Here, we have cases in which individuals are experimenting with ethnic and linguistic symbols that are not a part of their cultural heritage: White participants in hip-hop are often said to be performing a certain type of Blackness in terms of their use of linguistic and other ethnic markers (Cutler 2002).

Paula Chesley’s (2011) study of *Learning Words through Listening to Hip-Hop* shows the results which suggest that young non-African-American adults can learn African-American English (AAE) vocabulary from listening to hip-hop music. Non-African-American participants first gave free-response definitions to AAE vocabulary items, after which they answered demographic questions as well as questions addressing their social networks, their musical preferences, and their knowledge of popular culture. Results from the survey show a positive association between the number of hip-hop artists listened to and AAE comprehension vocabulary scores. Participants were more likely to know an AAE vocabulary item if the hip-hop artists they listen to use the word in their song lyrics. Together, these results suggest that young adults can acquire vocabulary through exposure to hip-hop music, a finding relevant to research on vocabulary acquisition, the construction of adolescent and adult identities, and the adoption of lexical innovations. Chesley’s (2011) study helps us understand the way how American hip-hop culture, especially rap music, influenced the form of expression of Czech and Slovak contemporary rappers. To further elaborate,

Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2002) draw some important generalizations about the language of European rap: as a rule, European rappers use their mother tongue. As a result of these factors the “major language” is being blended with the language of American rappers.

### Contemporary Slovak Hip-Hop Language

Since the apparition of *Haha Crew* on the Slovak scene, more and more rappers emerged, adopting comparable styles of expression. Moreover, they push the limits of the disfiguration of the standard language even further. The primary objective of this chapter is to explore connections between American hip-hop culture and the development of a local language variety, specifically the Slovak rap language. Since the paths of Slovak and Czech rappers are remarkably intertwined, we will consider the lyrics of Czech rappers relevant for this study. However, the emphasis will be put on the language of Slovak artists.

Hip-hop culture has influenced not only American English but numerous languages around the world. Through the years, many of the words and phrases became integrated and used by outside communities who had figured out the context and definitions of these words. Multicultural nations have vibrant hip-hop communities that have had to figure out what to do with these new words and phrases. Non-Americans and even non-English speakers have increasingly borrowed from and contributed to the slang of hip-hop, often modifying the meanings of the words to their own uses. Looking at hip-hop beyond the USA, linguists Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2002) document its rise in Europe beginning with the appropriation of American hip-hop followed by the eventual reterritorialization and localization of hip-hop in various countries and regions.

Given the spread of hip-hop culture to environments outside the Anglophone countries, it might be relevant to raise the question of whether it could not be conceptualized the other way around: that the codes and constructing principles underlying hip-hop style and rap music can serve as a model for the “tactics” of linguistic development. Central features characterizing rap music have close parallels in the practice and development of the language varieties often linked to this music: sampling and mixing, re-appropriation, transformation and improvisation. Parallel to the practice of “borrowing” music samples and beats from recordings by other artists, a hallmark of hip-hop lyrics is the rap artist’s ability to pick up the phrases and rhymes of other performers; re-appropriating them; twisting, turning or subverting phrases through inventive poetic and linguistic variation. In hip-hop style and especially in rap music, there has always been a deep commitment to pushing, bending and



breaking the limits. Hip-hop is a culture of resistance, its language is a “resistance vernacular” which deploys variance and improvisation in order to deform and reposition the rules of “intelligibility” set up by the dominant language (Potter 1995). Rap lyrics connote defiance, and to emphasize this, performers set out to bend and break standard language rules in much the same way they challenge the rules of society and established principles of making music. Rapping and singing in a “different” novel language is a marker of the community as well as boundaries – social belonging as well as social distancing. Using “street language” on stage is a public expression of the group’s differences and particularity.

The flow of hip-hop culture and rap music outside the United States and the indigenized result of this in countless “glocal” cultures throughout the world, points to a trend toward the creation of urban slang, characterized by a blend of influences and rich linguistic dexterity. Expressions from the English hip-hop vocabulary have proven to develop over time into particular, culturally embedded language varieties. Following the terminology developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1986), hip-hop jargon can be regarded as a ‘minor language’. While culturally dominant ‘major languages’ base their power on constants of vocabulary and grammar, the value of a minor language is based on linguistic dexterity, variance and flexibility. A principal feature of a minor language is the construction, manifestation and celebration of difference versus a major language. Minor languages tend to have an “overload of variation,” an abundance of parallel forms and flexible linguistic norms (Potter 1995). Contemporary Slovak rap has been influenced by the wider global hip-hop community, with many artists collaborating with international producers and performers, and drawing on a diverse range of cultural and musical influences. This has helped to create a more dynamic and vibrant rap scene, with a wide variety of styles and voices represented.

## Phonetics

Slovak phonology is relatively complex, with a large number of distinct sounds and sound patterns. The spelling of Slovak words is generally phonetic, meaning that words are spelt the way they are pronounced. In terms of phonology, Slovak rap language uses many of the same sounds and patterns as standard Slovak, but with a greater emphasis on rhythm and flow. This often involves the use of syncopation, where words are pronounced with an offbeat rhythm, and the manipulation of vowel and consonant sounds to create complex rhymes and wordplay. The syncopation is often achieved through the use of accents, rests, and other rhythmic devices that are performed by individual musicians.

For modern Slovak rappers, it is not uncommon to intentionally adopt an English accent as a way to add emphasis and style to their lyrics and to connect with audiences who may be more familiar with American hip-hop culture. Besides using the General American pronunciation, they may opt for vernacular expressions to enhance the connection to the particular group. Some may use an English accent when pronouncing Slovak words and vice versa. The addition of English to the Slovak register enables them to form new rhyming pairs by shaping phonological patterns. Therefore, it makes the process of lyrics creation more flexible and the result more complex.

It is also worth noting that English is commonly taught as a second language in Slovakia, and many young people in the country are fluent in English. As a result, some Slovak rappers may use English words and phrases in their lyrics simply as a way to express themselves more fully, without necessarily adopting an English accent. Overall, the use of English words and phrases and English accents among Slovak rappers is a complex and varied phenomenon and is often shaped by individual artistic styles, cultural influences, and personal experiences.

#### Semantics

It is important to note that the perception of semantic value in modern Slovak rap is subjective and varies depending on individual preferences and opinions. While some people may find the lyrics of modern Slovak rap lacking in semantic value, others may find them meaningful and impactful. There is no doubt that some modern Slovak rap lyrics focus more on surface-level themes, such as materialism, partying, and sex than on deeper social or political issues. This is a common trend in hip-hop music around the world and can be seen as a reflection of the genre's roots in urban youth culture. The manner of vocal production in modern Slovak rap is diverse and varied and reflects the unique styles and personal approaches of individual rappers. One common technique used by many Slovak rappers is a rhythmic and percussive vocal delivery. This involves using the voice as an instrument, with the rapper using various vocal techniques such as syllable repetition, rapid-fire delivery, and vocal inflections to create a rhythmic and dynamic flow. Another technique used by many Slovak rappers is the use of vocal effects such as auto-tune, distortion, and reverb. These effects can be used to add texture and depth to the vocals and to create a unique and recognizable sound. In addition, many Slovak rappers use their voice to convey emotion and to add emphasis to the lyrics. This can involve using vocal inflections, changes in pitch or

tone, or varying the intensity or volume of the vocals to convey different moods and emotions.

### Themes

In addition to the language itself, Slovak rap often incorporates themes and imagery from Slovak culture and society, such as references to historical events, local landmarks, and contemporary issues. Slovak rappers also frequently collaborate with other musicians from the region, blending their distinct styles and sounds to create a unique blend of hip-hop that is both regional and global in scope. The thematic framework found in contemporary Slovak rap is often very similar to the one found in American rap. Ranging from boasting, material wealth, gang references, drugs, and mental health, to fashion.

Notably, gang references have been a part of hip-hop culture since its inception in the United States in the 1970s, and this trend has carried over to Slovak rap as well. In Slovak rap, gang references are often used to express a sense of loyalty to a particular group or community, and to assert a sense of power or authority. Some Slovak rappers may use gang references to describe their own experiences with gangs or to reference the struggles faced by marginalized communities. Others may use gang references as a way of adopting the aesthetic or imagery of gang culture without necessarily endorsing its more negative aspects. While gang references may be a part of some Slovak rap lyrics, this does not necessarily mean that the rappers themselves are involved in criminal activity or endorse violent behaviour. Like many other forms of art, rap music can be used to explore and express a wide range of experiences and perspectives, and the use of gang references is just one of many ways that rappers may choose to express themselves.

### Grammar and Syntax

The grammar and syntax of contemporary Slovak rap language can vary depending on the individual rapper and their personal style. However, there are some general trends that can be observed in the grammar and syntax of Slovak rap. One common technique used by many Slovak rappers is the use of non-standard grammar and syntax, such as using slang or dialect-specific expressions. This can give the lyrics a more informal or conversational tone and can help to convey a sense of authenticity or street credibility. In addition, many Slovak rappers use creative wordplay and metaphors to add depth and complexity to their lyrics. This can involve using puns, double meanings, or extended metaphors to create a more layered and

nuanced expression. Another technique used by some Slovak rappers is to manipulate the rhythm and structure of the lyrics to create a more dynamic and engaging flow. This can involve using techniques such as syllable repetition, alliteration, or changing the tempo or cadence of the vocals to create a more dynamic and engaging sound.

## Terminology

Modern Slovak rap has certainly been influenced by the terminology used within the genre, as well as by the wider hip-hop culture from which it emerged. The use of specific terms such as "flow," "beat," "hook," and "bars" has helped to define the structure and dynamics of the genre and has provided a framework for rappers to express themselves creatively and effectively. At the same time, the terminology used within Slovak rap has also been shaped by the unique cultural context in which it developed. Rappers have drawn on their own experiences, as well as on the broader cultural and social influences around them, to create a language and vocabulary that reflects their own perspectives and worldviews.

## Ad-libs

In Slovak rap, ad-libs often take the form of vocalizations or sounds, such as "yeah," "hey," or "woo," that are repeated throughout a song or verse. These ad-libs may be used to punctuate the end of a line, emphasize a particular word or phrase, or create a sense of momentum and energy. Some Slovak rappers also use ad-libs to create a signature sound or catchphrase, such as the "haha" ad-lib used by the *Haha Crew*. These ad-libs can become a trademark of a particular artist or group, helping to distinguish their music and style from others in the genre.

## Analysis

Through the analysis of lyrics, we will try to confirm the hypothesis that the Slovak hip-hop language is directly influenced by the American hip-hop language. As an illustration of the outcome, we will observe the lyrics of the latest Czech and Slovak rappers. Criteria for the choice of these rappers are not as strict as they were for American rappers due to the reason that the Slovak rap scene is not that extensive. Therefore, we selected tracks from “new wave” rappers who currently operate on the Slovak rap scene, without placing importance on the popularity of the songs, although most of them have already gained national recognition from the audience and their colleagues. English translations, highlighting,

phonetic transcriptions, and comments will be supportive of the analysis. Lyrics were retrieved from the aforementioned source [www.genius.com](http://www.genius.com). The translations to English are literal to preserve the structure and word choice of Slovak artists.

*Kde je tráva, kde je **plug**?*

*Where's the weed, where's the plug?*

*Plice černý jako **puk***

*Lungs black as puck*

*[...]*

*Mí psi mají hlad, mí psi mají chut'  
appetite*

*My dogs are hungry, my dogs have*

*Jestli krysa mezi náma, tak půjde na **smrt***

*If there's snitch among us, then he'll die*

*[...]*

[Verse 2: AstralKid22]

*Supersonic jet*

*Supersonic jet*

*Fly shit, Sonic boom*

*Fly shit, Sonic boom*

*Kde sú drogy, kde je plug?*

*Where are the drugs, where's the plug?*

*Rýchlejšie než zvuk*

*Faster than sound*

*Cash sa točí furt, dookola loop*

*Cash in rotation all the time, around in a  
loop*

*Kde je tráva, kde je plug?*

*Where's the weed, where's the plug?*

*Víno v mojom pohári na glg*

*A sip of wine in my cup*

*Baby dolej mi to pls*

*Baby refill it pls*

Passages written in bold italics are those, in which a phonetic variation occurs. In “Kde je plug?” (Where’s the plug?) *Yzomandias* uses American vernacular words such as “plug” [plʌg] meaning “drug dealer”, which he articulates with an American and almost African-American accent [plɜ:]. Similarly, he even pronounces the Czech word “puk” [puk] meaning “puck” as [pɜ:] and the word “smrt” [smɪt] meaning “death” he vocalizes with an English accent as [smɪt]. Overall, the thematic scheme of this track, based on drug

consumption, falls into the previously mentioned general characteristics of contemporary American hip-hop language. Similarly, Slovak rapper and producer Astralkid22 in his verse for Yzomandias uses abundant underlined expressions, which remained unchanged after being translated into English.

[Verse 2: Dalyb]

*Ochutnaj môj orange juice, ah (juice)*

*Taste my orange juice, ah (juice)*

*Po ňom budeš ale screwed up (screwed)*

*But then you'll be screwed up (screwed)*

*Lahni si sem, nebud' čúza, ah (ooh)*

*Lay down here, don't be a bitch, ah (ooh)*

*Daj mi pusú, nebud' skúpa (mwah)*

*Kiss me, don't be stingy (mwah)*

*Štyri kruhy, Audi coupé (vrm)*

*Four circles, Audi coupé (vrm)*

*To je to v čom dávam pull up<sup>32</sup> (up)*

*That's what I pull up in*

*V štúdiu s Milion+, ah (milion+)*

*In the studio with Milion+, ah (milion+)*

*Nik a Dalyb sú hot, kurva (nie)*

*Nik and Dalyb are fucking hot (no)*

[...]

*Ay, merch mi ladí s Raf-mi<sup>33</sup> (oof)*

*Ay, merch matches my Rafs (oof)*

*Stack mi ladí s Raf-mi (oof)*

*Stack matches my Rafs (oof)*

*Fialový svet mám, fialový vesmír*

*I have purple world, purple universe*

*Moje rifle sú Fendi, zakrývam nimi Bape-y*

*My jeans are Fendi, I cover my Bapes  
with them (oof)*

*Som non-stop iba trendy (yes)*

*Non-stop I'm trendy (yes)*

*Sme prví, nikdy tretí (ooh)*

*We're first, never third (ooh)*

*Dneska máme... (Dalyb)*

*Today we have... (Dalyb)*

[Chorus: Nik Tendo]

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<sup>32</sup> Pull up - to go somewhere

<sup>33</sup> Shoes of the high-end brand of clothing designed by Belgian designer Raf Simons

Noční session, oh, ya (ya)

Hlasy jsou chopped and screwed<sup>34</sup>,

ya (skr,skr,skr)

Se mnou posádka má crew, ya (crew, crew)

Zhasly světla, hraje hudba (ya, ya)

Night session, oh, ya (ya)

Voices are chopped and screwed,

ya (skr, skr, skr)

My crew with me, ya (crew, crew)

Lights are off, music is playing (ya, ya)

Equivalently, *Dalyb* and *Nik Tendo* use plenty of words borrowed from English in their lyrics, written in underlined italics. The title of the song “Skrjud” is a play on the phonetic transcription of the word “screwed” [skrud]. However, both *Dalyb* and *Nik Tendo* pronounce the word “screwed” [skrud] in the song as [skrjud]. This demonstrates how these rappers purposefully deform not only their own languages by the American language but also vice versa. The themes prevailing in this track are the sexualization of women, boasting and fashion – all of these resonate in modern American hip-hop music. Therefore, the lexical choice including anglicisms and ad-libs which are in parentheses is accustomed. In terms of melody and rhythm, the inspiration behind “Skrjud” is undeniable, especially in *Nik Tendo*’s part. Audience accused him of copying the song “Burn One” by an artist named *SD*. *Dalyb* denied the link between the two songs, whereas *Nik Tendo* acknowledged that he anticipated the accusations. He claims there is a difference between copying and inspiration. Appropriation of Western trends and being inspired by foreign production is a persistent phenomenon and according to *Nik Tendo*, it depends on the way how an artist adapts to a certain style. (Kniš 2019).

The American influence on the language of classical Slovak rappers is also noticeable. *Ego*’s first solo project from 2017 contains a song “Flexim Ako Gott” produced by *Dalyb*, where he collaborates with Czech *Yzomandias* and Slovak new school rappers from *Haha Crew*, namely *Dalyb*, *Samey* and *Zayo*. The title of the song refers to the action of boasting. *Karel Gott* was a famous Czech singer who enjoys great popularity both in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia. If we want to develop the interpretation even deeper, the word *Gott* (German for God) can also serve as an equivocation. Thus, he might suggest that he is flexing as God.

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<sup>34</sup> Technique of slowing down the pace of recording and repeating certain points to create a double-up effect

[Verse 1: Ego]

*Jordany, Yeezy, Bape-y*

*Aj bez nich som ja svieži baby*

*Jako celý život predtým, nemám žiadne fake-y*

*Louis, Gucci snake-y*

*Nevadia mi hate-y*

*S mladými hatermi hrávam futbal, strielaj, ver si*

*Minimálne šperky, poznám len ich face-y*

*Nepämetám mená, to neznamená že nejsi*

*Supreme ako basic*

*Rozgajdané laces*

*Nechaj mi len loptu, to ostatné kludne ber si*

*Aj tak nikdy nebudeš väčší hráč jak ja*

*Aj keby si kúroval sedem báb do týždňa*

*Flexim ako Gott*

*Ja flexim ako Dan*

*Bilzerian<sup>35</sup>, Balmain v Balenciagach*

*Au monde du party, musique c'est ma vie*

*Les jours sont courts dans ma vie salary*

*Jordans, Yeezys, Bapes*

*Even without them I'm fresh baby*

*During my entire life, I haven't owned any fakes*

*Louis, Gucci snakes*

*I don't mind the hates*

*I play football with young haters, shoot, trust yourself*

*Minimal jewellery, I only know their faces*

*I don't remember the names, but that doesn't mean you don't exist*

*Supreme as basic*

*Untied laces*

*You can take everything except the ball*

*Despite that you'll never be a bigger player than me*

*Even if you screwed seven girls a week*

*I'm flexin' like Gott*

*I'm flexin' like Dan*

*Bilzerian, Balmain in Balenciagas*

*In the party world, music is my life*

*Days are short in my life of*

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<sup>35</sup> Daniel Brandon Bilzerian is an Armenian-American actor, internet personality, and gambler known for his lavish lifestyle.



*De misere, c'est l'enfer, je cherche paradis*

*Miserable salary, it's hell, I search for  
paradise*

*Puis on mange dans une station du gas*

*Then we eat at a gas station today*

*Aujourd'hui*

The main themes of this track include boasting linked to fashion and prevailing taste. In his verse, *Ego* lists a plethora of popular fashion brands ranging from streetwear to high fashion (Jordan, Yeezy, Bape, Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Supreme, Balmain, and Balenciaga) to reinforce his action of “flexing”. To give the song an international dimension, he uses English words (basic, laces) and anglicisms with Slovak suffixes (snake-y, fake-y) even though there exist Slovak equivalents for all of these terms. At the end of his verse, *Ego* switches his delivery to the French language to attract a broader audience and to make this song even more compelling for domestic listeners. International collaborations between contemporary rappers are another manner how to achieve the same objective. For instance, *Astralkid22*'s track “CINK CINK” features French rapper *Vadek*.

Furthermore, in the song “Cesta” by *Lvcas Dope & DJ Wich*, *Ego* switches his register of language into German. He commented on his motives in an interview for Jokerit TV: “I want to engage Germans living in Slovakia [...] when they hear playing something Slovak on a radio, it may make them happy to hear something in German [...] whereas, in Flexim ako Gott, it was more intentioned.” (Ego, 2018 - translated)

The following verses are extracted from *Kontrafakt*'s latest album “Real Newz”. In the song “Ideme dnu” *Rytmus* demonstrates pronunciation alternation on underlined words when he conceals the suffixes of the words (“utoro” instead of “utorok”; “učoro” instead of “učorovať”<sup>36</sup>; “neporo” instead of “neporovnávať”) to adapt them to the rhyming pattern. This psychoacoustic similarity is being employed by a multitude of American rappers, which shows the relation in terms of lyrical inspiration between the two nations' hip-hop scenes.

[Verse 2: Rytmus]

*Pusti ma dnu, čoro<sup>37</sup>, ah*

*Let me in wretch, ah*

*Aj keď je utoro', ah*

*Even though it's Tuesday, ah*

*Neni som raklo<sup>38</sup>*

*I'm not a boy*

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<sup>36</sup> Učorovať – to steal (of Romani origin)

<sup>37</sup> Čoro – wretch (of Romani origin)

*No nechcem nič učoro'*

*But I don't want to steal anything*

*Nechcem ich čučo*

*I don't want their cheap wine*

*Čistý jak Bengoro<sup>39</sup>*

*Pure as Bengoro*

*Istý aj tento rok*

*Certain also this year*

*Udávám tempo*

*I dictate the pace*

*Krok za krokom*

*Step by step*

*Rok čo rok so mnou sa, neporo'*

*Year by year, don't compare me to you*

The next track from “Real Newz” is named “J Lo” and is a product of collaboration between six Slovak rappers from “old school” as well as “new wave”. We decided to use only the verses from three of these rappers, including *Ego*, because they contain plenty of data demonstrating the influence of American rap music on Slovak rap music. The connection is visible in the thematic selection ranging from boasting (“Počítam cash celý deň; Dávam mad shit”), objectification of women (“Tá hoe vyzerá jak J Lo”) to fashion (fashion brands: “Uniqlo, Kith, Kenzo”). Apart from the use of underlined anglicisms, the verses include references to American celebrities (“J Lo, 6ix9ine”) as well as ad-libs in parentheses, some of which are American slang terms (“Dunno, Guwap”). The fact that *Mirez* states in his lyrics he came to the studio unprepared and rapped “freestyle” enhances the spontaneity and negligence of the lyrical value of the song, which are characteristic traits of “new school” American rappers.

[Intro: Mirez]

*Prišiel do štúdia, nenapísal nič*

*Came to the studio and hadn't written anything*

*BIIZA<sup>40</sup>, more, pusti mi tam beat*

*BIIZA, moe, play the beat*

*Zajebem to freestyle, shit*

*I'll freestyle it, shit*

*Rýchlo, čaká na mňa nasty b', yah*

*Quickly, nasty b' awaits me, yah*

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<sup>38</sup> Raklo – son of non-Romani parents (of Romani origin)

<sup>39</sup> Bengoro – Rytmus' alter ego

<sup>40</sup> BIIZA – the name of the beatmaker and producer of the track J Lo

[Chorus: Mirez]

Počítam cash celý deň, moe

Tá hoe vyzerá jak J Lo<sup>41</sup>, yah

Počítam cash celý deň, moe

Tá hoe vyzerá jak J Lo, yah

I count cash all day long, moe

That hoe looks like J Lo, yah

I count cash all day long, moe

That hoe looks like J Lo, yah

[Verse 4: Zayo]

Rrr

Počítam celý deň cash, moe (Guwap)<sup>42</sup>

Asi myslíš, že ti dám - no (Yeah)

No podelím sa iba s partou (FCK THEM)<sup>43</sup>

Kupujem drip<sup>44</sup>, platím kartou (Ice, ice)<sup>45</sup>

Ty si môj štýl iba stiahol, download

Nič iné nevieš, you dunno, dunno (Dunno)

Free 6ix9ine<sup>46</sup> (Yah), free rainbow (Rrr)

[Verse 5: Ego]

Môj štýl tento rok je technický, taktický,  
apokalyptický

Môj štýl tento rok je Uniqlo, Kith,

Free Solo<sup>47</sup>, nič mi neuniklo

Rrr

I count cash all day long, moe (Guwap)

You probably think I will give you some –  
no (Yeah)

I'll share only with my clique

(FCK THEM)

I buy drip, I pay by card (Ice, ice)

You only downloaded my style, download

You know nothing else, you dunno, dunno  
(Dunno)

Free 6ix9ine (Yah), free rainbow (Rrr)

This year, my style is technical, tactical  
apocalyptic

This year, my style is Uniqlo, Kith,

Free Solo, I missed nothing

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<sup>41</sup> J Lo - Jennifer Lopez is an American actress, singer, dancer, fashion designer, producer, and businesswoman

<sup>42</sup> Guwap - money

<sup>43</sup> FCK THEM is a record label via which members of Haha Crew release their music

<sup>44</sup> Drip - jewellery

<sup>45</sup> Ice - Jewellery

<sup>46</sup> 6ix9ine – Tekashi 6ix9ine, an American rapper characterized by his distinctive rainbow-coloured hair

<sup>47</sup> Free Solo - a 2018 American documentary about rock climber Alex Honnold on his quest to perform a free solo climb of El Capitan

*Som flashy aj v roku 2020*

*I'm flashy even in 2020*

*Dávam mad shit, sleduj tohoto chlapca*

*I rap mad shit, watch this guy*

*Nemám Enzo<sup>48</sup> no jazdím Benzom<sup>49</sup>*

*I don't have Enzo, but I ride Benz*

*Vzadu senzor, vpredu Kenzo*

*Sensor at the rear, Kenzo in the front*

*Zrýchlim jak Volko<sup>50</sup> na šprinte stovkou*

*I accelerate like Volko, hundred on sprint*

*So svojou holkou čakám pred škôlkou*

*With my girl, I wait in front of nursery  
school*

*Poznáš ten výbuch pravdy*

*You know that explosion of truth*

*High kick, low kick do gamby*

*High kick, low kick to the face*

To broaden his linguistic diversity, in an alternative verse for Zayo's "In da Club" *Ego* raps in the Czech language. Similarly, contemporary Slovak rapper and producer *Dokkeytino*, who collaborated with *Ego*, *Rytmus*, *Dalyb*, *Zayo* along with upcoming Slovak rappers *Mirez* and *Porsche Boy* on the track "J Lo", is fond of pushing the limits of Slovak language. He combines Slovak, Czech, and English in his verse for "Facelift" from Czech rapper *Hugo Toxxx*, who won the Czech Music Critics' Award *Apollo* for the best domestic album of 2019 for his recording entitled "1000" containing this song.

*Môj flow<sup>51</sup> rozjebe ti face*

*My flow will fuck up your face*

*Môj dom smrdí ako haze<sup>52</sup>*

*My house smells of haze*

*Kokotkovia sú fakt lame*

*Fuckers are really lame*

*Děvky chcú byť Sasha Grey<sup>53</sup>*

*Hoes want to be Sasha Grey*

*Duchcím brko, čo má metr*

*I smoke joint that's has a length of a meter*

*Se mnou ve studiu H4cker<sup>54</sup>*

*I'm in the studio with H4cker*

*Na sobě mám levnej svetr*

*I'm wearing cheap sweater*

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<sup>48</sup> Enzo - car named after the company's founder, Enzo Ferrari

<sup>49</sup> Benz – Mercedes-Benz

<sup>50</sup> Volko - Ján Volko is a Slovak sprinter

<sup>51</sup> Flow – a rapper's ability to vocalize the lyrics

<sup>52</sup> Haze - a certain strain of weed

<sup>53</sup> Sasha Grey – an American actress and model, former pornstar

<sup>54</sup> H4cker - Hugo Toxxx's alter ego

*Požul som vás ako **cracker***

*I chewed you up like a cracker*

*Nalej mi píčo **liquor***

*Bitch, pour me liquor*

*Ked' chceš **top shit**, dej mi Wickr<sup>55</sup>*

*If you want top shit, give me Wickr*

*Žuješ papulou jak pikr*

*You chew with your mouth like a tweaker*

*Zahejbá ti, dá ti blinkr*

*She two-times you, she'll give you blinker*

***Flowy** žerem ako Pringles<sup>56</sup>*

*I eat flows like Pringles*

*Ked' spím, PayPal<sup>57</sup> mi cink*

*While I sleep, PayPal is doing clink*

*Yeah, vyduchcím **shit***

*Yeah, I will smoke shit*

*Hakally<sup>58</sup> Tino Bauch<sup>59</sup> **money gang shit***

*Hakally Tino Bauch money gang shit*

*Dám to dám to česky, zmrdi, zmrdi brečí,*

*I'll rap in Czech, suckers, suckers cry,*

*jsou včerejší*

*they are yester*

In an interview for THE MAG *Dokkeytino* confessed that the lyrics for this verse were originally written in Slovak and only during the act of recording he decided to convert it to Czech. (Dokkeytino, 2019) In the original text, we underlined phrases written in Czech for the easier distinction of individual registers. Words of English origin are highlighted by bold lettering and we preserved Slovak words, onomatopoeia, and proper nouns in italics. This way, we can observe the swift alternation of the registers. For instance, in the tenth line, *Dokkeytino* uses all three languages “Ked' chceš **top shit**, dej mi Wickr.” In the following line, we decided to translate the Czech word “pikr” (meaning methamphetamine user) with the help of the site <https://www.urbandictionary.com/> as “tweaker” and we can observe that even after translation to English the rhyme structure of the verse is maintained. This illustrates how the languages that appear completely dissimilar in their formal versions can be deformed by the artists to make them almost indistinguishable in certain instances. An allusion to the gang problem is also portrayed in the text (“Hakally Tino Bauch money gang shit”) although in Slovakia, nor the Czech Republic, this problem is not relevant. He rather uses the word

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<sup>55</sup> Wickr - encrypted messaging application, predominantly used by drug dealers

<sup>56</sup> Pringles - an American brand of potato snack chips

<sup>57</sup> PayPal - an American company operating a worldwide online payments system

<sup>58</sup> Hakally – Dokkeytino's alter ego

<sup>59</sup> Bauch - Hugo Toxxx's alter ego

“gang” as an alternative term for “group” or “team”. *Dokkeytino*’s play with the Slovak language through the employment of other languages, especially English, is consistent throughout his lyrics. The next extract is from his song “In N Out”:

<i>Yee, idem do nej <b>in n out</b></i>	<i>Yee, I’m going to her in n out</i>
<i>Ochutná ma ako kanibal</i>	<i>She’ll taste me like a cannibal</i>
<i>Hejteri fajčia alobal, yee</i>	<i>Haters smoke aluminium, yee</i>
<i>Yeah, idem vysoko jak astronaut</i>	<i>Yeah, I’m going high like an astronaut</i>
<i>Hýbe sa so mnou cely <b>crowd</b></i>	<i>The whole crowd moves with me</i>
<i>Tinovelly bude raz <b>global</b></i>	<i>Tinovelly will be global</i>
<i>Idem do nej <b>in n out</b></i>	<i>I’m going to her in n out</i>
<i>Idem do nej <b>in n out</b></i>	<i>I’m going to her in n out</i>
<i>Idem do nej <b>in n out</b></i>	<i>I’m going to her in n out</i>
<i>Tinovelly bude raz <b>global</b></i>	<i>Tinovelly will be global</i>
<i>Dav ide <b>ape, shit</b>, môj štýl je čers-tvý</i>	<i>Crowd goes ape shit, my style is fresh</i>
<i>Nežerem le-xy, život je <b>hec-tic</b></i>	<i>I don’t eat Lexaurin, life is hec-tic</i>
<i>Môj <b>flow</b> je <b>nas-ty</b>, piče sú <b>plas-tic</b></i>	<i>My flow is nas-ty, bitches are plas-tic</i>
<i>Žereme plas-ty, ževraj máme byť šťastný, yeah</i>	<i>We eat plas-tic, we are supposed to be</i>
	<i>happy, yeah</i>
<i>Tinovelly ma tie flowy, vy ste <b>thirsty</b></i>	<i>Tinovelly has the flows, you are thirsty</i>
<i>Prešli doby, <b>fresh</b> jak novy, žiadne drístý</i>	<i>Time passed, fresh as new, for real</i>
<i>Píšem slohy z mojej doby, tá je <b>crazy</b></i>	<i>I write the verses from my age that is</i>
	<i>crazy</i>
<i>Skovám rohy, zmotám, zrollím, pod’ sem bližšie</i>	<i>I’ll hide the horns, I’ll roll one, come</i>
	<i>closer</i>

*Chlapci chovajú sa **just like** kurvy*

*Boys are acting just like hoes*

*Tinovelly striela na koš, Stephen Curry<sup>60</sup>*

*Tinovelly shoots baskets, Stephen Curry*

*Chlapci duchcia **blow***

*Boys snort blow*

*Čo je **prolly** sekly*

*That's prolly cut*

*Prinášam im niečo nové*

*I bring them something new*

*Nie sú zvyklí*

*They're not used to*

In the song “In N Out” we can observe a plethora of English expressions, that are highlighted in bold. One of his lines implies he is going to be global, therefore, this choice of words may help him achieve worldwide success, since English sounds more familiar to the ears of a foreign listener. We can deduce he is trying to increase the chances of global acknowledgement by using English expressions and an English accent. He pronounces underlined Slovak word as [kɜɹvi] instead of the proper pronunciation [kuɹvi]. The insertion of English “just like” beforehand is there to evoke the sentiment of listening to a foreign language and helps to disguise the following swear word. In addition, he uses American vernacular words such as “blow” meaning cocaine and “prolly” meaning probably. The area of interest in this song consists of the themes relying on drug consumption, boasting, and sexual objectification of women, which are topics commonly used in the songs of modern American rappers. The next extract is from his song “Hanbavám”.

*Hanbavám hanbavám, ye*

*Shame on you, shame on you, ye*

*Hanbavám nejsom sám, ye ye haaa*

*Shame on you, I'm not alone, ye ye haaa*

*Hanbavám*

*Shame on you*

*Neni ťa počuť*

*I can't hear you*

*Neni ťa počuť*

*I can't hear you*

*Neni ťa počuť*

*I can't hear you*

*Neni ťa počuť*

*I can't hear you*

*Vraj mi neni rozumieť, ye*

*Reportedly they can't understand me, ye*

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<sup>60</sup> Stephen Curry - Wardell Stephen Curry II is an American professional basketball player

Vraj mi neni rozumieť, ye

[...]

Robím s hlasom čo chcem, hmm

*Robím s čajkou čo chcem, hmm*

*Ona vie, že to viem, hmm*

*Ja viem, že to vie, hmm*

Reportedly they can't understand me, ye

[...]

I do with my voice whatever I want, hmm

*I do with my chick whatever I want, hmm*

*She knows I know, hmm*

*I know she knows, hmm*

He articulates the words “hanba vám” [hambavám] as [aməvám] in order to make it sound like “I’m a vamp”. *Dokkeytino* induces the listeners to hear the English vampire implication by visual accompaniment for this song on YouTube where the animation of his head with fangs is portrayed. (annexe 1) Underlined passages show that he is aware of the difficulties he poses for the audience to understand him due to the complexity of his lyrics, through engaging articulation and intonation. Since he repetitively sings certain words, we can deduce that he emphasizes the manner of pronunciation rather than the lyrical content of the song, which is a trait of American contemporary hip-hop music. Another example of his play on words is the title English-sounding title of his song “Chaddy Ebbe” which when read rapidly signifies a profane term in Slovak.

Another Slovak rapper affected by English influence is *Taomi*. In his verse for “Citybaby” he employs extensive English vocabulary. However, this influence stems not only from the American environment but also from the United Kingdom. In the last paragraph, which is almost entirely written in English, he references London (LDN) and New York City (NYC) as well as Bethnal Green, which is an area in the East End of London. Except for these references, we can’t observe a significant difference between American and British influence in terms of language. The lyrics contain fashion brands references (Margiela, Celine, YSL) as well as boasting (Ja som fucking outstanding), sexualisation of women (radšej ass jak tits) and money references (Moja B chce money thick stacks) which are the themes found in the majority of modern American and Slovak songs.

*Pod’ sem bližšie baby see me high,*

*ah (see me high)*

*Oni by chceli city life, ah (city life)*

*Come closer baby see me high,*

*ah (see me high)*

*They’d like to have city life, ah (city life)*



*Oni by chceli byť pri nás, ah (byť pri nás)*

*They'd like to be around us, ah (around us)*

*Nepustia sa ma už nikdy, ah, yeah*

*They won't ever let go of me, yeah*

*Margiela kicks na nohy si píš*

*Margiela kicks on feet you bet*

*Radšej twelve jak six radšej ass jak tits*

*Rather twelve than six rather ass than tits*

*Moja B chce money thick stacks*

*My B wants money thick stacks*

*My sme lit, ja dám stand up oni sit*

*We are lit, I'll do stand-up they'll do sit*

*Ja som fucking outstanding*

*I am fucking outstanding*

*Holla holla dievky krik*

*Holla holla girls scream*

*Prídem zničíme building*

*I'll come we'll destroy the building*

*Na strop dotýkam ceiling*

*I touch the ceiling*

*Oblečiem ju do Cèline*

*I'll dress her in Cèline*

*YSL jak C'est la vie*

*YSL like C'est la vie*

*Moja mind je luxury (bitch)*

*My mind is luxury (bitch)*

*My sme high nie na zemi*

*We are high not on the ground*

*LDN and NYC*

*LDN and NYC*

*Repin' E<sup>61</sup>*

*Repin' E*

*Homies<sup>62</sup> night floss Bethnal green*

*Homies night floss Bethnal green*

*Night city light green*

*Night city light green*

*Night city smoke green*

*Night city smoke green*

*Night city light green*

*Night city light green*

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<sup>61</sup> Repin' E – representing East

<sup>62</sup> Homies - friends

The lyrics to the song titled “Kick” from another Slovak rapper who performs under the pseudonym *SIMILIVINLIFE* contains plenty of examples highlighted in bold font, which are English expressions. From the variety of artists, and the frequency of the usage of such expressions in their lyrics analysed in this paper so far, we can exclude the possibility that it is entirely coincidental. We can observe a certain tendency of Slovak rappers to incline to the use of English terminology, even though the reference language is Slovak. Words like “shawty” and “kicks” which are vernacular terms indicate that they are trying to identify as members not only of the English-speaking people but rather a more specific subculture that expresses in such a manner, for instance, American rappers. The themes contained in the song “Kick” list from the sexualisation of women to bragging about material possessions and style of dressing.

*Praého beat má **kick***

*Prae’s beat got a kick*

***Shawty** pussy má **kick***

*Shawty’s pussy got a kick*

*Detroit Runner<sup>63</sup> má **blink***

*Detroit Runner got blink*

*Z **pussy boys** mám kyslý ksicht*

*Pussy boys make me cringe*

***Money out, money in***

*Money out, money in*

*Rátam, mám modré prsty*

*I’m counting, I got blue fingers*

*Z párty na párty **quick***

*From party to party quick*

*Na stole mám **dirty drink**<sup>64</sup>*

*On the table I got a dirty drink*

*Zavolaj kamošku*

*Call your friend*

*Zavolaj aj sestru*

*Call your sister too*

***Six-pack** dávno není v móde,*

*Six-pack isn’t in fashion anymore*

*v móde je koľko máš v bagu*

*How much is in your bag is in fashion*

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<sup>63</sup> Detroit Runner – a type of designer shoe

<sup>64</sup> Dirty drink – codeine mixed with Sprite

<i>Otočím klub na ruby</i>	<i>I'll turn the club upside down</i>
<i>Nikov na krk rubín</i>	<i>Niko's ruby on the neck</i>
<i>A všetci čo sa smiali môžu škripať zubami</i> <i>their teeth</i>	<i>Everyone who made fun of me now grinds</i>
<i>FF15<sup>65</sup> <b>kid</b>, nie si mi ani po ****</i>	<i>FF15 kid, you are below my ****</i>
<i>Ed Hardy opasky mi držia True Religion <b>jeans</b></i> <i>jeans</i>	<i>Ed Hardy belts hold my True Religion</i>
<i>Som <b>true</b> k mojim vždy</i>	<i>I'm always true to mine</i>
<i>Som <b>true</b>, keď nemám nič</i>	<i>I'm true even if I don't have anything</i>
<i>Som <b>true</b> more bosý</i>	<i>I'm true barefoot</i>
<i>Som <b>true</b> v 600 eurových <b>kicks</b></i>	<i>I'm true in 600 euro kicks</i>

In the next example of the song “Špinavý Sprite” by *Rollsout* along with the purely English words in bold, we can observe linguistic anglicisation of Slovak words, which are underlined. The title and the theme of the whole song are based on drug consumption, specifically, codeine mixed with Sprite which is very popular among the American hip-hop community. Also, other drugs are mentioned such as “yayo” and “oxy” which are vernacular terms for cocaine and oxycodone.

<i>Špinavý Sprite v mojom pohári</i>	<i>Dirty Sprite in my cup</i>
<i>So mnou Gs nemajú zábrany</i>	<i>With my Gs that don't have barriers</i>
<i>Nemením strany</i>	<i>I don't switch sides</i>
<i>Že nemá zmysel, mrdlo mi z toho asi</i>	<i>It doesn't have meaning, I'm probably</i> <i>going mad</i>
<i>Skús ma zastaviť</i>	<i>You can try to stop me</i>
<i>V <u>cupe</u> mám hlúpy mix</i>	<i>In my cup stupid mix</i>

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<sup>65</sup> FF15 – videogame Final Fantasy XV

*V hlave mi explódujú rýmy*

***Intoxicated** na mic spittin'*

*Yayo má šupiny jak ryby*

*Podávame to surové jak sushi*

*Poppol som oxy, vypol som proxy*

*Hádzem bars do beatu*

*Baby prosí nech už skončím, ale hittujem furt*

*Zo Sprite-u urobím to hneď, počkaj tu*

*Sprite červený jako krv*

*Do cupu nasyp mi ľadu*

***Bitch** má červenú podrážku*

*Ťahám si ju na vodítku*

*In my head rhymes are exploding*

*Intoxicated spitting on the mic*

*Yayo has scales like t fish*

*We serve it raw like sushi*

*I popped oxy, I turned off proxy*

*I throw bars to the beat*

*Baby is begging me to stop, but I'm still hitting*

*I'll do it from the Sprite right away, wait here*

*Sprite red as blood*

*Put ice in my cup*

*Bitch has red sole*

*I'm dragging her on leash*

## Conclusion

This thesis was written in order to confirm the hypothesis that the development of the Slovak hip-hop language is directly affected by the development of American hip-hop through globalization. Basic materials which served as the most important source to confirm this hypothesis were the lyrics of chosen rap artists.

The thesis is comprised of two main chapters. The first provides the theoretical background for the second part which is analytical. The theoretical part contains two subchapters. Whilst the first is devoted to the general conceptions concerning youth and subcultures, the second subchapter focuses on the description and development of hip-hop subcultures, specifically American and Slovak hip-hop subcultures.

The analytical part is divided into two main parts. The first one concentrates on globalization as a general process, which progressively influences almost every nation's domain from economy, culture, population, trade in goods and services, technology to flows of investment, people, information, etc. In the following subchapter, we aim our attention at the effects of globalization on hip-hop subculture which resulted in its worldwide spread. This alluded to the theme of global language. This linguistic topic is examined in the third subchapter of the analytical part, where we discover the English language can be considered global due to the global influence of the countries which use it, such as the United States of America, where hip-hop was born.

The second half of the analytical is subdivided into three subchapters which are subsequently divided into smaller subchapters. The first subchapter deals with the characteristics of contemporary American hip-hop language. This subchapter is divided according to individual language features and contains extracts from American rap song lyrics. The second subchapter is dedicated to the phenomenon of identity acquisition through language and broaches the final chapter which concerns contemporary Slovak hip-hop language. Methods used to support the analysis were gathering and selecting materials, lyrics of chosen artists, and their comparison according to linguistic selection. The result of the analysis of the lyrics is common traits found in these two contemporary hip-hop languages. The scale of parallelism ranges from choice of terminology, topics, phonetics, and semantics, to references. The connection between the two from the linguistic point of view is evident, although we did not study too extensively the motivations behind these rappers' actions since

it is rather a task of psychology and sociolinguistics. However, we offered several assumptions of how the Slovak hip-hop language acquired its current shape. Do the rappers blindly imitate foreign trends or is it a form of revolt via language? We will let the readers decide.

The main objective of this paper was to confirm the hypothesis that the Slovak hip-hop language is directly influenced by the American hip-hop language. The hypothesis was confirmed by the arguments and reasons provided in the theoretical and analytical part and therefore, the objective was achieved.

## Resumé

Tvorba identity je neustály proces, pri ktorom si jedinec organizuje svoje hodnoty. Avšak toto hľadanie samého seba je väčšinou najintenzívnejšie v období dospievania. Príslušníci mladej generácie skúšajú nové veci a vyhľadávajú spoločenstvá, s ktorými by mohli zdieľať svoje záľuby. Táto sociálna identita sa pretavuje do tvorby jednotlivých subkultúr. Slovo subkultúra v nás môže evokovať rôzne pojmy ako: inakosť, revolta, alebo podradenosť. Vo všeobecnosti však mládež, ktorá subkultúru tvorí iba hľadá porozumenie a vyhľadáva jedincov, ktorí zdieľajú ich myšlienky, názory, hodnoty, atď. S tým je spojený napríklad aj vzhl'ad, štýl obliekania, spôsob vyjadrovania alebo hudba. Jednou z takýchto subkultúr je práve hip-hop.

Hip-hopová subkultúra vznikla na konci sedemdesiatych rokov dvadsiateho storočia, v časti New York City, nazývanej Bronx. Za jej zakladateľa sa považuje DJ Kool Herc, ktorý usporadúval tanečné párty kde rád experimentoval s platňami hrajúcimi na viacerých gramofónoch súčasne. Takto sa zrodil prvý element hip-hopu: DJ-ing. Na jednu z párty si zavolať host'a menom Coke La Rock, ktorého úlohou bolo povzbudzovať publikum k tancu. Kombináciou hudobného podkladu a hovoreného slova vznikol ďalší element hip-hopu nazývaný rap. Názov hip-hop pôvodne popisoval rytmus hudby, do ktorej ľudia tancovali. K DJ-ingu, rapu, break-dancu sa pridala aj ďalšia forma sebavyjadrenia – grafitti. Tieto štyri elementy definovali hip-hop v jeho začiatkoch. Až neskôr sa vyvinul do komplexného konceptu označujúceho spôsob života členov tejto subkultúry.

Táto práca sa zaoberá štúdiom iba jedného z týchto elementov a to verbálnym prejavom – rapom. V dnešnej dobe sa označenia rapovej a hip-hopovej hudby používajú zameniteľne, predovšetkým kvôli nárastu povedomia o tomto elemente hip-hopu. Rap sa vďaka jeho dostupnosti a novosti začal rýchlo šíriť naprieč Spojenými štátmi americkými, kde sa onedlho dostal do hlavného prúdu. S príchodom skupiny N.W.A. vznikol štýl nazývaný „Gangsta rap,” ktorý získal vďaka svojej surovosti a úprimnosti mnoho prívržencov, ale aj kritikov. Väčšina z predstaviteľov tohto smeru boli trestanci, ktorí oslavovali nelegálny štýl života a tým oslovovali široké publikum. Trestná minulosť sa dokonca začala verejne propagovať nahrávacími štúdiami a považovala sa za vlastnosť, ktorá určovala legitimitu textov umelca. Touto fázou sa rap začal ľudom spájať s násilím, drogami a sexom. Po ére „Gangsta rapu“ nastúpila v Amerike takzvaná „Zlata éra“ rapu, za ktorej sa preslávili dvaja z vôbec najslávnejších umelcov tohto žánru – 2pac a Notorious B.I.G. Nevraživosť medzi

umelcami východného pobrežia Spojených štátov a západného pobrežia vyústila do tragického konca oboch týchto rapperov. Spory medzi umelcami tohto žánru, pri ktorých sa vzájomne snažia obhájiť svoju suverenitu, takzvané „beefy,“ sa odvtedy stali prirodzenou súčasťou tejto subkultúry. Netrvalo dlho, a na konci deväťdesiatych rokov dvadsiateho storočia rap prenikol do rádiového vysielania. S príchodom a preslávením Eminema, prestal byť rap záležitosťou iba tmavého obyvateľstva. Mnoho umelcov posúvalo hranice tohto žánru a rap sa rýchlo vyvíjal. Avšak, ako platí pri všetkých hudobných žánroch, čím známejším sa stáva, je možné v ňom nájsť viac dobrých, ale i zlých vecí. Cez rádiá sa rap začal šíriť do celého sveta.

Na Slovensko sa rap však začal dostávať až po páde železnej opony, čo výrazne oneskorilo jeho vývoj. Jeho začiatky boli zdĺhavé a do všeobecného povedomia sa dostal až v po roku dvetisíc, keď v roku dvetisíctri Kontrafakt vydal skladbu „Dáva mi“, ktorá sa dostala na vrcholy českých a slovenských hudobných rebríčkov a klip na túto skladbu sa dokonca objavil aj v MTV. Tak ako to bolo v Amerike, ani na Slovensku sa rap nevyhol kriticismu. V slovenskom rape sa pôvodne zvyklo rapovať po slovensky a okrem vulgarizmov sa v textoch zvyčajne zdôrazňovala slovanská solidarita, národná hrdosť a dôraz sa kladol na výpovednú hodnotu textov.

V Amerike sa medzičasom rap stále vyvíjal. Súčasný americký hip-hop dominuje svetovým hudobným rebríčkom a zo subkultúry sa stala plnohodnotná, ba až neodmysliteľná, časť dominantnej kultúry. Veľa súčasných amerických hip-hopových umelcov sa preslávilo po nahratí svojej podomácky skomponovanej tvorby na internetové platformy ako YouTube alebo SoundCloud. Vo svojej tvorbe kladú dôraz na umeleckú hodnotu piesne, využívaním softvérov na úpravu hlasu, intonácie, a nedokonalnej artikulácie. Ich cieľom je vyjadriť emóciu a odlíšiť sa svojim štýlom prejavu od ostatných rapperov. Ich nedostatok artikulácie je mnohokrát zapríčinený nadmernou konzumáciou omamných látok, kedy strácajú plnú kontrolu nad ovládaním svojho tela. Takisto pri nahrávaní skladieb uprednostňujú voľný tok myšlienok pred cieľeným písaním textov vopred. Preto sa výpovedná hodnota ich textov často dostáva do úzadia a okruh tém venovaný ich piesňam sa skresal na minimum. Inak povedané, rapujú o tom istom stále dokola. Dôležitým aspektom súčasnej tvorby a prezentácie rapového umelca je dôraz na módu – tento aspekt bol, okrem jazykovej stránky, tiež hlavným znakom umelcov, ktorí priniesli zmenu vo vnímaní rapperov aj na Slovensko.

Rapperi, ktorí v roku dvetisíctrinásť spôsobili rozruch na slovenskej rapovej scéne zverejnením skladby „Rap a móda“ na YouTube, boli zo zoskupenia Haha Crew. Ich texty



plné dovtedy na Slovensku neznámych módnych značiek, anglicizmov a odkazov na Spojené štáty americké boli sprvu nepochopené a zavrňované hlavne ich staršími, skúsenejšími kolegami z brandže, ktorí sa do tej doby postarali o vybudovanie scény, kde kládli dôraz na slovenský jazyk a jeho hodnoty. Postupom času, s nimi začali spolupracovať aj niektorí umelci zo „starej školy“ ako napríklad skupina Kontrafakt. Keďže ide o najprestížnejšiu slovenskú rapovú skupinu, ktorej členovia stáli aj pri vzniku slovenskej hip-hopovej scény, mnohí kolegovia sa inšpirovali ich konaním a dali voľný priebeh vývoju Slovenského rapu. Medzičasom sa na Slovensku objavili ďalší noví umelci s podobným, alebo ešte radikálnejším prístupom k tvorbe textov, ako spomínaná Haha Crew.

Praktická časť práce sa zaoberá jazykom rapperov, ako v Amerike tak aj na Slovensku. Domnievame sa, že globalizácia ako jav, je zodpovedná za spomínané zmeny v návykoch slovenských rapperov. Preto je jej venovaná jedna z podkapitol praktickej časti. Tá je následne rozvitá do samostatnej podkapitoly týkajúcej sa vplyvu globalizácie na hip-hopovú subkultúru, ako aj význam globálneho jazyka, ktorým je momentálne angličtina. Anglický jazyk sa stal univerzálnym nástrojom komunikácie medzi väčšinou krajín, vďaka vplyvu národov, ktoré angličtinu používajú ako materinský jazyk. Jednou z týchto krajín, pravdepodobne s najväčším medzinárodným vplyvom, sú Spojené štáty Americké.

Aby bolo možné skúmať vplyv globalizácie na jazyk Slovenských rapperov, bolo nutné najskôr charakterizovať jazyk rapperov v Amerike. Charakterizovali sme fonetickú, sémantickú, gramatickú a lexikálnu stránku tohto jazyka. Zistili sme, že z mnohých hľadísk má súčasný jazyk tejto subkultúry v Amerike veľa spoločných znakov s africko-americkou ľudovou angličtinou, keďže predstavitelia moderného „Mumble rapu“ sú častokrát jedinci afro-amerického pôvodu. Tieto prvky sa prejavujú vo fonetike ako napríklad spodobovanie, skracovanie slov, a rôzne iné formy fonetickej relaxácie. Gramatika a synax sa taktiež v mnohých bodoch stotožňujú s touto s africko-americkou ľudovou angličtinou. Okruh tém, rozoberaný v textoch súčasnej americkej tvorby zahŕňa najmä chválenie samého seba a poukazovanie na svoju nadradenosť voči ostatným členom subkultúry. Rapperi toho docieľujú aj skrz zapájanie iných tém, akými sú móda alebo materiálne bohatstvo. Často spomínanou témou sú drogy, ktorých sme v práci uviedli celé spektrum, takisto ako násilie a nevraživosť spojená s členstvom v gangoch. V neposlednom rade texty obsahujú veľa referencií na ženské pohlavie, hlavne ako objekty sexuálneho uspokojenia. Ďalším špecifikom tohto jazyka je používanie takzvaných ad-libs, čo sú slová, ktoré zdôrazňujú hlavné myšlienky v textoch. V mnohých prípadoch sa jedná o citoslovčia. Nespisovné slová

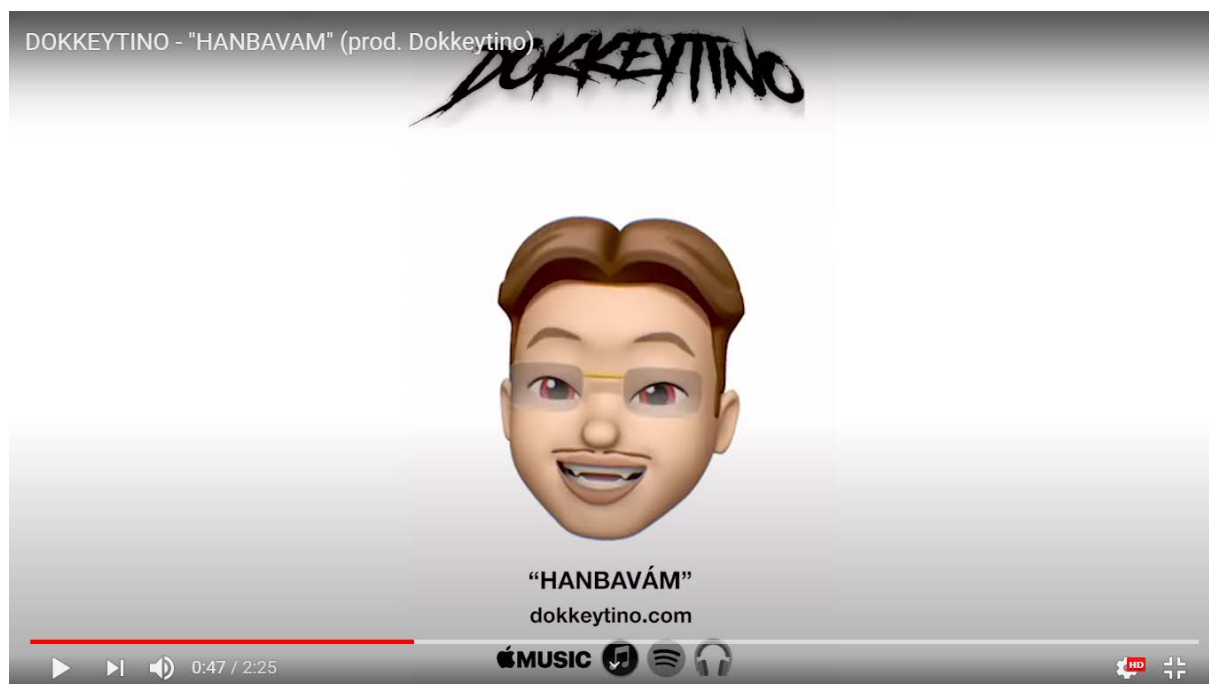
a slangové výrazy sú taktiež neoddeliteľnou súčasťou hip-hopového jazyka. Ako príklady, na ktorých sme ilustrovali jednotlivé lingvistické úkazy sme použili úryvky z textov konkrétnych piesní. Pre výber interpretov týchto piesní sme zvolili definované kritériá týkajúce sa miesta, času a ich popularity.

V ďalšej z podkapitol sme skúmali, akým spôsobom je možné nadobudnúť identitu prostredníctvom jazyka. V globalizovanom svete prichádzajú jednotlivé jazyky do spoločného kontaktu stále častejšie. Vzájomne na seba pôsobia a prostredníctvom ich používateľov sa deformujú. Vznikajú rôzne hybridné formy jazykov, ktoré majú svoje vlastné lokálne pravidlá a uplatnenie.

Postupne sme sa prepracovali k poslednej podkapitole, kde na analýze konkrétnych textov slovenských rapperov overujeme hypotézu, že jazyk slovenských rapperov je priamo ovplyvnený jazykom amerických rapperov. V súvislosti so samotným jazykom je spojené aj preberanie identity a príslušnosti k danej subkultúre, ktorá, ako sa ukázalo nemusí byť len lokálna. Globalizácia napomáha javu nadobúdania takzvanej „glokálnej“ identity, ktorá má okrem iného za následok deformáciu jazyka. Ako materiály pre overenie sme zhromaždili a vyseletovali texty, alebo úseky textov, súčasných slovenských umelcov, na ktorých je možné pozorovať tieto javy. Kritériom pri výbere bol iba dátum vydania jednotlivých skladieb, ktorý sa pohybuje v časovom intervale od roku dvetisícpätnásť nahor. Snažili sme sa pokryť každú oblasť jazyka charakterizovanú v kapitole o americkom hip-hopovom jazyku a následne nájsť podobnosti týkajúce sa jednotlivých oblastí. Našli sme množstvo zhôd na fonetickej, sémantickej, gramatickej, tematickej aj lexikálnej úrovni, preto považujeme túto hypotézu za pravdivú.

## Annexes

### Annexe 1



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