**The analysis of textual and stylistic features**

**of Greek hip hop songs through corpus linguistics.**

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1. **Theoretical framework**

Rap Music and the culture that surrounds rapping itself also known as hip-hop, is a genre of music and a lifestyle which originated in the housing projects of New York City, New York, in the 1970s but which now has global influence and expansion. While not uncontroversial and with numerous critics, rap music has emerged as one of the most popular musical forms in the world. From a marginalized form of cultural expression, hip-hop has transcended its previously deprecated by the masses status and currently constitutes a popular medium of artistic expression that is commercially successful and an exceptionally lucrative music genre of mass or pop culture (Werner 2018). The aforementioned shift in hip-hop reception and its omnipresence in music industry and market necessitates the mapping of its rhetoric and an exhaustive investigation of its linguistic and ideological transformations and variations from its birth as of now. The present thesis will attempt to delve into the textual and stylistic features of Greek hip-hop aiming towards defining its distinctive attributes and strands as a literary genre governed by its own norms. A diachronic approach on the evolution of the music genre under inspection, from the 90s up until the 10s, will be actualized by employing the affordances of corpus linguistics.

As is highlighted in academia (Androutsopoulos 2015, Roth-Gordon 2008, among others) hip-hop comes into existence and is performed both on an international and a local level. Hip-hop artists’ music production is twofold in nature. While it is determined and influenced by shared experiences and common topoi, as well as gets shaped by similar cultural models (such as that of the African-American ‘original hip-hop’) and the linguistic norms of such music genre, simultaneously, hip-hop artists appropriate local, shared points of reference in an effort to achieve a more personal(ised) style. The multiple instantiations of hip hop music and songs production diverge from the ‘original’ on the axis of linguistic and thematic choices, as well as the cultural references included in them (Mitchell 2001).

As is indicated by a number of linguistic studies on hip-hop songs, artists strive to construct a style of “authenticity” by conscious linguistic choices that deviate from linguistic norms (Delis 2022, Kreyer 2016, Olivo 2001, Werner 2019, among others). Studies on hip-hop conducted in English (Kreyer & Mukherjee 2007, Werner 2012) reveal that the high frequency of first and second person of personal pronoun occurrence along with the low type-token ratio are associated with the informal and interpersonal style that artists wish to convey through their songs. Brett & Pinna (2019), on the other hand, extrapolate that hip-hop is characterized by higher lexical density in comparison to other music genres, while Watanabe (2018) concludes that songs of such genre have almost formal style which does not, in any way, resemble that of conversations. The significance of the present research lies in that fact that, in terms of methodology, never before has corpus linguistics been utilized in the study of such a seminal music genre, employing data in Greek language. The apparent lack of a comprehensive charting of Greek hip-hop music, from its birth onwards, through representative of each decade texts reveals the imperative need to thoroughly examine the various aspects and idiosyncrasies of Greek hip-hop. The present study will commit to deducing all-encompassing conclusions about language use and the particular linguistic choices that Greek artists exploit towards formulating the Greek hip-hop identity within the pop culture continuum diachronically.

**2. Data and Methodology**

According to Gibbons & Whiteley (2018), a methodology combining quantitative and qualitative tools is fundamental in analyzing literary texts. The value of qualitative and quantitative methodologies synergy is highlighted by Goutsos & Hatzidaki (2017), Ho (2011) and Shepherd & Sardinha (2013). Following the paradigm of synergetic methodological approaches, the present research will adopt the methodologies and concepts developed within the framework of corpus linguistics (Γούτσος & Φραγκάκη 2015), corpus stylistics (Biber 2011, McIntyre & Walker 2019), and sociolinguistics focusing on stylistic aspects (e.g. Hernandez-Campoy 2016).

To this end, a corpus containing Greek hip-hop songs lyrics from the last three decades (1990, 2000, 2010) will be compiled and subsequently be compared to a hip-hop corpus of anglophone songs ranging from 1960-2010, part of which has already been utilized for a related research on hip-hop songs in English (Delis 2019). In terms of size, the Greek hip-hop corpus includes 222.474 words, while the reference corpus, namely that of anglophone hip-hop, contains 627.555 words. In order to compile a representative corpus of Greek hip-hop songs, due to the absence of data depicting the commercial success of songs, such as music charts issued by Billboard.com, popularity along with the positive reception of particular artists by the general public/audience will function as a selection criterion. Data extracted from tertiary texts articulated by supporters and activists of this particular music genre are to serve as indicators for selecting the songs to be added in the corpus.

The parameters that are to guide the analysis of the data are the decade that the lyrics are composed and for the comparison between Greek and English song lyrics are the artists’ gender, their nationality and the language itself.

**3. Research Questions**

From the theoretical framework and methodology introduced above the following research questions to be investigated emerge:

* How could Greek hip-hop be conceptualized as a register of its own?

More specifically, which are the stylistic differences and similarities shared between Greek hip-hop lyrics and other written or spoken genres, namely those that exist in SEK (Goutsos 2010)? Is hip-hop to be perceived as oral poetry or as a genre that lends characteristics of others (hybrid genre)? Pivotal to answering this question will be the type-token ratio investigation.

* Which thematic patterns (re)occur in Greek hip-hop and how do they diachronically evolve?

More specifically, what is to be investigated is whether Greek hip-hop cultivates thematic categories similar to those of anglophone hip-hop (see Kreyer 2016) and whether Greek hip-hop develops a concern for local issues that distinguishes itself and diverges from global hip-hop. Pivotal to answering this question will be the dissection of keyword lists.

* How do the stylistic characteristics of Greek hip-hop vary across decades, genders, nationalities, and languages?

More specifically, lemmas, common and different across sub-corpora, and the subsequent semantic and pragmatic functions they assume are to be examined, as well as the positive or negative semantic prosody of the lemmas as opposed to their inherent axiological value. Pivotal to answering this question will be the analysis of keywords, clusters, n-grams, and collocations, as well as the qualitative analysis of the relevant lemmas.

It is anticipated that the study of the Greek hip-hop music corpus will elucidate the multifaceted nature of it, namely a music genre that through the decades progressively assumes more attributes of orality and dialogicity and shares common thematic patterns with its international counterpart. The research is expected to bring to the surface themes that are inextricably linked to Greek reality, the status quo and its adversities which are so distinct and culturally specific that significantly diverge from global hip-hop. Finally, it is foreseen that the study at hand will reveal hip-hop artists’ predilection for addressing political issues and power-related topics.

The answers to the aforementioned questions are expected to substantially assist the linguistic exploration of Greek hip-hop. Hip-hop is a rather critical component of Greek language, the study of which could potentially lead to meaningful conclusions about linguistic, stylistic, and contextual characteristics of poetic genres and pop culture within the Greek social equilibrium.

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