



## The use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in three selected songs of Jay Park's album *The Road Less Traveled*

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate and identify the linguistic feature of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) used in the three selected songs of Jay Park's album, *The Road Less Traveled*, and understand the underlying reasons for this AAVE use by applying sociolinguistic approach. The data were analyzed using several theories from Wolfram (2004), Fromkin et al. (2011), and Davenport and Hanna (2005) to analyse AAVE features and Cutler's (2015) theory to analyze the underlying reasons why Jay Park employed AAVE in his songs. The data was gathered by attentively and comprehensively listening to the songs and reading the transcribed lyrics. The results were as follows: Jay Park used five out of the 13 grammatical features of African American Vernacular English, including copula absence, invariant be, remote been, specialized auxiliaries, and the use of "ain't" for negation. Additionally, he only employed two out of the proposed lexical features of AAVE, which are blends and clipping. Also, two phonetics features found in his music were regressive assimilation and deletion. Overall, the findings suggest that the use of AAVE by Jay Park in his songs is due to the authenticity of Hip-Hop culture regardless of the singer's nationality and to express empathy and solidarity with the African-American community.

**Keywords:** African-American Vernacular English (AAVE); hip-hop; Jay Park; linguistic features; song

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### INTRODUCTION

Language variation is a topic in sociolinguistics that has been analyzed by many researchers, as it reflects the complex relationship between language and society. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) provide a definition for a systematic language variation as the distinctive speech characteristics exhibited by a particular group. Maclagan (2005) categorizes language variations into two forms: user-based variations, which reveal the speaker's geographical location, origin, gender, age, social class, ethnicity, and education; and use-based variations, which pertain to changes in speech situations or events. One of the most interesting examples of language variation is African American Vernacular English (AAVE), a dialect of the English language commonly spoken by many

individuals of African American descent in the United States.

AAVE is a form of American English that is primarily used by urban working-class and mostly middle-class African Americans. It is considered a variety of English and can be categorized as a dialect, ethnolect, and sociolect (Green, 2002). AAVE has its roots in the historical and cultural experiences of African Americans in the United States. One study conducted by Ramos (2020) found that AAVE has distinct features that set it apart from Standard American English, including unique vocabulary, pronunciation patterns, and grammatical structures. Despite being stigmatized and marginalized for many years, AAVE is now acknowledged as a legitimate and valuable dialect, gaining recognition and

appreciation for its cultural significance and linguistic complexity.

The utilization of AAVE is prevalent in a specific genre of music known as rap, an integral component of African American cultural expression termed Hip-Hop. Despite rap primarily being associated with the black community, the global dissemination of Hip-Hop music, along with the incorporation of its affiliated dialect AAVE, has extended its influence beyond African Americans, encompassing individuals of various ethnicities, even Asians. One of the Asian singers who use AAVE in his music is Jay Park, a Korean-American musician who is a songwriter, rapper, producer, and choreographer who draws inspiration from '90s R&B and hip-hop. Additionally, he is a member of the Art of Movement crew and the founder of AOMG and H1GHR MUSIC labels. Park started his journey in the K-pop industry after finishing college. He joined the boy band 2PM and was part of it from 2008 to 2010 before pursuing a solo career. Originally from Edmonds, Washington, Park developed a fondness for hip-hop culture at a young age and later began his entertainment career after relocating to South Korea as a teenager. Signing with Jay-Z's Roc Nation label in 2017 was a significant achievement, as he became the first Asian-American artist to do so.

African American Vernacular English (AAVE) has caught the attention of many scholars due to its unique characteristics. In a study conducted by Suyudi et al (2023) on Eminem's album, it was found that negation is the most commonly used grammatical feature in AAVE, while the invariant *be* is the least common. Astuti (2018) analyzed Logic's album "Everybody" and discovered that 11 out of 13 grammatical features of AAVE were present. Logic's use of AAVE is influenced by three reasons: establishing himself in the Hip-Hop community, neighbourhood influence, and proving himself as black. Aryani (2020) focused on Rich Brian's use of AAVE and identified 7 grammatical features in the lyrics. In Yannuar et al's (2023) study of Indonesian rapper Ramengvrl, 8 out of 13 grammatical features of AAVE were found. The use of AAVE by Ramengvrl is influenced by Hip-Hop artists, the authenticity of Hip-Hop culture, and the representation of herself as an anti-language. Islami and Ardaniah's (2017)

research on Nicki Minaj's lyrics revealed the presence of new words with phonological processes. These studies have contributed to the understanding of the use of AAVE in contemporary music. However, there is still a research gap in understanding the detailed analysis of AAVE features and the social and cultural factors that influence its usage, especially AAVE that is used by Asian such as Korean, Indonesian, Chinese, Japan, and so on.

To fill the gap, this study focuses on Jay Park, a singer who has gained widespread popularity due to his unique fusion of cultural influences and global appeal. However, his use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in his music raises questions about the authenticity of his linguistic choices and the potential appropriation of AAVE within the music industry. To address these concerns, this research aims to identify African American Vernacular English (AAVE) features in three selected songs from Jay Park's album "The Road Less Traveled" and uncover the reasons underlying Jay Park's use of AAVE. In conducting this study, Wolfram (2004), Ramos (2020), Davenport and Hannah (2005), Fromkin et al. (2011) and Cutler (2015) are adopted as the theoretical framework. It is hoped that this research can contribute to the understanding of the relationship between language and culture while bridging a research gap in investigating the influence of different cultures and musical genres on the use of AAVE in contemporary music.

## **METHOD**

The research design for this study was a descriptive qualitative method. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a technique for examining and understanding the significance that people or groups attach to a social problem. This study applies a descriptive-qualitative method since the aim of the study is to understand the social phenomena which focused on the use of AAVE features in (three) selected song lyrics. Hence, this research design is appropriate as the data were analyzed descriptively rather than numerically.

The data for this study were the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) on three selected songs included in an album

of Korean rapper, Jay Park, called "The Road Less Traveled" which was released in June 7, 2019. All of the songs in this album were sung dominantly in English. According to Eiswerth (1995), it has been established that engaging in the study of music has the potential to inspire individuals to broaden their knowledge of diverse cultures. Consequently, the outcomes of this study hold significant educational value for individuals who are learning a foreign language, specifically in terms of enhancing their linguistic capabilities towards African American Vernacular English. This is particularly important for non-native speakers, as the findings aim to offer readers a more comprehensive understanding of the distinct characteristics inherent in this dialect, while also assisting them in overcoming any confusion that may arise from mistakenly perceiving it as broken English.

The focus of this study was one of the Asian singers who use AAVE in his music, Jay Park, A Korean-American artist who is known for his influence in hip-hop music. He is not only a songwriter and rapper but also a producer, choreographer, and member of the Art of Movement crew. Park grew up in Edmonds, Washington, where he developed a passion for hip-hop culture. As a teenager, he relocated to South Korea and started his career in the entertainment industry. In 2017, his signing with Jay-Z's Roc Nation label became a significant achievement, as he became the first Asian-American artist to achieve this milestone. In this study, it explores how his unique blend of cultural influences and linguistic expressions has resonated with audiences worldwide.

In terms of data collection procedure, Creswell (2014) suggests that qualitative data collecting procedure involves four basic techniques which are interview, observation, documentation, and audio-visual materials. However, the researcher only used documentation and audio material for obtaining data from Jay Park songs. Three songs, specifically "Get it all," "Legacy," and "Twisted Dreams," were analyzed by actively listening to them on the streaming platform Spotify and reading the transcribed lyrics on Genius Lyrics, the largest website for song

lyrics where the musicians themselves approved most of the lyrics.

The analysis was rooted in the framework of American Vernacular English (AAVE) features such as phonetic, grammatical, and lexical features, drawing from the works of prominent researchers such as Wolfram (2004), Ramos (2020), Davenport and Hannah (2005), and Fromkin et al. (2011). Additionally, Cutler's (2015) theory was applied to examine the factors that underlie the utilization of AAVE in Jay Park's Hip-hop music.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This findings and discussion is divided into four parts. The first part presents the findings on grammatical features of AAVE in three songs of the album *The road Less Traveled* used by Jay Park. The second part is the findings on lexical features of AAVE in three songs of the album *The road Less Traveled* used by Jay Park. Next part is the findings on phonetic features. Finally, the last part shows the findings on the underlying reasons in three songs of the album *The Road Less Traveled* used by Jay Park.

### Grammatical Features in Jay Park's *The Road Less Traveled* Album

Jay Park utilizes only five out of the 13 grammatical characteristics of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) suggested by Wolfram (2004). These include the absence of the copula, invariant be, remote been, specialized auxiliaries, and the use of ain't. Among these, copula absence is the most prevalent feature utilized by Jay Park.

#### Copula absence

Copula absence according to Wolfram (2004) refers to the absence of the auxiliary verb including in the sentence. In this study, the findings reveal that Jay Park frequently utilizes a structure in his songs from African American Vernacular English (AAVE), specifically by deleting copula and auxiliary components for contractible forms of "is" and "are". This pattern is highly prevalent, as shown in the following table:

**Table 1**  
*Copula Absence in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
1	you know <i>we scoring</i> points	Twisted Dreams	5
2	When <i>we trying</i> to be a soldier	Twisted Dreams	12
3	Intent on winning wars <i>they taking</i> shots	Twisted Dreams	13
4	And even if <i>we different</i>	Twisted Dreams	22
5	<i>We crossin'</i> every border	Get it all	12
6	<i>We leaving</i> trails	Get it all	27
7	<i>we leading</i> the movement	Get it all	27
8	<i>They at a loss</i> of words	Get it all	67
9	And <i>the streets selling</i> meat	Twisted Dreams	64
10	Now <i>you seein'</i>	Legacy	72
11	<i>People in positions of power really imposters</i>	Legacy	73
12	I talk to Pop like <i>he a friend to me</i>	Legacy	92
13	<i>This the type</i> of verse feel it in your bones and joints	Twisted Dreams	2
14	<i>This our legacy</i>	Legacy	57
15	<i>Beautiful hope turning</i> into twisted dreams	Twisted Dreams	27; 76

In all of the data above, the omission of copula/auxiliary generally happens with the second and third person pronouns (you, we, they, he, and it), and there is no example provided for the first person context. The copula "are" is consistently omitted in data (1)-(11); yet the copula "is" is omitted in data (12)-(15). In this particular stylistic choice, the copula is intentionally dropped, resulting in a more concise and informal expression. This is

similar to Astuti (2018) where AAVE shows resistance to removing the verb "be" when it is used in the first person singular form.

**Invariant Be**

Invariant be referred to the use of "be" as a general verb, regardless of the subject (Wolfram, 2004). It is found in three Jay Park's songs in his album as in the following table:

**Table 2**  
*Invariant Be in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
16	And still be around monsters	Twisted Dreams	18
17	And you be needin' extra time	Twisted Dreams	51
18	They be like "It's my honor"	Get it all	14
19	yeah I be grinding all day	Get it all	45; 46; 47; 48

Data (16) suggests that despite facing difficulties or challenges (referred to as "monster"), someone or something continues to exist or persist. The use of "be" implies that this persistence is a recurring or habitual behaviour, happening repeatedly over time. The line "yeah I be grinding all day" in data (19), the use of "be" in the phrase "I be grinding" suggests a habitual aspect. It implies that the action of "grinding" (which often refers to working hard or putting in effort) is something the speaker does repeatedly or habitually throughout the day.

So, the sentence conveys a sense of ongoing and regular effort, suggesting that the speaker is consistently engaged in the activity of grinding or working hard. Also, the lyric in data (18) demonstrates the habitual nature of others' response or perception. The use of "be" here suggests that people consistently respond with the statement "It's my honor," indicating it is a common reaction or sentiment. Overall, the invariant "be" in AAVE serves to convey habitual or ongoing actions, states, or perceptions that are expected to continue into the present and future. This is

in line with Suyudi et al. (2023) who found that invariant be is to denote a habitual aspect, or an occurrence that is recurrent.

**Remote Been**

Using the word "been" with a past tense verb may indicate a special way of expressing an activity that happened a long time ago (Wolfram, 2004). Remote been is found in three Jay Park's songs in his album *The Road Less Traveled* as in the following table:

**Table 3**  
*Remote Been in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
20	Since Trump's <i>been</i> in office, it seems that we lost it	Legacy	70
21	The US <i>been</i> a mess	Legacy	80

The lyrics in data (20) suggests that Trump's presidency has had a negative impact continuously throughout his time in office. The word "been" implies that this negative situation began when Trump took office and has remained true up until the present moment. It highlights the duration of

**Table 4**  
*Specialized Auxiliaries in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
22	Pop that Ace 'cause we <i>finna</i> celebrate	Get it all	24	
23	How long they <i>gon'</i> ignore us	Get it all	11	
24	We <i>gonna</i> make it	Get it all	84	
25	We <i>gonna</i> take it	Get it all	85	
26	You <i>gotta</i> believe, you can't keep running from God	Twisted dreams	45	
27	There's a war brewing, everybody <i>gotta</i> suit up	Get it all	9	
28	We <i>gotta</i> teach fear is a direct descendant of hate	Legacy	83	
29	We <i>gotta</i> do better	Legacy	88	
30	I <i>gotta</i> do this for my legacy	Legacy	93	

Data (22) utilize "finna" as a specialized auxiliary that is a contraction as found to. Data (23)-(25) are also specialized auxiliary. "Gon" and "Gonna" is a contraction of "going to" and is used to indicate future actions. Also, data (26)-(30) utilize "gotta" as a specialized auxiliary. "Gotta" is a contraction of "got to" and is used to indicate necessity

the negative effects and reinforces the idea that the US has been in a state of mess or turmoil throughout Trump's term. In addition, by using "been" in data (21), the lyrics convey that the mess and chaos in the US have been a prolonged and ongoing issue, attributing it to the entire duration of Trump's presidency. This linguistic feature adds depth to the statement, emphasizing the impact over time rather than just stating that the US is currently a mess. This is similar to Yannuar et al. (2023), where the use of "been" in AAVE expressions also denotes a perfect tense lacking "has" or "have," reflecting a remote past activity, although in these instances, the absence of subjects adds an informal tone, distinct from the specific emphasis on continuous impact observed in Jay Park's songs.

**Specialized Auxiliaries**

Different auxiliary verbs serve specific semantic and pragmatic purposes that set African American Vernacular English (AAVE) apart from other regional dialects of English (Wolfram, 2004). Several specialized auxiliaries occur in in three Jay Park's songs in his album *The Road Less Traveled*, as follows:

or obligation. This is similar to Yannuar et al. (2023) that also highlights the presence of specialized auxiliaries in AAVE, demonstrating the specific meaning and practical functions that set AAVE apart from other forms of English, and highlighting a common grammatical characteristic within AAVE language usage.

**The Use of “Ain’t”**

AAVE has various ways to express negation, such as using multiple negatives or negative concord. This can involve placing an indefinite word before a negative verb, inverting the negative, or using the word "ain't" (Wolfram,

2004). The three songs that have been analyzed employ only one out of the three forms of negation in AAVE which is the use of ain't as shown in the following table:

**Table 5**

*The Use of Ain't in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
31	I <i>ain't</i> perfect but far from worthless though you feel my soul	Twisted Dreams	7
32	I <i>ain't</i> talking clothes	Twisted Dreams	9
33	monsters I <i>ain't</i> talking Digimon	Twisted Dreams	18
34	But I <i>ain't</i> gon' judge	Get it all	15
35	I <i>ain't</i> wastin' no time no more	Get it all	78
36	I <i>ain't</i> movin' backwards	Legacy	37
37	Man, I <i>ain't</i> even black	Legacy	45
38	We <i>ain't</i> fucking around no more	Get it all	77

The data (31)-(38) show that the word "ain't" is used in AAVE to replace "are + not" and "am + not" in the context of negative auxiliary verbs in the present progressive tense. For example, in data (31), "ain't" is used to negate the idea of being perfect. It expresses the speaker's acknowledgment of their imperfections while emphasizing that they are not completely without value. In data (34), "ain't" is used to indicate the speaker's refusal or unwillingness to judge others. It emphasizes that they will not engage in judgmental behaviour. In data (36), "ain't" is used to negate the statement that the speaker is moving backward. It asserts that they are determined to keep moving forward, not in the opposite direction. In data (37), "ain't" is used to negate the statement that the speaker is black. This line suggests that the speaker does not identify themselves as solely or exclusively Black. Last, "ain't" in data (38) is used to negate the statement that they are "fucking around". This is similar to

Yannuar et al. (2023) where the use of "ain't" in AAVE acts as a negative word replacing different ways of saying 'not' in sentences, emphasizing saying no in different situations and sometimes using more than one negative, demonstrating a regular part of how AAVE is spoken.

**Lexical Features**

Fromkin et al. (2011) have proposed a number of lexical features that are specific to AAVE. Jay Park only employs 2 of them. They are blends and clipping. Blends is the most dominating feature.

**Blends**

Blends in AAVE are formed by combining two words, but they involve leaving out parts of the original words (Fromkin et al., 2011). It occurs in in three Jay Park's songs in his album *The Road Less Traveled*, as follows:

**Table 6**

*Blends in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
339	You <i>gotta</i> believe, you can't keep running from God	Twisted dreams	45
440	There's a war brewing, everybody <i>gotta</i> suit up	Get it all	9
441	We <i>gotta</i> teach fear is a direct descendant of hate	Legacy	83
442	We <i>gotta</i> do better	Legacy	88
443	I <i>gotta</i> do this for my legacy	Legacy	93
444	Ooo, <i>I'm a</i> bad man gimme the loot	Twisted Dreams	19
445	<i>I'm a</i> Moor	Legacy	85
446	so <i>I'm a</i> direct descendant of greats	Legacy	85

447	I'm permanent and <i>y'all</i> make shift	Get it all	20
448	Because <i>y'all</i> my brothers	Legacy	15
449	my actions reflect <i>y'all</i>	Legacy	15
550	All I <i>Wanna</i> Do	Get it all	34
551	All I <i>Wanna</i> Do	Twisted dreams	8
552	They don't <i>wanna</i> see	Legacy	53
553	How long they <i>gon'</i> ignore us	Get it all	11
554	But I ain't' <i>gon'</i> judge	Get it all	15
555	We <i>gonna</i> make it	Get it all	84
556	We <i>gonna</i> take it	Get it all	85
557	Ooo, I'm a bad man <i>gimme</i> the loot	Legacy	19
558	<i>Tryna</i> find my inner peace like I'm Buddha	Get it all	3
559	<i>Tryna</i> pass this bread around the team like a rumor	Get it all	5

In data (39)-(43), "gotta" is a blend formed by merging "got" and "to." It is a colloquial contraction commonly used in AAVE, meaning "have got to" or "have to". It implies the need or obligation to teach a particular concept or idea. Another blend mentioned in data (44)-(46) is "I'm a," created by merging "I'm" and "going to." This blend is used to refer to future plans or actions. The blend "Y'all" in data (47)-(49) is formed by combining "you" and "all." It is a common way to address a group of people in AAVE. "Wanna" in data (50) and (51) is a blend of "want" and "to," indicating a desire or intention to do something. The blends "gon" and "gonna" in data (52) and (56) are formed by merging "going" and "to." They are used to express future actions or plans. Also in data (57), the blend "gimme" is derived from the words "give" and "me." The omission of

the "ve" sound in "give" and its replacement with "me" results in the creation of the colloquial blending form "gimme". The blend "tryna" in data (58) and (59) is created by merging "trying" and "to," omitting the middle part of the words. It is a common AAVE contraction used to express an attempt or intention. This is similar to the study by Islami and Ardaniah (2017) that found the same blends which are used in various contexts to convey specific meanings or intentions in a shorter and more colloquial manner.

### Clipping

Fomkin et al. (2011) state that clipping involves condensing longer words into shorter forms and it occurs in in three Jay Park's songs in his album *The Road Less Traveled*, as follows:

**Table 7**

*Clipping in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
60	Kill <i>'em</i> for real really	Get it all	49
61	That's why you can catch <i>'em</i> at my shows yelling preach	Twisted dreams	54
62	Working <i>till</i> everybody balls yeah	Get it all	72

The word "them" in data (60) is clipped to "'em" which is a common feature in AAVE. The use of "kill'em" means to defeat or overcome someone or something. In data (61), "'em" is again used as a clipping for "them". It is a common feature in AAVE where the pronunciation of "them" is shortened to "'em". Furthermore, in data (62), "till" is a clipped form of "until". This is similar to Islami and Ardaniah (2017) who found the same clipping words that makes communication

more efficient and often giving a distinct rhythm and style to the language.

### Phonetics Features

In accordance with Davenport and Hanna (2005) framework, the analysis reveals two primary features in three songs from Jay Park's album "The Road Less Traveled". They are regressive assimilation and deletion. Deletion is the most dominating feature.

**Regressive Assimilation**

There is only one regressive assimilation found in three songs of the album *The Road Less Traveled* used by Jay Park that can be seen on the following table:

**Table 8**  
*Regressive Assimilation in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
63	Ooo, I'm a bad man <i>gimme</i> the loot	Twisted dreams	19

In data (63), The term "gimme" or "give me" exemplifies a linguistic process known as regressive assimilation, which involves three types of assimilation. In terms of articulation,

the final consonant "v" in "give" is a labiodental sound, and it is followed by the initial consonant "m" in "me," which is a bilabial sound. When "v" is followed by "m," it changes to "m," resulting in the pronunciation "gimme." This phenomenon is similar to the findings of Islami and Ardaniah (2017), who observed a consonant change in manner of articulation in the word "gimme." In this case, the final consonant "v" in "give" is a fricative sound, while the initial consonant "m" in "me" is a nasal stop sound. (Islami & Ardaniah, 2017)

**Deletion**

Davenport and Hanna (2005) explain that in various forms of English, a word-final coronal stop is deleted in clusters. It occurs in three Jay Park's songs in his album *The Road Less Traveled*, as follows:

**Table 9**  
*Deletion in Jay Park Songs*

No	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
64	You <i>gotta</i> believe, you can't keep running from God	Twisted dreams	45	
65	There's a war brewing, everybody <i>gotta</i> suit up	Get it all	9	
66	We <i>gotta</i> teach fear is a direct descendant of hate	Legacy	83	
67	We <i>gotta</i> do better	Legacy	88	
68	I <i>gotta</i> do this for my legacy	Legacy	93	
69	Ooo, I'm a bad man <i>gimme</i> the loot	Twisted Dreams	19	
70	I'm a Moor	Legacy	85	
71	so I'm a direct descendant of greats	Legacy	85	
72	I'm permanent and <i>y'all</i> make shift	Get it all	20	
73	Because <i>y'all</i> my brothers	Legacy	15	
74	my actions reflect <i>y'all</i>	Legacy	15	
75	All I <i>Wanna</i> Do	Get it all	34	
76	All I <i>Wanna</i> Do	Twisted dreams	8	
77	They don't <i>wanna</i> see	Legacy	53	
78	How long they <i>gon'</i> ignore us	Get it all	11	
79	But I ain't' <i>gon'</i> judge	Get it all	15	
80	We <i>gonna</i> make it	Get it all	84	
81	We <i>gonna</i> take it	Get it all	85	
82	Ooo, I'm a bad man <i>gimme</i> the loot	Legacy	19	
83	<i>Tryna</i> find my inner peace like I'm Buddha	Get it all	3	
84	<i>Tryna</i> pass this bread around the team like a rumor	Get it all	5	
85	Kill <i>'em</i> for real really	Get it all	49	
86	That's why you can catch <i>'em</i> at my shows yelling preach	Twisted dreams	54	
87	Working <i>till</i> everybody balls yeah	Get it all	72	



There are a lot of deletion words found in Jay Park as can be seen on the table above. For example, in data (69)-(71), the phrase "I'm going to" is modified to "I'ma", with the deletion of "going to". This results in the pronunciation of [ʌmʌ]. In data (72)-(74), the word "of" is omitted from the phrase "all of you". This simplifies the phrase to "y'all" pronounced as [jɔl]. In data (78) and (79), "gonna" is simplified to "gon" by removing the "a" sound [gʊn]. This change occurs by deleting "na" from "gonna". The same omission happens in data (83) and (84) where "trying" and "to" are shortened to "tryna" [traɪnʌ] by removing "+ing" and "to". Data (85) and (86) demonstrate how "em" is simplified to "them" [ðem] by deleting the [ð].

Lastly, in data (87), the word "until" is reduced to "til" [tɪl] by omitting [ʌn]. The findings are similar to Islami and Ardaniah (2017) in that both studies analyze the phonological and morphological processes in AAVE using the lyrics of popular musicians like Nicky Minaj.

**Reasons underlying the use of AAVE**

Rap music, which is one of the key parts of hip-hop culture, has a rich history closely connected to the Black community (Cutler, 2015). The reasons underlying the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) by Jay Park in his songs can be analyzed through the lyrics in the following table:

**Table 10**  
*Reasons Underlying The Use of AAVE in Jay Park Songs*

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
88	Not me, born nice politeness rooted in my culture	Twisted dreams	14
89	Yes, I am Asian but in this occasion boy I am not faking the funk	Get it all	61
90	This is Hip-Hop where the impossible can happen	Twisted dreams	15
91	Where rappers bicker over petty shit instead of rapping	Twisted dreams	16
92	And even if we different, do me the same and respect mine	Twisted dreams	22
93	Man, I ain't even black	Legacy	45
94	I just think it's unjust	Legacy	46

The data show that the use of AAVE in Jay Park's lyrics helps to establish a sense of identity, authenticity, and connection to the Hip-Hop genre and African American culture. It allows him to convey his message effectively and connect with the audience on a deeper level.

Jay Park showcases his cultural roots and identity in data (88) and (89). He acknowledges and celebrates African-American culture by incorporating African American Vernacular English (AAVE) phrases into his lyrics. Jay Park, an Asian artist, references his Asian identity while using AAVE in his songs. This can be analyzed in the context of the impact of African American popular music on K-pop. The influence of African American popular music on K-pop is well-documented, with K-pop artists participating in a global R&B tradition through cultural work that involves

incorporating strategies from black American music.

In data (90), it can be observed that AAVE, which stands for African American Vernacular English, is strongly connected to the culture of Hip-Hop. When Jay Park incorporates AAVE into his music, he is essentially aligning his style with the traditions and accepted ways of the genre. This addition of AAVE brings a sense of genuineness and an ability to connect with a broader audience. For quite some time, AAVE has been linked with the realms of rap and Hip-Hop, and employing this language can establish a more profound bond between the artist and those who listen to his music.

Furthermore, in data (91), Jay Park criticizes the current state of rap music in this line. By using AAVE to convey his message, he taps into the language and cultural nuances present within the genre. AAVE is a

prominent feature in rap music, and using it allows Jay Park to effectively address the issues within the rap community. Data (92) highlights the idea of unity and mutual respect. Jay Park's use of AAVE can be seen as a way to bridge cultural gaps and foster understanding. By incorporating AAVE, he is expressing solidarity with the African American community and promoting inclusivity within the genre. The lyrics above convey a sense of empathy and solidarity with the black community, despite the speaker not personally identifying as black.

Last, the phrase "I ain't even black, I just think that it's unjust" in data (93) and (94) suggests that the speaker is acknowledging their own ethnicity but is still concerned about the injustices faced by black individuals. Given that Jay Park is of Korean descent and grew up in the United States, it is possible that his exposure to and integration of AAVE in his music could be a reflection of his surroundings or musical influences. This is in line with Holmes (2013) who argues that social networks shape the way people use language.

Jay Park utilizes AAVE in his lyrics to establish a sense of identity, authenticity, and connection to the hip-hop genre and African American culture. Similarly, in Yannuar et al. (2023) research that analyzes the songs by Ramengvrl, an Indonesian rapper, incorporates AAVE into her music aligning her style with the traditions and accepted ways of the genre so that it allows her to connect with a broader audience. However, there is a difference in terms of the singers' backgrounds and experiences in relation to their use of AAVE in their music. Jay Park, a Korean artist, has been exposed to American culture and language due to the place he was growing up. On the other hand, Ramengvrl, an Indonesian artist, has been inspired by American hip-hop artists like Nicki Minaj, Kanye West, and Tyler the Creator, who use AAVE in their music. This highlights how artists from diverse cultural backgrounds can be influenced by AAVE and incorporate it into their music in different ways, reflecting the global impact of AAVE.

Given these points, the analysis of Jay Park's album "The Road Less Traveled" revealed several linguistic features, including grammatical, phonetic, and lexical aspects of AAVE. The study identified five grammatical

features of AAVE in the lyrics, such as copula absence, invariant be, remote been, specialized auxiliaries, and the use of "ain't" for negation. Furthermore, lexical features such as blends and clipping were identified in the album. Besides, the analysis found phonetic features, including regressive assimilation and deletion, used to convey specific meanings and emotions in the songs. Additionally, the reasons underlying the use of AAVE by Jay Park in his songs can be attributed to the influence of rap music, which is closely connected to the Black community and has a rich history within hip-hop culture. The lyrics of the songs reflect Jay Park's acknowledgment of his Asian identity while engaging with the conventions of hip-hop and AAVE. The reasons underlying Jay Park's use of AAVE reflect his engagement with hip-hop culture and his navigation of cultural identity within the music genre.

## **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of Jay Park's album "The Road Less Traveled" revealed several linguistic features, including grammatical, phonetic, and lexical aspects of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) used in the songs. The study recognized 5 out of the 13 grammatical characteristics of African American Vernacular English as proposed by Wolfram (2004) in three songs of Jay Park's album "The Road Less Traveled" such as copula absence, invariant be, remote been, specialized auxiliaries, and the use of "ain't" for negation and the most feature occurs in the lyrics is copula absence. Furthermore, out of all the lexical features of AAVE proposed by Fromkin et al. (2011), Jay Park only employs 2 of them such as blends and clipping and the most dominating feature is blends. Moreover, in accordance with Davenport and Hanna's (2005) framework, it reveals two features such as regressive assimilation and deletion where deletion is the most dominating feature.

The reasons underlying the use of AAVE by Jay Park in his songs can be attributed to the influence of rap music, which is closely connected to the Black community and has a rich history within hip-hop culture. The lyrics of the songs reflect Jay Park's acknowledgment of his Asian identity while engaging with the conventions of hip-hop

and AAVE. For instance, in the song "Get it all," the lyrics "Yes, I am Asian but in this occasion boy I am not faking the funk" demonstrate Jay Park's awareness of his cultural background while participating in the hip-hop genre.

In conclusion, the analysis of Jay Park's album "The Road Less Traveled" provides valuable insights into the use of AAVE in the songs, encompassing grammatical, phonetic, and lexical features. The reasons underlying Jay Park's use of AAVE reflect his engagement with hip-hop culture and his navigation of cultural identity within the music genre. These findings contribute to our understanding of the linguistic and cultural dynamics present in contemporary music, particularly in the context of AAVE usage by artists from diverse backgrounds.

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