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**TRANSLANGUAGING ON ONLINE PLATFORMS:
A Netnographic Study on K-Pop Stan Twitter**

São Leopoldo

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A Netnographic Study on K-Pop Stan Twitter**

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This work is dedicated to my mother, who has always supported and encouraged me. Thank you for always believing and being there for me.

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"Language has no independent existence apart from the people who use it. It is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end of understanding who you are and what society is like." (CRYSTAL, 2010)

ABSTRACT

The world is facing an era of technological expansion, in which our offline and online lives are blending and in mutual transformation. The youth is highly connected and social media have allowed them to interact with people beyond geographical borders. Fans of different idols may build communities of practice (CoP) online, towards achieving a common goal: supporting the artists and making bonds. *Twitter* is a platform where people can easily interact with others who share similar interests, regardless of where they are from, and allowing for language exchange. It is in this online environment that this final thesis aims to analyze how Brazilian fans of K-Pop use translanguaging in their fandom practices online. To achieve this, an outline of the History of K-Pop was drawn in order to understand how this musical genre became popular among Brazilians. Then, the existing literature on translanguaging was reviewed to provide an overview on how people use language to perform social practices. Finally, a qualitative netnographic research method was applied to analyze how Brazilian K-Pop fans resource to translanguaging practices on *stan Twitter*. The generated data suggests that Brazilian K-Pop fans interact as a community of practice, making use of different translanguaging strategies in their online activities.

Keywords: Translanguaging. Communities of Practice. K-Pop. Netnography. Twitter.

RESUMO

O mundo está passando por uma era de expansão tecnológica, na qual as nossas experiências offline e online estão se fundindo e se transformando mutuamente. Os jovens estão amplamente conectados e as mídias sociais têm permitido que interajam com pessoas além de suas fronteiras geográficas. Fãs de diferentes ídolos podem formar comunidades de prática online, a fim de alcançar um objetivo em comum: apoiar os artistas e formar laços. O *Twitter* é uma plataforma em que as pessoas podem facilmente interagir com outros que compartilham dos seus interesses, independente de suas origens e permitindo intercâmbio linguístico. É nesse ambiente virtual que o presente trabalho visa analisar como fãs brasileiros de K-Pop usam translinguagem nas suas práticas online de *fandom*. Para tanto, a história do K-Pop foi traçada a fim de compreender como esse gênero musical se tornou popular entre brasileiros. Então, a literatura existente em translinguagem foi revisada para proporcionar a compreensão de como as pessoas usam a(s) língua(s) para performar práticas sociais. Por fim, um método de pesquisa netnográfico qualitativo foi aplicado para analisar como fãs brasileiros de K-Pop recorrem a práticas de translinguagem no *stan Twitter*. Os dados gerados sugerem que os fãs brasileiros de K-Pop interagem como uma comunidade de prática, fazendo uso de diferentes estratégias de translinguagem nas suas atividades online.

Palavras-chave: Translinguagem. Comunidades de Prática. K-Pop. Netnografia. Twitter.

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TABLE OF ACRONYMS

BG	Boy Group
CMC	Computer-Mediated Communication
CoP	Community of Practice
DM	Direct Message
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
GG	Girl Group
J-Pop	Japanese Pop
K-Pop	Korean Pop
MV	Music Video
OST	Original Soundtrack
SNS	Social Networking Service

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1 INTRODUCTION

Brazilian late millennials and generation Z grew up in an era of technological expansion, in which middle and upper classes have easy access to the Internet and everything it offers. Computers have allowed us to access a wider range of information, as well as to consume media produced in any area of the world. As a “gen Z” myself, I got to experience and grow in this new digital environment – although nowadays I find it quite difficult to follow certain trends. Having grown in the 2000s and lived my teenage years in the 2010s, I “lived” through some different social media – such as the late *Orkut* and *MSN Messenger*, and the still standing *Tumblr*, *Last.fm*, *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and, more recently, *TikTok*.

Throughout my online existence, not only did I communicate with friends from school and people I knew in “real life”, but I also got to know people from all over the country (and later the world). It was on *Orkut* where I would “role-play” in what we used to call, in Brazil, “*fakes*” (we used the English adjective as a noun) that I first learned about K-Pop.

Orkut fakes had different niches, such as the fans of High School Musical, RBD, Disney shows, and others. In 2010, I unintentionally “entered” the K-Pop niche and became interested in the colorful aesthetics, synchronized dances, and unique sounds I discovered through it. As the K-Pop community in Brazil was not as numerous as it is now, I would find myself watching videos with English subtitles and translating news articles on my favorite groups. I would read and reply to blog posts on *Tumblr* in English and interact with both Brazilian and international fans on *Twitter* about my favorite idols. It was in this digital environment, by interacting with other fans, that I got to learn English as a lingua franca (ELF) and Korean (culture and language). I would use Portuguese, English and Korean, sometimes mixing them, others not, depending on the situation and the needs of the interaction I engaged in. As a result, not only did I immerse myself in the world of K-Pop, but I also became an active user of the three languages, and started “translanguaging” (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014), that is, actively drawing resources from either language system simultaneously.

Times and people change and, consequently, social media change as well, with old ones making room for the new. *Orkut* (and its “*fakes*”) no longer exist, but the young still live connected to their online and offline selves on other platforms. Nowadays,

teens seem to be keener on using *Twitter*, *Discord*, and *TikTok* to interact with others who share similar interests online. On *Twitter*, fans either use their “main accounts” (the one in which they write about general topics), or they use what is called a “*stan* account”, which is dedicated to their favorite idols. This allows them to communicate with people regardless of nationality and across geographic boundaries.

It is in this field of no geographical constraints for social interaction that this final thesis explores the world of virtual communication of K-Pop fandoms. This thesis aims at analyzing how Brazilian fans of K-Pop use translanguaging in their fandom practices online. To achieve this, the following were the specific objectives of this research:

- To draw an outline of the History of K-Pop in order to understand how this musical genre became popular among Brazilians;
- To review the literature on translanguaging and provide an overview on how people use language to perform social practices;
- To apply a netnographic research method to analyze how Brazilian K-Pop fans resource to translanguaging practices on *stan Twitter*.

Fans have through history shared their works and ideas with others through zines, fan events, blogs, and fanfiction. This way, they are able to interact and communicate with others who share the same interests (or not) and expand their creations to larger scales. As language is the means through which we act in the world and create, in this world-connected scenario, much translanguaging takes place. No research has been found by the author, to the moment of writing this thesis, on the use of translanguaging in the open and ever-changing environment of online fandom communities. Thus, being aware of how young learners use language in their regular activities can be very enlightening to teachers of (and not restricting to) English as an additional language.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

K-Pop did not reach its popularity in the Americas at the blink of an eye. It has been an ongoing process since the 1990s, which involves various aspects of South Korean industry and policies. In the following pages a brief overview of this phenomenon is drawn, starting with *Hallyu*, the wave of Korean culture that has been spreading around the globe for the past few decades. Then, the development of K-Pop is traced, by mapping its stages (or generations) and how the social and technological changes potentialized its expansion. Finally, different transcultural aspects of the new musical genre are explored to offer a broader understanding of how it relates to our current digital and globalized society.

2.1 Understanding Hallyu: a globalizing project

K-Pop has become a global phenomenon, attracting people from many countries, including Brazil. In order to understand how it became so popular worldwide, it is first necessary to refer back to the 1990s and the beginning of *Hallyu*. It is considered part of *Hallyu*: Korean dramas, music, makeup, fashion, food, the language, and culture in general.

Hallyu is a term that was originally coined in China, when the country started importing Korean dramas¹, used to refer to the “Korean Wave” of popular culture that was growing in their country. Kim Bok-Rae (2015, p. 156) explains there are two meanings to this word. The first meaning comes from the syllables “han”, which is the first for the word “Korean” in Mandarin, and “liu”, which means wave or current. This way, “*hanliu*” (韓流) means a Korean cultural wave. Conversely, the second meaning comes with a negative connotation, as “*hanliu*” (寒流) may also translate to “cold current”. Therefore, the second “*hanliu*” (寒流) carries a negative meaning that there is a cold wind, the considered “inferior” Korean culture, blowing over China.

¹ Dramas are similar to soap operas or TV series. The episodes are usually 1-hour or 1-and-a-half-hour long and they often consist of one or two seasons of around 16 episodes. The themes vary, but different social aspects of the culture are always present.

Nowadays, however, the word “*hallyu*” is not used pejoratively anymore. Instead, it is used in research and in the media to discuss and study the expansion of Korean culture beyond the country’s borders. It is a great component of South Korea’s soft power (NYE, 2004) and the importance of *Hallyu* may be understood through a decolonial perspective (MIGNOLO; VÁZQUEZ, 2013). Between the years of 1910 and 1945, the Japanese Empire invaded and colonized the Korean peninsula, violating, exploiting, and imposing restrictions on the Korean culture. At the Japanese doom in World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union took and divided the Japanese colonies leading to the Korean War, which separated the country in two: North and South Korea. From the periphery of the globe, in an economically and politically scarred country, *Hallyu* was able to help reestablish South Korea, making it, today, the 22nd greatest economy in the world (URBANO *et al.*, 2020). Besides, in 2020, the country profited over 10 billion dollars from content industry exports, with the government investing highly in cultural productions. This transnational phenomenon, which helped South Korea grow economically, has expanded differently through the decades. *Hallyu* has, so far, had three main “Waves”.

According to Kim (2015), the first “Korean Wave”, *Hallyu 1.0*, started in the 1990s when South Korea began exporting their TV dramas to other East Asian countries, such as China, Taiwan, and Japan. The success of dramas such as *What is love?* (1992) and *What is love all about* (1997) in China and, later, *Winter Sonata* (2002) in Japan, propelled what is today called *Hallyu 1.0*. The first Korean Wave is, then, marked with the exportation of Korean dramas to fellow East-Asian countries and it eventually developed into *Hallyu 2.0*.

The second Korean Wave, *Hallyu 2.0*, started with the expansion of K-Pop beyond South Korea’s borders in the mid-2000s. K-Pop began being consumed in other countries by Koreans living abroad, and soon expanded further with the advance of the Internet and thanks to *YouTube*. Kim (2015, p. 157) states that the term *Hallyu 2.0* was first used by Japanese media in 2010 when the group Girls’ Generation had their first showcase in the country. *Hallyu 2.0* is marked with the debut of Korean singers and groups in Japan – such as BoA (in 2001), TVXQ (in 2005), Girls’ Generation (in 2010), Kara (in 2010) – and in the United States – such as BoA (in 2008), the Wonder Girls (in 2009), Girls’ Generation (in 2012). With Korean artists

promoting overseas and the rise of social media, K-Pop entered the international music market with new foreign fans, now beyond Asia (KIM, 2015, p. 157).

We are currently experiencing the third Korean Wave, *Hallyu 3.0*. Now, one can easily watch Korean dramas and movies on Brazilian TV and streaming services. From the second part of the 2010s-decade, streaming platforms, such as *Netflix*, noticing the growing interest in Asian productions, started importing more and more dramas, animes, and movies. Besides, as there are no restrictions from geographical spaces, streaming services with original productions started investing in different countries around the world, South Korea being one of them.

In 2020, the world witnessed the first ever non-English language movie to win the *Oscar* for Best Picture: *Parasite*, by Korean director Bong Joon Ho. The film received a lot of recognition, along with many important awards. In his acceptance speech at another world-renowned Award Show, the *Golden Globes*, the director told the audience that “once you overcome the 1-inch-tall barrier of subtitles, you will be introduced to many more amazing films” (BONG, 2020)². This may be seen both as an example of *Hallyu* and as an example of how the world is becoming a bit more open to cultures that differ from the US and European norms.

In September 2021, *Netflix* released a new Korean original, *Squid Game*³, which, on October 2, became the most watched show in all 83 countries *Netflix* is available, debunking other popular shows, such as the new season of *Sex Education*. The show became a hit worldwide, received subtitles and was dubbed into several languages. The show, although violent, portrays different Korean values and criticized how the imported capitalism negatively affected the characters’ lives. Some of the Korean tropes present in the show (or drama) were: the struggling character who still tried to believe in good and trust people; the low-class character who could not succeed because she did not have money to pursue education; the pride of the community who was the first of the class and thrived (in the show, however, this character lost everything in the competitive business market), and others. It is interesting that a show

² Bong Joon Ho’s acceptance speech at the Golden Globes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cr6bq-LI2RQ&ab_channel=KOREANOW. Accessed on: 2 Dec. 2021.

³ For further information, see: https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2021/09/688_316008.html. Accessed on: 30 Nov. 2021.

which criticizes everything the *American Dream* is about was able to find so much success even in countries where meritocratic ideals are popular.

The popularity of Korean dramas and movies has been calling the attention of international companies. Not only *Netflix*, but also other streaming companies such as *Disney+*⁴ have noticed its profitability and are starting to invest more in Korea and East Asia for their catalogues.

This advance of *Hallyu* (among other Asian productions, such as Japanese animes, and Latin American music, such as reggaeton), however, seems to be worrying conservative Americans who fear losing their monopoly in world music and TV (URBANO *et al.*, 2020). As a result, K-Pop has been portrayed in mainstream media as an exotic villain and parents are advised to watch what their children are consuming online. Besides, with BTS⁵ selling millions of records worldwide and more K-Pop idols taking over international markets, some award institutions have created a special category for “Best K-Pop”⁶ in a way of keeping the other awards for American artists.

It is quite common for fans of K-Pop to watch K-dramas and vice versa, besides watching other Korean variety and reality shows. As a result of the Korean Wave, people are also more interested in consuming Korean goods, fashion, food, gadgets, and the language. Besides, Korean words have recently been implemented to the Oxford English Dictionary⁷, as they are being used more often with the influence of *Hallyu*. More and more courses and apps are being developed to learn Korean and different international brands and companies are also surfing the Korean Wave. In the following section is discussed the current biggest exporter of *Hallyu*: K-Pop.

⁴ For more information on streaming services investing in Asian dramas, see: <https://www.elfolivre.com.br/2021/10/disney-plus-evento-apac.html>. Accessed on: 30 Nov. 2021.

⁵ BTS is currently the most famous and best-selling K-Pop act in the world.

⁶ For more information on “Best K-Pop”, see: <https://www.mtv.com/vma/video-clips/bt1kei/mtv-video-music-awards-2021-bts-wins-best-k-pop#:~:text=In%20a%20recorded%20message%2C%20BTS,at%20the%20MTV%20VMAs%202021>

⁷ For more information on Korean words being implemented in the Oxford Dictionary, see: <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/10/05/asia/korean-words-oed-intl-scli/index.html>. Accessed on: 30 Nov. 2021.

2.2 K-Pop: from Korea to the world

Unlike other music genres which can be defined by beat, common instruments and the like, K-Pop is a bit more complicated to categorize because of its many influences and hybridity. K-Pop stands for Korean Pop, but what defines what it is? One could argue that it is any popular music from Korea, while others would say that it is a mixture of different genres. Regardless, K-Pop is not simply a matter of sound, but also of visual, dance, aesthetic, and concept aligned with the music. It is, overall, a complete performance. Besides, another aspect which distinguishes K-Pop from other popular genres is its system of production and distribution. In this section, we will contextualize the origin of K-Pop and its main characteristics.

Born in a time when South Korea was breaking from the conservatism of the dictatorship, post-the Korean War and the Japanese occupation, K-Pop emerged as something subversive and fresh. Although they started as an underground hip hop group, the debut of Seo Taiji and Boys (서태지와 아이들), in 1992 with the song *I Know* (난 알아요), is considered the beginning of what we know today as K-Pop and is still considered of great relevance for its impact in the industry (JUNG, 2017). In the following paragraphs, the situation in which the country found itself in the early 90s is explained in order to contextualize the success of the group among the *sinsedae* (신세대). *Sinsedae* stands for “new generation” and is defined as “a generation with a strong character that easily accepts new kinds of culture”, according to the *Naver Dictionary*.

The Korean peninsula suffered many international interferences through time. The most recent ones, in the 20th Century: The Japanese colony, and the U.S. political and economic interferences following. After the liberation from Japan in 1945, the U.S. military, who had built bases in the country, took control of the national radio which previously broadcasted Japanese propaganda, Korean traditional music, and Western classical music. Only in 1948, when the Korean government was installed, they retook their media control and established KBS, a government-run (Korean) broadcasting system. In the decades following, two main approaches to music were taken. The first, Korean traditional and popular music were broadcasted to reinforce a new nationalism.

The second, Korean elites had a preference towards Anglo-American pop music, broadcasting it more to middle-class families and orienting their tastes (LEE, J.-Y., 2017, p. 36, p. 38).

In the 1970s and 1980s, South Korea experienced an economic boom on the expense of political repression, educational oppression, and sharper class distinctions (JUNG, 2017). Furthermore, according to Jung-Yup Lee (2017, p. 40), not only did the government interfere in political and economic areas, but it also interfered in the media and on what was considered “healthy” to be watched and listened to. Besides, as the country had been receiving much influence from the USA, the young began to value “individuality over the old Confucian ideology of family and community” shifting their opinions and preferences, combined with a new political setting (JUNG, 2017, p. 144).

In this context of breaking from old traditional values and the growing of globalization and Western interferences, the youth were in need of someone who represented their new angsts and desires. And the hip hop group, Seo Taiji and Boys, were the perfect representation for them: rapping to their public on the issues Korean teenagers went through. However, they did not simply “copy” the American hip hop aesthetics, Jung (2017, p. 143) states that,

In the case of Korea’s adaptation of global pop music styles during the early 1990s, local youth drew on these styles to serve local social and aesthetic needs, challenging the older generation’s overpowering control, particularly the authority of the educational system. (JUNG, 2017, p. 143)

Seo Taiji and Boys have strongly influenced K-Pop and current music. Nevertheless, this “mixture” of Western and local genres to discuss Confucian values and/or local social issues have been a common practice in South Korea since then. These influences can be easily noticed in early BTS songs, such as *Spine Breaker* (2014) and *Baepse* (2015), for example. After the success of Seo Taiji and Boys with young audiences in the early 1990s, the Korean music industry saw in it an opportunity.

Before K-Pop, while American music dominated the phonographic market in the West, Japan dominated the market in Asia. Influenced by J-Pop idol culture, companies such as SM Entertainment decided to release their own “idol groups”, but in a different way. An idol, here, means a singer or celebrity who should be a role model for young audiences, not only in style, but also in behavior. In the 1990s, the Korean music industry began their training systems for future singers, in which they would

learn how to sing and dance. An idol was not only a singer, but a performer who should be able to dance, portray him/herself properly and serve as an example to the youth. This idol training system has improved since, and nowadays a variety of courses are taught as well, such as languages (especially Japanese and English), rapping, acting, and some companies even have sex education classes.

The first ever K-Pop group was debuted, under SM Entertainment, in 1996: H.O.T (에췑티). The group of five teenagers made their music to young audiences and the group's name was an acronym to "High-Five of Teenagers". The singers of *Candy* (1996) were a huge success and marked the beginning of the 1st Generation of K-Pop.

As *Hallyu* is known for its different "waves", K-Pop's development can be divided into generations, which were mapped and updated in 2020 by the Korean magazine IDOLOGY⁸. In the following paragraphs the 4 generations of K-Pop and their "mid-generations" are explained.

The 1st Generation of K-Pop is marked with the debut of the first boy groups and girl groups. It combined Korean lyrics with American genres and a Japanese style of idols. The main artists from this Generation were H.O.T. (1996 – 2001; 2018), S.E.S (1997 – 2002; 2016 – 2017), Sechs Kies (1997 – 2000; 2016 – 2017) and Fin.K.L. (1998 – 2005; 2019). Jung-Yup Lee (2017, p. 41) explains that between 1987 and 1997 the consumption of records and local music increased distinctly and argues that TV broadcasting had a major role in it:

Broadcasting media, especially television, drove this explosion of Korean popular music. The increased number of television music shows featured teen-oriented, dance-based popular music with strong visual appeal. Music-based shows, especially countdown chart shows, became more popular and influential; many of them recorded two-digit ratings and were among the most watched television shows. The FM radio had also contributed to the transformation; by the late 1980s, the FM music programming, previously dominated by international pop, dramatically moved toward domestic *kayo*⁹. (LEE, J.-Y., 2017, p. 41)

These idol groups focused on the local young audience, portraying bold visuals and music styles which appealed to teenagers. However, as local television was the main media used for promotions, K-Pop record labels were not much aware of

⁸ To read the original article, access: <https://idology.kr/13070>; and to read an English translation, access: <https://www.koreaboo.com/lists/breakdown-kpop-4-generations-according-idology-magazine/>. Accessed on: 30 Nov. 2021.

⁹ *Kayo* (가요) means music or song in Korean.

marketing for international audiences and export goods were the same as local ones (SHIN, 2009, p. 514).

Before the 2nd Generation of K-Pop, there are some artists who chronologically could be considered 1st Generation but cannot for a major difference. The reason the following artists are hard to place within a generation is that although they debuted at a time K-Pop was still focused on internal promotions, they received much attention from the Japanese and Chinese markets. This is the case of Shinhwa (1998 – present) and g.o.d (1999 – 2005; 2014 – present). In generation “1.5” we also have the debut of BoA (2000 – present) who is known as the “Queen of K-Pop”. She is one of the most successful and relevant singers from *Hallyu* and is responsible for opening the doors of the Japanese music market to Korea at the age of 15¹⁰, when she became the first Korean artist to top *Oricon*¹¹ with her first Japanese album in 2002. Thanks to her, other K-Pop singers and groups have been able to release music abroad in countries such as Japan (where she debuted in 2001) and the US (where she debuted in 2008). The star can be seen as a symbol of K-Pop herself: singer, dancer, lyricist, actress, and more recently joined her label’s (SM Entertainment) board of directors, she is multi-lingual (speaking Korean, Japanese and ESL) and an all-rounder who embodies what K-Pop is all about.

BoA’s debut in Japan is important for us to understand how K-Pop became a global phenomenon. As Japan dominated the music market in Asia, Soo-Man Lee (the founder and creative director of SM Entertainment) understood that to “make it big” in Asia, one should first obtain success in Japan. After her success, both in Korea and Japan, and also in Asia (giving her the nickname Best of Asia), other companies and artists started investing in these markets (LEE, S.-M., 2020).

The 2nd Generation is marked with the emergence of *YouTube*, which allowed people anywhere in the world to watch K-Pop music videos, performances, and others. This is about the time *Hallyu 2.0* was starting, K-Pop was being listened to by Koreans living abroad and by a greater variety of foreigners. Besides, most of the groups from this generation had overseas careers (with separate promotions from their local ones), especially in Japan. At this time as well, K-Pop groups started having their own reality

¹⁰ For further information, see: https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2021/09/732_300223.html. Accessed on: 30 Nov. 2021.

¹¹ Oricon is Japan’s most important music chart.

shows and the first world tours were held. As the country was in the middle of an economic crisis at the time, K-Pop became one of the most profitable industries, exporting goods and dramas which featured idols. The main groups from this generation are TVXQ (2003 – present), Super Junior (2005 – present), SS501 (2005 – 2010), BIGBANG (2006 – present), Girls' Generation (2007 – present), Kara (2007 – 2016) and Wonder Girls (2007 – 2017).

As happened between the 1st and 2nd Generations, between the years of 2008 and 2012 the scenario started changing a little and classifying groups became difficult again. With the success of 2nd generation idols, more and more groups and singers were debuting, and fans were not only expecting singing and dancing skills anymore, but complete entertainers. Besides, when Dong-Yeun Lee (2017, p. 173) discussed idol training, they mentioned that there were more idol groups debuts between 2010 and 2012 than there had been between 1996 and 2009. Some groups that are known from Generation 2.5 are: SHINee (2008 – present), 2PM (2009 – present), f(x) (2009 – 2019), 2NE1 (2009 – 2017), SISTAR (2009 – 2015), Infinite (2010 – present) and Miss A (2010 – 2017).

The 3rd Generation differs from the previous ones in their target audiences: they did not restrain themselves to Asia anymore but aimed globally now. As K-Pop started gaining more attention abroad, groups and their companies started using social media and online platforms more actively to promote to more audiences. The main groups from this generation are: EXO (2012 – present), BTS (2013 – present), GOT7 (2014 – present), Red Velvet (2015 – present), TWICE (2015 – present), GFRIEND (2015 – 2021) and Blackpink (2016 – present). As Jung-Yup Lee (2017) argues that media broadcasting systems shape the way music is distributed and produced, the same can be noticed with the changes in the most recent K-Pop generations.

In the mid-2010s, especially in 2016, survival shows such as *Produce 101* that aimed at producing the next hit group became popular in Korea. Now, K-Pop production was not happening behind closed-doors anymore, but in front of and with the help of the public, who voted to support their favorite trainees' dreams of debuting. Some of the groups that were produced openly were: Seventeen (2015 – present), I.O.I (2016 – 2017), NCT (2016 – present) and Wanna One (2017 – 2019). This is also the time when K-Pop started becoming mainstream in Western media with

performances of BTS on the AMAs in 2018 (and other American music awards later) and received a growing interest from American media.

Which leads us to the present, when K-Pop culture and production has become worldwide and groups such as Stray Kids (2018 – present), ATEEZ (2018 – present), LOONA (2018 – present), ITZY (2019 – present), TXT (2019 – present) and Aespa (2020 – present) are leading us through the 4th Generation. Now, local media is not the only pointer which defines if a group or singer will be successful and K-Pop idols have a greater variety of platforms online and foreign TV to promote on. In Figure 1 (p. 23), the generations of K-Pop are systematized in accordance with the information presented.

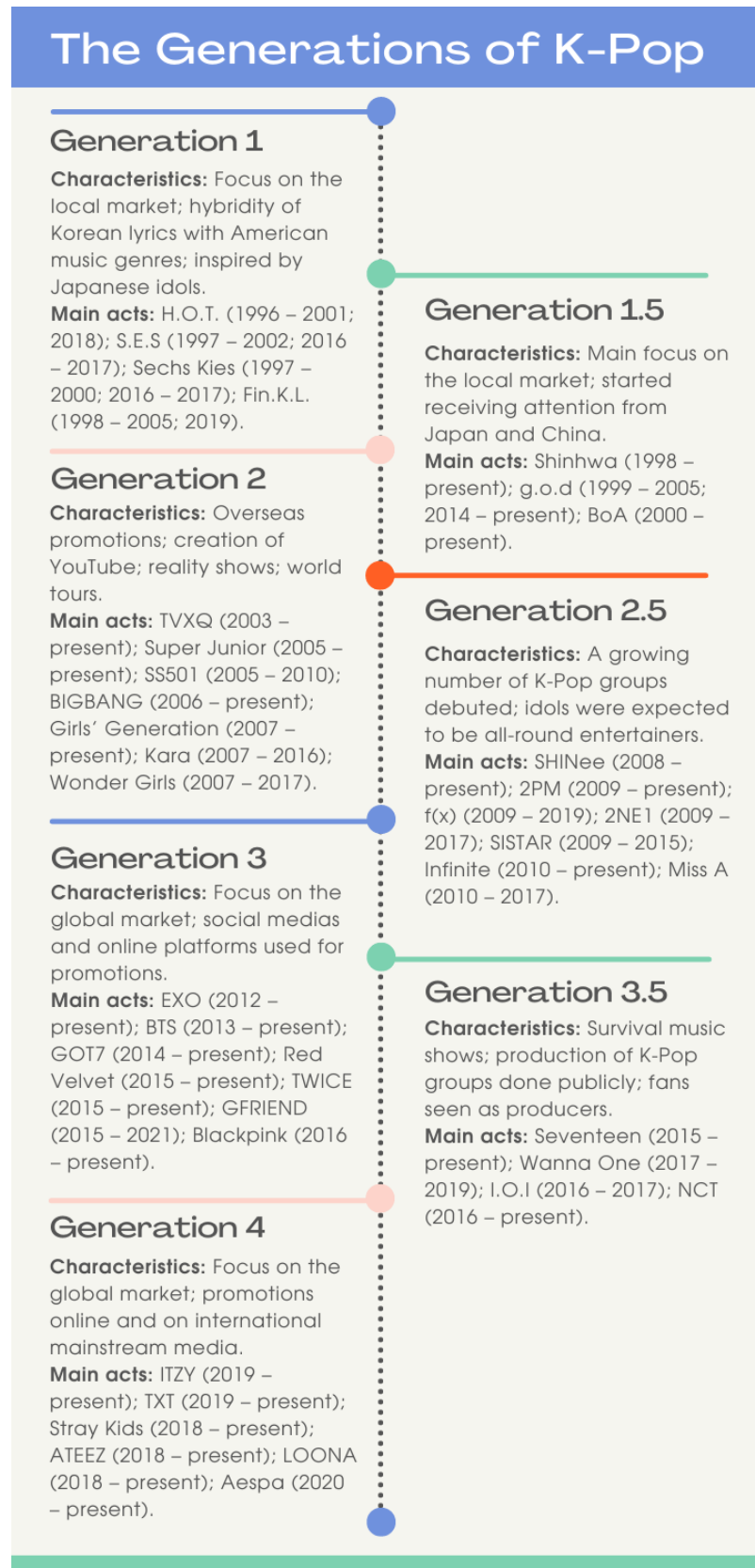
Many critics claim that K-Pop is not more than a commercial product and copy of Western music and that it is not a good representation of what the Korean culture holds and has to share through *Hallyu*. However, Kim disagrees with this view. Instead, the author writes that the

hallyu boom didn't originate in the domain of Korean traditional high-culture, but of contemporary pop-culture, such as dance music, rhythm and blues, funk, hip-hop songs of Korean idol groups. As a result, it provides affirmation of the power of K-pop culture we Koreans didn't even recognize till then. It's the attractive fruit of Korean-styled sensibility/creativity and competitiveness of K-pop culture which is growing further through free competition markets. It's the second theory of *hallyu* as attractiveness (soft power) that can serve as a "hub" to create an East Asian cultural network, whereas forming an East Asian-level-counter-discourse" to cope with the US-led global cultural hegemony. (KIM, 2015, p. 157)

Furthermore, international historians have often studied Asia (especially East Asia) through a Western perspective. Kim (2015) argues that *Hallyu* (and K-Pop) rose from a need to break from a Western view on Asian cultures and a strong desire to be the "cognitive subjects of their cultural activities" (p. 155). For many years, Koreans would either listen to more traditional popular sounds, like trot and ballads, or Western music, like rock and pop. K-Pop came as the blending of telling Korean stories through more contemporary music.

Park Gil-Sung (2013) argues that K-Pop represents a Korea-led system of music production which allows for more "innovative music and musical performances". Besides, Park states that by manufacturing creativity, K-Pop allows people from both "central" and "peripheral" countries to "participate in an endless interactive communi-

Figure 1 – The Generations of K-Pop



Source: Elaborated by the author

cation and discourse about music” (2013, p. 16). Nonetheless, Park (2013) presents the process of ‘globalization – localization – globalization’ (G → L → G'). In this hybridizing process, global (or international) trends, visuals or sounds are localized in the Korean music production and then globally distributed through SNS¹², like *YouTube*, *Spotify*, and, more recently, *TikTok*.

2.3 Transculturality at the core of K-Pop

Transculturality has been at the core of K-Pop since its inception, when Seo Taiji and Boys used of Western genres such as hip hop and metal in their music. Unlike interculturality or internationality which connote to a meeting of two or more distinct and unique cultures, Hepp (2015) and Baker (2018) propose the use of transculturality instead. In transcultural communication, borders are transgressed and one’s individual and group identities are transformed through these interactions. Hepp argues that transcultural communication is closely connected to both mediatization and globalization (2015, p. 3), which are two aspects that can be noticed to having directly influenced the development of K-Pop as seen previously.

In Seo Taiji and Boys’s music, for example, they used rap and metal which “were usually associated with confrontation in America” to express a feeling of supplication with their Korean lyrics (JUNG, 2017, p. 152). Jung argues that Seo Taiji

was not interested in maintaining full musical authenticity by embracing the totality of the ideology behind the idioms, but he took rap and metal as kinds of language that could be used to articulate what he wanted to express. (JUNG, 2017, p. 152)

Hip hop and rap are still important elements of Korean popular music, with most idol groups having at least one member responsible for rapping. K-Pop has blended different local genres (as trot and pop ballad) with foreign ones like R&B, rock, EDM, and even Brazilian genres such as *bossa nova* and *tecnobrega*. These interactions and exchanges between already stablished genres have historically been responsible for the creation of other newer ones and is not exclusive of Korean pop, but it is important to be mentioned.

¹² Social Networking Service

When discussing about “organizational debounding” of global media businesses, Hepp (2015, p. 89) presents the idea of Hollywood as an example. The concept of “Hollywood movies” implies a sense of locality for its productions, although many take place in other countries, such as Toronto (Canada) and Paris (France). For these Hollywood productions, American studios engage with local studios, directors, actors, and staff. The same “debounding territorialism” could be applied to K-Pop nowadays, considering that the presence of “K” for Korean in the name conveys a local sense, but in practice K-Pop production and consumption is not strictly done within Korean borders and its people. Instead, what is seen are songs and music videos produced in partnership between foreign and local producers, lyricists, choreographers, and directors.

Likewise, K-Pop record labels (or companies) have established partnerships with foreign businesses and professionals. In order to preserve the creativity and originality in their music, Soo-Man Lee (the founder of SM Entertainment), resorted to “outsourcing song-writing and composition, rather than simply mimicking Western songs” (PARK, 2013, p. 23). For his music globalization project to work, the composers of SM Entertainment had to go through training to develop the tacit knowledge necessary for the localization of foreign music sounds (PARK, 2013, p. 25). Another company that has been highly invested in the global market is JYP Entertainment. From the early 2000s, Jinyoung Park (JYPE’s CEO) started writing and composing songs for American singers to have his name known and make US connections (SHIN, 2009, p. 515). This effort later showed results when he was able to promote some of his idols (Rain, the Wonder Girls, Got7, and Twice) in American grounds.

Another transcultural factor worth mentioning is the presence of members from different nationalities, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds in K-Pop groups. Blackpink, for example, is a 4-member girl group which has been an international hit since its debut in 2016. It is composed of one Korean member (Jisoo), a Korea-born who lived in New Zealand (Jennie), an Australian, daughter of Koreans, who grew up in New Zealand (Rosé), and a Thai member (Lisa). This multinational character allows the group to better communicate and relate with their global fan base. This is not novelty, as foreign members have been part in K-Pop idol groups dating back with Shoo (from Japan) a member of S.E.S and Danny and Joon (from the US) members of g.o.d, from generations 1 and 1.5, respectively. Furthermore, according to Um (2017, p. 197),

these foreign members are strategically casted to appeal to specific countries. Interestingly, Blackpink's Lisa is considered a national treasure to Thai people who hold pride for her success and persona¹³.

Language is intrinsically connected to culture and, thus, in transcultural interactions, much language is also exchanged. As a result of American interferences in Korean politics and economy since the 20th Century, English words, terms, and expressions have been implemented into Korean. This phenomenon is called "Konglish", which is, although not a result of immigration, quite similar to "Spanglish" (the combination of Spanish with English) or "Portunhol" (the combination of Portuguese with Spanish). One example of an English word being turned into a slang in Korean is the case of "healing" (힐링). This word is used by Koreans to express a feeling of being healed by something after a stressful day or situation and can be used as an adjective.

As English words became popular among the youth and some were even turned into slangs, it is no surprise that in music targeting young audiences Korean and English would be mixed. K-Pop songs often have English words and phrases implemented in the lyrics. Lawrence (2010), in accordance with J. S. Lee (2004), argues that K-Pop artists may use English both to capture the audience's attention and to express feelings or ideas that go against Korean morals. This was an interesting strategy to avoid the censorship imposed by broadcasting stations. This way, the incorporation of English in specific parts (such as in choruses and opening verses) provides

a discursive space for Korean youths to assert their self-identity, to create new meanings, to challenge authority, to resist mainstream norms and values and to reject the older generation's conservatism. [...] English is being used as a language of resistance by K-pop artists by tactically switching to English and mixing the two language codes thus creating linguistic 'hybrids.' In this way they handle the tension between global and local dialogues with which they are constantly dealing. (LAWRENCE, 2010, p. 49-50)

J. S. Lee (2004) has found that many Korean singers would share different feelings within the same songs by mixing the two languages. While in English they

¹³ For more information, see: <https://www.koreaboo.com/news/blackpink-lisa-thailand-government-tourism-ambassador-federation-thai-industries/>. Accessed on: 30 Nov. 2021.

would share their more sexual or violent feelings, in Korean, they would keep their innocence to portray ambivalence.

Although Korean society has changed drastically in recent years, and nowadays singers may express themselves more freely, this practice is still part of K-Pop lyrics. Besides, being it the idols' intention or not, the presence of English in the songs attracts foreign listeners who cannot sing along to the Korean lyrics (although they often learn how to later). As a result of the transcultural aspects, the hybridization of languages in the lyrics, and marketing strategies, K-Pop has made fans all over the world who relate to the songs and also experience the effects of globalization.

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Now that the historical background behind the success of K-Pop in the Americas has been explained, it is possible to investigate the practices of its fandom here in Brazil. Following is the theoretical framework which supports this final thesis, taking into consideration the fluidity and the ever-changing environment that the *Twitter* platform allows for social interaction on the Internet. First, the concept of communities of practice (CoP) is used to define the use of K-Pop *stan Twitter* within the fandom practices. Then, the different linguistic aspects related to the multilingual character of online K-Pop fandoms are described taking into consideration contemporary concepts of language and translanguaging as a transformative social activity in speakers' subjectivities.

3.1 Communities of practice potentializing fandom participation

The concept of a community of practice (CoP) may help in understanding how fans engage in their fandom practices through language online. A community of practice is formed by individuals, with their own varied subjectivities and historical backgrounds, who collectively engage in a series of learning activities together. This learning experience may be intentional or not, as long as the participants contribute to each other's knowledge, regardless of being in formal or informal settings (WENGER-TRAYNER; WENGER-TRAYNER, 2015).

Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner (2015) propose that there are three main aspects that should be considered before defining a group as a community of practice: the domain, the community, and the practice. A community of practice has an identity constructed by its members defined by the domain of interest they share. The members build relationships by interacting in activities together, allowing them to learn from one another, stablishing a community. In their practice together, the participants (or practitioners) develop a shared repertoire of resources, knowledge, experience, and way of addressing recurring issues (WENGER-TRAYNER; WENGER-TRAYNER, 2015, p. 2).

The same way a CoP has a collective identity, its members' identities are also transformed through their participation and interaction with their peers. Kath Woodward

(2002) explains that one's identity is fruit of both our psyche and our experience in the social world. We identify with those alike and distinguish from those who do not share the same characteristics, in a relation of difference between "us" and "them". At the same time, there may be a need to accommodate and manage some differences, as no one is the same. People from the same social groups, such as a nationality, political ideology, or other, share symbols that represent them and mark others as different (for example a flag, the hammer and sickle, a salutation, etc.).

Woodward (2002) claims that in our identity construction there is a search for security and stability when identifying with others. Such assertion is useful to understand why people choose to join social groups and even engage in learning communities together. Besides, she explains that to assume an identity entails being named, be it your nationality (Brazilian), your political ideology (communist, anarchist), or even a not so formal social group, such as a fandom. Our identities, thus, are as much in us as they are in relation to others.

Malik and Haidar (2020) have analyzed K-Pop *stan Twitter* and found that it fits as a CoP. According to them, fans

work towards the shared goal of supporting their idols and helping them grow. During this process, engage in regular interaction with other community members and form interpersonal relationships while also choosing a role and place for themselves and contributing to the fandom community in their own respective capacity. (MALIK; HAIDAR, 2020, p. 6)

Some of the practices found in this study were that fans help each other in staying updated, learning the schedule of events, and gathering information on the idols. In this sense, the domain of K-Pop *stan Twitter* is the artists they follow, and the members share a goal of supporting them. As a result, the fans build relationships and fill different roles within the CoP, according to their skills, interests, and competencies. Another finding from Malik and Haidar (2020) is that there is a hierarchy in the fandom as a community of practice, based on the popularity of one's account and how long they have been following the artist, for example.

Twitter offers a space where people can interact and build relationships easily, regardless of where they are from and their social backgrounds. The platform shares information quickly and, thus, the participants of this kind of CoPs are always changing and transforming (both themselves and the community). In this environment of

facilitated online social practices, much translanguaging happen between the users in their fandom activities.

3.2 What is translanguaging?

Culture and language are strongly intertwined, and you cannot learn a language disconnected from its social practices. Being so closely connected with the time and place in which it occurs, cultures will “translate” in language. The established languages we know, such as English, German, and Spanish, “are historically evolved social conventions” (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 7). Which means, languages are social conventions as the people agrees and shares the meanings of the linguistic resources, and historically evolved because they have evolved, changed, and shaped through time. Besides, languages only exist as “individual” symbolic systems in comparison with others. A child only knows he or she speaks a named language when they learn others exist. However, languages are always in contact and sharing similarities.

We use languages to act in the world. Wherever the environment is, it has a socio-historical and cultural background that will both reflect on and be affected by the discourse of its interlocutors. As languages cannot be separated from the human experience, the term “languaging” is used to describe the processes involved in internalizing and using language as we interact in, and with, the world (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014). With this concept, it is understood that when people gain knowledge, articulate thoughts, communicate ideas, or perform actions through language, they are “languaging”, as an action verb. Therefore, García and Wei (2014) argue that languages may be seen not as fixed structures and sets of words, but as a “series of social practices and actions by speakers that are embedded in a web of social and cognitive relations” (p. 9).

According to García and Wei (2014), we make meaning of the world around us and of our social experience through language. Consequently, a person who knows two or more symbolic systems will look at the world through a magnified glass, with both languages (and their cultural baggage) supporting it. A bilingual or multilingual, then, is someone who can use the linguistic resources available to them, by the linguistic systems they have “acquired”, and adapt them to the needs of the social situation they are in.

In the past, bilinguals were understood as people who possessed two distinct language systems and who would switch between them according to the environment. This understanding, however, carries a meaning that the two symbolic systems are separated and only “activated” when needed. García and Wei (2014) argue that societal ideologies, especially in schools, make us engage in monolingual activities and only at times do we act in more fluid language practices. Therefore, this “separation” between languages results from institutional norms and is not often seen in bilingual families who can speak both languages with no restraints. They propose, then, the concept of dynamic bilingualism, which understands that humans have the competence of language instead of linguistic systems “stored” separately.

In this sense of dynamic bilingualism, or multilingualism, speakers draw from their repertoire the linguistic practices that are better suited to the communicative exchange they will engage in. Linguistic practices from either named language may transfer from one to another, leading to what is called “translanguaging”. This conceptual shift from the 20th Century, into the one that supports this thesis, is due to how society has changed in this new globalized and technological world.

As through the translanguaging perspective language is fluid and results in how and for what the speakers communicate, terms such as code switching and language interference in bilingual and multilingual speech are not suitable anymore. Through a structural understanding of languages, any form of linguistic interference of one language system in another is seen as a deviation from the norm. Alternatively, the concept of translanguaging offers us an angle to see this sort of construction as complex interrelated discursive practices that allow the speaker to draw from their entire language repertoire in making meaning (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014, p. 22).

According to Wei (2018), people have always made use of multimodal practices in communication. A mode is “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” (KRESS, 2010, p. 79) and may be used to understand how K-Pop fans engage in translanguaging practices on *Twitter*. *Twitter* in this context would be the medium (KRESS; LEEUWEN, 2021) through which these modes would be shared and be created, affecting how communication is carried in this social platform.

As *Twitter* posts, known as “tweets”, carry a variety of modes (text, image, video, music, audio) and allow different kinds of interaction, a level of multiliteracy is required from the interlocutors. In social interactions, regardless of the environment and context,

all the semiotic aspects involved work together in making meaning. Thus, Wei defends that a translanguaging approach would embrace

the multimodal social semiotic view that linguistic signs are part of a wider repertoire of modal resources that sign makers have at their disposal and that carry particular socio-historical and political associations. (2018, p. 22)

The interlocutors, then, are able to perform different subjectivities because of the variety of signs they use and the socio-historical contexts behind them. Besides, through a translanguaging perspective, the multilingual person is not only someone with different interactive linguistic systems and an ability to make meaning through a variety of modes. A multilingual is also someone who is “aware of the existence of the political entities of named languages” (WEI, 2018, p. 22).

Wei sees the concept of translanguaging as a transformative practice which creates

a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making it into a lived experience (WEI, 2011, p. 1223)

This social space is what he coined as translanguaging spaces, where different identities and values are combined and transformed through language, instead of simply co-existing. Each individual creates their own space, which is in a wider social space, interacting with those of others. It is, thus, ever changing and transforming, drawing resources from interaction with the environment and with other people.

According to Wei (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014; WEI, 2011, 2018), in our translanguaging spaces, multilinguals make use of their creativity and criticality when languaging. Language users are creative as they choose to follow the norms or push them, drawing from their linguistic repertoire, experimenting, and creating through language. They are also critical as they consider different cultural values and social aspects to question and act according to the context. Creativity and criticality, then, walk hand-in-hand, as one cannot go beyond the norms and create something new, without being critical of what is already established. Multilinguals “consciously construct and constantly modify their socio-cultural identities and values through social practices such as translanguaging” (WEI, 2011, p. 1224). Therefore, translanguaging spaces

are individual to the extent that they are built by individuals themselves, but social in the sense of being transformed and maintained through social interaction.

The concepts of CoPs and translanguaging work well together, and some studies¹⁴ have crossed both theories. García and Wei (2014) explain that translanguaging emerges in the social world, as a result not only of language(s), but also of interaction between speakers. Likewise, the linguistic behaviors of a CoP help shape it as a community, in its discourse, exchanges, and group identity. As *K-Pop stan Twitter* has already been described as a community of practice and seems to use of translanguaging as one of their characteristics, this thesis uses both to learn about fans' interactions on the platform. In order to conduct the present research, a qualitative methodological approach was applied, and it is explained in the following chapter.

¹⁴ For example, see: <https://core.ac.uk/reader/46929420> Accessed on: 4 Jun. 2022.

4 METHODOLOGY

Language occurs in the world. As explained previously, we language to do things in the world (be it offline or online), to communicate our ideas, express ourselves, and interact with others. Therefore, if one's goal is to investigate how people language, one cannot simply ask questions to a number of participants. If the goal is to observe language in use, an observative method must be applied.

Considering that the author of this thesis is part of the online community in which this research was carried out and cannot observe it as an outsider, an ethnographic methodology was chosen. According to Brian King (2019, p. 19), this kind of approach enhances linguistic analysis for the research and can analyze the relationship between language in use and the social world where it occurs. Two possible and similar, sometimes overlapping, options were considered: a virtual ethnography and a netnography.

A virtual ethnographer considers the digital world an extension of the real world, in which communication takes place and sees it as an additional source of data for their research. Therefore, the virtual environment in which these interactions occur works as a background, and this methodological approach disregards the community aspect of online platforms. Thus, it suggests a dichotomy between the digital and non-digital experiences, which is non-existent in today's reality, as what we do online transforms and affects our offline selves as well.

Robert Kozinets (2010) explains that a netnographer, on the other hand, analyzes how people form online communities and engage in cultural activities through the digital world, making community and culture two important aspects of this kind of research. According to Felice Addeo et al. (2020), through computer-mediated communication (CMC), people share "emotions, styles of life, new moral beliefs, and senses of injustice and consumption practices" and build communities with no geographic restrictions.

Howard Rheingold's (1993) concept of virtual communities associates with Etienne Wenger's (1998) communities of practice. Virtual communities are formed when a number of participants develop personal relationships by carrying discussions on a topic of shared interest and are moved by human feelings. Members of such communities come to become a CoP, as they produce contents and develop a shared

repertoire of resources, building knowledge, finding solutions, creating, and sharing information (LAVE; WENGER, 1991 *apud* ADDEO, 2020).

Netnography, thus, focuses on the building of relationships and experiences in the digital world, instead of treating it simply as an extension of the “real world”. Many sociologists today consider that to fully understand current society, it is necessary to also study CMC and online participation, as social life is more and more attached to the Internet and social media. As a result, netnography has become a highly respected methodology in the fields of behavior and social research (ADDEO et al., 2020, p. 5).

Unlike other methodologies that are stricter to the researcher design, it offers a “window into naturally occurring behaviors” (KOZINETS, 2010, p. 56) and it transposes and adapts the techniques of ethnography to CMC (KOZINETS, 2002). Netnography works as a non-intrusive observation method, allowing for complete immersion in the field, with or without the participation of the researcher who may choose to be visible or not. Besides, it allows the researcher to return to previous discussions through the data stored online, while following current ones. According to Addeo et al., netnography does not analyze individual and sporadic posts on the Internet, “but it explores continued and repetitive interactions performed through computer channels and technologies through the analysis of online communication” (2019, p. 6).

King (2019) defends the use of ethnography in linguistic research on communities of practice. Considering the researcher’s immersion in the field and prolonged observation of participants, it allows for “better understanding of insider meanings and interpretations” (p. 19). Besides, as it is not aimed at generalizing findings, ethnography offers a way of making sense to one’s own behaviors, acting, talking, and ways of being, in commitment with social theory in particular situations (JOHNSTONE, 2000 *apud* KING, 2019, p. 19).

Thus, in order to fulfill the objectives of this thesis of learning how translanguaging is used within the K-Pop fandom in *stan Twitter*, a qualitative netnographic research was carried out. In the following sections, the chosen methodology is detailed as the corpus and the procedures used to generate the data are explained.

4.1 The corpus

The community chosen for this research is the one based on the Brazilian K-Pop *stan Twitter*. Nowadays, *Twitter* is one of the most popular social media platforms, which allows for quick and fluid interactions between members through “tweets”. Tweets are posts limited to 280 characters, resulting in short texts, which can be replied to, liked, retweeted to one’s followers, and shared in private. It is also possible to make “threads” of tweets, by replying to your own posts, if you want to write longer texts.

Another aspect worth mentioning about *Twitter* is the kind of information users can add to their profiles. Every *Twitter* profile has an icon and a header. Users may write a short biography in their bio, share their date of birth, their origin/location, and an external link. This is important to understand as in the analysis the way K-Pop fans use these spaces is discussed. Users choose a name which appears for their followers when they tweet, like or retweet someone else’ post, as well as a username which is one’s login ID.

Figure 2 – Screenshot of Twitter’s Official Profile



Source: <https://twitter.com/Twitter> Accessed on: 26 May, 2022.

Although in the past the word “*stan*” had a negative connotation, being the combination of the words “stalker” and “fan”, currently a *stan* is simply considered a

dedicated fan. Being so, *stan Twitter* is how users call the niche of profiles by fans who dedicate their accounts to their idols, favorite movies, novels, series, or games. Therefore, the K-Pop *stan Twitter* is where the fans of various K-Pop groups and idols engage in social interactions and share their ideas, thoughts, opinions, and experiences with others alike.

The corpus of this research, then, are the profiles and the tweets posted by the members of Brazilian K-Pop *stan Twitter* and the data was generated by manually selecting tweets. The selected data either appeared in the researcher's timeline (*Twitter's* homepage) or was found through other tweets by the researcher. The profiles and tweets selected to be analyzed were those which demonstrated the belonging of fans to a CoP and/or presented translanguaging practices. Following, the procedures, data generation, and its analysis are explained.

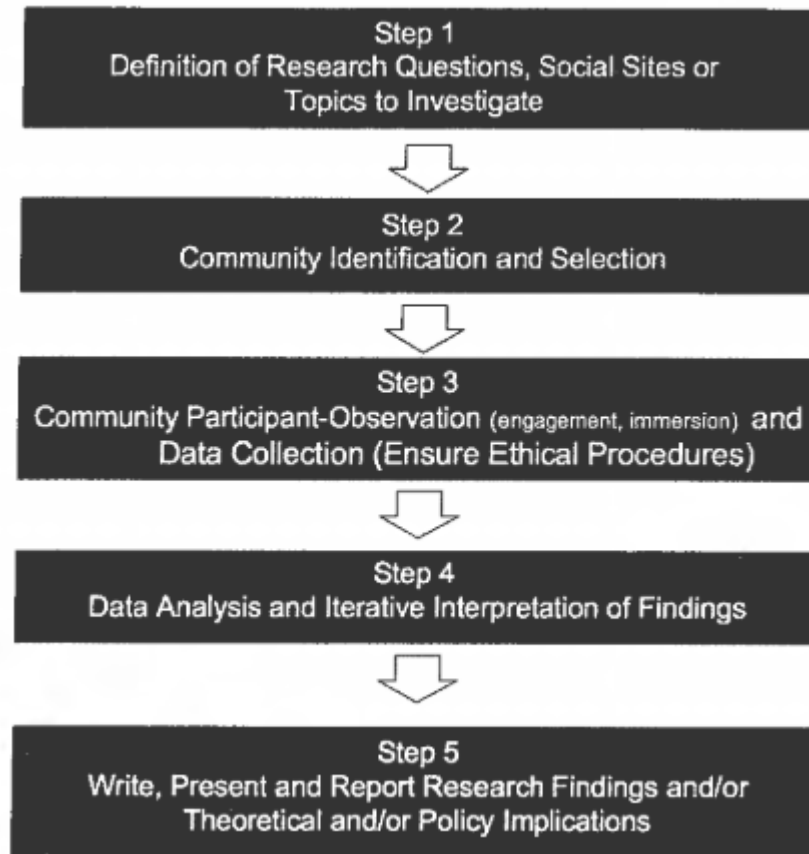
4.2 Procedures

One of the first stages of a netnographic research is getting access to the field, and it is advisable to start an exploratory observation to get familiarized with the community (ADDEO et al., 2020). In the period prior to beginning this thesis, the researcher was still unsure about the theme and decided to use her personal account to conduct an informal initial observation on *Twitter*. The original idea was to investigate the possibility of conducting research on the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) by K-Pop fans on *Twitter*. However, from the data collected in this exploratory stage, it was noticed that there was a field for studying translanguaging instead, as there was much more fluidity of language use (by mixing different systems), than there was of English being used as the lingua franca. This initial contact allowed for a change of perspective and the emergence of a new research possibility.

An account, then, was created on *Twitter*, through which the researcher interacted with other K-Pop fans about her favorite idols. Being a part of the community, it was possible to generate the data (users' tweets) with proximity to the subjects and in real-time, taking the role of a lurker. Which means, the researcher observed from within the community without interfering much in the discussions. The role taken reflects in the generated data and the analysis conducted.

In Figure 3, there is a list of 5 steps to netnographic research, extracted from Kozinets's "Netnography: Doing Research Online" (2010). A similar, although not exact, approach was taken in the present research.

Figure 3 – 5 Steps to Netnographic Research



Source: Kozinets (2010)

First, the author of this thesis defined a topic to investigate, in this case the use of ELF by K-Pop fans, and then selected K-Pop *stan Twitter* as the community. During the initial observation she realized she should redefine the research questions to better suit the reality she found in the community. The author began data collection while immersing in K-Pop *stan Twitter*. After that, the data was analyzed and interpreted individually, crossing with the literature on communities of practice and translanguaging, without disregard for the cultural aspects permeating such interactions. Finally, the research was documented in written form presenting its findings and possible theoretical implications.

5 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

During the period of data generation, selection, and analysis, it was possible to identify some common behaviors in the corpus studied. Considering the multimodality characteristic of *Twitter* and the great versatility of data, it was considered more adequate to analyze the tweets and profiles through screenshots, instead of compiling them in tables. As a result, the analysis became quite extensive and detailed.

In the coming sections, the data is analyzed and discussed in accordance with two main categories: the profiles and the interactions. The profiles have a multimodal nature, due to the use of text, image, and external links. Therefore, both the aesthetic and linguistic factors are analyzed. The interactions are between Brazilians and fans from different countries. Thus, the focus of this analysis is on the language used, without disregarding the multimodal aspect of tweets.

5.1 What does a K-Pop stan's profile look like?

As a result of *Twitter's* open character, users come across a wide range of profiles in a few minutes. The researcher chose a selection of profiles according to the tweets that would be analyzed and if their focus were on K-Pop idols and groups.

Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) write that in a CoP, members build a community identity, which is defined by the domain of interest. As a result, the CoP practitioners start sharing similar characteristics and developing an aesthetic. During this research, it was noticed that K-Pop fans usually use a picture of an idol as their icon and a matching image as their header. In the following figures (4 and 5), the users chose members of the boy group NCT to identify their profiles.

Figure 4 - @suhrealismo's Profile Page



Source: <https://twitter.com/suhrealismo> Accessed on: 4 Apr. 2022.

The user from Figure 4 uses Johnny Suh both as the icon and as the name to identify their profile. Besides, their username is a pun mixing the idol's last name, Suh, with the Portuguese word "*surrealismo*" (surrealism in English). The picture in the header is not of the NCT singer, but it matches the colors of the one chosen for the icon. Little is possible to learn from this user's identity looking only at their profile, only their date of birth and their favorite idol

Figure 5 - @itzneoct's Profile Page



Source: <https://twitter.com/itzneoct> Accessed on: 4 Apr. 2022.

This fan, on the other hand, does not use any name or nickname. Instead, she uses a four-leaf clover to identify herself and her username, “@itzneocl”, is a reference to two of her favorite groups: Itzy and NCT. In her bio, she writes her favorite idols (Itzy, Kep1er, and Chungha) as well as states that she *stans* (is a fan of) SM Entertainment idols in general. Regardless of being Brazilian, she writes her pronouns, “she/her”, in English so that others know how to address to her. She states her gender in the space that is originally dedicated for the user’s location (city or country). Besides that, the presence of the expression “multi”, where users are expected to share a link, means that she is a fan of more than only one idol or group.

By looking at her profile page, it is possible to learn the groups she likes, as well as that one of her favorite idols is NCT’s Jisung as his picture is both on her icon as on her header. It is not possible to deduce any information regarding this fan’s age, place of residence, or any other aspect besides her gender and idols. Thus, it seems her musical preference is what she considers important for others to know concerning her identity. Similar to the fan from Figure 4, identification with (and through) the fandom appears to be all she needs to locate herself in this community.

Figure 6 - @seotterfly’s Profile Page

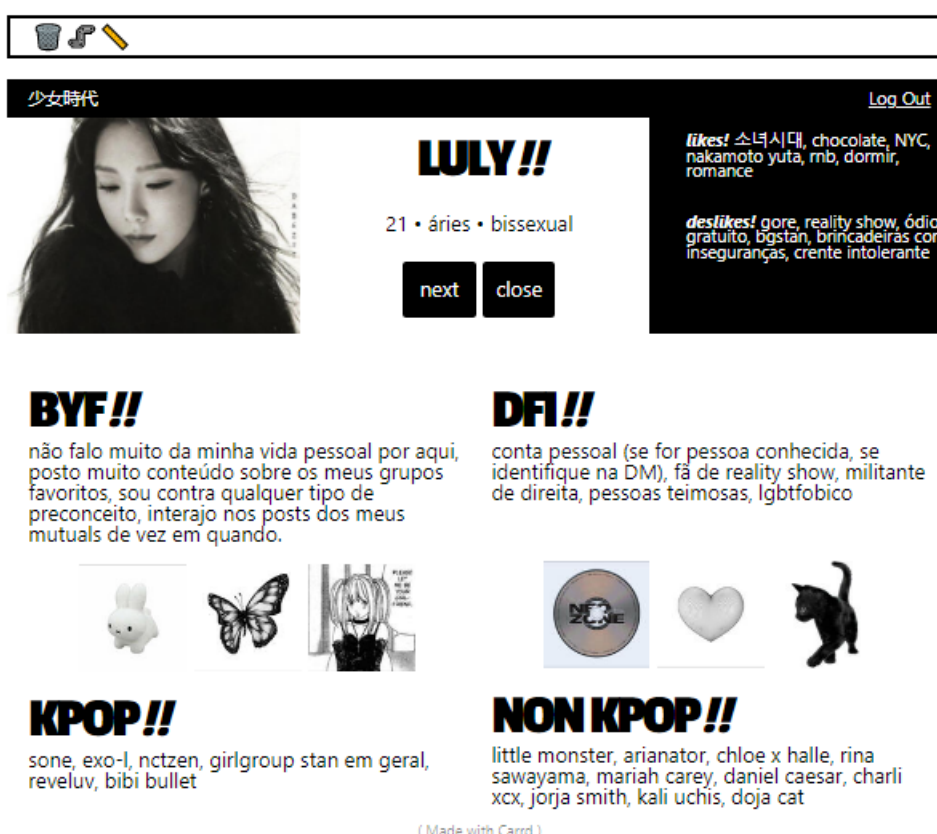


Source: <https://twitter.com/seotterfly> Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2022.

She identifies herself with her nickname “luly”, and uses the username “@seotterfly”, mixing Girls’ Generation member Seohyun’s name with the English word

“butterfly”. In her bio, we find a dedication to the *SONE* fandom (the fans of the group Girls’ Generation) in English, her pronouns in Portuguese, and the link to her *carrd* (Figure 7). Her location is dedicated to her best friend, “ket”, in which she writes “malu&ket amor eterno” (eternal love in Portuguese). There is much stylization in the use of symbols and different fonts, besides her choice of image for the header and icon, matching in a pastel and feminine color palette.

Figure 7 – @seotterfly’s carrd



Source: <https://seotterflys.carrd.co/#next> Accessed on: 5 May, 2022.

Above (Figure 7) is a screenshot of luly’s *carrd* (accessed through her external link). Although *carrd* is not part of *Twitter*, this editable website is frequently used by K-Pop fans to introduce themselves to followers and people who may come to follow them. They often add information such as things they like or dislike, approve or not, sexual orientation and gender identity, and anything they believe might affect one’s choice of following them or not.

There are some translanguaging practices taking place here, such as the use of the words “likes” and “deslikes” (although the second is misspelled) to talk about her

preferences. She also uses other English acronyms and word when separating some items in her profile: BYF, DFI, NON KPOP. The acronyms BYF and DFI are highly used in the community to filter the followers and allow for an environment with fewer intrigues, meaning “before you follow” and “don’t follow if” respectively. This way, the person who comes across this user’s profile is aware of their boundaries and things they should know before following.

In her “KPOP” and “NON KPOP” sections, she writes the names of the fandoms she identifies with, being them of K-Pop idols and groups or being them of other international artists. The use of the fandoms’ names instead of the artists’ and idols’ may indicate her need of identification and belonging within this (these) community (ies).

Furthermore, within her text, she uses English words that are widely accepted in the Portuguese language, on *Twitter*, and some that are specific to the K-Pop niche. Among the words that are known and used by many Brazilians are “reality show” and “post”. While “gore”, “mutual” (meaning that they follow each other), and the acronym “DM” (Direct Messages) are common *Twitter* lingo. There are also some English expressions that are frequently used in the Brazilian K-Pop community, such as “bg stan” (*stan* or fan of boy groups) and “girl group stan” (*stan* or fan of girl groups).

From the examples presented so far, it is possible to observe that the members of K-Pop *stan Twitter* share similar characteristics and can easily be identified as such. And this is not the only CoP aspect these members have. There is also a hierarchical structure between fans, as may be seen ahead with the following fan pages.

Figure 8 – @tmeNCTBRAZIL's Profile Page



Source: <https://twitter.com/tmeNCTBRAZIL> Accessed on: 7 May, 2022.

NCT Brazil (@tmeNCTBRAZIL) is a fan page dedicated to the boy group NCT and all of their subunits: NCT U, NCT 127, NCT Dream, and WayV. They are in total 23 members who divide in the many subunits for their releases and promotions. NCT is often described as a multinational group for having members of a variety of nationalities (South Korea, China, Japan, United States, Taiwan, Macaw, Thailand, and Canada) and for having a subunit focused on promoting in China. Therefore, this group is not only K-Pop, but expands territorially, just like *Hallyu* itself.

This fan page brings news information on the group it is dedicated to, as a way of keeping the Brazilian fandom updated as well as promoting the group's activities. They have a *Telegram* page, linked in their profile, in which all of the pieces of news are organized and easy to navigate through. It is possible to see that the English word "unit" is used in the Portuguese text of their bio without any indication of foreignness (such as using quotation marks). Such a casual use of an English word by an informative account indicates that it is part of the K-Pop jargon already.

Not only are there fan pages dedicated to specific idols or groups, but there are also general ones focused on updating on boy groups, girl groups, soloists, less

recognized groups, and K-Pop in general. In Figures 9 and 11 are examples of fan pages devoted to updating on boy groups and girl groups, respectively.

Figure 9 – @UpdateKBoys's Profile Page



Source: <https://twitter.com/UpdateKBoys> Accessed on: 7 May, 2022.

Update KBoys is a famous source of news for Brazilian fans of Korean boy groups and singers. They have a *carrd* page (Figure 10) to help organize the contents they provide, in which they have links for their calendar (with following releases, participation in dramas and movies, enlistments, and more by male idols), their *Spotify* account (where they have a variety of playlists), their media account (another *Twitter* page but consisting only of videos), a list of all the threads they have made (mostly introducing groups and soloists), a reserve account for the case of losing the main one, and an equivalent for J-Pop idols.

Figure 10 – @UpdateKBoys’s carrd



Source: <https://updatekboys.carrd.co/> Accessed on: 7 May, 2022.

Translanguaging is made present in their account not only in the name, “Update”, but also in their *carrd* and tweets. They use the word “fanbase”, instead of “fan page” to call themselves. According to the Cambridge Dictionary¹⁵, a fanbase is a group of fans of a singer, group, or team. In Brazil, however, the word “*fanbase*” refers to a page that functions as the base of the fandom, by sharing information and news on the artist or artists in question. Besides, the English word, common to many *Twitter* users, “thread” is used here. A *Twitter* thread, as mentioned before, is a collection of tweets that, combined, tell a single story which would not be able to be told in one tweet because of the limit of characters.

They use a variety of resources (their own tweets, calendar, *Spotify*, and extra accounts), all organized with the assistance of *carrd*, to inform fellow fans and promote idols. An internal CoP (the account’s administrators, or *admins* as they are called more commonly) works towards the common goal of helping the external CoP (constituted by the fans who follow and use the information brought by them to interact in the fandom).

¹⁵ Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/fanbase> Accessed on: 4 Jun. 2022.

Figure 11 – @UpdateKGirls’s Profile Page



Source: <https://twitter.com/UpdateKGirls> Accessed on: 7 May, 2022.

A similar account to Update KBoys is Update KGirls, which, instead of focusing on male groups and idols, focuses on girl groups and female soloists. They work similarly by sharing the news. However, one difference that is noticed is the lack of a *carrd* on their profile organizing their contents, instead having their side accounts (reserve and media) in their bio. They have a blog on *Blogspot*, where they develop their news further and it is displayed in their external link.

Figure 12 – @UpdateKGirls’s Pinned Tweet



Source: <https://twitter.com/UpdateKGirls/> Accessed on: 13 May, 2022.

In their pinned tweet, they have a link to their updated *Spotify* playlist called “Today’s KGirls Hits”. The use of English here is quite significant. Not only is the name of the playlist in English, making a reference to *Spotify* official “Today’s Top Hits”, but also the use of other English words within the text. There seems to be a convention on the meaning of the words “debut”, “comeback”, “*feats*”, and “OSTs” as such an influential page (with over 66,000 followers) uses them and is understood by their followers. The word “debut” is commonly used when a new group or soloist is releasing their first ever single or album, “comeback” when they return with a new release, “*feat*” when an artist features in another one’s song, and “OST” is an original soundtrack.

Another kind of influential pages within the K-Pop community are the ones dedicated to subtitling contents from English and/or Korean to Portuguese. Figure 13 brings an example of a subtitling page focused on the group Kep1er.

Figure 13 – @KEP1ERSUBS’s Profile Page



Source: <https://twitter.com/KEP1ERSUBS> Accessed on: 7 May, 2022.

Kp1er Brasil Subs translates and subtitles appearances of the group and the members in dramas, webdramas, variety shows, reality shows, and more. Initially, they would subtitle videos from the reality show *Girls Planet 999*, the survival show where the group was formed. Their videos are posted on YouTube and fans are informed about new translations through their *Twitter* account. Like Kep1er Brasil Subs, there are many other subtitling and translation pages dedicated to individual groups and to

K-Pop in general. Such profiles allow for a democratization of access to K-Pop media, for making contents from other languages accessible to those who cannot speak them.

As the examples above suggest, there is a common aesthetic which permeates the profiles on K-Pop *stan Twitter*. Fans carefully choose photos for icons and headers that coordinate in a color palette or theme, always referring to their idols. Besides, K-Pop *stans* rarely share their real name or pictures that may put their offline selves in danger. Instead, they identify themselves through nicknames, names, and pictures of their idols. They also seem aware of current issues regarding gender identity, as they do not say “I am a girl/boy”, but instead write their pronouns. The choice of writing one’s pronouns in bio has become popular on *Twitter*, for when a transgender person writes theirs, they will not feel uncomfortable or different.

K-Pop fans can be easily identified on *Twitter* due to their similar characteristics which constitute their collective identity. Even though they do not share strong symbols such as flags (WOODWARD, 2002), there sure are symbolic systems constituted by the elements described above which can be easily identified and represent this group of people. This strong sharing of resemblance offers fans a sense of belonging and stability. They can easily identify themselves by calling each other by the name of a fandom, or as multi/only *stan* (people who are fans of multiple or only one idol). It is through this relation to the social group that they are able to affirm their personal fan identity, regardless of possible differences they may have.

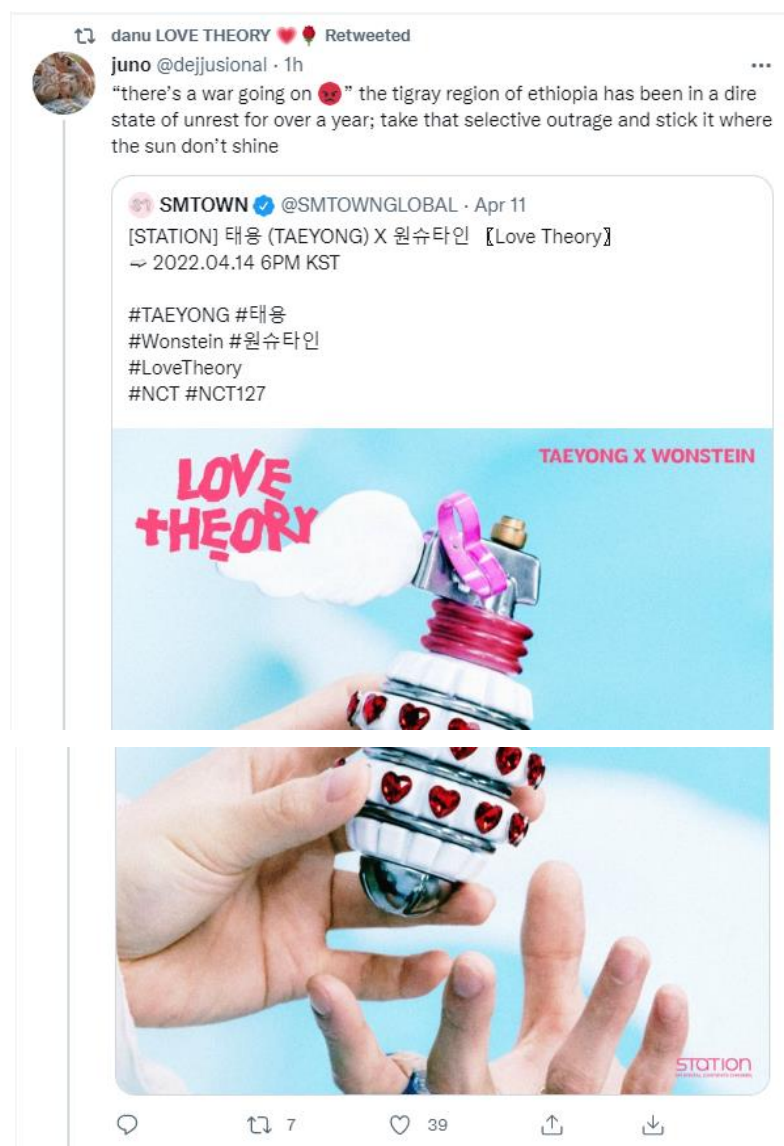
Although initially the profiles were selected solely to offer a window into the aesthetic of K-Pop *stan Twitter*, the constant presence of translanguaging practices made it important to be analyzed in this section as well. The language (and all of its complexity) adopted may be of difficult understanding for someone from outside of the K-Pop niche, which is another characteristic of this CoP.

Regardless of being an ordinary fan or one who owns an account to share news on idols, many engage in interactions using translanguaging practices. In the following section, the interactions between Brazilian and international K-Pop fans are analyzed and discussed.

5.2 Interactions beyond geographical borders

As mentioned previously, *Twitter* is a social media platform that does not have geographic constraints. As a result, K-Pop fans can easily interact with others who share similar interests (the same domain) who come from different countries and have diverse first languages. This lack of boundaries allows for larger scale discussions which would not be possible otherwise. In this section, the interactions of K-Pop fans are analyzed and discussed.

Figure 14 – Discussion risen from image teaser 1



Source: <https://twitter.com/dejjuasional/status/1513870530725568513> Accessed on 12

Apr. 2022.

Here is an example of a discussion which started with the teaser image for the singer Taeyong's, then, upcoming single *Love Theory*, featuring rapper Wonstein (Figure 15). A Brazilian fan (name "danu", and username *@princesstyongie*) likes a *quote-RT* of an international fan in English of an official post by the record label of their idol in Korean. In the original tweet, the record label, SM Entertainment, is promoting the single with the teaser image and hashtags. The label's tweet received a lot of criticism from fans around the world. These fans claim that the choice of image of a grenade with hearts romanticizes weapons and is insensible considering the Ukraine-Russia situation taking place at the time. Others support the concept of "an explosion of love" and disagree with the claims of romanticizing weapons.

The tweet liked by the Brazilian fan, though, calls fellow fans' attention to the fact that there has been war happening in other countries for a long time, as in Ethiopia, but that never made them outrage when such concepts were chosen by idols in the past.

Figure 15 – Discussion risen from image teaser 2

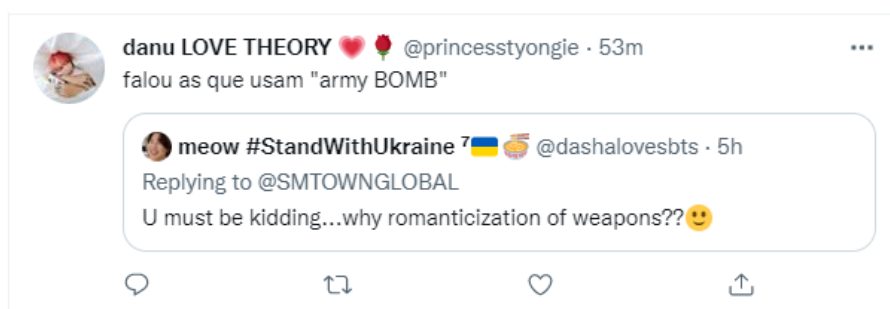


Source: <https://twitter.com/Pinapollayuna/status/1513871510926069763> Accessed on: 12

April, 2022.

In Figure 15, the same Brazilian fan likes a post by another international fan, from the middle east, with their opinions on the subject. There is much discontentment in this person's tweet, with the choice of words and the use of capital letters as they protest that some are using this controversy to start fan war¹⁶, instead of truly caring for the war situation.

Figure 16 – Discussion risen from image teaser 3



Source: <https://twitter.com/princesstyongie/status/1513876391086931979> Accessed on: 12 Apr. 2022.

Finally, the Brazilian fan makes a *quote-RT* herself to call out the hypocrisy of an *Army* (as BTS fans are called). The *Army* from the quoted tweet seems to complain about the alleged romanticization of weapons. The hypocrisy mentioned by danu (@princesstyongie) is that BTS's official lightstick¹⁷ is in the format of a bomb and is called an "Army Bomb". Besides, they have used other elements related to wars throughout their career, as the fandom name "army" suggests that their fans fight for the group.

A common tweet by a label promoting its idol triggered a whole political discussion among the fans and anti-fans, or haters, (Figures 14, 15, 16). Ignoring any barrier languages could posit, fans argued, shared their views, and interacted with one another. It is remarkable the use of ELF in these extracts, with K-Pop *stans* writing in, and interacting with, English, regardless of their mother tongues. The Brazilian fan in question uses the Portuguese language system to interact with ELF. It is a fine example of language being used in a CoP which engages in discussions and knowledge building together.

¹⁶ A fan war is when fans of different idols and groups engage in a general argument.

¹⁷ A lightstick is an official kind of flashlight K-Pop groups have. The English word is used in Portuguese without any translation.

Not only do serious discussions emerge in translanguaging interactions, but there are also ordinary conversations about idols' looks and music. In Figure 17, for example, a Brazilian fan is agreeing to another fan's tweet in ELF saying the hairstyle on member of boy group The Boyz looks good on him. She reacts in Portuguese, to the tweet written in English.

Figure 17 – Fan's reaction to an idol's hairstyle



Source: <https://twitter.com/minhodio/status/1513870171252867075> Accessed on: 12 Apr. 2022.

However, in the example above, she may not be replying to the English text, but to the video instead. This ambivalence reflects the multimodal aspect of both Twitter and multilingual interactions. She may not understand what is written, but the other visual resources allow that she participates in this exchange.

Another kind of interaction that is common is through likes and retweets. The user may not add anything to the discussion, only like to support it, or retweet to share with their followers, as in the example below (Figure 18).

Figure 18 – Fans liking an international meme



Source: <https://twitter.com/Imjaebabie/status/1513571862898425861> Accessed on: 12 Apr. 2022.

Two Brazilian fans (@itzneoct, represented by a four-leaf clover, and @safetaeil, known as lilo) like a tweet in ELF. The tweet in question has a photo of an escalator crowded with people and jokes comparing it to the cover of NCT's album *Universe*, represented in Figure 19.

Figure 19 – Cover of NCT's album 'Universe'



Source: SM Entertainment Domain (2021)

This tweet, as some seen previously, reflects both an understanding of and interaction with English text, as much as a multiliteracy competence. Practitioners of this CoP also refer to their shared knowledge of the album cover to create something new in the form of a meme. Thus, adding to their collective repertoire a creation of their own. This relates to Wei's (2018) explanation that, besides making use of translanguaging practices and having a broad linguistic repertoire, multilinguals also make use of multimodal practices in their interactions. Such capacities allow for fans to create and consume memes in a variety of languages, as long as they do not extrapolate their linguistic resources.

As seen before, sometimes fans interact in their mother tongue to a tweet in an additional language. In the following Figures (20 and 21), a more complex kind of translanguaging interaction takes place, as three named languages are used.

Figure 20 – Fans discussing CD designs 1



Source: <https://twitter.com/seotterfly/status/1514270191433261058> Accessed on: 14 Apr.

2022.

Figure 21 – Fans discussing CD designs 2



Source: <https://twitter.com/rdgvmvt/status/1514012742054977536> Accessed on: 14 Apr. 2022.

An account posted asking others to “*quote retweet*” (*qrt*) their tweet with their favorite K-Pop designs, using both English and Indonesian. It was *quote-retweeted* by a fan with CD designs of the group Red Velvet in English, and later that tweet was also *quote-retweeted*, now by a Brazilian writing in Portuguese, mentioning that her favorite is the pizza one.

Indonesian fans of K-Pop are known to often translanguague between English and Indonesian, sometimes making it difficult for *Twitter’s* automatic translation tool to determine which (named) language is being used. Even though user *@rdgvmvt* may not understand the Indonesian language, they were still able to comprehend the main idea of the tweet and contribute. Brazilian user *@seotterfly* saw the English quote retweet and contributed to that one in Portuguese. Thus, demonstrating the easiness with which K-Pop fans interact with others regardless of their nationality. Language, therefore, is not a barrier for this CoP, but a resource used to perform their fandom

activities and co-construct their shared repertoire. Such resource can also be analyzed in single tweets, when practitioners use of signs from other named languages while writing, mostly, in their mother tongues, as may be seen in the following examples.

Besides interacting with foreigners' tweets in other languages, Brazilian K-Pop *stans* have also been observed using different named languages within single interactions. The use of translanguaging in tweets seems to be a common practice in this CoP. From writing a tweet in Portuguese to a media in another format (photo or video) in English, to interchangeably using both languages within the same text, to using specific words in English or Korean while writing in Portuguese, fans interact and communicate understandably.

Figure 22 – Fan page shares translation of apology



Source: <https://twitter.com/npomvtt/status/1522272454969905154> Accessed on: 17 May, 2022.

Figure 23 – Reply to fellow Brazilian fan



Source: <https://twitter.com/npomvtt/status/1522273892030681089> Accessed on: 5 May, 2022.

In Figure 22, *Twitter* page Nunca Pause o MV (@npomvtt) translates the Instagram post of a photographer who mistreated Korean American singer Johnny Suh (NCT) at the 2022 *Met Gala* event. The photographer had spoken in a rude manner to gain the attention of the idol, while imposing that he could not understand “a single word he said”. Johnny Suh, raised in America by Korean parents, is not only fluent in Korean and English, but can also speak Japanese, Spanish, and Mandarin. Fans were upset at the photographer’s lack of respect, resulting in a public apology. In the Figure, the page translates the apology, attaching the screenshot as source, and responds to fellow fans while making use of translanguaging practices (Figure 23).

Fan @matakondo_na makes fun of the situation stating that he only claims having reflected on his action because of the negative outlash he received. @npomvtt agrees and adds that the photographer allegedly threatened to sue a fan identified as “globalmyeon”, who they describe as being a “literal minor”. In this interaction, the named languages English and Portuguese are being used to present the apology text (Portuguese translation in the text and English source in the image), as well as being used interchangeably in a reply by the translating page. Although the first co-occurrence of languages has the purpose of making a piece of news accessible to non-

English speakers, the second either suggests the familiarity of fellow fans with the language, or the internalization of English words by the author for not restraining themselves to using only Portuguese.

Figure 24 – Quote Retweet of a video



Source: <https://twitter.com/witchcatf/status/1526618097083351042> Accessed on: 17 May, 2022.

In Figure 24, @blackfedora tweets a video from another social media, *TikTok*, of NCT member Jaehyun dancing with Hyoyeon to her hit song *Dessert* (2020) with a text saying they frequently think of this video. The tweet was *quote-retweeted* (shared to followers while adding extra commentary) by @witchcatf, which was then retweeted by danu (@princesstyongie). @witchcatf makes a joke that the singer Jaehyun took this opportunity to “beat the allegations” of being “heterotop”, and supporting his “gay side”. “Heterotop” is a Brazilian expression that may carry pejorative connotation describing a man who follows heterosexual stereotypes.

Before continuing the analysis of this interaction, it is important to mention that this thesis does not intend to guess, discuss, nevertheless discriminate, anyone’s (be it an idol or a fan) sexual orientation. Neither does it seem to be the case of the tweet

made by the fan. Instead, the intention here is to analyze the richness of translanguaging that is observed in this tweet. Although the main core of the text written by @witchcatf is in Portuguese, they combine words and the structures of Portuguese and English.

The use of the English suffix “ers” to “lgbters”, gives the meaning of practitioners of “LGBT”, in sum, LGBT people. Besides, they transform the verb “beat” into the Portuguese infinitive form, by adding the “ar” suffix. And they also use the Portuguese adjective order when writing “allegations *injustas*” (unfair allegations). They end the tweet writing the English sentence “you go gay boy”. The author of the tweet demonstrates having semiotic competence besides understanding morphological and syntactic forms of both named languages. Thus, allowing for the creation of something new (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014; WEI, 2011, 2018) which challenges the boundaries of languages.

Figure 25 – News on Girls’ Generation’s comeback



Source: <https://twitter.com/UpdateKGirls/status/1526560347712278528> Accessed on: 17 May, 2022.

At the beginning of the second half of May 2022, the announcement of Girls’ Generation’s (also known as the acronym of their Korean name, SNSD) caused much excitement in K-Pop *stan Twitter*. In Figure 25, two kinds of translanguaging practices

can be noticed. The first is the use of English words such as “reality” (as in reality show) and “comeback” while writing in Portuguese. Such words are commonly used in the community, being “reality show” a known type of TV show in Brazil, and “comeback” a frequent word used in K-Pop-related interactions.

It is worth mentioning that to shorten the name “reality show”, the characteristic “reality” instead of the noun “show” was used. This is probably due to the order of adjectives in the Portuguese language, as the main word of a phrase is usually the first, and not the second as it is with English.

The second kind of translanguaging present in Figure 25 is in the word “*ommacitas*”. The author of the tweet mixes the Korean word “*omma*” (mother, *엄마* in *hangul*¹⁸) with the Spanish word “*mamacita*” (mommy). “*Mamacita*” is a Spanish word which is frequently used by Brazilian youth to refer to powerful women. There is a joining of two ways of addressing to “mother”, one in Korean and another in Spanish, making a new sign representing a powerful Korean woman. What makes this more interesting is that this new sign was made by a Brazilian and used in a Portuguese text, and not in a context in which Spanish or Korean were the focus.

Two things may be understood from the creation of the sign “*ommacita*”. The K-Pop *stan* CoP has both the concepts of “*omma*” and “*mamacita*” in their repertoire. Thus, this shared knowledge allows for the critical and creative action of making a new word and being understood by others in the community.

¹⁸ Hangul is the name of the Korean alphabet.

Figure 26 – Translation of an Instagram livestream



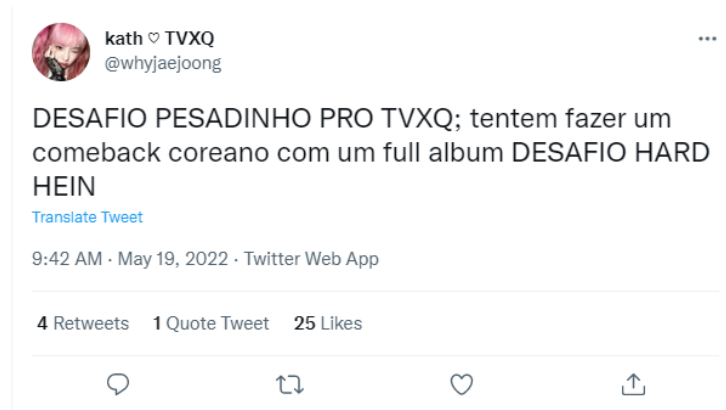
Source: <https://twitter.com/nctranslate/status/1526574675899609088> Accessed on: 17 May 2022.

In a thread translating the content from an *Instagram* livestream of NCT members (Figure 26), the Korean word “*hyung*” (형 in *hangul*) is not translated nor localized for any possible Portuguese equivalent. “*Hyung*” is a way for men to address an older brother, and is frequently used among friends to express proximity, care, and respect (as they recognize the other is older and, thus, wiser). Fans know that translating this word would imply in some loss of meaning and, therefore, they choose to keep it in its original form.

When K-Pop fans interact with each other on *Twitter*, regardless of where they are from, language is not something that is seen as a barrier for them. They engage in topics and discussions as they understand and use all their linguistic resources, unlike what happens in formal institutions like schools, where they are instructed to prioritize one named language (GARCÍA; WEI, 2014). They are free to create new words and

expressions, besides internalizing and making meaning of others they see online, despite being in Portuguese, English, Korean, or other. This freedom enables them to choose when to use a word in a language that does not have an exact or approximate meaning in another (as is the case of “*hyung*” and “brother”).

Figure 27 – Fan claiming for TVXQ’s comeback



Source: <https://twitter.com/whyjaejoong/status/1527268568320065538> Accessed on: 19 May, 2022.

In this example (Figure 27), kath (@whyjaejoong) uses English and Portuguese simultaneously while jokingly challenging boy group TVXQ to release a full album in Korean. She uses the English, yet already part of Brazilian K-Pop jargon, words “comeback” and “full album”, besides the English adjective “hard” combined with the Portuguese noun “desafio” (challenge). When mixing both languages in one phrase, she chooses to follow the Portuguese syntactic order of noun + adjective, instead of the English order adjective + noun. A similar use of translanguaging in a phrase was noticed in Figure 24.

The common use of ELF and Korean words by Brazilian fans demonstrates what Garcia and Wei (2014) explain about multilinguals drawing from their entire linguistic repertoire. K-Pop *stans* do not restrain themselves to only one symbolic system. The use and the creation of new signs in a variety of languages is a characteristic which permeates this CoP.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

K-Pop was one of the main reasons for me to start learning English, back when I was still a teenager who spent too much time on the Internet. It opened my eyes to a world bigger and more diverse than I could have imagined, and not only through the genre, but because I got to study and use English as a lingua franca. It seemed a perfect fit, then, that in my final thesis I would conduct research in applied linguistics on what introduced me to the beautiful study of language(s). Observing how K-Pop fans interacted was also a way of looking at myself and reflecting on my own experience as a learner, speaker, and member of communities.

Much has changed in the development of this research. I was able to study further on theories which I did not have much contact with during my undergraduate years and reshape my view on language. When noticing the field had changed much from when I was a K-Pop fan on *Twitter* myself, I could learn from it and allow myself to go beyond. I came across the concepts of translanguaging and community of practice, which became the core of the theoretical background basing this thesis.

Its thesis main objective was to analyze how Brazilian K-Pop fans use translanguaging in their fandom practices online, more specifically on *Twitter*. In order to achieve this, the author separated the thesis's background in a chapter dedicated to drawing an outline of the History of K-Pop to understand how it became popular among Brazilians, and another dedicated to reviewing the existing literature on translanguaging and CoPs to provide an overview on how people use language to perform social practices. After that, a qualitative netnographic research method was applied to gather and analyze K-Pop fans profiles and tweets.

Some difficulties were faced in the course of this research. Different research approaches had been considered, as the original aim was to analyze the use of ELF, which then was changed to translanguaging. When the focus was still on ELF, observation, interview, and questionnaires were thought as possible methodologies. However, when the focus shifted to translanguaging, netnography was rightfully chosen to allow for a participative observation of interactions in their original form.

It was possible to observe some common CoP behaviors in the corpus studied, such as: similar characteristics among profiles; hierarchical relations; collaborative engagement working on achieving a shared goal; discussions and meaning making;

and sharing of views and opinions through CMC. All of these could be observed happening through the use of translanguaging practices in their interactions.

The findings indicate that K-Pop fans see no boundaries in interacting with people from other regions of the globe and who do not share the same first language. In many instances, Brazilians like, retweet, and respond to tweets in ELF or Korean. Besides, fans were observed to make great use of translanguaging practices in their tweets. They would simultaneously use Portuguese, ELF, and Korean, applying rules of one language system to another, and creating new signs.

The use of translanguaging practices of K-Pop fans on *Twitter* suggests that, as active language users, they have internalized the words and forms of the named languages used. Thus, allowing them to draw elements from their entire linguistic repertoire in their utterances and interactions. Besides, they do not only “use” the words, but play and create new signs and structures by challenging the languages norms.

To be a member of K-Pop *stan Twitter*, one must have a well-developed multiliteracy competence. This is due to the dynamic interactions which take various forms – as tweets, replies, retweets, *quote-retweets*, and DMs, which were not analyzed in this thesis – and the variety of modes conversing to make meaning. All these characteristics, along with other aspects (such as gender, sexual orientation, ideology, nationality) which were not studied in this thesis, assist in forming these fans’ identities.

K-Pop is vast, and its fandom is subdivided in many others dedicated to specific groups. Considering that the data generated was selected from an account created by the author, the results may reflect a bias on her favorite groups. Specific fandoms interactions could be analyzed and/or compared in following studies to understand whether the results found may represent the whole of K-Pop fandom(s), or if they are specific to certain groups. Besides, although the tweets selected were those which referred to K-Pop idols and groups, the fans also use their *stan* accounts to make bonds and share about things that happen in their everyday lives. Therefore, the way fans build bonds through CMC and/or if they use language similarly when writing about personal and K-Pop-related topics could also be studied.

I hope I have contributed with the academia by offering a little glimpse of how such a diverse fandom uses translanguaging in their online practices. Moreover, I also

hope that this thesis helps teachers and people in general recognize and respect translanguaging as legitimate language in use and not as deviation from the norm. Knowing how our learners use language in their everyday practices is useful to understand them and apply different pedagogical strategies in our classes. Online platforms are a great resource for activities which helps us come closer and create bonds with our learners.

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