

# **K-pop at home: glocalization in the Korean version of “Mercy”**

Name: Leisan Luu

Student number: 4078640

Bachelor: Taal- en Cultuurstudies

Verdiepingspakket: Comparative Media Studies

Thesis supervisor: Anne Kustritz

Study year: 5<sup>th</sup> year

Blok 4

Submission date: 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2019

## Index

<b>Abstract</b> .....	3
<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Theoretical Framework</b> .....	7
<b>Method</b> .....	14
<b>Analysis</b> .....	18
<b>The filmic layer: the music videos</b> .....	18
<b>The narrative layer: the lyrics</b> .....	21
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	27
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	29
<b>Appendix</b> .....	33
<b>1.1 Lyrics: Girls' Generation – Dancing Queen (Korean/English)</b> .....	33
<b>1.2 Lyrics: Girls' Generation – Dancing Queen (English Translation)</b> .....	38
<b>2. Lyrics: Duffy – Mercy</b> .....	42
<b>3. Lyrics: ABBA – Dancing Queen</b> .....	45

## Abstract

In the last ten years K-pop has become increasingly globally popular as one of South Korea's biggest export products. Within the production of K-pop songs, there is a phenomenon of localizing Western pop songs to K-pop songs. Localization is a process where a product is adapted to fit the local market and audience of a country. Having K-pop songs localized to the Korean audience both indicates a clear Koreanness in these songs, while also embodying foreign aspects. One of K-pop's biggest girl groups, Girls' Generation, released one of these localized Western songs in 2012 called "Dancing Queen". "Dancing Queen" is stated to be a remake of the popular song "Mercy" of British singer Duffy. Alongside the song, the accompanying music video of "Mercy" was also localized. Interestingly, the localization process also included the lyrics of the iconic song "Dancing Queen" of Swedish pop group ABBA, as well as using the same title. By including Western songs into one K-pop song, there is a case of "double remake". This double remake shows how female sexuality, youthfulness and empowerment is both expressed through the use of English code-switching, as well as suppressed through the process localizing to a Korean culture that still strongly adheres to traditional Confucian values. The double remake does not only reflect upon the K-pop success formula that is mostly based on commercial business calculations, but also on Confucianism, contemporary Korean culture, globalization, American imperialism and glocalization. This analysis shows that Korean identity is everchanging and transcendent, and that K-Pop's Koreanness reflects the different cultural influences that create Korean identity.

## Introduction

In the last ten years Korean Pop, better known as K-pop, has become increasingly globally popular and one of South Korea's biggest export products.<sup>1</sup> Despite K-pop being a Korean product, according to John Lie, sociologist at University of California, there is not much "Korean" and traditional Korean culture in K-pop.<sup>2</sup> He argues that the global character and thereby lack of "Koreanness" makes it so attractive to consumers outside of South Korea. However, within the production of K-pop songs there is a process of localization, in which popular Western pop songs are adapted into K-pop songs that are catered to the Korean market and audience.<sup>3</sup> Having songs localized to the Korean audience indicates that there is a presence of Koreanness in K-pop songs, with the localization process showing the different and conflicting influences that shape Koreanness.

Localization is heavily present in the song "Dancing Queen" that was released in 2012. Girls' Generation, one of K-pop biggest girl groups, released "Dancing Queen" as a remake of "Mercy" by Welsh singer Duffy.<sup>4</sup> It was originally recorded in 2008 and was set to release as the lead single on the album *Gee*.<sup>5</sup> Earlier in the same year Duffy's original version was released as a part of the album *Rockferry*.<sup>6</sup> However, "Dancing Queen" was withdrawn and instead "Gee" was released as the lead single.<sup>7</sup> "Gee" skyrocketed Girls' Generation popularity and made them a household name in K-pop. "Dancing Queen" is clearly a remake of "Mercy" as the melody is distinctively the same. However, there are big differences in the lyrics, visual aspects such as dancing and performance and in the music video, that were all

---

<sup>1</sup> Romano, Aja. "How K-pop Became a Global Phenomenon." Vox. February 26, 2018. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/2/16/16915672/what-is-kpop-history-explained>.

<sup>2</sup> Lie, John. "What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity," *Korean Observer* 43, no. 3 (2012): 360.

<sup>3</sup> Somers, Harold, eds. *Computers and Translation: A translator's guide* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins B.V., 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Girls' Generation, "Dancing Queen," track 2 on *I Got a Boy*, S.M. Entertainment and KT Music, 2013, compact disc; Duffy "Mercy," track 7 on *Rockferry*, A&M, 2008, compact disc; and Benjamin, Jeff. "Girls' Generation Drop 'Dancing Queen,' Set Date for Album Release." *Billboard*, January 13, 2013. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/1481272/girls-generation-drop-dancing-queen-set-date-for-album-release>.

<sup>5</sup> Girls' Generation, *I Got A Boy*, S.M. Entertainment and KT Music, 2013, compact disc.

<sup>6</sup> Duffy, *Rockferry*, A&M, 2008, compact disc.

<sup>7</sup> Herman, Tamar. "The Legacy of Girls' Generation's 'Gee,' 10 Years Later." *Billboard*, January 06, 2019. Accessed June 13, 2019. <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/8492312/girls-generation-gee-10th-anniversary-legacy>.

changed to suit the taste of Korean K-pop consumers. “Dancing Queen” lyrically speaks about Girls’ Generation’s adoration for a woman who is so great at dancing they can’t help but admire her.<sup>8</sup> In “Mercy”, however, Duffy asks her male lover to either take the next step into a serious relationship or to “release” her from their current one.<sup>9</sup> The corresponding music videos are also vastly different, as “Dancing Queen” portrays the girl group in a American diner hosting a dancing party, while Duffy performs her song in “Mercy” surrounded by dancers and a backing band.<sup>10</sup> Also, the title choice and lyrics of “Dancing Queen” are strongly reminiscent and similar of one of the Swedish group ABBA’s most iconic and well-known songs “Dancing Queen” that was released in 1976.<sup>11</sup> It is a Europop disco hit and lyrically it addresses the listener as a “Dancing Queen” who is still in her late teens, who goes out on a Friday night to dance.<sup>12</sup>

In my thesis, I will build on yet challenge the theory of John Lie by using the songs and music videos of “Dancing Queen” and “Mercy” to discuss how localization within K-pop is reflective of the current Korean culture and how that goes hand in hand with the globalization in K-pop. The main research question is: “How does the process of localization in Girls’ Generation’s ‘Dancing Queen’ reflect on contemporary Korean culture and K-pop?” In order to answer the main research question, I will first look at the sub-question: “What are the differences and similarities between the songs and music videos of Duffy’s ‘Mercy’ and Girls’ Generation’s ‘Dancing Queen’?” Secondly, I will include ABBA’s “Dancing Queen” and research: “How has ABBA’s ‘Dancing Queen’ incorporated in Girls’ Generation’s ‘Dancing Queen’?” Lastly, I will look at: “How does localization explain the differences and similarities between Duffy’s ‘Mercy’, ABBA’s ‘Dancing Queen’ and Girls’ Generation’s ‘Dancing Queen’?” By looking at the process of localization in these songs, I am able to state

---

<sup>8</sup> “Girls' Generation – Dancing Queen.” Genius. December 21, 2012. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://genius.com/Girls-generation-dancing-queen-lyrics>.

<sup>9</sup> “Duffy – Mercy.” Genius. February 11, 2008. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://genius.com/Duffy-Mercy-lyrics>.

<sup>10</sup> SMTOWN. "Girls' Generation 소녀시대 'Dancing Queen' MV." YouTube Video, 4:24, December 21, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXZxc8GSXnI>; and DuffyVEVO. “Duffy - Mercy.” YouTube Video, 3:29, June 26, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7ZEVA5dy-Y>.

<sup>11</sup> “Dancing Queen - ABBA.” “Dancing Queen” - ABBA. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://www.nporadio2.nl/song/34938/dancing-queen>.

<sup>12</sup> “ABBA – Dancing Queen.” Genius, August 15, 1976. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://genius.com/Abba-dancing-queen-lyrics>.

that there is Koreanness in K-pop and discuss how this Koreanness reflects upon Korean culture and globalism.

## Theoretical Framework

In this thesis the process of localization in K-pop is analyzed to reflect on the K-pop industry, globalism and how they connect to Korean culture. In the theoretical framework I draw on the theory by Van Keulen and Krijnen about localization, which provides the basis for my analysis of localization. Next, I discuss the history and rise of K-pop by providing a background and discussing how globalism plays a role in K-pop. Furthermore, the concepts of Americanization and glocalization are important in my analysis of my corpus. I must also discuss Korean culture, its history of Confucianism and its effect on gender in Korean society. Lastly, the concept of English-codeswitching is discussed as it is essential within K-pop songs. Therefore, the academic relevance of this research is showing that through the process of localization, not only Koreanness in K-pop reflected, but also that this Koreanness is influenced by Confucian and contemporary Korean culture, globalism, glocalization and American imperialism.

According to Harold Somers, localization is an overarching theory that explains how customization for a local audience is constructed, something more prominent in language and technological disciplines.<sup>13</sup> Within media studies, Jolien van Keulen and Tonny Krijnen define localization in relation to television, where television show formats are translated to suit a local audience.<sup>14</sup> The localization of these standardized formats concerns national identity and culture. In their theory they use cultural proximity to measure localization, a term that is coined by Joe Straubhaar:

...the concept of cultural identity, which is complex and multi-layered, and consists of geographical, cultural and linguistic aspects like nationality, ethnicity, religion, and gender. Likewise, different levels of cultural proximity are distinguishable, such as geographic, cultural-linguistic, genre, thematic and value proximity features.<sup>15</sup>

Van Keulen and Krijnen also quote Albert Moran in their article, who explains that in order to transform a national television show into a show with a different national context, it must be localized on a linguistic, cultural and intertextual level.<sup>16</sup> The linguistic level lies in elements

---

<sup>13</sup> Somers, eds. *Computers and Translation: A translator's guide*.

<sup>14</sup> Keulen, Jolien Van, and Tonny Krijnen. "The Limitations of Localization: A Cross-cultural Comparative Study of Farmer Wants a Wife." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013): 277-92.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 281.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 282.

such as settings and montages of the format that can either be removed, replaced, altered and adjusted in the adaption of the format. These linguistic codes do not only point out the differences in adaptations in narrative and audio-visual style but also depict a level of representation. Cultural levels can mostly be found in the narrative and the symbolic layer of the show, which explains what the show is about and what the meaning behind it is. The intertextuality is established by knowledge of a particular society and the possibilities within it; these can be organizational traditions and habits that influence the adaptation of a format. Other intertextual codes include cultural aspects, media, politics, economics and the geographic context of a country. In their method, Van Keulen and Krijnen connect these the linguistic, cultural and intertextual codes to John Fiske’s audio-visual layers.<sup>17</sup> Fiske divides these into three intertwined layers “...with the filmic layer supporting the narrative, while the symbolic layer is found in the narrative and the filmic layer.”<sup>18</sup> Van Keulen en Krijnen employ the linguistic, cultural and intertextual codes with the audio-visual layers within the following table:

**Table 1.** Van Keulen and Krijnen’s localization table for television.

	<b>Linguistic codes</b>	<b>Intertextual codes</b>	<b>Cultural codes</b>
<b>Filmic layer</b>	Mise-en-scène Clothing Environment Accommodation Colors Setting Nature Staging Camera positions Sound	Production material Customs Knowledge Limitations	
<b>Narrative layer</b>	Characters Acts Editing Mode of address Story pace Story structure Episode structure Season structure	Genre features Role of broadcaster	Cultural identity (focusing on religion, gender, age and social class) History Traditions Conduct and aims
<b>Symbolic layer</b>			Norms and values Convictions and assumptions

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 284.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 284.



---

Manners and behaviour  
Lifestyle  
Gender roles  
Social stereotyping  
Cultural oppositions  
Central theme/message

---

*Source:* Keulen, Jolien Van, and Tonny Krijnen. "The Limitations of Localization: A Cross-cultural Comparative Study of Farmer Wants a Wife." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013), 7.

I use the theory of localization by Van Keulen and Krijnen by analyzing the linguistic, cultural and intertextuality codes and filmic, narrative and symbolic layers of the lyrics and music videos instead of television shows. I believe this theory is relevant for my research, as it serves to analyze how music is adapted in a different national context by altering lyrical and visual elements to fit the Korean audience.<sup>19</sup>

In order to analyze the South Korean cultural and societal background in K-pop, I must also discuss the K-pop music industry itself. Sarah Leung discusses the rise of K-pop and the globalization of the K-pop industry in her article "Catching the K-Pop Wave: Globality in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of South Korean Popular Music".<sup>20</sup> According to Leung, K-pop's success comes from the nature of Korea's economic growth, which stems from the exponential success and increasing global demand of Korean export products between the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>21</sup> John Lie also states that K-pop is "...largely as another instance of South Korean export success".<sup>22</sup> Similar to the Korean export business, K-pop's success comes from both globalization and technological developments.<sup>23</sup> Globalization of K-pop found its gateway in the 1990s and 2000s when it first gained access to Japan and Taiwan, while technological transformations as the rise of YouTube and digital music helped K-pop to become even more global.<sup>24</sup> Lie also argues that K-pop has always been an international business, with the first emergence of the genre being Seo Taiji and the Boys in 1992, who combined music that wasn't local: American pop, hip-hop and rap music,

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 282.

<sup>20</sup> Leung, Sarah, "Catching the K-Pop Wave: Globality in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of South Korean Popular Music" (2012). Senior Capstone Projects.149.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Lie, "What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity," 361.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 353.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 353.

and Japanese pop music. According to Leung, it was also this foreign influence, that came from Korean immigrants that grew up in Western cities that “would eventually introduce styles of hip-hop, rap, and R&B to South Korea”, transforming the Korean music industry.<sup>25</sup>

Aside from globalization in K-pop and its international character, there is also a strong presence of Americanization in K-pop. I discuss the concept of Americanization with the definition of Ulrich Beck, Nathan Sznajder, and Rainer Winter, who describe Americanization as:

...a powerful one-directional process that tends to overwhelm competing processes as well as the strength of local forces that might resist, modify and/or transform American models in hybrid forms. Moreover, the notion of Americanization is tied to a particular nation – the USA – but it has a differential impact on many specific nations.<sup>26</sup>

Americanization is the American cultural, political and economic imperialism that has influenced countries in industrialism, consumption, media and more, specifically in Europe, Asia and South America. It is historically rooted, according to Ji-Hyun Ahn.<sup>27</sup> She explains that Korea endured a series of national disasters around 1950, including the division in two Koreas and the Korean War. Chuyun Oh describes that in the following years South Korea entered rapid modernization.<sup>28</sup> These years included quick economic growth and changing politics. This also resulted in social dislocation that, according to Lie, allowed for the Korean audience to access the American popular culture that had its dominance in 1950 and 1960.<sup>29</sup> According to Patrick Mendis, after the war, Korea adhered to capitalism and democracy and being open to the global market.<sup>30</sup> He argues that South Korea has been influenced by

---

<sup>25</sup> Leung, “Catching the K-Pop Wave: Globality in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of South Korean Popular Music,” 12-13.

<sup>26</sup> Beck, Ulrich, Natan Sznajder, and Rainer Winter. “Theoretical Perspectives”, *Global America?: The Cultural Consequences of Globalization*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Ahn, Ji-Hyun. “The New Face of Korea” *Mixed-race Politics and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in South Korean Media*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 37.

<sup>28</sup> Oh, Chuyun, “The Politics of the Dancing Body: Radicalized and Gendered Femininity in Korean Pop” *The Korean Wave*, ed. Yasue Kuwahara (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 62.

<sup>29</sup> Lie, “What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity”, 343.

<sup>30</sup> Mendis, Patrick. “Americanization of Globalization: Is the United States the Un-centralized World Power for Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness?” *The Public Manager*, 2005, 6-7.

Americanization, as South Korean society and culture now consists of a mix of Confucianism and a Western outlook that reflects how Korean culture and popular media have been influenced by Americanization.

Historically, Confucianism is a religion that is central to Korea's traditional and contemporary culture and thereby key to understanding South Korean culture and society. I challenge the previous mentioned statements of John Lie, in which he states that K-pop is not Korean because traditional Confucian South Korean society and culture is not apparent in K-pop.<sup>31</sup> According to Lie, Confucianism stresses respect for the elders and ancestors.<sup>32</sup> There is also a strong emphasis on order, tradition, hierarchy and patriarchy. Tomas Sleziak explains that after World War II, these values were key to the rapid recovery and development of South Korea.<sup>33</sup> He also argues that Confucian familial, orderly and quiet lifestyle, emphasis on personal and family honor, and sense of collective belonging to a certain group do not only attribute to the economic success, but also to the popular culture which includes the K-pop industry.<sup>34</sup>

As my thesis includes a case study of female performers, it is important to understand the influence of Confucianism on the roles of women in K-pop. I discuss the issues of femininity and the male gaze with the article of Leung, who argues that these issues stem from the influence of Confucianism in Korea. The traditional roles of women in Confucianism are in defined regards to men. Kavita Karan and Katherine T. Frith describe that "...the husband was metaphorically referred to as 'heaven,' to signify his superiority, and his wife (as 'earth') was supposed to serve him with reverence."<sup>35</sup> Chuyun Oh specifically zooms in on the femininity issues in K-pop by using Girls' Generation as an example. She mentions that there is a "hypergirlish-femininity" in K-pop girl groups which comes from Confucian values that project women as submissive and fragile and idealizes female purity

---

<sup>31</sup> Lie, "What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity," 339.

<sup>32</sup> Lie, "What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity", 341.

<sup>33</sup> Sleziak, Tomasz. "The role of Confucianism in contemporary South Korean society." *Rocznik Orientalistyczny/Yearbook of Oriental Studies*, 66(1) (2013): 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 31

<sup>35</sup> Kavita Karan and Katherine T. Frith, "Commercializing Asian Women: Images in Media," *Media Report to Women* 35, no. 2 (2007): 13-18.

and cuteness.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, K-pop girl groups such as Girls' Generation are constructed through a male gaze.<sup>37</sup> Leung draws in her article on the research of Heather Willoughby, who observed that K-pop girl groups are constructed by "male producers, managers and media makers" who created an idea of the ideal Korean girl groups that both embody "sex appeal" and "demure sophistication".<sup>38</sup>

In my thesis, I use the concept of glocalization to analyze both the global and national influences in K-pop. According to Hyejung Ju, the phenomenon of *glocalization* in media and popular culture is "the reciprocal interventions of media production, distribution, and consumption as the result of interpenetration of the global and the local."<sup>39</sup> Ju further discusses that it requires at least two foreign elements to be adapted by mingling it with existing culture elements, making it easier for local audiences to access the content and welcome it in their daily lives. By using her theory on glocalization in the K-pop business I can connect the differences and similarities between the songs and music videos to localization and glocalization.

In the adaptation of the lyrics of Duffy's "Mercy" and ABBA's "Dancing Queen" into a K-pop songs, there is a clear appearance of code-switching.<sup>40</sup> According to Jamie Shinhee Lee, codeswitching is a phenomenon that came from hybridizing not only local, national and regional elements but also global elements. In K-pop this is mostly used as a mix of English and Korean to create a hybridized set of lyrics, an important part of the K-pop success formula. In Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen", there are certain words, sentences and expressions that are deliberately sung in English instead of singing the whole song in Korean. According to C. Bruce Lawrence, this influence of the English language is instilled in South Korea by students who learn English from elementary school until university, and the government's efforts to popularize and familiarize the language with the netizens and

---

<sup>36</sup> Oh, "The Politics of the Dancing Body: Radicalized and Gendered Femininity in Korean Pop," 68.

<sup>37</sup> Leung, "Catching the K-Pop Wave: Globality in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of South Korean Popular Music", 56-57.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>39</sup> Ju, Hyejung. "Transformations of the Korean Media Industry by the Korean Wave: The Perspective of Glocalization" *The Korean Wave*, ed. Yasue Kuwahara ( New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 34.

<sup>40</sup> Lee, Jamie Shinhee. "Linguistic Hybridization in K-Pop: Discourse of Self-assertion and Resistance." *World Englishes* 23, no. 3 (2004): 432.

culture.<sup>41</sup> He discusses that English is heavily used in the chorus, intro, title and verses of K-pop songs by analyzing 24 K-pop songs in his article.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Lawrence discusses that English code-switching is used in order to talk about love, express sexuality, to defy authority an conventional norms and values, and allows combining global and local dialogues while rejecting the hegemony of English.<sup>43</sup> Lawrence concludes that English code-switching enables a resistance against conservative Korean culture and the hegemony of the English language. By applying the theory of code-switching, I'm able to nuance the meaning and construction behind the localization of the lyrics in Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen".

---

<sup>41</sup> Lawrence, C. Bruce. "The Verbal Art of Borrowing: Analysis of English Borrowing in Korean Pop Songs." *Asian Englishes* 13, no. 2 (2010): 43.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 50-52.

## Method

This research uses textual analysis to analyze how localization is embedded in the K-pop adaption of “Mercy”. Alan McKee describes textual analysis in his article as “...a way of gathering and analyzing information in academic research” that helps us to “...make and share sense about the world we live in.”<sup>44</sup> He explains that texts in a textual analysis are not only written texts, but can also include programs, television shows, music videos and songs. All these texts play a role in the media and portray messages that are a part of the construction of our world view and thereby have a profound effect on our lives.<sup>45</sup> McKee stresses that the most important aspects of textual analysis are the context and by whom the text is interpreted “by ‘context’, I mean other texts that surround a text, which provide useful information for making sense of it, which teach us how to interpret texts (and are, in turn, texts themselves, interpreted in other contexts).”<sup>46</sup>

The two main texts I analyze are the songs and corresponding music videos “Mercy” and “Dancing Queen”. First, I look at the textual and visual differences between the lyrics and music videos of Duffy’s “Mercy” and Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”. The lyrics of both songs are not only different in language, but also in meaning. Looking at the visual differences, I analyze both the music videos and focus on the narratives, performance, dancing and the stylistic elements of colors and outfits. I also include a third song ABBA’s “Dancing Queen”, this iconic song has not only an identical song title, but also lyrical similarities. By including this song in my analysis of the lyrics, I am able to give a complete analysis of the localization of the lyrics of Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”. As Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen” is only stated as a remake of Duffy’s “Mercy”, and does not mention ABBA’s “Dancing Queen”, I choose not to include the music video of ABBA.

Textual analysis is very suitable for my thesis as I am both analyzing lyrical texts and music videos in the same context. However, to execute a musicological analysis on these songs is not possible with textual analysis. Furthermore, Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen” and Duffy’s “Mercy” differences lie mostly in the lyrics and the music videos, as the melody of the two songs are incredibly similar. There are notable musical differences between

---

<sup>44</sup> McKee, Alan. “What is textual analysis?” *Textual analysis: A beginner’s guide*, London: SAGE, 2003. 3; and *ibid*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

the original and the remake, however the scope of this research won't allow for such an extensive analysis. Moreover, according to McKee it is not necessary to concentrate on every aspect of a text, because "most of the information that you generate might be quite uninteresting. For all texts have some elements that are more important than others."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, I concentrate only on the lyrical differences and similarities, and the visual elements in both music videos.

To provide a context to the adaptation process of "Mercy" to "Dancing Queen" I compare the music videos of Duffy's "Mercy" and Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen". Next, I analyze the lyrics of Duffy's "Mercy", Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen" and ABBA's "Dancing Queen". Using the theory of localization employed by Van Keulen and Krijnen, I concentrate on the linguistic, intertextual and cultural codes in the filmic, narrative and symbolic layers of the music videos and the lyrics. For my research, the coding table of Van Keulen and Krijnen for television shows (previously mentioned in the theoretical framework) is adapted to the following table that is more suitable for analyzing the lyrics and music videos:

**Table 2.** Localization coding table for lyrics and music videos.

	<b>Linguistic</b>	<b>Intertextual</b>	<b>Cultural</b>
<b>Filmic layer</b>	Clothing Colors Setting Camera shots Performance Dancing Music video structure	K-pop business K-pop success formula	
<b>Narrative layer</b>	Artists Mode of address Lyrics	K-pop business K-pop success formula	Cultural identity (focusing on language and gender)
<b>Symbolic layer</b>			History Norms and values Gender roles Social stereotyping Cultural oppositions Central theme/message

I have chosen to not include all the linguistic, intertextual and cultural codes that are employed by Van Keulen and Krijnen, as they are not all relevant to my case study and the

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 15.

scope my thesis also does not allow for such an extensive amount of codes. To analyze the lyrics and music videos, there is a division of the music videos in the filmic layer and the lyrics in the narrative layer. In the filmic layer, the linguistic codes include the colors, setting, the structure of the music video, and the clothing, performance and dancing of Girls' Generation and Duffy in the videos. Instead of camera positions, mise-en-scène and environment, camera shots and the setting are more relevant to the music videos. There are also no elements of accommodation or nature apparent in the music videos and there will be no focus on the staging or sound of the music videos, so these codes are also left out.

In the narrative layer all three linguistic, intertextual and cultural codes are analyzed. In the linguistic codes of the narrative layer the characters are Duffy and Girls' Generation themselves, the artists. The editing, story pace, story structure and season structure are not relevant, as I will not be concentrating on the narratives of both music videos, because they follow very different storylines. Instead, the linguistic codes include the lyrics of Duffy's "Mercy", Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen" and ABBA's "Dancing Queen" and the mode of address in the lyrics. Cultural codes in the narrative layer are cultural identity, specifically the English and Korean language and the female gender of both artists. The intertextual codes in the filmic and narrative layer both include the K-pop business and K-pop formula, instead of production material, customs, knowledge, limitations, genre features and the role of the broadcaster, as the K-pop business and formula have a direct connection to the localization process.

Lastly, in the symbolic layer the focus is on the cultural codes that consist of norms and values, gender roles, social stereotyping, cultural oppositions and central theme/message that is reflected and conveyed in both the music videos and lyrics and in South Korean culture. Moreover, the history of South Korea is also included to touch upon Confucianism. The convictions and assumptions, and manners and behavior and lifestyle are aspects that are too broad to analyze from only two music videos.

This method is strongly suitable to my thesis, because it allows me to analyze the lyrics on both cultural and language aspects, while also enabling an analysis of the visual aspects of the music videos. These cultural, linguistic and visual aspects can be directly connected to the cultural meaning and K-pop business through the adapted table. "Mercy" and Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen" also offer an appropriate corpus alongside ABBA's "Dancing Queen", as "Mercy" was localized to such an extent that the only recognizable similarity is the melody and song structure. Furthermore, Girls' Generation is a girl group that



has had one of the most prominent careers in K-pop and has been called pioneers of the so-called Korean Wave, the global popularity and rise of Korean culture and entertainment.<sup>48</sup> As the lyrics of “Dancing Queen” are partly in English and Korean, I will use translations of the lyrics in my analysis.<sup>49</sup> When English-codeswitching was used for certain lyrics, I deliberately will state so. Lastly, the complete music video of “Dancing Queen” has three different narratives. The video starts off with an intro in the present, while the video ends with a preview of their next single at the time “I Got A Boy”.<sup>50</sup> In between the intro and the ending is the actual music video for “Dancing Queen”, which was recorded in 2008, and reused for its purpose with the release in 2012. For my analysis I will only concentrate on the actual music video of “Dancing Queen” when referring to the music video of “Dancing Queen”.

---

<sup>48</sup> “Girls' Generation and the New Korean Wave.” Asia Sentinel. October 21, 2011. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.asiasentinel.com/society/girls-generation-and-the-new-korean-wave/>.

<sup>49</sup> Breezy. “Girls' Generation (소녀시대) - Dancing Queen » Color Coded Lyrics.” Color Coded Lyrics. November 06, 2018. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://colorcodedlyrics.com/2012/12/girls-generation-sonyeosidae-dancing-queen>.

<sup>50</sup> Girls' Generation, “I Got A Boy,” track 1 on *I Got a Boy*, S.M. Entertainment and KT Music, 2013, compact disc.

## Analysis

Through the analysis of the filmic layer, this research shows how the process of localization is linked to sexuality in contemporary Korean culture, and American imperialism and globalism in K-pop. The narrative layer further explains how the process of localization also reflects on the position of femininity and women empowerment in K-pop and how that is inevitably connected to Confucianism in Korean culture. The influence of both Korean culture and American imperialism and globalism thereby also extends to glocalization.

### The filmic layer: the music videos

In the filmic layer, on a linguistic level, there are differences in performance and dancing on a between the music videos of Duffy's "Mercy" and Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen". The song title "Dancing Queen" has manifested itself as the central element of dance in the music video. The music video structure consists of three different segments: an American diner, close-ups and medium shots of the members, and a dance choreography against a white backdrop. Aside from the segment with the white backdrop, dance choreography also takes place in the American diner. About a third of the shots in "Dancing Queen" are about dancing, which is performed by all the members of Girls' Generation in a synchronized choreography. The choreography of "Dancing Queen" consists of catlike movements and movements that are reminiscent of retro and disco dance. There are highlights in the choreography where the girls stroke their legs and shake their hips near the end of the chorus and during the lyric "your sexiness makes me dizzy". The dance is mostly seen during the chorus and the bridge. Close-up shots are interspersed throughout the whole video, showing the individual girls performing with cute facial expressions. In "Mercy", Duffy is lightly dancing on a lighted stage platform and performing her song, while being surrounded by Northern Soul dancers in a dance hall.<sup>51</sup> According to David Nowell, Northern Soul was a music scene that originated in England around the 1960s, with its peak in the 1970s.<sup>52</sup> Duffy is the only one who is clearly visible, as the music video progresses the lighting becomes lighter and the dancers become more visible, and at the end some of the dancers catch fire. I will discuss the importance of the dancing and performance in the symbolic layer.

---

<sup>51</sup> "Mercy by Duffy Creative Music Video Choreographer." Natricia Bernard. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://www.natriciabernard.com/showreel/videos/duffy-Mercy/>.

<sup>52</sup> Nowell, David. "I Can't Help Myself" *The Story of Northern Soul: A Definitive History of the Dance Scene That Refuses to Die*. London: Portico Books, 2015.

Another filmic difference between the music videos is the clothing. Throughout the “Dancing Queen” music video Girls’ Generation wear a combination of colorful jeans and a t-shirt or blouse (some with a jacket), styled with pumps in the American diner. For the bridge there is a separate section where all the members wear the same white t-shirt and denim jeans with heeled boots. Both outfits have similarities in the fact that most of the shirts are cropped and bare the midriff of the body, while the jeans and pumps/heeled boots combination highlight the legs. In the “Mercy” music video, Duffy also wears a gray medium length dress with pink heels, while her dancers wear clothing that is not distinctively recognizable, because of the irregular lighting.

When analyzing these filmic differences on an intertextual and symbolic level, they show very interesting signs of localization. On an intertextual level, the emphasis on choreography in “Dancing Queen” shows how dancing itself is very much a part of K-pop. According to John Lie, K-pop introduced dance choreography as a central and crucial element of the music, when it was becoming increasingly popular in South-Korea.<sup>53</sup> Just as the lyrics and music, dance choreography is of equal importance in the K-pop success formula. The choreography and clothing in “Dancing Queen” express sexuality, with dance movements that include stroking legs and shaking hips during the lyric “your sexiness makes me dizzy”, and clothing that emphasizes these legs and show bare skin. The close-ups showing cute facial expressions also indicate Chuyun Oh’s hypergirlish-femininity image. As stated in the theoretical framework, the traditional Confucian values have influenced this hypergirlish-femininity image and idealize girls to be pure and fragile. A paradox of innocence and sexuality is expressed in the “Dancing Queen” music video, because the hypergirlish-femininity stems from the influence of Confucianism on Korean culture, that according to Lie, did not permit the showing any skin in traditional Korean music.<sup>54</sup> According to Leung, the innocent yet sexual characteristics that girl groups such as Girls’ Generation portray are emphasized in their music videos.<sup>55</sup> She discusses a different music video of Girls’ Generation called “Oh!”, released in 2010, and argues that the girl group has stuck to this same formula of “similar homogenizing, infantilizing and objectifying characteristics”.<sup>56</sup> She states that it is “extremely

---

<sup>53</sup> Lie, “What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity,” 349.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>55</sup> Leung, “Catching the K-Pop Wave: Globality in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of South Korean Popular Music,” 56.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 61-62.

common” for their songs to express these characteristics: this was also apparent in *Gee*, which was released in 2008 instead of “Dancing Queen”, and follows the same concept as “Dancing Queen”.<sup>57</sup> Hypergirlish-femininity is sustained through the image of a young group of girls throwing a dance party, which in combination with the dancing and outfits in “Dancing Queen” enables the expression of sexuality. This creates the homogenizing, infantilizing and objectifying formula that is key to K-pop girl groups. Moreover, the close-ups with cute, infantile facial expressions are a part of a method of highlighting the group and its individual members. According to Lie, this is also deliberate, as it has proven to be a success formula and is “thus dictated in part by cold-blooded business calculations”.<sup>58</sup> The nine members are all distinct, they vary in body types and speak multiple languages, set up to go global as K-pop has always been directed towards globalism.<sup>59</sup> The process of localization does not only reflect contemporary and Confucian Korean culture, but also the globalism of K-pop and how its formula is constructed through both global influences and Korean culture.

The linguistic codes of setting and colors in the filmic layers of “Mercy” and “Dancing Queen” indicate two different styles of “vintage-ness”. In the “Mercy” music video the color scheme looks monochromatic and has a vintage, almost grainy look. The setting is a large dance hall with chandeliers, with a platform that is lighted up. The microphone that Duffy uses is a ribbon microphone, widely used from the 1920s till the late 1960s.<sup>60</sup> Contrastingly, Girls’ Generation portray a very vibrant theme in their music video, the color palette containing bright and pastel colors with the white and soft pink backgrounds. In the main setting, the American diner, the colors of the interior and furniture consist of a lot of soft pink and pastel hues, while the checkerboard tile floor with pastel green and pastel orange tiles is very similar to the popular style of American diners from the 1950s. According to Andrew Hurley, the American diner in the 1950s had “... pastel colors for "brightness and richer appearance, as well as for their psychological effects", and whole interiors would be

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 61-62; and Benjamin, “Girls' Generation Drop 'Dancing Queen,' Set Date for Album Release.”

<sup>58</sup> Lie, “What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity”, 358.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 356.

<sup>60</sup> “Why Ribbon Mics Are the New Standard.” AEA Ribbon Mics & Preamps, November 29, 2018. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://www.aearibbonmics.com/why-ribbon-mics-are-the-new-standard/>.

colored with "...combinations of pink, turquoise, aqua, rose, chartreuse, and coral."<sup>61</sup> The furniture in the music video includes a jukebox, diner tables with accompanying couches and round bar stools, which are very similar to the furniture of these diners, as described by Hurley.<sup>62</sup> He discusses that most diners were also equipped with booths consisting of tables with couches or chairs that could fit a family of four. The bar serves as a background in "Dancing Queen", with signs that indicate food served such as "coffee, buttered popcorn, beef burger, hot dog and ice cream". These signs were also used by American diners according to Hurley, as they did not print costly menus but rather listed the food they offered above the bar.<sup>63</sup> Burgers and hotdogs, shown on the food signs, are also typical of American diner food served after the second World War, according to Hurley<sup>64</sup>

On a symbolic level, the setting, colors and dancing in the music video give "Mercy" a local vintage-ness reminiscent of the 1960s. The monochromatic color scheme, usage of a ribbon microphone and the large presence of Northern Soul dancers give "Mercy" a vintage-ness connected to the 1960s in Britain. In the "Dancing Queen" music video however, the setting and colors show an American style of vintage-ness. Instead fitting of the vintage-ness of Korea in the 1950s and showing typical Korean food on the food signs, the setting and colors were Americanized. This shows the Americanization in the localization of the vintage-ness of the "Mercy" music video, this has resulted in a Korean hybrid form of American 1950s vintage in the music video of "Dancing Queen". Thus, the filmic layer shows us how there are contradictions in Korean culture. The influence of Confucianism is still present in the hypergirlish-femininity of Girls' Generation, but is also oppressed by the clear expression of sexuality in the "Dancing Queen" music video. Moreover, there is a strong influence of Americanization in "Dancing Queen" that shows K-pop's global nature and indicates that Korean culture has also been influenced by Americanization.

### **The narrative layer: the lyrics**

In the narrative layer, there are interesting similarities and differences between the lyrics of Girls' Generation's "Dancing Queen" and Duffy's "Mercy". These differences show the

---

<sup>61</sup> Hurley, Andrew. "From Hash House to Family Restaurant: The Transformation of the Diner and Post-World War II Consumer Culture." *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 4 (1997): 1296-1297.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 1295.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 1286.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 1299.

process of localization. On a linguistic level, the most prominent difference between the two songs is the language. While “Mercy” is a British song, entirely sung in English, “Dancing Queen” is a Korean song with both Korean and English lyrics. According to C. Bruce Lawrence, it is very common in K-pop songs that there is a mixture of both Korean and English in the lyrics, also known to as ‘Konglish’.<sup>65</sup> This is a clear example of Jamie Shinhee Lee’s concept of code-switching. Lee also discusses how the presence of English code-switching in popular music of countries where English is not the native language, such as South Korea, has increased over time.<sup>66</sup> Lawrence found that the English language was borrowed in almost every part of K-Pop songs: the title, intro, verses and chorus. This is also the case in “Dancing Queen”: about 42% of the lyrics are in English and these English lyrics occur everywhere in the song, in the intro, verses, chorus and bridge.

Another significant difference is the meaning of the lyrics. According to Duffy herself, “Mercy” is about sexual intercourse.<sup>67</sup> Despite Duffy’s claim that there is a clear sexual layer in the song, this sexuality is expressed in an indirect way. In the lyrics, Duffy struggles with her relationship not progressing into a serious one, as she “begs” her male lover to either release her from his grip and of their relationship, or to take the next step towards a serious relationship. Lyrics such as “My moral got me on my knees” and the appearance of the word “mercy” twenty-four times, “begging” nineteen times and “release” ten times indicate a certain pressure and wish to be released, it is so stressed that the singer is literally begging: “you got me begging you for mercy”. However, there are no direct words or lyrics indicating sexual intercourse. Contrastingly, the lyrics of Girls’ Generation seem to express sexuality more directly than Duffy’s lyrics, with lyrics such as “your dancing makes me hot” and “your sexiness that makes me dizzy” literally expressing sexuality. This stronger expression of sexuality in “Dancing Queen”, however, is not directed towards a man, but rather celebrates the sexuality of a woman. Moreover, “Dancing Queen” does not depict a romantic relationship. The lyrics in “Dancing Queen” that express sexuality, such as “the way you shake your body”, “your dancing makes me hot” and the word “sexy” are all sung in English, while the lyrics that indicate platonic and inspirational love such as “that elegant performance” and “your powerful style” are sung in Korean.

---

<sup>65</sup> Lawrence, “The Verbal Art of Borrowing: Analysis of English Borrowing in Korean Pop Songs,” 46.

<sup>66</sup> Lee, “Linguistic Hybridization in K-Pop: Discourse of Self-assertion and Resistance,” 429.

<sup>67</sup> Dawson, Kim. “I’m Duffy, Not Dusty.” *Dailystar.co.uk*. March 27, 2008. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/showbiz/playlist/33352/I-m-Duffy-not-Dusty>.

This difference in meaning is reflected in the change of modes of address. Duffy strongly declares her love to “a man, who can take my hand” at the very beginning of the first verse, starting with the lyric “I love you”. Her sexual expression in the song is therefore directed towards a male lover. While on one hand, the lyrics “leaving only my heart pounding” and “the star in my heart” could argue that Girls’ Generation declare a romantic love towards a woman, lyrics such as “your dancing that captivated my heart” and “after some time, I’m on the stage, dancing and singing like you” declare more inspirational and platonic infatuation towards an idol-figure. According to John Lie, “the hegemonic pop-music theme of love” has always been a ruling theme of K-pop songs.<sup>68</sup> However in the case of Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”, the hegemonic view of a woman-to-male relationship in “Mercy” was not translated or used in “Dancing Queen”, but rather replaced with a platonic and inspirational relationship, where a woman is declared their hero with lyrics the “You are my hero”.

On a symbolic level, the process of localization of the lyrics of “Mercy” reflects how there is a clear divide in use of English and Korean in K-pop. The use of English code-switching in K-pop has become a standard part of the formula used in K-pop. Lawrence states that English is used in Korean Pop songs to fit “...Korean phonetic, syntactic and cultural patterns.”<sup>69</sup> The choice and pattern of English usage is also not at random according to Lee, who argues that this type of code-switching is meticulously planned and formulated.<sup>70</sup> Lee also calls K-pop code-switching unique, because it is not made up spontaneously as normally occurs with code-switching.<sup>71</sup> The English code-switching in “Dancing Queen” is used deliberately to convey a certain meaning. Most of the usage of English-codeswitching in “Dancing Queen” is used to express sexuality. Lee states in her article that English usage in a song is mostly used to express “...an assertive, pleasure-seeking, and self-indulgent liberal’s position...”, in contrast to the Korean lyrics in the same song which are used to vocalize a more “...reserved, wholesome, and introspective conformist’s view.”<sup>72</sup> So while Korean language is used depict the more wholesome part of the lyrics, English enables the expression

---

<sup>68</sup> Lie, “What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity”, 356.

<sup>69</sup> Lawrence, “The Verbal Art of Borrowing: Analysis of English Borrowing in Korean Pop Songs,” 42.

<sup>70</sup> Lee, Jamie Shinhee. “Linguistic Hybridization in K-Pop: Discourse of Self-assertion and Resistance.”, 434.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 446.

of sexuality in “Dancing Queen”. The sexual layer in “Mercy” seems to be completely changed to a platonic woman-to-woman relationship, however, it is also preserved in the localization process by using English-codeswitching. This type of usage of code-switching enables expressions of sexuality according to Jamie Shinhee Lee.<sup>73</sup> She also argues that code-switching functions as empowering for young South Korean music artists and groups, as is the case with “Dancing Queen”, where women empowerment and sexuality is expressed in English.

This clear division in the lyrics is a reflection of remaining Confucianism in Korean culture and its effect on the role of women. As earlier mentioned, girl groups like Girls’ Generation must uphold hypergirlish-femininity. Through the use of Korean language, this image can be sustained, while the use of English enables the expression of sexuality. The English-codeswitching also indicates rebellion against the conservative Confucian culture. Furthermore, this rebellion includes the message of women empowerment in the lyrics of “Dancing Queen”. It however stays debatable if the message of women empowerment is not just a part of the K-pop success formula, as English code-switching is meticulously and deliberately used in the localization process. Moreover, women “remain somewhat constrained by various industrial and social pressures” of Confucianism, making women empowerment still very much inferior in K-pop according to Sarah Leung.<sup>74</sup>

In the narrative layer, there are also interesting similarities between the lyrics of Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen” and ABBA’s “Dancing Queen”, showing a second process of localization. Besides the identical title, there are also lyrical similarities. Both songs are an ode to a person that is declared a “dancing queen”, celebrating and adoring their dancing abilities. ABBA also shines a light on youthfulness in their song, emphasizing the fact that the subject is 17 years old. The song gives an homage to going out in the lyrics “looking out for a place to go”, “you come to look for a king” and “night is young and the music’s high”. This is also incorporated in Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”, in the lyrics “Dancing party that makes young people excited” with the words “dancing party” sung in English. On a linguistic level there is a slight difference in mode of address: Girls’ Generation’s version implies an infatuation as they sing “You are *my* dancing queen”, instead of ABBA’s “You are *the* dancing queen.” The change of the word “the” into “my” causes a direct change in address.

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 438.

<sup>74</sup> Leung, Sarah. “Catching the K-Pop Wave: Globality in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of South Korean Popular Music”, 68; and *ibid*, 55.



While ABBA has a more motivational feel that encourages the listener to “dance”, “having the time of your life” and to go out, Girls’ Generation are idolizing a woman they look up to.

In the symbolic level of the narrative, the lyrical similarities shows how, according to John Lie, the K-pop industry works the same as the Korean export business.<sup>75</sup> The choice for not only the title of the song, but also the subject of the song to be the same as ABBA’s iconic “Dancing Queen” indicates how there is globalization in the localization process of “Dancing Queen”. Moreover, in Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen” there is a case of a “double remake”. In the process of remaking “Mercy”, the melody was remediated. However, instead of using and translating the existing lyrics of “Mercy”, ABBA’s “Dancing Queen” lyrics were incorporated into the song. This choice for using not one, but two popular songs can also aim towards a marketing strategy within K-pop: the relevance and iconic-ness of ABBA’s “Dancing Queen” was used to double up with the popularity and success of Duffy’s “Mercy” in order to ensure and strengthen the success outcome of Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”. The change in mode of address shows another use of English-codeswitching that enables opposition towards the “old Confucian” way of living. According to Lie, traditional Confucian norms and values are based on respecting elders and focus on familial relationships, however, the English lyrics in “Dancing Queen” allow a celebration of youthfulness and opposition of the contemporary South Korean culture towards Confucianism.<sup>76</sup> Lee also states that English code-switching is empowering for young South Koreans to stand up against those Confucian norms and values.<sup>77</sup>

The narrative layer reflects the division of Korean language and English code-switching that indicates the remaining influence of Confucianism on the role of women in Korean culture. As in the filmic layer, the contradiction of Confucian influence is still present in the hypergirlish-femininity of Girls’ Generation in Korean lyrics, but is also oppressed by the clear expression of sexuality, youthfulness and women empowerment through English-codeswitching. This oppression however stays debatable as feminism is still relatively absent in the K-pop industry. The double remake of including both “Mercy” and ABBA’s “Dancing Queen” is also another reflection of the K-pop business and success formula.

---

<sup>75</sup> Lie, “What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity”, 355.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>77</sup> Lee, “Linguistic Hybridization in K-Pop: Discourse of Self-assertion and Resistance,” 1.

The filmic, narrative and symbolic layer do not only reflect on the localization but also the glocalization of “Dancing Queen”. Using the previously mentioned definition of glocalization of Hyejung Ju, glocalization requires at least two foreign elements to be adapted by mingling it with Korean culture elements. In the case of Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”, these adapted elements are the lyrics that consist of the localized version of the lyrics from “Mercy” and ABBA’s “Dancing Queen”, and the music video of Girls Generation’s “Dancing Queen” that was localized as well as Americanized from “Mercy. The English code-switching expresses sexuality, youthfulness and empowerment, while maintaining the Confucian hypergirlish-femininity, in combination with the expression of sexuality and Americanization in the localized music video of “Dancing Queen” shows the mingling of both British, Swedish, American and Korean culture.

The academic relevance of this thesis lies in the glocalization of Duffy’s “Mercy” and ABBA’s “Dancing Queen” into Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”, challenging the notion of John Lie who states that there is no Koreanness in K-pop on a symbolic layer by indicating there is certainly Koreanness in K-pop. This Koreanness is a contradiction of Confucianism in Korean culture, with traditional Confucianism and sexual, youthful and women empowerment. Women empowerment however stays debatable in the K-pop industry. The glocalization in Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen” also reflects on the contemporary Korean identity which Oh calls “multicultural mutant Koreanness.”<sup>78</sup> The transcending and everchanging Koreanness reflects how Korean culture is not only a polarizing culture with both traditional Confucian ideals and contemporary modern values, but a global climate where Americanization and globalization is a part of Koreanness.

---

<sup>78</sup> Oh, Chuyun. “The Politics of the Dancing Body: Racialized and Gendered Femininity in Korean Pop”, 65.

## Conclusion

In the filmic layer, the linguistic codes of clothing and dancing in the “Dancing Queen” music video reflects the contradiction in Korean culture, where Confucian values are both still apparent and being opposed against. This is indicated in Girls’ Generation hypergirlish-femininity yet sexual appearance and dancing. This formula of girl groups being both innocent and sexual is also part of K-pop’s success formula directed towards globalism. Globalism can also be seen in the linguistic codes of setting and colors: while the “Mercy” music video depicts a local vintage-ness, the “Dancing Queen” video shows an American vintage-ness that stems from American imperialism and K-pop’s global character.

In the narrative layer, the clear division of Korean lyrics and English-codeswitching underlines this contradiction in Korean culture. While the Korean language takes up the wholesome lyrics in “Dancing Queen”, English code-switching is used to express sexuality, youthfulness and women empowerment. As English code-switching is part of the K-pop success formula, it stays debatable if these expressions of sexuality, youthfulness and women empowerment are for feminism in K-pop. The use of ABBA’s “Dancing Queen” also indicates how there is a double remake in Girls’ Generation “Dancing Queen”, as two Western songs were used to make one K-pop song. The double remake also indicates the glocalization process in Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen”. The glocalization reflects how there is not only traditional Confucianism and contemporary Korean culture in “Dancing Queen”, but also British, Swedish and American culture.

“Dancing Queen” reveals the contradicting global and local influences that come together in glocalization, which influence the expression of sexuality, youthfulness and empowerment. In “Dancing Queen” Girls’ Generation are shown in a more sexualized way than how Duffy is shown in the “Mercy” music video, yet the sexual meaning of “Mercy” is replaced with a localized aspirational message. This localized message is at the same time released with an Americanized video, creating a glocalized text. Glocalization challenges John Lie’s statement that there is no Koreanness in K-pop, as K-pop does embody Korean culture, but therefore also has influences of Americanization and globalization, because these cultural forces are present in Korean culture and society. This Koreanness thus consist of polarizing Confucianism and contemporary Korean culture, as well as Americanization and globalization which make the Korean identity transcending and everchanging. “Dancing Queen” reflects this transcending and everchanging identity.

As mentioned earlier in the method, this research does not include a musicological analysis. However, a musicological analysis would add another layer to the glocalization of “Mercy” and ABBA’s “Dancing Queen”. The melodic differences between “Mercy” and Girls’ Generation’s “Dancing Queen” could be analyzed to see if there is more to the process of glocalization in K-pop that also reflects how the Korean culture is constructed. It is also worth mentioning that there are other distinctive examples like I.O.I. who made a remake of Salt-N-Pepa’s song *Whatta Man*. However, the scope of this research did not allow for a more extensive corpus.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, including multiple remakes could broaden the analysis on how glocalization takes place in the K-pop industry. Also, the choice of not remaking one Western song into a K-pop song but including another popular and iconic pops song can point towards the marketing strategy within K-pop. I however did not do a marketing research on this, so this could also be relevant for future research.

---

<sup>79</sup> LoveKpopSubs. "I.O.I - Whatta Man (Good Man) MV [English Subs Romanization Hangul] HD." YouTube. August 08, 2016. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6mUxyrVqwk>.

## Bibliography

“ABBA – Dancing Queen.” Genius, August 15, 1976. Accessed June 04, 2019.  
<https://genius.com/Abba-dancing-queen-lyrics>.

Ahn, Ji-Hyun. “The New Face of Korea” *Mixed-race Politics and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in South Korean Media*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Beck, Ulrich, Natan Sznajder, and Rainer Winter. “Theoretical Perspectives”, *Global America?: The Cultural Consequences of Globalization*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003.

Benjamin, Jeff. “Girls' Generation Drop 'Dancing Queen,' Set Date for Album Release.” Billboard. January 13, 2013. Accessed March 21, 2019.  
<https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/1481272/girls-generation-drop-dancing-queen-set-date-for-album-release>.

Breezy. “Girls' Generation (소녀시대) - Dancing Queen » Color Coded Lyrics.” Color Coded Lyrics. November 06, 2018. Accessed June 04, 2019.  
<https://colorcodedlyrics.com/2012/12/girls-generation-sonyeosidae-dancing-queen>.

“Dancing Queen - ABBA.” “Dancing Queen” - ABBA. Accessed June 04, 2019.  
<https://www.nporadio2.nl/song/34938/dancing-queen>.

“Duffy – Mercy.” Genius. February 11, 2008. Accessed June 04, 2019.  
<https://genius.com/Duffy-Mercy-lyrics>.

Duffy “Mercy,” Recorded 2007. Track 7 on *Rockferry*. A&M, 2008, compact disc.

Duffy, *Rockferry*. Recorded 2004–2007. A&M, 2008, compact disc.

DuffyVEVO. “Duffy - Mercy.” YouTube Video, 3:29, June 26, 2009,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7ZEVA5dy-Y>.

Dawson, Kim. "I'm Duffy, Not Dusty." *Dailystar.co.uk*. March 27, 2008. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/showbiz/playlist/33352/I-m-Duffy-not-Dusty>.

Herman, Tamar. "The Legacy of Girls' Generation's 'Gee,' 10 Years Later." *Billboard*. January 06, 2019. Accessed June 13, 2019. <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/8492312/girls-generation-gee-10th-anniversary-legacy>.

Hurley, Andrew. "From Hash House to Family Restaurant: The Transformation of the Diner and Post-World War II Consumer Culture." *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 4 (1997): 1282-1308.

"Girls' Generation – Dancing Queen." *Genius*. December 21, 2012. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://genius.com/Girls-generation-dancing-queen-lyrics>.

Girls' Generation, "Dancing Queen." Recorded 2008. Track 2 on *I Got a Boy*. S.M. Entertainment and KT Music, 2013, compact disc.

"Girls' Generation and the New Korean Wave." *Asia Sentinel*. October 21, 2011. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.asiasentinel.com/society/girls-generation-and-the-new-korean-wave/>.

Girls' Generation, *I Got A Boy*. Recorded August – December 2012. S.M. Entertainment and KT Music, 2013, compact disc.

Girls' Generation, "I Got A Boy," track 1 on *I Got a Boy*, S.M. Entertainment and KT Music, 2013, compact disc.

Ju, Hyejung. "Transformations of the Korean Media Industry by the Korean Wave: The Perspective of Glocalization." *The Korean Wave*, ed. Yasue Kuwahara (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Kavita Karan and Katherine T. Frith, "Commercializing Asian Women: Images in Media." *Media Report to Women* 35, no. 2 (2007): 13-18.

Keulen, Jolien Van, and Tonny Krijnen. "The Limitations of Localization: A Cross-cultural Comparative Study of Farmer Wants a Wife." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013): 277-292.

Lawrence, C. Bruce. "The Verbal Art of Borrowing: Analysis of English Borrowing in Korean Pop Songs." *Asian Englishes* 13, no. 2 (2010): 42-63.

Lee, Jamie Shinhee. "Linguistic Hybridization in K-Pop: Discourse of Self-assertion and Resistance." *World Englishes* 23, no. 3 (2004): 429-450.

Lie, John. "What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity." *Korean Observer* 43, no. 3 (2012): 339-363.

Leung, Sarah, "Catching the K-Pop Wave: Globality in the Production, Distribution, and Consumption of South Korean Popular Music" (2012). Senior Capstone Projects.149.

LoveKpopSubs. "I.O.I - Whatta Man (Good Man) MV [English Subs Romanization Hangul] HD." YouTube. August 08, 2016. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6mUxyrVqwk>.

Mendis, Patrick. "Americanization of Globalization: Is the United States the Un-centralized World Power for Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness?" *The Public Manager*, 2005.

"Mercy by Duffy Creative Music Video Choreographer." Natricia Bernard. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://www.natriciabernard.com/showreel/videos/duffy-Mercy/>.

McKee, Alan. "What is textual analysis?" *Textual analysis: A beginner's guide*. London: SAGE, 2003.

Nowell, David. "I Can't Help Myself" *The Story of Northern Soul: A Definitive History of the Dance Scene That Refuses to Die*. London: Portico Books, 2015.

Oh, Chuyun, "The Politics of the Dancing Body: Radicalized and Gendered Femininity in Korean Pop" *The Korean Wave*, ed. Yasue Kuwahara, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Romano, Aja. "How K-pop Became a Global Phenomenon." *Vox*. February 26, 2018. Accessed March 21, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/culture/2018/2/16/16915672/what-is-kpop-history-explained>.

Sleziak, Tomasz. "The role of Confucianism in contemporary South Korean society." *Rocznik Orientalistyczny/Yearbook of Oriental Studies*, 66(1) (2013): 27-46.

SMTOWN. "Girls' Generation 소녀시대 'Dancing Queen' MV." YouTube Video, 4:24, December 21, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXZxc8GSXnl>

Somers, Harold, eds. *Computers and Translation: A translator's guide*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins B.V., 2003.

"Why Ribbon Mics Are the New Standard." AEA Ribbon Mics & Preamps, November 29, 2018. Accessed June 04, 2019. <https://www.aearibbonmics.com/why-ribbon-mics-are-the-new-standard/>.



## Appendix

### 1.1 Lyrics: Girls' Generation – Dancing Queen (Korean/English)

[Intro]

Girls' Generation

Let's dance

[Jess/Tiff] Hit the beat and take it to the fast line

Yeah yeah yeah

Yeah yeah yeah

Yeah yeah yeah

[Verse 1]

무대 위 너를 처음 봤을 때

내 주위에 시간들은 모두 멈추고

가슴만 뛰어

[Pre-chorus]

평범한 나의 인생을 바꿔 준

넌 나의 Dancing Queen

지루한 나의 일상을 깨워 준

하룻밤의 파티

[Chorus]

내 맘을 사로잡는 Dancing

그 화려한 솜씨

너의 그 이기적인 맴시

그 아찔한 Sexy

숨 막힐 듯해 Yeah yeah

[Verse 2]

한참을 지나 내가 무대 위에서

그때 그대처럼 춤추고 노래해

마치 꿈같아 정말로

[Pre-chorus]

평범한 나의 인생을 바꿔 준

넌 나의 Dancing Queen

지루한 나의 일상을 깨워 준

하룻밤의 꿈

[Chorus]

내 맘을 사로잡는 Dancing

그 화려한 춤씨

너의 그 이기적인 맵시

그 아찔한 Sexy

리듬에 몸을 맡겨 나 Yeah yes

[Bridge]

넌 나의 Dancing Queen

(I don't care what anyone thinks

Cause you're the one who makes me dance)

누가 뭐래도 영원히

(You're the one who makes me sing

Can't nobody be my Dancing Queen but you)

내 마음속의 스타

(I get the chills when I see you move

See you groove)

넌 나의 Hero

넌 나의 Hero

넌 나의 Hero

(The way you shake your body

Is "Look at me everybody"

Your dancing makes me hot)

[Outro]

Dancing (Dancing)

그 화려한 Dancing

(너의 화려한 Dancing)

니 이기적인 맵시

(Oh 너의 이기적인 맵시)

(Ooh yeah) 그 아찔한 Sexy

리듬에 몸을 맡겨 나 Yeah yeah

날 사로잡은 Dancing

니 그 화려한 숨씨

그 이기적인 맵시 (Whoo whoo)

니 그 아찔한 Sexy

숨 막힐 듯한 너

Yeah yeah yeah yeah

Bring it on

(Ooh la ooh la) 파티 (Eeh)

젊음을 불태울 Dancing 파티

(티) 모두 다 함께해 파티

젊음을 불태울 Dancing 파티

## 1.2 Lyrics: Girls' Generation – Dancing Queen (English Translation)

[Intro]

Girls' Generation

Let's dance

Hit the beat and take it to the fast line

Yeah yeah yeah

Yeah yeah yeah

Yeah yeah yeah

[Verse 1]

When I first saw you on the stage

Time around me all froze

Leaving only my heart pounding

[Pre-chorus]

It's you who changed my ordinary life

You are my Dancing Queen

It's you who woke me up in my boring daily life

Party all night long

[Chorus]

Your dancing that captivated my heart

That elegant performance

Your powerful style

Your sexiness that makes me dizzy

As If I'm suffocating yeah yeah

[Verse 2]

After some time, I'm on the stage

Dancing and singing like you

It seems like a dream, really

[Pre-chorus]

It's you who changed my ordinary life

You are my Dancing Queen

It's you who woke me up in my boring daily life

A dream all night long

[Chorus]

Your dancing that captivated my heart

That elegant performance

Your powerful style

Your sexiness that makes me dizzy

Leaving my body to the rhythm yeah yes

[Bridge]

You are my Dancing Queen

(I don't care what anyone thinks

Cause you're the one who makes me dance)

No matter what happens, forever  
(You're the one who makes me sing  
Can't nobody be my Dancing Queen but you)  
The star in my heart  
(I get the chills when I see you move  
See you groove)  
You are my hero  
You are my hero  
You are my hero  
(The way you shake your body  
Is "Look at me everybody"  
Your dancing makes me hot)

[Outro]

Dancing (Dancing)  
That elegant dancing  
(Your elegant dancing)  
Your powerful style  
(Oh your powerful style)  
Your sexiness that makes me dizzy  
Leaving my body to the rhythm yeah yeah  
  
Your dancing that captivated me  
That elegant performance



Your powerful style

Your sexiness that makes me dizzy

As if you are driving me out of breath

Yeah yeah yeah yeah

Bring it on

(Ooh la ooh la) Party (Eeh)

Dancing party that makes young people excited

Everyone partying together

Dancing party that makes young people excited

## 2. Lyrics: Duffy – Mercy

[Intro]

Hit the beat

And take it to the verse, now

Yeah, yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah, yeah

Yeah, yeah, yeah

[Verse 1]

I love you

But I gotta stay true

My morals got me on my knees

I'm begging, please

Stop playing games

[Pre-Chorus]

I don't know what this is, but you got me good

Just like you knew you would

I don't know what you do, but you do it well

I'm under your spell

[Chorus]

You got me begging you for mercy

Why won't you release me?

You got me begging you for mercy

Why won't you release me?

I said release me

[Verse 2]

Now you think that I

Will be something on the side

But you got to understand

That I need a man

Who can take my hand, yes I do

[Pre-Chorus]

I don't know what this is, but you got me good

Just like you knew you would

I don't know what you do, but you do it well

I'm under your spell

[Chorus]

You got me begging you for mercy

Why won't you release me?

You got me begging you for mercy

Why won't you release me?

I said you'd better release me

Yeah, yeah, yeah

[Bridge]

I'm begging you for mercy

*You look at me and think we're the same kind*

*'Cause you don't know what I got and*

Just why won't you release me?

*I'm gonna get more than I'm asking for*

*But I just don't want to waste my time*

I'm begging you for mercy

*You know that I'll be the other girl*

*Just like there's nothing in this world*

You got me begging

*I know that I'm gonna get me some*

*I just don't know where to get it from*

You got me begging

You got me begging

[Outro]

Mercy, why won't you release me?

I'm begging you for mercy  
Why won't you release me?  
You got me begging you for mercy, yeah  
I'm begging you for mercy (Mercy, mercy, show me some mercy)  
I'm begging you for mercy (Mercy, mercy, show me some mercy)  
I'm begging you for mercy (Mercy, mercy, show me some mercy)  
I'm begging you for mercy (Show me some mercy, show me some mercy)  
Why won't you release me?  
Yeah, yeah, break it down  
Mercy, show me some mercy  
You got me begging  
Begging you for mercy  
You got me begging  
Down on my knees, I beg  
You got me begging  
Begging you for mercy  
You got me begging..

### 3. Lyrics: ABBA – Dancing Queen

[Intro]

You can dance, you can jive

Having the time of your life

Ooh, see that girl, watch that scene

Digging the dancing queen

[Verse 1]

Friday night and the lights are low

Looking out for a place to go

Where they play the right music, getting in the swing

You come to look for a king

Anybody could be that guy

Night is young and the music's high

With a bit of rock music, everything is fine

You're in the mood for a dance

And when you get the chance

[Chorus]

You are the dancing queen

Young and sweet, only seventeen

Dancing queen

Feel the beat from the tambourine, oh yeah

You can dance, you can jive

Having the time of your life

Ooh, see that girl, watch that scene

Digging the dancing queen

[Verse 2]

You're a teaser, you turn 'em on

Leave 'em burning and then you're gone

Looking out for another, anyone will do

You're in the mood for a dance

And when you get the chance

[Chorus]

You are the dancing queen

Young and sweet, only seventeen

Dancing queen

Feel the beat from the tambourine, oh yeah

You can dance, you can jive

Having the time of your life

Ooh, see that girl, watch that scene

Digging the dancing queen

[Outro]

Digging the dancing queen