

Research Article

AFRICAN-AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH AS HIP-HOP ARTIST IDENTITY IN INDONESIAN RAPPER RAMENGVRL'S SONGS

Aulani Fajriyah Priambarini, Nurenzia Yannuar*, Herditya Wahyu Widodo, Yusnita Febrianti

Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia

Abstract.

This study aimed to investigate and identify the grammatical features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) used in the song lyrics of the Indonesian Rapper Ramengvrl's album, *Can't Speak English*, and understand the underlying reasons for this AAVE use by applying the language and society of sociolinguistics approach. The data was analyzed using Wolfram's theory of classification of grammatical features of AAVE in Ramengvrl's songs to elaborate on the purpose of its use. The data analyzed were qualitatively collected by closely and thoroughly listening to the songs and reading the transcribed lyrics. The results are as follows: Ramengvrl employs 8 out of 13 grammatical features of AAVE. Those are copula/auxiliary absence, specialized auxiliary, subject-verb agreement, negation, remote "been," nominals, non-standard pronouns, and question formation. Furthermore, this AAVE use by Ramengvrl is because of (1) the influences of Hip-hop artists, (2) the authenticity of Hip-Hop culture, and (3) as an anti-language to represent herself.

Keywords: *African-American Vernacular English, AAVE, hip-hop, identity*

Corresponding Author: Nurenzia
 Yannuar; email:
 nurenzia.yannuar.fs@um.ac.id

Published 27 April 2023

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

© Priambarini et al. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the IICB Conference Committee.

1. INTRODUCTION

In establishing a social identity, language is the most important aspect, which, as described by Blommaert (2010), is a fluid, hybrid, micro-interaction mark. Moreover, according to Cutler (2015), people show their identity and how they want to be through language and/or dialect. Dialect refers broadly to a particular language group (Lewis, 2019). To transmit language, which includes linguistic features and dialect, music, as one of the products of culture, is proposed as one of the most influential media. One of the most popular music genres that have been serving as one that has been spreading a dialect is Hip-hop music with its African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) as the dialect since rap music briefly originated from the African oral tradition which then became a new culture itself in the 1970s in the urban African American community (Blanchard, 1999). The spreading of Hip-hop music, as well as the use of its


OPEN ACCESS

associated dialect AAVE, have been globalized, which means non-African Americans have incorporated the culture, even Asians. The incorporation of AAVE, as a tool to establish represent an identity, by non-African Americans who are associated with Hip-hop, has also created a cultural identity, as explained by Bucholtz (2011), urban young people who have been deeply connected to Hip Hop are part of the trend once they follow ways of speaking, walking, dressing, and also understand African American urban youngsters' way of thinking. In this study, the use of AAVE in songs by Asians, specifically Indonesian, is being discussed to identify the grammatical features of AAVE and to reveal the underlying reason for this AAVE use.

As this study discusses the use of AAVE in rap songs, a few studies have been conducted to analyze the use of AAVE in hip-hop or rap songs as a part of hip-hop artist identity. These studies were conducted based on Wolfram's hypothesis on the characteristics of AAVE, which features 13 main lingual features. An article by Astuti (2018) analyzes the grammatical characteristics and implicit reasons for the dialect's use of AAVE in the Rapper Logic songs included in his studio album entitled "Everybody". Another study by Setiawan (2018) examines how and why, in their rap songs, African-American singers convey variations in grammar, based on African-American singers' songs in 2016, according to billboard.com. The grammatical features of AAVE and the appropriate use of AAVE for song lyrics are discussed in those two previous studies. The research was therefore based only on African-American and/or native-speaker musicians. In Indonesia, there is a very limited number of research that had been conducted to analyze the use of AAVE by non-African-Americans, let alone non-native speakers, whereas nowadays, hip-hop or rap music, as well as the use of AAVE has become one of the most popular music genres all around the world.

As explained, AAVE is no longer exclusively used by African-Americans. It means that non-African-Americans have also incorporated the features of AAVE, including Asians (Reyes, 2017). In Asian communities, especially Southeast Asian Americans, youths used stereotypes associated with African American terminology in various ways to establish their own identities, as revealed in the article by Reyes (2005). Some teenagers racialized African American language, while others established their identities as slang speakers. Moreover, rather than attempting to "act black," Reyes (2005) argued that the youths in these situations adopted AAVE (or, in their identification, slang) to create their own identities as the Other Asian. Teens also adopted slang to indicate sub-cultural activity among urban youth by establishing identity divides between youth and adults and among themselves. This shows how AAVE has become non-exclusive to African Americans as Asians have widely used it to achieve certain goals.

A pointed case of the use of AAVE by Asians is Ramengvrl, an Indonesian rapper, who has also used the grammatical features of AAVE in her songs in an album entitled “Can’t Speak English,” released in 2020. As a significantly popular artist in Indonesia, the use of AAVE by Ramengvrl, a non-African-American, is interesting to study because a number of the study for non-native use of AAVE is still minimal. Furthermore, the AAVE’s grammatical features employed in Ramengvrl’s album are intriguing to analyze to demonstrate that this dialect is not broken English; instead, it is a rule-governed, methodically constructed variety of English that also belongs to a culture (Pullum, 1999).

This study aims to identify the grammatical features of African American Vernacular English used in Ramengvrl’s Can’t Speak English album and reveal and understand the underlying reasons for this AAVE use by referring to the works used as the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework used will be Wolfram’s theory to analyze the grammatical features of AAVE in Ramengvrl’s songs (Wolfram, 2004; 2020). Wolfram (2004) stated that there are 13 classifications of grammatical features of AAVE. Those are copula/auxiliary absence, invariant be, completive done, sequential be done, remote been, simple past had + verb, specialized auxiliaries, irregular verbs, subject-verb agreement, non-standard pronoun, negation, nominals, and question formation. Moreover, Wolfram and Schilling (cited in Wolfram, 2020) added a detailed explanation for the use of specialized auxiliary of AAVE, which is the use of ain’t for don’t or didn’t.

Meanwhile, Nguyen and Ferguson’s (2019), Reyes’ (2005), Cutler’s (2015), and Fascina’s (2017) respective works will be used as references to elaborate on the underlying purpose of AAVE use. Nguyen and Ferguson (2019) and Reyes (2005) explained that the use of AAVE by Asian and/or Asian Americans is to help them develop an integrated identity locally and globally through interaction observational analysis. Cutler (2015) elucidates the use of AAVE as the authenticity of Hip-Hop culture that has significantly influenced how overseas urban youth (non-African Americans) express their identities and the resurgence of awareness in and use of stigmatized rural vernacular through text-based and interaction analysis. In addition, Fascina (2017), through text-based analysis, explained that AAVE serves as an anti-language, which, as coined by Halliday and Hasan (1976), is a sociolinguistic circumstance in which a minority group utilizes a specific language to differentiate themselves from the rest of the speech community. Moreover, the perception of rebellion among a particular ethnic community against the majority dominant community is a prevalent feature of anti-language. In other words, AAVE is used to represent a minority group.

2. METHOD

This study applies a descriptive-qualitative method using a branch of sociolinguistics, language, and society in approaching to analyze the data. This branch of linguistics is chosen as language and society are closely interrelated, as evidenced by a component of linguistic behavior in which the function language plays in revealing information about the speaker (Trudgill, 2000). This study analyzes the use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the lyrics of the songs included in the latest album of Indonesian rapper Ramengvrl called “Can’t Speak English” which was released in November 2020. All of the songs in this album were sung fully in English. The data in this study were in the form of linguistic units, which are in sentences, phrases, or clauses found in the songs’ lyrics. As Lovel noted (cited in Eiswerth, 1995), studying music encourages people to learn about various cultures. Therefore, the findings of the study will be helpful as educational input for language learners to enhance linguistic knowledge, particularly on African American Vernacular English from a non-native speaker’s perspective, by providing readers a better understanding of analyzing the grammatical features of dialect and avoiding confusing it as broken English.

There are a total of 10 song lyrics that are being analyzed. Those songs are “Let Em Be”, “Shine”, “Look At Me Now”, “Foreign”, “Tsundere”, “Blue Skies”, “The Emo Song”, “Go Get That B (Feat. Inayah)”, “Vaselina”, and “Can’t Speak English”. The song’s duration varies from 2 and a half to 3 and a half minutes long and contains 3 choruses (8 lines each) and 2 verses (vary from 12-to 16 lines each) in each song.

The subject of this study, Putri Estiani, better known as Ramengvrl, was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. Thus, English is not her mother language. In the genre of hip-hop, Ramengvrl’s biggest musical influences were the African-American rappers Nicki Minaj, Kanye West, and Tyler the Creator. In Indonesia, the hip-hop community has existed for a long time (Madame RAP, 2021). However, the Indonesian community does not use English as the main language of their rap songs (e.g., Saykoji). Yet, the debut album of Ramengvrl, whose fans were mainly Indonesians, *Can’t Speak English* is sung fully in English, also in order for her to move into the worldwide mainstream (Phillips, 2021).

The data were obtained qualitatively by deliberately and repeatedly listening to the album via the streaming platform, Spotify, and by reading the transcribed lyrics via Genius Lyrics (Genius.com), the world’s biggest platform or website of lyrics collection in which the musicians approved most of the lyrics provided. The analysis is based on the theory of classification of grammatical features of American Vernacular English

(AAVE) as proposed by Wolfram (Wolfram 2004, 2020), in which there is a total of 13 grammatical features of AAVE. After analysis, the researcher will interpret the data analysis by looking at the content of the lyrics, then referring it to Nguyen and Ferguson's (2019), Reyes' (2005), Cutler's (2015), and Fascina's (2017) works.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Grammatical Features in Ramengvrl's *Can't Speak English*

Out of the 13 grammatical features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) proposed by Wolfram (Wolfram 2004; Wolfram 2020), 7 types of grammatical features were found in 8 out of the 10 songs of Ramengvrl's *Can't Speak English* album. The grammatical features are the absence of copula or auxiliary, invariant be, specialized auxiliaries, subject-verb disagreement, negation, nominals, and the use of ain't. Out of the 10 songs that are being analyzed, the features of AAVE were not found in the songs "Blue Skies", and "The Emo Song". The data found are annotated using tables. Later, the data will be discussed in the paragraphs below it.

3.1.1. Copula/Auxiliary Absence

The data findings show that the deletion of copula and auxiliary components for contractable forms of "is" and "are" was one of the AAVE structures that is most frequently used in Ramengvrl's songs, as in the following table:

In all of the utterances above, the deletion of copula/auxiliary usually occurs on the second person (you) and third person (he, she, they) substance. There is one substance that is used for the context of the first-person. However, it is only for the plural subject that is "we". On the other hand, the singular pronoun "I" always does not experience deletion, for example, in data (9) and (12) where the be "am" still exists. This demonstrates that AAVE is impervious to the deletion of copula/auxiliary when expressed in the first person singular. Furthermore, the extracts show a pattern that the copula/auxiliary absence is only occurring in the form of the present tense, both in the simple present tense and in the present progressive tense.

TABLE 1: Copula/Auxiliary Absence.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Line Number
1	On a payroll, at the end of the month <i>you eating biscuit</i>	Let Em Be	21
2	<i>You gon</i> see, I ain't lyin'	Shine	4
3	If these <i>guys complaining</i>	Shine	33
4	'Cause you don't seem like <i>you from here</i>	Foreign	10; 12; 33; 35
5	Boy <i>you foreign</i>	Foreign	13; 17; 36; 40; 53; 57
6	<i>She a</i> nasty bitch	Go Get That B	9; 13; 15; 41; 45; 69; 73
7	Yeah, <i>she lookin'</i> so uptight	Go Get That B	16
8	<i>You in</i> the market like sum dijon	Go Get That B	33
9	<i>You just a hoe</i> I'm a fuckin lady	Go Get That B	34
10	Yeah, <i>we</i> so damn lit gasolina	Vaselina	3; 7; 21; 25; 55; 59
11	Now <i>we doin'</i> like	Vaselina	5; 9; 23; 27; 57; 61
12	If <i>you talkin'</i> money, I'm on my way	Vaselina	17
13	And if <i>you cute we gon'</i> bombayee	Vaselina	18
14	And if he said that <i>he in</i> love with me	Vaselina	19

3.1.2. Specialized Auxiliary

As Wolfram (2004) noted various auxiliaries perform semantic-pragmatic functions that distinguish AAVE from other vernacular English. A form of specialized auxiliary occurs in *Can't Speak English*, as follows:

TABLE 2: Specialized Auxiliary: I'mma.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
15	<i>I'mma</i> let 'em be, <i>I'mma</i> let 'em say shit about me	Let 'Em Be	6; 28; 50	
16	<i>I'mma</i> go get that bitch	Go Get That B	6; 8; 10; 12; 38; 40; 42; 44; 61; 66; 68; 70; 72	
17	<i>I'mma</i> go and proly get what's mine	Tsundere	15	
18	But whatever, <i>I'mma</i> just do my own thing	Tsundere	17	
19	<i>I'mma</i> just say I'm in love with my money	Vaselina	19	

The word “I'mma” (could also be spelled *Imma*, *Ima*, *Im'a*, or *I'ma*) in the extracts (15), (16), (17), (18), and (19) is not a combination of subject + be “I'm” and a specialized auxiliary “ma”. Rather it is a construction from the word I'm gonna, which in AAVE, this word means “I'm going to” that directly refers to immediate upcoming or planned activities.

Another AAVE specialized auxiliary is also employed in *Can't Speak English*, as follows:

TABLE 3: Specialized Auxiliary: gon’

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
20	You gon’ see, i ain’t lyin’	Shine	4; 8; 28; 32; 50; 54	
21	Your attitude, it gon’ bite you like piranha	Foreign	50	
22	When I blow up, it gon’ blow up like draco	Vaselina	14	
23	And if you cute we gon’ bombayee	Vaselina	18	

From the extracts [(20) – (23)] above the word “gon” serves as an auxiliary derived from the word “gonna” which is also constructed from the auxiliary going + to that signifies future events. In addition, throughout the extracts above, not only does it employ the special auxiliary “gon”, but it is also experiencing the copula deletion, which, as already been explained, is one of the characteristics of AAVE grammar.

3.1.3. Subject-verb Agreement

There are two characteristics of subject-verb agreement that stand out: one involving the insertion of the verbal suffix -s, and the other involving the contorted forms of past and present be forms. In *Can’t Speak English*, the latter characteristics are found. The concord of subject-verb agreement in AAVE is the leveling of “be”. It means that in the present tense, the be form “am” and “are” level or equal to “is”, as follows:

TABLE 4: Subject-verb Agreement.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
24	<i>Billions is</i> on the way	Vaselina	45	
25	I’m like the fuck <i>is you</i> talkin’ bout	Go Get That B	26	

In standard English, the extract (24) is considered grammatically incorrect. Therefore, the grammatically correct form of the above is “Billions are on the way” as the word “billions” is a plural form; hence the “be” form should be “are”. However, since there is leveling be in AAVE, Ramengvrl utilizes “is” as the “be” form of “billions”. The same thing happens to extract (25) as leveling “be” occurs in the auxiliary “is”. In standard English, the correct “be” form for “you” is “are”, but since be level applies, the sentence uses the auxiliary “is” instead of “are”.

3.1.4. Negation

There are several formations of negation in AAVE. Those are negative concord or multiple negations, which can involve preverbal indefinite followed by a verbal negative, negative inversion, and the use of “ain’t”. *Can’t Speak English* employs 2 out of the three forms of negation in AAVE.

First, the negative concord or double negation used by Ramengvrl is the use of “no” after a negative auxiliary, as follows:

TABLE 5: Negative Concord.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
26	We <i>don't do no</i> All-In, 'least a 30 for a show	Shine	10	
27	I'm just me and I <i>don't do no</i> trends	Look At Me Now	32	

The data (26) and (27) are examples of double negation as a typical feature of the negation form of AAVE. Each of these sentences can be interpreted in two ways in Standard English, “we don’t do all-in” & “I don’t do trends” (omitting the word “no”) or “we do no all-in” & “I do no trends” (undoing the verbal negation).

In AAVE, “ain’t” is used as a negative auxiliary to any present tense and perfect tense. It serves as a substitute for be (am, is, are)+not and/or have/has+not, which can appear in a first-person, second-person, or third-person context (Wolfram, 2004; 2020); as follows:

The substances [(28) – (36)] exhibit the use of ain’t as a negative auxiliary which replaces the use of is + not, am + not, are + not that occurs in the present tense. Additionally, the use of ain’t in AAVE also substitutes the use of do+not. The use of ain’t in the extracts [(37) – (40)] substitutes the negative auxiliary of do+not, which is grammatically correct in Standard English. Occasionally, a combination of different types of negation occurs in a sentence. In the extract (41), Ramengvrl employs a combination of two different types of AAVE negation, which are negative concord or multiple negations and the use of “ain’t” as a replacement for do/did + not. Hence, the same as before, there are two ways to interpret (41) in Standard English, which are by omitting the word “no” or by undoing the auxiliary negation (in this case, it would be by deleting the auxiliary “ain’t”).

TABLE 6: The Use of “Ain’t”.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
28	You gon’ see, i <i>ain’t</i> lyin’	Shine	4; 8; 28; 32; 50; 54	
29	If it <i>ain’t</i> about the money	Shine	35	
30	If you <i>ain’t</i> fuckin with me then boy bye	Vaselina	12	
31	But you know it <i>ain’t</i> forever	Tsundere	41	
32	And this <i>ain’t</i> a cry for help	The Emo Song	18	
33	If I <i>ain’t</i> feelin’ all your vibes, I don’t need to get along	Let ‘Em Be	36	
34	Bitch you <i>ain’t</i> important	Go Get That B	22	
35	It <i>ain’t</i> a joke it’s a true story	Go Get That B	35	
36	This game <i>ain’t</i> fair	Go Get That B	58	
37	<i>Ain’t</i> even say sorry	Go Get That B	20	
38	I <i>ain’t</i> gotta do all that	Let ‘Em Be	12	
39	I <i>ain’t</i> have nothing was down in that basement	Look At Me Now	47	
40	I <i>ain’t</i> gotta be the one of us who break their hearts	Tsundere	45	
41	You <i>ain’t</i> got no taste	Can’t Speak English	27	

3.1.5. Remote Been

In AAVE, the accentuated use of been followed by V₂ or the verb’s past tense form may suggest a particular function that denotes a remote past activity. This feature can be interpreted as the absence of an aspect of the perfect tense (e.g the lack of ‘has’ in she been married) (Rickford, cited in Wolfram, 2004). In *Can’t Speak English*, this feature can be found in some extracts as follows:

TABLE 7: Remote Been.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
42	<i>Been</i> around but never find me	Shine	13	
43	I <i>been</i> workin for my family	Shine	19	
44	I got some people who <i>been</i> hatin’ my shit	Look At Me Now	16	
45	I <i>been</i> makin’ big moves	Look At Me Now	20	
46	<i>Been</i> through up-downs now we heading uptown	Look At Me Now	59	
47	Yea, <i>been</i> a fan for a minute	Tsundere	37	

Throughout the extracts [(42) – (47)] the use of ‘been’ indicates perfect tense which lacks aspects, in this case, it is “has” and “have”. In addition, in extracts (42) and (46), the sentences lack subjects. Even though it is not a specific characteristic of AAVE,

null subjects in these extracts denote the informal tone of speaking, which is usually employed by AAVE speakers (Astuti, 2018; Chalker, & Weiner, 1998).

3.1.6. Nominals

The characteristics of nominals in AAVE are the absence of suffix -s on plurals and possessives. Each of these characteristics is only used once throughout the album, as follows:

TABLE 8: Nominals.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
48	I just paid a <i>couple tax</i>	Shine	37	
49	I just paid <i>my daddy bills</i>	Shine	39	

In the extract (48) above, the noun “tax” is in the plural form, indicated by the word “couple” which indicates the quantity of the noun, thus in Standard English it would have -es suffix as in “taxes” to mark the plural form. The data (49) exhibit a lack of inflectional -s on possessive in the noun “daddy” in the phrase “my daddy bills”. The word “bills” here is possessed by “daddy”, hence in Standard English the correct form of the noun phrase should be “my daddy’s bills”.

Non-Standard Pronoun

In AAVE, non-standard pronoun occurs in several kinds. Non-standard pronouns implemented by Ramengvrl are plural y’all and demonstrative. The plural of the second-person pronoun y’all derives from the combined you + all. While the use of demonstrative “them” as a substitute for “these” and/or “those”.

TABLE 9: Non-Standard Pronoun.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
50	<i>Y’all so lame</i>	Go Get That B	53	
51	Why <i>y’all</i> mind so simplistic	Let Em Be	19	
52	That ass so fake, <i>them</i> boots too fake	Can’t Speak English	24	

The extract (50) demonstrates the use of y’all as a second-person pronoun. Note that this sentence experiences another typical characteristic of AAVE, copula deletion, as it lacks the auxiliary “are”. However, in extract (51) the use of y’all refers to the possessive pronoun “your”. Therefore, in AAVE, the pronoun y’all is used not only as a subject pronoun but also as a possessive pronoun. In addition, these extracts also

experience copula deletion as one of the grammatical characteristics of AAVE. Each of the sentences above is missing “are” as the auxiliary.

The data (52) demonstrates the use of “them” as a demonstrative pronoun replacing “those”. Since “them” serves as a demonstrative pronoun, it is followed by a noun, constructed as them + noun. Hence, in standard English, the sentence is expressed as “those boots”. Another AAVE grammar occurs in this extract which is the copula deletion. The auxiliary “is” is missing from “that ass so fake” and “are” is missing from “them boots too fake”.

3.1.7. Question Formation

A characteristic that distinguishes AAVE in question formation is involving the inversion of the subject and auxiliary verb, as follows:

TABLE 10: Question Formation.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
53	Who that <i>bitch is?</i>	Can't Speak English	54	
54	Oh <i>why you talk</i> like that?	As exhibited by the extract, tsundere	21	

Subject and auxiliary verbs do not go through inversion in AAVE (53). While datum (54) exhibits a question sentence that does not go through subject-auxiliary inversion as it lacks auxiliary. In addition, the non-inversion of subject and auxiliary usually only occurs in wh- questions and is considered simple sentences syntactically (Wolfram, 2004). Thus, the question formation that occurs in wh- questions in AAVE can be constructed as 1) wh-question + subject + auxiliary and/or 2) wh-question + Ø + subject + verb.

3.2. The Underlying Reasons for AAVE Use

3.2.1. The Authentic Association of Hip-hop to Achieve a Cultural Identity as Hip-hopper

Rap music, as one of the elements of hip-hop culture, is deeply associated with African-American Vernacular English as it originated by American Black people and used to be reputed as Black music before the globalization of Hip-Hop culture (Cutler, 2015). The cross-racial implementation of AAVE by Ramengvrl, an Indonesian, is firstly caused by the influence of the music she listened to. In an interview with Madame RAP (2021),

she explained that her biggest musical influences on hip-hop are Nicki Minaj, Kanye West, and Tyler the Creator, who are all African-Americans and speak AAVE. Moreover, a survey study by Chesley (2011) shows that a deeper comprehension and higher acquisition of linguistics features of AAVE were correlated with the increased African-American Hip-hop artists' exposure. Therefore, this phenomenon of an Indonesian artist implementing AAVE grammatical features can be partially ascribed to the use of AAVE by American hip-hop musicians, who are Ramengvrl's inspirations.

In addition, the use of English itself by Ramengvrl is because she finds writing in English is more comfortable than in Indonesian, and she can express her message clearly and effectively in English (Ista, 2020). Ramengvrl, whose listeners were mainly local Indonesians, has expanded her targeted market globally. This English album is a step for her to move more into the worldwide mainstream, as *Can't Speak English* is her debut album released under EMPIRE, an American distribution company and record label (Phillips, 2021).

The reason that has been explained above and the content can also know the underlying reasons for Ramengvrl to implement AAVE grammatical features of her lyrics. As has been explained above, AAVE is deeply related to hip-hop culture. Therefore, every time the Indonesian rapper Ramengvrl uses AAVE in *Can't Speak English*, she adheres to the principle of authenticity in Hip-Hop culture. Across the use of AAVE, the topics discussed in the lyrics distinguish an authentic hip-hop rapper. As Hip-Hop originated from Black Americans and their negative stereotypes, white people and other communities, including Asians, recognition that the use of hip-hop's rap, breakdancing, dialects, and other cultural elements is perceived as problematic (Reyes, 2005; Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019). The negative stereotypes that are seen as problematic are rebellious, cynical, indifferent or apathetic, and prone to violence, teenage pregnancy, and other problematic tendencies (Lee, in Nguyen, J., & Ferguson, G. M., 2019). Moreover, this perception of problematic tendencies in hip-hop rappers correspond with the image of the legendary 90s hip-hop rappers Snoop Doggy Dogg, who was accused of murder (later found innocent), while 2Pac (Tupac Shakur) and Dr. Dre, who have police records (Eiswerth, 1995). Therefore, if a rapper can depict this problematic image of Hip-Hop in his/her lyrics, it would be considered authentic hip-hop. Ramengvrl has conceived this idea in her lyrics, as in:

In extract (55), Ramengvrl projects a rebellious image of a rapper. She explicitly stated that her being deviant rather than obedient. It correlates the best with the problematic image that an authentic hip-hop artist has. Moreover, the extract (56) appears to be

TABLE 11: The use of AAVE to depict negative stereotypes of hip-hopper.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
55	What's the meaning of obedient If it pays more to be a deviant	Look at Me Now	24 – 25	
56	I'mma go get that bitch	Go Get That B	6; 8; 10; 12; 38; 40; 42; 44; 61; 66; 68; 70; 72	
57	Fuck anybody tryinna belittle me I go down on this shit, they still be underneath Why you look so sick, you look so cancer-y Must be how my money look and how your thin wallet be	Look At Me Now	28 – 31	

problematic as it depicts violence. The phrase “go get” here carries an implicit brutal tone, meaning that she would go violent to the “bitch” she refers to.

In extract (57), other than the angry violent tone the first line carries with the word “fuck”, Ramengvrl also presents a sarcastic or sardonic persona of her to mock her haters by calling them cancer-y, which means they look pale and unpleasant to be seen. Also, she assumes the cause of it is because of the different amounts of money they have to take care of their appearance. By these lines, Ramengvrl has portrayed her persona or image as the cynical proud Hip-hop artist. Hence, Ramengvrl successfully employs AAVE to depict an authentic rapper of hip-hop culture.

As has been explained before, AAVE is a language of Hip-Hop which is a universal tool that transcends any cultural identity or group but still is fluid enough to adapt to local youth and reconstructed for the local context in which it is employed, making it a “glocal” event (Motley & Henderson, cited in Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019). Thus, in the implementation, non-black people, in particular Asians, also assimilate Hip-Hop’s culture, as participating in hip-hop allows Asian and others throughout the world to represent themselves and defy popular narratives, preconceptions, and misconceptions about their identities, while also carving out a position of belonging in an ever-expanding global society (Reyes, 2005; Nguyen & Ferguson, 2019). Moreover, Fascina (2017) proposed that AAVE is used by other social groups as an anti-language or as a tool to represent minority groups. In other words, Asians affirm authority over their own identities and narratives by emphasizing their Hip-Hop cultural identity, as it aids Asians in recognizing what they are and are not. Therefore, to achieve such aims, Asian employs AAVE as a language to implement their Hip-Hop cultural identity.

Through the extract (58), Ramengvrl implicitly states that she is not a Muslim, unlike the majority of Indonesians. This means Ramengvrl, as a non-muslim, is a part of a minority group in Indonesia. In addition, Ramengvrl employs AAVE to attain the goal

TABLE 12: The use of AAVE to affirm authority of Ramengvrl's identity.

No.	Data	Song Title	Lyrics Number	Line
58	Back in Indo they think I'm a Muslim	Let Em Be	9	
59	I can tell you don't like my kind But whatever, I'mma just do my own thing	Tsundere	16 – 17	
60	I'm just me and I don't do no trends	Look at Me Now	33	

of setting a self-identity in her lyrics. In the extract (59), Ramengvrl refers to herself as “my kind” which implicitly describes her identity as different and unfavorable from her encounter. In addition, Ramengvrl showcases another behavior that is indifferent or apathetic as she uses “whatever” to note her indifference to others’ opinions. In extract (60), Ramengvrl projects or defines her identity as “just me” while at the same time debunks any idea of her identity, stating that everything she does is not a trend. Hence, Ramengvrl’s portrayal of herself corresponds with the aiming of Hip-Hop’s identity adapted by Asians, in which AAVE serves as an anti-language.

4. CONCLUSION

Following the discussion previously, two conclusions can be drawn. First, in the album *Can't Speak English*, Ramengvrl employs 8 out of the 13 grammatical features of African American Vernacular English as proposed by Wolfram (2004; 2020). Those grammatical features are copula/auxiliary absence, specialized auxiliary, subject-verb agreement, negation which consists of negative concord and the use of “ain’t”, remote “been”, nominals, and non-standard pronoun which consists of the use of the plural “y’all” and demonstrative “them”, and question formation. Copula/auxiliary absence and the use of “ain’t” as a negation mark as the most frequent use features employed by Ramengvrl, where the deletion of copula/auxiliary occurs on the plural first person (we), second person (you), and third person (he, she, they) substances and the use of “ain’t” as the substitution for “be + not” and “do/did + not”. Additionally, the grammatical features not found in the data are invariant “be”, completive “done”, sequential “be done”, simple past “had + verb”, and irregular verbs.

Second, the cross-racial incorporation of African American Vernacular English by Ramengvrl is because of the influences of African American hip-hop artists she listened to as well as for the authenticity of Hip-Hop culture. She depicts problematic stereotypes that African-American hip-hop rappers perceive in her lyrics, including the depiction of sarcasm, violence, and apathy. In addition, Ramengvrl, as an Asian, utilizes AAVE to affirm authority over her identity, represent herself, and defy popular narratives,

preconceptions, and misconceptions about her. AAVE, as a language of hip-hop, helps Ramengvrl in portraying her identity, in which she is a part of the minority group in her homeland, Indonesia, as well as justifying that she is no one but “herself”. Ramengvrl’s portrayal of herself corresponds with the aiming of Hip-Hop identity adapted by Asians, in which AAVE serves as an anti-language.

References

- [1] Astuti PP. The use of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Logic’s *Everybody*. *English Language & Literature Journal*. 2018;VII(7):637–646.
- [2] Blanchard B. The social significance of rap & hip-hop culture. *Ethics of Development in a Global Environment (EDGE), Poverty & Prejudice: Media and Race* 1999. Available from http://hiphoparchive.org/sites/default/files/the_social_significance_of_rap_hip_hop_culture.pdf
- [3] Blommaert J. *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511845307>.
- [4] Bucholtz M. Race and the re-embodied voice in Hollywood film. *Lang Commun*. 2011;31(3):255–65.
- [5] Chalker S, Weiner E. *The Oxford dictionary of English grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1998. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780192800879.001.0001>.
- [6] Chesley P. You know what it is: learning words through listening to hip-hop. *PLoS One*. 2011;6(12):e28248.
- [7] Cutler C. White hip-hoppers. *Lang Linguist Compass*. 2015;9(6):229–42.
- [8] Eiswerth JP. (1995). Rap music as protest: A rhetorical analysis of Public Enemy’s lyrics. 1995. <https://doi.org/10.25669/wzlr-izkm>.
- [9] Fascina C. *The language of hip hop: A racial bridge?* (Doctoral dissertation, Università Degli Studi Di Verona, Verona, Italy). 2014. Available from <https://core.ac.uk/outputs/217566965>
- [10] Halliday MA, Hasan R. *Cohesion in English*. London: Routledge; 1976.
- [11] Ista. Indonesia’s hip hop star Ramengvrl spills why she ‘Can’t Speak English.’ *Eksentrika*. 2020. Available from <https://www.eksentrika.com/ramengvrl/>
- [12] Lewis MP. *How many languages are there in the world? Languages: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780199590599.003.0002>.

- [13] Madame Rap. Ramengvrl: "I don't believe in social conformity". Available from <https://madamerap.com/en/2021/01/26/ramengvrl-i-dont-believe-in-social-conformity-2/>
- [14] Nguyen J, Ferguson GM. A Global Cypher: The role of hip hop in cultural identity construction and navigation for Southeast Asian American Youth. *New Directions for child and adolescent development*. 2019;164. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20279>.
- [15] Phillips H. Ramengvrl. *Euphoria Magazine*. 2021. Available from <https://www.euphoriazine.com/blog/2021/01/interviews-ramengvrl/>
- [16] Pullum G. African American Vernacular English is not standard English with mistakes. In: Wheeler R, editor. *The Workings of Language*. Westport: Praeger Publishers; 1999.
- [17] Ramengvrl. *Can't Speak English [Album]*. United States: EMPIRE.
- [18] Reyes A. Appropriation of African American slang by Asian American youth. *J Sociolinguist*. 2005;9(4):509–32.
- [19] Reyes A. *Language, Identity, and Stereotype among Southeast Asian American Youth: The Other Asian*. New York: Routledge; 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315092027>.
- [20] Setiawan MA. An analysis of English grammar deviations in the 2016 song lyrics by African-American singers (Unpublished undergraduate thesis, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta). 2018. Available from https://repository.usd.ac.id/17477/2/131214130_full.pdf
- [21] Trudgill P. *An introduction to language and society*. 4th ed. London: Penguin Books; 2000.
- [22] Wolfram W. The grammar of urban African American Vernacular. Kortmann, Schneider EW (Eds.), *A handbook of varieties of English volume 2: Morphology and syntax*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter. pp. 111–132.
- [23] Wolfram W. African American English. In: Nelson CL, Proshina ZG, Davis DR, editors. *The handbook of world Englishes*. 2nd ed. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 2020. pp. 314–30., <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781119147282.ch18>