



Domestication of Hip-Hop Music in China: Innovations and Similarity

Zhenjie Wu^(✉)

International Department, Affiliated High School of Southern China Normal University,
Guangzhou, China
Wuzj.jeff2020@gdhfi.com

Abstract. Arrived in 1993, hip-hop in China had been through two stages (1993 to 2000 and 2001 to 2013) as it is currently entering stage three (2014 to present). This paper illustrates the similarity and differences between Chinese hip-hop music and western hip-hop music (mainly American hip-hop) and examines hip-hop music's domestication in China in terms of adaptations of western music industry pattern and innovations in musicality. The study is based on anthropological field research with hip-hop artists, music producers and hip-hop enthusiasts in China. The paper underscores the indigenous hip-hop music techniques that create a unique Chineseness, including flow arrangement and rhyming pattern produced in the process of assimilation and domestication.

Keywords: Hip Hop Music · Chinese music · Culture domestication · music integration

1 Introduction

As a thriving industry in China, hip-hop has declared its dominance in the current youth culture especially in recent years (2019–2022). Despite the fact that content censorship (for example, since 2015, China cultural ministry has banned hip-hop music contained “violent and immoral” content) has its way in controlling the spread of popular culture, hip-hop managed to adapt to this wider context without losing the essences. Generations of hip-hop music lovers devote themselves into this battle, contributing to this ever-growing genre.

1.1 First Generation (1993–2000)

The 80s to 90s was an era in which Cui Jian, the god father of rock in China, took the rock music to its peak (Kloet, 2010), but surprisingly features of hip-hop including drum set and rhythm were included in his music, for example, “Solution” (Jie Jue, 1992) in Cui Jian's fifth album *Solution* (*Jie Jue*, UFO Record Taiwan) released in 1991. [7] Thus, we can conclude that the influence of hip-hop in China was dated even before its actual presence in the country, which didn't arrive until the song “Someone” (MouMouRen, TUTU) was released in 1993 through China Record Corporation. The album covers

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Fig. 1. Album Cover, *China Rap*, China Record Corporation, 1993 (https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1T4411F7bs/?vd_source=25ae9359f7db9f9dd70070a39de3e865)

literally had the words “China Rap” on it, along with a photo of Xie Dong, Yin Xiangjie and Tu Tu (Fan, 2019) (Fig. 1).

Individual artists and rap groups in this generation paid effort in adapting a western culture to local prerequisites, including but not limit to: Li Xiao Long, D.D. Rhythm, Hi-Bomb, LMF, L.A. Boyz and TriPeots. Li Xiao Long, who has the same Chinese name as the martial artist Bruce Lee, is regarded as “the first Chinese rapper” (Anna, 2019). Li was in charge of the production of theme song for the hit TV-series *The Happy Life of Talkative Zhang Damin* (1998), signifying the first recognition of hip-hop in mass media regardless of the public knowing or not. Hi-Bomb, a rap group founded in Shanghai, is famous for their hit track “No.87 on Xiafei Road”, a classic remained until today. So much to say, this era dated from the early 90s to millennium was characterized with rough experimentations done by a few pioneers including individuals and group like Li Xiao Long and Hi-bomb in major cities of China such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hangzhou and Hongkong. Early influences of Chinese hip-hop in these days largely embodied in the formation of underground hip-hop events like Sect. 6, a regular party in Beijing featuring live rapping, skateboarding, street dancing and graffiti (Fan, 2019). This event was held by Mc Webber, an OG (original gangster) in Chinese hip-hop game who founded Sect. 6 and supported the establishment of “8 Mile underground battle competition” later in the 2000s. Since 1998, the event continued over the years to today in No.3 Workers Stadium in Beijing (Since the location had changed during the year, the current address information can only be held account for 2022). The founder later met the rest of the members in the rap crew Yin Ts’ang, a significant group of rappers (Mc webber, Mc Jeremy, Mc Hezhong and Mc Mark) that brought hip-hop onto national stage in the 2000s, when holding the event. Section 6 was a local event for the hip-hop enthusiasts to meet up once a week. Later such event started touring around the

country gathering even larger attentions from youth, musicians and authorities. Later as the rising of various battle competitions in China, the event slowly lose its momentum during the years but still lasts until present days in forms of open-mic concerts and freestyle nights. These sparks of hip-hop seemed trivial but necessary, setting the stage for the proliferation in the next decade.

1.2 Second Generation (2000–2013)

Beginning in the 2000, rap as a music style started to appear in the productions of major stars like Jay Chou from Taiwan and Edison Chen from Hong Kong (“List of Song”)¹. [10] Both artists possess immeasurable impact on the mainland’s music industry, representing two of the biggest music production sites in Mandopop industry. Their songs featuring the unique monotone, repetitive mid-range melody and indigenous language introduced the gilded age of hip-hop in China. This era between 2000 and 2013 was characterized by massive growth of hip-hop artists, audiences and related events. Yin Ts’ang, found by multinational members from China, America and Canada, first led rap music to the national scale with their album *Serve the People* (2003, Yin Ts’ang), an expression adapted from an old Maoist slogan. The song “In Beijing” (Zai Beijing) scored the 11th spot in Chinese radio annual playlist and won the award for Best New Group in 2003’s China National Radio Music Awards (Kohnhorst, 2018). [9] In 2002, another influential rap group named Bamboo Crew (BlaKK Bubble, Masta Loop, ZEERO (Baby Zee), Cee, DEEZY) was founded in Shanghai. They were believed to be the first group of rappers using the last two Chinese characters to rhythm, which ultimately attracted fascination over their music. The two group’s dominance of Chinese hip hop at the time led to what was dubbed the age of “Yin Ts’ang in the North, Bamboo in the South” (Fan, 2019). [6] Unfortunately, both groups disassembled after core members went solo. However, the heat never settled. A freestyle competition named Iron Mic filled the leading spot in promoting Hip-hop Culture. Founded by Detroit Showtyme, a black American who believes that rap is an art of socialist, in Shanghai, the competition features battles testing rappers’ essential skills including freestyle, stage performance skill, flow, clarity and acapella (L., 2014). [11] Such event later became “the underground qualification” for a skilled rapper. “If you get to be the Iron mic Champion, you get the respect and you get gigs. You get the respect. You really do.” Said by Detroit Showtyme in an interview with SmartShanghai, an independent media publication for foreign Shanghai residents (L. 2014) [1] (Fig. 2).

Later, the first 8-mile underground competition was held in Xi’an by C.H.A.O.S (Luan Zhan Men, est. 2003) and lasts until present days. As a competition named after the autobiography film *8 Mile* of the American rapper Eminem, participants soon included a variety of eminent rappers as well as rap crews, bringing the popularity up by introducing several rappers for national audiences. The event eventually ended up national touring similar to Iron mic. In this decade, rap groups sprang up in the country, including but not limited to: Kung Fu (Gong Fu, est. 2001) from Tianjin, C.H.A.O.S (Luan Zhan Men, est. 2003) from Xi’an, MaChi (est. 2003), No Fear (est. 2003) from Wuhan, D-Evil (est. 2003) from Nanjing, Bang Crew (Pen Peng Yue Tuan, est. 2003)

¹ https://www.wikiwand.com/en/List_of_songs_recorded_by_Jay_Chou, 29 July 2022.



Fig. 2. Album Cover, Serve the People, Yin Ts'ang, 2003 (<https://genius.com/Yin-tsang-yellow-road-lyrics>)

from Shanghai, Dragon King (Long Jing, est. 2007) from Beijing, Uranu\$ (Tian Wang Xing, est. 2005), Prosa (Jiang Zhe, est. 2005) and CHEE (Jing Qi Sheng, est. 2006) from Guangzhou, Keep Real (est. 2003, later developed into hip hop label GO\$H in 2012) from Chongqing, C-BLOCK (est. 2007) from Changsha-based label Sup Music, and Big Zoo (est. 2005) from Chengdu founded by Shaq G and Mow (Fan, 2019) [5].

1.3 Third Generation (2014–Present)

Publicity and acceptance of hip-hop had remained low for the first two decade since its appearance in China. According to Jiang, Early rappers weren't recognized as true artist due to the common perception of tonal music². Few clubs and events featured rap music and even fewer people knew such genre. Before the overnight fame and recognition brought by the show "Rap of China", few rappers attend major events or televised shows. However, the third generation is characterized by a growing publicity of rappers on a national scale. Fat Shady, as the "original gangster" in Chengdu hip-hop, brought his Sichuanese, a dialect located in midwestern China, rap "Not Going to Work Tomorrow" (Ming Tian Bu Shang Ban, Bo\$\$X) onto the stage of Sing My Song (Zhong Guo Hao Sheng Yin) in 2014. As a TV program produced by the CCTV since 2014, the song received instant viewership in Chinese media. For a significant portion of the public, this was the first time such genre of music being presented in their life. After the first success of Fat Shady, rappers tried several methods to gain public recognition, including going global and playing by the rules produced by content censorship. Higher brothers,

² Jiang, Chuck, Personal interview, 27 June, 2022. Hip-hop artist, performer, member of SFG (Straight Fire Gang).

a group of Sichuan rappers (Masiwei, Psy.P, DZknow and Melo)³, released the song “Black Cab” in 2017 (Black Cab, 88rising), receiving 3.9 millions of views in YouTube currently by date.⁴ They are the first rap crew in China gaining international recognition, hitting 23th in 2018 Billboard with their collaborate song Midsummer Madness with 88rising member Joji, Rich Brian and AUGUST 08 (Dawn, 2019) [2].⁵ As for another group located, likewise, in Sichuan, the CD REV gained their fame in national scale for its explicit patriotic lyrics. The game changer in the industry, the Chinese rap competition show The Rap of China, first aired in June 24, 2017 (Fan, 2019). [5] Featured K-pop star Kris Wu, rap industry pioneer MC Hotdog and other celebrity in Chinese music industry as judges, the show received over 3 billion views on mainstream platform iQiYi, Bilibili and Weibo, causing the overall recognition of hip-hop in China.⁶ The competition brought both fame and controversies which finally led to a national ban on hip-hop appearance on mainstream media when exposed scandals of PG-one and GAI, the co-champions of the show, reached the peak of social media search. The ban remains to the present days, but a variety of hip-hop reality show did find its audience in China. New sessions of Rap of China received mixed reviews while other reality shows like Rap for Youth (*Shuo Chang Xin Shi Dai*) and Generation Hip-hop project (*Shao Nian Shuo Chang Qi Hua*) went viral online. For better or worse, Chinese rap seems at a turning point, and exactly where it will go next remains unclear (Fan, 2019). [5].

As a culture import, hip-hop thrived during the years while bringing new mindset and value into Chinese society. Nonetheless, the importation of hip-hop into a social environment so distinct and almost disparate from its origin in America certainly caused specific assimilations to produce a music fittest to the audience and ideology in China. In this paper, I seek to understand the distinct features that emerged in Chinese hip-hop music through years of domestication. And I further ask why are there such differences existing and why it is necessary. This paper thus illustrates the similarity and differences of Chinese and western hip-hop music by comparing the fixed music pattern usage while identifying the indigenous developments of hip-hop in China in terms of musicality and linguistic adaptation to industry pattern in western music. The study is based on in-depth interviews with rappers, producer and fans from Mainland China, during 2022.

2 Implementation of Industry Pattern

Poor imitations of western industry pattern characterized the first generation of hip-hop artists in China while mastered usage and innovations to the pattern are being presented eventually in the second and third generation of Chinese rappers.

Early innovators in the first generation were primarily merely imitating productions of others in the western hip-hop industry and introducing ways of rhyme in Chinese. Productions in American hip-hop industry had developed a pattern which nearly all rappers follow. As included in the book *World of Music*, an international peer-reviewed journal examining performing art and culture involvement in music, a decisive factor in industry

³ Masiwei as Ma Siwei; Psy.P as Yang Junyi; DZknow as Ding Zhen; Melo as Xie Yujie.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfZPz7okidc>, July 12, 2022.

⁵ <https://www.billboard.com/artist/higher-brothers/>, July 25, 2022.

⁶ <https://www.iqiyi.com/u/2471330939/videos>, March 12, 2019.

pattern principle⁷ is a complete percussion pattern formed by a few incessantly repeated beats. The rest of the pattern is consisting of several layers of synthetic instrument sounds that stretch over the range of audible sounds. Deep down there is a pulse from the bass drum, which is carried by the bass as well. In the middle range there are several synthesizers sounds that carry the ostinato chord progression in strongly rhythm-oriented form. Metallic percussion sounds from hi-hat cymbals, rings of bells or bells fill in the upper spectrum of sound. Alone the sounding or pausing of certain instruments creates from the same pattern a verse, refrain, introduction or another section. The tempo of rap music is predominantly moderate, lying almost always between 80 and 90 beats per minute (Neumann, 2000). [12] The article was published in the 2000s about the style in the 90s, but such pattern was still implemented by Chinese rapper in the late 2000s.

The song “Force Majeure” (Bu Ke Kang Li) by the previous dominant group in China, Bamboo Crew, was constructed identical to the trending 90s west-side style. Tempo was set in 90 beats per minute with classic monotone in vocals. At upper range, hi-hat was arranged every beat with a break in the fourth, classic arrangement for Boombap style in the 90s. Syncretized bell sounds were arranged for the repetitive chords in the middle range. Drum set is identical to the pattern mentioned above. The song is essentially an imitation of the style of Tupac and 50 cents in the 90s.

In the second generations, industry pattern remained identical, but artist managed to show greater level of control as well as understanding of the music itself through wordplay, rhyme and modified production of instrumentals. M80, a Taiwanese rapper named Shawn Sung, is famous for his iconic work *Life’s A Struggle*. The song was released in 2003 after the legend died early in 2002 due to stage 4 bone cancer. The music demonstrated an enhanced level of linguistic usage through four-character rhymes and clear storytelling structure. In contrast to the first-generation artists, who rhyme for the sake of fulfilling the industry pattern, Shawn sung managed to tell his personal struggle by constructing a distinct logic, showing that the music was merely a tool for him to deliver messages. The song was a blockbuster in the early 2000s, defeating major stars like Jay Chou, Fang Wenshan and Faye Wong in the competition for the 15th Golden Melody Award⁸. The significance of the song is not in the demonstrated production or wordplay, but in the understanding of hip-hop as a tool for the unfortunate to speak. Shawn Sung is regarded as one of the Legend in Chinese hip-hop Industry for his stunting talent and tragic death, inspiring a new generation of youth participating in the hip-hop industry. Later in 2007, Edison Chen released his returning album *Let Me Introduce Myself Again*, in which features the production of Kanye West in the song *My Baby*. The song sampled Jazz piano and soul singing as the middle range melody and complete the song with basic drum set and string instruments for harmony. The production was quite simple but surprisingly comfortable to listen.

Industry patterns changed soon after the third generation began. Trap music⁹ took over the production list in global market, inspiring a new wave of rappers entering the

⁷ Essential elements of sub-genre Old-school.

⁸ Often abbreviated as GMA. The award is an honor awarded by the Taiwan’s ministry of culture for outstanding achievement in music industry.

⁹ Trap music uses synthesized drums and is characterized by complex hi-hat patterns, tuned kick drums with a long decay, and lyrical content focusing on drug and violence.

stage. Trap music tried to use as few instruments as possible to construct their iconic illusive vibe. In the early 2000s, trap music had emerged in the billboard top 100 for its distinct illusive synthesizer sounds, but not until 2010 did artists started to use this style of production abundantly. The style remains in production until today with vast audience acceptance as club music. Early in 2015, trap as a style was implemented in the song of L4WUDU, a Chengdu rapper who is commonly regards as the first hip hop artist making trap music. “one hundred” (Yi Bai, 2017) is considered as one of the industry standard songs of sub-genre trap. Featuring explicit lyrics of bustle in society, the song filled prolonged 808 bass drum (Roland TR-808 drum machine) in the lower range with repetitive snare drum set concentrated in every 4th bar. In middle range, acid syncretized sounds were arranged to form a melody, fulfilling the pattern principle of simplicity in trap music. In upper spectrum, rapid complex hi-hat was used to fill the spot where originally meant for two hi-hat only, making the gap between each section sparse. The song is an eminent adaptation of western style since Chinese lyrics fit in perfectly fine without sounding awkward. In the same year, Higher brother released their song “Made in China” featuring Famous Dex as their very first EP in international stage. The song receives over 24 million views on YouTube while being performed in various music festivals and used in the NBA as background music¹⁰. The song used tuned zither for the middle range melody with switching reverb to accompany the lyrics. Standard trap drum set was added with concentrated hi-hat in the upper range between major percussions. The simplicity of arrangement was made to emphasize the content in which the rappers are writing on. Chinese traditional culture was the key focus of background setting in the production of music video, making viewers for the first time recognize the existence of Chinese hip-hop.

Artists demonstrated their innovations in terms of musicality, but do we have to escape the widely used pattern in order to claim hip-hop Chinese? The solution isn't about creating a new genre or making something completely new in China, but to boost the acceptance of hip-hop using our own way.

3 Demonstrating Chineseness

One of the reasons why the early hip-hop in China was never popular is that artists never create music by taking the audience in consideration. The song Force Majeure was describing the playboy and pimp culture trending in America with arrangement copying the Boombap style in the 90s. To an extent, the problem laid not in the music itself but in the lyrics. Mass majority of Chinese never encounter such lyrics describing one's thoughts and desire that explicitly. For a significant portion of the public, this is not art but merely uncivilized songs. Yet in the present, songs are created with the merging of Chinese instruments that attract not only youth population but elderly. GAI, for example, merged the folk singing into his songs. Despite the tone and beat he used in his song is western, he manages to sound almost the same as Chinese folk song in the frame of hip-hop. As the Guangzhou-based musician Hu¹¹ stated during our interview, Gai is a successful case since people vibe and dance with his music, but they don't when they

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rILKm-DC06A>, July 12, 2022.

¹¹ A Guangzhou-based producer, rapper and band-owner.

listen to folk music alone.¹² According to Hu's comment, if audience were to recognize something Chinese, features including instrumentation, rhymes, vocals and dialect have to appear in the music¹³. Rap crews in Xingjiang, Wolf Gang for example, use the industry pattern of trap music entirely in their songs, but we can tell that something is different. There are features of Uyghur nation inside, but still it has all the elements of western hip-hop without replacements. The dialect, the way they speak, is the key element presenting the Chineseness of the musician and the way they rhyme using local accent demonstrated greater level of linguistic proficiency contrasting to the early rap music in China. Everybody did their part in the domestication of hip-hop. It is the question of time that the genre can blend into the mainstream fully.

3.1 Demonstrating Chineseness by Merging Traditional Elements

Domestication of hip-hop in China was largely based on the similar structure with replacements of middle and high range synthesizers sounds. "Hua Xia" (*Hua Xia*, Huaxia), song by the co-campion of the show Rap of China GAI, was notable for its usage of Chinese traditional elements. The song featured conventional vocal in refrain written in its representative pentatonic scale. Gong, Shaanxi drums and other Chinese percussion instruments were included in both the beginning and the end as replacement for western instrument like piano and sampling of Beijing opera in the background built up the patriotic emotion. At upper spectrum, we had folk instruments, zither and traditional flute, filling up gap between the structural hi-hat, constructing chords and harmony in repetition. In the instrumentation of verse parts, the iconic 808 bass and trap drum sets draw the rhythm and hardness of the song, making not change to pattern principle mentioned above. In like manner, another song named An Ambitious Person (*Xiao Xiong*, Rule The Roost!) by artist FOX marked the peak of current peak of merging traditional instrument usage with classic hip-hop. Traditional drama sampled in the introduction with traditional Chinese instruments erhu and flute filled in the upper range chords set the intense excitement as key mood of the song. At mid-range, western string instruments, fiddle and cello, were used to make up for the lack of Chinese instrument for harmony. Suona, Chinese horn instrument, was used to replace the rings of bells and guitar that are used for chords. The execution of verse imitated classic monotone of western hip-hop while the refrain used pop singing in American music. As for the drum set and lower range arrangement, the song remained in the structure of 808 bass and trap drum sets with hi-hit between major percussions.

3.2 Demonstrating Chineseness by Adapting to Chinese Language

Rappers have developed greater level of linguistic adaptation in terms of rhyming and storytelling. Linguistic differences proved to hinder the early development of hip-hop in China. To be started, syntax is less important in daily Chinese or even some of the literature. Similar to the imagism arose in early 20th century Europe which encourage focus on precise descriptions and wording of the subject but disregard the integrity

¹² Hu, Vincent. Personal interview. 16 March 2022, Guangzhou.

¹³ Hu, Vincent, Personal interview. 20 April 2022, Guangzhou.

of grammar as well as sentences (“A Brief Guide”), Chinese as a language has the precedence of abandoning unnecessary words for conjunction and adverb or omitting descriptions that have no contribution to the presentation. [1] In traditional Chinese poem, this practice is abundant. Tian Jing Sha Qui Si, a well-known poem by Ma Zhiyuan dated in the Yuan dynasty, was construct entirely based on this idea.

Ku teng lao shu hun ya	withered cirrus, old tree and dizzy-flying raven
Xiao qiao liu shui ren jia	Small bridge, flowing stream and house on the riverbank
Gu dao xi feng shou ma	Ancient road, wind blowing west and a lean horse
Xi yang xi xia	Sunset in the horizon
Duan chang ren zai tian ya	Far from home is the broken one

Thus, it can be seen that Chinese conversation and literature do not have to follow strict grammatical rules. The same principle is illustrated in hip-hop music as well. An example can be drawn from the song “Jungle juice” (庆功酒, WokenDead) by Fox.

Shi chang zhan zheng, bei wo zhan sheng	Direct: Is war, I won In direct: This is a war I knew I won it anyway
pian ke huan shen, bian neng chong sheng	Direct: a moment to rest, then I reborn In direct: All I need is a moment to rest After that nobody can stop me from coming back

Further, Chinese rhyming need to consider both the pronunciation of characters and the accent (Better understand as tone being used). In addition, coherence is harder to achieve in Chinese rhyme since usually more than two characters were used for a single meaning. For example, Apple in Chinese is pronounced Ping Guo. To rhyme based on apple, the corresponding words have to match the four-tone Pinyin in Chinese while making sense for the sentence. Such limitations can be visualized in the early hip-hop songs. Take the previously mentioned song Force Majeure as an example, the lyrics don’t really make a lot of sense. Here is an excerpt of the lyrics (The rhymes are labeled with Pinyin):

I got a girl in Bei jing	I got a girl in Beijing
Xi Huan Mei Jing	She likes American dollar
Dai Ge Yin De belly ring Xiang Shui Jing	She wears a belly ring with crystal embedded inside
Ran Hou Wo Qu Guang zhou	Then I go to Guangzhou
Girlfriend Shi Xing de	I Got a new girlfriend
Wo Xi Huan Ta De Tou Fa Shi Jin De	I like her for her blond hair

We certainly admit that the rhyming did fulfill the previous principles in which each syllable matches both in the tone and the pronunciation of standard Chinese, but

the point to be stress here is that early Chinese rap failed to achieve both fluency in storytelling and coherence between sentences. However, through generations of effort, the language finally fit into rap perfectly. Beibei, as the former member of the infamous rap crew HongHuaHui, is widely accepted as one of the most skilled Chinese rappers in the nation history. He demonstrated in-depth understanding of wordplay, rhyming, freestyle and beat-riding. “He understands the language better than most artist in the industry and people can clearly tell the differences in his songs and freestyle battles” said louis Feng, individual producer and rapper¹⁴. In his song DEMO, the artist rhyme both in the middle of sentences and the end.

Wu shu ren xiang he xie ta	People want to censor me
MC Bu gan jiang zhen hua	Every rapper in the game is afraid of telling the truth
Dou bian cheng zhe xue jia	All telling riddles like a philosopher
Bu dong de gen feng dong de bu gan kai kou	Those who don't know any better only follow the trend while others keep their mouth shut
Chu le ming de MC mei yi ge gan qu battle	None the “famous rappers” dare to test me on battles
Geng wo zuo dui zhi wei le bei ji zhu ni de wei zi	You fakers start a war with me only to attract attention

Tone in the lyrics remain the same for several sentences then switch to another one to continue the storytelling. His main idea that hip-hop game had lost its true value of being a “real” person is expressed clearly without losing the coherence of between sentences.

To adapt rap into Chinese, simply demonstrating the fundamentals of making a music rap is far from claiming hip-hop Chinese. What the rappers had really done to differentiate western and Chinese hip-hop is the indigenous flow. As stated above, distinct linguistic features had made industry rhyme pattern from America incompatible in making Chinese rap music. Rhyme, however, is a crucial factor in flow arrangement.

Flow, as defined in *How to Rap: the art and science of Hip-hop MC*, of a hip-hop song is simply the rhythms and rhymes it contains (Edwards, 2009). [3] The most basic flow in a rap song can be following the beat of the music. Here’s how it works in the *Force Majeure* (Table 1).

The flow diagram meant to analyze flow of artists in a visual way, in which the number above represent each beat in the song (Normally 4 beats make up a bar). From the lyrics being demonstrated the chart, we can see that characters are arranged based on the rhythm brought by the instrumental of the song, following the most basic flow in hip-hop music. From the previously mentioned book, a good flow can be built using various techniques, including breaking the syllables in words to pronounce the word differently; stressing the word by arranging a whole beat for it; resting half a beat or a whole to break the continuity of bars as if starting a new sonnet and prolonging the pronunciation of the work according to syllables to achieve overlapping of sounds in 2 beats. This conclusion

¹⁴ Feng, Louis. Personal interview. 9th March, 2022.

Table 1. Force *Majeure* Flow chart (Self-painted)

1	2	3	4
I got a girl	in Běi jīng	xǐ huān měi	jīn
dài gè yín de	Belly ring	xiāng shuǐ	jīng
rán hòu wǒ qù	guǎng zhōu	Girlfriend	shì xīn de
wǒ xǐ huān	tā de tóu fā	yán sè shì jīn	de

Table 2. Talking *Sh*t Freestyle* Flow Chart (Self-painted)

1	2	3	4
xiàn zài huàn wǒ shàng tái	bǎo chí zuì jiā zhuàng tài	wǒ men zǒng shì hōng zhà	jiù xiàng rén xíng zhà yào
nǐ wéi dāng jiāo diǎn	zǎo bèi zhǔ liú xiāo qiǎn	hái zài yīn wéi jiē mù bō fāng	chéng míng dà xiào
wǒ yī rán hún jì jiē tóu	represent my ghetto bro	zài underground de tǔ dì	héng háng bà dào
wú shù de gōng sī zài děng zhe qiān	shí cì xún yǎn hái bú dào wǒ yī chǎng zuàn de qián	yòng dú tè de fēng gé zuò chǎng piàn	rán hòu tú shā le zhōng guó shuō chǎng quān
wǒ de míng zì bèi nǐ jīngcháng shuō dào	jiù xiàng xīn wén bō bào	is freaking king word	nǐ zhī dào tīng wán duō zào
bié xīn fán guō zào	xià dào yūn chuán hē yào	call me ray brasilin	jīn chán tuō ké
suǒ wèi qián bèi bèi wǒ dǎ làn	bàn gè lǎo liǎn	nà xiē làn gē ràng wǒ chī bú xià	wǎn fàn hé zǎo diǎn
xià sān làn de biǎo yǎn	tā màn màn de táo yuǎn	xiǎng yào gēn wǒ guò zhāo	má fán xiān bàn gè bǎo xiǎn

of advance flow arrangement, however, does not work entirely in Chinese. Since a single character in Chinese equals to one syllable in English, rappers failed to appeal to the technique of breaking syllables in words to enhance their continuity between bars, but the rest remains compatible to Chinese.

Rappers like Beibei took advantage of the linguistic feature, one-character equals to one syllable, using it to develop the “Chinese flow” in terms of indigenous rhyme and fast-paced rapping. In his song Talking *Sh*t freestyle*, he combined fast and slow rap together, creating a flow that few languages are allowed to replicate and imitate. Here’s the flow diagram which shows the specific rhymes and flow arrangement (Table 2).

As demonstrated above, the flow arrangement took advantage to grainy sensation of Chinese and use it to achieve what is difficult in other language (English particular), fast rapping with each syllable sound legible to the audience. The artist constantly creates

breaks between characters to guide audience's attention to the next rhyme or content, a stark contrast to the plain basic flow in *Force Majeure*. Creating a sensation similar to the technique of breaking words into distinct syllables to enhance the continuity between bars. He managed to transform what's seemed disadvantage to Chinese rappers, the grainy linguistic feature, into a more flexible way of ridding the beat and arrange flow. Further, slang in English is replaced with Chinese four-character compound, making the rhyme acoustically smooth and comfortable to listen. As marked with double underline, four-character compounds are usually arranged at the end of sentences to create "punchline". Punchline is a particular strong phrase in the lyrics that "punches", or hits, the listener. It can be something funny, an interesting metaphor or simile, clever word-play, or anything that makes an impact (Edwards, 2009). [3] Four-character compounds are more likely to achieve the effect since behind each compound there is a tale which is exclusively legible to Chinese listeners. Finally, shown in the dashed underline, the rapper bypasses the rhyme principle of maintaining a constant tone in standard Chinese pronunciation by adopting melody into his song, creating a monotone similar to English language. This is important because it provides a precedence for fellow Chinese rappers to rhyme and flow better within the linguistic limitation and allows advancement to be made according to individual style. All of the aforementioned brings to the conclusion that the third-generation hip-hop artist in China possess the ability to distinguish their music from that of western music.

4 Conclusion

This paper illustrated the distinct features of Chinese hip-hop and identified products of year-long domestication including indigenous flow and indigenous rhyming pattern through examining linguistic differences and the work of prominent Chinese rappers.

However, due to limited time and resources, the conclusion of this paper might be biased, one sided and shallow as it failed to include larger research samples and the diversity of interviewees. If the research were to be promoted into the next level, more interviews of professionals in the Chinese hip-hop industry are required to produce an undiluted vision of current situation while a larger numbers of music sample needed to be examined in meticulous manner. Further, gender inequality in Chinese hip-hop industry was to be address in the paper but later abandoned due to insufficient music samples as well as limited interviewee. Such topic shall be included in a rounded paper for the purpose of providing significant detail for female rappers.

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