

ALEKSEJ TIKHONOV

Translanguaging and Reflection on Language Realities in the Lyrics of German Rap Artists with an East Slavonic Background in the 21st Century

Introduction

Since the conferment of an honorary doctorate upon rapper Kanye West in 2015¹ and the awarding of the Pulitzer Prize to Kendrick Lamar in 2018,² rap has not only achieved mainstream recognition but also emerged as the most dynamic form of musical expression, exerting significant influence on the economic, cultural, and political landscapes in the United States, Germany, and many other countries.³ Rap artists, frequently originating from socioeconomically underprivileged backgrounds,⁴ assume the role of opinion leaders and employ their widespread reach among predominantly youthful audiences to address social and political issues. Consequently, they often become the voice of marginalized young individuals.⁵ In this regard, the linguistic elements employed in rap lyrics and their semantic implications can serve as a response to prevailing social and political concerns, as exemplified by the initial quotation from the presented study: “Hier, wo Keiner Deutsch lernt,^{German} welcome to Kreuzberg^{English}”⁶

The quote above serves as the guiding principle for this article as musician Capital Bra’s lyrics show several dimensions of the research focus of this study. The lyrical identity of the rapper assumes that nobody in the Berlin district

¹ T. OWOSEJE: “Kanye West’s Honorary Doctorate Rescinded by Prestigious Chicago Art College”. CNN, 9 December 2022, [cnn.com/style/article/kanye-west-honorary-degree-rescinded-intl-scli/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/style/article/kanye-west-honorary-degree-rescinded-intl-scli/index.html), accessed 9 January 2024. In 2022, the Chicago Art College revoked his honorary title due to the expression of racist and anti-Semitic sentiments.

² The Pulitzer Prizes: DAMN. by Kendrick Lamar, 2018. [pulitzer.org/winners/kendrick-lamar](https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/kendrick-lamar), accessed 9 January 2024.

³ M. R. HODGMAN: “Class, Race, Credibility, and Authenticity within the Hip-Hop Music Genre”. *Journal of Sociological Research* 2013/4.2. 402. DOI: 10.5296/jsr.v4i2.4503; M. GIBSON: “‘That’s Hip-Hop to Me!’: Race, Space, and Temporal Logics of Authenticity in Independent Cultural Production”. *Poetics* 2014/46.1. 38–55. DOI: 10.1016/j.poetic.2014.09.002; M. AHLERS: “Kollegah the Boss: A Case Study of Persona, Types of Capital, and Virtuosity in German Gangsta Rap”. *Popular Music* 38.3 (October 2019). 457–80. DOI: 10.1017/S0261143019000473.

⁴ A. MCCOY: “Rap Music”. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.287.

⁵ P. J. KUTTNER: “Hip-Hop Citizens: Arts-Based, Culturally Sustaining Civic Engagement Pedagogy”. *Harvard Educational Review* 2016/86.4. 527–55. DOI: 10.17763/1943-5045-86.4.527.

⁶ “Here, where nobody is learning German, welcome to Kreuzberg” (Capital Bra „Deutlich genug” feat. King Khalil (2016).

of Kreuzberg⁷ speaks or learns German. The hyperbolic representation of the language situation in Kreuzberg is intended to point out that German is neither the single language of communication, nor is it a necessary language in this district of Berlin. After this statement, listeners are welcomed in English. The title of the song, *Deutlich genug* (Clear enough), and the lyrics highlight the fact that the rapper was singled out for his incoherent or incorrect German in the past (as was his colleague King Khalil, with whom he recorded the song). The lyrics therefore express how the two musicians are now heard and understood, regardless of how clear and grammatically correct their German is.

Wladislaw Balowazki, known by the stage name Capital Bra, was born in Russia in 1994. A few years later, he moved with his family to Ukraine and finally to Berlin, where he was socialized. His featured artist in the song is the Berlin-born German-Lebanese rapper King Khalil. The linguistic constellation found in the song *Deutlich genug* (Clear enough) arises from a combination of diverse heritage languages and cultural backgrounds, as well as socialization in Berlin's German-speaking environment. This constellation is characterized by multilingual practices and a dynamic code-switching between German and English, and it is semantically referring to German not being the mother tongue of most of the citizens in the multicultural district of Berlin-Kreuzberg.

The case study analyses the use of translingual resources in the lyrics of the three most popular German rappers with an East Slavonic language background. In combination with the semantic connotations of the relevant language(s) and projected attitudes towards language realities in Germany, the corpus case study focuses on two questions:

According to the statements made by the rappers in the lyrics, what role do the individual languages and word choice play for themselves and in German society?

What does the rappers' translingual behaviour look like in their lyrics compared to their statements about the languages and communication in the same lyrics?

After explaining why German-East Slavonic rappers are the focus of the study and summarizing the state of research on the subject, I will answer these two research questions using methods of corpus linguistics. An outline of the language biographies of the respective rappers (Capital Bra, Olexesh, Antifuchs) is also part of the supplementary data of this study.

.....
⁷ The census of the district administration from 2019 states that of the more than 290,000 inhabitants of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, around 43% have a so-called *migration background* or *individual migration history*. Nevertheless, refugees and people from post-Soviet and post-Yugoslavian countries are not included in the 43%. (berlin.de/ba-friedrichshain-kreuzberg/politik-und-verwaltung/beauftragte/integration/zuwanderung/ accessed January 31, 2023)

Why East Slavonic Languages?

In German rap (*Deutschrap*) lyrics, multilingual practices provide one of the current topical issues, alongside the general marginalization of the genre, its artists, and its audience since the 1990s. Turkish-/Kurdish-German musicians have especially been under the scrutiny of critics.⁸ The Kurdish-German rapper Haftbefehl was particularly innovative in the first half of the 2010s, becoming the first commercially successful artist to use code-switching in ways previously unseen by the German public. Switching between languages was fast, spontaneous, creative, with no apparent dominance of one language, and composed as poetry which not everyone may readily understand.⁹ The multilingual practice of translanguaging with no, or a flat, prestige hierarchy can be seen as an extension of the code-switching phenomenon in which the focus is on the language users, not on the difference between language use and the standard defined in grammar books. Thus, the concept of translanguaging is redefining the interrelation between bilingualism and monolingualism, where bi- or multilingualism is the typical language constellation on the individual level and questions the perspective on language as a distinct entity.¹⁰

Since the beginning of the 2010s, German rappers with Slavonic backgrounds have become increasingly popular. The reason for the time lag between the popularization of Turkish and Kurdish in German rap and the mainly East Slavic languages in German rap is the time of immigration to Germany. Whilst migration from Turkey to (West) Germany started in the 1960s, migration from the (former) Soviet states began in the 1980s. The gap of 20–30 years is also reflected in the spread of languages in *Deutschrap*. In the late 2010s, German rappers born in Ukraine, Russia, and Kazakhstan became more dominant in *Deutschrap*.¹¹ They brought new linguistic influences to the music genre, primarily through lexical borrowings (or indeed, whole sequences) in Russian, which appear in the lyrics next to text passages in German, English, Turkish, Kurdish, and Arabic. Many German artists with Eastern Slavonic backgrounds became counted among the country's most commercially successful rappers. Their language biographies and their translingual practices in the lyrics will be presented and examined in this article.

⁸ Ayse S. CAGLAR, "Popular Culture, Marginality, and Institutional Incorporation: German-Turkish Rap and Turkish Pop in Berlin". *Cultural dynamics* 10.3 (1998), 245.

⁹ Małgorzata DERECKA, "Sprachspielerei oder bewusster Sprachwechsel? Code-Switching, Bricolagen und Hybridbildungen im Gangsta-Rap von Haftbefehl". *Linguistische Treffen in Wrocław* 19.1 (2021), 53–62.

¹⁰ Ofelia GARCIA – Li WEI, *Translanguaging language, bilingualism and education*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

¹¹ 34.6% of Kazakhstan's population speak one of the East Slavonic languages: Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, or Polish (a West Slavonic language) (Juldyz SMAGULOVA, "Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use". *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* [2008], 442).

State of Research

Cotgrove was the first researcher who extensively examined the multilingual practices in Deutschrapp in the 21st century whilst considering East Slavonic languages. In addition to a detailed description of how multiethnolects in Germany developed under the influence of Turkish and Arabic, he also takes nine rappers of different origins into account. One of the nine artists has a Slavonic migration background: Capital Bra.¹² Tikhonov's pilot study was focused on German rappers with a West and East Slavonic language background. He analysed lyrics by the Polish-German rappers Schwesta Ewa and Krime, and the Ukrainian-Russian-German rappers Capital Bra and Olexesh. The study compared West Slavonic and East Slavonic influences, and the identity models projected throughout multilingual language use. Like Cotgrove, Tikhonov concluded that hybrid identities are directly formed through language behaviour. One of the main findings was the frequent contextualization of international politics in the artists' lyrics with Ukrainian and Russian backgrounds, whilst the rappers with a Polish background were revealed as apolitical and hardly relating to Poland as their homeland. Capital Bra sympathizes with Putin, yet at the same time criticizes the war in Ukraine.¹³ In 2021, Havryliv explored East and South Slavonic pejoratives loaned from rap lyrics into the colloquial spoken register of pupils in Vienna. The main sources for the lexical borrowings were the lyrics and social media postings of the rappers Capital Bra, Olexesh, and the influencer Slavik. The central finding here was that pupils in Vienna spontaneously use lexis from several Slavonic languages, Turkish, English, Arabic, and Farsi as a natural way of communication in a multicultural society, which also improves intercultural understanding, meaning less potential for conflict as a monolingual communication.¹⁴

The Choice of Rappers & Lyrics

The selection of the relevant musicians must have clear reasons because, apart from the musicians analyzed in the article, other German rap artists are also bi- or multilingual, having similar or comparable levels of German and one or more East Slavonic languages. Four selection criteria back up the relevance of rappers for this analysis: (i) the artist or one of her/his parents has an East Slavonic migration history, (ii) an official account represents the artist on YouTube and Spotify, (iii) the

.....
¹² Louis Alexander COTGROVE: "The Importance of Linguistic Markers of Identity and Authenticity in German Gangsta Rap". *Journal of Languages, Texts, and Society* 2 (2018), 67–98.

¹³ Aleksej TIKHONOV: "Multilingualism and Identity: Polish and Russian Influences in German Rap". *Multietnica: Journal of the Hugo Valentin Centre*, 2020, 55–66. DOI: 10.33063/diva-437458.

¹⁴ Oksana HAVRYLIV: "‘Fuck Oida!’ Entlehnungen im Bereich der Pejorativa bei Wiener SchülerInnen". *Germanistische Mitteilungen* 47 (2021), 171–197. DOI: 10.33675/GM/2021/47/11.

artist has at least one video on YouTube with at least 1 million views, (iv) the artist has at least one song on Spotify with at least 250,000 streams.

Considering these four criteria, the analysis is intended to ensure that the selection of musicians is objective and does not represent a marginal phenomenon but can very well be viewed as a trend. This procedure makes it clear that the musicians address a broad audience with their music and lyrics.

Capital Bra was born in Russia in 1994. His family moved to Dnipro (eastern Ukraine) a few years later. In the early 2000s, his family finally moved to Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, where the rapper was socialized. Olexesh was born in Kyiv in 1988. In 1994 he moved to Darmstadt-Kranichstein with his Ukrainian mother, where he grew up. Antifuchs was born in the Kazakh city of Taraz in 1989 and came to Flensburg at the age of one with her Russian-German family. The rappers Capital Bra and Olexesh thus show similar language biographies. Both spent their early childhood in the Ukrainian-Russian environment and then grew up in German cities, where their environment was mainly multilingual due to the social structure of their residential districts. German, English, Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic, and Turkish played a role in their youth. Antifuchs, on the other hand, came to Germany as a baby and acquired Russian skills in Germany in a family environment. Multilingualism also played a role in her language biography, though less intensively than it did for Capital Bra and Olexesh. In the case of Antifuchs, her youth consisted of a German-Russian environment at home contrasting with a German environment outside of the home. English, Turkish, and Arabic also play a minor role in the urban context of Flensburg.

To ensure the objectivity of the lyrics' choice, all official songs released by the artists between 2010 and 2021 will be included in the corpus. Of course, the relevant artists have also released songs since 2021. However, as the DRaKoSlavEast 2021 corpus was completed for the analysis, the data represents the corresponding period. Analysis of the corpus version completed in 2021 was performed in 2022 at the Code-switching in Arts conference between September 29 and October 1, 2022.

Corpus Design

The 0.5-version of the DRaKoSlav corpus **DRaKoSlavEast (Deutsch Rap Korpus Slavic Edition East)** (2021) consists of lyrics of 400 songs from official albums, mixtapes, and EPs by the three artists. With regard to the distribution of the lyrics per artist, the corpus is composed as follows:

■ Olexesh (204 songs; 51 %) ■ Capital Bra (143 songs; 36 %) ■ Antifuchs (53 songs; 13 %)



The varying quantity of songs per artist may give the impression of unbalanced data; for example, there is a large contrast between the 204 song lyrics by Olexesh and the 53 by Antifuchs included in the corpus. However, the corpus remains representative. DRaKoSlavEast contains lyrics of all songs released under the present artists' pseudonyms since the beginning of their careers in the early 2010s and up to 2021. The inclusion of all lyrics written by the rappers guarantees the utmost accuracy of the data, thereby ensuring the reliability of the analysis. The exact size of the corpus is 230,349 tokens, 182,166 words, and 2,014 sentences. The number of the used lemma is 14,016. The data was annotated as German txt-files on the SketchEngine platform with the RFTagger on the syntactic and morphological level.¹⁵ The assignment of the word forms to certain POS classes is based on the automatic evaluation of the common suffixes and lower and upper cases. Since the tagger was trained and evaluated on standard language texts, lexicon of the substandard falls into the category of unique word forms or unknown words. These are expressions such as *Bratans* ('Brother_{Russian} + S_{German plural masculine affix nominative}'), which are not yet considered standard German, but are still recognized by the tagger as nouns. So, if *Bratans* occurs often enough, is capitalized, and includes the plural masculine inflection affix <-s>, it is counted as a noun following German grammar.

The search in the corpus works in various ways. Users can search for specific word forms, phrases, (sub)clauses, grammatical categories (tags or combinations of tags), lemmas, or keyword combinations for a specific topic. For example, in the present article, the topic that has to do with language was analysed. The complication is that German spellings of language (*Sprache*) and to speak (*sprechen*) differs through the vocal <a> and <e> in the root, and through the derivation affixes <-e> and <-en>, but the nominative form and the infinitive as well as their paradigm should be included in one search request in the corpus. Corpus Query Language (CQL) enables the combined and simultaneous search query, including both lemmas: [word="Sprach.*|sprach.*|Sprech.*|sprech.*"]. This search query includes all word forms that start with the letters <sprach> or <sprech> and continue with any number and combination of letters. This method ensures the counting of word forms even if they are capitalized or not. The same applies to the possible alternative spelling of the noun with a small first letter, which may happen, for example, due to a mistake in the transliteration of the lyrics. The concordance result presentation on SketchEngine includes all found keywords with left and right contexts, the tracking of the original song file in the corpus, the absolute number of hits, the relative number of hits in instances per million tokens (i.p.m.), and the percent of the whole corpus. DRaKoSlavEast and its previous versions¹⁶ are already freely available under certain conditions at SketchEngine.

.....
¹⁵ Helmut SCHMID and Florian LAWS: "Estimation of Conditional Probabilities with Decision Trees and an Application to Fine-Grained POS Tagging" *COLING 2008* (2008), 777-784, aclanthology.org/Co8-1098.

¹⁶ DRaKoSlav 0.1 (East & West Slavonic) (2019/2020): lyrics from the albums of Capital Bra, Olexesh,

Keywords in Context (KWIC)

The KWIC analysis consists of two semantic areas: (i) language itself and the act of speaking; (ii) specific languages relevant to the subject of the study (German, Ukrainian, Russian). Search queries of both categories have relevant and irrelevant results, of which the relative frequency in i.p.m. is measured.

Category (i) contains 171.3 i.p.m. throughout the corpus. Of these, 24.5 are relevant for the analysis. The respective languages in category (ii) have given the following frequencies:

	German	Ukrainian	Russian
relevant	31,5 i.p.m.	3,5 i.p.m.	10,5 i.p.m.
total	206,2 i.p.m.	17,5 i.p.m.	160,8 i.p.m.

When considering the results quantitatively, the keywords *language*, *to speak*, and the *German language* turn out to be of a high frequency compared with the results for Ukrainian and Russian. In the next step, the interpretation of the results changes from the quantitative to the qualitative level. The individual, particularly relevant hits from the corpus, will be examined more closely.

In the song “HaHaHaHa” featuring Hanybal (2015), Olexesh poses the question, “Listen to what I’m telling you! Do you understand my language?” referring to the same sociolinguistic complex as Capital Bra 2016 cited in the introduction of this article. In addition to the line quoted in the introduction, Capital Bra explicitly reacts to the experience of not being understood with aggression: *Wie, mein Deutsch ist nicht deutlich? Das wär’ echt nicht gut! // Ich fickte deine Mutter. Ist das deutlich genug?* (What, my German isn’t clear? It isn’t really good! // I fuck your mother! Is that clear enough?) (“Deutlich genug” (Clear enough) featuring King Khalil) (2016). In this context, the experience of unsuccessful communication in German justifies excessive retaliation. The skill of speaking German thus also becomes a key feature of Capital Bra’s language biography. One year before Capital Bra, Olexesh (as the first East Slavonic German rapper) projects his experience of not being understood in a new country onto his lyrical self and simultaneously indicates that he wants to be heard and understood. Since its emergence in the 1970s, rap culture has been shaped by the fact that rappers have to carry a certain amount of credibility in their lyrics to be respected and accepted within the scene. This peculiarity of rap lyrics presupposes, in most cases,

Schwesta Ewa & Krime, 137.798 tokens, presented at the Sheffield Postgraduate Conference in Linguistics: Linguistic Variation and Identity 2019, University of Sheffield, published in ΤΙΚΗΘΝΟΝ, *op. cit.* DRaKoSlav 0.2 (East & South Slavonic) (2021): lyrics from the albums of Capital Bra, Olexesh, Čelo & Haze, presented at the LTS Conference 2021: Responding to Conflict, Crisis and Change, University of Nottingham.

the equalization of the lyrical I and the actual I.¹⁷ Contrary to Roland Barthes, in this case, the author of the (rap)poems is not dead but alive and deliberately overrides the boundary between the literary and non-literary text.¹⁸ Consequently, the rapper and his social environment experienced the situations described in the lyrics. A year later, Olexesh describes his everyday communication in the song “64 Kammern” (2016) as *Ich spreche alle Sprachen* (I speak all languages). In doing so, he first subtly introduces the topic of multilingualism in his lyrics. He cements this further in his song “Sag mir, auf was stehst du” (Tell me, what do you like) featuring Mosh36 & Veysel (2018). Through a monolingual hyperbola, he introduces a text sequence in which he uses five languages¹⁹ or translanguing word forms within two lines and nine word forms:

Red‘ nicht zwanzig Sprachen_{German},
 Rap_{German} – Amore_{Italian}, БЛЯТЬ_{Russian}
 Häng‘ mit_{German} Bratans_{Russian+German} hier im Club_{German}²⁰

In addition to German, Russian, Italian, and English, Olexesh also uses the translanguing form *Bratans*, combining the Russian stem with the German plural affix. Olexesh can also consciously set boundaries between languages and switch between monolingual and translanguing lyrics. This observation becomes clear in the next monolingual example in German, which also addresses the German language: *Der erste Tag beginnt, // Einschulung, deutsche Sprache, // Doch sagte Mutter, // Dass ich damals schon ‘ne Eins versprach* (The first day begins, // School enrolment, German language, // My mom said // that I promised an A back then) (“Lebendig begraben” (Buried alive) (2014)). The rapper is not only referring to the German language but also to German as a school subject, for which he promised his mother that he would only get the best grades.

Quantitatively compared to German and generally to the act of speaking, Ukrainian and Russian play a minor role in the lyrics analyzed; however, a qualitative analysis should clarify the relevance of the text passages for the study. In his 2014 song *Nu pagadi* (Well, just you wait) Olexesh mentions and uses the Russian language for the first time:

¹⁷ Daniel Levin BECKER: “On the first person”. in Daniel Levin BECKER: *What’s good: Notes on Rap and Language*, San Francisco, City Lights Publishers, 2022, 150–156.

¹⁸ R. BARTHES: “The Death of the Author”. In D. FINKELSTEIN – A. MCCLEERY, (eds.): *The Book History Reader*, London – New York, Routledge, 2003, 221–24.

¹⁹ The fifth language is English, which is only expressed through the borrowed word forms <rap> and <club>. The word forms are used organically in German and may no longer be recognized as foreign words.

²⁰ [] don’t speak twenty languages // Rap – love, shit, // Chilling with brothers in the club.

Вот в начале, чё ты паришь,^{Russian}
 Erster Track auf Russisch mach ich,^{German}
 Deep^{English}, hör den Slawen Rap,^{German}
 Er geht mir durch den Kopf,^{German}
 И мне хуй на ментов,^{Russian}
 Ich kenn kein Stop^{German}²¹

With these lines, Olexesh raps about his ability to rap in Russian, whilst simultaneously demonstrating his language skills. He uses, among other things, vulgar lexis of Russian. Antifuchs also uses vulgar Russian in her song *1989* (2018), not only referring to her use of the language, but also to her family's Russian:

Aufgewachsen zwischen Digga, kaltem Wind und
 bisschen platt Russisch fluchenden Verwandten,^{German}
 Иди нахуй, сука, блять!^{Russian}²²

In his song *Ballert* (Banging) (2018), Capital Bra refers to the phonological peculiarities of his oral realization of a consonant, namely the pronunciation of the voiced alveolar vibrant in a manner consistent with Ukrainian. Once again, the rapper draws here the attention to the clarity or unambiguousness of his language expression, and he is aware of the pronunciation difference from standard German. However, he does not try to hide or adapt it to standard German, instead emphasizing it and thus making it the trademark of his recitative:

Rollendes R, ukrainischer Stil,^{German} Bra,^{Russian}
 Wer hat hier Hunger, sag', wer ist hier^{German} real?^{English}²³

Although contexts of Ukrainian and Russian are rare, they can be considered relevant to the study. It is noteworthy that all three musicians had addressed the two languages at roughly the same stages of their careers: at the beginning of their careers in the mid-2010s and in the turning point year for German rap, 2018, when rap finally arrived the mainstream of the German music landscape.

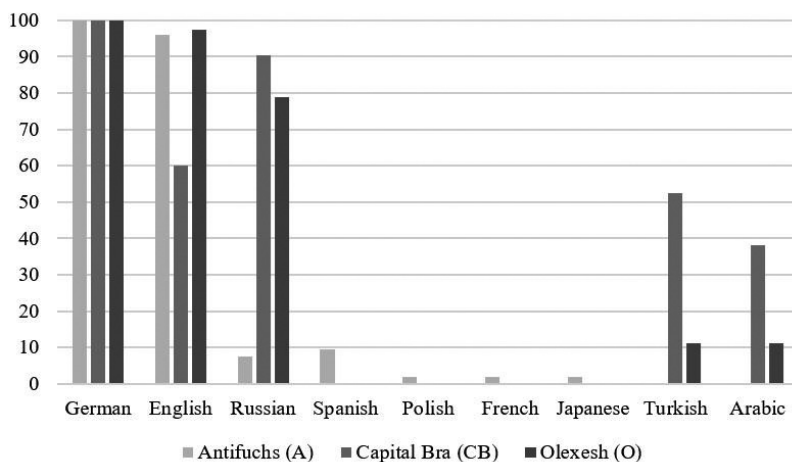
.....
²¹ That's the beginning, why are you bothering me, // I do my first track in Russian, // Deep, listen to the Slavonic rap, // It's going through my head, // And I don't give a fuck about the cops, // I don't know how to stop.

²² Growing up between [the word] homie, a cold wind and // relatives swearing a little lumpish in Russian // Fuck off, bitch shit!

²³ Rolling the R, Ukrainian style, Bro, // Who's hungry here, tell me who's real here?

Language Statistics

The relevant quotes, in which the rappers comment on individual languages and the role of languages, have shown this to be a relevant topic to them. Nevertheless, it remains a conclusion based on a few statements, and its validity can be questioned. As a further step in the investigation, the distribution of specific languages in the lyrics is examined to determine how multilingual the musicians are. The results of the quantitative investigation step of the distribution of languages in the lyrics are:



All three musicians use German in 100% of the lyrics. English is also heavily used – Antifuchs and Olexesh use English in over 95% of the lyrics. Capital Bra is the only one who uses Russian more often than English. He uses Russian in 91% of the lyrics and English in 60%. Antifuchs uses Russian the least – in about 7% of the lyrics. She uses Spanish more often – in 9% of her lyrics – also Polish, French, and Japanese. Capital Bra and Olexesh (the former especially) often use Turkish and Arabic. Capital Bra uses the two languages in 40 and 54% of his lyrics, and Olexesh in 12% of the lyrics.

The interesting observation in the statistics is that Capital Bra and Olexesh behave similarly for the three most commonly used languages, although there is also a slight difference here: Capital Bra, who grew up in the outskirts of eastern Berlin, uses English much less often than Russian. Olexesh, on the other hand, was socialized in the western part of Germany and uses English far more often than Russian. Antifuchs, who never really lived in Kazakhstan and was socialized in northern Germany, hardly ever uses Russian. However, English and a diversity of languages are relevant to her lyrics. It is also worth noting that Russian is the most common language in relation to Capital Bra after German, but Turkish and Arabic are also more common than for the other two rappers. This statement

can also be attributed to the social and business environment in which he was socialized as a young adult in Berlin-Kreuzberg and other Berlin districts in the city's center and West.

Conclusion and Outlook

At the beginning of this article, a new trend in German rap was presented – the growing influence of rappers of East Slavonic origin since the mid-2010s. From the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, apart from English, mainly Turkish and Arabic dominated German rap. One of the new East Slavonic rappers – Capital Bra – even became the most successful musician in Germany in the 21st century, remaining so to this day. In line with this trend, the respective languages also play an increasingly important role in the genre, society, and in pop culture in general. The first research question was derived from this: According to the statements made by the rappers in the lyrics, what role do the individual languages play for themselves and in German society?

The qualitative corpus-linguistic study has shown that the competence of the German language is an integral part of the lyrics – all analysed rappers have topicalized their socialization in a multilinguistic context, dominated by German but incorporating their Slavonic family's language, English, and other minority languages commonly spoken in Germany (first and foremost Turkish and Arabic). Above all, the ability to express oneself verbally in an understandable way is a central topic. Independently of one another, the rappers' experience of not being understood is a recurring topic in their songs, because their German does not correspond to standard German. It might be due to other reasons, e.g. expressing identity, a sense of belonging, not necessarily competence. The experience is processed in the lyrics in various ways – from a proud announcement that the musician is now rapping in German and is heard by everyone (Olexesh) to aggressive statements about this experience and the rhetorical question of whether one is now understood as a famous musician (Capital Bra). Overall, the act of speaking and how the recipient of the communication situation receives the message plays an essential role in the lyrics.

Russian and Ukrainian also play a role in the lyrics, albeit a smaller one if you use quantitative methods. Both languages are mainly used and contextualized as languages in which the rappers (Olexesh) can still rap alongside German and English or as a trademark in the phonetic realization of the lyrics in German with a Ukrainian pronunciation of consonants (Capital Bra). However, Russian is also presented as a language only spoken in the family (Antifuchs).

The second research question was intended to examine this result more closely and show whether and how the qualitatively determined conclusions correspond to quantitative data on the language behavior of the rappers. Therefore, the question

was asked: What does the rappers' translingual behavior look like in their lyrics compared to their statements about the languages and communication in the same lyrics?

As expected, German is the most common language in the lyrics. All three musicians use it in 100% of the lyrics. For other languages, the results are more variable. Capital Bra, who was born in Russia and grew up in Ukraine and East Berlin, is the only one who uses Russian more often than English. Turkish appears in his lyrics almost as often (about 54% of the lyrics) as in English (60% of the lyrics). It is different in the lyrics of Olexesh, where Turkish (about 12% of the lyrics) appears rarely, and in the lyrics of Antifuchs not at all. Compared to Olexesh and Capital Bra, for Antifuchs, Russian is more of a family language and is hardly used at all (less than 10% of the lyrics). However, Antifuchs shows a broader range of languages in the lyrics than her male colleagues – seven languages.

Overall, the evidence supports the theory that the country of origin plays a lesser role in translanguaging. The age at which the person came to Germany plays a more significant role. Olexesh and Capital Bra attended kindergarten in Ukraine, whilst Antifuchs migrated to Germany as an infant. Accordingly, Olexesh and Capital Bra identify themselves much more with Ukrainian (and Russian) than Antifuchs and show it qualitatively and quantitatively in their lyrics. The place of socialization also plays a role. While Olexesh and Capital Bra grew up in multicultural districts of major German cities, Antifuchs grew up in a smaller town where German was the dominant language. From this, the observation about the use of Turkish and Arabic in the lyrics seems to be logical – both languages play a role above all in Capital Bra's lyrics, yet they are also relevant (although not dominant) in Olexesh's lyrics. The quantitative analysis of the findings indicates that rappers not only address the concept of a multicultural and multilingual society from the semantic point of view but also actively portray it through their linguistic choices in lyrics. A pertinent example is Capital Bra, whose upbringing in the culturally diverse city of Berlin, having been born in Russia and raised in Ukraine and Germany, has imbued Turkish with a significance comparable to that of English in terms of lyrical language usage.

Future steps for the investigation would be to supplement the corpus with data from West Slavonic German rappers and to carry out a detailed gender-linguistic analysis of translanguaging language behavior. Furthermore, rappers without a Slavonic background should be included to create a comparative value. In addition, the study should include a detailed morphological and syntactical analysis of translanguaging phenomena in the lyrics to explore the functioning of translanguaging more deeply.

Works Cited

- AHLERS, M.: “Kollegah the Boss’: A Case Study of Persona, Types of Capital, and Virtuosity in German Gangsta Rap”. *Popular Music* 38.3 (October 2019). 457–80. DOI: 10.1017/S0261143019000473.
- BARTHES, R.: “The Death of the Author”. In FINKELSTEIN, D. – MCCLEERY, A. (eds.), *The Book History Reader*, London – New York, Routledge, 2003, 221–24.
- BECKER, D. L.: *What’s Good: Notes on Rap and Language*. San Francisco, City Lights Publishers, 2022.
- CAGLAR, A. S.: “Popular Culture, Marginality and Institutional Incorporation: German-Turkish Rap and Turkish Pop in Berlin”. *Cultural Dynamics* 1998/10.3. 243–61. DOI: 10.1177/092137409801000301.
- COTGROVE, L. A.: “The Importance of Linguistic Markers of Identity and Authenticity in German Gangsta Rap”. *Journal of Languages, Texts, and Society* 2018/2. 67–98.
- DERECKA, M.: “Sprachspielerei Oder Bewusster Sprachwechsel? Code-Switching, Bricolagen Und Hybridbildungen Im Gangsta-Rap von Haftbefehl”. *Linguistische Treffen in Wrocław* 2021/19.1. 53–62.
- GARCIA, O. – WEI, L.: *Translanguaging Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- GIBSON, M.: “That’s Hip-Hop to Me!’: Race, Space, and Temporal Logics of Authenticity in Independent Cultural Production”. *Poetics* 2014/46.1. 38–55. DOI: 10.1016/j.poetic.2014.09.002.
- HAVRYLIV, O.: “‘Fuck Oida!’ Entlehnungen im Bereich der Pejorativa bei Wiener SchülerInnen”. *Germanistische Mitteilungen* 2021/47. 171–97. DOI: 10.33675/GM/2021/47/11.
- HODGMAN, M. R.: “Class, Race, Credibility, and Authenticity within the Hip-Hop Music Genre”. *Journal of Sociological Research* 2013/4.2. 402. DOI: 10.5296/jsr.v4i2.4503.
- KUTTNER, P. J.: “Hip-Hop Citizens: Arts-Based, Culturally Sustaining Civic Engagement Pedagogy”. *Harvard Educational Review* 2016/86.4. 527–55. DOI: 10.17763/1943-5045-86.4.527.
- MCCOY, A.: “Rap Music”. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.287.
- OWOSEJE, T.: “Kanye West’s Honorary Doctorate Rescinded by Prestigious Chicago Art College”. CNN, 9 December 2022, [cnn.com/style/article/kanye-west-honorary-degree-rescinded-intl-scli/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/style/article/kanye-west-honorary-degree-rescinded-intl-scli/index.html).
- PULITZER: The Pulitzer Prizes: DAMN. by Kendrick Lamar, 2018. pulitzer.org/winners/kendrick-lamar, accessed 9 January 2024.
- SCHMID, H. – LAWS, F.: “Estimation of Conditional Probabilities with Decision Trees and an Application to Fine-Grained POS Tagging”. *COLING* 2008, 2008. 777–84.

SMAGULOVA, J.: “Language Policies of Kazakhization and Their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use”. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 2008/II. 3–4. 440–75. DOI: 10.1080/13670050802148798.

TIKHONOV, A.: “Multilingualism and Identity: Polish and Russian Influences in German Rap”. *Multiethnica: Journal of the Hugo Valentin Centre*, 2020. 55–66. DOI: 10.33063/diva-437458.

Abstract

Multilingual diversity in German rap music has been marginalized since the 1990s. In the late 2010s German-Ukrainian-Russian rapper Capital Bra drew much attention to rap in Germany after making 13 number-one chart hits in 12 months, becoming the most popular German artist of the 21st century. Despite this fact, research on linguistic diversity in rap has yet to be conducted. A corpus of lyrics from 400 songs by three German-East Slavonic rappers – Antifuchs, Capital Bra, and Olexesh – forms the basis for the analysis. The songs are from the 2010s and early 2020s and total a count of 230,349 tokens. All three rappers are of Ukrainian, (Ukrainian-)Russian, or (Kazakh-)Russian origin. The lyrics are analysed with qualitative and quantitative methods of corpus-linguistics to find out how relevant languages and translanguaging are for the rappers and how they perform translanguaging in their lyrics.

Keywords: German rap, multilingualism, East Slavonic artists, lyrics

*Transzlingválás és a nyelvi valóság megjelenítése
keleti szláv származású német rapzenészek dalszövegeiben a 21. században
Rezümé*

A német rapzenében az 1990-es évek óta háttérbe szorult a többnyelvűség. Azonban a 2010-es évek végén az német–ukrán–orosz származású Capital Bra a rapre irányította a figyelmet Németországban, miután egy év alatt 13 dala került fel a slágerlista élére, és ezzel a legnépszerűbb német előadóművészé vált. Ennek ellenére a rapzene nyelvi sokszínűségéről még nem készült kutatás. A jelen tanulmányban vizsgált korpusz három német-keleti szláv művész: Antifuchs, Capital Bra és Olexesh 400 dalának szövegéből áll, amelyek 2010 és a 2020-as évek eleje között születtek és összesen 230.349 tokenszámúak. A három művész ukrán, ukrán–orosz és kazah származású. A dalszövegeiket a korpusznyelvészet kvalitatív és kvantitatív módszerével elemzem és arra a kérdésre keresem a választ, hogy mennyire relevánsak ezek a nyelvek és a transzlingválás a zenészek számára, és mindez hogyan jelenik meg a dalszövegeikben.

Kulcsszavak: németrapzene, multilingualizmus, keleti szláv művészek, dalszövegek