



ENGLISH IN K-POP SONGS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE INTERCULTURAL PERCEPTION OF LISTENERS FROM THE CITY OF BRAGANÇA PARÁ ¹

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ABSTRACT: This research presents a qualitative and quantitative study on the influence of the English language on the intercultural perception of young people and adolescents in the city of Bragança, Pará, based on their consumption of the K-pop music genre. Given the widespread diffusion of this cultural phenomenon, the study seeks to understand how exposure to musical content that combines elements of South Korean culture and the English language contributes to the construction of listeners' knowledge, values, and perceptions regarding different cultures. Data collection was conducted using a questionnaire consisting of open-ended and closed-ended questions, allowing for the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative aspects. The results indicate that participants' familiarity with the English language acquired primarily through the English passages present and frequently repeated in K-pop songs constitutes one of the factors influencing their intercultural perception, stimulating interest in other cultures and broadening their understanding of other cultural contexts.

Keywords: K-pop. English Language. Intercultural Perception. Korean Culture

RESUMO: Esta pesquisa apresenta um estudo qualitativo e quantitativo sobre a influência da língua inglesa na percepção intercultural de jovens e adolescentes na cidade de Bragança, no Pará, com base no consumo do gênero musical K-pop. Dada a ampla difusão desse fenômeno cultural, o estudo busca compreender como a exposição a conteúdos musicais que combinam

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elementos da cultura sul-coreana e da língua inglesa contribui para a construção do conhecimento, dos valores e das percepções dos ouvintes em relação a diferentes culturas. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de um questionário composto por perguntas abertas e fechadas, permitindo a análise de aspectos quantitativos e qualitativos. Os resultados indicam que a familiaridade dos participantes com a língua inglesa adquirida principalmente por meio das passagens em inglês presentes e frequentemente repetidas nas canções de K-pop constitui um dos fatores que influenciam sua percepção intercultural, estimulando o interesse por outras culturas e ampliando sua compreensão de outros contextos culturais.

Palavras-chave: K-pop. Língua Inglesa. Percepção Intercultural. Cultura Coreana .

INTRODUCTION

With the arrival of the Korean Wave in Brazil, known as *Hallyu*, there has been a significant increase in Brazilians' consumption of content specific to South Korean culture. One example of this increase is the growing popularity of the K-pop music genre and Korean dramas, which are becoming increasingly popular in our country (Gomes, Timmermann, 2024). We can say that “Hallyu (한류) is the phenomenon of the Korean Wave (Korean Wave), which refers to the global popularization of South Korean pop culture and its effects” (Gomes, Timmermann, 2024, p. 7).

Amid this expansion of Korean culture, the role of the English language in facilitating access to this content is also becoming increasingly prominent; since many fans rely on English as the most accessible way to experience these productions firsthand when they are not available in Portuguese (Gomes, Timmermann, 2024).

In the late 1990s, with the remarkable success of Korean dramas (the famous hit TV series produced by South Korea, more commonly known as K-dramas) being exported to other parts of Asia such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and with the growing popularity of boy bands (bands made up of young men), also spreading across Asian countries, the so-called *Hallyu* emerged, which became popularly known as the Korean Wave, spreading to many countries and bringing various aspects of Korean culture (Palha et al., 2021).

In comparison, the English language, *like Hallyu*, has seen remarkable growth within consumer society, whether due to its role as a lingua franca in both social and economic

relations with other countries or in the context of globalization, that is, English is present in broad areas of society, also facilitating access for those seeking to expand their knowledge of a different culture and, in the case of this research, more specifically Korean culture.

This study emerged from a research project titled “Authentic Materials and Pop Culture: English Language Teaching with a Focus on Interculturality,” which focuses on authentic materials and English language teaching and is coordinated by Professor Rafael de Sousa Timmermann, with whom I volunteer. Based on the presence of Korean culture as well as the English language in Brazil and its direct involvement in the consumption of K-pop, this study presents the influence of English on the intercultural perception of listeners in Bragança and the factors linked to this perception; the present research aims to discuss how the perception of English within K-pop songs occurs among young people and adolescents in the city of Bragança do Pará who listen to and consume K-pop and other *Hallyu* products and have contact with the English language in this process, and what are the main factors influencing this perception.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is K-pop?

K-pop, short for Korean Pop, is a musical genre originating in South Korea, which, in addition to winning over a large number of fans, has distinctive characteristics because it “combines the country’s traditional cultural elements with the influence of Western audiovisual genres such as pop, rock, jazz, hip hop, R&B, reggae, folk, and country.” (Costa, Santos, 2025, p. 150). In addition to incorporating a mix of various genres into its musical compositions, K-Pop also features elaborate choreography and music videos that involve significant artistic production.

The spread of the genre is part of a political movement undertaken by the country to promote its culture through various media; to achieve this, “the South Korean government devised strategies, including increased investment in cultural products such as television programs, soap operas, music, films, and others” (Souza et al., 2023, p. 25). The strategy sought to consolidate the country’s culture and, consequently, to differentiate it from neighboring countries. As a result of this movement, the famous “Hallyu”, popularly known as the “Korean Wave”, emerged.

Hallyu is the “movement of Korean culture expanding beyond South Korea,” and “as a result of government efforts in the late 1990s, the Korean cultural industry entered the markets of various Asian countries” (Souza et al., 2023, p. 25). It is accurate to state that the Korean Wave is, in itself, the large-scale rise in the popularity of Korean culture outside its country of origin, where the culture has spread through various channels, achieving growing and significant success that continues to this day.

Initially, the content exported through the Korean Wave focused primarily on television media, such as hit Korean dramas; however, it was with the second wave of *Hallyu* that K-pop became one of the cultural exports, where “in the early 2000s, the second wave began, introducing K-pop among *Hallyu*’s products” (Souza et al., 2023, p. 25). With the introduction of the musical genre into *Hallyu*, the spread of the Korean Wave transcended the boundaries of Asia, reaching other continents as well and further boosting the South Korean market, having a positive and growing impact on the country’s economy. “In this way, *Hallyu* consolidated its importance, both politically and economically for South Korea, and even became one of Asia’s greatest cultural phenomena. (Souza et al., 2023, p. 34).

Regarding cultural perspectives, Teixeira (2022, p. 39) states that “different cultures, such as South Korean culture, have begun to share their history, values, and traditions with the world.” In line with this idea, Korean culture is undoubtedly rich in diverse content, and *Hallyu* has enabled this culture to carve out a space among so many others in the world, leading Korean culture and its various facets to expand increasingly beyond the Asian context.

Silva (2024, p. 27), on the other hand, tells us that “South Korea has a historical context that played a significant role in the emergence and success of the *Hallyu* Wave phenomenon”; thus, we can assert that the countless conflicts and histories of domination experienced by the country in the past facilitated the emergence of political issues that have influenced the expansion of *Hallyu* in the present day.

K-pop in Brazil

“In Brazil, the reception of K-pop reflects not only the genre’s universal appeal, but also its capacity for adaptation and local reinterpretation.” (Santos, Santos, 2025, p. 2). The genre’s impact is clearly evident in the actions taken by fans, as many end up culturally adopting certain practices that originated in Korea. Some of these practices involve dance

performances with choreography performed by groups (covers) at events organized by the fans themselves, as well as an interest in learning the Korean language, an interest in cuisine, following fashion trends, and even using products such as cosmetics and items used by the idols.

The genre has been gaining increasing popularity among Brazilians and on the global stage as well. According to Santos and Santos (2025, p. 2), “K-Pop has established itself as one of the most significant global cultural phenomena, transcending its musical origins to become a platform for cultural exchange, media consumption, and global identity.” As fans delve deeper into the musical genre, they encounter a new reality, a new culture, with different knowledge and behaviors, styles, and particularities, which further piques their curiosity and interest in learning more about it, perceptions that go far beyond the musical aspect.

For K-pop to spread so rapidly, there is one essential tool that has contributed to its expansion beyond the Asian context: “The internet has played a crucial role in the formation of global fandoms, enabling direct interaction between fans and idols, and facilitating the organization of events such as festivals, cover dance competitions, and flash mobs.” (Santos, Santos, 2025, p. 4)

The spread of K-Pop through social media in Brazil has been quite remarkable and has contributed to a significant increase in its target audience, since, “With technological advances and growing connectivity, K-Pop has established itself as South Korea’s leading cultural product, driven by innovative promotional strategies, social media engagement, and active fan participation.” (Santos, Santos, 2025, p. 4).

Digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and other social media sites contribute to the spread and dissemination of South Korean content, enabling this connectivity to transcend cultural and even geographical barriers and connect various parts of the world, including Brazil.

K-pop and the English Language

The English language has a very notable presence within K-pop, both through its use as a strategy for the genre’s internationalization and through its presence in spoken and written Korean culture. Given that “Korean is also influenced by English through its introduction (or intrusion) into the vernacular, as exemplified by the phenomenon of Konglish.” (Marino, 2020, p. 14).

Konglish is the phenomenon of mixing Korean words with English, thereby giving new meanings to those words. “This mixing occurs through word-formation processes, especially borrowing and hybridism.” (Marino, 2020, p. 14). These are words written in Hangul (the Korean alphabet), but with pronunciation and spelling that are the same as or similar to English. “An example of this is 키스 in Hangul, and its pronunciation [/ki.seu/], representing the English word ‘kiss’” (Marino, 2020, p. 7).

This adaptation to the Konglish phenomenon occurs precisely because of the use of English as a “universal” language by K-pop artists; as a result, more and more words are being incorporated into the vocabulary of those who use them, and thus the phenomenon is becoming increasingly entrenched within the country, not only in music but also in television media, as is the case with the famous “doramas.” Thus, “It can be said that the Konglish phenomenon is an attempt to preserve the Korean language while, at the same time, incorporating the prominence that English offers as a dominant language.” (Marino, 2020, p. 25-26).

This phenomenon has become a significant part of Koreans’ daily lives and is recognized as a true expression of the country’s culture (Marino, 2020). Different cultures also have different ways of understanding each language; in Korean culture, for example, there is a structure and a historical context behind the formation and creation of words, just as other languages also possess characteristics specific to their country of origin.

The presence of the English language in K-pop can be understood as a manifestation of interculturality, since it promotes dialogue between different cultures through music. Speaking briefly about interculturality, Silva (2024, p.14) notes that “Interculturality, in turn, is a concept based on the idea of promoting understanding and interaction between different cultures, seeking to value cultural diversity and establish equal and respectful relationships.”

By incorporating English words, expressions, and phrases into their songs, South Korean artists broaden their communication with audiences of various nationalities, fostering cultural exchange and bridging the gap between different linguistic and social realities. However, this incorporation does not imply an abandonment of cultural identity. In the interaction between cultures, there must be an exchange not only of cultural aspects per se, but also of the values that constitute this relationship and interaction, in such a way that the diversity among them is maintained and respected (Silva, 2024)

However, this integration does not imply an abandonment of Korean cultural identity, as elements of South Korea’s language, customs, and traditions remain present in musical

productions. In this way, K-pop functions as an intercultural space where different cultures interact and enrich one another, promoting respect for diversity and the appreciation of cultural differences, fundamental aspects for building meaningful intercultural relationships.

METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative-quantitative study, and to conduct this study, we sought theoretical texts related to the presence and consumption of K-pop in Brazil, as well as the presence of English within the musical genre. The search was conducted on academic search platforms, including Google Scholar, online journals (PUC Minas Electronic Journal Portal), institutional repositories (Institutional Repository of the Federal University of Uberlândia), and journals with articles published online, such as the (Undergraduate Journal of the Paulus School of Communication - FAPCOM).

Data for this study was collected through an online questionnaire created using Google Forms, which included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed to investigate K-pop fans' perceptions of the presence of the English language in the musical genre and its relationship to interculturality. The questionnaire was chosen as the data collection instrument because of its practicality and efficiency in gathering information from the study's target audience; it is a tool that is effective in collecting data and facilitates the accurate comparison and analysis of that data (Bastos et al., 2023).

In addition to enabling a larger number of respondents to participate in a short period of time, the questionnaire made it possible to collect both quantitative and qualitative data through open-ended and closed-ended questions, since "[...] it allows for the efficient collection of a large amount of data and enables quantitative analyses that aid in understanding phenomena and establishing relationships between variables" (Bastos et al., 2023, p. 7). Thus, it was possible not only to identify the participants profiles but also to understand their perceptions, opinions, and experiences regarding the presence of the English language in K-pop and the issues of interculturality present in this context.

The study's target audience consisted of K-pop fans residing in the municipality of Bragança, in the state of Pará, aged between 13 and 23 years old, the choice of K-pop fans in the city of Bragança as the study's target audience is justified by their direct connection to the subject of the study, since these individuals regularly experience and consume content related to the musical genre. It should be noted that, for the collection of data for the research, the

participants' identities were fully protected, and each participant had the option to accept or decline participation in the research, agreeing to the terms of participation by answering a relevant question at the beginning of the questionnaire. Each participant's involvement stems from their prior direct contact with elements of *Hallyu*, and with this prior information in mind, the author selected the participants.

Since most of the respondents were adolescents, a consent form for participation in academic research was prepared and sent to parents via Google Forms. It included an explanation of what the research entailed and the purpose of the respondents' participation in the questionnaire. The information included an introduction to the author and a brief description of the research topic and objective. Only after reading the descriptive information and the following terms:

1. Participation consists of completing a questionnaire, with the responses used exclusively for academic purposes;
2. The results will preserve the anonymity of the participants;
3. The information will be stored confidentially and used only for potential publications of the study.

Guardians could authorize the adolescents' participation in the study by selecting the "I authorize participation" option on the form and providing their name and CPF number at the end, all guardians gave their consent for the adolescents to participate in the study. The survey was administered online from May 5 to May 11, 2026. It was conducted using digital platforms to facilitate participant access. The multiple-choice questions provided quantitative data regarding the participants' profiles and their perceptions of the topic, while the open-ended questions allowed for the collection of individual opinions, experiences, and interpretations.

For some questions in the questionnaire, the *Likert scale* was used, as it is a tool widely employed in research aimed at analyzing participants' perceptions, opinions, and attitudes. This type of scale allowed respondents to express different levels of agreement or disagreement with the statements presented, thereby contributing to the collection of more accurate and organized data, making it possible to identify trends and gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions.

The questionnaire consists of 13 questions, which were designed according to the following categories:

Table 1 - Organization of questionnaire items by category, questions and answer choices

Participant profile	Perception of English in K-pop	Cultural influence and interculturality
1. How old are you? Ages 13–16 Ages 17–19 Ages 20–24 Over 25	5. How do you feel about the use of English in K-pop songs? Positive Negative	10. How does K-pop influence your perception of different languages? (open-ended question)
2. How long have you been into K-pop? Less than 6 months Between 6 months and 1 year Between 1 and 3 years More than 3 years	6. Does the use of English make K-pop songs more appealing to you? Yes No	11. How does listening to K-pop influence your view of culture? (open-ended question)
3. How often do you listen to K-pop? Every day A few times a week Rarely	7. Why? (open-ended question) 8. In your opinion, why is English used in K-pop songs? (open-ended question)	12. Can music be an effective tool for intercultural learning? I totally agree I agree I disagree I totally disagree
4. How would you rate your English proficiency? Básic Intermediate Advanced I have no knowledge	9. Does the use of English in K-pop contribute to the genre's internationalization? I totally agree I agree I disagree I totally disagree	13. When you listen to K-pop, can you tell if there's English in the songs? What influences that perception? (open-ended question)

Source: Prepared by the author, 2026.

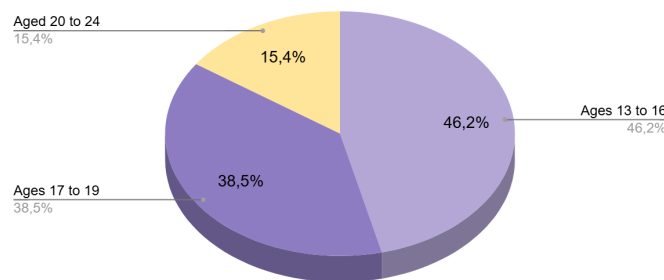
After data collection, the data were organized and analyzed using a qualitative-quantitative approach, employing descriptive statistics for the closed-ended data and thematic categorization for the open-ended responses, with the aim of gaining a broader understanding of the influence of the English language on K-pop consumption and its contribution to the participants' intercultural experiences.

RESULTS

The questionnaire yielded 13 responses. Initially, we sought to identify the age group of the study participants; the data obtained are presented in Figure 1, which shows the distribution of respondents by age.

Figure 1 - Age group of respondents

Question 1: How old are you?

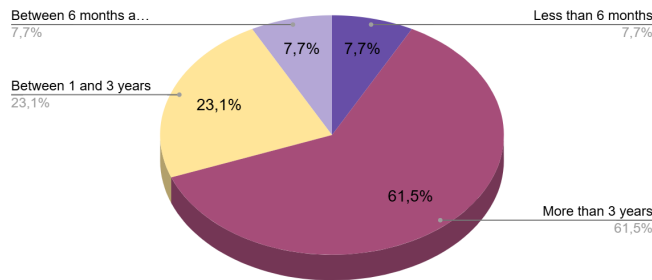


Source: Prepared by the author, 2026

The majority of respondents are teenagers, with 46.2% of participants in the 13–16 age group, indicating a predominance of younger participants. After surveying the participants' ages, we sought to identify the duration of K-pop consumption in years or months, along with the frequency with which each person listens to K-pop, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Time spent listening to K-pop

Question 2: How long have you been listening to K-pop?



Source: Prepared by the author, 2026

As a result, the data showed that 61.5% of respondents have been listening to K-pop for more than three years; regarding how often they listen to the music, 61.5% said they listen every day, while only 7.7% said they listen rarely. When asked about their English proficiency, 76.9% of participants reported having a basic level, 15.4% an intermediate level, and 7.7% an advanced level. Regarding the use of English in K-pop songs, 100% of participants rated it positively.

As for whether the use of English makes the songs more appealing, among the response options “yes” and “no,” 76.9% answered “yes” and 23.1% chose the second option. Regarding the rationale for their answers, participants stated that English facilitates understanding of parts of the songs, especially choruses and recurring phrases, which makes the musical experience more accessible, as we can see from the following response by one of the participants: “[...] because English is considered a global language, making communication clearer and more inclusive for listeners around the world.”

In addition, many stated that exposure to English words and phrases contributes to language learning, sparking an interest in studying it, as well as making pronunciation easier when singing the songs, as demonstrated by the following statement from one of the respondents: “Because I already see K-pop in English and English in K-pop, so it’s always been like that. Plus, since it’s K-pop, it makes me want to learn more English so I can understand even better what’s being said in the songs.”

Some responses also highlight concerns about the potential impacts of this linguistic influence; one participant pointed out that the excessive use of English could lead to a loss of cultural identity and the originality of K-pop, causing some productions to resemble Western pop and diminish elements characteristic of Korean culture as we can see in the following

response: *“Loss of Identity and Originality. By using mostly English lyrics to appeal to the Western market, many groups water down what makes K-pop special. The music starts to sound like generic American pop, losing the Korean ‘flavor’ that won over fans worldwide.”*

Regarding the question of using English to internationalize the genre, respondents point out that English, because it is widely used and understood in many countries, facilitates the promotion of songs, expands the audience, and contributes to K-pop’s entry into the international market. In addition, some participants noted that the use of English makes the songs more accessible to listeners who do not speak Korean, thereby facilitating the understanding of parts of the lyrics and strengthening the connection between artists and fans around the world; thus, 61.5% agree that the use of English in K-pop contributes to the genre’s internationalization.

Regarding how K-pop influences participants’ perceptions of different languages, respondents stated that K-pop has a positive influence on perceptions of linguistic and cultural diversity; most reported that exposure to the genre sparked an interest in learning new languages, particularly Korean and English, and also increased their curiosity about other languages and cultures. This response clearly illustrates that fact: *“K-pop makes me want to learn more and discover more. And not just English, but Korean, Chinese, Spanish, and others. K-pop brings out the best in me a desire to learn a little more about each language.”*

Participants also emphasized that K-pop contributes to the appreciation of cultural diversity, promotes exposure to new forms of expression, slang, and linguistic elements, and further demonstrates that music can forge connections between people regardless of the language spoken. In addition, some responses highlight the role of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) in popularizing the Korean language internationally, although there were also reflections on the need to preserve the genre’s unique cultural characteristics in the face of its growing internationalization. As for the impact of K-pop consumption on respondents’ cultural perspectives, the responses indicate that K-pop consumption has significantly contributed to broadening participants’ cultural horizons, fostering greater interest in, respect for, and appreciation of cultural diversity. Here is the response: *“K-pop has broadened my perspective on culture because it has introduced me to different customs, styles, and ways of thinking. This has helped me develop more respect and interest in other cultures and appreciate them more.”*

Respondents emphasize that exposure to South Korean music, language, customs, fashion, and other cultural elements allows them to learn about realities different from their own, fostering an understanding that every society has its own unique characteristics, values,

and identities. 61.5% of participants agree that music can be an effective tool for intercultural learning.

When asked whether they can tell if English is present in K-pop songs and what influences that perception, most participants responded that they can identify the presence of English in K-pop songs; the main factors cited for this perception were familiarity with English words and expressions, the difference in pronunciation compared to Korean, and the frequency with which the language appears in prominent parts of the songs, such as choruses and repetitive sections. Some respondents also noted that their prior knowledge of English and frequent exposure to K-pop facilitate the recognition of these linguistic elements.

In addition, it was noted that the inclusion of English in the songs sparks curiosity about the meaning of the lyrics, the concepts explored by the groups, and aspects of Korean culture; as a result, the presence of English is easily noticed by listeners and plays an important role in helping the public understand and connect with K-pop productions. We see this in the following response: *“In K-pop, English serves as a global bridge. It’s almost impossible not to notice it, since it usually features in the most impactful moments, such as the chorus and hooks, making it easier to connect with fans around the world.”*

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the following survey, it is clear how listeners in Bragança perceive English in K-pop songs and what factors influence that perception. The responses obtained through the questionnaire indicate that familiarity with the language is an essential factor in listeners’ perception of English in K-pop, since many of the responses indicated that the frequency with which the language appears in the songs and in key sections of the songs facilitates understanding of the songs and makes them accessible, as well as other content.

In addition to making it easier to understand certain parts of the songs, English plays a key role in giving fans access to this content, thus making it a gateway language, that is, a bridge to so much content from other cultures. Furthermore, the inclusion of English within K-pop is a factor that sparks fans’ interest not only in learning about other languages and cultures, but also in bringing them closer to the productions and even the artists in a certain way.

Another notable factor is the widespread dissemination of K-pop on the internet through social media, not only K-pop but also other products and elements of Korean culture. This trend supports the assertion made by (Santos, Santos, 2025) regarding the consolidation

of K-pop as a cultural product of South Korea through the dissemination of songs and fan communities, as well as the increased connectivity between listeners and artists. We can say that the greater the spread, the greater the fans' access to this content, since through the fans' constant consumption of K-pop itself, they delve even deeper into other elements of Korean culture.

One proven fact is the age group of fans; many of the listeners are teenagers who engage more directly with social media and television. This helps not only in absorbing the cultural aspects involved in consuming elements of the *Hallyu* wave, such as K-pop and dramas, but also in spreading this culture through social media, whether through posts, video edits, shared content, and so on.

Based on the results presented, we can gain an understanding of the impact of the Korean Wave in Brazil, the specific characteristics of its consumers, and their perceptions of English culture and language. This study is relevant to the field of intercultural studies, presenting the perception of English among K-pop listeners in the city of Bragança, in the state of Pará, and highlighting the use of music as a tool for intercultural education.

CONCLUSION

The study on the influence of English on the intercultural perception of listeners in Bragante highlighted key factors that shape the perceptions of fans who consume and have direct contact with K-pop and other elements of *Hallyu*. According to this research, the influence of English on listeners' perceptions is clear, stemming from familiarity with the language as well as the repetition of English-language passages in the songs. The role of social media in the dissemination of Korean culture was also demonstrated, thereby enabling fans to engage with elements of the Korean wave that extend beyond music, as well as to interact with artists, whether directly or indirectly.

The responses and analyses in this study further highlight the potential of music as a tool for intercultural education, a factor that opens up a range of fields for more in-depth studies on the topic. The research proceeded smoothly without any complications; responses were obtained within a reasonable timeframe, so there was no significant delay in receiving each response, which facilitated the process of analysis and discussion of the findings.

The time allotted for each stage was sufficient to achieve good results, however, it is important to note that if there were more time to conduct this research, it would be possible to

gather more insights and perspectives from K-pop listeners; in other words, the study could be conducted on a broader scale, encompassing more people.

We can therefore conclude that the objective of this study was achieved; the results were positive and provided highly satisfactory answers, since, through the K-pop music genre, we gained insight into various ways of perceiving the English language, including the specific intercultural perspectives of fans in the city of Bragança who directly consume music and other products from Korean culture through the *Hallyu* (Korean Wave).

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