



TAP! TAP! TAP ! COHERENCE OF ONOMATOPOEIC EXPRESSION BETWEEN THE SONG TITLES AND THE THEMES IN K-POP SONGS

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Abstract: K-Pop has become part of Korean culture attracting international attention. Beyond its global success, K-Pop incorporates various linguistic and cultural elements that merit scholarly investigation. One of the main attractions in this industry is the songs. Creative ideas abound in the writing of lyrics and the selection of song titles. One such element is the use of onomatopoeia, as seen in the numerous songs with unique or even strange-sounding lyrics, such as BANG BANG BANG, CLIK CLAK, and BOOM. This study aims to analyze the coherence between onomatopoeic K-Pop song titles and their song themes. The data consist of nine K-Pop songs, with the lyrics obtained from unofficial English translations available on the Genius website. The study use Vilma Kokko's (2013) theory of six types of sound effects based on their source to analyze the types of onomatopoeia in K-Pop song titles. How these types of onomatopoeia cohered with the songs is analyzed using Walter Fisher's (2010) theory, which states that coherence is based on three specific types of coherences. Techniques of analysis by Spradley (1980) were employed in this study. The main findings of this study indicate that onomatopoeia in K-Pop song titles is not merely a decorative or distinguishing element, but plays an important role both semantically and symbolically. The types of onomatopoeia most frequently used as song titles are impact, air current, explosions, and gunshots. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of semiotic strategies in contemporary K-Pop music. Further research could combine lyrics, images, and music video backgrounds in an objective manner in order to fully understand the metaphors, symbolism, messages conveyed by artists, and cultural values.

Key Terms: *onomatopoeia, K-Pop, song titles, lyrics*

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the phenomenon of K-Pop songs (K-Pop) has changed the landscape of the global music industry, attracting the attention of millions of fans around the world. K-Pop has become a part of Korean culture that has captured international attention. The global development of Korean music has occurred alongside the spread of the K-Popular culture wave

(Hallyu), which regionally began to develop in East Asian countries such as Taiwan and Japan, as well as in Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Park, 2006: 244). Behind its glittering success, K-Pop has various interesting elements-from the visuals of the members, their talents in singing and dancing, to their uniqueness in music. One of the main attractions in the industry is their songs, which are not only packed with stunning music videos, but also have distinctive instruments, vocals, and raps. However, more than just the external appearance, K-Pop's creative industry is also supported by fresh and creative ideas behind the scenes-especially when it comes to writing lyrics and choosing song titles. This can be seen from the number of songs with lyrics that sound unique or even awful, such as BANG BANG BANG by BIGBANG, CLIK CLAK by BABYMONSTER and BOOM by NCT DREAM, which have gained widespread popularity on social media platforms such as TikTok. This phenomenon proves that creativity in K-Pop continues to grow and is capable of creating global trends.

K-Pop songs that sound unique like that can be studied through a linguistic perspective. In linguistic studies, the term for words that mimic sounds is known as onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia is the formation of words whose sound is imitative of the sound of the noise or action designated, such as hiss, buzz, and bang or the use of such words for poetic or rhetorical effect (MOT Collins English Dictionary 2.0, 2006). Onomatopoeia is defined as the name of an object that imitates the sound produced by the object (Gasser, 2006:4). In our daily life it is easier to find onomatopoeias in various forms. Onomatopoeia is a unique type of linguistic expression because it seems that its phonological shape is more closely related to its content. Ordinary words (words that are not onomatopoeic) cannot convey imaginative, lively, or scenic meanings according to Sugahara (2010:1).

Onomatopoeia is a linguistic form that imitates or represents the natural sounds of objects, actions, or phenomena. Onomatopoeia is considered a form of transforming natural sounds into words through imitation (Assaneo, Nichols, & Trevisan, 2011). Onomatopoeia plays an important role in communication and writing because it imitates real sounds, helping readers understand the nuances and atmosphere in a text. Its use makes writing more vivid, evokes feelings, attracts attention, and creates a clear sense of time. In addition to being a play on words, onomatopoeia also reflects the writer's unique style and triggers the reader's imagination through familiar sounds in everyday life. According to Sasamoto (2019:23), onomatopoeia is often used in genres that emphasize emotion and sensitivity, such as literature, culinary arts, and music. In novels or comics, onomatopoeia brings the atmosphere to life and strengthens the reader's imagination through words such as “brang!” or “krak!” which realistically describe real sounds. In everyday conversation, words like “duar!” or “meow” are used to express something spontaneously and expressively, making communication more lively. Meanwhile, in songs, onomatopoeia adds rhythm, sound, and drama, such as the word “roar” in Katy Perry's song Roar.

Onomatopoeia can be understood through the concepts of iconicity and sound symbolism. According to Lockwood and Dingemanse (2015), sound symbolism refers to iconicity in spoken language, in which linguistic sounds are directly associated with meaning rather than functioning as entirely arbitrary signs. Likewise, iconicity describes a motivated relationship between linguistic form and meaning, allowing the form of an expression to resemble aspects of its referent. As one of the clearest manifestations of sound symbolism,

onomatopoeia imitates real-world sounds while simultaneously conveying semantic and emotional meanings, making it an effective semiotic resource in K-Pop song titles. This relationship enables listeners to infer meaning from sound even before interpreting the lyrics, thereby strengthening the coherence between the title and the thematic content of the song. According to Machin (2010), meaning in popular music is constructed through the interaction of linguistic and musical elements. The use of onomatopoeia in songs is a prominent linguistic and stylistic feature that strengthens emotional connections and creates auditory imagery. Onomatopoeia in songs not only provides uniqueness in the lyrics, but is also able to create emotional appeal for listeners. The public's response to the fame of these K-Pop songs has been mixed; many are attracted by the catchy rhythms and creative titles. Titles with onomatopoeia sometimes correspond to the lyrical content, while others primarily function to attract listeners through their distinctive sound.

Onomatopoeia is widely used in K-Pop song titles, one example of the title is CLIK CLAK by BABYMONSTER. The classification of onomatopoeia in this study refers to Vilma Kokko's (2013) framework, which divides onomatopoeia into six types: impact, air current, friction, breakage, liquid and food, explosions and gunshots. The word "CLIK CLAK" can be associated with the impact category, depicting sounds originating from the "collision of two (or several) objects." The sound varies depending on how soft or hard the different objects are, how fast the object or objects are moving, and whether and how either side yields at impact. The song "CLIK CLAK" by BABYMONSTER conveys the sound of bold, forward footsteps. This song describes the spirit of young people who dare to take their steps.

K-Pop songs employ expressions like "Bang Bang Bang" to describe gunshots, "Clik Clak" to represent footsteps, and "Sheesh" to convey emotional reactions such as admiration or sarcasm. This usage enriches the music, strengthens the song's identity, and helps listeners remember specific lyrics. Therefore, onomatopoeic song titles function not only as stylistic devices but also as semiotic resources that reinforce the overall message of the song. Such titles often attract listeners, onomatopoeia in K-Pop song titles also frequently continues throughout the lyrics to enhance thematic expression. Thus, existing literature suggests a strong coherence between onomatopoeic song titles and the thematic content of K-Pop songs, reflecting both phonological and semantic alignment that contributes to K-Pop's unique ability to seamlessly combine sound, visuals, and emotions.

Beyond representing the physical act of clapping, the onomatopoeic expression CLAP functions as a semiotic symbol of encouragement, solidarity, and collective energy. Clapping is widely recognized as a universal form of appreciation, celebration, and motivation, allowing listeners from different cultural backgrounds to immediately associate the sound with positive emotional support. Within K-pop performance culture, clapping also encourages audience participation during live performances, creating interaction between artists and fans. By selecting CLAP as the song title, SEVENTEEN transforms a simple everyday sound into a symbolic expression of resilience and optimism. The repeated use of this onomatopoeia reinforces the motivational message of the lyrics while strengthening the emotional engagement of listeners, demonstrating that the title functions not merely as an imitation of sound but as a cultural sign that embodies togetherness and perseverance.

This study differs from the previous research on the term recording to onomatopoeia. Several previous studies used different data sources, some used data sources from comics as seen from Dinata and Juniarta (2024). They examined how onomatopoeia in One Piece comics operates differently from outside of Japan though sharing the same meaning. Some data sources also from poems as seen from Carera, Anjas, and Nurcholis (2019), they examined onomatopoeia in some poems of Lee Emmett and found 21 onomatopoeic words, which were classified into two types: primary onomatopoeia and secondary onomatopoeia. Previous studies also highlight the use of onomatopoeia on children's song as seen from Laili and Putri (2021), they examined the phonological features of onomatopoeia in children's songs which contribute to foreign language acquisition and concerning the importance of onomatopoeia in the study of earliest language development.

Despite the widespread presence of onomatopoeia in K-Pop, there is still limited academic research that focuses on the coherence between onomatopoeic elements in song titles and the lyrical or thematic content of songs. This study examines the coherence of the use of onomatopoeia in the K-Pop song titles are not arbitrarily titled, but have meanings that are consistent with the meaning and content of the songs. Although onomatopoeic titles are widely used in K-Pop, little attention has been paid to whether these titles systematically correspond to the thematic content of the songs. Investigating this relationship is theoretically important because song titles constitute listeners' first point of contact with a song and contribute to meaning construction before the lyrics are interpreted. Examining the coherence between titles and themes therefore provides insight into how linguistic form, sound, and musical discourse interact to communicate meaning. Based on the background above, we formulated several studies as below:

1. What types of onomatopoeia are used in K-Pop song titles?
2. How does the onomatopoeia type cohere with the song?

By analyzing the relationship between titles and lyrics through the lens of Kokko's (2013) typology, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of semiotic strategies in contemporary K-Pop music.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative design to analyze and discover how onomatopoeia in K-Pop songs can be used and interpreted by the general public. This study uses descriptive qualitative techniques. The primary data source is K-Pop songs containing onomatopoeia in their titles and lyrics. These songs were chosen because they relate to the topic, words that imitate the sounds of objects colliding and producing sounds. What's interesting about this study is that we not only examine the types of onomatopoeia but also how these onomatopoeias help listeners "hear" the thump, ring, or even pulse of the feelings depicted in the music. This makes the songs more lively, catchy, and memorable, while also providing the dramatic nuances characteristic of K-Pop. The data used is textual, obtained from song titles and lyrics. Textual data was chosen because it allows for analysis of the relationship between titles and lyrics through the lens of Kokko's (2013) typology.

The data analyzed were textual data in the form of the lyrics of nine songs. The primary data of this study consisted of K-Pop songs containing onomatopoeic expressions in their titles that were released within the last ten years. The songs were selected through purposive

sampling to represent contemporary K-Pop and were limited to those in which the onomatopoeic song titles demonstrated coherence with the thematic content of the lyrics. The analysis was based on the original Korean lyrics, while the English translations were obtained from Genius English Translations. As the translations provided by Genius are unofficial and community-generated, they were used only as supporting references to facilitate interpretation of the original lyrics rather than as the primary source of analysis. The study used unofficial English translations from Genius, interpretations were cross-checked with the original Korean lyrics and contextual meanings to minimize mistranslations. The analysis focused on semantic consistency rather than literal translation.

Techniques of analysis by Spradley (1980) were employed in this study. Four phases of analysis named domain, taxonomy, componential, and cultural themes were taken. In the domain phase, the interpretation applied to Vilma Kokko's (2013) theory about six types of sound effects by source which are impact, air current, friction, breakage, liquid and food, explosions and gunshots. The purpose of applying this theory was to find out what types of onomatopoeia were used in K-Pop song titles. Within the domain, the six types of sound effects by source were identified as taxonomy analysis that the coherence between the types of onomatopoeia and the songs was examined using Walter Fisher's (2010) theory that coherence is based on three specific types of consistency: structural coherence (S), material coherence (M), and characteristic coherence (C). The componential analysis links the domains with the taxonomies. It shows the type of onomatopoeia and its coherence with the theme of the song were connected through a componential in the table:

Table 1. Componential

Song	Friction			Air Current			Liquid and Food			Breakage			Explosion and Gunshot		
	S	M	C	S	M	C	S	M	C	S	M	C	S	M	C
CLIK CKLAK															

The table above is examining the song “CLIK CLAK” by Baby Monster, the sound “CLIK CLAK” is classified as impact onomatopoeia meaning the sound that occurs when two objects collide with each other. In this song, it illustrates the sound of high heels striking the floor. This sound directly influences the ambiance of bravery and resolve in the song. The phrase “*CLIK CLAK, heels tap, walkin’ with my hips back*” underscores this unity, as the sound of footsteps relates to the physical assurance of motion. The sound of footsteps can be understood as a form of coherent characteristic, since the rhythmic “CLIK CLAK” consistently builds the meaning of courage and self-confidence that lies at the core of the song’s narrative.

A deeper analysis through taxonomy reveals that the onomatopoeia “CLIK CLAK” falls under “expressive sounds of human action” and specifies within the taxonomy as “footstep sounds serving as identity markers.” The taxonomy illustrates that a straightforward sound serves not just as a stylistic tool but also as a symbolic embodiment of cultural significance. If the song did not use this sound symbol (CLIK CLAK), the connection among the lyrics, title, and atmosphere might be weaker. Without it, the idea of confidence and determination might stay theoretical instead of being clearly expressed through sound. In contrast, employing CLIK CLAK as an impactful onomatopoeia, the song effectively weaves auditory, linguistic, and

cultural dimensions into a unified and expressive work. The culture theme analysis linking findings to broader cultural and ideological themes, particularly language ideology. From the taxonomy, a cultural finding emerges that footsteps expressed as CLIK CLAK signify not just physical movement but also embody cultural meanings of confidence, power, and presence in social space.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study explains an interesting linguistic phenomenon, namely that many famous K-Pop song titles contain Onomatopoeia, which can attract the attention of K-Pop song lovers. This song title will be connected to the song's lyrics, where Onomatopoeia functions to support the song's lyrics so that the song's content becomes more expressive and closer to the listener. Overall, this study aims to find out how the Onomatopoeia song title is coherent with the song's content and shows the appropriate function in the song's content. To enhance the transparency and credibility of the research, the selected songs were re-examined to ensure that they fulfilled the established selection criteria and consistently exhibited coherence between their titles and lyrical content, thereby minimizing potential researcher subjectivity. The results of this verification process are presented in providing a transparent overview of the data selection procedure.

Table 2. Table of Data

NO	SONG TITLES	RELEASE YEAR	ONOMATOPOEIA Kokko (2013)	COHERENCE Fisher (1987)
1	CLIK CLAK	2024	Impact	Characterological Coherence
2	B.O.M.B	2023	Explosions and Gunshots	Material Coherence
3	KNOCK KNOCK	2017	Impact	Material Coherence
4	CLAP	2017	Impact	Characterological Coherence
5	Shoong	2023	Air current	Structural Coherence
6	Ddu-Du Ddu-Du	2018	Explosions and Gunshots	Characterological Coherence
7	Ring Ding Dong	2009	Impact	Material Coherence
8	CHK CHK BOOM	2025	Explosions and Gunshots	Characterological Coherence
9	BBIBBI	2018	Air current	Structural Coherence

1. Onomatopoeia Types in K-Pop Song Titles

a. Impact

Impact refers to sounds produced when two or more objects collide. The resulting sound varies depending on the force of the collision, the speed of the movement, and the materials involved. In the dataset, this category appears most frequently because impact sounds are highly dynamic, memorable, and rhythmically suitable for popular music. Their acoustic characteristics make them effective as song titles, as they immediately attract listeners' attention and create strong expectations

about the song's energy. Examples of this category include CLIK CLAK by BABYMONSTER, KNOCK KNOCK by TWICE, CLAP by SEVENTEEN, and Ring Ding Dong by Super Junior.

In CLIK CLAK, the lyrics "*Click-clack, heels tap, walkin' with my hips back*" imitate the sound of high heels striking the floor. The impact sound symbolizes confidence, determination, and self-assurance rather than merely describing footsteps. Within K-Pop culture, confident walking is frequently associated with empowerment and charisma, particularly in performances emphasizing strong stage presence. Consequently, the title functions not only as an imitation of sound but also as a symbolic representation of the members' bold identity. The repeated *click-clack* sound creates a rhythmic hook that reinforces the song's energetic atmosphere and makes it easier for listeners to remember.

Similarly, KNOCK KNOCK by TWICE employs the repeated knocking sound in the lyrics "*Knock, knock, knock, knock, knock on my door.*" Although the sound literally imitates someone knocking on a door, it symbolically represents an invitation to open one's heart and begin an emotional relationship. In K-Pop, romantic themes are often expressed through simple everyday sounds that listeners can immediately recognize. The repetitive knocking sound increases anticipation, encouraging listeners to imagine emotional interaction while simultaneously strengthening the song's catchy chorus.

Another example is CLAP by SEVENTEEN, in which the repeated expression "*Clap until your hands catch fire*" imitates the sound of hands striking together. Beyond representing applause, clapping symbolizes encouragement, celebration, and collective participation. Such audience interaction is an important element of K-Pop performance culture, where fan engagement through synchronized clapping, cheering, and chanting enhances the live concert experience. Therefore, the title reflects not only the literal sound but also the communal spirit shared between artists and fans.

Likewise, Ring Ding Dong by Super Junior uses the repetitive ringing sound to imitate a bell. Rather than functioning solely as an auditory imitation, the sound symbolizes persistent attraction and romantic obsession, suggesting a feeling that repeatedly echoes in one's mind. The highly repetitive onomatopoeia contributes to the song's addictive quality, which has become one of its most recognizable characteristics. This demonstrates that impact onomatopoeia in K-Pop serves both semantic and symbolic purposes by strengthening the thematic message while simultaneously enhancing memorability and audience engagement. Overall, the Impact category demonstrates that onomatopoeia in K-Pop song titles extends beyond simple sound imitation. These expressions function as semiotic resources that symbolize confidence, affection, celebration, and emotional excitement while reinforcing the coherence between the song title and its lyrical theme. Their rhythmic and memorable qualities also contribute to the distinctive musical identity that characterizes contemporary K-Pop.

b. Friction

Friction is a sound that mimics the noise produced by friction between two surfaces. This sound can be sharp, harsh, or high-pitched, depending on the strength

and type of friction. Sounds such as “crunch,” “pfft,” “screech,” and “squeak” fall into this category. The word “screech” describes a sharp sound caused by strong friction, such as the sound of sudden car breaks or metal rubbing against metal. Meanwhile, “squeak” describes a high-pitched, light friction sound, such as when a door creaks when opened. Through these onomatopoeias, writers or singers can create a more realistic atmosphere and describe the intensity of the movement or situation that is taking place. No examples of the friction category were found in the dataset. This may be because friction related sounds typically represent incidental mechanical or physical events, rather than sounds that are emotionally expressive or possess a memorable rhythm. Given that K-pop song titles often serve as captivating hooks and branding tools, sounds that deliver a powerful, explosive impact are prioritized over friction sounds.

c. Air current

Air Current refers to onomatopoeic expressions that imitate sounds produced by fast movement through the air, such as wind, whistling, or objects moving at high speed. These sounds are commonly associated with motion, acceleration, and swift transitions. In K-Pop, Air Current onomatopoeia is frequently used to create a sense of dynamism and excitement while reinforcing the emotional intensity of the song. Their rhythmic quality also makes them memorable as song titles and contributes to the energetic image commonly associated with K-Pop performances.

In *Shoong* by Taeyang featuring Lisa, the lyrics “*On my way, I'm headed to you now (Skrrt) / Faster than a Lamborghini, shoong (Shoong)*” imitate the sound of rapid movement through the air. The expressions *shoong* and *skrrt* evoke the sensation of a vehicle speeding past at high velocity, emphasizing movement, acceleration, and excitement. These sounds were chosen because they immediately communicate speed without requiring explicit description, allowing listeners to imagine motion through sound alone. Symbolically, they represent the determination to reach someone quickly, reflecting the song's themes of passion, confidence, and desire. Within K-Pop culture, references to sports cars, speed, and luxury are frequently used to symbolize ambition, success, and youthful energy. Consequently, the repeated onomatopoeic sounds not only strengthen the song's rhythmic structure but also increase listener engagement by creating vivid auditory imagery that reinforces the relationship between the title and the lyrical message.

Similarly, *BBIBBI* by IU employs the expression “beep” in the lyrics “*Yellow C-A-R-D / If you cross this line, it's a violation, beep.*” The onomatopoeic sound imitates a warning signal commonly heard in everyday life. Rather than merely reproducing an electronic sound, beep functions symbolically as a warning that establishes personal boundaries and asserts the speaker's confidence in rejecting inappropriate behavior. The sound was selected because it is universally recognizable as a signal of caution, enabling listeners to immediately associate it with rules and restrictions. In the context of K-Pop, where artists often communicate messages of self-confidence and empowerment, the warning sound reinforces IU's independent persona while making the song's message more memorable. The use of beep therefore contributes to the coherence between the title, the lyrics, and the song's overall theme by transforming a simple warning signal into a powerful symbolic expression of self-

respect. Air Current category demonstrates that onomatopoeic sounds in K-Pop function beyond simple imitation. They create vivid auditory imagery, symbolize movement and emotional intention, and strengthen the coherence between song titles and lyrical themes. Their memorable rhythmic qualities also enhance audience engagement while contributing to the distinctive musical identity that characterizes contemporary K-Pop.

d. Liquid and Food

Liquid and Food are sounds that mimic the sounds produced by liquids or food, usually arising from activities such as cooking, biting, chewing, or when liquids drip and flow. These sounds make the atmosphere in songs, movies, or writing livelier and more realistic. Examples include “munch,” “splash,” “drip,” and “pop.” The word “drip” describes the sound of water dripping, as in the sentence “Water dripped from the faucet all night long,” while “pop” imitates a small popping sound, as in “Corn popped in the microwave.” Through these onomatopoeia, listeners or readers can imagine the real sensation of the sounds and events being described. The Liquid and Food categories were absent in dataset because sounds associated with eating or liquid movement were less compatible with the dominant themes found in K-pop songs, such as confidence, empowerment, romance, and ambition. These sounds carry weaker symbolic associations with the emotional intensity commonly expressed in K-Pop.

e. Breakage

Breakage is a sound that imitates the sound of an object cracking, breaking, or shattering. These sounds are usually sudden and loud, depicting the destruction or damage of an object. Sounds such as “crash,” “crack,” “smash,” and “clink” belong to this type. The word “crash” describes the loud sound when an object breaks or falls, such as a window pane shattering into pieces. Meanwhile, “crack” mimics the sound of a small crack, such as when a twig breaks or a plate split in two. Through these onomatopoeias, the atmosphere described becomes more dramatic and real, as if the listener can feel the moment the object is actually destroyed. No examples of onomatopoeia associated with the sound of breaking or cracking were found in the selected dataset. One possible explanation is that breaking sounds such as “crack” or “crash” typically represent a single moment of fracture rather than a recurring sound pattern. In contrast, K-pop song titles often serve as attention-grabbing elements designed to be memorable and repeated throughout the song, consequently, more rhythmic and accessible onomatopoeic expressions are better suited for this purpose.

f. Explosions and Gunshots

Explosions and Gunshots refer to onomatopoeic expressions that imitate loud, sudden, and powerful sounds produced by explosions or firearms. These sounds are characterized by their intensity, force, and dramatic impact. In K-Pop, this category is frequently employed because explosive sounds immediately capture listeners' attention and communicate strength, confidence, and high energy. As song titles, they create memorable rhythmic patterns while reinforcing the powerful image that many K-Pop artists seek to project.

In B.O.M.B by TREASURE, the lyrics “*My heart is boom, ba ra bi bomb, bomb*” imitate the sound of an explosion to represent overwhelming emotions. Rather than describing a literal explosion, the repeated expression bomb symbolizes intense excitement and the sudden emotional impact of falling in love. The explosive sound was chosen because it effectively conveys feelings that are too powerful to be expressed through ordinary language. Within K-Pop, exaggerated metaphors are commonly used to intensify emotional narratives, allowing listeners to experience love as something energetic and overwhelming. The repetitive sound also functions as a memorable musical hook, strengthening the coherence between the title and the song's central theme of explosive affection.

Similarly, DDU-DU DDU-DU by BLACKPINK imitates the rapid sound of gunfire through the repeated expression “*Hit you with that ddu-du, ddu-du, du.*” Instead of referring to actual violence, the gunshot sound symbolizes confidence, power, and dominance. The title was deliberately chosen to reflect the group's bold and fearless identity, which has become one of BLACKPINK's defining characteristics. In K-Pop culture, powerful sound effects are often used to construct strong stage personas and communicate self-confidence rather than aggression. The repetitive gunshot rhythm enhances the song's intensity, making the chorus highly memorable while reinforcing the message of female empowerment and confidence.

A similar pattern appears in CHK CHK BOOM by Stray Kids. The lyrics “*Ra-ta-ta-ta, I'ma make it boom, boom, chk, chk, boom*” imitate the sounds of loading and firing a weapon combined with an explosive blast. These sounds symbolize determination, competitive spirit, and the confidence to overcome challenges rather than literal acts of violence. The title creates a dynamic auditory image that reflects the group's energetic performance style and powerful musical identity. The repeated onomatopoeic expressions increase excitement and listener engagement by producing a rhythmic pattern that mirrors the song's fast-paced composition. Consequently, the title contributes directly to the song's meaning by reinforcing its themes of strength, ambition, and fearless self-expression.

Overall, the Explosions and Gunshots category demonstrates that onomatopoeia in K-Pop functions not merely as an imitation of loud sounds but as a semiotic resource for expressing emotional intensity, confidence, and artistic identity. The explosive acoustic patterns strengthen the coherence between song titles and lyrical themes while enhancing memorability, audience engagement, and the distinctive performance style that characterizes contemporary K-Pop.

2. Onomatopoeia Coherence with K-Pop Song Titles

a. Structural Coherence

The type of consistency that Fisher refers to as structural coherence is how a song has a coherent storyline that flows smoothly. When the story is confusing, when one part does not seem to lead to the next, or when the storyline is unclear, then the story in the song lacks structural coherence.

The song “BBIBBI” by IU has structural coherence. In this song, BBIBBI is read as beep beep, resembling the sound of a whistle and signaling a warning.

Yellow C-A-R-D

If you cross this line, it's a violation, beep

Keeping manners stop here, it's mi-mi-mi-mine
Please keep the li-li-li-line
Hello stu-P-I-D
If you cross that line, I'll get serious, beep
Stop it, keep the distance
Cause we don't know, know, know, know
Comma, we don't owe, owe, owe, owe (Anything).

The lyrics of BBIBBI express her heartfelt feelings to his haters and fanatical fans, telling them not to hate or love someone excessively. From the lyrics "Yellow C-A-R-D. If you cross this line, it's a violation, beep. Mind your manners, stop, it's mine, please keep your distance." This describes his frustration and desire to emphasize that there are boundaries they should not cross.

The song "Shoong" by Taeyang ft. Lisa also has structural coherence because the relationship between the lyrics is intertwined through a regular and continuous flow.

Playing jokes with you like a child
Don't mean what I said, nah, nah
You know that you're the only one for me, girl
On my way, I'm headed to you now (Skrrt)
Faster than a Lamborghini, shoong (Shoong)
Destination is always you
I'm like shoong-oong-oong, oong-oong-oong
On my way, I'm headed to you now (Yeah)
Don't you worry, I'm coming soon (Soon)
My moves that you liked so much
Like shoong-oong-oong, oong-oong-oong

The use of the word "shoong" reinforces the symbolic meaning trying to return to his lover, starting from regret, belief in true love, to the determination to return. The use of the word "shoong" not only enriches the auditory imagery, but also reinforces the symbolic meaning of the man's determination and speed in pursuing his love. Thus, the coherence of this song lies in the regularity of its narrative structure and the repetition of sounds that build a unity of emotional meaning between the lyrics and the musical atmosphere.

b. Material Coherence

According to Walter Fisher, the material coherence in the song focuses on describing the sound of the object/material. The song "KNOCK KNOCK" by TWICE has a specific material coherence because the relationship between the elements of the lyrics is built through the use of sounds and images that describe concrete physical actions, namely knocking on a door as a symbol of hope and the desire to open someone's heart.

Knock on my heart so that it will open up
Knock hard, bam-bam, one more time, bam-bam
Baby, knock, knock, knock, kno-knock on my door
Knock, knock, knock, kno-knock
It won't open up easily (Say that you're mine!)
Come again tomorrow and the day after

*I'll prepare and wait for you (Knock, knock, knock)
Baby, knock, knock, knock, kno-knock on my door
Knock, knock, knock, kno-knock
I want to hear it again and again
Knock on my door*

The use of impact-type onomatopoeia such as “knock knock” and “bam-bam” mimics the sound of real knocking, which creates an emotional closeness while emphasizing longing and enthusiasm. Material coherence is evident in how these sounds not only reinforce auditory imagery but also become a tangible representation of the effort and sincerity to approach someone. Thus, this song unites sound, meaning, and physical action into one concrete whole, depicting a love that is full of hope and enthusiasm for opening a closed heart.

The next song “Ring Ding Dong” by SHINee's has a specific material coherence because the relationship between the elements of the lyrics is built through the use of sounds and images that describe concrete physical actions, which is the sound ding dong depicting the sound of a bell.

*Butterfly, the moment I first met you
My eyes widened, my mind stopped and a bell rang
I mean, I'm not a great guy, a nice guy, or any guy like that
But I'm still a decent bad boy
Ring-ding-dong, ring-ding-dong
Ring-diggy-ding, diggy-ding-ding-ding*

From the lyrics above, it showed that the song is about falling in love without realizing it, depicted by the sound of bells ringing in one's head when one falls in love. The repeated phrase “ring ding dong” is a cartoon-like representation of the moment of falling in love, like bells ringing in one's head.

The song “B.O.M.B.” by TREASURE also has a specific material coherence because the connection between the meanings of the lyrics is built through the use of words and sounds that describe the physical form or material of the explosion of love itself.

*In my thoughts all day
Filled with you, just like this
Hey, can you hear my heartbeat?
My heart is boom, ba-ra-bi-bomb, bomb
I'll throw my love
It explodes in your heart
You're my love, I'm falling*

The lyrics “My heart is boom, ba-ra-bi-bomb, bomb” and “It explodes in your heart” show how feelings of love are concretely visualized as an explosion (bomb), something that is real, powerful, and highly destructive. This song also contains onomatopoeia of explosions and gunshots, which appear in the sounds “boom, ba-ra-bi-bomb,” imitating the sound of an explosion to reinforce the impression of the intensity and energy of explosive love. Thus, the material coherence in this song is realized through the relationship between sound, physical imagery, and emotional meaning, where all elements of the lyrics combine to form a picture of explosive and uncontrollable love.

c. Characterological Coherence

According to Walter Fisher, Characterological coherence refers to the extent to which the characters in a narrative both main and supporting characters, appear reasonable, consistent, and credible in their actions, motivations, and development throughout the story.

The song “CLIK CLAK” by BABYMONSTER has coherent impact and coherent specific characteristics because every element in the lyrics supports each other to form a strong image of a woman's confidence, strength, and courage.

*Click, click-clack, heels tap
Walkin' with my hips back
Money click-clack, click-clack, click-clack
Click, click-clack, heels tap
Walkin' with my hips back
Money click-clack, click-clack
Ain't looking back, let's take the lead
Go head, ladies, go 'head, ladies
Ain't looking back, let's take the lead
Go head, ladies, go 'head, ladies, here we go*

The repetition of the “click-clack” sound not only functions as an onomatopoeia that mimics the sound of high heels (footsteps), but also symbolizes a firm and confident step in facing the world. Impact coherence can be seen in how the rhythm and sound have a strong emotional effect on the listener, depicting energy and dominance. Meanwhile, the coherence of characteristics emerges from the affirmation of the character in the song who is confident, does not look back, and always leads. Thus, the relationship between the elements of sound, rhythm, and lyrical meaning creates a unified message of self-strength and assertive elegance, making “CLIK CLAK” a musical representation of a bold and independent female character.

SEVENTEEN's song "CLAP" has a coherent specific characteristic because the song is about the encouragement to rise above hardship and misfortune with confidence and passion.

*It's alright, it's alright, these things happen
These kinds of things are like tangled earphones in your pocket
When you stain your white shirt (And then)
When you have no money on your metro card (Times like this)
Yeah, on days like this when it starts raining right before you go home
Why do these things only happen to me?
Weekends pass in the blink of an eye
If this happens to you, come here (Guys!)
From now on
Clap until your hands catch fire (Clap, clap, clap, clap)
Clap whenever you want to (Clap, clap, clap, clap)
You over there, come here (Ah, yeah)
Let's have some fun (Ah, yeah)*

From the lyrics above, the song depicts the journey of someone who emerges from isolation, facing various small daily problems, yet remains enthusiastic and brave

enough to step into a wider world. The song conveys a powerful message of staying motivated despite facing many problems or misfortunes. It also tells the story of someone growing up and daring to step into a wider world after going through difficult times.

The song “CHK CHK BOOM” by Stray Kids has specific characterological coherence because each part of the lyrics and sound combine to emphasize a bold, ambitious, and confident character.

(Boom) Come on, I know that you want it
(Boom) Wolves, we cannot stop huntin
(Boom) Ra-ta-ta-ta, I'ma make it
Boom, boom, chk, chk, boom
(Boom) Come on, I know that you want it
(Boom) Chaos, we so catastrophic
(Boom) Ra-ta-ta-ta, I'ma make it
Boom, boom, chk, chk, boom
To the goal step by step
I took a step closer
I'm the owner of my goal, lucky to have me as an owner
I make it right zeroing in clear

The use of onomatopoeia such as explosions and gunshots like “boom”, “chk chk”, and “ra-ta-ta-ta” reinforces the image of strength and assertiveness, depicting unstoppable energy in pursuing goals. Characterological coherence is evident in how lyrics such as “I’m the owner of my goal” and “step by step, I took a step closer” affirm the determination to continue to grow and achieve success through personal effort. The relationship between the explosive sounds and the motivational message in the lyrics forms a unity of meaning that describes fighting spirit, courage in facing challenges, and strong belief in one's potential. Thus, “CHK CHK BOOM” becomes a musical representation of strength of character and unwavering determination.

The song “DDU-DU DDU-DU” by BLACKPINK has a specific characterological coherence because each element of the lyrics and sound supports each other in building a strong, confident, and dominant character image.

Think twice
I can't act nice like other people
Don't be mistaken
I only smile easily for myself
You may not know well yet
If you want, then test me
You're so predictable
If you wanted something easy
Oh, wait 'til I do what I do
Hit you with that ddu-du, ddu-du, du
(Ah yeah, ah yeah!)
Hit you with that ddu-du, ddu-du, du
(Ah yeah, ah yeah!)

The use of onomatopoeia such as explosions and gunshots in the sound “ddu-du ddu-du du” mimics the sound of gunfire or sharp bangs that symbolize strength and

assertiveness. Characterological coherence is evident in how lyrics such as “Think twice, I can't act nice like other people” and “Hit you with that ddu-du ddu-du du” reinforce a bold, indomitable attitude and complete control over oneself. Thus, the relationship between sound, meaning, and attitude in this song forms a unified character that is assertive, powerful, and full of energy, making “DDU-DU DDU-DU” a musical symbol of feminine strength and confidence.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the relationship between onomatopoeic K-Pop song titles and song themes extends beyond stylistic creativity, revealing a systematic coherence between sound, meaning, and lyrical content. Based on Walter R. Fisher's (1987) theory of narrative coherence and Kokko's (2013) classification of onomatopoeia, the findings show that onomatopoeic song titles are deliberately employed to reinforce the emotional atmosphere, narrative development, and symbolic meaning expressed throughout the songs. The most frequently identified types of onomatopoeia were Impact, Air Current, **and** Explosions and Gunshots, each contributing to the construction of meaning through distinctive sound patterns. These findings extend the application of Fisher's coherence theory beyond conventional narratives by demonstrating that coherence can also be observed in popular music through the interaction between song titles and lyrical themes. From a linguistic perspective, the study highlights onomatopoeia as a motivated linguistic form that contributes to meaning through sound symbolism and iconicity, while from a semiotic perspective, it shows that onomatopoeic expressions function as symbolic resources that communicate emotions, identity, and thematic messages rather than merely imitating sounds.

This study also contributes to popular music studies by demonstrating that K-Pop song titles are strategically constructed as part of popular music discourse, where linguistic choices, sound, and musical identity interact to shape audience interpretation and engagement. The findings suggest that onomatopoeia functions not only as an aesthetic or branding device but also as a meaningful communicative strategy that strengthens the coherence between titles and song themes. By integrating linguistic, semiotic, and popular music perspectives, this study provides a broader understanding of how sound contributes to meaning-making in contemporary K-Pop. Future research could adopt a multimodal approach by incorporating music videos, choreography, visual symbolism, and audience reception to further explore how language, sound, and visual performance collectively construct meaning in popular music.

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