

Unveiling the Linguistic and Social Practices of Arab Women Rappers in Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study from Tunisia

Fatma DRID ¹, Miloud BARKAOUI ²

¹ Laboratoire de Recherche sur les Langues Etrangères, Civilisations Universelles, Communication et Réalité Algérienne. L.E.C.U.C.R.A. University-Annaba, (Algeria), fatmadrid606@gmail.com

² University-Annaba, (Algeria), mbarkaoui@webmails.com

Received: 20/03/2023

Accepted: 29/05/2023

Published: 31/05/2023

Abstract:

Hip-hop music has become a significant means of expression for underrepresented black communities, and today's young female hip-hop artists worldwide have adapted the genre to reflect their unique experiences. As a result, hip-hop has evolved into a global form of youth culture, spanning various regions. This article uses Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the textual features, discursive practices, and sociocultural practices of Tunisian hip-hop artist Bouthaina Alaouadi 's rap lyrics. Through this analysis, the article highlights the extent to which hip-hop music serves as a tool for cultural representation and social resistance.

Keywords: hip-hop Music; textual features; discursive practices; sociocultural practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the 1960s and 1970s, the United States underwent a significant cultural transformation, marked by a lack of numerous privileges and rights, including access to healthcare, justice, voting rights, and other civil liberties. The Vietnam War was raging, and many young men were drafted and sent to fight, leading to disparities among youth and widespread abuse. The Bronx, a region experiencing urban decay and a swift spread of social phenomena such as drugs, gangs, and crime, became the birthplace of hip-hop culture. Despite its economic and social woes, disenfranchised young people created hip-hop as a tool of self-expression and community building, reflecting their experiences and struggles.

Hip-hop culture is a complex and multifaceted cultural phenomenon that extends beyond the realm of music. The cultural movement has evolved to shape a global expression with artistic styles that include not only musical elements, but also break-dancing, disc jockey mastery, and graffiti. The various components of hip-hop culture serve as tools for conveying the complexities of everyday life and for providing a platform for disaffected youth to express themselves creatively. This creative confrontation enables hip-hop culture to promote demands for justice and empowerment, advocating for greater social equality. The art forms of hip-hop culture, including DJing, graffiti, b-boying/b-girling, and MCing, are intricately woven together and represent a paradigm of self-expression.

Hypothesis: The study aims to highlight how hip-hop music can be a medium for cultural representation and social resistance. The hypothesis seeks to reveal that Bouthaina Alaouadi's lyrics contain themes of cultural identity and social resistance. The analysis will detect how hip-hop music can be approached to resist oppressive cultural norms and promote social justice.

Method: The used research methodology is Norman Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis, aiming to analyze the linguistic features, discursive, and sociocultural practices of Tunisian hip-hop artist Bouthaina Alaouadi's lyrics. The analysis will be conducted on selected songs using Discourse Analysis method.

This paper provides an overview of the roots of hip-hop music, with a particular focus on women's contributions to the genre. In addition, I will examine the emergence of Arab women rappers and their impact on the music scene. Section two focuses on the application of Norman Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis to selected songs of Bouthaina Alaouadi. In section three, I will analyze the linguistic features, the discursive practices and the sociocultural practices of her

Unveiling the Linguistic and Social Practices of Arab Women Rappers in Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study from Tunisia

rapping lyrics, showing how she reflects cultural identity and social resistance. The conclusion will summarize the main findings of the analysis.

2. Hip-Hop Music

2.1 The Roots of Hip Hop Music

Hip-hop music was predominantly produced and presented by African-American people in the late 1970s, with Sugar Hill Records release of “Rapper’s Delight” in 1979, bringing widespread fame and recognition. As a result, rap music gained popularity among black youth who consider it as a platform for the exposure of new adrenaline and motivation. Early pioneers of rap music such as Kurtis Blow, Grandmaster Flash, and Furious Five used the genre to address marginalized youth through social messages. By the early 1980s, rap music had become a liberal expression that appealed to young people, with songs like "Those Are the Breaks" and "The Message" becoming influential examples of socially conscious rap, highlighting the social and racial disparities experienced by black Americans (Forman and Neal, 2004, p. 78)."

2.2 Women Hip-Hop music

African American women were among the first to take the mic and rap in the 1980s; though they did not achieve mainstream success until the 1990s. Despite being underrepresented compared to male-rappers, women persisted and gained a presence in male-dominated music genre. This allowed them to challenge sexist assumptions about their abilities. As Cheryl Lynette Keyes notes, “female artists have not only proven that they have lyrically skillz, but in their struggle to survive and thrive within this tradition they have created spaces from which to deliver powerful messages from black female and black feminist viewpoints” (2002, p 186). Trough hip-hop, women have been able to carve out a space for themselves in a male-dominated industry.

African American women rappers upheld a unifying voice to address a wide range of issues that affect women, from economic independence and community empowerment to self-reliance and resistance to violence. Kylo-Patrick R. Hart explains that female rapping deliver messages of freedom through powerful lyrics that fight against violence, he writes:

In 2002, Donna Troka wrote that, in addition to the traditional themes historically found in black female rap music_ such as heterosexual courtship, female voice, and public displays of physical and sexual

freedom_ she noticed new topics emerging. "Female rappers," she explained, "have also begun to the forefront issues of economic independence and the importance of community, female self-reliance, and resistance to all types of abuse and violence". (Hart, 2009, p 197)

Donna Troka's analysis reveals that women address other issues beyond sexuality and gender to achieve women's liberation. Female rappers strive to gain respect for their own narratives. In this sense, they aspire to assert their sense of « identity formation» and be a part of an artistic expression and social transformation.

Female rappers played a vital role in hip-hop scene to resist sexism and subordination, while addressing issues related to identity formation. According to Murray Forman and Anthony Neal, female hip-hop artists have reclaimed Black women's history and challenged societal perceptions of their destiny through their performances (Forman and Neal, 17, p 291). Female rappers use their platform to deconstruct and reconstruct alternative visions of their identity, seeking empowerment and creating spaces for themselves and other women.

2.3 Arab women Hip-Hop Music

Hip-hop music spread all over the world, reaching Arab countries where rappers took up the mantle to use their rapping to speak out for marginalized people. Through their lyrics, rappers promote specific political and cultural issues, thus making rap an important form of artistic expression. In support of this, Reiland Rabaka, a professor of African, African American and Caribbean studies, argues that rap has revitalized the music industry in the late twentieth century and reflects regional culture, politics, and musical trends (Rabaka, 2013, p 17). Given its significance, rap deserves to be the subject of study in both musical and cultural fields. Although rapping is often seen as a male-dominated mode of expression, women have also shown great potential in using rap lyrics to represent underrepresented groups, including women.

Arab rapping has been known as a male medium of expression. It has established a strong hold in youth culture, then women have also turned to rap as a means of expressing their anger towards patriarchal communities and the governmental system. Balghis Badri and Aili Mari Tripp note that female rapping gained recognition with the start of the Arab revolution in some Arab countries, stating: "Since the Arab Spring, we are hearing women's voices, extending into the present... Arab women use poetry in song to express their visions, with themes that are socio-political and/or concerned with gender issues" (Badri and Tripp, 2017). Here, the writers underline the importance of the Arab spring in the emergence of

Unveiling the Linguistic and Social Practices of Arab Women Rappers in Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study from Tunisia

female rappers in Arab countries. Arab women's voices have historically been silenced, but the Arab revolution provided a space for these voices to be heard. Thus, female rappers gained more visibility.

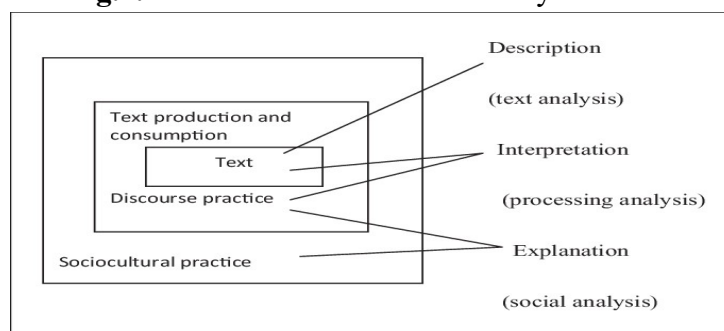
Hip-hop music plays an important role in the lives of Arab female rappers, connecting them to their Arab world and granting them a voice for expressing their concerns and desires. As the Lebanese MC Malika, an Arab female rapper, has emphasized, hip-hop that music is not just a form of entertainment but a powerful tool for expressing oneself and raising awareness about important issues (Amina Semlali, 2012). Arab female rappers have successfully used hip-hop music to speak out against oppression and empower themselves and other women.

3. Applying Norman Fairclough's Model of Critical Discourse Analysis

3.1 Fairclough's Model of CDA

Discourse Analysis is a field that is concerned with the study of texts and speeches. Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis establishes a connection between three dimensions: text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. According to Norman Fairclough, the aim of Discourse Analysis is not merely to analyze language but to investigate "the relationship between the discourse processes and the social processes" (Fairclough, 2013a, p 132). He also suggests that a discourse plays a crucial role in shaping continuity and change (Fairclough, 1989b, p 24). Therefore, discourse is not only a written or spoken language, but rather encompasses a range of social practices. The following figure illustrates the three dimensions involved in the analysis of a discourse.

Fig.1. Dimensions of Discourse analysis



Source: Fairclough, Norman, 2013a, p 98

On the basis of Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which takes into account not only vocabulary and grammar, but also discourse and socio-cultural practices. Therefore, an analysis of the linguistic features and socio-cultural significance of Bouthaina Alaouadi's rapping lyrics is in order.

3.2 An analysis of Bouthaina Alaouadi's "Hold On "and "Eden, Women War" Songs

3.2.1 Textual Analysis of the song "Hold On "

Table1: The Values Used in the Song "Hold On ": Vocabulary and Lexicon Meaning

Values in song's lyrics	Lexical Type	English Gloss	Extracts from the Song
Experiential Values	Synonym	Ignorance	بهامة جهل
	Antonym	Set apart unified	يفرقونا متحدين
	Hyponymy	Bribery Unemployment	الرشوة البطالة
	Positive Expressive		You can fight our destiny, our liberty
	Negative Expressive	Unfit people should not govern us.	مش هل الاشكال تتحكم فينا
	Euphemistic Expressions	Take money from people under the guise of providing aid.	يوخذوا في الفلوس soi-disant للاعنات
Relational Values	Informal Language	I have been noticing an increase in misery across society.	عمال نشوف في المزيرية قاعدة تقيض
	Formal Language	People call for justice.	الشعب يطالب بالعدالة

Unveiling the Linguistic and Social Practices of Arab Women Rappers in Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study from Tunisia

Expressive Values	Metaphors	The prices of goods are skyrocketing at an alarming rate."	شعلوا النار في الاسواق
--------------------------	------------------	--	------------------------

Table2: The varieties of languages used in the song

The song	Extracts from the lyrics	English Gloss	Variety used
	ويني الحرية لي جرات عليها الرجال	What has become of the freedom that people fought so hard to attain?	Tunisian Dialectal Arabic
	نجمو encore une fois لكراسي نفكوها	We can topple the regime.	Tunisian Dialectal Arabic and French
	être conscient الشعب ولا divisés	Don't you see that people are deeply divided?	Tunisian Dialectal Arabic and French
	This is new world order.		English

	تحيوتفارقونا استحالة	You cannot separate us because our bond is unbreakable.	Tunisian Dialectal Arabic and Standard Arabic
	Hand in hand bro, we'll be stronger.		English
	بلادي مشات في حالة بلاد الرشوة و البطالة	There are high levels of bribery and unemployment, which are contributing to the country's collapse.	Tunisian Dialectal Arabic

Table 3: Grammatical Features Used in the Song

Classification of Sentences	Sentences from «Hold on» Lyrics
SVC	You can be stronger
SVO	You can fight our destiny
SV	You Hold on

Table 5: Modes Used in the Song

Declarative	This is new world order
Imperative	Hold on
interrogative	What has become of the freedom that people fought so hard to attain?

Table 5: Features of Relation Modality Used in the Song

Modal Verbs	Sentences from the song
Will (positive)	You will be stronger

Unveiling the Linguistic and Social Practices of Arab Women Rappers in Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study from Tunisia

Table 5: Pronouns Used in the Song

Pronouns in the song	The subject pronoun “you “	The subject pronoun “we “	The subject pronoun “I “	The subject pronoun “they “
Extracts from the song	You can fight	We topple the regime	I am a free Tunisian person	They want us to be ignorant

3.2.3 Textual Analysis of the song « Eden, Women War X»

Table 1: The Values Used in the Song: Vocabulary and Lexicon Meaning

The song	Lexical type	English Gloss	Extracts from the song
Experiential Values	Antonym	Love hate	حب كراهية
	Hyponymy	Inspired with Instinct, kind	حنونة بالفطرة ملهومة
	Positive Expressive	I am not a half afraid of collapse	لست بنصف يخشى الانهيار
	Negative Expressive	A malignant world	عالم خبيث
Relational Values	Euphemistic Expressions	Struggle to continue	نضالها يقين الاستمرار
	Informal Language	Who was able to succeed without the presence of a woman	وينو لي وصل من غير مرا
	Formal Language	Her ambitions rise above the sidewalk	طموحاتها تعلو الرصيف
Expressive Values	Metaphor	Stabbing her freedom	يطعن في حريتها

Table2: The varieties of languages used in the song

The song	Extracts from the lyrics	English Gloss	Variety used
“Woman’s war X” song by Bouthaina Alaouadi	حب كراهية مادا تختار	Hate or love why should you choose?	Standard Arabic
	وينو لي وصل من غير مرا	Who was able to succeed without the presence of a woman	Tunisian Dialectal Arabic

Table3: Grammatical Features Used in the Song

Classification of Sentences	Sentences from Lyrics
SVC	We are complementary
SVO	I am not a half
SV	She wanted

Table 4: Modes Used in the Song

Declarative	she is an immortal flower
Imperative	Tear these roots
interrogative	Hate or love why should you choose?

Table 5: Pronouns Used in the Song

Pronouns in the song	The subject pronoun “you”	The subject pronoun “she”	The subject pronoun “I”	The subject pronoun “They”
Extracts from the song	Hate or love why should you choose?	She loved, created and take care of and educated a nation	I am not a half	They make her a reason to earn money

Unveiling the Linguistic and Social Practices of Arab Women Rappers in Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study from Tunisia

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 linguistic Analysis of Bouthaina Alaouadi's Rapping Lyrics.

At the textual level, Bouthaina Alaouadi addresses issues in relation to social justice, empowerment, and gender equality. In "Hold On", she has used various linguistic features which highlight the struggles encountered by people under corrupt and oppressive systems of power. The use of synonyms like "بهامة" and "جهل" and antonyms like "يفرقونا" and "متحدين" emphasizes the state of division the Tunisian people have been facing, which urges a need for collective action and unity within Tunisian society. Hyponyms "الرشوة" and "البطالة" draw attention to specific social issues the country is living. The negative expressive statements convey a sense of frustration and anger at those in power, while euphemistic expressions highlight the corrupt actions of those in charge who steal people's money under false pretenses. The use of formal language adds a sense of seriousness to the people's demands, while the informal language, specifically the Tunisian dialect, helps to effectively engage the populace. This combination of language styles underlines the severity of the situation. Metaphors also describe the difficulties faced by people. Additionally, she ponders over the economic challenges that people confront through metaphorical expression, which symbolizes the sharp rise in the price of purchases. The Tunisian rapper also addresses collective demand for change, expressed in the phrase "People call for justice

Alaouadi has involved, in her song, various languages, including Tunisian Dialectal Arabic, French, and English, to reflect the diversity of the Tunisian culture. She utilized the English language to reflect the impact of the American culture to draw the attention of wider audience, as stated in her own words « to get the appeal, you should follow 'the track' of the American hip-hop culture (Alaouadi, 2019). In addition, the song employs different modes, including declarative, imperative, and interrogative, to create a dynamic and engaging piece of music. Through declarative statements such as "this is new world order," the song calls for a revolutionary act against corrupt governments and social injustices. Meanwhile, declarative statements like "you can be stronger" encourage listeners to take action and stand firm in the face of the governmental system. Interrogative statements, such as "What has become of the freedom that people fought so hard to attain?" reject the current system and demand transparency. Additionally, the statement "you will be

stronger" conveys a sense of determination and resistance. In addition, Bouthaina Alaouadi seeks to address the listener through the subject "you" in order to take action and fight against the oppressed system. The use of the pronoun "we" creates a sense of solidarity among the listeners, whereas the pronoun "they" highlights the misrepresentation of those in power.

Besides, in her song, "Eden, Women's War X," Alaouadi focuses on women's empowerment and equal opportunities in society. She highlights the contrast between "love and hate," suggesting the complexity of women's experiences in a society that devalues them. Furthermore, her lyrics celebrate the power of women's innate abilities to connect with the other. Alaouadi has used standard Arabic and Tunisian Dialectal Arabic so that her voice reaches a wider audience, ensuring her voice resonate not only with Tunisian people, but also who may not be familiar with the Tunisian dialect. Thus, she allows for greater cultural exchange and connects diverse Arab speaking communities.

Alaouadi employs various sentence structures in her song to emphasize different messages. For example, she uses the SVC sentence structure in the line "We are complementary" to create a sense of support and unity towards building a better society. Additionally, the SVO sentence structure in the line "I am not a half," emphasizes her determination that women should not be viewed as incomplete. Furthermore, by using SV sentence structure in the line "She wanted," Alaouadi showcases the willpower of women. Regarding modes, she resorts to declarative mode in the line "She is an immortal flower" to symbolize the idea of eternal power and the strength of women. The imperative mode is utilized in the line "Tear these roots," which encourages the listeners to relinquish stereotypes and societal norms that circumscribe women. Finally, the interrogative mode is employed in the line "Hate or love, why should you choose?" to encourage the listener to make a decision and take action. In her song, she has included the use of subject pronouns «I» and « she» to refer to the powerful woman who withstands to the imposed social norms, while the pronoun « they» indicates those who exploit and oppress women.

4.2 Discursive Practice Analysis of Bouthaina Alaouadi's Rapping Lyrics.

The two songs "Hold On," and "Eden, Women War X" convey a discourse of struggle. In "Hold On," the use of hyponyms such as "unemployment" and "bribe," along with metaphors about the rise in prices, reflect economic struggles and corruption. In "Eden, Women War X," the use of metaphors like "stabbing her freedom" and negative expressions such as "a malignant world" convey a sense of oppression and struggle for women's rights. Overall, the linguistic features present

Unveiling the Linguistic and Social Practices of Arab Women Rappers in Hip-Hop Music: A Case Study from Tunisia

in the two songs suggest a discourse of resistance against oppressive forces and a call for justice and change.

4.3 Sociocultural Analysis of Bouthaina Alaouadi's Rapping

Bouthaina Alaouadi is a female rapper who has contributed to the male-dominated world of rap music. Through her music, she has challenged social norms and stereotypes, empowering women and marginalized groups. The sociocultural analysis of her rapping includes an examination of the social and cultural factors that shape her music, as well as the ways in which her music reflects and responds to those factors. Being an Arab woman from Tunisia shapes Bouthaina Alaouadi's music background. For example, in her song "Eden, Women War X" she raps about the struggles of being a woman in a patriarchal society.

Bouthaina Alaouadi uses her music to defy dominant cultural narratives and advocate for social justice. Her music shows the struggles of underprivileged groups, providing a voice for the silenced individuals. Her rapping serves as a device of resistance against oppressive power structures, offering a space for empowerment and social change.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the linguistic and sociocultural analyses of Bouthaina Alaouadi's rapping lyrics provide a clear example of how hip-hop music can serve as a powerful tool for cultural representation and social resistance. The artist challenges societal norms and stereotypes, and addresses important issues such as discrimination, gender inequality, and economic struggles. Through varied linguistic features like metaphors, antonyms, and hyponyms, Alaouadi transmits messages of resistance against oppressive system of government and calls for change. Alaouadi seeks to indicate how the sociocultural factors shape her experiences as women in male-dominated industries and highlights the importance of diversity in music through employing varieties of languages, including French, Tunisian Dialectal Arabic and English. Hence, it allows for greater cultural exchange. Bouthaina Alaouadi's music offers a voice to the underrepresented communities in Tunisia and promotes cultural identity and social resistance. She reveals her connection to Tunisian culture and identity by incorporating the Tunisian Dialectal Arabic into her music. In addition, her music addresses social issues, such as corruption, bribery, and drug abuse, and calls for collective action towards social change. Overall, Bouthaina Alaouadi's rapping serves as a powerful

device for inspiring the listener to make positive change in Tunisia.

5. Bibliography List:

Books:

- Badri, B., & Tripp, A. M. (2017). *Women's Activism in Africa: Struggles for Rights and Representation*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. Longman Publishing Group.
- Forman, M., & Neal, M. A. (2004). *That's the Joint! The Hip-hop Studies Reader*. Psychology Press.
- Hart, K. R. (2009). *Mediated Deviance and Social Otherness: Interrogating Influential Representations*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Journal article:

- Rabaka, R. (2013). The hip hop movement: from R&B and the civil rights movement to rap and the hip hop generation. *Choice Reviews Online*, 51(02), 51– 0784.

Internet websites:

- Semlali, A. (2012, November 12). *The rhythm of empowerment: female rappers from Morocco to Gaza*. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/arabvoices/rhythm-empowerment-female-rappers-morocco-gaza> (Consulted on 12/1/2023).

Interviews:

- Alaouadi, Bouthaina. Interview. Conducted by Drid Fatma, 26 Mai 2019.