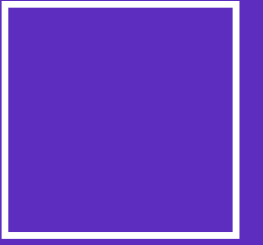


# Is the Korean language a communication barrier between K-Pop group BTS and their fans?



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RHIZOME CONNECT - AUGUST, 2020

01.

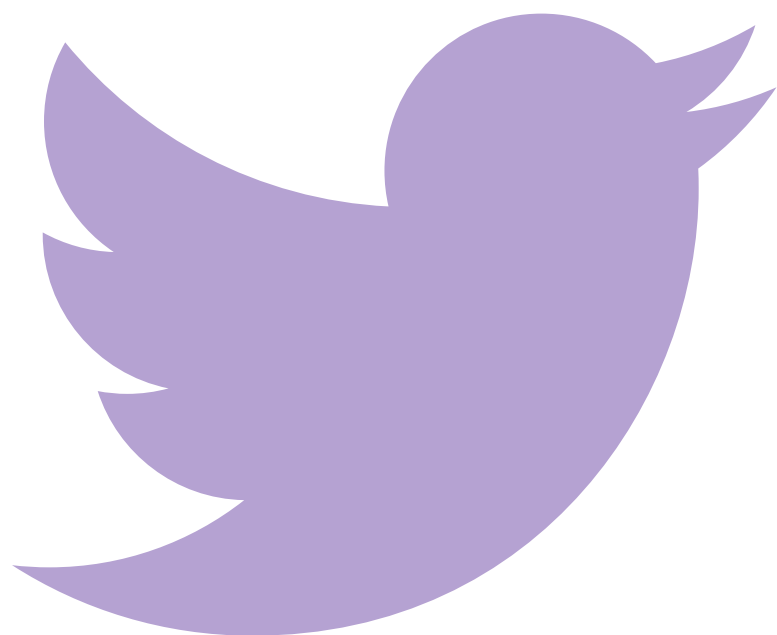
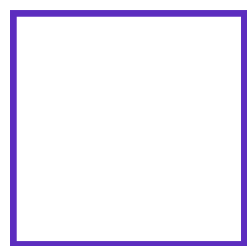
02.

# Introduction:

The music scenario in the world have become more diverse during these past ten years, from artists from all over the world providing impressive albums with different languages. One of the biggest music phenomena responsible for these results is the K-Pop (Korean-Pop) group BTS, from South Korea, that has been gaining big spotlights in the western countries. Their songs have enchanted a big number of fans, that are also called “ARMY”. In order to maintain a relationship with their fans, BTS is always delivering content to their fans, such as photos, messages and videos. These kind of contents are usually delivered through their social networks, which includes “Twitter” and “Weverse” (both of them allow the users to publish short messages, images and videos), among other websites and mobile applications. However, most of their content are delivered in Korean, which is a language not many fans outside South Korea are fluent in. Therefore, does the Korean language becomes a communication barrier between BTS and ARMY?



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# Analysis:

03.

## TWITTER:

Twitter is a social network created in 2006, that had over 145 million daily active users in 2019<sup>1</sup>. Anyone who is 13 years old or older can create an account on Twitter, sending messages through the world with their posts, that are called “tweets”. The users can upload content on this platform, sending up until 280 characters per tweet, adding photos and/or videos, and running polls<sup>2</sup>. Twitter users can also provide the following interactions: 1. "Like": represented by a small heart and are used to show appreciation for a Tweet. 2. "Retweet": sharing a tweet from another user on your own account, with an option to add your own comments and/or media to the tweet as well; 3. "Reply": it's a response to another user's tweets; 4. "Follow": subscribe to another user's tweets<sup>3</sup>.

# 04. Analysis:

## TWITTER:

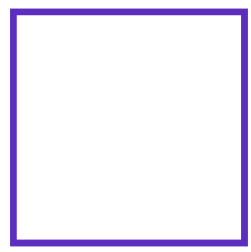
BTS has officially three Twitter accounts, identified as: @bts\_bighit, which delivers official notes about BTS latest news, @BTS\_jp\_official, focused on delivering official information related to Japanese songs and their audience in Japan, and @BTS\_twt, the account where the members usually post their personal information. Analysing this last account, it's possible to see the content is mostly photos of themselves and/or messages directly to ARMY. At the example on Figure 1, Park Jimin, one of the seven members of BTS, posted two photos and a message to all of his fans around the world in Korean.

Figure 1: BTS tweet on July 26th, 2020.



Source: BTS Twitter account<sup>4</sup>.





# Analysis:

05.

## TWITTER:

In order to help other ARMY understand what they're saying, fan clubs from each country started to translate their messages right away, and helped keeping the connection between BTS and ARMY on. It's possible to see on Figures 2 and 3, Indonesian and Brazilian fan clubs, respectively, tweeting on their own language what is written on Park Jimin's tweet.

Figure 2: BTS's fan club in Indonesia translating Park Jimin's tweet on July 26th, 2020



Figure 3: BTS's fan club in Brazil translating Park Jimin's tweet on July 26th, 2020.





# Analysis:

06.

## TWITTER:

In case the user doesn't understand what's written on any language at this platform, Twitter offers an option to translate the tweets contents via Google Translate. However, the results are not always assertive. At this tweet in discussion (Figure 1), Park Jimin wrote "It was JiJinJung. Good night. I love you.". When asked for the translation on Twitter with Google Translate, it is written "It was an earthquake well. Good night. Love it.", as it shown on Figure 4, having a different meaning.

Figure 4: BTS's tweet translated via Google Translate.



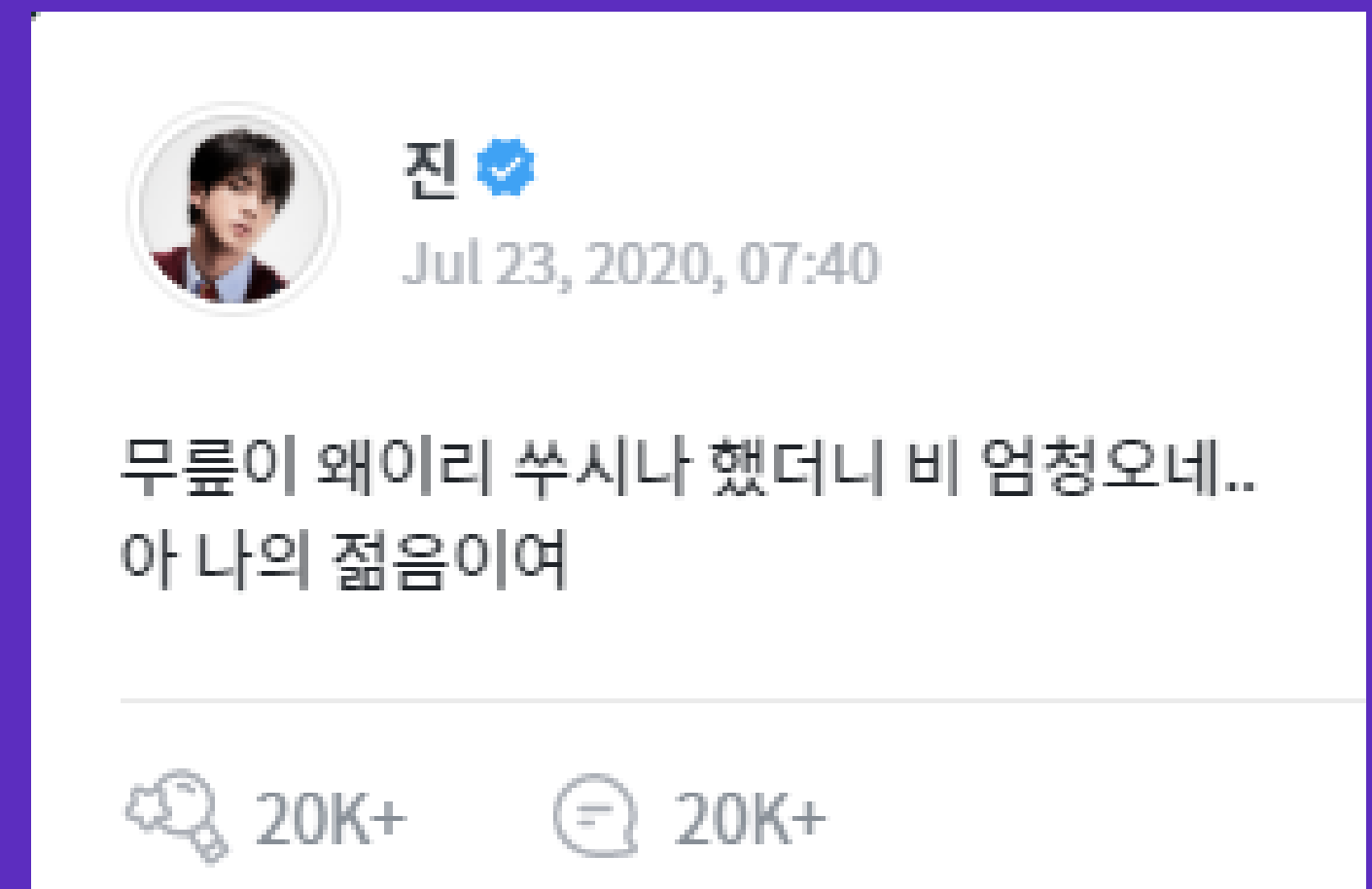
Source: BTS twitter account<sup>4</sup>.

# 07. Analysis:

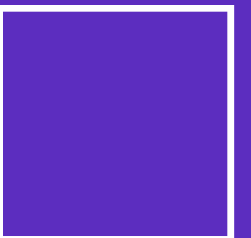
## WEVERSE:

Weverse is a social network created by Big Hit Entertainment, the record label that represents BTS, TXT and Lee Hyun. This website and mobile application allows users to connect with other fans around the world and the members of the group, allowing them to enjoy exclusive content through photos and texts contents<sup>7</sup>. This way, BTS members are active on this network, delivering content to ARMY, as an example on Figure 5, where Kim Seokjin, one of the BTS members, posted the following message:

Figure 5: BTS post on Weverse, on July 23rd, 2020.



Source: BTS weverse page<sup>8</sup>.



# Analysis:

## WEVERSE:

As the same way it happened on Twitter posts, foreign ARMY may struggle to understand what Weverse posts mean. Therefore, ARMY accounts also post their translated versions of BTS contents in their local language; however, it's important to notice that they usually choose to post the translation on Twitter, and not on Weverse itself, as it's possible to see on the Figure 6:

Figure 6: BTS fan club posting a translation in Spanish of Jin post, on July 23rd, 2020.



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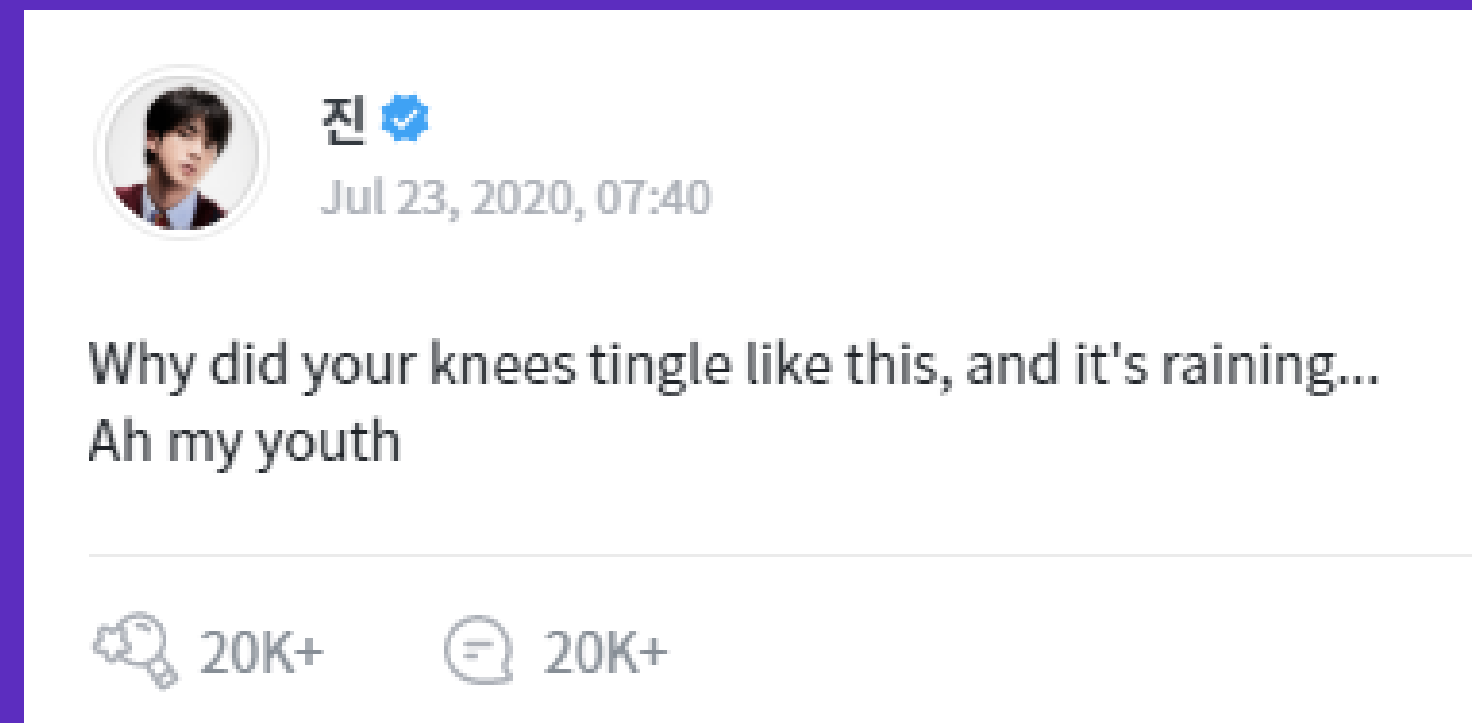
# Analysis:

09.

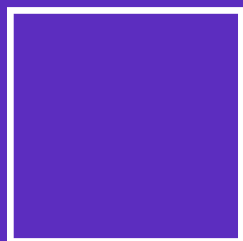
## WEVERSE:

In case ARMY don't understand what's written on Korean, Weverse also offers an option to translate BTS contents via Google Translate. Again, the results are not always assertive. At this post in discussion (Figure 5), Kim Seokjin wrote “I was wondering why my knees are aching so bad (turns out) it's raining so hard..ah my youth”. When asked for the translation on Weverse with Google Translate, it is written “Why did your knees tingle like this, and it's raining...Ah my youth.”, as it shown on Figure 7, having a different meaning.

Figure 7: BTS's tweet translated via Google Translate.



Source: BTS weverse page<sup>8</sup>.



# Conclusion:



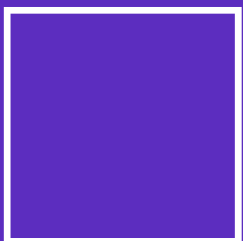
Although this research was focused on Twitter and Weverse, BTS delivers contents everyday through different social networks and streaming platforms, such as Fancave, VLive, Youtube and Instagram. By seeing all of these interactions from BTS, it's interesting to see how the automatic translation option at these platforms is not trustworthy, so the ARMY themselves became the main source of translated content, in order to deliver the complete information for other fans in their own country and language. Therefore, it's possible to conclude that Korean is, in fact, a language barrier between BTS and ARMY, but the passion and commitment from their fans makes it possible to overcome this barrier, and turns their messages as accessible as possible for ARMY around the world.

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11.

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# 12.

## If you have any questions at all



Don't hesitate to ask!



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