

Sample assignment: “Translating” song lyrics into IPA

This activity is discussed in the “Centering Black Language and Culture” subsection of “Teaching Introductory Linguistics for a Black Student Audience.”

This activity was assigned in Week 7 of Year 1 (2018), after two lectures and two discussion sections covering English consonants and vowels in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The activity is basic practice transcribing speech sounds in everyday words using the IPA. However, instead of decontextualized lists, the words to be transcribed are from a popular song and kept in the song lyrics in which they occur. “Man’s Not Hot,” performed by Black comedian Michael Dapaah, went viral on YouTube a few months prior, and all of the students in the course had heard the song at least once, even if they weren’t familiar with the lyrics. Michael Dapaah’s London-based speech style provided an example of English language variation and practice transcribing sounds less common in U.S. English. It also provided an example of variation among Black English speakers. This activity could be updated with music from any popular Black musical artist.

LING 20: Language and Linguistics
“Translating” song lyrics into IPA

Directions: The lyrics below are from the song “Man’s Not Hot” (2017) by Big Shaq aka Michael Dapaah. Transcribe the underlined words below in IPA as **you** pronounce them, identifying all consonants and vowels in each word. The point value for each word is in parentheses next to it and you will receive partial credit for partially correct answers.

Examples

- Yo, Big Shaq, the one and only [big]
- Two plus two is four, minus one that's three, quick maths [mænəs]

1. Every day man's on the block, smoke (2) trees
2. Hold tight, my man (my guy), he's got the frisbee (3)
3. Rice (2) Krispies, hold tight my girl, Whitney (my G)
4. If she ain't on it, I ghost, hah, look at your nose (check (2) your nose fam)
5. The girl told me, "Take off your jacket (2)"
6. And he's still callin' man for a draw (look (2) at him)
7. Your girl knows I've got the sauce (flexin'(3))
8. Ah, yo, boom (2), ah
9. Send man shop (2) by force (send him)
10. But either (2) way

TOTAL: ## / 22

Extra credit

Watch the music video for "[Man's Not Hot](#)" (use headphones!) and transcribe the underlined words as they are pronounced by Big Shaq **in the song**. The full lyrics are included below so that you can follow along with the song. (Some of these are very tricky, so you'll need to listen the words multiple times.) Each word is worth 1 point unless noted otherwise, and you must correctly identify all consonants and vowels to earn the point(s). Do as many or as few as you would like.

Keep in mind: Michael Dapaah is from England.

Yo, Big Shaq, the one and only
Man's not hot, never hot
Skrrat, skidi-kat-kat
Boom
Two plus two is four, minus one that's three, quick maths
Everyday man's on the block, smoke trees
See your girl in the park, that girl is a uckers (2)
When the thing went quack-quack-quack
You man were ducking (you man ducked)
Hold tight, Asnee (my brotha (2)), he's got the pumpu (big thing)
Hold tight, my man (my guy), he's got the frisbee
I trap, trap, trap on the phone, movin' that cornflakes
Rice Krispies, hold tight my girl, Whitney (my G)
On the road doin' ten toes, like my toes (like my toes)
You man thought (2) I froze, I see a peng girl, then I pose (chillin')
If she ain't on it, I ghost, hah, look at your nose (check your nose fam)
You donut, nose long like garden hose
I tell her man's not hot, I tell her man's not hot (2)
The girl told me, "Take off your jacket"
I said, "Babes, man's not hot" (never hot)
I tell her man's not hot (never hot)
I tell her man's not hot (never hot)
The girl told me, "Take off your jacket"
I said, "Babes, man's not hot" (never hot)
Hop out the four-door with the .44, it was one, two, three and four (us man)
Chillin' in the corridor (yo), your dad is forty-four
And he's still callin' man for a draw (look at him), let him know
When I see him, I'm gonna spin his jaw (finished)
Take man's Twix by force (take it), send man shop by force (send him)
Your girl knows I've got the sauce (flexin'), no ketchup (none)
Just sauce (saucy), raw sauce
Ah, yo, boom, ah
The ting goes skrrrahh (2), pap, pap, ka-ka-ka
Skidiki-pap-pap, and a pu-pu-pudrrrr-boom
Skya, du-du-ku-ku-dun-dun
Poom, poom, you dun know

[BREAK]

I tell her man's not hot (man's not), I tell her man's not hot (never hot)
The girl told me, "Take off your jacket"
I said, "Babes, man's not hot" (never hot)
I tell her man's not hot (never hot)
I tell her man's not hot (never hot)
The girl told me, "Take off your jacket"
I said, "Babes, man's not hot"
Man can never be hot (never hot), perspiration ting (spray dat)
Lynx Effect (come on), you didn't hear me did you? (nah)
Use roll-on (use that), or spray
But either way, A-B-C-D (alphabet ting)
The ting goes skrrrahh, pap, pap, ka-ka-ka
Skidiki-pap-pap, and a pu-pu-pudrrrr-boom
Skya, du-du-ku-ku-dun-dun
Poom, poom
You dun know, Big Shaq
Man's not hot
I tell her man's not hot (never hot)
Forty degrees and man's not hot (come on)
Yo, in the sauna (2), man's not hot (never hot)
Yeah, skidika-pap-pap

Score: ## / 19

Media referenced

Dapaah, Michael (aka Big Shaq). (2017). "Man's Not Hot." © Island Records.

- Music video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M_5oYU-IsU&feature=youtu.be
- Lyrics: <https://genius.com/Big-shaq-mans-not-hot-lyrics>