



Breaking Down The Codes:

**A Study of Nonverbal Emblems Used
in International B-Boy Competitions**

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Abstract

This study explored the use of nonverbal emblems and regulators in international b-boy competitions. Using semiotics, a lexicon of the emblems and regulators was recorded. Then the dimensions from a theory of semantics of dance were applied to understand how b-boy crews (dance teams) from around the world use gesture to communicate with the audience, judges, and other crews. The study analyzed how culture influences the use of emblems and regulators in the intercultural exchange that occurs during the international b-boy competitions, such as Battle of the Year (BOTY) and R16 World Series. Four videos from the 2013 and 2014 BOTY and 2015 R16 were analyzed. The study concluded that cultural dimensions such as collectivism and indulgence influence emblem selection, intensity, and frequency. These nonverbal elements exhibit an overall impact on the battle and the determination of the winner.

Artifact: Youtube Videos

Control: Fusion MC (South Korea)

Battle of the Year (BOTY) Finals
2013

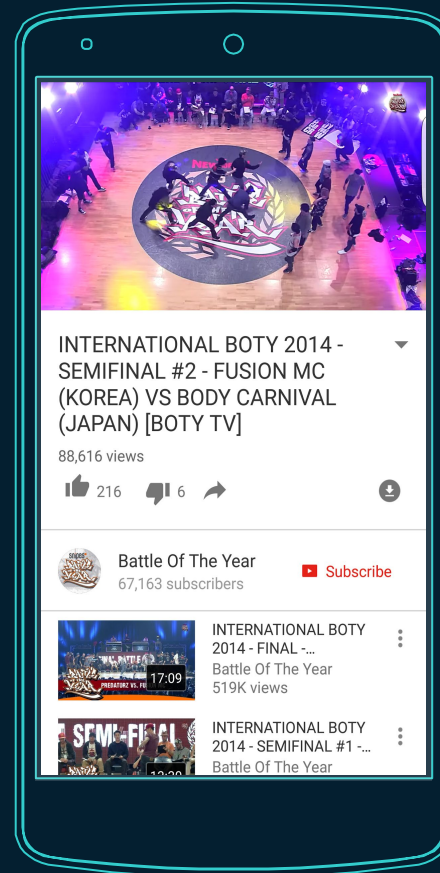
- › Fusion MC v. Vinotinto
(Venezuela)

BOTY Finals 2014

- › Fusion MC v. Body Carnival
(Japan)
- › Fusion MC v. Predatorz
(Russia)

R16 Series Finals 2015

- › Team Korea v. Team U.S.A.



Purpose Statement & Research Questions:

- › Analyze the emblems and regulators used in international b-boy competitions to understand cross-cultural communication patterns in this unique phenomenon.
- › What emblems and regulators are used in international b-boy competitions? How are they used?
- › How does the culture of the crew influence the sign usage?
- › How does the culture of the opposing crew influence the sign usage?

Method:

Semiotics

- › Charles S. Peirce
- › Signified, Signifier, and Signification

Semantics of Dance

- › Judith L. Hanna
- › 6 Dimensions of Sign Usage

Cultural Dimension

- › Geert Hofstede
- › Hofstede's 6 Cultural Dimensions

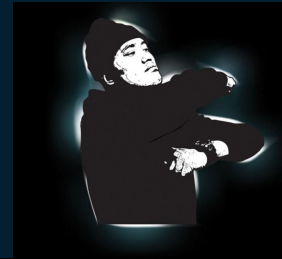
The method used for the study included a combination of other theories as a foundation to create a new method. Semiotics was used to create a lexicon of gestures. Semantics of dance and the cultural dimensions were used to understand sign usage and how culture influenced the usage.

Semiotics: The Lexicon

The cataloging began with the list from the Red Bull BC one website. → Emblems and regulators added to the lexicon were either repeated more than three times or are common to everyday usage (such as hello and goodbye).

There were fifty various emblems/regulators listed in the lexicon. They were then paired with the interpretant or sense made of the signs.

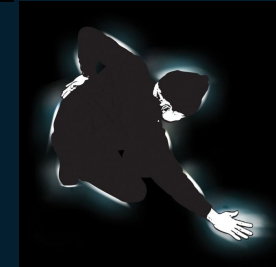
Biter



Smoked



Crashed



Repeating



Semantics of Dance

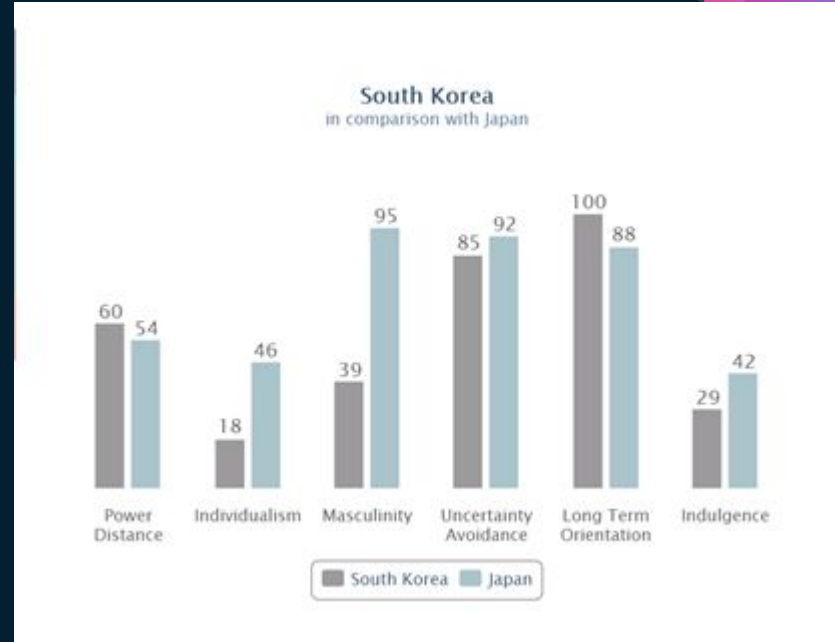
The six dimensions of sign usage for semantics of dance gave insight into how the signifier signified the message. It illustrated how a particular sign could be used to signify slightly varying meanings and the difference between the usage of the sign by opposing crews.

	Korea: Fusion MC	Japan: Body Carnival
Punch	Concretization, Regulator, Metonymy	Stylization, Regulator, Substitution, Metonymy
Gun	Stylization, Regulator, Substitution	Regulator, Substitution

Cultural Dimension

Using the national culture comparisons from the Hofstede Centre website, the characteristics of the cultures of the crews included in the study were compared to the sign frequency and usage dimensions.

Ex. Crews with low indulgence levels had higher levels of sign usage. When Fusion MC battled Body Carnival (Japan), Fusion MC had the higher number of emblems and regulators (498 compared to 267) and lower indulgence level.



Types of Usage: Results of Analysis

Intentions

The emblems and regulators were categorized by the intentions behind the signs used. (Ex. Crash is a criticizing emblem used to refer to a mistake an opponent makes.)

Intensity

High repetition per second (HRPS) and creativity in expression were used similarly to vocalics to emphasize a sign. HRPS was more commonly used.

	Criticizing	Intimidation	Supporting	Neutral	Challenging
Biter	X				
Repeating	X				
Crash	X				
Musicality	X		X		
Smoked		X	X		

Conclusions

B-boy crews depend on emblems and regulators to help them succeed in winning the battle. These gestures also help to facilitate a conversation between the two crews during the battle, allowing for a more enriched performance.

- › Emblems communicated various messages as substitution for verbal communication
- › Regulators enhanced the dance, indicated turn taking, or emphasized emblems
 - › Most common was pointing.
- › 97-300 gestures were used per a battle.
- › The semantics of dance dimensions were usually very similar between the crews battling each other.
 - › Most common dimensions: substitution, metaphor, and stylization.

Conclusions

- › Emblems and regulators served as a form of rhetoric.
 - › Persuade the audience and judges that their crew deserves the win.
- › The culture of the crew encoding the gestures influence personal style.
 - › Not every emblem or regulator was executed exactly the same.
 - › Certain crews personalized the gestures more.
- › Culture influences the intensity & selection of the emblems.
- › Culture of opposing crew influences the emblems and regulators used (intensity, frequency, and selection).

Culture determines the success of the communication exchange both nonverbally and verbally.

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