

Meaning Construction in TXT's *New Rules* and *No Rules*: A Riffaterrean Semiotic Study

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ABSTRACT

*Song lyrics constitute literary texts that communicate symbolic meanings through figurative language and indirect expression. As one of the leading fourth-generation K-pop groups, TOMORROW X TOGETHER (TXT) frequently portrays adolescent experiences through interconnected lyrical narratives. This study aims to analyze the symbolic meanings embedded in TXT's New Rules (2019) and No Rules (2021) using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study analyzed the official lyrics through heuristic and hermeneutic readings, followed by the identification of the matrix, model, variants, and actual hypogram. The findings reveal that New Rules is structured around the matrix of **freedom**, symbolizing adolescents' resistance to institutional authority and social expectations, whereas No Rules develops the matrix of **chaos and uncertainty**, representing psychological disorientation and disrupted social routines during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis further identifies an actual hypogram linking the two songs, demonstrating that they form a continuous narrative in which the pursuit of unrestricted freedom is transformed into existential uncertainty. These findings extend the application of Riffaterre's semiotic theory to contemporary K-pop lyrics and show that sequential song texts can function as interconnected literary narratives. The study contributes to literary semiotics and K-pop*

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studies by providing new insights into how symbolic language represents adolescent identity, social change, and psychological experience within contemporary popular culture.

Keywords: *Semiotics, Michael Riffaterre, TXT Song Lyrics, New Rules, No Rules.*

1. Introduction

Communication is a fundamental human activity that extends beyond spoken and written language to include literature, music, visual symbols, and other multimodal forms of expression. Within this broader communicative framework, song lyrics function not merely as entertainment but also as cultural texts that communicate emotions, ideologies, values, and social experiences through symbolic language. Similar to poetry, song lyrics employ condensed linguistic structures, figurative expressions, and layered meanings that invite multiple interpretations depending on listeners' cultural and contextual backgrounds (Chandler, 2017; Eco, 1976; Halliday, 1978; Wicaksono et al., 2021; Weda et al., 2022). Because song lyrics rely heavily on figurative and symbolic language, their meanings cannot always be understood through literal interpretation alone. Semiotic approaches therefore provide an effective framework for examining how linguistic signs generate meaning beyond their denotative level. In literary studies, semiotics has been widely employed to investigate poetic language, symbolism, and textual interpretation by emphasizing the relationship between signs, readers, and cultural contexts (Barthes, 1977; Riffaterre, 1978; Yaumi et al., 2023; Youngsun et al., 2024). Among these approaches, Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory offers a systematic method for revealing indirect expressions, heuristic and hermeneutic readings, matrix, model, and textual variants that collectively construct poetic meaning.

Within the contemporary global music industry, K-pop has emerged as one of the most influential forms of popular culture, reaching audiences across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Beyond its commercial success, K-pop increasingly addresses social issues affecting young people, including identity formation, educational pressure, mental health, and personal freedom (Jin, 2020; Lie, 2015). TOMORROW X TOGETHER (TXT), one of the leading fourth-generation K-pop groups, is particularly recognized for portraying the psychological and emotional experiences of adolescence through interconnected narrative albums. Their songs *New Rules* (2019) and *No Rules* (2021) present sequential narratives that explore changing perceptions of freedom and social regulation before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *New Rules* portrays adolescent resistance to restrictive educational and social norms through the desire to establish new rules, while *No Rules* continues this narrative by illustrating the confusion and uncertainty experienced by young people during the pandemic, when the freedom they had sought was constrained by public health regulations requiring social compliance.

Although numerous studies have examined K-pop from the perspectives of discourse analysis, cultural studies, fandom, and multimodal communication, relatively few have investigated the textual construction of meaning in K-pop lyrics using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic framework (Adinda et al., 2025; Youngsun et al., 2022; Sachiya et al., 2025). Existing research predominantly applies Barthes' semiotics, multimodal discourse analysis, or critical discourse analysis to explore visual representation, ideology, or audience reception, leaving Riffaterre's concepts of indirect expression, matrix, model, and textual variants comparatively underexplored in the analysis of contemporary popular music lyrics. Furthermore, studies specifically examining the narrative continuity between TXT's *New Rules* and *No Rules* remain limited, despite the two songs representing interconnected reflections on adolescent freedom under contrasting social conditions.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research problem: **How are meanings concerning adolescent freedom, resistance, and social regulation constructed through the semiotic system embedded in the lyrics of TXT's *New Rules* and *No Rules*?** To answer this question, the study employs Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory to examine how heuristic and hermeneutic readings, indirect expressions, matrix, model, and textual variants reveal the deeper meanings embedded in the two songs. By applying Riffaterre's framework to contemporary K-pop lyrics, this study contributes to the growing scholarship on popular music and literary semiotics while providing a deeper understanding of how adolescent experiences are represented through symbolic language within the context of global popular culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Michael Riffaterre's Semiotic Theory

The principal theoretical foundation of this study is Michael Riffaterre's theory of poetic semiotics. Riffaterre (1978) argues that poetic language differs fundamentally from ordinary language because it communicates meaning through the **indirectness of expression**, whereby the intended meaning is conveyed symbolically rather than literally. This indirectness is realized through mechanisms such as displacement, distortion, and the creation of meaning, enabling literary texts to generate multiple layers of interpretation. To uncover these meanings, readers engage in two complementary stages of reading. The first is **heuristic reading**, which follows the grammatical and lexical conventions of ordinary language to establish literal meaning. The second is **hermeneutic (retroactive) reading**, in which readers reinterpret the text based on literary conventions, contextual knowledge, and symbolic relationships in order to reveal its deeper significance (Riffaterre, 1978; Culler, 1975). The interpretive process is further extended through the identification of the **matrix**, representing the abstract semantic core of the text; the **model**, which constitutes the first textual realization of the matrix; the **variants**, referring to textual transformations that elaborate the model; and the **hypogram**, which denotes the intertextual source or prior text underlying the poem (Riffaterre, 1978). Owing to its systematic approach to textual interpretation, Riffaterre's

semiotic theory has been widely applied in literary studies to uncover symbolic meanings embedded in poetry and other forms of literary discourse (Chandler, 2017; Selden et al., 2005).

2.2 Song Lyrics as Literary Works

Song lyrics are widely recognized as a form of literary expression because they combine linguistic creativity, aesthetic language, and emotional representation within a poetic structure. Abrams and Harpham (2015) define lyric poetry as a literary genre that expresses personal emotions, thoughts, and experiences through carefully selected language and stylistic devices. Likewise, Perrine (1974) argues that poetic language is characterized by condensation, figurative expression, symbolism, and ambiguity, requiring readers to move beyond literal meanings in order to appreciate its artistic and semantic complexity. Song lyrics share these characteristics by employing metaphor, imagery, symbolism, repetition, rhythm, and other poetic devices to construct multilayered meanings (Leech, 1969). Consequently, song lyrics should not merely be understood as musical texts but also as literary texts that require critical interpretation to uncover their aesthetic, emotional, and ideological dimensions (Abrams & Harpham, 2015; Perrine, 1974).

2.3 Language, Meaning, and Interpretation in Song Lyrics

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a symbolic system through which people construct meanings, express emotions, and represent social realities (Halliday, 1978). In literary discourse, meaning is generated through the interaction between linguistic forms, cultural contexts, and readers' interpretations rather than through literal lexical meanings alone (Eco, 1976). As poetic discourse, song lyrics employ figurative language, symbolism, ambiguity, and stylistic deviation to communicate meanings that extend beyond their surface structures (Leech, 1969). Barthes (1977) further argues that literary texts constitute systems of signs in which meaning is continuously produced through interpretation instead of being fixed solely by the author's intention. These perspectives reinforce the relevance of Riffaterre's semiotic theory, which explains that literary meaning emerges through indirect expression and can only be fully understood through heuristic and hermeneutic readings. Therefore, interpreting song lyrics requires not only linguistic analysis but also semiotic interpretation to reveal the hidden meanings, cultural values, and ideological messages embedded within the text.

2.4 Research Material

The primary materials analyzed in this study are the lyrics of **"New Rules"** from TXT's album *The Dream Chapter: MAGIC* (2019) and **"No Rules"** from *The Chaos Chapter: FREEZE* (2021). These two songs were purposively selected because they represent a continuous narrative portraying adolescent experiences under contrasting social conditions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following Riffaterre's (1978) view that every poetic text functions as an integrated system of signs, each

stanza and lyric line is treated as a textual unit containing linguistic and symbolic signs that construct meaning. The analysis focuses on identifying indirect expressions, heuristic and hermeneutic readings, matrices, models, variants, and possible hypograms in order to explain how the lyrics represent adolescent freedom, resistance, identity formation, and social regulation within the broader cultural context of contemporary K-pop.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the symbolic meanings embedded in the lyrics of TOMORROW X TOGETHER's (TXT) *New Rules* (2019) and *No Rules* (2021). A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the objective of the study was to interpret linguistic signs, symbolic expressions, and textual meanings rather than to measure numerical variables. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore textual phenomena holistically and to generate in-depth interpretations based on contextual analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The primary data consisted of the official Korean lyrics of *New Rules*, released in *The Dream Chapter: MAGIC* (2019), and *No Rules*, released in *The Chaos Chapter: FREEZE* (2021). These songs were selected purposively based on three criteria. First, both songs are thematically interconnected and portray adolescent experiences from different social contexts. Second, they contain rich figurative language and symbolic expressions suitable for semiotic analysis. Third, the two songs form a narrative continuity that enables the exploration of evolving meanings through Michael Riffaterre's semiotic framework. Secondary data included books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other scholarly publications related to literary semiotics, K-pop studies, and qualitative research methodology.

Data were collected using documentation techniques. The researchers obtained the official song lyrics from authorized sources and carefully compared the Korean texts with available English translations to preserve semantic accuracy. The lyrics were then read repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of their linguistic and contextual meanings. Subsequently, words, phrases, clauses, and stanzas containing symbolic expressions, figurative language, or textual deviations were identified, coded, and organized into analytical data sheets to facilitate systematic interpretation.

The data analysis followed Michael Riffaterre's (1978) semiotic framework. The first stage involved heuristic reading, in which each lyric was interpreted according to its grammatical structure and literal meaning. The second stage consisted of hermeneutic reading, where the researchers examined indirect expressions, symbolic meanings, and textual deviations that could not be explained through literal interpretation alone. The third stage identified the matrix, model, and variants to reveal the underlying semantic structure of each song. Finally, hypogram analysis was conducted to examine intertextual relationships and the continuity of meaning between *New Rules* and *No*

Rules. Throughout the analysis, interpretations were developed inductively from the textual evidence and continuously compared with the concepts proposed by Riffaterre to ensure theoretical consistency.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis, the researchers applied prolonged engagement with the data through repeated readings of the lyrics and cross-checked each interpretation against Riffaterre's theoretical framework. In addition, interpretations were supported by direct textual evidence from the lyrics and relevant scholarly literature, thereby reducing subjective bias and strengthening the dependability and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Results

This study analyzed the lyrics of TOMORROW X TOGETHER's (TXT) *New Rules* and *No Rules* using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic framework, which consists of heuristic reading, hermeneutic reading, matrix, model, variants, and hypogram. The analysis identified recurrent linguistic signs that construct the thematic representation of adolescent freedom, resistance, and social disorientation across the two songs. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Riffaterre's Semiotic Taxonomy and the Representation of Meaning in TXT's Song Lyrics

Song	Key Lyrics	Heuristic Meaning	Hermeneutic Meaning	Matrix	Model	Variants
New Rules	"I want to rebel"; "breaking invisible shackles"	Student rejects school rules	Resistance toward institutional authority	Freedom	Rebellion	mathematics class, boundary lines, shackles
No Rules	"My world has fallen into panic"; "left or right"	Confusion in everyday life	Psychological uncertainty after social disruption	Chaos	Panic	disrupted routine, alarms, confusion

Source: Compiled by the authors (2026).

The semiotic analysis reveals that the two songs share a coherent narrative structure while presenting contrasting thematic orientations. In *New Rules*, the dominant linguistic signs are associated with resistance against institutional authority and social

norms. These signs are realized through recurrent variants referring to school routines, social boundaries, and invisible restrictions, all of which develop from the matrix of freedom.

Conversely, *No Rules* presents a shift toward psychological instability and existential uncertainty. The dominant signs no longer emphasize active resistance but instead portray confusion, disrupted routines, and the loss of personal orientation. These textual variants collectively develop from the matrix of chaos and uncertainty.

Furthermore, the analysis identifies an actual hypogram linking the two songs. Rather than functioning as isolated texts, *New Rules* and *No Rules* form an interconnected narrative in which the aspiration for unrestricted freedom expressed in the first song is transformed into experiences of confusion and instability in the second. This intertextual continuity demonstrates that the symbolic meanings of both songs are structurally interconnected within Riffaterre's semiotic system.

4.2 Heuristic and Hermeneutic Analysis of *New Rules*

The analysis of *New Rules* begins with a heuristic reading, which interprets the lyrics according to their literal linguistic meanings before proceeding to a hermeneutic interpretation that reveals their symbolic significance (Riffaterre, 1978). Through this two-stage reading process, the song constructs a coherent representation of adolescent resistance toward institutional authority and socially imposed norms.

One of the most prominent expressions appears in the opening stanza: **"banbokdoeneun suhak sigan, seone deureo gachin nae salm"** ("repetitive mathematics class, my life trapped within boundary lines"). From a heuristic perspective, the lyric simply describes a student repeatedly attending mathematics classes while living within clearly defined boundaries. At the denotative level, the expressions refer to ordinary school activities and spatial limitations. However, the literal reading alone does not adequately explain why these ordinary experiences are emphasized throughout the song.

The hermeneutic reading reveals that these expressions function as **indirect expressions**, one of the central concepts in Riffaterre's (1978) semiotic theory. The phrase **"mathematics class"** no longer refers merely to an academic subject but symbolizes repetitive institutional routines that regulate students' everyday lives. Likewise, the expression **"boundary lines" (seon)** extends beyond its literal meaning to represent social norms, educational regulations, and invisible expectations imposed upon adolescents. Through these symbolic signs, the lyrics transform concrete school experiences into broader representations of psychological restriction and limited personal autonomy.

This symbolic construction is reinforced by another key expression, **"tumyeonghan jokswaereul kkaego"** ("breaking invisible shackles"). Literally, the lyric refers to breaking chains that cannot be seen. Hermeneutically, however, the "invisible

shackles" symbolize social pressures, institutional discipline, and normative expectations that constrain adolescent identity formation. The adjective **"invisible"** is particularly significant because it emphasizes that these forms of control operate psychologically rather than physically. As Riffaterre (1978) argues, poetic meaning emerges when ordinary linguistic signs undergo semantic transformation through indirect expression, allowing readers to infer meanings that remain hidden beneath the literal text.

The recurring symbolic expressions throughout the song indicate that the **matrix** underlying *New Rules* is **freedom**. This semantic core is realized through the **model**, represented by the recurring desire to rebel against existing rules, while expressions such as *mathematics class*, *boundary lines*, *invisible shackles*, and the aspiration to become a "punk" function as **variants** that elaborate the same central meaning. Rather than introducing independent ideas, these variants consistently develop the matrix of liberation from institutional control and social conformity. This finding supports Riffaterre's (1978) proposition that every poetic text is organized around a single semantic nucleus from which multiple textual transformations emerge.

The findings also resonate with previous scholarship on contemporary K-pop. Jin (2020) argues that fourth-generation K-pop increasingly portrays the emotional and psychological experiences of young people through symbolic narratives rather than direct social criticism. Similarly, Lie (2015) observes that K-pop lyrics frequently negotiate tensions between individual identity and collective social expectations. In *New Rules*, these tensions are articulated through poetic symbolism rather than explicit statements, enabling the song to represent adolescent resistance in a form that remains both aesthetically expressive and culturally accessible. Consequently, the heuristic and hermeneutic readings demonstrate that *New Rules* is not simply a song about rejecting school regulations but a literary text that symbolically represents adolescents' aspirations for autonomy, identity, and freedom within contemporary society.

4.3 Heuristic and Hermeneutic Analysis of *No Rules*

The analysis of *No Rules* also begins with a heuristic reading, followed by a hermeneutic interpretation in accordance with Michael Riffaterre's (1978) semiotic framework. While *New Rules* expresses the adolescent desire to escape institutional restrictions, *No Rules* presents the consequences of living in a world where familiar structures and routines have been disrupted. Through a series of symbolic expressions, the song portrays confusion, uncertainty, and the loss of orientation experienced by young people during a period of profound social change.

One of the most representative lyrics is **"wenjjoginji oreunjjoginji, natinjji baminji"** ("whether it is left or right, whether it is day or night"). From a heuristic perspective, these expressions simply describe an inability to distinguish directions and time. Literally, the speaker appears confused about ordinary aspects of daily life. However, this literal interpretation cannot fully explain why such confusion is repeatedly emphasized throughout the song.

Through hermeneutic reading, these expressions function as **indirect expressions** that symbolize the collapse of psychological stability and everyday routines. The opposition between **left and right** and **day and night** no longer refers merely to physical orientation but represents the disappearance of certainty and predictability in adolescents' lives. Rather than indicating simple disorientation, these binary oppositions metaphorically depict a world in which established social structures have become unstable. In Riffaterre's (1978) terms, the ordinary lexical meanings undergo semantic transformation, allowing readers to interpret the lyrics beyond their literal level.

Another significant expression appears in the lyric "**nae sesangi daehonran**" ("my world has fallen into great chaos"). Heuristically, the phrase describes a situation of disorder. Hermeneutically, however, "**great chaos**" symbolizes psychological anxiety, emotional instability, and the uncertainty experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when educational activities, social interaction, and everyday routines were suddenly interrupted. Additional variants, including disrupted schedules, alarms ringing at inappropriate times, irregular sleeping patterns, and unexpected weight gain, collectively reinforce the symbolic representation of a life that has lost its normal rhythm. These recurring textual signs illustrate that the source of conflict is no longer institutional restriction but the absence of stable structures through which adolescents previously organized their daily experiences.

The analysis identifies **chaos and uncertainty** as the **matrix** underlying *No Rules*. This semantic core is realized through the **model**, represented by the declaration that the speaker's world has descended into panic, while the various symbolic references to confusion, disrupted routines, distorted perceptions of time, and psychological instability function as **variants** elaborating the same central meaning. Consistent with Riffaterre's (1978) theory, these variants are not isolated images but interconnected textual transformations derived from a single semantic nucleus.

These findings also correspond with broader discussions of contemporary K-pop and youth culture. Jin (2020) argues that recent K-pop narratives increasingly reflect the emotional consequences of rapid social change experienced by younger generations. Likewise, studies of youth during the COVID-19 pandemic have shown that prolonged social restrictions significantly altered adolescents' daily routines, emotional well-being, and perceptions of time and space. Within this context, *No Rules* transforms these social experiences into poetic symbols, allowing the lyrics to communicate collective psychological realities through aesthetic language rather than direct description.

Overall, the heuristic and hermeneutic analyses demonstrate that *No Rules* extends beyond a literal depiction of confusion. Instead, the song constructs a symbolic narrative of adolescent uncertainty through indirect expressions that represent the disruption of social order, psychological instability, and the search for meaning in an unpredictable world. Through Riffaterre's semiotic framework, these symbolic structures

become intelligible as interconnected signs that collectively express the existential condition of contemporary youth.

4.4 Intertextual Relationship Between *New Rules* and *No Rules* (Actual Hypogram)

One of the principal contributions of this study lies in identifying the intertextual relationship between *New Rules* and *No Rules* through Michael Riffaterre's concept of the **actual hypogram**. According to Riffaterre (1978), a literary text does not exist in isolation but derives part of its meaning from its relationship with preceding texts. A hypogram refers to the underlying text that generates or influences the meaning of another text, allowing readers to construct interpretation through intertextual associations. In this study, *New Rules* functions as the actual hypogram of *No Rules*, as the latter develops, reinterprets, and transforms the thematic concerns introduced in the former.

Textual evidence demonstrates a clear semantic continuity between the two songs. In *New Rules*, the lyrical speaker repeatedly expresses the desire to challenge institutional authority through symbolic expressions such as **"boundary lines"**, **"breaking invisible shackles"**, and **"I want to rebel."** These expressions collectively construct the matrix of **freedom**, representing adolescents' aspiration to escape educational discipline and socially imposed restrictions. The rebellious attitude is presented as a positive response to institutional control, suggesting that greater freedom will enable adolescents to express their authentic identities.

However, *No Rules* recontextualizes this aspiration by placing the speaker within a radically different social environment. Expressions such as **"whether it is left or right"**, **"whether it is day or night"**, and **"my world has fallen into great chaos"** illustrate that the disappearance of familiar structures does not produce liberation but instead generates uncertainty, anxiety, and psychological instability. The matrix therefore shifts from **freedom** to **chaos**, while maintaining thematic continuity with the earlier song. This transformation demonstrates that the desire to escape rules is not presented as an absolute solution but rather as the beginning of a new existential dilemma.

From Riffaterre's perspective (1978), this semantic transformation illustrates the dynamic nature of intertextuality. The second text neither repeats nor rejects the first; instead, it reconstructs the earlier meanings within a new historical and social context. The transition from institutional resistance in *New Rules* to existential uncertainty in *No Rules* reflects the profound social changes experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when adolescents who had previously sought greater personal freedom were instead confronted with unprecedented restrictions, disrupted routines, and psychological disorientation. Consequently, the two songs establish a dialogic relationship in which one text continuously responds to and reinterprets the other.

This intertextual dialogue is further supported by the progression of the songs' semantic structures. The matrix of **freedom** in *New Rules* develops through variants

associated with educational regulations and social boundaries, whereas the matrix of **chaos** in *No Rules* is elaborated through variants representing disrupted routines, distorted perceptions of time, confusion, and emotional instability. Although the matrices differ, both sets of variants ultimately explore the same broader concern: adolescents' ongoing struggle to negotiate identity and autonomy within rapidly changing social environments. The continuity of this thematic concern confirms that the songs should be interpreted as complementary texts rather than independent compositions.

These findings support Riffaterre's (1978) argument that literary meaning is produced not only through individual textual signs but also through relationships among texts. They also resonate with Jin's (2020) observation that contemporary K-pop increasingly employs interconnected narratives to portray complex psychological experiences and social realities. Similarly, Lie (2015) argues that K-pop lyrics frequently negotiate the tensions between individual aspirations and collective expectations, making symbolic storytelling a central characteristic of the genre. Within this broader context, the intertextual relationship between *New Rules* and *No Rules* demonstrates how TXT employs sequential lyrical narratives to document the transition from youthful idealism to existential uncertainty, thereby transforming personal experiences into reflections on wider social change.

Overall, the actual hypogram identified in this study reveals that *New Rules* and *No Rules* function as an integrated semiotic narrative. Rather than presenting two separate stories, the songs collectively construct a continuous representation of adolescent identity formation in which the pursuit of unrestricted freedom is ultimately confronted by the complexities of reality. Through Riffaterre's concept of the hypogram, this study demonstrates that the symbolic meanings embedded in both songs are generated not only within each individual text but also through the dynamic intertextual relationship connecting them.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the symbolic meanings embedded in TOMORROW X TOGETHER's (TXT) *New Rules* and *No Rules* through Michael Riffaterre's semiotic framework. The findings demonstrate that both songs construct a continuous narrative of adolescent experience through the processes of heuristic and hermeneutic reading, as well as the identification of the matrix, model, variants, and actual hypogram. In *New Rules*, the dominant matrix is **freedom**, represented through symbolic expressions such as *mathematics class*, *boundary lines*, and *invisible shackles*, which metaphorically portray adolescents' resistance to institutional authority and social norms. In contrast, *No Rules* develops the matrix of **chaos and uncertainty**, expressed through symbols of disrupted routines, confusion, and psychological instability, reflecting the social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The intertextual relationship between the two songs demonstrates that the aspiration for unrestricted freedom is subsequently transformed into an experience of existential uncertainty, thereby establishing a coherent narrative progression between the two texts.

Theoretically, this study extends the application of Michael Riffaterre's semiotic theory from conventional poetic texts to contemporary K-pop lyrics. By identifying *New Rules* as the actual hypogram of *No Rules*, the study demonstrates how sequential song lyrics can function as interconnected literary texts that construct meaning through matrix transformation and intertextual continuity. These findings contribute to the growing scholarship on literary semiotics, popular music studies, and Korean popular culture by illustrating how K-pop lyrics serve not only as entertainment but also as symbolic representations of adolescents' psychological and social experiences. Nevertheless, this study is limited to two songs by a single artist and focuses exclusively on textual analysis. Future research may integrate multimodal approaches by examining visual elements in music videos, performance practices, and audience interpretations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of meaning construction in contemporary K-pop.

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