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Symbols and Interpersonal Meanings of Popular Love Songs

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ABSTRACT

This study ventured to analyze the select popular love songs. It employed a qualitative research approach using linguistic and rhetorical criticism. Systemic Functional Linguistics of M. A. K. Halliday, Fantasy Theme Criticism, and Semiotics were the analyses applied in order to discover the interpersonal meanings and symbols that select popular love songs carry in their lyrics. The researcher analyzed ten (10) songs. The following statistical tools were employed to analyze the data gathered: frequency count and percentage distribution. The research discovered that the mood and modality present in the lyrics of the songs were the two components to consider in determining the interpersonal meanings. On the other hand, the swirling of three themes: setting, character, and actions, form a successful rhetorical vision. The fantasy themes present in love songs, taken together, reveal the worldview created in different contexts of relationships built by love. Salient themes in the songs are breakups, deeply falling in love, regrets, and self-love which codes that encompass the themes are the characters, settings, and actions. The popular love songs invite the rhetorical community to perceive love in many mirrors. Symbols are also present in the lyrics of the songs. The symbols generated from the lines of the songs have a message intended for the addressees. The symbols represent a particular idea, theme, or meaning that the persona would want to communicate to the addressees. Based from the results of the analyses, various strategies in teaching language and literature were made and it is concluded that songs are best to integrate in the teaching of language and literature. It is also recommended that researchers conduct more studies that aim to explore more effective strategies in teaching language and literature utilizing different kinds of poetry.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is always interesting because it expresses thoughts, feelings and attitudes in writing or speaking such as the process of observation of the social event as living the impact of reality (Vitria, 2013). In teaching language and literature, songs can be effectively incorporated in the syllabus. In fact, Griffiths (2012) claimed that literature enriches vocabulary, provides model of correct grammar, to develop cultural awareness and can be extended to develop listening and speaking skills and used as a prompt for writing. Hence, literature as part of the curriculum enhances the learners' grammar knowledge, awareness in culture and advances skills. Moreover, "literature is valuable in the language classroom because it is authentic, it encourages interactions, it educates the whole person and it is motivating" (Kucukoglu, 2010; Griffiths, 2012). Mart (2018) argued that learners can accumulate tangible benefits from exposure to literature.

Song as literature is widespread globally and easy to approach for people who unconsciously process the message. Singers and composers of the songs are not simply telling stories; they rather communicate strong influence of discourses. Songs can also be considered as one of beautiful literatures as it conveys meanings and conventional expressions through rhyme, symbol, image, metaphor, lexis, and sound. According to Maulana

(2019), songs can be described as a kind of poetry that is composed attractively and melodiously by songwriters with concern for the use of words, the varieties of stylistics device, rhythm and meaning. In Cambridge Dictionary, a song is defined as a short piece of music with words that are sung. Meanwhile, in Merriam Webster (n.d.) songs are short musical composition of words and music; a collection of such compositions".

Songs as literature has been regarded as a product of human feeling or thought. It is an expression of someone about something that has been seen, heard, experienced, and felt. The composers do play on words arrangement to create attraction and distinctiveness; thus, it creates meaning and message. In addition, the lyrics of the songs are the writers' thought about something. Lyrics are not just structured statements or composition of words or phrases but rather expressions of the composers about real experiences. Songs then are charged with purpose and meaning.

To understand the meaning and the message from the songs one should know about language study. Birch (1985) agrees that there are stylistician's insights into a text. He explicates the importance of language to the study of linguistics and literature when he writes "linguistics does have considerable contributions to make to the study of literature simply because it, like literature, is concerned

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with language.”

On the other hand, Auwera (2007) defines linguistics as a scientific device which studies a language divided topically into structure (grammar) and meaning (semantics). Grammar consists of morphology (formation of words), syntax (the rules by which sentences or phrases are combined) and phonology (how sound systems and abstract sound units form in word or sentence.) In addition to that, the importance of discourse analysis is comprehended because of studying the structure of texts and conversations and the meanings inside the text.

Systemic Functional Linguistics is one of the approaches employed in this study. In Systemic Functional Linguistic, “clause” rather than sentence is the unit of analysis. In systemic theory, a clause is a unit in which meaning of different kinds are combined. Three distinct structures, each expressing one kind of semantic organization, are mapped onto one another to produce a single wording. Nordquist (2019) claimed that Systemic Functional Linguistics is the study of relationship between language and functions in social settings. Furthermore, SFL is an approach that treats grammar to be a resource for meaning making and insist on the interrelation of form and meaning.

Other studies also used Fantasy Theme Criticism in the study of songs. Fantasy theme is a method of rhetorical criticism postulated by Ernest Bormann. This analysis interpreting messages allows researchers to pay attention on the artifact to interpret meaningful symbolism. If in the artifact where the three fantasy themes (character, setting and action) are present then it can generate rhetorical vision. Foss (2018) wrote “a swirling together of fantasy themes to provide a particular interpretation of reality. It contains fantasy themes relating to settings, characters, and actions that together form a symbolic drama or coherent interpretation of reality.” All three themes when combined form a successful rhetorical vision. Fantasy theme criticism can be applied in a diverse contexts. Zhaoxun (2015) in his study titled “Rhetorical Vision of a Chinese Corporate Hero: A Fantasy theme Analysis” concentrated on the heroic stories about Mr. Ni Rinfeng, a considered national corporate hero in their country. Based upon her research analysis, the fantasy types found in the stories as subject for the study, form the rhetorical visions of corporate heroes that are shared by organizational members.

The Sign theory of Charles Sanders Pierce was employed to extract the symbols induced in the texts of the songs. Semiotic is an account of signification, representation, reference, and meaning.

The present study investigated the interpersonal meanings present in the song lyrics. The researcher looked into the mood choice carried in the songs through the order of the Subject and Finite (mood choice) inside the clauses used within the song lyrics. Additionally, the engagement of rhetorical criticism were administered to identify the fantasy theme evident in the lyrics of the songs. From the fantasy themes and looking into the patterns to construct

the rhetorical visions. The application of semiotics also incorporated to know the prevailing symbols of love that are present in the song lyrics.

This study is a tripartite analysis of applying the SFL, rhetorical criticism and semiotics. Previous researchers did not apply the three approaches in analyzing their artifacts. There has been many studies in language and literature, however, popular love songs subscribed and frequently listened by young people make this research an interesting source to study lyric content, language use, style and idea. Many songs have been studied but popular love songs were the subject for analysis in the research. Based on the analysis of the three approaches, strategies in teaching language and literature were generated. These teaching strategies could be employed in the classroom setting to stimulate learner’s interest in learning language through literature, particularly in songs.

Statement of the Problem

This study analyzed the content of the select popular love songs. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following:

1. What are the mood types used in the lyrics of the songs?
2. What are the types of modality present in the lyrics?
3. What are the types of Interpersonal Meaning realized in the lyrics of the songs?
4. What are the fantasy themes emerging from the lyrics?
5. What rhetorical visions are created by the fantasies?
6. What prevailing symbols of love are extracted from the songs?
7. What teaching strategy/strategies could be developed in teaching language and literature?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The researcher used descriptive qualitative research design. Descriptive is a method which the analysis is in the form of words. This research design helps the researcher to better comprehend the social world with respect to the corpus of the study. Since this endeavor investigates songs, it aimed to understand the symbols involved in the rhetoric and its worldview.

Corpus of the Study

The present study utilized songs as the subject of the criticism. Songs are part of human existence; it is always present in the everyday lives of people in all ages. Its communicative effect creates symbols people create; therefore, its influence goes beyond amusement. The songs that were utilized in the research followed the inclusion criteria:

1. The songs reached can be accessed in the YouTube.
2. To determine the popularity of the songs, it should have at least one million views in YouTube.
3. They should be classified as love songs.
4. They should be songs familiar to students as the

participants to survey.

5. The songs should be written in English.

Instrumentation

This study used the song lyrics of the select popular love songs.

Since the research used qualitative approach, the main instrument of the research is the researcher himself. Accordingly, in qualitative research the researcher himself acts as the major instrument.

1. Survey Questionnaire through google form. The form was used to select the top ten popular love songs that the student listen.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher underwent the following steps in the conduct of the study:

1. The researcher submitted the approved proposal to the Ethics Review Committee (ERC) of Saint Paul University Philippines and sought approval for the conduct of the study.

2. He requested approval the approval support from the Dean of Graduate School and the Vice President for Academics at Saint Paul University Philippines regarding the conduct of the research.

3. The researcher identified love songs from the three most viewed list of songs available in the Youtube. The identified 48 select popular love songs were put into google form for the survey among students to determine the ten most popular songs.

4. He conducted a survey through Google Form on the most familiar love songs among students.

5. Upon determining the 10 most popular love songs, the lyrics were downloaded from the internet and started employing Systemic Functional Linguistics, Fantasy Theme Analysis and Semiotics in each song.

6. The researcher made use of consultation method to ensure the validity and reliability of the output generated. The panel of experts who assisted him in checking the analysis and interpretation have met the following qualification:

Language Expert

- Must be a Ph.D. Holder in Language and Literature/ Rhetoric and Linguistics

- Must have at least 5-year experience in teaching English and Related courses in a university /college.

7. Discussion and interpretation of data collected were made.

Data Analysis

To collect the data, the researcher read carefully and understood deeply the select popular love songs. The researcher tried to classify and described the data based on the research questions with the following steps:

1. The researcher found clauses carried in the lyrics. The songs were analyzed by the mood choice or the Subject and Finite order in the songs. To determine

the clauses that can be found in the lyrics of the songs whether it is declarative, interrogative, or imperative. The mood formula (Subject + Finite) was considered.

2. Then researcher identified the modality used in the lyrics of the songs and classified them according to the degree of which the modality belonged.

3. Based on the mood type and modality, the researcher provided explanations about the interpersonal meaning made.

4. For the fantasy theme criticism, the researcher implemented the following steps. First, identifying the three themes prevalent in the song lyrics; themes are the setting, character, and actions. Then, the researcher grouped together several shared fantasy themes to create the rhetorical visions.

5. By the implementation of semiotics, the prevailing symbols of love were determined. The representamen, object and the interpretant were identified to extract the symbols present in the text.

6. Lastly, the researcher created a strategy on teaching language and literature based on the result of the analysis in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emerging Mood Types in Select Popular Love Songs

The emerging mood type in the select popular love songs is declarative mood type.

Types of Modalities used in Select Popular Love Songs

The most dominant modality used in the songs is 'will' with a frequency of 26 and categorized in medium degree of modality.

Interpersonal Meanings

The songs discussed various kinds of love relationships which vary from heartbreaks to deeply falling in love. The lyrics of the songs interact with the audience through the mood system and the modality that build the interpersonal relationships between them. The declarative mood type which indicates the personae's providing statements or declaring something described the evidence of information given by the persona or the producer of the text. Meanwhile, the modality in the select popular love songs conveys different speaker's position, emotion, affirmation, and other meanings. which influences the addressees.

Fantasy Themes in Select Popular Love Songs

Salient themes in the songs are breakups, deeply falling in love, regrets, self-love, and complexities of love experienced by human beings which codes that encompass the themes are the characters, settings, and actions.

The popular love songs invite the rhetorical community to perceive love in many mirrors. Love is an element in a relationship that makes two people unite and understand each other.

Rhetorical Visions created by the fantasy themes in Select Popular Love Songs

The swirling of the three themes--- settings, characters, and actions, present in the lyrics of the songs created rhetorical visions that the personae would want to resonate to the addressees. Most of the songs dealt with love that has gone and yet the rhetors would want to send a message to the addressees that love can be viewed in different perspective, but one common agenda of love is to make people see their potential to connect with other people that is so dear to them.

Symbols extracted in the lyrics of Select Popular Love

The symbols that were extracted from the songs are the following: S1 fall into your arms which refers to immeasurable comfort and security. S2 climb every mountain, a symbol of man's effort to win back the girl. S3 thousand years, unending love. S4 girl which account to man's fulfilled dream in life. S5 photograph which means unfading love. S6 true colors and its meaning is unpretentious human being. S7 song which refers to inspiration. S8 pulled out a ring meaning assurance of love. S9 simple truth and its meaning is the loss affection and S10 hand that symbolizes immense care.

Strategy in Teaching Language and Literature

In teaching language and literature, the approaches of teachers, instructors, and professors are vital to enable students improve their knowledge. The strategies are developed to be utilized in the classroom for the learners to engage themselves to a more engaging activities that will enable them to learn and enhance their language proficiency through understanding literature.

The strategies employed in the classroom permit students to appreciate lessons and specifically allow students to value literature and learn the language at the same time. Strategies arouse students' interests in engaging to classroom activities through looking into the text, discovering new vocabulary, and learning personal perspectives of the global community.

CONCLUSION

Love songs are more than entertainment. Their appeal lies in the meanings their lyrics offer to listeners. Each song fulfills its purpose through interpersonal meanings shaped by mood and modality. Declarative moods influence listeners effectively. Modality strengthens the bond between the persona and the audience, qualifying the message and conveying different nuances. Interpersonal meanings, such as heartbreak and regret, are evident through mood and modality.

Additionally, the interplay of setting, character, and actions creates a compelling rhetorical vision. Fantasy themes in love songs reflect various perspectives on relationships. Common themes include breakups, falling deeply in love, regret, and self-love. Characters, settings, and actions encode these themes, inviting listeners to

explore love from multiple angles.

Symbols in song lyrics also carry significant messages. These symbols represent ideas, themes, or meanings that the persona wishes to share with the audience.

Recommendations

From the results of the investigation, the following recommendations are generated:

1. Teachers who teach language and literature may utilize songs as an effective way to explore interpersonal meanings present in the text.
2. Teachers may integrate songs in the teaching of grammar.
3. English teachers may integrate listening to songs in teaching modals of English language.
4. Teachers may explore songs in identifying the themes -settings, characters, and actions and allow learners to construct rhetorical visions.
5. Teachers may use semiotics to discover symbols in interpreting poems or songs.
6. The proponent may disseminate the results of the study to language and literature teachers for possible maximum utilization of the results and integration of the teaching strategy developed.
7. Researchers may conduct more studies that aim to explore more effective strategies in teaching language and literature utilizing different kinds of poetry.

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