

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter consists of the research background, the research problem, the purpose of the study, the scope and limitation, the significance, the method, and the clarification of key terms.

1.1. Research Background

Experiential meaning concerns the use of language that functions as an instrument of thought to represent the people's experience of what goes around them and inside them in a clause as experiential construct (Halliday, 1985). The ideational function of the clause is concerned with the transmission of ideas. Its function is that of "representing processes or experiences: actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations" (Halliday, 1985:53).

Many historians have used song lyrics to help understand the culture and consciousness of the people who sang and listened to them. Song lyrics can give important clues about what people thought and felt, their daily struggles, and their dreams about the future. Lyrics are created by the singer or composer. They usually make an interaction and communication to their listener or fans with the language that they use in their lyrics. The language of the lyrics itself can express different meaning. It can be also said that song always sends message in every lyrics; and every song has the lyrics which

gives a different meaning according to the language use. It means that the language used in the song lyrics can give different meaning which can influence someone to act or to do something. And it can be a good thing or a bad thing.

The problem is that the literal meaning of song lyrics is often hard to establish, and this meaning is usually enriched with allusion, suggestion, and implied meanings. Moreover, the words are only the beginning. How a song is performed contributes a great deal to its meaning. A song performed at a dance tempo means something different from the same song performed as a ballad.

One of the best ways to get an idea of the different things that a song means and has meant is to see what people have said about it (Peake, 1980). Responses to songs and interpretations of songs are available not just in reviews but also in poems, novels, and letters (Griffie, 1992). The opinions of the original songwriter are sometimes available, and they should be given special weight, but they should not be taken as a gold standard of meaning, because performers and audiences add many meanings of their own that are also important to a song's history (Peake, 1980). The ways in which songs take on different meanings in different settings provide potentially rich examples for understanding popular songs as historical evidence (Griffie, 1992).

On the other hand, it is not true that any meaning is as good as any other. Interpretations that contradict the literal meaning of the lyrics or the obvious intent of the performer, that are clearly anachronistic, or that do not correspond to anyone's actual reaction to the song have to be considered in a different light from meanings that were intended by the creators or that can be shown to be widely shared among audiences (Griffie, 1992). Songs are almost

always opened to multiple interpretations (Peake, 1980). The richness of using songs as sources for understanding history—and the need to delve deeply into the available evidence when doing so—lies in their openness to such multiple uses and interpretations (Griffie, 1992).

Students interpret the song lyrics in a variety of ways to find the message of the song. When interpreting the song lyrics, it is important to try to understand the conditions of the world as it set up and depicted within the song lyrics (Kurland, 2002). They examine features running throughout the lyrics to see how the discussion shapes their perception of reality. They examine what the lyrics do to convey meaning: how patterns of content and language shape the portrayal of the topic and how relationship between those patterns conveys underlying meaning (Kurland, 2002). There have been many different ideas about how meaning can be represented in their interpretation. There are literally thousands of things, and they are different for each person. Their responses to the song lyrics might differ.

This study is primarily focused on capturing the English as foreign language learners' experience in comprehension the song lyric, i.e. to what extent the song lyrics are comprehended by the students, to analyze how the students' interpretation of the song lyrics is represented in their writing, and to recognize the meaning making through representational strategies. This analysis is centered on the use of ideational metafunction which is focused on the experiential meaning. It associates with the representation of what is happening and can be identified through transitivity (Eggins, 2004).

The study of the ideational meaning especially on the experiential side has been widely studied by some scholars. They explained that the ideational

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meanings realize the contextual variable of field (Halliday, 1985). These mean that the ideational function of language concerns for the representation of experience of the world, and reflects the kinds of activities and the types of participants which are involved (Halliday, 1985). These functions can be seen in the studies of the ideational meaning done by Queenie, (2003); Ochi, (2008); and Mulasih, (2007), who stated that the ideational metafunction of the linguistic patterns of the text (ads and students' recount) mainly includes the types of processes (events and relation), the roles of participants and the lexical choice. Meanwhile, Huisman, (2002); Fraser, (1999); and Lock, (1996) mentioned that the natural human experiences which are constituted the extended human's environment that prove the theorizing of ideational meaning in SFL and, in particular, for the experiential meaning choices of the Transitivity system could be related to different narrative worlds in different social and historical contexts. They showed that the ideational meaning deal with the ways the language represents the interlocutor's experience.

There are different realizations of the ideational meaning processes that appear in those texts. However, it is also found that their studies mainly focused on the writer/author's point of view, not on the reader's. Based on this phenomenon, this study is focused on representation of represented text. More specifically, it examines the students' comprehension of the song lyrics, the analysis of the students' interpretation of the song lyrics represented in their writing, and the recognition of the meaning making through representational strategies. The analysis of transitivity and its application basically follows the SFG's theoretical framework.

1.2. The Research Problem

Since this study analyzes the experiential meaning from the students' point of view to the song lyric, the questions proposed in the research are:

- a. To what extent are the song lyric comprehended by the students?
- b. How is the students' interpretation of the song lyrics represented in their writing?
- c. How do the representational strategies build the message?

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

This study is primarily focused on capturing the English as foreign language learners' experience in comprehension the song lyric, i.e. to what extent the song lyrics are comprehended by the students, to analyze how the students' interpretation of the song lyrics is represented in their writing, and to recognize the meaning making through representational strategies. This study is also aimed to explore themes that are reflected in their broader experience while reading, listening, and interpreting the song lyrics.

1.4. The Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses to examine the experiential meaning in the two songs interpretation written by the students. The first song is "Rolling in the deep" by Adele, and the second one is "Because of you" by Kelly Clarkson.

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This study was conducted at the second semester students of Art. The students are asked to represent their understanding of the song lyrics through the writing task. Since the ideational meaning consists of experiential meaning and logical meaning, in order to limit the research and detail research, this study focuses on the experiential meaning represented by transitivity system. This study also focuses on the major clauses in students' texts due to only the major clauses which can be analyzed using transitivity system.

1.5. The sample of the study

The study was conducted at the third semester students of art who has taken the English subject and passed in this subject. The sample size of 8 male students and 7 female students were the total of subjects who were willing to participate in this study. These participants were grouped according to their grades in English subject, i.e. A, B, and C.

1.6. The Significance of the Study

The study is organized to describe the experiential meaning in the students' comprehension of the song. More specifically, it is conducted to describe how language is applied in the students' interpretation of the song lyric for describing experience, especially in expressing their feeling. It is hoped that this study will be beneficial for others. First, this study is aimed to know what the experiential meaning occurs behind the students' texts in interpreting the song lyrics. Second, this study will add depth material on the

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field of systemic functional grammar, particularly in the ideational meaning which is realized through transitivity and critical discourse analysis. Third, it is expected to be useful for improving the quality of critical thinking in written discourse. Finally it is hoped that through this study the students are able to explore the meaning of text in its context, to use the right process to represent the meaning accurately.

1.7. Methods of study

This study applied a qualitative method as a procedure to understand and to describe the world of human experience. As a qualitative study, this research describes the data to discover meanings by improving the comprehension of the whole and to explore the richness, depth, and complexity of phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It reveals the story behind what quantitative results might show and will be much more conducive to finding answers to the research questions. The instrument to be used in analyzing the data was a systemic functional grammar (Halliday, 1994; Eggins, 2004)) with the transitivity system as a framework in analyzing the experiential meaning of the text.

Data of this study were selected by purposive sampling. The data were gathered from the students' interpretation of the song lyrics through writing task. The theme song used here is focused on the songs about relationships i.e., "Rolling in the deep" which is sung by Adele and "Because of you" which is sung by Kelly Clarkson. The main reason why these songs were chosen was

because these songs were popular among the students. Many students of art recognized these songs.

The students were later grouped according to their grades in English subject, i.e. A, B, and C. Each of the students wrote their interpretation of the song lyrics. There are 10 texts in each group, 5 texts for “Rolling in the deep” and 5 texts for “Because of you”. These categorizing was attempted to simplify the analysis of this study.

In this study, data analysis was performed in four steps. The first step is to divide the texts into clauses, then to identify the transitivity that appears in the clauses by analyzing the components of transitivity (the processes (material, mental, behavioral, relational, verbal, existential), the participants (actor, senser, goal, behaver, token, and so on) and the circumstances (matter, manner, role, and so on) (Eggins, 2004). The third step is to identify the trends in the use of transitivity by looking at the distribution of use through the frequency and percentage. Finally, is to recognize how the representational strategies build the message.

In order to reveal the metafunctions of the texts, the 15 respondents were equipped with three guiding questions: (1) What is the song trying to say? (2) What emotion does the song bring you? (3) What lines/phrases seem most striking to you? Why? These three guiding questions are related to the four levels of comprehension (according to the theories of reading stated by Hillerich (1983), there are three levels of comprehension i.e. 1. literal, 2. inferential, and 3. evaluative). By using these levels, readers are attempting to understand what the author meant by what he/she said in the song lyrics. It is

presumed that they have already memorized certain facts at the *literal level* and now they are attempting to see the *implications* of the author's words.

For the flexibility of the study the respondents were required to write their responses in a piece of paper and were given a freedom to respond to the text. Then, their texts were compared with the song interpretation from the source. More details of the research methodology will be explained in Chapter III.

1.8. Clarification of Key Terms

Linguistics jargon is notorious for its ambiguity. Different terms mean different things to different people. So for clarification, some of the key terms used in this study are listed below, together with an explanation.

- **Experiential meaning** is the use of language that functions as an instrument of thought to represent the people's experience of what goes around them and inside them in a clause as experiential construct (Halliday, 1994).
- **Interpretation** is the expression of a person conception of a subject through acting, playing, writing, criticizing, etc. (Webster dictionary). The ultimate outcome of interpreting a text is self-understanding because we come to understand the world as well as the self. We gain meaning from a text. The text takes on both a semiological dimension and a semantic dimension (Ricoeur, 1981).

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- **Comprehension** is the capacity of the mind to perceive and to understand the act or action of grasping with the intellect (Webster Dictionary). Webster also tells us that reading is “to receive or take in sense of (as letter or symbols) by scanning; to understand the meaning of written or printed matter; to learn from what one has seen or found in writing or in print.”
- **Representation** is the process produced meaning and exchanged it between members of a culture (Hall, 2003). This process involved the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things.