Halliday's Language Metafunction on Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody"

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the use of Language Metafunction in a song "Bohemian Rhapsody". This research aims to identify the ideology of the song as portrayed through words and action of the protagonist in this song. This research focused on every single word in the lyric. The study used qualitative and descriptive methods. The data collection was obtained from genius.com. The data was analyzed by using Language Metafunction theory by Halliday's Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual Meaning. The results of the research show that three dominant processes of language can be found are Relational Process, Material Process, and Mental Process; with the last mentioned being the dominant one. Also, by analyzing the lyric, it can be concluded that the ideology of the song is the songwriter believes that all things that happened in the past is in the past.

Keywords: language metafunction, Bohemian Rhapsody

INTRODUCTION

Text has been one of the most common ways to share belief or ideology. It may include story, advertisement, drama, poem, etc. According to Van Dijk (2006), ideology refers to ideas or belief systems that are socially shared by the members of social groups. "Bohemian Rhapsody" is a single by English rock band Queen in 1975, taken from the album "A Night at the Opera". As a song, this one is composed in a very different popular musical pattern which is mostly based on verse-chorus, which chorus takes a role as a repetitive climax point of most popular songs. This song consists of several part, and every part has their own theme characteristics, including sung parts and musical only parts.

Unlike any other popular songs, this one uses a one single flowing timeline, which makes this song is more like a short story. Also, this song is also believed as only-Freddie-knows-

the-meaning masterpiece as many attempts to interpret this song have been done by many song critics. Hence, this paper aims to analyze a story and ideology inside.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Metafunctions in SFG

The terms metafunctions were first introduced by M. A. K. Halliday in *Systemic Functional Grammar*. According to Halliday (2004), language involves the text structure, meaning, and function of language. The text structure covers the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in the text.

Metafunctions relate language to the reflection of the outer world. According to SFL, language has three metafunctions which are ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Ideational function reflects the experience, interpersonal function reflects the personal and social relationship and roles, and the textual function focuses on the organization of the text or discourse. These metafunctions are interrelated and can typically be used to understand the structure and meaning of a text.

Ideational Metafunction

According to Halliday (2007), ideational function refers to the "content function of language". This function can be analyzed using transitivity. It deals with the events and situations along with all of the actions, processes, and entities that are involved (Halliday, 1985). In other word, ideational function reflects the experiences of phenomena in the outer world (Halliday, 1973: 106, ALL). Fowler (1986) argues that linguistic codes embody the ideologies of the author because they are not neutral and affected by society and culture.

There are 6 types of process which are material, behavioral, mental, verbal, relational, and existential process (Halliday, 1976). These processes refer to semantic verbs that have different functions (doing, happening, behaving, sensing, feeling, and existing). There are several labels given for the participants of each process, such as Actor, Goal; Senser, Phenomenon; Carrier, Attribute; etc. These process types are defined in Table 1.

Table: 1 Six types of process according to Halliday (2004)

Type of Process	Definition
Material Process	a process about an action verb of doing or happening of an animate or inanimate thing which typically causes a degree of change in various aspects
Behavioral Process	a process between material and mental processes which relates to the psychological and physiological behaviors
Mental Process	a process that shows how people think, feel, and believe and is classified into perception, cognition, and affection process
Verbal Process	a process that expresses idea or how people communicate with each other, directly or indirectly

| Relational Process | a process that shows the abstract relations between several objects and is classified into identifying, attributive, intensive, possessive, and circumstantial |
| Existential Process | a process that expresses an existence of something, such as an entity, action, or event |

Interpersonal Metafunction

Interpersonal metafunction refers to the participation of the language function (Halliday 2007: 184). It deals with the relation among the users or characters using pronouns, moods, modality, and formality degree. According to Muir (1972) and Halliday (1981), mood covers modality, speech function, and tone. Mood consists of the Subject and Finite, while residue consists of the remaining components of the clause. There are several types of mood which are declarative, interrogative (yes-no type and wh- type), imperative, and exclamative. Each mood deals with the speech acts which are statement, question, directive, and exclamation. Different speech act also has different language function, such as information exchange (statement), asking for information (question), demanding service (directive), and expressing attitude (exclamation).

Textual Metafunction

The textual metafunction refers to how the ideational and interpersonal meanings are realized in the form of structure and cohesion (Halliday, 2007). Therefore, this function deals with the organization of the information. The structure focuses on the theme and rheme of the clause. Theme refers to the "point of departure" of the message in the clause (Halliday 1994, buku biru). Thus, theme covers the message of the text (Halliday, 1981). Rheme refers to the other components in the clause. Theme is always located in the initial position, while rheme is always located in the non-initial position. However, this may not be the case if the clause includes "dummy it". Theme can be marked or unmarked. Marked theme refers to the unusual structure of a clause, while unmarked theme refers to the common structure of a clause.

Moreover, textual function also include cohesion, the "non-structural text-forming relations" (Halliday and Hasan 1976: 7). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), there are several cohesive devices such as ellipsis, substitution, referencing, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. However, this paper will focus only on referencing using personal pronouns and possessive determiners.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses SFG to identify the ideology in the lyric of "Bohemian Rhapsody". This lyric was broken down into 44 clauses. Then, the clauses were analyzed using the three metafunctions of SFG. These metafunctions include ideational (transitivity), interpersonal (mood and point of view), and textual (theme). In the transitivity analysis, the clauses were analyzed based on their process types (Halliday, 2004). In the interpersonal analysis, the

mood, point of view, speech act, and language function of each clause or sentence is analyzed. In the textual analysis, the relation between paragraphs and theme were determined and analyzed. From these three functions, the ideology of the writer was then analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the findings and discussion section, this paper will analyze the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. Ideational function covers transitivity. Interpersonal function covers mood, speech act, language function, and the portrayal of the character. Textual function covers relations between paragraphs, and theme.

Ideational Function

According to Halliday (2007), ideational function refers to the "content function of language". This function can be analyzed using transitivity. It deals with the events and situations along with all of the actions, processes, and entities that are involved (Halliday, 1985). There are 6 types of process which are material, behavioral, mental, verbal, relational, and existential process (Halliday, 1976).

The concept of transitivity in Halliday's grammatical system is a tool in analyzing the meanings expressed in clauses. Halliday proposed six process types. However, in this song, most of the process types found are relational process and material process. There are a great number of mental processes because these processes are used to describe the hero's personal struggle. Similarly, material processes are used frequently because this type of process describes the doing and happening of something.

1. Mental Processes

The dominant actor in this story is the unnamed boy, or the "hero" who takes part as lead character in this song. As this song is all about personal psychological experience, mental process is the dominant process exists in the lyric. Below are some examples of mental processes that describe the grandmother's appearance and behaviors:

> "*Caught* in a landslide, No escape from reality."
> "I *see* a little silhouetto of a man,."
> "*Sent* shivers down my spine"
> "I'm just a poor boy, nobody *loves* me."

From the mental processes found in the story, it can be seen that the main theme of this song is about the boy's mental struggle in dealing regretting his past deeds when he killed someone, and how he goes along ever since.

2. Material Processes

Another process which is dominant in this story is material process. This process exists the most in the second part of the song (the one after the acapella intro part), when the boy

explain what he had done, and how he killed that man as it is described when the boy confessed to his mother. The examples of this process are:

> "*Put* a gun against his head,"
> "*Pulled* my trigger now he's dead."
> "Mama, just *killed* a man,"

The author uses this type of material process mostly to describe how the boy killed a man in the second part of the song or famously called as confession part.

3. Relational Processes

There are only a few mental processes found in the song, found most on the opera part which portrays the abyss the boy is dealing with. Relational process takes part when two sides (depicted as heaven and hell) both want him. The following are some examples of the mental processes in the story:

> "*I'm just a poor boy*, nobody loves me."
> "*He's just a poor* boy from a poor family,"
> "*Beelzebub has a devil put aside for me*, for me, for me"

The use of relational process can mention what attributes the boy possesses in the song. Moreover, this relational process found in the opera part of the song is the implication of material process shown in the second part of the song. Thus, relational process here is a result of the boy's material process he had done previously, about the attribute and the value he possess.

Interpersonal Function

Interpersonal metafunction refers to the participation of the language function (Halliday 2007: 184). It deals with the relation among the users or characters through the use of pronouns, moods, modality, and formality degree. As Muir (1972) and Halliday (1981) proposed, mood covers modality, speech function, and tone. Mood consists of the Subject and Finite, while residue consists of the rest components of the clause. Types of mood can be elaborated into declarative, interrogative (yes-no type and wh- type), imperative, and exclamative. Each mood deals with the speech acts which are statement, question, directive, and exclamation

The interpersonal function also expresses the role relationships associated with the situation, which also relates to *tenor* or interactivity. Thus, in this function, the existences of the people or circumstantial portrayals are mentioned in this function. There are three sub-points of interpersonal function discussed in this paper which are mood, speech act, and the portrayals of the grandmother by the author.

This relationship is expressed through the way the author describes grandmother's appearance and behaviors throughout the story.

1. Mood

There are only three types of mood found on the story out of five. This story only has declarative as the dominant mood in the song, while interrogative and imperative moods only occur as a minor variety. The type of moods which are missing in this story is exclamative. It may happen because the song mostly consists of declarative, of how the boy gives new information and the dialogue between the boy, heaven, and hell. Moreover, about 86% of the sentences have declarative mood. This percentage shows how descriptive the song is. Below are some examples of moods found in the story.

Table: 2 Mood

Mood	Examples
Declarative	• Because I'm easy come, easy go, Little high, little low, • Too late, my time has come, • Anyway the wind blows. • Mama, Didn't mean to make you cry,
Interrogative	• "Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the Fandango?" • "Easy come, easy go, will you let me go?" • So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye? • So you think you can love me and leave me to die?
Imperative	• Bismillah! We will not let you go. (*Let me go!*) • Bismillah! We will not let you go. (*Let him go!*)

2. Speech Act and Language Function

Table: 3 Speech act

Speech Act	Examples
Statement	• Mama, life had just begun, • He's just a poor boy from a poor family, Spare him his life from this monstrosity. • Nothing really matters, Anyone can see, • I see a little silhouetto of a man,
Question	• "Scaramouche, Scaramouche, *will you do the Fandango?*" • "Easy come, easy go, *will you let me go?*" • So you think you can stone me and spit in my eye? • So you think you can love me and leave me to die?

As mentioned above in the previous sub-point, description is the dominant composition of this story. Therefore, it can be concluded that all of the declarative sentences in this story are statements. The language function of those sentences is to give information about the boy's experience and psychological condition. On the other hand, there are four sentences which are considered as questions. Still, these questions appear when the boy experienced many things during the opera part of the song, in the abyss of his mind.

3. The Portrayals of "The Boy"

The relationship between the grandmother and his grandson can also be seen through the portrayal of the grandmother. Below are some examples of how the portrayals of grandmother are used by the writer.

Table: 4 The Portrayal of "The Boy"

The Portrayals of "The Boy"	Examples
Describing feelings	• Is this the real life? • Is this just fantasy? • Sent shivers down my spine, • Body's aching all the time.
Describing behavior	• Nothing really matters to me. • Thunderbolt and lightning, Very, very frightening me.
Describing past experience (appearance)	• Mama, just killed a man, • Put a gun against his head, • Pulled my trigger now he's dead
Describing existence	"I see a little silhouette of a man"
Asking for permission	"Easy come, easy go, will you let me go?"

From the use of the moods, speech acts, and expressions, it can be seen that the main protagonist in this story is dealing with serious mental struggle. Throughout the story, it seems like the boy tries to conquer the feeling of being guilt and tried to get over the haunt of past dark deeds. In the story, the author also tends to use some gloomy adjectives, such as "I'm just a *poor* boy", "monstrosity", so on. The author describes the boy as a person who had a journey in order to find his redemption from the misery of his dark past. This song also portrays the circle of the boy's journey from point A, where he started by confession and regretting, to point B, where he struggles with the inner-mind imagination; and then finally return to the anti-climax point by saying *"nothing really matters…"*. It is shown how the boy's point of view is the key in this story, as shown by the using of possessive pronouns in the song, and how the point of view is set to self-center point of view (the boy's).

> "Too late, *my* time has come"
> "No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Oh, mama mia, mama mia (Mama mia, let me go.) Beelzebub has a devil put aside *for me, for me, for me*"

Textual Function

One of the functions proposed by Halliday (1985) is textual function. The textual metafunction refers to how the ideational and interpersonal meanings are realized in the form of structure and cohesion (Halliday, 2007). Therefore, this function deals with the organization of the information. As it also deals with the cohesion between paragraphs in

building a meaning of a text, below are the description of how the paragraphs in this story composed.

Table: 5 Relations between paragraphs

Part 1: Acapella	The first part is mostly about the introduction to the story, or in this case, we may say it as "the beginning of a journey". In this part, the story begins with the thought of the boy towards his personal condition now. In this part, the tense used is simple present tense which concludes that this paragraph is a description about the his present condition, with only one passive sentence: "caught in the landslide" to show what makes his condition as it is
Part 2: Piano Ballad	• This paragraph tells about the boy's confession to his mom about his past dark deeds. • The first tense used in this part is past tense which is used to inform what he had just done lately. Later it followed by past perfect tense to emphasize the beginning of a new part
Part 3: Opera Part	The third part tells about the situation in the abyss when the boy had confrontation with "heaven and hell" the tense used in this part is present tense which shows that the story keeps on rolling simultaneously
Part 4: Triumph	The triumph part tells about how the boy get over it (the previous situation), and he also reset his mindset in this part
Part 5: Conclusion	The very last part of the song is the conclusion and the final thought of the boy. In this part, the boy ensure himself to get over it as it is said in the song *"Nothing really matters"*, *"Anyway the wind blows"*

Ideology

The ideology used in this song as depicted on the boy's belief is the opinion towards how life should be. This is clearly depicted in the song by how the speaker, who also takes part as the main character of the story tells the story as a whole with a single flow; without any repetition like any other popular and mainstream pattern of a song (verse-chorus), starting from his own thought towards how his life has become until the final decision he takes. Through this song also, the concept of life as a timeline, starting from A to B, is portrayed here. Simply, the ideology used as a main value in this song is *"Que Sera, Sera"; whatever will be, will be*. Hence, it also shows how the character of the boy in this song finally surrenders himself to the fate and path he has to take, *"Anyway the wind blows"*.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the three metafunctions has found the ideology shared by the author through the portrayal of hero's action in this song. The author believes no matter what happens, anyway the wind will still blow, and everything that happened in the past is in the

past. The feeling of guilt and regret shown by the hero in the earlier part of the song only brings him to the confusion and doubt. From the ideational and interpersonal function, it is observed that the author's experience a great struggle in dealing with his dark deeds in the past. From the textual function, it is observed how the author's experience that helps him in forming his ideology.

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