



Critical Discourse Analysis of Imagine by John Lennon: An Iconic Song

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Abstract

Song lyrics will communicate several concepts, including saying something, conveying the author's experience and generating comments or opinions from listeners. Song lyrics are also the author's hidden messages or expressions of the author's heart. This study aims to describe the text analysis of Imagine by John Lennon and the elements of social cognition and context in the song. This research is library research with a qualitative descriptive method, and the approach used is the critical discourse analysis of Teun A. van Dijk. The research data is the lyrics of the song 'Imagine' by John Lennon. This finding shows that the diction used in the lyric is cohesive and coherent to support the song's meaning. Moreover, social cognition has relation to the contemporary social context, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

Keywords: song, discourse, social cognition.

INTRODUCTION

Language has always been fascinating to study because of its relationship with humans (Arifin, 2019). Language is essential in human life as the primary means of communication. Humans often use language to convey ideas, thoughts, feeling, experiences, intentions, opinions, and forth.

Song is formed through expressing feelings, outbursts, or pictures of the author's life. Song lyrics will communicate several concepts, including saying something, conveying the author's experience and generating comments or opinions from listeners. Song lyrics are also the author's hidden messages or expressions of the author's heart (Imam, 2012). Communication that occurs through the song is when the listener can understand the message or intent of the song, so there will be an interaction of someone with the world. The message contained in a song can invite, provoke and teach something to the listeners.

Song Lyrics is a discourse. Discourse is a series of sentences interrelated and contain the most complete, extensive and highest language units, can be delivered both orally (speech, lectures, sermons, dialogues) or in written form (short stories, novels, books, letters, written documents) that is cohesive and coherence (Saraswati, 2019). The term discourse refers to conversation, speaking in public, plays, and writing such as scientific reports. In order to know the meaning contained in a discourse, further research is needed. Research related to discourse is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis in social practice examines all aspects of phonological, morphological, syntactic, and language use at the social level. Discourse analysis tries to explain how language can reveal social reality (Fairclough, 2013).

There are three views in discourse analysis, namely empirical-positivism, constructivism, and critical views. This critical view is then called critical discourse analysis. The advantage of critical discourse analysis compared to other discourse analyses is its ability to reveal more deeply the content of discourse.

Research on song lyrics is essential to do so that the object of linguistic research is not only limited to poetry, prose, and drama scripts. Linguistic researchers are responsible for researching song lyrics to show the audience the meaning and intent that a songwriter wants to convey to his listeners.

Many linguistic types of research on song lyrics have been carried out. However, research on critical discourse analysis with the theory of Teun A. Van Dijk and the object of song lyrics *Imagine* has never been done as far as the author knows.

One of the linguistic researches on song lyrics is analyzing 'We Shall Overcome' song (Putri & Triyono, 2018). This study analyses text, social cognition, and social context in song lyrics. The song was analyzed using Van Dijk's discourse analysis model. This research shows that the diction used in the lyric is cohesive

and coherent to support the meaning of the song. The social cognition of the song lyric is also correlated with the social context currently happens in Palestine.

The object material in this research is different from previous research. The song 'Imagine' was composed by John Lennon in 1971. This song was created in the 19th century, so this research aims to observe the social cognition and the current social context. The finding of the research is also expected to encourage other researchers to analyze song lyrics. As previously explained, linguistic researchers are responsible for analyzing or researching song lyrics. Research on song lyrics attempts to convey the meaning and intent that the songwriters want to convey to their listeners. It is a form of appreciation from a researcher toward musicians or artists.

The Iconic Song 'Imagine'

When it comes to the best song of all time, the iconic song Imagine by John Lennon is the answer. The song is a peace song. The song was released in 1971, number 3 on the Billboard Hot 100 and number 6 in the United Kingdom. In 2004, the song was voted the third best song of all time by Rolling Stone magazine. Even the former president of the United States, Jimmy Carter, revealed that the song "Imagine" was played in nearly 125 countries he had visited. It was as frequent as the national anthem. According to John, this is a song with a message of peace. Many people have confirmed this, so the song is often used as a peace hymn.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is considered a theory and method that empirically examines the relationship between discourse and social development (Maman et al., 2021). Critical discourse analysis analyzes social relations hidden through linguistic elements.

Some of the critical discourse analysis models offered are the model of Norman Fairclough, Sara Mills, Teun A. Van Dijk, and others. The model presented by Van Dijk considers discourse not only as the result of text analysis but also the result of production practices that determine discourse (Oktoma & Amalia, 2018). There are three dimensions of Van Dijk's discourse: text, text cognition, and social context (Eriyanto, 2001). The text dimension analyzes the themes in discourse, and the social cognition dimension analyzes the process of text production. Meanwhile, the social context dimension analyzes how discourse develops in society.

According to Van Dijk, the structure of the text can be divided into three parts: the macro structure, superstructure, and microstructure. The macro structure examines the text's theme, and the superstructure examines the framework of a text consisting of schematics. In contrast, the microstructure consists of semantics, syntax, and rhetoric.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is library research with a qualitative descriptive method. The approach used is one of the linguistic approaches, namely critical discourse analysis. The theory used is critical discourse analysis model of Teun A. van Dijk.

The primary data are the lyrics of the song 'Imagine' by John Lennon. The secondary data in this study consists of academic books and scientific publications on linguistics, especially the theory of CDA by Teun A. van Dijk to support data analysis in the sub-chapter discussing text analysis. In addition to academic books and scientific research, other secondary data used in this research are articles containing information about the process of creating the song 'Imagine' and other information about songs to support data analysis in the sub-chapter on social cognition and social context.

This research consists of three techniques: data collection techniques, data analysis, and presentation of results. In collecting data, the song 'Imagine' lyrics are listened to through the Youtube application, while the lyrics are read through the LyricFind website.

The following technique is data analysis. In data analysis, the song 'Imagine' is listened to repeatedly, and the lyrics are read, absorbed, and related to each component of the text analysis. The text analysis focuses on the 'Imagine' lyrics. Meanwhile, in cognition and social context, other information is needed about John Lennon's process in creating the lyrics of 'Imagine' and how the song developed in society. That is why the secondary data in this research are not only from academic books and scientific publications but also from other articles that contain information about John Lennon and the song lyric of *Imagine*.

The last technique is the presentation of the results. In presenting the results, the theory of critical discourse analysis of Teun A. van Dijk's model is applied in the lyrics of 'Imagine'. Discourse structure consisting of thematic, schematic, semantic, syntactic, stylistic, and rhetorical will be presented in the sub-chapter discussion of text analysis. Meanwhile, the production and distribution process for the song 'Imagine' will be described in the sub-chapter on social cognition and social context.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes data findings and critical discourse analysis on John Lennon's song, *Imagine*. The model used to analyze the song lyrics is the critical discourse analysis of Teun A. van Dijk. The dimensions are text, social cognition, and social context.

Text Analysis

Text analysis is divided into three sections. Firstly, the macro structure is interpreted as examining the general meaning of a text. Secondly, the superstructure is related to the structure of discourse. Thirdly, the microstructure is related to the meaning of discourse explored from a small part of a text.

Macrostructure

Macrostructure refers to the overall meaning (global meaning) observed from the theme or topic raised by the text. The text's theme is not seen explicitly but is included in the whole text in a coherent form. So, the readers can find the theme by reading the whole text. It will help readers conclude one main idea or topic developed in the text. Theme shows the text's most important or core information to convey to the reader. The general theme is also supported by one sub-theme with each other.

The song, *Imagine*, has general theme of inviting all human beings to create a peaceful world. This song was created based on Jhon Lennon's concern regarding the war between the United States and Vietnam and invites people to love peace (Wijayanto, 2013). The song was composed during the Vietnam war era; it has continued to resonate strongly in every conflict the world has faced since the 1970s (Arkan, 2021b). The general theme is also supported by subthemes. The themes and sub-themes of this song can be seen in the following table.

Lyrics	Stanza	Structure of The Song
Imagine there's no heaven It's easy if you try No hell below us Above us, only sky Imagine all the people Livin' for today Ah	1	Verse Chorus
Imagine there's no countries It isn't hard to do Nothing to kill or die for And no religion, too Imagine all the people Livin' life in peace You	2	Verse Chorus
You may say I'm a dreamer But I'm not the only one I hope someday you'll join us And the world will be as one	3	Bridge
Imagine no possessions I wonder if you can No need for greed or hunger A brotherhood of man Imagine all the people Sharing all the world You	4	Verse Chorus
You may say I'm a dreamer But I'm not the only one I hope someday you'll join us And the world will live as one (Lennon, 1971)	5	Outro

Table 1. *Imagine* Song Lyric, Stanza, and Structure

After analyzing the text, it found several lyrics that represent the macrostructure. The lyrics in bold type contain several sub-themes that correlate with each other to form and support a common theme. John Lennon, the writer of the song *Imagine*, invites listeners to imagine the factors that can cause the world to be not at peace.

In the first stanza, the listeners are invited to imagine the absence of heaven and hell. It is because both heaven and hell are often used as an excuse for certain people to justify things that are not even right in the name of religion. The songwriter implicitly questions the existence of heaven offered by religion, but people who follow religion instead fight wars and do not create world peace. It makes the songwriter invites people to imagine the absence of heaven and hell. Every human being is equal and has no right to judge other people's lives. Therefore, humans should focus on their lives in the present because heaven and hell are determined after death.

In the second stanza, the listeners are again invited to imagine the absence of a state and religion. These two things are symbolic forms of boundaries, ethnicity, race, and culture closely related to differences. Most conflicts are caused by certain groups with the boundaries that have ambitions to dominate something. If they want to take control of something, there will be a war over something they want to take control of. It causes terrible conditions such as killing each other, and many people will be injured and become victims. If there is no war, then humans will live in peace.

In the third stanza, John Lennon shows himself as someone who dreams of peace. However, the songwriter doubts that he is not the only one dreaming of peace. Many people, and maybe all over the world, dream of peace. The songwriter hopes that people who dream of peace will unite in carrying out the vision and mission of peace to create a peaceful world. Nevertheless, everyone should contribute to creating a peaceful world.

In the fourth stanza, John Lennon again invites listeners to imagine the absence of a sense of belonging and control over the things that exist on earth. However, the songwriter doubts this because he does not believe everyone can do it. Humans are often obsessed with wealth, so they become greedy. The songwriter invites people to imagine that there is no human being who continues to feel hungry and greedy which can cause conflict. If humans do not feel greedy for property, humans will love each other and share with fellow humans. So, no human feels like a ruler and can live together by sharing.

At the end of the stanza, the songwriter re-emphasizes his listeners his dream of peace. However, he remains convinced that he is not alone in dreaming of peace. The songwriter again hopes that many people with the same vision and mission can join and try to create world peace.

Superstructure

Superstructure or schema in song lyrics explains the structure or elements that construct a song. The scheme or structure of the song consists of several elements, including introduction, verse, bridge, chorus, chorus, interlude, overtone, ending, and coda.

The schematic or structure of the song *Imagine* by John Lennon can be seen from the table 1. Based on the table above, *Imagine* song elements consist of an intro, verse, chorus, bridge, and outro (Arkan, 2021a).

The first schematic element in the song is the title. The title of this song is *Imagine*. Song titles are usually created to stimulate the imagination of listeners. The title song *Imagine* makes listeners curious about the contents of the song. So, the word *Imagine* is used to represent the song's content.

This song begins with the sound of walking feet and birds chirping and starts with song instruments as an introduction. The introduction appears before the singer sings the stanzas of the song.

The songwriter begins the song without any preamble and immediately conveys the message in the first stanza. There are five stanzas in this song. The first, second, and fourth stanzas consist of a verse and a chorus. The third stanza is a bridge, and the fifth stanza is an outro.

The verse is the unit of introduction and followed by the chorus. The verse and chorus sections are conditional statements or if-then *arguments* used to regulate the flow of logical thinking. If there is no difference between who will go to heaven and hell, then humans will focus on living right now; if there is no conflict between countries and religions, then peace will be created; if there is no sense of covetousness, then humans will share.

The bridge is the core part of the songwriter's message, inviting people to create world peace. on the outro element, the author returns to convey the same message as the bridge section. It shows that there is an emphasis that world peace can be realized if everyone strives to achieve it.

Microstructure

The third structure in van Dijk's discourse analysis model is the microstructure. The microstructure consists of semantics, syntax, stylistics, and rhetoric. Words, Clauses, Sentences, and other small text parts can help analyze discourse. Semantics elements, in this case, are categorized as local meaning arising from

the relationship between sentences, the relationship between propositions that builds a particular meaning in a text.

The term 'imagine' has many meanings depending on whoever interprets it. It also leads to something that can neither be visualized nor described clearly. The choice of this term is according to the context desired by the songwriter -peace- an abstract condition. Listeners can feel peace without coercion and anger through song lyrics. The term 'imagine' appears several times in the lyrics, such as: *living for today, living life in peace, and sharing all the world*. It means a message to everyone who listens to the song to make the world peaceful.

Syntactic element analyses the form and structure of the selected and used sentences. Syntactic in van Dijk's discourse analysis consists of sentence form, coherence, and pronouns, use of active or passive sentences, placement of clauses, complex sentences, and so on. Based on data, there are syntactic elements that makeup song lyrics. First, there are five imperative sentences from the lyric: *Imagine there's no heaven, Imagine all the people livin' for today, Imagine there's no countries, Imagine all the people livin' life in peace, Imagine no possessions, Imagine all the people sharing all the world*. Second, there are declarative sentences from the lyric: *You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one, I hope someday you'll join us and the world will be as one, I hope someday you'll join us and the world will live as one*. Third, there are one negative simple sentence: *It isn't hard to do* and one complex sentence: *It's easy if you try*. Fourth, there is transitive verb: imagine, hope, say, and wonder. Fifth, there are personal subject pronoun: I and You.

Stylistic elements are style elements of a text and diction used in the text. Stylistics is closely related to language style and consists of a lexicon. A text can display style through diction/choice of words, sentences, the figure of speech, dimensions, or other linguistic characteristics. Based on the data there are stylistics elements such as alliteration and enjambment. Alliteration is a language style in the form of repetition of the same consonant sound (Cui, 2012) such as: *living life* (second stanza) create the same phonetic /l/, *world will* (third stanza) create the same phonetic /w/, and *no need* (fourth stanza) create the same phonetic /n/. Enjambement is the termination of a sentence to be placed on the following line, emphasizing meaning (Nasution & Andriyani, 2022). Between stanzas 2 and 3, stanzas 4 and 5, the lines end with the word 'you'.

The rhetoric element is closely related to how the emphasis on a particular text is carried out. Rhetorical here is the style expressed when someone speaks or writes It is including hyperbole, repetition, alliteration, or others.

Songwriter usually conveys messages implicitly using figurative language Based on the data there are rhetorical elements such: metaphors, hyperbole, paradox, simile, and repetition that can be seen in the data below.

Figurative Language	Lyrics
Hyperbole	Sharing all the world
Paradox	Nothing to kill or die
Simile	The world will be as one
Repetition	Imagine
Metaphor	Imagine there is no countries

Table 2. Figurative Language in *Imagine* lyric song

Social Cognition

Social cognition is the production process of an author. In social cognition, the process of producing news texts involves the individual cognition of journalists. The song 'Imagine' is about peace and love, and many things had been inspirations for creating this song. The book *Grapefruit*, written by his wife Yoko Ono, inspired this song. In this book, several poems wrote the word 'imagine'. John Lennon said the song 'Imagine' would not exist without Yoko's inspiration. According to Yoko, this the song is also inspired by the relationship between the two (Macdonald, 2019). Both partners received so much racism because of differences in social strata at that time. Yoko is an Asian woman, so she is considered unsuitable for Lennon. This song is also inspired by the Christian prayer book given by Dick Gregory (Eames, 2020). Lennon said that religion should be positive without feeling that the god in one religion is greater and better than the god in another.

Among some things that inspired songwriting, Lennon said to put a political message in by adding a little honey when interviewed about the song 'Imagine' (O'Gorman, 2022). At the same time, Lennon seemed more interested in political issues marked by his campaign for peace, where there was a war between Vietnam and the United States. The song was made to encourage people to create a peaceful world. It clearly shows a connection between 'Imagine' song and society that occurred at that time. The stanzas of the song and social conditions are closely related. It can be concluded that the writer produces a discourse through his understanding of society.

Social Context

Social context is closely related to how discourse is accepted and developed in society. Many people interpret the song 'Imagine' in different ways. Sometimes the song is considered anti-religious because of the phrase *no religion*, considered anti-nationalistic because of the phrase *no country*, and anti-capitalistic because of the phrase *no possession* (Neal, 2021). A world church once asked Lennon to change the phrase no religion to one religion (Ulster, 2019). However, he refused the request because it would change the aim of the song. Even after his death, his wife Ono was repeatedly met by groups who wanted to change the phrase.

Nevertheless, despite the negative assumptions about this song, many people make this a song of peace. Stevie Wonder sang this song to honor the victims of the Centennial Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta, the United States, in 1996. Madonna also sang this song to raise funds for the tsunami victims in the Indian Ocean. The 39th president of America, Jimmy Carter, said that he had heard the song in 125 countries was almost like the national anthem (Taysom, 2020).

Recently the song 'Imagine' was re-released by John Lennon's son Julian Lennon in fundraising for the Ukrainian people (Janati, 2022). The war between Russia and Ukraine has caused many civilian deaths. The war is very detrimental to many people. Many singers often use this song to help victims of war and campaign for world peace.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study are divided into text analysis, social cognition, and social context. Text analysis is thematic, schematic, syntactic, stylistic, and rhetorical elements.; thematically reveals the theme that John Lennon wants to convey, namely peace. The Schematic divides the structure of the song. Syntax shows the assonance used in the song, semantics plays a role in finding the meaning of the lyrics, and rhetorical shows the language style used as an affirmation. On aspects of social cognition in the song 'Imagine.' The song was made to encourage people to create a peaceful world. It clearly shows a connection between the 'Imagine' song and society that occurred at that time. The stanzas of the song and social conditions are closely related. On the social context aspect of the song 'Imagine,' the song 'Imagine' was re-released by John Lennon's son Julian Lennon in fundraising for the Ukrainian people. The social context is related to the war between Russia and Ukraine that has caused many civilian deaths.

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