



Senior High School Students' Ability in Analyzing the Meaning of Song in English

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate senior high school students' ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English. The participants of this research were 20 students grade eleventh in SMA Pembangunan Laboratorium UNP who take the English subject as their elective subject. This study is descriptive research with a qualitative approach. The result of the test given showed that the students' ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English was in the category of poor. It was shown by the students' difficulties in elaborating their ideas into some paragraphs and the students' difficulties in concluding convincing evidence in the body paragraph.

Keywords:

Ability, Analysis, Theme, Song, Meaning

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INTRODUCTION

In improving the quality of education in Indonesia, the Ministry of Education makes changes to the education curriculum. One of the efforts that the government has done to do so is the implementation of a new curriculum which is called Curriculum 2013. This curriculum is an improvement of the previous curriculum known as Curriculum 2006 or KTSP. Under this new curriculum, English subject for Senior High School is taught in two different categories; English as a compulsory subject and English as an elective subject. English as a compulsory subject is required for senior high school students regardless of their stream of major. Meanwhile, English as an elective subject can be taken by non-language major students. In this subject, the students are taught special functional texts such as literary texts which include proverb and riddle, poem, and song. Unlike other literary texts, song is taught in both compulsory English subjects and English as an elective subject.

In Curriculum 2013, the literary texts are learned to help students in accomplishing certain tasks or work. For example, students are able to understand and produce texts both in oral and written form in various contexts. Then, students are enriched with knowledge about topics of text, the models, and in what activities the text is used, for example in a performance of art or literature work. In this case, students learn song in English with the aim that they are able to understand the meaning of song, social function, and the linguistic elements of the song.

Furthermore, these abilities are expected to be the skills which help them to accomplish certain task or work such as understanding and producing texts both in oral and written from various contexts.

Songs can be defined as a sequence of words that are sung with rhythm and tone (Suyanto, 2008). Furthermore, Goldmacher (2014) states that song is a writer's story told in the lyrics and followed by melody. Moreover, Guerra (2016) explains that "a song is a composition made up of lyrics and music, with the intent of the lyrics being sung to produce a proportionate feeling or emotion about a particular matter". To summarize, songs are a set of words showed in the lyrics and followed by music.

In English language classrooms, the learning of songs in English has some particular advantages. Among others, songs can enhance students' critical thinking ability (Harmastuty, 2016; Julien, 2016; Casas, 2018). In this regard, songs have meaning that the writer wants to show. Therefore, critical thinking ability is the main ability that the students need when they try to get the meaning of the song. Furthermore, some of the meaning in the songs are not derived from the words written. Therefore, students need to think beyond the words written and think deeper about the meaning meant by the songwriter.

In addition, studies on the teaching of song in English language classrooms are in abundance. The studies tend to focus on both language components and language skills. Some of the studies are the use of song as a way for learners to learn new vocabulary in English language classroom (Siskova, 2009; Phisutthangkoon, 2016; Gasma, 2017). Second, *songs* as a valuable *teaching* and learning tool to teach pronunciation in EFL classroom (Villalobos, 2007; Millington, 2011; Borland, 2015). Third, song as an enjoyable way to teach grammar (Tsai, 2001; Folse, 2006; Aarsheim, 2019). Fifth, Song used as a useful way to improve listening skills (Sevik, 2012; Wang, 2013; Mobbs, 2018). Lastly, there is a research about the use of songs as a tool to improve students' speaking ability (Shen, 2009; Hakim, 2014).

Although some studies have shown that song has various advantages in English language classroom, there are also problems that might happen to students when song is used in English language classroom. When it comes to the meaning, students find it difficult to understand the inferential meaning of song though they were familiar with literal meaning of words (Goh, 2000). Second, students find it difficult to understand some of lexical meaning of words in the song (Fabon, 2013; Kusriani, 2017). Third, students find it difficult to understand the implied meaning of song in English (Dwi, 2017).

There have been several studies related to song in English language classroom. To the best of my knowledge, the topic related to students' ability to analyze the deeper meaning of songs in English is still far between. On the other hand, Curriculum 2013 demands that students able to understand the meaning of songs, social functions, and the linguistic elements of the song. Thus, this research will analyze the students' ability in analyzing the deeper meaning of songs in English.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research. According to Creswell (2012) qualitative research is the most suitable for research problems where the researcher do not know the variables and need to analyze. Moreover, according to Lodico (2010) qualitative research is done by collecting and summarizing data using primarily narrative or verbal method like observations, interviews, and document analysis. Additionally, according to Nassaji (2015) the goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. As the researcher is going to analyze the phenomenon happens to students and then describe the data in descriptive form, it seems to be appropriate to use a qualitative method in conducting this research.

The population of this this research involved all grade twelfth students of SMA Pembangunan Laboratorium UNP. And use the cluster sample. And then, The class that the researcher used was class XI MIA 1. With the result, the number of sample are 21 students.

The instrumentation of this research was a writing test. This written test was aimed at finding out students' ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English. The students will write an essay to present their understanding about the meaning of the song. By nature, their essay fall into the category of an explanatory essay. Explanatory essay is a type of writing in which the author presents some point of view on a certain topic, event, or situation. In introduction paragraph, the writer will present a thesis statement to show what the reader will be informed about. Then, in the body paragraphs, the writer will include specific reasons, details, facts, and quotations from selections and outside resources to strengthen the thesis statement. The last is conclusion paragraph that gives the author opportunity to summarize the essay. Furthermore, this kind of essay has been learned by the students in previous grade, especially in grade X semester 2.

The song given to the students was a song by Michael Jackson entitled "Heal the World". This was the sixth single released from Jackson's 1991 album Dangerous. Jackson wrote and produced this song by himself. The music video for the song was directed by Joe Pytka and features children living in countries suffering from unrest, especially Burundi.

The essay would be written by students in three up to five paragraphs (150-250 words). The duration for creating the essay would be about 45 minutes. Students' ability to write the explanatory essay helped the researcher to find out students' ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English. Furthermore, the researcher assessed the students' essay based on the rubric assessment of explanatory essay. In theory, there are three elements of explanatory essay such as: Focus and Organization, Evidence and Elaboration and Conventions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION.

Data description

The purpose of this research was to find out senior high school students' ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English. The population of this research was all senior high school students grade XI of SMA Pembangunan Laboratorium UNP. The total of sample in this study was 20 students. To get the data, the test took

place on July, 25th 2020 by using Google classroom. The data were collected from the students' explanatory essay related to the meaning found in song "Heal the World" by Michael Jackson.

Based on the result of the test, it was found that there were three themes of the song appeared based on the students' analysis. Most of the students found that the theme of the song was related to the problems happened in this world like war, riots, discrimination, inequality, and even pandemics. However, the assessment toward students' explanatory essay showed that the students' ability to analyze the meaning of song in English was in the category of poor. There were two main problems found in students' explanatory essay. First, the students had problem in the element of organization. Then, the students had problem in the element of evidence of the essay.

The following table showed the themes of song found by the students on the test given.

No	Theme	Total Student
1.	The theme of the song is about problems happened in this world like war, riots, discrimination, inequality, and even pandemics.	10
2.	The theme of the song is about a reminder for all humans to create sense of love, empathy, and concern in the hearts.	6
3.	The theme of the song is about the author's concern with the lives of children as the next generation that the song writer wants the world become a safer place for children to live.	4

Table 4.1 showed that there were three themes appeared based on the students' analysis toward the song "Heal the World" by Michael Jackson. It can be seen that there were 10 students who said that the theme of the song was about problems happened in this world like war, riots, discrimination, inequality, and even pandemics. Further, there were 6 students who found that the theme of the song was about a reminder for all humans to create sense of love, empathy, and concern in the hearts. Lastly, 4 students found that the theme of the song was about the author's concern with the lives of children as the next generation that the song writer wants the world become a safer place for children to live.

The explanation in the essay which said that the theme of the song is related to the problems happened in this world like war, riots, discrimination, inequality, and even pandemics was also concluded with statements that there is songwriter's hope for humans to have awareness for the problems, since there are many people seem to close their eyes about the issues. Further, the song writer hopes that this earth become a safe and comfortable to live in.

Furthermore, the students who said that the theme of the song is about reminder for all human beings to foster the sense of love, empathy, and care in the hearts as well as good deeds said in particular that love has power and cannot lie.

Then, love has power to change the world for the better, full of peace, less fear, no more quarrels, struggles, and sadness. Further, there was also student who said that there was a hunger problem which could end if people had empathy for the incident. The more people do goodness and invite others to do goodness, many problems in this world will be resolved.

Lastly, the students who found that the theme of the song was about the author's concern with the lives of children as the next generation also said that the author's hopes children's lives in the world become better and get more attention. He hopes there is life that is safe and without fear. The students also said that all of that can be realized as long as humans have a sense of love, concern, empathy, and help each other.

The three themes found by the students above were generally included in the common song themes. Further, the researcher described the students' ability to explain their ideas in the form of explanatory essay related to the song in English given on the test. The following was the table that showed the students' ability in writing explanatory essay.

Table 4.1 Students' Ability in Writing Explanatory Essay

Criteria	Range of Score	Frequency of Students
Excellent	80-100	0 Students
Good	60-79	0 Students
Fair	50-59	3 Students
Poor	0-49	17 Students

In general, the results on the Table 4.1 showed that students' ability in analyzing in form of essay falls under the category of poor (17). There were (3) students whose in the category of fair. While, there were no students whose were under the category of good and excellent. Thus, it can be concluded that the students' ability in explaining in form of explanatory essay was under the category of poor. For more details, the following table showed the students' abilities based on the three elements of explanatory essay writing.

Table 4.2 Students' Score in Every Element of Explanatory Essay

Elements of Explanatory Essay	Score	Criteria
Focus and Organization	24	Poor
Evidence and Elaboration	23	Poor
Conventions	24	Poor

Table 4.2 showed that the students' abilities for each element of explanatory essay writing was in the category of poor. From all elements, there were two difficulties which indicated that the students had problems in analyzing the meaning of song in English. First, the students had problem in organization of the essay. Second, the students were lack in concluding convincing evidence in supporting

sentences. While, both of these element were quite important in an essay. The following essay were the examples of these problems.

Findings

Based on the data description above, there were three themes of the song appeared based on the students' analysis. There were 10 students who found that the theme of the song is about problems happened in the world like war, riots, discrimination, pandemics, and inequality. Then, there were 6 students who found that the theme of the song is about the feeling of love, empathy, and concern that should be raised in the heart of every human being. Lastly, there were 4 students who found that the song was related to the song writer's wish that this world become a safe place to live for children or the next generation.

Regarding to the students' ability to analyze in form of essay, the students' ability was generally poor. There were 17 students who were in the category of poor. There were 3 students who were in the category of fair. While, there were no students whose were under the category of good and excellent. In detail, the students had problems on the element of organization and the evidence of the essay. Therefore, the students' ability to analyze the meaning of song in English was poor.

Discussion

Based on the findings had already shown, the students were able to say the theme that they found in the song in English. It appeared three themes based on the students' analysis toward the song given on the test explained through the explanatory essay. The themes that the students found from the song were included into the common song themes such as peace and war, love, survival, and suffering. However, the students had problems in explaining their idea which showed that they had problem analyzing the theme of song in English.

The assessment toward the students' explanatory essay showed that students' ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English was in the category of poor. There were two main problems appeared in their writing. First, in the element of organization of the essay. It was found that the students were generally only able to explain their idea into one paragraph or two. While, there must be introduction paragraph, body paragraph, and conclusion paragraph.

Further, though the students had main idea in the first paragraph in their essay, it was found that the supporting sentences that the students used to clarify the main idea was not convincing for the readers. There was no students who included citation from the lyric of song to make the sentences become convincing. While, to have a convincing supporting sentences was important as it will be the assessment for the reader whether the idea in the essay can be accepted or not.

Basically, the students had already learned explanatory essay writing in previous semester. The curriculum requires them to be able to write an explanatory text with the completeness and conciseness of the text structure, the accuracy of the linguistic elements, and the suitability of the writing format. By this reason the students were asked to be able in explainin their ideas in the form of explanatory essay in order to find out students' ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English. However, the students' ability to write the explanatory essay was in the

category of poor. The students should have no difficulties in achieving explanatory essay writing criteria as they had already learned this kind of essay. By this problem, it can be concluded that the students were poor in analyzing the meaning of song in English

However, previous research showed that writing is a difficult activity for students. A research conducted by Nyasimi (2014) about challenges that students face in learning essay writing skills in English language showed that the major challenges students face in learning essay writing skills included inadequate content mastery, incorrect use of grammar, first language inference, and limited vocabulary.

Then, a research conducted by Asmarani (2018) showed that grade X students had problems in writing a proper introduction paragraphs and conclusions paragraph in essay writing. Lastly, a research conducted by Naim (2019) showed that students had problems in determining themes, creating and developing essays, expressing ideas, in using words when they were asked to write an essay.

The research above showed that writing is a difficult activity for students. There were some problems that commonly faced by students included difficulty in using words, inadequate content mastery, incorrect use of grammar, first language inference, limited vocabulary, difficulty in determining the themes, creating and developing essays.

Furthermore, another factor which causing students had poor ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English was the students' English language skill. Previous research showed some problems which causing students get difficulties in analyzing the meaning of song in English. First, a research conducted by Kusri (2017). In her research, it was found that the students got difficulties in understanding English songs because the students had a listening problem since they were lack in vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling.

Second, a study toward senior high school students in Indonesian-English translation by using song lyric by Mansyur (2018). In his study, the result showed that the students still made all kinds of errors in translation song lyric, for example in inversion, addition, omission, modification, and deviation. In another source, it was also found a research by Salwa (2016) who found students' difficulties in applying and understanding English vocabularies particularly figurative languages used in the literary work, such as poems, novels, or films.

All of the previous research above showed that there were two factors that causing students had poor ability in analyzing the meaning of song in English. First, written test is not an easy thing for students as writing has particular criteria. Second, the students were lack in English language skill like vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling. Then, in applying and understanding English vocabularies particularly figurative languages used in the literary work, such as poems, novels, or films.

However, there are some advantages in analyzing the meaning of song in English. First, it helps students to think critically. This is supported by a statement by Casas (2018) who states that song is an enormous source in the development of a critical thinking process since students are pioneers of change and future of any society. This comes from the activity in finding the meaning of song which naturally helps students in the way they think.

The statement above is supported by a study conducted by Martinez (2013) who states that critical thinking help people to analyze, reflect, make decisions, and take intelligent actions which later will lead them to accomplish a desirable outcome. Thus, though the activity of analyzing the meaning of song is difficult for students, this activity provides good advantages.

CONCLUSION

Besides, the activity of analyzing the meaning of the song has helped them to think critically. The activity of finding the meaning of song naturally helps the students to raise their critical thinking. Critical thinking help people to analyze, reflect, make decisions, and take intelligent actions which later will lead them to accomplish a desirable outcome. Thus, although the activity of analyzing or getting the meaning of literary work especially song is an activity that is generally difficult for students due to several factors, this activity provides good advantages for students.

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