

Critical Discourse Analysis in the “What a Wonderful World” Song Lyrics by Louis Armstrong

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Abstract

This research wants analyse a popular song around the world entitled “What a Wonderful World”. The song has become popular in every generation. This research follows Fairclough’s three inter-related processes of analysis tied to three inter-related dimensions of discourse as follow: (1) The object of analysis (2) The processes by means of which the object is produced and received by human as subjects. (3) The socio-historical conditions which govern these processes. The song lyric become the object of this research. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) used in analyse the song lyric by connecting to the social context in Indonesia. The result shows (1) Armstrong describes world as wonderful, although the singer himself is a black American that faced prejudice and bitterness (2) The song was written during hard time, a terrible turmoil in American society. (3) The song had released on 1967, on that time, the daily life and politic situation of America are disturbed. It is full of hatred and prejudice of racialism. The lyrics in the song offers description of how the world could be wonderful if we wonders and appreciate nature and create a good friendship, indirectly this song brings hope for the better future. Relate to the social context in Indonesia, this song lyric become as a good reminder for Indonesian to keep the wonderful, peaceful, and harmonization atmosphere, remembering Indonesia has many diverse culture, religion, racial, and ethnic. This research expected to remind people in every field not only in ELT, the power of love in giving hope for the future and to make world become better by what we are doing to the world with love nature and create a good relationship with anyone.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; What a Wonderful World by Louis Armstrong; Song Lyric

INTRODUCTION

Louis Armstrong’s has a good carrier and his legacy still continues although he passed away in 1971. It still continues to offers impact fans and artist around the world. (50 Years of “What a Wonderful World” - Louis Armstrong Home Museum, n.d.). What a wonderful world becomes one of his remarkable song. Even in this present time, Armstrong’s most popular recording; appearing in major motion pictures, racking up millions of views on YouTube and regularly leading the jazz categories on streaming music services such as Spotify and Apple Music.

It is not wrong to say that Armstrong’s What a Wonderful World is a popular song around the world. Every generation is familiar with this song. The tone in the lyric brings feelings of cheerfulness and optimist. (Sejarah Di Balik Lagu What A Wonderful World - Louis Armstrong - ShowBiz Liputan6.Com, n.d.)

Bob Thiele and George David Weis are the composers of the song What a Wonderful World. Louis Armstrong is the singer to bring that song, the song had released on 1967. On that time, the daily life and politic situation of America are disturbed. It is full of hatred and prejudice of racialism. This song was created as antidote and expected to give hope for the better future that full of peace, harmonization and wonderful. What a Wonderful World was one of the classic song that owned by the world and Armstrong's recorded was save in Grammy Hall of Fame in 1999.

This research wants to analyse What a Wonderful World, a popular song on every generation around the world, using Critical Discourse Analysis. Follow the Fairclough's three inter-related processes of analysis tied to three inter-related dimensions. By using CDA, the researcher wants to explain the messages that included in the song, the history background and social condition behind the song when it had been produced and released.

In this research the researcher hopes that people will sincerely appreciate and love nature and each other, to make world become a better place. And also in ELT, this research expected to contribute in Discourse Analysis Research, so educator, learners, and future researcher could understand and have new insights about topic and object that been choose by the researcher. And be more critical to analyse written text, included song.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Principles of CDA, outlined by CDA practitioners, can be summarised as follows (Bukhari, 2013):

1. Language is a social practice through which the world is represented.
2. Discourse/language use as a form of social practice in itself not only represents and signifies other social practices but it also constitutes other social practices such as the exercise of power, domination, prejudice, resistance and so forth.
3. Texts acquire their meanings by the dialectical relationship between texts and the social subjects: writers and the readers, who always operate with various degrees of choice and access to texts and means of interpretation.
4. Linguistic features and structures are not arbitrary. They are purposeful whether or not the choices are conscious or unconscious.
5. Power relations are produced, exercised, and reproduced through discourse. 6. All speakers and writers operate from specific discursive practices originating in special interests and aims which involve inclusions and exclusions.
7. Discourse is historical in the sense that texts acquire their meanings by being situated in specific social, cultural and ideological contexts, and time and space.
8. CDA does not solely interpret texts, but also explains them.

The summary above could simply making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures in doing discourse analysis (Djamila, n.d.)

METHOD

The method of this research is using qualitative research. That means the data is collected in the form of words. (Biklen, 2006). Qualitative research means for understanding the meaning individuals or groups to a social or human problem. In qualitative research, the researcher made interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. (Wisler, 2009).

In analyse the data the researcher using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. (Schiffrin et al., 2007)

Fairclough's model for CDA consists of three inter-related processes of analysis tied to three inter-related dimensions of discourse.(Janks, n.d.)

These three dimensions are:

- 1) The object of analysis
- 2) The processes by means of which the object is produced and received by human subjects.
- 3) The socio-historical conditions which govern these processes.

According to Fairclough each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis:

- 1) text analysis (description),
- 2) processing analysis (interpretation)
- 3) social analysis (explanation).

The Object of Analysis

What a Wonderful World – Lyrics
Song by Louis Armstrong

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world!

I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world!

The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces of people going by
I see friends shaking hands saying, "How do you do?"
They're really saying, "I love you"

I hear babies cry, and I watched them grow
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world!
Yes, I think to myself, what a wonderful world!

Text Analysis

Language is system of spoken or written symbols used by people for communication tools with each other. However, spoken or written have a very important component in them. This important component is called meaning. (Pasaribu, 2021). In this text analysis, the processes and socio-historical condition, the researcher tried to elaborate the meaning. Language can be understood as interplay of sound and meaning. (Ria Tambunan & Sinambela, 2018)

In analyze the song lyrics "What a Wonderful World" the researcher finds out the aspects of words.

1) Repetition

"*And I think to myself what a wonderful world.*" is repeated at the end of every verse (except one) to highlights the song message: The title that repeated throughout the song helps people remember it a lot easier.

2) Imagery

Used to describe nature and friends creates a vivid images of happiness and joy.

Repetition and imagery are an important stylistic devices in narrative and poetic discourse (Brown, 1999). It could help the writer or the speaker to deliver easily the meaning inside of the discourse to the reader or listener.

Word choice is important because every writer's goal is to clearly, cohesively, and concisely communicate your ideas to your audience. (*Word Choice NC State Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services * NC State Graduate Writing Center, n.d.*)

Processing Analysis and the Socio-Historical Condition

"What a Wonderful World" was written by the team of jazz producer Bob Thiele (under the pseudonym "George Douglas") and Songwriter Hall of Fame George David Weiss. (*Behind The Song: Louis Armstrong, "What A Wonderful World" - American Songwriter, n.d.*)

This song was for jazz legend Armstrong to sing that song with hope might quell the racial and political in United States that on the terrible period of time. Louis Armstrong also was a black jazz singer, band leader, entertainer, and trumpet player. He feels the prejudice and bitterness too.

During that time, the United States grew into a more fractured nation with intense, sometimes violent struggles over issues such as Civil Rights and the war in Vietnam. Thiele realized the nation needed a healing message delivered as only Armstrong could deliver it and tapped songwriter George David Weiss to craft the song. (50 Years of “What a Wonderful World” - Louis Armstrong Home Museum, n.d.)

Because lack of promotion the record is not popular and well receive in United States, although other countries embrace and appreciate that song.

In 1988, “What a Wonderful World” finally claimed a spot on the U.S. top 40 charts. Armstrong, sadly, was long dead by this time.

The popularity of song lyrics “What a Wonderful World could be seen in the history, it was a number one song in the U.K. in the 1960s. Then it was a top 20 song in Italy in the 1970s. Finally, in the 1980s, it charted in the United States. And fifty-three years after it was recorded, Louis Armstrong’s “What a Wonderful World” was recognized as an iconic standard when its creators were posthumously honoured with the Songwriter Hall of Fame’s Towering Song Award in June of 2015 in New York City. To be selected for the Towering Song Award, a composition has to be recognized as “an individual song that has influenced our culture in a unique way over many years.

By knowing the background and history that happened around the time when song been produced and released, and what happen to the subject on that time, it could help in understand the processes and socio-historical matter that contribute in the production of that song.

Song is one of the medium of expression to express one’s thoughts or critical analysis about any particular subject. When a songwriter creates a song, he or she tends to have special meanings and thoughts attached to it, which he or she aims to be understood and accepted by the audience and listeners. (Putri & Triyono, 2018). This statement in line with the song lyric “What a Wonderful World”, which is the composer wanted to deliver his expression or hope and message during the “hard” period of time in United States. The song expected to deliver the positive message in the lyrics through the terrible time included violence, racialism and political situation that disturbed in daily life on that time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyse the object of this research, the song lyric “What a Wonderful World”, the researcher finds out the strong tendency of the composer to deliver the message in the song, to create hope through difficult times. It could be seen as

the word of choice aspect that used by the composer, like repetition and imagery to emphasize the meaning and positive description that adhere in the song lyrics.

The background and history of social condition during the song's production time explain how big the positive message that included inside the song lyrics. How the singer and composer doing their own role by produce and sing the song although surroundings by terrible situation and face the atmosphere of bitterness, which is allow the violence, and racialism, and a terrible political situation.

This research hopes by analyse this song, the readers could understand and be more sensitive to start to love each other sincerely, appreciate the nature, and still optimist to hoping for the best through the challenging and hard time that offers by daily life. This research wants to suggest to the future researcher to doing more analysis in this song by any method of analysis, through linguistics point of view. So the more information could appear from the analysis.

CONCLUSION

It can't be denied "What a Wonderful World" song lyrics that sang by Louis Armstrong was one of the popular song around the world. Interestingly, the composer, Thiele and Weiss produce that beautiful and cheerful song during the hard time, which is the situation around was full of bitterness.

Armstrong sang beautifully that song through his experience of facing the prejudice and bitterness caused by racialism. Many awards and appreciation of this song were the proofs of how successful this song. This research hopes to remind to all the readers that no matter how hard the time was happened around us, we could still hope for the best by pay attention to what we are doing to this world, it could be started from our own world, at job, at home, at society, etc.

Relate to the social context in Indonesia, Indonesia has a variety of ethnicities and cultures. In addition to local cultures, Indonesian culture has been influenced by a diversity of external cultures. (Yudhistira & Fatmawati, 2020). It precisely connected remembering Indonesia has also diverse, religion and racial. We need to love each other, appreciate the nature, and doing anything sincerely, thus the better world or wonderful world could be created, not only in imagination.

The application from this research is focuses on developing and improving the places where we live and work as a responses to improving the condition of life and reducing the stress in environment (Wisler, 2009). It means to work and love sincerely in anything in what we do, and to anyone thus the best result could achieved by everyone.

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