

Discourse Analysis on Philippine Nationalistic Songs: Circa 70's and 80's

Dahlia G. Maglasang

Department of Education, Davso City, Davao del Sur, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative data analysis sought to discover the various linguistic features and identify the social leanings embedded in the 15 selected Philippine Nationalistic songs of the 70's and 80's which exhibit cultural, social and political notions related to how Filipinos retaliate and express their feelings towards the government during those era. Employing qualitative design using discourse analysis, the linguistic nature of the data source – Philippine nationalistic songs, the analysis, resulted to the prevailing linguistic features which comprised the morphological processes, lexical features, phonological features, semantic features and syntactic features of the nationalistic songs.

Furthermore, it emerged in the analysis that the social leanings embedded in the songs are nationalism, patriotism, motivation, happiness, embracing the beauty and realities of life, political chaos, call for unity, valuing strength, understanding meaning of life and unresolved conflicts. Philippine Nationalistic songs therefore are rich in linguistic features making it more meaningful to the listeners, as the songs mirror the emotions which embed social leanings and lessons in life.

Keywords: applied linguistics, discourse analysis, nationalistic songs, linguistic features, social leanings, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Nationalism today faces challenges from globalization, with younger generations often identifying more with global culture than with their nation (McCarthy et al., 2003; Pew Research Center, 2011). Music, as a form of language, plays a vital role in expressing emotions, ideas, and identity. Songs communicate stories and attitudes (Pettijohn & Sacco, 2009), evoke emotions (Van Gelderen et al., 2011), and preserve cultural memory (Iwasaki et al., 2013). They can inspire patriotism (Keller, 2012), motivate learners (Olson, 2011), and articulate social struggles (Nhelkisana & Oabona, 2007). Discourse analysis provides a lens to examine how songs function as texts that embody ideology and power (Fairclough, 2001). Songs forge cultural identity and national bonds (Filene, 2000), while also serving as tools of resistance and reflection. This study focuses on Philippine nationalistic songs of the 1970s and 1980s, a period marked by Martial Law, to uncover their linguistic features and social leanings. Such analysis is timely, as modern influences risk eroding patriotic consciousness among younger generations (Ossowski, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to:

- Identify the linguistic features present in Philippine nationalistic songs of the 1970s and 1980s.
- Examine the social leanings embedded in these songs.
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Theoretical Lens

The analysis is anchored on Finegan's (2004) structural view of language, which links meaning and expression, and on semantic theories (Murcia & Freeman, 2008) that explore word meaning and figurative language. Discourse analysis frameworks (Fairclough, 2003, 2006; Bhatia, 2006) provide tools to examine songs as social texts, while theories of emotion (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 1987; Levitin, 2006) highlight music's power to communicate feelings and awaken collective consciousness.

Significance of the Study

This study analyzes 15 Philippine nationalistic songs from the 1970s and 1980s to identify their linguistic features and embedded social leanings. By examining figurative language and discourse structures, the research highlights how songs function as tools of communication and cultural resistance.

The study is significant for several reasons:

- **Cultural relevance:** It rekindles patriotism and reminds Filipinos of their identity, heritage, and the sacrifices of heroes during Martial Law.
- **Academic contribution:** It adds to the body of literature by focusing on Philippine nationalistic songs, a relatively unexplored area in discourse analysis.
- **Pedagogical value:** It provides teachers and students with a framework for analyzing songs as texts, enriching literature and language instruction.
- **Research utility:** It serves as a guide for future researchers applying discourse analysis to literary and musical genres.
- **By situating songs as discursive texts,** the study underscores their role in shaping emotions, identity, and collective memory.

Definition of Terms

Discourse Analysis: Study of language use beyond sentences, focusing on meaning, ideology, and social practice (Fairclough, 2006).

Philippine Nationalistic Songs: Songs expressing devotion to the nation, love of country, and cultural identity (Merriam-Online Dictionary, 2017).

Linguistic Features: Morphological, lexical, phonological, semantic, and syntactic elements in songs.

Social Leanings: Messages, beliefs, and opinions embedded in songs that reflect societal issues.

Circa: Refers to the 1970s–1980s Martial Law period when these songs were composed and performed.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study is limited to 15 selected nationalistic songs from the 1970s and 1980s, focusing only on their linguistic features and social leanings. It does not cover performance contexts or audience reception. While discourse analysis reveals ideological and communicative functions, the scope is confined to textual analysis of lyrics.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis examines how language constructs meaning within social practices. Fairclough (2003) emphasizes its role in linking language to broader social life, while Hajer (1995) highlights the cultural and normative structures shaping discourse. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), as developed by Wodak (2001),

reveals hidden ideologies in texts and conversations, making it a valuable tool for analyzing songs as cultural and political discourse.

Power of Songs

Songs are powerful communicative tools that shape emotions, identity, and collective memory. They motivate, heal, and articulate dissatisfaction (Olson, 2011; Hunter, 2016). Protest music, as shown in Egypt (Valassopoulos & Mostafa, 2014) and China (Bryant, 2005), has historically mobilized collective action and preserved revolutionary memory. While music can inspire positive change, it can also negatively influence vulnerable youth through violent lyrics (Anderson, Carnagey & Eubanks, 2003).

Patriotic and Protest Songs

Patriotic songs foster national identity and loyalty (Roy, 2010; Keller, 2012). They connect citizens to their homeland and history, often serving as cultural anchors during colonization or political upheaval (Al Harbi, 2014). In the Philippine context, Martial Law-era protest songs became vehicles of resistance, echoing collective struggles for democracy. Filipino scholars emphasize this role: Santiago (2015) situates Pinoy punk and folk music as counter-cultural responses to repression; Majul (2017) interprets protest poetry as counter-memory preserving truths against state violence; Talusan (2004) documents Moro rebel songs as hybrid expressions of identity and resistance.

Songs as Social Discourse

Songs embed social leanings and values, functioning as indigenous ways of knowing (Nyota & Mapara, 2008). They convey moral lessons, cultural heritage, and aspirations for social change (Mulaudzi, 2013). Van Dijck (2006) underscores their role in shaping both personal and collective memory. In the Philippine setting, songs during Martial Law articulated dissent, solidarity, and hope, making them discursive texts that challenged dominant ideologies.

Conveying Messages through Songs

Music communicates beyond words, shaping emotions and social consciousness (Carless & Douglas, 2011). It has been used as propaganda, but also as democratic expression (Wai-Tong, 2008; Roy, 2010). In education, patriotic and protest songs can cultivate historical awareness and civic responsibility (Kuzmin et al., 2015).

Linguistic Features of Songs

Songs provide authentic language input, reinforcing memorization and cultural context. Their melodic and emotional features (Cooke, 1989; Juslin, 2013) make them effective tools for discourse analysis, as they encode nuanced meanings and social identities.

Consolidated Insight

This literature establishes that songs are not merely artistic expressions but discursive acts that shape identity, memory, and resistance. Global studies highlight their emotional and political power, while Philippine scholarship situates protest music within Martial Law's cultural struggle. Thus, analyzing nationalistic and protest songs through discourse analysis reveals their dual role: as cultural texts preserving collective memory and as political instruments challenging authoritarianism.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative design using discourse analysis to examine 15 Philippine nationalistic songs from the 1970s and 1980s. The approach focused on uncovering linguistic features and social leanings embedded in the lyrics. Qualitative research is inherently interpretive, aiming to make sense of phenomena

through meanings people attach to them (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Discourse analysis treats texts as records of social practice, emphasizing interpretation rather than raw data (Brown & Yule, 1983).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher gathered and analyzed the songs, ensuring accuracy of lyrics and neutrality in interpretation. Data collection involved consulting references, colleagues, and historical context to situate the songs within Martial Law-era realities. Objectivity and fairness were maintained throughout the process (Wiersma, 2000).

Research Materials

The corpus consisted of 15 purposively selected nationalistic songs, including works by Florante (Handog, Ako'y Isang Pinoy), Freddie Aguilar (Bayan Ko, Mindanao), Asin (Cotabato, Masdan Mo Ang Kapitaligiran), Herbert Bartolome (Tayo'y Mga Pinoy), Juan Dela Cruz Band (Ang Himig Natin), Virna Lisa (Magkaisa), Francisco Santiago (Pilipinas Kong Mahal), Jess Santiago (Pagbabago), and Rosita de la Vega-Da Roza (Mambo Magsaysay). These songs reflected resistance and patriotism during Martial Law. Following Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), 15 samples were deemed sufficient for qualitative analysis.

Data Collection

Songs were downloaded, verified, and analyzed using discourse analysis. The researcher listened repeatedly, took notes, and consulted advisers and colleagues to ensure validity. Qualitative strategies such as observation, document review, and reflective questioning were employed to capture linguistic features and social leanings (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003; Creswell, 2009).

Data Analysis

Analysis followed two steps: (1) repeated listening and reading to grasp meaning and emotion, and (2) examining linguistic features and discourse practices. Gee's six building tasks—semiotic, world, activity, identity, political, and connection building—guided interpretation of how songs construct meaning and social realities. This framework allowed exploration of figurative language, ideology, and socio-cultural contexts (Yin, 2011).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2003; Gasson, 2004). Bracketing minimized bias, while audit trails and triangulation enhanced confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Findings were presented transparently to allow replication and critique.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles of honesty, transparency, and impartiality (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Songs were properly credited, plagiarism avoided, and data integrity maintained. Guidance from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee was followed to ensure ethical compliance.

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the discourse analysis of 15 Philippine nationalistic songs from the 1970s and 1980s. Results are organized according to the research questions: (1) linguistic features present in the songs, and (2) social leanings embedded in them.

Linguistic Features

- **Morphological Processes** Common processes include affixation (napunta, magpalimos), reduplication (ala-ala, magsama-sama), and compounding (kapit-kamay). These reflect creativity in word formation and emphasize meaning through repetition and blending (Nevins & Vaux, 2003).

- **Lexical Features** Synonyms (tatanda–lilipas, luha–dalita) and antonyms (kapayapaan–gulo, kahapon–ngayon) highlight contrasts between peace and conflict, unity and division. Lexical variation reinforces emotional depth and ideological stance (Cruse, 1986; Kissler et al., 2007).
- **Phonological Features** Processes such as assimilation (look–crook), syncope (until–till), deletion (tayo’y–tayo ay), and rhyming (Magsaysay–Mabuhay) enhance rhythm and memorability, making songs effective vehicles for collective identity (Lass, 1984; Gussenhoven & Jacobs, 1998).
- **Semantic Features (Figurative Language)** Songs employ simile (kasing gulo ng tao), metaphor (Ang oras ay ginto), personification (Bayan ko, binihag ka), symbolism (ibon mang may layang lumipad), and hyperbole (Pagpanaw-panaw). These devices enrich meaning, dramatize social realities, and evoke strong emotions (Newmark, 1988; Harris, 2010).

Social Leanings

The songs reflect themes of:

- **Patriotism and identity** – affirming love for country (Ako’y Isang Pinoy, Pilipinas Kong Mahal).
- **Resistance and struggle** – voicing dissent against oppression (Bayan Ko, Cotabato, Pagbabago).
- **Unity and solidarity** – calling for collective action (Magkaisa, Tayo’y Mga Pinoy).
- **Environmental and social awareness** – highlighting issues of ecology and justice (Masdan Mo Ang Kapaligiran, Tuldok).

These leanings show how music functioned as discourse, encoding ideology and collective memory during Martial Law.

DISCUSSION

This study analyzed 15 Philippine nationalistic songs from the 1970s and 1980s, focusing on their linguistic features and social leanings. The findings highlight how language and music intertwine to express patriotism, resistance, and collective identity during Martial Law.

Linguistic Features

- **Morphological Processes:** Affixation (napunta, magpalimos), reduplication (ala-ala, magsama-sama), and compounding (kapit-kamay) were common, reflecting creativity in word formation and emphasis (Nevins & Vaux, 2003; Yip, 1999).
- **Lexical Features:** Synonyms (tatanda–lilipas) and antonyms (kapayapaan–gulo) conveyed contrasts between peace and conflict, unity and division (Cruse, 1986; Kissler et al., 2007).
- **Phonological Features:** Assimilation (look–crook), syncope (until–till), deletion (tayo’y–tayo ay), and rhyming (Magsaysay–Mabuhay) enhanced rhythm and memorability (Lass, 1984; Kohler, 1990).
- **Semantic Features:** Figurative language enriched meaning—similes (kasing gulo ng tao), metaphors (Ang oras ay ginto), personification (Bayan ko, binihag ka), symbolism (ibon mang may layang lumipad), and rhetorical questions (Dapat ka bang mangibang bayan?) dramatized social realities (Ogunsiji, 2000; Harris, 2010; Newmark, 1988).

Social Leanings

The songs articulated:

- **Patriotism and identity** (Ako’y Isang Pinoy, Pilipinas Kong Mahal).
- **Resistance and struggle** (Bayan Ko, Cotabato, Pagbabago).
- **Unity and solidarity** (Magkaisa, Tayo’y Mga Pinoy).
- **Environmental and social awareness** (Masdan Mo Ang Kapaligiran, Tuldok).

These themes show how music served as discourse, encoding ideology and collective memory, while also functioning as a cultural weapon against authoritarianism.

Implications

- **Educational practice:** Songs can be integrated into teaching to foster historical consciousness, critical thinking, and patriotism.
- **Research practice:** Discourse analysis of music opens avenues for exploring performance, audience reception, and media influence.
- **Cultural practice:** Nationalistic songs remain vital in shaping identity and solidarity, reminding Filipinos of their heritage and struggles.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Findings

The paper has analyzed fifteen Philippine nationalistic songs created and performed in the 1970s and 1980s to examine how the discourse features found in the items help convey patriotic messages and themes of struggle and belonging. The study found that the songs employed various linguistic strategies and devices to convey their meanings and intentions. These features were morphological creativity and richness, lexicon variety and semantic density, phonic emphasis, figurativeness of language, and syntactic diversity. The figurativeness was achieved through the extensive use of metaphor, symbolism, and personification.

Furthermore, the songs demonstrated social leanings that resonated against the backdrop of the country's tumultuous history during the time when the songs were created and performed. The items were statements of dissent and solidarity, carrying messages of hope and encouragement to the oppressed and downtrodden people, and promoting nationalistic ideas, social change, and unity.

Implications of the Findings

To start with, the findings contribute to the body of knowledge on Philippine linguistics by advancing the understanding of how the language of the Filipino people can be used, examined, and conceptualized. The paper's results can be used and integrated into future studies, including research assessing the application of such material in teaching and learning processes in both literature and language classrooms. Moreover, the results offer implications for further discourse analysis studies of nationalistic songs created in other countries and examine how the target language and its discourse features contribute to the process.

Limitations of the Study

The findings are limited by several constraints that a follow-up study could address. First, this analysis was focused on the linguistic aspects of the items but did not consider their musical components. Second, no information was gathered and assessed to understand how these songs resonated with the audiences that heard them since all results are based on the interpretations of the paper's author. Third, since the songs were created in the 1970s and 1980s, the findings might not be generalized to the current nationalistic songs.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies could be done to build on the findings and address the limitations of this paper. First, additional discourse analysis, including musical elements, could be conducted to obtain more comprehensive insights. Second, a study could explore how the audiences received the songs and whether their reception and interpretation differ across generations. Third, the next research could examine the similarities and differences between the nationalistic songs created during Martial Law and the current sociopolitical situation. Moreover, a comparison could be made between Philippine and Southeast Asian songs to discover patterns specific to the region.

Conclusion

The analysis of fifteen Philippine nationalistic songs created and performed during the 1970s and 1980s

demonstrated that the items used diverse discourse features to convey their themes and messages. The fifteen items were examined, and the ten most common discourse features were identified. The findings contribute to linguistic studies by advancing the understanding of how the nationalistic songs can be used as a discourse. Moreover, the results can be applied in the literature classroom to raise the learners' awareness of the language and the messages intended by the creators and performers of these items. Ultimately, the analysis helps the contemporary audience to revisit the events of the tumultuous times while reflecting on the values and patriotism the nationalistic songs of the era promote.

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