Lexical Cohesion in Meghan Trainor's lyrics in "TITLE (DELUXE)"

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Abstract

Creativity in manipulating language into that of aesthetic value does not entail abandoning clues for the audience to arrive at the intended meaning. The usage of lexical cohesion in the songs in Meghan Trainor's "TITLE" (Deluxe Edition) is one of many examples of how it provides clues and external references that may be relatable to the audience and thus the intended translation. The interrelationship between expressions and meaning mold a uniqueness of the author. This study aims to explore the uniqueness by describing and assessing the lexical cohesiveness in the lyrics. Halliday and Hasan's theory in discourse analysis regarding cohesion played a major part in the research in examining the data with qualitative-descriptive procedures. The results show that there are 253 lexical cohesions in the song lyrics, namely 211 repetitions, 14 synonyms, 12 antonymy, 4 meronymy, 4 hyponymies, and 12 collocations. It can be concluded that the high number for repetition added the functionality of highlighting meaning in addition to literary elements such as rhyming.

Introduction

For decades, the pop music industry has thrived to become one of the most lucrative industries in the world. Despite the gimmicks as a means of branding of the artists or the use of technology in enhancing their production, they still rely significantly on lyrics to convey the topic and meaning of the songs. Meghan Trainor's songs are no exception. Her popularity derived from her song titled "All About That Bass" which addresses body-shaming issues that she experienced. The lyric maintains the topic consistently by using the title phrase repetitively, constantly conveying the implied meaning of value over matter. Its catchy phrase may have engraved the song's success since the audience were constantly reminded throughout the lyric and given its context.

In discourse analysis, repetition is one of the strategies used in communication, be it literal or aesthetic in nature. It is identified as part of reiteration functions (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) which builds a base for interaction between the author and the audience. It provides clues for the audience to ponder upon and combine the meaningful units to arrive at the whole meaning of the song. Another discourse analysis element frequently used in songs is collocation. Well-established phrases as well as new paired words also contribute to the uniqueness of the text as well as its meaning. Some of them have become cliché due to heavy usage in the past, and others are made up of either combinations between old and new or new and new words.

The researcher is interested in discussing the types and uses of lexical cohesiveness employed in Meghan Trainor's lyrics from her debut album with a major label "Titled" released on January 9, 2015, by Epic Records. It extended the play of the same name on popular music streaming platforms. The lexical cohesion function in Meghan Trainor's song lyrics demonstrates how the song can be related to one another (from one lyric to the next) and how the song has unity from one lyric to the next. The researcher will learn about the many types and roles of lexical cohesiveness by examining them using Halliday and Hasan's theory.

Literature Review

Lyrics comprise many words or expressions, and a united and harmonious whole constitutes their meaning. Yule (2010) stated that by analyzing their discourse as in any language forms such as texts and conversations, the parties involved in the interaction may engage more meaningfully and purposefully. Such engagement, according to Jones (2012), needs to be within a social context the audience is familiar with; thus, the phrases and speeches orient to such a goal.

Cohesion is a component of a language's system, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976). It's the relationship between elements in a text where one element's interpretation is influenced by another. Lexical cohesion is the type of cohesion that is utilized to connect sentences, which builds into a specific context. In doing so, cohesion plays an important role as it governs parts of the text to suit the occasion. Lexical cohesion Halliday and Hasan (1976) advocated such functions by focusing on the choice of words for cohesiveness between textual elements.

In this study, reiteration and collocation are employed. Reiteration is a category in Halliday and Hasan's cohesion which is also common in lyrics. It is often vocabulary-related, either on its own or as an idiomatic unit made up of words. Repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and metonymy are the sub-categories often used to categorize the units and measure cohesiveness. Meanwhile, meaning extraction method from phrases can be done by using the construct and function of collocation. It is to ensure which meaning a phrase may orient to should it have various lexical meanings.

Method

The method used in this study was that of qualitative-descriptive. It does not involve complicated statistics-only to the total and percentage of each category. This is because it focuses more on providing the classification of the meaningful units and the justification of the categorization. The qualitative method contributes to the inductive processes of arriving at the meaning of the units in question. Again, the information obtained for this investigation is conventional qualitative data, as elaborated by Polit & Beck (2009).

The research commenced with recognizing the language phenomenon found in the lyrics from

1515

the songs of the album: The Best Part, all about That Bass, Dear Future Husband, Close Your Eyes, 3am, Like I'm Gonna Lose You, Bang Dem Sticks, Walkashame, Title, What If I, Lips Are Movin', No Good for You, Mr. Almost, My Selfish Heart, and Credit. The scope of the form of data was from words to sentences. It was followed by identifying the data based on the types and the characteristics of lexical cohesiveness (repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, metonymy and antonymy) and collocation. Then, their functions were described based on the categorization. Finally, a conclusion can be made on the uniqueness of the lyrics as a whole album and individual songs.

Results

In total, there were 253 data found for lexical cohesion in all the lyrics of the songs in the album, with reiteration being the larger percentage (84.90% or 241 data) compared to collocation (15.10% or 12 data). For the subcategories of reiteration (repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, and metonymy), there were 211, 14, 12, 3, and 0, respectively as seen in Figure 1.
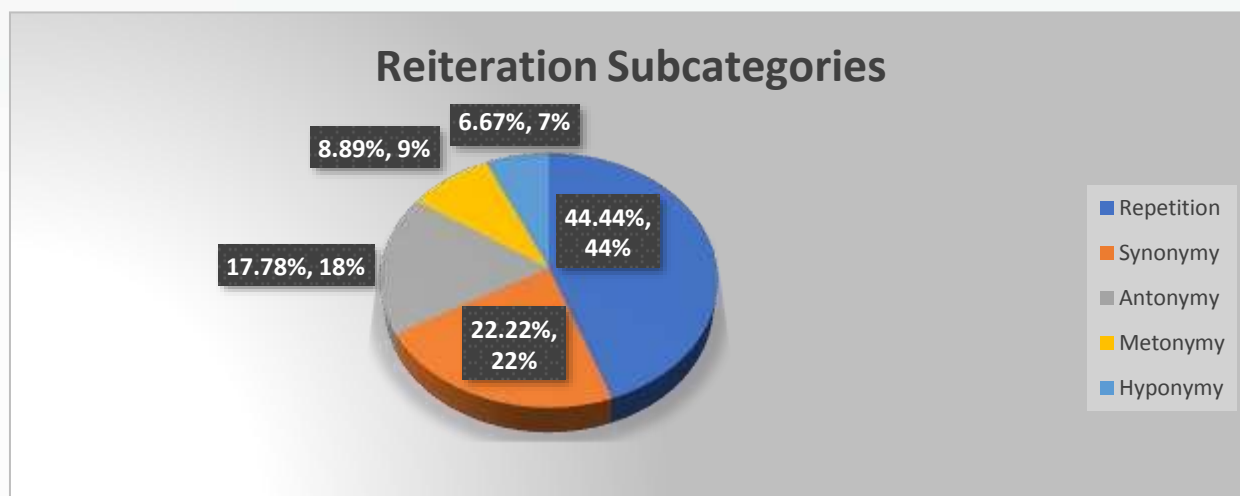
Figure 1 Reiteration Sub-Category Data

Meanwhile, the occurrences of the categories and subcategories based on the individual songs can be seen in the following table:

Table 1.
Lexical Cohesion Occurrences in Individual Songs

Song Title	Collocation	Metonymy	Hyponymy	Repetition	Synonymy	Antonymy
The Best Part	0	0	0	2	0	0
All About That Bass	0	0	0	15	4	4
Dear My Future Husband	0	0	1	14	2	1
Close Your Eyes	0	0	0	16	1	2
3 AM	0	0	0	19	0	0
Like I'm Gonna Lose You	0	0	1	18	0	0
Walkashame	9	0	0	22	0	0
Title	0	0	0	36	0	3
What If I	0	0	2	20	1	1
Lips Are Moving	3	0	0	29	6	1
Bang Dem Sticks	0	0	0	20	0	0
Sub Total	12	0	4	211	14	12

The next part is the description of the occurrences and how they function to construct meaning. It comprises of the individual cohesions and their example. An example of a partial repetition is as follows (taken from "The Best Part"):

[Datum 1]

I got a heart full of rhythm that beats with no pain
I got a head full of melodies stuck in my brain

The example above shows the use of "I got a…" as a repetitive element of the lines, leading to the conclusion that the person of reference in the lyric have multiple situations occurring simultaneously. Another example of repetition is the complete repetition of a line that occurs in the main or the refrain part of the song in a larger unit (clause).

[Datum 5]

Because you know **I'm all about that bass**
'Bout that bass, no treble
I'm all about that bass
'Bout that bass, no treble […]

The repetitive phrases above show the implied meaning of "value over matter" which would later be explained in the rest of the lyric. Therefore, it initially functions as a preamble and later switches to emphasis. Examples of synonymy are found in the following:

[Datum 15]

So if that's what you're into, then **go 'head** and **move along**
Both items present idiomatic expressions with similar meaning which is 'to leave'.
Here are examples of antonymy:
[Datum 21] (taken from "All About That Bass")
I'm bringing booty back
Go 'head and tell them **skinny** bitches that
No, I'm just playing, I know you think you're **fat**

[Datum 22]

But I'm here to tell you…
Every inch of you is perfect from the **bottom** to the **top**

Datum 21 shows a direct opposite of the words based on what other parties' self-perception think of themselves against what the singer thinks (skinny vs, fat). Meanwhile, the 'bottom-top' antonymy is used to show the location of which area to which the singer is referring. The following are examples of hyponymy:

[Datum 79]

So don't be thinking I'll be home and **baking** apple pies
I never learned to **cook**

The term 'baking' is a subgroup of 'cooking', which, in this case, the words are placed in the near proximity of the lyric. Even though they are in different grammatical form (the former being a verb and the latter being to-infinitive as part of the verb), there is an attempt to build a hyponymic relation between the two terms.
The data for collocation is represented by the following:

[Datum 100]

Oh my god, **I put** my pants on **inside out**
The term "inside out' shows the incorrect manner of which the person had worn their attire. The word 'inside" shows the side of reference, while its counterpart 'out' refers to the current location of the side the singer is referring to. The example is a well-established collocation.
Another example of the same formation but relatively new is:

1517

[Datum 105]

7 A.M. with the **bed head**

In this case, 'bed head' is a reference to the shape of one's hair formed randomly by the object the head leaned on during sleeping. It can be concluded partly from the time mentioned which strengthen the notion about when a bed head likely to occur (which is after waking up).

Discussion

The songs in the album have lyrics that are typical to other pop-style songs. First of all, they contain less formal diction, reflecting the level of familiarity intended for a broader audience than the listeners who prefer more intricate literature. Therefore, it can be assumed that the casual lyrics were not meant to cause the need to contemplate deeply on the messages conveyed; rather, it is significantly simple for comprehension and relatedness. Second, the lexical cohesion employed was significantly reliant on repetition. It indicates that the connection before and after can be established by simply repeating the catch phrases. Therefore, the cohesion between the meaningful units such as clauses and sentences of the lyrics may have a higher rate in connecting the ideas.

Like many other song lyrics, most of the repetition are found in the refrain. However, some of the lyrics do have repetitive parts in the main verses. The assumption that they function as emphasis can be justified from the context built within their proximity, such an introduction to the verse mimicking an opening of a letter ("Dear future husband"), or emphasis of the topic of the song (the title "3am" is often repeated in the verses retelling the singer's activities during the time).

Conclusion

Lexical cohesion is just as important as the literary value of a text. It serves to connect ideas into integrated parts of communication. By doing so, the author may have a degree of expectations that the audience are able to grasp the thoughts put forward and respond accordingly to the former's intentions. However, the format of which the thoughts are conveyed governs the level of use and the types of cohesion deemed suitable for the occasion. In aesthetic forms such as lyrics, there are other factors such as metrics and styles that limit the types of cohesion suitable for use. The results of the study show that repetition is the pre-dominant form of connection for song lyrics in pop music despite its various formation types. As for collocation, its use in idiomatic expression seems to favor the well-established pair while new ones are introduced not as freely as other genres of music such as rap. For further analysis of lexical cohesion, it is recommended that studies on different music styles are conducted. First, it will uncover the current uniqueness of the styles after time. Lastly, it provides basis of comparison in employing lexical cohesion.

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