An Analysis on Three Songs Calling for Peace from the Perspective of Transitivity System

Xuanxuan Zhao

South China Agricultural University, Department of English, Guangzhou, China

Abstract: *Song is a popular art form that is widely disseminated and entertaining. Application of transitivity process is of special significance for expressing the theme of the discourse, reflecting the author's emotion and achieving the purpose of the text. Through taking the clause of the lyrics in the theme song as the corpus, and discussing various transitivity processes involved in the clause, the lyrics of the three songs can not only successfully highlight the theme of the song, but also reflect the sense of discourse and image of the song.*

Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics; Lyrics; Transitivity System
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the Three Songs

Lyrics belong to a special style of writing, which is appreciated by the audience in the form of singing. Good lyrics are not like improvised conversation. They need to be created, modified and perfected by the musician. This paper makes a analysis on three songs, Heal the World, Tell me Why, and Blowin' in the Wind that call for peace. Heal the World is a song from Michael Jackson's hit album, Dangerous, released in 1991. The music video features children living in countries suffering from unrest. And Michael Jackson set up the Heal the World Foundation, a charitable organization which was designed to improve the lives of children for a brighter world. Tell me Why by a ten-year-old boy is about war, poverty and hunger and prays for peace, love and prosperity. And Blowin' in the Wind, the song of Bob Dylan, is considered an anthem of the civil rights movement in America. It is a song of protest, self-expression, and reality.

1.2 Significance of the Research

According to Systemic Functional Linguistics, language use is a process of constant linguistic choice, and the basis of this choice is the drive for meaning. In other words, the meaning expressed in a specific text is the result of the speaker's linguistic choices. Although a speaker can only express the corresponding appropriate meaning if he or she chooses the appropriate linguistic form, Huang Guowen (Huang Guowen, 2018) suggests that it is necessary for discourse analysts to study the meaning realized by linguistic forms, regardless of whether the speaker makes these linguistic choices consciously, subconsciously, or unconsciously.

Consequently, taking the source language text of the three songs Heal the World, Tell me Why, and Blowin' in the Wind as the research targets and Systemic Functional Linguistics founded by Halliday (1994) as the theoretical guidance, this paper makes an attempt to explore whether the application of systemic functional linguistics to the analysis of songs is appropriate and feasible through linguistic analysis and discourse analysis. Hence, this paper hopes to provide a new research perspective for the interpretation of literary discourse through the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is consist of an overview of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, followed by an introduction to experiential meta-functions.

2.1 Experiential Meta-function and Transitivity System

Developed by the British linguist M. A. K. Halliday, systemic functional linguistics, is recognized as one of the most influential linguistic theories around the world.

From a grammatical standpoint, the function of language is closely tied to its meaning. Language is used to express our experiences of the external and internal worlds, as well as the logical relationships between these experiences. The primary grammatical system used to represent these experiences is called transitiveness, which categorizes the world into different types of processes. In the field of textual analysis using the transitivity system, we examine how sentences refer to entities and events in the real world, specifically who does what to whom, under what circumstances. The main components of the transitivity system are the type of process, the participants involved, and the circumstances related to the action. Based on Halliday's

systemic functional linguistics (1994), transitivity system can be divided into six types of processes: material process, mental process, relational process, linguistic process, action process, and existential process.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will consist of three sections, interpreting the theme of peace in the three songs from the perspectives of Transitivity System.

3.1 The Perspective of Transitivity System

There are totally 126 processes in the three songs, especially material processes that appear most frequently to describe the hope for peace world.

Table 2: Overview of process in the songs

SUM	Process	Number	Proportion
	Material	77	61
	Verbal	29	23
126	Existential	10	7.9
	Relational	3	2.4
	Mental	6	4.8
	Behavior	0	0

3.1.1 Material Process

From the data presented in the Table 2, it can be clearly find that material processsses take up 77% of the total in the selected songs. In the three songs, material processes like,

Heal the world,
Make it a better place,
Create a world with no fear, *The answer is blowing in the wind*,

the singers all advocate protecting and cherishing the environment, keeping away from wars and conflicts, making the world peaceful, filling our hearts with love, and filling our places with warmth and joy. According to that interrogative clauses are used to engage the reader assigning a role to the reader and dragging the reader into the conversation, in the lyrics of the song Blowin'in the Wind by Bob Dylan, Dylan poses some questions to mankind that

How many roads must a man walk down, How many seas must a white dove sail, How many times must the cannonballs fly, How many years must a mountain exist, How many years can some people exist, How many times can a man turn his head,

regarding their conscious ignorance of the inhumane activities happening around the world such as the World Wars, racism, and discrimination.

3.1.2 Verbal Process

Saying something is a physical action that reflects mental activities. Verbal processes, is regarded as the processes of "saying", which are intermediate between mental and material processes. The central speech processes are all involved in transmitting information through language (Thompson, 2008: 100). In the songs Tell Me Why, the singer kept asking tell me why 29 times to question the world and also reveals the theme of the song.

3.1.3 Existential Process

Existential process especially There are people dying that appears 7 times in the song Heal the World emphasize the severe consequence that war brought about. They can arouse the listener's sense of responsibility, so as to take action and create a better world for people all over the world.

3.1.4 Relational Process

According to Thompson (2008: 96), relational process is a process of being, in which a relationship of identity has been set up between the two participants. Take the sentence from the song Heal the World "And this place could be much brighter than tomorrow" as an example, it is composed of a relational processes. To be specific, it is somewhat reasonable to take "this place" as the Carrier while "much brighter" is the Attribute and "tomorrow" is the Circumstance.

From this, we can see how Michael Jackson conveyed his inner thought of his deep concern about the state of the world and outlined a "a better world". In the song Tell Me Why, The sky(Carrier) is blue(Attribute) and fields(Carrier) are green(Attribute) and laughter(Identified) is the language of the world(Identifier), shows the singer's vision for a peaceful and beautiful world.

3.1.5 Mental Process

Take the song Heal the World for example, in this bliss we cannot feel fear or dread, the singer is full of yearning for a better world, the sorrow and anger of the war, encouraging people to call for peace.

To conclude, lyrics can make millions of people move for the audience will put their own thoughts and feelings into the pictorial feeling generated by the lyrics. A large number of material processes, relational processes and environmental elements in the lyrics constitute the narrative background of the text, and this quantitative foreground creates a rich pictorial sense and narrative situation for the narrative of the lyrics, which reveals the theme correspondingly.

4. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the previous researches in related fields, this paper analyzes the theme of "peace" in the three songs from the perspective of transitivity system of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics by adopting a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The analysis of the theme of peace in the three songs from the perspective of the transitive system indicates that material processes account for a high percentage of the total number of transitive processes, reaching 61%. The reason behind this phenomenon is that material processes are used to present a description of the real world and share the singer's thoughts, calling on people to physically build a better world, which echoes the theme.

In a nutshell, although this paper is a merely tentative study in this field, to a certain extent, it proves that the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics is one of the applicable types of linguistics. Furthermore, the application of the transitivity system to the thematic analysis of songs and other literary works is feasible. As a consequence, it is hoped that this paper can not only be conducive to deepen readers' comprehension of the theme in three songs, but also provide scholars and researchers in related fields with a new perspective on expanding the field of application of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics.

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