POSITIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN BEYONCE’S SONG LYRICS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This research is entitled “Positive Representation of Women in Beyonce’s Song Lyrics: Discourse Analysis”. The nine Beyonce songs have numerous lyrics that represent women. The method used in this research was descriptive qualitative method. This research was conducted by using discourse analysis of Sara Mills (1997) by analyzing the position of the subject-object in every sentence in Beyonce’s lyrics. The clause as representation by Halliday (1994, 2004) was also used to find out how the representation of women is constructed. The positive representation of women was examined by analyzing the process which involves women in the lyrics. In general, the results of this study indicate that Beyonce puts women in the position of the subject and positively representing them in her song lyrics.

Keywords: discourse analysis, representation, women, subject position, object position, clause as representation, positive self-presentation.
INTRODUCTION

The issue about gender identity is addressed in this article, especially gender identity for women. Women gender identity is often constructed from the norms that created by the society. Women are often mistaken as bad if their behavior is contradicting the norms that define their gender identity, and they are treated as the object. So, women who are treated as object started to rebel. Generally, women are put into perspective as object which is treated as the receiver (Prabasomo, 2006, p. 80). Numerous women fight against that treatment through discourse.

Discourse is a place to express opinions and thoughts. Discourse can also cover other studies, such as communication, information, politics and literature. According to Badudu in Eriyanto (2001), discourse is a group of sentences linked to each other by the connection between propositions that created united meaning. In this article, the discourse used for analysis is in a form of song lyrics because song lyrics contain implicit message from the song writer. The song lyrics are written by Beyonce. In this analysis we employed discourse analysis model by Sara Mills. This model focuses on discourse about women, especially about how women are represented in a text. Mills also examines narrating power which gives a person or a group a power to state their opinion through their point of view.

Beyonce is known as song writer and also singer who bring up the theme of women’s independence in some of her songs. The lyrics selected for this research are from nine songs which entitled Survivor, Independent Women, Single Ladies, Listen, Grown Woman, Sorry, Run The World, Flawless dan 6 Inch.

Representation is an important in analyzing a discourse. Representation occurred from how an actor, an opinion and an event are placed and are told in a text. This research focused on representation analysis especially the positive representation of women in song lyrics. This article is aimed at proving the positive representation of women in Beyonce’s song lyrics.

Discourse analysis according to Fairclough is “discourse analysis is based upon the assumption that language is an
irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). Discourse more than just text because text itself is a part of discourse. Fairclough also stated that “text analysis is an essential part of discourse analysis, but discourse analysis is not merely the linguistic analysis of texts” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 3), so, discourse analysis is textual analysis combined with social practice elements.

Also, according to Nunan (1993) discourse analysis is a study of language use with the purpose of showing and interpreting the relation between layers and patterns expressed in the language. Mills (1997) stated that discourse analysis is language use practice, especially language politics. Language is central to object description and by using language an opinion can be reflected within it. This aspect is the main focus of discourse analysis. Song lyrics are discourse because it contains story, feeling and phenomena in life, as is in Beyonce’s songs.

A song is a medium to express feelings through message in its lyrics. Moreover, a song also contains critics toward certain phenomenon in a society. Citron (2000, pp. 120-121) stated that music grew from certain social context and music is revealing basic assumption about where it came from. A person who writes a song is affected by the culture of where he or she came from and that culture affects what he or she writes.

Unlike the critical linguistics that concentrating the analysis at language structure such as words and sentence, Mills focus on how role affect a text. According to Mills (1997, p. 11) “Discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances and sentences, statements which are enhanced within a social context.” Also, according to Sara Mills in Eriyanto (2001, p. 200) “These positions are who is act as subject and who act as object, that will determine how text is structured and how meaning reflected from the entire text.” Sara Mills focus on actors’ position, especially women, in a text. The analysis on actor position will reveal certain limitation in narrating a text. An event is explained through the perspective of subject who
acts as narrator that is telling an event, then the meaning will depend on the subject explanation as the narrator.

In the field of representation, the position of subject and the position of object hold certain meaning. Subject in a sentence or a clause defined as a part of clause which indicates the person who do the speaking. Meanwhile, the object is a matter or a person which act as the receiver and object is to whom its existence is described through subject’s perspective. The meaning of the text will depend on the subject as the actor that do the action and describe others. A subject also have power to describe its own side and describe opposite side because it is through a subject’s point of the view a statement is stated. In this research, the position analysis is focus on the women of Beyonce’s song lyrics.

Halliday (1994, p. 106) stated that clause as representation is one of the aspects of functional grammar in analyzing representation. According to Halliday (1994, pp. 107-109) there are three aspects in this theory, such as: Process, Participant and Circumstances.

Process stands for the act of doing something. In this theory, process referred to verb in a clause. Participant stands for the one who does or the one who receive a treatment in a process. In a clause, participant comes in a form of a subject or an object of the clause. Then there is circumstance which stands as complement of a process that shows place, time, manner, role, etc. Circumstance comes in a form adverb or proposition. Halliday stated that in clause as representation theory there are six processes which are material process, mental process, behavioral process, verbal process, relational process, and existential process (1994, pp. 106-107), but in this research only appeared five processes which are material process, mental process, behavioral process, verbal process and relational process.

METHODS

This research was conducted using qualitative descriptive method. The qualitative method resulted in descriptive data in a form of written or spoken words about individual characters,
state and phenomenon of a certain group that is being observed (Moleong, 1989, p. 6). The descriptive method is an analysis strategy of laying out characterization and description of the data based on reality (Nawawi, 1994, p. 27).

The actor positions shown in Beyonce’s song lyrics are analyzed using Sara Mills’ subject-object position theory. In order to reveal the positive representation that reflected from the processes in Beyonce’s song lyrics, the clause as representation theory from Halliday is also cited in this research. The data were collected from nine of Beyonce’s songs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Representation of Women through Subject Position

The position of women in Beyonce’s song lyrics is seen through the representation analysis. There are two positions which are as subject, which is at the position that has power over giving definition about themselves or as object, which does not have power to describe themselves because their existence is described by the subject. In the analysis shown how Beyonce build women representation in her song lyrics through the position. Most of the actors in the data are women.

(1) You thought that I'd be stressed without you  
    But I'm chillin'  
    You thought I wouldn't sell without you  
    Sold 9 million

(2) I could care less what you think  
    I need no permission, did I mention  
    Don't pay him any attention

(3) Me and my ladies sip my d'ussé cups  
    I don't give a fuck chucking my deuces up  
    Suck on my balls pause  
    I had enough  
    I ain't thinking 'bout you

The first quote is from the song ‘Survivor’, which is about women who keep pursuing career even the people around criticize and underestimate them. Through their perspective as subject, they rebel against the statement that women cannot
reach success without following critics from society. Then, there is the song ‘Single Ladies’ (Quote 2) which is about a woman who feels happy even without having partner. In the song lyrics, subject is a woman who has power to narrate the story in the song. The subject describes herself and other women are happy even being single because they do not have to impress anybody (men). The third quote is from the song entitled ‘Sorry’. The message is that women do not always depend on men in their life. In this song, women have position as the subject. Through subject’s point of view, women are described as not always care about what men think about them and they do not depend on what men thought about them.

In the songs mentioned above, women are at the position of subjects. Subjects who are women describe their side through their point of view. Men who are at the position as object cannot interfere what the subject describes.

Verb Choices That Represent Women

Beyonce’s songs contain messages that can be seen from the processes in the lyrics. The following data is analyzed based on Halliday's theory of clause as representation by analyzing the process components in clauses that consists of process, participant and circumstance. Participants are the actors involved, while in the process there are verbs that represent women.

1. My persuasion can build a nation
   Endless power, with our love we can devour
   Boy, I know you love it
   How we're smart enough to make these millions
   Strong enough to bear the children

2. She works for the money, she work for the money
   From the start to the finish
   She fights for the power, keeping time
   She grinds day and night

3. Try to control me boy you get dismissed
   Pay my own fun, oh and I pay my own bills
The first quote is from ‘Run The World lyrics’. The choice of verbs shows that women are able to participate in building their country using their opinion, that women are not always below opposite sex, that women are not weak because they can work hard and at the same time, bear the children. Beyonce represents the women on rebelling against the stereotypes that says women should focus only on taking care of households and not playing a major role in society. The second quote is from the song ‘6 Inch’, the processes in this song show that women can work as hard as men and they are not intimidated working among men. Then there is the song ‘Independent Women’, the processes in this song show that women do not like themselves being restrained, so, when there are men who try to limit them, they will either leave the man or ask the man to leave. It shows that women are not dependent on the presence of men in their life and that reflects positive representation.

CONCLUSION
Based on of subject-object position analysis, it can be concluded that women are always on the subject positions. Based on those positions occupied by women in the song lyrics, it can be concluded that Beyonce builds women's representation through these positions so women can hold the power of narrating the story in the lyrics and can interpret their side or others. The power gives women freedom in the song lyrics to make statements and to reject statements. While based on the choice of verbs in the lyrics the conclusion is that Beyonce often use the material process in representing women, the choice of verbs used in the lyrics are the ones with meanings that can describe women as strong and independent figures.

REFERENCES


