BEYOND THE BEATS AND MELODIES: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POP MUSIC FROM THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

Pop music is a significant part of the cultural fabric, and it has an important role in framing public opinion and influencing social norms. This qualitative study which made use of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework investigated the type of pop music that dominated the Philippine music industry for the period 2017-2023. The factors contributing to their popularity among Filipinos as well as the linguistic elements and ideological underpinnings were also examined. In this research, corpora of 60 pop music lyrics and a total of 10 participants were used. The analysis uncovered that pop R&B is the most dominant type of pop music while relatability, emotional resonance, melodic appeal, cultural references, language accessibility, and social media influence are the factors that contribute to the popularity of pop music among the Filipinos. Moreover, the ideologies embedded in pop music included nationalistic ideology, sexism, intensive mothering ideology, new masculinity ideology, and post feministic ideology. The linguistic elements present in the lyrics included rhymes, metaphors, repetition, anaphora, epistrophe, assonance, alliteration, slang and non-standard language, and expressive values. The findings of this study highlight the transformative possibilities associated with incorporating popular music into educational methodologies, specifically in the realms of music education and language studies.

KEYWORDS: pop music, critical discourse analysis, linguistic elements, ideologies

1. INTRODUCTION

Pop music in the Philippines has evolved since 2010, witnessing shifts such as the fading popularity of rock bands and novelty songs from the 1990s and 2000s (Urrutia, 2019). De Leon (2018) sees pop music as a vibrant platform reflecting the country's social values through stories and emotions. Through its lyrics, Kaivanto and Zhang (2019) note its role as a vehicle for expressing sentiments through lyrics. Filipino pop music, known for its energetic beats, catchy melodies, and strong vocals (Kerlinger, 2022), faces emerging issues of representation and diversity in pop music genres, limiting the audience's appreciation of diverse expressions (Oliver, 2023). Scouring the diverse pop music types in the Philippines enables us to understand their impact on culture and society (Peralta, 2021; Martin, 2023) and how they illuminate existing societal values and the construction of ideologies (Cook, 2021).

In the Russian context, Aleshinskaya & Gritsenko, (2017) revealed the contrasting language ideologies, with pop music professionals favoring English and the audience supporting Russian language and culture. Focusing on language hybridization and the functions of English in Russian popular music, particularly through the lens of the television show "Golos", the study suggested how language choices in pop music contribute to the construction of diverse identities, illustrating the ideological dynamics embedded in Russian popular music. Moreover, the examination of Singaporean pop music by Kong in 2017 depicted how music becomes a potent tool for both perpetuating state-supported ideologies and serving as a form of cultural resistance.

In the Philippines, Huiqi (2021) asserts that music serves as a potent force for expressing shared political experiences and mobilizing people towards common purposes. It acts as a catalyst, using its rhythmic appeal to captivate and influence listeners, shaping the political discourse (Jie, 2023) on issues like racism (Horne, 2019), gender (Leonard, 2017) and democracy (Brusila et.,2022). Hence, it does not only reflect societal ideologies but also plays a pivotal role in actively shaping them.

However, studies on Philippine pop music lyrics lack a thorough exploration of the deeper socio-cultural and linguistic dimensions inherent in these compositions. In fact, Eiter (2017) perceived it as lagging linguistically although it serves as a valuable linguistic reflection of the present language landscape. While prior analyses touch upon musical styles and thematic elements, they fall short in addressing the profound societal implications of pop music influence. Also, several research examined pop music in the Philippines, yet many of them (De Lara, 2021; Mangaoang 2019; Shunwei & Jia 2022) do not employ a critical discourse analysis approach. Hence, this study aimed to uncover the linguistic elements and investigate the ideological underpinnings of selected pop music in the Philippines through critical discourse analysis (CDA). The classification of pop music and the factors contributing to their popularity among Filipinos were also examined and explained. The urgency of conducting this study



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lies in the recognition that pop music, as a vital component of the cultural landscape, significantly shapes public opinion and molds social norms.

For teachers, this study can be used as a valuable resource that supports instruction. As teachers strive to cultivate socio-cultural sensitivity and responsibility, a comprehensive understanding and contribution to Filipino music becomes imperative. Hopefully, the present study also contributes to the music listeners for them to critically read and listen to pop music lyrics. Finally, the researcher intends to successfully disseminate the core findings of this study to other researchers, professional practitioners, and the wider community. At the same time, the researcher endeavors to transfer this research-based knowledge in future research forum or any avenue of formal publication.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this qualitative study employing a critical discourse analysis framework was to analyze the pop music lyrics that dominate the Philippine music industry for the period 2017 – 2023. Specifically, this sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1. What type of pop music dominates the music industry in the Philippines for the period 2017 2023?
- 2. What make these pop music lyrics popular to the Filipinos?
- 3. What are the linguistic elements found in the selected pop music of the Philippines?
- 4. What ideologies are embedded in Philippine pop music?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design of Creswell (2009). Specifically, this utilized the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine and interpret the unique linguistic characteristics of pop music lyrics. The three-dimensional analytical framework of Fairclough (1995) was applied, involving the analysis of text (rhymes, alliteration, assonance, anaphora, epistrophe, slang and non-standard language, metaphors, and expressive values), discourse processes, and social analysis or explanation, connecting discourse with the social and cultural reality in the Philippine setting.

3.2 Research Material / Participants

This study utilized 60 pop music lyrics, adhering to the recommended range of 10 to 100 research materials for analysis in qualitative research. The selection process involved chart performance on platforms like Billboard Hot 100, Filipino Hot 100 Songs Chart by Popnable.com, and Philippine Music Charts, considering factors such as streams on YouTube, Apple Music, Spotify, iTunes, Deezer, and radio airplays. The researcher classified pop music types, downloaded lyrics from various sources, and ensured linguistic diversity with songs in Filipino, English, or multilingual. Additionally, purposive sampling was seamlessly integrated, involving in-depth interviews with ten participants, including pop singers, fans from different generations, music teachers, and DJs from Davao del Sur. The

participants were deliberately chosen based on their specific characteristics, ensuring a focused exploration of their perspectives and experiences related to pop music popularity in the Philippines.

3.3 Data Collection

The study employed a systematic approach to gather data, selecting pop song lyrics from Filipino artists' albums released between 2017 and 2023. Utilizing various chart performances and rankings, the researcher ensured a diverse corpus, including factors such as rankings on different music platforms and music service providers like YouTube, Apple Music, Spotify, iTunes, Deezer. The linguistic elements of the lyrics, including rhymes, repetition, alliteration, assonance, anaphora, epistrophe, metaphor, and slang language, were analyzed. Also, an in-depth interview was conducted with ten participants, including pop singers, fans from different generations, music teachers, and DJs from Davao del Sur, following the recommendation of Guest et al. (2006) for qualitative studies. The interviews were facilitated using an interview guide, ensuring a focused exploration of their perspectives on pop music popularity. The qualitative data were transcribed, analyzed for recurring themes, and validated by language experts, maintaining rigor and credibility in the research process.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study employed Fairclough's three-dimensional analytical framework to comprehensively analyze 60 pop song lyrics, exploring linguistic elements and their connection to social and cultural realities in the Philippines. The research aimed to identify prevalent pop music types in the Philippines from 2017 to 2023, examine factors contributing to their popularity and analyze linguistic elements in lyrics to uncover dominant discourses and ideologies. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) procedures, involving data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher systematically selected pop song lyrics, performed linguistic analysis, linked discourse with social structures, and conducted thematic analysis based on in-depth interviews. Visual representation through tables showcased the distribution of pop music types and linguistic elements as well as elucidated reasons for popularity, contributing to a structured and accessible presentation. Concluding narratives were constructed to effectively summarize the key findings and insights derived from the study, offering a concise recap of the research objectives and how they were addressed.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Types of Pop Music

This study identifies various types of pop music in the Philippines, encompassing R&B pop, pop rock, pop rap, folk pop, dance pop, electro pop, each with its corresponding percentage out of a total of 60 pop music lyrics. As shown in table 1, Pop R&B emerges as the dominant type at 33.33%. This is characterized by the fusion of rhythm and blues with influences like pop, electronic music, funk, and soul. Pop rock follows at 23.33% which features electric guitar, bass, and drums, with a



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focus on the lead vocalist. Pop rap constitutes 18.33% which showcased the blending elements of hip-hop and pop with infectious melodies and rhythmic vocal delivery. Folk pop accounts for 16.67% with its combining folk and pop elements,

catchy melodies and repetitive choruses. Dance pop and electro pop have 3.33% and 5% respectively which uniquely employ prominent vocals, melodic structures, and electronic sounds.

Table 1
Percentage of the Types of Pop Music in 2017-2023

| Type of Pop Music | Frequency | % to 60 |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|
| Pop R&B | 20 | 33.33% |
| Pop Rock | 14 | 23.33% |
| Pop Rap | 11 | 18.33% |
| Folk Pop | 10 | 16.67% |
| Dance Pop | 2 | 3.33% |
| Electro Pop | 3 | 5% |

These findings were in consonance with the study conducted by Susic (2022) which showed that R&B/Hip-Hop as the predominant music genre in the United States since 2017. *Pop R&B artists and listeners* in 2023 also stressed that Pop R&B, a subgenre within pop music, integrates elements of rhythm and blues, featuring soulful vocals, smooth melodies, and emotive lyrics. Since the 1980s, it has gained popularity, with chart-topping artists such as Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey. Presently, contemporary musicians like Ariana Grande and The Weeknd are pushing the limits of Pop R&B.

4.2 Reasons of the Popularity of Pop Music Lyrics to the Filipinos

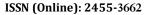
Table 2 shows the themes and core ideas generated from the data collected for the second research question which deals with the reasons that make pop music lyrics popular to the Filipinos. A total of six themes were identified. These include relatability, emotional resonance, melodic appeal, cultural references, language accessibility, and social media influence.

Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Reasons of the Popularity of Pop Music Lyrics to the Filipinos

| Essential Themes | Core Ideas | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|--|--|
| | Relating the lyrics to one's experiences and identifying oneself with them | | | |
| | Having lyrics that reflect interpersonal relationships especially between parents-sons/daughters, | | | |
| Relatability | husband-wife, lovers, and friends | | | |
| | Recollecting life's happenings especially with the song's lyrics that resonate meaningful messages | | | |
| | Evoking different emotions that touch the core of the listeners | | | |
| Emotional | Internalizing the lyrics to sing the song with appropriate emotion | | | |
| Resonance | Crying while singing or listening to the song or for others, enjoying the song that they like | | | |
| | Feeling empty and sad while listening to heartbreaking love songs | | | |
| Melodic | Appealing to the ears because of the catchy lyrics and melody | | | |
| Appeal | Considering the musical elements like making use of upbeat music | | | |
| Cultural | Portraying Filipino values, practices, beliefs, folklore, and arts which spread our cultural identity | | | |
| References | Mentioning places, events, food, icons in the Philippines | | | |
| | Drawing inspiration from historical and socio-political issues | | | |
| Language | Choosing Filipino language or using mixed languages and dialects in the lyrics | | | |
| Accessibility | lity Adding subtitles or captions to audiovisual content of songs to avoid language barrier | | | |
| | Preferring English over Filipino language to widen global reach | | | |
| Social Media | Learning and discovering the song from friends and relatives in social media | | | |
| Influence | Uploading and sharing music-related content on social media | | | |
| | Playing requested pop songs and downloading of pop music for classroom use | | | |
| | Engaging fans to like and share song covers and making fan edits and fan online pages | | | |

The findings conformed the study of Zellner (2023) which stated that a pop song's immense popularity can be attributed to the profound depth of its lyrics and the relatable message it conveys. Huang (2023) also stated that in the realm of Filipino love songs resonated profoundly with the audiences. Their infectious melody and emotions propelled them to the top of the charts, capturing

the essence of forbidden love. In addition to that, Hope (2023) revealed that a catchy song is one that remains memorable to its listeners, lingering in their minds even when not actively playing. For Filipinos, for example, the lyrics of SB19's songs enhance the relatability and cultural side of the music. The songs even refer to traditional Filipino courtship practices, particularly highlighting





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the act of *harana*, where individuals express their affection by singing to the person they admire (Cruz, 2023).

4.3 Linguistic Elements Present in Philippine Pop Music

The linguistic elements identified in this study include rhymes, anaphora, epistrophe, assonance, alliteration, slang and non-

standard language, metaphors, and expressive values. Table 3 introduces an organized and comprehensive breakdown of linguistic elements found in pop music, providing a detailed analysis of their frequency.

Table 3
Common Linguistic Elements in the Lyrics of Philippine Pop Music

| Linguistic Elements | | Pop Music Employing the Linguistic Element | | Usage of Linguistic Element in Pop Music | |
|----------------------|-----------|---|-----------|---|--|
| | Frequency | % to 60 PM | Frequency | % to Overall Usage | |
| 1. Rhymes | | | 922 | 66% | |
| 1.1 Internal | 58 | 97% | 464 | 33% | |
| 1.2 Perfect | 25 | 42% | 41 | 3 % | |
| 1.3 Slant | 60 | 100% | 417 | 30 % | |
| 2. Repetition | | | 278 | 20% | |
| 2.1 Anaphora | 30 | 50% | 32 | 2% | |
| 2.2 Epistrophe | 14 | 23% | 16 | 1% | |
| 2.3 Alliteration | 37 | 62% | 92 | 7% | |
| 2.4 Assonance | 47 | 78% | 138 | 10% | |
| 3. Language | | | 84 | 6% | |
| 3.1 Slang | 16 | 27% | 47 | 3% | |
| 3.2 Non-Standard | 24 | 40% | 37 | 3% | |
| 4. Metaphors | | | 29 | 2% | |
| 4.1 Standard | 17 | 28% | 18 | 1.2% | |
| 4.2 Implied | 7 | 12% | 7 | .5% | |
| 4.3 Extended | 4 | 7% | 4 | .3% | |
| 5. Expressive Values | | | 89 | 6% | |
| 5.1 Positive | 24 | 40% | 38 | 2% | |
| 5.2 Negative | 29 | 48% | 51 | 4% | |
| OVERALL USAGE | | | 1,402 | 100% | |

This shows the prevalent linguistic elements shaping the lyrical landscape of pop music. With a total of 1,402 instances analyzed, the linguistic elements are distributed as follows: rhymes (66%), repetition (20%), language (6%), metaphors (2%), and expressive values (6%). This highlights the dominance of rhymes, constituting a significant 66%. Repetition, comprising 20%, demonstrates the recurrence of specific linguistic structures like anaphora, epistrophe, alliteration, and assonance. Language, making up 6%, encompasses both slang and non-standard expressions. Metaphors, at 2%, indicate a more sparing use of figurative language in pop lyrics. Expressive values, also at 6%, are evenly distributed between negative and positive elements.

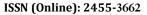
These findings affirmed Bradley in 2017 where lyrical language in pop songs incorporate rhythm, rhyme, and metaphor, providing a unique form of modern poetry. Furthermore, Nunes et al., (2015) investigated the prevalence of lyrics in the music people regularly listened to and explored how songs with greater lyrical repetition are processed more smoothly, leading to broader and quicker adoption in the market. Building on this, Sinaga et al., (2022) also captured the slang word construction techniques

found in music lyrics like contraction, shortening, blending, clipping, and compounding which are used in some songs. In another study conducted by Amir et al., 2019, political ideology in Indonesian online media utilized expressive values which played a crucial role in conveying political ideology, evident in the use of symbolic language and repetition within the vocabulary.

4.4 Ideologies Present in the Lyrics of Pop Music Nationalistic Ideology

In the context of nationalism, lyrics may evoke a sense of love and loyalty to one's country. One particular song titled "What?" which according to Lapa, 2021 expressed a play on the word watawat (flag). 'Di na bala para iangat ang bandera (No need for bullets to raise the flag) brought the message that raising our flag does not require resorting to violence.

Other than the idea that the strength of the nation lies not in conflict or aggression but in the collective pride, there was also a connection to national symbols, and the acknowledgment of the country's enduring spirit even in challenging times. *Ama! Salamat*





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at ikaw ang agimat (Father! Thank you, for you are the talisman. Bawat banat, iwagayway mo ang watawat, Pilipinas! (With every strike, unfurl the flag, Philippines!) The reference to the flag and the gratitude expressed towards a protective figure reinforced the importance of unity and patriotism. Specifically, it narrated that even in challenging times (banat) the national flag should be proudly hoisted, symbolizing resilience and unity. Also, the inclusion of Pilipinas! emphasized national identity.

In conformity, Nguyen in 2023 stated that contemporary Chinese hip-hop artists infused nationalist and patriotic ideologies into their lyrics. In fact, Kim (2016) expressed that nationalism as an ideology is manifested in popular music as well as it reflects a cultural expression.

Sexism

Other lyrics also contribute to sexism by focusing solely on a person's physical appearance. Particularly, the phrases, *Sa kanilang lahat ay talagang angat ka* (Among all of them, you really stand out) *Na paka-hot-hot 'di na dapat maghanap pa* (So hot, no need to look elsewhere), suggests that the person's value is primarily based on being attractive and "hot." This kind of thinking objectifies individuals, reducing them to their looks and implying that their worth is mainly about being physically appealing.

Sexism is everywhere, impacting people regardless of gender as noted by Neo (2023). It can be subtle or hidden in everyday life, from jokes to more serious consequences. Societal structures have deep-rooted sexism, and some song lyrics subtly include sexist messages, even if it is not always apparent. According to Park (2023) musicians are called to reject and not promote messages that objectify and hypersexualize women, emphasizing the need to protect women from the harms of sexism in media and society.

Post Feministic Ideology

In the analyzed pop music lyrics, post feministic ideology was made evident through the considerable number of lexical types that have been identified. The title of the pop music *Amakabogera* reinforces its content. It is a portmanteau of "I am" (pronounced as Amma), and *kabogera*, from the queer term *kabog*, which means a projection of oneself in an intimidating manner. It could also mean "Imma-stunner", "showstopper", "scene stealer" or "attention grabber". For the metaphors used in this song, individual empowerment and self-definition were being resonated. The metaphorical portrayal of walking "ala beauty queen" and wearing a crown "parang reyna" emphasized a reclaiming of traditionally associated symbols, turning them into expressions of personal agency and confidence.

The post-feministic ideology, as discussed by scholars like Gowrisankar (2016), is aligned with the modern empowerment narrative found in the lyrics. It emphasizes individual choice, independence, consumer culture, fashion, hybridism, humor, and a renewed focus on the female body. Similarly, Banet-Weiser (2018), a feminist media studies scholar in the 1990's observed

the widespread adoption of the rhetoric of "girl power" in North America and Europe portraying self-confident girls.

Intensive Mothering Ideology

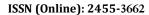
The are also metaphorical expressions that highlight the central role of a mother in the life of her child, emphasizing a deep and irreplaceable connection. The line *Dahil ikaw ang aking mata / Sa tuwing mundo'y nag-iiba* (Because you are my eyes / Every time the world changes) suggests that the mother is not just a caregiver but also a guiding force, providing vision and understanding as the world evolves. This reflects the idea that a good mother is one who not only nurtures physically but also offer emotional support and guidance, helping the child navigate the complexities of life.

In consonance with the findings of this study, Elliot et al, (2015) conducted research which focused on intensive mothering ideology, promoting sacrifice, self-reliance, and protection. However, Budds in 2021 emphasized the need to challenge the Western-centric motherhood model, as it may isolate and overwhelm women. Also, she looked into the benefits of broader social support systems for both women and children, while encouraging women to seek support without compromising their identity as a 'good mother'.

New Masculinity Ideology

There were positive values which reflected the encouragement to smile always in the lines Basta't ngumiti ka lang palagi, lagi, lagi, oh, lagi (Just keep on smiling always, always, always, oh, always). The lyrics beautifully expressed his overwhelming affection and deep admiration for his daughter, portraying how utterly captivated he was by her, emphasizing the simple joy he found in her constant smiles. Another was the readiness to stay immersed just to be with his daughter, Handa akong magbabad, makasama ka lang / Ayos lang kahit gabihin pa 'ko kakatingin (I'm ready to linger, just to be with you / It's fine even if I stay up all night just staring at you) and the acceptance of spending hours happily without regret, Okay lang, anak, kung ilang oras ang masayang / 'Di naman ako manghihinayang (It's okay, my child, regardless of the hours wasted / I won't be regretful) all demonstrated a shift towards a more emotionally engaged and nurturing masculinity.

Offer & Kaplan (2021) explored a study on the relationship between men's limited participation in childcare and shared ideals of new fatherhood. It examined the "new masculinity ideology," a cultural-ideological construct associated with authenticity, emotional expressivity, and holistic self-awareness. It indicated that new masculinity significantly influences emotional engagement and parental responsibility. Despite evolving ideals, the traditional breadwinning role remains important in this context. Similarly, in response to societal and cultural changes, Connor et al in 2021 conducted a systematic review which explored the evolving nature of masculinity.





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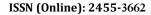
CONCLUSION

The study spanning 2017-2023 on pop music in the Philippines revealed a dynamic landscape with pop R&B emerging as the dominant genre, constituting 33.33% of analyzed lyrics. The diverse linguistic elements employed in Philippine pop music showcased a sophisticated use of language to convey emotions, tell stories, and connect with the audience, contributing to a rich linguistic landscape. The popularity of pop music in the Philippines is attributed to its ability to connect with cultural, emotional, and linguistic sensibilities, encompassing relatability, emotional resonance, melodic appeal, language accessibility, cultural references, and social media influence. Moreover, the diverse ideologies in pop music lyrics reflect an evolving societal norms and values which serve as a platform for expression and contributing to the complex tapestry of beliefs and perspectives within Filipino society.

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