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English Research Journal: Journal of Education, Language, Literature,  
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## **A Critical Discourse Analysis of Song Lyrics “Permission to Dance” by BTS**

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**Abstract:** The objectives of this research were: 1) to identify the grammatical and lexical cohesion of song lyrics ‘Permission to Dance’ by BTS; 2) to identify the situational context of song lyrics ‘Permission to Dance’ by BTS, and; 3) to identify the cultural context of song lyrics ‘Permission to Dance’ by BTS. The research analyzed the grammatical and lexical cohesion of song lyrics “Permission to Dance” by BTS based on the theory of Cohesion in English by Halliday and Hasan. The result showed that there were various kind of grammatical cohesion found in the song lyrics such as references that includes persona references, demonstrative references, and comparative references; ellipsis; and conjunction. This research also analyzed the context of song lyrics “Permission to Dance” by BTS by using Language Context theory by Halliday and Hasan. There are two types of context analyzed: 1) situational context, contained the situation, the participants, and the objective of the lyrics; and 2) cultural context contained the cultural background of BTS as Korean citizen in producing “Permission to Dance” during the pandemic situation.

**Keywords:** Discourse Analysis, Song Lyrics, Cohesion in Discourse, Situational Context, Cultural Context

**Abstrak:** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah: 1) mengidentifikasi kohesi gramatikal dan leksikal lirik lagu 'Permission to Dance' oleh BTS; 2) untuk mengidentifikasi konteks situasional lirik lagu 'Permission to Dance' oleh BTS, dan; 3) untuk mengidentifikasi konteks budaya lirik lagu 'Permission to Dance' oleh BTS. Penelitian ini menganalisis kohesi gramatikal dan leksikal lirik lagu "Permission to Dance" oleh BTS berdasarkan teori Kohesi dalam Bahasa Inggris oleh Halliday dan Hasan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat berbagai macam kohesi gramatikal yang terdapat pada lirik lagu seperti referensi yang mencakup referensi persona, referensi demonstratif, dan referensi komparatif; Elipsis; dan konjungsi. Penelitian ini juga menganalisis konteks lirik lagu "Permission to Dance" oleh BTS dengan menggunakan teori Konteks Bahasa oleh Halliday dan Hasan. Ada dua jenis konteks yang dianalisis: 1) konteks situasional, berisi situasi, peserta, dan tujuan lirik; dan 2) konteks budaya yang memuat latar belakang budaya BTS sebagai warga Korea dalam memproduksi "Permission to Dance" di masa pandemi.

**Kata kunci:** Analisis Wacana, Lirik Lagu, Kohesi dalam Wacana, Konteks Situasional, Konteks Budaya

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## INTRODUCTION

Language has meaning, a series of contents in the linguistic that is created from the creative and historical world of individual subject (Martinez del Castillo, 2015). Language is also an expression that interpret emotion naturally. As tools of communication, people are allowed to speak about anything in under any circumstances such as expressing thoughts, ideas, messages, etc. However, expressions in the language cannot be understood simply. They have to be analyzed and interpreted based on the context of the language production itself with a combination of applied knowledges.

Discourse analysis is a study field that combines linguistic knowledges in order to interpret meaning of language production based on context. Discourse aims to understand the meaning of language produced and understanding the use of language in a certain situation. It is a study beyond sentences that involves the search of structural and functional approach of a text and discover the social conventions determined by utterances (Schriffin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2001). There are a lot of social phenomenon that analyzed by the researchers intended to reveal the meaning and messages intended behind texts, such as song lyrics. A research in finding the messages and intention of songwriter apparently becomes one of the most popular phenomena. For example, a study on Taylor Swift's lyrics "Look What You Make Me DO" that reveal the intended meaning of the song by analyzing symbolic signs, figurative expressions, and gestures. The research found that the singer were intended to deliver a message about transformation of her images and new reputation (Alek, 2020).

Another study in revealing messages behind song lyrics also happened to be found in the critical discourse analysis of "Easy on Me" by Adele that analyzed the role of attitude of the songwriter by using Fairclough's CDA model. The research found out that Adele as the singer and songwriter conveyed the affection about her condition during the divorcement (Dewi, 2022). A research which used song lyrics as an object was a research proposed by In the research, the researcher used Van Dijk's model of CDA to analyze song lyrics entitled "Lonely" by Justin Bieber. The research identified the textual analysis and social context of "Lonely" by Justin Bieber. Considering the popular culture phenomenon, a discourse analysis research was applied on song lyrics of "Permission to Dance" by BTS and "Good Job" by Alicia Keys using Halliday & Hasan discourse analysis model of cohesion and context analysis (Afipah & Andriani, 2022).

Cohesion in English and Context Analysis proposed by M.A.K Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan are one of the discourse analysis theories used in critical discourse analysis approach. Cohesion is a concept that refers to a relationship between meaning exist in the text consist of grammatical setting and lexical setting of the text. Cohesion creates the text by providing textual component of linguistic system that dependent one and another. It expressed a continuity that related one part to another, thus the text can be created wholly (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Furthermore, in analyzing meaning, the analysis of context should be conducted. Text and context is a unity that cannot be separated during the process of language production. It includes the other non-verbal factors that provides social, cultural, and environmental setting in which the text is being produced (Halliday & Hasan, 1989).

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This research analyzed the song lyrics entitled “Permission to Dance” by BTS based on the theory of Halliday & Hasan namely cohesion and context analysis. The research explored the grammatical setting, lexical setting, situational context, and cultural context of the song lyrics in order to understand the messages that the writer intended to share or conveyed with the lyrics.

## METHODS

In this investigation, the researcher employs the qualitative research approach applied to library research. Qualitative research methodology offers techniques for exploring societal experiences, practices, and phenomena (Moen & Middelthon, 2015). The data of this study were the lyrics of “Permission to Dance” by BTS along with supported secondary data such as music video and visualization video. In this study, the researcher is using the qualitative research method that applied to literary research. The research was conducted based on the theory of discourse analysis proposed by Halliday & Hasan that includes two main section: 1) Cohesion Analysis, and 2) Context Analysis. Cohesion analyzed in this research includes grammatical and lexical cohesion, furthermore the context analysis includes situational and social context of the song lyrics.

Creswell (2012, p. 205) outlined four types of qualitative data: 1) Observation; 2) Interviews and Questionnaires; 3) Documents; and 4) Audiovisuals. In this study, the researcher opts for documentation to gather data from audiovisual sources. Utilizing documentation enhances reliability, particularly for audiovisual materials. The advantage of employing audiovisual content lies in its ability to captivate and engage audiences, fostering a deeper connection with the material. The researcher follows four steps in documenting audiovisual data such as: 1) Listen to BTS' song "Permission to Dance" attentively multiple times to thoroughly understand the lyrics and musical nuances; 2) Watch BTS' "Permission to Dance" Music Video to visually interpret the songs; 3) Gather information from both primary and secondary sources related to the research topic, and; 4) Use qualitative analysis methods to interpret the findings and draw meaningful conclusions about the songs' content, messages, and potential societal impact.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings were already collected based on the song lyrics analysis of “Permission to Dance” by BTS and “Good Job” by Alicia Keys. The result of the research include grammatical and lexical cohesion, and context analysis based on the theory proposed by Halliday and Hasan.

### Grammatical Cohesion

Grammatical cohesion consist of references that includes personal references, demonstrative references, and comparative references; ellipsis; and conjunction.

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## References

**Table 1.**

Persona References of “Permission to Dance”

Persona References	Noun			Possessive Pronoun			
	I/Me	You	We/Us	It	My	Your	Our
Permission to Dance	7	7	28	9	-	1	3

Based the table above, BTS mostly used the noun “we” that referred to both BTS as the singers and the listeners. BTS used the pronoun “we” to interpret them as the singers along with their listeners as the society that faced the Covid-19 pandemic situation together. As “Permission to Dance” told a story about togetherness in facing pandemic and hope for post-pandemic situation, BTS mostly used the noun “we” followed with “I/me” that referred to BTS as the singers and “you” referred to the listeners. Moreover, BTS on their “Permission to Dance” also used pronoun “it” that refers to a certain object and situation.

**Table 2.**

Demonstrative References of “Permission to Dance”

Demonstrative References	Selective			Non-Selective
	There	That	This	The
Permission to Dance	3	2	1	19

BTS on their song lyrics “Permission to Dance” used two types of demonstrative references. Each of unit has their own role in referring something. Selective type demonstrative reference “there” and “that” pointed out to objects that far from the addresser, for example:

(ln.20) “***There***’s always something that’s standing in the way”

(ln.9) “Just dream about ***that*** moment”

In addition, demonstrative reference “this” was used to point out objects that near the addresser, opposite with “there” and “that”, for example in line 23:

(ln.23) “There ain’t no one to prove, we don’t got ***this*** on lock, yeah”

In the other hands, based on the table above, BTS also used non-selective demonstrative reference “the” to point out objects that was not under any circumstances such as locations or positions, for example:

(ln.12) “I wanna dance, ***the*** music’s got me going”

(ln.7) “When ***the*** nights get colder”

**Table 3.**

Comparative References of “Permission to Dance”

Comparative References	Permission to Dance	
General Comparative	Like	9
Particular Comparative	Louder	1
	Colder	1

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BTS used general comparative unit “like” on their lyrics. The word “like” on the lyrics were part of figure of speech that compare two different objects like they have same characteristics, for examples:

(ln.2) “When your heart just like a drum”

(ln.4) “When it all seems like it’s wrong”

In addition, BTS also used particular comparative that expressed with the word “louder” and “colder”. Particular comparative used by BTS “louder” also found as part of figure of speech. Meanwhile, particular comparative “colder” used in a regular situation which interpreted a situation as can be seen on the lyrics below:

(ln.3) “Beating louder with no way to guard it”

(ln.7) “When the nights get colder”

## Ellipsis

In “Permission to Dance” the researcher found three ellipsis. The ellipsis found indicated the omission of subject or nominal ellipsis and omission of clause or clausal ellipsis.

**Table 4.**

Ellipsis of “Permission to Dance”

Ellipsis	Clausal		Nominal	
	Findings	Freq.	Findings	Freq.
Permission to Dance	(15) And <u>we’re</u> roll in...	1	(18) <u>We</u> don’t need...	2
			(27) And <u>we</u> stay up...	

Clausal ellipsis was identified in line (15), which involved the omission of both a noun and a verb. However, in line 18, the phrase “Don’t need to talk the talk, just walk the walk tonight” suggested the omission of the subject “we”, following the preceding line (line 17) where the subject “we” was mentioned: “Cause when we fall, we know how to land.” Since both clauses were interconnected, despite the omission in line (18), it could still be inferred that the subject of the sentence was “we.”

## Conjunction

**Table 5.**

Conjunction of “Permission to Dance”

Conjunction	Additive		Adversative		Causal		Temporal		Others	
	And	10	But	1	Then	1	Until	2	Well	1
Permission to Dance					Cause	8				
					So	1				

BTS on “Permission to Dance” used five types of conjunction: Additive, Adversative, Causal, Temporal, and Other type of conjunction “well”. Based on Halliday & Hasan (1976, p.269) “well” is not included in types of conjunction proposed by Halliday &

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Hasan, along with “now”, “anyway”, “after all”, etc. Those that are not included in the main four types of conjunction proposed by Halliday & Hasan named continuative conjunction. Continuative existed because the conjunctions are having more than one function as a conjunctive, for example opening a new clause or becoming the beginning of a response in dialogue. “Well” mostly found in the beginning of a response to a question that indirectly mean ‘I acknowledge the question’. However, based on Halliday & Hasan (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) “well” can mean by introducing an explanatory comment if it is spoken by the same speaker. Hence, in “Permission to Dance” (ln.30), the conjunction “well” used by BTS as the addresser to introduce or explain more about the situation expressed in the previous lyrics.

## Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion consist of reiteration or repetition in a sentence, and collocation. In this research, the researcher found various types of repetition and combinations of collocation.

### Reiteration

**Table 6.**

Reiteration of “Permission to Dance”

No	Reiteration Type	Permission to Dance	
		Findings	Freq.
1	Epizeuxis	(10)	1
2	Tautology / Tautotes	(17) (18) (21) (33)	4
3	Anaphora	(27 & 28)	1
4	Epistrophe	(24 & 32) (12 & 26)	2

Basically, reiteration is used to create a rhetorical effect and emphasize the keyword on sentences. Various reiteration found in “Permission to Dance” lyrics. Epizeuxis repetition is a repetition of keyword or important words for several time in a sentence in consecutive way. Epizeuxis found in the lyrics was used to convince and give courage to the listeners about the situation that they faced and expressed by using the lyric lines, as can be seen in line 10:

(ln.10) “When you look yourself right in the eye, eye, eye”

In “Permission to Dance” Most of the reiteration found was Tautology / Tautotes. Tautology is a type of repetition of word in a sentence that aimed to make a particular word clear and give an emphasize effect to the lyrics. One of the examples of tautology found in line (21):

(21) “But if you don't let it faze ya, you’ll know just how to break”

In this line, the word “you” was being emphasized third times, even though it has different form such as “ya”. Based on Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word “ya”, is the informal form or slang to represent the word “you”. In this line BTS tried to tell

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the listeners about something that might be in their way and they should break those obstacles and did not let it disturb them.

Anaphora repetition also found in “Permission to Dance”. It is a type of repetition that repeat the first word or phrase in the next line, as shown in the line 27 and 28:

(ln.27) “**And** stay up until we see the sunrise”

(ln.28) “**And** we'll say”

Other type of reiteration found in “Permission to Dance” and “Good Job” are Epistrophe and Mesodiplosis. Similar with Anaphora, Epistrophe is a repetition of word in the end of sentences, for example as shown in line (24) and (32):

(24) “The wait is over”

(32) “'Cause it's not over”

## Collocation

**Table 6.**

Collocation of “Permission to Dance”

No	Type of Collocation	Permission to Dance	
		Findings	Freq
1	Verb + Adv.	(22) looking back (27) stay up	2
2	Verb + Adj.	(5) sing along	1
3	Verb + Noun	(10) look (n) in the eye (14) break (n) plan (22) Keep the right vibe	3

Collocation is a group of lexical relation that commonly used by native speaker. It is a combination of lexico-grammatical words that has meanings. In this research, the researcher found five types of collocation combinations on “Permission to Dance” lyrics. The use of collocation in those lyrics shows that this lyric came naturally for the native speakers. Even if “Permission to Dance” was performed by BTS as a Korean boy group, the lyrics expressed ideas naturally and concisely.

For example, in line 5: (ln.5) “Just sing along to Elton John” the term "sing along" is a collocation comprising a verb followed by an adverb. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, "sing along" refers to the action of singing a piece of music while someone else is singing or playing it. In line 10: (ln.10) “When you look yourself right in the eye, eye, eye”, BTS utilized the collocation phrase "look (somebody) in the eye," which denotes speaking to someone in a genuine and sincere manner, as per its definition.

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## Situational Context

Situational context, or context of situation is a schematic construction of the environment in which the text is being produced. Based on Malinowski (Halliday & Hasan, 1989) in order to understanding the message of a certain product of language, it is important to know what's going on when the text is being produced. Halliday proposed that text basically produced in a certain social condition and situation through a relationship between social aspects. There are three aspects of situational context:

### 1. Field of Discourse

The field of discourse encompasses the situational context in which a text is produced. "Permission to Dance" was written during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, a global crisis that significantly impacted the world. The virus first spread worldwide at the onset of 2020, leading to widespread fear and concern. In South Korea, the first confirmed case of Covid-19 emerged in January 2020, prompting various government measures to curb the spread of the virus, including public activity restrictions and intensified border control (Cha & Kim, 2020).

"Permission to Dance" reflects BTS's experiences during the pandemic. Amidst the easing of pandemic restrictions, BTS used the song to envision a future where the world returned to normalcy. For instance, in the lyrics "The wait is over, The time is now so let's do it right," BTS captures the anticipation for a post-pandemic world where they can resume normal activities. This vision is further portrayed in the music video, which depicts essential workers, children, students, and elders removing their masks, symbolizing the end of the pandemic outbreak.

### 2. Tenor of Discourse

The tenor of discourse, an aspect of situational context, pertains to the participants involved in the text. In the case of "Permission to Dance," produced during the pandemic era, BTS aimed to share a personal story with their listeners. As citizens of South Korea, BTS was directly affected by the government's regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic. They faced challenges in maintaining their schedules, resorting to online discussions and studio work from home due to restrictions on movement. Additionally, BTS had to adapt to the suspension of their MAP OF THE SOUL:7 world tour concert, transitioning to online performances without live audiences. Despite these obstacles, BTS successfully released the album BE in November 2020, navigating the difficulties of creating music during the pandemic (Myeongseok, 2023).

During the creation of "Permission to Dance," Ed Sheeran and BTS originally might have met in person to discuss the song. However, due to the pandemic outbreak, the collaboration between the artists shifted online, conducted in real-time. (Yoon, How Permission to Dance Came to Be, 2021). BTS considered "Permission to Dance" as a necessary song, believing it had the power to deliver hope and happiness after enduring the challenges of the pandemic lockdown.

### 3. Mode of Discourse



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Continuing their journey and mission with "Permission to Dance," BTS was invited to deliver a speech at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2020. During this speech, they shared their insights on pressing global issues such as climate change, vaccine distribution, and the impact of the pandemic on the "Lost Generation," referring to those who missed out on opportunities due to the outbreak. In line with the themes of hope and happiness conveyed in "Permission to Dance," BTS encouraged the youth to embrace a new era and dubbed them the "Welcoming Generation".

BTS aimed to instill in the youth a belief in the possibilities and new hope that could be achieved after the pandemic era. As a culmination of their message, the United Nations General Assembly concluded with a performance of "Permission to Dance" at the UN Headquarters Building in New York, US. This performance served as a symbolic gesture of unity, resilience, and optimism for the future, echoing the sentiments expressed in BTS's speech and their song (Myeongseok, 2023).

## Cultural Context

BTS, a Korean boy-group, debuted in 2013 under BigHit Entertainment and is now associated with HYBE Group. They have become the most influential K-Pop group in history and have become a diplomacy instrument for South Korea. BTS collaborated with western artists, including Ed Sheeran, on their project "Permission to Dance" during the pandemic era (YoonHaein, 2021). The album, written by Ed, aimed to celebrate the life after Covid-19. South Korea's government implemented strict social distancing regulations, causing BTS to struggle with group meetings and schedules (Jeong & et.al, 2020).

In response, BTS released an album titled "BE" to express their feelings in facing the pandemic. The album reflected the anxiety and uncertainty of the pandemic (Myeongseok, 2023). The lyrics on "Permission to Dance" captured the celebration after the pandemic, highlighting the importance of dance in South Korea's culture. Even though dance is one of Korean's oldest cultural heritage, it was not part of the celebration during the post-pandemic era. Opposite with what BTS' interpreted in "Permission to Dance" that people did happy-dancing to celebrate post-pandemic, in reality, people tend to celebrate it by meeting peers and family after experiencing lockdown.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this research analysed critical discourse analysis on song lyrics "Permission to Dance" by BTS using Halliday & Hasan theory of English Cohesion and Language Context. The research found out about the English Cohesion that included grammatical and lexical cohesion in the lyrics. Various references: persona references, demonstrative references, and comparative references refer to every noun mentioned in the lyrics. Types of ellipsis were also found in "Permission to Dance" lyrics that used to implicit the messages expressed inside the lyrics. Conjunction also found in this research

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featuring four types of main conjunction proposed by Halliday and Hasan, and two other types of conjunction.

The research also found out that there are various type of reiteration used in “Permission to Dance” to create a rhetorical effect and emphasize the keyword on sentences such as: Epizeuxis, Tautology, Anaphora, Epistrophe, and Mesodiplosis. Additionally, the research also found about the situational and cultural context in song lyrics that tells messages behind the songs about story about how BTS as the singers faced the Covid-19 pandemic break, spread positivity, hope, and togetherness to the society.

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