



## THE POWER OF SONG IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

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### Abstract

Environmental issue has become the centre of attention quite a long time ago. United nation and many organisations have raised the awareness that the earth needs to be preserved and human must take part to bring less damage. The notions of global warming and greenhouse effect brought shocking fact that the earth is indeed in severe condition. Many actions and campaign have been made in order to raise people's awareness to have the eco-centred action. Not only United nation and organisation, but also singers and author promote the environmental awareness. This paper would like to see how the song can be the medium to raise people's awareness by analysing the language used and other aspect on the Lil Dicky's *Earth*. This study is a discourse analysis and implemented the theories implemented in this study are theory of raising awareness and language for campaign. The song was analysed using Sayer's MAST; it shows that implementing MAST principle improves the success of this song to increase awareness. A language strategy for campaign proposed by Cutlip and Centre was implemented to scrutinise what and how those strategies used in this song. The result of the analysis is the choice of language strategy in campaign and the unique choice of the mood of the song play an important role in the success of this song in raising people's awareness towards environmental issues.

**Keywords:** *song, raising awareness, environmental issues, campaign*

### Introduction

Raising people's awareness on certain issue can be done through campaign. Several time ago, Lil Dicky launched his song entitled *Earth*. He raised the issue of global warming by saying that earth is home for every creature. Actually, there are many songs before that address global warming issue. Despite the sad truth that earth is in a severe condition, this song brings a happy feeling through its melody, funny lyrics, and the music video as well. On the other hand, the previous songs tend to have a sad and mourning lyric as well as the official music video.

This article would like to analyse the song as a text that shows the socio-cultural aspect of the society especially related to environmental issues and how successful the song is in bringing the purpose to raise

awareness on the issues. The lyrics of the song was analysed on its language use linked with the idea on how language works in persuasion. The analysis went through on how song can trigger the message delivery on the certain issue by using certain catchy words and implementing certain strategies in persuasive utterance.

The method chosen to answer the research question is discourse analysis. In order to answer those research questions, theories of language in campaign were implemented in this study. Besides, some previous studies were presented as well in order to support the importance of this study.

### Previous Studies

This study referred to several previous studies related to the role of music into society and language for persuasive purposes. There are two studies: music as cultural window and song lyrics influences human's behaviour.

#### *A Cross-cultural Perspective on The Significance of Music and Dance to Culture and Society*

Music has been the media to learn certain culture in a society. From anthropological perspective, the meaning of music emerges from its overall context such as symbol, tempo, atmosphere of the occasion, and the emotional environment. Thus, in order to understand its meaning, we have to know the specific cultural context. Jerome Lewis (Lewis, 2013) studied music and song in Ba Yaka Pygmies. He examined that for Ba Yaka, music plays an essential role; for example, when the men set out to hunt, the women played the music in order to give the energy to the hunters. Another example is lullaby music for the fetus which aims to build a bond between the mother and the baby. Based on the study on the role of music in Ba Yaka, it can be concluded that music is the window into the cultural schemas. This finding is in line with the roles of music: expressing sentiment and nonverbal ideas.

#### *Song Lyrics Influences Human Behaviour*

This study took two studies under the topic how song lyrics can influence human. The first study was done by Ransom in 2015 (Ransom, 2015). She pointed that since a long time ago, human always tries to make their life worth living and becomes a well-being creature. In order to enhance the positive behaviour, many ways are done such as writing good things in life and doing well to others. Based on Ransom's experience, and it is supported by many researchers, song writing can heal human in facing their hardship as well as can be the way to show joy. Further finding about music is human can respond to music

emotionally both in positive and negative way. Another important note stated in this study is music can manipulate mood without the listeners' consent. In term of the consumers of music, Ransom believed that teenagers are the biggest consumers. As teenagers, they are in the age when they are good at impersonating. Thus, it is important to make them listen to songs which bring good emotion, since they tend to be easily driven by those songs. In short, songs indeed can influence human to do something good or bad since songs have the power to influence human's emotion.

### Literature Review

In order to analyse the data, the song entitled *Earth*, this study implements three theories namely principles of awareness-raising by Sayer and language of persuasion. Each theory will be explained briefly in the section below.

#### *Sayers's Principles of Awareness-raising*

The characteristics that the public's awareness has raised can be shown through their behaviour, attitude, and beliefs. Sayer (Sayers, 2006) mentioned that the difficulty in reaching the goal of raising public's awareness can be bridged through the effective communication. Communication is the meaning and message exchange.

The effectiveness of communication depends on some factors. Sayers mentioned there are three factors that influence the communication's effectiveness: the channel or medium used, the personal experiences and opinions of the communicators, and environmental factors. Communication can fail due to several factors such as language difference, cultural difference, personal difference, and lost information.

As the aim of persuasion is to have a successful behaviour, attitude, and belief changes, awareness-raising campaign should be characterised by MAST. Sayers formulated this MAST as the initial consideration to plan a public campaign.

MAST stands for message, audience, strategy, and timing.

The approach used in communication affects the successfulness of message transferring. Personal communication is believed to be the most effective approach. Sayers wrote in her book in the society or culture which oral communication dominates the message transferring, role play, performance, song, stories, poem, and dance include to the effective tools to transfer message. In term of strategy, mass communication is regarded as the most effective one. From printed material, audio-visual resources, websites, media interviews, and even SMS can be used to spread the message widely.

### *Language of Persuasion*

Communication is closely related with language. Language is the main tool in communication. This statement is supported by Arakelyan and Muradyan (Arakelyan & Muradyan, 2016) who stated that verbal language is used in many campaigns. In addition, Kenechukwu, Asemah, and Edegoh (Kenechukwu, Asemah, & Edegoh, 2013) language used in campaign needs to be persuasive enough to lure the people to choose and/ or have the same belief as what is being campaigned.

Psychological factor cannot be neglected. As the campaign aims to change people's behavior, covering human psychology can boost the success of the campaign. Kenechukwu, Asemah, and Edegoh (Kenechukwu et al., 2013) explained the campaign should be able to stimulate imagination and create a mental visual of the message. In order to reach the psychology side, the appropriate principle and technique need to be considered.

There are four principles to have a successful campaign. Cutlip and Centre, as cited in Kenechukwu, Asemah, and Edegoh (Kenechukwu et al., 2013), provide the following principle: identification principle, action principle, principle of

familiarity and trust, and clarity principle. In term of technique, there are lot techniques. Kenechukwu, Asemah, and Edegoh (Kenechukwu et al., 2013) mentioned some of them which are: name calling, plain folk, card stacking, bandwagon, glittering generalities, bait and switch, testimonials, and humor.

### **Methodology**

This study is discourse analysis study. Discourse analysis is the study of analyzing language use in its socio-cultural context. Gee (2005) explained language use reveals the performance of social activities and social identities; in other words, the language use is always political. The language user shows his belief through the language he uses. In deeper implication, the hearer can see the speaker's intention and wish though the language the speaker is using. In order to do so, certain analysis in language use such as the diction and test structure can be done in order to reveal the speaker's belief.

There are three tools that can be applied in analyzing a discourse: social languages, conversations, and intertextuality. Social language is defined as the difference in language use that shows the different social class of the speaker. This aspect was analyzed using language for persuasion theory provided by Cutlip and Centre. Intertextuality refers to the reference of the text with another text indirectly or directly. Conversation is the debate that is happening in society that is known by many people who side in either a pro or cont.

Social language of this song was analyzed using the catchy words used by Lil Dicky that reveals his identity. Intertextuality of the song was scrutinized by referring certain countries mentioned in the song and how the countries chose contributed in global warming issue. Conversation tool of the song is shown in how Lil Dicky point out the importance of saving the earth regardless this issue has been raised quite a long time ago, but still it

needs to be remembered and considered until now. This conversation tool was analyzed using Sayer's MAST.

### Discussion

Communication aims to transfer message from the speaker to the hearer. Cruse (Cruse, 2000) explained that in order to transfer the message, the speaker needs channel. Channel can be in many forms: auditory channel, the visual channel, the tactile channel, and many more. The hearer, so-called the receiver, has to decode the meaning transferred through the channel.

The analysis in this paper goes to the message intended to be transferred by Lil Dicky by choosing song as the channel. First of all, this paper analyzed the language used in the lyrics, followed by how song was chosen as a channel to promote the issue. Since this study is discourse analysis, the intertextuality and other discourse aspects such as its controversy and how far this song has been successful in reaching its goal were analyzed as well.

#### *How Language Works on Campaign*

The analysis of *Earth* song based on the principles in persuasion mentioned by Cutlip and Centre as cited in Kenechukwu (Kenechukwu et al., 2013). There are four principles that need to be considered in making a successful persuasion: identification principle, action principle, principle of familiarity and trust, and clarity principle. In term of identification principle, the song is presented in blissful atmosphere. This kind of atmosphere was brought to make the listeners know that Lil Dicky has a desire to make the earth beautiful again. This kind of atmosphere also aims to attract people attention since not many songs bringing the environmental issues that have merry atmosphere like this song. Indeed, the unfamiliarity in term of song emotion triggers listeners' attention. This kind of presentation agrees with the campaign strategy namely card stacking; this technique involves using false content deliberately to convince the audience that

this situation will happened and be achieved. It is true that there are some places on earth that shows the beauty of the creature; however, some other places obviously prove that our nature has been damaged.

The second principle is action principle. Based on Lil Dicky's interview with Rolling Stone Magazine (Greene, 2019), he said that he would donate the money he earned from the song to the organization worked in environmental affairs. Though he did not have any intention to do that at the first place, he decided to make this big project to take part in saving earth; this song was considered a big project seeing how many singers and celebrities across the world and generation taking part in this song. This principle is in line with MAST principle from Sayer and this will be explained further in the next session.

The next principle is familiarity and trust. Lil Dicky may not the person or celebrity who does not concern specifically about environmental issues; yet, he is a well-known rapper. He has made many successful projects and he has wide range of acquaintance. This can be the reason why he, you may say, easily recruit many celebrities and they agree to take part on his project. One of the celebrities whom he recruited is Leonardo DiCaprio. He was known for his memorable speech when he won Best Actor for the movie *The Revenant* talking about climate change. Lil Dicky collaborated with many famous singers such as Shawn Mendez and Selena Gomez. He also collaborated with singers from outside America such as PSY and Kris Wu. Not only singer from new era but also singers from old era namely Backstreet Boys also took part in this song. By recruiting celebrities, Lil Dicky implemented the celebrity's technique in campaign.

Clarity principle is the last principle in persuasion. Clarity here refers to the similarity and familiarity of the situation being presented. *Earth* song captures the

beauty of the earth and this song was released several days before Earth Day celebration. Earth Day is commemorated to make people aware of preserving earth and Mother Nature. From the theme and time release, it is clear that the song was composed to take part in environmental campaign. Even though it is not a novel idea composing a song about nature, but still the issue of global warming is still a hot topic. This clarity principle has the same meaning as bandwagon technique. This technique points out the familiarity of this issue to the audience. By using the familiar issue to the audience, this song can gain listeners' interest effectively. In the beginning of the official movie video, Lil Dicky had a conversation with 3 children about throwing garbage properly to save the earth. This shows that even a child, common people, needs to be aware of this issue like other important people such as nation leader or World Nation.

Besides those four principles of campaign above, this song uses several other campaign techniques such as glittering generalities and symbols. Glittering generalities means the campaign use beautiful words such as showing beauty and love by doing so, the persuader aims the audience to approve and accept that something is beautiful even without questioning it. This strategy is used through the way the animals were depicted to be able to speak. Each animal mentioned its own characteristics such as its behavior and/ or smell and other unique physical characteristics. The implementation of this technique can be seen as well in the music video. Presenting the movie video using animation and many colors beautifies the depiction of earth.

The next technique that was implemented in this song is symbols. Symbols have huge scope. They can be found in words or image that evoke emotional such as emotion related to home, family, nation, or lifestyle. It is interesting to analyze how this song chose the word. This study found out that the diction is very

direct and open; meaning to say the use of words that probably considered as taboo such as tits, dick, or fuck even cum. Those words, such as tits and dick, are depicted as the physical features of the animal. This symbols strategy is also closely related to glittering generalities technique in term of evoking emotional side of the audience. As it was explained previously, the music video focusing on the beauty of the nature, yet the real situation may not be that beautiful. This depiction triggers the emotion in a way that we want and miss the beautiful earth and its creatures; human actually wants to see earth as a home and it is clearly stated in the lyrics, *we love the earth it is our home*. Focusing the homey side of earth is indeed the unique approach of this song unlike other songs.

Besides the use of catchy words to describe the animal such as tits and dick, the way he mentioned some part of the world is also caught the interest. Lil Dicky, whose birth name is David Andrew Burd, is a rapper and comedian. He is known for his shaggy personality; it seems he shows in obviously in his recent work Earth song. It has been explained previously on how he used catchy words; it tends to be racy words to add its artistry taste of the song. The way he mentioned several countries into his climate-change-related song is intriguing. Besides that, reports and some reviews admitted that this song has a feel to be anthem by having repeated lyrics *we love the earth, it's our planet*.

As reported by [ucsusa.org](http://ucsusa.org) in 2017, Germany placed the 6<sup>th</sup> as the most countries emitting CO<sub>2</sub>. In the same year, China placed 1<sup>st</sup> and Africa 14<sup>th</sup>. India and Russia were not in the list of top 20 countries which emitted CO<sub>2</sub> the most. However, the rank was different in term of per capita emission. Using this measurement Russia placed 6<sup>th</sup> while Germany 8<sup>th</sup>, Africa 10<sup>th</sup>, China 12<sup>th</sup>, and India 20<sup>th</sup> in the chart.

Mentioning countries that are regarded as a giant in industry and CO<sub>2</sub> emission contributor sound like a satire. Regardless

the fact that those countries, and many others, have done something to reduce the CO2 emission, still they are in the top rank in the chart. Some listeners could not catch this satire. They mentioned on the YouTube section comment that Lil Dicky carelessly mentioned and praised those countries, while they contribute to global warming as the biggest industrial centers. Others praised his mentioning those countries, especially Germany, as the sign of peace; they refer to the Nazi who slaughtered many people in the past.

The effectiveness of using song to increase public awareness can be seen from the date when the song was released. This song was released three days before the international earth day celebration. As reported by Rolling Stone Magazine, Lil Dicky is known for his active participation in charity records since the song *We Are the World*. From the interview, Lil Dicky personally invited Rolling Stone to have the interview before the song was released, it is reported that the song aimed to give information about climate change. The idea to make the song into different sound of animal came from his own mind; considering that it would be funny and interesting to cast artists to play role as the animal. He added that he would donate the profits from the song to charities involved in saving the environment. His silliness as a rapper can be seen in this silly song. He mentioned that he was satisfied with the result that the song gives the gimmick.

#### *The Controversial and Its Success*

Reviewers pointed out the cheerful emotion presented in this song. Unlike its predecessor songs which have dark presentation, this song depicts the beauty of earth. The song intended to increase people's alertness toward the environmental affairs without overwhelming the listeners with the famine, forest damage, flood, or animal extinction due to climate change. This approach was regarded as a fresh idea. The music video that was made using animation shows the

peculiarity in depicting climate change. Furthermore, the repetition of the lyrics *we love the earth, it is our home*, has a potential to be the anthem.

Although this song has a potential to be the anthem, some YouTube reviewers said that this song is too witless. The official movie video is made in the form of animation, and the character was depicted cutely; however, looking at the lyrics, this song is not for children for sure. Indeed, it is common in America to use cursing word, but for the charity purpose, the lyric does not match with this noble aim. No matter what the reviews say regarding this song, the funny and witless aspects of this song truly can catch listeners' attention. Lil Dicky successfully shows his humorous yet blunt personality as a comedian in this song.

Despite some negative reviews regarding this song, the purpose to earn money for charity can be met. Report says this song has earned over \$800,000. Lil Dicky donates that amount of money from this song to various organizations such as Amazon Frontlines, the Carbon Cycle Institute, Shark Conservation Fund, and some more. The most recent report (Droke, 2020) mentioned that he donated around \$200,000 to his new-established fund for COVID-19 and climate response. His initial purpose to earn money for donation and as well as his intention to do something to save earth undoubtedly successful regarding the amount of money he can earn and people's reaction towards this song.

Others compared this song with *Earth Song* sung by Michael Jackson. Formerly mentioned, Lil Dicky's *Earth* has different vibe compared to other songs. The friendly, beautiful, and soothing earth is depicted vividly through its music video. Music video is made in order to visualize the lyric and deliver the meaning in clearer way. People are presented not only with the lyrics but also with the visual aspect of the song as well. Critics mentioned that delivering the meaning of urgency in saving the earth is more effective if the song and

the music video show how bad the earth condition is due to human's behavior. Moreover, critics evaluated, the lyrics plays the important role to make the listeners understand more the importance of initiating save-the-earth actions. On the other hand, Lil Dicky's song tends to focuses on being funny and racy and neglecting the main purpose to show how bad the impact of human's actions towards the earth.

Along with *Earth* and *Earth Song*, Alicia Keys has ever released a song entitled *Kill Your Mama* in 2016. In her album *Here* released in 2016, she successfully showed her transformation both as a person and a singer. It has been quite some time before releasing this album when she decided not to wear make-up to show her true beauty as African-American singer. She also started to dealing with humanitarian issues such as civil rights, feminism, and criminal justice. Based one of critics, Keys's feeling and result of her personal reflection can be felt in all songs in this album. Although this song does not clearly state about environmental affair, the lyric can be interpreted as human's greediness can damage "our mama"; our mother earth.

Indeed, comparing to these two songs, *Earth Song* and *Kill Your Mama*, Dicky's song *Earth* brings an opposite vibe. Those two songs have a sad and bereft feeling towards the earth; on the other hand, *Earth* has positive feeling towards earth. Referring to Lewis's study on Ba Yaka Pygmies, song as a channel to promote humanism and environmental affairs is still popular choice since most people will put an interest toward the song. The three songs mentioned previously show that through its own uniqueness, the song can be regarded as a success in raising man's awareness towards certain issue. In short, it is a brilliant way of Lil Dicky choosing the song as a medium, the time in releasing the song, and the artists and singers taking part in making this song.

### *The Success of Lil Dicky's Earth*

All the factors above, people's awareness on climate change and other environmental issues and the language used in this song were used to fulfil the idea of MAST by Sayer. As it has been mentioned on the previous section, MAST stands for message, audience, strategy, and timing. In term of message, it is clear that this song has the purpose to show the beauty of the earth. In the interview with TIME magazine published on 19 April 2019, Lil Dicky clearly stated that he made this song in order to participate in preserving the earth. He has made the commitment to donate the profit he earned to help saving the environment. Despites some reviews mentioned that the language is inappropriate; its purpose to attract people's attention and raise a fund is successful.

The last song about environmental issue was released on 2016; on the other hand, promoting go-green behavior in other media such as poster and campaign new behavior for example bringing own bottle and using reusable straw. The variety of media can boost the success in raising awareness as well as reaching wider audience. As it has been explained on the previous part, song is the powerful tool to influence human's behavior; thus, asking people to put more awareness on environmental issues through song is a good strategy.

In term of strategy, this song used various persuasion strategies; this has been analyzed on the previous part. The strategy here includes the strategy in the choice of word, the issue raised in this song, as well as the atmosphere brought in this song through the lyric and melody. By doing so, Lil Dicky aimed wider audience for this song. The music video which was made using animation interests many people. One of the listeners mentioned on YouTube comment section that he though this song is for children since the animation used for music video, but it turned out not like that if we also pay attention to the racy lyrics. There is a story in the prologue of the music

video told Lil Dicky who asked the children to put the trash in the bin. This shows that all people, children as well, should be aware of this environmental issue by doing something small, but it will contribute a lot to save the earth.

Releasing the song to welcome International Earth Day agrees with the idea of timing. In order to make the message can be accepted and seen its urgency, this song deliberately was released on that day to take part in commemorating Earth Day. As Lil Dicky aims to make his song as an anthem, the catchy and repeated lyrics were made to meet this purpose. The decision to make the repetition lyric *we love the earth it is our home we love the earth it is our planet* was taken in order to make this song sounds like an anthem to commemorate Earth Day.

### Conclusion

Issues on environment will never be obsolete since we are still struggling in make the earth a good place to live. Raising people's awareness and reminding human to always save the earth and nature are the concern not only formal organization but also non-governmental organizations and even artist. It has been a long time and many art works such as novel, poem, song, and many more that promoting environmental affairs. Song, which is regarded as a powerful tool to change human's behavior was chosen by Lil Dicky to take part in raising people's awareness to save the earth.

Choosing song as a media to promote saving earth movement is a thoughtful strategy regarding that song has been known to give impact towards human's behavior. In order to reach the success in making this song an influence towards human's behavior, various strategies have been implemented. Using catchy words, even regarded as racy and inappropriate, was done to fulfil the language strategy for campaign. Those words were used in order to point out the unique characteristic of an animal in a funny way.

Other aspects that support the success of this song is the time release. Releasing the song previous days prior to Earth Day celebration attracted the audience to listen to this song. Dicky's decision to include many singers added the value of this song; people talked about how busy he is since he recruited so many singers and celebrities from around the world. Dicky's intention to take part in saving-the-earth action has brought him making Earth in such a way to gain people's attention and expectedly this song will help increasing people's awareness to take part in saving the earth as well.

The writer suggests the future research to talk about the influence of song towards human's behavior. This study covers the how the catchy words used and the countries mentioned in his song have potential to change human's behavior to save earth. It will be better if future research can talk about the real change in human's behavior to save the earth which was encouraged by the songs they heard. Another research methodology in linguistics such as pragmatics analysis on perlocutionary acts can be analyzed more deeply in the future.

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