



Meaning Construction of Love in International-Style Thai Love Songs

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Abstract

This qualitative research aimed to study the construction of the meaning of love in international-style Thai love songs, the love representation that appears in the songs, and the construction process of the meaning image of the songwriters. Forty popular international-style Thai love songs were analyzed, and the sender was studied through in-depth interviews of the eight purposively-selected songwriters. The results revealed that the image of love in love songs could be divided into seven types: ideal love, passionate love, fascinated love, conditional love, expected love, unrequited love, and empty love. The construction process of the love images included two stages: 1) the stage of perceiving meaning, in which songwriters learn from society and experiences, and 2) the stage of conveying meaning, in which songwriters encode accumulated knowledge to convey the meaning based on their perspectives. The encoded and decoded meaning resulted from decoding the world of reality. As the meaning has a tendency to change over time, the image of love can reflect the zeitgeist of a particular era.

Keywords: 1) Construction 2) International-style Thai songs 3) Love song 4) Meaning 5) Zeitgeist

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Introduction

Meaning is constructed by humans to explain events in the world of reality. The world that people can experience through the five senses is paramount reality, which is a natural environment or human-made surroundings. Therefore, it is difficult to completely understand every single component, resulting in the construction of a world of meaning. For example, people seem unable to understand the natural reality of love. As a result, the world of meaning has been constructed to determine and explain it. The fundamental concept of the construction of social reality views reality as being constructed. Phenomenology believes that others and society transmit knowledge to people. Consequently, reality can be presented in the form of symbols, leading to the consciousness of individuals.

However, Berger and Luckmann (1966, pp. 51-55) mentioned that social reality could have changed from the original context, and the change depends on the transmission of the meaning of that phenomenon along with the code constructed and accepted by society. Besides, the code ultimately used for social interactions is language; therefore, language is considered an example of the experience construction of mutual perception. Language enables the subjective world to become a reality, and humans use language for communication directly and indirectly in different contexts, such as poetry, plays, novels, and songs.

Songs are one communication means that offers joy and aesthetics to the public in society, and songwriters create literary values by carefully selecting words, constructing sentences, and using profound style. It is a string

of words, melodies, and rhythms from musical instruments or singing with chorus accents and melodies, creating eloquence and pleasure for listeners. Lyrics can provide a more specific context for the listeners (Petti John and Sacco, 2009, p. 75 as cited in Gallée, 2016, p. 22). The concepts of fulfillment, disappointment, love, and generosity to people in society have long made songs gain popularity (Kheovichai, 1991, p. 35). One concept that has never changed over time is love, also known as love songs, which is the dominant theme of songs and a symbol of cultural development (Friedlander, 1996, pp. 14-21). Application of the theory of social construction of reality could explain that the meaning construction of love songs derives from the accumulated and molded experience of meaning perception of the songwriters to become their personal style. Moreover, love is a set of meanings generated by society to explain bonding relationships. Therefore, love songs have changed according to the social system and structure from time to time. In the past 65 years of pop music charts in the 20th century, songwriters presented love in different aspects, including the social aspect (Rogers, 2017). Even in Thailand, slow-rhythm Thai-style love songs have become a modern and international style according to their prevalence as well as social and cultural changes. The content patterns and semantic images also have different forms regarding the specific characteristics of each era.

Based on the abovementioned factual information, the researchers, therefore, would like to extend knowledge of the communication process of the semantic images or the content of the songs to examine how the image representation of the text and the sender is constructed,



as well as the songwriters' underlying attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs used to create the images. It also attempts to reveal reality reflection, construction, social direction, and changes in the meaning images of international-style Thai love songs.

Research Objectives

1) To reveal the attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs of the "sender", or the songwriter, during the construction process of love representation presented in the "text" to understand the changes that occur;

2) To study the pattern of change, reflection of reality, or social leading of the construction of meanings in international-style Thai love songs.

Literature Review

Related literature and previous studies were reviewed to find the framework and theory for conducting this research. The researchers have learned that, before songwriters write songs, there must be underlying concepts that drive the creation of music and the construction of the meaning of love. Based on the social construction theory of reality of Berger and Luckmann (1966, pp. 51-55), meaning construction aims to facilitate people's perception and understanding of the world of reality. The world of reality prevalently exists, and it is difficult to understand reality holistically. Therefore, a world of meaning is created. For example, humans seem unable to naturally experience and understand love, so they construct a world of meaning to determine and explain the meaning of love. The construction of the world of meaning is a process that changes subjective meaning into objective meaning to generate

the intersubjective common-sense world. When knowledge accumulates, it becomes a stock of knowledge that stipulates humans' reactions toward love with familiarity, and it finally becomes a social reality.

The concept of encoding and decoding explains a set of meanings of the sender and the receiver of the message under the same text, which could be identical or different. The difference varies based on individual background. The sender creates the text or a set of meanings from personal ideology or experience and transmits it to the receiver. How the receiver interprets the conveyed text also depends on background and experience toward that text. Similarly, whether love in international-style Thai love songs can create a mutual experience with the receiver hinges on the image of love being a mental representation for the receiver.

As previously mentioned and according to the concept of representation, the semantic meaning of thoughts in the human brain is created in reference to the objective world, like individuals or events, or as the imagination of the fictional world, people, and events. Hall (1997, p. 4) views that the concept of representation functions similarly to the system of language since representation is a meaning product of the thought system facilitated by the work of language. This provides a link between humans and the world of reality consisting of objects, individuals, and events. Through this method, humans can construct representation in the system of thoughts in the world of reality and meaning using language. Thus, representation is not the contraction of reality, but the self-construction with equivalent properties to reality. Studies in the construction of social reality, encoding and decoding, and the concept of

representation play a significant role in making the study of the meaning construction of love more profound.

However, even though studies in the construction of social reality or representation are essential, the explanation of encoding and decoding of the image of love in international-style Thai love songs requires the specification of the love image. Love is difficult to define since it is abstract and exists in the world of reality; moreover, different people construct different meanings of love based on their contexts. Sternberg (1986, pp. 119-135) conducted a study and developed a theory called the Triangle of Love, which comprises three components of the three different types of love, namely intimacy, passion, and commitment. Lee (1973) also explained that love is complicated and powerful. Besides, it can be expressed in many different feelings and forms. However, in the book entitled *The Art of Loving*, Fromm (1975) pointed out the problems of love that most people view as being loved is more problematic than loving and the ability to love. For them, the problem is how to be loved or adorable, which means they view love from the perspective of being loved or the receiver of love rather than giving love. Thus, the researchers applied the three concepts in the analyses of the existing semantic image of love.

Songs, especially international-style Thai songs, are considered a type of mass media, and international-style Thai music may directly influence the listeners' love. Songs are also a good tool that transmits information to many people. It is also a medium where representation is constructed to represent the meaning of something and to create values, meanings, and ideologies of love in society for all eras. According to the zeitgeist concept, the values

of a period are the forces that drive historical events in society at large (Boring, 1950, pp. 85-87; Hofstede, 1980, pp. 30-34; Watson and Evans, 1991, pp. 67-75). Phenomena that characterize a particular era have a zeitgeist effect and will change the values of people in society (Puohiniemi and Verkasalo, 2020, pp. 300-332).

Based on literature review, the researchers found a study by Raksatman (2004) titled *Young People and the Social Construction of Love in Thai Popular Music* which examined the process of perception of meaning and the construction of social reality about love in the context of Thai popular music. Leesomboonphol (2006) examined string music with lyrics associated with immoral love released between 2003 and 2004. Besides, studies by Tinsulanon (2010) titled *The Form and Communicative Strategy in Thai Popular Song Lyrics* by Surak Suksaewee and Promarach (2017) examined the use of symbols to create the meaning of love between men and women in Thai music videos. In the work of Homtoopprom (2011) titled *Themes, Content and Lyric/Tune Formats of Thai Classical Love Songs from 1932-87* and Samma (2003) entitled *An Analysis of Lyrics of Popular International Thai Songs among Thai Teenagers (B.E.2545)*, the research focus was still the content meaning. A research study by Gomutmass (1999) entitled *An Analysis of Music Literature of Rewat Buddhanan* studied and analyzed the rhetorical use in music. Leesomboonphol (2006) studied string songs released between 2003-2004 that featured lyrics about love in an immoral manner. The research aimed to study the song lyrics and students' opinions towards the lyrics that presented immoral love.

Regarding studies of social reflections presented in songs, Yaikhum (2004) studied Thai



ways of 1) values and beliefs and 2) society, culture, and tradition in country songs. Moreover, Winit (1999) researched forms and characteristics of language use in popular music literature. The previous studies mainly focused on the aspect of metaphor or the meaning of love in songs or movies. Some studies emphasized social reflections in songs or examined concepts and presentations of the meaning image in particular parts of the songs. However, none of the research has investigated the construction of the meaning of love by songwriters regarding its origins and relations to society. Therefore, the researchers are interested in studying meanings and forms of

love presented in international-style Thai songs as a message and examining the underlying songwriting process of the songwriters, as the sender, through popular international-style Thai love songs from the past to the present. The research aims to reveal the attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs of the sender or the songwriters under the construction of the meaning of love in the text and to understand the changes that occur. Moreover, it also examines changes, reality reflections, or social leading of the construction of meaning in international-style Thai love songs.

Research Framework

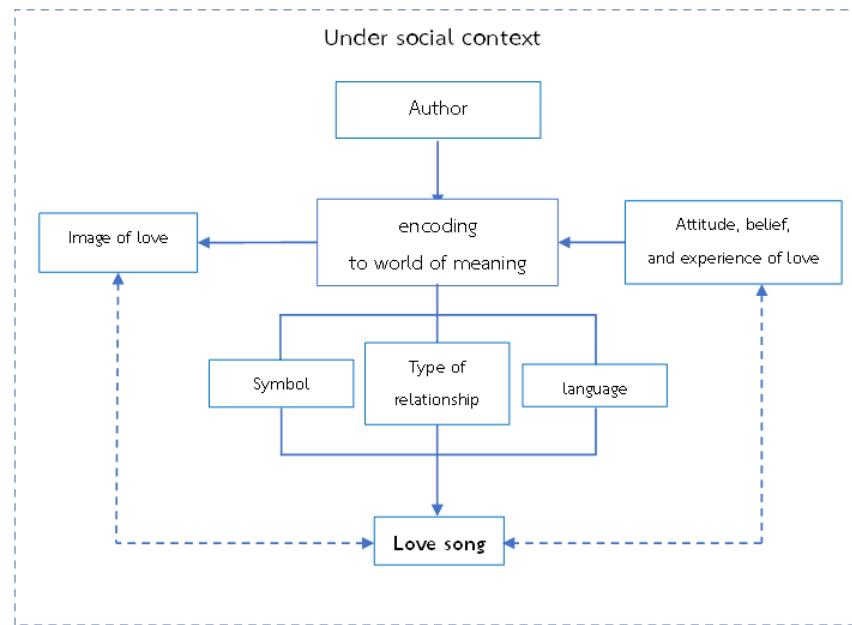


Figure 1 Research Framework

Methodology

The present qualitative research employed textual analysis and in-depth interviews conducted with samples as the sender.

Population and Samples

1) Text : The researchers analyzed the text from popular international-style Thai love songs that reflects attitudes and values in the society from four eras including the national unification

era, the music industry era, the minor hits era, and the freedom music era. The 40 songs were retrieved from an online database and a music chart from a trustworthy website. The criteria for song selection were as follows:

1. Popular songs in each era were searched from trustworthy online sources, such as music charts, Song of the Year awards presented by different institutions, and albums with the

most popular songs. The search employed keywords of “most popular,” “hit songs,” “songs of the year,” “million albums,” etc.

2. Samples were selected using at least four popular music datasets from various sources. Duplicated songs that appeared in multiple sources were counted, aiming to reassure the

reliability of the information and attempt to select songs from different years.

3. The love in the songs must be consistent with one of the characteristics of love, such as liking, infatuated love, empty love, etc.

Table 2 presents the love songs for textual analysis.

Table 2 Love Songs for Textual Analysis

National Unification Era (B.E. 2478 - 2506)	Music Industry Era (B.E. 2507 – 2536)	Minor Hits Era (B.E. 2537 – 2548)	Freedom Music Era (B.E. 2549 - present)
Chuen Cheewit (Delightful)	Piang Sop Ta (Just Look into Your Eyes)	Mai Ard plian Jai (Unchangeable Mind)	Klai Kae Nai Kue Klai (How Much Further to Get Close)
Prom Likit (Destiny)	Kad Ther Kad Jai (Without You, I'll Die)	Oh! Oh! (Oh! Aoy!)	Ther (You)
Kor Hai Muen Derm (Please Be the Same)	Keed sen tai (Underlined)	Rak Tae Du Lae Mai Dai (True Love I Couldn't Take Care)	Chuek Wiset (Magic Rope)
Kor Pop Nai Fun (Allow Me to See You in My Dream)	Boomerang (Boomerang)	Kreng Jai (No Thanks, No Offense)	Aow (Hey!)
Krasip Sawat (Love Whisper)	Pen Pai Mai Dai (Impossible)	Tho Aey (Alas!)	Thararat (Thararat)
Porn Prom (Brahma Blessings)	Prik Ki Nu (Spicy Girl)	Prung Nee Mai Sai (Tomorrow...Isn't Too Late)	Wan Keoy Tuen (Beached Whale)
Pran Lor Nue (Hunter)	Plik Lok (Unexpected)	Yak Dai Yin Wa Rak Kan (Want to Hear You Love Me)	Jeb Jon Por (Hurt Enough)
Yam Duek (Nighttime)	Mai Oan Oaw Tao Rai (How Much for Not Being Fat)	Pa Chet Na (Handkerchief)	Tha Chan Pen Kao (If I Were Him)
Pluk Rak (Love Creation)	Rak Krang Raek (First Love)	Pae Jai (Surrender)	Rak Tid Siren (Siren Love)
Fon Yaad Sudtai (The Last Rain Drop)	Rak Chan Nan Pue Ther (My Love for You)	Faen Ja (My Love)	Mork (Fog)



Three experts assessed the content validity of the selected international-style Thai love songs. Results showed that the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) value was equal to or greater than .50; therefore, the selected songs were considered appropriate representatives for the research.

2) Sender: The researchers conducted interviews with eight songwriters about their concepts, attitudes, accumulated experiences, and songwriting experiences. The eight songwriters were purposively selected and categorized into four groups, namely two senior songwriters with more than 30 years of experience, two professional songwriters with ten years or more of experience but not more than 30 years, two novice songwriters with fewer than ten years of experience, and two amateur but skillful songwriters. Additional interviews would be conducted if further information was required.

Data Collection Method

The researchers attempted to access the story and examine its essence to provide an in-depth explanation of societal phenomena. Therefore, the researchers employed qualitative research methods with the following data collection methods.

1) Textual Analysis: The researchers analyzed the text in the selected popular international-style Thai love songs, which could reflect social changes. The researchers also consulted various data sources to make the analysis more complete.

2) In-depth Interviews: The selected songwriters, as the sender, were interviewed in depth using semi-structured interview questions. Then the gathered data was synthesized and further discussed.

Data Analysis Methods and Criteria

Textual Analysis

The research employed the theory of social construction of reality, the concept of representation, the concept of semiology and signification, and the concept of love to analyze the meaning and image of love presented in the selected popular love songs.

Sender Analysis

The data gathered from the in-depth interviews were used for the sender analysis. This sender analysis was executed through the theory of social construction of reality, the concept of encoding and decoding, and the concept of the zeitgeist.

Results

The results of the study were divided into two parts. The first part presents the results from the analysis of the text, and the second part shows the analysis of the in-depth interviews. The textual analysis attempts to analyze the concepts, attitudes, and images of love that the songwriters were trying to convey. On the other hand, the results from the in-depth interviews explore the songwriters' experiences, concepts, and attitudes behind the construction of the meaning of love. The results of the study are as follows:

1. Textual Analysis

The textual analysis in this research was conducted based on the lyrics of the 40 selected songs. Words and phrases that appear in the songs were analyzed to examine the presented content and context before conducting a contrastive analysis with the concepts and theory to explain the meaning. The results of the analysis are as follows:

1.1 Views of Love

The researchers employed Sternberg's (1986, pp. 119-135) theory of the triangle of love, Lee's (1973) concept of the six types of love, and Fromm's (1975) concept of the art of love. The three concepts overlap and can be reorganized. Therefore, the researchers decoded and recoded the meaning and obtained a new notion of love with seven different types. The categorization of the 40 selected international-style Thai love songs showed that the content of the previous international-style Thai love songs covers the seven different types of love as follows:

Ideal love: Ideal love constructs meaning and ideals of love with beliefs and views that love is beautiful and worthy to protect. Based on the 40 selected songs, the ideal love appeared in the international-style Thai love songs in the national unification and the early music industry eras. However, it was not present in the minor hits and freedom music eras. Therefore, it can be assumed that the importance of cherishing and steadfast love in the later periods decreases. For example, the content in the song entitled **Chuen Cheewit (Delightful)** depicts the feeling of freshness in a couple's life and love as they love and trust each other forever through the ups and downs. The song also discusses the compatibility of the couple and the protection of love.

“...delightful life and mind, Love is stirred in our heart, You and I admire every harmonious and pleasant thing, delighted in love and trusted in love, Be confident you always have me, We rejoice love in our hearts without fading away...”

(The song “Chuen Cheewit (Delightful)”,

Kaew Atchاريယกุล)

Passionate love: Passionate love is present in the music content that reflects somewhat apparent sexual relationships. However, with the poetry method of word use, the content looks elegant and enhances the feeling of desire that is clear but not too overt. Metaphor was also employed to reflect desire through comparisons, but the listeners could immediately understand the message the music is trying to convey. For example, the song entitled **Khor Pob Nai Fun (Allow Me to Meet You in My Dream)** depicts joy and happiness that make life cheerful. The couple wants to meet daily, and they will feel sad when they do not see each other. Although they do not see each other when they are awake, the couple desire to meet in a dream because they can get close. An example of the sexual-related phrases that appear in the song is enjoying sexual intercourse.

“...Dreams are more joyful, and we may seek happiness together. In day we only meet but never touch, in dreams, we embrace and make love. Hope to see you in dreams because we share contentment there. I desire to dream of you every night. Dreaming is happier and better than being awake...”

(The song “Khor Pob Nai Fun (Allow Me to Meet You in My Dream)”, Kaew Atchاريယกุล)

Fascinated love: Fascinated love gained popularity and was presented in international-style Thai love songs in the music industry era. Here, love is a vehicle to react to feelings between humans as well as the desire to fill the void of a lost love. As a result, respected love occurs from enchantment to compensate for the absent things. **Piang Sob Ta (Just Look into Your Eyes)** is such an example which presents



love ranting. The music content shows that the man has frantically thought of the woman since they first met like it is love at first sight. The man wants to tell the woman. Although the woman does not have a feel for him, the man rejoices in this love with intense emotion. He tends to worship this love.

“...when I met you and looked at you, all I can do is think of you. I want to follow you with patience. I don’t care about any other girls, just following you who is so cute and cherished whom I care...”

(The song “Piang Sob Ta (Just Look into Your Eyes)”, Danupol Kaewkarn)

The creation of conditions for love is one of the prevalent concepts in international-style Thai love songs. It is also as popular as other concepts. The created conditions can be positive with determining appropriate distance and directions and negative with limitations and proposals to continue the relationship. An example song is **Oh Aoy (Oh Oh)**, which illustrates someone being forced to obey and follow their partner’s commands. If the person does not follow the instructions, the relationship will fall apart. So, the person is doubtful about whether to obey and if the break-up will cause serious consequences. The subject also wants to challenge these notions. Apparently, the song content presents conditional agreements to maintain the relationship.

“...I am forced and threatened to be careful. I am told to always agree and not to argue; otherwise, I will encounter difficulties. I am forced to be like someone. I am told I am not perfect. I also have to change my personality. Otherwise, I will be separated...”

(The song “Oh Aoy (Oh Oh)”, Thana

Lawasut and Pracha Pongsupat)

Expected love: Expected love is present in every period of international-style Thai love songs ranging from the national unification era to the freedom music era. The presence of expected love reflects the need for love and to be loved to fulfill the feeling and basic desires of ordinary people. The feeling and expectation of love appear to be one of the concepts that coexist with love in every era. Expected love can be individually categorized since it is considered an unfulfilled feeling and desire. If the feeling is fulfilled, it will turn into other types of love according to the context or situation. An example of a song demonstrating expected love is **Tha Chan Pen Kao (If I Were Him)**, which presents the desire to interfere in someone’s relationship to fulfill a personal desire of love due to witnessing the loved one feel express sorrow in a bitter relationship. The persona feels that if he were in the relationship, he would not hurt the loved one.

“...If it could be changed to be me who stands beside you, I would offer you love that never hurts. I will make him, who always hurts you, stay alone without anyone, allowing me to be the only one who loves you with all my heart. The more I witness you are hurt, the more I suffer. In reality, you love him with all your heart, and he has the right to possess your love...”

(The song “Tha Chan pen kao (If I Were Him)”, Sudkhate Jungcharoen, Anan Dapphetthikorn, and Bancha Khamluuechaa)

Unrequited love: The concept of unrequited love appears in every period of international-style Thai love songs, and it is found in selected popular love songs. It is consistent with

the previously mentioned concept of expectation in love. The content reflects or presents disappointments, unrequited love, separation, and loss. An example of a song depicting unrequited love is **Ruk Tae Du Lae Mai Dai** (**True Love I Couldn't Take Care**), which displays the feeling of loss toward a love that the person cannot protect. The person feels inadequate because he cannot maintain this love. When he realizes it, it is too late. If he could have another chance, he would take care of his loved one better.

“...Every scene and episode never fades away, although it has been a long time. Since I lost you, every scene and episode keeps repeating what I have done. I am the dumbest. I have true love, but I couldn't take care of it. When I realize its value, it is too late. I suffer. No matter how much I want to turn the clock back, it is just a dream. Can anyone tell me if there is a magic door that helps me turn back to the days and nights I have you by my side? I want to take care of you again.”

(The song “Rak Tae Du lae mai Dai (**True Love I Couldn't Take Care**),” Pativate Uthaichalum)

Empty love: The concept of empty love with two different meanings is rarely present in love songs. The first meaning shows that empty love occurs due to the absence of feelings of intimacy and fascination. However, the two parties have a mutual agreement that causes the continuation of a bland and lifeless relationship. The second meaning presents that empty love emerges because of the absence of the being-loved feeling and the emptiness of the romantic relationship. Therefore, the songs' content usually reflects the end of love, which

is a realistic situation according to the concept of love expectation. When a person is not successful in love, there must be a party out of love for the unsuccessful party. An example song is **Aow (Hey!)**, which depicts a story in which a person breaks the current relationship to choose someone better, but later on, the person asks for forgiveness and wants to restore the relationship. However, the request is turned down, as it is a waste of time, and the relationship will never be the same. The song clearly shows a cutoff of love for each other. Besides, the feelings of love and the sense of attachment have also gone.

“...Hey! It is not what we discussed that you chose him and would never return. Hey! Don't go back on your word. Don't waste your time asking for something you will never get back. I don't understand. It's you who said I am not the right person. But today, will the world or the sky collapse so that you ask me to return? You will never get me back...”

(The song “Aow (Hey!),” Chanakan Rattana-udom)

1.2 Views of Meaning Representation

The researchers applied the concept of representation of Hall (1997) to analyze the text. The results are as follows:

Social reflective approach: It was found that 15 songs contain content that apparently reflects society; namely Fon Yaad Sudtai (**The Last Rain Drop**), Kor Hai Muen Derm (**Please Be the Same**), Khor Pob Nai Fun (**Allow Me to See You in My Dream**), Chuen Cheewit (**Enjoy Life**), Prom Likit (**Destiny**), Pluk Rak (**Love Creation**), Krasib Sawat (**Love Whisper**), Porn Prom (**Brahma Blessings**), Yam Duek (**Night Time**), Tho Aey (**Alas!**), Mai Aon Aow Tao Rai (**How Much For Not Being Fat**), Rak Chan Nun Pue Ther (**My Love**)



For You), Faen Ja (My Love), Rak Tid Siren (Siren Love).

Based on the abovementioned songs, most of the songs that reflect views toward society belong to the national unification era. The selected songs directly and implicitly mention social aspects, culture, language, customs, traditions, thoughts, and beliefs related to the meaning of married life. For example, status will determine the spouse; being poor will not be successful in love; a person should be in love at the right time. Moreover, some songs in the music industry and minor hits eras reflect social views of physical appearances or communicative culture.

Intentional and desired approach: It was found that 17 songs present thoughts and desires. The songs are Pieng Sob Ta (Just Look into Your Eyes), Kard Ther kard Jai (Without You, I'll Die), Keed Sen Tai (Underlined), Boomerang (Boomerang), Pen Pai Mai Dai (Impossible), Prik Ki Nu (Spicy Girl), Plik Lok (Unexpected), Rak Krang Raek (First Love), Mai Ard Plian Jai (Unchangeable Mind), Rak Tae Du Lae Mai Dai (True Love I Couldn't Take Care), Kreng Jai (No, Thanks. No Offense), Prung Nee Mai Sai (Tomorrow...Isn't Too Late), Yark Dai Yin Wa Rak Gun (I Want to Hear You Love Me), Klai Kae Nai Kue Klai (How Much Further to Get Close), Aow! (Hey!), Jeb Jon Por (Hurt Enough) and Tha Chan Pen Kao (If I Were Him).

Each of these songs primarily presents thoughts, desires, emotions, or feelings, and the content holds a mutual understanding in society, such as secret love, attempts, patience, unsuccessful love, expectation in love, grief, and loss. These characteristics are messages that the receiver can easily understand without struggles.

Besides, the content of the 17 songs also reflects the views and intentions of the songwriters. The songwriters construct and determine the meaning related to the feelings of love. At the same time, they make changes to society, especially the assignment of the meaning of actions through vocabulary presented in the songs.

Meaning construction approach: Although the construction of meaning commonly occurs in international-style Thai love songs, seven songs present explicit meaning construction. The songs are Pran Lor Nue (Hunter), Oh Aoy (Oh Oh), Pa Chet Na (Handkerchief), Chuek Wiset (Magic Rope), Thararat (Thararat), Wan Koey Tuen (Beached Whale), and Mork (Fog). Each song uses specific words or phrases to create an implicit symbolic meaning. For example, the song **Pran Lor Nue (Hunter)** constructs the meaning of love as hunting which includes a prey and a hunter. Similarly, the song **Pa Chet Na (Handkerchief)** also presents the same notion, but the main difference is the handkerchief is used as a hunting tool. In contrast, the song **Chuek Wiset (Magic Rope)** illustrates the construction of the meaning of love that love has power over magic. It is stated in the song that even a magic rope cannot hold love. In the song **Wan Koey Tuen (Beached Whale)**, the construction of the meaning of love shows that love causes confusion. When someone is in love, that person does not seem to think or act logically, which can lead to disaster. The song **Mork (Fog)** also compares off-season fog and a love affair and that the two things can cause unexpected events during the marriage.

The above construction of meaning is a metaphor or creation of new and different

meanings or views. The receiver requires an understanding of concepts and signs that appear to have a mutual understanding with the songwriters.

2. In-depth Interviews

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with eight songwriters of different ranges of age and experiences to obtain conclusive concepts. The in-depth interviews of the eight songwriters provided sufficient information, therefore, additional in-depth interviews were not required. The gathered information from the interviews is presented in four parts, including 1) attitudes, beliefs, and experiences used in songwriting, 2) the meaning of love from the perspectives of the songwriters, 3) changes in the content of the international-style Thai love songs, and 4) changes of love representation in the international-style Thai love songs.

2.1 Attitudes, Beliefs, and Experiences Used in Songwriting

Attitudes, beliefs, and experiences are three essential components behind songwriting. The song's content is clearly constructed through accumulated experiences with or without consciousness. These accumulated experiences have been buried in a set of deep thoughts at a subconscious level, resulting in a body of knowledge functioning as a drive of a person-specific songwriting style.

Another pivotal aspect is storytelling, a technique in which the songwriters employ a combination of imagination, accumulated experiences, and attitudes to depict a story and meaning in a limited scope. Therefore, storytelling must be concise with the content or story that entirely conveys the emotions and feelings of the artist. When the songwriters have

a different set of background ideas, the storytelling also varies. Additionally, storytelling can be divided into two categories, including songwriting according to stipulated concepts and songwriting according to personal interests. The former songwriting style commonly occurs in capitalism, while the latter liberally relies on the songwriters' thoughts and imagination without any constraints. Therefore, songs written through the latter process usually reflect the experiences surrounding the songwriters.

The researchers also recognize significantly different songwriting techniques of songwriters in varying age groups. Novice and amateur songwriters rely more on their personal interests in songwriting than professional and senior songwriters due to their different accumulated experiences.

Consequently, it can be said that songwriting is storytelling that constructs a small world containing thoughts and imagination through social accumulation. It also presents a logical view and creative imagination via the construction of content and meaning within a limited scope using unique approaches. The transmission encourages the audience to perceive, understand, and feel that they are part of the song as it conveys human emotion.

2.2 Meaning of Love Based on the Views of the Songwriters

Individual experiences influence the differences in the representation of meaning and views of love of the songwriters. However, the songwriters share the idea that love beautifies the world because it drives and encourages humans to do something with determination to receive a pay-off. The concept also works with other types of love. The mentioned view of



love is a driving force to convey the love content in the songs. The core component of love is desire, which can be categorized into three types: expectation in love, successful love, and unrequited love.

Expectation in Love: The expectation in love prevalently appears in love songs. Besides, it is one of the basic feelings of humans that cause development and inspiration to fulfill their desires. It can also be a driving force and inspiration to attempt to be successful. On the other hand, expectations in love can sometimes exist solely as fantasies to comfort the mind and inspire someone to be courageous to continue living. (Parinyaninkul, personal communication, July 14, 2021) states that expectation is one of the dominant emotions that function as a driving force in life, and expectation in love encourages humans to make changes in life.

“...When we set an expectation of love, we usually have the power to fulfill this expectation and attempt to achieve it...”

Anthika Parinyaninkul, amateur songwriter (Interview, 14 July 2021)

Successful Love: Successful love refers to receiving love, being loved, and receiving a love reaction as expected or desired. It is one of the main concepts that are centrally present in love songs. Most love songs that depict successful love contain content presenting beautiful love. In song, this is conveyed by pleasure and a lively atmosphere. Furthermore, love songs with successful love content mostly display ideal love and attempt to convey love stability. Thepnom (Suwannabun, personal communication, 18 August 2021) interestingly describes successful love as the recipient of love in return and feelings of happiness and pleasure. Sometimes, to

convey the meaning, it is not always necessary to transmit the meaning through the word love. In contrast, it can be through a story and the feeling of pleasure of the person who receives love in return.

*“...Love is not necessarily presented through the word love. Sometimes, a story can depict love. For example, the song *Chan Dee jai Tee me Ther* (I'm Happy to Have You) by Boyd Kosiyabong conveys a feeling of pleasure to have the loved one by the side...”*

Thepnom Suwannabun, senior songwriter (Interview, 18 August 2021)

Unrequited Love: Unrequited love refers to a situation in which a person does not receive love in return as expected or desired. It presents the feeling of sadness and disappointment, and the feeling is difficult to move on from. Songwriters frequently create situations that have something in common. Landokmai (Sipasang, personal communication, September 23, 2021) comments that unrequited love represents a negative feeling that lingers in a person's mind and is hard to banish. Songs about unrequited love draw on listeners' experiences who have similar feelings lingering in their minds.

“...Disappointment appears to be a negative feeling and prevents us from being happy. The more we are disappointed in love, the more difficult it is to erase that feeling. When we listen to broken-heart songs, we tend to feel along with the songs more than usual...”

Landokmai Sipasang, novice songwriter (Interview, 23 September 2021)

2.3 Changes in the Song Content in International-Style Songs

Changes in the song content in international-style songs occur in the aspects of lan-

guage and songwriting styles. Based on the views of the songwriters, the occurring changes result from changes in society which affect the content and the songwriting styles. Overall, changes in the song content in international-style songs include two aspects: language and songwriting styles.

Changes in Language: Language or words used in songwriting have changed according to social characteristics. Language adjustment in songs aims to facilitate a better understanding of ordinary listeners. As society changes, songs also change to keep up with social trends. Social movement and changes relate to changes in storytelling as language use varies from era to era. Landokmai (Sipasang, personal communication, September 23, 2021) a novice songwriter who enjoys old and classic songs, mentions that songs in the previous eras are more elaborate and can reach a wider range of listeners. The listeners require concentration to absorb the feeling. On the other hand, current and modern songs are more direct, allowing listeners to immediately access the music's moods. It reflects the different aspects or advantages of songwriting.

“...I think, previously, the song content is more elaborate. The music in the current period makes it easy for anyone to write songs. I mean, songs in the current era usually use direct words, and the listeners really enjoy them as they think they have a common feeling. However, people in the previous time tended to concentrate more on listening to music. Besides, they could understand the music content deeply in their hearts. It’s just like that...”

Landokmai Sipasang, novice songwriter
(Interview, 23 September 2021)

Changes in Songwriting Styles: It is found that the content composition is simpler with little use of the poetic composition style with the internal and external rhyme scheme. Simple poetic composition with an emphasis on meaning gains more popularity, and the changes in songwriting styles depend on individual expertise. The charm of songwriting is the selection of word use and the organization of the content and components of the song to convey deliberate meaning. Thanee (Wongniwatkajorn, personal communication, September 11, 2021), a songwriter with continuous music products until recent times, states that changes in songwriting styles vary according to individual expertise. It is a uniqueness derived from educational and social backgrounds as well as age ranges. He further mentions that the importance of songwriting is not the composition style; in contrast, it is more about the content and desires to convey the stories of the songwriters.

“...The key aspect of songwriting is the content, and songwriting styles vary according to different songwriters. Songwriters in previous times used a particular songwriting style, while those in the current times have employed other varying styles. It also depends on the melodies of the song. Sometimes, using a poetic style in songwriting does not convey a concise meaning. However, overall, songwriting styles are not as important as the content.

Thanee Wongniwatkajorn, professional songwriter (Interview, 11 September 2021)

2.4 Changes of Love Appearing in International-Style Songs

Views of love presented in international-style songs have changed from era to era due to the changing social environment, perspec-



tives, and way of life. When people are in a strict society full of customs and traditions, the representation of love in that society appears to rely on those customs and traditions. In contrast, when social and cultural development occurs with the influence of foreign cultures, people's way of life and perspectives have also changed, resulting in another change in the representation of love. However, the musical mood of love songs from the earlier to present times still presents the content with both happiness and disappointment in love. Moreover, the content or the stories are no longer limited to males and females due to the interpretation and openness of the listeners.

According to the representation of love in each era, the ideal love in the national unification era was part of tradition and culture. Later in the music industry era, record labels produced songs with repeated content leading to a saturated music market. Then the era of minor hits began with distinct views of love from the mainstream hits. When the freedom music era arrived with access to the internet and online media, music became accessible and approachable for the public due to the openness to freedom of thought. Moreover, love at present tends to form instantly, similarly to the current world that changes swiftly. In contrast, love in the past appeared to be a relationship that took more time to get to know each other. Therefore, people in previous times gave importance to love and cherished love more than people today.

Conclusion and Discussion

The study of the construction of the meaning of love in international-style Thai love songs aimed to 1) reveal attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs of the sender or songwriter behind the

process of meaning representation of love in the text and to comprehend changes that occur and 2) study the forms of changes and the reflections of reality or social leading of the construction of the meaning of love in international-style Thai love songs. The two research foci were the process of the construction of a representation of the text or lyrics and the representation of love in the songs concerning social reflections. The results are as follows:

The Process of Representation of Love

According to the results of the study, the songwriters derived their representation of love, language, and music knowledge from accumulated experiences and their surroundings before transmitting it to society. The construction of the love representation includes two main steps: the perception of meaning and the conveying of meaning.

The Stage of Perceiving Meaning of the Songwriters: The results show that the scope of reality in the meaning of love recorded and transmitted by the songwriters emerges from the consciousness of the songwriters that accumulated from experiences, attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs, and they are significant components behind the songwriting process. It is clear that songwriters, with or without consciousness, shape their experiences through education, work, way of life, beliefs, and faith. These experiences have been stored in a set of profound thoughts at the consciousness level and become a body of knowledge that creates a memory in the stack of knowledge. It is consistent with the concept of the construction of social reality by Berger and Luckmann (1966) that social reality can be changed from the original context. The change usually depends on how the meaning of phenomena is trans-

mitted and how the code, which is created and accepted according to the rules of society, is changed. Therefore, the love representation of each songwriter varies.

In the stage of perceiving meaning, it can be analyzed according to the theory of the construction of social reality by Berger and Luckmann (1966, pp. 51-55) that songwriters do not have an absolute understanding of the world of reality regarding the nature of love. Thus, they have different notions of love, which can be either happy or disastrous. In addition, some songwriters have never experienced love. Since there are various types of love in the world of reality, having a complete understanding of love appears impossible. Consequently, songwriters tend to rely on decoding and selecting the meaning of love from the world of meaning and then encode it in their stock of knowledge. As a result, it can be interpreted that the representation of love in songs is part of the meaning derived from the experiences and knowledge of the songwriters. For example, the song **Kaem Nong Nang Nun Daeng Kwa Krai (Your Cheeks Are Redder than Anyone Else's)** is written based on the memory of Saroat Yodying (Khian Khai Lae Wanich) toward a woman he met.

However, when composing a love song, only the representation of love is insufficient to convey the meaning. Songwriting is a form of art, and songwriters are required to decode and have a good understanding of language and music. Language is an essential component in transmitting thoughts, and music creates rhythm. Therefore, the views and attitudes of songwriters toward love, language, and music are a set of realities associated with concrete reality in the intersubjective common-sense world. Songwriters reinterpret the meaning of love, then con-

struct and convey it to the world of meaning, allowing the listeners to interpret the content based on their individual experiences.

The Stage of Conveying Meaning of

Songwriters: In this stage, it can be analyzed based on the theory of the construction of social reality of Berger and Luckmann (1966, pp. 51-55) that reality is constructed and the statement of Schutz (as cited in Panichlocharoen, 2000, p. 45) that people's daily life is intersubjective. Besides the construction of the objective reality of love songs, the meaning of love at an institutional level exists. It is considered another primary set of knowledge input to songwriters through the determination of the mainstream trends in society, such as wedding tradition and monogamous values. Hence, the construction and representation of love is a shared meaning in society depending on code and love images. Consequently, if songwriters as encoders have the shared meaning of love, they will also share preferred reading. On the other hand, if they have a similar or different understanding, they will have negotiated reading or oppositional reading, respectively.

Consequently, it can be interpreted that songwriters create love songs by transcribing stories into songs written with a combination of imagination and thoughts accumulated from a limited scope of experiences making up a stock of knowledge. As language is a sign system that can make the world of meaning of love become objective, the construction of the meaning of love as being subjective can be realized.

According to the study of the 40 selected love songs, the meaning of love in love songs can be categorized into three types as follows:

1) Expectation in love is the love representation that shows an attempt to fulfill



desires, which can be positive reinforcement or fantasies to comfort a person's mind.

2) Successful love is the meaning image that presents the recipient of love and love reaction as expected or desired and a status of being loved. It usually illustrates pleasure and a cheerful atmosphere.

3) Unrequited love is another meaning that is controversial to successful love. It presents the meaning of not being loved or

not achieving the desire or love that a person expects. Besides, it usually illustrates the atmosphere of loss, sadness, and disappointment.

To summarize, the construction of the meaning representation of love in international-style Thai love songs of the songwriters occurs from the meaning decoding process from the world of reality and the encoding of the meaning image of love through songs, as presented in Figure 2.

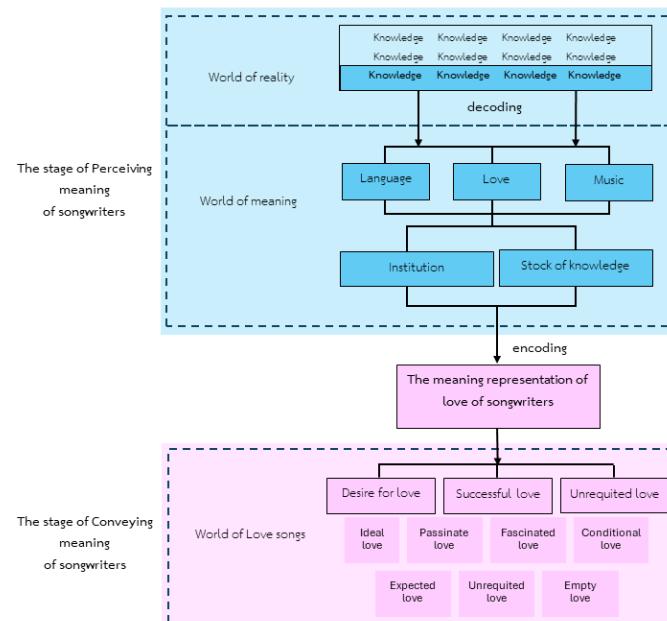


Figure 2 The Process of the Construction of Meaning of Love

According to Figure 2, the first stage of the construction process of the meaning of love decodes knowledge and the meaning of love, language, and music from the world of reality and creates a unique stock of knowledge for each songwriter. At the same time, institutions or societies also have the process of decoding meaning at a social level. Songwriters will match the meaning representation of love, language knowledge, and music with the widely accepted meaning from the institution at a social level to construct the meaning image of love based on their views.

The second stage is the decoding stage. In this stage, songwriters encode the representation of love into the world of love songs to convey the meaning and their views to the listeners in society. The constructed meaning image of love can be divided into three significant types: desire for love, successful love, and unrequited love. The three types of love also have seven subtypes as follows:

- 1) Ideal love is a form of perfect love and happy marriage.
- 2) Passionate love emphasizes hot love affairs to fulfill lustful desires.

3) Fascinated love is obsessive love and the feeling of pleasure in love. A person does not seem to survive without love.

4) Conditional love requires specific components or conditions to create or keep a relationship.

5) Expected love is a feeling of expectation or waiting for desired love.

6) Unrequited love expresses the meaning of disappointment, loss, or not receiving love reactions.

7) Empty love refers to the absence of feelings of intimacy or fascination. However, there is an agreement that allows the relationship to continue lifelessly.

During the encoding process, songwriters rely on literature, language knowledge, and the stock of music knowledge to construct the representation of love that can trigger the feelings and experiences of the listeners. The representation of love can be similar to or different from the meaning of institutions in order to stimulate the listeners to finally feel the meaning of love in those songs. Therefore, songwriters are the ones who determine the meaning representation in the construction of the meaning of love. However, the perception and understanding of language are pivotal factors that facilitate the conveyance of stories to encourage listeners to have a shared feeling. A body of music knowledge is also essential as music stimulates shared feelings and facilitates the decoding of the meaning representation of love. Besides, it allows the listeners to enjoy the music's mood deeply.

The Representation of the Meaning of Love in Love Songs and Social Reflections

Regarding the view of social reflection and the concept of the construction of the

world of reality, the encoded and transmitted meaning of love is decoded from the world of reality in the meaning system of institutions and an individual stock of knowledge that always changes in each era. The concept of zeitgeist claims that values in a certain period are driving forces of historical events in society to be expansive and holistic social phenomena (Boring, 1950, pp. 85-87; Hofstede, 1980, pp.30-34; Watson and Evans, 1991, pp. 67-75). Finally, the values of people in that society will change (Puohiniemi and Verkasalo, 2020, pp. 300-332). Changes after the royal court music era are discussed in this section.

National Unification Era: It is found that the national unification era has a schematic love representation. Therefore, love requires support and beliefs in tradition stipulated by the state. Marriage must be monogamous, and love representation illustrates traditional beliefs about power over control, such as the power of gods. Hence, the stated love representation is conveyed through the songs like **Prom Likit (Destiny)** and **Porn Prom (Brahma Blessings)**.

It reflects the spirit of the era through the ideal of love, which is the value of the time when national unity and western civilization are desired. However, the original beliefs about merit and fortune are still maintained.

Music Industry Era: In this era, the content of love representation starts to include expectation and fascination with love. When considering society at that time, it is revealed that most love songs target teenagers since teenagers long for love. Due to the rise of the music industry, teenagers are likely to be the spirit of the era. Therefore, love stories in songs present love in the views of teenagers who will soon become adults with changes in physical



and mental appearances, and longing for freedom and uniqueness (Erikson, 1968). Love songs usually illustrate the love that is more individually specific representation, such as the songs **Piang Sob Ta (Just Look into Your Eyes)** and **Keed Sen Tai (Underlined)**. The researchers recognized that love songs in the music industry era share the same meaning, and there is a reproduction of the mainstream love discourse, like stating desires for love or feeling sad about not being loved.

Minor Hits Era: When there is more than one meaning in the world of reality, the construction of the repetitive meaning of love does not represent the whole meaning of love in society anymore. Also, it does not accommodate the desires of all people in society. The present study reveals that the diversity of ideas of people increases and shows the image of love in other dimensions rather than desires for love. As a result, songs were created with content regarding identity, unchangeable minds, and questioning of the love of females. For example, the song **Oh Aoy (Oh Oh)** illustrates a social change that women's rights become more influential. Besides, the song **Pa Chet Na (Handkerchief)** also presents that women are more expressive. These social changes must be intensive enough at a social level to cause changes in the song content, leading to immense popularity in the era.

Freedom Music Era: When technological advancement arrives, the global border becomes narrower, allowing easier access to international cultures. Listening to music has been moved to digital platforms; as a result, views of love are more open, and the presentation of stories in love songs is more gender mutual.

Moreover, gender exposure has increased like in the songs **Klai Kae Nai Kue Klai (How Much Further to Get Close)** and **Thararat (Thararat)**

It is apparent that the love representation in songs includes various types of love, like ideal love, passionate love, fascinated love, conditional love, expected love, unrequited love, and empty love. These aspects of love appear in every era from the past to the present. However, the characteristics of meaning have somewhat changed, such as fewer statements of ideal love, owing to the current changing ideas that do not view love as important as it used to be. Expected love widely gains more popularity because of the social situation that family relationships are less intimate. Therefore, the desires for love become higher, and songs with this content are increasingly popular. Also, songwriters rely on the social contexts and the receivers' or the listeners' needs. It is in line with communicative theories in many aspects. For example, the social learning theory of Bandura (1986, pp. 88-92) claims that learning is an outcome of the interaction between humans and the environment. Both humans and the environment are causes of behaviors, and the content must be associated with the learners' or the receiver's desires.

Although the love representation in songs has significantly changed, desires to be loved and to receive love are the core components of stories in songs. The meaning of love is still associated with expectation, successful love, and unrequited love. Only presentation styles and language used in songwriting have changed according to changing cultures and traditions. Obviously, in the later eras, English or other foreign languages are increasingly used to

represent meaning in songs. Moreover, the love representation has changed from love between men and women to a broader gender-less scope. Based on the hypothesis of Gergen (as cited in Littlejohn, 1988, pp. 111-112) about acceptable things, the reality of love is not manifested objectively to humans. On the other hand, humans usually perceive it through experiences with the aid of language. Whether or how much humans can understand love depends on the current situations of people in society, which influence their understanding.

The love representation can also reflect the ideas and spirit of the era (*zeitgeist*). It can also present social values at certain times. In fact, a social change significantly causes the changing representation of love. It is consistent with concept of the battlefields of culture (as cited in Sriprapandh, 2008, p. 57) that culture is shared meaning. Culture affects each other, and meanings are exchanged with each other, resulting in shared perception based on a particular set of meanings used as a medium to explain that shared meaning. Therefore, it can be concluded that the construction of the meaning of love in international-style love songs is a process that occurs from the construction of love representation of songwriters as sender. They decode the meaning existing in the world of reality and create a stock of knowledge. Then this knowledge is matched with the institutional meaning. Language, music, and love are the three fundamental sources of knowledge, and they are employed to construct the love representation according to the songwriters' views. After that, the songwriters encode the love representation into the world of love songs, attempting to convey the meaning and their perspectives to the

listeners through stories of successful and unrequited love. The love representation merely reflects society or people's way of life and functions as a stimulant to trigger memories or previous experiences of the receivers, allowing them to feel along with the music's mood. Since the love representation is a social reflection, changes in the meaning representation occur due to social values at particular times, which can illustrate the spirit of the era. For example, in a particular period, love refers to family construction and stability of life; hence, the reflected meaning representation demonstrates the need for support and appropriate social status for marriage. On the other hand, in another era, love is a feeling that is not limited to only males and females. Thus, the meaning representation in songs contains content that expresses freedom of thought rather than adhering to rules.

Recommendations from the Present Research

The present research on the construction of the meaning of love in international-style Thai love songs reveals the attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs of the sender or the songwriters that underlie the process of the construction of the meaning of love representation in the text. It also enhances understanding of the reflection of social changes, which can provide academic and policy benefits. There are some recommendations as follows:

1. Changes in language and values in the meaning representation of love songs can reflect and demonstrate social changes. Sociologists can create a social and cultural learning resource through songs to facilitate a clearer picture of phenomena that occur in society. In the field of historical studies, the results of the present



study can benefit a study of subcultures, social movement drives, and hidden realities that occur in a concealed society.

2. Signs in songs are part of social movements and changes. Psychologists, mass communication experts, and songwriters should pay attention to the use of signs and the construction of meaning to social trends which add value to songs. Additionally, it will create communicative benefits that access the thoughts of the public. Besides, business advantages will also occur through popular songs.

However, the researchers agree that the application should be in the same direction and within a creative and sustainable scope rather than for political undermining.

3. The meaning construction of love in love songs is only part of the construction of meaning in society. However, other perspectives of the meaning construction also appear in songs. For example, the image of feminists has changed from reserving themselves and behaving according to conservative traditions to being expressive, explicitly showing love, and expressing desires. These perspectives usually display other views of attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs in love songs. Thus, the present study on the meaning in various perspectives can be advantageous in analyzing changes and movement of thoughts toward genders in the field of mass communication.

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4. The songwriting process clearly contains the essential components of meaning, language, and music. Therefore, music academics can carry out a study on the history of music according to the results of the present study. For example, it is also advisable to study a correlation between language and music notes that causes emotional changes or research the development of values and meaning of the song's content as musical therapy.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. The 40 selected songs are only a small number of songs available in society. Therefore, interested researchers can examine songs released in particular years or periods to compare occurring changes.

2. The present research purposively selected the songwriters for in-depth interviews. It is recommended that interested researchers can employ group discussions to gather a more conclusive range of data.

3. The present research only investigated the text and the sender. It still lacks a study on the receiver, which is one of the essential components of communication. Therefore, interested researchers should investigate the receiver to reveal concise effects and reflections of love songs on social conditions and to analyze whether love in the songs results from society or leads society.

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