

FEAR, GROWTH, AND SELF-DISCOVERY: A COMING-OF-AGE PROCESS IN LUCY - HAZE

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Abstract

In the realm of music, especially within the K-pop genre, songs serve as dynamic mediums for addressing social issues. This research focuses on the song "Haze" by LUCY. The selection of this song is emphasized due to its rich meanings capable of representing life, especially regarding individual journey from childhood to adulthood, resonating with universal themes of resilience, self-discovery, and social challenges in its lyrics. Additionally, "Haze" serves as a primary message about readiness for adulthood. This study utilizes semiotics, drawing from Charles S. Peirce's method, to uncover layers of meaning within the song's lyrics. Findings reveal a profound journey marked by fear, growth, and identity exploration. Through semiotic analysis, the study illuminates how individuals navigate internal struggles, overcome obstacles, and foster resilience. The lyrics capture emotional complexities, emphasizing the significance of self-identity and interpersonal relationships in navigating life's trials. Ultimately, maturity is depicted as the embrace of authenticity and inner strength amidst uncertainty.

Keywords: Adulthood, Coming-of-age, K-pop, Representation, Self Discovery

Abstrak

Di ranah musik, khususnya dalam genre K-pop, lagu-lagu berfungsi sebagai media dinamis untuk mengatasi isu-isu sosial. Penelitian ini berfokus pada lagu "Haze" oleh LUCY. Pemilihan lagu ini dalam penelitian ditekankan karena lagu ini kaya akan makna yang mampu merepresentasikan kehidupan, terutama tentang penggambarannya pada perjalanan individu dari masa kanak-kanak menuju dewasa, yang beresonansi dengan tema-tema universal tentang ketahanan, penemuan diri, dan tantangan-tantangan sosial dalam liriknya. Selain itu, "Haze" dapat dijadikan sebuah pesan utama tentang kesiapan diri menuju kedewasaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan semiotika, mengambil metode dari Charles S. Peirce, untuk mengungkap lapisan-lapisan makna dalam lirik lagu tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan perjalanan yang mendalam yang ditandai dengan ketakutan, pertumbuhan, dan eksplorasi identitas. Melalui analisis semiotik, penelitian ini menemukan bagaimana individu menghadapi perjuangan internal, mengatasi rintangan, dan membangun ketahanan. Lirik-lirik tersebut menangkap kompleksitas emosional, menekankan pentingnya identitas diri dan hubungan interpersonal dalam menghadapi ujian kehidupan. Pada akhirnya, kedewasaan digambarkan sebagai pelukan atas keaslian dan kekuatan batin di tengah ketidakpastian.

Kata Kunci: Masa Dewasa, Kedewasaan, K-pop, Representasi, Penemuan Diri

Introduction

Communication involves the transmission of messages from the sender to the receiver through various media, intending to create a specific impact—media functions as a wellspring where meaning and social constructs are embedded and materialized. In daily life, media holds a crucial position in the communication network. Media conveys messages, information, and various discourses to the public and audiences as a communicative tool. Mass media, a communication channel disseminating messages or information on a mass scale to the public, constitutes a cultural industry that produces and disseminates songs, novels, TV shows, newspapers, films, video games, and other cultural products to a broad audience (Campbell et al., 2017). John Vivian's perspective, as articulated in his book "The Media of Mass Communication," equates mass media to a tool used to disseminate messages to the mass audience.

In the realm of communication, music has emerged as a powerful channel for conveying messages, which has a significant influence on everyday life. Songs, in particular, play an essential role as they combine various elements to facilitate the delivery of a clear message from the songwriter and singer to the audience. These elements include video clips, lyrics, melodies, and supporting visuals. Moreover, specific messages are often summarized in song lyrics, categorizing the conveyed meaning into implied and explicit meanings.

The role of media in communication extends beyond being a mere conduit for conveying messages; it stands as a central element in societal life. In the modern era, various media types commonly expose individuals, such as television, magazines, internet browsing activities, advertising exposures, and cinematic experiences. Consequently, the popular culture emanating from media has become an inevitable part of daily life for the populace (Gauntlett, 2008). Hence, the interaction between humans and media and their reciprocal impact on each other exemplify a concrete manifestation of identity formation through media influence.

In the intricate web of media, music emerges as a potent tool for shaping social issues and constructing meaning. As a form of cultural expression, music can influence perceptions, attitudes, and discussions surrounding societal matters. In K-pop, music becomes a dynamic medium where artists convey messages that resonate with individuals' experiences, struggles, and triumphs within society.

K-pop, known for its visually striking music videos and diverse musical styles, is a medium that aggressively represents various social and life issues meanings. Artists often delve into societal challenges, personal struggles, and broader existential themes, creating a narrative beyond entertainment. By discussing this, K-pop artists aim to encourage their fans to become more aware and involved in this issue (K-Pop Life, 2023). This cultural phenomenon positions K-pop as a conduit for social commentary, allowing artists to articulate complex messages within the confines of a three-to-four-minute song.

On August 17th, 2023, LUCY (in Korean, 루시), a prominent K-pop band consisting of Shin Ye-Chan, Choi Sang-Yeop, Cho Won-Sang, and Shin Gwang-Il, released their mini-album 열 (Fever), featuring the title track "아지랑이" or Haze. This album is part of LUCY's discography, which continues to convey messages of enthusiasm and warmth to anyone who listens to their music.

The meaning of "Fever" itself is something that comes to everyone incessantly, making them sometimes feel tired and ready to give up. Ultimately, the suffering each person experiences will leave scars and a more mature self (Yoo, 2023). The title track "아지랑이" or Haze is a folk-based modern rock song. The song narrates an individual's journey of resilience and self-discovery in the face of life's challenges. Through this song, the members wish to convey that everyone must continue to live and face all existing problems because the most valuable things are our own lives and selves (Hyewon, 2023).

This initial interpretation leads to the issue of preparedness for adulthood. The transition to adulthood is a complex journey encompassing various aspects that include numerous challenges, each of which can significantly impact an individual's mental health. Some individuals face difficulties during this transition, which can affect their mental health (Lane, 2015).

Park and Jeon (2016) underscore the urgent need for Korean society to acknowledge and address the pervasive stigma attached to mental health issues. They argue that this stigma can exert a detrimental impact on individuals grappling with mental health conditions, potentially resulting in adverse social and economic consequences. Consequently, individuals contending with mental illnesses may encounter challenges in accessing treatment from mental health professionals due to the entrenched societal biases against mental health discussions. Recognizing the gravity of this issue, it becomes imperative for broader societal discourse and education to dismantle these stigmas,

fostering an environment that encourages open dialogue and supports those in need of mental health assistance.

Several aspects become apparent when someone feels the pressure of transitioning into adulthood, such as daily environmental conditions, career or work pressures, and social expectations and demands. Wyn (2022) explains that resilience in young people involves re-politicizing certain social conditions, including oppression, violence, or aversion within a social community.

On the other hand, Barlett et al. (2020) reinforces that the transition to adulthood presents two branches of a journey that are ultimately determined by how the 'individual' themselves navigates it. Some individuals may begin with positive relationships, such as having future goals including education or economic stability, while others start with negative aspects, such as debt, broken relationships with family or colleagues, and a lack of education and direction.

Reaching adulthood requires support in various forms (Hochberg & Konner, 2020). Support systems provide a safety net that helps individuals navigate the complexities of adult responsibilities. The presence of these support systems can significantly influence whether an individual experiences a smooth or turbulent journey into adulthood.

Music has the unique ability to convey complex emotions and experiences, serving as a form of emotional support and a means of expression. For many individuals, music can act as a companion, offering solace and understanding during times of stress and uncertainty. The interplay between music and media contributes to a nuanced understanding of social issues. Music can influence the mood, well-being, and emotional support of its listeners (North & Hargreaves, 2008). In the case of "Haze," the song serves as a cultural product within the K-pop industry and as a medium for articulating universal themes of empowerment, self-discovery, and perseverance. As scholars have noted, media, including music, becomes a mirror reflecting and shaping societal values, norms, and identities (Campbell et al., 2017). Thus, integrating music into the broader spectrum of media offers a comprehensive understanding of how cultural products influence and contribute to the ongoing discourse on social issues.

In order to fully explore the intricate meaning embedded in the song "Haze" by LUCY, this research employs a semiotic analysis framework based on Charles S. Peirce's

semiotic theory. The study of semiotics is basically how a message can be interpreted and understood by the recipient. Semiotics investigates the nuanced interplay between signs, symbols, and their interpretive frameworks within diverse socio-cultural contexts. Semioticians analyze the processes by which meanings are formulated and how the depiction of reality is portrayed (and, in fact, crafted) through signs and systems of signification (Chandler, 2017).

Peirce envisioned semiotics as the study of signs, comprising a complex network of meanings inherent in human communication. It explores the dynamic interplay between signs, their objects, and the socio-cultural contexts within which they are interpreted. When engaging with a song, individuals partake in a semiotic process, deciphering lyrics, melodies, and emotions to derive meaning. Through Peirce's triadic framework, the dynamic relationship between signs and their contexts is illuminated.

The realm of semiotics analysis has seen a growing fascination with delving into the rich layers of meaning within song lyrics, particularly within the domain of K-pop music. Numerous seminal studies have ventured into this area, each providing distinctive perspectives on how signs, symbols, and cultural allusions intertwine within the lyrical landscape. Notably, within the sphere of K-pop, previous research endeavors have explored the thematic content of song lyrics, shedding light on how music in this genre also addresses mental health issues, serving as a source of empowerment and solace for listeners grappling with such challenges.

Tsabitah & Patriantoro (2021) conducted an analysis of the lyrics of "Life Is Still Going On" by NCT Dream. This study revealed that the lyrics of "Life Is Still Going On" contain motivational elements in navigating life. The lyrics of the song serve as a reminder to both listeners and fans to continue living peacefully, follow their hearts, and pursue their desires.

On the other hand, Pratiwi & Saragih (2022), in their study analyzing the lyrics of BTS's song "Zero O'Clock," discovered that the song entertains its listeners and heals their minds in accordance with their situation. Humans may feel tired from their activities and feel left behind by others to the point of hating the world. However, midnight represents a new beginning, offering a way to have more hope and happiness in the future.

Hakim & Rukmanasari (2023) conducted a semiotic analysis study on the lyrics of the song "Beautiful" by NCT 2021. Their research findings revealed that the lyrics

convey a meaning intended by the songwriters to the listeners, which can be presented in the real-life situations experienced by individuals. The motivation and meaning embedded in the lyrics of "Beautiful" revolve around the notion that since birth, every individual is created differently, with their own unique strengths and qualities. Additionally, all individuals will achieve success according to the efforts they put forth.

In contrast to previous studies, which predominantly employed semiotic analyses based on the frameworks of Ferdinand Saussure or Roland Barthes, this research adopts the analytical approach pioneered by Charles Sanders Peirce. Furthermore, unlike prior studies focusing on selected excerpts or themes within song lyrics, this study extends its analytical scope to encompass the entirety of the song "Haze" by LUCY. In terms of interpretive significance, this study delves into the representation of mental health concerns, particularly the exploration of fear associated with the transition to adulthood and the quest for self-identity during such pivotal moments. Through this lens, the research aims to elucidate how the lyrics of "Haze" encapsulate the multifaceted experiences and emotional landscapes encountered in the journey toward personal growth and self-discovery.

K-pop serves as a powerful cultural medium, significantly influencing perceptions, attitudes, and societal discussions. The significance of this research lies in its exploration of how the song "Haze" by LUCY embodies the journey of transitioning from childhood into adulthood. By analyzing "Haze," the study underscores how music can shape societal perceptions, particularly concerning the challenges of young adulthood. The increasing popularity of K-pop today illustrates its role not merely as a business industry but as an expanding force in addressing various social issues through its music and lyrics, thus influencing the global cultural narrative (Messerlin & Shin, 2017).

Furthermore, this approach not only enriches the interpretation of the song's lyrics but also provides valuable insights into the broader cultural and social issues reflected in the music. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on media's role in shaping norms and values, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing these influences in society.

Based on the description of the phenomenon and the background of the problems stated above, this research aims to unravel the intricacies of LUCY's "Haze," exploring

how semiotics enhances our understanding of the song's profound cultural impact and its resonance with universal themes within the K-pop genre.

Method

This study delves into the rich realm of semiotics, focusing on Charles S. Peirce's renowned semiotic analysis method. Semiotics, as a field of study, examines signs and symbols and their interpretation, providing a structured framework to unearth the layers of meaning embedded within cultural products, such as music videos (Peirce & Welby, 1977).

Peirce's semiotic theory represents the semiotic triangle, which illustrates the relationship between a sign, object, and interpretant. This model is central to Peirce's understanding of how signs function in communication and meaning-making. The semiotic triangle comprises three key elements: the sign, which is the representation; the object, which is what the sign refers to; and the interpretant, which is the understanding or mental concept evoked by the sign (Chandler, 2017). At its core, semiotics involves a triadic relationship among three crucial elements. The sign, also known as the representation, serves as the conduit through which meaning is expressed. It can manifest in various forms: words, images, gestures, or symbols. The object corresponds to what the sign refers to—an external reality or conceptual entity. Lastly, the interpretant represents the mental concept or understanding triggered by the sign, reflecting the cognitive process of sense-making (Higuera, 2023).

The selection of the song "Haze" as the focal point of the research is informed by its narrative richness, depicting an emotional odyssey and journey of self-transformation that aligns closely with the exploratory aims of the study.

In the initial phase of data collection, this research will utilize the entire lyrics of the song "LUCY – Haze." Each word and phrase within the lyrics undergo meticulous scrutiny, aimed at identifying linguistic elements that resonate with the overarching themes of "Fear," "Growth," and "Self-discovery." Recognizing the lyrics as a creative expression of the songwriter and performer, the analysis seeks to unveil icons, indices, and symbols embedded within the text, symbolizing these thematic dimensions. The lyrics utilized for analysis have been translated from Korean to English, sourced from the

platform genius.com, and sourced from the music video "LUCY - Haze" available on the official YouTube channel @LUCYISLAND.

Furthermore, the analysis will be guided by relevant theoretical frameworks derived from existing literatures. Moreover, the analysis will be guided by pertinent theoretical frameworks drawn from extant literature. Throughout the process, the analysis will entail comprehending and interpreting the signs found within the lyrics of Haze - LUCY pertaining to the topics of "Fear," "Growth," and "Self-discovery." Subsequently, an analysis will be conducted utilizing the semiotics of Charles S. Peirce.

Results and Discussion

In the first verse, LUCY reflects on childhood moments. There are times when, in a state of falling, those around us offer solace by wiping away our tears, attempting to make us strong and rise again.

Table 1. Lyrics in the First Verse

No	Elements	Findings
1	Sign	Signs that refer to fear and growth.
2	Object	Korean Lyrics 나도 키 작을 적엔 넘어지면 모두가 눈물 닦아 줬었는데 달빛 한 줄 아래서 소리 없이 참은 눈물은 말랐네 English Lyrics When I was little Whenever I fell, everyone wiped away my tears But under a single line of moonlight My silently endured tears have dried
3	Interpretant	A reflection of the transition from childhood to adulthood, wherein individuals navigate the apprehension of confronting challenges

independently, devoid of the immediate solace
provided by others characteristic of adulthood.

Source: Genius English Translations – LUCY - 아지랑이 (Haze)

During the formative years, individuals often encounter a sense of trepidation associated with maturation. This apprehension is not rooted in genuine fear but rather in a perceived vulnerability akin to the presence of an inner child. Growing up necessitates an innate courage and independence, a transition from a state where others once comforted and consoled every fall.

Tears symbolize emotions and vulnerability, often associated with sadness, pain, or distress. In this context, it is the emotional experience or the underlying reason for the tears. At its core, the experience of fear is an aversive sensation, constituting an affective state that not only heightens alertness to potential threats but also prompts action tendencies aimed at finding safety (Spielberg et al., 2014). A natural inclination to alleviate the distressing alarm accompanies this emotional state, representing an innate desire to escape or mitigate the perceived danger.

As one matures, a subtle transformation occurs, symbolized by the moonlight casting a singular line. Under this celestial glow, individuals begin to dissipate tears that they stoically bore, signifying the internal resilience developed during the journey to adulthood. In this case, it could be a complex mixture of emotions, including resilience, the process of healing, or the development of emotional strength.

Psychological literature delves deeper into fearing the transition to adulthood and longing to retain the carefree nature of childhood, exploring the roots of this apprehension. Erikson (1968) has extensively examined the psychosocial and cognitive developments from adolescence to adulthood. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, in particular, shed light on the conflict between identity versus role confusion, a crucial phase where individuals grapple with defining themselves and their place in society.

In the first verse, the song “Haze” provides an illustration of the feelings of fear and the growth process that occurs in human life. This fear represents the change from childhood to adulthood, influenced by the shift in responsibilities and perceptions of

independence. In line with the entire first verse, it conveys how the affection and pampering of children will gradually fade as they grow up.

In the pre-chorus, LUCY presents the sentiments of a more complex life, marked by transitional periods fraught with kindness and joy on one side yet burdened with challenges and difficulties on the other.

Table 2. Lyrics in the Pre-chorus

No	Elements	Findings
1	Sign	Signs that refer to growth.
2	Object	Korean Lyrics 봐요 피워내고 살아낸 이들을 지어 보인 너의 그 미소가 의미 없지 않잖아 내려놔요 부서지는 열성(列星)의 무게를 요동치는 반야의 시간 속 움켜쥐었던 성한 곳 하나 없는 가슴을 English Lyrics Look At those who kindled and revived The smile that you made is not meaningless Put it down The heaviness of the breaking column of stars And a heart full of wounds that I clenched In the fluctuating half night
3	Interpretant	Message of finding strength and growth through adversity and the uplifting influence of others.

Source: Genius English Translations – LUCY - 아지랑이 (Haze)

The smile serves as a sign that represents a broader emotional state or connection. The lines, "Look at those who kindled and revived," suggest a reflection on the impact of individuals who have ignited a positive change or rekindled the spirit of others. The lyrics reflect on the power of human connections and the capacity of others to bring light into our lives. The mention of a smile is not meaningless. A smile can create a positive effect that spreads within social networks, enhancing happiness and connections between individuals (Gilbert et al., 2022). A smile is often associated with the power to generate positive energy and is considered a sign of warmth or positivity. It underscores the significance of even the smallest gestures, emphasizing that a simple act of kindness can carry profound meaning and create a lasting impact.

The subsequent lines delve into the nuanced weight of emotions, employing vivid imagery to convey the burdens carried within the human heart. In the lyrics "Put it down, the heaviness of the breaking column of stars," there is a metaphorical exploration of burdens and challenges that weigh heavily on the soul. The breaking column of stars is a metaphorical representation of shattered dreams or aspirations, and the heart whole of wounds encapsulates the emotional scars individuals bear.

The line "heart full of wounds that I clenched" further conveys the struggle and pain one may internalize, hinting at the resilience required to face adversity. This imagery invites the listener to contemplate the emotional turmoil hidden beneath the surface, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding.

This imagery resonates with the complexity of human emotions, suggesting a struggle to confront and release the burdens carried within. The concluding line, "In the fluctuating half night," introduces ambiguity and impermanence. The phrase "fluctuating half night" adds a temporal dimension, capturing the ebb and flow of emotions during the ambiguous and transformative periods of life.

In interpreting these lyrics, one can draw parallels to psychological concepts such as emotional resilience and the importance of interpersonal relationships for mental well-being. Studies in positive psychology emphasize the impact of genuine smiles on emotional states and social connections (Fredrickson, 2001). Additionally, the reference to a heart full of wounds may evoke discussions on emotional intelligence and the role of self-awareness in processing and healing emotional pain (Goleman, 1996).

Self-appreciation becomes a much more natural form for each individual in maintaining or being in an emotional state. When a person is able to recognize and appreciate their own struggles and achievements, it can form a strong foundation for emotional and psychological health, as well as improving relationships (Tedeschi et al., 2016).

In the chorus, LUCY presents the complex reality of life, where love and togetherness play a crucial role in facing challenges.

Table 3. Lyrics in the Chorus

No	Elements	Findings
1	Sign	Signs that refer to self discovery.
2	Object	Korean Lyrics 아아 원래 그런가 봐요 사랑하기 위한 삶 살기 위해 한 사랑 아아 함께 한 이 길 끝에 내가 없어도 그댄 밝게 비춰주리 English Lyrics Ah-ah, I guess that's how it is A life to love A love to live Ah-ah, at the end of this road, we were together Even though I'm not there for you, I'll light your every step
3	Interpretant	Emphasizes the interconnectedness of our experiences and relationships, suggesting that our journeys are enriched by personal exploration and the presence of others.

Source: Genius English Translations – LUCY - 아지랑이 (Haze)

The opening lines, "Ah-ah, I guess that is how it is," serve as the sign, initiating a contemplative tone that prompts the listener to reflect on the inevitability and unpredictability of life. In the lyrics "A life to love, a love to live," the exploration of the relationship between life and love unfolds, acknowledging that meaningful life is often closely tied to the existence of love, whether in the form of interpersonal relationships or affection towards life itself. It also underscores the importance of seeking meaning and happiness in every moment of life.

Individuals often express the transitional periods towards adulthood by seeking the focal point of meaning in their lives. Love is one of the most closely associated forces with an individual's happiness (Gómez-López et al., 2019). This aspect can support how a person navigates the phase towards adulthood in seeking and shaping their identity.

Arnett (2014) identifies this period as "Emerging Adulthood," a phase that spans from late adolescence to the mid or late twenties. During this transition, individuals undergo significant changes in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and interpersonal relationships. Emerging adulthood becomes a critical time when individuals start to explore and formulate the meaning of life and seek their identity. This search for meaning involves exploring values, goals, and commitments that form the foundation of one's identity.

Meanwhile, the lyrics "At the end of this road, we were together" portray life's journey together. The lyrics also interpret a metaphor for a long journey or life experience; ultimately, the individual is together with their loved one. The loved ones embody more than mere romantic love, illustrating that the presence and expression of love can manifest in various ways, including emotional support, physical presence, or even acts of service. In this context, the lyrics can be understood as a representation of a presence encompassing various aspects of a relationship, from emotional support to physical presence, forming the foundation of intense togetherness.

The last part of the lyrics reinforces the context for the people we love. It implies the enduring meaning that eternal expressions of affection, although not always physically present, will persist in the form of spirit and encouragement to move forward. Mikulincer & Shaver (2014) provide an understanding that in this developmental stage, figures or loved ones such as life partners or family can provide a crucial foundation of security and psychological support for the individual's emotional well-being.

The second verse intensifies the significance when an individual has reached the point of striving towards adulthood. In this second verse, LUCY conveys a message about the challenges and uncertainties associated with life's journey, even after achieving desired milestones.

Table 4. Lyrics in the Second Verse

No	Elements	Findings
1	Sign	Signs that refer to fear.
2	Object	Korean Lyrics 거의 다 왔단 그 말 지나도 멈춰 설 방법을 몰랐었네 English Lyrics The word, "You are almost there" Even after passing, I didn't know the way to stop
3	Interpretant	The feeling of uncertainty or doubt in facing progress or change. Conveys a sense of worry or discomfort about what will happen even though approaching the goal.

Source: Genius English Translations – LUCY - 아지랑이 (Haze)

The lyrics "The word, 'You are almost there'" can signify hope and encouragement to continue progressing toward desired goals or achievements. It can be interpreted as a representation of motivation or support extended to an individual striving to accomplish something. This sign creates an interpretant regarding the spirit and belief in the nearing attainment of goals.

Transitional phases often confront individuals with change and the search for life's meaning. During this stage, motivation and support from the social environment, especially from loved ones, become crucial in aiding individuals through challenges and in discovering their identity. Apart from close relationships such as parents and other family members, adolescents and adults may seek closeness, comfort, and a sense of confidence from friends, partners, teachers, mentors, and even religious leaders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2014). Support from others plays a significant role in guiding individuals through changes and challenges during this phase.

Transitioning toward adulthood often involves identity exploration, significant decision-making, and adjustments to new roles and responsibilities. Support from others can provide the emotional backing, guidance, and necessary perspectives to assist individuals through this journey.

However, in the subsequent lyrics, LUCY presents a contrasting conflict. The line "Even after passing, I did not know the way to stop" introduces a feeling of uncertainty. Despite possibly achieving a goal or passing a stage, the individual needs clarification regarding the next steps or how to halt the journey.

Individuals may need clarification regarding their following goals, the direction of their lives, or even dilemmas in halting the momentum they have built. The understanding is that uncertainty can generate stress and anxiety, especially if individuals feel a loss of control or are uncertain about what will happen next (Breazeale, 2020). Humans tend to seek certainty, yet learning to be more tolerant of uncertainty can enhance mental resilience and psychological well-being. Uncertainty after reaching a certain point may be a natural part of life's journey, and how individuals respond to such uncertainty can influence their mental well-being.

Thus, these lyrics underscore the complexity of emotions and thoughts that arise after achieving life goals. This process becomes an adaptation process, which becomes the goal when someone is faced with the need to choose and decide on their life choices (Spišáková & Ráczová, 2020). Despite achieving success, individuals must confront uncertainty, and how they grapple with this ambiguity can shape their journey forward.

In the bridge section, the song leads the phrases to evoke feelings that depict envy toward freedom.

Table 5. Lyrics in the Bridge

No	Elements	Findings
1	Sign	Signs that refer to growth.
2	Object	Korean Lyrics 날아가는 새가, 자유가 부러워 우린 꿈에서라도 달아나고 싶었던 거야 English Lyrics I envy the flying bird and the freedom, oh-oh

We wanted to run away even in the dreams, oh,
oh-oh

- 3 Interpretant The desire for freedom signifies a desire for personal development and expansion. Longing for freedom can indicate a readiness to accept change and pursue growth, both emotionally and experientially.

Source: Genius English Translations – LUCY - 아지랑이 (Haze)

In the lyrics section, "I envy the flying bird and the freedom," a sign is created that alludes to the desire for freedom. Birds capable of flight serve as a symbol of freedom, and the feeling of envy towards them signifies a human yearning for similar liberty. The interpretant of this sign is the human aspiration to liberate oneself from the constraints and burdens of life.

Arnett (2014) also observes that the changes during this transitional period often perceive adulthood as a moment of increased freedom and more significant life choices. In the context of the transition to adulthood, many individuals expect that with the advent of age, greater freedom will emerge. During this phase, individuals may feel increasingly independent and have greater control over their decisions.

The lyrics "We wanted to run away even in the dreams" add a dimension to the concept of freedom. These lyrics depict the desire to escape even in dreams, indicating that the moment of adulthood is often associated with a dream of liberating oneself from attachments and responsibilities felt in the earlier stages of life. Individuals also interpret freedom as an opportunity to live according to personal desires and values. The moment of adulthood often grants autonomy, allowing individuals to make life choices independently.

In the concluding section or outro, the endpoint of the maturation process lies in the ability to reconcile with oneself and strive to be authentic with one's current self.

Table 6. Lyrics in the Outro

No	Elements	Findings
1	Sign	Signs that refer to self discovery.
2	Object	Korean Lyrics 날 수 있던 거야 아지랑일 넘어서 달궀진 숨으로 English Lyrics I was able to be myself and fly high Beyond the haze With our heated breath
3	Interpretant	The portrayal of becoming oneself and soaring high depicts a sense of freedom and liberation from constraints or limitations. It also signifies a journey of exploration and self-realization.

Source: Genius English Translations – LUCY - 아지랑이 (Haze)

In the segment "I was able to be myself and fly high," a sign indicates a state of self-liberation. This interpretation suggests a juncture in the maturation process where individuals can fully embrace their identity and existence without external constraints.

Meanwhile, the lyrical section "Beyond the haze" illustrates breaking free from confusion or obstacles. Haze is an impediment or confusion present in life, and this can be associated with the process of growth and identity exploration during the transition toward adulthood.

The concluding lyrics, "With our heated breath," emphasize the presence of "we" as humans, highlighting the warmth of interpersonal relationships. The lyrics signify inter-individual intimacy involving togetherness and emotional closeness.

The journey towards adulthood confronts numerous challenges, where individuals encounter fear, growth, and identity exploration. This process is not solely about shedding external constraints, overcoming internal barriers, and cultivating strength from within. The developmental process underscores the pivotal role played by self-identity and self-

expression. Self-identity, involving an understanding of who the individual is with all aspects considered, forms the core of the quest and exploration of roles and values during adolescence towards adulthood (Erikson, 1968). On the other hand, self-expression is how individuals authentically convey their thoughts, feelings, and identity to the external world, involving individual freedom in expressing oneself through words, actions, art, or other mediums (Locke, 2020).

Delving deeper into the context of the song "Haze" by LUCY, it becomes evident that the composition is rich in meaning, emphasizing the strength and resilience needed to overcome obstacles. "Haze" is a song that encourages young people to love life and find love within it, despite facing various pressures.

The entirety of the lyrics of "Haze" by LUCY offers a narrative journey depicting the process by which an individual engaged in the course of their life confronts fears, undergoes growth, and navigates identity exploration. An overview of these themes is presented in the following table:

Table 7. Research Overview

Signs that refer	Lyrics Section	Interpretant
Fear	First Verse	Concerns and fears in the transition to adulthood
	Second Verse	The feeling of uncertainty or doubt in facing progress or change
Growth	First Verse	A reflection of the transition from childhood to adulthood
	Pre-Chorus	Discovering strength and growth amidst adversity
	Bridge	The longing for freedom signals readiness for personal growth and change.

Self Discovery	Chorus	Our journey will be filled with personal exploration and the presence of others.
	Outro	A journey of exploration and self-realization

Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior, has undergone significant development over the years, evolving into a crucial analytical tool for examining media representations of various issues in our lives. While traditionally focused on linguistic signs, contemporary semiotics delves into visual semiotics, exploring how visual elements convey meaning and how cultural codes are embedded within visual media (Aiello, 2020). This shift acknowledges the growing importance of visual media in our digital age and the need for tools to analyze these complex texts critically.

Peirce's semiotic analysis provides a framework for understanding the symbolic nature of signs and their significance in interpreting human experiences. Peirce's triadic model of signs, consisting of the sign, object, and interpretant, elucidates the dynamic relationship between symbols and their meanings. The song "Haze" by LUCY presents a narrative of a journey towards adulthood. Each lyrical section in this song contains objects that can provide explanations about how this narrative process unfolds.

It begins with how we as humans navigate the transition to adulthood. However, in this phase, we find ourselves in a vulnerable position, unprepared for adulthood. Shonkoff & Philips (2000) explain that childhood is a cautious phase. Children undergo emotional development, where they learn to manage and regulate their emotions. This process is crucial for healthy emotional development and is influenced by factors such as parenting styles and social interactions.

During this journey, individuals undergo transformation characterized by resilience and emotional maturity. They bear emotional burdens and face challenges that arise in the process of self-exploration and existentialism. Fear of change and uncertainty about the future are strong themes in this journey towards adulthood. However, through this struggle and growth, individuals gradually discover their identities and attain personal

maturity. They learn to accept and overcome their fears, using life experiences as lessons to confront the challenges ahead.

In contrast to previous studies, the utilization of Peirce's semiotic analysis provides a more accessible interpretation in capturing the essence of the journey towards adulthood, depicting intertwined themes of fear, growth, and self-discovery as individuals navigate the complexities of maturation in this research. Furthermore, this study also differs from previous studies (Tsabitah & Patriantoro (2021); Pratiwi & Saragih (2022); Hakim & Rukmanasari (2023)) that have predominantly focused on the mental health aspects of K-pop songs. The comprehensive analysis of the "Haze" lyrics as a whole invites us to contemplate the existential dimensions of the journey to maturity, fostering introspection and self-awareness in the process.

The study highlights that fear in the maturation process is not an absolute impediment but a challenge that can be overcome through internal strength. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing personal growth and the development of mature individuals. Personal experiences, overcoming obstacles, and building warm interpersonal relationships are crucial elements in this journey. The individual's internal strength plays a pivotal role in confronting and surpassing these challenges.

The culmination of the maturation process lies in the ability to reconcile with oneself and strive for authenticity. "Haze" by LUCY communicates that reaching adulthood involves more than meeting external expectations; it also entails finding personal happiness and well-being. This message is particularly relevant as it reminds us that, despite the heavy challenges of adulthood, it is essential to find ways to enjoy life and derive meaning from it. In line with Bradehoft (2021), who supports the findings that the maturation process is not an absolute impediment but a challenge that can be overcome through internal strength, personal experiences, overcoming obstacles, and building warm interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

The analysis of LUCY's song "Haze" provides profound insights into the human experience of transitioning from childhood to adulthood, navigating through fear, growth, and identity exploration. Through poignant reflections, the song captures the emotional journey individuals undergo as they mature. The lyrics convey a nuanced understanding

of the complexities of human emotions and the challenges faced during this transitional phase. The lyrical narrative delves into the nuanced weight of emotions, employing vivid imagery to convey the burdens carried within the human heart. The juxtaposition of kindness and joy with challenges and difficulties underscores the complexity of human experiences, fostering empathy and understanding. These emotional complexities resonate with psychological concepts such as emotional resilience and interpersonal relationships' role in mental well-being.

The journey from childhood to adulthood, as portrayed in the lyrics, involves confronting fears, experiencing growth, and navigating identity exploration. The culmination lies in the internal strength to overcome challenges, the significance of self-identity, and the warmth of interpersonal relationships. LUCY's "Haze" serves as a poignant exploration of the human experience, resonating with psychological principles and offering a nuanced perspective on the complexities of growing up. Peirce's semiotic analysis offers a valuable framework for interpreting the symbolic nature of the song's lyrics, shedding light on the deeper meanings embedded within the narrative. It underscores the significance of signs and symbols in representing human experiences and the journey towards maturity.

This study is still limited by the selection of research subjects and the scope of the topics analyzed. It would be beneficial to conduct a comparative analysis with other songs in the K-pop genre to evaluate the universality of themes such as fear, growth, and self-discovery portrayed in K-pop music.

Moreover, a qualitative investigation into the effects of K-pop music on listeners' psychological well-being and identity formation could offer insights into the potential value of such artistic expressions. Additionally, delving into the cultural and societal influences that shape the lyrical narratives in K-pop songs could enhance our understanding of how music mirrors and molds collective experiences and values. Further exploration in these areas could contribute to a more comprehensive comprehension of K-pop's role in addressing social and psychological concerns, as well as its influence on global cultural narratives.

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