

Multimodal Semiotic Analysis of Coldplay's *Viva La Vida*: Lyrical, Visual, And Intertextual Meaning

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Abstract

This study analyzes *Viva La Vida* by Coldplay to explore the deeper meaning behind its lyrics and music video. The song tells the story of a fallen king and expresses themes like power, loss, regret, and hope. As a multimodal text, it combines music, words, and visuals to deliver its message. Using a qualitative method, the researcher closely examined the lyrics and visuals. The analysis is based on three main theories: Barthes' semiotics, Kristeva's intertextuality and Kress & van Leeuwen's multimodality. Barthes' theory helps explain how words like "crown" and "puppet" carry not just literal meaning, but also feelings and cultural ideas. Kristeva's intertextuality shows how the song connects with older stories from history, the Bible, and literature, such as the French Revolution and Shakespeare. These references give the song deeper emotional value. The music video supports the story through strong visual symbols like a dying rose, broken television, and gestures of surrender. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, these elements add to the overall meaning. In the end, *Viva La Vida* gives a clear message: power does not last forever, but people can learn and reflect. The song is also useful for learning English grammar, vocabulary, and critical thinking

Keywords: Language learning, multimodal discourse, semiotics, intertextuality, song lyric.

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INTRODUCTION

The song titled *Viva La Vida* by Coldplay is one of the most well-known songs of the 21st century. When it was released in 2008, the song has been performed around the world. Today the song is still enjoyed by many listeners. This song is considered suitable for the research because of not only its beautiful melody, but also the deep meanings of lyrics and gestures found in the song. Besides, the song also contains strong visual elements contained in the album cover. The song tells a story of power, downfall, and reflection and it can be interpreted in many different ways.

This paper tries to analyze the meanings behind the lyrics and visuals in *Viva La Vida*. It applies the ideas borrowed from semiotics, intertextuality, and multimodal analysis to understand how the song shares its message through signs, symbols, and references. The visual of the album cover, which shows the painting *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix will be also examined. This painting gives a strong message about revolution and history which make the meaning of the song stronger while the combination of lyrics and visuals will deepen the layered messages. Therefore, makes the song suitable for this research.

Previous studies have shown that songs contained messages about culture, ideology or society. For example, Putri and Triyono (2018) used critical discourse analysis on *We Shall Overcome*. The message is describing Palestine's political situation. Rantung et al. (2023) discussed songs teaching environmental awareness. Arif and Triyono (2018) found that *Baby Shark* contained Korean values about work and discipline. These examples indicate that songs are more than just entertainment. They also carry the message about culture, social reality, and ideology.

In the field of language education, researchers believe using songs in classrooms helps increase students' interest and motivation (Al-Smadi, 2020; Husain et al., 2021). Songs improve learners to remember vocabulary, enjoy learning, and understand cultural messages (Kumar et al., 2022). However, deeper meanings in songs can sometimes slip out due to different backgrounds (Monson et al., 2016). Some researchers argue that music should not only be seen as entertainment, but also a type of message that uses many forms like sound, words, and images. Way and McKerrell (2021) explain that music can carry political and cultural meanings which are shaped by history, values, and symbols. In popular culture, songs often show resistance or reflection through audio and visual elements.

Another research, Forte (2023) adds that the true meaning of a song can be understood if it is examined with a multimodal text. It means it is necessary for us to study the lyrics, melody and visuals because they will work together and be interpreted as a single unit to reveal its hidden messages. The theories above strengthen the idea that *Viva La Vida* is considered a suitable choice since the song is more than just a beautiful song, but it is also a meaningful piece that can be analysed through its signs and symbols where they can reveal hidden message found in the song.

By looking at the signs in both the lyrics and visuals, we can understand how music talks about social, political, and historical issues in a creative and emotional way (Pudjiati & Zuriyati, 2022).

Theoretical Framework: Semiotics, Intertextuality, And Multimodal Analysis

To understand the layered message of a certain song, it is necessary to study deeper more than just the lyrics of the music. Therefore this study uses three approaches namely semiotics, intertextuality, and multimodal analysis to analyze how meaning

is created through symbols, certain references, and the combination of sound and visuals.

1. *Semiotics: Understanding Meaning Through Signs*

Roland Barthes introduced the idea that we can understand meaning by interpreting signs found in cultural texts, including songs. In a song, these signs could be words, symbols, or images.

This theory comes from the work of Saussure and Peirce, but this research will focus on Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco. Barthes divides meaning into two levels:

- Denotation: The direct & literal meaning (e.g., the word " *crown* " simply means a real crown usually worn by a king)
- Connotation: The hidden or symbolic meaning and what it represents in culture or emotion (e.g., a " *crown* " can symbolize power, authority, or royalty)

Another author, Eco (1976) said that sign interpretation depends on the audience's cultural background. Delacroix's painting which become the cover album of *viva la vida* may suggest freedom or revolution, depending on the viewer's background.

2. *Intertextuality: Connections Between Texts*

Intertextuality is a theory from Julia Kristeva (1966), who argued that there is no text standing alone. Every text is connected to the previous histories or songs, ideas, or symbols. This theory helps us see how artworks especially songs get interpretation from other works that came before them. In *Viva La Vida* as examples:

- The line "*I used to rule the world...*" might describe the King Louis XVI.
- The album cover uses Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) is believed referring to revolution.

Gérard Genette (1982) developed the theory further with the idea of hypertextuality, which means that a new text gets its meaning by referring to an older one. This connection is not always direct—it can be a feeling, a theme, or even a small detail that reminds us of something we already know. This connection makes the message richer and helps the audience understand the deeper layer of meaning behind a certain work.

3. *Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Combining Lyrics and Visuals*

Meaning in a song doesn't only come from the lyrics. It also comes from images, colors, music and how everything is presented together. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), all these elements which are called "modes" work together to create a full message. These modes include:

- Lyrics such as written/spoken words
- Sound such as music, instruments, voice tone
- Visuals such as music video, album cover.
- Gestures such as performances, dances

This theory is called multimodal discourse analysis, and it helps us understand how all these elements work together to create a certain meaning. In *Viva La Vida*, for example, the album cover adds more meaning to the lyrics such examples:

- The use of red and white may represent blood and purity,
- The old-style Baroque font suggests historical context and connects to revolution and monarchy.

There are other researchers who also talk about how music should be analyzed in this way. Forte (2023) says that it is necessary to look at lyrics, harmony, and visuals together to understand the deeper meaning. Way and McKerrell (2021) writes that popular music is more than just entertainment. It's a means that project ideas about power, identity, and history. Music videos, album covers, and body movement carry symbolic messages which can create social and political meaning.

From this point of view, *Viva La Vida* is not just a popular song. It is a meaningful artwork that carry the message of culture, history, and ideology.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to draw the layered messages in Coldplay's *Viva La Vida*. The analysis uses on semiotic and intertextual theory, and multimodal discourse. They will operate within the lyrics and the visuals (music video).

The material data of the research is taken from:

- Official lyrics from lyric websites and Coldplay's publications.
- Official music video from YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvgZkmlxWPE>

Then the two sources namely text (lyrics) and image (visuals), are examined together as one unit of message. This follows the idea of multimodal discourse (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), which explains that meaning is created through the combination of words, pictures, and sounds.

Data Collection and Procedure

The analysis is done in three stages:

1. Lyrical Analysis (Textual Semiotics)

The lyrics are read carefully to find important symbols and figurative language like metaphors or personification. This stage uses Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, which focuses on:

- Denotation: the basic, literal meaning
- Connotation: the deeper, emotional, or cultural meaning
For example, the word "crown" found in this song might mean a king's power.

2. Intertextual Analysis (Kristeva's Intertextuality)

The song was also studied to find connections to history, religion, and certain literature. This part is examined using Julia Kristeva's idea of *intertextuality*, which explains that every text has connection to other texts. For example, some lines in the song may remind people of the Bible or the French Revolution. These references make the song feel more emotional and more powerful by connecting it to real religious and ideological or political events.

3. Meaning Synthesis (Multimodal Interpretation)

The music video was analyzed using Kress & van Leeuwen's theory of multimodality. This means studying how the visuals (like images, colors, and body gestures) work with the lyrics to draw hidden messages from the song.

Table 1. Summary of Theoretical Approaches Applied to Viva La Vida

Theoretical Approach	Application in <i>Viva La Vida</i>	Scholar
Barthes' Semiotics	The word "crown" functions as a symbol of broken power	Barthes (1977)
Kristeva's Intertextuality	The lyrics represent religious and historical references	Kristeva (1966)
Kress & van Leeuwen's Multimodality	Visual elements (e.g., Delacroix painting) strengthen the theme	Kress & van Leeuwen (1996)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Lyrical Analysis: Understanding Textual Semiotics in *Viva La Vida*

The song *Viva La Vida* by Coldplay is considered being rich in semiotic text because it has many metaphors and narrative expressions. The lyrics are like a poetic structure filled with strong imagery and repetition. This will help understand its deeper meanings. According to Chandler (2017), textual semiotics focuses on how meaning is created through signs such as figurative language, symbols, and grammar. In this song, the lyrics operate on different levels namely historical, power and cultural.

This analysis applies Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, especially the concept of denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (implied or symbolic meaning). Barthes (1977) argues that figurative expressions not only create poetic effects but also carry ideological meanings. Connotations can build what he calls "mythologies," or cultural messages that represent certain ideas or beliefs. For example, the opening line "*I used to rule the world*" can be seen as a symbolic sign of lost power or past glory.

- Denotatively, it refers to someone who had leadership in the past.
- Connotatively, it suggests a historical or even religious reference, such as a fallen king or a divine ruler.

Another line, "*Seas would rise when I gave the word,*" uses exaggeration to show how powerful the king once used to be. The sea, which is normally very hard to control, follows his command. This makes him look like someone with God-like power. According to Barthes, this kind of image is more than just power, it becomes a myth that makes the king seem more powerful than he is in a reality.

But this strong image changes in the next part of the song. The line "*Now in the morning I sleep alone*" shows that the king quickly lost everything. He once used to be powerful and obeyed, but now he is alone and forgotten.

The next line, "*Sweep the streets I used to own,*" shows an even miserable picture. The king who once was powerful but is now doing a disrespected job, cleaning the streets he once had control over it. This change from power to weakness matches Bakhtin's idea of the chronotype, where time and place work together to create a strong emotional feeling in the story.

In the second part of the song, the line "*I used to roll the dice*" is a symbol of taking chances and trusting fate. The characteristics of dice which are used in games is highly unpredictable and become something we cannot control. This means the king used to take big risks when he was in power, and this led to his downfall.

Then the line "*Feel the fear in my enemies' eyes*" shows that the king once had power. A lot of his enemies felt afraid of him, which means they respected and feared his position. The fear shows how much influence and power he had at that time.

The next line, "*The old king is dead! Long live the king!*" is an important phrase. Based on Barthes' semiotic theory, the sentence has two meanings. On the surface (denotation), it's a traditional phrase said when a new king replaces the previous king. But the deeper (connotative) meaning is symbolic. It shows that power is temporary and will perish in the end. In this song, the "new king" might not be a person. It could be a symbol of life or fate that takes over after the old king's fall from power. So, the line can be interpreted that personal or king's power can disappear, but someone's else life or fate continues.

The line "*One minute I held the key*" uses the key as a symbol of control and access. It shows that the king once had power and control but now that power is quickly lost.

The following line, "*My castle stood upon pillars of salt and sand,*" possibly refers to a story in the Bible. It could be translated that the foundation of his power

was weak. As we know that salt and sand can easily be destructed, so this comes to perception that even great power can collapse if it is not supported by strong foundations or values.

In the chorus, the line "*I hear Jerusalem bells a-ringing*" adds a nuance of a deeper religious feeling. Jerusalem is a holy city, frequently viewed as a symbol of faith and sacrifice. The sound of the bells can be connected to the listener as church bells. This image strengthens the sense of emotional and spiritual to the listeners.

The next line, "*Roman cavalry choirs are singing*," combines historical and religious ideas. It connects the image of a powerful Roman army with Christian traditions like church music. This gives the song a deeper meaning describing that the fall of great kingdom, like Rome, is similar to the fall of the king in the song.

The phrase "*Be my mirror, my sword and shield*" uses three strong metaphors: (1) A mirror for self-reflection; (2) A sword for justice or action; and (3) A shield for protection. These three things can be interpreted that the king is asking for help. He might be asking for forgiveness or hoping to start again. According to Peirce's theory of compound signs, one sign (like a word or image) can have more than one meaning. In this case, the mirror, sword, and shield all show his inner struggle, his feelings of regret, hope, and weakness at the same time.

The line "*Never an honest word*" is repeated many times in the song. This repetition shows that the king feels very disappointed, alone, and betrayed. He believes that people are no longer honest about him, or they might be spreading lies or changing the truth. According to Barthes' (1977) semiotic theory, language is not just used to give meaning, but it can also create a myth, a false idea that people think is true because it is repeated many times. In this case, the king feels that language has been used to change how people see or think of him, making him disrespected or look bad or like someone he is not.

Another line, "*It was the wicked and wild wind*," uses a metaphor to describe something strong but out of control. The wind here is not just a form of weather, but it represents big distrust or chaos. In semiotic terms, the wind becomes a symbol of the events that overthrow the king's power.

The line "*Just a puppet on a lonely string*" gives a stronger meaning. A puppet cannot move by itself, and it only moves if someone pulls the string. This metaphor shows that the king has lost his control and powerless. Now, he feels like someone who is being controlled by other people or his fate.

The line "*I know Saint Peter won't call my name*" brings a strong religious and emotional meaning to the song. In Christian belief, Saint Peter is the one who allows people to enter heaven. If he does not mention your name, it means you cannot go into heaven. For the king, this line shows he feels guilty and not worthy. If his name is not called, it means he feels he will be rejected to enter the heaven. This shows that he feels abandoned and forgotten.

By using the theories from Barthes, we can understand that a lot of words in *Viva La Vida* have hidden meanings or metaphors which contain certain hidden messages. It helps create the hidden message about power, failure, and the hope for forgiveness.

2. Intertextual Analysis of *Viva La Vida* by Coldplay Using Julia Kristeva's Theory

Julia Kristeva proposed that no story or text is truly original. Every song, book, or film is influenced by previous stories, history or culture. In other words, new texts are often built from parts of old texts. This idea helps us understand how the song *Viva La Vida* by Coldplay a correlation with other aspects has such as religion, history, and literature to dig deeper into hidden meanings.

The song is about a king who once had power and fame but now feels lonely and full of regret. Through intertextuality, Coldplay connects this king to other well-known stories—from the Bible, the French Revolution, Shakespeare's plays, and Christian hymns. These connections make the song feel more emotional and meaningful.

a. Historical Intertextuality: The Fall of Kings

The lyrics:

- *"I used to rule the world"*
- *"Revolutionaries wait for my head on a silver plate"*

These lines remind us of the French Revolution in 1789, when King Louis XVI was overthrown from power and later executed. The song shows a similar story namely a leader who was once powerful and respected but now is prosecuted and left alone. This connects the song *Viva La Vida* to real history, showing that power doesn't last forever.

There is also a reference from the Bible. The lyric, *"Saint Peter won't call my name,"* shows the singer's fear of being rejected from heaven, just like the kings in the Bible who lost God's trust.

By using these historical and religious stories, the song talks about the consequences of pride and how power can be easily lost.

b. Religious Intertextuality: Guilt and Redemption

The song uses many religious lyrics, such as:

- *"I hear Jerusalem bells a-ringing"*
- *"Roman Catholic choirs are singing"*
- *"Be my mirror, my sword and shield"*
- *"I know Saint Peter won't call my name"*

These lines come from Christian tradition. The bells and choirs make us think of churches or holy places. The line *"mirror, sword, and shield"* may be inspired by Bible verses, like *"the sword of the Spirit"*. The name Saint Peter, who is believed to guard the gates of heaven shows that the speaker is afraid of being judged and maybe not accepted into heaven.

These religious references make the song feel more emotional and deeper, because they connect to big themes like sin, punishment, and hope for redemption.

c. Literary Intertextuality: Tragic Pride and Isolation

Some lyrics in the song are also connected to famous literature, such as:

- “*Just a puppet on a lonely string*”
- “*Sweep the streets I used to own*”

The line about the puppet reminds us of a line from Shakespeare’s play: “*Life’s but a walking shadow... a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage.*” This means that life is short, controlled by others, and sometimes meaningless just like a puppet on a string.

Another lyric, “*sweep the streets I used to own,*” is similar to the poem *Ozymandias* by Percy Shelley, which tells the story of a once-powerful king whose statue is now broken and forgotten in the desert.

These references help us see the speaker in *Viva La Vida* as a tragic character, like those in classic stories like someone who was once proud and powerful, but now feels alone, full of regret, and miserable. Even though the song doesn’t mention these books directly, but the themes and emotions clearly match.

d. Visual and Artistic Intertextuality

In the *Viva La Vida* music video, we see a famous painting “*Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix (1830)” behind the band. This painting shows the French people rising up in revolution led by a strong woman holding a flag. The picture represents freedom, protest and the fight against injustice. By using this image, Coldplay might give the song a political message that when power becomes injustice, people will eventually fight back.

This connection to other aspects helps us understand that the fall of a king in the song is not just a personal story. It’s also a part of bigger events in history and society. The painting makes the message of the song feel stronger and more universal.

3. Meaning Synthesis (Multimodal Interpretation): Interpreting Text and Visual Signs in *Viva La Vida*

As it is said before that Coldplay’s *Viva La Vida* is not just a song. It is a story told through music, lyrics, pictures, and movement. To understand the layered meaning, we need to look at how all these elements work together. This is what authors call multimodal interpretation, or combining many types of signs (like sound, image, color, and gesture) to reveal certain messages in the song.

In Coldplay’s *Viva La Vida* music video, meaning is created by combining different elements like music, body movements, costumes, and symbols. According

to Kress and van Leeuwen, visual texts (like videos) have their own kind of “grammar,” which means they follow certain rules to help the audience understand the message.

The *Viva La Vida* video which is about 4 minutes long uses these modes together to tell a story about power, loss, and reflection. We see things like roses blooming and dying, old clothes, broken TVs, and the symbols of a church. These visuals, combined with the lyrics and music, tell the story of a king who once ruled but then fell. Another hidden message is about how power and identity don’t last forever.

Below is an analysis based on specific times in the video, using ideas from multimodal semiotics and intertextuality.

At the beginning of the video, there are no pictures yet, only music. The sound music instruments and echoes create an emotional feeling right away. This kind of sound possibly helps prepare the audience to feel the mood of the story before they see anything. According to Kress & van Leeuwen, music like this works as a "modal anchor" which means it helps guide how we feel from the start.



Figure 1. Dark screen with sounds of drumbeats and strings

In this part of the video, we see a red rose bloom and then slowly die. This is believed to have a strong symbol. The rose shows natural beauty, but it also reminds us that everything beautiful will eventually fade and perish. The rose represents the king’s past greatness and also his coming fall. The camera slowly zooms in on the rose, making us focus on it. This way helps viewers think about how power and beauty are not permanent, or they can disappear finally.

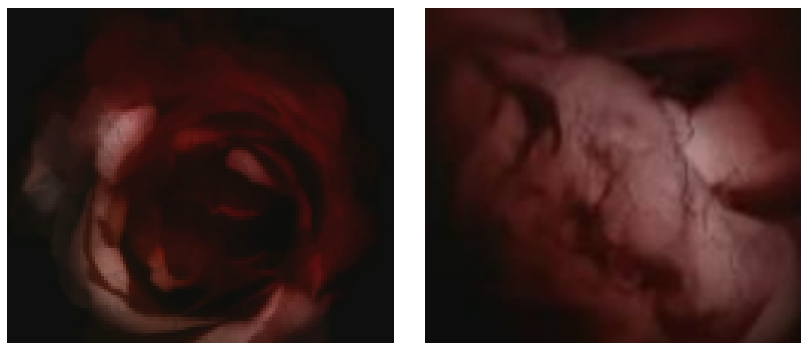


Figure 2. A blooming rose that wither, petals falling into darkness

In this part, we see Chris Martin's face up close. The camera focuses closely on him to make the moment feel personal, like he is thinking deeply. He points to his own eyes while singing "*Feel the fear in my enemies' eyes,*". This gesture matches the lyrics and helps us understand the meaning more clearly. It shows how movement (gesture) and words (lyrics) work together to send the message. His serious facial expression and the way the camera shows him suggest that he was once powerful, but now feels weak or unsure.



Figure 3. Chris Martin in close-up pointing to his eyes

In this scene, the band members wear old and faded military-style clothes. These costumes symbolize lost power or fallen leadership. There is a red letter "V" on Chris Martin's shirt, which stands for *Viva* (life), but it is placed low on his body. This possibly shows that his energy or power is no longer strong. The colors in this scene are also important. The clothes use faded colors, and the fabric looks old. These details help show the idea of something once great that now become weak and meaningless. This supports Kress and van Leeuwen's idea that color is not just for decorations, but it also helps give meaning and feeling in visual messages.



Figure 4. Band members in old military clothes

In this part, we see a broken television next to Chris Martin. The TV represents media and how we remember history. The broken, old screen might show that the king's fate is now bleak or cannot be trusted. In multimodal meaning, the broken TV is a symbol that needs us to think about how truth can become confusing or

broken in today's media world. It also suggests that the king can no longer decide what people say or believed about him.



Figure 5. An old television screen

In this scene, when Chris Martin sings "*Just a puppet on a lonely string*," he moves his body like a puppet. This gesture describes that he feels powerless and not in control of his own life. His actions match the lyrics and help the audience understand the meaning better. This is a good example of how body movement and words work together to send the same message. Here, his body becomes a symbol that shows he is being controlled by something we cannot see just like a puppet controlled by strings.



Figure 6. The singer in puppet-like movements

In this part, we hear the sound of a big church bell ringing. This sound usually means something serious like judgment or the end of something. In Western culture, the sound of bells is often used in religious events or when someone dies. So, the bell in this video gives a message that something religious or final is happening. The sound makes the scene feel more desperate, showing that the king is now facing his possible downfall or moral judgment.



Figure 7. bell sounding

In this scene, the white clouds open up in the sky and makes a circle. Chris Martin sings “*Saint Peter won’t call my name.*” The camera looks up, and Martin lifts his arms, looking like someone on a cross. This image is similar to pictures from Christian religion, where someone holy is shown in a cross. But here, it shows that he is being rejected not accepted as a saint or holy person. This reference to the “gate of heaven” not opening gives a strong message that he feels spiritually lost and left out

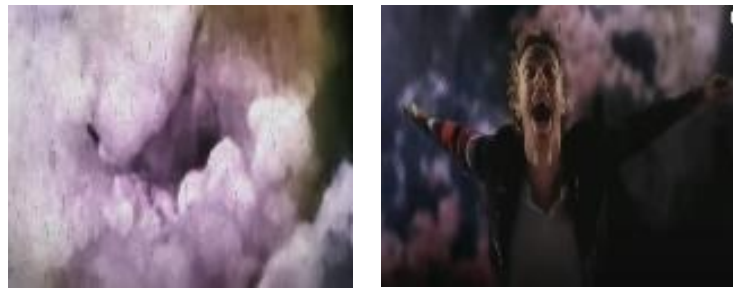


Figure 8. White clouds parting, Martin in cruciform pose

Chris Martin’s body rises and then falls slowly, with his arms stretched out and screamed out. His movement shows both pain and a feeling of letting go. According to Kress & van Leeuwen, the way something moves like speed and direction also gives meaning. The slow-motion effect makes the moment feel longer and more emotional, like a final goodbye. The dark colors in the scene help show feelings of sadness and loss



Figure 9. Martin's body falling in slow motion

In the last scene, the band members stand still and face away from each other. This shows a feeling of separation or going in different directions. Rose petals fall again, like in the beginning. This makes the ending feel like in a circle, repeating the first image to show that the story has come to an end. The falling petals and the stillness of the band create a visual message—like a quiet way to say goodbye. There is no music or sound at all. But this silence is not empty, it has deep meaning. Kress & van Leeuwen call this a "resource of absence," meaning silence helps the audience reflect and feel that the story is over.



Figure 10. Band members facing away, rose petals falling

Using multimodal theory, we can see that *Viva La Vida* is more than just a music video. It's a rich story built with many signs—images, music, movement, words, and symbols. Coldplay uses all of these elements together to create a deep story about power, loss, regret or redemption. They all work together to help us think about how everything will not last forever and how people must face the truth about themselves

The implication of the song for language learning

Coldplay's *Viva La Vida* is not simply a song, but it can also help us learn English in a fun way. The lyrics use figurative language (like metaphors and symbols) and tell a clear story, which makes them useful for learning real English in everyday life.

The song can help students improve their vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and even critical thinking. When we study it using semiotic and multimodal analysis (looking at words, music, pictures, and meaning together), we get richer learning experiences where language, culture, and media come together.

With *Viva La Vida*, teachers can focus on different parts of the language—like word types (nouns, verbs, etc.), verb tenses (past, present), and British English pronunciation

Parts of Speech in the Song

The lyrics of *Viva La Vida* have many examples of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that can help students learn grammar

There are a lot of nouns in the song, such as *world, seas, crowd, king, key, sword, mirror, shield*, and *Saint Peter*. Most of these are concrete nouns—words

that name real things we can see or imagine easily. This makes them easier for students to understand, especially when learning about history.

The lyrics also contain verbs, both in infinitive and past tense forms—like *rule*, *rise*, *gave*, *sleep*, *sweep*, *hold*, *discover*, *blew*, and *call*. Students can use these verbs to practice grammar and understand how verb tenses are used in real-life language.

There are also several adjectives (like *alone*, *old*, *wicked*, *shattered*, *honest*) and adverbs (such as *now*, *just*, *never*, *alone*) that make the lyrics more expressive. These words help students feel the mood of the song and understand the story of a king who has lost everything.

Tenses in the Song

The song uses different types of tenses like simple past, simple present, and present continuous.

Most of the lyrics are simple past, like “*I used to rule the world*”, “*I held the key*”, and “*I gave the word*”. These lines show that the singer is talking about the past. It was about the time when he had power but lost it.

But there are also some lines in simple present, like “*Now the old king is dead*”, and present continuous, like “*Roman cavalry choirs are singing*”. These present tense lines create a contrast between what happened before and what is happening now. This is helpful for showing how a story can move between past and present.

Teachers can use these examples to help students learn how to recognize different tenses, when to use them, and how they work in telling a story.

Pronunciation and Phonology

Because the singer, Chris Martin, speaks British English, this song is a good way for students to learn how British English sounds.

Here are some examples from the song:

- Rise – /raɪz/
- Castles – /'kɑ:səl/ (British people don't pronounce the “t”)
- Choirs – /'kwɪəz/
- Sword – /sɔ:d/ (the “w” is silent)
- Wicked – /'wɪkɪd/

By learning how these words are pronounced and looking at their phonetic symbols, students can improve their speaking skills and become more aware of the sounds in English, and it helps learners pronounce English more confident.

Learning About Culture and Meaning

As seen in the pictures and lyrics, *Viva La Vida* tells a story filled with references to history, culture, and religion—like kings in Europe, revolutions, and Christian ideas.

These parts of the song can help students learn more than just language. They also help students think critically and understand different cultures.

Teachers can guide students to explore deeper meanings behind phrases like “*puppet on a lonely string*” or “*Saint Peter won’t call my name.*” These phrases are not only important in grammar or vocabulary, but also in understanding the background behind them.

This kind of learning builds multimodal literacy, which means understanding meaning through words, pictures, music, and symbols

CONCLUSION

Viva La Vida by Coldplay is not just a song. it tells a meaningful story power, loss, and personal reflection. The lyrics, music, and visuals work together to show the journey of a fallen king who once had everything but lost it all. The song uses simple but strong images to tell the story. For example, the line “*I used to rule the world*” shows that the king once had power, but now it is gone. The line “*Just a puppet on a lonely string*” means he no longer controls his life but he is controlled by others or by fate. Based on Barthes’ theory of semiotics, these lines are not just words. They also express deep feelings like pride, sadness, and regret, they also reflect cultural ideas, like how power can fade. The story in the song is also connected to real history and famous literature. It reminds listeners of the French Revolution, Bible stories, and works by Shakespeare. The music video even includes a painting about a revolution. This is an example of intertextuality, when a song gets deeper meaning by using ideas from older stories. Visually, the music video uses strong images, colors, and body movements. A red rose that blooms and dies shows that power doesn’t last forever. Chris Martin moves like a puppet or stands with open arms like a person on a cross, adding emotional depth. At the end, there is only silence, showing a sad but sad ending without words. Together, the lyrics, video, and references give one clear message: power is temporary, and even strong people can fall. But the song also gives a sense of reflection and hope for forgiveness. Besides the message, the song is also helpful for learning English. It uses different verb tenses, important vocabulary, and English pronunciation. It also helps learners think critically by finding hidden meanings in the language. This makes it a great tool for both language and critical thinking.

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