



## **A Comparative Corpus-Driven Study of Thai and English Country Songs**

**Waranya Opasee<sup>a</sup>, Punyapa Boontam<sup>b,\*</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> warunya.o@nsru.ac.th, Foreign Language Division, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand

<sup>b</sup> punyapa.b@nsru.ac.th, Foreign Language Division, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Thailand

\* Corresponding author, punyapa.b@nsru.ac.th

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the thematic content of Thai and English country songs, shedding light on commonalities and distinctions in the cultural ideologies across cultures. Using a corpus-driven approach, the lyrics of 200 Thai and 200 English country songs were compiled and examined by analysing the collocational patterns and concordance lines of the top 20 most frequent nouns. The results suggest that Thai country songs emphasize LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, LIFE AND PEOPLE, NATURE, SORROW, BODY ORGANS, and PROMISE. English country songs feature themes like LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, LIFE AND PEOPLE, TIME, PLACES, ALCOHOLIC DRINKS, RELIGION, and BODY ORGANS. Findings reveal that Thai and English country songs share some common themes but exhibit notable distinctions, as Thai songs often focus on societal struggles. In contrast, English songs portray life with a sense of hardship and self-reliance. The influence of love and family values is more prevalent in Thai songs, while English songs often rely on alcohol and God in their narratives. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of these themes in both cultures,

	<p>offering a novel perspective on the thematic content of country songs.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, country songs, lyric analysis, gender equality</p>
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## Introduction

Music is essential to human life, designed to uplift the human spirit and profoundly impact our physical and emotional well-being. Within the realm of music, a song is a musical composition meant to be sung, usually accompanied by instruments. Songs, with their diverse rhythms and lyrics, can meet the varied needs of listeners. According to Groarke et al. (2020), everyday music experiences are shaped by the context, personal music preferences, and the specific goals individuals have when listening to music. Thus, songs with meaningful lyrics can lift one's spirits during difficult times or when feeling disheartened. Moreover, it is evident that lyrics go beyond being a fundamental aspect of music; they hold a unique significance in conveying a song's meaning, reflecting its themes, and expressing the perspectives, thoughts, lifestyles, and cultures of people in society (Maklai, 2021).

Country music is one of the music genres that has maintained enduring popularity and features particularly intriguing lyrics. The distinctive features of country music are its structured melody, lyrics, pronunciation, and rhythmic singing and performance. More importantly, country song lyrics often imply people's lifestyles and identities through diction and figurative language found in the lyrics. In particular, Thai country song lyrics are frequently tailored to cater to a diverse audience with varying themes. The contemporary evolution of themes in Thai country music is noteworthy, as it incorporates language and lyrics that resonate with the present times. Moreover, the language used in country songs often mirrors and is shaped by cultural beliefs and experiences (Engh, 2013). This genre has the potential to impact societal norms, and even the linguistic patterns of distinct generations, making music lyrics a fascinating area for linguistic research (Biber & Reppen, 2015; Vaughan & O'Keeffe, 2015). Hence, corpus-based methods are practical for analyzing these linguistic variations, allowing the study of artists' creative language use (Guskaroska & Taylor, 2019; McEnery & Hardie, 2012). This approach allows for examining word frequencies, concordance lines, and collocations within the lyrics, providing profound insights into song meanings, themes, and perspectives (Baker et al., 2013; McEnery et al., 2006; Xiao, 2008). It also sheds light on the creative ideas of the songwriters,

reflecting the societal and cultural context of that era (Nishina, 2017; Muhammad et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, with a view to the related literature, despite the benefits of corpus linguistics, the application of the corpus-driven approach in lyric analysis is still limited, particularly concerning country songs. In addition, most studies have concentrated solely on discourse analysis within song lyrics in some contexts (Ashtiani & Derakhshesh, 2015; Kendong et al., 2023; Bofman & Prez, 2008; Thongnoppakhun et al., 2019; Yeh & Hung, 2022). Consequently, an in-depth investigation of song lyrics across different languages using a corpus-driven approach to understand the differences and similarities in social and cultural ideologies is largely absent from the literature. Therefore, to fill in the gap, employing a corpus-driven approach, this comparative study aims to investigate the themes that emerge from the lyrics of Thai and English country songs, shedding light on their cultural and social contexts. In response to the objectives of the study, the following research questions are proposed:

Research questions:

- 1) What themes have surfaced in Thai and English country song lyrics?
- 2) What commonalities and distinctions exist among the themes identified in Thai and English country songs?

## **Literature Review**

### **Country Music**

Country music is a long-standing genre that consistently embodies lyrics reflecting each era's lives, societal existence, and prevailing attitudes and values. Over time, both the melody and lyrics of country songs have evolved. Various social, economic, and political factors have shaped the modern country music scene (Martinez, 2020), broadening its appeal to a more diverse audience. The essence of country music lies in living its core values, regardless of an artist's background or initial intent (Malone, 2023).

Country music's enduring appeal comes from its simplicity and distinctive qualities. It features easily understandable lyrics, familiar melodies, and everyday life themes. According to Dyck (2021), simplicity is a fundamental value in country music, and authenticity is the standard for judging what is "true country." At its core, country music conveys that an ideal life is rooted in rural simplicity, connecting rural living with genuine and straightforward values. As described by Burnett (2016), this music is characterized by its sincerity, humor, and directness, mirroring the same

qualities found in rural communities. Additionally, country songs often delve into themes of faith inspired by Christianity, introspection, and the importance of work in individuals' lives. Country songs also embody moral virtues such as hard work, resilience, self-reliance, and a deep respect for rural traditions. For instance, in Pruitt's (2019) analysis of masculine identity in popular country songs, it is apparent that these songs represent country masculinity. They portray a country man as hardworking, small-town-raised, with strong Christian values, achieving genuine maturity through monogamous heterosexual marriage and family responsibilities. This portrayal strongly emphasizes traditional values like heterosexual relationships, meaningful work, and fatherhood. In essence, country songs often revolve around straightforward themes such as love, heartbreak, tragedy, and drinking, all presented with genuine and sincere sincerity (Dyck, 2021).

More importantly, English country music explores a diverse range of love-related topics, such as romantic love, lost love, familial love, devotion to God and country, and fondness for joyous moments (Murphy, 2011). In a study conducted by Allen (2016), it was discovered that 82% of country songs emphasize romantic relationships between individuals of different genders, including themes of attraction, heartbreak, and the enjoyment of festive occasions.

Thai country music, also known as "Luk Thung," stands out for its heartfelt lyrics and the incorporation of traditional Thai musical instruments, creating a culturally immersive experience (Kamtue et al., 2019). Furthermore, the music is considered an intangible cultural heritage, conveying knowledge about culture, community, values, and narratives. The music reflects people's way of life and traditions through simple and straightforward language, directly delivering emotions and messages such as love, sorrow, joy, pride, courage, or happiness to the listeners (Jaitiang et al., 2023). Likewise, Eamsa-Ard (2006) indicated that urbanization, changing lifestyles, and heightened alcohol consumption have shaped the evolution of Thai country music over time, reflecting working-class ideology. Furthermore, Thai country song lyrics serve as a valuable resource, offering a broad spectrum of insights into life, culture, and society (Kabmala, 2020). It is also acknowledged that Thai country songs serve as historical records of the society during the specific periods (Jaitiang et al., 2023). Similarly, Photikanit and Sirasoonthorn (2018) highlight the Thai-ness ideology through Suntaraporn's songs as they instill nationalism, support hard work, and cultivate a sense of responsibility in children.

Utilizing the preceding information, it becomes apparent that the lyrics of Thai and English country songs provide nuanced insights into cultural identity, similarities, and distinctions in cultural aspects. This

correlation aligns with the research undertaken by Morling and Lamoreaux (2008), positing that lyrics serve as a reflection of both Eastern and Western cultural norms, indicative of collectivist and individualist mindsets. Thai and English country songs intricately portray the lives of individuals within distinct societal frameworks spanning various historical periods. The lyrical content frequently delves into the rigors of labor, particularly within the working class, offering perspectives on emotions, attitudes, and beliefs. This aligns with contention that lyrics can function as a conduit for the exploration of emotions, challenges, and adversities (Hargreaves et al., 2002).

The interpretation of song lyrics exhibits notable variability among listeners stemming from diverse cultural backgrounds. For example, in the realm of hip-hop lyrics, Australians might articulate feelings of melancholy, resilience, and aspirations. Conversely, Cuba songs may present depictions of violence and sorrow (Susino & Schubert, 2020). Therefore, conducting a study by comparing the lyrics of Thai country and English Country songs is a valuable research endeavor that can assist in reflecting on themes through the language patterns used in the songs.

### **Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis**

The term “corpus,” derived from Latin and meaning “body,” originally referred to a collection of language (Baker, 2023). Corpus Linguistics is the application of computational tools to the analysis of corpora in order to reveal language patterns which systematically occur in them, including lexis, multiword phrases, grammar, semantics, pragmatics and textual features (Flowerdew, 2013). The rationale behind this approach is twofold: firstly, it enables the automated analysis of large volumes of text, far surpassing what could be achieved manually; secondly, computational tools can use linguistic patterns and frequency information that may not be readily apparent to the human eye (Baker, 2023).

A related form of DA called Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis (CADS) integrates corpus linguistics into discourse analysis (Ancarno, 2020; Flowerdew, 2013). CADS examines data extracted from the corpus while considering the texts and contexts from which the data originates. While Corpus Linguistics primarily focuses on quantitative aspects, such as the frequency of language patterns, CADS introduces a qualitative dimension to the analysis. In contrast to mainstream corpora, which often comprise text samples, CADS commonly employs complete texts. This fusion of corpus methods into discourse analysis, and vice versa, is increasingly gaining popularity.

Baker (2006) highlights several advantages of a corpus-based approach to discourse analysis. First, corpus tools can offer a higher degree

of objectivity since they provide numerous examples of a linguistic phenomenon, in contrast to qualitative analysis, which may be limited to a single or a few texts. Also, when dealing with hundreds of articles, selecting a single newspaper article becomes more challenging. Another significant advantage of corpus-based discourse analysis is the opportunity it provides for triangulation, which involves using multiple methods of analysis. Analyzing individual texts represents one approach, while corpus-based analysis is another, and both complement each other, making the analysis more reliable (Flowerdew, 2013). Similarly, Biber (1998) pointed out that corpus-based research relies on quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative methods measure the connections between linguistic features and variations in contextual factors, while qualitative interpretation is a crucial component of any corpus-based analysis.

### **Corpus-Driven Approach to Song Analysis**

Song lyrics reflect the songwriter's thoughts, beliefs, and emotions, exerting a substantial cultural and psychological impact on those who listen (Agustina & Mustikawati, 2023; Evi et al., 2020). Likewise, as noted by Ashtiani and Derakhshesh (2015), specific lyrics are rooted in real-life experiences and societal ideals, drawing from the writer's personal life, while others venture into the creative and imaginative realms of the writer's mind. Similarly, lyrics in various music genres often capture unique meanings and themes that represent the specific periods they come from.

Numerous research studies have explored the analysis of song lyrics using corpus analysis from diverse perspectives, including works by Kendong et al. (2023) and Goyak et al. (2021). In corpus research for song lyrics, data is typically compiled from various artists, often selected based on their presence on music charts (Nishina, 2017; Muhammad et al., 2022). At present, there are some research studies in the realm of song analysis, which entails the scrutiny of lyrics and musical elements within songs using a corpus-driven methodology. This is exemplified by the research of Ashtiani and Derakhshesh (2015), who analyzed English and Persian pop song lyrics, and the work of Kendong et al. (2023), who conducted analyses on the song lyrics of Taylor Swift.

This research parallels the studies conducted by Rasmussen and Densley (2017) and Guskaroska and Taylor (2019), delving into terms related to gender and other aspects portrayed in country music through a corpus-based approach. To be more precise, they depicted how women were characterized in country songs, often being depicted as sexually attractive individuals dressed in revealing attire. This portrayal seemed to reinforce traditional female gender role stereotypes and contribute to the

objectification of women. Examples of word usage in country music have emerged from research across various domains. For instance, Guskaroska and Taylor (2019) state that “baby” is the predominant expression employed to refer to both men and women in the music genre. This term often characterizes women as romantic partners or individuals perceived as attractive or desirable. In the context of Country music, women are commonly described as beautiful or in a manner that conveys romantic admiration or desire.

## Methodology

### Data collection

The data in this study was compiled from 200 Thai country songs and 200 English country songs from the Billboard Charts in 2022-2023 (Billboard, 2023). In this study, English country songs specifically refer to the country songs from English-speaking countries that are ranked by the Billboard Chart. Moreover, the Thai lyrics were translated into English and cross-checked by two experts in the field to ensure that the interpretation remained unbiased. It should be noted that most of the Thai country songs contain a diverse range of pronouns influenced by factors such as social hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, religious belief, and political system (Jianghua, 2018). For example, *khun*, *mung*, *ter*, *gae*, and *eng* were translated as you, while *pom*, *chan*, *ku*, *kao*, or *kaa* were translated as I. Interestingly, the pronouns, I and You, can also be depicted by the familial terms like *pi* and *nong* (brothers or sisters), conveying a sense of intimacy, and the word *nuu* to mirror social hierarchy, depending on the contexts in the songs. Therefore, these considerations were taken into account during the translation of Thai pronouns into English. After removing all punctuation from the lyrics, this study’s corpus of Thai country song lyrics consists of 71,765 words and the corpus of English country song lyrics consists of 69,122 words. The corpus program used in this study was AntConc 4.2.4 (Anthony, 2023).

### Data analysis

The study utilized corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADS), employing a methodological approach that combined corpus linguistics and discourse analysis since integrating quantitative techniques from corpus linguistics into qualitative discourse analysis is acknowledged for its potential

to improve the overall reliability and validity of research findings (Baker & Levon, 2015).

In order to investigate the themes that emerged from Thai and English country songs, the top 20 nouns, according to their frequencies in each corpus, were categorized into semantic themes, demonstrating the embedded ideologies, and subsequently analyzed through content analysis. To ensure that only nouns were included in the study, the data drawn from the corpora underwent part-of-speech tagging. The researchers initially coded the data and then conducted a re-examination to enhance the reliability of interpretation. Subsequently, the intercoder reliability was implemented, involving two experts, to ensure consistency and agreement in the coding process between the researchers. Concordance lines of each noun obtained from the Antconc program were also interpreted to gain an additional understanding of the meanings. Furthermore, the collocational patterns of each noun were analyzed to gain more insightful information. By adhering to established conventions, the L5R5 collocates—referring to five words to the left and right of the target words—were examined. Referring to Mautner (2016) and Bleich et al. (2021), two criteria for selecting significant collocates were employed. Firstly, the chosen collocates were content words. Secondly, the mutual information (MI) score needed to be three or higher, indicating a strong co-occurrence of the words.

## Results and Discussion

### Semantic Themes Surfaced in the Lyrics of both Thai and English Country songs

In response to the first research question, the corpus of selected lyrics of Thai and English country songs was compiled and subsequently analyzed through AntConc. According to Table 1, the top 20 nouns were listed based on their frequency.

**Table 1**

*Top 20 frequent nouns in the current study's Thai country songs corpus*

Rank	Nouns	Frequency	Rank	Nouns	Frequency
1	heart	878	11	girl	103
2	love	650	12	pain	97
3	person	225	13	sky	97
4	day	208	14	eyes	91
5	dear	185	15	mother	86
6	time	184	16	face	71



Rank	Nouns	Frequency	Rank	Nouns	Frequency
7	tears	176	17	night	70
8	words	150	18	lover	68
9	people	116	19	hope	53
10	life	115	20	hands	50

It can be seen that *heart* (878 times) and *love* (650 times) are prominently featured in Thai country songs between 2022 and 2023, respectively, underscoring the significance of love and relationships in the lives of Thai people. Interestingly, the *heart* is associated with the adjective collocates, *broken* (104 times), *whole* (88 times), and *shattered* (88 times), and the verb collocates, *open* (192 times), *desire* (68 times), and *break* (64 times). These associations suggest a strong desire for love and an underlying theme of love-related tragedies within Thai country songs, as revealed in the following concordance lines.

- (1) I feel terrible, my *heart* is shattered. Thinking of the past The time when we loved (Chan Yang Jam Mai Leum by Thidet Thongapichat)
- (2) My broken *heart* yearns for the past, A *heart* shattered by someone unworthy. (Deow Man Ko Sao, Deow Hao Ko Leum by Meentra Inthira)
- (3) must be you, my darling, without a doubt. My *heart*, desires , to have you, oh my love. (Khun Sai Sek Hak by Nescafe Srinakorn)
- (4) Right, my *heart* breaks into pieces (Jep Sam Fa by Nek Nrupol)

Meanwhile, *love* appears to co-occur with the adjective *true* (160 times) and the verb *fall* (192 times), reinforcing the notion that discovering genuine love and experiencing the act of falling in love hold paramount importance in the lives of Thai individuals, as revealed in the concordance lines that follow.

- (5) become a dog barking at an airplane I have nothing but, true *love* in my heart, I won't deceive you (Chao Ngo by Kan Thasana Feat. Kwang Jirapun)
- (6) Oh, I'm deeply obsessed, I hope you won't fall in *love* with anyone else, Love only me, this (Rak Gu Long Gu by Sai Siwaphorn)

It is additionally worth noting that examples (5) and (6) underscore the dominance of genuine love over superficial matters such as wealth or social status. Interestingly, in (5), *a dog barking at an airplane* is a Thai idiom that metaphorically represents unrequited love stemming from differing social status. To broaden the scope of the findings, the above nouns were systematically grouped and categorized into semantic themes. Table 2 depicts

six distinct semantic themes from the data: LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, LIFE AND PEOPLE, NATURE, SORROW, BODY ORGANS, and PROMISE.

**Table 2**

*Categorization of nouns in Thai country songs corpus according to semantic themes*

Themes	Nouns
Love and Relationship	heart, love, dear, lover
Life and People	person, people, life, girl, mother
Nature	day, time, sky, night
Sorrow	tears, pain
Body Organs	eyes, face, hands
Promise	words, hope

Within LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, the nouns *heart*, *love*, *dear*, and *lover* are highlighted to reflect Thai people's significance on love and relationships. As illustrated in the following concordance lines, the concept of love and relationship demonstrates that love can profoundly influence people's lives (Jaitiang et al., 2023). This influence is magnified through the use of hyperbole in examples (8), (9), (11), and (12), signifying the enduring nature of love, the potential harm it can inflict, and the profound desire for it. Moreover, the triumph of love over money and power is underscored in (7) and (10), reflecting the idealized portrayal of love in Thai country songs, where true love consistently prevails.

- (7) I'll take you there when you call me, my *dear*. Love is more valuable than status. (Pen Khiat Lai by Mon Kan Kaen Khun)
- (8) You, my *dear*, I'll love you until the day I die. (Kho Faa Jad San by Bell Nipada)
- (9) without you is like being close to death. Thank you, my *dear*, for not leaving me. (Yoo Kang Tur Jon Wan Tai by KRK Ft. N/A)
- (10) I don't have much money, my *dear*, but I have something else. (Chomruthai by Yut Salawan ft. Wef Apl)
- (11) Eating meals with tears. Your worth is about to explode, my *dear*. My heart is as dark as a pot. (Haengkam by Khanan Najnun)
- (12) Trust me. Even in my sleep, I dream of being your *lover*, wanting to be your sweetheart. (Kan Maen Jao Mak Khon Khao by Phu Kong Nahan feat. Snake Ptmusic)

The theme of LIFE AND PEOPLE is brought to the forefront through the nouns *person*, *people*, *life*, *girl*, and *mother*. According to the

collocation analysis, *person* appears to commonly occur with the adjectives *good* (48 times) and *bad* (36 times), depicting two prominent archetypes of individuals depicted in Thai country songs. Interestingly, as displayed in the ensuring concordance lines, the collocational patterns of *good person* (31 times) and *bad person* (15 times) shed light on the theme of poverty and social inequality. These patterns are perceived as significant hindrances in the romance of Thai people, implying that being impoverished is equated with being a bad person who is deemed unworthy of love.

(13) A poor person like me cannot fight against rich people.  
I'm not a good person, I'm not from a prestigious family. (Kon Krachok by Book Supakarn)

(14) I'm not handsome, not good-looking, with a black face,  
I'm like a lump of coal. I'm not a good person, oh no. (Kon Krachok by Book Supakarn)

(15) I don't eat pizza and wear expensive clothes. I'm just a bad person. (Aiy Man Kon Saw by Mos Kammakbin)

In a similar vein, *life* tends to co-exist with the adjectives *luxurious* (32 times) and *tiresome* (12 times), further amplifying the themes of materialism and hardship prevalent in Thai country songs, as exemplified in (16) and (17). Thus, this study provides additional evidence in favor of the literature suggesting that working-class ideologies, such as poverty, social inequality, and hardship, are commonly depicted in the Thai context (Eamsa-Ard, 2006).

(16) You never mentioned that you want to live a luxurious life.  
(Nong Baw Dai Tong Kan Iyang by Wiang Namlon)

(17) Oh, *life* is tiresome every day. Struggling with poverty,  
burdened by debt (Khop khun tee mee tur by Nescafe Sri Nakorn Feat. Chokubusu Asawinnompong)

Notably, female characters like *girls and mothers* receive significant emphasis, as they are frequently featured in Thai country songs. To elaborate, the adjectives *beautiful* (21 times) and *drunk* (17 times) commonly co-occur with *girl*, which signifies the two contrasting images of women as either a beautiful individual (18) or as someone associated with drinking and intoxication (19).

(18) I've met a beautiful girl, from the land of golden swords.  
(Dek Tai Pai Rai by Wong Phatthalung, Para Hat)

(19) Her appearance may seem bad, but her love is genuine.  
Open your heart to a drunk girl. (Ped Jai Hai Khi Leaw Na by Nescafe Sri Nakorn)

This suggests that in Thai culture, there may be a tendency to place higher value on a woman's physical attractiveness. Additionally, women may face negative stereotypes, such as being associated with drunkenness. Consistent with Eamsa-Ard (2006), the findings highlight societal transformations through Thai country songs as influences such as urbanization, changing lifestyles, and heightened alcohol consumption have shaped the evolution of Thai country music. Furthermore, the word *mother* frequently co-occurs with *father* (23 times), implying that Thai people prioritize family and aspire to provide a comfortable life for their parents. This reflects the cultural value of gratitude toward their parents and responsibility within the family in Thai society.

(20) Hoping that one day will pass by. *Father* and *mother* are living comfortably. Young siblings can attend school. (Nang Ngam Tu Krachok by Carabao)

Therefore, it can be concluded that the theme of LIFE AND PEOPLE in Thai society centers on concepts such as poverty, materialism, adversity, traditional gender roles, and the values of gratitude and familial responsibility. This aligns with the studies of Attaviriyapap (2016) and Photikanit and Sirasoonthorn (2018), emphasizing the Thai-ness ideology reflected through Thai country songs and underscoring the hardships faced in the daily lives of impoverished rural areas.

Regarding the theme of NATURE, the words *day*, *time*, *sky*, and *night* serve to highlight nature's role in amplifying the intensity of love and adversity, as evident in the hyperbole used in the ensuing concordance lines;

(21) I thought of you *day* and *night*. My heart aches, you ran away. (Loi Maa Haa Nae by Nam Khaeng Tipawan Ft. Pond Kritdha)

(22) I might lose my way, wandering for a long *time*. Life is a journey, a storm, a perilous voyage (Yaa Ploi Meu by Mai Mueng)

These results offer a new perspective on the broader discourse surrounding the word *sky*, which frequently serves as a powerful symbol of eternity, personifying itself as a force that shapes the destiny of love between two individuals.

(23) But my heart remains faithful. I still long for you, like the eternal *sky*. (Kham Khuen Nee by Teh Jampa Sak)

(24) As long as the *sky* allows us to be together, I'll love you steadfastly, the best love I can give. (Tao Tee Faa Pen Hai by Tai Orathai)

(25) Since the *sky* separated us, I've been longing for only you  
(Kid Teung Leua Koen by Lilley Dai Mot Taa Sot Cheun)

In terms of the SORROW theme, it was found that tears, pain, and end can underscore one of the most prevalent themes in Thai country songs: the experience of parting and breaking up. To demonstrate, *tears* tend to co-occur with the verb collocates, *shed* (37 times), *flow* (30 times), and *fall* (14 times), evoking the emotions of sadness during a breakup. In addition, the co-occurrence of *pain* with the verbs *remain* (21 times) and *endure* (10 times) reveals the struggle to move on from their traumatic past romantic relationship, as exemplified in the concordance lines (26) and (27). Thus, the findings confirm that Thai country music serves as a channel to reflect the lifestyles and traditions of Thai people, conveying a multitude of emotions and messages, including love, sorrow, joy, pride, courage, and happiness (Jaitiang et al., 2023).

(26) causing wounds that won't heal. The *pain* I endure, it's because of you (Sa-dang aakam by Meg Apisit)

(27) But the *pain* remains, the old wounds are still unhealed.  
(Pan Pai by Kwang Jiraporn)

The study unveiled surprising insights into the theme of BODY ORGANS that is discovered through the nouns *eyes*, *face*, and *hands* to emphasize the use of body parts to represent affection and intimacy in a relationship in Thai country songs. For example, *eyes* appear to collocate with the possessive adjective *my* (31 times), indicating a sense of adoration, as exemplified in the concordance line (28). Likewise, *face* mostly collocates with *your* (21 times) to signify admiration, as in (29). Moreover, *hands* appear to co-exist with the verb *hold* (16 times), suggesting intimacy, as evident in (30).

(28) You're still a precious gem in my *eyes*, I long for you, my beloved. (Paeng Chao by Wee Phanom Phu Thai)

(29) In many nights, I dream of your lovely *face*. In many dreams, you smile at me every time. (Ngao Kiao Sao by Beer Prompong)

(30) I never deceive anyone, so let's hold *hands* and walk together. (Chuan Nong Long Tai by Nat Rachan Feat. Kluyay Stamp)

The last theme of Thai country songs in this current study is PROMISE, which is revealed by the nouns *words* and *hope*. To illustrate, *words* can symbolize the promises that people cling to, as depicted in (31). Significantly, the promises conveyed through *words* are often linked to matters of love and relationships. On the other hand, the sense of promise found in

*hope* is more closely associated with life and the pursuit of a better life through hard work (Eamsa-Ard, 2006), as seen in (32).

(31) Posting it in my heart, checking in the memories With the  
*words* “I love you.” I want to freeze this moment. (Yut Welaa  
Wai Trong Nee Dai Bo by Tai Orathai)

(32) She said, “Endure and don't lose *hope*.” Carry a clear mind  
and dream that the heart awaits. (Luk Bo Pae - Ost. Tayaat  
Phan Khaao Niao by Tai Orathai)

As demonstrated in Table 3, the list includes the top 20 frequent nouns elicited from the corpus of English country songs in this study.

**Table 3**

*Top 20 frequent nouns in the current study's English country songs corpus*

Rank	Nouns	Frequency	Rank	Nouns	Frequency
1	girl	256	11	whiskey	111
2	time	244	12	eyes	107
3	baby	212	13	God	105
4	night	191	14	town	100
5	heart	162	15	hand	84
6	home	150	16	bar	78
7	day	138	17	truck	75
8	man	135	18	lord	70
9	hell	133	19	beer	63
10	life	129	20	road	61

Notably, the most frequently occurring nouns are *girl* (256 times), possibly influenced by the overwhelming presence of male artists between 2022-2023. This underscores the significance attributed to women in the English context, as supported by the following concordance lines (33) and (34).

(33) *Girl* you gone and done it to me. Hotter than a hoochie-  
coochie (Like I Love Country Music by Kane Brown)

(34) Yeah, you could be the last *girl* that I take back home to  
Mama (Last Night Lonely by Jon Pardi)

Significantly, the result suggests that women are commonly referred to as girls, indicating the inferior status of women and the sense of sexism because this term can be either patronizing or sexually suggestive. As can be seen in (33), women are likened to a “hoochie-coochie,” a term encompassing various sexually provocative belly dance-like performances from the mid-to-

late 1800s, depicting them as sexually objectified and typically portrayed as sexually alluring figures.

To facilitate a deeper comprehension of the findings, the top 20 most frequent nouns in Table 3 were categorized and grouped into seven distinct semantic themes representing English culture, which are LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, LIFE AND PEOPLE, NATURE, PLACES, RELIGION, ALCOHOLIC DRINKS, and BODY ORGANS, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Categorization of nouns in English country songs corpus according to semantic themes*

Themes	Nouns
Love and Relationship	heart
Life and People	girl, baby, man, life, truck
Time	time, night, day
Places	home, town, bar, road
Alcoholic Drinks	whiskey, beer
Religion	hell, God, lord
Body Organs	eyes, hand

Regarding the LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP theme, the *heart*, a universal symbol of love, recurrently appears in English country songs, conveying romantic and unrequited love, as depicted in the ensuing concordance lines. Therefore, it is evident that love and relationships are among the most prevalent themes in English country songs (Dyck, 2021; Murphy, 2011; Van Sickel, 2005).

(35) But now every time that one comes on My *heart* gets  
broken in half (Damn Strait by Scotty McCreery)

(36) And life don't make it easy. But you're the reason my  
*heart* beats (Never Leave by Bailey Zimmerman)

Remarkably, the theme of LIFE AND PEOPLE is enriched by including the words *girl*, *baby*, *man*, *life*, and *truck*, shedding light on the way of life in the English context. Specifically, the two gender terms, *girl* and *man*, are commonly featured in English country songs, indicating distinct gender roles and status. Referring to women as “girls” often portrays them in a submissive manner, while addressing men as “men” underscores male dominance in Western patriarchal society (Thongnoppakhun, et al., 2019). As illustrated in (37) and (38),

- (37) Guys like me like girls that look like you *girl*. Cherry  
bottom boom *girl*  
Every shade of blue jeans look mean with a body like that  
(U Gurl by Walker Hayes)
- (38) She takes me by the hand. I am the luckiest *man* alive.  
(Joy of My Life by Chris Stapleton)

To expand on this, the objectification of women is evident in (37) with the phrase “Cherry bottom boom,” suggesting that a person with a small but nice bottom is considered a sexually appealing female figure, which is in line with Allen (2016) and Rasmussen and Densley (2017). The term *baby* also conveys the notion of inferiority, dependence, and vulnerability for those to whom it is applied (Guskaroska & Taylor, 2019), as depicted in (39).

- (39) I like your soul, *baby*. You've got that heart made of  
gold, *baby*. I'm gonna love you till I'm old, *baby*. I just wanna  
be your *baby*. (Soul by Lee Brice)

Furthermore, the words *life* and *truck* exhibit an interconnected relationship, portraying the authenticity and simplicity of life in the English context (Dyck, 2021), along with its hardship and self-reliance (Pruitt, 2019), as evident in the following concordance lines. Notably, the truck, one of the most iconic symbols of Western country songs, mirrors the aspects of rural culture and a range of social and economic factors, particularly in the United States, shedding light on the truck-driving country, which is a subgenre of country and western music. According to Pruitt (2019), a significant part of the American identity can be expressed through the concept of masculine identity, which envisions a rural man as diligent, small-town-raised with strong Christian values. This image is often conveyed through symbols associated with rural life, including cowboy hats and pickup trucks.

- (40) Our whole *life*, raised up right. In a town nobody  
knows. What a way to grow (Up by Luke Bryan)
- (41) But my way looks a whole lot better. With just my *truck*  
in the driveway. (Hope That's True by Morgan Wallen)
- (42) I woke up on the wrong side of the *truck* bed this  
morning. With a bone-dry bottle of Jack I was pouring.  
(Truck Bed by Hardy)

Hence, these results support the existing literature (Allen, 2016; Burnett, 2016; Dyck, 2021; Pruitt, 2019), which suggests that the theme of LIFE AND PEOPLE in English country songs conveys the concept of power dynamics between genders and rural life.

In terms of the TIME theme, the words related to time, such as *time*, *night*, and *day*, are highlighted to capture the roles of time in facilitating the

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concept of LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP. As elaborated in (43) and (44), time symbolizes eternity and exaggerates the feeling of falling in love.

(43) I guess missin' you takes its *time*. And every minute and mile between us. (Waiting by Bailey Zimmerman)

(43) Yeah, I'm waiting, I'm waiting Every minute of every *day* Just to hear you say, "I love you until we're dead and gone." (Waiting by Bailey Zimmerman)

As evidenced in (44) and (45), it is also worth noting that *night* frequently collocates with the words related to parties and alcohol consumption in English country songs, for instance, *last night* (36 times) and *Friday night* (14 times). The findings are consistent with Allen (2016), reflecting the enjoyment of festive occasions.

(44) Oh baby, last *night* we let the liquor talk. I can't remember everything we said, but we said it all. (Last Night by Morgan Wallen)

(45) You could find you a girl on a Friday *night*. Dancin' in the back of a bar (Can't Have Mine by Dylan Scott)

Another significant theme in English country songs is PLACES, amplified by the nouns *home*, *town*, *bar*, and *road*, showcasing Western ideologies. It is interesting to note that *home* frequently co-occurs with words that convey a sense of warmth and safety, such as *back home* (18 times), *home sweet* (10 times), and *coming home* (9 times). Nevertheless, the term *town* reflects the idea of people from rural areas leaving their towns searching for better opportunities in larger ones, as it appears to collocate with *this* (28 times) and *small* (15 times), as supported by the following examples.

(46) Way on up. Get me outta my head and outta this *town* (Pick Me Up by Gabby Barrett)

(47) I wanna drown in rot gut whiskey And leave this small *town* for awhile (Burn, Burn, Burn by Zach Bryan)

Consistent with existing literature, drinking is one of the most common themes in English country songs, as evidenced by the frequent appearance of *night* and *bar* in the songs:

(48) You'll be sitting at home drinking 'bout me When I'm out with my friends at the bar (Ghost Story by Carrie Underwood)

The word *road* also encapsulates the idea of hardship and the simplicity of life, as noted in the theme of LIFE AND PEOPLE. This is underscored by the

frequent references to life on the road in English country songs, as evident in its concordance lines.

- (49) So long, four wheels turnin' Got a tank full of gas down  
the *road* I'm burnin' (Don't Come Lookin' by Jackson Dean)  
(50) I bet that I'd be further down this *road* If I could read  
the signs that point me to the truth (Human by Cody  
Johnson)

Therefore, it is apparent that the predominant settings that play a pivotal role in English country songs, symbolizing Western country ideologies, are roads, homes, and bars. Similarly, the theme of ALCOHOLIC DRINKS aligns with the themes of TIME and PLACES, reflecting the reliance on alcohol and bars as a temporary escape from the challenges of everyday life like work or heartbreak, as illustrated in the following concordance lines. To be more precise, the nouns *whiskey* and *beer* distinctly exemplify this theme, highlighting the prevalent types of alcoholic beverages in Western culture. Beyond the themes of love, heartbreak, and tragedy, these findings add weight to the prevailing theory that drinking is also considered one of the simple themes in country music, characterized by lyrics that are often straightforward and uncomplicated (Dyck, 2021).

- (51) Good *whiskey*, bad decisions. Heartaches from some  
hard livin' (Good Girl Gone Missin' by Morgan Wallen)  
(52) Now I've wasted a paycheck on *whiskey* and longnecks.  
Ever since you left trying to figure this out (Whiskey On  
You by Nate Smith)  
(53) Or that first sip of a cold *beer* when the working week's  
done (What My World Spins Around by Jordan Davis)

On the contrary, it was unveiled from the corpus that certain groups of people in Western culture often turn to God to find solace and strengthen their faiths when facing life's trials through the theme of RELIGION demonstrated by the concordance lines of *God* and the *lord*.

- (54) I only talk to *God* when I need a favor And I only pray  
when I ain't got a prayer (Need A Favor by Jelly Roll)  
(55) If my neck don't come out red, then *Lord*, just keep me  
dead (Come Back As A Country Boy by Blake Shelton)

It is worth noting that the word *hell* is also categorized in this theme of RELIGION. Hell is frequently linked to biblical allusions and can symbolize evil, alienation, and despair, representing the traumatic experiences that individuals face in their lives.

(56) The devil's in the details, I won't tell. The *hell* that he put me through (What He Didn't Do by Carly Pearce)

(57) Going through *hell*, yeah. You moved on and I'm still here in Hell, yeah (Hell Yeah by Little Big Town)

The last theme explored in English country songs is BODY ORGANS, encompassing the words *eyes* and *hand*, further emphasizing LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP. The following concordance lines uncover the significance of eyes and hands in conveying love.

(58) Now I finally know what amazing grace is. When I look into your *eyes* Baby, I see my whole life (Growing Old With You by Restless Road)

(59) They say it's where the heart is; well, mine's with you, babe. Long as I got your *hand*, I'm fine (Home Sweet by Russell Dickerson)

Notably, in (58), the biblical allusion "Amazing Grace" is employed to reinforce the prevailing ideology frequently featured in English country songs, which reflects a strong belief in God, often referring to Christianity, in line with earlier research (Allen, 2016; Murphy, 2011).

### **Commonalities and Distinctions Existing among the Themes Identified in Thai and English Country Songs**

Drawing from the corpus-driven analysis in this study to answer the second research question, the commonalities and distinctions among the themes identified in Thai and English country songs are revealed. In terms of commonalities, it was found that the selected Thai and English country songs shared three similar themes: LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, LIFE AND PEOPLE, and BODY ORGANS. To elaborate, the portrayal of love in both Thai and English songs encompasses both romantic and unrequited love (Dyck, 2021; Jaitiang et al., 2023; Murphy, 2011; Van Sichel, 2005); however, Thai country songs particularly emphasize the theme of true love prevailing despite societal barriers. Even though the theme of LIFE AND PEOPLE emerges from both corpora, the cultural ideologies reflected in Thai and English country songs exhibit distinct differences to some extent. It was evident that the idea of social inequality and poverty is conveyed in Thai country songs, suggesting that working-class people are often depicted as bad people (Eamsa-Ard, 2006; Photikanit & Sirasoonthorn, 2018). On the other hand, life in the English context often portrays hardship and self-reliance, reinforcing the depiction of the United States as a truck-driving country in the songs (Dyck, 2021; Pruitt, 2019). More notably, the similarity of Thai and

English country songs regarding the theme of LIFE AND PEOPLE is the prevalence of gender-related terms like *girl*, *man* and *mother*. While a *girl* in both corpora often carries negative stereotypes of women as sexually appealing figures or drunkards, *man* is more commonly found in English country songs, indicating male dominance in a Western patriarchal society (Allen, 2016; Guskaroska & Taylor, 2019; Rasmussen & Densley, 2017). Another noteworthy cultural ideology in Thai country songs is exemplified through the use of *mother* to emphasize the cultural value of gratitude toward parents in Thai society (Attaviriyapap, 2016; Photikanit & Sirasoonthorn, 2018). The last commonality lies in the theme of BODY ORGANS, which is apparent in Thai and English country songs, underscoring the message of love and warmth through physical contact.

Although Thai and English country songs share certain commonalities, there are distinct differences in the themes that have emerged in these two corpora. To be more precise, Thai country songs appear to be associated with misery and despair, as shown in the theme of SORROW. In contrast, there is no explicit evidence in the corpus that English country songs lament over love. However, the underlying themes of ALCOHOLIC DRINKS and RELIGION reveal the two contrasting dependencies on alcohol and God. This unveils the different beliefs and lifestyles of people from different cultures. Thai people place a significant emphasis on love, whereas people in Western culture turn to their faith in God and choose to embrace joy and revelry to overcome their sorrows. Furthermore, the theme of NATURE in Thai country songs aligns with the TIME theme in English country songs, particularly in terms of the roles played by *day*, *time*, and *night* in illuminating the concept of love and lament. Notably, it was observed that in Thai country songs, the *sky* serves a similar role to God's in English country songs, determining the destiny of love. It is also worth pointing out that the theme of PLACES in English country songs shares common ideologies with Thai country songs, as is evident in the theme of PROMISE. Both themes illustrate the notion of people from rural areas leaving their towns in pursuit of better opportunities in the larger cities, often encountering hardships along the way.

## Conclusion

This study delves into the semantic themes in Thai and English country song lyrics, shedding light on the commonalities and distinctions between these two cultural expressions. Several key themes are identified through a comprehensive analysis of the top nouns in each corpus. In Thai country songs, the themes of LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, LIFE AND PEOPLE, NATURE, SORROW, BODY ORGANS, and PROMISE are

prevalent. Love and relationships are a central theme, with a strong emphasis on both romantic and unrequited love. The theme of life and people highlights societal inequalities and the impact of poverty on relationships, while the theme of NATURE is used to intensify the portrayal of love. Parting and heartbreak are conveyed through the theme of SORROW, and BODY ORGANS is used to symbolize affection and intimacy. The theme of PROMISE is present, signifying the importance of *words* and *hope* in the context of love and a better life. In English country songs, the themes of LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP, LIFE AND PEOPLE, TIME, PLACES, ALCOHOLIC DRINKS, RELIGION, and BODY ORGANS are identified. LOVE AND RELATIONSHIP center on the *heart*, emphasizing both romantic and unrequited love. LIFE AND PEOPLE portrays distinct gender roles and status, with the term *girl* signifying women and *man* emphasizing male dominance. The element of time is used to magnify the concept of love and the role of *night* in relation to parties and alcohol consumption. PLACES like *home*, *town*, and *bar*, along with the theme of ALCOHOLIC DRINKS, reflect the culture of joy and celebration to cope with life's challenges. In contrast, RELIGION reveals a reliance on faith and God in times of difficulty. BODY ORGANS, such as *eyes* and *hands*, conveyed affection and intimacy.

While common themes exist in Thai and English country songs, the distinctions are also evident. Thai country songs often focus on societal struggles, while English songs portray life with a sense of hardship and self-reliance. The influence of love and the significance of family values are more prominent in Thai songs. Additionally, the prevalence of the theme of sorrow in Thai songs contrasted with the reliance on alcohol and God found in English songs, showcasing the differing beliefs and lifestyles of these two cultures. In summary, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the themes found in Thai and English country songs with a corpus-driven approach, highlighting the commonalities and distinctions in the narratives and cultural expressions of these two cultures.

Bridging the gaps in previous literature, this study sheds light on implementing corpus linguistics into lyric analysis by examining the collocational patterns and concordance lines to understand the cultural and social ideologies across Thai and English country songs. Moreover, the findings of this study can be applied for teaching English, specifically focusing on lexical learning through song-based language teaching instruction. Nonetheless, this current study is constrained by the small size of the corpus, which presents certain limitations. As a result, future researchers should consider expanding the sample size and investigating the evolution of themes in Thai and English country songs over time.

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### About the Authors

**Waranya Opasee:** Lecturer, Division of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Nakhon Sawan, Thailand. Her areas of research interest include Critical Discourse Analysis and English Language Teaching.

**Punyapa Boontam:** Assistant Professor, Division of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nakhon Sawan Rajabhat University, Nakhon Sawan, Thailand. Her areas of research interest include Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis.

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