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Research Article

The Timeless Whirlwind Emotion Of Air Supply's Collection: A Musical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This study critically examined the stylistic devices, thematic elements, and audience interpretations in Air Supply's *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply* album, employing a qualitative research design. The corpus comprised twelve (12) songs analyzed through Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, supplemented by I. R. Galperin's stylistic device theory and Raney's Affective Disposition Theory. Interviews with eleven (11) purposively selected Airheads provided insights into listener reception. The analysis revealed 86 stylistic devices, with metaphor and repetition emerging as the most frequent, alongside personification, simile, imagery, anaphora, hyperbole, parallelism, symbolism, and antithesis. The lyrics conveyed recurring themes of trust, the transformative power of love, the need for intimacy, the desolation of lost relationships, and the emotional impact of past relationship. Audience interpretations reflected emotional connections, including family remembrance, emotional connection, nostalgia, coping mechanisms, and increased positivity. Beyond Air Supply's repertoire, this study contributes to broader scholarship on how musical discourse integrates literary expression, thematic resonance, and affective audience engagement. The findings may inform discourse studies, cultural research, and applications of music analysis in education and media studies.

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1. Introduction

Music has long served as a conduit for emotional expression, memory formation, and identity development, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries (Saarikallio et al., 2020; Peck & Greasley, 2020). Soft rock, in particular, carries a distinctive emotional timbre through its lyrical tenderness and expressive melodies. Among the most enduring contributors to this genre is Air Supply, a British-Australian duo whose evocative ballads of love, loss, and longing have resonated with global audiences for decades, achieving particular cultural resonance in the Philippines, where their music continues to hold nostalgic and emotional significance across generations. Examining Air Supply's lyrical discourse at this moment is timely, given renewed interest in how classic repertoires are reinterpreted by contemporary audiences.

Recent literature has underscored the therapeutic and affective dimensions of music, showing its capacity to foster emotional resilience, comfort, and connection during times of stress, trauma, and isolation (Schäfer, 2020; Viper et al., 2020; Sedikides et al., 2021). While existing research has explored emotional responses to genres such as classical music and pop, the lyrical discourse within soft rock—particularly the nuanced stylistic elements employed by bands like Air Supply—remains relatively underexamined (Li, 2023; Obenza & Silah, 2024). Unlike studies of mainstream pop lyrics, which often focus on cultural identity, or rock lyrics, which foreground rebellion and social critique, soft rock emphasizes intimacy, tenderness, and emotional vulnerability—dimensions that have not been extensively analyzed through a discourse-analytic lens. Furthermore, there is a gap in scholarly inquiry concerning how listeners interpret and emotionally engage with these lyrics over time.

The present study addresses this gap by conducting a musical discourse analysis of *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply*, a compilation album containing 12 of the band's most iconic songs. This analysis centers on three key objectives: (a) identifying the stylistic devices embedded in the lyrics; (b) exploring the thematic emotional elements that recur across the songs; and (c) investigating how Airheads—longtime fans of the duo—interpret and emotionally respond to these lyrical narratives. To achieve this, the study integrates three complementary frameworks: I.R. Galperin's (1981) Stylistic Device Theory, which enables precise identification of figurative and rhetorical techniques; Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which situates these devices within broader structures of meaning, interpretation, and ideology; and Raney's (2004) Affective Disposition Theory (ADT), which highlights the role of audience empathy and emotional alignment. Together, these perspectives allow for a holistic analysis of how Air Supply's lyrics function as both literary texts and affective experiences.

By synthesizing lyrical analysis and audience interpretation, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how language and musical emotion converge in soft rock. It also expands the scope of stylistic and affective discourse analysis by situating song lyrics as meaningful texts that shape and reflect emotional identities, while clarifying the scholarly significance of examining Air Supply as a case study in enduring popular music, cross-cultural reception, and the affective power of lyrical discourse.

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2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive approach, combining musical discourse analysis and textual corpus analysis. Twelve songs from *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply* were analyzed using Galperin's (1981) stylistic taxonomy and Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional CDA model. Semi-structured interviews with self-identified fans (Airheads) captured audience reception. Together, these methods integrated textual, discursive, and affective dimensions, revealing both the literary artistry of the lyrics and listeners' emotional experiences. Participant responses may reflect positive biases due to strong fandom, which is acknowledged as a limitation. The study also contributes to discourse analysis methodology by integrating stylistic, thematic, and reception analyses.

The lyrical corpus included all tracks from the album: *All Out of Love*, *Chances*, *Every Woman in the World*, *Lost in Love*, *Here I Am*, *Keeping the Love Alive*, *Sweet Dreams*, *The One That You Love*, *Even the Nights Are Better*, *Now and Forever*, *Two Less Lonely People in the World*, and *Making Love Out of Nothing at All*. Each song was analyzed for linguistic patterns, emotional content, and narrative structure. For the audience component, eleven (11) participants—self-identified Airheads—were selected through purposive sampling. Criteria included familiarity with the album and emotional connection to Air Supply's music. The semi-structured interview guide included prompts on lyrical interpretation, personal memories, and perceived emotional impact. Interviews were conducted in various modalities (in-person, online, and asynchronous), lasting between 5 and 20 minutes, with prior informed consent.

Data collection occurred in two phases. First, a three-week lyric analysis was conducted to identify stylistic devices (e.g., metaphor, repetition, personification) and thematic elements (e.g., trust, loss, and intimacy). Lyrics

were manually color-coded and categorized. To enhance coding reliability, the researcher engaged in iterative coding with adviser feedback, followed by member checking with selected participants to confirm that thematic interpretations aligned with their perspectives. Concurrently, a semi-structured interview guide was developed and refined with adviser input. In the second phase, a four-week interview period yielded qualitative data on participants' emotional interpretations of the songs. To analyze stylistic devices (Research Question 1), Galperin's (1981) framework was applied to detect and classify ten literary devices across the album. For thematic analysis (Research Question 2), Fairclough's (1992) CDA model—covering description, interpretation, and explanation—was used to interpret how lyrics construct emotional and social meanings. Lastly, Colaizzi's (1978) Seven-Step Method, combined with Raney's (2004) ADT, was used to analyze interview data and extract recurring emotional interpretations (e.g., nostalgia, family remembrance, and emotional regulation).

These three frameworks were analytically integrated: Galperin provided the micro-level identification of stylistic devices, Fairclough situated these within discursive and thematic contexts, and Colaizzi's method systematized participants' affective interpretations. This integration is visually summarized in Figure 1, which illustrates the sequential flow from lyric analysis (stylistic devices), to discourse interpretation (themes), to audience reception (emotional responses), culminating in an integrated model of musical discourse analysis.

This study received formal approval from the institutional research department board. All participants provided informed consent and were assured of confidentiality. Pseudonyms were used in all documentation, and audio files and transcripts were stored securely on password-protected devices. This musical discourse analysis observed the trustworthiness

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components of Lincoln and Guba (1985)—credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Further, the study adhered to the ethical principles of respect,

beneficence, and justice as outlined by institutional guidelines.

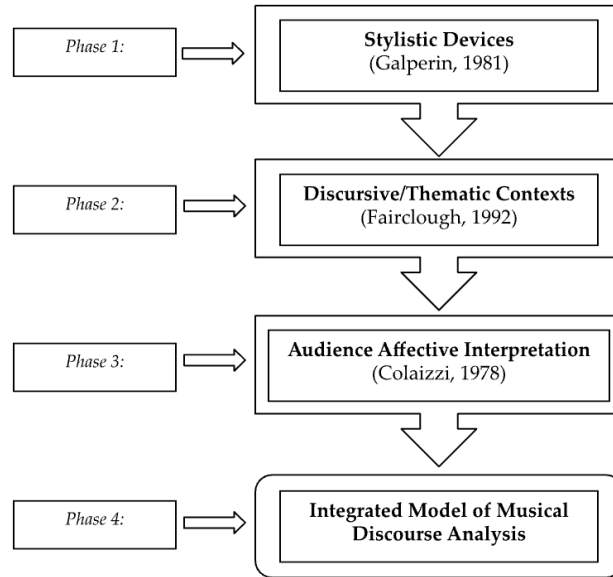


Figure 1. Integration of Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks

3. Results

This section presents the results of the study based on the three research questions: (1) the stylistic devices employed in the lyrics, (2) the thematic elements emerging from the album, and

(3) the emotional interpretations of listeners. Results are organized into subsections to ensure clarity and coherence, with supporting tables to summarize key data.

3.1. Stylistic Devices Employed in Air Supply's *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply* Album

Analysis of the twelve tracks from *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply* revealed ten stylistic devices used to varying degrees. These included metaphor, repetition, personification, simile, imagery, anaphora, hyperbole,

parallelism, symbolism, and antithesis. Among these, metaphor and repetition were the most dominant, each comprising 31.40% of all identified instances ($n = 27$ respectively).

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Table 1. Stylistic Devices Employed in Air Supply’s Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply Album

Stylistic Devices	F	Proportion	Sample Lyrics
Metaphor	27	31.40%	“The beating of my heart is a drum and it’s lost” (Making Love Out of Nothing At All)
Repetition	27	31.40%	“Here I am, the one that you love” (The One That You Love)
Personification	6	6.98%	“Saw love walk out the door” (Keeping the Love Alive)
Simile	5	5.81%	“But it slipped through like soft drifting sands” (Now and Forever)
Imagery	4	4.65%	“I was dancing in the dark with strangers” (Every Woman in the World)
Anaphora	4	4.65%	“Close your eyes” (Sweet Dreams)
Hyperbole	4	4.65%	“I’m living a lifetime in every minute” (Every Woman in the World)
Parallelism	4	4.65%	“Away from these long, lonely nights” (All Out of Love)
Symbolism	4	4.65%	“I never dreamed there’d be someone to hold me” (Even the Nights Are Better)
Antithesis	1	1.16%	“You’re my fantasy, you’re my reality” (Every Woman in the World)

Metaphors such as “*The beating of my heart is a drum and it’s lost*” and “*Tied to a heartache*” symbolically articulated emotional turbulence and romantic longing. Repetition, evident in lines like “*I’m all out of love, I’m so lost without you*” and “*Now and forever*”, emphasized

enduring sentiments and intensified lyrical rhythm. Less frequent devices such as antithesis (“*You’re my fantasy, you’re my reality*”) added emotional contrast, while personification, simile, and imagery enriched the lyrical texture.

3.2. Thematic Elements Emerging from the Lyrics of Air Supply’s Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply Album

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the album’s lyrics revealed five dominant emotional themes recurring across the songs: Trust, Transformative Power of Love, Need for Intimacy, Desolation of a Lost Relationship, and

Emotional Impact of Past Relationships. These themes were woven throughout the lyrics using figurative and symbolic language, portraying a range of affective experiences associated with romantic connection and personal longing.

Table 2. Thematic Elements Emerging from the Lyrics of Air Supply’s Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply Album

Themes	Sample Lyrics
Trust	“ <i>You know you can’t fool me, I’ve been loving you too long</i> ” (Lost in Love)
	“ <i>Girl, you’re every woman in the world to me</i> ” (Every Woman in the World)
	“ <i>We can’t stop the feeling’s too strong</i> ” (Keeping the Love Alive)
	“ <i>Now and forever remember the words from my heart will always be true</i> ” (Now and Forever)
	“ <i>We struggle and fight to survive, just keepin’ the love alive</i> ” (Keeping the Love Alive)

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Transformative Power of Love	<i>"But I'm back on my feet and eager to be what you wanted"</i> (Lost in Love)
	<i>"And you showed me how to ease the pain"</i> (Even the Nights Are Better)
	<i>"But miracles come true, I know cause here we are"</i> (Two Less Lonely People in the World)
	<i>"We've got the will to hang on"</i> (Keeping the Love Alive)
Need for Intimacy	<i>"Even the nights are better since I found you"</i> (Even the Nights Are Better)
	<i>"Hold me in your arms for just another day"</i> (The One That You Love)
	<i>"I needed someone to hold me"</i> (Every Woman in the World)
	<i>"Close your eyes I want to see you tonight in my sweet dreams"</i> (Sweet Dreams)
	<i>"Looking for the love that never came my way"</i> (Two Less Lonely People in the World)
Desolation of a Lost Relationship	<i>"Please love me or I'll be gone"</i> (All Out of Love)
	<i>"Why love had gone and left me lonely"</i> (Even the Nights Are Better)
	<i>"Thinking of you 'til it hurts"</i> (All Out of Love)
	<i>"And just when I thought time had set me free"</i> (Here I Am)
	<i>"The chances are all gone"</i> (Chances)
Emotional Impact of Past Relationship	<i>"Must we end this way when so much here is hard to lose"</i> (The One That You Love)
	<i>"Cause everything I know well it's nothing till I give it to you"</i> (Making Love Out of Nothing at All)
	<i>"I'm all out of love, I'm so lost without you"</i> (All Out of Love)
	<i>"Only you can fill that space inside"</i> (Here I am)
	<i>"You're everything I need, you're everything to me"</i> (Every Woman in the World)
	<i>"But I'm never gonna make it without you"</i> (Making Love Out of Nothing at All)

Each theme reflects recurring emotional narratives, capturing the highs and lows of relational experiences. The lyrics not only

present personal expressions but mirror broader emotional and relational realities, thus functioning as intimate yet universal texts.

3.3. Airheads' Emotional Interpretation of Tracks in Air Supply's Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply Album

Semi-structured interviews with eleven (11) Airheads revealed five primary emotional responses associated with the album's lyrical content: Family Remembrance, Emotional Connection, Feelings of Nostalgia, Coping Mechanism, and Increased Positivity and Productivity. Participants often associated songs with specific life memories or relationships, using lyrics as emotional anchors. For example, some listeners linked *"All Out of Love"* with memories of parents or siblings, while others described how *"Here I Am"* provided comfort during breakups.

Table 3. Airheads' Emotional Interpretation of Tracks in Air Supply's Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply Album

Theme	Airheads' Statements
Family Remembrance	"I remember him (dad) through the songs of Air Supply".
	"This song reminds me of the love my father and grandfather showed me".
	"The song now reminds me of my uncle".
	"Every time I hear Air Supply's songs, I'm reminded of him (dad)".

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	"We (dad) used to sing their songs and do duets together".
Emotional Connection	"Their music expresses exactly what I feel".
	"I can truly relate to their songs".
	"Without Air Supply, I wouldn't be able to express what I feel".
	"I'm also able to express all my emotions".
Feelings of Nostalgia	"Their music helps me connect with my emotions".
	"It feels so nostalgic".
	"Their music also takes me back to my childhood".
	"It brings a sense of nostalgia".
	"Those memories are some of our happiest family bonding moments".
Coping Mechanism	"It brings back memories of moments that don't happen as often now".
	"I feel at ease whenever I listen to their music".
	"They help relieve my stress and even help me sleep".
	"I listen to their songs just to help me fall asleep".
	"I listen to this song to help relax my mind".
Increased Productivity	"It brings me joy".
	"It helps me stay focused while studying".
	"It helped me stay productive while doing chores".
	"I feel productive and motivated to do household chores and work".

These responses underscore the album's emotional depth and intersubjective resonance. By aligning listener affect with lyrical discourse,

the findings validate the enduring psychological and cultural relevance of Air Supply's work.

4. Discussion

4.1. Stylistic Devices Employed in Air Supply's Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply Album

The findings reveal a dominant reliance on metaphor (31.40%), affirming its central role in shaping the lyrical fabric of the album. While the results highlighted its prevalence, the discussion emphasizes its interpretive function: metaphors enable the band to convey abstract emotions through symbolic images, thereby intensifying listeners' affective engagement. Rather than restating frequency, this underscores how Air Supply uses metaphor to transform personal emotion into shared experience, aligning with Rochma and Irwandi's (2020) view of metaphor as a bridge between implicit feelings and explicit expression.

Repetition (31.40%) emerges alongside metaphor as a stylistic anchor, sustaining emotional resonance and thematic cohesion across songs. Its persistence suggests a deliberate lyrical strategy: repetition not only emphasizes emotional states but also mirrors the

cyclical nature of longing and attachment, a feature noted in contemporary discourse on music's mnemonic power (Honcharuk, 2023). This illustrates how stylistic devices function not merely as ornament but as mechanisms of memory-making, reinforcing the songs' capacity to linger in the cultural imagination.

Less frequent devices, such as personification, simile, and imagery, enrich the lyrics by animating emotions and making abstractions relatable. Their presence demonstrates the band's ability to vary expression while maintaining lyrical coherence. Importantly, the near-absence of antithesis (1.16%) invites critical reflection. Its rarity may indicate the band's preference for lyrical unity and emotional continuity over stark contrast, thereby avoiding fragmentation of affect. This anomaly is not a weakness but a stylistic choice that reflects the band's identity as purveyors of harmony and

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emotional steadiness, distinguishing their work from artists who foreground tension and contradiction.

Overall, the prominence of metaphor and repetition, alongside selective use of other devices, highlights Air Supply's distinct lyrical

style—emphasizing clarity, accessibility, and emotional intimacy. These findings contribute to broader literary-musical discourse by showing how pop balladry employs stylistic devices to sustain memory, shape affective identity, and foster collective resonance across generations.

4.2. Thematic Elements Emerging from the Lyrics of Air Supply's *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply* Album

The thematic analysis demonstrates that the album weaves narratives of love, trust, loss, and longing into a coherent emotional journey. Themes such as trust and intimacy anchor the songs in experiences of relational stability and vulnerability, resonating with research on music as a vehicle for emotional bonding (Harvey, 2020). The transformative power of love, as conveyed in lyrics emphasizing closeness and reassurance, aligns with contemporary understandings of music's role in regulating loneliness and affirming belonging (Pang, 2022).

Equally, the desolation of lost relationships and the impact of emotional rupture highlight music's function as a medium of grief and recovery. Here, Air Supply's lyrics not only articulate personal despair but also serve as collective scripts for processing heartbreak, paralleling Saarikallio et al.'s (2022) findings on music's role in identity reconstruction after relational loss. Thus, thematic elements extend beyond storytelling, positioning the album as an emotional archive through which listeners navigate both private and shared experiences.

4.3. Airheads' Emotional Interpretation of Tracks in Air Supply's *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply* Album

The reception analysis underscores that listeners do not consume Air Supply's music passively; instead, they embed the songs within personal and collective memory. Themes of family remembrance, nostalgia, and coping mechanisms illustrate music's mnemonic and therapeutic functions. Participants' testimonies confirm that Air Supply's ballads act as vessels of remembrance—linking individuals to familial bonds, cultural identity, and personal histories (Belfi & Jakubowski, 2021).

Beyond memory, listeners emphasized emotional connection and productivity, showing that the songs remain relevant in daily life, from self-reflection to task performance. This aligns with recent scholarship framing music as both an emotional technology and a resource for self-regulation (Loureiro et al., 2024). The findings, therefore, reinforce how Air Supply's music continues to shape listeners' emotional landscapes, offering both personal resonance and shared identity markers across generations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study comprehensively explores *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply*, focusing on its stylistic devices, emerging themes, and audience reception. The findings demonstrate Air Supply's enduring capacity to articulate love, loss, and longing through poetic lyricism

and emotionally evocative narratives. Through stylistic analysis, the lyrics revealed a rich tapestry of figurative language—most notably metaphor, repetition, and personification—which deepened the emotional impact and aesthetic resonance of the songs. The

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thematic analysis uncovered central motifs such as trust, the transformative power of love, the need for intimacy, the desolation of lost relationships, and emotional impact of past relationship—each capturing fundamental dimensions of human connection and vulnerability. Audience interpretation further affirmed the album’s emotional gravity, with Airheads expressing nostalgia, emotional catharsis, and personal reflection in response to the lyrics. Collectively, these elements position the album as a timeless and affective work of musical discourse, affirming Air Supply’s role in shaping emotional and literary expression through soft rock. Beyond its academic contributions, the study carries practical implications. The lyrical and thematic richness of Air Supply’s music can be integrated into therapeutic settings to facilitate emotional release and self-reflection, particularly in music therapy contexts. In education, its poetic devices

may serve as valuable resources for teaching figurative language, stylistics, and cultural literacy. Furthermore, the preservation and analysis of such works contribute to cultural memory, ensuring that the emotional narratives embedded in soft rock remain accessible to future generations. For future research, a comparative analysis with other bands of similar or contrasting genres could further illuminate how stylistic choices shape emotional reception across musical traditions. Cross-generational studies may also provide insight into how younger and older audiences interpret Air Supply’s music differently, shedding light on the intergenerational transmission of cultural and emotional values. Expanding the scope beyond a single album to include broader discographies would likewise enrich the understanding of Air Supply’s lasting influence on global music and literary discourse.

6. Limitations

While the study highlights the stylistic, thematic, and emotional resonance of *Making Love... The Very Best of Air Supply*, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the use of a small purposive sample of eleven participants restricts the breadth of perspectives and may not fully represent the diversity of Airheads’ interpretations. Second, the focus on a single album narrows the scope of the findings, limiting their applicability to Air Supply’s wider discography or to other musical contexts. Third, the interpretive nature of Critical Discourse

Analysis and stylistic analysis introduces an element of subjectivity, despite efforts to ensure trustworthiness and ethical rigor. These limitations, while not diminishing the value of the study, suggest that findings should be understood as context-specific rather than universally generalizable. Future research could expand by incorporating larger samples, comparative albums, or mixed-method approaches to enhance generalizability and validity.

Author Contributions:

This paper was collaboratively authored by two researchers, each contributing according to their expertise: Ms. Raganas led the development of the introduction, interpretation of results, and discussion of findings; Prof. Caloc was responsible for the comprehensive review, ensured the rigor of the study through validation of the methodology and results critical refinement of the manuscript.

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