

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Semantics is one of the linguistic branches that deals with meaning in language. Lyons (1995) explains that semantics focuses on how meaning operates through words, phrases, and sentences, while also encompassing non-verbal elements such as signs and symbols. The scope of meaning in semantics is not limited to verbal signs such as words and phrases but also includes non-verbal signs like symbols and images. Understanding semantics is essential in interpreting texts and symbols accurately, as it helps prevent misunderstandings or misinterpretations. The study of semantics is widely applied in various forms of written works, including poetry, song lyrics, and advertisements.

One important aspect of semantics is figurative language, which enriches the meaning of a sentence beyond its literal interpretation. According to Leech (1981), figurative language allows for deeper expression by conveying emotions and messages in a more creative and non-literal manner, making statements more dramatic and engaging. Similarly, Rohani (2018) states that figurative language expresses feelings and thoughts indirectly, giving aesthetic and emotional impact to the audience. Common forms of figurative language include metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole, all of which are often used to make communication more engaging and expressive.

In the realm of music, figurative language holds a significant role in song lyrics. It enables artists to express emotions and messages through beautifully

crafted phrases and sentences. Moreover, it serves as a medium for musicians to channel their creativity, adding depth and meaning to their compositions. Music is one of the most widely enjoyed forms of entertainment, with numerous studies highlighting its ability to help individuals express their emotions. According to Juslin (2013), music is often perceived as expressive of emotions by listeners. This demonstrates the significant role of lyrics in shaping a song's emotional impact. Well-written lyrics that resonate with a listener's emotions create a sense of connection and relatability, enhancing the overall experience.

However, despite its artistic and emotional importance, figurative language in song lyrics is often difficult for listeners to interpret due to its non-literal nature. Many figurative expressions rely on symbolic meaning, cultural context, or poetic structure, which can be challenging for general audiences to understand. As a result, the deeper messages intended by the songwriter may be overlooked or misunderstood. Therefore, analyzing figurative language from a semantic perspective is necessary to understand the implicit meanings contained within song lyrics.

Although figurative language has been widely studied in literature and poetry, there is still limited academic attention given to its use in song lyrics, especially in contemporary music. One artist whose lyrics exemplify the rich use of figurative language is Lorde. Known for her poetic, introspective, and emotionally expressive songwriting, Lorde often reflects personal experiences and deep self-reflection in her lyrics. Her use of figurative language plays a crucial role in enhancing the emotional depth and artistic quality of her music.

Despite that, Lorde's work has gained critical recognition, and academic studies examining the figurative language in her lyrics are still scarce. Hence, this research aims to investigate the types and meanings of figurative language in selected Lorde songs using a semantic framework. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how figurative language functions in song lyrics and how it shapes emotional interpretation among listeners.

1.2 Problems of the Study

Based on the background, the research focuses on the following questions:

1. What types of figurative language are found in Lorde's song lyrics?
2. What meanings are conveyed through the figurative language used in Lorde's song lyrics?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the types of figurative language found in Lorde's song lyrics.
2. To analyze the meanings expressed through figurative language in Lorde's song lyrics.

1.4 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to two aspects.

1. This study examines the types of figurative language that appear in Lorde's selected song lyrics, using the categories proposed by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974). Other linguistic features are not included in the analysis.

2. This study focuses on interpreting the meanings of the figurative expressions found in the songs. The interpretations are based only on the lyrical context and do not discuss musical elements, the songwriter's personal background, or audience responses.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research, which focuses on figurative language, offers several contributions, both theoretical and practical. Therefore, an explanation of these two aspects is provided in further detail below.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

From a theoretical perspective, this research is expected to enrich the study of figurative language by serving as a reference for future researchers interested in analyzing figurative expressions in song lyrics. It is also intended to provide additional insight into how figurative meanings can be interpreted semantically across different literary forms.

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1.5.2 Practical Significance

Practically, this study may be useful for readers and learners who wish to understand figurative language in song lyrics more deeply. It can also help songwriters recognize how figurative expressions enhance the emotional and artistic quality of their lyrics, making their messages more impactful for the audience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE, CONCEPTS, AND THEORIES

2.1 Review of Related Literature

This section discusses several previous studies that focus on figurative language analysis in song lyrics. These studies serve as references and comparisons that help strengthen the theoretical foundation of this research. Five studies were reviewed, consisting of two theses and three journal articles, each providing relevant insights into figurative language use in musical contexts.

The first study was conducted by Dewi (2020) entitled *Figurative Language in Maher Zain's Song Lyrics*. The purpose of this study was to identify the types of figurative language found in Maher Zain's songs and determine which types appear most frequently. The researcher applied a descriptive qualitative approach and used Perrine's (1969) theory as the analytical framework. The findings showed that there were eight types of figurative language found in the lyrics: simile, metaphor, personification, synecdoche, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, and irony. Among them, metaphor appeared as the most dominant. Dewi's research is relevant to the present study because it emphasizes the relationship between lyrical expression and the emotional messages conveyed through figurative language. It also demonstrates how non-literal language can enhance the depth and meaning of song lyrics.

The second thesis, written by Habib (2024) under the title *The Use of Figurative Language in Bruno Mars's Songs*, aimed to analyze figurative expressions found in three of Bruno Mars's selected songs. Similar to Dewi's

research, this study employed a qualitative descriptive method but adopted the theoretical framework of Abrams (1999). The analysis identified three main types of figurative language: metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. From the findings, it can be seen that figurative language in Bruno Mars's songs functions as a medium to express feelings of love, admiration, and emotional intensity in a poetic way. Habib's research contributes to this study by showing how figurative language is not only decorative but also communicative in delivering universal messages through music.

The third research was an article conducted by Simarmata (2021) entitled *Figurative Language Used in Selena Gomez's Song Lyrics: A Semantic Analysis*. The aim of this study was to examine the types and meanings of figurative language in Selena Gomez's selected songs. The researcher used Perrine's (2008) theory and applied a qualitative method in analyzing the lyrics. The findings revealed several figurative devices such as simile, metaphor, personification, metonymy, symbolism, paradox, hyperbole, and irony. Among them, metaphor was found to be the most dominant. The study highlights how figurative language enriches the emotional and aesthetic quality of song lyrics, allowing artists to express complex feelings and experiences more vividly. This research is significant because it supports the notion that figurative language plays an essential role in shaping listeners' emotional responses and interpretations.

The fourth study was conducted by Puspitorini (2021) under the title *An Analysis of Figurative Language in Coldplay's Selected Songs*. This article examined several of Coldplay's songs to identify both the types and meanings of

figurative expressions. The research used a descriptive qualitative method and applied Knickerbocker and Reninger's (1963) theory as the analytical framework. The results showed that there were four main types of figurative language: metaphor, hyperbole, symbol, and synecdoche. Hyperbole appeared as the most frequently used type in Coldplay's lyrics. The researcher concluded that figurative language in Coldplay's songs serves to communicate deep emotions and philosophical ideas in a more imaginative way. This study contributes to understanding how the artistic use of language in music can strengthen lyrical impact and audience engagement.

The fifth study reviewed is an article by Yusnitasari (2022) titled *An Analysis of Figurative Language in the Song Lyrics "You Are My Sunshine" by Anne Murray*. This research analyzed figurative expressions in Anne Murray's song to identify both the types and meanings of figurative language used. The researcher adopted McArthur's (1996) theory and applied a descriptive qualitative method. The results indicated the presence of six types of figurative language: metaphor, hyperbole, symbolism, repetition, idiom, and imagery. The analysis revealed that figurative language plays a crucial role in conveying the song's emotional message, making the lyrics more expressive and memorable for listeners. This study provides further evidence that figurative language is an integral part of lyrical composition, adding both aesthetic and emotional value.

From the studies reviewed above, it is clear that various researchers have analyzed figurative language across different artists and genres, demonstrating its universality in lyrical expression. The similarities among these studies lie in their

shared focus on identifying and categorizing types of figurative language in song lyrics using qualitative methods. However, this current research differs by focusing specifically on Lorde's unique lyrical style, which is often characterized by introspection, symbolism, and emotional honesty. Additionally, this study combines Knickerbocker and Reninger's (1974) theory of figurative language classification with Leech's (1981) theory of meaning, aiming to uncover not only the types of figurative language used in Lorde's songs but also the semantic meanings underlying those expressions.

2.2 Concepts

This section clarifies the main concepts used in this research, including figurative language, song lyrics, and Lorde as the artist whose works are analyzed.

2.2.1 Figurative Language

According to Johnson and Arp (2016:773), figurative language refers to expressions that should not be interpreted literally. According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974), figurative language, also referred to as metaphorical language, carries meaning beyond the literal sense. They categorize figurative language into ten main types: metaphor, simile, personification, synecdoche, paradox, dead metaphor, allusion, metonymy, hyperbole, and irony.

2.2.2 Meaning

In semantic studies, meaning is considered an essential element in understanding how language conveys ideas and messages. Rather than viewing meaning as a single unified concept, Leech (1981) explains that meaning in

language can be analyzed through different perspectives. He proposes that meaning consists of several types which reflect not only literal interpretation but also emotional, social, and contextual aspects of language use. These types of meaning include conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning.

2.2.3 Song Lyric

Song lyrics are the textual representation of a song that conveys the singer's emotions, such as happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, and various other feelings. Song lyrics are the words of a song, often characterized by their poetic structure and emotional depth, conveying themes and stories through various literary devices. Frith, Simon (1996: 123).

2.3 Theories

This research applies two main theories as analytical frameworks to address the research problems. Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974) provide the classification of figurative language types, while Leech (1981) offers the framework for analyzing different kinds of meaning.

2.3.1 Types of Figurative Language

Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974) classify figurative language into ten types, namely metaphor, simile, personification, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole, irony, paradox, dead metaphor, and allusion. Each of these is briefly discussed below.

2.3.1.1 Simile

According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:283), a simile is a comparison between two different things, indicated by words such as *like* or *as*. A simile contrasts two objects by using connectors like *similar to*, *resemble*, or *then*. For instance, in the expression *My love is like a red rose* (Burns, 1794). The term *like* functions as a connector that compares *love* to a *red rose*. The use of a simile aims to clarify something unfamiliar by relating it to something the reader already knows.

2.3.1.2 Metaphor

Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:283) describe a metaphor as an implied comparison in which the connecting words such as *like* or *as* are omitted. A metaphor, like a simile, compares two different entities, but the relationship is expressed directly without using comparative terms. For example, *Life is but a walking shadow* (Shakespeare, 1606). In this expression, life is metaphorically compared to a shadow to convey the idea that human existence is temporary and fleeting.

2.3.1.3 Personification

As stated by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:283), personification assigns human traits to animals, objects, or abstract ideas. For instance, *My little horse must think it queer to stop without a farmhouse near* (Frost, 1923) is considered an example of personification because the horse is described as if it had human thought. This expression gives life and emotional quality to a non-human

subject. Personification enhances imagery and emotional connection within literary expression.

2.3.1.4 Synecdoche

Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:283) explain that synecdoche is a type of figurative expression in which a part of an object or concept is used to represent the entire entity. For example, *forty winters shall besiege thy brow* (Shakespeare, 1609). In this expression, the word winters is used to symbolize years, representing a period of time through one of its parts. This figurative device makes language more expressive by allowing a smaller element to stand for a broader meaning, thereby adding symbolic weight to an otherwise literal statement.

2.3.1.5 Metonymy

According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:284), metonymy is a figurative device in which one thing is identified or referred to by the name of something closely related to it. Unlike synecdoche, the relationship in metonymy is based on association rather than part or whole correspondence. An example of metonymy can be found in political discourse, where *the crown* is commonly used to represent royal authority or the king, as seen in historical and literary texts referring to monarchy (e.g., Shakespeare, 1606). In this case, *the crown* symbolizes the king through an associative connection rather than direct physical inclusion. This type of figurative language emphasizes representation and association rather than resemblance, and it is frequently used in political, cultural, and literary contexts to convey meaning concisely.

2.3.1.6 Hyperbole

According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:284), hyperbole is a figurative expression in which deliberate and dramatic exaggeration is employed to emphasize meaning. An example of hyperbole: *Go and Catch a Falling Star* (Donne, 1633). This expression describes an action that is impossible in a literal sense. Through this deliberate exaggeration, the writer conveys a figurative meaning by emphasizing the impossibility of the act rather than its literal interpretation.

2.3.1.7 Irony

According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974: 284), irony is a literary device characterized by a statement in which the intended meaning is completely opposite to the literal meaning expressed on the surface. An example of irony can be found in Jonathan Swift's essay *A Modest Proposal*, in which the author suggests that poor children should be sold as food to solve social and economic problems (Swift, 1729). Literally, the proposal appears to offer a practical solution; however, the true intention is to criticize the cruelty and indifference of society toward poverty. This contrast between literal expression and intended meaning clearly demonstrates irony.

2.3.1.8 Paradox

Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:284) describe paradox as a statement that seems illogical or absurd at first but reveals a deeper truth upon reflection. An

example of paradox can be found in William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, as seen in the line *I must be cruel only to be kind* (Shakespeare, 1603). At first glance, cruelty and kindness seem to be opposing qualities. However, this statement suggests that harsh actions may sometimes be necessary to achieve a positive or moral outcome. Thus, the paradox conveys a meaningful truth through an apparently contradictory expression.

2.3.1.9 Dead metaphor

Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974:283) explain that a dead metaphor refers to a metaphorical expression that has lost its figurative force as a result of frequent and prolonged use. Examples of dead metaphor can be found in common lexical expressions such as *the back of the chair* and *the face of the clock*, which are widely used in everyday English (Leech, 1981). These expressions were originally metaphorical, associating parts of objects with human body parts. However, due to repeated usage over time, they are no longer perceived as figurative and are now understood as literal expressions.

2.3.1.10 Allusion

An example of allusion can be found in T. S. Eliot's poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, as seen in the line *No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be* (Eliot, 1915). This line alludes to Prince Hamlet, a tragic character in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, who is known for his indecision and existential struggle. Through this allusion, the speaker contrasts himself with Hamlet to

emphasize his own sense of hesitation and lack of heroic qualities, thereby enriching the meaning of the poem.

2.3.2 Theory of Meaning

Leech (1981:9) introduces seven types of meaning that relate to the non-literal interpretation of language. Each type helps to reveal how meaning operates within figurative expressions.

2.3.2.1 Conceptual Meaning

Leech (1981: 9) defines conceptual meaning refers to the essential and dictionary-based sense of a word. It deals with the objective content that identifies a word's reference in the real world. For example, the word *woman* can be described conceptually as “+HUMAN, +ADULT, +FEMALE.” This type of meaning forms the central part of semantics because it provides the stable and objective foundation for communication.

2.3.2.2 Connotative Meaning

According to Leech (1981: 12), Connotative meaning goes beyond the literal definition to include emotional, cultural, and associative elements linked with a word. It reflects the personal or societal attitudes linked with a term. For instance, the word *woman* may connote ideas like “gentleness,” “weakness,” or “motherhood,” depending on the speaker's cultural perception. Thus, connotative meaning expresses what language implies rather than states directly.

2.3.2.3 Social Meaning

According to Leech (1981: 14), social meaning conveys information about the social circumstances of communication, such as the speaker's background, status, or the level of formality. For example, expressions like *I ain't got no money* indicate an informal or non-standard dialect, while *I haven't any money* suggests a more formal or educated variety. Therefore, social meaning helps identify the social identity and context of the speaker.

2.3.2.4 Affective Meaning

According to Leech (1981: 15), affective meaning expresses the speaker's emotional state or attitude toward the subject or listener. Tone, emphasis, and word choice often reveal this layer of meaning. For example, when someone says *You're a liar!* In an angry tone, the utterance carries strong affective meaning beyond the literal accusation; it conveys the speaker's anger and disapproval.

2.3.2.5 Reflected Meaning

According to Leech (1981: 16), reflected meaning arises when a word has multiple senses, and one meaning influences another because of psychological or emotional association. Leech illustrates this with the word *intercourse*, which literally means "communication" but often evokes a sexual sense. Similarly, words like *holy ghost* may evoke both sacred and frightening associations, depending on the listener's perspective.

2.3.2.6 Collocative Meaning

According to Leech (1981: 16), collocative meaning refers to the meaning that arises from habitual co-occurrence with other words. Certain words tend to appear with particular partners, creating predictable associations. For instance, *pretty* typically collocates with nouns like *girl* or *flower*, while *handsome* often goes with *boy* or *man*. Although both *pretty* and *handsome* mean “good-looking,” their collocative ranges differ.

2.3.2.7 Thematic Meaning

According to Leech (1981: 19), thematic meaning concerns the organization and emphasis of information within a sentence. It shows how the arrangement of words affects the focus or interpretation of a message. For example, “*The dog bit the man*” and “*The man was bitten by the dog*” share the same conceptual meaning but differ thematically: the first emphasizes *the dog*, while the second highlights *the man*.

