

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Definition of Semantics

The study of meaning in language is called semantics. It looked at how meaning is expressed by words, phrases, and sentences, as well as how interpretation is influenced by context. According to Lyons (1995:11), semantics is a broad science that investigates meaning in language at different levels. Lyons said that semantics is more than just the meanings of individual words; it also encompassed how phrases and full sentences express meaning. He stressed the significance of comprehending words' additional subtleties or associations (connotation) as well as their literal meanings (denotation). Lyons highlighted how context affected interpretation in his discussion of the connection between pragmatics and semantics.

Palmer (1981:1-5) defined semantics as more than simply the literal meanings of words and phrases; it also included the interpersonal meanings given throughout conversation. Palmer talked about how language users decipher meaning beyond the obvious by using social norms and common knowledge. He described the differences between sense (a word's intrinsic meaning) and reference (the thing or idea a word really refers to), as well as how these ideas interact in regular language use. His research emphasized how crucial it is for semantic analysis to consider both language and social aspects.

According to Griffiths (in Havery, 2024:6), semantics, one of linguistics' two primary subfields, is essentially the study of meaning. The study of word meaning and phrase meaning is known as semantics. The subject of semantics examined how words and signals may transmit meaning. The literal or intended meaning that speakers and writers convey might be referred to as semantics. Many different scientific disciplines study semantics, hence the methods used to study meaning might also differ. Semanticists investigate what words, phrases, sentences, and punctuation imply, as well as how body language, tone, and facial expressions impact meaning.

Based on the definitions above, the study of semantics examined how language conveys meaning through phrases, sentences, and words, as well as how interpretation is influenced by context. It incorporated social nuances and minor linkages in addition to precise definitions. Gaining an understanding of semantics entails examining meaning from several angles and appreciating how context and social norms affect communication. Semantics also considered body language and tone, in addition to spoken and written words. All things considered, understanding the depth and complexity of human communication requires an understanding of semantics.

2.2 Definition of Figurative Language

The figurative language is commonly found in literary works such as movie scripts, song lyrics, and novels. The use of figurative language in song lyrics is to creatively, aesthetically, and powerfully convey feelings, experiences, and ideas. It gives the words more depth and elegance while subtly expressing difficult emotions. Metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, and symbolism are a few examples of the figurative language types frequently found in song lyrics. By using these techniques, songwriters can highlight ideas, conjure up strong imagery, and increase the lyrics' emotional resonance and memorability. According to Abrams (Rahmadhani, 2022:17), figurative language diverged from the conventional or standard meaning and arrangement of words to attain a particular significance or impact. There are several categories of figurative language, such as personification, which gives human characteristics to non-human objects, simile, which employed words like "like" or "as" for explicit comparisons, hyperbole, which is purposeful exaggeration to highlight a point, and metaphor, which made implicit comparisons between unrelated things. Other forms are metonymy, which substitutes closely related terms; onomatopoeia, which used words that mimic sounds; allusion, which referred to a person, place, or event; symbolism, which used symbols to signify ideas; irony, which expressed a meaning opposite to the literal words; and synecdoche, in which a part represented the whole.

2.3 Types of Figurative Language

Figurative language came in a variety of forms, such as personification, simile, hyperbole, metaphor, and symbolism.

2.3.1 Personification

Personification is a figurative language technique in which an abstract idea or inanimate thing is described as though it possessed human emotions or characteristics. According to Abrams (in Syamsu and Weda, 2023:21), personification is the use of figurative language to represent an inanimate object or abstract idea as a live person. Personification is a figurative technique that gave an item, animal concepts, or abstract idea human sensitivity. For example:

a) “The Heart Wants What It Wants” by Selena Gomez

The expression above talks about human emotions, like love and longing, which are expressed through the personification of the heart's wishes.

a) “Sympathy for the Devil” by The Rolling Stones

The devil in the example above is portrayed as a human-like narrator accountable for historical occurrences.

2.3.2 Simile

According to Abrams (Syafitri and Marlinton, 2018:46), a simile compared two distinct things using the words "like" or "as". The words "like" or "as" are used to expressly compare two quite different objects in a simile. The differences between similes and metaphors are that they both compare opposite things for vivid imagery; however, similes utilize "like" or "as" for indirect comparisons, whereas metaphors assert direct analogy without utilizing "like" or "as". Similes make milder, suggested links, but metaphors form stronger identification fusions for greater impact. The use of connecting words like "like" or "as" to imply a comparison is what separates a simile from a metaphor. For example:

a) “My heart is like an open highway” from “It’s My Life” by Bon Jovi

This simile described the heart as free and open, representing freedom and limitless potential.

b) “As Long as You Love Me” by Backstreet Boys

The song title above indicated long-term love measured by a specific condition, implying persistence and dedication.

2.3.3 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a rhetorical device that emphasized a point or produced a powerful effect without intending to be taken literally. It is marked by purposeful and exaggerated exaggeration. According to McCarthy and Carter (2004:151), hyperbole is "a purposeful overstatement in everyday conversation, often accepted by listeners for evaluative or affective purposes," emphasizing its emotive and persuasive function in language. They observed that it entails speaking "much more than is precisely true, yea above all belief," underlining the character of an exaggerated magnification of reality. This concept is consistent with the traditional notion of hyperbole as a type of amplification that exaggerates to increase the impact of a message (McCarthy and Carter (2004:151)). For example:

a) “Firework” by Katy Perry

The song's title suggest that a person might flash exceedingly bright like a firework by figuratively exaggerating their explosive potential and brilliance.

b) “Cry Me a River” by Justin Timberlake

The song's title highlights the intense emotional suffering or melancholy by exaggerating the volume of tears as though they could fill a river.

2.3.4 Metaphor

In academic literature, metaphor is generally characterized as a cognitive and linguistic process in which one notion which is the source is utilized to comprehend or describe another, frequently abstract or unfamiliar, concept (the target) by mapping shared elements between them. It is more than merely a stylistic device; by enabling us to understand

difficult or abstract concepts in terms of more physical or familiar experiences, it profoundly influences human intellect and communication. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:3), metaphors are cognitive tools that organize our understanding of the world by transferring meaning from embodied social and physical experiences to abstract phenomena. For example:

a) “Rolling in the Deep” by Adele

This metaphor implies being completely engrossed in anything, frequently strong feelings, or circumstances, such as being submerged underwater, which represents hardship or sadness.

b) “Hotel California” by Eagles

The title itself is a long metaphor for living an extravagant, decadent, and ensnared lifestyle in which a person can leave but can never really escape from the consequences.

2.3.5 Symbolism

One kind of figurative language that is frequently used in literary works like song lyrics, books, and movie scripts is symbolism. It conveys meanings that go beyond the literal interpretation of words using symbols. Abrams (Syafitri and Marlinton, 2018:48), refers symbolism to a term or phrase that represents an object or event, which has a broader meaning beyond itself. Symbolism adds depth, passion, and complexity to a work by using symbols—objects, characters, or actions—to symbolize abstract concepts or themes. For example:

a) “Ghost Town” by Adam Lambert

The song title above expresses melancholy and a desire to get rid of isolation from one self’s heart.

b) “Titanium” by David Guetta

Titanium is a symbol of inner strength and toughness, demonstrating resiliency in the face of adversity and pessimism.

2.4 Previous Related Studies

There were similarities and variations between this research and several earlier studies that supported it. This demonstrated research that applied the same idea and approach to several materials.

The first research was from Revanza (2024), which was titled *Analysis of Figurative Language in Drake's Rap Song Scorpion Album*. The purpose of the study was to assist individuals in better comprehending and using figurative language by analyzing the forms of figurative language used in Drake's rap songs from the *Scorpion* album and their meanings. The study also employed a descriptive qualitative approach to identify, categorize, and analyze the many forms of English metaphorical language used by Drake throughout the album's rap tracks. The study examined how metaphors, similes, hyperboles, imagery, repetition, personification, and allusions were used to portray identity, emotion, success, and hardship. This research emphasized the importance of figurative language in artistic expression, providing opportunities to communicate complex concepts and sentiments that went beyond the literal meaning of words.

The second research was from Algivari (2024), which was titled *Figurative Language Used in Adele's Selected Song Lyrics*. The goal of this study was to examine the metaphorical languages utilized in Adele's lyrics to chosen songs. This study used a qualitative research design using a descriptive approach. The data were derived from Adele's chosen song lyrics. According to the research, Adele's four songs contained eight different types of figurative languages, including personification, metaphor, synecdoche, hyperbole, allusion, paradox, symbols, and dead metaphors. The writer used these kinds of figurative languages to make her product—in this case the songs—feel more alive.

The third research was from Syahrina (2019), which was titled *A Stylistic Study of Figurative Language in Katy Perry's Song Lyrics from Witness Album*. The purpose of this study was to ascertain Katy Perry's thoughts about her nation, particularly in the wake of the 2016 election, by analyzing the figurative language used in the song lyrics of her *Witness* (2017) album. The theories used in this study included Laurence Perrine's figurative language and Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short's stylistics. Only seven of the twelve categories of figurative language—simile, metaphor, personification, metonymy, symbol, hyperbole, and irony—were

found when using Perrine's theory of figurative language. With a total of eight instances (29.63%), metaphor predominated in the song lyrics. The researcher connected the meaning of figurative language to the data after identifying the different forms of figurative language that were employed.

My study and earlier research on figurative language in music lyrics had several important commonalities. My research used a qualitative descriptive approach to examine personification, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, symbolism, and other forms of figurative language. These studies acknowledged the important part figurative language played in enhancing song lyrics, allowing performers to express nuanced feelings and concepts that went beyond literal interpretations.

While other studies focused on American rap (Drake), pop songs with broad appeal (Adele), or socio-political commentary within an American pop context (Katy Perry), the difference in my research is that it focused on how J Hus used figurative language to express identity, social injustice, urban life of British-African community, and resistance in a British multicultural context. Because UK rap used metaphor to explore subjects like poverty, injustice, and cultural pride, it effectively communicated the experiences of oppressed populations. Furthermore, my research combined linguistic analysis and music studies, improving knowledge of how figurative language served not only as creative expression but also as a communicator of multiple social narratives and cultural identities.