

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research, I employ several theories and concepts related to my study. The main theories applied are semantic theory and figurative language theory, which include various types of figurative expressions such as personification, metaphor, hyperbole, simile, idiom, and irony. These theories are used to support the analysis of emotional content found in the figurative language expressions within NIKI's "*Nicole*" album. At the end of Chapter 2, I also present a discussion of three articles as previous studies to serve as a comparison between my research and the previous studies.

2.1 Semantics

As is well known, there are two main branches of linguistics that focus on meaning: pragmatics and semantics. Pragmatics studies how individuals interpret meaning based on context, while semantics focuses more on how language itself conveys meaning (Kreidler, 2013). Similarly, Yule (2006, p.100) explains that linguistic semantics deals with the conventional meanings of words, phrases, and sentences rather than what a specific speaker might intend in a particular situation.

In simple terms, semantics is the study of the literal or true meaning of words and sentences, rather than the subjective interpretation by speakers or listeners. (Kreidler, 2013). In other words, semantics helps us understand how language conveys ideas, emotions, and messages beyond the surface level of words. It plays an important role in connecting form and meaning, ensuring that communication is not only grammatical but also meaningful.

According to Dagna, semantics is a fundamental aspect of linguistics that helps explain the structure and meaning of words. By studying semantics, we can deepen our understanding of how language works and how meaning is formed and interpreted. In linguistics, semantics explores how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning, and how both speakers and listeners make sense of those meanings in communication. Over time, many linguists have developed theories to

explain how meaning is created and understood. Some of the most influential include the Referential Theory, Conceptual Theory, and Generative Theory of Semantics, each offering a different perspective on how language represents thought and meaning.

2.2 Figurative Language

2.2.1 Definition

Based on my research, there are several methods used in semantics to analyze meaning, and one of them is through figurative language. Figurative expressions often appear in various literary works, especially in song lyrics. Songwriters usually avoid expressing meanings in a direct or literal way. Instead, they use figurative language to make their lyrics sound more artistic, emotional, and meaningful. Sometimes, they choose to convey ideas implicitly to create deeper emotional resonance. Even though figurative language doesn't always express literal meaning, it can still be considered beautiful because of the way it captures feelings and imagination. According to Peter (2002), figurative meaning connects emotions to the speaker's desires in a way that can provoke thought, feeling, or action. Through figurative expressions, speakers can process and express their ideas more creatively.

In figurative language, the use of words often involves exaggeration, comparison, or creative twists to highlight a message and enhance its beauty. As Keraf (2010, p.112) explains, language style can be seen from both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. This means that the choice of words in figurative language should be thoughtful and deliberate to ensure that the intended meaning is clear to the audience. Figurative language also helps convey messages in a way that feels more vivid, fresh, and emotionally appealing. In essence, it allows writers to express meaning indirectly but effectively.

Furthermore, Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) describe figurative language as the use of words that go beyond their literal meanings to create imaginative and emotional effects. They identify several types of figurative language such as simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, and

irony each serving to express complex ideas and emotions in a more engaging and memorable way.

Overall, figurative language plays a vital role in enriching communication. It allows writers to express emotions and ideas creatively and indirectly, adding depth, beauty, and emotional power to their words. Through figurative expressions, language becomes more than just a means of conveying information; it transforms into a form of art that reflects human feelings, imagination, and experience.

2.2.2 Function of Figurative Language

Figurative language holds several important functions, especially in literary and musical works such as NIKI's *Nicole* album. One of its main functions is the aesthetic function, which serves to beautify and enrich the language, making it sound more expressive and emotionally captivating. According to Keraf (2009), figurative expressions give language a sense of beauty, rhythm, and style, transforming ordinary sentences into meaningful and heartfelt expressions. In the context of song lyrics, this aesthetic function brings words to life and makes them sound more poetic. NIKI, for instance, uses metaphors, similes, and personifications to turn her personal emotions into art, creating lyrics that feel intimate and resonate deeply with her listeners.

Beyond its artistic value, figurative language also serves an emotional function, allowing writers to express feelings indirectly. Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) explain that figurative expressions help reveal the inner emotions of the speaker in a subtle yet powerful way. Through these expressions, emotions such as heartbreak, longing, and nostalgia can be conveyed with greater depth. In NIKI's *Nicole*, figurative language enables her to communicate her pain and vulnerability without stating them explicitly, inviting listeners to feel what she feels and connect emotionally to her songs.

Another significant role of figurative language is its symbolic function. Figurative expressions allow writers and songwriters to convey abstract ideas and emotions through concrete imagery and symbols. As Peter (2002) notes, figurative

language helps communicate complex meanings symbolically rather than literally. Symbols such as “light” for hope or “rain” for sadness are often used to express emotional states. In NIKI’s lyrics, symbols like *ocean*, *engines*, and *autumn* represent transformation, separation, and emotional growth, giving her songs layers of meaning and interpretive depth.

Figurative language also fulfills a communicative function by helping writers deliver messages more effectively and memorably. Instead of expressing something in a straightforward manner, they use creative and emotionally charged language that captures the listener’s attention. This aligns with Kreidler’s and Yule’s (2006) views on semantics, which emphasize that meaning in language goes beyond literal expression it involves understanding how words convey emotional and contextual significance.

Additionally, figurative language has a cognitive function because it stimulates the imagination and interpretive thinking of the audience. When listeners encounter figurative expressions, they are encouraged to think more deeply, interpret meanings, and visualize the imagery within the lyrics. This process creates a reflective and personal listening experience. In NIKI’s songs, listeners are not only enjoying the melody but also engaging intellectually and emotionally with the lyrics, uncovering meanings that resonate with their own experiences.

Lastly, figurative language serves as an emotive and reflective function. It allows writers and artists to express their emotions and reflect on their personal experiences authentically and poetically. Through figurative expressions, NIKI conveys her emotional journey her love, loss, and self-discovery with sincerity and maturity. In this sense, figurative language is not merely a stylistic device; it becomes a bridge between semantics and emotion, between what is said and what is felt. It transforms language from a simple means of communication into a powerful medium of art and human experience.

2.2.3 Types of Figurative Language

According to Keraf (2009), figurative language is divided into several types, each with its own way of giving beauty and emotional depth to a sentence. Figurative expressions are not only used to make language more artistic, but also to communicate feelings and ideas more vividly. Keraf (2009) identifies ten main types of figurative language: simile, metaphor, personification, symbol, metonymy, irony, hyperbole, litotes, synecdoche, and idiom. Each type serves a unique purpose in enriching the emotional and imaginative meaning of a text. Through these forms, writers and songwriters can express ideas indirectly, allowing readers or listeners to interpret meaning based on emotion, experience, and context.

A simile is a figure of speech that compares two different things by using connecting words such as “*like*” or “*as*.” This comparison helps create strong imagery and allows listeners to visualize the emotion behind the words. For instance, when someone says “her smile is like the sun,” the simile connects a person’s smile to sunlight, giving the impression of warmth and brightness. Meanwhile, a metaphor makes a comparison without using the words “*like*” or “*as*.” Instead, it directly identifies one thing as another to create a deeper symbolic meaning. For example, saying “time is a thief” doesn’t mean time literally steals, but it emphasizes how time takes moments away from our lives something that evokes reflection and emotion.

Personification gives human characteristics to non-human objects or abstract ideas, making them feel alive and relatable. For example, saying “the wind whispered through the trees” makes nature sound human, helping the listener feel the emotion or mood in the scene. Symbol is another type of figurative language where one object or image represents a larger idea or concept. For instance, a *rose* may symbolize love, while *rain* might represent sadness or renewal. Metonymy is when a word is used to stand for something closely related to it for example, using “the crown” to mean “the king or queen.” These types of expressions help language become more expressive and layered, inviting deeper interpretation.

Another form is irony, which occurs when the intended meaning is different or even opposite from the literal meaning. It often expresses humor, sarcasm, or emotional contradiction. Hyperbole uses deliberate exaggeration to emphasize feelings or situations, often to make them sound more intense or dramatic for instance, “I’ve told you a million times.” On the opposite side, litotes uses understatement to express something indirectly, such as saying “not bad” to mean “good.” Synecdoche is when a part represents the whole, or vice versa for example, using “hands” to refer to workers (“all hands on deck”). Lastly, idiom refers to expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal meanings of the words themselves, such as “break a leg,” which means “good luck.”

In the context of songwriting, these types of figurative language play a crucial role in shaping the emotional atmosphere of the lyrics. NIKI, for example, often combines metaphor, personification, and idiom to express feelings of love, heartbreak, and nostalgia in her album *Nicole*. Through her poetic use of language, she turns personal experiences into universally relatable emotions. Figurative language, therefore, is not only a stylistic choice but also a creative tool that helps transform ordinary words into meaningful expressions of human emotion.

1. Personification

Personification is a type of figurative language that gives human qualities or emotions to non-human things such as objects, ideas, or natural elements. It allows something lifeless to “act” or “feel” like a human, making the expression sound more vivid and emotional. According to Keraf (2009), personification is used to describe non-living things as if they were alive or capable of human behavior, so that the message feels closer and more relatable to the listener.

This kind of expression can be recognized when an object or concept is described as doing something that only humans can do like thinking, speaking, or feeling. Keraf (2009, p.140) explains that personification gives life to words, turning simple descriptions into something more emotional and imaginative. It helps listeners or readers connect with the lyrics on a deeper emotional level.

2. Metaphor

Metaphor is a type of figurative language that compares two different things directly without using words such as *like* or *as*. It connects one idea or object to another to express deeper meaning or emotion. According to Keraf (2009), a metaphor is used to describe something by referring to it as something else, helping to create a strong and imaginative image. Through metaphors, songwriters can express feelings or experiences in a more symbolic and emotional way.

A metaphor does not simply describe an object but transforms it into a symbol that carries emotional value. It allows listeners to understand feelings indirectly, making the message sound more poetic and heartfelt. As Keraf (2009, p.137) explains, metaphors work by identifying one thing with another, creating a connection that strengthens emotional expression.

3. Simile

Simile is a type of figurative language that compares two different things using the words *like* or *as*. It is used to create vivid imagery and help the listener or reader understand emotions and situations more clearly. According to Keraf (2009), a simile connects two objects or ideas that share similar characteristics to make descriptions more imaginative and expressive.

The use of simile adds emotional depth and beauty to the language. It allows the songwriter to express complex feelings, such as love, heartbreak, or longing, through simple comparisons that the audience can easily relate to. This figure of speech makes the lyrics sound more poetic and meaningful.

4. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a type of figurative language that uses deliberate exaggeration to express strong feelings or to make an idea more powerful. It is not meant to be taken literally but serves to highlight emotions or situations in a dramatic and memorable way. According to Keraf (2009), hyperbole helps to emphasize meaning and create a deeper emotional effect for the listener or reader.

In songwriting, hyperbole is often used to describe intense emotions such as love, pain, or longing in a more vivid and expressive manner. By exaggerating reality, the songwriter allows listeners to feel the depth of the emotion being portrayed.

5. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech in which the actual meaning of a statement is different from, or even opposite to, its literal meaning. According to Keraf (2009), irony often highlights a contrast between what is said and what is truly meant, creating a subtle sense of humor, sadness, or reflection. It can reveal the gap between appearance and reality, allowing the listener to sense deeper emotional or psychological tension behind the words.

There are several forms of irony, such as verbal, situational, and dramatic irony. Verbal irony occurs when someone says the opposite of what they truly feel, usually to emphasize an emotion or contradiction. Situational irony happens when events turn out differently from what is expected, while dramatic irony appears when the audience understands something that the characters do not. In songwriting, irony is often used to express emotional conflict, self-awareness, or contradictions in love and life.

6. Idiom

An idiom is a group of words whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal definitions of the individual words. Instead, idioms carry a figurative meaning that is commonly accepted within a language or culture. According to Keraf (2009), idioms are often used to express ideas, emotions, or situations in a way that is more colorful and relatable than literal language.

In songwriting, idioms help convey feelings or experiences in a familiar and expressive way, often adding nuance or cultural context to the lyrics. They allow listeners to understand emotions indirectly while connecting with shared human experiences.

7. Symbol

Symbol is a type of figurative language in which an object, word, or image is used to represent a deeper or more abstract meaning. According to Keraf (2009), a symbol does not simply describe something directly but gives it a broader significance that goes beyond its literal sense. Symbol often represents universal ideas such as love, hope, faith, or change, allowing the writer or songwriter to express complex emotions through subtle imagery.

This figure of speech gives language emotional and philosophical depth, encouraging the listener or reader to reflect on meanings that are not explicitly stated. Keraf (2009) emphasizes that the use of symbols enriches expression and creates multiple layers of interpretation, making the message more meaningful and memorable.

8. Metonymy

Metonymy is a type of figurative language in which a word or phrase is replaced with another that is closely related in meaning. According to Keraf (2009), metonymy is used to make language more concise and dynamic while maintaining a connection between related ideas or objects. This substitution helps create expressions that sound more natural and meaningful, as one concept stands in for another.

Through metonymy, writers and songwriters can express ideas more effectively, avoiding repetition and enhancing the artistic quality of their language. Keraf (2009) explains that this form of expression helps the audience form associations and emotional connections that go beyond literal meaning, allowing for deeper understanding of the message.

9. Litotes

Litotes is a form of figurative language that expresses an idea by denying its opposite, often as a way to show modesty or politeness. According to Keraf (2009), litotes functions as a form of understatement, softening the tone of an expression while still conveying a positive or strong meaning. It is frequently used to avoid

sounding arrogant or overly confident, giving the language a sense of humility and refinement.

This figure of speech makes communication sound gentle and balanced, helping the speaker or writer express appreciation or emotion in a subtle way. Keraf (2009) explains that litotes reflects an attitude of respect and modesty, often used to maintain harmony in expression while still delivering emotional impact.

10. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a type of figurative language in which a part is used to represent the whole, or the whole is used to represent a part. According to Keraf (2009), synecdoche creates a connection between the specific and the general, allowing language to express meaning in a more compact and symbolic way. It helps highlight certain aspects of an idea while still referring to a larger concept or entity.

Keraf (2009) classifies synecdoche into two forms: *pars pro toto*, where a part stands for the whole, and *totum pro parte*, where the whole represents a part. This figure of speech enriches language by giving it depth, unity, and symbolic resonance, helping the audience perceive meaning both literally and figuratively.

2.3 Previous Related Study

Many researchers have conducted analyses of figurative language in song lyrics, but each study differs in terms of the research object and the results of the analysis. These studies provide valuable insights into the use of linguistic theories and methods in different musical contexts.

The first study was conducted by Sinaga (2024) with the title “*An Analysis of Figurative Language in Nicole’s Album by NIKI.*” This research used a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze figurative language found in five selected songs from NIKI’s album *Nicole*, including *Backburner*, *Anaheim*, *Oceans & Engines*, *On the Drive Home*, and *Take a Chance With Me*. The study identified eight types of figurative language: alliteration, hyperbole, metaphor, simile,

symbol, personification, metonymy, and irony. The results showed that metaphor was the most dominant type, accounting for 30% of the total findings, followed by hyperbole (22%), irony (13%), symbol (9%), alliteration (11%), personification (7%), simile (7%), and metonymy (2%). The study concluded that NIKI frequently uses metaphors and hyperboles to express emotions and create vivid imagery in her lyrics.

The second study by Alfiyani (2021) titled “*Type and Meaning of the Figurative Language Found in NIKI’s Selected Songs’ Lyrics*” also employed a qualitative descriptive approach. This research analyzed three of NIKI’s songs: *Lose*, *Indigo*, and *La La Lost You*. The findings revealed several types of figurative language, including simile, metaphor, personification, irony, apostrophe, paradox, allegory, and hyperbole. Among these, metaphor appeared as the most frequently used type. The study concluded that NIKI often expresses deep emotions such as love, sadness, and longing through metaphoric language that adds poetic and symbolic value to her songwriting.

The third study, conducted by Nur Fadilla et al. (2023) and titled “*Stylistic Analysis of Figurative Language in Ariana Grande’s Selected Songs (Album Positions)*,” also used a qualitative descriptive method. The research examined various types of figurative language found in Ariana Grande’s *Positions* album, such as metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, apostrophe, metonymy, symbol, allegory, and paradox. The results showed that metaphor was the most dominant type of figurative language used throughout the album. The researchers concluded that figurative language played a significant role in enriching Ariana Grande’s lyrics and in expressing complex emotions in an artistic and aesthetic way.

Based on the three studies above, several differences can be noted. The first difference lies in the research objects: both Sinaga (2024) and Alfiyani (2021) focused on NIKI’s songs, while Nur Fadilla et al. (2023) analyzed Ariana Grande’s album. The second difference is found in the dominant types of figurative language: metaphors were the most dominant in both Sinaga (2024) and Alfiyani (2021), whereas hyperbole appeared less frequent. In contrast, the study by Nur Fadilla et

al. (2023) found that metaphors also dominated, but within a broader stylistic framework that included multiple figurative expressions. Despite these differences, all three studies agreed that figurative language enhances the emotional and artistic quality of song lyrics, allowing artists to communicate their feelings more deeply and creatively.

