

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter discusses the theory used in the title of this research. With this chapter, it made easier for the reader to understand the purpose of this thesis. The researcher divided it into several essential parts related to the topic of this thesis.

2.1 Definition of Figurative Language

Figurative language is the use of words or expressions that go beyond their literal meaning to create a particular effect, express deeper ideas, and stimulate the imagination. Rather than conveying meaning directly, figurative language relies on implied connections, symbols, and context to be understood. Laurence Perrine explains that figurative language is a form of expressive deviation that enriches meaning, strengthens emotional impact, and enhances the aesthetic value of a text (Perrine, 2021). This view is still relevant in recent studies which state that figurative language plays an important role in expressing emotions, shaping aesthetic interpretation, and enhancing communication beyond literal meaning (Marulanda-Páez & Igoa-González, 2021; Ahrens et al., 2024). Furthermore, recent research highlights that figurative language, especially metaphor and simile, involves complex cognitive and semantic processes that help readers interpret implied meanings and emotional experiences (Mathisen et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025). Perrine also classifies figurative language into several main types, such as simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, hyperbole, litotes, irony, and paradox, each of which plays a distinct role in shaping how a text is experienced and interpreted.

Geoffrey Leech reinforces this view by emphasizing that figurative language is closely linked to the concept of semantic deviation, which involves deliberate deviations from conventional language use to achieve particular stylistic effects (Leech, 2021). He argues that figurative language should not merely be viewed as a decorative or ornamental element, but

rather as a meaningful linguistic strategy that enhances both aesthetic and semantic dimensions of language. Through figurative expressions, meaning can be expanded, reinterpreted, and emotionally intensified beyond literal interpretation. Recent studies also support Leech's perspective by stating that figurative language contributes significantly to creativity, emotional expression, and deeper interpretation in literary and musical texts (Sari & Putri, 2022; Hidayat & Ananda, 2023). Furthermore, contemporary semantic research explains that figurative language enables writers and speakers to communicate abstract ideas, emotions, and complex experiences more effectively through semantic and contextual interpretation (Ahrens et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025). Therefore, figurative language plays an important role in literary works and artistic expression because it allows readers and listeners to understand meanings on a deeper interpretative level while enriching the overall communicative experience.

Recent developments in linguistics and cognitive science have led to a significant shift in how figurative language is understood. Rather than being seen merely as a stylistic or ornamental feature, it is now considered an integral part of human cognition and communication. An increasing number of scholars argue that figurative language is closely tied to the way individuals think and process meaning. Gibbs (2022), for instance, explains that figurative language reflects how people interpret and organize abstract experiences such as emotions, social relationships, and personal identity by relating them to more concrete and familiar concepts. Through this cognitive process, abstract ideas become more comprehensible and meaningful, allowing individuals to construct and communicate complex understandings more effectively.

From an aesthetic perspective, figurative language creates stylistic beauty through imagination, symbolism, and wordplay. Geoffrey Leech's theory of linguistic deviation remains relevant in recent semantic studies, which explain that figurative language produces

aesthetic effects such as beauty, irony, surprise, and uniqueness that make a text more interesting and memorable (Ahrens et al., 2024). Metaphors, personification, and hyperbole function as stylistic devices that give artistic color to a work, so that song lyrics are not only informative but also poetic.

In the context of the album *sour*, Olivia Rodrigo uses figurative language to combine these two functions. The figurative elements in her lyrics not only clarify the emotional intensity such as heartbreak, anger, or regret but also beautify the delivery of meaning through powerful imagery and aesthetic language choices. Therefore, in this study, figurative language is understood as a form of non literal expression that produces emotional and aesthetic impact, thereby enriching the listening experience and deepening the interpretation of meaning in Rodrigo's songs.

2.2 Types of Figurative Language

Figurative language is a central element in literary studies, serving as a means of conveying meaning through imaginative and non-literal expressions. Laurence Perrine explains that figurative language involves a deliberate deviation from literal meaning to produce emotional intensity, aesthetic value, and semantic richness (Perrine, 2021). This perspective remains relevant and is supported by recent studies which state that figurative language plays an important role in enhancing emotional expression, creativity, and deeper interpretation in literary works (Sari & Putri, 2022; Ahrens et al., 2024). In addition, Geoffrey Leech conceptualizes figurative language as a form of semantic deviation that carries both aesthetic and semantic functions (Leech, 1969). Recent semantic studies also emphasize that figurative expressions enable writers and speakers to communicate abstract ideas and emotions beyond literal interpretation (Li et al., 2025). Based on Perrine's classification, the following are the main types of figurative language:

1. Simile

Figurative language is a central element in literary studies, serving as a means of conveying meaning through imaginative and non-literal expressions. Laurence Perrine explains that figurative language involves a deliberate deviation from literal meaning to produce emotional intensity, aesthetic value, and semantic richness (Perrine, 2021). This perspective remains relevant and is supported by recent studies which state that figurative language plays an important role in enhancing emotional expression, creativity, and deeper interpretation in literary works (Sari & Putri, 2022; Ahrens et al., 2024). In addition, Geoffrey Leech conceptualizes figurative language as a form of semantic deviation that carries both aesthetic and semantic functions (Leech, 2021). Recent semantic studies also emphasize that figurative expressions enable writers and speakers to communicate abstract ideas and emotions beyond literal interpretation (Li et al., 2025). Based on Perrine's classification, the following are the main types of figurative language:
Example: "My love is like a red, red rose." (Robert Burns)

This sentence compares love and a red rose using the word like, which indicates an explicit comparison. It means that love is beautiful, fresh, and full of strong emotion, similar to the qualities of a red rose. A red rose is commonly associated with beauty, romance, and deep affection, and it is often used as a symbol of love. By comparing love to a red rose, the expression helps readers imagine love as something delicate yet powerful, something that can grow and also fade over time. Therefore, this expression is categorized as a simile because it clearly connects two different things through a direct comparison to convey deeper meaning and emotional effect.

1. Metaphor

Metaphor is an implicit comparison in which one entity is described as being another without using comparative words. Laurence Perrine argues that metaphor is more complex than simile because it requires deeper interpretation (Perrine, 2021). In addition, Geoffrey Leech considers metaphor as a stronger form of semantic deviation, as it directly transfers meaning between unrelated domains, thereby creating layered interpretation (Leech, 2021). Example: “Life’s but a walking shadow.” (William Shakespeare)

This sentence compares life and a walking shadow without using comparative markers such as like or as, which makes it a metaphor. It means that life is temporary, insubstantial, and lacks permanence, just like a shadow that appears briefly and disappears quickly. A shadow has no physical substance and only exists because of light, and it cannot be held or controlled. Similarly, life is described as something fragile and fleeting, suggesting that human existence is short and uncertain. Through this comparison, the speaker conveys a deeper philosophical meaning about the nature of life. Therefore, this expression is categorized as a metaphor because it establishes an implicit comparison between two different entities to express a deeper and more complex interpretation.

2. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech that attributes human characteristics to non-human entities, such as objects, animals, or abstract ideas. According to Laurence Perrine, personification enhances emotional engagement by making abstract concepts easier to understand (Perrine, 2021). Within Geoffrey Leech’s framework, this constitutes a

semantic deviation through category violation, wherein non-human entities are treated as human (Leech, 2021). Example: “The leaves were dancing in the wind.”

This sentence gives human characteristics to leaves, which are non human objects, by describing them as dancing. In reality, leaves cannot dance because dancing is an activity performed by humans. However, the movement of leaves blown by the wind is described as if they are performing a dance. It means that the leaves are moving lightly, rhythmically, and gracefully in response to the wind. By using this expression, the writer creates a vivid and imaginative image of nature, making it feel more alive and expressive. Therefore, this expression is categorized as personification because it attributes a human action to a non human entity in order to create a deeper emotional and aesthetic effect.

3. Apostrophe

Apostrophes refer to addressing an absent person, abstract idea, or inanimate object as if it were capable of responding. Laurence Perrine explains that apostrophes are used to express strong emotions and create dramatic effect (Perrine, 2021). Meanwhile, Geoffrey Leech views this as a deviation from communication norms, as it violates expected patterns of real-life interaction (Leech, 2021).

Example: "O Death, where is your sting?"

This sentence addresses Death as if it were a living being that can hear and respond. In reality, death is an abstract concept and cannot communicate or interact like a human. However, the speaker treats death as if it has power, presence, and the ability to respond to a question. It means that the speaker is expressing defiance or questioning the power of death, suggesting that death may not be as frightening or powerful as it seems. By directly addressing death, the expression creates a strong emotional and dramatic effect, making the

idea more intense and personal. Therefore, this expression is categorized as apostrophe because it involves speaking to an abstract concept as if it were a real, responsive entity in order to convey deeper emotional meaning.

4. Hyperbole (Overstatement)

Hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration used to emphasize a point or intensify emotion. Laurence Perrine highlights that hyperbole strengthens emotional expression by presenting ideas in an extreme form (Perrine, 2021). According to Geoffrey Leech, hyperbole is a semantic deviation based on overstatement, where meaning exceeds logical reality for stylistic effect (Leech, 2021).

Example: “I’ll love you till the seas run dry.”

This sentence expresses an exaggerated idea of love by stating that it will last until the seas run dry. In reality, it is impossible for the seas to completely dry up, which shows that the statement is not meant to be taken literally. It means that the speaker’s love is extremely deep, strong, and everlasting. The use of such an impossible condition emphasizes the intensity and sincerity of the feeling being expressed. By exaggerating the duration of love beyond natural limits, the speaker creates a powerful emotional effect. Therefore, this expression is categorized as hyperbole because it uses extreme exaggeration to convey a stronger and more impactful meaning.

5. Litotes (Understatement)

Litotes is a form of understatement in which an idea is expressed by negating its opposite, often to create a subtle or ironic effect. Laurence Perrine states that litotes can

soften expression or create emphasis through indirectness (Perrine, 2021). In Geoffrey Leech's terms, it represents semantic deviation through understatement, reducing the intensity of meaning to achieve stylistic nuance (Leech, 2021).

Example: "I am not unaware of the issue."

This sentence expresses the idea of being aware by using a double negative form, not unaware, instead of directly stating aware. In literal terms, the sentence seems to reduce the strength of the statement, but in fact it implies that the speaker clearly understands the issue. This indirect way of expressing meaning creates a more subtle and nuanced effect compared to a direct statement. It means that the speaker is emphasizing awareness while maintaining a polite or less forceful tone. By avoiding direct affirmation, the speaker softens the expression but still conveys the intended meaning effectively. Therefore, this expression is categorized as litotes because it uses understatement through negation to express meaning in a more indirect and stylistically refined way.

6. Irony

Irony occurs when there is a contrast between the literal meaning of words and their intended meaning. Laurence Perrine emphasizes that irony requires the reader to infer meaning beyond the surface (Perrine, 2021). Geoffrey Leech categorizes irony as a form of semantic inversion, where meaning is understood through the contradiction between appearance and reality (Leech, 2021).

Example: "Brutus was an honorable man." (William Shakespeare)

This sentence appears to describe Brutus as an honorable person based on its literal meaning. However, in the context of the speech, the statement actually implies the opposite,

suggesting that Brutus is not honorable. The speaker repeatedly uses this expression to create doubt and highlight Brutus's betrayal of Julius Caesar. It means that the true intention of the statement is to criticize rather than to praise. By presenting a meaning that contrasts with reality, the speaker invites the audience to interpret the deeper implication behind the words. Therefore, this expression is categorized as irony because it involves a contradiction between the literal meaning and the intended meaning, creating a more complex and impactful message.

7. Paradox

Paradox is a statement that appears contradictory but contains a deeper truth. According to Laurence Perrine, paradox challenges logical reasoning and invites deeper interpretation (Perrine, 2021). Geoffrey Leech views paradox as a form of semantic deviation that disrupts logical expectations while ultimately revealing meaningful insight (Leech, 2021).

Example: "I must be cruel only to be kind." (William Shakespeare)

This sentence presents two opposite ideas, cruel and kind, which seem contradictory at first. Logically, cruelty and kindness are different and cannot occur at the same time. However, the statement suggests that being cruel in a certain situation can lead to a kind or positive outcome. It means that an action that appears harsh or painful may actually be necessary to achieve something good in the long term. For example, telling the truth or making a difficult decision may hurt someone temporarily but ultimately benefit them. By combining two conflicting ideas, the sentence encourages deeper reflection to understand its true meaning. Therefore, this expression is categorized as a paradox because it contains a contradiction that reveals a deeper and meaningful truth beyond its surface interpretation.

2.3 Basic concepts of Leech's semantic theory

Basic concepts of Geoffrey Leech's semantic theory refer to the idea that meaning in language is not only literal but also influenced by context, emotion, and usage. Leech explains that a word or sentence can have multiple layers of meaning depending on how it is used (Leech, 2021). He classifies meaning into seven types: conceptual meaning (literal meaning), connotative meaning (associative meaning), social meaning (related to social context), affective meaning (speaker's feelings), reflected meaning (double or ambiguous meaning), collocative meaning (meaning from word combinations), and thematic meaning (meaning from sentence structure). These concepts help readers understand language more deeply, especially in texts such as song lyrics where meaning is often implied rather than directly stated. Recent semantic studies also support the relevance of Leech's theory in analyzing implied meaning, emotional expression, and contextual interpretation in literary and musical texts (Li et al., 2025; Ahrens et al., 2024).

1. Conceptual Meaning

Conceptual meaning is the basic or literal meaning of a word as defined in a dictionary. This meaning is objective, logical and is not influenced by emotions or specific contexts. For example, the word 'home' conceptually means 'a place where someone lives.'

2. Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning is an additional meaning that arises from associations with specific feelings, values or experiences. This meaning can vary depending on the individual or culture. For example, the word 'home' may have connotations of comfort, warmth or family.

3. Social Meaning

Social meaning relates to the use of language in specific social contexts, such as the level of formality, social status, or the relationship between speakers. For example, the use of the word “father” (formal) and “dad” (informal) illustrates a difference in social meaning.

4. Affective Meaning

Affective meaning relates to the speaker’s feelings or emotions conveyed through language. This meaning reflects the speaker’s attitude towards something or someone. For example, the sentence “I’m really disappointed in you” conveys the emotion of disappointment.

5. Reflected Meaning

Reflected meaning occurs when a single word has more than one meaning, and one of those meanings influences the interpretation of the others. It is usually associated with ambiguity or specific associations. For example, the word ‘cock’ can mean ‘rooster’ but also has another, more sensitive meaning.

6. Collocative Meaning

Collocative meaning arises from the tendency for a word to be paired with another word in everyday usage. For example, the word “handsome” is more commonly used to describe men, whilst “beautiful” is used to describe women.

7. Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning relates to the way a message is structured or emphasis within a sentence. Changes in sentence structure can affect the focus or emphasis of the meaning.

For example:

- a. “John broke the window”

This sentence uses the active voice, so the main focus is on “John” as the agent. In other words, the speaker wants to emphasize who performed the action.

- b. “The window was broken by John”

This sentence uses the passive voice, so the focus shifts to ‘the window’ as the object affected. In this case, the speaker places greater emphasis on the event or outcome (the window breaking), whilst the agent becomes secondary information.

So, although the meaning is literally the same, the difference in structure results in a different emphasis on the information, and this is what is referred to as thematic meaning.

2.4 Song as a Form of Modern Literature

Song lyrics are widely regarded as a form of modern literary expression that merges aesthetic language with rhythm, sound, and emotional resonance. In recent literary studies, lyrics are increasingly recognized as a hybrid genre that combines poetic devices with musical structure to create meaning. According to Bennett (2022), song lyrics function as a contemporary form of poetic discourse that emphasizes personal voice, emotional depth, and

stylistic creativity. Similarly, Griffiths (2023) argues that lyrics share fundamental characteristics with poetry, such as imagery, symbolism, and figurative language, which contribute to their artistic and interpretative value. These perspectives demonstrate that song lyrics possess stylistic and expressive qualities comparable to traditional literary forms.

From a contemporary linguistic perspective, songs are also recognized as authentic cultural texts that reflect identity, emotion, and social experience. As discussed by Baker (2021), song lyrics serve as a medium through which individuals construct and express personal and social identities. Furthermore, Machin (2024) emphasizes that popular music lyrics function as multimodal texts, where language, sound, and cultural context interact to produce layered meanings. In this sense, Olivia Rodrigo's *sour* album can be understood as a modern poetic narrative that articulates themes of adolescence, heartbreak, and self discovery through the creative use of figurative language. Thus, song lyrics hold significant value as a contemporary literary form suitable for stylistic, semantic, and emotional analysis.

Released on May 21, 2021, *sour* marks the debut studio album of Olivia Rodrigo under Geffen Records. The album was written during Rodrigo's late adolescence and largely produced during the COVID-19 pandemic, reflecting an intimate and emotionally driven creative process. Rodrigo collaborated closely with Dan Nigro, whose production style emphasizes minimalism and emotional authenticity, allowing the lyrical content to remain central.

Recent analyses (e.g., Johnson, 2022; Smith, 2023) note that *sour* represents a shift toward confessional songwriting in contemporary pop music, characterized by raw emotional expression and narrative driven lyrics. The album was initially conceptualized as an extended play (EP) but later developed into a full length album as Rodrigo continued composing songs centered on heartbreak, insecurity, and identity formation.

The release of the lead single drivers license achieved unprecedented global success, breaking streaming records and reaching number one in multiple countries. According to IFPI (2022) and Rolling Stone reports (2021), the song's commercial impact significantly increased anticipation for the album. Upon its release, sour received widespread critical acclaim for its lyrical depth, emotional honesty, and stylistic versatility (Williams, 2022; Brown, 2024). Critics particularly highlight Rodrigo's effective use of figurative language in conveying complex adolescent emotions.

This historical and cultural background reinforces sour as a significant modern literary artifact. Its integration of emotional expression, cultural relevance, and figurative language makes it a compelling object for stylistic and semantic analysis, particularly in examining how meaning and emotion are constructed in contemporary song lyrics.

2.5 Previous Studies

Several studies have analyzed figurative language in song lyrics to reveal the relationship between linguistic expression and emotional impact. Rizky (2021) examined the types and meanings of figurative language in Taylor Swift's Folklore album, identifying metaphor and hyperbole as dominant devices that represent emotional struggles. Similarly, Rahmawati (2020) analyzed Ariana Grande's Thank U, Next and found that simile and personification were often used to express healing and empowerment. In a different scope, Wahyuni (2019) explored figurative language in Adele's 21, concluding that lyrical emotion is shaped by metaphorical constructs related to love and loss.

Recent research, such as that of Nuraini (2022), connected linguistic style with sociocultural context in Billie Eilish's Happier Than Ever, emphasizing that pop lyrics mirror generational identity through figurative patterns. However, most of these studies have focused primarily on identifying types and meanings of figurative language without exploring their

pedagogical implications in language learning. Therefore, this study extends the discussion by not only classifying the figurative language in Olivia Rodrigo's *sour* but also analyzing how these linguistic features can be utilized as authentic materials in English teaching, particularly to enhance students' understanding of non literal meaning.

Building upon these classical theories, Agustina and Mustikawati (2024) analyzed figurative language in BTS's *Make It Right* and *Permission to Dance* using Perrine's and Leech's frameworks. They identified six types of figurative language: metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, and idiom. Their findings reveal that metaphor, personification, and hyperbole are the most dominant forms, functioning to express internal emotional conflict and collective human experience in music. This supports Perrine's notion that figurative language intensifies emotional engagement between text and listener.

Similarly, Putra et al. (2024) conducted an analysis of figurative language in selected songs by Niki Zefanya. Using a combined stylistic and semantic approach, they identified five main types of figurative language: metaphor, hyperbole, simile, personification, and symbolism. Their results show that these figures represent themes of youth identity, love, and self reflection, proving that figurative devices remain essential in contemporary song lyrics to convey personal and cultural meaning.