

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents theoretical framework and previous studies.

A. Theoretical Framework

This research project aims to delve into the intricate world of figurative language within Taylor Swift's album "folklore", focusing specifically on the use of figurative language. By analyzing these literary devices, the project seeks to uncover the deeper meanings and layers of significance embedded within Swift's songwriting.

1. Pragmatics

The lyrics in Taylor Swift's Folklore contain various types of speech acts that are used to deliver messages to listeners. Communication can take place through verbal as well as nonverbal expressions. In pragmatics, communication is not limited to the literal meaning of words, since meaning is also affected by context, intention, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Pragmatics explores how context, social cues, shared knowledge, and the speaker's intentions contribute to the meaning of an utterance. It is a study which belief is what is communicated is more than what is said (Maulana & Sugiyartati, 2024). Pragmatics as "the study of using language in communication, particularly the relationship between sentences and the contexts, situations in which they are used. The utterances that the speakers produce in communication contain deeper sense than the actual meaning of the

words or phrases themselves Setyawati, Tusino, & Dewi (2024). It is important to remember that every word we use when we speak has meaning. Song lyrics express someone about something that has been seen, heard, or experienced. To express his experience, the songwriter chooses the proper diction or word choice to have its characteristics in the lyrics without forgetting the message that will be conveyed to the listener.

According to Nurindahsari (2019) stating that “lyrics are expressions of the feelings of the creator or poet; these lyrics are currently known as poetry or rhymes, namely literary works that contain the expression (outpouring) of personal feelings that prioritize how to express them.” As a communication medium, songs are often used as intermediaries to invite sympathy about current circumstances or phenomena and imaginative stories. Jan van Luxemburg in Hidayat (2014) also stated that the definition of poetry texts includes literary types and proverbial expressions, advertising messages, political slogans, pop songs, and prayers. “*Prayer*” the words used in song lyrics are not like everyday language and have an ambiguous and expressive nature, causing language to influence, persuade and ultimately change the reader’s attitude. Pragmatics in linguistics refers to how context influences the interpretation of meaning in communication.

2. Language Style

The language style employed in Taylor Swift’s *Folklore* album is distinguished by the extensive use of various figurative language devices that enhance the emotional depth, imagery, and overall meaning of the lyrics. According

to Gustsa and Laili (2022), the album incorporates numerous figurative elements, including metaphors, similes, personification, verbal irony, hyperbole, paradoxes, litotes. Among these, symbolism emerges as the most prominent stylistic feature, frequently utilized to convey abstract concepts and deeper meanings beyond the literal interpretation of the words. This invites listeners to engage with the songs on multiple interpretive levels. Additionally, metaphors and similes are extensively employed to create vivid and imaginative comparisons that articulate complex emotions and experiences in a poetic manner. Personification further enriches the lyrical narratives by attributing human qualities to abstract ideas or inanimate objects, thereby enhancing relatability and emotional resonance. Hyperbole and verbal irony contribute to the dramatic and emotional intensity of the songs, reinforcing the storytelling aspect of the lyrics.

The diverse application of these figurative language styles not only embellishes the lyrics aesthetically but also functions as an indirect communicative medium, fostering a profound connection between the artist and her audience (Santika & Syafryadin, 2023). Through this, shared emotional experiences and deeper engagement with themes such as love, loss, memory, and identity are facilitated throughout the album. In summary, Taylor Swift's language style in *Folklore* skillfully integrates poetic devices with narrative techniques to produce songs that are artistically sophisticated and emotionally compelling (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003).

3. Figurative Language

Figurative language refers to the use of words, phrases, or expressions in a way that deviates from their conventional, literal meaning to achieve a particular effect, convey complex ideas, or evoke emotion. According to Arp and Johnson (2005), figurative language is “a term that refers to language that conveys concepts beyond the literal sense of the words.” This means that figurative language is not intended to be interpreted word-for-word, but rather invites the reader or listener to find deeper or symbolic meanings. It is important to remember that every word we use when we speak has meaning. Song lyrics express someone about something that has been seen, heard, or experienced. To express his experience, the songwriter chooses the proper diction or word choice to have its characteristics in the lyrics without forgetting the message that will be conveyed to the listener. McKenzie (2016) further explains that figurative language involves the use of expressions that communicate ideas beyond their factual meanings, often imparting a sense of beauty and focusing on the significance of what is being conveyed. Amalia et al. (2021) note that figurative language can influence how people think about and perceive the world, as it often carries hidden messages or insights not immediately apparent in literal language.

Perrine (1969) states that figurative language is language that cannot be interpreted literally because it involves imaginative comparison or symbolic meaning. Perrine explains that figurative expressions are used to clarify meaning, intensify emotions, and add beauty to literary works.

According to Keraf (2009), figurative language is a style of language that conveys meaning indirectly through comparison, exaggeration, or symbolic expression. Keraf emphasizes that figurative language is an important stylistic element that strengthens the expressive power of literary texts.

Abrams (1999) defines figurative language as “a conspicuous departure from what users of a language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect.” This means figurative language intentionally diverges from the literal and conventional meanings or structures of language to create a distinct, often more profound or evocative, significance. According to Abrams, figures of speech are not merely ornamental poetic devices but integral elements indispensable to the functioning of all modes of discourse. He further explains that figurative language encompasses various types including metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, synecdoche, onomatopoeia, allusion, symbolism, metonymy, and irony.

According to Kennedy and Gioia in the book *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing* (2007), figurative language refers to language that goes beyond the literal meaning of words in order to create a more vivid and imaginative description. It helps readers understand abstract ideas through creative comparisons and symbolic expressions.

In literary analysis, figurative language plays an important role in interpreting the deeper meaning of a text. By using figurative expressions, writers can create imagery, emphasize emotions, and provide aesthetic value to their works. Kennedy

classifies several types of figurative language commonly used in literary works. In this research, the figurative language analyzed includes metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, litotes, paradox, and irony.

Types of Figurative Language According to Kennedy:

a. Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly compares two different things without using comparison words such as *like* or *as*. According to Kennedy and Gioia (2007), metaphor states that one thing is another thing in order to highlight similarities between them. Metaphors are commonly used in literature to describe abstract concepts through more familiar objects or experiences. By using metaphor, writers can create deeper meaning and stronger emotional impact.

Example:

"Time is a thief."

In this sentence, time is compared to a thief because it seems to "steal" moments from people's lives.

b. Simile

A simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using comparison words such as *like*, *as*, or *similar to*. According to Kennedy and Gioia (2007), similes make descriptions clearer by linking unfamiliar ideas with familiar ones. Similes help readers visualize an idea more easily because the comparison is stated explicitly.

Example:

“Her smile is like the sun.”

This simile compares a smile to the sun to emphasize warmth and brightness.

c. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech that gives human characteristics to non-human objects, animals, or abstract ideas. Kennedy and Gioia (2007) explain that personification allows writers to make descriptions more vivid and expressive.

Through personification, objects or natural phenomena are described as if they have human abilities such as thinking, speaking, or feeling.

Example:

“The wind whispered through the trees.”

In this example, the wind is described as whispering, which is a human action.

d. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that uses deliberate exaggeration to emphasize an idea or feeling. According to Kennedy and Gioia (2007), hyperbole is not meant to be taken literally but is used to create strong emphasis or emotional effect.

Hyperbole often appears in everyday speech as well as in literary works.

Example:

“I have told you a million times.”

The speaker does not literally mean one million times, but uses exaggeration to stress repetition.

e. Litotes

Litotes is a figure of speech that expresses an idea by using a negative statement to emphasize the opposite meaning. Kennedy and Gioia (2007) explain that litotes often creates understatement by denying the contrary of what is meant.

This figure of speech is commonly used to express modesty or politeness.

Example:

“That test was not easy.”

This statement actually means that the test was very difficult.

f. Paradox

A paradox is a statement that appears contradictory or impossible but actually reveals a deeper truth. According to Kennedy and Gioia (2007), paradox invites readers to think more carefully about the meaning behind the statement.

Paradox is often used to highlight complex ideas or realities.

Example:

“Less is more.”

Although it seems contradictory, the statement suggests that simplicity can sometimes be more effective than complexity.

g. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is different from, or opposite to, the literal meaning of the words. Kennedy and Gioia (2007) state that irony is often used to create humor, criticism, or emphasis.

Irony can occur in several forms, including verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony.

Example:

Saying “*What a beautiful day*” during a heavy storm.

In this example, the speaker means the opposite of what is stated.

B. Previous Studies

A thesis by Shaw (2021) delves into the intricate world of storytelling and character development within Taylor Swift’s albums *folklore*. It examines how Swift utilizes various song structures, both traditional and experimental, to effectively convey narratives. The thesis also explores the interconnectedness of storylines across the two albums, demonstrating how Swift creates a connected “Folklore” universe with recurring characters and themes. Furthermore, it labelling how Swift crafts distinct and relatable characters, both fictional and based on her own life, through her lyrics. Finally, the thesis examines how Swift portrays herself as a character within the albums, reflecting on her experiences with fame, relationships, and public scrutiny. In essence, the thesis goes beyond simply analyzing the lyrics and explores how Taylor Swift’s song writing transcends

personal expression to create intricate narratives and characters that resonate deeply with listeners.

Pristianingrum and Damayanti (2022) conducted a qualitative study focusing on the pragmatic dimension of semiotics, the authors analyzed the relationship between the signifier (the form of the words) and the signified (the meaning or concept) within the song's lyrics. The authors also discuss the broader context of music as a form of communication, referencing previous literature that treats song lyrics as a type of poetry (Saraswati, 2019) and emphasizes the expressive and persuasive power of language in music. They note that while semantics and syntax are important in understanding meaning, the pragmatic dimension is crucial for interpreting how songs affect listeners in real-life situations and social contexts. Despite these contributions, Pristianingrum and Damayanti identify a need for further research on how motivational messages in song lyrics are interpreted by diverse audiences and how these interpretations influence behavior and social attitudes. Their study provides a foundation for examining the practical effects of song lyrics, suggesting that future research could expand by including different genres, cultural contexts, or audience reception studies.

Harrison and Ringrow's (2022) study builds on these foundations by analyzing how disnarration operates in Swift's *folklore* and *evermore*. They argue that disnarration strategies not only characterize the albums' narrators and establish complex narrator-narratee relationships, but also invite listeners to adopt a participatory role in meaning-making. This approach extends previous stylistic and narratological research by focusing on the linguistic and interpretive mechanisms

of disnarration in contemporary songwriting. Despite these advances, there remains a need for further research into how disnarration and other narrative strategies in song lyrics shape listener engagement, emotional response, and participatory interpretation-especially in the context of popular music that blurs the boundaries between fiction and autobiography.

Gustsa & Laili (2022) stands out for its comprehensive identification and classification of figurative language within the album. The study found a diverse range of figurative expressions, including metaphor, allegory, metonymy, verbal irony, hyperbole, personification, symbol, paradox, simile, synecdoche, and understatement. The frequency of each type was also documented, with symbols and metaphors being particularly prominent. The authors argue that the use of figurative language and stylistic devices significantly enhances the artistic quality and depth of song lyrics. According to their findings, such language not only makes the songs more engaging and unique but also encourages listeners to reflect more deeply on the intended messages and meanings behind the lyrics. Importantly, Gustsa and Laili note that their study is the first to specifically analyze figurative language in Taylor Swift's *Folklore* album, distinguishing it from prior research that focused on different artists or albums. Their work provides a valuable foundation for further studies on figurative language in contemporary music, particularly in albums that have not yet been the subject of detailed linguistic analysis.

A relevant study for the analysis of figurative language in song lyrics is the research conducted by Bouti et al. (2023), entitled *Figurative Language in Taylor*

Swift's Songs (A Semantic Analysis). This study focused on identifying and analyzing the types and meanings of figurative language present in two songs from Taylor Swift's 1989 album, namely "Blank Space" and "New Romantics". The findings revealed seven types of figurative language in the analyzed songs: metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, irony, and paradox. Among these, symbolism was found to be the most frequently used, followed by metaphor and simile. The study also identified five types of semantic meanings in the lyrics: connotative, affective, social, conceptual, and collocative meanings, with affective and social meanings appearing most often. The study concluded that Taylor Swift's lyrics are rich in figurative language, which serves to convey deeper and more varied meanings to listeners. The use of figurative language not only enhances the aesthetic quality of the songs but also embeds implied messages and emotions that require interpretation beyond the literal level.