

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the writer outlines five key topics related to the study. These topics include the background of the study, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the scope and limitation of the study.

1.1. Background of the Study

Figurative language is a way of using words or expressions that go beyond their literal interpretation (Leech, 1981). It does not only explain ideas in a simple sense, but also works to perform several functions, such as provide imaginative pleasure, carry additional imagery, adding emotional intensity, and say a lot in a brief compass (Perrine & Johnson, 2017). This type of language is particularly impactful in its ability to communicate complex ideas in a creative and memorable way. As Perrine and Johnson (2017) describe, figurative language allows speakers and writers to express emotional depth and intricate concepts that literal language might struggle to capture. Common forms of figurative language include metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, irony, synecdoche, allusion, metonymy, and paradox.

Figurative language plays a crucial role in analysing song lyrics, by allowing artists to deepen the emotional resonance of their messages, engaging listeners both intellectually and emotionally. By utilizing figurative language, artists can effectively convey abstract concepts and personal experiences, providing nuanced interpretations that literal language alone might fail to achieve. This makes figurative language an important tool for analysing song lyrics, where meaning often transcends the basic words used, offering layers of emotional and symbolic significance.

Figurative language allows for the communication of complex concepts that surpass literal interpretation and evokes deeper emotional reactions by relying on connotations. This illustrates two main functions of figurative language by Perrine and Johnson (2017), first, it helps in expressing complex ideas that literal language

cannot capture easily, and second, it works to add emotional intensity that makes the language more engaging. Building on this idea, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out that figurative language not only influences communication but also shapes mental processes by humanizing abstract ideas. Similarly, Kövecses (2010) highlights how figurative language enables the expression of complex ideas in profound ways. This shows that figurative language functions to express complex ideas concisely, while still keeping their depth, making them more memorable and powerful for the audience.

Furthermore, Moon (2018) explains that figurative language enriches texts by allowing multiple interpretations that vary based on the reader's cultural and personal background, increasing the work's impact and reach. This demonstrates the function of figurative language in giving imaginative pleasure and creating vivid imagery, since readers can enjoy different layers of interpretation while forming personal connections with the text.

This dynamic use of figurative language is evident in Phoebe Bridgers' songwriting, where her implementation of vivid imagery enables listeners to connect with the lyrics in diverse ways, reflecting their own experiences and emotions. In this context, figurative language functions to create vivid imagery that stimulates the imagination, while also adding emotional intensity to the messages that Phoebe Bridgers' conveys. As a result, Phoebe Bridgers' song lyrics achieve both global appeal and emotional depth, resonating with audiences on a deeply personal level. This confirms that the functions of figurative language are central in Phoebe Bridgers' songwriting, making the song lyrics more impactful and relatable for listeners.

This use of figurative language to convey deeper functions is not exclusive to Phoebe Bridgers' song lyrics; similar figurative language can also be found in the works of other contemporary artists. For example, Santika and Syafryadin (2023) analyse a metaphor in Taylor Swift's *Snow on the Beach* from her album *Midnights*, as follows:

“Life is emotionally abusive”

This metaphor suggests that life can inflict emotional pain and hardship on individuals, evoking a sense of struggle and suffering. By comparing life to an abuser, it highlights the challenges and difficulties people often face, which can leave them feeling hurt or overwhelmed. This figurative language emphasizes the harsh realities of existence and serves as a reminder of the emotional impact that life's experiences can take on individuals. It underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing these emotional challenges in order to seek healing and support.

Song lyrics are a powerful way for artists to use figurative language, enabling them to express complex feelings and stories. Phoebe Bridgers is a great example of this, using her lyrical talent to deeply engage listeners. Phoebe Bridgers' music often reflects personal experiences and themes about existence, encouraging listeners to explore their own emotions. As Barradas and Sakka (2022) explain, song serve as a creative way for artists to share emotions and experiences, using figurative language to enhance emotional impact.

This is especially clear in Phoebe Bridgers' debut album, *Stranger in the Alps* (2017), where she shows her skilful use of figurative language throughout the tracks. The album not only highlights her unique voice but also offers rich lyrics filled with metaphors and strong imagery, making it a great example of how figurative language can deepen emotional impact in music. Moreover, Yang and Lee (2009) suggest that looking at song lyrics for emotional signals can provide helpful insights into how emotions are expressed and understood, supporting the idea that figurative language in music can have significant effects on our feelings.

Recent trends in the music industry, particularly within the indie genre, have showcased the increasing use of figurative language to express complex emotions and abstract concepts. The indie genre has experienced a surge in popularity over the past decade, with platforms like Spotify reporting increased streaming numbers for indie artists (Catapult, 2023). This trend is especially evident in the work of

musicians like Phoebe Bridgers, whose album *Stranger in the Alps* (2017) has gained attention for its lyrical and figurative depth. The growing interest among listeners in analysing song lyrics, especially those rich in figurative language, reflects a broader shift where music serves not only as entertainment but also as a tool for introspection and emotional expression. As Lambotte (2022) argued, songs in the indie genre often evoke powerful emotional responses, encouraging deeper reflection on personal experiences. This change in listener behaviour suggests that music has evolved into more than just a source of enjoyment; it has become a medium for individuals to connect with complex emotions, supported by the figurative depth woven into the lyrics.

Based on the explanation above, the writer is interested in analysing the types and functions of figurative language in Phoebe Bridgers' song lyrics from her album *Stranger in the Alps* (2017). Each song carries a unique message for listeners, making the album an ideal subject for analysis. In addition, the songs are both meaningful and enjoyable to listen to, featuring poetic elements that provide many opportunities to identify different forms of figurative language. Through this analysis, the writer expects to gain a deeper understanding of how figurative language is used to convey emotions and meanings in song lyrics, as well as to contribute to the study of figurative language in contemporary music.

1.2. Research Questions

This study examines figurative language in the song lyrics of ten songs from Phoebe Bridgers' album *Stranger in the Alps* (2017). Based on the background of this study, this study aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the types of figurative language found in Phoebe Bridgers' album *Stranger in the Alps* (2017)?
2. What are the functions of figurative language found in Phoebe Bridgers' album *Stranger in the Alps* (2017)?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the types of figurative language found in Phoebe Bridgers' song lyrics from the album *Stranger in the Alps* (2017).
2. To analyse the functions of figurative language found in Phoebe Bridgers' song lyrics from the album *Stranger in the Alps* (2017).

1.4. Significances of the Study

There are two main significances of this study, which include theoretical and practical significance.

1. Theoretical Significance

The writer aims for this study to enhance readers' understanding of the types of figurative language and their functions in the song lyrics from *Stranger in the Alps* (2017) album by Phoebe Bridgers. This study targets to add to the current body of understanding in the realm of linguistics, especially figurative language analysis in song lyrics. By using figurative language theories to contemporary song lyrics, this study expands theoretical frameworks into modern circumstances, highlighting the importance of linguistic theories in understanding creative works across regular literary works.

2. Practical Significance

This study is expected to provide practical benefits for teachers, students, the general public, and future researchers. For teachers, this study may serve as a teaching reference to explain figurative language through song lyrics in literature and language classes. For students, especially those in the English department, this study offers clear examples of figurative language types and functions that can support learning and critical analysis. For the general public, particularly listeners of Phoebe Bridgers' songs, this study helps increase understanding and appreciation

of the figurative and emotional meanings in song lyrics. In addition, this study may serve as a reference for researchers and thesis writers by providing a framework for analysing figurative language in song lyrics for future studies.

1.5.Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is figurative language. Building on the background provided, this study focuses on identifying the types of figurative language and analysing their functions found in the lyrics of songs from *Stranger in the Alps* (2017) album by Phoebe Bridgers. Specifically, the analysis is limited to the song lyrics that illustrate the types and functions of figurative language, as identified and analysed using Perrine and Johnson (2017) theory. As one of the eleven tracks on the album is purely instrumental and contains no lyrics, it is excluded from the analysis. Therefore, a total of ten lyrical songs will be analysed in this study. By narrowing the focus to these aspects, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how figurative language is employed to convey the types and functions within Phoebe Bridgers' song lyrics.