

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter consists of the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study. This chapter mostly introduces the general understanding of the rationale of this thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

A Language is very important in conveying messages to others such as communication with family, friends, society, and others. In human life, communication is vital because it can define the bonds that exist between individuals and other groups (Dwiwiyanto et al., 2021). Language is not merely a tool for communication but a powerful instrument for expressing emotions, evaluations, and building relationships. In the realm of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), this interpersonal function of language is explored through Appraisal Theory. Developed by Martin & White (2005), Appraisal Theory provides a framework to analyze how speakers or writers use language to express feelings (Affect), judge character (Judgement), and value things (Appreciation).

Song lyrics, as a form of literary discourse, are rich with appraisal resources. They serve as a medium for songwriters to project their inner world and construct relationships with the listeners and the subjects of their songs. One of the most significant musical works in recent years that heavily relies on emotional storytelling is Olivia Rodrigo's debut album, *Sour* (2021). The album broke global records and resonated deeply with audiences primarily because of its raw and honest depiction of relationships.

According to Yuningsih (2018), lyrics have a significant contribution to the song because with lyrics, the meaning of a song can be conveyed. The lyrics of a song are usually crafted to have both explicit and implicit meaning to make it interesting. But sometimes, the meaning of a song can be interpreted differently by

the listener from the actual meaning that the singer wants to convey (Purnamasari, 2018).

For this reason, this study chose a song to be analyzed for its meaning so that people can understand the meaning behind the song and what message the singer wants to convey to the listener. By understanding the meaning of a song, people can have similar emotions and feelings to the singer. It is common for a song to have similarities to someone's life because songs can be related to phenomena, events, and things that a person has lived through in his life. So, the singer wants to tell the events, emotions, and feelings that have been experienced through the song created with a series of tones and rhythms that adjust to the atmosphere of meaning in the song.

Appraisal is one of three major discourse semantic resources construing interpersonal meaning (Martin & White, 2005). In its most basic form, it is the assertion that the evaluation (appraisal) of circumstances and events produces feelings (Roseman and Smith, 2015). The appraisal system is the development of the Systemic Functional Linguistics theory in the realm of interpersonal meaning (Pusparini et al., 2017). In addition, Hashemi & Mahdavi-rad (2023) state that the linguistic tools that authors and speakers employ to convey their thoughts on communicative events and to convey their assessments of other people's attitudes during interactions are the subject of appraisal theory. The appraisal system is a theory that can be used to analyze different kinds of texts, including narrative texts, song lyrics, and speeches. It helps people understand how language is used to express feelings, opinions, and evaluations. One of the main aspects of the appraisal system is attitude, which is used to identify emotional expressions, judgments of people's behavior, and evaluations of things or events.

According to Martin & White (2005), attitude has 3 categories that can contribute to assessing emotions and responses to things, namely affect, judgment, and appreciation. The affect aspect is the aspect related to the formation of emotional reactions. The second is judgment. The judgment aspect is an aspect related to judging something, and how our attitude is formed from a behavior. The

third is appreciation. The appreciation aspect is concerned with interpreting the value contained in a text.

Besides attitude, appraisal theory also consists of engagement and graduation. Engagement deals with how speakers or writers position their voices toward other voices or alternative viewpoints in the text. It shows whether the speaker presents an opinion as a personal statement, agrees with other voices, denies, or opens space for different interpretations. Meanwhile, graduation refers to how the strength or intensity of evaluation is adjusted. It can amplify or soften feelings, judgments, and appreciations through words that indicate degree, intensity, or quantity. Therefore, engagement and graduation support attitude in showing how evaluation is expressed more strongly, weakly, openly, or firmly in a text (Martin & White, 2005).

Therefore, appraisal theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how language expresses emotions, evaluations, and interpersonal meanings in a text, including song lyrics. This study analyzes the selected song using appraisal theory to identify how attitudes, emotions, and evaluations are expressed through the lyrics. Appraisal theory is used because it helps explain the meanings conveyed by the songwriter, particularly in expressing feelings and opinions. The song chosen for this study is by Olivia Rodrigo, a well-known singer who is highly popular among today's youth. Her songs are often appreciated for their emotional depth and relatable themes, such as love, heartbreak, self-identity, and personal experiences. Therefore, Olivia Rodrigo's song is considered suitable for analysis because the lyrics contain various emotional expressions that can be examined through the appraisal framework.

In order to strengthen the foundation of this study, the researcher reviews several previous studies related to appraisal theory, particularly those focusing on the analysis of song lyrics. Reviewing previous studies is important to identify similarities, differences, and research gaps in the existing literature. The first study come from Suhartini & Nugroho (2023), entitled "*Appraisal Realization in To All the Boys I Loved Before Novel and its Indonesian Translation*" which examined the types of attitudinal systems, their realization, translation techniques, and

equivalence in the source text (ST) and target text (TT). Using Martin and White's (2005) appraisal theory, the study found that all attitudinal systems, such as affect, judgment, and appreciation, appeared in both texts, with affect as the most dominant category, especially in expressions of unhappiness and insecurity. The study also revealed that attitudinal systems were mostly realized through inscribed expressions. Then, Tiyas et al. (2019), entitled "*An Attitudinal Analysis of Talak Tilu Song from the Perspective of Appraisal Theory*" which analyzed the emotional expressions in the *Talak Tilu* song using appraisal theory by Martin and White (2005). The study found that negative affect was the most dominant attitude, while only one positive affect was identified. In terms of judgment, the song mainly expressed negative judgment. The findings revealed that the song reflects emotions such as melancholy, despair, frustration, and disharmony in household relationships.

Based on the previous studies above, it can be seen that Appraisal Theory has been widely used to analyze various texts, including song lyrics. However, limited studies have specifically examined the representation of relationships through the Attitude system in a contemporary music album, particularly Olivia Rodrigo's SOUR album. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the types and functions of the Attitude system in representing relationship experiences in five selected songs from the SOUR album.

Olivia Rodrigo, whose full name is Olivia Isabel Rodrigo, is a popular American singer-songwriter known for her emotionally expressive songs about love, heartbreak, and personal experiences. She was born on February 20, 2003. She is widely known for her role in the Disney series *High School Musical: The Series*, and her debut album *Sour* (2021). Her early career began her acting at the age of 6 and appeared in an Old Navy commercial in 2010. Acting Her first leading role was in the film *An American Girl: Grace Stirs Up Success* (2015), and she played Paige Olvera in the Disney Channel series *Bizaardvark*. *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series*: Played Nini Salazar-Roberts and gained wider recognition after writing the song "All I Want" for the show's soundtrack. After

that, her music career took off. She signed with Interscope Records and Geffen Records in 2020.

Then, she released her debut single, “Driver’s License,” in January 2021, which broke streaming records and debuted at number 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. She released her debut album, *Sour*, in May 2021. The *Sour* set a record as the most-streamed album in a single week by a female artist in Spotify history, with over 385 million global streams at the time. In May 2024, the album became the first album by a female artist to reach 16 billion streams on Spotify. The album received seven nominations at the 64th Grammy Awards, including Album of the Year, and won three of them. The album’s *SOUR* was heavily inspired by her personal experiences, such as a breakup.

Olivia Rodrigo’s songs are an interesting subject for this thesis because they have a large number of listeners, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, making them the most popular Olivia Rodrigo songs among her other songs. However, other researchers rarely use attitude system theory to analyze Olivia Rodrigo’s songs, even though these songs are the most popular based on the highest number of listeners among other songs on Spotify. Therefore, this could be a gap in this research. The author is interested in analyzing the songs in this study so that listeners do not misinterpret the meaning the singer intends to convey.

Additionally, the song has the potential to be understood through attitude system theory. This is because the researcher found several research references indicating that a song can be analyzed using the attitude system. According to these cases, it is worthwhile to research the lyrical elements that are one of the reasons for the song’s popularity using an evaluation system, particularly the attitude system. The five songs selected from the *SOUR* album for this study are “Driver’s License,” “Good 4 U,” “Traitor,” “Deja Vu,” and “Happier.” The five songs were selected based on four main considerations for several reasons. First, they rank as the most-streamed tracks from *SOUR* on Spotify, reflecting their broad cultural significance and emotional resonance (Spotify, 2024). Second, each song addresses a distinct relational stage, from heartbreak and betrayal in “Driver’s License” and “Traitor,” to jealousy and nostalgia in “Deja Vu,” and closure in “Happier,”

enabling a comprehensive exploration of attitudinal expressions across varied emotional contexts.

Third, the reason why the researcher chose Olivia Rodrigo's *SOUR* album is that the lyrics of Olivia Rodrigo's *SOUR* album are rich and expressive, making them a good fit for appraisal analysis. The songs contain both direct and indirect evaluative language that can be used to identify affect, judgment, and appreciation, as proposed by Martin & White (2005). Through these categories, the researcher can look at how Rodrigo expresses her feelings, evaluates people's actions, and gives meaning to the experiences described in the songs. Furthermore, since the songs were mostly written by Rodrigo herself, the lyrics represent her own genuine emotions and personal perspective, which makes an appraisal-based analysis more valid and reliable. According to these reasons, examining these five songs through the attitude system is expected to show how Rodrigo shares her emotions, reflects on personal experiences, and creates interpersonal meaning in her lyrics.

Despite these strengths, there are still several research gaps that need to be addressed. Previous studies on Appraisal Theory have primarily focused on identifying attitudinal resources in individual songs, literary texts, or translation studies. Limited attention has been given to examining how the Attitude system functions to represent interpersonal relationships across multiple songs within a contemporary music album. Furthermore, although Olivia Rodrigo's *SOUR* album has received widespread recognition for its emotionally expressive lyrics, studies specifically investigating the types and functions of affect, judgment, and appreciation in representing relationship experiences in the album remain limited. Therefore, this study attempts to fill these gaps by analyzing both the types and functions of the Attitude system in five selected songs from *SOUR*, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how evaluative language constructs interpersonal meaning in the lyrics.

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1.2 Research Questions

According to the background of the study above, there are two main issues as follows:

1. What types of attitude system found in Olivia Rodrigo's SOUR album songs?
2. What are the functions of each type of attitudinal system found in Olivia Rodrigo's SOUR album songs?

1.3 Objectives of the study

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

1. To identify the types of attitude systems found in Olivia Rodrigo's songs.
2. To explain the function of each type of attitudinal system found in Olivia Rodrigo's songs.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study of attitude systems provides several important knowledge levels in certain ways. The writer classified the role of this study into theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of appraisal theory, particularly in understanding the attitudinal system found in song lyrics. It may also enrich references related to linguistic studies, especially appraisal analysis in music discourse. Practically, this study is expected to provide useful references for future researchers, especially English Study Program students who are interested in conducting research on appraisal theory and song lyrics analysis.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study is the appraisal system, particularly focusing on the attitudinal system proposed by Martin and White (2005) in Olivia Rodrigo's SOUR song album. This study analyzes song lyrics containing the categories of attitude, namely affect, judgment, and appreciation. Furthermore, it examines the functions of the attitudinal system found in the selected songs. The limitation of this study is restricted to the top five most popular Olivia Rodrigo songs on Spotify,

namely “Driver’s License,” “Good 4 U,” “Traitor,” “Deja Vu,” and “Happier.” These songs are selected from Olivia Rodrigo’s debut album, *SOUR* (2021).