

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the background of the study explains the rationale behind this research and the reason why Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album was chosen as the object of analysis. Based on this background, the research question, objective, and significance of the study are formulated to explain the issue addressed, the purpose to be achieved, and the theoretical and practical contributions of this research. Lastly, the scope and limitation of the study defines the boundaries of the research, focusing solely on the emotive language found in the lyrics of Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album.

1.1 Background of Study

Music is a universal art form that has long been recognized for its crucial role in human life. It is often said to be the language of emotions, and listening to music has become an integral part of everyday life, if asked which song they would want to hear at any given moment, people would most likely choose one that matches their current mood (Jamdar et al., 2015). According to Hallam & Himonides (2022) the power of music is reflected in the ongoing attempts to exert control over it across history. Music transcends verbal boundaries and, as to Thompson (1996), notes, can be understood as a combination of tone and purpose. It is a universal language capable of evoking deep feelings, memories, and moods in its listeners. Beyond personal enjoyment, music has also been used therapeutically, with its role in health and healing recognized for more than 30,000 years (Hallam & Himonides, 2022).

Song lyrics, in particular, serve as a primary means of conveying human emotions through music (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010). Lyrics are literary works in the form of poetry presented with musical accompaniment, functioning as a space for creators to express ideas and feeling, although lyrics are considered the second element of music, they make significant contributions to a song's overall impact (Firdaus, 2013). The words chosen determine the song's effectiveness and its appeal to listeners, as the message of a lyric depends largely on how the writer arranges the language (Bértoli-dutra & Bissaco, 2006).

Emotive language is word choice that is used to evoke emotion and is intended to causes an effect (emotional response) on the audience (Adnan, 2021). Different words can be used to cause different reactions in the audience (Tsitsanoudis, 2018). Emotive language is crucial because it allows speakers or

writers to convey inner sentiments, psychological states, and subjective assessments that cannot be adequately expressed through neutral or referential language alone. Through emotionally charged words, phrases, and expressions, language becomes capable of influencing how messages are interpreted and felt by the audience. For this reason, emotive language plays a significant role in fostering emotional involvement, building empathy, and strengthening interpersonal relationships, particularly in expressive discourses such as poetry, literature, and song lyrics (Volek, 1987).

A famous example of this can be found in Sombr's debut album, *I Barely Know Her*, released in 2025, which explores the emotional nuances of a relationship shifting from intimacy back to the beginning, using emotive language to communicate feelings of longing, confusion, and heartache as the songwriter narrates the story of a friendship that stretched too far and had to be reset, capturing the pain and ambiguity of unlabeled relationships that many listeners relate to deeply, particularly those who have experienced the confusion of wanting more while being forced to act as though nothing happened, making the album's emotionally resonant lyrics gain widespread attention and go viral on social media as a global phenomenon; *I Barely Know Her* is thus a particularly compelling subject for linguistic analysis, as each song employs emotive language in ways that correspond to the complex dynamics of romantic relationships, depicting feelings of intimacy, longing, uncertainty, and emotional transition that frequently arise in close personal relationships.

Several previous studies have examined emotive language in various textual contexts, providing a foundation for the present research, notably Nurdiani et al., (2022), who investigated emotive language as a stylistic marker in Leila S. Chudori's novel *Laut Bercerita*, and Khalis et al., (2020), who analyzed emotive language in online news headlines; both studies confirm that emotive language operates systematically across different discourse types and serves both expressive and persuasive functions that are equally salient in song lyrics. However, despite the album's popularity, previous studies on emotive language in modern viral songs have mostly concentrated on broad semantic aspects or audience reactions with little attention to systematic linguistic frameworks, revealing a notable gap in studies that specifically examine how Jakobson's emotive function and Macagno's emotive types appear in contemporary song lyrics, particularly in the context of

evolving romantic relationships with existing research approaches emotive language from psychological or literary based perspectives with the anticipation that this research will deepen understanding of the songwriter's expressive techniques and contribute to broader discussions on emotive language in modern music.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the explanation background of the study above, the following research question are formulated:

1. What are the types of emotive language found in Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album?
2. What are the functions of emotive language found in Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research question above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To explain the types of emotive language in Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album
2. To explain about the function of emotive language in Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is theoretically significant in that it examines emotional expression in modern song lyrics by integrating two complementary frameworks: Jakobson (1960), theory of language functions, specifically the emotive function, and Macagno & Walton (2010) framework of emotive meaning and argumentation. By combining these two perspectives, this study demonstrates that emotional messages in popular music are not only impulsive expressions of feeling, but are instead systematically constructed through deliberate language choices and expressive strategies. Jakobson (1960) emotive function highlights how expressive elements such as evaluative phrases, interjections, and grammatical patterns reflect the speaker's feelings, attitudes, and psychological states. Complementing this, Macagno & Walton, (2010) argue that emotive meanings are intentionally embedded in words to shape interpretation, frame perspectives, and elicit specific emotional responses from listeners. Together, these two theoretical lenses provide a comprehensive and systematic framework for analyzing both the persuasive and

expressive dimensions of emotive language in song lyrics. Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study also holds practical value in understanding how emotive language functions in song lyrics, particularly in conveying complex emotional experiences and interpersonal dynamics. By applying Jakobson (1960) and Macagno & Walton (2010) frameworks to Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album, this study demonstrates that widely recognized songs can be rigorously analyzed using established linguistic theories. For linguistics and literature scholars and students, the findings offer a clear and replicable analytical framework for examining emotive language in creative texts. The word-level employed in this study may also prove useful for future research involving songs, poems, or other forms of expressive discourse. For songwriters and music audiences alike, this study raises awareness of how language choices shape emotional impact in lyrics. Understanding how emotive meanings are constructed can deepen listener's appreciation of music as a universal emotional medium and encourage more critical engagement with lyrical content. Thus, this study contributes not only academically, but also holds practical relevance for music appreciation, education, and creative practice.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focuses on the emotive language found in Sombr's *I Barely Know Her* album. Specifically, it examines how language conveys emotions, attitudes, and psychological states through the lens of Jakobson (1960) theory of language functions, with the emotive function serving as the primary analytical framework. In verbal communication, affective word choices, interjections, and emotionally charged expressions function as markers of individual sentiments and subjective positions. Within this context, semantics the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning offers a crucial lens for analyzing how lexical items carry not only denotative or referential meaning but also connotative and affective meaning that reflects the speaker's inner emotional state. Understanding the semantic dimension of language is therefore essential for identifying how word choices function beyond their literal sense to express feeling, evaluation, and subjective experience. This study also incorporates Macagno & Walton (2010) perspective on emotive meaning, which emphasizes how lexical choices are deliberately employed to shape interpretation, evoke emotional responses, and influence the listener's evaluative attitude toward the subject matter.

In applying these theoretical frameworks to the data, the lyrics of each song in the album are first identified and collected as the primary source of analysis. The lyrics are then examined line by line to identify linguistic features that carry emotive function, including expressive utterances, evaluative adjectives, first-person pronouns, and emotionally loaded vocabulary. Each identified expression is subsequently categorized according to Jakobson (1960) emotive function, which focuses on how the speaker's inner emotional state is linguistically projected onto the message. At the same time, Macagno & Walton (2010) framework is applied to determine the type of emotive meaning embedded in each expression, specifically whether the language is used to evoke sympathy, intensify emotional impact, or shift the listener's perception of the situation being described. Through this layered analytical process, the study traces how emotive language is systematically constructed across the album to reflect the emotional arc of a romantic relation.