

## Figurative Language in Selected Song Lyrics of NIKI's Nicole Album

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**Abstract.** Despite the extensive studies on figurative language in song lyrics, limited research has specifically explored emotional functions of figurative language in contemporary pop albums by Asian artists, particularly in NIKI's *Nicole* album. This study aims to examine figurative language used in the lyrics of a few of NIKI's songs from the *Nicole* album. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method focusing on documents through content analysis. The primary data of this study were a few chosen tracks from NIKI's *Nicole* album with an emphasis on the lyrics of the songs investigated. To examine the data, the songs were listened to several times, and the lyrics were carefully read to comprehend meanings of the metaphorical language. The data were gathered based on the categories of metaphorical language and categorized for further examination. Findings revealed that eight songs used 75 different types of figurative language which included metaphor as the most frequently used type. The five varieties of figurative language included personification, simile, hyperbole, irony, and metaphor. The use of figurative language created intense emotional expressions which included regret and despair and melancholy. The study demonstrates that song lyrics achieve their highest poetic and beautiful and emotional effects through the use of figurative language which also helps to express the song's main message.

**Keywords:** Figurative Language, Song Lyrics, NIKI's *Nicole* Album

### Introduction

Language plays a key role in communication and interaction that occurs in social life. Society uses language as a tool for spoken and written communication (Nursolihat & Kareviati, 2020). Speaking effectively will increase the establishment's significance and memorability.

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Since language is a frequent means of communicating information, emotions, and even ideas to others, it is crucial. Language is a system of sound symbols with arbitrary signals that members of a social group use to cooperate, communicate, and identify one another (Simarmata et al., 2021). A specific example of a complex communication system or the peculiarly human capacity to acquire and utilize such systems can both be described by language (Wibisono & Widodo, 2019). The speaker's feelings and thoughts can be expressed through language. Our daily interactions with one another depend on language.

All people in the world connect with one another through language. Language's primary purpose is to facilitate communication with other people who utilize signals, including words and gestures or movements (Yusnitasari et al., 2022). English is the language that practically everyone is familiar with these days. Listening to English-language music is currently the most popular way to converse in English, however there are other options as well. Singing is a popular and entertaining technique for many people to practice their English. Additionally, songs can be used to express thoughts and sentiments, albeit subtly using metaphorical language. The lyrics employ metaphorical language to convey their message; if we can comprehend it, the meaning will seem more profound (Muhammad et al., 2020). Figurative language is key in songs because it enhances the beauty and originality of the message, making it more appealing to listeners and readers. Because songwriters can employ figurative language to express the beauty and originality of their songs to listeners or readers, it becomes essential in song lyrics (Yunanda et al., 2021).

Through the indirect comparison of one object with another, figurative language transforms into beauty in songs. According to Tarigan (2013) cited in Yusnitasari et al. (2022) figurative language is a beautiful language used to enhance effects by comparing one thing to another. But even though figurative language is beautiful when it comes to speaking and communicating, some people may misunderstand it. Little ones are particularly affected since they are unable to take the word literally right away. If figurative language is not properly translated and understood, it can also lead to misunderstandings or even weird writing or communication. Loveana et al. (2020) asserts that words, phrases, or signals that allude to or are represented and may be interpreted with other words are what give song lyrics their meaning. The choice and application of uncommon or rarely used terminology typically causes this problem. Understanding the meaning behind figurative language and preventing miscommunications depend on correctly evaluating its use.

In earlier research, songs, poems, novels, movie, and even short stories frequently included figurative language. Figurative language gives writing a unique quality and enhances the portrayal of deep meaning. According to Hulu et al. (2021) figurative language is an alternative method of expressing ideas that enhances the beauty of speech. The study results indicated that the short story "Tale-Tell Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe contained multiple figurative language elements which included personification and simile and metaphor and hyperbole according to the research of Karimah et al. 2022. Rusmini combines multiple rhetorical devices with Tarian Bumi because she uses both simile and metaphor

and hyperbole and she employs parallelism and anaphora and repetition throughout the book Saud et al. 2023. The results show that Sheeran's use of metaphorical language in his songs increases their emotional impact on listeners while creating complex feelings for the audience to experience (Sau, 2024).

Previous research has emphasized the creative use of figurative language in song lyrics to express meaning and emotional experience. Bawemenewi and Swarniti (2024) underline how figurative expressions in song lyrics are employed to evoke particular feelings and mental imagery. Similarly, Zahira (2022) analyzes Imagine Dragons' *Night Visions (Deluxe Version)* album and finds that figurative language functions to convey the artist's personal journey and generalized life experiences during the early stage of his musical career. In contrast, Gunawan et al. (2021) argue that figurative language in song lyrics may lead to ambiguity or misinterpretation when listeners lack sufficient contextual understanding, focusing primarily on semantic clarity rather than emotional impact.

While these studies contribute to understanding figurative language in music, they predominantly focus on Western artists, emphasize either general meaning or potential ambiguity, and rely largely on surface-level identification of figurative forms. Moreover, limited attention has been given to how figurative language systematically constructs emotional meaning in contemporary pop songs by Asian artists. Addressing this gap, the present study examines figurative language in NIKI's songs from the *Nicole* album, not only as a stylistic feature but as an emotional and interpretative device that shapes listeners' affective responses, particularly among young audiences. By shifting the object of analysis and emphasizing emotional functions through qualitative interpretation, this study extends previous research and offers a more nuanced understanding of figurative language in modern pop music. Therefore, using the above described explanation, the following questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What kinds of figurative language are found in selected song lyrics in the NIKI's *Nicole* album?
2. What are the meanings of figurative language found in selected song lyrics in the NIKI's *Nicole* album?

## Method

### Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative research methodology. One method for studying written data, such as documents, without performing numerical analysis is the qualitative research approach. The researchers in this study used and content analysis techniques. Content analysis is regarded by researchers as the best approach for the subject under study. The process of describing and grouping materials into a single category is called content analysis. The process of grouping data into a common category is known as content analysis (Laimena & Que, 2022). Learning about human behavior through the analysis and interpretation of recorded information, such as public records, textbooks, letters, movies, cassettes, diaries, themes, reports, and other resources was the main goal of content analysis (Sinaga & Marpaung, 2020). The researcher decided to use content analysis as a research method because he believed that the questions in this study were answered using this method.

### Unit of Analysis

The researcher used NIKI's album as the object of this study. Several selected songs from Nicole's album were used based on explicit criteria: (1) the popularity of the songs among young listeners, (2) their thematic relevance to personal experiences such as love, regret, identity, and emotional vulnerability, and (3) the density of figurative language within the lyrics. In 2022, "Nicole" became NIKI's second studio album. The album chronicles Niki's adolescence and her experiences prior to making her debut on the 88rising label. The album describes Niki's teenage years and stories prior to her debut on the 88rising label. The researcher chose several tracks from Nicole's album for this study, including "Before," "Backburner," "Keeping Tabs," "The Apartment We Won't Share," "Anaheim," "Autumn," "Oceans & Engines," and "Take A Chance With Me." The researcher examined the lyrics to see if the songs on the album "Nicole" employed metaphorical language and what this signified. Simile, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, and irony were among the figurative language forms explored. The study's primary focus was on the words and phrases used in Nicole's record lyrics. The researcher chose these songs because it was considered that the song lyrics contained a lot of figurative language.

### Procedures

In qualitative research, the most common and significant data collection tools were interviews, questionnaires, reading papers, and making observations. One of the papers the researcher utilized to collect data for this study was song lyrics. Nicole from NIKI's lyrics were one of the data that was examined. The researcher focused on words and phrases that were used in the song lyrics in this document-based study. To facilitate the research process, the researcher used [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) to seek up the song lyrics online and printed the results. While gathering data, the researcher also listened to the music via an internet streaming service. To gather data, the researcher listened to the songs and carefully studied the lyrics for any use of figurative language. The researcher listened to the songs numerous times to better understand the meaning of the figurative language used in the lyrics. To ensure that the interpretations fit the context and content of the music, the researcher listened to the songs again and looked at the lyrics. The outcomes were noted for further review and clarification. To deepen their knowledge and bolster the inquiry, the researcher also read a lot of earlier study.

### Data Analysis

The researcher employed content analysis in this qualitative study to address the study's goals. Finding the song lyrics was the initial stage in the researcher's study of the research data. The researcher carefully analyzed the song lyrics in order to classify them. The data was thoroughly analyzed in order to categorize and identify the songs' many figurative language forms and to ascertain their meanings. The analysis of figurative language was guided by a semantic and contextual approach, in which meanings were interpreted based on both the literal sense of the expressions and their contextual use within the song narratives. The grouped data was then entered into a table to allow for classification according to the forms of figurative language. Furthermore, this

categorization facilitated comprehension of the found metaphorical language. Following the categorization of all the data, the researcher reviewed the lyrics and the obtained data to confirm and authenticate all of the metaphorical language in the song. The most prevalent and often used forms of figurative language in the lyrics of NIKI's songs from the Nicole album were identified by using a percentage of the data after it had been categorized by type and its meanings clarified.

## Findings and Discussion

### Research Findings

The researcher discovered the answers to the research questions formulated after examining the lyrics of a few chosen songs from the "Nicole" album. The first was figuring out whether songs' lyrics contained figurative language and what those figurative expressions meant. The table below provides a more detailed description of the five categories of figurative language utilized in the lyrics: personification, metaphor, simile, irony, and hyperbole.

### Figurative Language in NIKI's Nicole Album

Figurative language found in NIKI's Nicole album could be seen from table 1.

**Table 1 Types of Figurative Language**

No	Figurative Language	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
1.	Simile	5	6.7%	"I read him like a book, and he's a clueless little kid"
2.	Personification	7	9.3%	"Let your hands both freely speak"
3.	Hyperbole	18	24%	"Before I fly back to my death"
4.	Metaphor	32	42.7%	"But guess I won't ever mind crisping up on your backburner"
5.	Irony	13	17.3%	"The apartment we won't share"

### Meanings of Figurative Language

Meanings of figurative language in NIKI's Nicole album could be explained from table 2.

**Table 2 Meanings of Figurative Language**

No	Figurative Language	Example	Meaning
1.	Simile	"I read him like a book, and he's a clueless little kid"	This phrase is a simile with the word "like" which has the meaning that the writer can easily read what is on the person's mind, but the person is not even aware that the writer is doing that.
2.	Personification	"Let your hands both freely speak"	This line contains personification because in its true meaning it is not the hand that speaks but the hand that speaks describes the delivery of a deep feeling.

3.	Hyperbole	"Before I fly back to my death"	The phrase does not mean that the author will actually die but describes the author's great emotional anxiety and deep sense of destruction. The phrase is hyperbolic because it exaggerates and in the real sense the author is not dead.
4.	Metaphor	"But guess I won't ever mind crisping up on your backburner"	The real meaning is not that the writer is drying up or burning on the back burner but that the writer is comparing himself to a painful relationship that makes the writer willing to be hurt slowly and always be a backup.
5.	Irony	"The apartment we won't share"	This phrase describes a reality that does not match expectations where the writer imagined building a life together with his partner which turned out to never happen due to the failure of their relationship so that there was no longer any hope of reaching that point.

## Discussion

The results of the figurative language analysis of NIKI's selected songs from the Nicole album revealed the employment of numerous figurative languages. Eight songs from the album were examined for figurative language, yielding 75 examples for this study. The author concentrated on analyzing five different forms of figurative language: personification, simile, metaphor, irony, and hyperbole. Out of the 75 figurative language finds in the song lyrics on the Nicole album, metaphor was the most frequently used figurative language in NIKI's lyrics, appearing in 32 of them. This investigation supported earlier research that indicated metaphor was the most prevalent figurative language in the Lyodra album (Sarumaha et al., 2022)

This study is in line with previous research (Milana & Ardi, 2020) who in their research on song lyrics by Saif Adam found that metaphors are the most dominant figurative language, which is 25% of the total figurative language that has been found. Researchers found that the use of metaphors is very common in a song because metaphors make listeners use their imagination to interpret the song. In addition, metaphors make the delivery of emotions stronger so that listeners also feel the emotions written by the songwriter. This study is also in line with previous research that examines figurative language in the album "Falling into You" and it was revealed that metaphors also dominate in their findings, from the two songs described in the album, metaphors appear twice in the song "Falling into You" and appear four times in the song "Fly" (Ardhyanti & Supriyatiningsih, 2020). This study deviates from earlier research because of discrepancies in the final results, which showed that metaphor is the second most prevalent figurative language style after simile, accounting for 20% of the total findings, and simile is the most prevalent figurative language style, accounting for 30% of the total findings (Palguna et al., 2021).

In this analysis, it was also discovered that hyperbole was used frequently on the album "Nicole," which came in second place overall. The study discovered

that the author employed hyperbole in the lyrics of the songs on this album to convey very powerful emotions in order to entice listeners to continue listening to the song because of the dramatic lyrics. In earlier studies investigating figurative language in song lyrics, Stephen Sanchez discovered that hyperbole featured most frequently (Grensideng & Agung, 2023). This study is in line with previous studies because in his study of the song "Endless Love" which found hyperbole as much as 32% and was in second place in his findings as the most frequently appearing figurative language (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Therefore, hyperbole is also very commonly used by songwriters in their songs to convey emotions that cannot be shown literally.

Figurative language is used in songs to not only improve the lyrics, but also to convey messages in a subtle and meaningful way. According to Tarigan (2009, as cited in (Astuti & Astuti, 2020), figurative language is a beautiful language that is used to introduce and enhance effects by relating some objects to others. In the findings of this study, the researcher found that NIKI uses a lot of figurative language to express her deepest feelings that cannot be expressed literally. To persuade listeners to listen to the music, song writers and composers typically utilize figurative language to enhance the language (Dewi & Ardiantari, 2024). Researchers discovered in this study that the lyrics of Nicole's album frequently convey emotional melancholy and despair, wrapped in a variety of figurative languages.

Comprehending the meaning of figurative language is also critically significant in this research because it will help us understand the song and the songwriter's perspective, as well as prevent interpretation errors. In order to help listeners visualize and creatively comprehend the meaning, songwriters use figurative language to express a number of implicit ideas. According to previous research (Swarniti, 2022), the song's lyrics seek to artistically portray the emotion or theme through the use of figurative language. This emphasizes the frequent use of figurative language in song lyrics as a stylistic tool for representing feelings, reflections, and ideas in an inventive way.

## Conclusion

The research studied NIKI's Nicole album through its eight tracks which showed 75 instances of figurative language. The study discovered five types of figurative language which included simile, personification, hyperbole, metaphor, and irony. The research showed that metaphors served as the primary figure of speech which appeared 32 times throughout the text. NIKI's poetic lyrics used metaphors to express deep emotional themes which included sadness and regret and profound loss. The researcher examined the meanings that existed in the song through its use of figurative expressions. The analysis showed that NIKI's lyrics used figurative language to express strong emotional content. The use of such language enhanced the impression of sorrow and unspoken emotions present in the songs. The study showed that listeners who understand figurative language will comprehend the hidden meanings and emotional content which musicians express through their song lyrics. This study contributes to linguistic and stylistic research by reinforcing the view that figurative language operates at the intersection of semantics, context, and aesthetic expression.

The study examined multiple songs from the album, but it had a broad theme which created multiple restrictions. This study is limited by its focus on selected songs, reliance on subjective qualitative interpretation through content analysis, and lack of methodological triangulation. Furthermore, this study simply identified the varieties and meanings of figurative language; cultural analysis may have been employed to go deeper into this topic. The researcher also used only content analysis in identifying figurative language and its meanings, whereas the study could have been analyzed more broadly, for example, by incorporating an audience-centered approach. Therefore, future researchers were expected to conduct studies with broader aspects, such as using analysis that involved the audience's perspective to understand how figurative language emotionally affected listeners. Further researchers were also encouraged to expand the range of music genres studied in order to explore how cross-cultural figurative language influenced listeners.

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