

A SEMANTICS STUDY OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN SABRINA CARPENTER EMAIL'S I CAN'T SEND ALBUM LYRICS

Anniza Nursyahbani Siregar, Vera Kristiana

Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah

annizanursyahbanisiregar@umnaw.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the forms of figurative language and semantics meanings contained in Sabrina Carpenter's album Email's I Can't Send. A descriptive qualitative method was employed in this research to provide a systematic description of figurative expressions and semantics interpretations identified in the song lyrics. the analysis was based on Perrine's theory, which classification figurative language into 12 types, and Leech's theory, which classifies semantics meaning into 7 categories. However, the result revealed that only 11 types of figurative language and 4 types of semantics meaning were discovered in the analyzed data. The findings indicated the presence of 53 metaphor, 33 hyperbole, 32 irony, 13 paradox, 7 symbol, 4 simile, 4 personification, 3 metonymy, 3 understatement, 1 synecdoche, and 1 apostrophe. Furthermore, the semantics meaning identified consisted of 85 affective meaning, 64 connotative meaning, 3 thematic meaning, and 2 social meaning. Overall, the lyrics of the album dominantly convey emotional expressions, personal experiences, and implicit messages through the use of figurative language and non-literal language.

Keywords: *Semantics Meaning, Figurative Language, Email's I Can't Send Album, Leech theory, Perrine Theory*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bentuk-bentuk bahasa figurative dan makna semantic yang terdapat dalam album Email's I Can't Send karya Sabrina Carpenter. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk memberikan gambaran secara sistematis mengenai ungkapan figurative dan intepatasi makna semantic yang ditemukan dalam lirik lagu. Analisis penelitian ini berdasarkan pada teori Perrine yang mengklasifikasikan bahasa figurative menjadi 12 jenis serta teori Leech yang mengkategorikan makna semantic ke dalam 7 kategori. Namun, hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya 53 metafora, 33 hiperbola, 32 ironi, 13 paradoks, 7 simbol, 4 simile, 4 personifikasi, 3 metonimia, 3 understatement, 1 sinekdok, dan 1 apostrof. Selain itu, makna semantic yang ditemukan terdiri dari 85 makna afektif, 64 makna konotatif, 3 makna tematik, dan 2 makna sosial. Secara keseluruhan, lirik dalam album tersebut lebih dominan menyampaikan ekspresi emosional, pengalaman pribadi, serta pesan-pesan tersirat melalui penggunaan bahasa figurative dan bahasa yang tidak bermakna secara harfiah.

Kata kunci: *Makna Semantik, Bahasa Figuratif, Album Emails I Can't Send, Teori Leech, Teori Perrine.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Semantics is recognized as a major branch of linguistic that focuses on the study of meaning in language. According to (Leech, 1981) in (Yunira et al., 2019), semantics concerns the study of linguistic meaning and explains how words or expressions can convey different meanings depending on their context. To explain this phenomenon, Leech categorizes meaning into seven types, namely conceptual, connotative, affective, collocative, reflected, social, and thematic meaning. These categories show that language is not limited to literal meaning but also includes implied interpretations. In addition, (McGregor, 2024) explains that semantics studies meaning within a language system, including the relationship between symbols and their interpretations. Further emphasize that semantics analysis is concerned with understanding how linguistic expressions function and convey meaning within specific contexts (Nst & Kristiana, 2024). Since meaning cannot be observed directly, semantics analysis requires interpretation and cognitive understanding to identify both explicit and implicit meanings in language. Therefore, semantics can be defined as the discipline that explores the formation, interpretation, and communication of meaning through language. According to (Perrine, 1992) in (Gea et al., 2025), figurative language refers to expressions that differ from literal language in order to create imaginative effects and deeper meanings. Perrine classifies figurative language into twelve categories, including metaphor, simile, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, and irony. Furthermore, (Akmajian et al., 2017) argues that figurative language enriches communication because it helps speaker express meanings that are difficult to deliver through ordinary language. As a result, consequently, figurative language plays a significant role in literary works because it allows emotions, experiences, and ideas to be presented in a more creative and indirect manner. Since figurative language usually carries hidden meanings, semantics analysis is necessary to interpret those meanings systematically and clearly. However, (Nirmawati & Kristiana, 2022), figurative language carries meanings that are not stated directly in other words, its interpretation depends largely on the context in which it is used.

Song lyrics are literary texts that frequently employ figurative language to communicate messages creatively. Songs are not only combinations of melody and rhythm, but also media for expressing feelings, thoughts, and experiences. According to (Zamil, 2016), songs are rhythmic sound patterns, while (Moore, 2014) states that songs can represent the singer's vocal identity and character. Because song lyrics often contain poetic, symbolic, and emotional expressions, they are suitable objects for figurative language and

semantics studies. Furthermore, understanding meaning in language requires more than memorizing vocabulary. (Kristiana & Ningsih, 2026) state that terminology acquisition requires a deep understanding of how words are linguistically constructed. This perspective supports the importance of semantics analysis in interpreting figurative expressions found in song lyrics, where meaning are often conveyed indirectly. Through lyrics, singers can creatively communicate personal stories and emotional experiences that contain both literal and implied meanings. One singer whose lyrics contain many figurative expressions is Sabrina Carpenter. She is widely recognized for writing songs that include irony, wordplay, emotional experiences, and personal storytelling. Released in 2022, the album *Email's I Can't Send* contains 13 songs exploring themes such as heartbreak, betrayal, regret, vulnerability, and the process of self-healing. Even the album title itself symbolizes feelings and messages that were never expressed directly. The emotional and poetic quality of the lyrics makes the album interesting to analyze from linguistic perspectives, especially through figurative language and semantics approaches.

Several previous studies have discussed figurative language and semantics in literary works and song lyrics. (Kasa Taek, 2023) examined *The Analysis of Semantics Meaning Found in Seven Poems* by Sapardi Djoko Damono using Leech's theory, but the research only focused on semantics. Meanwhile, (Kurniati et al., 2025) examined *An Analysis of Slang Words in the Album "Emails I Can't Send"* using Yule's theory, focusing on slang expressions rather than figurative language and meaning. In addition, (Gea et al., 2025) *An Analysis Figurative Language in Sabrina Carpenter's Song Album Short n' Sweet* using Perrine's theory, but the study only discussed several types of figurative language without exploring semantics meaning in detail. Therefore, the present study differs from previous research by integrating Perrine's theory of figurative language with Leech's theory of semantics meaning to explain how both aspects interact in conveying emotional depth within song lyrics. Based on the discussion above, this research seeks to develop a more profound understanding of the connection between figurative language and semantics meaning in constructing emotional expressions within the album *Email's I Can't Send*. Through this analysis, the study is expected to contribute to linguistic studies and show how figurative language can be used creatively to express complex emotions and personal experiences in song lyrics.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach to examine figurative language contained in selected song lyrics from Sabrina Carpenter's album *Emails I Can't Send*. According (Creswell, 2017), qualitative research is appropriate for understanding meanings and

expressions conveyed through language. The method applied in this study is descriptive qualitative because the research describes the data systematically based on the original lyrics without making generalizations (Turale, 2020). The focus of this study is the analysis of figurative language and semantics meaning found in the selected song lyrics. The primary sources of data in this study were obtained from the lyrics of thirteen songs in the album *Emails I Can't Send*, namely *Emails I Can't Send*, *Vicious*, *Read Your Mind*, *Tornado Warnings*, *Because I Liked a Boy*, *Already Over*, *How Many Things*, *Bet U Wanna*, *Nonsense*, *Fast Times*, *Skinny Dipping*, *Bad for Business*, and *Decode*. The collected data include words, phrases, and sentences that contain figurative expressions and semantic meanings. Meanwhile, secondary sources were gathered from relevant books, academic journals, articles, and previous research related to figurative language and semantics. The process of data collection was conducted by listening to the selected songs, examining the official lyrics several times, and selecting lyric lines that represented figurative language and semantic meanings. After the data were identified, they were categorized according to the types of figurative language and meaning classifications. Subsequently, the collected data were arranged systematically in tables and research documents to support the analysis process. The data analysis was conducted through descriptive qualitative analysis. The researcher examined various forms of figurative language, including metaphor, hyperbole, irony, simile, personification, symbol, and other related expressions by applying Perrine's theory. Furthermore, the semantic meanings contained in the lyrics were analyzed based on Leech's theory of meaning. The results were then interpreted and described to demonstrate how figurative language and semantic meaning contribute to the expression of emotions and personal experiences within the song lyrics.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of selected songs from Sabrina Carpenter's album *Emails I Can't Send* reveals the presence of various forms of figurative language and semantic meanings that are used to represent emotions, personal experiences, conflicts in relationships, and complex feelings. The identified figurative language includes metaphor, hyperbole, irony, paradox, symbol, simile, personification, metonymy, understatement, apostrophe, and synecdoche. Furthermore, the analysis based on Leech's theory of meaning shows several categories of semantic meaning, including affective meaning, connotative meaning, thematic meaning, and social meaning. These results demonstrate that figurative language and semantic meaning have a significant function in constructing emotional expressions and enhancing the artistic value conveyed through song lyrics.

Table 1.1 Figurative Language and Semantics Meaning in Selected Lyrics

Song Title	Figurative Language	Semantics Meaning
Email's I Can't Send	13	13
Vicious	16	16
Read Your Mind	13	13
Tornado Warning	14	14
Because I Liked a Boy	12	12
Already Over	12	12
How Many Things	11	11
Bet U Wanna	10	10
Nonsense	12	12
Fast Times	10	10
Skinny Dipping	11	11
Bad for Business	11	11
Decode	9	9
Total	154	154

a. Email's I Can't Send

The lyrics of Emails I Can't Send, one of the tracks in Sabrina Carpenter's album Emails I Can't Send, reveal the use of various figurative language forms, with hyperbole and irony appearing as the most frequently used types. Hyperbole functions to intensify the expression of deep emotions, including pain, disappointment, and regret, while irony is employed to represent feelings of uncertainty, suspicion, and lack of trust within a relationship. In addition, other figurative expressions such as metaphor, simile, paradox, symbol, understatement, and apostrophe contribute to strengthening the overall meaning conveyed in the lyrics. From the semantics perspective, affective and connotative meanings are the most dominant. Affective meaning appears through emotions such as anger, sadness, and frustration, while connotative meaning can be seen in expressions like "time machine" and "wife," which carry meanings beyond their literal sense. Overall, the song portrays the speaker's inner conflict, including distrust, overthinking, and difficulty forgiving past experiences. Therefore, Email's I Can't Send is not only about a troubled relationship but also about the emotional struggles experienced by the speaker.

b. Vicious

The lyrics of Vicious in the album Email's I Can't Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor, followed by irony, hyperbole, and paradox. Metaphor is the most dominant because it helps describe the speaker's emotional experiences indirectly through

expressions such as “carried your burden” and “crush my heart.” Irony is used to express criticism toward the partner’s behavior, while hyperbole emphasizes feelings of pain, disappointment, and neglect. Paradox also appears to show contradictions and confusion within the relationship. From the semantics perspective, affective meaning is the most dominant because the lyrics focus on emotions such as anger, disappointment, and hurt. Connotative and social meanings also contribute to a deeper understanding of how the speaker views both the partner and the relationship. Overall, the song focuses on expressing emotional pain and frustration, making Vicious not only a song about a problematic relationship but also about the speaker’s emotional condition.

c. Read Your Mind

The lyrics of Read Your Mind in the album Email’s I Can’t Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use irony, followed by metaphor and hyperbole. Irony is the most dominant because many lyrics show a contrast between words and actual feelings, creating uncertainty and confusion in the relationship. Metaphors such as “ease the tension,” “crossin’ a line,” and “wastin’ all our time” help explain emotional situations and relationship problems more clearly. Hyperbole is used to highlight feelings of stress, pressure, and frustration. From the semantics perspective, affective meaning is the most dominant because the song strongly expresses confusion, anxiety, and emotional pressure. Connotative meaning is also found in several expressions that carry deeper meanings. Overall, the song portrays poor communication and emotional uncertainty, showing the speaker’s struggle to understand their partner’s thoughts and intentions.

d. Tornado Warnings

The lyrics of Tornado Warnings in the album Email’s I Can’t Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor and irony. Metaphor is dominant because it describes the relationship and emotions indirectly, such as comparing the relationship to a “see-saw,” which suggests instability. Irony appears through the speaker’s dishonesty and emotional conflict, including admitting to ignoring the truth about the relationship. From the semantics perspective, affective meaning is the most dominant because the lyrics focus on emotions such as confusion, denial, and inner conflict. Connotative meaning is also present in several metaphorical expressions. Overall, the song describes an unstable relationship in which the speaker ignores warning signs and struggles to face reality.

e. Because I Liked a Boy

The lyrics of Because I Liked a Boy in the album Email’s I Can’t Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use irony and metaphor. Irony is the most dominant because the lyrics show the gap between a simple action and the severe consequences that follow, reflecting

the speaker's frustration and sense of unfair treatment. Metaphor is used to describe emotional experiences and feelings more clearly. From the semantics perspective, affective meaning is the most dominant because the song expresses emotions such as stress, regret, and frustration. Connotative meaning also appears in several metaphorical expressions. Overall, the song highlights the emotional pressure and public judgment faced by the speaker after a relationship, making it not only about love but also about blame, identity, and emotional struggle.

f. Already Over

The lyrics of Already Over in the album Email's I Can't Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor and irony. Metaphor is the most dominant because expressions such as "fall" and "close the door" represent falling in love and ending a relationship. Irony appears when the speaker claims to move on but continues repeating the same emotional patterns. From the semantics perspective, connotative meaning is the most dominant because many expressions have meanings beyond their literal sense. Affective meaning is also present through feelings of confusion, attachment, and emotional struggle. Overall, the song portrays a relationship that should have ended but still emotionally affects the speaker, making it difficult to truly move on.

g. How Many Things

The lyrics of How Many Things in the album Email's I Can't Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use hyperbole, followed by metaphor and irony. Hyperbole is dominant because the speaker exaggerates emotions to show how difficult it is to forget someone, while metaphors such as "corner in my mind" and "falling down your priorities" describe emotional attachment and feelings of being unimportant. From the semantics perspective, affective meaning is the most dominant because the lyrics express sadness, longing, and disappointment. Connotative meaning also appears through metaphorical expressions. Overall, the song shows how memories continue to affect the speaker and make it difficult to let go of the past.

h. Bet U Wanna

The lyrics of Bet U Wanna in the album Email's I Can't Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor and irony. Metaphors such as "cold," "lights are off," and "left me dry" describe emotional distance, confusion, and emptiness, while irony highlights disappointment and hidden feelings within the relationship. Symbol and personification also appear but less frequently. From the semantics perspective, connotative meaning is the most dominant because many expressions have deeper meanings than their literal definitions. Affective meaning is also found in emotions such as hurt, insecurity, and

disappointment. Overall, the song reflects emotional distance, loss of trust, and the realization that the relationship is not what the speaker expected.

i. Nonsense

The lyrics of Nonsense in the album *Email's I Can't Send* by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use hyperbole, followed by metaphor, simile, and irony. Hyperbole is dominant because expressions such as “my tongue goes numb” and “cartwheels in my stomach” exaggerate feelings of excitement and nervousness. Metaphor and simile help describe love in a creative and playful way, while irony adds humor and flirtation. From the semantics perspective, affective meaning is the most dominant because the song expresses happiness, excitement, and nervousness. Connotative meaning also appears in several figurative expressions. Overall, the song portrays the fun, excitement, and emotional energy of being attracted to someone.

j. Fast Times

The lyrics of Fast Times in the album *Email's I Can't Send* by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor and hyperbole. Metaphors such as “no time for rewrites” and “tiptoeing past so many stages” describe life experiences and personal growth, while hyperbole strengthens emotional expressions. Other figurative language types, including simile, personification, paradox, and synecdoche, also support the meaning of the song. From the semantics perspective, connotative meaning is the most dominant because many expressions have deeper meanings beyond their literal sense. Affective meaning is also present through feelings of regret, admiration, and confusion. Overall, the song reflects a fast-paced life filled with emotional experiences, lessons, and personal growth.

k. Skinny Dipping

The lyrics of Skinny Dipping in the album *Email's I Can't Send* by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor, metonymy, and irony. Metaphors such as “edge of a cliff” and “going down with the ship” describe risky emotional situations and strong attachment. Metonymy appears in references such as “your name” and “garage,” which symbolize memories and shared experiences. Irony and paradox also contribute to the theme of emotional confusion. From the semantics perspective, connotative meaning is the most dominant because many expressions carry deeper meanings. Affective meaning also appears through feelings of nostalgia, discomfort, and attachment. Overall, the song reflects complicated memories of a past relationship and the emotional challenges of moving on.

l. Bad for Business

The lyrics of Bad for Business in the album *Email's I Can't Send* by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor and hyperbole. The dominant metaphor compares love to “business,”

showing the conflict between logic and emotion, while hyperbole emphasizes feelings of attachment, confusion, and emotional intensity. Symbol and paradox also appear to support the meaning of the lyrics. From the semantics perspective, connotative meaning is the most dominant because many expressions have deeper meanings than their literal interpretations. Affective meaning is also present through emotions such as love, confusion, and dependence. Overall, the song describes a relationship that feels emotionally satisfying but may not be healthy, highlighting the conflict between feelings and rational thinking.

m. Decode

The lyrics of Decode in the album Email's I Can't Send by Sabrina Carpenter mainly use metaphor and hyperbole. Metaphors such as "falling," "signs," "silence," and "weight off my shoulders" describe emotional involvement, communication problems, and eventual relief. Hyperbole is used to emphasize strong emotional reactions and overthinking. From the semantics perspective, affective meaning is the most dominant because the lyrics express confusion, disappointment, and relief. Connotative meaning also appears in several metaphorical expressions. Overall, the song portrays the speaker's journey from confusion to understanding, showing emotional growth and the process of finding clarity in a relationship.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This research examines the use of figurative language and semantic meaning in Sabrina Carpenter's album Emails I Can't Send. The results indicate that the song lyrics contain various forms of figurative language that function to represent emotions and personal experiences in an indirect way. Among the identified types, metaphor appears as the most dominant category with 53 data, followed by hyperbole with 33 data and irony with 32 data. Other figurative language forms, including paradox, symbol, simile, personification, metonymy, understatement, synecdoche, and apostrophe, are found with fewer occurrences. Regarding semantic meaning, affective meaning represents the highest frequency with 85 data, followed by connotative meaning with 64 data, while thematic meaning and social meaning are identified less frequently. The frequent occurrence of metaphor and affective meaning suggests that the lyrics primarily emphasize emotional expression, personal reflections, and meanings that are conveyed implicitly. In conclusion, figurative language and semantic meaning function together to build emotional intensity and artistic value within the songs. The analysis identified 154 lyric data containing figurative language and semantic meaning, demonstrating that these linguistic elements significantly contribute to helping listeners interpret and understand the emotional messages expressed throughout the album.

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