

## Figurative Language Analysis of “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade Among UIN Bandung Students

Aqil Rudya Alam<sup>1</sup>, Otong Setiawan Djauhari<sup>2</sup>  
State Islamic University Sunan Gunung Djati Of Bandung, Indonesia <sup>1,2</sup>

Corresponding Author’s Email: [aqilrudyaalam@gmail.com](mailto:aqilrudyaalam@gmail.com)

### History Article:

Received 06 20, 2025  
Accepted 06 25, 2025  
Published 06 27, 2025

### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the use of figurative language in the song “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade, focusing on the widespread misinterpretation of its meaning by listeners. Many audiences perceive the song literally, overlooking the deep symbolic messages embedded in its lyrics. The purpose of this article is to reveal the figurative language used in the song and highlight how different individuals may interpret the same lyrics differently, often diverging from the songwriter’s intended message. Employing a qualitative research method, the study involved a participatory approach through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to 26 respondents. The findings indicate a significant variation in interpretation among listeners, with a majority failing to grasp the figurative elements and underlying messages of the song. These results suggest that lyrical content, especially in poetic or symbolic forms, often requires contextual understanding to avoid misinterpretation. The study concludes that a lack of awareness regarding figurative language contributes to misunderstanding song lyrics, which may diminish the impact of the songwriter’s message. It recommends further research on public perception of figurative language in music and the role of educational tools in enhancing lyrical comprehension.*

**Keywords:** *figurative language; song interpretation; Ebiet G. Ade; qualitative study; listener perception.*

### How to Cite:

Aqil Rudya Alam, & Otong Setiawan Djauhari. (2025). Figurative Language Analysis of “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade Among UIN Bandung Students. Jejak Digital: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin, 1(4b), 1740-1747. <https://doi.org/10.63822/59ezp378>

## INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental means of human communication, playing a crucial role in daily life for expressing thoughts and emotions (Maghfiroh & Muzaka, n.d.). It functions as a tool for transmitting messages between the speaker and the listener (James Joyce, Yusniati Sabata et al., n.d.). In addition, language can be understood as both a medium for speech expression and a mechanism for processing thoughts (Djojoseuroto, 2021). Communication itself can occur either verbally or nonverbally; however, in both forms, language remains the essential medium used to convey ideas and meanings to others (Susanthi et al., 2021). To ensure the effectiveness of such communication, it is important to apply ideal communication principles (Umbas & Jayantini, 2021).

One important aspect of language in communication is figurative language. Figurative language is a literary device used to convey meaning in a more imaginative and expressive way. Rather than stating ideas directly, it employs comparison, symbolism, and creative expression to help readers visualize thoughts and emotions more vividly. Common forms include metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole. These devices allow writers and speakers to transcend the literal meanings of words, creating layers of interpretation and emotional depth. Figurative language thus strengthens the delivery of meaning and enhances the aesthetic quality of different expressions, serving as a creative leap through sound and imagery (Mogea & Reynaldo Joshua, 2022).

In literature and art, songs represent a unique genre that blends musicality with linguistic and poetic expression. Songs possess aesthetic value in both structure and meaning, often conveyed through word choice, figurative elements, and emotional messaging (Julianto IR, 2023). In today's digital and globalized world, music functions as a powerful medium—not only for entertainment but also for transmitting messages, emotions, and cultural values. Despite its popularity, however, many listeners fail to grasp the deeper meanings embedded in song lyrics, especially when they are written using rich figurative language. This highlights the importance of enhancing language and literary literacy to better understand and appreciate musical works.

This study addresses that need by analyzing figurative language in the song "Berita Kepada Kawan" by Ebiet G. Ade, a song known for its profound emotional and symbolic resonance. The urgency and significance of this research lie in its attempt to bridge the gap between artistic intention and public interpretation. By examining the figurative elements within the lyrics, this study aims to promote greater appreciation for Indonesian music, enrich linguistic analysis, and contribute to educational discourse on how meaning is communicated and understood through art. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the social and cultural relevance of music, particularly in how songs reflect shared experiences, historical events, or moral and philosophical messages.

The central issue examined in this study is the widespread misinterpretation of "Berita Kepada Kawan" by its listeners. Although the lyrics are rich with metaphorical and symbolic expressions, many audience members interpret them literally or overlook the figurative meanings entirely. Preliminary observations and responses from a group of participants reveal varying interpretations, with a significant number failing to identify figurative elements within the lyrics. This suggests a general lack of awareness or understanding of figurative language, which in turn reduces the listeners' appreciation of the song's intended depth and message.

While previous studies have explored figurative language in literature and music, most have focused on Western songs or academic poetry. There is a noticeable gap in the exploration of Indonesian popular music—particularly songs with social and philosophical themes—through a sociolinguistic and

literary lens. Moreover, past research rarely involves participatory methods to explore how the public perceives and interprets figurative language. This study seeks to address that gap by combining a literary analysis of the song’s lyrics with empirical data from listener responses.

The novelty of this research lies in its dual approach: it not only provides a literary analysis of figurative expressions in the lyrics but also includes a participatory investigation into how they are interpreted by actual audiences. Unlike earlier studies that merely classify figures of speech, this research emphasizes the discrepancy between artistic intent and public understanding, underscoring the sociolinguistic implications of such a disconnect.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to analyze the figurative language used in “Berita Kepada Kawan” and explore the diversity of interpretations among listeners. Through this analysis, the research aims to highlight the importance of strengthening language and literary education, while also offering insights and recommendations for future studies on public understanding of figurative language in Indonesian music.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the diverse interpretations of figurative language present in the song “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade. The qualitative approach was chosen to enable an in-depth analysis of the subjective meanings constructed by individuals when interpreting song lyrics. The primary variable examined in this research is the listeners’ perception and interpretation of figurative language, including the identification of symbolic meanings, metaphorical expressions, and emotional associations embedded in the lyrics.

The participants in this study comprised 26 undergraduate students from the English Literature Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. These students were selected purposively due to their academic background in literary studies, which was deemed relevant for evaluating their comprehension of figurative language within musical texts. The recruitment process employed purposive sampling, allowing the selection of participants who possessed sufficient knowledge and insight related to the research topic (Eldh et al., 2020).

Data collection was carried out using a Google Forms questionnaire, which was distributed through campus-related online forums and student groups. The questionnaire included a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions, designed to elicit both structured and detailed responses. Participants were asked to listen to the song and then explain their interpretation of its meaning, with a particular focus on figurative and symbolic elements.

To determine the adequacy of the sample size, the principle of data saturation was applied. Data saturation served as an indicator that sufficient information had been collected when no new themes or insights were emerging from participants’ responses—this being one of the most widely accepted approaches for evaluating sample sufficiency in qualitative research (Vasileiou et al., 2018)

The collected responses were analyzed by categorizing and interpreting them to identify common patterns in perception. Special attention was given to recurring themes, metaphors, and symbolic associations that emerged across responses. This analysis aimed to reveal the variation in individual interpretations and to demonstrate how such differences reflect broader disparities in literary comprehension and emotional engagement with figurative language.

## RESULTS

This study aims to explore how students of the English Literature Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung interpret the figurative language used in the song “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade. A total of 26 participants took part in this qualitative study, with 76% (19 students) coming from class 4D. Data were collected through an interpretative online questionnaire, in which students were asked to analyze selected lines from the song, identify the figurative language, and provide personal interpretations based on their understanding.

Although 40% of respondents had never heard the song prior to the study, the full lyrics were included in the questionnaire to ensure a shared context. Notably, 88.6% of participants reported feeling sadness when reading or listening to the lyrics, indicating the song's emotional depth and its effective use of figurative language to evoke empathy. When asked to identify the central theme, the majority (36%) chose “search for identity,” which aligns with the song’s reflective and philosophical tone as it questions the causes of natural disasters and societal breakdowns.

To ensure clarity and accessibility, participants’ interpretations of figurative expressions were categorized and summarized in a table, with one representative interpretation per line selected based on frequency and clarity of responses. The students’ responses demonstrate a deep emotional engagement with the lyrics, often interpreting them through the lens of collective trauma, natural disaster, and social empathy. The figurative language used by Ebiet G. Ade not only fulfills a poetic function but also resonates strongly with the students’ cultural and emotional perspectives.

**Table 1. Respondents’ Interpretation of Figurative Language in “Berita kepada Kawan”**

| No. | Lyric                                                                    | Dominant Interpretation                                    | Percentage (%) |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1.  | <i>Perjalanan ini terasa sangat menyedihkan</i>                          | A portrayal of a harsh and sorrowful life journey          | 73.1%          |
| 2.  | <i>Tubuhku terguncang dihempas batu jalanan</i>                          | A metaphor of suffering and hardship                       | 53.8%          |
| 3.  | <i>Banyak cerita yang mestinya kau saksikan di tanah kering bebatuan</i> | Represents the desire to share untold stories of suffering | 57.7%          |
| 4.  | <i>Hati tergetar menampak kering rerumputan</i>                          | Describes despair and emotional dryness due to disaster    | 57.7%          |
| 5   | <i>Gembala kecil menangis sedih</i>                                      | A child who becomes a victim of catastrophe                | 61.5%          |
| 6   | <i>Bapak ibunya telah lama mati, ditelan bencana tanah ini</i>           | A depiction of the real impact of disaster on families     | 84.6%          |
| 7   | <i>Sesampainya di laut ku kabarkan semuanya</i>                          | A symbolic place to pour grief and seek hope               | 53.8%          |

|    |                                                         |                                                                       |       |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 8  | <i>Kepada karang, kepada ombak,<br/>kepada matahari</i> | Shows the absence of human response to tragedy                        | 69.2% |
| 9  | <i>Tetapi semua diam, tetapi semua bisu</i>             | Suggests that no one or nothing can provide answers to such suffering | 69.2% |
| 10 | <i>Tinggal aku sendiri terpaku menatap langit</i>       | Reflects spiritual questioning and search for divine meaning          | 65.4% |
| 11 | <i>Barangkali di sana ada jawabnya...</i>               | Searching for reason and meaning behind national disaster             | 57.7% |
| 12 | <i>Mungkin Tuhan mulai bosan melihat tingkah kita</i>   | Suggests moral degradation of humankind                               | 65.4% |
| 13 | <i>Yang selalu salah dan bangga dengan dosa-dosa</i>    | Highlights human arrogance despite moral failings                     | 73.1% |
| 14 | <i>Atau alam mulai enggan bersahabat dengan kita</i>    | Nature’s rejection of human behavior                                  | 61.5% |

The analysis of student responses reveals a diverse range of interpretations toward the lyrics of “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade. This variation is largely attributed to the figurative quality of the song, which employs symbolic and metaphorical language rather than straightforward, literal expression. Such literary devices naturally invite individual reflection and interpretation, allowing each listener to engage with the text based on their personal experiences, emotional responses, and sociocultural backgrounds.

The data presented in the interpretation table underscores this point. Several lines were commonly associated with emotional and philosophical themes. For example, 73.1% of participants interpreted the line “Perjalanan ini terasa sangat menyedihkan” as a depiction of a painful life journey, while 53.8% saw “Tubuhku terguncang dihempas batu jalanan” as a metaphor for enduring hardship. Emotional depth was further recognized in the line “Gembala kecil menangis sedih”, which 61.5% of respondents saw as representing a child suffering from tragedy. The highest agreement (84.6%) appeared in the interpretation of “Bapak ibunya telah lama mati, ditelan bencana tanah ini” as a direct representation of the destructive impact of natural disasters on families.

More abstract and philosophical interpretations were evident in lines such as “Tinggal aku sendiri terpaku menatap langit” and “Mungkin Tuhan mulai bosan melihat tingkah kita”, which were perceived by 65.4% of participants as expressing spiritual questioning and critique of human morality. Similarly, 61.5% associated “Atau alam mulai enggan bersahabat dengan kita” with environmental rejection, highlighting ecological and ethical concerns embedded in the lyrics.

These findings suggest that the song’s figurative expressions are effective in provoking empathy and raising awareness of broader issues such as natural disaster, social responsibility, and environmental

degradation. The metaphors within the lyrics serve not only as poetic devices but also as tools for personal and collective reflection.

Students were able to connect deeply with the messages, indicating a high level of engagement and interpretive skill.

From an educational perspective, the results of this study offer meaningful implications for literature and language teaching. Song lyrics, particularly those rich in figurative language, can be powerful materials for developing students’ interpretive abilities, cultural literacy, and critical thinking. In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, such texts can bridge linguistic learning with emotional and social awareness, enriching the classroom experience through interdisciplinary engagement.

## **Discussion**

The interpretation results from the participants indicate that figurative language in the song “Berita Kepada Kawan” plays a crucial role in shaping emotional and reflective responses. The students were not only able to identify various figures of speech but also connected them to broader social and emotional contexts. This suggests that figurative language in song lyrics can serve as a medium for expressing complex realities such as grief, disaster, and moral questioning.

A notable finding is the emotional depth that many respondents experienced while analyzing the lyrics. Feelings of sadness, empathy, and introspection emerged strongly, showing that the song’s figurative expressions were effective in stirring emotional engagement. Phrases describing suffering, natural disaster, and moral crisis were consistently interpreted in ways that reflect both individual and collective experiences, especially within the Indonesian context.

Furthermore, the variety of interpretations presented by participants shows how figurative language opens space for multiple layers of meaning. Each student brought their own perspective, influenced by personal background, sensitivity, and understanding of language. This diversity in interpretation highlights the richness of figurative expression and how it invites deeper thought rather than offering fixed or singular meanings.

Some lines were interpreted as reflections on spiritual disconnection, environmental crisis, and societal decay. These interpretations reveal that the song’s figurative language extends beyond aesthetic value—it also acts as a form of subtle critique and philosophical exploration. Through poetic language, the song communicates messages that encourage listeners to think critically about human behavior and its consequences.

Educationally, this demonstrates the potential of music—especially lyric-based texts—as an effective learning tool in literature and language studies. When students engage with such content, they practice both linguistic analysis and emotional interpretation, which are essential skills for deeper literacy. In this context, song lyrics become not just entertainment, but a bridge between language learning, cultural understanding, and personal reflection.

Ultimately, the findings confirm that figurative language enhances not only the beauty of a text but also its ability to communicate profound and relevant messages. The students’ responses show an encouraging level of interpretive thinking, which suggests that integrating musical texts in academic settings can foster critical engagement and a richer appreciation for literature.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored how students from the English Literature Department at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung interpret the figurative language found in the song “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade. The findings revealed that figurative expressions in the song are not only artistically rich but also deeply resonant on emotional, social, and philosophical levels. Students were able to identify and interpret various metaphors and symbolic phrases, often linking them to broader issues such as natural disasters, moral decline, and spiritual questioning. These interpretations underscore the song’s potential as a reflective and educational literary text.

The value of this research lies in its demonstration of how music, particularly lyrics laden with figurative language, can be a powerful medium for developing interpretive skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness in literature studies. It also shows that students, when given the opportunity, can critically engage with artistic texts and draw meaningful insights from them.

However, this study is not without limitations. The participant group was relatively small and homogeneous, limited to students from one academic program and institution. This may influence the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, since the data collection relied solely on written responses via an online form, deeper layers of interpretation that might emerge through discussion or interviews could not be fully captured.

For future research, it is recommended to involve a more diverse sample, including students from different universities or cultural backgrounds, to compare how figurative language is interpreted across contexts. Further studies could also use mixed methods, combining qualitative interpretation with in-depth interviews or focus groups to gain richer, more nuanced insights. Expanding the scope to include other songs or genres may also contribute to a broader understanding of how figurative language functions in musical literature and its role in shaping public consciousness.

In conclusion, this research highlights the significance of integrating music and figurative analysis into literary education, not only to enhance linguistic competence but also to foster critical and empathetic engagement with texts that reflect real-world issues.

## REFERENCES

- Djojoseuroto, K. (2021). *Filsafat Bahasa*.
- Eldh, A. C., Årestedt, L., & Berterö, C. (2020). Quotations in Qualitative Studies: Reflections on Constituents, Custom, and Purpose. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920969268>
- JAMES JOYCE Yusniati Sabata, B., Ahmad Dahlan, J. K., & Kabupaten Banggai, L. (n.d.). PHATIC FUNCTION IN THE NOVEL “A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN.” <http://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/>
- Julianto IR. (2023). *Diksi, Gaya Bahasa, Dan Citraan Lirik Lagu Para Pencari-Mu Karya Ungu (Kajian Stilistika)*.
- Maghfiroh, D. P., & Muzaka, M. (n.d.). Language Style in The Lyrics of The Song “Berita Kepada Kawan” by Ebiet G. Ade.
- Mogea, T., & Reynaldo Joshua, S. (2022). LITERACY: International Scientific Journals Of Social, Education and Humaniora Figurative Language as Reflected in Worthsworth’s Resolution and

- Independence. <http://jurnal-stiepari.ac.id/index.php/LITERACY>
- Susanthi, I. G. A. A. D., Muliawan, M. S. D., & Suarjaya, A. A. G. (2021). The Language Functions Used in Guiding Conversation: Pragmatics Approach. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 7(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.7.1.2903.1-9>
- Umbas, R., & Jayantini, I. G. A. S. R. (2021). Diction and Message Logic in the Podcast of Deddy Corbuzier in Episode “Malih, Pesan Pedas Tuk Ade Londok.” *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa*, 7(1), 50–57. <https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.7.1.2902.50-57>
- Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S., & Young, T. (2018). Characterising and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: Systematic analysis of qualitative health research over a 15-year period. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>