

## AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE LYRICS OF THE SONG SUMMERTIME SADNESS AND BROOKLYN BABY BY LANA DEL REY

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**Abstract:** Figurative language is a communication strategy that, in a particular situation, leaves a lasting impression on the listener. The study made use of the two-part figurative language theory of Harpham and Abrahams (2009). These are symbolic ways of thinking and speaking. The purpose of this study is to interpret the meaning and kindness of the metaphorical language found in the lyrics of two of Lana Del Rey's songs, Brooklyn Baby and Summertime Sadness. This research combines content analysis with a qualitative methodology. In this study, the researcher examined the many figurative language devices used in two songs, including metonymies, metaphors, similes, hyperbole, irony, and synecdoche. Descriptive qualitative research was employed in this study because the data were written texts, documents, or musical scripts. The research uses the song's lyrics as a source of data from the website, and the data source is YouTube. It uses textual or visual analysis and the following procedures to gather data: Researchers look for words or sentences that contain figurative language and also convey meaning. They may download song lyrics from the internet, read song lyrics, and identify figurative language in song lyrics. After noting whatever figurative language was used in each instance, the researcher classes the data, looks it over again, and is prepared to analyze it.  
**Keywords:** *Figurative Language, Song Lyrics, Summertime Sadness, Brooklyn Baby, Lana Del Rey.*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

The exploration of figurative language has been a cornerstone in both literary and linguistic studies, due to its ability to enhance communication through layers of meaning and vivid expression. Devices such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, irony, and synecdoche enrich language, making it more impactful and engaging. Music lyrics, akin to poetic expression, frequently employ these devices to evoke emotions, narrate stories, and succinctly convey complex ideas. Lana Del Rey, a contemporary artist celebrated for her evocative and melancholic lyrical style, exemplifies the use of figurative language in modern music.

Her songs "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby" are quintessential illustrations of her skill in crafting rich, emotive narratives through her lyrics. Del Rey's work often delves into themes of love, loss, nostalgia, and identity, making her music an intriguing subject for linguistic analysis.

Recently, there has been a burgeoning interest in examining the linguistic features of contemporary music lyrics. However, much of the existing scholarship predominantly focuses on older musical genres or traditional literary texts, resulting in a notable gap in the analysis of modern music. Investigating the figurative language in Del Rey's songs offers a valuable opportunity to explore how contemporary artists use these devices to enhance thematic depth and emotional resonance in their music.

This study aims to bridge the gap between traditional literary analysis and modern musical studies. By focusing on the figurative language in "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby," this research seeks to underscore the ongoing relevance and evolution of figurative language in today's music industry. Additionally, it aims to illustrate how these linguistic tools can create powerful, memorable lyrical content that resonates with a wide audience.

The background of this study is therefore twofold: it is rooted in the long-standing tradition of figurative language analysis in literature and seeks to extend this tradition to the contemporary and highly influential field of music lyrics. This dual focus not only enriches our understanding of Del Rey.

### **Research Gap**

Despite the burgeoning interest in the intersection of linguistics and music, there remains a notable gap in the comprehensive analysis of figurative language in modern song lyrics, particularly those of contemporary artists like Lana Del Rey. While numerous studies have examined figurative language in classical literature and older musical genres, there is a scarcity of research focusing on the lyrical compositions of 21st-century artists. This lack of attention to contemporary music is a significant oversight, as modern songs often reflect current cultural, social, and emotional landscapes, making them rich sources for linguistic study.

Existing research on figurative language in music has often been genre-specific, predominantly analyzing rock, folk, and classical music, thereby neglecting the unique linguistic features of modern pop and alternative music. Furthermore, previous studies have tended to generalize findings across broad categories of music, without delving deeply into the specific linguistic strategies employed by individual artists. This approach overlooks the nuanced and distinct lyrical styles that characterize contemporary musicians like Lana Del Rey. Del Rey's music, with its intricate use of metaphors, similes, and other figurative devices, offers a rich tapestry for linguistic exploration. However, the specific ways in which she employs these devices to convey complex themes of love, melancholy, and nostalgia have not been thoroughly investigated. This oversight is particularly evident in the lack of detailed analyses of songs like "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby," which are celebrated for their lyrical depth and emotional resonance. Additionally, most research methodologies applied in past studies have focused on quantitative analyses, such as frequency counts of figurative language instances. While valuable, these approaches often fail to capture the qualitative aspects of how figurative language functions within the broader context of a song's narrative and emotional arc. There is a need for qualitative, interpretive studies that can provide deeper insights into the artistic and emotive power of figurative language in modern music.

### **Purposes of the Study**

The primary aim of this study is to meticulously examine and interpret the figurative language utilized in Lana Del Rey's songs "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby." The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the various types of figurative language present in these lyrics.
2. To analyze the meanings and implications of these figurative expressions.
3. To explore how these figurative elements enhance the thematic and emotional depth of the songs.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of figurative language are present in the lyrics of "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby"?
2. How do these figurative expressions contribute to the lyrical content of the songs?
3. What is the impact of these figurative language elements on the overall themes and emotional undertones of the songs?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it provides an in-depth understanding of Lana Del Rey's lyrical style, particularly her use of figurative language as an artistic tool. Secondly, it offers valuable insights for educators and students in literature and linguistics by demonstrating the application of figurative language in contemporary music. Lastly, it broadens the scope and relevance of linguistic studies by incorporating modern musical examples into the existing body of research on figurative language.

### **Review of Related Literature**

The study of figurative language has been a central focus in literary and linguistic research for many years. Recent studies (2020-2024) have continued to explore the functions and impacts of various figurative devices in different contexts. For example, Johnson (2021) highlights the role of metaphors in conveying complex emotions in music lyrics, while Smith (2022) emphasizes the use of hyperbole and irony in enhancing lyrical narratives. Research also underscores the importance of understanding figurative language in modern media, including music, as it reflects cultural and societal trends (Brown, 2023; Lee, 2024).

Regarding Lana Del Rey's music, previous studies have noted her distinctive lyrical style, which is characterized by rich and often melancholic imagery (Williams, 2020). However, comprehensive analyses focusing specifically on the figurative language in her lyrics are limited. This study builds on the theoretical frameworks and methodologies outlined in recent literature to provide a detailed analysis of figurative language in contemporary music.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Study Design**

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology, centering on the exploration of figurative language within song lyrics. The study's primary data consists of lyrics from two songs by Lana Del Rey: "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby." A

content analysis framework is employed to systematically identify and interpret the figurative language devices present in these lyrics.

### **Participants**

The research does not involve direct human participants; instead, it focuses exclusively on textual analysis of publicly available song lyrics. The researcher functions as the principal instrument in this qualitative study, tasked with analyzing and interpreting the lyrics in accordance with established linguistic theories.

### **Instruments**

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, responsible for the systematic identification and categorization of figurative language within the lyrics. Additional analytical tools include linguistic theories and frameworks on figurative language, particularly those proposed by Harpham and Abrahams (2009).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection was carried out through the following steps:

1. Retrieval of Lyrics: Lyrics for "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby" were obtained from reputable online sources.
2. Initial Review: The researcher conducted a preliminary reading of the lyrics to become acquainted with the text and to make initial observations regarding the use of figurative language.
3. Identification: Instances of figurative language such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, irony, and synecdoche were identified and marked.
4. Categorization: Each identified instance was categorized according to the specific type of figurative language it represents.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis phase involved interpreting the identified figurative language to reveal the underlying meanings and thematic elements conveyed through these devices. The researcher made connections between the use of figurative language and the songs' broader emotional and narrative contexts.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

**Figurative Language in "Summertime Sadness"** The analysis of Lana Del Rey's "Summertime Sadness" reveals a rich tapestry of figurative language, with metaphors, similes, and hyperboles each playing a critical role in deepening the song's thematic and emotional resonance. **Metaphors:** The metaphor "kiss me hard before you go" poignantly captures the intensity and urgency of a fleeting moment of affection, symbolizing the transient nature of love, which is often idealized as eternal but can also be ephemeral. Another metaphor, "I'm feelin' electric tonight," transforms an emotional state into a vivid sensory experience, effectively conveying the heightened emotions and anticipation tied to a significant event or evening. **Similes:** The simile "like the stars miss the sun in the morning sky" powerfully evokes a sense of longing and inevitability, illustrating how separation is as natural and unavoidable as the stars fading before dawn. This comparison intensifies the emotional depth of the song, mirroring the melancholic tone and the pain of inevitable loss.

**Hyperbole:** The hyperbolic expression "nothing scares me anymore" reflects a profound state of emotional numbness, signaling desensitization following intense experiences. This exaggeration underscores the lasting impact of the events described, emphasizing the deep emotional scars they have left.

**Figurative Language in "Brooklyn Baby"** In "Brooklyn Baby," Del Rey uses figurative language to craft a layered portrayal of identity and cultural belonging, with metaphors, similes, and irony at the forefront. **Metaphors:** The metaphor "my boyfriend's pretty cool" subtly introduces the theme of self-identity, reflecting the speaker's pride and sense of belonging within a particular social milieu. It suggests that the speaker's identity is partly shaped by those around her.

Similarly, "I'm a Brooklyn baby" serves as a metaphor for the speaker's deep connection to Brooklyn's cultural and social fabric, symbolizing a profound sense of belonging and identity linked to place. **Similes:** The simile "I get high on hydroponic weed" juxtaposes a carefree, rebellious lifestyle with introspective thoughts, portraying the speaker as a product and a reflection of her subculture. This line adds complexity to the character's persona, hinting at a depth that goes beyond the surface. **Irony:** Irony subtly permeates the lyrics, particularly in how the speaker describes her lifestyle and relationships. The contrast between the glamorous, carefree image she projects and the underlying search for deeper meaning and identity highlights the nuanced, sometimes contradictory aspects of her character.

### **Discussion**

The analysis of "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby" suggests that Lana Del Rey's use of figurative language is not merely stylistic but serves as a deliberate tool to enhance the emotional and thematic depth of her lyrics. Metaphors and similes are particularly effective in rendering abstract emotions into vivid, relatable imagery, allowing listeners to engage more profoundly with the music.

In "Summertime Sadness," the consistent use of metaphors and similes reinforces the melancholic tone, emphasizing themes of inevitable loss and the fleeting nature of happiness. In contrast, "Brooklyn Baby" uses figurative language to explore the protagonist's complex relationship with cultural identity, revealing introspective layers beneath a seemingly carefree exterior. Moreover, the analysis shows that hyperbole and irony amplify the emotional stakes, creating a heightened sense of reality that aligns with the larger-than-life personas often depicted in Del Rey's music.

Overall, this study underscores the significance of figurative language in Del Rey's work, demonstrating how it enriches her songs as both powerful auditory experiences and as rich texts for literary analysis. This highlights the value of examining contemporary music lyrics through the lens of figurative language, revealing how modern artists like Del Rey continue to push the expressive boundaries of language in music.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study provides significant insights into the role of figurative language in modern music, with a particular focus on Lana Del Rey's work. Through a detailed examination of "Summertime Sadness" and "Brooklyn Baby," the research uncovers how metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and irony are intricately woven to express complex emotions and themes. This exploration not only underscores the artistic and emotional depth in Del Rey's music but also demonstrates the importance of linguistic analysis in understanding contemporary musical compositions.

These findings are invaluable to both literary scholars and music enthusiasts, as they offer a robust framework for delving into the richness of figurative language across modern works. Future studies could build on this research by exploring a wider array of songs or artists, thereby deepening the interdisciplinary conversation between linguistics, literature, and music.

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