

## Foregrounding In Expressing Melancholy And Nostalgia In Lana Del Rey's Song Lyrics

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### Abstract

*This study discusses foregrounding in expressing melancholy and nostalgia in Lana Del Rey's song lyrics. Although many studies have analyzed figurative language in song lyrics, few have focused on foregrounding as the main analytical framework. This study aims to identify the forms and functions of foregrounding in the songs The Greatest and Happiness Is a Butterfly. This research applies a descriptive qualitative method based on Geoffrey Leech's (1969) theory of foregrounding. The findings show that foregrounding is realized through semantic deviation and parallelism. Semantic deviation appears through figurative expressions and is more dominant, functioning to construct melancholy, while parallelism appears through repetition and functions to construct nostalgia. In conclusion, this study shows that foregrounding plays an important role in expressing emotional meanings in song lyrics through non-literal and patterned language. This study contributes to stylistic analysis by explaining how linguistic features construct emotional meaning in contemporary song lyrics.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language has an important role as a means of communication that allows individuals to express ideas, thoughts, and emotions in everyday interaction. According to (Benany, 2020), language can be understood as a system used by individuals to convey meaning and understand each other in communication. The scientific study of language is known as linguistics. According to (Sinaga, 2020), linguistics is a systematic and scientific study that aims to analyze language in terms of structure, meaning, and use. In addition, (Zumrad & Feruza, 2022) state that linguistics includes the analysis of linguistic forms, structures, and contexts in communication.

One of the branches of linguistics is stylistics. Stylistics focuses on how language is used creatively to produce certain effects in texts. According to Leech (1969), stylistics examines the relationship between linguistic form and literary function, especially in how meaning is foregrounded through language. In stylistics, meaning is not only conveyed literally, but also through patterns such as deviation and repetition which make certain elements more prominent.

Foregrounding is one of the central concepts in stylistics. According to Leech (1969), foregrounding refers to the use of linguistic features that deviate from or repeat normal language patterns in order to attract attention and emphasize meaning. Foregrounding is realized through two main mechanisms, namely deviation and parallelism. Deviation involves the use of non-literal or

unusual expressions, while parallelism refers to repetition of words, phrases, or structures to emphasize meaning.

Song lyrics can be considered as a form of literary text because they use figurative language, imagery, and repetition to express meaning. Similar to poetry, song lyrics often convey emotional experiences indirectly. Emotional themes such as melancholy and nostalgia are commonly expressed through stylistic patterns rather than direct statements. One of the artists whose song lyrics strongly reflect these characteristics is Lana Del Rey, whose songs are known for their melancholic tone, nostalgic themes, and expressive language.

Previous studies have analyzed language use in song lyrics from various perspectives. (Amelia Agustin et al., 2021) analyzed slang in song lyrics and found that informal language reflects social identity and emotional expression. (Munthe et al., 2023) also found that linguistic variation in song lyrics plays an important role in conveying meaning and emotion. However, most of these studies focus only on identifying types of language features without analyzing how these features function as foregrounding mechanisms.

Although there have been many studies on figurative language and stylistic features in song lyrics, there has been no study that specifically analyzes foregrounding in expressing melancholy and nostalgia in the selected songs. This shows that there is still a gap in stylistic studies, particularly in understanding how semantic deviation and parallelism function in constructing emotional meaning.

Based on the explanation above, the problem of this study can be formulated as follows: (1) What types of foregrounding are found in the song lyrics? (2) How do these foregrounding features express melancholy and nostalgia? The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the use of foregrounding in expressing melancholy and nostalgia in the songs *The Greatest* and *Happiness Is a Butterfly*.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This method is appropriate for this study because it analyzes linguistic features in song lyrics, particularly foregrounding in expressing emotional meanings such as melancholy and nostalgia.

The data of this study consist of words, phrases, and lines that contain foregrounding features, namely semantic deviation and parallelism. The data are taken from two songs by Lana Del Rey entitled "*The Greatest*" and "*Happiness Is a Butterfly*." These songs are selected because they reflect emotional themes relevant to the focus of this study. The lyrics are used as the primary data source and are analyzed as written texts.

In collecting the data, several steps are applied. First, the researcher listens to the selected songs repeatedly to understand the context and emotional meaning. Second, the lyrics are transcribed and verified to ensure accuracy. Third, the researcher identifies and selects linguistic units that contain foregrounding features. Finally, the selected data are categorized based on the type of foregrounding.

The data are analyzed using Geoffrey Leech's (1969) theory of foregrounding. The analysis is conducted through several stages. First, the identified data are classified into types of foregrounding, namely semantic deviation and parallelism. Second, each datum is described based on its linguistic characteristics. Third, the data are interpreted to explain how these foregrounding features function in expressing melancholy and nostalgia. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the study.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are presented in the following table:

No	Data (Lyrics)	Type of Foregrounding	Emotional Meaning	Interpretation
1	I'm burned out after all	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	"Burned out" metaphorically expresses emotional exhaustion.
2	The greatest loss of them all	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Hyperbole intensifies the feeling of loss.
3	I guess I'm signing off after all	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Indicates emotional withdrawal and resignation.
4	"Life on Mars" ain't just a song	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Symbolizes escapism and dissatisfaction with reality.
5	Happiness is a butterfly	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Metaphor showing fragility of happiness.
6	It escapes from my hands into moonlight	Semantic Deviation	Nostalgia	Suggests loss of something intangible and fleeting.
7	If he's a serial killer, then what's the worst	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Hyperbolic framing of emotional risk.
8	That could happen to a girl who's already hurt?	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Highlights vulnerability through exaggeration.
9	If he's as bad as they say, then I guess I'm cursed	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	"Cursed" metaphorically expresses helplessness.
10	Looking into his eyes, I think he's already hurt	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Emotional projection through figurative meaning.
11	I miss Long Beach and I miss you babe	Parallelism	Nostalgia	Repetition of "I miss" emphasizes longing.

12	I miss New York and I miss the music	Parallelism	Nostalgia	Reinforces emotional attachment to the past.
13	The culture is lit and I had a ball	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Informal exaggeration creates ironic contrast.
14	The culture is lit / And if this is it / I had a ball	Parallelism	Melancholy	Structural repetition foregrounds resignation.
15	Those nights were on fire	Semantic Deviation	Nostalgia	Metaphor intensifies past emotional experiences.
16	We couldn't get higher	Semantic Deviation	Nostalgia	Figurative expression of emotional peak.
17	L.A. is in flames, it's getting hot	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Symbolic imagery of chaos and instability.
18	Kanye West is blond and gone	Semantic Deviation	Melancholy	Represents cultural loss and change.
19	I said, "don't be a jerk, don't call me a taxi"	Parallelism	Melancholy	Repetition emphasizes emotional resistance.
20	I just wanna dance with you / I just wanna dance with you	Parallelism	Nostalgia	Repetition foregrounds desire and emotional attachment.

**Explanation :**

Foregrounding in the song lyrics is realized through semantic deviation and parallelism, which function in expressing emotional meanings such as melancholy and nostalgia.

**Data 3:** "I'm burned out after all"

**Context:** This expression appears when the speaker reflects emotional exhaustion after experiencing various life situations.

**Interpretation:** The phrase "burned out" does not refer to literal burning but emotional fatigue. This semantic deviation foregrounds psychological exhaustion and constructs melancholy.

**Data 7:** "Happiness is a butterfly"

**Context:** This line describes happiness in a symbolic way within the song.

**Interpretation:** The metaphor represents happiness as fragile and difficult to capture. This semantic deviation foregrounds the fleeting nature of happiness and expresses melancholy.

**Data 1:** “I miss Long Beach and I miss you babe”

**Context:** The speaker expresses longing for both a place and a person.

**Interpretation:** The repetition of “I miss” shows parallelism, which emphasizes emotional longing. This pattern foregrounds nostalgia.

**Data 10:** “I just wanna dance with you”

**Context:** This line is repeated several times in the song.

**Interpretation:** The repetition highlights desire and emotional attachment. This parallelism foregrounds nostalgia and emotional persistence.

Overall, semantic deviation is more dominant and mainly expresses melancholy, while parallelism is used to emphasize nostalgia. Both mechanisms work together in constructing emotional meaning in the song lyrics.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the use of foregrounding in expressing melancholy and nostalgia in Lana Del Rey’s song lyrics, specifically in the songs “*The Greatest*” and “*Happiness Is a Butterfly*.” The analysis is based on Geoffrey Leech’s (1969) theory of foregrounding, which includes semantic deviation and parallelism.

The findings reveal that there are 20 data containing foregrounding features. These are classified into two main types, namely semantic deviation and parallelism. Semantic deviation is the most dominant type with 15 data, while parallelism appears in 5 data. This indicates that figurative language is more frequently used in constructing emotional meaning in the lyrics.

Semantic deviation is realized through metaphor, hyperbole, and symbolic expressions, which function to create unexpected meanings and intensify emotional expression. This type is mainly used to construct melancholy, as it reflects emotional states such as exhaustion, loss, vulnerability, and dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, parallelism is realized through repetition of words and sentence structures, which functions to emphasize meaning and reinforce emotional expression. Parallelism is mainly used to construct nostalgia, as it highlights memory, longing, and emotional attachment to past experiences.

In addition, both semantic deviation and parallelism may overlap in expressing emotional meaning, showing that emotional expression in song lyrics is dynamic and complex. Overall, foregrounding serves as an effective stylistic strategy in conveying emotional meanings, particularly melancholy and nostalgia, in a powerful and expressive way.

This study contributes to stylistic analysis by providing insights into how linguistic features are used creatively in song lyrics. It is expected that this study can be used as a reference for further research in the field of stylistics, especially in analyzing emotional expression in literary texts.

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