

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical foundations and previous studies relevant to this research. It discusses Systemic Functional Linguistics, Appraisal Theory, indicators of interpretation, Audience Reception Theory, and Personality Construction to explain how evaluative language conveys emotional meaning and personality in song lyrics. These frameworks support the analysis of how listeners of Eaj interpret personality and life experiences in the EP *When the Rain Stopped Following Me*.

2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday, perceives language as a social semiotic system employed to generate meaning within particular social situations. SFL asserts that each text fulfills three primary metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction pertains to the depiction of experiences and reality, the interpersonal metafunction emphasizes social relationships and the speaker's disposition, whilst the textual metafunction governs the coherent and cohesive structuring of texts. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) offers a conceptual framework for analyzing how life experiences, emotions, and social interactions are articulated through linguistic structures in song lyrics (Nabilah et al., 2025).

Previous studies indicate that the SFL approach is extensively employed in the analysis of literary texts and song lyrics owing to its capacity to connect linguistic structure with social function. Pascua (2024) demonstrates that an investigation of interpersonal metafunction in song lyrics can elucidate the interaction between authors and listeners via mood, modality, and particular lexical selections. Consequently, SFL not only theoretically endorses Appraisal Theory but also enhances the understanding of the construction and communication of emotional and social meanings in song lyrics to the audience.

2.2 Appraisal Theory in Systemic Functional Linguistics

Appraisal Theory is the main framework in this study because it specifically discusses how language is used to express the speaker's attitude, evaluation, and position towards a phenomenon. This theory, developed by Martin and White (2005), emphasizes that evaluative meaning in texts is not neutral, but rather reflects emotional attitudes, social judgments, and appreciation of specific objects or events. In the context of song lyrics, Appraisal Theory is highly relevant because lyrics often serve as a medium for expressing the songwriter's personal feelings, life experiences, and subjective judgments, which are then interpreted by the audience (Yuningsih, 2018). Through the Attitude system, which includes Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, this theory allows researchers to identify how emotions and values are expressed linguistically in musical texts.

Prior research has demonstrated that Appraisal Theory is proficient in examining interpersonal meaning within song lyrics and popular culture texts. Maisaroh (2024) demonstrates that evaluative expressions in fandom writings and musical lyrics significantly influence the emotional engagement of the audience. Additional research corroborates that Appraisal Theory can elucidate how specific lexical selections either amplify or diminish the emotional sentiments expressed in songs, therefore affecting listeners' interpretations of the messages and identities formulated through lyrics (Yuningsih, 2018). Consequently, Appraisal Theory serves as the primary basis for examining how language evaluation in song lyrics influences audience interpretation.

2.3 Indicator of Interpretation in Appraisal Theory

In evaluative linguistic studies, audience interpretation is understood as a meaning-making process shaped by linguistic and experiential factors. Appraisal Theory identifies three main categories of evaluation in texts: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. These categories function as analytical lenses to understand how emotional meaning, character evaluation, and life experiences are constructed and interpreted through language (Tarigan et al., 2022)

In this study, these categories are not treated as analytical lenses. Instead, they guide the development of open-ended questions and support the thematic coding of participants' responses. Through this framework, the researcher explores how listeners interpret personality, mental struggle, and lived experiences represented in song lyrics.

1. Affect as an Indicator of Emotional Evaluation

Affect refers to the expression and interpretation of emotions, both positive and negative, in language. In the context of song lyrics, affect helps explain how listeners recognize, relate to, and respond emotionally to the feelings conveyed in the text (Sihombing et al., 2025).

In this study, Affect is used to guide interpretation through several interconnected variables in the interpretative framework. First, Lyric Comprehension (PLC) (González, 2021) functions as the foundational stage of affective interpretation, as emotional evaluation requires adequate understanding of lyrical meaning. Second, Narrative Transportation (NT) (Frank & Falzone, 2021) reflects the extent to which listeners feel emotionally immersed in the narrative world of the song. Finally, the Outcome variable (empathy, reflection, and supportive intention), adapted from Kresovich (2022), represents the emotional consequences of lyrical interpretation. Therefore, affect in this study encompasses emotional recognition (PLC), emotional immersion (NT), and emotional response (Outcome).

2. Judgment as an Indicator of Personality and Character Evaluation

Judgment concerns the evaluation of character, behavior, and moral qualities expressed through language. In media texts such as song lyrics, listeners often infer personality traits, authenticity, and moral stance from the way life experiences are narrated (Utari et al., 2025). In this study, Judgment is used as a framework to analyze how fans perceive the songwriter's personality and character. The focus is placed on how participants describe traits such as honesty, resilience, vulnerability, or authenticity in their own words. These interpretations are examined

thematically to understand how personality is perceived through audience reception rather than statistically measured.

Judgment is operationalized through Perceived Authenticity/Self-disclosure (PA) (Jiang et al., 2022) and Parasocial Relationship (PSR) (Chung & Cho, 2017). PA captures listeners' evaluation of the songwriter's sincerity, vulnerability, and credibility based on lyrical self-disclosure. Meanwhile, PSR reflects the relational outcome of these character evaluations, as positive judgments of authenticity may strengthen perceived closeness and trust. In addition, Perceived Personality and Lived-Experience Inference (PII, the abbreviation is retained from the construct's original formulation) partially overlaps with Judgment when listeners infer personality traits or psychological characteristics from the lyrics. Thus, Judgment in this study reflects evaluative interpretations of the songwriter's personality and moral character.

3. Appreciation as an Indicator of Life Experience Evaluation

Appreciation refers to the evaluation of events, experiences, or phenomena based on their perceived value, significance, or impact. In song reception, Appreciation helps explain how listeners assess the meaning and depth of the life experiences represented in the lyrics (Jin & Ruan, 2023).

In this research, Appreciation is primarily operationalized through Perceived Personality and Lived-Experience Inference (PII) and supported by Lyric Comprehension (PLC). While PLC ensures that listeners understand the experiential content of the lyrics (González, 2021), PII measures whether listeners evaluate the songwriter's lived experiences and mental struggles as meaningful, significant, and reflective of authentic life realities (Kresovich, 2022). Therefore, Appreciation captures the evaluative assessment of experiential meaning constructed through the lyrics.

The three categories Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation are consistently used in evaluative linguistic research to examine interpersonal meaning in texts. In this study, they function as an interpretative framework that

supports thematic coding and in-depth analysis of fans' narratives. Through this qualitative approach, the focus is placed on exploring patterns of meaning construction rather than measuring predetermined constructs.

2.4 Audience Reception Theory

Audience Reception Theory, specifically the Encoding–Decoding model introduced by Stuart Hall, asserts that the meaning of a book is not only dictated by the author, but is instead constructed through an active interpretative process by the audience. Hall posits that audiences can understand texts through three primary positions: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings. This idea is pertinent to song lyric analysis as listeners possess varying social, cultural, and personal backgrounds, leading to varied interpretations of the same message (Xie et al., 2022)

Prior investigations in media studies indicate that audience reception is shaped by social environment and personal experience. (Aladdin, 2025) discovered that audiences do not merely absorb media messages passively; they actively interpret meaning according to their own beliefs and viewpoints. This study uses Audience Reception Theory to elucidate how audiences understand the evaluations and emotions embedded in song lyrics, highlighting the variability of meanings among listeners.

2.5 Personality Construction in Media Text

The theory of personality perception in media studies posits that individual character impressions are formed and inferred through linguistic representations in media texts, such as music and song lyrics. Boyd and Pennebaker (2017) demonstrate that language use is a reliable and internally consistent indicator of personality, allowing perceivers to form accurate trait impressions of a person from their words alone, even without direct acquaintance. Language not only mirrors personality but also shapes how it is perceived through narratives, assessments, and representations of life experiences (Pryma et al., 2024). In the realm of song lyrics, the personalities of songwriters and listeners can engage with

one another through the meanings embedded in the language; indeed, linguistic cues embedded in song lyrics specifically have been shown to carry recognisable personality signals to listeners (Qiu et al., 2019).

Previous studies have shown that linguistic factors including word choice, metaphors, and evaluative phrases are significant in signalling emotional disposition and character traits in media texts. A study by (Pryma et al., 2024) affirms that such traits in media texts are conveyed through coherent and significant language tactics. Consequently, personality perception theory serves as a foundational framework in this study to elucidate how linguistic assessment in song lyrics influences audiences' perception of the artist's personality.

Because the present study concerns a media figure who has publicly transitioned from an idol-group member to an independent solo artist, personality perception here also intersects with theories of persona and self-presentation specific to the idol context. Goffman's (1959) foundational account of self-presentation distinguishes a front-stage, performed persona from a back-stage, private self, a distinction extended to the K-pop idol context by Peinado and Shim (2024), who show that idols manage a dual self-presentation on social media, an official or branded 'reel' image and a more personal 'real' self, and that fans read authenticity claims by comparing the two. In this study, fans' perception of Eaj's personality can be understood as an attempt to locate this 'real' self behind the persona once required by his idol career, so that lyrical disclosures of guilt, apology, and vulnerability are read as evidence of the artist stepping outside the curated idol persona and toward a more authentic, post-idol self-presentation.

2.6 Previous Studies

Previous research shows that song lyrics play an important role in shaping listeners' emotional meanings and identities. González (2021) explains that song lyrics serve as a symbolic source that allows listeners, especially the younger generation, to interpret emotional experiences and build an understanding of themselves. These findings indicate that lyrics not only serve as entertainment, but also as a medium for personal

reflection that helps listeners relate the message of a song to their life experiences.

From a linguistic perspective, the use of evaluative language in texts plays an important role in shaping audience interpretation. Jin & Ruan (2023) found that evaluative language influences how audiences understand interpersonal meaning because certain language choices can reinforce emotional interpretations and attitudes toward a text. These findings support the use of Appraisal Theory as a framework for analyzing how emotions, social judgments, and life experiences are represented and interpreted by listeners through song lyrics.

In addition, research on audience reception shows that the meaning of media texts is actively constructed by audiences based on their social backgrounds and personal experiences. Xie et al. (2022) explain that audience interpretations of media texts are influenced by social and cultural contexts, so that one text can produce different meanings for each individual. This shows that interpretations of song lyrics can vary among listeners, especially in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contexts.

Based on previous research, it can be concluded that song lyrics are linguistic texts that allow listeners to construct emotional meaning and personality through a process of interpretation influenced by language and social experience. However, research that integrates evaluative linguistic analysis with a qualitative cross-linguistic audience reception approach is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how fans interpret personality and life experiences in the lyrics of Eaj's songs in the EP *When the Rain Stopped Following Me* through an audience reception approach.