

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AND SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS IN DPR IAN'S 'SCAREDY CAT' LYRICS AND VIDEO

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**Abstract:** *The use of figurative language in songs is now widely used, and semiotic signs are also used in music videos to convey the singer's intentions. This study aims to analyze the song lyrics and music video "Scaredy Cat" by DPR IAN to determine the intended meaning of each figurative language conveyed through the lyrics and explain the verbal and visual signs in the music video through a semiotic study. This analysis uses qualitative methods to analyze the lyrics and music video. The results show figurative language, such as metaphor, repetition, hyperbole, symbolism, and simile. The study's results did not find verbal signs, but there are visual signs that have implied meanings conveyed through music videos. This research interprets that the intended meaning of the lyrics and video of "Scaredy Cat" by DPR IAN is about the anxiety of being scared to be alone.*

**Keywords:** *figurative language; visual signs; lyrics; video.*

### INTRODUCTION

People routinely communicate with others by using language to share, help, and provide ideas for others. Even if they can communicate with others regularly, some people still struggle to convey their thoughts when expressing themselves in a language. One of the problems people have with language is the use of figurative language (Alwiya Saboe, 2018). Figurative language is language used to express something beyond the literal meaning (Yusnitasari et al., 2022). According to Ibrahim Ibrahim et al. (2019), figurative language becomes necessary in song lyrics because songwriters can convey messages that show the beauty and uniqueness of the song to people who hear or read it.

According to Mayr (2013), the term semiotics (often also referred to as 'semiology') derives from the Greek word semeion, meaning 'sign'. Daniel Chandler (2007) defines semiotics as signs which take the forms of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. Semiotics signs are used by creative workers in the music video to convey the message of a song (Sagimin & Sari, 2020). According to Widiarti et al. (n.d.), humans use language to obtain information conveyed by verbal and visual signs.

DPR IAN, originally known as Christian Yu, is the CEO and Visual Director of DPR, and he gained recognition for DPR's visually striking music videos (Maylkm, 2023). He released his first solo album, "Moodswings in This Order," featuring the track "Scaredy Cat," which draws on his personal experiences. The

singer's worries and anxieties are conveyed in the lyrics of "Scaredy Cat" by DPR IAN. The song discusses worry, loneliness, and abandonment (Samuel D, n.d.).

The literature review explores theoretical frameworks of figurative language, encompassing simile, metaphor, personification, and so on (Hatch & Brown, 1995). Previous research, such as Dewi et al. (2020) and Nurchitrawati et al. (2019), has examined the use of figurative language in songs. They found that figurative language, as observed in songs like "Lose You to Love Me" and Disney movie songs, enhances the beauty and appeal of the music for listeners, and Disney songs typically convey positive emotions such as happiness and joy. Previous semiotic analyses like Sagimin & Sari (2020) and Zulkarnain & Sembiring (2023) have done the analysis on music videos. Sagimin & Sari (2020) found that the semiotic approach to the music video analysis of "Goodbye Christmas" by LAY and "Universe" by EXO consists of denotation, connotation, and myth based on Barthes' theory. Meanwhile, Zulkarnain & Sembiring (2023) found that the music video of the song "High and Low" by Unlikely Candidates uses the play of lights, property, and facial gestures as signifiers to give us the message. However, DPR IAN's "Scaredy Cat" remains unexplored in this context. Despite its potential for figurative and semiotic analysis, no prior research has delved into its use of figurative language and semiotic analysis.

This study aims to determine the intended meaning of any figurative language delivered through the lyrics of Scaredy Cat by DPR IAN.

This study also aims to analyze the verbal and visual signs in the music video of DPR IAN's Scaredy Cat.

## METHOD

The data for this research were taken from the lyrics of DPR IAN's song "Scaredy Cat," which was released on March 22, 2021. The lyrics were sourced from the website <https://genius.com/>. The data for the music video is taken from Dream Perfect Regime's YouTube video entitled "DPR IAN - Scaredy Cat." The qualitative approach was used to conduct the study in terms of data collection and data analysis to obtain the messages of the lyrics and music video. This included categorizing any figurative language used in the lyrics to understand the song's intended meaning and determining the verbal and visual signs of the music video of Scaredy Cat by DPR IAN. The data collection for analyzing the lyrics in this research followed several steps.

To begin with, the researcher collected the lyrics from the online platform. Secondly, the researcher listened to the song and read the lyrics thoroughly to understand its meaning and emotional tone. Thirdly, the researcher identified the figurative language used in the lyrics and its corresponding meanings. Lastly, the researcher examined the data, and the data analysis results were presented as a conclusion by summarizing the song based on its use of figurative language. In this study, each verse collected by the researcher is classified according to the type of figurative language. The researcher then examined and explained the song's meaning.

Then, to analyze the visual and verbal signs in the music video, the researcher used the following procedures: Firstly, the researcher will watch and re-watch the music video to get the verbal and visual signs shown in the music video. Secondly, the researcher will analyze the verbal and visual signs found in the music videos. Thirdly, the researcher will draw a conclusion from the data that has been analyzed by collecting the scenes in the music video to find the verbal and visual signs. The researcher will also interpret the meaning or message conveyed by the verbal and visual signs of the music video of Scaredy Cat by DPR IAN.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Analysis of Figurative Language and Meaning in Song Lyric "Scaredy Cat"

There were five figurative language types—metaphor, repetition, hyperbole, symbolism, and simile—found in the data from the song lyrics of "Scaredy Cat" by DPR IAN.

**Tabel 1: Types of Figurative Language in Scaredy Cat**

No.	Figurative Languages	Lyrics
1.	Metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think I'm scared of all the signs</li> <li>• I'm a scaredy cat</li> <li>• (Please) no more heart attacks</li> <li>• It's hard to breath when you're not there</li> <li>• And there are clouds in disguis</li> <li>• They might just rain on me</li> </ul>
2.	Repetition	I'm a scaredy-cat (Please) no more heart attacks I'm a scaredy-cat (Please) no more heart attacks
3.	Hyperbole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I scream out loud just to see if I'm alive</li> <li>• I find everything a nightmare</li> <li>• I'm losing my mind</li> </ul>
4.	Symbolism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• And there are clouds in disguis</li> <li>• They might just rain on me</li> </ul>
5.	Simile	But I feel like I'm disappearing in a hole

According to Tim Jensen (2019), metaphor is a comparison between two things that are otherwise unrelated. It is a way to make a comparison that suggests a similarity between two different things, often to give a more vivid or imaginative description. In simple terms, a metaphor creates a relationship between two unrelated things by stating that one thing is another, helping to convey a new meaning or understanding. In this song, six lyrics are considered metaphors.

*I think I'm scared of all the signs*

The line "I think I'm scared of all the signs" is a metaphor because it compares signs to feelings of fear. In this lyric, the singer intends to say that he is afraid of all the unknown things happening around him. He is afraid that the signs of trouble or danger that appear to warn him will make him even worse, even though it has not happened yet. The signs in this lyric are not road signs but rather signs or indications of danger that will happen later. Therefore, the singer is afraid of all the signs that occur in his life.

*I'm a scaredy cat*

The line "I'm a scaredy cat" is a metaphor because it compares a person's timidity or fearfulness to that of a cat that is easily frightened. In this lyric, the singer describes himself as easily scared, shy, always in his comfort zone, and unwilling to try new things. The term "scaredy cat" is an idiom that originated in the United States in the early 20th century and is commonly used to tease someone who is overly cautious or afraid of trying new things. It draws on the behavior of cats, known for their skittishness and tendency to run away from unfamiliar situations or loud noises. So, his fear has a nickname, scaredy cat, because it is like a scared and shy cat who always chooses the safe route or is away from danger.

*(Please) no more heart attacks*

The line "(Please) no more heart attacks" is a metaphor because it equates the emotional impact of a sad or shocking situation with a physical heart attack. In this lyric, "heart attacks" does not refer to the actual heart problem but rather to the emotional impact of an event that is so frightening that heart attacks occur. For example, when we say "my heart is broken," we mean that we are sad and do not mean that our heart is cracked. So, here, the singer is describing the pain or fear that he has experienced so far, and he hopes he does not feel this feeling again; therefore, he says, "(Please) no more heart attacks."

*It's hard to breath when you're not there*

The line "It's hard to breathe when you're not there" is a metaphor because it compares one's longing to the condition of having difficulty breathing. In this lyric, the singer intends to say that he has always depended on and relied on the presence of others to be able to feel calm and breathe normally. He shows that someone's absence can have a significant impact on him. His longing for that person means a lot to the singer because their presence is as essential as the air we breathe.

*And there are clouds in disguise*

The line "And there are clouds in disguise" is a metaphor because it describes a more profound feeling. Clouds certainly cannot disguise themselves; in this lyric, clouds seem to be hiding something, whether it is the sun or the bright blue sky. Just as we cannot see what is

behind clouds, in this lyric, the singer means that the clouds are hiding something, maybe hiding emotions or the truth. Sometimes things seem fine, but like clouds that can hide something and change, humans are the same way; therefore, the singer feels that things like this make him afraid and make it difficult for him to get out of his comfort zone.

*They might just rain on me*

The line "They might just rain on me" can be considered a metaphor and symbolism. In the context of metaphor, this line intends to compare the singer's emotional feelings with the state of the rain that is falling. In this lyric, the singer intends to show feelings of being overwhelmed by problems or overwhelming emotions, like under the rain that soaks him. Just as rain is unpredictable and uncontrollable, so are the feelings that the singer is experiencing. He cannot control his feelings that are overflowing over the problems or fears that occur. Repetition refers to words that are repeated in the text, as well as words that have changed to reflect tense or number (Fitria, 2018). It is used to emphasize a point, create rhythm, and make a speech or writing more memorable.

*I'm a scaredy-cat**(Please) no more heart attacks**I'm a scaredy-cat**(Please) no more heart attacks*

The line "I'm a scaredy-cat / (Please) no more heart attacks" repeated twice constitutes a repetition. In this case, the lines are repeated to emphasize the singer's feelings of fear and vulnerability. Repetition creates rhythm, reinforces the message, and makes the sentiment more memorable and impactful to the audience. By repeating these phrases, the singer aims to highlight the intense emotions expressed and allow the reader or listener to grasp the recurring thoughts in the singer's mind entirely.

According to Fitria (2018), hyperbole is a figure of speech that is an intentional exaggeration or overstatement for emphasis or comic effect. It is a way to make a point more dramatically by overstating or stretching the truth. In this song, there are three lyrics that are considered as hyperbole.

*I scream out loud just to see if I'm alive*

The line "I scream out loud just to see if I'm alive" is hyperbole because it is an exaggerated



or desperate statement to emphasize one's existence. In this lyric, the singer intends to transform his fear by screaming to feel something. He screams to feel and confirm that he is alive because, in another lyric, he says that he sometimes loses touch with reality, so to make sure he is alive, he screams loudly.

#### *I find everything a nightmare*

The line "I find everything a nightmare" is indeed a hyperbole, serving as an exaggerated expression of the singer's distress or difficulty in dealing with situations. It is not meant to be taken literally but amplifies the singer's strong negative emotions or reactions to certain events. By likening everything to a nightmare, the singer vividly communicates the intensity of their discomfort or unhappiness. So, while the statement suggests that everything is as terrifying as a nightmare, it is actually an exaggeration used to emphasize the singer's overwhelming sense of dread or distress.

#### *I'm losing my mind*

The line "I'm losing my mind" is hyperbole because it exaggerates the singer's situation to the point of losing his mind. The singer may have deliberately used hyperbole to convey his feelings in this lyric. The meaning of "losing my mind" is probably the singer's fearful situation of losing touch with reality due to being overwhelmed or not thinking clearly.

According to Gilad Elbom (2020), Symbolism is the idea that things represent other things. Symbolism is a tool of figurative language in which an image, object, idea, or symbol represents something other than its literal meaning. It helps convey complex ideas and emotions in a more nuanced and powerful way. Two lyrics in this song are considered symbolism.

#### *And there are clouds in disguise*

The line "And there are clouds in disguise" uses clouds as a symbol to convey a deeper meaning. In literature, clouds often represent a range of concepts, from emotions and secrets to burdens and confusion. The idea of clouds being "in disguise" suggests that they conceal something, possibly the truth or one's true feelings. This symbolism highlights how people sometimes hide their emotions or intentions, presenting a facade that does not reveal what is truly happening beneath the surface.

#### *They might just rain on me*

The line "They might just rain on me" uses rain as a symbol to convey a more profound emotional or situational meaning. Rain is often used for various things in literature (Chris Drew, 2022), such as cleansing and renewal; rain can symbolize new beginnings or the washing away of the past; sadness and melancholy, rain can symbolize feelings of grief or times of emotional turmoil, ominous premonitions, rain can foreshadow difficult times or events to come, and reflection and introspection, can encourage characters to look within themselves and reflect on their thoughts and feelings. In this lyric, the symbolism of rain is meant to show that there are problems or difficulties in the future that feel like sudden and heavy rain. Hence, the singer fears and worries that everything will fall apart and cause emotional turmoil.

A simile is a comparison of one thing with another. It is always explicit because the words like and as are commonly used as comparison words. A simile is a way to create a vivid image or express a thought more clearly by directly comparing one thing to another, often poetically or imaginatively.

#### *But I feel like I'm disappearing in a hole*

The line "But I feel like I'm disappearing in a hole" is a simile because it uses the word "like" to compare the singer's lost feeling to the act of disappearing into a hole. In this lyric, the singer intends that he loses touch with reality because of his fear, so the feeling of fear seems to control him until he does not recognize himself anymore.

## **2. The Visual Signs in The Music Video "Scaredy Cat"**

Based on the analysis from data source, here were the results of the research. There are two classifications, namely verbal and visual sign. Unfortunately, there are no verbal sign in this music video, but there are nine visual signs in this music video. The explanation of the analysis of each data were discussed in the following description.

According to Sihite et al. (2021), visual semiotics is a new semiotic branch that analyzes how visual signs or visual images convey messages. According to (Daniel Chandler, 2007), verbal sign is something that deals with the text and words. If semiotics is the study of signs

and symbols, then visual semiotics is the study of signs and symbols that we see to interpret messages in terms of signs and patterns of symbolism.



Figure. 1 Hotel Hallway

This scene shows a man whose entire body is covered by a cloth; some parts of the cloth are tightly bound, knotted and tangled, which hinders its movement in the empty hotel hallway. The walls of the hotel hallway look bumpy. These bumpy walls represent the man's internal turmoil. This symbolizes his fear of something, so he tries to escape even though it is difficult to move, and the bumpy walls around him symbolize that he cannot differ, whether it is reality or not.

The man's walk down the corridor serves as a metaphor for what it is like for people to face uncertainty. The cloth that envelops him symbolizes the veil of doubt that life places over each of us, and the tangles represent the obstacles we must overcome in order to move forward. The uneven walls serve as a reminder that our doubts and concerns frequently distort reality, and the empty hallway symbolizes the loneliness that follows our worst fears. Every faltering step he takes forth is evidence of the human spirit's resilience. He persists in the face of both visible and invisible challenges. This scene effectively illustrates the conflict between courage and fear.



Figure. 2 Under the bed

This scene in which the lyric "I'm calling from under my bed" sets a tone of urgency and fear. This scene shows a man under his bed and trying to call someone using his gun. The bed,

a symbol of rest and safety, becomes a shield under which he seeks protection. It is really ironic that he chooses to signal for help with a gun. In this setting, a gun—typically a sign of authority and power—represents his weakness and desperation. The distinction between the man's defense and his request for help seems to be blurred, as though his situation is overwhelming him. This might symbolize his hopelessness and anxiety about making the call, which is why he is doing it under his bed. Usually, people, when seeing someone using a gun, call 911, but in this scene, he is the one who has a gun but still calls 911. The way he uses his gun to call 911 might be because he may not be conscious.



Figure 3. Lying on a round table

This scene shows a man lying on a round table with his mouth duct-taped and a red flower on his chest. The roundness of the table echoes the lyric "disappearing in a hole," suggesting an abyss or void that one might fall into. The red flower resting on his chest is a poignant touch. Red flowers, particularly poppies, are often associated with remembrance and the solemnity of death. In this context, the flower serves as a silent testament to the man's demise. And his mouth that duct-taped can symbolize a literal abduction, where the man's ability to communicate was forcibly taken from him. Alternatively, it could represent a more figurative form of captivity—where the man was rendered voiceless by societal forces, personal demons, or the crushing weight of his own thoughts. The tape acts as a barrier, preventing the expression of fear, pain, or truth, leaving us to wonder about the words left unspoken and the stories untold. And the duct-taped mouth can represent a real kidnapping in which the man's speech was taken away from him by force. On the other hand, it might symbolize a more symbolic kind of captivity, in which the man was silenced by social pressures, inner spirits, or the heavy burden of his own thoughts. So, until he died, he still could not express his thoughts or what was in his head.



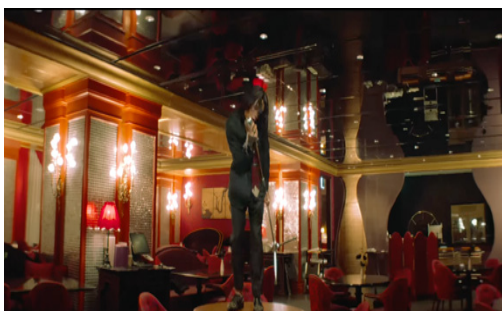
**Figure 4. Inside the closet**

The lyric “and no one will know” appears in this scene. It depicts a man hiding inside his closet to keep his actual location a secret from others. Although inside his closet is much bright yellow color that usually depicts happiness, it does not match what he feels. He is afraid of something so his facial expression in this music video reflects his fear of being discovered by something, and that is why his eyes check his surroundings to see if he is safe or not.



**Figure 5. Dark room**

This scene shows a man that sitting in his room alone in the dark. The man takes on a sense of loneliness. More than merely a lack of light, the darkness that envelops him is a metaphor for the melancholy that has descended upon his soul. It falls over him, a real, almost tangible cover of loneliness. This blackness represents his despair. His solitary figure in the room is a strong representation of the human condition. It alludes to those moments when we are all feeling overburdened and our problems appear too big for us to handle on our own. However, in the solitude of that room, there is a sense of possibility, a whisper that even in our darkest moments, we are not completely alone.



**Figure 6. Singing Alone**

This scene shows a man singing alone at the table. This scene is during the lyrics “Why does no one understand. When I say I am just afraid?” underscore his plea for empathy and connection, which goes unanswered in the empty space around him. The absence of other people emphasizes the music video’s message of isolation. The entire setting in this music video is only him and another depiction of himself. So, we can see why no one understands him because there is no one else in the music videos. He is so scared of being alone, so his body/mind creates other characters on him. The presence of this other self is a coping mechanism, a way to fill the void that loneliness has carved within him. All this time, what he feared was his other self, and this reflected his bipolar and anxiety disorder. In essence, the scene makes a profound message about the human need for understanding and the secret fights that many people suffer with their mental health. It serves as a reminder that sometimes the person we need to reconcile with the most is not those around us, but ourselves.



**Figure 7. Medicine**

This scene shows a man holding a medicine, and in front of him, there is a slightly cracked mirror. The picture of him holding the medicine is a representation of his desperate state, implying that he is thinking of ending his life to get rid of his terrible pain and anxieties. The act of holding the medicine indicates a vital decision-making moment in which the urge to find relief is battling with the desire to survive.

The slightly broken mirror in front of him gives the situation even more symbolic meaning. Though a broken mirror warps the reflection, mirrors are frequently connected to introspection and honesty. It might represent how the man views himself as broken or hopelessly wounded. The cracks in the mirror could also be a clue that he has struggled with suicidal thoughts or attempts in the past and indicate that this is not the first time he has found himself in such a desperate situation.





Figure 8. Lying unconscious

This scene shows a man lying unconscious on a table, his hands bound and his mouth sealed with tape. Another character of himself had likely killed him without him realizing it. This image is a powerful visual metaphor for the loss of agency and voice, suggesting a state of helplessness and vulnerability. The bindings on his hands could symbolize the constraints and struggles that he could not overcome, while the tape over his mouth might represent the suppression of his voice or his inability to express his inner turmoil.



Figure. 9 Devil horn

This scene shows a man with a devil horn and a black-and-white filter. The devil horn here represents another personality of the singer and could represent the singer's inner conflict. The black and white filter represents opposites. In most cases, white represents pure light, and black represents darkness. So, it can be considered that the singer's other personality is either good or bad.

## CONCLUSION

The study has analyzed the lyrics and music video of "Scaredy Cat" by DPR IAN. Based on the result and the preceding discussion, it can be said that the singer uses five figurative languages, namely metaphor, repetition, hyperbole, symbolism, and simile, in the lyrics to convey the song's meaning and having nine visual signs in the music video. The song's lyrics reveal the singer's anxiety of being scared to be alone, hopeless, and bipolar disorder. The singer feels like nobody understands him or his fears,

and he is afraid of disappearing into a hole where nobody will know or go. Overall, the song has an emotional appeal that resonates with anyone who has ever felt alone and scared, seeking connection and empathy in their vulnerable moments. The meaning of the music video is that the singer describes the loneliness he experiences so that in the music video, there is only him. To overcome his loneliness, he has other characters in himself, such as bipolar disorder. She also feels fear and runs away from something that is chasing her. The whole song and music video relate to the current situation and discuss the importance of maintaining mental health.

This study was limited to the figurative language and semiotic analysis used in the song "Scaredy Cat." Future research may investigate the meaning of figuration behind the elements of music movie clips and approach lyrical song analysis differently. The results of this study should be beneficial to researchers who study figurative language and semiotic analysis, especially as it relates to song lyrics and music videos. Furthermore, this study can serve as a resource for any researchers looking to delve deeper into the lyrics and music video analysis.

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