



## Symbolic Figures of Speech in the Lyrics of the Song Kolam Susu by Koes Plus

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### ABSTRACT

Koes Plus is a music band that was once established in Indonesia which was formed in 1969, this music group is widely known as one of the pioneers of pop and rock and roll genre songs in Indonesia, as well as one of the most productive and longest-standing music groups. "Kolam Susu" is a song created by Yok Koeswoyo and sung by the music group Koes Plus and first appeared on the album Volume 8 in 1973. This study aims to facilitate listeners in understanding the meaning contained in the song Kolam Susu through the analysis of symbolic figures of speech contained in the song lyrics. This study uses a descriptive method based on a qualitative approach with the main data source in the form of the song lyrics Kolam Susu. The data of this study, namely written song lyrics as a data source, were collected using observation guidelines with time triangulation techniques through a checklist. The analysis technique is based on clause language units to identify the symbolic figures of speech used. The results of the study revealed that there are six clauses in the song Kolam Susu that contain symbolic figures of speech, which play an important role in conveying meaning implicitly and enriching the song's message. This finding shows that symbolic figures of speech are effectively used as a tool to facilitate listeners in capturing deep meaning in song lyrics. This study is expected to contribute to the study of semantics and appreciation of Indonesian music.

*Keywords: symbolics figures, lyrics of song, Kolam Susu*

## Majas Simbolik Pada Lirik Lagu Kolam Susu Karya Koes Plus

### ABSTRAK

Koes Plus adalah sebuah grup band musik yang pernah berdiri di Indonesia yang dibentuk pada tahun 1969, grup musik ini dikenal luas sebagai salah satu pelopor lagu-lagu bergenre pop dan rock and roll di Indonesia, serta salah satu grup musik yang paling produktif dan paling lama berdiri. Kolam Susu adalah sebuah lagu yang diciptakan oleh Yok Koeswoyo dan dinyanyikan oleh grup musik Koes Plus dan pertama kali muncul di album Volume 8 pada tahun 1973. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mempermudah pendengar dalam memahami makna yang terkandung dalam lagu Kolam Susu melalui analisis majas simbolik yang terdapat pada lirik lagu tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif berbasis pendekatan kualitatif dengan sumber data utama berupa lirik lagu Kolam Susu. Data penelitian ini yakni lirik lagu tertulis sebagai sumber data dikumpulkan menggunakan pedoman observasi dengan teknik triangulasi waktu melalui daftar cek-riccek. Teknik analisis berdasarkan satuan bahasa klausa untuk mengidentifikasi majas simbolik yang digunakan. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa terdapat enam klausa dalam lagu Kolam Susu yang mengandung majas simbolik, yang berperan penting dalam menyampaikan makna secara implisit dan memperkaya pesan lagu. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa majas simbolik efektif digunakan sebagai alat untuk mempermudah pendengar dalam menangkap makna mendalam dalam lirik lagu. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi pada kajian semantik dan apresiasi musik Indonesia.

*Kata kunci: majas simbolik, lirik lagu, Kolam Susu*

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, many songs express the listener's feelings and emotions. The term "language" in song lyrics refers to the delivery of a message or artistic expression, encompassing the style and structure of language used to create a lasting impression on the listener.

Language is a crucial medium for conveying meaning and objectives. When studying the specific intent and purpose of communication, both verbally and in writing, the primary concern for speakers is achieving the language's objectives (Mailani et al., 2022). In practice, language is divided into two types: written and spoken. Both play a crucial role in conveying specific intent and objectives in communication.

One interesting example of the use of both types of language can be seen in song lyrics. Song lyrics are a form of written language expression conveyed orally through the medium of music. In this context, song lyrics serve not only as a means of conveying meaning but also as an aesthetic and rhetorical tool. This aesthetic stems not only from the diction used in each song's lyrics, but also from the way the lyrics are conveyed effectively and enjoyed by the listener (Setiawan et al., 2021). Song lyrics play a role in conveying emotional messages to listeners through specific word choices and style.

Keraf (2008) mentions three important aspects of word choice: (a) diction, which encompasses understanding which words best convey an idea, how to combine words correctly or use appropriate expressions, and which style is most appropriate; (b) word choice, which encompasses the ability to accurately distinguish the meaning of the substance of the idea being conveyed; and (c) choosing the most appropriate words to convey the vocabulary, or lexicon, of a language, encompassing all the words within it.

Creating a song requires the use of figurative language and appropriate diction to achieve its aesthetic value (Natalia et al., 2024). This demonstrates that in conveying a message in song lyrics,

the use of figurative language is an essential and inseparable element. Song lyrics employ figurative language to create an atmosphere for communication (Natalia et al., 2024).

Figurative language is an interesting phenomenon frequently found in music. The appropriate use of figurative language in song lyrics can provide powerful expressive power, seemingly possessing magical powers in conveying certain emotions, messages, and passions (Lena et al., 2024). In this context, song lyrics serve not only as an aesthetic communication tool but also as a means of conveying profound meaning through distinctive linguistic structures.

This meaning is not only generated through denotative words, but also through the use of connotative and aesthetic language or figures of speech that provide emotional depth and nuance for the listener. One figure of speech frequently used in song lyrics is a symbolic figure of speech. Symbolic figures of speech are a type of comparative figures of speech. According to Jadid (2024), symbolic figures of speech aim to make the reader think that a sentence can describe something through the form or symbol of an object, animal, or other object. The use of symbolic figures of speech in song lyrics provides a deeper, more satisfying dimension of meaning and strengthens the aesthetic and ideological content of the intended message. "The use of figures of speech in song lyrics is highly sought after for its ability to create a beautiful and meaningful impression (Sabili et al., 2025). In the Indonesian music world, Koes Plus is a legendary musician whose uniqueness lies in each song, conveying not only aesthetics but also profound meaning. Koes Plus successfully delivers a listening experience that not only touches the listener's emotional aspect but also invites them to reflect on the implied meaning behind the lyrics. One of Koes Plus' songs that prominently features figurative language is "Kolam Susu." "Koes Plus' song "Kolam Susu" has been recognised as one of Indonesia's best, receiving numerous awards and recognition as a timeless, legendary piece of Indone-



sian music. For example, it was ranked 31st on Rolling Stone Indonesia magazine's list of "150 Best Indonesian Songs" in the December 2009 edition. Despite its age, "Kolam Susu" is frequently performed at various festivals and music events, and even broke a MURI record for Koes Plus songs, with 62 fan clubs from 12 cities across Indonesia performing it. Furthermore, the song holds significant academic value, encompassing areas such as science, character, language, culture, and economics. Yok Koeswoyo, the composer of "Kolam Susu," directly explained the meaning and message behind the song. He emphasised that it was created to foster a sense of ownership, preserve, and manage Indonesia's natural resources effectively. He also once conveyed social criticism by changing the lyrics to "Kolam Lumpur" (Mud Pool), a response to the mismanagement of natural resources in Indonesia. According to Yon Koeswoyo, a member of Koes Plus, the inspiration for this song came from a real-life experience while visiting a place called Kolam Susu in East Nusa Tenggara. He emphasised that the song reflects Indonesia's extraordinary natural wealth. This sentiment was further reinforced by Kuntoro Boga Andri, Head of the Public Relations and Information Bureau at the Ministry of Agriculture, who emphasised that the song is not simply a series of words, but is inspired by the reality of Indonesia's natural wealth. He also highlighted the song's educational value regarding the importance of preserving and utilising natural resources.

The research problem is how to facilitate listeners' understanding of the meaning of Koes Plus' song "Kolam Susu" through an analysis of symbolic figures of speech in the lyrics. The purpose of this research is to help listeners understand the song's meaning more deeply by identifying and analysing

The study of the use of figurative language in song lyrics falls within the realm of semantics, a branch of linguistics that focuses on the meaning of language. This discipline places meaning on a par with sound elements and grammatical struc-

ture in linguistic studies (Hemandra et al., 2024). Therefore, this research is expected to be relevant not only for clarifying the meaning of song lyrics but also to contribute to the development of semantic studies in the context of musical art.

This research is not a new study that discusses the use of figurative language, specifically symbolic figures of speech, in song lyrics. However, research specifically examining the application of symbolic figures of speech in Indonesian song lyrics is still relatively limited and rarely found in academic literature that specifically addresses symbolic figures of speech.

This research certainly has a theoretical and methodological foundation that draws on previous research conducted by Jadid et al. (2024). That study examined the use of symbolic figures of speech in song lyrics, demonstrating the relevance and continuity of the themes with this study. By referring to previous research, researchers gain a strong foundation for developing further analysis of the symbolic function and meaning in song lyrics as part of semantic studies.

## METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate and comprehensively examine the research topic in greater depth. Qualitative research is a process that produces descriptive data, both written and spoken, from the research subjects (Fauzia & Ramadan, 2023; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Cresswell, 2008). This qualitative approach was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives, specifically to explore meaning in depth through descriptive data, including both written and spoken responses, from the research subjects. This approach is sufficient for identifying symbolic figures of speech.

This research utilises written data collection, specifically song lyrics, as its primary data source. Observation guidelines, utilising a checklist-based time triangulation technique, were employed to collect song lyric data.

The data analysis technique is based on the clause, a linguistic unit that captures symbolic meaning. The analysis began with the collection of primary data in the form of relevant song lyrics, which were then segmented into clause units—parts of sentences containing a subject and predicate—to capture specific symbolic meaning. Clauses were chosen as the unit of analysis because they enable the isolation of symbolic elements, such as metaphors or personifications, which are often integrated into sentence structures. This approach differs from less precise word-by-word or stanza-by-stanza analysis. In the identification stage, each clause was evaluated using a semantic theory-based checklist to detect the presence of symbolic figures of speech. By employing this descriptive qualitative approach, researchers were able to identify and describe the meanings of symbolic figures of speech contained in the clauses of the song lyrics.

## RESULTS

Research results, including an analysis of the figurative language in the lyrics of the song "Kolam Susu" by Koes Plus, indicate that the lyrics possess strong symbolic meaning. Symbolic figurative language is a figure of speech that utilizes symbols to express or represent a specific meaning or representation (Liziana, 2022). Simply put, symbolic figurative language is a figure of speech that uses symbols, signs, or symbols to indirectly or explicitly represent a deeper meaning.

The symbols used include natural objects, power, and guidance, each with varying characteristics depending on the word used as the symbol (Farida, 2020). These symbols function not only as aesthetic elements but also as representations of various aspects of life and conditions related to the songwriter's experiences and perspectives.

In the lyrics of "Kolam Susu," these symbols represent natural objects, power, and guidance, and various representations of nature associated with human traits. These symbols reflect the conditions

or situations experienced by the composer at the time of the work's creation. From the analysis, we found six clauses containing symbolic figures of speech, including:

- 1) "Not an ocean, just a pool of milk,"
- 2) "A hook and net are enough to sustain you,"
- 3) "You encounter no storms or typhoons,"
- 4) "Fish and shrimp come to you,"
- 5) "People say our land is a paradise,"
- 6) "Sticks and stones become plants."

All the clauses in the song's lyrics demonstrate the consistent use of symbolic figures of speech, which not only enhance the lyrics but also reinforce the moral and nationalistic messages they convey. These symbols effectively connect literal and connotative meanings, providing a depth of meaning that can be understood by listeners from various backgrounds.

These findings demonstrate that the lyrics of Koes Plus' "Kolam Susu" are not just ordinary musical compositions, but rather a work rich in symbolism and philosophical meaning. The use of symbolic figures of speech in the song's lyrics serves as an effective means of communication to convey important messages in a subtle yet profound manner, enriching the listener's aesthetic and intellectual experience.

Furthermore, in the contemporary context, this message is highly relevant, especially considering the various environmental issues and natural resource exploitation occurring in Indonesia. Thus, this research demonstrates that the lyrics of the song "Kolam Susu" can be studied not only from a musical perspective but also as an object of linguistic study, particularly in symbolic semantics. This song provides a concrete example of how style and diction can be used effectively to construct profound meaning and stimulate the collective consciousness of the listener.

## DISCUSSION

The symbolic figures of speech in this song not only enhance the lyrics but also convey profound reflections on Indonesia's social conditions



and natural potential. The symbols used in the lyrics depict the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, as well as social criticism of the state of natural resource management. Six clauses were analyzed.

Based on the analysis of the symbolic figures of speech in the lyrics of the song "Kolam Susu" by Koes Plus, the researcher identified six pieces of data, as follows.

#### **Data 1**

The ocean isn't just a pool of milk

The lyrics above convey the meaning of Indonesia's natural wealth. For example, the word "milk" in these lyrics is likened to plain water, but people know that milk contains many healthy nutrients. However, the word "sea" in these lyrics is likened to plain water with no benefits. However, the sea actually has many benefits, containing animals and plants that humans can cultivate or utilize to meet their needs. Therefore, this clause uses the symbol "pool of milk" to depict the prosperity and abundance of the country, a symbol of a fertile homeland.

#### **Data 2**

A hook and net are enough to support you

Judging from the lyrics above, "a hook and net" symbolize the skill of utilizing natural resources wisely and effectively through intelligence and knowledge. With knowledge, we can utilize and manage natural resources wisely, because the sustainability of nature depends on who manages it and how. Knowledge alone is not enough, because knowledge without action is just wishful thinking. Therefore, direct action or practice is needed to better understand and become skilled at managing them. Furthermore, the "hook and net" symbol emphasizes the importance of intelligent and sustainable natural resource management by representing simple tools used by the community. The use of this symbol signifies that Indonesia's natural resources are so abundant that basic necessities can be met with only simple tools.

#### **Data 3**

"No storm, no typhoon," you'll find.

The song's lyrics, "No storm, no typhoon," convey the meaning that there are no obstacles that are too difficult to achieve a desire or goal. As we know, Indonesia is located on the equator, which benefits from a tropical climate. This tropical climate creates conditions that support the growth of living things, both plants and animals. Therefore, we can obtain and utilize Indonesia's natural wealth without much effort, given its abundant natural resources.

#### **Data 4**

Fish and shrimp come to you

Judging from the following lyrics, "fish and shrimp come to you" symbolizes sustenance that comes naturally, and the phrase "menghampiri diri" symbolizes the ease of obtaining resources. This emphasizes that Indonesia's natural resources are abundant and capable of providing a prosperous life for its people, sufficient to meet the needs of the community if managed properly and wisely. The symbolism of "fish and shrimp" and the clause depicts the abundance of marine products. Furthermore, the fish and shrimp convey a social message and a subtle critique of marine resource management, which has often been exploited by foreign parties. This song can also serve as encouragement to fully utilize Indonesia's marine wealth for the welfare of the nation.

#### **Data 5**

People say our land is a land of heaven

The song lyrics above, "people say our land is a land of heaven," imply that Indonesia possesses many advantages and rich biodiversity, thus people refer to it as a land of heaven. The clause "people say our land is a land of heaven" implies that Indonesia's fertile soil possesses numerous benefits that can meet the needs of all living things. Furthermore, Indonesia is one of the world's oxygen contributors, or what could be called the world's lungs. Therefore, these lyrics symbolise

Indonesia's numerous important roles and benefits for all living things.

#### Data 6

Sticks and stones become plants

The clause in the song lyrics above, "sticks and stones become plants," symbolically depicts the fertility of Indonesia's soil. The wood and stone symbolise the hidden natural wealth and Indonesia's natural ability to support human life if managed wisely optimally. Furthermore, these two symbols also represent the wonder and immense potential of Indonesia's natural resources, which must be preserved and utilised to achieve sustainable prosperity. Furthermore, it conveys a message of optimism and hope that, with wise management, existing natural resources can be transformed into products and benefits that enhance the welfare of the people.

The use of these symbols aligns closely with the spirit of semantics; meaning resides not only at the lexical or grammatical level, but also in symbolic representations encompassing cultural, social, and historical aspects. An examination of this connotative meaning demonstrates that symbolic figures of speech can enrich a song's aesthetic value.

From a semantic perspective, these symbols contain two layers of meaning: literal and cultural. On the first layer, listeners are presented with a simple depiction of nature, while on the second layer, social and nationalistic messages are subtly embedded by the songwriter. This reinforces the view of Lena et al. (2024) that symbolic figures of speech possess high expressive power in conveying profound emotions and messages.

#### CONCLUSION

Six types of symbolic figures of speech were found in the song Kolam Susu. It can be concluded overall that the song Kolam Susu tells about the natural beauty of Indonesia that needs to be protected by its people because it is from this natural wealth that is able to make it easy for the people

of the country to get food through the sea, natural resources that can provide convenience and other blessings. The symbolic figures of speech used in this song have a deep meaning indirectly which is well packaged using beautiful diction. The first data shows that "milk" and "sea" have many benefits and proteins that can make things easier for humans, the second data found that "hook and net" means that the management of natural resources is very important, the third data has the meaning that there are no difficult obstacles in achieving goals, the fourth data has the meaning that sustenance will come to us by itself, the fifth data means that Indonesia has biodiversity, and the sixth data has the meaning that Indonesia has fertile land.

This relates to research conducted by Jadid (2024), which also found that the song Kolam Susu uses symbols such as objects and animals, as evidenced by the four "fish and shrimp" interpreted as sources of sustenance. These symbols are also used to reinforce aesthetics and ideology, ensuring the intended message is conveyed effectively to the listener. The song's profound meaning is conveyed indirectly, using subtle language. This aligns with research that suggests the use of symbolic figures of speech provides deeper meaning and strengthens the intended message.

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