

# ANALYZING THE USE OF SIMILES IN OLIVIA RODRIGO'S ALBUM *GUTS*

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## Abstract

This research focuses on the types and meanings of similes in the song lyrics of Olivia Rodrigo's *Guts* album. A simile, which directly compares two things using connecting words like "like" or "as," enhances emotional expression and vividness in lyrics. By applying qualitative methods, the research analyzes each song to identify simile occurrences, classify them by type, and interpret their meanings using Dancygier and Sweetser's (2014) theory of simile and Griffiths' (2006) theory of meaning. Additionally, Spardley's approach, including domain, taxonomic, componential, and cultural theme analyses, was used to interpret the data. The study identified twenty-two similes, with twelve narrow-scope and ten broad-scope examples. It also found nineteen data of sender's meaning and three data of utterance meaning, highlighting that narrow-scope similes and sender's meaning are most prevalent in the album.

*Keywords: Guts, Olivia Rodrigo, Simile*

## Introduction

Language functions as a system of communication through symbols, sounds, and rules, facilitating meaning exchange within a society. According to Andrian (2022), language is an essential tool for human communication, enabling individuals to express and comprehend messages. It is defined as a system that allows people to share verbal or symbolic expressions, serving not only as a communication medium but also as a platform to convey thoughts, emotions, and information. Figurative language enriches communication by using creative comparisons, offering more powerful and expressive ways to convey meaning. Nainggolan (2022) suggests that figurative language involves using words beyond their literal meanings, encouraging imagination to grasp the author's intention.

One prominent form of figurative language is the simile, a direct comparison between two different things, typically using "like" or "as." As Hayeesa-I (2023) explains, similes

highlight similarities between objects or ideas, prompting readers to engage with the narrative more deeply. This study analyzes the use of similes in Olivia Rodrigo's Guts album, exploring how they reflect the artist's emotional journey and transition from adolescence to adulthood. Rodrigo's Guts, released on September 8, 2023, encapsulates this transition through twelve songs that delve into themes of identity, fame, romance, and societal pressures.

The researcher chose this album due to its compelling portrayal of the challenges young women face during this life stage. Similes in the album effectively capture the complex emotions and experiences of adolescence, offering insight into broader cultural and emotional themes. Previous studies, such as Natanael and Indriani's (2022) analysis of similes in the movie War Room and Hayeesa-i and Maisara's (2023) study on similes in Thai literature, have examined figurative language in different contexts. However, this study focuses on similes in song lyrics, applying Dancygier and Sweetser's (2014) theory on simile types and Griffiths' (2006) semantic theory to uncover the meanings in Guts.

By analyzing similes in Rodrigo's Guts, this research contributes to the understanding of figurative language in music and highlights how similes convey deeper emotional messages, distinct from those found in novels or films. The research focuses on two key questions, they are what types of similes are found in the song lyrics of the Guts album? and what types of meanings do these similes convey in the context of the lyrics? Through these questions, the study aims to reveal both the structural use of similes and the deeper meanings they express.

## Review of Literature

According to Dancygier and Sweetser (2014), similes are figures of speech that compare two different things using "like" or "as" to highlight a shared quality. Similes offer straightforward comparisons, making it clear how two things are alike through descriptive language that creates vivid and imaginative imagery. Dancygier and Sweetser also explain two types of similes: narrow-scope and broad-scope, which differ in how direct or abstract the comparison is.

1. **Narrow-scope similes** focus on specific characteristics or attributes of the object being compared. These comparisons are clear and direct, pointing to a particular quality. For example, describing a man "standing at the door and smiling like a proud father at a wedding reception" focuses only on the man's behavior, comparing it to a familiar situation.

2. **Broad-scope similes** on the other hand, involve more abstract comparisons. The comparison itself doesn't provide enough detail for the reader or listener to immediately understand what is being compared. Instead, additional context is needed to clarify the connection. For instance, comparing a "town in Texas to a 3-D picture of Jesus" is vague until the speaker explains that the comparison depends on perspective, giving more information to make the simile clearer.

In his book *An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics*, Patrick Griffiths (2006) divides meaning into two main types: sender's meaning and utterance meaning.

1. **Sender's meaning** refers to the message that the speaker or writer intends to convey, even if it's not directly stated. The listener or reader must understand the intended message by considering the context and background knowledge. Sometimes, the speaker's meaning is personal and may not be fully explained at first. For example, if someone says, "Yes, that's part of what I meant, but I'm also trying to tell you..." the speaker is clarifying their previous statement, which was misunderstood by the listener.

2. **Utterance meaning** is about how we interpret spoken or written words, including both what is clearly stated and what is implied but not directly expressed. When we hear or read something, we use our knowledge of language and context to grasp both the explicit and implicit meaning. This helps us understand what the speaker or writer truly means beyond the words themselves.

## **Methodology**

This research employs a qualitative method, which, according to Mohajan (2018), produces descriptive data in the form of narratives or observed phenomena rather than numbers. This method enables the researcher to describe and explore in depth the types and meanings of similes in the lyrics of Olivia Rodrigo's Guts album. The data sources in this study consist of twelve songs from the Guts album, with the data in the form of clauses or phrases containing similes. The research instrument is the researcher themselves, who collects, listens to, reads, identifies, classifies, and analyzes the lyrics. For data analysis, the researcher applies Spradley's (1980) method from the book *Participant Observation*. This method consists of four distinct steps: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Findings**

**“Title of the song: All American Bitch”**

Datum 1:

**I am light as a feather**

I'm as fresh as the air

Coca-Cola bottles that I only use to curl my hair

I got class and integrity

Just like a goddamn Kennedy

I swear

With love to spare, I

The sentence "I am light as a feather" represents a **Narrow Scope Simile**. This type of simile is more precise, concentrating on a single characteristic. In this case, the speaker compares themselves to a "feather," emphasizing the specific quality of lightness. By saying, "I am light as a feather," the speaker highlights the sensation of feeling light and free, drawing attention to the feather's defining trait—its weightlessness. This conveys the speaker's sense of being unburdened by societal expectations. Through this simile, the speaker provides a clear and vivid depiction of this light, untroubled feeling, allowing the listener to easily visualize and connect with the emotion being described.

The sentence "I am light as a feather" reflects the **Sender's Meaning**, as its interpretation relies on the speaker's intentions and how the listener perceives the message. The speaker compares herself to a feather, highlighting how she feels in response to societal expectations, particularly those placed on young women in the public eye. By using the simile "I am light as a feather," the speaker conveys a sense of being unaffected by these pressures, much like a feather that floats effortlessly. Through this comparison, the speaker not only describes feeling light but also communicates a sense of freedom from societal demands. This deeper meaning reveals the speaker's emotional state, showing how she copes with criticism and expectations by remaining calm and unburdened.

**"Title of the song: Lacy"**

**Datum 10:**

Ooh, I care, I care, I care

**Like perfume that you wear**

I linger all the time

Watchin', hidden in plain sight

Ooh, I try, I try, I try

But it takes over my life

I see you everywhere

The sweetest torture one could bear

The sentence "Like perfume that you wear" falls under the **Narrow Scope** category because its meaning is highly specific and tied to a particular context. The phrase uses a simile to compare the speaker's feelings to the qualities of perfume. This comparison highlights how the speaker's emotions toward Lacy are like perfume soft yet potent. The feeling lingers, even though it is intangible, much like a fragrance that can be smelled but not touched. Perfume is often linked to memories and emotions, and in this song, the scent of someone's perfume holds significant emotional weight for the speaker. The understanding is limited to the personal emotional connection between the speaker and that individual, rather than referring to perfume in general, making the simile very focused and specific to the speaker's feelings.

In terms of meaning, the sentence can be classified as **Utterance Meaning**, as it focuses on what is explicitly conveyed by the speaker. The phrase "Like perfume that you wear" directly illustrates how Lacy's presence or influence is compared to the scent of perfume. This suggests that a person's presence has a noticeable and tangible impact, much like a fragrance that can be sensed. The meaning emphasizes that the presence of someone is powerful and unavoidable, akin to the scent of perfume that fills a room and draws attention.

**"Title of the song : Making The bed"**

**Datum 16:**

And I tell someone I love them just as a distraction

**They tell me that they love me like I'm some tourist attraction**

They're changin' my machinery and I just let it happen

I got the things I wanted, it's just not what I imagined

The phrase "They tell me that they love me like I'm some tourist attraction" represents a **Broad Scope Simile**, as it compares the speaker to a tourist attraction in a more generalized way. A tourist attraction is a place visited by many for enjoyment, experience, or entertainment. This comparison highlights the speaker's feelings of receiving superficial and fleeting attention, similar to how people visit tourist attractions without forming deep emotional connections.

The phrase "They tell me that they love me like I'm some tourist attraction" reflects the **Sender's meaning**, as the speaker aims to express more than a simple comparison. The speaker is conveying deeper emotions about the love she receives, showing that it feels shallow and insincere, as if she were merely an object to be briefly admired and enjoyed, rather than genuinely appreciated. Through this simile, the speaker reveals her disappointment and dissatisfaction with how others treat her, feeling as though she is just temporary entertainment, much like a tourist attraction visited without any meaningful connection.

Types of Simile	Meanings		Total
	M1	M2	
T1	9	3	12
T2	10	0	10
Total	19	3	22

Notes : T = Types

M = Meaning

T1 = Narrow Scope

T2 = Broad Scope

M1 = Sander's Meaning

M2 = Utterance Meaning

## Discussion

This study identifies that in Olivia Rodrigo's *\*Guts\** album, the most dominant type of simile is narrow scope, with no similes found in three specific songs ("Bad Idea Right?", "Get Him Back!", and "Teenage Dream"). The research found twelve examples of narrow scope similes, which are more dominant due to their effectiveness in conveying personal experiences and emotions directly to the listener. Narrow scope similes allow the singer to clearly express her feelings through specific comparisons, making it easier for the audience to emotionally connect with the lyrics. In contrast, broad scope similes, which offer more general comparisons,

are used less frequently because they are less effective in conveying the depth of personal stories and emotions that are central to Olivia Rodrigo's songwriting.

In addition to the dominance of narrow scope similes, the most frequently observed meaning in the Guts album is sender's meaning, with a total of twenty-five examples. The main focus of the album is on the meaning Olivia Rodrigo wants to convey, as reflected in lyrics that emphasize emotional expression and personal experiences. The singer ensures that the messages delivered allow listeners to connect deeply with the stories and emotions conveyed in the songs. The relationship between narrow scope similes and sender's meaning is very strong, as similes with specific comparisons help strengthen the personal emotional expression of the singer. In this way, the use of narrow scope similes becomes an effective tool in communicating feelings and meaning from the sender's perspective more sharply and deeply, enhancing the emotional connection with the listener.

The findings of this research align with previous studies, such as Natanael (2022), who also found that narrow scope similes are more commonly used in films, as these similes enable clearer and more focused comparisons. This is important in contexts with limited dialogue or fast-paced visuals. Similarly, Hayeesa-i (2023) emphasized the use of explicit similes in children's literature, as explicit similes provide clarity and ease of understanding for young readers, which parallels the way narrow scope similes function by offering more accessible emotional expression. Andrian (2022) explored the role of similes in conveying emotions in John Green's novels, further supporting the idea that similes, whether in songs or literature, are key tools for expressing deep emotions clearly.

Overall, narrow scope similes and sender's meaning share an important role in effectively conveying emotions and specific nuances across various media, including songs, films, and novels. This study not only supports previous research findings but also highlights the significance of similes in narrative and emotional expression. Narrow scope similes and sender's meaning allow for more specific and personal messages to be conveyed clearly, creating a deep emotional connection between the singer and the listener.

## **Conclusion and Suggestions**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Olivia Rodrigo utilizes similes in her Guts album to deepen her lyrics by comparing personal emotions and situations with broader experiences. Most similes identified are narrow scope, providing direct and clear comparisons, which make the message easier to understand. This allows the singer to effectively convey

personal emotions, helping listeners connect more deeply with the themes of the songs. Additionally, the frequent use of sender's meaning further emphasizes Olivia's intent in expressing her personal experiences, while broad scope similes and utterance meaning, which rely more on context, are used less frequently.

For future research, it is suggested to explore simile usage in other albums and music genres to broaden the understanding of how similes function in music. Listeners are encouraged to pay closer attention to similes in song lyrics to better understand the emotions and messages conveyed by the artist. This research can serve as a reference for further studies and contribute to a deeper analysis of similes in music, while welcoming constructive feedback to improve future research.

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