

**ANALYZING THE THREE METAFUNCTIONS OF THE SONG
TWINKLE TWINKLE BY PEDER ELIAS: A CASE ON
SYSTEMATIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTIC**

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<u>Article Info</u>	<u>ABSTRACT</u>
<p>Article history: Published November 30, 2025</p> <hr/> <p>Kata Kunci: SFL, Three Metafunction, Lyrics Song.</p>	<p><i>This study aims to analyze the linguistic meaning in the song “Twinkle Twinkle” using the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory developed by Halliday. The analysis focuses on three metafunctions of language, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunction, which together form the meaning of experience, social relations, and text organization in song lyrics. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, while the data is obtained through journal observation and descriptive analysis of the lyrics. The results show that the three metafunctions complement each other in constructing the emotional and poetic meaning of the song, making it not just a piece of music, but also a linguistic text that deeply reflects human experience.</i></p>

1. INTRODUCTION

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a functional social theory that focuses on how language structure, function, and meaning work together to form texts (Haratyan, 2021). This linguistic approach was first introduced by M.A.K. Halliday. SFL views language, both spoken and written, as systemic and functional (Halliday, 2016). It helps connect meaning and context by explaining how language operates in different situations. For example, it can be used to analyze the meaning of song lyrics. Songs serve as a powerful medium for expressing thoughts, ideas, and emotions, as well as shaping the way people think. According to Yashnar and Ogli (2020), language plays an important role in individual and social development, it supports communication, reasoning, and intellectual growth. Similarly, songs can be seen as a form of language, a tool for communication, and a symbolic expression (Suhandra, 2019). Through lyrics, songs can express functional values and serve as a way for singers and listeners to connect emotionally and meaningfully (Fairclough, 2023).

Through song lyrics, we can use language to transfer meaning to one another. This type of meaning is referred to as ideational meaning. According to Sukma et al (2021), Ideology refers to ideas or belief systems that are socially shared by one person to another. As in song lyrics, singers convey the meaning of their message to listeners through songs. Khamadudin (2021), said Song lyrics have complex linguistic meanings and can be

interpreted literally or figuratively. Therefore, it is important to analyze and understand their meaning from an ideational perspective. Through the meaning of ideational, we can understand the meaning intended by revealing the experiences, participants involved, and surrounding circumstances contained in the song (Puspa sari, 2015). songs are listened to almost every day, and the songs heard will influence the listener's feelings, because in this process, feelings and messages are conveyed (ideational process) (Nirwana et al. 2019).

In addition the textual metafunction focuses on how language is organized to create messages that are coherent and meaningful. It explains how ideas are arranged so that readers or listeners can easily follow the flow of meaning (Magfiroh et al, 2021). In song lyrics, this function shows how singers organize words, lines, and patterns such as repetition, contrast, and rhythm to express emotions and emphasize key ideas (Iveland, 2024). Through these choices, the lyrics form a smooth and connected message that guides the audience through the song's emotional journey. Analyzing lyrics through this metafunction helps reveal how linguistic features like clause order, conjunctions, and thematic progression shape the song's emotional and narrative impact (Silalahi et al, 2024).

Another important aspect is that interpersonal functions focus on how language is used to build and maintain social relationships and express attitudes and social roles between speakers and listeners. This is in line with the opinion of Ayomi (2021), interpersonal meaning is meaning that expresses the speaker's attitude and judgment. This meaning is used to act together and towards others. According to Qusairi (2017), the interpersonal function is so that the language structure used can be used to interact with other people, for example in songs, where interaction occurs between the songwriter and the listener. Songs are created by songwriters as a linguistic medium to convey meaning from the singer to the listener as a form of social relationship (Sari et al., 2019).

The SFL approach helps uncover the deeper meaning behind the words in a song. Lyrics are not just a form of entertainment; they also reflect the singer's emotions, experiences, and perspectives (Bloor, 2023). Through the analysis of the three main metafunctions of language: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, researchers can understand how singers express feelings, build connections with listeners, and organize messages to make them clear and successful (Gerot 2024). Therefore, analyzing song lyrics using the SFL approach provides a deeper understanding of how language conveys meaning and emotion. It also shows how the language in songs can represent cultural identity and social values within a community (Martin & Rose, 2017).

Literature Review

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2019), views language as a system of meaning used by people to interact within social contexts. This approach explains how the structure of language reflects communicative functions such as ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings. In this view, language is not only a tool for communication but also a way to understand how people think, feel, and interact in specific situations. This framework has become the foundation for many modern linguistic studies that explore language meaning in deeper and more contextual ways.

Emilia and Hamied (2015) define that SFL has wide applications in language teaching in Indonesia. They emphasize that this theory helps teachers and students understand the relationship between language form and its social function. Through the analysis of clauses, themes, and metafunctions, learners become more aware of how grammatical choices affect meaning and communicative purpose. Their findings suggest that this functional approach helps students read and write texts more meaningfully and contextually.

Hermawan (2020) stated that the connection between language and emotion from a functional perspective. He explains that language plays a key role in expressing feelings and

building interpersonal relationships. Using functional linguistic analysis, Hermawan found that lexical choices and sentence structures can reveal a speaker's emotional state such as empathy, sympathy, or anger. This study emphasize that understanding language also means understanding the emotional experiences of its users.

Juramli (2017) stated that the ideational function by analyzing transitivity in religious texts. He finds that verbal, material, and mental process types in clauses can reveal the conceptual meanings within the text. The analysis shows how the writer uses language structure to convey specific ideas and values. This research supports the idea that language plays a key role in constructing social and ideological realities.

Meanwhile, Schleppegrell and Oteíza (2023) and Cheng (2024) expand the use of SFL in discourse and interpersonal function studies. They argue that analyzing the interpersonal metafunction helps us understand how language is used to build relationships, negotiate meaning, and express attitudes or emotions. Cheng (2024) especially underline the importance of recent studies examining cross-cultural variations in language use, which reflect different values and communication styles in diverse social contexts.

Beyond linguistics, studies by Berger and Packard (2022), Vazard and Audrin (2022), and Wolf et al. (2021) show how language reflects human experience and culture. Berger and Packard (2022) use natural language processing to study social communication patterns, while Vazard and Audrin (2022) explore the cognitive feeling of confusion as part of meaning-making. Wolf et al. (2021) link language to human experience in healthcare, emphasizing the importance of empathy and meaningful communication between patients and medical staff. Together, these studies show that language is not just a linguistic system but also a window into human life and experience.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study analyzes the lyrics of the song Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (sad version). Data was taken from the complete lyrics and journal investigation, which express emotional and reflective meanings through poetic language. The focus of this study is to identify and describe the use of three metafunctions in Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), with a deeper emphasis on the ideational metafunction that represents the emotional meaning and experience of the singer.

The researcher used a descriptive qualitative approach according to Colorafi et al (2020) that qualitative descriptions are based on the general principles of naturalistic investigation. As this method allows for in depth interpretation of meaning through text and context analysis. The type of research used was content analysis, which focuses on examining how linguistic elements in lyrics reflect emotional experiences, actions, and interpersonal relationships.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Ideational Metafunction

Lyrics	Emotional Expression	Explanation
God, I wonder where you are	This line describes feelings of loss, confusion, and deep longing. The word "wonder" indicates a mental process that indicates a search for meaning and hope in the presence of someone far away.	These lyrics express the inner struggle of someone who feels separated from a loved one. The reference to "God" indicates that the sense of loss is so intense that it involves prayer and spiritual hope, deepening the song's emotional meaning.
Late drive with	These lyrics convey a recurring sense	The song's repetition signifies an inability to

the same song on replay	of nostalgia and sadness. Listening to the same song over and over while driving represents an attempt to hold onto past memories that cannot be forgotten.	let go of memories. The "late drive" activity creates a lonely and reflective atmosphere, reinforcing the sense of loneliness and longing that haunts the singer's feelings.
Please don't leave in the dark	This sentence expresses a fear of abandonment and a desire to get certainty or clarity from someone.	This request symbolizes emotional vulnerability and dependence on the relationship. "In the dark" becomes a metaphor for the confusion and sense of loss without the person present, revealing the depth of anxiety and fear of loneliness.

We know that songs have implied meanings that the writer wants to convey. Songs can also be presented in three meta functions, as evidenced in the following results and discussion. In the clause God, I wonder where you are. This part of the lyrics describes the feelings of someone who is feeling lost and confused (Vazard&Audrin,2022). As a songwriter, he tried to express my deep anxiety and longing through these lines. In the mind of the character in this song, he speaks to God, not only as a form of prayer, but also as an expression of despair as he searches for someone who means so much to him. He wonders where that person is now, whether they still remember him, or have gone too far away. These lines describe an inner silence full of questions, where only God may know the answers. In terms of meaning, this part shows a mental process, namely the activity of thinking and feeling. Through the word wonder, the character in this song expresses curiosity born of longing and anxiety. According to Berger&Packard (2022) language is used to convey the deepest human feelings: longing, fear of loss, and hope for an uncertain answer.

In the clause Late drive with the same song on replay. These lyrics describe a quiet night filled with memories. As a songwriter, the songwriter wanted to capture a simple moment that is rich in meaning: someone driving alone at night while playing the same song over and over again. This activity seems ordinary, but it actually holds deep feelings, as if the person wants to return to a happy past, or is trying to calm themselves from lingering sadness. Driving at night can be interpreted as a symbol of an inner journey, where a person seeks peace in solitude. Ideationally, these lyrics belong to the material process because he describe a real action, namely driving. However, behind that action lies an emotional meaning: the character in the song uses that physical action to remember, escape from sadness, and reminisce about someone who once meant so much. According to Wolf et al (2021) language here serves to portray human experience through actions that have strong emotional meaning.

In the clause Please don't leave me in the dark. This line describes the sincere plea of someone who is afraid of being left behind without certainty. As a songwriter, he wants to show the fragile side of humans who are often afraid of being alone and not knowing which direction to go. he use the expression in the dark as a metaphor to describe confusion, loneliness, and a sense of loss of direction, like walking without light when the person we rely on is gone. The character in this song not only asks not to be left behind, but also hopes to be given clarity and a sense of security. From a linguistic perspective, this part is a verbal process, as it involves the act of speaking or pleading (please don't leave me). But behind the words, there are strong emotions: fear of loss, emotional dependence, and the need for someone to be there (Chanotis, 2021). Through these lyrics, he tries to convey how deep the human need is to feel accepted and not alone in the darkness of their feelings.

b. Interpersonal Metafunction

Lyrics	Emotional Expression	Explanation
“Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star, God, I wonder where you are”	This lyric expresses feelings of confusion, longing, and emotional separation.	In this lyric, the songwriter not only describes a situation, but also becomes emotionally involved with a person who is far away. The phrase “I wonder where you are” reflects uncertainty and an inner need to know the location of someone who is deeply missed. On the other hand, the exclamation “God” adds depth to the feeling, showing a sense of despair and deep spiritual longing. Thus, this lyric demonstrates the interpersonal function of language, namely how the songwriter expresses emotions and creates emotional closeness with a person who is not there.
“We walk into your front door, we dance on the kitchen floor”	This line explains a sweet memory filled with warmth and closeness.	The repetition of the word "we" creates a very intimate atmosphere, as if these two people are truly experiencing the moment together. The use of present tense verbs also creates a lively atmosphere, as if the event is actually happening before our eyes, drawing the listener into the atmosphere.
“Oh, I wish that night would never end”	This is an expression of deep longing and a desire to preserve that beautiful past.	The word "I wish" conveys the singer's strong desire for the beautiful moment to last forever, not just for a moment. This reveals the mixed emotions that linger within. The phrase "I wish" reveals the songwriter's feelings.

In the context of interpersonal metafunction, language is used to express attitudes, emotions, and relationships between the songwriter and the listener or subject being discussed. Interpersonal metafunction reflects how the songwriter positions himself socially and emotionally through his choice of words and sentence structure.

The lyrics Twinkle-Twinkle Little Star, God, I wonder where you are reflect feelings of confusion, longing, and loss for someone who is far out of reach. The phrase I wonder where you are shows confusion and an emotional urge to know the whereabouts of the person being missed, while the exclamation God reflects despair and deep longing. In the context of interpersonal metafunction, language serves not only to convey information, but also to express emotions and shape interactions with other individuals. Cheng (2024) states that this metafunction shows how a person uses language to express attitudes and feelings through their choice of words and sentence intonation. As described by Medina et al. (2020) in a study on interpersonal meaning in song lyrics, the structure and emotional expression in songs are often a method for writers to connect with listeners emotionally, not just through the information conveyed. Thus, these lyrics show how language can be used as a tool to channel emotions and build an inner connection between the songwriter and the person they long for.

The lyrics We walk into your front door, we dance on the kitchen floor are a powerful example of how language serves to reinforce intimate and warm relationships (interpersonal metafunction). The repeated use of the first person plural pronoun we immediately establishes an atmosphere of closeness and shared experience. This we not only functions as a grammatical subject but also emotionally affirms their identity as a unified and personal unit. Linguistically, this line is realized through the clear physical actions of walking and

dancing. Although the descriptions are action based, they carry a significant emotional weight, consistent with Wilczewski (2023) view that language represents both action and social interaction. These actions are not described coldly, but are conveyed through the use of verbs in the Simple Present Tense. This grammatical choice has a dramatic effect, creating a sense of closeness, as if the happy memories are happening right now before the listener.

The lyrics of I wish convey the songwriter's strong desire for more than just a moment. It feels like a strong hope mixed with a sense of unease. Essentially, these words aren't just a wish, but a profound outpouring of the heart, a cry to the universe to preserve those beautiful memories forever. This clearly demonstrates how much the lyricist deeply misses and desperately wants to hold onto that beautiful past. The lyrics of Tell me seem to be begging someone song writer loves for reassurance that distance won't truly separate them. Although the phrase I wish is used, it's not a command, but rather a sign that the writer is fragile and full of hope. Suhandra (2019) defines, language is indeed a tool for conveying emotions like anxiety, love, or longing. In linguistic terms, sentences like this are like requests filled with emotional meaning, proving that language can be a medium for communication and an expression of affection.

c. Textual Metafunction

Lyrics	Emotional Expression	Explanation
“Tell me that you’re not too far away,”	This line expresses longing and desperation.	The imperative phrase “ Tell me ” places the listener as the source of comfort and hope, while “ that you’re not too far away ” deepens the sense of fear and emotional distance. Together, these parts highlight the inner conflict between hope and reality, allowing the listener to feel the song writer’s emotional struggle to hold on to the relationship.
“I’m stuck talking to the moon like,”	This line shows the songwriter’s loneliness and sense of despair, as if there’s no one left to talk to	The repetition of “ I’m stuck ” reflects an emotional state of being trapped between hope and sadness. It builds an introspective mood, showing the depth of the song writer’s loneliness. By choosing “ the moon ” as the one being spoken to, the songwriter emphasizes a longing for connection and invites listeners to feel the silence and emptiness within.
“Please don’t leave me in the dark,”	This line expresses fear of being abandoned and left alone.	This sentence highlights the songwriter’s inner struggle between fear and hope. The phrase “ don’t leave me ” directly conveys a desperate need for presence and comfort, while “ in the dark ” symbolizes confusion, sadness, and uncertainty. This combination builds a melancholic atmosphere and deepens the emotional tension in the song. It also helps shape the emotional flow of the lyrics, allowing listeners to feel the same sense of loss and longing that the songwriter is expressing.

All three lines of the song show how word choice and sentence structure create strong emotional meaning. In the line Tell me that you’re not too far away, for example, the simple request reflects the songwriter’s desire for reassurance and emotional closeness. The verb tell shows an intimate relationship, expressing hope that the distance, both physical and

emotional, is not too great. Halliday and Matthiessen (2019) explain that the connection between language and social function shows how meaning is built through interaction. This idea is supported by Schleppegrell and Oteiza (2023), who note that language structure does not only convey information but also expresses feelings and maintains human relationships. Therefore, this clause can be seen as an emotional act of communication that combines interpersonal meaning and personal experience. Juramli (2017) adds that expressions like this show how human emotions are represented through interactive language.

The line I'm stuck talking to the moon like deepens the sense of loneliness and the search for meaning. The phrase I'm stuck shows the songwriter's emotional state of being trapped and helpless, while talking to the moon symbolizes one sided communication, as if speaking to something far away and unreachable. Emotionally, this reflects isolation, which Halliday and Matthiessen (2019) describe as an example of how language represents inner experience through clause structure. Hermawan (2020) explains that natural imagery such as the moon is often used in song lyrics to express longing and emotional distance. The repetition of the word I also shows that the speaker places themselves at the center of the emotional experience, maintaining the flow of meaning within the text (Schleppegrell & Oteiza, 2023). In this sense, language does not just describe an action of speaking, but also becomes a way to release emotions that are hard to express directly.

The line Please don't leave me in the dark adds a stronger emotional tone. It expresses a plea for someone not to go and not to leave the speaker in confusion or loneliness. The word dark here symbolizes not only physical darkness but also uncertainty and fear of being abandoned. Schleppegrell and Oteiza (2023) point out that emotional language often reflects human needs for connection and security. The imperative form please don't leave me shows the speaker's vulnerability and emotional urgency, which, according to Emilia and Hamied (2015), creates a powerful emotional effect through repetition and gentle wording. Hermawan (2020) also notes that repetition in song lyrics strengthens the sense of desperation and hope, making the lyrics feel more alive and heartfelt.

These three lines show how the textual metafunction connects emotional and experiential meanings into a unified whole. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2019) explain, the textual function helps organize ideas so they flow logically and emotionally. In this song, repeated phrases such as tell me and please don't leave me act as cohesive devices that connect emotion and meaning throughout the lyrics. Schleppegrell and Oteiza (2023) also stress that such repetition helps create a consistent emotional flow that listeners can easily follow. The repeated use of personal pronouns like I and me strengthens the emotional link between the speaker and listener, while the rhythmic repetition makes the feelings in the song flow naturally. Hermawan (2020) explains that rhythm and repetition shape emotional patterns in lyrics, and Emilia and Hamied (2015) emphasize that the organization of themes and clauses helps emotion unfold naturally. Similarly, Juramli (2017) concludes that the harmony between language structure and human emotion is what gives a song its emotional depth and unified meaning.

4. CONCLUSION

The analysis of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star (Sad Version) through the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) reveals how the three metafunctions ideational, interpersonal, and textual interact to construct the song's emotional and linguistic meaning. The ideational metafunction shows how the lyrics express human experiences such as loneliness, longing, and emotional struggle through different process types, including material, mental, and verbal processes. The interpersonal metafunction shows how language conveys feelings of affection, hope, and vulnerability, positioning the song as a dialogue

between the speaker and an absent listener. Meanwhile, the textual metafunction organizes these meanings coherently, using repetition, theme structure, and cohesive devices to create emotional continuity throughout the song.

Altogether, these metafunctions demonstrate that the song is not only a form of artistic expression but also a linguistic representation of human emotion and experience. By interpreting the lyrics through SFL, this study affirms that even simple or familiar songs can embody complex linguistic structures and deep emotional resonance. The findings also support Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) view that language simultaneously functions to represent experience, relationships, and organize discourse revealing the intricate harmony between form, meaning, and feeling in the use of language.

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