

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Relying on Maslow's concept of psychological insecurity (1942), instead of a personality trait, insecurity is a psychological condition that shapes how individuals view themselves, others, and their surroundings. Insecurity is reflected through several interconnected characteristics, such as negative thinking toward the self, negative perceptions of the world and other people, intense negative emotions including jealousy, fear, and persistent unhappiness, emotional instability, excessive self-examination, and a few more. These characteristics interact dynamically and influence how individuals experience and express their emotions. Hence, those who experience insecurity tend to view the world as threatening and judgmental, which often results in emotional responses such as anxiety, self-criticism, and hypersensitivity reflected in their thoughts and behaviors. A study by Xu., et al. (2023) reveals that high feelings of insecurity are linked to lower rates of self-disclosure. In this way, individuals with greater insecurity tend to hide their true feelings and are reluctant to share openly, therefore often using indirect means instead.

At this point, language is the most fundamental aspect in implicitly expressing big emotions, such as insecurity. This tendency to communicate indirectly can be explained through Grice's (1989) theory of implicature, which explains how people can communicate meanings that are not stated word-for-word. Grice distinguishes two major types: conventional implicature, which is

tied to the lexical meaning of certain expressions, and conversational implicature, which may be generalized or particularized depending on how much contextual information is required for interpretation. In the context of emotional expression, implicature functions as a linguistic strategy that enables speakers or writers to express psychological vulnerability, including insecurity, in a subtle and indirect manner. Such implied meanings frequently appear not only in daily communication but also in artistic texts, including song lyrics.

Confessional writing is characterized by the expression of personal feelings, emotional struggles, and inner conflicts, allowing writers to transform intimate psychological experiences into literary texts (Smriti, 2024). This tendency can also be observed in contemporary songwriting, where personal emotions are frequently represented through song lyrics. Several contemporary pop artists have been widely studied for their use of confessional songwriting to articulate personal emotions and inner struggles, like Taylor Swift and Olivia Rodrigo. While Swift's songwriting has often been analyzed for its explicit narrative detail and autobiographical clarity, Rodrigo's tends to emphasize the closeness and relatability of the emotions. The development of her second album *GUTS* (2023) leaves an impression when compared to her debut album *SOUR* (2021). Whereas *SOUR* (2021) is a breakup album which exposes heartbreak and adolescent emotional turbulence in a more angsty and direct manner, *GUTS* (2023) presents a more complex and reflective exploration of insecurity, frequently conveyed through implicit language and hidden emotional cues.

Although confessional writings reveal these types of feelings intimately, it does not always mean that emotions are expressed in a direct or literal manner.

This style also lets sensitive emotions be communicated subtly while still touching the emotional depth. In an interview with Variety (2023), she explains that *GUTS* (2023) became an outlet for her feelings of shame, embarrassment, and regrets, which she describes as hard to externalize directly. This statement suggests that although the album is deeply personal, its emotional expression relies largely on indirect language rather than explicit confession.

Furthermore, although insecurity is a dominant theme throughout the album, this study focuses on five selected songs that most prominently represent indirect expressions of insecurity compared to other tracks on *GUTS* (2023). Based on the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the album, five songs were selected as the corpus for this study because they most clearly convey the theme of insecurity. These include “*Pretty Isn’t Pretty*”, which addresses body image pressure; “*Lacy*”, which expresses jealousy and feelings of inferiority toward an unattainable ideal; “*Teenage Dream*”, which reflects anxiety about growing up; “*The Ballad of a Homeschooled Girl*”, which portrays social awkwardness and low self-confidence; and “*Love Is Embarrassing*”, which explores emotional shame and self-blame in romantic experiences. Across these songs, insecurity is not always stated openly but is conveyed through implied meanings in the lyrics. Therefore, *GUTS* (2023) provides a relevant corpus for examining how insecurity is expressed through implicature in contemporary song lyrics.

Many earlier studies show that emotional messages in song lyrics are often best understood through pragmatic implication. A study by Hidayah (2021) examined English song lyrics and identified all four types of implicature,

showing how listeners interpret emotions beyond literal meanings. Aligned with the research by Putri and Arifuddin (2023) that analyzed Brandi Carlile's lyrics and found that particularized implicature dominated, showing that implied meanings depend strongly on context and personal interpretation. Moreover, Rosyid (2013) in their study on Maher Zain's *Forgive Me*, shows how implicatures allow listeners to uncover deeper messages related to spirituality, gratitude, love, and human values. In addition, several studies show that insecurity is a common issue in modern music. Sandra and Sumardjijati (2024) found that insecurity in Idgitaf's *Takut* reflects generational struggles involving mental health and self-acceptance. Aprilia and Neisya (2022) showed that insecurity and self-reflection emerge as responses to societal expectations in Maggie Lindemann's *Pretty Girl*. These studies show that insecurity frequently appears as a recurring emotional theme that mirrors inner conflict and self-perception.

In the context of song lyric analysis using psychological perspectives, Imaduddin and Wildi (2024) combined Maslow's concept of insecurity with Grice's implicature to analyze Taylor Swift's *Midnights*. They discovered 73 instances of insecurity, mostly related to emotional instability (38%) and self-examination (26%), with generalized implicature as the most frequent type (58%). Their findings show that artists tend to express insecurity and vulnerability implicitly through language. However, their study focused on mature, adult emotional experiences, which differ significantly from the chaotic adolescent insecurities explored in *GUTS* (2023). Meanwhile, Jechan et al. (2025) examined *GUTS* (2023) using Lacanian psychoanalysis and Barthes'

textual theory, revealing themes of lack and desire. Yet their study concentrated on psychological interpretation rather than explaining the linguistic mechanisms behind the expression of insecurity.

From these studies, including research on implicature in song lyrics by Hidayah (2021), Putri and Arifuddin (2023), and Rosyid (2013), as well as studies on insecurity in popular music by Sandra and Sumardijati (2024) and Aprilia and Neisya (2022), it is clear that emotional meaning and insecurity have been widely discussed. In addition, Imaduddin and Wildi (2024) and Jechan et al. (2025) have examined insecurity in song lyrics from psychological perspectives. However, no study has specifically analyzed how insecurity in Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023) is expressed linguistically through implicature. Understanding how indirect language conveys emotional vulnerability is important in contemporary music studies, particularly in music that reflects adolescent and early adulthood emotional experiences, as insecurity during this stage is often felt intensely yet expressed indirectly through implied meanings rather than explicit statements. For this reason, the present research aims to fill this gap by using Grice's (1989) theory of implicature and Maslow's (1942) concept of insecurity to see how different types of insecurity are communicated through implied meaning in the lyrics. Therefore, this study offers a linguistic perspective on how insecurity is articulated through implicature in contemporary pop music, with a specific focus on Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023).

1.2 Research Question

1. What types of implicature are used in selected songs from Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023) based on Grice's theory of implicature (1989)?
2. What characteristics of insecurity are reflected through those implicatures in the selected songs from Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023) based on Maslow's psychological theory (1942)?
3. How is insecurity expressed through implicature in the selected songs from Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023)?

1.3 Objective of The Study

In line with the research questions above, this study aims to identify the types of implicature employed to express insecurity, examine the characteristics of insecurity represented through those implicatures, and explain how implicature functions in conveying insecurity in the selected songs from Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023). Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the types of implicature employed to express insecurity in the selected songs from Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023).
2. To identify the characteristics of insecurity represented through those implicatures based on Maslow's theory of psychological insecurity (1942).
3. To explain how implicature functions in expressing insecurity in the selected songs from Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* (2023).

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to a pragmatic analysis of song lyrics from Olivia Rodrigo's album *GUTS* (2023). The corpus of this research consists of five selected songs: "*Pretty Isn't Pretty*," "*Lacy*," "*Teenage Dream*," "*The Ballad of a Homeschooled Girl*," and "*Love Is Embarrassing*." These songs are chosen purposively because they most clearly reflect themes of insecurity.

The analysis focuses on linguistic units such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that contain implied meanings related to insecurity. This study applies Grice's (1989) theory of implicature to identify the types of implicature used and Maslow's (1942) concept of insecurity to classify the types of insecurity expressed. Musical elements and audience reception are not discussed in this study, as the analysis is limited to the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the lyrics.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the field of pragmatics by expanding the application of implicature theory in the analysis of song lyrics. In addition, this study contributes to interdisciplinary research by linking linguistic analysis with psychological concepts, particularly Maslow's theory of insecurity, in the context of contemporary popular music. Moreover, practically, this study may help readers and *GUTS*' listeners better understand how emotional vulnerability, especially insecurity, is expressed indirectly through language in the song lyrics. It may also serve as a reference for students and future researchers who are interested in pragmatic analysis, music discourse,

or the study of emotional expression in popular culture, particularly in works related to adolescent and early adulthood experiences.

