

## A Multimodal Analysis on the Song “Easy On Me” by Adele

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### Abstract

Music is one of the communication tools that are often used by individuals. Through music, a person can express the experience in life. Each person has a different interpretation and perception of the relationship between the song and the video clip. Perception is an individual cognitive process in interpreting and summarizing information and messages obtained by the senses. The problem of the research is there are different perceptions among viewers about the meaning of video clip *easy on me*. To find the meaning of a video clip, it is necessary to analyze using a semiotic approach that focuses on multimodality. In this study, to get the message and meaning of the video clip *easy on me*, the researchers used descriptive qualitative research methods by data collection using library research techniques. To explain the truth the researchers used descriptive explanations in the form of sentences. Researchers also used discourse analysis methods to analyze nonverbal languages such as body language, and textual communication, possibly including images and symbols. To collect data and sources about the topics discussed in this study researchers conduct literature studies of various sources of journals, the internet, and libraries. Based on the results of the analysis multimodal in the video clip *easy on me* shows that the song and video clip are interrelated. The *easy on me* music video sung by Adele is one way to convey a message.

Keywords: *Analysis, Meaning, Mode, Multimodal, Video*

### INTRODUCTION

The English language is an international language that is used by more than 430 million people around the world as a second language (Ilyosovna, 2020). according to Devianty in Maulidiyah & Setyawan (2022), Language is a communication tool that is often used by humans to convey intentions, goals, ideas, and feelings to others. Communication is the event of conveying messages or conveying meaning to others with the aim of social interaction with others. Technological advances affect the way of communicating, because the more advanced technology is, the more ways of communicating through various media such as videos, movies, advertisements, music, and film. Music is one of the communication tools that are often used by individuals (Harnia, 2021) ; (Hidayat, 2014). Music is also categorized as a communication tool because music is used as a medium for conveying certain messages and intentions to the audience.

Through music, a person can express the experience in life, both the experience of romance and social experience. The disclosure and expression can be through song lyrics and can also be in the form of visualizations made in the form of video clips. Video clips are a combination of audio and visual that present a song, and has certain meanings according to the song. Visualization is the expression of an idea or feeling using images and writing. Video clips are a dominant factor in conveying a message in song lyrics and the meaning of the song (Alfariani et al., 2022). Usually, video clips are made as interesting as possible to promote song sales, but now video clips are the most effective means of being used as a communication

medium for conveying messages and phenomena contained in the lyrics of the song because they are supported by images and sound or music (Poetiray et al., Moller, 2011). In addition to promotional media, video clips can be used to strengthen the delivery of messages in the song itself (Fazira et al., 2021). Usually, the delivery of messages and meanings in visualizations contained in video clips can be through body movements and facial expressions.

Each person has a different interpretation and perception of the relationship between the song and the video clip. Perception is the experience of an event obtained by inferring information, interpreting and interpreting messages obtained by the senses. As well as what happened to Adele's album, when on YouTube several viewers interpreted it differently. One video clip that gets some perception is the video clip *easy on me* by Adele. Video clip *easy on me* is one of Adele's songs that was released on 15 October 2021 to all digital music platforms. One of them is YouTube. The problem of the research is that in the video clip, four viewers have different perceptions about the song through the comment section, causing different perceptions. In the video clip, there is a perception that the song is about her primacy. There is also a perception that the song is about reflection of the mistakes Adele made during her young. There is a perception that the song is about the request to her son, about having clarity to understand the effects of Adele's choices, and how Adele has hurt people in the process. However, knowing the meaning and message in a video clip cannot be interpreted by guessing. This attracted the attention of researchers to be more detailed about what was behind this song

Understanding the lyrics of the song and video clip can help to know the message of the song, but understanding the meaning of the video clip is also very important because all means of conveying the message of a song, be it through lyrics or video clip visualization, have an important role in conveying the message. Though all the means of delivery of messages from a video clip is through the lyrics or visualization of the video clip has an important role in conveying messages. The synergy of the song lyrics should be on-adding to one point of view or called multimodal for the complexity of the meaning of the song to be understood. According to Mills and Exley as in Suprakisno (2015), multimodality is defined as two or more modes that can produce meaning. Mode is a system signature that exists in multimodality, which is a collection of semiotic sources that can make meaning, such as images, writing, or speech.

According to Iedema in Suyudi, (2016), Multimodal can also be said to be a technical term that aims to show that in the process of speaking or conveying messages, humans use semiotics. Semiotics are studies of signs focusing on the form of words, images, sounds, movements, and objects. The mode in multimodality is a collection of semiotic sources that can make meaning, such as images, writing, or speech. Mode is a source that is formed to communicate meaning (Firmansyah, 2019; Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Hermawan, 2013). Michelle Anstey and Geoff Bull in Suprakisno (2015), there are five multimodal semiotic systems in a text, namely: 1) linguistic: vocabulary, generic structure, and the grammar of the oral and written language, 2) visual: color, vectors, and viewpoint in still and moving images, 3) audio: volume, pitch and rhythm of music and sound effects, 4) gestural: movement, speed and stillness in facial expression and body language, and 5) spatial: proximity, direction, the position of layout and organisation of objects in space.

To find the meaning of a video clip, it is necessary to use a semiotic approach that focuses on multimodality. Explanation of multimodality is very important because not all messages are conveyed through words, but also from visual elements. (Mills & Exley in Purbasari, 2015). According to Suprakisno (2017), stated that multimodal analysis emphasizes that all modes of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, play an important role in producing meaning. Multimodal analysis was conducted to provide an understanding that inherent communication is multimodal. Several previous studies had similar issues with multimodal analysis. The first study is A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of "Lathi" Song

(Muliani et al., 2022), the second study is Analysis of The Structure and Meaning of The Lyrics Song of Adele 30 Album “Struggle of Love” by Rifan (2023), the third study is Analysis Of Idioms Found In Selected Song Lyrics Of Adele (Artawan & Suastini, 2023), and the fourth study is Analysis of Figurative Language in “*Easy On Me*” Song Lyric by (Muliani et al., 2022).

As reviewed above, the objective of the research is researchers want to analyze more deeply the messages conveyed in the video clip *easy on me* by Adele to find out the truth of the meaning and message in the video clip so as not to cause different interpretations. In understanding it all it should be done multimodal analysis in the video clip. Analysis that the researchers will include performing semiotic systems of linguistic, visual, gestural, audio, and spatial.

## **METHODS**

In order to get the message and meaning of the video clip *easy on me*, the researchers used qualitative descriptive research methods by data collection using library study technique. Qualitative research is a method used to understand events, social conditions, and problems experienced by participants, as well as to describe in depth the subject of the research. In qualitative research, conceptualization, categorization, and description are developed based on events obtained when research activities occur (Alifah et al., 2023). Then, we also used discourse analysis methods to analyze nonverbal language such as body language, and textual communication, possibly including images and symbols. According to M.H Abrams and Geoffrey G Harpham in Nursita, (2023), discourse analysis is the study of how the language is contained in the message in the text and context. Halloran (2011) as stated in Muliani et al., (2022) consider that Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) the study of language that is combined with other sources, such as visuals, scientific symbolism, gestures, actions, music, and sound. To explain the truth of the meaning in the video clip *easy on me*, the researchers used descriptive explanations in the form of sentences.

To collect data and sources about the topics discussed in this study, we conduct literature studies of various sources of journals, the internet, and libraries. Literature study is research used for data collection by searching and reading, taking notes, and processing research information materials in the form of books, scientific journals, research reports, and theses related to the subject of research. Research materials in the study of literature can be in the form of oral, written, audio, or video (Nisa', 2022). The researchers observed Adele's music video and then described it. Then the researchers analyzed the multimodal aspects of the collected data to reveal the meaning and message conveyed in the video clip by the theory defined by Michelle Anstey and Geoff Bull. Data analysis is needed to support the process of conveying information so that it can be understood and used (Alifah et al., 2023). The analysis of the meaning and message in Adele's video clip used a semiotic approach because the data analyzed is in the form of images. Data was collected from a video clip of Adele's song on youtube for analysis. The results of the analyses were written and explained descriptively.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The video clip *easy on me* was analyzed based on a multimodal semiotic system. Based on the analysis of what the researchers have done, in this music video clip, the meaning is conveyed through the images and scenes contained therein. In particular, the song titled *easy on me* tells the story of Adele's divorce from her ex-husband Simon Konecki in 2019 and also about the message to her son, Angelo, who was also devastated by the separation of his parents. This was revealed by Adele in an interview with BBC Radio in October 2021. The following

are the results of the analysis based on the multimodal semiotic system regarding the messages and meanings in the *easy on me* by Adele music video.

### **a. Linguistic Analysis**

The *easy on me* video clip uses spoken and written language. The spoken language used is in the lyrics of the song. The spoken language variety used in the lyrics of this song is a formal variety that uses figurative words. In the first verse, there is figurative in the lyrics “There ain’t no gold in this river, that I’ve been washin’ my hands in forever. I know there is hope in these waters, but I can’t bring myself to swim, when I am drowning in this silence”. The word “gold” has the meaning of jewelry or valuable treasure, gold in this lyric is a metaphor that means in the marriage life valuable treasure is a good and harmonious relationship with husband and children. The word “river” is a metaphor that has the meaning of marriage life travel, which is like a river is a flowing stream of water. The word “waters” is a symbol in figurative language that has a meaning of the situation of marriage life. The word “silence” means no more words, the word silence refers to a situation where they are no longer talking to each other. It is supported by (Swarniti, 2022), which analyzes the figurative language “*easy on me*” song lyrics. The lyrics mean that Adele realizes there is still hope in her marriage life, but she cannot hold back any longer of situation of they no longer talk to each other which makes that there is no longer warmth in her marriage life and Adele no longer wants to fight for it.

Then in the second verse, in the lyrics “I was still a child, didn’t get the chance to feel the world around me”. The word “I” in the lyrics refers to Adele, then the word “child” in this lyric is a metaphor that means still immature, it supported by (Swarniti, 2022), who stated that the word “child” in sentence I was still a child has a meaning as the Adele act like a child. The lyrics mean that when Adele got married, she was still emotionally immature and the lyrics “didn’t get the chance to feel the world around me”. The lyrics “feel the world around me” is a metaphor that means knowledge of the bitter and sweet of marriage life.

Then in the third verse, the lyrics “There ain’t no room for things to change, when we are both so deeply stuck in our ways” and “I changed who I was to put you both first but now I give up”. The word “room” is a metaphor, the word room in this sentence is an opportunity, an opportunity to change the mind. The lyric means Adele's decision to divorce will not change anymore. While the word “I” in the lyrics refers to Adele herself, then “changed who I was to put you both first” The lyrics mean that at first, Adele prioritized her children and husband without caring about herself and her feelings, the word “you both” is directed at her children and husband. But then she gave up now, the meaning can be seen in the lyrics “but now I give up” and she has decided to change from what she had done before.

The explanation and emphasis of meaning in the song lyrics are reinforced by the visual variety displayed in the video clip. Then the writing shown in the scene minute 1: 44 shows the writing on a sign in front of the house “sold and for sale”. The meaning of the writing is that initially, the house was a place she lived in with her husband, but the house was sold because they had separated and no longer lived together due to divorce. This linguistic analysis is supported by Erikha, (2018) and Ben-Rafael (2009), that writing on a signboard is a linguistic aspect that can carry important aspects as a marker and produce meaning.

### **b. Visual Analysis**

Visually, this video clip is 5 minutes and 32 seconds long. In terms of color, this video clip begins in black and white, while black and white is the basic color in Adele's video clip. The black and white colors in the video clip are used as a nostalgic effect and the black and white colors have a negative meaning, namely feelings of sadness and boredom. It is supported by (Sutedja & Athoriq, 2021), that black and white can present negative visuals



Figure 1

A nostalgic effect is used to signify recalling past feelings. The feelings that are recalled are feelings of sadness and boredom. The black and white color gives the impression of a sad feeling that interprets Adele's sad feelings because of her divorce and separation from her husband. The meaning is also supported by linguistic aspects, that is the writing of the house for sale on the sign.

Then the black and white color also interprets the feeling of boredom, this feeling of boredom is because Adele realizes that her relationship with her husband is no longer romantic. The feeling of boredom can be seen in the lyrics "There ain't no gold in this river". The lyrics mean that in Adele's marriage life, her relationship with her husband is no longer harmonious and it makes her feel bored of the situation.

Then at 3:39 minutes duration, the video clip changes the transition from black and white to a natural color video clip. Instantly the colors in the video clip are seen, starting from the color of the room, furniture, and clothes that Adele wears look in reality. The natural color change signifies the transition from nostalgia to looking ahead. The use of black and white is associated with a period of sadness and boredom with the marriage life situation that Adele experienced. The change from black and white to natural color is associated with a change in Adele who left her past period of sadness and boredom because of her marriage life and she will focus on the present and focus more on herself. The visual interpretation in the video clip strengthens the linguistic aspects, the lyric "I changed who I was to put you both first but now I give up". The lyrics mean that Adele used to prioritize her husband without caring about his feelings, and now she is giving up. The analysis of the meaning of color is supported by Thejahanjaya and Hendra Yulianto (2021), colors can form non-verbal communication that can deliver messages instantly and have meaning. Visual analysis is supported by (Belinda Budijanto & Setyaningsih, 2022; Mahmudah, 2021; Suyudi, 2016), stated that visual aspects can also influence the meaning of the word. Each aspect of multimodality contained in the video clip can also reinforce the meaning of the actual words with images, colors, linguistics, gestures, and audio.



Figure 2



Figure 3

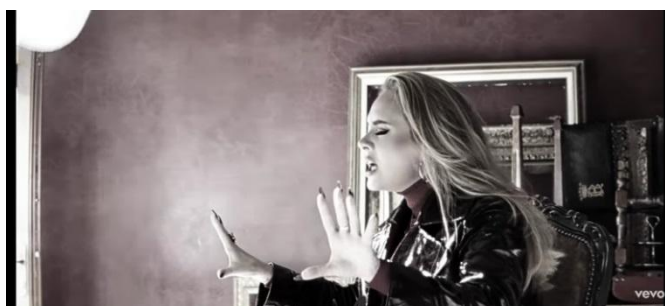


Figure 4

### c. Gesture Analysis

In the scene at minute 2:13, a happy expression is seen when she sees a family having a picnic and laughing together. Then Adele smiled at that family, but her smile did not stay long, her expression turned to sadness. The expression suggests that there is sadness and bitterness in her heart that makes her remember, and makes her smile turn faint. Sadness and bitterness caused by the breakup of her own family and she realizes that what the family does is a happy thing and she wishes she could be like that, but in reality, she can not because she has separated from her husband. The affirmation of the meaning of the expression is also strengthened by the linguistic aspect that is the lyrics "I know there is hope in these waters, but I cannot bring my self to swim when I am drowning in this silence". It means that expression and lyrics support each other to produce meaning.

Then at minute 2:37, Adele's expression is seen smiling broadly at a young couple who had just gotten married, still wearing wedding dresses driving pass Adele, the bride at that time looked at Adele and smiled, and then Adele also smiled broadly at the woman. Then after the couple passed, Adele's expression became flat. A smiling expression indicates that Adele is also happy for the couple's marriage, but then on the other hand the couple reminds Adele of her fail marriage, and that she got divorced because she was immature when she got married. That is marked by Adele's changing expression. The meaning is also strengthened by the lyrics "I was still a child, didn't get the chance to feel the world around me". The lyrics mean that because she is immature, she still does not understand and has not experienced much of the sweetness and bitterness of life.

Then in the scene at minute 5: 06, the expression displayed by Adele at the end of the video clip is seen from the eyes that look listless and a slight smile that seems genuine. The expression indicates that she sincerely asked her ex-husband to understand her. The meaning of the expression is supported by linguistic aspects, that is the lyrics "go easy on me". The lyrics "go easy on me". The word "go easy" means a request to be gentle, and the word "on me" refers to Adele. So the meaning in the series is a request from Adele to her husband to be gentle with her and a request to understand her. Then the emphasis on the meaning is also seen when Adele looks at the camera emphasizing the message and giving the impression of closeness as if she

is talking directly to her husband. It is supported by Mark as stated in Purbasari, (2015), that participants who stare directly at the camera with an eye-level angle create an impression of the viewer's closeness to the participant.



Figure 5



Figur 6

#### **d. Audio Analysis**

This video clip only uses piano accompaniment and this song starts with a low note the music tempo is also slow and the melody is soft. The low note at the beginning of the song aims to allow the listener to absorb the message in the song. It is supported by Sujatmiko & Ishaq (2015) as stated in Kristiani (2023) that, the use of slow tempos and soft melodies produces a wistful and sad mood. It is supported by Nisa & Qurrota (2022) that, music can be trusted as a medium to convey feelings, communicate, and build emotions. It accordance with the theme of the song is about separation. The music used only piano accompaniment makes this song seem simple but the emphasis of meaning in this video clip is very deep. The deep meaning of this song is seen from each of the lyrics.

Then there is a rise in the high pitch of the lyrics "I had good intentions, and the highest hopes but I know right now that probably don't even show, go easy on me baby, I was still a child, I didn't get the chance to feel the world around me" at minutes 4:19 to minutes 5:00. The increase to the high note is meant to emphasize the meaning in the song lyrics. It is supported by Liandra, et al. Liandra & Toruan (2016) that, when the movement of the melody starts to rise to a high note and swings down and then back up again, it shows an emphasis on the meaning in the lyrics (during the high note). In these lyrics, Adele wants to convey that when she married her husband and had great hopes for her marriage, but now that they had to separate, she wants her husband to understand her and be gentle with her. The meaning of the sound supported by Anstey & Bull (2010), in analyzing multimodal system in a text, the audio elements that can be analyzed will be found in form of sound effects, music, rhythm, pitch, and volume.

### e. Spatial Analysis



Figure 7

The distance between one image and another shows the integration of the meaning of this song. Each image displayed has its own meaning and the meaning supports each other. From all of Adele's images in this video clip, they are generally in the middle. The position of the object in the middle is a sign that the main character in the song wrote. It is supported by (Maulana, 2022), that, positioning the object in the middle strengthens the presence of the character and makes the object in the center look more dominant. Then in scenes 00:06- 00:10, the video clip shows several shots of the interior of an empty, old-looking house. Starting from the living room which contains a chair that has been covered by a cloth, and displays a messy chair that is in the room of the house. The messy chair indicates that the house has not been taken care of and the chair that has been covered by a cloth indicates that the house is empty and no one lives in the house anymore.



Figure 8

In the scene at minute 01:21 Adele walks towards the car, then drives the car which carries a lot of equipment items with a position getting away from the house with the car. Adele's position away from the house indicates that she is leaving the house because she no longer lives there. Then the position of many items carried by the car reinforces the meaning that she will move. In scene 03:46, the background of the video shows all the household furniture arranged in a mess emphasizing the meaning of the song as a whole, namely, a messy marriage life, namely divorce or separation in the marriage life. It is supported by Yanda, (2018), that layout and visuals are elements of communication.

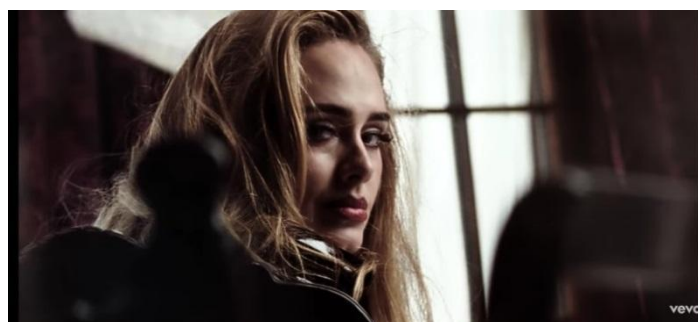


Figure 9





Figure 10

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of Analysis multimodal in the video clip *easy on me* shows that the song and video clip are interrelated. Each multimodal aspect in the video clip can be studied such as linguistic, visual, audio, spatial and gestural aspects. Each of these multimodal aspects is interconnected and supports each other in producing meaning. The *easy on me* music video sung by Adele is one way to convey a message. This song and video clip contain signs and meanings that convey the message that Adele's marriage life has failed.

Marriage life separation is not an easy thing, and separation is caused by many factors, one of which is emotional immaturity, such as the message that has been conveyed in Adele's video clip that when she got married, her thinking was immature, so when she was tired of facing the problems of marriage life the decision she took was to separate or divorce. The lyrics in this song have a deep meaning that describes the feelings felt by the songwriter and the statement he wants to convey to his partner. In this video clip, the songwriter also wants to tell the listener about what happened in her marriage life. The songwriter also conveys what she feels to her ex-husband to understand the reasons and decisions she has made, which is the decision in her divorce.

We hope this research can be useful and can provide information about messages and meanings in video clips using multimodal analysis. The researchers also hope that this research can be literature in research that will conduct further research with a similar theme, it is advisable to read a lot of literature and references to produce better research.

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