

FUNCTIONAL MORPHEMES IN 'OCEANS & ENGINES' SONG BY NIKI

Oleh:

Ghea Dwi Anzelia

Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing JIA

ghebambam1a@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to analyze the functional morphemes in the song "Oceans & Engines," in which the singer is NIKI, because the researcher has an interest to explore this song, which is also the writer's favorite song from the singer. This research uses qualitative methods, which allow researchers to understand and interpret language and related experiences. In this research, the writer analyzes the functional morphemes contained in the song lyrics of the famous song "Oceans & Engines". The aim of this research is to determine the categories of functional morphemes that appear in the lyrics and to comprehend their significance and functions within the framework of the song. The analysis showed several categories of functional morphemes, including article, auxiliary verb, conjunction, determiner, preposition, and pronoun, indicating of the song's lyrics focus more on personal and emotional experiences.

Keywords: functional morphemes, lyrics analysis, oceans & engines

A. INTRODUCTION

In the world of music, lyrics are often a window that reveals human emotions, stories and experiences. Each word chosen by the songwriter not only serves as a communication tool, but also as an element that shapes the main idea of a work. For the purpose to grasp the beauty of the lyrics, it is essential to explore the

underlying linguistic structures, one of which is morphology.

In linguistics, morphology refers to the examination of the mental processes used to create words or the field of study that focuses on this area (Mark Aronoff & Kirsten Fudeman, 2011, p.1). From the perspective of George Yule (2006, p.72), Morphology is a division of linguistics that investigates the internal composition of

words and the processes by which words are created and formed. In his book entitled "The Study of Language," (2006, p.73) Yule explains that morphology focuses on morphemes. Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning, which can either be a whole word or a part of a word, such as *re-*, *de-*, *un-*, *-ish*, *-ly*, *-ceive*, *-mand*, *tie*, *boy*, and *like*, as seen in words like *receive*, *demand*, *untie*, *boyish*, and *likely* (Nida, 1970, p.1). Understanding these foundational elements of morphology will pave the way for a deeper analysis of functional morphemes in song lyrics. Morphemes can be broadly categorized into two types: free morpheme and bound morpheme (Yule, 2006, p.64).

1. Bound morphemes

Bound morphemes are morphemes that cannot stand alone and must be bound to other morphemes to form words that have meaning. Usually, bound morphemes are affixes, which can be divided into prefixes and suffixes (Yule, 2006, p.63).

- Affix, is included in the category of bound morphemes that is attached to a root word to create a new word or change its meaning. Affixes cannot stand by themselves and are always connected to other morphemes.

- Prefix, is a type of affix added to the beginning of a root word. For instance, "*un-*" in "*unhappy*" (not happy) changes the meaning of the root word by adding negation or another meaning and "*re-*" in "*redo*" (do again) indicates repetition or going back.
- Suffix, is a type of affix added to the end of a root word. For example, "*-ed*" in "*walked*" (walk in the past) changes the root word into a different form, like past tense and "*-ness*" in "*happiness*" (the feeling of joyful) changes an adjective into a noun that shows a state.

2. Free Morphemes

The term refers to morphemes that can stand alone and have their own meaning. These are known as free morphemes. Free morphemes are units of language that do not need additional morphemes to convey meaning or to form a complete word. Examples of free morphemes include words like "*book*," "*run*," and "*happy*." These words can be used independently in sentences without needing to be added with other morphemes (Yule, 2006, p.63). Free morphemes can be categorized into two types:

- Lexical Morphemes

The units of meaning that convey specific concepts or ideas and can be easily identified is known as lexical morphemes. They usually refer to objects, actions, or concepts in the real world, and can stand independently as words without the need for other morphemes. Lexical morphemes include various categories, including adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs. With that said, lexical morphemes play an important role in conveying specific information and helping to establish meaning in communication.

| Word Type | Definition | Examples | Example in Sentence |
|------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| Nouns | Words that name a person, place, thing, or idea. | <i>dog, city, book, happiness</i> | The dog is playing in the garden. |
| Verbs | Words that show actions, events, or states of being. | <i>run, eat, write, is</i> | She writes a letter every morning. |
| Adjectives | Words that describe nouns by giving more information about them. | <i>beautiful, tall, red, happy</i> | He lives in a tall building. |
| Adverbs | Words that describe verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, usually telling how, when, where, or to what extent. | <i>quickly, very, always, there</i> | She runs quickly to catch the bus. |

- Functional Morphemes

In contrast, functional morphemes are morphemes that do not have a clear lexical meaning, but serve to indicate the grammatical relationship among words within a sentence. Although functional morphemes can also appear themselves as words, their meaning is more grammatical than lexical. They help form sentence structure and provide the context needed to understand the connection among words. Functional morphemes can be divided into several categories, including prepositions,

conjunctions, articles, determiner and pronouns. In this way, functional morphemes play a crucial role in creating coherent and clear sentences (Yule, 2006, p.64).

| Category | Definition | Examples |
|----------------|--|--|
| Article | A functional morpheme used to define a noun as specific (definite) or unspecified (indefinite). | Definite: <i>the</i> Indefinite: <i>a, an</i> |
| Auxiliary Verb | A functional morpheme that helps the main verb in a sentence by expressing tense, mood, voice, or aspect. | <i>be, have, do, can, may, will</i> |
| Conjunction | A functional morpheme that connects words, phrases, or clauses to create relationships between them. | <i>and, but, or, because, although</i> |
| Determiner | A functional morpheme placed before a noun to specify quantity, possession, or definiteness. | <i>this, that, my, some, any, each</i> |
| Preposition | A functional morpheme that shows the relationship between a noun (or pronoun) and another element in a sentence, often indicating direction, place, or time. | <i>in, on, at, to, by, with, from</i> |
| Pronoun | A functional morpheme that substitutes for a noun or noun phrase, often used to avoid repetition and indicate possession, subject, or object. | <i>he, she, it, they, we, him, ours</i> |

After understanding the distinction among free and bound morphemes, as well as the categories, it's possible to see how functional morphemes contribute to the analysis of song lyrics. Functional morphemes, such as prepositions, conjunctions, articles, determiner and pronouns, help form sentence structure and provide the context needed to grasp the interpretation of the lyrics.

NIKI is an Indonesian singer-songwriter who has gained wide attention in the international music scene with her unique style of pop and R&B. Known for her emotional lyrics and endearing melodies, NIKI has succeeded in creating a deep connection with her listeners. One of her well-known songs, "Oceans & Engines" in the album *Nicole* (2022) portrayed themes of melancholy and goodbye, where the lyrics reflected

complex and deep feelings. NIKI uses poetic language to convey strong emotions within this song, making it highly relevant to analyze. The presence of functional morphemes in song lyrics can influence how listeners perceive the connections between the ideas, emotions, and stories expressed by the songwriter. By understanding the usage of functional morphemes in the song lyrics of “Oceans & Engines,” we can dive deeper into how the songwriter conveys messages and emotions, as well as how sentence structure contributes to the song's overall message. For example, prepositions like “in” or “on” can indicate location or state, while conjunctions like “and” or “but” can connect different ideas.

Another research was applied by the writer as a reference for this paper analysis, which is “The Analysis of Functional Morpheme in Hansel and Gretel Short Story” by Kusumawardhani, P. (2023). This paper explores how to identify what a functional morpheme is and how to recognize it within a short story "Hansel and Gretel". This paper used Yule (2006) theory to comprehend and examine the application of morphemes in the song's lyrics. 'Oceans & Engines' by NIKI, concentrating on the function of functional morphemes, including prepositions, conjunctions, articles, determiners, and

pronouns, in conveying the meaning and emotions contained in the lyrics.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

1. Method of the Research

Within this investigation, the writer will employ a qualitative research approach to analyze the functional morphemes. Qualitative method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.8) is a research approach that focuses on collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as words, images, and social interactions, to understand the significance constructed by persons in a certain context. This research employed a qualitative approach where the writer describes the data in detail. This method was chosen because it fits well with the research, as the data consists of text and lyrics.

2. Time and Place of the Research

This research started after the STBA JIA's mid term test finished during the writer's fifth semester, which was in the middle of December 2024. The research was carried out primarily at the writer's home and STBA JIA campus.

3. Data Source of the Research

The object related to the research for this study is the popular song by NIKI titled “Oceans & Engines”. The song was chosen because it provides an excellent opportunity to analyze functional morphemes within the

lyrics. The analysis provides valuable insights into how functional morphemes such as prepositions, pronouns, determiners, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions contribute to meaning and structure within the lyrics, connecting and organizing content words. By studying these elements, we can better understand how NIKI conveys relationships between ideas, time, and emotions in the song.

4. Technique of Data Collection

The approaches that will be used for data collection in this study are documentation and observation. This documentation requires several steps to collect the data such as reading and learning the source from the lyrics, lyrics videos, or transcripts that relate to the object. Since the object of the research is music, observation will help the writer to collect the data for this research that is suitable to analyze each line from the lyrics to be analyzed.

5. Technique of Data Analysis

After the data has been gathered, the analysis will begin by examining the functional morphemes from the lyrics, such as prepositions, pronouns, determiners, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions will be identified and categorized using the knowledge and theory from Yule (2006).

6. Instrument of the Research

The main instrument in this study is the "Oceans & Engines" song, particularly the lyrics and the meaning from the song. The

writer will carefully analyze the elements from the lyrics to recognize their functional morphemes, such as prepositions, pronouns, determiners, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions. Using qualitative methods, the writer plays an important role in analyzing the data, observing appropriate lyrics, and explaining the background of functional morphemes.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This is a compilation of data gathered by the author concerning the functional morphemes found in the song's lyrics. "Oceans & Engines" by NIKI. Each data will mention the categories of functional morpheme, such as article, auxiliary verb, conjunction, determiner, preposition, and pronoun, along with the explanation of its meaning in the song lyrics.

1 Datum 1

*"Saturday sunset we're lyin' on my bed
With five hours to go"*

- "RE" is short for "ARE". The word is a form of to be that functions as an **auxiliary verb**. Auxiliary verbs are used to help establish the tense (time) in the sentence. In this context, "WE'RE" helps to demonstrate the action carried out by the subject. "WE" is taking place "lyin' on my bed".

- In this lyric, “ON” indicates the place where the subject (us) is, which is on the bed. It is therefore a **preposition** that shows location. The presence of “ON” provides clarity regarding the place where the action takes place. It helps the listener understand the circumstances of the situation being described, which is that they are lying on a bed, which creates an intimate and relaxed atmosphere.
- The word “MY” described as a **possessive pronoun** because it shows that the bed on which they lie down belongs to her (me). It serves to give information about ownership.
- The word “TO” is a **preposition** used to indicate purpose or direction. In the case of “TO GO”, “TO” serves to indicate the time remaining (five hours) before an event occurs.
- “WITH” is a **preposition** that shows a relationship or state. In the lyrics of “*With five hours to go*”, “WITH” indicates that there only five hours left for them to spend together.

*"You wiped away tears but not fears
Under the still and clear indigo"*

- The word “YOU” is a **pronoun** that refers to the second person. In this context, it serves to indicate who is performing the action (her boyfriend wiping away the tears).
- In this lyric, the word “BUT” is a **conjunction** used to connecting two opposite clause or phrase. In the lyric, “BUT” shows the contrast between the act of wiping away tears and the fear that remains between them.
- The word “THE” is a **determiner** that serves to show specificity. In the lyric '*Under the still and clear indigo*', the use of “THE” shows that we are refers to one particular color of indigo that is already known or expected, not any other indigo. This distinguishes the object from other objects and provides clarity in context.
- “AND“ is a **conjunction** used to connecting two adjectives '*still*' and '*clear*' that describe the noun '*indigo*'. It shows that both adjectives apply to “*indigo*”.
- “UNDER” is a **preposition** that indicates position or place. In this context, “UNDER” indicates the location where something is

1.2 Datum 2

happening under indigo which is known to be still and clear.

1.3 DATUM 3

"How is it now, that somehow, you're a stranger? You were mine just yesterday"

- **"A"** is an **article** used to refer to one object out of many possibilities. In the case of *"you're a stranger"*, **"A"** indicates that the subject 'you' or her boyfriend is seen as one of many strangers, not a specific stranger. This gives the impression that the status of *'stranger'* is new and non-specific as there is a possibility that they have just broken up which is shown by the following lines *"you were mine just yesterday"*.
- **"IT"** is a **pronoun** that referring to the situation or state being discussed. In the sentence *"How is it now"*, **"IT"** replaces something that is already recognized within the context of the discussion, which is the state of the relationship between the singer and someone that being talked about is her boyfriend.
- **"YOU"** also a **pronoun** that referring to the second person. In the lyrics *"you're a stranger"* and *"You were mine"*, **"YOU"** refers

directly to the person being spoken to, indicating that the speaker is speaking directly to her boyfriend.

- **"THAT"** serves as a **determiner** that indicates something specific. In the lyrics *"that somehow"*, **"THAT"** refers to the situation or condition that is under discussion (attempt to break up), giving emphasis to the statement that follows. In this context **"THAT"** also functions as a **conjunction** that connects the clause *"that somehow"*. It shows the relationship between the two parts of the sentence.
- In the lyrics of *"How is it now"*, **"IS"** stands out as an **auxiliary verb** because it is a form of the verb *'to be'* that functions as a supporting verb. **"IS"** shows the current state of the situation, helping to create a question regarding the present situation under discussion.
- **"YOU'RE"** is a contraction of *"YOU ARE"*. **"ARE"** is a variation of the verb *'to be'* which works in the capacity of an **auxiliary verb**. In this context, **"ARE"** indicates the current state of the subject (you), meaning that the subject is now considered a stranger.
- **"WERE"** is the past tense of the verb *'to be'* and worked as

auxiliary verb. In the sentence “*You were mine*”, “**WERE**” indicates a state in the past, namely that the subject (you) used to belong to the singer's partner. It emphasizes the change in status from the past to the present.

1.4 Datum 4

"But don't get me wrong I'll always love you that's why I wrote you this very last song"

- “**THE**” in “*this very last song*” is an **article** used to indicate that the “*song*” mentioned is specific and already known by the listener. In this context, “*this very last song*” suggests that the song is the last song written for the person being spoken to.
- “**ME**” is a pronoun that mention to the singer. In the lyrics “*don't get me wrong*”, “**ME**” indicates that the singer is asking the listener (her ex-lover) not to misunderstand her statement.
- “**I**” is a **pronoun** that points to the singer. In the context of “*I'll always love you*”, “**I**” indicates who is performing the expression of loving.
- “**YOU**” is a **pronoun** that pointed to the second person. In the context of “*I'll always love you*”, “**YOU**” indicates the person loved by the singer.
- “**THIS**” is a **determiner** that indicates something close to the singer. In the lyrics of “*this very last song*”, “**THIS**” indicates that the song referred to is the last song written for the person being spoken to.
- “**BUT**” is a **conjunction** used to connect two opposite or different clauses. In the lyrics of “*But don't get me wrong*”, “**BUT**” indicates that what will be said afterwards may be different from what was expected or understood before.
- The “**DON'T**” in “*don't get me wrong*” is a contraction of “**do not**”. “**DO**” functions as **auxiliary verb** used to explain negation in sentences. In this context, “**DON'T**” implies that the singer is telling the listener not to get her wrong.
- The “**I'LL**” in “*I'll always love you*” is a contraction of “**I WILL**”. “**WILL**” form as **auxiliary verb** that shows a future intention or promise. In this context, “**I'LL**” denotes that the speaker is dedicated to always loving her boyfriend.

1.5 DATUM 5

"But I'm lettin' go I'm givin' up the ghost."

- **"THE"** in *"the ghost"* is an **article** used to indicate that the *"ghost"* in question is specific and already known by the listener. In this context, *"the ghost"* refers to something that might be something in the past, a memory, a dream, or something that is heavy.
- **"I"** is a **pronoun** that refers to the singer. In the lyrics *"I'm lettin' go"* and *"I'm givin' up"*, **"I"** refers to who is letting go and giving up. The same goes for **"I'M"** which is a contraction of **"I AM"**. It shows the state or action being performed by the singer.

After analyzing, finding, and classifying the functional morpheme, here are the results that have been found by the writer.

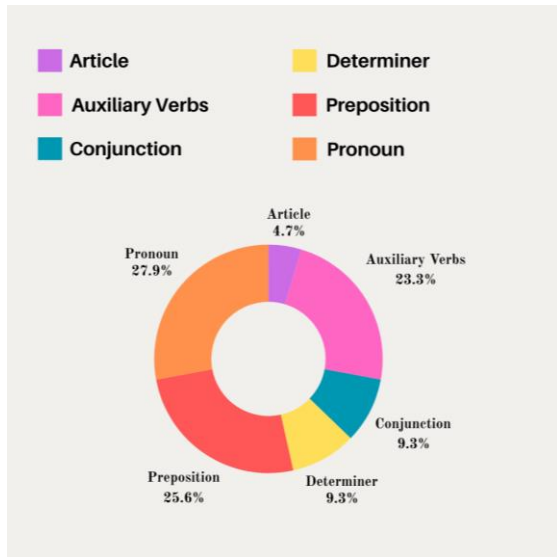
| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Article | the, a |
| Auxiliary Verb | is, will, are, am, were, don't, was, have, be, gets |
| Conjunction | and, but, when, while |
| Determiners | this, all, the, that |
| Preposition | on, with, under, down, to, in, up, into, at, of, to |

- **"BUT"** in these lyrics is a **conjunction** that connects two opposing clauses. **"BUT"** shows the contrast between what might be expected and the action taken by the singer.
- The **"UP"** in *"givin' up the ghost"* here serves as part of the verb phrase *"giving up"*, which means to give up. **"UP"** in this context acts as a **preposition** that functions to indicate the act of letting go or giving up on their relationship.
- **"I'M"** in the lyrics *"I'm lettin' go"* and *"I'm givin' up"* refers as **auxiliary verb** that functions to tell the current state. **"I'M"** implies that the singer is performing the action of letting go and giving up on her relationship.

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Pronoun | I, me, my, mine, you, your, we, our, it, they, them, this |
|----------------|---|

Based on the analyzing and classification, in the lyrics of "Oceans & Engines" there are 2 words as articles, 10 words as auxiliary verbs, 4 words as conjunction, 4 words as determiners, 11 words as prepositions, and 12 words as pronouns are the words in each lyric that are considered as functional morphemes. From this analysis we can say that functional

morphemes, like articles, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions, determiners, prepositions, and pronouns are needed to make the lyrics of the song clear and easy to understand for listeners.



D. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONCLUSIONS

In this research, the writer analyzes functional morphemes located in the song's lyrics "Oceans & Engines" by NIKI. The primary objective of this research is to determine the functional morphemes present in the lyrics, as well as understand their role and meaning in relation to the song. Through the analysis, we found several significant functional morphemes such as article, auxiliary verb, conjunction, determiner, preposition, and pronoun serve to provide essential grammatical information, which helps explain the

relationship among words in the lyrics. Through examples taken from the lyrics, we can see how words like "we're", "on", and "my" not only contribute to clarity of meaning, but also create a deeper sense of emotion and context. The existence of these functional morphemes is crucial, as omitting them can lead to ambiguity and loss of intended meaning. Overall, an understanding regarding functional morphemes provides a profound insight into how language functions in literary contexts and everyday communication. It shows that each element in a sentence, although it may seem small, plays a significant role in conveying the message and emotion for the listener.

2. IMPLICATIONS

This research helps us understand how functional morphemes work in the lyrics of the song. It shows how these roles build meaning of the lyrics more interesting and easy to understand for the listener. It highlights the value of using song lyrics as a useful source of data. The writer hopes this paper could assist the reader understand more about functional morphemes, the categories of functional morphemes and how these roles can be discovered in media like song.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this analysis, it is recommended that researchers who are interested in the linguistic used in song lyrics explore the role of functional morphemes in different types of music. This research can help us understand how these language elements add meaning and emotion to the lyrics. Additionally, studying these aspects can improve our understanding of how language and music work together, showing how functional morphemes influence how listeners feel and interpret songs. By looking into these details, researchers can help us appreciate the art of songwriting and its impact on listeners.

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