

Hybrid Aesthetic Values in Balinese *Karawitan*: The Role of Poetic Figurative Language in Bridging Tradition, Modernity, and Character Education

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24843/JKB.2026.v16.i01.p14>

Abstract: Balinese *karawitan*, a traditional music rooted in performative cultural expression, continues to evolve while sustaining its aesthetic foundations. This study examines hybrid aesthetic values in Balinese *karawitan* by analyzing how poetic figurative language functions as a mediating device between tradition, modern musical expression, and character education. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research analyzes four compositions: *Ngoner Ngakung* (Love That Blossoms), *Sekar Layu* (Withering Flower), *Janger Ngapat* (A Celebration of Fertility and Gratitude), and *Kenangan Manis* (Sweet Memories), to demonstrate how metaphors and other figurative forms deepen vocal aesthetics and intensify emotional resonance. The findings show that poetic imagery rearticulates traditional symbolic vocabularies within contemporary vocal styles, transforming musical narratives into ethical reflections on love, impermanence, gratitude, and nostalgia. Through this process, figurative language translates cultural meaning into values such as empathy, resilience, respect, and compassion. The study highlights poetic figurative language as an aesthetic bridge that sustains cultural identity while enabling moral formation within modern creative practice.

Keywords: hybrid aesthetic values; poetic figurative language; Balinese *karawitan*; tradition and modernity; character education

1. Introduction

Globalization and modernization have reshaped artistic practices in Bali, creating a tension between safeguarding traditions and engaging contemporary audiences. Balinese *karawitan* is an integrated art that unites

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Submitted: 15 January 2025; Accepted: 22 February 2026; Published: 5 April 2026



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gamelan and vocal traditions. *Gamelan* refers to the Balinese ensemble of tuned gongs, metallophones, drums, and other instruments performed collectively, characterized by interlocking patterns (*kotekan*), dynamic shifts, and deep ritual significance (Sujayanthi & Hartini, 2023). Together with poetic vocal texts, aesthetic values, and social-religious functions, *karawitan* embodies a comprehensive art of sound. Today it faces the dual challenge of preserving cultural authenticity while adapting to new instruments, styles, and trends. Although these pressures risk eroding its distinctive identity, many composers have turned them into creative opportunities, producing innovative works that fuse tradition with modernity (Sudirana, 2024; Suharta et al., 2025).

Within this transformation, poetic figurative language (PFL) plays a crucial role. PFL refers to rhetorical devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, and metonymy that appear in sung texts to construct imagery, intensify emotion, and convey moral values (Beach, 2025; Peel et al., 2023). In Balinese *karawitan*, these devices enrich the narrative dimension of vocals, turning abstract themes such as longing, impermanence, joy, and gratitude, into sensory and ethical experiences. Despite their importance, the contribution of PFL to the aesthetics of *karawitan* remains underexplored.

Previous studies on Balinese musical innovation have largely emphasized technical elements such as rhythm, tone, and instrumentation (Cahyo et al., 2020; Yulianti et al., 2024; Kariasa & Putra, 2021; Wid & Yulianti, 2023; Mayura et al., 2022). Other scholarship has addressed the aesthetic value of music in dance-drama accompaniment, the development of new musical forms, and the tension between traditional and modern practices (Hood, 2020; Tirta et al., 2024). Although valuable, these works often neglect the figurative and poetic dimensions of lyrics. Recent studies have begun to touch on metaphor in Balinese vocal music (Wigraha et al., 2023; Sutyasa et al., 2023), yet comprehensive investigations into PFL as a whole, particularly in relation to hybrid aesthetics and character education, remain limited.

This study addresses two gaps: first, the absence of in-depth analysis of PFL in Balinese *karawitan* vocals; and second, the lack of research linking PFL to character education. By analyzing four compositions *Ngoner Ngakung* by I Putu Dwipayana, *Sekar Layu* by I Ketut Agus Darmayasa, *Janger Ngapat* by I Wayan Sudiarsa, and *Kenangan Manis* by I Ketut Yudik Setiawan, this article demonstrates how PFL shapes hybrid aesthetic values and fosters empathy, resilience, respect, and compassion. *Ngoner Ngakung*, for instance, draws on the *Kakawin Bharatayuddha*; *ngoner* denotes blooming and *ngakung* means love (Zoetmulder et al., 2004, p. 538), symbolizing “love that blossoms”. Each of these works illustrates how figurative imagery deepens emotional expression and cultural meaning. Guided by this focus, the study asks how poetic figurative

language enhances the emotional and aesthetic qualities of Balinese *karawitan* vocals, and in what ways it supports character education through specific values and mechanisms. By positioning PFL as the lens of analysis, the study contributes to the theory and practice of *karawitan* by revealing its capacity not only as a musical form but also as a medium for cultural continuity, emotional growth, and moral development.

2. Literature Review

Early studies on Poetic Figurative Language (PFL) emphasize that poetic language in performing arts functions not only as an aesthetic device but also as a communicative medium that strengthens meaning and enhances artistic appeal (Haq et al., 2024; Kotelevskaya, 2020; Pramudya, 2024; Raden Arla Syamira Putri, 2023; Supeno et al., 2024). PFL plays a significant role in bridging language, emotion, and symbolism, making performing arts more communicative while also reflective of their socio-cultural contexts (Aubakir et al., 2024; Fairuz & Lestari, 2024; Hawkins, 2022). However, most of these studies remain focused on the stylistic and rhetorical functions of PFL, leaving its potential as a medium for value-based education, including character education, largely unexplored.

In parallel, research on aesthetics in musical performance beyond Balinese frameworks broadens understanding of how music shapes complex aesthetic experiences. From explorations of simplicity and authenticity in country music (Dyck, 2021), expressive deviations such as asynchrony (Jakubowski et al., 2022), to discussions on heterogeneity in Chinese music (Zou et al., 2022), these studies underline that musical aesthetics are not necessarily static in a given cultural framework but tend to be dynamic, emerging through encounters among traditions, communities, and values. Mencke et al. (2023) compare classical-romantic and contemporary Western European classical music, finding that genre structures shape audience expectations, physiological responses, and existential relevance. Meanwhile, Kang (2025) illustrates the importance of recontextualizing Korean Peninsula traditional performing arts to maintain their relevance, integrating music, dance, and drama. From an intercultural perspective, musical aesthetics concern not merely culturally formulated semantics about the beauty of sound, but also identity, togetherness, and the cultivation of sensibilities (Lines, 2022; Martin & Nielsen, 2024; Zhang & Wang, 2025). Nevertheless, the direct relationship between musical aesthetics and its role in character education, particularly within local contexts such as Bali, remains scarcely examined.

In *Triguna: A Hindu-Balinese Philosophy for Gamelan Gong Gede Music* (2010), Made Mantle Hood explores how the three primordial qualities of nature

(Triguna) provide a structural and emotional blueprint for Balinese musical life. While the music itself is a complex web of interlocking rhythms, the poetic song titles act as the bridge between abstract sound and human experience. Figurative language is not merely decorative in this context; it is the primary tool for categorizing the “energy” of a piece into the realms of *Satwam*, *Rajas*, or *Tamas*.

The connection between poetry and philosophy in *gamelan* lies in the ability of figurative language to assign a moral and emotional weight to sound. Figurative language allows the Balinese listener to decode the philosophical intent of a composition before a single note is struck. For example, *Gending Galang Kangin* or ‘Eastern Light’ is a classic metaphor for spiritual awakening and purity (*satwam*). The “East” represents the origin of the sun and the direction of the gods. The poetry of “light” frames the music as an ascent toward clarity. The personification and honorifics associated with the figurative language song title *Wira Nata* (Courageous Lord) evoke the heat of battle and the fire of leadership. It suggests music that is energetic, assertive, and driven by the “passion” of the *Rajasic* state.

The performing arts, painting and literature are perhaps the most documented areas of Balinese aesthetics, focusing on the concepts of spiritual charisma/creative inspiration (*taksu*) and aesthetic fullness or “crowdedness” (*rame*).

Existing literature on Balinese aesthetics explores the spatial aesthetics of performance, specifically the orientation between the sacred mountain (*Kaja*) and the sea (*Kelod*) (Bandem & DeBoer, 1995). Djelantik, a Balinese prince and scholar, provided a rare insider’s academic perspective on the foundational concepts of Balinese beauty and ritual art when he wrote “no writings about aesthetics specifically as a discipline exist in Bali” (Djelantik, 1995, p.2) implying Bali’s appropriation of the discipline itself. Edward Herbst dives into the “energetic” aesthetics of Balinese performance, focusing on how internal spiritual states are translated into external artistic expression (Herbst, 1997).

Research in painting, sculpture and masks focus on the transition from “classical” religious art (Kamasan style) to the individualistic modernism that emerged in the 1930s. The most comprehensive modern survey of Balinese painting traces the aesthetic evolution from temple hangings to the contemporary art market (Vickers, 2012). A concise but authoritative guide to the aesthetic rules of different Balinese painting schools (Ubud, Batuan, Sanur) provides a concise but authoritative guide (Djelantik, 1986). Exploring the aesthetic conceptions of heaven and hell as depicted in Bali’s mask-making traditions highlights Balinese aesthetic values that plot along a socio-cultural semantic continuum from ‘sculptural masterpieces’ to ‘spiritual vessels’ (Bandem and Carpenter, 2022).

Scholarly work in literature deals with *Kawi* (Old Javanese) poetics and the visual aesthetics of the *Prasi* illustrated manuscripts. Research on Balinese courtly poetry outlines the aesthetic principles of *Kakawin* (epic poems), which are governed by strict Sanskrit-derived metrical and phonetic rules (Creese, 1999). A recent academic study on the aesthetic transformation of Balinese lontar *Prasi* focuses on how the visual illustrations on palm leaves serve as a bridge between literature and the plastic arts (Putra, 2021).

The issue of character education in Balinese arts introduces a new dimension. Sujayanthi and Hartini (2023) demonstrate that Balinese traditional *gamelan* practice fosters concentration, social interaction, and moral values in children in the post-pandemic era through the principle of the *mirror of effect theory*. Dewi and Karja (2023) add that *satua Bali* (Balinese folktales) presented through digital media function not only as a medium for arts and literary learning but also as a means of instilling local wisdom values. Meanwhile, Wati et al. (2022) highlight the vital role of Balinese families in nurturing cultural love from an early age through everyday practices such as dancing, preparing offerings, and using the Balinese language, all of which contain character-building and aesthetic elements. Together, these studies illustrate that Balinese arts serve a dual role: as a vehicle for cultural identity preservation and as a medium for character formation.

Yet, the existing body of research reveals several limitations. First, studies on PFL tend to focus on rhetoric and expression without addressing how it may function as an instrument for character education. Second, global studies on musical aesthetics stress values of community, identity, and heterogeneity but have not sufficiently connected these insights with value-based educational practices. Third, while research on Balinese arts has acknowledged their role in character education, the focus has been largely on moral and social aspects, while the aesthetic dimension and poetic expression (PFL) embedded in *karawitan*, *satua*, and everyday cultural practices have not been fully examined as integral tools for character formation. Accordingly, a research gap remains: no study has comprehensively connected Poetic Figurative Language, musical aesthetics, and character education within the context of Balinese performing arts. This study seeks to address that gap by investigating how the aesthetics of Balinese performing arts, enriched by poetic expression through PFL, can function as a strategic instrument for shaping the character of younger generations.

3. Research Method and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Method

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method with an art-based research orientation. The study proceeded through three stages: (1) data

collection, (2) data analysis, and (3) presentation of findings. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables detailed, context-sensitive accounts of artistic phenomena while accommodating multiple forms of cultural data (Stanley, 2023; Sullivan-Bolyai & Bova, 2021). Such an approach is widely used in social and cultural research because it allows the researcher to present nuanced descriptions that are grounded in context (Ellis & Hart, 2023). In this study, the data consisted of audiovisual recordings, vocal texts, musical notation, photographs, videos, performance documentation, and publicly accessible digital audience responses.

The study examined four contemporary Balinese *karawitan* compositions: *Ngoner Ngakung* was briefly considered alongside other contemporary Balinese works such as *Sekar Layu* (withering flower) by I Ketut Agus Darmayasa, *Janger Ngapat* (a celebration of fertility and gratitude) by I Wayan Sudiarsa, and *Kenangan Manis* (sweet memories) by I Ketut Yudik Setiawan (see Tables 1-4). These works were selected purposively because they represent different configurations of hybrid aesthetic negotiation between tradition and modernity in recent Balinese musical practice. Among them, *Ngoner Ngakung* serves as the focal case because its documentation is the most extensive, including performance recordings, vocal text, musical notation, and audience responses on digital platforms. The other three works were included to provide a broader contextual basis for identifying recurring patterns in poetic figurative language, aesthetic expression, and character-related values.

Table 1. Vocal Script of *Ngoner Ngakung* and Its Free Contextual Translation

| No. | Original Script | Free Translation (English) |
|-----|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Kenehe murnayang hati</i> | The feeling purifies the heart |
| 2 | <i>Nanging nungkalik</i> | But respecting |
| 3 | <i>Wastu mawawas-wawas</i> | Speaking wisely |
| 4 | <i>Malih sebet inguh atine</i> | Again, sadness and confusion stirred up |
| 5 | <i>Sing sida purna</i> | Increasingly unrelieved |
| 6 | <i>Kadi i Tumlilingan ngalilacita ring taman ngerieng umang binal</i> | Like a bumble bee playing flittingly in the middle of the garden |
| 7 | <i>Saling langkahin mekeber</i> | Fly over each other |
| 8 | <i>Ngulangunin, kepurangga,</i> | How captivating, being flown |
| 9 | <i>Sekar Tunjung kewalek</i> | The lotus flower is insulted |
| 10 | <i>Konden kadirasa mekelo</i> | It hasn't been that long |
| 11 | <i>Konden maan nyicipin sarine I bunga suba kaempok</i> | Haven't had time to suck the nectar yet the flower has been picked |
| 12 | <i>Kaplaibang, tur sirna</i> | Taken away and disappeared |
| 13 | <i>Sedek tiang sakitang</i> | When I am unwell |
| 14 | <i>Semun beline ane manis ubad tiange ane utama</i> | Your sweet smile is my best medicine |
| 15 | <i>Rikala tiang ulangun tresnan beline</i> | When I miss your love |

| No. | Original Script | Free Translation (English) |
|-----|--|--|
| 16 | <i>Lembayung senja telah pulang membawa langit biru mulai hilang</i> | The twilight has gone home, bringing the blue sky to a close |
| 17 | <i>Betapa bahagianya ketika pujaan hati datang</i> | How happy it is when the lover comes |
| 18 | <i>Gemerlap bintang terangi cinta yang bersembunyi di balik cahaya rembulan dalam indahnya malam</i> | Sparkling stars illuminate the love that hides behind the moonlight in the beauty of the night |
| 19 | <i>Kunang-kunang jadi saksi ketika dirimu datang memberikan kenyamanan dan kebahagiaan</i> | The fireflies become witnesses when you come, bringing comfort and happiness. |
| 20 | <i>Aku harap inilah cinta sejati yang ku temui</i> | I hope this is the true love I meet |

Free contextual translation by Ni Ketut Dewi Yulianti (2025).

Table 2. The vocal script of *Sekar Layu* and Its Free Contextual Translation

| No. | Original Script | Free Translation (English) |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 | <i>Dahat sedih ring hati</i> | So sad at heart |
| 2 | <i>Lemah peteng setata mepanganan</i> | Every day, always regretting my fate |
| 3 | <i>Tanpa pegatan</i> | Endlessly |
| 4 | <i>Setata mapupuh toyan panon</i> | Tears always flow |
| 5 | <i>Inguh paling ngerambang sawan</i> | Confused and lost in dreams |
| 6 | <i>Uduh ratu kusumaning hati</i> | Oh, my dearest flower, |
| 7 | <i>Ngiring mewali</i> | Please, come back |
| 8 | <i>Las lalis ngawe titian lara</i> | How could you bear to make me suffer |
| 9 | <i>Kadi tunjung tanpa banyu</i> | Like a lotus flower without water, |
| 10 | <i>Layu sekadi sekar</i> | Wilting like a bloom |
| 11 | <i>Manawita sampun dados pituduh</i> | If this is truly fate |
| 12 | <i>Tan sida masikian</i> | And we cannot be united, |
| 13 | <i>Memang tak ada yang abadi di dunia ini</i> | Then it's clear—nothing lasts forever in this world |
| 14 | <i>Pertemuan takkan pernah lepas dari sebuah perpisahan</i> | Every meeting is inevitably followed by a farewell |
| 15 | <i>Ya, perpisahan itu pasti terjadi, cepat atau lambat, seiring waktu berjalan</i> | Yes, that farewell will surely come, sooner or later, as time goes by |
| 16 | <i>Namun, aku tak pernah bisa membohongi perasaanku saat ini</i> | But I can never deny how I feel right now |
| 17 | <i>Aku sedih, aku kecewa, aku tersiksa dengan semua ini</i> | I am sad, I am disappointed, I am tormented by all of this |
| 18 | <i>Tapi apalah daya, aku tak bisa berbuat apa-apa lagi</i> | Yet, what can I do? I am powerless |
| 19 | <i>Perasaanku saat ini, kutuangkan lewat karya ini</i> | I pour my feelings into this work of mine |
| 20 | <i>Aku hanya berharap kau telah mendengarnya, agar kau tahu yang kurasakan saat ini</i> | I only hope you've heard it, so you'll know what I feel right now |
| 21 | <i>Bagaikan bunga yang layu</i> | Like a flower that wilts |

Free contextual translation by Ni Ketut Dewi Yulianti (2025).

Table 3. The vocal script of *Janger Ngapat* and Its Free Contextual Translation

| No. | Original Script | Free Translation (English) |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | <i>Trungtung trungtung kulkule sube memunyi</i> | Trungtung trungtung the bugle has sounded |
| 2 | <i>Gita Semarane lan jani kawitin</i> | Gita Semara let's get started |
| 3 | <i>Sriat sriat sambilan megending</i> | Sriat sriat while singing |
| 4 | <i>Bagus trunane tur mekenyem manis</i> | Handsome man and sweet smile |
| 5 | <i>Adi ayu jegege sekadi bulan</i> | My sister is beautiful as the moon |
| 6 | <i>Kenyemne manis pipi sujenan</i> | Sweet smile with dimples |
| 7 | <i>Alise madon intaran</i> | His eyebrows are like neem leaves |
| 8 | <i>Beli bagus de je ngrayu ngae keneh tiang melayang</i> | Handsome brother, don't seduce, make my heart soar |

Free contextual translation by Ni Ketut Dewi Yulianti (2025).

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN_ckI8cdM4

Table 4. The vocal script of *Kenangan Manis* and Its Free Contextual Translation

| No. | Original Script | Free Translation (English) |
|-----|--|--|
| 1 | <i>Bagia sane meutama ring hati</i> | Happy is the main thing in the heart |
| 2 | <i>Serasa liang manah tityang ketemu sareng timpal-timpal jak mekejang</i> | So happy I met all my friends |
| 3 | <i>Sampun kerasayang pakedek pakenyum iraga makumpul</i> | Laughing smiling when together |
| 4 | <i>Ngiring galahe mangkin jagi kaanggen</i> | In this good time let's use it as a time to play together |
| 5 | <i>Riang girang manah tityang</i> | So happy and happy I feel |
| 6 | <i>Mepalyanan sareng timpale mekejang</i> | Playing with all my friends |
| 7 | <i>Cub cub cub cub</i> | "Cub" is a word used to admit a mistake or offense committed while playing. |
| 8 | <i>Saling pasuryakin kecag kecog laib melaib</i> | Cheerfully jumping to and fro and running |
| 9 | <i>Jelampulung</i> | "Jelampulung" is a word often used to cancel or revoke an admission of a mistake or offense committed while playing. |
| 10 | <i>Mecanda girang mepalyanan ngae manah tiange melayang-layang</i> | Joking cheerfully makes me feel flying |
| 11 | <i>Saling ampurayang ento sane mautama</i> | Staying after that forgiving each other is the most important |
| 12 | <i>Sampun kerasayang mepadu bagia makumpul mepalyanan sareng timpal-timpal</i> | It feels happiness to gather to play with friends |
| 13 | <i>Saling pakedek pakenyum liang bagia manah tityang</i> | Laughing together happy happy my feelings |
| 14 | <i>Galah mangkin mepamit kesarengin bagia ring hati</i> | Time has been enough it's time to say goodbye with a happy feeling in the heart |

Free contextual translation by Ni Ketut Dewi Yulianti (2025).

The analysis was conducted through an art-based interpretive lens, focusing on the relationship between poetic figurative language, musical expression, and character-related values. The study examined how metaphors, similes, hyperboles, personifications, melodic contours, dynamics, instrumentation, and vocal delivery interact to produce aesthetic and ethical meaning. Public comments on YouTube were treated as forms of digital audience reception. These responses were used to identify patterns of appreciation, interpretation, and cultural engagement surrounding the works, particularly in relation to preservation, emotional resonance, and the negotiation between tradition and modernity. By combining textual analysis, musical analysis, and reception analysis, this study seeks to explain how poetic figurative language in Balinese *karawitan* operates as an aesthetic mediator and as a vehicle of value formation within contemporary cultural practice.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study draws upon three interrelated theoretical perspectives to examine how poetic figurative language (PFL) in Balinese *karawitan* operates aesthetically and pedagogically. First, the analysis of poetic figurative language (PFL) in *karawitan* draws on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008), which views metaphors not as decorative language but as cognitive frameworks for understanding abstract experiences. In Balinese vocal scripts, metaphors transform intangible concepts such as love, sorrow, or gratitude into concrete imagery that resonates with cultural values, allowing audiences to grasp and interpret meaning in context. This perspective is enriched by Anderson & Livie (2025), who argue that creating and interpreting metaphors opens pathways for emotional release and coping, enabling individuals to process otherwise suppressed feelings through imaginative associations. Together, these theories highlight both the cognitive structuring and affective functions of metaphor. In Balinese *karawitan*, this dual role of PFL explains how metaphor mediates understanding and emotion simultaneously, setting the stage for deeper aesthetic experience and character formation.

Second, these metaphors gain significance within the broader field of aesthetic experience as theorized by John Dewey (Bresnahan, 2014; Dewey, 1934, 2024). Dewey emphasizes that art is not a detached object but a lived experience that integrates intellectual, emotional, and moral dimensions (Pugh & Girod, 2007). In the context of Balinese *karawitan*, aesthetic experience emerges through the interaction of sound, language, and ritual atmosphere. PFL enhances this experience by deepening emotional resonance and fostering reflection, thus allowing the performance to transcend entertainment and become a holistic cultural encounter. Dewey's perspective clarifies how metaphorical expressions

transform musical performance into a meaningful aesthetic journey for both performers and audiences.

Finally, Lickona's Character Education Framework (Lickona, 1996, 2001, 2013) situates this aesthetic experience within the domain of moral development. Lickona argues that character education rests on the triad of knowing, feeling, and doing (Kurniawan & Fitriyani, 2023; Rijal et al., 2022). When applied to Balinese *karawitan*, PFL and its aesthetic impact cultivate moral knowing (awareness of values embedded in metaphors), moral feeling (empathy and compassion evoked through aesthetic experience), and moral action (embodied in social behaviors such as respect, cooperation, and devotion). Thus, the integration of PFL and aesthetic experience contributes directly to character formation, aligning cultural preservation with contemporary educational needs.

These three theories establish a unified conceptual model in which poetic figurative language operates as the symbolic structure of meaning, aesthetic experience shapes affective engagement, and character education anchors artistic expression within moral formation. Through this model, Balinese *karawitan* emerges as a dynamic cultural practice that simultaneously negotiates tradition and modernity while cultivating ethical sensibility in contemporary society.

4. Results and Discussion

The beauty of *Ngoner Ngakung karawitan* is largely attributed to I Putu Dwipayana, S.Sn., a talented composer born on April 2, 1999, in Denpasar. He has been active at Sanggar Seni Gita Mahardika in Sukawati, Gianyar, since childhood, performing at the Bali Arts Festival, where the group placed third in the 2013 *baleganjur* musical competition. Growing up in a Balinese cultural environment, Dwipayana's talent was deeply shaped by the artistic atmosphere of his village community. A graduate of the *Karawitan* Arts Study Program at ISI Bali, he currently teaches at SMP Negeri 8 Denpasar (State Junior High School 8 Denpasar, Bali), where he fosters a passion for Balinese traditions among younger generations.

Using the *Semara Pegulingan Saih Pitu gamelan*, the piece *Ngoner Ngakung* blends traditional Balinese instruments like *trompong* and *kendang* with modern elements. This fusion of local traditions with global influences reflects the intersection of cultural preservation and creative innovation. Inspired by *Gita Shanti*, a traditional vocal ensemble, *Ngoner Ngakung* integrates spiritual depth with contemporary aesthetics. It exemplifies a broader trend in Balinese arts, where traditional forms are adapted to modern contexts, ensuring their relevance across generations.

The piece aligns with other works like *Sekar Layu* (Withering Flower) by I Ketut Agus Darmayasa, *Janger Ngapat* (A Celebration of Fertility and Gratitude) by I Wayan Sudiarsa and *Kenangan Manis* (Sweet Memories) by I Ketut Yudik which blend *gamelan* with global influences to explore personal and cultural themes. This movement in Balinese music merges traditional and contemporary aesthetics, appealing to diverse audiences.

This innovative blend of traditional and modern elements in *Ngoner Ngakung* serves as a foundation for discussing the key findings of the research. Specifically, it examines how figurative language enhances the emotional and aesthetic qualities of the vocals, as well as the role of figurative language in supporting character education through *karawitan*. The use of figurative language deepens the emotional connection of listeners, enriching the aesthetic experience, while also conveying important cultural and moral values that contribute to personal and emotional growth. These findings highlight the importance of figurative language in bridging the emotional depth of *Ngoner Ngakung* and its role in shaping character education within the context of Balinese *karawitan*.

4.1 Enhancing the Emotional and Aesthetic Qualities of Karawitan Vocals through Figurative Language

The analysis reveals that poetic figurative language plays a central role in intensifying the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of Balinese *karawitan* vocals. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff & Johnson, figurative expressions in the selected compositions are not merely ornamental devices but cognitive structures that shape how emotions are experienced and understood. Within Dewey's framework of *Art as Experience*, these figurative forms become integral to the aesthetic event itself, transforming musical performance into a lived and affective encounter. In the analyzed lyrics, four dominant figurative forms emerge: metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification. Each operates as an aesthetic mechanism that deepens emotional resonance while reinforcing cultural symbolism embedded in the musical structure.

4.1.1 Metaphor

The analysis of the selected compositions reveals that metaphor functions as a central aesthetic device that shapes emotional experience and cultural meaning in Balinese *karawitan*. Rather than serving as decorative language, metaphors in the lyrics operate as symbolic condensations of feeling, transforming personal emotions into culturally resonant imagery. For example, the metaphor "*Semun beline ane manis ubad tiange ane utama*" (Your sweet smile is my best medicine) equates a "sweet smile" with "medicine." Within the Balinese

cultural context, healing is not merely physical but also emotional and spiritual (Jawi & Senapathi, 2025). By framing affection as medicine, the lyric translates romantic experience into a culturally intelligible form of restoration and balance. Sung within the modal contours of *Semara Pegulingan*, the metaphor gains intensified affective force: the sustained melodic phrasing and gentle vibrato reinforce the sense of emotional healing. Here, metaphor bridges inner feeling and musical expression, allowing traditional symbolic concepts of harmony and well-being to be rearticulated in a contemporary romantic narrative.

Similarly, in the line “*Konden maan nyicipin sarine I bunga suba kaempok*” (Haven’t had time to suck the nectar yet the flower has been picked), the image of a flower whose nectar cannot be tasted metaphorically conveys lost opportunity and unfulfilled longing. The flower, a recurrent symbol in Balinese poetic tradition, carries associations of beauty, temporality, and impermanence. Within the performance, the descending melodic line and slower tempo amplify the sense of regret embedded in the metaphor. This fusion of traditional floral symbolism with modern emotional introspection exemplifies how metaphor mediates between inherited cultural imagery and contemporary affective expression. In both cases, metaphor does not merely compare two entities; it activates shared cultural symbols within a hybrid musical framework. Through this process, emotional states become aesthetically embodied and culturally legible, reinforcing the capacity of *karawitan* to negotiate tradition and modernity through poetic expression.

4.1.2 Simile

The simile “*Kadi i Tumlilingan ngalilacita ring taman ngerieng umang binal*” (Like the bumble bee playing flittingly in the middle of the garden) evokes an image of lightness and playful movement. The bumblebee (*tumlilingan*) is a familiar natural symbol in Balinese poetic imagination, often associated with vitality, freedom, and the cyclical rhythms of nature. By comparing the lover to a bumblebee in a blooming garden, the lyric transforms romantic affection into a scene of natural harmony and spontaneous joy.

Musically, this imagery is reinforced through brighter melodic contours and rhythmic liveliness, which mirror the sense of motion implied in the metaphor. The upward melodic gestures and lighter articulation reflect the flitting movement of the bee, creating an embodied aesthetic experience where language and musical structure converge. In this way, the simile mediates between traditional ecological symbolism and contemporary expressions of romance. The garden imagery preserves inherited cultural associations with fertility and balance, while the emotional framing speaks to modern sensibilities of personal freedom and intimacy. Through this interplay, the simile contributes

to the hybrid aesthetic character of the composition, allowing natural symbolism to animate present-day emotional narratives.

4.1.3 *Hyperbole*

The lyric "*Semun beline ane manis ubad tiange ane utama*" (Your sweet smile is my best medicine) not only operates as a metaphor but also intensifies emotion through exaggeration. By elevating a smile to the status of "the best medicine," the expression amplifies the emotional dependence and affective depth of the speaker's experience. The hyperbolic force lies in magnifying romantic affection into a form of existential healing. Within performance, this emotional amplification is reinforced by sustained melodic phrasing and dynamic emphasis on the word *utama* (best/most important), creating a heightened affective climax. The exaggeration thus becomes musically embodied, transforming personal sentiment into a dramatic aesthetic moment.

In cultural terms, the hyperbole resonates with Balinese conceptions of balance and restoration, where emotional harmony is closely linked to well-being. By dramatizing love as a source of healing, the lyric connects inherited notions of harmony with contemporary expressions of romantic intimacy. Through this exaggeration, the composition bridges traditional symbolic understandings of balance with modern emotional articulation, strengthening its hybrid aesthetic character.

4.1.4 *Personification*

In the line "*Kunang-kunang jadi saksi ketika dirimu datang*" (Fireflies were witnesses when you came) the natural world is drawn into the emotional sphere of the lovers. By presenting fireflies as "witnesses," the lyric situates romantic experience within a broader cosmological setting in which nature participates in human events. In Balinese cultural imagination, the environment is not inert but relational, embedded in spiritual and symbolic meanings. The soft melodic delivery and luminous timbre of the suling reinforce the sense of intimacy and subtle illumination suggested by the fireflies, creating an atmosphere in which emotion and landscape converge.

Similarly, in the line "*Lembayung senja telah pulang membawa langit biru mulai hilang*." (The twilight has returned with the blue sky gone) twilight is portrayed as an active agent that "returns," signaling emotional transition. The descending melodic contour accompanying this line strengthens the sense of fading joy and reflective melancholy. The imagery aligns personal feeling with cyclical natural change, suggesting that emotional transformation mirrors cosmic rhythm.

In “*Gemerlap bintang terangi cinta yang bersembunyi di balik cahaya rembulan dalam indahnya malam*” (Sparkling stars illuminate the love that hides behind the moonlight in the beauty of the night) love itself is animated as something capable of hiding. This personification renders emotion visible through celestial imagery, linking intimate feeling to traditional nocturnal symbolism found in Balinese poetic expression. The interplay between lyrical imagery and modal melodic suspension enhances the sense of longing and quiet revelation. Across these examples, personification expands emotional experience beyond the individual and situates it within a shared symbolic landscape. By allowing nature and abstract emotion to act and respond, the lyrics bridge inherited cosmological imagery with contemporary romantic introspection. Through this fusion, personification contributes to the hybrid aesthetic structure of the composition, where tradition and modern sensibility are woven into a unified expressive form.

The code-switching observed in *Sekar Layu* may be understood as a form of metaphorical code switching that reflects not merely bilingual competence but a deliberate expressive strategy. As studies on Balinese diaspora ritual practices have shown, shifts between Balinese and Indonesian often function to adjust levels of formality, accessibility, and intensity of meaning within specific social contexts (Sartini, 2015). This linguistic strategy resonates with broader studies on translanguaging in Bali, where multilingual practice functions as both a cultural bridge and a sign of openness within global interaction (Sinaga & Marbun, 2025). In this composition, the retention of Balinese in symbolic and poetic segments preserves cultural resonance, while the shift to Indonesian in emotionally explicit lines allows for clearer psychological articulation. Rather than signaling linguistic limitation, this transition expands expressive range and enhances communicative immediacy for contemporary audiences. The code-switching thus embodies a negotiation of cultural identity, situating traditional symbolic imagination alongside modern emotional transparency within the hybrid aesthetics of contemporary Balinese *karawitan*.

Describing the emotional depth and cultural fusion, for example in the *karawitan Ngoner Ngakung*, the composition is performed on *Gamelan Semara Pegulingan Saih Pitu*, a seven-tone ensemble (*pelog saih pitu*) with the scale *ding, dong, deng, deung, dung, dang, daing*. This system corresponds approximately to Western solmization as follows: Mi (*ding*), Fa (*dong*), Sol (*deng*), La (*deung*), Si (*dung*), Do (*dang*), and Re (*daing*) (Table 5).

Table 5. The Tone System of the Balinese Semara Pegulingan Saih Pitu Ensemble

| No. | Balinese Notation | Balinese Scale | Western Solmization |
|-----|-------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1 | ᮘ | <i>Ding</i> | Mi |
| 2 | ᮙ | <i>Dong</i> | Fa |
| 3 | ᮚ | <i>Deng</i> | Sol |
| 4 | ᮛ | <i>Deung</i> | La |
| 5 | ᮜ | <i>Dung</i> | Si |
| 6 | ᮝ | <i>Dang</i> | Do |
| 7 | ᮞ | <i>Daing</i> | Re |

Although Semara Pegulingan can also accommodate *selendro* modes, in *Ngoner Ngakung* the composer predominantly employs *selendro*-based melodies. This tonal choice provides a flexible foundation for blending traditional timbres with hybrid vocal styles, synergistically portraying an expansion of Balinese tradition that gestures toward aesthetic fusion and hybridity in the expression of romance. Modal, and at times harmonic, melodies function as the primary medium while enriching vocal variations that combine tradition-based embellishments with pan-popular singing vibrato, deepening the emotional portrayal of love within both aesthetic systems. Artistic expression across these two systems (Balinese traditional and pan-popular) is further enhanced through contrasting dynamics, from loud to soft, and subtle tempo changes from fast to slow.

The rhythmic section from 08:40–09:25 features dynamic patterns, modal modulation, rhythmic motifs, interlocking melodies (*kotekan*), and elements borrowed from the *kekebyaran* style. Similarly, the ascending pentatonic phrase (06:40–07:40) expresses joy with its bright contour, transitioning into syncopated rhythmic cells (07:50–09:23) that convey playful happiness. These musical notations visually represent the melodic and rhythmic expressions of joy and happiness (Figure 1).

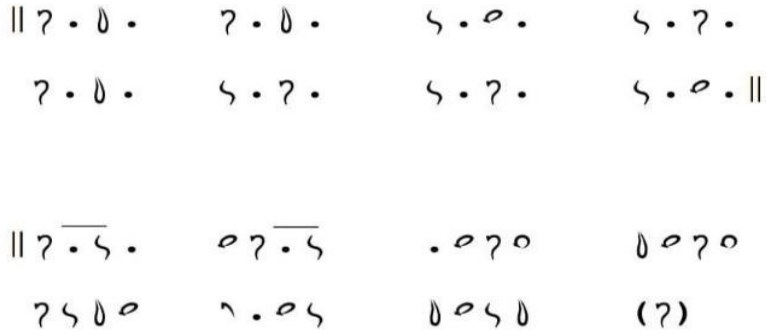


Figure 1. Notation of melodic and rhythmic expressions of joy and happiness in the *karawitan* work Ngoner Ngakung (Source: Author’s documentation).

A descending modal line (01:55–03:11) conveys sadness with its slower pace, lower contour, and minor intervals, creating a melancholic mood. The lyrics “*Malih sebet inguh atine*” (Again, sadness and confusion stirred up) emphasize the emotional depth. The notation excerpts further highlight this sorrowful atmosphere (Figure 2).

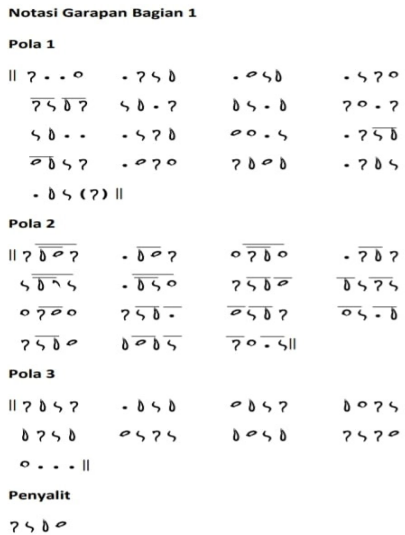


Figure 2. Notation of the lyrics "malih sebet inguh atine" (again, sadness and confusion stirred up) in the *karawitan* work Ngoner Ngakung (Source: Author’s documentation).

Sustained, soft melodic suspensions (09:31–11:50) evoke longing with unresolved tones and hesitant phrases. This mirrors the lyrics “*Konden kadirasa mekelo*” (It hasn’t been that long) and “*Aku harap inilah cinta sejati yang ku temui*” (I hope this is the true love I meet), emphasizing desire and anticipation. The notations further reinforce the theme of longing through both music and lyrics (Figure 3).

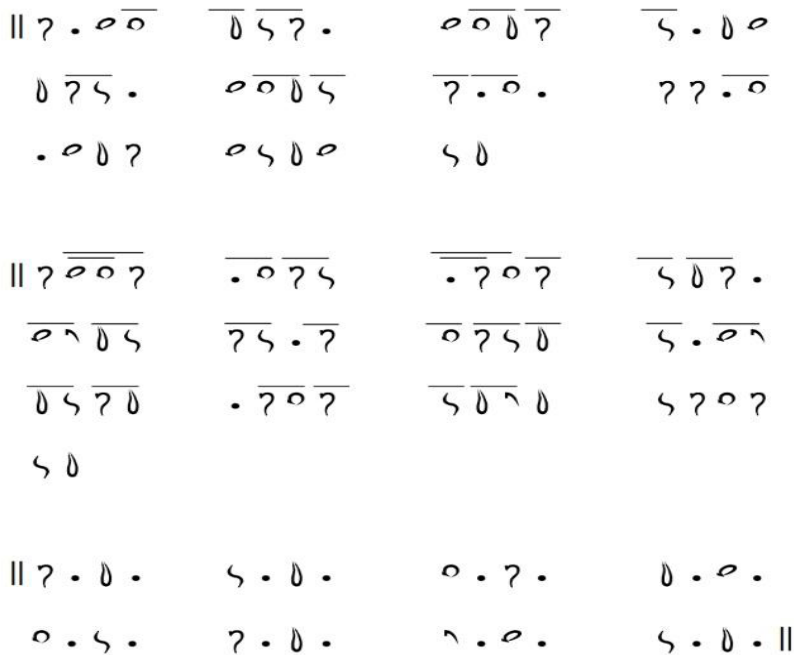


Figure 3. Notation of the lyrics “*Konden kadirasa mekelo*” and “*Aku harap inilah cinta sejati yang ku temui*” (Source: Author’s documentation).

The piece conveys a personalized message of love, allowing listeners to feel its emotional layers. The composer uses the flute (*suling*) and modal system, incorporating both pentatonic and septatonic scales, to enhance the mood. The *reong* kettlegong’s accents and innovative melodies create a unique atmosphere. With references to sunset and sparkling stars, the work symbolizes romance, beauty, and reflection, adding aesthetic depth through meaningful lyrics.

Dwipayana’s works are further distinguished through his collaboration with Ni Kadek Thaly Titi Kasih, a gifted vocalist from Gianyar, born December 11, 2005. A student of Theater at ISI Bali, Thaly blends Western pop vocals with Balinese tradition in *Ngoner Ngakung*, creating a unique fusion that enhances the piece. Together, they bridge modernity and tradition, fostering a dynamic

cultural exchange in Balinese *gamelan* art. Drawing from the *Kekawin Bharata Yuddha*, the work is informed by thorough research, adding literary depth and philosophical value. This integration of classical text with innovative musical elements not only preserves cultural heritage but also revitalizes it, resonating with diverse audiences across generations.

Published on the YouTube channel @putudwipayana7295, *Ngoner Ngakung* has received widespread acclaim for its artistic quality and its role in preserving Balinese cultural heritage. Viewers have praised both its artistic excellence and its contribution to cultural preservation, with comments such as “*Maju lan lestariang seni budaya Balinee* ♥” (Advance and preserve Balinese arts and culture ♥) and “*Berjuang untuk melestarikan seni budaya Bali, semoga selalu dalam lindungan Tuhan dan sukses*” (Keep fighting to preserve Balinese arts and culture; may you always be protected by God and succeed).

The artistic merit of the work is also acknowledged through responses such as “*Mahakarya keren* 🎵” (A great masterpiece 🎵), “*Karya terbaik 2022*” (Best work of 2022), and repeated affirmations such as “*Mantap*” (Excellent/Impressive). Some comments explicitly recognize the negotiation between tradition and modernity, for instance, “*Generasi era digital pelestari budaya Bali... mantap* 🎧” (The digital generation preserving Balinese culture... excellent 🎧) and “*Tugas akhir ini tiang berikan nilai A*” (I would give this final project an A).

The work has reached international audiences, reflected in comments such as “*Love from Tibet* ♥,” as well as responses from other Indonesian regions, including “*Om swastyastu, becik pisan niki bli putu*” (Om swastyastu, this is very good, brother Putu). Audience engagement also extends to practical appropriation, as seen in requests like “*Ijin bli untuk pakai backsoundnya untuk undangan wedding dados nggih?*” (May I have permission to use this as background music for a wedding invitation?).

Audience responses on YouTube reveal not merely appreciation but a patterned recognition of the work’s hybrid cultural function. Comments emphasizing preservation, such as “*Maju lan lestariang seni budaya Balinee*” (Advance and preserve Balinese arts and culture) and “*Berjuang untuk melestarikan seni budaya Bali*” (Keep striving to preserve Balinese arts and culture), demonstrate that listeners interpret the composition as a cultural act rather than a purely aesthetic object. Simultaneously, references to the “digital generation preserving Balinese culture” signal an awareness that digital mediation is not perceived as rupture but as continuation. In this sense, audience reception confirms that tradition is being renegotiated within contemporary platforms rather than displaced by them.

The aesthetic praise, including “*Mahakarya*” (Masterpiece) and “*Karya terbaik 2022*” (Best work of 2022), reflects affective immersion consistent with

Dewey's notion of art as experience (Dewey, 2024), where meaning emerges through lived engagement rather than detached evaluation. Requests to use the composition in weddings further indicate that the work has entered social practice, moving from mediated performance into communal ritual. From a conceptual metaphor perspective, the recurring imagery of healing, celestial witness, and natural cycles structures shared emotional understanding, enabling listeners to interpret personal romance within culturally resonant symbolic frameworks.

This finding extends prior studies on poetic figurative language that primarily focus on stylistic or rhetorical functions. In the context of Balinese *karawitan*, figurative language emerges as an aesthetic mediator that enables the negotiation between inherited symbolic cosmology and contemporary digital expression. Furthermore, this study shows how emotional intensity, audience response, and hybrid musical configurations converge, pushing PFL scholarship beyond purely textual interpretation toward a contextually grounded understanding of aesthetic experience.

4.2 The Role of Figurative Language in Character Education through *Karawitan*

The analysis demonstrates that poetic figurative language in Balinese *karawitan* functions as a subtle pedagogical mechanism through which ethical values are internalized rather than explicitly instructed. *Ngoner Ngakung* serves as an artistic communication medium, offering life experiences, solutions, and reflections on life's essence. For instance, the lyric *Semun beline ane manis ubad tiange ane utama* (Your sweet smile is my best medicine) reflects sincerity in appreciating the healing presence of a loved one. Likewise, *Aku harap inilah cinta sejati yang ku temui* (I hope this is the true love I have found) conveys an honest longing for genuine love. Furthermore, mutual respect is implied through *Kunang-kunang jadi saksi ketika dirimu datang memberikan kenyamanan dan kebahagiaan* (Fireflies were witnesses when you came) highlighting the value of appreciating each other's contributions to happiness. These textual elements illustrate how *Ngoner Ngakung* promotes positive character traits through poetic expressions. It conveys deep lessons while promoting positive character traits such as sincerity, honesty, and mutual respect.

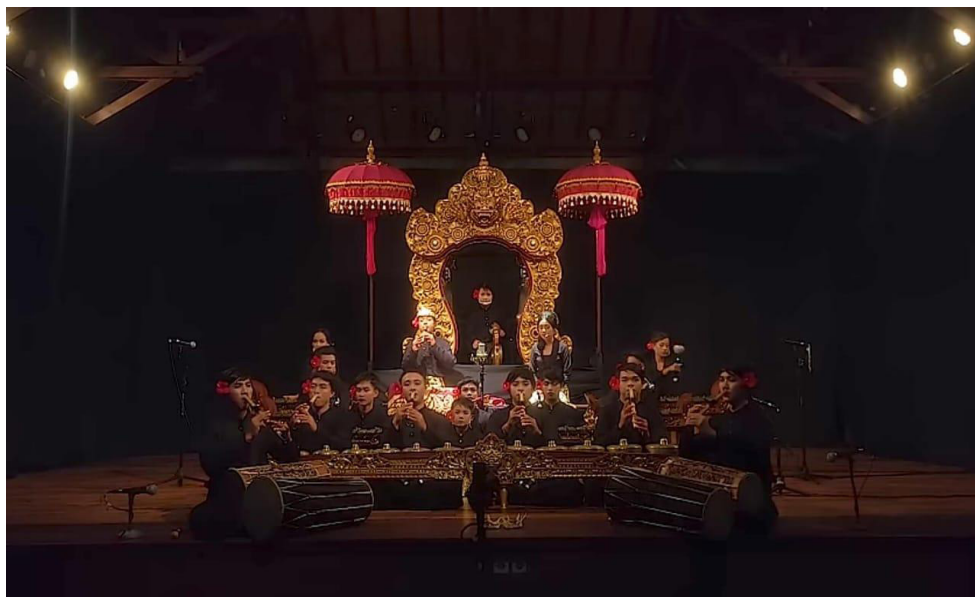


Figure 4. Performance of the *karawitan* composition *Sekar Layu* with flute players positioned in the front row (Source: Author's documentation).

Sekar Layu reflects hybrid aesthetic values through the fusion of traditional Balinese music with deep emotional expression (Figure 4). The use of expressive flutes, melodious vocals and complex harmonies from *Gamelan Semar Pagulingan Saih Pitu* create a strong sense of sadness. The flute melodies and poetic lyrics not only embellish the composition but also serve as a medium for expression of the composer's personal experience. This blend of traditional musical techniques and emotional narrative shows how Balinese art can adapt without losing its identity, making *Sekar Layu* more than just music, but also a universal expression of the heart.

Janger Ngapat reflects hybrid aesthetic values through the fusion of traditional *Janger* song elements with innovative musical approaches (Figure 5). The use of *Gamelan Gong Suling* and back-and-forth vocals between male and female groups creates a dynamic and fresh musical dialog. Composed by I Wayan Sudiarsa with *Gamelan Suling Gita Semara*, this work creatively explores the Balinese musical form. Its YouTube release also emphasizes the adaptation of traditional arts to digital media, making *Janger Ngapat* an example of a hybrid aesthetic between tradition and innovation.



Figure 5. Performance of the *karawitan* work *Janger Ngapat* (Source: Author's documentation).

Kenangan Manis is an innovative musical work that depicts the beautiful moments of the composer's childhood (Figure 6). This work was created as a nostalgic expression of childhood full of happiness, innocence, and sincere friendship. Childhood is considered a very special phase of life and will not be repeated, so the experience is immortalized in the form of musical art. Through this work, the composer wanted to capture the essence of past joys, from simple yet fun traditional games to warm social interactions with peers. This work is also a reflection of the stark differences between the lives of children then and now, especially in terms of how to play and socialize.



Figure 6. Performance of the *karawitan* work *Kenangan Manis* (Source: Author's documentation).

From the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, these poetic images translate abstract moral concepts such as compassion, reconciliation, and togetherness into embodied experiential domains that listeners can intuitively grasp. The code-switching from Balinese to Indonesian further intensifies psychological articulation, expanding emotional accessibility for contemporary audiences. In Dewey's terms, the aesthetic experience generated through melody, voice, and imagery allows these values to be lived and felt rather than abstractly prescribed (Pugh & Girod, 2007). Through this interplay of metaphor, musical embodiment, and linguistic hybridity, ethical meaning emerges within affective experience rather than through didactic instruction.

While previous studies on character education in Bali emphasize behavioral and programmatic approaches (Sutriyanti et al., 2025), the present study demonstrates that poetic figurative language operates as a culturally embedded mechanism of moral internalization within artistic practice. By integrating metaphorical cognition with aesthetic experience, *karawitan* transforms symbolic tradition into lived ethical sensibility. In this way, it sustains cultural continuity while shaping character through reflective engagement rather than prescriptive pedagogy.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals two key findings. First, poetic figurative language in Balinese *karawitan* enhances emotional resonance and aesthetic depth, as shown through metaphors, similes, hyperboles, and personifications embedded in the works *Ngoner Ngakung*, *Sekar Layu*, *Janger Ngapat*, and *Kenangan Manis*. Second, figurative language contributes to character education by fostering values such as compassion, sincerity, forgiveness, and resilience. These findings demonstrate how figurative language bridges tradition and modernity, enriching the listening experience while transmitting moral values. The study contributes to scholarship in three ways. Conceptually, it expands the study of *karawitan* beyond technical and structural analysis by foregrounding poetic figurative language as a vital element of hybrid aesthetics. Theoretically, it integrates aesthetic theory with character education, showing how artistic experiences nurture both cultural identity and moral growth. Practically, it highlights the pedagogical potential of figurative language in creative arts education, emphasizing its role in cultivating emotional sensitivity and ethical awareness among younger generations. Nonetheless, this research is limited to a small number of compositions within the Balinese cultural setting. Future studies could broaden the scope to other genres and regional traditions, explore cross-cultural comparisons, or investigate how figurative language is perceived and internalized by diverse audiences. Such research would not only strengthen

the interdisciplinary study of music, aesthetics, and education but also inform practical strategies for integrating traditional arts into contemporary educational and community contexts.

Acknowledgments

The authors used Grammarly solely for grammar checking and language editing. No generative artificial intelligence tools were used in the development of the research design, data analysis, or substantive content of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article.

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