



Gadamer's Hermeneutics in the Lyrics of the Song "*Si Paling Mahir*" by Raisa Andriana

Nisa Rahma Puspita

Egidius Bagas Pinasthiko Aji

Music Department, Universitas Negeri Jakarta

NisaRahma.P@unj.ac.id

Music Department, Universitas Negeri Jakarta

egidius_bagas@yahoo.com

Article Info

Abstract

Received : Desember 2025

Approved: Desember 2025

Published : Juni 2026

Keywords:

Gadamer's
Hermeneutics, Song
Lyrics,
Popular Music,
Si Paling Mahir,
Raisa Andriana

This study aims to interpret the meaning of Raisa Andriana's song "Si Paling Mahir" using Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical approach. Employing a qualitative case study with an interpretive design, the study analyzes the lyrics and their socio-cultural context. Data were obtained from the song lyrics, audio transcripts, academic literature on Gadamerian hermeneutics, the music video, and public responses on digital platforms. Data were collected through documentary study and observation, then analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the song's meaning emerges through the interaction between the text and listeners' lived experiences. Four hermeneutical dimensions are identified: historically, the lyrics reflect the tendency to display happiness on social media; dialectically, "always being fine" functions as an exhausting defense mechanism; prejudice reveals the cultural expectation to suppress negative emotions; and the fusion of horizons reconciles responsibility toward others with the need for self-care. The study contributes a hermeneutical model for interpreting Indonesian popular music.

© 2026 Universitas Negeri Semarang

INTRODUCTION

Songs are an alternative medium for delivering verbal messages that consists of non-verbal elements (tones, dynamic markings, instruments) and verbal elements (linguistic components) (Syakirina et al., 2025). Initially, these two elements were not separated. However, over time, song presentation developed into several versions. A common version is a song that combines music and language. There are also songs performed without musical instruments, as well as compositions that use only musical instruments, which are commonly referred to as instrumentals. Despite these various forms, the beauty of a song is deeply influenced by the subjectivity of its listeners. A song can reach its full narrative power when these two elements synergize; the lyrics provide a framework of meaning and story, while the musical accompaniment builds the mood and deepens the emotional impact of the lyrical message (Kirana et al., 2023).

In the context of a song, music and lyrics function as two complementary elements that construct meaning together (Ali & Peynircioğlu, 2006). Musical components such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and timbre operate in the non-verbal realm and directly affect the listener's emotions. Music has the ability to evoke feelings of sadness, joy, tension, or calm uttering a single word (Cook et al., 2017). On the other hand, lyrics serve as a cognitive framework that provides context, narrative, and a clearer message. The presence of lyrics directs the emotions evoked by music into a more specific storyline or statement (Barradas & Sakka, 2021). However, the real strength lies in the combination of both elements. When music and lyrics merge, a holistic aesthetic experience is created in which music provides the "soul" or emotional nuance, while lyrics provide the "body" or narrative structure (Peretz et al., 2004). The synergy between them produces deeper and more complex meaning than either element could achieve independently. A study by Syakirina et al., (2025) explains that "lyrics and music today have become an inseparable unity. The absence of either element makes it difficult for audiences to experience the full aesthetic effect". This

statement reinforces the idea that integration between musical elements and lyrics creates a dialectic of meaning, in which music is not merely an accompaniment, but an equal partner in constructing emotional and intellectual messages for listeners (Fiveash & Luck, 2016). In this context, music strengthens the message of the lyrics, while the lyrics give direction to the emotional journey shaped by the music (Ma et al., 2024). This combination enables a song to become a powerful medium for conveying meaningful messages, telling moving stories, or serving as an effective companion for nostalgia and emotional expression. This shows that the combined function of music and lyrics is significantly greater than when each stands alone (Allan, 2006).

Raisa Andriana, popularly known as Raisa, is an Indonesian singer and songwriter strongly associated with the Pop and R&B genres. Since her debut album in 2011, she has consistently released albums characterized with lyrics that often portray personal experiences and universal emotions. The language used in her lyrics is poetic yet not exaggerated, and maintain the tone of honest and natural everyday conversation. This creates a strong "sense of relatability", and allows listeners to feel that Raisa is expressing their own emotions. In addition to her clear and distinctive vocal character, the intimacy found in her lyrics is one of the strongest aspects that consistently receives positive responses from the public.

Hans-Georg Gadamer was born in Marburg, Germany, into a family with a strong academic background (Grondin, 2003). His intellectual engagement with Martin Heidegger marked a crucial turning point, shifting his focus from classical philology to hermeneutic philosophy. Hermeneutics is one a branch of philosophy concerned with interpretation and meaning. Initially, hermeneutics developed as a methodology for interpreting scriptures and classical texts (philological-textual hermeneutics). Through the influence of Martin Heidegger, hermeneutics evolved into an ontological inquiry (Grondin, 2024). At this stage, the focus shifted from "how we interpret" to "how we exist as

understanding beings". In its further development, hermeneutics no longer seeks merely the objective meaning behind a text, but explores how understanding itself is formed through dialogue between the interpreter and the interpreted object, both situated within particular historical contexts and traditions. Thus, hermeneutics emphasizes the linguistic, historical, and dialogical nature of the process of understanding (Gadamer, 2004).

Music and lyrics function as an interconnected system of emotional communication (Ruth & Schramm, 2021). Music exerts its power through nonverbal elements such as tempo, scale, dynamics, and timbre, which directly influence the listener's psychological state (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008). It is universal and establishes a strong emotional foundation. Meanwhile, lyrics provide specific narratives, context, and explanations that directs the arousal of emotions toward particular objects or experiences. Lyrics often employ the expressive power of language to portray the inner journey of the songwriter and become a medium through which listeners understand and internalize meanings conveyed (Salafiyah, 2020). The combination of the music's emotional stimulus and the lyrics' cognitive dimension often creates a richer, more personal, and deeper emotional experience for the audience (Kellaris et al., 1993).

One song with profound meaning that is interesting to examine is "*Si Paling Mahir*" by Raisa Andriana, which addresses the theme of self-conflict. The song was selected for analysis because it demonstrates a distinctive depth of meaning compared to many other songs. In general, themes of love dominate the repertoire of pop music (Hartiningtyas et al., 2023). However, unlike many songs in Raisa's *Ambivert* album, which predominantly explore romantic themes, "*Si Paling Mahir*" presents self-criticism expressed through ironic praise. The lyrics not only describe personal experiences but also convey a universal message about individuals who are trapped in the role of "the strong one" without having a safe space to express vulnerability. The phenomenon

of surface acting and emotional labor, where modern workers feel compelled to suppress emotions and appear fine to meet professional demands, is associated with an increased risk of burnout (Hartini et al., 2022). Mental health has therefore become a significant issue in contemporary society (Rahmasari & Adiyanto, 2023). The pressure to be the "best" at concealing burdens, as also revealed in research by Geong et al., (2024) regarding worker's mental health, not only reflects a double burden but also has the potential to undermine one's sense of meaning in life if not balanced with adequate emotional regulation mechanisms.

The depth of meaning in this song is further supported by a direct explanation from the songwriters—Raisa Andriana, Lafa Pratomo and Haris Pranowo—in a press release from June Records published by RRI on October 23, 2024. They stated that "*Si Paling Mahir*" was inspired by stories of people close to them and was intended to provide a deep portrayal of an individual's struggle in carrying complex life burdens. In terms of public reception, the song quickly went viral after its release, and many listeners expressed feeling "represented". Comments such as "I really know what it's like to be the backbone" frequently appeared in the comment section of Raisa's YouTube account. Based on these observations, "*Si Paling Mahir*" demonstrates depth of meaning from several perspectives: textual (a specific psychological portrayal of self-criticism), contextual (social observation with an empathetic mission), and sociocultural (its virality has opened public discussions about mental health issues).

Several previous studies on Raisa's songs have been conducted, including: (1) Haikal et al. (2023), which examines environmental persuasion in the lyrics of "*Nyawa dan Harapan*", (2) Suyanto & Indrawati (2022), who analyzed the lexical meaning of songs in the album "*Raisa*", and (3)

Agusetyaningrum & Suryadi (2022), which discusses romantic elements in the song "*Second Time*".

Based on previous research and existing literature, Raisa's songs have primarily been examined in terms of environmental persuasion, lexical meaning, and romantic aspects. To date, no study has applied hermeneutics analysis to "*Si Paling Mahir*". Drawing on the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer, this study aims to develop a deeper understanding of the song's lyrics from the perspectives of textual interpretation, historical context, dialectical process, prejudice, and the fusions of horizons. This research is expected to produce a hermeneutic interpretation model that can contribute to the study of popular music in Indonesia.

METHOD

The research design employed was a qualitative case study with an interpretive approach to interpret the meaning of the lyrics based on Hans-Geord Gadamer's hermeneutic concepts. The focus of the research consisted of an analysis of the lyric texts and the context of the work's production. The data used included: the lyrics of the song "*Si Paling Mahir*" (text and audio transcription), academic articles on Gadamerian hermeneutics, and documentary sources such as public responses on social media and interviews with Raisa Andriana. An interpretive approach was necessary to examine the meaning of song lyrics because lyrics do not constitute a closed system of signs with a single fixed meaning; rather, they function as complex and ambiguous cultural texts that live through interaction with listeners (Saventika & Taum, 2024). This approach enabled the researcher not only to record factual data but also to understand the historical, cultural, and contextual meanings associated with the text. Data were collected through document study, including exploration of the lyrics, musical scores, audience responses on digital platforms (YouTube, Spotify, and others), online media

coverage, and published interviews with Raisa Andriana and her production team. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

The data reduction stage involved selecting data related to: (1) historical aspects underlying the creation of "*Si Paling Mahir*," (2) dialogical elements within the lyrics, (3) individual prejudices or pre-understandings in interpreting the text, and (4) the fusion between the textual narrative and the audience's perspective. In the data display stage, the selected data were organized and presented according to categories related to the songwriter's background and audience responses. The researchers sought to understand the songwriter's personal perspective as well as the audience's interpretations, so that connections among the creator's intention, the meaning of the lyrics, and public understanding could be identified. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using Gadamer's hermeneutic framework, which consists of historical consciousness, dialectics, prejudice, and the fusion of horizons. After the analysis was completed, the researchers revalidated the data through in-depth examination and cross-checked the consistency of information obtained from various scholarly sources. Following the validation process, conclusions were drawn based on the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic concepts of Gadamer applied in this study include: historical consciousness, dialectics, prejudice (positive pre-understanding), and the fusion of horizons.

Historical Concept

Table 1
Historical Aspect

Lyric Excerpts	Historical Aspect
<i>Usahaku buatmu nyaman// Harus meredam semua amarah//</i>	Reflects traditional social constructions of the caregiver role, which demands emotional comfort for others;

<i>Terus abaikan segala gundah// Jangan sampai terucap lelah// Walau kadang ingin ku menyerah// Kalau bukan aku siapa yang bisa// Kalau bukan aku siapa yang mau// Membuat yang berat terlihat ringan dengan indah// Aku si paling mahir// Terlihat baik-baik saja</i>	represents a cultural legacy that emphasizes emotional repression as a sign of strength; mirrors the phenomenon of displaying only happiness on social media; and reveals pressure to constantly achieve and perform.
--	---

The first analysis of “*Si Paling Mahir*” by Raisa Andriana focuses on the aspect of historicity, namely the relationship between textual understanding and the historical context that underlies it. Gadamer (2004) emphasized that understanding is always historically situated, shaped both by the creator of the text and by the audience’s interpretation of it. From a historical perspective, the song was created within a highly modern context in which individuals are expected to perform multiple roles and responsibilities. “*Si Paling Mahir*” reflects contemporary issues such as mental health concerns, emotional exhaustion (burnout), and the pressure for constant achievement or performative excellence in the era of social media.

Dialectical Concept

Table 2
Dialectical Aspect

Lyric Excerpts	Dialectical Aspect
<i>Harus meredam semua amarah// Terus abaikan segala gundah// Ingin berganti peranan// Membuat yang berat terlihat</i>	At first glance, the phrase “ <i>Membuat yang sulit terlihat mudah</i> ” (making the difficult appear easy”) seems to signify achievement. However, when

<i>ringan dengan indah// Membuat yang sulit terlihat mudah// Aku si paling mahir// Terlihat baik-baik saja</i>	followed by “ <i>Aku si paling mahir</i> ” (I am the most skilled), a tragic irony emerges: the displayed independence is actually the result of repression and self-sacrifice.
--	---

The dialectical concept emphasizes understanding through tension or dialogue between contrasting ideas. In the context of “*Si Paling Mahir*,” dialectics appears as an internal dialogue within the individual. The song reflects an inner negotiation between social expectations and personal exhaustion. This dialectical movement produces a deeper insight: the “expertise” being celebrated is, in fact, an exhausting defense mechanism.

Prejudice (Positive Pre-Understanding)

Table 3
Prejudice Aspect

Lyric Excerpts	Prejudice Aspect
<i>Usahaku buatmu nyaman// Harus meredam semua amarah// Terus abaikan segala gundah// Jangan sampai terucap lelah// Membuat yang berat terlihat ringan dengan indah// Membuat yang sulit terlihat mudah// Aku si paling mahir// Terlihat baik-baik saja</i>	Social construction of emotional toughness; normalization of self-sacrifice; the cultural narrative of always being “fine.”

Gadamer (2004) consistently stressed that every individual brings prejudices or pre-understandings into the process of interpreting

a text. These prejudices are shaped by cultural background, personal experience, and social context. In the context of “*Si Paling Mahir*,” a dominant prejudice is the cultural assumption that being strong means being able to suppress negative emotions (anger, worry, exhaustion) and consistently act as a “pillar” for others. In addition, the song resonates with a narrative that glorifies self-sacrifice for the happiness of others. It also reflects the contemporary social media phenomenon in which individuals may feel emotionally burdened, yet present a polished image of a perfect and trouble-free life.

Fusion of Horizons

Table 4
Fusion of Horizons Aspect

Lyric Excerpts	Fusion of Horizons Aspect
Usahaku buatmu nyaman// Harus meredam semua amarah// Terus abaikan segala gundah// Jangan sampai terucap lelah// Walau kadang inginku menyerah// Ingin aku berganti peranan tapi// Membuat yang berat terlihat ringan dengan indah// Membuat yang sulit terlihat mudah// Aku si paling mahir// Terlihat baik-baik saja	Textual horizon: A narrative of an individual trapped in the role of a “skilled supporter,” who at times longs to give up and change roles. Audience horizon: Individuals with diverse life experiences, exposure to mental health discourse, and personal experiences of having to appear strong while internally fragile.

In hermeneutic theory (Gadamer, 2004), the fusion of horizons refers to the meeting between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter, which is shaped by personal experience, culture, and prejudice. The lyrics of “*Si Paling Mahir*” (the textual horizon) narrate the story of an individual trapped in the role of a capable supporter who occasionally wishes to surrender and exchange roles. Meanwhile, the

interpreter’s horizon includes lived experiences related to mental health struggles and the pressure to appear resilient despite inner vulnerability. When these two horizons merge, the song no longer speaks solely about Raisa or a fictional character. Instead, it becomes a reflection for listeners who have concealed their exhaustion. The phrase “*Aku si paling mahir*” (I am the most skilled) transforms from an expression of pride into a poignant and universal acknowledgment of the emotional alienation experienced while striving to meet social and personal demands. Within this fusion, the truth of the song’s meaning is disclosed: a profound exploration of the conflict between responsibility toward others and the need for self-care.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on Gadamer’s hermeneutic analysis, the lyrics of “*Si Paling Mahir*” by Raisa Andriana cannot be understood in isolation from the horizon of understanding brought by both the singer and the listeners. The findings within the hermeneutic framework include the following: first, from the historical perspective, the lyrics reflect the phenomenon of displaying only the happy side of life on social media; second, from the dialectical perspective, the supposedly celebrated “expertise in always being fine” is revealed to be an exhausting defense mechanism; third, in terms of prejudice, there exists a cultural assumption that being strong means suppressing negative emotions and consistently acting as a “pillar” for others; and fourth, from the perspective of the fusion of horizons, there emerges a merging between the meaning of the text and the audience’s understanding of the conflict between responsibility toward others and the need for self-care.

This study offers a structured application of Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutic theory in analyzing popular cultural texts, particularly song lyrics. Substantively, it is expected to serve as a reference for further studies on popular

song lyric analysis, cultural studies, and social psychology in Indonesia.

REFERENCES

- Agusetyaningrum, A., & Suryadi, M. (2022). Aspek intimacy, passion, commitment dalam lirik lagu "Jangan Berhenti Mencintaiku" karya Titi DJ dan "Kali Kedua" karya Raisa Andriana. *ANUVA*, 6(3), 307–316.
<https://ejournal.undip.ac.id/index.php/anuva>
- Ali, S. O., & Peynircioğlu, Z. F. (2006). Songs and emotions: are lyrics and melodies equal partners? *Psychology of Music*, 34(4), 511–534.
- Allan, D. (2006). Effects of Popular Music in Advertising on Attention and Memory. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 46(4), 434–444.
<https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849906060491>
- Barradas, G. T., & Sakka, L. S. (2021). When words matter: A cross-cultural perspective on lyrics and their relationship to musical emotions. *Psychology of Music*, 50(2), 650–669.
- Cook, T., A. R. K., & Welker, K. M. (2017). Music as an emotion regulation strategy: An examination of genres of music and their roles in emotion regulation. *Psychology of Music*, 47(1), 144–154.
- Fiveash, A., & Luck, G. (2016). Effects of musical valence on the cognitive processing of lyrics. *Psychology of Music*, 44(6), 1346–1360.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735615628057>
- Gadamer, H. G. (2004). *Truth and method : Vol. (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Ed.; J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Penerj.). Continuum Publishing Group.*
- Geong, E. A. T., Elda, P., & Utami, C. T. (2024). Hubungan antara makna hidup (meaning life) dengan depresi, anxiety, dan stress (DAS) pada dewasa yang bekerja. Dalam P. H. Priyanto (Ed.), *Seminar Nasional Magister Psikologi 2024: Pendidikan Psikologi pada Seperempat Abad Milenium Ketiga* (hlm. 102–117). Universitas Katolik Soegijapranata .
- Grondin, J. (2003). *The philosophy of Gadamer: Vol. (Kathryn Plant, Penerj.). McGill-Queen's University Press.*
<https://dokumen.pub/philosophy-of-gadamer-9780773582217.html>
- Grondin, J. (2024). *Metaphysical Hermeneutics: Vol. (-, Ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.*
- Haikal, M. F., Putri, D. K. E., Mushollia, S., & Balqis, A. F. (2023). Representasi persuasi pelestarian lingkungan dalam Lirik lagu Nyawa dan Harapan oleh Raisa. *Seminar Nasional Universitas Negeri Surabaya 2023 |* , 1582–1593.
- Hartini, S., Sherly, G., Thalia, Wijaya, V., & Felix, F. (2022). Hubungan emotional labour dengan burnout pada frontliner bank swasta di kota Medan. *Cakrawala – Repositori IMWI* , 5(2), 579–594.
- Hartiningtyas, W., Khususyairi, J. A., Nafi'ah, W., & Riyanto, E. D. (2023). Takut, Bertaut, and Runtuh: Analizing the Authenticity of Autobiographical Lyrics and Their Relation With Youth Reception. *Jurnal Seni Musik*, 12(1), 12–24.
<https://doi.org/10.15294/jsm.v12i1.68877>
- Juslin, P. N., & Västfjäll, D. (2008). Emotional responses to music: The need to consider underlying mechanisms. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 31(5), 559–621.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X08005293>
- Kellaris, J. J., Cox, A. D., & Cox, D. (1993). The Effect of Background Music on Ad Processing: A Contingency Explanation. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(4), 114–125.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299305700409>
- Kirana, M. W., Alberthiene, A., & Rusdi, F. C. (2023). Semiotic Dimension Deconstruction in the First Movement of "Spring" by Vivaldi. *Jurnal Seni Musik*, 12(1), 25–33.
<https://doi.org/10.15294/jsm.v12i1.69540>
- Ma, Y., Baker, D. J., Vukovics, K. M., Davis, C. J., & Elliott, E. M. (2024). Lyrics and melodies: Do both affect emotions equally? A replication and extension of Ali and Peynircioğlu (2006). *Musicae Scientiae*, 28(1), 174–186.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649221149109>
- Peretz, I., Radeau, M., & Arguin, M. (2004). Two-way interactions between music and language: Evidence from priming recognition of tune and lyrics in familiar songs. *Memory & Cognition*, 32(1), 142–152.

- Rahmasari, A., & Adiyanto, W. (2023). Representasi Kesehatan Mental Dalam Lirik Lagu Secukupnya Karya Hindia (Analisis Semiotika Ferdinand De Saussure). *INNOVATIVE*, 3(2), 11764–11777. : <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative>
- Ruth, N., & Schramm, H. (2021). Effects of prosocial lyrics and musical production elements on emotions, thoughts and behavior. *Psychology of Music*, 49(4), 759–776. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735620902534>
- Salafiyah, N. (2020). The Meaning of Kidung Rawapening in Larung Sesaji Ritual at Semarang Regency. *Journal of Music Science, Technology, and Industry*, 3(2). <https://jurnal.isi-dps.ac.id/index.php/jomsti/>
- Saventika, T. R., & Taum, Y. Y. (2024). Analisis Lirik Lagu “Lingkaran Aku Cinta Padamu” Karya Iwan Fals dan Sawung Jabo: Perspektif Hermeneutika Gadamer. *Proceedings Series on Social Sciences & Humanities*, 20, 64–72. <https://doi.org/10.30595/pssh.v20i.1305>
- Suyanto, H. I., & Indrawati, D. (2022). Semantik leksikal pada lirik lagu dalam album “Raisa” Raisa Andriana. *SAPALA*, 9(3), 22–33. <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/jurnal-sapala/article/view/48463>
- Syakirina, A. A., Tampubolon, E., Situmeang, M. S., & Sidabutar, P. A. (2025). Analisis lirik lagu Diri karya Tulus menurut teori Hermeneutika Gadamer. *Genta Mulia*, 15(2), 73–79. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61290/gm.v16i2>

