

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USED IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S ALBUM "FOLKLORE"

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Abstract

This research aims to explore types of figurative language found in Taylor Swift's album and elaborate their meanings. The data source is taken from 9 (nine) songs by an American female singer, Taylor Swift. This study's main theory was adopted from the figurative language theory of Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963). The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method. It begins with selecting several figurative sentences from nine song lyrics, then analyzed all. After analyzing, the authors recorded the related data. The results revealed that there are eleven kinds of figurative languages found out of the twelve or the total of the figurative language theory namely simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, overstatement, and irony.

Keywords: Figurative Language, Song, Album

INTRODUCTION

Language is a structural system that functions as a communication tool. Language is a medium to convey and perceive ideas, thoughts, and opinions (Rohmadi & Sulisty, 2014). Language is additionally the most communication medium in human life to act. The main function of language is as a means of interacting with humans, a tool for thinking, and channeling the meaning of belief in society. With language as a communication method, everything around humans will be adjusted and re-expressed to others as communication methods (Kerap, 1991). According to Fitria (2018), literature is everything that is written. What includes in literature is poetry, play, comic, novel, and song lyrics. Song lyrics are surrounded within the genre because lyrics are literary arts containing the author's sentiments, the words written within a song's type. However, not every song's lyrics are understandable once we read it for the first time. Some singers used figurative language to mention one thing in a rare and completely different way: we tend not to take it literally (Siska, 2019). Some lyrics on a song used figurative language to create a fascinating and creative meaning (Pamungkas, 2017). Figurative Language is a term that refers to language that conveys concepts beyond the literal sense of the words. (Arp & Johnson, 2005). The figurative language will make the language has its meaning because it can not define the word literally. Several figurative language types are simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, overstatement, understatement, and irony (Arp & Johnson, 2005). Figurative language, can be found in any medium of literary works, especially English songs. Since there are several English singers, the authors selected Taylor Swift. Taylor Swift is an American singer and songwriter. She has sold more than 40 million copies of the album, including 27.8 million in the US and 130 million uploaded singles. Swift has been recognized by the Nashville Songwriters Association and the Songwriters Hall of Fame, and was included in Rolling Stone magazine's 2015 list of the 100 Greatest Songwriters of All Time. Apart from

that, Taylor Swift is also known for her lyrics writing skills (Wikipedia, 2021). Most of the songs she wrote contained figurative meanings, which made her songs more beautiful.

Figurative Language refers to language that communicates ideas beyond the literal meaning of word (McKenzie, 2016) Figurative language gives a sense of beauty and emphasizes the importance of what is being said. The kinds of figurative language can be a particular repetition, arrangement, or omission of words with lexical meaning or a phrase with a specialized meaning that is not based on the word's literal meaning (Knickerbocker, 1963). In other words, figurative language is a different word or phrase that contains a hidden meaning behind it.

According to ARP and Johnson (2006), there are several types of figurative language, they are:

1. Simile

It is used to compare things that are not similar. This comparison is expressed as *like, as, than, similar to, or seems*.

2. Metaphor

A comparative figure describes something with a direct and exact comparison based on the same or nearly the same properties.

3. Personification

An allegorical figure which describes an object by giving human characteristics to inanimate objects so that it seems to have properties like humans or living things.

4. Apostrophe

An apostrophe is used to appeal to something to a human or something that is not present, for example, an appeal to the gods or a person who has died. An apostrophe is similar to personification in that they both 'give life' or act as if the Gods or the deceased can be spoken to and can talk, or at least can listen to the poet.

5. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a phrase whereby the term for a part of something is used to refer to the entire item or vice versa.

6. Metonymy

The use of a word indicates another meaning because a word is considered very closely related. For example, the *redhead* is used to refer to a person or people who have red hair.

7. Symbol

In short, it can be interpreted as something that has more meaning than what is explicitly seen. Symbols function both literally and figuratively at the same time. This book explains that symbols are the most challenging part of a figure of speech. This is because we do not know precisely what writers think when using certain symbols in their poetry. Even if we successfully interpret these symbols closer to the truth, it takes precision and expertise in reading these poems.

8. Allegory

Allegory is a narrative or short story that has a hidden meaning in it. Although the story has an explicit meaning, what the writer means is the hidden meaning. According to ARP and Johnson, allegory is no longer as famous as it was during the Renaissance or medieval times.

9. Paradox

The paradox shows the real contradiction with the facts—a paradox in the form of sentences. The paradox catches the reader's attention because of the truth that is revealed in its contradiction.

10. Overstatement

Overstatement is often called hyperbole, which is an exaggeration in expressing something. Hyperbole can be used to create a humorous, sad, angry, or convincing impression.

11. Understatement

Often called litotes, it is a comparative language that describes the situation with words that are opposite in meaning to the actual reality to humble oneself.

12. Irony

A figurative language that describes something that states the opposite of what is intending to insult people.

Using figurative language to analyze songs is essential because we can understand their actual meaning (Arifah, 2016). This helps us understand the song not only the literal words but also the meaning and the purpose of the song.

Song

The song is a variety of rhythmic voices in conversing, singing, etc. (Triana, 2020). The song is a work of art that blends sound art and poetic language art; the language is brief. There is a rhythm with a cohesive tone and a range of more refined words. The song also features the singer's harmony and voice (Kristiyanti, 2012).

Lyrics

Lyrics have two meanings, namely: literary works (poetry), which contain an outpouring of personal feelings, and the composition of a song (Moeliono, 2006). Lyrics can also contain the outpouring of the heart that we are feeling or words arranged so that when the sentences are put together, they will become a meaning. In making songs, a poet or a songwriter must be good at combining words so that the listener can feel their emotions (Djohan, 2016).

Based on the description above, the authors were interested in conducting a research about the use of figurative language in "Folklore" album. This research explored the figurative language used in Taylor Swift's album and categorized them into figurative language.

Several studies related to this research have been conducted. First, Fitria (2018) conducted a study that aimed to explore the types of figurative language and to elaborate the most dominant figurative language used in lyrics of One Direction's album song entitled Up All Night. The result shows that there were six types of figurative language, they are repetition, parallelism, personification, metaphor, simile and hyperbole. Meanwhile, repetition is the most frequently utilized sort of figurative language; there are 50 lyrics that feature both anaphora and epiphora. Second, a research conducted by Pratiwi (2018). This research describes the types of figurative language style and the function of figurative language style in Naif and Payung Teduh songs' lyrics. It was found that the lyrics of the songs of Naif band and Payung Teduh band used figurative language styles, namely (i) personification, (ii) simile or equality, (iii) metaphor, and (iv) irony. This study aimed to continue the study of figurative language to analyze song lyrics. The difference between this study and the previous studies is that this study chose Swift's latest album, which she made during quarantine.

METHOD

A research method is a scientific way of obtaining data for specific purposes and uses (Creswell, 2003). A research method is a strategy or a technique of locating, obtaining, collecting, or recording data, both primary and secondary data, for the purpose of compiling a scientific work. The authors analyzed the data using a descriptive qualitative technique. Descriptive qualitative method research is used in the literal sense of describing situations or events (Wiersma & S., 2005). This research is designed to analyze some figurative language used to understand the actual meaning of songs' lyrics.

The element that was analyzed and accomplished by using the descriptive qualitative method is data. Data sources in this study were lyrics taken from one album of Taylor Swift's song. The album is "Folklore" which was released in 2020. 16 (sixteen) songs were analyzed. A Descriptive research aims to describe situations or events (Wiersma & S., 2005). Steps to analyze the data were:

1. Preparation

In this stage, the writer took nine printed lyrics of Taylor Swift’s song to comprehend the lyrics. Then, the authors read carefully each line of the lyrics to identify the type of figurative language used in each of those lines.

2. Data Collection

In this stage, the writer chooses one of the song albums by Taylor Swift, which consisted of nine songs identified as containing figurative languages, then identified the lines in each song's lyrics that contained figurative languages based on the theory of Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) about the types of figurative language.

3. Data Analysis

The authors analyzed the data and discovered the figurative language used.

4. Conclusion

Making the conclusion based on data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

No.	Song Title	Lyrics	Types of figurative language	Meaning
1.	Illicit Affairs	<i>“Leave the perfume on the shelf That you picked out just for him So you’ll leave no trace behind Like you don’t even exist”</i>	Simile	Swift told a woman not to wear perfume so that her affairs would not get caught. Because whether or not she wears the perfume, she would eventually still exist.
		<i>“And that’s the thing about illicit affairs It’s born from just one single glance And it dies, and it dies, and it dies, A million little times”</i>	Overstatement	An affair will make someone dies over and over.
2.	Exile	<i>“I think I’ve seen this film before And I didn’t like the ending You’re not my homeland anymore So what am I defendin’ now?”</i>	Metaphor	Swift feels like her partner is not whom he used to be.
3.	Betty	<i>“Betty, I’m here on your doorstep And I planned it out for weeks now but It’s finally sinking in”</i>	Personification	Swift’s plan to meet her partner is already gone.
4.	The Last Great American Dynasty	<i>“Rebekah rode up on the afternoon train, it was sunny Her saltbox house on the coast took her mind off St. Louis Bill was the heir to the Standard Oil name, and money” And the town said “How did the middle-class divorcee do it?”</i>	Apostrophe	The further explanation of the sentence is that people started questioning how Rebekah and Bill became wealthy whereas they were a divorcee.
5.	This is Me Trying	<i>“I’ve been having a hard time adjusting I had the shiniest wheels; now they’re rusting”</i>	Synecdoche	Swift feels like all of the things holding her back from doing her best, using her potential to the

				fullest, and she feels that all of her talents are being wasted.
6.	Cardigan	<i>"I knew you Tried to change the ending Peter losing Wendy"</i>	Metonymy	Peter and Wendy refer to Swift and her partner, her partner wanted her to stay, but she refuses and decided to end the relationship.
7.	My Tears Ricochet	<i>"We gather here We line up weeping in a sunlit room And if I'm on fire You'll be made of ashes, too"</i>	Symbol	Swift's music producer betrayed her by not giving her any rights to her previous albums. So if Swift is falling, then she will take him down as well.
8.	Mad Woman	<i>"And you'll poke that bear 'til her claws come out And you find something to wrap your noose around And there's nothing like a mad woman"</i>	Allegory	This song is about how Swift's music producer, Braun, seized all of her previous albums. The sentence's actual meaning is that Braun will try to cause problems with Swift, and he would always defend himself.
9.	Peace	<i>"But I'm a fire, and I'll keep your brittle heart warm All these people think love's for show But I would die for you in secret"</i>	Paradox	The explanation of those sentences are (1) even though Swift's insane famousness surrounds her, but she will make her partner comfortable, (2) people always think that Swift's relationship is all fake, but she has proven that she would do everything for her partner, and (3) she loves her partner that she will give her everything.
10.		<i>"But there's robber to the east Clowns to the West"</i>	Irony	The word "West" in the sentence refers to Kanye West, whom Swift had a feud with that started when West interrupted her speech in the 2009 Video Music Award.

Discussion

The singer used figurative language to express something unusual, namely indirectly expressing the meaning of the word or language, which means the class or symbolic meaning. There were many forms of expression that use figurative language. In the first lyrics song *Illicit Affairs*, Simile and Overstatement were found. Simile is used as means of comparing unlike things, meanwhile overstatement is a figure of speech containing exaggeration expression (Arp et al., 2005). Furthermore, metaphor was found in *Exile*. Metaphor makes a comparison that is between two unlike things (Valentino, 2016). In the lyrics song *Betty*, personification was found. Personification is a figure of speech where human characteristics are being inanimate objects (Padillah et al., 2016). Next, apostrophe was found in *The Last Great American Dynasty* lyrics song. Apostrophe consists of various ways to address a person or a thing that invisible or inconceivable (Wijayanti, 2017). The next figurative language found was Synecdoche in *This is Me Trying*. Synecdoche is a figure of speech to describe things by standing the whole things or vice versa (Siska, 2019). In the next lyrics song *Cardigan*, Metonymy was found. It is for replace the previous name that has a similar meaning (Wijayanti, 2017). In addition, symbol was found in *My Tears Ricochet song lyrics*. Symbol can be used to describe a person, object, picture, word, or event that contains various additional meanings and is usually more than its literal meaning (Raisa & Sudarsono, 2017). After that, in *Mad Woman* song lyrics, allegory was found. Allegory is an illustration that has another meaning under the origin of the sentence. Another figurative language, paradox, was found in *Peace*. Paradox can be found when a sentence has a contradictory but may include a hidden truth (Arifah, 2016). The last figurative language, irony, was found in *Peace* lyrics song. Irony is a phrase that occurs when an expression is used in opposition to the speaker's viewpoint, it is expressing a message that opposes the literal meaning (Syafitri & Marlinton, 2018).

Figurative language plays an essential role in shaping a literary work, especially songs. This has created interest in researching figurative language in Taylor Swift's Folklore Albums. The figurative language used in the song collection contains an expressive aesthetic value that triggers the readers to think. Second, the figurative language used makes a distinctive feature of the song collection by giving connotative meaning as a figurative meaning. Third, figurative language in a collection of songs is used to convey the ideas and feelings felt by the singer. Fourth, figurative language is used as an indirect communication medium that connects singers and listeners (Shintari et al., 2019)

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, there were nine out of 16 songs used figurative language in Taylor Swift's Album entitled "Folklore". Furthermore, there were 11 figurative language used: *simile*, *metaphor*, *personification*, *apostrophe*, *synecdoche*, *metonymy*, *symbol*, *allegory*, *paradox*, *overstatement*, and *irony*. There was no *understatement* used. Whereas the purposes of figurative language used are: beautifying the lyrics, hiding something, creating a particular atmosphere, having the aim of persuading, reminding, convincing, and satirizing.

Figurative language is a language that uses expression words with different meanings from literal interpretations. When a singer uses literal language, he or she is only stating the true meaning. In comparison, figurative language uses alternative words to make certain points.

This research is useful for other relevant authors, anyone interested, or students looking for their research references

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to extend their deepest gratitude to their family and friends who always support them during the completion of this research.

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