Exploring Figurative Language in Ariana Grande's Interview on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon

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Abstract

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the types of figurative language employed by Ariana Grande in her interviews with Jimmy Fallon, published in June 2024, following Perrine's (2018) typology of figurative language. The data collection process followed the observational method and note-taking technique, enabling systematic gathering of instances of figurative language while preserving the authenticity of spoken interactions. The analysis employed the referential identity method and the contextual meaning technique, focusing on how linguistic expressions relate to their external contexts and uncovering the meanings behind figurative language. A total of 38 instances of figurative language were identified across various types, including 4 similes, 7 metaphors, 5 personifications, 4 apostrophes, 4 metonymies, 3 symbols, 4 overstatements, 3 understatements, and 4 ironies. Metaphors emerged as the most frequently appearing type, reflecting the complex emotional states and experiences that Grande expresses, which resonate with her audience. Interestingly, no instances of allegory or paradox were found, suggesting that while the dialogue was rich in imagery and emotional depth, it did not engage in these more complex forms of figurative language. The findings underscore the expressive potential of figurative language in conveying nuanced interpersonal relationships and experiences.

Keywords: Figurative Language; Semantic; Context

INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential tool for human interaction, serving as a means of expressing thoughts, emotions, and cultural identity. According to Halliday (1978), language functions not only as a system for conveying information but also as a social semiotic, reflecting the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. In today's globalized world, the role of language extends beyond basic communication; it also influences how individuals perceive and interpret reality. Figurative language, in particular, adds depth to communication, enabling speakers to convey complex ideas in imaginative and expressive ways.

Figurative language encompasses expressions where meaning extends beyond the literal interpretation of words, enhancing the communicative power of language. Perrine (2018) argues that figurative expressions like metaphors, similes, and personifications enrich language by allowing speakers to convey subtle nuances, evoke emotions, and paint vivid mental images. Such language forms not only make communication more engaging but also facilitate deeper understanding by connecting abstract ideas to concrete experiences.

In the field of semantics, the study of meaning, figurative language plays a crucial role in examining how language users interpret and construct meaning. According to Leech (1981), figurative language challenges the conventional boundaries of semantics by introducing non-literal interpretations that depend on context and shared cultural knowledge. Analyzing figurative expressions thus provides insights into how speakers manipulate language to achieve specific effects and how listeners decode these expressions to arrive at intended meanings.

In the digital age, figurative language is prominently used across social media platforms to captivate audiences, convey messages more vividly, and reflect cultural trends. Social media influencers, celebrities, and everyday users often incorporate metaphors, hyperboles, and other figurative expressions in posts, tweets, and memes to create impactful and memorable content. For example, phrases like "the grind never stops" or "drowning in emails" metaphorically describe work culture, resonating with users who share similar experiences. Such figurative usage reflects how digital communication continues to evolve, shaping language trends and expressions that transcend literal meaning (Crystal, 2008). This widespread phenomenon highlights the need to study figurative language in various modern contexts, including interviews and other forms of spoken media.

Media platforms, such as interviews, often showcase figurative language as celebrities and public figures employ it to articulate their thoughts, emotions, and creative ideas. Crystal (2018) discusses how language in media is frequently characterized by a blend of formal and informal styles, with figurative expressions used to engage the audience and communicate personal experiences more vividly. He emphasizes the evolving nature of language in media, including the influence of digital communication on language use. In the June 2024 interview, Ariana Grande uses the metaphor, "I miss you, bud. I miss you!" to convey a sense of longing and connection, emphasizing the emotional weight of her experiences. This figurative language illustrates the depth of her feelings and highlights how such expressions can enhance the relatability of her artistic narrative.

Previous research has extensively explored the use of figurative language in various forms of literary and non-literary texts. For instance, Alvina and Rudianto (2024) conducted a study to identify the types of figurative language and determine the dominant type used in the play Macbeth. This study employed Perrine's theory to categorize different figurative expressions found within the characters' dialogues. The study utilized a non-participant observation method and note-taking techniques to collect data. The analysis revealed a total of 60 instances of figurative language in the play, with similes being the most frequently used, followed by metaphors, paradoxes, symbols, personifications, hyperboles, and apostrophes. Chika's findings highlight the prominent role of similes in enhancing the language and engaging readers in Shakespeare's work.

Similarly, another study by Pertiwi and Handayani (2023) focused on figurative language in a different context, product reviews on the YouTube channel Nikki Tutorials. The aim of their study was to categorize the figurative expressions used by the content creator and analyze their functions. Drawing on Perrine's semantic theory of figurative language, the study identified twelve types of figurative language, including simile, metaphor, personification, and irony, among others. The researchers used a qualitative research design with document analysis and observation methods. The study found that hyperbole was the most frequently occurring type, with the primary function of increasing emotional intensity in the content creator's reviews. Their study illustrates how figurative language contributes to creating vivid and emotionally resonant communication in digital media contexts.

The studies conducted by Alvina and Rudianto (2024) and Pertiwi and Handayani (2023) share a common focus on identifying and analyzing figurative language, yet they differ in their data sources and specific objectives. Alvina and Rudianto's study centered around the play Macbeth, aiming to determine the various types and dominant forms of figurative language used in the dialogue. The study emphasized literary analysis, reflecting on how Shakespeare employed figurative expressions to enrich the narrative and evoke imagery. On the other hand, Pertiwi and Handayani's research explored figurative language in a non-literary digital context, analyzing product reviews on Nikki Tutorials to identify types of figurative language and their functions. While both studies used Perrine's theory as the basis for categorization, Alvina and

Rudianto focused on the prominence of similes in a literary script, while Pertiwi and Handayani examined hyperbole's frequency and its emotional impact in a digital media context. The present study, however, aims to analyze figurative language in a more dynamic setting, celebrity interviews, highlighting how language is used creatively in spoken communication.

The present study aims to explore the use of figurative language in Ariana Grande's interviews with Jimmy Fallon, focusing specifically on identifying the different types of figurative language employed in her responses. The data source consists of the interview, published on YouTube in June 2024. Utilizing Perrine's (2018) theory of figurative language, this study seeks to categorize the types of figurative expressions such as metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, and others that Ariana Grande uses to convey her artistic ideas and emotions. By focusing on this dynamic spoken context, the research highlights how public figures utilize figurative language to communicate creatively and engage with audiences in digital media.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics focused on the study of meaning in language. It examines how words, phrases, and sentences interact to convey information and express concepts. Leech (1981) emphasizes that semantics deals with both denotative meanings (literal meanings) and connotative meanings (implied or associated meanings). It explores how language users interpret various expressions based on cultural, social, and contextual factors. Saeed (2016) highlights the importance of semantics in connecting linguistic forms with the concepts and ideas they represent, enabling effective communication and understanding. By studying the meaning relations among words, sentences, and broader discourse, semantics plays a crucial role in understanding human cognition and communication.

An essential aspect of semantics is its distinction between literal and figurative language. While literal language conveys information straightforwardly, figurative language introduces creative interpretations that extend beyond the surface meaning of words. Perrine (2018) asserts that figurative expressions enrich communication by allowing speakers to convey abstract ideas, emotions, and imagery through metaphorical and symbolic language.

Context serves as a pivotal element in semantics, influencing how meaning is constructed and understood. As Fairclough (2003) notes, meaning does not exist in isolation but is deeply embedded in the interaction between linguistic expressions and their surrounding environment. Whether cultural, social, or conversational, context provides the framework within which words and sentences acquire relevance. This is particularly significant in the interpretation of figurative language, where context often determines whether an expression is understood literally or metaphorically. Without adequate consideration of context, the nuanced meanings of language remain obscured. Additionally, Flick (2014) highlights the role of context in interpreting meaning, explaining that understanding figurative language depends heavily on the situational, cultural, and conversational contexts in which expressions are used. This interplay between literal and non-literal meanings is at the core of semantic analysis, as it uncovers the complexity of language use in diverse contexts. The current study focuses specifically on the use of figurative language, which falls under the broader umbrella of semantic studies.

Figurative language encompasses a wide range of expressive techniques that allow speakers to convey meanings beyond the literal interpretation of words. As Munte and Afriana (2023) point out, figurative language is regularly employed not only in prose and literary works but also in everyday speech, including song lyrics, which often contain rich figurative expressions. Perrine (2018) identifies eleven types of figurative language that enhance communication by adding depth, creativity, and emotional resonance. These techniques enable speakers to express complex ideas in relatable ways and foster a deeper connection with their audience. The types of figurative language include simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, overstatement, understatement, and irony. Each type serves a unique purpose and contributes to the overall effectiveness of communication. **Simile**: A simile is a

direct comparison between two different things using "like" or "as," enhancing imagery and understanding. **Metaphor**: A metaphor implies a comparison by stating that one thing is another, allowing for deeper meanings and associations. **Personification**: This technique attributes human characteristics to non-human entities, making abstract concepts more relatable. **Apostrophe**: Apostrophe involves addressing someone absent or an abstract idea, often to express strong emotions. **Metonymy**: Metonymy replaces the name of one thing with the name of something closely associated with it, facilitating more concise expression. **Symbol**: Symbols are objects or images that represent larger ideas or concepts, enriching meaning through association. **Allegory**: Allegory conveys deeper moral or political meanings through symbolic figures and actions. **Paradox**: A paradox presents seemingly contradictory statements that reveal a deeper truth. **Overstatement**: Overstatement, or hyperbole, exaggerates for emphasis or effect, often adding humor or drama. **Understatement**: Understatement downplays a situation, often to create irony or emphasize a point through contrast. **Irony**: Irony involves expressing an idea by stating the opposite, often to highlight contradictions or create humor.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the types of figurative language employed by Ariana Grande in her interviews with Jimmy Fallon. A qualitative approach is chosen as it allows for a comprehensive examination of linguistic features and contextual nuances that arise in the interview content. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research focuses on interpreting and understanding the meanings embedded within textual or spoken data, making it suitable for this linguistic analysis. Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2017) emphasize that qualitative research provides rich, detailed insights into complex social phenomena, further supporting its appropriateness for analyzing the intricate use of figurative language in this context. The data collection process followed the observational method and note-taking technique as outlined by Sudaryanto (2015). The primary data source is taken from a YouTube interview with Ariana Grande, published in June 2024. The researchers conducted non-participant observation, which means observing the linguistic exchanges in the videos without interfering or participating. During this observation, instances of figurative language were recorded using a note-taking technique to capture the context and wording of each figurative expression in the interviews. This method allowed the researchers to systematically gather data while maintaining the authenticity of the spoken interactions. The analysis of figurative language in this study employed the referential identity method and the contextual meaning technique, following Sudaryanto (2015). The referential identity method focuses on examining how linguistic expressions relate to their external references and contexts, allowing the researchers to uncover the intended meanings behind figurative language. The analysis began with identifying and categorizing instances of figurative expressions based on Perrine's (2018) typology. Each identified expression was then analyzed using the contextual meaning technique to explore how the context, including surrounding dialogue and cultural references, shaped the interpretation of these expressions. By combining these approaches, the study provided a nuanced understanding of the figurative language used in Ariana Grande's interviews, highlighting how context influences meaning construction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis of the conversation revealed a diverse array of figurative language, highlighting the richness of conversational expression. The following table summarizes the types and counts of figurative language identified:

Table 1. Instances of Figurative Language in Ariana Grande's Interview on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon

Figurative Language Type	Number of Instances
Simile	4
Metaphor	7
Personification	5
Apostrophe	4
Metonymy	4
Symbol	3
Overstatement	4
Understatement	3
Irony	4
Total	**38**

In total, there were four instances of simile, which highlighted comparisons that added depth to the dialogue. Metaphors were particularly prominent, with seven instances illustrating complex emotional states and experiences. The use of personification appeared five times, suggesting a human-like quality in the subjects discussed, while apostrophe was noted four times, indicating direct addresses to absent entities or concepts. Metonymy appeared four times as well, demonstrating the use of related terms to signify larger ideas or entities. Symbols were present in three instances, enhancing the narrative with significant objects carrying deeper meanings. Overstatement was utilized four times, adding an element of exaggeration for emphasis, while understatement was employed three times to downplay significant feelings or events. Irony emerged four times, revealing contrasts between expectations and reality. Interestingly, no examples of allegory or paradox were found in the dialogue, suggesting that while the dialogue was rich in imagery and emotional depth, it did not venture into these more complex forms of figurative language.

Overall, the findings underscore the expressive potential of figurative language in conveying nuanced interpersonal relationships and experiences. These findings set the stage for a deeper discussion on the implications of figurative language in Ariana Grande's interview, particularly how it shapes the audience's understanding of her artistic process and emotional landscape. The subsequent section will analyze the significance of these figurative elements in relation to Grande's narrative and overall communication style.

Discussion

The analysis of figurative language in Ariana Grande's interviews with Jimmy Fallon reveals significant insights into the use of various figurative expressions and their impact on communication. With a total of 38 instances identified across multiple types, this section delves into how these figurative elements contribute to the richness of the dialogue and enhance the conveyance of emotions, relationships, and experiences. The findings illustrate the effective use of figurative language as a tool for creating vivid imagery and engaging storytelling.

Simile

Data 1

"I was, like, sworn to secrecy," (00:01:00-00:01:02)

In a conversation about her acting career, Ariana Grande reflects on the challenges of keeping a secret regarding her role in "Wicked." She mentions, "I was, like, sworn to secrecy," conveying the pressure of her situation and the excitement of landing the role without being able to share the news with others.

This simile captures the gravity of Ariana's circumstances, emphasizing the weight of her responsibility in maintaining secrecy. The use of "like" suggests an informal, conversational tone while still conveying seriousness. It highlights the tension and anticipation surrounding her new role, as well as the emotional burden of being in the public eye where such secrets can feel isolating and stressful.

Data 2

"You're one of our best-smelling guests" (00:04:43-00:04:45)

During a lighthearted exchange, the speaker compliments their guest by referencing their pleasant scent. This occurs in the context of a warm and friendly conversation, where personal anecdotes and memories are shared. The use of humor and compliments adds to the informal, enjoyable atmosphere of the interaction, making it clear that there is a strong rapport between the speakers. This moment not only reflects personal admiration but also contributes to the overall theme of friendship and support in the dialogue.

The simile "You're one of our best-smelling guests" serves as a playful and engaging compliment that highlights the intimacy of the relationship between the speakers. By categorizing the guest's fragrance as one of the "best," the speaker elevates their praise to a memorable level, creating a visual and olfactory image that resonates with the audience. This simile enriches the interaction by infusing it with humor and warmth, demonstrating that compliments can be delivered in a lighthearted manner without diminishing their sincerity. It enhances the convivial atmosphere of the conversation and underscores the strong bond shared by the participants.

Metaphor

Data 1

"It was just so surreal to see, of course, the response." (00:02:22-00:02:25)

Discussing the overwhelming response to her work, Ariana states, "It was just so surreal to see, of course, the response." Here, she expresses her astonishment at the public's reaction to her performance and the project.

This metaphor encapsulates a sense of disbelief and wonder, suggesting that the magnitude of the response feels almost dreamlike. By describing the experience as "surreal," Ariana conveys a blend of joy and astonishment, reflecting on how far she has come in her career. It illustrates her emotional journey and the transformative power of creative work, as she grapples with her identity as both an artist and a public figure.

Data 2

"Yes, but I was trying subliminally, like, tell you through the screen that I got it."
(00:01:10-00:01:15)

In this moment, the speaker is discussing a previous conversation with a friend during which they were unable to share their exciting news about getting a role in a show. The use of "subliminally" suggests that while they could not explicitly communicate the news, they hoped their feelings and hints would be understood by the other person through their demeanor and expressions. This highlights the nuances of friendship, especially when sharing significant life events, and the struggle of keeping secrets in close relationships.

This instance employs metaphorical language by suggesting that emotions and intentions can be communicated "subliminally," as if there is a deeper connection between friends that transcends verbal communication. The phrase "through the screen" not only refers to the

physical barrier of a video call but also symbolizes the limitations of technology in conveying genuine emotions. The speaker's attempt to communicate their excitement "subliminally" underscores the challenges of expressing oneself when words cannot be used, revealing a layer of vulnerability. This metaphor illustrates the complex dynamics of relationships in a digital age, where genuine feelings can sometimes be obscured or misinterpreted, yet the desire for connection remains strong. The overall sentiment captures the intricate ways friends navigate their emotions, suggesting that true understanding often lies beyond mere words.

Personification

Data 1

> "You know, this is something that Cynthia and I lived every single day." (00:02:25-00:02:29)

Reflecting on her collaboration with Cynthia Erivo, Ariana says, "You know, this is something that Cynthia and I lived every single day." This statement highlights the depth of their shared experience throughout the production process.

By personifying their project as something they "lived," Ariana emphasizes the intensity of their dedication and emotional investment. This language choice illustrates how their work became a significant part of their daily lives, shaping their experiences and interactions. It conveys a deep sense of partnership and connection, reinforcing the idea that their artistic journey was not just a series of tasks but a meaningful relationship that fostered personal growth.

Apostrophe

Data 1

> "Well, yes, they did add some flying monkeys and some, some animals." (00:02:50-00:02:54)

When discussing the fantastical elements of "Wicked," Ariana humorously comments, "Well, yes, they did add some flying monkeys and some, some animals.'" This moment captures her playful engagement with the audience.

The use of apostrophe here creates a lighthearted tone, allowing Ariana to address the audience directly while reflecting on the whimsical nature of the production. This playful acknowledgment of "flying monkeys" adds a layer of humor and absurdity to the conversation, inviting the audience to join in the fun. It also highlights Ariana's ability to balance the serious aspects of her work with a sense of enjoyment and creativity, making her more relatable to her fans

Metonomy

Data 1

> "Love seeing Wicked again" (00:01:43-00:01:44)

In this line, the speaker expresses their enjoyment of a particular musical, "Wicked." This statement is made in a conversation where the speakers are reminiscing about past experiences and the impact of theater on their lives. The casual mention of "Wicked" serves as a reference to the entire production, encompassing not just the show itself but also the emotions, memories, and cultural significance associated with it. It reflects the speaker's appreciation for the arts and the shared experiences that come with attending performances.

The metonymy in "Love seeing Wicked again" effectively captures the essence of theatrical experience by using the title of the musical as a stand-in for the broader context of live performances. This instance illustrates how cultural references can evoke strong feelings and associations, allowing the speaker to convey nostalgia and enthusiasm with a simple phrase. By mentioning "Wicked," the speaker taps into the collective memories and sentiments tied to the show, creating a sense of shared joy and appreciation for the art form. This usage not only highlights the significance of the musical itself but also emphasizes the social and emotional connections that arise from engaging with art and storytelling.

Symbol

Data 1

"She gave me a little, um, wand." (00:04:23-00:04:25)

Ariana recalls a childhood memory when she received a "little, um, wand" from Kristin Chenoweth after a backstage visit to see "Wicked." This wand serves as a cherished reminder of her aspirations in theater.

The wand symbolizes the magic of childhood dreams and the influence of early experiences on Ariana's artistic journey. It represents not just the allure of theater but also the lasting impact of formative moments in shaping her identity. This anecdote adds a personal touch to her narrative, showcasing how connections made during her youth have contributed to her passion for performing and the significance of mentorship in her career.

Overstatement

Data 1

"I feel like that's not true." (00:06:24-00:06:27)

In a moment of disbelief about her success, Ariana exclaims, "I feel like that's not true." This statement reflects her astonishment at her achievements.

This overstatement emphasizes Ariana's humility and genuine surprise regarding her accomplishments. By expressing disbelief, she invites the audience to share in her astonishment, reinforcing her relatable persona. It captures the emotional complexity of achieving fame, where the expectations of success can feel overwhelming. This moment showcases her grounded nature and the authenticity that resonates with her fans.

Understatement

Data 1

"It's just so surreal to see, of course, the response." (00:02:22-00:02:25)

Reflecting on the audience's reaction, Ariana remarks, "It's just so surreal to see, of course, the response." This statement conveys her calm demeanor in light of significant public attention.

This understatement contrasts the immense significance of the audience's response with a nonchalant tone. It reflects Ariana's humility, suggesting that she is not one to boast about her success. This choice of language encapsulates the emotional complexity of navigating public reactions, illustrating that while she appreciates the acknowledgment, she remains grounded and focused on her artistic journey.

Irony

Data 1

"I thought you were gonna do it after 'Wicked.'" (00:05:10-00:05:12)

In this line, the speaker is referring to their expectations about the timing of the listener's career moves, particularly regarding the release of new music or participation in other projects following their involvement in the musical "Wicked." This comment is made during a light-hearted exchange between two friends, where one is teasing the other about their busy schedule and the trajectory of their career in entertainment.

The irony in "I thought you were gonna do it after 'Wicked'" lies in the contrast between the speaker's expectation and the reality of the listener's situation. While the speaker anticipated a swift progression in the listener's career after such a significant role, the underlying implication is that things didn't unfold as expected, potentially due to unforeseen circumstances like the strikes in the entertainment industry. This discrepancy between expectation and reality highlights the unpredictability of show business and adds a layer of humor to the conversation. It reflects a common experience in the entertainment world, where plans can change dramatically, and reinforces the camaraderie between the speakers as they navigate their respective careers.

Data 2

"Yes, but I couldn't tell you yet." (00:00:25-00:00:27)

During the conversation, Ariana reveals, "Yes, but I couldn't tell you yet," referring to the secrecy surrounding her role in "Wicked." This moment highlights the tension between her excitement and the constraints of her professional obligations.

This irony underscores the conflict between personal joy and professional secrecy. By acknowledging her inability to share significant news, Ariana reflects the complexities of fame and the pressure to maintain certain boundaries. It reveals a deeper layer of her experience, where the thrill of achievement is tempered by the responsibilities that come with public scrutiny, creating a relatable moment for both her and the audience.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of figurative language in Ariana Grande's interview on The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon revealed a diverse array of expressions that enrich her narrative. A total of 38 instances of figurative language were identified, including four similes, seven metaphors, five instances of personification, four instances of apostrophe, four instances of metonymy, three symbols, four examples of overstatement, three instances of understatement, and four instances of irony. Among these, metaphors emerged as the most frequently appeared type, highlighting Grande's adeptness at conveying complex emotional states and experiences. Notably, there were no examples of allegory or paradox, indicating a focus on more direct forms of expression that resonate with the audience.

This exploration highlights the significance of figurative language in conveying complex emotions and experiences. The prevalence of metaphors and similes underscores Ariana Grande's ability to create vivid imagery, allowing her audience to connect with her creative process on a deeper level. Additionally, the use of personification and apostrophe adds layers of meaning, enhancing the emotional impact of her dialogue. Overall, the findings underscore the expressive potential of language in articulating personal experiences, illustrating how artists like Grande navigate their artistic journeys while engaging with their audiences.

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