

AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USED IN THE SONG LYRICS ALBUM MIDNIGHTS (THE TILL DAWN EDITION) BY TAYLOR SWIFT

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Abstract

This research aimed to ascertain the figurative language found in Taylor Swift's album *Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)*, and elaborate its general meanings and possible contribution to teaching poetry. The method used in this research was the descriptive qualitative method. This research discovered figurative language utilized in Taylor Swift's song lyrics album *Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)*, including metaphor, personification, irony, symbolism, hyperbole, and simile. The dominant sort of figurative language in the album is metaphor, which appears in 44 song lyrics and accounts for 55% of the lyrics. The album *Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)* by Taylor Swift offers rich reflections that can be analyzed to unveil the artist's profound insights into love, loss, and existential contemplation themes to enrich students' knowledge of figurative language.

Keywords: Figurative Language, Song Lyrics, Types of Figurative Language, album *Midnights (The Till Dawn Edition)* by Taylor Swift

a. Introduction

Language is a human tool used to develop their understanding of the world and express their views on living experiences. Most of the time, those expressions turn into creative and even valuable works of literature. The literariness is not only found in common literary genres such as poetry, prose, or drama. In this case,

songs also have this aspect since it is closely related to poetry in lyric-making. In popular music, to have a phatic expression in terms of gaining many listeners, musicians are conscious of creating comprehensive lyrics as a form of storytelling (Max, 2022). According to Plummer (Plummer, 2019), as we move between the public and private, new stories can emerge in the spaces between them in embodied human relationships and narrative actions. These three-layered worlds are in constant dialogue with each other.

As part of literature, a song lyric can have different meanings. It usually involves figurative language. It uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation (Arp, 2011). Many authors use this kind of language style to transfer their impression about something in their literary works to give special effects and unique understanding in every sentence of their works.

This research was focused on analyzing the kinds of figurative language that occur in Taylor Swift's song lyrics of "Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)". This album consists of twenty-three songs.

Song lyrics can be used to teach figurative language in high school and college. It is a great benefit to the students in developing their reading skills. Besides, music is often used as educational content to help students become more familiar with the language and enjoy a lesson, which can also serve as media for teachers of ESL. Moreover, by inspiring students to study, enhancing their knowledge of language and culture, guiding them to think critically, and offering feedback to improve their comprehension skills, figurative language through songs supports their understanding of the lesson (STKIP Dampal Selatan et al., 2020).

b. Literature Review

Figurative Language

Figurative language uses figures of speech to be more effective, persuasive, and impactful. Figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, and allusions go beyond seven the literal meanings of the words to give readers new insights. On the other hand, alliterations, imageries, or onomatopoeias are figurative devices that appeal to the senses of the readers. Figurative language can appear in multiple forms with the use of different literary and rhetorical devices.

As claimed by (McKenzie, 2016), figurative language refers to language that communicates ideas beyond the literal meaning of words. It is said that figurative language is a tool that is used to communicate with other people so that, it can be understood well. Later, as stated by Keraf (Keraf, 2009), figurative language is a word or phrase that departs from every literal language which is very difficult to understand by people even students because it has differentiation from its context and reality in meaning, to know that figurative language formed based on comparison and similarity". It assumes the writer and the reader can define, figurative language or not figurative language in a way to identify the text and then define the comparison.

Based on Tarigan (Tarigan, 2013) “Figurative language is a form of language used by the writer or speaker to convey something else other than literal meaning”. It means that figurative language is like a different or unique way to convey or deliver the exact meaning to the interlocutor.

Considering the various theories earlier, the researcher concludes that figurative language is a language that is used to build images, impressions, and issues to make a vivid understanding of literature works. Therefore, the meaning of figurative language is not fully reflected in the words that compose it.

As claimed by Abrams (Syafitri & Marlinton, 2018) stated that there are some types of figurative language, as follows:

a. Personification

Personification is a kind of figurative expression in which an animate object is given a human quality. The word personification derives from Latin words: “persona” means person, actor, or mask used in the theatre, and “fix” means to make. According to Abrams (Abrams, 1999). “Personification, in which either an inanimate object or an abstract concept is spoken of as though it were endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings”.

Examples:

- “The sun smiled down on us.”
- “The story jumped off the page.”
- “The light danced on the surface of the water.”

b. Apostrophe

The apostrophe is defined as greeting a person who isn't always present or something that isn't always human as though it's far alive and can answer what is stated. Apostrophes also are a form of personification wherein non-human or animate things are immediately addressed as though they were human or animate.

For example: “This is my letter to the world” In the example above, Emily Dickinson expresses her emotion by addressing people in the world using the “world” word which does not give her a reply.

Another example is a poem by John Donne entitled Death, Be Not Proud as follows:

Death, Be Not Proud
By John Donne

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou thinkst thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

c. Simile

A simile is a kind of figurative meaning comparing two essentially unlike things. A simile expresses a direct comparison between things, which have one or more points in common and be recognized by the use of the word like and as'. As stated by Abrams (Abrams, 1999), —in a simile, a comparison between two distinctly different things is explicitly indicated by the word like' or as'.

Examples:

- My mother is as busy as a bee.
- They fought like cats and dogs.
- My dog has a bark as loud as thunder.

d. Metaphor

The word metaphor comes from Greek; it means to carry over. In a metaphor, a word or expression that in literal usage denotes one kind of thing is applied to a distinctly different kind of thing, without asserting a comparison (Abrams, 1999).

Examples:

- He's a couch potato.
- She's got a heart of gold.
- Money is the root of all evil.

e. Hyperbole

According to Abrams (Abrams, 1999), “Hyperbole is a bold overstatement or the extravagant exaggeration of fact or possibility.

Examples:

- I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
- The queue at the amusement park goes on forever.
- My backpack is as heavy as a ton of bricks.

f. Irony

According to Abrams (Abrams, 1999), in most of the modern critical uses of the term “irony”, it remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is the case or not, however, to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects. Irony is a way of speaking or writing by saying something while the meaning is another. It refers to a situation in which reality differs from appearance. It occurs in sentences or words when they imply contrast or opposite meaning.

For example, it is a fitting irony that under Richard Nixon, launder became a dirty word.

g. Paradox

A paradox is often used to make a reader think about an idea in an innovative way. As stated by Abrams (Abrams, 1999), a paradox is a statement that seems on its face to be logically contradictory or absurd, yet turns out to be interpretable in a way that makes good sense.

Examples:

- Save money by spending it.
- If I know one thing, it's that I know nothing.
- This is the beginning of the end.

h. Metonymy

Metonymy is a change of name, the use of one word for another, or the use of an idea using terms involving the association. As stated by Abrams (Abrams, 1999), “metonymy (Greek for “a change of name”) is the literal term for one thing applied to another with which it has become closely associated because of a recurrent relationship in common experience.

Examples:

“*Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.*” —William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*.

Marc Antony uses *ears* as a metonymy for attention or listening.

“*The probability would be that he and his shipmates would never again remember it, on account of all hands gently subsiding to the bottom.*” —Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*.

Hands here are used as a metonymy to represent all of the men on the ship.

“*As I drift back into sleep, I can’t help thinking that it’s a wonderful thing to be right about the world.*” —Richard Russo, *Straight Man*.

The world is metonymy for a specific fragment of the world—in this case, whatever is known to Russo’s narrator. This is also an example of synecdoche, substituting the whole for the part.

i. Symbolism

Symbolism is applied only to a word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in turn signifies something or has a range of reference, beyond itself (Abrams, 1999).

Examples:

- The boy was as brave as a lion in the jungle.
- The assistant was as busy as a bee when she was preparing the podium for the presidential address.
- The new teacher is as tall as a giraffe.

c. Method

In this research, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative method, in which the data were described systematically to obtain an accurate and factual result. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human. This research is carried out by formulating the problem, collecting data, classifying data, and analyzing data. For the data analysis, the researcher used the method from Miles and Huberman.

Object of the Research

The object of the research was the song lyrics of *Midnights* (The Til Dawn Edition) album by Taylor Swift. There are twenty-three songs on this album, but the researcher just analyzed four songs on this album due to its popularity. The songs are *The Great War*, *Bigger Than The Whole Sky*, *Paris*, and *High Infidelity*. In this research, the researcher used purposive sampling. According to Creswell (Creswell, 2012), purposive sampling means that to learn or understand the essential phenomenon, a researcher selects individuals and sites intentionally.

Instrument of the Research

This research was an investigation to find out the figurative language in the song's lyrics and examine it carefully to obtain the desired conclusion. The researcher presented step by step for analyzing the research. In this research, to make the analysis easier the researcher needs to use the source of data. The researcher focuses on analyzing the figurative language of the song lyrics of Taylor Swift's *Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)* album. All of the songs in the album were analyzed and classified based on the selected tables containing lyrics and their type of figurative language.

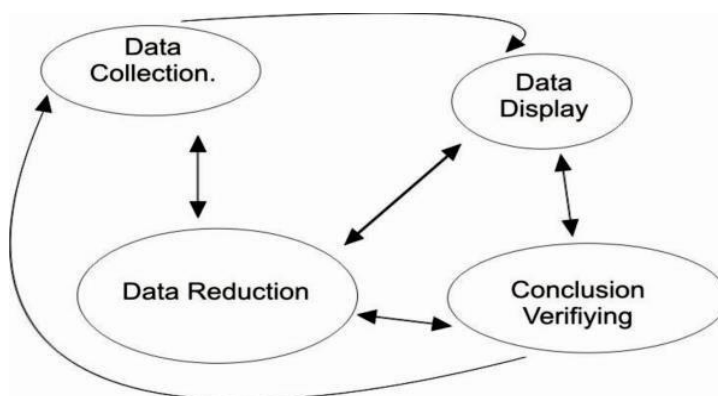
Method and Data Collection

In this research, the researcher used four songs taken from Taylor Swift's album *Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)*. The song lyrics become tools in content analysis to analyze figurative language and to describe the meaning of her songs. The steps used by the researcher in collecting the data are as follows:

1. The researcher selected 4 song lyrics from *Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)* album.
2. Reading the lyrics.
3. Identifying and analyzing the figurative language in every single lyric.
4. Organizing the data into selected classifications.

Method and Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman stated that qualitative data analysis consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles, 2014).



Picture 3.1 **Methods of Data Analysis in the Model of Miles and Huberman.**

1. Data reduction

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Miles, 2014). Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions.

In reducing the data, the researcher summarized data, took important data, made categorizations, and the data that was not important. Data reduction is part of the

analysis. With data reduction, researchers can get rid of unnecessary parts and organize data to get the conclusions that can be drawn and verified.

2. Data display

A display is a condensed, well-organized compilation of data that enables inference and action. Better data display, in their opinion, is the main strategy for valid qualitative analysis, which includes charts, graphs, networks, and matrices of all kinds. It is all intended to bring together data that has been organized in a logical and user-friendly manner.

As a result, an analyst may see what is occurring and decide whether to draw the right conclusions or keep analyzing following the presentation's recommendations, which may be helpful.

After the data is reduced, then the next step is data display. Data display can be done in the form of descriptions, charts, relations between categories, etc. In displaying the data, the writer translated the song lyrics into Indonesian first to understand more, and then the researcher categorized every sentence that contained figurative language based on the types.

3. Drawing and verifying conclusion

The last step is drawing and verifying the conclusion. A Gemini configuration consists of more than just the conclusion, according to Miles & Huberman (Miles, 2014). The analyst continues, verifying the conclusions as well. While gathering data, researchers encountered a brief conclusion. Naturally, one cannot just jump to conclusions; rather, one must examine the data again to ensure that they are accurate. For the conclusions to be genuinely accountable, they must be validated in addition to occurring throughout the data-collecting phase. In this step, the researcher concluded and verified according to the results after analyzing the song lyrics of the album "Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)".

4. Finding and Discussion

- a. The Type of Figurative Language found in "Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)" album by Taylor Swift.

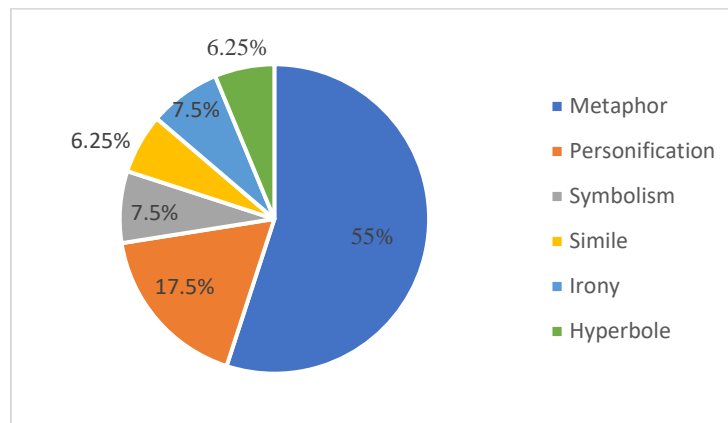
The researcher highlights the most significant findings from the research in this section. The researcher attempted to identify figurative language in the data. The analysis involved classifying every word to determine the various figurative language as follows:

Table 4.1 Type of Figurative Language used in the song lyrics album Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)

No	Type of Figurative Language	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Metaphor	44	55%
2.	Personification	14	17.5%
3.	Irony	6	7.5%

4.	Symbolism	6	7.5%
5.	Hyperbole	5	6.25%
6.	Simile	5	6.25%
Scores		80	100%

It can be stated, that the dominant type of figurative language found on the album *Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)* by Taylor Swift was Metaphor (55%). The apparent and complete analysis was explained by the picture below.



Picture 4.1 states that the dominant figurative language found was Metaphor (55%), followed by Personification (17.5%). Symbolism and Irony held the same percentage (7.5%) also Hyperbole and Simile (6.25%).

Discussion

Overall, these findings showed that all types of figurative language adopted from Abrams (Abrams, 1999) and Piscayanti (Piscayanti, 2015) were covered in the album entitled "*Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)*". It is assumed that Taylor Swift used various figurative language in writing her songs in her newest album, "*Midnights.*" It portrayed that using figurative language makes a song more aesthetic, artistic, and meaningful. It showed that the song lyrics in the "*Midnights*" album can be an effective material for students in learning the figurative language because these song lyrics had various figurative languages. It helps students enrich their vocabulary, learn about figurative language more deeply, understand it, and interpret the meaning based on the context of the figurative language found in the song lyrics. It is supported by Putri (Putri et al., 2022), who stated the importance of the song lyrics as authentic materials in figurative language in conveying the feeling and meaning that need a higher level of comprehension. Therefore, it is significant for the students to study figurative language and elaborate on its meaning through song lyrics.

5. Conclusion

In the “Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)” album by Taylor Swift, the researcher identified six different types of figures language. These include hyperbole, metaphor, simile, personification, symbolism, and irony. Through the analysis, a total of thirty-eight sentences containing figures of speech were found. Among them, five sentences featured hyperbole, forty-four sentences contained metaphor, fourteen sentences included personification, five sentences used simile, and six sentences featured symbolism.

Metaphor emerges as the most dominant figure of speech in the lyrics of Taylor Swift’s “Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)” album. Personification, on the other hand, holds the second position with fourteen instances found in the album’s songs. Irony and symbolism follow as the third most dominant, with six instances observed in Taylor Swift's songs. Lastly, simile and hyperbole are sparingly utilized in the song lyrics of the “Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition)” album.

Regarding the contribution to poetry teaching, the analysis of song lyrics can serve as an effective method for teachers, particularly when focusing on figurative language. The students have the opportunity to give their views and interpretations of lyrics when they use songs. The active participation of students and their interpretation skills are encouraged in this approach.

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