

# Figurative Language in the Song Lyrics of “*Superache*” Album by Conan Gray and Its Contribution to Poetry Teaching

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## Abstract

This research aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Conan Gray's song lyrics from the "*Superache*" album to enhance understanding of figurative language and its contribution to poetry teaching. The data included the lyrics of all songs (12 songs) from Conan Gray's "*Superache*" album. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method as well as a content analysis design to describe the kinds of figurative language and the messages to be conveyed in the song lyrics. This research is based on Leech's (2014) theory that figurative language consists of eight kinds: simile, personification, hyperbole, metaphor, irony, metonymy, litotes, and oxymoron. There are fifty-six expressions of metaphor, followed by hyperbole with ten expressions, irony with eight expressions, metonymy with two expressions, and simile, personification, litotes, and oxymoron, each with one expression. It was found that metaphor is the most frequent type of figurative language used by Conan Grey in the "*Superache*" album to convey the themes of heartbreak, self-discovery, and personal growth. The album explores the pain and longing after heartbreak while emphasizing the importance of moving on and focusing on self-development. This research demonstrates that the song lyrics in the album significantly contribute to teaching poetry, serving as a valuable resource for teachers and helping students develop their analytical skills and appreciation of literary works. The album can also be an effective tool and an excellent example for teaching poetry more engagingly.

**Keywords:** Figurative language, *Superache*, Song lyrics, Conan Gray, Teaching poetry.

## **a. Introduction**

Language is a systematic and organized way of communicating, consisting of rules (grammar) and a set of words (vocabulary). This structured system is essential for human expression, allowing people to effectively convey their ideas, emotions, and thoughts (Mahendra et al., 2023). This means that language is a fundamental tool for human interaction and understanding, and language plays an essential role in everyday communication and artistic expression. Nadeak (2023) agreed that language facilitates messages' explicit or implicit transmission. Within the realm of language, implicit communication involves conveying messages subtly or indirectly. This subtlety often makes implicit messages challenging for automated systems to detect and interpret. Figurative language, a form of implicit communication, relies on suggested meanings rather than direct statements, requiring the reader or listener to infer the intended message. Schmeisser-Nieto et al. (2022) highlight the intricacy of implicit language, noting its nuanced nature.

According to Simatupang et al. (2023), figurative language is creative linguistic style writers and speakers use to evoke emotional responses from their audience, enriching literature and other literary works. Songs are a powerful communication tool, allowing composers to share their ideas, feelings, and messages with listeners (Juniartha, 2022). It suggests that song lyrics might be regarded as literary works, similar to poetry. Much like traditional poetry, they often employ poetic devices such as metaphor, imagery, and symbolism to convey meaning and emotion. Many song lyrics are written in a lyrical and expressive style, making them poetry. An essential technique in songwriting is metaphorical language, with figurative language commonly used to convey explicit messages and enhance aesthetic appeal. Today, many songwriters and artists incorporate metaphorical language to embed hidden meanings in their songs.

The researcher has chosen this topic because a song is more than just a collection of lyrics. Many songs contain profound messages that their creators intend to convey to listeners through figurative language. Using figurative language in song lyrics can make listeners feel emotionally connected to the song, stimulating their imagination and conveying profound meanings. Ulya (2021) supports this view, noting that using figurative language in lyrics enhances the song's artistic qualities and evokes emotions in the listener.

According to Syamsia & Ismail (2021), poetry is a form of writing where ideas, feelings, and thoughts are expressed through the inventive and creative use of language. Figurative language, which uses literal and nonliteral language to convey nuanced or intricate meanings, is central to poetry. Figurative language in poetry serves multiple functions, including enhancing creativity, making the output more interesting, touching the reader's emotions, connecting with the reader, and conveying ideas purposefully (Saure & JANCINAL, 2024). Therefore, figurative language and poetry are deeply interconnected, providing readers with a rich and insightful experience.

The researcher has chosen to analyze Conan Gray's album "*Superache*" because it has not been the subject of research before. "*Superache*" is Conan Gray's second album, released on 24 June 2022. This "*Superache*" album explores themes of childhood trauma, abuse, friendship and love, drawing heavily on Gray's personal experiences. In addition, Conan Gray's songs are also very popular with teenagers because the song created by Conan Gray has beautiful lyrics and various kinds of figurative language in it, making the song very beautiful to listen to. The album has also garnered significant attention on various platforms, including TikTok. With frequent appearances on TikTok, listeners familiar with the music may become more intrigued by the meanings of the lyrics and feel a deeper connection to the songs. Many tracks feature figurative language or metaphors, adding to their appeal and resonating strongly with listeners.

Based on the statement above, the researcher has chosen song lyrics for analysis as they are regarded as a form of literary work, specifically poetry. The researcher finds that the "*Superache*" album contains much figurative language, making it very poetic when heard. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze this album further regarding its figurative language, which can be helpful in learning poetry. The research aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Conan Gray's song lyrics from the "*Superache*" album to enhance understanding of figurative language and its contribution to poetry teaching. The research will be titled "*Figurative Language in the Song Lyrics of 'Superache' Album by Conan Gray and Its Contribution to Teaching Poetry.*" This more profound understanding of the messages conveyed in the songs is expected to contribute significantly to the teaching of poetry.

## **b. Literature Review**

The researcher uses another research with the same subject but a different object related to figurative language, which uses different methods. This research used references from research articles and journals as a comparison method. The first previous studies was from Safitri et al. (2023) entitled "*Figurative Language Found on Pamungkas Album Entitled 'Birdy' To Teach Poetry.*" The researcher highlights Kennedy's theory of figurative language. Descriptive qualitative research methods were applied in this research. The lyrics to the song "Birdy" from Pamungkas' album contain 59 instances of metaphorical language. The 59 figurative languages can be further classified into personification, simile, repetition, irony, hyperbole, and metaphor. Using the song's lyrics can pique students' interest more because it provides up-to-date and modern references regarding figurative language in poetry instruction. It can also help them comprehend the subject matter and introduce new vocabulary more enjoyably. Additionally, this research contributes to poetry teaching since teachers may obtain the most recent and up-to-date references and teaching materials for their students.

The second previous study was from Alfiyani (2021) entitled "*Type And Meaning of The Figurative Language Found In Niki's Selected Songs' Lyrics.*" Using Kennedy, X.J., and Gioia, D.'s theory (2005), the types and meanings of the figurative language discovered in Niki's song lyrics were examined in this qualitative research. The research's findings identified seven different categories of metaphorical language. They also contained allegory, contradiction, repetition,

simile, apostrophe, metaphor, and hyperbole. The benefits of teaching poetry included fostering positive, focused attention, memory improvement, and imaginative enhancement.

The third previous study was from Faristian et al. (2021) entitled “*An Analysis of Figurative Language in Maroon Five’s Songs And Its Contribution to Teaching Poetry.*” This research indicates that the songs contain 14 distinct forms of figurative language, including assonance, symbolism, metaphor, repetition, consonance, simile, imagery, oxymoron, synecdoche, and contradiction. There are 77 lines in all that use figurative language. This research points out the significant benefits of teaching poetry to students, such as Maroon 5’s album as a teaching resource. It highlights the album’s use of figurative language, which enhances students’ comprehension of latent meanings and broadens their command of the English language. It also implies that using songs to teach poetry can be successful, but it stresses how crucial it is to choose songs that cover every aspect of teaching poetry. In other words, individuals do more than just receive information; they also interpret the meaning of poetry.

The varied data sources utilized in the five types of investigations described above indicate that all of the researchers have the same object: analyzing figurative language. However, the variation is in the subject of the analysis and the theory.

### **c. Method**

This research employs the descriptive qualitative research method. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research is a distinct approach to understanding methodology while studying social issues. Sugiyono (2012) states that descriptive qualitative research employs a case study method or approach. The researcher found a word, phrase, or sentence in every line of the song’s lyrics to obtain all of the information. The researcher chose the descriptive qualitative research method because it was suitable for analyzing the figurative language in the song lyrics of the “*Superache*” album by Conan Gray. The researcher uses a content analysis design to pinpoint a word, phrase, or sentence in each line of the song’s lyrics to gather information about the kinds of figurative language and their complete meanings. To analyze the kinds of figurative language in the song lyrics of the “*Superache*” album, the researcher used Leech’s (2014) theory in his book *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. Figurative languages have been divided into eight categories by Leech (2014): personification, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metonymy, and oxymoron.

To conduct this research, the researcher used the following data collection steps: first, the researcher listens carefully to the songs of the album “*Superache*” to understand the lyrics of the songs. Second, the researcher obtains the song lyrics from the “*Superache*” album which can be accessed on the website [genius.com](https://www.genius.com) then reads the song lyrics. Third, the researcher reads several previous studies, journals, articles, and books about figurative language. Fourth, the researcher identifies song lyrics to determine what type of metaphorical language is used in the song lyrics of the album “*Superache.*” Fifth, the researcher classifies the use of metaphorical language in the song lyrics after it is examined.

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzes the data with procedure such as:

1. The researcher reads each song's lyrics from the "Superache" album and listens to each official song on Conan Gray's YouTube channel.
2. The researcher identifies the words/phrases/clauses/sentences in each of the song lyrics which indicate the figurative language.
3. The researcher marks/highlights parts of the lyrics that contain figurative language and categorizes them into types of figurative language based on Leech's (2014) theory.
4. After that, the researcher classifies the type of the figurative language in the table, and gives a code for each data.
5. The researcher explains the findings, interprets the meaning of the types of figurative language used in the song lyrics of the album "Superache", and explains its contribution to poetry teaching.

#### **d. Finding and Discussion**

According to Leech (2014), as cited in *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, figurative language has eight types: simile, personification, hyperbole, metaphor, irony, metonymy, litotes, and oxymoron. In this chapter, the researcher wants to answer the problems in this research. The researcher also discusses the meaning of each figurative language in Conan Gray's "Superache" album, which has 12 songs, namely *Movies*, *People Watching*, *Disaster*, *Best Friend*, *Astronomy*, *Yours*, *Jigsaw*, *Family Line*, *Summer Child*, *Footnote*, *Memories*, and *The Exit*.

In the song "Movies," twelve kinds of figurative language are found, including one hyperbole, nine metaphors, and two instances of irony. These elements are used to express idealistic love and the disappointment that occurs when reality falls short. For example, the hyperbole in line 8, "still can't believe that this isn't a dream," highlights the singer's disbelief about the relationship's true state. The lyrics depict a relationship that fails to meet the singer's expectations, leading to denial.

In the second song, "People Watching", four kinds of figurative language are found, including one simile and three metaphors to express the poignant feeling of loneliness and the longing for meaningful connections. For example, the metaphor in line 13, "I'm only lookin' just to live through you vicariously," highlight the speaker desire to experience the kind of love and intimacy he observes in others but feels is beyond his grasp. In this metaphor in line 26, "life feels so monotone, but I still keep hoping," it highlights the internal struggle of feeling disconnected from the love that surrounds him and touches on themes of self-reflection, hope, and the eventual desire to find love.

In the third song, "Disaster," nine kinds of figurative language are found, including one hyperbole, six metaphors, and two instances of irony, to express the mental spiral one experiences when contemplating confessing their feelings for someone. The song represents the anxiety and overthinking that can occur when considering expressing romantic feelings, especially when there is a strong platonic relationship involved. For example, the metaphor in line 4, "cause the potential of us, it was keeping me up all night long," describes the uncertainty and fear of rejection that can dominate one's thoughts, leading to self-doubt. This sense

of unease is further emphasized with the hyperbole in line 6, "*this could be a disaster*," highlighting the overwhelming fear of a negative outcome.

In the fourth song, "*Best Friend*," six types of figurative language are found, including three hyperboles and two metaphors, to express the deep bond and unconditional love of a platonic friendship. For example, the metaphor in line 9, "*that's my fucking best friend, that's my fucking right hand*," and in line 13, "*that's my fucking lifeline, that's my ride or die*," describe the loyalty and mutual understanding between two people who are more than just friends but not romantically involved. The hyperbole in line 26, "*you're just as psycho as me, just as sick inside the head*," emphasizes the emotional intimacy, shared secrets, and unwavering commitment that define such a connection. This underscores their importance and the sense of loyalty and protection they offer each other.

In the fifth song, "*Astronomy*," eight types of figurative language are found, including one hyperbole, six metaphors, and one instance of irony, to express a relationship that has drifted apart, with the two people becoming like different worlds despite once being close. For example, the metaphor in line 9, "*it's astronomy, we're two worlds apart*," illustrates this distance, highlighting the pain of letting go and accepting change. It conveys the gradual decay of the relationship, the loss of familiarity, and the futility of trying to keep it alive, as represented in the metaphor in line 16, "*I thought if I wandered, I'd fall back in love*." The song also touches on the human tendency to deny the reality of the relationship's decline and emphasizes the importance of honesty in capturing the true emotions of heartbreak, as seen in the irony in line 17, "*you said distance brings fondness, but guess not with us*."

In the sixth song, "*Yours*," eight types of figurative language are found, including one hyperbole, six metaphors, and one instance of irony, to express unrequited love, where the narrator gives too much to someone who doesn't reciprocate their feelings. For example, the metaphor in line 8, "*the stars and the sun, but still, I'm not enough*," highlights the pain of giving too much to someone who doesn't notice or deserve it, showcasing the narrator's emotional vulnerability and authenticity. This song encourages listeners to acknowledge their own emotions and needs, offering empathy and understanding to those who have experienced unrequited love. The irony in line 30, "*I should've known that it was dumb love*," further emphasizes the regret and self-awareness that comes with realizing the futility of their efforts.

In the seventh song, "*Jigsaw*," ten types of figurative language are found, including one hyperbole, eight metaphors, and one instance of metonymy, to express the theme of self-alteration and the sacrifices one makes in the name of love or to fit in with others. For example, the metaphor in line 13, "*I've changed every part of me*," and the hyperbole in line 14, "*until the puzzle pieces aren't me at all*," describe the process of changing oneself to please another person, often to the point of losing one's identity. The song serves as a warning about the dangers of self-destruction in the pursuit of love, encouraging listeners to love and accept themselves as they are, rather than trying to change for others. This is further

emphasized in the metaphor in line 24, "*killing parts of myself to fit you*," illustrating the harmful consequences of altering oneself for someone else.

In the eighth song, "*Family Line*," three types of figurative language are found, including one hyperbole and two metaphors, to express generational trauma and how it is passed down through family lines. For example, the metaphor in line 11, "*scattered 'cross my family line*," reflects on the narrator's childhood and the pain he experienced due to his parents' behavior, as well as his struggle to break free from these inherited patterns. The song conveys messages about the lasting impact of childhood trauma, the importance of confronting and acknowledging past experiences, and the need to break free from the cycle of pain and hurt. This is further emphasized in the hyperbole in line 14, "*told a million to survive*," highlighting the immense effort required to overcome such deep-rooted issues.

In the ninth song, "*Summer Child*," eight types of figurative language are found, all metaphors, to express the contrast between a person's outward appearance of happiness and their inner struggles with emotional pain and vulnerability. For example, the metaphor in line 9, "*and you laugh and you dance in the wind*," and in line 11, "*but there's darkness behind those eyes*," highlight the contrast between how the character appears to others and what they are actually feeling inside. Line 9 depicts the character's outward display of joy and carefree behavior, while line 11 reveals their hidden emotional pain and struggles. These lines emphasize the importance of being genuine and taking care of one's mental and emotional health, as represented in line 14, "*you don't have to act like all you feel is mild*." Ultimately, this song urges the importance of being true to oneself and prioritizing personal well-being.

In the tenth song, "*Footnote*," four types of figurative language are found, including one personification, one metaphor, and two ironies, to express the theme of accepting one's insignificance in someone else's life. For example, the metaphor in line 12, "*so I'll just take a footnote in your life*," portrays the narrator, who has been rejected, acknowledging their role as insignificant in their crush's life. Despite this realization, they remain emotionally attached to the person, as depicted in line 25, "*you taught me a lesson, that feelings are reckless*." This song encourages listeners to come to terms with their place in someone else's life, even if it's minimal, and to derive lessons from their experiences.

In the eleventh song, "*Memories*," two types of figurative language are found, both metaphors, to express the painful process of moving on from a past relationship. For example, the metaphor in line 6, "*it's late, I hear the doorbell ringin' and it's pourin'*," poignantly conveys the bittersweet nature of memories and the struggle to let go. The song highlights the difficulty of finding closure and emphasizes the importance of moving forward despite the resurfacing of painful memories, as depicted in line 12, "*I wish that you would stay in my memories*."

In the twelfth song, "*The Exit*," six types of figurative language are found, including one hyperbole, four metaphors, and one metonymy, to express the painful process of watching a former lover move on after a relationship has ended. For example, the hyperbole in line 2, "*it's crazy how fast you tilted*," and the

metonymy in line 6, "*on your arm, a carbon copy*," illustrate how the speaker is still grappling with heartbreak and unhealed wounds, feeling betrayed and bewildered by their ex-lover's swift transition to someone new (referred to as a carbon copy). The song emphasizes the difficulty of letting go of the past and the importance of finding closure to move forward, as depicted in the metaphor in line 10, "*feels like we're buried alive*."

## Discussion

The researcher found eighty expressions of figurative language used in the song lyrics of the "*Superache*" album by Conan Gray. There are fifty-six expressions of metaphor, followed by hyperbole with ten expressions, irony with eight expressions, metonymy with two expressions, and simile, personification, litotes, and oxymoron, each with one expression. In explaining the data, here, the researcher only includes some of the best parts of each data type, which are analyzed below.

### *Simile*

***But I cut people out like tags on my clothing.*** (*People Watching*, Line:17)

This expression is a simile because it compares removing people from one's life to removing tags from clothes. It emphasizes the speaker's swift and decisive ability to remove individuals from their lives without hesitation. It uses the word "like" to compare cutting people out (humans) to cutting tags off of clothing (objects). This simile indicates a comparison between human and non-human elements.

### *Personification*

***You taught me a lesson, that feelings are reckless.*** (*Footnote*, Line: 25)

This expression exemplifies personification by attributing human qualities to the noun "feelings," explicitly describing them as "reckless," a trait typically associated with human actions or behaviors. By assigning human characteristics to non-human entities like feelings, the writer employs personification to evoke a vivid and relatable image in the reader's mind. In this instance, feelings are portrayed as having the capacity for reckless behaviors, suggesting that the speaker has learned from experience that emotions can lead to impulsive or potentially harmful actions.

### *Hyperbole*

***We've seen everything from Saturn to Mars.*** (*Astronomy*, Line: 9)

This expression is identified as hyperbole because it exaggerates the extent of the speaker's experiences by claiming to have seen everything from Saturn to Mars. This phrase represents the hugeness of the universe and expresses the wide variety of their experiences, implying that they have seen a wide range of things or traveled widely.



### ***Metaphor***

***If you are the diamond, then I am the ring.*** (*Movies*, Line 4)

This expression is a metaphor because it transfers meaning to analogize two concepts with similar qualities, such as a diamond and a ring on the finger, indicating a perfect match between the two parts. This implies that the speaker and the person spoken to have a close relationship and may be cherished and valuable. It directly compares two dissimilar things (a person and a ring/diamond) to illustrate a more profound meaning or relationship. This allows the metaphor to convey deeper meanings and evoke stronger imagery and emotions than a literal statement. According to the data, this song's lyrics consist of metaphor.

### ***Irony***

***You call me a liar, now I'm fallin' in faster.*** (*Disaster*, Line: 13)

This expression is ironic because it contrasts with the expected reaction to being accused of lying. Instead of distancing themselves, the speaker responds by falling deeper, possibly in love, highlighting an unexpected and paradoxical outcome. It presents a situation where the explicit statement (being called a liar leading to a negative outcome) contrasts with the intended meaning or the actual consequence, creating a disconnect that requires interpretation beyond the literal words spoken.

### ***Metonymy***

***On your arm, a carbon copy.*** (*The Exit*, Line: 6)

This phrase employs metonymy by using "carbon copy" to indirectly refer to a person who closely resembles another, suggesting a strong similarity between them. The implication is that the person with the speaker strongly resembles someone from the past, likely a previous partner, thereby highlighting their striking similarity. By invoking "carbon copy," traditionally used for an exact duplicate of a document, the phrase vividly illustrates how one person mirrors another in appearance or perhaps in demeanor, emphasizing the close association and resemblance between the two individuals. It substitutes the name of the concept of duplication ("carbon copy") to indirectly refer to a person who closely resembles another, illustrating the figure of speech where one term is used for something closely associated with it.

### ***Litotes***

***The only mistake that we didn't make was run.*** (*Astronomy*, Line: 18)

This litotes means that running was the correct action to take. By stating that not running was the only mistake they didn't make, it implies that running was the one thing they did right. It emphasizes the correctness of running through an understated, negative construction. It employs understatement and negation to convey that running was actually the correct decision or action, contrary to what might initially be inferred from the statement. According to the data, this song's lyrics consist of litotes.

### ***Oxymoron***

***That's my fucking hate you, but you know that that's a damn lie.*** (*Best Friend*, Line: 8)

This phrase is identified as an oxymoron because it combines opposing concepts, "hate you" and "damn lie," within one sentence. "Damn lie" implies dishonesty,

while “hate you” expresses intense dislike. This contrast adds tension and highlights the complexity of the speaker’s emotions. It combines two seemingly contradictory terms: “hate” and “love.” This creates a paradoxical statement that is both contradictory and thought-provoking, which is a hallmark of oxymorons. According to the data, this song’s lyrics consist of oxymoron.

### ***The Contribution of this Research in Teaching Poetry***

In the 2013 curriculum, poetry is taught to second-year students of Senior High School who choose English as their elective subject in specialization classes. Teaching English, especially poetry, to high school students is crucial because it equips them with essential skills and perspectives that extend beyond the classroom, giving them the courage to navigate the world's complexities with insight, empathy, and creativity. To enhance the learning experience, teachers should provide students with varied materials, incorporating traditional poems from the internet, textbooks, or classic literature and poetry from song lyrics.

The use of lyrics from Conan Gray's "*Superache*" provides concrete examples of figurative language and offers relevant, engaging material for students. This approach helps students more easily understand and appreciate the beauty of poetic language. Figurative language in songs, such as "my ride or die," "the stars and the sun," "dance in the wind," "carbon copy," and "matching wounds," can enrich students' knowledge of language styles. Students can use these lyrics to create sentences with appropriate figurative language, making learning more interactive and enjoyable. This study demonstrates that the song lyrics in Conan Gray's "*Superache*" album significantly contribute to teaching poetry, serving as a valuable resource for teachers and helping students develop their analytical skills and appreciation of literary works.

### **e. Conclusion**

After analyzed the song lyrics, the researcher found eighty expressions of figurative language used in the song lyrics of the “*Superache*” album by Conan Gray. There are fifty-six expressions of metaphor, followed by hyperbole with ten expressions, irony with eight expressions, metonymy with two expressions, and simile, personification, litotes, and oxymoron, each with one expression. So, from this analysis, metaphors were primarily found in the song lyrics of the “*Superache*” album by Conan Gray.

This research also contains various meanings according to eighty figurative languages in the song lyrics of the “*Superache*” album by Conan Gray that will be useful for the reader who finds difficulty when analysing the kinds of figurative language and the meaning. It explores the pain and longing following heartbreak while stressing the importance of moving forward and focusing on self-improvement. It portrays the healing process after heartbreak and underscores the importance of acceptance. This research demonstrates that song lyrics from Conan Gray’s “*Superache*” album significantly enrich poetry teaching, serving as a valuable resource for educators. By integrating these lyrics into their lessons, teachers can enhance students’ analytical skills and deepen their appreciation of literary works, making the study of poetry both meaningful and inspiring.

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