

AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE SONG LYRICS BY TAYLOR SWIFT “BLANK SPACE”Elisa Betty Manullang¹, Rizqi Fadhilah²^{1,2}Universitas Negeri Medanelisamanullang@unimed.ac.id¹, fhsimbolon@gmail.com²**ABSTRAK**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis bahasa kiasan yang digunakan dalam lirik lagu Taylor Swift “Blank Space” dan jenis bahasa kiasan yang dominan ditemukan dalam lirik lagu tersebut. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori Perrine. Peneliti menemukan 8 jenis bahasa kiasan yang digunakan dalam lirik lagu Taylor Swift seperti hiperbola, ironi, metafora, personifikasi, simile, imaji, simbolisme, dan penjajaran. Data dikumpulkan dengan membaca lirik lagu “Blank Space” milik Taylor Swift. Terdapat 4 hiperbola, 1 ironi, 7 metafora, 2 personifikasi, 1 simile, 5 imaji, 1 simbolisme, dan 2 jukstaposisi. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa jenis bahasa kiasan yang paling dominan adalah metafora dengan persentase sebesar 30,43%. Disusul citra dengan persentase 21,74%. Kemudian disusul hiperbola dengan persentase 17,39%, penjajaran, dan personifikasi dengan persentase 8,70%. Kemudian disusul simile, ironi, dan simbolisme dengan proporsi sebesar 4,35%.

Kata Kunci: Semantik, Bahasa Kiasan, Lagu, Lirik.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to identify the types of figurative language used in the lyric of Taylor Swift song “Blank Space” and the dominant types of figurative language found in the lyric of the song. The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method. This research used the theory of Perrine. The researcher found 8 types of figurative language used in Taylor Swift’s song lyrics such as hyperbole, irony, metaphor, personification, simile, imagery, symbolism, and juxtaposition. The data were collected by reading the lyrics of Taylor Swift’s song “Blank Space”. There were 4 of hyperbole, 1 of Irony, 7 of metaphor, 2 of personification, 1 of simile, 5 of imagery, 1 of symbolism, and 2 of juxtaposition. This study found that the most dominant type of figurative language was metaphor with the percentage of 30.43%. It was followed by imagery with the percentage of 21.74%. Then, it was followed by hyperbole with a percentage of 17.39 %, juxtaposition and personification with a percentage of 8.70%. And also, it was followed by simile, irony, and symbolism with the proportion of 4.35%.

Keywords: Semantics, Figurative Language, Song, Lyric.

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of communication which consists of a set of sound and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing. The ability to communicate thoughts, emotions, and opinions to others is truly a remarkable ability. Language is one of the most important things for people to communicate to one another in the world. By the language, people can communicate, interact and also can share information with each other. Harmer (2007) states that language is used widely for communication between people who do not share the same first (or even second) language. It means that language is the a crucial thing for a human being's life. It has a big role for every person in making good relationships with others.

There are many ways people can deliver their ideas to others so that people can understand and catch the meaning of that. One of the ways is by song. There are so many people who figure out their feelings through the songs. It can be feeling sad, happy, angry, etc. A song is a short piece of music, usually with words. In the song, there are many messages delivered on it. It usually contains how someone feels and the ideas of something. Song is a part of literature. Sometimes, the lyrics of the songs are not the same between what the conventionally says with what the composer intends to express. A composer usually puts the meaning implicitly, so not all people understand the actual meaning of the song. In the attempt to understand the meaning of what the composer means in the song, further knowledge is needed. The song usually consists of figurative language.

There are some studies that has been done related to the figurative language such as novel (Harya, 2016, Habibi, 2016), poem (Sofransyah, 2018, Wulandari 2015), song (Arifah, 2016., Ismail, Nuraeni, and Kareviati, 2020), and advertisement (Zakiyah, 2015., Defisyani, Hamzah, and Fitrawati, 2018.,). However, those studies focus only on the types of figurative language, the contextual meaning of the figurative language used, and how the figurative language is used for different genders. Meanwhile, certain Figurative Language also have some functions such as comparing two things (Risdianto, 2016), to hide the real meaning (Putri et al, 2016), to exaggerate the statement (Chunqi, 2014), etc.

The researcher found many types of figurative language used in Taylor Swift's song lyrics "Blank Space ". The author intends to analyze and learn about the types of figurative language used in Taylor Swift's song lyrics "Blank Space". The researcher only focused on the types of

figurative language and the predominant types of figurative language in Taylor Swift's song lyrics based on Perrine's theory.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study belongs to descriptive qualitative research that relates to the instruments used in the research. This research was conducted by using a qualitative approach because the results of the data are analyzed in descriptive phenomena such as words, phrases, and utterances. Bath (2019) said that Descriptive research is defined as a research method that describes the characteristics of the population or phenomenon that is being studied. This methodology focuses more on the "what" of the research subject rather than the "why" of the research subject. In other words, descriptive research primarily focuses on describing the nature of a demographic segment, without focusing on "why" a certain phenomenon occurs. In other words, it "describes" the subject of the research, without covering "why" it happens.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

This research analyzed the data based on the theory of Perrine (1983). The data were taken from the song lyrics by Taylor Swift "Blank Space". There are 8 types of figurative language found in this research which are hyperbole, irony, metaphor, personification, simile, imagery, symbolism, and juxtaposition. From those types of figurative language, the researcher found 4 of hyperbole, 1 of Irony, 7 of metaphor, 2 of personification, 1 of simile, 5 of imagery, 1 of symbolism, and 2 of juxtaposition

1. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is defined as a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used in the service of truth. This means that hyperbole involves deliberate exaggeration for emphasis or effect, but it is used to convey a deeper truth or to highlight certain qualities in a more impactful way. The exaggeration is not meant to be taken literally but is used to emphasize the intensity, importance, or nature of something.

"I could show you incredible things"

- **Exaggeration:** The speaker claims they can show "incredible things," which is a broad and exaggerated statement implying the possibility of extraordinary, almost unbelievable experiences.

- **Service of Truth:** The exaggeration is used to emphasize the speaker's potential to offer extraordinary and memorable experiences, conveying the excitement and allure of a new relationship.

"Got a long list of ex-lovers"

- **Exaggeration:** The phrase "long list" suggests a very high number of past relationships, likely more than is literally true.
- **Service of Truth:** This hyperbole underscores the speaker's extensive romantic history, highlighting a pattern of intense but short-lived relationships. It also sets up the context for potential issues in the new relationship.

"They'll tell you I'm insane"

- **Exaggeration:** Describing oneself as "insane" is an exaggerated way of suggesting that others view the speaker as wild, unpredictable, or excessively passionate.
- **Service of Truth:** The exaggeration serves to emphasize the speaker's intense and possibly erratic behavior in relationships, warning the listener about the dramatic nature of their romantic life.

"It'll leave you breathless"

- **Exaggeration:** The phrase "leave you breathless" exaggerates the physical effect of the relationship or experience, implying it is so overwhelming that it takes one's breath away.
- **Service of Truth:** This hyperbole highlights the intensity and impact of the experience, suggesting that it will be emotionally and physically exhilarating, leaving a lasting impression on the person involved.

2. Irony

"Boys only want love if it's torture"

Irony involves a contrast or incongruity between appearance and reality or between expectation and fulfillment. In this case:

- **Expectation:** Love is expected to be a source of happiness and comfort.
- **Reality (Implied by the Statement):** The statement implies that, paradoxically, some boys are only interested in love when it is fraught with difficulties and emotional pain.

The line "Boys only want love if it's torture" is considered ironic because it juxtaposes the conventional expectation of love (a positive, fulfilling emotion) with the contradictory condition of it being "torture" (a negative, painful experience). This use of irony highlights the speaker's cynical or jaded view of romantic relationships, suggesting that some boys find love appealing only when it involves drama and suffering.

3. Metaphor

A figure of speech in which an implicit comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something in common. Unlike a simile, which uses 'like' or 'as' to make the comparison, a metaphor states that one thing is another.

"Love's a game, wanna play?"

- **Implicit Comparison:** Love is compared to a game.
- **Commonality:** Both love and games involve rules, strategies, and risks. The metaphor suggests that love, like a game, can be playful and competitive, and involves winners and losers.

"I can read you like a magazine"

- **Implicit Comparison:** Understanding someone is compared to reading a magazine.
- **Commonality:** Both reading a magazine and understanding a person involve deciphering and interpreting information. The metaphor suggests that the speaker finds the person easy to understand, as one would find a magazine easy to read.

"I'm a nightmare dressed like a daydream"

- **Implicit Comparison:** The speaker is compared to a nightmare and a daydream.
- **Commonality:** Nightmares and daydreams are both forms of dreams but have opposite connotations. The metaphor highlights the contrast between the speaker's outward appearance (pleasant like a daydream) and their true nature (troublesome like a nightmare).

"I've got a blank space, baby / And I'll write your name"

- **Implicit Comparison:** The blank space is compared to an opportunity for a new romantic relationship.

- **Commonality:** Both a blank space and a new relationship offer a fresh start, a chance to begin anew. The metaphor suggests readiness for a new relationship and the possibility of filling that space with a new partner's name.

"Rose garden filled with thorns"

- **Implicit Comparison:** A beautiful rose garden is compared to a situation that is attractive but has hidden dangers (thorns).
- **Commonality:** Both a rose garden and a complex situation can appear beautiful but have underlying pain or challenges. The metaphor suggests that something seemingly lovely is fraught with difficulties.

"I can make the bad guys good for a weekend"

- **Implicit Comparison:** The transformation of bad guys to good is likened to a temporary change.
- **Commonality:** Both the metaphorical transformation and a weekend are temporary. The metaphor suggests the speaker has a short-term, transformative influence on people, making them behave well briefly.

"But you'll come back each time you leave"

- **Implicit Comparison:** This is not a metaphor but rather a straightforward statement of cyclical behavior.
- **Commonality:** While this line does not fit the definition of a metaphor according to Perrine, it indicates a recurring pattern without directly comparing two unlike things.

4. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which human attributes are given to an animal, an object, or a concept

"Rumors fly"

- **Human Attribute:** The ability to fly.
- **Non-Human Concept:** Rumors.
- **Explanation:** By saying "rumors fly," the line attributes the human-like ability of flying to rumors. Rumors do not literally fly; instead, this personification suggests that rumors spread quickly and widely, just as something that flies can move rapidly

through the air. The human action of flying is used to describe the speed and ease with which rumors disseminate.

"I get drunk on jealousy"

- **Human Attribute:** The state of being drunk.
- **Non-Human Concept:** Jealousy.
- **Explanation:** By saying "I get drunk on jealousy," the line attributes the human condition of drunkenness to the emotion of jealousy. This suggests that the speaker is overwhelmed or consumed by jealousy in a manner similar to how a person might be affected by alcohol. The human experience of drunkenness is used to describe the overpowering and impairing effect jealousy has on the speaker.

5. Simile

Simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using "like" or "as" to indicate the comparison.

"You look like my next mistake"

- **Comparison Indicator:** The word "like" is used to explicitly indicate a comparison.
- **Comparison:** The speaker compares the appearance of the person they are addressing to their perception of them as their "next mistake."
- **Explanation:** By using "like," the speaker is directly making a comparison between the person's appearance and the concept of a mistake. This comparison highlights the speaker's anticipation or belief that getting involved with this person will lead to a negative outcome, similar to past mistakes they have made. The simile serves to emphasize the speaker's apprehension or skepticism about the potential relationship, likening the person's appearance to a warning sign of future problems or regrets.

6. Imagery

Imagery refers to the use of vivid language that appeals to the senses, creating mental pictures for the reader

"Cherry lips, crystal skies"

- **Visual Imagery:** The phrase paints a clear picture of cherry-colored lips and clear, sparkling skies.

- **Explanation:** This line appeals to the sense of sight, evoking a vivid image of vivid red lips and a beautiful, pristine sky. The contrast between the red lips and the crystal-clear skies enhances the visual impact of the imagery.

"Screaming, crying, perfect storms"

- **Auditory and Visual Imagery:** The words "screaming" and "crying" evoke sounds, while "perfect storms" conjures up images.
- **Explanation:** This line appeals to both the sense of hearing and sight. The words "screaming" and "crying" create auditory imagery, suggesting intense emotional turmoil, while "perfect storms" creates visual imagery, evoking the image of powerful and destructive weather phenomena.

"Rose garden filled with thorns"

- **Visual Imagery:** The phrase conjures a mental image of a garden filled with roses and thorns.
- **Explanation:** This line appeals to the sense of sight, creating a vivid image of a beautiful rose garden contrasted with the presence of thorns. The imagery suggests that beauty and danger can coexist, adding depth and complexity to the scene.

"Oh, my God, look at that face"

- **Visual and Emotional Imagery:** The exclamation and description evoke both a visual image and an emotional response.
- **Explanation:** This line appeals to the sense of sight, as the speaker reacts to seeing someone's face. Additionally, the exclamation "Oh, my God" adds an emotional layer to the imagery, conveying surprise or awe at the sight of the face.

"New money, suit and tie"

- **Visual Imagery:** The phrase conjures a mental image of someone dressed in new, expensive clothing.
- **Explanation:** This line appeals to the sense of sight, creating an image of someone wearing a new suit and tie, which suggests wealth and sophistication. The imagery evokes the idea of someone who is well-dressed and possibly affluent.

7. Symbolism

Symbolism involves using objects, characters, settings, or other elements in a literary work to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

"Blank space"

- **Symbolic Representation:** The term "blank space" represents something more than its literal meaning.
- **Abstract Concept:** A "blank space" typically refers to an empty or unfilled area.
- **Symbolism Explanation:** In this context, the "blank space" symbolizes an opportunity or a fresh start. It represents the potential for something new, a clean slate upon which something can be created or written. The blank space may symbolize the absence of past experiences or preconceived notions, offering the possibility for a new beginning or a fresh perspective. It suggests openness to new possibilities and the potential for transformation or renewal.

8. Juxtaposition

Juxtaposition involves placing contrasting elements side by side to highlight their differences or create tension.

"Magic, madness, heaven, sin"

- **Juxtaposition:** This line juxtaposes contrasting concepts, such as "magic" and "heaven" with "madness" and "sin."
- **Explanation:** By presenting these contrasting ideas in close proximity, the line emphasizes the spectrum of human experiences and emotions. It contrasts positive, uplifting concepts like "magic" and "heaven" with darker, negative concepts like "madness" and "sin," highlighting the complexity and dual nature of life and human nature.

"So it's gonna be forever / Or it's gonna go down in flames"

- **Juxtaposition:** The contrast between the ideas of lasting forever and ending dramatically in flames represents a juxtaposition.
- **Explanation:** This line juxtaposes the idea of eternal longevity ("forever") with the possibility of a catastrophic, fiery end ("go down in flames"). The proximity of these contrasting possibilities creates tension and drama in the lyric, emphasizing the extreme and contrasting outcomes that the relationship might face. It highlights the

uncertainty and volatility inherent in relationships, where the potential for lasting love coexists with the risk of sudden, destructive failure

Finding of the research

After analyzing collected data, the researchers found types of figurative language as follows:

Table 1 Types of figurative in Taylor Swift's song lyric

No	Types of figurative language	Frequency	Percentage
1	Hyperbole	4	17.39%
2	Irony	1	4.35%
3	Metaphor	7	30.43%
4	Personification	2	8.70%
5	Simile	1	4.35%
6	Imagery	5	21.74%
7	Symbolism	1	4.35%
8	Juxtaposition	2	8.70%
	Total	23	100.00%

From the table above, there are 8 types of figurative language found in the song lyrics by Taylor Swift "Blank Space". The researcher found metaphor becomes the dominant types of figurative language that appear in the song lyric by Taylor Swift "Blank Space". After that, there were 5 data from imagery which became the second dominant types of figurative language after metaphor. Then, personification and juxtaposition have the same frequency in this song. The types of simile, irony and symbolism have the same frequency in this song. From the datum, in this analysis metaphor is the dominant type and the irony, simile, and symbolism are the less frequent that appears in the lyric by Taylor Swift song "Blank Space".

Discussion

From the analysis, the researcher compares the study with the previous study. The writer compares this study with the similar research but different object. There are some previous study that concern in this topic:

The research has several similarities and differences with the research by Arifah (2016). This research is almost the same because it also discusses about the types of figurative

language. Arifah (2016) has discussed about 5 songs meanwhile the researcher discussed about 13 songs in this research. There are several types of figurative language used which is the same in each study. Such as hyperbole, irony, metaphor, metonymy, simile, personification, etc. Another figurative language that Arifah (2016) analyzed are symbol and synecdoche. And hyperbole is also the dominant type found in the Five Jhon Legend's song.

Then, Heny Listiani (2015) analyzed about *"An Analysis of Figurative Language Found on the Song Lyric by Taylor Swift's 'Speak Now' Album"*. In this research, she identified the types of figurative language based on X.J. Kennedy theory. She also found the dominant types of figurative language used in the song lyric by Taylor Swift's "Speak Now" album is hyperbole and the least figurative language used are synecdoche and oxymoron.

In this current research also describes the same way to identify the types of figurative language in lyric song, but the object and the theory is not the same as the previous study listed above. The researcher identified the types of figurative language in Saif Adam's song lyric from the album "Heart" which consists of 13 songs.

The researcher found 8 types of figurative language in the song "Blank Space" by Taylor Swift, there were hyperbole, irony, metaphor, personification, simile, imagery, symbolism, and juxtaposition. And from those types, the researcher found 4 of hyperbole, 1 of irony, 7 of metaphor, 2 of personification, 1 of simile, 5 of imagery, 1 of symbolism, and 2 of juxtaposition.

This research analyzed the types of figurative language and the dominant type that appear in the song lyric by Taylor Swift "Blank Space". The purpose of the use of figurative language in the lyrics is to help the reader of the lyric even the listener of the song understood about the meaning of each lyric. Song is one of the media to learn about figurative language because there are many songs that use figurative language to make the song more interesting and alive. And it also can help the reader or the listener to determine the actual meaning the lyric of the song. There are still many aspects that can be studied about the types of figurative language. It is suggested the other researchers can continue about this topic. The other researchers can conduct the similar topic or expand more about literary analysis with other linguistic features and aspects.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

After analyzing the data which have been discussed in previous chapter, the researcher collected the song lyrics by Taylor Swift "Blank Space" and found 8 types of figurative

language that consist of hyperbole, irony, metaphor, personification, simile, imagery, symbolism, and juxtaposition. The researcher found 4 of hyperbole, 1 of irony, 7 of metaphor, 2 of personification, 1 of simile, 5 of imagery, 1 of symbolism, and 2 of juxtaposition. These types are used by the songwriter in order to make each song have a deep meaning and look alive. So, using the figurative language can lead the reader to the meaning of the lyrics.

Metaphor is the dominant type that is found in the song lyrics by Taylor Swift. The use of metaphor is to make the lyrics of a song become more colorful because it describes an object or action in a way that is not literally true, but helps to explain an idea or make a comparison. Metaphor compares two things or objects not because they actually are the same, but for the sake of comparison or symbolism. And metaphor also compares one thing to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar. It can be concluded that in analyzing lyrics besides find figurative language in lyrics, we can also understand the meaning of song that contain figurative language and the message of the song.

REFERENCES

- Arifah, K. 2016. Figurative Language Analysis in Five John Legend's Song, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang.
- Chunqi, L (2014). Two Immigrant Humor Styles of Stand-Up Comedy (A Linguistic Perspective). *International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Intercultural Cimmunication (ICELAIC 2014)*, 176 – 279. Hebei Vocational College of Foreign Languages, Qinhandao China: Atlantis Press.
- Defisyani, Hamzah, Fitrawati. (2018). The use of Figurative Language Found in Product Advertisement for Different Genre. *E-Journal of English Language & Literature*. 7 (1) : 253
- Habibie, M. S. (2016). An Analysis of Figurative Language in Edensor Novel by Andrea Hirata. *Paper. English Education Department, Teacher Training and Education Faculty State, Institute For Islamic Studies*.
- Harmer, Jeremy. (2006). *The Practice of English Language Teaching (3rd Ed)*. New York: Longman Publishing.
- Dinillah Harya, Trisna. (2016). *An Analysis of Figurative Language used in Coelho's Novel Entitled "Alchemist"*. IAIN Jurai Siwo Metro Lampung
- Ismail, Nuraeni, Kareviati. (2020). *The Analysis of Figurative Language used in The Lyric of Awaken by Maher Zein*. Professional Journal of English Education

- Listiani, Heni. (2015). *An Analysis of Figurative Language Found on the Song Lyric by Taylor Swift's "Speak Now" Album*. State Institute for Islamic Studies Salatiga
- McArthur, Tom. (1992). *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Perrine, L. (1983). *Literature: Structure, Sounds, and Sense (4th ed)*. London: Hourcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc
- Putri, M. W., Oktoma, E & Nursyamsu, R. (2016). Figurative Language in English Stand-Up Comedy. *English Review, Journal of English Education*, Vol. 5(1), 115-130
- Risdianto, F. (2016). *The Use of Metaphor in Barack Obama's Inauguration Speech, Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*. Vol. 10(2), 161-172.
- Sofransyah. (2018). *Analysis of figurative Language Used in Percy Bysshe Shelley's Poem*. Mataram University
- Wulandari, Agustin Evin. (2015). *Figurative Language Used in Robert Frost's Selected Poem*. Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang.