



An Analysis of Figurative Language Used in Philip David Wickham's Songs

Chaira Nurul Atiya^{1*}, I Gde Agoes Caskara Surya Putra²

^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Mahasaraswati Denpasar University, Kota Denpasar, Bali 80233, Indonesia

E-mail: ¹stevanyleo588@gmail.com, ²ajuscaskara@unmas.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 23 Nov 2022 Accepted: 08 Jan 2023 Published: 08 April 2023	The use of figurative language in Philip David Wickham's songs can make the words sound lovely and intriguing. The aims of this research are to identify different kinds of figurative language and their interpretations in four songs from Philip David Wickham's album "The Ascension". The study employs a qualitative approach in order to provide a thorough description of the problems identified. The observation method was used in collecting the data. The researchers discovered sixteen pieces of data that contain figurative language in Philip David Wickham's songs based on the discussion and analysis data, and there are four kinds of figurative language found in the song lyrics, such as simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. Hyperbole is the most common form of figurative language in Philip David Wickham's songs. The types of meaning used in song lyrics containing figurative language are connotative and conceptual meanings. These two types of meaning are the most widely used in interpreting the meaning of Philip David Wickham's song lyrics.
Keywords: Figurative language, Song Lyrics, Philip David Wickham	Doi: https://doi.org/10.59011/austronesian.2.1.2023.1-8

1. Introduction

Language as a communication tool has an essential role in human interaction. Humans can use language to convey new views, ideas, desires, feelings, and experiences to others. The use of language is related to the practice of language knowledge. The more comprehensive the knowledge of the language used in communication, the greater the ability of skills in giving meaning to a word or sentence. Semantics is the study of language's meaning. According to Kreidler (1998:3),

*Corresponding Author
E-mail: stevanyleo588@gmail.com
Copyright © 2024 The Author(s)
CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 License

semantics is the systematic study of the meaning and the manner in which language structures and communicates meaning. Every phrase said by a person has more than one meaning; it may have both a literal and nonliteral meaning. In contrast to non-literal meaning, which refers to a distinct interpretation of the term, literal meaning refers to the true meaning. Furthermore, studying semantics is very useful, especially for students, semantics plays an important role in communication because the language used in communication is to convey meaning. One can acquire semantic knowledge in daily life through dialog with others or in literary works, and most individuals use figurative language, which usually has a different meaning from the literal meaning, when talking with others or when creating a literary work.

Peter (2002) defines figurative language as a language with a metaphorical meaning that supports a person's desire to communicate to touch emotions, in convincing someone that what he is saying is genuine. Sometimes people use figurative language in everyday conversation to express their feelings or ideas by incorporating other meanings into their sentences, and it becomes the art of language itself. Besides being used in everyday conversation, figurative language is also used in various literary works that are commonly enjoyed today, such as poetry, novels, films, dramas, biographies, diaries, advertisements, and others because literary works are a medium or means to express emotions, feelings, even opinions that want to be used to express imagination for writers and cannot be separated from the use of beautiful words in it.

Figurative language is very important in the art of language itself to make language sound beautiful and interesting, because without figurative language, language will be very flat and boring. The song is also a form of literary work in which the words or lyrics of a song have a function to express one's thoughts and feelings. Songs are now a common way for people to communicate with one another. Through song lyrics, a person can convey his voice to many people, so that people can know his feelings. Currently, there are many songs that can express our feelings, such as songs with the themes of religion, love, social, with various figurative language in the lyrics. In this study, researchers chose a religious-themed song where a lot of hidden meanings were found in religious-themed songs and one example of lyrics was found such as "I'll rise up like the eagle". The song's lyrics are classified as similes. The word "like" demonstrates the use of figurative language since it compares two things in this phrase. The writer compared "I" and "Eagle" despite the fact that it is not feasible for people to rise up like an eagle. This research will examine the figurative language used in the songs of Philip David Wickham's, a Christian musician who creates songs with religious themes.

There are several reasons why researchers chose figurative language for analysis in song lyrics, especially in Philip David Wickham's songs. Firstly, the lyrics of Philip David Wickham's songs contain a lot of figurative language, as found in several of his songs, such as Holy Light, Carry My Soul and When My Heart Is Torn Asunder in the album The Ascension and it is important for listeners to understand the true meaning of the lyrics being sung, secondly, this study examines the figurative language contained in

Philip David Wickham's song with a religious theme, where the song created contains positive values accompanied by figurative language in the lyrics of the song, therefore this study is interested in analyzing figurative language in song lyrics. The figurative language itself plays an important role in song lyrics written by songwriters, which will make people wonder and be interested in the song. It is important for us, as students as well as music lovers, to understand the literal meaning of the figurative language contained in the lyrics of the song, and to know the meaning of the song.

Based on the explanation above, this current study is focused on analyzing the types of figurative language used in Philip David Wickham's song lyrics and finding out the meaning of the figurative language used in Philip David Wickham's song lyrics. To address these issues, the researcher employs Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) theory to identify the types of figurative language, using the theory proposed by Leech (1981) to analyze the meaning of Figurative Language used in Philip David Wickham's Selected Song Lyrics.

2. Literature Review

There are some studies that have been done by previous researchers. The first review related to this research by Krisnawati (2021) in her paper entitled "Types of Figurative Language in Miley Cyrus's Songs". She is focused on the types of figurative language in the song lyrics of Miley Cyrus's "Breakout" album. Secondly, Rohmah (2020), a student of English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training State Institute of Islamic Studies Ponorogo investigated the types of figurative language and values contained in the songs of Haris Jung's album "Salam". Then, research was conducted by Frida (2022). In her research, she is focused on identifying the types of metaphors and analyzing the metaphor's meaning in the song lyrics of the "Folklore" album by Taylor Swift. A further review related to this research by Astina (2021). She discusses the hyperbole figures of speech in the lyrics of Chainsmokers songs, with the goal of determining how many hyperbole figures of speech are used and the meaning of hyperbole language in the song.

The majority of the data analysis comes from one of the literary works, namely songs. The present study, which similarly employs songs as data sources, is concerned with identifying different forms of figurative language and establishing the meaning of song lyrics that contain figurative language. However, the difference between prior research may be seen in the song lyrics of each data source presented by the performer in each song, as well as the song's concept. Furthermore, the data source for this study concentrates on the genre of spiritual music or songs with religious values.

3. Method

The qualitative descriptive method was applied in analyzing the data in this study. Qualitative research is a research method that is descriptive in nature, uses analysis, refers to data, utilizes existing theories as supporting material, and produces a theory. The meaning of "descriptive qualitative method" is an analysis technique that describes

data in detail that has been collected to get a general conclusion. The sources of data in this study are taken from Philip David Wickham's Selected Song Lyrics. It was taken from the album entitled "The Ascension," which was released on September 24, 2013, and which consists of eleven songs; in this study, the researchers only analyzed four songs, such as "The Ascension", "Holy Light", "Carry My Soul", and "When My Heart Is Torn Asunder". The use of song lyrics from the album *The Ascension* as a source of research data is because it is one of the most famous albums among Christian youth and contains figurative language in the lyrics.

Newspapers, articles, letters, notes, books, and materials stored in libraries can be used to collect the data, according to Creswell (2012). In this research, the researcher examines study documents, conducts library research, and does some internet browsing. There are the following steps that are performed to acquire the data: First, the researcher intently listens to four songs from Philip David Wickham's album *The Ascension*. Second, after listening to the songs, the researcher closely reads the lyrics, understanding all the words, phrases, and sentences, and writes down the data, then identifies the data based on the types of figurative language, which concentrate on the literal and non-literal meaning of figurative language, with the goal of making data classification simpler. Lastly, classifying the data into kinds of figurative language. In addition, after getting the data, researchers analyzed it. This study's theory is divided into two parts: the first is to determine the types of figurative language using Knickerbocker and Reninger's (1963) theory, and the second is to analyze the meaning of figurative language as suggested by Leech (1981). Following that, the data was provided in formal and informal ways.

4. Result and Discussion

This section showed the types of figurative language that were found in the song lyrics by Philip David Whickham from the album "The Ascension". The researcher used the following formula to calculate the percentage of each figurative language found in Philip David Whickham's song lyrics.

$$P = \frac{TFL}{Total} \times 100\%$$

Note:

P : The percentage type of figurative language

TFL : The occurrence type of figurative language

Total : Percentage of the occurrence of figurative language

Table 1. The Calculation of the Types of Figurative Language Used in the Philip David Wickham’s Selected Song Lyrics

No	Types of Figurative Language	Occurrence	Percentage
1	Simile	5	31,25%
2	Metaphor	2	12,5%
3	Personification	2	12,5%
4	Hyperbole	7	43,75%
Total		16	100%

The table above explained the classification of figurative language used in Philip David Wickham’s Selected Song Lyrics. The types of figurative language found are five similes (31,25%), two metaphors (12,5%), two personifications (12,5%), and seven hyperboles (43,75%). They are applied in that songs as the messages of the text in the songs in order to create a beautiful meaning and creative literature so the reader will be interested to listen to the song. Furthermore, the analysis of figurative language types and their meanings are explained below:

Simile

Simile is stated of comparison, introduced by the word “like” or “as”. For example: “My Love is a Red Rose”. It is called simile because the word “like” in the sentence above there are two words which are expressed “my love” and “red rose”. The comparison is obvious and it is a common method to describe the beauty of the girl by comparing her with red rose. Red rose is usually identical with beautiful things (Knickerbocker and Reninger 1963:367).

Data 1 : I want to feel Your love like sunshine
Source : Philip David Wickham’s song, Carry My Soul, Line 3

This lyric is categorized into simile because it compares two different things using word like. The things that are compared in this lyric are “Your Love” and “sunshine”, both of this word have different conceptual meanings. The sentence “I want to feel Your Love” is a statement that shows the author wants to feel Love from God. And the author uses the word “sunshine” for expressed something that he could not tell with a word. And scientifically “sunshine” means the light that comes from the sun or the radiation that the sun gives off, figuratively the word is also used for cheerfulness, warmth, and happiness however from the context “sunshine” in the lyric means the warm love of God. In this case, the connotative meaning is expressed in the lyric. According to Leech (1981), connotative meaning is the communicative value and expression by virtue of what it refers to, the meaning that does not directly indicate it, the object, or the object it refers to. The author tries to tell that he wanted to feel the warm love of God like sunshine.

Metaphor

Metaphor has been identified as a powerful communicative device in a broad variety of contexts (Di Biase-Dyson & Egg, 2020). Metaphor is a figure of speech in which an implied comparison between two unlike things that actually have something in common, with “like” or “as” omitted (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1963:367). For example, “Life’s but a walking shadow” instead of saying life is like make a walking shadow. Both have different meaning in which life is the grace of God and shadow is a body’s reflection and its color is black. There are two comparison words to express something. So, the writer wants to describe the life through this sentence if the world is surrounded by darkness, which representative of sadness.

Data 2 : Jesus Christ is King
Source : Philip David Wickham’s song, Holy Light, Line 21

This data is categorized as a metaphor because the songwriter compares two things such as “Jesus Christ” and “King”, by using to be. In this sentence, the songwriter compares God as Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the central figure and founder of Christianity. And the word “king” is the highest ruler in a kingdom, and his power is usually inherited. The term “King” can also refer to the head of a specific region, the person who becomes the head of a nation’s government, and others. Furthermore, the word “king” metaphor for God also implies power. Authority cannot be exercised without some form of power. God’s power as king can be generally defined as the way in which God exercises God’s authority.

Based on the theory of Leech (1981) this data belongs to Conceptual meaning, sometimes called “denotative” or “cognitive” meaning. It is widely assumed to be central factor in linguistics and communication. Conceptual meaning is related to logical, cognitive, or denotative content (Leech, 1981: 9). The song lyrics describe Jesus Christ is King. Denotatively Jesus Christ is like a King above all kings for Christians.

Personification

Personification is giving human characteristics to an object, animal, or abstract idea. Personification is a metaphor in the sense that there is an implied comparison between a non-human thing and a human being (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1963: 367). For Example: “if the trees can cry, I will not crying alone here “. This sentence is categorized as a personification because it gives a human characteristic to the trees. As we know trees cannot cry as a human.

Data 3 : This is the start of something amazing **A moment when heaven touches earth**
Here in our hearts, Lord we are waiting
Source : Philip David Wickham’s song, The Ascension, Line 2

This data is categorized as personification because this sentence is giving characteristics of a human being with non-human beings. The personification concept that can be identified in this lyric is shown by a piece of lyric “A moment when heaven touches earth”. In this case, the word “touches” is like an activity usually used by humans, which makes the sentence categorized into personification.

The word “Heaven is a place of “no mores”. There will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more sorrow (Revelation 21:4). The word “heaven” is used by biblical writers to refer to the holy place where God currently resides. The word “Earth” is the planet where humans live. This lyric is categorized as a conceptual meaning sometimes called “denotative” or “cognitive” meaning. It is widely assumed to be a central factor in linguistics and communication. Conceptual meaning is related to logical, cognitive, or denotative content (Leech, 1981: 9). In the lyrics, the songwriter describes heaven touches earth. Although the reality is that heaven cannot touch the earth. In the Lyrics “A moment when heaven touches earth” the song writer tried to convey what he wants by giving praise like he really wants to meet God. Where the meaning of heaven is where God lives and earth, where humans live.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of an exaggeration used for special effect. For example: “my God strike me down if I tell you lies”. The sentence “my God strike me down if I tell you lies”, has hyperbolic meaning. It has hyperbole because how God will strike people down just because they lie to someone else. The meaning of that sentence is that he will not tell any lies.

Data 4 : Start a fire that will never die
Source : Philip David Wickham’s song, Holy Light, Line 16

This data is classified as hyperbole because the sentence gives an exaggerated statement. This data is classified as hyperbole because the lyric “Start a fire that will never die”. As we know Fire is naturally combustive and Fire can also be extinguished. Even though Fire has many positive and negative effects. The negative effect of fire is destructive; destroys valuables and property, while the positive effect of fire is to help in the production chain of production, in cooking etc.

This lyric is categorized as a connotative meaning because its meaning is outside the literal meaning. The word “fire” in this lyric means Divine Fire that is not found anywhere else, it is the Holy Pure Fire from God. This fire of the Lord cannot be extinguished by water. Not a natural fire that can be extinguished with natural extinguishers. In the lyrics of the song, the feelings of the songwriter are implied. The meaning of the lyrics is that the songwriter wants to invite people who listen to the song to praise the name of God always without stopping.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion and analytical data, the researchers found sixteen pieces of data that contain figurative language in Philip David Wickham's album entitled "The Ascension". There are four types of figurative languages, such as simile, personification, hyperbole, and metaphor, found in Philip David Wickham's songs and the most dominant figurative language in Philip David Wickham's songs is hyperbole, where hyperbole refers to the words used in songs that are exaggerated from their original meaning compared to an explicit word. The types of meaning in the data consist of connotative and conceptual meaning; the use of types of meaning helps one know and understand the hidden meaning in a song and ensures that there is no misunderstanding in interpreting its meaning.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors' contribution

The author made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

References

- Astina, R., Juniarta, I. W., & Ariyaningsih, N. N. D. (2021). An Analysis of Hyperbole in Album "The Chainsmoker. *Elysian Journal: English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 1(1), 11-20.
- Frida, K. Y., & Zuraida, I. (2022). Metaphor in The Folklore Album by Taylor Swift: A Semantics Study. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 9(2), 610-618.
- Genius.com.2022. Phil wickham-The Ascension Lyrics and tracklist. Retrieved August 18,2022. <https://genius.com/albums/Phil-wickham/The-ascension>
- Knickerbocker, K.L and Reninger. H.W. 1963. *Interpreting Literature*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Kreidler, C.W. 1998. *Introducing English Semantic*. London: Routledge
- Krisnawati, N. N. A., Winarta, I. B. G. N., & Ariyaningsih, N. N. D. (2021). Types of Figurative Language in Miley Cyrus's Songs: Hyperbole and Metaphor. *ELYSIAN JOURNAL: English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies*, 1(2), 1-11.
- Leech, Geoffrey N. 1981. *Semantics: The Study of Meaning*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.