

Figurative Language in The Song Lyrics of Billie Eillish “Don’t Smile At Me”

Sharon Ladisa Julianto¹, I Nyoman Sedeng², Novita Mulyana³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Udayana

E-mail: Sharonladisa@gmail.com¹

Article History:

Received: 22 Agustus 2023

Revised: 29 Agustus 2023

Accepted: 30 Agustus 2023

Keywords: Billie Figurative Language, Meaning, Lyric

Abstract: This study aimed to identify the types and meanings of figurative language applied in the song lyrics of *Don’t Smile At Me* album by Billie Eillish with the hope that readers can understand more about figurative language in depth. The documentation methods were combined with note-taking techniques to collect the data. To analyse the collected data this study applied descriptive and qualitative methods. Furthermore, the theory of Kennedy (1987) was used to describe the figurative language expressed in the study. The analysis of this study shows that all types of figurative language are found in the song lyric. They are allusion, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, metonymy, personification and simile. The most dominant figurative language found in the song lyric is metaphor. To classify the types of meaning in the song lyric, the theory of Leech (1981) was used as the supporting theory. There are seven types of meaning proposed by the theory, thus this study found two of them namely, conceptual meaning, and connotative meaning. The figurative language used in the song lyric mostly expresses connotative meaning. Only a few of them express conceptual meaning.

INTRODUCTION

Figurative language itself is usually used to analyze the deeper meaning of words. In songs for example, it is also used to make the lyrics sound more beautiful. The author uses figurative language in this research to identify the problems contained in the lyrics of Billie Eillish Songs Album “Don’t Smile At Me”.

The author is interested in analyzing a song’s figurative language. Usually individuals listen to the music without recognizing it, particularly if the lyrics include metaphorical language. As the results the author analyzes Western song music. The author has listened to the several songs, including Indonesia and Korean Pop, but finds that’s Western song music are more engaging to listen to. Additionally, Western songs are popular globally and are enjoyed by a large number of people. Readers or listeners may decipher the meaning of Western song lyrics by evaluating the song’s metaphorical language. As a result, the author is highly interested in undertaking this study since it will enable many people to become aware of the author’s use of

figurative language in many works.

Billie Eilish Pirate Baird O'Connell, born December 18, 2001) is an American singer and songwriter. She first gained public attention in 2015 with her debut single "Ocean Eyes", written and produced by her brother Finneas O'Connell, with whom she collaborates on music and live shows. In 2017, she released her debut extended play (EP), titled *Don't Smile at Me*. Commercially successful, it reached the top 15 of record charts.

A song is a vocal composition that is performed by an instrument or performer. Songs are an integral part of one's life, both personally and professionally, because of music. It has an influence on individuals in a variety of ways, including physical, emotional, behavioral, educational, and imaginative..

In the modern era, many types of music are preferred among the public, especially among teenagers who enjoy songs from other countries, such as Billie Eilish. She is very famous in terms of the songs they make with figurative language that is very good to learn and analyze. The study is focused on the analysis of the song lyrics of Billie Eilish Album "Don't Smile At Me" by American song-writer Billie Eilish and was released on August 11 2017.

In addition, elements of music, tone, theme, lyrics become an important element of the beauty of a song. Not infrequently, lyrics can also affect the feelings of those who hear them. The song also has a language used to communicate with others, conveying something using its own meaning or with figurative language to embellish in the lyrics of the song. There are many ways to express our feelings through language such as writing a song. In a song, we can also gain knowledge by interpreting the language in the lyrics when we listen and explore the deepest meaning of these lyrics. A lyric is an integral part of a song.

Petti John & Sacco Jr (2009) Talk about how songs convey information and communicate with listeners in ways that are similar to how people talk to each other. According to the definition above, a song is a poetry that incorporates music and lyrics. Its words are metaphorical, and they are an intrinsic aspect of the music, which acts similarly to a tale or interpersonal communication. Based on the research background, the statements of the problems are formed into:

1. What types of figurative language are implied in the selected song album of Billie Eilish?
2. How are the meanings of the figurative language implied in the selected song album of Billie Eilish?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Figurative Language

Figurative language is a mode of expression that does not depend on the literal or practical meaning of a word. It is often used in comparison and exaggeration to give creative flair to written or spoken language or to convey difficult concepts. Basically, figurative language occurs whenever you expand the literal meaning of words for impact, whether to appear creative, make jokes, or communicate more clearly and interestingly. Figurative language is an approach often used in narrative writing, where the writer aims to inspire an emotional response from the reader.

The concepts the author developed while conducting this study are discussed in this chapter. Figurative language is any term or phrase that has an additional, hidden meaning. Figurative language is employed in the majority of literary genres, including theater, poetry, and song lyrics. Some songwriters want to obscure the meaning of their work in order to elicit further thinking since the lyrics may occasionally mirror the writer's emotions. For instance, inventiveness and metaphorical language are necessary while writing music lyrics. Figurative languages come in many different varieties. Figurative language, which includes idioms, metaphors, similes,

euphemisms, synecdoche, and metonymy, is an important component required to create literature. Figurative language includes the use of words that differ from the original word meaning and phrases with a unique meaning not based on the actual meaning of the words.

Types of figurative language

According to (Kennedy, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, poetry, and Drama*(7th edition), 1997), Figurative Language is a language that uses figurative speech. A symbolic speech means saying something other than the word's literal meaning. For freshness or emphasis, the figure of speech may occur whenever a speaker or writer departs from the usual word denotation. According to Kennedy, Figurative language is divided into seven types: metaphor, Simile, Personification, Hyperbole, Allusion, Metonymy, Irony, and Symbol:

1. Metaphor

Kennedy, (1979) A metaphor is a statement that one thing is something else, which in a literal sense, it is not. It does not use connective words such as like or as. It means that metaphor only makes sense when the similarities between the two things become apparent, or someone understands the connection. A metaphor is a variety of analogies that compare two things directly but in a short pattern. It means that between subject and object have the same attributes, and the writer uses it to compare them to one another.

2. Simile

Kennedy, (1979) affirms that Simile compares two things, indicated by some connective, usually like, as, than, or a verb such as resembles. Generally, Simile is defined as a type of figurative language that is used to explain the resemblance of two objects (in shape, color, characteristic, etc.).

3. Personification

Kennedy, (1979) "personification is a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal, or an abstract term (truth, nature) is made human. Or in other words, when the attributions of human feelings or characteristics are given to abstractions or to inanimate objects, it can be called personification (Barnet, 1963)). Personification is used to help the authors describe a condition or something more vividly. Through personification, the reader can more easily grasp what the authors want to tell because personification expresses the way human perspective works and can figure it out more clearly. Using personification correctly can make all written literary works, especially novels, more interesting. The personification can show the readers how rich the meaning of a word has more than the readers could have ever imagined.

4. Hyperbole

Kennedy, (1979) affirms that hyperbole is emphasizing a point with a statement containing exaggeration. It can be ridiculous or funny. Hyperboles can be added to fiction to add color and depth to a character. Hyperbole is a figure of speech that intentionally exaggerates or overstates, often for emphasis or vivid description. Hyperboles can be added to fiction to add color and depth to a character.

5. Allusion

The allusion is figurative language that shows indirectly forwards a person or even that people have known together (Kennedy 1979). For example, Many Victims Caused Nazis was a military organization that Adolf Hitler led; this organization was known as a cruel organization; its members might have been killed all by the enemies and ignored enemies' women, children, and older people; they killed all.

6. Metonymy

According to Kennedy (1978), metonymy is the use of something closely related to the thing meant. It is a figure of speech in which the name of one object is replaced by another which is closely associated with it.

7. Symbols

According to Kennedy (2004), a symbol is any object or action that represents something beyond its literal self. An apple pie, for example, can represent an American Lifestyle. Natural symbols like light and darkness, fire and water can stand for contradictory things. The meaning of any symbol, whether an object, an action, or a gesture, is controlled by its context.

Semantics

Figurative language is part of semantics. Semantics can be used to analyze the meaning of a song. When people listen to a song, they may focus on something other than the lyrics, mainly if it contains a symbolic element. Usually, they like the song because the music is good or because they like the singer. Knowing the meaning of a lyric is essential because people will know the song's meaning and message.

Semantics is the study of the meaning of words and sentences. It uses the relations of linguistic forms to non-linguistic concepts and mental representations to explain how native speakers understand sentences. On the song lyrics, semantics helps us to find the meaning of the song, which is relative to my study.

In particular, semantics studies how meaning is structured in sentences, phrases, and words. The English term "semantics" comes from the Greek semantics, which means to show or give signs. Semantics can be applied to different symbol systems, such as computer languages and similar coding systems. In general, however, semantics generally refers to how meaning is conveyed through the symbols of a written language. Semantics can be understood when contrasted with other linguistic terms.

Songs

The song is a tone or sound art composition in sequence, combination, and temporal relationship (usually accompanied by a musical instrument) to produce a musical composition having unity and continuity (containing rhythm). And the variety of tones or rhythmic sounds is also called a song. Songs can be sung solo, both (duet), three (trio), or rollicking (choir). Words in the song are usually shaped as rhythmic poetry, but there is also a religious nature or accessible prose. Songs can be categorized into many types, depending on the measure used. (Hornby, 2000) Chants are recited poems with appropriate tone, rhythm, time signatures, and certain melodies to form harmony. Chanting is often referred to as the song that means the tone or sound art composition in sequence, combination, and the temporal relationship (usually accompanied by a musical instrument) to produce a musical composition with unity and continuity (containing rhythm). And the variety of tones or rhythmic sounds is also called a song.

Lyrics

Lyrics are words that make up a song, usually consisting of verses and choruses. The meaning of lyrics can either be explicit or implicit. Some lyrics are abstract, almost unintelligible, and, in such cases, their explication emphasizes form, articulation, meter, and symmetry of expression. A lyric is a paper written by someone with imagination composing beautiful words with deep meaning. Lyrics and music combined would be fantastic songs and pleasing to the ear. The writer of lyrics is a lyricist or lyrist. According to Hornby, he stated that the lyrics express a

person's personal feelings and thoughts, connected with singing and written for a lyric poem the words of a song.

Language song is similar to the language of poetry. It is a short lyric poem that expresses emotion. Song lyrics are poetry that is sung—the form of emotive expressions realized in sounds and words. Language in the song lyrics has rules that are elements of poems emotive through sounds and words. In addition to obtaining a particular impression as poetry, language lyrics are concise and packed.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted the qualitative research method since it is concerned with phenomena relating to quality (Kothari, 2004). Qualitative research requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). A descriptive qualitative method gathered into amounts of explanation that are expressed rely on words rather than a number, under this method figure out the analyzed of the type of figurative language and the meaning by the figurative language. The following part discussed the source and how the data were collected, analyzed, and presented.

Data is essential for every research to support the discussion of problems. Data source means the source from which the data is obtained for the analysis of this study. This research used song lyrics from Billie Eilish's Album "Don't Smile At Me." All of the data were taken from the songs found in the album.

The data were analyzed using qualitative methods. Some steps are taken here in analyzing the data; first, the data analysis started by classifying the data into the types of figurative language and the meaning. After that, all the data were explained to clarify figurative words' meanings.

First, this undergraduate thesis analyzed the types of figurative language found in the song lyrics of Billie Eilish's Album "Don't Smile At Me." The literary theory of Kennedy (1997) will be applied to complete this thesis and the I analyzed the meaning of each figurative language used in the song lyrics of Billie Eilish's Album "Don't Smile At Me" using the theory of meaning from Leech (1998).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Within this chapter, an examination of the chosen data presented the findings and discussions about the data. The analysis revealed the various types of figurative language, which were then classified and interpreted. Figurative language meaning was found in the songs of the Billie Eilish Album as the songwriters because figurative language is a songwriter's tool to represent powerful songs that convey complex emotions and ideas to pick up people's interest and engage lyrics the listeners. The analyzed utterances were found in Billie Eilish's album without any manipulation.

Moreover, according to the analysis result on figurative language, the presentation data was discussed individually. They are: the analysis concerns the figurative language features theory, which adopted the figurative language theory of each data proposed by X.J Kennedy (1979) which he offered 6 types of figurative language. Finally, the figurative language features would be analyzed again from the theory of meaning that provides a detailed explanation by semantic aspects proposed by (Leech, 1981).

The writer classifies the type of figurative language from the most data found. To find the meaning of figurative language from the most data found. Finally, the writer made the summary and the analysis below.

1. Metaphor

Kennedy (1979) stated that Metaphor is one thing is something else, which in a literal sense, it is not. It does not use connective words such as like or as. It means that metaphor only makes sense when the similarities between the two things become apparent or someone understands the connection. A metaphor is a variety of analogies that compare two things directly but in short patterns. It means that between subject and object have the same attributes, and the writer uses it to compare them to one another.

The Metaphor essentially replicates these elements in prose or verse. Here are found the metaphor based on Billie Eilish's songs lyric :

My boy's being sus', he was shady enough, but now he's just a shadow
 (My Boy, Verse 1 – line 2)

Data above included metaphor because the lyric uses the word "is" it is the characteristics of metaphor that point to the definition of something. The meaning of the lyric is the songwriter compares her boyfriend with the shadow which is mean that her boyfriend is not around her anymore, but the memories still follow her.

Data above is connotative meaning literal meaning the dark figure or shape made on a surface when something blocks the light from a source. The songwriter describes her boyfriend. A connotative meaning from this data is the speaker has a boyfriend but she cannot feel the presence of her boyfriend

2. Simile

Kennedy (1979) affirms that a simile is a comparison of two things, indicated by some connective, usually like, as, than, or a verb such as resembles. Generally, Simile is defined as a type of figurative language that is used to explain the resemblance of two objects (in shape, color, characteristic, etc).

In other words, the simile is a direct comparison of two things, which are unlike in their sense. Here are found the simile based on Billie Eilish's songs lyrics:

My boy loves his friends like I love my split ends
 And by that, I mean he cuts'em off
 (My Boy, Verse 1 – line 3)

Data above included similes because the lyric uses the word "like". The songwriter compares the word "my boy" and "split ends". The meaning of the lyric is the way that boy handles relationships as hair grows out, it becomes unhealthy and frayed along the bottom.

Data is connotative meaning with literal meaning. The literal meaning of the italic word is a hair in your head that has divided into parts at the end because it is dry or in poor condition. Connotative meaning is interpreted as figurative language for the data show that one's bad will be worst.

3. Personification

Kennedy (1979) defines "personification as a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal, or an abstract term (truth, nature) is made human. Or in other words, when the attributions of human feelings or characteristics are given to abstractions or to inanimate objects, it can be called personification (Sylvan Barnet, 1963). Personification is used to help the authors describe a condition or something more vividly.

In other words, personification can show the readers how rich the meaning of a word has more than the readers could have ever imagined. Here are found the personification based on Billie Eilish's songs lyrics :

If I love you , was a promise
 Would you break it ,if you're honest
 Tell the mirror what you know she's heard before.
 I don't wanna be you anymore
 (Idontwannabeyouanymore, Chorus – line 6).

Data above included personification because the songwriter describes something with an abstract term. The meaning of the lyric is the way the writer looks at the mirror and only she and "her mirror" could break it.

Data is connotative meaning with literal meaning. The literal meaning of the italic word is a piece of special flat glass that reflect images so that you can see yourself when you look at it. The connotative meaning conveyed through this lyric is that mirror is described as a deeply frustrated human. Here the data describe the feeling of heartbreak.

4. Hyperbole

Kennedy (1979) affirms hyperbole is emphasizing a point with a statement containing exaggeration. It can be ridiculous or funny. Hyperboles can be added to fiction to add color and depth to a character. Hyperbole is a figure of speech that it is intentional exaggeration or overstating, often for emphasis or vivid description. Here are found the hyperbole based on Billie Eilish's songs lyrics :

Hands getting cold, losing feeling getting old,
 was I made from a broken mold
 (Idontwannabeyouanymore, verse 2 – line 1)

Data above included hyperbole because the songwriter uses the exaggerated expression in the lyrics of the song, as seen in the sentence "Hands getting cold, losing feeling getting old, was I made from a broken mold?" The real meaning of the lyrics is there are all these perfect people. Nobody is perfect, but 'perfect' people around me. It's like ' Well what is wrong with me?'

Data above is connotative meaning with literal meaning. The literal meaning of the italic word is all the perfect things that happened. Where it means to express how the songwriter feelings.

5. Symbol

According to Kennedy (2004), a symbol is any object or action that represents something beyond its literal self. An apple pie, for example, can represent an American Lifestyle. Natural symbols like light and darkness, fire and water can stand for contradictory things. The meaning of any symbol whether an object, an action, or a gesture, is controlled by its context. Here are found symbols in Billie Eilish's song lyrics :

I'll sit and watch my burn
 With the fire that you started in me
 But you'll never come back to ask it out
 (Watch, Chorus – line 2)

Data above is a symbol, the word fire represents the emotional suffering that the songwriter felt. She blames her boy for everything that happened.

Data above is connotative meaning with literal meaning. The literal meaning of the italic word is the flames light and heat, and often smoke, that is produced when something burns. The connotative here is the songwriter wants to show the revenge that he did for her boy.

6. Symbol

According to Kennedy (2004), a symbol is any object or action that represents something beyond its literal self. An apple pie, for example, can represent an American Lifestyle. Natural symbols like light and darkness, fire and water can stand for contradictory things. The meaning of any symbol whether an object, an action, or a gesture, is controlled by its context. Here are found symbols in Billie Eilish's song lyrics :

[3-34] I'll sit and watch my burn
 With the fire that you started in me
 But you'll never come back to ask it out
 (Watch, Chorus – line 2)

Data above is a symbol, the word fire represents the emotional suffering that the songwriter felt. She blames her boy for everything that happened.

Data above is connotative meaning with literal meaning. The literal meaning of the italic word is the flames light and heat, and often smoke, that is produced when something burns. The connotative here is the songwriter wants to show the revenge that he did for her boy

CONCLUSION

A selection of figurative language data was found and analyzed, which were used in several songs from the Don't Smile At Me Album written by Billie Eilish. This last chapter of the research offers the conclusions regarding the situations which are involved in this research. The conclusion encompasses the research problem, which showcases the result of the study.

The types of figurative language are identified in the Don't Smile At Me Album written by Billie Eilish lyrics found 7 types of figurative language. These are metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, metonymy, symbol, and allusion. Metaphor is the dominant type found in this thesis. Metaphor as the one asserts the dominant type of figurative language because it embraces the expression with exaggeration.

The meaning of figurative language data implied in the Don't Smile At Me Album written by Billie Eilish lyrics is connotative meaning derived from the theory of meaning with seven types by Leech's Theory. The analyzed data overall use connotative meanings that contribute to utilizing abstract feelings or concepts from the figurative expressions. Therefore, the figurative language through connotation transformed into relatable messages that describe beyond the data's literal meaning

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. I Sharon Ladisa Julianto is a 2019 final semester student of English Literature at Udayana University who is active in organizing at the beginning of the academic year of college.
2. I Nyoman Sedeng is a senior lecturer at the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Udayana University who is very active in fostering the Udayana Debate Society.
3. Novita Mulyana ia a lecturer in sociolinguistics at the English Department, Faculty of

Humanities, Udayana University who is interested in research including language and society, media discourse, and cultural discourse.

REFERENCES

- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed Method approaches*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- David A. & Peter S. (2015). *Linguistic explanation and domain specialization: a case study in bound variable anaphora*. (online). Available from: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01421/full> [Accessed: 10 March 2022].
- Genius. (2019). *The Sailor Rich Brian* (online) Available from: <https://genius.com/albums/Rich-brian/The-sailor> [Accessed: 10 January 2022]
- Griffiths, P. (2006). *An Introduction to English Semantics and Pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd 22 George Square, Edinburgh.
- Holt, Richar and Winston, Inc.
- Knickerbocker, K. L. & Reninger, H. W. (1963). *Interpreting Literature*. Toronto:
- Kreidler, C. W. (1998). *Introducing English Semantics*. Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE.
- Leech, G. (Ed). (1981). *Semantics*. Penguin Book, New Zealand.
- Michael. K. (2022). *Examples of Dead Metaphors*. (online). Available from: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:N_MhyLCZBPwJ:https://examples.yourdictionary.com/reference/examples/examples-of-dead-metaphors.html&hl=id&gl=id&strip=0&vwsrc=0 [Accessed: 08 April 2022].
- Stewart. E. G. (1995). *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion*. Oxford University Press.