

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN 'RED' SONG LYRICS BY TAYLOR SWIFT

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ABSTRACT

Song is an artistic expression of feelings, ideas or thoughts. Sometimes the lyrics of a song are easy to understand, but sometimes the lyrics are so poetic that they are difficult to understand. This research aims at analyzing figurative language found in the song lyrics of 'Red' by Taylor Swift. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative to analyze the types of figurative language found in the song lyrics and also the meaning of the figurative language. The analysis of the types of simile expressions is carried out using theory of Perrine and Rozakis. The result of the analysis shows that 'Red' song lyrics has eighteen figurative languages that belong to the type of simile, symbol, metaphor and hyperbole.

Keywords: figurative language, song, lyrics.

ABSTRAK

Lagu adalah ekspresi perasaan, idea tau pemikiran yang artistic. Terkadang lirik sebuah lagu mudah untuk dipahami, namun terkadang liriknya begitu puitis sehingga sulit untuk dipahami. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bahasa kiasan yang ditemukan dalam lirik lagu 'Red' oleh Taylor Swift. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis jenis bahasa kiasan yang terdapat dalam lirik lagu dan juga makna bahasa kiasan tersebut. Analisis jenis ekspresi simile dilakukan dengan menggunakan teori Perrine dan Rozakis. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa lirik lagu 'Merah' memiliki delapan belas bahasa kiasan yang tergolong dalam jenis simile, simbol, metafora, dan hiperbola.

Kata kunci: bahasa kiasan, lagu, lirik.

INTRODUCTION

In daily life, language is one important aspect to interact with each other. Language is a human system of communication that uses arbitrary symbols, such as voice, gestures, and written symbols. Language can also be used to transfer and receive message. Each human language is a complex knowledge and abilities enabling speakers to communicate, to express ideas, hypotheses, emotions, desires, and all the things that need to express.

Linguistic is the scientific study of language. The part of linguistic that is concerned with the structure of language is divided into number of subfields, such as phonetic, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The study is exist to learn and understand what kind of language braches is in the language and people can also understand the patterns, structures, or even the rules in making good sentences or language. So that people can understand the language that comes out of the story, novel, film, or even the lyric of song and also understand the meaning behind the words. That is why linguistic comes.

Semantics is the study of literal meanings of words, phrases, and sentences. In everyday talk, we often explain the meaning of words in terms of their relationships. In doing so, we are characterizing the meaning of each word, not in terms of it component, but in terms of its relationship to other words. This approach is used in the semantic description of language and treated as the analysis of semantic relations. Figurative language is one of semantic relations that commonly used in poetry, song lyrics, and nonfiction writing as well. Figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal meaning. While literal meaning simply stating the facts as they are, figurative language, in comparison, uses exaggerations or alterations to make a particular linguistic point. Figurative language is divided into several kinds, such as hyperbole, personification, metaphor, simile, and other. So, indirectly, figurative language is a way to push the readers or listeners to make their own imagination of the words.

Everyone knows songs. Song is an artistic form of expression based on sound, generally considered a single (and often standalone) work of music with distinct and fixed pitches, pattern, and form. It can be wordless or with words. The lyrics that are written in a song is made by the poet or the creators, who express about a thing that seen, heard, experienced, or someone's imagination. The lyrics have a form of a message in the form of written words and sentences that can be used to create a variety of meanings. In its functions, song and lyric generally use a mean to encourage sympathetic about reality or even imaginative stories. Therefore, song can also provoke or mean of propaganda in getting interest, it also plays someone's emotion and feeling. In the lyric of song, sometimes the song's writer uses figurative language, where there are many hidden meanings inside the lyric.

Through this paper, the writer is going to analyze song lyric of Taylor Swift, specifically 'Red' song. The song is arranged by Taylor Swift herself and the song is about love and passion. The research is conducted under the title of "Figurative Language in 'Red' Song Lyrics by Taylor Swift". Based on the background and reason of choosing the title, the problems of this research can be formed as follow, *first* what are the types of figurative language that used in the song lyrics of *Red* by Taylor Swift and *second*, what is the meaning of the figurative language in the song lyrics of *Red* by Taylor Swift. Among all Taylor Swift's songs, the writer will be focusing the study on one song which titled 'Red'. This research is aimed at analyzing the types of figurative language as well as the meaning of the figurative language found in the lyrics.

Figurative language means language in which figure of speech are used to make it effective, persuasive, and impactful. People used it to go beyond the real meanings of the words to make a comparison and give the readers or listeners a new insight into the content of their works. According to (Kavka, 2003), "figuration is idioms use words in non-literal sense or unusual manner in order to add vividness, beauty, etc., to what is being said or written." This definition explained that figurative language is created to make a great vision from the words that being said or written.

Additional theory from (Kennedy, 1991) states, "A figure of speech may be said to occur whenever a speaker or writer, for the sake of freshness or emphasis, departs from the usual denotations of words." This means that figurative language or figure of speech is used with the purpose to emphasize in using denotation words.

Meanwhile (Perrine, 1978) states, "Figurative language is language using figure of speech, is language that cannot be taken literally." That means that figurative language is a way of saying something with uncommon way.

Based on statements above, the writer concludes that figurative language is a form of language that used to make a great vision from the said or written words. Figurative language also has the purpose to emphasize the meaning with denotation words. Figurative language has no literal meaning because figurative language does not mean exactly what it says seeing from

the uncommon way it used.

There are many types of figurative language, it often includes the use of a specific type of word or word meaning According to (Perrine, 1978) “Figurative language consists of 12 kinds, they are: simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole or overstatement, understatement, and irony.” By statement above can be seen that according to Perrine, figurative language is divided into twelve kinds, such as simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole/overstatement, understatement, and irony.

While according to (Rozakis, 1995), “Figurative language divided into allegory, ambiguity, apostrophe, conceit, connotation and denotation, contrast, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, litotes, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, personification, sarcasm, simile, symbolism, synecdoche, synesthesia, transferred epithet, and understatement.” It means that figurative language is divided into twenty two types, such as allegory, ambiguity, apostrophe, conceit, connotation and denotation, contrast, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, litotes, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, personification, sarcasm, simile, symbolism, synecdoche, synesthesia, transferred epithet, and understatement.

Based on statements above, the writer concludes that figurative language is divided into several types, such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, synecdoche, irony, allegory, paradox, ambiguity. But in general figure of speech that is often found or frequently used in making song lyric, they are as follow:

1. Metaphor

Metaphor is a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar. According (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), “Metaphor as a comparison that show how two things that are not alike in most ways are similar in another important way.” That means metaphor as a comparison to show two very different things can be similar in another important way.

(Bradford, 2002) states, “Metaphor is the comparison of two things without using the word “like” or “as”. It means that metaphor comparing two things vaguely because metaphor does not have connective words such as *like*, *as*, and *than* determining them as figurative.

Example : My brother was boiling mad.

In the expression above, that shows us an example of metaphor. The word boiling refers to high temper. So, the expression above metaphorically means that my brother is very mad.

2. Simile

Simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. Unlike metaphor, simile draws resemblance with the help of the words “*like*” or “*as*”. Therefore, it is a direct comparison. According to (Rozakis, 1995), “A simile is comparison between unlike objects introduced by a connective word such as *like*, *as*, or *than* or a verb as seems.” That means simile is a comparison form of two different things with connective words.

According to (Scott, 1983), “Simile is makes an imaginative comparison for purposes of explanation, allusion, or ornament, introduced by a word such as *like*, *as*, or *such*.” It means that simile makes an imaginative comparison for purposes of explanation by a word.

Example : Our soldiers are as brave as lions.

In the expression above, soldiers’ bravery is compared to lions. Lion is a strong animal that live in the wild life. So, the expression means that our soldiers are very brave.

3. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech which involves an exaggeration of ideas for the sake of emphasis. (Murphin, 2003) state that metaphor is, “A figure of speech that uses deliberate exaggeration to achieve an effect, whether serious, comic, or ironic.” It means that hyperbole is the style of language in expressing something created by an overstatement.

According to (Wren, 1981), “In hyperbole a statement is made emphatic by overstatement.” It means that some words that use is an overstatement from true meaning.

Example : Your suitcase weighs a ton!

From expression above, the word ‘a ton’ indicates as an exaggeration of very heavy. So, that means your suitcase is very heavy.

4. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing, an idea, or an animal is given human attributes. The non-human objects are portrayed in such a way that feel that they have the ability to act like human beings. (Barnwell, 1980) adds, "Personification is a figure of speech in which an abstract idea, or something which is not alive, is treated as though it were a person." It means that personification is the style of language that gives the characteristics of human to inanimate objects.

(Gill, 1985) defined, "Personification is giving non-human things human qualities." It means that all inanimate things are able to do something like human.

Example : Look at my car. She is a beauty, isn't she?

The word she and beauty make the car act like a girl while literally it means that the car is very good.

5. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a literary device in which part of something represents the whole or it may use a whole to represent a part. According to (Kennedy, 1983), "Synecdoche is use of part of a thing to stand for the whole of it." That means that synecdoche is a use of word to represent whole.

According to (Potter, 1967) , "Figurative language that say name of partial to represent whole or oppose." It means that synecdoche say about name of partial to represent whole or oppose.

Example : the term 'coke' is a common synecdoche for all carbonated drinks.

6. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. (Shaw, 1972) states, "A figure of speech in which the literal (denotative) meaning of a word or statement in the opposite of that intended." That means that irony is a form of language that contains opposite meaning.

7. Symbolism

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. According to (Perrine, 1974), "A symbol may be defined as something that means more than what it is." It means that there are hidden

meaning inside the used words.

Example : The dove is symbol of peace.

8. Paradox

Paradox is a statement that appears to be self-contradictory or silly but may include a latent truth. It is also used to illustrate an opinion or statement contrary to accepted traditional ideas. A paradox is often used to make readers or listeners think over an idea in innovative way. According to (Potter, 1967), “Paradox is variety of figurative language which has a real contrasted with a fact.”

(Kennedy, 1983) states, “Paradox is a situation containing apparently contradictory or incompatible elements, but on closer inspection may be true.” It means that paradox contains contradiction between statement and fact but on closer inspection it might be true.

Example : What a pity that youth must be wasted on the young. – George Bernard Shaw

9. Litotes

Litotes is a figure of speech which employs an understatement by using double negatives or, in other words, positive statement is expressed by negating its opposite expression. (Webster, 2004) said that, “Litotes is a figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite in addition it is understatement in which an affirmation is expressed by negative of its contrary, often used for emphasis or ironically.” It means that litotes used by people to understatement their self subtly, usually litotes is used to emphasize.

Example : New York is not an ordinary city.

The expression above can be concluded as litotes because saying New York is not an ordinary city is understatement because everyone knows that New York is fantastic.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the writer implements a descriptive qualitative method. The term qualitative method actually refers to methodological traditions, and methods with diverse aims, data collection, library, and internet research. The data analyzed are in the form of words and not in the form of numbers.

The procedure in this paper consists of four steps. The first step, the writer decides Taylor Swift's song that will be analyzed. The second step, the writer listens to the song and finds out the lyrics. The third step will be looking for the theory of figurative language that is used. And the fourth step is analyzing the song lyrics using the theory.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Figurative Language Found in 'Red' Song Lyrics

Table of figurative language in Red lyric

No.	Figurative Language	Types of Figurative Language	Line
1	Loving him is like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street	Simile	1
2	Loving him is like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street	Symbol	1
3	Faster than the wind	Hyperbole	2
4	Passionate as sin	Simile	2
5	Loving him is like trying to change your mind once you've already flying through the free fall	Simile	3
6	Like the colors in autumn	Simile	4
7	Like the colors in autumn so bright just before they lose it all	Symbol	4
8	Losing him was blue like I'd never known	Metaphor	5, 14, 26
9	Losing him was blue	Symbol	5, 14, 26
10	Missing him was dark grey all alone	Metaphor	6, 15, 27
11	Missing him was dark grey	Symbol	6,15,27
12	Forgetting him was like trying to know somebody you never met	Simile	7, 16, 28
13	Loving him was red	Metaphor	8, 9, 17, 29

14	Loving him was red	Symbol	8, 9, 17, 29
15	Touching him was like realizing all you ever wanted was right there in front of you	Simile	10
16	Memorizing him was as easy as knowing all the words to your old favorite song	Simile	11
17	Fighting with him was like trying to solve a crossword and realizing there's no right answer	Simile	12
18	Regretting him was like wishing you never found out that love could be that strong	Simile	13

In this analysis, the writer concludes that *Red* lyric by Taylor Swift consists four types of figurative language, they are simile, symbol, hyperbole, and metaphor.

1. Simile

(Rozakis, 1995) defines that simile is comparison between unlike objects introduced by a connective word such as like, as, or than or a verb as seems.

The phrase analysis : *Loving him is like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street* (Red; line 1)

Figurative language in the sentence is simile because the sentence has a comparison with the word like. In this line the author tells about her love for him evoked on adrenalin rush similar to driving a supercar towards a sudden halt. She was quickly enthralled by him, however her emotions were soon to be cut short by the demise of their relationship.

The phrase analysis : *Passionate as sin* (Red; line 2)

The sentence above is the second simile because the author used the word as to compare passion and sin. In the line above, the author tried to picture the passion really strong that it feels like sin. Sometimes when you sin, you are passionate about what you are doing but you do not realize that is wrong until you look back on that event.

The phrase analysis : *Loving him is like trying to change your mind once you've already flying through the free fall* (Red; line 3)

Trying to change your mind once you've already flying through the free fall is impossible. People simply can't change their mind while they are up in the air. So, in the third simile above, the author is trying to describe that loving him is a fate and unchangeable.

The phrase analysis : *Like the colors in autumn* (Red; line 4)

The sentence above is the fourth simile. The sentence can be translated as there are so many different colors in fall, so that means the relationship had many different emotions, such as happy, sad, frustration, angry, surprise, disappoint.

The sentence analysis : *Forgetting him was like trying to know somebody you never met* (Red; line 7)

Trying to know somebody you never met is hard. You never met in the first place, so there is no way trying to remember. So, the fifth simile above describes that forgetting him is hard.

The sentence analysis : *Touching him was like realizing all you ever wanted was right there in front of you* (Red; line 10)

Realizing all you ever wanted was right there in front of you is a shock. Swift describes the feeling of touching him is a shock due to either a realization or the feeling itself.

The sentence analysis : *Memorizing him was as easy as knowing all the words to your old favorite song* (Red; line 11)

Knowing all the words to your old favorite song is an easy task. You don't even have to remember it, you just know it. Swift here expressed that her memorizing him is easy, she does not need effort to remember because the memory of him stay there.

The sentence analysis : *Fighting with him was like trying to solve a crossword and realizing there's no right answer* (Red; line 12)

Trying to solve a crossword and realizing there's no right answer is very frustrating. That is the feeling that Swift tried to capture. The frustration of fighting with him and how it drives her crazy to find out that there is no right answer to a difficult problem.

The sentence analysis : *Regretting him was like wishing you never found out that love could be that strong* (Red; line 13)

The phrase "wishing you never found out that love could be that strong" means that somehow you just wish you never know the feeling of love because knowing it then lose it is

very saddening. The line can be concluded that regretting him is very saddening and the regret is very strong.

2. Symbol

(Perrine, 1974) states that a symbol may be defined as something that means more than what it is.

The words analysis : *Loving him is like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street* (Red; line 1)

The line above is symbolism because it uses the word **Maserati** and **dead-end street**. *Maserati* here means a very fast car which can result a rush of adrenaline, while *dead-end street* is a way of saying you have to stop here. So, symbolically, the line means that loving him is a thrill of adrenaline rush but you have to take a sudden halt, so the high not instantly go away.

The phrase analysis : *Like the color in autumn so bright just before they lose it all* (Red; line 4)

Autumn symbolizes the turning point in the color of leaves on trees. In the summer, the leaves are typically green but when the autumn comes, they die and turn yellow, red, and brown, and eventually fall off the tree. This symbolically represents how Swift's love was great but quickly died.

The words analysis : *Losing him was blue like I'd never known, Missing him was dark grey all alone, Loving him was red*" (Red; line 5, 6, 8)

At the above lyrics, Swift explains her emotions with colors and each color represents the emotion she feels perfectly. *Blue* means sad, so when you lose someone the feeling is sad. *Grey* means lonely, it says that when you miss someone the feeling is lonely. *Red* here as Swift explained is as intense feeling. So, at that moment her love for him is an intense feeling.

3. Metaphor

According to (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), "Metaphor as a comparison that show how two things that are not alike in most ways are similar in another important way."

The phrase analysis : *Losing him was blue like I'd never known* (Red; line 5)

Losing him analogically refers to feeling sad. When there is a woman who loses her love, she tends to be sad. Blue can also be described as sad condition. The phrase feeling blue is often used to show that someone is feeling sad. According to (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), losing him and blue can be categorized as a metaphor because those phrases have similarity, which is describe feeling sad, although they are two different things literally.

The phrase analysis : *Missing him was dark grey all alone* (Red; line 6)

Missing him describes condition where there is a woman who really wants her lover to be by her side, but in fact, he is not. The phrase also shows that she might feel lonely because no one with her. The same explanation goes to dark grey. The color represents loneliness. Grey stands between black and white, it is too light to be called as black and it is not clean as white. Dark describes that the loneliness has deeply felt by the person. Both missing him and dark grey come for similar definition, that is feeling lonely.

The phrase analysis : *Loving him was red* (Red; line 8)

Loving is a variety of feeling that shows willingness to own certain things. It cannot be denied by people who start to interest with something. It can also be considered as a passion. When someone has found his or her passions or things that they are passionate about, they will begin to start interested with it more and more. The more and more is similar to intensity. Swift also states that red is the intense color. So, from the line above can be concluded that the feeling of loving him is intense.

4. Hyperbole

(Wren, 1981) define that in hyperbole a statement is made emphatic by overstatement.

The phrase analysis : *Faster than the win*" (Red; line 2)

The line above is a hyperbole because she describes her feeling is faster than wind. The line above can also be related to the Maserati because of the speed. So, literally Swift emphasizes that her love for him is growing too fast it feels faster than wind.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of 'Red' song lyrics, there are eighteen lines of the lyrics that contain figurative language. Among the nine figurative language in the theoretical review,

there are four figurative language that are found in the 'Red' song lyrics, they are simile, symbol, hyperbole and metaphor. The total number of figurative language found in the lyrics is eighteen with the details of nine similes, five symbols, three metaphors and one hyperbole. It means, the most figurative language found in the lyrics is simile and the least number of figurative languages is hyperbole.

Suggestion

Through this paper the writer hopes that this research can help readers and listeners to have better understanding about the meaning of the song. Therefore, the listeners are not only able to sing and enjoy the song, but also understand what the song is about. This research can also be an input and inspiration to those who are learning English that they can learn English through songs and that there are many aspects of English language that they can learn through songs. Those who are teaching English can also be inspired to teach English using songs and search songs that can be used to teach various aspects of language; grammar, phonology, linguistic, etc.

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