

A Descriptive Study of Figurative Language used in The Greatest Show, This Is Me, and A Million Dreams Songs in The Greatest Showman's Soundtrack

ENISYA DWI AUDRYANI  
enisyadwiaudryani@gmail.com  
NI NYOMAN SARMI

Abstract

This research entitled "A Descriptive Study of Figurative Language Used in The Greatest Show, This Is Me, and A Million Dreams Songs in The Greatest Showman's Soundtrack" is aimed to found some types of figurative language used, the writer also studies about the meaning of figurative language used in selected songs.

Some of important research findings are presented that figurative language has many types, such as hyperbole, personification, metaphor, simile, allusion, metonymy, symbol, and irony.

In this research the writer was interested to conduct the research of song lyrics in The Greatest Showman's soundtrack, they are the song lyrics of The Greatest Show, This Is Me, and A Million Dreams song.

**A. INTRODUCTION**

In daily life, language is a very important thing. It is used by people in the world to make communication in order to share their ideas and purposes. Language which is used by people may have different functions, so they will try to understand what other people say if they have different languages. People have to be able know the function of language or words which is spoken or written by people to understand the purpose.

Living in a globalization era, English language is widespread. English, as an international language, is used by people from many countries to express their thoughts and ideas. According to Thirumalai (2002), English language is learned everywhere because people recognized that knowledge of English language is used as a passport, to get a better carrier, better salary, advanced knowledge, and for communication.

Many media serve knowledge and messages or information in English language either in the spoken form such as radio, music, television, song, etc or in written one like magazine, newspaper, journal, textbook, etc. This is the reason why in general, some people need to learn English yet lot of people seem to think that English language is difficult to learn. It is because they lack motivation.

Due to the lack of motivation, some difficulties may happen. Without desire to learn, it is very difficult to gain effective learning English. This view is in line with Jannah and Fitriati (2016) who write that students have lack motivation in learning English, especially in speaking, because they felt that their English was bad, English was boring for students, and speaking English was difficult for them. As a result, they lacked the confidence to speak English in front of the class, because they did not like English.

However, in this globalization era, people can find many ways or sources what they liked to learn English effectively. One of the ways that can help English learners is by introducing them songs to which most of them nowadays like to listen. They like to spend their time to listen their favorite songs every day. Songs can help learners improve their listening skills and pronunciation. Therefore, potentially help them to improve their speaking skills. Anca (as cited in Murphey, 1992) states that songs can help learners not only improve their listening skills and pronunciation, but also can be very useful in learning vocabulary, sentence structure, and language use. Shen (2009) argues that songs are comprehensible, enjoyable, authentic and full of language we need in real life.

Therefore, learning English through song is one kind of relaxing way in learning language especially English. Nowadays a lot of songs could express our feelings, such as songs with the theme of love, sadness, happiness, friendship, religion, and others. The song lyric is considered as literature, especially poetry. In some current usage, lyric still retains the sense of a poem written to be set to music; the hymn, for example, is a lyric on a religious subject that is intended to be sung, (Abrams, 2009, p. 147).

The lyrics (words) of songs are typical of a poetic, rhyming nature, though may be religious verses or free prose. Through the lyrics, the listeners will know the meaning of the song. Sometimes, listeners find difficulties to understand what a singer means in a song, because what conventionally says is not always the same as what a singer intends to express. A composer usually puts the meaning implicitly. In the attempt to understand the meaning of what singer means in the song, a further knowledge is needed.

In English, “meaning is divided into literal and figurative meaning” (Börjesson, 2011, p.5-6). Literal language is talking about the true context which does not need further interpretation. However, figurative meaning is talking about the implicit interpretation in sentences or paragraphs. The meaning of a song lyric can be understood by recognizing the use of literary works, especially by finding the figurative language of the song. Cuddon (2013) mentions that “figurative language is a language which uses figures of speech; for example, metaphor, simile, and alliteration” (p.279). Furthermore, Abrams (2009, p.118) gives keywords to get understanding figurative language, that is apprehending the standard meaning of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect.

Figurative language is used to give effect to the story of the song by comparing or

identifying one thing in terms of another that has a meaning or non-literal which is familiar to the readers. It can be concluded, the figurative meaning is talking about the implicit (non-literal) meaning in sentences or paragraphs. That is why we cannot interpret the meaning literally.

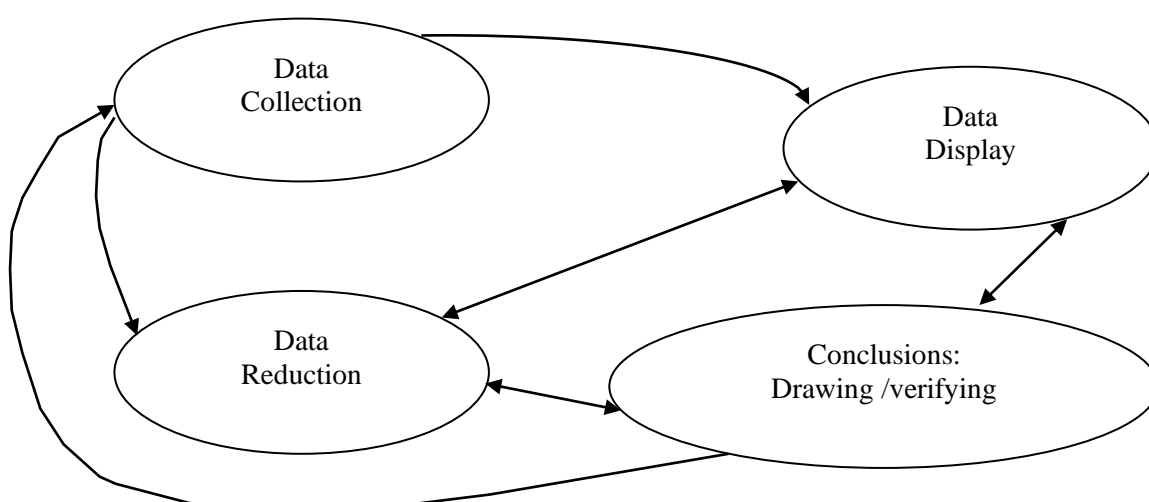
## B. RESEREACH METHOD

The thesis writer conducts data analysis by doing content analysis based on procedures suggested by Krippendorff (2004: 87) as follows:

1. Sample text, in the sense of selecting what is relevant
2. Unitize text, in the sense of distinguishing words or propositions and using quotes or examples
3. Contextualize what they are reading in light of what they know about the circumstances surrounding the text
4. Have specific research questions in mind.

Additional procedures done by the thesis writer are also based on Miles and Huberman's statement that "After data is collected, researchers engage in a three step process of analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10). The three steps and relationships between the steps and data collection efforts are pictured in Exhibit 3.1.

Exhibit 3.1. Components of Data Analysis: An Interactive Model



### C. ANALYSIS

No	Lyrics	Figurative Language							
		Simile	Metaphor	Personification	Metonymy	Symbol	Hyperbole	Irony	Allusion
1	Been searching in the dark						√		
2	Your sweat soaking through the floor						√		
3	Buried in your bones there's an ache that you can't ignore						√		
4	Taking your breath			√			√		
5	Stealing your mind			√			√		
6	All that was real is left behind						√		
7	Coming for you			√					
8	Running at you			√					
9	It's a preacher in the pulpit and you'll find devotion			√					
10	It is holding all that you know, so tell me do you wanna go?			√					
11	Just surrender cause you feel the feeling taking over			√					
12	Impossible comes true, it is taking over you			√					
13	Watching is come true, it is taking over you			√					

14	I am not a stranger to the dark					√			
15	Reaching for the sun					√	√		
16	When the sharpest words wanna cut me down		√	√					
17	We are bursting through the barricades						√		
18	The world is waiting up for me			√					
19	Through the dark					√			
20	Through the door					√			
21	But it feels like home	√							
22	A million dreams are keeping me awake						√		

Datum 1 is the line “Ladies and gents, this is the moment you've waited for Been *searching in the dark*”. Based on denotative meaning, the word searching means trying to find something by looking or otherwise seeking carefully and thoroughly and the word dark means with little or no light inside denotatively. The phrase “been searching in the dark” is difficult to understand literally because it is impossible for someone to look for something in the dark. Therefore, that phrase can be understood easily by applying connotative meaning in which it means trying hard to find something and therefore it is considered to be hyperbole. There is an exaggeration in it.

Datum 2 is the line “*Your sweat soaking through the floor*”. Based on denotative meaning, the word soaking means to make or allow (something) to become thoroughly wet by immersing it in liquid. The sentence “your sweat soaking through the floor” is hyperbole because it is an exaggeration. It shows the use of connotative meaning that is more than the literal meaning. In general, the sweat released by humans is not so much that it can soak through the floor.

Datum 3 is the line “*And buried in your bones there's an ache that you can't ignore*”. Based on denotative meaning, the word buried means to put or hide under ground, or it can also mean completely cover, cause to disappear or become inconspicuous. The sentence “buried in your bones there's an ache you can't ignore” cannot be understood denotatively and therefore

can only be understood clearly by applying connotative meaning which means there is something hidden deep down in the audience and the feeling is unbearable. There is an exaggeration in it and it shows the use of hyperbole.

Datum 4 is the line "*Taking your breath*". Based on denotative meaning, taking means lay hold of (something) with one's hands, reach for and hold or it can mean remove (someone or something) from a particular place and the word breath means the air taken into or expelled from the lungs. The phrase "taking your breath" is hyperbole because it is an exaggeration that the show takes the audience's breath. The phrase also indicates the use of personification in which the show is considered as human that can take something. It shows a connotative meaning that the show really the greatest show that can impress the audience.

Datum 5 is the line "*Stealing your mind*". Based on denotative meaning, stealing means to move somewhere quietly or surreptitiously or it can mean to take (another person's property) without permission or legal right and without intending to return it. The phrase "stealing your mind" is hyperbole. It shows an exaggeration in which it is too much if a show can steal the audience's mind. The phrase also indicates the use of personification because the show is treated as human that can steal something.

Datum 6 is the line "*all that was real is left behind*". Based on denotative meaning, the word real means actually existing as a thing or occurring in fact; not imagined or supposed. The sentence "all that was real is left behind" is hyperbole because there is an exaggeration in it. It can be understood by applying connotative meaning that the audiences ignore everything because they are amazed by the show.

Data 7 and 8 belong to the line "*it's coming for you, running at ya*". Based on denotative meaning, the word coming is activity to move forward from one point to another. It also means likely to be important or successful in the future. The sentence "coming for you" is personification because the show which is inanimate object is treated as animate object that can come and run. That line can be understood easily by applying connotative meaning.

Datum 9 is the line "*It's a preacher in the pulpit and your blind devotion*". Based on denotative meaning the preacher is a person, usually a priest or minister, who gives a religious speech. The text "it is a preacher in the pulpit" is personification. It is shown that the show as an inanimate object is given the attributes of human being that as a preacher. It means that the connotative meaning is applied to understand that line.

Datum 10 is the line "*It is holding all that you know, so tell me do you wanna go?*". Based on denotative meaning, holding means to grasp, carry, or support with one's hands. The line "it is holding all that you know" uses personification. The show as an inanimate object is treated as human having a pair of hands to hold something. Therefore, the line can only be understood clearly by applying connotative meaning.

Datum 11 is the line "can't you see it getting closer Just surrender cause you feel *the*

*feeling taking over*". Based on denotative meaning, taking over is to assume control or possession of or responsibility for. The line "you feel the feeling taking over" belongs to personification. The feeling that is an inanimate object is treated as human that can take over something. The feeling is treated like God, president, or others who have the power to control something. Therefore, the connotative meaning is more dominant to understand the meaning of the line.

Datum 12 is the line "Impossible comes true, it is *taking over you*". Based on denotative meaning, taking over is to assume control or possession of or responsibility for. The line "it is taking over you" is personification. The line explains the feeling that is an inanimate object as if it is human that can control something. Moreover, the sentence "Impossible comes true" also contains hyperbole because it is an exaggeration that something impossible can come true. Therefore, the connotative meaning is preferable to understand the meaning of the line.

Datum 13 is the line "Watching it come true, it is *taking over you*". Based on denotative meaning, taking over is to assume control or possession of or responsibility for. The line "it is taking over you" is personification. The line explains the feeling that is an inanimate object as if it is human that can control something. Therefore, connotative meaning is used to understand the meaning of that line.

Datum 14 is the line "I'm not a *stranger* to the dark". Seen from denotative meaning, stranger means a person whom one does not know or with whom one is not familiar. The sentence 'I am not stranger' is symbol. It shows that the word "stranger" has a meaning more than it self. The word "stranger" means that he is used to be someone whom one does not know but that person is not a stranger anymore now. Therefore, the connotative meaning is applied in that line. It also works for the word dark in that line.

Datum 15 is the line "*Reaching for the sun*". Seen from denotative meaning, reaching means to stretch out an arm in a specified direction in order to touch or grasp something. We know that the sun is the center of the solar system. It is amazing thing in the world and very important for the earth. The line reaching for the sun is symbol. The line means that the speaker in the song has goals and big ambitions to achieve something big and amazing. Moreover, there is also an exaggeration in it and therefore hyperbole is also used in that line. Both symbol and hyperbole can only be understood by applying connotative meaning.

Datum 16 is the line "When the *sharpest words* wanna cut me down". Seen from denotative meaning, sharpest means an object having an edge or point that is able to cut or pierce something. The lyric uses metaphor because the sentence compares two separate object without using clear connecting word. "*The sharpest words*" mean is the words that are spoken are very hurtful words. The meaning of that line can only be understood by applying connotative meaning.

Datum 17 is the line "We are bursting the barricades". Seen from denotative meaning,

the word bursting means to break suddenly and violently apart, spilling the contents, typically as a result of an impact or internal pressure. Therefore, there is an exaggeration in it because it is too much if we are bursting. It can only be understood by applying connotative meaning.

Datum 18 is the line “I can see *the world is waiting up* for me”. Seen from denotative meaning, waiting means the action of staying where one is or delaying action until a particular time or until something else happens. The line “the world is waiting up for me” is personification. The world is non human but in this lyric, the world is treated as an animate object in which it can wait. Waiting is more precisely used for human as the doer, not the world. Therefore, the connotative meaning involves here.

Datum 19 and 20 are the line “*Through the dark, through the door* ”. Seen from denotative meaning, the word through means moving in one side and out of the other side of (an opening, channel, or location) and the word dark means with little or no light. The line “through the dark” is a symbol. The word “dark” in the line has connotative meaning more than itself. The Dark can symbolize calamity, disaster, or also a hard life. It also works the same way as the word door that symbolizes opportunity.

Datum 21 is the line “*it feels like home*”. Seen from denotative meaning, the verb to feel means be aware of (a person or object) through touching or being touched. It also means experience (an emotion or sensation). Based on denotative meaning, the word home mean the place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household. The line “it feels like home” is a simile. It shows that the line compares two separate concepts using “like” as the connecting word. “like home” means the subject feels comfortable no matter what. The meaning of simile can be understood easily by applying connotative meaning.

Datum 22 is the line “*A million dreams are keeping me awake* ”. Seen from denotative meaning, the word dream means a series of thought, images, and sensations occurring in a person’s mind during sleep. Than, the meaning of keeping based on denotative meaning is the action of owning, maintaining, or protecting something whereas the meaning of awake is to stop sleeping or wake from sleep. The sentence “a million dreams are keeping me awake” can be considered as a hyperbole. Based on the connotative meaning, the line means that the speaker cannot sleep because he has so many dreams that make him keep awake. The line can also be considered as hyperbole because there is an exaggeration in it. It is an exaggeration that a person has million dreams. Moreover, the line can also belongs to personification because the dream as inanimate concept is treated as animate that can make someone awake.



## D. CONCLUSION

After conducting an analysis on the collected data from the song lyrics of The Greatest Show, This Is Me, and A Million Dreams, the thesis writer draws conclusion as follows:

There are 13 lines of the song lyrics entitled “The Greatest Show” that use figurative language and there are 2 types of figurative language used. They are personification and hyperbole. there are 4 lines of the song lyrics entitled “This is Me” that use figurative language and there are 4 types of figurative language used. They are metaphor, personification, symbol, and hyperbole. there are 5 lines of the song lyrics entitled “A Million Dreams” that use figurative language and there are 4 types of figurative language used. They are simile, personification, symbol, and hyperbole. The type of meaning used in the line having figurative language is connotative meaning.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams. 2009. *A Glossary of Literature Terms*, Ninth Edition. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Agus Darmayasa, I Kadek, (2015). *Analysis of Figurative Language Used In The SongLyrics of Lady Gaga’s Album “The Fame”*.
- Arifah, Khadijah. 2016. *Figurative language analysis in five John Legend’s Song*. Thesis. English Letters and Language Department, Faculty of Humanities, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang.
- Börjesson, K. 2011. *The notions of literal and non-literal meaning in semantics and pragmatics*. Germany: Leipzig University.
- Brinton, L, J. 2000. *The Linguistic Structure of Modern English is a revised edition of The Structure of Modern English*
- Bussmann , H. 1996. *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics (Routledge Reference)*
- Cuddon, J. (2013). *A dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*. (5th Ed). New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lyons, J. 1977. *Semantics (Vol. 1)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons, J. 1979. *Semantics (Vol. 2)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Murphey, T. 1992. *Music and Song*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Ogden, C. K., & Richards, I. A. 1923. *The Meaning of Meaning*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Palmer, A. S. 2010. *Language assessment in practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Patricia, 1998. *How to Do a Close Reading*. Harvard College Writing Center
- Perrine, L. 1978. *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc.
- Potter, James L. 1967. *Elements of Literature*. New York: The Odyssey Press Inc.
- Reaske, C.R. 1996. *How to Anlyze Poetry*. New York: Monarch Press.
- Thirumalai, M. S. 2002. *An Introduction to TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Language in India.
- Thomson, Alex. 2007. *You can't get there from here': Devolution and Scottish literary history*. Journal of International scottish literature.
- W. Tecumseh Fitch, 2010. *The Evolution of Language*
- Wilkins, A. L. 1983. *The culture audit: A tool for understanding organizations*. Organizational Dynamics.
- Yule, G. 1985. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yule, George. 2010. *The Study of Language*. Fourth Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.