

A STYLISTIC STUDY OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN KATY PERRY'S *TEENAGE DREAM*

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the types and functions of figurative language in *Teenage Dream*. This research employed descriptive qualitative method. The data of this study were taken from the song lyrics in the album entitled *Teenage Dream* by Katy Perry. The data were in the form of expressions which contain figurative language. Triangulation was used to establish the reliability of data, and to ensure the findings, so that it can enhance trustworthiness. The results of the research show that only ten out of twelve types of figurative language are employed in the album. They are metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, symbol, paradox, hyperbole, irony, and litotes. The most often used type of figurative language is hyperbole. The hyperboles are used to make the listeners understand and accept the feeling, effort, and motivation of the singer. Meanwhile, the four functions of figurative language are found in the album. They are to give imaginative pleasure, to bring additional imagery, to add emotional intensity, and to concentrate meaning in brief compass. The most frequent functions are adding emotional intensity and bring additional imagery. Among the ten types of figurative language found in the album, hyperbole is the most influential linguistic expression which adds emotional intensity in listeners' feeling. The dramatic effect of hyperbole could enhance the readers' feeling on the story of the songs.

Keywords: figurative language, types, functions, *Teenage Dream*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool that enables humans to exchange information through verbal or symbolic utterances. Language can be expressed through many things. One of which is through songs. Songs consist of music and lyrics. While

song music deals with tones as its root, song lyric deals with words as its raw material. The words are used to create a picture, an idea or a story in a meaningful pattern. Lyrics, as an artistic work, need human creativity in using language. When an author

wants to make language to be creative, usually, he uses language different from the conventional and everyday language. Using this distinctive language, an author can give his readers unexpected surprise and make a strong impression on their minds. This kind of distinctive use of language is called style. Style refers to the way a person uses a language which characterizes his or her uniqueness as human being. The study of style lies under one branch of linguistic fields called stylistics. In stylistic approach, style can be seen in the tone of voice, the different ways of pronouncing sounds, the choice of words and the grammar (Chaika, 1982 :29).

A song album is chosen as the object of this research. The song album is entitled *Teenage Dream*. It is an album sung by a pop musician, Katy Perry. The album was released on August 24, 2010 in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and on August 30, 2010 for the rest of the world. The album debuted at number one on the *Billboard* 200, and had sold 192,000 copies in its first week. *Teenage Dream* is chosen because it

consists of twelve interesting songs which have unusual choices of words in their lyrics. The lyrics tell about the life of youth, their ideals, their craziness, their passions, and their regrets. The feelings of being a youth are all being realized with the author's choices of words in the lyrics. These word choices help the listeners to experience or re-experience the life of a teenage.

The objectives of the research are to find out the types of figurative language found in *Teenage Dream* album, and to identify the functions of figurative language found in *Teenage Dream* album.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted by applying descriptive qualitative method. This method emphasizes on describing phenomenon by interpreting the data. In analyzing language phenomena, qualitative research has the purpose to give description and to provide a richer and more in-depth understanding of the matter under the study (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009: 7). Since this research tried to describe

the phenomena of figurative language used in song lyrics, qualitative approach was the most appropriate method.

The forms of the data were expressions in the song lyrics of *Teenage Dream* album that contain figurative language. The context of the data was the song lyrics in the album. The source of the data was *Teenage Dream* album by Katy Perry. The song lyrics of the album were retrieved from <http://www.katyperry.com/songs/>.

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the designer, data collector, analyst, interpreter, and also result reporter of the research (Moleong, 2010: 121). Thus, the main instrument of this research was the researcher herself. Another instrument of this research was a data sheet.

The researcher did the following procedures for data collection: downloading the songs of the album along with their lyrics from reliable sources on the internet (<http://www.youtube.com> and <http://www.katyperry.com>), listening to the songs of the album repeatedly

while reading the downloaded song lyrics to make sure that the lyrics were true, reading the song lyrics repeatedly to find valid and relevant data, writing down the data which contained figurative language, and using the experts' theories of figurative language to see whether the data were appropriate or not.

The steps for analyzing the data are selecting and classifying the valid and relevant data based on the categorizations, transferring the data into data sheet, conducting data triangulation with some classmates, and drawing the conclusion based on the finding of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In total, the researcher analysed a total of 78 data. According to Perrine (1969), there are twelve types and four functions of figurative language. However, the researcher only found ten types of figurative language in the album. The types are metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, symbol, paradox, hyperbole, irony, and litotes. While the functions are to give imaginative

pleasure, to give additional imagery, to add emotional intensity, and to concretize the meaning in a brief compass. To provide more explanation about the types and functions of figurative language found in the album, some examples are provided below.

1. Types of Figurative Language Found in *Teenage Dream*

The first type of figurative language in Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* is metaphor. Metaphor is a type of figurative language which compares two things which are basically unlike or describes a thing by using another thing. The datum is in the following.

Boy, you're an alien, your touch so foreign.

(Datum 14)

The datum is found in the song entitled *E.T.* In the extract, the 'Boy' is compared to an alien. Alien is an inhuman existence which is still considered as a mystery. It is a famous concept of oddity which is beyond difficult to be seen or found. Using listeners' basic knowledge about alien, the comparison would probably draw a new perception of

imagination in their mind. By comparing a human to an alien, the author tries to give the atmosphere of idiosyncrasy. Thus, the atmosphere of idiosyncrasy created by comparing a loved one to an alien could be described as 'strange yet special', a new discovery which is so difficult to find.

The second type of figurative language found in the album is simile. Simile can be defined as a statement which says that one thing is like another thing. The example of simile found in the album is the following.

*She was unstoppable
Moved fast just like an avalanche.*

(Datum 54)

The datum is found in the song entitled *Pearl*. The appearance of the word *like* in the extract signifies the occurrence of simile. The author compares the move of a human to an avalanche. *She* is the personal pronoun for human and an avalanche is a natural disaster. The author employs simile to describe how strong the girl was, by comparing her move to an avalanche. The illustration of the avalanche

invites the listeners to imagine its high speed and strong force. Then, still in the listeners' mind, making those speed and strength as the girl's belongings.

The third type of figurative language found in the album is personification. Personification can be defined as giving non-human object the abilities or characteristics which belongs to human. The datum is in the following.

*But I still hear the flames
calling out my name.*
(Datum 73)

In the datum, the author uses personification by giving an attribute of human to the flames. Here, the flame is given the ability to call a name. The expression certainly cannot be understood literally since it employs a figurative language. It is impossible for flames to call a human's name, whereas they are inanimate objects. The author makes some peculiarity in her works by employing figurative language in order to attract listeners' emotion and imagination.

The next type of figurative language found in the album is

Metonymy. Metonymy is a type of figurative language characterized by substitution of a thing with another thing which is closely related to the thing that is actually meant. The example of simile found in the album is the following.

Sun-kissed skin, so hot.
(Datum 04)

In datum 05, the author uses the word *sun-kissed* while actually she wants to say *tanned*. It indicates the use of metonymy since the author replaces the word she actually meant (*tanned*) with another word which is closely associated (*sun-kissed*). For white skinned people, tanned skin can only be obtained by exposing it to the sun light. Here, the author uses *sun-kissed* to represent the meaning of *exposed by the sun light*. The substitution makes the utterance more aesthetic.

The fifth type of figurative language found in the album is synecdoche. Synecdoche is a type of figurative language that mentions a part of something to refer to the whole thing or a whole thing to refer to a part. The example is in the following.

California girls
We're unforgettable.

(Datum 03)

The synecdoche in the extract is the whole that stands for its part. *California girls* could mean all of the girls who live in California. However, as human naturally have diverse personalities, there are actually various types of girl who live in California. Those various types are California girls too. Yet, the phrase *California girls* here refers only to the type of girls who match the description in the song lyrics. It becomes the reason why this figure of synecdoche could be understood as a whole that stands for a part considering the purpose of the author who actually wants to say some girls of California.

The sixth type of figurative language found in the album is symbol. Symbol can mean as something that express more ideas than what the word actually means. An example of symbol is discussed as follows.

Oh, she used to be a pearl.
 (Datum 50)

Since ancient times, pearls have been known as a symbol of

unblemished perfection. In datum 59, the author refers to the girl as a pearl. It means that the author sees the girl as an unblemished perfection. Based on the context, the author intends to tell that the girl was someone flawless, great, and adorable. It can also mean that the author sees the girl as someone valuable. Thus, the expression can be categorized as symbol because the author tries to describe the girl with the meaning implied in the word *Pearl*.

The seventh type is paradox. Paradox is a statement or a situation that appears to contradict itself. The following extract is an example of paradox found in the album.

Could you be the devil, could you be an angel.
 (Datum 08)

The word 'you' in the extract refers to the boy the singer falls in love with. The author states that the boy could be *the devil* but afterwards she states that he could be *an angel*. A devil is an evil being from hell. While an angel is a fine being from heaven. The two beings are totally opposite. Naturally, it is impossible for the two beings to be united.

However, the statement is somehow true if it is applied to human. Sometime a human can be as cruel as a devil but the other time the human can be as kind as an angel. Therefore, the statement is considered as paradox because it contains a contradiction which is somehow true. Thus, the lyric tells that in the girl perspective, the boy she loves can be as wicked as a devil and as adorable as an angel at times.

The next type of figurative language found in the album is hyperbole. Hyperbole is an exaggerating statement used to deliver a certain point. An example of hyperbole found in the album is discussed as follows.

*The boys **break their necks**
Trying to creep a little sneak
peek at us.*

(Datum 01)

The words **break their necks** in datum 01 is an overstatement since ones cannot break their necks and still alive to do the peeking. Therefore, the utterance can be categorized as hyperbole. The author uses hyperbole to tell that the boys' desires to peek at the girls are so strong that they will work really hard

to be able to peek. The words **break their necks** in the extract cannot be taken literally. Those words intend to say that for the sake of peeking at the girls, the boys will do anything. Not necessarily breaking their necks but they will do things even as hard and dangerous as breaking their own necks.

The ninth type of figurative language found in the album is irony. The definition of irony is a literary device in which the expression says the opposite meaning of what is actually intended by the author. The example is as follows.

*All this money can't buy me a
time machine,
Can't replace you with a
million rings.*

(Datum 42)

Based on the extract, the singer now has lots of money. However, what she wants the most is for the boy to be by her side. Sadly, all those money cannot buy her a time machine to bring the boy back. Indeed, it can buy her lots of rings but the rings would never be able to replace the presence of the boy. It is ironical that as much money as someone could have, it will never be

able to buy a machine since there is no such thing as time machine in the real life. Also, as valuable as the rings could be, they would never be equal to the presence of a precious person.

The last type of figurative language found in the album is litotes. Litotes is the type of figurative language that suggests affirmative expression by negating its opposite. The datum is as follows.

*Wanna be your **victim**, ready for **abduction**.*

(Datum 13)

Datum 13 is found in the song entitled *E.T.* The words *victim* and *abduction* are both contain negative meaning. Normally, no one would ask to be the victim for abduction. However, the statement shows that the author is willingly ask to be abducted. The author states implicitly that she desires to be the victim. In this context, there is affirmative statement of the persona in which she positively agrees to accept the role as the victim of the abduction.

2. Functions of Figurative Language Found in *Teenage Dream*

The first function of figurative language found in the album is giving imaginative pleasure. Imagination is the ability of human to form some kind of picture in their minds. The following extract show how figurative language gives the listeners an imaginative pleasure.

*She is a **pyramid**.*

(Datum 43)

In datum 51, a girl is being compared with pyramid. A pyramid is an ancient building famous for its unique shape, its glorious treasure, its strength structure, and its security. Here, the author intends to tell that the girl is a unique, noble, strong, and secured person just like a pyramid. After hearing the line, the listeners will automatically build an image of pyramid in their mind. They will get to enjoy the picture of its beautiful shape, the image of the overflowing treasure kept inside it, also the illustration of the building's strong structure and the traps which make it safe from intruders. Then, the listeners will relate all those

treats to the personality or quality the girl used to have. The statement could simply drive the listeners' imagination about how majestic the girl used to be. Thus, it gives them delights through the imagination.

The next function of figurative language found in the album is giving additional imagery. This function intends to make the listeners get more concrete imageries through their senses. The discussion is presented as follow.

*But I still hear **the flames**
calling out my name.*

(Datum 73)

In the extract, the author gives a human attribute to the flames. It gives an additional imagery for the listeners in which they can imagine how flames make such sound to call out a human name. Since this utterance tells about the sound made by the flames, the listeners try to illustrate of how the voice of the flames calling out a name sounds. The presence of auditory sense emerged in this utterance through the imagination of the listeners in how such sound appears. Implicitly, the listeners will try to make their sense

of hearing more sensitive. Therefore, this utterance can be categorized as a bringing additional imagery in relation to the function of figures of speech.

The third function of figurative language found in the album is adding emotional intensity. Figurative language is used to explain informative statements in such a way that can create emotional sense. Thus, the readers or listeners could feel the condition of the character in the story as if they experience it themselves. The discussion is presented as follow.

***You don't have to feel**
Like a waste of space.*

(Datum 25)

The words *a waste of space* can mean a futility. In this context, it can also mean something useless or meaningless. Thus, the author tells the listeners not to think of themselves as useless or meaningless.

Hearing the statement in the extract, the listeners can feel the motivation conveyed by the author. The message of not to feel useless or meaningless is clearly delivered by

the statement. The mood appears in the statement could touch the listeners' feeling by hearing it. The simile in the statement is able to arouse the emotion of the listeners such as the feeling of comfort, secure, and peace embedded in the statement itself.

The next function of figurative language found in the album is to concentrate meaning in brief compass. This means that an author can explain much about something without employing many words. The discussion is presented as follows.

*Just own the night,
Like the fourth of July.*

(Datum 22)

The fourth of July is the independence day of United States of America (USA). On the night of the fourth of July, the people of USA hold out a party to celebrate the day. On that day, everyone is a free person. Thus, the word *the fourth of July* symbolizes freedom. In the extract, the author wants to tell the listeners that they can free themselves just like what the nation did on its independence day. By

mentioning the words *the fourth of July*, the author wants to depict the joy and the freedom brought by the memories of the day as well as to convey the deep meaning behind the historic day. The statement can make the listeners grasp more meaning just by mentioning a few words. Thus, the statement functions to concentrate meaning in a brief compass.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data, hyperbole is the most dominant type of figurative language in the album. The author uses hyperbole to impress the listeners or to add emotional intensity, such as feeling, efforts, or motivation. In a creative work, hyperbole is an effective literary device. It is used to gain a dramatic effect and to get a point across or make a desired effect.

Among the ten types of figurative language found in the album, hyperbole is the most influential linguistic expression which adds emotional intensity in listeners' feeling. This is because the dramatic effect of hyperbole that

could enhance the readers' feeling into the story of the songs. Meanwhile, simile, metonymy, hyperbole, and metaphor are the most dominant types to bring additional imagery. This is because simile, metonymy, and metaphor create depiction through comparison and hyperbole creates exaggerated illustration in an utterance.

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