

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOUND IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S  
SONG LYRICS IN THE ALBUM *FOLKLORE***

**A THESIS BY**

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**English Education Study Program  
Department of Language and Arts Education**



**FACULTY OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
SRIWIJAYA UNIVERSITY  
INDRALAYA  
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# FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOUND IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S SONG LYRICS IN THE ALBUM *FOLKLORE*

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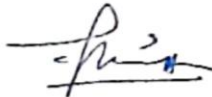
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## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned

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Certified that thesis entitled “Figurative Language Found in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics in the Album *Folklore*” is my own work and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethic and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face the court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Indralaya, 6 July 2022

The Undersigned



Sabrina Nabila  
06011181823072

## DEDICATIONS AND MOTTOS

*This thesis is sincerely dedicated to my beloved parents, who has become the source of motivation and encouragement to finish my study.*

*To my mother and my late father:*

*Asniati & M. Yunus*

“Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear”

Quran: Surah Baqarah | Verse 286

“Take it slow. It’ll work itself out fine. All we need is just a little patience”

Guns N’ Roses

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Indralaya, July 6 2022

The Writer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sabrina' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sabrina Nabila

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## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOUND IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S SONG LYRICS IN THE ALBUM *FOLKLORE*

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### ABSTRACT

*Figurative language is a phrase, word, or sentence used in implicit forms to create stylistic delivery or expressive intended meaning. It is an utterance that departs from its literal meaning and can be found in the simple form of literary works such as verse in song lyrics. This study's object was an album entitled Folklore by Taylor Swift. The aims of this study were (1) to find out the types of figurative language, (2) to find out the meaning of figurative language (3) to disseminate the figurative language in the album Folklore at SMA Negeri 2 Ogan Ilir. This study utilized descriptive qualitative research. In collecting the data, this study searched the songs and the scripts from the Folklore album booklet. The data were classified into some types of figurative language based on Kennedy's theory (1983). The results showed that 163 lyrics from 17 songs utilized 17 types of figurative language. It also highlighted that the dominant figurative language types were metaphor with 61 instances (37.42%), simile with 23 instances (14.11%), and hyperbole with 17 instances (10.43%). Figurative language expressions found in Folklore were used to give an intense delivery, extended explanation, and meaningful lyrics that make each song's story lively and exciting to listen to. The dissemination of figurative language at SMA Negeri 2 Ogan Ilir showed that the twelfth-grade students were already familiar with figurative language in the Indonesian context. It was easier for them to interpret the meaning correctly, but it was hard to classify it precisely since they experienced language barriers.*

**Keywords:** *figurative language, song lyrics, Taylor Swift, Folklore, dissemination*

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents (1) background of the study, (2) problems of the study, (3) objectives of the study, and (4) significance of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Language is a sign system used for communication in verbal and written forms. Communication, identity expression, entertainment, imaginative expression, and emotional release are all language functions. In almost every act of communication, language serves as a resource for mapping ideational, interpersonal, and literary meaning toward each other (Martin & White, 2005). Language is one of the instruments needed for human communication. People use language to communicate, discover, and easily exchange information with others. In other words, language can be defined as a method of utilizing words or utterances in a structured way so that humans may efficiently convey meaning and express their emotions, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and knowledge. Rowe and Levine (2006) state that language is a uniquely human cognitive process utilized to generate and interpret explicit meaningful utterances. In terms of communication purposes, language should be understood by the speakers. The nature of the language itself is literal, precise, and direct. Meanwhile, figurative language does not intend to express literal meanings, and it frequently relates one concept to another to try and make the meaning or main idea more understandable.

Figurative language is a literary technique usually used to convey entertaining concepts in a meaningful expression and implicit delivery. According to Giroux and Williston (1974), figurative language is distinct from the use of direct words that create a remarkable impression, define an idea, and make writing more exciting and impressive. In a textual framework, figurative language provides a practical and persuasive manner. The purpose of figurative language is to let readers envision what a writer intends to express. As a result, figurative

language extends beyond the literal meaning of an utterance to provide new insights and influence the sense of the readers to capture the intended meaning. Figurative language is commonly used in various literary works, including poetry, drama, prose, and speech.

Some figurative language features include savvy metaphor, attractive phrases, well-written structure, rhymes, and aesthetic alliteration. With figurative language features, the writer aims to give profound meaning and interpretation by showing the creative and artistic expression, yet it is implicit to the readers. As Meyer (1997) mentions, literature is applied to written works but is distinguished by thoughtful language. People learn and comprehend literature by understanding the form of speech, utterance, and the message inside it (Setiawati & Maryani, 2018). It indicates that the writer wants the readers to experience and understand the meaning. Thereby, readers may find it challenging to understand the intention of the statements because the writer usually keeps the intended meaning out of sight. With particular diction and imagery in writing, what is commonly said or written may not always be the same as what is trying to express. For example, *Young people must think out of the box*. The utterance of "out of the box" could interpret literally as a non-sense meaning. In contrast, the utterance above refers to the ability to think creatively. Instead of usually saying young people must think artistically, figurative language makes the delivery of the statement more attractive with the unusual and exciting concept delivered in the speech.

According to some experts and scholars, the types of figurative language are categorized differently. However, four general types of figurative language are usually found in literary works and English learning textbooks. Those types are metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification. The existence of figurative language is closely related to literary works such as poems, novels, novellas, fairy and folk tales, short stories, scripts, and other prose forms. However, a simple creation object such as song lyrics may comprise figurative language. A song is an example of literary work. Listening to music is a pleasurable activity; somehow, listeners will be unsatisfied if they do not get the message delivered by the

songwriter. Kimball (2006) illustrates that whenever people hear music, they perceive it for what it is. Songwriters create visual pictures using language, melody, harmony, and rhythm. The entire poetical expression and the musical impression are combined to produce an exclusive unique representation of the song with a combination of words and sound. Therefore, as they listen to those images, people build mental pictures and experience emotions, taste, smell, and spiritual sensations.

Songwriters and literature authors use figurative language to convey thoughts, concepts, intentions, and emotions. A song can attract and enchant listeners with an expressive message. Otherwise stated, the song may be used as an attribute to express thoughts and feelings poetically and let listeners understand and interpret the message based on the lyrics. Song lyrics tend to narrate a short story written implicitly to give a captivating and artful meaning to a song. Taylor Swift is a well-known singer-songwriter who has gotten credit and critical acclaim for her skillful narrative songwriting, typically inspired by her personal life experiences. The most recent album by Swift, *Folklore*, was published in July 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. McKenna (2020) reviews that *Folklore* practices songwriting style through first-person and third-person perspectives of the characters to perform the stories. Unlike Swift's previous albums, *Folklore* explores views outside of the perspective of Swift as the songwriter. With the creative storyteller style, several songs in *Folklore* are associated with an associated plot story but sung from a different point of view.

*Folklore* receives momentous recognition and praise for its emotional impact and poetic lyrics. *Metacritic* gave the album a calculated average rating of 88 out of 100 (July 2020), which provides an overall score based on ratings from various publications, indicating worldwide recognition. The album has achieved extraordinary achievements, awards, and ratings. It is also highly applauded for its musicality, lyrics, and songwriting style. The stories from *Folklore* are narrated based on the various perspectives and characters with powerful fiction. Hence, the song lyrics of each song on the album generally contain literary aspects, including figurative language. The researcher selected *Folklore* because various figurative



language features are found in the song lyrics. Some types of figurative language found include hyperbole, metaphor, and personification. One of the songs in the *Folklore* entitled "The Last Great American Dynasty" contains some types of figurative language, including personification. For example, *Holiday House sat quietly on that beach*. The lyrics belong to personification because an inanimate object is given a human characteristic. A "house" is a dead object that can act like a living creature. The lyrics aim to show the lonely house without any host located at the edge of the beach. The ninth song on *Folklore*, "This Is Me Trying," contains various figurative language such as metaphor and simile. For example, *They told me all of my cages were mental*. It belongs to a metaphor that compares two objects; cages and mental are being compared. The word "cages" here means the difficulties that refer to the disorder of the mind. While in the following line, *So I got wasted like all my potential*. It is categorized as simile since it compares two things that employ the word "like." The song's intended meaning portrays to compare between how the speaker felt like an outcast after the darkest phase in life and the potentiality that she thought she had lost a long time ago.

Based on the senior high school 2013 curriculum, the song interpretation topic includes in the twelfth-grade English subject syllabus. Students must be able to interpret and capture contextual meaning, social function, and language features of song lyrics to achieve basic competence. Fatimah et al. (2020) simplify the primary reason for using figurative language for EFL learners. These include assisting students in understanding the lesson, actively collaborating with students in learning activities, integrating language and culture, suggesting improvements, enhancing students' comprehension of the reflection, and stimulating critical thinking skills. Following the learning objectives, the students' inability to comprehend a song's interpretation is due to a lack of language comprehension, especially in non-literal language. The existence of figurative language in song lyrics is unnoticed by students, leading them to fail to interpret song lyrics. Therefore, students must comprehend figurative language as a linguistic feature to capture song interpretation. It can also raise their awareness of figurative language

to understand the meaning of oral literary works, such as contemporary films, books, and dramas. The importance of knowing and identifying figurative language found in written works is expected and predictable in literature, linguistics, or language learning. Therefore, the researcher reflects on how ironic if high school students are not incompetent to understand song meaning that carries the figurative language features since the purpose of English subject in Indonesia is to communicate in today's society.

For this purpose, twelfth-grade senior high school students must learn the figurative language to make it more accessible to interpret a song. SMA Negeri 2 Ogan Ilir, previously known as SMA 1 Negeri Indralaya, established in 1985, is one of the public senior high schools in Ogan Ilir regency, South Sumatera. It is a favorite high school with A accreditation. Same as the typical high school in Indonesia, the school education period at SMA Negeri 2 Ogan Ilir consists of three school years, starting from ten grade to twelfth grade. This school has fully used and integrated the 2013 curriculum.

Several studies have been conducted in previous studies. First, Marwati (2017) conducted a study entitled "The Analysis of Figurative Languages Found in Song Lyrics of Taylor Swift's album *Speak Now* and Its Application in Teaching Reading at the Eleventh Grade of Senior High School." The study showed that *Speak Now* involved six different figurative languages. Analyzing the fourteen songs reached the following results: 19 instances of hyperbole, 12 instances of simile, 11 instances of symbol, 5 instances of personification, 1 metaphor, and 1 synecdoche. Another latest study conducted by Prakoso (2020) is entitled "Types and Meaning of Figurative Language in Selected Song Lyrics of Red Hot Chili Peppers." The result of the study found 6 types of figurative language: metaphor, personification, exaggeration, metonymy, pun, and paradox. The metaphor was the most frequent figurative language type among the other types discovered.

In conclusion, this study would like to find the various types of figurative language and identify the meanings discovered in the lyrics based on seventeen songs from *Folklore*. The researcher conducted this study based on figurative

language found in Taylor Swift's song lyrics in the *Folklore* and then practiced the dissemination based on the result of the study through the dissemination plan in teaching English lesson for the twelfth-grade classroom learning. Concerning the description above, the researcher undertakes a study of figurative language found in song lyrics of Taylor Swift *Folklore* album by title: "Figurative Language Found in Taylor Swift's Song Lyrics in the Album *Folklore*".

### **1.2 Problems of the Study**

From the above explanation, this study attempts to formulate these three research problems as follows:

1. What types of figurative language are found in Taylor Swift's song lyrics in the *Folklore* album?
2. What is the meaning of figurative language found in Taylor Swift's song lyrics in the *Folklore* album?
3. How is the dissemination of figurative language found in the album *Folklore* at SMA Negeri 2 Ogan Ilir?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Under the following research problems, the researcher concludes that the study has three objectives. The objectives of this study are served as follows:

1. To find out the types of figurative language in Taylor Swift's song lyrics in the album *Folklore*.
2. To find out the meaning of figurative language found in Taylor Swift's song lyrics in the album *Folklore*.
3. To disseminate the figurative language in the album *Folklore* at SMA Negeri 2 Ogan Ilir.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

As this study was taken upon several contributions, the researcher greatly hopes that this study can give further insight into the figurative language to the

teachers, students, and future researchers. The researcher explains some of the usefulness of the study, which is described as follows:

#### **1.4.1 The English Teachers**

For the teachers, the study result may offer the implementation to teach English subject, especially English Literature and its language features. The songs on *Folklore* can be used as alternative learning materials to teach figurative language contents in English class. The teachers can use popular English songs as a media source to teach a topic about the song and figurative language types that may be discovered in the lyrics. Using poems, poets, and classic novels may complicate students' understanding of learning the figurative language.

#### **1.4.2 The Students**

For the student, it is expected that the result of this study can enhance their figurative language understanding that can be discovered in song lyrics by enabling a better understanding to identify the meaning and message of the song. With dissemination, students are hoped to acquire comprehension and improve their knowledge to master English skills, mainly about figurative language as a language feature, especially in linguistic study. This study could also be used to resolve whether figurative language found in song lyrics can encourage students to enhance the intended meaning that would assist in the form of communication.

#### **1.4.3 The Future Researchers**

The researcher looks forward to the prospects of the study that can stimulate and encourage future researchers to explore more figurative language features found in literary works. Furthermore, future studies are expected to develop literary works that integrate linguistics scope, especially pragmatics and interpretation study. For future researchers, it will be great to modify any literary works into instructional media learning and lesson plan in the classroom.

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