

INVESTIGATING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN "GHOST OF YOU" SONG LYRICS

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi penggunaan bahasa figuratif yang ditemukan dalam lagu "Ghost of You" oleh 5 Seconds of Summer, dengan penekanan khusus pada bagaimana elemen linguistik mengkomunikasikan tema kehilangan dan kerinduan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dan analisis lirik didasarkan pada kerangka bahasa figuratif yang diusulkan oleh Perrine (1969). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam lagu ini terdapat tujuh jenis bahasa figuratif: metafora, simile, personifikasi, metonimi, ironi, simbol, dan hiperbola. Setiap jenis bahasa figuratif berfungsi secara signifikan untuk meningkatkan makna emosional yang terkandung dalam lirik. Hiperbola dan metafora menunjukkan kekerasan rasa kehilangan dan kerinduan yang dirasakan, sedangkan simbolisme dan personifikasi menggambarkan kenangan yang masih hidup. Dengan menekankan peran penting bahasa figuratif dalam meningkatkan makna emosional sebuah lagu, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada penelitian stilistika.

Kata Kunci: bahasa figurative; lagu; *Ghost of You*; stilistika

Abstract

This study aims to assess the metaphorical language employed in the song "Ghost of You" by 5 Seconds of Summer, focusing specifically on how linguistic aspects convey the themes of loss and desire. This research employs a qualitative methodology, with the lyrical analysis grounded in the figurative language framework established by Perrine (1969). The findings indicate that this song contains seven forms of figurative language: metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, irony, symbol, and hyperbole. Each form of figurative language plays a crucial role in amplifying the emotional significance embedded in the lyrics. Hyperbole and metaphor illustrate the intensity of loss and longing, whilst symbolism and personification convey the enduring nature of memories. This study contributes to stylistic research by highlighting the significant significance of figurative language in augmenting the emotional resonance of a song.

Keywords: figurative language; song; *Ghost of You*; stylistics

1. INTRODUCTION

People use language as a tool to express their knowledge through verbal or symbolic means. It can be expressed using a variety of artistic mediums in addition to the conventional spoken or written ones. Songs are a particularly intriguing way to communicate linguistically. Harmonic tones are emphasized in song music, and carefully chosen words are used in the lyrics to convey ideas, tales, or pictures in meaningful and moving ways.

Lyrics might have a simpler, more direct language than poems, which is one of their main distinctions. The notes that accompany the words, their relationships to other notes, and the rhythm they represent will all contribute a great deal of additional color. The poet is able to employ ambiguity, many meanings, complicated metaphors, and somewhat complex vocabulary, including unfamiliar terminology (Pattison, 2011).

Lyrics kind of artistic expression call for a great lot of human imagination. Songwriters often communicate deeper emotions and ideas using language in unusual and surprising ways. This departure from common language use shocks listeners and has a lasting effect. Style is the unique way of expression this language use shows.

The study of style is within the umbrella of linguistics, which is also known as stylistics. Simpson (2004) defines stylistics as "a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language," highlighting the impact that word choice and placement have on how a message is understood. Barry as cited in Fadilla, et. al, (2023) also notes that stylistics combines language and literary studies to investigate how books convey more profound concepts. Stylistics looks into a number of aspects of language, such as tone, pronunciation, word choice, and grammar, to see how these elements contribute to meaning and emotional resonance (Chaika, 1982: 29 as cited in Nisyaroh 2017). It can gain a deeper understanding of how songwriters engage with their audience and convey challenging emotions by examining the stylistics of song lyrics.

Selena Gomez's song "Lose You to Love Me" has been scrutinized as a source of artistic expression and inspiration due to its use of figurative language. The objective of this investigation was to ascertain the varieties and significance of figurative language employed in the song. The lyrics of the song, which was published on October 23, 2019, were the source of the data for the analysis. The song was classified as pop. The research identified figurative language techniques, including personification, hyperbole, irony, contradiction, repetition, and simile, by employing a strictly structuralist approach. The study categorized and analyzed the various forms of figurative language in the composition using a descriptive qualitative model. Six distinct categories were identified: irony (11.1%), paradox (22.3%), personification (11.1%), repetition (11.1%), simile (11.1%), and hyperbole (33.3%). Hyperbole was the most prevalent of these, underscoring its ability to enhance the evocative and profound meanings of otherwise literal expressions, thereby altering the lyrics of the song. In general, the song's lyrics underscore a connotative interpretation rather than a denotative interpretation, which contributes to its emotive and aesthetic resonance. The song's emotional profundity and artistic quality are enriched by the use of figurative language, which provides a vivid and colorful depiction of its themes.

For this study, the song "Ghost of You" by the well-known pop-rock group 5 Seconds of Summer has been

chosen. This song is the thirteenth track on the band's third studio album, *Youngblood*. *Youngblood*, which was released on June 15, 2018, marked a sea change in the band's career. *Ghost of You* is rather well-known for showcasing its strong emotional impact, with over 386,521,156 streaming on popular platforms.

Ghost of You presents a touching portrait of melancholy and loss. Examining how memories live and mix with daily life helps the song to portray the emotional trip of losing a loved one. The great emotional depth and vivid images of the songs help to show the grieving process as a continuous struggle to manage loss. In an interview by Entertainment – Mediacorp, 5 Seconds of Summer Vocalist, Luke Hemmings clarified that an episode of the series *This Is Us* (Season 1, Episode 12) inspired him to write the song. In the episode, a doctor imagines himself dancing with his late wife and then dances alone.

This research aims to identify the types of metaphorical language used in *Ghost of You* and investigate how these linguistic strategies assist to convey loss and sadness. By means of an analysis of *Ghost of You*'s stylistic features, this paper attempts to show how language is creatively used in modern music to convey universal feelings such loss, yearning, and regret. Examining the interaction between language and music helps one to better appreciate how art speaks and responds to the human condition.

METHOD

The study was carried out with a qualitative methodology, which is suitable for stressing the exhaustive interpretation of data to explain events. This method was chosen since it provides a more complete and in-depth knowledge of the subject of investigation. Since this study intends to look at the metaphorical language used in song lyrics, the qualitative methodology was determined to be the most suitable approach to achieve these objectives.

This study's material is derived from particular words in the song "Ghost of You," performed by the band 5 Seconds of Summer. These comments used aspects of metaphorical language. While the "Ghost of You" track serves as the data source, the lyrics elucidate its context. The tracks were sourced from credible platforms such as Spotify and genius.com to ensure their authenticity and precision.

To ensure the authenticity and trustworthiness of the findings, several meticulous steps were taken throughout the data collecting process. The researcher first

located the song lyrics on respectable and well-known websites like Spotify and genius.com. Once she got the lyrics, the researcher listened to the “Ghost of You” song multiple times on platforms like YouTube and Spotify. This stage was done in parallel with reading the lyrics to ensure the words were accurate and in line with the real performance of the song. The researcher listened to the song multiple times to get acquainted with its nuances and make sure none was overlooked. During the process, the researcher meticulously recorded especially specific instances of metaphorical language. The researcher also consulted accepted theories of figurative language to confirm that the selected data were relevant and in conformity with scholarly conventions.

The phase of analysis for the research was equally meticulous and exhaustive. The researcher began by carefully selecting and grouping the pertinent and dependable content based on specific figurative language categories. These arranged data were then transferred into a data sheet to simplify analysis and organization. In the end, the researcher carefully examined the material in line with the objectives of the study and produced perceptive conclusions. The results were shown methodically and coherently to ensure readers' clarity and accessibility.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on Perrine's framework (1969), there are twelve types of figurative language. However, only seven types were identified in the song Ghost of You. These types include metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, symbol, hyperbole, and irony. To further elaborate on the types and functions identified in the song, specific examples are included for clarity and deeper understanding.

Stanza 1

Line 1: "Here I am waking up"

Line 2: "Still can't sleep on your side"

Line 3: "There's your coffee cup"

Line 4: "The lipstick stain fades with time"

Line 5: If I can dream long enough, you'd tell me I'd be just fine

Line 6: I'll be just fine

In this verse, the songwriter combines personification, symbolism and concrete imagery to describe the slow but painful process of losing a loved one.

The phrase “The lipstick stain fades with time” uses personification, which gives inanimate objects human

characteristics (lipstick stain can “fade” slowly, as if it has a will). This represents the slow fading and loss of memories and emotional bonds. Although a lipstick stain is just an inanimate object, in this context it symbolizes the presence of a loved one that is still present in everyday life, even though it will fade away over time. This “fading” process implies sadness and helplessness, as there is no stopping the passage of time and the fading of memories.

In addition to personification, the author also uses symbolism through objects such as “coffee cup” and “lipstick stain”. These two objects become physical reminders of the intimacy and presence of a loved one, even though that person has left. The surviving coffee cup shows the routine that was once practiced together, while the lipstick stain on the cup is a trace of presence, leaving a mark of warmth that is now just a memory. This symbol reinforces the sense of loss that remains tangible in the simple objects around us.

The lyrics in Line 5 and 6 use hyperbole to emphasize the overwhelming longing and unrealistic desire to be back with the person who has left. By saying that “if I could dream long enough,” it is as if the author wants to prolong the dream in order to hear the person's words of comfort. This exaggerates the ability of dreams to provide comfort or bring back the person's tangible presence, showing the deep longing and sense of hopelessness in dealing with the reality of loss. The songwriter successfully portrays the grieving process as a slow and uneasy emotional journey. Everyday objects become silent witnesses to the profound loss, while the unrealistic hope of staying together in dreams shows the unwillingness to truly let go of the lingering memories.

Stanza 2 (Reff)

Line 1: "So I drown it out like I always do"

Line 2: "Dancing through our house"

Line 3: "With the ghost of you"

Line 4: "And I chase it down"

Line 5: "With a shot of truth"

The songwriter uses metaphor, symbolism and simile connected with bar culture imagery to describe the emotional process of dealing with loss.

The phrase “the ghost of you” is a metaphor that shows the emotional presence of a loved one who still “haunts” the narrator, rather than a literal ghost. This metaphor illustrates how the memory and sense of loss still looms over the narrator's daily life, emphasizing that someone may be physically gone, but their memories

remain, filling the empty spaces in the narrator's home and heart.

The line "Dancing through our house" adds a symbolic layer, where the act of dancing in the house becomes the narrator's way of seeking relief and catharsis in the midst of loss. The act of dancing, which is usually synonymous with happiness, here becomes a contrast to the sadness felt, showing the narrator's attempt to stay alive and find a moment of peace amongst the pain of loss.

The phrase "So I drown it out like I always do" describes the narrator's attempt to drown or ignore the pain and memories through distraction or old habits. This suggests a coping mechanism that may not be healthy, but is the narrator's way of dealing with a difficult reality.

Furthermore, at: "And I chase it down with a shot of truth," the author uses a simile inspired by bar culture, where "chase it down" usually means drinking another drink after the liquor to reduce the bitterness. Here, the narrator uses the metaphor of alcohol to describe how he tries to deal with the harsh reality. "Shot of truth" represents the harsh reality of loss that must finally be faced honestly, even though it is painful. It shows the inner battle between the desire to avoid the pain (drowning the feelings) and the need to accept and process the loss in a real way.

The whole verse captures the combination of suffering, longing and the narrator's journey towards acceptance. The songwriter uses the imagery of home to show a personal space that is still full of memories, and places deep emotional experiences into the context of everyday actions such as dancing and drinking, so that the audience can feel close to the narrative.

Stanza 3

Line 1: "Cleaning up today"

Line 2: "Found that old Zeppelin shirt"

Line 3: "You wore when you ran away"

Line 4: "And no one could feel your hurt"

The songwriter uses metonymy, symbolism, and themes of emotional isolation to portray regret and deep sadness for the distance that was once created.

In "Found that old Zeppelin shirt," the Zeppelin shirt functions as a metonymy, representing the memory and emotional attachment to the person who has left. Instead of directly mentioning the person, the songwriter mentions the shirt that the person once wore, so that the

object becomes a substitute or representation of the person in the narrator's memory. This metonymy is effective in presenting the sense of loss concretely, as a simple object like a t-shirt can trigger a wave of nostalgia and sadness for the loss that has occurred.

The phrase "You wore when you ran away" indicates the act of leaving physically or emotionally, which could mean running away from home, staying away due to conflict, or withdrawing from a relationship due to emotional distress. This sentence carries shades of regret and a deep sense of loss, as the act of "ran away" indicates a painful moment of separation.

Meanwhile, the line "And no one could feel your hurt" underlines the theme of emotional isolation experienced by the person before leaving. It suggests that although the person may have been around many people, no one really understood the pain they were experiencing. This emphasizes that pain is often hidden, and people around are not always sensitive or able to sense the burden a person is carrying, which can lead to drastic actions such as walking away.

Overall, the verse builds a regretful picture of the emotional and physical distance created by invisible pain. Through the metonymy of the Zeppelin t-shirt as a memory trigger, the narrator is brought back to memories of the past that confirm that a sense of loss and alienation can be imprinted on small objects left behind.

Stanza 4

Line 1: "We're too young, too dumb"

Line 2: "To know things like love"

Line 3: "But I know better now (Better now)"

The songwriter uses irony, repetition and a sarcastic tone to highlight the ignorance of youth and the valuable lessons that come through bitter experiences.

The phrase "We're too young, too dumb" is repeated to emphasize the self-awareness of youthful ignorance and immaturity in understanding love. The repetition of the word "too" shows how the narrator at that time felt that he didn't have enough maturity to truly understand the meaning of love, and now realizes this limitation. This phrase also sets a tone of regret and self-reflection, as if the narrator is laughing at himself in the past.

"To know things like love" adds an element of irony to the lyrics. When they were young, they believed

they were in love, when in fact they didn't understand what love really was. The irony lies in the fact that they believed they were experiencing true love, but later life experiences proved that their understanding at the time was incorrect.

The line "But I know better now (Better now)" shows the emotional growth and knowledge gained after going through the pain and failure of relationships. The narrator realizes that what they considered love at the time was actually just a narrow interpretation based on their ignorance as young people. The phrase "know better now" emphasizes the change in perspective after learning from the experience, so that the pain of the relationship actually gives the narrator new insights into a more mature love.

The sarcastic tone appears subtly in these lyrics, as the narrator seems to admit their mistakes in a bitter tone but with the calmness of someone who has accepted the harsh reality. This shows that bitter experiences not only cause wounds, but also mature a person in understanding emotions and relationships.

Stanza 5

Line 1: "That my feet don't dance"

Line 2: "Like they did with you"

The songwriter uses a simple yet powerful metaphor to describe the deep sense of loss and emotional change after the departure of a loved one.

The phrase "my feet don't dance" does not mean that the narrator's feet are completely immobilized, but rather describes the inability to feel the joy, freedom and emotional connection as before. Dancing is often associated with happiness, freedom, and light, carefree moments. By saying that their feet "no longer danced," the narrator shows how the loss of a loved one has deadened a part of them that was once alive and vibrant.

The phrase "like they did with you" makes it clear that the happiness the narrator once felt can only arise when with that person. That person's presence is what allows the narrator to feel joy in full, and without that person, the narrator loses the ability to feel happiness in the same way. This emphasizes the emptiness and emotional chasm left by the departure of a loved one. This metaphor also creates an emotional contrast between a past filled with joy and a present filled with loss and emptiness. The usually light-hearted and fun activity of dancing has now turned into a symbol of lost emotional attachment,

suggesting that even simple activities no longer bring the same joy because the person is gone.

CONCLUSION

Seven forms of figurative language were identified in the lyrics of the song Ghost of You by 5 Seconds of Summer, including metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, irony, symbol, and hyperbole, as determined by the analysis. The primary motif of the song, which is loss and sadness, is effectively communicated through the use of this figurative language. Metaphor that describes the emotional presence of a deceased figure, symbolism that presents lingering memories, and hyperbole that emphasizes longing are all examples of figurative language that emphasizes profound emotional meaning.

The lyricist's capacity to creatively process language in order to convey universal emotions, including grief, longing, and regret, is demonstrated through the use of figurative language in this composition. This song achieves a profound emotional impact on its audience by integrating melody with lyrics. The utilization of figurative language in various musical disciplines could be compared in future research to discover unique creative patterns in contemporary art music.

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