

## AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOUND IN TWENTY ONE PILOTS SONG LYRICS

**Irenius Napa<sup>1</sup>, I Komang Sulatra<sup>2</sup>, I Made Perdana Scholastika<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3</sup>English Study Program, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Mahasaraswati Denpasar University, Jalan Kamboja No.11A Denpasar, Bali-Indonesia

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>[irennapa@gmail.com](mailto:irennapa@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[soelatra01@yahoo.com](mailto:soelatra01@yahoo.com), <sup>3</sup>[perdana.skolastika@unmas.ac.id](mailto:perdana.skolastika@unmas.ac.id)

**Abstract**—This study intended to analyze figurative language found in the song lyrics of *Scaled and Icy* album by Twenty One Pilots. The objectives of this research are find out types of figurative language and analyze their meanings as found in the song lyrics of *Scaled and Icy* album by Twenty One Pilots. There were two theories used in this research, such as; the first theory proposed by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974) was used to find out of figurative language used in the song lyrics of *Scaled and Icy* album by Twenty One Pilots, and the second theory proposed by Leech (1981) was used to analyze the meaning of figurative language found in song lyrics of *Scaled and Icy* album by Twenty One Pilots. The method used in collecting the data was observation method. The data were collected by browsing and downloading song lyrics from internet, reading and understanding the song lyrics, and taking note and classifying the lyrics that contain of figurative language. The collected data were analyzed descriptively by using qualitative method. After analyzing the song lyrics, this study found eight types of figurative language used in *Scaled and Icy* album by Twenty One Pilots. There were eight types of figurative language used in the song lyrics by Twenty One Pilots, they were 2 of simile (9%), 2 of metaphor (9%), 4 of synecdoche (18%), 1 of metonymy (4,5%), 8 of hyperbole (37%), 2 of irony (9%), 1 of paradox (4,5%), and 2 of allusion (9%). There were three of meanings found from seven types of meanings, they were connotative meaning, affective meaning, and reflected meaning.

**Keywords**—Figurative Language, Song Lyrics, Meaning

### 1. Introduction

Language is a system of conventional spoken, written symbols used by humans to communicate. Generally people need to communicate, to interact and to get information from other people by using language. The people can share their opinion, experience, ideas, and emotions by language. Kreidler (1998:5) stated that “Language is complex and subtle of expressing whatever its speakers need to express and capable of changing to meet the changing needs of speakers.” Thus, the language which can build the imagination of listener, usually it called figurative language.

Figurative language is a language that uses words or expressions with a meaning is different from the literal interpretation. According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974: 283) figurative is sometimes called metaphorical language or simply metaphor because its Greek ancestor “Metapherein” means to carry the meaning beyond its literal meaning. Figurative language used in literary works to demonstrate the creativity of the author also as the beauty of language itself. Figurative language can be found in most writings such as poetries, dramas and the common writing in song lyrics. One of the way to communicate with language is

through song lyrics. Song lyrics is not only entertaining the listener, but it also has some meanings that deliver to the listener in implicitly.

In this study the writer analyzed the song lyrics of Twenty One Pilots album “Scaled and Icy” entitled: *Good day, Choker, Shy Away, The Outside, Saturday, Never Take It, Mulberry Street, Formidable, Bounce Man, No Chances and Redecorate*. Scaled and Icy is a new album by Twenty One Pilots. It was released on May 21, 2021, and penned by Tylor Joseph. The writer chose those songs because many figurative language that used in those lyrics describe about the condition and situation that the singer got. The readers including the writer sometimes found some difficulties in understanding the meaning of figurative language in the song lyrics by Twenty One Pilots.

## **2. Literature Review**

This part consists with the review of some previous studies that have relation and positive contribution to this research. The first study was conducted by Jaya (2020) entitled “An Analysis of Figurative Language Used in the Song Lyrics of Jason Mraz’s Album Entitled “Know”. There were two aims of Jaya’s study, those are to find out types of figurative language and the meaning in the Jason Mraz’s song lyrics. Her study used the observation method to collect the data and used qualitative method to analyse the data. Jaya (2020) applied the theory proposed by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) to find out the types of figurative language and the theory by Leech (1981) to analyze the meaning that contains of figurative language.

The second study was conducted by Rahmat (2020) entitled “An Analysis of Figurative Language Used in the Song Lyrics by Ziggy Marley’s Album Entitled Fly Rasta”. His study has two objectives of the study, such as; identifying the types of figurative language and finding out the meaning of figurative language in the song lyrics by Ziggy Marley’s album entitled “Fly Rasta”. His study used qualitative method to analyze the data by using the theory from Knickerbocker (1963) to find out types of figurative language and also the theory of meaning by Leech (1981).

The third is an article written by Wedayanti (2021) entitled An Analysis of Personification Found in John Meyer’s Selected Song Lyrics. International Journal of HUSOCPUMENT. There were two aims of Wedayanti’s study, those are to find out personification and the meaning in John Mayer’s selected song lyrics. Her study used observation method to collect the data and used qualitative method to analyses the data. Wedayanti (2021) applied the theory proposed by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) to find out the personification and supported theory of meaning by (Leech, 1981).

## **3. Methods**

The data source of this study was taken from the Scaled and Icy album by Twenty One Pilots. The data source was chosen because his album has many types of figurative language in every its song lyrics. This study used observation method to collect the data. There were some steps of collecting the data in this study are:

First, browsing and downloading the song lyrics of album “Scaled and Icy” by Twenty One Pilots from internet. Second, listening the song carefully, watching the video on YouTube and repeatedly to understand the contents of the song. Third, taking note and then classifying the word, phrase and sentence that contain of figurative language

The method in analyzing the data in this study was descriptive qualitative method. The was applied to describe the situation that was observed more specifically, transparently, and in depth. There are some steps to analyze the data. First, identifyng the types offigurative language found in Twenty One Pilots song lyrics by using the theory Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974). Second, analyzing the meaning of figurative language found in “Scaled and Icy” album by Twenty One Pilots by theory of Leech (1981) to support the understanding of meaning from that song lyrics. In presenting the data of this research, this study used both formal and informal presentation.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

This part showed the result of figurative language that contained in the song lyrics of “Scaled and Icy” album by Twenty One Pilots. In this study the researcher analyses all the song lyrics of “Scaled and Icy” album namely; *Good day, Choker, Shy Away, The Outside, Saturday, Never Take It, Mulberry Street, Formidable, Bounce Man, No Chances and Redecorate*. This study found eight types of figurative language from ten types of figurative language based on the theory of Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974: 283-284) in “Scaled and Icy” album; those are simile, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole, irony, paradox and allusion. Those song lyrics was analyzed by writer using the theory of Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974: 283-284), and theory of meaning supported by Leech (1981).

Based on the types of figurative language above, the researcher analyzed all the song lyrics that found in the “Scaled and Icy” album by Twenty One Pilots, and types of figurative language serves in the table below. The table below presents eight types of figurative language that found in the “Scaled and Icy” album by Twenty One Pilots.

The researcher applied the formulation below to find the percentages of every figurative language used in “Scaled and Icy” album by Twenty One Pilots.

Figurative Language	Occurrences	Percentages
Simile	2	9%
Metaphor	2	9%
Synecdoche	4	18%
Metonymy	1	4,5%
Hyperbole	8	37%
Irony	2	9%
Paradox	1	4,5%
Allusion	2	9%\
Total	22	100%

Table 1. Types of Figurative Language

There are only 8 examples of figurative language presented in the discussions.

##### Simile

Simile is a figure of speech involving comparison, it draws resemblance with the help of the words like and as. (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974:283).The data of simile are presented below.

##### Data 1

I am a Megalodon, **ocean's feelin' like a pond** (Like a pond)  
Swimmin' like a beast, underneath, they be clingin' on (Clingin' on)  
Meteoric rise in prehistoric times  
(The outside, line:23)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric “ocean’s feeling like a pond”. This lyric is a kind of simile because there is a comparison of the wide between ocean and pond by using the word “like”. Ocean is a large area of water between the continents while the pond is a small body of still water formed naturally.

Based on the theory proposed by Leech (1974) the expression “ocean’s feeling like a pond” is classified into connotative meaning because the meaning beyond of the literal meaning. The song writer describes the wide of the ocean is the same as a pond. As we know, a pond are made by humans, which are made according to what we want. Connotatively, the writer used the words oceans and pond to show our lives which are full of challenges. Thus, from the lyrics above the writer wants to convey a thing or a problem that is considered big or serious can be resolved as we expect.

## **Metaphor**

Metaphor is a figure of speech which concisely compares two things. It is considered implied comparison without used words “like” or “as”. (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974:283). The data of metaphor are presented below.

### **Data 2**

In my house shoes in a foot race  
In this house, got feng shui  
Get the door to blow you away  
**Flamethrower, you are switchblade**  
(No chances, line: 6)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative language expression in the lyric “you are switchblade”. This lyric is a kind metaphor because the song writer compares someone with the “switchblade” without used word “like or as” to compare them. “Switchblade” is a type of knife with folding and sliding blade contained in the handle which is opened automatically by a spring when button, lever, or switch on the handle.

Song lyrics above has a connotative meaning because the meaning in this sentence is beyond the literal meaning. The song write compares directly a person with switchblade. As we know, switchblade are used by human for survival whereas other for hunting, camping or for everyday tasks. The meaning of the song lyrics above doesn’t belongs to the switchblade itself but to describe something identical to the switchblade. Connotatively, the word “switchblade” represent faster, safer and stronger. Thus, the meaning of the lyric “you are switchblade” is the writer tries to convey that he felt safer because of someone who always care about his life.

## **Synecdoche**

Synecdoche is a figure of speech using a part for the whole. (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974:284). The data of synecdoche are presented below.

### **Data 3**

He says he likes an open schedule, but he mostly hates it  
If you’re running to his room, take a breath before you break in  
**Put your ear up to the door**, tell me, can you hear him saying?  
( Redecorate, Line:43)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric “put your ear up to the door”. This lyric is a kind of synecdoche because used a part to explain the whole. The song writer use “ear” is part of a human body to explain the whole body. “Ear” is a part of human body as the organ of hearing and balance in humans.

Song lyrics above has connotative meaning because the meaning beyond the literal meaning. In this lyric, the song writer used the word “ear” to explain the whole body. The song lyric is illogical since put somebody ear to the door. As we know, in human there is no door. “Door” is a hinged, sliding or revolving barrier at the entrance of the building, room, or vehicle. The door in this song lyrics describe something happen in human life. Connotatively, ”door” refers to the someone attitude. The meaning is the song writer hopes that someone must focus on something happened that she or he facing.

## **Metonymy**

Metonymy is a figure of speech which describes one thing by using a term for another thing which closely associated with it, (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974:284). The data metonymy are presented below.

### **Data 4**

We want you home in one piece now (Run away, run away)

Mm, ba-da-dum-ba-da-dum-bum

**We get bodies every day**

(No changes, line:32)

From the song lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric “we get bodies everyday”. This lyric is a kind of metonymy because this sentence is describe one thing using another thing closely. The word “bodies” mean a person more than one. Actually, when we hear a body, of course our mind will thinking immediately goes to human being.

The song lyric above has connotative meaning because the meaning is beyond the literal or dictionary meaning. The song writer used the word “bodies” that is related to couple of person. As we know, “bodies” is the physical structure of person or an animal, including the bones, flesh and organs. The word “bodies” in this song lyrics do not describe each part of their bodies, but the song writer explain something that related with their relationship. Connotatively, the song writer tries to convey that he and his girlfriend always together in every day.

### **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is an exaggeration used for special effect, (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974:284). The data of hyperbole are presented below.

### **Data 5**

Today's a good day, never know, never know

When the next one will show, it'll show

**So I'ma sing my soul, I'ma sing my soul** (Da-da-da)

(Good Day, line:21)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric “I'ma sing my soul”. This lyric is a kind of hyperbole because the song writer exaggerates his soul be able to singing. As we know, the word “soul” is one of spiritual of human being.

This song lyric belongs to connotative meaning because the meaning is beyond of the literal meaning. The song lyrics is illogical since the song writer describes he is soul can singing. As we know, soul is one of spiritual of human being which do not singing. The word singing of this song lyrics belongs to happiness of song writer. Connotatively, the song writer describes himself happiness.

### **Irony**

Irony is statement of which the real meaning is completely opposed its professed, or surface meaning, (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974: 284). The data of irony are presented below.

### **Data 6**

She had a plans to change her name

Just not the traditional way

Haunted by a couple of big mistakes

**She covers all the dents with the way she decorates**

(Redecote, line:24)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric “she covers all the dents with the way she decorates”. This lyric is kind of irony because the song lyric opposed of surface meaning. As we know, the word “dents” is a slight hollow in a hard, even surface made by a blow or by exertion of pressure and the word “decorates” is make something look more attractive by adding extra items or image to it.

The song lyrics above has connotative meaning because the meaning is beyond the literal meaning. The song writer describes that his girlfriend tries to cover all of her mistakes until the way she decorates it. The word dents in this song lyrics explain his girlfriend mistakes in the past, while the word decorates is explain

how his girlfriend in covered all her problems or mistakes. Connotatively, the song writer tries to convey that his girlfriend did something to cover up his mistake.

#### **Data 7**

##### **Self-sabotage is a sweet romance**

Seems like all I'm worth is what I'm able to withstand  
Sooner I can realize the pain is just a middleman  
(Choker, line:18)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric “self-sabotage is a sweet romance”. This lyric is kind of irony because it is opposed of the surface meaning “self-sabotage is a sweet romance”. As we know, “self-sabotage” is something that make us feel stressed and anxious when we are trying to achieve something important, which trap us and keep us from doing what we need to do, but “sweet romance” is a sweet relationship between two people who are in love.

Song lyrics above has reflected meaning because the meaning is responses to another cases. The song writer describe self-sabotage is a sweet romance, but the reality is nobody who are in love have a good relationship if both of them do a self-sabotage because self-sabotage is kind of things that bring split for the future. Reflectively, this song lyrics has responses in other cases that a couple of person who are in love will not get a better relationship if each of them do a self-sabotage. The meaning is the song writer supposed that self-sabotage is not good for a couple of person who are in love. Thus, the statement above is the way to show for the hearer that he have his own unique way to overcome his problem.

#### **Paradox**

Paradox is a statement whose surface obvious meaning seem to be illogical, even absurd but which make a good sense upon closer examination, (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974: 284). The data of paradox are presented below.

#### **Data 8**

As a shadow cast upon the ground where you'll eventually  
Lay forever, but the day goes on, the sun moves behind you  
**You get taller, bolder, stronger, and the rearview only blinds you**  
(Choker, line: 40)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric “you get taller, bolder, stronger, and the rearview only blinds you”. This lyric is a kind of paradox because this sentence is contradiction each other. This sentence seems to not make any sense. The paradox appears when the word “blinds” should not be able to exist in this sentence, because the word “blinds” is people who are unable to see, while the words “taller, bolder and stronger” refers to someone is still strong, still alive or in a good condition.

Song lyrics above has connotative meaning because the meaning is not in literal meaning. The song lyrics above is illogical since describes there is someone who are taller, bolder and stronger be able to blinds because of their rearview. Connotatively, the “rearview” represents to the something happened in the past. The meaning is the song writer tries to conveys that days goes by, so don’t think about something happened in the past, but they must keep up moving, never give up until they find a peace in their life.

#### **Allusion**

Allusion is a reference to some well know place, even or person. Not comparison in the exact sense, but a figure in the sense that implies more than its narrow meaning, (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974: 284). The data of allusion are presented below.

#### **Data 9**

**I am Megalodon**, ocean's feelin' like a pond  
Swimmin' like a beast underneath, they be clingin' on  
Metoric rise in prehistoric times  
Now that meteor is comin'  
(The outside, line:23)

From the lyrics above it is found figurative expression in the lyric "I am Megalodon". This lyric is kind of allusion because this sentence is reference to the known thing. As we know, Megalodon is the largest shark to have ever lived in the world's ocean also a megalodon is an ancient and extinct species of shark.

Song lyrics above has connotative meaning because the meaning is beyond from the literal meaning. The song lyrics describes the song writer himself as a megalodon. However, a Megalodon identical to largest and strongest animal which cannot defeat by other animal in the ocean. The song writer conveys himself indirect way to describes himself as Megalodon. The meaning of this song lyrics is the songwriter describes himself like a Megalodon which are biggest, strongest and nobody can defeat him.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, the writer concluded that the Scaled and Icy album by Twenty One Pilots, consist of eight types of figurative language, such as; Simile, Metaphor, Synecdoche, Metonymy, Hyperbole, Irony, Paradox and Allusion. The writer found twenty two data of figurative language. There are two of simile, two of metaphor, four of synecdoche, one of metonymy, eight of hyperbole, two of irony, one of paradox, and two of allusion. The dominant types of figurative language that exist in the album is hyperbole, because the song writer many use an exaggeration effect in the lyrics which could not possibly happen in real life. There are three meaning that used in Scaled and Icy album by Twenty pilots, such as; connotative meaning, affective meaning and reflected meaning. Based on the data above, the writer concluded that the Scaled and Icy album by Twenty One Pilots used figurative language to convey implicit messages and hidden life values.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Genius. 2022. Retrieved from <https://genius.com/albums/Twenty-one-pilots/Scaled-and-icy>
- [2] Jaya (2020). An Analysis of Figurative Language Used in the Song Lyrics of Jason Mraz's. Thesis. Denpasar: English Study Program Faculty of Foreign Languages Mahasaraswati Denpasar University.
- [3] Knickerbocker, K, L and H, Williard Reninger. 1974. *Interpreting Literature*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winton.
- [4] Kreidler, Charles. 1998. *Introducing English Semantic*. London: Routledge.
- [5] Leech, Geofrey. 1981. Semantics: *The Study of Meaning*. second Edition. London: penguin book
- [6] Nidi., Utami, Verayanti & Maharani (2022). An Analysis of Personification in The Some Selected Poems by Robert Frost. International Journal of HUSOCPUMENT. <https://www.publication.idsolutions.co.id/journals/index.php/husocpument/article/view/110>
- [7] Rahmat (2020). An analysis of Figurative Language Used in the Song lyric of Ziggy Marle's. Thesis. Denpasar: English Study Program Mahasaraswati Denpasar University.
- [8] "Scaled and Icy". Acces on march, 19<sup>th</sup> 2022. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scaled\\_and\\_Icy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scaled_and_Icy)
- [9] "Twenty One Pilots". Acces on march, 22<sup>th</sup> 2022. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty\\_One\\_Pilots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty_One_Pilots)

[10] Wedayanti (2021). An Analysis of Personification Found in John Meyer's Selected Song Lyrics. International Journal of HUSOCPUMENT. <https://www.publication.idsolutions.co.id/journals/index.php/husocpument/article/view/28>