



The Analysis of Hyperbole Found in Live in the Lou Album by Story of the Year

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the use of hyperbole in Story of the Year's album, *Live in the Lou*, with an emphasis on its role in enhancing emotional expression and the intensity of the lyrical message. Specifically, this study will identify various manifestations of hyperbole in song lyrics, classify the types used, and analyze their meaning and communicative function within the narrative and musical context of each song. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative, focusing on textual analysis of the song lyrics. The theory of figurative language, particularly hyperbole, is applied to analyze the data. The results show that hyperboles are frequently used to convey intense feelings such as love, anger, pain, and despair. These exaggerations help the band express emotional depth and connect with listeners on a personal level. It is concluded that hyperbole plays a significant role in enhancing the aesthetic and emotional value of the songs in the album.

Keywords: *hyperbole, song lyrics, meaning*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan hiperbola dalam album Story of the Year, *Live in the Lou*, dengan penekanan pada perannya dalam meningkatkan ekspresi emosional dan intensitas pesan lirik. Secara khusus, penelitian ini akan mengidentifikasi berbagai manifestasi hiperbola dalam lirik lagu, mengklasifikasikan jenis yang digunakan, dan menganalisis makna dan fungsi komunikatifnya dalam konteks naratif dan musikal setiap lagu. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif, dengan fokus pada analisis tekstual lirik lagu. Teori bahasa kiasan, khususnya hiperbola, diterapkan untuk menganalisis data. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa hiperbola sering digunakan untuk menyampaikan perasaan yang intens seperti cinta, kemarahan, kesakitan, dan keputusasaan. Lelucon ini membantu band mengekspresikan kedalaman emosional dan terhubung dengan pendengar pada tingkat personal. Disimpulkan bahwa hiperbola memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan nilai estetika dan emosional dari lagu-lagu dalam album tersebut.

Kata kunci: *hiperbola, lirik lagu, makna*

Introduction

Language is an essential system that enables humans to communicate, process ideas, and make sense of the world around them. It is much more than a mere collection of words; language acts as a vital bridge connecting thoughts and emotions between individuals. Its primary functions include exchanging information, expressing feelings, fostering social relationships, and enhancing cognitive abilities such as reasoning and reflection. Moreover, language plays a fundamental role in transmitting knowledge and experiences across generations, making it not only a tool for communication but also a cornerstone of human civilization and our interaction with reality. Among the most sophisticated expressions of this linguistic capacity is the art of literature.

Literature, as one of language's highest achievements, is understood as carefully crafted writing distinguished by inventive analogies, varied expressions, diverse grammatical structures, rhymes, and distinctive word choices, as defined by Meyer (1997:1). One common linguistic device used in figurative language is hyperbole, which involves deliberate exaggeration to create dramatic or humorous effects rather than to convey literal meaning. This device is frequently employed by singers and performers in entertainment and propaganda to intensify emotional impact, adding layers of drama or comedy. Such uses fall under the study of semantics, the branch of linguistics concerned with meaning in language.

Knickerbocker (1963) noted that words become more vivid and engaging when they display human qualities. This observation is particularly evident in the music of The Chainsmokers, whose songs resonate strongly with younger audiences due to their meaningful and relatable lyrics. According to Hornby (1995) song is a piece of music with words that is sung. A song is a composition made up of lyrics and music, with the intent of the lyrics being sung, for the purpose of producing a proportionate feeling or emotion in relation to a particular matter. Likewise, the band Story of the Year is celebrated for their poetic command of language, skillfully expressing emotions and imagination in ways that listeners can deeply connect with. Their use of clear, powerful words elevates their music beyond simple pop, transforming it into a medium that evokes profound feelings.

Hyperbole, as a figure of speech, is widely used in everyday language to express intensity—phrases like “I’m starving” or “I’ve told you a million times” are common examples. In music, hyperbole amplifies the emotional message of a song, making it more relatable and impactful. Songwriters and performers use exaggeration to underline extreme emotions such as love, pain, anger, or desperation, drawing listeners into the emotional world of the song and fostering empathy with the experiences being conveyed.

Previous study consistently demonstrate an interest in the analysis of hyperbole within the context of song lyrics and literary works. Research by Astina et al. (2021),

Sari et al. (2021), Utami et al. (2021), and Dewi (2022) all focus on song lyrics from various albums (The Chainsmokers, Sempiternal, Divinely Uninspired to a Hellish Extent, and Adele's 19 & 21 albums), while Bian et al. (2021) examine the drama "Romeo and Juliet." Generally, these studies adopt a descriptive qualitative method, utilizing Knickerbocker and Reninger's (1963) theory of figurative language for identification and Leech's (1981) theory of meaning for analysis of hyperbole's meaning, with the primary goal of identifying the types and interpreting the meaning of the hyperboles found. This consistency in approach and theoretical framework indicates a well-established methodology within the field of figurative linguistic studies.

In line with previous research, this study also employs a descriptive qualitative method and specifically applies Leech's (1981) theory of meaning to analyze the hyperboles found in song lyrics. However, this research distinguishes itself by selecting a unique object of study, namely the "Live in the Lou" album by Story of the Year, which has not been previously analyzed in the context of hyperbole. Furthermore, while previous studies primarily focus on identification and meaning, this study explicitly adds a dimension of analysis by aiming to interpret the functions of these hyperbolic expressions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of hyperbole's rhetorical role in song lyrics.

This research aims to fill that gap by analyzing hyperbole in Live in the Lou, a live album by Story of the Year. Unlike studio recordings, live performances introduce additional elements such as vocal intonation, emotional delivery, and crowd interaction, all of which can influence how hyperbole is perceived and experienced. By integrating textual and performative analysis, this interdisciplinary study combines stylistics and musicology to offer a richer understanding of hyperbole's function in emotionally charged music contexts. Furthermore, focusing on post-hardcore music—a subcultural genre often overlooked in linguistic and literary scholarship—reveals how hyperbole serves not only as an artistic device but also as a cathartic outlet for both performers and audiences. This exploration broadens our understanding of language's crucial role in human emotional expression.

Method

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze non-numerical data in the form of song lyrics from the album Live in the Lou by Story of the Year, focusing specifically on the identification and interpretation of hyperbole. Data were collected through documentation of transcribed and verified lyrics, then analyzed using figurative language theories by Knickerbocker & Reninger (1963) and

Leech's (1981) theory of meaning. Each hyperbolic expression was examined for its function—such as expressing emotion, adding emphasis, or creating drama—while considering the lyrical context. Triangulation with previous literature and similar studies was used to strengthen the validity of the findings, resulting in a deeper understanding of how hyperbole enriches the emotional and poetic qualities of lyrics in the post-hardcore rock genre.

Result and Discussion

Hyperbole, defined as an exaggerated word for special effect by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963: 367), is a widely recognized and utilized form of figurative language, commonly found in daily life, music, and entertainment to add drama, comedy, or even for propaganda purposes, essentially using overstated statements to create or express strong feelings. Leech (1981) describes meaning as the intended, expressed, or signified message or idea, a term derived from “mean,” which itself carries multiple distinctions. An analysis of the “Live in the Lou” album revealed a total of 48 hyperbolic sentences across its 12 songs.

Table 1. The Occurrence of Referential Function

No	Song Title	Onccurence of Hyperbole	Percentage of Hyperbole
1	And The Hero Will Drown	6	12.5%
2	Divide The Conquer	4	8,33%
3	Dive Right In	3	6,25%
4	Anthem of Our Dying Day	6	12,5%
5	Falling Down	2	4,16%
6	Burning Years	1	2,08%
7	The Heart of Polka is Still Beating	7	14,5%
8	Sidewalks	3	6,25%
9	Swallow The Knife	5	10,4%
10	Until The Day I Day	6	12,5%
11	In The Shadows	2	4,16%
12	Page Avenue	3	6,25%
Total		48	100%

This study examined the use of hyperbole as a figure of speech by applying the theory proposed by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963: 367), with the results summarized in a table. Additionally, the aspects of the data concerning the occurrence of meaning were analyzed according to Leech's theory (1981) and described in detail. The table further demonstrates how these analyzed components contribute to the overall interpretation of meaning.

A study utilizing Knickerbocker and Reninger's (1963) theory identified a total of 48 hyperboles within the 12 songs on Story of the Year's "Live in the Lou" album. The distribution varied, with "The Heart of Polka Is Still Beating" having the most (14.5%). Songs like "and the hero will drown," "Anthem of Our Dying Day," and "Until the Day I Die" each contained 12.5% of the hyperboles. Conversely, "Burning Years" had the lowest proportion at 2.08%, while "Falling down" and "In the Shadows" each had 4.16%. "Divide The Conquer" accounted for 8.33%, "Swallow the Knife" for 10.4%, and "Dive Right In," "Sidewalks," and "Page Avenue" each contributed 6.25%

Discussion

Data 1: "*Swim In the Smoke*" (*The Hero Will Drown-line 11*)

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that significantly exaggerates an idea or situation for dramatic effect or emphasis, and is not meant to be interpreted literally. In the lyrics of "And the Hero Will Drown," the phrase "*Swim in the smoke*" is a strong example of hyperbole. This phrase is hyperbolic because humans cannot literally "swim" in smoke as they would in water; smoke is a gas that does not allow for swimming. It is an exaggeration used to describe an extremely unlikely, suffocating, or dangerous situation, where someone is trapped or must move through a highly uncondusive or chaotic environment. Physically, this action is impossible, thus emphasizing its figurative effect.

According to Leech (1981), the hyperbole in this phrase falls under Connotative Meaning. Connotative Meaning refers to the additional emotional or cultural associations carried by a word, beyond its conceptual meaning. Here, the word "smoke" carries strong connotations of obscurity, danger, chaos, or a suffocating environment, while the action "swim," usually associated with relatively free movement in water, when juxtaposed with "smoke," creates an image of struggle in extremely unfavorable conditions. The intended meaning is not about physical swimming, but rather about struggling or existing in a very chaotic, dangerous, or suffocating situation.

Data 2: ***“And This Blood Still Running Through Our Veins”*** (*The Heart Of Polka Is Still Beating-line 6*)

The phrase *“And this blood still running through our veins”* can be considered hyperbole when viewed within the overall context of a song that likely discusses a larger essence or spirit rather than just biological function. Although blood literally flows through our veins, this phrase is used to emphasize the vital force, an unshakeable core, or the continuous essence of something (for example, an idea, a legacy, or resistance). It’s an amplification of the idea of undying vitality and continuity.

According to Leech’s (1981) theory of meaning, this phrase best fits the category of Connotative Meaning. Connotative meaning relates to the additional associations and feelings attached to words beyond their basic meaning. In this context, “blood running through our veins” doesn’t just mean biological circulation, but evokes strong connotations of life, strength, heritage, an unyielding essence, deep identity, or a continuing spirit of resistance. This hyperbole highlights how the core or essence of something remains alive and active, despite potential challenges. Its essential meaning in the song is that there is an essence, spirit, or core strength that is still very much alive and continuously pulsating within them, symbolizing the continuity and resilience of an identity or struggle. Literally, the sentence means that this red fluid is still flowing within our blood vessels. Its connotative meaning encompasses unshakeable vitality, the enduring essence of life, a strong legacy, a deep identity, and an undying spirit of resistance or continuity.

Data 3: ***“Just A Ghost To The world”*** (*Anthem Of Our Dying Day-line 7*)

The phrase *“just a ghost to the world”* is a striking hyperbole, given that the speaker is not literally a ghost or spirit. This comparison is an extreme exaggeration used to convey a profound sense of isolation. Describing oneself as a “ghost” is a dramatic way to state that they feel completely unseen, insignificant, or disconnected from interaction with others and from existence in the world.

Based on Leech’s (1981) theory of meaning, this phrase aligns best with Connotative Meaning. Connotative meaning pertains to the additional associations and emotional nuances attached to a word, beyond its basic definition. The term “ghost” here does not refer to a spiritual entity but rather evokes strong connotations of non-existence, invisibility, bitter solitude, neglect, and social disconnection. This hyperbole effectively highlights the speaker’s feeling of being ignored or unrecognized by their surroundings. Overall, the meaning of this lyric is that the speaker feels neglected, irrelevant, or as if their existence is insignificant to others in the world. If

interpreted literally, the sentence means merely being the spirit of a dead person to the world. Meanwhile, its connotative meaning encompasses feelings of being unseen, unimportant, extreme loneliness, alienation, and a sense of being disconnected from existing reality.

Data 4: ***“The stars will cry / The blackest tears tonight”*** (*Anthem Of Our Dying Day-Line 1 and 2*)

“The stars will cry / The blackest tears tonight” is a striking example of hyperbole because, literally, stars do not have the ability to shed tears, especially “the blackest” ones. This is an extreme exaggeration designed to create a profound dramatic effect. The use of personification (attributing human qualities to stars) intensified by the claim of the blackest tears, intensely underscores the level of sadness, despair, or gloom felt, as if the entire universe is weeping in that darkness.

Based on the theory proposed by Leech (1981), this expression most strongly resonates with Affective Meaning. Affective meaning directly highlights how language is used to convey the speaker’s emotions and mood. Through the imagery of stars shedding the blackest tears, these lyrics vividly express an extremely powerful and pervasive emotional turmoil a grief so deep, a sense of destruction, or a level of despair that transcends the self, as if enveloping the entire cosmos. The essential meaning of these lyrics is that on this night, the speaker is overwhelmed by immeasurable sadness or darkness, depicted so powerfully that even celestial bodies partake in the sorrow. Literally, the sentence means that the stars in the sky will shed the darkest fluid tonight. Meanwhile, its connotative meaning encompasses universal sorrow, extreme despair, a profoundly gloomy and dark atmosphere, and the feeling that even the universe is grieving.

Data 5: ***“Now I can taste the war that I’ve been fighting”*** (*Falling Down-line 1*)

The phrase *“Now I can taste the war that I’ve been fighting”* is a striking example of hyperbole because, literally, a “war” which in this context is a metaphor for a heavy inner struggle or conflict cannot be perceived through the sense of taste. This claim is an exaggeration of sensation, transforming an abstract experience into something so real and intense that it can be physically sensed. Its purpose is to highlight the profound impact and bitterness of the struggle the speaker has endured or is currently enduring.

Based on the theory of Leech (1981), this phrase most aligns with Affective Meaning. Affective meaning focuses on how language is used to express the speaker’s

feelings or attitude. By stating that they can “taste the war,” the speaker expresses an extraordinary intensity of emotion a deep weariness, bitterness, or an unbearable burden from an unceasing inner conflict. This is a powerful emotional expression that highlights a very profound internal experience. The overall meaning in the song is that the speaker has gone through such a heavy and prolonged struggle that its consequences feel incredibly real and deeply ingrained within them. Literally, the sentence means that I can now taste with my tongue the armed conflict I have experienced. Its connotative meaning encompasses extreme emotional exhaustion, bitter resentment over difficult experiences, a crushing mental burden, and the profound, physically felt impact of the struggle.

Data 6: “*Nothing Can Fly With This Broken Wing*” (Burning Years-Line 9)

The phrase “*Nothing can fly with this broken wing*” is a hyperbole. While a broken wing would literally impede the ability to fly, this phrase is used in a metaphorical context that goes beyond its physical meaning. It’s an extreme exaggeration to suggest that something perhaps a relationship, a hope, or someone’s ability to move forward has sustained such severe damage that it’s impossible to recover or succeed again. This claim emphasizes the irreparable nature of the damage.

According to the theory of meaning that perposed by Leech (1981), the data is categorized as connotative Meaning. Connotative meaning focuses on the additional associations and feelings attached to a phrase beyond its literal meaning. Here, “broken wing” doesn’t refer to a physical wing but evokes strong connotations of inability, severe devastation, loss of hope, or an irreparable condition. This hyperbole effectively conveys a feeling of despair over something that has been shattered and can no longer function as it once did. The overall meaning in the song is that something has been fundamentally and irreparably broken, rendering any attempt to rise or continue futile. Literally, the sentence means that nothing can fly if its wing is broken. Its connotative meaning encompasses feelings of hopelessness, irreparable damage, loss of ability or potential, and the end of a hope or state.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that hyperbole plays a significant role in the lyrical construction of the Live in the Lou album by Story of the Year. The analysis revealed 48 hyperbolic expressions found throughout various songs in the album, with the majority of them falling into the category of emotional, numerical, temporal, and metaphorical hyperbole. These exaggerated expressions are

used deliberately to strengthen the emotional tone of the lyrics, dramatize personal experiences, and create a poetic atmosphere that resonates with listeners. The frequent use of hyperbole reflects the band's stylistic approach in expressing deep emotions such as love, heartbreak, anger, and despair, allowing the lyrics to become more impactful and memorable rather than communicating these feelings in literal terms. The analysis shows that hyperboles are not just decorative but serve as essential tools in emotional storytelling within the alternative rock/post-hardcore genre, proving that hyperbole enhances both the aesthetic and expressive quality of music lyrics. Overall, the use of hyperbole in the album contributes significantly to the communication between the band and its audience, allowing abstract or intense emotions to be externalized and shared through figurative language. This study may also serve as a reference for future research on figurative language in music, encouraging a deeper appreciation for how artists use language creatively to connect with their listeners on a more emotional level.

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