

## AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE ED SHEERAN SELECTED SONG LYRICS

Fransiskus Xaverius Sau<sup>1</sup>

English Study Program, Faculty of Foreign Languages

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar

e-mail: [savesau170@gmail.com](mailto:savesau170@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This research analyzes the use of figurative language in Ed Sheeran's selected songs, specifically “Boat,” “Salt Water,” and “Eyes Closed.” The study employs descriptive qualitative research to identify and interpret various figurative language types within these lyrics. The analysis is grounded in theories from Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) on figurative language types and Hurford (2007) on their meanings. The study reveals the use of metaphor, personification, symbolism, hyperbole, imagery, and irony in Sheeran's lyrics. Key findings indicate that metaphors often represent emotional resilience and personal challenges, while personification enhances the emotional depth of the songs. Symbolism and hyperbole underscore the intensity of personal experiences, and imagery vividly portrays sensory and emotional states. Irony serves to contrast perceived and actual experiences, deepening the emotional impact. The findings suggest that Sheeran's use of figurative language significantly enriches the expressive quality of his songs, providing listeners with a nuanced emotional experience. This research contributes to the understanding of how figurative language functions in contemporary songwriting and highlights the artistic techniques employed by Sheeran to connect with his audience.

**Keywords:** *figurative language, Ed Sheeran, songwriting, metaphor, imagery*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam beberapa lagu Ed Sheeran yang dipilih, khususnya “Boat,” “Salt Water,” dan “Eyes Closed.” Studi ini menggunakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif untuk mengidentifikasi dan menafsirkan berbagai jenis bahasa kiasan dalam lirik-lirik tersebut. Analisis didasarkan pada teori dari Knickerbocker dan Reninger (1963) tentang jenis-jenis bahasa kiasan serta Hurford (2007) tentang maknanya. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan penggunaan metafora, personifikasi, simbolisme, hiperbola, citraan, dan ironi dalam lirik-lirik Sheeran. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa metafora sering kali

merepresentasikan ketangguhan emosional dan tantangan pribadi, sementara personifikasi memperkuat kedalaman emosional lagu-lagu tersebut. Simbolisme dan hiperbola menekankan intensitas pengalaman pribadi, dan citraan menggambarkan keadaan sensorik dan emosional secara jelas. Ironi berfungsi untuk membandingkan pengalaman yang dirasakan dengan yang sebenarnya, memperdalam dampak emosional. Temuan ini menyarankan bahwa penggunaan bahasa kiasan oleh Sheeran secara signifikan memperkaya kualitas ekspresif dari lagu-lagunya, memberikan pendengar pengalaman emosional yang lebih mendalam. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang bagaimana bahasa kiasan berfungsi dalam penulisan lagu kontemporer dan menyoroti teknik artistik yang digunakan oleh Sheeran untuk berhubungan dengan audiensnya.

**Kata kunci:** *bahasa kiasan, ed sheern, penulis lagu, metafora,*

## **Introduction**

Language is a tool or structured system of communication that consists of grammar and vocabulary. It is the primary means by which humans convey meaning, both in spoken and signed forms, and may also be conveyed through writing. The purpose of language is to get some information from other people through interaction. The people can share their opinions, experiences, ideas and emotions by language. According to Kreidler (1998:5), language is complex and subtle capable of expressing whatever its speakers need to express and capable of changing to meet the changing needs of the speakers. Thus, the language which can build the imagination of the listener, is usually it called figurative language (Santika, Putri, & Miun, 2021).

Figurative language is fascinating to analyse because it is used very often in daily life which we can find in daily conversations, According to Peter (2002:12), figurative language is a language that has a symbolic meaning that incorporates the speaker's desire to touch the emotions to cause shock and persuade into action. From the definition above can conclude that figurative language serves to deliver thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that cannot be expressed in literal meaning. Figurative language can be found in novels, songs, poems or any other written form. The figurative language mostly can be found in songs Figurative language, a key component of linguistic expression, plays a crucial role in songwriting by enhancing the aesthetic and emotive qualities of a song. Its use can captivate and intrigue listeners, particularly when a composition incorporates various figurative elements.

A song is the act or art of singing, song is a piece of music with words that are song has a function to express thoughts and feelings, song has two elements, such as lyrics and music. The way figurative language works is necessary for a positive appreciation of

works and literature because it is used to describe people's culture and life. One of the musicians or songwriters who use figurative language in his lyrics is Ed Sheeran. Edward Christopher as people known as Ed Sheeran, is a singer, songwriter and record producer. He is well known for the talent that he has in composing his song lyrics, especially singing. The writer chooses figurative language to investigate the kinds of figurative language used in Ed Sheeran's songs and to know what's the meaning of the figurative language used in Ed Sheeran Song's.

Based on the background of the study above, some problems can be formulated as follows:

1. What types of figurative language are found in Ed Sheeran's selected song lyrics?
2. What are the meanings of figurative language used in Ed Sheeran's selected song lyrics?

## **Method**

This study has been conducted using descriptive qualitative research. This study intends to analyze figurative language in Ed Sheeran's selected song. This method will be carried out by selecting theories such as figurative language and sources taken from the relevant text and journal that support figurative language analysis.

The data source for this study was taken from the lyrics of Ed Sheeran's selected songs entitled "Boat", "Saltwater", and "Eyes Closed". The reason why the writer chose these songs is because rather than other songs composed by Ed Sheeran these three songs contained more figurative language than others so these songs were used as representative songs to analyze how figurative languages work in Ed Sheeran's songs. After the data collection was completed, the analysis was conducted using the theory of figurative language proposed by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963: 367) to identify the types of figurative language present, and the theory of meaning by Hurford (2007) to interpret these figurative elements. Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963: 367) identify several types of figurative language in their work. The writer employed a methodical approach consisting of six steps: (1) downloading the song lyrics from YouTube and reviewing the scripts, (2) listening to the songs carefully and repeatedly to grasp the lyrics, (3) underlining sentences, words, and phrases containing figurative language in each song, (4) classifying the data based on the types of figurative language identified, (5) analyzing the data derived from Ed Sheeran's songs selected which are "Boat", "Salt Water", and "Eyes Closed". (6) Finally, mapping the types of figurative language found in Ed Sheeran's selected songs and finding out the meaning of figurative language in the selected songs and the last conclusion is based on the results found.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

In this part, the results of the figurative language analysis of the selected songs of Ed Sheeran will be shown. Below is a table of the results of the analysis of the types of figurative language found in Ed Sheeran's song "Boat, Salt Water, and Eyes Closed".

NO	Types of Figurative Language	Frequency	Precentage
1.	Metaphor	7	22%
2.	Personification	6	19%
3.	Symbolism	5	16%
4.	Hyperbole	5	16%
5.	Imagery	6	19%
6.	Irony	3	9%
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above types of figurative language used in the lyrics of selected songs by Ed Sheeran, showing how each type of figurative language contributes to the overall theme and emotion of the song. Based on the analysis, there are various types of figurative language found such as metaphor, personification, symbolism, hyperbole, imagery, and irony.

### Discussion

By applying the theoretical framework of Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) to identify types of figurative language and Hurford (2007) to understand its meaning, we aim to explain the various figurative elements present in the album's lyrics. This analysis will highlight how Sheeran uses figurative language to enrich his lyrical content and convey deeper emotional and thematic nuances. Below are the lyrics and analysis of the types of figurative language and the meaning of Ed Sheeran's selected songs (the selected songs are Boat, SaltWater, and Eyes Closed).

Ed Sheeran's lyrics in the songs "Boat, Salt Water, and Eyes Closed" exhibit a rich use of figurative language, enhancing their emotional depth and thematic complexity. In "Boat" metaphors such as "*But the waves won't break my boat*" and "*The times that I*

*jumped never were real*” symbolize resilience and the fleeting nature of significant moments, respectively. Personification, seen in *“Stones crash on the boardwalk”* and *“Wind rushed through the trees”* intensifies the scene's emotional impact by imbuing inanimate elements with human-like qualities. Hyperboles like *“The more that I love, the less that I feel”* emphasize the overwhelming nature of the emotional experience, while symbolism in *“The waves won't break my boat”* represents life's challenges and personal strength.

In *“Salt Water”* metaphors such as *“Come and kiss me, salt water”* and *“Gazing into Hell”* explore themes of emotional liberation and existential fear. The personification in *“Feel the wind's harsh refrain”* and *“The clouds gripped my face”* amplifies the emotional atmosphere by attributing human characteristics to nature. Symbolism, seen in *“Embrace the deep”* represents acceptance of profound emotions, while hyperbolic expressions like *“Gazing into Hell”* underscore the extremity of the speaker's fears. Imagery such as *“When the rain soaks through the heels”* creates a vivid depiction of discomfort and introspection.

In *“Eyes Closed”* metaphors such as *“Dancin' with my eyes closed”* and *“Tears”* convey the singer's emotional escape and suppressed grief. Similes, like *“I pictured this year a little bit different”*, highlight the contrast between expectations and reality. Personification, seen in *“Every song reminds me you're Gone”*, emphasizes the persistent reminders of loss, while symbolism in *“Bar”* and *“Eyes Closed”* reflects the search for solace and avoidance of reality. Hyperboles, such as *“Oh, how can it be this heavy?”* accentuate the overwhelming nature of grief, and the repetition of phrases like *“eyes closed”* reinforces the themes of denial and emotional numbness.

### **Conclusion/Simpulan**

In analyzing Ed Sheeran's lyrics from *“Boat,” “Salt Water,”* and *“Eyes Closed”* through the frameworks provided by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1963) and Hurford (2007), this study offers a nuanced understanding of how figurative language enriches lyrical content. By applying these theoretical perspectives, the analysis highlights how Sheeran's use of metaphor, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, imagery, and irony contributes to conveying complex emotional states and thematic depth. This innovative approach underscores how figurative language not only enhances aesthetic expression but also deepens the listener's engagement with the emotional and existential themes explored in Sheeran's music.

## **Reference**

- Hurford, J. R. (2007). *The semantics of meaning: An introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Knickerbocker, K. L., & Reninger, H. W. (1963). *Interpreting and using figurative language*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kreidler, C. W. (1998). *Introducing English semantics*. London: Routledge.
- Peter, J. (2002). *Figurative language and its impact*. New York: Academic Press.
- Santika, D., Putri, A., & Miun, T. (2021). *The role of figurative language in enhancing literary expression*. Jakarta: Pustaka Nusantara.