Associative Meaning of Figurative Language Found in Taylor Swift's *Midnights (3am edition)*

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Abstract

Midnights (3am edition) is a more complex version of Taylor Swift's album, *Midnights*. It is also her first autobiographical album because her previous albums were about myths. *Midnights* album is mostly about her life and discusses people in her past. This research aims at analyzing the content of the songs, how Taylor expresses her story in the past using figurative language, and what Taylor means by using associative meaning in the Midnights (3am edition) album. Data source in this research is spotify and genius website, after that researcher uses a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. Data is collected using documentation. Four steps are used to analyze data: domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural themes. The results of this study show that there are 87 data of figurative language in *Midnights (3am edition)*. The most common figurative language is overstatement, which is as many as 22 (25%), followed by metaphors, as many as 19 (22%) data. Furthermore, there are 83 data associative meanings of figurative language. Connotative meaning is the most common data found in this study, with 64 (77%) data.

Keywords*: Figurative Language, Associative Meaning, Taylor Swift, Midnights (3am edition)*

Abstrak

Midnights (3am edition) merupakan album yang lebih kompleks dari album *Midnights*. Album ini merupakan album autobiografi pertama Taylor Swift karena album-album sebelumnya mengenai dongeng. Album *Midnights* kebanyakan mengenai kehidupan si penyanyi di masa lalu. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk menganalisis isi lagu dan bagaimana Taylor mengekspresikan kehidupan masa lalunya dengan majas serta apa yang Taylor maksud dalam album ini menggunakan makna asosiatif. Sumber data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini ada spotify dan website genius kemudian diolah dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan dokumentasi. Untuk menganalisis data digunakan empat langkah, antara lain, analysis domain, analisis taksonomi, analisis komponensial, dan cultural theme. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan 87 data majas dalam album *Midnights (3am edition)*. Data dominan yang ditemukan adalah overstatement sebanyak 22 (25%) dan metafora sebanyak 19 (22%) data. Terdapat 83 data makna asosiatif dalam majas dengan data dominan adalah makna konotatif sebanyak 64 (77%) data.

Kata kunci*: Majas, Makna Asosiatif, Taylor Swift, Midnights (3am edition)*

Introduction

Midnights album is the tenth album by Taylor Swift, which was released on October 22nd, 2022. There are several versions of the album *Midnights*, namely

Midnights, Midnights (3am Edition), and Midnights (The Til Dawn Edition). Based on Billboard, in the 64-year history of the Billboard Hot 100, Taylor Swift was the first to hold positions for a whole week. She set a new record for herself with her new album and surpassed Madonna in the number of women's top 10 hits. Taylor states on her Instagram that Midnights is a compilation of songs created in the middle of the night, taking listeners through dread and lovely dreams. An album contains a few songs that have lyrics in it. In Midnights, Swift often uses several language styles to express her feelings, mainly figurative language. In other words, Swift frequently expresses implicit meanings in her lyrics.

According to Dancygier & Sweetser (2014), figurative language distinguishes a text as unique and poetic from other written works regarding aesthetic value. Abrams & Harpham (2014) state that figurative language deviates noticeably from what proficient language users understand as a word's standard meaning or word order to convey a special meaning. According to Webster (1988) in Swarniti (2020), figurative language is one way to convey a concept imaginatively. Besides being aesthetically pleasing in literary works, figurative language can also illustrate the idea of a person in a phrase or sentence, which requires other knowledges to interpret that phrase or sentence. There are many types of figurative language. However, based on Perrine in Johnson and Arp (2016) only discusses twelve types including simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, overstatement, understatement, and irony.

Each type of figurative language has a different function. Similes and metaphors are figurative language that compares two things; however, similes are explicit and metaphors implicitly. Personification means giving character to something. An apostrophe is something dead as if it were alive. Symbols and allegory represent something more profoundly; however, symbols generally focus on words or phrases, while allegory is more overall or narrative. Paradox states something contradictory but true. An overstatement is an exaggeration of something. Understatement expresses something with a word that has a lower meaning than the word itself. Irony states something good and bad at the same time (Johnson & Arp, 2016). Based on the explanation above, it is firmly believed that figurative language is on the main discussions in the field of semantics.

Semantics studies the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences (Yule, 2010). The study of language in semantics depends on each region. In this science, one language cannot be used to interpret another language due to differences in language use. In addition, cultural and social status also affect a language. For example, the word Ustaz in Arabic means teacher in general, but in Indonesia, it means a person who is an expert in Islamic religion. Therefore, meaning in semantics requires context to interpret what words mean. Thus, in semantics, meaning is divided into seven types. However, the broad outline of types of meaning is three: conceptual meaning, associative meaning, and thematic meaning. Conceptual meaning can be known just by looking at the sentence. In this meaning, no additional knowledge is required as the conceptual meaning can be found using a dictionary. For example, the word

'grandmother' is female, old, and has grandchildren. Conceptual meaning is embedded in the brain automatically when someone mentions a word.

Associative meanings require other knowledge or context to understand it. Associative meaning is divided into five categories: connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, and collocative meaning. A connotative meaning is a meaning that cannot be interpreted just by looking at the sentence. Region, social class, and other aspects of society are all indicated by social meaning. A meaning that conveys emotions or a person's feelings is called an affective meaning. Reflected meaning is a meaning that has multiple conceptual meanings. Collocative meaning is the recognized meaning of words grouped in a neighborhood. Thematic meaning is where the speaker conveys his or her message, as seen from the sentence structure and emphasis (Leech, 1981).

Several previous studies, including the following, have relevance to this research: the first is from Vinanda Yusnitasari, Wulan Wangi, and Yuli Sugianto (2022), entitled An Analysis of Figurative Language on The Song Lyrics "You are My Sunshine" by Anne Murray which discusses the type of figurative language in the song You are My Sunshine using Mc Arthur's theory. In contrast, this research utilizes Perrine's theory in Jonhson and Arp. The second is from Maudy Yaser Fajrin, and Aseptiana Parmawati (2021) with the title An Analysis of Figurative Language Found in Song of Bruno Mars Entitled "Grenade" which discusses types of figurative language uses Kennedy's theory (1991) and contextual meaning in song Grenade. Whereas, this study discusses figurative using Perrine's theory and its associative meaning by Leech; The third is from Septia Tri Gunawan, Didin Nuruddin Hidayat, Alek, and Nida Husna (2021), entitled Figurative Language Used in Blackpink Featuring Selena Gomez's Song Lyrics "Ice Cream": A Discourse Analysis which discusses types of figurative language and discourse analysis in song Ice Cream. Meanwhile, this research focuses solely on figurative and its associative meaning.

Based on previous studies, many researchers examine figurative language, especially in songs. The difference in this study is the object of research, namely Midnights (3am Edition) album. The theory for finding figurative language is also different. The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify types of figurative language found in Midnights (3am edition) album, and (2) to identify associative meaning of each figurative language found in Midnights (3am edition) album.

Method

Data Source

This research used a descriptive qualitative method as its research design. Qualitative research is a technique for examining and comprehending the significance that people or groups attach to social or human problems (Creswell, 2009). Thus, Sugiyono (2017) in Fariha (2022) states that descriptive qualitative research does not permit statistical or computational research. Based on the definition above, qualitative research is incredibly descriptive. It has no numerical data. Qualitative research in this

study focuses on figurative language, which is how language can have a different meaning than its literal meaning.

Collect Data

According to Creswell (2009), there are four types of data collection: observations are when researchers conduct research on a location directly and record activities there; interviews are when researchers conduct interviews with related parties which were conducted; documents are ways to collect data, such as newspapers, letters, and many more; audio-visual materials are data in the form of photos, audio, and videos. This study used documentation to collect the data because data of this study is textual form. There are several data collection techniques:

1. Listening to music from *Midnights (3 am edition)* album on *Spotify* (an application for listening to music or podcasts) is available on smartphones and laptops.

2. Searching lyrics in *Genius* website to know the lyrics and the parts of the song such as intro, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, post-chorus, bridge, breakdown, and outro.

3. Copying the lyrics on Microsoft Word, then identifying figurative language.

4. Further, identify associative meaning of the lyrics after analyzing figurative language.

5. Making data as coding to facilitate data in each kind of figurative language and to know how many data is found in each type of figurative language and its associative meaning.

Data Analyze

Data analysis techniques steps to processing the data, from how it is collected and categorized to how it is displayed data in a table. Spradley (1980) in Fariha (2022) argues that four steps are involved in data analysis: domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural themes.

Result and Discussion

This chapter discuss the research problem's results in detail. The research problem is the type of figurative language and the associative meaning of the figurative language found. The researcher looked for and analyzed the data containing figurative language first and then analyzed the associative meaning type. The data was taken from Taylor Swift's album Midnight (3am edition), which contains twenty songs.

Types of Figurative Language Found in Midnights (3am edition) Album

Figurative language is the study that has more than the actual meaning or more than the literal meaning. There are several types of figurative language, and each theory has a different number of figurative types. In this study, used Perrine's theory in Johnson & Arp (2016) to identify figurative language.

Table 3.1. The Types of Figurative Language
in *Midnights (3am edition)* Album

Types of Figurative Language	Frequency	Percentage
Simile	12	14%
Metaphor	19	22%
Personification	4	4.5%
Apostrophe	0	0
Synecdoche	1	1%
Metonymy	6	7%
Symbol	11	13%
Allegory	3	3.5%
Paradox	4	4.5%
Overstatement	22	25%
Understatement	1	1%
Irony	4	4.5%
Total	**87**	**100%**

Overstatement

Overstatement or exaggeration is figurative, which means exaggerating the meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence (Johnson & Arp, 2016). There are 22 (25%) data have been found, and highly found in the song *Bejeweled*. It is a song that depicts a relationship in which one of the parties does not value the other. Here are several examples with explanations:

30/Ove/CM/Sta1/Lin2/Bejeweled
*Didn't notice **you walkin' all over my peace of mind***

The lyric above exemplifies overstatement, especially in the sentence ***you walkin' all over my peace of mind.*** The literal meaning of the lyrics is that someone is walking in the singer's mind, while logically, it is impossible to walk in other people's minds. Therefore, datum 30, stanza 1, dan line 2 is an overstatement because it exaggerates the lyrics. However, in this song, the lyrics can be interpreted as a person who is always thought of by the singer, described by the person walking in the singer's mind.

31/Ove/CM/Sta2/Lin6/Bejeweled
*Best believe **I'm still bejeweled***

Datum 31, stanza 2, and line 6 in the song Bejeweled contain an overstatement in the sentence ***I'm still bejeweled***. If interpreted literally, the lyrics are about a person still a jewel. The word bejeweled means jewel, which in this lyric refers to sparkle or something valuable. In short, the lyrics can mean a person who is still valuable because if it is interpreted, as previously explained, the meaning of the lyrics is impossible. Thus, the lyrics fall into overstatement because exaggerated the song's lyrics. In

addition, this can be known based on the song's context about a pair of lovers, one of whom does not appreciate their partner.

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figurative language that compares implicitly or without adding the word as a comparison (Johnson & Arp, 2016). The data metaphors were found in 19 (22%) data in this album, and the song that contains the most metaphors is *Karma*, a song about how people will be rewarded for their actions. On the other hand, metaphors are also found in the song *Midnight Rain,* a song about the relationship between two different people, and it is also about a person (the singer) who prefers a career rather than a relationship. Below are several examples of metaphor which explained:

24/Met/CM/Sta2/Lin14/Midnight Rain
He was sunshine, I was midnight rain

Datum 24 is found in the song Midnight Rain in stanza 2 and line 14. The lyrics contain metaphors that implicitly compare *he* and *sunshine*. The symbol of sunshine has the literal meaning of the sun's light, while the referent in this lyric refers to someone who is like sunshine. The person or the singer's lover is the one who is more concerned about their relationship and guides how their relationship will continue. When viewed in real life, sunlight is one of the phenomena where the rays will shine all over the world, and it can be interpreted as how the singer's lover is more concerned with their relationship in the future. It is can also be seen with the context of the song *Midnight Rain,* which was explained earlier. Therefore, this lyric contains a metaphor because it compares the lover (he) with sunshine without the intermediary of additional words (Johnson & Arp, 2016).

25/Met/CM/Sta2/Lin14/Midnight Rain
*He was sunshine, **I was midnight rain***

The lyrics above contain a metaphor that implicitly compares ***I*** and ***midnight rain.*** The phrase midnight rain is a state of rain that occurs in the middle of the night. In this song, that phrase represents the singer's situation in which she prefers her life at that time because when viewed from the previous lyrics, *"he was sunshine,"* which has been explained in the previous data, is the opposite of, *"I was midnight rain."* On the other hand, this can also be seen from the song's context, where the singer prefers her career over her relationship. The following lyrics further reinforce this interpretation*, "he wanted it comfortable, I wanted that pain; he wanted a bride, I was making my own name."* Therefore, the lyrics in datum 25, stanza 2, and line 14 in the song *Midnight Rain* is a metaphor because compared *I* and *midnight rain.*

Simile

A simile is one type of figurative language that compares explicitly uses the words "like," "than," "as," and many more (Johnson & Arp, 2016). In this album, similes are primarily found in the song titled *Karma*, which tells the story of people

who have done wrong to her (the singer) in the past and how she warns them about the consequences of their actions. In addition, the song *Snow on the Beach* also contains many lyrics that contain similes. The song is about two people in love, and it is rare for two to fall in love simultaneously. Below are several examples of similes that have been found:

55/Sim/CM/Sta8/Lin44/Karma
Sweet like justice, *karma is a queen*

The lyrics above exemplify simile in datum 55, stanza 8, and line 44 in the song *Karma*. A simile is shown in the word ***sweet***, compared to ***justice*** with a comparative ***like***. However, in this lyric, ***karma*** is compared with justice because the previous lyric explains more about karma, *"Karma's on your scent like a bounty hunter. Karma's gonna track you down. Step by step from town to town."* The following lyric also explains about karma, *"karma is a queen"*.

Sweet like justice is fairness that has a sweet flavour. If interpreted literally, the interpretation of the lyrics would seem strange. However, this referent, *sweet like justice,* is rewarded for what people do, reinforced by the following lyric, *"karma is a queen"*. The lyrics further explain that karma is like an influential queen so that a person can give justice. Therefore, the lyric in datum 55 is included in the simile even though what is being compared is karma and justice.

9/Sim/SM/Sta2/Lin9/Snow on the Beach
*And **it's like snow at the beach***

The data number 9 in stanza 2 and line 9 of the song entitled *Snow on the Beach* contains a simile that compares ***it's*** and ***snow at the beach*** explicitly. If interpreted literally, snow at the beach is a rare phenomenon where snow falls on the beach. However, the referent of the lyrics is more directed to the singer's situation based on the context of the song mentioned earlier, which is that she and her lover are in love simultaneously, which is usually a rare occurrence compared to snow at the beach. She feels that her story is weird but also beautiful; this is supported by the lyrics, *"weird, but fuckin' beautiful."*

The word ***it's*** in the lyrics of this song is a description of the singer's love story at the beginning of the song: *"one night, a few moons ago; I saw flecks of what could've been lights; but it might just have been you."* The lyric in the song's first stanza explains how the singer describes her lover. Then, in stanza 2, datum 9 compares ***snow at the beach*** with the word ***like***. Therefore, this lyric is included in the simile category because it compares directly (Johnson & Arp, 2016).

Types of Associative Meaning Found in *Midnights (3am edition)* Album

Table 3.2. The Types of Associative Meaningin *Midnights (3am edition)* Album

Types of Associative Meaning	Frequency	Percentage
Connotative Meaning	64	77%
Social Meaning	5	6%

Affective Meaning	6	7%
Reflected Meaning	7	8%
Collocative Meaning	1	2%
Total	**83**	**100%**

Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning is one associative meaning that is more than conceptual meaning (Leech, 1981). In connotative meaning, commonly used words have more than the basic meaning of a word depending on the context. This means that connotative meanings cannot be interpreted using only a dictionary. There are 64 (77%) data of connotative meaning found in the Midnights (3am edition) album. The data is significantly found in the songs *Bejeweled, Karma, The Great War, Midnight Rain, Mastermind,* and *Bigger than the whole Sky.* The following are several examples and explanations in detail:

41/Sym/CM/Sta7/Lin44/Bejeweled
*A **diamond's** gotta shine*

The symbol of diamond refers to a type of precious stone, while in its referent in this song the ***diamond*** refers to a precious woman. It can be interpreted like that because the previous lyrics, *"what's a girl gonna do?"* ask what women should do. In the subsequent lyrics, *"a diamond's gotta shine,"* the word diamond refers to the woman in the previous lyrics. That is why lyrics contain connotative meaning.

60/Sym/CM/Sta3/Lin14/Mastermind
*The **dominoes** cascaded in a line*

The song lyrics above are included in the connotative meaning of the song *Mastermind* on the word ***dominoes***. The word is included in connotative meaning because it describes a relationship under the singer's control. This song contains a long relationship but cannot be separated from the control of one of them (the singer). Dominoes is a block game where one block is shaped, and the other will fall. However, in this song, dominoes are a relationship that the singer controls, which is why the data above is included in the connotative meaning.

Reflected Meaning

Reflected meaning is a multiple conceptual meaning or words that have taboo meanings in society (Leech, 1981). The album *Midnights (3am edition)* has 7 (8%) reflected meaning data. Some songs with reflected meaning include *Lavender Haze; Anti-Hero; Snow on the Beach; You're on Your Own, Kid;* and *Karma*. The following are two examples and explanations:

52/Iro/RM/Sta4/Lin20/Karma
*My **pennies made your crown***

In the data above, the lyrics contain reflected meaning because of the words ***pennies*** and ***crown*** have multiple conceptual meanings. The symbol of pennies has the referent of coins, while in this song, the pennies symbol has the referent of the singer's efforts. The word crown means something worn by the queen, yet in this song, the word crown means luxury; therefore, the lyrics contain reflected meaning because the words pennies and crown are double connotative meanings used for other meanings.

Affective Meaning

Affective meaning is meaning that expresses feelings or involves feelings (Leech, 1981). This study found 6 (7%) affective meaning data in songs such as *Snow on the Beach; You're on Your Own, Kid; Midnight Rain; Bejeweled;* and *Would've, Should've, Could've.* Below are three examples and the reasons:

23/Ove/AM/Sta2/Lin13/Midnight Rain
I broke his heart *'cause he was nice*

Data number 26, stanza 2, line 13 in the song Midnight Rain, especially in the lyrics ***I broke his heart*** is an example of affective meaning. The lyrics mean that the singer has hurt her lover's feelings because, in the context of this song, it is about a couple; one of them (the singer) is more inclined towards her career. In addition, the lyric also contains overstatement, which means that the lyric cannot be interpreted literally. Therefore, the lyrics are included in affective meaning because involve the singer's feeling of hurting her boyfriend (Leech, 1981).

In this section, classification and analysis of the previous findings were discussed by the researcher. The data are findings from the question of figurative language types using the theory of Perrine in Johnson & Arp (2016), as well as associative meaning using the theory of Leech (1981) found in Taylor Swift's album *Midnights (3am edition).* According to the singer on her social media account, this album is written in the middle of the night and will take listeners through fears and beautiful dreams. In addition, most of the contexts in the songs on this album are about relationships. The researcher uses a semantic approach to interpret and analyze the data.

In the first problem formulation, overstatement or hyperbole is the figurative type with the most data found in this album, with as many as 22 data. In addition, there were as many metaphors as 19 data points. One of the reasons is because the data taken is from song lyrics, which generally cannot be understood just by the written texts. Nevertheless, additional knowledge is needed, such as the song's context and the singer's life. In the album *Midnights (3am edition),* the song's context is mainly about a couple's relationship from a reasonable relationship to a bad one.

The findings of overstatement or hyperbole, the most dominant type of figurative language in this study, are also supported by a study by Mahendra et al. (2023). *This study of The Analysis of Figurative Language Used in the Song Lyrics of Adele's Album "30"* found that hyperbole was also the most dominant data. He concluded that whenever trying to express her loved ones, Adele exaggerates her loved ones with the same character. However, Taylor uses many hyperboles in this album to describe her

past life, mostly about her love story that went poorly and how she expresses herself and that she is valuable by using overstatement.

The subsequent finding is a metaphor in this study with 19 data and is supported by research from Julianto et al. (2023). In a study entitled *Figurative Language in The Song Lyrics of Billie Eilish "Don't Smile At Me"* metaphor was the most data found. The researcher concluded that the singer compared her lover to something describing their story. However, in the album *Midnights (3am edition),* the singer describes her past life as lacking by comparing her situation with something terrible.

The second problem formulation is the associative meaning of figurative language that has been found. In the analysis of associative meaning, the most common type of data found is connotative meaning, which has 64 data. Connotative meaning is primarily found in this study because it is one level above conceptual meaning. Connotative meaning conveys ideas or feelings by the person who conveys them by using words that are familiar in everyday life but have different meanings based on the context.

In terms of connotative meaning, the associative meaning data of figurative language was found. In this study, the most connotative meaning data is in overstatement with 20 data. This finding is supported by research from Mahendra et al. (2023), which explains that singers use connotative meaning to express their feelings and allow fans to imagine when listening to the song. In contrast, Taylor Swift uses connotative meaning in overstatements to provide clarity about the circumstances of her past love story were terrible, and also to express her ever-precious self. On the other hand, connotative meaning is also found in metaphor with 16 data points; this research is also supported by Julianto et al. (2023). He explained that many connotative meanings were found in metaphors to help explain the singer's past story. Meanwhile, Swift, in this study, uses connotative meaning in metaphors to clarify what she means in comparing her past life was not good.

Of the 64 connotative meaning data, it was found that the most types of figurative language that utilize connotative meaning are overstatement and metaphor, as many as 36 (56%) data. It means that more than half of the figurative language data found uses connotative meaning. This is because Taylor Swift, in her interview on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* in 2022, explained that this album is her first autobiographical album. Swift uses connotative in overstatements and metaphors to describe her past life, especially those she knew who misbehaved with her. In addition, Taylor uses connotative a lot because, in connotative meaning, there are aspects such as emotional, social, cultural, or personal aspects associated with words, phrases, or sentences that contain connotative meaning (Syah in Nasution et al., 2024). In this album, Taylor tends to express her emotions about her past life with connotative meaning.

The conclusion of the correlation in this study is that overstatement and metaphor are the most common types of figurative language and have the most connotative meaning. Taylor uses overstatement to exaggerate the behavior of people in her past who referred to bad things. To describe her past romantic life, most of which were not good relationships. In addition, she also uses it to show that she remains a precious person despite herself. She also uses metaphors to compare her past life to something awful. Then, the singer uses connotative meaning to clarify what she means.

The use of connotative meaning in overstatement and metaphor also shows that he tends to exaggerate and compare with words that appear in everyday life but have other meanings than their essential meaning.

Conclusion

In this study, a semantic approach within the scope of external meaning context was used by researchers to interpret the data. The goal is that when interpreting the data, the interpretation remains limited and does not get out of the song's context. This research found 87 data types of figurative language in *Midnights (3am edition)* using Laurence Perrine's theory in Johnson and Arp (2016). Based on the theory, there are twelve types of figurative language: simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, metonymy, synecdoche, symbol, allegory, paradox, understatement, overstatement, and irony. Most of the data found was overstatement with 22 data points and followed metaphor with 19 data points. Meanwhile, this study did not find the figurative language types apostrophe. The figurative language data found is then analyzed using associative meaning using Geoffrey Leech's theory (1981). Based on the theory, there are types of meaning, namely connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, and collocative meaning. In this analysis, 83 data were collected for associative meaning and the most data used connotative meaning, with as many as 64 data. In addition, only one collocative meaning data was found in this study. Of the 64 connotative meanings found in figurative language, in overstatement and metaphor, the most common data, figurative language uses as many as 36 (56%) data, which means more than half of figurative language uses connotative meaning.

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