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## Exploring Figurative Language in the Lyrics of 'When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?' by Billie Eilish and Its Relation to English Language Learning in High School

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**Abstract**—Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam lirik lagu album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* karya Billie Eilish. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis bahasa kiasan yang digunakan, menginterpretasikan maknanya, serta memahami manfaatnya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumen terhadap lirik lagu-lagu pilihan, seperti "When the Party's Over," "Ilomilo," "All the Good Girls Go to Hell," dan beberapa lagu lainnya dari album tersebut. Validasi data dilakukan dengan teknik triangulasi sumber. Analisis difokuskan pada identifikasi jenis-jenis bahasa kiasan, seperti metafora, personifikasi, simbolisme, hiperbola, dan ironi, serta penafsiran maknanya dalam konteks lagu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lirik lagu Billie Eilish kaya akan bahasa kiasan yang menyampaikan tema emosional dan sosial yang mendalam, seperti perjuangan kesehatan mental, ketakutan eksistensial, dan kritik terhadap norma sosial. Metafora dan simbolisme ditemukan sebagai jenis bahasa kiasan yang paling dominan. Selain itu, pemahaman terhadap bahasa kiasan melalui lirik lagu dapat meningkatkan kosakata, pemahaman bacaan, serta apresiasi siswa terhadap karya sastra berbahasa Inggris, sehingga menjadikan lagu sebagai media yang efektif dalam pembelajaran bahasa.

**Kata Kunci**—Bahasa Kiasan, Lirik Lagu Billie Eilish, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Analisis Deskriptif Kualitatif

**Abstract**—This study aims to explore the use of figurative language in the lyrics of the album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* by Billie Eilish. The objectives of this research are to identify the types of figurative language used, interpret their meanings, and understand their benefits in English language learning. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected through document analysis of selected song lyrics, including "When the Party's Over," "Ilomilo," and "All the Good Girls Go to Hell," and several other songs from the album. Data validation was conducted using source triangulation techniques. The analysis focused on identifying types of figurative language, such as metaphor, personification, symbolism,

hyperbole, and irony, and interpreting their meanings within the context of the songs. The results of the study show that Billie Eilish's lyrics are rich in figurative language that conveys deep emotional and social themes, such as struggles with mental health, existential fears, and criticism of social norms. Metaphor and symbolism were found to be the most dominant types of figurative language. Furthermore, understanding figurative language through song lyrics can enhance students' vocabulary, reading comprehension, and appreciation of English literary works, making songs an effective medium for language learning.

**Keywords**—Figurative Language, Billie Eilish's Song Lyrics, English Language Learning, Descriptive Qualitative Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Language is super important in our lives and culture. When we learn a language, especially a foreign one, we can use all kinds of language from media, the internet, or anywhere else to improve our skills and knowledge. Also, in formal education like at school, teachers can use art products like movies, novels, or songs to help with the learning process (Rahmawati et al., 2021). Language holds immense value in our lives. It is the foundation of how we communicate with others. When individuals do not share the same native language, they rely on language to exchange ideas and messages. Effective communication is essential for ensuring that information is conveyed accurately and understood. Since language is seen as a tool, it's super important to adjust the way we teach it to fit each student's specific needs, so they'll be more interested and motivated to learn (Matin et al., 2022).

Figurative language is when we use words in a creative way to make something sound more artistic or beautiful. You can find this kind of language in things like poems or even in song lyrics (Tirtanawati et al., 2024). According to Muhammad et al., (2021) She argues that figurative language is commonly used not only in written forms but also in spoken communication. This is particularly evident in literary works, including magazine articles, advertisements, novels, and poetry. However, the use of figurative language serves as a means to convey the intended meaning of an expression while minimizing the possibility of multiple interpretations.

that convey ideas in a concise and poetic manner. These expressions are crafted through words and set to music. The definition of lyrics or songs can be viewed as a form of poetry or an extension of spoken language. Lyrics go beyond the realm of literature, encompassing elements of proverbial expressions and carrying profound implied Song is a form of literature, and figurative language is an integral component of it. Songs are artistic compositions meanings (Nurcitrawati et al., 2019). Songs are a widely used medium for expressing ideas, thoughts, or emotions. Within song lyrics, creators have the opportunity to convey their ideas or share their deepest feelings.

Song lyrics are short poems composed of several verses set to music and meant to be sung. In crafting these lyrics, songwriters or composers often enhance their language by incorporating figurative expressions, making the songs more engaging and appealing to listeners (Setiawan, 2014). Song lyrics fall within the literary genre,

as they are artistic expressions that reflect the author's emotions, conveyed through carefully chosen words. However, not all song lyrics are immediately clear upon first reading. Some artists use figurative language to express ideas in unique and unconventional ways, prompting listeners to interpret the meaning beyond the literal words (Taufik & Cahyati, 2022).

This study examines the lyrics of several songs from Billie Eilish's debut album, including: "Bad Guy," "You Should See Me in a Crown," "All the Good Girls Go to Hell," "Wish You Were Gay," "When the Party's Over," "My Strange Addiction," "Bury a Friend," "Ilomilo," and "Listen Before I Go." Although *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* gained widespread acclaim and received numerous prestigious awards in 2019, many of its tracks are rich in figurative language that conveys deep, often implicit messages, addressing topics such as mental health, social expectations, and existential anxiety. Nevertheless, only a few studies have explored the complex meanings hidden within these lyrics. The figurative expressions used are often abstract and metaphorical, making them difficult to interpret using standard references like dictionaries or lyric interpretation websites.

This study will concentrate on Billie Eilish's album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*. The researcher aims to examine the figurative language present in the album's song lyrics and explore its relevance to English language learning at the high school level.

## METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative method with a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive qualitative research involves a straightforward qualitative strategy that follows an inductive reasoning pattern. In this approach, the study begins with the observation of specific events or processes and gradually develops general conclusions based on those observations (Ruhansih, 2017). Descriptive qualitative method is used to explore and understand experiences, ideas, perceptions, responses, and activities in a deep and complete way (Rahmawati et al., 2024). The data for this research will be collected through document analysis.. According to Nilamsari, (2014), According to experts, the documentary method is a data collection technique commonly used in social research to investigate historical information. In this study, the data collection process involves repeatedly reading the lyrics from Billie Eilish's album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* to grasp their meanings. The researcher will then highlight and record parts of the lyrics that contain figurative language. The data analysis process includes several steps: identifying the data, analyzing it, classifying it, conducting further analysis, and interpreting the results (Gusal, 2015:13), The steps are outlined as follows: (1) Data Identification involves thoroughly reading all the lyrics from Billie Eilish's album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* and coding the data based on the specific issues addressed in the research. (2) Data Analysis refers to examining the collected data using a descriptive qualitative method as previously defined. (3) Data Description entails presenting the stylistic features found in the album's lyrics in a clear and understandable manner, based on the researcher's interpretation and analytical skills.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the summarized data, several selected songs from Billie Eilish's album contain various types of figurative language, including metaphors, personification, symbolism, hyperbole, and irony. Specifically, there are 5 instances of metaphor, 4 of irony, 2 of symbolism, 1 of personification, and 1 of hyperbole. In total, 13 figurative expressions were identified in the chosen songs from the album. The following section presents a detailed discussion of the analyzed data.

### 1. Metaphors.

A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things by highlighting a shared quality, often in a creative way that shouldn't be interpreted literally (Silalahi, 2020).

#### a. Tore my shirt to stop you bleeding

This line uses metaphor to convey emotional rather than physical pain. "Bleeding" symbolizes emotional suffering or distress, while "tore my shirt" represents a selfless act or personal sacrifice made to support or comfort someone else.

#### b. I'm gonna run this nothing town

The song features a metaphor as a figure of speech by comparing two unrelated concepts that convey a deeper, figurative meaning. This is evident in the line "I'm gonna run this nothing town," where "nothing town" symbolizes a place viewed as unimportant or lacking value, and "run" suggests taking control or assuming leadership. The phrase reflects a strong intention to take over or make a significant impact on something perceived as insignificant.

#### c. You're my strange addiction.

The song also employs a metaphor by subtly drawing a comparison between two distinct ideas. In the line "You're my strange addiction," the word "addiction" typically refers to a dependency on substances or harmful behaviors, but in this case, it is used to describe a person. This suggests that the person is akin to an unusual obsession—something captivating yet difficult to move on from.

#### d. Step on the glass, staple your tongue.

The song uses a metaphor by making an indirect comparison between a literal action and its symbolic meaning. This is evident in the line "Step on the glass," where "glass" can symbolize pain or a perilous situation. Stepping on glass represents enduring hardship or courageously taking a risk in life.

#### e. Bite my tongue, bide my time

The song incorporates a metaphor by using figurative language to convey deeper meanings. In the line "Bite my tongue, bide my time," "bite my tongue" doesn't refer to physically biting one's tongue but rather to refraining from speaking, while "bide my time" suggests waiting patiently for the appropriate moment. Both expressions highlight self-control and patience when dealing with a situation.

### 2. Symbolism.

A symbol is something that represents a deeper meaning beyond its surface appearance. It invites people to reflect more deeply, as it carries greater significance than it may initially seem. (Ariska et al., 2021).

a. Take me to the rooftop

The song also uses symbolism, as seen in the line "Take me to the rooftop." Here, the word "rooftop" symbolizes a space for solitude, introspection, or the emotional climax of a journey. It can also represent a high vantage point, offering a distant view of the world, symbolizing a desire to escape reality or a sense of deep despair.

b. Crawl back into bed

Another instance of symbolism is found in the line "Crawl back into bed." This phrase goes beyond its literal meaning, symbolizing a wish to retreat from the outside world and return to a place of comfort or security. In this case, the bed represents an escape, a sense of despair, or emotional instability, such as depression or the desire to avoid the challenges of life.

### 3. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that involves describing an event or action with exaggerated language, making it appear more intense or dramatic than it truly is (Matin et al., et al 2020).

a. I'm that bad type, make your mama sad type

The song employs hyperbole as a figure of speech by using exaggerated language to make a strong impact. This is apparent in the line "I'm that bad type, make your mama sad type," where the speaker portrays herself as so bad that she could make someone's mother upset. This statement is not meant to be taken literally but rather highlights the speaker's rebellious or "dangerous" persona in the context of a relationship, making it a clear example of hyperbole.

### 4. Irony

According to Grensiding & Agung (2023), irony occurs when figurative language is used to express the opposite of the literal meaning, or when something is stated, but a different meaning is intended. It involves words that imply the reverse of their usual meaning. Irony is not merely a figure of speech; it carries more profound implications.

a. I'm the bad guy.

The song employs irony as a figure of speech because the statement contrasts with its true meaning. This is evident in the line "I'm the bad guy," where the speaker refers to herself as the villain. This could be a sarcastic comment on how others view her, or a contrast between external perceptions and internal truths. The line functions as a critique or satirical commentary on the labels placed on her by others.

b. All the good girls go to hell

The song also uses irony in the line "All the good girls go to hell," where the statement directly contradicts moral and religious principles. This line acts as a form of social or religious satire, suggesting that even goodness is no longer rewarded in a corrupted world. It highlights the ironic truth that moral values are being ignored or turned upside down.

c. I just wish you were gay

The song features irony in the emotionally complex line "I just wish you were gay." In this case, the speaker expresses an unusual desire for the person they like to be gay, making rejection easier to bear. This line illustrates

emotional irony, as it contrasts with the speaker's real wish to be loved in return.

d. Man is such a fool, why are we saving him?

The song employs irony as a figure of speech by using a statement that critiques human behavior. In the line "Man is such a fool, why are we saving him?" the speaker calls humans foolish while questioning why they are being saved. This conveys irony by highlighting how people repeatedly make mistakes yet still expect forgiveness or redemption.

5. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech where a non-living thing is described as if it has human qualities, so it seems like the object is alive (Matin et al., 2020).

a. My Lucifer is lonely

The lyrics can be seen as employing personification by attributing human emotions to something abstract, namely "Lucifer." This is evident in the line "My Lucifer is lonely," where Lucifer, often viewed as a supernatural entity or a symbol of evil, is described as experiencing a human emotion—loneliness. This clearly exemplifies the use of personification.

**Relevance of language style in the lyrics of the album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*, by Bille Eilish with English language learning in high school.**

After exploring the use of figurative language in the lyrics of Billie Eilish's album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*, students are expected to comprehend and explain it in their own words, as well as analyze the figurative language in literary texts. The figurative language in song lyrics is utilized as learning material for English lessons in the 10th grade during the second semester, with the objective of analyzing and evaluating figurative language in literary texts such as songs, poems, and short stories. This research is a linguistic study focusing on figurative language, which is part of the figurative speech topic.

In this study, the Merdeka curriculum is used. The Merdeka curriculum is the educational framework implemented in Indonesia's school system, established by the Ministry of Education.

Based on the above explanation, English language learning is closely linked to figurative language, which involves understanding and evaluating meanings in both literary and non-literary texts, whether spoken or written. The aim of teaching figurative language is for students to identify various types of figurative language in literary texts (such as poems, songs, short stories, etc.), explain the meanings of these figurative elements, and use them to create their own texts (like poems or simple song lyrics). A practical way to learn figurative language is by analyzing the figurative language in song lyrics that students often listen to in their everyday lives.

Thus, this research can serve as a teaching resource for English lessons in the X grade during the second semester, supporting the Learning Outcomes goal of understanding and evaluating meanings in literary and non-literary texts, as outlined in the English syllabus.

Table 1.1 Result Figurative

Figurative language	Result
Metaphor	5 Data
Hyperbole	1 Data
Symbolism	2 Data
Irony	4 Data
Personification	1 Data

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, the writer concluded that the selected songs feature five types of figurative language: metaphor, personification, symbolism, hyperbole, and irony. A total of 13 figurative expressions were identified, including 5 metaphors, 1 hyperbole, 2 symbols, 4 instances of irony, and 1 personification, According to Tirtanawati et al., (2024) The most frequently used figurative language is metaphor. Based on these findings, it's important to learn and understand the meaning behind figurative language. By doing so, we can expand our knowledge of unique and uncommon expressions, while also helping to bring back the habit of reading, which seems to be fading over time.

The analysis also explored the relationship between language styles in Billie Eilish's album *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* and its relevance to English learning materials, particularly in the syllabus under Learning Outcomes B: Understanding and comprehending the meaning in both oral and written literary and non-literary texts. This applies to grade X in the even semester, following the Merdeka curriculum.

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