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Comparative of Figurative Language Usage in the Album *Sos* and *Sos Deluxe: Lana* by Sza

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Abstract— *Figurative language is an important element in song lyrics because it conveys emotional and aesthetic meanings more deeply. The albums SOS and SOS Deluxe: LANA by SZA are interesting to study because they contain various forms of figurative language representing emotional experiences, interpersonal relationships, and self-reflection. This study aims to compare the use of figurative language in both albums and identify the most dominant types of figurative language. This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive comparative analysis design. The data consisted of song lyrics from the albums SOS and SOS Deluxe: LANA, collected through documentation techniques and analyzed using figurative language theory. The findings revealed that both albums use various types of figurative language, such as metaphor, hyperbole, personification, simile, and irony. SOS Deluxe: LANA demonstrates more expressive and emotional figurative language than SOS. These findings indicate that figurative language plays an important role in strengthening messages and emotional nuances in song lyrics. Future studies are recommended to examine pragmatic meanings or listeners' responses to figurative language in popular music.*

Keywords: *Figurative Language, Song Lyrics, SZA, Comparative Analysis, Music Album*

abstrak— Bahasa kiasan merupakan unsur penting dalam lirik lagu karena mampu menyampaikan makna emosional dan estetis secara lebih mendalam. Album *SOS* dan *SOS Deluxe: LANA* karya SZA menarik untuk dikaji karena menampilkan berbagai bentuk bahasa kiasan yang merepresentasikan pengalaman emosional, hubungan interpersonal, dan refleksi diri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam kedua album serta mengidentifikasi jenis bahasa kiasan yang paling dominan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain analisis deskriptif komparatif. Data penelitian berupa lirik lagu dalam album *SOS* dan *SOS Deluxe: LANA* yang dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan dianalisis menggunakan teori bahasa kiasan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua album menggunakan berbagai jenis bahasa kiasan, seperti metafora, hiperbola, personifikasi, simile, dan ironi. Album *SOS Deluxe: LANA* menunjukkan penggunaan bahasa kiasan yang lebih ekspresif dan emosional dibandingkan album *SOS*. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa bahasa kiasan berperan penting dalam memperkuat pesan dan nuansa emosional dalam lirik lagu. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan mengkaji makna pragmatik atau respons pendengar terhadap penggunaan bahasa kiasan dalam karya musik populer.

Keywords: *Bahasa Kiasan, Lirik Lagu, SZA, Analisis Komparatif, Album Music*

INTRODUCTION

Music is one of the most popular forms of artistic expression, and song lyrics play an important role in conveying messages, emotions, and personal experiences from artists to listeners. Through lyrics, musicians are able to communicate ideas in a more expressive and meaningful way. One important element often found in song lyrics is figurative language, such as metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole. The use of figurative language helps song writers express feelings and experiences indirectly while creating aesthetic value in the lyrics. In modern music, especially R&B and pop, figurative language also strengthens emotional connection between artists and audiences because listeners are invited to interpret meanings beyond the literal words. According to Nugraheny & Yuwita (2023), figurative language enriches the meaning of song lyrics and builds stronger emotional relationships between singers and listeners. This idea is also supported by Fauziyah & Prastiwi (2024), who found that song lyrics contain connotative meanings that deepen emotional expression and provide symbolic interpretations beyond literal language. Therefore, figurative language becomes an important aspect to analyze in understanding song lyrics as literary and cultural texts.

Figurative language refers to language that goes beyond literal meaning in order to create imaginative and symbolic expressions. It allows writers and musicians to communicate ideas in a more creative and emotional way. According to the conceptual metaphor theory proposed by (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), abstract concepts are often understood through metaphorical expressions based on concrete human experiences. This theory explains why figurative language is effective in representing emotions and psychological experiences. In addition Abrams (1999) and Leech (1981), classify figurative language into forms such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, and irony. These expressions are not only used to beautify language but also to deliver deeper meanings. In song lyrics, figurative language helps artists represent emotional conditions, identity, and social experiences in poetic but understandable ways.

Several previous studies have discussed figurative language in song lyrics and found that metaphor and personification are among the most dominant forms used to express themes such as love, sadness, and emotional struggle (Swarniti, 2022; Zahria & Wibowo, 2024). However, (Fitriani et al., 2020) explain that many studies still focus only on the emotional function of figurative language in individual songs and rarely compare figurative patterns across a complete album. Meanwhile, (Fairuz & Lestari, 2024) emphasize that cultural context is important in interpreting figurative language because lyrics often reflect values and collective

experiences. This shows that studies on figurative language in music still need broader analysis, especially on interconnected albums that carry similar themes but present different developments. Based on this gap, comparing figurative language across albums becomes important to understand stylistic patterns and deeper meaning.

This study chooses the albums *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA* by SZA because both albums present emotional narratives through strong lyrical expression and figurative language. *SOS*, released in 2022, focuses on themes such as heartbreak, anger, self-worth, and personal growth. The lyrics contain many symbolic and metaphorical expressions that represent internal conflict and emotional vulnerability. In 2023, SZA released *SOS Deluxe: LANA* as an expanded version with additional tracks and wider emotional exploration. Although both albums are connected, the deluxe version offers thematic development and stylistic variation. (Menza & Hariyanto, 2023) state that SZA's lyrics represent emotional complexity and Black women's experiences through reflective and symbolic language. This makes both albums relevant to analyze comparatively because they show continuity while also offering possible differences in figurative language usage.

Based on those explanations, this study aims to compare figurative language usage in *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA* by SZA. The research focuses on identifying the types of figurative language found in the lyrics, interpreting the meanings conveyed through those expressions, and analyzing similarities and differences between the two albums. Through this analysis, the study is expected to contribute to linguistic studies, especially in stylistics and semantics, while also helping readers understand how figurative language functions in contemporary song lyrics as a form of artistic and cultural expression.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach combined with a comparative method as its main analytical framework. The qualitative approach is selected because this research focuses on the in-depth understanding of meanings embedded in the use of figurative language in song lyrics. This approach enables the researcher to interpret data in a more contextual manner, not only based on its linguistic form but also on the implicit meanings constructed through language structures. According to (Creswell & Poth, 2018), qualitative research is an approach aimed at exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem through a process of deep and systematic interpretation of data.

Furthermore, the descriptive method is applied in this study to provide a detailed and systematic description of the types of figurative language found in the song lyrics. This method does not only serve to identify data but also to clearly and systematically describe the characteristics of each figurative expression. Meanwhile, the comparative method is used to compare the use of figurative language between the two research objects, namely the albums *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA* by SZA. Through this comparative approach, the study is able to reveal similarities and differences in the use of figurative language in terms of frequency, variety of types, and contextual meaning constructed in each album.

The object of this research is the song lyrics from SZA's albums *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA* as the main source of linguistic analysis. The selection of these two albums is based on the consideration that SZA's works are known for their lyrical depth, emotional expression, and complex use of figurative language. In this study, five songs are analyzed from each album. From the *SOS* album, the selected songs include "Kill Bill," "Nobody Gets Me," "Open Arms," "Good Days," and "Snooze." Meanwhile, from the *SOS Deluxe: LANA* album, the selected songs include "What Do I Do," "BMF," "Cry Baby," "Saturn," and "Diamond Boy (DTM)." The song selection is based on purposive sampling, considering that these songs contain a high intensity of figurative language and are relevant to the research objectives.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data are song lyrics from both albums, obtained from official digital music platforms and credible lyric websites that can be academically verified. These primary data serve as the main focus of analysis because they directly contain the linguistic phenomena under investigation. The secondary data are collected from various academic sources such as linguistics textbooks, scholarly journals, research articles, and previous studies related to semantic studies and figurative language. These secondary sources are used to support theoretical foundations, strengthen analysis, and enhance the validity of the research findings.

The data collection technique used in this study is document analysis. Document analysis is chosen because song lyrics are written texts that can be linguistically examined to uncover their embedded meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). state that document analysis is an important technique in qualitative research because it allows researchers to examine written materials deeply without altering their original context. The data collection process is conducted through several systematic steps, including reading all selected song lyrics repeatedly to gain comprehensive understanding, identifying words, phrases, or sentences containing figurative

language, recording relevant data, and classifying the data based on the types of figurative language found.

The research instrument in this study is the researcher herself as the primary instrument (human instrument). This is because, in qualitative research, the researcher plays a crucial role in all stages of the study, including data collection, identification, classification, and interpretation of meaning. In addition, supporting instruments such as a data classification table are used to organize the data into specific categories, along with a coding system to facilitate the identification of figurative language types in a more systematic and structured manner. These instruments help ensure accuracy, consistency, and reliability in the data analysis process.

The data analysis technique in this study follows the qualitative data analysis stages proposed by Creswell & Poth (2018), which are conducted systematically and sequentially. The first stage is data preparation, which involves collecting all selected song lyrics from both albums as the research corpus. The second stage is reading and comprehending the data repeatedly to gain a thorough understanding of the overall context and meaning. The third stage involves identifying elements of figurative language found in the lyrics, whether in the form of words, phrases, or sentences. The fourth stage is coding each identified data item based on its type of figurative language to facilitate classification.

The next stage involves classifying the data according to categories of figurative language and grouping them based on their respective albums, namely *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA*. After classification, the data are compared between the two albums to identify similarities and differences in the use of figurative language. This step is conducted systematically to ensure objective and comprehensive findings. The final stage of data analysis is interpretation, where the findings are analyzed using relevant theories of figurative language proposed by various scholars. Through this process, the study aims to provide a comprehensive, systematic, and academic description of figurative language usage patterns and the meanings embedded within the lyrics of both albums.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the use of figurative language in the lyrics of songs from the albums *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA* by SZA. Based on a systematic data analysis, it was found that the lyrics in both albums contain various types of figurative language. The data were obtained

through the identification of lyric excerpts containing non-literal meanings, which were then classified according to their types of figurative language. The results show that figurative language is consistently used across multiple songs in both albums. In general, several types of figurative language were found, including hyperbole, metaphor, simile, irony, personification, and symbolism. These findings indicate that figurative language plays an important role in constructing emotional meaning in song lyrics.

Hyperbole is the most dominant type of figurative language found in this study. Hyperbole is used to express emotions in an exaggerated way to strengthen dramatic effects in the lyrics. One example can be found in the song *Kill Bill* with the lyric “I might kill my ex,” which represents an exaggerated emotional expression of heartbreak. Another example is the lyric “Rather be in hell than alone,” which intensifies the feeling of loneliness and emotional suffering. These expressions are not meant to be interpreted literally but as strong emotional expressions. Therefore, hyperbole functions to emphasize emotional conflict within the songs. Metaphor is also frequently found in both albums. Metaphor is used to compare two different things implicitly without using comparative words. An example can be found in the song *Nobody Gets Me* with the lyric “Nobody gets me like you,” which expresses the depth of emotional connection between individuals. In other cases, metaphorical expressions such as “love is a war” are used to describe conflict in romantic relationships. Metaphor provides deeper and more symbolic meaning to the lyrics. Therefore, it helps listeners understand complex emotions in a broader way.

Simile is found in several lyrics, although it is not as dominant as other types. Simile is used to compare two things using words such as “like” or “as.” An example can be seen in the expression “I feel like I’m drowning,” which describes emotional pressure. This comparison helps clarify the emotional condition experienced by the character in the song. Thus, simile functions to strengthen emotional imagery in a more understandable way. It makes the message in the song more communicative.

Irony also appears in several analyzed lyrics. Irony is used to show the contrast between what is said and what is actually meant. An example can be found in the lyric “This text gon’ be evidence” from *Kill Bill*, which reflects emotional and relational conflict. Although simple in appearance, the lyric carries deeper meaning related to emotional consequences. Irony adds a critical and reflective nuance to the song. Therefore, it enhances the complexity of meaning in SZA’s lyrics.

Personification is found when objects or feelings are given human characteristics. For example, expressions such as “pain talks back” describe emotions as if they can respond like humans. This technique makes abstract feelings more vivid and relatable. It helps listeners better understand emotional experiences. It also creates a stronger emotional connection between the song and the audience. Therefore, personification strengthens the expressive aspect of the lyrics.

Symbolism is also widely used in both albums. Symbolism functions to represent deeper meanings through symbolic elements. For instance, “fire” often symbolizes anger or emotional destruction. In addition, “mirror” can represent self-reflection and inner conflict. The use of symbols adds multiple layers of meaning to the lyrics. Thus, symbolism enriches the interpretation of the songs. Based on Leech (1969), figurative language is a deviation from denotative meaning that aims to create aesthetic and expressive effects. This is clearly reflected in SZA’s lyrics, where meanings are often non-literal. Meanwhile, Keraf (2009) states that figures of speech function to beautify language and strengthen expression. These theories support the finding that figurative language enhances emotional depth in lyrics. Therefore, the use of figurative language in this study is theoretically grounded. According to Creswell & Poth (2018), qualitative research emphasizes in-depth interpretation of data. In this study, each lyric excerpt was not only identified but also analyzed based on its emotional context. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of meaning. The interpretation shows that lyrics carry layered and complex meanings. Therefore, the qualitative approach is highly appropriate for this research.

The comparison between the albums *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA* shows differences in the use of figurative language. The album *SOS* predominantly uses hyperbole and irony, such as in “I might kill my ex” and “This text gon’ be evidence,” which reflect intense emotional expression and direct conflict. Meanwhile, *SOS Deluxe: LANA* relies more on metaphor and symbolism, indicating a more reflective approach. This shows a shift from explicit emotional expression to more symbolic expression. The difference highlights SZA’s artistic development in expressing emotions.

Overall, figurative language plays a crucial role in building meaning, emotion, and aesthetics in SZA’s song lyrics. The use of various figurative devices not only beautifies the language but also strengthens emotional messages. The lyrics become deeper, more complex, and open to multiple interpretations. This shows that song lyrics function not only as

entertainment but also as a form of modern literary work. Therefore, this study confirms that figurative language is an essential element in lyric analysis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the first research question, this study shows that there are several types of figurative language found in the song lyrics of the albums *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA* by SZA. These types include hyperbole, metaphor, simile, irony, personification, and symbolism. From the analysis results, hyperbole is the most dominant type compared to the others. Metaphor is also frequently used to convey meaning indirectly and in a more symbolic way. Meanwhile, irony, personification, simile, and symbolism appear in smaller numbers but still play an important role in constructing lyric meaning. Thus, it can be concluded that SZA uses various forms of figurative language in a diverse manner in both albums.

Furthermore, the diversity of figurative language types shows that song lyrics are not only constructed through literal language, but also through artistic expression. The use of various figures of speech demonstrates SZA's creativity in delivering emotional messages to listeners. Each type of figurative language has its own function in strengthening the meaning of the lyrics. This also indicates that language in songs has a high level of complexity. Therefore, the analysis of figurative language types is important to understand the structure of meaning in song lyrics.

Based on the second research question, this study found that figurative language in the lyrics contains various meanings related to emotions, experiences, and psychological conditions. Hyperbole is used to express exaggerated feelings such as heartbreak, loneliness, and anger. Metaphor is used to describe relationships, love, and inner conflict in a deeper and more symbolic way. Irony shows the contrast between what is said and what is actually meant, creating a more complex meaning. Personification and symbolism strengthen emotional imagery by giving human characteristics to objects and using meaningful symbols. Therefore, figurative language in SZA's songs does not only function as decorative language, but also as a medium for conveying deep emotional meaning.

In addition, the meanings contained in figurative language also show that song lyrics can represent a person's life experiences. Each figure of speech reflects different emotional conditions, ranging from happiness, sadness, to inner conflict. This shows that song lyrics function as a medium of self-expression. Thus, listeners do not only enjoy the music but also

understand the emotional messages conveyed. This interpretative process becomes an important part of understanding modern literary works in the form of songs.

Based on the third research question, this study found similarities and differences in the use of figurative language between the albums *SOS* and *SOS Deluxe: LANA*. The album *SOS* more frequently uses hyperbole and irony, indicating more explicit and intense emotional expression. Meanwhile, *SOS Deluxe: LANA* is more dominated by metaphor and symbolism, reflecting a more reflective and symbolic style of expression. The similarity between both albums is that they both use figurative language to express complex emotional experiences. This difference shows the development of SZA's writing style in expressing emotions through song lyrics. Overall, figurative language in both albums plays an important role in building meaning and musical aesthetics.

These differences also indicate that the creative process in songwriting can evolve along with a musician's experiences and emotional journey. SZA appears to be able to process similar emotions in different ways across the two albums. This enriches the variation of language styles used in her lyrics. Thus, both albums can be seen as representations of different stages of artistic development. This change adds value to the study of modern music literature.

Overall, the results of this study show that figurative language plays an important role in building meaning, emotion, and aesthetics in SZA's song lyrics. The use of various figures of speech not only beautifies the language but also strengthens the emotional messages conveyed. The lyrics become deeper, more complex, and open to multiple interpretations. This shows that songs do not only function as entertainment, but also as modern literary works. Therefore, this study confirms that figurative language is an essential element in lyric analysis.

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