Figurative Language in Songs in Senior High School English Student's Book

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This paper is aimed at exploring types of figurative language in songs in Senior High School Student's English textbook. Students of English need to understand the figurative language in songs in order to learn English by using song lyrics. Qualitative analysis was done to three songs in *Student's Book 2 for Senior High School Students Grade XI*. The current paper reports on the findings on four types of figurative language, namely: simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. To examine the data, the researchers listened to each song three times, identified the types of figurative language that were used in the songs, and then analyzed the identified figurative language. Results showed that the three analyzed songs, namely "Flashlight", "See You Again", and "Hall of Fame" contained three types of figurative language, namely: metaphors, hyperboles, and personifications. The findings are expected to be beneficial for English teachers and designers of English learning materials, in teaching and designing English learning material. Hopefully, more attention can be paid to figurative language in English songs in textbooks.

INTRODUCTION

Listening to songs is one of the interesting alternatives to learn English. Songs in English are increasingly used by teachers in the classroom to help students to improve their English abilities. Every person can listen to the songs and improve their English skills through the vocabularies or the meanings in the lyrics. The most important thing that should be considered in learning a particular language is understanding the meaning well. If someone cannot understand the meaning well, it may cause misunderstanding. If the listeners cannot get the meanings of the songs, it will be meaningless.

In songs, songwriters usually use figurative language to make the songs more interesting. Figurative language is the language which "does not refer to the most basic or concrete meaning of a word or phrase" (Lazar, 2006, p. 3; see also Shamisa, 2004). Figurative language is usually used in written expressions, for example, in lyrics of songs, poems, and articles of magazines or newspapers to make the writings more vivid. Besides, Jumino (2017, p. 172) states that "The use of language with the selection of beautiful and meaningful vocabulary makes a poem interesting to explore". In general, the more types of figurative language used in a poem, the more exciting the poem becomes. To a great extent, song lyrics and poems are similar in terms of language styles that are applied.

However, not all of the people can easily understand the meaning of figurative languages in the songs. It is because the meanings are different from the literal meanings which can be easily found in the dictionary. Fadaee (2010) says that figurative language can cause ambiguity. Therefore, understanding figurative language is necessary to do to avoid the ambiguity of meaning. Traditionally, figurative language is more complex than a literal meaning. This study aims to identify the number of the types of figurative language that are used in three songs in the students' textbook and to analyze the identified figurative language. The songs are printed in *Student's Book 2 for Senior High School Students Grade XI* (Kusrihadi & Bachtiar, 2016), which was written to help senior high school students, especially in Cilacap Regency, Indonesia, to learn English.

This qualitative study is important because learning the figurative language can help students or English learners to develop their comprehension skills. As Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) say, qualitative research is a study aimed at gaining an understanding of holistic picture and scope on a specific topic. Since figurative language conveys non-literal meaning, students can practice how to interpret the meaning through many sources of literary works, such as lyrics of songs or poems. Lazar (2006, p. 1) states that there are four benefits of learning the figurative language in the classroom. The first one is that it can enhance students' vocabulary. The second is that figurative language "provides a handy and memorable way of organizing new vocabulary to be learned" (p. 1). Third, learning figurative language can make students familiar with useful idioms and common collocations. The last is that figurative language activities "can provide a useful springboard for integrated skills work" (p. 1). It means that students can stimulate their reading, writing, and speaking skills once they understand the figurative language well.

Tajalli (2003, p. 100) says that there are three purposes of figurative language, namely, clarity, forth, and beauty in the language. Through this study, the students, especially senior high school students, are able to know and understand types of figurative languages. Later, they are expected to apply those figurative languages in their writing. This is because using figurative language can make the writing more vivid and challenging rather than just using ordinary words which can be interpreted directly. Besides, through this study, the teachers are also expected to be able to consider the importance of learning figurative language and develop learning materials that are related to figurative language (see also Roberts & Kreuz, 1994). As suggested by Liontas (2018), teachers can also make use of "television shows, movies, songs, commercials, and YouTube videos" to start teaching figurative languages to students. It is because "...much can be gained if figurative language is systematically employed and developmentally organized across the curriculum" (Liontas, 2018, p. 4). Besides, Littlemore, Chen, Koester, and Barnden (2011)

mention that teaching figurative language can give many advantages for international students who learn English as a second language.

In analyzing the figurative languages in the songs, the researchers used some theories in this study as the basis. They are semantics, pragmatics, review of previous studies, and figurative language. Each of them is elaborated as follows.

Borjesson (2011) says that "semantics is concerned with meaning that is independent of any specific context" (p. 2). Recanati (2004) has summarized the differences between semantics and pragmatics. "Semantics deals with the literal meaning of words and sentences as determined by the rules of the language, while pragmatics deals with what the users of the language mean by their utterances of words and sentences" (Recanati 2004, p. 3).

According to Borjesson (2011), "pragmatics deals with those aspects of meaning that are determined by the actual use of language" (p. 2). This branch of linguistics focuses on language use and the meaning beyond the literal meaning. People can draw their own interpretation of some expression which cannot be easily drawn directly only by looking at the words in pragmatics.

There were some researchers who investigate the use of figurative languages in songs. Afriani (2014) investigated the use of figurative languages in "Heal the World" song by Michael Jackson. In this study, qualitative data analysis was used to analyze the lyric of the song. There were four types of figurative language which were found in the song, namely, metaphor, personification, synecdoche, and antithesis. There were 10 metaphors, 3 personifications, 1 synecdoche, and 1 antithesis which were identified. Metaphor became the dominant figurative language in the song investigated.

Another study was done by Setiawan (2014). He used qualitative research and content analysis to analyze Coldplay's songs. There were five songs which were analyzed, namely, "Yellow", "Clock", "A Message", "Fix You", and "The Scientist." As the result, there were five types of figurative languages in the songs. The figurative languages were metaphor (80%), simile (4%), hyperbole (7%), personification (7%), and onomatopoeia (2%). It was seen that metaphor most frequently appears in this study.

Jauhari (2015) used descriptive qualitative research to investigate figurative languages used on Beyonce's album. He focused on the album entitled "4." In the results, there were 76 figurative languages used. Symbolism was the dominant figurative language in the study. There were 20 symbolisms in the songs. Then, there were 13 apostrophes, 9 similes, 8 hyperboles, 5 euphemism, 4 antitheses, 4 chiasmus, 3 anaphora, 3 personifications, 2 ellipses, 2 synecdoches, 1 alliteration, 1 assonance, and 1 oxymoron that were used on Beyonce "4" album.

Then, in analyzing figurative languages, Listiani (2015) used the songs of Taylor Swift in the "Speak Now" album. In this study, Listiani (2015) applied descriptive qualitative as the method. There were seven types of figurative languages which were found in Taylor Swift's songs. The total of figurative languages in the "Speak Now" album was 59. There were 13 personifications, 20 hyperboles, 8 similes, 4 metaphors, 10 symbolism, 2 synecdoche, and 2 oxymora. Thus, the dominant type was hyperbole.

Based on the previous studies, the researchers decided to analyze four types of figurative language in this study. The categories of figurative language are chosen based on the results of previous studies which showed that those types frequently appear in song lyrics. The four types of figurative language are metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification. Besides, Housel (2015) states that simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole are four common figurative language types which usually appear in student's textbook. Therefore, the researchers refer to the four types of figurative language in analyzing the songs in this study.

Figurative language is the non-literal meaning of language. Littlemore, Chen, Koester, and Barnden (2011) state that figurative language can be used "as a way to express something more than the literal meaning." Kennedy (1979) also states that figurative language is a language that conveys different meaning from the literal interpretation. In addition, Glucksberg (2001) says that "figurative language as a language where the meaning does not coincide with literal language´s meaning and points at metaphors and idioms as examples of it." Based on the study by Perrine (1969), figurative language can give a new opportunity for readers to enjoy the imaginative pleasure of a literary work. He also adds that figurative language can be used as "a way of bringing more imagery into verse, of making the abstract concrete, of making poetry more sensuous" (Perrine, 1969, p. 71). The meaning of figurative language may differ according to the context. There are four figurative languages which usually appear in the daily life or literature aspects. Each of them is described as follows.

A simile is usually used to increase the beauty of the text. This figurative language compares two things that are not alike. The words "like" and "as" can be used to identify simile easily (Housel, 2015, p. 118). This type of figurative language usually used to give examples. Fadaee (2011) says that "Simile is an overtone which explicitly and precisely explains the object and it is the first and simplest method for conveying the beauty of message which is used in poetry, prose and also usual conversations" (p. 22). One example of a simile is "She sings like an angel."

Metaphor is "a comparison which identifies one thing with another, dissimilar thing" (Lazar, 2006, p. 3). Setiyawati, Indrayani, and Amalia (2018) also state that metaphor is used "to compare two things which have the same characteristics" (p. 70). This type of figurative language usually uses three linking verbs such as is, am, and are. A metaphor compares two things that are not alike with another word. This aims to help the reader get a good picture of what is said. Housel (2015) adds that "like" or "as" are usually used to show a metaphor. Then, Afriani (2014) says that "Structural metaphor is perceived as a concept which is metaphorically structured in terms of another" (p. 23). The example of a metaphor is "She is climbing the ladder of success" (Housel, 2015, p. 118). Mahmood, Obaid, and Shakir (2014) also explain that metaphors often only have one point of view of an issue by blocking or removing other points of view. Therefore, definitions of context may be unclear depending on the intention.

Housel (2015) says that personification is "giving human characteristics to an inanimate object" (p. 118). Therefore, personification can be used to "clarify or richen the description of something, or to emphasize a certain characteristic of a non-human creature or object" (Arifah, 2017, p. 33). Personification is a type of figurative language which gives human characteristics to an animal, object, or idea. It can also be said that in personification, human traits (qualities, feelings, action, or characteristics) can be given to non-living objects (things, colors, qualities, or ideas). Here are

examples of personification. The first one is "The sun smiled at me as it popped up." The second is "The birds dance beautifully in the sky."

This type of figurative language is usually used to exaggerate language. Housel (2015) states that hyperbole is "gross exaggeration, often used to make a point or to promote humor" (p. 118). In addition, Arifah (2017) also mentions that hyperbole is used to exaggerate and extravagant statements. Those statements are intended to create more meaningful messages and give strong emotion. People can use hyperbole of number to highlight something, such as thousands of, millions of, and billions of. Claridge (2011) adds that the list of eight "Universal Descriptors" such as all, every, ever, always, nothing, never, everybody, and nobody can be used to exaggerate language.

METHODS

The data collection and verification steps were as follows. Firstly, the researchers collected all of the song lyrics which were in *Student's Book 2 for Senior High School Students Grade XI*, written by Kusrihadi and Bachtiar (2016). The three songs were Flashlight by Jessie J, See You Again by Wiz Khalifa feat Charlie Puth, and Hall of Fame by The Script. The textbook was one of the books which were used by many high school students in Cilacap Regency, Indonesia. Secondly, the researchers tried to find the audio songs on the internet. Next, the researchers listened to the songs while checking the lyrics. This was aimed to know whether the lyrics which were used by the researchers in this study were already the same as the songs or not. Lastly, the researchers started to classify the types of figurative language in the songs one by one.

For further data analysis, the researchers listened to each song three times. First, the researchers only listened to the songs attentively. Second, the researchers identified the figurative languages that were used in the songs. Third, the researchers classified the figurative languages. After listening to the songs for three times, the researchers re-checked the classifications of figurative ellipses by reading through the lyrics of the songs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers only focused on four types of figurative language, namely, simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole as stated by Housel (2015) because those types of figurative language were commonly used in students' textbooks. Besides, those four figurative languages also often appeared in some studies of figurative language as discussed before in the previous part. In this study, the researchers did not analyze the lyrics which are repeated twice because the types of figurative language were the same.

The first song which is analyzed is "Flashlight" by Jessie J. The researchers concluded that the first song is about hope and dream. When a person is afraid of her uncertain future, her lover comes and gives her the strength to face hard moments ahead. Therefore, rather than give up on the problems she faces, she still believes that she can overcome her problems with the guides of her lover. In this song, the songwriter only uses two out of the four types of figurative language (Housel, 2015), namely, hyperbole and metaphor. There are four examples of hyperboles which are identified. The first hyperbole is in line 13 "I got all I need when I got you and I." According

to Housel (2015), a hyperbole is "gross exaggeration, often used to make a point or to promote humor" (p. 118). In this line, it is such an exaggeration because the subject in the song gets everything that she wants only if her lover is with her. It seems like she can get whatever she wants instantly without working hard while in the real world when people want to get what they want, they have to work hard first. Then, the second hyperbole is in line 19. It is stated that "Can't stop my heart…." This is a hyperbole because no one can stop a heart. The third is "I see the shadows long beneath the mountain top" as seen in line 27. The fourth hyperbole is in line 29 "I'm not afraid when the rain won't stop." This line exaggerates the rain that won't stop. It will not happen because although there is heavy rain, there will always be a rainbow after that. It means that the rain will always stop.

The second figurative language in the song "Flashlight" is a metaphor. A metaphor is "a comparison which identifies one thing with another, dissimilar thing" (Lazar, 2006, p. 3). There are two metaphors which are in lines 15 and 21. "I'm stuck in the dark but you're my flashlight" in line 15 shows that the songwriter compares "you" and the flashlight. While in line 21, "I can't lie, it's a sweet life" compares "it" and sweet life. The researcher finds that the songwriter does not use many figurative languages in the "Flashlight" song.

The second song is "See You Again" by Wiz Khalifa and Charlie Puth. This song tells us about the feeling of losing a best friend. There are two figurative languages which are identified from the song, namely personification and hyperbole. The researcher identifies four personifications in the song. They are found in lines 14, 18, 51, and 52. Housel (2015) states that personification is "giving human characteristics to an inanimate object" (p. 118). In line 14, the writer of the song writes "But something told me that it wouldn't last." Referring to Housel's definition of personification, this line is given human characteristics. Something is not a human. It is only given an action which usually done by a human. There is only a human who can tell about particular news to others, not something. Then, in line 18, "hard work forever pays." Hard work here becomes the evidence of personification because only human pays something, not hard work. In literal meaning, hard work cannot be used to pay something. Hard work is only a non-living thing which is given a human characteristic. The next personifications are found in lines 51 and 52. "So let the light guide your way" and "Hold every memory as you go" are the lyrics. The non-living thing which is given human characteristics is the light. In these two lines, light is used to guide and hold every memory. However, guiding and holding something cannot be done by an inanimate object, such as light.

The second figurative language in the "See You Again" song is hyperbole. Hyperbole is "gross exaggeration, often used to make a point or to promote humor" (Housel, 2015, p. 118). The hyperboles are seen in lines 22-25, "Everything I went through you were standing there by my side, and now you gonna be with me for the last ride." These lines show loyalty because they are always together in any situation. The songwriter does not directly express the idea but using those figurative languages, so the other people are able to understand the meaning beyond the literal ones. Then, in lines 36-40, the hyperboles are also identified. "A friendship turn into a bond, and that bond will never be broken, and the love will never get lost, and when brotherhood come first; then the line will never be crossed" show exaggerations of the meanings. Each line conveys the causes and effects of the actions. Besides, Claridge (2011) says that the list of eight "Universal Descriptors" such as all, every, ever, always, nothing, never, everybody, and nobody can be used

to exaggerate language. Therefore, starting from line 36 up to line 40, the songwriter really wants to emphasize the meaning through the word "never."

The song "Hall of Fame" becomes the third song which is analyzed in this study. This song is about motivation. The writer of this song wants to deliver a message that everyone can be a great person. In this song, the songwriter not only uses literal meaning but making use of some figurative languages to make this song more beautiful. Three types of figurative language are found in this song. They are metaphor, hyperbole, and personification. The only metaphor which is identified is "You can be the king kong banging on your chest" in line 3. As discussed before, a metaphor is "a comparison that doesn't use like or as" (Housel, 2015, p. 118). The songwriter tries to compare "you" and the king kong. "You" is hoped to have a strong character like "King Kong" which has described as a strong creature.

Then, the second type of figurative language in the song "Hall of Fame" is hyperbole. According to Housel (2015), a hyperbole is "gross exaggeration, often used to make a point or to promote humor" (p. 118). This is the most frequent figurative language which appears. Not more than five hyperboles are found in the song. The first hyperbole is in line 4 "You could beat the world." This means that "you" have a great strength to beat the world which is impossible to do if the meaning is transferred into the literal one. Then, the second hyperbole is in line 5. In this line, it is stated that "You could beat the war." The meaning of this line is more or less the same as the previous line. The songwriter exaggerates that the subject of the song is able to beat the war which does not like what conveyed by its literal meaning. The next hyperbole is in line 6 "You could talk to God, go banging on his door." In literal meaning, talking to God is only possible to do through praying. However, in this song, the songwriter says that the subject of the song is able to talk to God and bang his door. It is such an impossible action to do. The last hyperbole is found in line 21 "You could walk straight through hell with a smile." The hell seems like a scary thing for many people and it is impossible to walk through hell with a smile. It is then the songwriter exaggerates the meaning of songs. A personification is found as the last type of figurative language in this song. It is in line 15 "And the world's gonna know your name." According to Housel (2015), personification is "giving human characteristics to an inanimate object" (p. 118). The world here is given human characteristics. It is known that the world is a non-living object so it cannot know someone's name.

CONCLUSION

Using songs to understand figurative language can help the students who are still learning to master English. However, senior high school students might be still be unfamiliar with figurative language. Songs can be used as an interesting learning medium. While the students enjoy music, they can also learn something beneficial. Songs can help to enhance students' learning experience by making the learning process more interesting. English teachers can provide some questions about types of figurative language, and then get the student to answer those questions. In the "Flashlight" song, there are four hyperboles and two metaphors that are found. Besides, in the second song entitled "See You Again," there are four personifications and seven hyperboles found. Then, in the "Hall of Fame" song, there are one metaphor, five hyperboles, and one personification. Based on the above, the most frequently figurative language found in the songs in *Student's Book 2 for Senior High School Students Grade XI* is hyperbole. In the beginning, it is

stated that simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole are four types of figurative language that often appear in student's textbooks. However, there is no simile that appears in this study.

The inclusion of songs as one of the learning materials in student's textbooks is a good step in enhancing students' motivation in learning English. However, rather than answering comprehension questions in general, it is better to provide some activities which can lead students to understand literal and non-literal meanings from the songs. Learning figurative language gives some benefits for students. In order to make students familiar with the types of figurative language, it is better for the teachers or those who design textbooks to provide materials about figurative language through songs. They also have to be able to select songs appropriately, so that they can address the students' needs. As a consequence, it is expected that the learning goals can be achieved. The findings of this research can be used as a reference for English teachers, especially in Cilacap Regency or even in other parts of Indonesia. If teachers choose to use song lyrics to teach English, figurative language is an aspect that should be taken into account. Students will not only learn to answer question regarding language comprehension, but also discuss the lyrics more deeply through classifying the types of figurative language.

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