

## Figurative Languages Found in Paint My Love Greatest Hits Lyrics

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**Abstract.** Language is a fundamental tool in communication and expression, including in the realm of music. Songs, as a form of art, often use figurative language to convey messages more emotionally and aesthetically. However, not all listeners are able to understand the hidden meaning behind the lyrics, especially when figurative language is used. This study aims to examine the use of figurative language in the album Paint My Love Greatest Hits by referring to Frederik's theory. This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the types and meanings of figurative language found in song lyrics. Data were obtained from all songs in the album. The results of the analysis show that the most frequent type of figurative language is symbols (42.86%), while the least frequent are hyperbole, litotes, metonymy, and paradox. These findings reveal that figurative language plays an important role in enriching the meaning and emotional depth of song lyrics.

**Keywords:** analysis, figurative languages, paint my love greatest hits, michael learns to rock

### Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in our lives as it enables individuals to communicate and engage with others (Simarmata et al., 2021). Language functions as a vital medium for expressing meaning, emotions, and cultural values, particularly within the context of song. Song lyrics, as a fundamental element of musical composition, frequently employ diverse forms of figurative language such as metaphors, similes, personification, and hyperbole which enhance the listener's experience and deepen emotional engagement or highlights surprising similarities between things that might not have been previously connected. Song lyrics contain figurative language, figurative language itself is typically employed to examine words' more profound meanings (Agustina & Mustikawati, 2023). Arfani & Damayanti (2019) stated that a poet or songwriter conveys an experience by skillfully manipulating words and language to create captivating and distinctive lyrics or poems.

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Figurative language is often used in lyrics to convey emotions in more vivid, imaginative, and relatable ways.

The previous research showed that typically, people may have a mild preference for a song due to the artist or the pleasant melody. However, when people attempt to focus on the lyrics, they may encounter challenges in grasping their meaning, particularly if the lyrics use figurative language (Siagian & Englishtina, 2022). Figurative language often requires interpretation beyond the literal meaning of words, which can pose a challenge for audiences who are unfamiliar with certain idiomatic expressions, cultural references, or poetic devices. As a result, the emotional or thematic messages embedded within the lyrics may be misunderstood or overlooked entirely. This gap between intended meaning and listener interpretation highlights the importance of analyzing figurative language found in the song lyrics.

In education settings, figurative language can be taught using song lyrics in high school and university. This approach is highly beneficial for students as it enhances their comprehension skills (Santika & Syafryadin, 2023). Figurative language also involves the use of various forms to enhance creative writing. Through writing activities, students are encouraged to convey ideas and concepts that are both logical and creative (Marganingsih & Bamiro, 2022). This study investigates figurative language in Paint My Love – The Greatest Hits album by examining their types based on the theory of Frederik (1988) and its meanings. By analyzing this text, the research aims to deepen understanding of figurative language in song lyrics

### **Figurative Language**

Based on the explanations from Perrine (1977) as cited in Anggraeni (2023), Corbin (2006) in Pratiwi & Ardiantari (2023), Peter (2002) in Atiya & Putra (2023), and Sharndarma & Sulaiman (2013) in Sembiring (2020), figurative language can be summarized as a form of expression that goes beyond literal meaning to convey deeper, more vivid, and emotionally resonant messages. It involves the use of imaginative comparisons—such as metaphors, similes, personification, and hyperbole—to create imagery, express complex ideas, and evoke emotions. Figurative language enriches communication by encouraging interpretation, revealing hidden meanings, and enhancing the reader's or listener's engagement with the text. It is widely used across both informal and formal contexts, including literature, media, and everyday conversation.

### **Types of Figurative Language**

There are some types of figurative language according to Frederik (1988) as cited in Yulianti (2015) they are: simile, metaphor, overstatement (hyperbole), understatement, metonymy, personification, apostrophe, paradox and symbol. Frederik (1988) in Yulianti (2015) explain the definition of some figurative languages as follows: (1) a simile uses the words “like”, “as”, or “than” to highlight a similarity between two fundamentally different things. (2) metaphor which compares one thing is another without using the comparative terms “like”, “as” or “than”. (3) overstatement or hyperbole is exaggerating facts for a

humorous or serious effect. (4) understatement is the intentional portrayal of something as significantly less than it actually is. (5) metonymy substitutes for another word or phrase with which it is closely linked. (6) apostrophe addresses the dead as though they were alive, and the absent as though they were present. (7) personification involves treating inanimate objects or abstract concepts as if they were human beings. (8) paradox is used to defy logic or common sense, presents a contradiction or absurdity. (9) symbol is a sign that points to a deeper meaning.

### **Song and Song Lyric**

Based on the explanations from Grout in Hasyim (2020), Griffie (1992) in Safitri (2019), Moeliono (2003) in Yunanda et al., (2021), Emba (2024), and Rizka (2024), and Bawemenewi & Swarniti (2024), a song can be summarized as a musical composition that blends poetic or lyrical expression with vocal and instrumental elements to create an aesthetic and emotional experience. It combines melody, rhythm, harmony, and sometimes spoken words to convey messages, tell stories, or express feelings. Songs serve both as artistic expressions and as cultural narratives that reflect individual and collective identities.

Based on the explanations from Abrams (2002) in Nasrullah & Dewi (2023), Barung et al. (2023), Ibrahim et al. (2019), Santika & Syafryadin (2023), Rahim & Maryadi (2019), and Lailiyah (2023), song lyrics can be summarized as the verbal or poetic component of a song, composed of words, expressions, or symbols that convey messages, emotions, thoughts, or experiences. Lyrics are typically structured into verses and often use figurative language to enhance meaning and emotional impact. They serve as a medium for personal and cultural expression, intellectual reflection, and emotional connection, playing an essential role in both musical composition and societal communication.

### **Paint My Love Greatest Hits Album**

Most of English songs use figurative language on their lyrics, one of them is “Paint my Love – The Greatest Hits” album by Michael Learns to Rock (MLTR). Michael Learns to Rock is a Danish soft rock and pop rock band that was formed in 1988. The current members are Jascha Richter, Mikkel Lentz, and Kåre Wanscher. Previously, there was one member that left in 2000 namely Søren Madsen. “Paint my Love – The Greatest Hits” is an album released in 1996 which consists of 15 songs. They are Paint My Love, Sleeping Child, That’s Why You Go Away, The Actor, Wild Woman, Love Will Never Lie, I Still Carry On, Complicated Heart, Breaking My Heart, Someday, Out Of The Blue, 25 Minutes, Breaking the Rules, How Many Hours, and Crazy Dream. Their music often blends elements of soft rock and pop, characterized by catchy melodies and emotional storytelling. Paint My Love – The Greatest Hits album is chosen as the subject of analysis because its rich figurative language in shaping the lyrics. The study explores two main questions: first, identifying the types of figurative language in the song lyrics; and second, explaining the meaning of each figurative language type within the lyrics.

### **Method**

This research used descriptive qualitative method to describe the analysis of figurative language in Paint My Love album. It is a research approach used to describe and interpret phenomena in detail without relying on numerical data.

This method is applied as it is valuable for exploring and gaining a deeper understanding of a central phenomenon. Researchers typically pose broad, open-ended questions to participants, gather detailed responses in the form of words or images, and analyze the data to develop descriptions and identify key themes. Creswell (2012) in Pangestu (2023).

To collect the data, the researcher described in the following steps: 1) Finding the lyrics of Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock on the internet, 2) Listening the Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock, 3) Reading and understanding of the song lyrics in Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock. 4) Finding the figurative language in the lyrics of the song lyrics in Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock.

After collecting the data, the researcher analyzed the data using the following steps: 1) Counting the data of Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock. 2) Categorizing the data of Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock. 3) Explaining the types of figurative language identified encountered in Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock. 4) Formulating conclusions of Paint My Love-Greatest Hits song album by Michael Learns To Rock.

## Finding and Discussion

In this section, researcher analyzes the figurative languages found in Paint My Love Album by Michael Learns to Rock. This study applied Frederik (1988) theory to analyze the types of figurative language. The table shows 9 types of figurative language, the number of types of figurative language, and the percentage of figurative language found in the album.

**Table 1 Types of Figurative Language Found in Paint My Love Album**

Types of Figurative Language	$\Sigma$	Percentage
Simile	4	11,43%
Metaphor	4	11,43%
Overstatement (hyperbole)	2	5,71%
Understatement	2	5,71%
Metonymy	2	5,71%
Apostrophe	-	-
Personification	4	11,43%
Paradox	2	5,71%
Symbol	15	42,86%
Total	35	100%

From the table above, it can be stated that Paint My Love Greatest Hits album only has eight types of figurative language out of the nine types of figurative language in Frederik's theory. Those are simile, metaphor, overstatement, understatement, metonymy, personification, paradox, and symbol. There is no use of apostrophe as a figurative language. Previous study showed that the figurative language present in the song lyric "Like the Way It Be" by Sound of A Mirror can be categorized into six of twelve identified types: simile, metaphor, apostrophe, paradox, symbol, and hyperbole. Specifically, there is one instance of simile, two instances of metaphor, one instance of apostrophe, one instance of

paradox, one instance of symbol, and one instance of hyperbole (Meryantari & Ardiantari, 2024).

### 1) Simile

Simile uses the words “like”, “as”, or “than” to highlight a similarity between two fundamentally different things.

“It’s like coming home to a place i’ve known” (Paint My Love)

It belongs to simile because it is signed by word *like*. It compares an experience (possibly an emotion or situation) to the feeling of coming home using the word “like” which is a key characteristic of simile. The comparison helps convey familiarity, comfort, or nostalgia. The use of “like” indicates that the speaker is not saying the two experiences are the same, but rather that they share similar emotional qualities. The imagery of “coming home” suggests warmth, safety, and familiarity. Since it explicitly draws a similarity between two different things, it qualifies as a simile.

### 2) Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech that suggests that one thing is another without using the comparative terms like, as or than.

“Love is one big illusion” (That’s Why You Go Away)

It belongs to metaphor because metaphor directly compares one thing to another without using “like” or “as” to create figurative meaning. The word “love” is directly compared with the word “illusion”. This sentence means that love is illusion. By stating that love is an illusion, the speaker conveys a perspective that love may be based on false perceptions or unrealistic expectations. Since the sentence stating that A is B it is considered a metaphor.

### 3) Overstatement

Exaggerating facts for a humorous or serious effect is known as overstatement or hyperbole.

“The whole world will be yours” (The Actor)

It belongs to hyperbole because it is exaggeration that is not meant to be taken literally. It does not mean that someone will actually own the entire world. Instead, it emphasizes the idea of limitless possibilities, great success, or ultimate happiness. By exaggerating the extent of what someone can have, it also emphasizes ambition and encouragement. This makes the lines more impactful, even though it is not meant to be taken literally.

### 4) Understatement

Understatement is the intentional portrayal of something as significantly less than it actually is.

“Coming home late at night, drunk again but that’s alright” (Breaking My Heart)

It belongs to understatement because it minimizes the importance or severity of something, often to create irony or subtlety. Stating “but that’s alright” downplays the seriousness of coming home drunk repeatedly. In reality, frequent drunkenness can have serious consequences, but the phrase makes it sound trivial or acceptable. The understatement may reflect a coping mechanism, where the speaker tries to normalize or dismiss the implications of their drinking habits. This minimizes potential consequences of the action, which is a key characteristic of understatement.

### 5) Metonymy

Metonymy is a literary device where a word or phrase is substituted for another word or phrase with which it is closely linked.

"Dirty money in the left hand" (Wild Woman)

It belongs to metonymy because the one word or phrase is substituted with something closely related to it. In this case, "dirty money" does not literally mean money covered in dirt. Instead, it refers to illegally obtained or unethical money, making it a figurative expression. Metonymy often relies on cultural or contextual understanding, and in this case, the audience recognizes that "dirty money" implies more than just the physical currency. This makes it metonymic, as it replaces the cause (illegal action) with an associated effect (the money). Therefore, "dirty money" is metonymy because it uses "dirty" to represent illicit financial activities rather than literal filth.

#### 6) Personification

Personification is a figurative technique that involves treating inanimate objects or abstract concepts as if they were human beings.

"Waves carry voices from you" (Someday)

It belongs to personification. In this case, the waves are described as "carrying voices" which is an action typically associated with living beings. Waves, in reality, do not have the ability to carry voices like a person would, they only transmit sound through physical motion. By attributing this human-like function to waves, the sentence creates a more vivid and poetic expression. This makes the waves seem active and intentional rather than just natural forces. Therefore, the sentence demonstrates personification by giving waves the human-like ability to "carry" voices.

#### 7) Paradox

Paradox is a statement that seems to defy logic or common sense. It presents a contradiction or absurdity.

"I have to join the fight for freedom until the war is won"

It belongs to paradox because it contains a contradiction. Freedom often symbolizes peace and harmony. However, the word "fight" implies conflict, aggression, or war. The contradiction lies in the idea of using violence to achieve something that is, by nature, peaceful. It is impossible to gain peace through violence. Fighting for freedom may require taking away the freedom of others, even if temporarily. The sentence suggests that to achieve something noble, we must engage in something harmful. That contrast between method (fighting) and goal (freedom) make the sentence feel self-contradictory. Therefore, it can be viewed as a paradox.

#### 8) Symbol

Symbol is a sign that points to a deeper meaning. In this way, all words and signs can be considered symbols.

"You brought me out in the sun" (Out of the Blue)

It belongs to symbol because "sun" represents a deeper meanings. In this sentence, "sun" likely does not refer to the physical sun. Instead, it symbolizes light, warmth, happiness, or hope. Being "brought out in the sun" suggests moving from darkness or sadness into a brighter, more positive emotional state. It represents the person helping the speaker overcome depression, pain, or isolation. The sun also often symbolic of new beginnings or enlightenment. This transformation from shadow to sunlight reflects a change in the speaker's inner world.

This finding shows that the most dominant figurative language in the Paint My Love album by Michael Learns to Rock is symbol because the lyrics consistently use symbolic expressions to represent deeper emotional meanings, abstract ideas, and universal experiences. Rather than stating feelings or situations directly, the songs often use symbols—such as “paint,” “love,” “dreams,” or natural elements—to convey themes of longing, affection, loss, and hope. This allows listeners to interpret the songs on a personal level, making the emotional message more powerful and relatable across different cultures and backgrounds.

## Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that figurative language plays a significant role in the lyrical composition of Paint My Love Greatest Hits album. Among the 15 analyzed songs, a total of eight types of figurative language were identified. The most frequently used type is symbol, appearing in 15 instances, which accounts for 42,86% of all figurative language used. This indicates that symbolic expressions are a dominant stylistic feature in the album's lyrics. Simile, metaphor, and personification each appear four times (11,43%), reflecting a balanced use of comparison and imaginative description. Overstatement (hyperbole), understatement, metonymy, and paradox are used less frequently, with two instances each (5,71%). Notably, apostrophe was not found in any of the songs, suggesting it is not a preferred figurative device in this album. The varied use of figurative language contributes to the emotional depth and poetic quality of the lyrics. It also enhances the listeners' experience by allowing deeper interpretation and personal connection to the songs. Overall, the presence of these figurative elements highlights the artistic nature of the lyrics and the creative expression of the artists. The implication of the study shows that songs can be used as a learning source which can make the class more enjoyable and critical by analyzing the figurative languages in the song lyrics.

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