

## EXPLORING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN MARIAH CAREY'S *CAUTION* ALBUM: A SEMANTIC STUDY

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### Abstract

The present study aims to explore the types and meanings of figurative language in Mariah Carey's latest album, *Caution*. A descriptive qualitative method was employed to analyze 37 data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. A note-taking technique from Sudaryanto (2015) was applied in collecting the data. For analyzing the data, the researchers began by observing, identifying the category of the figurative languages, and classifying the types and the meaning. The present study utilized Perrine's theory in analyzing the types of figurative language and Leech's theory in revealing the meanings of the figurative language in the album. Results of the study demonstrated that there were eight types of figurative language found in Mariah Carey's *Caution* album, namely, metaphor (20 data), hyperbole (9 data), simile (1 datum), personification (1 datum), metonymy (2 data), symbol (2 data), paradox (1 datum), and irony (1 datum). Furthermore, in analyzing the meaning, this research utilized the connotative and conceptual meaning of the figurative language found on the album.

**Keywords:** figurative language, Mariah Carey's album, meaning, semantic

### INTRODUCTION

In expressing ideas or messages, there are two ways to communicate: literally or figuratively (Susilowati, 2006). Communicating figuratively means the speaker needs to use imaginative words that have no literal meaning as they have deviated from the actual meaning (Nainggolan et al., 2021). It is used to deliver someone's ideas to listeners to present their message deeply while also being linguistically rich and more aesthetic. Figurative language is also often associated with literary works because it makes the work richer linguistically (Nabila & Hasanah, 2021). Figurative language is the basic linguistic form of language that is used in everyday conversation, not just the decorative effect in language but broader than that. Hence, it is not only found in the literary works.

Kalandadze (2018) states that figurative language is an ever-present thing in social communication, influencing social relationships. As figurative language is more abundant in social life, more people are more likely to use this language style. Further, some people may not directly understand figurative language as they tend to focus on the conceptual definition and not the so-called real meaning (Ketaren et al., 2021). Understanding figurative language may require critical thinking skills and initiation to learn from the literature (Tresnawati, Yuliana, & Isnaini, 2023) as figurative language gives an essential way of thinking and shapes the way we perceive the world and surroundings (Harun, Yusuf, & Karnafi, 2020).

To understand figurative language, the stylistic approach, which studies the language delivery style, can be used. Wellek and Warren (2014) stated that stylistics is the study of linguistics, which aims to analyze the aesthetic purpose of literature. The researchers used the stylistics approach to further support the research discussion. As stated by Islami (2019), stylistics is the approach that analyzes the literary works within the language and its structure. One of the most common literary works is a lyric. As stated by Culler (2017), A lyric is one of the genres in the literature presented expressively. Furthermore, Sulzer (1968), as cited by Culler (2017), added that lyric is one of the examples of the epitome poet.

Based on Perrine's (1969, p. 65) theory, there are 12 types of figurative language. A simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things explicitly from their shape, color, and other characteristics (Perrine, 1969), while a metaphor uses the implicit comparison between the objects (Tarigan, 2009). Apostrophe deals with a nonhuman thing to be live at that time and there to respond to what it said (Perrine, 1969). Personification is the figure of speech that gives the human characteristics and ability to inanimate objects or concepts (Lede & Swarniti, 2020). Further, a type of hyperbole is a figure of speech that gives emphasis and exaggerates something. Irony is figurative language that implicates the opposite of what is being said (Perrine, 1969). Litotes is the type of figurative language that states something positive to its negative form or smaller from its realization (Perrine, 1969; Potter, 1967). The symbol is a figure of speech that could be meant more than what it is, while paradox is a type of figurative language that is totally contradictory in meaning, but it is true. Moreover, synecdoche is used to represent the entire object yet just mentioning the part of the object itself, while metonymy is the figurative language that makes use of the object to its related other objects. The last type is allegory, which contains a non-literal meaning and is less popular in contemporary literature (Perrine, 1969).

Many songwriters express their ideas and feelings through the lyrics they write as the song's writer. Some of them use figurative language within the lyrics as their writing style. As stated by Mizanto (2019), song lyrics are usually composed of well-written figurative language. The use of figurative language in the song is to be understood uniquely (Simanjuntak, 2021). In line with those statements, Ardhyanti and Supriyatningsih (2020) denoted that using figurative language in songs made the song more pleasing to hear and fuller in meaning. Acknowledging the figurative language, the readers can properly imagine the song's purpose (Simanjuntak, 2021). It is commonly used in a well-written song to express the imagination and the depth of the meaning to the readers and listeners of the lyrics.

One of the most well-known songwriters who used figurative language is Mariah Carey. Sembiring (2020) stated that most of Mariah Carey's song lyrics contained figurative language that she found to be meaningful, romantic, and simple. It is an example of those meaningful, romantic, and simple lyrics, vividly emblazoned in my mind in her lyrics. Mariah Carey is a worldwide diva who debuted in the United States. She is well known for her poetic songs and lyrics. Billboard claimed her as the most successful female singer-songwriter in the world (Billboard Music Awards, 2019). According to Puspita (2018), most of Mariah Carey's lyrics use a variety of idiomatic expressions to create colorful words. Mariah Carey also writes most of her catalog by herself. Nolfi (2020) stated that Mariah Carey was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. After 20 years of songwriting career, she is finally acclaimed as one of the greatest songwriters in the world.

Based on the background mentioned, the researchers intend to examine the types of figurative language in the lyrics of Mariah Carey's songs in her latest album, *Caution*. In addition, the researchers also aimed to explore the semantic realms, especially the conceptual and connotative meanings that can be found in the lyrics. Thus, the complexity of this album and the correlation to the study of stylistics make the present research worth discussing. In seeing this occurrence, the researchers are interested in studying the stylistic analysis of the figurative language used in the music album by Mariah Carey.

## METHODOLOGY

The present research is a descriptive study with a qualitative method. This method is applied to arrange this research, especially in applying the theory of figurative language by Perrine (1969) and the theory of meaning by Leech (1981). The data were collected from the song's lyrics from the *Caution* album using techniques such as library research, documentation, and observations, which helped the process of arranging this paper. Observation is the method used to observe the words of the object of the observation. Sudaryanto (2015) discussed that this method is used to observe language use. The method is divided into the Participative Observation Technique, Non-participative Observation Technique, and Tapping Technique. For further collecting the data, the researchers used the Non-Participative Technique. The collected data included ten songs entitled "GTFD", "With You", "Caution", "A No No", "The Distance" (featuring Ty Dolla Sign), "Giving Me Life" (featuring Slick Rick and Blood Orange), "One Mo' Gen", "8th Grade", "Stay Long Love You" (featuring Gunna), and "Portrait". The researchers obtained the lyric from <https://genius.com/>

.The steps of collecting the data included searching for the lyrics of Mariah Carey's *Caution* album, collecting the data on the lyrics of the album, compiling those lyrics into a single file in Microsoft Word to analyze more, reading the lyrics from the album to make sure that the lyrics contain the figurative language, selecting the figurative language in the form of sentences in the lyrics, and presenting those sentences into a table to be analyzed more.

Furthermore, this study utilized a qualitative method in analyzing the data, consisting of two main steps. The first step encompassed reading the whole album's lyrics carefully to understand those lyrics deeply. The second was analyzing the lyrics using Perrine's (1969) and Leech's (1981) theories. Sugiyono (2016) further explained that the descriptive qualitative method is a research method based on philosophical meaning; hence, the research results pointed out the elucidation rather than the generalization of the research object. Descriptive data analysis helps describe, show, or summarize the data points constructively, with patterns that might appear to fulfill every data condition. Thus, the author can answer the problem formulation with this method. The data analysis steps included writing down the data to analyze them more in the table of data collection, classifying those data into the types of figurative language using Perrine's theory (1969) of figurative language, finding the meaning using the Leech theory (1981) for the conceptual meaning and connotative meaning, drawing conclusions from the data analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study found 8 out of 12 types of figurative language by Perrine's theory in the album, namely, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, simile, paradox, irony, metonymy, and symbol. These types of figurative languages are discovered from a total of 37 data. They are Hyperbole (9 data), Metaphor (20 data), Simile (1 data), Personification (1 data), Paradox (1 data), Irony (1 data), Metonymy (2 data), and Symbol (2 data). Moreover, the researchers found and analyzed 6 data on the meaning of figurative language using Leech's theory.

### Types of Figurative Language Found in Mariah Carey's *Caution* Album

#### *a. Metaphor*

Metaphor is figurative language comparing two objects that are implicitly similar (Perrine, 1969). The researchers found 20 data metaphors in the album and took two for the deep analysis. "Boy, you're the missing pieces of my heart" contains metaphor because it compares the boy, who is shown with you as the whole human being, with the pieces of heart. The boy is portrayed as the pieces of the heart that have been missing. The heart is a vital human organ, so it is very important for the human body, and life depends on the heart to pump blood to every part of the body. According to Perrine (1969), metaphor is the comparison of two similar objects. In this study, there was a comparison between the boy and the heart piece. It clearly shows the metaphor case of this datum by comparing the heart organ to the whole human being.

"We'll fix our minds on another tangent" contains a metaphor. There was an indirect comparison on the line of our minds on another tangent. There was a comparison between our minds, a part of someone's way of thinking, and tangent, an activity. Tangent is a function in trigonometry used as the point of the crossing. Here, the writer compared the mind and tangent implicitly in the hope of the process of fixing the mind. Therefore, this datum is a metaphor in accordance with Perrine (1969) due to the comparison between minds and tangents, showing the metaphor case by using the comparison of the state of thinking with an activity.

#### *b. Hyperbole*

The researchers found 9 data of hyperbole in the album and took two for the deep analysis. "Bulldozed my heart as if you planned" contains figurative language expressions in the form of hyperbole. The line bulldozed my heart belongs to hyperbole because bulldozed describes how her lover would break her heart. This expression exaggerates so much, in line with Perrine's (1969) statement on hyperbole due to the expressions that bulldozed my heart. As Dewi, Hidayat, and Alek (2020) state, hyperbole is added to make the text or content more colorful and deeper in characterization.

"I ain't the type to play the martyr" contains figurative language expression in the form of hyperbole. The expression that belongs to hyperbole is the play the martyr, which shows the obligation to the lover in a relationship. Thus, it can be concluded that she refuses to exaggerate her sense of obligation in love by feeling suffering to elicit a little love from the lover. It is so exaggerated in line with Perrine's (1969) because martyr is associated with the religious concept of being dead for God.

#### *c. Personification*

The researchers only found 1 datum of personification in the album. "Somethin' is tellin' me you're ready, am I wrong?" contains figurative language in the form of personification. It is shown in the clause, "Somethin' is tellin' me you're ready". In literal meaning, datum 31 means an unspecified object is saying something to me that you are not ready. It can be concluded that she disguises herself and says the lover is not ready yet. It can be someone or even her intuition because it is used for something that cannot be known clearly or in its exact form. Hence, datum 31 contains personification by Perrine (1969) because the clause "something is telling me" can be regarded as the attribution of human characters and feelings to non-humans (Rozakis, 1995).

#### *d. Irony*

The researchers only found a datum for irony in the album. "How would you feel if you had me, then I was gone?" contains figurative language in the form of irony. In the lyrics, it says "had me," then it results "I was gone". When something or someone is gone, there is no chance it will return. The datum is a form of the third conditional sentence or conditional sentence type 3. This type of conditional sentence is being used to explain how the present circumstances would be completely different if something had happened back then. Thus, the lyrics contain figurative language expression in the form of irony by Perrine (1969) because the words had and gone have different and contradicting meanings.

#### *e. Simile*

The researchers only found a datum in the album. "Feelin' myself like I'm Norma Jeane" included in the figurative language in the form of simile. It can be seen from the word "like" as the main feature that indicates this datum is a simile. For the context here, Norma Jeane is the birth name of Marilyn Monroe, who was an American Actress who became sensational for being an icon of beauty and sexuality (Browne & Browne, 2001). American Film Institute also ranked her as one of the greatest female artists of all time (Frail, 2014). On behalf of that, Mariah Carey, the writer, is a lifelong fan of Marilyn Monroe, who always is Mariah Carey's inspiration with Monroe's confidence, a glamorous, feminist, and adored person (Carey & Davis, 2020). According to Carey & Davis (2020), Mariah Carey also named one of her children after Marilyn Monroe and is also collecting Marilyn Monroe's grand piano. The sentence directly compares "myself" with Norma Jeane, who are two different people. Hence, the datum includes the figurative language expression in the form of a simile by Perrine (1969) because of the comparison of the idol and the speaker's self.

#### *f. Paradox*

The researchers only found a datum for the paradox in the album. "The hate only made us get closer" contains the figurative language expression as a paradox. It is because it runs counter to the previous words used in the sentence, which are hate and get closer. The idea of the word hate is the opposite of the word closer. According to Aumer et al. (2016), hate will impact the relationship. They stated that the passion for love will decrease as hatred overtakes the relationship. Here, we can conclude that "the hate" could separate people apart and tear down the relationship. Hence, the sentence belongs to the paradox by Perrine (1969) due to the state that "the hate" made the relationship better, which is the opposite and contrary to the idea of maintaining the relationship itself.

*g. Metonymy*

The researchers found 2 data in the album for the metonymy and took one for the deep analysis. “Off with your head, now slither out the door” contains figurative language of Metonymy. The expression itself can be found in the clause off with your head as it has the word head that refers to him, the ex-lover who was kicked out. The word “head” is used here to replace the whole individual. Here, Mariah Carey narrated to eject someone with a mentioning head rather than using you to point out someone. Hence, this line belongs to metonymy by Perrine (1969) on using the word head. It is utilizing the word head to transfer the idea of the whole embodiment of someone.

*h. Symbol*

The researchers found 2 data in the album for the symbol and took one for the deep analysis. “I’m that security when you’re insecure” clearly contains figurative language as a symbol. It is because of the use of the word security following the word insecure. Security is the job that deals with security. The literal meaning of the datum is I am the guard when you feel insecure. The words security and insecure come from the same root word: secure. It is also the play word because both words rhyme. Hence, the line belongs to the symbol by Perrine (1969) because of the use of the word “security”, which symbolizes secureness so the lover will not face insecurity anymore.

“I’m a confirmation, should you feel unsure” contains figurative language as a symbol. It is because of the use of word “confirmation” that followed by “unsure”. In literal meaning, the datum means I am the proof that you should not have doubts. To make the partner sure, Mariah Carey symbolized herself as the “confirmation” here to emphasize that she is the one to be trusted. hence the partner would feel sure even more. Through this explanation, Mariah Carey wants to make sure that her partner has no doubts about certain things that may make her partner feel unsure in some way. The word “confirmation” symbolizes ensuring things are on the face. Hence, the line belongs to the symbol by Perrine (1969) for having the word confirmation to point out I am and being confirmed by the word unsure.

**Meaning of Figurative Language Found in Mariah Carey’s *Caution* Album**

After analyzing the types of figurative language in *Caution*, the researchers then analyzed the meaning of figurative language in the album using Leech’s theory (1981). The researchers analyzed two meanings, namely, conceptual meaning and connotative meaning. The researchers randomly selected four samples of figurative language for the meaning analysis.

Table 1. Conceptual Meaning and Connotative Meaning

Figurative Language	Conceptual Meaning	Connotative Meaning
Bulldozed my heart as if you planned.	The heart is being bulldozed as the plan would be.	Destroy the heart so badly.
Fly off with the wind, bye bye baby.	Flying away within the wind.	Go away like the wind, which never comes back to its previous place.
I’ll follow you from here like you’re the northern star (datum 14)	You are the northern star to be followed	I will follow you as my guidance.
Just put yourself into my shoes	Putting yourself in my shoes.	imagining how you would feel or act if you were in the same

Conceptual meaning could mean the literal meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence (Leech, 1981). Anggraenii (2022) stated that conceptual meaning helps people look up the meaning since it has the same meaning or definition as the word’s core meaning. On the other hand, the connotative meaning means they get another meaning than the literal one (Leech, 1981).

The first one is the line said, "Bulldozed my heart as if you planned", which cannot be true. To break here, three words are the key to this sentence: bulldozed, heart, and planned. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2023), bulldozing means destroying buildings or making a flat area with a bulldozer tool. The second word, the heart, is the human organ inside the chest, which transfers blood through the body (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). The last word, planned, is the past participle of the plan, which means the decisions on how to do something in the future (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). According to Leech's theory (1981), the literal meaning of this datum is bulldozing someone's heart as the partner made decisions before using a bulldozer, the heavy equipment, to flatten an area. It is something that is out of one's mind that someone who is willing to do and plans such a thing, especially with a sane mind towards the lover or partner. Furthermore, to know the writer's perspective, we can use the connotative meaning to analyze this one. It shows the hyperbole expression that it can be defined as destroying something due to the use of a bulldozer to destroy things, and it will be flattened until it can be seen as a whole thing. Thus, it can be concluded that the connotative meaning of this datum is destroying the heart badly as you planned before.

The next one is the line that says, "Fly off with the wind." Humans move by walking on foot because feet are only for movement. To break down this datum, a phrase and a word must be analyzed deeply. The first phrase is fly off. According to Collins Dictionary (2023), fly-off is going away quickly or in a hurry. The next one is wind. The wind is the air that is currently moving and can be felt (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Based on those two explanations, we can conclude the literal meaning of this datum is to fly away with the wind as the wind blows. Although fly off means in a hurry or go away, it is followed by the word wind, which shows the wordplay in the sentence. Hence, we can define the datum literally, like the statement of Leech (1981). However, it is impossible for us to fly, let alone be with the wind itself, because of our body mass. In addition to knowing this hidden meaning, in accordance with Leech's (1981) statement, connotative meaning is important to know the purpose of some hints. The first hint is fly off is go away, which means something is moving to another place. The next one is the wind; the wind's character never returns to its previous place. Hence, it can be concluded that the connotative meaning of this datum is to go away and never go back, just like the wind, which was never in its previous place.

The third datum is the line that says, "I'll follow you from here like you're the northern star". In accordance with Leech's theory (1981), to know this sentence's literal meaning is by the dictionary. To identify this datum, two keywords need to be broken down. Those keywords are followed by northern stars. The first keyword is the word follow, which means acting according to someone or something, and you choose to see and act in accordance with the thought and lifestyle (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). The second keyword is a northern star, also known as the Polaris. Thus, the literal meaning of this sentence is that "I will follow you because you are the northern star or the Polaris". It used to be the determiner of the north latitude measurements by navigators, like the sailorman or traveler, back in the day when the compass had not yet been invented (Seidelmann & Hehenkerk, 2020). It can be concluded that the northern star is the guidance. Hence, the connotative meaning per Leech's theory (1981) is "I will wholeheartedly follow you as my guidance in life".

The last figurative language is the line that says, "put yourself in my shoes". It is impossible to do because the human body would not fit the shoes of the other humans. To break down the meaning of the datum, three keywords can be interpreted. The words are put yourself, and shoes. The first word, put, means moving someone or something in some place, position, or direction (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Yourself is the word used to point out the person being spoken to (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Moreover, the last word is shoes, which means the pair of objects that cover our feet that may made from a strong material such as leather or plastic (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). The literal meaning of this figurative language is putting the body inside the shoes. In accordance with Leech's (1981) statement on connotative meaning, it can be concluded from the old saying of this idiom. According to Collins Dictionary (2023), putting yourself in someone's shoes means making an effort to feel a certain way about someone's situation. Hence, this datum means catch my feelings of mine; what would you be if you were in my situation or circumstance.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research, the researchers found that there are 37 figurative language used in stylistic analysis in *Caution* album by Mariah Carey. Out of 37 data, the researchers found that there are 8 types of figurative language from the whole album, such as hyperbole (9 data), Metaphor (20 data), Simile (1 data), Personification (1 data), Paradox (1 data), Irony (1 data), Metonymy (2 data), and Symbol (2 data). The meanings of each figurative language in the *Caution* album reflected their character for further analyzing the type. Hence, the meaning of the figurative language found in Mariah Carey's album *Caution* could be understood. This means some might use some words or phrases with indirect meanings, yet it shows the purpose of using them; for instance, a lyric that contains hyperbole can be understood with exaggerated expressions. That character, which correlated to the context, helped the researchers find the meaning and further analyze the lyrics. Based on the findings, the researchers also provide some suggestions for the readers, especially those who intend to deepen the semantic study in figurative language. Mariah Carey's album can be used as an object for learning various forms of figurative language. The album itself contains figurative language expressions to study further. Moreover, R&B music uses a lot of figurative language as the formula for understanding lyrics. This type of music can be used and referenced as the object in finding the figurative language.

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