Uncover the Meaning of Figurative Language in BTS Selected Song Lyrics

Ni Putu Risma Cahyani
Mahasaraswati University ,Denpasar Bali, Indonesia, rismacahyani788@gmail.com

Desak Putu Eka Pratiwi
Mahasaraswati University ,Denpasar Bali, Indonesia, desak.eka.pratiwi@gmail.com

Dw. Ayu Devi Maharani Santika
Mahasaraswati University ,Denpasar Bali, Indonesia, devimaharani17@gmail.com

Abstract*

This article entitled "Uncover the Meaning of Figurative Language in BTS Selected Song Lyrics". Figurative language is language that have some meaning behind the word or sentence and uses figures of speech. A figure of speech could even be how of claiming something aside from the literal meaning of the world. This article aims to analyze the types of figurative language and uncover the meaning of figurative language used in BTS selected song lyrics. The writer is interested in analyzing BTS selected songs since their songs not only tell stories of love or heartbreak, but also about current social situation. The data were collected by observation method and note taking technique. The collected data were analyzed by descriptive qualitative method using theory proposed by Keraf (2006) and Kennedy (1983) to identify the types of figurative language and theory of meaning by Leech (1981) to uncover the meaning of figurative language. The finding shows that there are various figurative language used in BTS song lyrics such as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, symbol, and synecdoche.

1. Introduction

Behind the world of music that is in great demand by the general public, there are numerous composers who create songs using language that has such deep meaning. Every language they use must have a meaning that the composer wants to precise to the general public. Composers use language and words that interest the listener. Language can unite the thoughts of others, become a way of exchanging ideas, culture, social life, and far more. Stand

what other people say if they have a different language, therefore, we have an international language, namely English to strengthen our relationship with other people who have different languages.

Language is one of the media used to communicate with other people. Language can connect us with all people in the world. People can communicate with other people through many other media, for example literature such as books, novels, poetry, or a song that can provide information to others. At this time, the song is one of the media that is in demand by almost all people in the world, so that the development of the times, there are a lot of composers and songwriters in the world. They create songs to express their feelings about their surroundings, social environment, or about their life stories. However, most composers or songwriters do not directly convey what they want to say through song lyrics, most song lyrics use figurative language to make the lyrics sound beautiful, full of mystery and do not offend any party.

Figurative language is language that have some meaning behind the word or sentence and uses figures of speech. A figure of speech could even be how of claiming something aside from the literal meaning of the world. Rozakis (1995: 28) says that figurative language may be a thanks to saying one thing in terms of another. Figurative language is critical aspect needed to form the literature, use of a word that contrasts from the first word sense, a phrase with a singular meaning not supported the particular meaning of the words. According Kennedy (1991:548) a figure of speech could even be said to occur whenever a speaker or writer, for the sake of freshness or emphasis, departs from the standard denotations of words. Wren and Martin (1981:488) stated that figure of speech could even be a departure from the standard from expression or the standard course of ideas so on supply a greater effect.

The authors focused on analyzing several selected songs by BTS, which is one of the famous boy groups from South Korea. The writer is interested in analyzing their songs because their songs not only tell stories of love or heartbreak, but also take the theme about current social situation. The authors uses this song because as we know, Kpop is seen as an industry that only relies on physical appearance as the main point, but the writer wants to break this assumption because they do not only rely on physical, but their music can also give positive messages to listeners.

2. Research Methods

The authors used BTS selected songs as data source which taken from Genius.com site. This site not only provides song lyrics, but also includes explanation about the song, writer, authors, credit to the artist, year of release, singer, etc. The authors used 23 songs from several BTS albums such as Not Today, DOPE, Filter, Cypher Pt. 3, Love Maze, Let Me Fly to My Room, Heartbeat, and A Brand New Day. The data were collected by observation method and note taking technique. The collected data were analyzed by descriptive qualitative method using theory proposed by Keraf (2006) and Kennedy (1983) to identify the types of figurative language and theory of semantic by Leech (1981) to analyze the meaning of figurative language in BTS song lyrics.

3. Discussions

This section will present the analysis of types and meaning figurative language found in BTS selected songs. The authors found five types of figurative language from the song lyrics such as metaphor, metonymy, symbol, hyperbole and synecdoche. The finding can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Types of Figurative Language Contained in BTS Selected Song

No.	Types of Figurative Language	Total	Percentage
1.	Metonymy	2	22,22 %
2.	Metaphor	2	22,22 %
3.	Symbol	2	22,22 %
4.	Hyperbole	2	22,22 %
5.	Synecdoche	1	11,11%
	Total	**9**	**100%**

a. Metonymy

Metonymy is a sort of language that uses a word to precise something else because it has a very close relationship (Keraf, 2006: 142). Metonymy often replaced something with other objects that are closely associated with it. Metonymy can describe a thing with different words or sentences which associated with the meaning to be expressed.

Data 1:
"All the underdogs in the world, a day may come when we lose"
"But it is not today, today we fight!"

(BTS: Not Today)

The lyrics above use metonymy due to the use of the word 'underdog'. 'Underdog' is a term commonly used in a competition aimed at teams or individuals, where the underdog means the person who is most likely to lose. 'Underdog' refers to a competitor thought to have little chance of winning a fight or contest. The opposite of 'underdog' is 'top dog' which refers to a person who is successful or dominant in their field. From this song, it can be seen that BTS invites everyone to keep trying to achieve their goals. People who are considered underdogs will not always lose, they can win by fighting hard. Through this song, BTS motivates people who are desperate to keep fighting until they can be the 'top dog' by continuing to fight and work hard because their victory will come. There is so much that must be fought and struggled for in achieving a goal that has been set.

Data 2:
"I don't need Givenchy 'cause I'm a star"
"I don't need Hugo, already a boss"

(BTS: Cypher pt. 3)

The lyrics use metonymy because of the words *'Givenchy'* and *'Hugo'*. Givenchy is a luxury perfume, fashion, accessories and cosmetics company in France that was founded by Hubert de Givenchy in 1952. According to the Genius website, Hugo Boss is a luxury fashion brand from Germany. Hugo Boss was founded by one of the leading fashion

designers in Germany named Hugo Ferdinand Boss. The two brands above are well-known brands that have sold various kinds of luxury fashion products in the world and are big brands from France and Germany. From the lyrics above, it can be interpreted that BTS does not need luxurious and expensive brands to achieve popularity since they are indeeed more popular than the brands. They are trying very hard to achieve their dreams and their own popularity by creating their music and show their unique talent to the world. With their current popularity, one by one the luxury brands want to make them their brand ambassadors and want to invite BTS to collaborate because they have a huge influence in the world.

b. Metaphor
Metaphor compares two things directly (Keraf 2006: 139). It directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. It may provide clarity or identify hidden similarities between two different ideas. The examples of metaphor can be seen in the following analysis.

Data 3:
"Love is a <u>maze</u>"

<div align="right">

(BTS: Love Maze)

</div>

This lyrics use metaphor because it compares love and a maze. Love may be a set of emotions and behaviors characterized by intimacy, passion, and commitment. It involves care, closeness, protectiveness, attraction, affection, and trust. Love can vary in intensity and may change over time. It is related to a variety of positive emotions, including happiness, excitement, life satisfaction, and euphoria, but it also can end in negative emotions like jealousy and stress. A maze is a pathway that is intricately created and has many branch paths that can lead someone astray, and a maze has many dead-end paths. The lyrics above compare love with a maze which means that love is complicated. The deeper we love someone, the more pain we feel which could be caused by the one we loved. When we have problems or ague one another, or even if lost him/her, it can be very stressful and caused depression. There are so many twists and turns that make us emotional, feel scared, panic and so on. However, if someone's love has a positive impact, we will find a way out of the pain.

Data 4:
"I'm your <u>filter</u>"

<div align="right">

(BTS: Filter)

</div>

The lyrics of the song above use a metaphor because they compare themselves and filters. A filter is literally a medium that can filter or separate solids from liquids, or separate powders to get a finer powder. The word 'filter' in this context has deeper meaning. In speaking or acting we must also filter what we say and what we want to do in order to keep the feelings of others. The lyrics say that BTS become filters, meaning they will become filters like filters, but not filtering solid or liquid which normally filters to get a finer result, but removing or filtering out bad things or words or thoughts so that other people only can hear and see the good things. Filter is used to take the best thing

out of somebody. The lyrics implicitly convey that BTS is able to be a filter of their loved ones who can make their partner their best version.

c. Symbol

According to Kennedy (1983) symbol in literature, could also be a thing meaning quite its literal meaning. It is the practice or art of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. An action, person, place, word, or object can all have a symbolic meaning. When an author wants to suggest a certain mood or emotion, he can also use symbolism to hint at it, rather than just blatantly saying it.

Data 5:
"Cause we got <u>fire</u> (Fire) Higher (Higher)"
"I gotta make it, gotta, gotta make it"

(BTS: DOPE)

The song lyrics above are categorized into symbol. Fire is the rapid oxidation of a cloth within the exothermic chemical change of combustion, releasing heat, light, and various reaction products. Fire is literally a chemical reaction that gives off light and heat. Fire is useful, but also very dangerous because it can cause houses, trees and many other things to burn into ashes. Fire symbolizes many things, including passion, desire, rebirth, resurrection, eternity, destruction, hope, hell and purification. These symbols have been used in literature, film and religious texts for millennia. And from our earliest literature, humans have written about fire. They have written about its ability to nourish and protect, but also harm and even kill. The symbolism of fire can change depending upon the context. In one book, it may represent passion. In another, it may represent destruction. In this song lyrics, the fire symbolizes courage, desire or passion. This lyrics means that BTS has a definite goals and dreams to reach and they have high courage to make dreams come true.

Data 6:
"Get me outta <u>my blues</u>"
"And now I'm feelin' brand new"

(BTS: Let Me Fly to My Room)

These lyrics can be categorized into symbol. 'Blue' is literally a color intermediate between green and violet, as of the sky or sea on a sunny day. It also has connotative meaning. 'Blue' refers to mood of melancholy, sad, down, miserable or depressed. 'Outta my blues' in the song lyrics above means out of the negative feeling or mood. It implicitly means that the singers are feeling great. It is followed by the lyrics "And now I'm feelin' brand new" which emphasized the idea of happiness. It is actually part of their history and the fact that BTS had difficult time before they became the world's new idol. However, now they are feeling brand new which means that they feel so good and better and different than their normal life. Before they became popular, they had dark times where they felt depressed during their struggle to reach their dreams. They were not accepted easily by the people. Moreover, so many people scoffed them and said that they would not succeed. But now they prove that it is wrong. BTS has come out of their dark times, where they had to experience a downturn, the desire to give up, depression,

excessive panic that made them afraid to act. And now finally BTS has come out of the difficult time and can feel a new better life.

d. Hyperbole

Keraf (2006: 135) defines that hyperbole is a figure of speech that has overstatement. Knickerbocker (1963: 367) defines hyperbole as an exaggeration used for effect. It is a figure of speech in which an author or speaker purposely and obviously exaggerates to an extreme. It is used for emphasis or as a way of making a description more creative and humorous. It is important to note that hyperbole is not meant to be taken literally; the audience knows it is an exaggeration.

Data 7:
"You give me a new life, you give me a new birth"

(BTS: Heartbeat)

These lyrics use hyperbole because of the phrase '*new birth*' since it's illogicall that one person can give life to another. Only God can determine a person's life and death. But the lyrics have another meaning. This song tells about the important role of the people we care about in life, people who can be the reason for our struggles. The behavior and words of a person can affect our personal nature and behavior. There are times when you feel down, fall and depressed about particular circumstances. That's where the love and attention of others really matters. From the lyrics above, it can be interpreted that somebody can give new life. Not 'life' in its literal meaning but provide a zest for life, motivation, and affection that can be a source of happiness in life. It helps BTS to get through the worst time as if they are reborn with a better feeling and enthusiasm. The support they receive can be a reference and a spirit to show the world that they can give their best. With the support of the community, especially their fans ARMY, BTS can create music which can motivate us to always enjoy life and strive to pursue dreams.

Data 8:
"My heart is on fire for your love"

(BTS: Hearbeat)

These lyrics are hyperbole since 'someone's heart is on fire' is an overstatement. If something is on fire, it is literally burning and being damaged or destroyed by an uncontrolled fire. However, in this case, if you say that someone is on fire, you mean they are very enthusiastic, excited, or passionate about something. It also refers to a state of mind in which people believe that they are unstoppable and can do anything they want. These lyrics implicitly means that BTS are very enthusiastic, excited, or passionate for someone's love. When they are on fire meaning that they are unstoppable and can do anything to get what they want. In this case, BTS want to get attention and affection from the their loved ones.

e. Synecdoche

According to Keraf (2006) "synecdoche is a figurative locution that used a part in order to signify the whole". Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to signify the whole, or vice-versa. As a literary device, synecdoche

allows for a smaller component of something to stand in for the larger whole, in a rhetorical manner. Synecdoche can work in the opposite direction as well, in which the larger whole stands in for a smaller component of something. Synecdoche is a helpful device for writers to express a word or idea in a different way by using an aspect of that word or idea. This allows for variation of expression and produces an effect for the reader.

Data 9:
"(We know the world)"
"Show <u>the world</u> just who I can be"

(BTS: A Brand New Day)

The lyrics of the song above are included in synecdoche which uses the word 'world' which represents the whole of the universe. The lyrics use the whole to signify part of it. Show the 'world' does not smply means showing every single thing exists on earth. More specifically, it means that BTS want to show to people around the world who they are. BTS has a dream that their success will be recognized by all people in the world. They want to introduce their music to all the people in the world. BTS proved that their efforts and hard work can help them to achieve their dreams. Nowadays, almost all people in the world know them, their fans are spread all over the world, and they also received recognition from their country for promoting Korean music to the world.

4. Novelties

Figurative language is critical aspect needed to form the literature, use of a word that contrasts from the first word sense. The novelties from this study is the analysis of figurative language in songs composed by the South Korean boy band BTS. Artists from South Korea are currently well known by people in the world. BTS is one of the popular artists from South Korea who has succeeded in giving a new breakthrough in the South Korean industry and being able to deliver the name South Korea to be known throughout the world. Their songs not only tell about feelings, but can be inspired by the social conditions around them. Their songs provide lessons for us to always be aware of our surroundings, and invite us to always love ourselves. This study gives an overview about the recent trend of the Korean music in which they used both Korean and English in their song lyrics so that their music can be accepted globally. In addition, most of their songs' tittles are in English to make it easily understood and more attractive. Some of their lyrics are in English, although Korean is still more dominant. However, it is very effective to promote their music all over the world. Interestingly, the song lyrics also use figurative language to make it more interesting. This study shows how English figurative language used in Korean song lyrics and how it plays an important role in giving an effect for the hearers to enjoy the songs in the language they understand. This study also discover the meaning of figurative language used in BTS song lyrics which is very crucial in understanding the messages delivered by the songs.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above it can be concluded that there are nine figurative language used in BTS selected song lyrics, which consist of metonymy, metaphor, symbol, hyperbole and synecdoche. Figurative language plays an important role in the song lyrics since it creates particular effects for the hearers. It makes the lyrics more beautiful and meaningful. Figurative language often provides more effective means of saying what a writer means than a direct statement. The functions of using figurative language in song lyrics are to create a fresh work, to emphasize certain part of the work, and to be an alternative from the usual denotation words. Figurative language is used in a non-literal way to create an effect. This effect may be rhetorical as in the deliberate arrangement of words to achieve something poetic, or imagery as in the use of language to suggest a visual picture or make an idea more vivid. Overall, figures of speech function as literary devices because of their expressive use of language. Words are used in other ways than their literal meanings or typical manner of application.

References

Arifah, K. (2016). Figurative Language Analysis In Five John Legend's Song. *Thesis*. Malang: English Language and Letter Departement, Faculty of Humanities, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University.

Genius, *A Brand New Day,* URL: https://genius.com/Bts-and-zara-larsson-a-brand-new-day-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 03.10 p.m.

Genius, *Cypher Pt. 3,* URL: https://genius.com/Bts-bts-cypher-pt-3-killer-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 02.47 p.m.

Genius, *Dope,* URL: https://genius.com/Bts-dope-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 02.38 p.m.

Genius, *Hearbeat,* URL: https://genius.com/Bts-heartbeat-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 02.20 p.m.

Genius, *IDOL Ft. Nicki Minaj Remix,* URL: https://genius.com/Bts-idol-remix-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 02.56 p.m.

Genius, *Let Me Fly To My Room,* URL: https://genius.com/Bts-fly-to-my-room-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 02.10 p.m.

Genius, *Love Maze,* URL: https://genius.com/Bts-love-maze-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 02.25 p.m.

Genius, *Not Today,* URL: https://genius.com/Genius-romanizations-bts-not-today-romanized-lyrics. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 02.00 p.m.

Kennedy, X. J., & Gioia, D. (1995). *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* (6th ed.). New York: HarperCollins College Publisher.

Keraf, G. (2006). *Diksi Dan Gaya Bahasa* (16th ed.). Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

Koreaboo, BTS' V Describes "Blue & Grey As and Expression of Depression and Anxiousness, URL: https://www.koreaboo.com/news/btss-v-track-blue-grey/. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 03.45 p.m.

Leech, G. (1981). *Semantic The Study of Meaning Second Edition.* England: Penguin Books.

Wikipedia, *Maze,* URL: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maze. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 03.20 p.m.

Wikipedia, Fire, URL: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire. Accesed at: 8 February 2020, 03.25 p.m.

Biography of Authors

Ni Putu Risma Cahyani, S.S. was born in Tabanan, July 19th, 1999. She is a graduate student from the Faculty of Foreign Language, Mahasaraswati Denpasar University. She graduated from Mahasaraswati University in 2021 with a bachelor degree in English literature. She is interested in semantics, business, and composing fiction.

Dr. Desak Putu Eka Pratiwi, S.S., M.Hum. is a lecturer of English Study Program, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Mahasaraswati Denpasar University. She graduated from Udayana University in 2007 with bachelor degree in English Literature. She got her Master degree in 2009 and Doctoral degree in 2015 from Linguistics Department, Udayana University. In 2013, she got Sandwhich scholarship from Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic Indonesia and attended a short study in the Linguistics Department of Sydney University, Australia. She actively attends national and international conference and presents her articles which generally discusses about the language of advertisements. She also published her articles in national and international journals. She is interested in Semantics, Semiotics, Pragmatics and Linguistic Anthropology.

I Dewa Ayu Devi Maharani Santika was graduated from Udayana University. Her Bachelor's degree was in 2006 from the English Department, and her Master's degree, in 2012, was from the Linguistics Program. At this moment she works as a lecturer in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Mahasaraswati Denpasar University. She actively attends national and International Seminars and publishes articles in National Journals of Linguistics. She is interested in Translation, Semiotic, and Pragmatics.