

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGES USED IN THE BEATLES' SONG LYRICS  
 COMPOSED BY TWO DIFFERENT SONG WRITERS  
 (JOHN LENNON AND PAUL MCCARTNEY)

by:

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**Abstrak:**

*Judul dari penelitian ini adalah "Figurative Languages Used in the Beatles' Song Lyrics Composed by Two Different Song Writers (John Lennon and Paul McCartney)". Sumber data yang digunakan dalam penelitian adalah tiga lirik lagu dari John Lennon dan tiga lirik lagu dari Paul McCartney; "Instant Karma", "I am the Walrus", "Across the Universe", "She's a Woman", "Hey Jude", dan "Honey Pie". Penelitian menggunakan metode dokumentasi dalam mengumpulkan data, serta metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif dalam menganalisa dan menyajikan hasil analisis. Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian diambil dari Knickerbocker dan Reninger (1967). Hasil dari analisis menunjukkan perbandingan dan perbedaan tema lirik lagu dari kedua penulis lagu dipengaruhi oleh jenis dan jumlah kata kiasan yang dipakai oleh masing-masing penulis.*

*Kata kunci: Kiasan, lirik, tema*

## **1. Background**

Figurative languages is a language device which has special characteristics that usually used by people to express their feeling and thought. Many authors use this kind of language style for transferring their impression about something in their literary works to give special effects and unique understanding in every sentence of their works. Generally, figurative languages is divided into several kinds. Each kind has a special characteristic in beautify the meaning of certain work. Figurative languages can be found in most writing such as dramas, poetries, and the common writing is song lyrics.

Nowadays, song has been a part of lifestyle. Song is a short musical composition which is sung by human voice, and has certain lyric. Lyric is a set of words that make up a song ([www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com)). The meaning of a lyric can either be explicit or implicit. Some of lyrics are composed in poetical composition which makes it similar with poetries that there are many words written using figurative languages. Most of song writers express their ideas of reality, social life

in their point of view, and their experiences through their own imaginative and intense perception of their own world. No doubt, writers' purpose is to make a good response from the listeners. The more listeners explore the hidden meaning of certain song lyrics, the more listeners will understand about the writer's feeling which conveys behind the meaning of the lyric.

The study focused on the use of figurative languages in The Beatles' song lyrics which composed by two different person; John Lennon and Paul McCartney, as the members of the band itself. John Lennon was known as a controversial song writer. Some of his songs were considered as the expression of atheism, anti-religion, or causing bad impact to the people at the time. His songs regularly contain multiple meaning which hard to understand. While Paul McCartney known as a famous one. He is listed in *Guinness World records* as the most successful musician and song writer in popular music history. John Lennon and Paul McCartney had crowned as the best couple of song writer in music history by *Rolling Stone* magazine.

## **2. Problem**

The study focused on the differences between the use of figurative languages in the song lyrics composed by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

## **3. Aims of the Study**

The aim of the study is to identify and analyze the differences between the use of figurative languages composed by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. It is also aimed to make the reader to understand about the songs which written using figurative languages that are contain hidden meanings which conveyed by the writers.

## **4. Research Methods**

The data used in the study were taken from six songs as the data sources; they are *I am the Walrus*, *Across the Universe* and *Instant Karma* written by John Lennon; *Hey Jude*, *Honey Pie*, and *She's a Woman* written by Paul McCartney. The data collected from an internet website [www.iamthebeatles.com](http://www.iamthebeatles.com). The songs and lyrics printed out, and the next step was listening to the songs, and read the lyric carefully, repeatedly, intensively. Note taking and coding also conducted while the process of collecting the data. The techniques used in analyzing the data

were both qualitative and quantitative method. The results of the analysis were presented descriptively. The comparison of figurative languages use found in the songs were tabulated, and followed by descriptions and explanation.

### 5. Results of the Study

The analyses were divided into two main points: figurative languages in John Lennon's three songs and figurative languages in Paul McCartney's three songs. The results can be seen on the following tables:

Table 1

<b>DATA 1 INSTANT KARMA</b>	
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Type</b>
Instant karma's gonna get you	Personification
Gonna knock you right in the head	Personification
Laughing in the face of love	Personification
Gonna get you right in the face	Personification
Join the human race	Irony
And we all shine on like the moon and the stars and the sun	Simile
We all shine on	Hyperbole
Gonna knock you off your feet	Personification
Surely not to live in pain and fear	Dead metaphor

*Table 1: figurative languages found in "Instant Karma" lyric composed by John Lennon*

There were nine sentences contain figurative languages found in the lyric, and the mostly appeared was personification (nine times). The use of figurative language in the song revealed that the theme used by the writer in the song is nature and religion theme.

Table 2

<b>DATA 2 I AM THE WALRUS</b>	
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Type</b>
I am he as you are he as you are me	Simile
See how they run like pigs from a gun	Simile
Corporation T-shirt, stupid bloody Tuesday	Hyperbole
You let your face grow long	Metonymy
I am the eggman	Metaphor
They are the eggmen	Metaphor
I am the walrus, goo goog'joob	Metaphor
See how they fly like Lucy in the sky	Irony
Crabalocker fishwife, pornographic priestess	Irony
Boy, you've been a naughty girl	Paradox

If the sun don't come you get a tan from standing in the English rain	Irony
See how they smile like pigs in a sty	Simile
Climbing up the Eiffel tower	Allusion
Elementary penguin singing Hare Krishna	Personification
Man, you should have seen them kicking Edgar Allan Poe	Allusion

Table 2: Figurative languages found in "I am the Walrus" lyric composed by John Lennon

There were 15 figurative languages used found in the lyric. Simile, metaphor, and irony were in the same number of appearances in the lyric (three times). The theme that John Lennon conveys in the song is about freedom and social critics.

Table 3

<b>DATA 3 ACROSS THE UNIVERSE</b>	
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Type</b>
Words are flowing out like endless rain into a papercup	Simile
They slither while they pass they slip away	Personification
Across the universe	Hyperbole
Pools of sorrow, waves of joy a drifting through my open mind	Personification
Possessing and caressing me	Personification
Nothing's gonna change my world	Metonymy
Images of broken lights which dance before me like a million eyes	Simile
They calls me on and on	Personification
Thoughts meander like a restless wind inside a letter box	Simile
The tumble blindly as they make their way	Personification
Sounds of laughter, shades of earth are ringing through my open views	Irony
Inciting and inviting me	Personification

Table 3: Figurative languages found in "Across the Universe" lyric composed by John Lennon.

There were 12 sentences found which considered as figurative languages in the lyric. Personification was the most kind of figurative languages found in the lyric (six times). According to the use of figurative languages, it can conclude that the lyric brings the theme of nature and feeling.

Table 4

<b>DATA 4 SHE'S A WOMAN</b>	
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Type</b>

My love don't give me presents	Personification
Love forever and forever	Hyperbole
Turn me on when I get lonely	Metonymy
She don't give the boys the eye	Metonymy
That I will never leave her	Hyperbole
Gives me all her time as well as loving	Hyperbole

Table 4: Figurative languages found in "She's a Woman" lyric composed by Paul McCartney.

There were six figurative languages found in the song lyric, and the mostly appeared was hyperbole (three times). Love and exaggeration is the theme that the writer conveys in the lyric.

Table 5

<b>DATA 5 HEY JUDE</b>	
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Type</b>
Remember to let her into your heart	Metonymy
Don't carry the world upon your shoulder	Hyperbole
By making this world a little colder	Hyperbole
The movement you need is on your shoulder	Metonymy

Table 5: Figurative languages found in "Hey Jude" lyric composed by Paul McCartney

There were four figurative language found in the lyric. Hyperbole and Metonymy were the only kinds found in it. The lyric's theme is about a spirit, love and friendship.

Table 6

<b>DATA 6 HONEY PIE</b>	
<b>Sentence</b>	<b>Stanza</b>
North of England way	Allusion
Now she's hit the big time in the USA	Hyperbole
Honey pie you are making me crazy	Metaphor
Come and show me the magic of your Hollywood song	Allusion
You became a legend of the silver screen	Synecdoche
Oh honey pie you are driving me frantic	Hyperbole
Sail across the Atlantic to be where you belong	Allusion
Kindly send her sailing back to me	personification

Table 6: Figurative languages found in "Honey Pie" lyric composed by Paul McCartney

There were eight figurative languages found in the lyric. Allusion was the mostly found in the lyric. The lyric brings the theme of love, obsession, and feeling.

Table 7

No.	Type of Figurative Languages	John Lennon	Paul McCartney
1	Simile	7	0
2	Metaphor	3	1
3	Personification	12	2
4	Synecdoche	0	1
5	Metonymy	2	4
6	Hyperbole	3	7
7	Irony	5	0
8	Dead Metaphor	1`	0
9	Allusion	2	3
10	Paradox	1	0
Total		36	18

*Table 7: total amount of figurative languages found in three songs of John Lennon and three songs of Paul McCartney*

Table 7 shows that John Lennon wrote the lyric b using figurative languages much more that Paul McCartney did. This can be used as a basic of other comparisons. John Lennon uses figurative languages in his lyrics to cover it by poetical senses, while Paul McCartney uses figurative languages in his lyrics to make a beautiful sense; the lyric composed by Paul McCartney are more conceptual and easy to be understood by listeners. The differences lead us to see that the songs of Paul McCartney are mostly famous among the people until today; while John Lennon's songs are not as famous as Paul McCartney's because his songs quite strange, hard to understood, and contradictive.

The use of figurative languages in their songs also gives contribution in their way to build the themes. As we can see from the table 7, personification is the most used by John Lennon in the songs to represents nature and religious themes. The lyrics become poetically stated and quite hard to be understood. Paul McCartney, on the other hand, brings the theme of love and friendship in his

songs by conveying hyperbole as the most used in the songs. As we know, to present the feeling of love there should be some exaggerated statement and expression.

## 6. Conclusions

From the analysis and the discussion, we can conclude that there are nine kinds of figurative language which John Lennon used to express his feeling in the song lyrics; they are simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, irony, dead metaphor, allusion, and paradox. There are total 36 figurative languages found in three lyrics of John Lennon. Besides that, there are six kinds of figurative language and total 18 figurative languages used by Paul McCartney in three of his song lyrics. The analyses were based on the theory of figurative language proposed by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1967) and other theory supported with.

After conducting a comparison analysis, there are some differences between the song lyrics composed by John Lennon and Paul McCartney in the use of figurative language. The total amount of figurative language used by John Lennon is 41 in three songs, much more than the figurative language used by Paul McCartney which totaled 19 in three songs. That makes the songs composed by Paul McCartney are more easily understood by people than the songs made by John Lennon; that is why songs composed by John Lennon are not as famous as Paul McCartney's. There are some facts which used to strengthening the statement. Difference also seen from the themes they used; John Lennon took a nature and religious themes which shown by the use of personification that mostly appear in his songs, while Paul McCartney took a love and daily life theme which shown by the use of hyperbole that mostly appear in the songs.

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