

Figurative Language Analysis in Song Lyrics ‘Cindy Lou Who’ by Sabrina Carpenter

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze figurative language as used in the lyrics of ‘cindy lou who’ by Sabrina Carpenter. It was selected because it uses a lot of figurative language to convey expressions making the lyrics even more feeling and full of unsaid meaning in it. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach where the method is content analysing, and the aim is to figure out the nature of figurative language employed and the meaning behind them within the context of the whole song. The variable used to gather the information was the content of the presented lyrics, which was analysed thematically under applicable theories of figurative language. The results indicate that a lot of figurative language such as metaphor, irony, imagery, symbolism and also hyperbole dominates the lyrics of ‘cindy lou who’ are used to enhance the overall poetic style and to translate a sense of emotions and feelings of loss, regret and or longing. Through analysing the instances of these figures of speech, the study also attempts to reveal the implicit messages which are not explicitly expressed by Sabrina Carpenter and to prove how figurative language may influence emotional aspects and aesthetic norms of a musical work itself.

Keywords: *cindy lou who; lyrics; figurative language; Sabrina Carpenter*

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INTRODUCTION

Figurative language is a language that cannot be interpreted it gives a different meaning than what is said or written (Devi, Setya & Jonathan, 2023, p. 130). The use of figurative language helps the writer to deliver a deep meaning to the reader, with the help of figures of speech such as hyperbole, metaphor, irony, simile, symbol, etc., making the literary work rich in the description of feelings with neat diction.

Figurative language can be found in many forms of writing throughout time, ranging from classical poetry, verse, short stories, novels, plays, even in works in the digital era like now figurative language can be found in many media works. One of them is writing song lyrics. In writing the lyrics of a song, it is not uncommon for writers to use figurative language to imply meaning and strengthen the feelings they want to convey in each line. This is to strengthen the depiction of happiness, sadness, anger, love, and many other feelings so that listeners can immediately feel the feelings that the lyricist or singer wants to convey.

Figurative language can be described as a form of descriptive language that expresses meanings in a manner that does not correspond to how the word is commonly meant (Matt, 2024). The language that makes use of figures of speech is collectively called the figurative language. Figurative language that is more widespread in comparisons and exaggeration, is usually used to add some of the creativity into the language written or spoken or it is used to explain a more complicated idea. Figurative usage is a literal meaning of words as extended to gain some effect, faint artistic, to make a joke or more clearly and attractively. It is not strange to use figurative language when narrating and especially when the author wants to connect with the reader at an emotional level. Another use of a figurative language is to facilitate the simplification of difficult things. Scientists could use it to make less confusing aspects of their work easier to understand, which an average viewer might not pick up such as the recitation of an atom structure explained to be similar to a mini-solar system.

Non-literal use of words, phrases and sentences in order to say something but it does not say it out rightly is known as figurative language. Its creative wording is utilized to create vivid images in mind of a reader, enhance it and aid give power to words in a different emotional, visual and sensory associations in the mind of a reader (Indeed, 2025). Any time that you refer to something by relating it to another thing, we are using figurative language. Through figurative language, an author is able to elicit emotion and image in the writing that literal language simply cannot offer. In such a way, figurative language simplifies conveying the meaning through writing and makes it closer to the reader. To many, figurative language is a tool of poets or writers, in other words, people belonging to the creative sphere. Only a handful of individuals know that we day-to-day use metaphorical expressions. What someone thinks about it depends on the view everybody has.

Furthermore, figurative language is actively used in many literatural work to this day, one of it is being in a lyrics of a song. The lyrics of the western music have a language not only to convey message of the singer by use of denotative meaning but also through the use of connotative meaning (Latip, 2020, p. 11). Connotative meaning occurs due to the fact that the singer wants to make agreement, disagree, happy, unhappy, etc, to the listeners. Most types of literature provide us with such a volume of information whereby they employ non literal usage of words. E.g. There are some lyrics on the songs which are figurative to make it less routine and more imaginative. Figurative language represents language that makes use of figures of speech (saying one thing, meaning another) (Bejo & Amanda, 2018, p. 118). The lyrics of the song are figurative. Figurative language can be of many different forms like: metaphor, simile, symbols, hyperbole, irony, etc. These figurative languages are renowned in the society and even in the educational sector beginning at the elementary level to the university level.

The lyrics in 'cindy lou who' is an expression of Sabrina Carpenter's feelings about her past lover's new woman, expressing her yearning of the place that used to be hers during the Christmas holiday. By using figurative language such as metaphor, hyperbole, irony, symbolism and imagery, Sabrina expresses the feeling of losing someone over someone new, the feeling of jealousy because she can't be with her past lover, becoming something interesting to analyze because it is related to some teens' feelings.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology. This approach falls under the category of describing and explaining the language usage within the lyrics of songs without the number of data and numerical analysis. The objectives of descriptive qualitative research are to understand meaning, pattern, and expression in textual data. Several sorts of reasons apply to the use of descriptive qualitative method; they include that (1) a concrete problem statement or research objectives could not be developed; (2) a more comprehensive and detailed examination of the objectives need; (3) research objectives addressing the issue of occurrence of natural phenomena; (4) the intention to investigate a group of connected research conditions; and (5) the necessity of an updated approach to the research. Its use enables us to integrate different data sources, analysis, instrument development and other research procedures, which are often largely employed in descriptive and qualitative research techniques (Brylialfi, 2023). In this example, the researcher focused on the lyrics of a song, singing of 'cindy lou who' by Sabrina Carpenter, to find out the themes, emotional shades, and style features. This will enable a close study of how the lyrics help the songwriter express his feelings and messages with the help of language.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A figurative language is one which differs in its wording or sentence pepper normal wording or sentence on own common literal meaning and extends to own common literal meaning beyond literary meaning of words to create a certain type of effect (Bertaria, 2017). A more precisely defined figure of speech is of saying one thing and meaning another, and also and of it indeed being true that the impression of what figures of speech there are to be found, will often seem to be generally more copious where there is the strongest coincidence of emotional and dramatic interest. The purpose of figurative language is to evoke a particular image. It influences the beauty of work language used, both orally and in writing. There are many different functions of figurative language. They are employed to offset ambiguity, to illustrate graphically, to drive home, to call up associated ideas and affections, to give animation to still things, to entertain or to decorate.

The result of the analysis presents that in 'cindy lou who', Sabrina Carpenter uses 5 figure of speech as the main figurative language choice. There are metaphor, hyperbole, irony, symbolism and imagery, these figurative languages was choosen because its contributes to a deeper layer of implicit meaning, amplifying the emotional resonance and evoking the sentimentality characteristic of a hopeless romantic.

Metaphor is one figure of speech when two often unrelated objects are compared implicitly. A metaphor is when a phrase or expression that in literal usage represents one type of item and is applied to a radically another type of thing without making a comparison (Ahmad & Sukardi, 2023, p. 21). In 'cindy lou who' the type of metaphor being used is synaesthetic metaphor. Synaesthetic metaphor is a type of metaphor which is generated by reference to transferring the senses or the conceptions. It may be

conveyance of the sense of one human being to another; of sound to sight, of touch to sound, etc. Such as a warm voice or a cold voice. It is observable that the feeling of warmth is contrasted to another sense which is the hearing sense and feeling sense (Nova, Yusrita & Putri, 2022, p. 144).

A figure of speech that involves being in excess is called hyperbole. Hyperbola is one of the forms of figure of speech; it is an exaggeration and embellishment of arguments than facts (Burgers, Kenji & Steen, 2019, p. 6). Exaggeration or hyperbole is simply exaggeration, but exaggeration for the sake of truth. Excessive hyperbole is often used to show more severe emotions in its target. Hyperbole is a type of figurative language in which one says one thing and means another. In another word, the true meaning of what we are saying is not equivalent to the intended meaning. In working with hyperbole, what speakers state is not something is and not something is less than X, but it is more than X. They also surpass the bounds that the hearers would expect through exaggeration (Noura, 2018, p. 2)

The irony is the use of words to express a meaning which is contrary to what is said. Irony is a term with deeper significance than when it is used solely as figurative language. It alludes to a circumstance where reality diverges from appearance, which happens when words or phrases convey a different or opposing meaning (Lisa & Maria, 2023). Verbal irony in classical rhetoric is perhaps best understood as having been analysed as a trope: one word or utterance, with a figurative effect, which differs in one of a limited number of common ways, with respect to its literal effect. In metaphor, the figurative meaning is a related simile or comparison; in hyperbole, a weakening of the literal meaning; in meiosis (understatement), a weakening of the literal meaning; and in irony, the opposite or opposite of the literal meaning (Deidre & Dan, 2012, p. 123).

Imagery refers to the use of descriptive language that creates a mental picture in the reader's mind, while figurative language is a way of using words in a non-literal sense to create a specific effect. Figurative language often plays a crucial role in developing and enhancing imagery (Imed, 2025). Imagery, in its literary context, imagery can be taken to mean words that stimulate the reader to make a mental pictorial, or image, that involves one of the five senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. Imagery is arguably one of the most formidable of literary tools since it reaches into the memory banks of the reader or rather into the recesses of personal experience.

The term symbolism refers to figure of speech where a person, situation, object, or word is employed to express another thing or item (Halimul, 2021). When a symbol there is, then the meaning there is also. These symbols were a voice intonation, facial expression, words, pictures which characterized a meaning. Symbols were applied by authors to necessitate the utilization of a special effect so that they could pass their message making the readers understand their works in-depth. It also assists the readers to visualize as well of their works since there were times when authors were more colorful and forceful with the presentation of their works (Dina, Singgih & Anjar, 2020, p. 678).

To get better in understanding the whole context of the lyrical meaning the researcher has provided the full lyrics of the song, here's the full lyrics of 'cindy lou who' by Sabrina Carpenter.

*I saw you laughing in one of his pictures
But you'll be the one with his ring on your finger
There's red and green everywhere, but i'm so blue
Cindy lou who*

*Maybe he met you somewhere in the desert
While he was soul searching, he found someone better*

*Guess you make him happy like I couldn't do
Cindy lou who*

*With your hair so long, lips so red
(Ooh) Maybe we met once, I forget
(Ooh) Scrolling five years back, i'm obsessed
Breaking my heart, 'tis the season, I guess*

*With your hair so long, lips so red
(Ooh) If you're waking up now in his old bed
(Ooh) At his family's house, know that you're just
Breaking my heart, 'tis the season, I guess*

*The snow's gonna fall and the tree's gonna glisten
And i'm gonna puke at the thought of you kissin'
The boy who I love is who's now in love with you
Cindy lou who*

*Told all my friends, they said it can't be true
Cindy lou who*

Results

The identification of an image of figurative language exercised in the song by Sabrina Carpenter has well arranged and discussed five categories of figurative language used in the song, that is, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, symbolism, and imagery and the meaning and and frequency amount of the repetitive language used in the song. The subsequent table provides the list of some of the lyric lines that employ these figure of speech to convey the hidden meaning, emotional intensity, authoritative moods implied in the song.

Table 1. Analysis result of 'cindy lou who' lyrics

Lyrics	Figurative Language	Repetition
There's red and green everywhere, but i'm so blue	Metaphor, irony, symbolism	1
Cindy lou who	Metaphor, symbolism	3
Maybe he met you somewhere in the desert	Metaphor	1
While he was soul searching, he found someone better	Hyperbole	1
With your hair so long, lips so red	Imagery	2
Scrolling five years back, i'm obsessed	Hyperbole	1
Breaking my heart, 'tis the season, I guess	Irony	2
The boy who I love is who's now in love with you	Irony	1

(Source: Lyrics source of google & musixmacth, 2025)

Discussion

According to the assessment of the lyrics of the song Cindy Lou Who, through the analysis of the particular lyrics, it is revealed that there are five types of figurative language used over eight lines that are constituted of figurative expressions. They are metaphor, hyperbole, irony, symbolism, and imagery. Both of these forms of types have different purposes in strengthening the feelings of the narrator and especially her sadness, longing and hopelessness with her former lover.

1. **There's red and green everywhere, but i'm so blue"**

This is a metaphoric and also an ironical line. The literality of the word blue in this case is not describing the color but is rather related to the profound emotion of sadness and emotional heaviness of the narrator. By comparison, colors of red and green are linked to Christmas time, as they often refer to Christmas decorations and flamboyant celebrations. The irony is the emotional one: in the surrounding environment, everything is concentrated on the symbolism of joy and warmth, but the speaker cannot experience the opposite: he is lonely and heartbroken, disenfranchised. The utterance is one verbal manifestation, which demonstrates the emotional discord between outside celebration and inside loss, and the sadness is that much more somber against the scene of what is intended to be a happy season.

2. **"Cindy lou who"**

'cindy lou who' which is also the title of the song as well which serves as a metaphor to bring more depth to the emotional experience of the narrator. In the original story *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, it is Cindy Lou Who who is a sweet innocent child who still believes the Grinch is good although he wants to rob Christmas. This character comes to be a sort of a proxy of the narrator in the song, who indeed is an innocent, hopeful, and emotionally vulnerable individual. The metaphor implies that in the same way Cindy Lou Who was deprived of the pleasure of the holidays not by an imaginary bad person, the narrator was also deprived of the holiday by the man who was already taken by someone. This analogy gives an emotional tone to the story describing how the narrator is cheated, heartbroken and deprived of the coziness and cheerfulness, which the winter holidays are supposed to be.

3. **"Maybe he met you somewhere in the desert"**

This is a metaphor since the words don't mean that there was literally a desert, but that it was a period in the life of this man that he was in some sort of a desert emotionally lost, suffering and vying after something or someone to find and express love. The desert symbolizes the draught and vacuous period- where he was humoured and without any sense of direction. Encountering the girl in such a place of a desert indicates that she entered his life when he went through a rough patch, which given to his surroundings could have brought him comfort or hope at the darkest moments of his life.

4. **"While he was soul searching, he found someone better"**

This line is a hyperbole. The expression soul searching is not intended to apply literally, i.e., that he is searching for a lost or soulless form of his body but rather metaphorically emphasis on mood of soul-searching his life, identity and personal wishes. It suggests that the man was in the active state of self-discovery or self-struggles. The hyperbole makes his journey seem very deep, as it implies that he was attempting to figure himself out but instead he chose something/people, someone who he thought was more suited or satisfied what he was seeking out.

5. "With your hair so long, lips so red"

It is a type of imagery in this line because it paints a clear visual image of the woman who is being described. These details are long hair and red lips, which address the sense of sight directly and enable a listener to imagine how she looks. This verse supports a traditional and idealized image of female beauty that may be connected to appeal and self-assurance. With the help of this visual description, the songwriter underlines the impression of how appealing or beautiful the new woman looks, perhaps stressing the difference between her and the speaker..

6. "Scrolling five years back, i'm obsessed"

This is a hyperbole by the narrator as she shows how she binds to her past lover in an emotional attachment. Scrolling back five years in memories or social media is an over the top gesture that is used to indicate the extent to which she is entrenched in the past and the distance she will go to recreate the experience as it had taken place. It does not literally imply that she is literally scrolling back in time to the last five years but instead stresses the aspect of her obsession and how much she is obsessed with these feelings that she still has. This hyperbolism tells a lot about the strength and persistence of her feelings, which stays with her even after so many years.

7. "Breaking my heart, 'tis the season, I guess"

This line is an irony. The image of Christmas holiday is not new; rather, it reminds people of joy, cosiness, and unity, also, it is known as the season or, to be more exact, the time of the year, when it is legitimately called the season of Christmas. But in this line, that mirthful appearance is juxtaposed to the sorrowful feeling of heartbreak. This forms irony as the feelings of the season are reversed; the narrator should be happy, yet he or she is addressing some pain in terms of emotions. The contrast of a festive occasion and the presence of heartbreak shows the tinge of sweetness and bitterness that surrounds the occasion and creates an emotional effect to the lyrics.

8. "The boy who I love is who's now in love with you"

This line is an ironical term, in particular showing the unfilled love. The twist in the feeling- this twist is ironical because the opposite is happening, the narrator loves someone deeply, but that same individual has offered his love to somebody. This love is not mutual; it is misdirected, which forms a rather painful contrast between how this narrator feels toward it and how the situation actually works. This sarcastic twist highlights the heartbreak and emotional disconnect that is now a reality, even though the affection still lingers and even finds its way out in the narrator.

CONCLUSION

Sabrina Carpenter presents a thorough examination of the lyrics of Cindy Lou Who, according to which, it is possible to state that the purposeful and artistic employment of the figurative language is greatly important in securing the emotional tones and other undercurrents, which the songwriter wants the listener to remember. Its language is very expressive, which makes the song beautiful and expands both the emotional and psychological context of the story. By reading the lyrics carefully, it has been identified that there are five main types of figurative language conveyed, namely, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, symbolism and imagery. All these devices help bring out their own significance and affect in the song in general.

All these figurative features are used to convey more complicated emotional states of loss, regret, yearning, and emotional detachment that is closely connected to theme of the past love affair and the bitterness of emotion that is so often experienced during the nostalgic time of the holidays. The song achieves more than merely narrating a story, however, through its lyrical content; the audience is asked to enter an extremely personal and intensely emotive place where words are used as a decoration and decoration as well as a method of emotional communication. Although the song has certain poetic beauty to it, the small things that are described in it are bits of truth in emotion that one might be unable to describe otherwise in a dry sense.

Also, the present study demonstrates the perspectives of using figurative language in song texts as the significant method of analyzing the artistic and psychological sides of music. It outlines how such music artists as Sabrina Carpenter use words and language not only to convey stories, but also to create the visceral emotional reaction within their audience, and often have recourse even to the indirect, symbolic or hinting language. These results confirm the idea that figurative language utilized in songwriting does not serve as some kind of decoration, but is a key element in terms of creating both emotional and thematic content of a musical composition.

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