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Figurative Language in Rupi Kaur's Social Media Posts

A Paper

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*Done under my
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾

صدق الله العلي العظيم

سوره البقره ايه (32)

Dedication

I thank God Almighty for the strength, patience and perseverance to continue my studies and achieve my dream. I dedicate this work to my family. All the love.

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Abstract

In literature, there are several models of literary works, one of them is poetry. Poetry is the literary work that contains most elements of beauty. This can be seen from the characteristics of poem that use figurative language, choice of words and messages are expressed by the author. Those characteristics are difficult to be understood by people in learning a poem. Therefore, this issue is very important to be studied and analyzed. The aims of this research are to know the types of figurative language are used in the poems especially in collection of figurative language used by Rupi Kaur's poems, and the messages are generated from that poem.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Problem

Poems are one of the most popular literary works because it does not take much time to read it. Poetic diction differs from everyday speech in that it has a one-to-one correlation between word and meaning (Perrine, 1977). It will be difficult to express the point if the denotative meaning is used in literary works, especially poetry. A poem presents an idea using diction, the figure of speech, pattern, imaginary, tone, rhyme, sound, meaning, and rhythm. We can say that poem used language that was more complex in meaning. The authors concentrated on Rupi Kaur's poem's domain of figurative language. The term "figurative language" refers to language that has multiple meanings. Figurative language is a language that is utilized creatively rather than literally. As a result, people must think deeper when trying to comprehend it. The use of figurative language should not be regarded literally, and a poet's imagination is expressed through figurative language. This paper tries to answer the following:

- 1- What is meant by figurative language?
- 2- What are the forms of figurative language in poetry?
- 3- What are the types of figurative language used by Rupi Kaur in their work "*milk and honey*"?

1.2 The Aims

The study aims at:

1. Defining the concept of figurative language.
2. Identifying the forms of figurative language used in poetry.
3. Identifying the forms of figurative language used in Rupi Kaur's "*milk and honey*".

1.3 The Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that :

1. There are several forms of figurative language in poetry.
2. Metaphor is the most common type of figurative language used in Rupi Kaur's "*milk and honey*".

1.4 The Procedures

In carrying out this study, these steps will be followed:

1. Presenting theoretical background about figurative language.
2. Analyzing the figurative language used in Rupi Kaur's "*milk and honey*".
3. Pinpointing the conclusions of the study.

1.5 The Limits

This paper is limited to the forms of figurative language in English poetry, and to the analysis of its uses in Rupi Kaur's work "*milk and honey*" only.

1.6 The Value

It is hoped that the results of this study will be of value to all those concerned in the field of stylistics, especially those who tend to deal with contemporary poetry.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Background

2.1 Figurative Language

2.1.1 The Definition of Figurative Language

McArthur (1992: 402) explained that figurative language is the language in which figures of speech such as metaphors freely occur. He also states that figures of speech are a rhetorical device using words in distinctive ways to achieve a special effect. Figurative language is sequences of standard words are used by the user language, to achieve the meaning or special effects.

According to Dian (2010: 2), figurative language is categorized as the implied meaning, because the words used in figurative language is not the real meaning but it is the connotative meaning. She also explains that it is language which forces the readers to attend connotation rather than to the denotation.

Elder (2004: 294) stated that figures of speech or figurative language can be compared to painting a picture in people's minds. The forms of expression, such as art, make use of the human symbolic ability, which relies upon the conceptual system; it follows that artistic expression must reflect the nature of human embodiment, and thus bodily experience, Evans and Zinken (2006:11). One way in which art manifests itself is through language, particularly literary language.

2.1.2 The Characteristics of Figurative Language

Figurative language has several characteristics that distinguish it from literal language. Some of these characteristics are (Adhikari and Yadav, 2013):

- **Non-literal meaning:** Figurative language uses words or expressions in a way that deviates from their literal meaning to create an image or comparison.
- **Expressive:** Figurative language is often used to convey a mood, emotion, or feeling that cannot be conveyed through literal language.
- **Imaginative:** Figurative language often creates an image or comparison that is vivid and imaginative, engaging the reader or listener's imagination.
- **Poetic:** Figurative language is often used in poetry to create a more powerful and resonant message.
- **Symbolic:** Figurative language often uses symbols or metaphors to represent abstract concepts or ideas.
- **Open to interpretation:** Figurative language can be interpreted in different ways by different people, allowing for multiple meanings and interpretations.
- **Creative:** Figurative language allows for creativity and innovation in language use, encouraging writers and speakers to think outside the box and create new and interesting expressions.
- **Overall,** figurative language is a powerful tool for communication that allows for a greater depth of meaning and emotional impact than literal language alone.

2.1.3 Forms of Figurative Language

According to Tarigan (1986:113), figurative language can be categorized into four groups, those are:

a) Figure of Comparison

Simile

Simile comes from Latin which means “such as” . Simile is comparison of two different things but considered has the same meaning. Simile is described explicitly by use of the words: such as, like, if as, as though, be like. (Tarigan, 1986:118).

e.g. Her spirits are hard as steel.

Metaphor

Metaphor comes from Greek. Metha which means “displace”, and pherein means “bring”. According to Poerwadarminta (1986), metaphors are words that do not have real meaning, however their description is based on similarities or comparisons.

e.g. A library is a warehouse of knowledge.

Personification

Personification comes from the Latin word persona which means “human”, and fic which means “make”. According to Moeliono (1986), personification is the type of figure of speech which applies the character of human to inanimate object.

e.g. Love is blind.

Allegory

According Tarigan (1986) allegory is figure of comparison which is told with symbols. Allegory can be in the form of poetry and prose. Allegory is a style of language that compares two pieces of wholeness based on their overall similarities.

b) Figure of Contradiction

Hyperbole

Hyperbole comes from the Greek word which means waste or exaggeration. According to Moeliono (1986), a hyperbole is an expression which exaggerates the amount, size, or character of something.

e.g. My heart is broken when I see you with others.

Dad drank a million gallons of water after his run.

Litotes

Litotes comes from the Greek word litos which means “simple”. Litotes are a figure of speech that express positive things with a negative form or contradictory forms. According to Tarigan (1986), litotes are the opposite of hyperbole because they contain a minimized statement, which could be used to express a humble attitude.

e.g. I am not a beauty queen.

This car is the result of our small business.

Irony

Irony is a figure of speech that expresses contradictory meanings with the purpose of humiliating (Tarigan, 1986). The purpose can be achieved by arguing incompatibility between expectation and reality.

e.g. Your body is so fragrant that no one is approaching you.

Your writing is very nice like a child who just learned to write.

Oxymoron

Oxymoron is figure of speech which contains the establishment of a syntactic relationship between two antonyms (Ducrot and Todorov, 1986).

e.g. People who climb a mountain are attracting attention even though very dangerous.

c) Figure of Correlation

Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech that replaces the name of a thing with the name something else with which it is closely associated.

e.g. The White House, for president of the United States.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure of speech that explains a part of the object to state the whole thing or otherwise (Dale, 1986)

e.g. Mother's hand is like magic that can make my heart feel calm.

Allusion

Allusion is a figure of speech to remind about the past event that are known to both author or the readers to connect with events in the presents.

e.g. I was horrified when I recalled the event of Reformation in 1998.

Euphemism

Euphemism comes from Greek euphemizien which means speak with clear words. According to Moelionono (In Tarigan, 1986), euphemisms are a smoother expression as an alternative for direct or rude expressions.

e.g. "passed away" instead of "died"

Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a figure of speech that involves removing or deleting a sentence element (Tarigan, 1986).

e.g. He and his wife to Jakarta last week. (Predicate removal: went)

a) Figure of Repetition

Alliteration

Alliteration is the commencement of two or more sounds in close connection with the same sound (Drabble, 1985).

e.g. Find me fifteen friendly friars.

Chiasmus

Chiasmus is figure of speech by which the other words in the first of two parallel clauses is reversed in the second (Drabble, 1985 : 189).

e.g. She saved others; herself can not save.

Repetition

Repetition is a figure of speech by which the same words or phrases are used repeatedly in successive clauses (Tarigan, 1985).

e.g. Awake up my glory, awake up my lute and harp, and I will awake right early.

2.2 “milk and honey”

2.2.1 About Rupi Kaur

Kaur was born on October 4, 1992 into a Sikh family in Punjab, India. She immigrated to Canada with his parents when she was three years old. Her father had previously left home and was away when Kaur was born. At a young age, she witnessed relatives and friends being subjected to domestic violence and abuse. Seeing her parents subjected to racism made her a shy character. The environment she grew up in led her to develop what she describes as a “constant survival mode” (Tariro, 2017). Kaur studied rhetoric and professional writing at the University of Waterloo; she teaches creative-writing classes for high school and college students while in education herself (Joanna , 2020:3)

2.2.2 Rupi Kaur’s Style of Writing

Rupi’s debut collection, *milk and honey*, published in 2014, has spent more than three years on The New York Times’ bestseller list and has been translated into 42 languages. Her second book, *the sun and her flowers*, was published in 2017 to equal acclaim.

Rupi's work is written exclusively in lowercase to honour her mother tongue, Punjabi. Punjabi is written in the Gurmukhi script, which contains no uppercase letters and no punctuation, other than the period. A part of her writing style is being very thoughtful in the words that she choose to use, and to not over saturate a poem by adding unnecessary words. Each word she use has to push the message of the poem forward, if there are any extra words just hanging about, they have to go (Simran, 2018)

2.2.3 Rupi Kaur's Best Works

Rupi Kaur's *milk and honey* is a collection of prose and poetry that explores themes of silence, abuse, womanhood, family, connections and personal power. Kaur divides the work into four sections--hurting, loving, breaking, and healing - mirroring the poet's growth. In the section "the hurting," Kaur explores the idea of otherness within oneself, how one cannot be at home in one's own body and how so many experiences affirm that to be a woman is undesirable and alien. Her trauma related to alcoholic family members, abuse and rape shape the poet's fraught psyche, leaving a sense of insecurity and confusion that permeates every page. This confusion is directed both toward understanding her place in the world as an individual and her relationships with others (Simran, 2018)

The sun and her flowers is the second book of poetry by Rupi Kaur. This collection also explores big themes including loss and love and identity in a way that is heartfelt, relatable, and beautifully raw. The poems range in length from as short as one line to several pages, but the majority are in what has come to be Kaur's signature style: short and uncomplicated lines that seem to say so much more in sum than the total of their parts. The five sections of the book correspond with a poem that compares the process of personal growth to the life cycle of a flower. The poem is based on a lesson Kaur credits to her mother (Ella, 2017).

Chapter Three

Data and Analysis

Rupi Kaur's *milk and honey* is a collection of prose and poetry that explores themes of silence, abuse, womanhood, family, connections and personal power. This research explores the use of the forms of figurative language described in Chapter Two within the poems of Kaur's "*milk and honey*". A total of 12 poems are selected to discuss the figurative tools, taken from Rupi Kaur's personal page on Facebook where she publishes her works online.

*how is it so easy for you
to be kind to people he asked*

*milk and honey dripped
from my lips as i answered*

*cause people have not
been kind to me*

- rupi kaur



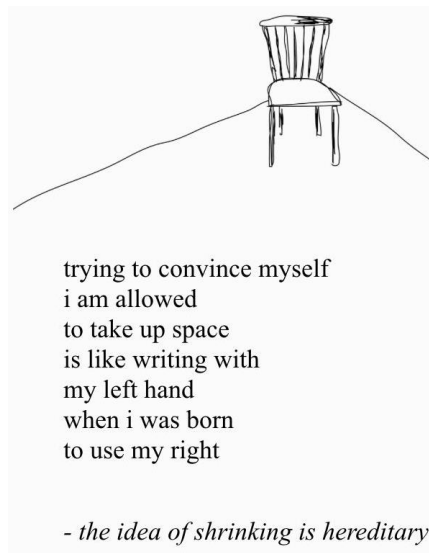
**“milk and honey dripped
from my lips as I answered”**

These lines compare between milk and honey that dripped from her lips and how she answers. It means that she can answer the question smoothly. These lines include a **simile**, a comparison of two different things but considered has the same meaning. Simile is described explicitly by use of the words: such as, like, if as, as though, be like.

the first boy that kissed me
held my shoulders down
like the handlebars of
the first bicycle
he ever rode

**“held my shoulders down
like the handlebars”**

It compares between shoulders and handlebars used function word “like”. It means that the boy held her shoulders really hard until feel like the boy is holding a handlebar of bicycle. **Simile** is comparison of two different things but considered has the same meaning.



**“i am allowed
to take up space
is like writing with
my left hand”**

It compares between taking space and writing with her left hand ‘feeling using function word “like”. It means that it is hard for her to take space for herself. She is not having her own place and privacy until it is hard for her to take up space for herself. This is again an example of **simile**.

**“she was a rose
in the hands of those
who had no intention
of keeping her”**

It compares between ‘she’ and ‘rose’. It means the writer describes that she is beautiful as a flower, and she is really having beauty that make people describe her as a flower. **Metaphor** is the figurative language tool used here. The words “rose” also represents beauty, meaning that she was beautiful. Thus, the rose is a **metonymy** that replaces the name of a thing with the name something else with which it is closely associated.

**“i can’t tell if my mother is
terrified or in love with
my father it all
looks the same”**

These lines imply that she is not sure if her mother love or terrified to her father because it looks the same to her. **Apophysis** is a rhetorical term for the mention of something in disclaiming intention of mentioning it, or pretending to deny what is really affirmed.

**“he was the first boy
to teach me my body was
for giving to those
that wanted that I should feel anything
less than whole”**

The verse of the poem explains the whole part that who is the first boy and what the boy has taught her. The boy had told that her body does not belong to her, so she should just give it up. **Synecdoche** is the figure of speech that explains a part of the object to state the whole thing or otherwise.

you pinned
my legs to
the ground
with your feet
and demanded
i stand up



**“you pinned
my legs to
the ground
with your feet
and demanded
i stand up”**

The verse of the poem represents the whole part which means helpless or unable to do anything. It can conclude that she has been abused and cannot do anything. Again, this is an example of **synecdoche**.

your father is absent

you are a war
the border between two countries
the collateral damage
the paradox that joins the two
but also splits them apart

“you are a war”

In “the border between two countries”, the countries mean the poet and her father. She feels like she is in a bad environment, almost like the war. An **epithet** is a literary device that describes a person, place, or object by accompanying or replacing it with a descriptive word or phrase.

“i understand this world broke you”

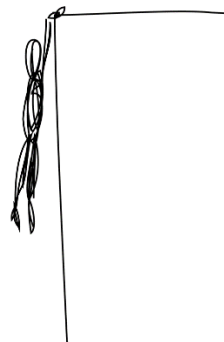
This line describes as if the world is alive and can break a person. The poet tried to understand why her father would hurt her. This is a case of **personification**, whereby the character of a human being is applied to inanimate objects.

**“the rape will
tear you
in half
but it
will not
end you”**

It describes as if the rape or abuse is alive and has the ability to tear a person. It means that the abuse leaves behind a huge trauma. This is another example of **personification**.

anxiety feels like i'm hanging
off the side of a building
and my hand is going to
slip any second

- rupi kaur

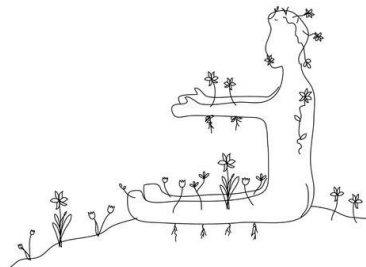


**“anxiety feels like i'm hanging
off the side of a building
and my hand is going to
slip any second”**

Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech that involves the use of words that imitate the sounds they describe. In other words, the word itself sounds like the thing it is describing. In these lines, the repeated “-ing” sound imitates the swinging movement of someone who is hanging of the side of a building.

it is a blessing
to be the color of earth
do you know how often
flowers confuse me for home

- rupi kaur



**“it is a blessing
to be the color of earth
do you know how often
flowers confuse me for home”**

Euphemisms are expressions used to replace a more direct or blunt phrase that might be considered unpleasant, offensive, or taboo. Euphemisms are often used to make a statement more socially acceptable or less uncomfortable. In these lines, the description “the color of earth” indicates that the poet is a person of brown skin color.

Chapter Four

Conclusions

Based on the work in this research, the following conclusions can be stated:

1. Figurative language is a kind of expression that differs from the conventional meaning of a word or sentence and the ordinary literal meaning of a word or sentence. Figurative language is part of a language phenomenon worth studying because it results from creative imagination.
2. Figurative language can be realized through 16 tools, namely (simile, metaphor, personification, allegory, hyperbole, litotes, irony, oxymoron, metonymy, synecdoche, allusion, euphemism, ellipsis, alliteration, chiasmus, repetition).
3. In the 12 poems selected from Rupi Kaur's "milk and honey", there are 13 cases of figurative language identified. The most commonly occurring form is (**simile**), followed by (**synecdoche**) and (**personification**). Single cases of euphemisms, onomatopoeia, epithet, apophasis, metaphor, and metonymy are also found.

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