

An Analysis of Figures of Speech in the Selected Song by Michael Jackson

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Abstract

Figures of speech can easily be found in almost all songs like in short stories, Novels and so on. The present research is entitled *An Analysis of Figures of Speech in the Selected Song by Michael Jackson*. The aim of the research is to analyze how figures of speech are used in the selected song *Heal The World* by Michael Jackson. The objectives of the research are to explore the figures of speech used in the selected song and to find out which figures of speech are most used and which are least used. In this research, the figures of speech found in the song by Michael Jackson are classified into twenty kinds: alliteration, anaphora, antithesis, apostrophe, assonance, chiasmus, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metaphor, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, paradox, personification, pun, simile, synecdoche and understatement. It was based on the theory of Nordquist (2019). The study shows that figures of speech found are Alliteration, Anaphora, Antithesis, Hyperbole, Metaphor, Metonymy and Paradox. The method of this research is combined quantitative and qualitative methods. The most dominant use of figures of speech in the song is alliteration. The least used figures of speech in the song are Antithesis and Metonymy. It is suggested that more studies can be done on figures of speech of other types of songs.

Key words: Figures of speech, Alliteration, Anaphora, Antithesis, Hyperbole, Metaphor, Metonymy, Paradox

Introduction

Literature (from the Latin *Littera* meaning 'letters' and referring to an acquaintance with the written word) is the written work of a specific culture, sub-culture, religion, philosophy or the study of such written work which may appear in poetry or in prose. For the purposes of study, literature is divided into the categories of fiction or non-fiction today. Literature is a form of human expression. Certain forms of writing, however, are universally regarded as belonging to literature as an art. (Joshu J. Mark, 2009)

Poetry is the first major literary genre. All types of poetry share specific characteristics. In fact, poetry is a form of text that follows a meter and rhythm, with each line and syllable. It is further subdivided into different genres, such as an epic poem, narrative, romantic, dramatic, and lyric. Dramatic poetry includes melodrama, tragedy, and comedy, while other poems include ode, sonnet, elegy, ballad, song, and epic. (Literary devices)

Lyrics are flash stories; they are poems, they contain elements of memoir; in some cases, they address personal themes, at times universal. Lyrics reflect the individual

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journey or cultural observations of the songwriter. They are a serious art form. (Gerri George)

Song is a musical piece with lyric: prose that one can sing. (New World Encyclopedia) Listening song is fun activity, but the listeners cannot get pleasure if they don't understand the figures of speech that commonly found in song. In fact, there is a form of poetry which is made into music called a lyric poem.

A lyric poem is short, highly musical verse that conveys powerful feelings. The poet may use rhyme, meter, or other literary devices to create a song-like quality. Unlike narrative poetry, which chronicles events, lyric poetry doesn't have to tell a story. A lyric poem is a private expression of emotion by a single speaker. (Jackie Craven, 2019) The songwriters or composers usually beautify the language they use by any figurative language, so that the listeners will be more attracted in listening the song.

In this research, the song *Heal The World* by Michael Jackson was chosen as material because his songs are meaningful and enjoyable to be heard. His songs are famous because they give moral lessons and ways of using literary work. The scope of this study is stylistics as method which combines linguistics and literature. Moreover, it contains research questions so that the aim of research could be distinctive more.

What are the figures of speech used in the selected song *Heal The World* by Michael Jackson? What is the aim of this research?

According to Bose and Sterling (1960), the term 'figure' (Lat. *Figura*) primarily means the form or shape of an object. Figure of speech is a means of arranging the syntax of language in order to intensify the emotional expressiveness or the imperative force of an utterance. Figures of speech are used in everyday conversation, in journalism, and in literary language, particularly in poetry. In Yadanabon University context, there are very few researches on lyric songs . Therefore, this study is done to fill this gap.

The aim of the research is to analyze how figures of speech are used in the selected songs of Michael Jackson. The objectives of the research are to explore the figures of speech used in the selected song and to find out which figures of speech are most dominant used in the selected song by Michael Jackson.

Literature Review

This chapter presents profiles of Michael Jackson, the subject matter of the selected songs, theoretical background.

Profile of Singer Michael Jackson

Michael Joseph Jackson was born on August 29, 1958 in Gary, Indiana, and entertained audiences nearly his entire life. His father, Joe Jackson (no relation to Joe Jackson, also a musician), had been a guitarist, but was forced to give up his musical ambitions following his marriage to Michael's mother Katherine Jackson (née Katherine Esther Scuse). Together, they prodded their growing family's musical interests at home. By the early 1960s, the older boys Jackie, Tito and Jermaine had begun performing around the city; by 1964, Michael and Marlon had joined in.

A musical prodigy, Michael's singing and dancing talents were amazingly mature, and he soon became the dominant voice and focus of the Jackson 5. An opening act for such soul groups as the O-Jays and James Brown, it was Gladys Knight (not Diana Ross) who officially brought the group to Berry Gordy's attention, and by 1969, the boys were producing back-to-back chart-busting hits as Motown artists ("I Want You Back," "ABC," "Never Can Say Goodbye," "Got to Be There," etc.). As a product of the 1970s, the boys emerged as one of the most accomplished black pop / soul vocal groups in music history, successfully evolving from a group like The Temptations to a disco phenomenon.

Solo success for Michael was inevitable, and by the 1980s, he had become infinitely more popular than his brotherly group. Record sales consistently orbited, culminating in the biggest-selling album of all time, "Thriller" in 1982. A TV natural, he ventured rather uneasily into films, such as playing the Scarecrow in *The Wiz* (1978), but had much better luck with elaborate music videos.

In the 1990s, the downside as an 1980s pop phenomenon began to rear itself. Michael grew terribly child-like and introverted by his peerless celebrity. A rather timorous, androgynous figure to begin with, his physical appearance began to change drastically, and his behavior grew alarmingly bizarre, making him a consistent target for scandal-making, despite his numerous charitable acts. Two brief marriages -- one to Elvis Presley's daughter Lisa Marie Presley -- were forged and two children produced by his second wife during that time, but the purposes behind them appeared image-oriented.

Michael Jackson died on June 25, 2009 in Los Angeles, California. His passion and artistry as a singer, dancer, writer and businessman were unparalleled, and it is these prodigious talents that will ultimately prevail over the extremely negative aspects of his troubled adult life.

The Subject Matter of the Selected Song *Heal the World*

Heal The World by Michael Jackson is about being more considerate of others who are less fortunate in the world. The message this song is sending is that we need to consider others' lives, which are in great danger or people in poverty around the world. It shows how powerful one gesture of kindness really is and how someone can change the world and make it an enjoyable and loving place for everyone across the world. This song is about peace and equality. The message is we should treat each other equally and stop the discrimination, we should understand for others who are less fortunate in the world, who were in great danger or people in poverty around the world. We should stop all the wars to make the world become a peaceful place where we spread love not hate. Everyone can change the world no matter what you are and what you do. This song inspires me to help anyone who needs help.

Theoretical Background

In the book *Elements of English Rhetoric and Prosody*, Bose and Sterling (1960) classified seven classes (30 kinds) of figures of speech. Perrine (1991) classified figures of

speech into seven kinds. And Nordquist (2019) divided figures of speech into 20 kinds. In this research, the researcher uses the theory of Nordquist (2019).

According to the theory of Nordquist (2019), a figure of speech is a rhetorical device that achieves a special effect by using words in a distinctive way. Figures of speech are also known as figures of rhetoric, figures of style, rhetorical figures, figurative language, and schemes. Figurative language is often associated with literature and with poetry in particular. The following rhetorical elements are met with in English literature.

1. Alliteration

The repetition of an initial consonant sound is called alliteration.

Example: She sells seashells by the seashore.

2. Anaphora

An anaphora is the repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses.

Example: Unfortunately, I was in the wrong place at the wrong time on the wrong day.

3. Antithesis

An antithesis is the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases.

Example: As Abraham Lincoln said, "Folks who have no vices have very few virtues."

4. Apostrophe

An apostrophe is the directly addressing a nonexistent person or an inanimate object as though it were a living being.

Example: "Oh, you stupid car, you never work when I need you to," Bert sighed.

5. Assonance

The identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words is called assonance.

Example: How now, brown cow?

6. Chiasmus

A verbal pattern in which the second half of an expression is balanced against the first but with the parts reversed is called chiasmus.

Example: The famous chef said people should live to eat, not eat to live.

7. Euphemism

Euphemism is the substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit.

Example: "We're teaching our toddler how to go potty," Bob said.

8. Hyperbole

An hyperbole is an extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect.

Example: I have a ton of things to do when I get home.

9. Irony

An irony is the use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. It is also a statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.

Example: "Oh, I love spending big bucks," said my dad, a notorious penny pincher.

10. Litotes

Litotes is a figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite.

Example: A million dollars is no small chunk of change.

11. Metaphor

An implied comparison between two dissimilar things that have something in common is called metaphor.

Example: "All the world's a stage."

12. Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated; also, the rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it.

Example: "That stuffed suit with the briefcase is a poor excuse for a salesman," the manager said angrily.

13. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to.

Example: The clap of thunder went bang and scared my poor dog.

14. Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.

Example: "He popped the jumbo shrimp in his mouth."

15. Paradox

A paradox is a statement that appears to contradict itself.

Example: "This is the beginning of the end," said Eeyore, always the pessimist.

16. Personification

A personification is a figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities.

Example: That kitchen knife will take a bite out of your hand if you don't handle it safely.

17. Pun

A pun is a play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

Example: Jessie looked up from her breakfast and said, "A boiled egg every morning is hard to beat."

18. Simile

A simile is a stated comparison (usually formed with "like" or "as") between two fundamentally dissimilar things that have certain qualities in common.

Example: Roberto was white as a sheet after he walked out of the horror movie.

19. Synecdoche

A synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole.

Example: Tina is learning her ABC's in preschool.

20. Understatement

It is a figure of speech in which a writer or speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is.

Example: "You could say Babe Ruth was a decent ballplayer," the reporter said with a wink.

Research Methodology

In research methodology the figures of speech found in the song by Michael Jackson are classified into twenty kinds: alliteration, anaphora, antithesis, apostrophe, assonance, chiasmus, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metaphor, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, paradox, personification, pun, simile, synecdoche and understatement based on the theory of Nordquist (2019). The method of this research is combined quantitative and qualitative methods. This chapter includes two sections: (1) data collection and data analysis and (2) data interpretation. According to the line number of the songs found figures of speech, data are collected and described.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

According to Nordquist (2019), data are classified into twenty kinds of figures of speech. Total figures of speech in the selected song *Heal the World* by Michael Jackson are twenty-four. Only lines found figures of speech are presented in it.

Table (1) shows sample data analysis of figures of speech in the selected song of Michael Jackson. The table includes five columns. The first column is serial numbers. The second column shows the lines' numbers from the song. The third column reveals the lines of the song. Then the fourth column is figures of speech. And the last is remark column. The following coding systems are used in analyzing figures of speech.

Alliteration	= Al	Metonymy	= Mt
Anaphora	= An	Onomatopoeia	= On
Antithesis	= At	Oxymoron	= Ox
Apostrophe	= Ap	Paradox	= Pa
Assonance	= As	Personification	= Pe
Chiasmus	= Ch	Pun	= Pu
Euphemism	= Eu	Simile	= Si
Hyperbole	= Hb	Synecdoche	= Sy
Irony	= Ir	Understatement	= Un
Litotes	= Li	Repetition	= Rp
Metaphor	= Me	Rhyme	= Rh

Table 1: Sample Analysis of Figures of Speech in the Song *Heal the World* by Michael Jackson

Sr. No	Line. No	Lines of Song	Figures of Speech																			Remark	
			Al	An	At	Ap	As	Ch	Eu	Hb	Ir	Li	Me	Mt	On	Ox	Pa	Pe	Pu	Si	Sy		Un
1	9	<i>There</i> are ways to get <i>there</i>		✓																			Repetition of same word in a line
2	13	Heal the world										✓											An implied comparison
3	15	For you and for me		✓																			Repetition of same word in a line
4	16	And the entire human race										✓											An implied comparison
5	20	For you and for me		✓																			Repetition of same word in a line
6	21	If you want to know why	✓																				repetition of “w” sound
7	24	It only cares of joyful giving											✓										Substituted phrase
8	25	If we try we shall see		✓																			Repetition of same word in a line

In analyzing figures of speech in the selected song of Michael Jackson, it can be found Alliteration, Anaphora, Antithesis, Hyperbole, Metaphor, Metonymy and Paradox in the song *Heal the World* and did not find the rest.

Data Interpretation

In this research, figures of speech found in the song *Heal The World* are identified and classified into twenty kinds by using theory of Nordquist(2019). There are only seven kinds of figures of speech found in it. They are Alliteration, Anaphora, Antithesis, Hyperbole, Metaphor, Metonymy and Paradox. Figures of speech in the selected song *Heal The World* has been mentioned and some interpretations of the data are presented as examples.

(1) Alliteration

If you want to know why (Line No.21)

This line is alliteration because of the repetition of an initial consonant “w” sound.

(2) Anaphora

There are ways to get there (Line No.9)

This line is anaphora because of using the same word 'there' at the beginning of successive clause.

(3) Antithesis

We stop existing and start living (Line No.28)

This line is antithesis because it is used contrasting ideas in balanced phrases: stop existing and start living.

(4) Hyperbole

This world is heavenly (Line No.40)

It is hyperbole because the word "heavenly" is used in an extravagant statement for the purpose of emphasis to the word "world".

(5) Metaphor

Heal the World: (Line.No.13)

It's an implied comparison between two similar things.

It shows how powerful one heal the poor in great danger around the world.

(6) Metonymy

It only cares of joyful giving (Line No.24)

This line is metonymy because the phrase “cares of joyful giving” is indirectly described as a substitution of “heal the world”.

(7) Paradox

Together we cry happy tears. (Line No.46)

It is paradox because the words 'happy' and 'tears' are stated as contradicted statement in the song.

Findings and Discussion

This chapter describes findings from the analysis of figures of speech in the selected song *Heal The World* by Michael Jackson. The following table shows the frequency and percentage of figures of speech found in the selected song *Heal The World*.

Table (2) Frequency and percentage of Figures of Speech found in the selected song *Heal The World*.

Sr. No	Kinds	Al	An	At	Hb	Me	Mt	Pa	Total
1	Frequency	8	5	1	4	3	1	2	24
2	Percentage	33.33%	20.83%	4.17%	16.67%	12.5%	4.17%	8.33%	100%

Table (2) shows the frequency and percentage of figures of speech in the selected song *Heal The World*. It can be found Alliteration is the most dominant used in the selected song having 8 findings (33.33%).

The second dominant of figures of speech used in the selected song *Heal The World* are Anaphora with 5 findings (20.83%). The least dominant of figures of speech used in the selected song *Heal The World* are Antithesis and Metonymy with only finding (4.17%) each.

These results are shown in the following pie chart.

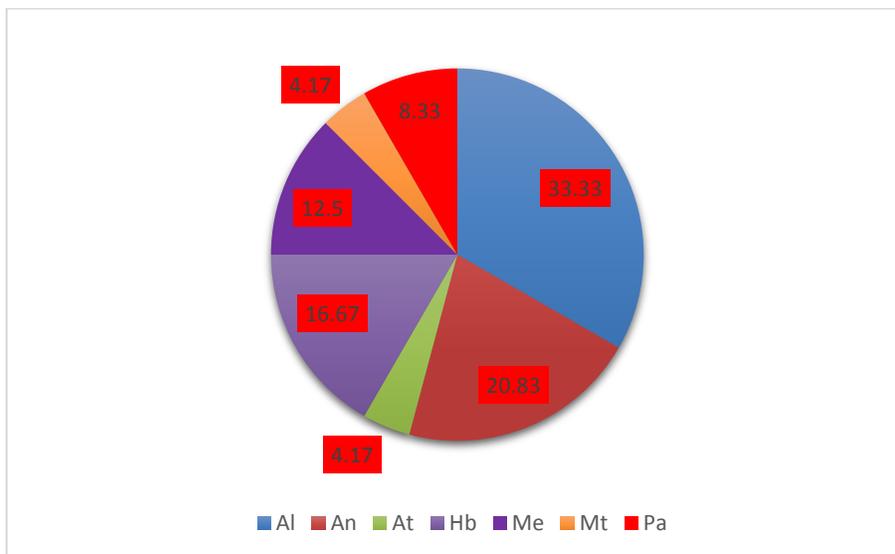


Figure (1). The percentage of figures of speech found in the song *Heal The World*.

As a result of analyzing figures of speech in the selected songs by Michael Jackson according to the Nordquist (2019) theory, these findings lead the listeners and readers to realize that uses of figures of speech can help them to understand the underlying meanings and themes of the songs. Moreover, the tune of songs can attract listeners to feel meanings of songs and listen songs. Therefore, knowledge of figures of speech is very

invaluable to comprehend not only the hidden meanings of songs but also some literature. If only listeners comprehend songs' meanings very well, those songs can make listeners or readers enjoy, appreciate and feel deeply as if they themselves experience and feel. Furthermore, the studying of figures of speech can also provide information and can make the listeners' or the reader's ability to understand coherence of a literary piece of work and how the use of figures of speech can make songs and other written texts more attractive and more meaningful.

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to analyze how figures of speech are used in the selected song *Heal The World*. The research analyzes the figures of speech found in the selected song due to the theory of Nordquist (2019). Nordquist classified twenty kinds of figure of speech namely: alliteration, anaphora, antithesis, apostrophe, assonance, chiasmus, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metaphor, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, paradox, personification, pun, simile, synecdoche and understatement. There are only seven kinds of figure of speech found in the research.

Total figures of speech in the selected song *Heal The World* by Michael Jackson are twenty-four. The most dominant used of figures of speech in the selected song is Alliteration. The least dominant used of figures of speech in the selected song *Heal The World* are Antithesis and Metonymy. Then, the present research may give satisfaction to readers. It can also be found very interestingly that the selected song has the meaning; desire to give help. Moreover, the findings highlight that the readers should have knowledge of figures of speech. If not, the readers cannot understand the hidden meaning of songs definitely and completely. It is believed that this research will help readers to get useful information and enrich their knowledge about various types of figures of speech. The study of figures of speech makes the audience appreciate songs satisfyingly. The results of this research may be used as a reference for future researches. It is suggested that more studies can be done on figures of speech on other genres of songs.

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