

**Figurative Language in Speechless Song by Naomi Scott:  
What Meaning Lies Behind It?**

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**ABSTRACT**

Figurative language is one part of semantic study which is usually used in poems and song to enrich the meaning of that literary works. This research aimed to find out the kinds of figurative language, the most popular kinds of figurative language, and the meaning lies behind Speechless song lyrics by Naomi Scott. The method of this study used descriptive qualitative design. The source of the data in this research was the lyrics of Speechless song. However, the researchers collected the data by reading the lyrics. The results showed there were three kinds of figurative language used in that song such as: metaphor, hyperbole and personification. Metaphor was the most repeatedly utilized in the song with 53% use, hyperbole was 30% and personification 15%. The meaning lies behind this song tells about feminism or women empowerment. Therefore, all figurative languages used were aimed to convey the personal emotional power of the singer toward her oppressor. It was vividly expressed by Naomi Scott by using those figurative languages in her song lyrics.

**Keywords:** Figurative Language; Song Lyrics; Meaning

**INTRODUCTION**

In everyday reading, we frequently come upon figurative words with several meanings. They are called by figurative language which is a type of writing that takes the literal meaning of words and turns it into something exceptional. According to Kennedy (1979) the employment of figures of speech in figurative language is known as figurative language. A figure of speech is a technique of expressing anything other than its literal meaning. When a speaker or writer, for the sake of freshness or emphasis, departs from the standard denotations of words, it is considered to be a figure of speech.

Figurative language is a style of language used to beautify a work that is usually written or pronounced differently from the meaning commonly used. Hidayat and Supriyanto (Yono & Mulyani, 2017) state that the use of figurative language in a literary work can add more value, and more attractive as well as pleasant to enjoy. Moreover, figurative language serves human goals, whether they are everyday communicative goals in a speech environment, genre-specific goals in a genre of communication, or artistic and creative goals in poetry and fiction (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014). Thus, the use of figurative language is performed to reach a certain impact, such as increasing the recipient's interest in the message. Figurative words are essentially another technique of increasing language's additional aspects.

Song is one type of literary work that makes extensive use of figurative language. A song uses to deliver ideas, opinions, feelings, history, social, politic, and someone life condition. According to (Ibrahim et al., 2019) state that using a song can be an effective way in communication to convey a message created by a song's writer through a singer to listeners. As a communication media, a song conveys a message through lyrics. The use of the song in sending a message can motivate the listeners, change people mind, or even make them aware to a certain event or problem. A song usually uses figurative language to raise the listeners' emotion, to form their mental images, and to bring them into the song. Referring to (Setiawati & Maryani, 2018), the use of figurative language in song lyrics will create more beautiful words that have hidden meanings. It requires certain ability in delivering the meaning of the song so the listeners will be more fascinated in listening the song.

Every song has thousands of messages, and it is necessary to evaluate the meaning of the song in order to comprehend it. However, in reality, sometimes people will face the problem in understanding the meaning of the song. One of the reasons is caused by the use of figurative language. Saboe in (Dewi et al., 2020) claims one of the problems people have in a language is the use of figurative language. It will be difficult for ordinary people to understand; can be ambiguous and lead to a misunderstanding, particularly for those non-native speakers who want to learn English by listening to English songs.

Therefore, researcher intended to depict the figurative language of Speechless Song by Naomi Scott and the meaning lies behind it. Speechless is an English song that became soundtrack of famous Disney's 2019 live-action *Aladdin* movie. It was penned by the original film's composer Alan Menken plus Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (*The Greatest Showman* and *La La Land*). This song which was performed by Naomi Scott became viral in the first day of its release. Many articles wrote that this song is inspiring and powerful. Thus, the researchers were eager to know the kinds of figurative language which indicate the power inside the song that is able to lead the listeners inspired.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Previous Related Study**

The Analysis of Figurative Language Used in the Lyric of Firework by Katy Perry (A Study of Semantic) by Hariyanto in 2017 which conveyed that there were some figurative languages found in that song such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, affiliation, symbolic, paradox, and personification. Similar study was also conducted by Setiawati & Mulyani, 2018 with the title “An Analysis of Figurative Language in Taylor Swift’s Song Lyrics”. In their study, some figurative languages were found with hyperbole as the dominant kind used in that Taylor Swift song. The Analysis of Figurative Language in “Endless Love” Song Lyric conducted by Ibrahim et al., 2019 also enriches scientific studies on figurative language. These several studies prove that the study of figurative language is still needed to conduct in conveying the implicit meaning of a song.

Those previous studies are similar with this study in term of the topic which is analyzing of figurative language in a song. The differences are the title of the song, the theory used and also the way of the researchers depicting the meaning of figurative language which lies behind the lyrics. This research was properly to conducted that hopefully contributes to the world of literature and education.

### **Figurative Language**

In everyday reading, we frequently come upon figurative words with several meanings. They are called by figurative language which is a type of writing that takes the literal meaning of words and turns it into something exceptional. It is used in our everyday conversations and is frequently seen in literary works such as newspapers, ads, novels, poems, and song (Hutauruk, 2019). According to Ibrahim et al (2019) words and sets of terms that exaggerate or modify the typical meanings of the component words are referred to as figurative language. It means that a collection of words with a different meaning from the genuine one is known as figurative language. There are many types of figurative language. Kennedy (1979) divides figurative language into metaphor, hyperbole, personification, irony, simile, illusion, metonymy, and symbol. These are the eight categories of figurative language.

The use of figurative language in the literary world will provide readers a new and different point of view, in addition to making sentences more beautiful. It is another way to add depth to language and capture the attention of the reader (Perrine, 1992). Moreover, it is used to connect two ideas in order to convince an audience to see a link even if one does not exist. In other words, figurative language is used to communicate feelings, thoughts, and perceptions that are difficult to explain in literal language. Moreover, Sharndama and Suleiman (2013) state figurative language is used to express feelings, thoughts, and experiences that are difficult to express using literal language. When an author uses figurative language, he or she

is usually attempting to create an implied meaning that will compel the reader to reflect deeply on the meaning (Hasanah, 2018).

## **Song**

According to Wikipedia, song is a musical composition written for the human voice to perform. This is frequently done utilizing sound and silence patterns at separate and defined pitches. Song is a type of poetry that is performed by singing and is accompanied by musical instruments (Setiawati & Maryani, 2018). A song is one of the literary masterpieces that every human being possesses. People get increasingly creative in songwriting as time passes and world music develops. So that the song can be enjoyed by a wide range of people, including kids, adults, and parents. Songs are employed in a variety of contexts, including traditional festivities, religious events, and even education.

Songs can express a wide range of emotions, including joy, grief, surprise, rage, fear, and a variety of other emotions. Ginting and Levana (2021) state that songs serve as cultural products that assist people in identifying their needs. Songs are written not simply to entertain their listeners, but also to express things such as sentiments, viewpoints, and ideas to songwriters. Songs can also be used to motivate or even influence the minds of those who listen to them. The song is usually composed in basic language that may be comprehended on first listening.

## **METHOD**

### **Design and Samples**

This research used descriptive qualitative design which describes a phenomenon that is examined by a researcher by digging the meaning of an event. Referring to (Moleong, 2002), qualitative design is used by the researcher to obtain the descriptive data in the form of observable written or oral data. This aims to achieve the objectives of the research. In descriptive qualitative research, the instrument used is the researchers. The researchers observed the song 'Speechless by Naomi Scott' directly for analyzing the song to get the information about the figurative language used and the meaning lies behind it. The data of this research were divided into two categories namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data was obtained from the Speechless song lyrics, while the secondary data was obtained from articles told about figurative language and review of Speechless song as well.

### **Instrument and Procedure**

In gaining the data, firstly the researchers searched the song lyrics. Then, the researchers read the lyrics and listened to the song frequently. After that, the researchers analyzed the figurative language in this song by paying attention to details in words, phrases, and sentences. The researchers took note of the words, phrases, and sentences that contain figurative language and dug deeper into the

meaning used in this song as well. The next stage after finding the figurative language in each word, phrase, or sentence, the researchers analyzed and identified the kinds of figurative language used and the meaning lies behind it.

### Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers used theory of figurative language from Kennedy (1979) that conveys many kinds of figurative language and the meaning as well as the purpose of each. Also, some related articles discussing about figurative language were read to enrich and deepen the analysis. Finally, drawing a conclusion became the last stage of this research.

### RESULT AND DISUSSION

Some kinds of figurative language were found in the lyric of Speechless which were able to enrich the song with various words that can invite the listeners to communicate emotional content. Those figurative languages are metaphor, hyperbole and personification. Metaphor was most frequently used in this song lyric as written in the following table:

*Table 1. The Percentage of Figurative Language in Speechless Song Lyrics*

<b>Figurative Language</b>	<b>Lyrics</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Metaphor	Here comes a wave My voice drowned out in the thunder Cause I'll breathe Written in stone Let the storm in I will take these broken wings And watch me burn across the sky And I won't start to crumble	53%
Hyperbole	To shut me or cut me down When they try to suffocate me Centuries old and unbending	30%
Personification	Swallowing sand Meant to wash me away	15%

From table 1 it can be showed that the Speechless song consists of some figurative languages which is dominated by metaphor that reached 53% use. In this song, there are many metaphorical words to describe and convey something happens in the film. Metaphorical words were chosen since it is able to make the listener involved in the song as the singer want to depict them emotionally.

## Metaphor

According to Kennedy (1979:490), metaphor is a sentence that includes one thing whose meaning other thing which in a literal sense, it is not. It is written directly without any connective words such as “like or as” as in simile. The metaphors found in this song are:

*Here comes a wave  
My voice drowned out in the thunder  
Cause I'll breathe  
Written in stone  
Let the storm in  
I will take these broken wings  
And watch me burn across the sky*

*Here comes a wave*

The word wave does not show the real wave on the sea. It means connotatively which illustrates a big obstacle faced by Princess Jasmine. She said that since she felt any pressures come from the oppressor inside.

*My voice drowned out in the thunder*

The word thunder is not used to show the real thunder that usually happens before raining. It illustrates a power above the singer that tries to hamper her. This sentence shows that Princess Jasmine is powerless which is stated as “my voice drowned out” “under the oppressor power that is described as “the thunder” which has a great sound.

*Cause I'll breathe*

This sentence shows that the singer is optimistically sure she will be able to hold out even anyone tries to hamper her ways. The word breathe indicates that the singer could also act something even in a difficult situation.

*Written in stone*

This sentence reflects something that is rigid, unchangeable as proverb stated “writing in childhood as if writing on the stone” which means unforgettable and unchangeable. This lyric shows that something has been decided for long time and could not be changed anymore.

*Let the storm in*

The word storm indicates big challenge provided by the rival for the singer. It is brave statement delivered by the singer which indicates that the singer is ready to face him whatever the risk.

*I will take these broken wings*

Broken wings shows something that has been broken but it is still able to utilize. Broken wings enable someone to fly even though it is challenging. This shows the big courage of the powerless singer to defeat her enemy.

*And watch me burn across the sky*

This statement is indicated that the singer wants to show her great action to against her oppressor. It is written with the word “burn across the sky”

This kind of figurative language was used aiming to implicitly convey the singer personal emotional feeling toward her oppressor. Such figurative language was chosen to make this song more enjoyable to listen without using any real emotional words.

### **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that is employed to show exaggeration or over statement which functions to emphasize certain point (Kennedy, 1983). The hyperbole words in this song were preferred to depict a strong brave expression of the singer toward her oppressor that vividly invite the listeners to experience the same feeling. There are 4 hyperbole words were found in the lyric of Speechless:

*And I won't start to crumble  
To shut me or cut me down  
When they try to suffocate me  
Centuries old and unbending*

*And I won't start to crumble*

The word crumble usually indicates a condition of something that is break into small pieces. This word is used in this song to show that the singer is strong enough to face any obstacle or challenge that could endanger herself. This word is considered as hyperbole because it is overstatement since breaking into small pieces is attached to something , not someone.

*To shut me or cut me down*

The word cut me down usually indicates to an activity to make a tree or other plant fall to the ground by cutting it near the bottom. However in this song, it indicates the challenge of the singer toward her rival to defeat her. “cut me down” was chosen to make the condition in this song dramatic as happen in the film itself.

*When they try to suffocate me*

The word “suffocate” indicates prohibition toward someone from improving or developing in a positive way. In this case, the rival of the singer in the film try to limit her step to do anything in positive ways for the goodness of the kingdom since the anxiety of defeat. However the suffocate is overstating to use.

*Centuries old and unbending*

The word centuries old indicates hundreds years or very long periods. The use of centuries old here is overstating. This word was chosen to show that is all rule prevailed are unchangeable because it has been determined several years before.

### **Personification**

It is a figure of speech in which human characteristic is attached to non human thing (Kennedy, 1979). This kind of figurative language could help the reader to easily understand the purpose of the text. In this song, there is only one personification form found. It is in the lyric "*Swallowing sand*". The word swallow is used for process of digesting food in the mouth to the throat. In this song, this word is used to show someone who is sunk into the sand. In this case, the word swallow shows connotative meaning which actually it describes Princess Jasmine who is in danger situation because of the oppressor's pressure and threat.

The lyric '*meant to wash me away*'. It means that the wave meant to wash her away. The word wash means flowing water to carry someone or something in a particular direction. A wave is an inanimate object that is incapable of throwing a human being. This means that there is someone who wants to try to bring down the character of Princess Jasmine in the Aladdin film in this case is Naomi, the singer of this song.

Finally, all figurative languages found in Speechless song make this song help the singer was well welcomed by many people around the world. Referring to Yono and Mulyani (2017) state that the use of figurative language in a literary work in this case song, can add more value, and more attractive as well as pleasant to enjoy. It reached millions viewers in the first day it released. Figurative language is another way to add depth to language and capture the attention of the reader (Perrine, 1992). This song was fruitfully carrying the listeners to involve in the emotional situation as the singer, Princess Jasmine, felt in that movie. It tells how Princess Jasmine wants to show her oppressor that she will not be speechless whatever the big obstacles she faced because everyone has a voice. It does not matter who she is, who she looks like, what gender she has. What she thinks is her voice matter. What she wants to do is trying bravely to confront any pressures and obstacles as strong as she can to speak out against injustice matter. Such content of this song implicitly stated through the lyrics of the song using those figurative languages as stated previously.

### **Meaning Lies Behind The Song**

Naomi Scott's song 'Speechless' is about a woman who has a different point of view and perspective than men but is denied the opportunity to speak because women are regarded as second-class citizens who are unable to govern. In other words, it tells about a person who does not want to be constrained or threatened from expressing her desires, in the literal sense. So she wants to be free of opinion and will. According to Princess Jasmine's state at the time, she felt confined in the palace.

There's something intriguing about this song; Naomi Scott, who plays Princess Jasmine, wants to send a feminist message. Where women should not remain mute

and accept what they do not desire. Women are not simply second to men. As a result, women must fight for their aspirations by daring to speak up. This is in line with Sharndama and Suleiman (2013) who state figurative language is used to express feelings, thoughts, and experiences that are difficult to express using literal language.

The lyrics in this song express the nature of "rebellion" to break free from the shackles, which might motivate many people to not give up and accept their conditions, but to keep fighting to make a change. As state in (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014) figurative language serves human goals, whether they are everyday communicative goals in a speech environment, genre-specific goals in a genre of communication, or artistic and creative goals in poetry and fiction.

## CONCLUSION

This study depicted figurative language of Speechless song lyrics, a soundtrack of famous film Aladdin 2019 through figurative language analysis. This song is an empowering and inspiring song. It was proven through the lyrics which are rich of figurative language, showing that this song is carrying something emotional and powerful which is able to invite the listeners involved to experience it. Metaphor reached 53% that is most repeatedly utilized in the song. Then, hyperbole is in the second place which 30% used. This kind of figurative language vividly describes the power and big passion that want to be conveyed by the singer in this song by exaggerated words. The last figurative language is personification which also enriches this song lyric with 15% use. Furthermore, Naomi Scott, who plays Princess Jasmine, wants to send a feminist message or women empowerment. The meaning lies behind this song tells about women who should not remain silent and accept what they do not desire. Women are not simply second to men. So, it motivates many people to not give up and accept their conditions, but to keep fighting to make a change. Finally, all figurative languages found were utilized to enhance the song quality and make it more meaningful and enjoyable to listen.

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