

Article

Investigating Rupi Kaur's selected poems: an analysis of figurative language

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Abstract

This research describes figurative language in Rupi Kaur's selected poem in her book of poems, *Milk and Honey*, *The Hurting*. This research focused on the type of speech found and then analyzed its meaning. This research used descriptive qualitative using the theory of figurative language by Keraf. The authors read selected poems and interpreted them. Then find out the type of Figurative language used and the meaning of the selected poems by Rupi Kaur, *The Hurting*. This research showed that Rupi Kaur combined some figurative languages in her poems. The result of analyzing poems found eight types of figurative language. Those figurative languages are simile, metaphor, personification, epithet, synecdoche (totem pro-parte and pars-prototo), metonymy, apophasis, and alliteration. The poet creating and using this figurative language is a way to express her ideas, feelings, and thoughts about rape, sex, and abuse.

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1. Introduction

The poem is 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.

Figurative language, which appeals to the imagination, offers new perspectives on the new reality, and it is continually comparing and contrasting different things. Perrine points out that poems contain at least two levels of meaning: Poetry is exciting, creative, and especially explicit in its depiction of imagination because of its use of literal

language (Perrine, 1977). Language information is not always enough to express something about a poem's subject. Metaphor, Personification, Simile, Metonymy, Synecdoche, Apostrophe, Understatement, Allegory, Symbol, Overstatement, Paradox, and Irony are all used by the poet to make his words strong.

Figurative language, as defined above, 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. To generate a specific effect, figurative language goes beyond the literal meaning of words. Figurative language is part of a language phenomenon worth studying because it results from creative imagination. Figurative language pushes the reader to focus on the connotation rather than the denotations because of its compatible terminology.

The authors choose the topic because students often believe that memorizing poems is tedious, and it is because they just look at the same analysis of poem parts like theme, diction, and so on. Apart from the factors mentioned above, the authors of this study want to tell students that there is a pleasurable in learning literature, which is figurative languages. Figurative language can be found not only in songs but also in poetry. In addition, Rupi Kaur's poetry contains figurative language, which makes them more interesting to analyze. Figurative languages have an

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important role in elucidating the meaning of poetry. The author intends to uncover and describe Rupi Kaur's figurative language in some of her poems.

In this study, the result of the discussion about the statements of the problem is to find out the types of Figurative Language in Rupi Kaur's selected poem and find out the meanings of those Figurative Languages in Rupi Kaur's selected poem.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Poems/Poetry

The oldest form of literature is poetry. People used to get these kinds of stories from storytellers when they did not know anything about written language. Many of the stories were based on the storyteller's memory rather than written language. There is no clear boundary between poetry and other genres of imaginative literature. "Perrine says that "the difference between poetry and other literature is merely a matter of degree." It denotes that a poem's language is more condensed in its message delivery than prose or theater. (Perrine, blue1977, p.9).

Poem and poetry are cover categories that encompass a variety of spoken and written forms, styles, patterns, and a broad range of themes. It is hard to establish a single, complete definition due to the variety (Roberts and Henry, 1995). The poetry is composed in lines, and however, there are no rhymes or rhythmical patterns in it. The most significant aspect of it is that, while it fascinates and entertains us, it also rings true. "Poetry is the kind of things poets write" (Miller, 1981, p.44). Because not everything can be classified or explained, poetry is difficult to define. It is essential to refine reader's awareness and offer them a greater knowledge of what it is about a poem that delights them while also giving it structure and significance.

2.2. The Element of Poetry

Several elements in poetry turn it into a wonderful work of art. Those elements cannot be isolated from one another. A poem contains various elements. Tone, form, language, and sound are the four elements (Kennedy and Gioia, 2005).

2.2.1. Tone

The tone of a piece of writing often reflects the writer's attitude toward the person it addresses. In poetry, it describes how the speaker feels about himself or herself.

2.2.2. form

The design of a poem, the arrangement of all its pieces, is known as form. Rhythm, meter, scansion, and stanza are also aspects of form (Kennedy and Gioia, 2005). The repetition of stresses and pauses in a poem is known as rhythm. Furthermore, stress (or accent) refers to the degree of effort applied to one syllable compared to another (Kennedy and Gioia, 2005). The melody created by the poem's declaration, which contained the syllables in the line, is known as rhythm.

2.2.3. Language

Poetry is frequently written in a special and unique language that enhances its beauty and meaning. Thus, poetry's

language can be divided into figurative language, imagery, and diction.

2.2.4. Sound

The sound of words has a magical enchantment for readers, and it is most powerful when it points to meaning. Furthermore, onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, and rhyme are four components of sound (rime). In poetry, there may or may not be a rhyme. When we use rhyme in poetry, we are saying that the lines' last words are related in some sense. The first- and second lines' last words, the first and third, second and fourth, and so on, would rhyme.

2.2.5. Figurative Language

"Figurative language," according to Rozakis (1995, p.28), is "expressing one thing in terms of another." It denotes that figurative language is a comparison-based term used indirectly by a person or author. Due to the comparison in figurative language expression has meaning. It cannot be interpreted literally. Furthermore, according to Abrams (1999, p.63), "figurative language is a departure from what speakers of a language understand as the usual or standard, significance or sequence of words to produce some specific meaning or effect". As a result of this explanation, we can conclude that this term is distinct from the language we use on a regular basis.

2.3. The Use of Figurative Language in Poetry

Figurative language is used to convey a certain image. Writers and poets use figurative language to create imagery and increase the power of their words. Simile, metaphor, and other non-literal language approach aid in familiarizing and comprehending new concepts. It affects the attractiveness of the work's language in both spoken and written communication. On the other hand, it is linked to Lazar's (2003) "Figurative language may serve as a great springboard for integrated skills practice and can help to develop reading, speaking, and writing skills." It also includes activities that try to improve the writer's general language awareness while encouraging them to be more creative. To put it another way, figurative language is used to express feelings, thoughts, and experiences that are difficult to express using literal language. According to Keraf (2008), figurative language can be employed to explain, reinforce, arouse, or embellish an item.

2.4. Meaning

Geoffrey Leech (1983) classifies meaning in a different way. According to him, there are seven different sorts of meaning, as follows:

- In general, conceptual meaning is the most important aspect of language communication (also known as "denotative" or "cognitive" meaning).
- Connotative meaning is the communication value that a phrase has because of what it alludes to and its purely intellectual meaning.
- The information that a piece of language exposes about the social context in which it is employed is known as its social meaning.

- Affective meaning is ultimately a parasitic category in the sense that we rely on the mediation of other categories of meaning – intellectual, connotative, or aesthetic – to communicate our sentiments.
- In situations when there are many conceptual meanings, reflected meaning describes the meanings that emerge when one word is part of our response to another sense.
- Collective meaning refers to the implications that a word acquires as a result of the meaning of words that frequently appear in its context.
- Thematic meaning is determined by choice of grammatical constructions.

In general, meaning can be defined as cognitive knowledge found in language, identified and structured inside, and by a linguistic system that advances via a constant process of revision and clarification, resulting in greater clarity and depth of understanding.

2.5. Content Analysis

According to Moleong (2018), content analysis is a research approach for producing objective, systematic, and unambiguous descriptions in a communication context. What text units will be sampled and what will be included in the sample, what will be the units of analysis, what will be the codes used in the analysis, what will be the categories of analysis, what will be the data analysis, what will be the summarizing, and what will be the speculative inference (Moleong, 2018). “Content analysis is a research approach for establishing repeatable and accurate judgments about the settings in which text (or other significant matter) is used.” Krippendorff (in Nauendorf, 2017).

Content analysis is defined as a technique of scientific research aimed at investigating the description of the characteristics of the content and drawing the inference from the contents. Content analysis is a type of study that entails a detailed examination of the contents of written or printed information in the media. Harold D. Lasswell, the inventor of symbol coding, entails meticulously noting symbols or messages and then providing an interpretation.

This type of content analysis is commonly found in qualitative research. All types of communication may be analyzed using content analysis, and newspapers, radio news, television commercials, and other documentation items are all included. Content analysis is a research technique that may be used in practically any social science field.

The content analysis aims to describe the features of a message’s content. To explain the features of communications, at least four content analysis approaches are often utilized. Content analysis is used to see communications in multiple scenarios, including social and political contexts. Content analysis is used to see how messages are received by different audiences, including readers, listeners, or media. Content analysis is a technique for identifying messages from various communicators. Content analysis may be used for more than just visualizing a message. Content analysis can also be used to deduce the reason for a message’s existence. The content analysis focuses not on describing the message,

but on determining why the communication’s “content” appears in a certain format.

2.6. Rupi Kaur

Rupi Kaur is a poet, performer, and illustrator who is twenty-five years old. She was born in 1992 in Punjab, India, to a Sikhism-practicing family. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that plays a vital role in Kaur’s life and writings. She moved to Canada with her parents when she was four years old, and it was there that she first learned English, which will be addressed shortly. She grew interested in art after being encouraged by her mother; she began drawing and painting at the age of five, and she also became interested in writing as a form of self-expression at school when she was introduced to great inspirational poets such as Virginia Woolf and Anais Nin. In an interview, Kaur recounts her reaction to the words of these amazing authors as follows:

She felt the need to take a hiatus after the huge success of her first poetry collection, as she was unable to produce due to the excessive pressure, she was under to publish another book. In her interview with Lewis Howes, titled “Rupi Kaur on Love and Pain,” she describes how she felt like a locomotive that refused to stop while also feeling compelled to move quickly. Such was the strain to match, if not exceed, the impact of Milk and Honey. Her second collection of poetry, *The Sun and Her Flowers*, was published in 2017. However, as previously said, this dissertation will solely focus on examining various aspects of Milk and Honey. However, first, a word about the beginnings of micro poetry, a literary genre that is growing in popularity these days, thanks largely to social media.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

The techniques for doing research are as follows:

- The descriptive analysis technique will help to analyze data by reading it.
- Recognizing the metaphorical language employed in poetry.
- Sorting the data into several figurative languages.
- To discover the overall meaning of figurative language, the researcher explores its lexical and contextual meanings.

The varieties, meanings, and overall meaning of the figurative language employed in chosen poems by Rupi Kaur are described using a descriptive qualitative technique in this study, based on the explanation above. The analysis of content in literary works was based on three key assumptions. First, there is objectivity. In the form of reliable construct analysis, it has gone through theoretical development. The second is systematic; systematic refers to well-defined methodologies and procedures. Meanwhile, generalization is the third phase. The assumptions are completely based on the context of literary works (Endraswara, 2004).

3.2. Source of Data

The poetry of Rupi Kaur is chosen as the study’s subjects; there is the hurting. The hurting is one of four section/theme

poem in book *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur. *Milk and Honey* is the first book collection of poetry by Rupi Kaur that made her become a number one New York Times bestselling author and illustrator that sold millions of copies in 2014.

3.3. Procedure of Data Collection

The study is a descriptive qualitative study. Descriptive qualitative analysis is used to solve a problem by acquiring, classifying, and objectively assessing data.

- Collecting. First is collecting poems the hurting by Rupi Kaur from the book.
- Classifying. After gathering the poems, the authors divide them into groups depending on the figurative language employed in each poem.
- Analyzing. In this phase, the authors examine and interprets each figurative language's meaning.

3.4. Technique of Data Analysis

The entire content analysis process can be broken down into a few steps: The population in data analysis was specified by the researcher by specifying the statements of the problem to be addressed through content analysis and conducted only a few phases of content analysis as follows the reading, listing, identifying, analyzing, and inferring.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Findings

The researcher then moved on to the following stage of the investigation, where he discovered the study's objectives. The author merely analyzed Rupi Kaur's poetry. The poems in the book *Milk and Honey* are all part of the theme Hurting. The most crucial aspect of the research was discussed in this section. Figurative language was discovered in the data by the researcher. The analysis begins with the identification of each individual word in order to identify the different types of figurative language and explain their meanings. Each line of the poem's investigation of figurative language is explained by describing the found figurative language. Because it requires the ability to understand the essential term in the poem, figurative language makes for a successful interpretation in poetry. As a result, the use of figurative language in poetry is required since it can engage the reader.

Based on the paragraph above, the researcher used 11 points of figurative language to analyze the data. Those 11 points were personification, synecdoche (totem pro parte and pars prototo), metaphor, simile, metonymy, apostrophe, epithet, irony, apofasis, alliteration, and assonance. The findings are presented below.

4.1.1. Simile

There are four findings of simile found in the poem that the researcher analyzes, there are:

*Milk and honey dripped
from my lips as I answered*

It contains simile because it compares how milk and honey dripped from her lips and how she answered the question using function word "like". It means that the writer wrote

sustenance and nutrition that seethe from her lips as an answer, but their existence is not because of kindness but due to wickedness.

*Held my shoulders down
like the handlebars*

It contains simile because it compares shoulders and handlebars used function word "like". It means that the boy held her shoulders really hard until feel like the boy is holding bicycle handlebars.

*Did I feel as empty
as his mother at 4:25 a.m.*

It contains figurative language, which is a simile because it compares her feeling and his mothers' feeling using function word "as". It means she is not sure about what she feels after having a party "sex" with the boy.

*I am allowed
to take up space
is like writing with
my left hand*

It contains a kind of figurative language which is simile because it compares between taking space and writing with her left hand 'feeling using function word "like". It means it is hard for her to take space for herself.

4.1.2. Metaphor

There is a finding of metaphor that found in the poem that the researchers analyzes, there is:

She was rose

It contains figurative language, which is metaphor because it compares 'she' and 'rose'. It means the writer describes she is beautiful as a flower.

4.1.3. personification

There are findings of personification found in the poem that the researcher analyzes there are:

I understand this world broke you

It contains figurative language, which is personification, because it describes as if the world is alive and can be broken. It means that the life of "you" is really hard until it feels like it can break him down.

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

It contains figurative language, which is personification because it describes as if the rape is alive and can tear someone. The writer wrote that the rape could cause a big trauma to the victim until it feels like the victim is torn in half by the rape.

*He guts her
With his finger*

It contains figurative language, which is personification because it describes as if the finger is alive that can be gutted. He harasses her by putting her finger in her private area.

4.1.4. Epithet

There are findings of epithet found in the poem that the researcher analyzes, there are:

You are a war

It contains a kind of figurative language, which is epithet because 'a war' gives a description to someone.

She was a rose

It contains a kind of figurative language, which is epithet because 'a rose' gives a description to someone.

4.1.5. Synecdoche Pars Prototo

There is a finding of synecdoche that found in the poem that the researcher analyzes, there is:

I was five

It contains kind of figurative language that is synecdoche because the word "five" represents her age but her whole.

4.1.6. Synecdoche Totum Pro Parte

There are findings of synecdoche that found in the poem that the researcher analyzes, there are:

*he had the smell of
starvation on his lips
which he picked up from
his father feasting on his mother at 4 a.m.*

It contains a kind of figurative language, which is synecdoche because the verse of the poem are explain the whole part where and when he got the smell of starvation on his lips.

*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*

It contains a kind of figurative language, which is synecdoche, because the poem's verse explains the whole part of who the first boy is and what the boy had taught her.

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

It contains a kind of figurative language, which is synecdoche because the verse of the poem represents the whole part which means helpless or unable to do anything.

4.1.7. Metonymy

There are findings of metonymy that found in the poem that the researcher analyze; there are:

*taught your legs
are a pit stop for men*

It contains a kind of figurative language, metonymy, because the words "your legs" represent another concept: the private area between legs.

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

It contains kind of figurative language, metonymy, because the word "rose" represents another beautiful concept, which means she was beautiful.

4.1.8. Apophasis

There is a finding of apophasis found in the poem that the researcher analyzes; there is:

*I can't tell if my mother is
terrified or in love with
my father it all
looks the same*

It contains a kind of figurative language that is apophasis because it pretends not to tell but shows the fact. It means that she is not sure if her mother loves or is terrified of her father because it looks the same as her.

4.1.9. Alliteration

There is a finding of alliteration found in the poem that the researcher analyzes, there is:

I've had sex she said

It contains kind of figurative language, which is alliteration because of the repetition of sound consonants "s". It means that the writer wrote that she is had sex, but she is not sure about it.

4.2. Discussion

This research was conducted to find out types and the meaning of figurative language that are applied in Rupi Kaur's poems. According to Keraf (2008) there are several kinds of figurative language, but in this research, the researcher just used 11 points of figurative language to analyze the several part of theme the Hurting in book Milk and Honey. The result of analyzing poems is showed some expressions in 8 types of figurative language with 18 extracts. Those figurative language are simile that found 4 extracts, metaphor with just 1 extract, personification with 3 extracts, epithet with 2 extracts, synecdoche (totem pro parte with 3 extract and pars prototo with 1 extract), metonymy with 2 extracts, apophasis with just 1 extract, and alliteration with an extract. The meaning of those figurative language that found in several part of theme the Hurting in book Milk and Honey is explained below.

4.2.1. Simile

4.2.1.1. Extract 1

*Milk and honey dripped
from my lips as I answered*

It compares between milk and honey that dripped from her lips and how she answers. It means that she can answer the question smoothly.

4.2.1.2. Extract 2

*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.

4.2.1.3. Extract 3

*Did I feel as empty
as his mother at 4:25 a.m.*

It compares her feeling and his mothers’ feeling using the function word “as”. It means she is not feeling good but empty after she have party “sex” whit the boy and she want to know is that boy’s mother feels the same as her.

4.2.1.4. Extract 4

*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 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.

4.2.2. Metaphor

4.2.2.1. Extract 1

She was rose

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.

4.2.3. Personification

4.2.3.1. Extract 1

I understand this world broke you

It describes as if the world is alive that can be broke. It means that the life of “you” is really hard until it feels like it can break him down. In this line the writer wrote that she tried to understand why her father do such a thing to her.

4.2.3.2. Extract 2

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

It describes as if the rape is alive that can be tear someone. It means that the writer wrote that the rape could make a really big trauma to the victim until it feels like the victim tear in half by the rape.

4.2.3.3. Extract 3

*He guts her
With his finger*

It describes as if the finger is alive that can be gutted. It means that he harasses her by putting her finger in her private area.

4.2.4. Ephetet

4.2.4.1. Extract 1

You are a war

a war’ describes someone. In the next line of this part of the poem, the writer wrote “the border between two countries” the countries here mean her father and her father, then we can conclude that she is not in a good environment but in a bad environment until it feels like she is in the war.

4.2.5. Synecdoche Pars Prototo

4.2.5.1. Extract 1

I was five

The word “five” represents her age but the whole of her. It does not represent her height, weight, or how she looks. She is just telling us how old she is when the tragedy happens in her life.

4.2.6. Synecdoche Totum Pro Parte

4.2.6.1. Extract 1

*he had the smell of
starvation on his lips
which he picked up from
his father feasting on his mother at 4 a.m.*

The poem's verse explains the whole part where and when he got the smell of starvation on his lips. The verse shows how hungry “lust” is because he saw his father feasting on his mother (having sex) at dawn.

4.2.6.2. Extract 2

*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, and she should not have felt less than whole, just give it up.

4.2.6.3. Extract 3

*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 rape and cannot do anything.

4.2.7. Metonymy

4.2.7.1. Extract 1

*taught your legs
are a pit stop for men*

The words “your legs” represents another concept that is private area between legs. It means that “she” thinks her body is for all men who wanted it because of the treatment she always received.

4.2.7.2. Extract 2

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

The words “rose” represents another concept that is beautiful which means she was beautiful. The verse mean That “she” is in the wrong place.

4.2.8. Apophasis

4.2.8.1. Extract 1

*I can't tell if my mother is
terrified or in love with
my father it all
looks the same*

It pretends not to tell but showing the fact. It means that she is not sure if her mother love or terrified to her father because it looks the same to her.

4.2.9. Alliteration

4.2.9.1. Extract 1

I've had sex she said

Repetition of sound consonants “s”. It means that the writer wrote that she is had sex, but she is not sure about it. In the next line of the poem the writer wrote “but I don't know what making love feels like”, according to the net line we can conclude that she has been forced to do sex until she can't feel it in a good way.

5. Conclusion

To understand the poem, we have to find the figurative language in each line or verse of poem. Each line or verse of the poem may have a different kind of figurative language divided into eleven types: simile, metaphor, personification, epithet, synecdoche (pars prototo and totum pro parte) metonymy, irony, apophasis, apostrophe, alliteration, and assonance. The conclusions were made to answer the objective of the study:

The authors just analyzed the hunting in book Milk and Honey that written by Rupi Kaur. Most of types of figurative language used in the poem is synecdoche. The second types of figurative language mostly used in the poem are simile. The third types of figurative language mostly used in those poems are personification. Then metonymy and epithet are the fourth dominant type of figurative language that used in

the poem. Metaphor, apophasis, and alliteration is the fifth dominant. While the other types of figurative languages used in the poem do not exist.

The contextual meaning was explained in each part of figurative in the previous chapter. One of the sentences was ‘she was a rose’ it means that the writer interprets the woman with flowers like rose and the figurative language is epithet. By employing figurative language, the poems become more entertaining to read and assist readers in imagining the poems; nonetheless, the reader's imagination remains inside the framework of the poetry. The texts of Rupi Kaur's selected poems tried to tell us about women experience in life which contained about family, love, harassment, abuse, sadness, and rape. In the texts of Rupi Kaur's selected poems that contains figurative language aids comprehension of the poems. The purpose of figurative language is to simplify and clarify the understanding of each text, not to make it more difficult.

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