

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USED IN AVENGED SEVENFOLD ALBUM CITY OF EVIL AND IT'S CONTRIBUTION TO VOCABULARY TEACHING

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis bahasa kiasan yang ditemukan dalam lirik album *City of Evil* oleh Avenged Sevenfold dan mengeksplorasi kontribusinya terhadap pengajaran kosakata dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan analisis isi terhadap lima lagu terpilih dari album tersebut: *Seize the Day*, *M.I.A*, *Bat Country*, *Beast and the Harlot*, dan *The Wicked End*. Penelitian ini menerapkan teori dari Perrine (1991).

Kata Kunci: avenged sevenfold; bahasa kiasan, city of evil, lirik lagu, pembelajaran kosakata.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the types of figurative language found in the lyrics of the City of Evil album by Avenged Sevenfold and explore its contribution to vocabulary teaching in English language learning. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach using content analysis on five selected songs from the album: *Seize the Day*, *M.I.A*, *Bat Country*, *Beast and the Harlot*, and *The Wicked End*. The research applied Perrine's (1991) theoretical.

Keywords: avenged sevenfold; city of evil, figurative language, song lyrics, vocabulary teaching.



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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the fundamental cornerstone of human communication, enabling individuals to express thoughts, emotions, and complex ideas through structured systems of meaning. Beyond its basic communicative function, language operates as a crucial instrument for social connection, allowing people to share their innermost feelings and conceptual frameworks with others. Within this broader linguistic landscape, figurative language emerges as a particularly sophisticated tool that transcends literal meaning to create deeper layers of significance and aesthetic appeal.

Figurative language, as defined by Reaske (1966), encompasses various figures of speech including metaphor, simile, contradiction, antithesis, and exaggeration. This linguistic phenomenon represents what Abrams (1999) characterizes as a deliberate distortion of everyday language—a departure from standard linguistic conventions that involves semantic shifts and structural

rearrangements to achieve specific expressive effects. The strategic employment of figurative language serves multiple purposes: it provides imaginative pleasure unique to literary works, introduces vivid imagery that transforms abstract concepts into concrete expressions, and imbues statements with emotional intensity while conveying complex attitudes in a succinct manner (Perrine, 1991).

The intersection of figurative language and popular music presents a particularly rich field of study, as songs frequently serve as vehicles for emotional expression where authors may deliberately obscure literal meanings to inspire deeper interpretation. Contemporary music, especially within genres that emphasize lyrical complexity, offers abundant examples of sophisticated figurative language usage. Heavy metal music, in particular, has evolved to incorporate intricate vocabulary and vivid imagery that challenges traditional boundaries between popular culture and literary expression.

Avenged Sevenfold, an American heavy metal band formed in 1999 in Huntington Beach, California, exemplifies this trend toward linguistic sophistication in popular music. The band's current lineup—comprising vocalist M. Shadows, rhythm guitarist Zacky Vengeance, lead guitarist Synyster Gates, bassist Johnny Christ, and drummer Brooks Wackerman—has consistently demonstrated a commitment to creating music that combines powerful sonic elements with complex lyrical content. Their album "City of Evil" stands out as particularly noteworthy for its rich vocabulary and vivid imagery, presenting an exceptional opportunity to examine the deployment of figurative language within a contemporary popular music context.

The significance of studying figurative language in popular music extends beyond mere literary analysis. In an era where traditional vocabulary teaching methods often struggle to maintain student engagement, the integration of music and figurative language analysis presents innovative pedagogical possibilities. Music's central role in youth culture positions it as a potentially powerful tool for language acquisition, offering educators and researchers new avenues for creating stimulating and effective learning experiences.

This study addresses the need for comprehensive analysis of figurative language usage in contemporary popular music, specifically focusing on how heavy metal artists employ various rhetorical devices—including simile, metaphor, personification, allusion, paradox, irony, hyperbole, synecdoche, and metonymy—to create meaning and emotional impact. By examining Avenged Sevenfold's "City of Evil," this research aims to illuminate the sophisticated linguistic strategies employed by contemporary musicians and explore the potential implications for both literary studies and language education.

The study seeks to bridge the gap between traditional literary analysis and contemporary popular culture, demonstrating that rigorous linguistic examination can reveal the artistic and educational value inherent in modern musical expression. Through this analysis, we aim to contribute to the growing body of research that recognizes popular music as a legitimate and valuable source of linguistic and literary study.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design with content analysis approach to examine the figurative language used in Avenged Sevenfold's "City of Evil" album and evaluate its potential contribution to vocabulary teaching. The research combines linguistic analysis with pedagogical assessment to provide comprehensive insights into vocabulary teaching.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research focused on analyzing figurative language in five selected songs from Avenged Sevenfold's album *City of Evil*: "Seize the Day," "M.I.A.," "Beast and the Harlot," "Bat Country," and "The Wicked End." The study employed Perrine's (1991) classification of figurative language, which includes simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, apostrophe, metonymy, symbolism, paradox, understatement, irony, and allegory.

Through qualitative analysis, the study found that the lyrics are rich with figurative expressions that serve multiple functions. Among the various types, metaphors were the most frequently occurring, used to depict abstract emotions and ideas such as grief, hope, loss, inner conflict, and existential reflection. For example, in "Seize the Day," the phrase 'I see my vision burn' uses a metaphor to express the destruction of dreams or aspirations. Such expressions bring a poetic and philosophical depth to the song lyrics.

Symbolism was also prominent, especially in "Beast and the Harlot" and "The Wicked End." These songs heavily use biblical and apocalyptic imagery to represent societal decay, moral corruption, and eventual reckoning. For instance, references to 'the beast' and 'the harlot' are symbols drawn from the Book of Revelation, used metaphorically to critique worldly temptations and power. Personification gave emotional weight to inanimate or abstract concepts. For example, in "M.I.A.," the line 'Memories won't let you cry' attributes human agency to memories, emphasizing their haunting influence. Hyperbole, understatement, and irony further enriched the lyrics, adding drama, satire, or emotional contrast.

The total occurrence of figurative devices across all five songs exceeded sixty individual instances, highlighting the band's lyrical complexity. The consistent use of vivid, emotionally charged, and imaginative language illustrates not only the band's artistic vision but also the pedagogical potential of these songs in language learning environments. (*Perrine, 1991*) (*Lakoff & Johnson, 1980*) (*Forceville & Urios-Aparisi, 2009*)

Discussion

The presence of figurative language in "City of Evil" supports its pedagogical utility in English language education, particularly in the realm of vocabulary instruction and literary appreciation. Figurative expressions function as gateways to deeper semantic processing, allowing learners to understand meanings beyond the surface level.

Metaphors such as 'He who makes a beast out of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man' (from "Bat Country") demonstrate how language can encode complex philosophical ideas in a compact form. Interpreting such lines encourages learners to infer meaning, analyze language contextually, and engage with abstract concepts, thereby improving both their critical thinking and vocabulary skills.

The integration of music in language classrooms—particularly genres that are rich in expressive and poetic devices—has been shown to enhance learner motivation and retention. Students are more likely to engage with lyrics that reflect themes of human experience, such as grief, hope, rebellion, and redemption. These themes are not only relatable but also intellectually stimulating.

By dissecting figurative expressions in these lyrics, students are exposed to authentic, high-frequency vocabulary embedded in context. They also learn how tone, emotion, and narrative are conveyed through literary devices. Furthermore, repeated listening and analysis help reinforce new lexical items and structures. For example, analyzing lines like 'The skies are burning red, the signs are clear' from "The Wicked End" fosters visual imagination and metaphorical comprehension.

The variety of figurative language identified also underscores the interdisciplinary potential of music-based teaching—bridging literature, cultural studies, and linguistics. The album's themes often touch upon biblical allegory, existential questions, and moral dilemmas, inviting rich classroom discussions and deeper cognitive engagement.

In summary, the figurative language in "City of Evil" not only adds artistic value to the music but also represents a powerful educational tool. It enhances students' lexical range, interpretive skills, and emotional intelligence. Its integration into language instruction makes learning more relevant, relatable, and resonant for learners. (*Levine & Stauffer, 2013*) (*Danielewicz, 2019*) (*Lazar, 1996*)

Implications

Contextual Learning: Vocabulary is learned in meaningful context, aiding memory retention. Figurative Language Proficiency: Exposure to metaphors improves students' ability to interpret and use figurative speech. Critical Thinking: Analyzing metaphors fosters interpretative skills and deeper textual understanding. Listening & interpretation tasks with lyric sheets. Group discussion and debate on figurative language meanings. Cross-cultural comparison of metaphorical expressions.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that City of Evil, an album by Avenged Sevenfold, contains a wide range of figurative language forms—including metaphors, similes, personification, symbolism, hyperbole, irony, and others—that reflect deep thematic content such as mortality, inner conflict, rebellion, and

redemption. These linguistic devices not only enrich the artistic value of the lyrics but also provide meaningful context for language learners to explore and understand abstract expressions.

The research demonstrates that integrating figurative language found in music into vocabulary instruction enhances learners' engagement, interpretive skills, and retention of new words. The use of lyrical content from *City of Evil* supports the development of semantic understanding and offers an emotionally resonant and relatable method for acquiring language. Overall, the study confirms the value of music-based materials in the teaching and learning of English vocabulary, especially when learners are exposed to language in authentic and expressive forms.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher provides the following suggestions. For English language teachers, incorporate selected lyrics from *City of Evil* into classroom activities focused on vocabulary and literary analysis. Teachers can design interactive lessons that encourage students to identify figurative expressions, interpret their meanings, and connect them to broader themes. For curriculum developers, consider integrating contemporary music—especially songs with rich figurative language—into English language curricula. Albums like *City of Evil* offer authentic, engaging material that supports both linguistic and cultural learning. For future researchers, conduct comparative studies on figurative language across various music genres or bands to explore how different styles affect vocabulary acquisition. Quantitative research could also assess the long-term impact of using music on language retention and student motivation. For students, approach music as a valuable educational resource. Analyze lyrics not just for enjoyment but for understanding how language functions metaphorically, enhancing both vocabulary and critical thinking skills.

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