

AN ANALYSIS OF SIMILE IN DRAKE'S SONG LYRICS

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the types of similes and meanings contained in Drake's song lyrics. Finding and evaluating similes and their meaning is the aim of this research, and it explain these meanings. The writer uses Beekman & Callow's (1975) theory to analyze the types of similes, while Kreidler's (2002) theory for the meaning. A qualitative descriptive method is used in this research. The observation approach was used to gather data from 41 songs and 13 albums. The research findings show 9 full similes and 42 abbreviated similes. Moreover, the writer can conclude that full simile is the least category and abbreviated simile is the most frequently used. The use of similes in songs is to make song lyrics more interesting, then it can hone the reader's critical thinking because similes discuss comparisons, particularly in abbreviated similes that force readers to reflect and visualize the events in the narrative.

Keywords: simile; meaning; types of simile; Drake's song.

INTRODUCTION

Language has a role in every contact and is part of our daily life. Language is used by humans to convey their ideas, feelings, and goals to others and to comprehend their environment better. To communicate with one another in society and to comprehend the meanings of the speaker and the addressee, people utilize language. Both the speaker and the addressee negotiate the meaning while speaking or writing. Figurative language is a linguistic tool that emphasizes meaning by modifying conventional expressions for rhetorical or artistic purposes. Figurative language is defined by Leech (1969) as the use of words that are not literal to accomplish a particular goal. It not only improves textual meaning in poetry and literature but also makes it possible for authors to artistically and vividly convey their thoughts and feelings. Through figurative expressions, authors can convey deeper nuances and evoke stronger emotional responses than would be possible with literal language alone (Leech, 1969, p. 146).

There are various types of figurative language according to scholars. One of the most frequently discussed and commonly examined types in linguistic and literary studies is simile. Similes and metaphors are similar, according to Knowles & Moon (2006), but there is one significant distinction: the connection is explicit. The terms like, as, compare, and resemble indicate that two extremely distinct yet explicit entities are being compared in a simile.

Similes are frequently employed to enhance meaning and provide vivid images in poetry, and fiction. Similes give readers or listeners a more tangible way to visualize abstract ideas by comparing various phenomena. They are a crucial stylistic tool in creative expression because of their efficacy in evoking feelings and elucidating descriptions.

Similes are also frequently used in song lyrics to enhance their lyrical quality and literary value. The literary aspect of a song can profoundly impact the listener's perception and emotional engagement. The author wants to examine how Canadian rapper, singer, and actor Aubrey Drake Graham, better known by his stage name Drake, uses similes in his lyrics. Drake is recognized for incorporating R&B elements into hip-hop. The analysis focuses on similes found in Drake's albums, including *For All the Dogs* (2023), *Certified Lover Boy* (2021), *Scorpion* (2018), *Views* (2016), and others. By exploring figurative language in these lyrics, this study aims to demonstrate how similes enhance meaning and visualization, contributing to a deeper understanding of literary techniques in song lyrics. The findings may serve as a reference for future research on figurative language in music.

Furthermore, this study provides insights into the stylistic choices in song lyrics, particularly how similes contribute to artistic expression and listener engagement. By offering a detailed analysis of simile usage, this research not only enhances the understanding of figurative language in music but also encourages further exploration of its rhetorical and aesthetic functions in various literary forms. Additionally, the findings may help songwriters and lyricists refine their use of figurative language to create more impactful and evocative lyrics. The wider role of figurative language in forming artistic and cultural narratives is further shown by this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language, including the origins of symbols, their relationships, and their impact on individuals and society. Semantics, which comes from the Greek term *semantikos*, which means "sign," studies meaning at the word, phrase, and sentence levels. Semantics, according to Yule (2010), is the study of word, phrase, and sentence meaning. The study of semantics focuses on how speakers and listeners interpret the meanings that language transmits (Yule, 2010, p. 112). Furthermore, semantics does not address the meanings of facts or actions; rather, it focuses only on the meanings of linguistic things, such as words, phrases, grammatical forms, and sentences (Löbner, 2014, p. 10). Semantics is the study of linguistic meaning, or the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences, according to Parker (1986). In addition, Grammar proper, which is the study of language's inherent structure, includes semantics (Parker, 1989, p.29)

Figurative language is a part of semantics, as it extends meaning beyond literal interpretation through imaginative expressions like metaphors and similes. Figurative language, or language that employs figures of speech, is a language that cannot be understood literally, according to Perrine (1983). The author's topics, ideas, and sentiments can all be expressed through the use of figurative language (Perrine, 1983, p. 570). Furthermore, according to Abrams (1999), figurative language is a clear deviation from what language users understand to be the conventional meaning of words, or the standard arrangement of words, to accomplish a particular meaning or effect. Barnet et al. (2008) claim that because figurative language uses contradictory terms, the reader is forced to focus on the connotations (associations, recommendations) of the terms rather than the denotations (dictionary definitions). As per the

findings of numerous experts, including Bain et al. (1977), there are numerous categories of figurative language, including personification, symbolism, metaphor, allegory, and simile.

Items from distinct classes are explicitly compared in a simile by a verb like appears or looks or by a connective like, as, or than, according to Barnett et al. (2008). However, according to Kennedy & Gioia (1995), a simile is a comparative figure of speech that uses verbs like resemble or connectors like “like, as, and than” to explicitly relate two different items. While a simile highlights a similarity between the compared elements, it requires that they be fundamentally different. In addition, A simile, according to Beekman and Callow (1975), is an explicit comparison in which one of the comparison's items (the "image") has many meaning components, of which typically only one is shared by and contextually relevant to the second item (the "topic"). Beekman and Callow stress that there are two types of similes: complete similes and truncated simile. Beekman and Callow emphasize that similes are divided into two, namely full similes and abbreviated similes. The explanation of each types as follow:

1. **Full Simile** : A full simile is a comparison where both elements being compared are fully expressed, and the relationship between them is made explicit, consisting comprising a subject, a picture, and a similarity. The topic is the subject being described, while the image illustrates it, making the comparison more vivid. The point of similarity highlights the shared characteristic, either stated directly or inferred from context. For example, in “The heavens shall vanish away like smoke,” the heavens (topic) are compared to smoke (image), with “vanish away” as the point of similarity, emphasizing their transient nature. This clarity allows readers to easily understand the intended meaning.
2. **Abbreviated Simile** : An abbreviated simile is a condensed comparison where some elements are omitted, but the point of similarity remains implied. While both the topic and image are stated, the point of similarity is left unstated, requiring interpretation. This type of simile is commonly used in poetry and casual conversation to create vivid imagery with minimal words. For example, in the sentence, “I saw three unclean spirits like frogs,” the topic “unclean spirits” is directly compared to the image “frogs” without explicitly stating their similarity. In biblical and cultural contexts, “unclean spirits” represent evil forces, while “frogs” symbolize impurity or disorder, leaving readers to infer the connection.

The meaning in figurative language plays a crucial role in shaping interpretation and enriching communication, as it allows abstract concepts to be conveyed more vividly and effectively through non-literal expressions. Misunderstandings can sometimes happen while speakers and speech partners are communicating. According to Kreidler (2002), meaning is an important aspect of language that enables humans to communicate and share an understanding of the world. Kreidler also states that there are several types of meaning:

1. **Denotation meaning** is a word or phrase's literal or fundamental meaning, independent of interpretation, context, or sentiment. The dictionary meaning is a common term for it. For instance, the term "dog" designates a certain kind of pet with particular traits.
2. **Connotation meaning** is the additional or emotional association evoked by a word beyond its denotative meaning. Connotations vary based on individual and shared

experiences. For example, “home” can imply warmth, comfort, or security in addition to its literal meaning.

3. **Lexical meaning** refers to the basic dictionary meaning of a word, independent of grammatical context. It directly relates to a specific referent or concept. For example, “book” lexically means “a physical object consisting of sheets of paper with writing or pictures.”
4. **Grammatical meaning** arises from sentence structure rather than individual words. It includes elements like tense, number, and aspect. For example, “walked” indicates past tense, and “books” signifies plurality.

RESEARCH METHOD

The employs descriptive qualitative methodologies. A collection of nonstatistical inquiry methods for obtaining information about social phenomena is referred to as qualitative research (Mcnabb, 2010). Words, symbols, images, and other non-numerical records, materials, or artifacts gathered by a researcher are examples of qualitative data. This study used observational approaches in addition to the procedures

- (1) Observe all of the lyrics in Drake’s song,
- (2) Identify the lyrics of Drake’s song that contain similes.
- (3) Classifying each type of simile based on Beekman & Callow's (1975) theory.

The data used in this study came from the lyrics of Drake's songs. The songs are taken from 13 albums. The albums are titled *Room For Improvement* (2006), *More Life* (2007), *So far Gone* (2009), *Take care* (2011), *Nothing Was the Same* (2013), *The Gift Without a Curse* (2014), *What a Time to be Alive* (2015), *Lost Tracks* (2015), *Views* (2016), *Scorpion* (2018), *Certified Lover Boy* (2021), *For all the Dogs* (2023), *100 Gigs* (2024). In the 13 albums analyzed, not all songs contain similes. Only a few songs in each album were found to use them. In addition, the songs analyzed in this study were obtained from a music streaming platform, Spotify.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the writer found 51 simile data in several Drake’s songs taken from 13 albums. From the 51 data that have been found, the writer found 42 abbreviated simile data, and 9 full simile data. In addition, the writer also explains the meaning of each data.

1. Types of Simile

A. Full Simile

From 51 data, the writer found 9 data of Full Simile. The data found below is explained by the writer:

*I sat in the back of the plane
Fucking crazy
And then I go on that wack-ass vacation
The chef is feedin' us the same meal every day*

like I was like in jail still or somethin'
I'm like, "Why are we eatin' jerk chicken and oxtail every single day
Can we switch it up?"
No, the oxtail was fire though, but can we switch it up?
I can't eat that shit every day, what?

Data (1) :

"The chef is feedin' us the same meal every day like I was like in jail still or somethin'"
(Calling For You, Verse 3, L15)

The lyric is a full simile because it explicitly compares eating the same meal every day to being in jail using the word "like." The topic is "The chef is feedin' us," indicating a lack of control over food choices, while the image "I was like in jail still or somethin'" reflects prison life, which is often monotonous and restrictive. The point of similarity is the *lack of freedom and variety*, emphasizing boredom and limited options. This simile carries a *connotative meaning*, as "jail" evokes strong emotional and negative associations, reinforcing the frustration of having no choice in meals. The comparison helps create a vivid picture of the speaker's dissatisfaction, making the situation more relatable and impactful.

I gotta feed the streets, my pistol gon' bleed the streets
Ski mask on my face, sometimes you gotta cheat
To stay ahead in this bitch-a (gang), drank syrup like it's liquor
Street life'll have you catchin' up to God quicker (yeah, gang)
Sticker, AK-40 to your liver
Let the chopper bang on you like a Blood or a Crippler (gang)
Flipper, so much bread, I'm a gymnast
Made so much money off of dummies, off of dummies (yeah, gang)

Data (2):

"To stay ahead in this bitch-a (gang), drank syrup like it's liquor"
(Knife Talk, Verse 1, L3)

The sentence "To stay ahead in this bitch-a (gang), drank syrup like it's liquor" is a full simile because it explicitly compares "drinking syrup" to "drinking liquor" using the word "like." In hip-hop culture, "syrup" typically refers to codeine cough syrup, which has mild opioid effects that induce relaxation or drowsiness. Meanwhile, "liquor" is a strong alcoholic beverage commonly associated with intoxication, parties, and escapism. The point of similarity lies in *drunkenness* both substances are consumed to alter one's state of mind. This simile suggests that drinking syrup is treated as casually as drinking liquor, normalizing its use within the lifestyle being portrayed. The phrase carries a *connotative meaning*, as it reflects cultural and social associations beyond the literal act of consumption, emphasizing a particular lifestyle and attitude toward substance use.

I heard Papi outside
And he got the double-R droppy outside
Checked the weather and it's gettin' real oppy outside (gang)
***I'ma drop this shit and have these pussies droppin' like some motherfuckin' flies (yeah,*
*gang)***
Type of nigga that can't look me in the eyes

*I despise
When I see you, better put that fuckin' pride to the side (gang)
Many times, plenty times, I survived
Beef is live, spoiler alert, this nigga dies (yeah)*

Data (3):

"I'ma drop this shit and have these pussies droppin' like some motherfuckin' flies (yeah, gang)"

(Knife Talk, Verse 3, L5)

The sentence "*I'ma drop this shit and have these pussies droppin' like some motherfuckin' flies (yeah, gang)*" is a full simile, as it explicitly compares "*pussies droppin'*" to "*flies*" using the word "*like*." In this context, "*pussies*" is a slang term referring to individuals perceived as weak or cowardly, particularly enemies or opponents. The word "*droppin'*" suggests falling, whether physically (being injured or killed) or figuratively (losing or giving up). Meanwhile, "*flies*" are commonly associated with creatures that are fragile, insignificant, and easily killed, often in large numbers. The point of similarity lies in speed and ease, emphasizing how effortlessly and rapidly these individuals will fall, just like flies. This simile conveys a sense of power and dominance, implying that the speaker can defeat or overpower opponents with little effort. The phrase carries a connotative meaning, as it extends beyond the literal act of something falling and instead evokes an emotional and impactful image of weakness, insignificance, and destruction.

*Some of these niggas say what they mean, it ain't what it seems
Had to pull my niggas out the mud like I'm trainin' Marines
You niggas hot to them little kids, you ain't famous to me
Told you I'm aimin' straight for the head, not aiming to please
I can give a fuck about who designing your sneakers and tees
Have somebody put you on a Gildan, you play with my seed
Trust me, there's some shit you really gotta come see to believe
That's why your people not believers, they all leavin' ya
That's why you buyin' into the hype that the press feedin' ya
You know the fourth level of jealousy is called media
Isn't that an ironic revelation?*

Data (4):

"Had to pull my niggas out the mud like I'm trainin' Marines"

(7am On Bridle Path, Verse 8, L2)

The sentence "*Had to pull my niggas out the mud like I'm trainin' Marines*" is a full simile because it explicitly compares "*pulling my niggas out the mud*" to "*training Marines*" using the word "*like*." The topic, "*pulling my niggas out the mud*," symbolizes helping friends or associates out of difficult or disadvantaged circumstances, where "*mud*" metaphorically represents struggle, hardship, or a low point in life. The image, "*training Marines*," refers to the intense and grueling training process that Marine recruits undergo, emphasizing discipline, resilience, and physical endurance. The point of similarity lies in *struggle, perseverance, and effort*, as both acts helping someone rise from hardship and Marine training require immense dedication, patience, and strength. This comparison suggests that assisting others in overcoming obstacles is not an easy task; it demands the same level of endurance, mental toughness, and persistence as military training. The sentence carries a *connotative meaning*, reinforcing the theme of loyalty, hard work, and commitment within a

close-knit group, showing that true support means enduring challenges together and working tirelessly to uplift others.

B. Abbreviated Simile

From 51 data, the writer found 42 data of Abbreviated Simile. The writer explains the data found below:

Our texts feelin' like a fencin' match
Your temper shorter and I'm sensin' that
You keep talkin' 'bout some, "Period"
But where you 'bout to end the sentence at?
'Cause you been goin' off on my ass
Then I tell your ass where I'm at
And you act like I'm not supposed to mention that
I introduce you to my friends' girlfriends
You ain't interested in makin' friends

Data (5):

"Our texts feelin' like a fencin' match"

(Virginia Beach, Verse 6, L1)

The sentence "*Our texts feelin' like a fencin' match*" is an example of an abbreviated simile because it uses the word "*like*" to compare "*our texts*" with "*a fencin' match*". This comparison illustrates that texting feels like an intense and tension-filled battle, where both parties may attack or defend, similar to a fencing match. The sentence is categorized as abbreviated simile because it simplifies the comparison structure by not expanding on the noun or providing additional explanations. This simile belongs to connotative meaning because it conveys an emotional and interpretative message beyond its literal sense, emphasizing the intensity and tension in the conversation.

And I had way badder bitches than you, TBH
Yeah, that man, he still with you, he can't leave
Y'all go on vacation, I bet it's Antilles
Let me stop
You know what? Fuck it, let me go
What? Ayy, what? Ayy, what? Ayy
Girl, you make me wanna cuff you like the law, huh
Girl, you make me wanna work you like the job, ayy
I know you a cat, but can your pussy do the dog?

Data (6) :

"Girl, you make me wanna cuff you like the law, huh"

(Fear of Heights, Verse 3, L2)

The sentence "*Girl, you make me wanna cuff you like the law, huh*" is an abbreviated simile because it uses the word "*like*" to compare "*cuffing*" someone to "*the law*". The topic "*cuff you*" in slang means committing to a serious relationship, while the image "*the law*" refers to law enforcement handcuffing someone, symbolizing possession or control. This simile conveys intensity and dominance in romantic feelings, emphasizing a strong desire to secure someone in a relationship. The sentence belongs to connotative meaning as it uses slang to express a figurative idea of exclusivity rather than the literal act of handcuffing.

*Nadine, Christine, Justine, Kathleen
Charlene, Pauline, Claudine*

Man, I pack 'em in this phone like some sardines
*And they send me naked pictures, it's the small things
You niggas is still takin' pictures on a Gulfstream
My youngins richer than you rappers and they all stream
I really hate that you been sellin' them some false dreams
Man, if your pub was up for sale, I'd buy the whole thing*

Data (7):

"Man, I pack 'em in this phone like some sardines"

(First Person Shooter, Verse 13, L3)

The sentence "*I pack 'em in this phone like some sardines*" is an abbreviated simile because it explicitly compares storing something in a phone to sardines being tightly packed in a can using the word "*like*". The topic "*I pack 'em in this phone*" refers to keeping numerous nude photos of women, as suggested by previous lyrics, while the image "*some sardines*" symbolizes tight packing and limited space, creating a vivid visual of how crowded the phone's storage is. This simile emphasizes the large quantity of images and the idea that they are crammed into the phone. The sentence carries a connotative meaning, as it figuratively describes the phone being overcrowded rather than literally containing sardines, reinforcing the excessiveness and perhaps even the carelessness with which the speaker keeps these images.

*The girl that the boy cherishes workin' late night at the Pyramid, and it ain't right
Ain't something I can make right
Fucking up another date night
Fucking up another great night
Message read like a brake light
Words sharp like a steak knife*

Data (8):

"Words sharp like a steak knife"

(Tried Our Best, Verse 5, L6)

The sentence "*Words sharp like a steak knife*" is an abbreviated simile because it explicitly compares "*sharp words*" to a "*steak knife*" using the word "*like*". The topic "*words sharp*" refers to speech that is cutting, critical, or hurtful, while the image "*steak knife*" symbolizes sharpness and precision, emphasizing the emotional impact of the words. A steak knife is designed to cut through meat effortlessly, just as harsh words can deeply wound someone's feelings. This simile carries a connotative meaning, as "*sharp*" does not refer to physical sharpness but rather to the piercing effect of words, reinforcing the idea that they can be emotionally painful or cutting, much like a blade slicing through meat.

*Show you spots you never been before
It's fucked up that we was goin' once
And now you're goin' twice like a biddin' war
Why you act like just 'cause I go to the strip club, girl
That I don't love you?*

*You still listenin' to R. Kelly in the whip, baby girl
And I don't judge you
I'ma end this shit and let the 40 beat play before I snap
In Booby Trap, throwin' more bills than your baby daddy trap*

Data (9):

“And now you're goin' twice like a biddin' war”

(Drew a Picasso, Verse 6, L23)

The sentence *“And now you're goin' twice like a biddin' war”* is an abbreviated simile because it compares *“goin' twice”* to a *“bidding war”* using *“like”*. The topic *“you're goin' twice”* refers to someone being highly sought after, similar to an auction where an item is about to be sold after multiple bids. The image *“biddin' war”* emphasizes intense competition and escalating interest, suggesting that the person is being fought over or pursued by multiple people. This simile enhances the dramatic effect of the situation, implying that the individual is in high demand. The connotative meaning conveys a sense of urgency and desirability, just like an auction where bidders continuously raise their offers to secure something valuable.

This study found 51 similes in Drake's album but focused on 28, consisting of 7 full similes and 21 abbreviated similes. The analysis identified two types of similes, with abbreviated similes being more common. These require the reader to infer the comparison, while full similes explicitly state the point of similarity, making them easier to understand. Additionally, all similes in the study carry connotative meaning, as they evoke emotions and associations. For example, *“Words sharp like a steak knife”* conveys emotional impact, a key trait of connotative meaning.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research have been found from the song of a rapper named Aubrey Drake Graham. Through this singer, the researcher was able to evaluate the thesis data and look for different forms of similes. The writer found the types of similes by using the theory of Beekman & Callow (1975). In this research, the writer found 51 data. Full simile has 9 data, and abbreviated simile has 42 data. This shows that the most common type of simile found in Drake's songs is abbreviated simile. After the writer studied the types of similes, the writer investigates the meaning of the similes by considering the context. It can be said that similes play an important role in this song. This is because similes make the song more enjoyable to listen to. Furthermore, the author thinks that other researchers will benefit from the study's findings.

The study highlights the significance of similes in shaping meaning and emotion in song lyrics. The findings can benefit future researchers, especially those interested in linguistics and figurative language. The writer suggests further analysis of similes from different perspectives, such as open and closed similes, to deepen the understanding of their use in music. In addition, many linguistic perspectives can be analyzed in this song, such as metaphor, irony, and hyperbole. The writer also suggests analyzing simile types in different cases, such as movies, novels, poems, and others, because many sources of data can be found to analyze the theory of simile.

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