



## Figures of Speech in Best Actresses' Acceptance Speeches in the Golden Globes Award

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### Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the use of the figures of speech in Best Actresses' acceptance speeches in the Golden Globes Award. Descriptive and interpretative method of content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) was employed in the qualitative study. The source of data was fifteen acceptance speeches in the Golden Globes Award from 2001 to 2015. Theoretical concepts that guided the framework of investigation in this study are related to six types of figures of speech, which included hyperbole, metaphor, irony, oxymoron, metonymy, and simile. The frequencies of the types of figure of speech were presented. The results showed that hyperbole was the most found type of figure of speech, being used eleven times. Metaphor held the second spot for being used seven times, while simile was not found. The research findings seem to suggest that it is relatively obvious to acknowledge the power of the literary devices across the disciplines.

**Keywords:** *Figures of speech, Speech*

### 1. Introduction

English is widely regarded as the essential language of almost all nations. It is used as a significant tool to help people around the world communicate with one another. It is more than just the language you use; its largeness expands to the world of education, business, or entertainment. Several research studies revealed that learners of the English language have improved their skills to some extent, but the more exposed they get to the language, the better they become. Besides, the willingness to communicate is much needed for language learners. If they are inspired, a chance for them to autonomously learn things by themselves is probably increasing. In other words, people seem to be more energetic and comfortable when they are to themselves. For example, listening to some good music or watching good movies can be both entertaining and beneficial for those language learners. A vast number of research studies have shown that people can pick up the language through the interaction they have with either face to face communication or one-way communication like listening to English songs, watching English speaking movies or series, or any award shows where their favorite actors or actresses might attend whether they be a presenter or an award recipient. Because of this reason, from English tutors to professional language instructors, they have been suggesting these learners that should be introduced to the context where they feel at ease and motivated.

In every notable award show from English speaking countries (the United States of America, England, or Australia), people not only have a great time cheering for their favorite nominees, but also subconsciously learn, whether or not, how these winners employ a variety of language use, including the stress patterns, the pace, the pronunciation, the word choice, or most evidently, the figures of speech.

Figures of speech are considered to be one of the interesting parts of English. It always appears in your life such as in conversation, articles of newspaper, speech, novels, and poems. Wrynne (2010) stated that figurative language is the language that created a picture in the mind to give a better understanding of an idea. They will be used when the words are used more than literal meaning.

Figures of speech are often used based on the fact that their job is to create tone by taking the words and applying them to other objects or concepts (Wise, 2013). It also leads to many other positive effects: making the material more pleasing to receive and also helping the argument more convincing. The widespread use of figures of speech has been heavily included in the media as motion pictures, song lyrics, newspapers, and books for them to absorb. Taylor (1981) believed figurative language surprised the reader because the statement or idea expressed does not make sense on the surface level, and, since literal meaning is denied, an act of imagination is required before the intended meaning becomes clear.



To use the English language with more confidence, users should be able to understand its foundation. Figurative and non-figurative language is one good example of English foundation, which is essential for the users who seek to professionalize themselves. Guckberg (2001) stated to become an English language expert, in other words, a genuine understanding of the difference between figurative and non-figurative language is the most important. Non-figurative (or literal) language is actual words that are easy to understand.

A significant number of studies have been paying attention to the analysis of these literary devices. For instance, based on the descriptive qualitative method, Boontong (2011) studied the kind of figurative language in “The Greatest Hits” album of Whitney Houston’s song lyrics. Her work showed that the most found type of figure of speech is hyperbole used in Whitney Houston’s songs. Apart from the mentioned work, some other research studies investigated the figures of speeches in advertisements or films.

Therefore, this research aims to study and analyze each type of figure of speech that is used in the speeches for creating aesthetic sending and receiving between senders and receivers.

## 2. Objectives

The study aims to examine the type of figures of speech used in the Golden Globes Award Acceptance speeches and to investigate whether there is any specific use of the figures of speech in these speeches and how they are used.

## 3. Materials and methods

### 3.1. Methodology

*In this* study, a qualitative approach using content analysis was adopted. The researcher, according to Cresswell (2009), interpreted meanings and characteristics of sources were interpreted through the contexts, understandings, and background knowledge in a systematic way. For this research study, the language techniques were examined, and the figures of speech were clarified under an analytical framework.

The content analysis process is as follows: the selection of texts, the analysis of the specific texts to comprehend and draw conclusions about the content (Gritti, 1967). For the related research studies regarding the figures of speech, the content analysis was employed in studying language in advertisements. For example, Leigh (1994) used a content analysis approach to identify connections between figures of speech and word use.

Thus, in this study, the content analysis was used to analyze the figures of speech in the acceptance speeches, which are different from the literal meaning.

### 3.2. Samples and Data Collection

The research procedures are as follows: For the first stage, the researcher collected scripts of 15 speeches in the Golden Globes Award Acceptance Speeches. The main reasons why these speeches were purposively selected are because of their level of success and popularity; the study focused on the acceptance speeches of the Golden Globes Award winners for Best Actress as a leading role from 2001 to 2015.

The Golden Globe Awards are the award show organized by the 87 members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association starting in January 1944. The annual ceremony presented is held every January, and is a major part of the film industry.

### 3.3. Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed, following the three steps. The details are as follows:

Step one: The researcher studied the related theories based on figures of speech through the theoretical framework of six types, which are as follows: Metaphor (a type of figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from or a thing considered as representative of some other (usually abstract) thing), Hyperbole (intentional exaggeration that is associated with formal and persuasive speech), Oxymoron (a figure of speech by means of which two ideas of opposite meaning are combined, so as to form an expressive adjective or phrase), Metonymy (when the speakers answers his or her own question. It shows contempt for the person being addressed that is, an



impatience toward, a lack of interest in, whatever response might be forthcoming), Simile (a type of figure of speech in which two entities are compared. The comparison is normally created morphologically, namely, by an indicator of resemblance, such as the word “like” or “as”), and Irony (a type of figure of speech that consists in saying the opposite of what is meant, though the words are not to be taken literally).

Step two: The number of instances of figures of speech were counted in the samples and sorted out whether there were most found types or least used types.

Step three: To identify the figures of speech and the connotations, the researcher applied the method of labeling and coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strass and Corbin, 1998). From Miles and Huberman (1994), 30 percent of the analysis was submitted to validators to ensure at least 80 percent agreement with the researcher’s interpretation before further analysis was undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis in this study. Three validators were university lecturers with more than 20 years of experience in the English teaching field: one of them is a native speaker of English.

#### 4. Results

This section analyzes the data collected according to the method applied in the present research. The results are presented according to the actual number in frequency form.

**Table 1** Frequency of Usage of Figures of Speech

Figures of speech	Frequency of Usage
1. Hyperbole	11
2. Metaphor	7
3. Irony	3
4. Oxymoron	2
5. Metonymy	1
6. Simile	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

Table 1 shows that hyperbole was used the most by 11 times while simile was not found. Some examples of figures of speech found in the data are presented here with the frequency order as follows:

##### 4.1. Hyperbole

###### 4.1.1. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2001

Winner: Renée Zellweger

Statement: *“I also have to thank other people, USA films for filling your hearts into this picture and for taking such good care of it and for making it.”*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Renée thanked the USA films for filling their hearts with the movie *“Nurse Betty.”* In reality, nobody can bring out his or her heart to let other people feel that person is really into something important to them. The USA films did not put their heart, a living organ, into this movie. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

###### 4.1.2. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy – Golden Globes 2003

Winner: Renée Zellweger

Statement: *“Rob Marshall, I just love you, I will for the rest of my life be proud to say that I was in Rob Marshall’s first movie.”*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Renée expressed her feeling that she was so proud that she was in Rob Marshall’s first movie. It seems quite exaggerating in this context since it is quite hard for people to always remember the exact details of all their lives. The hyperbolic condition of this quote



is the exaggeration of the statement.

4.1.3. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2004

Winner: Diane Keaton

Statement: *"It's like reaching for the stars with the stepladder."*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Diane said it was like reaching for the star with the stepladder. She could not do that in reality, but it was said to emphasize how she felt. The feeling of happiness and excitement is beyond compare. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

4.1.4. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2004

Winner: Diane Keaton

Statement: *"I thank you not only for making me so happy at a time in my life when this kind of honor just isn't in the cards but also for shining light on the brilliance."*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Diane thanked the Hollywood Foreign Press for acknowledging her work. The trophy she received cannot be used as a torch to light the way in reality, but it means that its significance can guide the brilliance to other actresses to come. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

4.1.5. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2006

Winner: Reese Witherspoon

Statement: *"Joaquin Phoenix who put his heart and soul into this performance."*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Witherspoon thanked Joaquin Phoenix, her colleague, who put everything he got in *"Walk The Line."* She stated that he brought his heart and soul into his acting that cannot be true in reality. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

4.1.6. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2007

Winner: Meryl Streep

Statement: *"Congratulations to the nominees in all the categories for best actress. It's like a million categories for best actress."*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Meryl Streep congratulated the nominees in the best actress category. It does not actually mean that Meryl did not know how many categories are there, but she might like to emphasize the importance of being an actress in the Hollywood sphere where sexism seemed to be widespread and true during that time. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

4.1.7. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2007

Winner: Meryl Streep

Statement: *"I just want you to know, all of you, that this has been such a fun year to watch movies"*



*because of you gals. And it makes you wanna cry with gratitude until next year.”*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Meryl admired all the nominees and said she wanted to cry until next year. It is impossible for people to keep crying every day for the whole year or the next two years. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

#### 4.1.8. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2012

Winner: Michelle Williams

Statement: *“Thank you Hollywood foreign press association for putting in my hands the same award that Marilyn Monroe won over fifty years ago.”*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Michelle thanked the Hollywood foreign press for the award. Hollywood foreign press gave her the award that Marilyn Monroe won over fifty years ago. They did not put the award by hand to hand as she said. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

#### 4.1.9. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2013

Winner: Jennifer Lawrence

Statement: *“Harvey, thank you for killing whomever you had to kill to get me up here today.”*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Jennifer thanked Harvey, a film producer, for killing whomever he had to kill to get her up here today. Harvey did not kill anybody in reality; he just refused another actress who auditioned for this role and instead, he chose Jennifer to be in this movie. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

#### 4.1.10. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy Golden Globes 2014

Winner: Amy Adam

Statement: *“David, thank you so much for letting the world know that the princess can punch and wear a low-cut gown.”*

Analysis: The statement has a hyperbolic meaning. Amy thanked David, a director, that he let the world know the princess can punch and wear a low-cut gown. In this context, Amy was trying to tell the audience that the character she played was not a typical princess, who is supposed to wear long gowns and wait for a prince to come to her rescue. The world in this statement means everyone. The hyperbolic condition of this quote is the exaggeration of the statement.

## 4.2. Metaphor

#### 4.2.1. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy – Golden Globes 2002

Winner: Nicole Kidman

Statement: *“I have some great friends, who have taught me, shared their knowledge, their wisdom, and stuck by me. Susan Batson, a goddess.”*

Analysis: The statement has a metaphoric meaning. Nicole thanked and admired her friend, Susan Batson. Nicole compared Susan to a goddess who is beautiful, brilliant, and wholesome. The metaphoric condition of comparing two unlikeable things is to show the characteristic of the statement.



## 4.2.2. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy – Golden Globes 2003

Winner: Renée Zellweger

Statement: *“Catherine, you are goddess, and I’m so glad the world knows what you can do.”*

Analysis: The statement has a metaphoric meaning. Renée said to Catherine, her colleague. Renée compared Catherine to a goddess who is so excellent that the world should acknowledge the fact that Catherine is such a talented actress. The metaphoric condition of comparing two unlikeable things is to show the characteristic of the statement.

## 4.2.3. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2005

Winner: Annette Bening

Statement: *“Brad and Billy Bening, you’re my heroes.”*

Analysis: The statement has a metaphoric meaning. Annette said Brad and Billy were her heroes. Annette compared her brother and sister-in-law to heroes, someone with heroic qualities or has performed a heroic act like her brothers who always help, support, and inspire her. The metaphoric condition of comparing two unlikeable things is to show the characteristic of the statement.

## 4.2.4. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2010

Winner: Meryl Streep

Statement: *“I’m very clear about the fact that I’m the vessel for other’s people stories and other’s women’s lives.”*

Analysis: The statement has a metaphoric meaning. Meryl compared herself to the vessel of other’s people stories. In other words, she considered herself as someone with the ability to tell people’s stories through her performances. The metaphoric condition of comparing two unlikeable things is to show the characteristic of the statement.

## 4.2.5. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2011

Winner: Annette Bening

Statement: *“Our producers all of you for working so hard to get this movie made. It was a labor of love for all of us.”*

Analysis: The statement has a metaphoric meaning. Annette talked about her producers in *“My Week with Marilyn”* that they were working so hard for this movie. She compared the process of movie-making to a labor of love, which means a piece of hard work that you do because you enjoy it, not because of the money or praise. The metaphoric condition of comparing two unlikeable things is to show the characteristic of the statement.

## 4.2.6. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2013

Winner: Jennifer Lawrence

Statement: *“The entire cast of this movie, you guys are the heartbeat of this film and it wouldn’t be the same without you guys.”*

Analysis: The statement has a metaphoric meaning. Jennifer said to the entire cast of *“Silver Linings*



*Playbook*” and compared the entire cast to the heartbeat, meaning that everybody was very important for this movie. She also said that it would not be the same without those who put their hearts and souls into the project. Simply put, a body cannot keep going and moving forward without the heartbeat. The metaphoric condition of comparing two unlikeable things is to show the characteristic of the statement.

#### 4.3. Irony

##### 4.3.1. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2004

Winner: Diane Keaton

Statement: “*A romantic comedy starring Jack and Diane two people who combined ages 125.*”

Analysis: The statement has an ironic meaning. Diane talked about Jack and herself whose age combined about 125 years old. The statement has an ironic meaning because Diane made a joke that Jack and her were quite old at that time. The ironic condition of this quote is in a sarcastic form. The irony is employed for the humorous intention the speaker might like to convey.

##### 4.3.2. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2010

Winner: Meryl Streep

Statement: “*I wanna change my name to T-bone. T-bone Streep. I think it sounds good.*”

Analysis: The statement has an ironic meaning. Meryl said she wanted to change her name to T-Bone. The statement has an ironic meaning because she did not actually want to change her name. It was just a reference to the Seinfeld quote that Markus pointed out to fellow Golden Globes nominees. The ironic condition of this quote is the intended meaning of the question that is different from the true meaning.

##### 4.2.3. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2013

Winner: Jennifer Lawrence

Statement: “*Oh, what does it say, ‘I beat Meryl?’.*”

Analysis: The statement has an ironic meaning. What Jennifer said did not mean she was going to harm or hit Meryl. She was just quoting a scene from 1996’s *The First Wives Club*. She said that quote because Meryl was one of the nominees from Hope Springs, but Jennifer won the award. The ironic condition of this quote is the intended meaning of the question that is different from the true meaning.

#### 4.4. Oxymoron

##### 4.4.1. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2004

Winner: Diane Keaton

Statement: “*Nancy gives me a chance to play a woman to love one more bittersweet time.*”

Analysis: The statement has an oxymoronic meaning. Diane described her role in “*Something’s Gotta Give*.” She combined two words of different meanings to create a new meaning. According to Oxford Dictionary, bittersweet is a mixture of two opposing feelings. One is good, and the other is bad. It creates a new meaning, which means something is good, but there is a bad part about it. The oxymoronic condition of this pair of words that are combined to create an effect in the statement.



#### 4.4.2. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy - Golden Globes 2005

Winner: Annette Bening

Statement: *"We had a helluva good time making this movie and we love it."*

Analysis: The statement has an oxymoronic meaning. Annette described the time of making the movie, *"Being Julia."* She combined two words of different meanings to create a new meaning. According to Oxford Dictionary, helluva is a short form of a-hell-of that means a very difficult and bad person or things. So, *a hell of a good time* is a mixture of two opposing meanings. One is good and the other is bad. It creates a new meaning, which means an extremely good time. The oxymoronic condition of this pair of words that are combined to create an effect in the statement.

#### 4.5. Metonymy

##### 4.5.1. Best Actress Motion Picture Musical or Comedy – Golden Globes 2003

Winner: Renée Zellweger

Statement: *"The wonderful John C. who is the star of every movie he does."*

Analysis: The statement has a metonymic meaning. Renée talked about John C., her co-worker. The star in this statement does not mean anything in astronomy, but the word "star" here refers to a very famous and successful person. The metonymic condition of this quote is the description that is linked to particular things.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1. Conclusion and Discussions

To conclude, the findings from the present study seem to show that the most found type of figure of speech is hyperbole for eleven times in eleven speeches. Hyperbole is the way that words are exaggeratedly communicated. Aside from the use of hyperbole, metaphor is held the second position of the most found type by being used 7 times (29%) in 7 speeches. It showed that when people illustrate their imagination with words, they usually compare their emotions, actions, and thoughts to simple terms to make their speeches interesting and perfect for understanding. The irony is the way that the word's real meaning is opposite to the word form. Sometimes people will use it for making humorous or sarcastic effects to the words. In this case, most of the irony is used for making jokes. Moreover, there are also 2 oxymorons and 1 metonymy are used in the speeches.

In the discussion part, the findings are consistent with the work of Boontong (2011) whose work revealed that the most found type of figure of speech is hyperbole used in Whitney Houston's songs. This study was based on the descriptive qualitative method. The purpose of the study is to know deeply about the kind of figurative language in "The Greatest Hits" album of Whitney Houston's song lyrics. The population is the whole lyrics song and the sample is the lyric that is related to the figurative language found in the song. This method started by collecting research figurative language to provide the research data. Next, the data are carefully examined to analyze the lyrics that are using figurative language. The data in this study are collected from the internet. The population in this study is thirty songs in "The Greatest Hits" album. The results from the study show that there are fourteen figurative languages namely hyperbole (16.02%), idiom (15.50%), assonance (12.66%), reduplication (9.56%), anaphora (8.79%), alliteration (8.79%), imagery (7.50%), personification (6.46%), metaphor (4.91%), symbol (4.13%), simile (3.10%), paradox (1.29%), oxymoron (1.03%), and irony (0.26%).

Moreover, the current study also matches the outcome of the work of Boontong (2011) regarding the least found types of figures of speech: irony, metonymy, and oxymoron. It can be explained that it is hard to see them being used in everyday lives.





### 5.2. *Limitations, Implications, and Recommendations for the Further Studies*

The limitations of the study are as follows: all samples were collected from one category from one award show. Examination of the speeches from other categories over numerous award shows may reveal more the changing use of figurative language by actors or actresses.

For the implication criteria, based on the findings of the current study, the sociolinguistic aspect of the use of those figures of speech can be applicable for a wide range of branches. Hyperbole is used for exaggerations for emphasis or effect. Hyperboles are often used in casual speech as the highlight. Hyperbole can be used in a form of humor, excitement, distress, and many other emotions, all depending on the context in which the speaker uses it. It can be implied that several Hollywood actresses are able to use figures of speech effectively to reveal the intended messages to communicate with their audiences. Apart from the analysis of figures of speech in the award speeches, further recommendations are as follows:

1. The use of the figures of speech in local newspapers, poetry, and proverbs should be further conducted. In other words, this dimension will shed some light on the variation in the use of these figures of speech in such parameters as age, gender, social class, and educational background.

2. Another aspect for further study is to explore the cultural values reflected or expressed in other types of media, such as songs or movies.

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