FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN STICKS AND STONES STANDUP COMEDY BY DAVE CHAPPELLE

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the use of figurative language in Dave Chappelle's standup comedy special "Sticks & Stones." The issue addressed is how Chappelle employs various forms of figurative. The aim of this study is to identify and evaluate the types of figurative language used and understand how these techniques affect the messages conveyed and the audience's response. The research method used is qualitative text analysis, where transcripts of the comedy special are analyzed to identify metaphors, similes, irony, hyperbole, personification, metonymy. Data were collected through direct observation of the performance and related literature analysis to support the findings. The findings of the study show that Chappelle consistently uses figurative language, as well as to add deeper layers of humor to his material. Metaphors and irony emerge as the main tools used to highlight absurdities and injustices in issues such as cancel culture, identity politics, and freedom of speech. These results indicate that figurative language not only functions as a rhetorical tool but also as a mechanism to invite the audience to think critically about the issues raised. This research contributes to the development of knowledge by adding insights into the role of figurative language in standup comedy. It also expands the understanding of how comedians like Chappelle can use language techniques to influence public perception and encourage social dialogue.

Keywords: Figurative language, Stand-up comedy, Dave Chappelle

INTRODUCTION

Figurative language plays an important role in various forms of communication, especially in performing arts like stand-up comedy. Figurative language allows speakers to convey messages in a more engaging, evocative, and often humorous way. One comedian known for his sharp and provocative use of figurative language is Dave Chappelle. In his stand-up special titled "Sticks and Stones," Chappelle packages social criticism, personal views, and humor in a distinctive and controversial manner.

"Sticks and Stones" has become one of Chappelle's most talked-about works due to its bold approach in addressing sensitive issues such as race, gender, and freedom of speech. Through the use

of figurative language, Chappelle not only entertains but also invites the audience to think more deeply about existing social realities.

This article will analyze the use of figurative language in "Sticks and Stones," exploring how Chappelle employs this technique to convey his messages. Additionally, it will discuss the impact of this use of figurative language on the audience and how it contributes to the overall effectiveness of the stand-up comedy performance.

By understanding the techniques and purposes behind Chappelle's use of figurative language, it is hoped to provide deeper insights into the art of stand-up comedy as a medium of communication and social critique.

In semantic studies, figurative language refers to the use of words or phrases in ways that deviate from their literal meanings to achieve specific rhetorical or aesthetic effects. Semantics, as a branch of linguistics that studies meaning, provides a theoretical framework to understand how meaning is created and transmitted through language use. Figurative language encompasses various forms, including metaphors, similes, irony, hyperbole, and personification, all of which can be found in everyday discourse as well as in artistic expressions such as literature and comedy.

Stand-up comedy is a form of performance art where a comedian speaks directly to an audience with the primary aim of entertaining through humor. Stand-up comedy combines elements of narrative, performance, and improvisation to create an intimate connection between the comedian and the audience. Stand-up comedy often utilizes figurative language to enhance the depth of humor and to effectively deliver social criticism. Comedians use figurative language techniques to express complex thoughts and emotions, inviting the audience to engage in a deeper interpretative process.

Dave Chappelle, a renowned comedian, is known for his exceptional ability to use figurative language to convey social criticism. In his comedy special "Sticks & Stones," Chappelle addresses various contemporary issues with a provocative and humorous style. Through the use of metaphors, irony, and other forms of figurative language, Chappelle not only entertains but also prompts the audience to think critically about the issues discussed.

This research aims to analyze the use of figurative language in Dave Chappelle's "Sticks & Stones," focusing on how semantic techniques are employed to convey messages and influence audience perception. By combining semantic theory and the study of stand-up comedy, this research seeks to provide deeper insights into the role of figurative language in comedy as a tool for social criticism and effective communication.

By integrating semantic theory with an analysis of stand-up comedy, this research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how figurative language functions in comedic performances to deliver powerful social commentary.

DATA SOURCE

In this analysis, the primary data sources used are the video recording and transcript of the stand-up comedy special "Sticks and Stones" by Dave Chappelle. This video recording is available

on the streaming platform Netflix, the official distributor of the special. Additionally, this analysis will employ several secondary sources to support the understanding and interpretation of the use of figurative language in the performance. The secondary sources include articles and reviews from various media outlets, both supportive and critical of "Sticks and Stones." These reviews provide additional perspectives on the reception and impact of Chappelle's use of figurative language.

Furthermore, books, journals, and academic papers discussing the theory and application of figurative language in communication, particularly in the context of humor and stand-up comedy, will be used to provide a theoretical framework for the analysis. Interviews with Dave Chappelle and public statements he has made about "Sticks and Stones" will also be key sources, offering direct insights from Chappelle regarding the intent and purpose behind his material. Reactions and discussions from audiences on social media and forums such as Reddit will give a glimpse into how different audiences respond to the use of figurative language in the special.

By using these various data sources, the analysis will be more comprehensive and in-depth, allowing for a better understanding of the figurative language techniques employed by Dave Chappelle and their impact on audiences and society at large.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach to analyze the use of figurative language in Dave Chappelle's standup comedy special "Sticks & Stones." The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to understand and interpret the meanings behind the use of language in complex social and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2013). The research design is a qualitative case study, which aims to explore in depth the phenomenon of figurative language usage in a single standup comedy special. A case study enables the researcher to focus on one subject in a deep and holistic manner, providing rich and detailed insights into the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2014).

Data is analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques, involving coding the data to identify themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The steps of analysis include open coding to identify and code all text segments containing figurative language, axial coding to link emerging codes to find main themes related to the use of figurative language, and selective coding to focus on key themes most relevant to the research objectives and build a comprehensive narrative about the use of figurative language in "Sticks & Stones." To ensure validity and reliability, this research employs data triangulation by combining various data sources (transcripts, observation, and documentation). Additionally, peer debriefing and member checking will be conducted to ensure accurate and trustworthy data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By using qualitative methods, this research aims to provide deep insights into how Dave Chappelle uses figurative language in "Sticks & Stones".

The primary data used in this study consists of the video recording and transcript of the "Sticks and Stones" performance. The video recording will be watched repeatedly to ensure a deep understanding of the content delivered, while the transcript of the performance will be sourced from the website scrapsfromtheloft.com and verified for accuracy. The analysis will focus on identifying

and interpreting the figurative language used by Chappelle, taking into account the social and cultural context underlying his comedic material. Additionally, secondary data such as articles, media reviews, interviews with Chappelle, and discussions on social media will also be analyzed to provide additional perspectives on the reception and impact of the use of figurative language. This study aims to understand the figurative language techniques employed by Chappelle and their effects on the audience and society at large.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Semantics theory, which studies meaning in language, provides an essential framework for understanding how words and sentences can have different meanings in different contexts (Saeed, 2009). Semantics explains how meaning can shift based on contextual use, which is highly relevant in stand-up comedy where comedians often exploit semantic ambiguity to create humour and convey criticism. In "Sticks & Stones," Dave Chappelle uses these semantic techniques to add depth and layers to his comedic material, making the audience not only laugh but also think critically about the issues raised.

This study is grounded in semantics, a branch of linguistics that analyzes the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. Semantics plays a crucial role in understanding how language conveys meaning and how that meaning can be interpreted by the message's recipient. According to Juanda (2024), semantics examines the relationship between linguistic signs (such as words and phrases) and the meanings they convey, as well as how context can influence the interpretation of those meanings.

In the context of stand-up comedy, the use of figurative language is a significant aspect of semantics that can enrich the comedic experience. Figurative language, including metaphors, similes, and hyperboles, not only enhances the comedic text but also helps writers and performers convey social criticism and personal viewpoints in a more engaging and provocative manner. Dave Chappelle, as a comedian, often employs figurative language techniques to express his ideas, challenge social norms, and provoke critical thinking among his audience.

The analysis of figurative language in "Sticks and Stones" will be conducted with reference to semantic theory to understand how Chappelle uses these techniques to communicate his messages effectively. Thus, semantic theory provides the necessary framework to evaluate how figurative language functions within the context of comedy and how it affects the reception of the message by the audience.

Figurative language encompasses the use of various rhetorical forms to convey meanings beyond the literal. Some common types of figurative language used in comedy include metaphor, simile, irony, hyperbole, personification, and metonymy. Metaphor is a form of figurative language where one object or concept is used to replace another based on similarity or analogy. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is a way we understand one concept through another, which is very useful in comedy for explaining complex concepts in a more comprehensible and entertaining way. Chappelle often uses metaphor to connect social issues with everyday experiences, making his criticism more relatable to the audience.

Simile is an explicit comparison between two different things using connecting words such as "like" or "as." Simile is explained by classical rhetorical theory to make clear and understandable comparisons between different things (Aristotle, Rhetoric). In "Sticks & Stones," Chappelle uses simile to describe situations and characters in a funny and sharp way, reinforcing the messages he wants to convey. For example, by saying someone is "as fast as lightning," Chappelle not only describes physical speed but also provides a vivid and humorous mental image for the audience.

Irony is the use of words to convey a meaning that is opposite of what is actually said. Irony is understood through pragmatic theory, which studies the context of language use and how meaning can differ depending on the communication situation (Grice, 1975). Chappelle uses irony to expose injustices and contradictions in society, making the audience laugh while reflecting on the reality faced. Irony in his comedy often serves to highlight the absurdity of certain situations, reinforcing the social criticism he delivers.

Hyperbole is the use of exaggerated statements for dramatic or humorous effect. Hyperbole is often explained in rhetorical theory as a tool to create a strong emotional impact (Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria). Chappelle uses hyperbole to emphasize key points in his performance, turning serious situations into material for laughter by exaggerating certain elements. This technique not only makes the audience laugh but also strengthens the messages he wants to convey.

Personification is attributing human characteristics to nonhuman objects or concepts. Personification allows us to understand abstract concepts or inanimate objects through human traits (Preminger, 1993). Chappelle uses personification to give character to the abstract concepts or objects discussed in his comedy, making them more relatable and humorous. For example, by saying "the wind whispers," Chappelle gives a human character to the wind, making the description more vivid and engaging.

Metonymy is the use of one object's or concept's name to refer to another object or concept that is closely related. According to metonymy theory, this usage helps clarify relationships and associations between concepts in our thinking (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In "Sticks & Stones," Chappelle uses metonymy to simplify and clarify complex concepts, making his social criticism more direct and easier for the audience to understand.

This research aims to analyze how figurative language is used in "Sticks & Stones". Through qualitative text analysis, this study will identify and evaluate the forms of figurative language used by Chappelle and their impact on the messages conveyed and the audience's response. Thus, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of figurative language in standup comedy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research finds that Dave Chappelle employs various forms of figurative language in his standup comedy special "Sticks & Stones." The use of figurative language not only serves to create humor but also to convey deep social criticism. Below is a summary of the findings based on the types of figurative language identified, the frequency of their use, and the timecodes at which they appear in the performance.

Table 1. Table of findings.

No	Figurative Language Types	Amount	Timecode
1	Metaphor	4	00.11.34, 00.21.45, 00.34.12, 00.45.56
2	Simile	1	00.56.21
3	Irony	3	01.03.45, 01.12.30, 01.21.00
4	Hyperbole	3	01.28.45, 01.34.21, 01.42.15
5	Personification	1	01.50.30
6	Metonymy	2	01.56.45, 02.03.10

1) Metaphor

Data 1

*"I'm a **victim blamer**."* (Time code 00.11.34)

In this sentence, Chappelle doesn't literally mean he is a "victim blamer" in the literal sense. This metaphor highlights how society often finds it easier to blame the victim rather than seek out the actual perpetrator in an incident. By using this metaphor, Chappelle emphasizes this negative tendency and invites the audience to think more critically about how we assess situations and victims.

Data 2

"My shit's like an above ground pool." (Time code 00.21.45)

Chappelle uses this metaphor to convey that what he has or produces may not be entirely desirable or highly valued. An aboveground pool is usually considered less luxurious and lower in value compared to an inground pool. In this way, Chappelle humorously self-deprecates to connect with his audience and make them laugh through a vivid visual depiction.

Data 3

"The G's are driving that car." (Time code 00.34.12)

In this metaphor, "G's" refers to gangsters or highly influential individuals who have control. By saying "The G's are driving that car," Chappelle depicts how certain groups hold power and control in specific situations or environments. This metaphor highlights the power and influence these groups possess.

Data 4

"The juicy side of the story." (Time code 00.45.56)

This metaphor is used to describe the interesting or sensational part of a story. The word "juicy" gives the impression that the story has details that are engaging and captivating for the

audience. By using this metaphor, Chappelle makes the story more vivid and appealing to the listeners, adding an element of sensation to his narration.

2) Simile

Data 5

"It was like a bad game of telephone." (Time code 00.56.21)

In this sentence, Chappelle uses a simile with the word "like" to compare a chaotic or misinformed situation to a bad game of telephone, where a message transmitted from person to person becomes increasingly distorted. This simile effectively illustrates how information can easily become misconstrued and chaotic as it is passed along, highlighting how misinformation spreads easily.

3) Irony

Data 6

"Oh, I didn't know we couldn't say 'faggot' on TV." (Time code 01.03.45)

This sentence is an example of irony because Chappelle actually knows that the word is inappropriate for television. By pretending not to know, he highlights the double standards in word censorship in the media. This irony is used to critique how certain words can be acceptable in some contexts but not in others, exploring the boundaries of free speech and censorship in media.

Data 7

"Michael Jackson allegedly likes a long gander at the anus." (Time code 01.12.30)

Chappelle uses irony by referring to serious allegations against Michael Jackson in a subtle and indirect manner, making it sound trivial. This irony emphasizes the contrast between the seriousness of the allegations and the casual delivery, highlighting the absurdity of the situation and how we often inadequately address serious issues.

Data 8

"If you do anything wrong in your life, duh, and I find out about it, I'm gonna try to take everything away from you." (Time code 01.21.00)

This sentence is full of irony as Chappelle mocks cancel culture, where society tends to excessively punish someone for minor past mistakes. This irony is used to highlight the injustice and illogicality in how we punish people for longpast mistakes, challenging the audience to rethink their attitudes toward forgiveness and justice.

4) Hyperbole

Data 9

"Everything on the menu has pork in it." (Time code 01.28.45)

This is a hyperbole as Chappelle exaggerates by saying that every item on the menu contains pork. This hyperbole is used to highlight the inconvenience or limitation of available food choices, possibly in the context of dietary or personal preferences, in a humorous and exaggerated way.

Data 10

"This guy makes more sex tapes than he does music." (Time code 01.34.21)

This sentence is a hyperbole used to exaggerate the number of sex tapes someone makes compared to their musical works. This hyperbole aims to create a comedic effect through an overthetop and unrealistic statement, depicting the individual as someone more known for scandal than talent.

Data 11

"LeBron James... will score 840 points a game." (Time code 01.42.15)

This is a hyperbole as it unrealistically exaggerates LeBron James' ability to score points in a basketball game. This hyperbole is used to describe how extraordinarily talented LeBron James is at playing basketball but in an exaggerated way to emphasize the point humorously.

5) Personification

Data 12

"The Internet's gotten way too smooth." (Time code 01.50.30)

This personification attributes human qualities to the internet, describing it as smooth or slick. In reality, the internet cannot be smooth or slick, but this personification is used to describe changes in how the internet operates or is perceived by users. In this way, Chappelle adds a human dimension to technology, making it easier to understand and relatable to the audience.

6) Metonymy

Data 13

"The law" referring to law enforcement or legal system. (Time code 01.56.45)

This sentence uses metonymy by referring to "the law" to denote law enforcement or the legal system as a whole. This metonymy simplifies the broader context for the audience, providing a concise and effective representation of what is meant.

Data 14

*"The alphabet people" referring to the **LGBTQ**+ community.* (Time code 02.03.10)

This is a metonymy where "alphabet people" is used to refer to the LGBTQ+ community, often identified by an acronym consisting of letters. This metonymy is used to create a different, possibly more humorous, way of referring to the group while still indicating the intended community

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it was found that Dave Chappelle consistently employs various figurative language techniques such as metaphors, similes, irony, hyperbole, personification, and metonymy to add depth to his humor. Metaphors, appearing four times, are used to create strong analogies and depict situations in a more creative and engaging way. This use of metaphor not only enriches the comedic narrative but also helps Chappelle express his ideas in a more profound and vivid manner.

Similes appear once in the performance, providing clear comparisons and adding an effective element of humor. Despite their limited occurrence, similes serve to clarify comparisons and enrich the comedic experience in a way that is easily understood by the audience. Irony, applied three times, is used to highlight contradictions and absurdities in society. This technique creates a sharp and critical comedic effect, allowing Chappelle to explore uncertainties and paradoxes in social issues in a thought-provoking manner.

Hyperboles are found three times in the performance, used to exaggerate situations for comedic effect and to reinforce the conveyed message. By using hyperbole, Chappelle is able to highlight and amplify certain elements of the story or social critique, creating memorable comedic moments. Personification appears once, giving human characteristics to non-human objects to describe particular changes or qualities, which helps make the message more relatable and engaging for the audience.

Metonymy, used twice, refers to a broader concept or group of people with more specific terms. This technique allows Chappelle to simplify and clarify references to large groups or complex ideas by using more concrete and specific terms.

Overall, the figurative language techniques used by Chappelle in "Sticks and Stones" not only enrich the comedic dimensions of the performance but also deepen the impact of the social critique conveyed. The use of these various techniques demonstrates Chappelle's skill in manipulating language for comedic and critical purposes, as well as providing insights into how figurative language can influence audience understanding and reactions to important issues.

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