

# THE USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN CHARACTERIZATION OF WILDE'S *THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE RED ROSE*

Fitria Lonada & Laily Martin  
Andalus University

## Abstract

*The study suggests how figurative language is related to the description of characterization in children literature. To ensure that the indirectness of the figurative language actually helps describing characterizations further, the study focuses on the description of the simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and irony (Rozakis, 1999) of the main characters of Wilde's The Nightingale and the Rose. The analysis on the figurative language uses is used as the base for interpreting the story's characterization. It reveals that figurative language describes characterization relating to the information on the characters' mental and physical attributes. Each of the figurative language categories describes the characterization in certain way in order to make the particular abstract concepts for characterization detailed and concrete. In that case, with the help of figurative language, the story may be comprehended better by young readers.*

**Keywords:** *figurative language, characterization, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony*

## Introduction

Rozakis (1999: 28) defines "Figurative language is saying one thing in terms of another." By figurative language, a concept of an actual object is represented indirectly. Even though it is commonly found in literary works to arise the beauty of language choices, the indirectness seems irrelevant to the ideas of concreteness and explicitness of children psycholinguistic development. Therefore, this writing generally describes the way Wilde uses figurative language in the sample short story, *The Nightingale and the Rose*, which was taken from his children literature collection of *The Happy Prince and the Other Tales* (1988). It particularly focuses on how figurative language describes and forms characterization.

Stylistics is an approach which relates ideas in linguistics and literature; linguistic features are used to describe and prove an interpretation of a literary text (Widdowson, 1975:4; Semino and Culpeper, 2011:1; Verdonk, 2002:3; and Simpson, 2004:3). By applying stylistic analysis, readers are able to analyze the style of an author in telling stories from the linguistic choices. In this study, figurative language is observed in relation to its support to the interpretation on characters and their characterizations.

Figurative language refers to telling something to convey an implied meaning (Rozakis, 1999:28). Tajali (in Fadaee, 2011: 1) states "The language that uses figures of speech is called 'figurative language' and 'its

purpose is to serve three elements of clarity, forth, and beauty in the language." Other than to tell something implicitly, figurative language also functions to make text language more interesting and aesthetic. The using of figurative language creates literary works with a high artistic value because the language style makes the text language more poetic, colorful and different from daily language. Moreover, using figurative language also causes "special meaning and effects" (Abrams, 1981: 63).

Figurative language is categorized into certain types. Little (1984) divides it into three: comparison, association and other figure of speech; Perrine (1988) divides it into 10: metaphor, simile, synecdoche, personification, metonymy, allegory, overstatement (hyperbole), irony, symbol and paradox; and Rozakis (1999) has allegory, ambiguity, apostrophe, conceit, connotation and denotation, contrast, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, personification, sarcasm, simile, symbolism, synecdoche, synesthesia, transferred epithet and understatement in his kinds of figurative language. From the three, the idea of Perrine (1988) is chosen and limited to the discussion on the categories of metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole and irony. Here is the brief explanation.

### Metaphor

Rozakis (1999:33) defines "A metaphor is a comparison without the words like or as."

From the definition, it can be said that metaphor is the comparison between two different things directly without the word comparison. Black (2006: 102) states “Metaphor was once defined as saying one thing and meaning another.” In simply, metaphor can be analogous to the formula A is B. For example, in *man is a wolf* (Glucksberg, 2001:7), the *man* is compared to *wolf* which refers to wild- and braveness. It means that the man is brave like a wolf, or, otherwise, the man behaves terribly like a wolf does. The way to determine the process of carrying meaning in metaphor divides the process into two; the tenor and vehicle (Bradford 1997:22-27, based on the ideas from Richards (1936) and Leech (1969)). In brief, the tenor is the main subject that describes the analogous subjects (the vehicle).

### Simile

Simile is the comparison that expresses a thing is like another thing explicitly. Rozakis (1999:36) states that “A simile is comparison between unlike objects introduced by a connective word such as *like*, *as*, or *than* or a verb as *seems*.” This is similar to Klarer’s (2004:152) “Simile is rhetorical figure which “compares” two different things by connecting them with “like”, “than”, “as”, “or”, “compare”. These comparison words are the characteristics of simile. In simile, the comparison is seen clearly. This is contrast to metaphor that compares things implicitly. If the concept of metaphor is A is B, then the concept of simile is A is like B. Barnwell (1980:34) divides three parts of simile and metaphor:

the **TOPIC**, i.e., the actual thing which is being talked about

the **ILLUSTRATION**, i.e., the thing to which the topic is compared

the **POINT(S) OF SIMILARITY**, i.e., the components of meaning which the topic and the illustration have in common when compared.

Henceforth, Barnwell gave an example, *the baby’s skin is a smooth as silk* (1980: 34). From this example, *the baby’s skin* is compared to *silk* by using connective word *as*. Since a *silk* is smooth and soft, thus, it can be said that the baby’s skin feels smooth and soft. Here, the point is the baby’s skin, the illustration is silk and the point of similarity is smooth.

### Personification

According to Barnwell (1980), “Personification is a figure of speech in which an abstract idea, or something which is not alive, is treated as though it were a person.” Furthermore, Rozakis (1999:35) explains that “Personification is the attribution of human characteristics and/or feelings to nonhuman organisms, inanimate objects, or abstract ideas.” This statement is supported by Murfin and Ray (2003:339), “Personification is a figure of speech (more specifically a trope) that bestows human characteristics upon anything nonhuman, from an abstract idea to a physical force to an inanimate object to a living organism.” In other words, personification is the expression of language to create non human to live as human by giving human’s attributes: act, conversation and emotion. The example of personification is *death, no be proud* by John Donnes (Rozakis, 1999:35). From this example, *death* is compared to *proud*. Donne indicates *death* as human who can feel proud.

### Irony

Galperin (1977:146) states “Irony is a stylistic device also based on the simultaneous realization of two logical meanings— dictionary and contextual, but the two meanings stand in opposition to each other.” Similarly, Rozakis also states that “Irony states one thing in one of voice when, in fact, the opposite meaning is intended (1999: 33).” Clearly, it can be proposed that irony has the different meaning from the literal. Irony is not seen from what it is said but rather to interpret the meaning from the context, as stated by Black (2006: 110), “A marked disparity between what is said and the situation is often indicative of irony.” For example, *how clever are you*. (Galperin, 1977:147). In analyzing of irony, the readers are not interpreting the dictionary meaning but rather from the context. From the example, the word *clever* is used to mock here rather than to compliment a person.

### Hyperbole

Barnwell (1977: 49) proposes that “A hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration, used for emphasis and dramatic effect.” It means hyperbole is the style of language in expressing something exaggeratedly. Hyperbole, or overstatement, is used to cause the effect and reaction from the listener or reader, such as serious, ironic and humorous. As stated by

Murfin and Ray (2003: 205), "A figure of speech that uses deliberate exaggeration to achieve an effect, whether serious, comic, or ironic." Galperin (1997:76) provides an example, *he was so tall that I was not sure he had a face* (O. Henry). This utterance contains the meaning that the 'he' is very tall that the speaker cannot see his face. Here, the speaker expresses the height excessively since, in logic, no matter how tall a person is, his/her face can still be seen.

The above discussion on figurative language is going to be related to the ideas of character and characterization of the short story to interpret its actual uses in the text.

Childs and Fowler (2006) say that "Character is the fictional representation of a person, which is likely to change, both as a presence in literature and as an object of critical attention much as it changes in society." A character is an object that can be interpreted by the reader through its nature, dialogue and action. In a literary work, a character is not always a person but may also an animal and plant. Murfin and Ray (2003:53) believe that "A character is a figure in literary work. That figure need not be human, although most characters are." On the other hand, characterization is the technique used by an author to describe the characters. As Murfin and Ray (2003: 53) say that "The term characterization

refers to the various means by which an author describes and develops the character in literary work." The characterization technique can be done physically and mentally, as Murfin and Ray (2003:53) describe "Author must therefore make their characters "come alive" by describing not only such things as physical attributes, actions, conversation, and their effect on other characters but also such things thought and emotions." They say further that "The author may employ direct characterization, explicitly presenting or commenting on the characters, or indirect characterization, setting forth the characters through representation on their action, statements, and feelings." In other words, a character has the physical and mental attributes which are explained through the description of his/her action and feeling, and conversation.

### Discussion

Figurative language is used to describe more about the characterization of the characters in the short story *The Nightingale and The Rose*. In general, the uses give more details to the characters' attributes in different ways, based on the different kinds of figurative language applied.

### Simile

Simile can be found in the following expressions:

No	Expressions
1	His hair is <i>dark as the hyacinth-blossom</i> ,
2	his lips are <i>red as the rose of his desire</i> ;
3	passion has made his <i>lace like pale ivory</i> ,
4	Surely <i>Love</i> is a wonderful thing. <b>It is more precious than emeralds</b>
5	<b>and dearer than fine opals</b>
6	<i>She passed</i> through the grove <b>like a shadow</b> , and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.
7	Yet <b>Love is better than Life</b> ,
8	and <b>what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?</b>
	etc.

In relation to the description of characterization, here is an example of the data analysis:

**His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom**, and **his lips are red as the rose** of his desire; but passion has made **his lace like pale ivory**, and

sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.

The three expressions: *his hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom*, *his lips are red as the rose of his desire*; and *his lace like pale ivory* are similes. The topics of these similes are *his hair*, *his lips*, *his lace*. The illustrations are *the hyacinth blossom*, *the rose and pale ivory* while the points of

similarity are *dark, red and pale ivory*. The comparing words used are *as* and *like*. Here, the nightingale compares the young student's dark hair to hyacinth blossom. In biology, hyacinth blossom is a beautiful flower that has four to six leaves and with the rather wavy cloaks. This flower actually has various colors, like dark, purple and pink, but in this story the color that referred to is the dark; the young student has a beautiful wavy dark hair. In addition, ancient Greek legend also explains the origin of hyacinth. It is believed as a handsome young man who was loved by two Gods, Apollo and Zephyr. They competed to attract Hyacinth. From this Greek belief, it can also be said that the young student has a charming look too.

In the next simile, *his lips is red* is compared to *the rose*. As it is known, the red rose has a very red and beautiful color. The point of the similarity between red lips and red rose has explained that the young student's lips are red, same as the color of the red rose. It is also described further that, even though his lips are red, but his face seemingly pale, as in *his lace like pale ivory*. Although the young student is handsome and he has the wavy hair and also red lips, but his face is pale. It is caused by his desire and expectation which has not been achieved, to have a red rose. In conclusion, the three expressions give details on the physical characterization of the young student which refers to his young and charming look.

### Metaphor

Metaphor is found once in the story, in the expression: **Flame-coloured are his wings.** Here, without a connective word, *flame* is directly mentioned as the colour of the nightingale's wings. It is also identified by the use of *are*, as one of the indicators for metaphor (*is, has* and *are*). The tenor of the metaphor is its principal subject; the topic addressed is *the nightingale's wings*, and the vehicle is the analogue, or the subject carried *flame*. *Flame* is analogous to *his wings*.

Flame comes from Latin "flamma", the fire that is produced by combustion and air (oxygen). It is brown and it can be clearly seen by eyes. It is caused by an exothermic reaction in the thin zone. In real life, we can see the flame through the candles or fireworks. The brown in flame makes us think of an impression of class. Wilde compares flame to the nightingale's wings because he wants to reveal the nightingale with the brown wings which looks beautiful and class. This metaphor describes the characterization of the nightingale physically. The expression *flame-coloured are his wings* gives an understanding to readers that the nightingale is a beautiful bird with the beautiful colour of wings impressing class.

### Hyperbole

Hyperbole is found in:

No	Expressions
1	<b>"Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."</b>
2	'Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!' he cried; 'here is a red rose! <b>I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has long Latin name;</b> ' and he leaned down and plucked it.
3	<b>She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor,</b> and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her.
4	'You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose,' cried the Student. <b>'Here is the reddest rose in all the world.'</b>

Here is a sample explanation:

'Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!' he cried; 'here is a red rose! **I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has long Latin name;**' and he leaned down and plucked it.

The expression is a hyperbole because it has an exaggerated style to cause the dramatic effect to readers. The sentence that indicates hyperbole is the combination of using *I have never seen any rose like it* with *in all my life*. It shows how happy the young student is when he finally gets the red rose. The hyperbole in *I have never seen any rose like it in all my life* means

he had just seen the prettiest rose he has ever seen in his life. However, of course a red rose will seem like other roses with red color and covered by tiny thorns at the stem. He utters the expression to show how lucky he is because he finally gets what he wanted, a red rose. Previously, he already felt his life was terrible because of the red rose. Now, he will present the red rose to the daughter of the professor, his dreamed girl, and he hopes his life is happier than before because, by presenting the red rose to the girl, he is able to invite her to the party, as the girl requirement for inviting her. If he brings her a red rose, she would hold her in the young students' arms. Not only that, she also leans her head upon his shoulder. In addition to the dramatization, the young student also states *It is so beautiful that I am sure it has long Latin name* that makes an amazed impression, that red rose is really a beautiful rose which he had ever seen. This expression makes readers believe that the red rose is extremely pretty.

**Personification**

Personification is found in two data. Here is a sample analysis,

*Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it,*

nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.'

In this expression, inanimate objects, such as pearls and pomegranates, act like human. As we know, pearls are the jewelry, but in the story it behaves like human who can act to buy or cannot buy something. The expression indicates that pearls and pomegranates act as if human who has money for buying something. Literally, pearls are silvery-white expensive jewel that grows inside an oyster. Everyone knows pearls have small hard structure which is often used by woman. Then, pomegranates are a thick-skinned sweet fruit with red color and full of seeds. Both of these, pearls and pomegranates, are given human attributes as if they can act like buying something. The most important thing in the expression is that the nightingale compares pearls and pomegranates to love. Actually, the expensive pearls and curable pomegranates are not able to buy something called love. The relation to love probably in terms of seeing love as the most precious thing, that even pearls and pomegranates cannot buy.

No	Expressions
1	<i>Pearls and pomegranates cannot <u>buy</u> it,</i> nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.'
2	'You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose,' cried the Student. 'Here is <b>the reddest rose</b> in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together <b>it will tell you how I love you.</b> '

**Irony**

In the example, "But the girl frowned. 'I am afraid it will not go with my dress,' she answered; 'and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers.'", irony is seen in the situation faced by the young student because the situation is exactly different with what he had

hoped. In the short story, it has been told that when the young student is able to bring the red rose to the girl, they will dance together at night. The expression of irony is contained in the answer of the girl to the young student *I am afraid it will not go with my dress and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers.* This expression is indicated as situational irony because the author has been hiding the information or the situation from the readers

No	Expressions
1	But the girl frowned. 'I am afraid it will not go with my dress,' she answered; 'and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and <b>everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers.</b> '
2	Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful,' said the Student angrily; and <b>he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cart-wheel went over it.</b>

and characters. It makes the plot running unpredictably. Readers have already hoped that when the girl receives the red rose to pin on her dress, she will agree to go to the invitation with the young student. However, the ending is in contrast. It is strengthened by the expression, *I am afraid it will not go with my dress* explaining that she has changed her mind. She breaks her promise to pass along a wonderful night with the young student since she already gets the more expensive things than the red rose, the jewelry from the Chamberlain's nephew. This demonstrates the real characteristic of the professor's daughter. She is a girl who does not keep her words, a mercenary girl who only concerns on expensive jewelry.

### Conclusion

It seems that, in the story characterization, simile is used more dominantly than other types of the figurative language. It is probably caused by the principle of simile itself, using connective words, *like, as*, that help brain see the real relation between an object and the detail referent, the attributes that come before and after the connector. Other types occur less frequent because they require more complicated relation between the object and its concept. Therefore, the use of figurative language does not only add to the beauty of the story's language, but also gives significant detail to the characterization, the description of the characters. This is how they may support children comprehension in reading the imaginative work.

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