A STUDY ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE COVERING SIMILE, METAPHOR, PERSONIFICATION AND SYMBOL IN POEM

A RESEARCH ARTICLE

WRITTEN BY:

METHA RAISA
F12112008

ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
LANGUAGES AND ARTS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY
TANJUNGPURA UNIVERSITY
PONTIANAK
2017

A STUDY ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE COVERING SIMILE, METAPHOR, PERSONIFICATION AND SYMBOL IN POEM

A RESEARCH ARTICLE

Written by:

METHA RAISA
F12112008

Approved by:

Supervisor I   Supervisor II

Drs. H. Sudarsono, Ph.D   **Dr. Albert Rufinus, M.A**
NIP. 195804141987031001   NIP. 195208031983031001

Legalized by:

The Dean of Teacher Training and   The Chairman of Languages and
Education Faculty   Arts Education Department

Dr. H. Martono, M. Pd   **Drs. Nanang Hervana, M. Pd**
NIP 196803161994031014   NIP. 196107051988101001

A STUDY ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE COVERING SIMILE, METAPHOR, PERSONIFICATION AND SYMBOL IN POEM

Metha Raisa, Sudarsono, Albert Rufinus
English Education Study Program of Languages and Arts Education Department FKIP
Universitas Tanjungpura, Pontianak
e-mail: metharaisa0609@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to find out the students' ability to show figurative languages and to mention their functions. The research was conducted to the Semester 3 students of English Education Study Program of Tanjungpura University in Academic Year 2016/2017. The research method used is descriptive study. The sample of this research consists of 70 students who are taking Poetry subject in Class A and Class B in Semester-3 of English Education Study Program. The technique of data collecting for this research is measurement test. From the calculation, the mean score of students' ability to show figurative language was 60,29. Therefore, the students' ability to show the expressions of figurative language is categorized as "Average to Good". From the computation, the students' mean score to mention the function of figurative language is 55,71, thus this result is categorized as "Poor to Average". The results of this study show that the students need more hours to learn about figurative language including the defintions, the functions, and the identification practice.

Keywords: *Figurative Language, Poem, Descriptive Study*

Literature has been widely engaged in EFL in both English speaking countries and non-English speaking countries. It has been one of the effective ways to develop the learners' English skill. Literature helps the students to see the diversity of language. Therefore, students can develop their vocabulary and explore themselves to understand the meaning while reading literary text. It also helps the students to develop their ideas to see how the foreign learners learning literature in their countries and how they appreciate it in their learning process. Tanjungpura University students attend literature-based subjects. These subjects are Introduction to Literature, Poetry, Drama, and Literary Work.

Literature is the representatives of the writer's feeling. Robert & Jacobs (1993, p. 1) refer "literature" to "composition that tells a story, dramatizes a situation, expresses emotions, analyzes and advocates ideas." Literature is not a matter of "felt-experience", "personal response" or "imaginative uniqueness": such terms, in dissociable for us today from the whole idea of literary (Eagleton, 2003, p. 16). By the time, literature was becoming virtually synonymous with the "imaginative" figurative language. It is often used in speaking and writing to express ideas and emotions, and to affect the views and attitudes of others. Normally, human language is commonly understood as the combination of the meaning of individual words into larger units in a compositional manner.

In literary education, it is poetry that has a particularly difficult position; it often needs quietness, silence and darkness to be able to give the right impression and effectiveness. Poetry has traditionally been considered 'high' art, which is only accessible to the elites who are only able to understand it – this fact might be the reason of poetry's marginal position both at school and outside school (Pike, 2000, pp. 41-55).

Better insight into the process of the reception of poetry and knowing about specific and concrete readers' preferences make it possible to choose more adequate methods of education contrary to the current ones which rather discourage students from enjoying literature.

By studying literature students not only learn about language skills such as reading, listening, writing, speaking, vocabulary, grammar, pronounciation but also its aesthetic purpose cover enrichment of language. In understanding literary work, it is much easier if the students can examine the literature, for instance novel, poem, etc., by its elements. There are several elements of literary work, such as poetry, prose (novel, novela, short story), and drama.

Poem is a collection of words that express emotions or ideas into a literary text. It helps students to increase not only language skills but also their vocabulary items. Poem contains vocabulary features that aids students to improve listening skills while listening to the speaker who perform poetry reading on the stage, video or audio. In addition, poem will drill student's reading abilities through comprehending its meaning and at the further stage their speaking skills will also improve through delivering their ideas to other students concerning to the meaning, moral value, or thoughts wrapped in poem.

There are some elements included in poem such as ryhme, rhythm, stanza, tone, theme, but the most important one is figurative language. Figurative language is used to create a special effect or feeling. It is characterized by figures of speech—language that compares, exaggerates, or means something other than what it first appears to mean. According to Perrine (1977, p. 116), figurative language is broadly defined as any way of saying something other than ordinary way. It is more narrowly definable as a way of saying one thing and meaning another.

The purpose of figurative language is to capture readers' interest and to deliver the idea and imagination in more entertaining way. It will present a lot of meaning or rich in meaning. Figurative language does not only decorate poems and endow them with aesthetic value, they also convey connotative meanings and produce certain special effects, which enrich the texts and make their meanings more precise and concrete. (Ogunsiji, 2000, p.56).

Figurative language contains the diversity of language that can be used for the poet to develop their ideas in writing a poem. It has a special effect to say something other than ordinary ways. The critical fact that emerges from the foregoing is that, figurative language constitutes the cornerstone of the literariness or ornamental nature of literary language, as it enables the researcher to exploit and manipulate the latent potentials of language, in sundry ways, for specific stylistic effects (Yeibo, 2012). It plays a major role in compelling literary works. Its primary purpose is to force readers to imagine what an author means with an expression or statement. Using figurative language is an effective way of communicating an idea that is not easily understood because of its complexity.

There are many types of figurative language such as symbol, simile, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, litotes, metonymy, alliteration, allusions. But in this researcrh the researcher uses only four types of figurative language to be analyzed. They are simile, metaphor, personification and symbol. Students need to be able to recognize these four types before going deeper to another types of figurative language because these four types are more common to be found in poem rather than other types.

Based on the researcher's experience while sharing about figurative language to semester-3 students in academic year 2015/2016, they still had difficulties in implementing their knowledge about figurative language even after they had learnt about them. Recognizing figurative language is not as easy as it seems. This is a kind of skill that has to be accustomed, so, they will get used to comprehend the meaning of the poet's words.

There are many kinds of figurative language. Giroux & Williston (as cited in Jaroenroop, 2004, p. 101) classify the most common figurative language into nine. They are symbol, simile, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, litotes, metonymy. This research focuses on four out of many types of fingurative language which are taught in Semester-3. The four types are simile, metaphor, symbol, and personification. In this semester, the students have learnt all about poetry and the elements included in a poem.

They involve identifying the meaning of poem. By the end of this study, the research aims to answer "how good the students' ability to show the expressions of figurative language is" and "how good the students' ability to mention the function of figurative language is". The result of this study will be dedicated to English Language Education Study Program to improve the teaching of literature especially in poetry subject.

METHOD

To conduct the present research, a research method need to be selected appropriately. According to Dawson (2001, p. 37), "research methods" refer to "the tools that are used to gather data". They include personality, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes when choosing research methods.

To meet the objectives to get information or description of the ability to show the expressions and to mention the function of figurative language covering simile, metaphor, symbol and personification in poem, the research method is a descriptive study. It is to obtain the information about the current status of phenomena. Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen (1985, p. 640) say that descriptive study asks questions about the nature, incidence, or distribution of variables; it involves describing but not manipulating variables.

Population is the research subject in which the research data can be acquired and to which a conclusion refer to. Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen (2010, p. 148) define population as all members of any well-defined class of people, events, or objects. The population of this research is the Semester-3 students of English Education Study Program of Tanjungpura University in Academic Year of 2016/2017.

Sample is a part of population, which represents the whole population of data sources. In this research, cluster sampling is implemented to decide the sample. According to Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen (2010, p. 154), the unit chosen by cluster sampling is not an individual but, rather, a group of individuals who are naturally together. The sample of this research consists of 70 students who are taking Poetry subject in Class A and Class B in Semester-3.

To support the research, a technique of data collecting need to be selected. The appropriate technique of data collecting for this research is achievement test which will measure the student's ability to show the expressions and to mention the function of figurative language covering simile, metaphor, personification, and symbol.

An achievement test is used as the tool of research. The type of the test is Teacher Made Test. The worksheet is composed of seven pieces of poetry with 20 (twenty) items. The test items are constructed by considering the representation of four types of figurative language.

The technique of data analysis is as follows:

a. To answer the research questions, the mean score of students will be computed. The mean score will be computed by using the mean score formula as shown below:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma I}{N} \qquad ...(1)$$

Note:
M = Students' mean score
I = Total of Students' scores
N = Number of students

Then, as the supplementary data, this research also analyzed the percentage of correct answers for each type of figurative language. To measure the percentage of correct answer, this research used the following formula:

$$P = \frac{C}{Q x N} \text{ x } 100\% \qquad ...(2)$$

Note:
P = the percentage of students' ability
C = total of correct answer
Q = total items
N = number of students

b. The mean score of students' ability to show the expressions and to mention the function of figurative language will be categorized as follows:

Table 1. The criteria of student's score

Test Score	Description
80 – 100	Excellent
60 – 79	Average to good

50 – 59	Poor to average
00 – 49	Poor

(Harris, 1969, p.134)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

From the test computation, first, the research found out the students' ability to show the expressions of figurative language covering simile, metaphor, personification and symbol in poems is categorized as "average to good". And second, the research found out that the student's ability to mention the function of figurative language covering simile, metaphor, personification and symbol is categorized as "poor to average". As the supplementary result, the research found out the most difficult type of figurative language to be showed is personification, while the easiest is simile.

The results of the data analysis on the students' ability to show the expressions and to mention the function of figurative language in poem which were collected from 70 students of Semester 3 students in English Education Study Program taking Poetry subject are desrcibed below.

There were 12 students with excellent score, 26 students with average to good score, 19 students with poor to average score, and 13 students with poor score. From the calculation by using the formula to measure the students' mean score to show the expressions of figurative language, the mean score was 60,29. Therefore, the students' ability to show the expressions of figurative language is categorized as "Average to Good".

Then, the research found out the students' ability to mention the function of figurative language in poems. There are 6 students who got perfect score (100), 24 students got 75, 21 students got 50, 18 students got 25, and one student got 0 (zero). From the computation, the students' mean score to mention the function of figurative language is 55,71, thus this result is categorized as "Poor to Average".

As the supplementary data to this result, this research analyzed the percentage of students' ability to show each type of figurative language in poems. From the calculation of Simile items, there were 5 (five) items for simile. More than half of the total participants can answer all the items correctly, 51 of 70 students. 10 participants can answer 4 (four) items correctly. 5 participants answered 3 (three) items correctly, and 4 (four) participants answered 2 (two) items correctly. Totally, 318 of 350 items are answered correctly, or 90,86%.

From the calculation of Metaphor, there were 4 (four) items for Metaphor. Only 12 participants can answer all the items correctly, 12 of 70 students. 20 participants can answer 3 (three) items correctly. 23 participants answered 2 (two) items correctly, and 11 participants answered 1 item correctly. Totally, 165 of 280 items are answered correctly, or 58,92%.

From the calculation of Personification items, there were 7 (seven) items for Personification. Only 1 (one) participant can answer all items correctly, 1 (one) of 70 students. 4 participants can answer 6 (six) items correctly. 12 participants answered 5 (five) items correctly, 14 participants answered 4 (four) items correctly, 16 participants answered 3 (three) items correctly, 8 (eight) participants answered 2 (two) items correctly and 12 participants answered 1 (one) item correctly. Totally, 223 of 490 items are answered correctly, or 45,51%.

From the calculation of Symbol items, there were 4 (four) items for Symbol. 8 participants can answer all items correctly, 8 (eight) of 70 students. 12 participants can answer 3 (three) items correctly. 23 participants answered 2 (two) items correctly, and 19 participants answered 2 (two) items correctly. 8 participants got totally wrong answer. Totally, 133 of 280 items are answered correctly, or 47,50 %.

From the findings above, it can be concluded that the most difficult type of figurative language for the students is personification with 45,51, followed by symbol with 47,50, metaphor with 58,92, and the easiest is simile with 90,86.

Discussion

Based on the result of data analysis, it had shown that the Semester-3 (three) students's ability to show the expressions of figurative language in poems were categorized as

"average to good". From the calculation of 70 participants, the overall score is 60,29.

This finding shows that students are able to show the expressions of each type of figurative language consisted in several pieces of poem well. Based on Appendix 1 (one), 38 students or 54,28% of the total participants obtained the score ranging from 60 to 100. This is due to the preceding learning given by the lecturer on figurative language material approximately five meetings. Consequently, they use this knowledge while answering the test items. This 54% shows that the students have rather good understanding about figurative language and its function.

When looking at the result of students' ability to show the expressions of simile, 90,86 % of total items are answered correctly, this shows that most of them have already understood this type of figurative language. Students are mostly familiar with simile because it is commonly used in many famous poems. In relevance with (Gargani, 2014, p. 6), the speaker/ author simply communicates that the relevance of the comparison lies in the fact that two entities or activities are being compared and the listener/reader has the responsibility for deciding where relevance lies. For simile compares two entities by using "like" or "as", it will be easier for the reader to find out the comparison between them.

The next figurative language is metaphor and symbol. Metaphor clearly compares two objects which is quite similar with simile, except the using of "like" or "as". For example, *lawyers are sharsk*. In principle, lawyers cannot be define and do not have the same quality as sharks, but it can occur in metaphor. Metaphor and symbol are in the second and third position of the most commonly recognized by the students respectively. Based on the result, the researcher found that most of the students struggled to distinguish metaphor and symbol. The students do not get a clear understanding on the differences between metaphor and symbol. A metaphor is one of the topes, a device which an author turns, or twist, the meaning of word (Moeinzadeh, 2006, p. 10). Richardson (2006, p. 165) explains symbol as a person, object, image, word, or event that evokes a range of additional meaning beyond and usually more abstract than its literal significance.

To understand symbol in literary work, the important things is to understand the main concept of symbol itself. Generally symbol already has its conventional counterparts. For example, students recognized "All the world's stage" as symbol. the word "world" is compared directly with "stage", which is a characteristic of metaphor. But, many students identified it as a symbol.

The last type of figurative language to discuss is personification. Based on the result, this type of figurative language has the lowest percentage of correct answer. Hence, it is classified as the most difficult type to be identified with only 45,06 % items are answered correctly. If compared with the other types of figurative language, personification has the lowest average score. Of the seven lines containing personification, only 39 students can identify up to three lines, and 14 students can identify four lines. `

There are some factors that make it is difficult for the students to identify this type of figurative language. First, some students only read the line as a seperate part. In fact, personification is only included in two poems, and each poem has three and four personification respectively. Furthermore, in the test item, personification is spread to more than one line in a poem but they still have the same node. For example, in poem 3 entitled "Hope" by Emili Dickinson, *hope is the things with feathers* (first line), is a metaphor. Meanwhile, *that perches in the soul* (second line), is a personification because the word *perches* is reffered to *hope* in the first line. Therefore, the word *hope* has a quality of human being. When the students only look at the second line as a seperate meaning, they will not catch it as a personification.

The second example is in the fourth poem entitled "Ah Sunflowers" by William Blake. The first line, *Ah-sun-flowers! Weary of time* is a personification because the word *sun-flowers* has a concept of human traits. This line still has connection with line two and three, *who countest the steps of the sun* dan *seeking after*

that sweet golden clime, which makes them as personification, too. In the identification of personification, most students only wrote one or two lines contained personification in poem 3 or 4. Whereas there are seven lines contained personification in poem 3 (three) or 4 (four).

The second part of the test items, ask the students to mention the function of figurative language covering, simile, metaphor, personification, and symbol. From the result, only six students get the excellent score. Most of the students answer the test items with the defintion of figurative language not the function. This means that, they still get confuse to differenciate the definition with the function. For example, the function of simile is to give the reader a description of the author's imagination, enables them to imagine how an event has happened in the story carried in the poem. Meanwhile, the students' answer is "to compare two things, using words "like" or "as", which is recognized as the defintion of simile.

The second figurative language is metaphor. The main purpose of metaphor is to describe an entity, event or quality more comprehensively and concisely and in a more complex way than is possible by using literal language. Whilst the students' answer is "to compare to things without using 'like' or 'as' ", which is one of the characteristic of metaphor.

The third figurative language is personification. The function is to add life and vividness to expressions or concepts as we always look at the world from the perspective of a human being. In this type of figurative language, many students get the answer right. For example, the student's answer is 'the function of personification is to give human traits to object or ideas. So the words can be more life". This shows that students' understanding on the function of personification is fairly good.

The last figurative language is symbol. Symbol has a function to express the poet's feelings and thoughts about phenomena, life and death. Based on the result, most of the students can give the correct answer. For example, the student's answer is "to stand for something else without losing its original identity, so the word can be more meaningful".

This shows that the students already have a good understanding of the function of symbol.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
Conslusions

Of the 70 participants involved in this research, the student's overall ability to show the expressions of figurative language in poem covering simile, metaphor, personification and symbol is 60,29, or categorized as "average to good". For the second research question, it can be concluded that the students' ability to mention the function of figurative language covering simile, metaphor, personification, and symbol is categorized as "poor to average" with the mean score of 55,71. The percentage of students' ability to show the expressions of simile is 90,86%, metaphor is 58,92%, personification is 45,51%, and symbol is 47,50%. From this data it can be concluded that the most difficult type for the students is personification, while simile is the easiest.

Suggestions

This research has formulated some suggestions that need to be done for the further improvement in the study of literature. First, it is important for the lecturer to give more attention in teaching the theory of figurative language. The results of this study show that the students need more hours to learn about figurative language including the defintions, the functions, and the identification practice. Second, for further study, it is suggested to find out the students' difficulties in recognizing certain type of figurative language and the reason why such type of figurative language is difficult for them. In addition, it is recommended to make a study on other types of figurative language. Third, for the students, it is important to understand the distinction between figurative languages to appreciate literature by alternative learning thorugh reading poems, songs, or novel which contain figurative language.

REFERENCES

Ary, D., Jacobs, L., & Sorensen, C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning.

Dawson, C. (2001). *Practical research method: A user-friendly guide to mastering research.* Oxford: How To Books Ltd.

Eagleton, T. (2003). *An introduction to literary theory.* Minneapolis: The University of Minesota Press.

Gargani, A. (2014). *Poetic comparisons how similes are understood. .* Salford: University of Salford.

Giroux, J. A., & Williston, G. R. (1974). *Appreciation of literary forms.* Rhode Island: Jamestown Publishers. .

Moeinzadeh, S. N. (2006). *Translating metaphor from English to Persian : a case study of literary texts.* Pulau Pinang: Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Ogunsiji, A. (2000). *Introductory semantics. in Babajide, A.O. (ed) Studies in English Language.* Ibadan: Enicrownfit Publisher.

Perrine, L. (1977). *Sounds and sense: An introduction to poetry.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Pike, M. A. (2000). *Boys, poetry and the individual talent vol. 34 pages 41-55.*

Richardson, J. (2006). *Illustrated dictionary of literature.* New Delhi: Lotus Press.

Robert , E. V., & Jacobs, H. E. (1993). *Literature: An introduction to reading and writing.* New York: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Yeibo, E. (2012). Figurative language and stylistic function in J. P. Clark-Bekeredemo's poetry. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 180-187.