

# Figurative Languages Found in Folktales Translated by Native and Non-Native Writers

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**Abstract**—This paper is aimed at investigating the use of figurative language in folktales translated by native and non native folktale writers and how these figurative language supports the coherence of the stories. Figurative language is used with the purpose to serve three elements of clarity, forth and beauty in the language (Tajalli, 2003). He, further, says that the term “figurative” language has traditionally refers to language “nonliterary” usage, it is used to create a special effect or feeling. This triggers the paper writer to investigate whether the folktales writers are aware of the important roles of figurative language in their story. This qualitative research used 15 native English folktales and 15 non native folktales which were translated into English. The finding shows, firstly, both native and nonnative writers employ same type of figurative language except metonymy, native folktales writers used figurative language more in numbers and frequency than those of non native writers. These findings show us that nonnative writers employ less figurative language than the natives because of the writers awareness to the readers’ basic level of English competence and English status as a second language which influence on the children readers’ understanding of the story, secondly, figurative language gives contribution to the coherenness and the lifeness of the story because of its quality in creating mood of the story, developing the characters personality and quality.

**Keywords**— *simile; metaphors; figurative language; folktales*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Dawkins (1951) says folktale is described as a story handed down by oral tradition from mouth to ear or in among people generally in fact illiterate. Usually the author is unknown and there are often many versions of the tale. It differs from myths and legends which are literary forms that reveal the soul of any society; it express its wishes, desires, hopes and benefits about the world. Folktales are short stories which are usually shared in small communities, and they are based on very similar plots; these qualities make the readers feel comfortable to read them. Furthermore, folktales are closer to language than literature (Propp, 1968). It means that they are more alive just like languages ones speak, they are in a constant state of transformation, always adapting to the circumstances of society and culture.

Reading folktale is enjoyable and interesting for the use of figurative language (FL). Figurative language is the use of words, phrases and sentences in anunconventional and non-literal manner. It is used with the purpose to serve three elements of clarity, forth and beauty in the language (Tajalli, 2003). He, further, says that the term “figurative” language has traditionally refers to language “nonliterary” usage, it is used to create a special effect or feeling. Therefore, to make the story and the characters more interesting and alive in the readers’ mind, folktales realy heavily on figurative language such as similes, metaphors, hyperbole, and personification.

Layfield (2019) says that FL is vivid and descriptive. Perrine (1982) mentions that some writers have reasons for employing figurative language namely, 1) FL affords readers imaginative pleasure of literary works, it can create an image effectively 2) it is a way of bringing additional imagery into verse, making the abstract concrete, making literary works some sensuous, 3) FL is away of adding emotional intensity to otherwise merely informative statements and conveying attitudes along with information, reading it can cause emotional reaction, 4) it is a way of saying much in brief compass.

The ability to use FL successfully is one of the most effective tools in writers’ skill set, the more they use figurative language in their writing, the more mature they are in writing. Besides, analysing the use of figurative language by writters from different language background will give information about the different style of each native and non native writers in communicating with the readers and meanings of the words used because FL is specific to culture. Reading FL from other historical and cultural contexts can be difficult if the readers do not understand the assumptions underlying the figurative language. Though, it is specific to culture and sometimes difficult to understand, writers of folktales employ FL to make their writing more lively and expressive. Therefore, this use of figurative language has important roles in the coherence of the story and affect the readers’ understanding because the ability to understand figurative language helps them play with abstract ideas and authors employ figurative language to make unfamiliar objects, settings and situations more relatable (Layfield, 2019).

There are seven types of figurative language, according to Leech (1981, p. 11); 1) metonymy, figurative meaning in which the name of one object or idea is subtituted for that of another closely associated with it. It is used to add flavor, for example; this dish is delicious, to substitue the sentence; these chicken wings, coleslaw, and green beans are delicious, 2) irony, word using that say something other than what we mean actually. It is one type of figurative language that declare the opposite meaning and contradict with the fact, so it is onething is said but the opposite is meant, for example; I am not happy in this expensive hotel

room, 3) hyperbole is expression of exaggeration which used by a writer depicted as being better or worse or larger or smaller than actually the case, for example; I am so hungry I could eat a horse, 4) litotes, is reserved for a particular kind of understatement in which the speaker uses the negative expression where a positive one would have been more forceful and direct, for example: this boy is not handsome 5) simile is a kind of figurative meaning comparing two essentially unlike things. It expresses a direct comparison between things which have one or more points in common and be recognized by the use of the word like and as, for example, she is as beautiful as an angel, 6) metaphor is a kind of figurative meaning which is an implicit comparison in which two unlike objects are compared by identifying or substituting one with another, for example, her voice is music to his ear, love is a battlefield. There are different types of metaphors; absolute, complex, conceptual conventional, creative, dead, extended, mixed, primary, root, submerged therapeutic and visual, 7) personification figure of speech in which abstraction, animals, ideas, and inanimate objects are having form character, traits or sensibilities, for example, the trees are dancing under the moon light.

Regarding to the important information about the writers' different styles in using figurative language, this research is aimed at finding out types of figurative language from the translated folktales by non native writers and English folktales by native writers. She is interested in comparing the different types figurative language by native and non native writers and how these figurative languages affect the coherence of the stories.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation. Perrine (1969 p.65) states that figurative language is a way of saying something through a certain use of language; it deals not only with the delivery of idea but also the aesthetic value of the expression. FL is often used in spoken and written language such as in articles in newspaper, advertisements, novels, poems, short stories, etc. It is also defined as the use of words that go beyond their ordinary meaning because when an author uses FL, a reader is required his imagination to figure out the author's meaning. This kind of language is different from literal language in which when a writer uses literal language, he or she is simply stating the facts as they are. Literal language refers to the meanings of words, phrases, and sentences in their real or actual sense. The meaning of literal language does not change, irrespective of the context in which it is used. In the sciences, for example, language is used in its literal sense; the language is particular and unambiguous. Meanwhile FL refers to the use of words, phrases and sentences in an unconventional and non-literal manner. Authors often employ figurative language to make unfamiliar objects, settings and situations more relatable (Layfield, 2019).

Leech (1981, p. 11) stated that there were seven types of FL, those are 1) metonymy, figurative meaning in which the name of one object or idea is substituted for that of another closely associated with it. This figure of speech replaces the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely associated. It is used to add flavor, for example; this dish is delicious, to substitute the sentence; these chicken wings, coleslaw, and green beans are delicious, 2) irony, word using that say something other than what we mean actually. It is one type of figurative language that declare the opposite meaning and contradict with the fact, so it is one thing is said but the opposite is meant, for example; I am not happy in this expensive hotel room, 3) hyperbole is expression of exaggeration which used by a writer depicted as being better or worse or larger or smaller than actually the case, for example; he was such in a hurry that he drove his car at a bazillion miles per hour, 4) litotes, is reserved for a particular kind of understatement in which the speaker uses the negative expression where a positive one would have been more forceful and direct, for example: this boy is not handsome 5) simile is a kind of figurative meaning comparing two essentially unlike things. It expresses a direct comparison between things which have one or more points in common and be recognized by the use of the word like and as, for example, this man is as brave as a lion. He is never afraid of anything, 6) metaphor is a kind of figurative meaning which is an implicit comparison in which two unlike objects are compared by identifying or substituting one with another, for example, the skies of his future began to darken, 7) personification is figure of speech in which abstraction, animals, ideas, and inanimate objects are having human form, character, traits or sensibilities, for example, the flowers are beautiful and they invite the bees to kiss them.

In relation to his theory of figurative language, Perrine (1982) proposes four functions of figurative language; 1) they are to afford imaginative pleasure because some ideas are best to say through imagery within audience's head. People sometimes need to be shown an abstract thing with something favourable and knowlegable, it helps to explain an idea, 2) to bring additional imagery. Using FL will help the audience paint a vivid picture such as in personification when the audience is invited to imagine an object as human, 3) to increase emotional intensity By successfully increasing emotional intensity of the audience, ideas are properly delivered and remembered, 4) to say much in brief compass. Sometimes to avoid monotony ideas, an author uses figurative language.

## III. METHOD

This research is descriptive qualitative research. It was conducted using qualitative method. There were 60 data in which 30 Indonesian folktales translated by Indonesian writers and 30 folktales translated by native writers. The procedures of analyzing data were 1) the data were collected from the two allotment of folktales (Bahasa to English translated folktales and English folktales), 2) The figurative language found in each folktales was classified based on Leech's (1981) types of figurative language, 3) the frequencies of the figurative language found were counted and then put in the table, 4) the function and the

important roles of figurative language in the story were described, and the final analysis was describing the functions of figurative language in the stories and their important roles in the of the stories. Finally the conclusion was constructed.

#### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Result

The result of the study shows that the total figurative language employed by the non native writers in this case Indonesians is 39 FL compared to those employed by native writers who employ 59 FL. It can be observed from the table that the variety of FL used by those two allotment of writers is similar which are simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony and metonymy. The following types of figurative language are elaborated as follows.

##### 1. Simile

This type of FL were broadly employed both by the native writers which is 36% and non native writers which is 23%. It means that non native writers prefer using this style while trying to make the story alive, by using simile, the readers will be able to get some description more clearly about the people and places or events. For example; she picked the snail and took it back, it shell shone like gold when the old woman saw this magical moment (SNN12). The writer compared the beauty of shell with gold because of his deep admiration towards the shell, the moon was shining brightly and the white pebbles in front of the house where glistening like silver coins ( SN12). The bright shining moon and white pebbles are compared to silver coins which is spraying bright ray. From those two examples, both the native and no native writers are trying to give an impression about the shell, the moon and the pebbles to readers that they are very beautiful that the readers will be able to gain a concrete description about the shell, the moon and the pebbles. When the simile is not employed in those two sentences, the impression and imagination of the readers will be flat so that they will not be able to react give emotional reaction such as excited, happy or flattered (Layfield (2019).

##### 2. Metaphor

Both group of writers used metaphors although they employed in different frequencies and form. The table shows that non native writer employed 33% but native writers only employed 22%. Comparing to simile, metaphor is used in similar way to describe a place or characters in such away that could trigger the readers' imagination, for example; he walked toward when he had gone part of the way it started growing brighter about him, and it wasn't long before he saw a golden sun rise in the heavens and the day light as bright as clear as in the real world (MN14). The readers are demanded to imagine about heavens which they have never seen before and the beauty of the sun although some readers do not thinking that it is beautiful, the heavens used to represent a beautiful places on the wedding of raden putra and Dewi Limaran day, the holy gamelan played its heavenly music (MNN10). The music is so beautiful that it is compared to the beauty of the heaven.

##### 3. Personification

Personification is figure of speech in which abstraction, animals, ideas, and inanimate objects are having form character, traits or sensibilities (Leech 1981). In 15 folktales translated by native and non native writers, Personification is employed in slight different frequencies in which non native employed 15% and native employed 13%. For example; at length, when he was getting quite old, he came to a place unlike any that he had ever seen before, where a big river rolled right to the foot of some high mountain (PN6). There are two personifications in the above example; a big river rolled right to the foot of the mountain. The dangers of the river are personified as it rolled right to the foot of the mountain. It is described as if the water river is rolling like humans who jump and roll while the lowest part of the mountain is personified by the word foot which is actually a mountain does not have one. The writer gives part of human body to a mountain in order to describe it in human term.

##### 4. Hyperbole

The frequency of hyperbole employed by the native folktales is 10% from all the total 59 FL while nonnative writers employed 17% hyperbole. This FL is employed to highlight an emotion and dramatizes the text. For example; with a glance, betel daughter before the water, turn to thousands of head of the centipede-large..... (HNN6), they went from town to city from village to village to find the bride (HNN12). In the first example, it is not really thousands head but to exaggerate the idea that betel daughter turns to many head of centipede. The same idea is also expressed in the second example because the character is described as trying very hard in finding his bride to pass the town city and village. However, the writer successes in creating an amusing effect of the story in which the normal condition become memorable because of this description is stressed in a specific point.

##### 5. Irony

Irony is hardly found in the folktales. It is only 6% from the total FL employed by the folktale writers. The non native writers employed irony 2,5% in the 15 folktales they wrote. This type of figurative language appears in the folktale "Hanzel and Gretel" when the writer describe the character Gretel lost in a forest, it is written, she came to a great, wild forest where she got onto her knees and prayed to God (IN12). What becomes an irony is when the writer describes the forest is great but wild. The forest is great it means that it is marvelous, a place that is comfortable to live in but in different place, he mentions that the forest is wild

which means it is dangerous to live in. In the vicinity of the king's castle, there was a large, dark forest and in this forest, beneath an old hidden tree, there was a well (IN13). In this case, the writers want to describe that the place like a large castle is not absolutely safe place because it is located near large and dark forest which represents devil and wild life. He was always poor and ragged but he was always generous with what he had (IN4). Two different conditions which arouse ironic situation, the character is poor but he is capable of helping others within his unlucky condition. This sentence is expressed to dig the readers' emotion to the character described so that they will give their sympathy to him and expect him to the lucky situation in his life. In other words, irony was used to draw the readers' attention towards the unexpected situation.

#### 6. *Metonymy*

The last type of figurative language found in the folktales is metonymy which is one type of figurative language that replaces the name of a thing with the name of something else which it is closely associated. In Bahasa to English translated folktales, there is only one metonymy employed by the writer while the frequency of it in the folktales translated by native writer is 5% from the total FL the writers use. The word *beast* is used to represent monkey, as seen in the following example; chase that monkey away, I don't want to see that beast trample this castle (MeNN14). *Beast* is associated to monkey as the character felt that the monkey or *Lutung kasarung* became the only creature that hinder her to be the queen in the kingdom, so *lutung* is mentioned as a beast. The similar situation is described in the story the Lion and the Cat; For hundreds of years I have lived in the depths of the forest where nothing but wild beast ever come (MeN6). The word *beast* is associated to all animals in the forest so the writer employs this word does not only want to describe that the forest is populated by animals but the hidden meaning is he wants to illustrate that the forest is dangerous for human beings. Therefore, the use of metonymy will affect to the readers' vivid images towards the forest described in the story.

#### B. *Discussion*

By comparing two classifications of writers from different language background, it is confirmed that both of them employ the same types of figurative language; simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony and metonymy. This does not mean that they employ the same style of creating FL because they have different language and cultural background. As written by Kavences (2010) that language is a set of linguistics signs that is pairing form and meaning. Learning a language means the learning of such linguistic signs. Thus language can be regarded as a repository of meanings stored in the form of linguistic signs shared by members of a culture. There is a culture when a group of people living in a social, historical and physical environment make sense of their experiences in a more or less unified manner. It means that they understand what other people say, identify objects and events, create objects, texts, discourses, producing and understanding language in similar ways. When a person have different culture, they will produce language expression indifferent way. For example in producing metaphor when they communicate about the world, native speakers of all languages use a large number of metaphor which are vary considerably across different languages (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). She became bitterly angry and threw him against the wall with all her right (MN13). Bitterly angry is representing a condition that a person is extremely angry. Non native writer (Indonesian writers) describe this condition by saying really angry as found in data (NN8) No specific word is found to describe this emotional condition. Often native writers, use nature to represent beauty such as bright day, beautiful sun, golden sun.

Regarding to the frequencies of FL employed by the writers, there are significant differences between those employed by the native and nonnative writers. Native writers used more FL compared to non native writers. FL are used to serve three elements of clarity, forth and beauty in the language (Tajalli, 2003). Therefore when the writers employ FL in their stories, they expect the readers will enjoy reading the stories because of some sensuous feeling FL can create. Furthermore, the use of FL is related to the level of audiences the writers try to address such as Indonesian folktales are translated for basic readers because of the theme mostly suitable for those ages. Forstall (2019) says that as a writer, it is important to know the audience first because this one is related to decide type of language the writers should use to convey the message effectively, whether they use literal or figurative language. Qualls and Harris (2003) in their research found that the older African American adults comprehension of FL is largely preserved. Moreover, since English is a foreign language in Indonesia and second language in other parts outside Indonesia, the readers' competencies in English is different. Thus this may lead to the writers' decision whether to use FL or not.

### V. CONCLUSION

The total number of FL found in folktale translated by native is 59 and non natives are 39. Six types of FL employed by the non native and native writers are simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, irony and metonymy. These two allotments of writers employ the same type except metonymy which is only found in folktales translated by native writers. Among those FL, simile and metaphor are found in high frequencies compared to other FLs. Native writers employs 36% simile while nonnatives employ 23% from the total number of FL in folktales. For metaphorical expression, natives employ in lower frequency than nonnatives which is 23% and 33%. The third place is for hyperbole which is 17% employed by nonnatives and 13% by natives. The fourth place is for personification which is 13% and 10% by natives. The lowest frequency of FL found in the story is irony which is 6% by the natives and 2,5% by nonnatives and metonymy is 5% by natives. Non native writers do not use metonymy in their folktales.

This figurative language gives contribution to the coherences and the liveness of the story because of its quality in creating mood of the story, developing the characters personality and quality.

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