

## **Figurative Languages Employed by EFL Lecturers in Teaching**

**Fatimah**

STKIP Dampal Selatan, Tolitoli

**Siti Hardiyanti Amri**

STKIP Muhammadiyah Barru

**Rusan**

IAIN Palu

### **Abstract**

The objectives of this study are to find out (1) kinds of figurative languages used by EFL lecturers (2) reasons for using figurative languages in teaching, and (3) students' responses on the use of figurative languages by EFL lecturers in teaching. The current research employed the descriptive qualitative method. The subjects of this research are two EFL lecturers and students at English Education Study Program of STKIP Dampal Selatan. The results of the research indicated that (1) kinds of figurative languages employed by EFL lecturers in teaching are: rhetoric, simile, metonymy, personification, repetition, paradox, metaphor, and litotes, (2) the reasons for using figurative languages are: to help students' understanding the lessons, in motivating students in learning process, for introducing language and culture, as a feedback to increase students' understanding on the lessons, and to train students' critical thinking. In addition, (3) the students' responses on the use of figurative language is the students easily in association the material with the real world absorbed because those make closer with their environment; those also could enrich their knowledge on languages; and figurative languages used by lecturers help them to understand the lesson.

### **Keywords**

figurative languages, teaching, culture

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### **Corresponding author:**

Fatimah, STKIP Dampal Selatan, Tolitoli, Indonesia

Phone: +62 823-4648-3184

Email: fatimah.rahmat07@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

Figurative devices require cognitive abilities to produce abstractions and interpret meanings other than literal words. According to Katz, Cacciari, Gibbs Jr, and Turner (1998) the figurative language reflects patterns of thought in communication and social frameworks. In this respect, communication is not only sharing a common code, but also being capable of inferring information beyond syntax or semantics. If such information is not correctly unveiled, then the real meaning is not achieved and accordingly the figurative effect is lost.

In teaching, the use of figurative languages by educators or instructors is not only as a style in language but also as introduction to the native speakers' language culture heritage (Manning & Wray, 1990). The process of teaching and learning in a classroom is only an example situation that the figurative language is used. Therefore, the teacher is necessary to introduce and teach the figurative language early. It is not only involved the literature teacher/ lecturer in responsibility to teach it, but also all English teachers/ lecturers. Based on the background above the researchers are interested to conduct a research with entitle *Figurative Languages Employed by EFL Lecturers in Teaching*.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A figurative device is a part of major class commonly known as figure of speech. These figures are linguistic statements in which one, or various of their constituents, deviate(s) its/ their literal meaning in favor of a figurative interpretation. Kennedy (1983) stated that figurative language consists of comparative, contradictive, relation, and repetition figurative language.

According to Paxson (1994) personification is a style of language that makes things as if they were living by giving qualities as if they were doing something like humans. Here are examples of personification language style:

- The bamboo tree behind the house **whispered** in the afternoon breeze.
- Every morning the cellphone alarm **sings** to awaken me.

Forceville (2002) stated that metaphor is a variety of analogy which compare two things directly, but in short pattern. Examples of metaphore:

- Doni was so happy to see the **goddess of night** had come.
- The **king of the forest** roars loudly in the morning.

Simile is a form of comparison that compares a thing with another thing by using conjunctions or comparative words, where the two things are different but have the same characteristics (Forceville, 2002). For instance:

- His smile is like the rain pouring down on the dry ground.
- Your face is like the moon shining at night.

Hyperbole or overstatement is figurative language that contain exaggeration element about something (Claridge, 2010). Examples of hyperbole:

- The loud noise from the music concert **boomed through the earth**.
- My love for you is **as deep as the ocean**.

According to Claridge (2010) litotes is a figurative language that contains statement which makes smaller from the original. It means that people usually use it to make it simple. As the examples:

- I am just an intellectual worker who everyday **eats only rice and salt**.
- Only **this obsolete television** is our daily entertainment.

Katz et al. (1998) stated that paradox is a style of language in the form of a sentence to describe the opposition or resistance but still contains the correct meaning.

- Even though the weather is **cloudy**, my day is always **bright** when with you.
- Didn't I tell you? That girl has **beautiful in face** but **ugly in heart**.

Metonymy is often confused with another figure of speech called synecdoche. Panther and Radden (1999) stated that metonymy is a figure of speech that replaces the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely associated. Examples of metonymy:

- **England** decides to keep check on immigration. (England refers to the government.)
- The **pen** is mightier than the **sword**. (Pen refers to written words, and sword to military force.)

Panther and Radden (1999) stated that synecdoche takes an element of a word or phrase and uses it to refer to the whole, a metonymy replaces the word or phrase entirely with a related concept. In truth, some synecdoche are a form of metonymy. For instance, saying "The soldiers were equipped with **steel**" is more concise than saying "The soldiers were equipped with **swords, knives, daggers, and arrows**." Other examples:

- Boots on the ground — refers to soldiers
- New wheels — refers to a new car

Allusion is a figure of speech that references a person, place, thing, or event. (Hollander, 1981). Examples of allusion can be found in literature and everyday conversation.

- I wish that I can recover from my injury just like Wolverine.  
(Wolverine – A Marvel Comics character in X-Men whose super regeneration ability)

- A hit man won't take a Prius.

(Prius – A brand of car from Toyota which considered being a family man's typical)

(Hollander, 1981) proposed other kinds of figurative languages, namely:

- a. Rhetoric is a technique of using language effectively and persuasively. It is an art of discourse, which employs various methods to convince, influence, or please an audience. For instance, a person gets on your nerves, you start feeling irritated, and you say, "Why don't you leave me alone?" By posing such a question, you are not actually asking for a reason. Instead, you simply want him to stop irritating you.
- b. Climax is the term used to refer to the part of story or play where the tension or action reaches its highest part.
- c. Anti-Climax is opponent of climax figurative language.

Some studies on the use of figurative languages have been conducted by researchers. One of them is a study conducted by Hartono (2012). That study aimed at reporting the problems and solutions of novel translation. Through an evaluative qualitative research based on the holistic criticism approach, the researcher found that idioms were translated by applying idiomatic translation method such as metaphors, similes, and personifications.

Another study has been conducted by Bohrn, Altmann, and Jacobs (2012) that aimed at identifying the differences of figurative and literal language processing, and investigating the role of figurative language processing. Through a quantitative coordinate-based meta-analysis combined data, they found a consistent front-temporal network for figurative language processing, advantages of metaphor processing, idiom and metaphor processing, and irony or sarcasm processing.

Sharndama and Suleiman (2013) had also investigated the use of figurative languages as a medium of expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas implicitly. They employed the descriptive and discursive approach in their research. The result showed that rhetorical questions, symbolism, metaphors, imageries, smiles, and repetitions were used by artists when composing funeral songs. In addition, those figurative expressions were used in creating sad feelings, and making people recall the positive qualities and achievements of the deceased.

In the field of language teaching, a research related to figurative languages had been conducted by Doiz and Elizari (2013). The objective of the research was to explain the significance of metaphors as a figurative language for learners of English in EFL classroom. They found that the metaphor awareness is instrumental in the accomplishment in learning new figurative vocabulary in English, and in understanding the subject-matter targeted in the lesson plan.

In current study, researchers focused on firstly describing kinds of figurative language. The second objective is to find reasons for using figurative languages by EFL lecturers in teaching. The last is to describe students' responses toward the figurative language used by the lecturers.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed the qualitative research method. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) pointed out that qualitative research can be taken to refer to research that is based on descriptive data that does not make use of statistical procedures. Qualitative research often involves the provision of careful and detailed descriptions as opposed to the quantification of data through measurements, frequencies, scores, and ratings.

The subjects of the current study are EFL lecturers and students of English study program at STKIP Dampal Selatan, Tolitoli. Two Lecturers and twelve students were involved as participants in this research. The first lecturer teaches the course of Sociolinguistics, while the second one teaches cross culture understanding subject. For collecting data, the researchers used observation method and interview.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Kinds of Figurative Languages

#### a. Rhetoric

It can be seen in the following situation:

Lecturer : *apakah kamu benar-benar sudah punya cucu?*

[Is it really that you had had grandchildren?]

The above situation showed the use of rhetoric figurative language. In the utterance “Is it really that you had had grandchildren?” the lecturer used figurative language namely rhetoric question and he did not need answer from that students because he and all students knew that the answer must be “not yet”.

#### b. Simile

In delivering the lesson, the lecturer took an example from herself. The lecturer stated:

“Next topic is sensitive issue. Sensitive means not making people offended. If you want to investigate me why I have oval face, surely I will not accept you to investigate me. That makes me offended. What is the problem with my oval face? You must be careful in investigating the participant. So, sensitive means not taking the research that makes participants or data sources offended.”

In above statement, the lecturer used a figurative language namely simile. The lecturer used the simile in the utterance “What is the problem with my oval face? You must be careful in investigating the participant.”

#### c. Metonymy

The lecturer mentioned some examples of written materials such: article, books, and dictionary as kind of library research to complete their materials. The lecturer said:

*“Masuklah dengan tenang, yang banyak-banyak dikunjungi, yang trend dikunjungi yaitu yang berwarna cokelat, itu yang banyak dikunjungi yang favorit kalau mau buat proposal”*

[“come in calmly, the place visited most, the trend one that is visited most is the brown one, it is more favorite place to visit by students if they attempt to compose their draft”].

The lecturer alluded students that most of them only visit the library at the last semester and crowd around the shelf where thesis manuscripts are saved. This expression showed the use of figurative language namely metonymy. “the brown one” refers to students’ thesis manuscripts. The phrase “the brown one” is the physical appearance of the thesis manuscript at the English study program in STKIP Dampal Selatan, which described thesis report closely associated with it. Therefore, when the lecturer said “the brown one” all students directly understood.

#### d. Personification

The lecturer linked the material in a lesson namely the instrument of intensive listening comprehension and the previous knowledge of students in basic communicative grammar subject at the last semester. The lecturer said:

“Nah, kan? Hilang semua yang pernah didapat di basic communicative grammar ini, yang ada tinggal cuma skornya saja, tapi ilmunya menguap semua”.

[“Alright, you see? All of you got from basic communicative grammar is missing now, the only one exists is your achievement scores, but your understanding went away].

In reviewing the students’ previous understanding about reading comprehension, the lecturer used personification language, namely “went away” for the students’ understanding. The utterance of “*hilang semua yang pernah didapat di basic communicative grammar ini, yang ada tinggal cuma skornya saja, tapi ilmunya menguap semua*” is a kind of personification. The lecturer gave human being’s characteristic for students’ understanding.

e. Repetition

The lecturer repaired several lexical mistakes made by a student in writing. The lecturer said:

“Mira, ketika kamu mengetik dan kamu melihat garis merah di bawah kata yang kamu ketik di layar laptop, pasti ada salah ketikan, mungkin ejaannya yang salah, mungkin kelebihan atau kekurangan hurufnya, seperti itu contohnya (instead of typing perspective, the student typed *persfectife*). Itu juga, apa itu otter? It is for your experience, when you type some words or sentences, and you see red lines under your typed words, there must be a misspelling.”

[Mira, when you are typing and you find red line under the word you type, so there must be something wrong in typing, perhaps in spelling, perhaps the excess letters, or lack of letters, as this example (instead of typing perspective, the student typed *persfectife*). It is also, what is *otter*? It is for your experience, when you type some words or sentences, and you see red lines under your typed words, there must be a misspelling.]

The lecturer reminded the student’s error on the lexical term. The lecturer explained the way to identify easily those errors, namely those words will be a red-lined. The lecturer then repeated his explanation to emphasize her explanation.

f. Paradox

The lecturer began with asking the notion of random and asking the students to give example. After that, the lecturer added some information by saying:

“Seperti doorprize, misalnya banyak orang datang karena ada mobil baru di sana. Ada bola-bola yang diacak untuk mendapatkan hadiah. Saya juga datang ke sana tapi saya cuma nonton karena saya tidak punya rekening di bank tersebut.

[As like a door prize. For insrance, many people visit to a bank office because there is a new car there. There are randomized balls to get a prize. I also came there, but I was just watching because I did not have any account there].

The lecturer's expression gives an example of the use of figurative language device namely paradox. The contradiction made by the lecturer through his utterance is "I also come there, but I am just watching because I do not have any account there". The lecturer said that he did not have any bank account which contradicts with the real fact that all of lecturers at STKIP Dampal Selatan, including this lecturer, have bank account, because their salary are always transfered in there every month.

g. Metaphor

The lecturer gave the examples of issues that have to be asked by the students in interviewing subject indirectly. The lecturer then provided the example that really closed to the students' environmental by saying:

*"Contoh sensitive seperti ini, kalian ingin mengetahui apakah seseorang suka pergi ke pekuburan setiap malam jum'at kliwon atau tidak? Itu kan sensitive issues, toh?"*

[Here is an example of the sensitiveness, you want to know whether someone likes to visit the graves every *kliwon* Friday night or not. That is a sensitive issue, isn't it?]

In giving example about the sensitive issues that want to be interviewed for the subject in research, the lecturer used the figurative language namely metaphor. The use of variety of analogy here only exists in Dampal Selatan, namely visit the graves every *kliwon* Friday night. Visiting this grave is not just to clean the grave. This is a very unique habit because the purpose of this activity is to ask for blessings in the cemetery. This activity is carried out only on *kliwon* Friday night. Therefore, in this case, the lecturer said that asking a uestion like this is a sensitive issue and should be done by indirect question.

h. Litotes

The lecturar presented the lesson about choosing sample from population and he showed the lesson through power point presentation.

*"Saya tidak bisa membuat banyak-banyak garisnya. Apakah kalian bisa? Pasti bisa sebab kalian lebih pintar daripada saya."*

[I cannot make many lines. Can you do it? I am sure you can, because you are smarter than me.]

The above utterance showed the use figurative language namely litotes. The lecturer said "I cannot make many lines. Can you do it? I am sure you can, because you are smarter than me". The lecturer tried not to be arrogant and showed that his ability in making a material presentation was as not good as students'. In fact, the lecturer's presentation was exciting, very clear, and easily comprehended.

## 2. Reasons for Using Figurative Languages in Teaching

a. To help students' understanding the lessons

The explication of the lesson is the shortest stage. It happens right at the beginning. The lecturer explained the lesson as thoroughly as possible using examples which are related to the students' life through the terms which are usually used by them.

During this stage the students should get all the information they need to use the new piece of language well and complete the tasks. As a result, all students still encountered the problem on understanding the material. Therefore the lecturer used the figurative language to help students more understanding the subject material.

b. In motivating students on the learning process

According to the lecturer when they were interviewed, one of the reasons for using figurative language is to motivate students in teaching learning process. The lecturer assumed that the use of figurative language especially personification can motivate students such in his statement that he personified the the knowledge like human being that “the score stays but knowledge goes away”. It means the students got score of A on specific subject but when the lecturer asked the question related to that subject as result the students could answer it. That’s why the lecturer said their knowledge goes away. Definitely, the knowledge does not has feed like human being that can walk and run, it was only the types of figurative language namely personification. Through that figurative language use, the lecturer observed the students that they realized their mistakes by showing the shy face, turning their face off.

c. For introducing language and culture

When interviewing, the lecturer stated that through the use of figurative languages in teaching, he could introduce the language, such as language varieties or figurative languages to the students. The lecturer tried to explain the materials in simple expression, but sometimes the use of figurative language could not be denied. The use of figurative languages through analogy was by comparing for instance the human being habit with the things around the students.

d. As a feedback to increase students’ understanding on the lessons

The lecturer often gave feedback by using figurative languages to evoke and increase students’ performance. The figurative languages provide guidance to students in their effort to raise their comprehension on the lessons. Feedback is generally given for informational or motivational purposes. The lecturer gave informational feedback to reinforce students’ understanding on the subject learnt.

e. To train students’ critical thinking

The lecturers assume that such language variety is effective to train students’ critical thinking. The lecturers stated when they were interviewed that through figurative languages, the students’ critical thinking could be trained. Furthermore, the lecturer stated that the reason for using figurative language was to expend all students’ rhetorical competence. This is very important so they could throw no-confidence vote if they are capable of using rhetoric, as at the university level needs.

### **3. Students’ Responses toward the Use of Figurative Languages by Lecturers**

From the result of the interview, it is found that students are excited about their lecturers who used the comparative figurative languages in teaching. They got a common knowledge at courses that have been discussed, and easily correlated with the previous knowledge. In association the material with the real world the students easily



absorbed it because it was closer with their environment. As a result, the students will get more insight about the learned materials. In using comparative language the lecturers used new vocabulary and the students wondered what the meaning of these words and after that they asked the lecturer what the true meaning of these words.

Figurative languages used by the lecturers in teaching were assumed by the students that those were creative and exciting. Those also could enrich their knowledge on languages. There are also students who stated that they understand more if the lecturers explained the materials by using figurative languages in teaching.

Through the use of figurative languages in teaching, the students' perception showed that they expected their lecturers. Students stated that all materials become easier to remember. Figurative languages help them to understand the lesson, to find the correlation between the material and the real world, to imagine it and as result they could develop their minds so that they were more easily to accept what they taught.

## CONCLUSION

From the findings and data analysis, it is concluded that EFL lecturers use figurative languages namely rhetoric, personification, simile, metaphor, litotes, paradox, metonymy, and repetition. The reasons for using figurative languages are to help students' understanding the lessons, in motivating students in learning process, for introducing language and culture, as a feedback to increase students' understanding on the lessons, and to train students' critical thinking.

Based on the result of the interview, students were excited about their lecturers who used the figurative languages. They got a common knowledge from courses that usually have the same with that have been discussed by the lecturer and easily correlated with the previous knowledge. Those also could enrich their knowledge on languages. Figurative languages used by lecturers helped them to understand the lesson.

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