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Figurative Language in Students' English Book

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Abstract. This research was carried out to investigate the types of figurative language found in reading texts at grade X students' book, the dominant type of figurative language and to find out the students' difficulties in understanding the figurative language. The design of the research was qualitative in which content analysis research was conducted. The source of the data was high school students' English textbook in Padangsidimpuan. The instrument to collect the data was content analysis checklist, test and interview. Some of the students were interviewed by the researcher to know their responses on the use of figurative language. The data was analyzed based on three theories proposed by Keraf. The findings of this research are: there are 6 types of figurative language in English reading text at grade X students' book. They are personification, hyperbole, metonymy, euphemism, antithesis, and repetition, the dominant types found in this text are personification; and the students' difficulties in understanding the language are lacking of the linguistic knowledge that is semantic meaning and lacking of socio-cultural understanding in the phrases and sentences.

Keywords: Figurative language; reading text; high schools in Padangsidimpuan.

1. Introduction

Reading is an activity of recognizing and interpreting of a written text and it is really close to the form of the language. The form of the language includes letter, words, phrases and clauses (Harmer, 2003). Doing reading can increase people experiences, develop people knowledge, improve people skill in academic areas especially the way to applied the grammatical rules, or even people can get way out of their problem.

One of important parts to enrich students' knowledge is the ability to comprehend an article. Through a serious learning process, the ability of comprehending an article can be obtained. This is will be the teacher's responsibility to be able to present a meaningful learning especially reading. It

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means that the teacher should be creative and put big effort to develop students' skill in comprehending a text or article. The teacher must realize that his or her help is really important for the students, because many of the students are effortless in developing their ability.

The Educational and Cultural Ministry of Indonesia has been a decision maker for the education policies in Indonesia for years up until now. It involves the educational curriculum for all levels of education. In the curriculum of high school states that the minimum score for English skill especially reading is 70. It means that if a student gets 70 or higher than 70, one is pass the test. But vice versa, if the score lower than 70. It means that the students were failed and they must deal with another test.

In line with this, the researcher did a prior observation in SMA Negeri 1 Padangsidimpuan to know more in depth the problems faced by the students especially in doing reading task. The researcher collected a document from the English teacher. The document is the students' reading score in a semester. The average of the score from 39 students is about 67.2%. It means that only several students got high score. From this fact the researcher wanted to do a further investigation on reading. Then, the researcher did a mini test like giving some of the students a reading text which is taken from a song entitled "Firework" by Katy Perry. In this task, the students were asked to listen to the song and see the lyrics. The researcher asked the students to translate each of the sentence into Bahasa Indonesia. At first the students had no problems in translating some of first sentences, they could say the translation easily and aloud confidently. But the sentence "feel so paper thin" stopped everything in the class. No more sound from the students. Their expressions were very confused and they tried hard to translated it into Bahasa Indonesia but they found that it was ridiculous. Here, the researcher felt quite curious about this stuck. Then, the researcher gave another sentence to confirm what the problem was. The sentence "drifting through the wind" also made the students had no action. They felt as what they experienced previously. So, the researcher came to a conclusion that the students did not really understand about figurative language. Both sentences: "feel so paper thin and drifting through the wind" are figurative languages.

The researcher then did an interview to some of students in order to ensure what the students' problems are in reading. From the interview, the researcher found the fact that the students still think that figurative language is extremely difficult for them. The students felt hard to understand the sentences. Most of them just kept quite when they met figurative language that made them gave up to continue the next sentences. Furthermore, in the interview the students admitted that they have not enough knowledge about figurative language. So, they felt so hard in understanding the phrases. In this case the students translated the phrases word by word so that they were confuse about the meaning. For example, the students translated "*time is thief*" into "*waktu adalah pencuri*" which is in figurative language actually meant that time runs so fast and some of moments in our life are missed. Another example such as "feel blue", this figure of language was translated by students as "*merasa biru*" which is supposed to mean feeling sad. And there are still many more examples of this kind of language that students cannot get the precise meaning.

Figurative language is a language which use figures of speech to present the beauty of language. It is often found that the figure of speech in this style cause ambiguity which influences the clarity of the meaning (Tajali, G, 2003). Figurative language deals with some specific features that make it not the same with non-figurative language.

Figurative meaning is beyond the words. It means that it is cannot be translated word per word. The reader should connect the meaning of the phrases with the certain context of the setting in order to know the explicit meaning that the writer try to deliver through his or her writing. In reading not all the words and also phrases can be translated directly to the target language. Teacher should realize the figurative language. Because this style of language often found in reading text. The main purpose of this language is to beautify the language. So that, the teacher should help the students to understand the text. Students must have the ability to identify which language s include to the figurative language.

Thus, considering about all the facts, the researcher was interested in investigating figurative language. Then, the researcher took the students' English textbook to see whether figurative language exists in the reading text. The books were written by Utami Widiati, Zuliati Rohmah, and Furaidahand and were published by *Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan, Balitbang, Kemendikbu* in 2016.As what the researcher expected, that kind of language is in there. There are some reading text available in that book and many of them contain figurative language. So, based on this fact, the researcher thought it is important to carry out an investigation about figurative language in English reading texts at grade X students' book in Padangsidimpuan.

2. Related Literature

Reading is a receptive skill which is fundamental to build the knowledge and insight of learners. It is one of the most important skill of all. Reading as one of the influential factors in EFL and learning affords considerable contribution toward EFL learner language development on contextual vocabulary, grammatical pattern and cultural expose, so, to have the good reading skill, the students must be supported by providing them the well-selected reading material (Arifani, 2016). Reading is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. As a skill, reading is clearly one of the most important in many instances around the world. Reading is a process of recognition or interpretation of written materials and it ideals with language form. It involves letter, words, phrases, and clauses (Harmer, 2003). Through reading, people can increase their experience, develop new concept, solve their problem study how the words are used, how to implement the grammatical rules, and enrich their knowledge.

Furthermore, reading as a language process in which an individual construct meaning through a transaction with written text that has been created by symbols that represent language. The transaction involves the reader's acting upon or interpreting the text, and the interpretation is influenced by the reader's past experiences, language background, and cultural framework as well as the

reader's purpose for reading (Patel, et.al, 2008). Reading is an activity with purpose. Grabe and Stoller mention the following purposes of reading (Orr, 2006).

Through some researchers see it as a relatively independent cognitive process. In reading to search, typically scan the next for a specific piece of information or a specific word. As an example, usually search through a telephone directory to find key information, either an address a phone number. In prose text, sometimes slow down to process the meaning of a sentence or two in search of clues that might indicate the right page, section, or chapter. Similarly, reading to skim is a common part of many reading tasks and a useful skill in its own right. It involves, it essence, a combination of strategies for guessing where important information might be in the text, and then using basic reading comprehension skills on those segments of text until a general idea is formed.

Reading to learn typically in academic and professional contexts in which a person needs to learn a considerable amount of information from a text. It requires abilities to: a) remember main ideas as well as number of details that elaborate the main and supporting ideas in the text, b) recognize and build rhetorical frames that organize the information in the text, c) link the text to the reader's knowledge base Grabe, 2012).

Reading to integrate information requires additional about the relative importance of complementary. Mutually supporting of conflicting information and the likely restructuring of a rhetorical frame to accommodate information from multiple sources. Both reading to write and reading to critique texts may be task variants of reading to integrate information. Both require abilities to compose academic tasks that call upon the reading abilities needed to integrate information.

Reading for general comprehension is the most basic purposes for reading, underlying and supporting most other purposes for reading. General reading for comprehension, when accomplished by a skilled fluent reader, requires very rapid and automatic processing of words, strong skill in forming a general meaning representation of main ideas, and efficient coordination of may processes under very limited time constraints. The importance of reading also stated by Grabe, reading is also important to recognize that many people around the world read in more than one language (Grabe, 2012). Large population of people have learned to read in second or third language for variety of reasons, including interaction within and across heterogeneous multilingual countries, large-scale immigration movements, global transportation, advanced education opportunities, and the spread of language of wider communication.

2.1. Figurative Language

Figurative language used not in usual literal sense but imaginative way. Therefore, figurative language is language that cannot be taken literally. Figurative language refers to words, and groups of words, that exaggerate or alter the usual meanings of the component words (Wijayanti, 2017). In other words, language cannot be taken literally. Literal and figurative language is a distinction in traditional systems for analyzing language. Literal language refers to words that do not deviate from their defined meaning found in entry in

dictionary. Figurative language may involve analogy to similar concepts or other contexts, and may involve exaggerations.

Figurative Language is language using figures of speech (a way of saying one thing and meaning another); in other words, language that cannot be taken literally or should not be taken literally only. Figurative language uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation (Dennis, 1996). Therefore, when a researcher uses literal language, he or she is simply stating the facts as they are. Figurative language, in comparison, uses exaggerations or alterations to make a particular linguistic point. Figurative language is one which literally in compatible term, forces the readers to attend the connotation rather than to the denotation.

If a writer does not use figures of speech, one's speech or writing will be dry. The researcher agreed with this statement because figurative language would bring the colour of the literary work. As being written above that figurative language would beautify the form in literary work and give the different way to serve the meaning to the target readers. Several scholars wrote about figurative language. Figurative language or figure of speech is the device to create the imagination by comparing two or more different things and it violates the rules of linguistics. Here are the types of figurative language according to Keraf (2007):

a. Personification

Personification consists of giving human characteristics to an object. It is figure as speech when any inhuman objects are given the human qualities and attributes to achieve dramatic effect. Personification is inanimate object are given human qualities and characteristic. Personification is when you assign the qualities of a person to something that isn't human or in some cases, to something that isn't even alive (Wales, 2001). By the giving human characteristics to things that do not have, it makes those objects and their actions easier to visualize for a reader. For example, "The leaves are dancing by the wind" what the sentence is trying to say is the leaves are moving because of the wind.

b. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is the figure used by someone who has desire and expectation toward the thing that happen to make object greater than the real object. Hyperbole as the expression which contains exaggerating statement. Hyperboles can be found in literature and oral communication. Hyperboles are comparisons, like simile and metaphors but are extravagant and even ridiculous. Hyperbole is a figure of speech used for the purpose of exaggeration. So, hyperbole is a kind of figurative meaning that often used when someone wants to emphasize something. Hyperbole consists of exaggerated statements in such amount, size, nature and quality in which the speaker wants to give stressing or emphasizing in their statement or situation. For example: I love you for a thousand years, the phrase a thousand years indicates an exaggeration. The writer wants to show that his/her love was loyal and everlasting. But a thousand years is not logistic. As we know that there is no human age reach a thousand years.

c. Paradox

Paradox is variety of figurative language which contains a real contrast with a fact. It can be meant all of things that interest because of their truth. Paradox is figure of speech that links apparently contradictory term in a single statement that is in fact (Wales, 2001). For example:

- He is dying with his untrustworthy belief
- Please, watch with closed eyes and you will see the heaven.
- Creatively dull person cannot do anything in his life.

c. Metonymy

Metonymy to be closely related to metaphor and that the two look alike, but function differently from one another. Another thing can be name of person, something as pronoun, uses words and it shown in.

For example:

- The Pentagon is located in Washington in the United States.
- The Hollywood is a home of English movies.

d. Repetition

Repetition is only described repetition in word, phrase, or clause. Repetition is figurative language that uses repetition word to emphasize meaning. It is a figure speech which using recurrence to show the forceful pretension. For example:

- If you think you can do it, you can do it. In this sentence the word or phrase use repetition of the meaning.
- The boy was a good footballer, because his father was a footballer, and his grandfather was a footballer.

f. Antithesis

The style of antithesis contains conflicting ideas, by using the opposite words or groups of words. This style arises from balanced sentences. Antithesis is a type of style language that makes a comparison or comparison between two antonyms namely words that contain conflicting semantics. Antithesis results when pair or more of strongly contrasting term are presented together. For example:" the girl who was as beautiful as Ida was married to ugly Dedi".

g. Eponym

Eponym is a style in which someone whose name is so often associated with certain properties, so that the name is used to declare that trait. For example: Hercules to express strength; Hellen from Troy for express beauty.

h. Euphemism

The word euphemism or euphemism is derived from the Greek word euphemize in which means to use words with meanings that are good or with purpose good. Euphemism is a style of language that is a kind of reference in the form of expressions that do not offend people, or subtle expressions to replace possible references perceived as insulting, offensive or suggesting something unpleasant. Euphemism is figure of speech, which veils the obvious word with another, less direct. For example: His father is not in their midst which means dead.

i. Parallelism

Language styles that try to achieve alignment in the use of words or phrases that occupy the same function in grammatical form the same one. The parallel can also be in the form of a sentence that depends on a parent of the same sentence. This style is born of structure balanced sentences. The form of parallelism is a good form to accentuate the same word or group of words its function, but if too much is used it will make a sentence become stiff and die. Parallelism requires equal treatment for equally importance aspects of the matter under consideration. For Example: Both the high and low class must be tried guilty.

j. Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a style of language that removes an element of sentence to be interpreted by readers or listeners themselves. So, there are several words omitted / made to make the reader continue alone or also because to abbreviate the sentence (without changing meaning), because the word that has been applied has been represented by a certain word, for example a word go represented the preposition. For Example: Do you still not believe that from a physical standpoint you are okay, your body is healthy, but psychic ... (passed on by the reader or listener).

k. Periphrasis

Periphrasis is a style of language similar to pleonasm, but said the excess can actually be replaced with just one word. The difference is that periphrasis contains excessive words almost all sentences, while pleonasms are usually only a few words only. For Example: He has rested peacefully which means died, or died.

2.2. Problems in Understanding Figurative Language

The Problems occurred in understanding figurative language are manifest as in linguistics, literary, and socio-cultural problems (Abdiel, et.al, 2016).

a. The problem in its linguistic happens when it includes the collocation and obscured syntactic structures. The problem also occurred at the habit of English learners in bringing the source language into the target language. In other words, the readers often translate the figurative language literally.

b. The literary problems are actually related to the diction, poetic structures and sound, and these dimensions refer to the beauty of the writer's language. It is closely related to the aesthetic aspect of the language used by the writer in order to create a more interesting text.

Socio-cultural problems arise when a reader translate the figurative language without any cross-cultural understanding between the source language and the target language.

2.3. Relevance Studies

The studies of analysing figurative language in literature were done by some researchers. However, the study related to figurative language in textbook has not been found yet, so it is important to conduct a study in this field. Four previous studies are used as the guidance for this study.

Satriani, (2016) a study on figurative language to investigate types of figurative language that is used in Cinderella. There are eight kinds of figurative language used on Charles Perrault and The Brothers Grimm Fables. They are simile, metaphor, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, Euphemism, repetition, and antonomasia.

Harya (2016) conducted a study on investigating figurative language in the novel entitled The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho. The result shows that there are 70 sentences that contain figurative language from all chapters. The researcher put one sentence for every types of figurative language as the representative. Then, all the sentences were listed and classified based on Leech's theory dealing with types of figurative language. In this case the researcher discusses four types of figurative language from the novel. They were personification, simile, metaphor and hyperbole. After analyzing the data, it was found that figurative language really works in that novel. It makes the language is more interesting to read. The reader can be more imaginative in reading the novel based on the illustration described in the novel text. So that, the imagination of the novel is still in control of the story context.

Wijayanti (2017) conducted a study on figurative language to find out figurative language in Paulo Coelho's Adultery novel. This research intended to analyse types of figurative language in Adultery novel. The purpose of this research was to find out the dominant types of figurative language in that kind of novel and to find the non-dominant types as well. From the data analysis, there are four existed types of figurative language such as comparison figurative language, opposition figurative language, linkage figurative language, and repetition figurative language. Furthermore, the dominant types are personification and non-dominant is synecdoche.

Fadaee (2010) conducted a study on figurative language to find out figures of speech specifically symbol, metaphor and simile have an important role in figurative language. Symbols, metaphors and similes in George Orwell's "Animal Farm" were studied to investigate the influence of using figures of speech on the writer's style and the addressees understanding. The writer used various types of figures of speech in order to beautify his article. Moreover, the writer wanted to deliver his messages of the novel implicitly. The result of using these kinds of figures of speech, the addressee does not explicitly understand the concept of the story and she/he must refer to the allegorical dimension of the novel and discovered its covering concept.

Those prior researches had investigated figurative language in written text. Those researches aimed to find types of figurative language especially in novel. Generally, the finding is about figurative language used by the writer to make the novel more interesting for the reader to read. It gives aesthetic touch in the language. But, in this case this research aimed to analyse types of figurative language in English reading texts of students' book. The researcher assumed that it is urgent to do with the student's book because they would read the texts and meet the figurative language.

3. Method

This research deals with qualitative research. This research will be conducted by using content analysis technique. This technique makes replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material.

The research described and analysed the types of figurative language in reading text, to find the dominant type of figurative language and to find out the students' difficulties in understanding figurative language in English reading text at grade X English books. The English textbook of SMA Negeri 1, SMA Negeri 2, and SMA Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan were used to get the data.

The data of this study was words or phrases which contain figurative meaning. The source of data of this study is English reading texts which were taken from students' book at the grade X from semester I and II. The books were written by Utami Widiati, Zuliati Rohmah, and Furaidahand and were published by *Pusat Kurikulum dan Perbukuan, Balitbang, Kemendikbu* in 2016. This two-hundred-page book consists of 15 chapters. Two semester of English learning materials are covered in this book. The semester I book consists of 9 chapters. Totally there are 9 reading texts in it and in semester II book there are 7 reading text. The total texts which were analysed were 16 texts.

The content analysis checklist was done by the researcher in order to know and collect the figurative languages in reading texts. The checklist is in the form of table which consists of only figurative language types. The researcher read the reading text, underline the phrases or sentences which considered as figurative language and then, tabulate them into the content analysis checklist.

The reading test is a ten-question reading test in multiple choice form. The tests were administered to the students. The questions in this test is about figurative language found in the reading texts. The result of the test was used to determine the interviewee. In means that the students with low score (below 70) were interviewed.

The interview was done to know the students' problems in understanding the figurative language in reading texts. It was structured interview in which the researcher prepared some questions to be asked to the students related to figurative language. The researcher interviewed some students and recorded it. The researcher interviewed the interviewees in person. There were 5 questions that the researcher asked in this part.

4. Result and Discussion

Based on the analysis, from 11 types of figurative language proposed by the Keraf (2009:113 and 2007:117-118), there are 6 types of figurative language exist in the reading texts. They are Personification, metonymy, euphemism, hyperbole, antithesis and repetition. The total of figurative language in those texts is 18 expressions. There are 11 personifications found out of 18 expressions. This type is the dominant figurative language type in this analysis which is 61.1%.

In order to find out the students' students' difficulties in understanding figurative language stated in the English reading texts, the researcher analysed the data from the interview and reading test. The reading test was a set of 10 question taken from reading texts. The questions were derived from two reading

texts namely *The Legend of Malin Kundang* and *Issumboshi.* It is multiple choice which related to figurative language. The test was administered to the students. After checking the students test, the students who achieved low score in which below KKM (70) were interviewed.

The researcher distributed the question sheets to the students. There were 34 students. The students were instructed to read the text carefully. Before answering the questions given. Apparently, there were some wrong answers that answered by the students. The percentage of students who got score below 70 is 64.7 % in which they were 22 out 0f the total number (34). It means that only about 30% of the students pass the test. Automatically, there were 22 students were interviewed to know what made the test was difficult for them. The failure was about the figurative language in the text. The students got wrong in interpretation the meaning of the sentences which lead them to choose incorrect option.

The interview used to investigate the students' difficulties. The researcher interviewed the students about their difficulties. In Interview, the researcher asked some questions. The recorded interviews were transcribed before being analysed.

From the interview, it was found that the students found some words which they did not know the meaning. The students were interviewed by the researcher. In this case, the students had very limited knowledge about linguistic especially translation technique. The researcher asked about their understanding on the text. Most of the students admitted that they did not know the meaning of the phrase because she translated the phrase into literal translation. For example, the phrase "passed away" in The Legend of Malin Kundang, was translated become *lewat jauh* which is totally wrong meaning. Another phrase is "put on a cup for sedge hat" in Issumboshi. In this case the students did not know the meaning and when they translated literally, it was meaningless. Then, they just chose the same phrase from the options which similar with the phrase itself. They chose put on a cup by Issumboshi which is wrong answer. Because of this error, the phrase is meaningless. As the result, the students got no score in this point.

Furthermore, it was also found that the students thought really hard to get the meaning of some phrases which could not be translated by word per word or literally. So, they could not relate it with the cultural aspect. As the result, they were failed to get the meaning precisely. For example, the phrase "quite sea" was translated by students as *agak laut*. As the students did not learn about cross cultural understanding in their subjects of course they could not relate the meaning precisely. The students did not know the cultural aspect in that phrase. In English the phrase "quite sea" means confusion, lost, or do not understand about something. But here, the students were failed to get the meaning and they chose wrong answer.

This research found that not all the types of figurative language exist in the reading text of students' textbook at grade X. There only 6 types found in the reading texts namely, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, euphemism, antithesis, and repetition. From the analysis, personification is the most frequent type among the others. The reason why personification occurs frequently in

students' reading text is because personification works to make things more memorable and relatable. When it comes to the author's point of view, it makes the author becomes easier to express what is in his/her mind creatively through personification. In this type of figurative language, the human characteristics, such as emotions and behaviors are given to non-human things, animal, and ideas. In relationship with human characteristics, it is believed that students will have a better understanding because they can relate the meaning with their own life.

In line with this, prior research done by Harya who investigated types of figurative language in novel entitle The Alchemist written by Paulo Ceolho. In his research it was found that personification comes as the runner up of dominant type of figurative language. There are 27 personifications out of 70 sentences. It is almost a half of the total number of figurative languages in that novel.

Personification is an imperative figure of speech and with its application in language, ideas, animal and non-living things get human qualities. In brief, the reader can easily get connection with the things which are described. The main objective of using this device is to grab the readers' attention as well as their emotional support. In short, it boosts the readers' emotion and sensitivity. Writers and poets prefer to do this.

In correlation with the goal of personification, the author of the reading texts believes that the applying personification is a good idea to create the text to be more interesting for the readers. It is assumed that with human characteristics that the readers have led them to get a better understanding on the text. But, the fact that the researcher found in analysing the data was surprising. Most of the students were failed answering the reading test which contained personification. The failure was about 64.7 % of the students could not answer the test. The students got low score regarding to the interpretation of figurative language. When it was confirmed to the students through an interview, it was found that they still have a blur concept of figurative language. In fact, they have learnt this linguistic device from the teacher but it seemed like an incompleteness concept. Of course, what the author expected from the reading text was only a dream. In fact, the students could not connect the non-living things which are described vividly and clearly.

However, from the analysis there were two problems that the students faced in comprehending the figurative language such as lacking of linguistic knowledge and socio-cultural understanding. The first problem deals with linguistic feature which is about translation procedure. The phrases or sentences of figurative language were translated mostly literally. Because of this mistranslation, the students thought really hard to get the correct meaning of the phrases or sentences they were read. The problem emerged were including structure like *quite sea* became *agak laut, a cute cry* became *menangis imut,* and *passed away* became *dilewati jauh.*

The problems faced by students emerged that can be seen by the method that oriented to the source language and the approach seemed not pay attention to the culture because the contextual meaning in each of the sentence was missed by the students. Since the students did not realize the contextual situation in the

phrase and sentence, it led them to have wrong understanding and finally they chose incorrect answer in the reading test.

6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, the conclusions are drawn as follows:

1. Not all figurative languages proposed by the experts could be found in those texts.
2. Some types of figurative Language were found in students' reading text at grade X. The Types are personification, hyperbole, metonymy, euphemism, antithesis, and repetition. Personification is the most frequent types among the others. It was found 11 out of 18 figurative languages in the texts in which personification takes more than 60%.

Regarding to the figurative languages found in the text, students dealt with several problems which led them into errors in answering the questions attached with the texts. The students directly translated the figurative language into word per word or literal translation which made them were confused in understanding the meaning. It is not only that case that the students faced, another thing is that the students were failed in integrated the idea in a passage with their personal background knowledge or experiences due to lack of capability in transferring the figurative language meaning.

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