Figurative Language and Its Meaning Found in The Novel “It Starts with Us”

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Abstract

Figurative language is one of the literary devices used to enrich the meaning of literature work. The research problem of this research is to find the figurative language and its meaning in the novel “It Starts with Us”. This is qualitative research and used literary study. The data collection is taken from the novel “It Starts with Us” by Collen Roover, published in 2022. The data shows that there were five kinds of figurative language simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and repetition. Out of 86 data; 76 data (86%) were simile that consisted of using “like” 65 data (75,5%), using “as” 6 data (6,9%), and using “as…as” 3 data (3,4%). Data figurative language on metaphor and hyperbole were 4 each (4,65%). Out of 2 data each (2,32%). It can be concluded that the novelist emphasized the expressions of metaphor to compare the situation and emotions in the story of the novel.

Keywords: Figurative Language, Meaning, Novel

INTRODUCTION

This research is aimed to find out the figurative language used in the novel “It Starts with Us” and its’ meaning. Besides, it identifies the percentage of kinds of figurative used in the novel. This romance novel was written by Colleen Hoover. This is the sequel to her bestseller in 2016 “It Ends with Us” (Hoover, 2022). This novel brings the readers to the intricacies of life after divorce and domestic abuse. The main characters of this novel are Lily, Ryle (her abused husband), and Atlas (Lily’s first love). The synopsis of the story in the novel begins with the line between respecting her ex-husband, Ryle, and his position in her life. She wants to move on in her love life and eventually sees that she deserves a romantic relationship and takes the steps in order to have a better life. She is navigating single motherhood, running her flower business, and the hope that she could have a healthy relationship after all. Atlas and Lily attempt to rekindle the love they felt for each other as teenagers.
However, it must deal with the repercussions of the love they have now as adults. Atlas and Lily love each other so much and explore the reality of their relationship. Falling in love is easy but loving is hard work. In addition, in some way, all relationships are flawed and we simply must choose which imperfections we are willing to accept. It shows that Lily deserves second-chance love.

According to (Abrams, M. H. Harpham, 2009), the novel is a great variety of writing that have in common only the attribute of being extended works of fiction written in prose. As an extended narrative, the novel is distinguished from the short story and from the work of middle length its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, a greater complication of the plot (or plots), ampler development of the milieu, and more sustained exploration of character and motivates that do the shorter, more concentrated modes. While according to (Peter, 2006), a novel is one of the three main kinds of literature (poetry, drama, novel), the novel is the last to evolve and the hardest to define, for reasons suggested in the name. ‘A fiction in prose of a certain extent’. The fascination of the novel is that, because of its representational dimension, it raises the problem of the nature of fiction at a point very near to familiar, unfictionalized versions of reality. In addition, (Cuddon, 2013) stated that novel is a wide variety of writings whose only common attribute is that they are extended pieces of prose fiction. In other words, novel is an invented prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience, usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting.

Humans characteristically use language, and a characteristic feature of the use of language is that it is meaningful. This research uses semantic theory in order to explore the meaning of figurative language found in the novel. According to (Maria, Aloni. Paul, 2016), semantics is the study of meaning, of the structural ways in which it is realized in natural language, and of the formal logical properties of these structures. The area of formal semantics finds its roots in logic and the philosophy of language and mind, but it has also become deeply entrenched in linguistics and the cognitive sciences. While according to (Jacobson, 2014), each expression that is proven well-formed in the syntax is assigned a meaning by the semantics, and the syntactic rules or principles which prove an expression as well-formed are paired with the semantics which assigned the expression a meaning. An interesting consequence of this view is that every well-formed syntactic expression does have a meaning. While according to (Riemer, 2010), semantics is the study of meaning, besides, it is one of the richest and most fascinating parts of linguistics. In addition (Dixon, 2005), stated that underlying both words and grammar there is semantics, the organization of meaning. A word can have two sorts of meanings. First, it may have ‘reference’ to the world: red describes the color of blood; chair refers to a piece of furniture, with legs and a back, on which a human being may comfortably sit. Secondly, a word has ‘sense’, which determines its semantic relation to other words, for example: narrow is the opposite (more specially: the antonym) of wide, and crimson refers to a color that is a special sort of red (we say that crimson is a hyponym of red).

According to (Colton, 2015), figurative language provides a lot of bang for its buck (idiom).
Figurative language expresses meaning beyond its correct figurative interpretation – correctly understanding “I couldn’t be better” as a negative when spoken by someone feeling miserable (verbal irony). This extra meaning includes all kinds of thing (hyperbole), such as speaker attitudes and emotions, contextual enhancements and elaboration, social revelations and influences and new meaning arising from interactions between or among these things. Furthermore, (Colton, 2015) stated that there are ten kinds of figurative which are metaphor, simile, verbal irony, oxymoron, hyperbole, contextual expression, understatement, idiom, indirect request and repetition. In addition, (Colton, 2015) explains the meaning and gives examples of kinds of figurative language that stated as follows:

1) Metaphor is a comparison between one thing to another or two different things. Metaphors for people or other things commonly use animals as source domains, on occasion as terms of affection (e.g., “He’s my little koala bear”), but also frequently as a means of impolite derision; or whether by leveraging undesirable characteristics of particular animals in reference to people or things (for example, “He’s a skunk” or “My car is a turtle”) or by the general view that animals are somehow lesser in epistemic quality than people. 2) Simile is a figure of speech that compares two things. The difference is that similes use comparative words “like - like, as”. A simple example is "He eats like a horse". Simile is much less investigated the metaphor, although it occurs in frequently in discourse. Like metaphor, it is a semantic figure, a mental process playing a central role in the way we think and talk about the world, which often associates different spheres. It can may have an affirmative or a negative form: the affirmative form asserts likeness between the entities compared, as – “The sun is like an orange” and the negative one denies likeness, as “The sun is not like an orange”. 3) Verbal irony is the use of words occurs when a speaker’s intention is the opposite of what he or she is saying. It comes in several forms and is used to bring humor to a situation and it is used by a speaker intentionally. For example, a character stepping out into a hurricane and saying, “What nice weather we’re having!” even though there was a storm outside but he said the weather was good. 4) Oxymorons are typically less negative than verbal irony, though, because their contradictory propositions do not as readily correspond, respectively, to expectations and reality as verbal irony, for example: “Take your time, but hurry it up” or “She’s killing me with kindness.”. 5) Hyperbole is a figure of speech in which an author or speaker purposely and obviously exaggerates to an extreme. It is used for emphasis or as a way of making a description more creative and humorous. It is important to note that hyperbole is not meant to be taken literally; the audience knows it’s an exaggeration. For example, "I’m so hungry I could eat a horse." This example of hyperbole exaggerates the condition of hunger to emphasize that the subject of this sentence is, in fact, very hungry. 6) Contextual expressions comprise a class of utterances with a variety of structures (e.g., noun-noun combinations and denominal verbs) whose meanings depend completely on discourse contexts, for example, “Their senses depend entirely on the time, place, and circumstances in which they are uttered”. As such, contextual expressions are among the most dependent on common ground of all the types of figurative language. 7) Understatement, was worse than comprehension of verbal irony. It is
unclear whether the measured imperfection in hyperbole comprehension at very early ages is an artifact of item authenticity and laboratory tasks with compromised contextual support – hyperbole comprehension may occur earlier with more subtle and realistic measures. But the issue is probably moot for present purposes – that hyperbole production develops relatively earlier than other figurative production is revealing for a consideration of pragmatic effect causes. For example: “Seems to be a bit chilly”. 8) Idiom is a figure of speech that is used to help express a situation with ease, but by using expressions that are usually completely unrelated to the situation in question. For example, 'Don't worry, driving out to your house is a piece of cake.' The expression of the piece of cake would be understood that it is easy. Normally, the expression obviously wouldn't associate the word 'cake' when it is on its own as anything other than dessert. But in this context, it's a well-known idiom. Another example "We should let sleeping dogs lie", which means to avoid restarting a conflict. 9) Indirect Request is a figure of speech that is used to express of some desire or inclination. Indirect request happens when a person asks another person to tell, order or ask something to a third person. For example, "Could you tell me how much you earn?" meaning here is someone who wants to know the person's income but by using pleasantries. 10) Repetition is something that should take a relatively short time. The repetition also iconizes the redundancy. The repetition is an interesting and fairly novel means of inflating a discrepancy between expectations/preferences and reality – the man’s first echoed statement explicitly draws attention to the fact that the woman is currently wondering about something – a state of affairs that is normally finite, for example “Run, run, run!”

Previous studies about figurative language were done in eight studies with different object of study, those were poetry, news article, short story, online newspaper and songs’ lyrics. First study was done by (Hutahean, Minar. Manik, 2015) entitle “Figurative Meaning Found in Sport News Article”. The aim of the study is to analyze the use of figurative language meaning in sports articles. The data showed that there were seven types of figurative language, those were metaphor, simile, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole, personification, and irony. While the percentages of the data from the most to the least were metonymy (51.90%), hyperbole (18.95%), simile (19.25%), personification (9.6%), while irony, metaphor, and synecdoche (2.35%). The sports news is reported emotionally to give impression of the team and the quality of the competition to the readers. Second study was done by (Nurhaida, Marlina, 2017) entitle “An analysis of Figurative Language in Views (opinion column) of Online Padang Express Newspaper”. The results of the study showed that from 100 data taken by the research, there were 66 phrases, 25 phrases were simile, 9 pieces were personification. The style of dominant language used in newspapers Padang Express Online is metaphor and most dominant meaning is positive meaning. Third study was conducted by (Hutauruk, 2019) entitle “The Use Of Figurative Language on The Students’ Poetry Semester V at FKIP Universitas HKBP Nomensen”. This research used the theories of Quinn, Brown, Harmer, Heller and Creswell. The result showed that there were three types of figurative language on the students’ poetry, those were symbol, metaphor and personification.
Fourth study was done by (Wibisono, Radna Tulus, Widodo, 2019) entitled “An Analysis of Figurative Language in Online Short Story Posted on the Jakarta Post”. The theories used were theories of figurative language by Perrine and short story by Klarer. The result showed that type of figurative languages were personification, simile, symbol, and onomatopoeia. Personification is mostly used in this short story of the Jakarta Post. Fifth study was conducted by (Ismail, Taufik, Nuraeni, Syifa, 2020) entitled “The Analysis of Figurative Language Used in The Lyric of Awaken by Maher Zain”. The design of this research is descriptive qualitative research. The lyrics of the song is got from kapanlagi.com entitled Awaken. The result found that there are some kinds of figurative language used in Maher Zain’s song entitled “Awaken”, such as hyperbole, rhetoric, repetition, and personification. The contextual meaning of each figurative language is also clarified. The conclusion of this research is there are some kinds of figurative language used by Maher Zain in his song entitled “Awaken”. Sixth study was conducted by (Mukti. Bintang Rizki, 2022) entitled “Figurative Language Analysis in “Sing 2” Movie by Garth Jennings: A Semantics Study”. The identification is done by looking at the dialogue that has been transcribed and analyzing the figurative language in each dialogue based on Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama second edition by X.J., Kennedy. The result of this research there is four types of figurative language, such as 12 metaphors (52,4%), 8 hyperboles (34,7%), 2 ironies (8,6%), and 1 symbol (4,3%). Metaphors are commonly used in Sing 2 because the dialogue must make the audience use their critical thinking. Each figurative language in Sing 2 has a non-literal meaning which makes the dialogue between characters have a different impression. Seventh study was conducted by (Iqbal. Muhammad, Thamrin. Husni, Maulida. Restu Dessy, 2023) entitled “Figurative Language Analysis on Efek Rumah Kaca’s Song Lyrics at Sinestesia 2015 Album”. The research is focused on analyzing the type of figurative language with its meaning by using Kennedy’s theory of classification of figurative language (1983) and Ogden and Richard’s theory of meaning (1923). Qualitative descriptive is the method used for this research. The result of this research showed that there were 4 types of figurative language found, which were 25 personifications, 18 metaphors, 15 overstatements, and 2 apostrophes with each figurative language’s meaning elaborated. Besides, the writer found that figurative language existed in the Sinestesia album’s song lyrics has a connection to the song itself. Lastly, eighth study was done by (Bagul. Apolinarius, Pratiwi. Desak Putu Eka, 2023), entitled “Discovering the Meaning of Figurative Language in Jamie Miller’s Song Lyrics”. The aim of this study is to identify the meaning of figurative language in the song lyrics, the theories used were the theory of Kennedy (1987) as used to identify the types of figures of speech used in Jamie Miller’s song lyrics. The second theory is presented by Leech (1974) in order to figure out the meaning of the figures of speech of the songs. The method used in data collection is the method of observation. After analyzing the data, the writer found that there are six types of figurative language used in Jamie Miller's song lyrics which consist of 2 metaphors (16,6%), 2 similes (16,6%), 2 personifications (16,6%), 1 paradox (8,3%), 2 apostrophes (16,6%), and 3 hyperboles (24,9%). All of the figurative languages have a connotation
that implicitly conveys hidden messages and values of life.

METHOD

The novel “It Starts with Us” is the object of this research. It contains 250 pages with thirty-seven chapters and was published by Simon and Schuster in 2022. It Starts with Us” is Colleen Hoover’s sequel to her best-selling novel and the book took a sensation, “It Ends with Us.”. The writer uses qualitative research in conducting this research. Literature is different from natural sciences or social sciences. It is the product of the creative writer. According to (Sinha, 2018), literary research, therefore, cannot confine itself to either the literary text or the writer; it has to study both. When its material (the object of study) is the creative writer, it applies the tools of social sciences and when the object of study is the text, it applies the tools which are specific to it. According to (Yin, 2016) qualitative research is driven by a desire to explain social behavior and thinking, through existing or emerging concepts, which means exploring and understanding the meaning of an individual or group described as a social or human problem. It gives closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situates the study within the participants. In addition (Taylor et al., 2016), stated that qualitative research methods refer to research that produces descriptive data, written and spoken works, and behavior that can be observed. Data collecting steps are as follows: 1) reading the novel, 2) highlighted sentences in the novel that contain figurative language, 3) distinguish it based on its type, 4) find its meaning, and 5) put them into percentage based on the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The finding of this research based on the novel were 86 data that consists of five figurative language those were metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, and repetition. The number and percentage of the data were 1) simile with 74 data (86%), 2) metaphor and hyperbole with 4 data each (4,65%), and personification and repetition with 2 data each (2,32%). The percentage can be seen in Figure 1 below:
Furthermore, the data showed that simile has highest number of data which is 74 data (86%) that consists of simile using “like” 65 data (75.5%) as the highest percentage of simile, second is using “as” 6 data (6.97%), and third is using “as…as” 3 data (3.4%).

The findings about 3 kinds of simile are discussed as follows: first discussion starts with simile using “like”. Examples of simile using “like” is “Two minutes ago, you acted like eight hours without a text was too long. Now you’re telling me to calm down?” (ch 3, p. 13). In this sentence, the meaning is the comparison is “the situation before is described with eight hours”. Second example is “My blood feels like it freezes in my veins”. (ch. 6, p. 27). In this sentence, “my blood vessel is compared with it freezes in my veins” which means the person is shocked. Third sentence is “We’re using it like a conch shell as if we need it for permission to speak”. (ch.19, p. 127). In this sentence, the way the person using the thing is compared with a conch shell when they want to talk. Fourth data is “He’s like a bully to the bullies if that makes sense”. (Ch.19, p. 127). In this sentence, the subject “He” is compared with “a bully the bullies. Fifth data is “I’m worried for Lily. I’m worried Ryle is a little bit like my mother, and that he’s going to retaliate by fighting for the sake of fighting, and for no other
reason”. (ch. 25, p. 162). In this sentence, Ryle is compared to my mother that will have a fight with no reason.

Second data about simile is using “as” with 6 data. The example of the data is as follows: first sentence is “That’s what it feels like—as if these wonderful things happen, but as they start to sink in, they eventually reach a part of me that is still making decisions based on Ryle and his potential reactions.” (ch 2, p. 11). In this sentence, the feeling or emotion is compared with wonderful things happen. While second “That one word was meant as a putdown, as if she was saying, Wow, Atlas. You’re not smart enough for something like this. (ch. 13, p. 83). The subject, the word one is meant to be the same as a putdown or don’t understand better enough. Furthermore, in the third sentence, “And then, as if it’s the most natural thing in the world”. (ch. 22 p.142). In this sentence, the situation is compared with the most natural thing in the world as something pure and sincere.

Third data is of simile is the using of “as…as” that consist of 3 data is discussed as follows: first data is “Her snore is as endearing as she is”. In this sentence, the snore is compared as endearing in other words inspiring of love or affection”. Second data is “I could see his chest moving just as hard as mine was. (Ch. 11, p. 58). The sentence is described that the hard moving of the chest of two of them as the same. While the third data, the sentence “As happy as I know I can make Lily, she will never be fully until she has your acceptance and cooperation”. In this sentence, the happiness of Lily is compared with the acceptance and cooperation.

Second data is metaphor with 4 data (4,65%). The data of metaphor found in this research are discussed as follows. First data is “Apology flowers are my least-favorite kind of bouquets to assemble”. (ch. 2, p.6). In this sentence, the comparison is made about two things, those are apology flowers and the feeling of it is as the least-favorite kind of bouquets to resemble. Second sentence, “Life with them was a nightmare”. (ch. 12 p. 64). In this sentence though it has negative meaning where the comparison is made between a life with them and a nightmare. In third sentence, “Life is a funny thing”. (ch. 15 p. 93). In this sentence which has meaning because is compared life as a funny thing. While, fourth sentence, “This kiss is hope”. (ch. 20 p. 133), stated that the writer compares kiss and hope as the same quality of life.

Third data is hyperbole with 4 data (4,65%), those are: first “I just smile and wait for him to reach us, but a walk from the door to the front corner seems like it is expanded by a mile”. (ch. 6 p. 16). In this sentence, the writer exaggerates things by saying that "a walk from the door to the front corner is a mile. In the second sentence “Never in a million years did I imagine it will feel like this” (ch. 11 p. 59). In this sentence the writer exaggerates the expression of million years that impossible for a person to live. Third sentence, “I’d run five miles just to give you hug”. (ch. 13 p. 87). In this sentence, the writer exaggerates the expression that he had run for five miles. The last sentence, “I am sure her brain is running a mile a minute, searching for an insult or a threat of her own but she has got nothing” (ch. 33 p. 213). In this sentence the expression of a mile a minute is a form of exaggeration of a situation.
Fourth and fifth data are personification and repetition with 2 data each (2,32%). The data about 2 examples of personification in this research is stated as follows, first in the sentence, “The coffee never kicked in, I guess”. (ch 11 p. 57). In this sentence, human characteristic ‘kicked in’ is attached to “coffee”. (ch 12 p 76). The second sentence, “I feel the guilt swallowing me”. In this sentence, human ability “swallowing” is attached to the emotion “guilt”. Furthermore, 2 data about repetition are: first in the sentence, “Just keep swimming, swimming, swimming”. (ch. 12 p. 73). In this sentence, the verb “swimming” is repeated three times which emphasized that it has to be done. While in the second sentence, “I am sorry, I am sorry, I am sorry”. (ch. 24 p. 151). The writer emphasized that the expression of “I am sorry” is repeated three times shown that the person really sorry about the things that he/she has done.

The research found five figurative languages in the data out of ten proposed by Colton. The number of data can be seen on table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinds of figurative language</th>
<th>Number of data</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>86,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. using “like”</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. using “as:”</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. using “as…as”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3,4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simile</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings of metaphor in this research are based on the comparison of two nouns using “like, as or as…as”. In this novel, the writer compares two nouns in order to give more explanation about the situation of the main character Lily that has to face the reality of her life that must to get divorce from her abused husband, Ryle. Besides, she is in love again with her former boyfriend of her high school, Atlas. While the use of metaphor is more on the expressing of positive and negative emotion like “Life with the was a nightmare” and “This kiss is hope”. These positive and negative emotions are based on the experience and circumstance when Lily has to encounter. In addition, the use of hyperbole is stated as the expression of how the main characters, Lily and Atlas, have to fight for their love and be certain that Lily’s daughter, Emmy, is safe. Furthermore, the expression personification is used to make things more alive in this story, like in the sentences: “The coffee never kicked in, I guess” and “I feel the guilt swallowing me”. The last one is repetition which is used to give more emphasize on the instruction, warning, asking for attention or showing intention.

CONCLUSION

The research problem of this research is to find the figurative language and its meaning in the novel “It Starts with Us”. This is qualitative research and used literary study. The data shows that
there were five kinds of figurative language simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and repetition. Out of 86 data; 76 data (86%) were simile that consisted of using “like” 65 data (75.5%), using “as” 6 data (6.9%), and using “as...as” 3 data (3.4%). Data figurative language on metaphor and hyperbole were 4 each (4.65%). The last data were personification and repetition which with 2 data each (2.32%). This expressions of figurative is used to enrich the flow and insights of the story in the novel.

REFERENSI
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