

AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE FOUND IN THE BIBLE NEW TESTAMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study intended to analyze figurative language found in the Bible New Testament. The objectives of this study research were to find out the types of figurative languages and their meanings in the Bible New Testament. There were two theories that used in this research such as the first theory proposed Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974) entitled *Interpreting Literature*, and the second theory proposed by Leech (1981) entitled *Semantic: The Study of Meaning*. The method used in collecting the data was observation method. The writer collected the data of Bible New Testament by reading and understanding the bible New Testament on the book "The Gideon's International", and taking note and classifying the phrase and sentence that contain of figurative language. The writer analyzed the data descriptively by using qualitative method. After analyzing the sentences in the Bible, the writer found several of figurative language used in Bible New Testament. There were seven types of figurative language that used in the Bible New Testament, they were 9 of Metaphor (32%), 4 of Simile (14%), 1 of Personification (4%), 4 of Synecdoche (14%), 2 of Metonymy (7%), 6 of Hyperbole (22%), and 2 of Irony (7%). There were two of meanings found from seven types of meaning, they were conceptual meaning and connotative meaning.

Key words: *Figurative Language, the Bible, New Testament*

ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bahasa kiasan yang terdapat dalam Alkitab Perjanjian Baru. Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk mengetahui jenis-jenis bahasa kiasan dan artinya dalam Alkitab Perjanjian Baru. Ada dua teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu teori pertama yang dikemukakan oleh Knickerbocker dan Reninger (1974) yang berjudul *Interpreting Literature* dan teori kedua yang dikemukakan oleh Leech (1981) berjudul *Semantic: The Study of Meaning*. Metode yang digunakan dalam pengumpulan data adalah metode observasi. Penulis mengumpulkan data-data Alkitab Perjanjian Baru dengan membaca dan memahami Alkitab Perjanjian Baru pada buku "The Gideon's International", serta mencatat dan mengklasifikasikan frasa dan kalimat yang mengandung bahasa kiasan. Penulis menganalisis data secara deskriptif dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Setelah menganalisis kalimat-kalimat dalam Alkitab, penulis menemukan beberapa bahasa kiasan yang digunakan dalam Alkitab Perjanjian Baru. Ada tujuh jenis bahasa kiasan yang digunakan dalam Alkitab Perjanjian Baru, yaitu 9 dari Metafora (32%), 4 dari Simile (14%), 1 dari Personifikasi (4%), 4 dari Synecdoche (14%), 2 dari Metonymy (7%), 6 dari Hiperbola (22%), dan 2 dari Irony (10%). Ada dua makna yang ditemukan dari tujuh jenis makna, yaitu makna konseptual dan makna konotatif.*

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Kiasan, Injil, Perjanjian Baru

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is the common tools that can be accept by many people whole the world, and it is one of media to communicate with the other, which has function to carry the

meaning to the listener. According to Kreidler (1998: 55) Language is complex and subtle capable of expressing whatever it is speaker needs to express and capable of changing need of speaker and it is means that language

is an instrument of communication and without language human civilization would have remained impossibility. Language also used to express human emotion, thoughts, idea, feelings of the situation in their life. Most of writers use figurative language to build imagery and give words more power. Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974: 283) stated that figurative language is sometimes called metaphorical language, or simply metaphor because its Greek ancestor "Metapherein" means to carry the meaning beyond its literal meaning. Figurative language used in literary works to demonstrate the creativity of the author also as the beauty of language itself. Figurative language is very common in poetry and prose, it also be able found in the Bible.

The Bible is God's revelation, which means the full revelation of God's self to Jesus Christ and manifest in man who creates in the image and likeness of God. The Bible is really means to Christians to get to know Christ more deeply, contains the plan and how God saves human, also commands and prohibitions of God Himself. The Bible is one of the spiritual books owned by most Christiana who believe in Jesus Christ and they believe that God communicates with them through the scripture, also as the guidance in running their daily life. There is have two part of Bible there is Old Testament and New Testament.

The Bible New Testament contain testimonies and deep reflection from Christians about Jesus Christ, it's also contains the testament of God with humans that occurred in Jesus and was written after Jesus rose. The Bible New Testament containing the history of Jesus Christ from and before His birth until His ascension as well as the letters written by His followers and His disciples. It is as a foundation of the church's life and Christian's life, who believe in Jesus Christ as the savior. The Bible New Testament received in the Christian Churches which is made up of twenty-seven chapter.

This study was conducted by reading and reviewing some references that related to figurative language. The first study

conducted by Silalahi (2017) entitled: "An Analysis of Figurative Expressions in the Holy Bible: John". The second study conducted by Purba (2016) entitled "An Analysis of Figurative Expression on the Holy Bible in the Book of Hebrew". The third study conducted by Arifah (2016) entitled "Figurative Language Analysis in Five John Legend's Songs". Based on the previous related literature above, the similarities is discussed about figurative language in the song lyrics. And the differences is data source, this data source from the Bible New Testament.

This study interested in analyzing the figurative language in *Bible New Testament* because when Jesus came into the world and carried out the mission of preaching for approximately three years, Jesus travelled from Galilea to Judea to proclaim the kingdom of God through word and deed. In his preaching, Jesus often used parables as a medium to convey God's truth. By teaching with parables, the Lord Jesus invites us to become more mature individuals who are willing to explore, reflect and make decisions. Because in the parable implied truth which we are asked to make a decision whether we want to accept or reject it. Often nowadays, many young Christian generations rarely read the Bible and do not understand the meaning or significance of Jesus' parables. Therefore I want to analyze the meaning of the parable of Jesus in figurative language.

II. METHOD

The data of this study were taken from the Bible New Testament. The writers used observation method in collecting the data by conducting several steps: (a) reading repeatedly the Bible New Testament carefully; (b) understanding every chapter; (c) taking note and classifying the data based on types of figurative language. This research used descriptive qualitative method in analyzing the data. It was done in the following steps: (a) analyzing the types of figurative language using theory of figurative language by Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974) and (b) analyzing the meaning of

figurative language using theory of meaning by Leech (1981). In presenting the data of this research, the writer used formal and informal method. The formal method used table to show types of figurative language found in Bible New Testament. The informal method used descriptive paragraph to describe the types of figurative language and their meaning.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part showed the finding of figurative language used in the Bible New testament. This study found seven types of figurative language such as Metaphor, Simile, Personification, Synecdoche, Metonymy, Hyperbole, and Irony. The table below presents seven types of figurative language found in the Bible New Testament.

Figurative language	Occurrences	Percentages
Metaphor	9	32%
Simile	4	14%
Personification	1	4%
Synecdoche	4	14%
Metonymy	2	17%
Hyperbole	6	22%
Irony	2	7%
Total	28	100%

Table 1. Types of Figurative Language

There are only 13 examples of figurative language presented in the discussion.

Metaphor

Metaphor is figure of speech which concisely compares two things. It is considered as implied comparison without used words “like” or “as” (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974: 283). The examples of metaphor can be seen in the following discussion.

Data 1

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men (Matthew 5: 13)

The data above categorized as metaphor because the bible compares to things between “You” and “Salt” by using to

be. “You” in this sentence refers to followers of Jesus Christ. They are compared to salt, in that they have a purpose in the world. In denotative meaning salt is white substance obtained from mines and seawater, used to flavor food (Oxford Dictionary, 2008: 389). The data above has connotative meaning because the meaning in the sentence is beyond its literal meaning. In this part, Jesus describe His followers with the salt. Salt gives a change taste of food that was bland to be tasty and delicious. Jesus describes His followers with salt, with the aim that His followers can bring change to others, by doing good, giving help to those in need, being a person who can be an example or role model for others. The sentence above is a warning to the followers of Jesus that you are salt, be a Christian who brings peace and joy, behaves well, and speak politely so as not to offend others. From the sentence you are the salt of the earth above we can understand that God is warning us that we always speak politely to anyone to avoid being hate or shunned by people around us.

Data 2

And Jesus said to them, **I am the bread of life.** He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst (John 6: 35)

This data categorized as metaphor because there is compares two things between Bread and I and by using to be. I am in this sentence is referring to Jesus in denotative meaning. This we can know from the previous sentence that says Jesus said to them. Bread in conceptual or denotative meaning usually defines as a food made of wheat flour (Oxford Dictionary, 2008: 48). As we know that bread can be a food that will fill us up when we are hungry. The data above is categorized as connotative meaning because the meaning beyond from its literal meaning. Jesus compares Himself as a bread directly. As we know, bread can fill our stomachs so we do not starve. And Jesus in this context who says the bread of life means spiritually filling, He fills our hearts, and our faith. So not only physical desires are fulfilled

but also our faith desires. Jesus suggests that He can sustain his followers in spiritual sense. In this case, that God can be relied on when we are exhausted because of our activities. When our soul is hungry for faith, God will fill us with His holy spirit. He is able to become a new strength and passion for His followers. So, I am the bread of life here does not mean that Jesus is the bread that we eat every day, but with His holy spirit He will become a new strength for us when we are weak.

Simile

According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1974: 283) simile is figure of speech involving comparison, it draws resemblance with the help of the word like. The examples of simile can be seen in the following discussion.

Data 3

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because **you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly**, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (Matthew 23: 27)

The data above categorized as simile because there is compares two things such as "You" and "whitewashed tombs". The connection word that used as comparing in this sentence is word "like". You here means scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. And whitewashed is cover a wall, with whitewash (Oxford Dictionary, 2008: 507). While tomb means place especially with a stone monument, where a dead body is buried (Oxford Dictionary, 2008: 468).

The data above has connotative meaning because the meaning in this sentence is beyond its literal meaning. The sentence above is Jesus pronounced to scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites into whitewashed tombs. In this case, Jesus used to describe their spiritual condition. Jesus compares them because they look good on the outside but evil on the inside, which they pretend to be good in front of the crowd but their minds and hearts think or say otherwise. Jesus compared them to tombs because as we know the tombs look very beautiful on the outside, but inside there are so many dung and bones of the dead.

As Jesus said after the comparison sentence above which you are looks beautiful from the outside, but inside is full of the bones of the dead and all uncleanness.

Data 4

Go your way, behold, **I send you out as lambs among wolves** (Luke 10: 3)

The data above is categorized as simile because this sentence compare two things such as "condition you being sent out" and "condition lamb among wolves" and used the word "as" as comparison. "Condition you being sent out" means the disciples were sent by Jesus to every city. Lamb is a young sheep. And wolf is a beast. The data above has connotative meaning because the meaning in this sentence is beyond its literal meaning. In the sentence above, Jesus sent His disciples to go to every city. And Jesus compared the condition of His disciples to that of a lamb that went among wolves, where they went far from home with nothing, and see how they survive. The meaning of the sentence of Jesus above is that the disciples were sent and did not bring everything they had, so that they could live mingle with people in every city, struggling and trying to stay alive so that they were called like lambs. City life with all worldly temptations, which tested the faith of disciples were called wolves. In this case, the meaning of Jesus state is not really lambs sent among wolves, but condition of disciples who were sent to each city and left everything that belonged to each of them, and in order to survive, they must be able to mingle with the surrounding society, live side by side to be a humble person, and strong to face every worldly temptation which as we know city life is full of something tempting and make us do various ways to get or try even though we know its wrong way to do. So the condition when they were sent did not bring everything they had. And the condition of lambs among wolves is the condition of the disciples in facing worldly temptations while living in the city.

Personification

Personification is giving human characteristic to an object, animals, or an abstract idea. According to Knickerbocker

and Reninger (1974: 283) personification is an implied comparison between a non human thing and a human being. The examples of personification can be seen in the following discussion.

Data 5

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** (John 3: 5)

The data above is categorized as personification because this sentence is giving characteristic of human being with non-human being. The word born as we know it has many meanings but is more of a human characteristic. Example; the baby was just born. The child was born blind, the newborn child is very beautiful. Water is something we need when we are thirsty, its play an important role in the survival of humans and many other living things. We always need water in every process of our life. Water is as important as food. The spirit is something we cannot see but we can feel, spirit is related to belief and heart. In this context Jesus said "a person born of water and spirit" as if water or spirit could give birth to or give human characteristics to the object "water and spirit".

The data above has connotative meaning because the meaning is beyond its literal meaning. The meaning of the words of Jesus is not a human being born literally of water and spirit. Water is symbolizes of cleansing, in the Christian life; Baptism or blessing with water is one of the first sacraments received as a symbol of followers of Jesus Christ. Sacrament means a sign of God's salvation given to humans to sanctify humans, the meaning is an agreement between man and God, so that by receiving the Sacrament, a person promises to live faithfully to Jesus Christ. Spirit is a symbol of power of Jesus Christ for believers. The water and the Spirit function to cleanse and strengthen the power of Christ, who takes away all sin and becomes the savior. So the meaning of Jesus "born of water and the spirit" is someone who has been baptized in the name of Jesus and believes in the Holy Spirit.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche is a figure using the part of the whole (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974: 283). The examples of synecdoche can be seen in the following discussion.

Data 6

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? (Matthew 7: 3)

The data above categorized as synecdoche because used the part to explain the whole. This sentence is command of Jesus that used "eye" is the part of human body to explain the whole body. "Eye" is a part of human body to see. The data above has connotative meaning because the meaning is beyond the literal meaning. The sentence is illogical since "look at the speck in your brother's eye" and the second sentence is "do not consider the plank in your own eye?" As we know, in human body there is no speck or plank. The meaning of Jesus' words is that we often judge and ridicule others, judge all the behavior of others, talk about the faults of others, but we forget our own faults. We do not introspect ourselves, many things and sins that we have but we do not realize because we are more busy seeing the sins of others. Jesus wants us to be aware of, and realize our mistakes, to repent, ask God for forgiveness, and draw closer to God.

Data 7

And He said to them: Go into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature.** (Mark 16: 15)

The sentence above categorized as synecdoche because used the whole to explain the part. This sentence is Jesus' command to his disciples to spread the gospel. Here Jesus used "creature" is living animal or person. In this case, the word "creature" to explain people. The sentence above has connotative meaning because the meaning is beyond the literal meaning. As people who believe in Jesus who has risen from the dead we are all called to always preach the gospel to all people, wherever we go or wherever we are, we have to become evangelists, preachers of the word, do something that reflects the life of Jesus. In

other words, our way of life, our way of acting and our behavior should always make other people happy and have more faith, and devote ourselves more fully to God. Jesus who has risen from the dead lives and acts through His Spirit, for that as his followers believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in His creations and of course especially in humans who are created in the image of God. Hopefully, that anyone who meets us or sees us will see and meet God who lives and works within us.

Metonymy

Metonymy is describing one thing by using the term for another thing closely associated with it, (Knickerbocker and Reninger, 1974: 284). The examples of metonymy can be seen in the following discussion.

Data 8

The people who sat in darkness, have seen a great light: and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned (Matthew 4: 16)

The data above categorized as metonymy. Darkness is the partial or total absence of light. Light is the natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible. In this case “darkness” is symbolizes of sadness, fear, worry, and full of sin. The “light” is symbolize of joy, happiness, rise and full of salvation. This data has connotative meaning is beyond the literal meaning. People who live in darkness, are full of fear, have been freed, and feel great light in their hearts. A heart that feels full of darkness, overshadowed by death has risen and is bright. They have been saved and get eternal light by Jesus.

Data 9

But He turned and said to Peter, **Get behind me, Satan!** You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men (Matthew 16: 23)

The data above is categorized as metonymy because the word “satan” is associated or related to a person possessed by a demon. Connotatively, the meaning of satan

in Jesus' words for peter is not peter who was possessed by a demon but peter who lacked faith and was cowardly. Jesus scolds peter for rebuking Jesus who is telling him about the life he will live, that he will be tortured and crucified, but Peter says "that Jesus will not experience all that, and peter wants Jesus not to tell about it to the scribes, it is enough to tell them all about things that are proud, miraculous, and amazing things, so that they believe that he is the messiah. Jesus said "get behind me, Satan," Jesus shouted at peter that way because Peter did not believe, had no faith, and has given room to the evil spirit because he thinks so, because you think not what God thinks, but what human thinks, meaning that what Peter said was the thing that human thinks, which is only to please himself, what is good according to himself, but not what God planned.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is figure of an exaggeration used for special effect, (Knickerbocker and Reninger 1974: 284). The examples of hyperbole can be seen in the following discussion.

Data 10

If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you, for it is more profitable for you that one of your member perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. (Matthew 5: 30)

The sentence above is categorized as hyperbole by looking at the sentence clearly because this is contrary to reality, in real life there is no person who if he makes a mistake with his hand, he will cut his hand and throw it away. Hands make mistakes because there is an intention from the heart, mind, and eyes that see. The sentence above has a connotative meaning. The meaning of the data above is a stern warning. "If one of your hands makes a mistake, cut off your hands and throw them away from you" which Jesus wants us to be careful in using hands because if you do something wrong with your hands then your whole body will sin, and will take you to hell. The threat of hell's punishment is so terrible that we have to control our limbs.

Therefore, we can understand that the Lord Jesus did not command us to literally cut off our hands, but the words of the Lord Jesus mean that we really watch our behavior to avoid hell.

Data 11

And again I say to you: **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.** When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?” but Jesus looked at them and said to them, “with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19: 24-26)

The data that underline above is categorized as hyperbole. Camel is an animal with a long neck and one or two humps on its back. Needle is small pointed piece of steel, with a hole at the top for thread, used in sewing. In real, it is impossible for camel as an animal to go through a needle. And for human it is most impossible to enter the kingdom of heaven, as we know, we are sinners. The data above has connotative meaning, this data is a parable of Jesus to rich man who asked Jesus for instructions for eternal life, said Jesus, so that he would sell and distribute some of his wealth to the poor. A man who has everything, has a lot of money, with that money he can buy and enjoy whatever he wants. Money is no longer seen as a means to do well, but an opiate that makes people accumulate as much wealth as possible. God does not forbid His people to have wealth and live prosperously. However, there is a risk that needs to be watched out for, namely loving wealth more than God is tantamount to spiritual adultery and idolatry. Abundant wealth does not save. Pray that God will enlighten our hearts and minds to understand that the eternal treasure is Christ!

Irony

Irony is a statement of which the real meaning is completely opposed to its professed, or surface meaning, (Knickerbocker and Reninger 1974: 284). The examples of

synecdoche can be seen in the following discussion.

Data 12

These people draw near to me with their mouth, **and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.** And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (Matthew 15: 8-9)

The sentence above categorized as irony because it's opposed of the surface meaning is “these people honor me with their lips: but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”. These people, which Jesus meant here, were the Pharisees and scribes, and the teaching doctrines and commandments of men meant were the teachings of the ancestors or the teachings of humans. Connotatively, Jesus strongly denounced the behavior of the Pharisees and scribes, who tried to compare the behavior of respecting and appreciating customs with more than their worshiping God. They do continue to worship, it's just that the worship they carry out is only part of the customs, which it's just a habit that just goes on. That's why Jesus said “in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”. This clearly indicates that there must be a commitment to do what God wants. In other words, worship should put aside the teachings of human commands, and do what is God's will. We have to start a lifestyle in worship that really pleases God, not just following habits. Therefore, worship is not just following tradition, coming to church with neat clothes, clean shoes, make-up, and so on but also with preparation of the heart, ready to receive God's blessings, glorifying and praising God with a pure heart, surrendering your heart completely to God and repent.

Data 13

When they had **twisted a crown of thorns**, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews! (Matthew 27: 29)

The data above is classified as irony because it contradicts the meaning of the

surface, which is "twisted a crown of thorns". Crown is a circular ornamental headdress of a King or queen. As we know the crown has made by gold or diamond but in this case the crown of thorns. This is part of the tragedy of the life of Jesus, which Christians call Easter every year, in memory of the suffering and death of Jesus. The data above has connotative meaning because in this sentence is beyond its literal meaning. The crown of thorns worn on Jesus was part of a cruel game played by Roman soldiers before Jesus was crucified. The crown of thorns symbolizes the human sin that Jesus suffered through his sacrifice, the Lord Jesus saved us by His death on the cross and Jesus rose again in a third day. When Jesus was tortured by the soldiers until he was crucified on a cross, Jesus was seen silently as he was persecuted. Not because He was helpless. As the Son of God, Jesus had God's power to destroy His enemies. The prophecy of Isaiah explains why Jesus kept silent, namely to fulfill the prophecy about the suffering Servant of God (Isa. 53: 7). He is the King of kings who gave

us eternal life through His death and resurrection.

IV. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, the writer concluded that the Bible New Testament, consists of seven types of figurative language such as Metaphor, Simile, Personification, Synecdoche, Metonymy, Hyperbole, and Irony. The writer found twenty eight data of figurative language. There are nine sentences identified as metaphor, four sentences identified as simile, one sentence identified as personification, three sentences identified as synecdoche, two sentences identified as metonymy, six sentences identified as hyperbole, and two sentences identified as irony. The writer used the theory from Leech (1981), from the seven types of meaning the writer analyzed two types of meaning which are conceptual meaning and connotative meaning. Based on the data above, the writer concluded that the Bible New Testament used figurative language to convey implicit messages and hidden life values.

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