

## **An Analysis of the Fourth Year Students' Ability to Understand Figurative Language found in short stories at English Department**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

The purpose of this research was to know the fourth year students' ability to understand figurative language found in short stories. The design of this research was descriptive in nature. The population of the research was the fourth year students of English Department of FKIP Bung Hatta University. The writer used cluster random sampling technique to select the sample. The number of population members was 210 students distributed in 6 classes, and the number of the sample members was 42 students in class B. The instrument used to collect the data was non-standard reading test in the form of multiple choice. The writer limited her research the students' ability to understand; hyperbole, personification and simile as found in short stories. The test was tried out to students out of sample. To know the reliability of the test, the writer used split half method with person product moment formula and Spearman Brown. The reliability of the test was 0.66; and it was categorized high. As the result, the students' ability to understand figurative language in general was 27 students (77.14 %), it was categorized moderate 14.25-22.59. In specific, their ability to understand hyperbole was 25 students (71.44 %), it was categorized moderate 3.73-7.29, their ability to understand personification was 19 students (54.29 %), it was moderate 4.78-7.96, their ability to understand simile was 26 students (74.29 %), it was moderate 4.54-8.48.

**Key Words:** Learning English, Grammar, Students' Achievement

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### **INTRODUCTION**

English is an international language. It is our escort to know abroad country because many people have known about the important of English. So, we should master the four language skills in English learning. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In reading a short story, the reader finds interesting words and sentences. Interesting words and sentences of the short story are studied in literature subject. In literature, the students commonly talk about short story, poem, and poetry. Fortunately words and sentences are true, short story is also literature as figurative language.

Figurative language is a part of literature which forms the interesting words and sentences. Sweeney (2007: 1) states that figurative language is a way of using description to create a special image and bring out one's emotions. In communication we also need good words and sentences to make polite and fluently the communication. Figurative language makes meaning comparison that reader can understand the thing better or it can more vividly make short story interesting. Figurative language almost exists in reading subject that was more fresh for students.

Crarie (1981: 14) states that speech is the basic system of communication. Figurative language has to be communicated by creative writers to share their literature by using novel, poem, and short story. And also using speech the people can do good communication with another author.

Based on syllabus in academic year 2009/2010, the fourth year students have studied English Prose subject at seventh semester. One of the subjects is figurative language. The specific subject in figurative language is short stories.

Based on writer's informal interview, to the fourth year students at English department still confused because they have not understood figurative

language. They faced difficulties to understand hyperbole, personification and simile because there are many kinds of figurative words in short stories. Actually, they have studied figurative language at seventh semester in English Prose subject.

Concerning the explanation above, the writer was interested to know the fourth year students' ability to understand figurative language found in short stories. The writer intended to prove for the students' ability to understand figurative language.

Based on previous points, the writer saw the problems of understanding figurative language in short stories. Figurative language uses a word or phrase that departs literal language (Wehardt, 2013: 1).

There are many kinds of figurative language that were used in some short stories; allegory, alliteration, apostrophe, assonance, hyperbole, idiom, metaphor, methonymy, onomatopoeia, personification, simile, symbolism, synecdoche, and understatement (Nair, 2012: 1). They are commonly found in fiction. Fiction is a type of stories not fully factual but it has been invented (Kennedy, 1991: 1).

Fiction has many categories such as novel, short stories, fairy tale, poetry and

fable (Wikipedia, 2013: 1). Short story is a form of stories that has more realistic than tale and of modern origin (Kennedy, 1991:8). The writer shows the events fullness good. Short story is kind of fiction story.

Some elements of short story are setting, plot, conflict, character, point of view and theme. In figurative language, there are also aspects of reading of short stories. They are phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension.

In her research, the writer limited the study on the students' ability to understand figurative language found in the short story. The writer limited such types of figurative language as hyperbole, personification, and simile. They often appear in short story. The writer chose them because they were very interesting. Besides that, their words were easy to understand by students. The writer chose the fourth year students of English Department because they had studied figurative language at seventh semester.

In general, the purpose of this study is to identify the students' ability to understand figurative language as found in short story. Specifically, the purposes of this study are:

1. To identify the fourth year students' ability to understand hyperbole found in short story.
2. To identify the fourth year students' ability to understand personification found in short story.
3. To identify the fourth year students' ability to understand simile found in short story.

According to McWhorter (1992: 259), figurative language is a way of describing something that make sense on an imaginative level not on a literal or factual level. Sweeney (2007: 1) states that figurative language is a way of using description to create a special image and bring out one's emotions. Figurative language is using words or phrases with a meaning that is different from the literal translations. Figurative language enhances your literature.

From the explanation above, the writer concludes that figurative language is language which enhances literature but has meaning that is different from literal meaning. It has function to make a short story interesting for reader.

There are many types of figurative language that are used by authors to help readers envision beauty in the works that they create. They are allegory, alliteration,

apostrophe, assonance, hyperbole, idiom, metaphor, methonymy, onomatopoeia, personification, simile, symbolism, synecdoche, and understatement (Nair, 2012: 1). They are explained one after another in the following.

Fiction is a type of stories not fully factual but has been invented (Kennedy, 1991: 1). Fiction story urge their reader into fantasy world, which the story is full about imagination of story. In addition the story makes the reader life in the story. Because of imagine into it make the fantasy sense is real.

According to Harmon (2006: 216), fiction is narrative writing drawn from the imagination rather than from history or fact. In fiction the author imagines of expression in a novel and short story. The characters and situations are “making”. Because the author’ expect the reader can feel that he or she is in the story or real their world.

Based on statement of the experts above, we can conclude that fiction is the story telling about imagination world of story for reader, it is interesting and entertain.

Fiction has many categories such as novel, short stories, fairy tale, poetry, fable, legend and myth (Wikipedia, 2013: 1). In

this chapter, the writer only explained some of them.

Short story is a story that tells someone or some event in form not longer. To make the short story interesting, the author also uses figurative language. A short story is a part of fiction, and also it is one of the story in sequence. According to Hornby (2000: 1235), short story is a story, usually about imaginary characters to and events, that is short enough to be read from beginning to and without stopping. Kennedy (1991: 8) adds that short story is a form more realistic than the tale and of modern origin the writer shows the events fullness good.

Based on definition above, we can conclude the short story is creation of short to have character in story of our live with complete and short, but it can makes us feel real.

There are some elements of a short story: theme, setting, plot, character, conflict and point of view.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this research, writer used descriptive method. Related this theory, the writer conducted this research to describe the fourth year students’ ability to understand figurative language found in short story.

The population of this research was the fourth year students at English department of FKIP Bung Hatta University registered year 2009/2010. The writer took the fourth year students at English department of FKIP Bung Hatta University because they have studied basic knowledge in literature in English prose subject. The number of population members was 210 students distributed in six classes. In selecting the sample of the research, the writer used cluster random sampling. The writer chose one class to be the sample in this research. In choosing the sample, the writer made six small papers, and writer wrote A, B, C, D, E and F, rolled them and mixed them in the box. The first paper was for tried out and the second paper was for the real class. The tried out class was class C and for the real class was class B. The writer used cluster random sampling because the students are homogeneous.

The instrument of this research was reading test in the form of multiple choice, taken from Rapunzel and Hansel and Gresel short stories. The questions consisted of 34 items because the writer found 34 sentences using figurative language. To do the test the writer gave the time is 90 minutes.

Before the writer gave the real test, test who tried out since the writer used non-

standard test, the writer did try out test also to see whether the time allocation to do the test is enough or not for the students and to see whether the students understand instruction of the test or not and to see the reliability of the test. To determine the validity of the test, the writer used the content validity. It means that test is constructed based on the curriculum, syllabus, and teaching materials. To find out the reliability of the test, the writer used split half method. It was kind of method which divides the item of the test into odd group and even group. The writer calculated the correlation by using Pearson Product Moment Formula by Sugiono (2011: 255):

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{(n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

where:  $r_{xy}$  = the coefficient correlation between variable x and y

$n$  = the number of the students

$\sum x$  = the odds items test

$\sum y$  = the even items test

Furthermore, to know the coefficient correlation of the test, it was analyzed by using Sperman Brown formula, as follow:

$$r_{ii} = \frac{2r_{xy}}{(1+r_{xy})}$$

where :  $r_{ii}$  = the reliability coefficient of the test

Sugiono (2011: 257) states that coefficient correlation is as follow:

0.0– 0.19 = very low correlation

0.20 – 0.39 = low correlation

0.40 – 0.59 = moderate correlation

0.60 – 0.79 = high correlation

0.80 – 1.00 = very high correlation

Gay (2009:139) states that if the coefficient is high. It means the test is reliable. The writer found that the coefficient correlation was 0.66 (see Appendix 4). It means that the test have high correlation.

Then, to analyze the item in order to know whether test items are easy or difficult, the writer used the following formula (Arikunto, 2012: 223) :

$$P = \frac{B}{JS}$$

Where: P = item difficulties

B = sum of students who answer correctly

JS = sum of students who follow the test

The writer classified item difficulties by using the following formula (Arikunto, 2012: 225) : P = 0.00 – 0.30 = difficult

P = 0.31 – 0.70 = moderate

P = 0.71 – 1.00 = easy

The item discrimination is measured by separating the students into high and low group. The writer used the following formula by Arikunto (2012: 228) as follows:

$$D = \frac{BA}{JA} - \frac{BB}{JB}$$

Where : D = Item discrimination

BA = Sum of students in the high group who answer the item correctly

BB = Sum of students in the low group who aswer the item correctly

JA = Sum of students in the high group

JB = Sum of students in the low group

The result of item discrimination is classified (Arikunto, 2012: 232) as follows:

D = 0.00 – 0.20 =poor

D = 0.21 – 0.40 = satisfactory

D = 0.41 – 0.70 = good

D = 0.71 – 1.00 = excellent

Arikunto (2009: 219) says that a good item test is an item that has discrimination index between 0.41-0.70, however the discrimination index between 0.21-0.40 could be accepted. From the range of item difficulties and item discrimination above, the writer used P=0.31-0.70 and D=0.41-0.70.

The result of counting item difficulties of the try out conducted that item 3, 4, 19, and 33 were easy and the other items were moderate. The result of counting discrimination of the try out was as follow (See Appendix 7).

The writer did try out on July 18<sup>th</sup> 2013 for students registered 2009/2010. It was a reading test in the form of multiple choices. It consisted 34 items. The writer took one class (class C) as the sample that consisted of 37 students to do try out, and 11 students were absent. The students were given 90 minutes to do the test, and the time was effective for the test. And the result of try out number items 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31,32 and 34 were good items, and 4 items (3, 4, 19, and 33) were discarded and 1 item was revised. So, the writer got 30 items as the real test.

To gather data, the writer administered the test. The writer prepared a test in type of multiple-choice. Then, the students were given 34 questions and the time allocation to do the test is 90 minutes, after that writer collected the test.

In analyzing the data of multiple choice tests, there were some steps the writer used. The procedures as follows:

1. The writer presented the raw score of each sample and calculates Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). The writer used the following formula (Gay, 2009: 307):

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Where:  $M$  = mean

$\sum x$  = total score of the students

$n$  = number of sample

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{n} - \left\{\frac{\sum x}{n}\right\}^2}$$

Where: SD = standard deviation

2. The writer calculated the students' ability into high, moderate, and low ability by using formula as follows:

$>M + 1SD$  = High Ability

$M - 1SD$  until  $(M + 1SD)$  = moderate Ability

$<M - 1SD$  = low Ability

3. Finally, the writer determined the percentage of the students who get high, moderate, and low ability. The writer uses this formula, as follows:

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \times 100\%$$

Where: P = percentage of the students score

R = the sum of the students who get high, moderate, and low

T = the sum of the students

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, the writer presented and discussed the result of the study on the students' ability to understand figurative language found in the short stories.

**Table 4.1.1**  
**The Classification of Students' Ability to Understand Figurative Language Found in the Short Stories**

The Score Range	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
>22.59	High	3	8.58 %
14.25 until 22.59	Moderate	27	77.14 %
<14.25	Low	5	14.28 %

Table 4.1.1 reveals that the students' ability to understand figurative language found in the short stories was moderate. It was indicated by 27 students got scores in the range of 14.25-22.59 and the ability was included in moderate category (77.15 %).

**Table 4.1.2**  
**The Classification of Students' Ability to Understand Hyperbole Found in the Short Stories**

The Score Range	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
>7.29	High	5	14.28 %
3.73 until 7.29	Moderate	25	71.44 %
<3.73	Low	5	14.28 %

Table 4.1.2 reveals that the students' ability to understand hyperbole found in the short stories was moderate. It was indicated 25 students got scores in the range of 3.72-7.29 and the ability was included in moderate category (71.44 %).

**Table 4.1.3**

**The Classification of Students' Ability to Understand Personification Found in the Short Stories**

The Score Range	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
>7.96	High	11	31.43 %
4.78 until 7.96	Moderate	19	54.29 %
<4.78	Low	5	14.28 %

Table 4.1.3 reveals that the students' ability to understand personification found in the short stories was moderate. It was indicated by 19 students got scores in the range 4.78-7.96 and the ability was included in moderate category (54.29 %).

**Table 4.1.4**  
**The Classification of Students' Ability to Understand Simile Found in the Short Stories**

The Score Range	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
>8.48	High	5	14.28 %
4.54 until 8.48	Moderate	26	74.29 %
<4.54	Low	4	11.43 %

Table 4.1.4 reveals that the students' ability to understand simile found in the short stories was moderate. It was indicated by 26 students got scores in the range of 4.54-8.48 and the ability was included in moderate category (74.29 %).

### **The Fourth Year Students' Ability to Understand Figurative Language Found in the Short Stories**

As already discuss before, the fourth year students' ability of English Department of FKIP Bung Hatta University to understand figurative language found in the



short stories was moderate (77.14 %). It meant that students still did not understand well the figurative language found in the short stories. Specifically, the discussion can be seen in the following part.

### **1. The Fourth Year Students' Ability to Understand Hyperbole Found in the Short Stories**

Figurative language hyperbole was distributed on number items 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 and 8. The data analysis showed that 5 students (14.28 %) got high ability, 25 students (71.44 %) got moderate ability, while 5 students (14.28 %) got low ability. In fact, the students got mistake on question number 8.

Question :

1. *"I am looking at my little white cat, which is sitting up on the roof, and wants to say good-bye to me"* means . . . . .

- a. He did not leave his father's house
- b. He leaved his cat
- c. He wanted to go to forest

The correct answer for this question is a. He did not leave his father's house. But she found only 17 students of 35 students can answer correctly. Based on this research, the students need to improve their knowledge and understanding to comprehend about hyperbole.

### **2. The Fourth Year Students' Ability to Understand Personification Found in the Short Stories**

Figurative language personification was distributed on number items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19. The data analysis showed that 11 students (31.43 %) got high ability, 19 students (54.29 %) got moderate ability, while 5 students (14.28 %) got low ability. In fact, the students got mistake on questions number 14 and 18.

Question:

1. *the cat has got it* means . . . . .

- a. the enchantess has got her eyes
- b. the cat always see the anchantress eyes
- c. the enchantress withholds rapunzel

The correct answer for this question is c. the enchantress withholds rapunzel. But she found only 11 students of 35 students can answer correctly. Based on this research, the students need to improve their knowledge and understanding to comprehend about personification.

### **3. The Fourth Year Students' Ability to Understand Simile Found in the Short Stories**

Figurative language simile was distributed on number items 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30. The data analysis showed that 5 students (14.28 %) of

students got high ability, 26 students (74.29 %) got moderate ability, while 4 students (11.43 %) got low ability. In fact, the students got mistake on questions number 25 and 26.

Question:

1. The moon shone brightly, and the white pebbles which lay in front of the house glittered like real silver pennies.

The meaning of sentence above is . . . . .

- a. Precious
- b. Beautiful
- c. expensive

The correct answer for this question is b. beautiful. But she found only 12 students of 35 students can answer correctly. Based on this research, the students need to improve their knowledge and understanding to comprehend about simile.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the result of the data analysis, the writer made a conclusion of the fourth year students' ability of English Department of FKIP Bung Hatta University to understand figurative language found in the short stories was moderate. The data described that there were 27 students (77.14 %) got moderate ability, 5 students (14.28 %) got low ability, and 3 students (8.58 %) got high ability to understand figurative

language found in the short stories. In detailed, their ability as follows:

1. The fourth year students' ability of English Department of FKIP Bung Hatta University to understand hyperbole found in the short stories was moderate because there were 25 students (71.44 %) from 35 students had moderate ability.
2. The fourth year students' ability of English Department of FKIP Bung Hatta University to understand personification found in the short stories was moderate because there were 19 students (54.29 %) from 35 students had moderate ability.
3. The fourth year students' ability of English Department of FKIP Bung Hatta University to understand simile found in the short stories was moderate because there were 26 students (74.29 %) from 35 students had moderate ability.

Based on conclusions above, the writer would like to give several suggestions as follows:

1. To lecturers:
  - a. Since the students' ability to understand figurative language was moderate, the lectures of reading 1 (reading aloud) and English prose subject is expected to give more

exercises, especially in understanding figurative language in fiction stories.

2. To the students:
  - a. They are suggested to do more exercises related with figurative language in literature work.

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