THE ANALYSIS OF HYPERBOLIC FORMS FOUND IN THE NOVEL
EATING FIRE AND DRINKING WATER BY ARLENE J CHAI

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Abstract

This thesis aims at studying the Semantics of the figurative language. The focus of the analysis is the hyperbolic forms and their meanings in the novel Eating Fire and Drinking Water by Arlene J. Chai. The writer analyzes 30 data by using observational method and note taking. Then the writer represents the result of data analysis in informal method.

The writer finds all of the seven forms of hyperboles a; they are (1) Single Word Hyperbole, (2) Phrasal Hyperbole, (3) Clausal Hyperbole, (4) Numerical Hyperbole, (5) The Role of the Superlative, (6) Comparison, and (7) Repetition. The writer concludes that the seven hyperbolic forms are the creative literary device in producing literary works. The form can be mean to exaggerate, to emphasize, to compare, or to give additional information. In general, all of the findings have connotative meaning because each of the datum have implied meaning or more than one meaning behind the literal meaning.

Keywords: journal, figurative language, hyperbole, hyperbolic forms.

Introduction

Language is a communication device which is used in human life. By using a language, people can share an idea, opinion, and also their feeling to one another. The people can express their purpose directly or indirectly. When they want to say something directly they can tell it in exact words. Meanwhile, indirectly people can speak by using figurative language. The aim of Figures of Speech is to exemplify, analyze and describe the character and function of natural verbal language (Arvius, 2007:135). Perrine (1982:311) defines figures of speech as a way of saying one thing and meaning another. She argues that figures of speech should not be taken literally only and that they serve function of giving extended meaning to words, phrases or sentences from their literal expressions. Perrine (1982:311) proposes seven classifications of figures of speech, namely metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, paradox, overstatement, understatement, irony and allusion.

Richards et al (1987:105) define that figure of speech is a word or phrase which is used for special effect, and which does not
have its usual or literal meaning, for example, one of the figures of speech is hyperbole. Perrine (1988:605) states that overstatement, or hyperbole, is simply exaggeration. To describe a very long car trip, one might write “I’d been driving for about a hundred years when I finally came to a fork in the road.” A hundred years here mean a very long time. Of course someone is impossible to have a trip so long. Actually the writer wants to say “I’d been driving for a very long time when I finally came to a fork in the road.” The hyperbole is used to give heavy impression about what is felt by the writer.

Hyperbole as a term has a long tradition; in the sense of ‘exaggeration’ it was already used in classical Greece and a common feature of everyday language use (Claridge, 2011:1). Hyperbole has a long history of study within rhetoric and so persuasive written discourse, thus, hyperbole has traditionally been examined as a creative literary device and is still nowadays almost invariably associated to the production of literary works (Mora, 2009:26). Forming an integral part of language, figures of speech are found in primitive oral literature, as well as in polished poetry and prose and in everyday speech (http://www.britannica.com). It means that the figurative language is also found in literature such as poetry and prose since long time ago. Therefore, in this research the writer wants to analyze the hyperbole in a novel because hyperbole is used more than the other types of figure of speech especially in literary work.

Claridge (2011:2) explains that hyperbole contains exaggeration, for example, I’ve been working my fingers to the bone. The emphasis is in working my fingers to the bone. This expression might seem that the speaker has some duties that he must do with his fingers. Actually the hyperbole here means that the speaker’s hand is very exhausted. The writer thinks that this kind of analysis is interesting because to study hyperbole needs a certain skill, so that the writer can understand that to study language is an art.

Moreover, usually hyperboles are used more often than the other figures of speech in literature. Http://www.englisharticles.info/2010/10/27/hyperbole/ writes:

Using hyperbole is a way both poets and prose writers sometimes express an emotion. Hyperbole is an exaggerated expression used to show the depth and strength of an emotion. We use hyperbole in our everyday language, certainly more than we would ever use metaphors or similes. For example, how many times have you heard someone say, “I’d give my right arm for a hamburger” or “I’m so hungry I could eat a horse”? This use of language to demonstrate the strength of emotion is called hyperbole.
There are some advantages to use hyperbole in the novel. Almost all of the figures of speech that appear in everyday speech may also be found in literature. In poetry and prose, however, their use is more fully conscious, more artistic, and much more subtle; it thus has a stronger intellectual and emotional impact, and is more memorable (http://www.britannica.com/figure-of-speech). The quotation means that the use of the figurative language in the novel is more effective to make the story becomes more interesting.

Claridge (2011:44) writes that hyperbole can occur on a much more comprehensive level. She classifies the hyperboles to be seven forms, they are (1) Single Word Hyperbole, (2) Phrasal Hyperbole, (3) Clausal Hyperbole, (4) Numerical Hyperbole, (5) The Role of the Superlative, (6) Comparison, and (7) Repetition.

The phenomenon that the writer tries to study is the hyperbolic form found in the novel Eating Fire and Drinking Water by Arlene J Chai. The story tells about a young reporter aged 23 years namely Clara Perez. One day, she reports about the fire a street called Calle de Leon. By doing this job, then she finds the truth about her true parents. The background of the story happens in Philippines during the regime of Ferdinand Marcos. There are many conflicts such as political struggle, students protest, poverty, friendship, romance and destiny. The writer is attracted to choose the novel because Arlene J. Chai is born and educated in Manila. She writes in this novel the reflection about the reality in Philippines.

After reading the novel, the writer finds some figurative languages such as simile (e.g. The poisonous memory that stuck to him like a leech, sucking him of his capacity for joy), personification (e.g. In the shadows, I saw the trees bowing in welcome and homage), metaphor (e.g. He is her shadow, going where she goes, doing as she does) and hyperbole (e.g. I hoped it would feed his hungry mind). The writer analyzes that the novel is dominated more by hyperboles than the other figures of speech. Hyperboles in literature need some understanding. That is why the writer wants to explain about the hyperbolic forms in this novel and the meaning, so the reader will not misunderstand the hyperboles.

Research Methodology

The writer holds the research in qualitative way because the writer does not use the calculation but only describe the data in language or through the words.

The writer took the data from the novel Eating Fire and Drinking Water by Arlene J Chai. The novel was published in Australia in 1996. The writer identified the hyperbolic forms found in the novel, and
then tried to explain the meaning of the expression.

Qualitative researchers collect descriptive-narrative and visual-nonnumerical data to gain insights into the phenomenon of interest (Gay, et al, 2000:366). It means that the writer collects the data from what can be read in the novel *Eating Fire and Drinking Water* by Arlene J Chai. The phenomenon of interest is to analyze the hyperbole in order to understand more about the story.

According to Gay et al (2000:366), there were four data collection techniques: observing, interviewing, administering questionnaires, and examining records. The writer used the most suitable technique to study the hyperbole in the novel with observation method. To document the observation, Gay et al (2000:380) suggested to use field notes. Therefore, the writer also uses the step like note taking to collect the data.

Gay et al (2000:449) stated that there are three steps in analyzing the data: 1) reading/memoing; 2) describing what is going on in the setting; and 3) classifying research data. The writer also follows these steps, first, to read the novel again and again to become familiar with the data. Second, the writer describes the hyperboles by explaining the situation in the novel why the expression happens. Then, the writer classifies the data based on the form of the hyperbole.

Sudaryanto (1993: 145) wrote that there are two kinds of methods to present the result of the data analysis. The writer uses informal method in representing the result of the data analysis. The writer reports the result of the research by using words and does not use any numerical calculation because the research is held in qualitative method.

**Result and Analysis**

1. **Single Word Hyperbole**

In Single Word Hyperbole, the exaggeration is found in one word only of an utterance. It means that the emphasis of the sentence is in this one word only. The writer finds some interesting single words of hyperbole in the following description:

**Datum 1:** For the next few minutes, El Presidente ranted on, face black with rage, hands gesturing (62).

In the novel, the quotation above happens to the President. Early in the morning the students of Loyola University hold a demonstration toward the government. They hold a campus sit-in and make the university to be the basement of their movement. They ask for justice and economic policy to reduce the poverty. The President sends a thousand soldiers to guard and to disperse the students out of the buildings. The soldiers are ordered not to use force and weapon. However, there is one male student who spits saliva on a soldier’s
face. The soldier becomes very angry and shoots the student. The news reaches the palace that there is a gun fire and kill a student.

This situation makes the President becomes very angry and disappointed. He is furious because the soldier does not follow instruction. He says no shooting but in fact there is a murder. The President so far has the image that he uses military to cover for his own protection. With this incident the image becomes true for his people. That is why the President gets very angry so that the anger makes his face gets black. The use of the single world black shows the depth of the President’s emotion about this case. His anger fulfils his body so that it turns the color of his face to be black. In other words, face black with rage can mean face full with anger. The single word hyperbole with the word black exaggerates the emotion that the President feels.

Datum 2: I buried myself in my work (241).

The man in this quotation is Don Miguel Pellicer. The story tells that he is dating with Consuelo Lamuerta. Both of them come from different social status. Miguel is the heir of the widest sugar plantation in the south. Meanwhile Consuelo is a poor university student. She makes money by making candies and sell them. They love each other but Miguel’s mother, Dona Carmela, does not approve their love. When Dona Carmela finds that Consuelo becomes pregnant, she gives her a lot of money to get rid of the baby before it birth. She says that this is Miguel’s order. Dona Carmela lies to both of them and destroys their love. Then Consuelo moves to another town and never communicates with Miguel. Miguel loses Consuelo but he cannot find her. He feels very disappointed.

To forget his love for Consuelo, he makes himself really busy with the sugar plantation business. In his hand as the sixth generation he develops the sugar plantation to be a modern sugar industry. His business becomes twice bigger than before. He never cares about a woman until his mother offers a match with Marina, the girl of high class. So, the single word hyperbole in I buried myself in my work means that I make myself super busy with my work. The hyperbole is use to describe how busy he is with his work. There is a sense of exaggeration compare to the word make myself very busy. The work occupies all of his time so that he does not think about his broken heart anymore.

2. Phrasal Hyperbole

In Phrasal Hyperbole, the exaggeration is found in the phrase of the sentence. In general, the phrase is function to give additional information about something in the sentence. Some findings of Phrasal Hyperbole are discussed below:
Datum 3: You know, I only come up here on weekends but the work and the air do me a world of good (399).

The statement above is expressed by General Dante Cortez. He is a good friend of judge Romero Jimenez for 48 years. He is judge Romero’s secret contact in the military. General Cortez retires before judge Romero retires. He has a farmland and invites the judge to come to celebrate his fiftieth birthday. Dante welcomes the judge in his farm clothes with the appearance of a gentleman farmer. The judge compares how different he looks like from his friend. Dante is still in excellent shape in his fiftieth.

When the judge says compliment about Dante’s well look, Dante says that the work on the farm and the air in the countryside do him a world of good, even though he only comes there on weekends. It means that since retirement Dante leaves all the conflicts about the military and enjoys the life in his middle age. He stays away from stress and gets fresh air on weekends. He has more free time because he has retired. In the statement the work and the air do me a world of good there is a phrase that contains hyperbole. The phrase a world of good means so many advantages that cannot be counted one by one. The advantages that Dante gets from working in the farm can be a peaceful mind, away from problems, a healthy body, and a happy old age. There is an exaggeration in this phrase, that is why it is called Phrasal Hyperbole.

Datum 4: Laslo shifted on his feet and shook his arms. He needed to loosen his muscles before his mounting fear took over his body (27).

The Loyola University students in the novel are going to hold a demonstration toward the government. Laslo is one of the students who join the protest march. He feels nervous and scared before the demonstration starts because the government uses the army to block the students. Last year there are six students who die in students’ demonstration like this. Laslo tries to get relax to reduce his fear. Because the focus of this expression is in the phrase mounting fear, it is a Phrasal Hyperbole. The mounting fear also means the fear that keep growing inside Laslo because something unpredictable can happen. Somebody can be killed especially when there is a clash with military. The word mount usually refers to a mountain that looks big and high. The fear here also grows bigger and higher in Laslo’s mind. In other words, the phrase mounting fear makes us more understand about Laslo’s feeling.

1. Clausal Hyperbole

In Clausal Hyperbole the exaggeration is found in the clause of a
sentence. The writer analyzes some findings of Clausal Hyperbole as follows:

**Datum 5:** The hard concrete steps of the administration building *have robbed him of sleep* for the third night in a row (14).

The man in this quotation is Laslo. The Loyola University students hold a demonstration for three days. They hold a sit-in campus and sleep in the buildings. They occupy the campus and make the campus as the basement of their movement. Some of them sleep on the floor, on the table and some of them sleep on the steps of the stairs. Laslo cannot sleep at all because the hard concrete step of the administration building is not a place to sleep. Usually the word rob is used for robbery, but in this hyperbole the sleep has been robbed. It means that Laslo cannot sleep at all. By using this clause the author make exaggeration about the sleep.

**Datum 6:** *The phone lines burned* across the city as both ladies boasted to their friends of their escapade (90).

There are two ladies in the novel flirting with the senate member, Sixto Mijares. Sixto is a young rich smart and handsome senator. He likes to play with women. The two ladies try to catch Sixto’s attention in a party of high class people. However, none of them wins Sixto’s heart. But the two ladies call their friends that Sixto have a crush on them because Sixto is willing to talk with them in the party. They call many friends to gossip about Sixto. The situation does not mean that the phone lines burned by the fire across the city. The phone lines become very busy because of their callings. Because the stress of the hyperbole in this sentence is in the clause *The phone lines burned*, it is called Clausal Hyperbole.

2. **Numerical Hyperbole**

In Numerical Hyperbole the exaggeration is found in a single of number. The number makes the hyperbole becomes larger scale. The multiple of hundred, thousand, etc, are more striking and effective. The writer identifies the number *ten, hundred, and thousand*.

**Datum 7:** Mel was five years older than me and *ten* times more gregarious (81).

Clara Perez and Mel work for a small metropolitan daily called the Chronicle. Clara often gets the duties from the editor to report about natural disaster, riot, fire, traffic or the other common news. Meanwhile Mel often gets the duties to report about rumors or gossips about high class people. Sometimes Clara also wants to get the job like Mel. She realizes that their basic is different. Mel’s jobs become easy for her because she is a person who likes to make friends with other people. So, it is easy for her to gather many information. On the other
hand, Clara is not easy to make friends. That is why she only reports the objective news or the factual news. Therefore in this Numerical Hyperbole Mel is ten times more gregarious than Clara. The use of number ten here means that Mel is so much better than Clara to gather information about rumor or gossip. Of course this kind of skill cannot be measured by number but the number functions to exaggerate.

Datum 8: Certainly not one who was reputed to have a hundred lives, and his hands seemed incapable of hurting another living thing (160).

The quotation happens to Colonel Santiago Aure. He often handles problems in crime. Sometimes he gets secret mission from the President to kill someone. He plays with people’s lives and never leaves his duties undone. He makes different ways of kill his target. Sometimes he slices the body, sometimes he takes the victim’s eyes out, and sometimes he throws the dead body into the river. He is a very cruel person. The Colonel should have been dead because he deals with death. He seems to have a hundred lives because he never dies. He never fails to execute his mission to kill. So the number hundred means he has long life even though he often deals with death.

5. The Role of the Superlative

The hyperbole in Superlative is found in the word the most, and ending -est. the Superlative makes a potential high point. The Superlative also gives extreme points in the sentence that makes hyperbole more interesting. The writer finds some Superlative in the following description:

Datum 9: All hand-picked to help put together the grandest wedding in the country would ever see (67).

The wedding in the novel is the marriage of the daughter of the President with the son of the wealthiest family in that country, Maia and Inigo Pellicer. Madam sets the wedding ceremony exclusive in an old cathedral. She restores the cathedral but still keep its centuries old look. The cathedral is located near the beach. To make the beach looks more beautiful Madam asks to bring seven tones of white sand from Queensland, Australia. To house the two thousand expected guests, Madam built a hotel. Madam will wear a diamond first made by the jeweler that nobody ever has that expensive necklace. Madam also repairs the people’s houses around the cathedral because many high class guests will come to that area. Madam wants to show she is the first lady in that country. She can do anything with her power and money. From the preparation of the wedding makes the wedding to be the grandest wedding ever made in that country. The Superlative grandest means the most exclusive wedding that never happens before.
Datum 10: In exchange, Madam would gain a lasting tie to one of the country’s *oldest, wealthiest and most* respected names (101).

Don Miguel Pellicer has the largest sugar plantation in the country. Inigo, his only son is the heir of the legendary fortune built over several generations. He marries the daughter of the President to further the family’s wealth. In fact, Madam also has hidden purpose by matching her daughter with Inigo, she wants to tie her family name with the Pellicer. The Pellicer has the country’s *oldest, wealthiest and most* respected name. If the President and Madam do not rule anymore they will not become the first family anymore. But they still included in high class people if they marry their daughter to the wealthiest family in this country. Beside that they will not be poor. The Superlative in this hyperbole has overstatement. The repetition of the Superlative *oldest, wealthiest and most* gives emphasis about how extreme important the family of Pellicer.

6. Comparison

Hyperbolic form in Comparison compares something with something else which is not Metaphor. The comparison Hyperbole contains explicit comparative particles such as *than* or *more ...than*.

Datum 11: The students soon realized, however, that the government considered the manifesto no *more* valuable *than* the sheets of paper on which it was written (17).

The university students watch the way the government run the country. There are many things that are not suitable with their promises and planning in campaign. The poverty rises and social gap. The government’s commitment is no more valuable than the sheet of paper on which it is written. The hyperbole occurs in the Comparative *more...than* to give low effect in the government’s commitment. There is a comparison between the government’s commitment with a piece of paper.

Datum 12: You are no better *than* a butcher (159).

The expression above is stated by Colonel Santiago Aure. He teaches one of his pupils at practicum. He teaches how to kill with art with the canvas is the human body. He says there is a kind of control when killing a subject. To hack, to saw, to stab, to cut without thought is undisciplined. If the killer is undisciplined, he is no better than a butcher. They do the same way, to kill, but Aure teaches his students to kill with some arts. For example, Aure plays a classical piano as the background music when he is doing his job to kill someone. So, the use of
Comparison here compares the new student with a butcher.

7. Repetition

Repetition for hyperbolic purpose is a spoken language use. It is a simple way to say something more about a certain thing by repeating it several times. The repetition is the re-occurrence of the same word or phrase in sequence. The writer analyzes about the repetition of every, no, rows and so.

Datum 13: Every chair, every pencil in my pencil holder, every picture on the wall, every book on my shelf— they were all references to my life (213).

The writer has explained previous that Clara Perez does not know her real parents. She does not grow in the family because she lives in the convent until the age of 23 years. Since she lives at Vito Cruz, her rent room, she becomes a possessive person. The repetition of the word every give emphasize that she likes every details of her belonging. Because she does not has her own history, and she does not have a family, so she wants every moments in her life can be remembered.

Datum 14: The land was covered with rows and rows of sugarcane standing upright in the sun. (222)

The quotation happens when Don Miguel Pellicer is brought by his father to see his inheritance. The sugar plantation belongs to the Pellicers in the south is the biggest sugar plantation in that country. It is called Hacienda Esperanza. The Pellicers start to build their empire since the early 1800s. The Spanish governor of the island gives the land as a reward for a loyal supporter. Miguel’s father takes him to a top of a hill. When he looks down, his land is as far as eyes can see. Everything planted on the land is only sugarcane. When Miguel grows up, his father dies. He becomes the Sugar Baron of the south. So, in the quotation above, “The land was covered with rows and rows of sugarcane standing upright in the sun”, there is a hyperbole of repetition. The repetition of rows and rows gives the sense how wide and big amount are the sugarcane in that sugar plantation. The repetition also adds the description of the situation so that the reader can imagine the sugar plantation.

Conclusion

Based on all of the findings and analysis, the seven hyperbolic forms have their own sense in the sentence. The form can be mean to exaggerate, to emphasize, to compare, to show the depth of an emotion, or to give additional information. In general, all of the findings have connotative meaning because each of the datum have implied meaning or more than one meaning behind the literal meaning. After analyzing each the
expression, the writer can get more understanding to read the whole novel. Then the writer realizes that the novel is very interesting because of the use of hyperbolic forms in the story.

**Bibliography**


