AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE
IN SISTER MACLEAN GOES WEST BY ELIZABETH GILZEAN

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Abstract

This research is a part of Semantics studies. The study aims at analyzing figurative language namely Metaphor and Personification found in the novel Sister MacLean Goes West by Elizabeth Gilzean. The writer explains the meaning and the function of the Metaphor and Personification. The writer applies descriptive research. The writer collects the data by reading and note-taking. Then the writer represents the data analysis in informal way.

Through the analysis about Metaphor, the writer draws conclusion that Metaphor is a comparative figure consists of two objects and makes them look similar, even though actually they are different. The similarity between the two objects can be the same character, the same physical look, and the same situation. Metaphor functions to make comparison, to describe a similar situation, or to give a sample about something.

In the analysis about Personification, the writer finds that the author mostly uses Personification to explain about the nature setting, for example the sky, the slight shadow, the stars, the cloud, and the sea. Moreover, Personification functions to give clear description about inanimate objects, and to give human characteristics to nonhuman objects.

Keywords: figurative language, metaphor, personification, meaning and function.

Introduction

Analyzing language seems to be interesting as it is connected to human being communication. The language could mean anything, depends on the situation and the context of both speaker and listener. Some people use the real meaning of sentences called literal language meanwhile some other people use non literal language or figurative language.

In daily life the language can be used to express something directly or indirectly. In indirect way, people can use figurative language. To discuss about figurative language, the writer would like to explain first about literal language. A good example can be the sentence: He went outside the box which has literal meaning that a man was in a box then he went out of the box. Further, when the reader understands the sentence from a figurative language side, the sentence will have unreal meaning (figurative meaning). It means that the man uses his imagination and creativity to solve a problem. Thus, it is clear that the same sentence can have the meaning both literally and figuratively.
Figurative language is commonly used both in spoken and written utterances such as in conversation and certain text. Actually, there are various discussions about types of figurative language in many articles. Nabholz (2013: 1) writes that there are three most common types of figurative language; Metaphor, Simile, and Personification.

A Metaphor is considered one of the most important forms of language, from everyday speech to formal prose and all forms of fiction and poetry. It is a comparison between two unlike things and never uses any special language to establish a comparison. Example, *He was a gem in helping me.* The Metaphor lies in comparing a person’s value to that of a gem or jewel.

Similes are easier to recognize than Metaphors (Nabholz, 2013: 1) because they do have a special language to set them off, usually by using ‘as’ or ‘like’. Example, *My love is like a red, red rose.* The comparison of “my love” to a rose does not necessarily mean that his loved one is thorny, nor that she lives in a garden, nor that she has a green neck. Rather, it means that “my love” is delicate, fragrant, and beautiful as the flower.

Personification is a figure of speech in which an animal, object, or idea is given human form or characteristics. Example, William Shakespeare personifies the wind in “Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind,” when he addresses it as if it were a person who could act with kindness or unkindness. He also gives it teeth and breath.

*Blow, blow, thou winter wind,*  
*Thou art not so unkind*  
*As man’s ingratitude.*  
*Thy tooth is not so keen,*  
*Because thou art not seen,*  
*Although thy breath be rude.*

In this research the writer tries to analyze the Metaphor and Personification. Then the writer tries to explain the function of Metaphor and Personification. Authors and speakers use figurative language to make their writing and speech more vivid. Metaphors and Personification describe and compare things in ways that people can better imagine and understand (Nabholz, 2013: 2)

The writer tries to find the Metaphor and Personification in the novel *Sister MacLean Goes West* by Elizabeth Gilzean. The novel is about a nurse namely Jean MacLean. She moves from the hospital of St. Augustine in Scotland to Royal Western Hospital of Neurosurgery in Vancouver, Canada. The Canadian people think that her English accent is funny. She finds many different ways of life in Canada compare to Scotland. Because the culture is quite different, she finds many people speak indirectly, sometimes use figurative language. The
content of the novel help the research because there are many figurative language in the story. However, the writer focuses on Metaphor and Personification.

**Research Methodology**

This research is called as descriptive research because the writer uses descriptive method. A descriptive study determines and describes the way things are (Gay, 2000: 275). Further he suggests that it involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions about some topic or issue.

The writer takes the data from the novel *Sister MacLean Goes West* by Elizabeth Gilzean. The novel is published in 1959 in London. The writer identifies the Metaphor and Personification found in the novel, and then tries to explain the functions of the Metaphor and Personification.

The writer collects the data from what can be read in the novel *Sister MacLean Goes West* by Elizabeth Gilzean. The focus of the research is to analyze the Metaphor and Personification in order to understand more about the story. According to Gay *et al* (2000:366), there are four data collection techniques: observing, interviewing, administering questionnaires, and examining records. The writer uses observation method to study the Metaphor and Personification in the novel. To document the observation, Gay *et al* (2000:380) suggest to use field notes. The writer also uses the step like note taking to collect the data.

Gay *et al* (2000:449) state 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 Metaphor and Personification found in the novel. Then, the writer ties to explain the functions of the Metaphor and Personification.

Sudaryanto (1993: 145) writes that there are two kinds of methods to present the result of the data analysis. They are informal and formal methods. 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 descriptive method.

**Result and Analysis**

1. **Metaphor**

Metaphor compares words in a sentence; however, instead of saying that one thing is like something else, a
Metaphor actually makes one thing become something very different by renaming it. A Metaphor can sometimes use words like is, are, or was (and other words) to signal that a Metaphor is present. However, a Metaphor never uses the words like or as to compare. The writer finds and analyzes the data about Metaphor below:

Datum 1 *The little donkey engine whistled as they passed.* (169)

The quotation happens to Gavin Stirling’s car. The situation is on the countryside road where Gavin and Jean MacLean return from two weeks holiday at a horse ranch at a village called Flying U. They ride at night in the rocky road. In the middle of the night there is a storm that causes flood on their way. They must arrive early in the morning in the city to catch a morning shift at the hospital. Gavin’s car is a low sport car that can be sank in the flood. Gavin tries his best to push the machine to pass the flood. Finally they succeed and get out of the water.

In the expression *the little donkey engine* there is a Metaphor. Metaphor compares two things: the engine with the little donkey. A donkey is an animal like a horse that can be used to carry things. In this quotation the size of the donkey is the little one. In this situation where Gavin and Jean must return soon and safe, the car engine seems less power. The rocky road and the flood are difficult track for a low sport car. The car is expected to have horse power, not a little donkey. It means that the little donkey is used to describe the less power car engine. *The little donkey engine* whistled does not mean that the car is whistling like a man. The whistle here means the engine gives a kind of sound of relieve when the car can pass the flood.

Datum 2 *They might catch sight of the industrious animals busily rebuilding their dams.* (136)

The *industrious animals* in the expression above refer to the beavers. The situation happens to Jean MacLean when she learns to ride the horse at the Flying U. She is a fast learner and she gets addicted to ride. When she rides together with Gavin with different horses in the forest, she looks around to enjoy the sightseeing. There are some beavers busy making the pile of woods like a dam.

The Metaphor occurs in the phrase *the industrious animals*. There is comparison between the beavers’ daily activity with the business of activities in an industry. There is a similarity between them because beavers are always busy like the workers in the industry. In this quotation the beavers are rebuilding their dams which reflect that the beavers are
hard workers and they are the master in their field. The Metaphor here functions to give a descriptive effect.

Datum 3 They practiced their fancy turns on the nursery slopes under the eagle eye of the instructor. (194)

The situation happens when Jean MacLean and a group of doctors and nurses are having Christmas holiday at Forbidden Plateu. Forbidden Plateu is a tourism spot for ski. Some of the group members can play ski very well and some of them are beginners. They practice in a low area with the guidance from an instructor. The instructor is watching each member carefully especially the beginners. The instructor pays attention if there is an accident or someone gets hurt.

The Metaphor presents in the phrase the eagle eye of the instructor. There is a description between the eagle eye and the eye of the instructor. There is no eagle at all in the story, and the instructor is not an eagle. It means that the instructor is watching the ski members very carefully like the eye of an eagle. In other words, the instructor’s eyes are as sharp as the eagle’s eyes. That is why it is a figurative language that makes two things looks like the same quality.

Datum 4 Careful, Jeanie, one of these days a Canadian wolf is going to take you literally! (73)

The statement comes from Red Delaney who is Jean MacLean’s friend at the hospital. Jean is a new comer in the hospital who comes from Scotland. She is a good nurse and smart, and some male colleagues start to like her. One of them is Red Delaney who works at the Emergency. At that time Red is Nan Ermitt’s boyfriend. One night Red gives a ride for Jean and takes her back to the apartment. He warns Jean to be careful because some men are fighting to win her heart. He knows one of the men who is not a good man. But Red does not tell her the man’s name but he just says a Canadian wolf.

Red Delaney says one of the men who likes Jean as a Canadian wolf. Actually there is no wolf in the story. The word wolf reflects a wild animal in the jungle. The Canadian wolf means the Canadian man that is not really good and not kind heart man. There is a similarity in the character of wolf and a bad man. The Metaphor is in the two things that have the same quality or characteristic.

Datum 5 Poor little devil, and his mother’s so brave about it. (33)
The boy in the quotation is one of Jean MacLean patient in Royal Western Hospital in Canada. His name is David Greenways. He suffers from brain tumor. The other nurses before Jean MacLean come have difficulty to handle David. He makes nurses busy with his requests. For example he wants nurses to play with him. The nurse is also difficult to bath him. So they think that David is a naughty boy. “Poor little devil” can mean “Poor little naughty boy”. The doctors and nurses feel pity because he is very young age but he gets brain tumor.

Metaphor functions to compare between devil and a boy. The Metaphor describes one thing by comparing with another. There is similarity between the devil and the naughty boy even though they are different. Metaphor contains items that make individual similar to something else.

Datum 6 I wonder what Matron was thinking of when she chucked you into this den of lionesses. (43)

In the city of Victoria, Canada, Jean MacLean lives in apartment with Nan Ermitt. She is permanent nurse staff in Royal Western Hospital. The apartment is near the hospital. The room is furnished with luxurious furniture. The quotation above comes from doctor Gavin Stirling. He is the Senior Surgical Resident in the Royal Western. He does not really like Nan because she often rude to him. She lives in free life, she often brings her boyfriend into her bedroom, and she also smokes. Her attitudes make Gavin to say her like a lioness. Usually the lioness is female lion. The lion is a brave animal in the jungle. Gavin wonders why Matron puts Jean into Nan’s room. So the expression “den of lionesses” can mean “Nan’s room”.

Gavin makes a Metaphor in the word lioness. He compares Nan Ermitt with the lioness. Even though Nan is a human being, but according to Gavin she has some characters like the female lion. The description about animal makes the reader understand about Nan’s character. Therefore, the Metaphor also functions to make clear comparison between two things.

Datum 7 Would you be an angel and come through the hospital to collect him? (191)

Gavin finds out that Michael Warren has some problem in his past that gives effect to his personality. Michael suffers from nervous collapse. In fact, since childhood he loves his playmate namely Jeanie. Jeanie died of tumor. Michael cannot forget her. That is why Michael wants to be a neurosurgery doctor to safe the patients who suffer from tumor.
The memory about Jeanie comes back to him again. When it comes, he will babble unconsciously. Gavin promises to cure Michael since they become friends at royal Western. Gavin sets a picnic to a ski arena. He asks Jean to pick up Michael in his room in the hospital. Gavin persuades Jean to be an angel only to pick up Michael. It means that Gavin makes Jean to be look like an angel. The angel usually has kindhearted. “Would you be an angel” also can mean “Can you be a good girl.”

In the quotation the Metaphor functions to compare between angel and a good girl. The Metaphor describes one thing by comparing with another. There is similarity of character between the angel and the good girl even though the girl actually not an angel. Metaphor contains items that make individual similar to someone else.

2. Personification

Personification is figurative construction when it describes something that is not human as though it could feel, think, act, live, or die in the same way as people. The writer finds the data about personification in the following analysis:

Datum 8 The sky met water and mountains showed coldly white. (13)

The quotation above is the setting in Jean MacLean apartment in the city of Victoria. The apartment is located near the beach. Jean lives with Nan Ermitt. Their room is on top floor. Jean is watching the view through the window. She can see the deep blue sea and the rocky shore. It was at night and from the top floor the sky looks very close to the sea water. The mountains showed coldly white because the moonlight makes the mountains have white shadow.

The figurative language that exists in this sentence is Personification. Personification is a figure of speech in which an animal, object, or idea is given human form or characteristics. The sky met water as if the sky is a person and the water is another person. They meet one another like human being. The Personification functions to make inanimate objects alive.

Datum 9 While overhead the stars played peek-a-boo with clouds fretted into lace by the wind. (40)

The quotation is still about Jean who admires her new country. She enjoys watching the view at night. One night see looks at the sky above. There are so many stars shining. Sometimes the clouds appear and the stars are closed by the cloud. Then the clouds disappear and the stars come up
again. It happens often that Jean sees. So, with this situation, Jean describes the stars to play peek-a-boo with clouds. The stars and the clouds behave like children who like to play. The children play peek-a-boo by closing their eyes for a while and then open the eyes again. They repeat this for several times.

Personification is found in the stars and the clouds. Usually to play is human being experience. The inanimate objects have the experience and ways of thinking, reacting, and behaving as human in the world. Personification functions to make the inanimate objects become alive.

**Datum 10 The cloud threw a veil across the sky. (41)**

The quotation is the situation when Gavin takes Jean MacLean to enjoy the night view at the beach near the hospital. The night is having moonlight. The story describes about the nature looks in the sky, the cloud, the stars, and the beautiful sea.

In this quotation the cloud acts like human being. The cloud has the hand to throw the veil. The veil is thrown to the sky. The sky seems to have a face. When the cloud throws the veil to the sky, the sky becomes darker. The cloud threw a veil across the sky means that there are many clouds appear in the sky that makes the sky darker. From the explanation above it can be concluded that the cloud behaves like a man. So it means the figurative language in this quotation is Personification. Personification is the act of giving non-living things human characteristics.

**Datum 11 The sea caught the moonlight and held it like a burnished shield. (41)**

The situation in this quotation is still about Jean MacLean who is watching the view around her apartment. She watches from the top of the apartment at night. She sees the light of the moonlight shines to the surface of the sea water. The moonlight keeps shining the water and does not move. It means that when the moonlight appears, the shine will fall to the sea water. The shines will disappear when the moon is closed by the dark cloud. So, “The sea caught the moonlight” means that the sea is bright because of the moonlight. The word “caught” makes the sea to have a hand like a human. The hands caught the moonlight and held it for a long time. The sea uses the hand like a person.

The sentence contains Personification where the sea looks like having a hand because it can touch. The sea acts like human being with the hand. Personification functions to give human-like qualities to an object. In other words,
Personification makes the object seem like a person.

**Datum 12** Only the restless sea far below sang its muted song and could have reminded her of the lullabies of the sea lochs of home. (48)

The quotation is taken from Jean’s situation. She is thinking about Michael. She hears Michael stays at Royal Western Hospital as the staff of neurosurgery doctor. Michael presence makes her feeling doubt again. She moves to Canada to forget about him. But in fact, he came unexpectedly. Jean is thinking while looking at the view outside the window. She hears the wave of the sea like a song that reminds her of the sound of the see in Edinburgh. The sea in her hometown is similar with the sea in Canada. The restless sea means that the sea never stops to move. It never stops moving because that is the nature of the wave. The sound of the wave seems like a soft song. So, in this case, the sea can sing and have a voice like a person. The figurative language makes the readers can figure out what happens in the story.

In addition, Personification in the quotation is found in the sea that never stops moving and it also can sing. Personification functions to make the inanimate object to have ways of thinking, reacting, and behaving as human, to make the inanimate object becomes alive.

**Datum 13** They reached the beginning of a steep hill and the engine roared its protest as they climbed and climbed. (129)

The quotation happens when Gavin and Jean MacLean are on the way back to the city of Victoria. The road lies around a valley. They ride at night on the rocky road. The track is difficult for Gavin’s sport car. The car looks unable to climb the hill. However, there is no other choice because it is the only way back to the city. When they reach a steep hill, the engine is pushed very hard to be able to pass it. There is a sound of roaring from the engine.

The roar of the engine sounds like someone who is protesting because of doing hard job. The sport car cannot speak and cannot say a protest even though it is used in hard track. Therefore there is figurative language in this expression. The engine is made like a human who can protest about something. Personification is also used to give a sample to the readers so that the readers can imagine the situation in the story.

**Datum 14** A quite peace stole into Jean’s heart. (186)
The story tells that on Christmas day the nurses and the doctors still work on their duties at the hospital. They cannot have a free day but they are allowed to attend the morning service at the church near the hospital. Only the people who are free on that day can have a holiday because it is Christmas. On that morning Gavin takes Jean to the church. Jean even does not realize that it is Christmas because of her business in nursing. When Jean and Gavin kneel and say their pray, Jean feels very peaceful. They believe that Jesus Christ is born today and peace had come to mankind.

In the expression “a quite peace stole into Jean’s heart” means that suddenly in the church Jean feels very peace because the moment of the Christmas. It can be said that the peace on Christmas day makes Jean's heart also becomes peace. The peace steals into Jean’s heart as if the peace has hands to steal. The peace also acts like a thief. Therefore this is Personification because it makes the nonliving objects to be able to behave and act like a person.

**Conclusion**

After analyzing the novel, the writer concludes that figurative language especially Metaphor and Personification help to create the readers imagination. The readers can create an image on their mind and understand the situation that happens in the story. Elizabeth Gilzean uses the figurative language to make the story of the novel becomes more interesting to read.

Through the analysis about Metaphor, the writer draws conclusion that Metaphor is a comparative figure consists of two objects and makes them look similar, even though actually they are different. The similarity between the two objects can be the same character, the same physical look, and the same situation. For example, to compare the little donkey with the powerless car engine, or to compare the kind-hearted girl with an angel. In addition, Metaphor functions to make comparison, to describe a similar situation, or to give a sample about something.

In the analysis about Personification, the writer finds that the author mostly uses Personification to explain about the nature setting, for example the sky, the slight shadow, the stars, the cloud, and the sea. Personification makes the nonliving things to have the ability like human being. Moreover, Personification functions to give clear description about inanimate objects, and to give human characteristics to nonhuman objects.
Bibliography


