

Figurative Language in the Short Story Ayah by Tetin Sobariah on Kompas.id Santuso SANTUSO¹, Albert TALLAPESSY²

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Abstract:

Purpose:

Literary works aim to entertain and hold aesthetic value. To achieve both, a literary work must be rich in the use of figurative language. This research aims to describe the use of figurative language in the short story Ayah by Tetin Sobariah.

Methodology:

This study is classified as qualitative descriptive research. The research data consists of words containing figurative language, sourced from Kompas.id. Data collection involves reading, note-taking, and classification techniques. Data analysis employs contemporary stylistic theory.

Findings:

The results of this research indicate that the short story Ayah exhibits various figurative languages, including the comparison style group (27 instances), emphasis style (20 instances), conflicting style (2 instances), and satirical style (1 instance). Other variations of figurative language identified include the certainty style (8 instances), causality style (7 instances), reinforcement style (6 instances), surprise style (3 instances), denial style (3 instances), and non-standard style (2 instances).

Implication:

This research enhances stylistic studies in understanding the role of figurative language in short stories. The findings can serve as a reference for language and literature learning. Additionally, it provides insights for writers to align their writing style with the characteristics of short stories in Kompas.id. Further research may reveal patterns of figurative language usage and the literary identity of the media.

INTRODUCTION

Literary works are the result of a writer's thoughts that contain elements of creativity and imagination (Sukirman, 2021). The main purpose of literary works is to convey messages and provide entertainment to readers. In addition, literature also serves an aesthetic purpose. Therefore, a work must be engaging and possess artistic value. Literature is a combination of selection and creation, imitation and creativity, as well as imagination and reality (Sembiring et al., 2020). In the process of creating a work, a writer is influenced by various factors, including personal experiences. The realities of the writer's life become a significant stimulus reflected in the literary work. Plato stated that literature and art are merely forms of imitation or reflections of reality. At the same time, Aristotle argued that in the creative process, a writer does not merely imitate reality but also creates a new world with the power of creativity (Novianti, 2017).

Based on the above, literary works have a unique ability to reflect human life, explore various aspects of cultural diversity, and provide new perspectives on reality. Furthermore, literature can also serve as a tool for voicing social criticism, stimulating critical thinking, and even shaping a deep understanding of human values (Novitasari, 2021). Literature encompasses various forms, both fiction and nonfiction, including poetry, prose, drama, and essays.

Short stories, as one of the fictional literary works in prose form, are widely read and generally well understood (Kholiza & Jailani, 2024; Dhanurendra, 2023; Putri et al., 2023). Short stories typically use simple language and emphasize denotative meaning, making them easier to comprehend. According to Widayati (2020), short stories have several characteristics: (a) they have a single plot as they present only one event, (b) they present

a single main theme, which is closely related to their singular plot, (c) they contain fewer characters, with character traits not being explored in depth as in novels, and (d) they have a limited setting that is not elaborated in detail.

Short stories are among the literary works that continue to develop today. The increasing production of short stories reflects significant transformations in the literary world, particularly in line with technological advancements and changes in reading habits. The emergence of digital platforms such as websites, blogs, and social media platforms has provided writers with broad opportunities to publish their works independently. It allows short story writers to reach a wider audience without relying on conventional publishers. Additionally, online newspapers have also developed in the modern era, providing dedicated columns for short stories, such as Kompas.id. This platform accepts short story submissions from anyone, and selected works that meet the requirements are published on the Kompas.id website. It serves as motivation for aspiring short story writers to start creating and gaining recognition in the literary world. It also contributes to the growth of short story production in Indonesia.

One of the short stories published on Kompas.id is titled *Ayah* by Sobariah (2023). This short story tells the story of a girl who never meets her father. It is because she was born as a result of adultery. Her mother became pregnant out of wedlock, leading the family to take various measures to ensure that the mother's pregnancy remained hidden from the surrounding community. As a result, the girl's grandfather married her mother off to a stranger from a distant village. The goal was to protect the girl from being labeled as an "illegitimate child" by society. The girl serves as the main character in the story and is introduced as the first-person narrator.

The story in the short story is inspired by a social phenomenon that is increasingly common today, where many women experience out-of-wedlock pregnancies. This situation impacts the children born, who often receive negative stigma from society. Another unique aspect is that the short story was coincidentally published in November 2023, a month that includes the celebration of Father's Day. The short story contains a critique of the prevalent social phenomenon of irresponsible men who impregnate women outside of marriage. However, this critique is constructed with an engaging narrative, utilizing various stylistic devices.

In every literary work, including short stories, authors employ stylistics as a rhetorical tool by exploiting, manipulating, and utilizing the potential of language to craft an engaging story (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017). Stylistics is a branch of linguistics that studies the artistic function of language in various contexts, including literary texts. This study involves the unique and distinctive potential of language, covering sound styles, diction, sentence structure, and discourse, as well as the use of figurative language and imagery (Islam et al., 2018:1).

According to Ratna (2009), there are two definitions of figurative language understood by the public. In traditional literary theory, figurative language is narrowly defined, as it is equated with figures of speech categorized into four types: emphasis, comparison, contradiction, and satire. In contemporary literary theory, figurative language has a broader meaning, extending beyond these four categories of figurative language. Furthermore, Utama & Listianingsih (2019) explain that figurative language encompasses all linguistics levels, from word choice, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and even discourse. Figurative language is used to create an engaging and aesthetically pleasing effect in literary works (Anshari & Zabadi, 2022). According to Kridalaksana, the concept of figurative language includes three aspects: (a) an individual's use of linguistics richness in speaking or writing, (b) the use of a specific linguistics variety to achieve a particular effect, and (c) the overall linguistics characteristics of a group of writers (Gaol & Lubis, 2022). Faizun said that the purpose of using figurative language is to attract someone's interest in reading (Santuso & Sofyan, 2022; Indrayani et al., 2023).

This study aims to describe the figurative language in the short story *Ayah* by Tetin Sobariah. It seeks to reveal the beauty of figurative language in the short story. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to provide deeper insights into the richness of language and aesthetic expression in literary work. By detailing the use of figurative language, this study can also help readers explore and appreciate the hidden layers of meaning within the short story. Additionally, the study's findings can contribute to the development of better language skills,

particularly in written language, as stylistic analysis teaches how to use language in an elegant and captivating manner.

Previous research relevant to this study has been conducted by several parties, as follows. First, Fatmawati et al. (2020) examined figurative language and imagery in the short story *Dedaunan Gugur di Sesayup Sepertiga Malam* by Sumiati Al Yasmine. The identified figurative language includes simile, hyperbole, metaphor, and personification. Second, Ningsih et al. (2020) studied figurative language in the short story *Maryam* by Afrion. The findings include six types of emphasis, four types of comparison, two types of satire, and another figure of speech called *eklamasio*. Third, Yaqutunnafis et al. (2021) analyzed the figurative language in short stories published in the *Jawa Pos* weekly newspaper from June to October 2019. A total of 19 types of figurative language were found, with the three most dominant being simile, metaphor, and hyperbole. Fourth, Artajaya (2021) examined figurative language in the short story anthology *Daerah Baru* by Gde Aryantha Soethama. The study identified 12 types of comparison, two types of satire, four types of emphasis, and two types of contradiction. Fifth, Astuti et al. (2023) researched figurative language in the short story collection *Tak Semanis Senyummu* by Sirojuth. The study found seven types of comparison, six types of contradiction, four types of association, and four types of repetition (Utami et al., 2023).

Based on the literature review above, similarities and differences between this study and previous research can be identified. The similarities lie in the field of study used for data analysis, namely stylistics, and the similarity of the object, which is short stories. However, the differences lie in the theoretical framework and the content of the short stories analyzed. This study focuses on analyzing figurative language using contemporary stylistic theory in the short story *Ayah* by Tetin Sobariah, published on the *Kompas.id* website. By analyzing this short story, it is expected to reveal the aesthetic criteria of language used by emerging short story writers whose works are accepted and published by *Kompas.id*.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. According to Raco (2010:106–107), qualitative research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning or interpretation of an event, phenomenon, fact, occurrence, reality, or specific issue. In this context, qualitative research is used to describe the figurative language in the short story *Ayah*. The data in this study consists of words containing figurative language. The data source is *Kompas.id*. Data collection is carried out using reading, note-taking, and classification techniques. The short story *Ayah* is first read carefully. Then, the researcher records words containing figurative language. Next, the data is classified based on the research objectives. After that, the data is analyzed using contemporary stylistic theory by describing and interpreting the meaning and effect of the use of figurative language in the short story.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe the use of figurative language in the short story *Ayah* by Tetin Sobariah. Based on the data analysis conducted, the short story contains various types of figurative language. From a traditional perspective, the figurative language found in *Ayah* falls into four categories: comparison (27 instances), emphasis (20 instances), contradiction (2 instances), and satire (1 instance). Meanwhile, from a contemporary literary perspective, the figurative language found is not limited to these four categories but also includes various other forms, such as certainty (8 instances), causality (7 instances), reinforcement (6 instances), surprise (3 instances), negation (3 instances), and non-standard expressions (2 instances).

The comparison category includes simile, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, euphemism, and epithet. It can be observed in the following data samples:

- (1) *Ketika tiba-tiba mendapati Ibu hamil sebelum menikah, kakek seperti mendapati ladangnya terbakar habis, tak bersisa.* (When he suddenly found out that Mother was pregnant before marriage, **Grandfather felt as if his field had been completely burned down**, leaving nothing behind.)
- (2) *Saban hari sejak saya menulis berita tersebut, wajah seleb itu diam-diam merasuk ke otak saya tanpa saya undang.* (Every day since I wrote that news, **the celebrity's face secretly infiltrated my brain** without my invitation.)
- (3) *Sebab, yang menanam benih di rahimnya tak hanya satu lelaki. Pengakuannya ini membuat kakek bertambah berang.* (Because **the one who planted the seed in her womb** was not just one man. This confession made Grandfather even more furious.)
- (4) *Sementara Ibu, demi melindungi saya dari hujatan seluruh warga Indonesia, ia tak keberatan dinikahkan dengan tunawisma.* (Meanwhile, Mother, **in order to protect me from the condemnation of the entire Indonesian people**, did not mind being married to a homeless man.)
- (5) *Tak tanggung-tanggung, kakek mengambil seorang tunawisma dari Desa Mojosari.* (Not half-heartedly, Grandfather took a **homeless man** from Mojosari Village.)
- (6) *Itu semua demi menjagamu, menjaga dari hujatan anak haram.* (All of that was to protect you, to protect you from the condemnation of being an **illegitimate child**.)

Data (1) represents a simile, comparing two different things using the word *seperti* (as). The sentence equates Grandfather's feelings upon discovering his daughter's pregnancy before marriage to his feelings upon seeing his field burned to the ground. This comparison is intended to illustrate Grandfather's devastation and sense of loss. A completely burned field creates an image of total destruction and irreparable loss. By using this simile, the author conveys the intensity and severity of Grandfather's emotions. Data (2) is an example of personification because it attributes human-like qualities to the phrase *wajah seleb itu* (that celebrity's face), making it seem as if it has the ability to infiltrate the protagonist's mind. By using personification, the author creates a more vivid and emotional depiction of the celebrity's influence, reinforcing the impression of obsession or the protagonist's inability to erase the image from his thoughts.

Data (3) represents metaphor, which describes an idea or concept by comparing it to something else. It is evident in the phrase *menanam benih di rahimnya* (planting a seed in her womb), which does not literally refer to planting a seed in the soil but serves as a metaphor for the act that leads to pregnancy—sexual intercourse. The use of metaphor in this context helps create a more subtle expression as it deals with a sensitive subject.

Data (4) demonstrates hyperbole, an exaggerated statement. In this sentence, the mother is described as taking extreme measures to protect her child—born out of wedlock—from societal condemnation. However, the phrase *seluruh warga Indonesia* (the entire Indonesian people) is an exaggeration, as it implies that the entire country is involved in judging the situation. By using hyperbole, the author creates a dramatic and exaggerated depiction of the mother's struggle and sacrifice. The effect of this hyperbole is to evoke strong emotions and emphasize the dramatic nature of the narrative.

In data (5), the word *tunawisma* is classified as a euphemism, which is a figure of speech that uses more polite words or expressions. The word *tunawisma* is synonymous with the word *gelandangan* (homeless person). Therefore, *tunawisma* carries a more polite meaning compared to *gelandangan*. The euphemism is used to avoid offending others. Furthermore, data (6) is an example of an epithet, which describes a distinctive trait or characteristic of someone. The phrase *anak haram* (illegitimate child) is a label used by society to refer to a child born out of wedlock. It is because such a child is considered the result of adultery, which is forbidden in Islam. By using the epithet *anak haram*, the writer not only conveys information about the child's status but also introduces an emotional nuance and a strong moral judgment. The effect of using this epithet is to intensify the meaning of the words, making the message sharper and deepening the reader's understanding of the situation described in the sentence.

The emphasis figures of speech found in the story include repetition, periphrasis, correction, rhetorical question, ellipsis, and anastrophe. It can be observed in the following data samples:

- (7) *Terkadang saya menulis berita politik, terkadang saya menulis berita ekonomi, terkadang saya menulis berita hukum, terkadang saya menulis berita kriminal, terkadang saya menulis reseksi film, dan terkadang juga saya menulis berita seleb.* (Sometimes I write political news, sometimes I write economic news, sometimes I write legal news, sometimes I write crime news, sometimes I write film reviews, and sometimes I also write celebrity news.)
- (8) *Ruang gerak saya tidak lagi dibatasi.* (My freedom of movement is no longer restricted.)
- (9) *Lalu, selama beberapa bulan, saya jadi pengangguran ... Sebenarnya kurang tepat jika saya sebutkan saya sebagai pengangguran, alangkah lebih tepat jika saya katakan beristirahat.* (Then, for several months, I was unemployed ... Actually, it's not quite right to call myself unemployed; it would be more accurate to say I was taking a break.)
- (10) *Siapa yang bisa menjamin orang tidak berkomentar yang aneh-aneh? Siapa yang menjamin bisa membungkam mulut orang. Apalagi mulut seluruh Indonesia?* (Who can guarantee that people won't make strange comments? Who can guarantee that they can silence people? Let alone the mouths of the entire Indonesia?)
- (11) *Begitu ibumu telat satu bulan, ia langsung menduga bahwa dirinya hamil.* (As soon as your mother was one month late, she immediately suspected that she was pregnant.)
- (12) *Semuanya, tanpa bersisa saya jual.* (Everything, without exception, I sold.)

Data (7) is an example of repetition because it repeats the phrase *terkadang saya menulis berita* (sometimes I write news). The use of repetition aims to emphasize the variety of topics the narrator handles. It also gives the impression that the narrator has broad expertise and is capable of covering various types of news. Data (8) is an example of periphrasis, which uses more words than necessary and could actually be replaced with a more concise expression. The sentence *Ruang gerak saya tidak lagi dibatasi* (My freedom of movement is no longer restricted) can be replaced with a shorter sentence, *Saya sekarang bebas* (I am now free). By using periphrasis, the writer elaborates on and describes the situation or change in circumstances in more detail rather than using a simpler sentence. The effect of periphrasis is to add nuance or additional meaning to the expression, making the sentence feel richer in explanation and detail.

Data (9) is an example of correction. It is because the narrator initially states that they became unemployed but then corrects this statement, considering it less accurate, and replaces it with *beristirahat* (resting). The effect of this correction is to provide a more precise understanding that aligns with the narrator's experience, as well as to demonstrate careful word choice and meaning. Data (10) is an example of erotesis, or a rhetorical question, which is a question that does not require an answer. Bi Rini speaks the sentence in data (10) to the narrator regarding the mother's reason for keeping the identity of the man who impregnated her a secret. Bi Rini uses a rhetorical question to emphasize that if the man's identity were known, there would be no guarantee that people would refrain from making negative comments about the narrator and their mother.

Data (11) is an example of ellipsis, a figure of speech that omits a certain element in a sentence while still allowing readers to understand its meaning. The word *telat* (late) in data (11) refers to a late period or menstruation. Therefore, the omitted element in the clause *Begitu ibumu telat satu bulan* is the word *haid* (menstruation). The use of ellipsis in this sentence aims to create a more concise and straightforward statement. Data (12) demonstrates anastrophe, which involves the inversion of sentence structure. If arranged according to standard Indonesian syntax, the sentence in data (12) would be *Saya jual semuanya tanpa bersisa* (I sold everything without exception). This inversion emphasizes the word *semuanya* (everything). Positioning *semuanya* at the beginning of the sentence highlights the act of selling performed by the narrator. The effect of this anastrophe is to create a sentence structure that captures the reader's attention, emphasizes the object of the action, and adds a dramatic or impactful tone to the described event.

The next group of rhetorical devices found includes contradiction (*contradictio in terminis*) and satire. Below are the identified examples:

- (13) *Kakek sendiri tak pernah absen ke masjid untuk shalat lima waktu, **kecuali** sakit.* (Grandfather himself never missed going to the mosque for the five daily prayers, **except** when he was sick.)
(14) *Seleb tersebut **seungguh tak memiliki kompas moral**.* (That celebrity **truly lacks a moral compass**.)

Data (13) represents contradictio in terminis, which contains a negation of a previously stated fact. The sentence states that grandfather always prays the five daily prayers at the mosque. However, the writer contradicts this statement by using the word **except**, meaning that grandfather does not pray at the mosque when he is sick. The effect of this rhetorical device is to create an engaging contrast that captures the reader's attention, highlights the imperfections of the grandfather as a human, and deepens the understanding of the character's habits. Meanwhile, data (14) represents satire, which conveys criticism toward a person—in this case, a celebrity. The writer mocks the character by stating that he lacks a moral compass or ethics. It is because he impregnated the narrator's mother and engaged in affairs with many women. The effect of this satire is to express condemnation or ridicule toward behavior deemed immoral, allowing readers to perceive the disapproval or criticism of the character's actions.

Besides the four categories of figurative language mentioned above, other variations are also found, such as the figurative language of certainty, causality, emphasis, surprise, denial, and informal usage. Below are sample data from these findings:

- (15) ***Tentu saja**, ibumu memerlukan bantuanku.* (**Of course**, your mother needs my help.)
(16) *Atau ketika sang ayah pasang badan untuk membela anaknya. Sangat iri. **Sebab**, saya tak dapatkan hal itu.* (Or when the father stands up to defend his child. Very envious. **Because** I never got that.)
(17) *Aku sudah berjanji kepada ibumu tidak akan menceritakan hal ini, **bahkan** jika aku harus disiksa sampai babak belur.* (I have promised your mother that I will not tell this, **even** if I have to be beaten to a pulp.)
(18) ***Bagaimana tidak**, seleb tersebut, tak hanya tidur dengan gadis, tapi juga dengan istri orang sekalipun.* (**How could it not be shocking?** That celebrity not only slept with young women but also with married women.)
(19) *Kemudian saya menelusuri bagaimana proses saya lahir. **Bukan, bukan** proses lahir normal atau lahir caesar, tapi lebih kenapa Ibu bisa mengandung saya.* (Then I traced how I was born. **No, not** the normal birth process or a C-section, but rather why my mother became pregnant with me.)
(20) *Demi melindungi Ibu dari hujatan warga sekampung. Kakek yang dari Desa Kadongdong **bela-belain** pergi jauh ke Desa Mojosari untuk menutupi aibnya.* (To protect Mother from the villagers scorn, grandfather from Kadongdong Village **went to great lengths** to travel far to Mojosari Village to cover up her disgrace.)

Bi Rini spoke the sentence in data (15). It represents the figurative language of certainty, identifiable by the phrase *tentu saja* (of course). This phrase functions as a reinforcement to indicate that the situation or statement conveyed by Bi Rini is something considered definite. Thus, it can be interpreted that the mother certainly needs Bi Rini's help. Data (16) demonstrates the figurative language of causality with a cause-effect pattern. In this sentence, the character *saya* (I) narrates her experience of never feeling a father's love. She first describes the effect—feeling envious when seeing other children being supported or defended by their fathers. Then, she reveals the cause—that the feeling of envy stems from the absence of a father figure in her life. The effect of this figurative language is to deepen the reader's understanding of the character's emotions and experiences, clarify the origin of their envy, and enrich the emotional depth of the narrative.

Data (17) showcases the figurative language of emphasis, which can be recognized through the use of the word *bahkan* (even). This word serves as a conjunction that functions to reinforce a statement. Bi Rini explains that she has promised the mother of the character *saya* (I) not to reveal the identity of the man who impregnated her. She then strengthens this statement with the conjunction *bahkan* (even), meaning she will keep that promise even if she has to endure severe physical punishment. Data (18) illustrates the figurative language of surprise, evident in the phrase *bagaimana tidak* (how could it not be shocking). The context of this sentence narrates how the character *saya* (I) is shocked to discover that the celebrity they reported in the media had engaged in adultery

with multiple women, both young and married. This use of figurative language enhances the intensity of the emotions experienced by the character, allowing readers to feel the shock and disbelief toward the revealed reality.

Data (19) represents the figurative language of denial, which can be identified through the use of the word *bukan* (not). Initially, the character *saya* (I) narrates that they are tracing how they came into the world. However, they immediately deny a possible misunderstanding from the reader. The character *saya* (I) does not intend to determine whether they were born through a normal delivery or a C-section, but rather to understand the process of their mother's pregnancy—whether it occurred before or after marriage. Next, data (20) represents the use of informal or colloquial figurative language, which can be identified through the reduplication of *bela-belain* (went to great lengths). This reduplication is part of the Jakarta dialect of Indonesian and does not conform to standard Indonesian language rules. In general, short stories published by Kompas.id use formal Indonesian. However, authors sometimes incorporate informal words, though in very limited numbers and usually italicized. In *Ayah*, a short story by Tetin Sobariah, only two instances of informal figurative language were found. The presence of such informal language serves to create a more relaxed narrative. It helps readers better understand the words, as the informal terms are more widely recognized than their formal equivalents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis presented above, the short story *Ayah* by Tetin Sobariah is a literary work rich in figurative language. The types of figurative language used in the short story are as follows. (1) Comparative figurative language, with a total of 27 instances, consisting of simile, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, euphemism, and epithet. (2) Emphatic figurative language, with a total of 20 instances, consisting of repetition, periphrasis, correction, erotema, ellipsis, and anastrophe. (3) Contradictory figurative language, with a total of 2 instances, consisting of contradiction in terminis. (4) Satirical figurative language, with only 1 instance, which is satire.

In addition to these four categories, various other figurative language variations were also found, including certainty (8 instances), causality (7 instances), reinforcement (6 instances), surprise (3 instances), denial (3 instances), and nonstandard language (2 instances). The variety of figurative language used by the author enhances the aesthetic and entertaining value of the short story *Ayah*. Based on these findings, Kompas.id publishes short stories that incorporate a wide range of figurative language.

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