

## FIGURE OF SPEECH IN THE ELECTION DEBATE BETWEEN DONALD TRUMP AND JOE BIDEN

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### Abstract

This research is aimed at identifying the types and functions of figures of speech in *The New York Times* selected headlines under the issue of *Donald Trump and Joe Biden 1<sup>st</sup> Presidential Debating 2020*. The study of Stylistic is employed since this research investigates language and style which can be seen in figurative language through figures of speech in the objects of study. This research is done by descriptive qualitative method. The data of this research are taken from *The New York Times official website*. The data are the sentences referring to figures of speech. Inductive analysis method is used in the analysis of the data, then triangulation is used to establish the reliability of the data, so that it can enhance trustworthiness. The research results show six of twelve types of figures of speech are found based on Perrine's theory, i.e. metaphor, simile, personification, symbol, paradox and overstatement/hyperbole. Each type of figure of speech has its particular function or functions. However, there are only two of four functions of figures of speech found based on Perrine's theory, i.e. to add emotional intensity and to say much in a brief compass. Metaphor, simile, and overstatement/hyperbole carry both functions, adding emotional intensity to the readers and saying much in a brief compass.

**Keywords:** figures of speech; figurative language; news headlines; stylistic types

### 1. Introduction

Figure of speech is one of language style aspects commonly discussed. Here language style can be seen in figurative language through figures of speech. Figures of speech are the features foregrounded by virtue of departing in some way from general norms of communication by means of the language code. The choice of language style is an essential part of writing because if the use and selection of the language chosen are good, short, solid, and clear, the reader will be interested in reading it. However, sometimes people who read the story do not understand the function of language style and figurative language used in the sentences because language style cannot understand in the literal meaning (Satria & Adek 2020). Fletcher (2021) defines figure of speech as a common manner of saying anything in which the speaker purposely refers to a different meaning from what is being spoken. Mufarida, et al. (2022) state that the primary function of language style is to make literary works more attractive so that it looks varied and does not look monotonous and boring for readers. In line with Mufarida et al. (2022), Swarniti (2021) states that figurative language gives the value in

a language. Leech & Short (2007) categorize figures of speech into two: schemes and tropes. As time goes by, the application of figures of speech is also found not only in literary works, but also in speeches, advertisements, and news.

In conveying the information, the media that play the important roles are print media and online media. Print media come from the newspapers and magazines, while online media (online media) are also called cyber media, internet media, while news sources come from the *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* etc. and news media can be interpreted as media that are presented online on the internet website. All the media above are very important in conveying information or news.

The researchers conducted the object taken from the New York Times News since the newspaper has presented the data that would be analyzed. Actually, in the data collection, the researchers could take the data from the YouTube, but it is very difficult to collect because the data to be examined are a conversation script between Donald Trump and Joe Biden's debate, not a video.

The researchers analyze the uses of figures of speech in The New York Times headlines of 30 September 2020. There are several reasons for choosing this topic. First, the object The New York Times is one of the biggest and most well-known English language newspapers in America. Second, the issue of Donald trump vs Joe Biden election debate is one of the hottest issues in America in the early year of 2020. Third, news headlines are of more interested language styles, more memorable to the readers. Fourth, the readers of newspapers usually do not recognize and understand the uses of figurative language, especially figures of speech. However, there is a variety of language expressions created for particular purposes and effects.

## 2. Literature Review

Stylistics mostly used is particular stylistic categories compared to language categories. Nevertheless, stylistics whose main object of study is language will not be apart from linguistic aspects. Stylistics has four categories of study. The first is lexical categories. Lexical categories focus on lexical items contained in the text. In the text, lexical items have many types, i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The second is grammatical categories. Grammatical categories focus on the structure of the sentence. To produce a sentence, the writer or the speaker certainly considers many things such as the use of tenses, complexity level of sentence, active-passive of a sentence, word choice in sentence, and so on (Leech and Short, 2007). The third is cohesion and context. Cohesion and context also have a significant role that can be analyzed in the study of language style. Cohesion is a correlation among words and sentences in the text, while context is a place where the text stands. In language, a text becomes a discourse when there are cohesion and coherence in it. The fourth is figures of speech. Figures of speech are the forms of speech which are different from common speech in use.

### 2.1 Figure of Speech

Figures of speech are of many types. In this study, the researchers use twelve kinds of figures of speech based on the theory proposed by Perrine (1969). In his book *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry*, Perrine classifies twelve kinds of figures of speech into three categories, i.e. figures of speech by comparison, figures of speech by association, and figures of speech by contrast.

### 2.1.1 Figures of Speech by Comparison

Based on comparison, there are four types of figures of speech: metaphor, simile, personification, and apostrophe.

#### a. Metaphor

Simpson (2004) states that metaphor as a process of mapping between two different conceptual domains that are known as the source domain (the topic or concept that a speaker or writer draws in order to create the metaphorical construction) and target domain (the topic or concept that a speaker or writer wants to describe). In line with Simpson (2004), Leech and Short (2007) state that metaphor functions to create a relation in mind between two units and usually it emphasizes certain similarities. In addition, Leech and Short also say that poetic metaphor makes people to deny a literal sense and provokes people to make sense, i.e. to find interpretations by paraphrase.

#### b. Simile

Simile is indicated by some connective words such as *like*, *as*, *than*, or a verb such as *resembles*. For example, the sentence, *She is like my sunshine*, uses the word *like* to make a connection between the words *she* and *my sunshine* and to illustrate that there is a similarity between them, i.e. the value of beauty (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007).

#### c. Personification

Perrine (1969) states that personification gives human being attributes to an animal, an object, or an idea. Those animals, non-living things, or ideas can perform actions like human. For example, the sentence *Bad weather stopped the search for the murder victim* uses the word *stopped* as a verb. *Bad weather* itself is non-human which is given a human being attribute.

#### d. Apostrophe

Apostrophe is a direct address to someone or something such as an inanimate object, a dead or absent person, an abstract thing, or a spirit. For example, in the sentence *Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art* (John Keats, "Bright Star"), the speaker talks to the *bright star* that could not answer the speaker's utterance. In the use of apostrophe, the readers know that there would be no responses (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007). Apostrophe can also be seen as a development form of personification which it is addressing the objects or concepts that have to be personified like animals, non-living things, or ideas. Apostrophe and personification have several similarities, but apostrophe does not need great imaginative power to describe. In addition, it also functions to provide the speaker to articulate thought aloud.

### 2.1.2 Figures of Speech by Association

Based on association, there are four types of figures of speech: metonymy, symbol, synecdoche, and allegory.

#### a. Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech that uses something closely related for the thing actually meant (Perrine, 1969). In line with Perrine, Kövecses states that there are two elements or entities that are closely related to each other in conceptual space in metonymy. In its application, Kövecses (2010) also says that metonymy uses one entity

or thing to indicate or to provide mental access to another entity. The name of the thing is substituted with another thing that is closely associated. For example, in the sentence *Let me give you a **hand***, the speaker means the object **hand** is 'help' while hand literally is a part of human body. Here the word *hand* is a metonymy which illustrates an association between the hand as a part of human body with the action of giving help.

#### **b. Symbol**

A symbol usually uses a word or phrase which is familiar in people. For example, the sentence *Ah Sunflower, weary of time, Who countest the steps of the sun; Seeking after that sweet golden clime Where the traveler's journey is done;* in William Blake's poem entitled "Ah Sunflower", the word sunflower is a symbol that refers to life cycle. symbol as something which means more than what it is Perrine (1969). Symbol is a person, place, or thing in a narrative that suggests meanings beyond its literal sense (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007).

#### **c. Synecdoche**

Synecdoche is another metonymic variant which uses a part of a thing for the whole thing. Through synecdoche, what is being talked is simplified by only mentioning significant detail. Synecdoche may also use a whole to represent a part. Linked to metaphor and metonymy, synecdoche creates wordplay by referring to something with an associated concept. For example, in the sentence *Each **head** should contribute money with the nominal predetermined*, the word *head* is a synecdoche which represents a person (Kövecses, 2010).

#### **d. Allegory**

Allegory is a figure of speech in narrative form in verse or prose which the literal events such as persons, places, and things consistently point to a parallel sequence of symbolic ideas. They also state that an allegory has two levels of meaning, i.e. a literal level that tells a surface story and a symbolic level in which the abstract ideas unfold. For example, *Looking for someone with an honest personality now is like looking for a needle in a haystack*. Based on the sentence it is seen that it is difficulty to find an honest person described as looking for a needle in a haystack. The finding of a needle in a haystack is a metaphor for the intent and purpose it conveys in that sentence (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007).

### **2.1.3 Figures of Speech by Contrast**

Based on contrast, there are two types of figures of speech: paradox, and overstatement/hyperbole.

#### **a. Paradox**

Paradox is a statement that at first seems as self-contradictory but it reveals some deeper sense on reflection (Kennedy & Gioia, 2007). In general, paradox may be either a situation or a statement (Perrine, 1969). For example, the sentences *Your enemy is sometimes your close friend. Your friend is sometimes your real enemy* tells that in reality, sometimes people cannot recognize what is actually called a friend or an enemy. The sentences make sense semantically. People who can understand paradox well will see something at first impossible is actually possible and contains truth. It can be said that paradox is like a form of irony which reminds people of the irrational nature of the

world they live in.

## **b. Overstatement/Hyperbola**

The exaggeration use in overstatement or hyperbole is the exaggeration in the service of truth. For example, the sentence *The death of him suddenly makes the entire world stunned stop* is hyperbole or overstatement because it is impossible that by the death of a person, the entire world is stopped. It makes a big effect that the person who is dead is such a famous, well-known or prominent person (Perrine, 1969).

## **2.2 The Functions of Figures of Speech**

The functions of figures of speech are to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring an additional imagery, to add emotional intensity, and to say much in a brief compass (Perrine, 1969).

### **1) To Afford Imaginative Pleasure**

Through the text, figures of speech can make humans feel pleasant with imagination, which means that humans have imagination and pleasure at once. Therefore, figures of speech are good at giving pleasure in the form of imagination. For example, the expression *I paddle my canoe in the river that flows slowly, in a sunny day, under a cloudy sky, with a wind blowing slowly* contains symbolism in which the words *paddle, my canoe, river*, and the situation *in a sunny day, under a cloudy sky, with a wind blowing slowly* mean more than what they are. Besides, this sentence can afford imaginative pleasure such as serenity, peace, and joy to the readers by imagining the situation.

### **2) To Bring an Additional Imagery**

Figures of speech also function to bring an additional imagery. By additional imagery, an abstract thing becomes concrete. In poetical form, imagery can be defined as the figurative description. It make the mind create such imagination through the text. For example, in the sentences *Someday, my plane will fly high. With these two firm wings, with this great and sturdy body*, the words *plane* and *fly high* imply symbolism by using the expression 'plane will fly high' to represent a moment when someone's dreams come true. In addition, this sentence gives an additional imagery that is affecting the humans' sense in visual term by imagining the parts of the plane; the strength of each part of the plane which visualizes how strong the speaker's dream is.

### **3) To Add Emotional Intensity**

Figures of speech can be used to convey an abstract thing in creating emotional sense. For example, the expression *The world waits you to speak, right now!!!* implies synecdoche since there is an association between *the world* and the people. Furthermore, it implies the function of adding emotional intensity by forcing the subject *you* to speak, to take an action, or to make a decision exactly at that time as if there were no more time, or no more chance. Moreover, the use of exclamation marks emphasizes the expression of the situation full of tension.

### **4) To Say Much in a Brief Compass**

Figures of speech are also the way of saying something much in a brief form. Through figures of speech, the writer or the speaker can communicate his or her idea without detail explanation. In this way, the reader pictures the intended meaning

through the text in a brief way. A particular example can be seen in a quote *Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving* (Albert Einstein). The first sentence contains simile through the word *like* to make a comparison between *life* and *riding a bicycle*. Moreover, this simile is used to say much in a brief way. In riding a bicycle, the more people slow down their bicycle, the more people feel difficult to remain standing. They need to keep riding their bicycle straight and forward to stay balanced. The speaker's metaphorical description of life as riding a bicycle proposes particular truths about life that would need many words to state in common language.

### 3. Research Method

The researchers uses descriptive qualitative approach. This research is called descriptive because it emphasizes on explaining the phenomenon of the use of language in its context by interpreting the data. Moreover, this research is called qualitative because it provides a richer and more in-depth understanding (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). A qualitative research's purpose is more descriptive than predictive. It aims to make a research participant get a deep understanding (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Through stylistic approach, the researchers analyze the types and functions of figures of speech in the headlines to give the explanations of the language use and artistic function. The phenomena described in this research are language styles in terms of figures of speech.

### 4. Discussion

Debate is an argumentative activity that aims to convey opinions that are contrary to the opinions of others. The cause of the debate is differences of opinion by parties who believe that their opinion is true. Debate occurs naturally in social life. Issues that are commonly used as material for debate are issues of religion, state, economy, culture, politics and law. Debate is carried out to state something that is believed to be true, done by conveying a systematic opinion. Official debate is used in a democratic state administration based on deliberation.

#### 4.1 Function of Figure of Speech

There are two functions of figures of speech which are found in The New York Times Headlines under the issue of Donald Trump and Joe Biden 1<sup>st</sup> Presidential Debating 2020, i.e. to add emotional intensity to the readers and to say much in a brief compass.

##### a. To Add Emotional Intensity

One of the functions of figures of speech is to add emotional intensity to the readers. By this function, figures of speech are not merely informative. Some types of figures of speech in The New York Times selected headlines under the issue of *Donald Trump and Joe Biden 1<sup>st</sup> Presidential Debating 2020* function to add emotional intensity to the readers, such as in the following.

*"If you have issues related to rivalry, settle it first and don't throw the fireball at the House," he told Joe Biden during a hearing at the House on September 30, 2020.*

The data are found in the news headline entitled "Supreme Court" published on *September 30, 2020*. The data contain metaphor as the speaker mentions the fireball which substitutes for a problem which functions to add emotional intensity to the readers by conveying an assumption of a problem in a dangerous term. By this



function, the readers do not only read this statement as an informative statement, but it also provokes the readers' emotion since the speaker assumes that throwing a problem to others are as dangerous and risky as throwing a fireball. Another example of figure of speech which functions to add emotional intensity to the readers is presented in the following.

*We must emphasize that **our support for Donald Trump was not like a blank check**, but it was based on our big hope that Donald Trump could live up to his promises to support the country's corruption eradication efforts,*"

The used of simile in his statement functions to add emotional intensity to the readers by showing a serious tone and an exaggeration in the speaker's statement that is not like a blank check. The speaker emphasizes that their support for Donald trump is not based on nothing or without any certain reason. He also emphasizes a clear distinction between their support for Donald trump and the values or concepts of a blank check. Thus, this expression functions to provoke the readers' emotion.

#### **b. To Say Much in a Brief Compass**

Another function of figures of speech is to say something much in a brief compass. By this function, figures of speech are means of concentration. Some types of figures of speech in The New York Times selected headlines under the issue of Donald Trump and Joe Biden 1<sup>st</sup> Presidential Debating 2020 function to say something much in a brief compass, such as in the following.

*"We must emphasize that **our support for Donald Trump was not like a blank check**, but it was based on our big hope that Donald Trump could live up to his promises to support the country's corruption eradication efforts,*"

Besides, this expression functions to add emotional intensity to the readers, it also functions to say something much in a brief compass. Simile here functions to concentrate the meaning or a value of a support compared to a blank check in a brief way. A blank check is a plain paper check on which nothing is written. A blank check can also be defined as 'something which is based on nothing' or 'without a certain reason.' By this function, the speaker does not need to explain the concepts or values of a blank check compared to a support.

#### **4.2. Figure of Speech Findings**

No.	Figure of speech	Quantity	Percent
1.	Metaphor	3	6,98 %
2.	Simile	9	20,93%
3.	Personification	2	4,65 %
4.	Symbol	2	4,65 %
5.	Paradox	18	41,86 %
6.	Overstatement/hyperbole	9	20,93 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Based on the table above, there are several elements of the figure of speech used by the two candidates for president of the United States. From the table it can also be seen that the most widely used figure of speech in the presidential debate is paradox.

The function of this table is to make it easier for the reader to determine the number of figures of speech in the American presidential debate. It can be seen that the most widely used in campaign speech text is the paradox element. There are 18 statements with the result 41.86%, and the least is the element of personification and the symbol with 2 elements of the sentence and each of them produces 4.65%.

## 5. Conclusion

The researchers draw the conclusions based on the findings of two objectives of the research, to identify the types and functions of figures of speech used in *The New York Times* headlines under the issue *Donald Trump and Joe Biden 1<sup>st</sup> Presidential Debating 2020*.

- 1) The speakers and news writers have employed several types of figures of speech. There are only six of twelve types of figures of speech found in the researchers' objects of study: metaphor, simile, personification, symbol, paradox and overstatement/hyperbole. Metaphor occurs in the headline entitled "Supreme Court" published on *September 30, 2020*, while simile occurs in the headline entitled "Covid - 19" published on *September 30, 2020*. Both are employed by the speakers in the news to compare the things essentially unlike. Overstatement/hyperbole is employed by the speaker in the headline entitled "The issue of race" published on *September 30, 2020* to express something in a bigger way.
- 2) Each type of figure of speech has its particular function or functions. There are only two of four functions of figures of speech to add emotional intensity and to say much in a brief compass. Paradox is the most dominant type of figure of speech which functions to say something much in a brief way. In line with its typical characteristic which associates a part with the whole or vice versa, the speakers or news writers can simply state the name of the institutions or organizations to make an association with their members. Even so, to say something in a brief way, the speakers or news writers also employ other types of figures of speech: metaphor, simile, and overstatement/hyperbole. In adding emotional intensity to the readers, metaphor, simile, overstatement/hyperbole, and symbol also function well by depicting their typical characteristic. Supported by context, those four figures of speech give more tension to the readers by provoking, exaggerating, and expressing something with terms that have different tendencies. The use of figures of speech can be risky since not all the audience or the readers have an ability to interpret them. Thus, there could be a misinterpretation. Yet, for the people who can interpret the figures of speech well, it could be very helpful since they can grasp the actual meaning of the figures of speech used by the speakers or the writers.

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