

# FIGURES OF SPEECH BY COMPARISON IN *CORALINE* BY NEIL GAIMAN

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## Abstract

This research is under the issue of stylistics approach since it explores the figures of speech applied in *Coraline* novel. It is aimed at identifying the types and functions of figures of speech by comparison in the novel. This research applied the descriptive qualitative method. However, to support the interpretation, the researcher also applied the quantitative approach in processing the data. The forms of the data were the dialogues of all characters, and also words, phrases, and sentences of the narration in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* which contains figures of speech by comparison. In this research, textual analysis was used in the analysis of the data. The researcher found that there are four types of figures of speech by comparison proposed by Perrine which are applied by Neil Gaiman in *Coraline* novel. Those types are simile (79 data), personification (46 data), metaphor (15 data), and apostrophe (1 datum). Bringing additional imagery and giving an imaginative pleasure are the main functions of the use of figures of speech by comparison in *Coraline* novel because figures of speech often make concrete understanding and pleasure in the readers' mind. There are also other functions which are giving an imaginative pleasure, adding emotional intensity, and concreting meaning in a brief compass.

Keywords: figures of speech, comparison, function, *Coraline*

## INTRODUCTION

In daily life, people share their thought, ideas, and expression through direct communication or, nowadays, through plenty social media. They may share their thought and express their emotion with language in their communication. Without language, people might have difficulties to deliver their message to others. Each person has his/her own style to use language.

Style refers to the selection of linguistic forms to convey social artistic effects. Keraf (1984: 112) defines language style as a particular way to express an idea or concept through language use. A style is choices made by a particular author in a particular text to bring out a particular genre inside the text (Leech & Short, 2007: 31).

The style of a novel can be analyzed from linguistic point of view through stylistics. The analysis is under four general headings: lexical categories,

grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context (Leech and Short, 2007: 61).

There are three types of figures of speech: comparison, association, and contrast. Comparison is assessed by comparing features of a certain thing with another thing's features. Association is understood from how two matters have a relation. Contrast is used to compare how some things may differ. This paper focuses only on identifying the types of figures of speech by comparison and their functions in Neil Gaiman's novel, *Coraline*.

The first type of figures of speech by comparison is metaphor. Glucksberg (2001: 4) states that metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is substituted to an object or action which provides different meanings from its literal meaning. Also, it may be considered as a representative of abstract concept which cannot be easily described. To make this comparison, there must be some similarities

between the two objects compared. For example, “She is really proud of her new wheels”. *Wheels* here refer to automobiles.

Simile is a type of figures of speech by comparison which compares two things with the use of connector words so the readers can easily understand the comparison (Gill, 2004: 25). Connector words that are usually used in simile are ‘like’, ‘as’, ‘than’, ‘similar to’, ‘resembles’, and ‘seems’. Simile is easily found in daily speeches such as “Jane is as slow as a snail.” Snails are infamous for their slow move and Jane’s movement is compared to snail.

The next type is personification in which, according to Kovecses (2002: 35), an animal, an object, or a concept can be described like having human’s actions or emotions. Personification occurs when human qualities are put into a word or phrase to non-human entities. It gives more sense of imagination to non-human entities in a text because they are lack of human traits. For example, in the expression “the ground is thirsty”. The word “thirsty” is human’s attitude to describe that the ground is actually dry.

In addition, Perrine (1969: 67) claims that apostrophe is a figure of speech which addresses someone’s absent, dead, or something non-human as if that person or thing were present at the moment. For example, “where, O death is your victory?” Here, death is considered to have ability to hear the addressee which actually it is an abstract thing.

An interesting language style with figures of speech is presented in *Coraline* by British author Neil Gaiman, published in 2002. It has been compared to

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and was adapted into a 2009 stop-motion film. Gaiman himself stated in “Why I Wrote *Caroline*” section in *Coraline* that he wanted this novel to have a girl as a heroine, and he wanted it to be refreshingly creepy. In this novel, the researcher is interested in finding the figures of speech by comparison which creates a sublime effect while the readers read it.

The use of figures of speech, particularly comparison type in *Coraline* novel is very interesting and important to be analyzed. It is valuable to describes how authors employ their styles in language in their literary work. The style used by the writer is closely related to a story. It will show how successful the style in a literary work conveys the message that is communicated by the authors to the readers.

The researcher is concerned with the analysis of the use of figures of speech in which this research has significance both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the research finding will enrich the research in linguistic field, especially in stylistics. It is expected that this research may give additional information to linguistics researchers dealing with the study of figures of speech and stylistics. Practically, the findings will be useful for students of English Language and Literature study program to have an example of stylistic analysis of the use of comparison because they have limited explanation in their study program and can be their source in conducting similar research. Hopefully, the research findings can be used as the example of analysis of comparison in figures of speech using stylistic approach.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Type**

This research was descriptive qualitative in which the researcher described the phenomenon by interpreting the data collected. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1997: 10), the data collected in qualitative research are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Qualitative research uses inductive approach in which the analysis proceeded into an interpretation by the researcher which then concluded at the end of the observation. This approach provided more comprehensive understanding in explaining the phenomena of the use of language particularly the use of figures of speech by comparison.

In addition, the quantitative method was also used to measure the frequency of data occurrence. As stated by Vanderstoep and Johnson (2009: 7), the quantitative method is used to specify numerical assignment of certain phenomena in the research study.

### **Form, Context, and Source of Data**

The object of this research is a novel entitled *Coraline*. The data were in the form of phrases, clauses, and sentences of the narration and utterances of all characters in *Coraline* novel. The context of the data was in dialogues of the characters and paragraphs of the narration. Meanwhile, the data source is where the data are taken from. The novel of Neil Gaiman, *Coraline* was the data source in this research.

### **Research Instrument**

Burns (1994: 295) states that the role of researcher in the qualitative research is as the main instrument. Thus, the researcher has the key role in this qualitative research. The researcher takes an action as the planner, data collector, data analyzer, and

data reporter. Meanwhile, the secondary instrument of this research was the data sheet. A data sheet was used to classify the data that it eased the researcher to analyze the data from the novel.

### **Technique of Data Collection**

There are many kinds of technique in collecting data in qualitative research, such as interviewing, ethnographic observation, analysis of documents and material culture, and visual analysis (Vanderstoep and Johnston. 2009: 189). As the source of data in this study was a written literary text in the form of novel, the data collection technique used was analysis of documents by note taking. The researcher used textual analysis to analyze the data. Textual analysis use inductive analysis to interpret meaning and analyse a text (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009: 167). There are number of possible interpretations of the text and each interpretation is similarly accepted to the extent that it reflects the meaning attributed to the text.

### **Trustworthiness**

A research must be truthful and accurately represented the subject or the object of the research. To achieve accurate result and represent object of the research, triangulation is needed in the qualitative research method. Therefore, the data findings were checked by two experts and researcher's peer reviewer from English Language and Literature study program whose concentration package is linguistics.

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

There are four types of figures of speech by comparison that have been found in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*. They are metaphor, simile, personification,

and apostrophe. Furthermore, each type of figures of speech by comparison has its particular functions.

**Table 1. Types and Functions of Figures of Speech by Comparison in *Coraline***

Types of Figures of Speech by Comparison	Frequency	Functions of Figures of Speech by Comparison			
		1	2	3	4
Metaphor	15	5	11	6	4
Simile	79	33	61	24	4
Personification	46	41	10	14	8
Apostrophe	1	1	0	0	0
Total	141	80	82	44	16

Note :  
Function

- 1 : to give imaginative pleasure
- 2 : to bring additional imagery
- 3 : to add emotional intensity
- 4 : to concrete meaning in a brief compass

Table 1 shows that the writer tends to use direct comparison in *Coraline* novel. It is proven by the finding of simile occurrences in 79 data from a total of 141 data. Simile becomes the most frequent type of figures of speech by comparison found in the novel. Meanwhile, apostrophe only shows up one time in the whole story.

In Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, the researcher found many metaphors applied in the story. By using this type, the author attempts to indirectly compare two objects in his story. This expression allows readers to imagine the similarities between two objects being compared in the narration or characters' utterances. One of the examples of this type is shown below.

**It was the size of a broom closet.**  
(067/P.79/Met/4)

This narration takes time when the other mother gets angry to Coraline's bad manner. She puts Coraline away to a mysterious room behind a mirror. Curious about the place she got in, she tries to put out her hands to touch the space and every side in where she is imprisoned. Then she compares it to a broom closet because she could reach the top of the room and sense every side. It gives mental pictures to the readers that the size of the room is not too big or too small for a child like Coraline. The readers could imagine that the room is tall enough to stand in or to sit in, and it is not wide or deep enough to lie down for Coraline.

In *Coraline*, simile is mostly used by the writer in his story. The researcher found simile in most of the narration and utterance in *Coraline*. The first example of simile is found is shown below.

It was my dad, **charging like a rhino.**  
(038/P.55/Sim/2)

The utterance above is uttered by Coraline when she tells the black cat about her story. When she was a little girl, her dad took her for a walk on a wasteland. They have walked for minutes there when suddenly Coraline's dad asked her to run away. After a while, little Coraline stopped running and looked back. She saw her dad charging like a rhino. Rhino is well-known to have an ability to run fast with its large body. Rhino will make a blast and strike everything in front of it. It is quite horrific to see a rhino runs. The comparison describes how Coraline's father strongly runs in a rush towards Coraline just like a rhino. It is called as simile because Coraline makes a comparison by using the conjunction *like*.

The next figure of speech by comparison applied in *Coraline* is personification. Personification compares a human attribute which is applied to a non-human object or concept. The non human is represented as having human ability, such as to speak. An example of personification can be seen below.

“**Have you got any more chocolates?**” said the dog. (032/P.42/Per/1)

The utterance above is a personification because it brings the attribute of human traits which is the ability to talk. A dog is not a human being that has an ability to talk. It could only bark and make sound such as “woof, woof”. It is merely depicting human attribute in an animal to make the language style sound creative. This dialogue happens after Coraline helps the other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible with their dagger performance. Miss Spink gives her a small box of chocolates as an appreciation. Coraline offers it to the dog next to her. It comes as revelation that the dog there loves chocolate. It is an impossible thing for a dog to speak and be able to eat chocolate, but with personification it comes to be possible.

In *Coraline* novel, the researcher only found one datum of apostrophe uttered by Coraline. Apostrophe is when a person makes a reference to something or somebody that is not there. The datum of apostrophe found in *Coraline* novel can be seen below.

“**Play fair,**” shouted Coraline into the wind. (088/P.96/Apo/4)

The utterance above is categorized as apostrophe because Coraline is addressing the other mother as if she is present at the time. This utterance occurs when Coraline walks down the hall after she found the first ghost’s soul. Suddenly, very strong and

stingy sand is blowing upon her as it slows down her movement. One of the ghost whispers to her that the other mother is angry to her. That’s why Coraline shouts into the wind, to the other mother, to play fair. She does not want her to interrupt her with the blowing sand. Coraline shouts to the other mother although she knows the other mother is not around. She has confidence that the other mother could hear her. Therefore, it can be categorized as an apostrophe.

From Table 1, the researcher found that one type of figures of speech may have more than one function. Therefore, although figures of speech by comparison occur 141 times, the total number of the functions is 222 data. It happens because each figure of speech has the equal possibility to possess all of the functions of the use of figures of speech in literary text. It is because figures of speech often provide a more effective means of saying than a direct statement.

Table 1 shows that the function of bringing additional imagery is the most frequent functions applied in *Coraline*. Simile is the figure of speech by comparison which mostly functions to bring additional imagery.

She put out one hand . . . and felt something **wispy, like a spider’s web**, brush her hands and her face. (042/P.58/Sim/3)

Due to sudden lights out from the candle, Coraline scabbled the room with her hand. She touches something wispy of a thin and soft fibre. She compares the sense of touching something wispy to touch a spider’s web. Visual imagery vividly appeared in the statement. Readers could simply imagine through the visualization of the sense of touching something wispy. It seems to the readers, that they could experience the feeling of touching something

wispy by imagining touching a spider's web. The function of figures of speech by comparison in bringing additional imagery can be seen through this statement.

To give imaginative pleasure occurs almost as frequent as to bring additional imagery. Based on Table 1, personification is the figure of speech by comparison that shows most of this function due to its nature, that is to illustrate.

**The toys in the toy box were still asleep, and they stirred and muttered** as she moved their box, and then **they went back to sleep.** (050/P.64/Per/1-2)

Coraline takes advice to take a rest in the other mother's house. In her room, she closes her door and hauls a toy box in front of it. She knows it will not keep anyone out. However, she hopes that the noise somebody would make trying to dislodge it would wake her up. The writer depicted the toys as human being. The toys are assumed as humans that can sleep, stir, and mutter. It gives a pleasure to the readers in which they can imagine how toys could sleep. The way the toys act is not usual in daily life. Commonly, toys will need a power source or battery to make them move their body parts and produce sounds. However, the writer personified the toys. Thus, it contributes pleasure for readers in which that action is not commonly found in daily life.

The next function is to add emotional intensity. Simile is a figure of speech by comparison which is used frequently to show this function.

She popped another blackbeetle into her mouth and then another, **like someone with a bag of chocolate-covered raisins.** (065/P.77/Sim/2-3)

While having a conversation, the other mother offers snacks to Coraline. Expecting it is to be a toffee

or a butterscotch ball, Coraline looks at it. The bag is half filled with large shiny blackbeetles, crawling over each other in their efforts to get out of the snack bag. The other mother enjoys her snack very much. It looks like someone with a bag of chocolate-covered raisins. Coraline's feeling at the time probably is full of disgust to the other mother's behaviour. The same feeling is also experienced by the readers when they read the statement. The way the writer wrote how the other mother enjoys the living blackbeetles as snacks is indeed to make the readers experience the same feeling as Coraline. Through this figure of speech, the readers could feel the emotion experienced by the character in *Coraline* novel.

The lowest level of frequency in in terms of the function of figures of speech by comparison is to concrete meaning in a brief compass that contributes around 16 data. In *Coraline* novel, personification is the figure of speech by comparison which has the most function in concreting meaning in a brief compass among others.

"It's big enough for her," said the cat. **"Spiders' webs only have to be large enough to catch flies."** (061/P.73/Per/1-4)

The datum above is uttered by the black cat that is addressed to Coraline to describe the size of the other mother's world. Spiders' webs here are a metaphor of the size of the other mother's world and its function. The statement gives an implicit meaning that Coraline is a prey which has been trapped at the other mother's created world. The flies, here, represent Coraline's situation in the other mother's world. From the utterance above, the reader sees how the character makes the statement more compact rather than explaining much even though it has the

same meaning. It is done by the character in order to get aesthetic values in creating words.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

In *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman as the author uses all types of figures of speech by comparison in the forms of metaphor, simile, personification, and apostrophe. By using figures of speech by comparison, he has proved to have an interesting feature of style in his novel.

The writer used simile as the most frequent figure of speech by comparison in *Coraline*. The writer tends to use some direct comparisons to compare two things which have similar characteristics. It gives a better imagery to the readers about the characteristics of each character and also about the condition in *Coraline* story. Although simile the most frequent figure of speech to occur, metaphor is also used to deliver comparisons in the story.

In contrast to simile, apostrophe only occurs once in *Coraline*. In apostrophe, a speaker is addressing a person or an object which is not there by the time he is speaking. *Coraline* does not have many situations which trigger the characters to use apostrophe. On the other hand, *Coraline* has a fable side of genre, thus it has more personification rather than apostrophe.

Furthermore, each type of figures of speech by comparison has its particular functions. The findings show that the function of bringing additional imagery is at the highest level of frequency. It indicates that most functions of figures of speech by comparison in *Coraline* can create a mental picture in the readers' mind. The type which contributes significantly to this

function is simile. Simile has a role to create imagery in the readers' mind because it creates depiction through comparison and illustration.

Giving imaginative pleasure is also frequently applied in *Coraline*. The presence of figures of speech by comparison in *Coraline* can affect the readers' mind to create a pleasure in building their imagination. Based on the findings, personification is the figure of speech by comparison that shows most of this function due to its nature, which is to illustrate. This function is mostly used to provide the readers' imagination on how the animal characters in the story communicate with the main character, Coraline.

Further, apostrophe has only one function in this novel since there is only one datum. The function is to give imaginative pleasure to the readers. This happens because of the nature of apostrophe which is to illustrate the presence of something or someone. Thus, it can give the readers a pleasure through imagination.

### Suggestions

After conducting this research, the researcher proposes some suggestions based on the conclusions. The researcher suggests that students who are majoring in linguistics and interested in stylistics to gain interest in learning stylistics since it is very interesting and it can be used to analyze the style of the authors of literary works. Therefore, the students are suggested to conduct a research using stylistic approach to explore style as one of the prominent aspects in literary works. Even though there are many researchers who have conducted research on stylistics, there are still many interesting topics under it. The topic is not limited to figures of speech by comparison.

The future researcher could conduct research with other kinds of figures of speech, such as association and contrast. There are also other kinds of foregrounding in literary works, like lexical deviation or grammatical deviation. It is also suggested that the future researcher develop this analysis with different objects. The object can vary in the forms of movie, poem, and other literary works.

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