

A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN VLADIMIR PUTIN'S 2007 MUNICH SPEECH

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Abstract

This research is aimed at identifying the types and functions of figurative language in Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech*. This research is also aimed at revealing the responses of the audience in relation to the use of figurative language in the speech. Stylistics is applied in analyzing the figurative language since the researcher investigates the language and style.

This research applied the descriptive qualitative method. The data were taken from the Russian Government official website. The form of the data was utterances spoken by Vladimir Putin and the context of the data was the monologue of Vladimir Putin in his 2007 *Munich Speech*. Even though the original speech and script were in Russian, the translated version of the script was taken from the Russian Government official website which was considered as reliable. The data were collected by reading the script of the speech, identifying the utterances where figurative language was used and categorizing the data into a data sheet. The researcher acted as the primary instrument of the research while the script of the speech, video of the speech and data sheet were used as the secondary instruments of the research. The data were collected and categorized based on theories that were used and then the researcher drew the conclusions. Triangulation was applied to establish the trustworthiness of the data.

The results of the research are: (1) there are only seven out of twelve types of figurative language found based on Perrine's theory, i.e. metaphor, simile, personification, synecdoche, paradox, irony and hyperbole; (2) among four functions of figurative language proposed by Perrine, only three are found in the speech. Bringing additional imagery is carried by metaphor, increasing emotional intensity is carried by metaphor and hyperbole and saying much in brief compass is carried by all the seven figures of speech found in the speech; (3) there are two types of responses toward the speech, the negative which sees it as a criticism to counter U.S. dominancy towards the globe and the positive one which sees it as an invitation to discussion.

Keywords: figurative language, types, functions, Vladimir Putin, 2007 *Munich Speech*

INTRODUCTION

Through the ages, humans have developed several media of communication to exchange information among themselves. Among all the means of communication, language is considered as humans' main means of communication. Language is divided into two main forms, the written form and the spoken form which each of the form is bounded into certain rules. The written form of language is considered to be more formal than the spoken language due to its strict rules and purposes.

The significance of language in humans daily life is undoubted. Due to its significance in human life, a particular field of study which

focuses on human language called linguistics is formed. Moreover, in delivering their ideas, humans tend to use certain styles. A specific field of study in linguistics which focuses on human's style of language is called stylistics.

Every language user has their own style in delivering the ideas through language and it makes each language user have his/her own language style. Stylistics focuses on revealing the purposes of certain language styles, the motives behind the styles and the idea underlying (Simpson, 2004: 98). The study of stylistics also reveals the artistic functions of a language style and how they play role within the language.

The use of figurative language is one aspect of language styles which is commonly discussed. Perrine (1969: 65) states that figurative language is a way of saying something through a certain use of language; it deals not only with the delivery of idea but also the aesthetic value of the expression. In short, it is a way of delivering ideas out of ordinary ways. Literary work is considered as the most common work to contain figurative language within its styles. Yet, as the time goes by, the use of figurative language is also found in non-literary texts such as speeches, advertisements, and news.

In this study, the researcher investigates the use of figurative language in Russia President Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech*. The speech was delivered in 2007 Munich Conference of Security Council which is held annually. Moreover, the speech was considered as a tough speech by the Western observers due to its high-degree of criticism towards the Western world. In addition, Vladimir Putin is also considered as a controversial figure by the Western due to its foreign policies and speeches.

The objectives of the research are to identify the types of figurative language found in the speech and to reveal the functions of figurative language found in the speech. Furthermore, this research is also aimed at revealing the responses of the audience toward Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech* in relation to the use of figurative language.

This research is expected to give some benefits both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research is expected to give

better comprehension towards the knowledge of language use in speeches particularly the use of figurative language in political speech and the motives that go beyond the speech. It is also expected that this research can be one of the sources of references in conducting a stylistics research. Practically, by reading this research, it is expected that the readers will have more understanding on how leaders of nations are able to use language style in order to deliver what they want and to persuade the audience to agree with their perspective.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the researcher used the descriptive qualitative approach. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 7-8) state that qualitative research provides richer and more in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study as it produces narrative or textual explanations of the phenomena under study. Thus, this research focused on providing a richer and in-depth explanation of the phenomenon of the language use, particularly the use of figurative language in Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech*.

The forms of the data were words, phrases, clauses and sentences uttered by Vladimir Putin in his 2007 *Munich Speech*. The context of the data was the monologue of Vladimir Putin in his 2007 *Munich Speech*. The data were taken from Russia Government official website, <https://kremlin.ru>. The speech was originally written and spoken in Russian, yet the English translation of the speech was also taken from the official website <https://en.kremlin.ru>. Thus it was considered as a reliable translation of the speech.

The main instrument of the research was the researcher himself. The secondary instruments used to ease the researcher were the data sheet, video of the speech and the official script of the speech. The secondary instruments helped the researcher in categorizing and analyzing the data.

The data were collected and analyzed by conducting note-taking and reading the script for several times. After the data were collected the researcher categorized and labeled the data based on the theory. Then, the data of types and functions of figurative language were interpreted based on the theory.

The method of triangulation was applied to ensure the validity of the research. The researcher discussed and consulted the research to his two supervisors. In addition, the researcher also asked some of his linguistics fellow to triangulate the data in order to ensure the validity and suitability between the theory and the result of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In his *Sound and Sense* (1969), Perrine classifies the types of figurative language into twelve, i.e. metaphor, simile, personification, apostrophe, metonymy, symbol, synecdoche, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, litotes and irony. Those twelve types are further divided into three categories, i.e. By comparison (metaphor, simile, personification, and apostrophe), By association (metonymy, symbol, synecdoche, and allegory), and By contrast (paradox, hyperbole, litotes, and irony). Among twelve types of figurative language, only seven are found in the speech,

they are metaphor, simile, personification, synecdoche, paradox, irony, and hyperbole.

In relation to his theory of figurative language, Perrine (1969) also proposes four functions of figurative language. They are to afford imaginative pleasure, to bring additional imagery, to increase emotional intensity and to say much in brief compass. In Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech*, three functions of figurative language are found, i.e. bringing additional imagery, increasing emotional intensity, and saying much in brief compass. To provide more explanation about the types and functions of figurative language and also its effectiveness towards the delivery of the information of the speech, some examples are provided below.

The first type of figurative language in Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech* is metaphor. Metaphor is a comparison between two entities that belong to different domains. The datum is in the following.

But we should not forget that the fall of the Berlin Wall was possible thanks to a historic choice – one that was also made by our people, the people of Russia – a choice in favour of democracy, freedom, openness and a sincere partnership with all **the members of the big European family**.
(24/Mt/3)

The expression was uttered by Putin in the middle of the speech. In above expression, the phrase **the members of the big European family** is compared to the **European countries**. He compared two different concepts of **countries and family** to evoke a new meaning of countries that share the landmass of Europe. The European countries consist of various tribes

and cultures, and they are only related by the notion European continent. Then, by comparing the concepts, Putin was able to create a new meaning that the European countries are actually not stranger to each other. He implied that they are actually a big family and should help each other as family does. Thus, the metaphorical expression is giving a new meaning of the notion of European countries to the audience through its comparison.

The next type of figurative language found in the speech is simile. Simile is similar to metaphor because both of them are comparing entities. The only difference between simile and metaphor is the use of indicative words by simile. The example of simile found in the speech is the following.

Because no one can feel that **international law is like a stone wall** that will protect them.

(12/Si/4)

The above expression is considered as simile by the use of indicative word *is* and *like* when comparing **international law** to **a stone wall**. The expression implies that the international law should possess the quality of a stone wall that protects the people within its wall, not just protecting a few of them. Putin suggested that the current conduct of international law was far from his idea of the ideal international law because it did not possess the quality of protecting all. Thus, by comparing those two concepts, Putin was able to deliver his idea clearly.

The third type of figurative language is personification which deals with humanizing inhuman entity or giving human quality to

inhuman being. The example of personification found in the speech is in the following datum.

And, just like any war, the **Cold War left us with** live ammunition, figuratively speaking.
(02/Pe/4)

The above expression is considered as personification because a human quality of **inheriting** given to a state of political and military tension named **the Cold War**. Putin personified the Cold War to make the impression that its participants were passing down their legacy to the next generation and to imply that the next generation is conserving the Cold War as child conserves parents' legacy. Thus, by giving human quality to inhuman entity, Putin was able to say his idea in interesting way.

The fourth type of figurative language found in the speech is synecdoche. It used by referring the part for the whole or vice versa. The example of synecdoche found in the speech is in the following datum.

One state and, of course, first and foremost **the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way**.
(09/Sy/4)

The expression is considered as synecdoche by the use of the whole to refer its part. Putin did not really mean that the whole United States was really overstepping the border, but he referred to a part of the United States, its government. By referring the whole for the part, he also implied that the government is supported by the people in overstepping the border. Thus, he managed to simplify his idea in a brief but effective expression.

The fifth type of figurative language is paradox. Expression can be defined as a paradoxical expression by the existence of contradiction. In the simplest way, paradox is an expression that contradicts itself. Its existence is also found in the speech as follows.

And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself **because it destroys itself from within.**

(04/Pa/4)

The contradictory within the above expression can be revealed by carefully examining the concept of **system**. Commonly, a system, especially political system, is established to maintain order in certain circumstances. Yet, Putin contradicted the common sense of system by stating that the system of unipolarity would eventually destroy itself. The irrational sense in the expression can be made rational by revealing Putin's idea. By contradicting the concept of system that **maintaining** and system that **destroying**, Putin intends to say that the unipolarity is non-sense due to its destructive effects to all the members and even the sovereignty.

The sixth type of figurative language found in the speech is irony. Similar to paradox, the core of irony is contradictory but the contradictory in irony lies on the expression and the meaning underlying. Irony is also found in Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech* as follows.

This conference's structure allows me to avoid excessive politeness and the need to speak **in roundabout, pleasant but empty diplomatic terms.**

(01/Ir/4)

The above expression is considered as an irony of situation due the existence of discrepancy between the expected condition and the reality. Putin expected that the speakers of the conference would say things directly and honestly. Yet, he mentioned that his expectation was undone due to the previous speaker that spoke in a manner that he defined as 'pleasant but empty diplomatic terms'.

The last type of figurative language found in the speech is hyperbole. Hyperbole deals with the excessive use of language, or a means of exaggerating something. There are some hyperbole found in the speech with an example is provided as follows.

Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging **the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts.**

(07/Hy/3)

The expression above is considered as a hyperbole because the exaggeration of the world conflict by Putin. He exaggerated the duration of the conflict into a point of **an abyss of permanent conflicts** which seems irrational because no country is able to withstand permanent conflict due to limited resource and manpower. Thus, Putin was delivering his view on hyper use of military force through exaggerating the most possible outcome of it.

The first function of figurative language found in the speech is bringing additional imagery. Some ideas are best to say through imagery within audience's head. The example is presented below.

In international relations we increasingly see the desire to resolve a given question according to so-called issues of political expediency, **based on the current political climate.**

(10/Mt/2)

The metaphor in above expression is indicated by the comparison between **climate** and **condition**. By bringing the imagery of climate into audience's head, the concept of political condition is longer abstract since the term **climate** is able to say the idea. The imagery of climate made the audience comprehend the political condition as something that may be favorable or not as a climate that may be favorable or not.

The second function of figurative language found in the speech is increasing emotional intensity. By successfully increasing emotional intensity of the audience, ideas are properly delivered and remembered. The example is provided in the following datum.

Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.

(8/Hy/3,4)

The hyperbole in above expression is indicated by the exaggeration of the effect of world's conflict into a state where no political settlement existed. By presenting the worst effect of world's conflict, Putin was successfully transmitting his worry to the audience about the future of the world. He succeed not only in delivering his idea, but also in making his speech memorable to the audience.

The last function of figurative language in Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech* is saying much in brief compass. Figurative

language can also serves a means of concentration since it allows authors to say much in brief compass through the use of figurative language. The example is provided in the following datum.

Of course such a policy stimulates **an arms race.**

(13/Mt/4)

The metaphor in above expression is indicated by the comparison between **an arms race** and **the state of military tension**. By using the term **an arms race**, Putin is able to simplify his idea into one brief and effective metaphorical expression and avoid monotony speech. Rather than explaining in detail what he thought about military tension, he preferred to say it metaphorically.

Vladimir Putin's 2007 *Munich Speech* made powerful impact to the international community.. Generally, the responses divided into two, the negative one which sees the speech as a sign of Russia's intention to start a new Cold War and the positive one which sees the speech as an invitation to think and discuss the recent global condition though the criticism of late Western world's actions. Thus, Putin's figurative expressions are used to refer his main ideas of the speech.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, the researcher concludes three important things as follows.

First, among twelve types of figurative language proposed by Perrine (1969) only seven are found in the speech, i.e. metaphor, simile, personification, synecdoche, paradox, irony and

hyperbole. Metaphor and simile are used to compare things that belong to different domains. Personification is used to personify certain states as they were human. Synecdoche is used to refer the whole for its part. It is used to refer the institution by its country and to refer certain people by their institution. Paradox is used to contradict certain concepts in order to criticize the Western's policies. Irony is used to show discrepancy between the expected condition and the reality in order to criticize the Western. Last, hyperbole is used to exaggerate certain state to show Putin's attitude towards certain issues.

Second, among the four functions of figurative language, only three are found in the speech, i.e. bringing additional imagery, increasing emotional intensity, and saying much in brief compass. The function of bringing additional imagery is only carried by metaphor. The comparison between two different things is likely to bring certain imagery within audience's head and ease to digestion of the ideas. The function of increasing emotional intensity is carried by metaphor and hyperbole. The function is to direct audience's attention toward certain issues and to evoke Putin's intended emotion towards those issues. Last, the function of saying much in brief compass is carried by all types of figurative language found in the speech. In his 2007 *Munich Speech*, Putin intended to deliver a lot of ideas into his speech. Then, by the use of figurative language, the ideas were delivered in a brief but effective way. In addition, he also avoided monotony.

Last, the speech invited responses from various figures and media throughout the globe.

Generally, the responses are divided into two, negative responses which see the speech as a pure criticism and the sign of Russia's future foreign policy; and the positive ones which see the speech as an invitation to rethink and discuss the future of international community. Moreover, the figurative expressions used by Putin are frequently quoted by the audience to refer the idea of the speech. Thus, Putin was able to transmit his ideas through the use of figurative language in his speech.

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