



## An Analysis of Figurative Language Used in Beowulf Poem Translated by Burton Raffel

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**Abstract:** Purpose of this study is to find the figurative language in Beowulf poem translated by Burton Raffel. The researcher read and studied Beowulf poem which were the subject of study. The poem itself composed in Old English consisting of 3,182 lines. Beowulf is an epic poem that consist seven six-line stanzas. The researcher use descriptive-qualitative method to collect the data. The language itself spoken in Anglo-Saxon England. Beowulf poem doesn't rhyme not the same as most modern poem this day that have rhyme. But, to create unity and flow of language, poets like Beowulf instead used figurative language in their poetry. According to Perrine (in Arp, 2010: 73), figurative language refers to language that is not literary true but that is used to create truthful meaning and understanding. From the result of the study, the researcher found kinds of figurative language in this poem include; assonance, alliteration, kennings, similes, metaphors, imagery, caesura. stock and allusion.

**Keywords:** *Beowulf, Figurative Language, Poem Analysis, Poem*

### INTRODUCTION

Laurence Perrine in An Introduction to the Poetry, (New York: Harcourt, Brace Javavovich, 1977), p.590 says poem expresses the idea in line by using diction, figure of speech, imaginary, rhythm, and sound and meaning pattern. According to Paul Valery, poetry is an art based on language, but poetry has more general meaning that is difficult to define because it is less determine; poetry also expresses a certain state of mind. Frieda Hughes also state that poetry is the way of communicating a vast array of thoughts and feeling by concentrating them into minimal, or

even single points which describe a whole. Poetic diction is different from daily expression that have straight cleared meaning and literal purposes.

According to Perrine in An Introduction to the Poetry, p.61. figurative language is broadly defined as anyway of saying something other than ordinary way and it is more narrowly definable as a way of saying one thing and meaning another.

According to Jay Parini in the definition of poetry, 2006 p.31 says "The epic is one of the major genres. The term is rather, flexible, and it often refers loosely to works written on a grand

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scale with heroic dimensions.”. An Epic is a long narrative poem that celebrates a hero’s deeds. The word “epic” comes from the ancient Greek term “*epos*,” which means “story, word, poem.” The earliest epic tales survived for centuries as oral traditions before they were finally written down. They came into existence as spoken words and were retold by poet after poet from one generation to the next.

Beowulf is an epic poem that tells the story of the hero, Beowulf, who kills two horrible monsters before eventually becoming king and dying in one final battle with a third monster. The main character of this poem is Beowulf itself. According to Sapardi (2012) The characters created by the author in the poem the classics face their own destiny in various ways. The ideas and fate of these characters depend on their social background. The relationship between the ideas of the characters in literature and real society can be described through the character itself.

Kennedy (1983:397), states that many readers who have no trouble understanding and enjoying prose find poetry difficult. The difficulty of poetry is sometimes it can’t be understood and enjoyed on first reading, because a poem has to be read slowly, carefully, attentively and more than one reading. Wardaugh (1972:3) states that language is an arbitrary system of vocal symbols used for human interaction. The main role of language is as the tool of communication. By using language, we can share our feelings, intents, information’s, and messages to others.

There are two kinds of language, first is literal language and second is figurative language. While literal language uses words exactly according to their direct, straightforward, or conventionally accepted meanings or denotation. The figurative language has the implied meaning or we can say that the meaning of the figurative language is based on the context.

The objective of this study is the poem aims to find and reveal the figurative language used in Beowulf poem translated by Burton Raffel.

Figurative language or also we can call figure of speech is one of the linguistics features. Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) explains that figurative language is known to be one element of what a text offers, in a particular special

aesthetic value in poetic text. one of the materials taught in English language teaching, especially for higher education level, is literature. As we know, the literature applies in linguistics features including poem, poetry, prose, movie and novels. In creating such of literature works, writers love to use figurative language in gain to attract the readers and listeners.

According to Werren and Martin (in Amriani: 2009) that” Figure of Speech is a departure from ordinary form the expression or the ordinary course of idea in order to produce a greater effect “. Figurative language is used to describe an object, person, or situation by comparing it with something else.

According to Abrams (1999, p. 96), “Figurative language is a conspicuous departure from what users of a language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect.” In stating ideas in fascinating way, resembling the look of people and things, and describing something nonliteral, people use the figurative languages.

### **Types of Figurative Language**

There are many classifications of types of figurative language based on different experts. Rozakis (1995) mentions that there are 22 kinds of figurative language and divides it into allegory, ambiguity, apostrophe, conceit, connotation and denotation, contrast, metaphor, irony, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metonymy, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, personification, sarcasm, simile, symbolism, synecdoche, synesthesia, transferred epithet, and understatement.

Furthermore, Siqueira, Marques and Gibbs (2016) point out that metaphor, metonymy, idiom and proverb are types of 14 figurative languages. Meanwhile, according to Abrams (1999), figurative language consists of 17 types; they are alliteration, allegory, allusion, ambiguity, antithesis, hyperbole, imagery, irony, metaphor, metonymy, onomatopoeia, paradox, personification, pun, simile, synecdoche, and understatement. Moreover, one of Indonesian man of letters, Tengsoe Tjahyono, divides figurative language into four groups in generally. Those are comparison, affirmation, contradiction and satire. Specifically, comparison consists of personification,

metaphor, simile, metonymy, symbol, litotes, euphemism, hyperbole, synecdoche, allusion, periphrasis, antonomasia, allegory. Meanwhile, in affirmation, there are pleonasm, parallelism, repetition, tautology, symmetry, climax, anticlimax, asyndeton, polysyndeton, inversion, rhetoric, correction, enumeration, ellipsis, interruption, exclamation.

Furthermore, contradiction consists of paradox, contradiction in terminis, antithesis, occupational, anachronism. Lastly, in satire, there are irony, cynicism, and sarcasm. This study is concerned with the types of figurative language proposed by Perrine (2008). They are simile, metaphor, synecdoche, personification, metonymy, allegory, overstatement (hyperbole), irony, symbol, paradox, apostrophe and understatement due to the needs and the focus of the study.

## METHOD

The data in this research is analyzed by descriptively qualitative method. There are two sources of data used in this study. The main data of this research is the Beowulf Poem by Burton Raffel. The data are in the form of dialogues from the poem. The supporting data are taken from journal articles, books and thesis that are related with the theory used in this study.

According to Meldy et al. (2020), this type of research is “a series of activities related to the method of collecting library data, reading, recording, and processing research materials,” among which are “scientific journal, reference book, and literature” (p. 95).

In doing the research, the researcher first, collecting various words and also underline it. Second, the researcher takes some note from collecting the data that are taken as the data in the poem, which are then investigated further in terms of the types of linguistic features.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

This Chapter covers the research result of the analysis of figurative language used in Beowulf Poem Translated by Burton Raffel. The researcher read and studied the poem itself and found there are 10 figurative languages in Beowulf Poem. There are; alliteration, assonance, kennings, imagery, caesura,

symbolism, stock, simile, metaphors, and allusion.

For alliteration, the researcher found there are 4: consonant “w”, “b”, “n”, and “h”. For assonance, the researcher found there are 2: vowel “o” and “i”. In kennings, the researcher found there are 3 kennings. For the imagery, the researcher found there are 3 imagery. In caesura, the researchers found there are 4 caesura. For symbolism, the researcher found there are 3 symbolism. In stock epithets, there are 3 of them. For simile and metaphors, the researcher found there are 3 of them. And last, for allusion the researcher found 2.

### Discussion

#### Alliteration

In Beowulf poem line 30, the researcher found an alliteratively intense repetition of “w” sounds in every line, and often multiple times per line.

*“Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel went up to Herot,*

*Wondering what the warriors would do in that hall when their drinking was done.”*

In Beowulf poem line 35, the researcher found there are alliteration of “b” sounds.

*“Unknowing in their beds and ran out with their bodies, The blood dripping, behind him, back.”*

In Beowulf poem line 70, the researcher found there are alliteration of “n” sounds.

*“No truce, accepting no settlement, no price In gold or land, and paying the living For one crime only with another.*

*No one waited for reparation from his plundering claws;”*

In Beowulf poem line 90, the researcher found there are alliteration of “h” sounds.

*“And sometimes they sacrificed to the old stone gods, Made heathen vows, hoping for Hell’s*

*Support, the Devil’s guidance in driving Their affection off. That was their way, And the heathen’s only hope, Hell.”*

#### Alliteration

The other figurative language is assonance. (Baldick, 1996, p. 26) defines it as “the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in the stressed syllables (and sometimes in the following unstressed syllables) of neighboring words”,

In Beowulf poem line 155, the researcher found there are sets alliteration, one with “o” sounds and one with “e” sounds.

*“All **o**f that race from the **e**arth. I swam.*

*In the blackness **o**f the night, hunting  
monsters*

*Out **o**f the **o**cean, and killing them **o**ne  
By **o**ne; death was my **e**rrand and the fate  
They had **e**arned. Now Grendel and I are  
called.”*

In Beowulf poem line 175, the researcher found there are alliteration of “i” sounds.

*“And gorge his belly with our bodies. **I**f he -  
can,*

***I**f he can. And **L**think, if my **t**ime will have to  
come.”*

In Beowulf poem line 176, the researcher found there are alliteration of “o” sounds.

*“There’ll be nothing to mourn **o**ver, no  
corpse, to prepare For its grave: Grendel  
will carry **o**ur blood*

*Flesh to the moors, crunch **o**n **o**ur bones  
And smear torn scraps of **o**ur skin **o**n the  
walls*

***Q**of his den. No, I expect no Danes.”*

### Kennings

A kenning is a metaphorical phrase or compound used to name a person, place, or thing indirectly. The researcher found there are lines that indicate kennings:

In Beowulf poem line 1;

*“Powerful monster” which means  
“Grendel”*

In the poem Grendel as known as the powerful monster that haunt the kingdom, where the people lives. No one has defeated Grendel before, until Beowulf came and kill the beast.

In Beowulf poem line 163;

*“Sheltered of warriors” which means  
“Hrothgar”*

Hrothgar is king itself. Who ruled the kingdom. He also help Beowulf development into maturity and has a same heroic code that rooted in his body.

In Beowulf poem 7;

*“The Almighty” which means “God”*

As the nordic mythology they served many Gods. Like Zeus, the all-father, Poseidon, etc.

### Imagery

Is the general term covering the use of literary devices which encourage the reader to form a mental picture in their mind about the way something or someone looks, sounds, behaves, etc.

The researcher finds there are lines that indicate imagery:

In Beowulf poem line 8 – 13;

*“These beautiful plains marked off by  
oceans, then proudly setting the sun and  
moon to glow across the land and light it- “*

In these line, show us some imagery setting. The author of this poetry want us to imagine some beautiful scenery that cover by sun and moon to shine the plains.

In Beowulf poem line 138 – 141;

*“Standing on that prince’s own hearth,  
helmeted, the silvery metal of his mail shirt  
gleaming with a smith’s high art, - “*

The author of this poetry, want us to imagine the prince itself, cover with helmet and silvery mail shirt.

In Beowulf poem line 218 – 222;

*“And then, in the morning, this mead-hall  
glittering with new light would be drenched  
by blood- “*

In these scene, Grendel imagine that she will cover the mead-hall with people blood.

### Caesura

Is the pause in the middle of a poetry or a line. It can be used for dramatic effect. The researcher found there are lines that indicate caesura:

In Beowulf poem line 23;

*"He knew the sea, would point the prow"*

In Beowulf poem line 57;

*"Distance was safety; the only survivors"*

In Beowulf poem line 59;

*"So Grendel ruled, fought with righteous"*

In Beowulf poem line 60;

*"One against many, and won; so Herot"*

### **Symbolism**

Symbolism is the use of symbols to represent other ideas or object in a work of literature. The researcher found there are lines that indicate symbolism:

In Beowulf poem line 19-23;

*"He was spawned in that slime, conceives by a pair of those monsters born in Cain, murderous creatures banished by God, punished forever for the crime of Abel's death."*

In Beowulf poem line 44-49;

*"-knowing by its tracks that some demon had torn his followers apart. He wept, fearing the beginning might not be the end."*

In Beowulf poem line 144-148;

*"-in the sky the sun had lit, light and life fleeing together."*

### **Stock Epithets**

Is a compound adjective to describe a specific character. The researcher found there are lines that indicate stock epithets:

*"Hell"* in reference to Grendel

*"Lord"* in reference to Hrothgar

*"Gold"* and *"Sweet"* in reference to the mead hall

### **Similes and Metaphors**

Similes and metaphors are used to create some connection between two ideas. The researcher found there are lines that indicate similes and metaphors:

In Beowulf poem line 35;

*"Thought were as quick as his greed or his claws"*

In Beowulf poem line 57;

*"Distance was safety..."*

In Beowulf poem line 158;

*"...Death was my errand."*

### **Allusion**

Allusion used in literature to reference a well-known historical event or an event in another piece of literature. The researcher found there are lines that indicate allusion:

In Beowulf poem line 20-21;

*"...monster born / of Cain."*

In Beowulf poem line 418:

*"Of his last human supper..."*

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on discussion above, nine types of figurative language are used in Beowulf poem: alliteration, assonance, kennings, imagery, caesura, symbolism, stock epithets, similes and metaphors, and allusion. The research aimed to identify the types of figurative language in Beowulf Poem. Eventually, the researcher had got data and analyzed each form based the context.

In conclusion, the researcher found four alliteration that used in Beowulf Poem, they are "w", "b", "n", and "h". Also, we can see assonance in this poem, the researcher found two assonance, they are "o" and "i". In Kennings, there are three kennings that found. In imagery, the researcher found there are three imagery. In caesura, there are four caesura that found in poem. For symbolism, The researcher found three symbolism in this poem. For stock epithets, there are three line that indicates stock epithets. The researcher also found similes and metaphors, they are three of them that indicates similes and metaphors, and the last, for allusion, the researcher found two lines that indicates allusion.

Suggestion for further research, the researcher has some limitations due to time and space constrains. Among the poem itself composed in Old English consisting of 3,182 lines, the researcher can only investigate the half of the poem.

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