

## WHY DO LECTURERS USE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN CLASSROOM? THE CASE OF EFL LECTURERS

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the lecturers' reasons of using figurative language in EFL Classroom. This research is qualitative using a case study design. The participants of this study were three EFL Lecturers who were selected using purposive sampling techniques. Their names use pseudonyms to keep the identities confidential. The instruments used are observation and interview. The data analysis techniques used in observation instruments are transcription and coding while for interviews using thematic analysis. The result of this study confirms that the lecturers' reasons of using figurative language in EFL Classroom are introducing language and culture, as a feedback to improve students' understanding on the lessons, to help students' understanding the lessons, to motivate students in learning process, to enhance the students' language style competence, and to train students' critical thinking. This study is limited on types and intensions of implementing Figurative Language in context, therefore, future researchers are recommended to elaborate the impact of its implementation and model.

**Keywords:** Figurative language, classroom, EFL lecturers, case study

### INTRODUCTION

Understanding a figurative extension of any word depends on knowing the literal meaning. Empirical studies show that to a native speaker or a highly proficient speaker of a language idiomatic expressions are not more difficult to understand or use than literal speech (Bendtz et al., 2022; Marchesin, 2022). However, second language learners generally have better knowledge of idioms whose meaning can be inferred from their literal meaning (Bohrn, Altmann, & Jacobs, 2012; Roberts, 1944; Siyanova-Chanturia & Martinez, 2015). The different kinds of figurative language, like idiomatic expressions, metonymies and metaphors. Some of them are considered conventional while some of them may be created as we speak (Gibbs, Bogdanovich, Sykes, & Barr, 1997; Graves et al., 2022). Accordingly, the comprehension of the former, usually idiomatic expressions, depends on retrieval of a figurative meaning stored in memory, whereas the comprehension of the latter, usually metaphors, depends on an online sense creation process (Rosidi, 2021).

Figurative language is one of the most arduous topics that natural language processing has to face. Unlike literal language, the former takes advantage of linguistic devices such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, irony, and so on, in order to project more complex meanings which, usually, represent a real challenge, not only for teaching learning process, but for humans as well (Ijinska & Ivanova, 2020).

Figurative devices, moreover, entail cognitive capabilities to make abstractions as well as to interpret the meaning beyond literal words; i.e. figurative language reflects patterns of thought within a communicative, and thus, social framework (Rafatbakhsh & Ahmadi, 2020; Sumathi, Gowtham, Naveen, & Subramani, 2021). In this respect, communication is more than sharing a common code, but being capable of inferring information beyond syntax or semantics; i.e. figurative language implies information not grammatically expressed. If such information is not correctly unveiled, then the real meaning is not achieved and accordingly the figurative effect is lost.

In the classroom context, the interactional activities of teachers and learners in a typical audiolingual classroom are characterized in terms of three Ps; presentation, practice, and production. At the presentation stage, the already selected and graded linguistic items are introduced through a carefully constructed dialogue that contains several examples of the new items. At the second stage, the learners practice the new linguistic items through mechanical, meaningful, or communicative drills. At the production stage, the learners are given the opportunity to role-play dialogues similar to the ones introduced in class or in the language lab. They are supposed to modify the language they have memorized in order to vary their production (Harmer, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2008). When lecturers teach, they sometimes use figurative language with a certain intention.

However, the question is whether the message from lecturers using figurative language can be conveyed properly to students.

Research related to Figurative language has been carried out by several researchers in various contexts and multidisciplinary sciences. Figurative language in the song (Dewi & Putra, 2022), dimension of figurative language used in prisons (Pacheco Baldó, 2022), microcomputers used to enhance the students' comprehension on figurative language (Nippold, Schwarz, & Lewis, 1992), implementation of discovery approach to teach figurative language (MacArthur & Littlemore, 2008), figurative language used to expand the students' vocabulary (Lazar, 1996), figurative language is necessary to develop children language and literature (Colston & Kuiper, 2002). In this study, the writers focused to elaborate the lecturers' reasons of using figurative language in EFL Classroom.

## METHOD

This research is qualitative (Creswell, 2007) using a case study design (Mason, 1996). This design was chosen to achieve the purpose of this study, namely to reveal the EFL Lecturer's reason of using figurative language in the classroom. The participants of this study were three EFL Lecturers who were selected using purposive sampling techniques (Creswell, 2014). Their names use pseudonyms to keep the identities confidential. Gabriella is a lecturer in Cross Cultural Understanding, aged 36, and has been teaching for 15 years. Ivonne is a lecturer who teaches Research on ELT, age 50 and has served for 25 years. George is a lecturer who teaches Research on ELT and has been teaching at UKI Toraja for 30 years. The instruments used are observation and interview (Creswell, 2014). The data analysis techniques used in observation instruments are transcription and coding (Patton, 1990) while for interviews using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kvale, 1996).

## RESULT

In this section, the writers observed and interviewed the lecturers of English Study Program of UKI Toraja that become subject of this research. Observation and interview was used to collect data about some issues relate to the reasons of figurative languages used in teaching English

by lecturers of English Study Program of UKI Toraja. The result of lecturers' observation and interview related to the topic of reasons of figurative language used as follow:

### a. Introducing language and culture

The lecturer, Gabriella, assumed that through the use of figurative language she could introduce the figurative language to the students in teaching English. The lecturer tried to explain the materials in simple language, but sometimes the use of figurative language could not be denied. The use of figurative language through analogy was by comparing for instance the human being habit with the things around the students.

"I tried to explain with words that are simple but cannot deny that we often use explicit words because from there we learn about the language and culture meant we sometimes use the analogy in explaining the material to the students"

*Interview with Gabriella, 14 April 2022 at 12.30-13.05 p. m.*

Moreover, Gabriella assumed that in communication with people in different country especially with the native speakers, they usually use that words/phrases that needed to be understand well because these words/phrase are ambiguous ones. It is very necessary to introduce and teach to the students in order to grasp the understanding in communication.

"Because language and culture, the English men for example often use ambiguous words in speaking and have meaning depending on the context"

*Interview with Gabriella, 14 April 2022 at 12.30-13.05 p. m.*

Regarding with the quotation interviews above, the reasons of using figurative language showed that Gabriella was to introduce the kinds of language variety and culture of native speakers moreover to teach how to interpret the use of figurative language through context.

Gabriella assumed that through the use of figurative language she could introduce the language (language variety/figurative language) to the students in teaching English. The lecturer tried to explain the materials in simple language, but sometimes the use of figurative language could not be denied. The use of figurative language through analogy was by comparing for instance the human being habit with the things around the students. Moreover, Gabriella assumed that in communication with people in different country

especially with the native speakers, they usually use the words/phrase that needed to be understood well because that words/phrases are ambiguous ones. It is very necessary to introduce and teach to the students in order to grasp the understanding in communication.

- b. As a feedback to improve students' understanding on the lessons

The lecturer, George, gave feedback by using figurative language in order to improve learner performance; it provides guidance to students in their effort to raise their understanding on the lessons. Feedback is generally given for informational and/or motivational purposes. George gave Informational feedback to reinforce learning.

"Yes often, before going to determine about to what extent of their understanding of the material provided, so sometimes the answer without words, the usual smile or nodding as non-verbal language"

*Interview with George on Wednesday, 22 April 2022 at 10.05-10.40 a. m.*

Moreover, George stated that figurative language use in teaching English to grasp the students' responses in order to know those who understand and do not understand the lesson.

"Often, because previously I wanted to capture how the students respond to the lessons because there are students who are inventions responsive and there are those who do not understand the lesson, so I know oh those who understand and do not understand the lesson."

*Interview with George on Wednesday, 22 April 2022 at 10.05-10.40 a. m.*

Regarding with the quotation interviews above, George's reasons of using figurative language in order to improve learner performance; which feedback use to provide guidance to students in their effort to raise their understanding on the lessons and to the students who understand and do not understand the lesson.

George gave feedback by using figurative language in order to improve learner performance; it provides guidance to students in their effort to raise their understanding on the lessons. Feedback is generally given for informational and/or motivational purposes. George gave Informational feedback to reinforce learning. Moreover, George stated that figurative language use in teaching English to grasp the students' responses in order to know those who understand and do not understand the lesson.

- c. To help students' understanding the lessons

Explanation of the lesson is the shortest stage, and happens right at the beginning. The lecturer, George, explained the lesson as thoroughly as possible using examples that were real to the students' life namely through the terms which usually used by them. During this stage the students should get all the information they need to use the new piece of language well and complete the tasks, as result in the condition that the students still encountered the problem on understanding the material therefore George used the figurative language to help students in understanding the material well.

"The ambiguous one, if they are not clear, I still give them an example of an appropriate explanation, with their lives; for example, often uses the term refresh, refresh that's ambiguous, refresh it frequently they use while working on assignment in lap top, oh it turns refresh it is making a fresh one, so not only refresh lap top but also what they've learned during this had been being chaotic.

*Interview with George on Wednesday, 22 April 2022 at 10.05-10.40 a. m.*

Similarly with Ivonne opinion that the use of figurative language in order to help the students' understanding on the lessons because there are those who do not understand the lesson, so I know oh those who understand and do not understand the lesson. The students' character because the students have the different character. Therefore, the teacher should understand the students' character before using the figurative language. For instance the hyperbole which exaggerates or overstates something from the real fact, so if it uses to correct students' mistakes for those who are sensitive or easy to be offended it will decrease their motivation in learning process.

"Yes, it's very important because the character of the child and the child's ability is very different so it is very important the use of ambiguous words in the learning process of learning so that they can understand it according to their individual character"

*Interview with Ivonne on Thursday, 30 April 2022 at 13.00-13.25 p. m.*

Considering on the interviews quotes above, the lecturers' reasons on using figurative language are as the assistance for students in understanding the material well and emphasizing that through figurative language use, the lecturer

considered on the students' character because the students have the different characters.

Explanation of the lesson is the shortest stage, and happens right at the beginning. George explained the lesson as thoroughly as possible using examples that were real to the students' life namely through the terms which usually used by them. During this stage the students should get all the information they need to use the new piece of language well and complete the tasks, as result in the condition that the students still encountered the problem on understanding the material therefore George used the figurative language to help students in understanding the material well. Similarly with the Ivonne opinion that the use of figurative language in order to help the students' understanding on lessons moreover she emphasized that through figurative language use, she considered on the students' character because the students have the different character. Therefore, the teacher should understand the students' character before using the figurative language. For instance the hyperbole which exaggerates or overstates something from the real fact, so if it uses to correct students' mistakes for those who are sensitive or easy to be offended it will decrease their motivation in learning process.

d. To motivate students in learning process

The lecturer's reason in using figurative language was to motivate students in teaching learning process. The lecturer, George, assumed that he usually used figurative language especially personification in motivating the students such in his statement that he personified the knowledge like human being that worth lives but knowledge goes. Which meant the students got grade of "A" on specific subject but when the lecturer asked the question related to that subject as result the students could answer it. That's why the lecturer said their knowledge goes. Definitely, the knowledge does not has feed like human being that can walk and run, it was only the types of figurative language namely personification. Through that figurative language use, the lecturer George observed the students that they realized their mistakes by showing the shy face, turning their face off.

"Yes, often but sometimes motivate them to find faults, such as hell but it's a bit hard to motivate, worth lives but knowledge goes, so their worth/grade is "A" but what is being

asked that they've forgotten, values are down on paper but forgot knowledge, what students do after I say like that they turns out be shy, oh we are wrong actually"

*Interview with George on Wednesday, 22 April 2022 at 10.05-10.40 a. m.*

Moreover, George said that by using figurative language he could make the class more alive because he observed that sometimes the students redundantly gloomy as a result of the difficulty of the material provided.

"Yes I think it is very important because it is part of what makes the classroom atmosphere so alive lest student redundantly continued gloomy as a result of the difficulty of the material provided, so I guess there is a figurative language that can be used in teaching, so they are Fresh back so it is very important to understand the classroom management"

*Interview with George on Wednesday, 22 April 2022 at 10.05-10.40 a. m.*

Similarly, Ivonne said that the use of figurative language used to motivate the lazy students as following quote:

"This sort of criticism to the student, if the student who diligently phrases will not appear, but for students who are lazy and perfunctory come automatically lectures using this language because the language is very important for adults to check the ability for automatic no longer need to hit, but must be struck with the languages that trend so that they can realize that oh he quipped while and let him realize the words themselves and study so that they can come back and realize"

*Interview with Ivonne on Thursday, 30 April 2022 at 13.00-13.25 p. m.*

Moreover, Ivonne assumed that through figurative language could develop students' interest and open-minded in learning English.

"...On the other hand, students can develop interest and open-minded"

*Interview with Ivonne on Thursday, 30 April 2022 at 13.00-13.25 p. m.*

Considering on the interview quotes above, the reasons of using figurative language namely through that figurative language use, the

lecturer observed the students that they realized their mistakes by showing the shy face, turning their face off, could develop students' interest and open-minded in learning English, figurative language used to motivate the lazy students and by using figurative language he could make the class more alive because he observed that sometimes the students redundantly gloomy as a result of the difficulty of the material provided.

The lecturer's reason in using figurative language was to motivate students in teaching learning process. George assumed that he usually used figurative language especially personification in motivating the students such in his statement that he personified the the knowledge like human being that worth lives but knowledge goes. Which meant the students got grade of "A" on specific subject but when the lecturer asked the question related to that subject as result the students could answer it. That is why the lecturer said "their knowledge goes". Definitely, the knowledge does not has feed like human being that can walk and run, it was only the types of figurative language namely personification. Through that figurative language use, George observed the students that they realized their mistakes by showing the shy face, turning their face off. Moreover, George stated that by using figurative language he could make the class more alive because he observed that sometimes the students redundantly gloomy as a result of the difficulty of the material provided. Similarly, Ivonne stated that the use of figurative language used to motivate the lazy students. Moreover, Ivonne assumed that through figurative language could develop students' interest and open-minded in learning English.

e. To Enhance the students' language style competence

The use of figurative language by the lecturer, Gabriella, in teaching English was in order to enhance the language only. The exaggeration on something was seemed to make different values in her language, clearly stated in following quotes.

"I tried to explain in accordance with the facts, but that does not correspond to the facts, for example like this, our distance in thousand-mile when the distance is close, even though we only exaggerate course, the language needs to be enhanced"

*Interview with Gabriella 14 April 2022  
.05 p. m.*

The use of figurative language by Gabriella in teaching English is in order to enhance the language only. The exaggeration on something was seemed showing the different values of language use.

f. To train students' critical thinking

In using figurative language the lecturers assumed that such language variety was effective to train students' critical thinking. As George stated that through figurative language the students' critical thinking could train their critical thinking and it clearly stated as following quotes:

"yes, to train students' critical thinking"

*Interview with George on Wednesday,  
22 April 2022 at 10.05-10.40 a. m.*

Moreover, Ivonne assumed that by using figurative language in explaining something that the contrast one was very important especially students can pull their language action to provide some sort of negotiations and force them how to speak so that they can also be trained to use that language.

"I return it to the student, when my students given feedback that there is a kind of feedback, it's a good teaching style for communication between lecturer and students because when explaining something that the contrast one was very important especially students can pull their language action to provide some sort of negotiations and force them how to speak so that they can also be trained to use that language"

*Interview with Ivonne on Thursday, 30  
April 2015 at 13.00-13.25 p. m.*

Furthermore, Ivonne stated that her reason of using figurative language because through figurative language, the students could expend all their rhetoric. This is very important so they could throw no-confidence vote if they are capable of using rhetoric, as at the university level it is needed.

"It is also a very interesting language learning, which means learning can negotiate, could expend all their rhetoric, this is very important so they could throw

no-confidence vote if they are capable of using rhetoric that, as at the university level it is needed and especially specialized in the subjects I teach”

*Interview with Ivonne on Thursday, 30 April 2015 at 13.00-13.25 p. m.*

Regarding with the interview quotes above, clearly showed that the lecturers assumed that such language variety was effective to train students’ critical thinking, the students could expend all the students’ rhetoric, and by using figurative language in explaining something that the contrast one was very important especially students can pull their language action to provide some sort of negotiations and force them how to speak so that they can also be trained to use that language.

In using figurative language the lecturers assumed that such language variety was effective to train students’ critical thinking. As George stated that through figurative language the students’ critical thinking could train their critical thinking. Moreover, the lecturer Ivonne assumed that by using figurative language in explaining something that the contrast one was very important especially students can pull their language action to provide some sort of negotiations and force them how to speak so that they can also be trained to use that language. Furthermore, the lecturer Ivonne stated that her reason of using figurative language because through figurative language, the students could expend all their rhetoric. This is very important so they could throw no-confidence vote if they are capable of using rhetoric, as at the university level it is needed.

This study shows that the lecturers’ reasons of using figurative language in EFL Classroom. Their intensions such as introducing language and culture, as a feedback to improve students’ understanding on the lessons, to help students’ understanding the lessons, to motivate students in learning process, to enhance the students’ language style competence, and to train students’ critical thinking. The result of this study highlights the previous researches, figurative language in the song (Dewi & Putra, 2022), dimension of figurative language used in prisons (Pacheco Baldó, 2022), microcomputers used to enhance the students’ comprehension on

figurative language (Nippold et al., 1992), implementation of discovery approach to teach figurative language (MacArthur & Littlemore, 2008), figurative language used to expand the students’ vocabulary (Lazar, 1996), figurative language is necessary to develop children language and literature (Colston & Kuiper, 2002).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this study, it can be concluded that the lecturers’ reasons of using figurative language in EFL Classroom are introducing language and culture, as a feedback to improve students’ understanding on the lessons, to help students’ understanding the lessons, to motivate students in learning process, to enhance the students’ language style competence, and to train students’ critical thinking. This study is limited on types and intensions of implementing Figurative Language in context, therefore, future researchers are recommended to elaborate the impact of its implementation and model.

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