

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the research question, the study's aims, the study's scope, the study, the significance of the study, and the terminology.

A. Background of Study

Language serves as a tool for communication, allowing us to express our thoughts, ideas, emotions, and feelings to others. It is a system of accepted spoken, signed, or written symbols that enables individuals to communicate as members of a social group and participants in its culture. Typically, language flows effortlessly when we need to speak, and it takes something like social awkwardness, mental confusion, or a sudden coughing fit to make us silent when we wish to communicate.¹

Linguistics is the scientific study of language, encompassing theoretical and descriptive analyses. It connects to applied language studies and language acquisition, which concentrate on learning specific languages. Before the 20th century, linguistics evolved within other academic fields and wasn't exclusively based on scientific methodology.²

Linguistic analysis traditionally covers various areas, including syntax (sentence structure rules), semantics (meaning), morphology (word structure), phonetics (speech sounds and sign language gestures), phonology (language-specific sound systems), and pragmatics (the role of social context in meaning). Subfields like bio-linguistics, which examines language's biological aspects and evolution, and psycholinguistics, which investigates the psychological factors influencing language, bridge this

¹ Iman Alshami, "Language and Linguistics," March 1, 2019.

² Ralph Fasold and Jeffrey Connor-Linton, *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

division. These interdisciplinary studies connect and enhance the understanding of language across its different dimensions.³

Figurative language refers to expressions that go beyond the literal meanings of words to convey a deeper message or idea. This concept, originating from the mid-nineteenth century and the old French word “figurative,” meaning metaphorical, is often used by writers through figures of speech like similes. Journalists utilize this figurative language by employing rhetorical devices such as analogies to enhance communication.

Figurative Language or figure of speech is a way of using language creatively to convey a message imaginatively, intended to evoke a specific effect on the reader or listener. Writer’s craft figurative language using devices like similes, metaphors, personification, and other literary techniques that enhance imagery, such as alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia. These expressions refer to words or phrases that hold meaning but are not meant to be taken literally.⁴

Figurative language is a form of expression that goes beyond the literal meaning of words. Often found in comparisons and exaggerations, it is commonly used to add creativity to written or spoken language or to clarify complex ideas. Figurative language involves stretching the true meaning of words for emphasis, whether to sound artistic, make a point, or communicate more engagingly and understandably.

Figurative language is often used in narrative writing to help the author connect emotionally with the reader. In contrast, literal language uses the exact meaning of words without any imagination or exaggeration. For instance, if athletes perform well, they might be described as “on fire” figuratively, but if their clothes catch on fire (which I hope doesn’t happen), that would be a literal situation.⁵

³ R. L. Trask and Peter Stockwell, *Language and Linguistics: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed, Routledge Key Guides (Abingdon [England] ; New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁴ Raymond W. Gibbs, “What’s Figurative about Figurative Language?,” *Lingua* 287 (May 1, 2023): 103520

⁵ Rachel Giora, *On Our Mind: Salience, Context, and Figurative Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

For instance, figurative language is also found in *The 99 Superhero comic*. The connection between figurative language and *The 99 superhero comic* is that figurative language used in verbal and written communication. Many writers believe figurative language is only found in literary texts such as comics, poetry, short stories, novels, and role-playing. In contrast, the use of figurative language is also found in speeches, essays, articles, and translations of the Qur'an.⁶

In *The 99 superhero comics* explicitly and implicitly use figurative language. This use of figurative language is very interesting to study, and it does not mean to reduce, add, or change the content of the comic itself. This study only intends to describe the types of figurative language in *The 99 Superhero Comic* by Naif Al-Mutawa.

Meanwhile, the writer of *The 99 Superhero Comic* is Naif Al-Mutawa. He was the founder and C.E.O. of Teshkeel Media Group. His knowledge led to a position as a respected person. He completed the comic and published it featuring a team of superheroes with special abilities based on the 99 attributes of Allah in Islam. The comic has some virtues encouraged by several faiths. Forbes listed the 99 as one of the 'Top 20 Trends Sweeping the Globe' in January 2008. His comic books inspired many young people who embody the teaching and tolerance of Islam.

The 99 superhero comic has been featured by global media outlets such as The New York Times, CNN, Newsweek, BBC, and The Washington Post. The idea behind The 99 is inspired by the 99 attributes of Allah, many of which represent traits that humans can embody. While the comic series is not religious, it seeks to convey Islamic values that, according to creator Dr. Al-Mutawa, are universal.

The 99 superhero comics were first published in 2006 by *Teshkeel Comics*, a division of the Teshkeel media group. Dr. Naif Al-Mutawa explains this media as a story. This story was presented through interviews

⁶ Annalisa Baicchi, ed., *Figurative Meaning Construction in Thought and Language*, vol. 9, *Figurative Thought and Language* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1075/ftl.9>.

and media coverage in 2010-2011 when The 99 entered the US comics market through a ‘crossover’ collaboration with DC Comics.⁷

International media aims to reveal and identify cartoon comics as a medium to ‘correct’ negative perceptions of Islam/Muslims, which mark them as ‘global’ and ‘Islamic. His aim was to use cartoon comics as a medium to ‘correct’ negative perceptions of Islam/Muslims themselves. What he meant by ‘corrective purpose’ provides a context for his story about the comic The 99, which he built as a fantasy to underscore what made The 99 global, but it wasn’t Islam.

Generally, comics are considered humorous works designed to evoke artistry and laughter. Apart from that, comics are a source that produces images with an additional dimension in the form of depth in the comic. In comic books, it is intended to condense and reduce complex issues into one image that is easy to remember and often contains deep-seated meaning. It is common knowledge that comics have spread widely and attracted the interest of many people to read them.⁸

The point where most people buy Islamic comics to be an effective learning medium for learning about Islam, such as history, Islamic figures, and Islamic advice. Look at the cartoon segment first before discussing the day’s main news. Most comics have visual metaphors and caricatures to address complex political situations. Often, cartoons in comics contain biased portraits of people and events.⁹

The purpose of figurative language is to provide clearer explanations because it describes the comparison of different things that have meaning behind the expression. In addition, this also proves that the use of figurative language is more colorful, rich, and aesthetic and attracts readers. Based on this explanation, the researcher can conclude that figurative language is

⁷ John B Newhall, “Devoted Heroes: Muslim Superheroes, Comics, and Fundamentalism,” *Lawrence University*, 2019, 26.

⁸ Jasbeer Musthafa Mamalipurath, *TEDified Islam: Postsecular Storytelling in New Media* (Springer Nature, 2024).

⁹ Gift Ngozi Okata, Thomas K. Egwuonwu, and Clara O. K. Egwuonwu, “Language and Image Interaction in Cartoons: A Stylistic Analysis of Language Use and Humour in Selected Punch Newspaper Cartoons,” *Beyond Babel: BU Journal of Language, Literature, and Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2020): 1–23.

language or sentences that contain a meaning that exaggerates or attributes the meaning of something.¹⁰

Figurative language has the purpose of comparing or to compare or analogizing something with another in order so that the meaning becomes clearer, more interesting, and more real. The connection between figurative language and *The 99: The Comic Superheroes Inspired by Islam* is characteristic of the comic language style, including the arrangement of the words from the comic and sentences of the comic, which has a unique tone, concise, that it is easy to understand, satisfying thinkers and laymen, so that laymen are easy to understand can satisfy the mind and soul, also the beauty and fixity of its meanings.

This research focuses on types of figurative language found in *The 99: the comic superheroes inspired by Islam*. The reason for choosing this research is that, even though this comic is old, the themes of diversity and representation in this comic are still very relevant in today's social context, especially in discussions about identity and tolerance.¹¹

Innovation in the genre in The 99 Comics is an effort to incorporate Islamic values into the superhero genre so that it can provide a new perspective that many people have not explored. The cultural impact of comics has been influential in introducing Muslim superhero characters and shaping positivity in media; examining its impact can provide insight into the evolution of representation in pop culture. Meanwhile, linguistic analysis in studying this comic's language and communication style can reveal how characters and themes are depicted and how language reflects social and cultural values.¹²

Analyzing it can reveal how the media shapes society's view of positive Muslim identity. Although the comic was published long ago, discussion about the adaptation and reception of digital comic media today

¹⁰ John B Newhall, "Devoted Heroes: Muslim Superheroes, Comics, and Fundamentalism," *Lawrence University*, 2019, 26.

¹¹ Adnan Mahmutovic, "Ms. Marvel : Transnational Superhero Iconography," *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 13, no. 6 (November 2, 2022): 869–83.

¹² Laura Antola, "Creating Transnational Superheroes. The Adaptation of American Superhero Comics in Finland in the Late Twentieth Century," *University of Turku*, 2024.

can be an interesting perspective among Muslims worldwide. Given the popularity of 'The 99' in various countries, this analysis can open up discussion about the impact of globalization on local cultures and how this comic plays a role in cross-cultural dialogue.

In moral and ethical terms, this comic conveys many moral messages related to tolerance, friendship, and diversity. Through the language used in the comic, we can understand how the characters interact and how Islamic cultural values are conveyed. This provides a new dimension in linguistic studies. In the context of an increasingly polarized world, an analysis of 'The 99' can help explore issues such as tolerance and identity and how comics can serve as a bridge between cultures.¹³

This comic teaches positive values such as cooperation, tolerance, and friendship. Analyzing these comics can help us understand how print media can be a tool for spreading good moral messages. Innovation in this genre is one of the superhero comics inspired by Islam. Even though it was published long ago, the issues raised in this comic, such as identity and tolerance, are still very relevant in the current social context.

This comic can play a role in bridging understanding between Western and Eastern cultures. Analyzing these comics can help explain how comics can strengthen intercultural dialogue. It's important to see how the superhero genre can evolve and encompass various cultural and linguistic backgrounds worldwide.

Based on the explanation above, this research conducted. This research will analyze figurative language found in *The 99: The Comic Superheroes Inspired by Islam*, which previous researchers have never studied. Hence, the title of this research is **"An Analysis of Figurative Language Found In The 99: The Comic Superheroes Inspired by Islam"**.

B. Research Questions

This research is aimed at answering the following question:

¹³ Adnan Mahmutovic, "Ms. Marvel : Transnational Superhero Iconography," *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 13, no. 6 (November 2, 2022): 869–83.

1. What are the types of figurative language found in *The 99: The Comic Superheroes Inspired by Islam*?
2. What is the contextual meaning of the figurative language that can be used in *The 99: The Comic Superheroes Inspired by Islam*?

C. The Aims of Study

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the aims of the research are:

1. To identify the types of figurative language found in *The 99: The Comic Superheroes Inspired by Islam*.
2. To find out the contextual meaning of figurative language found in *The 99: The Comic Superheroes Inspired by Islam*.

D. The Scope of the Study

The scope and limitations of this research are only to study and analyze about 11 types of figurative language, as claimed by Perrine 2018¹⁴, the types in the figurative language have 11 types. These 11 types included Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Apostrophe, Metonymy, Symbol, Allegory, Paradox, Overstatement/Hyperbole, Understatement, and Irony. Found in *The 99 superhero comic*, a comic inspired by Islam by Naif Al-mutawa. This research is limited to analyzing the variations of figurative language and finding out the contextual meaning of figurative language found in *The 99 superhero comic*.

Using Perrine's theory, the researcher can systematically analyze various types of figurative language in the comic, enabling a more holistic understanding of the text and visuals. Contextual meaning the researcher using Deborah's and Requejo's theory, speech can determine the quality to understand the meaning of speech according to the context being discussed, this is related to contextual meaning. Allows exploration of the various meanings and nuances present in the text and images, and can be applied to the analysis of other texts, opening up further research opportunities in the same field. Perrine theory (2018) is important to use in this study because

¹⁴ Greg Johnson, Thomas R. Arp, and Laurence Perrine, *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound & Sense*, Thirteenth edition (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2018).

it offers a systematic, clear, and relevant approach to analyzing figurative language in literary works. This theory is the newest from Perrine book edition, and this theory remains strong and flexible in explaining the types and functions of figurative language in various types of texts, so it greatly supports the depth and accuracy of the analysis in this study.

E. Significance of the study

This research is intended to be helpful for English students, lecturers, and other researchers. For English students, it aims to enhance their understanding of figurative language, particularly within comics. For English lecturers, the findings are expected to assist in teaching figurative language more engagingly, sparking students' interest before delving into the material. The results can serve as a valuable reference for other researchers looking to conduct studies in the same field.

F. Terminologies

1. Figurative Language

According to Perrine, figurative language is a form of conversational implication where the distinction lies in the relationship between what is explicitly said and what is suggested.¹⁵ It involves language that carries non-literal meaning, often used to express ideas differently. Figurative language encourages a broader interpretation beyond the literal words. Perrine identifies 11 types of figurative language: Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Apostrophe, Metonymy, Symbol, Allegory, Paradox, Hyperbole, Understatement, and Irony. Figurative language creates images, associations, or effects in the listener's or reader's mind, extending beyond the literal meaning of words. Figurative expressions are seen as the opposite of literal language, which focuses on the exact meaning of words. For example, the literal meaning of "it stinks" refers to an unpleasant smell, while its figurative meaning indicates something very bad. Figurative language is also used to make phrases more beautiful and interesting and to

¹⁵ Johnson, Arp, and Perrine.

enhance imagery, often appearing in poetry, song lyrics, movie scripts, and comics.¹⁶



¹⁶ I. Kadek Agus Kumara Putra and Ni Wayan Suastini, “The Types Figurative Language in Michel Jackson Song Lyrics,” *BULLET: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu* 1, no. 06 (December 17, 2022): 1177–82.