

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

People are social creatures who cannot exist without social interaction and communication, which makes it impossible for them to exist without language. Language is widely known as the tool to communicate. More than any other features, language was what set humans apart from other being. Though every species have its own way to communicate, human is the only species that has achieved cognitive linguistic communication. It is a fundamental part in building a proper communication, verbal or non-verbal. According to Goldstein (2008), language can be defined as a system of communication using sounds or symbols that can enable the ability to express, thoughts, ideas, and experiences.

In order to understand the language, moreover foreign languages, it is crucial to learn the linguistic feature of the language. Linguistic is the study of language, how it is put together and how it functions. One of the feature in linguistic is semantics. According to Griffith (2006), semantics is the study of meaning behind a sentence or a word. In understanding and learning a language, people not only understand the form of the language but also the meaning behind it. In semantics, there is a study on figurative language. McKenzie (2016) stated that figurative language conveys the meaning beyond the literal translation of the word. Meaning that figurative language is not literal. In line with McKenzie, Wibisono & Widodo (2019) also stated that figurative language is a way of expressing different interpretation with the same idea. There are many kinds of figurative languages.

According to Kennedy (2016) figurative language is divided into eight, namely simile, metaphor, personification, allusion, hyperbole, metonymy, irony, and paradox. Amongst the many kinds of figurative language according to Kennedy, the researcher decided to take focus on three kinds: metaphor, personification, and simile.

Figurative languages can be found basically everywhere, mostly in literature works. Literature is one of many ways used to express thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Usually figurative language is used in poetry to achieve that romantic, dreamy, imaginative diction. Beside poetry, songs, movies, and novels also use a big amount of figurative language. Although it is widely used, many language learners still do not know how to figure out the meaning behind some of the words in figurative language. Sometimes language learners still find it hard to understand behind the figurative meaning of some words. The figurative words cannot be found in the dictionary because the vocabulary aren't the literal meaning, for example the phrase "*She cried a river over her ex-boyfriend*". That doesn't mean the person is crying a river, but it means that she cried so much that it can fill up a river. It is crucial for language learners to study not only the literal meaning of some vocabulary in English but also the figurative. Because it gives deeper and wider understanding on the language itself.

Figurative language is one of the components of a novel. In writing a novel, writers will mostly use figurative language. The researcher used novel as a form of literature in specific as a subject to this research is because according to Perrine (1982), figurative language in novel plays a big part in the effectiveness of

language learning as it is an engaging and imaginative media to learn figurative language. In addition to that, Siraj & Farrah (2018), stated the advantages of using novels as a media to learn English language are learners' motivation increased, new cultural awareness, and vocabulary enrichment.

For this research, the researcher used the novel *The Little Prince* as the media to analyze to university students' ability in understanding figurative language. *The Little Prince* is a novel written and illustrated by French writer, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. It was first published in April 1943. It is a book that resonates for the young and adult readers. Throughout the years, it remains one of the best modern classic. In terms of the story, it is also short and simple so as the second language learner it's not difficult to read it. The story follows a man who crashed his plane and then met a prince in his adventure to different planets. This book addresses the theme of childhood, adulthood, loneliness, friendship, love, and loss. Although it is considered a children book, *The Little Prince* is heavy in the discourse about life, adults, and human nature. According to Jean (2022), the reason why *The Little Prince* is still one of the media used in learning figurative language is because it has poetic language which is perfect to learn figurative language.

In this study, the researcher has decided to conduct the research on the 6th semester English Education students of Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji to analyze their ability in understanding figurative language. As a language learner on a higher level education, it is important to understand different aspects of a language. From the observation that the researcher did, many of the university students face different obstacles in understanding the figurative language. Some of

them said that they did not fully grasp the different kinds of figurative language, because there are so many of them. Some of them also said that as second language learners, it is hard to decipher non-literal language especially in English.

This study is aimed to analyze the ability of university students' ability in understanding figurative language contained in the novel *The Little Prince*. The study of linguistic is as important as the other branches in language study. To understand certain language is to comprehend not only the literal aspects of the language but also to know the figurative meaning of the language itself.

1.2 Identification of the Research

From the explanations above, the researcher want to find out the ability of university students' ability in figurative language. Because as much as it is important to know the literal meaning of a word in foreign language, to understand the figurative language is also as crucial.

1.3 Limitation of the Research

The researcher analyzed the ability of 6th semester students on understanding figurative language used in the novel *The Little Prince*. Out of all the eight kinds of figurative language by Kennedy, the researcher will focus on only three kinds; metaphor, personification, and simile.

1.4 Problem of the Research

Regarding the problems that have been mentioned prior, the research is limited to providing a response to the following question:

1. How is the 6th semester students' ability in understanding figurative language contained in the novel *The Little Prince*?

1.5 Objective of the Research

1. To know the ability of the 6th semester students' ability in understanding figurative language in the novel *The Little Prince*.

1.6 Significances of the Research

1. For teacher

For the teacher, this research is expected to support them in teaching figurative language and raise the awareness on learning figurative language and help to better understand the figurative language in the classroom.

2. For students

For the students, the research is expected to be useful and can help in terms of understanding figurative language better and easier.

3. For other researcher

For other researcher, hopefully this research will be a helpful reference in a similar research.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

The title to this skripsi is “An Analysis on University Students’ Ability in Understanding Figurative Language in The Novel *The Little Prince*”, here are the key terms:

1.7.1 Figurative Language

Figurative language is one of the branch in semantics. It is a figure of speech used to describe something with the non-literal meaning. It can be said that figurative language is words or expressions that carry more than their literal meaning. It is a study that focused on to analyzing the meaning of a sentence or a

word.

1.7.2 Semantics

Semantics is the branch of linguistics that focused on the study of meaning and interpretation of a word, phrase, or sentence. The difference between semantics and pragmatics as study of meanings are semantics focused on the basic, literal meanings of words as considered principally as parts of a language system, whereas pragmatics concentrates on the ways in which these basic meanings are used in practice. There are three types of semantics; formal semantics, lexical semantics, and conceptual semantics.

1.7.3 Novel

Novel is a type of literary work. Generally speaking, a novel is regarded to have at least 45,000 words. As a result, a novel is essentially a longer narrative than a short story. Novels are the author's ideas written in the prose form. The novel *The Little Prince* is a modern classic by French aviator and writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in 1943 who follows the story of the little prince and a pilot on their journey to different planets.

1.7.4 University Students

University students in definition are students who receive higher education in a university. In this research, the university students are the sixth-semester students from the English Education Study Program in Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji.