COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USED IN ADVENTURE VIDEO GAME AND MOBA VIDEO GAME

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Abstract

Figurative language is a way of uttering or writing words by setting aside their literal form and replacing them with other words that describe the intended meaning. In this research, the researcher aimed to analyze the types of figurative language and cultural ambiguities used in Genshin Impact, Ghost of Tsushima, Arena of Valor, and Honor of Kings. This study used a descriptive qualitative method to collect the data. The researcher analyzed the utterances containing figurative language and examined any instances of cultural ambiguity. The researcher identified all the utterances that demonstrated types of figurative language and cultural ambiguity. The study determined the types of figurative language and cultural ambiguity employed in those video games. As a result, the researcher found 36 data of types of figurative language. There are 19 data of personification utterances, 5 data of metaphor occurrences, 3 data of simile sentences, 3 examples of hyperbole, 3 sentences containing paradox, 1 data of synecdoche utterance, 1 example of understatement, and 1 instance of antithesis. Additionally, the researcher found 21 data of types of cultural ambiguity. There are 11 instances of semantic ambiguity, 7 data of referential ambiguity sentences, and 3 data of pragmatic ambiguity utterances. Genshin Impact and Ghost of Tsushima were categorized as adventure games, while Arena of Valor and Honor of Kings were classified as MOBA video games. The study found that adventure video games used hyperbole, synecdoche, and understatement. Meanwhile, MOBA video games preferred personification, metaphor, simile, paradox, and antithesis.

Key words: Semantic, Figurative Language, Cultural Ambiguity, Video Games

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental way for humans to express ideas, thoughts, and information, and semantics helps clarify the meaning behind words and sentences. Figurative language, a key aspect of semantics, involves using expressions that deviate from the literal meanings of words to create interest and evoke vivid imagery. As Johnson and Arp (2018) emphasize, figurative language should not

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be taken literally, as it serves to enhance writing's engagement and intrigue. Among its many forms, metaphor, simile, and alliteration are frequently used to deepen the impact of language (Cuddon, 2013).

With the rise of digital media, figurative language has found new applications, particularly in online platforms such as video games. Dekavalla (2022) suggests that early metaphors in the Internet age helped users make sense of the virtual world, and today, video games often incorporate figurative language to enrich storytelling and dialogue. Jhon (2015) states that video games can influence how players learn and understand vocabulary, especially metaphors, as they offer immersive and interactive environments where language plays a significant role.

However, the use of figurative language in video games is not without challenges. Mixed messages can arise when figurative language clashes with gameplay mechanics, leading to player confusion (Ryan, 2015). Additionally, cultural ambiguity presents another issue, as figurative expressions may be misunderstood due to differences in cultural backgrounds (Samovar et al., 2009). This highlights the importance of examining how figurative language functions within video games, especially in a cross-cultural context.

Previous studies have explored figurative language in specific games, such as Fitriana and Rois (2023) who analyzed metaphors in Mobile Legends, and Tomasowa and Agoes (2022) who examined figurative language in World of Warcraft. However, there is a lack of research comparing the use of figurative language across different video game genres. This study aims to fill that gap by examining and comparing the application of figurative language in two different types of video games. Additionally, the study will explore how cultural ambiguity affects the interpretation of figurative language in video game dialogues, offering a more comprehensive analysis than previous research.

B. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This method aligns with the research purposes, as it will elucidate and examine the figurative elements present in these video games. Bengtsson (2016) explain qualitative content analysis is a method that goes beyond simply describing the content. It aims to reveal the underlying meanings, interpretations, and experiences reflected in the data. This approach allows the researcher to categorize and collect the suitable data to analyze using the figurative language method. The data of the research were taken from characters utterances from Genshin Impact, Ghost of Tsushima, Arena of Valor and Honor of Kings.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings

All data in this study are types of figurative language and types of cultural ambiguity. Each phrase or sentence of the data is analysed using Abrams (2018) theory of figurative language and Greenfield's (2000) cultural ambiguity theory.

The following describes some data related to each types of figurative language and types of cultural ambiguity found by the researcher.

A. Types of Figurative Language

Abrams (2018) stated there are seventeen types of figurative language. However, there are only eight types of figurative language found in Genshin Impact, Ghost of Tsushima, Arena of Valor and Honor of Kings. There are personification, metaphor, simile, paradox, hyperbole, synecdoche, understatement and antithesis. Below is the finding of the research.

No	Types of Figurative Language	Number of Occurrences	Percentage
1	Personification	19	52,77%
2	Metaphor	5	13,88%
3	Simile	3	8,33%
4	Hyperbole	3	8,33%
5	Paradox	3	8,33%
6	Synecdoche	1	2.77%
7	Understatement	1	2.77%
8	Antithesis	1	2.77%
	Total Data	**36**	**100%**

Table above shows that there are 36 data found in Genshin Impact, Ghost of Tsushima, Arena of Valor and Honor of Kings. Genshin Impact and Ghost of Tsushima are categorized as Adventure Video Games. Meanwhile, Arena of Valor and Honor of Kings are categorized as MOBA video game. Personification is the most found types of figurative language. Metaphor is the second most used types of figurative language across all of those video games. Hyperbole, Paradox and Simile got three data each. The rest of the data, each came from Synecdoche, Understatement and antithesis

1. Personification

(Datum 1)

Frost is *coming!*

Frost is shown in the sentence as an active, deadly force in addition to a natural occurrence. The speaker personifies frost by referring to it as "coming," implying that danger is on the horizon, as though frost itself had the power to assault and hold back the adversaries. Because of this personification, which increases the drama and tension, Frost becomes a strong figure with the ability to change the course of events. As a result, the line has greater meaning in the context of war or warfare since it simultaneously warns the opponent and demonstrates the speaker's command of the element.

2. Metaphor

(Datum 15)

I am one with *everything.*

This metaphor illustrates the complete union between the individual self ("I") and the universe or everything that exists ("everything"). It suggests that the boundaries between the self and the external world have dissolved, symbolizing a profound connection or cosmic unity. The metaphor implies that the individual is not a separate entity but rather an integral part of a larger whole, reflecting a deep spiritual or philosophical understanding often associated with mystical or holistic worldviews. This perspective emphasizes that personal identity extends beyond the self, connecting with all of existence, thereby portraying a sense of harmony and unity with the universe.

3. Simile

(Datum 10)

I'm like an *arrow* shot from the bow.

The simile compares the speaker to an arrow using the word "like," illustrating that the speaker feels like an arrow released from a bow, suggesting fast, directed, and purposeful movement. The arrow represents momentum, power, and the inability to turn back, symbolizing that the speaker is in an unchangeable situation, moving forward with speed and determination. This comparison also reflects focus and determination, as the speaker, like an arrow aimed at a target, feels directed toward a clear goal or mission, unhindered by obstacles. The simile conveys a sense of dynamism and strength, implying the speaker is ready to face challenges and move forward with precision.

4. Hyperbole

(Datum 4)

It's cold, my tails are **turning into ice pops.**

The sentence "It's so cold my tails are turning into ice pops" uses hyperbole, an exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally. The phrase "turning into ice pops" dramatizes the intense cold, humorously exaggerating the speaker's discomfort by suggesting that their tails are freezing solid. Of course, tails cannot actually transform into ice pops, but this overstatement vividly conveys how extreme the cold feels. The use of hyperbole adds both humor and emphasis to the statement, creating a striking image of the cold's severity in a light-hearted

manner. This technique effectively highlights the intensity of the temperature while keeping the tone playfu**l.**

5. Paradox

(Datum 26)

Strong is *weak. Weak* is *strong.*

The seemingly incongruous saying "Strong is weak, weak is strong" exposes a deeper reality about the intricate and interconnected link between strength and weakness. It suggests that those who are strong can also be weak and that people who are weak can be strong. This implies that vulnerability can sometimes be a sign of actual strength because people who own their flaws may be more receptive to change and growth. Strength is not always synonymous with domination or success. On the other hand, vulnerability and failure might result from having too much strength or pride. By using this paradox, the speaker highlights how strength and weakness can affect one another in life and challenges listeners to reconsider how they are defined and valued.

6. Synecdoche

(Datum 5)

I'll lend you a *hand.*

The sentence "I'll lend you a hand" employs synecdoche, where "hand" symbolizes overall help or support rather than just a physical part of the body. In this context, the term conveys the speaker's intention to provide assistance without specifying the exact form it will take. This use of synecdoche highlights how a part (the hand) can represent the entire action (providing help), creating a more human and familiar impression since many people recognize this expression in social contexts. The sentence fosters a sense of solidarity and cooperation, demonstrating the speaker's readiness to actively help others, even if the specifics of that help are not detailed. Thus, the synecdoche enhances the message of understanding and the desire for mutual support.

7. Understatement

(Datum 12)

A small price to pay for what you have done.

This sentence features an understatement, where the speaker minimizes the true significance of a situation or consequence. The phrase "a small price to pay" implies that the costs or consequences of someone else's actions are trivial, despite

potentially having serious implications. This use of understatement often creates a dramatic or ironic effect, particularly when the actions in question lead to severe or painful outcomes. By downplaying the "price" to be paid, the speaker may express a cynical or critical perspective on the situation. Additionally, this phrase contrasts what is perceived as small with the larger reality, encouraging the listener to reflect on the seriousness of the consequences arising from those actions.

8. Antithesis

(Datum 34)

Sophisticated but not *serious, simple* but not *ordinary.*

This sentence employs antithesis, where two opposing or contrasting ideas are juxtaposed to create a strong contrast. In the phrase "Sophisticated but not serious," the term "sophisticated" typically connotes maturity or complexity, while "not serious" suggests a light or easygoing nature. This contrast conveys that something or someone can appear sophisticated yet still possess a fun side. Similarly, in the phrase "Simple but not ordinary," "simple" often implies ease or ordinariness, while "not ordinary" indicates uniqueness. This antithesis highlights that even something seemingly simple can possess special qualities that differentiate it from the rest. Overall, the use of antithesis effectively reinforces the dualities within a character or object, creating an intriguing complexity and illustrating the balance between traits that may seem contradictory yet actually complement each other.

B. Types of Cultural Ambiguity

Greenfield (2000) stated there are four types of cultural ambiguity. There are three types of cultural ambiguity occurred in Genshin Impact, Ghost of Tsushima, Arena of Valor and Honor of Kings. Those three types of cultural ambiguity are semantic ambiguity, pragmatic ambiguity and referential ambiguity. The table below shows the findings of types of cultural ambiguity.

No	Types of Cultural Ambiguity	Number of Occurrences	Percentage
1	Semantic Ambiguity	11	52,38%
2	Pragmatic Ambiguity	3	14.28%
3	Referential Ambiguity	7	33.33%
Total Data		**21**	**100%**

From the table above. It shows that semantic ambiguity is the most frequently used types of cultural ambiguity. Three from eleven data were from adventure video games and the rest are from MOBA video games. All of the data of pragmatic ambiguity were from adventure video games. Four data of referential

ambiguity were from adventure video games and three of them were from MOBA video games.

1. Semantic Ambiguity

(Datum 14)

The mighty fall at last, to be no more than dust before the wind.

The semantic ambiguity in the figurative sentence arises from the double meanings of the word "mighty" and the phrase "dust before the wind." "Mighty" can refer to individuals with political or governmental power, economically influential people, or even large empires. Similarly, "dust before the wind" can be interpreted in different ways, such as total destruction, loss of power, or death. These varying interpretations stem from cultural differences in how such terms are understood. The ambiguity is heightened by the metaphorical comparison of powerful figures crumbling like dust blown by the wind. In some cultures, "dust before the wind" symbolizes the transience and impermanence of worldly power, while in others, it may represent a cleansing or transition to a better form of leadership. This variation in semantic meaning highlights how cultural backgrounds significantly influence the interpretation of figurative expressions, particularly metaphors.

2. Pragmatic Ambiguity

(Datum 4)

It's so cold, my tails are *turning into ice pops*.

The pragmatic ambiguity in the sentence arises from the unclear intent behind the speaker's use of the hyperbolic expression "tails are turning into ice pops." In some cultures, such exaggerated language may be interpreted as a way to complain or express discomfort about cold weather. However, in other cultures, this kind of extreme hyperbole could be viewed as humorous, a joke, or even subtle sarcasm. The interpretation varies depending on how different cultures perceive the use of hyperbolic language in everyday conversation, with some taking it more literally and others recognizing it as playful or exaggerated speech.

3. Referential Ambiguity

(Datum 2)

When *the evil* lurks, shoot on sight!

The term "the evil" is ambiguous because it lacks a clear and specific reference, making it unclear who or what is being referred to. "The evil" could represent various things, such as a person, a group, a supernatural force, or even the abstract concept of evil itself. Without further context, it is difficult to determine what or whom "the evil" is targeting. This referential ambiguity forces

the reader or listener to interpret the meaning based on the given context, which is not clearly provided in this instance. As a result, different interpretations can emerge depending on the situation, cultural background, or event, leading to potential confusion or varied understandings of what "the evil" truly signifies.

2. Discussion

The researcher conducted the research about figurative language and cultural ambiguity in adventure and MOBA video games. This research use the figurative language theory from Abrams (2018) and cultural ambiguity from Greenfield (2000). There are only eight of seventeen types of figurative language occurred across the adventure and MOBA video games. There are personification, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, paradox, synecdoche, understatement and antithesis. Meanwhile, according to Greenfield (2000) there are four types of cultural ambiguity. However, only three of them occurred. There are semantic ambiguity, pragmatic ambiguity and referential ambiguity.

There are 45 data from the analysis of types of figurative language. Personification became the most frequently used types of figurative language across the adventure and MOBA video games. It made 20 appearances. The second most frequently used types of figurative language is metaphor with 13 appearances. Simile, hyperbole and paradox only occurred 3 times each. Meanwhile, synecdoche, understatement and antithesis occurred once each.

Personification and metaphor are widely used in video these games because they are effective in building the world, strengthening the narrative, and creating a more immersive experience. Personification helps to bring inanimate elements such as nature, weapons, or magical powers to life, making the game world feel more dynamic and immersive. Metaphors, on the other hand, are used to convey major themes or emotional conflicts in a symbolic way, deepening the story and characters. Both of these figures of speech also make in-game interactions and visualizations more creative, giving more meaning to the gameplay and decisions the player makes. In this way, personification and metaphor enrich the narrative and gaming experience, creating a more engaging and memorable world for the players.

Jenkins (2004) agreed that the foundation for an immersive narrative experience is laid by environmental storytelling, which makes use of personification and metaphor to create places that can be filled with story possibilities.

In the analysis of types of cultural ambiguity there are 28 data. Semantic ambiguity is the most frequently used types of cultural ambiguity across the adventure and MOBA video games with 14 data. Followed by referential ambiguity with 11 appearances. Semantic ambiguity and referential ambiguity are often found in these video games because they provide narrative flexibility, allowing players to interpret situations differently. Semantic ambiguity allows a word or phrase to have more than one meaning, deepening the story and creating complexity. Referential ambiguity creates mystery by leaving the referent unclear, encouraging players to use their imagination and increasing engagement. Ryan (2015) stated that the deliberate use of semantic and referential ambiguity in

digital storytelling opens up new interpretive options, allowing players to connect more deeply with the story and create their own meaningful experiences.

The results of this research is a little different from the research that has been conducted by Fitriana and Rois (2023) and other previous research. Which also use video games as the object of the research. This research is not only focusing on the types of figurative language but also the cultural ambiguity that contain in the figurative utterances. Besides, this research also found the differences of the usage of types of figurative language from both adventure and MOBA video games. There is also a similarity with Fitriana's and Rois (2023) research. The similarity is in the most frequently used types of figurative language. Metaphor became the most frequently used types of figurative language. Even though, it is the second most frequently used types of figurative language across those video games.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research examines the classification of figurative language and cultural ambiguity in the video games Genshin Impact, Ghost of Tsushima, Arena of Valor, and Honor of Kings, and compares their usage across different game types. Using Abrams' (2018) theory, the study identified 8 types of figurative language out of 17 possible, with personification being the most frequent, followed by metaphor. For cultural ambiguity, the study applied Greenfield's (2000) theory and found 3 types: semantic, pragmatic, and referential ambiguity, with semantic ambiguity being the most common. Adventure games like Genshin Impact and Ghost of Tsushima tended to use metaphor, hyperbole, synecdoche, and understatement, while MOBA games such as Arena of Valor and Honor of Kings primarily employed personification, simile, paradox, and antithesis. The researcher recommends future studies explore figurative language and cultural ambiguity using updated theories and broader video game genres to provide a more comprehensive understanding. The researcher also notes that this topic remains relevant due to the subjective nature of interpreting figurative language.

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