



AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USED IN *CODA* MOVIE (2021)

Elisabeth Christin Franscetya Manalu¹, Anisa Nurjanah²

English Department
Faculty of Languages and Arts
Universitas Negeri Padang
email: ecf.manalu@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the use of figurative language in the *CODA* movie (2021). The objective is to identify the types and functions of figurative language that appear in the verbal dialogues of the characters. The study employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach, aiming to describe the meaning and functions of figurative language without statistical analysis. The data source consists of dialogues from the *CODA* movie (2021), and the research instrument is documentation techniques. Keraf's theory (1991) is used to classify types of figurative language, while Perrine's theory (2016) is used to determine their functions. From a total of 73 data points analyzed, eight types of figurative language were found: metaphor (12), simile (10), personification (2), metonymy (6), hyperbole (21), irony (18), euphemism (2), and paradox (2); allegory and litotes were not found. Hyperbole was the most dominant type, reflecting a strong emotional intensity in the dialogues. Regarding function, enhancing emotional appeal and strengthening themes and meanings were the most prominent, indicating that figurative language in *CODA* plays an important role in reinforcing thematic meaning while building emotional depth and character development.

Keywords: Figurative Language, *CODA* Movie, Dialogue

A. INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the primary tool that enables humans to interact, express thoughts, and build mutual understanding. Through language, people not only communicate functionally but also construct social and cultural identities that form the foundation of society. As stated by Moser (2020, p. 30), language plays an essential role in maintaining ethnic identity and establishing social order within a nation. Moreover, language acts as a bridge between cultures, allowing individuals to exchange experiences, values, and perspectives across different backgrounds.

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on December 2025

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



In the global context, English holds a central position as a lingua franca that connects nations around the world. Safari and Razmjoo (2016, p. 138) explain that globalization has made English the primary means of communication across various domains, including education, business, and the arts. With its dominant role, English serves not only as a medium of interaction but also as a channel for creative expression. One of the most intriguing aspects of English is its rich use of figurative language.

Figurative language is a significant linguistic element that enhances both meaning and beauty in communication. In semantic studies, figurative language is seen as an expression whose interpretation extends beyond its literal meaning, involving deeper and more imaginative layers. Khasawneh (2021, p. 265) points out that figurative language adds a persuasive and aesthetic dimension to style, enabling the expression of ideas and emotions in a more powerful and meaningful way. Through figurative expressions, speakers and writers can convey complex messages more delicately and emotionally—something that literal language alone cannot fully achieve.

The use of figurative language is not limited to literary works but also extends to audiovisual media such as films. In films, figurative language plays an important role in strengthening emotional impact, clarifying themes, and deepening characterization. Ayu and Simanjuntak (2025, p. 341) state that figurative expressions in films help build emotional connections between audiences and characters while enhancing the thematic depth and aesthetic value of the narrative. Therefore, analyzing figurative language in films does not merely explore linguistic features but also provides insights into how language shapes meaning, emotion, and artistic message.

The film *CODA* (2021), directed by Sian Heder, is an engaging example that illustrates the profound use of figurative language. The story follows Ruby Rossi, a teenager who is the only hearing member in her deaf family. Ruby faces an inner conflict between pursuing her dream of becoming a singer and fulfilling her responsibility to her family, who depend on her as their connection to the hearing world. In *CODA*, figurative language serves not only as an artistic device but also as a means of expressing emotion, tension, and moral values. Through its expressive dialogue and nuanced narrative, the film conveys meanings that transcend literal boundaries, demonstrating how language can bridge emotional and communicative gaps between the hearing and the deaf.

Based on this perspective, the present study focuses on analyzing the types and functions of figurative language in the *CODA* movie. The study aims to identify how figurative language is used to reinforce messages, shape characterization, and convey moral values through verbal expressions in the film. By employing Keraf's (1991) theory to classify types of figurative language and Perrine's theory (2016) to examine its functions, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of figurative language in audiovisual works. Furthermore, it aims to enrich linguistic studies that explore inclusivity and cross-disability communication, highlighting how language can serve as a medium that connects human experiences across diverse worlds.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive qualitative method was used to analyze the types and functions of figurative language found in the *CODA* (2021) movie. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a means of exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social phenomenon. Rather than emphasizing numerical data, this study focused on interpretation and in-depth understanding of figurative language use within the film context. Therefore, the descriptive qualitative method was considered the most appropriate approach for this research. The source of data was the *CODA* (2021) movie script, which contains verbal utterances exchanged between characters. The researcher acted as the main instrument, as qualitative research does not require structured instruments such as questionnaires. The researcher directly analyzed the data by reading the script to identify and classify various forms of figurative language. A table of indicators was used to assist the researcher in determining the types and functions of figurative language. Keraf's (1991) theory was applied to identify the types of figurative language, while Perrine's theory (2016) was used to determine their functions within the film's dialogues.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding (tentative)

In this study, two research questions were examined through data analysis. The first research question focused on identifying the types of figurative language used in the *CODA* (2021) movie based on Keraf's (1991) classification, while the second addressed the functions of those figurative expressions as analyzed through Perrine's (2016) framework. This section presents the findings related to both aspects, explaining how figurative language appears in the film's dialogues and how each instance contributes to the expression of meaning and emotional depth within the narrative.

Table 1. Types of Figurative Language Found in *CODA* (2021)

No	Types of Figurative Language	The Number of Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1.	Metaphor	12	16.44%
2.	Simile	10	13.70%
3.	Personification	2	2.74%
4.	Allegory	0	0%
5.	Metonymy	6	8.22%
6.	Hyperbole	21	28.77%

7.	Litotes	0	0%
8.	Irony	18	24.66%
9.	Euphemism	2	2.74%
10.	Paradox	2	2.74%
Total		73	100%

Based on Table 1, a total of seventy-three figurative language expressions were identified in the *CODA* (2021) movie. Ten types of figurative language were classified according to Keraf's (1991) framework; however, only eight types appeared in the data, while allegory and litotes were not found. Hyperbole was the most frequent type with twenty-one occurrences (28.77%), followed by irony with eighteen occurrences (24.66%) and metaphor with twelve occurrences (16.44%). Other types such as simile, metonymy, personification, euphemism, and paradox appeared less frequently, with occurrences ranging from two to ten instances. These findings indicate that the movie employs various kinds of figurative language throughout its dialogues, each contributing to the overall linguistic expression of the characters.

Table 2. Functions of Figurative Language Found in *CODA* (2021)

No	Function of figurative language	The Number of Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1.	Enhancing emotional appeal	25	34.25%
2.	Strengthening themes and meanings	20	27.40%
3.	Encouraging audience imagination	10	13.70%
4.	Facilitating layered interpretations	7	9.59%
5.	Adding aesthetic dimension	11	15.07%
Total		73	100%

As shown in Table 2, five main functions of figurative language were identified based on Perrine's (2016) theory. The most frequent function is enhancing emotional appeal, with twenty-five occurrences (34.25%), followed by strengthening themes and meanings with twenty occurrences (27.40%). Other functions such as adding aesthetic dimension (15.07%), encouraging audience

imagination (13.70%), and facilitating layered interpretations (9.59%) occur less frequently but are still present in the data. Overall, the quantitative distribution of these functions demonstrates that figurative language in *CODA* performs multiple roles within the dialogues, encompassing emotional, thematic, imaginative, interpretative, and aesthetic dimensions.

a. Metaphor

Metaphor is a style of language that compares two things directly without using a comparative word.

Datum 38

[Bernardo stops playing. Ruby stops singing, unsure.]

Bernardo: Well. It's not sand and glue.

The expression “It's not sand and glue” is categorized as a metaphor because it implicitly compares Ruby's voice to physical substances without using comparative words such as like or as (Keraf, 1991, p. 139). The phrase symbolically contrasts a rough and heavy sound with a smooth and pleasant tone, implying that Ruby's voice is clear and melodious. Its function corresponds to facilitating layered interpretations (Perrine, 2016, p. 851), as the utterance allows multiple readings—serving both as an indirect compliment and as a symbolic reflection of Ruby's natural vocal quality.

b. Simile

Simile is a language style that compares two things explicitly by using connective words such as “like” or “as”.

Datum 50

Miles: This one time, I think it was like third grade, you were at the Seaport Grille. You were ordering for your parents, talking to the waiter like a total baller. And then you ordered two beers. I thought it was so cool.

The expression “like a total baller” is categorized as a simile because it directly compares Ruby's confident attitude to the bold and charismatic demeanor of a “baller” through the use of the conjunction like. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2024), a “baller” refers to someone who appears successful, confident, and dominant—indicating that the comparison is figurative rather than literal. The intensifier total strengthens the image, allowing the audience to vividly picture Ruby's confidence and composure as a child. This vivid visualization aligns with Perrine's (2016) function of encouraging audience imagination, as figurative language enables viewers to perceive an event more vividly than literal description allows. Thus, the simile not only highlights Ruby's self-assurance but also transforms a simple memory into a lively and imaginative scene that deepens the audience's engagement with her character.

c. Personification

Personification is a style of language that brings inanimate objects, animals or abstract ideas to life by giving them human-like characteristics or actions. It is

used to create imaginative and emotional effects, so that something inanimate can feel closer and more alive to the listener or reader.

Datum 22

Bernardo: Next. Yes, you! The red shirt.

[Ruby steps to the front.]

Bernardo: Bless me with your birthday wishes.

The expression “Bless me with your birthday wishes,” said by Bernardo, illustrates personification because it assigns the human action of blessing to Ruby, who is not literally capable of performing such an act. As Keraf (1991) explains, personification occurs when human qualities are attributed to non-human subjects to create a sense of vitality in language. In this dialogue, the use of bless gives the utterance a more vivid and expressive tone rather than a literal one. This figurative use aligns with Perrine’s (2016) function of adding an aesthetic dimension, as it enhances the beauty and emotional resonance of the line. Through this expression, Bernardo’s words sound more artistic and affectionate, making the interaction more engaging and emotionally appealing.

d. Metonymy

Metonymy is a style of language that uses the name of a closely related thing, place, or attribute to represent something in question. The relationship between the word used and the intended meaning is one of association, not comparison.

Datum 6

Ruby : Two-fifty? What’re you guys getting at auction?

Tony : Calm ya livah, honey, you let me worry about the numbers. Sign over here.

The phrase “You let me worry about the numbers” illustrates metonymy because the word numbers substitutes for financial matters such as price, payment, and profit. According to Keraf (1991), metonymy occurs when a word is replaced with another that has a close semantic association. In this context, numbers does not literally refer to digits but symbolically represents money and financial processes, showing a shift from the concrete to the conceptual. The figurative function corresponds to enhancing emotional appeal (Perrine, 2016), as the indirect reference to money creates subtle emotional tension and emphasizes Tony’s authority and composure. This implicitness allows the audience to sense both the seriousness of the negotiation and Tony’s controlled demeanor without explicit mention of money.

e. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a style of language that exaggerates something for emphasis or dramatic effect. The purpose is not to convey a literal meaning, but to amplify the expression of emotion or accentuate a situation prominently.

Datum 29

Chubs : How much is that gonna cost?

Tony : Eight hundred bucks a day.

Mondo : Come on, that's gonna kill us.

The phrase “that's gonna kill us” is a form of hyperbole because the verb kill exaggerates the real situation to emphasize the severity of the financial burden. According to Keraf (1991), hyperbole involves overstating reality to create a strong emotional or dramatic effect. In this context, kill does not literally refer to death but intensifies the expression of stress and pressure caused by financial strain. The function of this hyperbole aligns with Perrine's (2016) concept of enhancing emotional appeal, as the exaggerated term evokes tension and urgency, allowing the audience to feel the characters' frustration and anxiety through the force of the language itself.

f. Irony

Irony is a figure of speech that conveys meaning indirectly by expressing something contrary to what is actually intended. Typically, irony is used to subtly mock, deliver gentle criticism, or create a humorous effect in certain situations.

Datum 9

[The faint sound of snoring comes from the back of the class. Ms. Simon stares at Ruby, passed out on her desk.]

Ms. Simon: Sadly, there was no amendment protecting the right to nap – Ruby!

Ms. Simon's line, “Sadly, there was no amendment protecting the right to nap – Ruby!” illustrates irony because its literal meaning contrasts with the speaker's real intent. As stated by Keraf (1991), irony occurs when words express something opposite to their actual meaning. The phrase amendment protecting the right to nap humorously imitates formal legal language to criticize Ruby for sleeping in class, making the statement both playful and corrective. The irony lies in this deliberate contrast between the serious tone of constitutional language and the trivial situation of a student dozing off. In terms of function, the expression aligns with Perrine's (2016) concept of enhancing emotional appeal, as the ironic phrasing creates humor and liveliness, allowing the teacher's reprimand to feel lighthearted rather than harsh. The inclusion of the word Sadly adds a mock-serious tone that deepens the humor, engaging the audience emotionally while highlighting the teacher's wit.

g. Euphemism

Euphemism is a figure of speech used to express something that is considered harsh, sensitive, or unpleasant in a gentler and more acceptable way. This style is often employed to soften the emotional impact of a statement, maintain politeness, or avoid direct conflict.

Datum 16

Gertie: You're already socially challenged enough around here, but sure...

The phrase "You're already socially challenged enough around here" is considered a euphemism because it expresses criticism in a softened and indirect manner. The term socially challenged replaces harsher alternatives such as socially awkward or bad at socializing, making the remark sound polite and humorous rather than offensive. According to Perrine (2016), its function is adding aesthetic dimension, as the euphemistic wording refines the expression through creative and considerate language. By using a gentler phrase, the dialogue gains subtlety and wit, transforming a potential insult into an aesthetically pleasing and socially sensitive statement.

h. Paradox

Paradox is a figure of speech that contains a logical contradiction but ultimately reveals a deeper truth or meaning. Paradoxical statements often appear contradictory at first glance, but upon closer understanding, they convey a powerful and reflective message.

Datum 57

Mondo: You want to control the fishing, but you don't know what's going on out there!

Mondo's statement, "You want to control the fishing, but you don't know what's going on out there!" is a paradox because it contrasts two opposing ideas—authority and ignorance—to reveal a deeper truth. As Keraf (1991) defines, paradox unites contradictory concepts that express reality more sharply. The function corresponds to Perrine's (2016) strengthening themes and meanings, as the contradiction underscores the film's critique of policymakers who control without understanding. This paradox enriches the film's message about the divide between power and lived experience.

2. Discussion

The findings indicate that figurative language plays a central role in expressing emotional, social, and thematic dimensions in *CODA* (2021). From seventy-three identified data, ten types of figurative language were examined using Keraf's (1991) framework, yet only eight appeared—hyperbole, irony, metaphor, metonymy, simile, personification, euphemism, and paradox—while litotes and allegory were absent. The predominance of hyperbole, followed by irony and metaphor, reflects the film's reliance on expressive and emotionally charged language rather than symbolic understatement.

The dominance of hyperbole is closely linked to the film's emotional core, which revolves around Ruby Rossi's struggle between her world of sound and her deaf family's silence. This tension generates strong emotional expression, often conveyed through exaggeration. Hyperbolic utterances such as "You guys are the worst!" or "I can't ever see him again!" highlight characters' intense emotions rather than factual meaning. As Keraf (1991) suggests, hyperbole emphasizes

emotional force, while Perrine (2016) views it as a means to enhance emotional appeal. In *CODA*, this form effectively amplifies audience empathy and dramatizes inner conflict, reinforcing both the emotional and thematic resonance of the story.

Hyperbole also maintains narrative balance between drama and humor—heightening tension in serious moments and softening tone through irony in lighter scenes. This duality reflects Ruby's psychological complexity and her effort to navigate identity and belonging. The close alignment between Keraf's and Perrine's perspectives shows that figurative language in *CODA* functions not merely as a stylistic feature but as a linguistic strategy to deepen meaning and intensify emotional experience. The absence of litotes and allegory aligns with the film's realistic and emotionally direct tone. As *CODA* prioritizes honesty and authenticity, understatement and symbolic abstraction are naturally minimized, reinforcing its focus on genuine emotional communication.

When compared with previous studies—such as Fatchiyati & Sujana (2021), Mukti & Nugraha (2022), and Sriwedani et al. (2023)—the present study diverges in showing hyperbole as the dominant type with a strong emotional function. This difference arises from *CODA*'s narrative focus on family tension and emotional struggle, contrasting with more metaphor-dominant works that emphasize poetic or imaginative styles. Hence, this study contributes new insights into how figurative dominance may vary depending on narrative context and emotional emphasis.

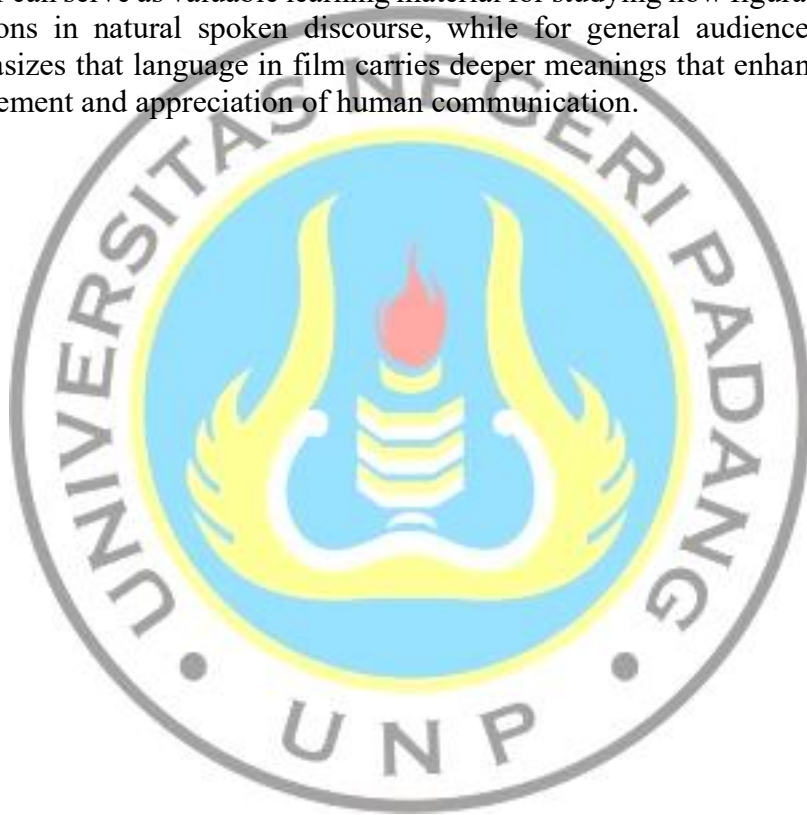
Regarding function, enhancing emotional appeal and strengthening themes and meanings emerged as the most frequent. This supports Perrine's (2016) assertion that figurative language links linguistic form to human experience, evoking empathy and reinforcing core themes such as family love, identity, and communication barriers. In contrast to prior studies that highlight imaginative pleasure, *CODA* emphasizes realism and emotional authenticity.

Overall, figurative language in *CODA* serves as both an emotional amplifier and a thematic unifier. Hyperbole captures the intensity of feeling, while other types—metaphor, irony, metonymy, and paradox—add depth and nuance. The absence of litotes and allegory underscores the film's realism and emotional transparency. Ultimately, *CODA* illustrates how figurative language operates not only as artistic expression but also as a bridge between voice and silence, emotion and meaning, within the complexity of human connection.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that figurative language in the *CODA* (2021) movie plays a vital role in shaping emotional expression, character interaction, and thematic coherence. Based on Keraf's (1991) classification, eight types of figurative language were found, with hyperbole emerging as the most dominant form, followed by irony and metaphor. The frequent use of hyperbole reflects the emotional intensity and expressive tone of the film's dialogues, while the absence of allegory and litotes highlights its realistic and straightforward communication

style. Referring to Perrine's (2016) theory, the most prominent functions identified are enhancing emotional appeal and strengthening themes and meanings, supported by other functions such as encouraging audience imagination, facilitating layered interpretations, and adding aesthetic dimension. These findings show that figurative language in *CODA* is not only a stylistic element but also a communicative tool that enriches emotional depth and artistic expression. Future researchers are encouraged to apply similar analyses to other films or genres to broaden the understanding of figurative language use in audiovisual media. Combining linguistic, cultural, and semiotic approaches may provide more comprehensive insights into how figurative expression reflects social and emotional realities. For students and educators, *CODA* can serve as valuable learning material for studying how figurative language functions in natural spoken discourse, while for general audiences, this study emphasizes that language in film carries deeper meanings that enhance emotional engagement and appreciation of human communication.



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