



The Analysis Of Figurative Language In Novel *Looking For Alaska*

¹Meldiana Kewa Sari Kasimo, ²Ida Ayu Made Puspani

^{1,2}Universitas Udayana

	Abstract
Received: 06 Februari 2026	<i>This study aims to analyse the use of figurative language in John Green's novel Looking for Alaska. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to identify and classify types of figurative language based on Larson's theory (1998), namely metonymy, synecdoche, idioms, euphemisms, hyperbole, metaphors, and similes. The results of this study indicate that this novel is rich in figurative language, which strengthens characterization, deepens emotions, and enriches the story's meaning. Each type of figurative language plays a distinct role in creating atmosphere, conveying messages, and enhancing the reader's experience. These findings underscore the importance of figurative language in literary works, particularly in building narrative depth and appeal. This study is expected to enhance appreciation for the beauty of figurative language in literature and serve as a reference for further research on linguistic style in literary works.</i>
Revised: 16 Februari 2026	
Accepted: 28 Februari 2026	
Keywords:	<i>Figurative Language, Looking For Alaska, Novel, Literature.</i>

(*) Corresponding Author: meldianasariiii@gmail.com

How to Cite: Kasimo, M., & Ayu Made Puspani, I. (2026). The Analysis Of Figurative Language In Novel Looking For Alaska. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 12(3.D), 79-85. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/JIWP/article/view/12773>.

INTRODUCTION

Semantics is a fundamental branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language. As a discipline, it is directed toward determining how humans' reason with language and, more specifically, discovering the patterns of inference we employ through linguistic expressions. The term "semantics" is taken from the Greek word "Sema," meaning "sign" or "symbol," reflecting a focus on the relationship between linguistic signs and their meaning (Djajasudarma, 2016).

The relation between language and semantics, semantics helps explain how speakers use linguistics sign to represent concepts, emotions and realities. Language is not just a collection of random symbols but a structured system where meaning is systematically organized and shared among users. This system enables effective communication, interpretation, and understanding within a community. Language is an important communication tool in human life. In daily activities, language conveys a message, idea, feeling, and information. According to Oxford learners Dictionary, language is system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country or area.

One form of language often found in literary works is figurative language, which gives a deeper meaning and evokes the viewer's emotions. Figurative language is central to create a literary work's atmosphere, characters, and themes. According to Murphy and Koskela (2010:67), figurative language is commonly understood to refer to embellished and poetic language and uses imagery to achieve a special effect. According to Harya (2017) as cited in (Nursolihat& Kareviati, 2020) stated Figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation. Perrine (1992) also highlights figurative language conveys ideas and emotions more imaginatively. Figurative

language includes metaphor, simile, personification, and various other language styles that aim to enrich the text and give a different perspective on the meaning.

This study analyzed figurative language that found in the novel *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. The analysis was limited to the most dominant types of figurative language found in the novel. The study applied Larson (1998) theory to classify the types of figurative language. Larson (1998) explains that figurative language involves using figures of speech where the meaning of the expression differs from the literal meaning of the individual words. Figures of speech, such as metaphor, simile, metonymy, and hyperbole, enhance the text's expressiveness and vividly convey complex ideas or emotions.

The novel *Looking for Alaska* was chosen as the object of this study because it is one of the best-seller novels and has been nominated for several literary awards. The novel contains rich figurative language that plays a crucial role in developing characters, emotions, and themes. This novel exploration of deep themes and emotional struggles adds complexity to figurative language, making this novel still enjoyable to discuss.

Thus, this research was expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how figurative language can be affected in literature and how meaning is constructed through these figures of speech, enhancing the appreciation of literary artistry and emotional expression.

THEORITICAL REVIEW

The theoretical framework regarding figurative language and its relationship to meaning is an important foundation in analyzing communication, literature, and linguistic studies. Figurative language is a form of language use that does not convey meaning literally but instead conveys more complex, symbolic, and imaginative meanings through deviations from literal meaning and standard language structure (Abrams in Nurgiyantoro, 2019; Knickerbocker & Reninger, 1963). Figurative language encompasses various types such as metaphors, similes, idioms, hyperboles, and personification, whose use is often closely tied to cultural and emotional contexts (Larson, 1998).

Figurative language is not merely a linguistic deviation but also a rhetorical and stylistic technique that creates aesthetic effects and enriches the meaning of communication. In stylistic studies, figurative language elements are considered one of the ways of processing language style that displays creativity in expressing ideas and reveals the author's distinctive characteristics in their work (Keraf, 2007; Nurgiyantoro, 2009).

Figurative language can also be considered a deliberate deviation from ordinary language to create a persuasive effect and beauty in the text or discourse. This deviation can manifest in word choice, sentence structure, and imagery, thereby constructing implicit meanings that must be interpreted by the reader or listener (Abrams in Nurgiyantoro, 2019; Aminuddin, 2013). The primary function of figurative language is to add depth and richness of meaning, enliven the message, and evoke emotional and aesthetic impressions that cannot be achieved by literal language alone (Keraf, 2011; Waluyo, 1991).

In summary, in this theoretical study, figurative language is understood as A form of language style that uses deviations in meaning and language structure for aesthetic and expressive purposes, A means of communication that utilises associative and connotative meanings to convey messages in a richer and more layered manner, a form of expression closely related to cultural and emotional contexts, so that understanding its message requires interpretation of meaning beyond literal meaning.

METHOD

This article used a qualitative method to analyze the data, allowing for an in-depth examination of the nuances and complexities of figurative language. Qualitative research is a way for people to interpret social action and understand the reality of individuals in their minds (Indarti et al, 2023). This article used the novel *Looking for Alaska* by John Green as a data source. This novel was published in 2005 by Dutton Juvenile. This novel tells the story of Miles Halter, known as Pudge, who enrolls at Culver Creek boarding school in Alabama in search of the “Greta Perharps” or the greater meaning in life. Miles meets Chip Martin and Alaska Young in Cluver Creek, who become friends. This novel explores themes of friendship, love, loss, the search for meaning in life, and the grieving process. Moreover, the story was also adapted into a miniseries in 2019, demonstrating broad cultural impact and relevance.

The analysis process involved several key steps. First, all highlighted data were collected to ensure a comprehensive dataset. Second, the types of figurative language present in the data were identified using the theoretical framework proposed by Larson (1998). Lastly, each piece of data was analyzed and described to explain its meaning and contribute to a deeper understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, the findings and discussion are presented together. According to the research data that have been collected, 36 figurative languages were identified from each of the types of figurative language. Below are some of the examples which give the best representation of each type.

No	Types of Figurative Language	Frequency (f)
1	Metonymy	3
2.	Synecdoche	2
3.	Idioms	3
4.	Euphemism	3
5.	Hyperbole	4
6.	Metaphor	8
7.	Simile	13
TOTAL		36

Table 4.1 Types and Frequency of the Figurative Language

As can be seen above, there are 36 sentences containing figurative language in the novel *Looking for Alaska*. The seven types of figurative language proposed by Larson (1998) are found in the novel *Looking for Alaska*, but the frequency of each type of figurative language differs in his findings.

The following is a summary of the findings: Similes are found in 13 sentences, metaphors in 8 sentences, metonymy, idioms, and euphemisms in 3 sentences, and hyperbole in 4

sentences. From these findings, the most dominant type of figurative language in the novel *Looking for Alaska* is the simile.

The following are the types of figurative languages and their contextual meanings found in the Novel, but in this study, the researcher only presents one datum of each kind.

1. Metonymy

Metonymy is the use of words in a figurative sense involving association. It means that one word substitutes another word but they are not synonymous.

Example:

“Kids, meet **Blue Citrus**. So named because she is a lemon,” Alaska said.

The phrase "**Blue Citrus**" in *Looking for Alaska* is an example of metonymy because it substitutes the literal name of Alaska's car with a symbolic nickname that conveys deeper meaning. Rather than simply calling it "the car" or "Alaska's car," the name "**Blue Citrus**" associates the vehicle with its defining traits, its blue color, and its poor mechanical condition (a "lemon"). 'Citrus' is smart because it hints at sourness, reinforcing the car's unreliability while easing the objection with playful irony. Additionally, "blue" can symbolise the car's paint and the frustration it causes, adding an emotional nuance to the description. Unlike direct nicknames, this metonymy does not merely identify the car; it defines it through its weaknesses, making the reference richer and more memorable.

2. Synecdoche

Synecdoche is figurative senses based on part-whole relationships (a part of something which is being substituted for the whole part). It can be described as using part of something to mean the whole of it.

Example:

“The colonel **gritted his teeth**, like it pained him to lie.” (p.63)

The sentence, “The colonel gritted his teeth because he felt hurt having to lie,” is an example of synecdoche, a figure of speech in which a part represents the whole. Focusing on the colonel's “teeth” represents his overall emotional response to the situation. Rather than explicitly stating that the colonel is experiencing discomfort, restraint, anger, or frustration, the writer uses gritting his teeth, a common physical reaction to stress or internal conflict, to convey those emotions. By highlighting only the teeth, the narrative draws attention to the intensity of the colonel's feelings, implying that lying is difficult for him and causes a visible, almost unconscious reaction.

3. Idioms

Idioms are phrases or expressions where the meaning is not apparent from the individual words.

Example:

“I just did some calculations, and I’ve been able to determine that **you’re full of shit**.”

The sentence “I just did some calculations, and I’ve been able to determine that you’re full of shit” is an example of the use of idioms in English that are sarcastic and informal. The phrase “I just did some calculations” is used metaphorically to give the impression that the speaker has conducted a serious analysis or consideration, when the intention is to express distrust of the other person. Meanwhile, the idiom “full of shit” is a rude expression that means someone is lying, talking nonsense, or saying something that cannot be trusted. This idiom adds a humorous yet confrontational tone to the conversation, as the speaker directly accuses the other person of being dishonest or making things up. In a social context, this phrase is typically used

among close friends or in casual debate situations, but caution is still advised as it can offend if used with someone less familiar.

4. Euphemism

Euphemism is a figure of speech that replaces a harsh, direct, or unpleasant term with a milder, more indirect expression.

Example:

“She was **passed on**, son,” he said, shaking his head, and my last hope of last words faded. The phrase “passed on” was used as a euphemism to convey someone’s death subtly and politely. The phrase “passed on” is a commonly used substitute for the words “died” or “deceased,” which can feel heavy or painful when used directly. Using this euphemism, the speaker aims to soften the harsh or painful impact of the sad news while demonstrating respect and sensitivity toward the listener’s feelings, in this case, the “son” (child).

5. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that involves deliberate exaggeration for emphasis or effect. It’s not meant to be taken literally but to highlight a feeling or idea strongly.

Example:

“**He can smell a cigarette from like five miles.**”

This sentence is an example of hyperbole, a figure of speech that uses exaggerated statements to emphasise something dramatically. Scientifically, eagles do not possess a keen sense of smell. In the context above, the term "eagle" is a metaphorical reference to Mr. Starnes, who could not possibly detect the smell of cigarette smoke from five miles away. Therefore, this claim is an exaggeration to highlight Mr. Starnes' sharpness or alertness figuratively.

6. Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech that directly compares one thing to another by stating that something *is* something else, to highlight a particular quality or experience.

Example:

“which was **die a hundred little ecstatic deaths, my fists clenched, my body shaking.**” (p.143)

This sentence contains a powerful metaphor to describe an extremely intense emotional or physical experience. The phrase “die a hundred little ecstatic deaths” is not meant to be taken literally, but instead represents the feeling of repeatedly experiencing "deaths" in small increments, symbolizing pain, joy, or profound and recurring inner change. The term “ecstatic,” filled with joy or ecstasy, adds a contradictory nuance. It implies that while the experience may be heavy or sad, it also brings intense sensations and may evoke a sense of relief or emotional peak. Combined with physical descriptions like "my fists clenched, my body shaking," this sentence reinforces the image of the body's spontaneous reaction to these feelings, allowing the reader to feel how powerful and profound the experience is for the character.

7. Simile

Simile is a direct comparison between two things that are different but have certain similarities, simile always using connecting words such as “like” or “as”.

Example:

“Did I tell you that **Jake is hung like a horse and a beautiful** , sensual lover?” (p.68)

The sentence above exemplifies simile, a figure of speech that compares two things using connecting words such as “like” or “as.” In this sentence, the comparison “hung like a horse” uses the word “like” to explicitly describe Jake’s size or ability by comparing him to a horse, which is generally considered to have specific prominent physical attributes. This simile

provides a clear and strong picture of Jake's character in a particular context, namely his sexual appeal or ability, which is then reinforced by the additional description as a "beautiful, sensual lover." The use of this simile not only adds colour and visual strength to the narrative but also gives a more vivid and imaginable impression to the reader. Thus, this sentence uses a simile to emphasise the character's traits and capture the reader's attention through a strong and familiar comparison.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on an analysis of John Green's novel *Looking for Alaska*, this study found that figurative language is dominant and essential in building the story's meaning, characterisation, and emotional depth. The types of figurative language identified include metonymy, synecdoche, idioms, euphemisms, hyperbole, metaphors, and similes. Each type has its function and effect in enriching the narrative and enhancing the reader's experience.

The use of figurative language in this novel beautifies the style of language and conveys emotions, conflicts, and characters in a more vivid and imaginative way. For example, metonymy and synecdoche are used to create associations and emphasise specific traits or feelings, idioms and euphemisms help convey messages subtly or humorously, while hyperbole, metaphor, and simile enhance emotional expression and visual imagery in the story.

In conclusion, this study concludes that figurative language in *Looking for Alaska* is a primary tool for building depth of meaning, strengthening characterisation, and enhancing the appeal and beauty of the literary work. These findings are expected to increase appreciation for the beauty of figurative language in literary works and encourage further research on the role of style in shaping meaning and reader experience.

REFERENCE

- Anwar, M., Hanum, I., & Purwanti. (2023). BAHASA FIGURATIF DALAM HIMPUNAN PUISI GAMBAR KESUNYIAN DI JENDELA KARYA SHINTA FEBRIANY: KAJIAN STILISTIKA. *Ilmu Budaya Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni Dan Budaya*, 7.
- Armita, E., Sobari, T., & Isnaini, H. (2021). BAHASA FIGURATIF PADA PUISI "HARAPAN" KARYA IKA MUSTIKA. *KARYA IKA MUSTIKA*, 149(2614-6231).
- Erna Pranata Putri. (2025). The Analysis of Figurative Language In The Movie: *Spellbound*. *Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Dan Pendidikan*, 4(1), 116–124. <https://doi.org/10.56127/jushpen.v4i1.1872>
- Geoffrey Neil Leech. (1976). *Semantics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Green, J. (2005). *Looking for Alaska*. New York: Speak.
- Keraf, G. (2011). *Diksi dan Gaya Bahasa*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Larson, M. L. (1998). *Meaning-based translation: a guide to cross-language equivalence*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.
- Leksono, S. (2013). *PENDEKATAN DESKRIPTIF*. Retrieved from <https://www.wisnuwardhana.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Penelitian-Kualitatif-ilmu-Ekonomi-BAB-7-oleh-Prof-Dr.-Ir.-Sonny-Leksono-S.E.-M.S.1.pdf>
- Miftachul Farichah, & Viyanti Malasari. (2022). ANALISIS MAKNA FIGURATIF DALAM SYAIR UMRUU AL-QAIS. *Al-Lahjah.*, 3(1), 282–291. <https://doi.org/10.32764/al-lahjah.v5i1.793>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of Translation*. New York: Prentice-Hall International.

- Nurdiani, A., Sumarlam, & Supana. (2022). *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Linguistik dan Sastra (SEMANTIKS) PENGGUNAAN DAN FUNGSI DARI JENIS BAHASA FIGURATIF SEBAGAI CIRI KHAS GAYA KEPENGARANGAN LEILA S. CHUDORI DALAM NOVEL LAUT BERCEKITA*.
- Nursolihat, S., & Kareviati, E. (2020). AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE USED IN THE LYRIC OF “A WHOLE NEW WORLD” BY ZAYN MALIK AND ZHAVIA WARD. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 3(4), 477. <https://doi.org/10.22460/project.v3i4.p477-482>
- Shafira, H., Muslem, A., & Muthalib, K. (2023). An Analysis of Figurative Language in The Novel “Looking For Alaska.” *Research in English and Education (READ)*, 8(4), 198–208.
- Waluyo, H. J. (1995). *Teori dan apresiasi puisi*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Wibowo, S., & Supard, M. (2025). View of TRANSLATION STRATEGIES OF IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN “AN ABUNDANCE OF KATHERINES.” Retrieved from [Upbatam.ac.id website: https://ejournal.upbatam.ac.id/index.php/basis/article/view/8793/3951](https://ejournal.upbatam.ac.id/index.php/basis/article/view/8793/3951)
- Zahria, S. T., & Wibowo, H. (2024). An Analysis of Figurative Languages in the Niki Zefanya’s Song Lyrics. *STAIRS: English Language Education Journal*, 5(2), 98–105. <https://doi.org/10.21009/stairs.5.2.2>.