

AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN GIFTED (2017): A STYLISTIC APPROACH

Afifah¹, Bagus Yudha Prawira², and Nurul Anam³

¹ Universitas Bakti Indonesia, Indonesia

² Universitas Bakti Indonesia, Indonesia

³ Universitas Bakti Indonesia, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:

Afifah,

Department of English literature, Faculty of Language and Literature, Universitas Bakti Indonesia.

Jalan Kampus Bumi Cempokosari No.40, Dusun Cempokasari, Sarimulyo, Kecamatan Cluring, Kabupaten Banyuwangi, Jawa Timur 68482, Indonesia

Email: iffah17farades@gmail.com

Article Info

Received: July 27, 2026

Revised: August 30, 2026

Accepted: September 23, 2026

Online Version: Oktober 11, 2026

Abstract

This study analyzes the use of figurative language in the movie *Gifted* (2017), directed by Marc Webb. The study aims to identify the types of figurative language found in the movie and interpret the meanings conveyed through the identified expressions. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The data consisted of characters' utterances containing figurative language, collected through document analysis by repeatedly watching the movie and examining the subtitles as a textual reference. The data were analyzed through identification, classification, and contextual interpretation based on Perrine's (1977) theory of figurative language. The findings reveal 77 instances of figurative language classified into eight types: metaphor, hyperbole, simile, personification, metonymy, irony, paradox, and understatement. Metaphor was the most frequently identified type, with 41 instances (53.25%), followed by hyperbole with 22 instances (28.59%). The findings indicate that figurative language in *Gifted* is used not merely as a stylistic feature but also to convey emotions, attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and conflicts. The analysis further demonstrates that figurative expressions contribute to characterization and narrative development, particularly in representing the conflict between intellectual giftedness, family relationships, and the need for a normal childhood and emotional well-being.

Keywords: figurative language, Perrine, *Gifted* (2017)



© 2026 by the author(s)

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>).

Journal Homepage

<https://ejournal.staialhikmahpariangan.ac.id/Journal/index.php/jiltech>

How to cite:

Afifah, Afifah., Prawira, B. Y., & Anam, N. (2026). An Analysis of Figurative Language in *Gifted* (2017): A Stylistic Approach. *Journal International of Lingua and Technology*, 5(5), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.55849/jiltech.v4i1.1420>

Published by:

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Hikmah Pariangan Batusangkar

INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental means of communication through which people express ideas, experiences, attitudes, emotions, and intentions. However, meaning in communication is not always conveyed through literal expressions. Figurative language allows speakers to communicate meanings that extend beyond the conventional or literal interpretation of words and expressions. Recent studies describe figurative language as an important component of everyday communication because speakers regularly use metaphor, irony, hyperbole, simile, and other forms of non-literal language to communicate meanings and attitudes (Chahboun et al., 2021; Colston & Gibbs, 2021; Marulanda-Páez & Igoa-González, 2021). Rather than simply replacing literal expressions with more decorative forms, figurative expressions may enrich the meaning of an utterance by directing attention toward particular ideas, emotions, or attitudes (Colston, 2021; McDonald, 2023). The interpretation of figurative expressions therefore requires attention not only to the words used but also to the context in which they occur (Alkhamash, 2022; Dobrovol'skij, 2021).

Figurative meaning is particularly important when an expression establishes a relationship between a literal source and an intended meaning. In metaphorical expressions, for example, features associated with one conceptual domain may be transferred to another domain, allowing abstract experiences to be represented through more concrete images (Alkhamash, 2022; Ronderos et al., 2021). Metaphorical interpretation is influenced by contextual information because the surrounding discourse helps determine which aspects of the literal expression are relevant to the intended figurative meaning (Mo et al., 2022; Ronderos & Falkum, 2023). Metaphors may consequently provide a richer or more salient way of expressing an idea, attitude, or emotion than a comparable literal formulation (Colston, 2021; Hesse, 2023). The relationship between figurative expressions and context is also relevant to other forms of figurative language, including irony and hyperbole, whose intended meanings may depend strongly on the speaker's communicative situation (Musolff, 2021; Pfeifer & Lai, 2021).

The contextual nature of figurative language makes it particularly relevant to the analysis of dialogue in literary and audiovisual works. Dialogue does not merely provide information about events; it can also reveal relationships, attitudes, emotions, and characteristics of the speakers. Recent research on dialogue emphasizes that characters' speech can function as an important means of characterization because the way characters speak contributes to the representation of their identities and relationships (Madoyan, 2023). In films, dialogue is also closely related to emotional development and narrative progression. (Hipson & Mohammad, 2021), for example, demonstrate that the emotional patterns of movie characters can be traced through their utterances, indicating that dialogue is an important component of the emotional development of a narrative. Figurative language can therefore be examined not only as a collection of stylistic devices but also as a linguistic resource through which characters communicate attitudes, emotions, interpersonal tensions, and thematic meanings (Chahboun et al., 2021; McDonald, 2023).

Previous studies have demonstrated the relevance of figurative-language analysis to film and other audiovisual texts. Wardani (2022) examined figurative language in *The Split* and showed that figurative expressions occur naturally in movie dialogue and require contextual interpretation. Janah et al. (2022) investigated stylistic elements of figurative language in *Snow White and the Huntsman*, demonstrating that figurative expressions can be analyzed as stylistic elements of film dialogue. Similarly, Wijaya (2022) analyzed figurative language in two films and found that figurative expressions were related to the mood and communicative context of the characters. More recent research has continued to examine figurative language in films, including *The Shape of Water* and *Free Guy*, demonstrating that figurative expressions contribute to meaning construction and storytelling in audiovisual narratives (Fadilah &

Nurhayati, 2024; Wiguna & Suastini, 2024). These studies indicate that film dialogue provides a productive source for investigating how figurative expressions operate in narrative contexts.

The theoretical study of figurative language has also continued to develop beyond traditional classifications. Contemporary research has examined figurative meaning from cognitive, pragmatic, discourse, and stylistic perspectives (Barnden, 2021; Colston, 2023; Steen, 2023; van Poppel, 2021; Vereza, 2021). Metaphor, for instance, may be understood as a relationship between source and target domains, while its interpretation can also involve contextual, pragmatic, and embodied processes (Alkhamash, 2022; Colston, 2023; Ronderos et al., 2021). Research on metaphor has further demonstrated that figurative expressions can construct meanings that are not fully reducible to their literal wording (Fuyama, 2023; Hesse, 2023). The growing attention to contextual and discourse-based interpretations supports the need to examine figurative expressions within the specific situations in which characters use them rather than treating them as isolated linguistic forms.

The present study focuses on *Gifted* (2017), directed by Marc Webb, a film that presents the conflict surrounding Mary Adler, a mathematically gifted child raised by her uncle, Frank Adler. Frank attempts to provide Mary with an ordinary childhood, whereas her grandmother, Evelyn, believes that Mary's exceptional mathematical ability should receive intensive development. Their different perspectives lead to conflicts concerning Mary's education, custody, intellectual development, and emotional well-being. Because these conflicts are expressed through interactions among the characters, the dialogue provides an important linguistic source for examining how meaning and characterization are constructed. Figurative expressions are particularly relevant in this context because they can allow characters to express disagreement, concern, frustration, affection, humor, and other attitudes indirectly or emphatically. The analysis of figurative language in *Gifted* can therefore contribute to an understanding of how linguistic choices support the representation of the film's central conflict.

Research specifically examining *Gifted* has previously approached the film from other linguistic perspectives. Nurhidayah et al. (2021) analyzed conversational implicature in the movie and found that particularized conversational implicature was prominent because the interpretation of many utterances depended on contextual and background knowledge. Zuryatina et al. (2020) investigated presupposition and common ground in the same film and identified the role of implicit assumptions and interpersonal relationships in character communication. These studies demonstrate that the dialogue of *Gifted* contains linguistically significant meanings beyond the literal content of utterances. However, the studies reviewed for the present research have not specifically examined the figurative language of *Gifted* using Perrine's classification as the principal framework. The present study therefore addresses this gap by examining the figurative expressions occurring in the spoken dialogue of the film.

Perrine (1977) provides a classification of twelve forms of figurative language: simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, and irony. Although contemporary studies have developed more cognitively oriented approaches to figurative meaning, a systematic literary classification remains useful for identifying and organizing different forms of figurative expression in a literary or audiovisual text. The present study applies Perrine's framework to the spoken dialogue of *Gifted* (2017), while interpreting each identified expression according to its linguistic and narrative context. This combination allows the study to maintain a clear classification framework while also considering the contextual meanings and communicative functions of the expressions.

Based on this background, the present study aims to identify the types of figurative language found in the spoken dialogue of *Gifted* (2017) and to interpret the contextual meanings conveyed through those expressions. The study also examines how the identified figurative expressions contribute to characterization, emotional expression, interpersonal conflict, and the

development of the film's central theme. The study is expected to contribute to literary and stylistic studies of film dialogue by showing how figurative language operates as part of narrative communication rather than merely as an ornamental linguistic feature. It also provides a contextual analysis of figurative language in *Gifted*, complementing previous studies of the film that have focused on conversational implicature and presupposition.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze figurative language in *Gifted* (2017). A qualitative descriptive design is appropriate because the study aims to provide a systematic description and interpretation of linguistic data within its natural context rather than test a predetermined statistical hypothesis (Bazen et al., 2021; Villamin, 2025). The study uses document analysis because the data are derived from an existing audiovisual work and its textual dialogue reference. Document analysis enables researchers to examine existing materials systematically and is particularly appropriate when the research does not involve direct interaction with participants Morgan (2022). Methodological transparency is maintained by explicitly describing the criteria for selecting data, the theoretical classification used, and the procedures for verification and interpretation (Daniel et al., 2024; Yadav, 2022).

Research Design

The research uses a qualitative descriptive design. The analysis focuses on the forms and contextual meanings of figurative language found in the characters' spoken dialogue in *Gifted* (2017). The study does not treat figurative language as a numerical phenomenon, although frequency and percentage are used descriptively to present the distribution of the identified types. The principal theoretical framework is Perrine (1977) classification of figurative language. Each potential figurative expression was examined to determine whether its intended meaning differed from its literal interpretation and whether it could be classified into one of Perrine's categories. The contextual interpretation considered the surrounding dialogue, the situation of the scene, the relationship among the characters, and the communicative purpose of the utterance.

Time and Place of Research

The research was conducted through document-based analysis of *Gifted* (2017) and its subtitle/dialogue transcript. Because the study analyzes an existing audiovisual document and does not involve research participants or field observation, no field research setting was required. The research activities consisted of repeatedly viewing the film, examining the dialogue, identifying potential figurative expressions, classifying the selected data, interpreting their contextual meanings, and verifying the interpretations by returning to the relevant scenes. Such a document-based procedure is consistent with qualitative document analysis, in which existing textual or audiovisual materials can be systematically examined as research data Morgan (2022).

Research Target/Subject

The target of this research is the use of figurative language in *Gifted* (2017), directed by Marc Webb. The research subject is the spoken dialogue produced by the characters throughout the film. The data consist specifically of utterances that contain expressions classified as figurative language according to Perrine (1977) framework. All characters and dialogue occurring throughout the film were considered during data collection. Utterances that conveyed their meaning literally and did not contain a figurative expression were excluded from the final dataset. This criterion was applied consistently to prevent ordinary literal statements from being counted as figurative data.

Research Procedure

The research procedure consisted of several stages. First, the researcher repeatedly watched *Gifted* (2017) to understand the storyline, characters, relationships, and major conflicts. Second, the researcher examined the available subtitle/dialogue transcript while simultaneously listening to the spoken dialogue in the film. Third, utterances containing potential non-literal expressions were identified and recorded. Fourth, each candidate expression was examined using Perrine (1977) twelve-category framework. An utterance was retained as data when its intended meaning could not be adequately explained by its literal wording and when its linguistic characteristics corresponded to one of Perrine's categories. Fifth, the selected expressions were interpreted according to the surrounding dialogue and scene context. Sixth, the researcher revisited the relevant scenes and cross-checked the subtitle wording against the spoken dialogue. This final verification was conducted to minimize transcription discrepancies and to ensure that the interpretation was based on the actual dialogue rather than the subtitle alone. Detailed procedural reporting is important for qualitative rigor because transparency in data selection, analysis, and interpretation enables readers to assess the consistency of the research process (Daniel et al., 2024; Yadav, 2022).

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The main data of this research are the characters' dialogue containing figurative language in *Gifted* (2017). The primary instrument was the researcher, who identified, recorded, classified, and interpreted the data. Supporting materials included the movie and a subtitle file used as a textual reference. Because the official script was unavailable, the subtitle was used to assist the identification and recording of the dialogue. However, the subtitle was not treated as the sole source of the data. Each selected utterance was cross-checked with the spoken dialogue in the movie to ensure accuracy.

The data were collected using document analysis. The researcher watched the movie several times and examined the dialogue systematically. Each utterance containing a potential figurative expression was recorded and categorized according to Perrine (1977) classification. The relevant dialogue, character, type of figurative language, and contextual information were documented for further analysis. Document analysis was considered appropriate because the study examines existing audiovisual and textual materials rather than collecting data directly from participants.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, all recorded utterances were reviewed and filtered according to the research criteria. Utterances that did not contain figurative language were excluded. The remaining expressions were classified according to Perrine, (1977) twelve categories. This process resulted in 77 figurative-language instances belonging to eight categories.

In the data display stage, the selected expressions were organized in tables according to their figurative-language types. The tables included the relevant dialogue, character, contextual meaning, and timestamp. Frequency and percentage calculations were also used to present the distribution of the identified categories. The use of tables allowed patterns in the dataset to be identified while maintaining the connection between each linguistic expression and its contextual interpretation.

In the conclusion drawing and verification stage, the researcher interpreted the contextual meaning and function of each figurative expression. The interpretation considered the linguistic form of the expression, the surrounding dialogue, the scene in which the utterance occurred, and the relationship among the characters. The researcher then returned to the relevant scenes to verify the consistency of the classification and interpretation. This process corresponds to the

principle of methodological rigor in qualitative research, which requires transparent and systematic procedures throughout data collection and analysis (Daniel et al., 2024; Yadav, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified 77 instances of figurative language in Gifted (2017). Eight types were found: metaphor, hyperbole, simile, personification, metonymy, irony, paradox, and understatement.

Table 1. Percentage and Frequency of Figurative Language

No.	Type of Figurative Language	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Metaphor	41	53.25%
2.	Hyperbole	22	28.59%
3.	Simile	4	5.19%
4.	Personification	4	5.19%
5.	Metonymy	2	2.60%
6.	Irony	2	2.60%
7.	Paradox	1	1.29%
8.	Understatement	1	1.29%
Total		77	100%

The distribution shows that metaphor was the most frequently occurring type, with 41 instances (53.25%), followed by hyperbole with 22 instances (28.59%). Simile and personification each occurred four times (5.19%), while metonymy and irony each occurred twice (2.60%). Paradox and understatement were each identified once (1.29%). The concentration of the data in metaphor and hyperbole suggests that the characters frequently rely on comparison and exaggeration when expressing experiences, attitudes, and interpersonal tensions. This finding is consistent with the broader observation that figurative language can provide a more salient and expressive representation of abstract ideas and attitudes than literal formulations (Colston, 2021; McDonald, 2023). However, the frequency should not be interpreted as evidence that metaphor is inherently more important than other figures; rather, it indicates that metaphor is particularly prominent in the specific communicative situations represented in Gifted.

Metaphor

Metaphor was the dominant category, with 41 instances. The frequent occurrence of metaphor can be related to the film’s emphasis on abstract issues such as responsibility, education, intellectual ability, emotional pressure, and interpersonal conflict. Such abstract experiences can be represented through more concrete expressions, allowing characters to communicate complex attitudes in relatively concise forms (Colston, 2023; Hesse, 2023).

One example is:

“You can borrow money from the rest of your life.”

The expression borrow money is metaphorical because borrowing normally describes a financial transaction, whereas the utterance refers to experiences and social opportunities that Mary may obtain through attending school. The metaphor maps the concept of financial borrowing onto the concept of obtaining or making use of future life experiences. In this mapping, school is not presented merely as an educational institution but as an opportunity through which Mary can gain experiences that cannot simply be recovered later. In the surrounding conflict, Frank argues that Mary needs opportunities to interact with other children rather than having her intellectual ability become the sole focus of her upbringing. The metaphor therefore connects the immediate issue of schooling with a broader concern about Mary’s childhood and future. Such metaphorical mapping allows an abstract concern about childhood experience to be expressed through a concrete economic concept, illustrating how metaphor can

frame an otherwise difficult-to-express idea through an imagistic perspective (Hesse, 2023; Steen, 2023).

Another example is:

“You’re gonna bury her in tutors.”

The word bury does not refer to literal burial. The metaphorical mapping can be represented as burial is excessive academic pressure, in which the physical experience of being covered or enclosed by something is transferred to Mary’s anticipated experience of being surrounded by tutors and academic demands. The source domain of burying evokes physical confinement and the loss of space for movement, while the target domain concerns the excessive educational demands that Frank believes may be imposed on Mary. The surrounding conflict between Frank and Evelyn strengthens this interpretation because their disagreement concerns whether Mary’s mathematical ability should be intensively developed or whether she should be allowed a more ordinary childhood. Thus, the expression does more than exaggerate the number of tutors. It constructs academic pressure as something capable of overwhelming or enclosing Mary. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that metaphorical meaning can emerge through the selective transfer of relevant features from a source domain to an abstract target domain (Alkhamash, 2022; Colston, 2023; Ronderos et al., 2021). The metaphor consequently reinforces the film’s central conflict between intellectual development and Mary’s emotional and social well-being.

A further example is:

“And Mary to you is just a pawn in all this.”

The word pawn metaphorically represents Mary as a person who may be used within the conflict between the adults around her. The source domain is a chess game, in which a pawn can be moved according to another player’s strategy, while the target domain is the custody and educational conflict involving Mary. The mapping therefore presents Mary as a pawn is the Mary as a person subject to adults’ strategies. The expression emphasizes Mary’s vulnerable position because the adults’ decisions may determine the direction of her life. At the same time, the metaphor characterizes the speaker’s critical attitude toward the conflict by suggesting that Mary is being treated as an instrument rather than as an autonomous child. Metaphor can serve such argumentative and interpersonal functions by framing an issue from a particular perspective rather than merely describing it neutrally van Poppel (2021).

Taken together, the metaphorical data demonstrate that metaphor in *Gifted* frequently represents abstract experiences through concrete images. The dominant metaphors concern education, responsibility, interpersonal conflict, and Mary’s position within the adults’ disagreement. The dominance of metaphor can therefore be interpreted in relation to the film’s narrative subject: many of the conflicts are conceptually abstract, involving questions of childhood, intellectual ability, parental responsibility, and future development. Metaphorical expressions provide characters with a compact way of framing these abstract issues. The finding also demonstrates that metaphor functions stylistically as part of characterization because the selected source domains reveal how characters conceptualize Mary’s situation.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole was the second most frequently identified category, with 22 instances. The relatively high frequency of hyperbole indicates that exaggeration is another important strategy through which characters intensify their attitudes and emotional responses. Hyperbole does not normally require the listener to interpret the exaggerated statement as literally accurate. Instead, the exaggeration can increase the pragmatic and emotional force of an utterance Musolf (2021).

One example is:

“I’ve taught you everything I know.”

The word everything exaggerates the extent of Frank’s teaching. It does not necessarily mean that Frank has literally transferred every piece of knowledge he possesses to Mary. Rather, the expression emphasizes the speaker’s perception that he has taught Mary as much as he can.

In context, the statement supports Frank's argument about Mary's need for a different educational environment. The hyperbole therefore strengthens the argumentative force of the statement while simultaneously revealing Frank's emotional involvement in Mary's development.

Another example is:

"We've gone over them a hundred times!"

The expression a hundred times is an exaggeration of the actual frequency with which the subject has been discussed. The exact number is not the central meaning. Instead, the exaggerated quantity emphasizes Frank's frustration. The hyperbole makes the emotional intensity of the interaction more noticeable and contributes to the development of interpersonal tension. This use illustrates how exaggerated numerical expressions can communicate emotional intensity rather than factual measurement.

Hyperbole can also be used humorously:

"And the manufacturers of Legos, they should all be in prison."

Frank does not literally argue that all Lego manufacturers should be imprisoned. The extreme statement exaggerates his frustration after stepping on Lego pieces. Its effect is therefore not primarily factual but interpersonal. The exaggeration transforms a minor physical inconvenience into a humorous complaint. In the context of the interaction, the hyperbole helps reduce tension and creates a lighter atmosphere. This supports the view that figurative expressions can simultaneously communicate an attitude and shape the interpersonal atmosphere of an interaction.

Another example is:

"One in a billion."

The expression exaggerates the rarity of Diane's intellectual ability. Rather than functioning as a literal statistical calculation, it emphasizes the exceptional nature of her mathematical talent. The expression is particularly significant because intellectual exceptionalism is one of the central concerns of the film. The hyperbole consequently contributes to the characterization of Mary and Diane as extraordinarily gifted while also reinforcing the film's tension between intellectual achievement and the emotional consequences of treating giftedness as exceptional.

Simile

Four instances of simile were identified. Simile explicitly establishes a comparison, commonly through markers such as like or as. One example is:

"I look like a Disney character."

The expression explicitly compares the speaker's appearance with a Disney character. The comparison makes the description more vivid and contributes to the playful and informal quality of the dialogue. Rather than providing a neutral description, the speaker uses a culturally recognizable comparison to express an evaluation of appearance.

Another example is:

"You drive like an old lady."

The expression compares Frank's driving style with the stereotype associated with an "old lady." In context, the comparison functions as a humorous evaluation of slow or cautious driving. It also contributes to the informal relationship between Mary and Frank. The simile therefore has both descriptive and interpersonal functions: it communicates an evaluation while simultaneously maintaining the playful quality of their interaction.

Personification

Four instances were classified as personification. Personification attributes human characteristics or actions to non-human entities. One example is:

"Because the court said I had to."

The expression uses said as if the court were a human speaker. In literal terms, the statement refers to a decision issued by a legal institution. The institution is therefore represented

through a human communicative action. The expression makes an institutional decision easier to incorporate into ordinary conversation. Within the film's context, such expressions also reflect the characters' frequent interaction with institutions, particularly in relation to custody and legal authority.

The use of personification in the dialogue demonstrates that figurative language is not restricted to emotional statements. It can also provide a familiar linguistic way of referring to institutions and abstract entities. This is consistent with the broader observation that figurative expressions can help speakers represent abstract or distant entities through more concrete and accessible forms of expression McDonald (2023).

Metonymy

Two instances of metonymy were identified. One example is:

"An Apple? Whoa."

In context, Apple does not refer to the fruit but to a technological product associated with the Apple brand. The brand name is therefore used to refer to a product through an association between the producer and the product. This demonstrates the function of metonymy as an associated-term substitution rather than a direct comparison.

Another example is:

"Do you want your life back?"

Here, life refers to a person's previous condition, freedom, responsibilities, and way of living rather than merely biological existence. The expression condenses a broader personal situation into the single term life. In context, the utterance reflects the consequences of the characters' responsibilities and conflicts. The metonymic expression consequently makes a broad personal condition more concise and conversational.

Paradox

One instance of paradox was identified:

"I want my crummy school."

The expression combines the speaker's desire for a school with the negative description crummy. The apparent contradiction reflects an emotional preference that cannot be understood solely by evaluating the school as either good or bad. The speaker recognizes shortcomings in the school but nevertheless wants to return to it. The paradox therefore expresses the complexity of the speaker's emotional attachment and indicates that emotional value may differ from objective evaluation.

Understatement

One instance of understatement was identified:

"I see you're looking at our little problem."

The expression little problem minimizes the apparent seriousness of the situation. The problem being discussed is considerably more significant than the adjective little suggests. The contrast between the mild wording and the seriousness of the situation produces the effect of understatement. The expression allows the speaker to refer to a serious matter without explicitly emphasizing its seriousness, which may contribute to the conversational tone of the interaction.

Irony

Two instances of irony were identified. One example is:

"I'm a fucking hero."

The expression functions as verbal irony because the positive term hero contrasts with the speaker's actual attitude and circumstances. The speaker does not sincerely present himself as heroic; instead, the expression mocks or criticizes the situation. The intended meaning therefore emerges from the contrast between the literal wording and the contextual attitude. Research on irony indicates that emotional context can influence how ironic statements are interpreted, making the surrounding situation important to the analysis of such expressions Pfeifer & Lai (2021).

Another example is:

“Start charging you room and board.”

In context, the speaker does not literally intend to charge the lawyers for occupying the courtroom. Instead, the expression humorously comments on the prolonged situation. The ironic formulation communicates impatience while maintaining an informal tone. Thus, irony in the dialogue can simultaneously express an attitude and shape the interpersonal relationship among the speakers.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the types and contextual meanings of figurative language found in *Gifted* (2017) using Perrine (1977) framework. The analysis identified 77 instances of figurative language belonging to eight types: metaphor, hyperbole, simile, personification, metonymy, irony, paradox, and understatement. Metaphor was the most frequently identified type, with 41 instances (53.25%), followed by hyperbole with 22 instances (28.59%). The other types occurred less frequently, with simile and personification appearing four times each, metonymy and irony twice each, and paradox and understatement once each.

The findings show that figurative language in *Gifted* conveys meanings that cannot always be understood from the literal expressions alone. The expressions are closely related to the conversational and narrative contexts in which they occur. Metaphors are frequently used to represent abstract experiences and interpersonal situations through concrete images, while hyperbole intensifies emotions, attitudes, and conflicts. Other types of figurative language also contribute to expressing the characters' perspectives and emotional responses.

Overall, the use of figurative language in the dialogue contributes to characterization and narrative development by reflecting the characters' attitudes toward Mary, education, family responsibilities, and the custody conflict. The findings particularly demonstrate how figurative expressions represent the tension between Mary's intellectual giftedness and her need for emotional support, social relationships, and an ordinary childhood. Thus, figurative language in *Gifted* functions not merely as a stylistic feature but also as a linguistic resource for constructing meaning and supporting the development of the film's narrative.

For future research, figurative language in *Gifted* may be examined using other theoretical perspectives or approaches, such as cognitive stylistics, pragmatics, or discourse analysis. Further studies may also compare figurative language across different films or examine how figurative expressions interact with other elements of film discourse, including characterization, visual representation, and conversational context.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Alkhamash, R. (2022). Processing figurative language: Evidence from native and non-native speakers of English. *Frontiers in Psychology*, Volume 13-2022. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1057662>
- Barnden, J. (2021). Metaphor and irony: Messy when mixed. In *Figurative Thought and Language*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ftl.11.05bar>

- Bazen, A., Barg, F. K., & Takeshita, J. (2021). Research techniques made simple: An introduction to qualitative research. *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, 141(2), 241–247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jid.2020.11.029>
- Chahboun, S., Kvello, Ø., & Page, A. G. (2021). Extending the Field of Extended Language: A Literature Review on Figurative Language Processing in Neurodevelopmental Disorders. *Frontiers in Communication*, Volume 6-2021. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/communication/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2021.661528>
- Colston, H. L. (2021). Evaluating metaphor accounts via their pragmatic effects. In *Figurative Thought and Language*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ftl.11.03col>
- Colston, H. L. (2023). The roots of metaphor: The essence of thought. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1197346. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1197346>
- Colston, H. L., & Gibbs, R. W. (2021). Figurative language communicates directly because it precisely demonstrates what we mean. *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 75(2), 228–233. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cep0000254>
- Daniel, B. K., Asil, M., & Carr, S. (2024). Psychometric properties of the TACT framework—Determining rigor in qualitative research. *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics*, 8, 1276446. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2023.1276446>
- Dobrovol'skij, D. (2021). On some specific features of conventional figurative language. *Studies in Psychology*, 42(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/02109395.2021.1913550>
- Fadilah, & Nurhayati, S. (2024). Figurative languages in The Shape of Water movie. *Pujangga*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.47313/pujangga.v10i1.3437>
- Fuyama, M. (2023). Does the coexistence of literal and figurative meanings in metaphor comprehension yield novel meaning? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1146262. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1146262>
- Hesse, J. (2023). Metaphors, religious language and linguistic expressibility. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 93, 239–258. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-023-09865-2>
- Hipson, W. E., & Mohammad, S. M. (2021). Emotion dynamics in movie dialogues. *PLOS ONE*, 16(9), e0256153. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256153>
- Janah, K. E. N., Retnaningdyah, P., & Mustofa, A. (2022). The stylistics elements of figurative language in Snow White and the Huntsman movie and the implications toward EFL teaching. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 7(2), 313–329. <https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v7i2.840>
- Madoyan, G. (2023). Character, characterization and dialogue. *Armenian Folia Anglistika*, 19(1), 144–157. <https://doi.org/10.46991/AFA/2023.19.1.144>
- Marulanda-Páez, E., & Igoa-González, J.-M. (2021). Figurative language: Advances and new research perspectives. *Studies in Psychology*, 42(2), 185–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02109395.2021.1914391>
- McDonald, S. (2023). What's figurative about figurative language? *Lingua*, 287, 103520. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2023.103520>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Analysis*. SAGE Publication, Inc.
- Mo, Y., Zhou, R., & Chen, X. (2022). The effect of incongruous contextual cues on pictorial metaphor processing. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 966386.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.966386>

- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(1), 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>
- Musolff, A. (2021). Hyperbole and emotionalisation: Escalation of pragmatic effects of proverb and metaphor in the “Brexit” debate. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*, 25(3), 628–644. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-3-628-644>
- Nurhidayah, Yassi, A. H., & Sukmawaty. (2021). The Types of Conversational Implicature in “Gifted” Movie. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 4(4), 2021. <https://doi.org/10.34050/elsjish.v4i4.18369>
- Perrine, L. (1977). *Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry* (7th ed.). Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Pfeifer, V. A., & Lai, V. T. (2021). The comprehension of irony in high and low emotional contexts. *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 75(2), 120–125. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cep0000250>
- Ronderos, C. R., & Falkum, I. L. (2023). Suppression of literal meaning in single and extended metaphors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1135129. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1135129>
- Ronderos, C. R., Guerra, E., & Knoeferle, P. (2021). The role of literal features during processing of novel verbal metaphors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 556624. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.556624>
- Steen, G. J. (2023). Thinking by metaphor, fast and slow: Deliberate Metaphor Theory offers a new model for metaphor and its comprehension. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1242888. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1242888>
- van Poppel, L. (2021). The study of metaphor in argumentation theory. *Argumentation*, 35, 177–208. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-020-09523-1>
- Vereza, S. (2021). The fabric of metaphor in discourse: Interweaving cognition and discourse in figurative language. In *Figurative Thought and Language*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ftl.11.11ver>
- Villamin, P. (2025). A worked example of qualitative descriptive design: A step-by-step guide for novice and early career researchers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 81(8), 5181–5195. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.16481>
- Wardani, W. A. (2022). Figurative language used in The Split movie. *Language Horizon: Journal of Language Studies*, 10(3), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.26740/lh.v10n3.p1-8>
- Wiguna, K. E. K., & Suastini, N. W. (2024). Behind the script: Analyzing figurative language in Free Guy. *Elysian Journal*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.36733/elysian.v4i3.9454>
- Wijaya, Y. (2022). *AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN “RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON” MOVIE: SEMANTIC APPROACH.* Putera Batam University.
- Yadav, D. (2022). Criteria for good qualitative research: A comprehensive review. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 31, 679–689. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-021-00619-0>
- Zuryatina, F., Rejeki, S., & Taufik, M. (2020). Presupposition and Common Ground of the Characters in the Movie Gifted (2017). *Journal Albion : Journal of English Literature, Language, and Culture*, 2(2), 91–94. <https://doi.org/10.33751/albion.v2i2.2477>

Copyright Holder :

© Afifah et.al (2026).

First Publication Right :

© Journal International of Lingua and Technology

This article is under:

