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**AN ANALYSIS OF HYPERBOLE USED IN HEART OF DARKNESS
BY JOSEPH CONRAD**

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to identify the forms of hyperbole found in Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. The research data were taken from the novel Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. The writer applied Claridge's theory to classify the forms of hyperbole. There are seven forms of hyperbole. They are single-word hyperbole, phrasal hyperbole, clausal hyperbole, numerical hyperbole, hyperbolic superlatives, hyperbolic comparison, and hyperbolic repetition. This study was qualitative research. This study reveals that seven forms of hyperbole according to Claridge (2011) were found in Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. The forms are single-word hyperbole, phrasal hyperbole, clausal hyperbole, numerical hyperbole, the role of the superlative, comparison, and repetition. From the occurrence of all seven forms of hyperbole, it was found that the most form of hyperbole was clausal hyperbole. In conclusion, it can be said that Joseph Conrad used all forms of hyperbole in the novel Heart of Darkness.

Keywords: hyperbole, Heart of Darkness, clausal hyperbole.

I. INTRODUCTION

Hyperbole is a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect. Hyperbolic statements are usually obvious exaggerations intended to emphasize a point, rather than be taken as reality. Exaggeration is the first element of hyperbole (Burgers et al, 2016). When speaking hyperbolically, the speaker is exaggerating an element or feature (Carston & Wearing, 2015). When speakers exaggerate, they usually want to emphasize the importance of something (Norasetkosol, Timyam & Sriussadaporn, 2012). The following example will be used to illustrate: *This is the worst thing that happened in 2005!* Based on the statement above, the speaker is saying that the statement is an exaggeration. He is stating something false ‘worst thing that happened in 2005’ to stress his feeling that what has happened was awful.

Heart of Darkness (1899) is a novel by Polish-English novelist Joseph Conrad. It tells the story of Charles Marlow, a sailor who takes on an assignment from a Belgian trading company as a ferry-boat captain in the African interior. The novel is widely regarded as a critique of European colonial rule in Africa, whilst also examining the themes of power dynamics and morality.

Although Conrad does not name the river where the narrative takes place, at the time of writing the Congo Free State, the location of the large and economically important Congo River, was a private colony of Belgium’s King Leopold II. Marlow is given a text by Kurtz, an ivory trader working on a trading station far up the river, who has “gone native” and is the object of Marlow’s expedition.

In this research, the writer chose Joseph Conrad’s novel to analyze since it contains the number of hyperboles that become the topic of this research. In this research, the writer analyzed the forms of hyperbole used in Joseph Conrad’s entitled *Heart of Darkness*.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Definitions of Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a kind of figurative language where the speaker says something while meaning another thing (Stern, 2000). In other words, the literal meaning of what is said does not match the intended meaning (Recchia, Howe, Ross & Alexander, 2010). When using hyperbole, speakers do not say X, rather they say something is more than X (Claridge, 2010). They exceed the limits that the hearers expect by using exaggeration (Burgers, Brugman, Lavalette & Steen, 2016).

Hyperbole as a term has a long tradition; in the sense of ‘exaggeration’, it was already used in classical Greece. Roman rhetoricians, such as Quintilian, deal with the figure of overstatement in their handbooks and from there it has found its way into the European rhetorical tradition. It is found used in diverse sources; the Encyclopedia Britannica mentions love poetry, sagas, tall tales, classical mythology, political rhetoric, and advertising as texts containing hyperbole, illustrating the great range of the phenomenon regarding both time and genre. Furthermore, hyperbole is not only an arcane rhetorical figure but rather, similar to metaphor, it is a common feature of everyday language use (Leech 1983: 146f.).

Burgers et al. (2016) define hyperbole as: ‘*An expression that is more extreme than justified given its ontological referent*’ (p.166). In other words, they suggest that there are three main elements that will help us define what hyperbole is. The first is an exaggeration. The second is the importance of the shift from the propositional meaning to what the speaker intended to say. Lastly, there must be a specific referent assigned when speaking hyperbolically. It will explain each

of those elements starting with exaggeration.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Type of Research

The research is qualitative. The writer used the qualitative approach to collect, analyze, interpret, and explain data and ended with a conclusion which did refer to that analysis of data. The characteristics of this study chose based on their objectives. According to Creswell (2009, p.22) says that Qualitative research is means of investigating and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups on a social problem. Creswell is divided into a natural setting, researcher as a key instrument, multiple sources of the

data, inductive data, participants’ meaning, emergent design, theoretical lens, interpretive, and holistic account. This study used a descriptive qualitative method to study the problem because this study has a purpose to describe and analyze the forms of hyperbole used in Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. This study did by formulating problems, collecting data, classifying data, and analyzing data.

3.2 Data Source

The data of this research were taken from the Heart of Darkness novel. The

writer chose this novel because there were some hyperbolic expressions that can be found in the Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. The writer took the novel Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad from the internet in the form of a pdf file.

3.3 The Method of Data Collection

According to Creswell (2013:178-180), the techniques to collect data are divided into observation, interviews, documents, and audio-visual material. In getting the data, the writer uses the documentation method to get the detailed data about hyperbole found in Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. There were some steps in collecting the data. First, read the novel to find hyperbole. Second, highlight all hyperbole in the novel. Third, write down all hyperboles. Fourth, put the hyperbole in a table.

3.4 The Method and Data Analysis

According to (Creswell, 2014) there are 5 steps of the Data Analysis Technique for Qualitative Research. First, organizing and preparing the data for analysis. Second, reading or looking at all the data. Third, start coding all of the data. Fourth, using the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as

categories or themes for analysis. Fifth, making an interpretation in Qualitative Research of the findings or results. By referring to the procedures set out by Creswell, the writer did four activities in analyzing the data. First, the writer organized and prepare the data for analysis. Second, the writer read and look at all the data. Third, the writer analyzed the data to classify the forms of hyperbole based on the concept of Claridge (2011). Finally, the writer made an interpretation in Qualitative Research of the findings or results.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writer is going to present the finding and discussion of the data that the writer has got from the analysis. The finding and discussion of the data focus on the forms of hyperbole used in Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. The forms are single-word hyperbole, phrasal hyperbole, clausal hyperbole, numerical hyperbole, the role of the superlative, comparison, and repetition (Claridge, 2011). Based on Claridge (2011) theory of hyperbole forms in chapter II, there are seven forms of hyperbole. In this discussion, the writer found forty-six (41) hyperbolic expressions in Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. It was

classified into five (5) single word hyperbole, three (4) phrasal hyperbole, twenty (16) clausal hyperbole, two (2) numerical hyperbole, two (2) the role of the superlative, seven (7) comparison and six (7) repetition found in Heart of Darkness. In this research, the writer focuses on the discussion about single-word hyperbole, phrasal hyperbole, clausal hyperbole, numerical hyperbole, the role of the superlative, comparison and repetition (Claridge, 2011).

4.1 Single-Word Hyperbole

The first is single-word hyperbole. Single-word hyperbole only occurs when there is only a single overstatement word in the utterance or sentence. The most common realization of hyperbole is the type where the exaggerated content is exclusively or principally found in one word only of an utterance, and if one substituted a more 'contextually appropriate' word or phrase for that particular item, the overstatement would completely disappear.

- (1) *"The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die!"*

It can be seen that the hyperbole word is *die*. The data can

be said a single-word hyperbole based on Claridge (2011). According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), "*die* means to stop being alive, either suddenly or slowly." Based on it, the word *die* means too many workers who were forced to work without even time to rest, they had devoted their lives to work. By saying that word, the word is too exaggerated. If the word *die* is omitted, the sense of hyperbole in the sentence will disappear.

- (2) *"Then, alluding with a toss of the head to the tumults in the station-yard, 'when one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages-hate them to the death."*

It can be seen that the hyperbole word is *savages*. The data can be said a single-word hyperbole based on Claridge (2011). According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), "*savage* means extremely violent, wild, or frightening. Based on it, the word *savages* means people who have stirred up a riot in that place, then others would hate them forever. By saying that word, the word is too exaggerated. If the word *savages* is omitted, the sense of hyperbole in the sentence will disappear.

4.2 Phrasal Hyperbole

Phrasal hyperbole is a certain combination of words and senses that create hyperbolic meaning. Among the other forms, this form occurs frequently.

Phrasal hyperbole is mostly noun phrases that tend to carry hyperbolic meaning, in particular, if one takes into account that the last three categories will very often be realized within a noun phrase frame as well.

- (3) *“Now and then a carrier dead in harness, at rest in the long grass near the path, with an empty water-gourd and his long staff lying by his side”*

The phrasal hyperbole is “*now and then a carrier dead in harness.*” which can be seen in the sentence above. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “dead means not now living.” Based on it, the carriers who usually pass that route, in a state of restraint, cannot do anything. All they can do is obey their superiors. In fact, the carriers were only exhausted while resting. The words of a dead carrier in bridles are an exaggeration.

- (4) *“More than once she had to wade for a bit, with twenty cannibals splashing around and pushing.”*

It can be seen the word *cannibal* is too exaggerated. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), *cannibal* means a person who eats human flesh or an animal that eats the flesh of animals of its own type.” Based on it, she crossed the river with forced workers, whose workers continued

so long that they were called twenty cannibals. The words *twenty cannibals* are too exaggerated.

4.3 Clausal Hyperbole

Clausal hyperbole is a form of hyperbole that contains two or more clausal constituents. Clausal hyperbole encompasses all those cases in which the hyperbole is created only by the combined effect of items in two or more clausal constituents as the minimum requirement. Hyperbole can spread over several clauses within a sentence. The hyperbolic markers form a clause that consists of a subject and a verb.

- (5) *“For the rest after his hours, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold form him the secret of whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing.”*

The clausal hyperbole is “*a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold form him the secret of whole continent,*” According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “continent means one of the seven large land masses on the earth’s surface, surrounded, or mainly surrounded. Based on it, when walking on the beach while looking at the ocean, he seemed to know a secret that should not need to be known which is a secret that is as big to him as the continent. In fact, he was only expressing his overblown feelings supposing it was as

big as an entire continent. The words *as the continents* are too exaggerated.

4.4 Numerical Hyperbole

Numerical hyperbole is a form of hyperbole in which the speaker or writers use numbers as one way to sign and occur frequently. Invented or authentic examples involving numbers are not uncommonly quoted in the literature (e.g., Norrick 2001, Clark 1996) and a recent study of hyperbole in a conversation using the cancode corpus (McCarthy and Carter 2004) singles out a number as one of four fields of investigation, doubtlessly due to the assumption that it is a promising area. There are significant words to recognize numerical hyperbole. They are hundreds, thousands, millions, billions, etc.

- (6) *“He was five feet six, I should judge, and his grip on the handle-end of ever so many **millions**.”*

The numerical hyperbole is *many millions*. Numerical hyperbole which the speaker or writer uses numbers as one way to create hyperbolic meaning. Numerical hyperbole can be found in single-word hyperbole, phrasal hyperbole or in clausal hyperbole. “*Many millions*” is numerical hyperbole because the word “millions” is an exaggerated word to show how

strong he is, especially in his grip that is very strong like millions. Million is an exaggeration, because in fact, it is not that much, which is just strong.

- (7) *“She talked about ‘weaning those ignorant **millions** from their horrid ways,’ till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable.”*

The numerical hyperbole is “*ignorant millions*”. The words mean so many very terrible people he met along the way, which illustrates how much he disliked these people. The words “*ignorant millions*” are exaggerated.

4.5 Hyperbolic Superlatives

In hyperbole, there is also superlative expression which indicates hyperbolic meaning. The role of superlative marks a potential high point suggested by the sequence positive-comparative-superlative; Spitzbardt counted it among the hyperbole-prone items. Bolinger (1997: 28) remarked more generally that ‘the superlative can jump any adjective to the outer limits of its scale. Comparing some words using superlatives can be the form of an overstatement. Superlative makes something sound so excessive and extreme.

- (8) *“The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over **the biggest and the greatest**, town on earth.”*

“*The biggest and the greatest*” are superlative hyperbole data in this research. It is because the word “*biggest* and *greatest*” indicates hyperbolic meaning. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “*greatest* means large in amount, size, or degree.” Based on it, Gravesend, which was dark due to a drizzle, and was about to be hit by rain, was likened to a very large and best city in the world. In fact, the author emphasizes that the city is very crowded and congested.

- (9) “*Then I began to look for a ship-I should think **the hardest** work no earth.*”

The superlative hyperbole is “*the hardest*”. It is because the word “*the hardest*” indicates hyperbole meaning. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “*hardest* means not easy to bend, cut, or break.” Based on it, he complained about his very heavy work, even to the point of wanting to keep looking for work between the ports, so he does not want a hard job. He just wants an easy job.

4.6 Hyperbolic Comparisons

This category here includes non-metaphorical comparisons which contain explicit comparative particles, such as *like*, *as*, and *than*. By comparing the entity or aspect

in question in such a way, it is being maximized. Very often the hyperbolic potential is contained solely within the comparative phrase. Thus, comparisons are the place where Spitzbardt’s comparative degree comes to play a role in hyperbole, which, however, it can never establish on its own.

- (10) “***He resemble a pilot**, which to seaman is trustworthiness personified.*”

The comparison hyperbole is *he resemble a pilot*. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “*pilot* means a person with detailed knowledge of an area of water, such as that around a port, who goes onto a ship to direct it safely.” Based on it, the word *pilot* means a captain or leader on a ship who is very manly and trusted by all crew. The word *pilot* is an exaggeration. In fact, the *pilot* is in charge of driving the plane while the captain is driving the ship. He is a skipper who has been sailing up and down the rivers around him.

- (11) “*“Do I not?” he said slowly, gasping, **as if the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power.***”

The comparison hyperbole is *as if the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power*. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “*supernatural* means (of something’s cause or existence) not able to be explained by

the laws of science.” Based on it, it means that the person's words have been gasping for air as if not believing it until he seems to have run out of words. The clause as if “*the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power*” are exaggerated.

4.7 Hyperbolic Repetition

This form of hyperbole is usually used in a spoken language such as in conversation or it can be called a phenomenon in spoken language. However, not all, perhaps even rather few, repetitions are necessarily hyperbolic; many are just generally emphatic and emotive, which is certainly the prototypical function of repetition (e.g., Leech 1969: 78f.).

- (12) “*The edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black, **far, far, far** away along a blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist.*”

The data repetition hyperbole is *so dark-green as to be almost black, far, far away along a blue sea*. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “far means at, to, or from a great distance in space or time.” Based on it, he was in a very dense forest which is very far from the ocean. He said that the river was so far from the ocean that he repeated the distant word twice.

- (13) “*I was smoking my pipe quietly by my dismantled steamer, and saw them all cutting capers in the light, with their arms lifted high, when the stout man with moustaches came tearing down to the river, a tin pail in his hand, assured me that everybody was ‘behaving **splendidly, splendidly,** dipped about a quart of water and tore back again.*”

The data repetition hyperbole is *assured me that everybody was ‘behaving splendidly, splendidly, dipped about a quart of water and tore back again*. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2022), “splendidly means in a way that is excellent, or beautiful and impressive. Based on it, he saw so many people busy digging boats and people were very scared until someone stopped by to say that everything was fine, convincing him to say they were good people just busy with their work.

V. CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

Hyperbole is a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect; it is an extravagant statement. In adjective form, the term is hyperbolic. The concept is also called overstatement. Hyperbole is used to place emphasis on a particular action, feeling, or feature and is not meant to be taken literally. After analyzing the data, the writer found that

there were seven forms of hyperbole in *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad. The writer found single-word hyperbole, phrasal hyperbole, clausal hyperbole, numerical hyperbole, the role of the superlative, comparison, and repetition. The total data was forty-one but, the writer only discussed twenty-seven data since there were many data that appear twice or three times similar.

In specific, there was five 5 single word hyperbole, 3 phrasal hyperbole, 17 clausal hyperbole, 2 numerical hyperbole, 2 the role of the superlative, 7 comparisons, and 7 repetitions. The most used form of hyperbole in *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad is clausal hyperbole. It is 20 clausal hyperboles found in *Heart of Darkness*. The least hyperbole used form of hyperbole in *Heart of Darkness* is superlative and numerical.

5.2 Suggestion

Based on the findings of this research, the writer has some suggestions. First, it is suggested to the next researchers who want to analyze hyperboles to take the source of the data containing more hyperboles so that they can analyze more data. Second, the writer suggests that students of linguistics need to study more about hyperboles so that they can

understand and use hyperboles well and appropriately. Finally, it is suggested that the readers of a novel should be more aware of hyperbole so that they can understand the novel.

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