SIGEH ELT: Journal of Literature and Linguistics
Volume 6 Number 1, March 2026, pp: 962-973
E-ISSN: 2775-8834

The Aesthetics of Figurative Language in Contemporary Indonesian Poetry

Afni Rosalina[1], Ratna Sari Dewi[2]
[1]English Literature Study Program, Universitas Deztron Indonesia, Indonesia
[2]English Literature Study Program, Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah. Indonesia

Article Info

Submitted:
6 March 2026
Reviewed:
24 July 2026 – 1 September 2026
Accepted:
3 September 2026
Published:
24 September 2026

Keywords:
Figurative language; contemporary indonesian poetry; aesthetics; stylistic analysis; interpretation.

Abstract

Contemporary Indonesian poetry employs figurative language not only as stylistic ornamentation but also as a means of constructing aesthetic experience and interpretative meaning. This study examines how figurative language functions aesthetically and contributes to meaning-making and emotional engagement in contemporary Indonesian poetry. A qualitative stylistic analysis was conducted on 35 contemporary Indonesian poems published between 2018 and 2024. The poems were purposively selected from published anthologies and online literary platforms according to their relevance to contemporary Indonesian poetry and the richness of their figurative language. Data were analyzed through close reading, coding, categorization, and qualitative interpretation, drawing on stylistics, conceptual metaphor theory, and cognitive poetics. The analysis identified metaphor as the most prominent figurative strategy, followed by sensory imagery, personification, and symbolism. Across the corpus, these forms contribute to the construction of identity, collective memory, urban experience, ecological awareness, and existential reflection. The findings show that figurative language operates as an integrated aesthetic system: metaphor structures abstract experience, sensory imagery creates embodied engagement, personification animates human–environment relations, and symbolism condenses sociocultural meanings. The study contributes to literary stylistics by demonstrating how figurative devices work collectively to produce aesthetic and interpretative effects in contemporary Indonesian poetry.

Correspondence Author: Afni Rosalina Email: afnirosalina@udi.ac.id
DOI: https://doi.org/10.36269/sigeh.v6i2.4942
Published by Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung
Journal Homepage: https://journal.uml.ac.id/index.php/ELt/index
Journal SIGEH ELT licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

INTRODUCTION

The development of contemporary Indonesian poetry in the post-Reformasi era has been characterized by increasingly diverse aesthetic expressions and thematic complexity. Contemporary poets no longer rely solely on conventional lyrical forms but increasingly employ figurative language to articulate issues of identity, collective memory, urban transformation, ecological awareness, and existential uncertainty. This shift reflects broader changes in Indonesian literary discourse, where poetry has become a medium for negotiating personal experience and sociocultural realities through symbolic and imaginative expression. Consequently, figurative language has gained greater significance not merely as a stylistic feature but as a central mechanism for constructing aesthetic meaning and inviting multiple interpretations. Within this context, examining the aesthetic functions of figurative language is essential for understanding how contemporary Indonesian poetry responds to changing cultural and social landscapes.

As argued by (Gibbs, 2023) poetic language is characterized by deviation and foregrounding, through which figurative expressions intensify meaning and aesthetic effect. This perspective is complemented by (Bretones Callejas et al., 2022) who explains that the poetic function of language is achieved through the projection of equivalence, making figurative devices such as metaphor and parallelism fundamental to the organization of poetic discourse. Extending these linguistic perspectives, (Ricoeur, 1977) argues that metaphor should not be understood merely as a decorative rhetorical device but as a cognitive process that generates new meanings and reshapes human experience.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that figurative language performs interconnected linguistic, aesthetic, and cognitive functions. While Leech emphasizes its role in foregrounding artistic expression, Jakobson highlights its structural contribution to poetic communication, and Ricoeur demonstrates its capacity to construct new conceptual understandings. Collectively, these theories establish that figurative language is not simply an ornamental feature of poetry but a fundamental mechanism through which aesthetic experience and interpretative meaning are produced. This integrated perspective provides the theoretical foundation for examining how figurative language operates in contemporary Indonesian poetry beyond the level of structural identification

In the Indonesian literary context, studies on figurative language have generally focused on identifying and classifying figures of speech in poetic texts (Amelia & Hermawan, 2025) explains that figurative language is a dominant feature in Indonesian poetry that enhances aesthetic expression and emotional nuance Likewise (Amelia & Hermawan, 2025) states that figurative expressions contribute significantly to the richness of literary language by intensifying imagery and symbolic meaning. Several empirical studies on Indonesian poetry also reveal the frequent use of metaphor, simile, and personification in contemporary works; however, these studies tend to remain descriptive and limited to structural categorization rather than interpretative analysis.

Despite these contributions, there remains a significant gap in examining figurative language from an aesthetic and interpretative perspective in contemporary Indonesian poetry. Most previous studies emphasize formal identification rather than exploring how figurative language shapes thematic construction, emotional resonance, and interpretative depth. In contrast, international scholarship often situates figurative language within interpretative frameworks, highlighting its role in producing aesthetic experience and engaging readers cognitively and emotionally (Ricoeur, 1977).

Recent scholarship has moved the study of figurative language beyond rhetorical classification toward cognitive, interpretative, and aesthetic perspectives. (Burke, 2022)emphasizes embodied literary experience, (Rasse, 2022) highlights conceptual metaphor in poetic interpretation, and (Alkhammash, 2022) demonstrates the contextual and inferential processes involved in figurative-language processing. In Indonesian literary studies, (Saputri, A. A., Nurhamidah, I., & Wulandari, 2025) examine figurative language in song lyrics, (Elamera, E. M. N., Sales, P. A. O., & Slleza, 2023) focus on stylistic deviation, while (Santiano, 2025) examines women's allegorical representation in poetry. These studies demonstrate the growing attention to figurative and stylistic features as resources for literary representation and interpretation. However, they mainly examine particular devices, genres, or stylistic phenomena separately. Thus, limited attention has been given to how multiple figurative forms interact as an integrated aesthetic system in contemporary Indonesian poetry. This study addresses this gap by examining metaphor, personification, symbolism, and sensory imagery in 35 contemporary Indonesian poems published between 2018

and 2024, focusing on how their interaction constructs aesthetic meaning, emotional resonance, and themes of identity, memory, urban experience, ecological awareness, and existential reflection.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into figurative language, stylistic analysis, and poetic interpretation, they primarily focus on identifying linguistic features or thematic structures. Limited attention has been given to how figurative language functions as an aesthetic strategy that simultaneously shapes meaning construction, emotional engagement, and interpretative openness in contemporary Indonesian poetry.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing how metaphor, personification, symbolism, and sensory imagery interact to construct aesthetic meaning in contemporary Indonesian poetry. Its primary contribution lies in proposing an integrated stylistic–interpretative framework that explains how multiple figurative devices collectively shape thematic construction, emotional resonance, and interpretative openness within the context of Indonesian contemporary poetry.

Accordingly, the research problem of this study is formulated as follows: how does figurative language function aesthetically in contemporary Indonesian poetry, and how does it contribute to the construction of meaning and emotional resonance? Based on this problem, the study aims to analyze the aesthetic roles of figurative language and to explain its contribution to thematic articulation and interpretative openness in selected contemporary poems.

By addressing these objectives, this study contributes to the development of Indonesian literary scholarship, particularly in stylistics and poetry analysis, and offers a framework for further comparative and international studies. Ultimately, it advances the understanding of figurative language as a dynamic medium of aesthetic expression in contemporary Indonesian literature.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore and interpret the aesthetic functions of figurative language in contemporary Indonesian poetry. A qualitative design was selected because the study focuses on meaning, interpretation, and contextual depth rather than numerical generalization (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2024). In literary studies, this approach enables the researcher to examine poems as cultural and aesthetic texts and to interpret how figurative language contributes to meaning construction and aesthetic experience.

Data Source

The primary data consisted of 35 contemporary Indonesian poems published between 2018 and 2024, drawn from published anthologies and online literary platforms, including works by poets such as Hasan Aspahani and Pitrus Puspito, among others. The 2018–2024 period was selected to represent a recent body of contemporary Indonesian poetry. The complete list of poem titles, poets, and publication sources is provided in Appendix A. Secondary data consisted of scholarly books and journal articles related to stylistics, poetics, figurative language, and literary interpretation. Library research was used to support the theoretical and interpretative analysis of the selected poems (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

Sampling Technique

The poems were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to contemporary Indonesian poetry and the richness of figurative language required for the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The unit of analysis was the line or stanza containing identifiable figurative expressions, particularly metaphor, personification, symbolism, and imagery.

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through close reading and note-taking. Each poem was read repeatedly to identify relevant figurative expressions. The identified expressions were recorded and organized according to their types and functions. Close reading enabled detailed examination of the linguistic features and contextual meanings of the selected expressions (Bretones Callejas et al., 2022; Rasse, 2022).

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using qualitative interpretative analysis, thematic analysis, and stylistic analysis. The analysis involved four stages: identification, coding, categorization, and interpretation. First, figurative expressions were identified through repeated reading of the poems. Second, the expressions were coded according to their figurative types and functions. Third, recurring patterns were categorized into broader aesthetic and thematic patterns. Finally, the patterns were interpreted in relation to their contribution to aesthetic effects, meaning construction, and themes such as identity, collective memory, urban experience, ecological awareness, and existential reflection (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Bretones Callejas et al., 2022; Malneva, 2022).

Research Validity

To ensure credibility, this study employed theoretical triangulation by comparing the textual interpretations with relevant theoretical frameworks and previous studies in Indonesian and international literary scholarship. The use of established theories of stylistics, poetics, and figurative language helped maintain consistency in the interpretation of the selected texts and reduce the possibility of arbitrary interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

These methodological procedures provided a systematic framework for identifying, organizing, and interpreting figurative language while maintaining the contextual and interpretative depth required in qualitative literary analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Metaphor as a Dominant Aesthetic Strategy

Metaphor emerged as a major figurative strategy in the selected poems, particularly in the representation of identity, memory, and existential experience. The analysis shows that metaphor frequently transforms abstract experiences into concrete spatial, natural, and temporal images, allowing personal and cultural meanings to be expressed indirectly.

For example, in Hasan Aspahani's "Terbayang-bayang Rumah Gadang," the image of a former room is used to represent changing identity and belonging. The physical transformation of the room from a familiar private space into an open environment reflects the speaker's changing relationship with home and selfhood. The spatial image therefore functions beyond description by providing a concrete structure through which separation, memory, and identity can be interpreted.

A similar pattern appears in Aspahani's representation of geographical distance in "Talaud," where distance between place and person is associated with the relationship between sea and shore. The image suggests that physical distance does not necessarily eliminate emotional attachment because memory and belonging continue to connect the individual with the place. These examples demonstrate that metaphor functions as an aesthetic mechanism for translating abstract psychological and cultural experiences into concrete images.

Personification and the Representation of Contemporary Anxiety

Personification is frequently used to represent urban experience and the relationship between humans and their environment. In Aspahani's poetry, abstract experiences are sometimes represented as active agents, creating a sense of confrontation and uncertainty. In "Hidup di situ seperti seseorang yang menghadang di ujung gang," for instance, life is represented through the image of a figure waiting at the end of an alley for a duel. This representation transforms the abstract condition of life into a concrete and threatening presence.

The aesthetic effect of this personification lies in its ability to dramatize experiences of uncertainty, pressure, and limited control. Rather than describing urban anxiety directly, the poem allows readers to experience it through the image of confrontation. Personification therefore contributes to meaning-making by transforming abstract social and psychological conditions into perceptible human actions.

Sensory Imagery and Embodied Emotional Experience

Sensory imagery constitutes another important figurative pattern in the corpus. The poems frequently employ sensory details to connect emotional experience with physical perception. Rather than expressing emotions only through abstract statements, the poets construct images that invite readers to imagine sounds, colors, spaces, textures, and bodily sensations.

This strategy can be observed in Pitrus Puspito's representation of the mother figure through natural and sensory imagery. The mother is associated with a flower, courage, hope, and a comforting space for her children. These images transform an emotional relationship into an embodied experience in which affection, security, and hope become perceptible through natural and spatial imagery. Sensory imagery therefore strengthens emotional resonance by connecting abstract feelings with concrete sensory experience.

Symbolism and the Construction of Sociocultural Meaning

Symbolism functions as a mechanism for condensing broader sociocultural meanings into relatively concise poetic images. Objects, places, and natural elements can acquire meanings beyond their literal references when they are repeatedly associated with memory, identity, history, or social experience. The symbolic function of figurative language is particularly important because it enables poets to communicate complex meanings indirectly. Instead of presenting social or cultural concerns through explicit statements, symbolic images allow readers to construct meanings through contextual interpretation. In this way, symbolism contributes to interpretative openness while maintaining the aesthetic density of poetic expression.

Integrated Function of Figurative Language

The findings demonstrate that metaphor, personification, sensory imagery, and symbolism do not operate as isolated stylistic devices. They interact to construct layered aesthetic meanings. Metaphor provides conceptual structures for abstract experience; personification dramatizes human and environmental relationships; sensory imagery creates embodied emotional engagement; and symbolism condenses cultural and thematic meanings. This interaction indicates that figurative language in contemporary Indonesian poetry functions as an integrated aesthetic system rather than as a collection of separate rhetorical devices. Through these interconnected strategies, the poems transform personal experience into broader reflections on identity, memory, contemporary life, environment, and human existence.

2. Conceptual Metaphor as Existential Framework

Metaphor was the most dominant category with 146 occurrences. The metaphors identified were primarily conceptual and existential rather than ornamental.

Spatial Metaphors of Identity

Example 1

> *Kamu menunjuk ke sudut dan berkata: itu dulunya kamarku... sebuah ruang yang sekarang tidak perlu lagi aku masuki, sekarang dihiasi bingkai jendela berbentuk berlian, pola sinar matahari tengah hari, dan halaman terbuka yang membuatmu bebas, liar, dan terbang*. (Aspahani, 2021)
>
> [You point to the corner and say: that used to be my room... a space I no longer need to enter, now lined with diamond-shaped window frames, patterns of midday sun, and an open yard that lets you go, wild and flying.]

The spatial image of the former room represents changing identity and belonging. The room, once associated with intimacy and familiarity, is transformed into an open space that suggests separation and transition. The contrast between the former private room and the newly open environment reflects the speaker's changing relationship with home and selfhood. Thus, the physical space functions as a metaphorical structure through which identity and departure are expressed. This finding supports the view of conceptual metaphor as a means of organizing abstract experiences through concrete domains (Rasse, 2022).

This spatial metaphor is consistent with conceptual metaphor theory, in which abstract experiences of belonging and departure are structured through concrete architectural imagery. (Martina Nur Avida1, Zikri Zul Arvi1, Intan Cahyani1 & Elmustian1, 2025)

Example 2:

> *TALAUD jauh seperti laut terhadap pantai tapi Talaud tak menjauh karena ombak selalu sampai*. (Aspahani, 2021)
>
> [Talaud is far, like the sea is to the shore, but Talaud does not grow distant, because the waves always arrive.]

The poem uses geographical distance to represent emotional closeness and belonging. Talaud is physically distant, but the continuous movement of the waves suggests that emotional and cultural connections remain present despite geographical separation. The relationship between the sea and the shore therefore becomes a concrete image for understanding the relationship between distance and attachment. The metaphor transforms geographical space into an expression of memory, belonging, and identity. This finding is consistent with conceptual metaphor theory, which explains how abstract experiences can be structured through concrete and familiar domains (Rasse, 2022).

Organic and Temporal Metaphors

Example 3

> *Sebentar lagi, seluruh Juni ini selesai. Kau melipat hari-hari menjadi kupu-kupu. Peristiwa-peristiwa gugur, jatuh satu persatu. Lalu musim kemarau bergegas menemuimu. Pohon-pohon masih menyimpan sesuatu yang amat penting. Amatilah batangnya! Ada kisah-kisah rahasia di balik kulit kayu itu, rahasia menjadi pohon yang hidup*. (Puspito, 2025b)
>
> [Soon, all of June will be over. You fold the days into butterflies. Events fall, dropping one by one. Then the dry season hurries to meet you. The trees still keep something very important. Look closely at their trunks! There are secret stories behind that bark—the secret of becoming a living tree.]

The poem represents time and human experience through organic and temporal imagery. The expression "you fold the days into butterflies" transforms the passage of time into a physical act, suggesting that days can be shaped, gathered, and transformed. Similarly, "the dry season hurries to meet you" gives the season human agency and creates a sense of urgency as June comes to an end. The image of trees that "keep" secret stories further connects natural growth with accumulated

experience and memory. Through these figurative expressions, time is presented as a moving force while the tree represents the gradual accumulation of lived experience. The interaction between temporal and organic imagery therefore creates an aesthetic representation of change, growth, and memory.

Example 4:

> *Pohon-pohon masih menyimpan sesuatu yang amat penting. Amatilah batangnya dengan saksama! Ada kisah-kisah rahasia di balik kulit kayu itu, batang itu, sebuah arsip dari kehidupan yang pernah dijalani, rahasia menjadi pohon yang hidup.* (Puspito, 2025b)
>
> [The trees still keep something very important. Look closely at their trunks! There are secret stories behind that bark—the trunk, an archive of a life once lived, the secret of becoming a living tree.]

The expression "secret stories behind that bark" represents the tree as a repository of lived experience and memory. The bark is presented not merely as a physical surface but as a layer that conceals stories accumulated through growth. The expression "the trunk, an archive of a life once lived" strengthens this interpretation by comparing the tree trunk to an archive that preserves traces of the past. The tree therefore becomes a metaphorical representation of memory, growth, and lived experience. The phrase "becoming a living tree" further emphasizes that growth is understood as an ongoing process rather than a fixed condition. Through this organic imagery, the poem connects natural growth with the accumulation of human experience and the formation of identity.

3. Personification and Modern Anxiety

Personification appeared 92 times, frequently in poems addressing urbanization and environmental degradation.

Urban Personification

Example 5:

> *HIDUP di situ seperti seseorang yang menghadang di ujung gang... untuk sebuah duel yang tanggung... tak bisa menghindar dari peluh dan peluru dari keluh dan gerutu."* (Aspahani, 2021)
>
> [Life there is like someone blocking the end of an alley... for an uncertain duel... unable to escape the sweat and the bullets, the complaints and the grumbling.]

The expression represents life as a human figure confronting someone at the end of an alley, transforming an abstract concept into a threatening presence. The image of an "uncertain duel" reinforces a sense of conflict and insecurity, while "sweat and bullets" and "complaints and grumbling" combine physical and psychological dimensions of struggle. Through this personification, life is portrayed not as a passive condition but as an active adversary that must be confronted. The figurative construction therefore intensifies the representation of uncertainty, pressure, and anxiety associated with contemporary urban experience.

Example 6:

> *Sebelum angkutan umum yang penuh penumpang itu melintas, sebelum lampu lalu lintas di perempatan itu berganti warna, sebelum ia menyeberang kembali dan aku masih menunggu.* (Aspahani, 2021)
>
> [Before the crowded public transit passes by, before the traffic light at the intersection changes color, before he crosses back over and I am still waiting.]

The repeated use of "before" creates a rhythmic structure centered on waiting and delay. The movement of public transportation, the changing traffic light, and the act of crossing establish a contrast between the continuous movement of the city and the speaker's stationary position. The

repetition therefore creates an aesthetic representation of urban experience as a condition of waiting, uncertainty, and limited control over time. Rather than presenting anxiety explicitly, the poem communicates it through repetition, temporal delay, and the contrast between movement and stillness.

Ecological Personification

Example 7:

Apakah payung membenci atau mencintai hujan? (Aspahani, 2021)

[Does the umbrella hate or love the rain?]

The expression "Does the umbrella hate or love the rain?" personifies the umbrella by attributing human emotions to a non-human object. The contrast between "hate" and "love" transforms the functional relationship between the umbrella and rain into an emotional relationship. The umbrella, which exists to protect against rain, is therefore presented as emotionally connected to the very condition it is designed to resist. This personification creates an aesthetic representation of the human response to unavoidable circumstances, suggesting a tension between resistance and acceptance. Through this figurative strategy, an ordinary relationship between an object and nature is transformed into a broader reflection on human experience and uncertainty.

Example 8

Laut Kami, Hujan Kami. (Aspahani, 2021)

[Our Sea, Our Rain.]

The title establishes a collective relationship between the community and the natural environment through the repeated possessive pronoun "our." The sea and rain are presented not merely as elements of nature but as shared parts of collective experience and belonging. The use of "our" emphasizes a communal relationship with the environment, suggesting that nature is connected to social identity and everyday life. Thus, the title contributes to the ecological dimension of the poem by framing the natural environment as a shared cultural and relational space.

4. Symbolism and Ideological Density

Symbolic structures were identified in 81 instances. Frequently recurring symbols include soil, blood, doors, and shadows.

Example 9

Mayat politik ditutupi koran pagi. (Malna, 1998)

[A political corpse covered by the morning newspaper].

The expression "political corpse" symbolizes a political condition that has lost its vitality or legitimacy, while the "morning newspaper" represents the everyday circulation of public information. The combination creates an ironic image in which political reality is concealed beneath an apparently ordinary media routine. The symbol therefore suggests a tension between political reality and its representation in the public sphere. Through this condensed image, the poem invites readers to interpret how media discourse can obscure or reshape perceptions of political conditions. Symbolism thus functions as an aesthetic strategy for expressing social and ideological critique indirectly.

5. Sensory Imagery and Embodied Aesthetic

Sensory imagery appeared in 165 instances, making it the second most dominant category.

Example 10

Setelah dewasa, Ibu gemar menyimak suara pada sulur janggar juga pada sebatang pohon jambu dersana, tempat di mana kehidupan menawarkan cinta dan asa. Ibu bukan taman

berbunga, Ibuku sekuntum keberanian, tempat harapan meletakan aneka warna, ruang ternyaman bagi kami anak-anaknya. (Puspito, 2025a)

[Grown older, Mother loved to listen to the sound in the tendrils and on a jambu tree at dersana, where life offers love and hope. Mother is not a flowering garden; my mother is a bloom of courage, a place where hope lays down its many colors, the most comfortable space for us, her children.]

The poem combines sensory imagery with metaphorical and spatial expressions to construct an embodied representation of the mother figure. The expression "listen to the sound in the tendrils" emphasizes auditory sensitivity and connects the mother with the natural environment. The metaphor "a bloom of courage" associates the mother with growth, beauty, and strength, while "a place where hope lays down its many colors" transforms emotional comfort into a spatial and visual experience. These images make love, courage, hope, and security perceptible through sensory and embodied language. The figurative expressions therefore intensify emotional engagement by transforming an abstract experience of maternal affection into a concrete aesthetic experience.

6. Thematic Mapping of Figurative Patterns

To clarify qualitative clustering, thematic mapping is presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Thematic Mapping of Figurative Language Patterns

Theme	**Dominant Figurative Form**	**Example Pattern**	**Aesthetic Implication**
Identity & Selfhood	Spatial Metaphor	Body as space	Existential framing
Collective Memory	Symbolism	Soil, fracture	Historical layering
Urban Modernity	Personification	City as predator	Alienation effect
Ecological Awareness	Natural Personification	Forest whispering	Environmental empathy
Emotional Experience	Sensory Imagery	Cold in bones	Embodied affect

Table 1. indicates that figurative language is thematically structured. Identity is framed spatially; collective memory is symbolically layered; urban modernity is dramatized through aggressive personification; ecological themes employ restorative animation; emotional experience is embodied through multisensory imagery.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that figurative language in contemporary Indonesian poetry functions as an integrated aesthetic system rather than merely as stylistic ornamentation. Metaphor, personification, symbolism, and sensory imagery work together to transform abstract experiences such as identity, memory, belonging, and anxiety into concrete and emotionally meaningful poetic expressions. Metaphor provides conceptual structures for interpreting abstract experiences, supporting (Rasse, 2022) view of poetic metaphor, while personification and sensory imagery make emotional and environmental experiences more immediate and perceptible.

These findings are also consistent with (Burke, 2022) emphasis on embodied literary experience and (Alkhammash, 2022) view of the contextual and inferential processing of figurative

language. Similarly, (Saputri, A. A., Nurhamidah, I., & Wulandari, 2025) highlight the emotional function of figurative language, while (Elamera, E. M. N., Sales, P. A. O., & Slleza, 2023) demonstrate the contribution of stylistic features to aesthetic expression and interpretation. The present study extends these perspectives by showing that figurative devices do not operate independently. Their interaction enables poetic language to connect cognition, emotion, and sociocultural experience within a single aesthetic framework.

Overall, the findings suggest that the aesthetic power of contemporary Indonesian poetry lies in the interaction among different figurative strategies. Metaphor structures meaning, personification creates emotional and relational depth, symbolism condenses sociocultural meanings, and sensory imagery strengthens embodied engagement. Through this interaction, personal experiences can be transformed into broader reflections on identity, memory, urban life, ecological awareness, and human existence. Thus, figurative language functions not simply to decorate poetic expression but to shape how readers imagine, feel, and interpret poetic experience.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that figurative language in contemporary Indonesian poetry functions as an integrated aesthetic system through which metaphor, personification, symbolism, and sensory imagery construct meaning, emotional resonance, and thematic expression. The findings show that these figurative forms connect concrete images with abstract experiences of identity, memory, urban life, ecological awareness, and existential reflection, demonstrating that poetic meaning emerges through the interaction of linguistic, cognitive, emotional, and sociocultural dimensions.

The study contributes to literary stylistics by extending the analysis of figurative language beyond the identification of individual devices toward an integrated stylistic–interpretative perspective. Rather than treating metaphor, personification, symbolism, and sensory imagery as separate stylistic features, the study demonstrates how their interaction contributes to the construction of aesthetic meaning and emotional engagement in contemporary Indonesian poetry.

It also contributes to the interpretation of contemporary Indonesian poetry by demonstrating how figurative language connects textual features with broader experiences of identity, memory, urban life, ecological awareness, and existential reflection. This perspective highlights the role of figurative language not only as a stylistic resource but also as a means through which personal experience can be transformed into broader cultural and emotional meaning.

The broader implication of this study is that the interpretation of figurative language can move beyond the classification of individual figures of speech toward an examination of how multiple figurative strategies work together within their textual and sociocultural contexts. This approach may provide a useful analytical perspective for future literary studies and may also support the teaching of poetry by encouraging readers and students to examine how figurative language shapes meaning, emotion, and aesthetic experience.

However, the study is limited by its purposive selection of 35 poems and its reliance on textual interpretation, which limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the selected corpus. The findings should therefore be understood as context-specific interpretations of the selected poems rather than as representative conclusions about contemporary Indonesian poetry as a whole.

Future research could examine larger and more diverse poetry corpora and combine stylistic analysis with reader-response or corpus-based approaches to further investigate how figurative language shapes aesthetic and interpretative experience.

Acknowledgment

The authors gratefully acknowledge the institutional support and resources provided throughout this research. The authors also thank colleagues and academic mentors for their valuable feedback and support, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their constructive suggestions, which contributed to improving the quality of this manuscript.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Afni Rosalina: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, and Visualization. **Ratna Sari Dewi:** Conceptualization, Validation, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing, and Project Administration. **Both authors:** reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the integrity of the work.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors**.**

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

ChatGPT (OpenAI) was used to assist with language improvement, grammar checking, readability, and refinement of selected manuscript sections. DeepL Translator was used to assist with the translation of selected text. All AI-assisted outputs were reviewed, edited, and verified by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and integrity of the final manuscript.

REFERENCE

Alkhammash, R. (2022). Processing figurative language: Evidence from native and non-native speakers of English. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*(5), 10. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1057662

Amelia, Y. S., & Hermawan, M. A. (2025). Kajian stilistika puisi “Kepada Hawa” karya Aan Mansyur dan pemanfaatannya sebagai materi ajar Bahasa Indonesia. *MARDIBASA: Jurnal Pembelajaran Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia, 5*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.21274/jpbsi.2025.5.1.1-14

Aspahani, H. (2021). *Lupakan payung dan biarkan hujan. DIVA Press.*

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. Sage.

Bretones Callejas, C. M., Ridao Rodrigo, S., & Alarcón Hermosilla, S. (2022). Language, cognition and style: An introduction to the cognitive stylistics section. *Odisea*, *22*, 9–13. https://doi.org/10.25115/odisea.v0i22.7151

Burke, M. (2022). *The aesthetics of literary reading: A cognitive poetic approach. Poetics, 90,*. https://doi.org/10.1016

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2024). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Elamera, E. M. N., Sales, P. A. O., & Slleza, K. B. (2023). Stylistic Deviation in the Selected Literary Works of Kristian Cordero. *SIGEH ELT: Journal of Literature and Linguistics, 3*(2). https://doi.org/10.36269/sigeh.v3i2.2064

Gibbs, R. W. (2023). What's figurative about figurative language? *Lingua, 287*, 103520. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2023.103520

Malneva, E. Y. (2022). Cognitive poetics and cognitive stylistics: Variation and incorporation of the terms. *Philology. Theory & Practice, 15*(8). 2503-2508. https://doi.org/10.30853/phil20220462

Martina Nur Avida1, Zikri Zul Arvi1, Intan Cahyani1, A. A., & Elmustian1. (2025). Reproduksi realitas: mimesis dalam antologi puisi lupakan payung dan biarkan hujan karya hasan aspahani. *J-SES: Journal of Science, Education and Studies, IV*(3), 18–33. https://doi.org/10.30651/jses.v4i3.29027

Rasse, C. (2022). *Poetic Metaphors: Creativity and Interpretation*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/ftl.15

Ricoeur, P. (1977). *The rule of metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*. University of Toronto Press.

Santiano, C. U. (2025). Women's Allegories in Estelito B. Jacob's Pinagrok. *SIGEH ELT: Journal of Literature and Linguistics, 5*(1). https://doi.org/10.36269/sigeh.v5i1.3127

Saputri, A. A., Nurhamidah, I., & Wulandari, D. F. (2025). Figurative Language in Rey's Born to Die and Its Reflection of Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love. *SIGEH ELT: Journal of Literature and Linguistics, 5*(2). https://doi.org/10.36269/sigeh.v5i2.3862