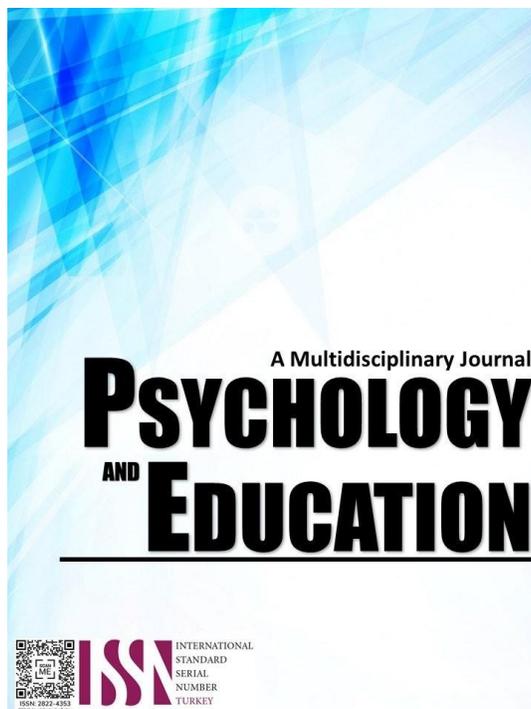


# INTO THE 21ST CENTURY: FIGURES OF SPEECH IN THE SELECT PROSE POEMS OF CONCHITINA CRUZ



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## Into the 21st Century: Figures of Speech in the Select Prose Poems of Conchitina Cruz

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### Abstract

This study aimed to identify and examine the figures of speech in the selected prose poems of Conchitina Cruz. Moreover, it employed a descriptive qualitative method that focuses on content analysis. The primary source of the study was ten chosen prose poems. In exploring the data, New Formalism was employed as the research paradigm and the types of figures of speech according to Laurence Perrine – by comparison, association, and contrast. Findings revealed that twenty-eight figures of speech were obtained in the study. It is also discovered that there are eight types of figures of speech in Cruz's prose poems. In comparison, eighteen (20) excerpts were determined, which yields to (71.42%). In terms of association, the data suggests that it occurs four times leading to (14.28%). With regards to contrast, it appears four times which yields to (14.28%). Thus, simile occurs five times which yields to (17.85%), metaphor occurs three times (10.71%), personification occurs nine times (32.14%) while apostrophe occurs three times (10.71%). With regards to association, synecdoche occurs three times and had garnered (10.71%), symbol occurs once (3.57%). In terms of contrast, hyperbole occurs three times (10.71%), while paradox occurs once (3.57%). Personification mostly dominates and consists of the highest frequency percentage resulting to (32.14%) and appears nine times. After analyzing the data, the findings revealed that identifying the figures of speech would help the students enhance their writing and heighten their ability to comprehend. Based on the research findings, a lesson exemplar was developed to reinforce and support teaching figures of speech.

**Keywords:** *figures of speech, conchitina cruz, comparison, association, contrast*

### Introduction

Linguists have studied figures of speech extensively in recent years. Figures of speech, in its essence, convey meaning by requiring the listener or reader to comprehend deeper to what the text portrays. It is also a figurative language with multiple interpretations (Perrine, 1977). Thus, literature has been examined because it contains the essence of style and beauty.

Figurative language in poems is a technique of giving language more depth. A poet uses figures of speech to create style and beauty. Figurative language enhances the impact of a poem and heightens the poet's enthusiasm to communicate their mood since fascinating expressions are implied. In addition, figurative language can give such a wide range of meanings with such a small word. Furthermore, it has the potential to have a unique effect on the readers. The aesthetic part of poetry, on the other hand, is dependent on the use of figurative language in addition to other elements such as imagery, rhythm, topography, and so on (Nursyal, 2009).

Various theories and approaches had transpired in terms of examining figures of speech. The formalist theory has been one of the approaches. According to the Introduction to Literary Studies (1999), new formalists or new critics are concerned with literary structure rather than phonetic content. In other words, this theory focuses on examining the figures of speech in literary texts. Therefore, using the new formalist theory to determine the types of speech figures is highly recommended.

In exploring the types of figures of speech, this study employs the prose poems of Conchitina "Chingbee" R. Cruz, an award-winning Filipina poet, as its corpus. She was one of the contemporary Filipina poets whose works were studied in the K12 curriculum. This is one of the main reasons why her prose poems were selected as corpus in the study. Furthermore, she was awarded two Palanca Awards for Poetry in 1996 and 2001. She is the youngest poet in *A Habit of Shores*, the third and final edition of the *Man of Earth* anthology series, covering a century of Filipino poetry and verse in English. Moreover, her poetry collection "Dark Hours," published in 2005, received recognition in the National Book Award for Poetry. Furthermore, the poetry collection "Dark Hours" consists of poetic devices such as imagery, symbols, and figures of speech.

Recent studies emerged that employ the formalist approach and Perrine's figures of speech theory. For instance, in the study of Alejandrino (2016) wherein the corpus of the study is focused on figures of speech in contemporary Cebuano poems. Her study examines the depths and intricacies of Cebuano figurative language using new formalist theory. Another survey by Rezeki (2021) attempted to identify the different types of figurative language employed in the movie *Les Misérables*. The data were in the form of utterances. Using Perrine's classification of types of figures of speech, the results show eleven types of figures of speech in *Les Misérables* Movie.

Although linguists intensively examined figures of speech, there are still challenges that have emerged. The study of Ventrone (2017) emphasized the problems of the students in determining figures of speech, especially those students who are learning English as a second language. Learners face difficulties in understanding a variety of figures of speech and conversation occurrences, comprehending, and employing the mode of expression correctly. The use of figures of speech is not just limited to literature. For students to integrate into society, they must be able to communicate effectively in English achieve complete communicative skills in

various domains, including figures of speech.

Moreover, the researcher affirms the previous studies regarding the challenges in figures of speech. She discovered that most of her students had difficulties understanding texts that contained figures of speech. Students dwell on its literal meaning resulting in poor comprehension. The researcher believed that it is also deemed essential to study Philippine prose poetry because it supports the development of critical thinking abilities among students to pursue 21st-century competencies. With this in mind, the researcher examined the figures of speech using selected prose poetry as the corpus of the study.

Prose poetry is a creative writing format that combines prose and poetic form elements. It is a popular form of contemporary literature because it highlights the use of ordinary language or prose without line breaks. Although it is composed with prose, poetic devices such as imagery and figures of speech are still present. Indeed, it is written in sentences and paragraphs rather than verses and stanzas, making it convenient for poets.

In fact, in the study of Tee (2007), she investigates various subject positions using Cruz' prose poems to see if they are postmodern texts that emphasize the ramifications of difference.

Her study synthesizes the theory of desire of Freud. Another study by Banzon (2007) focuses on analyzing the techniques and themes of Cruz's prose poems that depict the characteristics of cultural phenomena in society. The studies mentioned above failed to explore speech figures vital in teaching and pedagogy.

### Research Questions

This study identified and analyzed the types of figures of speech in the selected poems of Conchitina R. Cruz in her poetry collection. Specifically, the study answered the following research questions:

1. What figures of speech are depicted in the selected poems based on the following classification:
  - 1.1. by comparison;
  - 1.2. by Association; and
  - 1.3. by Contrast?
2. What are the dominant figures of speech found in the selected poems?
3. What lesson exemplar can be designed that emphasizes on teaching figures speech?

### Methodology

#### Research Design

This study employed the descriptive-qualitative method, which involves content analysis in examining the selected poems. Content analysis is one of the several qualitative methods currently available for analyzing data and interpreting its meaning (Scheier, 2012). As a research method, it represents a systematic and subjective means of describing and quantifying phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Schreier, 2012). In this case, it emphasizes exploring the phenomena of figures of speech in interpreting the data. In investigating the data, this study used ten selected prose poems as the source of the data.

Moreover, the descriptive-qualitative approach was utilized since it focuses on evaluating data to understand the phenomena of figures of speech in context. The researcher used this method to identify and investigate the types of figures of speech in the selected prose poems. The researcher investigated the phenomenon of figures of speech in literary works, emphasizing the employment of figures of speech in comparison, association, and contrast.

Furthermore, the primary purpose of descriptive – qualitative design is to produce more detailed, deeper information through creating narrative or textual accounts of the phenomena being studied.

Since this is a content-analysis of a corpus, there is no research participants and research setting hence, source of language data were employed.

#### Source of Data

Among the authors in the 21st Century Philippine Literature, Conchitina R. Cruz were chosen. This is primarily because she is an award-winning Filipina poet and her works were studied in the curriculum. . The source were ten selected prose poems of Conchitina R. Cruz in her poetry collection book *The Dark Hours* (University of the Philippines Press), which was published in 2005. The said poetry collection won as National Book Award for Poetry. The prose poems that were critically explored were the following: "Dear City," "Move Your Hand Over Your Body," "What Is It About Tenderness," "Smile," "The Gist of It," "Alunsina Takes A Walk in the Rain," "I Must Say About the City," "Autobiography," "Now at the Hour," "Insomnia." Upon selecting the materials, the researcher executed prior reading and in-depth examination to guarantee that most of the figures of speech that Perrine had mentioned were present. These classifications were as follows: by comparison, association, and contrast.

Criteria in selecting poems. In choosing the prose poems, the researcher read and reread the collection of prose poems to make sure that the selected poems were significantly rich in figures of speech based on Lawrence Perrine's classification. Among the fifty prose

poems in the poetry collection “Dark Hours of Conchitina Cruz, ten poems were selected based on the criteria.

Several criteria were also considered in selecting the prose poems to be examined. Bright (2014) proposed criteria for choosing appropriate poems to be examined. These comprise linguistic criteria, background, and universal appeal. Vocabulary levels of the selected poems were also prioritized. The researcher made sure that the poems were aligned and suitable for the students in their language. This is essential since this study aims to develop a lesson exemplar to cater to students' needs. In this case, since these are selected prose poems, they mostly use contemporary, everyday language.

The researcher also made sure that the chosen prose poems were familiar within the imaginative grasp of the students. Lastly, the selected poems have universal appeal. These poems are relatable. Studies have shown that relatable poems can grasp the students' interests. Students must be able to see the relevance to their own experiences. The selected prose poems are critically examined and relatable to students in this case

### **Instrument**

The researcher collected the data from the selected prose poems of Conchitina R. Cruz in her poetry collection "Dark Hours." Ten prose poems were extensively examined to identify the types of figures of speech the author employed. The researcher utilized extensive reading to comprehend and identify the types of figures of speech in the poems. Furthermore, the researcher assigned specific codes to the given data. Data were in the tabulated form. Thus, as the main instrument, she oversees planning data collection, analysis, interpretation, and conclusion.

Since the research design of this study is descriptive qualitative, the main instrument and most important tool of this study is the researcher herself. According to Croker (2009), qualitative research is used for at least two purposes: because the researcher gathers data explicitly by exploring the collection of data and because previous research has collected data by observing or interviewing participants.

Moreover, the researcher assigned respective codes to each prose poem. The ten prose poems were set from PO1 to PO10, as seen in the appendices. Since prose poetry involves sentences and paragraphs, every sentence and paragraph in each of the prose poems was assigned by a number starting from 1. The poem entitled "Dear City" was coded PO1. The poem "Move Your Hand Over Your Body" was assigned as PO2. "What is it about Tenderness" was coded as PO3. The poem "Smile" was assigned as PO4. "The Gist of It" was classified as PO5. "Alunsina Takes a Walk in the Rain" was coded as PO6. PO7 was given to the poem "I Must Say this about the City." The poem "Autobiography" was assigned as PO8. "Now and at the Hour" was given a code as PO9. Lastly, the poem "Insomnia" was coded as PO10.

Furthermore, a tabulated datasheet was also utilized. This was used to identify the types of figures of speech and discover the dominant figures of speech that were present in the selected prose poems.

### **Procedure**

To critically explore the types of figures of speech, the researcher applied New Formalism or New Criticism anchored with Perrine's classification of Figures of Speech since this research focused on exploring the types of figures of speech.

The researcher chose a world-class and renowned contemporary Filipina poet Conchitina R. Cruz and her poetry collection entitled the "Dark Hours" since it was published in 2005 and had won the National Poetry Award. Among the poems of Cruz, the researcher chose only ten selected poems as the basis of the study and interpretation. Furthermore, the researcher uses this study's descriptive-qualitative analysis technique. Methods and applicable theories or techniques are used to base the analysis. In selecting the prose poem to be examined, specific criteria are employed by the researcher to ensure that the chosen prose poems are suitable for students.

### **Data Analysis**

The data is analyzed based on the figurative language theory of Perrine to discover the types of figures of speech. According to Wiersma (1995), data analysis in qualitative research is a process of successive approximation toward an accurate description and interpretation of phenomena. Inductive analyses, typically associated with qualitative methods, were utilized to analyze the acquired data. It was a backward reasoning method in which observation came before theory, hypothesis, and interpretation. In exploring some types of figures of speech, qualitative approaches used observations and understanding. The researcher took various measures while doing the data analysis.

Moreover, the integrity and authenticity of the data were also considered. This study went through plagiarism scanning to ensure that most of the data were not copied without permission or acknowledgment. Furthermore, credibility was also utilized to ensure the correctness of the data using investigator triangulation. In this kind of investigator triangulation, experts were involved in examining, collecting, and processing the data. The experts, in this case, were the teachers who taught English. The researcher categorized and described various lines of poetry that use figures of speech. The steps the researcher took in analyzing the data are as follows:

Prior reading of the selected material was made to ensure that the types of figures of speech according to Perrine's viewpoint were present. The researcher made sure that criteria in selecting poems were applied.

The researcher read and reread the selected prose poems comprehensively and carefully to recognize the figures of speech in the prose poems according to Perrine's Types of Figures of Speech.

Then the researcher assigned respective codes on the data

The researcher identified the figures of speech that can be seen in the selected poems by using datasheets.

To ensure the reliability and validity, the data were checked, reviewed, and validated by experts whose concentration is on English language. The tabulated data by the experts were found on the Appendix.

Then, the researcher classified the data into classes of figures of speech using the tabulated data.

The researcher categorized the types of figures of speech employed according to Perrine's types of figures of speech.

Next, the researcher concludes and analyzes the selected lines critically.

Lastly, based on the result, the researcher developed a lesson exemplar in teaching figures of speech.

## Results and Discussion

According to Perrine (1977), there are three classifications of figures of speech. According to Comparison, association, and contrast, these are types of figures of speech. Figures of Speech, by Comparison, include Simile, metaphor, personification, and apostrophe. Figures of speech by association consist of synecdoche, metonymy, allegory, and symbol. Lastly, according to contrast, the figures of speech comprise hyperbole, paradox, litotes, and irony.

The tabulated data below shows the occurrence of the figures of speech, by Comparison, association, and contrast.

Table 1. *The Types of Figures of Speech*

<i>Types of Figures of Speech</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
by Comparison	20	71.42%
by Association	4	14.28%
by Contrast	4	14.28%
Total	28	100

Table 2. *Occurrence of the Figures of Speech*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Figures of Speech</i>	<i>Occurrence</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
by Comparison	Simile	5	17.85 %
	Metaphor	3	10.71%
	Personification	9	32.14%
	Apostrophe	3	10.71%
by association	Synecdoche	3	10.71%
	Metonymy	-	-
	Symbol	1	3.57%
	Allegory	-	-
by contrast	Hyperbole	3	10.71%
	Paradox	1	3.57%
	Irony	-	-
	Litotes	-	-
	Total	28	100%

The data are tabulated to determine the frequency with which the figures of speech appear. According to the table, there were eight figures of speech used in the study. In terms of Comparison, Simile occurs five times which yields to (17.85%), metaphor occurs three times (10.71%), personification occurs nine times (32.14%), while apostrophe occurs three times (10.71%). With regards to the association, synecdoche occurs three times and has garnered (10.71%), symbol appears once (3.57%). Thus, metonymy and allegory are not found in the prose poems. In contrast, hyperbole occurs three times (10.71%), while paradox occurs once (3.57%). Meanwhile, irony and litotes were not found in the selected prose poems.

The data strongly suggests that personification consists of the highest frequency of occurrence, 32.14%, and comprises nine data. This means that personification is the dominant figure of speech found in the selected prose poems. According to DiYanni (2002), personification is a commonly used literary device that refers to moments in which poets, fiction writers, or playwrights give human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects, or forces. This might be one of the reasons why personification is the dominant figures of speech.

Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing or an abstract term is endowed with human characteristics (Kovecses, 2002). This

is with the same findings Perrine (1966) that states that personification is a common type of figure of speech in that human characteristics are attributed to non-human things (Perrine, 1966).

To answer the third statement of the problem, this section highlights the lesson exemplar that can be designed in terms of teaching figures of speech. This lesson exemplar solely focuses on the figures of speech by comparison, such as simile, metaphor, personification, and apostrophe. This is mainly because, the above figures of speech are the most common figures of speech encountered by the students. Thus, the researcher employs 4A's in creating the lesson exemplar.

Furthermore, this lesson plan gives students an opportunity to understand and appreciate poetic devices such as figures of speech in writing. Hence, the purpose of the activities is to ensure that the students will not just retell the theme of the poems but teach them that figures of speech convey emotion, creates tone and mood, and expresses slight nuances in connotation. These are important clues that help students make inferences and understand the author's purpose. Students who grasp figures of speech quickly become expert writers. Teaching figurative of speech builds creativity and offers students a unique way to express themselves.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the selected prose poems are indeed rich in figures of speech. Figures of speech that are classified by Perrine such as comparison, association, and contrast were present in the selected prose poems. Personification that belongs to the figure of speech that compares is frequently used in the selected poems while Irony and Litotes that belongs to the figure of speech that contrast were not present. Thus, the poems of Conchinita Cruz are good literary pieces that helps teachers in teaching personification or figure of speech that compares.

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

Teachers may use the poems of Conchinita Cruz in teaching Grade 11 students in the subject "21st Century Literature from the Philippines and the World". Thus, solely focuses on identifying figures of speech. Teachers are also encouraged to used supplementary materials such as prose poems in the 21st century other than textbooks to provide students with stronger learning experiences. Furthermore, this will guide students who had difficulty identifying and understanding specially to figures of speech that compares.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct research on analysis utilizing New Formalistic Approach of the poems of Conchinita Cruz. In terms of New Formalism, this study solely focuses on identifying and examining the meaning of figures of speech.

The researcher recommends that future researchers would critically analyze figures of speech and other literary techniques and devices centered on other elements such as phonetical, grammatical, and lexical of texts and poems based on the learning competencies (EN11Lit-Ie- 27).

The researcher encourages literature students to employ the use of figures of speech in their writing of poems. Thus, maximizing the use of figures of speech will enhance the beauty of their writing and can be effective means to express, expand and explore the emotion, imagination, and their observation.

The researcher recommends that the future researchers employs content-analysis to learning activities of the students such as essays/prose poems etc.

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