

Language Techniques in the Anthology of Short Stories “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” by Ummisalam Umar

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to analyze language techniques in the anthology of short stories, “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” by Ummisalam Umar consisting of 10 short stories: Phu Tong Songsai (Eyes of a Child), Foon (Dust), Nithan Khong Pho (Daddy’s tales), Klang Phung Phae (Amidst a heard of goats), Phi Chai (Older Brother), Kai Lud Khok (Let Loose Chicken), Ya (Grandma), Luang (Cheating), Khuamtai Nai Duean Ramadan (Death in the Ramadan Month, and Phae Lang Hak (Broken-back Goats). Data were collected from documents and results were presented through descriptive analysis. “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” is an anthology of short stories by a Muslim female writer nominated for the 2017 S.E.A Write Award (Southeast Asian Writers Award). Its outstanding language features are created by blending emotional aspects resulting from characters’ fate that make them realistic. Three major language techniques found are: 1) Word usage consisting of words with direct meanings and words with implications; 2) Use of figurative language consisting of simile, metaphor, and symbol; and 3) Usage of sentences consisting of affirmative, negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences. It can be said that the value of language techniques used in this anthology is how the writer presents literary value to reflect social value creatively and cleverly with unity.

Keywords: Language techniques, anthology of short stories

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Introduction

“Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” is an anthology of short stories by a Muslim writer nominated for the 2017 S.E.A Write Award (Southeast Asian Writers Award). She refers to relationships of life and the stories that she used as raw materials for creation of the content of her short stories in Matichon online newspaper stating that “The society where we spend our lives is full of stories that are not tales or legends or whatever but they are stories that go round and round in that society which sometimes things, words, and people have hidden meanings and stories about them. The styles people use when they speak, the ways people are, and the ways people do things all have stories behind them. When we perceive them or listen to them, sometimes we could feel them and think they play a role in our lives more than they could actually do. Ummisalam Umar believes that every life is socialized with stories and her life is not different; her stories also socialize her life (Dokfon, 2017).

In the anthology of short stories, “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” by Ummisalam Umar, language techniques clearly reflect concepts through characters’ behaviors corresponding with admirations given to the beauty of language techniques she uses. Bunyathat states “The writer’s attitude as a missionary indicates viewpoints of understanding aiming to describe the outcome unfolding the clues for causes of problems that are so valuable when carefully examined. The scenes hide clues using signs to convey meanings that are memorable and impressive to readers. Linguistically, the writer incorporates various angles of stories that make her short stories valuable with creativities that are new and different but complete with mental beauty and liveliness” (Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 5-9).

Therefore, the researcher was interested in examining the anthology of short stories, “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” by Ummisalam Umar, and thus analyzed language techniques used by characters in the stories that reflect concepts or reveal attitudes toward how humans spend their lives; language techniques that are results of transferring emotions and thoughts through language use in words, figurative language and sentences linking concepts that indicate value of experiences of human lives in the Thai society.

Objective

To examine language techniques reflecting concepts in the anthology of short stories, “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” by Ummisalam Umar.

Methodology

Analysis of language techniques reflecting concepts of 10 short stories in the anthology, “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” by Ummisalam Umar consisting of Phu Tong Songsai (Eyes of a Child), Foon (Dust), Nithan Khong Pho (Daddy’s tales), Klang Phung Phae (Amidst a heard of goats), Phi Chai (Older Brother), Kai Lud Khok (Let Loose Chicken), Ya (Grandma), Luang (Cheating), Khuamtai Nai Duean Ramadan (Death in the Ramadan Month,

and Phae Lang Hak (Broken-back Goats). Data were analyzed and processed, and results were presented through descriptive analysis with examples.

Results

The anthology, “Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)” by Ummisalam Umar reveals three literary devices: 1) word choice especially use of words with denotative and connotative meanings; 2) figures of speech consisting of simile, metaphor, and symbol; and 3) use of sentences consisting of declarative, negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences as follows.

1) Word choice

A word is a sound or writing of letters hand written or typed to show a thought which usually is considered the smallest unit with a meaning in itself (Royal Institute of Thailand, 2003: 248). For this present study, the researcher applied the concepts of Laksanasiri and Intharaporn (2015: 28-29) in the analysis of word use comprising denotative and connotative meanings as follows.

1.1 Denotative meaning refers to the meaning as the word is written or literal meaning about which a dictionary usually gives as the first meaning. It is also called direct meaning. For example:

In the short story “Klang Phung Phae” (Amid a heard of goats), there are words with direct meanings used when the speaker is furious. A character, an old homeless woman who is called by an insulting name *Nomphuean*, is always bristly and hot-tempered. Thus, she usually uses words with denotative meanings. One example is,

“You go ahead and say that you want me thrown into a jail cell. Son of a bitch, you get yourself thrown into it first.”

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 65)

The word “cell” used by the character means a small room used to lock up a person convicted of a crime. The word conveys a direct meaning and shows that the character is ready to fight and never surrenders to anyone or gives in to anything. The word choice reflects implication of self-defense; expressing oneself directly without fear; self-defense of a small and powerless person against the majority in society. It can be said that an important language dimension is that people can use it as a tool for negotiation or demand for justice in society. Thus, the fact that the author chooses to use words with direct meanings is associated with the character’s status as a common person to make it realistic and to display emotions and feelings of commoners talking to each other giving the reader vivid imaginations.

1.2 Connotative meaning refers to the sub-meaning hidden in the main meaning (direct meaning) and conveys meanings that show attitude, emotion, or feeling of the speaker. An example from a short story in the anthology is as follows.

In the short story “Phu Tong Songsai (Eyes of a Child)”, one word with a connotative meaning is used about a homeless man whose insulting name is Poh-ne.

He is accused of being a terrorist and it is a groundless accusation. A boy who has been instilled by his teacher with a negative attitude towards Poh-ne is afraid of Poh-ne. The boy, because of his being inexperienced about life, believes in his teacher's suggestive words, and so he criticizes Poh-ne with a connotative word in the following sentence.

*“Don't you go near Poh-ne; he's not just a man. What we see is only his **outer skin.**”*

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 19)

It can be seen that in the conversation between the characters, the words “outer skin” refer to the appearance of a person not his/her real self. The appearance of Poh-ne is that of a homeless man but he is looked at as a terrorist which reflects a language dimension that links to a framework of thought formed by the person's experience. Thus, the words “outer skin” have a connotative meaning which is to avoid speaking directly about one's attitude or thought towards another whom one considers dangerous or harmful to oneself or others or to avoid speaking about sensitive matters about which one cannot express opinions directly. This reflects a thought that has been instilled or framed with a readymade thought that makes people believe or have the same understanding that makes it easy for social organization. Therefore, the use of connotative words can be considered a language technique in a dimension that communicates with implications which can hook the reader's attention.

2) Figures of speech

Figures of speech refer to a use of words to empower communication that the writer intends to make it different from the meaning structure or the regular order of words in order to create power in expressing and creating readers' imagination (Chitchamnong, 1984: 161-162). This article applies analytical principles stated in Chitchamnong, (1984: 161-162) consisting of simile, metaphor, and symbol as follows.

2.1 Simile refers to a comparison of one thing with another that is different in its kind but they have the same features and they use a word with the same or similar meaning to emphasize how they are similar. An example is the following.

In “Nithan Khong Pho (Daddy's tales)”, there is a comparison in describing thoughts of a character who is a daughter asking a question about her father's unusual behavior. The father loves the sea and his boat very much because he is a fisherman who is so attached to the area and things around there; this behavior is nothing unusual. However, the daughter notices that her father often tells the tale about a beautiful woman in the sea and as he is telling it, he seems to be absent-minded. Therefore, she contemplates his inattentive behavior, and a simile is used to describe it in the following sentences.

*“Ariya often thinks about **the tale** told by her father and wonders why her father enjoys telling it repeatedly **as if it was real** and so impressive. So, today she could tell what her father wants; that boat is not everything to him but the sea is his **everything.**”*

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 53)

The writer uses the phrase *“as if”* to compare the meanings conveyed by the words *tale* and *real* to communicate her thought that the tale may not be only a tale or an age-old story but it has power linking thoughts and beliefs. It can be said that the writer uses a simile to reflect cultural communication in a form of local cultural beliefs distribution to readers through characters’ thoughts.

2.1 Metaphor refers to an implied comparison using a statement saying one thing to mean another. It compares important features without using words showing comparison. Here is an example.

In “Phae Lang Hak (the Broken-backed Goat)”, there are metaphors in the sentences used by an abbot to warn a girl who is riding a goat which may injure the goat. The abbot says:

“That’s a goat not a horse, little girl. You’re like a water jar; why are you sitting on its back. Don’t you pity it? If it can’t walk like this, how can it go to find grass to eat?”

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 168)

The writer uses a metaphor twice. The first time to compare a goat and a horse to say that they are different, and the second time to compare the size and shape of the girl with a water jar. The use of metaphors shows that the writer uses rhetoric in communicating the meanings to make it easier for readers to imagine and understand the content.

2.3 Symbol refers to a comparison of things using other words to represent them. These words are derived from comparisons and interpretations that have long been used and are generally understood. It can be a single word or a phrase used throughout a story or only a part of it. An example is as follows.

In the story “Khuamtai Nai Duean Ramadan (Death in the Ramadan Month)”, a symbol word is used to comfort another gangster who has been found guilty and received a life sentence for detonating a bomb to ambush and kill other people. The writer chooses to use a sentence containing a symbol to empower a character that is faced with a problem to feel better under a stressful circumstance.

*“Don’t worry. We all will go to **heaven** for sure. That man is the spy not you; you are not guilty.”*

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 152)

In this sentence, the writer uses the word “heaven” to represent a positive meaning. Heaven is a place, according to a religious belief, where people who do good deeds go after death. The word communicates the speaker’s ideology and belief in what s/he has done to be right. The writer chooses to use the word “heaven” as a symbol to transfer a thought, emotion and feeling of the character in this context. Thus, it has communication power as a figure representing hope. The use of the word in this

context makes it *concise* and *easy* to interpret; it is a language technique that avoids use of a long description which keeps readers reading the story.

3) Use of sentences

A sentence refers to a group of words put together systematically according to grammatical principles of each language and sentences are classified into types based on language structures (Laksanasiri & Intharaporn, 2015: 43). Sentences in this anthology are analyzed based on sentence analysis principles by Changkhuanyuen (1993: 30-31) where types of sentences are declarative, negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences.

3.1 Declarative sentences are used to show an intention to tell or inform knowledge, fact, opinion, emotion and feeling. An example is as follows.

In the story “Luang (Cheating)”, declarative sentences are used by the writer to transfer thoughts through a conversation between a decisive daughter and her seriously ill mother. Their neighbors believe that the mother’s illness is a result of negligence in paying respect to sacred things and thus they pray to Allah asking for blessings for her to recover from the illness. However, the daughter sees the cause of her mother’s illness differently as she is a new generation living in the capital city; her mindset does not agree with the local belief. Therefore, she wants to take her mother to a hospital for modern medical treatment.

Daughter: “I am taking you to the hospital myself. It’s not far at all. There’re a lot of buses and taxis but they don’t take you to the hospital.”

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 141)

The writer chooses to use the declarative sentences to reflect a mindset of a new generation that is different from that of locals in the community. The character, the daughter, represents people of a new generation who have confidence in modern medical treatment which is different from the mindset of older locals in the community who believe that the mother is punished by sacred things in the community as a result of her not paying respect to the sacred. As can be seen, the writer transfers a thought and attitude through simple declarative sentences and fully justifies the thoughts and behaviors of the characters who have different beliefs.

3.2 Negative sentences are used to show that something is not acceptable and often include the words: *no*, *not*, *cannot*.

In the story “Kai Lud Khok (Let Loose Chicken)”, a conversation between Salma and her aunt-in-law about Salma’s decision to move back to her parents’ house because her husband has always blamed her for so many things and it is getting more severe making her disappointed. Her husband looks down on her and does not respect her. Thus, she has tried to solve the problem by deciding to move back to her parents’ house taking her children with her. Part of the conversation is as follows.

Aunt-in-law: Consider talking it over with him. Don’t move back. Discuss it with him first.

Salma: *No, Machi. I would rather go back home than living here and let others look down on me.*

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 113)

The writer uses the above negative sentences to reflect alternatives a woman who is a wife and a mother has and to reflect local culture relating to marriage; after marriage, the woman must move into the man's family. Consequently, when the couple has a problem that cannot be solved, the woman usually choose to go back to her parents. This shows spatial authority, that is to say, when the woman refuses to live in the man's space, it infers that she is not happy living in that space. She decides to go back to a safe place for her and her children; that is her parents' place, her birth place. The fact that the writer opts for using negative sentences in this situation communicates more than just a general negation but power negotiation by a woman who is a wife and a mother.

3.3 Interrogative sentences are used to show an intention of getting a reply.

In the story "Foon (Dust)", the writer transfers this type of sentence through the main character who is the first wife. The writer chooses to use language with hidden touching feeling expressed with furiousness as a result of the fact that her husband takes another woman as his wife without her permission. Her anguish is released by asking for justice as in these sentences.

"Is it fair to me? Tell me that it is fair."

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 36)

The interrogative sentence "*Is it fair to me*" indicates that the writer chooses to use an ironic speech act that conveys more than just a question because it expresses the character's repressed emotion resulting from her husband's unjustifiable behavior. Her question also conveys her hidden desire for sympathy. Thus, it is not only a simple question but also an expression of frustration and heartbreak. This emphasizes that in society where there is religious permission for a man to have more than one wife at a time, it is not always true that a woman would agree to it and she suffers when it happens to her.

3.4 Imperative sentences are used to show requests or commands for the message recipient to do as instructed and this type of sentence usually begins with a verb.

In the story. "Ya (Grandma)", the writer transfers her message through a conversation between the main character who is an angry father talking to his children. The stressful situation in the family has been caused by the religiously untraditional funeral of the grandmother. The father who is religiously strict does not agree with what his relatives did for the funeral. Thus, he orders people in his family not to have anything to do with their relatives any longer.

"No. Don't say anything at all, whatsoever. When I say no and don't; I mean no and don't, period. When I die, don't hire anyone to pay respect to my body; don't hire anyone to give my body a bath. I have several children. If none of them can pay

respect to my body, don't call me Pa. I don't care if there are only two people giving me a bath. But don't hire anyone to do it; I would feel ashamed.

(Ummisalam Umar, 2014: 131)

When considering the sentences expressing the character's thought, it can be seen that the writer chooses to use imperative sentences to reflect a mindset with strict religious principles that are crucial factors for their life plan. When the situation does not go according to plan, the character demonstrates his disagreement with another mindset. Nevertheless, these imperative sentences communicate a message from a person whose status is head of the family. The use of imperative sentences in this situation is to stimulate the reader's feeling and to present the character's strategy for controlling thoughts and behaviors of the other characters whose status is family members under the head of the family.

Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of language techniques reflecting concepts and thoughts in the anthology of short stories, "Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)" by Ummisalam Umar consisting of 10 short stories: Phu Tong Songsai (Eyes of a Child), Foon (Dust), Nithan Khong Pho (Daddy's tales), Klang Phung Phae (Amidst a heard of goats), Phi Chai (Older Brother), Kai Lud Khok (Let Loose Chicken), Ya (Grandma), Luang (Cheating), Khuamtai Nai Duean Ramadan (Death in the Ramadan Month, and Phae Lang Hak (Broken-back Goats) reveals three main language techniques: word choice or use of words, figures of speech, and use of sentences. 1) Use of words consists of words with denotative and connotative meanings. Words with denotative meanings are for example, in the story Klang Phung Phae (Amidst a heard of goats), because the characters are villagers, they use words with direct meanings. However, sometimes they use words with connotative or latent meanings as seen in the story Phu Tong Songsai (Eyes of a Child), because the topic of the conversation is sensitive and takes place in public, the characters use words with indirect meanings in order to avoid talking about it elaborately. 2) Figures of speech consist of simile, metaphor, and symbol. In the story Nithan Khong Pho (Daddy's tales), a simile is used to communicate a thought of a character who is doubtful about a behavior of another character who tells a tale as if it was real and compares it with a belief among fishermen about the tale. Metaphors are used in Phae Lang Hak (the Broken-backed Goat) to make it easy to convey the message and easy to understand for readers. Furthermore, symbol words are used in the story Khuamtai Nai Duean Ramadan (Death in the Ramadan Month to communicate with power about an important belief. 3) Use of sentences consists of declarative, negative, interrogative, and imperative sentences. Declarative sentences are used in the story Luang (Cheating) to communicate and give an account a new mindset that is different from a traditional mindset while negative sentences are used in the story Kai Lud Khok (Let Loose Chicken) but they are actually expressions showing women's power in terms of spatial dimension. Another type of sentence used in this anthology is interrogative sentences. In the story Foon (Dust), an interrogative sentence is used by the main character to show women's negotiating power for justice. Lastly, the other type of sentence is imperative sentences that are used in the story Ya (Grandma) to control thoughts and behaviors of family members with clear orders.

When considering all the three language techniques used in the anthology of short stories, *Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)* by Ummisalam Umar which consists of 10 short stories, it can be seen that the writer reflects concepts of how humans maintain their existence and that their communication can affect their own as well as others' thoughts and emotions. The language used for communication is usually associated with the speaker's or the character's environments. For instance, characters who are local villagers usually use words with direct meanings which sometimes seem to be somewhat violent but they communicate with clear meanings while a character who is a student uses words with indirect meanings and is careful with the use of words as they can cause adverse reactions if used in public. This emphasizes that a person's status can affect the use of language; people with different statuses use language differently as a result of how they have been socialized and acquired their mindsets. It can be said that the language techniques used in the anthology of short stories, *Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)* by Ummisalam Umar gives the readers vivid imaginations that enhances their leisure reading.

Recommendations

The analysis of language techniques used to reflect concepts in the anthology of short stories, "*Klang Phung Phae Lang Hak (Amidst a Herd of Broken-backed Goats)*" by Ummisalam Umar is only one example of language use the characters employ to present thoughts relating to human life experience. Thus, further studies can be conducted on other aspects such as speech acts of apology in fictions as it is one way of learning about culture reflected in language use in daily life in Thai society.

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