

**An Analysis of Figurative Languages Used in  
Mark Manson' Book Entitled "The Subtle Art  
of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive  
Approach to Living A Good Life"**

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**Abstract**

The objectives of the study are to identify the types of the figurative language found in the book and provide the contextual meaning of the found figurative language. The method used in collecting the data related to the subject of this research is documentation method, and this research was conducted by seeking any relevant data and information about the focus of the study from books and internet that are available for the analysis. The data collection was done by following these steps: reading the book, and then selecting sentences that have figurative language from the book. While the steps to analyze the data are identifying the types of figurative language on each sentence according to Leech, determining the contextual meaning of the figurative language, and eventually interpreting the data. The result shows that there are 274 figurative languages. Simile is at 18.2%. Afterwards, Litotes takes the second most found figurative language about 15.3%, and then Metaphor gets 14.2%. On the lowest point at 8.4 % are Personification and Irony. The rest types of figurative languages, Hyperbole, Metonymy, and Oxymoron, have various percentages at 10.9% for Hyperbole, 12.7% for Metonymy, and 12% for Oxymoron. It can be concluded that figurative language plays important roles in this book. Figurative language makes the novel more attractive to read, and helps the readers imagine the story, the circumstances, and the character based on what the author has illustrated. Hence, the imagination created by the reader is still in context of the story.

Keywords: *contextual meaning, semantics, figurative language*

**Introduction**

Figurative language is common to any form of communication like everyday conversation, advertisements, poems, books, novels, etc. It is rarely found in daily conversation and articles (Saputri, 2014). It is mostly in poems and novels that are beyond the common meanings. It is aimed for the readers to use their imagination to find out what the author means. Perrine (1982: x) mentioned four ultimate reasons to use the figurative language; first, figurative language supplies the pleasure of the reader's imagination of literary works; secondly, It is also one of the ways to bring additional illustration into verse, make the abstract

concrete, make more sensuous literary works; thirdly, figurative language is to add emotional intensity to otherwise merely informative statements and conveying attitudes alongside the information; the last, it is how to claim a lot in short compass. In this research, researcher gets willing to analyze the figurative language of a non-fictional book. Based on Cambridge Dictionary, non-fiction is writing that is about real events and facts, rather than stories that have been invented. Thus, a non-fictional book bears the author's notion of happening phenomena without additional imaginative writing. Though non-fictional book is rare to contain figurative language, the researcher is challenged to figure out the common figure of speech of the kind of book, and the contextual meaning of it.

Therefore, based on above explanation, the researcher would analyze the figurative language of *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life* written by Mark Manson in 2016. This book is an anti-self-improvement. Mark Manson views positive self-improvement books impractical and unhelpful. The point is, instead of always trying to be happy, he invites the readers to gamble up and down through life. Also, the amazing style of Mark Manson and how he writes are having a private conversation with readers over coffee. His writing evokes a feeling in the reader's mind, enticing them along to believe that the author is someone the reader knows personally. To get his points across, he talks in slang, profane, potty-mouthed, and easy to understand language. Thus, the book is related to people from every age level. The book is flexible and adaptable in every of times.

Beside the figurative language of the book, the researcher is willing to figure out the meanings of figurative languages or expressions which are found in the book. Thus, this research would be entitled "An Analysis of Figurative Languages Used in Mark Manson's Book Entitled "The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life".

### **Types Figurative Language**

There are many types of figurative language; one of them is the figurative language based on the theory of Leech. Leech in Dewi (2010:2) classified

figurative language into eight types personification, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, litotes, metonymy and oxymoron.

1. **Personification.** Personification is a figure which characterizes things like human. In other words, it is transferring human characters to animals, or abstract plan. It makes the animals the objects speak or behave like human.
2. **Simile.** Simile is a figurative language which compares two objects in contrast, a trope that expresses a right away comparison between the objects, that have one or additional points commonly and be recognized by the utilization of the word 'like' and 'as'. Macmillan (1984:187) said simile is a figurative language that directly compares 2 apparently contrast things.
3. **Metaphor.** Metaphor is a figurative language which compares implicitly two dissimilar objects without the linking words 'like', 'as', 'such as', etc. Macmillan (1987:702) defined, 'Metaphor is a figure of speech that creates a comparison between 2 apparently different things'.
4. **Hyperbole.** Hyperbole is a figurative language of exaggeration. It tells the reality regarding the scale, degree, or number of one thing while not aspiring to deceive. Leech (1969: 168) stated 'Hyperbole, just like 2 other figures, is often involved with sentiment and personal values. By creating subjective claims that, but exaggerate, people prefer not to verify unless they tend to be somehow ready to get in the bone of the person to whom the claims are created.
5. **Irony.** Fowler in Leech (1969: 171) identifies Irony as a mode of expression that proves a double audience, one of which is 'in the know' and alerts the speakers' intention while the opposite one is naive enough to require the auditory communication initially.
6. **Litotes.** Litotes is one of the statements, continually deliberate and with the intention of refined stress. but the interpretation of understatement relies on the context, along with cultural context. In speech, it relies on stress and intonation. Leech (1969: 169) states that the term 'litotes' is typically reserved for a selected quite statement when the speakers

express negatively wherever the positive one is additionally forceful and direct.”

7. **Metonymy.** Metonymy is one of the figurative languages where the name of an object is substituted for the others which are closely related to it. In Webster’s Third New International lexicon in Leech (1969: 152), it is said “Metonymy is a figurative language consisting in exploiting the name of an object, plan, or factor for that of something else that is related.”
8. **Oxymoron.** Oxymoron which has plural form ‘oxymora’ is a figurative language mixing two contradictory ideas the figure seems in a very sort of contexts, as well as unintended errors like ground pilot and a literary figure crafted to reveal a contradiction. The foremost common kind of figure consists an adjective-noun combination of two words. Leech (1969:132) says “An oxymoron is that the yoking along with 2 expressions that are semantically incompatible. Thus, together they do not bear any conceivable literal relevance reality.”

### **Contextual Meaning**

Lyons in Manik (2013:8) stated that contextual meaning is the meaning of words which is consistent to the circumstances during which they are used. Dissimilar circumstances provide dissimilar meanings. On contrary, within the special circumstances, the sentences are going to have equal meanings. Also, Crystal explained that contextual meaning is additionally identified because the information shows the type of use a language unit bears in its context socially (Manik, 2013:8).

Longman cited in Manik (2013:8) states that context means a part of speech and therefore things denote. It is often defined that contextual meaning is consistent with the text. It is constructed by the word function in the formation of sentence as different pattern of equivalent words can bring out different context. So, it can be concluded that contextual meaning is the word meaning dependent on the circumstances or situations in which they are used. Different circumstance might bear different meaning in a sentence.

## **Research Method**

The research design is qualitative. A qualitative analysis is multi technique concerning, involving associate instructive, representational approach to its subject material. This suggests qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, making an attempt to create sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning's folks bring back them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2). Meanwhile, document or literature study is picked because the method is commonly used to study literature. Document study is a method of collecting data not aimed directly to the research subject. Document study is a type of data collection that examines various kinds of documents that are useful for material analysis (Mann, 1993).

### ***Unit of Analysis***

The unit of analysis of this research is the sentences of the book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life* by Mark Manson. The researcher focuses on sentences with the figurative languages to be analyzed.

### ***Source of the Data***

The source of data of this research was the book—*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life*. It is the second book by blogger and author Mark Manson. It was published by Harper One, United States on September 13, 2016. The length of the book is 224 pages for printed book and 100 pages for e-book

### ***Key Informant***

One of qualitative research characteristics is the data are collected by the researcher on her own (Arikunto, 2002). In the research, researcher act as not only datum collector but also an instrument. As the research method is document study, the researcher plays very essential role to collect and analyze the data to be conclusion as the research findings.

### ***Technique of Data Collection***

The data were collected by using the following steps: 1) Reading the book—*The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life*. 2) Finding sentences that have figurative language from the

book. 3) Highlighting the sentences which have been found with different colors for each kind of figurative language.

**Data Analysis**

To analyze the collected data, the researcher followed these steps:1) Identifying the types of figurative language on each sentence and marking them with highlighters. 2) Grouping the identified figurative languages. 3) Identifying the contextual meaning of those figurative language found. 4) Interpreting the data.

**Research Finding and Discussion**

The tables below show the number of figurative languages in each chapter, and provide the number of each types of figurative languages in total of the book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life* is a book written by Mark Manson.

<b>Types of Figurative Languages</b>	<b>Chap 1</b>	<b>Chap 2</b>	<b>Chap 3</b>	<b>Chap 4</b>	<b>Chap 5</b>	<b>hap 6</b>	<b>hap 17</b>	<b>Chap 8</b>	<b>Chap 9</b>
Personification	6	6	0	2	1	1	0	0	6
Simile	5	12	8	5	6	3	3	5	3
Metaphor	5	6	2	5	2	5	4	4	6
Hyperbole	8	4	4	3	2	3	1	2	2
Irony	1	0	6	5	4	3	1	2	1
Litotes	5	5	3	2	7	6	2	9	2
Metonymy	3	4	2	5	3	1	1	3	13
Oxymoron	5	4	3	1	4	12	1	1	3
<b>Total</b>	38	41	28	28	29	34	14	26	36
	<b>274</b>								

Table 4.1  
Figurative Languages of Every Chapter

<b>Types of Figurative Languages</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Personification	23	8.4
Simile	50	18.2
Metaphor	39	14.2
Hyperbole	29	10.6
Irony	23	8.4
Litotes	41	15
Metonymy	35	12.8
Oxymoron	34	12.4
<b>Total</b>	274	100

Table 4.2  
Figurative Languages in Total

From the tables, it can be seen table 4.1 represent the findings of figurative languages in each chapter, while the table 4.2 gives data about the total of each figurative language and the percentage of it compared to the figurative languages which are found in the book in total.

The researcher found totally 274 figurative language items. Of all the chapters, chapter two has the most figurative languages at 41, and the least number of figurative languages is in chapter seven at 14. Meanwhile, the highest number of the type of figurative languages is Simile by 50, which has 18.2% of total. Next to Simile, Litotes takes the second most found figurative language by 42, which is about 15.3%. Close to Simile, Metaphor gets 39 number by about 14.2%. On the other hand, Personification and Irony reach the lowest point at 23 or by 8.4 % for each. The rest types of figurative languages, Hyperbole, Metonymy, and Oxymoron, have various numbers around 30s, 30 (10.9%) for Hyperbole, 35 (12.7%) for Metonymy, and 33 (12%) for Oxymoron.

#### 1. Personification

Personification is one of the figurative languages which humanize an object. In other words, this kind of figure of speech transfers human characteristics to an animal, object, or abstract things in the way they behave or feel. In this book, most of the personified objects have human-like behavior such as eating, teaching, finding, etc. Only slight objects are personified having humans' traits. Below is the explanation of personified sentences from each chapter.

##### **Excerpt 1:**

It **will eat** you alive (*see page 10, line 16*)

The pronoun **It** refers to *giving a fuck* or minding others business. In this part of the book, the author gives explanation of how people love minding business other than theirs just to get entitled that they are happy and everything goes the way they expect. Once everything has slight difference as what has been wished to happen, they cannot help but see it as traitor so as every challenge is a failure, every adversity is an injustice, and every disagreement is a betrayal. They are not ready for those, for they give too much to mind. They should focus on their priority, not other people's.

The sentence is described as a personification. The word ‘eat’ is human’s activity while *giving a fuck* as an abstract idea can actually not eat. Eating is a process of digesting food, swallowing it to the gut just as minding many affairs can cause people stuck. They do not improve themselves even if they do, it is not a massive improvement due to the entitlement to balance in each affair. Then, they lose their priority like the swallowed food. The author uses the personification to emphasize minding many affairs is like suicidal attempt. It harms ones who live this sort of life since they cannot resist any difficult situation, and differentiate either the prioritized affairs or not.

## 2. Simile

Simile is a comparison between two different things, either its shape, appearance, or the action. The comparison is usually marked with a preposition like such as, as, or even like itself, and sometimes a comparison of positive degree and comparative degree such as the same as, as ... as, and more than. Simile in this book is often a form of comparison between the values of life or metrics with any other object. The comparison is explicitly stated. Often, the author explains one example of the values and thus it is compared. Below are the nine samples of Simile from each chapter.

### **Excerpt 2:**

He would feel **like shit** and think to himself, “Gee whiz, I sure do feel **like a cow turd** today. ....” (*see page 7, line 37*)

The today’s life style which is often posted on social media just happens to make people more insecure. While other people get rich and achieve dreams, other miserable people just blame themselves for failing. It is definitely so toxic. Everything seems failing them.

The comparison is between the character He and shit, particularly a cow shit. This is two different things. He is a human, and shit is a digestive residue. The comparison between them is defined simile due to the use of a preposition ‘like’ to bridge them. Shit is often used to describe a coward, a useless life, and a failure. Once he feels insecure after comparing himself to people’s achievements on social media, he feels nothing but a social residue like that of a cow.



### 3. Metaphor

Metaphor is a figurative language that compares apparently two different things to illustrate the situation. The difference from Simile is that simile has a connector, either a preposition or a conjunction while metaphor does not. But overall, both function the same. The comparison that is mostly used is physical, not a process or feeling of something. Other than Simile, metaphor is implicitly stated due to no connection included. The organization of the sentence is frequently a definition such as ‘Pain is an inextricable thread in the fabric of life.’ The comparison of the sentence is between pain and a thread, but the organization of sentence is a definition. To get to know more about metaphors in this book, here are some excerpts from each chapter with each explanation.

#### **Excerpt 3:**

Stories like Bukowski’s are the bread and butter of our cultural narrative. (see page 5, line 26)

Bukowski was a loser, drunk head, gambler, or even the worst man alive. He was a poor writer who never stopped writing though his many writings did not get to be printed out. One day, Bukowski was lucky enough to get his book published which came popular. His life is the true example of a famous proverb ‘no pain, no gain’ which is believed by a bunch of people in the world.

Bread and butter are identical to the western countries. Western people eat them every day. They are daily essential needs. Food is definitely a part of the culture. Food like bread and butter is in western people’s blood like the proverb of struggling hard initially, and getting success after then, which is taught from generation to generation to motivate their children to be diligent. As the live example of the proverb, the life story of Bukowski seems wonderful. Being successful, he was seen wiser, learned much from his past experience, and was found very inspiring. However, ironically, he was just being him. Still being a loser, drunker, and gambler after all.

### 4. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figurative language that exaggerates the sentence in order to show big impact of the event told in the sentence. In poetry, hyperbole is used to

evoke the feelings while in the book ‘The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck’, hyperbole is both to emphasize the impact and evoke the author feelings. Hyperbole exists in every chapter of the book because the style of Mark Manson’s writing is like telling the old friends his experiences and the way he means his life. As a story telling, exaggeration is commonly found many. Hyperbole which is found by the researcher is 30 of 274 figurative language in total. Of the 30 found hyperboles, the researcher only takes one sample from each chapter. Thus, the number of hyperboles to explain is nine.

**Excerpt 4:**

He’s probably **the last person on earth** you would ever look to for life advice or expect to see in any sort of self-help book. (*see page 5, line 2*)

It was a story of Bukowski, a loser, a drunker, a playboy and a gambler. He was not included in commonly social standards. He knew that but kept going like that. He was not an ambitious man, yet he kept working on writing. For years, his writings were rejected by almost magazines, newspapers, and any publishers. His writings were terrifying, they said. He filed letters at a post-office for living. His modest payment was spent for gambling, and getting drunk. He was a total deadbeat.

Even though he was the living example of badness, he was not that bad to advise. His value was being comfortable with his failure. Thus, once he succeeded, he was not overproud of himself, living extravagant life. He was just being him, not to try being a social-standard person. That was what he might have said to people asking for advice, but that did not sound wise enough for common standard. A common standard should have been saving money, living economically, or living healthy, not dealing with failures.

The use of “the last person on earth” is certainly a hyperbole. He was wise, and his value did fit to him. But this kind of value is not people’s standard, not everybody can accept it likely. Moreover, the value came out from a man who wasted money easily for one night, not knowing the night was his good luck or his bad luck while drinking alcohol that costs much money.

## 5. Irony

Irony is a figurative language that contains satire which is a collection of concrete facts and, in general, also the opposite of these facts. In short, the kind of speech is a style of language used to express sarcasm subtly to someone. The word irony comes from the Greek "Eironeia", which means pretending not to understand. In general, the main purpose of using irony is to express subtle innuendos, even if they sometimes have quite a meaning.

In this book, irony is used to quip people's life styles that mind what is not prioritized while they should not do so. The author described some ironic lives of people such as Jimmy, a so-called very busy businessman, who actually achieved nothing. In total, there are 23 ironies which were found. It is about 8.4% of total. Irony is almost in every chapter but chapter 2. Most ironies are found in chapter 3.

### **Excerpt 5**

See, despite the book sales and the fame, **Bukowski was a loser**. (*see page 5, line 32*)

Bukowski was a filer whose writings were published and sold bunch of copies. Before then, he was just a loser. He gambled and got drunk almost every night. He filed letters at post office for living. He worked so hard and spend his money easily. His writings once used to get rejected by many magazines, newspapers, and even publishers. One day, a publisher had a weird interest in him. The publisher did not offer much money or promise a successful book sale, but took a chance on him due to his pitiful poorness. Once his first novel was published, it was a big sale. Ironically, his first book was dedicated to nobody.

The more popular, the richer he is. Despite his wealth, he kept living his modest life, gambling, consuming drugs, sleeping with many women, and sometimes waking up on the floor in the morning after drunk. The irony is that his life was seen as a model, struggling hard, believing in self, never giving up, and finally succeeding and becoming a motivator. It sounds so wise, but when realizing the life he chose which was not a success story standard, nothing can be inspired from him but his value to be himself.

## 6. Litotes

Litotes is a figurative language that describes the situation with words that are contrary to the meaning of the actual reality in order to humble oneself, even though the meaning is high. Or, in another sense, litotes is a figure that reduces a positive thing to a negative one or in other words minimizes the actual reality. Litotes is a contradiction figure which aims to influence others by humbling oneself. . Litotes can be interpreted as an expression of downplaying facts. This is usually to maintain civility or to refine.

Litotes exists in every chapter in this book. There are 41 Litotes in total. It is about 15% of all the figurative languages that are found in this book with its most frequent number in chapter 5. Litotes in this book is used to define people life style or to explain some values that are as matter of fact criticized by the author. As there are nine chapters, and the researcher will take one litotes from each chapter, litotes which will be explained contextually are nine.

### **Excerpt 6**

He **never** tried to be anything than what he was. (*see page 5, line 34*)

It is another story of Bukowski, a successful writer yet a loser. Bukowski, who was a living deadbeat, a gambler, a womanizer, and a drunker, began his successful life after meeting a publisher which put strange attention to his writings. Bukowski made six novels, and thousands of poems throughout his life, and hit big sales. Despite his fame and sales, Bukowski remained gambling, drinking alcohol, and consuming drugs. He was comfortable with the kind of life. He never tried to change the way he spent his days.

**“Never** tried to be anything” is considered as litotes since litotes means changing positive thing into negative one. Indeed, the word ‘never’ represents negativity. The term ‘never tried to be anything’ sounds negative, but its meaning is positive. The term means one needs to be oneself. The one is supposed to not try so hard to fit in everybody’s values. The one should live his own values as he could struggle for because sometimes somebody’s values are just not suitable to everyone else.

## 7. Metonymy

Metonymy language is a figurative language that uses part or all of a word that is a brand, label, characteristic, or certain attribute that becomes a unit of a word to replace the name of an object or item. Sometimes it is a phrase that replaces another phrase in order to romanticize the sentence or to act as an epithet.

Most metonymies which are used is a word or phrase of an app represent the group the app is in. Also, a general noun that represents specific one is frequently found. The metonymies that are found in this book are totally 35. It is about 12.8% with its highest number at 5 in chapter 4. Metonymy is in every chapter. Thus, there are nine metonymies to explain which was taken from every chapter.

### **Excerpt 7**

...and we're too busy watching **porn and advertisements for ab machines** that don't work, wondering why we're not banging a hot **blonde** with a rocking six-pack, to notice. (*see page 8, line 8*)

Media effects much on people' mindset. What are shown on TV or social media like having big house, a bunch of money, and happy family triggers people to feel like a shit. Ironically, those people are not motivated to achieve wealth but feel insecure. As they get used to it, their mindset of being shit becomes their daily acceptance. They think the reason why they were born is to be coward. The insecurities, fear, and anxiety get worse.

To overcome those bad feelings, not giving a fuck is the key. By not giving a fuck, you may feel a shit but who cares? The solution for such feelings is easy by not giving a fuck much. But instead of thinking that way, people admit themselves as a shit who cannot be saved. They prefer to prove themselves that they are useless by watching porn videos or popped-up advertisements than struggling that they are not.

**Porn and advertisements for ab machines** are metonymies. Porn in literal meaning is a portrayal of sexual subject arousal. It can exist in the forms of games, video, or pictures. In this sentence, porn stand for porn videos because what people watch is a video while game is not something watched. It is played,

and neither the pictures. Meanwhile **blonde** represents blonde-haired women or men since the word 'banging' is identical to a person.

#### 8. Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a figurative language containing words that appear to have contradicting meanings to one another. Oxymoron is usually said to be contradictory in terms. Just like other tools of language rhetoric, oxymoron is used for a variety of purposes. Commonly it is used to create a little drama for the readers, sometimes it is used to make the reader pause and think for a moment, whether it's laughing or wondering.

The researcher found 34 oxymora in the book, and its highest number at 12 oxymora in chapter six. Totally, oxymoron is accounted for 12.4%. The comparison which the author frequently use is the contrary adjectives like *simple* and *hard*, *certain* and *uncertain*, etc. Oxymoron exists in every chapter. From every chapter, the researcher excerpt one for each, so totally the explained oxymora are nine.

#### **Excerpt 8**

If pursuing the **positive** is a negative, then pursuing the negative generates the positive..... The **failures** in business are what lead to a better understanding of what's necessary to be **successful**. Being open with your **insecurities** paradoxically makes you more **confident and charismatic** around others. ....Suffering through your fears and **anxieties** is what allows you to build **courage and perseverance**. (*see page 9, line 11*)

The failures in business result in a more understanding of what's necessary to achieve success. Being open with insecurities paradoxically causes people to be more confident and attractive around others. The pain of honest confrontation is what generates the best trust and respect in a relationships. Suffering through the fears and anxieties is what permits people to create bravery and perseverance. It is all called backwards law.

Oxymoron is one of the figurative languages that put two contrary words in one context. The contrary words in this point are positive and negative, failure

and successful, insecure and confident, and anxiety and courage. Those couple words have opposite meanings, but put together to explain the readers the rainbow after rain, or the success after the failure.

### **Conclusion**

The sentences constructed with figurative language in the book *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck: A Counterintuitive Approach to Living a Good Life* by Mark Manson are 18.2% of simile, 8.4% of personification and irony, 10.6% of hyperbole, 14.2% of metaphor, 15% litotes, 12.4% of oxymoron, and 12.8% of metonymy. It indicates that the dominant types of figurative language which is found in the book is simile. Using simile in the book means that the book contains of portrayal to the circumstances or objects. The author tried to describe his thought or event by comparing them to the objects which somehow are not literally related. The author used simile to explain circumstances, to express emotion, to describe the characters, and to make more vivid and attractive writing. In general, the figurative languages are used to describe the author's feeling, his attitude, his thought, and his critiques to the modern ironic values. In conclusion, figurative language has important roles in the book. The use of figurative languages makes the novel more attractive to read, and also helps the readers imagine the author's circumstances and thought. The illustration of the figurative languages triggers the imagination created by the readers in the contextual corridor of the book.

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