



Analysis of Comparative Language Styles in the Poetry of Nias Songs

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Abstract : *This study aims to describe and analyze the comparative figurative language found in Nias song lyrics. A qualitative approach was employed using content analysis on fifteen traditional Nias songs containing personification and simile. The results reveal that comparative figurative language plays a crucial role in enriching meaning and strengthening emotional expression. Personification endows nature, animals, and inanimate objects with human traits, creating a deep emotional connection between humans and their environment. Meanwhile, simile is used to emphasize meaning through vivid and imaginative comparisons, such as likening pain to a wound rubbed with salt or a lover's departure to a leaf carried by the wind. These stylistic devices not only enhance poetic aesthetics but also reflect the cultural values, spirituality, and worldview of Nias society. Thus, Nias song lyrics function as a medium of aesthetic expression and a means of preserving local cultural identity.*

Keywords: *figurative language, comparison, Nias songs*

Abstrak : Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menganalisis gaya bahasa perbandingan yang terdapat dalam syair lagu-lagu Nias. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan teknik analisis isi terhadap lima belas lagu daerah Nias yang mengandung unsur personifikasi dan perumpamaan (simile). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa gaya bahasa perbandingan berfungsi penting dalam memperindah makna dan memperkuat ekspresi emosi penyair. Personifikasi digunakan untuk memberikan sifat manusia pada alam, hewan, dan benda mati sehingga tercipta hubungan emosional yang mendalam antara manusia dan lingkungannya. Sementara itu, simile digunakan untuk menegaskan makna melalui perbandingan langsung yang konkret dan imajinatif, seperti membandingkan rasa sakit dengan luka yang dibaluri garam atau kepergian kekasih dengan daun yang terbawa angin. Gaya bahasa ini tidak hanya memperindah estetika syair, tetapi juga mencerminkan nilai-nilai budaya, spiritualitas, dan pandangan hidup masyarakat Nias. Dengan demikian, syair lagu Nias berfungsi sebagai media ekspresi estetis dan pelestarian identitas budaya lokal.

Kata kunci: gaya bahasa, perbandingan, lagu Nias

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the primary object of linguistic study and functions as a system of sound symbols used by a social community to communicate, collaborate, and construct identity. In this sense, language is not merely a means of conveying information but also a medium of artistic and creative expression. Through language, humans articulate ideas, emotions, and lived experiences in an aesthetic form, particularly in literary works that embody cultural values and artistic beauty. As a creative medium, language has the power to communicate moral, emotional, and intellectual messages through distinctive and captivating styles of expression.

In Nias society, language plays a central role as both a vehicle of cultural expression and aesthetic communication. The Nias language reflects a rich system of values that is closely

intertwined with social and spiritual structures. Its vocabulary and symbolic expressions reveal unique cultural concepts, such as *ke-afo-an*, which connects human existence with natural and moral entities (Hadi & Mulyono, 2023; Mbete et al., 2023). Through language, the Nias people express the beauty of life in various artistic forms, rituals, and performances. As Hermanto et al (2023) and Lomas (2023) note, the aesthetic dimension of language enriches cultural experience and strengthens social cohesion, making it a crucial medium for the preservation of communal identity.

Song lyrics represent an art form that combines linguistic and musical elements. Within Nias culture, song lyrics serve not only as entertainment but also as a medium for transmitting moral values, emotional expression, and cultural identity. Hura & Waruwu (2023) observe that songs such as *Saohagölö Ina* and *Fa'omasiu Nagu* contain moral and character-building messages that educate younger generations. Similarly, Dzarna et al (2022) and Suharsiwi et al (2020) emphasize that traditional songs function as intergenerational bridges for cultural preservation. Thus, song lyrics possess both educational and symbolic importance in shaping social and moral awareness within a community.

Beyond their didactic purpose, song lyrics also act as powerful emotional outlets. Through poetic wording and melodic form, they communicate deep feelings, spirituality, and human experience. Hilmi et al (2023) demonstrate that Hamzah Fansuri's *poem-song Perahu* expresses profound religious and spiritual emotions through figurative language. Likewise, Seftiandani & Hidayatullah (2023) argue that children's songs foster joy while simultaneously instilling positive character values. In this way, song lyrics engage both the heart and the intellect, creating a space where emotion, reflection, and cultural consciousness converge.

Figurative language is a crucial stylistic element that enhances the beauty and expressiveness of literary works. Comparative figures of speech—such as simile, metaphor, personification, and allegory—serve to deepen meaning and evoke vivid imagery. As Dewi & Rahman (2022) and Santoso & Miranti (2023) explain, metaphors and similes generate strong emotional imagery that intensifies a text's aesthetic appeal. Personification, as described by Ningsih et al (2020) and Andhini & Arifin (2021), attributes human qualities to non-human entities, making the message more relatable and emotionally resonant. Allegory, meanwhile, conveys moral and philosophical insight through symbolic representation (Ilham & Nurjadin, 2023). The combination of these stylistic forms, according to Umami & Anto (2020), produces layers of meaning that enrich literary interpretation and reader engagement.

Preliminary observations of Nias song lyrics reveal various forms of comparative figurative language that embellish their aesthetic and cultural value. For example, in Kasman

Wau's song Basaki, lines such as "*He bawa hagaini dōdōgu bakha*" and "*He ndumi tola ōlili danō ōfasui*" illustrate personification by attributing human characteristics to elements of nature. These expressions not only beautify the lyrics but also reflect the Nias worldview—emphasizing harmony between humans and nature as well as interpersonal respect. Figurative language in this context thus performs a dual function: enhancing poetic aesthetics and conveying the community's cultural philosophy.

This study aims to describe and analyze comparative figurative language in Nias song lyrics as a representation of cultural expression and linguistic aesthetics. Such investigation is essential given the scarcity of research focusing on stylistic elements in regional songs, particularly those from Nias. Previous studies have analyzed figurative language in other musical contexts, such as the Apache 13 album by Thursina et al (2020) and Riuh by Feby Putri, examined by (Putri & Hidayatullah, 2023). However, no study has yet explored the distinctive stylistic and cultural meanings embedded in Nias song lyrics. Therefore, this research seeks to fill that gap and contribute to stylistic studies as well as to the preservation of Indonesia's regional languages and literary heritage.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach because it does not involve statistical procedures in data analysis. The type of research used is content analysis, following Weber's concept as cited in Wicaksono (2022), which defines content analysis as a research technique used to infer messages from a text systematically and objectively. In other words, this method aims to explore explicit and implicit ideas expressed by the author through linguistic elements. The qualitative non-interactive design allows the researcher to analyze textual data without direct field interaction. The research was conducted from March to May 2024, focusing on the linguistic characteristics of comparative figurative language found in Nias song lyrics.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation. According to Sugiyono (2019), documents are records of past events, which may appear in written, visual, or monumental forms. In this study, the researcher collected written data in the form of song lyrics. The procedures included: (1) listening to Nias songs repeatedly to identify relevant linguistic patterns, (2) transcribing and compiling the lyrics that contain potential data sources, and (3) coding or marking the parts of the text that exhibit comparative figurative language. The data analyzed are secondary data, obtained from existing documents—specifically, fifteen Nias song lyrics authored by local musicians such as Waty Lase, Kasman Wau, Fati Zebua,

and others. These lyrics were accessed from publicly available digital platforms such as YouTube and music archives.

The data analysis in this study followed the interactive model consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved summarizing and focusing on key elements relevant to figurative language patterns. The reduced data were then displayed in descriptive and tabular forms to facilitate interpretation. The final step was conclusion drawing, in which preliminary findings were continuously verified until consistency and credibility were achieved. To ensure the validity of data, the researcher applied triangulation of time, which, as stated by Sugiyono (2019), involves checking and re-examining data repeatedly at different times to confirm accuracy and reliability. This procedure strengthens the credibility of the results obtained from the analysis of Nias song lyrics.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Language as Cultural Expression and Aesthetic Communication in Nias

These results align with language's role as a vehicle of cultural expression that encodes symbols, values, and local knowledge. Concepts such as *ke-afu-an*—linking persons to natural entities—help explain why nature, animals, and celestial bodies appear so prominently as referential domains: they are not passive objects but integral parts of the community's ecology of meaning (Hadi & Mulyono, 2023; Mbete et al., 2023).

The aesthetic communication dimension emerges in the way lyrics mobilize comparative figures to craft narrative aura: rather than reporting emotion denotatively, they invite listeners to feel through dense imagery. This resonates with accounts of language in performance and narration as enriching aesthetic experience and strengthening social cohesion (Hermanto et al., 2023; Lomas, 2023).

Consequently, comparative strategies in Nias lyrics carry dual, simultaneous functions: (1) aesthetic—beautifying diction and concretizing affect; (2) cultural—affirming a relational cosmology of human-nature-cosmos. Both converge in a semiotic practice that sustains cross-generational relevance.

2. Song Lyrics as Value Transmission, Collective Emotion, and Identity

The findings indicate that comparative figures package character values (honesty, fidelity, honor) in communicative, memorable ways. This supports research showing that lyrics can serve as vehicles for character education and cultural preservation (Dzarna et al., 2022;

Hura & Waruwu, 2023; Suharsiwi et al., 2020). Simile and personification ease internalization by translating abstractions into sensory-near narratives.

Simultaneously, songs operate as an archive of collective emotions. Grief, separation, ritual burdens, and economic struggle are not stated flatly but refracted through nature and cosmos. Invoking “angel-stars” or the “moon that illuminates the heart” encodes social witnessing and consolation symbolically—designing a safe aesthetic space to process pain without forfeiting dignity.

This symbolic function contributes to cultural identity. Lyrics do not merely describe Nias; they perform a way of comprehending suffering, hope, and honor. Consistent with studies of regional songs as identity markers (Kusumawati et al., 2019; Macaryus & Wicaksono, 2019; Rozi, 2023), our analysis underscores comparative figures as cultural tools for curating memory and positioning the self amid change.

3. Aesthetic Payoffs of Comparative Figures for Emotional Reception

From a stylistic standpoint, simile and metaphor—often realized as personification—produce vividness that elevates emotional arousal. Prior literature attributes deeper meaning and stronger engagement to such figures (Dewi & Rahman, 2022; Santoso & Miranti, 2023). Our data corroborate this: similes like “salt on a wound” or “husks in the wind” are swiftly intelligible and affectively potent.

Personification functions as relational mapping: it converts non-human entities into partners of address so that affect can flow without direct confrontation with a human subject. This matches findings that personification (frequently intertwined with allegory) deepens emotion and adds layers of meaning (Andhini & Arifin, 2021; Ningsih et al., 2020). In Nias lyrics, birds/butterflies as messengers and stars as witnesses typify this mapping.

Although allegory is less explicit in the dataset, an allegorical frame—nature as a mirror of moral order—remains palpable. As Ilham & Nurjadin (2023) argue, allegory transmits moral knowledge through seemingly simple narratives. In our corpus, the cosmos as witness and nature as tester of resilience constitute a guiding metanarrative that shelters personal experience.

4. Theoretical and Cultural Implications

Theoretically, this study enriches regional stylistics by showing the binding of comparative figures to local cosmology. Figures are not mere stylistic preference but the negotiated outcome between emotional structure and communal worldview. This invites cross-regional comparisons: do similar image clusters (nature-animal-cosmos) dominate in other island/pacific cultures, and how do they vary?

Culturally, mapping personification and simile suggests a pedagogy of cultural literacy. Educators and art practitioners can employ these songs to cultivate reflection on values, empathy, and aesthetic language in schools and community programs. This accords with research that language bolsters social cohesion and value transmission (Bawamenewi & Riana, 2023).

For preservation, the analyzed corpus—and its close reading of comparative figures—can ground curation and revitalization of traditional musical performance. Documentation that includes a glossary of figures, themes, and affective functions will help younger generations grasp not only how to sing but why these lyrics matter.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of the study show that the comparative language style in the poetry of Nias songs, especially personification and simile, has an important function in beautifying the meaning and expressing the cultural values of the Nias people. Personification is used to bring to life elements of nature, animals, and inanimate objects so that they act as emotional partners in conveying the poet's feelings, while similes are used to affirm meaning through concrete and imaginative comparisons. These two forms of language styles not only enrich the aesthetics of language, but also reflect the way of thinking and outlook on life of the people of Nias who uphold the attachment between humans, nature, and moral values. Thus, Nias song verses function as a medium of inheritance of values, emotional expression, and symbols of cultural identity that strengthen social relationships between members of the community.

Based on these results, it is suggested that research on language styles in regional literary works continue to be developed to strengthen understanding of local linguistic and cultural heritage. The next researcher can expand the study by analyzing other forms of language styles such as metaphor, allegory, or hyperbolic in various literary genres of the Nias region. In addition, the results of this research can be used in the field of language and literature education as teaching materials that foster appreciation for regional literary works and instill local wisdom values to the younger generation. Efforts to document and preserve the poetry of regional songs also need to be carried out systematically so that the cultural and aesthetic richness of the Nias language remains sustainable in the midst of globalization.

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