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Review Article

Mirroring academic journeys through figurative language in the Book of Proverbs

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Abstract

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in studying figurative language, not only in literary works but also in the Bible. However, while most studies have focused on the Books of Psalms, little attention has been paid to the Book of Proverbs. Therefore, this study aimed to review the Book of Proverbs by identifying the different figures of speech and understanding the underlying values within these figures of speech in relation to students' academic journeys or pursuits. Using qualitative content analysis, the researchers identified 40 figurative languages, and they were classified into ten different figures of speech. Furthermore, the values found in the Book of Proverbs reflect guiding principles, reminding students that amidst the challenges of learning, it is crucial to persevere until the goal is achieved. Thus, since the Book of Proverbs magnifies the desired values that God wants people to observe, students or anyone who is in their academic pursuits can consider it a gigantic mirror that reflects relatable insights, stories, and experiences.

Keywords: Book of Proverbs; figurative language; figure of speech; values; Bible-based English language teaching

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Introduction

The aesthetic allure of literature is intrinsically intertwined with the adept use of figurative language. Figurative language is an umbrella term covering all language that uses figures of speech to represent a means of conveying one idea while expressing another (Hutauruk, 2019). Though sometimes used interchangeably with figurative language, figures of speech pertain to specific types of language that deviate from the literal meaning of words to create a more complex or powerful effect (Beaty & Silvia, 2013). According to Kreuz and Roberts (1993) and Abdujalilova (2022), even if figurative language is not always clear or concise, and even if there is a risk of potential misinterpretation, authors in both prose and poetry are aware of this and still employ figures of speech. The reason they do this may lie in Hutauruk's (2019) explanation, stating that they use these not only to stimulate vivid imagery but also to enhance the aesthetic appeal of both oral and written communication. Additionally, they serve as a vehicle to articulate thoughts, emotions, and perceptions that conventional language may struggle to encapsulate. Jenkins (2022) also asserted that the incorporation of figures of speech enriches texts with depth, meaning, and vibrant imagery. Thus, figurative language empowers writers to convey points and images that conventional sentences may fail to articulate.

Moreover, The Holy Bible, a collection of sacred books written by ancient prophets and historians, encompasses a variety of literary forms and styles that contribute to its significance as a literary work (Jódar, 2022). For instance, Psalms, Job, the Book of Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes are identified as poetic due to their different uses of literature. These books are considered a transition from the Pentateuch and the Historical Books to the Prophetic Books (American Bible Society, 2023). Recently, many scholars (e.g., Ahmad, 2022; Amung et al., 2023; Resi & Adrallisman, 2021; Silalahi, 2017) have undertaken systematic analyses of the figurative language employed in the Bible, specifically focusing on figures of speech. Resi and Adrallisman's (2021) examination of Chapters 1–30 of Psalms in the King James Version Bible revealed that metaphor was the most frequently used figure of speech, followed by simile, idiom, hyperbole, and paradox. Amung et al. (2023) scrutinized The Gideons International New Testament, uncovering the prevalence of personification, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole, irony, and, notably, metaphor. Silalahi's (2017) study explored metaphor, personification,

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hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche, and simile, with metaphor emerging as the most prominent. Ahmed (2022) examined wise sayings in the Bible, unearthing figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. Simanjuntak (2020) conducted a study on the Book of Proverbs, and the research stated that integrating verses from the Book of Proverbs into articles can help individuals learn and cultivate wisdom which can guide them toward discipline, joy, and success. Hence, these studies collectively illuminate the richness and diversity of figurative language in the Bible.

In the contemporary era of education, a notable trend has emerged, with educational institutions now offering English language instruction grounded in biblical principles (Pethtel, 2011). This development represents a pivotal milestone in language pedagogy, significantly diversifying the student demographic being served (Chao & Mantero, 2014; Jiang, 2012). In academic discourses, the integration of Christian faith and the utilization of the Bible in the English language are commonly referred to as 'Bible-based English language teaching' (Burgos, 2017), 'faith-based ESL' (Ritchie, 2014), 'Christian-based ESL' (Puspita & Mambu, 2020), and 'church-based ESL' (Han, 2018). Furthermore, Sayakhan (2018) has underscored that teaching poetry is crucial. A teacher must present it in an engaging manner, and there is the added challenge of elucidating various poetic texts, particularly when figures of speech are involved. Consequently, one might wonder about the level of complexity when instructing on the diverse books in the Bible that encompass poetic elements. Additionally, teaching the content at a surface level falls short, as the values embedded within the Bible's texts transcend mere linguistic proficiency (Pilch & Malina, 2016). Hence, as Newberry (2014) emphasized, the role of early education grounded in Christian principles is crucial, especially for preschool and primary school children, in shaping their spiritual foundation and worldview. Furthermore, if these students continue their education in Christian schools from high school to college, they often show a strong desire to continue their spiritual growth in university settings, with their faith being a guiding force in their academic pursuits (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012).

Against this background, while previous studies have extensively analyzed figurative language in books like Psalms and other segments of the Bible (Ahmed, 2022; Amung et al., 2023; Resi & Adrallisman, 2021; Silalahi, 2017), the Book of Proverbs, also called Proverbs (Vayntrub, 2016), has received comparatively less attention in this regard. Therefore, this research aims to fill

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this gap by focusing on the figurative language within the Book of Proverbs and conducting a thorough examination of its intricate literary techniques and its implications for conveying timeless wisdom and moral precepts. Moreover, Simanjuntak (2020) mentioned the guiding power of the Book of Proverbs, but the figures of speech in the Book of Proverbs were not explored. As Alkhammash (2022) contended, native English speakers frequently employed figures of speech in everyday conversations, presenting a significant challenge for second and foreign language learners. So, in order to provide a reference for understanding these figurative language expressions in the Book of Proverbs that would connect to students' academic journeys or pursuits in Christian schools, as argued by LeBlanc and Slaughter (2012) and Newberry (2014), this study delves into their usage within this specific text. Specifically, the following research questions were answered:

1. What types of figures of speech can be discerned from the figurative language extracted from the Book of Proverbs in relation to students' academic journeys or pursuits?
2. How are the identified figures of speech in the Book of Proverbs connected to students' academic journeys or pursuits?

Literature review

Christianity has always held a significant place in religious education curricula (Fancourt, 2017). This is particularly evident in the adoption of Bible-based English language learning or similar approaches, a unique method fostering a profound connection between students and their spirituality within the context of language acquisition (Burgos, 2017). The global implementation of this approach, observed in schools, language institutes, colleges, and universities, is well-documented (Casta, 2018). For example, in the United States, adult Bible-based English language education has been extended to Asian and Latino immigrant learners, utilizing church-based English as a Second Language (ESL) programs as social mediators to integrate learners into real-life communities and empower family literacy (Chao & Mantero, 2014). In South Korea, a Bible-based ESL program engaged students in various language activities, aligning with the broader trend of religious institutions incorporating English programs to meet the needs of their members. The expansion into language education by religious institutions opens a new perspective on language teaching (Casta, 2018).

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The primary goal of these educational initiatives is for students to gain experiential knowledge of God, develop faith in Him, understand His plan for their lives, and ultimately become spiritual leaders committed to a life of ministry (Montague & Taylor, 2017). Graduates of Christian schools exhibited a strong commitment to academic pursuits, helping others, defending beliefs, sharing their faith, appreciating diverse cultures, taking responsibility for actions, receiving constructive feedback, and being honest with themselves (LeBlanc & Slaughter, 2012). This resonated with Li's (2021) study, revealing a significant correlation between Christian values education and holistic child development imbued with values such as repentance, reconciliation, faith, worship of God, perseverance, obedience, and hope.

Moreover, it is viewed as a cognitive process rooted in children's intrinsic curiosity and shaped by values education designed to align with the belief that human nature is a gift from God (Li, 2021). Maitanmi (2019) emphasized the importance of Christian education in fostering a consciousness of God, understanding Jesus' teachings, and cultivating Christian characters. This role of Christian schools as extensions of Christian homes provides a necessary substitute for cultural learning when parents face financial challenges (Maitanmi, 2019). Furthermore, Jeynes (2008) explored the connection between Bible literacy among secondary school students and academic achievements, revealing that higher Bible literacy correlates with higher grade point averages (GPAs) and better school behavior. Thus, the complex relationship between integrating faith and learning into the school curriculum can enhance academic rigor when done judiciously and purposefully (Horner, 2019). Besides, Bible courses do not necessarily hinder performance on standardized tests and may, in fact, improve students' skills, depending on various academic variables (Horner, 2019).

Meanwhile, various studies (Ahmad, 2022; Amung et al., 2023; Resi & Adrallisman, 2021; Silalahi, 2017) dwelt with figures of speech in the Christian Bible. Also, Simanjuntak's (2020) study focused on the wisdom found in the Book of Proverbs. However, none of these have focused on the figures of speech in the Book of Proverbs, and nothing has been mentioned about the values that are connected to the academic journey of students. Hence, the researchers

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examined the figures of speech in the Book of Proverbs and highlighted the values that are relevant to the academic pursuits of learners.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically employing qualitative content analysis. Qualitative research aims to gather non-numerical data to gain insights, employing semi-structured or unstructured approaches, unlike statistical methods. It also seeks to uncover the underlying reasons behind phenomena (Ugwu & Eze Val, 2023). Qualitative content analysis involves reviewing various forms of human communication, such as books, newspapers, and films, to identify patterns, themes, or biases. Also, this method focuses on extracting specific characteristics from the content of human communications, including "verbal, visual, behavioral patterns, themes, or biases" (Williams, 2007, p. 69).

Additionally, the researchers placed specific emphasis on the Book of Proverbs, an anthology of collections of sayings and instructions, attributed to King Solomon and comprising 31 chapters, and it stands as a prominent testament of wisdom in the Old Testament (Simanjuntak, 2020; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2023). Though regarding the choice of the Bible version, the researchers opted for the New American Bible (NAB) due to its approval for Mass in both the United States and the Philippines (Catholic Bible Press, 2023). However, a new version was released known as the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE) (BibleGateway, 2008), and the researchers considered this instead as a reference for finding figurative language.

The screening process involved extracting figurative language from each chapter of the Book of Proverbs for profiling (Table 1). However, a criterion was considered wherein only the proverbs related to students' academic journeys or pursuits were considered. For example, verses that depict fidelity in marriage were not included. In other words, it was the discretion of the researchers to remove those that were not directly related to the said criterion. Furthermore, content analysis was utilized to grasp the meaning within the messages, focusing on content and significance, as well as employing conversational, rhetorical, and discourse analysis (Gheyle & Jacobs, 2017). The researchers considered looking at the figurative language's corresponding figures of speech and associated values. Also, the researchers directly lifted

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lines from the Book of Proverbs because content analysis focuses on the text or "recorded information," and quoting was inevitable and was done for the purpose of emphasis and analytical discussion (Elango & Kumaravel, 2022, p. 62).

Findings

Identified figures of speech in relation to the academic journey or pursuits of students

Table 1 shows the identification of 40 figurative language instances, and each was classified under specific figures of speech, including simile, metaphor, antithesis, apostrophe, alliteration, personification, metonymy, idiom, chiasmus, and hyperbaton. These were recognized for their relevance to the academic journey or pursuits of students.

Table 1. *Identified figurative language with corresponding figures of speech*

Chapter	Figurative language	Figures of speech
Proverbs 1:7	Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge	Metaphor
Proverbs 1:27	When terror comes upon you like a storm, and your doom approaches like a whirlwind; when distress and anguish befall you.	Simile
Proverbs 2:10	For wisdom will enter your heart, knowledge will be at home in your soul	Personification
Proverbs 4:1	Hear, O children, a father's instruction, be attentive, that you may gain understanding!	Apostrophe
Proverbs 4:11	On the way of wisdom I direct you, I lead you on straight paths.	Chiasmus
Proverbs 4:14	The path of the wicked do not enter, nor walk in the way of the evil.	Chiasmus
Proverbs 5:21	Indeed, the ways of each person are plain to the Lord's sight; all their paths he surveys	Personification
Proverbs 6:5	Free yourself like a gazelle from the hunter, or like a bird from the hand of the fowler.	Simile

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Proverbs 6:6	Go to the ant, O sluggard, study her ways and learn wisdom	Apostrophe
Proverbs 6:23	For the command is a lamp, and the teaching a light, and a way to life are the reproofs that discipline.	Metaphor
Proverbs 7:2	Keep my commands and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye.	Idiom
Proverbs 8:1	Does not Wisdom call, and Understanding raise her voice?	Personification
Proverbs 9:8	Do not reprove the arrogant, lest they hate you; reprove the wise, and they will love you.	Antithesis
Proverbs 9:10	The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding	Metaphor
Proverbs 9:12	If you are wise, wisdom is to your advantage; if you are arrogant, you alone shall bear it.	Antithesis
Proverbs 10:2	The Proverbs of Solomon: A wise son gives his father joy, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother.	Antithesis
Proverbs 10:9	Whoever walks honestly walks securely, but one whose ways are crooked will fare badly.	Antithesis
Proverbs 10:16	The labor of the just leads to life, the gains of the wicked, to futility.	Antithesis
Proverbs 10:17	Whoever follows instruction is in the path to life, but whoever disregards reproof goes astray.	Antithesis
Proverbs 10:23	Crime is the entertainment of the fool; but wisdom is for the person of understanding.	Antithesis
Proverbs 10:27	Fear of the Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.	Antithesis
Proverbs 10:29	The Lord is a stronghold to those who walk honestly, downfall for evildoers.	Metaphor
Proverbs 11:13	One who slanders reveals secrets, but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence.	Antithesis
Proverbs 11:23	The desire of the just ends only in good; the expectation of the wicked is wrath.	Antithesis
Proverbs 12:1	Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates reproof is stupid.	Antithesis

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Proverbs 12:15	The way of fools is right in their own eyes, but those who listen to advice are the wise.	Antithesis
Proverbs 12:16	Fools immediately show their anger, but the shrewd conceal contempt.	Antithesis
Proverbs 12:22	Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who are truthful, his delight.	Alliteration
Proverbs 13:14	The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning one from the snares of death.	Metaphor
Proverbs 14:24	The crown of the wise is wealth; the diadem of fools is folly.	Alliteration
Proverbs 14:26	The fear of the Lord is a strong defense, a refuge even for one's children.	Metaphor
Proverbs 21:2	All your ways may be straight in your own eyes, but it is the Lord who weighs hearts.	Personification
Proverbs 21:23	Those who guard mouth and tongue, guard themselves from trouble.	Metonymy
Proverbs 21:30	No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel prevail against the Lord.	Hyperbaton
Proverbs 23:21	For drunkards and gluttons come to poverty, and lazing about clothes one in rags.	Metonymy
Proverbs 23:29	Who scream? Who shout? Who have strife? Who have anxiety? Who have wounds for nothing? Who have bleary eyes?	Hyperbaton
Proverbs 24:7	Anger is cruel, and wrath overwhelming, but before jealousy who can stand?	Personification
Proverbs 24:17	Do not rejoice when your enemies fall, and when they stumble, do not let your heart exult,	Antithesis
Proverbs 24:27	Complete your outdoor tasks, and arrange your work in the field; afterward you can build your house.	Metonymy
Proverbs 29:23	Haughtiness brings humiliation, but the humble of spirit acquire honor.	Antithesis

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Simile

It is important to note that a simile is a figure of speech that compares two different things, highlighting their similarities by using “like” or “as” (Bayat & Kuz, 2020). For instance, in Proverbs 1:27, it states, “When terror comes upon you like a storm, and your doom approaches like a whirlwind; when distress and anguish befall you.” This draws a comparison between 'terror' and 'storm,' and 'doom' and 'whirlwind' using "like." Another example can be found in Proverbs 6:5, which states, "Free yourself like a gazelle from the hunter, or like a bird from the hand of the fowler." This simile draws a parallel between freeing oneself and the actions of a gazelle evading a hunter or a bird escaping from the hand of a fowler. It serves to underscore the urgency of taking swift and decisive action to avoid danger or capture.

Metaphor

On the other hand, a metaphor compares two distinct things that share some similarities. It can take the form of a single word, a group of words, a phrase, or even an entire text (Yaseen, 2013). Unlike a simile, a metaphor is more concise, as it omits certain elements, like the subject or markers of similarity, to convey meaning in a figurative or connotative manner (Rahmadhanti et al., 2022; Yaseen, 2013). For instance, in Proverbs 1:7, it equates the 'fear of the Lord' with the 'beginning of knowledge', emphasizing the significance of reverence or awe in the pursuit of wisdom and understanding. In Proverbs 6:23, the 'instructions of God' are compared to a 'lamp,' God's teachings are likened to a 'light,' and the 'way to life' is equated with 'reproofs and discipline.' Similarly, in Proverbs 9:10, the 'fear of the Lord' is compared to the 'beginning of knowledge.' Here, it is evident that knowledge of the Holy One, God himself, is likened to understanding. In Proverbs 10:29, a vivid image is created by comparing the 'Lord' to a 'stronghold,' signifying a fortified place of security or survival (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). Proverbs 13:14 compares the 'teaching of the wise' to the 'fountain of life,' and Proverbs 14:26 compares the 'fear of the Lord' to a 'strong defense.' As observed, in each of these comparisons, no 'like' or 'as' is used to connect the two dissimilar elements.

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Antithesis

Antithesis is a stylistic technique employed in art and oratory to establish a strong contrast between concepts, positions, images, or conditions that share a common structure or underlying meaning (Ruzibaeva, 2019). This figure of speech involves highlighting the sharp opposition between two ideas or elements, resulting in a striking and impactful effect (Eshmurodov & Ugli, 2020). In the study, there were 15 instances of antithesis (e.g., Proverbs 9:8, Proverbs 9:12, Proverbs. 10:2, and Proverbs 10:9, just to name a few), making it the most frequently used figure of speech in the Book of Proverbs. For instance, in Proverbs 24:17, it contrasts the natural inclination to gloat or rejoice when an enemy falls with the wisdom of refraining from doing so. Additionally, in Proverbs 29:23, the verse compares the effects of pride with the benefits of humility. It should be noted that similar cases of antithesis can be found in other chapters as well.

Apostrophe

As for the apostrophe, its purpose is to heighten the impact of a speech by generating a sense of surprise or unexpectedness that captures the audience's attention (Hallmark, 2011). In Proverbs 4:1, it reads, "Hear, O children, a father's instruction, be attentive, that you may gain understanding!" This apostrophe manifests when the father directly addresses his absent or potentially non-present children, urging them to listen attentively for the purpose of acquiring understanding. Additionally, Proverbs 6:6 mentions, "Go to the ant, O sluggard, study her ways and learn wisdom" which depicts the ant as a symbol of diligence.

Alliteration

Moreover, alliteration is a figure of speech that involves the repeated use of words starting with the same consonant sound in a phrase or line of poetry. Its purpose is to instill emphasis, rhythm, and musicality in the language (Benczes, 2013; Saydaliyeva, 2021). This can be observed in Proverbs 12:22, which states, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who are truthful, his delight." Here, one can notice the repetition of the sound 'l,' especially in the phrase 'lying lips'. This alliteration emphasizes the significance of honesty.

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Individuals who lack honesty or humility often exhibit behaviors characterized by deceit, manipulation, cheating, and pretense (Nault & Thau, 2022).

Personification

Personification, also known as prosopopoeia (Melion & Ramakers, 2016), is also featured in the Book of Proverbs. As defined by Nidi et al. (2022), this figure of speech imparts human attributes to non-human entities or concepts. For instance, Proverbs 2:10 personifies wisdom and knowledge that reside in a person. In Proverbs 5:21, the notion of God examining one's paths is personified, endowing God's actions with human-like qualities. Another example can be found in Proverbs 8:1, where wisdom and understanding are personified, imbuing them with human-like traits. In Proverbs 24:7, anger and jealousy are also personified, endowing them with human characteristics. Hence, this use of personification serves to enhance the engagement and comprehension of the readers by rendering abstract concepts more relatable and tangible.

Metonymy

According to the Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica (2023), metonymy is a figure of speech where the name of an object or concept is substituted with a word closely associated with or suggested by the original term. This study revealed instances of metonymy in the Book of Proverbs. For example, in Proverbs 21:23, the terms "mouths and tongues" are used metonymically to represent speech and communication. In Proverbs 23:21, the verse employs "drunkard and glutton" metonymically to signify excessive behavior leading to poverty. Finally, in Proverbs 24:27, "outdoor work" and "fields" are used metonymically to denote preparations for the future.

Idiom

For idiom or idiomatic expression, it is a figure of speech or simile that carries a meaning different from the literal interpretation of its individual words (Mukhammad et al., 2022). Idioms do not rely on the exact or literal meanings of words but rather convey a metaphorical sense (Gapur & Pujiono, 2019). An example of an idiomatic expression can be found in Proverbs 7:2, which states,

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"Keep my commands and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye." The idiom "apple of your eye" means "a person or thing that someone loves very much" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b). Thus, the verse emphasizes that God's instructions, represented by the terms "commands" and "teaching," should be cherished and held dear.

Chiasmus

Another figure of speech observed in The Book of Proverbs is chiasmus. This pattern is identified when parallel words, though different, maintain a relatedness, indicating a chiasmatic structure. Pelkey (2016) has explained that chiasmus is a rhetorical device involving the reversal or inversion of two or more terms. It can take a parallel or asymmetrical form and often introduces antithetical pairs. This arrangement creates a mirror-like relationship, implying tension, reversal, or exchange between the terms. In this study, Chapter 4 of the Book of Proverbs provides notable instances. In Proverbs 4:11, "wisdom" and "straight paths" are parallel in meaning, as wisdom represents "the straight path," while foolishness leads away from the correct direction. Additionally, "wisdom" is positioned in the middle, whereas "straight paths" are placed at the end. While the meaning is parallel, the structure is inverted or "criss-crossing" (Pelkey, 2016, p. 16), thereby exemplifying chiasmus. Furthermore, in Proverbs 4:14, chiasmus is evident in the juxtaposition of "enter" and "walk." The structure is "criss-crossing" as the clause "the path of the wicked do not enter" (Prov. 4:14) concludes with the word "enter," while "walk" initiates the second half of the proverb. It asserts that one must walk to enter. Consequently, "walk" and "enter" share parallel meanings. The convergence of parallel meaning and inverted structure confirms that Proverbs 4:14 is an instance of chiasmus. Additionally, "the path of the wicked" aligns in meaning with "the way of the evil."

Hyperbaton

Lastly, though rare, it is intriguing to note that hyperbaton was also observed in two verses within the Book of Proverbs. Hyperbaton is a figure of speech wherein the usual, natural order of words is altered by displacing certain words (Markovic, 2006; Warren, 2015). As Proverbs 21:30 states, "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel prevail against the Lord." This verse exemplifies

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hyperbaton because the expected order is "counsel, understanding, and wisdom" as people would hear counsel first, try to understand the counsel and acquire wisdom afterwards. However, with hyperbaton, the verse starts with "wisdom," and "counsel" is mentioned last, reversing the normal order of the said verse. Also, in Proverbs 23:29, hyperbaton is employed to emphasize certain elements through the inversion of the standard word order. Proverbs 23:29 states, "Who scream? Who shout? Who have strife? Who have anxiety? Who have wounds for nothing? Who have bleary eyes?" It began with the act of screaming. Conventionally, people experience "strife" first before they "shout" and "scream." This is the expected progression of an intense emotion, but hyperbaton is used in Proverbs 23:29, so the usual order is reversed.

Connection of the identified figurative languages to the academic journey or pursuits of students

Brazeau (2022) emphasized that no one navigates their academic journey alone, implying that there are individuals who contribute to either our achievements or setbacks. Proverbs 10 imparts general wisdom about navigating one's path, emphasizing the importance of walking with honesty and security (Proverbs 10:9) and being guided by instructions (Proverbs 10:17). By doing so, one can receive wisdom from God to tread straight paths (Proverbs 4:11) and remain undeterred by evil (Proverbs 4:14), as every person's path is guided by the Lord (Proverbs 5:21), who serves as a stronghold for those who walk uprightly (Proverbs 10:29). Additionally, even though schooling can be hectic and at times anxiety-inducing (Proverbs 23:29), it is natural for students to wonder about how wisdom and understanding work (Proverbs 8:1). Nonetheless, it is crucial to remember that the Lord is present and He always weighs our hearts (Proverbs 21:2).

Additionally, specific proverbs can be related to how parents or guardians provide guidance and counsel to their children as they embark on their educational journey. For instance, Proverbs 1:7, 9:10, 10:27, and 14:26 all emphasize the fear of God. Here, "fear" does not denote being frightened or terrified of God, but rather signifies a deep reverence, respect, and awe for God's wisdom, authority, and guidance. According to the third definition of "fear" from Merriam-Webster (n.d.-c), fear is defined as "profound reverence and awe especially toward God." This wisdom can be imparted by guardians

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to their children, reminding them of the importance of placing God first in their studies.

Moreover, children are also cautioned by their elders against engaging in criminal activities; these are deemed foolish pastimes (Proverbs 10:23). This advice stems from their own experiences and observations of such behaviors. Consequently, it is imperative to pay attention (Proverbs 10:2; Proverbs 12:15) and comprehend (Proverbs 4:1) what they witness, for this wisdom is likened to a lamp, a light (Proverbs 6:23), a form of wealth (Proverbs 14:24), and a source of life (Proverbs 6:23; Proverbs 13:14). Those who heed such advice are regarded as wise (Proverbs 12:15). By keeping all commands, they can lead a fulfilling life (Proverbs 2:10; Proverbs 7:2; Proverbs 10:2).

Furthermore, the moment students take the step of going to school, it is like taking on the challenge that they want something better for themselves. While their parents may have their aspirations, they are embarking on a journey to prove something for their future. Proverbs 6:5 suggests that they need to free themselves like a gazelle or like a bird, as if schooling is not about going into a cage. However, there are terrors like storms that can approach everyone's journey (Prov. 1:27), such as anger and jealousy (Prov. 24:7), haughtiness (Prov. 29:23), arrogance (Prov. 9:8), hate (Prov. 9:8), slander (Prov. 11:13), foolishness (Prov. 12:16), lies (Prov. 12:22), drunkenness, gluttony, and laziness (Proverbs 23:21). As much as possible, these must be avoided in any circumstances. Also, we must be humble in order to acquire honor (Prov. 29:23), reprove the wise, and they will love us (Prov. 9:8), and even reproving those trustworthy people can help us keep our confidence (Prov. 12:22). In other words, we must not be arrogant because it has a drawback (Prov. 9:12). Additionally, there is no need to rejoice if someone whom we considered a foe falls, and it is not good if someone stumbles, so we let our hearts exult (Prov. 24:17). As advised by the sayings in the Book of Proverbs, we must love diligence (Prov. 6:6), discipline, knowledge, and wisdom (Prov. 2:10; Prov. 12:1). If it is not time to speak then we guard our mouth and tongue from trouble (Prov. 21:23), and the moment to speak, it must be truthful as this will delight the Lord (Prov. 12:22). In summary, we must always think that 'No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel prevails against the Lord' (Prov. 21:30).

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After schooling, wisdom does not end. From the Book of Proverbs, it says that the fruit of our labor leads to another life unless the gain is something a product of wickedness, and it can definitely lead to futility (Prov. 10:16). If we desire that the end be good, then it will definitely end in goodness. Unless we end up being wicked, wickedness can lead to wrath (Prov. 11:23). Here, it can be noticed that all actions have consequences. Goodness begets goodness or otherwise. Regardless, Proverbs 24:27 says, "Complete your outdoor tasks, and arrange your work in the field; afterward you can build your house." In other words, if we work hard, then we will harvest the fruits of our labors, just like in school.

Discussion

Figures of speech commonly used in the Book of Proverbs

Based on the findings, antithesis emerges as the most prominent figure of speech. The majority of the antithesis present in the Book of Proverbs underscores wisdom. For example, the contrast between being "wise" and "fool" was clearly shown in Proverbs 12:15. Wisdom allows individuals to effectively utilize their knowledge to overcome life's challenges (Grossmann, 2017). Hence, wisdom will help students succeed in life. Also, the alliteration in the Book of Proverbs teaches students about honesty. The value of honesty is deduced from "lying lips" in Proverbs 12:22. Wilson (2018) and Nault and Thau (2022) added that honesty is a value that is widely esteemed across cultures. This figure of speech reinforces the importance of honesty, which can be used by students when dealing with their peers and teachers. Meanwhile, the use of apostrophes can portray obedience and diligence. The students can learn obedience and diligence from an ant in Proverbs 6:6. Bègue et al. (2015) mentioned that obedience plays a significant role in socialization processes, while Deo and Malge (2022) stated that having a diligent personality means that a person is engaged in active work. With obedience, students will be able to follow instructions during activities and exams. With diligence, students will be mindful of working hard in school.

Chiasmus mirrors the value of wisdom in the academic journey of students. Vervaeke and Ferraro (2013) defined wisdom as the capacity to demonstrate astute discernment when resolving social challenges. Therefore, students can remember Proverbs 4:14, which states, "The path of the wicked do not enter,

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nor walk in the way of the evil." This Bible verse, reinforced by chiasmus, can remind students how to deal wisely with bullying, peer pressure, bad companionship, and academic honesty, such as cheating or plagiarism. Hyperbaton in Proverbs 21:30 states, "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel prevail against the Lord." Even if the positions of "no wisdom," "no understanding," and "no counsel" were switched in the said verse, the meaning would not change, and no force could outshine the power of God. This kind of acknowledgment can guide students to recognize different authorities at school: teachers and school management as a whole. Similarly, idioms in the Book of Proverbs can help students realize the importance of obedience. For example, in "my teaching as the apple of your eye" (Prov. 7:2), it means that students are expected to find the words and instructions of God attractive, just as one is attracted to the vibrant color of an apple. With this kind of mindset, students will see that obedience is pleasing to the eyes of God. In addition, the metaphors in Proverbs 1:7 discuss the value of humility. With humility, students will be able to understand class rules or school policies and be more receptive to dealing with other students, teachers, and staff whose races, traditions, languages, and religious beliefs are different from the majority (Davis et al., 2011). Metonymy in Proverbs 21:23 reflects the value of honesty as reinforced by the phrase "mouth and tongue." Being honest means being able to honor your word or your conscience, whether it comes to promises or abilities. Students can realize that the growth of knowledge-based economies and societies depends on the role of honesty (Błaszczak, 2020; Kadir et al., 2015).

Furthermore, personification in Proverbs 8:1 mirrors the value of wisdom. In the said verse, "wisdom" and "understanding" were personified. Macdonald (2018) stated that wisdom is to realize that in order to achieve your goals, you must go toward those higher states of psychological and spiritual development by expanding and developing your knowledge on numerous aspects. In relation to their academic journeys, the students can involve themselves in various school clubs or organizations. They can join sports clubs, clubs related to music, language, the Bible, student body organizations, or any organization that fits students' talents and interests. These students can choose a club or two, and they will be able to have the "knowledge [of] how to live well" (Grimm, 2015, p. 1). The simile in Proverbs 6:5 could narrate students' challenging journeys because they are likened to a gazelle and a bird. The said animals are targets of hunters. In schools, several students become victims of bullying, too

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(Martín-Pérez & Gascón-Cánova, 2023; Smith, 2023). These students can seek help from a guidance counselor or anyone from the school administration if the said issue worsens, so they will be freed like a gazelle or a bird from the hands of attackers.

On the teaching of Bible-based education

It is important to acknowledge the challenge of implementing Bible-based language teaching in countries where Christianity is not the predominant religion. According to Phan's (2021) data, Buddhism is the dominant religion in Southeast Asia, prevalent in countries like Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. In Cambodia alone, 97% of the population practices Buddhism. Conversely, Islam is the primary religion in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. The Philippines and Timor Leste stand as the only two countries in Southeast Asia where the majority of the population identifies as Catholic Christians. Nevertheless, Hoon (2014) demonstrated that the development of critical reflective skills and a culture of respect for differences contributed to a more understanding, peaceful, and multicultural Indonesia, even in the context of implementing Christian education in an Islam-dominated country.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Book of Proverbs is a book of values and figures of speech. The value of wisdom is the most prominent, while antithesis is the most evident figure of speech. The Book of Proverbs magnifies the desired values God wants people to observe. Students can count on the Book of Proverbs as a gigantic mirror that could reflect their relatable insights, stories, and experiences. The different figures of speech highlighted in this study were employed not just to teach the English language but to guide students' decisions and actions that could make them better learners and citizens of the world.

This research recommends that figures of speech from Christian songs be studied so that students can continuously learn Bible-based English language teaching from another angle. The lyrics can be examined, and the music can be enjoyed by the students. If other schools do not observe Bible-based English language teaching, wise sayings from African, American, Asian, or European proverbs can be used to imbibe values. Different forms of literature, such as short stories, novels, or poems, are highly encouraged to be used by English

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language educators as pedagogical resources to teach figures of speech, grammar lessons, and character education.

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