ABSTRACT

This study aims at describing imagery in the English translation of a Chinese poem written by Wang Wei, the great Chinese poet of Tang Dynasty. The focus of analysis is on imagery in the English translation of a Chinese poem entitled *Qiuye Duzuo* that is *An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone*. It is interesting to analyze imagery in a poem to find out how vivid depiction of life is created through words. Through imagery, the readers of a poem can be brought into a certain situation that involves the human senses and part of body to see, hear, smell, touch and move. The identification of imagery in this study is based on Morner and Rausch (1998: 105) supported by the classification of imagery by Sayuti (2002). The results show that visual imagery is predominantly found in the poem that involves the eyes to see, meanwhile some lines can also be categorized as the auditory imagery that refers to images which involve the ears to hear.

Key words: Imagery, Chinese Poem, ‘An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone.’

I. INTRODUCTION

To share their idea and create the atmosphere that deeply gets into the senses of the readers, a poet must have the ability to bring a lifelike experience to his/her works. The vivid images are needed to evoke the sense of touch that poems usually have so that the life values can be successfully delivered to the readers. The readers are those who like to appreciate literary works not only for pleasure but also understanding. In terms of giving enjoyment and understanding, it is the obligation of the poets to satisfy the readers by means of interesting themes, stories, unique yet fascinating dictions as well as values of life. Such a condition is understandable since nowadays readers are very critical and can compare one work to another work easily in this digital era—in this case a poem as the example. The readers do not only need to read but also get something from the reading of a poem. It is also good to feel that after spending their time with their daily routine, the readers can enjoy literary work, especially poem to make them realize the existence of life and the role of being human beings as social creatures as well as the relationship with nature at a better level.

Everyday human life is, actually, surrounded by “a poem.” It is part of human daily life that shares the moral values through interpersonal communication. In Indonesia, for example, a poem has been part of Indonesian traditional life (Sayuti, 2002). Take for example, a poem can be found in the spell (*mantra*) and the rhythmical poem (*pantun*). This is the fact that becomes part of Indonesian people’s life, particularly the activities related to the culture, customs and traditions. Meanwhile, in the social media era, poems are, in fact, used in many kinds of media like newspaper, magazines, radio, television, advertisements and the statements people post in their social media account.

The expressions in a poem cannot be separated from the use of figurative language. It utilizes to make the poem more concrete and colorful. The message can even be conveyed more beautifully. Through figurative language, the poets may express many ideas and create the atmosphere she/wants in different ways. Such an expression shows that language is adaptable in the sense that it gives imaginative spaces to color and exaggerate the expression. Although direct statement can always be used, figurative language brings different sense of description, which is more vivid. In other words, it may be defined as the representation through language of
sense experience. It is the power of figurative language that makes the poets of any poems create some unique, touching and stylistic expressions.

To make the expressions alive and stylistic, the use of imagery is irrefutable. It is the style that becomes an element of a poem involving the imagination of sense experience. In writing a poem, imagery is even known as the most utilized figurative language. It is the making of “picture in words.” Picture in words are collection of images that show the pictorial quality of a literary work. Imagery is often used to have similar expressions to figure of speech like simile, metaphor, or symbol. Imagery touches the senses of taste, smell, hearing, and touch, and the internal feelings and to the sense of sight (Morner and Rausch, 1998: 105). Imagery evokes the emotional feelings. It can also communicate mood, tone and meaning, says an image is “language that addresses the senses”. The most common image in a poem is visual; they provide verbal pictures of the poets’ encounters with the world (Meyer in Zhou, 2007). Through the creation of images in poetry, the poets give the readers the impressions of what they frequently experience in life. They usually create images that evoke to readers’ other senses.

Imagery represents the emergence of any experience in one’s mind that includes cognitive process employed by humans. Image is a language use in a poem that helps one to feel through the senses to see, hear, feel and think about. It is the impressions that the poet wishes to be felt by others (Croft and Cross, 2000). Some images in readers’ mind are shaped by the poet through language which is used with respect to diction and rhetoric. In terms of senses involved in interpreting the images, imagery is divided into (1) visual imagery that refers to images involving the eyes to see, (2) auditory imagery involves to images which is close to the ears to hear, (3) kinesthetic imagery that refers to images involving the body movement, (4) thermal imagery that refers to the images involving skin to touch, (5) sense of smell imagery, which refers to the images that involve the nose to smell (Sayuti, 2002: 174-175).

The poem analyzed in this study is an old work of a great Chinese poet of Tang Dynasty, Wang Wei. The poem An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone is the English translation that is originally written in Chinese. The analysis is based on the English translation for the sake of finding general understanding since English is the lingua franca of the world’s language. Despite its old age, the poem can still be relevant as the data source for an analysis of imagery because the expressions are strongly representative to describe the fear of being old and facing the changes from the youthfulness to the old appearance when wrinkles are developed and health problems are inevitable. Such an impression can be observed from line by line in the poem. Wang Wei portrays the life impermanence very obviously in his poem (Becker and Li, 2013). The images that clearly describe the fear of getting old that may result in deep loneliness can be seen from the six lines found in the poem, namely (1) lamenting this hair of mine, I sit alone/in empty rooms, (2) the second watch close/ (3) mountain fruits falls out there in the rain. and here in lamplight, field crickets sing/ (4) no one’s ever changed white hair back/ (5) might as well try conjuring yellow gold/ (6) if you want to elude the old-age disease there’s only one way: study unborn lifel.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

As has been posed above, the poem analyzed in this study is the English version of a Chinese poem entitled Qiuye Duzuo written by Wang Wei, the great Chinese poet of Tang Dynasty. The translation is done by David Hinton as an English poem entitled Autumn Night, Sitting Alone. In the English translation, the atmosphere of an autumn night can be clearly perceived in the line by line of the poem delivering the message of the law nature concerning the decay of youthfulness. Becker and Li (2013)) defines this poem as a literary work that “conceives the passage of time as a norm of human existence, and thus uses his poems as a way to instruct the attitudes and ways to face man’s inevitable mortality.”

The method applied in this study refers to the approach in analyzing the content of literary works known as content analysis technique (Rafiek, 2011). This technique enables the investigation of facts, numbers, and arguments. These aspects are parts of a literary work that
can be analyzed creatively and interpretatively by a researcher. Rafiek (2011) mentions that there are several steps that a researcher must pay careful attention, namely (1) proposing an hypothesis or an assumption, (2) reading thoroughly the data source, (3) defining the object of analysis, (4) defining categories, (5) making some codes to record the findings, (6) testing the categories, (7) data collection, (8) calculating or counting the findings, (9) interpreting the data, (10) finding out the relationship between the problems and the analysis, (11) presenting the findings, (12) analyzing the findings, (13) finding out the percentage from the calculation, and combining the content analysis with the other methods.

This study attempted to undertake the steps by modifying the activities without neglecting the essence of applying each procedure described by Rafiek (2011). Of thirteen procedures, this study simplified the steps into three procedures that were applied in the process of classifying the images emerged in the poem. The three steps were briefly explained as follows.

1. Comparing the English version of the poem under study with another translation that was also made from Chinese into Indonesian. It was considered a significant step to get a better understanding on the images used by the poet to support the messages he wanted to convey. The comparison was applied by observing thoroughly the data, i.e. the poem Autumn Night, Sitting Alone containing the imagery investigated in the study and the poem used as the comparison entitled Sitting Alone on an Autumn Night. Observation was implemented by note-taking technique to collect the images used to convey the message in the poem. This activity is, in fact, the application of proposing an hypothesis or an assumption, reading thoroughly the data source, and defining the object of analysis.

2. Identifying types of imagery in the poem. The identification was based on several references such as Morner and Rausch (1998), Kennedy and Gioia (2003), and Sayuti (2002). A formal presentation in the form of a table was used to show more visible identification. The note taking technique was utilized to help with the data identification that was significantly important to formulate the analysis. Here, the identification covers several activities, such as defining categories, making some codes to record the findings, testing the categories, data collection and counting the identification.

3. The data were analyzed in accordance with theory and relevant references about imagery in the literary work, particularly poem. This step includes data interpretation that is actually the application of finding out the relationship between the problems and the analysis, presenting the findings, analyzing the findings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of comparison bring the similar images describing the naturalness of getting old that must be faced by any living things. Several images can be found in the two poems constituting similar impressions on the decay of youthfulness like whitening hair, empty room and empty house, the falling of mountain and hill fruits, lamplight, lamp, the sound of field crickets, grasshoppers and yellow gold. The clear comparison can be found in table 1 that shows the data source in the left side and another English translation at the right side of the table. The data sources are taken from the online source from http://pgrnair.blogspot.co.id/2015/04/autumn-night-sitting-alone.html, while the comparison is taken from Becker and Li’s paper (2013) from: http://www.uky.edu/Centers/Asia/SECAAS/Seras/2013/10BeckerLingWangWei.pdf.

Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Translation 1 (by David Hinton)</th>
<th>Translation 2 (by Robinson)</th>
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<td>An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone</td>
<td>Sitting Alone on an Autumn Night</td>
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<td>source:</td>
<td>In Becker and Li (2013)</td>
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Table 1 shows the comparison about the images of getting old that can be found in some lines of the poem. The very interesting part of the poem is the sharing thought about the fear of getting old when the black hair turns grey or white. It is the old age that no one can avoid. In the poem’s lines, the poet presents clearly the decline of his life and his consciousness about the death. Apart from the personal fear of aging, the poem conveys the message about the life cycle that is irreversible. None of us can avoid the white hair that never turns black. It can be found in the lines of the first and second poems like Lamenting this hair of mine and I sit alone sad at my whitening hair. The image that human power is limited conveys the message that human has no power to create gold as can be interpreted from the fifth line of the first poem, that is no one’s ever changed white hair back: might as well try conjuring yellow gold. In addition, human cannot also refuse the natural law that white hairs will never be transformed (line 5 of the second poem).

In the two English translation versions, the poet has to sincerely accept the cycle of life which is the naturalness that is tangled with life itself. The sense of nature is brought by the autumn fruits. They fall from the tree at the autumn night described through the images that may come in the mind after reading the poem like the lamps, the crickets, and the rain. In summary, all of the images that emerge from the poem An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone are the features that make the poem worth analyzing. These images can be obviously found in the lines three and four of the first and second poems respectively, i.e. Mountain fruits falls out there in the rain and here in lamplight, field crickets sing and In the rain the hill fruits fall/under my lamp grasshoppers sound.

Having observed the lines in the poem, it must be interesting to reveal the images emerging from the words used to picture the messages. At the same time, it is also challenging to interpret the atmosphere created by the poet who positions himself as the “I” in the poem. The pictures that can be strongly imagined are the gloominess, darkness and loneliness. In the poem An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone, it can be imagined that someone is alone at night. He/she is sitting in an empty room at the autumn night. The poem can also be interpreted from the reflection of images and thoughts that may emerge at the autumn night. It pictures the night at around 9-11 PM since the second clock in the English poem represents the Chinese second watch that is around nine to eleven at nights.

In the poem An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone, Wang Wei as the poet was successful in describing the continuum that constructs the gloomy feeling of the “I” in the poem. There is a contradictory image emerge in the poem that is the sitting poet with the other living things. The poet does not make any movement by sitting alone at the autumn night while the grasshopper, the tree and the fallen fruit accept the coming of their mortality. The moral values of the poem can be strongly found in the last two lines; if you want to elude the old-age disease there’s only one way: study unborn life. These lines demonstrate the human inability to deny the aging process. Thus, instead of being stressful by the law of nature about the aging and the coming of
mortality, Wang Wei as the poet reminds the readers to triumph over time’s tyranny. The last line of the poem provides the Buddhist solution to *study unborn life* that means to accept the naturalness of birth and death. People must understand the essence of life and its cycle of birth, growth and death.

Table 2 indicates that there are three types of imagery found in the poem *An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone* (*Qiuye Duzuo*). The three types of imagery are visual imagery, auditory imagery and sense of kinesthetic imagery. In two lines of the poem, visual imagery and auditory imagery are combined to leave special impressions that support the theme. There is also another combination emerges in the poem involving the use of visual imagery that comes at the same time with kinesthetic imagery. The following analysis represents how each category of imagery is presented.

1) **Visual imagery:** refers to the images involving the eyes to see. Such images can be easily found in the lines *lamenting this hair of mine, I sit alone in empty rooms and the second watch close. If you want to elude the old-age disease there’s only one way: study unborn life.* In accordance with the definition of visual imagery, there are several images that involve the eyes to see the surrounding objects in the poem’s lines, namely white hair, empty room, and the old disease. The gloomy feeling is represented by the verb *lament* in the first line of the poem. Observing from its meaning, the verb *lament* brings the atmosphere of deep grief expression, disappointment and unsatisfactory. It can be understood that the poet as the “I” in the poem is lamenting his black hair that turns into white. This may indicate aging and the coming of old disease. The images of white hair and old disease remind anyone that life is impermanent. Such images are analogous to the images of autumn showing the changing color of trees with its leaves. Green leaves turn into browns and oranges. In autumn, the trees seem to be ready for the next season as winter will soon come. Therefore, the images of white hair from the expression found in the poem *lamenting hair of mine, the old-age disease* can be categorized as the imagery that involves the eyes to differentiate the change from the period of young to the time of getting old.

2) **Visual and auditory imagery:** Visual imagery and auditory imagery involve the eyes to see and the ears to hear. The line in the poem that can be categorized as visual and auditory imagery type of imagery is *mountain fruits falls out there in the rain and here in lamplight, field crickets sing.* Visual imagery is presented in the images that come from *mountain fruits, rain, lamplight* are the images that appeal to the senses of sight. All of the objects used to convey the message can be seen by the eyes like mountain fruits, the rain and the lamplight. Meanwhile, auditory imagery can be strongly caught by the ears from the song of the field crickets. In the poem, the crickets sing at the autumn night to present their sincere acceptance to life. The characteristics of cricket are chirping at night since most predators are active during daylight hours. They make the chirping sound happily.
As insects, they live their life as if there is nothing to worry about. The male ones make their chirping sound by rubbing the edges of their forewings together. It is kind of call to their female mates. This is a clear example that auditory imagery is found in the line of Wang Wei’s English translation version describing that the field crickets are singing at the autumn night.

(3) Visual and kinesthetic imagery refers to images involving the body movement. The line no one’s ever changed white hair back: might as well try conjuring yellow gold is considered as the representation of visual and kinesthetic imagery when the change of hair color can be seen by the sense of sight. The use of verb conjure in try conjuring yellow gold evokes the image of movement as the meaning of conjure refers to doing something by means of a magic ritual. It has the sense of movement so that the classification of kinesthetic imagery is given to support the visual imagery used in the poem. By giving this statement, it is obvious that the poet believes in the impossibility of changing the world. Human being has the time of growing from a child when one is full of vitality and potential. Then the time flies to make one an elderly man who can do little more. The youthfulness is then erased into the aging period as time goes by.

IV. CONCLUSION

Since it can make the pictures in words that appeal to the senses of sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing, and even internal feelings, imagery plays an important role in a poem. In the English translation of a Chinese poem (Qiuye Duzuo) entitled An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone, imagery is used to create the atmosphere that constructs the gloominess felt by the “I” (the poet) in the poem. Some images present a contradictory continuum in which the sitting poet is opposed to the other living things. Sitting alone, the poet does not make any movement at the autumn night to leave the impressions of being afraid of his old age. He still encourage himself to study the unborn life and accept the appearance changes due to the aging. Meanwhile, the other living things taking part in the poem like the grasshopper, the tree and the fallen fruit never deny the coming of their mortality. They accept it sincerely.

Through imagery, a poet can evoke a certain situation that involves the human senses that is part of body to see, hear, smell, touch and move. The results show that there are three types of imagery found in the poem An Autumn Night, Sitting Alone, namely visual imagery, auditory imagery and kinesthetic imagery. The combination of imagery also occurs in the poem, that is visual imagery and auditory imagery, as well as visual imagery that comes with kinesthetic imagery. Visual imagery is use to raise the readers’ sense of sight to see the images found in the poem. The other types of imagery are also utilized to express the intention of delivering message of the poem.

V. REFERENCES


World Wide Web:
http://pgrnair.blogspot.co.id/2015/04/autumn-night-sitting-alone.html
http://www.uky.edu/Centers/Asia/SECAAS/Seras/2013/10BeckerLingWangWei.pdf