INVESTIGATING BOOK CLUB MEMBERS' FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH "THE ODYSSEY"

A THESIS

Submitted to fulfill one of the requirements
for *Sarjana Pendidikan* Degree in English Education

By:
NABIL AMINULLAH
SN. 20522121

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
2026

INVESTIGATING BOOK CLUB MEMBERS' FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH "THE ODYSSEY"

A THESIS

Submitted to fulfill one of the requirements
for *Sarjana Pendidikan* Degree in English Education

By:
NABIL AMINULLAH
SN. 20522121

ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN

2026

SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN SKRIPSI DAN PENGGUNAAN BANTUAN KECERDASAN ARTIFISIAL

Saya yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:
Nama : Nabil Aminullah
NIM : 20522121
Program studi : Tadris Bahasa Inggris
menyatakan dengan sesungguhnya bahwa skripsi saya yang berjudul:

INVESTIGATING BOOK CLUB MEMBERS' FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH "THE ODYSSEY"

adalah karya asli saya sendiri, disusun dan ditulis berdasarkan kemampuan, pemikiran, serta hasil kerja saya. Skripsi ini bukan hasil penjiplakan (plagiarisme) baik sebagian maupun seluruhnya, serta tidak mengandung pengutipan atau penggunaan karya pihak lain yang melanggar etika akademik.

Saya menyatakan bahwa setiap pendapat, data, temuan, gambar/tabel, maupun kutipan dari karya orang lain yang digunakan dalam tugas akhir ini telah dicantumkan sumbernya secara benar sesuai kaidah penulisan ilmiah dan ketentuan yang berlaku.

Sehubungan dengan penggunaan teknologi Kecerdasan Artifisial (AI) dalam proses penyusunan skripsi, saya menyatakan bahwa:

1. AI (jika digunakan) hanya sebagai alat bantu, hanya untuk perbaikan bahasa, penyusunan, ringkasan, atau bantuan teknis, dan tidak menggantikan peran saya sebagai penulis utama.
2. Saya bertanggung jawab penuh atas seluruh isi skripsi dan memastikan kebenaran, keaslian, serta kepatuhan pada etika akademik.
3. Saya tidak menggunakan AI untuk kecurangan akademik, seperti membuat skripsi sepenuhnya, membuat data palsu, atau memalsukan sitasi/rujukan.
4. Jika diperlukan sesuai kebijakan institusi, saya bersedia menjelaskan penggunaan AI dalam penyusunan skripsi.

Apabila di kemudian hari terbukti terdapat pelanggaran terhadap etika akademik dan/atau ketentuan yang berlaku, maka saya menerima sanksi sesuai ketentuan hukum yang berlaku.

Demikian surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sebenar-benarnya untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya.

Pekalongan, 16 Oktober 2026



Nabil Aminullah
NIM. 20522121

NOTA PEMBIMBING

Kepada
Yth. Dekan FTIK
UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid
c/q. Ketua Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris
di
PEKALONGAN

Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

Setelah diadakan penelitian dan perbaikan seperlunya, maka bersama ini saya kirimkan naskah skripsi saudari:

Nama : Nabil Aminullah

NIM : 20522121

Prodi : Tadris Bahasa Inggris

Judul : INVESTIGATING BOOK CLUB MEMBERS' FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH "THE ODYSSEY"

Saya menilai bahwa naskah skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan kepada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan UIN. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan untuk diajukan dalam sidang munaqosah

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatiannya , disampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.

Pekalongan, 16 Oktober 2026
Pembimbing,

Nadia Faradhillah M.A
NIP. 19930406 202012 2015

KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
FAKULTAS TARBIYAH DAN ILMU KEGURUAN
Jl. Pahlawan KM 5 Rowolaku Kajen Kab. Pekalongan Kode Pos 51161
Website: ftik.uingusdur.ac.id | Email : ftik@uingusdur.ac.id

APPROVAL SHEET

The Dean of Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, approved this undergraduate thesis by:

Name : **NABIL AMINULLAH**
SN : **20522121**
Title : **INVESTIGATING BOOK CLUB MEMBERS' FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH "THE ODYSSEY"**

Has been established through an examination held on Saturday, 24th October 2026 and accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Pendidikan (S.Pd.) in English Education.

The Examiners

Examiner I	Examiner II
Dewi Puspitasari, M.Pd	Ravinda Eva Rahmah, M.Pd.
NIP. 19790221 200801 2 008	NIP. 19900924 202521 2 005

Pekalongan, 24th October 2026
Assigned by
The Dean of FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan

Dr. H. Muhlisin, M.Ag
NIP. 19700706 199803 1 001

MOTTO

"Man can be himself only so long as he is alone; and if he does not love solitude, he will not love freedom; for it is only when he is alone that he is really free"

— Arthur Schopenhauer,

Parerga and Paralipomena

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillahirabbil'alamin, all praise and sincere gratitude belong to Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for the countless blessings, strength, and guidance that have carried me through the process of writing this thesis. Without His grace, this work would never have reached this point. I hope this humble work can offer a small but meaningful contribution to the field of English education. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the greatest role model, who guided humanity from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and truth. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and deepest gratitude to:

1. My beloved mother, Mrs. Sudanisih. To my mom, thank you for the love you have always given me and for the complete trust you have placed in me. Your prayers have accompanied every step of my journey, and I am deeply grateful for each one of them. To my father, Mr. Tarwoto, may Allah SWT grant you a spacious grave and eternal peace in the hereafter. Thank you for all the lessons and values you taught me, which continue to guide me even though you are no longer by my side. To my father, Mr. Hendi Suhendra, thank you for your constant support, your thoughtful advice, and the motivation you have given me, which have helped me reach this point.
2. My esteemed supervisor, Mam Nadia Faradhillah, M.A. Thank you very much for your patience, guidance, and valuable feedback throughout the writing of this final thesis. Your direction has helped me think more carefully and push my work toward a better standard.
3. All the honorable lecturers, examiners, and staff of the English Education Department. Thank you for the knowledge you have shared and for the support that made my academic journey smoother. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to the participants of this study: the three book club members, the moderator, and the discussion starter. Thank you for your help and dedication. Your willingness to share your time, experiences, and perspectives is the heart of this research.

4. My two exceptional brothers, Mas Luthfi Arisyi and my younger brother, Naja Sajidan. Thank you for all your support, your encouragement, and even the pressure at times, which, to be honest, I truly needed to keep myself motivated. You are wonderful brothers.
5. My partner, Arvita Devi Anggraini, who never grows tired of giving me encouragement, appreciation, and patience. Thank you for always believing in me, even when my own confidence is not complete. Thank you for always being here.
6. Two teachers whom I could never meet, Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer. I wish I could have the chance to make a pilgrimage to your tombs. Thank you for the ideas that have shaped the way I think and see the world. From Schopenhauer, I learned to find freedom and strength in solitude, and the long hours of writing this work proved to me that quiet moments alone can be productive rather than lonely. From Nietzsche, I learned to face difficulty with courage and to accept every struggle as part of becoming who I am. Because of both of you, I could look at my own doubts, my tiredness, and my uncertainty without running away from them. This work is also an appreciation for myself: for staying on the path when giving up would have been easier, and for trusting the process even when I could not yet see the end. Thank you for everything you left behind for this world. Rest in peace.

ABSTRAK

Nabil Aminullah (2026). Investigating Book Club Members' Figurative Language Learning Through "The Odyssey". *Skripsi. Program Studi Tadris Bahasa Inggris.* FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.

Pembimbing: Nadia Faradhillah, M.A.

***Kata kunci**: pembelajaran bahasa figuratif, klub buku, The Odyssey, diskusi sastra.*

Bahasa figuratif memainkan peran penting dalam teks sastra karena memungkinkan penulis menyampaikan makna, emosi, dan pengalaman yang melampaui ungkapan harfiah. Namun, memahami bahasa figuratif masih menjadi tantangan bagi banyak pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) karena sulitnya menafsirkan makna non-harfiah. Diskusi sastra kolaboratif dapat memberi pembelajar kesempatan untuk mengembangkan pemahaman mereka melalui interaksi dan penafsiran bersama. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji bagaimana anggota klub buku mempelajari bahasa figuratif melalui diskusi The Odyssey serta tantangan yang mereka hadapi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan konstruktivisme sosial Vygotsky sebagai lensa teoretis. Data dikumpulkan dari satu sesi diskusi klub buku melalui observasi, dokumentasi, dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan lima partisipan yang dipilih secara purposif, yaitu tiga anggota, moderator, dan pemantik diskusi. Data dianalisis dengan prosedur analisis spiral Creswell dan Poth (2018), dan keabsahannya diperiksa melalui triangulasi data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anggota mempelajari bahasa figuratif melalui interaksi yang bergerak dari teks ke kelompok. The Odyssey dan alat bantu lain, seperti cetakan dengan catatan kaki, Google Translate, slide, dan teman di sebelahnya, berfungsi sebagai medium. Kegiatan membaca hening dan diskusi menempatkan anggota pada zona perkembangan proksimal (ZPD), sehingga makna yang tidak terjangkau sendiri menjadi dapat ditafsirkan. Moderator dan pemantik diskusi memberikan scaffolding berupa informasi latar, perbandingan sehari-hari, parafrasa, dan pertanyaan. Tiga tantangan ditemukan: kesulitan mengenali dan menafsirkan makna non-harfiah, jarak linguistik dan budaya antara anggota dan teks, serta dukungan dan partisipasi yang tidak merata. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa klub buku dapat menjadi ruang belajar bahasa figuratif yang efektif ketika teks didampingi alat bantu yang sesuai dan dukungan disesuaikan dengan kemampuan anggota, meskipun pembelajarannya belum merata bagi semua anggota.

ABSTRACT

Nabil Aminullah (2026). Investigating Book Club Members' Figurative Language Learning Through "The Odyssey". Undergraduate Thesis. English Education Department. FTIK UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.

Supervisor: Nadia Faradhillah, M.A.

Keywords: figurative language learning, book club, The Odyssey, literary discussion.

Figurative language plays an important role in literary texts because it enables authors to convey meanings, emotions, and experiences beyond literal expressions. However, understanding figurative language remains challenging for many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners due to the complexity of interpreting non-literal meanings. Collaborative literary discussions may give learners opportunities to develop their understanding through interaction and shared interpretation. This study investigated how book club members learn figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey and what challenges they encounter. It employed a qualitative case study design with Vygotsky's social constructivism as the theoretical lens. Data were collected from one book club discussion session through observation, documentation, and semi-structured interviews with five purposively selected participants: three members, the moderator, and the discussion starter. The data were analyzed using Creswell and Poth's (2018) spiral procedure, and trustworthiness was established through data triangulation. The findings show that members learned figurative language through interaction that moved from the text to the group. The Odyssey and other tools, namely the printout with footnotes, Google Translate, the starter's slides, and fellow members, served as mediums. Silent reading followed by discussion placed members within their zone of proximal development (ZPD), where meanings they could not reach alone became interpretable. The moderator and the starter provided scaffolding through background information, everyday comparisons, paraphrase, and questions. Three challenges emerged: recognizing and interpreting non-literal meaning, linguistic and cultural distance from the text, and uneven support and participation. The study concludes that a book club can be an effective space for learning figurative language when the text is surrounded by suitable mediating tools and support is adjusted to members' levels, although the learning was not equal for everyone.

PREFACE

All praise and gratitude are devoted to Allah SWT for His mercy, blessings, and guidance, so that the researcher can complete this thesis entitled "**Investigating Book Club Members' Figurative Learning Through "The Odyssey"** This thesis is submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in English Education. This thesis could not have been completed without the support, guidance, prayers, and encouragement from many parties. Therefore, the researcher would like to express deepest gratitude to:

1. Prof. Dr. H. Zaenal Mustakim, M.Ag., Rector of UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
2. Prof. Dr. H. Muhlisin, M.Ag. as the Dean of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan.
3. The head of the English Education Department, Mr. Ahmad Burhannudin, M.A., and the secretary, Mrs. Eros Meilina Sofa, M.Pd.
4. Mrs. Nadia Faradhillah, M.A., my supervisor, who has given valuable guidance, advice, and support throughout the completion of this thesis.
5. All lecturers and staff of the English Education Department, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, for the knowledge, guidance, and support during my study.
6. My beloved family, for their endless love, prayers, support, and encouragement throughout this journey.

The researcher acknowledges all limitations and shortcomings in the content and writing of this thesis. Therefore, constructive criticism and suggestions from all parties are welcome. Hopefully, the results of this research will be beneficial and contribute to the development of future learning.

Pekalongan, 16 Oktober 2026



Nabil Aminullah

TABLE OF CONTENT

COVER i

SURAT PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN SKRIPSI ii

NOTA PEMBIMBING iii

APPROVAL SHEET iv

MOTTO v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT vi

ABSTRACT viii

PREFACE x

TABLE OF CONTENT xi

TABLE OF FIGURE xiii

LIST OF APPENDICES xiv

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION 1

1.1. Background of the Study 1

1.2. Formulation of the Problems 4

1.3. Aims of the Study 5

1.4. Operational Definitions 5

1.5. Significances of the Study 6

CHAPTER II LITEATURE REVIEW 7

2.1 Theoritical Farmework 7

2.1.1. Social Constructivism 7

2.1.2. Challenges in Learning Figurative Language 12

2.2 Previous Studies 15

2.3 Conceptual Framework 18

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 21

3.1. Research Design 21

3.2. Setting and Participants 22

3.3. Data Collection 23

3.4. Data Trustworthiness 28

3.5. Data Analysis 29

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 33
4.1 Findings 33
4.1.1. Learning Figurative Language Through The Discussion of The Odyssey 34
4.1.2. Challenges Encountered by Book Club Members in Learning Figurative Language 50
4.2 Discussion 56
4.2.1. How Book Club Members Learn Figurative Language through Discussions of The Odyssey 56
4.2.2. Challenges Encountered by Book Club Members in Learning Figurative Language 62
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION 67
5.1. Conclusion 67
5.2. Recommendation 69
REFERENCES 75
APPENDICES 79

TABLE OF FIGURE

Figure 2.1. Conceptual framework of the study. 20
Figure 4.1. Annotated reading notes of participant S, page 156. 35
Figure 4.2. Annotated reading notes of participant Al, page 156. 37
Figure 4.3. Annotated reading notes of participant Ar, page 156. 38
Figure 4.4. Presentation slides 1–6 prepared by the discussion starter. 41
Figure 4.5. Presentation slides 7–12 prepared by the discussion starter. 42
Figure 4.6. Presentation slides 13–18 prepared by the discussion starter. 43
Figure 4.7. The discussion starter explaining a passage. 46

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Interview Question 79
Appendix 2 Transcript of Interview 81
Appendix 3 Observation Sheet..... 100

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Instrument 74
Appendix 2: Interview Transcript 86
Appendix 3: Documentation 103
Appendix 4 Curriculum Vitae 115

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Figurative language is the main tool people use to share ideas, feelings, and experiences, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners must go further than literal meaning to understand literary texts. Perrine (1963) defines figurative language as expression that moves away from ordinary speech patterns to create a special effect or a deeper meaning. This kind of language remains one of the hardest parts of English for EFL learners to master (Givanda & Nanda, 2026; Littlemore, 2015). Forms like simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and symbolism carry meaning indirectly, so learners need context, cultural background, and inference skills that grammar alone cannot give them. Because many EFL learners only meet English inside the classroom, they often stop at surface-level reading when they face these expressions in literary works.

One way to help learners face this challenge is by introducing them to classical literary works, which are rich in figurative expression even though their language can be demanding (Lazar, 1993). Epic poetry, for example, keeps figurative devices in a dense and sustained form (Foley, 1999), giving learners repeated exposure to simile, metaphor, and symbolism inside one connected story. Because the old style of language and the unfamiliar setting can make such works hard to read alone, they cannot simply be given to learners as independent reading tasks. Their rich figurative language only

becomes useful for learning when learners have a method for unpacking and discussing the text together. Collaborative learning offers exactly this kind of method, turning the reading of a classical text from a private decoding task into a shared, meaning-making activity.

A book club is one concrete form of collaborative learning that gives members this kind of shared opportunity. In a book club, members read the same text, meet at set times, and exchange interpretations, questions, and reactions about the material under discussion (Ro, 2021). Because figurative language can be read in more than one way, members can test their reading of a metaphor or symbol against other readings, confirming or revising their understanding through this exchange (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021). This process fits Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which claims that higher mental functions, including interpretive reasoning, first appear through interaction between people before becoming an independent skill within each person. In this sense, every discussion session works as a place where members build understanding together rather than simply receiving one fixed reading of the text.

Learning to understand figurative language matters far beyond the task of reading one literary text. Figurative competence lets learners reach the aesthetic and emotional sides of literature that literal reading alone cannot offer (Littlemore, 2015), helping them see how writers use non-literal language to create imagery, add nuance, and deepen meaning (Sudar, 2024). This ability also supports learners' appreciation of literature as an art form, not only as a

source of information. Building this skill therefore gives EFL learners a fuller, more rewarding way of engaging with the texts they read. Understanding figurative language is therefore not an optional extra skill but a core part of advanced English competence, one that lets learners read, interpret, and respond to English texts with the same depth available to native readers.

Before designing this study, the researcher conducted a preliminary study of the book club to be investigated, using information from two of its members, one of whom is the permanent moderator. The club discusses English books, whether originally written in English or written in another language and read in English translation, such as The Odyssey. Its members are mostly university students from diverse majors, along with a few who are not in college, and all of them are EFL learners who improve their English through the books they read. Their competence levels differ widely, which the researcher considers to make the discussions livelier.

According to the members, the club usually picks books that are currently popular, following whatever is in the public spotlight. In late 2025, for instance, it discussed Maggie O'Farrell's Hamnet, a novel based on the story of William Shakespeare that was later adapted into an Oscar-nominated film. Members said many of its sentences and terms carried figurative rather than literal meaning, so each member offered different interpretations. Seeing this pattern, and with Christopher Nolan's film adaptation of The Odyssey released in July 2026, the researcher expects the club to discuss The Odyssey. Given its far greater scale than Hamnet and Nolan's involvement, the discussion should be

lively and enjoyable. Thus, The Odyssey serves as the research medium, the members as participants, and the club as the learning space.

Several earlier studies have looked at figurative language in literary and artistic texts, but most focus on identifying and classifying figurative devices rather than on how readers actually learn to interpret them. Telaumbanua et al. (2022) analyzed the types and meanings of figurative language in Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club, while Sudar (2024) studied the use and meaning of figurative language in EFL students' literary writing; both studies stayed focused on textual analysis rather than the learning process itself. This leaves a gap concerning how learners come to understand figurative expressions through collaborative literary discussion, especially with a densely figurative classical text such as The Odyssey. Based on this gap, the present study investigates how book club members learn figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey, and is entitled "Investigating Book Club Members' Figurative Language Learning Through The Odyssey.".

1.2. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background described above, the problems of this study are formulated into the following research questions:

1. How do book club members learn figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey?
2. What challenges do book club members encounter when learning figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey?

1.3. Aims of the Study

The aims of the study are:

1. To investigate how book club members learn figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey.
2. To examine the challenges book club members face in learning figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey.

1.4. Operational Definitions

To avoid any misunderstanding about the terms used in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to the study as follows:

1.4.1. Figurative Language

Figurative language refers to expressions whose meaning extends beyond their literal interpretation in order to create imagery, emphasis, or deeper meaning, encompassing devices such as metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, and symbolism (Perrine, 1963).

1.4.2. Book Club Discussion

Book club discussion refers to a structured, collaborative reading activity in which participants share interpretations, exchange ideas, and negotiate meaning while discussing a literary text (Daniels, 2002).

1.4.3. Figurative Language Learning

Figurative language learning refers to the process through which learners develop the ability to recognize, interpret, and understand figurative expressions in a literary text through discussion, interaction, and reflection (Littlemore, 2015; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021).

1.4.4. The Odyssey

The Odyssey refers to the classical Greek epic poem attributed to Homer, used in this study through its English translation by Ian Johnston (Homer, ca. 8th century BCE/2006), which serves as the primary literary text discussed by the book club members.

1.5. Significances of the Study

1.5.1. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the understanding of figurative language learning in literary discussion settings by exploring how book club members learn and interpret figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey. Furthermore, this study supports the application of Perrine's theory of figurative language and Vygotsky's social constructivist theory in literary learning contexts.

1.5.2. Empirical Significance

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the processes and challenges experienced by book club members in learning figurative language through collaborative discussions of The Odyssey.

1.5.3. Practical Significance

This study provides insights into the use of book club discussions as a learning environment for developing figurative language comprehension. The findings may benefit English language learners, educators, and reading communities by highlighting effective ways to facilitate figurative language learning through literary discussions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Social Constructivism

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of social constructivism, which explains that human cognitive development starts in social interaction before it becomes internalized by the individual (Alkhudiry, 2022). Vygotsky proposed that every higher mental function appears twice during development: first between people, on what he called the interpsychological plane, and only later within the individual, on the intrapsychological plane. This idea places social interaction not as a simple aid to learning but as the actual mechanism through which knowledge, including the ability to read figurative language, is built. Applied to a book club, social constructivism suggests that members do not reach an understanding of metaphor, simile, or symbolism alone; instead, that understanding first forms through dialogue, negotiation, and shared interpretation among members before it becomes each person's own competence.

Empirical research in language education supports the relevance of Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist idea to collaborative learning settings. Alkhudiry (2022) argued that collaborative techniques, which place teachers and learners within shared social and cultural norms, create a democratic learning environment where learners are

encouraged to discuss, question, and take responsibility for building their own knowledge. These findings show that social constructivism is not limited to first-language development but also applies meaningfully to second and foreign language learning, including the interpretation of figurative expressions found in literary texts.

Within a book club specifically, social constructivism appears in the structure of each discussion session, where members bring their own partial readings of the figurative language in a shared text and refine these readings through interaction with one another (Ro, 2021). Daniels (2002) said, this dynamic turns the book club from a simple reading group into a genuine site of interpsychological activity, where meaning is negotiated together before it settles into each participant's own understanding. The present study therefore uses social constructivism as its main theoretical lens, looking at medium, the Zone of Proximal Development, and scaffolding as three connected mechanisms through which this social process of learning figurative language unfolds.

a. Medium (Semiotic Medium)

Central to Vygotsky's (1978) theory is the idea of mediation, which explains that human cognitive processes never work directly but are always channeled through signs, symbols, and cultural tools, together called a medium (Fadeev, 2019). Language, written text, and other cultural artifacts act as psychological tools through which

learners' reasoning, problem-solving, and interpretation take place, and Vygotsky argued that using such mediating tools, rather than direct unmediated perception, is what allows higher cognitive functions to grow. In literary learning, a text such as The Odyssey works exactly as this kind of medium, standing between the reader and the meanings that must be actively built rather than simply received.

Kozulin (1998) extended Vygotsky's idea by sorting mediators into material tools, psychological tools, and other people, a distinction that helps explain how a literary text can work as a psychological tool on its own and also as an object mediated further through other readers. Fadeev (2019) similarly studied Vygotsky's theory of mediation in relation to literary texts, arguing that inner speech mediates study material through different sign systems and that engaging classical texts through discussion-based approaches carries real educational value.

Huong and Hung (2021) further showed that both digital and textual tools can serve a mediating role in language learning, noting that a tool may be a technological device or a text used for teaching, and that Vygotsky treated tools and symbols as two sides of the same mediating process. These findings directly support the present study, in which The Odyssey works as the main semiotic medium through

which book club members together engage with and internalize figurative language.

b. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Another key idea in Vygotsky's (1978) theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), defined as the gap between what a learner can do alone and what the same learner can do with help from a more capable peer (Alkhudiry, 2022). This concept changes the purpose of teaching: instead of aiming at what a learner already knows, useful support works just beyond the learner's current independent level, with scaffolding from more knowledgeable others helping the learner reach that higher level. In a book club, members have different levels of literary skill, and this difference naturally creates a ZPD dynamic in which group discussion of complex figurative language, such as the epic similes and personifications in The Odyssey, helps individual members reach interpretive levels they could not reach by reading alone.

"The use of the ZPD in language and literary learning has been supported by a range of empirical studies. Vygotsky's account of the ZPD holds that higher-order cognitive processes start in social interaction (Vygotsky, 1981), an idea later applied to reading instruction among second language learners working with challenging texts (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021). This body of work confirms

that guided social interaction, rather than solitary effort, is what pushes learners toward more advanced interpretation (Ro, 2021)."

Alkhudiry (2022) also stressed that the ZPD concept centers on active interaction between a learner and a more capable other, connecting a learner's current stage of development to the potential development reachable through that interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), with the frequency and quality of outside support shaping a learner's progress. These findings confirm that the ZPD is not just a theoretical idea but a practical framework for understanding how figurative language learning unfolds within collaborative literary discussions such as those in a book club.

c. Scaffolding

Scaffolding is the practical way the ZPD works in real interaction, referring to the temporary help that a more knowledgeable participant gives to help a learner complete a task beyond their own current ability. Vygotsky (1978) did not use the word scaffolding himself, but the idea follows naturally from his account of the ZPD, since guidance that matches a learner's growing ability and is slowly withdrawn as competence develops (Ro, 2023) is exactly what turns performance within the zone into independent skill. In a book club discussing The Odyssey, scaffolding appears when more experienced members offer clarifying questions, alternative readings, or background context that helps less experienced members move past a

literal reading of a figurative expression toward a fuller, independent interpretation.

Alkhudiry (2022) named scaffolding, along with mediation and internalization, as one of the working concepts through which Vygotsky's sociocultural theory can improve collaborative second language learning, noting that learners build understanding not alone but through structured interaction with peers and more knowledgeable others. This view fits closely with how scaffolding operates inside a book club discussion, where more experienced members act as the knowledgeable others who guide their peers.

Ro (2023) recorded scaffolding in action within a book club, observing that a facilitator gradually moved toward a less directive role across a series of sessions, giving clearer and more responsive guidance while slowly allowing learner independence to grow as facilitated support decreased. This pattern shows that scaffolding in a book club is not a one-time act of help but a dynamic process that adjusts to members' growing competence (Alkhudiry, 2022), a feature directly relevant to how figurative language competence develops among participants in the present study.

2.1.2. Challenges in Learning Figurative Language

Even with the support that collaborative discussion can give, learning figurative language remains difficult for EFL learners. The literature points to three potential challenges that are especially relevant

to a book club reading The Odyssey: recognizing and interpreting non-literal meaning (Givanda & Nanda, 2026; Littlemore, 2015), bridging the linguistic and cultural distance between learners and the text (Lazar, 1993; Yahia, 2020), and negotiating interpretations unevenly among members (Ro & Burch, 2020; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021). These three challenges relate directly to the Vygotskian mechanisms discussed above and form the basis of the second research question of this study.

a. Recognizing and Interpreting non-literal meaning

Figurative language is a departure from ordinary speech patterns that creates a special effect (Perrine, 1963), so readers cannot rely on the literal sense of words and must judge for themselves when a text departs from it. This is difficult for EFL learners because figurative competence in a second language develops unevenly and often lags behind other language skills (Littlemore, 2015). Givanda and Nanda (2026) found that EFL students reading short stories struggled with limited vocabulary, found it hard to distinguish personification, simile, and metaphor, and found it hard to interpret figurative meanings embedded in the stories. In Vygotsky's (1978) terms, such difficulties mark the limit of what a learner can interpret independently, which is the starting point of the zone of proximal development.

b. Linguistic and Cultural Distance

Yahia (2020) argued that analyzing figures of speech in foreign literary works is difficult for EFL learners for two reasons: their stock

of vocabulary is limited, which hinders their ability to translate the text, and the author's social standards, which shape the language of the text, differ from those of the reader, who must be familiar with them to decode the text. Yahia also noted that learners with incomplete knowledge of grammar and vocabulary may rely heavily on the dictionary, which can slow their ability to read between the lines. Classical literary works make this distance more likely, because their language can be demanding (Lazar, 1993). Seen through Vygotsky's (1978) notion of mediation, a text can only work as a medium for building meaning if learners are able to reach it, and when its language and background are unfamiliar, the medium itself can become an obstacle.

c. Uneven Support and Unequal Participation

Figurative language from literary texts is negotiated through oral interaction, which Walldén and Nygård Larsson (2021) described as a dual disciplinary literacy practice involving both language learning and the study of literary texts, so participants must manage language and literary meaning at the same time while talking. Ro and Burch (2020), studying an L2 book club, treated participation as a social practice in which members, when free to do so, choose whether to initiate or avoid communication, and in which showing engagement is an essential part of the club's activity. Because the zone of proximal development and scaffolding depend on interaction (Vygotsky, 1978),

members who hold back, or who receive help that does not match their needs, may benefit less from the discussion. This may appear as members who hesitate to share a tentative reading, competing readings that are hard to reconcile, or help from more experienced members that comes at the wrong level or the wrong time.

2.2 Previous Studies

Based on several sources related to this topic, the researcher presents several previous studies relevant to the present research. The following section compares these earlier studies with the current study.

The first study that serves as a foundational reference for this research is an undergraduate thesis by Tan (2022) from Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia, titled Figurative Language in Troye Sivan's Blue Neighbourhood Album. Using a qualitative descriptive approach and Perrine's (1977) classification framework, this study identified and analyzed different types of figurative language, including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and irony, found in the album's song lyrics. The findings showed that figurative language works as a multi-layered expressive device whose meaning needs careful interpretive reading beyond the surface, and that each type of figurative device serves its own communicative and aesthetic purpose within the text.

The second previous study is an international journal article by Ro (2021) from Kangwon National University, South Korea, published in the Journal of Pragmatics under the title The Reshaping of Participation Practices in a Second Language Book Club. Using conversation analysis, this study examined how a

facilitator's pedagogical intervention reshaped the participation practices of members in an extensive reading book club for second language learning, tracing changes in how individual members took part in book discussion across multiple sessions. The findings showed that the facilitator's new participation framework, which required all members to form and direct questions to one another, produced clear shifts in how participants talked about books, moving from passive listening toward active, dialogic contribution.

The third previous study, also by Ro (2023) and published in the journal System, is titled Topicalization as a Practice for Facilitating L2 Discussion in Video-Mediated Extensive Reading Book Club Meetings. This study looked at how a facilitator builds and manages space for second language learning inside an online, video-based book club, using a multimodal conversation analysis approach across ten weeks of Zoom sessions involving five Korean university students. The main finding was that the facilitator gradually moved toward a less directive stance over time, using more varied interactional resources, giving clearer and more responsive instructions, and becoming more sensitive to students' understanding, which created an adaptive scaffolding environment where learner independence grew as facilitated support decreased.

The fourth previous study, by Alkhudiry (2022) from Saudi Arabia and published in Theory and Practice in Language Studies, is titled The Contribution of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in Mediating L2 Knowledge Co-Construction. This research carried out a critical theoretical review of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, examining key concepts such as the ZPD,

mediation, scaffolding, and internalization to show how these ideas can improve collaborative second language learning. The study argued that sociocultural theory treats language learning as a fundamentally social and mediated process, in which learners build understanding through structured interaction with peers and more knowledgeable others rather than alone, and recommended that collaborative techniques be built into second language classrooms to create dialogic learning communities.

The fifth previous study is an international journal article by Fadeev (2019) from the University of Tartu, Estonia, published in Punctum: International Journal of Semiotics under the title Vygotsky's Theory of Mediation in Digital Learning Environment: Actuality and Practice. This study examined the continued relevance of Vygotsky's theory of mediation for digital educational settings, using an online literary learning platform called Education on Screen, which presents classical Estonian literary texts together with their film adaptations and multimedia exercises, as its main case. The research explored how presenting classical texts through several digital sign systems at once shapes the mediated learning process, arguing that each type of media forms a symbolic sign belonging to a different sign system, and that this kind of varied engagement deepens learners' inner processing and meaning-making.

The five studies reviewed above (Alkhudiry, 2022; Fadeev, 2019; Ro, 2021, 2023; Tan, 2022) together map out the research area surrounding the present study, yet none of them fully matches its specific focus. Most importantly, no existing study has addressed all three core concerns of the

present research at once: figurative language as the specific target of learning, the book club as the social learning setting, and Vygotsky's framework of social constructivism, medium, the ZPD, and scaffolding as the theoretical lens, nor has any study looked at these concerns through the specific text of The Odyssey, a classical epic of unusual figurative richness and cultural depth. The present study, Investigating Book Club Members' Figurative Language Learning through The Odyssey, addresses this combined gap by offering an empirically grounded, theoretically coherent look at both how book club members learn figurative language through collaborative discussion and what challenges they meet in that process, adding a new and needed perspective to the fields of figurative language learning, book club pedagogy, and Vygotskian sociocultural theory.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This study was framed by Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, which holds that understanding is built between people before it becomes a learner's own competence. It examined a book club in which EFL learners read The Odyssey (Homer, ca. 8th century BCE/2006), a text dense with figurative language (Perrine, 1963), and exchanged interpretations about it (Daniels, 2002). The findings show how three Vygotskian mechanisms worked together. As a medium, The Odyssey did not work alone: members approached it through their own cues, such as the words "like" and "as" and the test of literal sense, and these cues were extended by other mediators, namely the printout, Google Translate, the starter's slides, and the people sitting next to them

(Kozulin, 1998). Within the Zone of Proximal Development, members could read and mark the text alone, but meanings such as the name “Nobody” and the fisherman image were reached only with help from others. Scaffolding in the form of background information, everyday comparisons, and questions was adjusted to the distance between an expression and the members’ experience, and it was reduced as members began to interpret later expressions on their own (Alkhudiry, 2022; Ro, 2023). Through these mechanisms, participants described a more layered understanding of figurative language than reading alone, which answers the first research question.

The same framework explains the challenges found in the second research question, which appeared where mediation or support did not fit the member. The first was recognizing and interpreting non-literal meaning, since unmarked figures were read literally and limited vocabulary prevented some members from forming the image behind an expression (Littlemore, 2015; Givanda & Nanda, 2026). The second was the linguistic and cultural distance between the members and the text, which made the medium itself an obstacle for members with less background (Yahia, 2020). The third was uneven support and participation, shown by explanations that did not match some members’ needs, shyness, the limit of about five askers, and meanings left open by competing interpretations (Ro & Burch, 2020; Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021). Because the zone and scaffolding depend on interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), members who held back or received mismatched help gained less from

the discussion, so the learning process and its challenges are two sides of one social process.

Figure 2.1 presents the conceptual framework by linking the research questions to Vygotsky's social constructivism, with the three mechanisms explaining how members learn figurative language and the three challenges explaining what limits that learning.

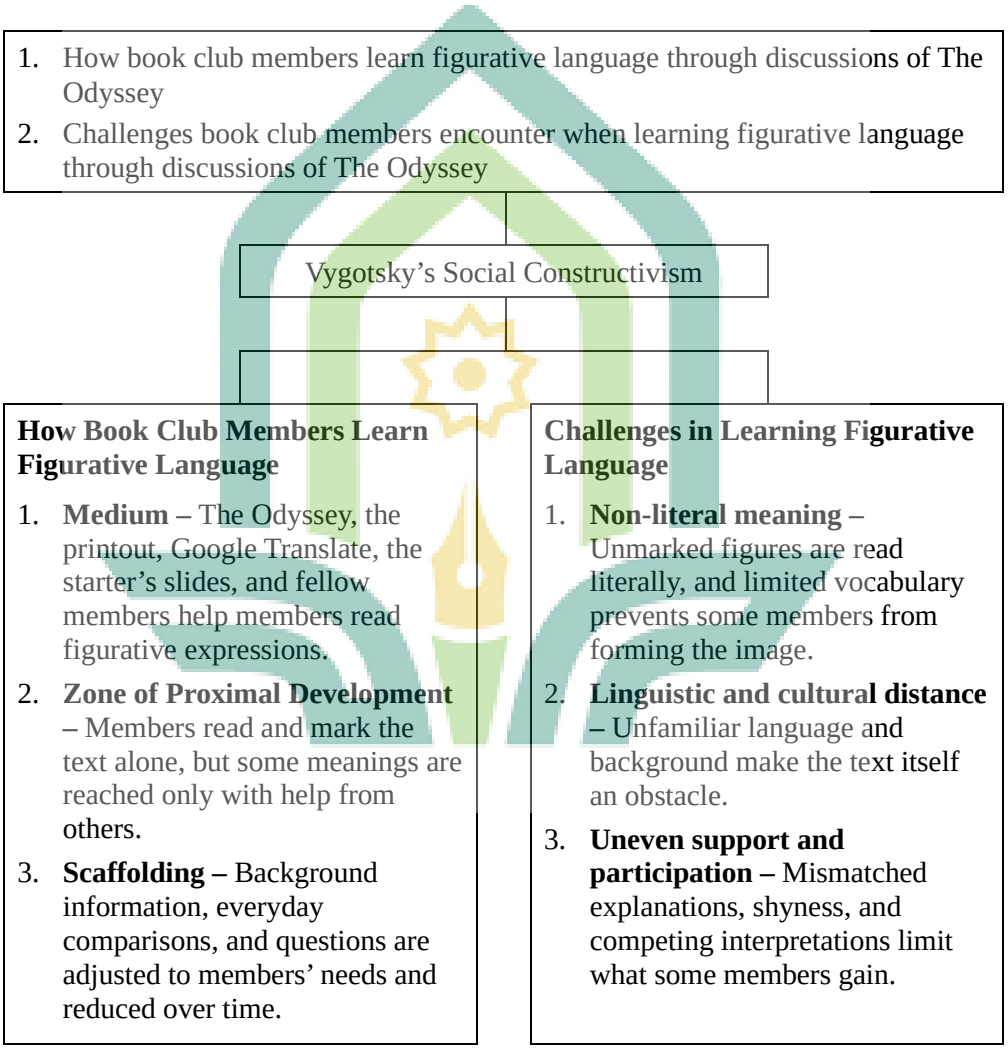


Figure 2.1. Conceptual framework of the study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative method. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups give to a social or human problem. This method lets researchers gather rich and detailed information about participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations (Patton, 2002), which fits the aim of understanding how book club members personally make sense of figurative language. Among the different qualitative approaches available, this study specifically used a case study design, since it best matches the focused, real-life setting under investigation.

Yin (2018) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a present-day phenomenon within its real-life context, an approach well suited to gaining an in-depth understanding of one specific case or social setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This design fits the present study because it centers on one specific case, the figurative language learning experience of book club members while discussing The Odyssey. Through this approach, the researcher can explore how participants identify, interpret, and understand figurative language through collaborative discussion, while also examining the challenges members face and how social interaction shapes their learning process.

3.2. Setting and Participants

This research took place in a book club that regularly discusses literary works, especially The Odyssey by Homer. The book club works as a collaborative learning space where members share interpretations, ask questions, and discuss different aspects of the text, including its figurative language. The data were collected from one discussion session on The Odyssey, which followed several stages: an opening by the moderator, who briefly introduced the discussion starter and the book; the starter's presentation with short silent reading sessions; a question-and-answer session; reflection and feedback; and a closing. The researcher conducted one observation of this session, collected documentation from the same session, and then conducted one interview with each participant after the session ended.

The participants of this study were book club members who actively took part in discussions of The Odyssey. About 15 to 20 members attend each session, including a moderator and a discussion starter. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling, since they had direct experience reading and discussing The Odyssey. They were suitable participants because they were actively engaged in interpreting literary texts and interacting with other members during discussion.

This choice is further supported by Patton (2002), who argues that in qualitative inquiry, the value of purposive sampling lies in choosing information-rich cases that can most fully illuminate the questions under study, and that even a small number of such cases can produce data of real analytical

depth. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) similarly recommend that qualitative researchers working with interview data choose a manageable number of participants whose experiences closely relate to the research focus, prioritizing quality of engagement over quantity of informants.

In this study, five participants were chosen not at random but based on clear criteria: they had to be active, regular participants in the book club's discussions of The Odyssey, they had to show engagement with the text's figurative language during discussion, and they had to be willing to take part in an interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The five participants were three book club members, the moderator, and the discussion starter. They were drawn from the broader group of 15 to 20 book club members and represent what Patton (2002) calls purposefully selected information-rich cases, whose experiences were most likely to produce the detailed, reflective data needed to answer both research questions of this study.

Through these five participants, the researcher gained detailed insight into how figurative language is learned and understood through collaborative literary discussion. The interviews also revealed the specific challenges that arise when book club members engage with the figurative complexity of The Odyssey through peer interaction and guided discussion.

3.3. Data Collection

This study used three data collection methods in sequence: observation, documentation, and interview, each conducted once and applied to one book club discussion session. This combined approach was used to ensure the data

gathered were comprehensive, credible, and rich in depth, since using multiple methods lets the researcher cross-check findings and build a fuller picture of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002). As Creswell and Poth (2018) explain, using multiple data sources in qualitative research strengthens the trustworthiness of a study by letting different kinds of evidence support a coherent interpretation. The following subsections describe the order and reasoning behind each data collection step.

The first data collection method was observation, carried out once during one book club session. In this session, the researcher acted as a non-participant observer (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), attending the meeting and systematically watching the interactions, dynamics, and engagement patterns among members as they discussed figurative language in The Odyssey. Field notes recorded how members raised and responded to figurative language topics, how the moderator and discussion starter guided the session, how knowledge was shared and negotiated among participants, and what moments of difficulty or confusion appeared around figurative expressions in the text (Patton, 2002).

Observing the session from its opening to its closing allowed the researcher to capture the full sequence of the discussion stages and build a detailed picture of how members worked with figurative language in the book club. Observation was chosen as the first data collection method because it lets the researcher watch the learning process as it naturally happens, without the influence of researcher-directed prompts or questions (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016), producing authentic, context-rich data on how book club members actually work with figurative language in real-time discussion (Patton, 2002).

This choice fits Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) view that observation is a particularly strong method in qualitative research, since it lets the researcher collect data directly from the setting where the phenomenon occurs, capturing the complexity of real human behavior that other methods may miss. From a Vygotskian perspective, observation was also well suited to this study because it allowed the researcher to record the interpsychological side of learning, meaning the social, dialogic process through which figurative language understanding is built together among book club members, before any individual internalizes it (Vygotsky, 1978).

After the observation session, the researcher moved to the documentation phase, collecting and organizing materials produced during the book club session into one set of documents. This was done once, covering the same session. The documents consisted of photographs of the session, the presentation slides prepared by the discussion starter, and the annotated reading notes marked by the participants on the printed passages of The Odyssey.

By collecting documentation from the whole session, the researcher ensured that the document set reflected the entire discussion, allowing a fuller look at how figurative language was discussed from the opening to the closing of the meeting. Documentation was included as its own data collection method because it gives a stable, checkable record of the discussions (Bowen, 2009) that adds to and strengthens the field notes from observation, capturing details

of language use, specific figurative expressions discussed, and member responses that may not have been fully caught in real time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As Bowen (2009) explains, document analysis in qualitative research offers valuable background information and supporting evidence that can confirm and add to data gathered through other methods, contributing to the overall triangulation of findings. In this study, the documentary record from the session served as a key source of evidence for identifying how figurative language was introduced, discussed, interpreted, and responded to by members (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), directly informing both research questions about the learning process and the challenges involved. The documentation also gave the researcher a solid basis for preparing the semi-structured interview questions that followed, grounded in the actual events and language observed during the discussions.

The final data collection method was the semi-structured interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), conducted once with each participant after the observation session was complete and the documentary materials from the discussion had been gathered. Placing the interview last was a deliberate choice: by conducting interviews only after observing the session and reviewing the documents, the interview questions could be shaped by and responsive to the actual events, interactions, and figurative language episodes that happened during the book club discussion (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), making the questions specific, well-grounded, and analytically useful.

The interviews were conducted with the five purposively selected participants introduced earlier, namely three book club members, the moderator, and the discussion starter, each taking part in one individual semi-structured interview with the researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This format was chosen because it gives a flexible yet focused structure for data collection: the researcher prepared guiding questions in advance, centered on how each participant experienced learning figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey and what challenges they faced, while still being free to probe, follow up, and explore new themes as the conversation unfolded (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain, the semi-structured interview suits qualitative research that seeks to understand the subjective meanings, experiences, and views of individual participants, since its conversational yet purposeful structure encourages participants to share reflections that more rigid instruments cannot draw out. Each interview took place in a comfortable, private setting to encourage open and honest responses, was audio-recorded with participants' informed consent, and was later transcribed word for word for analysis.

Conducting the interviews after the observation and the documentation phase also gave participants enough time to reflect on their experiences in the session, allowing richer, more considered answers than would have been possible during the discussion itself (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This timing matches Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) recommendation that qualitative

researchers give participants enough time to build reflective distance from the events discussed before drawing out their interpretations, especially in studies where the learning process itself is the object of inquiry.

3.4. Data Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was built through data triangulation. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe triangulation as a strategy used in qualitative research to strengthen the credibility of findings by collecting data from multiple sources or using multiple methods. By comparing different sources of information against each other, researchers can reach a more complete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, rather than relying on a single, possibly incomplete, point of view.

In this study, triangulation came from one observation, one set of documentation, and one round of interviews, all drawn from the same book club session on The Odyssey (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Observation showed how book club members interacted and discussed figurative language during the session. Interviews gave deeper insight into participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in learning figurative language. Documentation, namely the photographs of the session, the starter's presentation slides, and the participants' annotated reading notes, provided extra evidence to support the findings, filling in details that observation and interview alone might have missed.

The researcher compared and cross-checked data from these three sources to find similarities and differences between them. Through this process,

the researcher could make sure the findings truly reflected participants' experiences and reduce the risk of bias entering the interpretation. Data triangulation was therefore used to strengthen both the credibility and the overall trustworthiness of the study.

3.5. Data Analysis

Data from the observation, documentation, and interviews were analyzed using the qualitative analysis procedure proposed by Creswell and Poth (2018), who describe data analysis as a spiral process made up of several connected stages: organizing and managing the data, reading and noting emerging ideas, describing and sorting data into codes and themes, developing interpretations, and representing and showing the data. This spiral model fit the present study because it allows for the back-and-forth, non-linear nature of case study research, where the researcher keeps moving between raw data and emerging interpretations rather than following one fixed sequence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Since this study used a case study design as defined by Yin (2018), the analysis also followed Yin's case-oriented logic, in which the researcher treats the book club as a bounded, present-day case and works to build a coherent, in-depth account of how figurative language learning unfolds within that real-life setting, rather than trying to generalize findings beyond the case itself.

The first stage of analysis involved organizing and managing the data collected from the single observation session, the document set, and the five semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Field notes from the

observation were turned into a readable narrative, documentary materials were labeled by type and source, and audio-recorded interviews were transcribed word for word, following Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) recommendation that careful, faithful transcription is a necessary first step for meaningful interpretation in qualitative interview research.

Once organized, the researcher read through the entire dataset several times to build a full sense of the material and began writing analytic memos, noting first impressions, repeated patterns, and points of interest related to how members identify, interpret, and discuss figurative language in The Odyssey, as well as the difficulties they faced in doing so.

The next stage involved describing and sorting the data through coding. The researcher read through the observation field notes, documentary materials, and interview transcripts line by line to find meaningful units of data, which were then given descriptive codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These codes were later grouped into broader categories and, eventually, into overarching themes that directly address the two research questions of this study: how figurative language is learned through collaborative discussion, and what challenges members face in that process.

In building these categories, the researcher followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) advice that categories in qualitative analysis should stay close to the data, be broad enough to capture the range of participants' experiences, and stay sensitive to subtle but meaningful differences between cases. For the documentary materials specifically, categorization was also guided by Bowen's

(2009) approach to document analysis, which treats documents not just as background but as real evidence that must be skimmed, read closely, and interpreted alongside other data sources so it can be folded into the emerging categories.

After coding and categorizing, the researcher moved to the interpretive stage of analysis, examining the categorized data for patterns, relationships, and underlying meanings. At this stage, the analysis drew on the Vygotskian lens adopted earlier in this study (Vygotsky, 1978), so the researcher could interpret the data both descriptively and conceptually, telling apart the interpsychological processes seen in the observation data, where figurative language understanding is negotiated together among book club members through dialogue, from the intrapsychological processes seen in the interview data, where individual participants explain how they personally made sense of figurative expressions after the group discussion (Alkhudiry, 2022).

This dual focus let the researcher trace the path of learning from the social to the individual plane, matching the theoretical framework used in this study. In carrying out this interpretation, the researcher also applied the cross-case and within-case comparison strategies suggested by Yin (2018), comparing patterns across the stages of the observed session and comparing the experiences shared by the five interview participants, in order to find both agreements and differences in how figurative language learning and its challenges appear within the book club (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Throughout the analysis, the trustworthiness of the emerging findings was checked continuously through the triangulation process described earlier, in which the researcher cross-checked the codes, categories, and interpretations drawn from the observation, documentation, and interview data to make sure conclusions were well supported across multiple sources rather than resting on one type of evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This matches Patton's (2002) view that the richness and credibility of qualitative findings depend on the researcher's ability to connect data sources into a coherent, well-supported account of the phenomenon.

The final stage of analysis, representation, involved bringing the interpreted findings together into one coherent narrative, supported where useful by illustrative excerpts from the field notes, documents, and interview transcripts. Through this final step, the resulting account is meant to faithfully reflect the lived experiences of book club members as they learn and work through the figurative language of The Odyssey.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

This section presents the results obtained from semi-structured interviews with five participants of the book club, supported by documentation of the book club session on The Odyssey, namely photographs of the session, the discussion starter's presentation slides, and the participants' annotated reading notes. The five participants are three book club members (S, Al, and Ar), the moderator (V), and the discussion starter (P). The findings are divided into two main parts to answer the research questions. The first part describes how the book club members learn figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey. The second part describes the challenges they encounter in that process.

The session discussed three passages of The Odyssey in Ian Johnston's English translation (Homer, ca. 8th century BCE/2006): the Cyclops episode (pages 156–158), the passage of Scylla and Charybdis (pages 217–218), and the storm and raft episode (pages 96–98). Each passage followed the same sequence prepared by the discussion starter: a short context, a five-minute silent reading session in which members could mark the printed text and quietly ask the person sitting next to them, an explanation (penjabaran) of selected figurative expressions on the slides, and an open question to trigger discussion (Figures 4.4–4.6). After the three passages, the session continued with a

question-and-answer session limited to about five askers and a reflection and feedback session led by the moderator.

4.1.1. Learning Figurative Language Through The Discussion of The Odyssey

This sub-section describes the learning process of the members based on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism. The data show that figurative language was learned through three connected processes: using The Odyssey and other tools as a medium for building meaning, moving from independent reading to assisted interpretation within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and receiving and gradually outgrowing scaffolding.

a. The Odyssey and Other Tools as Medium

The first finding concerns how the members recognized that a line is figurative. All three members described a personal way of noticing figurative language in the text, and each of them relied on a different cue. S relied on explicit comparison words and explained:

> *"Biasanya dari kata "like" atau "as", seperti klub Cyclops yang dibandingkan dengan tiang kapal dagang. Tanpa kata pembanding, saya sering tidak menyadarinya. Cuma kalo ada kata pembanding nya sih lumayan mudah buat dipahamin." (S, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "Usually from the words 'like' or 'as,' such as the Cyclops's club being compared to the mast of a merchant ship. Without a comparison word, I often don't notice it. It's just that when there is a comparison word, it's fairly easy to understand." (Researcher Translation).

S's annotated reading notes confirm this statement. On page 156 S underlined the phrase "as one might put a cap back on a quiver" and wrote "pake 'as' = perumpamaan, ohh nutup tabung panah" (using 'as' = a comparison, oh, closing an arrow case), and noted the Cyclops's club as the ship's mast with the remark "ada 'like', oke deh" (there is 'like,' okay) (Figure 4.1).

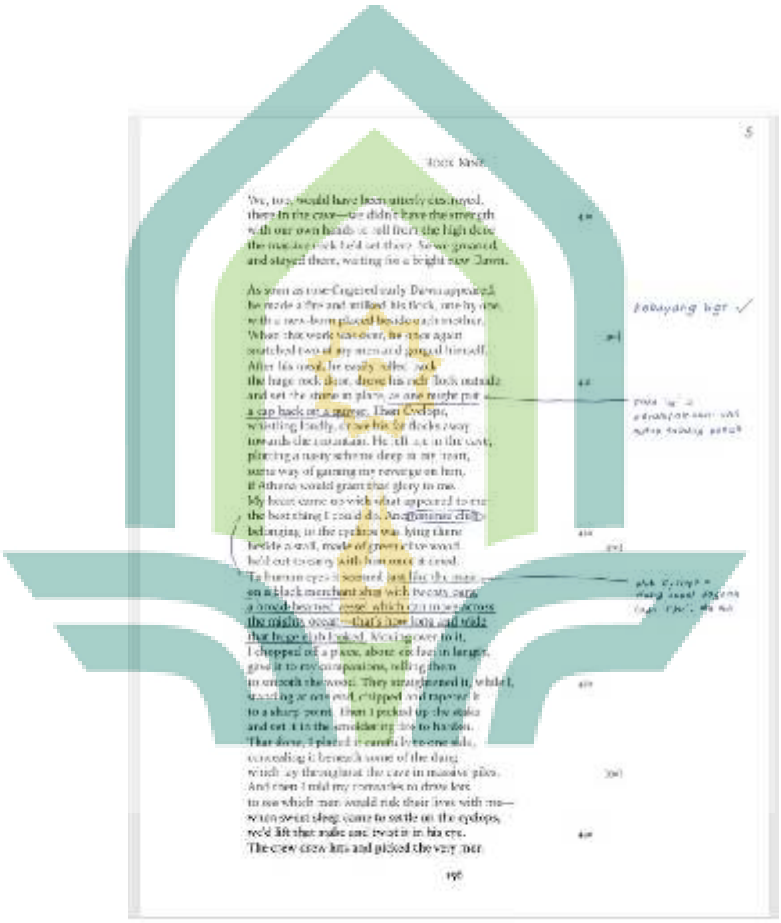


Figure 4.1. Annotated reading notes of participant S, page 156.

The notes show how S identified similes through the comparison words "as" and "like" and translated the compared images into Indonesian in the margin.

Al used a different cue, namely checking whether a sentence still makes sense when read literally. Al stated:

> *"Saya mengecek apakah kalimat itu masuk akal kalau dibaca harfiah. "All-conquering Sleep overpowered him" jelas personifikasi, dan perumpamaan "like a cauldron" untuk Charybdis jelas simile epik." (Al, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "I check whether the sentence makes sense if read literally. 'All-conquering Sleep overpowered him' is clearly personification, and the comparison 'like a cauldron' for Charybdis is clearly an epic simile." (Researcher Translation).

Al's notes on the same page use technical labels, such as "epithet (Dawn), recurring" beside "rose-fingered" and "epic simile: club ≈ ship's mast (scale / size)" beside the comparison, while the name Athena is circled with the remark "who? → check bg" (Figure 4.2).

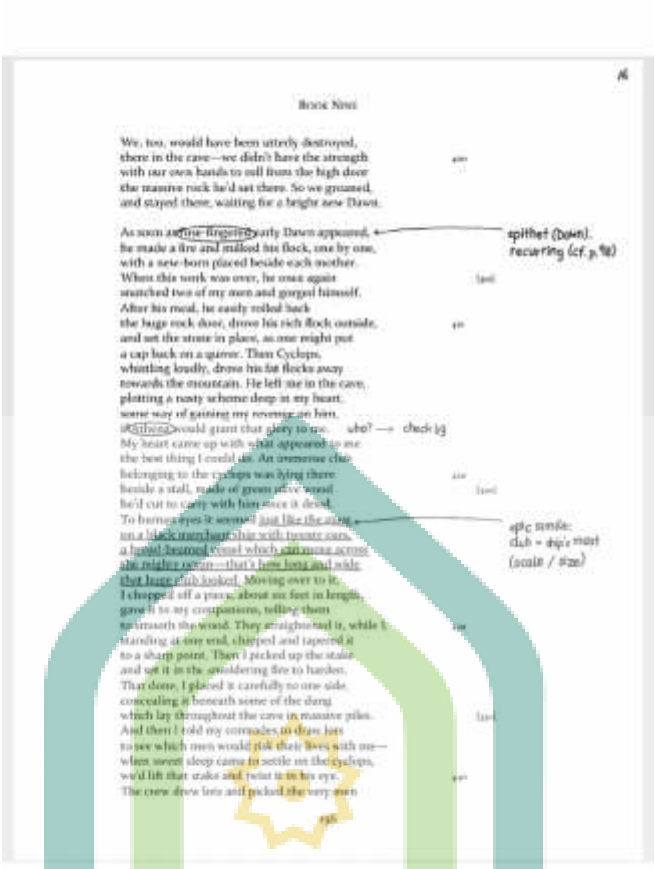


Figure 4.2. Annotated reading notes of participant Al, page 156.

Al labelled the epithet and the epic simile with literary terms and flagged an unfamiliar character for background checking.

Ar, who is the least familiar with English literary texts, relied on suspicion of words that sound strange when read literally. Ar said:

> *"Kalau ada kata yang aneh dibaca harfiah, saya curiga itu kiasan. Contohnya "rose-fingered Dawn", yang awalnya saya kira fajar punya jari, dan saya baru yakin setelah memikirkannya sebagai gambaran. Itu pun tetep saya klarifikasi, karena akhirnya saya nanya mbak-mbak di sebelah saya karena dia kayaknya banyak jawab kalo ditanya sama yang laen." (Ar, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*

> "If a word sounds strange when read literally, I suspect it is figurative. For example, 'rose-fingered Dawn,' which at first I thought meant that dawn has fingers, and I only became sure

> after thinking of it as an image. Even then I still clarified it, because in the end I asked the lady next to me since she seemed to answer a lot when the others asked her." (Researcher Translation).

Ar's notes show this process directly. Beside "rose-fingered" Ar wrote a question about whether dawn has fingers, then an interpretation of it as an image of light, and finally a note to ask the person sitting beside Ar (Figure 4.3). Ar's notes also contain many word-level translations, such as "quiver = tempat panah" (arrow case), "gorged = makan rakus??" (eat greedily??), "mast = tiang kapal" (ship's pole), and "Athena = org?" (a person?).

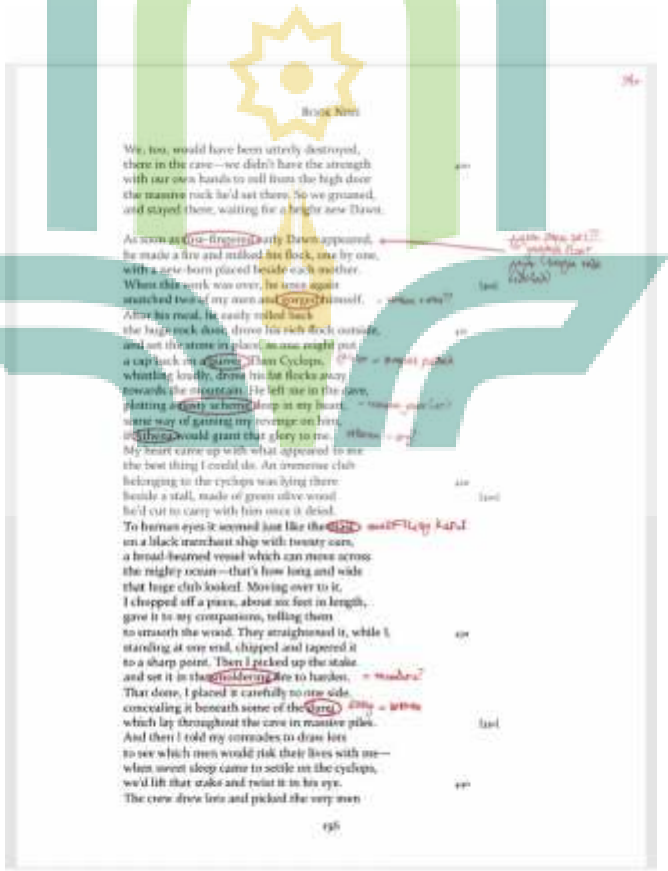


Figure 4.3. Annotated reading notes of participant Ar, page 156.

Ar circled unfamiliar words, wrote their Indonesian meanings, and marked uncertainty with question marks.

Beyond the text itself, the participants described several other tools that mediated their understanding. S mentioned “printout yang bisa saya coret, slide penjabaran starter, dan Google Translate,” and added that the footnotes were also useful (S, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). Al used the footnotes on the printout, for example the note explaining that Ino becomes Leucothea, and used the slides to match their own reading with the starter’s explanation. Ar listed the printout, the Indonesian slides, Google Translate, and, most often, the people sitting next to Ar. The moderator and the starter confirmed the same set of tools from the design side. The moderator explained:

> *“Printout membuat anggota bisa menandai bagian yang menarik atau membingungkan, jadi mereka tidak hanya menyimak. Slide penjabaran membantu menghubungkan teks dengan maknanya. Saya tidak menambahkan alat sendiri, tapi saya tidak melarang anggota memakai kamus atau terjemahan.” (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> “The printout lets members mark parts that are interesting or confusing, so they don’t only listen. The explanation slides help connect the text with its meaning. I don’t add tools myself, but I don’t forbid members from using dictionaries or translation.” (Researcher Translation).

The discussion starter described how he designed the slides as a mediating tool:

> *“Printout teks, ikon dan gambar di slide, nomor halaman, slide “The Lore” sebagai latar, dan pertanyaan pemantik di akhir tiap bagian. Saya merancang slide pendek, satu judul untuk satu*

> *kiasan, supaya anggota bisa mencocokkannya dengan teks yang sedang mereka tandai." (P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "The text printout, icons and pictures on the slides, page numbers, the 'The Lore' slide as background, and trigger questions at the end of each part. I designed short slides, one heading for each figurative expression, so that members could match them with the text they were marking." (Researcher Translation).

The slides indeed follow this design. Each explanation slide gives the page number, a short heading naming the image (for example "Tiang kapal dagang," "Kuali mendidih," "Ikan & nelayan," "Serbuk bunga," and "Anak & ayah"), and a one- or two-sentence explanation in everyday Indonesian (Figures 4.4–4.6). The moderator also prepared the members for this at the opening of the session by mentioning that The Odyssey is rich in comparisons and should be read slowly while paying attention to the images used (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).



Figure 4.4. Presentation slides 1–6 prepared by the discussion starter.

The opening slides introduce the book, the reason for choosing it, its "plus and minus," the background slide "The Lore," and the route of three passages with the rules of the session.



Figure 4.5. Presentation slides 7–12 prepared by the discussion starter.

The Cyclops passage is followed by a five-minute reading slide, two explanation slides, and the trigger question “Why do you think Odysseus calls himself ‘Nobody’?”

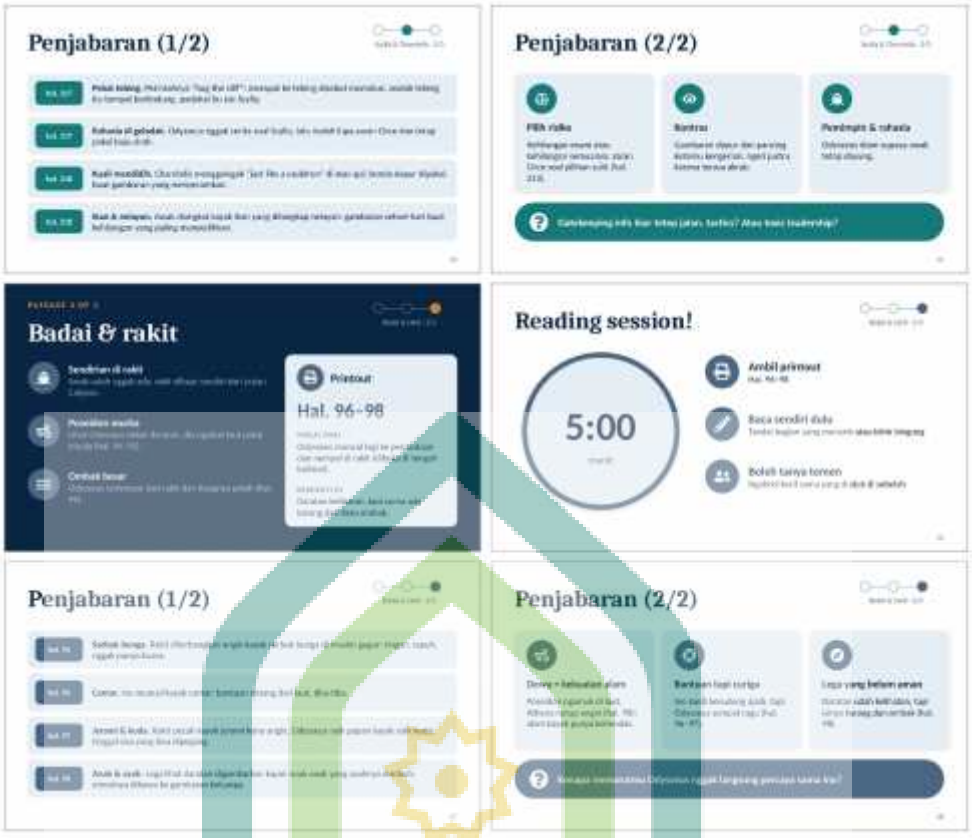


Figure 4.6. Presentation slides 13–18 prepared by the discussion starter.

The explanation slides for Scylla and Charybdis, and for the storm and raft, each end with an open question.

b. From Independent Reading to Assisted Interpretation within the ZPD

The second finding shows that the members worked at the edge of their independent ability during the five-minute reading, and that discussion then carried them further. The moderator observed this period directly. The moderator described that some members marked the text, some talked with the person next to them, and some opened a dictionary on their phones. The moderator could usually guess who needed a small push from the questions they asked afterwards, for

example a member who asked about a single word but had already caught the overall picture (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). The starter had a similar view:

> *"Anggota menandai teks dan ada yang berdiskusi dengan teman sebelah. Dari pertanyaan sesudahnya, biasanya mereka sudah menangkap alurnya, tapi belum tentu makna di balik gambarannya. Di situ penjabaran saya mengambil peran." (P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "Members marked the text and some discussed with the person next to them. From their questions afterwards, they had usually caught the storyline, but not necessarily the meaning behind the image. That is where my explanation takes its role." (Researcher Translation).

The clearest example of a shift from a literal to a figurative reading was the name "Nobody." Three participants described it, from three different positions. S recalled the moment when the starter asked, "Why do you think Odysseus calls himself Nobody?":

> *"Waktu starter bertanya, "Why do you think Odysseus calls himself Nobody?" Sebelumnya saya hanya menganggap itu nama, lalu ada yang menjawab bahwa itu cara menyembunyikan identitas, yang akhirnya saya pikir, masuk akal sekali dan agak mind blowing ya si odysseus ini." (S, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "When the starter asked, 'Why do you think Odysseus calls himself Nobody?' Before that I only thought it was a name, then someone answered that it was a way to hide his identity, and in the end I thought, that makes a lot of sense and this Odysseus is kind of mind-blowing." (Researcher Translation).

The moderator and the starter described the same moment from what they saw. Both said that members first read "Nobody" as an ordinary name; after someone answered that it was a way to hide identity, the discussion moved to Odysseus's cleverness and self-

protection (V, 11 October 2026; P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). Al, who had already sensed that Odysseus did not want to reveal his name, said that the layer of wordplay became complete only after their friends and the starter added views about Odysseus's cleverness.

Other members also changed their reading through discussion. Ar described the fisherman slide as the moment when the image of an angler became clear as a comparison with the crew being lifted from the ship, whereas before it had seemed to be another story, "soalnya emang keliatan nya wajar aja gitu kan di laut" (because it seemed natural at sea). Al described how the question "taktik atau toxic leadership?" in the Scylla and Charybdis passage moved the group from simply saying "he lied" to discussing the leadership of Odysseus (Figure 4.6, slide 14). In the Cyclops passage, S could picture the shipwright's drill but did not see its link to the blinding of the Cyclops until the slide explained that what is compared is the turning motion. Ar stated that after the discussion Charybdis became understandable as something described like a boiling cauldron and the lifted crew like fish caught by a fisherman.

The members also described how differences among them shaped what they gained. S felt helped by members who understood more, especially because the starter and the other members used everyday language, although S admitted to sometimes waiting too

long for their explanation before trying to interpret first. Al often helped the neighbour during the reading session, which Al saw as good for the neighbour but not challenging for Al, although Al gained new perspectives from others. Ar felt the difference strongly, but said that the Indonesian slides reduced the distance. The moderator saw the difference as a learning resource and regarded it as the moderator's own task to make sure that no single voice dominated and that quieter members had a chance (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). The starter handled the difference by explaining through everyday comparisons for new readers and adding open questions for experienced ones.



Figure 4.7. The discussion starter explaining a passage.

The photograph shows the starter standing beside the projected explanation slide of Scylla and Charybdis (Figure 4.6, slide 14) while members listen.

c. Supporting the Process through Scaffolding

The third finding concerns the support the members received and how it changed over time. The members named several forms of support. S named the starter's explanation through everyday comparisons and the moderator's return questions. Al named the background in "The Lore" slide and the trigger questions, and noted giving help to the neighbour more often than receiving it, which also strengthened Al's own understanding. Ar named the starter's explanation, the translation of words by the person next to Ar, and trigger questions that made Ar think first, and added that the moderator mostly managed the session and passed interpretation questions on to the starter (Ar, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).

The moderator and the starter described how they chose the type of support. The moderator decided by the type of question:

> *"Saya melihat jenis pertanyaannya. Kalau menyangkut konteks atau tafsir sastra yang mendalam, saya teruskan ke starter karena dia yang menyiapkannya. Kalau pertanyaannya terbuka, saya lempar dulu ke anggota lain supaya jawabannya datang dari kelompok sebelum saya menambahkan." (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "I look at the type of the question. If it concerns context or deep literary interpretation, I pass it on to the starter because he prepared it. If the question is open, I throw it to the other

> members first so that the answer comes from the group before I add something." (Researcher Translation).

The starter chose according to how far the figurative expression was from the members' own experience:

> *"Mungkin yang informasi latar ya, perbandingan sehari-hari, parafrase, dan pertanyaan. Saya memilihnya berdasarkan jarak kiasan itu dari pengalaman anggotanya sendiri: makin jauh, makin banyak latar yang saya berikan, makin dekat, makin saya serahkan lewat pertanyaan." (P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "Probably background information, everyday comparisons, paraphrase, and questions. I choose based on how far the figurative expression is from the members' own experience: the further it is, the more background I give, and the closer it is, the more I hand it over through questions." (Researcher Translation).

The data also show that support was gradually taken over by the members themselves. Three members gave concrete examples of interpreting a later expression on their own after being helped with an earlier one. S explained that after understanding the Cyclops's club as a ship's mast, it became possible to grasp that the "straw scattered by the wind" in Book 5 describes a raft that breaks easily. Ar said that after the explanation of "like a sea gull on the wing" for Ino, it was possible to guess that "like a sea bird" when Ino dives is also a comparison about Ino's movement, so that the guess was based on what had been explained before. Al described a friend who at first often asked questions but, after Al explained the pattern of epic similes, could guess alone in the next part. The starter and the moderator reported the same movement from their side. The starter

said that after the Cyclops passage some members guessed by themselves that the cauldron and the fisherman in Scylla and Charybdis were also comparisons taken from everyday life, even before he explained them. The moderator mentioned a member who used to ask only the person next to them but began to voice their own interpretation during the question-and-answer session (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).

The way the session was guided also changed across its stages. S described that at the opening the moderator only introduced the starter, and the starter then explained the background; after the silent reading there were explanations and trigger questions; and in the question-and-answer session and reflection the moderator invited members to speak, which made S dare to answer. Al remembered that the session first felt one-directional, but opened up after each five-minute reading when the starter threw questions. The moderator described the moderator's own role as an introduction at the opening, stepping back to become a listener during the presentation, and becoming more active to arrange the direction and summarize during the question-and-answer session and reflection. The starter explained more in the Cyclops passage and then reduced the explanation and increased the questions in the following passages, because members had started to recognize figurative expressions and sometimes

signalled this through their questions (P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).

4.1.2. Challenges Encountered by Book Club Members in Learning Figurative Language

This sub-section describes the challenges that appeared in the interviews and documentation. The challenges are grouped into three: difficulty in recognizing and interpreting non-literal meaning, linguistic and cultural distance between the members and the text, and uneven support and participation during the discussion.

a. Recognizing and Interpreting Non-literal Meaning

The first challenge is that figurative expressions were sometimes read literally. S admitted to sometimes reading a figure as an ordinary sentence, especially when there was no comparison word, and said that long similes made S forget what was being compared. The problem was noticed only when the meaning did not connect, and S understood after asking a friend or hearing the starter's insight. S's example was the name "Nobody":

> *"Saya kira itu nama aneh saja, dan baru sadar itu tipuan setelah Cyclops meminta tolong. Soalnya saya tidak terbiasa mencurigai nama sebagai bagian dari strategi." (S, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "I thought it was just a strange name, and I only realized it was a trick after the Cyclops asked for help. I am not used to suspecting a name as part of a strategy." (Researcher Translation).

The moderator and the starter independently identified “Nobody” as the expression that was most often read literally. The moderator explained that people rarely meet names used as a tool of deception, so they are not used to suspecting a name of being figurative or a play on words. The starter added “hug the cliff,” which looks simple and easy to read literally while containing a play of meaning, since “hugging” the cliff feels protective even though the cliff is the side of Scylla (P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). Al also read “Earthshaker Poseidon” at first as a name, although it is an epic epithet that carries meaning about the god’s power.

Ar experienced the most basic form of the challenge, which is marking what is figurative at all in English:

> *“Saya sulit menandai mana yang kiasan dalam bahasa Inggris. Di novel Indonesia saya terbiasa menangkap metafora, tapi di sini kosakatanya sering menghalangi soalnya emang mungkin kosakata saya dalam Bahasa inggris dikit, jadi gambarannya tidak langsung terbentuk.” (Ar, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> “I find it difficult to mark which is figurative in English. In Indonesian novels I am used to catching metaphors, but here the vocabulary often gets in the way, because maybe my English vocabulary is limited, so the picture does not form immediately.” (Researcher Translation).

Ar also could not link the shipwright simile with the blinding of the Cyclops, because the image was too specific to imagine alone, and Ar understood it only after it was explained.

b. Linguistic and Cultural Distance

The second challenge is the distance between the members and the language and world of the text. The moderator and the starter agreed that for members the main difficulty lay in the many names of gods, Greek cultural references, and layers of meaning (V, 11 October 2026; P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). The members' own accounts showed that this distance is not felt equally. Al, who studies English literature and is familiar with classical works, felt the influence was small, and the difficulty was limited to cultural references and divine epithets:

> *"Kesulitan saya sedikit, lebih ke rujukan budaya dan julukan dewa. Teknik kiasannya sendiri sudah lumayan akrab bagi saya. [...] pada bagian referensi yang lumayan terkenal kayak zeus gitu masih oke, tapi kayak athena, calypso terus poseidon kurang di background identifikasi karakter nya aja, selebihnya aman." (Al, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "My difficulties are few, more about cultural references and the epithets of the gods. The technique of figurative language itself is already quite familiar to me. [...] in the part of well-known references like Zeus I am still fine, but for Athena, Calypso, and Poseidon I lack the background to identify the characters, the rest is safe." (Researcher Translation).

For Ar the distance was still large, because names such as Charybdis and Aegae were unfamiliar and Ar was sometimes confused whether a name referred to a person or to an event. Ar said that the modern translation by Johnston and the Indonesian slides made it lighter than Ar had imagined, although some parts were still confusing (Ar, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). S felt that

the ancient Greek setting was far away, but that the slide “The Lore” helped S follow the storyline, while scenes such as milking sheep and goats in the cave were easy to imagine. Al also realized that because the text was read in translation, some of the original Greek nuance was lost, although it could still be felt. The moderator therefore reminded the members that they were reading a translation (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).

The starter’s design shows that this distance was anticipated. The slide “The Lore” summarizes Troy, Poseidon, the shrinking crew, and Odysseus’s continued effort to reach Ithaca, and a note on the same slide warns that the sea journey is told by Odysseus himself as a flashback, so that the order of the pages is not the order of events (Figure 4.4, slides 5–6). The reading plan in the “Today’s Route” slide likewise lists the pages as 156–158, 217–218, and 96–98.

c. Uneven Support and Unequal Participation

The third challenge concerns the social process of the discussion. Several members and the facilitators described moments when the support did not match the member’s need. S said that the support was sometimes insufficient because one slide contained four points at once, so S could not digest all of them before the next part. Ar said that the explanation was sometimes too fast, and that a friend’s use of the term “simile” in conversation confused Ar twice, because the starter’s slides did not use technical terms. Al, on the other hand,

found some explanations too basic, although Al understood that they were meant for other members. The starter acknowledged the same problem, namely that an everyday explanation could feel too basic for those who had read a lot (P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).

Participation was also uneven. Ar said that asking a neighbour happened more often than speaking in the forum, and gave the reason:

> *"Soalnya jujur saya malu, kadang takut di jugde gitu lho kalo nanya-nanya mulu. Makanya mending nanya temen yang lain aja deh." (Ar, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication)*
>
> "Because honestly I am shy, sometimes I am afraid of being judged if I keep asking. So I'd rather ask other friends." (Researcher Translation).

The structure of the session added to this. Ar mentioned that the question-and-answer session only allowed five askers, so Ar rarely dared to raise a hand, the question about why the word "hug" is used for the cliff was never asked, and the question was cut off when the session moved on to the next slide (Ar, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication). The moderator confirmed that the limit of five is necessary to keep the time, but that consequently some questions were not answered, and that the moderator usually suggested those members ask the starter directly after the session. The moderator also noted that an answer was sometimes too long for a simple question and tried to shorten it.

Competing interpretations were another form of this challenge. The starter recalled that in the question “taktik atau toxic leadership?” some members defended Odysseus and others blamed him, while some stayed silent, so he invited them to give opinions and stressed that both interpretations could be defended as long as they were based on the text (P, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).

Finally, some figurative expressions remained unresolved even after the discussion. S named epithets such as “Earthshaker,” which was not discussed specifically on the slides, so S was still unsure about its full meaning. Ar named “hug the cliff.” Al, the moderator, and the starter named the meaning of Ino’s veil and Odysseus’s doubt toward it. For Al this openness was interesting rather than problematic, since a wide space for perspectives makes a good ground for discussion, and the starter explained that the meaning is open to interpretation, whether suspicion or a bitter experience with the gods, so there is no single answer. The moderator explained that both Ino’s veil and the epithets of gods have many layers of interpretation and that the time was limited, so it was natural that they were not completed (V, 11 October 2026, Personal Communication).

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. How Book Club Members Learn Figurative Language through Discussions of The Odyssey

a. The Odyssey and Other Tools as Medium

The data show that the members first noticed figurative language through their own cues. S relied on the comparison words "like" and "as," Al checked whether a sentence still made sense when read literally, and Ar became suspicious of words that sounded strange when read literally. These cues were extended by the printout and footnotes, Google Translate, the starter's slides, and the people sitting next to them (Huong & Hung, 2021; Kozulin, 1998), and the annotated reading notes recorded the process, such as S's remark "pake 'as' = perumpamaan" and the question marks in Ar's notes (Figures 4.1–4.3).

In my view, The Odyssey alone was not enough for the members to build meaning. The text became usable because of the tools placed around it, and the annotations show clearly the points where the text by itself could not yet be interpreted.

This pattern corresponds to Vygotsky's (1978) idea of mediation, which holds that human cognitive processes are always channeled through signs, symbols, and cultural tools instead of direct perception. In the book club, The Odyssey stood between the members and the meanings they had to build, and the cues they brought to the

text worked as their own psychological tools for noticing figurative language. The range of tools in the data also fits Kozulin's (1998) classification of mediators into material tools, psychological tools, and other people. The printout, footnotes, and Google Translate are material tools, the slides with their short headings, icons, and trigger questions, together with labels such as "epic simile," are psychological tools, and the neighbours, the starter, and the moderator are other people who mediated the text further.

Huong and Hung (2021) noted that a mediating tool can be a technological device or a text used for teaching, and the two tools in this study played different roles. Google Translate gave Ar word-level meanings such as "quiver" and "mast," but Ar still needed the explanation to see how the shipwright's drill relates to the blinding of the Cyclops, which suggests that a translation tool supports vocabulary but not necessarily the building of the image. The starter's combination of text, icons, and everyday explanation resembles Fadeev's (2019) argument that engaging classical texts through more than one sign system, together with discussion, deepens learners' inner processing. Taken together, these findings confirm that The Odyssey functioned as the main semiotic medium, but it became accessible to the members only because it was surrounded by other mediators.

b. From Independent Reading to Assisted Interpretation within the ZPD

The five-minute silent reading showed members working at the edge of their independent ability (Vygotsky, 1978). The moderator and the starter observed that members marked the text, talked with the person next to them, or opened a dictionary, and that they had usually caught the storyline but not yet the meaning behind the image. Shifts from a literal to a figurative reading, such as the name “Nobody,” the fisherman image, and the question “taktik atau toxic leadership?”, happened after another participant’s answer or the starter’s question, and the members benefited differently (Alkhudiry, 2022), since S and Ar were helped by those who understood more while Al often helped the neighbour and found the reading stage not challenging.

I think the gap between what the members could read alone and the meaning they reached after discussion is what they experienced as learning. This gap was also not the same for everyone, because it looked narrower for Al and wider for Ar.

This finding matches Vygotsky’s (1978) definition of the ZPD as the gap between what a learner can do alone and what the learner can do with the help of a more capable person. The members could read, mark, and ask by themselves, but the figurative meaning of the image was reached only with help, which is the point at which useful support is supposed to work. The way the answer came from another participant before it became the member’s own reading also reflects

Vygotsky's (1981) claim that higher cognitive processes start in social interaction, an idea later applied to second language readers working with challenging texts (Walldén & Nygård Larsson, 2021). Ro (2021) likewise confirmed that guided social interaction, rather than solitary effort, pushes learners toward more advanced interpretation, and Daniels (2002) described the book club as a place where meaning is negotiated together.

The differences among members can be explained further through Alkhudiry (2022), who stressed that the ZPD centers on interaction between a learner and a more capable other and that the frequency and quality of the support shape progress. The data add that the more capable member also gained something, because explaining strengthened Al's understanding and others' views gave Al new perspectives, although the lack of challenge at the reading stage shows that the zone was narrow for Al. Littlemore's (2015) observation that figurative competence in a second language develops unevenly fits the case of Ar, who could catch metaphors in Indonesian novels but not in English, and who then used that experience to start recognizing comparisons during the discussion. This shows that the ZPD in the book club differed from member to member and from language to language.

c. Supporting the Process through Scaffolding

The members named several forms of support, namely the starter's explanation through everyday comparisons, the background in "The Lore" slide, paraphrase, trigger questions, and the moderator's return questions (Ro, 2023). The starter chose the form according to how far an expression was from the members' experience, giving more background for distant expressions and more questions for close ones, while the moderator passed deep context questions to the starter and threw open questions to the group first. Later, S carried the understanding of the club as a ship's mast to the straw in Book 5, Ar carried the explanation of Ino's "sea gull" to the "sea bird," and the starter reduced his explanation and increased his questions across the three passages (Alkhudiry, 2022).

This suggests that the support was matched to the members' need and then taken over by the members themselves. In my view, the support could fade within a single session because the epic similes in The Odyssey repeat and draw on everyday images that members could recognize quickly.

The support fits the idea of scaffolding as temporary help matched to a learner's ability and gradually withdrawn. Vygotsky (1978) did not use the word himself, but the idea follows from his account of the ZPD, in which guidance that fits a learner's growing ability and is slowly removed turns performance within the zone into

independent skill. The starter's rule of matching support to the distance of an expression, and the moderator's choice to keep open questions with the group for as long as possible, are clear examples. Alkhudiry (2022) named scaffolding together with mediation and internalization as a working concept for collaborative second language learning, in which learners build understanding through structured interaction with peers and more knowledgeable others, and the starter, the moderator, and the more experienced members acted as these knowledgeable others.

The movement toward independence resembles what Ro (2023) recorded in a book club, where a facilitator gradually became less directive, gave clearer and more responsive guidance, and let learner independence grow as facilitated support decreased. The same pattern appeared when the members applied an interpretive pattern learned with help to a new expression without help, which is the internalization that scaffolding aims at (Vygotsky, 1978). A difference is that Ro followed the change across ten weeks of sessions, while in this book club it happened within one session. This indicates that scaffolding is a dynamic process that adjusts to members' growing competence, and that its fading can be fast when the figurative devices in the text are repeated.

4.2.2. Challenges Encountered by Book Club Members in Learning Figurative Language

a. Recognizing and Interpreting Non-literal Meaning

Several members read figurative expressions literally (Givanda & Nanda, 2026). S sometimes read a figure as an ordinary sentence when there was no comparison word and forgot what was compared in long similes, and “Nobody” and “Earthshaker Poseidon” were first read as plain names, while the starter added “hug the cliff.” The challenge also differed between members, since Al identified the devices by their technical names, while Ar found it hard even to mark which expressions were figurative because limited English vocabulary prevented the image from forming (Littlemore, 2015).

I think the comparison words helped recognition but left the unmarked figures, such as names, epithets, and metaphors, hard to notice. How hard this was depended on each member’s background in literature and in English.

This finding agrees with Perrine’s (1963) description of figurative language as a departure from ordinary speech patterns. Because of this departure, readers cannot rely on the literal sense of words and must judge for themselves when a text moves away from it, which explains why names that seem ordinary were not suspected. Littlemore (2015) added that figurative competence in a second language develops unevenly and often lags behind other language

skills, which fits the difference between Al, who knew the devices, and Ar, who could not yet form the image in English.

The same difficulty was reported by Givanda and Nanda (2026), who found that EFL students reading short stories struggled with limited vocabulary, found it hard to distinguish personification, simile, and metaphor, and found it hard to interpret the figurative meanings embedded in the stories. In Vygotsky's (1978) terms, these moments mark the limit of what each member could interpret alone, so they are the starting point of the ZPD and not a sign of failure. This is why the same expressions, such as "Nobody," later became the clearest examples of learning through discussion.

b. Linguistic and Cultural Distance

The moderator and the starter agreed that the main difficulty lay in the many names of gods, Greek cultural references, and layers of meaning (Lazar, 1993). Al felt the difficulty was small and limited to cultural references and divine epithets, while for Ar the distance was still large, because names such as Charybdis and Aegae were unfamiliar and Ar was sometimes unsure whether a name referred to a person or an event. S felt that the ancient Greek setting was far away but was helped by "The Lore" slide, and Al noticed that some Greek nuance was lost in translation (Yahia, 2020).

In my opinion, the distance was felt unequally because it depended on how much each member already knew about classical

literature. The starter's slides and the moderator's reminder show that the club expected this distance.

Yahia (2020) argued that analyzing figures of speech in foreign literary works is difficult for EFL learners because their vocabulary is limited and because the author's social standards, which shape the language of the text, differ from those of the reader. Ar's confusion over Charybdis and Aegae and Al's need to "check bg" for Athena are examples of this gap in background knowledge. Yahia also noted that learners may rely heavily on the dictionary, which can slow their ability to read between the lines, and Ar's many word-level translations in the notes are a similar case. Lazar (1993) observed that the language of classical works can be demanding, so the distance was more likely in a text such as The Odyssey.

From the perspective of mediation, a text can work as a medium only if learners are able to reach it (Vygotsky, 1978), and when its language and background are unfamiliar, the medium itself can become an obstacle. The book club reduced this obstacle through the modern Johnston translation, the Indonesian slides, and "The Lore" slide, which supports Kozulin's (1998) view that mediators, including other people, bring the text within the learner's reach. The challenge was not removed completely, however, because the translation still carried some loss of the Greek nuance that Al noticed. This shows that

the same mediators that make a classical text reachable can also set the limits of what members can understand from it.

c. Uneven Support and Unequal Participation

The support did not always fit the member (Vygotsky, 1978). S found that one slide with four points was too much, Ar found the explanation sometimes too fast and was confused twice when a friend used the term “simile,” and Al found some explanations too basic. Participation was also uneven, since Ar was shy and preferred to ask a neighbour (Ro & Burch, 2020), the limit of five askers meant that Ar’s question about the word “hug” was never asked, and competing interpretations in “taktik atau toxic leadership?” and the unresolved meaning of Ino’s veil were left open.

I think one explanation had to serve members with different levels, so a mismatch was almost unavoidable in a group. At the same time, the structure of the session decided who could receive help, and not every open meaning was a problem for learning.

Vygotsky (1978) explained that the ZPD and scaffolding depend on interaction, so members who hold back, or who receive help that does not match their needs, benefit less from the discussion. The mismatches reported by S, Ar, and Al are examples of this, and the confusion over “simile” shows that support also comes from peers, whose language can be more technical than the explanation itself. Ro (2023) described scaffolding as adaptive, with a facilitator becoming

more sensitive to students' understanding, but in this session the explanation was prepared in advance on slides, which made it harder to adjust to each member during the explanation.

Ar's choice to ask a neighbour rather than the forum is consistent with Ro and Burch's (2020) view of participation in an L2 book club as a social practice in which members, when free to do so, choose whether to initiate or avoid communication. The neighbour served as a substitute channel of support, but the five-asker limit still narrowed the chance to speak. The competing interpretations and the unresolved meaning of Ino's veil illustrate Walldén and Nygård Larsson's (2021) point that members must manage language and literary meaning at the same time while talking, and Daniels's (2002) idea that meaning is negotiated together. The starter's insistence that both readings could be defended if they rested on the text, and Al's view that open interpretation is a good ground for discussion, indicate that unresolved meaning is not always a problem, although limited time prevented some members from reaching the interpretation they were seeking.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1. Conclusion

This study investigated how members of a book club learn figurative language through discussions of The Odyssey and what challenges they encounter in the process. The findings were organized with Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, namely medium, the zone of proximal development, and scaffolding, as the theoretical lens, and were drawn from interviews with five participants (three members, the moderator, and the discussion starter) supported by documentation of one book club session.

Regarding the first research question, the findings show that the members learned figurative language through interaction that moved from the text to the group. First, The Odyssey worked as a medium that members approached with their own cues, such as comparison words, the test of literal sense, and suspicion of strange wording, and these cues were extended by other mediators, namely the printout and footnotes, Google Translate, the starter's slides, and the members sitting next to them. Second, the five-minute reading followed by explanation and discussion placed the members within their ZPD, where figurative meanings that they could not reach alone, such as "Nobody," the fisherman, and the leadership of Odysseus, became interpretable with the help of others. Third, the starter and the moderator provided scaffolding in the form of background information, everyday comparisons, paraphrase, and questions, adjusted to the distance between the expression and the members' experience,

and this support was reduced as members began to interpret later expressions on their own. Finally, all participants described that discussion gave them a more sensitive and more layered understanding than reading alone, because they met more than one interpretation of the same expression.

Regarding the second research question, the findings show three challenges. The first is recognizing and interpreting non-literal meaning, since unmarked figures such as names, epithets, and long similes were read literally, and members with limited English vocabulary found it difficult to form the image behind an expression. The second is the linguistic and cultural distance between the members and the text, shown by the many names of gods, Greek cultural references, and the loss of Greek nuance in translation, which affected members differently depending on their experience with classical literature. The third is uneven support and participation, shown by explanations that were too fast, too dense, too technical, or too basic for particular members, by shyness and the limit of five askers in the question-and-answer session, and by interpretations that remained open because of competing views and limited time.

Overall, the findings suggest that a book club can be an effective learning space for figurative language when the text is surrounded by suitable mediating tools and when support is adjusted to members with different levels. Even so, the learning was not equal for everyone, and the members who most needed help, such as those with limited vocabulary and little confidence, were also those who found it hardest to ask for it.

5.2. Recommendation

Based on the conclusions of this study, the recommendations are addressed to the following parties.

Book club organizers, moderators, and discussion starters. It is recommended that they prepare mediating tools that connect the text to its meaning, such as printouts that can be marked, short explanation slides with one heading for each figurative expression, and background slides for unfamiliar names and cultural references. Support should be adjusted to the distance between an expression and the members' experience, with more background for distant expressions and more questions for familiar ones, and it should be reduced as members become able to interpret on their own. To lessen unequal participation, organizers could provide more room for questions about figurative language than a fixed limit of five askers, for example by collecting questions in writing or by allowing questions to the starter after the session. Technical terms such as "simile" should also be explained briefly when they are used, so that members with less background are not confused.

Book club members and English learners. It is recommended that members mark the figurative expressions they find confusing during the silent reading and bring those expressions to the discussion instead of stopping at word-level translation. Members who feel shy to ask in the forum can begin with the person sitting next to them, as the participants did, and gradually try to share their own tentative interpretations, since the findings show that understanding grows through exchanging readings.

English language educators. Teachers who use literary texts in EFL classrooms may adopt the structure found in this book club, namely a short context, a brief silent reading, an explanation of selected figurative expressions in familiar language, and an open question, as a model for collaborative reading. Teachers should also prepare background on names and cultural references in advance, and should pay attention to students with limited vocabulary who may not be able to recognize which expressions are figurative.

Future researchers. This study used a qualitative case study of one book club session with five participants, so the findings describe this case and are not meant to be generalized. Future researchers are encouraged to observe several sessions in order to trace how scaffolding and members' independence change over a longer period, to include other literary texts or other book clubs, and to use tasks or tests that directly measure how well members interpret figurative expressions before and after discussion. Further studies may also examine how digital tools such as translation applications and online summaries mediate figurative language learning in collaborative reading.

REFERENCES

Alkhudiry, R. (2022). The contribution of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in mediating L2 knowledge co-construction. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 12*(10), 2117–2123. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1210.19

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs and reading groups* (2nd ed.). Stenhouse Publishers.

Fadeev, A. (2019). Vygotsky's theory of mediation in digital learning environment: Actuality and practice. *Punctum: International Journal of Semiotics, 5*(1), 24–44. https://doi.org/10.18680/hss.2019.0004

Foley, J. M. (1999). *Homer's traditional art*. Pennsylvania State University Press.

Givanda, D., & Nanda, D. S. (2026). Figurative language learning challenges in EFL short stories. *English Education: Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris, 19*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.24042/ee-jtbi.v19i1.30846

Homer. (2006). *The Odyssey* (I. Johnston, Trans.). Richer Resources Publications. (Original work published ca. 8th century BCE)

Huong, L. P. H., & Hung, B. P. (2021). Mediation of digital tools in English learning. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network, 14*(2), 512–528. https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/LEARN/article/view/253278

Kozulin, A. (1998). *Psychological tools: A sociocultural approach to education*. Harvard University Press.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Lazar, G. (1993). *Literature and language teaching: A guide for teachers and trainers*. Cambridge University Press.

Littlemore, J. (2015). *Figurative language and second language learning*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Perrine, L. (1963). *Sound and sense: An introduction to poetry* (2nd ed.). Harcourt, Brace & World.

Perrine, L. (1977). *Sound and sense: An introduction to poetry* (4th ed.). Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Ro, E. (2021). The reshaping of participation practices in a second language book club. *Journal of Pragmatics, 184,* 89–106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.08.012

Ro, E. (2023). Topicalization as a practice for facilitating L2 discussion in video-mediated extensive reading book club meetings. *System, 113*, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103175

Ro, E., & Burch, A. R. (2020). 'Willingness to communicate/participate' in action: A case study of changes in a recipient's practices in an L2 book club. *Linguistics and Education, 58,* Article 100821. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2020.100821

Sudar. (2024). Investigating the use and semantic interpretation of figurative language in EFL students' literary work. *English Review: Journal of English Education, 12*(3), 1159–1168. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v12i3.10367

Tan, P. A. (2022). *Figurative language in Troye Sivan's Blue Neighbourhood album* [Undergraduate thesis]. Sanata Dharma University.

Telaumbanua, I., Wardani, A. A. A. D. K., Umiyati, M., & Susanthi, I. G. A. A. D. (2022). Figurative language in Amy Tan's The Joy Luck Club. *KnE Social Sciences*, *7*(10), 179–184. https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i10.11286

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1981). The genesis of higher mental functions. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology*. Sharpe.

Walldén, R., & Nygård Larsson, P. (2021). Negotiating figurative language from literary texts: Second-language instruction as a dual literacy practice. *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature, 21*, 1–30. https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2021.21.01.08

Yahia, F. (2020). Teaching figurative language to EFL learners: Methods and constraints. *El-Wahat Journal for Research and Studies, 13*(2), 1643–1659. https://journals.univ-ghardaia.edu.dz/elwahat/article/view/378

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name : Nabil Aminullah

Student ID : 20522121

Place and Date of Birth : Pekalongan, 28 August 2001

Gender : Male

Address : RT.10 RW.03Jajarwayang Village, Bojong District, Pekalongan Regency

Educational Background :

1. Baitul Muttaqien Kindergarten (2006-2007)
2. SDIT Insan Mulia Kajen Elementary School (2007-2013)
3. SMPIT Assalam Junior High School (2013-2016)
4. MA Darussalam Subah Public Senior High School (2016-2019)
5. English Departement, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training UIN KH. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan (2022-2026)

KEMENTERIAN AGAMA REPUBLIK INDONESIA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI
K.H. ABDURRAHMAN WAHID PEKALONGAN
UNIT PERPUSTAKAAN
Jl. Pahlawan KM 5 Rowolaku Kajen Pekalongan, Telp. (0285) 412575 Faks. (0285) 423418
Website : perpustakaan.uingusdur.ac.id Email : perpustakaan@.uingusdur.ac.id

LEMBAR PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN PUBLIKASI KARYA ILMIAH UNTUK KEPENTINGAN AKADEMIS

Sebagai civitas akademika UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini, saya:

Nama : Nabil Aminullah
NIM : 20522121
Program Studi : Tadris Bahasa Inggris
E-mail address : aminullahnabil96@gmail.com
No. Hp : 081412260890

Demi pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan, menyetujui untuk memberikan kepada Perpustakaan UIN KH. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Hak Bebas Royalti Non-Eksklusif atas karya ilmiah:

☐ Tugas Akhir ☑ Skripsi ☐ Tesis ☐ Desertasi ☐ Lain-lain (.....)

Yang berjudul : **INVESTIGATING BOOK CLUB MEMBERS' FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH "THE ODYSSEY"**

Beserta perangkat yang diperlukan (bila ada). Dengan Hak Bebas Royalti Non-Ekslusif ini Perpustakaan UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan berhak menyimpan, mengalih-media/format-kan, mengelolanya dalam bentuk pangkalan data database, mendistribusikannya, dan menampilkan/mempublikasikannya di Internet atau media lain secara ***fulltext*** untuk kepentingan akademis tanpa perlu meminta ijin dari saya selama tetap mencantumkan nama saya sebagai penulis/pencipta dan atau penerbit yang bersangkutan.

Saya bersedia untuk menanggung secara pribadi, tanpa melibatkan pihak Perpustakaan UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, segala bentuk tuntutan hukum yang timbul atas pelanggaran Hak Cipta dalam karya ilmiah saya ini.
Demikian pernyataan ini yang saya buat dengan sebenarnya.

Pekalongan, 26 Oktober 2026



Nabil Aminullah
NIM. 20522121