International Journal of Social Science and Human Research

ISSN (print): 2644-0679, ISSN (online): 2644-0695

Volume 09 Issue 03 March 2026

DOI: 10.47191/ijsshr/v9-i3-58, Impact factor- 8.361

Page No: 2211-2213

Personification in Pham Ho's *Stories of Flowers and Fruits*

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ABSTRACT: Personification is one of the most frequently employed rhetorical devices in children's literature, contributing to the construction of a vivid and accessible artistic world for young readers. This study investigates the use of personification in Pham Ho's *Stories of Flowers and Fruits*. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research analyzes linguistic data collected from representative stories in the work. The findings indicate that personification occurs with high frequency and is applied to a wide range of entities, including animals, plants, objects, and natural phenomena. The principal forms of personification include addressing non-human entities using kinship terms, attributing human actions and qualities to them, and treating them as conversational participants. The flexible use of this rhetorical device not only enlivens the natural world but also enhances the cognitive and educational value of the text for primary school readers.

KEYWORDS: personification; rhetorical devices; children's literature; Pham Ho; *Stories of Flowers and Fruits*

1. INTRODUCTION

In children's literature, artistic language plays a crucial role in constructing imaginative worlds and fostering children's creativity. Rhetorical devices render language more vivid, expressive, and emotionally engaging, thereby enhancing the appeal of literary works.

Pham Ho is widely regarded as one of the most prominent authors in modern Vietnamese children's literature. His work *Stories of Flowers and Fruits* presents imaginative narratives explaining the origins of various plants and fruits while conveying meaningful educational messages. The distinctiveness of this work lies not only in its thematic richness but also in its refined use of artistic language.

Among the rhetorical devices employed, personification appears with notable frequency and plays a central role in rendering the natural world vivid and relatable. However, this device has not yet been systematically examined in previous studies. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the formal characteristics, semantic features, and expressive value of personification in the work, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of Pham Ho's stylistic features and the pedagogical significance of his writing.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In Vietnamese stylistics, personification is regarded as a special form of metaphor in which human attributes, actions, or qualities are assigned to non-human entities to make them more vivid and relatable.

According to Dinh Trong Lac, personification is defined as a variant of metaphor in which human characteristics are attributed to non-human objects, thereby facilitating comprehension and enabling the expression of subtle emotional attitudes.

Structurally, personification typically manifests in two main ways: (1) attributing human actions or qualities to non-human entities, and (2) treating non-human entities as human beings capable of interaction and dialogue.

Similarly, Lai Nguyen An considers personification a form of metaphor that transfers human characteristics to non-human objects and phenomena. Phan Thi Thach further classifies personification into three main types: (1) using human actions or emotions to describe non-human entities, (2) addressing them using kinship terms, and (3) treating them as conversational partners.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The data were collected from selected stories in *Stories of Flowers and Fruits*. The study employs the following methods:

- Statistical analysis to determine the frequency of personification
- Stylistic analysis to examine structural and semantic features
- Descriptive interpretation to clarify artistic and educational values

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Personified entities

The findings indicate that personification is applied to a wide range of entities, including animals, plants, objects, and natural phenomena. Notably, animals constitute the majority (91.5%), followed by plants (3.5%), objects (2.8%), and natural phenomena (2.2%).

Table 1. ***Frequency of personified entities***

Personified entity	Frequency	Percentage
Animals	130	91.5%
Objects	4	2.8%
Plants	5	3.5%
Natural phenomena	3	2.2%
Total	**142**	**100%**

These results indicate that animals are the most commonly personified entities in the work.

4.2 Forms of personification

Table 2. ***Forms of personification***

Form	Frequency	Percentage
Addressing objects using human terms	36	18.3%
Describing objects with human attributes	123	62.4%
Treating objects as human interlocutors	38	19.3%
Total	**197**	**100%**

Example 1

"This time, May seemed to be warmed by the affection of Father Snail, Little Snail, Uncle Spider, Brown Spider, Queen Bee, and Yellow Bee…"

The kinship terms *Father* and *Uncle* are used to address animals. This personification gives animals human-like social identities and makes them appear as members of a human community.

Example 2

"The nightingale still hesitated."

The verb *hesitate* describes a psychological state typical of human beings. When applied to the nightingale, it gives the bird human-like emotions and inner thoughts.

Example 3

The baby dragon said to the child: "I am not a snake. I am a baby dragon. Please let me live with you.".

The dragon is portrayed as a speaking character capable of communication with humans, which is a typical form of personification in narrative discourse.

Example 4

"But when standing before that very unusual plant, which was both beautiful and full of love for children…"

Human qualities such as *beauty* and *love for children* are attributed to a plant. This form of personification creates emotional depth and makes the plant appear human-like.

Example 5

"The egg came and met the stream."

The verb *meet* is typically used to describe interactions between humans. Applying it to an egg gives the object human-like actions.

Example 6

"The sunlight crawled down into the ground."

The verb *crawl* describes human movement. Using it to describe sunlight creates a vivid and imaginative image.

4.3 Expressive Value of Personification

4.3.1 Vivid representation of the non-human world

The non-human world-including animals, plants, and objects-is portrayed as possessing human-like emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Through personification, these entities are transformed into vivid and emotionally resonant characters.

For example, in *The Strange Snails*, a snail is depicted as a fair evaluator of students' learning, symbolizing justice and moral judgment. Similarly, plants described as "gentle" are endowed with emotional depth. Objects such as the egg, which "met the stream," appear capable of interaction, creating vivid imagery. In *Many-Fingered Hands*, plants are described as expressing love and gratitude, reinforcing their human-like qualities.

4.3.2 Expression of the author's emotional attitudes

Personification also reflects the author's emotional engagement with nature. Relationships between humans and non-human entities convey values such as friendship, loyalty, and compassion.

In *The Child and the Baby Dragon*, the bond between the child and the dragon symbolizes brotherhood and mutual care. In *The Firewood Boy and the Young Deer*, the deer is portrayed as capable of memory and longing, reinforcing emotional attachment. In *The Red Umbrella*, personification supports the depiction of self-sacrifice and familial love.

Thus, personification serves as a vehicle for expressing ethical values and emotional depth.

4.3.3 Reflection of observation and imagination

Personification also demonstrates Pham Ho's keen observation and creative imagination. Natural features-such as banana clusters resembling hands or hibiscus flowers resembling umbrellas-are transformed into narrative motifs.

The integration of folklore elements, such as the Buddha and fairies, further enriches the narrative while reinforcing moral lessons. In some stories, however, ethical values emerge without supernatural intervention, highlighting virtues such as kindness and integrity.

Thus, personification functions as a bridge between observation and imagination, enabling the transformation of natural phenomena into meaningful literary narratives.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates that personification plays a central role in shaping the stylistic and expressive features of Pham Ho's *The story of flowers and fruits*. By attributing human characteristics to non-human entities, the author constructs a vivid and emotionally engaging narrative world that resonates with young readers.

From a stylistic perspective, personification reflects both careful observation and creative imagination, serving as a bridge between the natural world and human experience. From an educational perspective, it contributes to the development of children's moral awareness, imagination, and linguistic competence.

These findings suggest that personification is not merely a rhetorical device but also a pedagogical resource that can be effectively integrated into Vietnamese language teaching at the primary level.

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