

Semantics Analysis of Figurative Language in A Selection of ‘Robert Frost’ Poems

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Abstract: Language is essential for communication and expressing emotions, and understanding figurative language is crucial for literature enthusiasts to gain insights from poems. This study explores the types and meanings of figurative language in Robert Frost's poems, guided by theories from M.H. Abrams, Leech, and Charles Dillon Perrine. Using a qualitative approach, the researcher analyzed selected Frost poems through note-taking techniques. Data analysis involved reading, identifying, and understanding figurative language to draw conclusions. The findings reveal the following instances of figurative language: eleven metaphors, eight personifications, six symbols, two hyperboles, two instances of imagery, two paradoxes, and one instance of irony, highlighting the predominance of metaphors in Frost's poetry.

Keywords: Language; Figurative Language; Poems; Robert Frost

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a medium for conveying our emotions and ideas. It's a vital tool for everyone's survival and progress. Some individuals primarily communicate in their mother tongue and have limited interaction with others. However, many strive to learn or master various languages to enhance their life prospects. English has been chosen as one of these languages due to its significant global influence. Through language, people can express their ideas, feelings, thoughts, and expressions to another person. In addition, language is used for socialization, politics, power sharing, transmission, and knowledge acquisition, among other things (Sofyan, 2021). Using language, individuals can express that every language has its grammar, emotions, and thoughts. These rules force the speaker to convey their ideas in a way that their intended audiences can understand. Semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology form a language's grammar. Semantics, the latter branch of linguistics, is concerned with how words and sentences are constructed to convey meaning (Nisa, 2020).

A branch of linguistics known as semantics studies the meanings that are ingrained in words, codes, and other types of representation. Semantics is essentially the study of meaning. Pragmatics, the practical application of symbols by individuals in particular settings, and syntax, which is the construction of complex symbols from simpler ones, are two further elements that are frequently associated with it. As stated by (Kasanah, 2023) semantics is a language studies or linguistic study that investigates meaning or language meaning. Therefore, through this study of language with semantics, the meaning contained in a language can be carefully peeled or analyzed. Abdul Chaer States The field of linguistics that investigates the

connection between linguistic signs and the meanings they convey is then generally accepted to be called semantics. Alternatively put, the area of linguistics that investigates meaning (Kase, 2019).

One of the fields of semantics analysis is figurative language. (Eka Agustina & Mustikawati, 2023)) explains that Figurative language relies on a language's practical or literal meaning to convey ideas. To add creative flair to written or spoken language or to explain complex ideas, it is frequently employed in comparison and exaggeration. According to Colton (Monny, 2023), Figurative language conveys meaning beyond its literal interpretation; for example, one might accurately take the statement "I couldn't be better" as a negative when it is made by someone who is depressed. Anything from speaker attitudes and emotions to contextual elaborations and enhancements to societal discoveries and effects to new meanings resulting from interactions between or among these things are all included in this additional meaning. metaphorical language involves using expressions or words that don't match their direct meaning. Often, this can make it challenging to understand the usual meaning, and readers must use their creativity to interpret the author's intended message in their writing and one of them exists in a poem.

A poem is a kind of written literature with lines and stanzas that are organized into a beautiful, meaningful flow and are constrained by rhyme and rhythm. Riffaterre argues that poetry does not say things directly, but uses words that have other meanings. Watts-Dunton defines poetry as the art of expressing something concretely, while Lascelles Abercrombie claims that poetry is the way of sharing an experience that comes from imagination, which can also be done in a speech or a statement that uses the language of a group of people, who know how to use every aspect of language effectively and skilfully (Lestari et al., 2023). So, every poem is a creative way of showing individuals, and the initial thing that we experience, after reading a poem, is the poem itself. William Wordsworth described poetry as an impromptu surge of intense emotions. Emily Dickinson believed that if a book could evoke a feeling so profound that no warmth could alleviate it, then it was truly poetic. Dylan Thomas characterized poetry as something that could provoke laughter, tears, or boredom, incite a sparkle in one's toenails, or inspire action or complete stillness (Flanagan, 2019).

Robert Frost stands out as a celebrated poet, renowned for his poetic works that are rich in exquisite language and vivid emotional imagery. Scholars find his poetry appealing for analysis due to its reflection of his personal experiences and character. Moreover, Frost's poetry paints a picture of both individual life and broader societal themes. The universal nature of the themes he explores makes his work timeless and accessible to people across different eras. His enduring relevance has cemented his status as a pivotal figure in American poetry. Among his influential works, "The Road Not Taken" and "Mending Wall" have left a lasting impact on subsequent generations by offering a deeper insight into his unique approach to writing, his stylistic choices, the themes he delves into, and his overall contribution to the literary world.

Several studies have been conducted on the use of figurative language in literature. Rika Elfira's research, applying Charles Dillon Perrine's theory, revealed that out of twelve figurative language types, ten were present in two selected poems by William Blake. These included seven similes, four metaphors, four instances of personification, one synecdoche, five metonymies, three symbols, two paradoxes, three hyperboles, nine understatements, and two ironies. Another study by Amanda Fuji Astuti found a distribution of metaphors in a different work, with 40% being ontological, 20% structural, 20% visual, 10% extended, and 10% active metaphors, while oriental and complex metaphors were absent. This analysis was grounded in the theories of Lakoff and Johnson. Lastly, Sindi Werdiningsih's research identified thirteen figurative language types in the poem "I'll Tell You How The Sun Rose," with metaphors (31%), personifications (23%), alliterations (15%), imageries (15%), similes (8%), and symbolism (8%) being the most prevalent,

indicating metaphors as the dominant figure of speech. This conclusion was based on M.H. Abrams' figurative language theory, further supported by Perrine, Wellek Warren, and Leech's theories.

Based on the previous research, this study focused on the same analysis namely figurative language in literary works such as poetry. However, none of them focuses on figurative language in Robert Frost's poetry. In this study the researcher includes several choices of poems by Robert Frost to be given a more in-depth and thorough analysis of the use figurative language.

The study in question concentrated on examining various forms of figurative language as defined by Charles Dillon Perrine, with additional insights from M.H. Abrams and Leech. Perrine's categorization includes imagery, simile, metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, symbol, allegory, irony, paradox, and personification, all of which are expected to be found in the selected poems. The specific poems by Robert Frost being analyzed are "Nothing Gold Can Stay," "The Road Not Taken," and "Acquainted with the Night." Then this research analyzed the meaning of the poems based on the type of figurative language. This research examined the use of figurative language in Robert Frost's poems "Nothing Gold Can Stay," "The Road Not Taken," and "Acquainted With The Night." The study was motivated by the complex aspects of figurative language, highlighting the necessity of employing both straightforward and symbolic language to communicate effectively. Furthermore, grasping figurative language facilitates the understanding and production of literary compositions. The selection of these particular poems was driven by the researchers' eagerness to explore the profound messages embedded within each verse and to identify the various forms of figurative language employed.

METHOD

Research Design

A research design is a framework for methodically conducting studies. It encompasses the strategies for collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting data. The study in question adopted a descriptive qualitative method to delve into the semantic aspects of figurative language in Robert Frost's poems. This approach was chosen because the data involved textual analysis rather than quantitative metrics. The descriptive method is advocated for its ability to offer a detailed comprehension of the research subject, including all related phenomena, behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions, with the findings articulated through descriptive prose (Lederer, 2022).

The descriptive approach focuses on detailing the attributes, reality, challenges, and topics within a text. It involves the author empirically detailing the qualities of the subject matter, which, in this case, is a piece of literature rather than a demographic or individual count. Key features of this research technique include being a representative sample that the author utilizes to carry out the study.

Source of Data

The research utilizes poems by Robert Frost, sourced from the book titled "Robert Frost Poetry Collection." Additionally, the researcher employed both library resources and online investigations to choose relevant books, journals, and other written materials that provide backing for the research.

Instrument

In qualitative research, the most effective tool for understanding the interpretations people attribute to events in their lives is the human observer. In this particular study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument. The investigator conducted a personal examination and interpretation of three of Robert Frost's poems: "Nothing Gold Can Stay," "The Road Not Taken," and "Acquainted with the Night. Additionally,

the writer scrutinized the lyrics of a song to identify and interpret the figurative language employed within it. The goal was to decipher the meaning conveyed through the use of figurative language in the song.

Data Collection

The investigator is engaging in library research to collect significant data, predominantly consisting of documents associated with the topic under investigation. This study's data are obtained from verses that include figurative expressions in the poetry written by Robert Frost. The data collection process involves several steps:

1. Searching for Robert Frost's poems online and offline.
2. Reading and comprehending the poems written by Robert Frost.
3. Choosing poems that contain numerous instances of figurative language.
4. Analyzing each line of Robert Frost's poetry to pinpoint examples of non-literal expressions.
5. Organizing the identified examples into various categories of figurative language.
6. Analyzing the poems to determine their meanings.

Data Analysis

The research undertakes four stages in data analysis, involving reading, categorizing, identifying, and drawing conclusions.

Following data collection, the initial step involves thorough reading of the poem. The researcher reads the poem attentively, aiming to grasp its meaning. Next, the data is classified based on different types of figurative language. This classification is carried out line by line, identifying instances of figurative language within each poem. Following that, the investigator interprets the poem's significance and integrates the theory of figurative language following the research question. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the analysis.

In this research, the author employed a descriptive approach to examine the provided data. Descriptive methodology focuses on elaborately detailing the current state or characteristics of a given situation. Nazir (Astuti, 2019) describes the descriptive method as a research technique used to examine the current state of a community, an entity, various situations, a philosophy, or a sequence of occurrences to forecast future trends.

According to Afrizal (Astuti, 2019), in analyzing the data, there are some steps in data analysis as follows:

1. Following data collection, the author endeavored to assess the gathered information.
2. Categorizing the data about the stated issues.
3. Investigating the various forms of figurative language and their significance in Robert Frost's poems.
4. Providing a conclusion after the data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After studying the data from Robert Frost's poems using Charles Dillon Perrine's theory, researchers found 30 data on the use of figurative language.

The Road Not Taken

Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" was featured as the first work in the collection titled "Mountain Interval," which was published in 1916 by Henry Holt and Company in New York.

Table 1.1: The figurative language used in the first poem

The poem	Figurative language
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood	Metaphor, Symbol
And sorry I could not travel both	-
And be one traveler, long I stood	-
And looked down one as far as I could	-
To where it bent in the undergrowth	-
Then took the other, as just as fair	-
And having perhaps the better claim	-
Because it was grassy and wanted to wear	Personification
Though as for that the passing there	-
Had worn them really about the same	-
And both that morning equally lay	Personification
In leaves no step had trodden black	-
Oh, I marked the first for another day	-
Yet knowing how way leads on to way	-
I doubted if I should ever come back	-
Somewhere ages and ages hence	-
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I	Metaphor
I took the one less traveled by	-
And that has made all the difference	-
Somewhere ages and ages hence	-

The analysis of the poem “The Road Not Taken” revealed three kinds of figurative expressions: a single symbol, a pair of metaphors, and a couple of examples of personification, making up a total of five rhetorical devices. In this literary piece, metaphors and personifications are particularly prominent, each represented by two occurrences (Fahas et al., 2021).

Acquainted With the Night

Robert Frost’s poem “Acquainted with the Night” is included in the poetry collection “West-Running Brook,” which was released by the publisher Henry Holt and Company.

Table 2.1: The figurative language used in the second poem

The poem	Figurative language
I have been one acquainted with the night.	personification, symbol, and metaphor
I have walked out in the rain- and back in the rain	Metaphor
I have outwalked the furthest city light.	hyperbole and symbol
I have looked down the saddest city lane.	Metaphor
I have passed by the watchman on his beat	Metaphor
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.	Hyperbole
I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet	Irony
When far away an interrupted cry	Metaphor
Came over houses from another street,	Personification
But not call me back or say goodbye;	-

And further still an unearthly height,	-
One luminary clock against the sky	Metaphor
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor night	Paradox, personification
I have been acquainted with the night	personification, symbol, and metaphor

The table analysis highlighted a total of six figurative language categories in the poem “Acquainted With The Night”: specifically, three symbols, seven metaphors, four instances of personification, one example of irony, one paradox, and two hyperboles, cumulatively representing eighteen figurative elements. Consequently, metaphors, symbols, and personifications are the most frequently occurring figures of speech within this work (Suwarso, 2021).

Nothing Gold Can Stay

The poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay” was written by Robert Frost. It was first published in The Yale Review in 1923. Therefore, it was not a publisher that released this poem, but a publication.

Table 3.1: The figurative language used in the third poem.

The poem	Figurative language
Nature’s first green is gold,	Imagery, personification, symbol
Her hardest hue to hold	Personification
Her early leaf’s flower;	Paradox
But only an hour	-
Then the leaf subsides into the leaf	Imagery
So Eden sank to grief,	Metaphor
So dawn goes down to day.	Metaphor
Nothing gold can stay	Symbol

The analysis based on the given table shows that the author pinpointed a total of seven figurative language elements in the poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay,” which include two symbols, two metaphors, two examples of imagery, one paradox, and two instances of personification. Therefore, the most prominent figurative elements in this poem are metaphors, symbols, imagery, and personification (charlie Gussen, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings discussed, the figurative language present in each poem is summarized as follows:

1. The Road Not Taken: metaphor, symbol, and personification
2. Acquainted With The Night: personification, hyperbole, irony, paradox and symbol.
3. Nothing Gold Can Stay: imagery, symbol, personification, and metaphor.

The figurative language breakdown across the selected poems is as follows: there are eleven instances of metaphor, eight instances of personification, six instances of symbol, two instances of hyperbole, two instances of imagery, two instances of paradox, and one instance of irony. Therefore, it is clear that “meta-

phor” dominates the selected poems, because from the analysis of the poems the most frequent figurative type of metaphor is found, with eleven examples which is the most of the other figurative types.

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