
Figurative Language Analysis In Emily Dickinson’s Poem “Hope Is The Thing With Feathers”

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Abstrak: This article explores how Emily Dickinson uses figurative language in her poem “Hope is the Thing with Feathers.” Using qualitative descriptive analysis methods, this research delves into how Emily Dickinson employs figurative language in her poem. various forms of Figurative Language contained in the poetry, such as Metaphor, Personification, Irony, Symbolism and Hyperbole was found in the poem. Research findings show that Dickinson’s use of Figurative language deepens the poem’s meaning and emotional impact, potraying hope as a pure force that seeks no reward and remains within the human soul, even in toughest of times. The authors identified five types of figurative languages in the poem; metaphor, personification, irony, symbolism, and hyperbole. This provides an in-depth look at how Figurative Language is use to depict abstract themes creatively and enhance the emotional effect on the reader.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a crucial tool for human life. Language functions as a tool for communication between two or more people. Without language, humans would never be able to communicate well. Language is one of the main contributors to the progress of society and is indispensable in every aspect of human life. This is the way humans communicate verbally and non-verbally with each other to understand information, build relationships, and create a sense of togetherness. According to (Moats, 2020), Language is a tool for communication among members of society, consisting of sound symbols created by the vocal organs. Communication, language, and culture are closely interconnected. This connection is evident in our daily interactions, whether between individuals or within groups. Our environment and the different cultural groups around us tend to shape the way we speak and communicate. Culture shapes people's lives and behaviour to influence our thought patterns, beliefs, and feelings about right and wrong. Many parts of daily life follow cultural patterns, from the way we talk and make friends to traditions and social customs.

To truly understand and study language, it’s essential not only to grasp its structure but also to uncover the deeper meanings it conveys. Language are often used in ways that people used to convey their ideas to others so that they can understand and capture the meaning of those ideas. language is one of the main contributor on the progression of society because it serves as the foundation for communication, knowledge transfer, and cultural development.

Historically, language has facilitated major societal advancement, from ancient civilization to the modern era. Language birthed literature as a means of preserving and sharing stories, knowledge, and cultural values, marking a significant step in societal progression. Literature became a key indicator of societal advancement. The literary heritage can take various forms, from oral traditions to written works, including poetry, prose, or drama.

The primary focus to be discussed in this paper is poetry. Poetry, often considered the most expressive and emotive form, stands out for its unique use of language and structure. In learning to understand poetry, it is crucial to know what is figurative language. Chris Cummins (Cummins, 2023) defined figurative language as words or expressions that carry meaning distinct from their literal interpretations. Figurative language helps one to say something in an ordinary way or say one thing and mean another. It is used to describe something in a non-literal way by making comparisons or using creative imagery. In writing a poem, the poet is required to choose appropriate words to be able to describe something clearly. Thus, making figurative language is needed in poetry to help the reader clearly imagine and visualize what the poet is describing. By using creative comparisons and imagery instead of just literal descriptions, figurative language sparks the reader's imagination and makes the ideas more vivid in their mind. Using figures of speech like metaphors and similes allows the poet to paint powerful mental pictures that straightforward language cannot convey as effectively. In short, figurative language gives poetry its ability to transport the reader into the world the poet has created through their imaginative use of language. This paper will examine the use of figurative language in Dickinson's poem *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*, which achieved recognition in the 20th century. The previous research written by (Fahas et al., 2021), used as the benchmark for writing this research is a literature analysis paper titled *Linguistics Analysis: Figurative Language used in Robert Frost's Poem*. The aim of this study is to identify the most frequently used figurative language in Robert Frost's poetry.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The paper is written based on the concept and theory of Perrine. According to (Perrine & Arp, 1982), we can identify figurative language by twelve categories:

1. Personification: Attributing human characteristics to non-human entities.
2. Simile: A direct comparison using "as" or "like."
3. Metaphor: An implicit comparison between two unlike things without using "like" or "as."
4. Synecdoche: A part representing the whole or vice versa.

5. Metonymy: A figure of speech that involves using a word that is closely related to the thing being meant.
6. Hyperbole: Exaggeration for emphasis.
7. Irony: Expressing something contrary to what is expected.
8. Allusion: An indirect reference to a person, place, thing, idea, or cultural or historical event that enhances the emotions or ideas conveyed in a work.
9. Paradox: A statement or situation that appears to be contradictory but is actually true.
10. Allegory: A narrative with a deeper moral or political meaning.
11. Apostrophe: A literary device that involves speaking to someone who is absent or to something non-human as if they were present and could respond is known as apostrophe.
12. Symbol: Using an object or action to represent a larger idea.

Figurative language expresses ideas in a more creative and unconventional way. It enhances meaning by: (1) offering readers a sense of imaginative enjoyment, (2) helping to visualize abstract concepts, making them feel more vivid and tangible, (3) adding emotional depth, and (4) sharpening focus, making ideas clearer and more impactful.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper employs a descriptive qualitative analysis method as its primary approach, focusing on words rather than numbers to convey its findings. The data is drawn from the poem *Hope is the Thing With Feathers* by Emily Dickinson and analysed through qualitative analysis. Focusing on the types, functions, and meaning behind the figurative language used in the poem. First, I will peel back the layers of meaning in the poem and dissecting the types of figurative language and how they contribute to the overall message and emotional impact of the poem. Then I will explore the function of the figurative language used. Why did Dickinson choose these specific metaphors or similes? How do they shape the reader's perception of hope?

4. DISCUSSION & RESULT

In this poem you can find some Figurative Language, which is based on Perrine's theory. The results found in analysis of the poem "Hope is the Things with Feathers" by Emily Dickinson include: metaphor, personification, irony, symbolism, and hyperbole. Authors found that there are 2 metaphors, 1 personification, 1 irony, 2 symbolism, and 1 hyperbole.

"Hope is the Thing with Feathers" by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the Thing with Feathers

That perches in that soul,

And sings with the tune without the words,

and never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;

and sore must be the storm

The could abash the little bird

That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,

And on the strangers sea;

Yet, never, in extremity,

It asked a crumb of me.

1. Stanza 1

*Hope is the Thing with **Feathers***

*That **perches** in that soul,*

*And **sings with the tune** without the words,*

and never stops at all,

a) Methapor

Hope is compared to a 'bird' described as "The thing with feathers." This is the main metaphor of the poem, where hope is analogues to a small bird with soft feathers. Dickinson stated that hope is light and continues to be present in the human soul.

b) Personification

Hope is described as “perches” and “sings the tune.” This is personification, because hope is given the characteristics of a living creature that can act like a bird, even though hope is an abstract concept.

2. Stanza 2

*And sweetest in the **gale** is heard;*

*and **sore must be the storm***

The could abash the little bird

That kept so many warm.

a) Irony

There is irony when Dickinson states that the song of the bird of hope sounds sweetest amidst a great storm described as “Gale”. This emphasizes that hope is felt strongest when someone is in trouble, turning a difficult situation into something easier to face.

b) Metaphor and Symbolism

The bird of hope is depicted as remaining strong even though it is hit by a heavy storm described as “Sore must be the storm / That could destroy the little bird.” In this metaphor, the storm represents life’s challenges, while the bird represents the power of hope that is able to survive, despite difficult circumstances.

3. Stanza 3

*I’ve heard it in the **chilliest land**,*

*And on the **strangers sea**;*

*Yet, **never, in extremity**,*

It asked a crumb of me.

a) Symbolism

The “coldest land” (chilliest land) and “strangest sea” are symbols for the difficulties and tough challenges of life. It illustrates that hope remains, even in the most difficult and unfamiliar times

b) Hyperbole

The phrase “never in Extremity, it asked a crumb – of me” is hyperbole, which shows that hope never asks for something in return, even in the most extreme conditions. This is an exaggerated way of emphasizing the pure and selfless nature of hope.

5. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that Figurative Language plays an an important role in the poem "Hope is the Thingss with Feathers" by strengthening the theme of hope trough vivid and poetic depictions. The use of the main metaphor, namely hope as a bird, as well as other forms of Figurative Language such as symbolism and hyperbole, helps readers feel and visualize the abstract concept of hope in more depth. These findings highlight that Figurative Language is not only a stylistic tool, but also an essential element that increases the depth and appeal of emotions in poetic works.

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