



The Analysis of Figurative Language in “The Sky is Low, The Clouds Are Mean”, “We Outgrow Love Like Other Things”, And “Hope Is The Thing With Feathers” By Emily Dickinson

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Abstract. *This study explores the use of figurative language in selected poems by Emily Dickinson, with a focus on how metaphor, simile, personification, symbol and hyperbole enhance the literary experience. The research aims to identify, categorise, and analyse the various types of figurative language used in Dickinson's poetry. Using a descriptive-qualitative method, the study reveals that Dickinson's poems employ a wide range of figurative language techniques to express complex emotions and themes, reflecting the intricate relationship between human experience and literary expression. There are 16 figurative languages in these three selected poems by Emily Dickinson; there are 5 personifications, 2 hyperboles, 2 similes, 4 symbols, and 3 metaphors. The findings suggest that figurative language not only enriches the text but also deepens the reader's understanding of the poet's intended messages.*

Keywords: *Emily Dickinson, figurative language, metaphor, simile, personification, symbol*

1. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Literature is every artistic work that is often produced through expression. Keler reveals evidence that literature is defined as all aspects of written expression, however with the exception that not all written works come up with the purest definition of the term (Mario Keler, 1962:1). Everybody in the world wishes to use writing to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences to others. These writings can take the forms of poetry, prose, or theatre, which are more commonly associated with literary works. That is why literature can be defined as a way of human expression that represents thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Aristotle believed that literature was the art of imitation (Abrams, 1997:11).

Susan Basnett also explains a different viewpoint about literature. According to Basnett, Literature is the study of literature beyond the borders of one particular country as well as the relationship between literatures and other fields of study and belief, like philosophy, history, the sciences (such as politics, economics, and sociology), religion, painting, sculpture, architecture, and music. To summarize it briefly, it is the analysis of literature in relation to other forms of human expression. (1988:30).

Poetry is a form of literary work that is derived from a feeling expressed by a poet in a language that uses rhythms, rhymes, matras, bait, and the composition of lyrics that contain meaning. (Aruperes.S, 2020:4). Poetry, according to Hooper, is mostly metaphoric with the capacity to express ideas and emotions of huge complexity in a limited number of words. Poetry conveys a conventional framework (found in ballads, lyric, odes, and sonnets) for the publication of short yet distinct narrative, descriptive, or reflective pieces. Figure of speech is one of the poem's components. (1990:22). According to Perrine (1977:5 77), using figures of speech or figurative language is a different method to give language a deeper meaning. Additionally, he discusses the various forms of figurative language in his work, including metonymy, personification, metaphor, simile, symbol, synecdoche, and hyperbole.

Based on the previous perspectives, we can summarize that poets use figurative language as a literary device to convey meaning, express feelings, and create lifelike images in readers' minds. It includes a range of methods that crosswords in their actual meaning. Poetry is enhanced by figurative language, which develops the message and improves the literary experience. This study aims to analyze the types of figurative language and their means that are found in Emily Dickinson's poems.

2. THEORETICAL STUDY

Some authors have studied figurative language previously. The researcher completed this study with the assistance of earlier research. Numerous scholars analyze the context and meaning of poems in order to use them as figurative language. The first is the Thesis of Sindi Werdiningsih, a student of the English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Institute of Islamic Institute (IAIN) of Ponorogo, entitled "AN ANALYSIS OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE ON EMILY DICKINSON'S POEM ENTITLED I'LL TELL YOU HOW THE SUN ROSE". Her study aims to identify the different figurative language types used in the poem I'll Tell You How the Sun Rose and to reveal the meaning of the poem's content. She used Library research methods because all of the data were collected in libraries. The data were analyzed by using descriptive qualitative methode. The study of her poem reveals 13 different types of metaphorical language. They include one simile (8%), one symbolism (8%), two alliterations (15%), three personifications (23%), four metaphors (31%), and two imageries (15%). Thus, it may be said that metaphor is the most of figurative language in I'll Tell You How the Sun Rose.

The second research is THE ANALYSIS OF FIGURE OF SPEECH IN EMILY DICKINSON'S "SUCCESS IS COUNTED SWEETEST" "I HAD NO TIME TO HATE", AND "HAVE YOU GOT A BROOK IN YOUR LITTLE HEART" by Octavia Kurniawati and Mas' ulah from Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya. Their analysis aims to analyze the types of figure of speech, the possible meaning, and the total meaning of the Emily Dickinson's poems by using qualitative method. By this analysis, they found the figure of speech in the first poem "success is counted sweetest" are metaphore, Hyperbole, and Symbol. While in the second poem " I had no time to hate" the figure of speech are personification and symbol. And in the last poem "Have you got a Brook in your little heart" figure of speech are personification and allegory.

Based on previous research, the authors noted a number of similarities and differences. The focus on the subject of figurative language in Emily Dickinson's poetry, which developed through the studies, is one obvious similarity. Furthermore, a qualitative descriptive research methodology was utilised in both researches ensuring a detailed and complex analysis of the poetry. But there were also noticeable differences. Different Emily Dickinson poems were chosen for each study, which produced unique perspectives and insights. In addition, several expert theories were included in the studies; each study had a unique theoretical background to support the results. The variety of theories offered plenty of analytical approaches that enhanced our comprehension of Dickinson's use of figurative language as a whole.

3. RESEARCH METHODE

This analysis was designed by using the descriptive qualitative method as a way to give a detailed and comprehensive analysis of Emily Dickinson's usage of figurative language in her poems. Researchers may understand and describe the concept of figurative language completely by using the qualitative descriptive method, which is why it was selected. By means of a detailed and careful analysis of the poem, this study aims to identify, categorise, and evaluate the different kinds of figurative language used by Dickinson. Additionally, it will investigate the significance of these figurative elements in expressing themes, messages, and feelings in her poetry. Because literary works are complex and include subtleties, this technique guarantees that the analysis is conducted completely and contextually.

The methods for collecting data for this research were conducted by using online resources. The first step is to find and collect Emily Dickinson's poetry, which may be done by visiting a number of reputable digital libraries and literary websites. The primary sources

are the websites of university libraries that have collections of Emily Dickinson's writings, the Poetry Foundation, and Project Gutenberg.

After collecting poetry texts, the data is then organised and stored in digital format, which makes further analysis easier. To get further context for Dickinson's use of figurative language, the next step is to search for supporting literature. Research papers, articles, and electronic books are accessible to enhance comprehension and offer an effective theoretical structure using resources like JSTOR, Google Scholar, and SpringerLink.

During the whole process of collecting data from the internet, attention is paid to the legitimacy and credibility of the sources, making sure that only reputable academic sources that are popular in the literature are used. In addition, reference recording is done with great consideration to guarantee that all information collected can be tracked down and, if needed, validated. This method allows the study to collect detailed and relevant information for an investigation of figurative language in Emily Dickinson's poems.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter discusses research on the figurative language and meaning found in Emily Dickinson's poems, "The sky is low; the clouds are mean" and "We outgrow love like other things." And "hope is the thing with feathers." The researcher used Perrine's (1983) theory to analyse this poetry. The poem "The sky is low, the clouds are mean" contained one metaphor, two personifications, and two symbols. This poem contains four instances of figurative language, whereas the poem "We outgrow love like other things" contains two similes, one metaphor, and one personification. The third poem contains two symbols: two personifications, two hyperboles, and one simile. There are 16 instances of figurative language in the three poems. Because there are no sentences that display the indications, there is no additional usage of figurative language in these three poems.

Figurative Language Used in The Poem "The Sky is Low, The Clouds Are Mean"

a) Personification

The sky is low, the clouds are mean

(The sky is low, the clouds are mean – Line 1 – Poetry)

Dickinson uses personification in her poem "Clouds Are Mean." The terrifying and frightening atmosphere that the clouds depict in the lines above emphasises how alive the non-living thing is. The researcher makes a comparison between this and how the difficult

frightening aspect of nature itself causes tension and anxiety. This conveys the emotion of miserable hopelessness that surrounds the poem.

A narrow wind complains all day

(The sky is low, the clouds are mean – Line 5 – Poetry)

The poem's line, "A narrow wind complains all day," personifies the wind by giving it human characteristics and suggesting that it is constantly miserable. This creates a depressing and gloomy mood that reflects the speaker's or poet's inner loneliness, stress, and hardship. The personification contributes to highlighting the tense and depressing aspects of the relationship between emotions and environments.

b) Symbol

A travelling flake of snow

(The sky is low, the clouds are mean – Line 2 – Poetry)

Snowflakes symbolise the choices and changes made during a person's life. Their movements act as an example of how humans adapt to constant change. Because they are both beautiful and temporary, snowflakes serve as a reminder of how short life's experiences and moments are. Snowflakes show how people interact with and adapt to their surroundings, emphasizing the relationship between people and their environment. The word "travelling" suggests a choice or pause for thought, signifying a struggle between finishing a journey and continuing.

Across a barn or through a rut

(The sky is low, the clouds are mean – Line 3 – Poetry)

The phrase "Across a barn" shows going through an organised, perhaps comfortable, or safe zone, while "Through a rut" indicates heading through a challenging, well-worn path. Moving "through a rut" emphasises the importance of persistence and courage in getting over challenging circumstances. This contrast can represent the different struggles and journeys people take throughout their lives. The phrase "through a rut" might symbolise the decision-making process between easier, more predictable routes ("across a barn") and more difficult, unsure ones. Together, the barn and the rut draw attention to the various experiences encountered throughout life's journey—both the easier, more protected routes and the harder, more difficult ones.

c) Metaphore

Without her diadem

(The sky is low, the clouds are mean – Line 8 – Poetry)

The metaphor compares a person (or an entity like nature) without a diadem to a queen or other royal figure without a crown. This analogy focuses attention on the lack of something great and beautiful. By stating "without her diadem," the metaphor refers to a condition of loss, imperfection, or lesser greatness. It suggests that a person is not in their most complete or glorious state. The metaphor suggests images of misery or a downfall. A loss or lack of these qualities is suggested by the diadem's disappearance. It suggests a state of having lost one's previous glory, charisma, or strength.

Figurative Language Used in The Poem "We Outgrow Love Like Other Things"

a) Simile

We outgrow love like other things

(We outgrow love like other things – Line 1 – Poetry)

A simile is used in the poem "We Outgrow Love Like Other Things" to illustrate how temporary love is. By using the word "like," the poet directly creates a comparison between developing love and other growing things, showing how love, like hobbies or belongings, can eventually become out of date. The poet discusses themes of impermanence and the unavoidable changes that come with life in the poem's broader context. Emily Dickinson has a consistent theme throughout her work, which reveals an in-depth understanding of human relationships and emotions. By creating a comparison between love and other growing things, the simile suggests that we outgrow love in the same way that we outgrow hobbies or possessions. It is shown by this contrast that love is dynamic and changing.

Love in our childhood can be extremely passionate, like a toy or interest that fully attracts our attention when we are young. Love can change with maturity, becoming more stable and quieter to represent our values and interests. Love can eventually lose its importance and value, much like an old hobby, which can cause feelings of loss or nostalgia. The realisation of the mixed emotions related to transition can have an extensive emotional effect. It suggests that although love is valuable, it is also influenced by the same factors of ageing and development as other aspects of life. The term "outgrow" is especially dramatic since it suggests a necessary or natural process. It deepens the relationship by stating that growing out of love is a process of personal growth rather than a sign of failure.

This simile connects to the larger literary concepts of impermanence and time's passage. It refers to the idea that nothing in life stays the same and that letting go of the past and accepting the present while appreciating the past can often be necessary steps for personal growth.

Like costumes grandsires wore

(We outgrow love like other things – Line 4 – Poetry)

The researcher identifies this phrase as a simile because Dickinson uses the word 'like' to compare love to a costume worn by a great-grandfather. This comparison portrays love as something that can become outdated or irrelevant over time, much like old-fashioned clothing. By likening love to ancestral attire, Dickinson emphasizes how love, once important and meaningful, can transform into something nostalgic or obsolete. This simile effectively conveys the idea that feelings of love, like traditional costumes, can lose their relevance in the context of modern life.

b) Metaphore

And put it in the drawer

(We outgrow love like other things – Line 2 – Poetry)

One interpretation of the phrase 'And put it in a drawer' is that it refers to the decision of accepting or rejecting love. In this poem, the metaphor of placing something in a drawer symbolizes how love can be rejected or forgotten until it is no longer needed or seen. The author suggests that this is a reflection of how people deal with the changing nature of love over time. This allegory emphasizes that, like other aspects of life, love can be overlooked or diminish in significance.

c) Personfication

Till it an antique fashion shows

(We outgrow love like other things – Line 3 – Poetry)

The phrase "Till it is an antique fashion show" uses personification to depict love as something that can age and become outdated, much like fashion. Personification is the attribution of human characteristics to non-human things. In this case, love is given the ability to age and be put on display like an "antique fashion show," suggesting that love, once colourful and modern, can transform into something old-fashioned or nostalgic. This line emphasises the idea that love, over time, can lose its freshness and become something more reminiscent of the past.

Figurative Language Used in "Hope Is The Thing With Feathers"

a) Symbol

Hope is the thing with feathers

(Hope is the thing with feathers – Line 1 – Stanza 1)

Hope is symbolized as a bird in this poem. Just as a bird can soar above obstacles and navigate through different environments, hope provides a sense of freedom and resilience, enabling people to rise above their difficulties. Feathers symbolized as freedom, lightness, and the capacity to fly. They suggest that in addition to being real, hope also conveys a feeling of comfort and elevation that enables people to overcome obstacles.

And sore must be the storm

In this poem, the storm symbolizes the difficulties we experience in life. Dickinson utilizes the word "storm" to describe terrifying natural events that have the potential to blow out everything in the area. Similar to a storm, we face challenges in life that could destroy everything we have achieved, including our hopes and goals.

b) Personification

That perches in the soul,

And sings the tune without the words,

(Hope is the thing with feathers – Line 2-3 – Stanza 1)

Hope is given human qualities in this line by Emily Dickinson, who describes it as something that "perches" and "sings" in a person's soul. Hope is typically an elusive, invisible, difficult concepts to grasp or see. But Dickinson gives hope a more concrete and approachable presence by depicting it as a singing bird that perches. This artwork suggests that hope is a constant and soothing energy within of us rather than just a fleeting feeling. Hope is referred to as "perching" because it is thought of as a steady companion that is always there to provide support. In meanwhile, the image of hope "singing" shows its calming and uplifted energy, consistently providing comfort and inspiration. Dickinson personifies hope so clearly that it feels like a constant and essential aspect of our inner life, a strong presence that sticks with us even in the darkest hours of despair.

That could abash the little bird

That kept so many warm.

(Hope is the thing with feathers – Line 7-8 – Stanza 2)

Dickinson uses the word "abashed" and the bird's ability to retain warmth to humanize the small bird. Although we are aware that Bird is only an animal in the real world, she used

the word "Bird" to illustrate how easily hope can be destroyed, even if it provides us with the calmness and courage to face the challenges of life. In this poem, "the bird" is personified as a breakable object and contains the human capacity for keeping warmth.

c) Hyperbole

And sweetest in the gale is heard;

(Hope is the thing with feathers – Line 6 – Stanza 2)

In this line, hyperbole is used to describe the hope that always provides strong energy and inspiration, even in the most difficult situations. By stating that the song is heard even in the middle of a storm that might be chaotic, It conveys the meaning that even though we have a very bad day, hope will always stay in ourselves and give us the spirit to pass the challenges.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,

And on the strangest sea;

(Hope is the thing with feathers – Line 9-10 – Stanza 3)

Hyperbole is used in the sentences to highlight how amazing and unlimited hope is. The phrase "chilliest land" refers to a very chilly place that is far colder than usual. Dickinson uses hyperbole to convey that hope survives even in the most difficult situations. This exaggeration emphasizes how strong hope is and how it persists under the most extreme conditions. The phrase "strangest sea" emphasizes how foreign and strange everything is. It refers to a sea that is not only uncommon but also radically mysterious and strange. The idea that hope is present and visible even in the most strange and unexpected circumstances is emphasized by this hyperbole.

d) Metaphore

Hope is the thing with feathers

(Hope is the thing with feathers – Line 1 – Stanza 1)

Dickinson likens hope to a feathered bird. Because of their ability to fly, birds are frequently connected to freedom. The analogy means that hope, like a bird, persists through difficulty without trembling. Dickinson suggests that hope gives people a sense of freedom and possibility, empowering them to overcome their challenges and limitations, by drawing a comparison between hope and a bird.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

This study analyses the use of figurative language in selected poems by Emily Dickinson, specifically focusing on how she uses literary devices to convey meaning and emotion. The main topic is to identify and categorize various types of figurative language, such as metaphors, similes, hyperboles, personifications, and symbols, in Emily Dickinson's poems.

The authors reveal that Dickinson frequently employs these devices to enhance the themes and emotional depth of her poetry. For example, in "The Sky is Low; The Clouds are Mean," Dickinson uses personification to give life to natural elements, creating a gloomy and tense atmosphere that mirrors the poet's internal feelings. Similarly, in "We Outgrow Love Like Other Things," she uses similes and metaphors to express the transient nature of love, comparing it to outdated costumes and objects that lose their significance over time. She also uses personifications, metaphors, hyperbole, and symbols in the final poem, "Hope is the thing with feathers," in order to convey her viewpoint about the importance of hope and spirit in a person's life.

Overall, the study highlights how essential Dickinson's use of figurative language is to her poetic expression, allowing her to effectively and clearly communicate difficult concepts and feelings. Descriptive qualitative research methodology is applied, which involves a thorough examination of the poetry to determine the underlying meanings of the figurative language used.

Suggestion

In order to better understand how these elements affect the overall meaning and emotional impact of Emily Dickinson's poems, it is recommended that future studies look at other areas of her poetry, such as word choice, rhyme system, and poetic structure. In order to emphasise the unique aspects of Dickinson's writing style, further research might be done by comparing her use of figurative language with those of other poets from the same era. It is expected that this study will also be used as a reference by researchers who are interested in the analysis of figurative language in literature.

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