

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGES USED IN ROBERT FROST'S SELECTED POEMS

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### Abstract

Figurative language is a language that increases the beauty of a literary work, shortens the author's narrative and it could create a certain feeling and atmosphere. Those characteristics were difficult to understand for people who learn or read a poem. The researcher examined the figurative language in Robert Frost's selected poem entitled *Into My Own, Stars, Reluctance, The Vantage Point, and A Prayer in Spring* which has never been studied before, both figurative languages and the messages in the poem. The purpose of this research is to find out the types of figurative languages and the messages expressed through figurative language in each of Robert Frost's selected poems. This study used the descriptive qualitative method. The theories used in this research are figurative language theory by Lawrence Perrine and message theory by several experts and sources. Types of figurative languages found were simile, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, hyperbole, and understatement. The most commonly used is personification. The messages reveal from figurative languages in the poems are: fight our fear of success, what we get is what we do, God is all-wise, nature can heal us, and ask God for everything.

**Keywords:** Figurative Language, Messages, Poems

### INTRODUCTION

Literary works are produced through a process of long reflection that is in contact with the nature of life. Literary works of literature are created by authors with deep appreciation so that they can touch the soul in the reader's imagination. Therefore, literary works contain the author's message to be conveyed to the reader. However, the meaning and the message are often conveyed indirectly or implicitly, so the reader is not easy to express the message, (Safitri, 2017).

Literary works include novels, prose, drama, and poems. Poem is a literary work that is imaginative by expressing the emotions and thoughts of the author. One of the elements of the poem is figurative language. The researcher defined Figurative language as a language that increases the beauty of a literary work, shortens the author's narrative and it can create a certain feeling and atmosphere. Based on Daniswara (2016), The figurative language mostly used in writing poems to represent the author's feelings can also make the poem more feel alive, attract attention, create a sense of comfort, and most importantly, create a clear image for readers. Those characteristics were difficult to understand for people who learn or read a poem. Then, the researcher formulated the problem statement into two questions, as follow:

1. What kinds of figurative languages are used in Robert Frost's selected poems?
2. What messages are revealed through figurative languages in each of Robert selected poems?

### Review of Related Literature

#### *Poems*

According to Robert Frost, poem is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words. Perrine (1969) additionally said that to understand a poem, it must contain not only your intelligence but also your senses, emotions, and imagination. A poem is an expression of the poet's feelings and thoughts based on the experience or imagination of the poet himself. Poems are not the same as when we read a story, a poem has a very deep meaning

because it requires your senses, emotions, and imagination to understand it, and that's why poems are hard to understand.

Based on I. A. Richards in Sari (2019) some of the classic elements of the poem are:

- 1) Theme, it refers to the poet. the reader must more or less know the background of the poet so as not to misinterpret the poem.
- 2) Feeling, we can catch the poet's tone and feeling if the poem is read aloud in poem reading or recitation. The feelings that animate poems can be feelings of joy, sadness, etc.
- 3) Message, the message is the impression that the reader catches after reading the poem.
- 4) One and Atmosphere, the tone expresses the poet's attitude towards the reader and the atmosphere is the state of the soul (psychological effect) of the reader after reading the poem.

### ***Figurative language***

According to Perrine (1969), Figurative language is a language that cannot be taken literally. Figurative language has several characteristics; it gives the reader entertainment in a literary work; it can put an emotional feeling into a statement and sparks the imagination when conveying it and that makes literature more interesting. Figurative language is a language that increases the beauty of a literary work, shortens the author's narrative and it can cause a certain feeling and atmosphere. Perrine (1969) states there are twelve types of figurative languages, as follow:

#### ***Simile***

Simile is a comparative figure of speech that compares one thing with another thing that has a different meaning but is considered similar, it uses the words "like", "as", "resemble", etc.

For example:

*"How public, like a frog"* - Emily Dickinson

*"He moves like a flash"*

From the example above, Emily expresses the contrast between listener/reader to a frog and the second line is comparison between human and flash.

#### ***Metaphor***

Perrine (1969) stated that metaphor and simile are similar. Both are comparisons between various things. The handiest difference between them is the use of conjunctions. In similes, the poet makes use of conjunctions which include: like, as, from, just like, resembles, or appears to; while in Metaphors evaluate two objects without the use of conjunctions including 'like' and 'as'. It often makes indirect, implied or hidden comparisons between unrelated objects. It uses one thing to mean another and makes comparisons between the two.

For example:

*"Dying is a wild night and a new path."* – Emily Dickinson

The example of metaphor above compares death with a wild night and a path. It could mean that dying can be very crazy and hard, but you will eventually get past it and start on a new journey.

#### ***Personification***

Personification is a figurative language that gives human traits to animals, objects or things as if they live or have human nature. In personification, an item or gadgets that are not human are given human characteristics due to the resemblance between the object and a human. It is straightforward to keep in mind as it includes human characters in it. It can be concluded that personification is a style of language that treats inanimate objects as if they were alive, or have human characteristics.

For example:

*"Shadows--hold their breath"*

In the example above, the shadow acts like a human in which the verb is held. It is placed as a shadow as a human being that holds its breath.

#### *Apostrophe*

The apostrophe is defined as greeting a person who isn't always present or something that isn't always human as though it's far alive and can answer what is stated. Apostrophes also are a form of personification wherein non-human or animate things are immediately addressed as though they were human or animate.

For example:

*"This is my letter to the world"*

In the example above, Emily Dickinson expresses her emotion by addressing people in the world using the "world" word where it is not giving her a reply.

#### *Synecdoche*

Synecdoche is the use of elements for the entire. Synecdoche is divided into elements: Pars Pro Toto and Totem Pro Parte. In which the figurative language states that a part of a component is to say all of these components (pars pro toto) or uses all parts to state some of it (totem pro parte).

For example:

*"The eyes around – had wrung them dry"*

Here the word "eyes" stands for the people or the audience that is watching the speakers. The eyes in the example refer to the audience. The speaker does not refer to the humans around him, it refers to their dry eyes from running out of breath and tears.

#### *Metonymy*

Metonymy can be interpreted as something that is compared to something else with a certain name. In its use, metonymy figure of speech is often read with the name of an item, the name of a place, the name of a character, or the name of certain events. In free poems, often the use of metonymy figure of speech is a diction attached to an object.

For example:

*"Boots on the ground"*

The word "Boots" relates to people who work in the military field. so it can be interpreted that "Boots" means soldiers.

#### *Symbol*

Symbol is a figurative language used to describe something. So, fortunately to describe something the poet does not directly use clear language but is described with symbols. Symbolic language is widely used in poem with the aim of adding to the impression of the beauty of the word. For example:

*"Ah Sun-flower, weary of time,*

*Who countest the steps of the sun" - William Black*

In this example, the sunflower is symbolized as a human, while the sun is symbolized as life. This poem describes how humans go through their lives from time to time.

#### *Allegory*

Allegory is figurative language that conveys an intention or explains something not literally, but through narrative or depiction. Allegories contained in a particular story or description will make the explanation more complex. Allegory is sometimes associated with a metaphor or simile and sometimes a related series of symbols.

For example:

*“Life is like riding a bicycle, you have to keep pedaling and moving forward to maintain balance.”*

In this example, life is symbolized like we ride a bicycle, it also explains how it is like life that must keep moving forward and keep pedaling to stay standing.

#### *Paradox*

The paradox is a real contradiction which is true after all. It can be a situation or a statement. A paradox is a statement that seems to contradict itself or contradicts what is generally considered to be true but still contains truth.

For example:

*“Heavenly Hurt, gives us”*

The example above is contradictory because we know that in heaven there is no pain and suffering.

#### *Hyperbole*

Hyperbole is a state that something or an exaggerated situation by using words contains greater meaning from the real meaning.

For example:

*“Since then 'tis centuries and yet  
Feels shorter than the day”*

This showed that the woman had been dead for ages but she felt like it had only been a day.

#### *Understatement*

Understatement, it is the opposite of overstatement. Understatement is saying less important than the real situation. Understatement is saying less important than the real situation. Understatement is the opposite of overstatement. As we can notice, overstatement is saying more important, while understatement is saying less important than what the words mean.

For example:

*“I have this tiny little tumor on the brain.”*

In the example, we can see how the speakers say that he has a tiny tumor on his brain, but we know that the tumor is one of the dangerous diseases and he is not in good condition.

#### *Irony*

Irony is stating the opposite of what is meant. In other words, the irony is hiding and covering up. Irony can be subtle but can also convey a rough meaning. The irony is classified as a figurative language of opposition or satire.

For example:

*“The police station gets robbed”*

In this line, the speaker uses irony saying how the police station gets robbed while the place itself is a place to accommodate those who have committed crimes.

### **Meaning**

#### *Conceptual meaning*

The meaning that emphasizes the logical meaning is known as conceptual meaning. This is referred to as 'denotative' or 'cognitive' meaning. Although it is possible that each language user's conceptual meaning differs, it is assumed in this study that the conceptual meaning is the meaning written in the dictionary.

Example:

*“Beside the lake, beneath the trees” - Daffodils by William Wordsworth*

The phrase "beneath the trees." It indicates that the daffodils are growing in the shade of the trees rather than beneath them.

#### *Connotative meaning*

Connotative meaning is the expressive value of an expression based on what it refers to. A connotation has beyond its literal meaning. Poets use connotation in poems to help create mood and tone, as well as control how a reader will think of a person, place, thing, or concept.

Example:

*“The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—” - Out, Out— by Robert Frost*

The poet uses the word "life" to refer to the blood flowing out of the boy's arm. This connotes that the boy did not lose so much "blood" that he died.

### **Messages**

According to Wulandari and Malik (2015) there are several ways that can be used to detect messages conveyed in a poem, they are:

1. Read the poem carefully.
2. Pay attention to the title of the poem, because the title of the poem will give clues about the main purpose of the poem.
3. Observing the diction or word-for-word chosen by the author (language code), especially those that refer to the local cultural context (cultural code), to look for referential or contextual meanings.
4. Pay attention to the connotative meaning (literary code), to determine the textual meaning.
5. Pay attention to the way it is delivered and the figurative language.
6. Get the message that the poem wants to convey.

So, a message is really important in a literary work because it is a goal or something that the narrator wants to say to the reader, either directly or indirectly, also can be interpreted as a medium to help readers understand the meaning of life This provides readers with a different perspective on life.

### **METHOD**

The qualitative method is a developing method that has opened questions, interview data, observation data, documents, and audiovisuals. It involves text and image analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) claim that qualitative research involves interpretive and naturalistic approaches. This study uses a qualitative method because poems can be referred to as abstract or concrete, and to analyze it, we must use a qualitative method with steps to read poems intensively. After that, find the messages found through the figurative language in the poem. In analyzing the data, the researcher uses the Expressive approach. This approach focuses on the efforts of the author or poet to express his ideas through the style (author's style) in literary works so that it attracts the emotions or feelings of the reader.

The primary data for this research poem was taken from a book entitled “Classic Poem Series of Robert Frost” published by PoemHunter.Com – The World's Poem Archive, London (2004). Secondary data will be taken from other sources which are related to the primary data such as the literary books, thesis, articles, journals, and websites that are related to this research. The researcher collects the data in this research is based on the steps, they are:

1. Download book entitled “Classic Poem Series of Robert Frost” from the website PoemHunter (<https://www.poemhunter.com/robert-frost>)
2. Make the transcript of the selected poems “Into My Own, Stars, Reluctance, The Vantage Point, and A Prayer in Spring”. This will make it easier for researchers to analyze poems.
3. Read and comprehend the poems “*Into My Own, Stars, Reluctance, The Vantage Point, and A Prayer in Spring.*” by Robert Frost. The researcher reads poems through 3 stages of reading. The first read is to understand the concept of a poem, the second read is to classify the types of figurative language in a poem and the third read is to analyze the meaning and the message contained in the poem.
4. Take notes on the lines or words that are identified as figurative language.

To analyze this data, the researcher used the theory from Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) which is analyzing data with three steps: data condensation, presenting data (data display), and drawing conclusions or verification (conclusion drawing and verification).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

The researcher discovered 32 extracts form of figurative languages in the poems with word or lines in Robert Frost's selected poems. There are 8 types of figurative languages and 16 messages found, which will be explained in this section.

### ***Type of Figurative Languages used in Robert Frost's selected poems***

#### ***Symbol***

Extract 1:

(Into My Own, line 1)

*"One of my wishes is that those **dark trees**"*

In the first line of the poem, we can see the figurative language of **symbols** in the word "Dark tree" describe a dark forest that he wishes. The dark forest is symbolized as a challenge and fear that he wants to face.

Extract 15:

(Stars, line 7)

*"To **white rest**, and a place of rest"*

In this extract, the word "white rest " is indicated as a symbol. Symbol was used to describe something by comparing it with something else. In this line, the white rest is symbolized as the last rest or death. The color white widely used by poets to describe holiness, purity, and death.

#### ***Understatement***

Extract 3:

(Into My Own, line 3)

*"Were not, as 'twere, **the merest mask of gloom**,  
But stretched away unto the edge of doom."*

In this line, the sentence "the merest mask of gloom" is indicated as an understatement. We know that trees are something big and can be called a forest. So, this poem describes the dark trees in the first line, nothing more than just a small thing.

#### ***Synecdoche***

Extract 6:

(Reluctance, line 4)

*"I have climbed the hills of view  
And **looked at the world**, and descended;"*

In this extract, it is indicated as **synecdoche**. Synecdoche is saying some parts but represent all parts (pars pro toto) or vice versa. In the sentence "look at the world" is synecdoche pars pro toto, where it says some part which is the view that he looks when he sees the scenery at the top of the hill but represents that he sees the world.

#### ***Simile***

Extract 16:

(Stars, line 10)

*"Those stars **like** some snow-white"*

In this extract, the word “like” indicated as **simile**. simile is comparing something with something else using “like”, “as”, “resemble”, etc. In this line, the author comparing stars with snow-white.

Extract 28:

*“Like nothing else by day, **like** ghosts by night;”*

In this extract, the word “like” in line above indicated as **simile**. one of characteristics of simile is used like, as, etc. This line comparing the orchard is like a ghost in night. the poet's vision of his garden at night, his garden looks like a ghost with white blossom.

### **Metonymy**

Extract 18:

(The Vantage Point, line 1)

*“If tired of trees I seek again **mankind**,”*

In this extract, the word “mankind” indicated as **metonymy**. Metonymy is replacing the name of something to the object that associated. In this line, the word “mankind” is replaced the word “society” or “people”.

### **Hyperbole**

Extract 22:

(The Vantage Point, line 11)

*“The sunburned hillside sets my face aglow,”*

In this extract, the word “the sunburned hillside sets my face aglow” indicated as **hyperbole**. In this line, it was exaggerated that the hillside gets burned by the sun, thus making his face aglow.

Extract 4:

(Into My Own, line 4)

*“Were not, as 'twere, the merest mask of gloom,*

***But stretched away unto the edge of doom**”*

In this extract, the word “the edge of doom” is indicated as **hyperbole** where it is exaggerating something more than the reality. We know that ordinary masks only have the size of a hand, but in this line the mask is described stretched until to the edge of doom. According to the *Britannica dictionary*, the word “doom” means a bad event that cannot be avoided or a terrible fate. So, the author depicts his dream about his future will bring him trouble.

### **Apostrophe**

Extract 26:

(A Prayer in Spring, line 1)

*“**Oh**, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;”*

In this extract, it is indicated as an **apostrophe**. The author addressed “oh” to express his wish about flowers to God. This line depicts the prayer of the speaker about a flowers or spring coming to him.

### **Personification**

Extract 2:

(Into My Own, line 2)

*“One of my wishes is that those dark trees*

*So **old and firm** they scarcely show the breeze”*

In the second line of the poem, the word “old and firm” is classified as **personification**, where the trees have the attitude and human nature that is firm and old. In this line, it describes the gloom of the dark forest that doesn't even show the wind. It depicted how big and scary the challenges to go through.

Extract 11:

(Reluctance, line 18)

“But ***the feet question ‘Whither?’***”

In this extract, it is indicated as **personification**. The author gives human character to his feet as if the feet are asking him “whither”. It depicts the feeling of the poet where to go after those events.

Extract 13:

(Stars, line 2)

“O'er our ***tumultuous snow,***”

In this extract, the word “tumultuous” was indicated as **personification**. The author gave the snow characteristic of humans by using the word tumultuous. According to *Cobuild Advanced English Dictionary* in Collins dictionary, tumultuous means loud, noise, or an event that includes many exciting events and confused feelings, and this is one of human character. This line depicts the feelings of the authors how the snow fell to the ground.

Extract 25:

(The Vantage Point, line 13)

“I smell the earth, I smell ***the bruised plant,***”

In this extract, the word “bruised” is indicated as **personification**. personification is giving the object human characteristics. In this line, the author described the plant getting bruised.

Extract 29:

(A Prayer in Spring, line 7)

“And make us happy in ***the happy bees,***”

In this extract, the phrase “the happy bees” indicated as **personification**. The bees described have a human characteristic which is happiness. This line depicts the speaker's hopes for the fertility of his farmlands.

### **The messages that revealed through Figurative Languages**

After analyzing the figurative language in poems, in this section, the researcher discusses the messages that are revealed through figurative language in each of Robert Frost's selected poems which have been analyzed in the previous section. In determining the message, the researcher uses expert theory, other researchers and related sources. Researchers divide extracts or lines that have been analyzed based on the messages conveyed.

#### ***Fight our fear of success (Into My Own)***

In this poem, Robert Frost describes his desire to overcome his fear of success. We can see in extract 1 which says “*One of my wishes is that those dark trees*” and extract 2 “*So old and firm they scarcely show the breeze*”, the fear is described as a big, dark and scary tree that does not even show the wind that blows. As a human, we have so many kinds of fears such as; fear of the future, loss, failure, trying new things, etc. This poem gives us a message to fight the fear of success. what is the fear of success? in *jackcanfield.com*, the fear of success is a condition where a person avoids success because of fears that all his efforts will be in vain or even worse, or worried that his dreams are too high and cannot be achieved, or scared that his success will turn himself into a different person such as relationships and the reactions of those around him (social reactions).

#### ***What we get is what we do (Reluctance)***



The message in this poem is "life is short to conquer the world". We can see in extract 6 in line "And looked at the world, and descended;" where it belongs to a figurative language, namely Synecdoche pars pro toto which says some but represents all parts. This represents the poet's feelings of how he passed through various challenges and obstacles by passing through fields, forests and hills so that in the end he arrived at the top of the hill. However, all he saw was the scenery he could see on the hill. This can be interpreted as how hard you try and through everything, in the end what you can achieve is only what you do and not beyond that.

#### ***God is all-wise (Stars)***

The message revealed in the poem "Stars" is that God is all-wise. we can see in extract 17 "Minerva's snow-white marble eyes, Without the gift of sight." The last two lines of poetry are classified as symbols, precisely the word "Minerva" which is a symbol of wisdom. In this poem, the poet expresses his sadness and disappointment in God. It can be seen in the last line "Without the gift of sight", where the goddess of wisdom (Minerva) is not given the gift of sight and it seems useless to him. This relates to the background of the poem when a child his son was sick but he could not do anything and finally his son died. The poet describes how God is all wise but he feels it is useless.

We can take the message from the poem that God is all wise, but we sometimes misinterpret God's plan. Only God knows what is good and what is bad for us. God sometimes makes us feel lost or sad in order to receive his other gifts that are greater than before, the proof is that after Frost lost his child, he was blessed with 4 children.

#### ***Nature can heal us (A Vantage Point)***

It can be seen in extract 21 "Myself unseen, I see in white defined" line 5 in the poem is classified as a symbol on the word "white defined". white is symbolized as clean, fresh, and innocent. It can be concluded that when the poet is in nature, he feels fresh and calm. based on Adam (2018) nature is very good for our health. Based on research, when we make direct contact with the earth through our bare feet or lying on the grass, it is proven to reduce anxiety, stress, improve blood function and mood.

#### ***Ask God for everything (A Prayer in Spring)***

The message conveyed in this poem is ask God for everything you want. We can see in extract 26 "Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;" in the first line of a poem classified as an apostrophe. on the word "oh". The poet expresses his wish to God for spring to come to his garden. The message that can be taken from this figurative language is if we want something or need help even for the smallest thing, then ask God first.

### **Discussion**

The researcher discovered eight types of figurative language in this study: simile, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, hyperbole, and understatement. And the most commonly used is personification, which can be found in the poem's "reluctance" and "the vantage point". There are differences between this study and the previous study. In previous studies, the researchers concentrated on the most commonly used figurative language, its meaning, and its application. The researcher focuses not only on figurative language in this study but also on the messages revealed by figurative language and the messages that we can take from each poem

### **CONCLUSION**

Review throughout this section, the researcher reaches the results:

1. Types of figurative languages found were simile, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, hyperbole, and understatement.
2. The messages revealed from figurative language in the poems are: fight our fear of success, what we get is what we do, God is all-wise, nature can heal us, and ask God for everything.

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