



## RESEARCH PAPER

### A Stylistic Analysis of Robert Frost's Selected Poems

<sup>1</sup>Aneeqa Latif    <sup>2</sup> Dr. Muhammad Ajmal\*    <sup>3</sup>Dr. Saira Maqbool

1. M. Phil English Researcher, Department of Linguistics & Literature, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar (D. I. Khan Campus), KP, Pakistan
2. Associate Professor of English, Department of Linguistics & Literature, Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar (D.I. Khan Campus), KP, Pakistan
3. Assistant Professor, Department of English, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> February 14, 2022 <b>Accepted:</b> April 10, 2022 <b>Online:</b> April 15 21, 2022 <b>Keywords:</b> Language Features, Phonological Level, Semantic Level, Stylistic Analysis <b>*Corresponding Author:</b>  dr.muhammad.ajmal@qurtub.a.edu.pk	<p>This research purposes to analyze Robert Frost's selected poems from a stylistic point of view. The analysis is done under the two levels of language; semantic and phonological level. In phonological level of language, alliteration, consonance and assonance are used to depict the importance of the words in the poems. In semantic level of language, metaphor, symbols, and imagery are used to show the poem's meaning. The two language features in selected poems of Robert Frost are closely connected to each other convey the meaning of the poem that is battle and connection in human being's life. Stylistic analysis is used in linguistic to discover the various language features that are in the poems and create the meaning that can be found from the language features. This analysis is very helpful and innovative in understanding the basic concept of Robert Frost's selected poems. It depicts the basic difference between common language used in our daily life as compared to the literary poetic language that is used in literary poetic text. This portrays the difference in style and the impact of this variation on the reader. Robert Frost's poetry is very unique and it can easily get the attention of readers due to the versatile writing style of the poet and use of innovative features of language in poetry.</p>

## Introduction

Stylistics is the study of literary style. It is the study of use of language in a literary text. (Widdowson, 2004). Different writers, authors and poets use different and innovative style in their works. The word style is taken from a Latin word "stylus" which means the way in which something is written or done. Leech (2014) states that style is a way in which a literary text is spoken and written. Style is the only way in which the writers use artistic poetic and figurative language. The writers use different choice of words, form of a sentences and innovative poetic devices to convey their feelings, emotions and thoughts to the listeners and readers. Style also shows the behavior, attitude and personality of the writer. Short and Leech (1981) states, that style is used by authors and writers according to a specific context and it has meaning. Lawal (2004) has views about style. He says that style is a type of different linguistic expression which covers different features of a language. Haynes (1989) states about style as a study of individuality. It is the study of linguistics which shows how the writer's way of thinking is portrayed in literary works.

Stylistic is the analysis of various expressions of language. (Verdonk, 2002). Widdowson defines, stylistic as a very crucial study of literary discourse. (1975). Stylistics is the study which explores how readers do interaction with the use of language especially in a literary text. It is a science which covers all main aspects of the language. The main purpose of stylistics is not only to focus on the formal features of a literary text but to focus on significance of function with the interpretation of texts.

### **Introduction of the poet**

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco. He is a modern American poet. He is very famous for his poetry. In the field of poetry, he is considered a poet and a man of true wisdom. He has not only a knowledge of literature but he also has a knowledge of other fields such as history and philosophy. Frost uses a very distinctive style in his poetry. His poems are famous due to his unique style of poetry. He mostly uses simple and easy words. He uses a narrative language in his poems. He builds a very deep philosophy by using different natural objects. Style distinguishes a form of work from another form of work. The style of a writer portrays that how the writer thinks about a particular subject and thing. It is the tone and voice of every writer. Frost uses a different writing style in his poem.

In poetry, Frost describes the reality of a life and different situations of a life. He has shown the intellectual issues and problem of his modern era. He is also called a philosophical poet because he mostly talks about philosophy of life. His main purpose of life was not to write poems only for aesthetic pleasure of readers but also to show bitter realities of life. He is also known as a great poet of a nature. He depicts a number of natural objects in his poems. For him nature is so unpredictable. He has shown the dual characteristics of a nature. Nature gives pleasure and comfort to people but on the other hand, it is indifferent to man.

### **Introduction of Robert Frost's selected poems**

#### **Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

It is one the best poems of Frost. It depicts the true side of nature. The main idea of the poem is that a poet is passing through the woods which is completely filled with beautiful white snow. The lake is also frozen due to cold weather. The poet wishes to stop there in the woods and to enjoy this beautiful and pleasant sight. The poem depicts the nature and the relationship of a man with natural objects.

#### **Mending Walls**

The *Mending Wall* is one the well-known poems of the Frost. This poem is appreciated by readers. The poem is written in blank verse. Frost is a modern poet. In the 20th century, modern poets were not using blank verse in their poems but Robert Frost uses blank verse in his poem to get the praise from his readers. In this poem, the speaker is against of the wall. The wall stands for barrier between the speaker and his older neighbor. He considers this wall as a useless but the neighbor takes this wall as a positive sign. So, the main theme is the separation of people living in a same society. It also represents difficulty in change.

## The Onset

It is famous and best poem of Frost. It is one of the lyrical poems of Frost. The poem shows the views of a poet about the concept of a life and death. The poet also expresses his feelings about winter and spring season. For poet, winter is a cause of destruction in nature whereas spring is a season which comes to reconstruction of everything around us but this process cannot be change and in the same way the process of life and death cannot be change because it is a natural process. So, everyone around us should accept the concept of life and death with open heart.

## Levels of Language in Stylistic

There are four levels of a language in stylistics but the present research study will analyze only two levels of language; phonological level and semantic level.

### Phonological Level

Ofuya (2007) states, that phonology is the study of proper sequence of sounds in a language. Lodge also shares view about phonology that phonology is the linguistic organization in words. It is the study of various sound in a given language, word, phrase and sentences. It is the study of sound.

### Semantic Level

It is the study of meaning used in a language, word, phrase or a sentence. It is the study of meaning.

### Literature Review

The first study is done by Tia Xenia with the title *Stylistics Analysis of Maya Angelou's Still I Rise and Caged Bird*. (2015). The researcher focuses on two basic purposes. The first aim of the researcher is to show language features and themes in these two poems. The second aim is to explore and highlight same themes that is about black subjugation and existence of black people in society.

The second study is conducted by Mugair & Mahadi (2014). His research explores the two broad concept: style and stylistics. Part one is about stylistics. This part introduces stylistic as a linguistic device. It shows the language features that are related to the stylistic such as choice of words and figurative language. The second part focuses on the concept of style and works of some famous author on style.

The third research study is done by Sohail Qamar Khan (2015). He analyses statistically a novel *Black Beauty* by Anna Swell. The novel is autobiography of a horse named black beauty. The researcher has focused on the form, structure, meaning, repetition of sounds, punctuation, spelling, dashes and pictures.

The fourth study is conducted by Rabia Mahmood and Anila Jamal (2015) on the William Blake's poem *Holy Thursday I*. The is analyzed with the help of stylistics and different features of language. The language of the poem is plain but its theme is universal. The researcher analyzed the structure, style, form of William Blake 's poem. The poet has



conveyed his thoughts feelings by using different stylistic devices. Short (1996) states that Stylistics is a linguistic approach to the literary text.

The fifth research study is conducted by Hira Ali to analyze the poem *Hope is the thing of the feathers*. The researcher has used the stylistic techniques and different levels of language such as grammatical lexical phonological and graphological levels. The researcher has also focused on the style, structure and themes of the poem. The tone of the poem is optimistic. Hope is compared to the bird. she depicts that hope always remain with us.

The sixth research study is conducted by Yazan Shaker Almahmeed. The research study focuses on the stylistic analysis of the short story *The Little Match Girl*. This study is analyzed with four levels of language: phonological level, syntactic level, semantic level and graphological level. The language of the author is unique and eye catching. The researcher has worked on the use of words, proper sequence of sentences and arrangement of words.

The seventh research study is conducted by Aatika Asad (2020). The researcher presents a stylistic analysis of Mohsin Hamid story *A Beheading*. This analysis is based on lexical and morphological level of language. The story is about a middle-class man. The research is helpful and useful to depict the style of Mohsin Hamid and his use of innovative language. According to Leech and Short (1981), style is the use of words and vocabulary in a specific situation.

The eight-research study is conducted by Zahida Batool on the Stylistic analysis of *Daffodil*. The poem is written by a romantic poet Wordsworth. He is also called the poet of nature because he depicts natural objects in his poems. The analysis is done on the basis of graphological level (grammar), phonological level (repetition of sounds in words) and semantic level (meaning in a language). Stylistic features are used to show the unseen beauty of poet's mind and thought. The theme of the poem is beauty of nature.

The ninth research study is conducted by Muhammad Ismail Memon. He has done stylistic analysis on the poem *If* Rudyad Kipling. The research of the study has depicted language features and level of language which are morphological and pragmatic. The poem is written in form of advice to poet's son. The finding of the research helps the readers to understand the concept of stylistic and various levels of language.

The tenth study is done by Sarab Kadir Mugair on Oscar Wilde poem *The Nightingale and the Rose*. In this research study, the researcher uses a different style to show his artistic expressions of language. The stylistic features of language used by Oscar Wilde gives his literary work a proper sequence and cohesion.

### **Material and Methods**

The researchers used qualitative method to analyze the features of language and levels of language. The data is collected and analyzed from famous selected poems of Robert Frost. The researcher has selected the poems of Frost as the data. Then the researcher analyzed the poems which contained the important themes of nature, society, civilization and human life.

The researcher has studied the famous articles related to Frost's poems which are mainly related to nature and worldly life of human beings. Finally, the researcher has

analyzed two levels of language in data. In the phonological level of language, the researcher has focused on alliteration, assonance and consonance. In the semantic level of language, the researcher has focused on the several literary devices such as metaphor, imagery and symbolism. Through these devices, the researcher has constructed the meaning in the language of poems.

## Results and Discussion

In this section, the researchers discussed in detail the stylistic features present in selected poems of Robert Frost.

### Phonological level in poems of Robert Frost

In this part of research, the research has discussed phonological level of language. In phonological level, sound which creates rhythmic language and there is repetition of various sounds in words, phrases and sentences. The phonological level contains alliteration (repetition of same sound in words), resonance (the use of similar vowel sounds) and consonance (the repetition of same consonant sounds in words).

### Alliteration in the poems of Robert Frost

Alliteration is the repetition of similar consonant sounds in the same lines of the poems. It is used artistically by Robert Frost in his selected poems. It is also known as cluster because each sound in a cluster form can be clearly heard in a line of stanza. According to the definition of Bradford, alliteration is the repetition of cluster consonant sounds in a single sentence or a phrase. (2005 p.16)

In the poem alliteration occurs when same sounds are continuously repeated in the same line of the stanza. Robert Frost uses alliteration in his all famous and well-known poems to emphasize his sentences and subjects of his lines. The main purpose of Frost using alliteration in his poems is to get the attention of his listeners and readers.

### Alliteration in the poem *The Onset* by Robert Frost:

Frost uses alliteration in his famous and heart touching poem *The Onset*. It is the lyrical poem of Frost. It is considered by critics a remaining part of Frost another famous poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. In this poem, alliterations are as follows:

Wood, With (Line 3)

Been, Begun (Line 11)

Four, Feet (Line 15)

See, Snow (Line 18)

Frost uses alliteration in his another well know poem *The Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. In this poem the alliteration can be seen in the following given words. For instance,

Whose, Wood (Line1)

His, House (Line 2)

Watch, Woods (Line 4)

He, His, Harness (Line 9)

Similarly, Frost uses alliteration to make his poems versatile and unique. Almost in his every poem the readers can see the evidences of alliteration. Another famous poem *Mending Wall* is full of alliterations. For example,

That, There (Line 1)

Spill, Sun (Line 3)

We, Walk (Line 13)

Good, Good (Line 27)

Alliteration is a very famous literary device. In this device same sounds are repeated in a sequence of words that are very much close to each other. This technique plays a very significant role in poetry and poetic stanza of poems. It gives a musical touch to the structure of verses in poems. It is a very famous poetic tool in which words are brought together and make a proper and well-arranged pattern in writing of poems.

### Assonance in the poems of Robert Frost

Assonance is repetition of vowel sound in the lines of stanza. It occurs in poems when there is a repetition of vowel sounds. Frost is expert in using assonance in his poems. We can see the example of assonance in *Mending wall* by Robert Frost. The vowel sound *e* in *Frozen* and *Under* (Line 2). Then *e* vowel sound in words *Them* and *Them* (Line 10). Again, there is *o* vowel sound in *Some* and *Some* (Line 17.) The vowel sound *a* in words *Have* and *Balance* (Line 18.) The repetition of vowel sound *i* in words *Finger*, *With*, *Handling* (Line 20). Again, there is repetition of vowel sound *o* in words *Good* and *Good* (Line 27). There is repetition of vowel sound *e* in words *He* and *See* (Line 38.)

Then we can see assonance in Robert Frost another poem *The Onset*. In this poem he has used assonance sound and repeated vowel sounds in lines of poem. In this point we can clearly see same vowel sound in words or syllables. There is repetition of *a* vowel sound in words *Always* and *Same* (Line 1). Then again there is repetition of vowel sound *a* in words *Last* and *Gathered* (Line 2). The same vowel sound *e* in words *Feet* and *Deep* (Line 15). Again, there is repetition of vowel sound *a* in words *Maple* and *Against*. There is repetition of vowel sound *o* in words *Snow* and *Go* (Line 18). Frost uses assonance in his well-known poem *The Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* in the first stanza of the poem *o* sound in *Wood* and *Know*, in *House* and *Though*, in *Wood* and *Snow*. In the second stanza of the poem, *o* vowel sound is repeated. The vowel sound *o* in words *Woods* and *Frozen*. In the fourth stanza of the poem once again *o* vowel sound is repeated in words such as *Woods*, *Lovely*, *Before* and *Go*.

Similarly, there is a repetition of vowel sound *u* in many words. In the first stanza, *u* sound in words *House* and *Though*. In the second stanza there is again *u* vowel sound in *Without* and *Though*. Then there is a repetition of vowel sound *a* in many words of the poem.

Such as **a** sound in Farmhouse and Near, Darkest and Year of the second stanza. Then again, **a** sound in Harness and Shake, Easy and Flake of the third stanza.

Then there is repetition of **e** vowel sounds in many words of the poem such as **e** sound is used in Village, House, See, Hear of the first stanza. In fourth stanza **e** sound is used in Lovely, Deep, Before and Sleep. Frost has used these vowel sounds in a sequence to produce an effective rhythm in the minds of listeners and readers of his poems.

### Consonance in the poems of Robert Frost

Consonance is the repetition of consonant sound in words, phrases and sentences of the poems. Frost also uses consonance in all famous poems. It produces a melodious affect and creates a lyrical feeling in the poem. Frost uses this device in almost all his famous poems. In his famous poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. We can clearly see consonance in the poem such as the repetition of the consonant sound **g** in Village and Though. In the third stanza of the poem **y** sound is repeated in words such as Easy and Downy.

Similarly, Frost uses consonance in his other famous poem *The Onset*. In the poem consonant sound **l** is repeated many times in words such as in words Shall and All (Line 4). Then **r** sound is repeated in words such as Uncovered and Ground. (Line 17). In the poem **k** sound is repeated in words such as Check and Cloak. Again, **r** sound is repeated in words Water and Slender (Line 19).

Then Frost uses consonance in another famous poem *Mending Wall*. The researcher will highlight the consonance in this poem. In the poem consonant sound **n** is repeated such as in words Frozen and Under (Line 2). Then **t** sound is repeated in words such as Left, Not and Stone (Line 7). Again, **d** consonant sound is repeated in words such as Would and Hiding (Line 8). Then sound **h** is used in words such as Each and Each (Line 16). In the poem **l** sound is used in words such as Nearly and Ball (Line 17). Then **r** sound is used in words such as Wear, Our and Fingers. (Line 20). We can see **m** sound in words such as Himself and Him. (Line 38) Then **p** sound in words such as Grasped and Top. (Line 39).

### Semantic Level in the Poems of Robert Frost

The second most important level of language is semantic level of language. According to the definition of Simpson, semantic level is the meaning of different words and sentences in literary works (2004 p.5). According to the definition of Wales, there are four very crucial types of semantic level such as sentence semantics then narrative semantic, literary semantics and the last is lexical semantics. (2011 p.379).

All these four types are very important but the most famous one is lexical semantics which focuses on figurative language. Frost uses lexical semantic or figurative language in his famous poems. The figure of speech is used in the poetry to gain the attention of the listeners and readers. Frost uses metaphor, imagery and symbolism in poems. It is a famous trick of poets to get the attention of their readers by using figurative language.



## **Metaphors in the Poems of Robert Frost**

Metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things without using as and like in line. In simile clearly words as and like is used but this is not the case in metaphor. In metaphor these two words are not used. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which completely two different things or ideas are compared. Metaphors are mostly used in poetry to add some beautiful colors and charm to their poetic stanzas. In poetry, metaphors help the listeners and readers to understand a complex thought of poet in a very easy way. Good writers or poets know how to use metaphors in their works. For Frost, metaphor is everything in poetry. He considers it heart of the poetry. He believes that it is the main job of the artist to provide innovative metaphors due to which the universe and the things around us can be clearly understood.

Frost uses metaphor in his poem *The Onset*. The “hissing of snow” in the poem is compared to the evil sound of the serpent. So, this metaphor refers to the evil and something bad. So, Frost uses metaphor in a very artistic way to convey a completely different idea. Then Frost uses metaphor in another famous poem *Mending Wall*. The “wall” in the poem is used as an extended metaphor that is present between the speaker of the poem and his neighbor. So here this metaphor shows that speaker and neighbor are living on the opposite side of the Wall. The wall is a barrier between the speaker and his neighbor. Then the metaphor can be seen in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. In this poem the extended metaphor is used such as “miles to go before I sleep”. In this line the miles represent the Journey of life and sleep here represents the death in the poem.

## **Imagery in the selected poems of Robert Frost**

Imagery is a part of figurative language. It is used in the poems by many poets. The purpose of using imagery is to make the listeners feel the various things through their own five senses. In the poem *Mending Wall*. Frost uses many hearts touching symbols such as the word “darkness” (Line 41). In the poem the word darkness shows the something evil or bad. In the area of poetry, the word darkness shows evil thing. Then imagery is used by Frost in another famous poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. Many famous images are used such as woods, house, lake and these images help the readers to see all these things through the senses of sight. Woods is used as an imagery which provides comfort to a lonely person or traveler.

The example of imagery can be seen in the poem *The Onset*. In the poem, the readers can see a visual imagery. It is shown through “gathering snow” (Line 2), “dark woods” (Line 3) and then “four feet” (Line 14). So, all these words in poem appeals to the senses of human beings and creates a special description on the mind of the readers and listeners of the poem.

## **Symbolism in the selected poems of Robert Frost**

Symbolism depicts various ideas indirectly. In symbolism, the poets do not convey the meaning directly but the meaning is conveyed indirectly. There are many poems Frost in which he used various symbols to convey meaning indirectly. In the poem *The Onset* “night” symbolizes sadness everywhere. Then the dark wood shows the evil of the worldly life. It also symbolizes mystery of life; one cannot run away from mysterious things of this world. The winter and snow in the poem, show the worst destruction which eventually becomes a cause of death. Then the church in the poem, stands for the hope and faith that is



present in this painful, gloomy and imperfect world. The world is not a perfect place because of good and bad phases of life. Frost poems are full of symbols. In his famous poem *Mending Wall*, very beautiful attractive, innovative and hard touching symbols are used.

In this poem, the main and important symbol is the “wall”. The wall in this poem stands for a barrier between the speaker and his neighbor. This symbol has two broad perspectives in the poem. First perspective is from the speaker side and the second perspective is from the neighbor side. For the speaker of the poem, the Wall is a barrier between the speaker and his neighbor. The speaker hates this wall because this wall is a barrier between the friendship of the speaker and his neighbor so he is not in favor of this wall. As the speaker says,

And on a day, we meet to talk the line,

And set the wall between us once again.

We keep the wall between us as we go. (Line 13-15)

So, for the speaker, the wall stands for a barrier and lack of friendship. Therefore, he is against of this wall because it makes him lonely, sad and isolated in the world. But the neighbor has a very different perspective of thinking from the speaker. For the neighbor, the wall is a fence which shows the positive side and connection between one another. So, the neighbor is taking the wall in a very positive way. As the neighbor says,

He says, ‘Good fence makes good neighbors (Line 27)

‘Why do they make good neighbors? Isn’t it (Line 30)

He says again, ‘Good fences make good neighbors. (Line 45)

So, we can clearly see that the speaker is taking the wall in a negative sense. The existence of wall is meaningless for the speaker while on the other hand, the neighbor is taking the wall in a positive sense. Frost through the symbol of wall tries to convey meaning in indirect way. The meaning of wall is conveyed indirectly in the poem. Then the Frost uses symbols in another famous poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”. The most important symbol is used in the title of the poem and that is the woods. Woods provide shelter to the people or to the traveler. The woods symbolize the beautiful and pleasant aspect of this worldly life. There are other symbols as well such as village and farm houses which represent the society and civilization of the people living in that community or society. The poems of Robert frost are full of figurative language.

## Conclusion

With the help of stylistic analysis, we find out that the poems of Frost are constructed in a very careful way. Stylistic is the study of style which plays a crucial role in different levels of language. It helps the readers to interpret and understand the literary texts in a better way. This research focuses on two levels of language: phonological and semantic level. In the phonological level, there is a repetition of sound both in vowels and consonant words. In the semantic level, there is a repetition of meanings in a language. The selected poems of Frost are analyzed with help of stylistic features and two levels of language. *Stopping by Woods on*

*a Snowy Evening*, *Mending Wall* and *The Onset* are the well-known and best poems of Robert Frost. The poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* is about the poet is passing through the woods and seeing the beautiful sight of nature.

Then the poem *The Onset* is about the poet's reviews about the natural process of life and death, good and evil in the life of human beings. As the poet portrays that people cannot escape from their doom, so they should accept the reality. The other poem is *Mending Wall* in which the speaker is expressing his hate for wall. For poet, the wall is barrier and useless but for neighbor the wall is a good thing. The research problem is to find the different stylistics feature in the poems of Frost. The answer of the problem is provided with the help of two levels of language.



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