

AN ANALYSIS OF SYMBOLIC MEANING FOUND IN ROBERT FROST'S POEMS "A BOY'S WILL"

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Abstract

As one genre of literature, poetry has poetic values that bring meaning, music, and emotion on its words. Symbols as one of the poetic values are usually used as the central to the way our minds and words function. Moreover, symbolic meaning involves the developments of students' critical thinking and linguistic skills. The objectives of the research are; 1) to know the kinds of symbolic meaning and 2) to know the dominant symbolic meaning found in Robert Frost's Poems "A Boy's Will". This research deals with semantic approach. It belongs to qualitative research and descriptive qualitative as research design. The method of collecting data is closed reading and documentation. The writer analyze the symbolic meaning using the theory by Timpane and Watts (2001) that has three parts; "A" referred to the symbol itself; "B" is what the symbol stand for; and "C" is the meaning of the symbol. Furthermore, the writer also used Shamisa's theory (2004) to classify kinds of symbolic meaning. This theory has two kinds of symbolic meanings, arbitrary symbol and personal symbol. The result of the research reveals that the total number of symbolic meaning is 30 data. They consist of 6 arbitrary symbols or 20% of total findings and 24 personal symbols or 80% of total findings. Thus, the dominant symbolic meaning found in Robert Frost's poems "A Boy's Will" is personal symbols. The implication of this research is to improve students' understanding on poems and help them to grasp the entire contexts of the poem.

Keywords – symbolic meaning, arbitrary symbol, personal symbol, poetry

Introduction

As one genre of literature, poetry has a profound special composition which has poetic values in the term of words and sound. The poetic itself brings meaning, music and emotion on its words, thus it creates artwork using language. However, some students failed to understand what the poet is trying to communicate through his poetry, due to the lack of understanding on the poetic values. Since poetry has many poetic values, they need to read poetry more than once in order to uncover the meaning. Symbol is central to the way our minds and words function which leads people to use symbols to stand for something else. As one of the poetic values, symbol can bring intense world of meaning. Through interpretation of symbol, readers can discover the meanings of the poem and enhance their understanding. By analyzing symbolic meaning, students will develop linguistic skills, critical thinking, and acquire discourse, especially on knowledge of other cultures, cultural values, and beliefs. It is because of symbols interact with various motives of cognitive and it falls in the category of the linguistic-cognitive model which connected with the language of concepts. Thus, students need to understand symbol in poetry to enhance their understanding.

"A Boy's Will" is an interesting subject to be analyzed in terms of types of symbolic meaning. The writer chooses this collection of poems because the 32 poems possess various stages in the evolution of a young man's outlook upon life.



Based on the above explanation, the writer is interested in analyzing the types of symbolic meaning and intends to conduct a research entitled: “An Analysis of Symbolic Meaning Found in Robert Frost’s Poems “A Boy’s Will”. The objectives of the research are; 1) to know the kinds of symbolic meaning and 2) to know the dominant symbolic meaning found in Robert Frost’s Poems “A Boy’s Will”.

Meanwhile, in order to understand poem that have symbols, language learners have to associate with the intentions that the poets want to deliver. Krawczyk (2017: 23) emphasize the importance of the intentions of the language user when expressing meaning because it directly makes the recipient involved in the process of decoding the meaning of the message. Thus, DeLoache (2004: 67) explains that human “intention” is at the heart of symbolization, whether it is in the philosophical sense of being about something and in the everyday or in psychological sense of being intended by someone, of being done for a purpose. Cubukcu (2010: 786) states that understanding a poetry involves the construction of meaning which present a cognitive challenge to its writer and it also stimulates critical thinking to its reader. Keskinel (2014: 99) proved that in language classes, students will get advantage on critical reading and thinking in the process of evaluating a poem that contains universal ideas and symbol.

Furthermore, Dilidüzgün (2015: 252-253) explains that poetry cannot be excluded from foreign language teaching because it is a component of language itself with different and creative uses of words and structures in different contexts which embodies imagination and emotion using stylistic devices. Although it has figurative language that hard to understand, poetry can be a beneficial type of input for language learners because it is a content rich reading material and a model of creative language in use (Kellem 2009: 12).

Methodology

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. The writer carries out this research to know kinds of symbolic meaning found in an eBook of a collection of poems entitled “A Boy’s Will”. The eBook is consisting of 32 poems that are written by Robert Frost. The method of collecting data that the writer uses in this research is documentation. The documentation is consisting of the process of by identifying, classifying, specifying, analyzing and calculating the symbolic meaning found in the poems. The writer uses close reading as the documentation of this analysis. The data was analyzed based on the theory from Timpane and Watt’s theory (2001), the stages were as follow;

1. Reading the poems and identify the key ideas and details.
2. Analyzing the symbolic meaning or “A” in the poems. Then, find “B” or what the symbolic meaning stand for. Lastly, combine “A” and “B” to make “C” or the conclusion of the symbolic meaning based on Timpane and Watt’s theory (2001).
3. Classifying the symbolic meaning into two kinds of symbolic meaning based on Shamisa’s theory (2004).
4. Calculating the number of the kinds of symbolic meaning.



5. Calculating the percentage of whole symbolic meanings and types of symbolic meaning based in this formula:

$$P = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

P : The percentage of the whole symbolic meanings and types of symbolic meaning

n : The total number of types of symbolic meanings found

N : The total of symbolic meanings found.

6. Interpreting the result of data analysis.

Finding(s) and Discussion

This section presents the discussion based on the findings of the study. It concerned with the kinds of symbolic meaning and the dominant symbolic meaning found in Robert Frost's poems "A Boy's Will". After analyzing the data, it can be seen there are many symbolic meanings found in the collection of poems by Robert Frost entitled "A Boy's Will". The writer uses Shamisa's theory to classify the kinds of symbolic meaning found in the poem.

a. Arbitrary Symbols

Arbitrary symbols are symbols that commonly seen and familiar ones that the reader simply can recognize their meanings instantly. There are 6 arbitrary symbols found in this research or 20% of the total findings. The following is an example of arbitrary symbol which is taken from unit 29, Line-storm Song poem;

1 *"THE line-storm clouds fly tattered and swift,*
2 *The road is forlorn all day,*
3 *Where a myriad snowy quartz stones lift,*
4 *And the hoof-prints vanish away.*
5 *The roadside flowers, too wet for the bee,*
6 *Expend their bloom in vain.*
7 *Come over the hills and far with me,*
8 *And be my love in the rain.*

1 *The birds have less to say for themselves*
2 *In the wood-world's torn despair*
3 *Than now these numberless years the elves,*
4 *Although they are no less there:*
5 *All song of the woods is crushed like some*
6 *Wild, easily shattered rose.*
7 *Come, be my love in the wet woods; come,*
8 *Where the boughs rain when it blows.*



1 *There is the gale to urge behind*
 2 *And bruit our singing down,*
 3 *And the shallow waters aflutter with wind*
 4 *From which to gather your gown.*
 5 *What matter if we go clear to the west,*
 6 *And come not through dry-shod?*
 7 *For wilding brooch shall wet your breast*
 8 *The rain-fresh goldenrod.*

1 *Oh, never this whelming east wind swells*
 2 *But it seems like the sea's return*
 3 *To the ancient lands where it left the shells*
 4 *Before the age of the fern;*
 5 *And it seems like the time when after doubt*
 6 *Our love came back amain.*
 7 *Oh, come forth into the storm and rout*
 8 *And be my love in the rain."*

The symbolic meaning of this poem is storm. In Old English, storm means "violent disturbance of the atmosphere, tempest; onrush, attack, tumult; disturbance". In this poem, storm stands for *problem* and it purely symbolizes problem that the poet wants to go against with alongside with his loved one. This poem teaches the readers that sharing problem with others will make it easier to solve. Meanwhile, the educational value that the readers can get is courage, because it gives them space to take intellectual and creative risks. Therefore, its aims and objectives are to develop character, morality, social efficiency and positive adjustment.

b. Personal Symbols

Personal symbols are contrary to arbitrary symbols because these kinds of symbols are made by the poet freshly and new. These symbols are difficult to be recognized by the readers. There are 24 personal symbols found in this research or 80% of the total findings. The following is the example of personal symbols taken from unit 7, Storm Fear poem.

1 *"WHEN the wind works against us in the dark,*
 2 *And pelts with snow*
 3 *The lowest chamber window on the east,*
 4 *And whispers with a sort of stifled bark,*
 5 *The beast,*
 6 *'Come out! Come out!'--*
 7 *It costs no inward struggle not to go,*
 8 *Ah, no!*
 9 *I count our strength,*
 10 *Two and a child,*
 11 *Those of us not asleep subdued to mark*
 12 *How the cold creeps as the fire dies at length,--*
 13 *How drifts are piled,*
 14 *Dooryard and road ungraded,*



15 Till even the comforting barn grows far away
16 And my heart owns a doubt
17 Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
18 And save ourselves unaided."

The writer chooses this example because the symbolic meaning found in this poem also a storm. However, the symbolic meaning of storm in this section is different from the arbitrary ones. It is commonly known that storm represents as "problem, fight, and rage as disturbance". Based on line 5 to 6, it shows that the storm is symbolizing a person who is in rage. Meanwhile, from line 9 to 18, it explains that they are fighting someone beyond their league. Here, the poet explains that the storm is a person in a form of beast. The poet wants to warn the readers that they need to live wisely and do not do anything rashly because there are some people beyond our reach that they cannot offend. The educational values that the readers can get from this poem are critical thinking, reflection, civic engagement, and global perspective. It helps the readers enable to interpret and evaluate information from multiple perspectives and collaborate it with diverse individuals, organizations, and communities inside and outside of their setting. Its aims and objectives are to develop character, morality, and positive adjustment.

This research also found the dominant symbolic meaning in Robert Frost's Poems. The following table represents the result of the data analysis of the kinds of symbolic meaning found in Robert Frost's poem "A Boy's Will".



Table 1. Result of kinds of symbolic meaning in Robert Frost's poem "A Boy's Will"

No.	Unit	Arbitrary Symbols	Personal Symbols
1	Into My Own	0	1
2	Ghost House	0	1
3	My November Guest	0	1
4	Love and Question	0	1
5	A late walk	0	1
6	Stars	0	1
7	Storm Fear	0	1
8	Wind and Window Flower	0	3
9	To the Thawing Wind	1	0
10	A Prayer in Spring	0	1
11	Flower-gathering	1	0
12	Rose Pogonias	0	0
13	Asking for Roses	0	1
14	Waiting	1	0
15	In a Vale	0	2
16	A Dream Pang	0	1
17	In Neglect	0	0
18	The Vantage Point	1	0
19	Mowing	0	1
20	Going for Water	0	0
21	Revelation	0	0
22	The Trial by Existence	0	0
23	In Equal Sacrifice	0	1
24	The Tuft of Flower	0	1
25	Spoils of the Dead	0	1
26	Pan with Us	0	1
27	The Demiurge's Laugh	1	1
28	Now Close the Window	0	0
29	Line-storm Song	1	0
30	October	0	1
31	My Butterfly	0	1
32	Reluctance	0	1
Total		6	24
Percentage		20 %	80%

Based on the above table, it can be identified that there are 6 arbitrary symbols or 20% of total findings. Meanwhile, for personal symbols there are 24 symbols or 80% of total findings. However, the dominant symbolic meaning that belongs to personal symbols is 24 symbols or 80% of total amounts of symbols found in Robert Frost's poems "A Boy's Will".

Conclusion(s)

Based on analysis of data on the Robert Frost's poems, the writer would like to draw some conclusions. There are two kinds of symbolic meaning on Robert Frost's poems "A Boy's Will". They are arbitrary and personal symbol. The aims and objectives of this poem are to develop character, morality, and positive adjustment. While the dominant type of symbolic meanings on Robert Frost's poem "A Boy's Will" is personal symbol.



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