



## STUDENTS' PROBLEM TO INTERPRET METAPHORE IN POEM

Nadia Mustika Rahman<sup>1</sup>, Deddy Sofyan<sup>2</sup>, Mursidah Rahmah<sup>3</sup>

Pakuan University

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### \*Correspondence Address:

*nadiarahman9498@gmail.com*

### Abstract

Metaphor is one of the figurative languages that important for students to understand, not only in literature works, but also in reading comprehension. Based on the pre-research observation, the students have difficulties to interpret and also to acknowledge the metaphor in poems. Therefore, the writer intends to find the students' problem to interpret metaphor especially in poems. This research uses descriptive qualitative method, which tries to explain plainly about the students' problem to interpret the metaphor. It was conducted at English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Sciences, Pakuan University. To collect the data, the research uses triangulation such as, documentations, interview, and questionnaire. The respondents of this research are 21 students of third semester at Pakuan University that formed into three groups of people. After collecting the data, the writer classifies the findings into two categories, misunderstanding and non-understanding. Based on the result, there are two groups with non-understanding problem; they clearly not understand the whole meaning of metaphor, and decided to not seek for further explanation. It can be seen by the way they missed the real metaphor that they supposed to interpret. However, two group with misunderstanding problem, they believed that they already interpret the metaphor correctly, furthermore, they do not seek for clarification to clarify their statements, whether it is right or wrong.

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## INTRODUCTION

People often see poetry as a literature text that arduous to interpret, because it has metaphorical meanings that instilled in every line of it. However, poetry can be an effective tool to teach English in a fun way. Since poetry will give the students the opportunities to explore the language and play it as well. Reading

poetry also can enhance students' skills in reading comprehension (Inpok et al., 2019). Poetry is such a powerful genre which research indicates can benefit English Language learners in many ways (Isro'iyah & Herminingsih, 2023). However, since the existence of metaphorical languages, lots of teachers are still doubtful to use poetry as their teaching materials. Whereas, poetry can bring lot of advantages for the students who are still struggling in reading comprehension, since poems are typically shorter piece of text, which are more manageable for struggling readers; the rhyming and patterns provide sound qualities helpful for predicting words and phrases; and, when introducing new content, poetry can be a tremendous tool (Alvi & Alvi, 2019).

However, in learning literature, students are often to find it hard to understand the genuine meaning of poem (Isariyawat et al., 2020). The students are confused to distinguish and interpret the figurative languages. Metaphor is one of the figurative languages that usually appear in literary text, especially in a poem. From the discussion above, the writer wants to conduct the qualitative research to find students' problem to interpret metaphor in poems.

Understanding metaphors in literature, particularly in poetry, can pose a formidable challenge for many students (Nanda & Susanto, 2020). The intricate interplay of language, symbolism, and meaning within metaphors often leaves learners grappling with a multitude of questions. As they embark on their literary journeys, students frequently encounter difficulties related to recognizing metaphors, distinguishing them from literal language, grasping the context in which they are used, and unlocking the rich layers of interpretation they contain.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this research, qualitative approach became the basic approach of analyzing students' difficulties in interpreting metaphor. To maintain the approach chosen, the writer implied descriptive method. In addition, triangulation data collection was involved, starting from documentation, following by the questionnaire distribution before interview session. Target of the research was the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester English students in Pakuan University. The writer conducts the interview to get more information about students' problem to interpret metaphor. Furthermore, she would transcribe and sum it up. The first data was taken from

students' documents which were students' worksheets and learning note. The worksheets were from groups of students who take Literature Class in the third semester. The students were asked to analyze Personification, Metaphor, Alliteration, Imaginary and Consonance. In this case the writer only analyzed the Metaphor which the students wrote. There were three groups of students' worksheets which were analyzed by the writer. Each worksheet has their own poetries which were analyzed by each group. The first group analyzed "Hope" is the thing with feathers by Emily Dickinson. The second group analyzed I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud by William Wordsworth and She Walk in Beauty by Lord Byron. Thereupon, the writer will show the learning note belongs to the students while they were interpreting the poem. Each group has seven members hence the writer will conclude the result generally.

## **DISCUSSION**

After describing the result from the instruments which were documentation, questionnaire and interview, the writer analyzed it to make them valid. The first data was taken from students' worksheets. There were three documentation which were analyzed from three groups of students who analyzed different poems in Literature class. The writer found two students' problems in interpreting metaphor which are misunderstanding and non- understanding. Its data conveyed that the three groups have their own opinion regarding to metaphor in each poem. It can be seen from the following data:

The students found only one metaphor in the poem which conveyed that the author compared hope with feathers or bird which shows that human must have a hope to fly. However, according to Abdullayev & Kholbekova (2023), Emily Dickinson uses a metaphor 'feathers' to compare hope to a bird. There is a misunderstanding interpretation that which the metaphor is "feather" to compare hope to a bird not "hope" compares with feather and bird.

Other things that the writer found in the first students' worksheet are the students only found one metaphor in the poem, in fact, there are another metaphor which used by Dickenson. Another metaphor found in this sentence "That perches in the soul" this sentence uses a metaphor 'perches' represent to a birdcage. It can be interpreted that, after a bird find their food, they back to their

cage to rest for a while. It tells that we have something inside of us which soul is the home for hope.

In this case, group one has difficulties to differ the metaphor. Based on the study of Amanda Fuji (2019), they have a misunderstanding of the meaning and non-understanding of metaphor. Since when students believed that they have interpreted properly, but did not seek for another clarifications, and clearly not understand the whole meaning of metaphor, and decided to not seek another further explanation.

The group found the first metaphor that is "they flash upon that inward eye". They said that "inward eyes" compare with sweet memories that author must have. However, according to Kosimov (2022) since eyes cannot be bliss, literally speaking, this is also a non-literal proportion. However, it is not a metaphor but a metonymy, as we dealing with the eye as the cause or the site of bliss. It can be said that the students in group 2 has non-understanding since the students clearly not understand the whole meaning of metaphor, and decided to not seek another further explanation.

The metaphor in the poem should be on line 13. Xu et al., (2022) mentioned that the third stanza of the poem contains the following metaphorical proportion: *Danced Waves*. There is a literal referent "waves": which is an entity is actually present in the text world, and it is linked to a non-literal predicate, "dance". This statement represents the metaphor as a non-literal idea, that the waves danced.

The first metaphor which was found by the students in group three is in line eleven. They found that *where thoughts serenely sweet express, how pure how dear their dwelling place*. They found that the poet compares thoughts with people and "dwelling place" with the house that the people would be live in. However, the exact meaning of "dwelling place" is actually *the mind*. According to Belia, (2019), the line "Thoughts serenely sweet express" is actually the personification, Byron essentially tries to represent the woman's beauty that have a pure mind (serene and sweet) in her "dwelling place" that is reflecting her character.

In this case, group three has difficulties to differ the metaphor. Based on Littlemore's study they have a misunderstanding of metaphor because when

students believe that they have understood the metaphor, but do not seek for other clarifications.

Moreover, it can be said that the students' difficulties in interpreting metaphor in the poem can be classified in two cases which are misunderstanding and non-understanding. Golfam & Nahavandi, (2021) in their study, revealed two types of metaphor comprehension difficulties: misunderstand and non-understanding. In this statement, students with misunderstand is convinced themselves that they already interpret metaphor correctly. Furthermore, they do not seek for clarification to clarify their statements, whether it is right or wrong.

After analyzing the documents, the writer scrutinized the data from the questionnaire and interview to the Literature lecturer. The first indicator is about students' knowledge about metaphor, 81% of students know about metaphor from introduction of English Literature and 95,2% them know metaphor from another sources. It can also be proven by the lecturer opinion that the students know metaphor from literature classroom and another sources like book and internet, it can be seen from excerpt #1 and #2.

Based on the two aspects of students' difficulties in interpreting metaphor in poems which are misunderstanding and non-understanding. In misunderstanding aspect, fifteen or 71,4% of respondents feel that what they have interpreted is correct and eighteen or 85,7% of them feel they have tried to find out the meaning when they do not know the meaning of the metaphor. However, based on the documentations of the three analyzes of the poems and learning note from the students. Each group have their own misunderstanding. It can be seen from figure 4.7 and 4.9 the students in group one and three have misunderstanding problem which is convinced themselves that they already interpret metaphor correctly. Furthermore, they do not seek for clarification to clarify their statements, whether it is right or wrong. It can be seen from excerpt #6 and excerpt #10.

To sum up, the writer found students' difficulties in interpreting metaphor in poems. The three groups have their own difficulties in interpreting each metaphor. It conveyed that based on misunderstanding and non-understanding aspects, each group found at least one aspect that indicate

they have problems or difficulties in interpreting the poem.

With misunderstanding, the students believe they have understood metaphor correctly and therefore do not seek clarification. In the study there are two groups which are group one which analyzed the poem "*Hope*" is the *Thing with Feathers* by Emily Dickinson and group three, *She Walks in Beauty* by Loy Byron evaluative metaphors used in the poem. The students in this group misinterpret the metaphor in the poem. Moreover, with non-understanding is when students clearly not understand the whole meaning of metaphor, and decided to not seek another further explanation. There are two groups which are group one which analyzed the poem "*Hope*" is the *thing with feathers* by Emily Dickinson and the second group which analyzed the poem *I wandered Lonely as a Cloud* by William Wordsworth.

Alongside of those statement of students' difficulties based on misunderstanding and non-understanding; it is found that the students only know metaphor as comparison not also for equation. This is a problematic and Bram & Avillanova (2019) stated that difficulties in understanding metaphor, therefore, can hinder a student's ability to follow the academic content of a lecture, as well as to grasp the lecturer's stance toward material presented. In this case is the student's understanding of metaphor in poem can hinder their ability to comprehend the meaning of the whole poem (Gurra & Berisha, 2019).

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The writer investigates Students' Difficulties in Interpreting Metaphor in Poems. From the data consist of the documentations, questionnaire and interview, it is found that there are students' difficulties in comprehending the metaphor. This study has investigated some of the ways which metaphor can cause comprehension difficulties for university students in semester third who take Literature class.

The writer scrutinized the data by analyzing two aspects of students' difficulties which are misunderstanding and non-understanding. The cause of difficulties in comprehending metaphor faced by the students are most likely the lack of prior knowledges and the carelessness (de Laurentiis Brandão, 2021). It can be proven by the way the students misinterpreted some of the metaphor

into another figurative language or misplaced the real metaphor with a mere saccharine word in the poems.

With misunderstanding, the students believe they have understood metaphor properly and therefore do not seek clarification. In the study, the students are identified the correct line of the metaphor. However, they misinterpret those words into something else. For instance, in the poem "Hope is the thing with feather" by Emily Dickinson, the students compared *hope* with the *feather*, whereas the real interpretation of hope is the bird, because Dickinson wanted her hope to fly as high as it can be. The next example is found in Lord Byron's poem "She walks in Beauty", the students stated that dwelling place in the 12<sup>th</sup> line as the house that people would be live in. However, the exact meaning of the metaphor is the beautiful mind of women.

Moreover, with non-understanding is when students clearly not understand the whole meaning of metaphor, and decided to not seek another further explanation. In this study, instead of interpret the correct metaphor words, the students interpret other sweetened words, and the students misinterpreted some of the metaphor into another figurative language. For instance, in the poem of Emily

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