

Leech's seven Types of Meaning: A Semantic Analysis of *The Road not Taken*

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to analyze a poem by Robert Frost "The Road not taken" by the application of semantic theory. The present study applied Leech's theory of the seven types of meaning which are connotative, denotative, affective, reflective, thematic, stylistic, and collocative meaning, by applying this theory the researcher highlighted the choices and opportunities that a person can have in his life and the regret of not taking every opportunity and this regret accompanies a person through his whole life. The data was examined by applying these meanings on the different stanza of the poem. A descriptive qualitative method was used for this study. According to the findings, connotative, denotative, stylistic, and thematic meanings were found in the first stanza, affective meaning in the second stanza, collocative meaning in the third stanza, and reflective meaning in the fourth stanza of the poem. This study has also highlighted the major themes in the poem after applying leech's theory. Everyone learns from his experiences and the choices that he makes in life so; the poem is about making the choices without any regrets and without looking back on life.

Key Words: Leech, Meaning, Semantic Analysis, Robert Frost

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INTRODUCTION

When people speak, they share some knowledge in the real world through their words, phrases, or sentences. (Yule, 2010). Therefore, language is used to exchange information or to negotiate with other people, to make an agreement, to argue or to finish or to start any kind of activity. Semantics is the study of meanings through which different types of text is analyzed by using linguistic devices and terms by describing the relationship between signifier and signified. When someone hears any word, phrase or sentence, the mind creates a picture of that concept or object which is referring into the real world. There is a diversity of meanings in every language of the world. One branch of linguistics that deals with the study of meaning is called semantics. There are various semantic classification systems that can be applied to analyze the meanings of the words; Leech's seven types of meaning are very important and suitable to analyze any kind of text whether it is drama, poetry, novel or any other type of text.

Semantic analysis is the most effective way to analyze and to understand any work of poetry. When any literary text is semantically analyzed, it is not only analyzed by focusing on the proposed meanings by the author but also those meanings that are incidentally occurred. So, in semantic analysis of any text the focus is also on the style of the author that how he uses the language to express his thoughts and feelings. It means how he expresses something through language. Therefore, in the present study the poem was analyzed semantically to evaluate the in depth meaning of the poem. Semantics is not only the study of the meaning, but it also gives a detail description of the nature of the poem and also the attitude of the poet towards the poem. The semantic analysis of the present poem *The Road not taken* has given various types of meanings in a separate way by applying leech's seven types of meaning. These meanings are not applied on this poem before, so it has highlighted the different important points in the poem. *The road not taken* is written by Robert Frost who was an American poet, and he was the only one poet who received four Pulitzer prizes for poetry. This poem is a masterpiece of Frost's poetic work. The main idea in this poem is so versatile that anybody can relate this poem to his life. This was the first poem in his book named 'Mountain interval'. It is popular for its simplicity yet it has a complexity of meanings and this poem is also often misunderstood. The major themes in this poem are the opportunities and choices that any person can have in his life but he cannot take all the opportunities in life so the poet also highlights the regrets of life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semantics means ‘significant’ which is derived from a Greek word ‘semantikos’. It is the study of how listeners interpret the meaning that speakers say and how readers understand the meaning that a writer writes. As per Saeed (2016) the meanings which is delivered through language is studied under semantics. So it can simply be inferred that by using the language in communication, meanings are created. Language symbols are drawn from those meanings on which people are agreed upon. Filip in Agung (2016) suggested the symbolic system as the characteristic of the meaning that is expressed in any language. It is all about the understanding of the listener and the choice of words of the speaker to deliver his message. Therefore (Suprpto, 2010) is giving awareness about semantic principles that the meaning will be changed if it is formed by different types of writing. So, it is obligatory for the people to obey the semantic rules and choose those meanings that are agreed upon by society to make their message understandable. Semantics is the study of meanings which focuses on the relationship between signifiers that can be words, phrases, signs or symbols that are used in a language and the signified the things that they are referring to in the real world. Babatunde defines semantics as the study of the logical and conceptual meanings through which communication occurs in a language. (Alshar,2016). Semantics also defines that what a speaker of any language might want him to mean in an utterance on a particular occasion, and how he makes his utterance meaningful for the others. But this approach is only concerned with objectivity and not the subjectivity. It only focuses on the general meaning of the utterance and not any kind of specific or individual meaning.

The more effective way of understanding what is talked about in a conversation is the study of meaning. Leech (1981) has designed a theory in which he described seven types of meaning i.e. conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. Conceptual meaning is defined as the real meaning of the words that are stated in a dictionary. According to Mwihiaki (2004) conceptual meaning or denotative meaning got more special features than the other types. Conceptual meaning is dealt as the primary or universal meaning since the very beginning. Connotative meaning is that type of meaning which is related to the context of words. These meanings are concerned with the expression and emotional aspects of any person which is based on his cultural background and the experience of his life. The example of the word sea can be given here for more description. Sea is

defined as the field of saltwater in the dictionary, but any individual will associate the sea to danger based on his personal experience but it might be a pleasant experience for any other person. So, the meaning would be varied from person to person. The next type is social meaning. Social meaning can be depended on the social circumstances of any individual's culture such as the various types of tones and styles from different background of an individual's life. Social roles are affected by the social meaning. When any person communicates with others and expresses his feelings and emotions then it is called affective meaning. Any speaker's emotions are determined by the situation in which he is speaking whether he is talking to a friend or a stranger. Tone of voice and intonation of the speaker is very important in this meaning. The fourth type of these meaning are reflected meaning. As the name suggests, it is described as when one sense of a word defines another sense of any word then it is called reflected meaning. The understanding of this meaning is associated with one sense to another sense. Collocative meaning is defined as the meaning that occurred by the association with other words. This type of meaning makes a correlation with other possibly related words to make an appropriate sentence. This association of words conveys a sense of meaning in sentences. The seventh and final type of meaning is thematic meaning. In thematic meaning, the sentences can be changed but the theme will remain the same in these sentences. Sentences will be written on the base of grammatical order and thematic structure. This meaning aims to focus on the message conveyed through the sentence. There is another theory about thematic meaning which the researcher has followed for the accuracy of the data which is defined by Suryawinata (2003) it is closely related to the theory of Leech (1981). According to Suryawinata (2003) there are five types of meaning which are lexical meaning and in leech this is conceptual meaning, the next is grammatical meaning or by leech is called thematic meaning, textual meaning and on the other hand collocative meaning, situational meaning which is also reflected meaning, and the last one is socio cultural meaning or also can be called social meaning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars have classified semantics into various ways up to now. Such as Grice has made a distinction between natural and non natural sense of meaning in his article 'Meaning' that was published in 1957. He made a division of linguistic meanings from the view point of language use. On the other hand Geoffrey Leech has divided the linguistic meanings in seven different types in

his book 'Semantics' in 1974. This classification of meanings are connotative meaning, denotative or conceptual meaning, reflective meaning, social or stylistic meaning, affective meaning, collocative and thematic meaning. These seven types are also generalized further into three broad categories which are: thematic meaning, associative and conceptual meaning (Leech, 1974). This classification on linguistic meaning by leech has a greater influence on linguistic community and it has promoted and developed the semantics in a more effective way. So, the theoretical frame work for this study is this theory of seven types of meaning by Leech.

Seven Types of Meaning by Leech

1. Conceptual or Connotative Meaning

Conceptual meaning is not that meaning which directly refers to the actual meaning of the word. According to Purnamasari (2018) connotative or conceptual meaning can be changed by the time because it has a relation with any speaker's inner feelings either it can be positive or negative feelings which influence the meaning. The word 'cold' can be taken as example that has some meaning. it can be used differently when it is said 'the weather is cold' it is used here as an actual meaning but in a different sentence, when it is said, 'his behavior was cold' in this sentence it has a totally different meaning. so, connotative meaning is that meaning which appears as an additional meaning and can be used in different senses.

2. Denotative Meaning

Denotative meaning is also called cognitive meaning. This meaning is usually stated in the dictionary so, it is also called dictionary meaning. Denotative meaning is the most important meaning because it is an essential factor for the communication in any language. It is also referred to as pure meaning in speech because it refers to the basic idea and concept. This meaning related to the everyday experience, things which anyone heard and saw so, it can be said that denotative meaning is pure, real or actual meaning which is found in the dictionary. The example of this meaning can be any actual word such as 'Male' and it can be specified as human, adult, man, handsome etc. All these specifications are in accordance with the word man which is a pure meaning.

3. Collocative Meaning

In collocative meaning a word require an association with another word that occurs in its environment. It is group of words that appear together and make an association to convey the meaning. For example, we can associate the word handsome with boy and pretty with girl, cold or hot with water and beautiful with house.

4. Stylistic Meaning

Stylistic meanings are those meanings which are created by the use of language and in accordance with the social circumstances in which it is used. Stylistic meaning is created when the same thing is said in different ways and styles. When the two utterances are said that have a same meaning but have different structure. So, stylistic meaning has different linguistic structure but it conveys the same meaning. For example,

The day of her departure or the day when she left, is referring to the same meaning.

5. Affective Meaning

Affective meaning is a large category that to express the emotions and feelings speaker relies on the other categories of meaning such as connotative meaning, denotative or stylistic meaning. Intonation is also important in this meaning, when someone wants to show friendliness he will adopt an impolite tone. It also reflects the personal feelings and emotions of any person.

6. Reflective Meaning

When one sense of a word creates our response to another sense of the word then it is called reflected meaning. It is based on multiple conceptual meanings and it is also the product of any person's imagination and recognition. The example of the comforter and the Holy Ghost can be given here. These two words refer to the same idea which is third person in the trinity but these words also have separate meanings in everyday life when it is used other then the religion.

7. Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning is that type of meaning in which a speaker or writer organizes the message in a way that what he wants to convey to the others. It can be arranged in a form of order or request and to emphasize on something. Active and passive sentences are also arranged to focus on some specific part. For example when it is said as,

‘Hina washed the clothes yesterday’ or in passive form ‘clothes were washed by hina yesterday’. So in first sentence the emphasis is on the hina and in the second sentence the emphasis is on the clothes.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF *THE ROAD NOT TAKEN*

The poem “*The road not taken*” is about the decision that a speaker has to make between two roads, and about his choice of taking the road that is less traveled. The speaker supposes that it will make a big difference if he takes the road that is less traveled by the others. This poem is full of multiple meanings, that’s why this study will semantically analyze the poem by applying leech’s theory.

In first stanza the speaker is walking through the forest and reaches to a fork in the road. The speaker stares at the road for a long time because he is in a confused state of mind that which road he should take, because he cannot travel on both roads at the same time. The speaker is unable to see very because he is walking through a dense forest and both the roads are covered with trees and do not seem straight. So, he cannot guess where these roads will lead him. Denotative meanings are the literal meanings which are stated in the dictionaries. So, in the first stanza the denotative meaning is that the speaker is facing a problem of selecting one road from the two roads that are ahead of him. It can be referred to as the choices that people mostly make in life and people are forced to make these choices in their lives whether they want it or not they have to make some choices. Connotative meanings are those meanings that give more than one meaning of the word. So, in first stanza according to connotative meaning, it can be said that to make a choice between two things is difficult for any person. It is very painful to make choices, because when a person makes a choice he loses the other opportunity. No one can predict the future and can tell which one of his choices is correct and which decision will lead him to where in life. Stylistic meaning is that type of meaning which is related to the style of the language that is used in any literary text by the author. Author uses different literary devices to elaborate his meaning that what sort of message he wants to convey to the reader. In the first stanza the speaker is using different words to clear his message. He uses imagery to elaborate the meaning, which describes the dilemma that any person faces in his life and he faces this dilemma not only for once but multiple times. It is the dilemma of choice that everyone goes through in his life. Here, the speaker is talking about roads

figuratively, when a person comes to a point in his life where he has to make a decision about choosing the next step that is based on the opportunities presented to him. The speaker expresses the agony of life in this poem that most often he is disappointed that he could not be able to take every opportunity that was presented to him and he could not experience the consequences of all the opportunities in life. Thematic meaning is that meaning in which the writer conveys his message. The thematic in this poem is the uncertainty, choice and over thinking. The speaker has to make a choice but he is uncertain about what is best for him. Because he thinks that what choice he is making, may not be beneficial for him in future. Because the opportunities that are presented to him appears as the same to him that's why he is uncertain about his decision. Over thinking is giving another thematic meaning. When someone over thinks on some decisions that he has to make in life, his habit of over thinking makes the things more complicated.

In the second stanza, speaker at last after much consideration chooses a road because it appears to him less traveled by the others. But after choosing the road he realizes that both the roads were the same. He feels regret by not taking the other road but he consoles himself by saying this, that he will take the other road on some other day. Affective meaning describes the speaker's emotions and feelings about the ongoing text. So, in this stanza affective meaning can be applied. After a long thinking the speaker selects the one road but his regret of not choosing the other road, and the psychic pain of consoling himself by saying this that now he is just saving the time, can be felt in the lines of this stanza. He is in a deep despair that now he will not be able to travel on the other road which he has left behind. When a person chooses one thing in life, he cuts off the knowledge of that other opportunity which he can experience.

In this stanza the speaker tells further that after choosing the road, it appears to him that both roads were identical. But then he tells himself that he will take the other road at some other day. Collocative meanings are group of words that convey the meaning with association. In the third stanza the writer is using the words, 'equally lay' and 'trodden black' which is delivering the same idea about the roads, by using these words the speaker is collaborating that both the roads were the same and identical. No one has travelled on these roads that's why the leaves on both roads are not disturbed. So, there is no difference between two roads. The words 'equally lay' and 'trodden black' are different when they are used differently other than this context of the poem. But here these words convey the same meaning by association.

In the fourth stanza the speaker is pretending that one day he will tell the story of his decision which he is making at this moment. He is taking the less traveled road and it will make a difference to justify his decision in future. In the fourth and last stanza of the poem, the regret of the speaker has been reflected. Because in every person's life, there is always comes a time when it is hard to decide about something, and no matter what a person choose there will always be a regret of not being able to avail the other opportunity. So, this stanza reflects the regret of the speaker about choices that he could not make in life. So, to minimize this regret he would tell the people a distorted version of truth that he had taken the road which was not travelled by so many people.

CONCLUSION

The poem *the road not taken* is unique in nature and style. The semantic analysis of the poem has given a detailed and in-depth description. Researchers have analyzed the poem microscopically by applying Leech's seven types of meaning; this has comprehended the poem up to the mark. This study has clarified all seven layers of meaning presented in the poem. It has also analyzed and explained the writer's point view about opportunities and decisions in life that people never know where life would take them. So over thinking, pre planning and building regrets are foolish when they do not know how the end of the road looks like. Especially, when they do not even started their journey. Therefore, the decisions should be made with confidence and swiftly and not regretfully. From this study, the researcher hopes that it will help in understanding the meanings more deeply by these seven layers of meaning and it will be a guide for the future researchers to study the poem analytically.

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