

Research Paper

“Semantic Analysis of Ode to Death Poem”

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This study presents the semantic analysis of Daud Kamal’s poem “An Ode to Death” by applying the semantic theory within this poem. It seeks analysis of the poem by using Geoffrey Leech’s theory of seven types of meaning, by using this theory the research presents the meanings of the expression and devices used by the poet to differentiate life and death and also brings to the reader a clear picture of life and death.

Key words: Ode to Death, Semantic meaning, Leech, life and death

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INTRODUCTION

The Word semantics is derived from the Greek word. “Semantics which means ‘significant’. It is the philosophical and scientific study of meanings that focuses on the relation between the signifiers and the signified in a language, which belongs with the relationship between signifiers such as words, phrases, signs and symbols and what they stand for. According to Babatunde the semantic as: The study of overall logical and conceptual meanings communicated through language. (Alshar, 2016). Furthermore, semantics is the study to focus on what an individual speaker might want them to mean on a particular occasion. This approach is concerned with objective or general meaning and avoids accounting for subjective or local meaning .so as a result doing semantics is attempting to spell out what one knows when one behaves as if one shares knowledge of the meaning of a word , a phrase , or a sentence in a language (Yule, 2010). So now it’s clear from the above mentioned statements that semantics is the study of meaning in a language by analyzing text or spoken document through linguistic devices and terms by indicating the relationship between words, phrase or sentence with the real world object or with a concept our mind creates when speaking or listening word or phrase.

Geoffrey leech in his book, semantic has proposed semantic as the study of meaning is central to communication, It is also at the Centre of the study human mind, thought processes , cognition, conceptualization – all these are intricately bound with the in which we classify and convey our expression of the world through language. When analyzing a literary text semantically the attempt is made to investigate proposed meaning of author occurred and incidental meaning , the study also focuses the style of author in the way he uses the language to express his thoughts by this it means that to guess the style of the author means when he expresses something through language. The first attempt was made by Russian Formalists, who consider the literature as the part of linguistic. Their main focus was the scientific study literature for the prevailing view of that literary text is a system of signs serving for particular function. The present study attempts to analyze Daud Kamal’s poem “ode to Death’ semantically.

Daud Kamal (1935-1987) was a Pakistani English poet. He was a professor and chairman of English department at the University of Peshawar. His writing is influenced by the imagists; he follows the style of W.B Yeats and Era pound. His poetry presents a blend of cultural, historical

and religious imagery which was one of the salient characteristics of modernist poetry. (Alshara,2016). In the poem of kamal there is a sense of loss, spiritual displacement in the face of violence and crucial erasure, cruelty and injustice of kings on common men (Mubeen,n.d).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Geoffrey leech has proposed seven types of meaning in his book semantics, the study of meaning , he suggests these types of meaning to analyze the meaning of a piece of text or a language different aspects of linguistics. The types as conceptual meaning, connotation meaning, social/stylistic meaning, Affective meaning, Reflected meaning, collocative meaning and thematic meaning so Leech's theory of seven types of meaning is the theoretical framework for this study.

Conceptual Meaning of positive or negative attitude through sentences

Conceptual Meaning, It's a universal meaning of a word or sentence in a language the objective meaning. It was assumed to be a central factor in linguistic communication. Leech has considered the conceptual meaning as primary because it is complete in organization and structure to the syntactic and phonological levels of language. To understand the conceptual meaning leech proposed two structural principles. The principle of contractiveness and the principle of structure. Contractiveness feature of word or sentence underlie the classification of sounds in phonology i.e. any label we apply to a sound defines it positively and negatively by what features it possess and what it does not(Leech 1981) the second principle was structure by which larger units were built up of small units to analyze the constituents of a sentence.

Denotative Meaning.

Commutative meaning is the communicative value an expression has virtue of what is referred to over and above its conceptual meaning (Leech,1981). Denotative meaning is concerned with the experience of real world one associates with the linguistics expression one uses or hears. It's peripheral when compared with conceptual meaning while the conceptual meaning is close ended the denotative meaning is open ended and relativity unstable according to culture , historical periods and experiences of individual so the meaning one associates when one hears or uses a word with the real world experience is being subjective.

Social/Stylistic Meaning

The situation or environment in which an utterance was produced in a language describes the meaning of word and this meaning is called the social meaning. Leech states that social meaning is that which a piece of a language conveys about the social circumstances of its use. In part we decode the social or stylistic meaning of a text through our recognition of different dimensions and levels of style within the same language (leech 1981). The illusionary force of utterance that interpret an expression as a request, assertion, an apology and a threat.

Affective Meaning

Affective meaning reflects the personal feelings of a speaker and it includes the attitude of the listener or his attitude to something the listener was talking about. The reflective meaning can be conveyed with the conceptual and cognitive content of the words a speaker uses. Intonation counts more for the recognition of the meaning, either it is a request, threat or warning or anything else can be guessed that a speaker speaks or expresses his thoughts.

Reflective Meaning

Reflective meaning is due to the relation between words on the lexical level of language. Reflective meaning tends to occur only when it has a strong suggestive power over the other word that co-occurs with that. Reflected meaning arises in cases when a word has multiple conceptual meaning, one sense of word forms the part our response in too another sense. In this situation the dominance of a word over the other word reflects the meaning.

Collocative Meaning

Collocative Meaning consists of association a word requires on account of life the meaning of words which led to occur in its environment (leech, 1981). While collocative meaning is simply an idiosyncratic property of individual words.

Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning what was communicated by the way in which a speaker or writer organize the message, in terms of ordering, focus and emphasis what a speaker or writer wants to convey through his expression depends

on the word order and emphasis on certain words and phrases to clarify his idea or she wishes to say speaker or writer give stress to the words and phrases to highlight the intended information in a sentence.

Analysis of the poem “An Ode to Death”

Analysis step I:

Denotative Meaning

It is the cognitive and conceptual meaning. The poem “An ode to Death” belonging to the core concepts of the world as its very title suggests ode to Death. The concept of death reflects the motionless, demise and decay of a living being in this world. Death in any form is destructive in nature so poet shows the destructive nature of death in following lines.

*The pine tree blasted by last Year’s thunderbolt.
And the burn out much-stick in my ashtray.
Look so terribly alike. (8-10)*

Death is same for all things, it brings end to actions and it turns every living thing into the static condition. Either it is a huge tree like of pine or a tiny thing. It is the law of nature that each life has the death, decline and fall. By contrasting the concept of life with it becomes clear that life is the process while the death is end of that process, life is liveliness and energetic but death is decrease, fatality. Just not a living being stops breathing or a tree fails if dead but also the body gets decomposed, indicating towards the process or time period of decomposition of body poet asks questions from a person on death bed.

*I have sat by your beside and felt.
You’re sinking pulse, Are hair and bones.
Reality indestructible and how long.
Does it take for the eyes?
To dissolve in the grave. (11-15).*

In the above line poet is wandering and interrogating about the short time period for the humans to stay here on the surface of the earth and beneath the earth. Through use of imagery that shows figurative language to point out actions, objects and ideas in such a way that leads to physical senses- in this stanza poet describes the whole scenario of man’s last breathing and short period of life through especially these terms “felt your sinking pulse” that takes you last breathing and also it symbolizes last breathing when man is dying he is also checked his pulse that it is moving on or it has been stopped and the second one terms are “Hair and bones how much time will remain and dissolve” from these

terms it is demanded about question that how much time your hair and bones will dissolve in the grave and how much will remain in this scenario of the grave.

Analysis step-II:

Connotative Meaning.

The communicative value an expression has virtue of what it refers to over and above its purely conceptual meaning. The following lines represent the idea of reference about life and dreams of life and the always approaching death with the figurative use of language.

*How many galaxies yet to be explored.
How many seeds in the pomegranate of time?
The pine tree blasted by last year’s
thunderbolt
And the burn out match-stick in ashtray.
Look so terribly alike. (6-10).*

The first line denotes the meaning of scientific exploration of the galaxies and discoveries of new planets. But the here means the connotative meaning of words used in these lines he is referring to the uncountable desires of human that he wishes to fulfill and achieve all his dreams, By using the figurative expression , “how many seeds in pomegranate of time” the poet is referring to the finiteness of the human and boundaries of the time and space comparing man with the seeds and time with pomegranate in which he discusses that man’s life is limited to time and space whatever the time and space is selected by the Allah Almighty he has to cross from that time and space in this context of the world which belonging to busy life of man. Poet shares his own experience of life that man has desires but he can’t achieve all his dreams because he is bound by the time and space as seeds of pomegranate.

Analysis Step-III:

Social Meaning/Stylistic Meaning

Social Meaning is that information which a piece of language (i.e. Pronunciation variation a word, phrase, or sentence) conveys about the social circumstances of its use. Illusionary force of an utterance helps to understand the mode of an expression and style of a writer is guessed by analyzing the choice of words and ordering them, and literary devices he uses.

*Your Ode to Death is in the lifting of a single
eyebrow (canard Aiken)
Death is more than certain, says E.E*

Cummings

*But the clocks go ticking as before
And in every particle of carbon dust.
There lives a diamond dream. (1-5).*

The tone of the poem realistic as it expresses the harsh realities of death and indifference of nature on the death of individuals. Poem contains literary devices such as metaphor, imagery and dramatic monologue to make a clear image of the topic in the mind of the reader. "The pine tree" that blasted last year and "the burn out match – stick" create a cruel picture of nature and death. Poem is in dramatic monologue form in which an imagery person narrates the feelings of a person about a particular situation or object.

The last lines of the poem present the feelings of poet towards death in which he asks the question of escape".

*Who was the deceiver and who the deceived
Was I on the floating Island?
And were you on the Shore?*

And also soul is addressing to a man that you yourself have to think that I am here for the short period of time you yourself have to purify soul in this context of the world and creates suspense of body until soul is separated from the body, so as a result it depends upon you that you deceive soul or purify it easily to a coming day. Except this one the above whole scenario creates Islamic point of view in this stylistic function meaning.

Analysis Step-IV:

Collocative Meaning.

Associations a word acquires when the meaning of words which occur in its environment, most often a word takes an adjective to intensify with all nouns do not mean the same all the time. Like "Diamond dream" "naked rocks" "dark addresses" and "floating Island" These words in poem indicates human precious desires harsh realities of nature and death grave and the always changing place.

Analysis Step-V

Affective Meaning.

Affective Meaning reflects the personal feelings and attitude of the speaker with listener. On several places poet is seemed sentimental and crying the songs of death, he expresses the feelings of pity for the person on death bed.

*I have sat by your beside and felt
Your sinking pulse (11-12).*

The Monologue in which poet is seemed as asking questions either from himself or from an imaginary person shows the attitude of the poet towards past and the present, the death and its harsh reality, his attitude towards nature as of a person who welcomes the guest so he does to the death.

*I, too, have wandered in forest of symbols.
And clutched at the harslots of memory
I have seen the "stars plummet to their dark
addresses"
I have felt your absence around my neck
But let bygones by gones. (21-25).*

Poet regrets at first but then rejects the idea of regeration on past and bygones by quoting that "let bygones be bygones". So in this context he, furthermore, explains about past time that past moments, events, ideas and debates are certainty useless memories but man is to think about the death that is certainly going to come for every so anyhow man has to say welcome it when time is limited for death. No one escapes from the reality of death time that is last breathing moment and whose harshness is so hard that no one can avoid from this one aspect.

Analysis Step-VI

Reflected Meaning.

When one sense of word forms the part of our response to other sense the reflected meaning arises in such cases when a word has conceptual meanings. In the following lines.

*How many seeds in the pomegranate of time
(7)
Two streams mingle in a forgotten river (16)
I have seen the "stars plummet to their dark
addresses (23)
Was I on a floating Island (26).*

We find the reflected meanings form our sense when read together but if they stand alone they will mean different than this. In the first line "pomegranate" in line refer to the boundary wall for the seeds as their limit. In the second above "forgotten river" refers to the world in which man has emerged and has no awareness about it that is the grave where he will be asked questions about his actions either are good or bad so all scenario is administered by the angels of grave who are guardians of this one place whose duty is to ask questions about man's actions who he(man) has done in this busy life and The word "Two" is referring to soul and body of man, so these elements are mingled into the luxurious and

colorful life so in this context man has to purify his soul as that in future he sees good actions. The pair "dark addresses" in the above line refers to the last destiny of the according to poet that is their fall, decay or death. Floating Island refers to the moving pace or time that is always in the process takes not the name of stopping.

Analysis Step-VII

Thematic Meaning

What was communicated by the way in which a speaker or writer organize the message, in terms of ordering, focus, and emphasizing the point is clear about which poet wishes to talk, he starts by referring two lines of two different poems who have talked about the death and duration between life and death.

Your ode to death is in lifting of a single eyebrow.

Lift it and see. (conard Aken)

Death is more certain say E.E Cummings.

But Clock goes on ticking as before.

"Between the eye and the tear" (18)

Death is certain and arrives in the last time even less than a second it takes, it is in just lifting of a single eyebrow that we can see as says the Aken. But time is totally in different to it and it goes on whatever might be happening but never stops. It comes to achieve and for that he has his life but he is conditioned with time. Furthermore, explaining that quotation of E.E Cummings "Death is more than a certain" that takes Death is an ultimate reality and from the reality of death we cannot avoid and no one can escape from its clutch and as the needles of clock never stop ticking for anyone so in the same this one happens to human beings that they never stop taking their breath with the death of their beloveds so, as a result clock needles never wait for anyone in this world and death is focused that death is certainly going to come for one day which time is limited and it's also space is definitely told where he has to go in this world.

Not all have the chance to achieve that dream because some meet with their death in journey before reaching the destination. People often approach deal with a pessimistic point of view and live their fears instead of living their dreams. They live their life mounting on those has gone, people are crying on the hardship of life and on the death, but Daud Kamal in his poem an ode to death approaching the death with a positive point of view and sees the life as the opportunity to live your life rather than regretting on past. He faces the loss and death without fear and accepts it open heartedly. As in the last line 'eye' is referring to life and 'tear' is referring to death so eye and tear is the relationship between life and

death. As a result we people forget death will happen certainly out of tear context scenario, so no one knows when tear will begin from the eyes and death will come certainly someday. As seen in conclusion.

Literary Devices to differentiate life and death

Metaphor- is a word or phrase for one thing that is used for refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that are almost similar. So he has used here metaphorical device to express meaning here in the stanza such as: "And in every particle of carbon-dust There lives a diamond dreams" Eveyman promotes a dream which dies with his death. So, here, diamond and carbon dust present death of man's dream with his death. So from this metaphor device is assumed that man's dream is completed through only moment of death which differentiate man's clear concept of life with death only moment.

Imagery- imagery means to figurative language to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it appeals to the physical senses, so the poet has used here in the stanza such as: "I have sat by your beside and felt your sinking pulse. Are the hair and bones really indestructible and how long does it take for the eyes To dissolve in the grave. In this whole stanza the poet has described the whole scenery and he appears to be a witness of a person breathing his last. From this above mentioned imagery statement it's clear that meaning is death is absolutely clear from life as to say that by feeling sinking last pulse and separated life this phrase from life towards the reality those moments remain till last forever.

CONCLUSION

This study presented the semantic analysis of Daud Kamal's poem An ode to death, the study has analyzed the poem with seven layers of meaning and suggesting a position point of view to look upon the poem, it represent the poem as an optimistic approach to the life and the veracity of death, The study also shows that how Daud Kamal has expressed his idea of death by investigating the poem from different point of view as well as approaches in this poem. To sum up in this way denotative meaning gave a focus on concept of death that every man has to taste it in this world, connotative meaning gave reference of life dreams man has to find other many galaxies, stylistics meaning gave a way to express writer points of view about death and life to clear image of death and life real meaning as well, collocative meaning took word diction association with meaning through these words 'floating Island and naked rocks, affective meaning showed attitude of speaker meaning to

express feeling of pity for the person at the death time, reflective meaning gave a focus on sense of words meanings and their response to listener like the two streams here two refer the sense of soul and human body and last one thematic meaning showed the whole message which has organized here to talk about death and duration between life and death.

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