

Messages Reveal through Figurative Language and Semantic Deviation in “Lamb to the Slaughter”

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Abstract: The readers often found some obstacles in finding the meaning intended by the author. In this study, the researchers use “Lamb to the Slaughter” as an object of study to reveal the use of semantic analysis to understand the meaning of words that have been used by the subject of the study. The purpose of this research is to identify the type and meaning of the language used in the story “Lamb to the Slaughter” by distinguishing between literal and non-literal translations before examining semantically related features. To support the analysis process, the theory of Semantic Deviation and figurative analysis by Perrine is used to recognize the various types of linguistic categories in a piece of writing. The result of this research showed that there are seven types of figurative language that appear in this short story. The seven types of figurative language are simile, personification, imagery, metaphor, foreshadowing, allegory and irony. Specifically, the simile occurs one time and the imagery appears five times in the story. Furthermore, personification appears six times and metaphor five times. The researchers also found one example of foreshadowing and allegory each. For instance, the researchers found four examples of irony in this short story.

Keywords: Semantic Deviation, Figurative Language, Short Story, Message, Symbol

INTRODUCTION

Semantics is one of the branches of linguistics that explains the meaning of language; in fact, one could argue that understanding meaning is the most important aspect of studying semantic words. In the words of one semantician, the phrase refers to “research on ideas or concepts that can be transmitted from the speaker to the hearer by being embodied, so to speak, in the form of one language or another.” (Lyons, 1984)

When words or phrases have a different meaning than they actually do, this is known as figurative language. based on the literal interpretation. Figurative language can be used in any kind of communication, including everyday speech, newspaper articles, advertisements, books, poems, and other literary works. Some words used in figurative expression have additional meanings. When reading this, the reader must use imagination to ascertain the author’s intentions. This creates some obstacles in understanding the message of the story.

Semantic deviation is one of the most popular deviation found in literature. Semantic deviation is not used to deliver a meaning as it should, but it confounds and transforms a thing’s concept into something else in order to pursue a specific objective. There are three types of semantic deviation such as semantic oddity, honest deception and transference of meaning.

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A short story is a condensed fictional prose tale that is less than a novel in length. Short stories often have a plot, setting, and characters. The short story's focal point is often the unique effect that is meant to be communicated through just one or a few important episodes or scenes. Prior to the 19th century, the short story was not typically thought of as belonging to a specific literary genre. In this way, short prose fiction might seem to be a relatively recent form, yet it is actually almost as old as language. Jokes, anecdotes, study digressions, fast allegorical romances, moralizing fairy tales, condensed mythologies, and condensed historical legends are just a few examples of the many different types of short stories that have long been in demand. They all fall beyond the definition of short tales as it has been used since the 19th century, but they do account for a large amount of the environment in which the modern short story first developed.

Roald Dahl was born in 1916 in the little village of Llandaff, which is close to Cardiff, the capital of Wales. Norwegian immigrants who had first settled in Wales in the 1880s were Roald's parents. The family had a large home and was wealthy. His first name, Roald, is pronounced 'Roo-ahl' with a silent ending. It is a Norwegian name. He lived a fairly isolated life as a child. He goes into some detail in his 1984 autobiography *Boy*, which recounts his South Wales childhood and upbringing. He attended a public boys' school up until his senior year of high school. After finishing high school, Dahl joined the international oil company Shell and embarked on a lengthy journey.

The use of literary devices and metaphorical language in short stories allows for the portrayal of ideas that go far beyond what can be conveyed by the words alone. One of the reasons short stories tend to use so much metaphorical language is because of how tightly confined in length they are. Although word choice is important in all creative works, short stories require it more. Authors can say more with fewer words by using literary devices and metaphorical language.

Thus, in the research, the researchers intended to dig deeper for the use of figurative language by Dahl in a short story entitled 'Lamb to the Slaughter', then revealing the semantic deviation used by the author. The researchers chose this short story because this short story has a deeper meaning and portrayed symbolism in such a unique and interesting way. This short story also indicated the density of black humor.

To clarify the messages intended by the author in 'Lamb to the Slaughter', the researchers formulated two research questions such as:

1. What are the figurative languages used in 'Lamb to the Slaughter'?
2. What are the semantic deviations found in Lamb to the Slaughter?

The study's objectives are to find the figurative language used in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' and to reveal the semantic deviation through the use of figurative language.

Review of an earlier study was derived from Baur, Petronela Miarni Dasilva's 2021 paper, "Messages Revealed through figurative analysis on Eldorado by Edgar Allen Poe." The two goals of this study are to understand the beauty of the poem "Eldorado" The first step is to determine the kind of figurative language the poem uses. The second is to analyze the messages hidden in the poetry's figurative language. The study comes to two basic conclusions. The poem uses five different types of figurative language, including imagery, metonymy, symbols, similes, and allegories, as the first conclusion. The researcher might draw various conclusions from all these figurative expressions, including the need to believe in oneself and to never give up on a great desire.

Trisna Dinillah conducted the second prior study. She looked at Coelho's "The Alchemist" novel's use of metaphorical language. The study's goals are to categorize the

many kinds of figurative language used in the book and to determine its context-specific significance. Because the researcher obtained the data from the novel, documentation was the approach employed to gather the data relevant to the topic of this study. There are 30 similes, 27 personifications, 12 metaphors, and 1 hyperbole in the entire corpus of sentences. It is clear that figurative language plays a significant part in this book. This is the reason the author of this novel employed metaphorical language in so many of the phrases.

In this study, the researcher will make use of Perrine's (1965) theory of metaphorical language. He contends that metaphorical language shouldn't be taken literally (p. 65). Literature regularly uses figurative language. Perrine added that employing metaphors also allows us to use our imaginations. It gives statements and claims that would otherwise be dry facts emotional depth by using imagination (1969, p. 71). Metaphor, personification, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, irony, simile, and imagery are a few examples of figurative language that Perrine offers. A metaphor is a tool for comparisons, according to Perrine (1969, p. 65). Literal language evolved into metaphorical language, which has some similarities to it. Personification is the process of adding human characteristics to an animal, an object, or an idea. Metonymy, according to Perrine (1969, p. 67), is "something closely related to the thing meant." In essence, it replaced the meanings of names with words that go along with them. Perrine (1969) claimed that the symbol indicates something that symbolizes more than what it actually represents. It uses a variety of forms where the object serves as a stand-in for other indications. A story or representation with deeper meaning is known as an allegory. Literature gains more value because allegory depicts hidden meaning or messages, such as a moral, spiritual, or historical topic. A paradox is a seemingly incongruous statement that actually reveals an unstated reality. Hyperbole or exaggeration can be employed to support the truth (Perrine, 1969). It implies that exaggeration or hyperbole highlights the current situation. The irony serves a function that is diametrically opposed to what it literally means. A simile is a rhetorical device in which one item is compared to another (Perrine, 1969, p. 65). A metaphor and a simile are comparable. In contrast, the distinction is that a simile compares things using the words "like" or "as." According to Perrine (1969, p. 69), imagery is a descriptive language used to entice readers' senses of touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight.

The message is being represented for the readers in significant literary works. A good message, in the opinion of Hudson (1958), does not conform to the norm but instead develops a fresh aesthetic based on human values (p.23). It means that messages are not included in the writing rule. The values or benefits for the readers are what matter. According to Beaty and Hunter (1989), a work of art's message is expressed or summarized inside and focuses on its meaning or an obvious conclusion (p.899).

In contrast, another author named Sinclair outlines the function of messages. The message can evaluate us for a better life, according to Sinclair (1956). A concept that seeks to spread to others is called a message. Additionally, it is the intent to convey the meaning, notion, or idea.

The messages contained in certain writers' explanations may serve as the author's means of inspiring the reader to ponder, gain new perspective, or find motivation in their own life. It may also improve their quality of life. For some reason, literary teachings can serve as a guide to problems and serve to inspire people to develop wisdom in their approach to living. Therefore, these investigations can aid the researcher in deciphering the significance of the themes in "Lamb to the Slaughter" and highlighting such meanings.

METHOD

In order to evaluate and characterize the meanings that were communicated through the figurative language utilized in the brief tale, the researchers of this study used a descriptive qualitative methodology. The descriptive approach is a methodology that describes, analyzes, and categorizes everything using a variety of procedures, including surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and tests, according to Fraenkel & Wallen (1993, p. 23). Fraenkel and Wallen (1993, p. 380) also provide a definition of qualitative research. A research study that considers the quality of connections, actions, circumstances, or materials is known as qualitative research. Open-ended interviews, naturalistic observation, and document analysis are a few instances of qualitative methods that use categories and descriptions. As stated by Kaid in Prafitri, W., & Nasir, M. A. A. (2023:33-44), content analysis researchers look for indicators of issue or image, positivity or negativity, partisan appeals, emotional tone, and fear appeals, among many others.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993, p. 380–381) list five qualities of the qualitative technique. In qualitative research, the primary tool is the researcher, and the direct data source is the environment. Second, rather than using numerical data, qualitative information is obtained through words or visuals. Third, qualitative researchers are interested in both process and product.

Through figurative language analysis, the researcher identified a message in the short story “Lamb to the Slaughter” that was then analyzed. This short story’s selection was influenced by its linguistic and symbolic depth. The phrase “like a lamb to the slaughter” has a very remarkable history in both English and biblical literature. The title also functions as a dark double entendre, or a word or phrase used in a way that conveys two meanings of the plot’s resolution.

Data Collection

This study is qualitative in nature; it contains no numerical information, statistical analysis, or empirical computation (Brink, 1993). By describing concepts, emotions, or phenomena, qualitative research, from the viewpoint of the researcher, tries to generate or develop meaningful understandings from their experiences.

The researchers collected the research’s data based on a sample. The researchers also employed a population study because they selected “Lamb to the slaughter” as their study sample. The study produced verbal data. Before starting to gather data, the researchers read “Lamb to the slaughter,” one of the short stories in a book writer’s cauldron. The researcher reads the brief narrative with empathy and attention in an effort to fully understand it. The pdf of this short narrative is then downloaded by the researchers in order to gather information for this study. The researcher’s organization of the brief story she had gathered as study data was the second step. The researcher categorized the words, phrases, and sentences that exhibit the traits of figurative expression. The third and final phase involves the researchers transcribing data or figurative language clauses from short stories that are based on theories like semantic theory and figurative language theory that have been demonstrated and used in this study. The study’s data that could be used for additional analysis to address the problem formulations in this investigation is presented next.

Data Analysis

The study’s results are analyzed using a variety of methods. The purpose of this study is to categorize the figurative language found in “Lamb to the Slaughter” by examining and addressing two issues. To solve the study’s first issue, the researcher first chooses the types of figurative language that will be employed. The researcher groups the many types of

metaphorical language found in Lamb to the Slaughter according to Perrine's method. The researcher identified the figurative idioms in "Lamb to the Slaughter" and compared them to each of Perrine's figurative language traits.

Next, the researchers analyzed the figurative languages found in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' based on the characteristic of each figurative language type. After that, the researcher uses an English Dictionary and some proven websites in order to find the literal meaning of the data in this research. The researcher interprets the figurative language meaning and analyzes the messages intended by Roald Dahl as the author of 'Lamb to the Slaughter'.

RESULT

In this section, the researchers provide several examples of figurative language found in the short story 'Lamb to the Slaughter'. The results of the study were presented in the form of tables.

Table 1. Simile

1. <i>"She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel - almost as a sunbather feels the sun."</i> Page 1

Table 2. Imagery

1. <i>"The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight-hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket."</i> Page 1
2. <i>"and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in."</i> Page 1
3. <i>"She knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom of the empty glass when he lowered his arm."</i> Page 1
4. <i>"she lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered eyes"</i> Page 2
5. <i>"That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street."</i> Page 4

Table 3. Personification

1. <i>"There was a slow smiling air about her and about everything she did".</i> P.1
2. <i>"the drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil"</i> P.1
3. <i>"When the clock said ten minutes to five , she began to listen"</i> P.1
4. <i>"Holding the tall glass with both hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side."</i> P.1
5. <i>"he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow."</i> P.2
6. <i>"all the old love and longing for him welled up inside her"</i> P.5

Table 4. Metaphor

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.</i> P.2 2. <i>“watching him with a kind of dazed of horror as he went further and further away from her with each word”</i> P.3 3. <i>She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.</i> P.3 4. <i>“She didn’t feel she could move even a yard at the moment.”</i> P.6 5. <i>“The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a trifle exasperated.”</i> P.6

Table 5. Foreshadowing

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“This is going to be a bit shock to you , I’m afraid,” he said. “But I’ve thought about it a good deal and I’ve decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won’t blame me too much.”</i> P.2

Table 6. Allegory

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“When she walked across the room she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything at all- except a slight nausea and desire to vomit. Everthing was automatic now down the steps to the cellar; the light switch, the deep freexe, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the firts object it met.”</i> P.3

Table 7. Irony

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>“Patrick’s decided he’s tired and doesn’t want to eat tonight,” she told him. “We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he’s caught me without any vegetables in the house.”</i> P.4 2. <i>“And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it as tasty as possible because <u>the poor man was tired</u>”</i> P.5 3. <i>“When she entered the house. She happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally, it would be a shock and she’d become frantic with grief and horror.”</i> P.5 4. <i>“all the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary.”</i> P.5

DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, the researchers found seven types of figurative language such as simile, imagery, foreshadowing, personification, metaphor, allegory and irony.

Simile

The title, which can also be read as “Like a lamb to the slaughter,” clearly illustrates the use of simile. The lamb, which serves as the story’s symbolic representation of innocence in the first half of the narrative and Mary Malone in the second, is later “slaughtered” by her husband. Second, the author employed a simile: “She loved to luxuriate in this mankind’s presence to feel almost like a sunbather feels the sun.” This simile illustrates how she initially felt for Patrick, up until he didn’t trap her with his choice. Her innocence is overpowered by this, and she ends up killing him. Author used of analogies in *Lamb to the Slaughter* has a

big impact on the reader by giving the narrative a symbolic meaning that develops a deeper and more meaningful representation of the character's nature. Because it shows the main character's whole development through her actions, the author's choice to use these literary strategies in *Lamb to the Slaughter* is both intriguing and understandable.

Personification

Personification is the process of adding live characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract notions. There are a number of personifications used in *Lamb to the Slaughter* that are intended to add variety and underline various points. Page 1 has the first instance of a personification: "There was a slow smiling air about her and about everything she did." 'Slow smiling air' at this moment may be seen as the first indication of Mary Maloney's intentional personality. She is grinning as she waits for her spouse to get home because she enjoys their time together and treats him like a property that she can manage. She moves slowly, indicating that she has given her actions and attitude a lot of thought. The persona she is able to assume to hide her emotions is revealed in "smiling air." At this stage, "air" is an abstract noun that is lifeless. The author personifies it by adding the term "smiling," which is typically used to describe living things like people or animals.

Metaphor and Foreshadowing

The short story *Lamb to the Slaughter* contains multiple phrases that use metaphor. On page 3, the phrase "She might just as well have hit him with a steel club" is one of the most notable metaphors. At this moment, "a steel club" alludes to Patrick's killer's first tool, a frozen lamb thigh. Foreshadowing is a technique the author uses to increase suspense in the narrative. When Patrick adds, "This is going to be a bit of a shock to you," he uses this literary device to hint at the growing tension between Mary and Patrick. I'm scared. Because he wants to set up an unpleasant situation between the characters, the author has selected this strategy. This leads the reader to think that something negative is going to occur within their relationship, making curiosity increase within the reader's mind. The descriptions of Mary's character are built up step after step to make the reader suspect Mary's change. This creates anticipation within the story using effective writing. The uncertainty created within the reader on Mary's real intentions is a technique used by the author to create suspense throughout foreshadowing. The use of foreshadowing as a device is effective within Roald Dahl's short story because it creates dramatic tension within the trend of the story and conveys little information at a time to help the reader understand what could come next.

Irony

Irony is a literary device used by the author in *Lamb to the Slaughter*. This is evident in the quotation: "I'd appreciate it if you'd eat it up. After that, you can continue working. We can deduce from this quote that the investigators don't realize the leg of lamb was the murder weapon when they are eating it, but the reader does. This puts the reader and the plot on hold while they consider whether or not the police will recognize Mary as the murderer of their husband at this point in the narrative. Even when Patrick says anything ironic, the author frequently employs irony. Irony is a major device used by Roald Dahl, even when Patrick says to Mary: "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out." The reader is left wondering whether she will commit this dreadful act at this point in the narrative. The story's use of irony has a significant impact on the reader by evoking strong feelings that allow the reader to learn what Patrick's character is in for and, on the other hand, comprehend Mary's goals. An ironic spin on the story is provided by the title *lamb to the slaughter*. Lambs are renowned for being easily led to slaughterhouses where they are put to death. The sarcastic turn in the story is also revealed by the double meaning of the word "slaughter." The story makes clear Mary's sardonic and defiant behavior in contrast to conventional norms.

The Author has successfully introduced the readers to black humor in this piece of work. It can be seen by how he portrays Mary Maloney, the pregnant, doting wife of a policeman waiting for her husband to come home from work. This is the same lady that uses the frozen leg of lamb to hammer onto her husband's back of the head and let his friends eat the murder weapon. This plot of the story suggests that Mary did things out of necessity for the sake of her child.

In the story Mary's innocent character represented the lamb, a symbol of innocence and peace. This represents her character in the beginning of the story before she murdered her husband and lost all of the innocence. Mary was the lamb and the divorce was an emotional slaughter.

Semantic Deviation found in the story *Lamb to the Slaughter*

1. Semantic Oddity

Semantic oddity is the strangeness or semantic peculiarity of expressions that do not frequently arise. Under the heading of "semantic oddity," there are five tropes that set them apart from semantic absurdity and superfluity. Pleonasm, periphrasis, and tautology all have semantic inanity and superfluity, which refer to superfluous or redundant language use, whereas oxymorons and paradox have semantic absurdity, which refers to information that contradicts itself. Despite having more tropes than the other two, this section employs the least number of findings. In this research, the researcher found one data indicated as paradox.

"all the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary." P.5

The contradictory information, which is a key aspect of a paradox, is evident in the excerpt above. The first claim asserts that Mary Maloney actually loved her husband, but the fact that she killed him and pretended to be sad showed contradiction. As a result, this linguistically contradictory thought is a paradox since it defies logic.

2. Transference of Meaning

This section includes the four tropes of synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor, and simile. The division of transference of meaning has the most obvious application in this study when compared to other applications.

Many of the terms used in the short story "Lamb to the Slaughter" are metaphors. One of the most notable metaphors appears on page 3, where it reads, "She might just as well have hit him with a steel club." The phrase "a steel club" here refers to the first weapon Patrick's killer used, a frozen lamb thigh. Furthermore, the researcher also found one extract classified as simile.

"She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel - almost as a sunbather feels the sun." Page 1

The extract above describes that Mary Maloney really enjoyed the presence of her husband, she treated her husband like 'the sun' something that she looked up to, it shows that Mary is a devoted wife.

3. Honest deception

Honest deception is classified into three tropes which are: hyperbole (the figure of overstatement), litotes (The figure of understatement), and Irony.

"She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment." P.6

The extract above is classified as hyperbole. The author tries to create a strong

impression about Mary Maloney after her husband's death which is actually a hyperbole because the fact that she's still able to manage to grocery store after committing the murder, defies the logic.

“When she entered the house. She happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally, it would be a shock and she'd become frantic with grief and horror.”

The extract above is classified as irony. The title lamb to the slaughter gives the narrative an ironic twist. The ease with which lambs can be herded to slaughterhouses to be killed is well known. The double meaning of the term "slaughter" also contributes to the story's satirical turn. Mary's sarcastic and rebellious behavior in opposition to social conventions is made plain by the story.

CONCLUSION

This section presents the conclusion of the analysis. In this study, there are two research questions that are being discussed. The first research question focuses on the types of figurative language in the short story 'Lamb to the Slaughter' and the meaning. The second research question discusses the semantic deviation in this story.

Answering the first research question, there are seven types of figurative language that appear in this short story. The seven types of figurative language are simile, personification, imagery, metaphor, foreshadowing, allegory and irony. Specifically, the simile occurs one time and imagery appears five times in the story. Furthermore, personification appears six times and metaphor five times. The researchers also found one example of foreshadowing and allegory each. For instance, the researchers found four examples of irony in this short story. In revealing the message, the researchers understand the meaning of the figurative language in the story and find the shared semantic features. As a conclusion the author has successfully created a story that seems typical but has lots of interpretation on the character development as well as the plot of the story. Finally, he also creatively imparts the element of black humor in this story and significantly highlights the wit and wisdom of a woman who struggles for a better life.

Furthermore, there are three semantic deviations found in this story such as semantic oddity, transference of meaning and honest deception. The purposes of the author using several figurative languages and semantic deviations are to bring more additional imagery and to increase the readers' emotional intensity.

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