

SEMANTIC DEVIATION ON WILLIAM BLAKE'S SELECTED POEMS

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Abstract: *In this study, we analyzed the existence and the contribution of the semantic deviations in the eight selected poems of William Blake. We tried to answer two problems : what were the semantic deviation found on William Blake's selected poems and how those deviations contributed to the meaning of the poems. Eight poems were selected from the songs of innocence and songs of experience. Furthermore, we used the qualitative content analysis which involved series of activities in analyzing document and described them based on the related theories of research. After analysing the data, we revealed the following findings: (1) the semantic deviation found on William Blake's selected poems was formed by three tropes. There were semantic oddity, transference of meaning and honest deception. (2) those deviations contributed to help the poet transmit his point of view about social condition, religious value, love and human to human relationship. They were also used to make the poems more aesthetical and dense in meaning.*

Keywords: *semantic, deviations, poems, William Blake*

Abstrak: *Dalam studi ini, kami menganalisis keberadaan dan kontribusi deviasi semantik dalam delapan puisi yang dipilih dari karya William Blake. Kami mencoba untuk menjawab dua masalah: deviasi semantik apa saja yang ditemukan dalam puisi terpilih karya William Blake dan bagaimana mereka memberikan kontribusi terhadap penyimpangan arti dari puisi-puisi tersebut. Delapan puisi dipilih dari kumpulan puisi the songs of innocence and songs of experience. Selanjutnya, kami menggunakan metode penelitian qualitative content analysis yang melibatkan serangkaian kegiatan dalam menganalisis dokumen dan menggambarkan mereka didasarkan pada teori-teori yang terkait dengan penelitian ini. Setelah menganalisis data, kami mengungkapkan temuan berikut: (1) deviasi semantik ditemukan pada puisi William Blake dipilih dibentuk oleh tiga kiasan. Ada keanehan semantik, pemindahan makna dan penipuan yang jujur. (2) deviasi tersebut berkontribusi untuk membantu penyair mengirimkan pandangannya tentang kondisi sosial, nilai agama, cinta dan manusia untuk hubungan manusia. Mereka juga digunakan untuk membuat puisi yang lebih estetik dan padat makna.*

Kata kunci: *semantik, deviasi, puisi, William Blake*

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was semantic deviation as one of linguistic deviations which occurred in the poems. Semantic Deviation is the unconventional combination of word phrase which can transmit the mind and the feeling of William Blake depending on his life and cultural background. Semantic deviations consisted of semantic oddity which means absurdity of expression, transference of meaning which means the conversion from literal meaning to figurative meaning, and honest deception which means a sense of misrepresenting the truth. Words which are indicated having semantic deviation should be seen not only through the literal meaning that can be found in dictionary, but by understanding the mind of William Blake such as his spiritual views, social view and educational background. Eight poems were selected from William Blake's Classic Poetry series in order to make this research manageable. Those poems were *The Chimney Sweeper*, *The Tyger*, *A little Boy lost*, *A little Girl lost*, *The Clod and the Pebble*, *A Poison Tree*, *The Schoolboy* and *The Lamb*. Those poems were considered as the most famous poems of William Blake. Besides, those poems were often used in teaching literature. Two research questions such as "What were semantic deviations found on William Blake's selected poems?" and "How did semantic deviations contribute to the meaning of the poems?" will be also discussed in this study.

BASIC THEORY

Study about linguistic deviations has ever been conducted by Famala Eka Sanhadi Rahayu (2012). She investigated about Linguistic Deviation on Shakespeare's Selected Sonnets. She focused on finding the lexical deviation and syntactical deviation in

Shakespeare's selected sonnets. We used similar theory and the steps in conducting this study. Concerning to the differences, we analyzed William Blake's selected poems. Furthermore, we focused on semantic deviation and find out how semantic deviations contributed to the meaning of poems itself.

The first previous study was done by Meliana Sri Rahayu Widodo (2004). It dealt with stylistics devices in songs, especially the songs in Psalm, whose forms were the same with poetry. By conducting this research, Widodo (2004) tried to find out stylistic devices and syntactic deviation that occurred in the songs of Psalm. Finally, through this research, she also wanted to find out the tone and theme in the selected articles of Psalm. She analyzed the psalm by using some theories. She used stylistic theory because she intended to find out the stylistics devices that were used in Psalm. She also analyzed the syntactic deviation and lexical selection, she uses the theory of diction and syntax.

The third study conducted by Muhammad Saleem (2009). It dealt with the form and functions of the semantic deviations existent in the language of T.S. Eliot's celebrated poem *Ash-Wednesday*. It is central to Eliot's artistic disposition to richly make use of linguistic absurdities that ultimately leads to the pragmatic and imaginative interpretation of the discourse which is dubbed as the intended sense of the author. This study would explain the mechanism of the additional meanings in the poem using the theory of Geoffrey N. Leech in the book *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969).

RESEARCH METHODS

To analyze the data, we used content analysis which is used to characterize the content of popular books,

work, art, and document as the subject. First, we prepared the data. Then we define the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis referred to the basic unit of text to be classified during content analysis. After that, we develop categories and a coding scheme. Categories and a coding scheme were derived from three sources; the data, previous related studies and theories. Next, we tests the coding scheme on a sample of text. After sufficient consistency had been achieved, the coding rules could be applied to the entire corpus of text. After coding the entire set, we needed to recheck the consistency of her coding. For instance we draws conclusions from the code data and reports the findings. For the study to be replicable, we needed to monitor and reported the analytical procedures and processes as completely and truthfully as possible.

FINDINGS

After following the procedures of data collection, we found some semantic deviations from eight selected poems of William Blake. In this stage, we described the term of semantic deviations and the description are directed to answer the research question “What were semantic deviations found in William Blake’s selected poems?” and “How did semantic deviation contribute to the meaning of the poems ?”

In her earlier findings, we found some phenomena of semantic oddity which has been classified into pleonasm, tautology, periphrasis, oxymoron and paradox. From eight selected poems by William Blake, there were two phenomena of pleonasm, three phenomena of periphrasis, one line containing tautology, three lines containing oxymoron and three phenomena of paradox. Moreover, in the second trope which was called as

transference of meaning, there were some phenomena of synecdoche, metaphors, metonymy and simile. Specifically, there were three cases of synecdoche, two cases containing metonymy, eighteen phenomena of metaphors, and for instance, there were two cases of simile. In the third trope, honest deception, this has been categorized into hyperbole, litotes and irony. There was one semantic deviation related to hyperbole, one phenomena of litotes and four phenomena of irony. However, the finding were undergone triangulation processes and some of the data were omitted because they did not fulfill the requirement which the meanings are too simple to be called as semantic deviation (Plett: 2010).

Semantic Oddity

Semantic oddity meant absurdity or bizarreness of expression. Semantic oddity consisted of pleonasm, tautology, oxymoron, paradox and periphrasis. Pleonasm and tautology divide naturally into 'inainties' which convey no Information in the cognitive sense and 'absurdities' which convey self-conflicting information. It had to be emphasized that any kind of absurdity, whether logical or factual, can rule out a particular literal interpretation, and cause the reader to search for a figurative one.

Pleonasm

Pleonasm is an expression which is semantically redundant in that it merely repeats the meaning contained elsewhere in what precedes or follows it. Pleonasm can be seen in the following quotation :

Excerpt.

Tyger ! Tyger ! Burning Bright
(The Tyger, Line 1)

The phrase 'Burning Bright' contained pleonasm , since it gave too much description. Burning had

already stated the image. That's why bright was redundant. The word 'burning' contained semantic feature (+ light) (+fire). Similar with 'bright' which means full of light or shining.

Periphrasis

Periphrasis is an expression which is of unnecessary length, in that the meaning it conveys could have been expressed more briefly.

Excerpt.

Dare its deadly terror clasp

(The Tyger, Line 16)

In this line, it can be found the use of periphrasis. Deadly means something filled with hate which can caused death. Terror also has negative meaning. It refers to fear. At this point, 'deadly terror' is periphrasis because it could be expressed more briefly. 'Deadly terror clasp' is used to elaborate the image of something big and scary.

Tautology

Tautology is a statement which is vacuous, because self-evidently true. A tautology can also be interpreted as a syntactic variant of pleonasm.

Excerpt.

In what distant deeps or skies

(The Tyger, Line 5)

In 'distant deeps' the tautology is "distant" because it is pointless . It describes something far away. 'Deeps' refers to something below and 'skies' refers to something above. By omitting 'distant' it wouldn't change the meaning

Oxymoron

Based on Plett (2010) Oxymoron disclose the contradiction in human existence. It especially exposed the discrepancy between reality and appearance.

Excerpt.

And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair

(The Clod and The Pebble, Line 4)

Oxymoron played decisive role in this line. Oxymoron disclosed contradiction between human existences. According to the Bible, Heaven and Hell impinge on human experience. The words Heaven and hell contrasted the positive and negative features. In this line, Blake conveyed the message that even though in miserable situation as has been through by the clod, he still believed that love should be given to others. At this point, the clod can make his own happiness even though in miserable condition. William Blake contrasted heaven and hell to represent the happiness and misery.

Paradox

Paradox is a statement which is absurd because of self- evidently false. The distinction of paradox and oxymoron can be perceived from syntactical view and semantical view. In stylistics (for example in Leech :1969) the tacit assumption cases involved a syntactically "relaxed" form of oxymoron. The structure A (Adj) + Not A (N) to an oxymoron and the structure A (N) is Not-A (Adj) or A (V) and Not A (V) to a paradox. From semantical view, paradox has more comprehensive significance. Its potential force develops especially in rhetoric of argumentative and stylistic inversion that deconstructs established habits of thought and speech (Plett, 2010)

Excerpt.

A little black thing among the snow

(The Chimney Sweeper, Line 1)

This line worked paradoxically. In which the poet showed the contrast using a phrase describing the color or visual pattern. We know that snow is white, but then the poet made the reader notice

about the little black thing. It would cause an initial interpretation among the readers about this poem.

Transference of Meaning

In poetry, Transference of meaning is the process whereby literal absurdity leads the mind to comprehension on a figurative plane. The relation between figurative and literal sense can be represented by the formula Figurative = Literal. According to Leech's classification transference of meaning is classified into four types of figurative language such as Synecdoche, Metonymy, Metaphor and Simile.

Synecdoche

Synecdoche is identified with a rule which applies the term for the part to the whole. Furthermore, synecdoche can also be used for the general term which represented the particular.

Excerpt.

*What immortal **hand or eye**?*

(The Tyger, Line 3)

In this case, the words “**hand or eye**” are parts of body which represented the creator of Tyger. Blake used synecdoche to emphasize parts of body which can stand for the whole.

Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech that consisted in using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated. Metonymy can be regarded as kind of ellipsis where its obvious advantage in poetry is its conciseness.

Excerpt.

*A **little black thing** among the snow*

(The Chimney Sweeper, Line 1)

There was a use of metonymy in which the poet used the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated. In this case, ‘a little black thing’ was used to describe a

child who worked as a chimney sweeper. The poet used the word ‘black’ because at that time, all of the chimney sweeper’s body almost covered by dust from the chimney.

Metaphor

Metaphor happens when two different things were brought together according to the relation of meaning between literal and figurative senses. There are several types of metaphor. The first kind of metaphor is Humanizing Metaphor. This sort of metaphor is known more familiarly as personification which ‘attributes humanity to what is not human. The opposite of humanizing metaphor is dehumanizing metaphor. This metaphor ‘ascribe animal or inanimate property to human being’. The third is concreate metaphor. This concreate metaphor makes abstraction concrete and physical. In addition, there is a synaesthetic metaphor. This metaphor transfers meaning from one domain of sensory perception to another.

Excerpt.

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright

(The Tyger, Line 1)

In this case, William Blake used a metaphor ‘burning bright’ to describe the power and appearance of the tiger. Commonly, we knew tiger doesn’t burn, but in this line, the poet tried to create an image of powerful and dangerous creation

Simile

In metaphor, two things are brought together and asserted to be one. In simile, there are also two things brought together but the connection is made clear to the reader by the use of the words ‘like’ or ‘as’. A simile is generally more explicit than metaphor.

Excerpt.

*I love you like the little bird That
picks up crumbs around the door*

(A Little Boy lost, Line 7-8)

At this point, the poet made explicit comparison using simile. It has been indicated by the use of 'like' in this poem, when the boy say 'I love you like the little bird that picks up crumb around the door', it could be interpreted that his love was identical with little bird that pick up crumb around the door. He could not love beyond his natural capacity for love, just like a little bird which only has the capacity to eat crumbs, not huge slices of bread.

Honest Deception

Honest deception is a sense of mispresenting the truth. It consisted of three tropes such as hyperbole, litotes and irony. Hyperbole distorts by saying too much,. Understatement by saying too little, and irony often takes the form of saying or implying the opposite of what one feels to be the case.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an exaggeration statement which is often incredible because at variance with known fact.

Excerpt.

What the hand dare seize the fire?

(The Tyger, Line 8)

William Blake used hyperbole in this rhetorical question because simple words did not justice his curiosity of the creator of the Tyger. 'the hand dare seize the fire' meant something which is very brave and powerful, because ordinary hand would not dare to do that kind of thing. In simple word, William Blake tried to express that the creator of the Tyger is beyond normal human.

Irony

Irony involved a contrast between appearance and actual reality. It is a

discrepancy between what is anticipated to be true and what is actually true.

Excerpt.

And I watered it in fears

Night and morning with my tears

And I sunned it with smiles

And with soft deceitful wiles

And it grew both day and night

Till it bore an apple bright

And my foe beheld it shine

And he knew that it was mine

(A Poison Tree, Line 5-12)

There were situational irony in these lines. The poet treated his wrath as a growing plant. A growing plant is usually a good, positive thing, it is a symbol of life. It seemed ironic that a growing plant was being compared to a growing anger

Excerpt.

In the morning glad I see

*My foe outstretched beneath the
tree*

(A Poison Tree, Line 13-14)

There was a situational irony which was clearly stated in these lines. In line 13, the poet felt glad or happy when he saw his enemy's dead body beneath the tree. It was ironic because at the same time, a condition could be perceived as a good time for the poet but on the other hand it was a bad time for the enemy.

Excerpt.

A little black thing among the snow

*Crying "weep! Weep!" in notes of
woe*

*"Where are thy father and mother?
Say?"*

*"They are both gone up to the
church to pray"*

(The Chimney Sweeper, Line 1-4)

These lines worked ironically if we read it meticulously. In the first and second line, the poet told about a little black thing who cried among the snow. On the other hand, his parents go to the church to pray. This situation related to

the child labor during the French revolution in which there were many children have been sold to work as chimney sweepers. Many of them died because the lack of food and bad working condition. It was ironic that the parents, who were mostly loyal catholic and very religious, do that kind of thing to their children.

Excerpt.

*And because I am happy and dance
and sing*

*They think they have done me no
injury,*

*And are gone to praise God and his
priest and King*

Who make up heaven of our misery
(The Chimney Sweeper, Line 9-12)

These lines were ironic. From the voice of the child who worked as chimney sweeper, his parents were clearly hypocrites for mistreating him so badly whilst still being able to regard themselves, as church-goers, as being moral and up-standing citizens. The poet suggested that it was 'because I am happy and dance and sing' that they 'think they have done me no injury'. They may not be malicious: simply misguided, or perhaps self-deceiving. No shred of an excuse, however, was offered for the church to which they have gone. The sweeper clearly implied that 'God and his priest and king' are to blame, because they 'make up a heaven of our misery'.

Litotes

Litotes is particular kind of understatement in which the speaker used a negative expression where a positive one would have been more forceful and direct.

Excerpt.

*They think they have done me no
injury*

(The Chimney Sweeper, Line 10)

The intention of the poet using Litotes in this line was to leave the reader with the question whether the chimney sweeper was harmed or not. The word 'no injury' had positive meaning such as health or wealth. In this line the poet used negative expression because it was more interesting rather than to use short and direct positive expression.

Moreover, based on the excerpts above, we tried to give a view that William Blake was likely to use unconventional word combinations to transmit his idea and express his feeling. It could be seen from the numerous frequencies of using metaphor and other literary devices. The spread of semantic deviation in William Blake's poems had been showed in appendices.

Semantic deviations made the poems were more aesthetical and dense in meaning. By using semantic deviation, the poet could tell more than the capacity of ordinary words. William Blake used semantic deviation to help him transmit his ideology and suggestion without making him too frontal which were not allowed in his era. For instance, semantic deviation gave significant contribution to the meaning of the poems.

CONCLUSIONS

We investigated the semantic deviation in the eight selected poems of William Blake. From the investigation, we concluded that there were two conclusions as follows. First, there were twelve kinds of semantic deviations occurred in the eight selected poems of William Blake. They were pleonasm, periphrasis, tautology, oxymoron, paradox, synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, irony and litotes. There were two phenomena of pleonasm, one case of tautology and for each periphrasis, oxymoron and paradox, there were three phenomena. Moreover,

there were three phenomena of synecdoche, and two phenomena for each metonymy and simile. For each hyperbole and Litotes there was only one case. There were four phenomena of hyperbole and eighteen phenomena of metaphor. Metaphors were the most often occurred in these eight selected poems. It was likely to be the characteristic and idiosyncrasy of William Blake because of numerous metaphor created.

Second, semantic deviations in these poems mostly contribute to the meaning of the poems itself. It helped William Blake to express his ideology and perception of several aspects in life such as his religious view, social view, perception of love and human to human relationship. From the eight selected poems, it can be seen that Blake is a religious person. He believed the existence of God as the creator. Semantic deviations in his poems also reflect that William Blake is a sensitive citizen. He used poems as media to criticize government and society in his era. From the perception of love, it can be seen that Blake respects and understand the concept of love. From these eight selected poems, Blake seemed as a suspicious individual. It can be seen from the way he described the relationship between human to human. Furthermore, by using semantic deviations, the poems were made to be more interesting and aesthetical which could create deep meaning for the readers. For instance, by using semantic deviation, William Blake could talk more than the capacity of ordinary combination of word phrase. It made the poems were denser in meaning.

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Book Information. Blake's Selected Poems. By William Blake. Ratings: Rating: 4 out of 5 stars4/5 (24 ratings). Regarded by a contemporary as a "brilliant eccentric whose works skirted the outer fringes of English art and literature," William Blake (1757–1827) is today recognized as a major poet and artist. This collection of 104 poems, carefully chosen by noted Blake scholars David and Virginia Erdman, reveals the lyricism, mystical vision, and consummate craftsmanship that have earned the poet his preeminent place with both critics and the general public. Analysis of William Blake's Poems A. Biography of William Blake William Blake was born in 1757 in Soho, London, England. He was the third of seven children. Two of them died in infancy. Blake was an English painter, poet and printmaker. He began writing at an early age and claimed to have had his first vision, of a tree full of angels, at age 10. Similar to Blake's focus on man's fall from grace, Blake was constantly exploring the moment of lost innocence. This repeated theme in Blake's poetry is almost like a paragon for a combination of all the other themes so far discussed. The theme of the separation, transition, and difference between innocence and experience is highlights the theory of opposition, cycling, repression, and sexuality.