

INTERPRETATION OF POETRY *THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE* BY ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Mhd. Ridho Wandana Y.¹

¹UNIVERSITAS NEGERI MEDAN

Abstract

This study discusses indirect descriptive expressions in the poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson use semiotics theory of Riffaterre. This study aims to, (a) describe the kinds of indirect descriptive expressions used in the poetry *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, (b) explain the realization of indirect descriptive expressions realized in the poetry *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, (c) explain the reasons of indirect descriptive expressions realized in the ways they are. This research is a qualitative descriptive study. The data source used in this study is in the form of words, phrases, clauses and sentences from the poem. The results of this study, namely there are 8 Metaphors and 7 Metonymy in displacing of meaning; 6 Ambiguous, 2 Contradictions, and 4 Nonsense in distorting of meaning; 16 rhymes, 12 enjambments, and 6 typography in creating of meaning.

Keywords: Indirect descriptive expressions; Poetry; Semiotic

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a written works which when compared to other ordinary writing, has various characteristics of excellence, authenticity, artistry, beauty, content and expression. Literature is a means to convey certain goals, such as values or teachings to readers. Literature can also be used to convey an idea or thought related to something that is happening, one of the things about nature and the environment. (Sariasih & Yulianto , 2018: 69). Literary work itself is an essay that has the virtue of writing beautiful language full of aesthetics. Literature also provides general knowledge and insights about humans, social, intellect, with a unique style. Literary readers must be able to interpret signs and literary texts in accordance with their experiences and insights, all return to the reader and connoisseurs. In addition, literary work is an abstraction from an experience, thought, feeling both real and imaginary, which is decapitated and reunited with the perceptions and expertise of artists (writers) and presented through a media. The meaning of the signs does not belong to itself, but comes from the context in which it was created, where it is embedded. In general, literary works consist of three parts, namely poetry, prose, and drama.

Poetry is part of a literary work. It is one of the results of art. As a product of art, literary works are human creations that express the thoughts, ideas, understandings,

response, and feelings of the creators about life with imaginative and emotional language. According to Ahmad in (Sipahutar & Arianto, 2019:237) poem is any kind of verbal or written language that is structured rhythmically to tell a story, or express any kind of emotion, idea, or heart condition. Poetry itself is the result of one's thoughts and feelings, each person are free to express through poetry, by favoring the language style (diction) in each line or stanza. In poetry, diction or word choice is the essence or the building foundation of poetry writing. Diction can be used as a benchmark of how far a poet has genuine creativity. In using diction, a poet always takes into account the relationship of certain words to the basic ideas to be communicated and the possible effects on the reader. Words are truly chosen so that has the power of pronunciation. Moreover, it may seem brief or concise, it is powerful.

Within the wider realm of literature, the authors will always give a new twist to their work. Poetry can change according to the taste of evolution or in accordance with the wishes of the author. Alfred, Lord Tennyson was a famous British poet from England. Some of his poetry even came under the spotlight of the British Kingdom during the Victorian queen. They are "*The Lady of Shalott*", "*The Eagle*", "*Crossing the Bar*", "*The Charge of the Light Brigade*", "*Ulysses*", "*Tithonus*", and others. *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is the most famous one. It was an accusation of light British cavalry led by Lord Cardigan against Russian troops during the Battle of Balaclava on the 25th of October, 1854, in the Crimean War. It was originally intended to send the Light Brigade to chase the retreating Russian troops, but miscommunication caused them to carry out suicide attacks on different positions and was defended.

Semiotics is derived from the Ancient Greek *sēmeion*, meaning most broadly "sign" or "mark." The basic founders of modern semiotics and semiology were the philosopher C. S. Peirce (1839–1914) and the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Actually, semiology is the science of signs (and signals) in general; semiotics refers to the theory of sign systems in language. For all practical purposes they are both concerned with the means of communication as conventions, with particular emphasis on language. But, *not just language*. The term 'semiology' was taken over and used by Saussure in a manuscript dated 1894. It's defined semiology as 'a science that studies the life of signs within a society'. Semiotics is the older of the two terms and its use is traceable to the ancient Greeks. Broadly speaking, semiotics is associated with the North American tradition of sign study, whereas semiology is associated with the European tradition.

According to Riffaterre in his book entitled *Semiotics of Poetry* (1978), there are four things that can be used in producing or obtaining and interpretation meaning in

poetry, namely: indirect descriptive expressions (Riffaterre, 1978: p. 1-2), the reading of heuristics and retroactive or hermeneutics (Riffaterre, 1978: p. 5-6), matrix, model, and variant (Riffaterre, 1978: p. 13, 19-21), and hypogram or intertextual relationship (Riffaterre, 1978: p. 23). It is not all theories used in the research, but only using the first step to interpret the poetry *the Charge of the Light Brigade*. Riffaterre put forward the concept of ungrammaticalities as one of the characteristics of poetry. According to him, it is caused by the existence of literary conventions to (a) displacing of meaning that is caused by metaphor and metonymy, (b) distorting of meaning that is caused by ambiguity, contradiction, and nonsense, (c) creating of meaning that are different from those given by grammar that is caused by Rhyme, enjambment (run-on line), and typography.

METHODOLOGY

The research is a qualitative-descriptive. The object of the research is poetry by Alfred, Lord Tennyson *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. The research is using semiotic approach of Riffaterre. The research data was collected by observation method. Observations are made by reading poetry repeatedly. (1) The first step is collects the primary data sources, (2) And then, the researcher begins to read the data carefully and takes the meaning of the semiotic, (3) Then, the researcher takes a note and compose it into a table properly, (4) The researcher also underlines data in the poem to make easier in collecting from whole data, (5) The whole data will be input into Thesis paper and describe the study. Then the research data is analyzed with some steps. (1) The researcher classify the data to be analyzed, (2) The researcher describes the kinds of indirect descriptive expressions used in poetry, (3) The researcher explains the realization of indirect descriptive expressions realized in poetry, (4) The researcher explain the reasons of indirect descriptive expressions realized in the ways they are, (5) The researcher summarizes the results of the study, (6) Finally, concludes the results of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were found after collecting and analyzing data. It was found 61 data from the kinds of indirect descriptive expressions in *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Displacing of meaning consisting of: eight metaphors and seven metonymies, from distorting of meaning could be found: six ambiguities, two contradictions, and four non-senses, and in creating of meaning consisting of: 16 rhymes, 12 enjambments, and six typographies. The indirect descriptive expressions in *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson realized in three great ways, namely displacing of meaning, distorting of meaning, and creating of meaning. Indirect descriptive expressions is a thought or idea indirectly, but there is another way.

(Maulana, 2019:69). All the eight figurative languages were found in the poem. The most common figurative languages in the Alfred's poem were rhyme. It was found sixteen rhymes. It meant that Alfred used more rhyming style in this poem rather than others. It was also found three contradictions in the poem. Contradiction was the figurative languages which were the least used in Alfred's poem. It was the great realization in interpreting the meaning of a poem. It could occur by displacing of meaning, distorting of meaning, and creating of meaning. The diction in it could differentiate denotation and connotation meaning precisely. Esthetic and writing style could be determined by implemented it into a poem. The indirect descriptive expressions also could guide the reader to describe the plot-line more coherent. To express a paragraph or and discourse could be effective by diction. The most important why it was realized in the ways they are was because it could help the reader or listener to understand the literary works more easily.

Table 1 the number of indirect descriptive expressions

| No. | INDIRECT DESCRIPTIVE EXPRESSIONS | | | Total |
|-----|----------------------------------|---------------|----|-------|
| 1. | Displacing of Meaning | Metaphor | 7 | 61 |
| | | Metonymy | 8 | |
| 2. | Distorting of Meaning | Ambiguity | 5 | |
| | | Contradiction | 3 | |
| | | Nonsense | 4 | |
| 3. | Creating of Meaning | Rhyme | 16 | |
| | | Enjambment | 12 | |
| | | Typography | 6 | |

Indirect Descriptive Expressions

There were three ways for indirect descriptive expressions to occur. Those were occurring to give the access for the reader to the poem. It was produced by displacing of meaning, distorting of meaning, and or creating of meaning.

Displacing of meaning

The displacing of meaning was standing when there were one sign or one word took turn the meaning to another as happens with metaphor, and metonymy.

Metaphor

Metaphor was found in stanza one on line three and seven; second stanza on line eight: "*the valley of Death*" The following were the sentences:

All in the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

In the sentence above, the Poet stated that all the Brigades were in the valley of death. It meant that all the Brigades should go to the valley called the valley of death. It illustrated that the soldiers were willing to sacrifice their lives on the battlefield for the sake of their country. It was unknown where the location of the valley of death mentioned by the Poet. Thus, the poem told about the struggle of the Light Brigade from Britain against Russia in the Crimean war. The valley of death intended by Poet was a battlefield that occurs in the Crimean. The Poet likened the battlefield as the valley of death. The word valley of death in poetry was an expression that is used by Poet. Ordered the Brigades come forward to attack was the same as sending them to their death, in other words it was killing their own Brigades. The Poet also used words other than the valley of death to describe the same battlefield.

Metonymy

Metonymy was found in stanza five on line six: "*hero*" The following was the sentences:

Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

While horse and hero fell.

In these sentences, it could be described that the soldiers had been surrounded by enemy Brigade with their cannons. Wherever they faced they would always see the cannons of the enemy Brigade. The cannons' looked like did not give them space for long breathing. The bullets continued to shoot into the air toward them. It came as many as they saw on the air. The attack caused many casualties to fall from the Light army. The word "*hero*" above was a metonymy of the soldiers who had sacrificed to fight for their country. The word was used by the Poet in the poem to replace the term Light Brigade. That word was a correct choice to be replaced. The Poet considered those soldiers to have sacrificed his body and soul for his country as the country's hero. The Poet highly respected the services of the soldiers through the poem. Hero deserved got what they need to achieve for their lives.

Distorting of meaning

Distorting of meaning was the second items of the indirect descriptive expressions. It occurred when there were ambiguity, contradiction, and nonsense.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity was found in stanza one on line five; stanza two on line one; stanza six on lines five: "*the Light Brigade*" The following were the sentences:

*"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.*

In relation to those sentences, the Poet told us that the Light Brigade was marching forward and charging their guns. The Brigade was ready getting into the valley of Death. The Light was the name of the British Brigade in the Crimean War. The Light Brigade was led by Lord Cardigan in 1854. Lord Cardigan gave an order to stroke the enemy Brigade. The enemy of the Light Brigade was absolutely the Russian Brigade. The word "*Light*" in "*the Light Brigade*" had double meaning or made an ambiguity contextually. The word "*Light*" could be meant as light which was a source of illumination, whether a natural one (like the sun) or an artificial one (like your lamp). In other words, it could be meant as a noun, an adjective, a verb, and it could be meant "*bright*" or "*not heavy*" The fact that the real meaning of the light was the light that was coming from the sun the source of illumination.

Contradiction

Contradiction was found in stanza four on line nine: "*Not though the soldier knew / Someone had blundered*" The following were the sentences:

*Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.*

In these sentences, it could be described that there were 600 soldiers rode their horses into the valley of Death. That command had been given by their lord. The soldiers knew that the command was a mistake, but no one afraid of the charge. The Poet told us that Lord Cardigan had blundered, but did not mention the name in the poetry, the Poet wrote just "*someone*" Their sacrifices had been presented for the mistake command by their lord. By reading those sentences that caused of a contradiction. It could be described that contradiction happen when the soldier knew that the command was a mistake. The soldier thought it should not be done and it would kill them fast. They made a contra statement among the soldier, but no one afraid of revealing that they did not stand for the command. In the next lines, the Poet stated that no soldier had right to reply the command and soldier had no right to questioned why the command should be done. What they had to be done was just did the command and then died.

Nonsense

Nonsense was found in stanza four on line eight: “*Cossack*” The following was the sentences:

Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke

Cossacks and Russians were the enemy soldier of the Light Brigade in the Crimean war. Cossack was an ally for Russians. They united to charge British soldier. But in these sentences, the Poet described that Cossack and Russians have been reeled by the strike of the Light Brigade’s sword. Even tough, Russians had more weapon and soldier around, but that was not enough to defeat the British soldier. The word “*Cossack*” had been defined that Cossacks were a mainly Eastern Slavs, especially Russians and Ukrainians. But that word was including the nonsense, because *Cossack* was unlisted in any dictionary or lexicographically. As what nonsense definition the word “*Cossack*” was one of nonsense. Cossack was Eastern Slavs people. It was the same like Russian was Russia people. The word “*Russian*” was found in dictionary but not for “*Cossack*.”

Creating of meaning

It was the third items that occurred by organizational of textual space functions for instance rhyme, enjambment, and or typography.

Rhyme

Rhyme was found in stanza one on line one and two. The following were the sentences:

Half a league, Half a league,
Half a league onward,

In these sentences, it had been told before that “*Half a league*” means 1.5 miles. It indicated a distance that was marched forward by the Light Brigade into the battlefield. It could not be expanded that was it an exact benchmark to measure the distance that they passed through. The Poet wrote that sentence up to three times instead there was something important to be told in that sentence. At least, that was how far the soldier spent their time before arrived at valley of death. The sentences in those lines of the poem are a rhyme. As mentioned above that the Poet wrote that sentence three times on line one and two in stanza. There were the same words at the first sentence of each line. Those same words were a rhyme at first. The words “*half a league*” was written at the first sentence on line one and two. It realized on the sentence that the first rhyme at first was found in the poem.

Enjambment

Enjambment was found in stanza one on line one, two, three, and four. The following were the sentences:

Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,

All in the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

The lines of the poem above told about distance, number, and command. The word “*half a league*” was an old parable which means 1.5 miles. It meant the distance traveled by the soldiers to arrive at war and was 1.5 miles. The sentence “*Half a league onward*” made it clear that the soldiers were ordered to move forward as far as 1.5 miles. In the sentence “*all in the valley of Death*” explained the journey of the soldiers, namely the valley of death. All warriors would be in the valley of death, the valley of death was another term for the battlefield. “*Rode the six hundred*” the sentence explained that there were six hundred people who went into the valley of death. The six hundred people are parables for the soldier pronouns. From the four lines of poetry above, a continuous event took place. The storyline from the first to the last line had clear coherence and cohesion. The lines of the poem above were indicated to be an enjambment. It occurred because the first stanza had a final phrase that connected to the initial phrases of the next stanza or lyrics. The meaning of each line had a continuity that was interconnected to explain the meaning of each line.

Typography

Typography was found in every its stanza. It became a unity with the lines in its typography.

Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,

All in the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

“Forward, the Light Brigade!

Charge for the guns!” he said.

Into the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

In the Stanza one, the Poet told about 600 advanced soldiers “*Half a league, half a league*” was an old parable which meant a distance of about 1.5 miles. It meant that 600 soldiers walked 1.5 miles to the valley of death. The valley of death was a parable of battlefield which could be interpreted as the valley of death. The 600 soldiers, called the

Light Brigade, rode horses, marched straight towards the valley called the valley of death. The typography looked in stanza one. The Poet wrote the poem with some lines of poems protruded slightly inward. It created his-own typography in the poem. It also made the poem looked different from the others. It could be seen in the sentence "*Rode the six*" that was written between the sentences "*all in the valley of Death*" and "*Forward, the Light Brigade!*" And in the last line of first stanza, the Poet rewrote the sentence "*Rode the six*" after the sentence "*Into the valley of Death.*"

CONCLUSIONS

After interpreting the poem, it is seen that Alfred used more rhyme and enjambment. Rhyme and enjambment has a great symbolic significant. They were important to be found in a poem. It could be beautified the impressive and created a moment to the reader or listener. Research studies use Riffaterre's semiotic theory applied to the poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson produced indirect descriptive expressions (a) displacing of meaning in the form of metaphor and metonymy, (b) distorting of meaning in the form of ambiguity, contradiction, and nonsense, (c) creating of meaning in the form of rhyme, enjambment, and typography. All data were 61 that found in the poetry. Displacing of meaning consisting of: 8 metaphors (11%) and 7 metonymies (13%), distorting of meaning consisting of: 6 ambiguities (8%), 2 contradictions (5%), and 4 nonsense (7%), and creating of meaning consisting of: 16 rhymes (26%), 12 enjambments (20%), and 6 typographies (10%) that use the writing style with several lines written rather indented. The indirect descriptive expressions of Riffaterre could be used effectively in interpreting a meaning of a poem. The diction which should be found and the analyzed could help the reader or and the listener understanding what Poets said in their writing. The application of indirect descriptive expressions to poetry has influence in interpreting the meaning of poetry. It could distinguish the meaning of connotation and denotation.

SUGGESTIONS

The relations to the conclusions, suggestions are staged. The researcher himself needs to conduct further research related to interpretations of poetry. But, there are still several theories from the Riffaterre semiotic theory that have not been applied to *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. It can be analyzed further using the other theories of Riffaterre. The further researches should deepen the theory of research before conducting the research. The four theories of Riffaterre have different types of analysis but they have relation to each other. The research is expected to be done perfectly by applying them into the interpretation. It is suggested that the reader should

increase scientific knowledge about the indirect descriptive expressions. In order to understand the meaning in poetry, *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. The research also makes it easier for readers to deepen the theory of indirection description expressions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, praise and great gratitude to the Almighty God Allah SWT for His blessing, mercy, opportunity and help so that the article is able to completed. Shalawat and greetings are sent to our Prophet Muhammad SAW who has brought us out from the darkness into the bright world that full of knowledge. In completing the article, there are many supporting from some important people. Therefore, he would like to express his sincere gratitude, love and special thanks to: Prof. Amrin Saragih, M.A., Ph.D., the First Supervisor; Syamsul Bahri, S.S., M.Hum., the Second Supervisor; Dr. Muhammad Natsir, M.Hum., the First Reviewer; Dr. Immanuel Prasetya Gintings, M.Hum., the Second Reviewer; Dr. Anna Riana Suryanti Tambunan, M.Hum., the Reviewer of Article; Boy Hasibuan and Sri Wahyuni, Beloved Parents; Ika Mega Prameswari, Lathifah Dhuha Kunarti, and Zuliana Sari Harahap Beloved Younger Sisters and Friend.

REFERENCES

- Riffataere, Michael. 1978. *Semiotics of Poetry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sariasih, Yanti & Yulianto, Agus. 2018. Analysis of the Meaning of Mantra Ajian Jaran Goyang. *Atlantis Press*, Vol.257, 69-72.
- Riana, Munawaratul Nova et al. 2015. Langston Hughes' Selected Poems In Riffaterre's Perspective. *Publikasi Budaya*, Vol.3, 8-13.
- Sipahutar, Rusmitha & Tomi, Arianto. 2019. An Analysis Of Semiotic Riffaterre In Walt Whitman Selected Poem. *Jurnal Basis*, Vol. 6, 237-248.
- Maulana, Luthfi. 2019. Semiotika Michael Riffaterre (Analisis Pembacaan Heuristik-Hermeneutik Atas Q.S. Ali-Imran (3): 14). *QOF*, Vol.3 (1), 67-78.
- Adudu, Hatima Husnul & Husain, Dahlia. 2014. Semiotic Analysis in William Blake Poems. *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*, Vol.1 (1), 39-55.
- Fadli, Ainul Zaki. 2015. Kajian Semiotik: Interpretasi Puisi *Kurofune* Karya Kinoshita Mokutaro. *Izumi*, Vol. 4 (2), 69-75.