

A Phono-Stylistic Analysis of Langston Hughes' Poem "Harlem"

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ABSTRACT

This research was utilized stylistic analysis tools at the phonological level in the poem titled "Harlem" by Langston Hughes. By leveraging the collective cultural scheme of the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes establishes a connection with the reader, eliciting specific cultural and emotional reactions. The study will be conducted using a qualitative method, followed by organizing the research data into a table and analyzing it by identifying dominant consonants and vowels. The research findings reveal a correlation between the dominant sounds and implicit themes in the poem. Surprisingly, the dominant sounds which is consonant give rise to words such as 'tear' and 'star', which are related to the theme of the Harlem poem. Both words obtained in this study strengthen the message and emotions conveyed by Hughes regarding the feelings of black individuals. In undertaking this research, it aids researchers in understanding the purpose, intent, and even the style of the author in creating the poem. In this particular poem, Hughes avoids repetition of themes but conveys the feelings of black individuals implicitly. This research contributes to deepening the understanding of stylistic elements at the phonological level and fosters an appreciation for a literary work.

Keywords: *Consonant; Harlem; Phono-stylistic; Theme; Vowel.*

INTRODUCTION

Stylistics comes from the word 'style'. It's a branch of linguistics that looks at different styles and variations in language. According to Leech and Short style is the use of words in specific situations for a specific purpose. Simply put, style is how thoughts are expressed and communicated as a message to readers or listeners Saldanha, (2014). Verdonk, (2002) defines stylistics as the study of language features with an explanation of their purpose and impact. Scott, (1973) helps define stylistics as a scientific or methodological study of style, linking it to the complex use of language in literature. Lawal, (1997) further argues that stylistics refers to applying linguistic rules to literary texts. According to Verdonk, stylistics is the study of language features with clarification of their purpose and impact.

In the field of linguistics, stylistics becomes a central point of study that aids in analyzing written expression. Rather than criticizing, stylistics appreciates every style in literary works. The exploration of stylistic analysis can occur at different levels, one of which is the analysis at the phonological level.

According to Smith, (2007), Phonology records how sounds are combined to produce meaningful speech, while phonetics deals with how those sounds are produced, the entire process in which air generated from the lungs collaborates with various vocal tract organs. Simply put, phonology studies phonemes and their patterns in a language. In conducting phono-stylistic analysis in poetry, it is grounded in dominant phonetics with the aim of emphasizing both the theme and title of the poem. Chatman, (1960) also supports the idea that specific sounds can serve specific functions by evoking meanings when associated with certain words.

The object to be used in analyzing phono-stylistics is a poem by Langston Hughes titled “Harlem”. Hughes establishes a connection with the reader through the poem, eliciting specific cultural and emotional reactions. The vivid metaphors in the poem each depict different emotional and psychological states resulting from deferred dreams, contributing to a profound emotional impact. Though not explicitly discussed, the analysis reveals how the poem intertwines the realm of dream space and reality, creating a structure that clearly portrays the emotional consequences of deferred dreams.

In this study, there is a development from previous research. Al-Hindawi & Hussian, (2023) conducted an analysis of style from a phonological and phonetic perspective, emphasizing the relationship between the poem's theme and its effects. The chosen data for analysis is William Blake's poem 'Cradle Song'. The research focuses on the use of various phono-stylistic devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, repetition, rhyming words, and euphony. The poem is analyzed through statistical analysis accompanied by percentage equations. The research also yielded findings regarding the connection between the poem and its theme, integrating them into phono-thematic ideas.

The second research data comes from the study conducted by Asad & Batool, (2020). This paper presents a stylistic analysis of Mohsin Hamid's story 'A Beheading'. The analysis is performed using lexical and morphological stylistic analysis. The research reveals significant morphological and lexical features of the text. The short story is analyzed by classifying lexical categories and highlighting their importance in this particular text. Therefore, this paper provides an analysis of the selected short story at two levels: morphological and lexical.

The third study is from Hammadi, (2022). This research involves phono-stylistic analysis that deals with sound patterns to observe the foregrounding of linguistic behavior, both through deviation and parallelism. The selected data for analysis is the poem 'Our Share of Night to Bear' by Emily Dickinson. The hypothesis of this study is that phonological devices such as alliteration, meter, rhyme, and onomatopoeia successfully bring out two different themes in the poem (life and death). Additionally, the research finds that ballad meter devices are frequently used, and there are instances of deviation from the amphimacer meter to emphasize a comic paradox resembling a woman and a lonely night.

Stylistic research at the phonological level has seen significant progress. However, there is a possibility of research gaps, mostly related to phonological devices such as alliteration, assonance, rhyming words, and others. Previous studies have also focused

on lexical, morphological, and grammatical features, resulting in less attention to the analysis of sound patterns that are connected to the meaning and themes of poetry.

Previous research has often focused on analyzing poetry through phonological, morphological, and lexical devices. However, in this study, the examination was conducted at the phonological level by identifying dominant consonant and vowel letters in the poetry. This research is aided by phonetic transcription, examining each word in the poem 'Harlem' one by one.

This study aims to uncover the implicit meanings and themes within the poem 'Harlem' by utilizing a sound analysis. The research seeks to enhance our understanding of the contribution of sound in literary works, particularly in poetry. The objective is to provide more information on how phonological features in literature can have an impact. This stylistic analysis is expected to assist readers and academics in gaining a deeper understanding of how various sounds in poetry can convey detailed and meaningful meanings.

METHOD

This research is delved deeper into the phonological level of the poem titled 'Harlem' by Langston Hughes it is a dialogue of which we are to hear only one side Wiandari, (2017). It is a qualitative study that involves documenting every sound used by Hughes in his poem. Qualitative is a research method that emphasizes the aspect of an in-depth understanding of a problem rather than looking at the problem for generalization research. Qualitative research methods prefer to use in-depth analysis techniques, which is to examine a problem one by one, from the case by case Astri & Langsa, (2020). The research was identified dominant consonants and vowels and examine their relationship with the poem's theme which tries to elaborate and discuss the elements of syllable structure and possibilities of patterns of syllables in a term of consonants and vowels Jubran AL-Mamri, (2023). Specifically, the study was analyzed the lines of the poem at the phonological level, which have been identified in each line. In other words, phono-stylistic analysis involves extracting prominent phonetics that contribute to the poem's theme by relying on the words in the poem Roach, (2001).

The following is a table of the phonetic transcription of the poem, which will serve as the reference data for the researcher in identifying consonants and vowels.

Table 1. Phonetic transcription of the poem

Poem	Phonetic Transcription
What happens to a dream deferred?	wɒt 'hæpənz tu ə dri:m drɪ'fɜ:d?
Does it dry up	dəz 'it draɪ ʌp
like a raisin in the sun?	laɪk ə 'reɪzn ɪn ðə sʌn?
Or fester like a sore—	ɔ: 'fɛstə laɪk ə sɔ:—
And then run?	ənd ðen rʌn?
Does it stink like rotten meat?	dəz 'it stɪŋk laɪk 'rɒtn mi:t?
Or crust and sugar over—	ɔ: krʌst ənd ʃʊgər 'əʊvə—
like a syrupy sweet?	laɪk ə 'sɪrəpi swi:t?
Maybe it just sags	'meɪbi: 'it dʒəst sægz
like a heavy load.	laɪk ə 'hevi ləud
Or does it explode?	ɔ: dəz 'it ik'spləud?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher has presented two tables containing transcribed lines of the poem, with selected sections for consonants and vowels.

Table 2. Sound of Consonants

Poem	Phonetic Transcription	Consonants
What happens to a dream deferred?	wɒt 'hæpənz tu ə dri:m drɪ'fɜ:d?	/w/, /t/, /h/, /p/, /n/, /z/, /t/, /d/, /r/, /m/, /d/, /f/, /d/
Does it dry up	dəz 'it draɪ ʌp	/d/, /z/, /t/, /d/, /r/, /p/ /1/, /k/, /r/, /z/, /n/, /n/, /ð/, /s/, /n/
like a raisin in the sun?	laɪk ə 'reɪzn̩ ɪn ðə sʌn?	/ð/, /s/, /n/
Or fester like a sore— And then run?	ɔ: 'festə laɪk ə sɔ:— ənd ðen rʌn?	/f/, /s/, /t/, /l/, /k/, /s/ /n/, /d/, /ð/, /n/, /r/, /n/ /d/, /z/, /t/, /s/, /t/, /ŋ/, /k/, /l/, /k/, /r/, /t/, /n/, /m/, /t/
Does it stink like rotten meat?	dəz 'it stɪŋk laɪk 'rɒtn̩ mi:t?	/k/, /r/, /s/, /t/, /n/, /d/, /ʃ/, /g/, /r/, /v/ /l/, /k/, /s/, /r/, /p/, /s/, /w/, /t/
Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet?	ɔ: krʌst ənd ʃʊgər 'əʊvə— laɪk ə 'sɪrəpi swi:t?	/m/, /b/, /t/, /dʒ/, /s/, /t/, /s/, /g/, /z/ /l/, /k/, /h/, /v/, /l/, /d/ /d/, /z/, /t/, /k/, /s/, /p/, /l/, /d/
Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.	'meɪbi: 'it dʒəst sægz laɪk ə 'hevi ləʊd	
Or does it explode?	ɔ: dəz 'it ɪk'spləʊd?	

Table 3. Sound of vowels

Poem	Phonetic Transcription	Vowels
What happens to a dream deferred?	wɒt 'hæpənz tu ə dri:m drɪ'fɜ:d?	/ɒ/, /æ/, /ə/, /u/, /ə/, /i/, /ɪ/, /ɜ/
Does it dry up	dəz 'it draɪ ʌp	/ə/, /ɪ/, /a/, /ɪ/, /ʌ/
like a raisin in the sun?	laɪk ə 'reɪzn̩ ɪn ðə sʌn?	/a/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /e/, /ɪ/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /ʌ/
Or fester like a sore— And then run?	ɔ: 'festə laɪk ə sɔ:— ənd ðen rʌn?	/ɔ/, /e/, /ə/, /a/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /ɔ/
Does it stink like rotten meat?	dəz 'it stɪŋk laɪk 'rɒtn̩ mi:t?	/ə/, /ɪ/, /a/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/, /i/, /i/ /ɔ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /ə/, /ə/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /ə/
Or crust and sugar over— like a syrupy sweet?	ɔ: krʌst ənd ʃʊgər 'əʊvə— laɪk ə 'sɪrəpi swi:t?	/a/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /i/, /ə/, /e/, /i/, /ə/, /ɔ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /ə/, /ə/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /ə/
Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.	'meɪbi: 'it dʒəst sægz laɪk ə 'hevi ləʊd	/e/, /ɪ/, /i/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /æ/ /a/, /ɪ/, /ə/, /e/, /i/, /ə/, /ʊ/
Or does it explode?	ɔ: dəz 'it ɪk'spləʊd?	/ɔ/, /ə/, /ɪ/, /i/, /ə/, /ə/, /ʊ/

From the two tables above, the researcher found the overall results of consonants and vowels.

Consonants

No	Consonants	Line											Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1	/p/	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	4
2	/b/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
3	/t/	2	1	-	1	-	4	1	1	2	-	1	13
4	/d/	3	2	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	2	11
5	/ѓ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
6	/dʒ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
7	/k/	-	-	1	1	-	2	1	1	-	1	1	8
8	/g/	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
9	/f/	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
10	/v/	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
11	/θ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
12	/ð/	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
13	/s/	-	-	1	2	-	1	1	2	2	-	1	10
14	/z/	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	6
15	/ʃ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
16	/ʒ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
17	/m/	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	3
18	/n/	1	-	3	-	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	9
19	/ŋ/	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
20	/h/	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
21	/l/	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	2	1	7
22	/r/	1	1	1	-	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	8
23	/w/	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
24	/j/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

There are five dominant consonants found in the Harlem poem, with the consonant /t/ appears 13 times, consonant /d/ appears 11 times, consonant /s/ appears 10 times, consonant /n/ appears 9 times, and consonant /r/ appear 8 times.

Vowels

No	Vowels	Line											Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
1	/ɪ/	1	2	3	1	-	3	-	2	2	1	2	17
2	/i/	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	1	-	6
3	/æ/	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
4	/ʌ/	-	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	4
5	/ʊ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	1	4
6	/ɒ/	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
7	/ə/	2	1	2	2	1	1	4	2	1	2	2	20
8	/e/	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	5

9	/a/	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	6
10	/ɔ/	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	4
11	/ɜ/	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
12	/u/	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
13	/eɪ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
14	/əʊ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
15	/aʊ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
16	/ɪə/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
17	/eə/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
18	/ɔɪ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
19	/aɪ/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
20	/ʊə/	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

There are five dominant vowels found in the Harlem poem, with the vowel /ə/ appears 20 times, vowel /ɪ/ appears 17 times, vowel /i/ appears 6 times, vowel /a/ appears 6 times, vowel /e/ appears 5 times.

History of the Poem

The poem 'Harlem' is written by involving the history of Harlem itself. Harlem is one of the neighborhoods with people living in poverty. This condition led to the Harlem riots, both of which were also triggered by violence against African-Americans. The 1943 riot began after a white police officer shot and wounded a black soldier.

According to literature at the time the poem was written in 1951, black individuals had fought for the U.S. military in World War II to defeat fascism and uphold the vision of freedom and equality in America. Dreams of racial equality and equal opportunities, glimpsed in the period after the U.S. Civil War, were continually deferred and postponed. This sense of delay, and the need to demand justice and equality, gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement. In a sense, Hughes' poem envisions and foreshadows the energy and power of this movement, as it imagines dreams that 'explode' and demand to be realized.

In seeking the relationship between the most dominant sounds and the theme, the researcher found that there are five dominant consonants, namely /t/ appearing 13 times, /d/ appearing 11 times, /s/ appearing 10 times, /n/ appearing 9 times, and /r/ appearing 8 times. Meanwhile, there are five dominant vowels found in the poem, namely /ə/ appearing 20 times, /ɪ/ appearing 17 times, /i/ appearing 6 times, /a/ appearing 6 times, and /e/ appearing 5 times. The researcher observed that words formed from the most dominant consonants and vowels are 'Tear' (/t/, /ɪ/, /ə/) and 'Star' (/s/, /t/, /a/). The word 'tear' reflects the feelings of black individuals waiting for equality and freedom. However, their waiting seems endless, and their hopes remain as mere dreams. The word 'star' serves as a metaphor for the dream of black people. Stars are the most admired celestial objects, always accompanying our nights. Stars are likened to the hope in an unrealized dream. The hope is high and difficult to attain, almost impossible.

The words 'tear' and 'star' are not explicitly written in the poem 'Harlem', but this is the purpose of the research—to find a connection between dominant words and the poem's theme. It is evident that the dominant words in this poem refer to the themes of deferred dreams, suffering, equality, freedom, and the sorrow experienced by black individuals at that time. The word 'tear' reminds us of how humans are gifted in expressing their emotions. Tears usually appear most abundantly when someone feels sadness. Many things can be factors for sorrow, but based on this poem, Hughes wants to show how painful the feelings of black people were while waiting for freedom. The tears shed by them bear silent witness to the resistance made for the sake of experiencing freedom. Tears don't only flow when we feel sadness, but we can also shed tears of joy. However, in this poem, there is no depiction of happiness, so tears of joy are not relevant to this poem.

The second theme revolves around the word 'star'. The term 'star' does not appear in Hughes's poem, but it is incorporated into the theme and message Hughes intends to convey. A star is a celestial object that appears in the night sky with the assistance of the moon's reflection of light. The star is metaphorically depicted as an illumination every night in the dreams of black people. They hope their dreams can be realized soon to break free from the injustices they endure. However, the star is so distant and exceedingly difficult to reach, perhaps even impossible for them to attain. Black individuals at that time could only gaze at that shining star from afar, waiting for the moment when their dreams would come true. The distant star is as challenging to reach as the dream of freedom for black people.

Hughes indeed places significant emphasis on his poem about the cries of black individuals at that time. The desire for freedom and equality becomes an unrealized dream in their lives. Hughes pours forth all the questions, confusion, and sense of direction loss from those residing in the Harlem area concerning freedom in an eleven-line poem. Hughes employs five lines containing questions about dreams that never come true. This poem is truly powerful and effectively conveys the situation of black individuals at that time in a way that is both impactful and understandable.

CONCLUSION

This study yielded findings that indicate phono-stylistic analysis can be used to identify themes and meanings in a poem, particularly in the case of the poem 'Harlem'. Sorting words based on consonants and vowels was employed to clarify the parts of the poem most heavily utilized by the author. The research also found that in the poem 'Harlem', Hughes prefers to convey meaning through themes rather than the repetition of words in each line. In conclusion, phono-stylistic analysis successfully obtained results in exploring themes using the most dominant consonants and vowels. The researcher can provide suggestions on how this research can be further utilized for future phono-stylistic learning.

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