



RESEARCH PAPER

**Metaphor and Conceptual Blending in Ted Hughes' *The Hawk in The Rain*: A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is cognitive stylistics analysis of the metaphor and the conceptual blending in Ted Hughes' poem *The Hawk in The Rain*. This research seeks to examine how Hughes uses the tools of metaphor and conceptual blending in the creation of the poem and how the knowledge of cognitive processes helps in understanding the poet's style and the workings behind it. The focus of the research lies in the analysis of essential metaphors and blending patterns that reveal the reinforcement of primary senses and the construction of the multifaceted poet's mental worlds. The conclusion successfully conveys how Hughes' metaphors do not only portray nature but also require the readers to ponder on the subject. Future research should compare the text with other Hughes' poems or other contemporary poets in order to draw additional conclusions on how cognitive stylistics can be used in contemporary poetry.

**KEYWORDS** Cognitive Stylistics, Conceptual Metaphor, Ted Hughes, The Hawk in The Rain

Introduction

Cognitive stylistics has been very popular subject for the researchers in exploring the possibilities of analysis for the literary texts. Various texts have been explored and analyzed by the researchers as to find their best possible explanations by applying various literary theories. All the possible explanations have made their marks in the existing literature. Various theories have been applied to the literary texts as to pave ways of thinking and evaluating the literary texts. Theories have been applied to the literary texts in order to have a new understanding of them which has given rise to project analysis. Stylistics has added a great number of researches on various topics where a literary text is evaluated with the perspective of a specific stylistic tool. This has been in the consideration by various researchers who have taken it as a unique approach to analyse the data and texts. No doubt stylistic analysis has been a significant contribution to the analysis of literary texts and it has added a variety to the evaluation of the literary texts. Cognitive stylistics has emerged as a significant contribution to the evaluation and treatment of the literary texts which has a significant quality of dealing with the mental approach and mind mapping. It tells about the construction of a specific literary text, and the way a reader can comprehend it. Schema theory and Conceptual metaphor theory are the most significant tools used in the cognitive stylistic approach. Both the theories have greatly addressed the phenomenon of understanding a text by using the mental capabilities of the readers. They purely address the mind and the background knowledge of the readers. The present study investigates the literary language of the poems of Ted Hughes where some poems have been taken to have an understanding of them using both of these theories.

It is obvious that Hughes poems are a brilliant manifestation of figurative language; it is the outcome of various discussions made by researchers and critics. This research aims at exploring the world in the texts (stylistics) of given poems through the lens of the world

of the readers' mind (cognitive stylistics). The research also aims at exploring Hughes' poems applying the concerned theories i.e. CMT and ST as not much has already been done on Hughes from this perspective. It will enable the future researchers to appreciate the poems and their figurative language by the use of their (readers) background knowledge.

### **Literature Review**

Cognitive stylistics is a sub-discipline in the field of applied linguistics "cognitive stylistics provides a new way of thinking about literature involving the application of cognitive linguistics and psychology to the literary texts"(Gavins and Steen 2003:35).

Hermosilla (2022) examined the relationship among the language, cognition and style with relation to texts. He views that the study of language style from cognitive perspectives involves the comprehension skills, knowledge and mental capacities of a reader who is involved in this process. The researcher also examines that the knowledge of stylistics helps the reader to comprehend the world outside the text as sociocultural context, author's inclinations, genre through the internal language features, stretches of discourse and linguistic propositions. The formal aspects of the language style can help the reader to interpret the function and meaning of the text. It engages the reader with the given description of the situation in the text, text relation to the situation and given cognitive context.

Bajwa (2017) has described the undertaking of conceptual metaphor theory in the process of developing the meaning in poetry in a *Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the Emotion Stylistics: An Analysis of Urdu Poems*. The researcher finds out that the use of conceptual metaphor helps the authors to develop the broader spheres of the subject matters as well as the area of meanings. The stylistics choices of the poet and author determine his versatility and uniqueness which establish the separate identity of that particular poet or author. The achieving of emotive functions through the use of natural language are connected with the cognition of the reader and author takes advantage of it. The understanding of the relationship between the cognitive metaphor and language's meaning is very crucial to effect the texts' meanings for the reader. The use of metaphor as a stylistic device helps the reader to comprehend the meaning and makes the message attractive for the readers.

Jaafar (2020) in *Schema Theory and Text Worlds: A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Selected Literary Texts*, has examined that the existing knowledge of the reader is very crucial element in the process of reading and interpreting literary texts. The study finds out that the schema theory helps the reader to connect his real world with the textual world created by the poet or author. The interaction between the text's world and discourse's world create the connotative grounds of interpretations for the readers. The reader's act of bringing his own background knowledge and personal experiences in the world of text develop interpretative connections between two worlds. Schema and cognitive metaphor theories are two useful theories in the cognitive stylistics which help the reader to connect his own world with the world of text.

The process of reading and interpreting the selected literary text from the perspective of cognitive stylistics provides the reader an outlook to go back to his background knowledge with the help of deep thinking. The individual's experiences has great impact upon the activity of viewing the text world and constructing meaning from it. So, the readers, schema has also great influence upon the world created by writer during the activity of deriving meaning from it.

Reijmersdal (2008) has argued that the cognitive stylistic is a new domain of study which combines the psychology, linguistic, cognitive science and literary studies. The cognitive study have answered the questions of literature which remained unanswerable in

previous times. This approach towards the interpretations of literature had taken many forms and adopted multiple different direction as an interdisciplinary approach. The cognitive linguistic and cognitive psychology has left an evident impact upon criticism and modern readers.

Semino (1997) argued that meanings are constructed though the specific parameters as the interaction between the interpreter's knowledge and the given texts. The perception of the text by the reader depends upon the particular schema of the reader and meaning varies from one individuals to another due to variety of experiences involved in reading process. The refreshment of experiences and knowledge develop the change in schema and which may annihilate the old schema and meaning and give birth to new one. The confirming assumptions about the practiced trends and people confirms the reinforcement of the schema. The schema is distorted when the deviations occurs at the level of language and style and literariness arises and text demonstrate the challenging nature for reader's schemata (Semino, p. 7).

Cook (1994) has noticed that how schema and cognitive theory help to complete the meaning of the particular text. He examines that the process of meaning making is only valid through the schematic development of the reader. The dynamic interaction between the texts structure form and linguistic at one level and the schematic representation of the universe at other, help to construct the validity of the meanings. Schema works as a script in interpreting the texts and fixed the standards of analysis. The dynamic schema brings variations in meanings and brings the texts from the rigidity of fixed meanings. The conventional symbol and actions in texts are needed to repairs with rejuvenation of schematic experiences (p. 9).

Stockwell (2007) has suggested that schema is like a script which is arranged for the execution of goals and plans. The reader passes different phases such as engaging in situation, socializing and moving to fresh position. When, the reader's interactions are repeated with the persons, atmosphere, situations and things, the experiences become the routine and works as a script. The persons are not born with inherent knowledge about the civilizations and cultures of societies rather they acquired it from the interaction with them. The personal experiences and formal or informal learning process develops the extending details for the existing schema or help them to adopt several existing schema (p. 9).

The mind of the reader involves in the process of foregrounding a text and background another one at the same time. The active mind of the reader can involve in patterning the text through self-awareness and through this he/she can notice the different aspects of the textual data and develops awareness about the reading and comprehension process (Stockwell, 2017, p. 220).

Norman (1974) has suggested that schema is a cognitive structure which provides information related to our comprehension and knowledge of universe. A schema of a person includes the general information which aids him to comprehend reality through the extrapolation of the details which are either skipped at all or not described fully in the text. The procedure of reading the poetical diction demands the certain cognitive process of mind from the part of reader to digest the given information and comprehend the useful points from it.

Marsalek (2014) has illustrated that schema is about the common knowledge of the reader but the difference is social and cultural groups provides different kind of knowledge. The factors like race, gender, age, class and culture has great impacts upon the development of socio- cultural schema. The researcher also argued that reading is not only the process of processing fact rather it helps to enjoy the real sense of the world created through the text so the reader requires a good sensory schema to develop awareness about the basic requirements for perceptions as hearing, vision, touch and smell (p. 273).

Ghani (2017) has discussed the role of cognitive stylistics in poetic discourse in a research work *A Cognitive Stylistic Study of Poetic Discourse*. The researcher has found out that the main task of the reader during the interpretations of any literary work is to bridge the gap between two worlds which are the world of text created by the author and the world of reader constructed from his personal experiences. The conceptualizing the writing and the reading process involves a complicated framework. The cognitive devices are very helpful for the interpretations of meanings. Cognitive stylistics works as a device to provide the scientific and systematic approach to bring together the reader and authors' understanding of the universe and reflection of the interpretation in authors' discourse.

Al-Saeedi (2016) has investigated "*The Sound of Silence*" where the author has analyzed the song through cognitive stylistics perspective where there is a lucid use of conceptual mapping. The very nature of conceptual framework is a leading ability of the readers to make them feel more familiar with the literary texts in and to grasp the meaning to the maximum possible extent. Now that a reader is expected to have a background knowledge of literature and literary language, he/she is the central figure to meet the expected delivery of the literariness.

Since conceptual metaphor is widely used in poetry, an attempt has been made to explore it in Russian poetry by Hayrutdino, Wang and Zhang (2021) where they have attempted to explore the nature of poetry finding conceptual metaphors. They have also explored the ways in which poetry (a form of expression) can express the culture and society of a particular area describing the social, religious, political and economic terms specific to a specific culture and region. As this research is concerned mainly with cognitive stylistics, it will purely address the intended texts and research aspects concerning the suggested theories.

Tsur (2008) observes that the Cognitive stylistics, a field that bridges cognitive science and literary analysis, explores how readers interpret texts through their cognitive processes. Ted Hughes, a prominent 20th-century British poet, is known for his intense and vivid imagery, often drawing from nature and myth. This literature review examines how cognitive stylistics can provide insights into Hughes' poetry, focusing on the interaction between linguistic features and readers' cognitive responses.

Freeman (2007) examines that Hughes poetry is rich, often with violent natural imagery. Frequent references to mythological themes and archetypal figures. Intense emotional expression, often exploring themes of life, death, and the human condition. Hughes often employs foregrounding through lexical and syntactic choices that disrupt conventional reading patterns. This technique defamiliarizes common perceptions, prompting readers to engage more deeply with the text. In "Pike," the meticulous description of the fish and its environment foregrounds the predator-prey relationship, evoking a primal sense of fear and awe.

Stockwell (2012) examines that Hughes frequently uses conceptual metaphors to convey complex emotional and psychological states. These metaphors often draw from nature, creating a bridge between the external world and internal experiences. In "Hawk Roosting," the hawk's perspective serves as a metaphor for power and dominance, mapping the bird's physical traits onto human notions of control and supremacy. Semino (2002) opines that the readers construct detailed mental worlds based on Hughes' vivid descriptions and narrative structures. These text worlds are populated with dynamic, often conflicting elements that reflect Hughes' thematic concerns. In "Crow" poems, the eponymous character navigates a surreal landscape where myth, history, and personal trauma intersect, creating a complex mental world that challenges readers' interpretive efforts.

## **Material and Methods**

The current research is qualitative in nature and utilizes content analysis approach. Ted Hughes selected poem is analyzed from cognitive stylistic perspectives to highlight that accomplishment and coherency of meaning through stylistic techniques have formative effects upon the mental steadiness and performance of reader during their reading process. The research also examined the impact of cognitive stylistic techniques to develop the sense among readers for the perceptions of meanings. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is used as a framework. It was introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which indicate that abstract concepts are correlated with concrete domains mapped into metaphors. In literature, the use of metaphors provides readers with perspectives and understanding of concepts since they are based on familiar sensory experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

## **Results and Discussion**

The poem starts with the concept of struggle and immense hard work which provide the meanings to life "I drown in the drumming plough land, I drag up". The opening line immediately immerses the reader in a sensory experience of struggle and immersion. The alliteration of "drown" and "drumming" and the harsh consonant sounds create a visceral sense of effort and resistance. The use of stylistics elements as assonance and consonance emphasizes the speaker's physical and emotional labor. The poet further proceeds to highlight the empowered nature of Hawk "heel after heel from the swallowing of the earth's mouth". The personification of the earth as "swallowing" suggests a powerful, almost predatory nature, evoking feelings of being overpowered and consumed. The vivid stylistics elements as imagery and personification deepen the reader's sense of the earth's overwhelming force as the poet further says "from clay that clutches my each step to the ankle". The tactile imagery of clay clinging to the ankle heightens the sense of entrapment and struggle. The repeated 'c' sounds (alliteration) mimic the stickiness and persistence of the clay.

The concept of death has been also reflected by the poet "with the habit of the dogged grave, but the hawk". The "dogged grave" introduces a motif of death and persistence, contrasting with the dynamic image of the hawk. The metaphor of the grave underscores a theme of inevitability and relentless pressure. Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye. The hawk's effortless presence and stillness in the sky contrast sharply with the speaker's struggle, creating a dichotomy of power and ease versus labor and entrapment. The juxtaposition of the hawk's stillness against the speaker's movement accentuates the hawk's dominance and grace.

The power and control of Hawk is quite impressive for Ted Hughes "his wings hold all creation in a weightless quiet". The given line conveys the hawk's omnipotent control and serene authority, evoking a sense of awe and reverence. The paradox of "weightless quiet" emphasizes the hawk's supernatural stillness and power. The capacities of the Hawk are further elaborated "steady as a hallucination in the streaming air". Describing the hawk as a "hallucination" suggests an almost unreal, transcendent presence, blending reality with a dream-like quality. The simile creates an ethereal, almost mystical atmosphere around the hawk.

The wild nature of Hawk and destructive forces of societies catch Ted Hughes attention "while banging wind kills these stubborn hedges". The violent imagery of "banging wind" attacking the hedges introduces a hostile, destructive element in contrast to the hawk's serenity. The personification of the wind and the aggressive verb "kills" heighten the sense of conflict and turbulence. The poet further says "thumbs my eyes, throws my breath, tackles my heart". The wind's actions are described in an intensely physical and invasive manner, emphasizing the speaker's vulnerability and the environment's aggression. The

anaphora (repetition of "my") and the series of violent verbs create a rhythm of continuous assault.

The world is full of threat and anxieties. The mind and physique are the factors which can either disturb or make life comfortable. The poet examines these aspects of life as "and rain hacks my head to the bone, the hawk hangs". The relentless battering by the rain evokes a sense of physical torment and mental weariness. The harsh consonance in "hacks my head" reflects the brutality of the rain.

The will, courage and determination are the factors which existence can demolish the hostile forces "the diamond point of will that polestars". The hawk is depicted as a symbol of pure, unyielding will, guiding and dominating the landscape like a polestar (North Star). The metaphor of the "diamond point" conveys precision and indestructibility. The poet further celebrates the power of Hawk "the sea drowner's endurance: And I". The comparison of the hawk's will to a sea drowner's endurance underscores its supreme, unwavering nature. The enjambment carries the reader swiftly to the next line, maintaining momentum.

The world of chaos and uncertainty snatches the comforts and determinations from the weak creatures "bloodily grabbed dazed last-moment-counting". The speaker's struggle is intensified by the graphic and urgent imagery of being "bloodily grabbed." The compound adjectives create a sense of urgency and fragmentation, mirroring the speaker's chaotic experience. The indefiniteness of the universe is frightening "morsel in the earth's mouth, strain to the master". The speaker feels like a small, insignificant piece within the earth's larger, consuming force, emphasizing a powerlessness against nature. The metaphor of being a "morsel" in the earth's mouth highlights the speaker's vulnerability.

Ted Hughes concludes the poem with the projections of infinite powers of Hawk "fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still". The poem concludes with the hawk as the central point of balance amid chaos, symbolizing ultimate control and dominion. The repetition of the hawk's stillness creates a powerful, concluding image of dominance and poise.

Through the lens of Cognitive Stylistics and Metaphor Theory, the readers involve in the process of delving into the intricate layers of language and imagery. It helps to break down the poem line by line to uncover its metaphorical significance and cognitive implications. The message is easily unfold for the reader through the help of this theory. The unfolding process of stylistics techniques help the reader to comprehend the author intentions for using particular vocabulary items and linguistic approach.

Ted Hughes love for rural life and the natural surroundings is everywhere in his poems which is easily understood through the images which are employed by the poet for the effective use of his message as "I drown in the drumming plough land" This line suggests a sense of immersion and overwhelm, where the speaker feels engulfed by the relentless rhythm of agricultural work. The metaphor of drowning evokes a feeling of suffocation and struggle.

"Thirst creaks in my throat" Here, thirst is personified as a creaking sensation, highlighting the speaker's intense desire for relief. This metaphorical portrayal enhances the reader's sensory experience and emphasizes the nature of life which requires some mental and physical comforts as well after the long toiling hours of work. The readers construct meaning based on their cognitive processes and prior knowledge schemas, during the process of reading. Ted Hughes love for natural life and rural setting help the reader to develop analysis from rural touch "I drown in the drumming plough land" This line sets the tone with a sensory image, evoking the feeling of immersion in the agricultural landscape. The use of "drown" suggests overwhelming sensory experience.

"I drag up" The hawk's movement is depicted, possibly suggesting a struggle or effort.

"Heavier than hunger" The weight of the hawk is compared to hunger, indicating its primal, instinctual nature. "Thirstier than thirst", extending the comparison, emphasizing the intense desire or need driving the hawk's actions. "Closer to my bone" This line suggests a deep, visceral connection between the hawk's instincts and the speaker's own being, perhaps hinting at a primal shared experience. "Wet grass", a simple, sensory image that adds to the vividness of the scene, highlighting the hawk's surroundings. "Driving the iced winds of the night" The hawk's movement is described with powerful imagery, evoking a sense of determination and strength. "With my face frozen" The speaker's physical state is emphasized, creating a contrast with the hawk's resilience in harsh conditions.

The thinking powers of Hawk are mightier than the other creatures of the forest as depicted by Hughes "into the furrowed darkness of the brain". This metaphorical line suggests the hawk's penetration into the depths of consciousness, perhaps hinting at primal instincts or subconscious drives. "Where it will not drown again", a hint of existential struggle for survival, suggesting the need to avoid being overwhelmed or consumed by darkness or subconscious forces. "I have come far enough" The speaker reflects on their journey or experience, suggesting a sense of accomplishment or realization. "Over the seas" This line suggests a vast, expansive journey, possibly metaphorical or symbolic.

The message of Hughes poetry is always meaningful for the reader "to feel the sun break through", the imagery of the sun breaking through implies a sense of triumph or enlightenment after a long journey or struggle. "On my face" The physical sensation of the sun's warmth is emphasized, suggesting a moment of personal connection or revelation. "That does not keep a record of wrongs" This line introduces a philosophical or existential theme, suggesting a release from past burdens or grievances. "I believe" The speaker expresses a personal belief or conviction, suggesting a sense of faith or certainty. "Could be" Despite the assertion, there is still an element of uncertainty or possibility, adding complexity to the speaker's perspective. "Written on a dark water" A metaphorical image that suggests the ephemeral nature of existence or the inscrutability of deeper truths.

The analysis demonstrated that cognitive stylistics and schema theory can illuminate the complex interplay of language, imagery, and meaning in Ted Hughes' poem "The Hawk in the Rain". It has also highlighting the ways in which readers construct understanding based on their cognitive processes and prior knowledge schemas.

## **Conclusion**

The poem triggers the schema of a predatory bird, which brings associations of power, control, and dominance. The hawk's monologue engages readers by inviting them to inhabit the perspective of a high-ranking predator. The hawk serves as a metaphor for authority and self-assuredness. Hughes's use of phrases like "top of the wood" and "I kill where I please" reinforces the hawk's position as a supreme ruler, eliciting a cognitive frame of hierarchical power dynamics. The hawk's mind style is conveyed through the simplicity and directness of its language, reflecting a straightforward, unambiguous mindset. Phrases like "No arguments assert my right" illustrate a clear, self-justifying thought process that mirrors the hawk's instinctual behavior. The poem's structure, with its short lines and stark imagery, reduces cognitive load, allowing readers to process the hawk's thoughts with immediacy and clarity. This enhances the impact of its assertions. The fluent, rhythmic quality of the poem's language facilitates smooth cognitive processing, making the hawk's statements more memorable and impactful. The poem uses simple, declarative sentences, which mirror the hawk's direct and authoritative mind style. The diction is powerful and unambiguous, with words like "kill," "tearing," and "bones" evoking a visceral reaction.

The hawk's imagery perched high, watching, and killing symbolizes omniscience and omnipotence. This symbolic layer engages readers' cognitive abilities to interpret and infer deeper meanings about power and nature. The repetition of certain phrases (e.g., "I," "my") emphasizes the hawk's self-focus and dominance, reinforcing the cognitive schema of a powerful, self-centered being.

The poem employs conceptual metaphors that shape readers' understanding of abstract concepts through more concrete terms. The hawk can be seen as a metaphor for power and control. The hawk's dominion over the air and its effortless navigation of the skies can be seen as a metaphor for superiority and freedom. The tension and power in the hawk's movements, combined with the hostile environment of the rain, evoke feelings of admiration for the hawk's resilience and mastery. The poem creates two contrasting mental spaces: the lethargic, almost static space of the zoo animals and the dynamic, intense space of the jaguar. The former is characterized by stillness and decay, while the latter is full of energy and defiance. Hughes blends the physical confinement of the jaguar with the idea of boundless freedom ("His stride is wildernesses of freedom"). This blend emphasizes the jaguar's indomitable spirit and the illusion of captivity. Words like "mesmerized," "enraged," and "fierce" evoke a sense of awe and admiration for the jaguar's power and vitality.



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