ABSTRACT


Keywords: poem, stylistics, structural features, contextual features.

Since a poem veils things more than what it divulges, the emphasis on the aesthetics of language and the use of different techniques in poetry such as repetition, meter and rhyme are what commonly used to distinguish poetry from other literary works. That uniqueness of poem also often attracts researchers to investigate it more than any other literary works. Yet, some people still get lost in interpreting the messages of poems. Therefore, the mystery of a poem should not be left behind; instead, it needs to be dug out more deeply and clearly through its structural and contextual features. Then, the researcher in this study selected Walt Whitman’s poem A child said, What is the grass? as the subject of her study and chose stylistic approach in examining this poem. Stylistics is a study of both structural and contextual features of a literary work.

Particularly, this research raises three main questions. The first one is how the structural features of Whitman’s poem A child said, What is the grass? are incorporated. The second one is how the contextual features of this poem are constructed. The last one is how the combined features between structural and contextual features help reveal the messages of the poem. This research was conducted by a qualitative approach in which this study describes human work that is poem and the researcher becomes the key instrument while three other supporting instruments are interview guides, observation sheets, and forms for notes in which the data were taken from internet.

This research presents three findings which are simply the answers to the research questions. The first conclusion is about the structural features in this poem which include three linguistic features; phonology, syntax, and semantics. Phonologically, the form in this poem gets foregrounded by means of alliteration and assonance and the rhyme employed were mostly internal rhyme, while syntactically, the structure of sentences in this poem is purposively constructed to be short to help create the aesthetics of sounds. Most sentences in this poem semantically deviate from literal meaning through the creation of “fresh metaphors”. The second conclusion is about the contextual features in this poem which embrace society, culture, and poet’s background. The conditions, events, and circumstances occurred at the time the poet was still alive turn out to give many influences toward his poem. As the conclusion of this point, slavery, American Civil War, and immigration in the United States are the socio-cultural backgrounds which affect the poet in creating this poem. The last conclusion is one about the combination between both structural and contextual features in revealing the messages of the poem. Then, by conducting this study, the researcher expects this study could bring some contributions to students and lecturers of linguistics and literature, people in general, and future researchers.