

## Imagery and Figurative Language in Emily Dickinson's Poems

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**Abstract** – This study examines the types of imagery and figurative language used in several Emily Dickinson poems. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the study of imagery and figurative language in poems. Data were taken from seven poems, namely Because I Could Not Stop for Death, Wild Nights, with a Flower, I Died for Beauty, I Never Saw a Moor, I Heard Fly Buzz When I Die, and I'm Nobody! Who You? then divided into several types of imagery and figurative language. The results of this study indicate that: (1) Three types of imagery are found in poems, namely visual imagery, tactile imagery, and auditory imagery. There are fifty-nine imagery data, which includes fifty visual imagery data, one tactile imagery data, and eight auditory imagery data. (2) There are three types of figurative language in poems, namely personification, metaphor, and simile. With a total of nine figurative language data, which includes six personification data, two metaphor data, and one simile data. (3) Then it was found that the implied meanings in the figurative language and imagery Emily Dickinson's poems are about death, relationship, feminine beauty, life, and faith.

Key Word: Imagery, Figurative Language, Poems, Emily Dickinson

**Abstrak** - Penelitian ini mengkaji jenis citraan dan bahasa kiasan yang digunakan dalam beberapa puisi Emily Dickinson. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis kajian citraan dan bahasa kiasan dalam puisi. Data diambil dari tujuh puisi yaitu Because I Could Not Stop for Death, Wild Nights, with a Flower, I Died for Beauty, I Never Saw a Moor, I Heard Fly Buzz When I Die, dan I'm Nobody! Who You? kemudian dibagi menjadi beberapa jenis citraan and bahasa kiasan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa: (1) Sebanyak tiga jenis citraan ditemukan dalam puisi, yaitu citraan penglihatan, citraan peraba, dan citraan pendengaran. Terdapat lima puluh sembilan data citraan, yang meliputi lima puluh data citraan penglihatan, satu data citraan peraba, dan delapan data citraan pendengaran. (2) Ditemukan tiga jenis bahasa kiasan dalam puisi, yaitu bahasa kiasan personifikasi, metafor, dan simile. Dengan total sembilan data bahasa kiasan, yang meliputi enam data personifikasi, dua data metafor, dan satu data simile. (3) Kemudian ditemukan bahwa makna yang tersirat dalam pencitraan dan bahasa kiasan di puisi-puisi Emily Dickinson adalah tentang kematian, hubungan, kecantikan feminin, kehidupan, dan keyakinan.

Kata kunci: Citraan, Bahasa Kiasan, Puisi, Emily Dickinson

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### INTRODUCTION

Literature is a work of art that is imaginative, literature can express thoughts, feelings, and is related to the author's life experiences, literature also uses words in an effective, powerful, yet captivating way, and explains the relevance of hidden facts. (Ade and Okunoye, 2008). Fictional works and non-fictional works can be divided into two categories. A literary work that is not based on a factual story is called fiction. A literary work that is neither based on a factual narrative nor created by humans is considered non-fiction. The examples of fictional literary works are novels, poems, music, movies, and others. The examples of non-fiction literary works are personal essays, histories, biographies, and autobiographies.

Longman Dictionary (2003) writes that poem is a written work that is written or composed with rhyming lines, writing thoughts, emotions, and experiences with words that come out of thought or imagination. Because poem is a creative literary work that employs figurative language or language that is infrequently used in usual communication, poem is one type of literary work that is difficult to fully understand. Poems are literary works that use language to evoke the reader's imagination and feelings. Shanker (1966) also argues that poem is a direct form of the human need to communicate inner and outer experience.

Imagery is one of the elements in poem that is commonly used by poets to build the readers imagination and



emotions, which is useful for reviving the images and feelings that the poet wants to convey through the words in the poem. (Sugihastuti, 2000). Therefore, imagery is a very important poetic instrument for poets to be able to create visual images or images of feelings that can be felt by the reader. Simply put, imagery is used to build strong images of the feelings and thoughts of the reader. Another very important element in poems is figurative language. Abrams (1981) said that Figurative language, which is different from the language people use in daily interactions, is the use of language by poets. The goal of using language that differs from what is commonly spoken is to produce words that are more pleasant and meaningful. So, imagery and figurative language are very important in a poem.

There are also many literary works of poems from world-famous poets that have beautiful and meaningful imagery as well as figurative language, one example of a poet who uses beautiful imagery and figurative language in his literary work especially in poems is Emily Dickinson. She is one of the best and most famous female poets in America, her first volume of poems was published in 1890, four years after her death, the poems were a stunning success. Through 11 editions in just under two years, Emily Dickinson's poems have had a very wide audience of all ages and interests. During her 55 years of life Emily Dickinson has written around 1,800 poems and most of her poems are poems with themes of death, sadness, or depression. Some of Emily Dickinson's most popular poems are "Hope is the thing with the feathers", "Because I Could Not Stop For Death", and "I Heard Fly Buzz When I Die".

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The writer uses descriptive qualitative method for analyzing this thesis. Descriptive qualitative research is research that uses explanatory methods to understand or analyze a research subject by describing in the form of words and language. (Moleong, 2010). The steps that the writer takes in qualitative method are several procedures, the first is selected the poems by Emily Dickinson that contained imagery and figurative language to get data to analyze. The second is analyze type of imagery and figurative language in the poems. The third is collect of data from various sources to gain a deeper understanding about the topic and analyzing it with supporting theories from experts. And the fourth is concluded how many types of imagery and figurative language that found in the poems and complete this research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Imagery Analysis in Emily Dickinson Poems

#### a. Visual Imagery

Horovenko (2021) stated that visual imagery is imagery that is often used by poets in their literary works. Visual imagery is very interesting because it can describe something that we can imagine in our minds from the poet's words in her/his literary work. Visual Imagery in Emily Dickinson's poems would be explained through the following data.

#### Data 1

##### **Title: Because I Could Not Stop for Death**

*Because I could not stop for Death—  
He kindly stopped for me—  
The Carriage held but just  
Ourselves—And Immortality.  
We slowly drove—He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure  
too, For His Civility—  
We passed the School, where Children strove  
At Recess—in the Ring—  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—  
We passed the Setting Sun—*

*Or rather—He passed us—*

In lines 1-13 is **visual imagery**, the writer can imagine how the poet describes death as something that we cannot avoid or even stop. Emily Dickinson visualizes a dead person's journey to immortality but with lines that are not scary, as in the lines "*We passed the School.....We passed the Setting Sun*" in lines 9-12. Through the stanzas of the poem the readers can imagine how the process towards immortality is described until the effect of vision or visual imagery appears.

**Data 2**

**Title: Wild Nights**

*Wild Nights – Wild Nights!  
Were I with thee  
Wild Nights should be  
Our luxury!*

*Futile – the winds –  
To a heart in port –  
Done with the compass –  
Done with the chart!*

*Rowing in Eden –  
Ah, the sea!  
Might I moor – Tonight –*

*In thee!* From the poem titled Wild Nights from lines 1-12 the writer can imagine how the speaker symbolized the stronglove with the sea and wild nights in the poems. All of line in the poems makes the readers have a **visual imagery** about the love depicted in the poem.

**Data 3**

**Title: With a Flower!**

*Almost a loneliness.*

Based in the line 8 of poem 'With A Flower' by Emily Dickinson, the writer can imagine how the speaker symbolized the feminine pretty woman with a flower, so the imagery in this poem is **visual imagery**.

**Data 4**

**Title: I Died for Beauty**

*I died for beauty, but was scarce  
Adjusted in the tomb,  
When one who died for truth was lain  
In an adjoining room*

This poem tells the conversation of 2 people in the afterlife about what caused them to die. In the first paragraph or line 1-4, the poet invites the reader to imagine two dead people buried next to each other, so the imagery used in this poem is **visual imagery**.

*And so, as kinsmen met a-night,  
We talked between the rooms,  
Until the moss had reached our lips,  
And covered up our names.*

In the last paragraph or lines 9-12 the reader visually imagines the two graves that are finally covered by moss covering the tombstones, so the imagery in this last paragraph is **visual imagery**.

**Data 5**

**Title : I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died**

*For that last Onset - when the King  
Be witnessed - in the Room -*

In lines 7-8 the writer can imagine the figure of the king in the room, giving rise to **visual imagery**.

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#### **Data 6**

##### **Title: I Never Saw a Moor**

*I never saw a  
moor I never saw  
the sea  
Yet know I how the heather looks  
And what a wave must be*

In the poem I Never Saw a Moor, Emily Dickinson invites the reader to imagine a moor and also the sea which is the main object in the first paragraph of the poem, so the imagery of this poem is **visual imagery**.

#### **b. Tactile Imagery**

Mahfouz (2012) stated that tactile imagery is imagery that describes something that can be felt by our sense of touch or can be represented through touch. A tactile imagery is one that is related to a tactile sense of touch, such as cold and warmth.

#### **Data 1**

##### **Title: Because I Could Not Stop for Death**

*The Dews drew quivering and chill—*

In the 14th stanza the poet through the diction she chooses invites the readers to feel the cold morning dew so that it creates imagination through the sense of touch or **tactile imagery**.

#### **c. Auditory Imagery**

Horovento (2021) stated that auditory imagery is imagery used to imagine things or actions in a literary work using the sense of hearing. This kind of imagery connects to other auditory modalities, such spoken or musical imagery, with auditory imagery the reader can hear something as described by the poet.

#### **Data 4**

##### **Title: I Died for Beauty**

*He questioned softly why I failed?  
"For beauty," I replied."  
And I for truth – the two are one;  
We brethren are," he said.*

In the second paragraph line 5-8, the reader is invited to imagine the conversation between the two people who have died in the afterlife and creating **auditory imagery** for the reader.

#### **Data 5**

##### **Title: I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died**

*I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -  
The Stillness in the Room  
Was like the Stillness in the Air -  
Between the Heaves of Storm -*

In this poem Emily Dickinson imagines the sound of flies in a quiet room in lines 1-4 which means the first paragraph is **auditory imagery**.

Table 1. The type of imagery in each poem

Data	Line	Type of Imagery
Data 1	1-13	Visual Imagery
	14	Tactile Imagery
	15-24	Visual Imagery
Data 2	1-12	Visual Imagery
Data 3	8	Visual Imagery
Data 4	1-4	Visual Imagery
	5-8	Auditory Imagery
	9-12	Visual Imagery
Data 5	1-4	Auditory Imagery
	7-8	Visual Imagery
Data 6	1-4	Visual Imagery

## 2. Figurative Language in Emily Dickinson Poems

### a. Personification

#### Data 1

##### Title: Because I Could Not Stop for Death

*We passed the Field of Gazing Grain  
Or rather he passed us  
The Dews drew quivering and chill*

According to Baret (1993) **personification** is a figurative language that gives human attributes to animals or objects that appear in the 11th, 13th, 14th lines of this poem. Emily Dickinson personifies the fields in the soul possessing the human character that could staring to others human. Emily also personifies the sun that could passed us like a human being. In the line 14-line Emily personifies the dews that could quivering and chill.

#### Data 2

##### Title: Wild Nights

*To a Heart in port -*

In line 6, Emily dickinson uses **personification** figurative language by giving human attributes to the word 'heart', in the line the heart is in the airport like a human. So the figurative language is personification.

#### Data 3

##### Title: I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died

*The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -  
And Breaths were gathering firm*

Emily Dickinson **personifies** the eyes and breathes in the lines "The Eyes around - had wrung them dry - And Breaths were gathering firm" from I Heard Fly Buzz When I Died. Emily Dickinson gives the eyes and breaths a human character that may squeeze them dry and make them start quickly.

### b. Metaphor

#### Data 2

##### Title: Wild Nights

*Wild nights - Wild*

*nights! Wild nights  
should be*

According to Perrine (1996) **metaphor** is a comparing between two things without the use of words 'like or as' appears in the 1 and 3 lines of this poem. Emily Dickinson equating wild nights with strong love or simply the desire to be intimate with another person.

### c. Simile

#### Data 7

#### Title: I'm Nobody! Who Are You?

*How public – like a Frog –*

According to Perrine (1969) unlike metaphor, simile is the comparison of between two objects or things using some words such as: like, as, then, similar to, or resembles. In this poem, the writer finds a figurative language simile in the line 6 which also uses the word 'like' in the sentence. In the sentence, Emily Dickinson make a comparison between the public or society to a frog. As the writer learn that public is an adjective that means society. Portrayed as a frog that in social life there is a trait that likes to telling other people's lives.

Table 2. The type of figurative language in each poem

Data	Line	Type of Figurative Language
Data 1	11-13	Personification
Data 2	1 & 2	Metaphor
	6	Personification
Data 5	5-6	Personification
Data 7	6	Simile

### 3. Implied Meaning in Emily Dickinson Poems

Table 3. Implied Meaning in each poem

Implied Meaning	Data
Death	Data 1, 4, 6
Relationship	Data 2
Feminine Beauty	Data 3
Life	Data 5
Faith	Data 7

### CONCLUSION

Imagery and figurative language in these poems are essential elements in interpreting and understanding the meaning behind the verses. According to statistical analysis of the imagery and figurative language in seven poems by Emily Dickinson, most of the imagery is visual, and most of the figurative language is personification in these seven poems. Three types of imagery were found: visual, tactile, and auditory. There are fifty-nine imagery data, which include fifty visual imagery data, one tactile imagery data, and eight acoustic imagery data.

The writer also found three types of figurative language in poems: personification, metaphor, and simile, with a total of nine extended language data, which include six personification data, two metaphor data, and one simile data. The writer also found five implied meanings in 7 poems by Emily Dickinson; there are stories about death, relationships, feminine beauty, life, and faith.

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