

## A Cognitive Approach to A Dead Rose by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

**Assist Prof. Dr. Lanja Abdul Razzaq Dabbagh**

Department of English, College of Languages, Salahaddin University, Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

[lanja\\_dabbagh@yahoo.com](mailto:lanja_dabbagh@yahoo.com), [lanja.dabbagh@su.edu.krd](mailto:lanja.dabbagh@su.edu.krd)

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: 29/1/2022

Accepted: 26/5/2022

Published: Winter 2022

#### Keywords:

Cognitive linguistics,  
Cognitive Stylistics,  
Language and Literature

#### Doi:

10.25212/lfu.qzj.7.4.46

### ABSTRACT

The mind of the human being is a highly complex organ that is still under investigation and exploration. A lot has been discovered about its normal functions. Sciences that study matters related to the mind are highly related to concepts, logic, and cognitive linguistics. The goal of cognitive linguistics is to explain how the mind works in matters related to language. Cognitive stylistics is an important branch of cognitive linguistics that takes into consideration the cognitive processes by which readers react to particular aspects of texts. This research aims to analyze the selected poem A Dead Rose by Elizabeth Barrett Browning using a cognitive stylistic approach. The aim is to analyze the poem stylistically using a cognitive approach to reach a better and more comprehensive understanding of the poem. The purpose is to grasp the theme of the poem cognitively. The reason for selecting this particular poem is that it is considered one of the most for selecting this particular poem because it is considered one of the most-read pieces of English literature through the ages and it is rich data for such analysis. One of the conclusions arrived at is that the use and repetition of phrases and clauses add to Browning's writing style, highlighting the brilliant use of language and how she can transfer us as readers to the landmark of the poem. Through this we are able to know that the poem is a love poem where the lover is either the rose or the speaker.

## I. Introduction

General cognitive nature is unique to human beings. Cognitive linguistics is regarded to be a new knowledge of language. It is intensely embedded in our general cognitive



nature. Cognitive linguistics includes the interdisciplinary field that is inclusive as features of cognition motivate, cause, or mirror aspects of language. Langacker 1987 states:

Meaning is what language is all about; the analyst who ignores it to concentrate solely on matters of form severely impoverishes the natural and necessary subject matter of the discipline and ultimately distorts the character of the phenomena described (Langacker 1987:12)

There are a number of cognitive approaches to the study of language and linguistics. A variety of accurate and satisfying approaches, each highlighting different interaction features, enables researchers to reach a higher level of analysis. The products in cognitive linguistics and cognitive linguistics analysis put forward the notion that natural language is not merely a system that covers a number of random signs and abstract rules. The truth is that a large amount of language structures at a large amount of language structures are stimulated as segments of our cognitive system and can be logically clarified.

Essentially, literary texts contain attractive, mysterious, and motivating tales that have been analyzed in different ways and by a variety of methods to investigate and discover the inspiration that each and every one of them contains in their own unique ways. After all, these are the products of extremely talented people. For this purpose, linguists employed cognitive stylistics to analyze literature because it is one of the creative and appropriate branches of linguistics with a main goal: emphasizing noteworthy creative features of the work. The approach in this paper advocates that meaning is positioned in the prescribed structure of the poem and is controlled by the readers using their pre-existing schema (background knowledge) as they go through the work. Such approaches are innovative and dynamic in linguistic analysis because they have an illustrative power to uplift the work by a new meaning of comprehension. For this reason, the attempt here is to get further investigation to one of the most notable poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *A Dead Rose*.

## **2. Background**

One of the major and outstanding branches of cognitive linguistics is cognitive stylistics. It is considered to be a relatively recent branch in stylistics. The main aim of such analysis is the cognitive developments and understanding that the readers reach and react to distinct features of any text. It also highlights and shows how the readers employ and engage their real-life schematic knowledge and information to understand, deeply comprehend, and get the pleasure of reading literary texts. This leads to the fact that texts consciously and unconsciously produce meanings to the readers and leave them to construct their own understanding. Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010 state that "Texts contain triggers which activate aspects of readers' background knowledge. This then allows readers to construct mental representation of the world of the text". So, whatever we do as linguists trying to read and analyze any literary text using any approach, we are actually engaging our background knowledge.

Simpson (2004) indicates that "*Foregrounding* is essentially a technique for 'making strange' in language, or to extrapolate from Shklovsky's Russian term *ostranenie*, a method of 'defamiliarisation' in textual composition. ... Whether the foregrounded pattern deviates from a norm, or whether it replicates a pattern through parallelism, the point of foregrounding as a stylistic strategy is that it should acquire salience in the act of drawing attention to itself," (Simpson 2004).

Miall (2007), also gives another meaning to the term by stating that "[T]his opening line from a poem by Roethke, ranked high [for the presence of foregrounding]: 'I have known the inexorable sadness of pencils.' The pencils are personified; it contains an unusual word, 'inexorable'; it contains repeated phonemes such as /n/ and /e/,". While Childs and Fowler (2006)

In literature, foregrounding may be most readily identified with linguistic deviation: the violation of rules and conventions, by which a poet transcends the normal communicative resources of the language, and awakens the reader, by freeing him from the grooves

of cliché expression, to a new perceptivity. Poetic metaphor, a type of semantic deviation, is the most important instance of this type of foregrounding, (Childs and Fowler 2006).

Thus, foregrounding is an establishment in stylistic analysis displayed through two important aspects: deviations and parallelism. The majority of the conclusions arrived at in some research and empirical tests focus on the reality that readers associate highly on descriptive significance to foregrounded features of the text in the process of comprehending them. Thus, the notion of figure and ground plays its dynamic part. This notion provides a new cognitive shading to foregrounding and it also gives a chance to explain the reasons behind readers' strong fascination with the unusual, ambiguous, and parallel structure in the texts.

Edgar Rubin (1915), the Gestalt psychologist, put forward the concept of *figure and ground*. According to Rubin, we can distinguish between figures and background because we have a specific visual field organization. He proposed a 'face-vase illusion model' in which states that a bright object will pop out in a dull background, so it becomes noticeable and hence 'figural'. Such objects that 'stand out', among others, we try to concentrate our attention on because they have unusual properties of shape, color, and size. Therefore, figures are more attractive and are in the obverse location. On the contrary, ground is boring, shapeless and unstructured, hence less prominent. Figures are more unforgettable than grounds; that is why readers attach special importance to them. This view is shared by several linguists researching the same topic.

Ungerer and Schmid (1996) state that "figures are likely to be associated with meaning, feeling and aesthetic values". As a matter of fact notion of 'figure and ground' is intensely engaged in Visual Arts and could apply to literary texts for their explanation and analysis. In literary texts, especially novel, Authors equip the characters with a sense of movement. They move through the ground and evolve themselves. They are called *textual figures*. Clarification of such literary aspects could be carried out with the assistance of *Image Schema*. In poetry beside the characters, specific other substances establish 'figures' that can move in different ways and

durations across the ground. According to Stockwell (2002) these movements are represented by:

- a) the verb phrases,
- b) verbs of motions, and
- c) locative expression of space and time realized through prepositional phrases.

Image schema is actually the result of frequent experience related to specific concepts. It can be used as a tool to understand the movement in literary texts. Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) say, 'with regard to movement, one of the image schemas we have is the locative expression OVER/UNDER. This arises out of our repeated encounters with objects moving over other aspects. Stockwell (2002) lists these schemas as Journey, Conduit Up/Down, Front/Back and Into/Out. In this schema, "FIGURE" is referred to as a *Trajectory* and the 'Ground' that it is moving over is called *Landmark* and a trajectory moves over a landmark, it follows a 'path'. 'Now let us consider how the concept of figure and ground is in explaining the mechanism a reader utilizes to understand the sense of a literary text.

### **3. The Selected Poem**

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1809 - 1861), wrote *A Dead Rose* describing her anger and disappointment to this particular dead rose. Elizabeth Browning shows her disgrace towards the dead rose (Feder 2002). Generally, it carries a sad mood; it is about something which is lost. The rose is a representation of something that is lost. The fact that the rose is actually dead does not please the poet. On the contrary, it makes her miserable and angry. That is why she is asking in an angry tone: who dares to name you a rose? The rose is dead, which makes it does not look like one. The poet asks why to name the dead flower since it is dead, a name that does not deserve to be used for a dead rose? In a sense, that she does not want to name death because it does not worth or deserves it Browning interprets that if the rose died somewhere else, she would not have seen it.

Nevertheless, at the end of the poem, we can see that the author is wearing that rose; the dead rose True, the rose is a disappointment, but she wears it, and it breaks her

heart. She wears the rose in the pocket over her chest, probably near her heart for a reason, to attend a party. Although the rose is dead, yet it is noticeable by the poet.

***A Dead Rose***

*O Rose! who dares to name thee?*

*No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor sweet;*

*But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-wheat,—*

*Kept seven years in a drawer—thy titles shame thee.*

*The breeze that used to blow thee*

*Between the hedgerow thorns, and take away*

*An odour up the lane to last all day,—*

*If breathing now,—unsweetened would forego thee.*

*The sun that used to smite thee,*

*And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn,*

*Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—*

*If shining now,—with not a hue would light thee.*

*The dew that used to wet thee,*

*And, white first, grow incarnadined, because*

*It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—*

*If dropping now,—would darken where it met thee.*

*The fly that lit upon thee,*

*To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet,*

*Along thy leaf's pure edges, after heat,—  
If lighting now,—would coldly overrun thee.*

*The bee that once did suck thee,  
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,  
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—  
If passing now,—would blindly overlook thee.*

*The heart doth recognise thee,  
Alone, alone! The heart doth smell thee sweet,  
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,—  
Though seeing now those changes that disguise thee.*

*Yes, and the heart doth owe thee  
More love, dead rose! than to such roses bold  
As Julia wears at dances, smiling cold!—  
Lie still upon this heart—-which breaks below thee!*

#### **4. The Analysis**

In this poem, the speaker is the poet. She describes her feelings toward a dead rose. Her feelings show a deep change in her mode of perception. Reading the poem makes the reader imagine the scene that is termed in the poem. Readers could see it in an explicit way. The dead rose is pictured in the poem as; *longer roseate now, nor soft, nor sweet; But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-wheat*, thus, being in the foreground of the scene. These are negative adjectives, and they are expressing no movement because they show the dead shape of the rose having no color, no light, no softness, and no sweetness. On the contrary, the rose has no color and no brightness. It is, actually, hard, and pale.

The reader could also notice *The breeze that used to blow* the rose when it was not dead *The sun that used to smite* the rose when it was still alive. All of them are somehow or another related spatially or temporally to the central symbol captured in the title of the poem, which happened to be a noun phrase *A Dead Rose*. Thus, the notion of 'figure and image' can highlight on the cognitive process in which the reader could imagine the scene. There are other 'figures, and 'grounds' which the poet the poet skillfully weaves skillfully weaves through the course of a whole poem:

1. The adverbial phrase *that used to* is mentioned three times. They are related to the activity that no longer exists; described as being an action that happened in the past.
2. The figure of the speaker in the poem is characterized by the pronoun *thee*. It is repeated in the poem 19 times. The significant thing is that the pronoun *thee* plays its role as an object in the sentences in which they occur in.
3. The figures in *would coldly* and *would blindly* leads the readers to establish the mental picture of the situation in which the dead rose experience. That is the rejection, the leaving, and the down looking of the fly and the bee to the rose.
4. Readers could construct the mental picture of the rose when it was not dead through the if conditional phrases *If breathing now, If shining now, If dropping now, If lighting now, and, If passing now*. These if conditional phrases show semantic parallelism between life and the rose when it was alive.

Another figure that attracts attention is that the noun phrase *the heart* which is mentioned three times in the poem. This noun phrase constitutes the feeling of love and sympathy. The strong mixed emotions of feeling sorry for the dead rose while being angry at it establishes the poem's landmark. This landmark represents the feeling of sorrow.

## **5. Conclusions**

From the analysis of the poem, it could be concluded that:

1. The poem is a strong illustration of what has been lost, and what has been forgotten. The rose represents something lost, dead, do not exist in the life of the



speaker. The poem also represents a picture of the speaker speaking to the rose, through this speech the speaker put forward all the feelings and emotions experienced after the death of the rose.

2. The poet who is the speaker in this poem is mournful and pities the poor rose. She considers the rose for its natural prettiness. She wishes the others could see the same and ignore the rose's blemishes, imperfections, and dramatic changes. She believes that the rose should always be valued and cherished even after it withers out and dies. The rose's memory should remain in the heart of the readers; the picture of the rose should remain the same as it was when it was alive.
3. Through the analysis, one can sense that the poet is talking about and directing her words to human beings not to the read dead rose by using a language full of words and phrases used for human beings. Although someone might look different or less attractive when they grow older or even have a problem, they still have the same good heart they used to own. A kind of lesson implies we should not judge a person just because they have flaws and have lost their beauty or grow older. After all, life takes its turns and no one could escape this fact. All that remains and matters at the end is respect and honor to those who have grown older yet wiser.
4. The poem is picturesque, deep, and touching. It includes declarations about the past, desertion, forgotten, neglected, abandoned, transformed and changed. It is descriptive poem that portrays, a truthful picture of the life we are living. The poem strongly emphasizes the idea of living entirely in the present moment, cherishing with total mindfulness, thankfulness, and grace. An accurate representation of human beings experiences in life in general.
5. The use and repetition of phrases and clauses add to Browning's style of writing. She gives the poem another level of understanding. This indicates the brilliant use of language and how she is able to transfer us as readers to the landmark of the poem. Through this, we can know that the poem is a love poem where the lover is either the rose or the speaker.

## References

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. 'The Dead Rose'. *Poem Hunter*. Web. 11. November. 2019.  
<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-dead-rose/>

Feder, Helena. (2002) "Ecocriticism, New Historicism, and Romantic Apostrophe." *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment*. Ed. Steven Rosendale. Iowa: University of Iowa Press.

Jeffries, Lesley and McIntyre, Danial (2010). *Stylistics*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Langacker, Ronald (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol. 1. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Stockwell. Peter, (2002). *Poetic Cognitive*. London and New York, Routledge.

Ungerer, Friedrich and Schmid, Hans- Jorg (1996). *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. London, Longman.

## رېيازىكى ھۆشەكى بۆگۈلەباغى مردووى ئېلېزابېس بارىت پراونىنگ

پوختە

سەرجمە زانستە ھۆشەكېيەكان لە بابەتەكانى پەيوەست بە مېشك دەكۆلنەوہ. زمانەوانى ھۆشەكېش لەمە بەدەر نىيە و ئامانجىەتى ئەوہ پوونبكاتەوہ كە مېشك چۆن كاردەكات. لەپاستىدا، زۆر نامۇ دەبىت كە بەجۇرېك مامەلە لەگەل زمان بكرېت وەك ئەوہى كە ھەموو شتىكى لەخۇ گرتووہ، وەك بلىي زمان جىابكرېتەوہ لەو خەلكەى كە بۇ ئالوگۇرکردنى پەيوەندى و چەمك و بىرۆكە و واتا بەكارى دىنن. شىوازگەرى ھۆشەكى تاراددەيەك بە لقىكى تازە و نوپى شىوازگەرى دادەندرىت، شىوازگەرى ھۆشەكى ئەو پروسە ھۆشەكېانە لەبەرچا و دەگرېت كە بە ھۆيەوہ خوینەران كاردانەوہيان بۇ چەند لايەنېكى دىارىكرای دەقەكان دەبىت. ئامانجى ئەم توپۆزىنەوہيە شىكارکردنى شىعەرى ھەبۇرردراوى گۈلەباغى مردووى ئېلېزابېس بارىت پراونىنگە. لەنپو شىعەرەكانى دىكە نووسەرى گەورەى سەردەمى قىكتۇربان ئېلېزابېس بارىت پراونىنگ، ئەم شىعەرەى لە پرووى زمانەوانى و ئەدەبىيەوہ شىكارى بۇ كراوہ. ئامانج لەم توپۆزىنەوہيە ئەوہيە كە ئەم شىعەرە بە شىوہيەكى شىوازگەربانە و بەكارھىنانى رېيازى ھۆشەكى شىكار بكرېت. مەبەست لە شىكارکردنى ھۆشەكى ئەوہيە كە تېگەيشتنېكى باشتەر بۇ شىعەرەكە ھەبىت

لهبرئهوهى ئەم شيعره بهيهكيك لهو شيعرانه دادهندريت كه زورتريين جار له تهواوى سهردهمهكانى ئەدهبى ئينگليزى دا خوئندراوهتهوه.

## مقاربة معرفية للوردة الميتة إليزابيث باريت براوننج

### الملخص

جميع العلوم المعرفية تدرس الأمور المتعلقة بالعقل. علم اللغة المعرفي ليس استثناءً ، هدفه هو شرح كيفية عمل العقل. في الواقع ، سيكون من الغريب التعامل مع اللغة كمكون قائم بذاته ، وكأنها منفصلة عن الأشخاص الذين يستخدمونها في التواصل والمفاهيم والأفكار والمعاني. يعتبر الأسلوب المعرفي فرعاً حديثاً إلى حد ما في الأسلوب الذي يأخذ في الاعتبار العمليات المعرفية التي يتفاعل بها القراء مع جوانب معينة من النصوص. الهدف من هذا البحث هو تحليل القصيدة المختارة بقلم إليزابيث باريت براوننج. تم تحليل هذه القصيدة من بين قصائد أخرى لهذا الكاتب الفيكتوري العظيم أدبياً وكذلك لغوياً. الهدف من هذا البحث هو تحليله بطريقة أسلوبية باستخدام نهج معرفي. الغرض من التحليل المعرفي هو الحصول على فهم أفضل للقصيدة لأنها تعتبر واحدة من أكثر المقاطع قراءة في الأدب الإنجليزي عبر العصور