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A Phono-graphological Study of Frost's *After Apple Picking*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the stylistic devices utilized by Robert Frost in his famous poetic work After Apple Picking. The stylistic dimensions specifically phonographic techniques employed by the poet in the text have been traced out, and interpreted subsequently. Previously, no extensive effort has been made to point out the stylistic features of the poem under investigation, although a few studies have been done pertaining to the area of literary criticism. Whereas, the present study investigates the usage of stylistic devices by the American poet, Robert Frost. The researchers' aim is to trace out the literal as well as metaphorical aspects of the poem to develop a systemic interpretative perspective for understanding of poetic expressions artistically crafted through various phonographic devices such as assonance, consonance, alliteration, rhyme scheme and other graphological elements as contraction, punctuation marks, etc. The speaker of the poem seems tired, drowsy and dreamy. Hence, the poem has abundance of sensuous appeal which reminds us of Keats' Ode to Autumn. The study would be beneficial for the readers to comprehend the poet's point of view from stylistic perspective.

Introduction

Stylistics is concerned with analysis of literary discourse from linguistic perspective. It is called the study of discourse (Widdowson, 1975). Verdonk (2002) has taken it as examination of distinctive expression in language which, in simple words, is scientific study of style. According to Leech (1989), style is the name of pattern, structure and arrangement of words, and it also helps to build language in written or spoken form. Furthermore, Leech & Short (1981) have also taken it as vocabulary usage in particular situation for some particular purpose. Various scholars have defined it as dress of thought as well as the transporter of thoughts and messages to readers and listeners. Whales (1993) says that it may differ from context to context and person to person. Through style, same picture is explained with same theme but with a different approach. So, for comprehensive understanding of any writer, it is essential to know about his/ her style and stylistic devices used for creating a specific piece of writing.

In *After Apple-Picking* (1914), Robert Frost maintains a balance between visionary romanticism and pragmatic New England values. It is about the mysteries of sleep and

dream, death and spiritual transcendence. Hashmi, Mahmood & Mahmood (2019) stylistically analyzed Frost's poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (1923). Their study focused on the usage of stylistic devices by the poet, and analyzed the poem at graphitic, semantic, grammatical, phonetic and phonological levels. They concluded that the poet had employed a lot of stylistic devices like cacophony, assonance, metaphor, tone modulation, alliteration and personification to emphasize the thought of death and dismay. Bari & Summara (2014) analyzed *The Onset* (1923) by Robert Frost and their study revealed that the poet had uniquely used various figurative devices such as simile, metaphor, imagery, hyperbole and many other sound-related language devices as well. The basic purpose of the above-mentioned study was to draw attention of the readers to the themes of the poem as life and death, virtue and evil. Aslam, Mukhtar & Sarfaraz (2014) conducted a study to trace out the style of *Bereft* (1928) by Robert Frost. They analyzed this poem on syntactic level, and traced out nouns, pronouns, adjectives, rhyme scheme, anti-thesis, anaphora, imagery, and the other devices utilized by Robert Frost. Their study discovered the prominent themes of the poem such as loneliness of youth, hope and distinctive treatment of nature.

Literature Review

Various studies previously done guided the researchers and paved the way for the present study. Furthermore, these also enabled the researchers to expand their ideas and gain better understanding of the topic. Kaplan & Blei (2007) observed that Robert Frost has frequently used coordinating conjunctions in his various poems which present poet's subjective point of view. Opara (2013) contributed to the understanding of speech in Emecheta's narrative discourse, and the researcher's focus was on the stylistic and pragmatic dimensions of speech. It also traced out phono-graphological features to indicate contrastive stress and focus information. Khan, Summara & Siddique (2014) stylistically evaluated Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken* (1916), and found that how the poet used varying stylistic devices at different levels. They explored that the poet used various stylistic components to produce deeper meanings. According to Bari & Summara (2014), Frost has chosen very simple words and phrases but he is very clever in his use of similes, metaphors, anti-thesis, ironical words and symbols and his purpose is to create impression on the readers. Moreover, Frost (1923) set up the idea of the poem by using various figure of speech which creates aesthetic effect. For this purposes, assonance, consonance and alliteration are being used which causes musicality as well as pleasant effect upon the reader (Hashmi, Mahmood & Mahmood, 2019). Frost also used various figures of speech to create aesthetic effect in the poem. Nova (2020) made stylistic analysis of Robert Frost's *Mending Wall*. His study revealed the linguistic features of the poem at phonological, graphological, grammatical and semantic levels of the poem. Ramzan, Khan & Khan (2021) studied Hashmi's poem *You are Chained* and their focus was on foregrounding, parallelism and deviation, and to draw the reader's attention towards the hidden meanings of the text. All these previous studies traced out different stylistic features from various pieces of literature but no extensive effort has been made to pin point the stylistic elements particularly incorporated in the poem under analysis.

Material and Methods

In this study, stylistic approach worked as principal apparatus to examine the text of the poem. The researchers analyzed the language features of this poem to reveal the meanings. Simpson's (2004) Language Level Theory was kept in view as a model. This analysis was done at two levels i.e. phonological and graphological to trace out the linguistic elements. Each level has been further divided in sub-levels. At phonological level, the study investigated assonance, consonance, alliteration, and rhyme scheme of

the selected poem. Subsequently, the researchers examined the graphological features of the poem, specifically punctuation marks such as comma, period, dash, colon and contraction. After tracing out the linguistic elements, the researchers tried to describe that how these elements helped in discovering textual meanings.

Results and Discussion

Phonological Level

Phonology is study of sound system. Ofuya (2007) believes that phonology is the study of the organization of the sound patterns in a language; while Lodge (2009) has the views that phonology is the study of linguistic organization. Here, phonological level has been further broken down in segmental and suprasegmental level. The segmental level comprises of alliteration, assonance and consonance while suprasegmental level contains meter and rhyme. Although *After Apple Picking* does not have evident rhyme scheme yet its language is very soothing to ears because of its musical quality achieved by the poet through the help of various sound devices as assonance, consonance, alliteration, etc. Logically, sound devices are essential fundamentals of poetry that put emphasis on a special form of art. These devices are also known as musical devices (Certo, 2007). In addition, such devices as alliteration, rhyme or repetition, assonance, consonance, etc. are also utilized by the poets to create aesthetic sense in the reader's mind (Skinner, 1941).

Segmental Sound Features

Sound *segments* of language i.e. vowels and consonants and further how they make a syllable is named as *segmental* phonology. Basically, it is related to the functions of speech sound and possible combination of speech sounds within the sound system (Roach, 2000). In this study, various segmental sound features have been traced out by the researchers such as alliteration, assonance and consonance.

Alliteration. In alliteration, consonants are repeated at the beginning of the words in the same line of poetry (Hashmi, Mahmood & Mahmood, 2019). Bradford (2005) defines alliteration as recurrence of consonant cluster sound in individual lines and across sequence of lines. In old poetry, it was a continuous and essential part of metrical scheme and this tradition continued till late middle Ages where it was often used. However by the end of the 15th century, it became very rare. The examples of alliteration found in *After Apple Picking* have been listed below in Table 1.

Table 1
Alliteration in Frost's *After Apple Picking*

No.	Alliteration	F	Example
1	/w/	5	One can see **w**hat **w**ill trouble
2	/b/	5	I feel the ladder sway as the **b**oughs **b**end
3	/a/	4	The scent of **a**pples: I **a**m drowsing off
4	/s/	4	The **s**leep of mine, whatever **s**leep it is
5	/t/	4	My long **t**wo-pointed ladder's sticking through a **t**ree
6	/l/	4	My **l**ong two-pointed **l**adder's sticking through a tree
7	/θ/	3	And **th**ere's a barrel **th**at I didn't fill
8	/o/	2	**O**f load **o**n load of apples coming in
9	/h/	2	For I **h**ave **h**ad too much
10	/f/	2	There were ten thousand thousand **f**ruit to touch Cherish in hand, lift down and not let **f**all.
11	/g/	1	I **g**ot from looking through a pane of **g**lass

12	/e/	1	Stem **e**nd and blossom **e**nd
13	/n/	1	**N**o matter if **n**ot bruised or spiked with stubble
14	/st/	1	My long two-pointed ladder's **st**icking through a tree Toward heaven **st**ill
15	/k/	1	My instep arch not only **k**eeps the ache, It **k**eeps the pressure of the ladder-round.

In *After Apple Picking* the researchers find that there occur 15 alliterations. The consonants that go under alliteration are /w/, /b/, /a/, /s/, /t/, /l/, /θ/, /o/, /h/, /f/, /g/, /e/, /n/, /st/ and /k/. Alliterations /w/, /b/ are the most frequent one, and these occur five times in this poem. The instance of alliteration /w/ is evident from words "**w**hat **w**ill" in line 37 and alliteration /b/ can be noticed in words *boughs bend* in line 23.

Assonance. The researchers tried to find out a number of examples of assonance in this poem. Technically, it is repetition of similar vowel cluster within individual lines and across sequence of lines (Bradford, 2005). The examples of assonance found in this poem have been presented below in Table 2.

Table 2
Assonance in Frost's *After Apple Picking*

No.	Assonance	Frequency	Example
1	/o/	16	Apples I did n**o**t pick up**o**n s**o**me b**o**ugh.
2	/i/	16	And there **i**s a barrel that I d**i**d not f**i**ll
3	/e/	11	It m**e**lted, and I l**e**t if fall and br**e**ak
4	/a/	10	The scent of **a**pples, I **a**m drowsing off
5	/oʊ/	6	There were ten th**ou**sand th**ou**sand fruit to t**ou**ch
6	/ē/	6	My instep arch not only k**ee**ps the ache, It k**ee**ps the pressure of a ladder-round
7	/y/	4	Upon m**y** wa**y** to sleep before it fell

Here in *After Apple Picking,* assonance /o/ and /i/ are dominant one and these both occur 16 times in the poem. Example of /o/ can be seen in words *not, upon* and *some* in line 5 and example of /i/ can be seen in words *is* and *did* in line 3. The third assonance is of sound /e/, it comes 11 times in the poem and examples are evident in line 13. The fourth assonance is of sound /a/ which occurs 10 times in this poem. The next assonance is of sound /oʊ/ and /ē/ that occur 6 times. Example of /oʊ/ can be seen in line 30, and example of /ē/ is evident in lines 21, 22 as quoted in the above table. Final assonance is of /y/ and it takes place 4 times in the poem and its examples can be seen in line 15 of poem.

Consonance. The last segmental feature that the researchers traced out was consonance. Cuddon (2013) defines it as the close recurrence of identical consonant sound after different vowels. The examples found in this poem have been given below in Table 3.

Table 3
Consonance in Frost's *After Apple Picking*

No.	Consonance	F	Example
1	/s/	17	E**ss**ence of winter **s**leep **is** on the night
2	/l/	13	And there's a barre**l** that I didn't fi**ll**
3	/t/	8	My long **t**wo-poin**t**ed ladder's s**t**icking through a **t**ree
4	/p/	8	A**pp**les I didn't **p**ick u**p**on some bough

5	/n/	8	Esse**n**ce of wi**n**ter sleep is on the **n**ight
6	/b/	7	**B**eside it, and there may **b**e two or three
7	/m/	6	I cannot rub the strangeness fro**m** **m**y sight
8	/d/	5	Stem en**d** and blossom en**d**
9	/r/	4	It keeps the pressure of a ladde**r** **r**ound
10	/k/	4	I s**k**immed this morning from the drin**k**ing through
11	/w/	4	But I **w**as **w**ell
12	/θ/	3	And **th**ere's a barrel that I did not fill
13	/c/	3	Essen**c**e of winter sleep is on the night The **sc**ent of apples: I am drowsing off.
14	/f/	3	Upon my way to sleep be**f**ore it **f**ell
15	/tʃ/	2	There were ten thousand fruit to tou**ch**, **Ch**erish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
16	/h/	2	And **h**eld against the world of **h**oary grass
17	/g/	1	And held a**g**ainst the world of hoary **g**rass

The consonance /s/ occurs the most as it takes place 17 times in *After Apple Picking*. Example of /s/ can be seen in words *essence and sleep.* The second consonance is of /l/ sound; it occurs 13 times in the poem, and its examples are evident from words *fill and barrel.* The third consonance is of /t/ sound which has been repeated 8 times in the poem and example can be seen from the words *two-pointed ladder sticking through a tree.* The fourth assonance is of /p/ sound and it also occurs 8 times in the poem and is evident from the words *apples I didn't pick upon some bough.* The fifth assonance is /n/ and it also has been repeated 8 times and in Line 7 which is clear from the words *essence, winter and night.* The sixth consonance is /b/ and it occurs 7 times in the poem, similarly, line 4 shows its example in words *beside and be.* The next consonance is /m/ and which is clear from the words *from my sight* in line 9. The eighth consonance is /d/ and the words *stem end and blossom end* show its example. It comes 5 times in the poem. The next consonances are /r/, /k/ and /w/ and these occur 4 times in this poem. Example of /r/ consonance is in words *it keeps the pressure of the ladder round* and /k/ consonance is evident in words *skimmed and drinking* in line 11 and example of /w/ assonance is in line 14—*But I was well.* The twelfth consonance is of /θ/ and it has been repeated 3 times in the poem. The words *there and that* show its example. The thirteenth assonance is of /c/ and it occurs 3 times and its examples can be seen from words *essence and scent.* The next assonance is /f/ and it is also repeated 3 times, which occurs in words *before and fell.* The fifteenth consonance is /tʃ/ that is evident from words *touch and cherish* and it can be seen only 2 times. The sixteenth consonance is /h/ and its example is mentioned in words of *held and hoary.* The last assonance is /g/ in *After Apple Picking*—is evident in words *against and grass.*

Suprasegmental Sound Features

Supra means beyond the levels of segments which comes under the scope of *suprasegmental* sound features. Basically, these are the aspects of speech which involve in more than single consonants or vowels (Ladefoged, 2006). It deals with the attributes of pronunciation those cannot be segmented. Suprasegmental sound features include meter and rhyme. *After Apple Picking* consists of 42 lines and a single stanza. Many lines have a rough version of iambic pentameter. Robert Frost often completely imitates the natural speech of New Englanders. This poem starts with *iambic hexameter* instead of *iambic pentameter*. The same can be noticed in line 1:

My **long** | two-- | ed**lad-** | der's**stick-** | ing**through** | a **tree**

The very next line 2 has just two iambs:

Toward **heav-** | en **still**

Lines 3, 4 have been narrated in iambic pentameter, though we can find some variations, and stress pattern is also not obvious. Take lines 3 and 4:

And **there's** | a **bar-** | relˈthat | I **did-** | nʼtˈ**fill**

Be**side** | it, and | there **may** | be **two** | or **three**

The meter changes in lines 14 to 17. The poet frequently shifts the meter to represent the changing mindset of the speaker. This inconsistency of meter continues throughout the poem as line 18 has 11 beats; while line 19 has only 6. Actually, this tug-of-war depicts the speaker's drowsiness due to tiredness.

Rhyme Scheme. *After Apple Picking* has not any reliable rhyme scheme. Rhyme scheme of the first four lines is ABBA and the next two lines i.e. 5 & 6 are rhymed couplet (CC), while lines 7, 8 and 9 are written in DED pattern. Whereas, there is no particular pattern of rhyme scheme after these lines rather individual rhymes can be seen in line 10, 12, 13, 17 and 21 similarly in line 14, 16, 18 and 20. Frost is habitual of precise use of rhyme; so, the lack of a definite rhyme in this poem is against his habit. The scattered and broken rhyme schemes highlights the speaker's confused state of mind as he drifts uneasily off to sleep.

Graphological Level. Leech (2014) is of the view that graphology goes beyond orthography. It refers to whole system of writing as punctuation, spacing as well as paragraphing. This level highlights the certain elements about the writing style of the poem. This poem consists of 42 lines through which the researchers traced out at this level is the use of contraction as presented below in the table 4:

Table 4
Contractions in Frost's *After Apple Picking*

No.	Contraction	Representation	Frequency	Example
1	Didn't	Did not	2	Apples I *didn't* pick upon some bough.
2	Ladder's	Ladder is	1	My long two-pointed *ladder's* sticking through a tree
3	There's	There is	1	*There's* a barrel that I didn't fill
4	It's	It is	1	The woodcutter could say whether *it's* like his

In this poem, the poet has used contraction (shortening form) of auxiliary verbs *do* and *is*, and there are five contractions in total. Mostly this poem has iambic meter which has five set of unstressed-stressed syllables, therefore writer uses contractions to maintain number of syllables in every line.

Apart from contractions, the punctuations marks have also been traced out at the graphological level. The present study traced out the use of comma (,), colon (:), period (.) and hyphen (-). Semantically, full stop indicates that the idea of the sentence has been completed while comma indicates that it is not completed yet rather the idea continues while, comma is actually a brief pause which gives a separate idea to the reader; whereas, dashes separate the group of words. The examples of punctuation marks have been listed below in Table 5:

Table 5
Punctuations marks in Frost's *After Apple Picking*

No.	Name	Frequency	Example
1	Comma (,)	12	Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
2	Period (.)	15	Of load on load of apples coming in.
3	Hyphen (-)	5	But I am done with apple-picking now.
4	Colon (:)	2	The scent of apple: I am drowsing off.

In *After Apple Picking* Robert, Frost uses comma 17 times and period for 15 times at the end of the sentences. William (1999) argues that dash is separation mark which is more relaxed than parenthesis, less formal than a colon and stronger than comma—occurs 3 times in the poem which is evident from words *apple-picking*. Here, the use of dash depicts the mental state of the poet. The last graphological deviation founded in the poem is colon. It is used to act as speech breaker, and helps to give relevant information. It can be seen 2 time overall in the poem.

Conclusion

The current study concludes that the poet created this poem very tactfully, where the speaker of the poem seems tired, drowsy and dreamy. Various stylistic devices made this poem lyrical. At segmental level, Frost used different phonological devices such as alliteration, assonance and consonance. While, at supersegmental level, the poem started with the iambic hexameter instead of iambic pentameter and it had no reliable rhyme scheme. Apart from contraction, other punctuation marks as comma, period, hyphen and colon have been also traced out at the graphological level. Briefly, the excessive use of phonological devices created musicality in this lyric. Whereas, shift of meter and broken rhyme scheme show the speaker's state of mind that was dreamy and tired after long day's work. The present study is important by dint of the pragmatic significance of stylistic analysis. Thus, it will be helpful for the students of literature by providing them new directions and guiding them to interpret the poems scientifically.

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