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to Robert Graves' *Recalling War* in First and Second Years at
Some Colleges in South Kivu province



Applying the Discourse-Comprehension Approach to the Analysis to Robert Graves' *Recalling War* in First and Second Years at Some Colleges in South Kivu Province

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to apply the Discourse-Comprehension Approach to analyze Robert Graves' poem *Recalling War* with first and second-year college students in South Kivu province.

Methodology: The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design based on the discourse-comprehension approach. The poem was analyzed at both formal and semantic levels by examining its structural organization, grammatical categories, rhetorical devices, discourse interactional factors, themes, tone, subject matter, scenario, feelings, effects, punctuation, paralinguistic features and the poet's communicative intention. The analysis integrated linguistic, stylistic, semantic, pragmatic and reader-oriented perspectives to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the poem.

Findings: The analysis revealed that *Recalling War* is a five-stanza narrative poem organized around the enduring physical, psychological and social consequences of war. The poem employs a rich combination of nouns, verbs, adjectives, metaphors, imagery, repetition, oxymoron, simile, alliteration, personification, contrast, ellipsis and other rhetorical devices that reinforce its anti-war message. The discourse-comprehension analysis identified war trauma, destruction, fear, hopelessness, psychological suffering and post-war memory as the dominant themes. The serious and warning tone, the selected linguistic and paralinguistic features enable readers to experience pity, compassion, fear and pain while understanding the poet's intention enables readers to preserve collective memory and warn future generations against the devastating effects of war. The analysis further demonstrated that discourse elements such as language clues, punctuation, interactional context and rhetorical organization work together to facilitate literary comprehension.

Unique contribution to the theory, Policy and Practice: This study contributes to literary studies by demonstrating the effectiveness of the discourse-comprehension approach as an integrated framework for interpreting poetry through linguistic, semantic, stylistic, pragmatic and communicative analysis. It provides literature teachers with a practical model for teaching poetry that promotes deeper comprehension beyond traditional paraphrasing and thematic analysis. The study also offers national curriculum designers a structured analytical framework that can strengthen poetry instruction, literary interpretation and critical thinking in literature courses by integrating discourse analysis into poetry teaching.

Keywords: Poetry, Poetry Analysis, Discourse, Comprehension, Discourse-Comprehension Approach

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Poetry plays an important role in the English language and literature teaching because it develops learners' abilities to interpret language, appreciate artistic expression and engage critically with human experiences represented in literary texts. However, despite its educational value, poetry comprehension continues to present considerable challenges for many learners as it is the case of first and second-year students at some colleges in South Kivu province. They often struggle to interpret poems because poetic texts contain condensed language, figurative expressions, implicit meanings, complex structures and culturally embedded references that cannot be fully understood through literal reading alone. As a result, poetry teaching frequently becomes limited to identifying themes, explaining vocabulary and listing literary devices without sufficiently examining how these elements interact to construct meaning.

In Anglo-American literature and African literature courses at ISP Baraka, ISP Kamituga and ISP Walungu; poetry interpretation has traditionally relied on approaches that emphasize paraphrasing, identification of themes and explanation of literary devices. While these approaches contribute to basic literary appreciation, they may not always provide learners with systematic procedures for understanding how meaning is created through the interaction between form, language, context and reader interpretation. Many first and second year students encounter difficulties in interpreting poems because poetic language frequently involves metaphor, ambiguity, symbolism, unusual grammatical structures and implicit meanings. This challenge highlights the need for analytical frameworks that integrate linguistic and literary perspectives.

Discourse analysis offers a valuable framework for addressing these challenges because it examines language as a meaningful form of communication situated within social, cultural and interactional contexts. In literary studies, discourse analysis enables learners to investigate how textual organization, lexical choices, grammatical patterns, rhetorical strategies and communicative intentions contribute to meaning construction. A discourse-comprehension approach extends this perspective by focusing on the relationship between textual features and readers' processes of understanding, allowing poetry to be analyzed as a coherent communicative event rather than merely a collection of isolated literary elements. Although discourse analysis has been widely applied in linguistics to investigate how meaning is constructed through language use, its application as a comprehensive framework for poetry interpretation and teaching remains relatively underdeveloped. Existing literary approaches often examine either thematic interpretation or stylistic features separately, creating a gap between linguistic analysis and literary comprehension.

This study responds to this need by conducting a discourse-comprehension analysis of Robert Graves' *Recalling War* which examines how linguistic features, semantic relationships, rhetorical devices, discourse organization and contextual elements contribute to the construction and interpretation of poetic meaning. Furthermore, this study proposes a

systematic model for teaching poetry through discourse analysis with the aim of supporting literature teachers in developing learners' interpretive abilities, critical thinking skills and deeper appreciation of poetic discourse.

Research problem

The problem addressed in this study is the teachers' lack of a systematic discourse-comprehension approach for analyzing and teaching poetry that integrates linguistic, semantic, stylistic, pragmatic and communicative dimensions. This study seeks to address this gap by applying a discourse-comprehension approach to Robert Graves' *Recalling War* in order to demonstrate how discourse features contribute to poetic interpretation and to propose a practical model for enhancing poetry teaching and literary comprehension.

Research questions

Main research question

How do linguistic, semantic, rhetorical and discourse features contribute to the interpretation of poetic meaning in Robert Graves' *Recalling War*?

Specific research questions

RQ1: How do the linguistic and structural features of Robert Graves' *Recalling War* (such as lexical choices, grammatical patterns, cohesion, and organization) contribute to the construction of poetic meaning?

RQ2: How do rhetorical, semantic and discourse features (including imagery, metaphor, repetition, tone, context, and communicative intention) shape readers' comprehension and interpretation of the poem's themes and messages?

Research hypotheses

Main hypothesis

H1: A systematic discourse-comprehension analysis of Robert Graves' *Recalling War* reveals that the interaction of linguistic, semantic, rhetorical and discourse features play a significant role in constructing and interpreting the poem's meaning.

Specific hypotheses

H1a: The poem's linguistic and structural features including vocabulary selection, grammatical categories, cohesion and textual organization contribute significantly to the representation of war experiences and the development of the poem's central message.

H1b: The rhetorical and discourse features of *Recalling War*, including metaphor, imagery, repetition, tone, contextual elements and the poet's communicative intention enhance readers' understanding of war trauma, suffering, memory and the poem's anti-war perspective.

Research objectives

General objective

To analyze how linguistic, semantic, rhetorical and discourse features contribute to the interpretation of poetic meaning in Robert Graves' *Recalling War* and to propose a discourse-comprehension approach for teaching poetry in first and second years.

Specific objectives

1. To examine how the linguistic and structural features of Robert Graves' *Recalling War* including lexical choices, grammatical categories, cohesion and textual organization contribute to the construction of poetic meaning.
2. To analyze how rhetorical, semantic and discourse features, including imagery, metaphor, repetition, tone, context and communicative intention shape the interpretation of the poem's themes, emotional effects and anti-war message.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Poetry has long occupied a significant position in literary studies because it provides a complex medium through which human experiences, emotions, social realities and cultural memories are represented. It is a highly organized form of communication in which meaning is created through the interaction between linguistic choices, artistic expression and contextual interpretation. Unlike ordinary discourse, poetic language frequently employs condensed structures, symbolism, ambiguity and figurative expressions that require readers to interpret both explicit and implicit meanings. Halliday (1978: 112) argues that language functions as a social semiotic system, meaning that linguistic choices represent different ways of creating meaning according to social contexts. From this perspective, poetry can be examined as a meaningful communicative event in which linguistic forms contribute to the representation of experience, interpersonal relationships and textual organization.

Similarly, Richards (1929: 11-13) explains that successful literary interpretation requires attention to the interaction between words, emotions, attitudes and intellectual meaning. He argues that readers should not approach poetry merely as a collection of ideas but as an organized structure where different elements cooperate to produce meaning. Therefore, poetic comprehension requires analysis of both what the poem says and how the poem communicates its message.

Discourse analysis provides a framework for examining how language functions beyond individual sentences. According to Dijk (2014: 3-5), discourse involves the relationship between text structures, knowledge, cognition and social contexts. He emphasizes that understanding discourse requires to examine not only linguistic forms but also the mental and social processes involved in interpretation. In literary studies, discourse analysis allows researchers to explore how textual organization and linguistic choices contribute to meaning construction. Fairclough (1995: 97-98) argues that language is a form of social practice through which meanings, perspectives, and ideological positions are produced. Applied to

poetry, this perspective helps explain how poets use language to communicate particular interpretations of events, emotions, and social realities. Therefore, poetry analysis through discourse approaches moves beyond identifying literary devices and investigates how these devices operate within a larger communicative structure.

A central concern of discourse analysis is the way linguistic elements combine to create textual unity. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 4-6) explain that cohesion refers to semantic relationships that connect parts of a text and enable readers to interpret it as a meaningful whole. They identify major cohesive mechanisms, including reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976: 31-33, 88-89, 142-143). In poetry, these cohesive resources contribute significantly to interpretation because repetition, lexical association and structural patterns often reinforce central themes and emotional effects. For example, repeated words or images in a war poem may establish connections between past experiences, present suffering and collective memory.

Stylistics provides a systematic method for explaining how linguistic forms create literary effects. Leech and Short (2007: 11-13) define stylistics as the study of the relationship between linguistic choices and literary interpretation. They argue that stylistic analysis examines how features such as vocabulary, grammar, sound patterns and figurative expressions contribute to meaning.

According to Leech and Short (2007: 135-137), literary effects emerge from deliberate linguistic choices made by writers. Therefore, analyzing metaphors, repetition, imagery, sentence structures and lexical patterns enables readers to understand how authors create particular emotional and aesthetic effects. In poetry, rhetorical devices are not simply decorative elements; they function as mechanisms for constructing meaning. Metaphor, for example, allows poets to represent abstract experiences through concrete images, while repetition reinforces important ideas and emotions.

Understanding poetry requires an active process in which readers combine textual information with previous knowledge and contextual understanding. Kintsch (1998: 101-103) explains through the construction-integration model that comprehension involves building mental representations of texts through interaction between linguistic information and readers' background knowledge. This perspective is relevant to poetry because poems often communicate indirectly. Readers must infer meanings from symbols, images, rhetorical patterns and contextual clues. Consequently, a discourse-comprehension approach recognizes that interpretation results from interaction between the poem's linguistic features and the reader's cognitive processes.

Traditional poetry teaching often emphasizes explanation of themes and identification of literary devices. However, such approaches may not sufficiently develop learners' ability to understand how meaning emerges from the relationship between linguistic structures and interpretation. Contrary to the traditional poetry teaching, the discourse-comprehension approach provides learners with systematic procedures for analyzing texts. According to

McCarthy (1991:12-15), discourse analysis helps learners understand how language operates in real communicative contexts rather than as isolated grammatical structures. Similarly, constructivist learning perspectives emphasize that learners develop deeper understanding when they actively construct knowledge through interaction with texts and experiences. Therefore, integrating discourse analysis into poetry teaching can support critical thinking by enabling learners to examine vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, rhetorical choices, context, and authorial intention.

Although previous studies have examined stylistics, discourse analysis and literary interpretation separately, limited research has proposed an integrated discourse-comprehension model that combines linguistic, semantic, rhetorical, pragmatic and reader-oriented dimensions for poetry interpretation. Existing approaches frequently focus either on literary devices or thematic explanation without fully demonstrating how multiple discourse features interact to produce meaning. This gap justifies the present study which applies a discourse-comprehension analysis to Robert Graves' *Recalling War* and proposes a systematic framework for teaching poetry through discourse analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Discourse - comprehension analysis of Robert Graves' *Recalling War*

Before analyzing Robert Graves' *Recalling War*, it is important to determine the starting point for this analysis. To this effect, one approach offers itself for consideration. Ngwaba (2013) states that the discourse- comprehension approach emphasizes the apparent correlation between discourse, communication and comprehension. According to Adams (1971:1) quoted by Ngwaba (2013:18), the discourse-comprehension process approach is an eclectic one that builds on the mimetic, expressive, objective and affective orientations which are the four traditional literary approaches from which individual approaches have derived since Plato. The mimetic orientation includes the sociological, historical and socio-historical also known as political approach or Marxism. The expressive orientation includes expressionism as well as psychological and psychoanalytical approaches. The objective orientation includes formalism, structuralism, linguistic, stylistic and the semantic approaches. The affective orientation includes pragmatic and the reader-response approaches.

He goes on mentioning that the discourse analysis to poetry takes into account the nature of poetry discourse as communication to include at least seven variables: language clues, paralanguage, semiotic signs, the discourse interactional factors, knowledge of co-text or textual context, the macro-language functions and poetic rhetoric. Language clues include grammar, vocabulary, cohesive devices and sense devices. Paralinguistic features include gestures, body expressions, situation or scenario, network and prosodic features such as pitch and information focus. Semiotic signs include punctuation marks such as exclamation mark, question mark, dash and full stop. Discourse interactional factors (elements of communication) include participants (addresser and addressee), network and relationship between the participants, the content (topic and subject matter), setting (time and place), the

purpose (functions and outcomes and the tenor (Preston, 1989: 122-186). The knowledge of co-text or textual context helps the writer produce the text at hand. The macro-language functions include phatic, emotive, directive, poetic, referential, contextual and metalinguistic. The poetic rhetoric has to do with a poet's deliberate choice of words and with the skilful ways he arranges those words to be create meanings, arouse feelings and create effects in order to be able to decipher meaning. I will try to formulate the following questions to guide my answers: (1) How many stanzas are there in the poem? How many lines are there in each stanza? What type of poetry is that? (2) What are the main parts of speech? (3) What are the poetic devices used in the poem? (4) Can you make a paraphrased version of the poem? (5) What is the scenario? (6) What is the subject matter of this poem? (7) What are the themes containing in this poem? (8) What are the feelings aroused in the poem? (9) What are the effects created by the poem? (10) How is the tone? (11) What is the poet's intention? (12) What is your general appreciation of the poet's control of discourse? (13) What is your personal appreciation of the poem as an artistic and literary work? The poem under focus is below. Lines are numbered to facilitate the reference.

Recalling War

1. Entrance and exit wounds are silvered clean,
2. The track aches only when the rain reminds.
3. The one-legged man forgets his leg of wood,
4. The one-armed man his jointed wooden arm.
5. The blinded man sees with his ears and hands
6. As much or more than once with both his eyes.
7. Their war was fought these twenty years ago
8. And now assumes the nature-look of time,
9. As when the morning traveler turns and views
10. His wild night-stumbling carved into a hill.
11. What, then, was war? No mere discord of flags
12. But an infection of the common sky
13. That sagged ominously upon the earth
14. Even when the season was the airiest May.
15. Down pressed the sky, and we, oppressed, thrust out
16. Boastful tongue, clenched fist and valiant yard.
17. Natural infirmities were out of mode,

18. For Death was young again: patron alone
19. Of healthy dying, premature fate-spasm.
20. Fear made fine bed-fellows. Sick with delight
21. At life's discovered transitoriness,
22. Our youth became all-flesh and waived the mind.
23. Never was such antiqueness of romance,
24. Such tasty honey oozing from the heart.
25. And old importances came swimming back –
26. Wine, meat, log-fires, a roof over the head,
27. A weapon at the thigh, surgeons at call.
28. Even there was a use again for God –
29. A word of rage in lack of meat, wine, fire,
30. In ache of wounds beyond all surgeoning.
31. War was return of earth to ugly earth,
32. War was foundering of sublimities,
33. Extinction of each happy art and faith
34. By which the world had still kept head in air,
35. Protesting logic or protesting love,
36. Until the unendurable moment struck —
37. The inward scream, the duty to run mad.
38. And we recall the merry ways of guns —
39. Nibbling the walls of factory and church
40. Like a child, piecrust; felling groves of trees
41. Like a child, dandelions with a switch.
42. Machine-guns rattle toy-like from a hill,
43. Down in a row the brave tin-soldiers fall:
44. A sight to be recalled in elder days
45. When learnedly the future we devote
46. To yet more boastful visions of despair.

Formal organization of the poem

Structure of the poem

Robert Graves' poem under analysis is an unrhymed 46-line long poem divided into five stanzas. The first stanza has ten (10) lines, the second one has nine (9) lines, the third one has eleven (11) lines, the fourth one has seven (7) lines and the fifth one has nine (9) lines. The poem is a narrative in its attempt to retell the effects of World War I that affected the poet physically and psychologically.

Main parts of speech

The poem uses parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions. The nouns used are: *entrance, exit, track, wounds, aches, rain, man, leg, wood, arm, ears, hands, eyes, war, years, nature-look, time, traveler, night, hill, discord, flags, infection, sky, earth, season, May, tongue, fist, yard, dandelion, infirmities, mode, death, patron, delight, transitoriness, youth, mind, antiqueness, romance, honey, heart, importances, wine, meat, log-fired, roof, head, weapon, thigh, call, God, word, rage, sublimities, extinction, art, faith, world, air, logic, love, moment, scream, duty, ways, guns, walls, factory, church, child, trees, switch, machine-guns, hill, row, sight, grove, days, future, visions and despair.*

The main actions in the poem are expressed by the verbs such as *to fight, to assume, to turn, to view, to ooze, to carve, to thrust out, to come, to protest, to recall, to nibble, to surgeon, to press, to sag and to rattle.*

The adjectives used are: *silvered, legged, armed, jointed, wooden, blinded, wild, common, airiest, boastful, clenched, valiant, natural, ugly, young, alone, healthy, fine, tasty, old, happy, unendurable, inward, merry and elder.*

The adverbs used are: *only, ominously, learnedly, down, beyond and now.*

The prepositions used in this poem are: *of, with, into, upon, for, at, from, over, in, beyond and by.*

Sense devices

The most remarkable sense devices used in this poem are: metaphors, imagery, inversion, alliteration, oxymoron, repetition, simile, assonance, ellipsis, contrast and personification.

Metaphors are central in this poem. They appear in line 1: *silvered cleaned*, in line 9: *morning traveler*, in line 10: *wild-night*, in line 11: *discord of flags*, in line 12: *infection*, in line 14: *airiest May*, in line 15: *oppressed*, in line 16: *boastful tongue*, in line 17: *natural infirmities*, in line 24: *tasty honey*, in line 25: *old importances*, in line 31: *ugly earth*, in line 37: *inward scream, to turn mad* and in line 46: *boastful visions*.

Images are also central in the poem. They appear in lines 1: *wounds*, in line 3: *one legged-man*, in line 4: *one armed-man*, in line 5: *the blinded man*, in line 17: *natural infirmities*, in line 18: *death*, in line 20: *fear*, in line 27: *weapon at the thigh*, in line 33: *extinction*, in line 35: *protesting logic, protesting love*, in line 38: *guns*, in line 42: *machine-guns* and in line 43: *soldiers*.

Inversion is used in: - L45. When learnedly the future we devote

Alliteration is used in:-L3.The one-legged man forgets his leg of wood,

- L7 Their war was fought these twenty years ago

-L20. *Fear made fine bed-fellows*. Sick with delight

-L31. *War was* return of earth to ugly earth,

-L32. *War was* foundering of sublimities,

-L15. Down pressed the sky, and we, oppressed, thrust out

Oxymoron is used in: -L5. *The blinded man sees* with his ears and hands

-L19. Of *healthy dying*, premature fate-spasm.

-L20. *Fear made fine bed-fellows*. Sick with delight -

- L38. And we recall *the merry ways of guns*

Repetition: -war is repeated in lines 7, 11, 31, 32 and in the title.

-wounds is repeated in lines 1 and 30

- gun is repeated in lines 38 and 42

- wine, meat and fire are repeated in lines 26 and 29.

- earth is repeated in lines 13 and 31.

- air is repeated in lines 14 and 34.

- boastful is repeated in lines 16 and 46.

- death is repeated in lines 18 and 19.

- sky is repeated in lines 12 and 15.

Simile appears in: -L40. *Like* a child, piecrust; felling groves of trees

-L41. *Like* a child, dandelions with a switch.

-L42. Machine-guns rattle toy-*like* from a hill,

Assonance appears: -L10.His *wild night*-stumbling carved into a hill.

-L40 *Like* a child, piecrust; felling groves of trees

-L41 *Like* a child, dandelions with a switch.

Ellipsis appears in: - L4. The one-armed man...his jointed wooden arm.

-L31. War was return... of earth to ugly earth,

Contrast appears in line 12. *But* an infection of the common sky

Personification appears in: L18. For Death was young again: patron alone

Semantic organization

Paraphrased version of the poem

Remembering the effects of World War I

At the entrance and exit, wounds are silvered clean,
The track aches only when the rain reminds.
The man with a leg forgets his leg of wood,
The man with an arm forgets his jointed wooden arm.
The blind man sees with his ears and hands
As much or more than once with both his eyes.
Their war was fought these twenty years ago
And now assumes the nature-look of time,
As when the morning traveler turns and views
His wild night-stumbling carved into a hill.

What was war? It is not only discord of flags
But it spreads like an infection of the common sky
And its effects continue on earth
Even in beautiful May, the effects of war are still active.
People were oppressed in those hard times, thrust out
Boastful tongue, clenched fist and valiant yard.
Natural infirmities were out of mode,
Society was on the line between death and life,
Remembering this was death itself.

Fear made fine bed-fellows. Sick with delight
At life's discovered transitoriness,
Our youth became all-flesh and waived the mind.
Never was such antiqueness of romance,
Such tasty honey oozing from the heart.
And old importances came swimming back –
Wine, meat, log-fires, a roof over the head,
A weapon at the thigh, surgeons at call.

Even there was a use again for God –
A word of rage in lack of meat, wine, fire,
In ache of wounds beyond all surgeoning.

War was returning of earth to ugly earth,
War was foundering of sublimities,
Destruction of each happy art and faith
By which the world had still kept head in air,
Protesting logic or protesting love,
Until the unendurable moment struck —
The war, the duty to run mad.

And we recall the merry ways of guns —
Nibbling the walls of factory and church
Like a child, piecrust; felling groves of trees
Like a child, dandelions with a switch.
Machine-guns rattle like toy from a hill,
Down in a row the brave tin-soldiers die:
If these tragedies are not remember
Their future will be
Full of despair.

Scenario

The topic around which the scenario is built is *Recalling war* which tells about war and its effects which return to people as trauma.

The speaker is the poet himself. He is a kind of narrator who knows almost everything about the events in the story and possibly the poet himself, telling the story of his experiences of World War I. The addressee is “you” the reader or the public which is a victim of war.

Between the speaker and the addressee, the relationship is that of a human being. And between the speaker and the public, the relation is that of victim of war. The network that ties the speaker to the addressee is humanity and the network that ties the poet to the public is that of victim of war. From these relations, one may deduce that the purpose of this poem is to make victims of war remember those difficult times.

Subject matter

Recalling war refers to Robert Graves who was affected physically and psychologically by War War I that he witnessed. The poem is an account of war and its effects on the society: the sufferings people faced during the war, difficulties soldiers with one leg encountered during the war, difficulties soldiers with one arm encountered during the war, difficulties blind soldiers encountered at the battlefield, the consequences of war on society, etc.

At a deeper level, the poem is about the poet's real life experience, his own personal journey from the army to become a poet. Robert Graves was devastated by World War I and its effects on the society. It is possible to see the poet's complex feelings about war in "Recalling war".

Themes

Central theme

The central theme of *Recalling war* is that the purpose of war is to make people remember those difficult times because the poet did not want people to forget the war experiences. War is described through the destruction of all the happiness on earth such as art, faith, humanity, love, logic, mind, bodies, history and all the things human beings need. War experience is also described through the devastating results that negatively affect all the physical, material and spiritual possessions of society. The post-war traumas are described in through the depression, troubles and mental depression.

Sub- themes

Sub-themes can be pointed out: hopelessness, war experiences, fear, psychological damages, physical damages, pain, post-traumatic disorder. It is probably because of war that people develop these negative attitudes. The speaker tries to show us how painful marks the war left on society.

The other sub-themes are depression, troubles and mental disorder are also essential characteristics of *Recalling war*. It is probably because of these psychological and physical pains that society went through that the speaker is saying "with the duty to run mad" and the pains, according to him, should never be forgotten. The speaker tries to show us that the war never ended in people's minds and souls.

Feelings aroused in the poem

Recalling war arouses five (5) feelings in the reader: pity, compassion, hopelessness, fear and pain. The reader feels pity and compassion towards the soldiers who fell and died at the battlefield. He also feels pity and compassion towards the soldiers who were injured during the war. The feeling of pity and compassion could also be explained by the fact that people were crushed and oppressed during the war. It was destructive and painful.

The feeling of hopelessness, fear and pain could be explained by the fact that war destroyed all the happiness on earth such as art, faith, humanity, love, logic, mind, bodies, history and all the things human beings need. The feeling of hopelessness, fear and pain could be explained by the fact that the devastating results that negatively affect all the physical,

material and spiritual possessions of society. The feeling of hopelessness, fear and pain could be explained by the depression, troubles and mental depression that people face after war.

Effects created by the poem

Recalling war creates various effects on the reader, namely pity, compassion, hopelessness, fear and pain.

The reader feels pity and compassion towards the soldiers who fall down and die at the battlefield as a human being just like himself. The effect of hatred towards the war and its effects is created by the fact that war destroys, devastates, traumatizes or carries on its traces in people's mind and souls. The effects of war are clearly presented in the poem.

Tone of the poem

The tone of the poem is serious and alerting. It is serious because the poet offers the picture of the past war in the first stanza and he raises awareness about war in the second stanza. The tone is also serious because the poet describes war and its chaotic effects in the third stanza and he tells us about the post-war process and what war is in the fourth stanza. The tone is finally serious because the poet tells us about war experiences in the fifth stanza.

Lines 1 to 46 of the poem have alerting tone since they ask readers to become watchful and ready for a potential danger which has destroyed the world. The danger is so imminent that it is possible to avoid it. From Russia to Ukraine, from the Middle East to South- Soudan, from the Central African Republic to the DR Congo, the destructive effect of the war is still alive and knows no bounds.

Poet's intention

From the subject matter, the central theme and the tone of the poem, it is possible to guess that the poet's intention is to urge the reader to be watchful and to watch out in a world which is characterized by wars. The poet was certainly referring to World War I to indicate that war has spread like an infection and its effects continue up to now, i.e. the war and its effects have never gone away from the body and the mind of the poet.

General appreciation of the poet's control of discourse

Robert Grave's use of discourse in *Recalling war* is controlled since he chooses appropriate language, paralinguistic and punctuation marks to convey meaning, arouses the feelings and creates effects as desired by the poet himself. In this poem, discourse is made up of language, paralinguistic and punctuation marks. The poet's discourse is both poetic and rhetorical. First, it is poetic because it meets the characteristics of poetic discourse such as it is short, condensed, incomplete, connoted and implicit. Second, it is rhetorical because it contains the rhetorical devices such as metaphors, images, inversion, alliteration, paradox, repetition, simile, assonance, ellipsis and contrast.

The use of the language to convey the meaning

The use of language is controlled to help convey meaning. Ten sense devices have been pointed out: metaphors, imagery, inversion, alliteration, paradox, repetition, simile, assonance, ellipsis, contrast and personification.

Metaphor is a central device in this poem. A metaphor is a word or a phrase used in an imaginative way to describe somebody or something else in order to show that the two things have the same qualities and to make the description more powerful. There are the following metaphors in this poem: silvered clean in line 1, discord of flags in line 11, infection in line 12, tasty honey in line 24, morning traveler in line 9, wild- night in line 10, airiest May in line 14, oppressed in line 15, boastful tongue in line 16, natural infirmities in line 17, old importances in line 25, ugly earth in line 31, inward scream in line 37, boastful visions in line 46 and duty to run mad in line 37. As a metaphor, inward scream simply stands for war which causes the depression, the mental disorder and the troubles in people's mind after war. Infection stands for the war when the poet says that the war has spread like an infection and its effects continue. Airiest May stands for the most beautiful May times during which the destructive effects of war are still active. Oppressed stands for how people were crushed in those hard times. People were between life and death and even remembering war experience was death itself. Duty to run mad stands for post-war psychological problem because the poet says that war and its effects traumatized people in the society.

The use of images is remarkable in the poem. Abram (1999:121) states that "Imagery" (that is, "images" taken collectively) is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature. There are the following images in this poem: *wound* in line 1, *one legged-man* in line 3, *one armed-man* in line 4, *the blinded man* in line 5, *death* in line 18, *fear* in line 20, *extinction* in 33, *guns* in line 38, *machine-guns* in line 42, *soldiers* in line 43, *weapon* in line 27, *protesting logic or protesting love* in line 35 and *despair* in line 46. They are all images of war experiences which are used in this context to make the poet's sufferings clear to the reader.

The use of inversion can be regarded as another characteristic of the language in this poem. In line 45, words are not arranged in a logical order. Instead of saying: *When learnedly the future we devote*, the poet could probably say: *When we learnedly devote the future*.

Alliteration is used for the sake of focus, emphasis and reinforcement. It appears in line 3: The one-legged man forgets his leg of wood, line 20: *Fear made fine bed-fellows*. Sick with delight, in line 31: *War was* return of earth to ugly earth, in line 32: *War was* foundering of sublimities and in line 15: Down pressed the sky, and we, oppressed, thrust out and in line 7: Their *war was* fought these twenty years ago. Abram (1999: 8) asserts that alliteration is the repetition of a speech sound in a sequence of nearby words. The term is usually applied only to consonants, and only when the recurrent sound begins a word or a stressed syllable within a word.

The use of oxymoron in this poem makes the language paradoxical. Oxymoron is used in line 5: *The blinded man sees* with his ears and hands, in line 19: *Of healthy dying*, premature fate-spasm, in line 20: *Fear made fine bed-fellows* and in line 38: *And we recall the merry ways of guns*. The blinded man sees is a paradox because a blinded man cannot see. The merry ways of guns is also a paradox because the ways of guns cannot be merry. Abram. M.H (1999: 201) writes that a paradox is a statement which seems on its face to be logically contradictory

or absurd, yet turns out to be interpretable in a way that makes good sense. Perrine (1956: 85) quoted by Ngwaba (2013:52) completes Abram M.H. by saying that a paradox is an apparent contradiction which is nevertheless true. It may be either a situation or a statement.

Repetition is used for the purpose of emphasis. A lot of words such as war, wounds, gun, wine, meat, fire, earth, air, boastful, death and sky are repeated several times in this poem. War is repeated five times: in the title, in lines 7, 11, 31 and 32. Wounds is repeated two times: in lines 1 and 30. Gun is repeated two times: in lines 38 and 42. Wine, meat and fire are repeated two times: in lines 26 and 29. Earth is repeated two times: in lines 13 and 31. Air is repeated two times: in lines 14 and 34. Boastful is repeated two times: in lines 16 and 46. Death is repeated two times: in lines 18 and 19. Sky is repeated two times: in lines 12 and 15. Quick and Baum (1973:428) quoted by Ngwaba (2013: 53) write that repetition, variation and substitution are used for the purpose of emphasis, focus and thematic arrangement.

There is also the use of simile. A simile is a word or phrase that compares something to something else, using the words “like” or “as”. *Like* a child, piecrust; felling groves of trees in line 40, *Like* a child, dandelions with a switch in line 41 and Machine-guns rattle toy-like from a hill in line 42.

The language of this poem is characterized by assonance. Abram (1999: 9) says that assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowels—especially in stressed syllables—in a sequence of nearby words. Assonance appears in lines 10: His *wild night*-stumbling carved into a hill, in line 40: *Like a child, piecrust*; felling groves of trees and in line 41: *Like a child, dandelions with a switch*. The speaker says that he remembers the sounds of guns as they were climbing the walls of factory and church like a child cutting trees, like a child with a dandelion.

The language of this poem is also characterized by ellipsis. Ngwaba (2013:54) writes that an ellipsis is an omission or the leaving out of a word or words from a sentence when the meaning can still be understood without them. Poetry cannot do without ellipsis since it is the most incomplete and condensed literary discourse. Ellipsis appears in line 4: *The one-armed man his jointed wooden arm* and in line 31: *War was return of earth to ugly earth*. A distinction is made between grammatical ellipsis and semantic ellipsis. A grammatical ellipsis occurs where words are needed to complete the construction of a sentence and semantic ellipsis where the omission has brought an ambiguity as to whether what remains is a subject, verb or object or whether it is related to one part of the sentence or to another. Quick and Green Baum quoted by Ngwaba (2013:54) assert that the main role of an ellipsis in poetry is to emphasize, focus or reinforce an idea. In this poem, the role of semantic ellipsis is to reinforce the idea of one-armed man who forgets his jointed wooden arm.

Contrast is also used in this poem. It is a comparison between two people or things that shows the difference between them. Contrast appears in line 12: *But* an infection of the common sky. The poet says that war is not only the discord of flags or conflict between countries but it is also an infection of the common society.

The use of personification is apparent in this poem. Personification consists of attributing things the characteristics of human beings. Personification occurs when the poet says in line 18 that *For Death was young again: patron alone*. Only human beings are young. Death is not an animate to be young. Death is not a human being to give people money. The main function of personification is to emphasize.

The use of paralinguistic features to convey the meaning

The pitch, scenario and information focus are the three paralinguistic features that contribute to the understanding of meaning of this poem.

As Hatch (1992:275) quoted by Ngwaba (2013:50) pointed it out, at discourse level, prosody or the supra-segmental system made up intonation, stress, rhythm and pitch helps to give information on the speaker's emotions, feelings, moods and even convictions.

The pitch or voice quality is high in this poem because of the tone of feelings and physical and psychological pain that the society went through due to the war.

Information focus is mostly achieved through the use of repetition and variation. It has been helpful to detect the subject matter of the poem, the central theme and sub-themes, the feelings aroused, the effects created by the poem and the tone.

The scenario has been helpful in finding out the elements of communication in the poem for a better understanding and discussion of the poem.

The use of punctuation marks to convey the meaning

The poet has used seven (7) kinds of punctuation marks: comma, full stop, dash, question-mark, colon, semi-colon and hyphen.

Comma is found in lines 1, 3, 8, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 40 and 42 of Robert Graves' "Recalling war". The main function of comma is to separate the items in a list or to show where there is a slight pause in a sentence.

Full-stop is found in lines 2, 4, 6, 10, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30, 37, 41 and 46. The main function of a full stop is to indicate a break in thought which means that something meaningful and complete has been said. In other words, it indicates the completeness of the poet's idea. The first idea is to remind war. The second idea is to raise awareness about war. The third idea is to describe war and its chaotic effects. The fourth idea is about the post-war process. The fifth idea is the recollection of war experience.

Dash is found in lines 25, 28, 36 and 38. The main function of a dash in line 38 is to emphasize the destructive effects of war.

Question mark is found in line 11. The main function of a question mark in line 11 is to ask a question about what war is.

Colon is found in lines 18 and 43. The main function of a colon in line 43 is to explain the tragedies of soldiers who fell and died at the battlefield. The poet says that if these tragedies are not remembered, the future of these soldiers will be full of despair.

Semi-colon is found in line 40. The main function of the semi-colon in the middle of line 40 is to explain and give additional comment on lines 38 and 39 that of recalling the merry ways of guns.

Hyphen is found in lines 3, 4, 8, 10, 19, 20, 22 and 43. The main function of a hyphen is to join two words together to make a new one.

Personal appreciation of the poem as an artistic and literary work

The reading of this poem is a great experience for the pleasure it gives and for the value it expresses for a number of reasons. The poem addresses war experiences as a world issue saying that the war destroys the society but it also carries on its traces in people's mind. That is, people who are victims of war are generally traumatized due to depression, troubles and mental disorders.

The poem demonstrates craft and artistry. The poet's craft and artistry can be seen through the choice of language, poetic devices, skillful way of saying things in ordinary language and re-arranging them beautifully to please the reader.

I would recommend this poem to other readers because in some way it is good for renewing and refreshing their memories about World War I and its effects that the poet witnessed.

RESULTS

The findings are presented according to the research questions guiding the study. The analysis of Robert Graves' *Recalling War* revealed that poetic meaning is constructed through the interaction of linguistic, semantic, rhetorical and discourse features. The results are organized around the main research question and the two specific research questions.

Result 1: The analysis revealed that the linguistic and structural organization of *Recalling War* plays a fundamental role in constructing the poem's meaning. The poem is structured as a five-stanza narrative poem that presents war as a destructive experience whose consequences extend beyond the battlefield into psychological and social memory. The progression of ideas across the stanzas creates a movement from the description of war time experiences toward reflection on the lasting effects of conflict. At the lexical level, the poem employs carefully selected nouns, verbs, and adjectives that represent violence, suffering, destruction and emotional pain. The grammatical analysis indicated that verbs and descriptive modifiers play important roles in portraying both physical actions and psychological experiences. Dynamic verbs emphasize violent events and destructive processes, while adjectives intensify the emotional atmosphere by describing states of suffering and despair.

Overall, the results indicate that linguistic and structural features function as interpretive signals that guide readers from the literal description of war toward a deeper understanding of trauma, memory and human suffering.

Result 2: The findings demonstrated that rhetorical and discourse features significantly contribute to the interpretation of *Recalling War*. The poem employs a wide range of rhetorical devices, including metaphor, imagery, repetition, simile, oxymoron, alliteration,

personification, contrast and ellipsis. These devices operate together to transform the description of war into an emotional and moral reflection on its consequences. The discourse analysis further revealed that the poet adopts a serious and warning tone aimed at encouraging reflection on the consequences of war. The communicative intention behind the poem is not simply to recall historical events but to preserve collective memory and caution future generations about the devastating effects of violence. The interaction between textual features and reader interpretation generates emotional responses such as pity, compassion, fear and pain. Understanding the poem requires readers to connect linguistic evidence with knowledge of war experiences and their broader historical implications.

Result 3: The analysis demonstrated that a discourse-comprehension approach provides a systematic framework for teaching poetry by integrating linguistic, stylistic, semantic, pragmatic and reader-oriented dimensions. The findings suggest that effective poetry instruction should move beyond traditional approaches based mainly on paraphrasing, vocabulary explanation, or identification of literary devices. The results indicated that this approach promotes deeper literary comprehension because it enables learners to understand not only the content of a poem but also the mechanisms through which meaning is created. It therefore provides literature teachers with a practical framework for developing learners' analytical abilities, critical thinking and appreciation of poetic discourse.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The present study examined how linguistic, semantic, rhetorical and discourse features contribute to the interpretation of Robert Graves' *Recalling War* and explored how a discourse-comprehension approach can support poetry teaching. The findings demonstrate that poetic meaning does not emerge from isolated literary elements but from the interaction between textual structures, linguistic choices, rhetorical resources, contextual factors and readers' interpretive processes. These findings are discussed in relation to previous theoretical and empirical contributions in discourse analysis, stylistics, literary interpretation and language education.

The first finding revealed that the linguistic and structural features of *Recalling War* contribute significantly to the construction of poetic meaning. The analysis showed that lexical choices, grammatical patterns, cohesion, organization, and punctuation function as interpretive resources that guide readers toward understanding the poem's representation of war, suffering, and memory. This finding supports Halliday's (1978: 21-22) view that language is a social semiotic system in which linguistic choices represent particular meanings according to context. From this perspective, the poet's selection of specific nouns, verbs, and adjectives is not accidental; rather, these choices encode experiences, attitudes, and perspectives toward war. The finding also agrees with Halliday and Hasan's (1976: 4-6) theory of cohesion, which emphasizes that texts achieve meaning through semantic relationships connecting different linguistic elements. In *Recalling War*, repetition, lexical association, and thematic continuity create links between descriptions of conflict and reflections on its consequences. These cohesive patterns enable readers to perceive the poem

as a unified discourse rather than a collection of independent lines. Furthermore, the importance of grammatical choices identified in this study corresponds with Halliday's (1994: 106-107) functional grammar perspective which argues that grammatical structures represent experiences, relationships and processes. The use of action-oriented verbs to represent violence and descriptive forms to express suffering demonstrates how grammar contributes to the representation of reality. Therefore, the findings extend functional linguistic perspectives by showing how grammatical resources operate within poetic discourse to communicate emotional and ideological meanings. The structural organization of the poem also confirms the argument of Leech and Short (2007: 11-13) that stylistic effects arise from deliberate linguistic decisions made by writers. The five-stanza organization of *Recalling War* creates a progression of ideas that moves readers from recalling past events toward reflecting on their lasting consequences. This confirms that poetic structure is not merely an aesthetic feature but a mechanism for organizing interpretation.

The second major finding indicated that rhetorical devices such as metaphor, imagery, repetition, contrast, oxymoron, personification and alliteration play an essential role in shaping the poem's meaning and emotional impact. This finding supports Leech and Short's (2007: 135-137) argument that stylistic analysis reveals how linguistic forms create literary effects. In *Recalling War*, rhetorical devices function as meaning-making strategies that transform historical experiences into emotional and moral reflections. The role of metaphor identified in this study is consistent with Lakoff and Johnson's (1980: 3-5) conceptual metaphor theory, which argues that metaphors are not merely decorative expressions but cognitive mechanisms through which abstract experiences are understood. In war poetry, metaphor allows poets to represent complex realities such as trauma, destruction, and memory through concrete images that readers can emotionally and cognitively process. The findings also support the work of Richards (1929: 11-13), who emphasized that poetic meaning emerges from the interaction between linguistic form, emotional response, and intellectual interpretation. The serious and warning tone identified in *Recalling War* demonstrates how poetic language influences readers' affective responses while simultaneously communicating a broader social message. The feelings of pity, fear, compassion, and pain generated by the poem are therefore not separate from meaning construction; rather, they form part of the interpretive process. Additionally, the identification of war trauma, destruction, hopelessness, and post-war memory as dominant themes corresponds with studies of war literature that emphasize the role of poetry in challenging heroic narratives of conflict. Scholars of war poetry argue that modern war poets frequently shift attention from military achievements to individual suffering and psychological consequences. The present findings confirm this perspective by demonstrating that Graves' poem constructs war primarily as a human tragedy rather than a historical event.

The third finding was that the interpretation of *Recalling War* depends not only on textual features but also on discourse context and the poet's communicative intention. This finding supports van Dijk's (2014: 3-5) socio-cognitive approach, which explains that discourse

interpretation involves interaction between text structures, knowledge, and social context. Readers understand the poem more effectively when they connect linguistic expressions with broader knowledge about war experiences and collective memory. The finding also aligns with Fairclough's (1995: 97-98) argument that language represents social meanings and perspectives. Through its discourse organization, *Recalling War* communicates an anti-war position by emphasizing suffering, destruction, and the enduring effects of violence. Thus, the poem functions not only as an artistic text but also as a form of social commentary. The study further confirms Kintsch's (1998, pp. 101-103) comprehension theory, which proposes that readers construct mental representations of texts by integrating textual information with prior knowledge. The emotional and thematic interpretation of the poem therefore results from the interaction between textual signals and readers' cognitive processes. This finding highlights that literary comprehension is an active meaning-construction process rather than a passive reception of authorial messages.

Overall check

The findings support the argument that poetry interpretation requires an integrated analytical perspective combining linguistics, stylistics, discourse analysis, semantics, pragmatics and reader response. The study contributes to existing scholarship by demonstrating that discourse-comprehension analysis can serve as a bridge between linguistic analysis and literary interpretation. While previous scholars such as Halliday (1978), Halliday and Hasan (1976), Fairclough (1995), Leech and Short (2007), van Dijk (2014) and Kintsch (1998) have examined language, discourse and comprehension from different perspectives, the present study brings these perspectives together within a unified framework for poetry analysis and pedagogy. The analysis of *Recalling War* demonstrates that poetic meaning is produced through the interaction of textual evidence, contextual interpretation and reader engagement.

Consequently, the study advances the view that discourse analysis should not be limited to non-literary communication but can also provide valuable theoretical and pedagogical tools for understanding and teaching poetry. The proposed discourse-comprehension model offers literature teachers a structured approach for moving beyond a surface-level explanation toward deeper evidence-based literary interpretation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that Robert Graves' *Recalling War* can be effectively interpreted through a discourse-comprehension approach that integrates linguistic, semantic, rhetorical, stylistic, pragmatic and reader-oriented perspectives. The findings revealed that lexical choices, grammatical structures, cohesion, rhetorical devices, discourse organization, tone and contextual elements interact to construct the poem's meaning and communicate its anti-war message. The analysis showed that themes of war trauma, destruction, fear, suffering and collective memory emerge through the systematic interaction between textual features and readers' interpretation. The study further established that discourse analysis provides a

valuable framework for poetry teaching because it enables learners to move beyond simple paraphrasing and identification of literary devices toward deeper understanding of how meaning is created. By integrating language analysis with literary interpretation, the proposed discourse-comprehension model can support the development of critical thinking, interpretive skills and literary appreciation among learners.

Recommendations

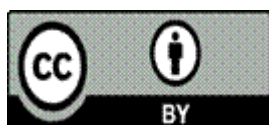
Based on the findings, this study recommends literature teachers to integrate discourse-comprehension approaches into poetry teaching by combining linguistic analysis, stylistic exploration, contextual interpretation and critical discussion. National curriculum designers should consider incorporating discourse-based models into English language and literature courses to strengthen learners' analytical abilities and appreciation of literary texts. Further studies are also recommended to apply this approach to other genres of poetry and literary texts as well as to investigate its effectiveness in different educational contexts.

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