

Morphophonemic analyses of the textualities in “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe

Elmira L. Colicol-Rodriguez*

Abstract: This paper argues that the structural linearity of language is revealed in General American English morphemes and phonemes of “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. It analyzes the phonological and morphological structures in select textualities. It focuses on phonemic structures in terms of segmental and suprasegmental phonemes and morphemic structures according to lexical and grammatical free morphemes, inflectional and derivational bound morphemes, and word-formation processes. Findings reveal that for segmental phonemic analysis in terms of vowel sounds, the center vowel [ə] or *schwa* is the most dominant vowel phoneme in both poems against diphthong [oy], which never appeared in both textualities. Meanwhile, in terms of consonant sounds, nasal [n] dominated the poems. Fricative [zh], affricate [ch], and syllabic consonants [ʎ] and [ʎ̥] are absent in the textualities of these poems. Both poems also show suprasegmental features in their textualities as they display stress patterns, pitch level combination of 2-3-2/2-3-1, sustained or level 1 juncture, and non-final intonation level 2-3-2 patterns. Both poems contain 71 lexical morphemes or content words and 43 grammatical morphemes or function words on their textualities. They contain eight (8) inflectional morphemes, such as suffix -s, and 5 derivational morphemes, such as suffix -ly and -y, that cause the change in the meaning of the words. Word formation processes of the two poems reveal more folk etymology and derivational processes. Therefore, the linearity of phonemes and morphemes are revealed in the linguistic structure of the textualities of “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. It is recommended that these poems are to be used as learning materials, specifically in phonology and morphology lessons.

Keywords: morphophonemic analyses, “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer, “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe, phonemic structure, morphemic structure

* Elmira L. Colicol-Rodriguez

Jose Rizal Memorial State University-Tampilisan Campus, Znac, Tampilisan, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines

Introduction

Poetry is a form of language that produces a set different from the ordinary use of language. Its structure is so ordered and arranged to be formed from a conventional manner of language used seemingly.

According to Liven (1969, as cited in Nofal 2011), when linguistic analysis is applied to poetry, this could result in a grammar structure different from the grammar of a linguistic analysis done from ordinary discourse and the ways it uses the language. It means that poetry has a unique literary convention compared to ordinary language.

Moreover, as language evolves through time, so does the convention of poetry. Hence, linguistic analysis plays a significant role in understanding the context and meaning of literary pieces in poetry form.

As previously mentioned, poetry evolves as writers have evolved in all aspects that could influence their writing. Classic poetry, such as Joyce Kilmer's "Trees," covers a wide variety of functions that could be a good source of linguistic analysis, and so does Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat."

Published studies and interpretations of these poems have been made; however, little is known about their morphophonemic analysis despite the rich and abundant linguistic features. Hence, the researcher takes the lead in analyzing the linearity of speech sounds and words in Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Black Cat" using the Philippine Center for Language Study (PCLS) diacritical symbols (Studocu 2024).

To address the gap, this paper analyzes the phonological and morphological structures of General American English in the poems "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer and "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe. Specifically, it focuses on phonemic structures such as segmental and suprasegmental phonemes and morphemic structures such as lexical and grammatical free morphemes, inflectional and derivational bound morphemes, and word-formation processes.

Theoretical considerations

This paper argues that the structural linearity of language is revealed in General American English morphemes and phonemes of "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer and "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe.

This argument is supported by the theory of Corder, which is a Linear Grammar Theory that treats the sentences of a language as a "string" of grammatical categories like beads in a necklace or as a

series of “slots” to be filled by words of a category appropriate to each slot.

Another theory that supports this argument is that of Parker and Riley (1994) through their Theory on the Structure of Words, which involves word formation. According to them, each word is made up of basic units of meaning (morphemes) that are more or less constant in sense and form. Generally, morphemes that can stand alone (have sense) in meaning as words are called free morphemes. In contrast, those morphemes that can only be meaningful when attached to free morphemes are called bound morphemes.

Research methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative method of research using textual analysis and structural analysis. The process of textual analysis is analyzing the language, symbols, and images found in texts in order to learn more about how individuals interpret and convey their life experiences. Communications that are spoken, written, or visually represented offer hints about how they could be perceived (Allen 2017). This paper analyzes the phonological features such as the General American English phonemes as revealed in the textualities of the poems “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. This study also employs a qualitative method of research using structural analysis. It is analyzing words into their constituent elements in order to ascertain their meaning. Understanding a few word pieces can provide hints about the meanings of a vast number of terms, making structural analysis an effective method for expanding one’s vocabulary (“Reading: Vocabulary”). In this study, the General American English words extracted from the authentic texts were analyzed according to free morphemes, bound morphemes, and word-formation processes.

The sources of verbal data for this study are the two poems titled “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer from the Website Poets.org on the Webpage, “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer 1886-1918 (Kilmer), and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe from the Website, PoeStories.com on the Webpage, “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe 1845 (Poe).

For phonemic structures, the two poems “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe are analyzed through transcription of their segmental phonemes, such as vowels, diphthongs, and consonant sounds. The number of occurrences of the vowel and consonant phonemes is counted and ranked to detect which among

those phonemes have dominated both of the poems. Then, these were further analyzed in terms of their suprasegmental prosody patterning, namely, stress, pitch levels, juncture, and intonation.

Meanwhile, the data-generating process for morphemic structures has three phases. Phase 1 is for free morphemes, Phase 2 is for bound morphemes, and Phase 3 is for the word-formation processes.

Phase 1: In generating the free morphemes in the text, the following processes are followed. First is the identification of lexical and grammatical words from the text, and the second is the plotting of words in the table with three columns: 1st column is allotted for the sentence extracted from the poem *Trees* by Joyce Kilmer, labeled according to the content words such as noun, verb, adjective, or adverb, and the function words such as preposition, determiner, or conjunction; 2nd column is for the lexical morphemes or content words, and the 3rd column is for the grammatical morphemes. The third process is the analysis of words according to their lexical and grammatical function in the sentence.

Phase 2: In generating the bound morphemes in the text, the following procedures are followed: First is the identification of words with inflectional and derivational morphemes. The second is classifying or grouping the words according to words with inflectional morphemes as well as words with derivational morphemes. The third is plotting the words in tabular form. There are two tables—one for the inflectional morphemes and the other one for the derivational morphemes. There are five columns for inflectional morphemes. The first column is allotted for the inflectional morphemes, the next column is the type of content words, the third is for the words extracted from the text, the fourth column is for its root word, and the last column is for the affixes attached to the words collected. The table for derivational morphemes still has five columns. The first column is for the root words, 2nd is for the words collected with derivational morphemes, the third is for the prefixes that may be attached to the word, the fourth is for the suffixes that are attached to the word, and the fifth column is allotted for the analysis of the functional shifts or changes that each word had undergone.

Phase 3: In gathering the data for word formation processes, the following steps are followed. First is the identification of the words found in the authentic texts that have undergone certain word-formation processes. The second is classifying or grouping these words according to the processes of word formation. The third is the plotting

of these words in a tabular form with three columns. The first column is for the types of word-formation process, the second column is for the description of the formation of the new word, and the third column is for the analysis of the sample words extracted from the texts.

Results and discussion

Phonemic and morphemic structures are revealed in the textualities of the poems “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. Phonemic structures consist of segmental phonemes and suprasegmental phonemes, and morphemic structures are composed of lexical and grammatical free morphemes, inflectional and derivational bound morphemes, and word-formation processes.

Phonemic structures

For the vowel phonemes in the textualities of “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe, there are 95 phonemes in “Trees” and 75 in “The Black Cat.” This number of phonemes is broken down into 81 front vowel sounds, 41 center vowel phonemes, 20 back vowels, and seven (7) diphthongs. Moreover, it is also worth noting that the vowel phoneme dominant in both poems is the center vowel phoneme /ə/ or ‘*schwa*,’ which has a frequency of 34 occurrences in both poems. It is followed by the phonemes /I/, /iy/, /ae/, /ε/, /ow/, /ey/, /ʊ/ and /a/, /ay/, /aw/ and /ɔ/, and /uw/. However, diphthong /oy/ is never used in both poems. This result means that the center vowel /ə/ or the ‘*schwa*’ sound is the most dominant vowel phoneme in both poems against diphthong /oy/, which never occurred in the textualities of both poems. It implies that most of the General American English words in both poems use the center vowel /ə/ or *schwa* sound, as revealed in the data. This result supported the study of Weber (2018) about “Listening for schwa in academic vocabulary,” which found that the schwa sound is the most frequent in English and that it is almost constant in three-syllable words or longer academic texts. Linguistic study has demonstrated that it contributes to a word’s unique sound structure by rhythmically alternating with stressed syllables. The identity of derivational suffixes frequently determines the position of high stress and, hence, schwa.

Meanwhile, the consonant phonemes are revealed in “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe with 219 occurrences. The consonant phoneme nasal /n/ dominated the textualities of both poems as it has the highest frequency of 21. It is

followed by /m/, /r/, and /t/ with 19 occurrences; /l/, /d/, /z/, /s/, /h/, /b/, /dh/, /p/, /v/, /k/, /w/, /th/, /g/, /f/, /ng/, /sh/, /y/, and /j/ as ranked according to frequency. Meanwhile, phonemes /zh/, /ch/, /hw/, /'l/, and /'n/ do not occur in both poems. Twenty-seven (27) consonant cluster phonemes appeared in both poems with /st/, which has the highest frequency. The findings support Mines et al. (1978) study as they have found that /t/, /d/, and /k/ are among the top ten ranking consonant phonemes, three of the four sonorants, /r/, /l/, /w/, is also ranked in the first ten consonant phonemes.

Nevertheless, the suprasegmental prosody is also found in “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. There are 48 stressed words, which are composed of content words, and 31 unstressed words, which consist of function words. Meanwhile, “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe has 28 stressed content words and 18 unstressed function words. Both poems have a pitch level, which is a combination of pitch levels 2 and 3. Both poems’ juncture is a combination of sustained or level juncture (/) and falling juncture (#). Further, both poems’ intonation is a non-final intonation level 2-3-2. It means that “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe bear the suprasegmental prosody in their textualities.

Morphemic structures

For the lexical and grammatical free morphemes, there are a total of 71 lexical free morphemes found in “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. The prevailing lexical free morphemes are nouns (24), verbs (21), and adjectives (21). There are only 4 adjectives found in both poems. Meanwhile, there are 43 grammatical-free morphemes in both textualities. Prevailing grammatical free morphemes are pronouns (13), prepositions (12), and conjunctions (11). There are 7 determiners in both poems. This result means that the poems “Trees” and “The Black Cat” revealed both the lexical and grammatical free morphemes. For lexical free morphemes, nouns dominated both poems, and pronouns prevailed in grammatical free morphemes.

The inflectional and derivational morphemes are likewise found in “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. There are 5 nouns and 5 verbs in “Trees.” The inflectional morphemes added to their root words are 7 -s, 1 ‘s, 1 -ing, and 1 k changed to d, making each term changed to the possessive, present tense, plural, present participle, and past tense. Meanwhile, “The Black Cat” has

only one (1) word with an inflectional ending -s that makes the word sense into senses which changed it into plural. For derivational morphemes, there are five (5) words in both poems that bear suffixes that make each term have a functional shift or change. Three (3) terms change from noun to adjective, one (1) noun to an adverb, and one (1) adjective to the adverb. Suffix -ly prevailed in both poems. It means that both the “Trees” and “The Black Cat” revealed inflectional and derivational morphemes in their textualities. The study’s findings were consistent with those of Genon-Sieras (2020), who found that most of the verbs used in the research abstract had inflectional affixations, in which a bound morpheme is appended as a suffix to the stem. These morphemes indicate many verbs and tenses. On the other hand, English verbs and nouns typically include inflectional suffixes to identify grammatical categories like tense and number. This process is known as derivational affixation, and it entails attaching suffixes to the verb form in order to derive the noun form.

Word-formation processes are also revealed in “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe. Seventeen (17) terms have word-formation processes found in both poems. These word formation processes range from folk etymology, derivation, compounding, and proper name. It means that the “Trees” and “The Black Cat” have words that have undergone word-formation processes or the so-called idiom-formation processes. The findings of the study are corroborated by Angsigita’s (2019) investigation, which discovered that 35 words – four of which were acronyms, borrowing, compounding, and derivations – were employed in the word formation processes of Jolie Clothing Official Shop and Callie Cotton Official Shop. Contrary to the findings of the current study, which found that folk etymology dominated the textualities of both poems that were the subject of the investigation, borrowing is the dominant type of word formation process that Jolie Clothing Official Shop and Callie Cotton Official Shop used.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that for segmental phonemic analysis in terms of vowel sounds, the center vowel [ə] is the most dominant vowel phoneme in both poems against diphthong [oy], which never appeared in the textualities of these poems. While in terms of consonant sounds, nasal [n] dominated the poems. On the other hand, fricative [zh], affricate [ch], and syllabic

consonants [ʔ] and [n] are absent in both textualities. Both poems show suprasegmental features in their textualities as they display stress patterns, pitch level combination of 2-3-2/2-3-1, sustained or level 1 juncture, and non-final intonation level 2-3-2 patterns. Both poems contain 71 lexical morphemes or content words and 43 grammatical morphemes or function words on their textualities. They contain eight (8) inflectional morphemes, such as suffix -s, and 5 derivational morphemes, such as suffix -ly and -y, that cause the change in the meaning of the words. The word formation processes of the two poems reveal more folk etymology and derivational processes. Therefore, the linearity of morphemes and phonemes is revealed in the linguistic structure of the textualities of “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe.

Recommendations

Hence, this paper recommends that “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer and “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe could serve as learning materials for analysis in phonology and morphology lessons. English major students should be taught how to analyze the linearity of speech sounds in linguistic resources, especially in literary texts such as poetry. The students should also be taught how to analyze linguistic materials according to the linearity of sounds and words. Both poems are rich in linguistic structures and could be the best sources for linguistic analysis. Instructional material writers of English language courses should consider the structures of phonology and morphology, especially in terms of word formation processes in poetry literary pieces.

References:

- Allen, Mike. 2017. Textual analysis. *Sage Research Methods*. Sage Publishing. methods.sagepub.com/reference/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-communication-research-methods/i14636.xml.
- Ansigita, Della Y. 2019. “An Analysis of Word Formation Process Used by Clothe Online Shop in Shopee.” *UMM*. eprints.umm.ac.id/56624.
- Corder, Pit S. 2003. *Introducing Applied Linguistics*. Great Britain: Penguin. [file:///D:/2.%20RESEARCH/0.%20LINGUISTIC%20Society%20of%20the%20Philippines/AGATHOS%20Journal/Corder%20S.%20Pit.pdf](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022268903001000).
- Genon-Sieras, Shangrela V. 2020. Affixations and Allomorphs in Verbs and Nouns in a Research Abstract: A Morphemic and Morphophonemic Analysis. *International Journal of English Language Studies*. SSRN Electronic Journal. Web.

Morphophonemic analyses of the textualities

- Kilmer, Joyce. 1913. "Trees." *Poets.Org*. Academy of American Poets. poets.org/poem/trees.
- Mines, Ardussi M., Barbara F. Hanson, and June E. Shoup. 1978. Frequency of Occurrence of Phonemes in Conversational English. *Language and Speech*, 21(3): 221–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002383097802100302>.
- Nofal, Khalil Hassan. 2011. Syntactic aspects of poetry: A pragmatic perspective. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(16): 47–63. https://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_16_September_2011/6.pdf.
- Parker, Frank, and Katherine Riley. 1994. *Linguistics for Non-Linguists*. Boston: Allen and Bacon.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. 1845. "The Black Cat." *PoeStories.Com*. poestories.com/read/blackcat.
- Studocu. 2024. The IPA or PCLS Symbols of English Sounds. <https://www.studocu.com/ph/document/cebu-normal-university/filipino-major/pcls-notes/37293223>.
- Weber, Rose-Marie. 2018. "Listening for Schwa in Academic Vocabulary." *Taylor & Francis Online*. Informa UK Limited. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02702711.2018.1464531.