



A Semantic Analysis of Sylvia Plath's Poems "Ariel" and "Lady Lazarus" through Leech's Model of Semantics (1981)

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: April 26, 2024

Revised: June 13, 2024

Accepted: June 14, 2024

Available Online: June 15, 2024

Keywords:

Semantics

Leech's Model

Sylvia Plath

Meanings

Ariel

Lady Lazarus

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ABSTRACT

The research paper aims to conduct a semantic analysis of Sylvia Plath's poems "Ariel" (1965) and "Lady Lazarus" (1965) by employing Leech's Model of Semantics (1981). Semantics is the study of the investigation of meaning communicated through language. The study intends to investigate the intricate layers of meaning in the selected poems. Therefore, the study deals with certain research questions based on How does the study of meaning help the readers to understand the contextual background of Plath's selected poems "Ariel" and "Lady Lazarus" and How does Leech's Model of Semantics facilitate seven layers of meaning and complexities inherent in Plath's poetic expression? The study utilizes a non-empirical research method with a descriptive approach to interpret the data; the researchers used content analysis technique to address the research objectives. The results and findings are based on seven layers of meanings including, denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, social, thematic, and reflected dimensions in Plath's selected poems and confirms the credibility and applicability of Leech's Model of semantics (1981). Lastly, this research enriches the multilayered meanings of Plath's artistic language and contributes to a deeper understanding of Plath's struggle and conflict by tracing her poetry as evidence for the study. The study invites the readers and future researchers to explore Plath's poetic expression and language within the broader framework through understanding the deeper social and cultural contexts.

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1. Introduction

Semantics, generally describes as the investigation of meaning features, particularly is a field of linguistics that examines meaning in language. It is essential to comprehend the meaning that words and phrases express in regular speaking and writing contexts (Lyons, 1977). The study of semantics is intimately related to several conceptions of representing meaning, including the truth, coherence, and correspondence theories of meaning (Crystal, 2011). This research aligns with Leech's model of Leech (1981), which identifies seven layers of meaning: denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, social, thematic, and reflected. For instance, a) Denotative meaning refers to universal meaning and concepts and is also based on logical meaning. b) Connotative meaning denotes certain emotional, cultural, or subjective associations attached to a word and goes beyond the literal definition of a word. c) Collective meaning associates with the habitual juxtaposition of a specific word with another word and ties words together. d) Affective meaning reflects the speaker's personal experience and attitude. e) Social meaning pertains to the societal and cultural context in which the word is utilized, including its social associations. f) Thematic meanings are related to the central theme or idea conveyed by a word within a particular context and it arranges messages in order and emphasis. g) Reflected meaning represents certain attitudes, values, or perspectives reflected in language usage.

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963), an American poet, novelist, and short story writer, Plath's confessional style of poetry makes her unique and emphasizes mental illness, identity, and the operation of being a woman in the 20th century. Her life is marked by her turmoil and consequences which leads her to attempt suicide thrice till her thirties, including her battle with depression and disastrous marriage to poet Ted Hughes. Both the selected poems were written in an intense prolific period of Plath's life. Two poems have been selected for content analysis, S. Plath (1965); S. Plath (1965) *Ariel* (1965) and *Lady Lazarus* (1965). The poem *Ariel* is a confessional form of a poem begins in the morning time, *Ariel* is the name of the narrator's favorite horse, occupies the themes of death and the birth (the arrow and the sun), loss of control, transformation (metamorphosis), connection between human and animal (horse and rider), gender role and restrictions, oppression and adventure etc. While, In *Lady Lazarus*, Plath creates an alarming and vibrant "self" by ironically accepting the platitude that a poet is immortal. She criticizes the reader's involvement and curiosity about her death and counters the male sensibility that assumes the right to interpret her, using peremptory malice and mocking the reader's curiosity about her death. The present study undertakes a nuanced exploration of the Semantic analysis of Plath's poetic expression through Leech's model of Semantics, in which the poems incorporate the seven layers of meaning offered by Leech (Leech, 1981).

1.1. Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the contextual background of the selected poems of Plath *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus* through semantic analysis
2. To examine semantic sheds (seven layers) of meanings and complexities inherent in Plath's poetic expression through the lens of Leech's Model of Semantics (Leech, 1981)

1.2. Research Questions

Plath's two poems are selected to analyze the data by employing Leech's Model of Semantics (Leech, 1981), more specifically, the study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. How does the study of meaning help the readers to understand the contextual background of Plath's selected poems *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus*?
2. How does Leech's Model of Semantics facilitate seven layers of meanings and complexities inherent in Plath's poetic expression?

1.3. The Rationale of the Study

The purpose for choosing Semantic analysis is the need to fill the gaps in existing research by providing a detailed, non-empirically-driven analysis of Plath's content of language and poetic legacy beyond surface interpretations. The study also demonstrates the applicability of Leech's Semantics model to literary analysis. Thus, this research follows a systematic pattern and thorough investigation by offering the new insights into seven layers of meaning which contribute overall poetic expression of Plath.

1.4. The Significance of the Study

The research holds significant scholarly importance, as it aims and seeks to enhance the understanding of Plath's selected poems by employing Leech's model of Semantics (1981). The study contributes to the field of semantics; content analysis provides intricate layers of meaning embedded in Plath's iconic poems. By focusing on denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, social, reflected, as well as thematic meanings. The research seeks to offer a fresh perspective on Plath's poetic diction, uncovering new meanings, enriching the academic discourse and overall literary legacy.

1.5. The Limitation of the Study

The study enclosed by semantic analysis of two selected poems by Sylvia Plath, leaving room for further exploration of her entire body of work. The limitation ensures the thoroughness and depth in the examination of these poems and acknowledges the vastness of Plath's poetic impact. The research does not aim to cover the broader spectrum of Plath's poetry but rather to offer a concentrated exploration of semantic layers within the selected poems utilizing Leech's model of Semantics (1981) by directing seven layers of meaning, denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, social, reflected, as well as thematic meaning.

2. Literature Review

The literature review has collectively emphasized what is semantics and the central notion and role of semantics through different researchers' viewpoints. Then, it reviews the seven layers of meanings highlighted by Leech in his book "Semantics" (1981), and lastly, it provides the applicability of using Leech's model as a theoretical framework to find out the results based on seven layers of meaning in the research study. However, many researches have been extensively explored the literary works on Leech's model of Semantic analysis, but none has targeted the semantic analysis of Plath's *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus* poems through Leech's model (1981).

2.1. Semantics

Semantic refers to the study of meaning in language, while as the semantic analysis is a process in linguistics that connects syntactic constructions from clauses, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, making writing independent of language. It focuses on the objective and universal meaning of words and sentences, rather than the subjective and narrow meaning of the speaker. Meaning is the fundamental core of semantics in linguistics, and understanding its relationship to other words, concepts, and real-world entities is crucial for predicting the meaning of linguistic form. Semantic addresses that it is the meaning communicated through language, and meaning is generally considered to concern the relationship between signs and the things to which they refer (Saeed, 2011). Semantic has central importance to linguistics and it carries presupposition implication, and other properties of meaning also the use of meaning in context to communicate ideas, attitudes and intentions (Hurford, Heasley, & Smith, 2007). According to Kearns (2000), semantics is a field of analysis of how meaning is enclosed and transmitted in human language and is based on the meaning of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences of any text. Newmark (1988) argues that semantics is linked to linguistics and is the study of overall meanings and their interpretations. Semantic properties are based on homonyms, heteronyms, synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, metonyms, and reonyms (Ridwan, 2015; Shaikh, Arain, Naz, & Lashari, 2023).

According to Leech (1981), there are seven layers of meaning mentioned in his book "Semantics", including conceptual meaning, associative meaning, connotative meaning, collocative meaning, stylistic meaning, thematic meaning, affective meaning and reflected meaning. Denotative or conceptual meaning refers to the relationship between a word and lexeme with something outside of language, such as a horse or a sacred animal. Connotative meaning is another meaning added to denotative meanings related to the sense of the person or group of people who use the word or personal associations that a word or phrase evokes beyond its literal layer of meaning (Ahmed, Lashari, & Golo, 2023; Hidayatullah, 2009). Associative meaning is the same as symbols used by a language community to express other concepts, similar to the characteristics, situations, or features of the word's origin. Affective meaning is what is communicated about the feelings and attitudes of the speaker or writer, arising due to the listener's reaction to the use of words or sentences (Salsabilla & Yusuf, 2023). Reflected meaning refers to the association with another sense of the same expression (Ibid), while collocative meaning is linked through association with words that occur in the environment of another word (Ibid), Thematic meaning is understood after being communicated through a sequence of words, the focus of discussion, and emphasis over discussion. According to Leech (1981), the central notion of semantics is to provide the systematic nature of the meaning. The languages we use for communication are the implication of the knowledge that one knows and understands rather than what one does. Any language has a set of forms and the set of meanings related to those forms corresponds to that language. For Leech, unconscious knowledge is not the language but the knowledge of the language the speaker has. Hence, semantics produces a more general meaning of words and sentences. The most repeated and crucial concept behind semantics is the "meaning". Thus, semantics can extract the core meaning from linguistics (Bagha, 2011). C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards in their book *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), made an attempt to define the word "mean" with the expression of our intention. For instance, what the red signal actually means "stop" and what it signifies. Fadzillah, Satiti, Susanti, and Syarif (2022) investigate the semantic meaning of figurative language in senior high school English textbooks. Most of the forms of figurative language were discovered, the most prevalent of which were metaphors and hyperbole. The study recommends using poetry and song lyrics to improve High Order Thinking Skill practices when implementing instructional strategies like experimentation, association, questioning, and network.

2.2. Previous Studies on Plath's Poems

Study based on Plath's poems is undertaken by Astuti and Chalesti (2022), their research examines five poems by Sylvia Plath, focusing on language features and meaning. The study uses phonology and semantic levels of language, including alliteration, assonance, and consonance, and a pragmatic approach to uncover meaning in each stanza. They used a descriptive qualitative method and content analysis technique to analyze all content in the poems, revealing the meaning and phonological and semantic levels of language in Plath's works. Moreover, Mohammad (2019) analyzes the consequence of violence in Sylvia Plath's poetry "*Lady Lazarus*" and "*Daddy*", emphasizing its pivotal role in the poet's demise. Violence is perceived as a revolutionary response to societal conformity and as a reaction to the repressive contemporary society. His research looks at the destructive aspect of violence and how it can be fruitful for poets, looking at themes like rebirth through the mortality of death in "*Lady Lazarus*". It also highlights the significance of violence in poetry by examining the paradoxical relationship between the fractured surroundings and poet's inner turmoil.

Path's poems reflect a wide range of feministic perspectives; a study examines the feminism and meaning found in three of Sylvia Plath's poems: Last Word, Lady Lazarus, and Daddy. The study discovered 64 data points using a qualitative descriptive method and content analysis; 59 of these indicated generic meaning, while 5 indicated various forms of feminism. Liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, Marxist, socialist, multicultural, eco, and postmodern feminism were the five categories of feminism that were found (Damayanti & Rohiyatussakinah, 2019). Pydych (2020) investigates the usage of cognitive linguistics to evaluate metaphors in the poems of Sylvia Plath. He explored the theoretical overview of cognitive linguistics, including its goals, history, and commitments, is given in the first chapter. Within this field, semantics and grammar are also covered. Further, the study provides an explanation of the fundamental ideas and historical background of cognitive linguistics' understanding of metaphors. The examination of poetic metaphors is next covered, emphasizing their strength and significance as well as their accessibility. Astuti and Chalesti (2022) research examines five poems by Sylvia Plath entitled Daddy, Ariel, Poppies in October, Lady Lazarus, and Edge. Focusing on language features and meaning. It uses phonological and semantic levels of language, such as alliteration, assonance, and consonance. The pragmatic approach uses descriptive qualitative methods and content analysis techniques to analyze the meaning in each stanza of the poems. The previously conducted studies have revealed the gap in existing literature, and therefore, this study aims to fill the research gap by conducting a Semantic analysis of Plath's poems *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus*, applying Leech's Semantic Model (1981).

3. Research Methodology

The study utilizes a non-empirical method and descriptive approach for semantic analysis, to understand and interpret seven layers of meaning mentioned in a theoretical framework. Leech's model of Semantics is taken for Plath's two famous poems, *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus*. Leech (1981) theoretical framework divides "meaning" into seven categories to examine "meaning" in its broadest sense, with special emphasis on conceptual meanings. The following seven categories of meaning are denotative, connotative, collocative, reflected, social, and thematic meanings.

3.1. Research Design

This research study utilized content analysis technique for analyzing selected poems, this technique serves a systematically analyzes texts, images, or other literary works to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. It helps to involve coding and categorizing data to quantify and qualify the content, allowing researchers to draw conclusion and provide inferences (Krippendorff, 2018). To utilize content analysis for poem analysis certain steps are followed for the design of the study. 1. Define research questions and objectives, 2. Select poems for analysis, 3. Develop a theoretical framework to analyze the selected data, 4. Draw a conclusion and make inferences.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

Geoffrey Leech developed a Model of Semantic Meaning in his book 'Semantics' 1981, a framework identifying seven layers of meaning in language: meaning refers to the emotional impact a word or expression conveys, as denotative meaning clears the concept at surface level, connotative significance includes connections to emotions beyond literal explanation, reflective meaning describes how a word develops meaning through its relationship with other concepts,

collocative concept of meaning arises from the habitual co-occurrence of the words, affective layer of meaning is bound to the speaker's personal feelings or attitudes, social meaning derives from the social context in which the language is used while as the thematic meaning is highly subjective, it considers the text's larger themes, ideas and messages. The present study is based on the theoretical framework established by the two previous studies. Firstly, Atta, Fatima, and Afzal (2023) examined Daud Kamal's poem using Leech's Model of Semantic (1981) as a theoretical framework; demonstrating denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, social, thematic, and reflected layers of meaning. The study facilitates readers' understanding the contextual background and reveals that the poems possess profound meanings that illuminate the cultural identity of the Pakistani poet. The frequency of different meanings reflects the poet's approach to social and cultural change, with predominant meanings being connotative and collocative. Second, Yunira, Fradina, Sumbayak, Putri, and Derin (2019) study investigates the field of semantics, a subfield of linguistics that focuses on word "meaning" in languages. They conducted qualitative analysis of three article reviews and Geoffrey Leech's book *Semantics* (1981) emphasizing on the seven categories of meaning to analyze the words, sentences, and phrases linked to the theory. Their results validate the following seven meanings: conceptual, collocative, emotional, thematic, reflective, and social. Apart from connotative, social, affective, introspective, and collocative meanings, the study also identifies discrepancies in the theorist's views, including associative meanings.

3.3. Seven Layers of Meaning

Geoffrey Leech's 1981 semantics model is a key paradigm for investigating and analyzing the complex creation and interpretation of layers of meanings in language. To obtain a deeper understanding of texts that specifically target the nuances of literature, Leech claims that a language has seven distinct levels of meaning. As per Leech's "Semantic" (Leech, 1981), the following meanings are cited:

3.3.1. Denotative meaning

The meaning is conceptual, descriptive in nature, or cognitive meaning is frequently mentioned. Leech (1981) Of the seven levels of meaning, it is regarded as the fundamental and most significant meaning. Leech has associated it with an integral part of language function than the other layers (Yunira et al., 2019). Denotative meaning is more obvious in the logical understanding of speech and a fundamental aspect of grammatical competence. Cognitive or denotative meaning, a universal concept, can be represented at the lexical level, including simple clauses or sentences. It is most closely tied to the word's definition without the consideration of any personal, emotional and cultural association.

3.3.2. Connotative meaning

It is a component of meaning based on the communicative value of expression of what it refers to and it is beyond its pure conceptual content. The relationship between conceptual and connotative meanings can be likened to the connection between language (conceptual) and the "real world" (connotative), making connotative meanings more open and unstable (Leech, 1981). The connotative meaning is often subjective and depends upon the cultural and personal experiences.

3.3.3. Collocative meaning

It refers to the associations between words based on the meanings of words that often appear in the same context (Leech, 1981). The meaning emerges when the words are used together in a way that is familiar.

3.3.4. Affective meaning

This type of meaning is related to the speaker's personal experience and feeling, and it is comparable to social meaning. According to Leech, affective meaning is indirectly related to conceptual representation. He also states that affective meaning is often treated and conveyed through the conceptual and connotative content of the words (Leech, 1981). The meaning is connected to feelings, values, attitudes and can influence how people respond to or interpret language.

3.3.5. Social meaning

It conveys aspects of the social context, and encompasses the relationship between the speaker and listeners, the societal roles and expectations, and also the broader cultural spectrum (Leech, 1981). Social meaning is often implicit, relying on shared knowledge and assumptions within a social group.

3.3.6. Reflected meaning

This meaning refers to what is communicated through association with another sense of the same expression (Leech, 1981).

3.3.7. Thematic meaning

This kind of thematic interpretation offers a solution to answer the query: What does the author's structuring and arrangement of messages communicate? This is regarded as a component of a semantic utterance (Leech, 1981). The study is based on the seven layers of meaning to underline Plath's poetic expression in *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus* and the overall impact it creates on.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Contextual Background of "Ariel" and "Lady Lazarus"

The poem "*Ariel*" (1965) is part of the collection of the same title, published posthumously. It is a metaphor for the ecstasy of escape; a theme explored in her various works. It may contextually refer to three possible meanings of Ariels: the horse the narrator rides, the holy city of Jerusalem in the Old Testament (Isaiah, Chap-29, p. 7), or a character in Shakespeare's play "The Tempest". The poem Ariel's journey begins in darkness but then quick transition to a more hopeful tone of shadow, white, glitter, and blazing red. The narrator is describing how she has died and returned to life multiple times and each time feels like a miracle. The narrator emphasizes that dying is an art (escape of survival) and she is fully capable of doing it each time. Without using a single word of suicide, the narrator vastly emphasizes suicide. The poem ends on a path of suicidal destruction, with the narrator being annihilated by the sun. The poem's reflection, "morning", sounds similar to "mourning," reinforcing the idea that something must die for something new to be born. Critics argue that the poem's focus is not death but the moment of courting death, fulfilling the desires of poets like Plath. The tremendous thrill of escaping is the poem's main theme.

On the other hand, the poem "*Lady Lazarus*"(1965) centers on committing suicide and explores themes of feminine strength, destruction, and rebirth. The poem was composed in October 1962, amidst the flurry that followed Plath's divorce from Ted Hughes. The poem's title alludes to the biblical account of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead, although in this particular rendition, the narrator rises from the grave independently of a masculine or divine character. The narrator is not a human who has stolen divine power, but one who just happens to have it. The poem shifts in tone, revealing that the narrator is not just a victim of suicide who has made it back, but also the one responsible for her third death. She speaks to her enemy and asks if she terrifies them, and she has another quest: revenge on her murderers. This third rebirth has come with a newfound sense of hope and purpose. Both poems, infer into Plath's confessional style, struggles with mental stableness, and biblical allusions, and her fascinating themes of death, rebirth, resilience, transformation, and self-identity. However, these themes explore the confessional style of art in her narration.

4.2. Plath's poetic expression on identity and Transformation

Plath's poetic expression is a complex narration yet often leaves room for interpretation at the individual level through a subjective approach. The Tempest and her horse "*Ariel*" are often alluding to the poet's biographical referent. However, there is another possible reference in the poem's title, "*Ariel*", which is the Hebrew symbol for Jerusalem, meaning "Lion of God." The poem begins with "God's lioness", implying a direct reference to the Hebrew "Ariel". Plath's obsession with Judaism and the Jewish people is evident in her poems, where she identifies with the Jews and their sufferings, even referring to herself as a Jew. For instance, in *Ariel*, several phrases carry an open interpretation of transformation and revival, And I/ Am the arrow/ The dew that flies/ Suicidal, at one with the drive/ Into the red, Plath infer reader to a deeper implication about self-identity and transformation.

"God's lioness

*How one we grow,
Pivot of heels and knees!___*" (Lines 4-6)

Plath's grave experiences with *Ariel* have been located to highlight the complex views of Plath's life and anxiety that concentrate on a lioness to a place of escape and ecstasy, where they meld together. The rider's heels and knees provide direction and support, and an exclamation point appears amid a line for Plath. The narrator keeps grasping towards the neck she is unable to grasp while the thrilling riding, intricacies, sexual references, and physicality all continue. But despite everything, there is still gloom and darkness since the berries are not simply tasty and black, but also loaded with blood.

*"White
Godiva, I unpeel___
Dead hands, dead stringencies"* (Lines 19-21)

In the above stanza from *Ariel*, Plath narrates the transformation into a white Godiva, displaying even greater whiteness in her public nudity. "White" on its own however stands in sharp contrast to the prior blackness. The phrase "unpeel," which takes us back to the previously luscious fruit, is an interesting choice to create complexity. The narrator now has some influence over the story, which is also compelling. Instead of merely struggling to hang on for the trip, she gets to peel away the deadness. The only verse that stands alone is this one. This marks the start of the shift. More attention is paid to light and "I." Beginning with the word "White" at the opening of this stanza, the lengthy "I" sound appears several times throughout the residue of the poem.

*"I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it—"* (Lines 1-3)

Like nearly all of her opening statements, this one strikes like a driven hammer: the tone is mockingly severe, but it's also partially aimed at her. The stanza from *Lady Lazarus* has too much of the self-irony ("a sort of walking miracle"). However, it takes a certain kind of obsession with the Plath myth to overlook the poet's urge to exaggerate the significance of her performance by drawing fictitious parallels with the Holocaust. Plath's acclaimed in "*Lady Lazarus*", which discusses her recurring suicide attempts often violent, intensifies the poem's badness, leaving the author with no possibility of development. Despite her intensely moving story and notable talent, no coherent statement exists about the nature or value of her vision. It is suggested that Plath's state of mind at the end of her life is a ground for high valuation, but this assumption needs to be questioned. After the noise subsides, Plath will be considered an interesting minor poet whose personal story was poignant. Some of her poems will be included in anthologies, and this acknowledgment is significant considering the common fate of talent.

4.3. Seven Layers of Meaning in the Selected Poems

4.3.1. Denotative Meaning

The denotative meaning is universally acceptable among humans across the globe, often based on logical and conceptual meaning. The conceptual meaning of the poem's title, "*Ariel*" can be analyzed from its mythological spirit associated with air and fire, highlighting the intense and transformative nature of the speaker's experience, Ariel is a winged horse. The indication of Ariel is also depicted in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* and Jerusalem's holy city in the Bible. *Ariel* portrays a complex exploitation of personal transformation, inner turmoil, and struggle for freedom, death, and rebirth. The poem is often seen as Plath's struggle for autonomy, as she confers issues of identity, gender roles, and the social constrain imposed on her. Plath's purposeful riding of the metaphorical *Ariel*, delves into intense emotions, grappling with the conflict of social expectations and self-destruction. "*Ariel*" is a poignant and evocative work in Plath's body of work evokes the denotative meaning powerful expression of the human desire for liberation and self-transformation. The denotative concept of *Lady Lazarus* unfolds the story of a dead lady raised by Jesus. Plath draws parallels to this resurrection and explores her own experiences with death and suicide. The poem serves as a dramatic monologue narrated by *Lady Lazarus* to unpeel her struggles with mental health and the expectations imposed on her by society. Plath's often catching thoughts with disturbing imagery portray the emotional and

psychological state with the act of suicide as a form of performance. This act of drawing attention from the spectacle and morbid fascination surrounds her struggle. The concept behind the repeated resurrection in the poem suggests a cyclical pattern of nature and reflects the recurring nature of mental and emotional crises. Overall, the poem's profound exploration of identity, morality, death, rebirth, and transformation are complex yet creates an impactful stance on the reader's mind.

4.3.2. Connotative Meaning

Plath's use of connotations goes beyond its denotative reference and create a rich connectivity with cultural, emotional and symbolic associations. connotations revolve around the themes of death, rebirth, transformation, and struggle for control over her life. The connotation conveys a vivid and intense transformation. the title "Ariel" possesses significant connotations as it refers to freedom and creativity by evoking the sense of aspiration. It symbolizes the speaker's desire to break the constraints and reach a higher state of being. Plath states in the opening line of *Ariel*: Stasis in darkness, the word "stasis" implies a state of stillness or equilibrium, a pause or break from turmoil as it is creating a contrast with the subsequent imagery of dynamic transformation. The use of "darkness" sets an initial tone of obscurity or mystery. So, the phrase "stasis in the darkness" uncovers the state of overwhelmed emotions and inability to escape from suffocating grip of depression. Moreover, the word "substance" connotes the oppressive weight of reality, force of physical world along with the destiny of bodily existence. She feels trapped by the substance of the earth and own flesh. The speaker then transcends the sense of release and surrender in this line: White/Godiva, I unpeel and address the imagery of bravery in this phrase God's lioness. Further, it symbolizes poet's own artistic and personal identity and the qualities she seeks to instill in her life and work. Connotative meaning refers to the real word experience based on a subjective approach, for instance, lioness indicates the bravery and powerful strength of a horse solely symbolizes the auspicious meaning an object carries. Plath's depiction of psychological and emotional complexities in the case of *Ariel* can be vividly examined with its connotative expression.

Certainly, Sylvia Plath employs connotative language to convey the speaker's intense emotional state and multiple resurrections convey a sense of defiance and a desire to transcend personal hardships, in the lines of *Lady Lazarus: Out of the ash/I rise with my red hair* (Lines 80-81) suggest a phoenix-like rebirth, emphasizing resilience. Additionally, the use of Holocaust imagery, such as:

"A sort of walking miracle, my skin
bright as a Nazi Lampshade" (Lines 66-67)

The speaker adds a connotative meaning to convey the poet's emotional turmoil and the societal expectations placed upon her shoulders. Moreover, *Lady Lazarus* implies the connotation of "dying"; the speaker has a sense of control and mastery over the act of dying, in the lines:

"Dying is an art, like everything else
I do it exceptionally well." (Lines 1-3)

By framing "suicide" as a form of artistic expression, Plath criticizes the complex relationship she has with the concept of self-destruction. The speaker suggests that the act of ending one's life is not exclusively an escape from pain but is imbued with a sense of intentionality and the desire for a reader to witness or acknowledge the profundity of their emotional struggle. These lines provide connotative evidence:

"The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all" (Lines 39-40)

The connection between art and self-destruction emphasizes the connotative layer. Moreover, the words "ashes" and "fire" depict the concept of transformation and destruction and the concept of "bones" and "rags" demonstrate the fragility and decay. While as the "Mouth" and "Wire" reflects the tension between expression and silencing. The aforementioned words with connotative concepts blur the lines between life and death.

4.4. Collocative Meaning

Collocative meaning refers to the way certain words tend to co-occur in a language. There are several instances of collocation inferred in *Ariel*, which contribute overall meaning and themes to the poem. For example: *The Horse, I Ride*, the collocation between horse and ride emphasizes a powerful relationship between speaker and the symbolic horse that ultimately refers to the identity, power and purpose of life. The unusual combination of words *dew flies* conveys the concept of (dew) as freshness and beauty while as the (flies) expresses, decay and mortality. Moreover, the pair of words, *brown arc* uncovers the earthy color associated with nature and decay, it symbolizes the cycles of life and death. Some other examples of word pairing are: *White Godiva* for (feminine power), an oxymoronic expression of pain, violence and pleasure is shown in the collocation of words *sweet blood* that blurs the boundaries between pain and pleasure. A haunting collocation *mouthful Shadows* represents the speaker's emotional inner state with external world *while as dark Hooks* indicates the depression and mental illness. *Plath has employed the words combinations as Dead hands and dead stringencies* to convey a sense of stagnation that surrounds her. In addition, a vivid description of colors has been explored in collocational form that depicts the overall emotional turmoil in *substance less blue, and red eyes* expressing the feeling of hollowness, (*blue*) sadness and despair and (*red*) passion and anger. such a litter of collocations show the ability and artistry of the poet's language and expression that not only engages the readers but also contribute intense emotional influence by creating images in the minds of readers to leave a lingering impact through language usage.

On the other hand, *Lady Lazarus* occupied a striking variety of collocations that enhance the overall meaning and emphasis of the poem. For instance, *Peanut-crunching crowd* is a specific collocation that adds emphasis on everyday life, and mundane details to the scene contradictory with the profound subject matter of the poem. *Beware, beware* is a collocation that stresses rhythmic and incantatory quality to the verse drawing attention to the speaker's emotional state pulling her towards the spiral of hopelessness and destruction. Plath use of the German title *Herr God, Herr Lucifer*, donates the conflicted relationship and feelings with these figures and creates the sense of ambiguity and contrast by reflecting the inner turmoil and struggle of speaker to reconcile. *Gentlemen, Ladies*, an ironical phrase subverts the traditional notions of politeness and employs a certain social gaze and contrast between the narrator's internal struggle and external expectations. Moreover, *the Grave cave* emphasizes the sense of darkness and enclosure to the act of consumption, for instance, the Grave identifies a vivid image as a devouring entity contributing to the central theme of the poem, death, and resurrection. Some other examples are *Nazi Lampshade*, a haunting and powerful image for brutal realities of history and the speaker's personal experiences. *walking miracle* expresses the complex relationship of the speaker with life and death, despite being a survivor of multiple suicide attempts and hospitalizations. Focus on a single body part "*Right foot*" highlights the speaker's sense of fragmentation and presents a significant image in the poem by suggesting the stability and forward movement, contrasting with emotional turmoil. *Furthermore, million filaments* (speaker's fragile and complex emotions), *big strip* (speaker's feelings of disempowerment), *identical woman (fragmentation of identity and loss of individuality)*. *touch of dark humor in first time, second time, nine times*, listing the specific time (first, second, nine) draws the attention of readers to her repeated suicidal attempts and its performative nature. *Herr Enemy, the use of Herr* (German: for Mr. Or Sir) alludes the Nazi regime, and the Holocaust with the expression of personal sufferings and historical trauma. These collocations play a crucial role in shaping the tone, imagination, and overall poetic expression of Plath's poetic diction. The poet's language and her exploration of complexities interplay between the speaker and audience.

4.4.1. Affective meaning

The affective meaning highlights the emotional and experimental dimensions present in the text. The poet encompasses the affective meaning of the poem *Ariel*, Plath's thoughts remarked by intense urgency to create a heightened emotional state and impact conveyed through the poetic diction.

"And I
Am the arrow,
The dew that flies
Suicidal, at one with the drive" (Lines 26-29)

In the above stanza, the poet accentuates the transformation and rebirth, and the whole emphasis on "Am" in "Am the arrow" adds to the emerging feeling of ontological awareness, a fresh pulse in the monotonous copulation. The affective meanings of the "arrow", "suicidal", and "drive" convey a complex and heightened emotional state of the speaker, suggesting a sense of emotional sublimity and fervor in the speaker's approach to driving emotions. The term "resilient" can be driven by the speaker's willingness to fly despite the challenges. Similarly, the "arrow" incorporates freedom and release from all the worries and anxiety the speaker faces in her personal life. Furthermore, the poem's final ecstasy is described as "suicidal" not because it symbolizes the loss of one's identity in favor of the other (since no man appears in the poem and the landscape and horse are quickly transcended). Her poetry is unique not so much for her obsession with mortality and death which she shares with many contemporary poets, but rather for her allusions to an enigmatic rebirth and an ascent toward vengeance rather than salvation.

"How one we grow,
Pivot of heels and knees! ____" (Lines 5-6)

The aforementioned verses manifest the transformative agency and growth that strengthen her body to consulate the emotional state. However, Plath's plunge growth typically culminates in a rise into a newfound sense of empowerment under the shadow of an ominous force. In other visionary experiences when the speaker is overtaken by a heavenly force, the journey toward the transformation and rebirth represents both the destruction and the consummation of existence. Certainly, *Lady Lazarus* is characterized by a range of intense emotions, including reliance, defiance, and theatricality that conveys the affective meaning from various dimensions of Plath's life experience. The poet addresses "O my enemy," asking, "Do I terrify?" (11-12) hence, the narrator is not content to just be alive; rather, she is seeking retribution on those who killed her.

"Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air" (Lines 82-84)

The affective meaning here is one of defiance, as the speaker boldly rises from ashes metaphorically and proclaims her strength with the imagery of consuming men.

"I am only thirty
And like a cat
I have nine times to die" (Lines 20-23)

The affective meaning is employed by the speaker's art of comparing her repeated experience of death or suicidal attempts to the nine lives of a cat, emphasizing the performative nature of existence. The speaker's bold assertion of age and anticipation of facing multiple times, by creating a poignant and assertive tone. As Plath's poems have grounded themes of death and rebirth as this poem also narrates more about rebirth than death. Thus, the speaker criticizes her experiences of death, whether it gives us a chance to rebirth or chooses the life again to live.

4.4.2. Social Meaning

Social meaning employs the social circumstances that reside in the words. *Ariel* established in first-person narration presupposes a shared cultural knowledge of mythological and literary references with a personal connection with the speaker, potentially Plath herself.

"And I am the arrow,
The dew that flies
Suicidal, at one with the drive" (Lines 29-31)

Plath conveys a sense of personal agency and struggle driven by social circumstances; these lines contribute to a broader social context. For instance, the imagery of flying and rebellion may symbolize a desire to break shackles from societal constraints, the cultural boundaries, reflecting the broader theme of social liberation. The temporal aspect reflects the societal transformation and change that occur in Plath's poem to depart from the status quo and continued struggle of the speaker's tone challenges societal expectations. Furthermore, the use

of conspicuous imagery "*God's lioness*" interrupts conventional courtesy, drawing attention to the brutal and wild nature of the speaker's emotions and desires.

The social illustration of *Lady Lazarus* could be identified in the lines: "*I have done it again*", (Line 1) portrays the immediate involvement of the speaker and her repeated experiences, and Plath's repeated experiences of facing death are a proactive social harmony convey respect or assertiveness.

"*Out of the ash*
I Rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air" (Lines 55-57)

Plath's art of describing departure from conventional politeness, challenging societal norms. For instance the "red hairs" suggest a moment of heightened awareness or self-realization that indicates a significant turning point in the speaker's life. Moreover, the suggestion of a societal shift implies the poem's themes extend beyond the individual experiences; Plath resonates with the broader context of societal expectations and challenges faced by women during the age in which Plath wrote the poem.

4.4.3. Reflected Meaning

Undoubtedly, Plath's poems are intensified with reflected meanings that can interpret ironic reflections of her personal life and experiences. For instance, *Ariel*, the poem itself has the vehicle for personal and transformative power, which is represented by the arrow and flying dew, it also reflects the quest for empowerment and autonomy the speaker wants to have. Plath's diction also reflects the struggle and conflict through the opening lines of the poem, *Stasis in Darkness*, which convey the internal and external struggle, a stagnant darkness is followed by dynamic and vast blue pour, reflecting the conflict and moment. The *child's cry* and *Brown arc* show the reflection of nature, and the speaker also shows the reflection of the healthy relationship between humans and animals through this line and *how one grows*, here the growth and movement portray the dynamic imagery relationship. The speaker intensifies horse riding with life journey, in this line, *Of the neck I cannot catch*, this neck is not only associated with the horse but also reflects the "Human nature" of controlling everything, thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Another example *White Godiva, I unpeel*, reflects a lady riding on a horse for freedom by the speaker to highlight herself in the poem.

Similarly, the second poem *Lady Lazarus* is complex and exaggerates the theme of death, rebirth, feminine identity, and the performative aspects of existence that produce reflected meaning through different lenses. *And like the cat, I have nine times to die*, the speaker compares herself to the Cat for femininity and objectification, it helps to evoke societal expectations, and also the inquiry of nine times repeated struggles the speaker has. Plath's reflection of reclamation, *Herr God, and Herr Lucifer*, both assert the sense of agency and threaten against underestimating her power. The speaker employs the complex historical and cultural reflection through *Bright as Nazi Lampshade*, this line incorporates symbolism with Holocaust. The phrase *Peanuts-crunching crowd* reflects the speaker's personal and public aspects of life and struggles. These interpretations capture some reflected meanings and instances in the poems to showcase Plath's ability to intertwine personal experiences with artistic expressions.

4.4.4. Thematic Meaning

The poem *Ariel* revolves around the themes of rebirth, transformation, feminine power, and self-discovery. Plath narration opens to empower women by asserting "*I eat men like air*", this verse presents a theme of woman empowerment, reflecting the poet's desire for autonomy and rejection of gender roles. The theme leads to a phoenix-like experience for women out of her curiosity of life. The theme of renewal of nature and validity is also reflected in the verse: "*And now I/ foam the wheat/ a glitter of seas*". The intense imagery of foaming wheat and seas portrays a connection with nature and forces, whereas in another verse Plath indicates the theme of human and animal connection: "*How one we grow*", this shows the relationship between horse and narrator, a significant theme which allows the narrator to transform the relations from human to nature. Nature is the foremost detected theme, that refers to *the Child's cry, the brown arc*,

describes the natural connection that relates it to the natural sublimity that is preserved in the poet's mind.

Plath believes in the struggle and conflict, the opening stanza suggests the thematic meaning of darkness revealed throughout the poem because it is connected to death "*Stasis in darkness*", which has a backdrop of her personal life anxieties, struggle, and conflict, thus, death and darkness is longing for something to yet come and reborn. Throughout her life, Plath embraces the intensity of feeling and emotions, the poet tries to focus on freedom and intensity while singing "*Hurling my green all over*", this verse conveys the freedom of desire and willingness to be something and embrace the complex life experience all over. Plath's continual use of poetic diction reflects the positive thematic meaning through certain lexemes, *God's lioness, arrow, we grow, a glitter of seas, air* whereas the *dark, darkness, distance, blood, Black, shadow, Dead* convey stressful and violated forces in the poem, due to poet's distressful life experiences. On the other hand, the central theme of *Lady Lazarus* is the death and resurrection of Lady Lazarus, Plath's substitution of Lady Lazarus in her. The poem revolves around self-destruction, which leads Plath to confess with open-mindedness to accept the brutality of her life. The poet's explanation of death creates an artistry thought: *Dying/ is an art, like everything else/ I do it exceptionally well*, conveys that death is an art, and it has certain control over the process, again the death and resurrect thematically are parallel to the biblical allusion of Lady Lazarus and also symbolizes poetess resilience. Another theme related to death is the theatricality of suicide; when the Plath says "*Like a Cat I have to die nine times*" this verse entertains the preservation of suicidal attempts in the poet's narration which is metaphorically connected to the poet's repeated experience with death. Nevertheless, the suicidal attempts are the performative nature of her struggles and survival raising again the biblical theme of Lady Lazarus. Moreover, the tendencies of identity and destruction are also analyzed in the verse, such as, "*And I a smiling woman/ I am only thirty/ Like a Cat I have to die nine times*" which refers to the complexity of thematic meaning, poet creates between self-identification and self-destruction. With the employment of juxtaposition of smiling woman to multiple deaths. The poem shows empowerment and victimhood, which can be interpreted as an assertion of agency and a warning to those who may underestimate her strength by saying, "*her God/ her Lucifer/ beware, beware*" Herein Plath narrates that both God and Lucifer negotiate of higher power, and are the same. This thematically highlights how a woman portrays herself for the confrontation. The thematic meaning of poems conveys the complexities and experiences portrayed by the poet's mind and give a subjective ground to interpret the thematic meaning to the overall thematic analysis. This section serves as the individual answers to the two research questions mentioned in the current study. The findings are based on the explanation of the selected poems mentioned previously.

5. Conclusion

The research article concludes the seven layers of meaning highlighted in Plath's two selected poems, *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus*. The researchers revealed the layers of meanings by using Leech's model of Semantics (1981). This model not only helps to analyze the seven layers of meaning but also have explored the complex structure and psychological turmoil in Plath's poetic language and expression. Plath's examination of life is skillfully experienced with themes of death, rebirth, transformation, and famine identity that offer the readers insights into the self-identification and self-discovery. The study locates textual references for evidence purposes from *Ariel* and *Lady Lazarus*.

Finally, the study witnesses Plath's skill at utilizing emotions in poetic expression, revealing how her poetry veils at different levels and provides readers with a new perspective on morality and rebirth. Plath uses symbolism, imagery, and paradoxical language to embrace the real essence of meaning, such as denotative, connotative, collocative, affective, social, reflected, and thematic. The study recommends the future researchers interact with Plath's other complex works on contextual, sensory, and intellectual levels by employing Leech's (1981) model of semantics.

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