

Stylistic Analysis of Robert Frost’s Poem: “The Road Not Taken”

Sumera Batool¹, Abdul Bari Khan², Anser Iqbal³, Khurram Ali⁴, Rana Muhammad Haris Rafiq⁵

^{1, 2, 3, 4, & 5}Department of English, University of Lahore, Sargodha Campus Pakistan

(Corresponding Author: anseriqbal30@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” from the viewpoint of stylistic analysis. This analysis covers the different aspects such as the lexico-syntactic patterns and choices, semantically, grammatically, graphological and phonological patterns. This analysis is helpful in understanding the basic concept of poem that is the contrast between the selection of right and wrong of life. Though this poem is in personal in tone and mood but applicable to every man in this world. The poem is simple but the theme is universal. This research is helpful to analyze the structure and style of Robert Frost’s poetry. The poet conveyed his message, themes, views and handling of conflict forcefully by using different stylistic devices.

Keywords: Stylistic, viewpoint, conflict, lexico-syntactic patterns, phonological, graphological.

1. INTRODUCTION

Style is a primary aspect of any literary piece of writing. It gives unique recognition to the writer. The idea or thing discussed by many other writers, by using stylistic devices and dignified style a writer presents the same idea or thing with new colour, meanings and dimensions. Therefore style is the basic thing which gives uniqueness to every writer. The word stylistics is derived from style. Stylistics is a branch of Linguistics which deals with different styles. It refers to the study of appropriate use of words or language in a sentence or writing. Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics as “the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation”. He (1975) says that the link between literary criticism and linguistics is stylistics. Style has different meanings for different people. According to Carter (1989) style is generally depends on linguistic levels. Due to these levels every text and writing is different from the others, hence every genre is different. Haynes (1989) is of the view that the study of style is the study of distinctions; looking at what was said against what might have been said. Style can also be called as variety. In various contexts, style refers as the manner of expression. Due to multipurpose field of style, it is used according to one’s field of study.

Adejare (1992) makes this clear when he said that style is an ambiguous term. Lawal (1997) however, describes style as an aspect of language that deals with choices of diction, phrases, sentences and linguistic materials that are consistent and harmonious with the subject matter. He added that it involves the narrative technique of a writer in terms of choice and distribution of words and character. Lawal (1997) also added that it may be reckoned in terms of the sociolinguistic contexts and it may also be reckoned or analyzed on linguistic, semantic and even semiotic terms.

2. STYLE

The general meaning of style is ‘manner or mode’ but the literary meaning of style refers how a writer’s thoughts take the shape of words. The style has variety of meanings throughout the history in and outside the literary text. It is observed by many critics that the term style is generally used without knowing its meaning. According to Leech (1969) style is the way in which something is spoken, written or performed. It refers to use of words, sentences, structures and speaking style. Personality of the writer is connected with his particular style. It reveals that how a person effectively and beautifully depicts his ideas and thoughts. It describes the way of person's speaking and writing. It is derived from the Latin word "elocutio" which means "style" and means "lexis" in Greek. Leech and Short (1981) is of the view that the word style has an uncontroversial meaning. Style depends on the context for a given purpose for which the language is being used. Birch (1989) believes that both language and style cannot move beyond a limit on the supremacy of words. He strongly believes that these words contain specific meanings which differs it from the ordinary language. Leech and Short (1981) also said that it is the selection of the words from a grand linguistic vocabulary.

Style is involved in both, spoken and written, literary and nonliterary types of language but it is particularly associated with written form of the literary texts. Leech and Short (1981) further elaborates that style is the dress of thoughts. It is the way of the writer to convey the message to the readers. It is upon the writer that how he makes his text understandable that the meanings are conveyed. Style or stylistic variations may also be analyzed in linguistic terms for example sentence types, phonological devices, lexical varieties, morphological varieties, rhetorical terms, semantic terms, and even semiotic terms and utterance. Oloruntoba-Oju (1999) believes that “style is almost synonymous with variety; it refers in a simple way to the manner of expression, which differs according to the various contexts”. Styles probably vary according to place, time, individuality and modality.

The style of Robert Frost in ‘The Road not Taken’ is based on a search for understanding of things that are apparently hidden from the view. The selection of roads is a simple matter but the poet does not know where his selection leads him in future. Frost uses the simple words and phrases but through irony, antithesis, symbolism and metaphors, the poem takes the deeper meaning. The ordinary meanings of the poem are different from the intended meanings. This ambiguity gives a sense of mystery to Robert Frost’s work that is difficult to find in ordinary works of literature.

3. STYLISTICS

Literally stylistics means the study of style and the methods used in written language. Every critic and scholar define stylistics in his own way. According to Freeman (1971) stylistics is a sub-discipline which started in the second half of the 20th century. According to Leech and Short (1981) stylistics is the (linguistic) study of style, is rarely undertaken for its own sake, simply as an exercise in describing what use is made of language. According to them the main objective of stylistics is to discover the meanings and appreciate the linguistic characteristics of the text. Short and Candlin (1989) said that stylistics is a linguistic approach to the study of the literary texts. Widdowson (1975) defines stylistics the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation which differs stylistics from the literary criticism and considers linguistics as its linking technique. Carter (1988) has of same view that stylistics is a bridge (link) discipline between linguistics and literature. Stylistics is the study of those devices used in

language such as rhetorical terms and syntactical devices that are used to create expressive or literary style. Therefore, Stylistics is that study which touches both literary criticism as well as linguistics as its morphological structure suggests. According to Widdowson (1975) stylistics expresses means whereas language and literature as a subjects.

4. Levels of Stylistic Analysis

Following are the five levels of stylistics analysis. By using these levels, we analyze any given piece of text.

4.1 Phonetic Level: It is an analysis of sounds; we study the features and possible function of sounds in phonetic level.

4.2 Phonological Level: Basically this level deals with the study of sound patterns of a given language, rules of pronunciation, the rhyming scheme and utterance of the word in the sentence. Lodge (2009) is of the view that phonology is the study of linguistic systems, specifically the way in which sound represents differences of meaning in a language. Phonological devices are rhyme elements, alliteration, consonance and assonance.

4.3 Graphological Level: Crystal and Davy (1969) said that graphology is the analogous study of a languages writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of hand writing or topography. These are the formalized rules of writing. Leech (1969) claims that graphology exceeds orthography which refers to the whole writing system; punctuation, paragraphing and spacing. In short it deals with the systematic formation, structure and punctuation in the sentence.

4.4 Grammatical Level: It discusses syntactic and morphological levels. Morphological level deals with the construction of the word by adding prefixes and suffixes to the root words. The main aim of this level is to study and analyze the words, internal structure of sentences and their formation. To find out foregrounding and the deviation, clauses, phrases, words, nouns and verbs are to be distinguished.

4.5 Lexico-Syntax Level: It is the group of two dissimilar words, lexis and syntax. The term lexis means the vocabulary used in a language or in any writing for any purpose. Syntax means sentence construction, how words combine together to make phrases and sentences. So, it is used in the construction of the sentence as stylistics is used in literary style. Lexico-Syntactic patterns may be obtained through various means which include unusual or inverted word order, omission of words and repetition. According to Tallerman (1998) Lexico-Syntactic choices are obtained through devices such as piling of usual collocates, unusual collocates, archaic words, particular parts of speech, metaphor, simile, oxymoron etc.

5. TITLE OF THE POEM

The title of the poem is the key to its understanding. The road not taken is a suitable title as the whole poem circles around it. We can justify the title in two ways. If the title is “The Road Less Travelled”, it means that the poet selects the less frequented road and that has made all the

difference. He rejects the majority of choice and chooses an adventurous road for journey of his life. But if we focus on the title "The Road Not Taken" it means that the poet is repenting on why he has opted the less frequented road. The poet justifies his decision by saying "i will be saying this with a sigh" also supports this.

Another interpretation of the poem is that Robert Frost had not taken any of the stated roads. Rather, he selects the middle path or does not choose any road for him as the title of the poem suggests. Frost himself warned "You have to be careful of that one; it's a tricky poem – very tricky". The fact is that there may be many interpretations of the title due to the multidimensional nature of literature. According to Aristotle history deals with what happens, but poetry deals with what may happen.

6. BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET

Robert Frost was born in 1874 in San Francisco, California. He moved to New England (Massachusetts) as a child after his father's death. Frost suffered from financial and economic difficulties until he decided to move to England (United Kingdom) when he was 38 years old. By doing this, he managed to publish his work overseas, becoming popular in America. He then returned in 1915, at the age of 41 and one year later wrote his masterpiece "The Road Not Taken". The poem theme has many themes including indecision, which can be related to Robert Frost's age at the time he wrote it. He is reflecting on the many choices he made throughout his life, and wondering how different would his life be if he had made other decisions (by taken other road). Another interpretation, due to some symbolisms in the poem suggests that Frost felt that his life was ending, therefore reflecting on his lost opportunities.

7. THEME OF THE POEM

The poem "The Road Not Taken" is written by Robert Frost and one of the prettiest poems in the English language. In this poem he relaxes meter to gain a more conversational tone. It revolves around the main theme of making choice in the life. The poet in the poem is travelling and comes at the spot from where road is divided into two. Here he has to decide which path he has to adopt for travelling for future of his life. He confused at this point and it is difficult for him to decide. The destination of both the roads is unknown. But the poet has to choose one of them. One road is looked that it is frequently used by others and it is trodden path. So he decides to choose the less trodden path. At this confused state one moment, he thinks one way is better, the next, both paths are about the same. Leaves cover both roads equally. No one on this morning has yet taken either road, for the leaves lie undisturbed. The poet remains committed to his decision to take the road he had previously selected, saying that he will save the other road for another day. He observes, however, that he probably will never pass this way again and thus will never have an opportunity to take the other road.

In years to come, he says that he will be telling others about the choice he made. While doing so, he will sigh either with relief that he made the right choice or with regret that he made the wrong choice. Whether right or wrong, the choice will have had a significant impact on his life. Though the main theme of the poem is the right choice of direction or road for life but there are many other sub themes which are as follows:

- (a) Decision/indecision
- (b) Individualism
- (c) Caution

- (d) Commitment
- (e) Accepting a Challenge
- (f) Dreams, Hopes, and Plans in life
- (g) Man and the Natural World
- (h) Exploration
- (j) Ambiguity

7.1 “The Road Not Taken” – Narrative and Lyrical Poem

A narrative poem usually contains elements such as a plot, characters, conflict and a setting. All these elements are found in this poem. So, “The Road Not taken” is a narrative poem. The narrator describes the poem in first person point of view by using “I” which helps the readers to know and understand all the thoughts and actions of the poet. “The Road Not Taken” is a lyrical in nature in which the poet expresses his strong feelings and emotions by using the power of imagination.

8. METHODOLOGY

Stylistic analysis of the poem “The Road Not Taken” of Robert Frost will be carried out. The lexico- syntactic patterns and choices, phonological, graphological and morphological levels of analysis are going to form the basis of the analysis.

8.1 Diction or Choice of Words: The poetic language is different from the ordinary language. The poetic language normally deviates from general rules of the language. According to Wordsworth all good poetry is “spontaneous flow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth,1989). Words are the same but their arrangement is different from prose etc.

Diction means choice and use of words and phrases to express thoughts, feelings and emotions, especially in literature and poetry. The diction of this poem is very expressive to discuss the narrative in detail. Although the poem is clearly symbolic in nature, lines are mostly short and easy to understand due to the simple words. The poet develops the idea of indecision with colloquial words.

In line 3, stanza 1, Frost writes “long I stood”, this suggests that the poet is in chaos for making up his mind for right choice. In line 2, stanza 2, he writes, “And having perhaps the better claim”, the word perhaps proposes that he is not certain in his choice. In line 4, stanza 2, he writes, “Though as for that the passing there” this again shows the confused state of the poet. In line 5, stanza 3, he writes “I doubted if I should ever come back.” the word “doubted” means he is just not sure. In the last stanza the poet repeats the word “I.” “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by.” This repetition communicates a sense of indecision on the part of the poet. He does not announce his choice with surety.

8.2. Syntax or Grammatical Structures: There are many grammatical devices used in the poem to create the poetic effects. In the first three lines of the stanza one, ‘and’ is repeated at the beginning of each of the lines. The repetition of ‘and’ highlights the idea that poet’s mind is occupied by many thoughts i.e. selection of the road. This poem is a mixture of tenses as the poet moves forwards and backwards over time.

All the verbs used in the poem (finite verbs) are in the past tense, except for the verbs in the first and last lines of the last stanza, i.e. ‘*shall be telling*’ and ‘*has made*’ of the present

tenses. This indicates the poet's personal or self-reflection on what he did or selected in the past and on what has resulted in. Thus, it contributes the idea that choice is inevitable but he never knows what his choice means until he has lived it.

Taking the grammatical structures into our consideration when analyzing poem, has revealed that the linguistic features of a poem have something to do with the meaning of the poem itself. It seems that the poet knows that people look back over their lives and want to say that they have taken the right path. He also knows that few people want to admit that they are wrong or they at least chose a path that might lead them to better life.

The frequent use of commas reflects the sense of wandering. They emphasize the pauses for thought and reflection. The semi-colon at the end of the first stanza makes an end stopped line and stresses the strictness of the decision being made. At the end of line 8 again semi colon is used to highlight that the poet will select the less travelled road but at the same time he admits they are 'really about the same'. The exclamation mark at the end of third line of stanza three introduces a note of distress.

The last line of the third stanza is a complex one and depicts negative doubt of the poet that can he come back at this place where the road is diverged in his life. The first line of last stanza is in the future tense. Here the main clause comes first suggestive of either sadness or regret. The first line comes again in last stanza and uses a hyphen to create a pause to make it more expressive before taking the final decision.

8.3 Paradox: The paradox of this poem is that the poet has the choice to select one of the roads that are equally fair. Obviously he is unable to travel both roads at the same time even though he wants to. It is a simple matter to just select the road. However, the poet made this situation paradoxical because he decides to take the road less travelled by, even though they are both equally fair.

8.4 Irony: This poem focused on the selection of the road out of two. The irony is that the poet chooses the one that is less travelled and says "that has made all the difference". Although before this, he has said that both the roads are equally fair and worn. They looked like the same. Moreover the selection of road in life (to lead life) is not the problem of the poet alone; everybody has to go in this process in his life that how they want to lead their lives.

8.5 Ambiguity: An important theme that can be identified in Robert Frost's poem is the ambiguous nature of what appears and what is actually envisioned. Another important consideration that gives rise to ambiguity in "The Road Not Taken" is the priority of word 'road' over 'path' as one visualizes a path to be less travelled and the road to be much more travelled.

8.6 Rhyme Scheme: This poem consists of four stanzas. All stanzas comprise five lines. Each line composed by iambic tetrameter (unstressed syllable is followed by the stressed one). The rhymes are end rhymes which are perfect rhymes (wood, stood and could) and slant rhymes (both and undergrowth). Each stanza of "The Road Not Taken" has the pattern of the rhyme scheme: ABAAB, CDCDD, EFEEF, and GHGGH pattern. The same rhyme scheme pattern is repeated in all the four stanzas.

8.7 Rhythm and Meter: The rhyme scheme of this poem is ABAAB, CDCDD, EFEEF and GHGGH. The rhythm is iambic (an unstressed beat followed by the stressed beat) and each line

has eight syllables (four stressed and four unstressed). The meter used for this poem is mostly loose iambic tetrameter. Tetrameter means that it has four feet per line (tetrameter).

To create dramatic effect, breaking the patterns to produce different tones and flow within the poem, Robert Frost used unconventional metrical structure in “The Road Not Taken”. In this poem Anapest and Dactyl are added within the iambic tetrameter. Anapest and Dactyl are considered variations of iambic meter. Robert Frost himself remarked that “there are only two meters in English, strict and loose iambic.” Frost said, “Meter alone is too limited and monotonous to convey meaning through sound (www.frostfriends.org/meter.html). The possibilities fortune from the dramatic tones of meaning struck across the rigidity of a limited meter are endless.” The loose iambic included some of the other types of meter like spondee.

9. STYLISTIC DEVICES

Multiple stylistic devices are used in Robert Frost's poem “The Road Not Taken”. Detail is as follows:-

9.1 Assonance: Assonance is the repetition of a vowel sound within a line of poetry. The assonance creates a rhythm to the poem. This poem has many repetitions as highlighted below:-

In the first line of stanza one: two **roads** diverged in a **yellow** wood, the sound “O” is repeated in “roads” and “yellow”. In line no 3, “A” sound is repeated in **And** be one **traveler**, in line 4, “O” sound is repeated in **looked, could** and in line 5, “E” sound is found in **where, bent**. In stanza two: assonance plays an important role in the stanza. Frost uses many short **As** in words such as **was, grassy, wanted, passing, as, that, having, and had**. In stanza three: the rhyme of stanza three also represents “A” assonance with an alternation between long and short **As**. Assonance “I” is also repeated (**I doubted if I should ever come back**). In stanza four, “I” and “A” sounds are repeated.

9.2 Cacophony: It is the use of harsh sounds such as “Ts”, “Ks” and “Chs” to add meaning and foreshadows the coming an unpleasant event in the poem. But in this poem these sounds do not add the meaning. The cacophonies in this poem are “t” and “tt”.

9.3 Consonance: In this poem overall “w” “th” and “f” sound are repeated at many places in the poem. In stanza four: there is “ll” and “g” consonance in this stanza. See *shall, telling, all*, and repetition of *ages* along with *diverged*.

9.4 Alliteration: In stanza two, line 3, “wanted wear” is alliteration. **W_s** in the beginning of both words produce beautiful effect on the reader. In the same way in stanza 3, line 3, in “first for” **f** is alliteration.

9.5 Onomatopoeia: The word ‘sigh’ in stanza four emphasizes the poet’s depression/sadness/happiness for the consequence of the decision he made.

9.6 Imagery: Robert Frost uses different images to describe the atmosphere and surrounding of the scene for the reader to understand and know the correct situation of problem. First line of stanza one:-

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood”

First and second line of stanza three:-

“And both that morning equally lay” and “In leaves no step had trodden black”.

The images used in the above three quoted lines help the readers to visualize and know the current situation of the poet. There is also a little bit of auditory or sound imagery when the poet sighs.

9.7 Personification: In stanza two, line 3:-

“Because it was grassy and wanted wear”

“Wanted wear” is a personification because “wanted” is a human quality. Personification is the giving of human characteristics to non-human/non-living things. As we know that a road cannot have a desire to want wear. Thus personifies the path, giving it desires.

9.8 Antithesis: Robert Frost uses antithesis while deciding which road he wants to travel. He wants to travel both but realizes it's impossible because he can travel on one road at a time. The second stanza is showing antithesis. Frost, in this stanza is saying that one road is better than the other because it is less travelled. Then he says that the both roads are equally worn and travelled. This fits the definition of antithesis.

9.9 Metaphor:...Following are the different metaphors which are used by the poet in this poem to make the thoughts more effective and expressive:-

9.9.1 Road as a Metaphor: The whole poem is a metaphor. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to a person, idea, or object to which it is not literally applicable. The poet is, therefore, comparing the paths in life to the choices one must make when reaching a cross roads. The poem speaks of the actual choices in life as roads one must choose to take. Metaphorically, the roads simply represent choices in life. The roads diverged is a metaphor describing the turning points in life when people have the opportunity to decide and choose a path in their life.

The metaphor of the road is used throughout the poem. The fork in the road is used as a metaphor throughout the poem; therefore it is an extended metaphor. In line 1, the roads diverged’ is a metaphor describing the turning points in life when people have the opportunity to decide and choose a path in their life. In line 6, the poet thinks about one road, but takes another. Here Robert frost used this is a metaphor for meditation of his choices before deciding.

In lines 4-5 the road is used as a metaphor for the future. We can see the consequences of our choices and decisions in near future just like the poet. In lines 13-15, the poet wants to travel on both the roads but he is unable to travel both at a time. Once he selected the road, then he is unable to come back again to this place. Here road is used as a metaphor for a decision that changes everything. In lines 18, the recurrence of the first line takes us back to the beginning of the extended metaphor (two roads). In line 19, one of the roads is selected which is less travelled which has made all the difference and this choice has changed the life of the poet.

9.9.2 Nature as a Metaphor: Nature is also used as a metaphor in the poem. In line 1, the woods are yellow means that is autumn season or a metaphor of making decisions in the old age. In line 5, the woods are thick enough and a road can disappear in the undergrowth. Metaphorically, the undergrowth represents the future of the poet is unclear. The poet used the lines 7-8 not only represents nature, but they are also metaphor for a decision that is made by only few people like the poet. In lines 11-12, metaphor of morning, leaves and steps are used. Next day, in the morning, the leaves equally covered both the roads and no road is travelled but they are looking equal. This situation confused the poet in better decision making. Before this, the

poet has mentioned that one road is less travelled. In line 18, the first line is repeated again (Two roads diverged in a wood, and I) here shows that the nature is still important to the poet.

9.10 Symbolism: It is a stylistic device used by the poets/writers to give deeper meaning and reference. A symbol is an object or action that represents something else and more than its literal meanings. In this poem following symbols are used to enhance the effect of the poem:-

9.10.1 Road: The road symbol is most important symbol which symbolizes the journey of Life. However, it signifies not only journey but also the destination. According to the poet, sometimes the journey itself is the destination. The road that is caught in the undergrowth indicates entanglement with obstacles. “Two roads diverged” perhaps represent the strongest symbolism used in the poem where on surface it may seem that Frost is talking about a division in the road, but in reality he is talking about choices people face in their lives. The road that is gone in the undergrowth symbolizes muddle with difficulties.

9.10.2 Comparing Choices: The concept of two choices is a thought-provoking one. By presenting the two choices he may be implying that one is wrong and the other right or that one is superior to the other or one is traditional while the other is special one. One choice is considered default and natural; the other unnatural and deviant.

9.10.3 Woods: The image of woods signifies ‘indecision’ as the poet is lost searching for answers. The image of 'woods' has represented indecision in Frost's other poems too. The yellow colour of the woods points to the season of autumn. Autumn is symbolic of incipient decay and stagnation. The poet also experiences a sense of stagnation as he cannot progress forward to make a decision.

9.10.4 Decision Making Process: The line "Somewhere ages and ages hence" symbolizes that the problem to decide the right path not only difficult for present time but it will also be difficult for future generations. The difference of time and space gives the poem a universal touch. "And looked down one as far as I could:" signifies that poet does not choose the path blindly but he meditates and thinks deeply while taking decision. It means that according to the poet it is not just a routine and common matter. The future life depends on one's decision. The words "Way leads on to way" symbolizes the poet's confusion.

9.11 Sigh: Robert Frost ends the poem with a *sigh* which implies that the decision taken by him may be wrong or right. But his decision has made all the difference in his life (And that has made all the difference).

9.12 Meaning: There are two types of meaning which helps the reader to understand the true meaning of the poem. They are as follows:-

9.12.1 Denotation in the Poem

Road: A long hard and smoothed surface made for travelling and transportation, way, path

Wood: A large area of trees

Difference: Dissimilarity

Passing: Going by

Traveler: A person or thing that travels

Yellow: Yellow trees, Name of a colour

Diverged roads: Forked or separated roads

Dark woods: Thick forest

9.12.2 Connotation in the Poem

Road: Decision; choice, carrier, path of life

Wood: Maze; difficulty

Difference: Strange, new, not right

Passing: Instantaneous; not fixed

Traveler: Lost, tired

Yellow: Autumn, old age, irresolution, madness, sickness

Diverged roads: Much greater and more distinct parting, difference

Dark woods: Fear or lack of knowledge, difficult to find way

10. ANALYSIS

The poem “The Road Not Taken” is written by Robert Frost and is basically a lyric, having four quatrains, each quatrain contains five lines. The basic pattern of rhythm is loose iambic tetrameter. Robert Frost deviates from the traditional pattern. According to Leech, the rules are made to be broken and if the poem has the same rhythm till the end than it becomes deadly (Leech, 1969).

The poem is very interesting and the reader feels himself facing the situation instead of the poet. An average reader can easily understand that the variation in rhythm. The change in the rhythmic pattern causes the effectiveness in the poem. The stress on the words attracts the reader’s attention. In the book, ‘Linguistic Guild to English Poetry’, Leech differentiates poetic language with common language. He writes —poetic language may violate or deviate from the generally observed rules of the language in many different ways, some obvious, some subtle (Leech, 1969).

The poet starts the poem dramatically. He stands at place where two roads are leading to the yellow woods. The images and metaphors make the scene very easy to understand the situation of the poet. The poet is facing the challenge of selection one of the roads for his life. The poet wants to travel both the roads but he is helpless in front of his desire. It is understood that one person at a time travel on one road. The poet tries to tell his position where he is standing and to depict his mental distress.

This choice making problem is not the problem of the poet but decision making is a challenging affair for every human being. In practical life everyone has to face the same situation like the poet and everyone is bound to take decision. Before accepting this challenge, everyone feels himself in the situation of confusion, chaos, hesitation and indecisive like the poet. Choice making in life demands fair attention, insight, knowledge and intellect. By taking all the possible measures and using intellect, it is not necessary the choice and selection is right, it may be wrong (I shall be telling this with a sigh). In this way the problem of the poet becomes the problem of everyone. So, we can say that “The Road Not Taken” is a poem contains universal theme and problem (Somewhere ages and ages hence).

11. FINDINGS

The poem “The Road Not Taken” describes the selection or choice of the road for his life. The poet is standing at the place where road is diverged into two. The situation becomes very serious when the poet finds it difficult to decide that which the road out of two, he can opt for his future life. By using different stylistics devices, the poet successfully describes his point of view. Stylistics devices give deeper meaning to any literary piece of writing like this poem and stylistic analysis helps to dig out the hidden meaning. The poet used simple words and

phrases to make it understandable and to clarify his intentions. By using different metaphors, symbols and images, the poet makes the poem more effective to convey his message.

12. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Stylistic analysis is conducted through the use of the following levels of analysis: lexicosyntactic patterns, diction, phonology, graphology and morphology. Analysis conducted using the stylistic elements in each of the above mentioned levels, it would provide be helpful to future researchers in a related field.

13. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The poetry is a multi-meaning literary genre and every reader can extract meaning according to his own understanding, literary taste, religion, society, social status and background knowledge. It is also very difficult to know the exact context and factors that affect the thoughts of the poet at the time of poem creation. We have tried our best to explore the true meaning and various possible themes given in the poem. However, it is true that there is always a room for improvement. It is possible that some aspect of the poem may be remained unfolded.

14. CONCLUSION

From the stylistics analysis, we find out that the poem is very carefully constructed and brings to mind the act of trying to balance something not given over easily to being balanced. The poem is not so much about making a decision but about the art of indecision. The poet cannot easily reach a conclusion about what he is actually seeing before him, let alone a rational decision about which route to take. He repeatedly contradicts himself in his assessment, even after he has apparently made his decision. He cannot know that he has actually taken the road less travelled by because he has no idea of what lies along the other road. Likewise, he has no evidence that all will end well. He expects a positive outcome though he still does not know what exactly the outcome will entail.

Finally, interpretations need not be the same for everyone. There need not be a logical reason for what the poet meant. Also, only the poet himself will know what the poem truly means. It is rather what we perceive that makes a poem. Therefore, there can be hundreds of interpretations and everyone may be right. Interpretations should never be stated as fact, especially in instances where so many different views are possible. Now we have analyzed the poem stylistically, it has, in some extent, proved that by using a systematic analytical technique like stylistics, we have tried our best to make our interpretation as clear as possible. In other words, it is some ways towards convincing that stylistics is a useful tool for anybody interpreting literary texts.

REFERENCES

- Adejare, O. (1992) *Language and Style in Soyinka: A systematic Text and Linguistic Study of Literary Dialect*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Birch, D. (1989), *Language, literature, and critical practice : Ways of Analysing text*, London and Newyork : Routledge.
- Carter, R. (1988), *What is Stylistics and why can we teach it in different ways*

- Carter, R. (1989). What is stylistics and why do we teach it in different ways? In M.Short, (Ed), *Reading, Analysing and Teaching Literature*. London: Longman.
- Crystal, D. & Davy, D. (1969). *Investigating English Style*. London: Longman.
- Freeman, D.C. (ed.) (1971), *Linguistics and literary Style*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Haynes, J. (1989), *Introducing Stylistics*, London & New York: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Lawal, R. A. (1997), *Pragmatics in Stylistics: A speech – Act Analysis of Soyinka’s 5. Telephone Conversation*, R.A Lawal (ed.) *Stylistics in theory and practice*, Ilorin: Paragon books.
- Leech, G. (1969), *A linguistic guide to English Poetry*, London: Longman
- Leech, G. and Short, M.H. (1981), *Style in Fiction: A linguistic introduction to English Fictional prose*, London: Longman.
- Lodge, K. (2009), *A Critical Introduction to Phonetics*, London & New York: Continuum international publishing Group.
- Oloruntoba-oju, T. (1999), *Sociolinguistics: An overview*; E. Adegbija (ed.), *The English Language and literature-in -English: An introductory Handbook*, Ilorin: The department of Modern European languages, University of Ilorin.
- Short, M., & Candlin, C. (1989). *Teaching study skills for English literature in reading, analysing and teaching literature*. London: Longman.
- Tallerman, M. (1998), *Understanding Syntax*, London & UK: Holder Education Ltd.
- Widdowson, H.G. (1975), *Stylistics and the teaching of literature*, London: Longman Group Ltd.
- Wordsworth, W. Coleridge, S.T. (1989). *Preface To The Lyrica Ballads*. Lahore: Kitab Mahal.
- <http://www.frostfriends.org/meter.html>
- “The Poetics of Robert Frost” by Carole Thompson
- Home : <http://www.frostfriends.org/tutorial-poetics.html>

APPENDIX

“The Road Not Taken”

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
(Robert Frost)