



INTENTION OF THE POET VERSUS INTERPRETATION OF A READER

-A study on teaching of poetry in English literature

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Abstract: Teaching of poetry in English literature is becoming a challenge for the teachers of English as they find it difficult to understand and analyze a poem from a right perspective. The reader of the poetry must be Constructing/ Deconstructing a poem to arrive at specific meaning that may lead a reader-interpreter to intake the essence of the poem in a wrong way. To identify the way that a reader interpreter takes to understand a poem and to arrive a conclusion on it, I have chosen my own five poems and prepared a questionnaire that contains twenty-five questions and circulated it with the faculty of English. It is found that the reader interpreter Construct/ Deconstruct a poem to certain extent, where they are unaware of the hidden messages expressed by the poet. This paper will help the reader interpreter to understand the factor affecting the reader-interpret to analyze a poem in different perspectives and suggest some strategies to read a poem.

Keywords: Construction, Deconstruction, Hermeneutics, Intention, Interpretations, Poetry,

I Introduction

Poetry is regarded as the most difficult genre of literature as it involves in expressing the higher emotions and feelings of a human. Poetic language is unique and understanding such language needs knowledge to sense the innermost thoughts underlies in it. In the Book of Semiotic Poetry, Michael Riffaterre (1980) says that the language of poetry differs from the common Linguistics feature, as poetry involves the usage of words excluded from common usage and it has its own special grammar that is even invalid or incorrect.

Every creative writer writes either to entertain or to educate. For both the purposes it is mandatory for a reader to intake the emotions and feeling of the poet to the fullest as literature is the mere expression of life. Most of the times a reader-interpreter fails to extract the exact intention of the poet since a reader cannot interpret a poem in the exact way as a poet. Though essence of a poem is grounded on the poet's point of view, reader-interpreters are expected to assimilate the idea of the poet.

Construction and Deconstruction are the other methodologies that are used by the literary experts to interpret and analyze the meaning of the poem. Constructing any literary text presupposes the understanding the structure of that literary text to arrive at a particular meaning. Whereas Deconstruction involves the close reading of the text to assimilate the meaning of the text in terms of binary position. Deconstruction sees the literary work in terms of its undecidability.

“When teaching poetry to students, we must first examine our own apprehensions, preconceived notions, and perceived abilities as poets” said Parr & Campbell (2006). Unlike reading a poem, teaching a poem needs a special care as the teacher who acts as a reader interpreter is in the position to understand it in a right sense to sow the ideas of a poet into the minds of their wards. So many researches have made in understanding and analyzing a poem. The previous researchers focus on linguistics aspects of poetry like understanding poetic language, sign and symbols employed on it. The paper throws a light to find whether a teacher who reads and explains the poem to their ward, interpret it in a right way as the poet intended to express. The paper also intends to find the factors that influence or affect the reader from understanding it from poet’s perspective.

II Research Methodology

To arrive a conclusion on it, the researcher has chosen five own poems written on different circumstances based on life experience on various themes. The idea behind choosing poems that focuses on different real-life incidents is to provide enough space for the reader to understand the intentions of the poet. The questionnaire that contains twenty-five questions has been prepared and circulated along with the poems with the known circle of nineteen teaching faculty who belongs to the department of English. The general feedback on the poem and writing style has also been attached to find whether the reader could analyze the poem without much reference.

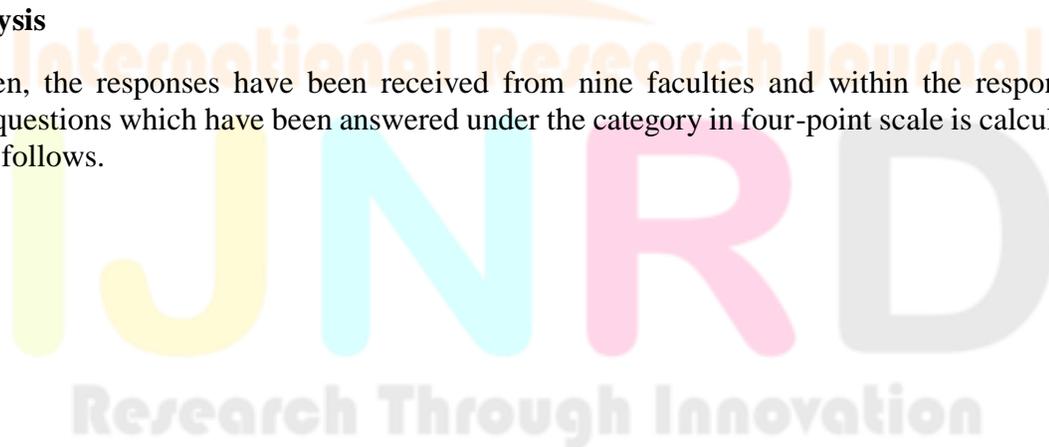
The four-point scale questionnaire is selected to categorize the options into four categories. They are

- a) Construction
- b) Deconstruction
- c) Poet’s point of View
- d) Irrelevant

The questionnaire is mixed with direct and indirect questions that mainly focus on the themes and structure of the poems. The responses have been collected and analyzed carefully to unveil the understanding of a reader-interpreter. Based on their responses, this paper will take a lead to analyze the intention of the readers towards the poetry and arrive at a specific conclusion to analyze a poetry in the right perspective.

III Data Analysis

Out of nineteen, the responses have been received from nine faculties and within the responses, the percentage of questions which have been answered under the category in four-point scale is calculated and the result is as follows.



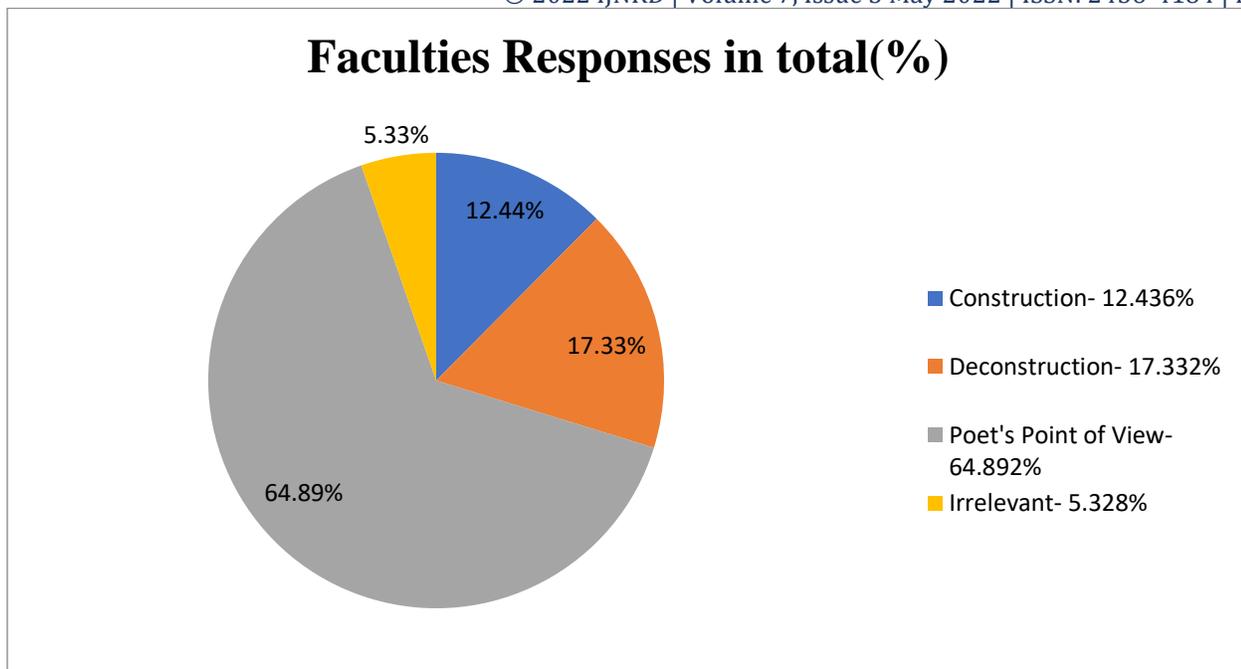


Figure 1: **Faculties Responses in total (%)**

It is inferred from Figure 1 that the reader-interpreter is constructing (12.436%) a poem unknowingly to some extent that affects the meaning of the poem. The reader-interpreter is trying to deconstruct (17,332%) the poetry in terms of binary opposition. The reader interpreter is understanding and interpreting the poem in poet's point of view (64.892%) to the maximum level and they choose irrelevant answers (5.328%) due the lack of interest or unable to identify the answers.

Thus, the reader interpreter can analyze the poem in poet's perspective to the maximum level and the reader interpreter also construct and deconstruct the poem to some extent that tends them to deviate from the ideas expressed by the poet.

Both Construction and Deconstruction may affect the poetry and may spoil the intentions of a poet. On the basis of the responses received, the researcher draws some factors affecting readers' interpretation:

- a) Experience (personal) of a reader-interpreter: When a reader interpreter reads a poem, they may relate some of the incidents happened to them and read it with the reference to their life and it may lead them to deviate from the actual meaning of the poem.
- b) Excellency of a reader-interpreter: Here, the word excellency refers to the knowledge gained through teaching experience where the reader-interpreter could relate a poem with some of the other poems which has been read before which sometime affects the interpretation of the poem.
- c) Knowledge gained through education: It refers to the typical knowledge that gained through the years of learning, so the reader interpret may come to the conclusion with what they have already learned, that may differ from the actual meaning of the poem.
- d) Striving to be unique: Some reader interpreter who want to stand different and unique may interpret a poem in a different way that may deviate them from the intended meaning of the poem.
- e) Sex of a reader interpreter: Most of the time sex of the reader interpreter plays a major role in analyzing a poem. As a male may not understand some emotions of a female and vice versa, the reader may not able to understand the poem properly gender issues. So, there is a chance to get diverted from the intended meaning of the poem.

These factors may make a person to shed a new light on poetry which progressively aims at giving different meanings.

IV Conclusion

Pursuing the essence of the poem in a right sense is very essential for a reader interpreter to understand the intention of the poet. The reader-interpreter may construct in the place of Deconstructing and Deconstruct in the place of Constructing and they may come up with number of interpretations for a poem. This leads to a serious conundrum and a poet's willed meaning is often misinterpreted as understanding a poem is not a mere process of making meanings rather it is an art of intaking the experience and emotions of a person to the fullest.

Thus, the ambiguity towards analyzing a poetry may resolved only when a reader forgets his/her present state, leave all prejudice to travel with the poet to assimilate and intake the right meaning.

Future researches may aim at applying Hermeneutic theory of Interpretation in analyzing a poetry that mainly focuses on two aspects. They are

1. To understand whole from a part and a part from a whole
2. To travel back to analyze the background of the poet to understand the poet's intention

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