

Mapping Meaning in the Poetry for Children: A Corpus-Assisted Thematic Analysis of Lexical Choices in Pakistani English Textbooks

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Abstract

This study examines the linguistic and ideological construction of childhood in selected English poems for children incorporated in Pakistani school curricula for grades 6 to 8. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, it combines corpus linguistics and thematic analysis to investigate how linguistic selections particularly adjectives, adverbs, and nouns impact the emotional, moral, and aesthetic representation of childhood. Using a corpus tool, the study analyzed a corpus of 209 poems (19,706 words) to find out frequency patterns and evaluative language. Quantitative analysis indicated the prevalence of positive evaluative adjectives, adverbs and nouns which served as prescriptive indicators. The qualitative analysis determined five principal themes through thematic analysis. These findings illustrate that children's poetry in the Pakistani curriculum romanticizes childhood as emotionally dynamic, morally educational, and creatively abundant while concurrently embodying educational orientations.

Keywords: poetry for children, linguistic choices, ideology, ELT textbooks

Introduction

Children's literature serves as a fundamental tool in shaping the emotional and moral orientations of young readers. It is more than a medium for entertainment; it reflects the child's own world and opens them up to the worlds of others. The construction of identity-related meaning, as well as moral and social norms, is shaped through representation by the early ideas portrayed in children's literature. Despite the fact that these poems are often perceived as funny and entertaining, they include values and perspectives that influence how children view themselves and their world (Halliday, 1978; Scheiding, 2019). According to Hunt (1994), "Children's literature is a complex of story, language, ideology, and expectations that provides children with a linguistic and cultural toolkit" (p. 12).

In the Pakistani school context, where English often serves as a second or third language, poems in the curriculum have an added influence in framing children's identities, values and a sense of belonging. The lexical and evaluative choices of children's poetry are a central part of the way a young reader internalizes not only language but the norms of culture as well. According to Coats (2013), poetry among children can be described as a holding environment, which tames chaotic

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sensory experience by means of rhythm and repetition (p. 130). Building on these perspectives, the study focuses on the linguistic construction of meaning in Pakistani children's poetry.

Rationale of the Study

It is recognized that children's literature is getting greater academic attention; nonetheless, research on the use of poetry in the Pakistani school system is an under-explored field. Research on children's literature seems to be predominantly focused on written narratives or Western educational systems. There is a notable lack of research that examines the cultural values, moral codes, and emotional perspectives that children are exposed to via English literature poetry included in the textbooks of Pakistan. Moreover, there is lack of research that observes the use of evaluative language in children's literature from Pakistan and the frequency of such linguistic choices to impact children's moral and emotional codes of conduct.

The present paper tries to bridge this gap by combining corpus linguistics and thematic content analysis in the investigation of the linguistic pattern and content interests of the selected poems included in the school curriculum of the Pakistani educational system to ensure the moral and emotional value of poems and their possible implications.

Purpose of the Study

The research examines the prevalent lexical aspects and the thematic formulations in an approach that studies the educational value that is embedded in the poems. The study underlines the significance of children's poetry as a means of ideological representation and supports the idea that young readers should be encouraged to become critical literacy thinkers who can see and challenge ideological messages in literary texts. The aim of this study is to investigate how lexical choices in poems for children contribute to the construction of thematic meanings. Using corpus linguistics with qualitative thematic analysis, this study identifies the linguistic patterns in adjectives, adverbs and nouns and then interprets how these choices communicate ideas and values to the children through poems included in school textbooks for grade 6 to 8. This study sets the goal of revealing how these linguistic choices convey ideological, moral, emotional and cultural values and how these lexical items frame moral orientations.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in that it uncovers the potential for children's poetry, typically regarded as being both innocent and simple, to function as a mode for representing linguistic and cultural meaning. From a more theoretical perspective, this research also brings to light the potential for corpus research to expose the role that language might play regarding ideas, values, and emotions expressed through literary genres but in a subtle but significant fashion. It connects linguistic analysis and literary interpretation by showing that word patterns reflect cultural values.

In practical terms, research aids educational settings by enabling teachers and curriculum developers to acknowledge the ideological capacity of poetic language. Comprehending how lexical patterns convey values and emotions may promote a more reflective and critical engagement with poetry in educational settings. By integrating these insights, the present study bridges linguistic form and moral function of children's literature.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the lexical choices used in selected English poems for children to construct or communicate multiple themes.
2. To explore how these linguistic choices contribute to the construction and communication of multiple recurring themes in the poetry for children.

Research Questions

1. What are the lexical choices used in selected English poems for children to construct or communicate multiple recurring themes?
2. How do these linguistic choices contribute to the construction and communication of thematic meanings in poetry for children?

Literature Review

This section of the study reflects the conceptual understanding of the researchers gained through the existing pool of knowledge on the subject matter which subsequently helps them to identify the research gap and finalize methodological underpinnings for better research. The eminent part of it is depicted below:

Ideology and Language in Children's Poetry

The interface of ideology and language is critically significant. Its multiple aspects are highlighted in the following:

Ideological Nature of Children's Texts

Poetry often responds to contemporary issues and mirrors shifts in ideology and pedagogy. Vardell (2014) emphasizes the flexibility of poetry to "address a range of themes and issues relevant to children's lived experiences" (p. 19), making it a vital component of ideology formation. Through choices in language, character roles, and thematic framing, poems can subtly promote specific worldviews, cultural norms, and power structures. This is demonstrated by Stephens (1992), who writes: "Texts for children are never ideologically neutral; they are produced within and reflect prevailing discourses" (p. 8). Therefore, through an examination of poetry with a critical eye, one can identify how these works disseminate ideologies toward gender, nationalities, classes, and morality.

Linguistic Devices and Ideological Transmission

Some researchers have also investigated the effect of poetic language on children's beliefs and identities. Sunderland (2011) performed a corpus-assisted study of children's poetry and fiction, which found patterns that support hegemonic gender role stereotypes and social hierarchies. Recent studies increasingly employ corpus-linguistic tools to uncover patterns of lexical repetition, evaluative language and framing of discourse. According to Bednarek (2006), evaluative language is used as a key in the construction of point of view and ideology in texts (p. 28). These results suggest that children's poetry serves as a source of education, but also as a tool of ideological transmission.

Language choices are central to the way literature and especially children's poetry shapes the minds of young readers. Language is a social semiotic system (Halliday, 1978): the decisions made in the texts are not just stylistic, but values, social norms, and ideologies are expressed. Such decisions are carefully made in children's literature, and particularly, in poetry to be age appropriate and at the same time have didactic functions.

Among basic linguistic devices employed in children's poems, there is the utilization of lexical patterns. Nikolajeva (2010) feels that children's books use high-frequency words, but nevertheless often combine these with imaginative vocabulary to arouse linguistic and cognitive development in children (p. 28). This balance provides accessibility and adds to the number of vocabularies for the child. Besides, figurative language like metaphor, simile, and personification adds to the emotional engagement by emotional and conceptual understanding. According to Nodelman (2008), "Figurative language, far from being merely an entertaining aspect of poetry for children, also, develops in them a sense of moral reasoning and ability for abstract thinking" (p. 87).

Another notable aspect is repetition, which in most cases is used for the creation of rhythm and order in children's poems. The use of repetition helps in memorization and the highlighting of thematic aspects. Temple, Martinez, and Yokota (2011) reflect on the content of the children's poetry by highlighting that "children's poetry is characterized by forms of repetitive structures that have the dual purpose of holding the child's attention and, in subtle ways, reaffirming the norms and values of the culture in which the child lives" (p. 42). The most common forms of creating "emotional and intellectual appeal" involve phonological forms (rhymes and rhythms), lexico-semantic forms (the use of adjectives in relation to morality), and syntactic forms (the use of imperatives).

Mackey (2002) argues that the linguistic structure of a poem by children is usually covertly persuasive, and it attracts the readers into normative morality constructs and at the same time entertains them with rhythm and storyline (p. 42). It is thus important to study these linguistic patterns to comprehend how literature works ideologically in educational contexts.

Children's Poetry in the Pakistani Curriculum

Such stylization of language is even more relevant in the context of Pakistani textbooks considering the multilingual, multicultural, and religious nature of the classroom. The fact that English is mostly the second or third language of students provides another dimension to the power of linguistic decisions impacting not only the understanding but also identity formation. As one reads these kinds of poems, whose subject matter is the presentation of common moral messages and cultural terms, one realizes that one is being exposed not to language but to systems of thought.

The linguistic strategies discussed above are, in no way, neutral, as these act as a tool to refine, in a particular manner, the moral, emotional, and social consciousness of the reader. By exposing a child to a particular style of words, poets can impose ideologies in a particular way. Stephens (1992) famously observed that children's literature is rarely innocent; rather, it "manipulates language in ways that construct ideological positions" (p. 9). The linguistic format itself can be seen to be acting in congruence with forces of social conditioning when one recognizes that in a poem consistently portraying positive outcomes for characters who conform to societal norms, there is

another level of cultural influence to be considered. Again, there is an identified need to discuss the cultural impacts of curricular poetry intended for Pakistan.

Theoretical cum Analytical Background

The following paragraphs highlight two significant aspects of study: theoretical as well as analytical:

Corpus Linguistics and Its Application in Literary Studies

According to Mahlberg (2013), corpus stylistics is a cross-section of corpus linguistics and literary research that allows the researcher to explore the contributions of repetitive lexicogrammatical choices in the creation of literary effects, thematic concerns, and even ideological positioning.

Applications for Literary Studies and Children's Literature

Corpus linguistics as applied to children's literature is an emerging field of interest. Among the notable ones, there is a study by Mahlberg, McIntyre, and Trum (2020) that explored the corpus-based approach to the use of body language verbs in children fiction. They found that the minute lexical choices in the texts develop the norms of narrative in terms of emotion, action, and character development. By analogy, Teranishi (2015) has used the corpus-based discourse analysis to examine the gender representations in English-language textbooks used by children and found regularities in the way traditional gender roles are presented using specific lexical and syntactic constructions. These studies demonstrate the relevance of corpus-based approaches for examining ideological patterns in children's literature, while highlighting the need for context-specific analysis.

Research Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework used to explore the role of linguistic choices in the chosen English poems that are directed to children. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach as it will employ both quantitative and qualitative data to give an overall insight into the linguistic characteristics and their effects in the chosen poems. The quantitative dimension will deal with the methodological extraction and classification of adjectives, adverbs, and nouns to determine the frequency and distribution of these in the corpus. This gives a general description of the linguistic trends. The qualitative component will then apply the thematic analysis framework to investigate the functions and meanings these word choices express in the poems, and their role in the emotional and thematic content of the poems (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Research Design

This study will use mixed-methods research design in which both quantitative and qualitative research designs are employed in a strategic manner. Specifically, the given design suits the current research because it allows a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the multifaceted nature of the interaction between the selection of words and the effect that they create on the reader. Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) state that mixed methods are important because they give a deeper and more contextualized image of the research issues. The quantitative component of the research focuses on finding and quantifying the existence of specific linguistic features: adjectives

tives, adverbs, and nouns in the selected group of poems. This involves application of a computational linguistic tool and frequency-based quantitative analysis to elicit patterns and trends in the use of these word classes. Quantitative data will be taken as a foundation of greater qualitative analysis.

Thematic analysis, in turn, will enable identifying certain patterns of meaning recurrence and the emergence of central themes in the poems due to the identified linguistic choices. Mixed-methods approach does not merely refer to gathering both types of data; rather, it is a combination of data that allows the strengths of one of the approaches to counteract the limitations of the other (Bryman, 2012).

Theoretical and Analytical Framework

An integrated theoretical and analytical framework that combines corpus linguistics and thematic analysis in a mixed-methods design serves as the foundation for this investigation. By finding patterns in the adjectives, adverbs, and nouns used in the chosen poems, corpus linguistics offers the quantitative basis. The evaluated linguistic resources are grouped into more general themes using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis, which reveals the emotional and ideological messages contained in children's poetry.

Corpus and Data Collection

The research uses a well-selected corpus of English poems targeting children in grades six to eight as the source of its data. The development of this corpus is a very important part of the research as it serves as the basis of the quantitative and qualitative analysis. A series of clearly specified procedures will be used to select the poems such that the corpus is representative, diverse, and relevant to the research question.

To begin with, a range of public and private schools that serve students studying at grades six to eight will be selected. This choice will be driven by a desire to have diversity in school type and possible pedagogical strategies. This variation is significant so that the corpus could be representative of various poetic forms and thematic material to which children of this age group are exposed in the various forms of education.

Secondly, the curriculum of English language arts and recommended reading lists of the identified schools will be reviewed to identify the corresponding poetry choices that are to be used with the target age group. This will be done by examining official documents of curriculum, textbooks, and supplementary reading materials that are used in such schools. The focus is to find poems that are widely taught and read by children in the grades 6-8, and this will give a fair reflection of poetry that children are exposed to in school.

Thirdly, poems will be chosen on the following basis:

Target Audience

The poems should be directly aimed at children of the 6th-8th grade reading level. This is going to be established by basing on the poems that are presented in the official curriculum and textbooks in the chosen schools.

Thematic Diversity

The corpus will seek thematic and subject matter diversity that is typical of children's literature as represented by the school curricula of choice. These will be themes like nature, family, friendship, adventure and personal growth. Such variety will enable a more detailed study of the way in which linguistic choices are employed to provide various meanings and feelings.

Narrative or Descriptive Elements

The poems will be chosen based on their obvious narrative patterns or descriptive language to allow the study of expressions of emotion, attitude and evaluation, which are particularly prevalent in poems narratively or descriptively focused.

Fourthly, the poems that are selected will be organized into a digital corpus to analyze them systematically. This will entail the development of a digital set of poems, in form of plain text files. Efficient and precise extraction of linguistic features will be possible with the use of a digital corpus.

Fifthly, after the corpus is constructed, the next linguistic characteristics will be obtained in every poem:

Adjectives. Adjectives are important in expressing evaluative meaning and constructing vivid imagery which are the focus of the thematic patterns.

Adverbs. Adverbs are useful in adding to the overall tone and style of a poem and are also significant in terms of the intensity and manner of actions and descriptions.

Nouns. The content of the poem is based on nouns, and their choice and alteration by adjectives play an important role in the whole meaning and effect.

This extraction will be done using Sketch Engine, a corpus analysis tool and manually checked to ensure that it is accurate. Sketch Engine does the part-of-speech tagging and the grammatical category of words in the poems automatically. Nonetheless, manual checking will be undertaken to rectify any tagging mistakes and to make the data reliable. The extracted linguistic features will then be placed in a structured database, and this will allow efficient retrieval and both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This database will assist in the analysis of patterns and trends of the use of linguistic features in the corpus of poems.

Thematic Analysis

After the extraction, thematic analysis will be used to determine common patterns of meaning and key themes that arise and are found in the linguistic choices and their context. This will be a methodical process of finding, classifying and understanding patterns of meaning in the data. In the current study, thematic analysis is intended to be performed to elucidate the principal concepts and ethical values derived from the lexical patterns identified in the corpus. It will follow on the results of the corpus analysis to see how the linguistic choices combine to form repeated patterns of meaning, and what wider themes these patterns imply about the overall meaning and emotional effect of the poems.

The thematic analysis entails an intensive and repetitive reading of the poems with special consideration given to the adjectives, adverbs, and nouns that have been classified after corpus analysis. This entails finding a group of words that are frequently used together in comparable situations to generate specific effects. As a second example, a repeating theme that involves a sequence of positive adjectives related to affective traits, and a sequence of words related to nature, could represent the theme of joy in nature. Another possible example is the apparent prevalence of negative adjectives related to a particular character, which could represent the theme of oppression or injustice. It attempts to determine how these linguistic decisions relate and combine to produce patterns of meaning, and the larger themes these patterns indicate regarding the overall message and emotional appeal of the poems. Themes that arise out of such analysis are not pre-determined, but data driven. The researchers stay receptive to the themes that are more predictable or conventional and open to unexpected or emergent themes. The thematic analysis also takes into consideration the relation between the identified themes to the general context of children's literature and the effect that the poems may have on young readers.

Ethical Considerations

The research is based on the analysis of the publicly accessible literary texts. Thus, there are few direct ethical considerations of human subjects. The study, however, is conducted with academic integrity by giving credit to the sources and interpreting the literary works with respect. The analysis concentrates on the linguistic aspects of the poems and does not make unjustified conclusions regarding the intents of the authors or the possible effect on the subjective reader beyond what the text can reveal itself.

Data Analysis

The present section delves into the linguistic as well as thematic characteristics of the featured English poems for children, and seeks to discover how the emotional, moral, and evaluative meanings are conveyed in poetic language. The corpus comprised 209 poems (19,706 words) selected from course-books of grades 6-8 taught in both public and private schools of Pakistan. Following this, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify general themes across the poems like innocence, imagination, dread and growth that depict how poetry can represent childhood's emotional and developmental environments (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Collectively, these methods provide an overall picture of the way language in children poems expresses the experience of growing up. This analysis proceeds in two parts; first a corpus-based linguistic analysis to identify lexical patterns, and second, a thematic interpretation of their ideological significance.

Linguistic Analysis

To carry out the linguistic analysis, Sketch Engine was used to draw out important linguistic characteristics of the chosen children's poems. This corpus-informed tool helps identify systematically adjectives, adverbs and nouns; parts of speech that are critical to the expression of emotions. According to Baker (2019), thematic coding is based on identification of the relevant linguistic features that bear evaluative meaning (p. 45).

Corpus Compilation and Linguistic Choices Extraction

The corpus was constructed based on English poems in the syllabus books of classes 6 to 8, chosen in both systems of schooling, the public and the private in Pakistan. The texts were scanned and normalized so that they could be used in computational analysis. With a total of 209 poems, totaling approximately 19706 words, it had an almost uniform distribution of content with descriptions, imaginations, and moral values. The software program that was utilized to conduct the corpus analysis was Sketch Engine, through which it was possible to obtain information needed to detect content trends with frequency lists, keywords, and concordances.

Adjectives

WORDLIST Poems

adjective (517 items | 1,211 total frequency)

Adjective	Frequency	Adjective	Frequency	Adjective	Frequency	Adjective	Frequency	Adjective	Frequency
1 good	29	11 big	14	21 happy	9	31 green	7	41 sweet	6
2 old	24	12 many	12	22 blue	9	32 dry	7	42 rich	6
3 high	21	13 deep	12	23 black	9	33 full	7	43 mad	6
4 other	20	14 small	12	24 lovely	9	34 utter	7	44 tall	6
5 long	19	15 dark	11	25 last	9	35 sudden	7	45 true	6
6 more	17	16 own	10	26 wide	9	36 bad	6	46 hot	6
7 little	15	17 red	10	27 human	8	37 bright	6	47 dead	5
8 first	15	18 cold	10	28 secret	8	38 naked	6	48 frantic	5
9 great	15	19 only	10	29 thin	8	39 free	6	49 young	5
10 new	15	20 such	10	30 hard	8	40 sure	6	50 busy	5

Rows per page: 50 1-50 of 517

Adverbs

WORDLIST Poems

adverb (177 items | 991 total frequency)

Adverb	Frequency	Adverb	Frequency	Adverb	Frequency	Adverb	Frequency	Adverb	Frequency
1 not	140	11 far	23	21 up	13	31 suddenly	8	41 fast	5
2 then	43	12 all	23	22 sometimes	13	32 else	8	42 though	4
3 now	35	13 still	19	23 much	11	33 once	8	43 alone	4
4 so	34	14 as	19	24 right	11	34 ever	8	44 awake	4
5 again	33	15 away	18	25 down	10	35 yet	8	45 very	4
6 there	33	16 only	17	26 anyway	10	36 even	7	46 first	4
7 just	29	17 more	16	27 long	10	37 often	6	47 simply	4
8 never	29	18 always	15	28 about	9	38 really	6	48 above	3
9 here	24	19 back	13	29 no	9	39 together	6	49 softly	3
10 too	23	20 well	13	30 out	9	40 soon	5	50 instead	3

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Nouns

WORDLIST Poems

noun (1,894 items | 4,576 total frequency)

Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency	Noun	Frequency
1 bell	42	11 hand	25	21 thing	20	31 leaf	17	41 ship	14
2 time	35	12 way	25	22 sky	20	32 bird	17	42 rabbit	14
3 mother	34	13 cat	24	23 water	20	33 love	17	43 wood	13
4 day	34	14 head	23	24 home	20	34 mouse	17	44 war	13
5 man	31	15 air	23	25 grass	20	35 door	17	45 horse	12
6 sea	31	16 heart	23	26 wing	19	36 earth	17	46 voice	12
7 eye	31	17 field	23	27 foot	19	37 forest	16	47 frog	12
8 night	30	18 world	21	28 tree	18	38 friend	16	48 god	12
9 child	30	19 wind	21	29 people	18	39 life	15	49 something	12
10 country	26	20 sun	20	30 name	17	40 light	14	50 end	12

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The corpus extraction showed that the total number of nouns was 1894, while the total number of adverbs was 177 and the total number of adjectives was 517 for all the 209 poems. The positive adjectives like happy, kind, and brave were used the most, while those describing nature like green, bright, and wild were used the second most. Very, so, and always were used as intensifiers to increase the emotional content in the poem. The nouns were mostly classified as describing nature tree, sun, flower; relationships like mother, friend; morality like duty, right, sin.

Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis was an extension of the analysis of the data obtained in the use of the Sketch Engine, paying attention to the role the evaluative patterns identified in the linguistic data play in the overall meanings and messages of the poems. In this section, the author determines and discusses the most important themes that can be traced in the texts, providing an in-depth comprehension of the way in which childhood experiences, emotions, and imagination are presented in poetry. The analysis by looking at recurrent motifs revealed how these poems convey the universalities of the lives of children creating their perceptions about the world.

In exploration, the aspects of childhood are examined emotionally, morally, and aesthetically, and hence, there is a heightened significance to the language used that reflects the experience of the young reader. The themes arrived at using the six-phase process of thematic analysis as prescribed by Braun & Clarke (2006). It entails familiarization of the data, generating codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, finalizing themes and themes report, and lastly the report itself. Building on the evaluative trends arrived at from the corpus analysis, the themes of the text were aimed to be explored.

Theme 1: Innocence and Joy of Childhood

The words used to describe the feeling of happiness, pure emotion, and children's optimistic outlook are all examples of the thematic concept of innocence and joy of children. The lines *"Be happy anyway"* and *"For when you are happy, you're so happy to write; all that bubbles out is pointless and trite"* illustrate an overflowing and unadulterated experience of joy through the heavy use of the word happy. *"The pilgrims were so happy"* reasserts the experience of joy as a common experience, while *"happy days to come"* relates it to the experience of hope.

Alternatively, in *"Light will fill Each dark, round drop; I hope the Sun shines bright; 'Twill be a lovely sight,"* the words "bright" and "lovely" evoke a positive and colorful picture that can be related to the colorful world of children. Similarly, *"far away is my village! Where I saw dreams of happy days to come"* evokes nostalgic happiness tied to memory and imagination. Words like *happy, bright, and lovely* express emotional responses, while descriptions of landscapes and future hopes reflect the speaker's valuation of experiences and aesthetics. The general tone is also emotionally charged, which is characteristic of positive emotional orientation that characterizes the innocence and happiness of childhood. Such thematic interpretation is consistent with qualitative methods supported by Wellington (2015), where thematic patterns in children's literature are intricately linked to aesthetic and emotional reactions.

In children's poems, the theme "Innocence and Joy of Childhood" generates an ideology that believes in a memorable and perfect period of one's life. Children in poems are presented as innocent, inquisitive, and joyous, reflecting that they are completely separate from all the critical

concerns that life has in store once an individual attains adulthood. The theme of imagination and inquisitiveness also appears in synchronization with the innocent and joyous theme. It reflects the way the poems' vivacity reflects the innate creativity of children.

Theme 2: Curiosity and Imagination

A child could relate to the theme of Curiosity and Imagination through the imagery, metaphors, and the repetition of words that are found in children's poetry. For example, the repetition of words: *"the steady breaking and wombing wild seabirds"* is an imagery that depicts nature as pregnant and giving birth to wonder. In the poem: *"Alf the joiner as Peary in cotton-wool snow-storms,"* the transformation of the ordinary figure into the heroic explorer reveals the child's ability to re-imagine the ordinary person in the context of an adventure.

The repetition in *"It's a good country". It's a secret country, And it's your country and mine"* emphasizes the deep personal nature of this imaginative land. Not only is it a world of fantasy, but one of comfort, kind, and safe as well. There is a sense of curiosity with the repeated lines such as *"There's something new in the river," "There's something new in the trees,"* etc. All the lines are a child's innate tendency to ask questions. Lines such as *"Suddenly glass world"* and *"Quite suddenly is real"* blur the boundary between imagination and reality. Through surreal lines like *"His ineffable effable Effanineffable / Deep and inscrutable singular name"* the children's poetry not only entertains but also empowers the mind to question, invent, and dream.

As Perry Nodelman (2008) notes, children's literature often "pretends to empower the imagination of the child while simultaneously guiding and limiting it according to adult norms" (p. 9). The theme contributes to an ideology that idealizes imagination but within acceptable boundaries, reinforcing adult conceptions of "appropriate" childhood behavior and thought.

Theme 3: Movement and Freedom

The theme of Movement and Freedom is very prominent in poems and is supported by the ideas of flying, escaping, traveling, and emotional freedom. The stanzas *"How do you like to go up in a swing, Up in the air so blue? Oh, I think it the pleasantest thing indeed,"* and *"Up in the air and over the wall, Till I can see so wide, Rivers and trees and cattle and all",* freedom is expressed as delightful, heady movement. Likewise, the imagery of the poem, *"High flight of the vulture, Red flight of the bird / them to my soul And I've started to fly,"* employs metaphorical flight as a symbol of empowerment and self-realization. *"And I was filled with such delight / As prisoned birds must find in freedom."* These lines not only show the importance of freedom but also show the emotionality of it.

The movement can also be expressed in terms of emotional or psychological traveling such as in the phrases, *"Bill had his thoughts off wandering free"* and *"Because I am fading at a fast pace."* The lines, *"There are no cages / There is no zoo / But the free creatures / Come and walk with you"* create a vision of an ideal world where autonomy is the standard and there is no control or confinement. Even more somber or reflective lines such as *"futile leaps to freedom"* or *"how long they have pulled the leash, and strained apart",* suggest a struggle to be free, as a reminder that freedom is not always an easy thing to achieve.

Finally, a nostalgia of such lines such as *"Far, far away is my village! Where fireflies of my youth / Glow yet in dense thickets"* depict emotional movement. These memories are a revisitation of a happier, more innocent era. This kind of construction idealizes freedom as a part of the identity of the child and usually opposes it to the perceived rigidity of adult life. Perry Nodelman (2008) writes that children's literature often expresses, as he puts it, adult assumptions about what childhood ought to be, rather than what it is (p. 5).

Theme 4: Loneliness, Fear, and Loss

Phrases like *"I wandered lonely as a cloud"* and *"At such a lonely place and think 'Where am I being led?'"* elaborate on the theme of loneliness in great detail. Words like 'lonely' are repeatedly used to highlight the theme of loneliness. Dark is used to reflect the theme of fear as follows: *"But when black sadness sits upon your soul and into dark corners you protectively crawl"* helps to measure the internal emotional status and create the impression that fear is an overwhelming force. The negative imagery of 'black sadness' adds to the depiction of dread, considering that it includes both metaphors of emotions and color symbolism. Phrases like: *"The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep"* and *"mutely into the dark behind us"*. These illustrate how the reader is drawn in through metaphors that refer to mysteries, deaths, and discomfort. The word "dark" is often referenced.

Loss is powerfully expressed through references to death: *"His tall body dead. His eyes were dead, and his lips"*, and *"In such a fight, my Khoka must be dead!"* The repeated usage of "dead" evokes a finality that demonstrates emotional sorrow, and these sentences vividly depict loss as physical absence. The line *"His widow rejoiced, though she never wished him dead"* adds sarcasm and assesses the character's restrained demeanor despite her emotional pain, which heightens the grief. Repetition and negation further stir up intense emotions: *"You can never win a fight," "Never the least stir made the listeners,"* in addition to *"The singing will never be done."* The repeated use of "never" emphasizes loss and longing as long-term emotional burdens and reflects unbroken pessimism.

The adverbs "mutely," "never," "alone," etc., not only increase the sense of emptiness and isolation but also the adjectives "dark," "lonely," "dead," "black," etc., describe the mood. Such linguistic devices are expressions of the poets' need for the expression of almost unimaginable deep sensations to let young readers share the experiences of sad, lonely, frightening moments, etc. "Loneliness, Fear, and Loss" in children's poetry develops an ideology that evaluates childhood as a complex emotion not always characterized by joy or innocence. Children's weaknesses, such as loneliness, anxiety, loss, and more, come into view under this topic, contrary to themes that make a prior claim for freedom or creation.

Theme 5: Passage of Time and Growing up

The poems manifest temporal movement strongly—from childhood through adulthood, innocence to awareness, and the past into the present. Life-stage themes associated are impressively highlighted using terminologies like "old man," "old woman," "grandmother," "child," and "young maiden." It is strengthened by the indication of temporal movements themselves with the use of linguistic tools like temporal markers: "first," "last," "once," "now," "then," and "always". In lines such as *"An old man, going a lone highway,"* and *"The old man turned his head,"* the focus is on solitude and reflection in later life. The poems also show how the past is not only remem-

bered but re-lived through daily routines: *"Wind has the same old habit / the same old routine"*. The repetition of "same" and "old" accentuates inertia and cyclical monotony, reflecting the unchanging flow of time.

Children, too, are part of this timeline. A generational gap is exposed in the lines *"Once children bailed out of the homestead"* and *"You were too young when yours died."* The emotional impact of early exposure to death and responsibility is highlighted by the adverbs "once" and "too young," which denote remembrance and loss and insecurity and vulnerability, respectively. Transitions are often paired with spatial and temporal references like *"first we shall go by escalator, then... underground, then... motorway"*, mapping literal journeys to metaphorical ones. The contrast between the *"flexible and awkward energy / of young eager hands"* and the *"last dear fuel"* shows the positive valuation of youth and the implied sorrow of aging. The adjectives "young", "eager", and "awkward" highlight vitality, while "last" and "dear" convey scarcity and value.

Temporal change is also marked by nature and seasons: *"Fresh October brings the pheasant... Dull November brings the blast"*. The words "fresh" and "dull" are adjectives that show change in moods, symbolizing the experience of time not just individuals but also on nature, thereby connecting all individuals with a universal experience. In sentences like *"I would be first and always the best,"* there's a degree of optimism, naivety, perhaps. But this contrasts with the inevitable decline captured in *"He won't last long with that leg,"* showing how time undercuts such youthful confidence.

Conclusion

Together, the Corpus-based frequency patterns and thematic interpretation demonstrate how linguistic choices systematically construct ideological representation of childhood. Evaluative language heavily leans toward warmth and optimism. The vocabulary used, such as happy, bright, and kind, appears in sentences that normally center upon plays of the children or scenes of joy in nature. Within such words used for children playing or scenes in nature, innocence can be seen as placed within the context of safety and propriety as idyllic. Nouns such as dream, story, and forest, with verbs such as discovery and wonder, point out the imaginative dimension of youth. These also invite readers to share imaginative notions. Adjectives such as *free*, *swift*, and adverbs like *boldly* and *wide* appear as lexical patterns in contexts of travel, nature, or play.

Though less frequent, words such as *loneliness*, *quiet*, *shadow*, and *gone* introduce emotional complexity. These articulate vulnerability and response to absence or change. Time-related words such as years, mornings, first day, and when you grow, are examples of temporal progression, a language that is an anchor of change. Contemporary children's fiction recognizes the psychological complexity of the world and incorporates the natural process of growing up with a sense that carries worth. Poetry promotes maturation as an inevitable phenomenon filled with considerable meaning. All these themes fall under broad categories that describe the ideology of childhood as being of great value but transient, filled with emotional content, moral significance, and imaginative expression. They sometimes even combine all those themes within the same work of poetry.

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