

Contextual Meanings Used by Archibald McLeish's Poetry 'The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak'

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Abstract

This study was conducted by the aim to investigate the contextual meaning applied in the poetry written by McLeish by the title "The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak". This research applied descriptive qualitative design by applying the semantics theory supported by theory of contextual meaning proposed by Leech (1981). The instrument was the researcher as the primary instrument of the study. The data were indentified, classified, displayed, and were described into the poetry in regard the contextual meaning. The findings showed: (1) This poetry was one of Archibald MacLeish contribution towards World War II because the function of the poetry is not only commemorated the dead, but also made it clear that those who survived bore a special responsibility to make the deaths of these soldiers meaningful; (2) The poetry was a portrayed of horrific World War I in Europe which was pointed out Archibald MacLeish got the record because he was a volunteer of the United State of America young soldiers whom sent to Europe to serve his country; and (3) The dead soldiers saw the peace toward their death because they gave their life for the country so they did not die for nothing. Nevertheless, their dead seem nothing if the further generations do not remember them as the piece of peace which have to be honored.

Keywords: *meaning, contextual meaning, poetry*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a part of human being to express their ideas, feelings, and emotions that can be implemented as a work through language used. Literature related to all aspects of human beings' activities, any varieties of phenomena in the world, parts of perspectives and knowledge owned by human beings (Nuriadi; in Apriono, 2017, p. 6). Normally, the writers of literature use it to express their hearts in every single word, phrase, and/or sentence applied in works. Consequently, they make the readers or listeners feel it by heart, not only the eyes or ears. Poetry, short story, song and novel are forms product of literature works which most of those used.

People use language in literary works in order to communicate, to express, to interact with other through songs. People can deliver their voice or even their purposes as the feelings through literary works (Kennedy, 1983). Literature as a term used to

describe written text marked by careful of language implied involving some features as called: metaphor, well-turned phrases, elegant syntax, rhyme, alliteration which are aesthetically read oriented by the author and well deliberate somewhat open in the interpretation as well. It requires the preservation of aesthetic, taste, and meaning when the works are transferred from source language to target language.

A poet of language used knowledge and abilities in language to deliver communication with each other, ideas, hypotheses, emotions, desires, and all the other things that need to be expressed. Furthermore, these knowledge systems are studied in scientific way; it is called linguistics. Linguistics is the scientific study of language on how it is put together and how it functions. Abrams (1999, p. 140) argued "Linguistics is the systematic study of the elements of language and the principles governing their combination and organizational". Moreover, linguistics can be divided into three categories or subfields of study: 1) language in context, 2) language meaning, and 3) language form. In linguistics, the study of meaning is devoted to semantics.

Semantics is a study of the meaning as a branch of linguistics. Linguistic itself has brought to the subject of semantics a certain degree of analytic combined with a view of the study of meaning as an integrated component within the total theory of how language works (Leech & Short, 1981). In addition, it is argued "Explaining and describing the meaning in natural language is the aim of semantics". People may even say in ordinary usage more explicit that the goal of semantics is to explain what underlies the use of the word means and related term (sense, nonsense, signify, ambiguous, antonym, synonymy, etc.) in English and other language. The language which uses the context meaning is called contextual meaning of language.

Contextual meaning is defined as the meaning of words, phrases or even sentences based on the situations in which they are applied. Thus, a different situation used also gives different meaning as the interpretation of listeners or readers. Understanding literary work of poetry as well includes more than simply transforming text into the interpretation of ideas applied. It is known as an act of interpreting and transferring the meaning across cultures based on every chosen language used on them (Prakasiwi, 2015, p. 2).

An interpretation result can be deliberated successful if the overall messages, thoughts, ideas, and concepts in the source language can be delivered into the target

language as well. Consequently, it is similar to the interpretation of contextual language, people must be able to interpret the overall messages and ideas through the poetry implied.

This study focused on and described of analyzing the contextual meanings of language that occur in McLeish's poetry. It was considered as an important thing to understand what the meanings were applied within the poetry. Because it is useless, if people just read the poetry without understanding what actually the poets want to convey to the readers. Thus, people need to analyze the contextual meaning of language in poetry more deeply. Concerning to the explanations mentioned the researcher took the study entitled "*Contextual Meaning Used by Archibald McLeish's Poetry 'The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak'*".

The term meaning is basically derived from the word mean which has a number of definitions as proposed by semanticist, for example, Leech (in Saputri, 2014, p. 33) mentions the three facts of meaning namely: (1). Meaning including the speaker's intention to transfer a certain meaning that may or may not be evident from the message itself. (2). Interpretation by the listener referring to the context being used. (3). Meaning in the sense of something representing something that exists in particular way. Thus, it implicates the action (the speaker produces and effects on the hearer) and the interaction (the meaning being negotiated between the speaker and the hearer on the basis of their mutual language). It is assumed a meaning depends on the grammatical structure of the sentence when the speakers say in order to express their ideas, minds and feelings as in the semantics field category.

Moreover, contextual meaning is defined as the meaning of words, phrases or even sentences based on the situations in which they are applied. Thus, a different situation used also gives different meaning as the understanding of listeners or readers. In addition, meaning is also defined as the information signaled about the kind of use a linguistic unit has in its social context (Saputri, 2014, p. 34). A context means the part of speech of words and the things represent. It can be said that contextual meanings have meaning according to the text or context being applied by involving the function of word in sentence formation since different arrangement of the same word can convey different context. Consequently, it can be concluded that the contextual meaning is the

meaning of the words, phrases or sentences focusing on the situation in which they are used.

Poetry is that genre of literature which reveals the beauty and loveliness of human life and nature. The word of poetry derived from the Greek word '*poiein*' means to make or to construct. While, poetics means the making and it became a poetry, the art of a poet. It could be concluded that the meaning of poetry is a piece of writing in verse form, in a regular metric line (Caullier in Pardede, 2016, p. 2). Archibald MacLeish's poetry, *The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak*, which was printed in 1940 for the Treasury Department of America while he worked as the volunteer for the Congress. People whom ever read this poetry might admit that the work has so much in common. This poetry talks about the idea: described and portrayed the viciousness of war. The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak inspired by the condition of World War I.

METHOD

This study was categorized as descriptive qualitative methodology. It is qualitative descriptive because the result of this study served in words form not in numeric form as quantitative method served and this study was intended to describe and to analyze the contextual meaning of poetry. The primary data of this research is the poetry from famous poet in America written by Archibald MacLeish entitled *The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak*. Archibald MacLeish printed his poetry in 1941 while he was working as volunteer in Congress Library di America. But this poetry did not spread to all citizen in America. Archibald wanted his poetry published anonymously because he dedicated this poem as a treasure for Treasury Department of America. The data were collected by carefully reading *The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak* written by Archibald MacLeish first, then try finding the appropriate data from reading supporting books and internet surfing to broaden the knowledge about the topic in order to interpret the contextual meaning within the poetry examined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Archibald MacLeish poetry's *The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak* was a special gift which was written for Library Congress Memorial Service in 1940. This poetry is one of Archibald MacLeish contribution towards World War II because the

function of the poetry is not only commemorated the dead, but also made it clear that those who survived bore a special responsibility to make the deaths of these soldiers meaningful. The Library Congress stated that the poetry is a portrayed of horrific World War I in Europe. Archibald MacLeish got the record because he was a volunteer of the United State of America young soldiers whom sent to Europe to serve his country. Archibald MacLeish served his country as an artillery officer in World War I in Europe and had witnessed suffering and death on the battlefield in Europe.

*They say, We were young. We have died. Remember us
They say, We have done what we could
but until it is finished it is not done
They say, We have given our lives but until it is finished
no one can know what our lives gave
They say, Our deaths are not ours: they are yours:
they will mean what you make them
They say, Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace
and a new hope or for nothing we cannot say:
it is you who must say this
They say, We leave you our deaths: give them their meaning:
give them an end to the war and a true peace:
give them a victory that ends the war and a peace afterwards:
give them their meaning.*

(Archibald MacLeish)

Based on the poetry above, Archibald MacLeish wants to identify himself as the young dead soldiers whom killed during the war. The word *remember* in this poem states that the young dead soldiers asked for nothing, they just wanted to be remember as a hero and the further generation keep the battle spirit on to maintain their country from foreign attack. They had sacrificed their live to serve the country but it would mean nothing if the further generations do not continue the young dead soldiers' fight.

*They say, We have done what we could
but until it is finished it is not done
They say, We have given our lives
but until it is finished no one can know what our lives gave*

*They say, Our deaths are not ours: they are yours
: they will mean what you make them
They say, Whether our lives and our deaths were
for peace and a new hope or nothing we cannot say:
it is you who must say this
They say, We leave you our deaths:
give them their meaning:
give them an end to the war and a true peace:
give them a victory that ends the war and a peace afterwards:
give them their meaning.
We were young, they say. We have died. Remember us.*

(Archibald MacLeish)

Generally, Archibald MacLeish's poetry represents the young dead soldier struggle from around the world because he is not mentioning the place where the war takes in place and time. This poem reflects the horrific war in general by telling the hopes of the young soldiers that they wanted to be honored and remember by the young generation of their country. In addition, this poem illustrates the young hopelessness in front of their enemies and can't grab independence. *The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak* does not tell about the struggle of troops of one nation to get their country independency.

*Nevertheless they are heard in the still houses:
who has not heard them?*

(Archibald MacLeish)

Archibald MacLeish begin his poetry with a simple question but have very deep meaning toward the further generation of the United State of America and to the generation who lost their family during the World War I and World War II. The sentence before the colon has different with the sentence after the colon. The sentence before the colon said that the soldiers still remembered by their family because their home still heart their voices. Therefore, the sentence after the questioning somebody who does not remember hears their voices. This sentence stated that there is a possibility the dead soldiers' buddies, friends, and nation forget them although they killed during the war because of serving their country.

*They have a silence that speaks for them at night and
when the clock counts*

(Archibald MacLeish)

In this second line, Archibald used a symbol to illustrate the condition of dead soldiers who killed during the World War I in Europe and World War II. According to the lyric of the poem above, the soldiers speak in *the night* and *the clock counts* mean that there is something important to talk to with the further generation of the United State of America. Silence and night refer symbolize great hopes. It reflects the daily life of a man who will usually pray at the coming of the night and the peaceful silence. By choosing silence as the situation and night as the time means the dead soldiers hope the generation, they left remember them as a hero that ever been serve their nation and civilization. This line also reminds the further generation of the United State of America that they have to remember and honor people who died during the war by using *the clock count* as a symbol. The phrase *the clock count* means the dead soldiers always hoping to be remembered forever as the clock count till the end of the world.

Here Archibald MacLeish used personification in the phrase *they have a silence that speaks*. In normal life, the only creatures who have spoken language is human. But in this poem, Archibald MacLeish illustrate that the silence can speak and deliver messages. Archibald MacLeish not only used personification but also imagery. In this second line, Archibald MacLeish used internal imagery in phrase *a spoken night*. The readers are imaging that people who involved in the conversation communicate and talk using their heart, body language but not with their spoken language. While, night refers to visual imagery that people could see the different shiny day when the sun rise and the day turn into dark when the sun set. The last imagery used in this line is a double-visual imagery and auditory imagery. People can see the clock ticking and hear the sound of ticking sound produced by the clock where place on the wall.

They say, We were young. We have died. Remember us

(Archibald MacLeish)

This line implies that the youth not only in the era of the dead soldiers but also for the further generation have huge responsibility to defend their country from

foreigner and foreign attacks. This statement is strengthened by the illustration in the poem above that youth willing to die to defend their country from foreigner attack. The different between the dead soldiers' era and the further generation responsibility is the way they defend their country. In the dead soldiers' era, they have to go to battle field to win the war while the further generation of the United State of America has to go to battle field. In the third sentence in the line above, the dead soldiers remind the further generation of the United State of America to remind them as a hero because they ever serve their country.

*They say, We have done what we could but until
it is finished it is not done*

(Archibald McLeish)

There is opposite meaning contain in the sentence above. The dead soldiers said they have done everything but it is not done yet. In this line, the dead soldiers said that they have gave everything they have even their life to defend their country from the foreigner's attacks. The meaning it is not done yet is they cannot continue the battle because they killed during the war. They hope they end the war and bring peace for their further generation and independence as well. Because of they killed before achieve it, they hope the further generation of the United State of America to continue their struggle to end the war, bring the peace, glory, and independence.

*They say, We have given our lives but until it is finished
no one can know what our lives gave*

(Archibald McLeish)

This line is a repetition of line 4. Here, the dead soldiers said that their struggle means nothing if there is no honor from the further generation of the United State of America. The function of this repetition is to remind the further generation to remember their sacrifice and continue their struggle to defend their country. The hope of the dead soldier in this line mean they wanted their photograph hang on the wall of the World War I and II museum. Mostly, people often forget whose fight for their independence.

*They say, Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace
and a new hope or for nothing we cannot say: it is you who must say this*

(Archibald McLeish)

In this line, Archibald MacLeish tried to illustrate the hopes of the dead soldiers. Here the dead soldiers have given their lives for peace. They died because they were serving the country. The dead soldiers see the peace toward their death because they gave their life for the country so they did not die for nothing. Nevertheless, their deaths seem nothing if the further generations do not remember them as the piece of peace which have to be honored.

*They say, We leave you our deaths: give them their meaning:
give them an end to the war and a true peace: give them a
victory that ends the war and a peace afterwards: give them their meaning.*

(Archibald MacLeish)

This line is the longest line in this poem. In this line, Archibald MacLeish gave deep explanation about the hope of the dead soldiers who killed during the World War I and World War II. The soldier, state again and again that their sacrifice in serving their country means nothing if the further generation of the United State of America do not honor and remember them as hero. Lot of repetition in this poem seems the dead soldier feared of being forgetting because they cannot in the battle.

We were young, they say. We have died. Remember us.

(Archibald MacLeish)

The last line of this poem is a reminder for the further generation of people who lived in America to respect and honor the dead soldiers during World War I and World War II. The word we were young and we have died contain very deep meaning. Archibald MacLeish seems to give a signal to the United States of America's further generation that youths have huge responsible to keep their country safe. In this line, Archibald MacLeish tried to remind the further generation of the United State of America to remember the young dead soldiers who killed during the war as their hero that they deserve love and peaceful.

CONCLUSION

Answering the formulated problem in this study about the contextual meaning used in the poetry of *The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak* written by MacLeish which was published in 1941 in the United State of America, it was described that Archibald MacLeish poetry's *The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak* was a special gift which

was written for Library Congress Memorial Service in 1940. This poetry was one of Archibald MacLeish contribution towards World War II because the function of the poetry is not only commemorated the dead, but also made it clear that those who survived bore a special responsibility to make the deaths of these soldiers meaningful. The Library Congress stated that the poetry is a portrayed of horrific World War I in Europe. Archibald MacLeish got the record because he was a volunteer of the United State of America young soldiers whom sent to Europe to serve his country. Archibald MacLeish served his country as an artillery officer in World War I in Europe and had witnessed suffering and death on the battlefield in Europe. Archibald MacLeish illustrated that the silence can speak and deliver messages. Archibald MacLeish not only used personification but also imagery. In this second line, Archibald MacLeish used internal imagery in phrase a spoken night. The readers are imaging that people who involved in the conversation communicate and talk using their heart, body language but not with their spoken language.

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