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**Constructing Emotional Worlds through Cognitive Grammar: A
Stylistic Analysis of Farzana Aqib's *My Nameless Pleads***



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Abstract

This research explores how poetic language reflects deep emotional experiences using Ronald W. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar framework. The study applies five key concepts including construal, profiling, image schemas, subjectivity/objectivity, and scanning to the poem *My Nameless Pleads* by Pakistani poet Farzana Aqib (2023). Through a qualitative textual analysis, the poem was read and examined multiple times, with careful attention to emotional expressions, grammatical patterns, and metaphorical language. Furthermore, the poem was selected using purposive sampling because of its rich emotional and symbolic depth. Each word, phrase, and structure was closely studied to understand how grammar expresses inner thoughts and emotions. The analysis portrays that the poet's use of grammar does not just convey meaning but it also constructs a mental world of pain, strength, and healing. This study shows that Cognitive Grammar is a powerful tool for understanding how poets express complex emotions through simple language. It also offers a new way to analyze South Asian poetry by focusing on how language shapes thought and experience. Lastly, It is recommended that future researchers examine this poem and similar texts using other frameworks such as Text World Theory, Foregrounding Theory, and literary approaches like Psychoanalysis, Jungian Psychology, and Lacanian Analysis to uncover further psychological, symbolic, and cognitive dimensions.

Keywords: Cognitive Grammar, Conceptual Stylistics, Farzana Aqib, Pakistani Poetry, Poetic Language, Construal, Image Schemas, Profiling, Cognitive Linguistics, Emotional Expression in Poetry

Background of the Study

Poetry has always been a powerful medium for expressing human emotions, struggles, and inner thoughts. In literary studies, understanding how poets convey these emotions through language has remained an important area of research. Traditionally, poetry has been analyzed through literary approaches like symbolism, psychoanalysis, and thematic criticism. However, recent trends in linguistics, particularly in Cognitive Linguistics, have provided new ways to understand how language reflects thought.

Moreover, one of the most influential theories in this field is Cognitive Grammar, developed by Ronald W. Langacker. According to Langacker (1987, 1991), grammar is not just a set of rules, it is part of a broader conceptual system that reflects how we see, experience, and describe the world. This theory argues that meaning is deeply connected to grammar, and that even small grammatical choices in a poem can show how a poet conceptualizes pain, love, memory, or hope.

Besides, in South Asian and Pakistani poetry, emotional expression is often rich and layered with symbolism. However, few studies have applied Cognitive Grammar to Pakistani poetry. This study attempts to fill that gap by analyzing the poem "My Nameless Pleads" by Farzana Agib, a modern Pakistani poet. The poem explores deep emotional pain, endurance, and inner strength through powerful and symbolic language. By applying Cognitive Grammar, the study aims to show how linguistic structures in poetry create a mental world of emotion, rather than merely describing feelings. This research contributes to both linguistic stylistics and Pakistani literary studies, offering a fresh and insightful way to analyze poetic language and emotional depth.

Statement of the Purpose

This study aims to explore how Farzana Aqib's poem *My Nameless Pleads* expresses deep emotional experiences through the lens of Cognitive Grammar. By focusing on key constructs such as construal, profiling, and image schemas, the research seeks to uncover how grammar and structure in the poem reflect the poet's inner world of pain, strength, and healing. The analysis intends to show that grammar is not just a mechanical structure but a powerful tool for shaping emotional meaning and mental imagery. This approach is meant to offer a fresh perspective on Pakistani poetry, combining linguistic theory with literary interpretation to enhance our understanding of poetic language.

Literature Review

The study of poetry has long been grounded in literary traditions such as formalism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and symbolism. These approaches often focus on themes, imagery, and authorial intention, but in recent years, the rise of linguistic stylistics has introduced new ways to examine how language itself shapes meaning in literary texts. One such linguistic approach is Cognitive Grammar, introduced by Ronald W.

Langacker (1987, 1991), which views grammar as a meaningful and symbolic system. Unlike traditional grammar, Cognitive Grammar argues that language reflects how individuals mentally represent their experiences. Concepts like construal, profiling, and image schemas explain how speakers or writers choose to present events, emotions, or ideas. These tools are especially useful in poetry, where subtle language choices carry deep emotional and symbolic meanings.

Moreover, in the field of stylistics, scholars such as Peter Stockwell (2002) and Paul Simpson (2004) have emphasized the role of cognitive poetics in understanding how readers construct mental images and emotional responses through language. Their work bridges linguistics and literary interpretation, showing that grammar, metaphor, and sentence structure significantly affect how literature is experienced.

In this connection, studies have also explored cognitive linguistics in literature, such as Gavins (2007), who developed Text World Theory to explain how readers build mental models while reading fiction or poetry. Similarly, Freeman (2006) argues that cognitive linguistics allows scholars to analyze how readers interpret emotions, metaphors, and characters in literary texts. However, while these approaches are becoming popular in Western literature studies, they remain underexplored in the context of South Asian and Pakistani poetry.

Lastly, despite the emotional intensity and symbolic richness of contemporary Pakistani poetry, little attention has been given to how linguistic structures (not just themes) contribute to meaning-making. There is a lack of research applying Cognitive Grammar to the works of modern Pakistani poets like Farzana Aqib. This study fills that gap by applying Langacker's framework to her poem "My Nameless Pleads", revealing how emotional expression is constructed through grammatical and conceptual choices.

Methodology

Research Design and Type

This research follows a qualitative, interpretive research design, focusing on the detailed linguistic and conceptual analysis of a literary text. A qualitative approach is most suitable because this study aims to explore how grammatical structures in poetry reflect mental and emotional conceptualization, as proposed in Ronald W.

Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (1987, 1991). Rather than testing a hypothesis or quantifying data, this study seeks to interpret how meaning is constructed through poetic language, making a qualitative lens most appropriate.

Besides, qualitative research is ideal for this study because it facilitates in-depth textual interpretation, paying close attention to emotional language, metaphor, and cognitive processes encoded in grammar, all central to Langacker's cognitive framework.

Data Collection Method

The primary data consists of the poem *My Nameless Pleads* by Pakistani poet Farzana Aqib. The poem was selected for its highly symbolic, emotional, and metaphor-rich language, which aligns well with Cognitive Grammar's emphasis on mental representation and construal. The process of data collection included the following steps:

The poem was read and re-read several times, both silently and aloud, to grasp its deep structure and conceptual flow. Furthermore, during each reading, the researcher closely examined each line, phrase, and word, paying attention to grammatical constructions, metaphors, and emotional expressions. Furthermore, a list of linguistically and conceptually relevant features (e.g., use of possessives, action verbs, metaphorical structures) was drafted and organized according to the five core concepts of Cognitive Grammar. Besides, the text was annotated manually, highlighting words, phrases, and clauses that reflected cognitive features such as construal, profiling, and image schemas. Lastly, this careful, repeated reading process helped ensure rigorous and systematic textual engagement, allowing for a rich and accurate application of Cognitive Grammar to the poem's structure and emotional content.

Sampling Method

This research uses purposive sampling, a well-established non-probability method in qualitative studies (Patton, 2002). The poem was purposefully selected because it exhibits linguistic and conceptual features that are highly suitable for Cognitive Grammar analysis, including: First-person subjectivity, High emotional density, Metaphorical structures, Internal mental states, Non-linear, conceptual flow of meaning. Purposive sampling ensures that the data selected is information-rich,

theory-relevant, and offers sufficient linguistic complexity to demonstrate the theory's explanatory power (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data Analysis Method

The method of analysis was qualitative textual analysis grounded in Ronald W. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar framework, particularly focusing on five core constructs:

1. Construal
2. Profiling
3. Image Schemas
4. Subjectivity/Objectivity
5. Sequential vs. Summary Scanning

The analysis followed these steps:

- a. Relevant grammatical and metaphorical structures were identified and highlighted within the poem.
- b. Each highlighted element was mapped against the five theoretical constructs to determine how it contributed to the reader's conceptual experience.
- c. The analysis emphasized how grammar encodes emotion, projects mental imagery, and constructs meaning, consistent with Cognitive Grammar's symbolic and usage-based principles.
- d. Interpretation was grounded in conceptual linguistics and stylistics, ensuring the study remained interdisciplinary between language and literature.

Using this framework allowed the researcher to analyze how the poet's grammatical choices reflect deeper conceptualizations of pain, healing, and emotional agency, rather than just stylistic ornamentation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Ronald W. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar, a branch of Cognitive Linguistics that focuses on how grammar reflects human thought, perception, and mental imagery. Cognitive Grammar views language as symbolic. It does not separate grammar and meaning, instead, it argues that all grammar is meaningful and connected to how we conceptualize experiences. In poetry, this means every word, phrase, and structure reflects how the poet mentally represents emotions, actions, and ideas.

Langacker (1987, 1991) introduced several important concepts in Cognitive Grammar. This study applies the following five constructs to analyze the poem:

1. *Construal*

How the poet chooses to present or “see” an idea (emotionally, closely, distantly, etc.).

2. *Profiling*

What part of a sentence or concept is highlighted or focused.

3. *Image Schemas*

Mental patterns like path, container, or force that structure meaning.

4. *Subjectivity vs. Objectivity*

Whether the poet’s emotions are visible or hidden in the expression.

5. *Sequential vs. Summary Scanning*

Whether meaning unfolds over time or is presented all at once.

This theoretical framework helps uncover how poetic language creates emotional meaning, projects mental imagery, and reflects the inner world of the speaker.

Analysis & Discussion

This poem by Farzana Aqib presents a rich emotional landscape that can be examined through Ronald Langacker’s Cognitive Grammar (CG). The poem offers a non-narrative, affective experience through its metaphorical structure, where language functions as a reflection of conceptualization.

Construal

Construal refers to how a speaker selects, organizes, and presents conceptual content.

My nameless pleads

This line construes the speaker’s emotional efforts as invisible, unrecognized, and undefined. By modifying “pleads” with “nameless,” the speaker construes emotion as something abstract, without a specific social or situational identity, inviting the reader to interpret it symbolically.

The magnanimity of my tears,

My silent sacrifice

My diligent pain

These lines construe intangible emotional states (tears, sacrifice, pain) using adjectives such as “magnanimity,” “silent,” and “diligent.” These modifiers shape the reader’s perspective, emphasizing the nobility and discipline behind suffering. Rather

than narrating an event, the poet construes the emotional world as morally rich and dignified.

Profiling

Profiling refers to highlighting a particular conceptual component of a scene or relationship.

My empty pleads without name

Will carve my paths

Will halt the storm

Here, "my pleads" is profiled as the agent of action. Even though "pleads" are abstract and usually passive, the poet gives them agency. They are personified, capable of carving paths and halting storms. This reversal in grammatical function (from experiencer to agent) is a strong example of conceptual profiling. Furthermore, the speaker's internal pain is profiled as a shaping force, granting the emotional world an active role in reshaping the future, an inversion of typical narrative roles.

Image Schemas

Image schemas are recurrent patterns of bodily experience that shape abstract thought. Several core schemas occur in this poem:

a. PATH schema

Will carve my paths

This evokes a journey metaphor, the speaker's pain will shape their direction. The pleads are conceptualized as a tool or force cutting a path forward, the body and mind both travel a metaphorical path created by emotional endurance.

b. FORCE schema

Will halt the storm

That unleashed torrent it may retain

This represents a resistance force dynamic, the inner emotional pleas act as a barrier or shield against a chaotic external storm. The pleads are stronger than the storm, challenging the expected roles of internal vs. external forces.

Cleanliness / Purification Schema

It will wash all my wounds

And all my ugly stains

The metaphors of "washing," "wounds," and "stains" suggest emotional healing and

moral cleansing. This reflects the schema of removing impurity, not physical dirt, but guilt, trauma, and emotional scars.

Subjectivity vs. Objectivity

Langacker distinguishes between subjective construal (speaker's presence is felt) and objective construal (speaker removed from the scene).

This poem is deeply subjective. The use of first-person possessive determiners ("my tears," "my pain," "my wounds") reflects the speaker's emotional ownership of the experience.

My silent sacrifice

My diligent pain

These lines reflect the speaker not as an outsider describing a scene, but as someone immersed within it. The construal is intensely subjective, making the reader emotionally aligned with the speaker's internal world.

Sequential vs. Summary Scanning

Sequential Scanning presents a series of actions over time. Summary Scanning presents a conceptual scene all at once. This poem blends both, but leans toward summary scanning in the beginning:

The magnanimity of my tears

My silent sacrifice

My diligent pain

These lines are perceived simultaneously, describing the speaker's condition in a static but intense emotional moment. However, in the second stanza:

Will carve my paths

Will halt the storm..

Will wash all my wounds

Here the poem moves into sequential scanning, presenting a future-oriented series of events that the emotional state will initiate. It implies transformation over time.

Through the lens of Cognitive Grammar, Farzana Aqib's *My Nameless Pleads* emerges not just as a poetic description of pain, but as a conceptual world where grief becomes agency, and language reflects internal strength. The poet uses grammar not merely to construct sentences but to shape emotional reality. Each grammatical choice reflects how the speaker conceptualizes pain as power, turning inner suffering into a

transformative force, a highly personal, yet universally resonant experience.

Findings

The analysis of “My Nameless Pleads” using Cognitive Grammar revealed how the poet expresses deep emotional pain and strength through specific language choices. The poem does not describe events directly but instead creates a mental and emotional world using powerful words, images, and grammatical structures.

In addition, one major finding is that the poet uses construal to present pain not just as suffering but as something meaningful and strong. For example, phrases like “My diligent pain” and “My nameless pleads” show how the poet carefully frames her emotions to highlight their value and purpose. Additionally, through profiling, the poet gives agency to abstract concepts like “pleads” and “tears,” treating them as active forces. This shows that the speaker's emotions are not passive but capable of shaping the future, as seen in lines like “Will carve my paths” and “Will halt the storm.”

Moreover, the use of image schemas such as path, force, and cleaning, helps the reader visualize emotional experiences as physical movements or actions. For instance, the poem speaks of washing wounds and stopping storms, which reflect inner healing and resistance. The poem also uses a subjective voice, where the speaker is emotionally present in every line. This gives the poem an intimate, personal tone. At the same time, it uses summary and sequential scanning, first giving an overall emotional picture, then showing the imagined outcome of inner strength.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Cognitive Grammar is a powerful tool for analyzing poetry.

It helps uncover how emotions are not just described but constructed through grammar, metaphor, and mental imagery. In “My Nameless Pleads,” grammar becomes a way to transform inner pain into emotional strength and healing.

The research shows that modern Pakistani poetry, especially by poets like Farzana Aqib, can be better understood through linguistic frameworks like Cognitive Grammar, which connect language, mind, and meaning.

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Appendix

"My Nameless Pleads"

The magnanimity of my tears
My silent sacrifice
My diligent pain
My empty pleads without name
Will carve my paths
Will halt the storm
That unleashed torrent
it may retain...
It Will wash all my wounds
And All my ugly stains
— **Farzana Aqib**