A Review of Literature: Genre Theory, Concrete Poetry, and Iconicity

مراجعة أدبية: نظرية النوع الأدبي، والشعر الملموس، والأيقونية

إعداد

ميار محمود أحمد محمود

معيد بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية - كلية الآداب جامعة أسوان

الملخص

وهذه الدراسة عبارة عن استعراض للأدبيات المتعلقة بنظرية الأجناس ، والشعر الملموس، والأيقونية. ويشمل الاستعراض دراسات ومقالات مختلفة تناقش ظهـور تحليل النوع ، وتصنيف الأنواع ، ومفهوم النوع في سـياق النظريـة الخطابيـة. وتتناول الدراسة أيضًا الجدل الدائر حول ما يشكل النوع البلاغي وكيف ينبغي وضع تصور للنوع الخطابي.

ويناقش المقال أيضاً خصائص الشعر والشعر الملموس، بما في ذلك اسـتخدام الكلمات ويفحص الطرق التي تستخدم بها اللغة الإشارات البصـرية لنقـل المعنـى وتوصيل الأفكار من خلال الأيقونات والرموز؛ مما يخلق تجربة غـامرة وتفاعليـة للقارئ. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، فهو يعترف والأسـئلة المسـتمرة المتعلقـة بالشـعر الملموس، ويسلط الضوء على أهميته في العصر شبه الأدبي والتكنولوجيا الحديثة.

ويتناول هذا المقال مفهوم الأيقونة، وهو شـكل لغـوي، ويستكشـف الطـرق المختلفة التي يتم بها التعبير عن الأيقونة أو تمثيلها في اللغة، بـدءًا مـن الكلمـات الصوتية التي تقلد الأصوات إلى الاستعارات التي تعتمد على التجارب الحسية لنقـل المفاهيم المجردة. ويكشف المقال كيفية استخدام الكُتّاب للأيقونية لتعزيـز الجوانـب الجمالية والتواصلية لأعمالهم.

الكلمات الدالة

نظرية الأجناس، الشعر الملموس، الأيقونية والسميوزية.

Abstract

The study is a review of literature on genre theory, concrete poetry, and iconicity. The review covers various studies and articles that discuss the emergence of genre analysis, the classification and taxonomy of genres, and the concept of genre in the context of rhetorical theory. The study also addresses the ongoing debate about what constitutes a genre and how rhetorical genre should be conceptualized.

The article also discusses the characteristics of poetry and concrete poetry, including the use of words and examines the ways in which language utilizes visual cues to convey meaning and communicate ideas through icons and symbols; which create an immersive and interactive experience for the reader. Moreover, it acknowledges the complexities and the ongoing questions related to concrete poetry, highlighting its significance in the Para-literary age and modern technology.

The article tackles the concept of iconicity, which is a linguistic form, and explores the various ways in which iconicity is expressed or represented in language, ranging from onomatopoeic words that imitate sounds to metaphors that draw upon sensory experiences to convey abstract concepts. The article explores how writers employ iconicity to enhance the aesthetic and communicative aspects of their works.

Keywords

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Genres

In a study entitled "Genre Learning and Development: A Bakhtinian Perspective", Chen rationalizes the emergence of genre analysis as the description of the way experts generate texts for a genre and the significance of the organization of this text for genre growth. In this study, Chen tackles genres as a way to analyze and understand texts in "cross-disciplinary areas" (1) through pedagogical and academic aspects. She, therefore, displays genres' development of English as second language writing with the aim of raising the student's awareness of "the schematic structure of the genre form" (1).

Although there are effective techniques available for classifying content and topics in text and determining authorship, there has been less research on identifying specific literary genres or styles. Rogula, et al. in their article "Literary Genre Recognition among Polish Blog Posts" introduce various methods for identifying eight different literary genres in a large collection of Polish blogs. They achieve favorable outcomes by using pre-trained word embeddings and a recursive deep neural network classifier.

In an article entitled "An Introduction to Genre Theory", Chandler deals with the genre, and how it can be classified. He exposes some critics' viewpoints in that issue. He claims that "[s]ince classical times literary works have been classified … to general types … [:] poetry, prose, and drama, within which there are further divisions, such as tragedy and comedy within the category of drama" (1). He deals with media genres and asserts that any theme can be tackled in any genre. He, moreover, shows a difference between the conventional and the contemporary views, and how the conventional definitions of genre tend to be based upon conventions of content such as theme or setting. On

the other hand, contemporary theorists declare that an "individual text within a genre rarely if ever has all of the characteristic features of the genre" (2). He highlights Steve Neale's viewpoint as "genres are instances of repetition and difference" and that "difference is absolutely essential to the economy of genre" (qtd. in Chandler "An Introduction") because mere repetition will not attract the audience. Buckingham has the same view asserting that genre is not given by culture, but rather it is a process of negotiation and change. Chandler claims that "[e]ach new work within a genre has the potential to influence changes within the genre or perhaps the emergence of new sub-genres" (3).

The significance of the study is that genre theory is bothered with various doubts and problems, such as the definition of genres, their existence in the world, their taxonomy, and their cultural and transcultural nature. The classification and taxonomy of genres is not a neutral and objective process, and there is often theoretical disagreement about the definition of specific genres. Genres are not discrete systems, but rather instances of repetition and difference, and they can overlap and exhibit conventions of more than one genre. The way genres are defined depends on the purpose and perspective of the theorist, and genres continue to be categorized and labeled in everyday life.

In Miller's "Genre as Social Action", the study explores the concept of genre in the context of rhetorical theory. The author addresses the ongoing debate about what constitutes a genre and how rhetorical genre should be conceptualized. The paper highlights the problem faced by rhetoricians in defining genre and provides insights into how genre can be understood as a stable classifying concept that is rhetorically sound. Miller deals with genre from a social context and claims that genre is conceptualized as "a conventional category of discourse based on large scale typification of rhetorical action and acquiring meaning from the social context of a situation" (162). She also highlights Bazerman's view around the importance of genre studies as:

> In recognizing a text type we recognize many things about the institutional and social setting, the activities being proposed, the roles available to writer and reader, the motives, ideas, ideology, and expected content of the document, and where this all might fit in our life. (qtd. in Miller 162).

The author suggests that a genre is a conventional category of discourse based on large-scale typification of rhetorical action, interpretable by means of rules, and distinct from form. The study also highlights the implications of this understanding of genre for rhetorical criticism, theory, and education.

In his article "Poetry a unique language", Hickey states some characteristics of poetry. One of them is that "it is a unique language that … uses words to convey meaning and communicate ideas, feelings, sounds, gestures, signs, and symbols." He moreover claims that it is a language which deals with the human experiences and the world around us. It is "a vehicle of thought … and spirit dressed up in words which are often … vague [and] mysterious, and have layers of meaning" (Hickey "Poetry a unique language").

On the other hand, Benjamin in her article "On the Distinctiveness of Poetic Language" discusses the debate around the idea of poetic language and examines the case against it. She notes that since the 1970s, with developments in linguistics, the notion of poetic language as distinct from ordinary language has declined. The case against poetic language is based on two assumptions that literary texts and non-literary discourse can be compared to determine if poetic language exists, and that distinctive feature analysis is a valid way to judge the results. However, analyses found no intrinsic differences between

literature and non-literature, rendering the idea of poetic language superfluous. The author aims to take a critical look at this distinctive feature approach and propose considering typical rather than distinctive features. An example from Freud's colleague Hans Silberer is used to illustrate how the ordinary and poetic systems can generate separate narratives with the same meaning but in different forms.

Benjamin concludes that poetic language is a distinctive mode of expression that is generated by a separate system of mind, different from the ordinary system that produces everyday language. She argues for the use of typical features instead of distinctive features to understand poetic language and suggests that the study of cognitive studies can contribute to the understanding of poetic discourse.

Quality characteristics in poetry are reflected in an article titled "Elements of Poetry - and Description of Quality Characteristics". They could be seen in: creativity, thought, imagination, the descriptive and vivid language reflected in the words, the emotional responses; as the poem reflects the feelings of its author through its context, the use of figurative language; (for example the use of metaphor, personification, simile, onomatopoeia, and hyperbole), the use of imagery, rhythm, and rhyme, the words written in verse. On the other hand, Sarduy in his article "the concrete poetry movement in Brazil" claims that Concrete poetry aims at using words in an abstract manner without using allusions which is a "new way of looking not only at poetry but [also] at life itself". He claims that concrete poetry dismantled words to show their composition and made the poet a "designer of meaning". It was inspired by non-figurative and rational geometrical art styles.

Concreteness

The writers of concrete poetry use typographical elements in order to convey the meaning of the poem. Preece and Wells in their article "Typography" argue that typography is "the design … or selection … of letter forms to be organized into words and sentences". In this respect, Concrete poets grab the readers' attention with visuals. They use visual cues called graphic elements to affect the poem; enhancing its meaning. These graphic elements include line length, word position, punctuation, and capitalization.

Preece and Wells state that typography has functional purposes of allowing communication between writers and readers, typographers still have room for creativity and personal judgement. Typography is also considered a secondary art form for three reasons: its basic materials of letters and alphabets are pre-existing rather than invented, there is carryover of letterforms between languages, and typographers have thousands of proven typeface designs to choose from.

The article, moreover, discusses the evolution of typography and related roles over time. It notes that typography was originally done by a single individual like Gutenberg who performed all functions from type design to printing. Over years, these roles were divided among more specialists. It became more common to have type designers, layout artists, binders and others; each contributing separately to the finished book under a printing company. There was variety in how strictly these roles were divided between being freelance, full-time staff, or a single individual handling everything. The context argues that typography can be considered a secondary art since typographers

work with standardized letter forms and reading conventions not of their making, and their work is mediated through mechanical printing processes mostly handled by others.

The article discusses the aesthetics of typography and classification systems for typefaces. It talks about two aesthetic qualities of typographic pages; atmosphere or feel, and colour. Atmosphere depends on design choices like margins, font sizes, etc. Colour refers to the darkness or lightness of text based on letter shapes, spacing, etc. It also talks about different ways typefaces have been classified over time, from categorizing based on seminal artists to precise mathematical systems. Of all elements, letter design is seen as most important as early typography aimed to reproduce written scripts. The main type families are roman, italic and blackletter.

Preece and Wells also discuss the origins and development of printing and typefaces from the 15th century invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany. They describe how Gutenberg utilized existing wine presses to invent the printing press and developed movable metal type. They explain how the earliest typeface used was blackletter or Gothic script, which was later replaced by roman type in Italy influenced by humanism. Roman type then spread across Europe while Gothic remained dominant in Germany. The article provides historical context on the development of lowercase letters and scripts that influenced early typefaces of antiqua, Gothic, and italic. It outlines the three major type families; blackletter, roman, and italic that evolved from calligraphic scripts, and were influenced by various factors such as standardization, regional styles, and the spirit of Humanism.

In an article dealing with the graphic art and the genre of poetry entitled "Speaking about Genre: The Case of Concrete Poetry", Pineda claims that poets deal with graphic art and poetry and how they are linked together and influence each other. She, moreover, refers to the importance of the typographers as an essential aspect in this kind of poetry and that poets ought to be acquainted with typographic techniques.

The author analyzes the concept of genre in the context of concrete poetry. Pineda then goes on to analyze the specific problems that arise from the concept of genre when studying this form of poetry. She discusses the origins of concrete poetry as a literary genre, its development, production, and transmission, as well as its relation to traditional forms and other systems. Pineda claims that concrete poetry is identified by its use of specific techniques, such as subdivisions of ideas, interpenetration of time and space, typographical techniques, perceptive ambivalence, and montage.

The origins of concrete poetry as a literary genre exemplify a process categorized as polygenesis, involving the contributions of writers from different geographical locations. The article discusses the contributions of the Swiss-Bolivian; Eugen Gomringer and the Brazilian group Noigandres, emphasizing the incorporation of elements from different systems to create a completely new experience.

The article delves into the variety of systems that intervene in concrete poetry, such as music, sculpture, mathematics, graphic art, and advertising; posing a challenge in defining it as a genre. It discusses the influences derived from painting and the form of poetic objective, which expands toward the visual, sonority, and movement.

The article focuses on the concept of genre, particularly in the context of concrete poetry. The author justifies the use of the term genre when applied to concrete poetry and introduces theoretical frameworks by Walter Mignolo and Alastair Fowler. Pineda claims that according to Mignolo, the term genre is associated with a sufficient number of meta-texts that account for it. And according to Fowler's system, Concrete poetry would be a historical kind, not a subgenre or a mode.

"The evolution of traditional poetic forms, from more or less fixed rules to a more "free" poetry, alters the condition of poetry itself." (Pineda 384) The concept of genre becomes a constellation of generic questions when studying the case of concrete poetry. Concrete poetry places an emphasis on sensory stimulation and the act of perceiving, challenging traditional modes of interpretation. The emphasis on perception over interpretation in concrete poetry is underscored, necessitating a shift in the reader's approach to sensory experience.

The article concludes by acknowledging the complexities and ongoing questions related to concrete poetry, examining its unique characteristics and production methods. It includes its evolution, present state, and the challenges posed to traditional interpretation by a literary genre arising within the semiotics of the visual. The author concludes that the creation of the new genre is determined in both time and space, and different elements are taken from different systems and incorporated into a completely new experience.

In his article "Brazilian Concrete poetry", Jackson tackles the issue of concrete poetry through its beginnings and how it started in Brazil; highlighting the exhibits held and their role in presenting both; the concrete art and poem. He, moreover, refers to the founding fathers of concrete poetry.

The article discusses a Poem/Art exhibit at Yale University that featured rare books and experimental art from the Beinecke Library curated by the art historian Irene Small. Additionally, it discusses an international conference held in 2006 at Yale to mark the 50th anniversary of the First National Exhibition of Concrete Art in Brazil in 1956. The exhibit represented a period of intense creativity and experimentation in poetry and the arts in Brazil. It left a lasting impact on the public imagination and projected Brazilian Concrete poetry and plastic arts as the vanguard of an international aesthetic movement. The Yale conference was the third one focused on Brazilian Concrete Poets: Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos, and Décio Pignatari; as the previous conferences were held in 1995 and 1999, honoring the contributions of these poets.

Jackson claims that Augusto de Campos designed the conference poster, incorporating the Chinese ideogram for sun from Décio Pignatari's poem *LIFE*. The words poem and art were spelled in vertical columns to the left and right, in alternating red and black colors.

In Hanson's study; "Is Concrete Poetry Literature?" Concrete poetry is presented by the author as a type of visual art. The study is an argument which tackles different viewpoints about the nature of this kind of poetry and whether it can be considered literature or not. Hanson claims that any visual element added to a literary work makes it lose its literariness. The study shows that there is a difference between concrete poetry and ordinary works of literature; as "being more visual … than ordinary works of literature" (82). It arises the argument of whether concrete poetry is literature or not through the "perceptual properties" (92) in the work of art and through the structure.

Hanson argues against the view that concrete poetry is a form of literature. It makes this case by showing that if concrete poetry was considered literature, then by the same reasoning certain sonic works should also count as literature, which is an unintuitive result. The article considers various objections to this view. It also suggests that concrete poetry is best understood as a hybrid art form containing elements of both literature and visual design, rather than being purely one or the other.

Hanson discusses the differences between concrete poetry and ordinary literature, addressing whether the visual presentation of concrete poetry matters, and if the identity conditions for ordinary literature and concrete poetry differ. Hanson explores the historical origin of concrete poetry. She delves into the evaluation of ordinary literary works and concrete poetry, highlighting the relevance of cognitive features in their evaluation. Her argument leads to the conclusion that concrete poetry is not literature.

Works of literature can have visual properties, but these properties are already present in ordinary works of literature. Works like Robert Creeley's *Bresson's Movies* may seem more visual, but they do not have any extra visual element that ordinary works of literature do not have. The difference lies in how these works manipulate the visual dimension that is already present in literature. Therefore, Hanson claims that concrete poetry cannot be considered literature because its visual properties go beyond the visual properties of the word-sequence and structure. The article leaves room for further debate on specific works, such as Cummings's l(a, questioning whether its extreme slenderness is a feature of the word-sequence structure or visual layout.

Hanson considers the possibility of works of concrete poetry to lack word-sequences. Concrete poetry is characterized as a species of avant-garde literature, but Hanson argues against this view, contending that concrete poetry is not literature. Ultimately, the author argues that the properties of concrete poetry preclude its classification as literature, based on intuitions accepted by both sides of the debate.

Sokar's study, *The Rearrangement of the Text, Images, and Symbols in the Visual Poetry of Bob Cobbing, Mary Ellen Solt, and Charles Bernstein: A Theoretical, Thematic, and Technical Study*, explores the significance of visual poetry in rearranging text, images, and symbols to convey the poet's message. The thesis delves into the origin, development, and features of visual poetry, including an exclusive interview with Charles Bernstein, and aims to trace its origin, development, clarify its kinds, and highlight its significance in the Para-literary age and modern technology.

The study defines visual poetry as a form that incorporates visual and verbal elements, designed to be seen rather than read. It discusses its historical roots in ancient Greek and Roman cultures and its evolution alongside avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Dadaism, Minimalism, and Fluxus. Sokar claims that "not all visual poems are literary works. However, they are pieces of art which share some features of literary works." (11).

Sokar explores the features of postmodernism in visual poetry, including its aim to destroy traditional forms of poetry. He, moreover, sheds light on themes as: iconoclasm, formlessness, intertextuality, and others in visual poetry. He discusses the emergence of post-postmodernism in visual poetry due to the negative impacts of modern technology.

The study tackles the visual poetry of Bob Cobbing, Mary Ellen Solt, and Charles Bernstein, highlighting their innovative styles, techniques, and forms. Sokar argues that Mary Ellen Solt, known for concrete poetry, used rearrangement of text and minimalism. Bob Cobbing, a visual, concrete, sound, and performance poet, incorporated ambiguity and educational material in his works. Charles Bernstein, an anti-poet, emphasized the visual appearance of verbal language and used illustrations to complement his poetry. Each poet contributed distinct styles and philosophies to the visual poetry movement.

Sokar concludes his study claiming that visual poetry has emerged as a result of technological advancements and has become a new form of literature that combines visual and verbal elements. It is difficult to categorize visual poetry, but it can be defined as poetry that is meant to be envisioned rather than read. Visual poetry is influenced by various avant-garde movements and has features of both postmodernism and post-postmodernism. He requests that visual poetry can be used as an attractive form in teaching English as a foreign language.

Iconicity

In Becker's *The Effect of Iconicity on Phonetic and Phonological Processes in American Sign Language*, the research explores the impact of iconicity on phonetic and phonological processes in American Sign Language (ASL). The dissertation highlights the importance of considering both structured iconic mappings and their interactions with a sign's phonological structure in order to understand the influence of iconicity on variation in signed languages. It implies that in certain situations, iconicity can help to create more variation at the same time, broadening our understanding beyond just creating new sign forms and limiting variation.

Salama in her study *Opera in the Realm of Linguistics: Visual Social Semiotic Analysis of Opera Carmen* tackles visual semiotics as a theoretical framework and research methodology, divided it into two sections. The first one reviews visual social semiotics as a theoretical framework, focusing on the study of semiotics with a social orientation. It explains the significance of signifiers and the signified, motivated signs, and the development of meaning through interest in social semiotics. Salama argues that:

> Any sign has two dimensions: the signified and the signifier, meaning or content, and form or realization. In social semiotics, the signifier and the signified are existed separately until they are connected together by sign which is produced by culturally-different sign makers. (27)

The second section outlines Martinec's theory of semiotics of action, which explores how actions or movements make meaning, and analyzes the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings of actions through phases. Illustrative examples of phases are provided, showcasing the representation of phases in different contexts, such as in the opera *Carmen* and Michael Jackson's *Jam*.

The visual social semiotics approach combines systemic functional grammar, critical discourse analysis, and semiotics to understand how visuals communicate and create meaning. It emphasizes the analysis of socially situated sign processes and the organization of different semiotic resources. Martinec's theory further delves into the meaning potential and meaning affordance of semiotic resources.

The dissertation offers a detailed exploration of social semiotics, visual social semiotics. It tackles the meaning-making as a complex process that involves various modes of communication, such as language, visuals, and music. In the context of opera, the combination of theatrical elements, music, and dance is used to create meaning and evoke emotions in the observer.

Iconicity includes images, diagrams, and metaphors. It plays a significant role in literary texts by adding meaning and enhancing the overall effect of the text. Nanny and Fischer in their study "Iconicity: Literary texts" discuss the concept of iconicity in language and literature, emphasizing the use of form, structure, and syntax as iconic expressions. The article explores the understanding of iconic critique in literature from a historical standpoint.

Semiotic iconicity refers to the "form miming form" (Nanny and Fischer 1), where a sign resembles its referent. A situation where a sign or symbol looks like the thing it represents. This means that the form of the sign mimics the form of its referent. The authors claim that iconicity in everyday language is widely accepted in modern linguistics, but its application in literature is less common. Literary studies of iconicity have traditionally focused on onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, and typography in pattern poetry and modern visual poetry.

Iconicity in literature is semantically motivated and depends on the reader's capacity to see connections and perceive similarities between the meaning of a sign or text and its formal expression. In poetry, iconicity is highest due to its complex and innovative use of language in terms of sound and space. Prose also offers a wide potential for iconic meaning, while drama provides fewer opportunities for verbal iconic functions.

Sandra Wynands's "Visuality and Iconicity in Samuel Beckett's *Catastrophe*" examines Beckett's play Catastrophe by focusing on the themes of visibility and iconicity. "*Catastrophe* links the dualism that is inherent in representation to the visual" (Wynands 87). The study suggests that the play criticizes the Western tradition of dualistic ways of seeing, which are influenced by philosophy and theology. It discusses the play's critique of the exploitation of human beings in institutionalized contexts, defending human rights in Beckett's minimalist style. It, moreover, explores the significance of the dedication of Beckett's Catastrophe to Vaclav Havel and his political context.

The article also focuses on the use of a single condensed theatrical image at the end of the play and its effectiveness in conveying a message about human complicity with exploitative structures. It further delves into Beckett's exploration of visuality. Additionally, Wynands analyzes the play's elements of self-reference and how they disrupt the traditional representational logic, thus challenging the conventional concept of subjectivity. She also delves into Samuel Beckett's frustration with the limitations of language and his fascination with the inexplicable. The study emphasizes the significance of an iconic space in his artistic pursuits.

Wynands claims that the protagonist directly challenges traditional ideas of representation in the climax. This iconic structure mirrors phenomenology's concept of phenomena that cannot be fully understood by individual subjects.

Liubetska, in her study "The Importance of the Iconic Poetics: Based on the Works of N.V. Gogol and F.M. Dostoyevsky", discusses the rise of interest in Russian icons in the early 20th

century. She mentions that many researchers studied icons from the perspectives of painting, literature, philosophy, and theology. Comparisons are made between icons and pictures, as well as icon painting and religious painting. The author claims that when considering icons from an aesthetic point of view, it provides unusual opportunities to study Orthodox culture and literature. Moreover, the concept of icon and iconicity is expanded from religious art to encompass works of literature and define types of mindsets.

In today's digital age, texts have become more than just words on a page. Saemmer in "Some reflections on the iconicity of digital texts" examines the iconic nature of digital texts, highlighting their dynamic and changeable characteristics. The combination of text and symbols within the same system of signs referred to as "pluricode couplings" (Saemmer 1), creates a unique reading experience that captivates readers. She claims that the use of iconic elements in language, such as onomatopoeias and visual representations, adds depth and richness to the text. Additionally, the font and color choices can have a significant impact on the reader's perception of the text, conveying iconic meanings.

Holm discusses a book titled *Form miming meaning: Iconicity in language and literature*, which is a collection of papers from a symposium on iconicity in language and literature. Holm in his review claims that the book delves into the intricate connection between form and meaning in language, shedding light on the role of iconicity in the formation and evolution of language. The book authors examine the intricate relationship between the sounds, words, and grammatical structures of a language and the meanings they convey. By exploring the concept of iconicity, which refers to the resemblance between linguistic forms and the concepts they represent, the book delves into the ways in which language utilizes visual, auditory, and tactile cues to convey meaning.

The book explores the various ways in which iconicity is expressed or represented in language, ranging from onomatopoeic words that imitate sounds to metaphors that draw upon sensory experiences to convey abstract concepts. It explores how iconicity is not limited to individual words but can also be observed in the structure and organization of language, such as in the repetition of sounds or the arrangement of words in a sentence. The authors explore how writers employ iconicity to enhance the aesthetic and communicative aspects of their works. They examine how literary devices such as imagery, symbolism, and figurative language utilize iconicity to evoke vivid mental images and convey complex emotions and ideas.

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