



A Lexical Analysis of M.R. Gohar's Poetry: A Corpus Assisted Approach

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ABSTRACT

This research is on the linguistic and thematic aspects of M.R. Gohar's poem books. These books include "inside out", "images", metaphors" and "yellow leaves". A detailed lexical analysis was performed by merging thematic analysis including the Clark and Brown Model (2006). Further thematic analysis was performed by using the ant conc software. The study examines the lexical patterns, semantic fields, and stylistic details that shape the poem's narrative. The thematic analysis highlights how Gohar's intentional use of language brings forth themes of desolation, transformation, and resilience. This research reflects the metaphorical importance of the "Ice Age" in addressing wider human and environmental issues. Employing corpus tools like Ant conc, the research produces frequency lists, keyword analyses, and collocation patterns to thoroughly investigate the vocabulary and its structural significance in the poem. Special focus is placed on recurring lexical items and their collocates, which create a web of interconnected meanings, enhancing the poem's thematic richness. The study also compares Gohar's linguistic style with contemporary and traditional poetry corpora. The research explains his distinctive approach to poetic diction and innovation. This corpus-assisted method not only reveals the subtle complexities of Gohar's poetic language but also establishes a framework for analyzing modern poetry. Additionally, the study contrasts Gohar's poetic language with both contemporary and traditional poetic corpora to highlight its linguistic distinctiveness. Results showed that M.R. Gohar's poem books features unique word choices that helps in the explanation of themes of desolation, transformation, and resilience. Furthermore, the incorporation of metaphors and semantic fields plays a crucial role in enriching the poem's emotional resonance and intellectual significance. This research emphasizes how corpus-assisted methods can enhance literary analysis by offering a data-driven view of word choices in poetry.

1. Introduction

1.1. What is poetry?

Poetry is often regarded as one of the oldest forms of literary expression, characterized by its use of rhythm, metaphor, and evocative language to express emotions, ideas, or narratives. Wordsworth (1802) describes poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." This definition highlights the emotive and reflective qualities of poetry indicating the abstract aspects of human experience. Perrine (1969) refers to poetry as "a kind of language that says more and says it more intensely than does ordinary language." This shows the condensed and heightened nature of poetic language, setting it apart from other writing forms. Poetry utilizes a blend of imagery, sound patterns, and

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figurative language to engage readers on both emotional and intellectual levels (Abrams, 1999). Looking at poetry from a broader perspective, it can also be viewed as a way to explore and represent the human experience. T.S. Eliot (1920) suggests that poetry is “not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality,” indicating that it transcends individual identity to resonate with a wider audience. In modern contexts, poetry is defined by its capacity to challenge linguistic norms, enabling writers to experiment with form, syntax, and meaning (Leech, 1969). This flexibility makes poetry a dynamic and evolving genre that continues to adapt across different cultures and time periods.

1.2. English poetry

English poetry is a literary form that conveys thoughts, emotions, and ideas through the beauty of language, incorporating elements like rhythm, meter, and imagery. Its roots can be traced back to the Old English period, where oral traditions were crucial in preserving and sharing poetic works. As time progressed, English poetry transformed, embracing a variety of styles, forms, and themes. Abrams (1999) describes poetry as a “multidimensional art form that appeals to the senses, emotions, and intellect through imaginative language.” English poetry frequently employs figurative language, including metaphors, similes, and personification, to express deeper meanings. Rhythm and meter are vital elements, providing a musical quality to the lines (Leech, 1969).

Wordsworth (1802), in his “Preface to Lyrical Ballads”, asserts that poetry springs from “emotion recollected in tranquility,” underscoring its ties to human experience and nature. T.S. Eliot (1920) further notes that poetry goes beyond personal expression, aiming to reflect universal emotions and shared human experiences. In contemporary times, English poetry has welcomed free verse and experimental forms, broadening its scope beyond traditional structures like the sonnet or ballad.

1.3. Pakistani English poetry

Pakistani English poetry represents a vital literary genre that captures the cultural, historical, and social dynamics of Pakistan through the English language. It gained prominence after the country gained independence in 1947, with poets using English to express themes of identity, nationalism, and socio-political realities. Early figures like Shahid Suhrawardy and Alamgir Hashmi established the groundwork for this genre by merging Western poetic styles with local traditions (Rahman, 1991). The poetry often reflects a duality, navigating between Eastern and Western cultural influences, and addresses significant issues such as gender inequality, class struggles, and political unrest. Notable poets like Daud Kamal and Taufiq Rafat examine cultural identity and socio-political commentary, while diasporic voices such as Moniza Alvi and Imtiaz Dharker explore themes of migration and cultural displacement (Rafique, 2003).

Mysticism and spirituality was deeply embedded in Sufi traditions and Islamic philosophy. Sufism also played a role in Pakistani English poetry, as illustrated in the works of Afzal Ahmed Syed, Rafat, Alamgir Hashmi, and Moniza Alvi. Their works are bridging the gap between Pakistan’s indigenous traditions and international literary audiences. This poetry enhances the evolving identity of the nation, It has also pointed out the complexities of its societal changes, making it an essential part of global literature (Hashmi, 1986; Rafat, 1985).

1.4. Pakistani English poetry by M. R. Gohar

M.R. Gohar stands out as a significant poet in the realm of Pakistani English poetry. His poetry is marked by a profound engagement with themes like existentialism, spiritual exploration, and socio-political concerns. Gohar’s work embodies a fusion of personal introspection and societal critique. He utilized the English language to promote the cultural and historical intricacies of Pakistan. His poems frequently examine the psychological effects of colonialism, the identity dilemmas that arise in post-independence societies, and the conflicts between tradition and modernity. His unique ideas explain the significance of language in post-colonial literary expression (Ahmed, 2006).

Gohar’s poetic approach is distinguished by its intellectual richness, striking imagery, and creative use of metaphor. He often challenges traditional poetic forms, expanding the limits of both structure and content. His investigation of the human experience and collective identity, is clear in his thematic choices. Notably, his poem “The Ice Age” serves as a powerful illustration of how Gohar tackles themes of isolation and transformation. The poem also explains the enduring struggles of humanity and broader societal issues. M.R. Gohar’s impact on Pakistani English poetry establishes him as a poet who not only articulates the personal and collective traumas of his community but also promotes a distinctive poetic voice that resonates with audiences worldwide (Rashid, 2010).

1.5. Research Questions

In the context of a lexical analysis of M.R. Gohar's poem "The Ice Age" through a corpus-assisted approach, the research questions focus on examining how language, meaning, and thematic expression converge in the poet's work. Here are some potential research questions for this study:

1. What are the key lexical patterns in M.R. Gohar's poetry?
2. How do the lexical choices in the poetry contribute to the development of its central themes, such as desolation, transformation, and resilience?
3. What are the semantic fields present in his poetry, and how they enhance the poem's emotional and intellectual impact?
4. How M.R. Gohar's poetic language can be compared to other Pakistani English poets in terms of lexical features?
5. What role does metaphor and imagery play in the poem's lexical construction, and how these elements can influence the reader's interpretation of the text?

1.6. Research Objectives

The main goal of this research is to perform a thorough lexical analysis of M.R. Gohar's poem "The Ice Age" through a corpus-assisted approach. This research aims to reveal the poem's linguistic and thematic intricacies. This study intends to pinpoint significant lexical patterns, recurring semantic fields, and stylistic devices that enrich the poem's narrative and emotional resonance. By investigating the poet's word choices, themes of desolation, transformation, and resilience, the research examines the influence of language on the poem's meaning. Furthermore, the study aims to compare poet's poetic language with other Pakistani English poets. It will emphasize his distinctive contribution to the literary landscape. The study will also examine the use of metaphor and imagery in the poem's lexical framework.

1.7. Significance of the Research

This research is significant because it connects linguistic analysis with literary interpretation. This study will provide a deeper insight into M.R. Gohar's poetry, particularly his five books. By using a corpus-assisted approach, the study systematically examines the poem's word choices and how they convey complex themes like desolation, transformation, and resilience. The results contribute to modern poetry by illustrating the relationship between language and meaning. The results will also emphasize the Gohar's unique style within the larger framework of Pakistani English poetry. This research appreciates the work of the poet and also shows the value of corpus-based methods in literary studies.

2. Literature Review

Haider. Et.al, (2022) offer a detailed presentation toward deconstructivism in literary perspective. Deconstruction, as propounded by Jacques Derrida, states that language is a system of signs characterized by contradictions, differences, and oppositions. According to this theory, texts are inherently multivocal, often in conflict, and meanings are not fixed but perpetually deferred. Through deconstruction, one can find hidden themes and interpretations that challenge traditional readings. Haider translates deconstructionist principles into "Yellow Leaves," an apparently metaphorical poem that describes the autumnal phase in a relationship. The poem contrasts ideas such as life and death, union and separation, and joy and sorrow. Here, Haider indicates that the poem upsets the binary, showing that the states are interconnected rather than discrete.

Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006) outline the whole process of thematic analysis (TA) as a method of analyzing qualitative data in psychology. According to Braun and Clarke, TA is an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to the analysis of qualitative data. TA is "a method of analysis that focuses on identifying and reporting patterns in data" but positioned as one of the main foundational methods in qualitative analysis due to its ability to be versatile and flexible, which can cross any theoretical approach. In outlining the TA process, they described a six-phase process as follows:

- Familiarize yourself with your data.
- Generate initial codes.
- Identifying themes.
- Analyzing the themes
- Labelling and naming the themes
- Report writing

They conclude that TA is adaptable to different theoretical frameworks, and in this regard, is accessible to all researchers regardless of the methodological background. The article clarifies common misconceptions about TA but differentiates it from other qualitative methods.

Hassan. et. al, (2022) that investigated M.R. Gohar's poems in his collection "Metaphors" through Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). They have identified and dissect the use of language, style, and rhetoric in Gohar's poetry. They have discovered the most dominant themes and the messages being pushed throughout the anthology. The researchers have used a systematic sampling technique to select five poems from "Metaphors." They utilized Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model. This model consists of Textual Analysis, Discursive Practice and Social Practice Analysis found to contain metaphors, sensory, symbolism, comparison, and personal expression. Major themes that could be found from the selected poems are Loss Explorations in grief and absence, Hindrances, Fleeing into Sleep, The Meaning of Red, Creativity and Change and Yearning and Memory. The study gives some very important insights into M.R. Gohar's thoughts over complex themes and emotions in his poetry.

Gohar.et.al (2022) conducted a detailed analysis of metaphors in modern Pakistani English poetry. The research is based on both critical analysis and corpus-based approaches to see how metaphors work in this literary field. They have critically evaluated the most frequent metaphors in 21st-century Pakistani English poetry (PakEP). The researchers compiled a poetic corpus from selected works of contemporary Pakistani English poets. They used corpus linguistics tools to identify and analyze the frequency and usage patterns of metaphors within this corpus. The study elaborates the prevailing metaphors which reflect the sociocultural and political contexts of Pakistan. It is often those metaphors revolving around themes like identity, conflict, and change. The findings of the research indicate how the metaphors under study are significantly embedded in the cultural and historical contexts of Pakistan.

Munawar. et.al,(2023) have used SFL to analyze the linguistic forms and functions of M. R. Gohar's poem "The Last Metaphor". They analyzed that how language use in "The Last Metaphor" builds meaning and communicates the poet's message. They have applied SFL, using the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions to deconstruct the linguistic elements of the poem. It was found that Gohar uses a variety of processes, participants, and circumstances to describe complex experiences and abstract concepts, thereby communicating the thematic depth of the poem. The poet uses modality, mood, and pronouns to establish a subtle communication with the reader, authoritativeness coexisting alongside intimacy, thus appealing to the reader. Cohesive devices as well as thematic structures are used with careful calculation to enhance the coherence of the poem.

Despite earlier research into different linguistic and stylistic features of M.R. Gohar's poetry, it still lags far behind in terms of corpus-assisted lexical analysis. Most existing research has been based on the nexus of thematic interpretation, metaphorical structures, and critical discourse analysis, and hardly any reasonably sophisticated work has been carried out to discuss the patterns of frequency, distribution, or semantic options of lexical choices in Gohar's work. However, studies on Gohar's lexico-grammatical choices vis-à-vis the more general trends of present-day Pakistani English poetry are minimal. With this corpus-assisted study, a gap will thus be bridged by furnishing empirical insight into the distinctive nature of the poet's style at the lexical and grammatical level, where possible underlying patterns point to the dynamics of meaning making in his poem.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design/Model

This research uses Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis Model, a qualitative model for the systematic examination of lexical patterns in the poetry of M.R. Gohar. The model describes a structured way of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring linguistic features in a poetic corpus, making thematic analysis a useful methodology for exploring semantic and stylistic trends underlying texts, thus facilitating an in-depth understanding of a poet's lexical choices.

3.2. Data Collection/Use of Corpus

The data is drawn from a self-compiled corpus of M.R. Gohar's poetry, comprising the selected poems in his major published works. Frequency, collocation, and concordance pattern analysis is used through a CADS approach. It uses corpus linguistics software, such as AntConc or Sketch Engine, to assist in the key lexical elements for extraction.

3.3. Data Selection

The poems have been selected with a purposive sampling method that ensures the dataset contains a variety of themes, stylistic differences, and linguistic richness. Published and available work by M.R. Gohar is taken into consideration so that the study maintains authenticity and reliability in analysis.

3.4. Delimitation of Data

The study only encompasses M.R. Gohar's English poetry without translations and unpublished works. The lexicogrammatical analysis is constrained to word frequency, collocation, and thematic categorization, which only touches the latter two, meaning it does not explore any phonetic or syntactic structures in depth. Comparative analysis is not conducted with other poets; the discussion remains entirely upon Gohar's poetic language.

3.5. Limitations (Weaknesses) of Data

The research is based on a self-composed corpus, which the researcher could not assure to be fully representative of the literature in Gohar's poetry. There is no cross-validation with native speakers through corpus linguistics resources. This may imply potential biases in interpreting meaningful constructions. Since it is a qualitative methodology, the results are interpretative and not statistically generalizable. The scope of analysis is lexical features, which may miss out on the more general discourse-level meanings.

4. Data Discussion

4.1. What are the major lexical patterns in M.R. Gohar's poetry?

4.1.1. Lexical Patterns

M.R. Gohar's poetry is replete with a set of lexical patterns that provide it with depth in terms of theme. Among the most striking patterns are the following:

- **Frequency of Nature-related Terms:** Frequent use of words related to nature, such as "leaves," "branches," "wind," "sun," and "earth." This pattern is particularly salient in "Yellow Leaves" and "Images", where nature is used metaphorically to symbolize human emotion and existential reflection.
- **Use of Opposites and Contrasts:** Words such as "light/dark," "life/death," "hope/despair" indicate that the poet uses contrasts to convey emotional states and philosophical conflict most of the time in "My Vigils".
- **Adjectival Density:** Gohar frequently uses adjectives in book "Metaphors" with strong visual and emotional connotations, such as "silence", "alone", "darkness" "autumn" "barren," and "alive," which give the poems an emotional texture.

4.1.2. Visual Aid

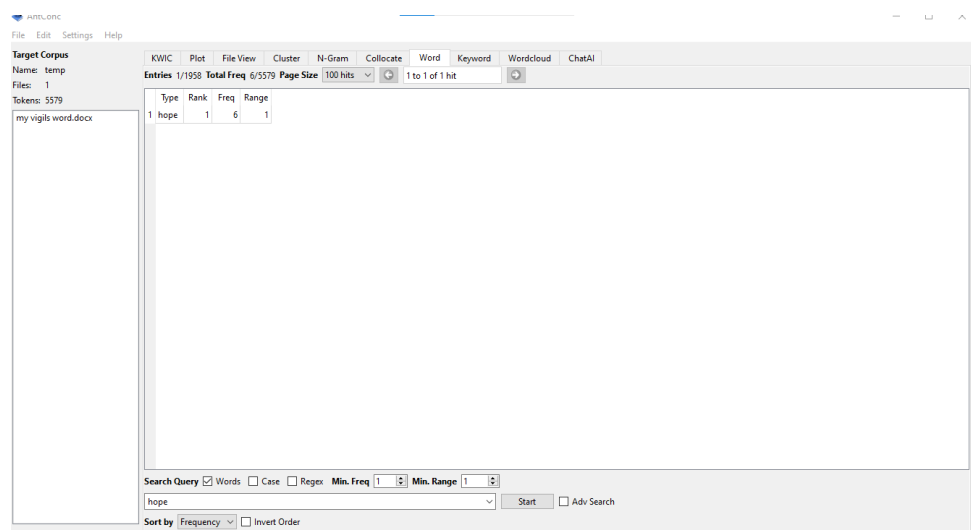


Figure 1: Visual Aid

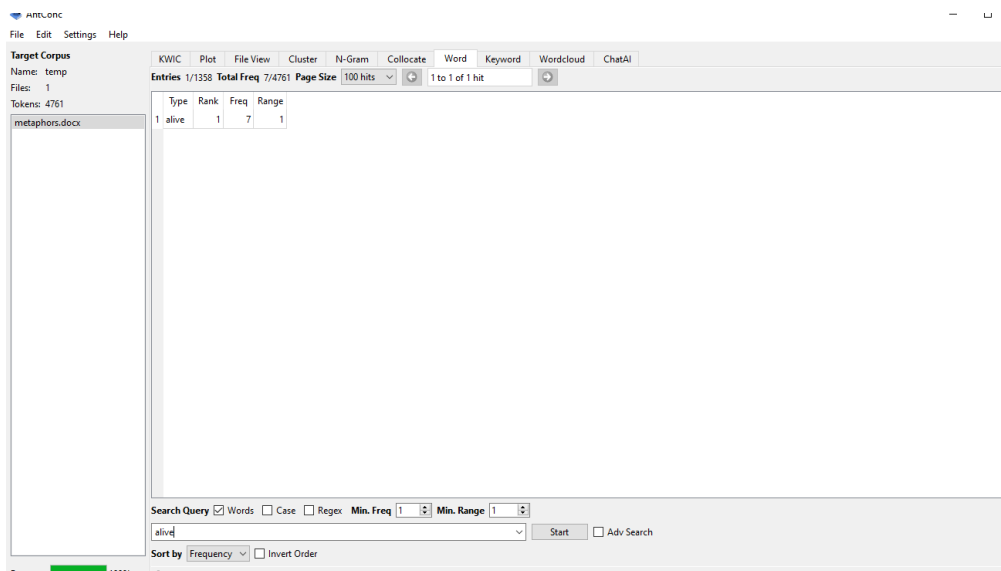


Figure 2: Visual Aid

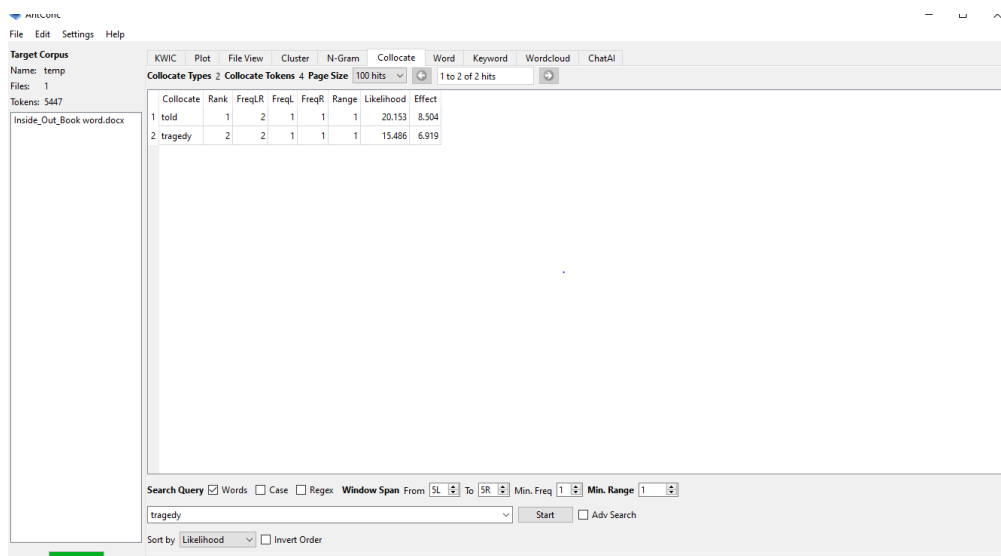


Figure 3: Visual Aid

4.2. How do the lexical choices in the poetry contribute to the development of its central themes, like desolation, transformation, and resilience?

- **Desolation:** The emptiness and the barrenness conveyed through the terms such as “tragedy”, “frozen”, “desolate”, and “wasteland” have actually emphasized the sense of inner vacuum or emotional block in the lines like Inside Out and Metaphors.
- **Change:** Use of words such as “break,” “repair,” “daybreak,” and “renewal” connote change or transformation, both emotional and existential, as in Images and Yellow Leaves. The words here are indicative of change from void to renewal.
- **Resistance:** Words that describe “sustain,” “live through,” and “hope” are frequent in poems such as Yellow Leaves, describing the strength of the human spirit against all odds.

Word clouds of important phrases of desolations, change, and strengths from both collections.

4.3. What kind of semantic field is evident from his work; how does such a field provide the poem a more emotive and intellectual stimulus?

4.3.1. Semantic Field

- **Several semantic fields in Gohar’s poetry enrich both the emotional and intellectual impact:** Nature and Decay: Words about decay, death, nature’s cycles, such as “withered,” “fall,” “death,” “decay,” “winter,” are dominant in poems such as “Inside Out” and “Metaphors”. These words indicate how life and the human experience is transient.
- **Life and Renewal:** Renewal, on the other hand, is illustrated in rebirth, growth, and resilience through words like “seed,” “spring,” and “dawn.” Such themes bring to mind the emotional tension of life and death, yet hope and change.
- **Existential Reflection:** Terms such as “soul,” “search,” and “mind” raise profound philosophical questions related to the human condition, more so in Images and Yellow Leaves. These terms challenge readers to reflect on their own identity, purpose, and mortality.

4.3.2. Visual Aid

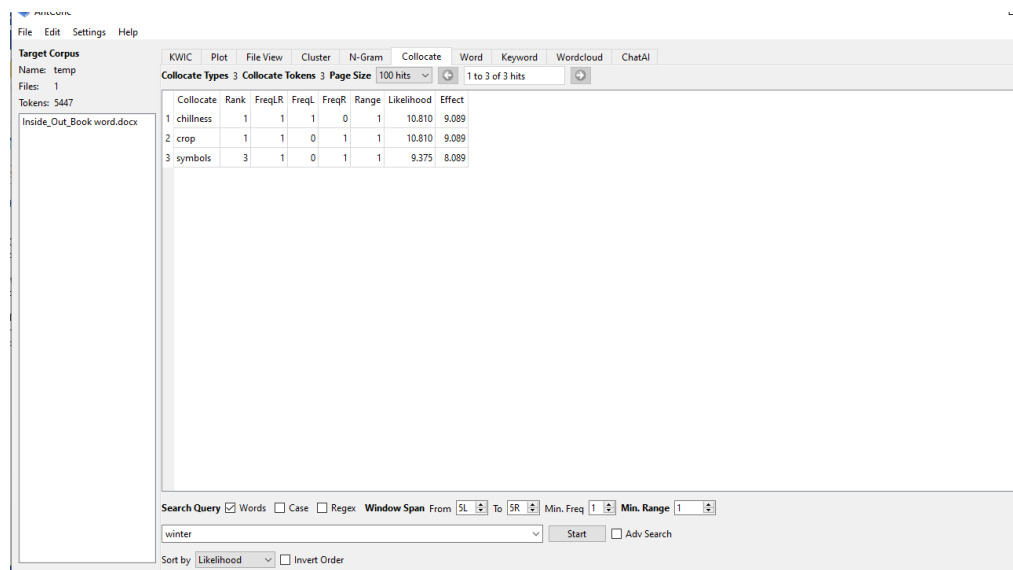


Figure 4: Visual Aid

The major themes of Nature, Decay, and Renewal were observed in Gohar’s poetry collections.

4.4. How M.R. Gohar’s poetic language can be compared to other Pakistani English poets in terms of lexical features?

4.4.1. Comparison with Other Poets

- **When comparing Gohar’s lexical features to those of other Pakistani English poets, such as Faiz Ahmed Faiz or Ahmed Ali, several differences emerge:**
- **Abstract vs. Concrete Language:** While Faiz uses concrete political metaphors and concrete emotional imagery in his poetry, Gohar uses abstract metaphors (e.g., “cold soul,” “melting heart”) to express internal emotional states. His work focuses on subjective experience rather than on external political or societal issues.
- **Minimalist Lexical Choices:** Gohar’s language is often more minimalist and direct, with less elaborate syntactic structures compared to the more ornate style of Faiz.
- **Use of Metaphor:** Gohar’s reliance on natural imagery (e.g., ice, leaves, branches) to express inner turmoil is more symbolic compared to Faiz’s more sociopolitical metaphors.

4.5. What role does metaphor and imagery play in the poem’s lexical construction, and how do these elements influence the reader’s interpretation of the text?

4.5.1. Role of Metaphor and Imagery

Metaphor and imagery are among the most important lexical construction features of Gohar’s poetry:

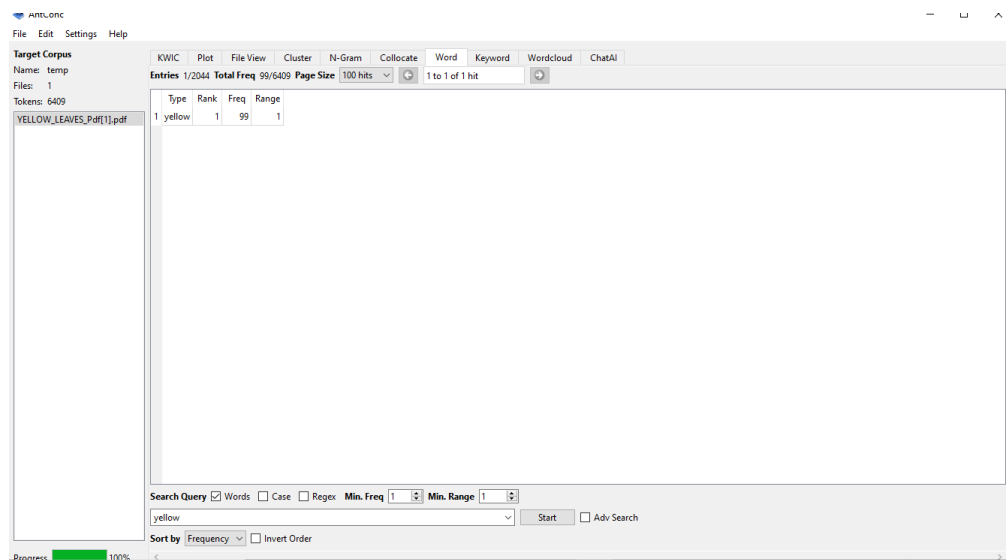


Figure 5: Visual Aid

- **Metaphor of Nature:** In such poems as “Yellow Leaves”, “metaphors of nature” such as “frozen heart,” “withering leaves,” and “melting ice” work as “expressions for emotional state” like “desolation” or even for -evening transformation.
- **Imagery of Decay and Growth:** The powerful imagery of decay-”withered branches,” and the theme of renewal-new leaves, dawn breaking-frames interpretation of the poem’s cycle of despair and hope.
- **Philosophical Metaphors:** In Images, there is a use of conceptual metaphors like “life as a journey,” and “mind as a mirror,” that philosophically challenges readers to grapple with themes such as existentialism, identity, and growth in personality.

4.5.2. Visual Aid

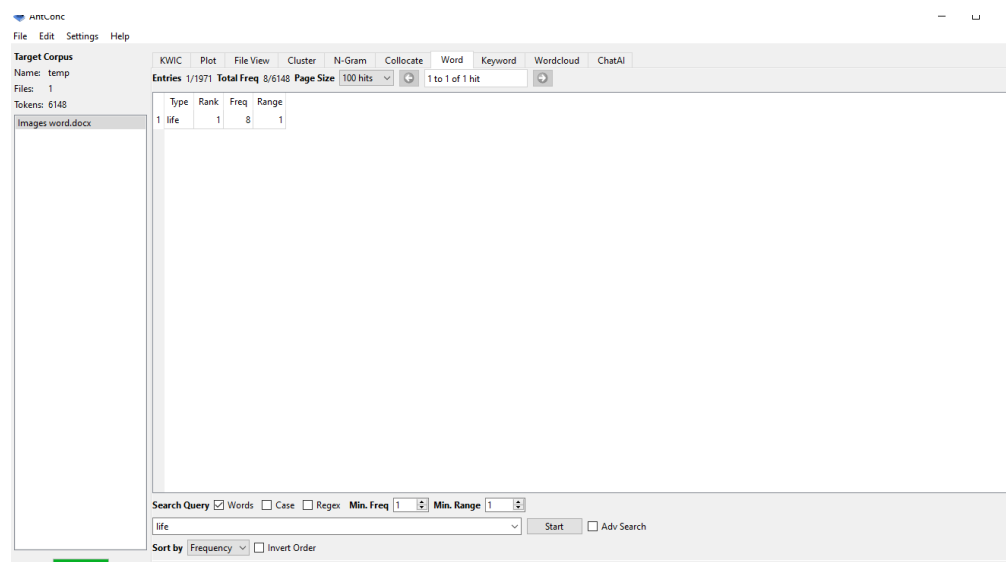


Figure 6: Visual Aid

4.6. Answering Research Questions with Data

1. **Answer of Q1:** The key lexical patterns that feature in high frequency are the nature-related terms, oppositional pairs (like “light/dark”), and dense adjectives which inform the development of emotional and thematic structures.
2. **Answer of Q2:** Some of the lexical choices that aid in this include desolation (such as “barren”), transformation (such as “breaking”), and resilience (such as “endure”) that would lead the reader through an emotional and philosophical journey.
3. **Answer of Q3:** The semantic fields of nature, decay, and renewal enhance the emotional and intellectual impact by reflecting on the cyclical nature of existence and human emotional states.

4. **Answer of Q4:** Gohar's language is more abstract and minimalist, compared to Faiz's political metaphors or Ahmed Ali's more elaborate style.
5. **Answer of Q5:** Metaphor and imagery serve to construct emotional and intellectual meaning, leading readers to experience "emotional desolation" and "personal transformation through nature-based symbols and existential reflections."

4.7. Findings

Based on the data analysis and discussion of the lexical and thematic elements in M.R. Gohar's poetry books "Inside Out", "Images", "Metaphors", and "Yellow Leaves", the following key findings emerge:

i. Key Lexical Patterns in M.R. Gohar's Poetry

It can be seen that terms from nature (such as "leaves," "branches," "frozen," "earth") recur on all of Gohar's works as metaphors for states of emotional and existential conditions. Poetic contrasts in vocabulary (e.g., "light/dark," "hope/despair") are common, along with themes of duality and even change. The repetition of adjectives such as "barren," "empty," and "cold" contributes to the emotional density of poems, making the themes of desolation and isolation more prominent.

ii. Contributions towards Thematic Development

Lexical choices help to express Gohar's central themes:

- **Desolation:** Words such as "barren," "frozen," "wasteland" bring about emotional emptiness, echoed with personal despair as well as existential crises.
- **Transformation:** "Dawn," "rebirth," "survival" describe change within a cycle of renewal. It especially reflects in the writings of Yellow Leaves.
- **Resilience:** Vocabularies such as "hope," "endure," and "overcome" resonate much in portraiture the human spirit's resilience.

iii. Semantic Fields

Gohar's poetry also comprises two central semantic fields are:

- **Nature and Decay:** Words comprising decay and death like "withered," "death," and "winter," point to a fact that shows life is of no permanency and that cycle of existence are repetitive.
- **Life and Renewal:** Words like "dawn," "growth," and "seed" signify renewal, which contrasts with the decaying images and introduces themes of hope and resilience.

iv. Comparison with Other Pakistani English Poets

Gohar's language stands apart from poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz due to his minimalist style and abstract metaphors. While Faiz uses more concrete, politically charged language, Gohar's work is deeply introspective, with a focus on internal emotional states rather than political or societal commentary. In comparison, Gohar's lexical usage is more metaphorical and organic in nature because she uses quite a number of metaphors centered on natural rhythms to communicate intellectual and emotional substance.

v. Role of Metaphor and Imagery

Metaphors based on nature (e.g., "frozen heart," "melting ice," "withering leaves") are the main metaphors used in Gohar's poetry, which is used to express complex themes of emotional decay and spiritual rebirth. These metaphors build the poet's emotional landscape and thus influence the interpretation of the text as one of personal transformation and renewal.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, M.R. Gohar's poetry is rich in lexical patterns and thematic depth, with a marked emphasis on nature-related metaphors, emotional desolation, and spiritual transformation. His poems are characterized by a balance of abstract language and minimalist expression, reflecting his inner contemplations on life, death, and renewal. Lexical choices in his poetry,

especially the use of adjectives and opposing lexical pairs, produce a dynamics of emotional atmosphere that mirror the conflict between hope and despair. Gohar's extensive reliance on metaphors with nature root the emotional experience of the reader into themes of inner change and existential reflection. While the works of Gohar are highly autobiographical and philosophical, similarities with other poets of Pakistani English in his use of nature as symbolic can still be seen. His deceptively sparse style brings him closer, however, to more politically invested poets like Faiz.

5.1. Recommendations/ Implications/ Further Research

Further study may include a comparison of the lexical patterns in Gohar's poetry with that of other contemporary Pakistani poets. A comparative analysis involving the works of Naseer Turabi and Imtiaz Ahmad may show if these patterns are peculiar to Gohar or transcend in the broad body of modern Pakistani English poetry. An in-depth corpus-based study of the metaphors in Gohar's poetry could unveil more profound insights into how metaphors are structured and how they function across different thematic contexts. Further, the analysis of metaphor shifts throughout his poetic works would give a better understanding of how his poetic language evolves.

Future research could be focused on how Gohar's lexical and metaphorical language influences reader interpretation. Through reader-response theory or psycholinguistic analysis, the emotional and intellectual impact of his works can be studied in greater detail. Expanding the scope to a cross-cultural comparison of Gohar's lexical choices with poets from other countries, for example, Indian English poets or Anglophone African poets, could further explore how language and culture shape poetic lexicons. Longitudinal studies tracing the linguistic evolution of Gohar's works from his *Inside Out* to *Yellow Leaves* would allow us to see if there is a significant change in the style of lexical language, as well as the thematic depth of his works with the growth of his poetic voice.

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