

# A Corpus-based Study of Symbolism in William Golding's Lord of the Flies

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**Abstract---** *Corpus-based literary analysis is getting its momentum nowadays in the hands of researchers around the globe as it offers objective and unbiased results. The present study is a corpus-based analysis of symbolism in William Golding's novel Lord of the Flies. The main purpose of this study is to compare these given symbols akin to the human nature of modern society. All symbols reflect the theme of the novel and represent the human nature and instinct of civilization and savagery. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. Quantitative data was analyzed to check the frequency of the given symbols. For that purpose AntConc 3.5.8 software is used. Ten symbols are selected randomly to analyze the frequency and their use in the novel through concordance tool. Gathered data are categorized according to frequency order, analyzed in descriptive manner for qualitative purposes. The Findings of the study reveal that symbols used by Golding in his novel Lord of the Flies represent the theme of the novel that is the representation of human nature.*

**Keywords---** *Corpus Linguistics, Literary Text, Symbolism, Quantitative Method, AntConc.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study is to make comparative analysis of modern human beings and symbols used by William Golding in his novel Lord of the Flies. Most of the symbols are related to status and attitude of our modern society in term of positive and negative presentation of modern human nature. Lord of the Flies was written in 1954 by William Golding, in this novel he presented the British schoolboys with their inner civilization and savagery. These characteristics of human nature can be seen in Lord of the Flies, with a clear representation of civilized humanity and savagery. Lord of the Flies reflects our modern society when it suffers a lot of problems and at the end disconnects of humanity, destruction and loss of innocence.

### 1.1 Symbolism in Lord of the Flies

Symbolism is a literary device used by a writer to express his own ideas and thoughts in another way. William Golding wants to convey his own message through his novel Lord of the Flies. Golding is a person who is the witness and has experienced the horror of the war, he attempts to convey his ideas and view on human nature by using such techniques. Lord of the Flies is full of symbols that represent the themes of the novel through symbolism, such as loss of innocence, and the instinct nature of good and evil of human beings. By using such symbols, Golding wants to make his novel interesting to the readers and to make them think or experience the situation, the reader becomes able to apply these symbols on his own society. Golding's main aim by using such symbols is to convey and transfer his own thought and views of the evil inside of the man and the primitive nature of mankind.

Ralph and Simon represent civilized humanity whereas Jack represents human's inner brutality. Ralph keeps

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himself busy all the time in performing civilized actions like building huts and doing different task for other boys while the other boys like to play different games, having fun all the time, and avoiding from the responsibilities of all kinds. Roger is a mysterious boy. He is the violent and brutal. He is regarded as the right wing of Jack. He is the one who kills Piggy. Ralph represents humanity, goodness, civilized morality in society and capable of leadership. Simon represents the innate goodness of humanity. Jack's evil, Simon's purity and goodness follow a deeper inherent morality. Ralph's, Piggy's and Simon's good habits are not due to their strict adherence to the standards of society, or due to their innate innocence, their ethical lifestyle do not make them immune to the island, but it differs them to other boys. They do not require society to inform them what is right or wrong. They know that the island is changing the mind and actions of boys into savages as it is clear from this statement. "However Simon thought of the beast, there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick" (Golding 103).

Piggy is an important character of this novel, physically vulnerable as he is suffering from asthma, and poor eyesight. The other boys make fun of him and often treat him an inferior member of the society. However, he is an intelligent boy and a good advisor to Ralph. He always applies scientific approaches in everything wisely. While using several symbols like conch, glasses, fire, beast, and island, William Golding brings out the theme of the novel. The conch is the symbol of power and authority among the society. Ralph as a leader blows the conch shell every time when he calls for assembly of society. As the conch is the symbol for authority and Jack want to get this conch to become a leader. Piggy glasses represent wisdom and intellect of society because society is able to get fire from sunlight through lens of Piggy glasses. Piggy glasses represent that every person is important in society. The fire represents call for help from ship that will come and rescue the boys from island. The beast is the sign of an instinct of violence and aggressiveness that exist within every human being. Lord of the Flies is the most valuable symbol that William Golding uses in this novel. Althaus, (2007) notes "Lord of the Flies" is a literal translation of Baal-Zebub who is identified in the Bible as a powerful demon in hell and at times taken to be the evil himself. This novel is representing barbaric nature of human beings. Human beings are suffering in the world due to their evil deeds and due to their savagery nature.

### ***1.2 Lord of the Flies and Our Modern Society***

Lord of the flies is a depiction of the status of society and human nature and true reflection of the modern society. All the boys are innocent and they are in a desert island. William Golding uses different symbols and themes in this novel that represent our modern society and human nature. The savagery and civilization in Lord of the Flies can be compared in many ways that take place in our modern society. All the problems faced by the boys on island can be seen in our daily life. As conch is a symbol of authority in Lord of the Flies. A person having this conch has the right to speak and it shows freedom. On blowing the conch all the boys give response that shows their civilization. But gradually the conch starts to fade and freedom is being taken away. The system of blowing conch becomes corrupt like our political society of modern world. Nobody wants to be under supervision as he wants to be a chief; so everybody wants to make his own separate party and needs more and more members to join while using oppression. He wants to gain more and more power. Today oppression is a big issue of our modern society. The littluns are considered to be the foolish kids and useless to do any work due to their age. This discrimination differ these people from the society who are unable to do any work and have no contribution in societal events like

beggars, gays and disabled people etc. Ralph represents democracy and logic, Piggy represents rationalism and intellectualism, Jack and Simon signify savagery and anarchy, and beast mirrors the evils, sins and darkness of our modern society.

### ***1.3 Objectives of the Study***

The objectives of this study are to:

- Apply the symbols used by William Golding on human nature of our modern society
- Compare themes and symbols to the human nature of modern society
- Analyze Golding's symbolism through Antconc

### ***1.4 Research Questions***

1. How does William Golding's symbolism represent human nature of our modern society?
2. Which kind of themes and symbols are compare-able to human nature?
3. How can we analyze symbols in *Lord of the Flies* through Antconc software?

### ***1.5 Significance of the Study***

This study will be significant for those researchers who want to conduct corpus based study of symbolism or any other device and want to apply these devices on current situation of modern society or human nature. Antconc software will be helpful to them who want to gather and analyze the data on corpus based.

### ***1.6 Delimitation of the Study***

As this study covers only a single novel, so the researcher has to delimit this research only on one style of Golding. He has used many devices in his novel like irony, simile, imagery, metaphor but researcher has selected only one stylistic device symbolism. Lord of the Flies is full of symbols it is not possible to analyze all symbols from the text so researcher has chosen only ten the most prominent symbols to analyze.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

William Golding (1911-1993) was a literary figure who wrote the famous novel Lord of the Flies in 1954. He won the Nobel Prize in 1983 for his literary work. He showed his unique writing style by adding different devices in this novel such as irony, satire, metaphor, and symbolism etc. Golding, (2012) described the transformation of civilization into savagery of young boys on the island. On the first view they were all innocent and kind and able to take care of themselves. They were managed to be civilized and dutiful for the rescue but another wish of freedom and enjoyment of hunting, eventually turned the paradise into hell.

Symbolism is a device that is used in literature to give another meaning that is entirely different from the real meaning. This device was emerged in literature in the mid of nineteenth century but in twentieth century it had great influence on literature. Today, use of symbolism has a strong impact on different arts like painting, music, writing, and theatre etc. Moreover symbolism expressed the naturalism and realism in literature, which was presented through reality, human nature, society, and real world. Poetic and musical languages made the text more interesting and impressive by the use of symbolism. The symbolists were impressed and greatly influenced by the poetry of

Charles Baudelaire, (1857) and his work *Flower of the evil*. He was the greatest literary figure of his age. Similarly Stephane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud were the central figures who were known for French symbolism. French symbolism was greatly affected in literature in nineteenth and twentieth centuries at international level (Milne, 2009)

In nineteenth century, the symbolists made their tool to present their views through symbolism because modern society started to lose their belief in civilization and culture. The symbolists criticized modern society for materialistic desires (Yeganeh, 2009, p196-197). Symbolism represented hidden meanings and abstract ideas in *Lord of the Flies* to reveal the theme of the novel (Cuddn, 1998, p. 866).

De Saussure, (1990) explained that symbol is the word that is used to describe the physical form of a thing or object. There are many symbols in *Lord of the Flies* which unmask the theme of the novel. All the characters of the novel are the symbols of the human beings of modern society, and other objects reveal the theme and represent modern world. George Orwell, (1984) depicted that *Lord of the Flies* by Golding was a description of an imperfect world. The boys on the island created disturbance for the sake of their materialistic desires. Jack and his fellows were the responsible of destruction on the island.

Modern writers used different literary devices to represent different aspects of the modern society such as symbols, metaphor, irony, satire. They wanted to uncover the reality of modern society and human nature by using symbols that represented real things and actions. They needed to show reality of modern materialist society. Similarly Golding's symbols had a great association with cultural background and his personal experience as well. A reader can easily understand his point of view because his own experience and general observation reflect modern society. It is stated by Patil, (2011), modern society is known for its intellectualism, materialism and interaction with social environment. Modern society can be described as a materialist who ignores the traditions and customs of their predecessors by adopting new life style. William Golding was the most prominent figure of the modern age and his *Lord of the Flies* is the mirror which reflects truly human nature of modern society. Baldick (2001) stated William's novel was full of stylistic devices, but most prominent style of writing was the use of symbolism.

Human nature has the elements of violent and innocence as it is the combination of good and evil. There are civilized and savage people in every society. Golding's novel unmasks human nature as good and pure but it is the society that corrupts the human beings.

Human beings have no wish to be powerful when they are individuals but as soon as they assemble and make a society, things start to be change and corruption start among them, in order to get leadership and authority. When schoolboys make a new society and select a leader for them, soon a kind of conspiracy starts against them and this is also the reflection of our society. The end of innocence is the result behind the wish of authority and cause of appearance of savagery nature of human beings.

Petocz Freud (2004, P.24) has presented two important theories on symbolism; the first is known as Freudian narrow position and second is known as Freudian borrowed position. According to him symbol is the meaning that is represented by the people who share same cultural background and adopted by earlier generation. In second theory symbol represents a different and limited context n use.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to find out symbols from the selected novel Lord of the Flies through the Antconc software to analysis the data, so the ten symbols are chosen to search frequency through concordance tool.

#### 3.1 Data Collection Tools

A full text book (Lord of the Flies), Antconc 3.5.8 software and general observation of human beings are the tools to collect and analysis the required data. Ten words are used to check the frequency, and excessive use of symbols in the novel that represent characteristics of human beings of modern society.

#### 3.2 Procedure

The researcher will download the novel which is in Pdf form and convert this file into word form to analyze the data. After converting the pdf file into word it will be change into plain Txt because antconc software does not read pdf or doc file. The antconc 3.5.8 software is used to search frequency of the words with the help of concordance tool. It has also many other tools and functions to analyze but this study deals with only frequency and concordance tools. After opening the file in this software, the selected words are given to it one by one to check the frequency of the words that are regarded as symbols. The frequency of the symbolism will be categorized in order while using MS Excel table for data analysis.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The symbols which are occurred more frequently in our corpus are enlisted in the following table. Although there are many symbols used by Golding but the researcher has selected only top ten most prominent symbols for the purpose of analysis.

All the symbols checked by concordance tool with their frequency can be seen in blue color and total concordance hits are mentioned on the top left in the given pictures. Researcher will compare each symbol with the nature of human being of modern society through general observation. There is no specific population of human being that is going to be target in this study. The general observation of human nature is included to compare with Golding's symbolism.

Table 1: Shows the Frequency of the Symbols in Golding's Novel

<i>Sr. no.</i>	<i>Symbols</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1.	Ralph	795
2.	Piggy	414
3.	Jack	370
4.	Fire	211
5.	conch	180
6.	island	114
7.	beast	95
8.	pig	75
9.	littluns	54
10.	glasses	41

Above table shows the frequency of the symbols in Golding's novel. A comparatively analysis of these symbols to the human nature of the modern society are given one by one.

## Ralph as a Symbol

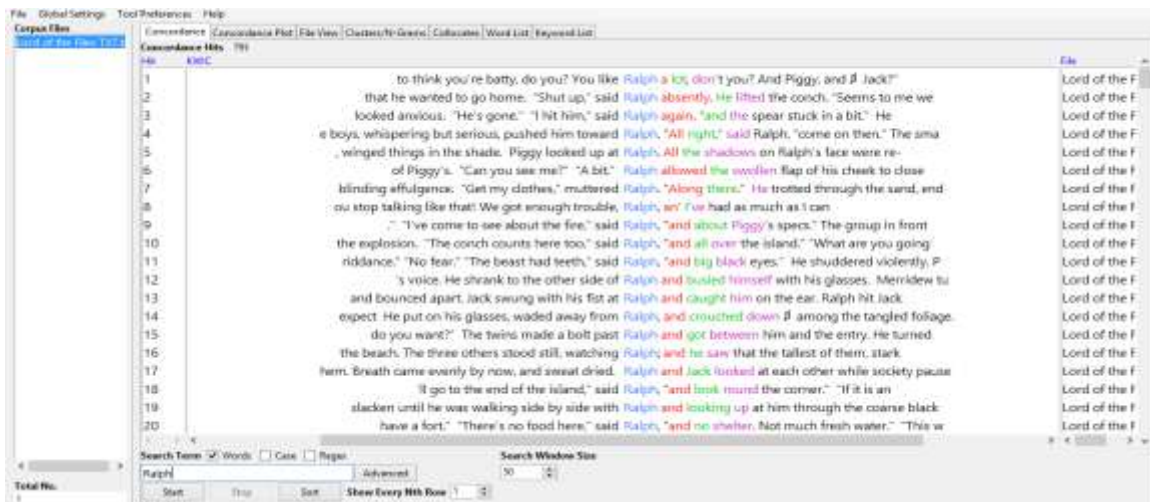


Figure 1: Frequency of Ralph

In this corpus name of “Ralph” is used for the 795 time. Ralph is a prominent figure of the story and symbolizes goodness, civilization and democracy. He is an active and productive leader who performs many tasks for others to save them from the troubles and trials of the island. For example, he realize the importance of house building for the shelter, he keeps on trying to burn fire for the rescue. He is mature enough but left alone at the end because of other rebel boys. Same cases can be seen in our modern society. Ralph represents civilization of human nature of our modern society. It is a common observation that most of the people of our society are kind and humble and try to help others all the time. A great leader is a blessing of God on the people. They want to make the society more civilized and peaceful by performing their duty in good manners. But some opponents try to destroy the peace of the society only for the sake of their enjoyment and lust. Golding uses the name of Ralph most frequently to reveal the civilized nature of human beings. Golding gives the theme of goodness through this symbol.

## Piggy as a Symbol



Figure 2: Frequency of Piggy

Piggy in this corpus gets second position in frequency list. Piggy is the name of a fat and an intellectual boy. His name has been used for the 414 times, analyzed by antconc software. Golding symbolizes Piggy as an intelligent and intellectual person of the society. Piggy presents his ideas and point of views logically and according to scientific perspective. Although, he is wise and helpful person but always is mocked by other only due to his physical appearance. He is fat and has poor eyesight with wearing glasses all the time. He is a good adviser and true friend of Ralph. Piggy represents logic, scientific and other useful developmental and organizational ideas of human society.

### *Jack as a symbol*

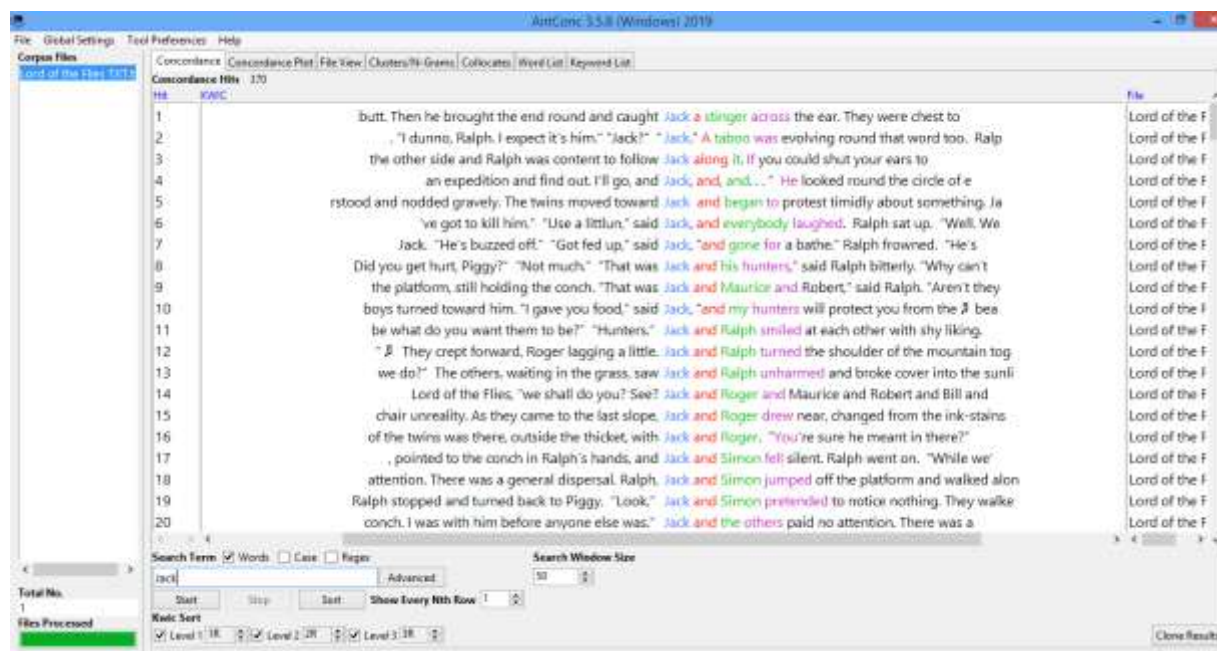


Figure 3: The Frequency of Jack

The frequency of Jack in corpus is next to Piggy. Jack is the name of a cruel boy which has been used 370 times in the novel. Golding has symbolized the Jack as an evil, savagery and violence instinct in human beings. Jack wants to become leader of the group and for this purpose he urges the other boys for barbaric and wild actions. He gives more importance to hunting and at the end as a result he turns into savage. He loses interest to be rescued but enjoys hunting. As he becomes the leader of hunter boys and they kill Piggy and Sam (Ralph's friend) without any reason.

### *Fire as a Symbol*

The frequency of fire is 211 in this corpus and is aimed to analysis this symbol to reveal the Golding's hidden meaning behind this theme. Fire is giving the meaning of rescue and also the meaning of destruction as well. The boys burn the fire on the top of the mountain to attract the attention of any ship. They want to be rescued with the signal of the fire. On the other hand when the boys lose interest in fire burning it causes of destruction at the end. This fire destroys the whole forest. Golding signifies the fire as a hope and the other hand cause of destruction as well. There are two opposite views about fire. It is used for constructive purposes on the other hand for destruction. It is the will of human being how he utilizes this element.



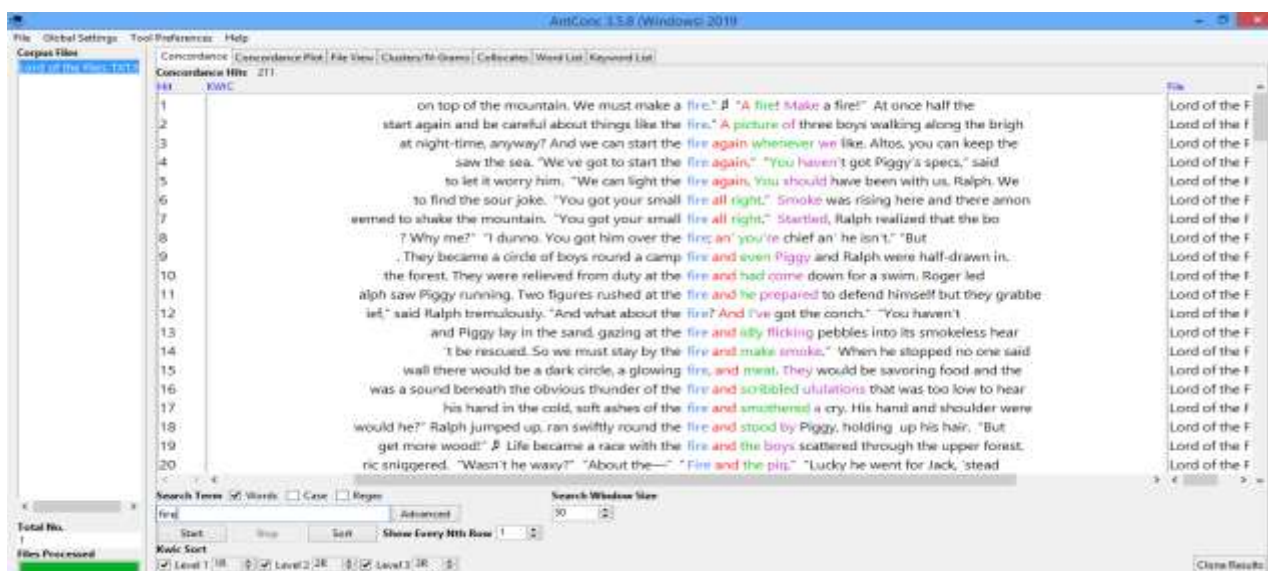


Figure 4: Frequency of Fire

## Conch as a Symbol

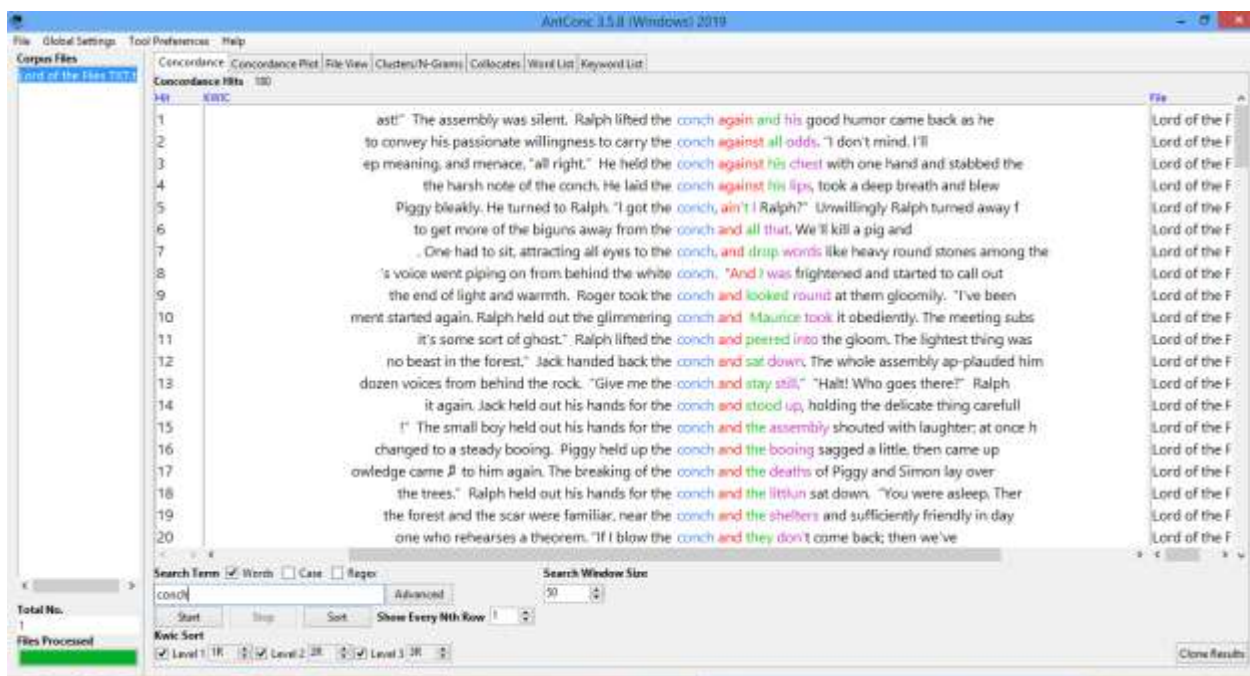


Figure 5: Frequency of Conch

The word conch has been used in this novel for the 180 time. Conch is the symbol of power, leadership, and authority. At the beginning of the novel, both the younger boys Ralph and Jack find a conch shell on the island and this conch becomes a cause violence and savagery among boys. Ralph is selected a chief and conch is handed over to assemble the boys, but Jacks wants to be the chief to have the authority. The conch has also given the symbolic meaning of democracy. A person who has conch in his hand, has right to speak and power.



## Island as a Symbol



Figure 6: Frequency of Island

Island is on 6<sup>th</sup> position in symbolic list and its frequency is 114. Island represents society or the inhabitation of human beings where they spent their whole lives and practice their behavior. It is true that they learn from the society and from the surroundings but instinct elements of goodness and badness play an important role in their lives. Golding has selected island for the setting of the whole story, he wants to reveal the reality of human nature when he is facing problems while living in a society and what is his behavior during the process of trial. Rules and regulation of the society makes a man civilized and only some evil factors are the cause of violence.

## Beast as a Symbol

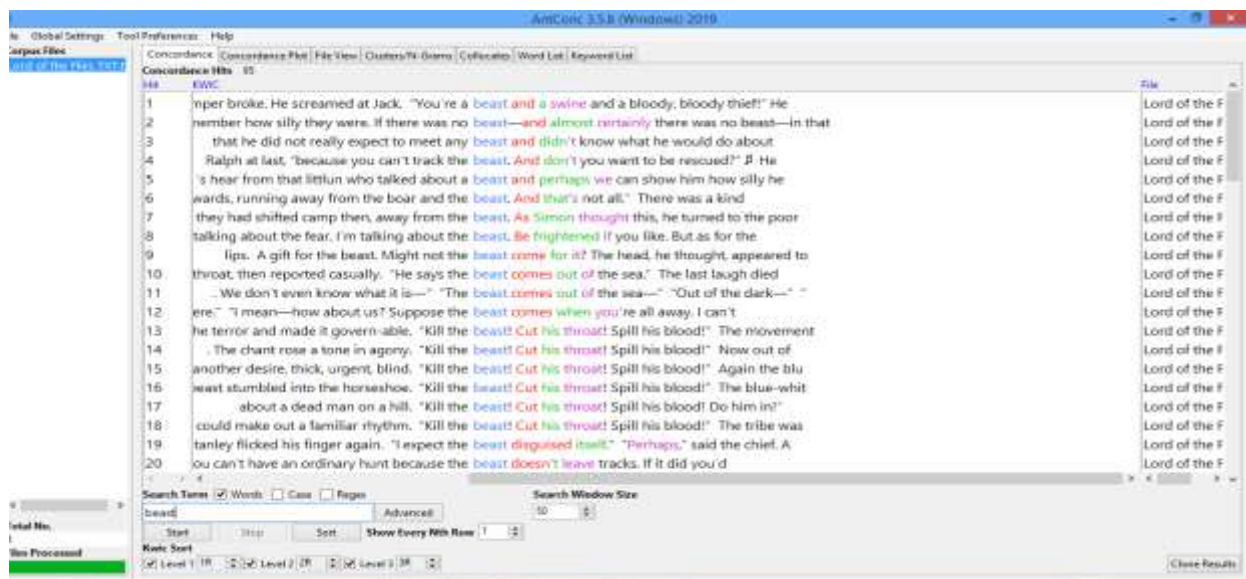


Figure 7: Frequency of Beast

Beast is the symbol of fear among the boys. The beast is the cause of fear and aggressiveness among them and represents inner darkness and savagery of human being of modern society. There is no any beast on island but instinct evil itself in human heart. As the human beings grow more savage, fear of beast makes its position strong in their heart such as the boys have fear of beast on island. All the boys agree to belief on beast but Simon has strong belief that there is no any beast because he is a kind hearted man and has strong trust in god. He states; “I don’t believe in beast.” Further he says that “maybe there is a beast... maybe it is only us” (111). It is human’s behavior that is the cause of the existence of beast. In the modern society, it can be observed human nature has possessed the element of darkness and evil in his hear so Golding tries to depict the idea through this symbol.

### *Pig as a Symbol*

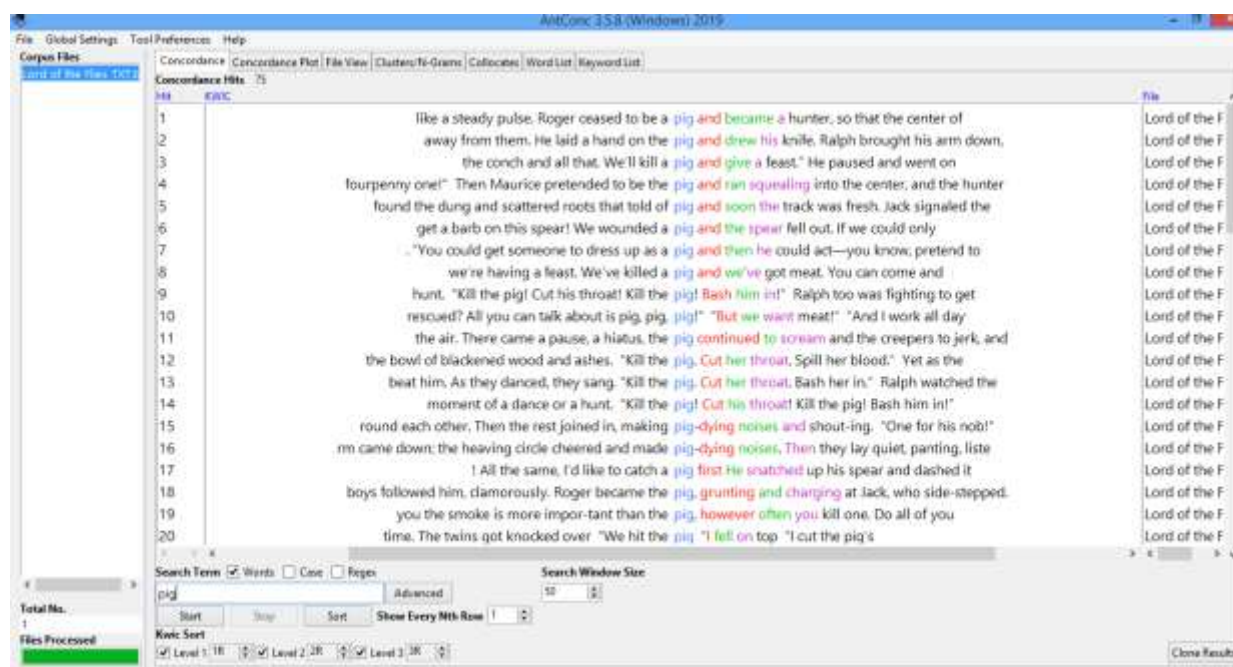


Figure 8: The Frequency of Pig

The frequency of “pig” in this corpus is 75. The pig presents different ideas in this novel. The pig symbolized three different ideas: piglets represent innocence of human nature, hunting pigs represent the human desires, and head of the pig on the stick represents darkness of human heart. In modern society innocent are killed brutally. The hunting pigs symbolize human nature and desire. Golding describes how the innocent boys come to end of innocence and turn into savage for the sake of lust. The desire of lust and enjoyment is the cause of negligence of real aim and goal of human life. It is clear from the words of pig’s head, “you know, didn’t you? I am a part of you. Close, close, close! I’m the reason why it’s no go? Why things are what they are?” Through these symbols Golding represents innocence of human nature, human desires and darkness of human heart.

### *Littluns as a Symbol*

The frequency of littluns in this corpus is 54. Littluns are the little children on the island who represent innocence of the young children. They do not know anything about right and wrong. They are under influence of the

young boys and commit things as the young boys order them. Mostly they are considered as useless members of the society because they are unable to perform any task. They are innocent and spend most of their time in playing and enjoyment. Through these littluns Golding represents that group of people of modern society that has no contribution in progressive and societal events.

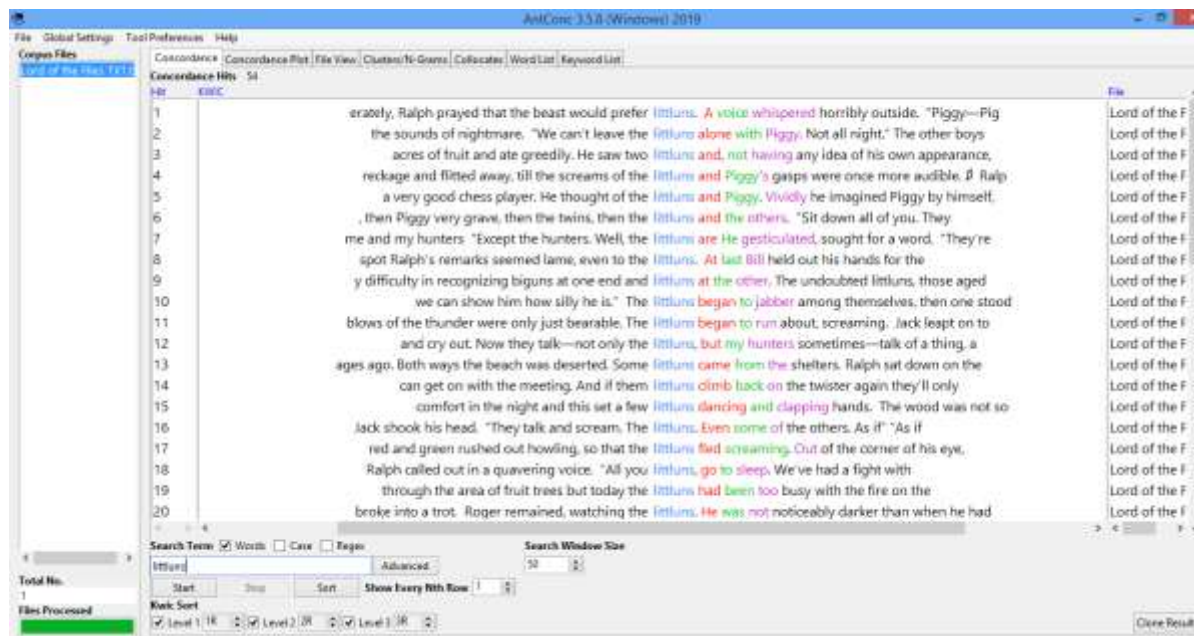


Figure 9: The Frequency of Littluns

### Glasses as a Symbol

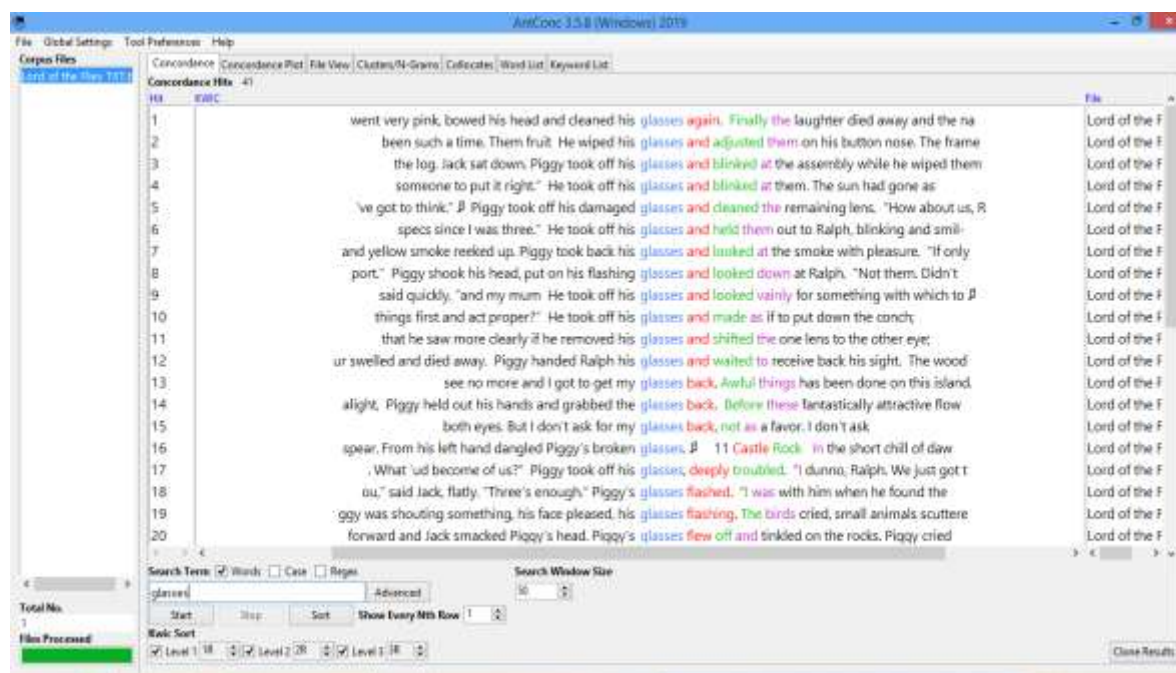


Figure 10: Frequency of Glasses

Piggy's glasses represent the production of science and frequency of glasses used by Golding is 41. Piggy's glasses are the most important element to burn the fire on the top of mountain for the survival. Piggy's glasses are the symbol of clear vision or ability to see clear things. Glasses symbolize the power of science and technology. Piggy has poor eyesight so his glasses are the great product of science for him. Similarly, scientific objects have positive effect on human beings of modern society.

## **V. DISCUSSION**

In order to achieve the objectives and answers of the given research questions, the corpus data has been analyzed. After analyzing the data, the most frequently use of symbols can be seen in Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*. First question of the study is to: apply symbols used by William Golding on human nature of our modern society, explores that the symbols that have been chosen from the novel represent human nature of modern society in real sense. Ten symbols are chosen, four are the characters who represent civilization, savage, innocence and intelligence of human nature. These four characters represent our modern society. The other six symbols are the other objects such as island, fire, beast, pig, glasses, and conch that represent setting of stage, destruction, evils, desires, scientific progress and power of human nature of modern society. Second objective of the study is to: Compare themes and symbols in *Lord of the Flies* with human nature of modern society, explains all the symbols used by Golding in *Lord of the Flies* represent the theme of the novel. This novel depicts the instinct elements of human nature such as goodness and badness, civilization and savagery on human nature. What are the factors in a society which are cause to turn the human innocence into evil and savage? After analyzing the symbols it is clear the theme of the novel reflects the human nature of modern society. Through general observation of modern society it is clear that all the events and settings of *Lord of the Flies* reflect our modern society in real sense

The third objective of the study is to: Analyze Golding's symbolism through antconc. Defines that antconc is a useful corpus tool to analyze the data with in short period of time. Concordance tool has been use to analyze the frequency of the symbols used by Golding in his novel. Use of antconc has made the task easy to collect and analyze the data in no time. Excessive use of symbols and their frequent analyzed by antconc defines how Golding is conscious in using this literary term.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the data is concluded that William Golding has used different symbols to represent the human nature of modern society. Golding' aims in *Lord of the Flies* is to trace flaw back of human nature if they are left in a jungle or island. How they practice their behavior when there is no body to supervise them. What happens when the civilization vanishes and human beings turn into savagery? Symbolism is a stylistic device to convey the idea in another way. Through these symbols Golding wants to expose the main issues of human beings whiling living in a society. In *Lord of the Flies* Golding has shared his own experience and observation as he is the person who is the witness of horror and destruction of World War II. By using symbolism in his literary work he wants to reveal instinct elements of human nature. *Lord of the Flies* is full of symbols and these symbols represent the theme of the novel. To check the frequency and use of these symbols, ten most prominent symbols have been used to analysis the human nature. Twelve British schoolboys on the island represent human beings of our modern society. The most

prominent figure of the story Ralph symbolizes as goodness and civilized person of the society. He is selected as a leader by other boys to make the society peaceful. On the other hand Jack represents evil, cruelty, and savage of human nature and another group leader of hunting group. Another important character of the story is Piggy who symbolizes goodness and intelligence of the society.

Similarly, other objects are analyzed by antconc's concordance tool, defines the frequency of the symbols one by one. The main theme of the novel is civilization and savage. These are the instinct elements of human nature that exist in everybody. Golding uses the other symbols such as conch, beast, glasses, fire, glasses, and pig, all these symbols are the representation of different aspects of modern society. There are good and bad people in modern society, and they make their society peaceful or destroy it by doing good or evil deeds. Golding's main concern is to include social issues and the factors that have the great influences on society. These factors are the responsible to turn the human behavior into opposite directions. All the setting of the novel and its features clearly represent our modern society. Human beings should adopt such a progressive means to make this world civilized. Leadership must be for people's welfare. Human beings should be utilized the scientific knowledge for the betterment of other. Equal chances should be provided to everyone to make the society peaceful.

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