

EXPLOITING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY

EJIE, Ifelunwa Margaret
Department of Journalism and Media Studies
Faculty of Computing
Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro
08034909244
ifelunwaejie4real@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper is an exploitation of the linguistic and paralinguistic features in the stylistic analysis of a text. By exploring the controversy between the linguists and the literary critics, this study was able to utilize the linguistic theory of M.A.K Halliday's systemic functional grammar in the analysis of a literary text. It was found out that the investigation of content and form both need a joint collaboration that provides an insight into the inner working of the text by revealing the possibilities and limitations of the text. It concluded that language use in this field of discourse is a deviance from the regular language use and therefore, recommended that linguists and literary critics should collaborate not only in the analysis of literary texts but also of texts that are not necessarily literal so that they can see themselves as partners in academic progress.

Keywords: Linguistics, Language, Stylistics, Poetry, paralinguistic, functional grammar

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Bateson's attempt to disqualify linguistics as a discipline of relevance to literature in his *Essays in Criticism* (1951) is described by Fowler Roger (1971:65) thus:

...comprises a very cunning and apparently substantial argument inter-woven with a misleading line of polemic. In his usual mastery fashion, he has constructed a case against which it is very difficult to argue in an organized way.

I will try to show that his argument (1) rests on premises which cannot provide an adequate aesthetics for literature, (2) is ineffective as a disqualification of linguistics because of misconceptions about the nature of linguistics, (3) is motivated by a set of prejudices which inhibit constructive discussion of the present issue.

This clearly reveals a controversy between language and literature or more precisely between stylistician (ornatist) and the literary critics (organists). Mr. Bateson's case is basically a somewhat complicated version of ideas he has offered linguists and medievalists for at least the last ten years (Fowler, 1976). The first argument bothers on the evaluation and interpretation of a literary text while the second argument is on the role of linguistics to the analysis of a text. According to Fowler R. (1971), "Because of these difficulties in communicating between linguists and critics, the applicability of linguistic method and ideas has still, apparent, to be justified; this is in spite of a good deal of practical work and theoretical argument by linguists during the last twenty years". He dates the beginnings of modern interest in linguistic criticism from the statement made by Harold Whitehall in 1951 which says "no science can go beyond mathematics, and no criticism can go beyond its linguistics." (Fowler 1971:3) sees this as an extravagant claim. In his words, he states:

I do not think any contemporary linguist would commit himself to such a sweeping assertion... It has to be said that they are in general extremely ignorant about linguistics, regarding it as an alien discipline about which they need to know nothing. It is not surprising that they fail to distinguish it from the older school of medieval textual and phonological studies. It is a very sad fact that progress in the rapprochement of linguistic and literary studies has been hampered by the ignorance of and prejudice of literary colleagues.

Statement of the Problem

This research bothers in the applicability of modern linguistics to the study of literature. As Fowler explains, it is now necessary to moderate the, excesses of the early claims, and restate as clearly as possible what critical functions it is proper for the contemporary linguists to perform. He added that the confidence of Whitehalls proposal stems from the mood of American linguistics at the time. And that in 1951 two extremely influential books were published: Z. S. Harris's "Method in Structural Linguistics", and *Outline of English Structure* by G. L. Trager and H. L. Smith. With the publication of these books it seemed that American Structuralism, the foundations of which had been laid in the twenties and thirties, had attained methodological perfection. Harris's book, and a body of articles by authors in the same school, laid out a set of efficient techniques for discovering the structure of languages.

Theoretical Framework

It should be stated that many parts of the grammar of English have not been studied in-depth and there are many incompatible theories from which a choice has to be made; the linguistic

study of vocabulary has not progressed very far, and semantics is still only studied as part of traditional literary criticism. Stylistics simply applies available descriptive categories and research findings to a further end. In view of the fluid state of theoretical and descriptive linguistics at that time, it becomes incumbent on the stylistician to illustrate the salient point of the model he is going to use, as a preamble to his actual description. What he must avoid is having to spend time during his stylistic analysis explaining the meaning of the terms he is using; on this Crystal and Davy (1969) posit that it is irrelevant and distracting. They state further that there are inadequacies in the stylistic analysis, and vice versa. The model, can and should be criticized in its own terms, for what it is, a theory which will account for certain linguistic contrasts in the language: the way in which this model is applied to show stylistic effects involves a quite different set of criteria, which also can and should be criticized in their own terms. It would be wrong to criticize the stylistic descriptions for unclear grammatical model. In evaluating stylistic analysis, it is important to keep the two kinds of criticism apart:... The aim of the stylistician is to compose a single linguistic picture of a text as a whole, to make a synthesis of the information he has discovered from his earlier analysis into levels. Once he has done this, the descriptive aspect of linguistics' role is complete. The tasks which then follow critical interpretation and evaluation – are not his concern consequently, through non-segmental features, varieties of spoken English tend to be primarily differentiated.

Literature Review

The academic discipline which studies language scientifically is Linguistics. Stylistics which studies certain aspects of language variations is therefore, essentially a part of this discipline. Some scholars have called the object of study style without further qualification. According to Crystal and Davy (op cit) style may refer to some or all of the language habits of one person as when we talk of Shakespeare's style (or styles) or the style of James Joyce, or when we discuss questions of disputed authorship. The Advanced English Dictionary (2023) sees stylistic as of relating to style (especially in the use of language).

The word stylistics was first used by Baly in 1909. Baly is a French structuralist linguist who was a student of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure was the founder of structuralist linguistics which he propounded in 1848. Structuralism is regarded as the earliest theory of modern linguistics and it marked the beginning of modern linguistics. Between 1909-1950, stylistics as a discipline spread throughout Europe except Great Britain and the United States of America and Canada. Stylistics is an area in applied linguistics. According to Osakwe (2018), stylistics is the same as style. The word style from which stylistics is derived is used to refer to a number or rather different aspect of language. It is understandable then stylistics should also have different definitions. J.P. Thorne defines stylistics as a word that is applied to various kinds of linguistics analysis. A branch of linguistics which studies the features of situationally distinctive users of language and tries to establish principles capable of accounting for the particular choices made by individual and social groups in their use of language (David Crystal, 1969). G. Hough sees stylistics as one of the new terminologies invented to replace style because style is out of fashion. As if Turner wanted to reply to this definition. He says that stylistics is not just fashionable word but the scientific or methodical study of style. The foregoing put together suggest that stylistics is defined in relation to linguistics and style. Stylistics is the aspect of linguistics which concentrates and accounts for variations in the use of language. Stylistics understandably should be defined within the context of linguistics e.g spoken language in use. It is not as simple as saying style is the object of stylistics study because style itself needs further qualification if the nature of such a study is to be clarified in order to put stylistics in its right perspective. Style is a very

complex phenomenon, it should be noted. Style can be defined in three perspectives as follows:

Language users view point i.e. based on the sender view point

Based on the message itself by an objective way of looking at the textual features from the text or message based on the receiver of the message

The most useful definition of stylistics is one which makes it possible to carry on analysis of the text in a concrete and practical manner. Envisit definition of stylistics serves a very useful and practical purpose here. He says the style of a text is... the aggregate and contextual aspect of the linguistic items of a text is very crucial to stylistics study because style is a result of more than one linguistic item generated. The stylistics significance of a linguistic word for example arising more in relation with its co-occurrence with other word is important.

Crystal and Davy (1969) explain that as stylists then, approach a text with various levels in mind and try to organize their material in their terms. The material is worked on systematically while allocating points to areas of stylistic significance to one level or the other and that where approaching the study of the language of a text using a model wherein the levels are kept apart, it must not be thought that this precludes cross-referencing between the levels, or forces us to ignore significant inter-level linguistic relationships. The analysis into levels is simply a device to help organize our material and focus attention more closely on a particular aspect of language by reference to one level only, then the relevance of all the levels involved must be pointed out. Features at one level may reinforce or explain features at another, and text may be characterized stylistically as much by the way inter-level features exist as by the features which operate within levels.

Style Study before the Birth of Linguistics

Linguistics is less than 140 years old. It is a recent study but the study of style is much more older i.e. Aristotle B.C. In Roman times when style was being studied, it was tied to rhetoric and rhetoric is a classical art of oratory. It became a model for written art in 16th century B.C. (Osakwe, 2018).

The Rhetorical Approach to Style

Rhetoric as Osakwe (op cit) puts it became a model for written discourse in the 16th century. It views style as decorative of content (message) - The approach brought in to celebrate the content or message to make it beautiful and ornamental. Three main styles were recognized.

1. Ciceronian style named after Cicero (a Roman Orator)
2. Gorgian style
3. Seneca style

The Ciceronian style was associated with the Roman Orator, Cicero. Ciceronian style was associated with the high style. That is, the use of words grandiloquently. It was characterized by high figured metaphors and high sounding words. It was an elitist and grand style. Writers such as John Milton, Sydney acquired this style in their writing. John Milton used Ciceronian style in his poems. Gorgianic style refers to the midway kind of style. Not the high style or the low style such as John Donne. The middle style shows a moderate blend of the characteristics of the high and the low. Senecan style is associated with the Roman

Stylistician. It flourished during the Roman period. It is regarded as the low style. It avoided high sounding words. It is paratactic, that is loosely coordinated. Each style is expected to perform a specific function. The grand style was to move you and entertain you. It brings out the very dexterity of the language and affects your emotion. It is supposed to persuade you. It is the preachers' style. The middle style and the low style are meant to teach. It was however, possible to have various types of styles since speakers could also choose their own styles regardless of their functions. On the average, decorum presuppose used for tragedies, epics and elegies. The middle style is used for odes e.g. Odes to the Nightingale. The low style is used for comedies and satires. It is like a teaching style. The middle style shows a moderate blend of the characteristics of high and low. By this approach we had a way of describing style before linguistics and discourse was analyzed in relation to its meaning and hence was provided through rhetoric. Style study predates the coming of Jesus Christ therefore style study is older than linguistics. Linguistics is a scientific study of language and as soon as it was born, it became a means for studying style.

Linguist Theory

The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is M.A.K Halliday's (1985) "Systemic Functional Grammar". It is regarded as a reaction to Ferdinand de Saussure's "Structural Linguistics". The systemic functional grammar is divided into two:

1. The earlier model of systemic functional grammar propounded by J.R. Firth, and it is also known as Neo-Firthian grammar
2. The later model, M.A.K Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. The difference between the earlier and the later model is the fact that while the earlier model only has a surface structure known as the surface plane, the later model has both a surface and a deep plane. The advantages of M.A.K Halliday's systemic functional grammar to stylistic analysis includes the following:
 1. This theory believes that context colours meaning, and the theory incorporate context in its analysis.
 2. The theory focuses on acceptability of the use of language and not grammaticality and this also has to do with context.
 3. Stylistics is defined as an analysis of a text with a linguistic eye, and M.A.K. Halliday's systemic functional grammar discusses all aspects of theoretical linguistics. Systemic functional grammar subdivided a language into four different components as far as analysis is concerned. They are (1) unit (2) class (3) structure and (4) system. These four categories are ideal for stylistic analysis because all aspects of the grammar of a language are encompassed in these four categories.

Unit discusses the subcomponent of language and is subdivided into the following: they include phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, clauses and sentences. Each of these units is again subdivided into smaller units. For examples, the phonemes are divided into vowels and consonants, and for stylistics at the level of phonology, we have foregrounded phonological features which includes assonance and alliteration. Morphemes are also subdivided into free and bound morphemes. Free morphemes are known as roots and bound morphemes are known as affixes. Words are either monomorphemic, dimorphemic or polymorphemic. A writer may choose to employ the use of only polymorphemic words for stylistic reason in order to project meaning. Words are also divided into single and compound subtypes. Phrases also have (m) H (q) structure. Sentences are subdivided into simple, compound and complex sub types. A writer that predominantly uses simple sentences is said to use paratactic style whereas one who uses compound and complex sentences is said to use hypotactic style. Class

discusses the word class or word structure of English sentence having the form: SPCA structural system. System is always binary in nature, and it discusses the components of languages binary functions.

1. Number – binary (singular & plural)
2. Tense – present & past
3. Voice – active & passive
4. Aspects – progressive & perfective

Controversies between Stylisticians and Literary Artists

The first controversy between stylisticians and literary artists arose from the evaluation and interpretation of a literary text of which literary entities were of the opinion that a work of art should merely undergo literary interpretation. Literary stylisticians are of the opinion that a work of art should undergo evaluation. Evaluation involves passing valued judgment objectively based on use of linguistic features in interpreting a text. To interpret a text is to aid the comprehension of the text by trying to analyze its content. It involves an insight into the inner working of the text by revealing its possibilities and limitations. It is about an investigation of the content and form of the text based on subjective value judgment. Therefore, while Stylisticians evaluate a text, Literary critics interpret it. The second controversy between literary critics and stylisticians has to do with the role of linguistics to the analysis of a text. The literary artists are known as organists. The organists were of the opinion that linguistics is imperative to the analysis of the text. Fowler (1971:3) can be regarded as the protagonist of the organists which he states the importance of linguistics to the analysis of a text thus:

“As no science can go beyond Mathematics, no criticism can go beyond its linguistics. Bateson (1960:16) an Ornatist buttresses fowler’s argument by positing that: “As far as the study of literature is concerned, linguists are the ones who gave light to their non-Linguists and Critics who walk in darkness”.

The organists were of the opinion that the importance attached to linguistics for evaluation of a text is over bloothed when Jerpherson (1968:30) stated that “you cannot see linguistics adding more to literary studies than a new vocabulary – A new jargon”. Batex (1966:10) is also an organist who concluded that:

“An academic alliance between literary Critics and Stylisticians is a vain hope”.

Methodology

The evaluative and interpretive stylistic analysis as propounded by the Ornatists and the Organists were utilized in the analysis of our text in this paper. As opposed to Batex’s assertion, an academic alliance is possible, hence the alliance between the researchers in this study.

Data Analysis

The data available for analysis here is a text belonging to the general field of discourse known as literature, while the specific field is poetry. Poetry is a continuous flow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility. This local texture is more concerned with the world of imagination. The mode of discourse is written to be spoken as if not written, hence the urgency of the language used. The title of the poem is “Jos Genocide” (See appendix ‘A’ for specimen of the text for analysis). Quite significant is the graphological foregrounding of the

lines and variation in type size of the poem. The lineation catches the reader's attention. It is irregular graphological foregrounding at the paradigmatic level. A good instance of paradigmatic foregrounding at the lexical level through the use of parallel structures is the use of anaphora in the lines of our text (lines 6 and 12):

This bloodletting must cease

This bloodletting must cease

“This” repeated at the end of each line help to point the attention of the reader to the subject of concern and for the purpose of emphases. Syntagmatic foregrounding can also be found at the level of clausal repetition. This clausal parallelism at the grammatical level is a compound sentence that is made up of two clauses repeated twice for emphacy having the SVCC structure (lines 1 and 6)

S	V	C
It	is	man's blood, not malu's
S	V	C
It	is	man's blood, not mosquitos

The graphological foregrounding is a deviation from norm for the purpose of emphasis. Notable is the phonological foregrounding of phonological features in our text such as the use of rhyme (internal) in “shone beyond this shore”, “unions and orgs” “of man, not of ram” and “roll call” (lines 3,9,18 and 19). Another phonological feature is the use of alliteration in “Jos our Jos”, “round and round: and “sons of the soil” (lines 24 and 25-26) Also utilized in our text in the use of assonance in: untold, unsung” (line 18). These metrical devices are meant to enhance memorability of the text. The lexical foregrounding presents it as a short piece which is only a segment of an experience. The linguistic resource is condensed to achieve economy of words or vocabulary.

At the syntactic level, there is a blend of paratactic and hypotactic syntactic parallelism and syntagmatic foregrounded parallelism. The text is both paradigmatically and syntagmatically foregrounded as it contains simple sentences and compound sentences (line 24). Below is an instance of paratactic foregrounding:

S	V	C
Bokoharam,	using	book weapons to trade their jihad

Instance of the hypotactic foregrounding is observed in line1. This is demonstrated below:

S	P	C	C
It	is	man's blood	not malu's

There is also instance of complex sentence such as “Jos, our Jos: home of peace turn house of fury and war” and “The bloodletting must cease, it is man's blood, not mosquito's” (lines 2 and 6). Aside, there is copious use of noun and verbal phrases as used in the following forms: Boko Haram; Jos, our Jos; Not malu's; Missions and Missionaries; Tourists round and round globe; Our worry; Gruesome murder; Not millipedes; desecrated soil and Their sponsors?

Remarkable long this line is the phrase structure presented in lines 19, 20, and 21 as seen below:

m	m	H	q	q
Lust	for	blood	of man,	not of man
Lust	of	blood	of man	in the name of religion
Lust	for	blood	of child	and sucking of the other tribe

This is deviation from the norm used to create syntactic parallelism. The verb phrases employed in the text are “dripping in 2001”, and “untold, unsung”.

At the lexical level, there are foregrounded features indicating collocation overlap and the predominant sentence type used in the text is compound sentences. There is a conscious attempt towards the use of lexical items to enhance the creation of new collocates. The new collocates created in the text are: blood and letting to realise “bloodletting”, Jos and University to derive “Jos Varsity” and book and weapons to derive “bookweapons” and the use of window and hood to create “widowhood”, magnet and climate to realize magnetic-climate (lines 1,11 and 24). Due to condensed vocabulary, a lot of lexical deviations occur at the lexical level. The lexical items used are predominantly phrases which go a long way to buttress the simplicity of the local texture embarked upon. For example, we have “man’s blood, not malu’s”, “our worry”, “Jos varsity” e.t.c. Also present is the use of metaphorical reference in “Desecrated soil” (line 26). At the semantic level there are semantic features or contextual features such as the use of synonyms in “fury and war” “the roofless, the weak” (lines 2 and 27).

The theme of the text is reflected in the title of the poem ‘Jos Genocide’. It bothers on the gruesome killings of 2001 in Jos, Plateau. ‘Jos Genocide’ paints a picture of the cruel nature of man to man- genocide committed in a home that could be described as a “home of peace” which turns “house of fury and war”. It was a place that was once a tourist cite for missions and missionaries, and settlers round the globe. The inevitable “cry of women”, “weeping of babies”, “repeated cries of sudden widowhood”, “the cry of orphans” and “parents beheaded” of a necessity demands the need for the use of the imperative “stop this bloodletting, the bloodletting must cease”.

Conclusion

From the forgoing we have been able to explore and exploit the English language in the analysis of a literary text. As can be seen, the local texture poetry is dense. It does not conform to the regular form of language use, rather anomalous forms are utilized in order to achieve an effect. That is, language use in this field of discourse is a deviance from the regular language use. It is therefore clear that there should be a strong alliance between the linguist and the literary critic. Halliday’s theory is quite ideal for the analysis of stylistic text as all aspects of the theory is utilized in the analysis of our text. Fowler (1976) finally said, it is no new thing for the academic linguist to turn his attention to literature. For centuries written texts were his almost exclusive concern...

Recommendations

It is recommended in this study that:

1. Linguists and literary critics should collaborate to carry out a linguistic/literary analysis of different aspect of the three genres of literature from time to time
2. From time to time, there should also be room for linguist and literary critics to analyses text which may not necessarily be literal. This will help to foster a sense of belonging in which they see themselves as partners in academic progress.

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Appendix A

Jos Genocide

Stop this bloodletting! It is man's blood, not malu's
Jos, Our Jos: home of peace turns house of fury and war?
Light upon Plateau shone beyond this shore; inviting
Mission and missionaries, tourists, settlers round and round
the globe
This bloodletting must cease, it is man's blood not mosquito's
It is man's blood, not malu's, not monkey's, man's blood, it is
Round the globe Jos' magnetic climate announced welcome home
To world conferences of all trades, garbs unions and orgs.
Trace back early thiny drops before these pools, dripping in 2001
Jos varsity hosting global law conference posted casualties beyond
This bloodletting must cease, blood of man not of monkeys
Casualties beyond the plateau blood of man not of mosquitoes
Begetting pools of blood: man's blood, not malu's, not millipede's!
Home of peace and love turns home of war, our worry
Our worry is this lust for blood of man, cannibalism?
Daily roll call of whole families departed; gruesome murder
Daily in their tens, weekly in their hundreds untold, unsung
Lust for blood of man, not of ram,
Lust for blood of man in the name religion?
Lust for blood of child and suckling of the other tribe
Who, these blood suckers? Sucking blood of women,
pregnant, nursing mothers.
Boko Haram, using book weapons to trade their jihad
Their sponsors? Agents claiming 'honourable sons of the
soil'
Desecrated soil; desecrated by blood of the roofless, the weak

Monthly toll in thousands may turn millions, yearly
genocide!
Hear the cry of women, weeping for their babies
Hear the repeat cries of sudden widowhood
Hear our orphans' cries of parents beheaded
Stop this bloodletting, blood of man not *malu*
Jos genocide must stop!

Desert Songs of Bloom – Mabel Osakwe (2011)