Communication focus through a Stylistic Approach

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Abstract : Style is the art of expression in writing. 'Style' may be expressed in numerous ways. A person's use of language in creative writing, his selection of words, manner of expression, variation in the use of language and it has also been interpreted in terms of deviations from the normal use of language. Style is the specific form of a text, as there is no text without style. According to Nils Erik Enkvist "the style of a text is a function of the aggregate of the ratios between the frequencies of the phonological, grammatical, and lexical items in a contextually related norm" (1973).

Against the above backdrop, this paper attempts a description of lexical and grammatical patterns employed in a few poems by Dom Moraes. Since style functions in a literary text to convey meanings in distinct ways, it is assumed that a linguistic analysis of the lexis and grammar of the poems will reveal how the poet exploits stylistic choices of the English language to convey his meaning. Its relevance in poetic language is discussed. That is the poetic analysis in this paper involves the study of the stylistic patterns along with their functions at the levels of the 'grammar', 'syntax' and 'lexis'.

The present study discusses how the numerous ways the linguistic features are exploited to show the literary qualities of the text and as well as how the text can be a source of study to understand the linguistic and stylistic areas for pedagogic purposes empowering the English teaching classrooms, as it has innumerable use of exploitation of such structures to study.

Therefore, my study looks into such creative use of language used by the poet and his conscious use of lexical and syntactic features to exploit the literary meaning of his text and how this language variation in the text can be used for pedagogic purposes. It is through a text to create a context to teach the linguistic/stylistic features, that means, a resourceful teacher can introduce any number of texts into the classroom that enable the learners to appreciate the text reading as well as make use of the text to teach structural/contextual learning allow them to enhance their creative thinking by using language tools as an aid for study and thus make the teaching learning method more efficient and communicative.

Introduction

Indian English is particularly used by creative writers in India. It varies according to a changed society. It depends on the variations in regional cultures. The use of the language in India will certainly depict Indian culture. Similarly the writers' use of the language will depict Indian flavour. Indo-Anglian poetry is an outcome of Indo-Anglian literature. The growth of Indo-Anglian poetry began with Henry Louis Vivian Deozio who was half Indian and half Portughese. His noted work, The Fakir of jungheera and Other poems (1823) was sustained by memories of India. Among other modern Indian poets writing in English Dom Moraes is different in his outlook. Moraes, notably considered the 'English' of Indian English poets, who chose to return to the native country. This research attempts a description of lexical and grammatical patterns employed in Moraes' first book A Beginning (1957), included in the Collected Poems. Since style functions in a literary text to convey meanings in various ways, it is assumed that a linguistic analysis of the lexis and grammar of the poems may depict how the poet exploits stylistic choices of the English language to convey his meaning.

1.0. Foregrounding as a Stylistic Choice Ian Mukaravsky noted the Prague school linguist, states that all literary language is purposeful distortion of ordinary language; and that the hallmark of literary language is 'foregrounding'.

As is well known, poetic language is different from ordinary language, as it uses several linguistic strategies for foregrounding and thus deviates from what is considered to be the norm. Style is the message conveyed by the linguistic code which is a sort of deviation from the norm.

1.1. Style as Meaning For Wimsatt (1967) Style is a function of the selection and arrangement of words and since words are units of meaning, style and meaning become inseparable. If style is identified with meaning, as Ohmann points out, there is no way to determine which part of meaning is to be called style and how to locate its boundaries. (1959).

1.2. Style as Choice Style means making choices. According to Ullmann (1957:6) style is concept of choice. In the opinion of Joshua whatmough "style is the selection of particular linguistic units and the variation in their arrangement"(1956:88). In keeping with the view that all poetry is language but all language is not poetry. In order to be foregrounded poetic language is need not violate any rules of language as such it is by its very nature a highly patterned and organized method of expression. But the expression part of it would vary for different writers depending upon the writers' selection and combination of words to express the common experience.

Against the above demonstration, this paper examines a description of lexical and grammatical patterns used in a few poems by Dom Moraes. It is demonstrated in this study how Moraes achieves foregrounding through repetition and parallelism, one of the most important characteristics of his style.

I would like to present a thematic focus of a few poems by Dom Moraes:

Poem 1:

Figures in the Landscape 'Dying is just the same as going to sleep',
The piper whispered, 'close your eyes',
And blew some hints and whispers on his pipe;
The children closed their eyes and gravely wandered in a private darkness, Imagining death to be a way of looking.
The piper seemed to listen with his eyes.
A cry from distant meadows brought them waking
And shook some birds from folds of fields and walls
Children are birds: they chirped and flew away
Into a country peace as tall as hills.
Even their voices went away
And left an absence: glitter of his loss.
He blew a wavery quittance on the pipe,
Then honked with thumb and finger at his
And shuffled off to find a place to sleep.
Walking in lonely fields at break of day.
He remembered a dream, looked at the sky
And wondered would a stranger come that way
To take his hand and say, I long to die.

Poem 2:
Shyness
Ah! Hard hard hard to be constricted
By the lucid wills of gardens where
Roses compress the brain blood-drops
And bird calls ripple ripple down the air
While teacups rattle and the conversation flos.

I am too often silent
And I often think that rivers, streams, the sea
Owe their wholeness to their never being silent.
Then changing weather in November tells me
That I must only love enough to wait

Till locked locked with the body of the poem
I voyage past my darkness into light
By an act like the act of lovers who
Riding through death upon each others thighs,
Create, within their death, a life, a voice.

Poem 3:
Song

The gross sun squats above
A valley full of shadows:
The wizard plays his flute
the scene is transformed as … archers in pursuit

Of antelope and dove
Grow dumb and cannot move.
Here winter is symbolically presented as a dove, which in bringing peace also ends in contrast between the artist's art that is imagination and the reality which is harsh and concrete.

Lexis:

Following three Sections analyse the lexicon of the 3 thematic divisions in the poems and discuss how the choice of lexiconis related to the depiction of various moods. In the first poem, Figures in the Landscape, lines 1-6 are based on the poet's imagination. There the poet is a 'piper' as well as an artist who creates landscape. In another poem Shyness, the positive mood of the poet is seen in different natural objects like, 'gardens', 'roses', 'air' etc. In the first poem, 'Dying' means noiseless parting; 'sleep' is presented as supremely active. There is a close semantic association between the words 'sleep', 'eyes', 'close', 'darkness', 'private'etc. The first phase reveals that what is seen and felt by the poet is true in his 'private' imaginary world. In the Shyness, 'gardens', 'roses' etc., are marked by concreteness. This use of concrete imagery to convey abstract thought brings closer to the romantic poets. In the first poem, the abstract idea of death is presented in contrast. He says, 'Dying is just the same as going to sleep'.

Thematically Section 11 depicts transitoriness or interface between Section 1 and Section 111. Section 11 brings the poet back from the world of imagination to that of reality. When the poem begins, the poet is in a ecstatic mood. This state soon changes. Moraes like Keats is in a state of uncertainty as Keats wonders whether he is awake or asleep.
'was it a vision, or a waking dream?' (Ode to a Nightingale)
In the poem Figures in the Landscape, the lexical items 'waver', 'shuffled off', 'distant', 'cry', 'absence', 'loss', etc., depict the poet's wavering state between dream and reality. In another poem, Shyness, the lexical choice i.e. 'changing weather', 'November', 'enough wait', etc., shows the poet's dilemma and his inner struggle to produce a poem.
Thematically, Section 111 leads us to a negative harsh reality. In the poem Figures in the Landscape, 'break of day', 'waking', 'remembered'. 'looked', 'wondered' etc., remind the poet of his own wakeful state in the actual world. Similarly, he talks of 'light' dawning on him in the poem Shyness.

Syntax:

The following three Sections analyse the syntax of the three thematic divisions in the poems and discuss how the choice of syntax is related to the depiction of various moods.

The poem Figures in the Landscape, begins with a syntactic inversion. In the line gerundial 'Dying' has been brought to the front position through which the theme of death is topicalized. For instance, the lines:

1. a.'Dying is just the same as going to sleep',
    The piper whispered, 'close your eyes',
    And blew some hints and whispers on his pipe:
    The children closed their eyes
     A normal sentence of English would read:
  b.The piper whispered, 'close your eyes',
    The children closed their eyes
    And blew some hints and whispers on his pipe:
    'Dying is just the same as going to sleep',

The focus thus shifts from the subject the 'piper' to the object 'Dying'. Here the Adverbial group has been brought to the sentence initial position for focus. Similarly, in other two lines of the poem there is syntactic inversion. The lines are:

2. a. Imagining death to be a way of looking
   The piper seemed to listen with his eyes.
   A normal grammatical order of the sentence
    (2a) would be
b. The piper seemed to listen with his eyes
   Imagining death to be a way of looking.

In the above lines the notion of imagination is foregrounded. Here the gerundial 'imagining' has been brought to the subject position where imagination is topicalized.

Section 11 of syntactic inversion depicts the transitory state of the mind of the poet in the poem Song. The poetic line reads:

3. a.   Lightly the flute sighs:
         No living voice replies.
         A grammatical order would be;
   b.   The flute sighs lightly:
         No living voice replies.

Section 111 of all the above poems, an awareness of his wakeful state in the present world makes him out of his imaginary state induced by the sleep. In the poem Figures in the Landscape, by bringing the gerundial noun to the subject position it makes clear the poet returning to the actual concrete reality. The poetic line reads;

4. a. Walking in lonely fields at break of day
       He remembered a dream, looked at the sky
       And wondered would a stranger come that way
      To take his hand and say, I long to die.
       A normal sentence of English would read;
  b. He remembered a dream, waking in lonely fields at break
       of day (He) looked at the sky And (he) wondered…..

Thus Moraes's poetry depicts an awareness of reality which brings joy in life. Here the poet has effectively used linguistic strategies like lexical selections, syntactic inversions, topicalization, nominalization etc., in order to express the shifting moods in his poetry.

In any stylistic study, rather than simply using literary texts as a linguistic study, it is important that the quantitative properties of texts should be related to literary interpretation. This type of approach to style when attempted through the computer may be quite useful in stylistic studies in order to browse the larger texts to recognize and count the phonological, grammatical and lexical features involved. The quantitative analysis of texts may bring us important style features which would otherwise have been unnoticed, and thus help us to further investigation.

For instance, Web tools like ENGCG, Link parser and TACT were used for abstracting non-English words, i.e. words of Indian origin. Similarly, Wordsmith and CALTS tools were used to extract the most frequently used word lists and INTEX & NOOJ for hyphenated words, pre-head modifiers, verbless sentences etc. However, these tools only served as helping aids in the research. In these type of studies, one can use some of the text analysis tools in a limited way for preliminary exploration. Web Tools, CALTS, INTEX and NOOJ helped me to identify ambiguous or unknown words, nominals, single words, repetitions etc., in my comparative study in the fiction of R.K. Narayan and Arundhati Roy and I found that these are very predominant in Roy's writings compared to those in Narayan's. However, these tool applications have its own limitations.

Studies of the present research can be used as a source material for applied linguistics as well as for pedagogic purposes. These texts are the contexts for teachers to teach literary and linguistic aspects operating on multiple codes that enhance learners' communication skills to a great extent. A resourceful teacher can inculcate interest literary appreciation among the learners' teach grammar through poetic appreciation and can construct any number of classroom activities, for instance, word study, semantic relations, cross word puzzles, creative thinking, contextual learning, reading comprehension, debate etc., to enable the learners to enjoy literary piece of writing and can mould themselves to a better creative expression and thought and thus help them write comfortably and effectively.

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