

LITERARY STYLISTICS FOR ANALYZING LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the discipline of Stylistics with the aim of appropriating a literary approach that can be used in literary studies. Literary Stylistics studies literature with a special focus on its artistic and aesthetic characteristics. Literary Stylistics is very important for literary scholarly studies, and it can be used as a theoretical background, framework and methodology for these studies. An elaborated explanation about the different levels and elements of Stylistics in general are highlighted in this paper.

Key Words: Literary Stylistics; style; its levels; elements.

INTRODUCTION

There are divergent scholarly views on what stylistics means and what it entails as opinions differ from scholar to scholar. Several ideas are discovered although they are considered not to be too far from one another, varying submissions on stylistics have been proved by critical studies to be a similar message but different voices.

STYLE – STYLISTICS

The concept of style has had a troubled history in the modern period both within and outside literary study. It has commonly been argued that we use the term ‘style’ without knowing its meaning. According to Leech (1969), ‘style’ is the way in which something is spoken, written or performed. It refers to word use, sentence structures and figures of speech. More broadly, style is considered to be a manifestation of the person speaking or writing. He further refers to ‘style’ as elocution-a Latin term which means style and also means lexis in Greek elocution is the style and diction of a language.

Stylistics, the study of the devices in languages (such as rhetorical figures and syntactical patterns) is considered to produce expressive or literary style. Stylistics is, therefore, a field of study that contributes both literary criticism on the one hand and linguistics on the other as its

morphological make-up suggests; the ‘style’ component relating it to literary criticism and ‘istics’ component to linguists.

Linguistic Stylistics: In several respects, linguistic stylistics is the purest form of stylistics in that its practitioners attempt to derive from the study of style and language variation some refinement of models for the analysis of language and thus contribute to the development of linguistic theory.

Literary Stylistics: A distinguishing feature here is the provision of a basis for fuller understanding, appreciation, and interpretation of avowedly literary texts. Although a precision of analysis mode available by stylistic methods offers a challenge to established methods of close reading or practical criticism of texts, the procedures of literary stylistics remain traditional in character in spite of developments in literary theory which challenge assumptions about the role of language in depicting literary realities

Style and Discourse: Work in stylistics within this category acknowledges that style is not an exclusively literary phenomenon and addresses itself to the description and characterization of stylistic effects in a wide range of discourse types. Fowler (1986) calls it ‘linguistic criticism’.

Pedagogical Stylistics: There are a number of issues deriving from deep-rooted divisions between linguistic and literary critics but which still require being considered; which emerge in the context of debates concerning the pedagogical relevance of stylistics.

Approaches to Stylistic Analysis

There are different approaches to the analysis of styles of texts i.e. there are various ways/perspectives from which we can account for the analysis of texts.

Lawal (1997) in his own view identifies these factors as “approaches” while Babajide (2000) on his own part defines them as “concepts.” The two of them, however, give similar points.

Style as personality/individuality: Style is a relational term. We talk about “the style of x’ referring to ‘style’ to characteristics of language use, and correlating these with some extra linguistic. Leech and Short (1981:11) believe that “traditionally, an intimate connection has been seen between style and an author’s personality.” Deriving largely from ‘idiolect’ this largely proves that every individual or person is unique in one way or the other.

Style as the Choice from Variants: The approach is backed by the fact that every phenomenon has many possible alternatives that form the variants. It constitutes selection from a total linguistic repertoire. Each individual has the right to choose from the available possibilities that which is appropriate and fits into his work. This approach is usually prominent in paradigmatic and systematic relations among linguistic elements.

Style as the Deviation from the Norm: Language is a behavior governed by rules and norms. When something is done in a quite different way from how it is usually done, then that is said to be the deviation from the norm. This is achieved by reconstruction from the structural resource

of language to extend the frontiers of current usages. This concept is most common at both the lexical and the syntactic level and used mostly for effective communication.

Style as Situation or Relationship between Message and Medium: Language use does not occur in a vacuum, the message and medium are always of importance. The medium can be formal or informal, spoken or written and so on. Different language use is determined by the different context of the operation. In other words, there are variations in language use. For example, the kind of language used in the court room will be different from the one used in the classroom and so on. By and large, it is obvious that the concept of medium and message is indispensable in stylistics.

Using any of these approaches explained above, the stylistic analysis could be conducted by means of the levels of analysis. We, therefore, explain briefly the levels of stylistic analysis and the elements under them.

Levels of Stylistic Analysis

The levels of stylistics analysis are identified as: 1. Graphology: In the works of Crystal and Davy (1969:18) cited in Alabi (2007:170) “Graphology is the analogous study of a language writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of handwriting or topography”. Leech (1969:39) believes that graphology transcends orthography. “It refers to the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing.”

Alabi(2007:170) added that a graph logical discussion of style among other features entails the foregrounding of quotation marks, ellipses periods, hyphens, contracted forms, special structures, the full stop, the colon, the comma, the semicolon, the question mark, the dash, lower case letters, gothic and bold prints, capitalization, small print, spacing, italics etc.,

Phonology: “Phonology describes the ways in which Speech sounds are organized in English into a system.” Lodge (2009:8) believes that “phonology is the study of linguistic systems”.

Specifically, it is the way in which sound represents differences of meaning in a language. Phonology in stylistics usually deals with analyzing sound patterns in a piece, the systemic use of sounds to form words and utterances in language. Phonological devices are obtained through the repetition exhibited. For example: in rhyme elements, alliteration, consonance, assonance, and phonaesthesia.

Morphology: “Morphology refers to the mental system involved in word formation or to the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed.” Morphological level of analysis is concerned with word formation processes subjected to specific conditions and rules of the process of affixation, the prefix, suffix and the root words, coining, back-formation etc.

Lexico-Syntax: This is a word formed by the combination of two different words “Lexis” and “Syntax”. Lexis is the total vocabularies that make up a language or the body of words known and used by a particular person. Syntax, according to Tallerman (1988:1) ‘sentence construction’ means how words group together to make phrases and sentences. It is also used to mean the

study of the syntactic properties of languages: in this sense, it is used in the same way as we use 'stylistics' to mean the study of literary style.

Lexico-syntactic patterns may be obtained through various means which include unusual or inverted word order, the omission of words and repetition.

Lexico-syntactic choices are obtained through devices such as piling of usual collocates, unusual collocates, archaic words, particular parts of speech, metaphor, simile, oxymoron etc.

Elements in Stylistic Analysis

The elements under each of the levels of analysis mentioned above are discussed briefly below:

Lexico-Syntactic Patterns include

Anastrophe: Alabi (2007:163) says 'anastrophe is the inversion of the natural or usual word order'. The use of anastrophe secures emphasis and focuses the readers/hearers attention.

Parenthesis: According to Alabi (2007:163) it entails the insertion of some verbal unit (extra information, and afterthought or a comment) in a position that interrupts the normal syntactical flow of the sentence.

Ellipsis: Alabi (2007:163) cites that 'Ellipsis entails the deliberate omission of a word or words, which are readily implied by the content: it is used to create brevity reemphasis or ambiguity.'

Asyndeton: This is the deliberate omission of conjunctions between a series of related clauses. Asyndeton produces a hurried rhythm in the sentence. Corbett (1971:470) cites Aristotle's observation that 'asyndeton was especially appropriate for the conclusion of a discourse, because there, perhaps more than in other places in the discourse, we may want to produce the emotional reaction that can be stirred by, among, other means, rhythm.'

Anaphora: Alabi (2007:164) cites that 'it entails the repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginnings of successive stages of the chosen pattern.' The repetition of the words helps to establish a marked rhythm in the sequence of clauses, this scheme is usually reserved for those passages where the author wants to produce a strong emotional effects.

Epizeuxis: According to Alabi (2007:165) a word or phrase is repeated without any break at all.

Lexico-Syntactic Choices include:

Alabi (2007:167) is the genetic name for the figures which play on words. It is a figurative expression in which a speaker plays on a word or phrase to suggest double meanings. A speaker may also play on two or more semantically different but orthographically or phonologically similar words to construct a thought-provoking statement. It is often employed to display linguistic process or verbal dexterity and ultimately entertain the audience.

Anthimeria: In the words of Alabi (2007:168) 'this is the substitution of one part of speech for another.' Employing a part of speech in a sentence or a group of words instead of another.

Periphrasis (antonomasia) Alabi (2007:168) ‘This is the substitution of a descriptive word or a phrase for a proper name or of a proper name for a quality associated with the name.’ It can also be described as an expression in which a celebrated person, event or place is used to represent another person, place or event as a result of a similar quality present in them.

Hyperbole: Alabi (2007:168) cites that ‘this is the use of exaggerated words, a figurative expression in which a fact or a situation is blown out of proportion.’ It is an overstatement of a fact in the course of emphasizing it or as a result of over enthusiasm for it. Hyperbole gives emphasis or produces humor.

Personification: This invests abstractions or inanimate object with human qualities. In other words, a quality associated with man is given to a non-living phenomenon thereby making it look like a person. It is also called prosopopeia and personification stirs the emotion. Alabi (2007:168).

Paradox: Alabi (2007:168) says ‘This is a seemingly contradictory statement, which happens to be true’ Paradox is a kind of the expanded oxymoron. It is also an expression which is obviously absurd or unreasonable but will become logical or reasonable on a closer look or a deeper thought.

Synecdoche: Alabi (2007:167) believes that this is the employment of a part of the reference to standing for the whole or vice versa.

Oxymoron: According to Alabi(2007:168) “This is a figure of speech in which two contradicting words are placed side by side in a statement thereby making it sound self-contradicting. In other words oxymoron yokes two terms which are ordinarily contradictory.”

Simile and Metaphor: Alabi (2007:167) believes that both the metaphor and the simile are related to the topic of similarity, for although the comparison is made between two words of unlike nature. Metaphor gives clearness and liveliness to words.

Archaic or Difficult Words: Alabi (2007:166) says “This is used to show the level of education or social accomplishment, they are attention focusing.”

Synonyms: Hyponyms are part of lexical means of achieving cohesion in discourse. They are means of unifying the discourse.

Parts of Speech: The deliberate preponderant choice of particular parts of speech in discourse sometimes gives precise and accurate descriptions some seek precision and intensify meaning. They are means of achieving cohesion in discourse.

Phonological Devices include:

Rhyme elements according to Abrams (1981:163) the Standard English rhyme consists in the identity, in rhyming words, of the last stressed vowel, and of all the speech sounds following that vowel. End rhymes occur at the end of a verse-line while internal rhymes occur within verse-lines.

Alliteration: This is generally taken to be the repetition of the initial consonant in two or more adjacent words.

Consonance: Is a half-rhyme in which final consonants are repeated but with different preceding vowels.

Assonance: Is also a half rhyme realized by repeating the same (stressed) vowel but with the different final consonant in a sequence of nearby words.

Phonaesthesia: (secondary onomatopoeia) are those sounds, which are felt to be appropriate to the meaning of their words. The repetition of sounds of words helps in linking related words to reinforce meaning. It provides tone and musical color and it aids memorability.

Graph logical devices include Punctuation. These are marks used in writing that divide sentences and phrases. It is also the system of using the punctuation marks.

Paragraphing, paragraph involve a section of a piece of writing, usually consisting of several sentences dealing with a single subject. The first sentence of a paragraph starts on a new line.

In literary studies, stylistics analysis is usually made for the purpose of analyzing quality and meaning of a text. Scholars of literature must use Literary Stylistics when analyzing literary texts for General Stylistics fails to investigate the aesthetic and artistic beauty Stylistics analysis helps reveal the good qualities of writing.

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