

Stylistics : A Contact between Linguistics and Literary Criticism

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Introduction

Quirk (1969) has remarked that a man's style is as specific as his fingerprints. Stylistic analysis can in fact settle many knotty problems in literature. A Writer's use of language, if studied carefully, can reveal his aesthetic personality, his deep – laid philosophy and world – view, the way he looks at the world, perhaps far more accurately than any study of his background and the literary movement he subscribes to. In fact, the question of the nature of stylistics, and its position among the various disciplines, its scope and its limits have aroused considerable discussion. The term "stylistics" can apply to various kinds of linguistic analysis. Anyhow, stylistics, which is, in general, incorporated within the terminology of linguistics, has not won the satisfaction of some linguists. therefore, they began to coin some other new terms. Thus, this research is intended to present discussion of the scope of stylistics, stylistic analysis, and stylistics as a middle ground between linguistics and literary criticism. In general, it is divided into three parts each to cover a certain aspect of the subject. the first part is a review of the definition of stylistics, its function, and its aims. The second part is concerned with stylistic analysis and kinds of stylistic studies. Whereas, the third part of this research discusses the role of stylistics as a contact between linguistics and literary criticism.

Part One: The Scope of Stylistics

1.1 The definition of Stylistics

The term "stylistics" is fairly easy to define, whereas, the notion of "style" has been found notoriously elusive. Most linguists and main literary critics, particularly those who are not resistant to the rapidly growing influence of modern linguistics on literary studies, would readily accept the generally acknowledged definition as Turner (1975:7) writes: "stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the most conscious and complex uses of language in literature". Thus, we can say that stylistics means the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation which offers an area of contact between literary criticism and linguistics. Stylistics, therefore, involves both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological make-up suggests: the "style" component relating it to the former, and the "istics" component to the latter. (see Widdowson , 1975) .

On the other hand , Hendricks (1974:4) refuses to regard the application of linguistics to literature as something included within the field of applied linguistics, he proposes , instead , the term "stylolinguistics" to mean " ...the study of convariation between linguistic and literary phenomena . " no matter whether we call it "stylistics" , "stylolinguistics" or " linguistic stylistics " , all of these disciplines function in the same way and have a particular quality in common .

Ullmann (1957:23) account that " The tasks of stylistics are primarity descriptive . " This statement suggests that stylistics is one of the descriptive ways which can never become a fully comprehensive method of literary criticism . Furthermore , any study which deals with linguistic structures in a work of art evaluation should not be set aside . So, any linguostic study of literature already implies appreciation . " Literary "

description and evaluation are inseparable :evaluation not only grows out of description but is presupposed and implied in the very act of cognition itself ." (Wellek , 1971:72)

Forc Riffaterre "style" is an emphasis –expressive, affective or aesthetic – added to the information conveyed by linguistic structure, without alternation of meaning . that is to say , language expresses and that style stresses . (see Ekkis ,1977:163) .

For Bernard Bloch , the style of a discourse is the message carried by the frequency distribution and transitional probabilities of its linguistic features ,especially as they differ from the same features in the language as a whole . This seems a fairly accurate and useful definition that takes a much sounder approach to the study of style than that taken by Riffaterre, for style is here envisaged as the differential manipulation of linguistic features to convey a particular message, with due emphasis on the fact that the message itself is inseparable from the linguistic configuration through which it is realized. So, when one speaks about stylistics within the context of poetic language , it is necessary that the relation between stylistic analysis and literary criticism should be clarified from the outset .

1.2 The Function of Stylistics

In fact, the function of stylistics is to act a means of linking the two disciplines: linguistics and literary criticism. Since stylistics is neither pure linguistics nor sheer literary criticism, a stylistician is, thus, intended to act possibly as a linguist and as a literary critic as well . To link both, the job of the linguist and that of the literary critic, stylistics emerges as a connective means to demonstrate how the linguistic elements act significantly in a text to produce a communicable message.

The function of stylistics is to help the reader elicit , the significance of a literary text by analysing the interrelations between its linguistic items.

This approach is essentially selective . It aims to identify the stylistically significant, or stylistically distinctive, features in a literary text and to study their function in the text as a whole.

Stylistics occupies the middle ground between linguistics and literary criticism and its function is to mediate between the two. In this role, its concerns necessarily overlap with those of the two disciplines. It is for this reason that stylistic analysis shades imperceptible into literary appreciation. Therefore, literary analysis seeks the assistance of stylistic analysis which is of a complementary nature to it. Stylistic analysis usually seeks to identify what stimulates and guides the reader or listener in the literary work. But there is no specific and confined technique to follow. (see Fairly , 1979:335)

1.3 The Aims of Stylistics

The purpose of stylistics, as discussed before, is to link the two approaches by extending the linguist's literary intuitions and the critic's linguistic observations and making their relationship explicit. The linguist directs his attention primarily to the way a piece of literature exemplifies the language system . The literary critic, on the other hand, searches for the for the underlying significance, for the essential artistic vision that the poem embodies. Between these two is an approach to literature which attempts to show specifically, how elements of a linguistic text combine to create messages. In other words, how pieces of literary writing function as a form of communication. This approach treats literature as discourse. It is this approach which is most centrally stylistic .

Stylistic description of literary texts is not linguistic description for its own sake. Its ultimate aim is the provision of an authentic means of objectively justifiable interpretation. The stylistician would therefore omit from his description certain linguistic features which he considers

irrelevant to the complete interpretation of a text, although such features would never be excluded from any purely linguistic description. On the other hand, he may include in his description features to which no linguist would justify giving any attention . (see Cluysenaar ,1976:16)

In fact, stylistics serves as a tool for a different purpose than definitely its own main purpose, and it serves the purpose of the identification of an author, and the establishment of the authenticity of a work. Such stylistics replaces or rather usurps poetics and literary theory.

Part Two: Stylistic Analysis and Studies

2.1 Stylistic Analysis

There are two possible methods of conducting a stylistic analysis. First, there is the of a single work of art which proceeds by a systematic analysis of its linguistic systems , elaborates the grammar of a work , and interprets its features working towards the aesthetic purpose of a work , or group of works . A second approach is that of comparison and contrast. We isolate and observe deviations and distortions of the individual traits from normal usage, and try to discover their aesthetic purpose by comparing and contrasting them with the traits of non-aesthetic language. A first step in stylistic study will be to observe such deviations as the repetition of sound, the inversion of word-order , the construction of involved orders of clauses, all of which must serve some aesthetic function .

In fact, there are many recent works on "counter-grammar" or "ungrammaticalness" of poetic texts, which do not find it necessary that the poet or inspired artist is rigorously bound to follow rules and to evolve his own grammar. Other works say that poetic language need not violate any rules of language in order to remain what it is ,i.e., poetic , a highly patterned and organized mode of verbal expression . There are

scholars, however, who try to trace stylistic features to the presumed mental dispositions of their author—sometimes with psychoanalytical assumptions. In other cases stylistic analysis is combined with study of content—links, sources, and other matters, such as recurrent allusions. (Turner,1972)

Stylistic analysis seems most profitable to literary study when it can establish some unifying principles, some general aesthetic aims pervasive of a whole work. Stylistic analysis can easily lead to problems of content. Critics have long analyzed styles as expressive of particular philosophical attitudes. Some of the scholars go very far in inferring the psychological features of an author from the traits of his style. Such a widening scope of stylistics will cover quite a considerable area of literary study and literary criticism, but still literary criticism remaining beyond the grips of stylistic analysis.

On the other hand, the transformational generative approach to stylistic analysis exhibits a different kind of inadequacy. Based on the hypothesis that stylistically distinctive features are properties of sentences generated by optional transformations, the application of this approach is strictly limited to the analysis of sentences, and utterly fails to account for intersentential features of style. It should also be noted, in this respect, that there are many literary texts in which sentence boundaries are so vague that any application of a sentence-bound analysis is rendered fully hopeless.

The important point to note here is that stylistic analysis can bring the scholar to the point where he is capable of tearing out meaning for himself. Besides, literary analysis seeks the assistance of stylistic analysis which is of a complementary nature to it. The validity of any

interpretation of a literary text must ultimately be determined by the consistency and precision of the linguistic argument behind it.

2.2 Stylistic Studies

Stylistic studies generally fall into two kinds in respect of the theoretical interpretation of the term "style". It is intended to mean, first, coherence, i.e., compact and harmonious assemblage of different categories to create the unique form of structure. This theory is basically elaborated through the works of Halliday and Leech. Secondly, 'style' is often characterized by deviation from the norm. The most prominent and influential champions of this theory are Spitzer and Pierre Guiraud.

(see Todorov ,1971:30)

Stylistic studies can also be classified, but in another way, according to the linguistic levels considered by the analyst. They can be phonological such as the study offered by Dell H. Hymes or morphological (studies of diction) or syntactic, i.e., studies carried out within the limits of sentences, or beyond the limit of the sentence .

In addition to the previous analytic approach, Hendricks (1976:132) reviews two other types of analysis: stirring analysis and IO analysis. A string analysis isolates, first, the bases: subject, verb, and object, each of which is supposed to consist of a single word. It, then, describes the remaining words normally called 'adjuncts' which are actually attached to the bases.

An IO analytic description starts decomposing the sentence into two constituents on the level of every structure and substructure ending with 'ultimate constituents' which are either single words or morphemes . In fact stylistic analysis usually seeks to identify what stimulates and guides the reader or listener in the literary work.

Part Three

Stylistics , Linguistics and Literary Criticism

3.1 Preliminaries

The question of the nature of stylistics, and its position among the various disciplines, its scope and its limits have aroused some kind of considerable discussion. Turner (1972:17) accounts "Stylistics is that part of linguistics which concentrates on variation in the use of language, often, but not exclusively , with special attention to the most conscious and complex uses of language in literature" . There are tow points of view from which it is possible to study the language of literature. We may use only the literary work as a document in linguistic history, for example, there is rich material for the history of English language. In this kind of study literary woks are used as sources and documents for the purposes of linguistic science. But linguistic study becomes literary only when it serves the study of literature, when it aims at investigating the aesthetic effect of language in short, when it becomes stylistics .

Stylistics can not be pursued successfully without a thorough grounding in general linguistics, for one of its central concerns is the contrast of the language system of a literary work of art with the general usage of the time . Without the knowledge of what is common speech and what are the different social dialects of the time , stylistics can scarcely transcend impressionism .There have been attempts , like that of Charles Bally ,to make stylistics a mere sub-division of linguistics : but stylistics has its own very definite problems .

The stylistician is still viewed by the critic with suspicion and treated as a trespasser .Or each tries to swallow up the other. There is a controversary between the two: the literary critic claims that linguistic analysis of literature can offer no important insight into the beauties of

literature, on the other hand , it may quench the breath out of it. While, the stylistician complains that the literary critic only talks round and round a piece of literature telling everything about it except how it works its charm.

The claim has been made that stylistics replaces or rather usurps poetics and literary criticism , that stylistics is simply poetics , or even , if we consider stylistics a branch of linguistics, the literary study is a part of linguistics . Roman Jakobson (1960:350) puts the claim forcefully, declaring that "since linguistics is the global science of verbal structure, poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics" . On the other hand, Damso Alonso (1970:149) stated that "Stylistics is the only science of literature " .

In fact, stylistics, applied to literature, is not a purely linguistic discipline which has nothing to do with literary criticism: nor is it a purely aesthetic discipline which claims for itself the role of literary criticism and is wholly unrelated to linguistics. It occupies the middle ground between the two disciplines and connects them together, for its primary concern is with language as a means of literary expression. Hence, it is assumed that although stylistics is part of linguistics, "stylistic analysis shades imperceptibly into literary appreciation". (Widdowson , 1975:117)

3.2 Conclusion

We have seen that stylistics is not a substitute. Fore literary criticism, but the latter can benefit a great deal from the stylistic analysis of the work of art. From the stylistic point of view, the validity of any interpretation of a literary text must ultimately be determined by the consistency and precision of the linguistic argument behind it . However, it is possible to harness the language and linguistic studies to the study of

literature through stylistics. Now, the linguistic structure of a poem, for example, including grammatical and semantic patterning – in addition to sound and rhythm – whose value has already been admitted – as well as stylistic choices constitute a major source and can not, therefore, be ignored in a pedagogical situation where English is taught as a foreign language. This will justify a linguistic analysis of a poem preparatory to its presentation to the class.

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