

*Stylistic Analysis and the Teaching of Literature:
A Linguistic Approach*

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1. Introduction

The present work explores the possibilities of adopting a language based approach to the teaching of literature in the English language classroom. The work is necessitated by the fact that there has been an urgent need to re-examine the traditional approach to the literature teaching which has relied on literary criticism. The teacher devotes most of his time to discussing the social and literary background and very little time to the literary work itself.

An analysis of a literary work can no longer be treated as a matter of personal insight and understanding alone. The students can make use of their knowledge of linguistics and grammar in the literature class. Bright and McGregor (1976: 222) begin their model lesson with the reading of the poem without any direct introduction because what is not in the poem does not matter. The literary work should be the focus of the lesson and not the background.

2. The Aim of the Research:

The aim of the present research is to propose an approach to stylistic analysis and see how it can be applied in

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classroom situation. The analysis of a poem, therefore, can offer certain pedagogical advantages and involves linguistic analysis of a certain kind. This kind of analysis is intended for advanced classes and can lead to a deeper understanding of a literary work. Our aim, therefore, is to develop a pedagogy that will help learners to respond, interpret particular literary texts and acquire the capacity to appreciate literature as a mode of discourse

3. Previous Works:

Great deal of work has been done in the field of linguistically oriented study to literature. However, very little attention is given to the pedagogical implications of these studies. The treatment of literary texts has been largely fragmentary, language items are studied in details but in isolation and almost no attempt is made to link them to other aspects of language use in the same text. We try, therefore, to develop a pedagogy which can be tested and refined in the light of actual classroom experience (Yadugiri, 1992: 72).

The traditional method of teaching would be to begin with a brief introduction on the text, the writers attitude and his role then goes to deal with the text in detail, focusing on its themes and the significant poetic devices like similies or metaphors used in the poem. This means that the learners are simply given plenty of information about the poet and the poem and not being encouraged to respond to or interpret the poem by themselves. Such an approach to literature teaching does not give the learners an opportunity to read literary texts on their own (Yadugiri, 1992: 74)

4. The Method Used:

In order to achieve our aim, we have adopted a stylistic approach to the teaching of literature. In such an approach the learners are encouraged to look closely at those aspects of language use in a text which plays a significant role in conveying its message and are therefore useful for the interpretation of the text. This method is worth consideration because it is based on a linguistic analysis of literature. Halliday et al. (1964: 184-185) state that "no student should be pushed into literary work until he has a sufficient linguistic ability to understand, enjoy and appreciate the literary texts that he will be studying." Our approach, therefore, will encourage student's participation since the learner is expected to analyze the form, discover the literary meaning and effect of linguistic structure. We have attempted an interpretation of T. S. Eliot's poem The Hollow Men on the basis of linguistic analysis which is to follow in section 6. The model applies to poems of the type generally included in course books. The text is analysed in terms of Halliday's "Systemic Linguistics". We are, therefore, interested in finding out how Eliot's The Hollow Men exemplifies the language system i.e. paradigmatically related (grammatical, semantic or phonological categories constituting a closed (finite) like the system of tense, the system of gender and the system of pronouns.

"It is misleading in teaching a literary text communicatively to focus on a part of the text in isolation. We have, therefore, to consider the text in its entirety." (Yadugiri, 1992: 71). There are also grounds to believe that a linguistically oriented approach can ensure students

motivation and makes learning possible because the student can make use of his knowledge of grammar and linguistics in the literature class. This approach also encourages student participation. They are expected to analyse the form and discover the poetic meaning and the effect of linguistic structures (Sharma, 1982).

5. Presentation:

In this approach, it is not necessary that the discussion of the poem should be preceded by a careful presentation of the context. The teacher, then, can read the poem and starts with the discussion of the title.

Titles have different meanings based on grammatical distinctions and raise different perceptual images in the mind of the reader (Sharma, 1982).

The semantic and grammatical components of the title must be carefully studied. The student must explore all the meanings of the title: affective, referential and stylistic. The title, therefore, is of prime importance. "Once the title is revealed, the poem regains its coherence and beauty." (Boulton, 1979: 107).

The first sentence of the poem follows the title. It can be taken as a unit because it initiates the poetic discourse and is an important pointer to the direction the poem may take. It is closely linked with the rest of the poem and can be modified by what follows. It may or may not be tied to the title by linguistic cohesion (Sharma, 1988: 147). Students, therefore, are helped to find the cohesion between the title and the first line of the poem. Repetition may serve to achieve cohesion.

The variation in rhythm should also be made clear. The plural form, for example, gives a concrete meaning. Students must be made to realize the nature of modification. The modifier may be described in concrete terms. Words rhythm signals a change. The connotations have to be realized as well as the suggestive meaning. The use of connectives has also to be explained to students. Types of sentences have their significance in literature. A change of sentence type from declarative, for example, to imperative makes an important turn. Students attention should also be directed to the significance of punctuation marks.

The linguistic configuration of a poem helps us discover the total effect of the poem along certain dimensions: concrete-abstract, general-specific, dynamic-static, sensuous-conceptual; they also lead to a linguistic recognition of the linguistic patterning of the poem. Construction of the linguistic pictures offers a great deal of language work to the advanced student. The declarative sentence, for example, has a n informative function: it states something; the imperative is associated with resolutions and power. We can also construct semantic pictures representing the distribution of structure and content words, general and specific words and denotative and connotative words. They will define the figure the poem makes on the reader's mind: the "feel" of the poem in a sensuous term. We shall go into these details in our sample analysis of "The Hollow Men". (Please see section 6)

An appreciation of the poem can take the form of a group discussion on vocabulary, types of sentences, structures and sound patterns. Finally when a student tries to read an

English poem by himself, he will need some references like The Oxford English Dictionary, a one-volume encyclopedia, a History of the English Language and a glossary of literary terms.

The learner should also be made able to see that the sound patterns contribute to the meaning of the poem. "The sound patterns used in the poem go without the patterns of meaning and set up new relations between certain sets of words like mountain and fountain, growing and flowing, glitter and twitter. Sounds are meaningful and the recognition of these patterns in a poem is as crucial to its interpretation as the recognition of grammatical structures or meaning." (Yadugiri, 1992: 80-81). Students, therefore, should focus attention on sound devices used in the poem. It is also necessary that the learner be made able to see through language the images and metaphors used in the poem and realize the feelings which are conveyed through different sensory impressions. Learners attention should be directed to the metaphorical use of language in the poem and its significance.

6. Linguistic Analysis

There are three levels at which we can analyse language and account for its features and properties. Meaning is perceived at the level of "form" and the interlevels of "medium" and "context". The medium of a given text can be either phonological or graphational. Under the level of form, we have two demilevels-grammar and lexis. However, we cannot make an absolute distinction between lexis and

grammar and between semantics and pragmatics. So we have three types of meaning:

- i. Phonological or graphological meaning-significance
- ii. Formal meaning-value-lexical and grammatical
- iii. contextual meaning-content-semantic and pragmatic

(Halliday, 1964)

A good analysis of a piece of language will, therefore, involve the discussion of these three types of meaning. The language teacher, especially when he is teaching a foreign language, will have to concern himself with all these modes of meaning.

A consideration of the phonological meaning will involve a clear understanding of the phonetic structure and phonological function of the phonematic units – their contrasts and distributions. Next we have to consider the prosodic features which are supra to phonematic units, e. g., word stress and intonation play a very important role in the intelligibility of ones speech. Moreover, a careful study of the graphational features /./, /;/, /./ and /?/ will help the reader to get at the intonational features. A teacher will have to decide the meaning of all units and features discussed at the interlevel of medium.

At the two demi-levels of grammar and lexis of the level of form the teacher will have to consider meaning. At the level of grammar, we have the units of sentence, clause, group, word and morpheme. Each unit has its own structure and at each element of the structure of a given unit operates a class of the unit next below. A given class of items will yield further subclasses when we make a move on the scale of delicacy.

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The secondary classes obtained on the scale make up a system which is a bundle of distinctive features both formal and functional. The teacher has also to consider certain syntactic supra features like word-order which is of major importance for the study of the value of English forms.

The lexical units are simple, compound and complex. We have to consider the nature of the lexical item, its collocational span, its scatter and its membership in the set. It is, therefore, obligatory on the part of the teacher to discuss the grammatical and lexical value of a piece of language he is teaching. A teacher can show his students how the occurrences and repetitions of items produce a specific effect. The teacher can then deal with all sorts of context i.e. potential, actual, denotative connotative, rational, emotive, simple or complex, full or elliptical, universal or particular. A teacher has to deal with all these factors and sort out the content with the help he can get from the text and the cultural patterns of the people described in it.

In this work, we shall discuss only the linguistic features encountered in the analysed text. We shall deal with Eliot's "The Hollow Men" as a sample of linguistic analysis. The Hollow Men is a kind of elegy on some of the characters mentioned in his early poems like Prufrock, Gerontion and Sweeney who are representatives of modern civilization but lack moral values and all that which makes life worthwhile. This tragic chant sums up the views of Eliot on the barrenness of modern society.

Students attention can be directed to the use of the determiner "the" in the title of the poem with a plural common

noun "men" which suggests that the poet's intention in this discourse is to talk about the 'hollowness' of the modern man. It refers to the wastelanders of our time and is an important linguistic cue to the theme of the poem. All linguistic layers, phonological, formal and contextual reinforce the meaning in a good discourse. The different linguistic levels of this poem contribute to its meaning.

6.1. Lexis

From the analysis in table 2 it is evident that the ratio of grammatical (function) words to content words in the poem is 53: 47. The analysis further shows that the density of nouns is more than verbs and adverbs.

This data reveals that the poem is about a "noun" and not an action because the hollow men are paralyzed. The use of function words is related to the theme of the poem because the life of the hollowmen is meaningless. Next to nouns is the density of adjectives. This further helps the teacher to draw the conclusion for his students that some nominal element and its description constitute the theme of the poem. Furthermore, a good deal of nominals (66%) are abstract and this fact helps the teacher to draw a further conclusion that an existential situation is the main concern of the poet. There are also numerous lexical sets in all the five sections which manifest the ultimate objective of the poet in this poem. Students attention can be drawn to the lexical set "hollow", "stuffed", "straw", "dry voices", "whisper", "quiet and meaningless", "dry grass", "broken Glass", and "dry cellar" - consisting words of the very opening section project that the poem is about

"hollow men". another lexical set is "dead land", "cactus land", "stone images", "dead man's hand", "fading star", "trembling ", "broken stone", which makes the student feel the kind of place our world is at present. The teacher can tell his students that the use of a particular category of lexis has foregrounded the notion of the bareness of the modern world in the poem. It is clear that the lexical sets connote the central message of the poem.

The use of the exclamatory word "alas!" in the very opening section of the poem, at once brings forth the poet's feeling. This woeful exclamation of "The Hollow Men" is in fact the cynosure of the poet. Table 1 below shows the frequency of content and function words in the poem. Students' attention can be drawn to the most important percentages and helped to interpret their significance as we have already shown.

Table 1
Frequency of Content and Function Words in the Poem

Stanza	N	Adj	V.	Adv.	Content Words	Function Words	Total
1	23	14	5	2	44	40	84
2	19	10	6	4	39	45	84
3	6	5	5	28	44	60	104
4	17	15	4	3	39	29	68
5	33	5	8	8	54	72	126
Total	98	49	28	45	220	246	466
%	45	22	13	20	47	53	100

6.2. Grammatical Overflow

Like many other free verses, Eliot has used the grammatical overflow technique in this poem as in the following lines of the first section

'Our dried voices, when
We whisper together-----
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats feet over broken glass-----
In our dry cellar. "

There is a grammatical overflow from one line to another. This acts like metrical variation in setting up a tension between the expected pattern and the pattern actually occurring. The grammatical overflow also seems to disturb the metrical movement and the reader is held up by an ungrammatical break before the end of the line.

6.3. Syntactic Parallelism:

The major syntactic patterns of the present poem are broken and reveal the sadness of the hollow men. The broken syntax resorts to enjambment for the total effect of the poem. However, we notice a few examples of extreme syntactic regularity which foreground the meaning of the poem for instance, in the following lines:

"Shape without form, shade without
colour, Paralysed force, gesture without
motion."

The same syntactic pattern using negation is exploited three times to show the contradictions in which the wastelanders are fastened to. Another example of syntactic parallelism can be shown to the students for reinforcing the meaning of the poem to the very opening lines of the poem,

"We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men"

and the opening lines of section III-

"This is the cactus land"

The syntactic regularity in the last section of the poem portrays the dilemma of the hollow men-"between idea and reality;" "between motion and act", ' between emotion and response" falls the shadow.

6.4. Syntactic Deviation

Apart from syntactic parallelism, the poet has also used syntactic deviation in the following lines:

"For Thine is

Life is

For Thine is the

The above lines are the prayers of the hollow men who are unable to pray coherently and can only mumble or lisp their prayers like linguistically handicapped men and children.

The absence of punctuation (full stop) in the above quoted lines adds to the impact of the poem. This perhaps shows the sort of broken prayers of the hollow men until they are slowly reduced into pieces. It is also possible to drive students' attention to graphology which displays the poet's

expressive use of language. The deliberate indentation of the lines- "For Thine is the kingdom" - twice and - "Life is long" once in this poem deserves attention. This indentation at once distinguishes this material and painful world from the devine world. The use of capital letter in the word "Shadow" which occurs three times in the last section is also suggestive of its difference from its literal meaning.

6.5. Repetition

The poem abounds in various kinds of lexical and syntactic repletion-an important poetic device to pack the poem with meaning. For example Eliot has used apostrophe in the opening two lines and closing lines of section I:

"We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

.....

;.....

As the hollow men

The stuffed men

This repetition echoes the sense of the poem. Another noteworthy repetition is the first stanza of section V.

"Here we go round the prickly pear

Prickly pear prickly pear

Here we go round the prickly pear

At five o'clock in the morning."

The repetition of the first sentence in the above quoted stanza has reinforced the theme of the futility of human endeavours in the modern world. Still the most important

example of such type of repetition is the concluding stanza of the poem in which the sentence

"This is the way the world ends"

is repeated three times. This repetition reinforces the poet's pessimism and projects the overall gloomy and tragic tone of the poem.

6.6. Metrical Analysis:

From the metrical analysis of this poem, it is clear that the poem is a free verse. Although dactylic foot is the most dominant in this poem, the poet has mixed it with trochee in a good number of lines. The poem has neither a fixed stanza form nor a fixed number of syllables. The number of syllables varies from line to line and that is why no clear rhythm emerges. The falling and 'rioting rhythm' is compatible to the theme of the poem. The falling rhythm reveals the sadness of the hollow men who have no rhythm in their life and so is the poem. These variations in the use of metrical devices result in a stylistic impact. The effect, therefore, is a stylistic one. The use of trochees and dactyls in the poem suggests the melancholy atmosphere. Apart from rhythm, the poem does not have any rhyming patterns well. The fractured rhythm projects the weariness of the hollow men. However, some of the metrical variations foreground the meaning of the poem. For instance, in the first section, the use of iambic and anapestic feet for depiction of hollow men's deplorable condition makes the rhythm more natural. The abrupt use of iambic meter in section V line 10 (for thine is the kingdom) in the midst of trochaic and dactylic foregrounds the existing

opposition between the two words but also lessens the monotony of the rhythm.

As is evident from the analysis, (75%) of words in this poem are monosyllabic, and this is why the rhythmic pace of the poem is very slow and reinforces its theme of inertness and slackness of the Hollow men. However, owing to its simple syllabic structure, there is a flow of ideas in the poem. Eliot, by using a good number of monosyllabic words, has packed the poem with meaning. The teacher can ask his students to find the number of syllables in each stanza and help them to find out the implication of that. For the frequency of syllables in the poem see table 2 below

Table 2
Frequency of Syllables in the poem

Stanza	monosyllabic	Disyllabic	Trisyllabic	Quatersyllabic	Pentasyllabic	Total
1	59	20	5	-	-	84
2	56	24	3	1	-	84
3	43	13	3	-	-	59
4	44	19	2	1	1	67
5	94	26	6	-	-	126
Total	296	102	19	2	1	420
%	71	24	5	0	0	100

7.7. Alliteration:

Though there are few examples of alliteration in the poem, yet they are remarkably expressive. For instance, we can see the expressive use of alliteration in the following line:

"Shape without form, Shade without colour"

The repetition of the sound /s/ interlocks both the lexical items which collocate with each other. Another expressive use

of alliteration is the repetition of /p/ sound for six times in the opening lines of section V:

"Here we go round the Prickly pear
Prickly Pear Prickly Pear"

Another remarkable use of /k/ is found in the following line of section II:

"Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves"

The alliteration emphasizes men's constant endeavour to disguise themselves, that is to shy off their duties and responsibilities.

8. A Final Remark:

The preceding linguistic analysis reveals the importance of linguistic interpretive model of writing and shows how linguistics might be used as the model for a poetics which would revitalize literary criticism. Though the model is time-consuming, it is worth the effort and shows how we can make use of language in the interpretation of literature. The use of figures and percentages gives our approach more scientific bases though too much figures may kill the interest in reading the work. However, figures and percentages are useful as far as the interpretation of the literary work is concerned.

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التحليل الأسلوبي وتدریس الأدب: طريقة لغوية

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الملخص

يقترح البحث طريقة لتحليل الأسلوب وبيّن كيف يمكن أن تطبق في الصف حيث يشجع المتعلمون أن يمعنوا بدقة في جوانب الاستخدام اللغوي في النص والذي يلعب دورا مهما في نقل الرسالة اللغوية وبذلك تكون مفيدة لتحليل النص. وقد حاولنا تفسير قصيدة ت. س. اليوت "الرجال الفارغين" على أساس التحليل اللغوي ويتم تذوق القصيدة عن طريق مناقشة الصف للمفردات وأنواع الجمل والتراكيب والأنماط الصوتية حيث يمكن تحليل ثلاثة أنواع من المعاني: صوتية وشكلية وسياقية. وتمّ إيجاد الكلمات النحوية والوظيفية في القصيدة وتحليل الانسياب النحوي والاتساق البنائي والانحراف النحوي والتكرار والتحليل العروضي وتكرار المقاطع في القصيدة والجناس الاستهلاكي. وتبين الدراسة كيف أن علم اللغة يستخدم كنموذج في الشعر والذي يمنح حياة جديدة للنقد الأدبي وبيّن النموذج كيف يمكن استخدام اللغة في تفسير الأدب. كما أن استخدام الأرقام والنسب المئوية يعطي للنموذج أسسا علمية أكثر

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